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OPTIMIS ARTIBUS EMPORIUM ÆTÉRNUM



ISSUE.13 MAY-JULY 2013

Impressionists on the Water

Embark on an artistic voyage during San Francisco's hosting of the America's Cup with *Impressionists on the Water*. Explore the significant role pleasure boating and competition played in the art and lives of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, including Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, and Signac.

JUNE 1–OCTOBER 13, 2013
Legion of Honor
Lincoln Park • legionofhonor.org

Exhibition organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Major Patron: Mrs. George F. Jewett. Patron: Mrs. James K. McWilliams. Additional support is provided by the Estate of Donald Casey and the Bequest of Lois E. Kalb. Supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Additional media sponsor support: KPIX-TV. Community Partner: Ghirardelli Chocolate Company.

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Gustave Caillebotte, *Regatta at Argenteuil* (detail), 1893. Oil on canvas. Private collection. © Comité Caillebotte, Paris



Diebenkorn

The Berkeley Years

Deeply engaged with the unique setting of the Bay Area, postwar artist Richard Diebenkorn profoundly influenced American modernism during his years spent working in Berkeley (1953–1966). Explore the first exhibition to focus on this pivotal period in Diebenkorn's career with more than 120 works, beginning with the artist's earlier abstract paintings and moving through his subsequent figurative phase.

JUNE 22–SEPTEMBER 29, 2013

HERBST EXHIBITION GALLERIES

de Young

Golden Gate Park • deyoungmuseum.org



Exhibition organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, in collaboration with the Palm Springs Art Museum. Additional support is provided by Christie's, the Koret Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Richard Diebenkorn, *Figure on a Porch*, 1959. Oil on canvas. Oakland Museum of California, gift of Anonymous Donor Program of the American Federation of the Arts. © 2013 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

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PROXIMITIES 1: WHAT TIME IS IT THERE?

ASIAN ART MUSEUM MAY 24—JUL 21, 2013
www.asianart.org

What is Asia? Its influences are everywhere and we each encounter it differently, be it through lineage or pop culture. Some of the Bay Area's most exciting artists—**Elisheva Biernoff, Lisa K. Blatt, Ala Ebtekar, James Gobel, Tucker Nichols, Larry Sultan, Andrew Witrak**—will answer this question in *Proximities*, a series of three intimate exhibitions. The first installment presents landscapes, imagined and real. The second and third are about family, community, trade, and commerce, and will open later in the year.

OPENING EVENT, Thursday, May 30, 6–9 PM, \$10. Curator remarks, lively in-gallery discussions, and performance by new media artist and composer Surabhi Saraf.

This exhibition was organized by the Asian Art Museum. Presentation at the Asian Art Museum is made possible with the generous support of Graue Family Foundation and Columbia Foundation. Image: Antioch Creek (detail), 2008, by Larry Sultan. Chromogenic print, edition of 9. H. 40 5/8 x W. 49 3/4. © Estate of Larry Sultan. Courtesy of the Stephen Wirtz Gallery and Pier 24.

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Without Reality There is No Utopia is organized by the
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New Location | 2569 Third St @ 22nd, SF
Information on the new museum and its
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**MUSEUM
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Hung Liu, *September* (detail), 2001. Collection of Driek and Michael Zirinsky.

Exhibitions and programs generously supported by: Windgate Charitable Foundation and San Francisco Grants for the Arts / Hotel Tax Fund | Designed and Produced by Gauger + Associates | Media Sponsors:  **HANDFUL OF SALT**  **SFAQ**
Left: Michael Cooper, *Ruby*, 2010 | Center: Arline Fisch, *Paper Lanterns*, 2008 | Right: Rebecca Hutchinson, *Affinity*, 2012



招魂

SUMMONING GHOSTS
THE ART *of* HUNG LIU

March 16 – June 30

Made possible in part through the generous support of the Oakland Museum Women's Board, OMCA Art Guild, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Koret Foundation.

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The Art of the Book, May
Devorah Jacoby, June
Leslie Allen, July



Jack Kerouac wandering along East 7th Street after visiting burroughs at our pad, passing statue of Congressman Samuel "Sunset" Coy, "The letter-carrier's Friend" by Tompkins Square Grand Corner of Avenue A, lower East Side, he's making a Dostoyevsky mad-factor Russian lower let-top O'm, just walking around the neighborhood, then involved with the subterranean, samie's notebook in wool short-pockets, Fall 1953, Manhattan.
Allen Ginsberg

Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac wandering along East 7th street . . . , 1953, Gelatin silver print, printed 1984–1997, 11 ½ x 17 ¾ in, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Gary S. Davis. Copyright © 2013 The Allen Ginsberg LLC. All rights reserved. *Beat Memories: The Photographs of Allen Ginsberg*.

Beat Memories: The Photographs of Allen Ginsberg is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Presenting partnership for this exhibition is provided by an anonymous donor. Supporting sponsorship has been provided by The Jim Joseph Foundation, BNY Mellon, Joyce Baskin Linker, and Richard Nagler and Sheila Sosnow. Additional support has been provided by Doug Mandell.

The Koret and Taube Foundations are the Lead Supporters of the 2012/13 exhibition season.



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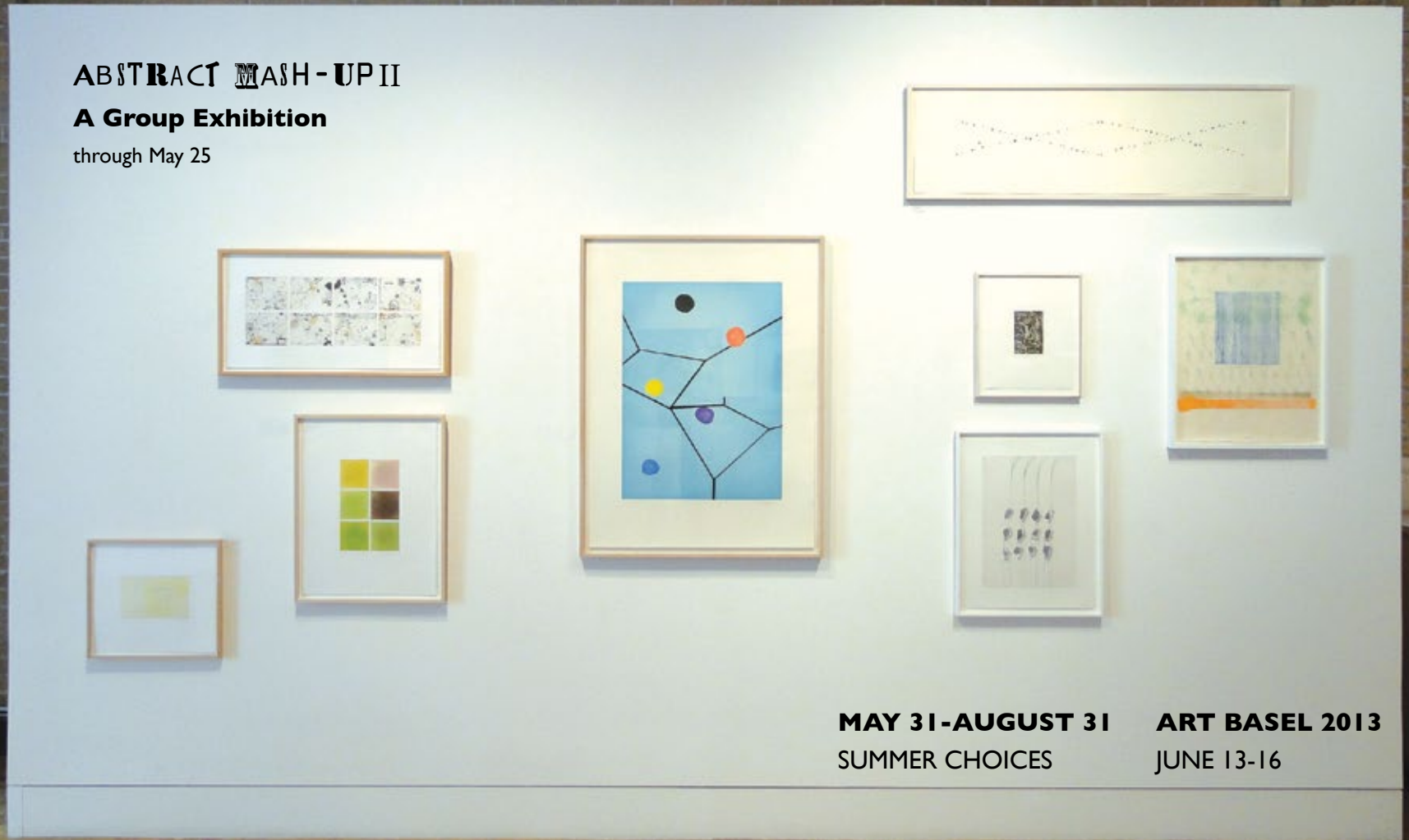
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www.art-mrkt.com/sf



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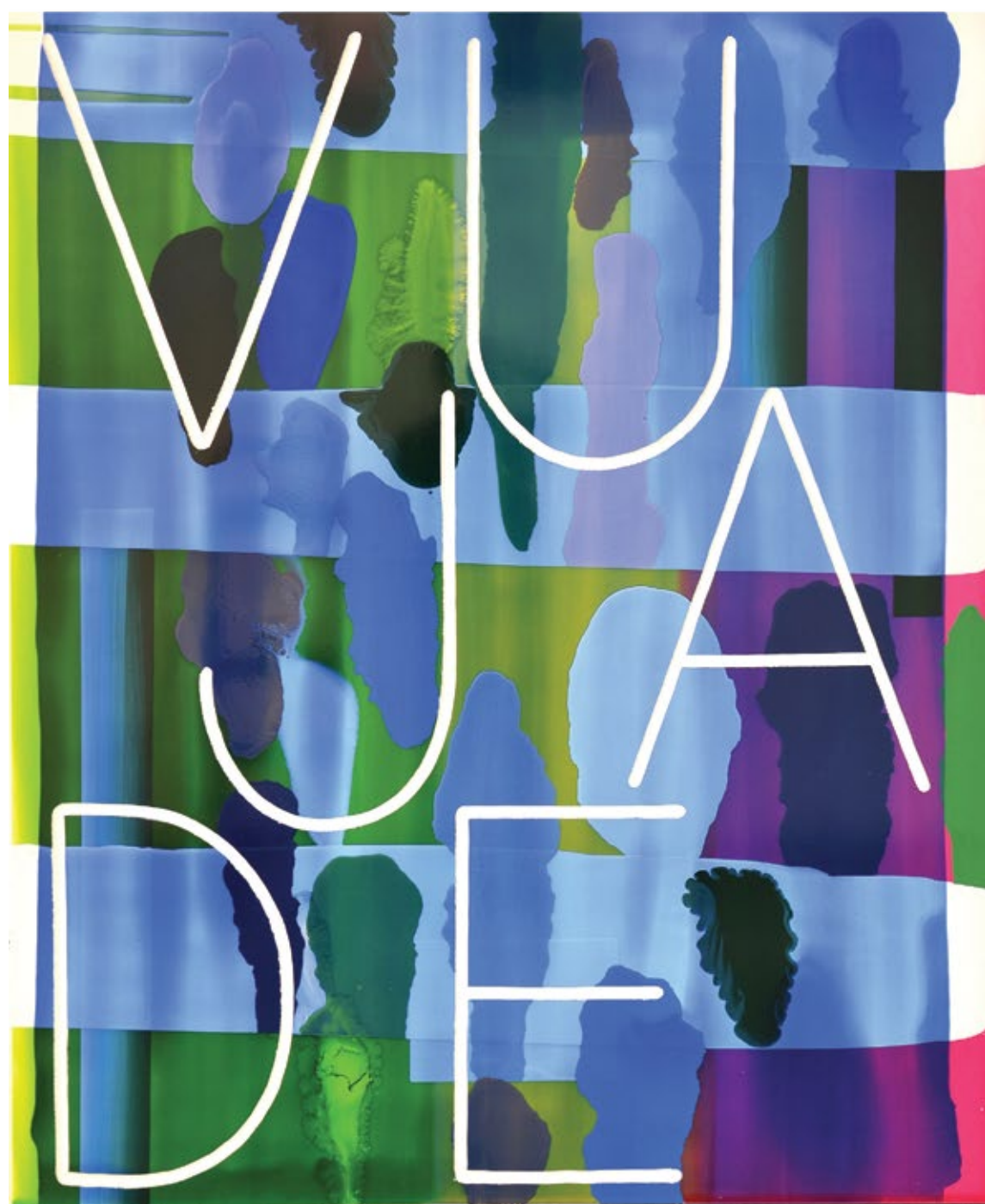
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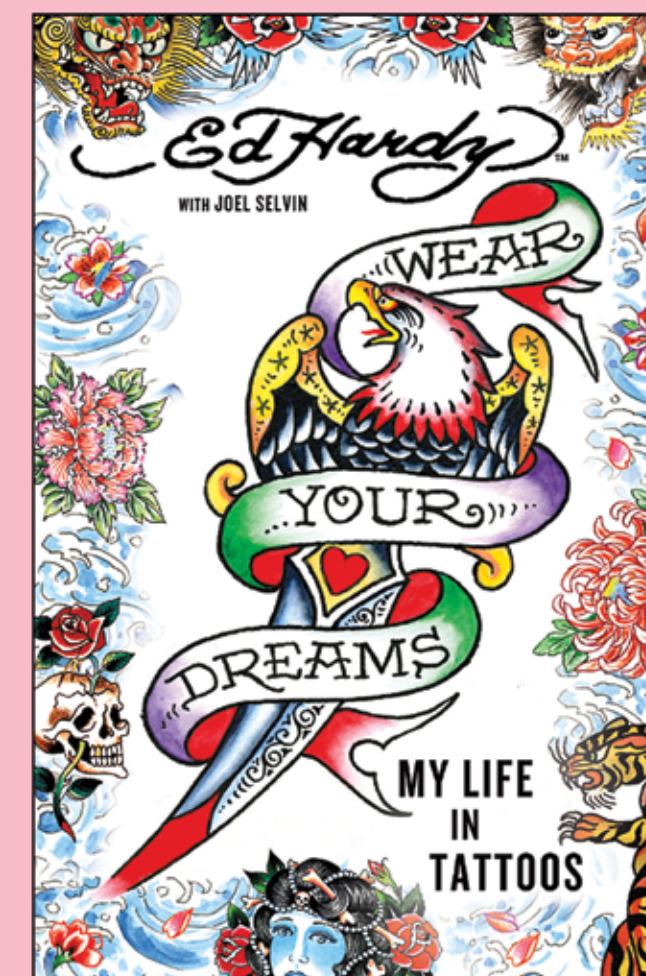
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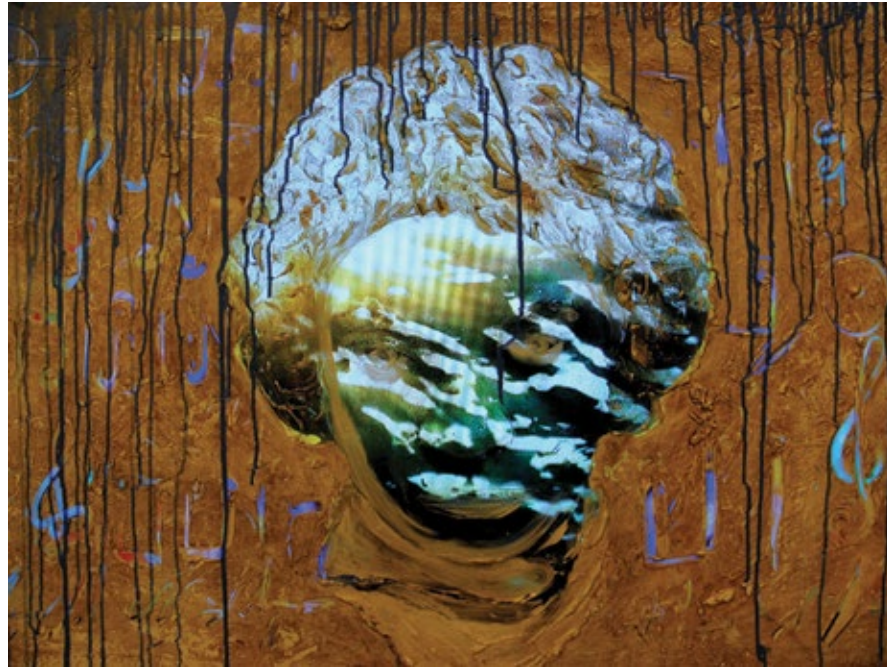
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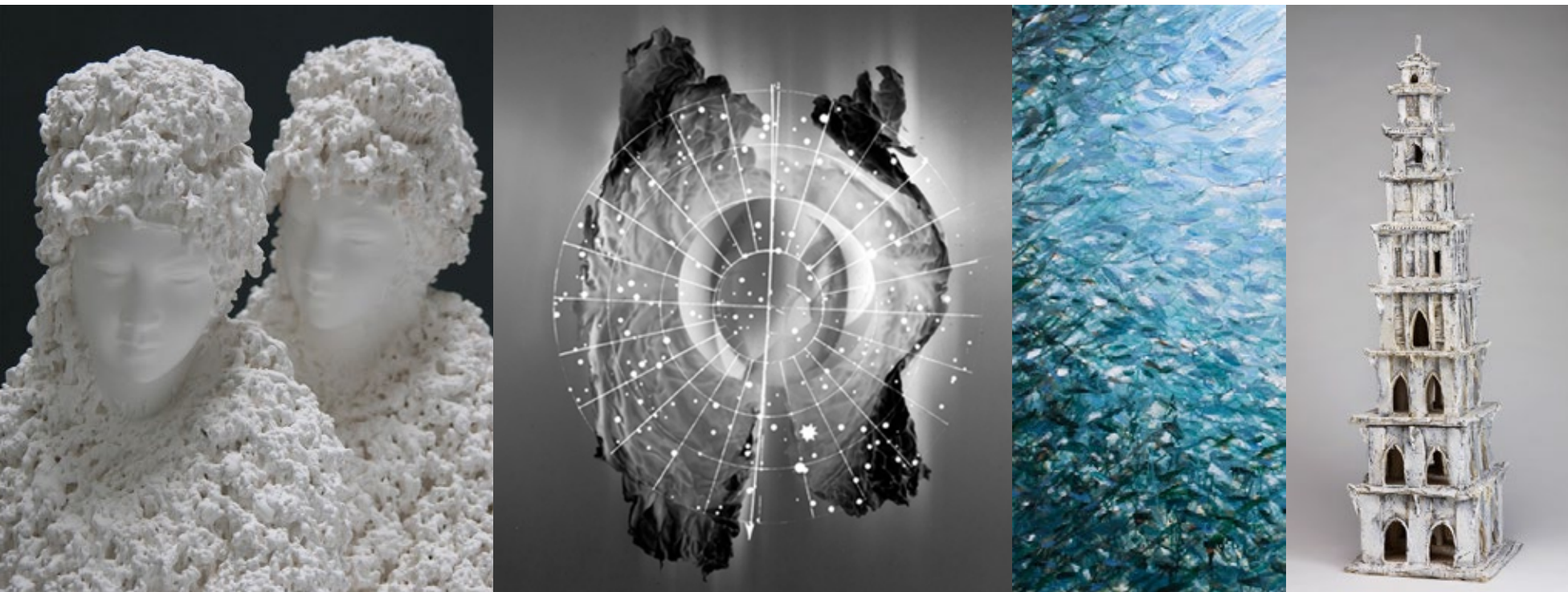
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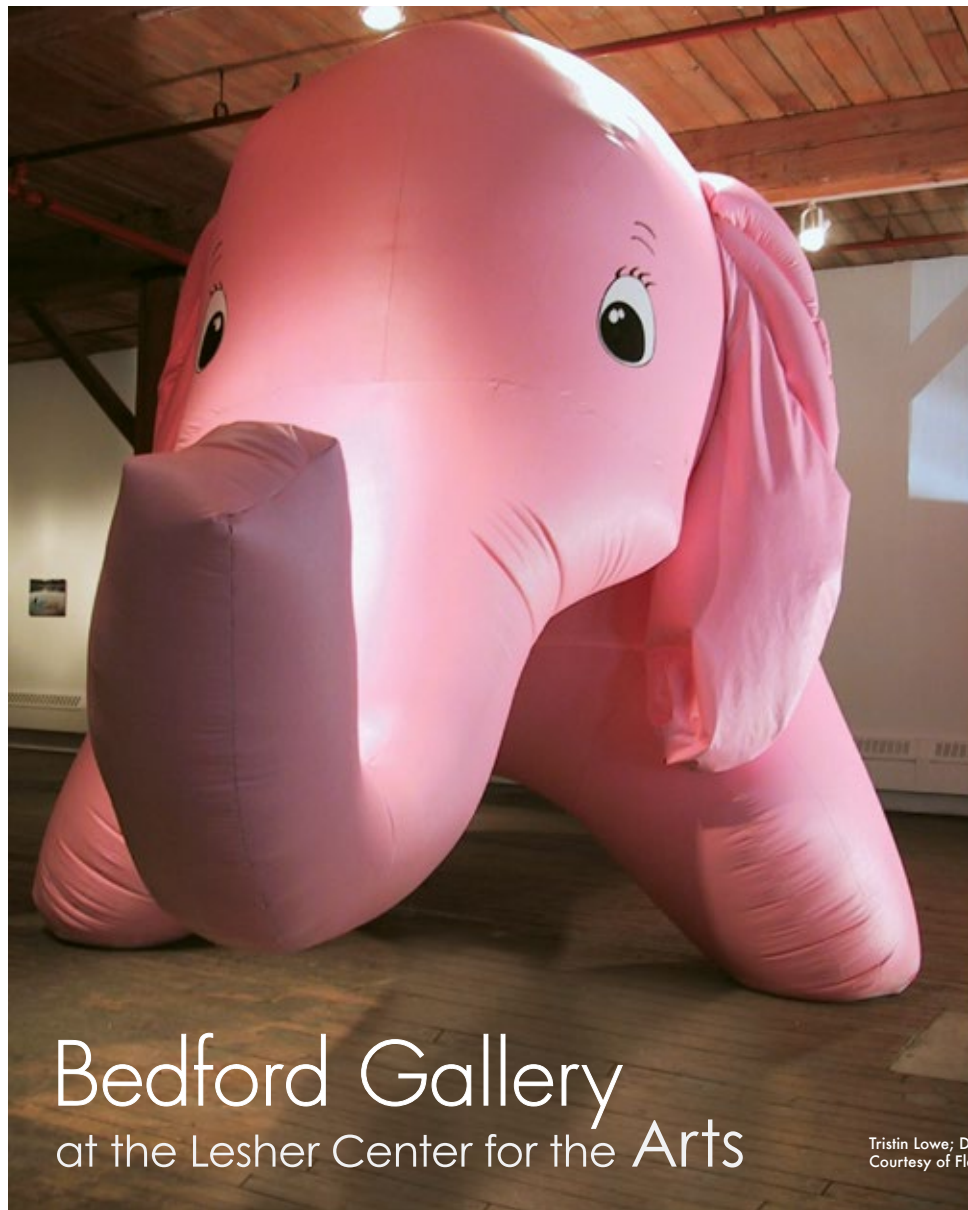
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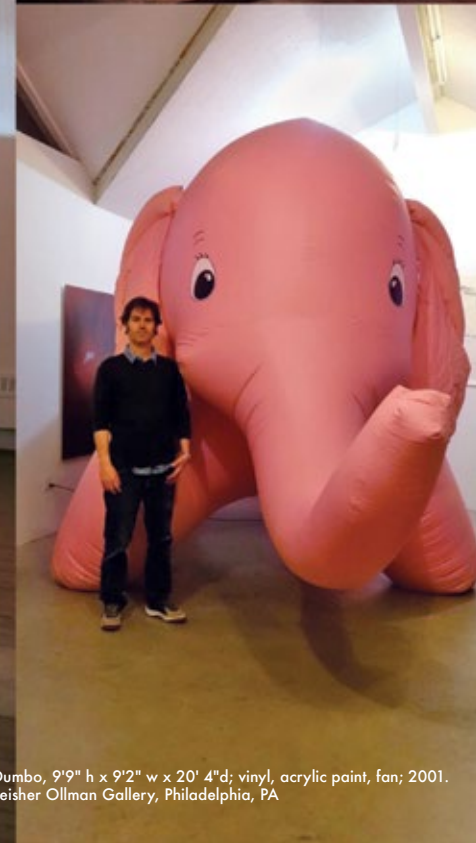
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Tristin Lowe; Dumbo, 9'9" h x 9'2" w x 20' 4" d; vinyl, acrylic paint, fan; 2001.
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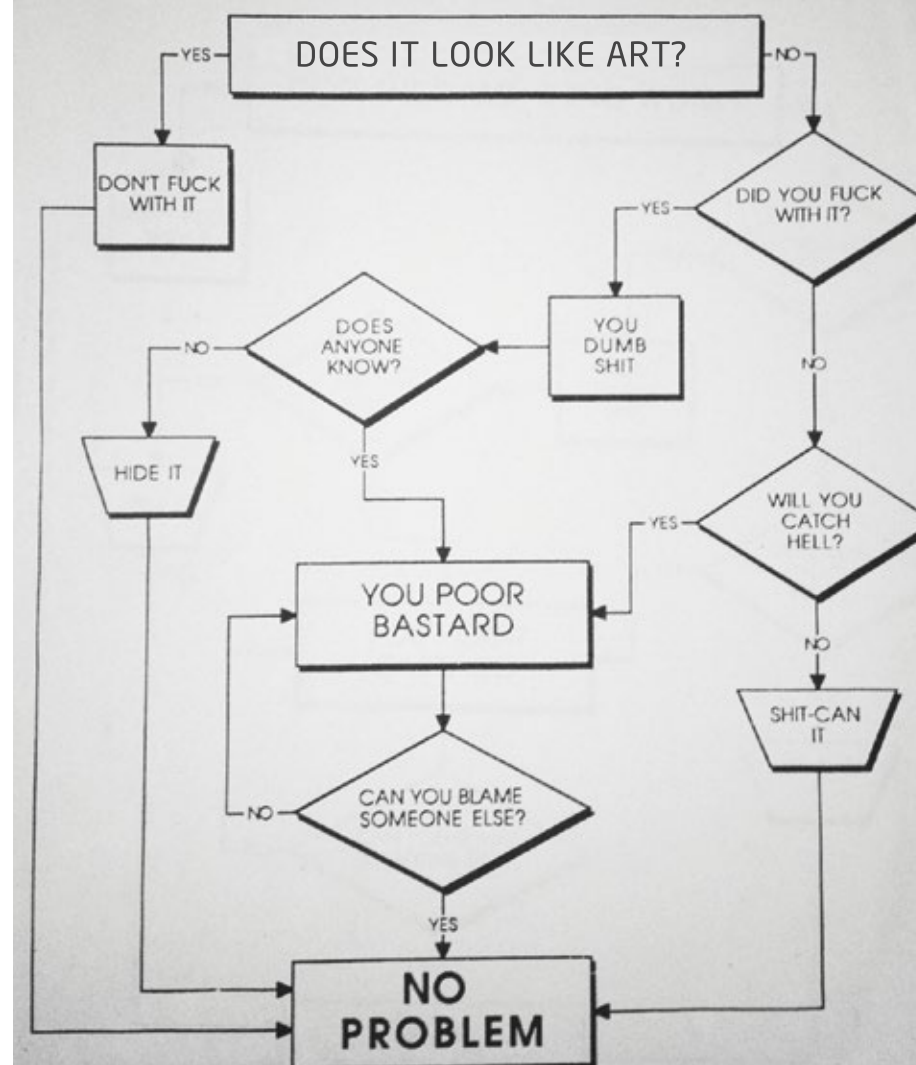
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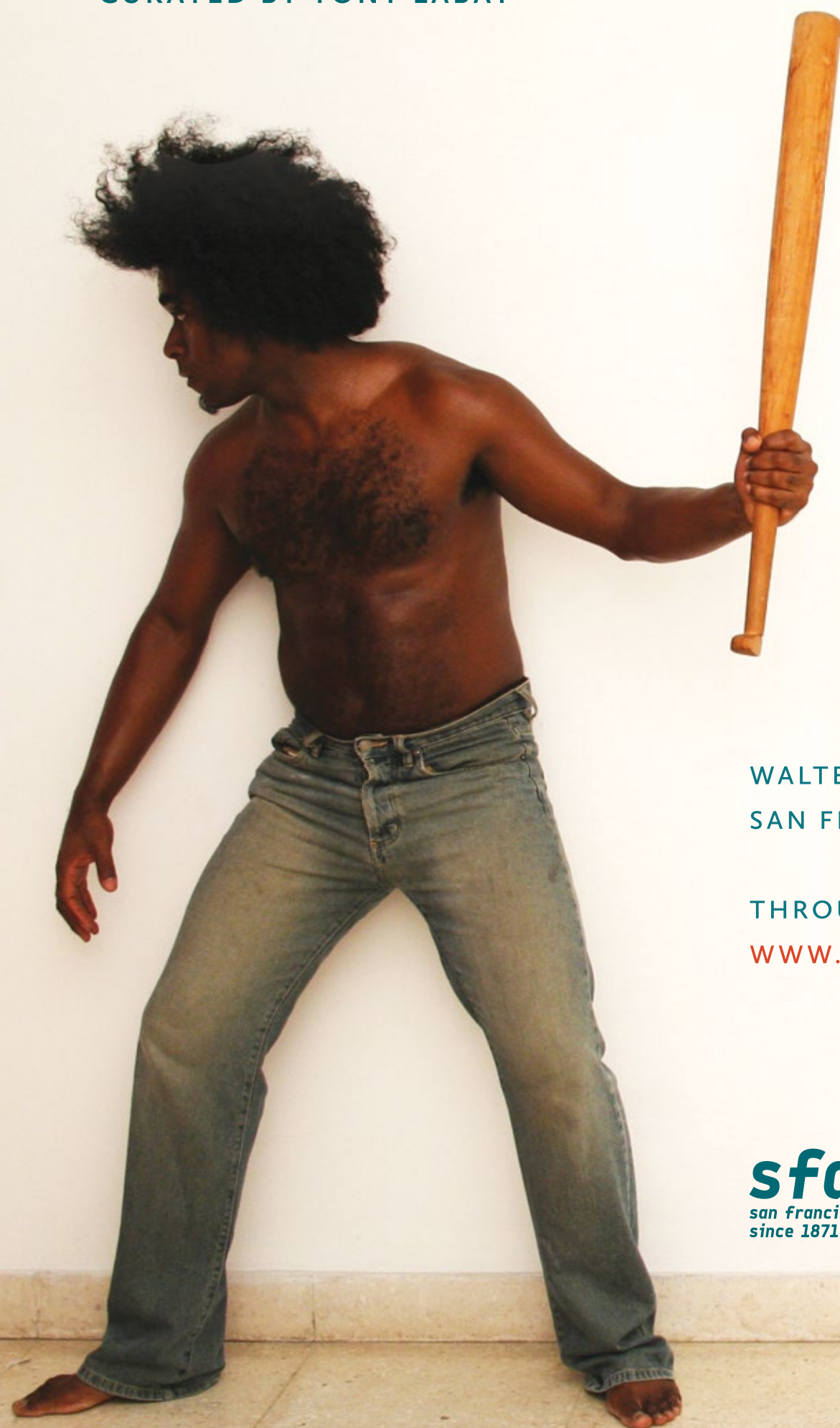


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Image: Laura Swanson, "White" (2007).

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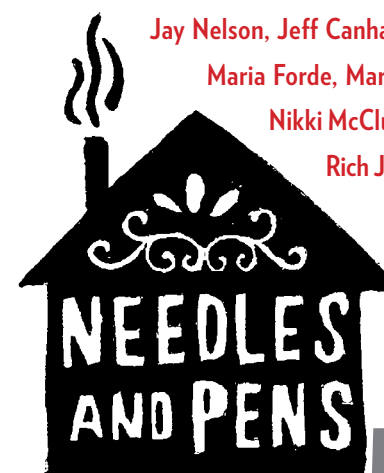
Alexandre Arrechea, White Corner, 2006. Video installation. Kadist Art Foundation.



Sandy Kim // September 2013 // Ever Gold Gallery

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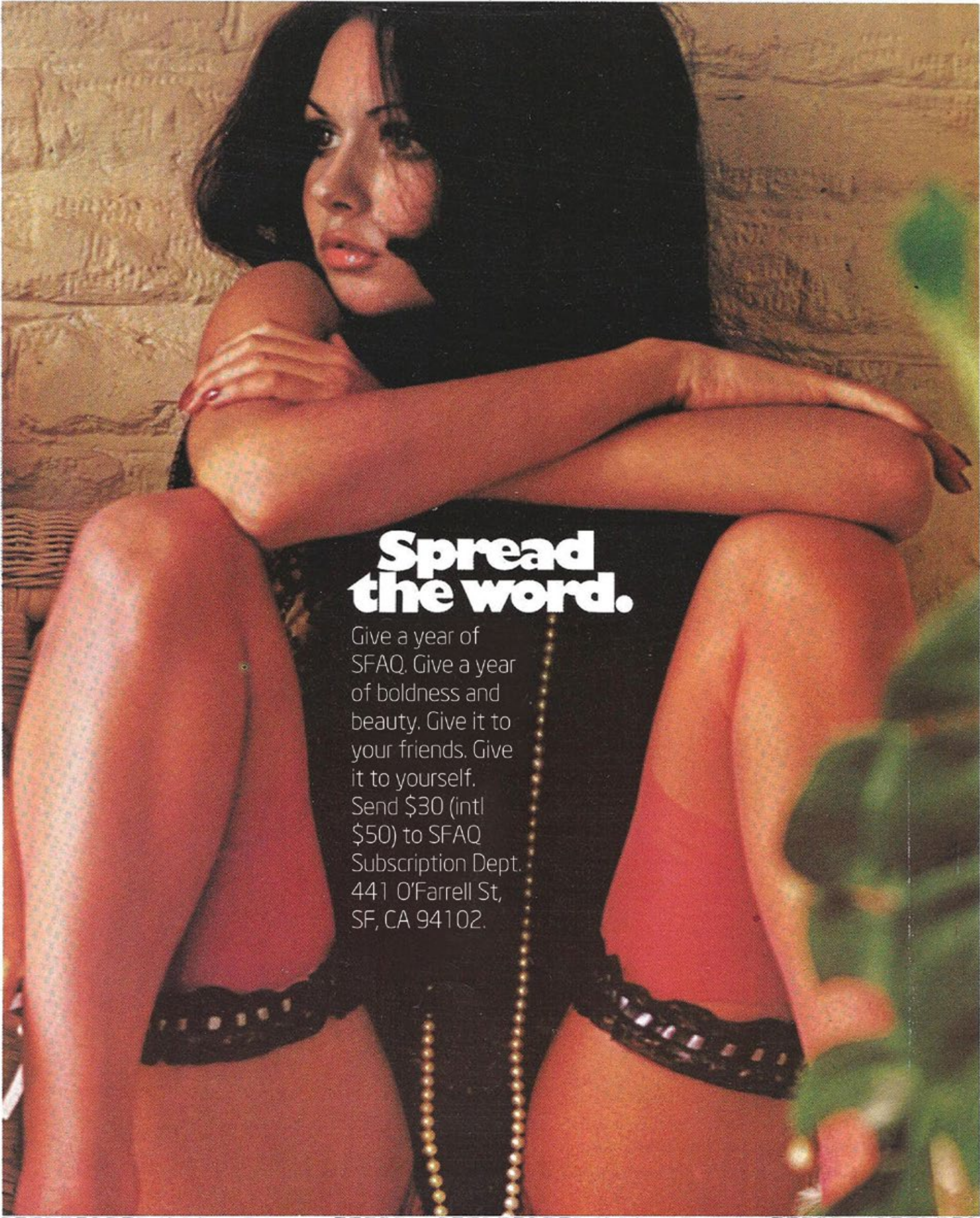
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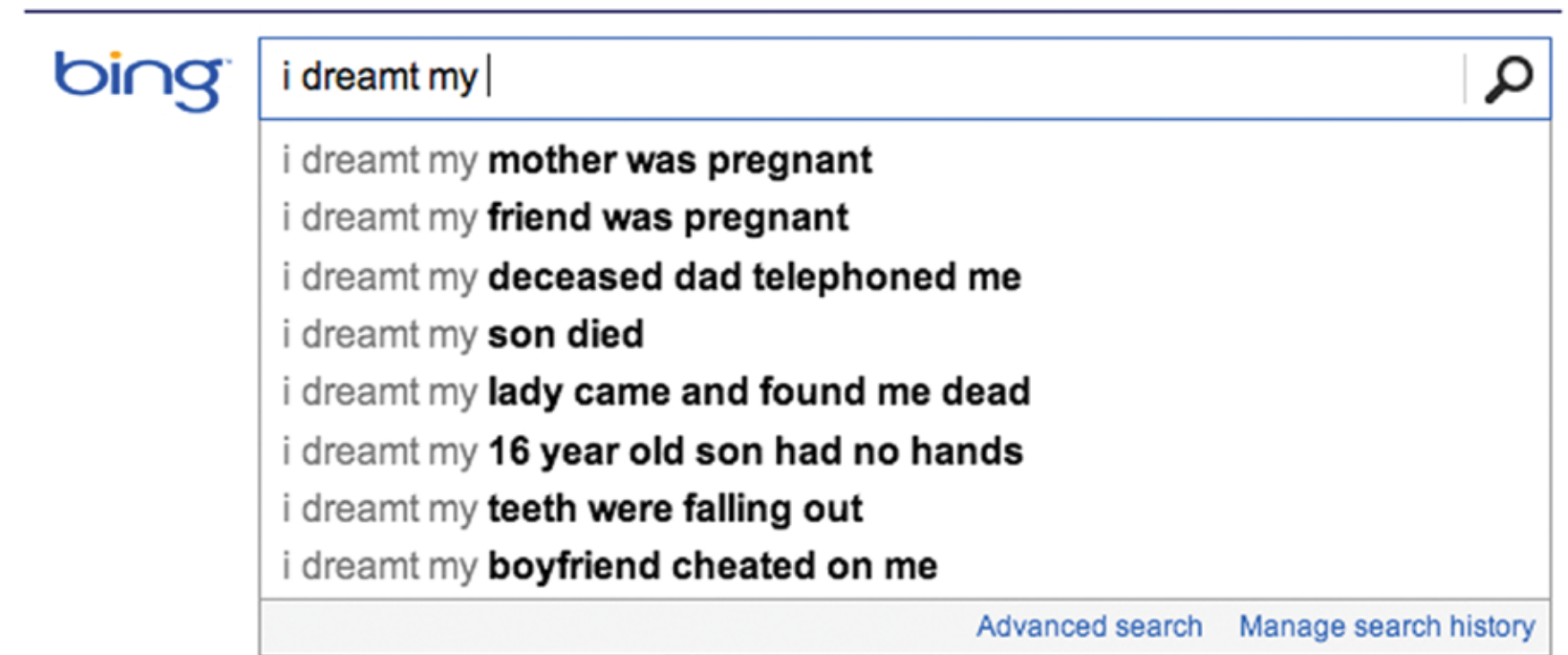
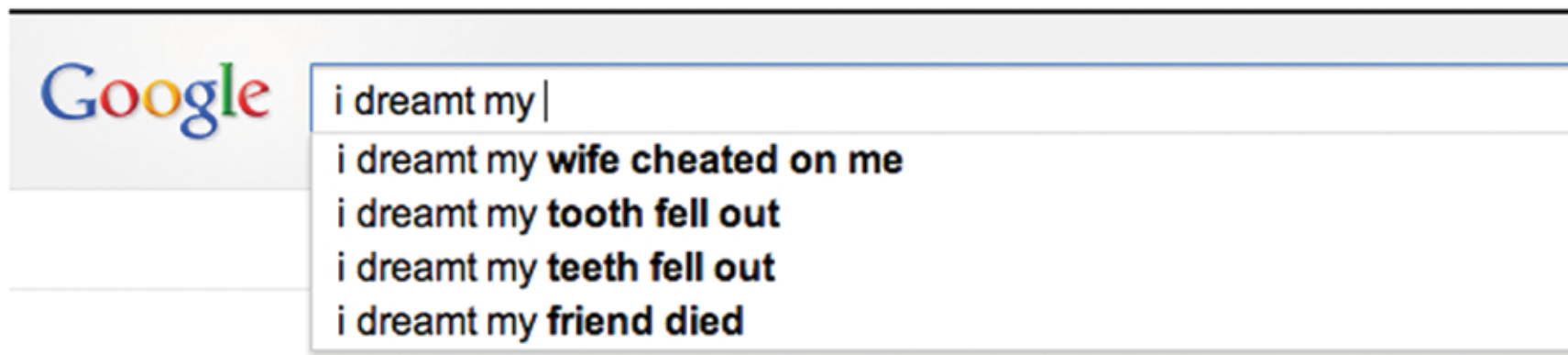


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100	Revenue, total	15,885.00	10,511.50	6,677.00	11,835.00	11,720.50	1,649.00
100	Revenue, total	11.44	13,479.00	-1,498.00	6,755.00	301.00	5.00
100	Revenue, total	15.88	288.00	210.00	135.50	62.00	12.80
100	Revenue, total	35,250.00	23,875.00	75,500.00	1,771.00	35,500.00	80.00
100	Revenue, total	135.00	11,530.00	20,850.00	17.00	12.00	4.80
100	Revenue, total	350.00	75.00	589.00	450.00	11.55	
100	Revenue, total	1,635.00	810.00	731.00	11.85	11,992.50	150,450.00
100	Revenue, total	1,050.00	220.00	267.00		25.00	1.50
100	Revenue, total	500.00			1.00		
100	Revenue, total	12.00				55.00	50,000.00
100	Revenue, total		450.00	32.00	12.00	12.00	4,500.00
100	Revenue, total		11.00	19.00	1.17	20.00	
100	Revenue, total		11.00	80.00	25.00	20.00	
100	Revenue, total		13,515.00	8.00		2,620.00	
100	Revenue, total	300.00	350.00	12.50	4,000.00	6,575.00	1,000.00
100	Revenue, total	6,445.00	13.00	12.50	5,875.00	1,318.00	
100	Revenue, total	32.20	772.00	4.00	2,077.00	1,951.00	
100	Revenue, total				395.00	4.00	
100	Revenue, total				1,517.00	8,500.00	
100	Revenue, total	35.00	90.00	16.18	1.00	14.50	3.98
100	Revenue, total						



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San Francisco Arts Quarterly

ISSUE 13: MAY. JUNE. JULY 2013

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- A. Will Brown is a curator and writer working in San Francisco and Oakland. Brown is currently the curatorial fellow at the Kadist Art Foundation and the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts. He has curated exhibitions at the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts; Triple Base Gallery, SF; Alter Space Gallery, SF; Live Worms Gallery, SF; The Oakland Museum of California, Oakland; The Luggage Store Gallery, SF. Additionally Brown has contributed writing to SFAQ and Art Practical

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- Simon Cole is the Director of Cooper Cole Gallery in Toronto, Canada. His gallery has a focus on showing emerging and mid-career Canadian artists as well as introducing international artists to a Canadian audience. Cole is also the Director of Spectrum Art Projects, a not-for-profit organization that uses murals and public art initiatives as tools to empower individuals and reshape neighbourhoods.

- **Jarrett Earnest**

- Jarrett Earnest is an artist, writer, and co-director of 1:1, a collaborative that took the form of an art space in the Lower East side of Manhattan. He writes regularly on contemporary art and pursues the interview as a distinct critical form, publishing long innovative interviews with artists such as Maurizio Cattelan, Richard Tuttle, and Nayland Blake, among others. He is presently at work on a book of writing and drawing exploring the aesthetics of intimacy. All of his disparate projects engage the intersections of performance, poetry, the visual arts and politics.

- **Daelyn Farnham**

- Daelyn Farnham is the Director of Altman Siegel Gallery. A Dallas native, Daelyn recently relocated to San Francisco, having previously lived and worked in London and New York. Prior to relocating, Farnham worked with David Zwirner, New York, for six years. As a Director with Zwirner, she helped to organize exhibitions including Yan Pei-Ming: Les Funérailles de Monna Lisa, Musée du Louvre, Paris, Yes! Yan Pei-Ming, Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco Art Institute, The Bible Illuminated: R. Crumb's Book of Genesis, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and R. Crumb's Underground, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. Farnham is active with the San Francisco Council of Artaidia: The Fund for Art and Dialogue, and the Mycological Society of San Francisco, and enjoys gardening at her cabin in Southern Humboldt.

- **Rudolf Frieling**

- Rudolf Frieling was born in Münster (GER); he graduated in Humanities at the Free University in Berlin and received a Ph.D. from the University of Hildesheim; since 2006 he is Curator of Media Arts at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) where he has curated among others the survey shows In Collaboration: Early Works from the Media Arts Collection (2008), The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now (2008/2009), and most recently Stage Presence: Theatricality in Art and Media (2012). Between 1994 and 2006 he was curator and researcher at the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany; he co-edited a series of volumes on the histories and contexts of media art, among them the online portal Media Art Net 1/2 (2004/2005); he has taught at various academies and universities internationally and is currently also Adjunct Professor at the California College of Art in San Francisco and the San Francisco Art Institute.

- **Nikki Grattan**

- Nikki Grattan came to San Francisco after some post-college traveling, and ten years later she thinks she might have finally found "home." Not too long ago she finished grad school at San Francisco State University, where she earned degrees in English and Creative Writing and is currently busily mapping out her future. In The Make is a project she's been collaborating on that showcases artists in their studios.

- **Glen Helfand**

- Glen Helfand is a visiting faculty member in SFAI's History and Theory of Contemporary Art program. His writing, concentrating on contemporary art and culture, appears in Artforum and numerous other publications, and has curated exhibits for the de Young Museum, San Jose Museum, Mills College Art Museum, and Dust Gallery in Las Vegas.

- **John Held, Jr.**

- John Held, Jr. is a staff writer for San Francisco Arts Quarterly. He is co-curator of the current San Francisco Art Institute exhibition, "Experimental Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Mid-Winter Burning Sun: Gutai Historical Survey and Contemporary Response." Held's two-volume work, "Where the Secret is Hidden," containing over one hundred essays on the alternative arts composed over a thirty year period, is available from lulu.com.

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- **Gregory Ito**

- born: Los Angeles. lives/works: San Francisco. Co-founder of SFAQ and Co-owner of Ever Gold Gallery. Gregory Ito was recently awarded the LOOP Arts Grant and Residency, 2013 and exhibits his work internationally. www.gregoryito.com

- **Paul Kos**

- One of the founders of the Bay Area conceptual movement, Kos has exhibited internationally and is represented in major museum collections, including New York's MoMA, the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, SFMOMA, and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. He is a Professor Emeritus at SFAI, where he taught in the New Genres Department from 1978 to 2008. www.paulkos.net

- **Michael Krouse**

- Michael Krouse is an artist who was born during the second round of the biggest fight in history, when Ali met Frazier for the first time as two undefeated champions in New York City's Madison Square Garden.
- Raised in Las Vegas, Nevada. The son of a Holocaust survivor turned exotic dancer and a WWII fighter pilot

turned cab driver. Currently, he lives in San Francisco with his wife, daughters and dogs. He is also the owner of Madrone Art Bar.

- **TOM MARIONI**

- 1969 One Second Sculpture, curate Invisible Painting and Sculpture, 1970 founder (MOCA) Museum of Conceptual Art, curate Sound Sculpture As, 1970 The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art, 1972 Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach, Drum Brush Drawings, 1975 Thinking Out Loud, Warsaw, Poland, 1975-1981 editor/designer VISION magazine, 1981 Guggenheim Fellowship, 1991 The Yellow Sound for Kandinsky, radio play, Cologne, Germany, 1996 founded The Art Orchestra, Beer Drinking Sonata, 2003 A Memoir, Beer, Art and Philosophy, 2012 Beer with Friends... Vienna, Paris, Bristol.

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- Carlo McCormick is a New York City based writer and curator as well as a senior editor at Paper Magazine.

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- Austin McManus is a photographer; writer; curator; and publisher. He founded the web-based zine publishing and distribution collective TheFloPBox.com in 2003. Austin is involved in a wide range of creative projects and currently works as an editor for Juxtapoz magazine.

- **Jasmine Moorhead**

- Jasmine Moorhead is the owner and director of Krowswork, a video and photography gallery in Oakland founded in 2009. www.krowswork.com

- **Lucy Mulroney**

- Lucy Mulroney is a curator of rare books and manuscripts at Syracuse University. Her essay on how Warhol wrote his book of philosophy is forthcoming in the catalogue Reading Warhol, published by Hatje Cantz and the Museum Brandhorst in Munich. She is currently working on a project about a collection of restaurant menus collected by one of the first female CIA agents as she traveled through the Middle East, North Africa, South America, and the Carribean during the Cold War period.

- **Maria Nicolacopoulou**

- Maria Nicolacopoulou is a researcher, art critic and curator. Apart from organizing projects and interventions, she has worked for Daylight Magazine, Tate Modern, Sotheby's and University of London. She has written for artists' catalogues, journals and Third Text. She holds a BA in Philosophy from CUNY, an MRes in Humanities & Cultural Studies from the London Consortium and, following a year with YBCA's curatorial department, is now working towards a further MA in Museum Studies from New York University.

- **Wendi Norris**

- Wendi Norris, proprietor of the eponymous San Francisco-based gallery, exhibits a robust contemporary and modern program with a strong emphasis on the global market. Wendi exhibits an international array of established artists in her 5,000 square foot gallery space in South of Market and at top-tier art fairs around the world. Through her expertise in the modern art world, with an unparalleled network in Surrealism, and through a considered selection of some of today's most dynamic artists, Wendi supports a exciting range of private clients, museums, and not-for-profit art organizations.

- **Joseph del Pesco**

- Joseph del Pesco is founding director of the San Francisco branch of the Kadist Art Foundation. Located at 20th and Folsom in the Mission district, Kadist presents events and exhibitions, hosts artists for residencies and collects contemporary art.

- **Joey Piziali**

- Joey Piziali was born in Stanford, California. He received his B.S. from the University of Colorado, Boulder and his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2005. He has exhibited his work extensively in San Francisco as well as Los Angeles, New York and Singapore. As an active member in the San Francisco Art scene he co-founded the Romer Young Gallery (formerly Ping Pong Gallery) in 2005 with partner Vanessa Blaikie.

- **Ariel Rosen**

- After receiving her Bachelor of Arts from Tufts University, Ariel Rosen worked at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Louvre Museum, Paris. She brings diverse knowledge of multiples and works on paper to her work in the gallery world and outsider art community. She is proud to reside in Oakland and is currently an associate at Catharine Clark Gallery.

- **Jessica Silverman**

- Jessica Silverman founded the Jessica Silverman Gallery upon completing her MFA in Curatorial Practice at the California College of the Arts in 2007. The gallery is known for discovering emergent artists in California and bringing them to an international audience as well as introducing foreign artists to the San Francisco Bay Area. The gallery has a strong concept-driven roster that embraces both rigorously abstract and hyper-figurative work.

- **Gianni Simone**

- Escaped from his home country in 1992 and found refuge in Japan, where he promptly found a job teaching people how to shout HELP! and avoid being robbed on foreign buses. Since 1997 he has been unhealthily active in the mail art network, unleashing on the unsuspecting public, among other things, the "Treatise of Pataphysical Anatomy" and the international fake political campaign poster project. He has recently opened the Stickerman Museum - Tokyo Annex. When not running after his two kids and from his wife, he is usually busy making zines, writing for high- and lowbrow magazines, and exploring Tokyo.

- **Stephanie Smith**

- Stephanie Smith received her Bachelor of Arts at the University of California at Berkeley, where she majored in Psychology and Art Practice, with electives in Art History and Italian. She has remained active in the Bay Area art community, gaining exhibition and curation experience at several galleries in the East Bay. She maintains an interdisciplinary art practice, including installation, new media, social practice, and arts writing.

- **Ashley Stull**

- Ashley Stull is a curatorial collaborator living and working in San Francisco, CA. In May of 2012, Ashley completed a Masters in Curatorial Practice at California College of Arts, and continues to produce projects dealing in alternative exhibition space, flux and ephemera, and interdisciplinary art and research.

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- Mark Van Proyen is an artist and art critic based in northern California. His writings have appeared in Art in America, Art Issues, CAA Reviews, New Art Examiner, Bad Subjects, Art Practical and Square Cylinder.

- **Kenneth White**

- Kenneth White is an artist, writer, and curator. He is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford University. Recent publications include "Muybridge's Enthalpy" in PUBLIC 47 (Spring 2013) and "Until You Get To Know Me: Tony Oursler's Aetiology of Television" in Millennium Film Journal 57 (Spring 2013). His essay "Terminal Velocities," on the work of Carolee Schneemann, appeared in San Francisco Arts Quarterly 11 (Winter 2012-13).

- **Griff Williams**

- Griff Williams is an artist and owner of Gallery 16, San Francisco. He founded G16 and the pioneering fine art printmaking workshop Urban Digital Color; both now in their 20th year. As an artist, his paintings have been exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide, including San Diego Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Crocker Art Museum. His work has been reviewed in Art in America, Flash Art and Art Forum.

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- by Mark Van Proyen

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this issue is dedicated to:

Carlos Villa

1936 - 2013



Carlos Villa, circa 1965. Photograph by Jerry Burchard. Courtesy of the Estate of Jerry Burchard.



Carlos Villa at a pool room that was on Kearny street in what used to be Manila town near the International Hotel, San Francisco, circa 1960s. Photograph by Jerry Burchard. Courtesy of the Estate of Jerry Burchard.

RICHARD DIEBENKORN

The Berkeley Years, 1953–1966

TIMOTHY ANGLIN BURGARD interviewed by John Held, Jr.



Rose Mandel, Richard Diebenkorn, 1956. Digital scan from original negative. Copyright Rose Mandel Archive, All Rights Reserved. Courtesy of the deYoung Museum.

A Conversation with Timothy Anglin Burgard, The Ednah Root Curator of American Art, and Curator-in-Charge of American Art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (deYoung/Legion of Honor), San Francisco, California.

It seems appropriate that the Richard Diebenkorn exhibition is being held here, as he visited the California Palace of the Legion of Honor with his grandmother in the 1930s, and had his first one-man show at the Legion of Honor in 1948, when he was twenty-six years old.

The Fine Arts Museums have a long history with Richard Diebenkorn in terms of supporting his work. You mentioned the early exhibition of Van Gogh at the Legion of Honor [April 28-May 24, 1936]. It was memorable for Diebenkorn, not least because Van Gogh was one of the great modern masters and an early influence for him. Interestingly, not so much for Van Gogh's subjects or technique per se, although they were both great "painter's painters." You really see the luscious impasto in both of those artist's works. But, Diebenkorn was most taken with the reaction of the public looking at Van Gogh's pictures. He pointed out that, unlike today, where Van Gogh has become almost a cliché of popularity and high market prices, at that time when Diebenkorn was a teenager [15], Van Gogh's works were not fully understood, and were rarely seen in this country. In fact, in the exhibition that Diebenkorn saw at the Legion of Honor, the artist's works were derided by the viewers.

This was Diebenkorn's first insight into both the potential and possibilities that modern art might present in challenging viewer's preconceptions about what art is or could be, but also what the response might be. That, indeed, art had the power to instigate responses that were sometimes very negative. I think that Diebenkorn was very famously someone who was essentially immune to critical or commercial concerns. I've always felt that this early experience, seeing what a double-edged phenomenon this critical or public scrutiny could be, may have shaped his later sensibility in that regard.

One of the persons challenged by modern art at that time was his father, who was a successful businessman. Diebenkorn was born in Portland and moved to the Bay Area soon after. When he came of college age, he went to Stanford, but his father wanted him to go into a reputable profession.

You are correct that Diebenkorn, although born in Portland, really was a local, because he lived in Ingleside Terraces [San Francisco]. He attended both Stanford and Cal as an undergraduate. He also attended as a student and then taught as an instructor at the California School of Fine Arts, now the San Francisco Art Institute. He lived in Sausalito, San Francisco and Berkeley. He really is very much a product of both the landscape and the culture of the Bay Area.



"Cityscape I (Landscape I)", 1963. Oil on Canvas. San Francisco Museum of Art © 2013 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation. All rights reserved.

Ingleside Terraces today is perceived as a very beautiful, even luxurious, neighborhood. Interestingly, shortly before Diebenkorn’s father died, he returned to his home turf and somewhat enigmatically said that this neighborhood and the paintings he created dealing with Ingleside actually dealt with his feelings and emotions that resurfaced during this revisiting, as they often do when we go back to our childhood haunts. He said the neighborhood embodied certain values that he had since rejected. I think that, knowing enough about his history and biography, those values were also embodied by his father, a respectable businessman. He had turned down a medical fellowship, so he wanted his son, as is so often the case, to live out his desires and be a lawyer or doctor—a good, solid suitable upper middle-class profession.

Diebenkorn, of course, was enormously resistant. He was an artist at heart from childhood. He said he knew that was what he wanted to do, and he did, indeed, ultimately reject his father’s values. His grandmother, the one who took him to the Van Gogh exhibition at the Legion of Honor, was an interesting personality, who was way ahead of her time in terms of gender politics and her profession. She was actually a reviewer on the radio. She talked about books and art and literature. Diebenkorn often spoke very fondly of her as a great influence in his life as another path that might be followed.

It’s also interesting that the childhood drawings he was doing carried over into his later life as well.

He was typical in some respects in reading all the great childhood literature and he was especially taken with westerns and with romances—medieval knights and ladies. What he was most taken with, as an aspiring artist even as a young boy, were the illustrations. He spoke of N. C. Wyeth and Howard Pyle very fondly until the end of his days. I went back to those books and what I was taken with, thinking about how Diebenkorn might have perceived them, is how the landscape background behind the protagonists—the stage set, as it were—often furthers the story. So, when you have a storm tossed boat in the ocean with people escaping, the tonalities, atmospherics, colors, and, of course, the landscape itself, the roiling ocean, all mirror the dialogue and the narrative that’s being set forth in the novel.

Diebenkorn’s other great childhood influence was the Bayeux Tapestry. He spoke often about the influence of this great icon, this medieval embroidery of the Norman invasion in 1066. On the one hand, it’s very typical. Little boys love knights and swords and life and death battles. But he responded to it visually. It’s the kinetic aspect of it. The sequential narrative is over a hundred feet long. It’s all connected, yet there are discreet incidents and elements.

He also spoke very specifically, formally, about the tripartite division of the tapestry. There’s an upper band and a lower band that have secondary commentary, visual images, anecdotal narrative, genre scenes, but the main narrative courses through the central band. He was quite taken with this, and one element in many of the abstract Berkeley paintings is this tripartite division, which is often discussed in terms of landscape, which I think is partially true. They seem to have this band of sky, a band of water; be it the bay or ocean, and then a band of foreground land. But, I think the template for this tripartite division of the field of vision originated in the Bayeux Tapestry.

His father changed his mind about his son’s art when Diebenkorn left Stanford to join the Marines, and headed east to Camp Lejeune, and from there took trips up to Washington D. C. to receive his first real taste of modernism at the Phillips Collection.

Diebenkorn is quite amusing about this. He mentions that once he decided to enlist in the Marines his father stopped pressuring him to take pre-law and pre-medicine courses, and said, “That’s alright son, you can take all the art courses you want.” Diebenkorn said it was a great ploy for him to be able to study art and art history.

Diebenkorn had two very early formative experiences with art while a college student. One was at Stanford, where one of his art professors, David Mendelowitz, took him to see the Stein collection, which was right there in Palo Alto. I should say one of the Stein collections - Sarah Stein’s collection. In that collection were many beautiful paintings by early modern masters – Picasso, Matisse, and so forth. It’s his first encounter with significant paintings by Matisse. Until the end of his days Matisse and Cezanne were his two great mentors or exemplars in modern art, followed by Willem de Kooning, a more contemporary Abstract Expressionist artist.

The Phillips Collection is the other great influence for Diebenkorn. He speaks very fondly, of he and Phyllis, the young married couple, going to the Phillips during his leave from Marine training. They were rich in Matisse, Bonnard, Vuillard, and other early modern masters, who of course were largely representational. I would also point out that for him, Matisse, Bonnard, and Vuillard were great colorists, and Diebenkorn is widely renowned as one of the great colorists of the twentieth century.

These were his early formative influences, and I think Matisse, who like Picasso never fully crossed the line from representation into abstraction, also set an example in this regard – that you could push the image to the very edge—Matisse’s World War I paintings would be a perfect example—but both he and Picasso pulled back from that edge. Diebenkorn talks about how everything is abstracted from something. So, when you think about Diebenkorn’s abstract works, the concept of “abstracted from” is the more productive way to think about it.

Another influence of Diebenkorn while at Stanford was Edward Hopper, which shows up in those later lonely figures in a color field.

When you look at the very early works that Diebenkorn was doing while at Stanford, his

first mature artworks, they are deeply influenced and inflected by Hopper. On the one hand, it’s partly formal, because Hopper’s constructed compositions have very strong geometry. It’s often urban architecture—rooms, interiors, windows—views from interiors out into the exterior world, which is a favorite Diebenkorn motif. I think initially he picks up, as he does with Matisse, on the formal innovations of Edward Hopper, but then he picks up on Hopper’s psychology and the emotions.

He begins to absorb this idea, not only of the psychology, but of the interior life of the mind that the protagonists of Hopper’s paintings might have, as well as their relation to their environment. Also, how the environment, stage set, or context might mirror their emotional states through color, tone, and mood. “Early Sunday Morning,” perhaps the most iconic and famous Hopper painting, creates a mood even though there are no visible protagonists. Yet, you sense their presence with the window shades that rise or fall, the doorways out of which someone might come to greet the new day. These are deeply influential, as you say, for Diebenkorn’s mature representational works in which you often have a solitary figure in an interior in a melancholy pose, or a male/female couple like Hopper’s famous, “Office at Night,” where you feel this subtle tension. You can’t quite pinpoint what the narrative is, or should be, or could be, but you feel it’s palpable.

After the contact with the modernists at the Phillips Collection, Diebenkorn came back to California and entered the California School of Fine Arts, first as a student under David Park, and then the following year as an instructor there. This was a particularly interesting time at the school, this 1947-1948, early 1950s period, at what is now the San Francisco Art Institute. Clyfford Still was there. The director at the time was Douglas MacAgy, who was very important in bringing in people like Cyfford Still and Mark Rothko.

I think anyone who has spoken, as I have and you have, to artists and professors of that era; it’s quite extraordinary. Here we are sixty, in some cases almost seventy years on, yet for students and professors who were at the School of Fine Arts, it’s as if it was yesterday. When you talk to those artists about the politics, the polemics, the battles waged for abstraction versus representation or figuration, the friendships lost or betrayed, the firings and resignations from the school, it’s extraordinary. It’s a reminder how seriously these battles were taken.

We live in an age now in which anything goes in the art world, and it’s an international art world, a multicultural art world. We forget how in this Cold War context, which is not a coincidence, that art became a weapon in certain cases.

As you mentioned, both Clyfford Still and Mark Rothko were professors, sporadically. Mark Rothko was there for two summers. Still was there for a longer period of time. Interestingly, Diebenkorn did not study directly with either one of them, and I think this may have been partly by choice. They were towering figures, and Diebenkorn certainly respected and admired Rothko. Some of his early work showed the influence of Rothko. I think the landscape sensibility that people perceive in Rothko was certainly in Diebenkorn as well in this early period. And of course, Rothko—as a great colorist and an atmospheric artist—was very important to Diebenkorn. However, Diebenkorn also speaks critically of the “you’re either with me or against me” attitude adopted by Clyfford Still as a monastic missionary and zealot for abstraction. You were either outside or inside his circle of followers.

There is a wonderful anecdote about Clyfford Still. Everyone at the Art Institute knew that Diebenkorn was a rising star. When you talk to people of that era, it was absolutely clear that he was extraordinarily talented, hence the Legion of Honor exhibition when he was only a year out of his graduate studies.

Due, in part, to Douglas MacAgy’s [Director of the California School of Fine Arts/ SFAI] wife, Jermayne, who was a Curator at the Legion of Honor, and a very influential figure in her own right.

Absolutely. And Jermayne MacAgy was very far-sighted in terms of her innovations, programming, and exhibitions. But, Diebenkorn’s talent certainly warranted it. Interestingly, Clyfford Still also perceived the talent. So, here is the star of that generation, or that few years at the School of Fine Arts, and yet he’s not a Clyfford Still student.

Still notices Diebenkorn’s work and invites the young artist to go into his inner sanctum, the holy of all holies, Still’s studio, to look at his paintings. Which he does. Then, Diebenkorn reciprocates and invites Still to look at work in his Sausalito house and studio. Still comes. They walk around and look at the paintings. Diebenkorn basically says nothing. Still basically says nothing. At the very end, they come downstairs, where Phyllis Diebenkorn is making lunch, and there’s a painting in the living room and Still actually compliments the painting. Diebenkorn says something to the effect of, “well, it still has some problems I’d like to work out.” Clyfford Still picks up his coat, puts it on, and walks out the door. (laughs)

Still wasn’t looking for colleagues. He was looking for acolytes. Indeed, he was.

As your exhibition points out, place was very important to Diebenkorn, but before we get to the Berkeley years, we have to go through the Albuquerque and Urbana periods. Can you explain that?

Yes, Diebenkorn was a graduate student in Albuquerque, and this was the turning point in his career as an artist. First of all, he was a student at the School of Fine Arts, and in Albuquerque he was able to get away from the domineering influences of artists like Clyfford Still and the political battles that were being waged there.



“Seawall”, 1957. Oil on canvas. 20 x 26 in. (50.8 x 66 cm). Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, gift of Phyllis G. Diebenkorn, 1995.96 © 2013 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation. All rights reserved.

Albuquerque, at that point, was more of a backwater than an important cultural center like San Francisco or New York, and it gave him the freedom to flex and become Richard Diebenkorn—to become himself. Albuquerque was also very influential, because like the Bay Area, the landscape is so striking, unique and pervasive, with those open Western landscapes, the beautiful mesas, an incredible sense of color and light, Western sunsets, the golden hues of ochre in the sandstone cliffs. The natural environment in Albuquerque was hugely influential for Diebenkorn, but interestingly, he fused it with something else, which is animal imagery.

They lived in a little cottage on an actual working ranch, and he said we would open the door in the morning and there would be cattle and pigs and other livestock right outside the door. So, in some of the early Albuquerque period paintings you see him taking the landscape as backdrop, the landscape a stage setting, which he rendered in very two-dimensional terms, synonymous with the two dimensional canvas.

But, he also fuses that two-dimensional surface with the schematic and calligraphic outline silhouettes of livestock. There’s a well-known painting called “Disintegrating Pig,” where he overtly identifies animal subject matter. It’s distorted and morphed into some bloated shape or form that dominates almost the entire canvas. If you didn’t know the title right away, it might take you a moment to perceive the subject. It’s important because, away from the teachers and professors in San Francisco, who didn’t allow any backsliding into representation—you had to hew to the Abstract Expressionist’s path—Diebenkorn felt liberated.

I think this was his great insight, that he fuses biomorphic imagery—which is popular with Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning and other Abstract Expressionists—with landscape imagery, and this is absolutely essential to understanding the Berkeley period. Diebenkorn also very importantly said of the Albuquerque period, “Temperamentally, perhaps, I had always been a landscape painter but I was fighting the landscape feeling. For years I didn’t have the color

blue on my palette because it reminded me too much of the spatial qualities in conventional landscapes. But in Albuquerque I relaxed and began to think of natural forms in relation to my own feelings.” And these are also very important elements of the Berkeley paintings.

Am I correct in saying that during this Albuquerque period Diebenkorn went up in a plane and saw the landscape from above, and that had an effect on his work as well?

That’s absolutely true. He took his first airplane flight from Albuquerque to San Francisco in 1951. This was in a time period when civilian airplane travel was a relatively new phenomenon, and he was absolutely astounded by the visual images that he was able to see from the airplane. Most significantly, not only the broad expanses of the natural landscape, but also the manmade landscape—the irrigation canals that drew lines through the landscape, the reservoirs that had been constructed, and the dams, fields and ranches, fences, and so forth.

He spoke very eloquently about how both the natural and man-made landscapes were equally of interest to him. He also talked about the way in which the three-dimensional landscape appeared flattened from the air. As an Abstract Expressionist artist, who was trying to create two-dimensional pictorial fields, and to destroy, or at least subvert what we would consider traditional or conventional three-dimensional perspectival representation, it was a true eye-opener for him to have that bird’s-eye view.

After having graduated from Albuquerque, he received a professorship at Urbana, Illinois, and the colors began to change.

They did. The Albuquerque period is dominated, as anyone who has been to the Southwest might expect, by ochres, yellows, taupes—sand colors, desert colors. And also blue for the sky. The Urbana period is very different. First of all, he was unhappy there. He described his disappointment regarding the flat and uninteresting landscape. He recalled that in Alberquer-



“Berkeley #3”, 1953. Oil on canvas. 54 1/8 x 68 in. (137.5 x 172.7 cm). Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, bequest of Josephine Morris, 2003.25.3 © 2013 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation. All rights reserved.

que, the sky took the place of the ocean. It was a very poetic appreciation for the openness and vast scale of the southwest, but the Midwestern landscape of Urbana was different. He was not there as long, and it was not as pivotal a period for him.

However, the color and the palette changes and gets intensified; deeper cobalt blues, and black finds its way into his palette, a color that Matisse very famously used to great effect. There is another maturation process, but the works are not imbued and saturated with the local landscape. It’s more Diebenkorn responding to his own inner evolution and vision.

In fact, one of the best-known paintings from the Urbana period is a reaction against the Urbana landscape, titled “Beachtown.” It’s one of the very few paintings that Diebenkorn gave a descriptive title, as opposed to just a number or a place, such as, “Urbana #5,” which is its alternate title. He recalled that, “Here I was in the Midwest, and I was pretty unhappy there because of all this ground and hay and stuff around, and then this painting occurred, I don’t know, a suggestion of a street and buildings and perhaps an ocean on the other side of these things, kept coming, insisting. So, I thought well this is what I want to paint so I’m going to paint it. So, I did it. And then, I’ve always numbered pictures; I did this for some years afterwards, but this one I guess I identified because of the special feelings I had about it, and it was to me like a town near an ocean and just to remember it, I referred to it as ‘Beach Town’.” So, in a public lecture, he explicitly identified it as the anti-Urbana painting.

What’s interesting, is that this trope of a street that runs away from the viewer, up over a hill to the ocean and the horizon line and sky beyond, becomes one of Diebenkorn’s favorite motifs. He actually creates an abstract painting during the Berkeley period, “Berkeley #8,” which essentially is this composition in an abstracted form. You have the diagonal, receding road, and the blue house with a peaked roof that is now torqued and leaning. It’s only familiarity with the

first painting that enables you to perceive the same basic composition in the second canvas. But, of course, by then he’s back in Berkeley, and San Francisco, this environment in which “no backsliding to representational imagery” was allowed.

More importantly, “Berkeley #8” achieved a complete synthesis of representation with abstraction. Representation still lurks beneath the surface. I think it makes the painting more powerful. One of the great tropes of the abstract period verses the representational period that comes out in the exhibition is in the abstract works you often sense some element of figuration—it could be human figures, animals, still lifes or other imagery—lurking beneath the surface. It’s a secondary mode, but at any moment you feel that the dynamic could be inverted and the secondary mode could become the dominant one.

Conversely, in the representational period, you often have this very interesting organizing geometry that borders on the abstract. You look at one of his interior/exterior paintings, and you feel that the window or door suddenly becomes almost like an Ocean Park painting—very abstracted and geometric. So there, too, you have this dominant mode of figuration and then a secondary mode of abstraction. I think they play off each other in this incredible dialogue, and it’s that tension between them that makes the paintings even more powerful.

This is where the exhibition begins. Diebenkorn moves to Berkeley in 1953. The Berkeley paintings are often defined as a distinct period [1953-1956], since, during these years, the artist titled these abstracted works, “Berkeley,” followed by a number. There have been previous shows just on this series of paintings. But your exhibition extends the Berkeley period further, until Diebenkorn moves from Berkeley to Los Angeles in 1966.

Three decades ago, there was an exhibition in Berkeley of the abstract Berkeley paintings [Berkeley Art Museum, 1981]. However, to my knowledge, there’s never been an exhibition that has encompassed entire Berkeley period from 1953 to 1966, so this is the first major retrospective.

But yes, Diebenkorn moved to Berkeley in the fall of 1953. And the first question, and indeed it’s the first one I address in the essay [for the accompanying Yale Press catalogue] is: “are the abstract Berkeley paintings landscapes?” You have to. Part of the answer, and I actually wrote it this way in the catalogue essay, is “yes, but what kind of landscapes?” What do we mean by landscapes?

One of his best friends, the artist William Brice, said, “I don’t know of any artist who was more responsive to his physical environment than Dick. If he moves down the block, it changes everything. He absorbed the aura of a place.”

Diebenkorn also talked about this sensitivity to landscape. He said, “Very often if you go to the locale where an artist works you’ll suddenly really know that you’re in that person’s area. If you go to Arles, you feel the Van Gogh around you.” So that’s the first thing that should be said. The extraordinary beauty of the natural environment—be it color, the atmospheric, the fog and light, the water, and the changeable weather—is self-evident to anyone in the Bay Area. We all have that experience of looking at the Bay at sunrise and sunset, and the water may be silver or gold, deep blue or deep green. This tripartite division, the earth in the foreground underneath your feet, a band of the bay or the ocean in the distance and then sky above, that’s also a major element both in the landscape and in the paintings.

Diebenkorn did number the abstract works. Like a lot of Abstract Expressionists, he didn’t believe in descriptive titles. He thought that was too literal, that it would focus your attention in one direction at the expense of other interpretations. Mark Rothko numbered his paintings too. It should be noted that Diebenkorn had four studios in Berkeley, one of which he built in his own backyard—at his house on Hillcrest Road. None of them had a view of the Bay. Everything he painted was essentially drawn from within his own mind. He almost never painted from a motif in front of him, either in terms of landscape, or even figurative subjects. Even most of the representational paintings are abstract in the sense that they are derived from his imagination rather from observed motifs or models.

Very few of the paintings have sketches leading to the finished work.

(break in tape)

Where were we?

We were talking about the influence of Berkeley and whether or not the abstract works might be perceived as landscapes. This is one of most fundamental issues confronting any viewer when you look at the numbered Berkeley abstract paintings. What I have come to feel and believe is that, yes, they are absolutely imbued, inflected, and shaped to some degree by the natural environment. Diebenkorn himself acknowledged the importance of his local environment. Ocean Park is another famous example. People often liken those paintings to that environment, that neighborhood in Santa Monica with its architecture, the blue ocean and sky, the stark contrast of the stucco walls, and so on.

That being said, what I have come to believe is that for Diebenkorn, who never painted directly from a landscape motive, they are not to be taken as literal. It is not unlike Georgia O’Keefe. It’s not that their works are literal translations of anything, but how one might feel in the presence of such things. They are pictorial projections of Diebenkorn’s thoughts, emotions, and feelings about those subjects or objects. It takes it out of the realm of the literal into something much more metaphorical, and of course, away from the prosaic to the poetic. And also, not coincidentally, this leaves room for other viewers to maneuver in there and see and find their own paths, as well.

I think this is the key to these works, that they become fields for the projection of his thoughts and emotions, so that once he’s completed a painting, that painting truly embodies those emotions and thoughts. They are a part of Diebenkorn, in a sense, that is now projected out into the world.

The abstract paintings are connected. He didn’t envision the whole series at the outset, yet they are numbered sequentially. He often reworked them. There are also missing numbers, either because he destroyed them as having been unsatisfactory, or just as often, he reworked them so that number X became number Y in its reworked incarnation.

In one case, we have a black and white photo of “Berkeley #23” in its first incarnation, and we also have the final painting that still exists today. You would never—other than the fact that the canvases are the same dimensions—recognize that it’s the same painting. They are so far afield from each other, almost polar opposites. This, also, is a key to Diebenkorn in the abstract period, this idea of metamorphosis and process. He never had a preconceived idea, hence no motifs that he was copying.

What he wanted to do was to make marks on the canvas in the avant-garde, Abstract Expressionist mode, and through that process, through that physical, psychological, and emotional interaction with the canvas, arrive at an image. There’s a great quote by Kyle Morris, who was both an artist and a curator who included Diebenkorn’s works in exhibitions, in which he

wrote (more generally about this generation of artists), “this type of painting does not start with nature and arrive at paint, but on the contrary, starts with paint and arrives at nature (although it can be of an unexpected kind).” Which is a really interesting inversion of how people typically think about it. And, indeed, one senses those ideas and concepts at play when you stand before a Diebenkorn painting. Anyone who lives in the Bay Area immediately feels a deep kinship with the sensibility of those works.

All the while he was creating the Berkeley numbered abstract paintings, he was working with David Park and Elmer Bischoff in life drawing classes, producing a number of figurative drawings.

True. One of the interesting things is that this idea of a complete and absolute split between the abstract and the figurative paintings, as has been articulated and described, is a little too tight and day. Like all artists, he was complex. And indeed, while he’s painting the ostensibly abstract numbered Berkeley paintings, he’s also studying from the nude model with David Park, his mentor and teacher, and Elmer Bischoff, his friend and colleague, at these drawing sessions where they would chip in and hire a nude model—it was cheaper to do it with three people. He did say that in the abstract period, when he was creating these drawings, they didn’t resonate for him in the same way, because they’re not inherent and intrinsic to his own artistic interests at that point in time.

However, he also does three paintings during the supposedly abstract period that are figurative. One of those paintings is an “Untitled Nude” from 1954, of a nude woman with her right leg tucked under her, her left leg extended out straight in front of her, seen in profile. She also has very prominent breasts, again seen in profile. Her head is there, but she’s turned away. Diebenkorn often omits specific physiognomy, because it’s too literal.

What’s interesting is that there is a series of several black ink drawings that show essentially the same female nude in profile, but abstracted to the point where it almost becomes an abstract composition. Indeed, what I suggest in the catalogue essay is that our abstract Berkeley painting – “Berkeley #3” - is another version of this composition. That the dark oval head appears in all three works, as do the prominent breasts of this very voluptuous model. Again, calligraphically schematized and distilled. The outstretched leg becomes like a horizon line, thus conflating the figure with the landscape. None of this is literal. None of this could be perceived without the aid of the related ink studies and the related oil painting, but when you line them up together, you really sense and see, I think, that this is a possibility. It’s inherently subjective, but I think it’s visually convincing.

What this sequence of works does is give a very rare look into one aspect of Diebenkorn’s sensibility, which was more visible in the Albuquerque period, where you actually could discern pigs and cattle and other biomorphic images, but that it may have persisted into the Berkeley period, despite the prohibition against representation among the Abstract Expressionists. That in fact, he found a way to embody an abstracted landscape with figuration, and make both more powerful and more resonant.

While talking to Kathan Brown, who worked with Diebenkorn at Crown Point Press, she mentioned that he mentioned to her that he gave up the abstractions, because the compositions were being reduced to a horizon line, and that figuration introduced a figure/ground dynamic into the works, reintroducing a conflict he found interesting enough to pursue.

He also talked, in relation to the abstract works, about his own inclinations towards landscape. On the one hand he said in 1955, “I’m not a landscape painter (at this time, at any rate) or I would paint landscape directly.” This is when he’s doing the abstract works. On the other hand, two years later he said, “temperamentally, perhaps, I had always been a landscape painter.” (laughs) He also said that, “It was impossible to imagine doing a picture without it being a landscape; to try to make a painting space, a pure painting space, but always end up with a figure against a ground.” And so, he does have this struggle.

Diebenkorn talks about how every artist reflects their age and time period. And it’s true, but it’s also true that Diebenkorn struggled with his time period. Here he was, perhaps the most talented Abstract Expressionist in the Bay Area and he’s being held up as the exemplar and the star that Clyfford Still wants in his camp, and yet on the other hand, people accused him of being a traitor to the movement when he switched to representation.

He wanted to be Richard Diebenkorn. He didn’t want to be anybody else’s poster child, or to fight anyone else’s battles. Both sides wanted to enlist him for their movements, and he always resisted. This context fuels that tension I was talking about earlier, figuration beneath abstraction, and abstraction beneath figuration. He loved operating in that middle ground. Diebenkorn was always looking for the middle ground, because it fed his artistic vision by creating tension and stirring up these problems - visually, emotionally and aesthetically.

Out in the real world, he gets that push-back from people. “Why are you doing that? Why did you switch?” When he switched to representation, one collector actually called him up and yelled at him. “What have you done to the value of my paintings?” (shared laughter)

So, that’s all a roundabout way of saying that I think Diebenkorn finds this middle ground to be incredibly fertile. Whether you think of it as Berkeley ground or Bay Area ground, or just the ground of art or painting in general, it’s where he wants to be, because he loves the problems. He has this great quote, “I began to feel that what I was really up to in painting, what I enjoyed almost exclusively, was altering—changing what was before me—by way of subtracting or juxtaposition of superimposition of different ideas.” That’s what he loved. He loved the altering and reworking process.

Wayne Thiebaud talks very perceptively about Diebenkorn’s work and said, “There’s a systematic skepticism inherent in his paintings – they always seem complete, but never finished.” Diebenkorn always leaves remnants of the process, the rough brushwork that’s not too pretty or perfect, the erasures, the over-painting—it’s a living object. I think what he discovered is not only keeping those elements in play and in tension with each another, but also letting the painting be a living, breathing, organic thing that will continue to evolve if you don’t “finish” it and make it perfect.

Perhaps I’m skipping over too much here, but the period the exhibition examines begins to come to an end in 1965, when he goes to Moscow on a State Department sponsored visit, where he is reinvigorated by seeing Matisse at The Hermitage, and then the following year goes to Los Angeles to teach at UCLA. What do you see as the reasons for his departure from the Bay Area?
It’s interesting. I don’t know for certain. I’ve read every interview, but never heard a specific reason articulated other than the offer of the job, at a point in his life and career where the job offer was interesting to him.

At that point, by 1966, he’s been painting for eleven years in the representational style. I think that in any estimation, he mastered it, but, at the same time, he was initially criticized for being conventional or even retardataire for throwing in the towel and giving up on abstraction, which is absolutely nonsense. In fact, in retrospect, once you get away from the politics of the era, I think we see how incredibly innovative and accomplished these paintings are in balancing those two ostensibly polar opposite modes—putting them into play with each other and fomenting that tension that we were describing earlier.

That being said, once any artist has mastered a particular idiom, they are confronted with a choice. We can all name artists who have followed the same style to this very day for forty, fifty, or even sixty years, often to great personal, critical or commercial profit. Everyone is driven by their inner vision, and some people feel obliged to do that.

However, I also remember reading a letter to Joan Brown, a younger Bay Area figurative artist from her New York dealer, which stated something like, “I can sell every painting you make in your current style.” She wrote back and said, essentially, “I can’t. I’m done. I’ve pushed this and taken this as far as I can go.” Her paintings were ever more lush and impastoed, beautiful and accomplished, but she’d reached the end of the road for herself and for that vision. She had achieved that vision.

So, my own sense is that whatever the ostensible reason given for leaving, including a great job offer at UCLA, that Diebenkorn felt he had absorbed, analyzed, dissected, and comprehended everything that this Bay Area environment and context, including the cultural environment, had to offer. He spent most of his life here in the Bay Area, and he perhaps wanted or needed a change. Artists often feel, like writers, that a change in your context and surroundings and even the people around you, creates new artistic ferment and fertility.

And indeed, it led to the Ocean Park series, which became one of the highlights of his career.
It did. One of the really interesting things I learned, or discovered, working on this exhibition, pertains to the issue of Diebenkorn’s various periods. Everyone talks about Diebenkorn, not only in relation to the abstract period versus the representational periods, but also in relation to the Sausalito, Albuquerque, Urbana, Berkeley, and then Ocean Park periods. What’s interesting to me is the continuity of his personal vision. He once said, when he switched to representation, “I’ve simply taken somewhat different form to talk about the things I’ve always wanted to.”

So, in the theme explored in the “Urbana #5 (Beachtown),” painting and “Berkeley #8,” paintings, which we discussed earlier, I argue is carried through in, “Cityscape #1,” (1963) a painting in the collection of SFMOMA, which depicts a neighborhood with a road running up to the horizon line on the hill. It was never identified by him or anyone else as a specific street or site in San Francisco, although you feel like it might be out in the avenues somewhere near the Pacific Ocean. But, while it’s not a specific site, it does replicate the concept and the construct of the “Urbana #5, (Beachtown)” and “Berkeley #8” paintings. It also embodies this tension between the built urban environment and nature.

It’s very interesting to note that the Sausalito, Albuquerque, Urbana, Berkeley and Ocean Park paintings, whether we view them as landscapes or not, were all created in suburban, built environments. Standing in front of them, you realize that they also have architectonic elements and geometries that are very strong. Whether these elements come from the surrounding environment, or from Hopper, Cezanne, Matisse or de Kooning, is not clear. But again, I think that it’s that tension between nature and culture that is underlined.

We know that Diebenkorn originally included buildings on the right hand side of the street in, “Cityscape I,” and then painted over them to create open fields. So, it’s that classic California situation on the edge of settlement, the inherent tension between suburban sprawl and nature. Even in the streets and the grass, he creates these sharp, blade-like forms as well as this enigmatic empty street with no cars or people, not unlike Edward Hopper’s “Early Sunday Morning.” In addition, this narrow street is really only wide enough for one car, and then runs up into a street that resembles a vertical roadblock, so how could it actually function?

At any rate, what suddenly occurred to me was to go back and look at the Ocean Park works, and I found “Ocean Park #24” (1969). What I argue in the essay, is that this seemingly abstract painting incorporates the concept and construct of a street rising up the hill to the horizon, as in “Urbana #5 (Beachtown),” “Berkeley #8” and “Cityscape I.” What he’s achieved here, in the Ocean Park series, is the absolute two-dimensional flattening of forms that he experienced during the transformative airplane flight from Albuquerque to San Francisco.

During later flights, he actually took aerial photographs and kept them in his studio. He never copied any of them directly but it is easy to imagine how these images would have had new resonance during the Ocean Park period.

You organized the exhibition in conjunction with Dr. Steven Nash, who formerly was the Chief Curator here at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and is currently the Executive Director of the Palm Springs Art Museum. How did both of you delegate responsibilities for the exhibition?
The works were all selected together as a team. The third essayist is Emma Acker [Assistant Curator of American Art at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco], who wrote about the aerial perspective in Richard Diebenkorn’s work, which is an overarching theme and subject that crosses from abstraction into representation. But the way we divided the first half of the catalogue was that I wrote about the abstract period, and Steve Nash wrote about the representational period, which he has also done for the catalogue raisonné.

A great impetus and inspiration for this exhibition is that the artist’s family and the Richard Diebenkorn Foundation are finishing work on a grand catalogue raisonné, which will be a great contribution to the literature. We were fortunate, in that we had access to the catalogue raisonné computer database, which I was able to view at the Foundation’s offices in Berkeley. In this way, I viewed thousands of Diebenkorn works, which was how I learned about objects such as the drawing and small oil of the female nude that may relate to our, “Berkeley #3,” painting.

I also viewed drawings Diebenkorn created right before switching to representation, that parody Abstract Expressionist artists. One of them is this very stern, grim, rigid, and professorial figure, who is at an easel pointing in a lecturing sort of way. And on the canvas is a blood-red cross, suggesting the humorless and near-religious devotion of the Abstract Expressionists to their cause.

A second drawing, which is largely black, shows an Abstract Expressionist artist with paint smeared all over his clothes, and in a very dramatic splayed legs and outstretched arms posture, throwing paint onto a canvas. It captures the Abstract Expressionist ideal of physically throwing yourself into the work of art, which, in turn, is the remnant of this physical, emotional and psychological process. This is Diebenkorn very sarcastically and satirically savaging this kind of rigid thinking, in which there’s no middle ground for an artist to operate.

So, the works themselves are inherently fascinating, but having access to them through the catalogue raisonné was important. This is the great revelation of every catalogue raisonné, in which a scholar, art historian, curator, collector, or critic suddenly realizes, “I’ve never seen a drawing like that by him or her! I’ve never seen this painting before.” And, indeed, there are objects in this retrospective that come from the family and have never been exhibited before. So this was a great opportunity for us. The confluence of events pertaining to the catalogue raisonné have enabled us to celebrate, if not a native son, at least an adopted one, who is deeply rooted here both culturally and artistically, and to have the exhibition be the ultimate expression of his legacy.

I appreciate your taking the time to talk about the forthcoming show.



“Berkeley #44”, 1955. Oil on canvas, 59 x 64 in. (149.9 x 162.6 cm). Private collection © 2013 The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

“Richard Diebenkorn: The Berkeley Years, 1953-1966.”
Herbst Exhibition Galleries
De Young Museum, San Francisco
June 22 – September 29, 2013



"Interior with Doorway", 1962. Oil on canvas. 70 3/8 x 59 1/2 in. (178.8 x 151.1 cm). Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Henry D. Gilpin Fund, 1964.3
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"Untitled (Yellow Collage)", 1966. Cut-and-pasted paper, gouache, and ink on paper. 28 3/4 x 22 in. (73 x 55.9 cm). The Grant Family Collection
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TOM MARIONI

MOCA (MUSEUM OF CONCEPTUAL ART) 1970-1984

Interview by Andrew McClintock

All images courtesy of Tom Marioni

Let’s start with the Richmond Art Center. How you were fired from there, and how that led you to be invested in starting your own space?

First, I want to say that I don’t expect anybody to read this, but someday in the future, some historian who’s doing work on curatorial practice might read it at that point. I don’t have faith in people reading so much these days, but maybe a little background before I get to the Richmond Art Center.

I worked in the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, when I was a student in the 1950s as an assistant to the curator and preparator. Then I moved to San Francisco in ’59 and I used to go to a bar down on Polk Street in my neighborhood. I talked the bartender into opening an art space that I named The Beep Gallery in 1965. I had the first show there called, “Op at the Beep.”

Herb Caen said it was the campiest site in town, Op at the Beep, you know? Anyway, it was 1965. So in ’68 I got the job as curator at the Richmond Art Center.

Was that an Op Art show?

It was Op Art paintings. So in ’68 I went to work at the Richmond Art Center, and I did maybe the first—now when I say I did the first—I’m not going to say I did the first anything, but I’m going to say “maybe the first,” maybe the first conceptual art show in the Bay Area. Because sometimes I get called out making a claim like that.

Some of the interesting shows I did there were “3D prints,” the first show I did, and then “Invisible Painting and Sculpture” which has become a very important show now, that was 1969 with Wally Hedrick and Larry Bell and a lot of interesting artists. It was invisible art based on an idea of the all black paintings of Wally Hedrick, or a glass box by Larry Bell that you could look through. They were defining space pieces.

You say one of the first conceptual art shows, so it seems like the first show you did at the Beep space was Op Art. So it was painting?

That was my painting show I was doing in 1965.

Right, so what was the transition? You just woke up one day and decided you should do something that deals with ‘invisiblerness’ or something that’s not painting?

About the time that I went to work at Richmond, the early part of ’68, my thinking changed about being an artist and became about a bigger scale. That was the beginning of the conceptual art movement, that’s when I became a born again conceptual artist and left all that traditional art behind me. So my thinking changed and at Richmond I started doing these kinds of shows and then doing my own personal art, too. Like “One Second Sculpture,” an early piece of mine that is like an early performance piece. So then at Richmond I did several shows like “Invisible Painting and Sculpture,” “Return of Abstract Expressionism,” which was a process art show with process art pieces, that had Dennis Oppenheim and Ian Baxter, who worked in New York and Canada. They were early conceptual artists at that time, and Terry Fox and Paul Kos from around here. That was a successful show.

In process painting you mean more about the material—

Process art, not painting. Yeah, like scatter pieces, things where the process was the point. Mel Henderson had a stack of cordwood stacked up outside in the garden as a sculpture. But it was really a functional piece of wood, it was actually sold to somebody for the price of a cord of wood that they could take home and use by burning it. I introduced my alter ego artist Allan Fish with “Birds in Space,” which was crumpled pieces of paper on the floor. That was executed by me, the curator, from instructions sent in.

Then after that was Paul Kos’ first show and Terry Fox, I discovered those two artists, then there was the sculpture annual, and that was where jurors were invited to jury the shows. Artists brought in their work, paid a five dollar entrance fee, and there was first, second and third prize. I hired Larry Bell from Los Angeles to be a juror for that show, and he selected only three works from all those submitted. That was Paul Kos’ “Money Exchange” piece, a handmade check, Terry Fox’s piece, that you had to go to his studio to see, and Jim McCreedy, who was a lawyer friend of mine who I used to smoke dope with. I suggested to him that he enter a sculpture in the show, and I recommended that it should be a photograph of St. Mary’s Church burning. So those were the three pieces that Larry Bell chose.

That was one of the first examples of an invisible work of mine. The Jim McCreedy piece was under my direction. That show was a big scandal because they assumed that I was responsible for picking those works because I was already known in the conceptual art scene, but Larry Bell was a sculptor from the 60s and he picked the works.

Then there were the Acid Painters of San Francisco, and that was all psychedelic art at the time, like mandalas and rock and roll posters.

Like Stanley Mouse or Mosconi?

Yes like that, the Fillmore Auditorum posters, that kind of stuff, and paintings too that were psychedelic. Then I did “Color as Subject Matter in Sculpture,” and then the last show I did was called “California Girls,” and that’s the one I got fired for.

Do you want to talk about the performance that got you fired?

Judy Chicago, one of the artists in the show, sent her student up there and she did a performance at the opening. It was her crawling on her hands and knees with a milking machine strapped to her and it was dripping cow’s blood on a long strip of paper. And then I got fired the next day for that. But they were looking to fire me anyway, because they didn’t like my programming. They thought they should have more balanced programming. But I actually did lots of shows of more conventional stuff: ceramic art shows, photography shows, painting shows, and I had a show by three women Lynn Hirschman, Nancy Genn and Freda Paris. I might have discovered Hirschman in that show.

So then in March of 1970 you started the Museum of Conceptual Art and that was on—

86 Third Street, and then I moved two years later across the street to 75 Third Street, because I got evicted due to redevelopment in this area [SOMA].

You define conceptual art as idea-oriented situations not directed at the production of aesthetic objects.

That’s how I defined it in 1970 when I opened with MOCA.

Do you still?

No, now I define conceptual art as art that’s not defined by the medium, so an artist starts with an idea and realizes that idea in whatever media is appropriate or best for the idea, so in other words it’s idea art. And if it’s not an original idea then it’s not conceptual art. It’s neo-conceptual, maybe.

Which is something I want to get into later. How do you define aspects of humor or the importance of humor in conceptual art?

It’s always been in my art, but it’s considered to be California conceptual art.

More humor based.

For instance, Joseph Kosuth said that John Baldessari’s art wasn’t conceptual art, it was a cartoon of conceptual art. And New York, they dismiss California as being—

I define conceptual art as art that’s not defined by the medium, so an artist starts with an idea and realizes that idea in whatever media is appropriate or best for the idea, so in other words it’s idea art. And if it’s not an original idea then it’s not conceptual art.



Breens bar and Cafe, ground floor of MOCA, 75 3rd. street, 1973.



Vito Acconci, installation, MOCA, 1975.

Not serious enough?

Not serious, yeah, and call it juvenile humor, but that was even before conceptual art, for instance, when they criticized Robert Arneson. They called that juvenile humor, and Wiley too. But generally, California has always been put down. For instance, Mel Bochner said that Larry Bell was just with Sol LeWitt with color: A lot of times people say California art is just New York art with color. We have a lot of color here. So that's a put down, because there was no color in conceptual art because it was all about language and theory and systems. If it was about color, it was painting. And I always say that conceptual artists are free to work in any medium except paint, because painting is—you can't have your cake and eat it too, you know? You can't be like a traditional artist and a conceptual artist at the same time, I think. It's a contradiction.

So one of the first shows you did at MOCA was “Sound Sculpture As” which was, would you say, in theory the first sound art show?

I always say that MOCA was probably the first alternative art space in the United States. My sound art show was probably the first sound art show anywhere, and the body works show was probably the first video art show in California.

That one was curated by Willoughby Sharp?

Yeah, and we sort of worked together on that. It was called “in coordination with Willoughby Sharp,” and the sound art show was nine artists, nine sculptors I should say, and most of the shows I did at MOCA were sculpture-oriented, because I considered MOCA to be a sculpture action museum. So basically a performance art space in its first five years, but it was performances by sculptors. Sculpture-based, that's the term people use today, meaning it's about manipulation of materials, and not about theatre. So that's what my space was about. So the sound sculpture was about nine sculptors who made actions that produced sounds.

Then, starting with the invisible show, there were two blank pages where “Marioni” would be alphabetically. It was actually my work in the catalog and that was never explained or anything, and the “The Return of Abstract Expressionism” was when I first made work in that show under the name Allan Fish, a process piece that was in that show. And in the sound sculpture show the Allan Fish piss piece was performed by the curator, me.

Because Allan was out of town...

The same way a music piece would be performed by someone else, because sound was close to music.

So other artists that were in that show, Terry Fox, Paul Kos, Mel Henderson, Jim Melchert and Paul's piece was the “Sound of Ice Melting.” What did Terry Fox do?

Terry had some instruments that he manipulated, dragging a shovel across the floor, hitting a bowl with water on the floor and then tilting it so that it made kind of electronic or undulating sound.

Can we talk about Terry a little bit? I don't know if you can give a brief explanation or anecdote of his—

When I did The Return of Abstract Expressionism at the Richmond Art Center, I was looking around for artists doing this new kind of art, and that was '69. I found Terry Fox and he was in that show with a piece of plastic blowing from an electric fan inside and another one blowing with the wind outside in the sculpture court. That was his work in the show. Later he had a show called “Levitation” at the Richmond Art Center. I was forced to shut it down because the head of Parks and Rec got the fire department to come in and say the paper on the floor was a fire hazard. He had the health department come in and declare it a health hazard as well, because there was dirt on the floor. It was an earth art piece as well, it combined performance art with earth art.

Fox laid in an island of dirt and tried to levitate. Then after three days, I think, I was forced to close the show. So the show only existed that short time. Then Terry Fox--and a lot of these same artists, Paul Kos, etc. were in many shows that happened at MOCA over the years because it became more like a company of performers; like a theatre company, but it didn't have anything to do with theater. The difference between performance art and theatre is that in performance art, which I always referred to as actions, it comes from action painting, from Jackson Pollock, who is considered to be the originator of painting as a result of a performance. So in performance art or in sculpture actions, I call it, the action is directed at the manipulation of the material by the sculptor and in this case is witnessed by an audience. In theatre, the performer is usually not the creator. He's given lines and it's about storytelling. And being somebody else wearing a costume, and about the past, because it's a story, and it's about the manipulation of the audience's emotions, rather than witnessing the manipulation of the material. That's the difference, that's what makes it sculpture action, because it's about manipulating material, rather than emotions. So it's more intellectual than emotional.

When did Terry Fox pass away?

About four years ago. He was here until 1968 and we were friends, we shared a studio in the early days, and then he moved to New York for a year and then to Europe and lived in Naples and then in Florence, and in Belgium, and then ended up in Cologne, Germany with a German wife the last ten years of his life. So he dropped out, in other words, from the U.S. Similar attitude to how some black jazz musicians left and moved to Europe in the '50s, because they found an audience and there wasn't so much prejudice.

And there still is a rich jazz scene out there, in Europe. So let's talk a little bit

about how Avalanche Magazine out of New York was starting to—in the first issue did they do something on MOCA? You were in there a lot.

In the first issue they gave me a free ad, and it was a performance by the transvestite group, I forget what they were called now, shoot. Anyway, they did a performance in drag, and there was a picture of that in the first issue...The Cockettes! Have you ever heard of them? They were in the early '70s and they were a group of transvestites that performed.

I haven't, no. So when did you meet Willoughby Sharp the publisher? Because he did that show at the Berkeley Art Museum, the “Air Art Show,” you met him there, and then—was that before he started Avalanche?

That was in '68, I think, and then he did the Air Art Show at Berkeley, and then he was out here looking around for material for the first Avalanche magazine. I met him through Dennis Oppenheim, then I introduced him to Terry Fox and other people here.

So did he and Liza Béar not have that NYC prejudice against California conceptual art?

Actually I never met Liza Béar because Willoughby always came out here alone, and she was in New York, so I never met her until last year I think. But it was mostly his doings, you know, he did all the interviews and he's the Editor in Chief and stuff like that. And then the second issue of Avalanche, there was another ad in there for the body work show, the video show, and it was a picture of Breen's [Bar] and the videos were shown on the TV in Breen's.

That was Bruce Nauman, Oppenheim, Vito Acconci, Wegman, Fox etc. And that was the first video show, supposedly, in California?

I'm saying, maybe the first video show.

And one of the first of that kind in the country.

The first body work show in the country, yeah.

And Vito was burning—

Burning the hair off his chest and nipples.

Do you remember what Nauman did?

He was walking in an exaggerated manner in the studio.

So maybe I could bring up a couple names and we can go through about them, unless you want to keep going through some of the shows here.

Lets keeping going through the shows that happened at MOCA. In 1970, “Films by Sculptors,” was the very first event at MOCA, we showed films in the space. Then “Sound Sculpture As,” which we talked about before. “Body Works,” the video show, and then in '71 “Six Comedy Sonatas” at MOCA; it was four artists, and that included Bonnie Shirk, Howad Fried. Then probably Chris Burden's first performance outside school called “Secret Hippy” was 1971 at MOCA. Robert Irwin told Chris Burden to come up to meet me. I used to go down to LA in the early days when I was at Richmond, and I met Barbara Smith and Chris Burden through Larry Bell and Irwin when they were both students at Irvine. Then I did “MOCA FM” which was twenty five, one minute audio works on KPFA radio, and that was designed for radio.

The exhibit was held at Breen's-

It was broadcast and we had the reception and the presentation at Breen's, it was on the radio so it was played. Those were all one minute works.

Later I'm going to ask you some questions about performances in public spaces like Breen's, and the birth of relational aesthetics...

Yeah, I had done my “The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art” in 1970 at the Oakland Museum. I didn't start doing it as a regular thing until '73 at MOCA. I'm going to get to that. So then in '72 I had the Dennis Oppenheim show called “Violations.” It was a photo project of stolen hubcaps on a hillside, with San Quentin in the background. “Notes and Scores for Sounds,” I was starting to do shows outside of the MOCA space and this was in '72 when I lost eighty six Third Street. “Notes and Scores for Sounds” was at Mills College. That was another sound art show, and I was known as a sound artist and performance artist in the '70s and so I did sound shows. Then “The San Francisco Performance” was a trip down to Newport Harbor Art Museum, which is now the Orange County Museum, and that was Howard Fried, Terry Fox, Mel Henderson, Bonnie Shirk and Sam's Café, a Berkeley group.

You gave me a nice catalog that went along with that.

A newspaper catalog and George Bowling videotaped it, and Larry Fox, Terry Fox's brother, photographed it, and that was included in the show, the documentation of the process, you know. That was '72.

I lived out in Marin County at that time and I did the “Bay Area Roach Clip” show at the San Geronimo Art Center, a little art center in the valley. A roach clip show, it was like a - it was also like a Montessori kind of school, there was a school bus parked outside at the opening, everybody was inside the school bus, smoking joints. And inside was the opening with all the roach clips on display.

People are so uptight these days.

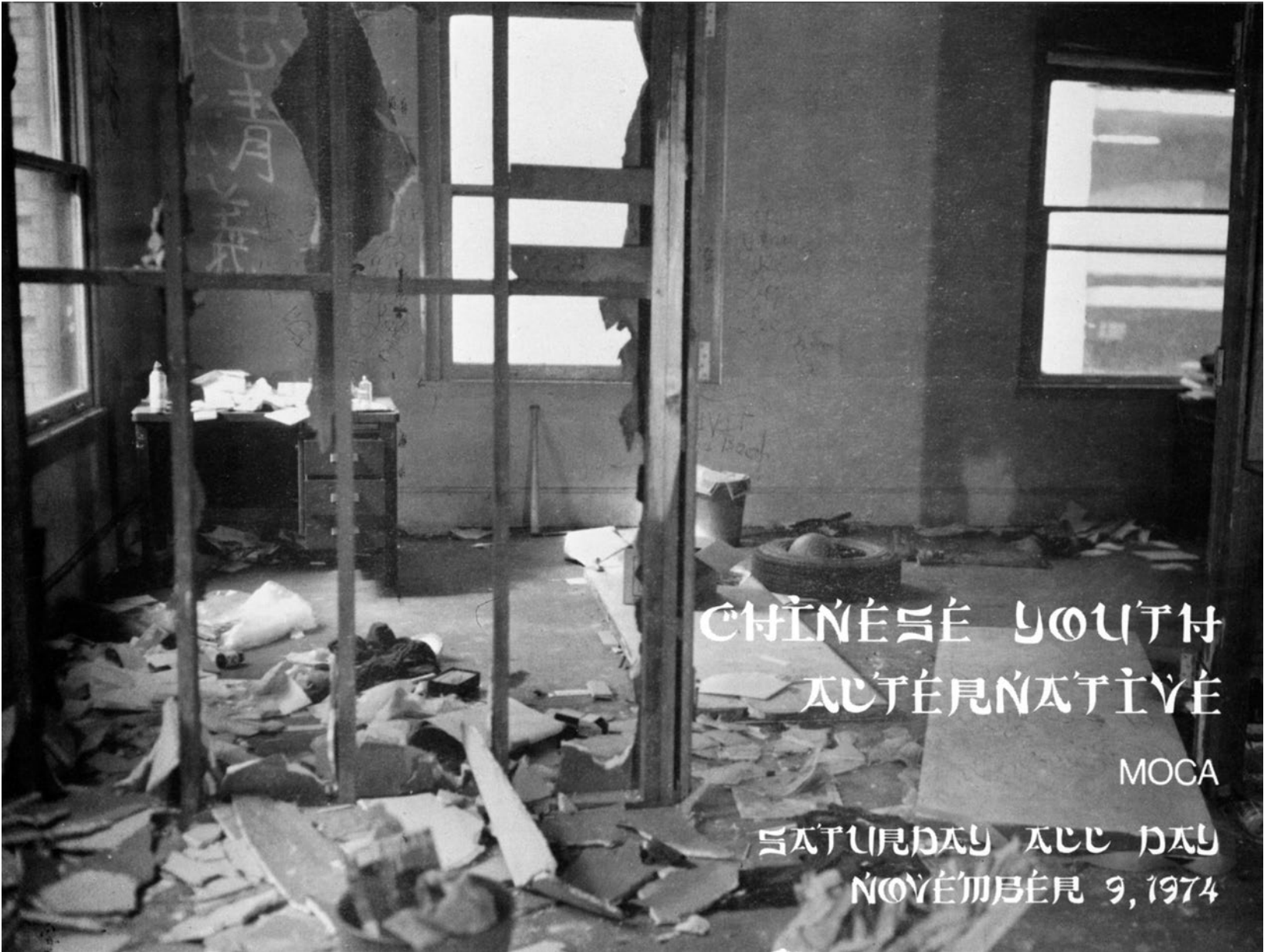
Those were different times, those were hippy days. Okay, then '73 I started having free beer every Wednesday at MOCA and showed artist videotapes. And I showed two hours of a twelve hour lecture by Joseph Beuys, which I think might have been the first time Joseph Beuys was seen in the country.



Invisible Painting and Sculpture, Richmond Art Center, 1969, George Neubert, Wally Hedrick.



Paul Cotton 1973, MOCA performance.



Chinese Youth Alternative, announcement for installation, 1974.

Because he didn't come in person until later?

Yeah, maybe a year later or two years later. Because I had seen the lecture at Edinburgh, and my video curator at the time taped two hours of it. Then I did Chris Burden, Howard Fried, and Paul Cotton, a three-man show, and they all did performances. Chris Burden did "Fire Roll," he put out a fire with his body on the floor. Howard Freid built a whole separate room, and it was a very complex performance, it would take too long to explain now, but had four monitors, four cameras recording from four different angles.

Was it a live feed?

Yes, and he was editing upstairs, it was very complicated, like all his work. And Paul Cotton did one of these pieces where he was dressed like a bunny, exposing himself, anyway, so it was three very interesting, strong pieces, and Harald Szeemann, who happened to be in town, came to that performance with Jim Melchert. I showed the Joseph Beuys video from Edinburgh. Then there were four artist composers who did music performances, and then there was the "All-night Sculptures," and that was probably the most interesting show that happened at MOCA. That was seven or eight artists who did things that were designed for nighttime viewing, from sunset to sunrise the next spring.

The museum was opened up the whole night?

From sunset to sunrise the next morning and people came throughout the night, and some artists made site-specific pieces, some artists did performances that lasted all night.

Can we talk about Barbara Smith's piece?

That was a famous piece. Barbara Smith was in the lady's room of what had formally been a print shop from the 1920's, until I moved in at the end of 1972. So I left the space the way I found it, I kept it as kind of a relic of the age. Breen's was on the first floor and the second and third floor was MOCA, so 10,000 square feet altogether.

And seven stories of parking next door.

Yeah, and a lounge and a restaurant downstairs, so it sounded like it was the Museum of Modern Art. Alfred Frankenstein wrote about it, that it was all a scam or something, "you pay your money to become a member and you get absolutely nothing for it," he said. He really didn't like me. Okay, so getting to Barbara Smith, she was in the lady's restroom and she did a piece—she had a tape recorder loop playing "feed me, feed me" over and over again, and she was naked in there on a mattress, and there were flowers and incense, and there was food and fruit and wine, so people went in one at a time, there was a line, and people interacted with her, including having sex with her, you know? Later the feminists were mad at her and she said it was just to demonstrate the relationship of men to women.

It was about the female experience?

But it was designed for the men or the people to interact with her, or use her, even, so outside this room was just a single light bulb hanging, it was like a street corner. And two years after that, Marina Abramovic did the same thing in Amsterdam.

Did she take credit for it?

Well, actually Marina Abramovic is a great artist, but several of her pieces, like a lot of artists, were influenced by other earlier art. So there's John Woodall, Terry Fox, Steven Loub, Frank Youmans, Barbara Smith, Joel Glassman, Mel Henderson, Paul Kos and Bonnie Shirk. They all did interesting pieces. Bonnie Shirk is on the rooftop and Terry Fox is in the skylight and John Woodall drawing on the floor, Paul Kos' first display of "Mar-mar-march, march" through the room while a recording of a typewriter is typing, with wooden slats on the floor forcing you to march into the room. Mel Henderson built a room that reflected search lights from outside on the street, and Frank Youmans was the plaster mold maker that I hired.

That was your piece?

Yeah, he did a casting of a woman's torso. It took all night to make the mold, the front and back in plaster. So the placed turned out to be like a traditional sculptor's studio.

Because there was plaster all over.

And work benches and stuff like that.

And the Oakland museum bought that later?

They bought that installation from me, it was really my work, and another example of my invisible art. Okay, then Dan Graham came by and we had one of his film installations, and then there was a benefit buffet and Diane Fuller provided all the food. Francis Ford Coppola came to that and he became a supporter of me in those days and then Linda Montano approached with the idea of being handcuffed to me for three days, so that was like a marathon dance piece in a way.

You did everything together.

Slept together, went out together. She was married at the time too, but we never had sex. So that was that piece, and then Dennis Oppenheim did an installation piece in that year, '73. And then in '74, "Actions by Sculptors for the Home Audience" was broadcast on KQED TV. I approached KQED because at that time they were starting to be socially aware of minority groups and stuff, so they would normally have shows where they would invite different



All Night Sculptures, 1973, Frank Youmans.

minority groups to come in and basically complain on TV about their plight in life. I went to KQED and said I represent a minority group, conceptual artists, and they'd never heard of that, so I said, all right, I guess you better give me the air time. They gave me a half hour of air time and the producer went to the studio and Howard Fried and Terry Fox and Linda Montana and my jazz group, the MOCA Ensemble performed.

What did you play?

Percussion.

Besides the live music on the KQED show, what were the performances?

I can't remember. Anyways, it was broadcast.

That's the most important thing!

So there again is the word Sculptor in that title. "Sound Sculpture As," "All Night Sculptures," "Actions by Sculptures for the Home Audience" on TV, and that's my influence from Joseph Beuys, his idea of social sculpture, which is a term he invented, and so when I did my One Second Sculpture that was influenced by Beuys' use of the idea of making sculpture the basis of performance.

You mean sculpture as not only—as like a relative performance as well as the actual, physical action of making sculpture, interacting with the sculpture?

No, Beuys is the inventor of the idea of the sculpture action because he did a piece in '65 called "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare," and that's a famous piece, but that was the beginning of this kind of thinking. The idea of doing a performance that was about sculpture. Sculpture-based. 1973 was the year I formed the MOCA Ensemble and we did concerts in Berkeley, SFMOMA and Edinburg Festival. Then I did the "Chinese Youth Alternative" show. So upstairs from my space was—around the beginning of '74 the space upstairs was technically not my space but I had access to it, I had a stairway that went up there and I used both floors. The redevelopment agency had given me the space free because the rent was frozen, so I had it free for twelve years, the Museum of Conceptual Art. They had several buildings that they were always tearing down and redeveloping, so they gave the top floor to this Chinese group and it was basically a gang of Hong Kong born from Chinatown, and they were always fighting the American born Chinese. So they were like these two gangs, and they had the floor above, and they were there less than a year. When they were evicted they completely trashed the place. They broke out walls, they put graffiti everywhere, there was some furniture that they trashed. I made an announcement for them, there was another

example of an invisible work of mine, it was really my piece, it was like a found installation, so I presented it as an installation.

You said before, making art out of misfortune as well, does this kind of relate to that?

Yeah, that was sort of the beginning of my thinking like that, you know. In '75 I put a plaque on my front door that said, "Breaking and Entering," with the date.

Because you always kept getting broken into?

The space got broken into several times, so I was documenting it with a plaque that recorded the event, and that's when I said make art out of misfortune. So I had two plaques on the door that year, and both of them were stolen off the door!

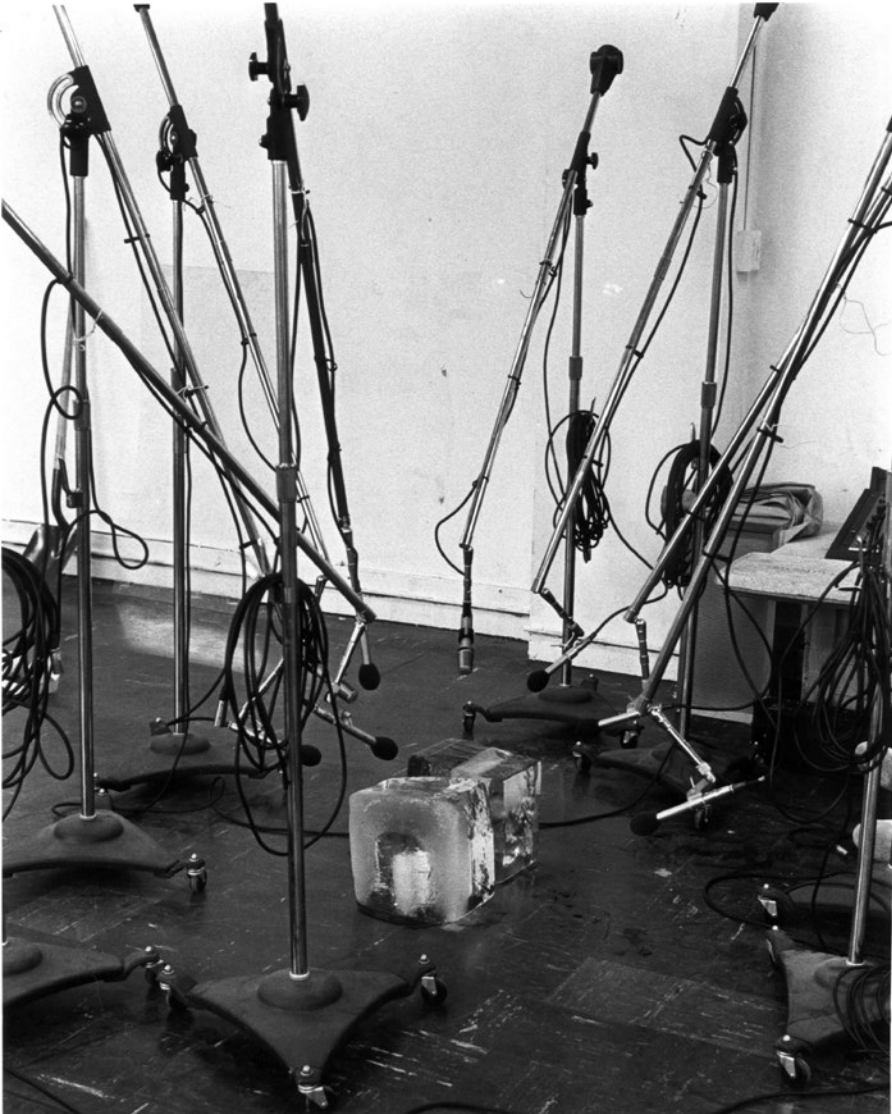
You put a private eye neon—

I had an electric sign that said "Private Investigation," and some people in the neighborhood thought I was a real private eye. That was fun for me because my whole office, the period of the building and everything was all Sam Spade, it was very Dashiell Hammett.

Then in 1975 I did "Second Generation." That was artists I invited who had been students of the artists that were first showing five years earlier. Jim Pomeroy was a student of Jim Melchert, he was one of the artists. Darrel Sapien was a student of Howard Fried's, and there was Richard Alpert, so that's when Darrel Sapien did a piece against the back wall, he painted part of it white and did his performance there. Afterwards, I felt that the space had been defaced, because I was trying to keep it kind of in a pristine, in its old funky state, so it was as if he came and painted a white section in a funky space rather than the other way around. Afterwards, I wanted to get rid of [the white] so I hired David Ireland to restore it and it became another piece in '76, called, "The Restoration of the Back Wall, Ceiling, and Floor of the Main Gallery of the Museum of Conceptual Art by David Ireland." He spent a month doing it, I documented it with slides and video, and then at the opening I showed the video in Breen's downstairs. He worked from photographs of the space before.

So he was scraping the old paint and then remixing it?

There had been shapes painted around equipment on the back wall and Sapien painted a big white section over that, so he had to repaint it to look like it was before, to restore it. Then the same with the floor: he had to scrape white paint off and retain it with ink because it had been a printing company. A lot of years and years of ink stains. When he was finished



Paul Kos, Sound of Ice Melting, Sound Sculpture As show, MOCA, 1970.

restoring this, it became invisible art work, so people who came in who hadn't been there for two years didn't know what the art was because it looked like it did before, before it was it was defaced.

Did you show a “before” photograph of what it looked like in the exhibition?
Yes. There was the video, and then of course, I documented the whole process from beginning to end. So it was like, because he was working from photographs, it becomes a photorealist painting. Because working from a photograph, you can copy a photograph.

That was one of the first painting shows at MOCA.

It was the only painting show ever at MOCA. And then that led to David Ireland restoring his house as an art work, because he was basically a painter and printmaker up to that point.

And that kind of switched him into—
He became more of a conceptual artist.

Then you and him developed a strong friendship.

Oh sure, we became friends and that's an example of an artist that I influenced who surpassed me in reputation because he became the most beloved artist in San Francisco, and then he died a couple years ago. Yeah, we were good friends. And then I had Vito Acconci who did an installation and performance, and that was definitely the first time Vito did anything in California. It was his last performance that he ever did. 1975.

Which piece was that?

I can't remember the name of it, but he basically put all the furniture on the ceiling upside down and talked about his experiences on a recording that played in the gallery while he watched from the office through a window. His opinions or his ideas about science fiction and California, what it was about, coming to California.

That's interesting because he then started doing more architecture.

It was like that, by putting furniture on the ceiling, it was the beginning of that thing. It was his last performance and the beginning of his kind of architectural direction. That was in '76, and then also in '76, Diane Blell who moved to New York later did “Odalisque.” She bought a billboard in North Beach and it was her reclining Odalisque, herself nude, total nudity wasn't allowed in North Beach, but at that time toplessness was okay. She got around it by making it art.

And the city didn't take it down?

No, it was right next to Enrico's on the wall.



Barbara Smith, All Night Sculptures, 1973.

Were there strip clubs over there at that point too?

Oh yeah. Okay, and then, “A Tight Thirteen Minutes” video works, that was shown in Breen's. Like the radio show I did with one minute pieces, I had artists do one minute videos and put them all together and showed it in Breen's. That was the usual suspects, and Diane Blell was in that too. Most of the women that were doing performance art in the Bay Area did stuff at MOCA, and some people accused me of not showing enough women. But I think all the women that were doing sculpture based performance art at that time did something at MOCA.

There were just not that many female conceptual artists at that time.

Right. So in 1978, Robert Barry was out here and he did a sound piece and that was recorded words played every 30 seconds. It was broadcast upstairs in the gallery and downstairs in the bar so people went upstairs and downstairs where the reception was going on. Their conversation was always interrupted by one of his words because he's a language artist. It was called “Sound Piece.” And then Lowell Darling ran for governor that year and MOCA was his San Francisco headquarters, and that's where he was interviewed for national TV and also when the election returns were broadcast on TV, we had the big reception in the bar at Breen's.

He got a lot of votes?

60,000 votes in the primary against Jerry Brown. So in 1979 the SF Museum of Modern Art invited several alternative art spaces to have shows in there because that was their time of social awareness.

You mean compared to now, how they cater to the private collections of their donors.

Yeah, the beginning of political correctness and for them, like that, so they invited me and they invited La Mamelle and Lynn Hirschman's “Floating Museum” and one other space. They had a curator just for that, for minority artists and for social stuff, you know, but all the other work in this show was just documentation. They would put up photographs of the things they did. But in my case I got two galleries, one gallery had photographs in it, and the other gallery was free beer for the whole month, and I got the Anchor Steam beer company owner Fritz Maytag to donate the beer for the whole month, 2,500 bottles of beer. So there were shelves for the bottles, refrigerator, table and chairs, and yellow light in a gallery painted grey. It had the feeling of a church or café combination. So that was open there for a whole month in 1979, and then there was “a situation” by Masashi Matsumoto, and people went in a backroom and did a line of coke. That was the experience, and then there was a big buffet table full of food which was the reception, that was the whole show, it was a performance.



Lowell Darling, 1976 running for governor in the saloon of MOCA, Greens Bar, first floor of MOCA.

Then 1980 was the last show at MOCA and it was Tony Labat and Jose Maria Bustos who moved to Chicago since then, and it was installation performance.

What did Tony do?

He had the top floor and it was the destroyed space from the Chinese youth alternative.

It was still destroyed?

It was still like that, and he put a big black curtain between two columns and it was already painted purple, and then he had a generator to run electric lights because there was no electricity up there anymore. And the electric lights were red bulbs, it felt the way I imagine Havana to be. And so the generator created fumes, it was toxic too, so the whole thing seemed dangerous, you know, it was just this installation. And the generator going and the red lights; it was an installation piece. He also had a live choir group singing who were drowned out by the generator.

So that was the last show in the actual space, but then now starts another era outside the space I think, because I wasn't using the space after that, and it was sort of like the end of an era. It was like art for the '70s, kind of. Even though I stayed in the building until 1984. But I didn't do anymore shows in the actual building.

You were over it?

I didn't have any ideas. We were already getting into Mark Pauline and Tony Labat's generation of a different way of thinking.

You said an interesting point in your book, about when the building was torn down in 1984, the question of the relics and the residue, you weren't able to—the collection kind of got destroyed with the building, because without context these things were not art.
Several things were lost.

Like Vito's chairs, David Ireland's piece, the skylight piece.

All those came down with the building and there's no way to remove them. Actually, Howard Fried brought his class to do a performance for me. The class assignment was to do a performance for one person, for me. And so that was the class with Tony Labat and Karen Finley.

It was one of the first new genre classes at the Institute.

Yeah, so Tony Labat had cut off a long fingernail and nailed it into the floor and so when the building was being torn down he asked me if he could take it out, so he cut a section out of the floor with that piece.

I wonder if he still has it.

He does; I think it showed up in one of his shows. But then there was a collection of material, mostly documentation, but a few other things.

Do you still have some of these relics around?

Around 1995 the Berkeley Art Museum bought the archives of MOCA. So you have videotapes, files of books, records, audio tapes, all that stuff.

Has anyone done a show?

Once in awhile they take a piece out. Fred Wilson selects stuff from museum collections and makes exhibitions out of them. So every once in a while they use something from my archives.

But there's never been a whole [overview]?

No. Because there's so much documentation, it's an archive, not really an art collection. Even though there were things, like all the designs for Vision Magazine that the artist gave me, they're all in the archives too. In 1981, I organized “Elegant Miniatures from San Francisco.” And they were all small pieces by 50 artists in San Francisco, including Wayne Thiebaud and Wiley and other non-conceptual artists. I took it to Japan and it was shown in a space in Kyoto, a friend of mine invited me, and then I asked him to organize 50 miniatures from the Kyoto - Osaka area, and they were sent back here and shown at SFMOMA, along with the 50 San Francisco artists. One side of the gallery was miniatures of San Francisco, and the other side was all from Japan.

Any Gutai artists in there do you remember? It was after the Gutai movement ended.

There very well could have been, I don't remember all the artists, who they were.

During this time in the '60s and '70s, was there awareness of what was going on with the Gutai movement?

I was aware, some other people, but generally the Bay Area was kind of provincial in those days, and they weren't—most people here, certainly not the establishment, was aware of much that went on outside of San Francisco. Not that there's anything wrong with that!

That's the end of the MOCA shows, and then, okay, so then, in 1976 San Francisco Magazine asked me if I wanted to do a page with a picture and text, then they asked me to invite other artists, so they asked me to be the curator for the magazine for these two pages. I had already done—

As an ongoing thing?

It came out every month, and it was different than the San Francisco Magazine now, more like the size of Newsweek, more like that. And so I invited Paul Kos to do a piece and Terry Fox did one, and it only lasted three issues and then they sold the magazine and went out of business.

And when you say two pages you mean in the tradition of an artist creating a site specific work—design a work for that situation.

Yes, so that was kind of a curating job off-site. And then I did Vision Magazine, at the same time which I considered an extension of MOCA, and it was published by Crown Point Press. I was the designer and editor of it, and the first issue, “California,” I invited twelve artists from San Francisco and twelve artists from LA to design two facing pages. Michael Asher had his two pages glued together, another example of invisible art, other people like Bruce Connor, Linda Montano, Fox, Kos, Fried, Wiley, and people from LA like Irwin, Bell, Wheeler, Nauman, Burden, Elenor Anton, Barbara Smith, etc. and then at that time I thought they were the most interesting artists in the north and south of California.

And you had to glue each page yourself?

Right, and then so that was the first issue, and the second issue I went to Eastern Europe and I did performances and shows in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia and gathered material from artists. I think Vision was the first magazine published in the west on the avant garde of Eastern Europe. I went in '75 and the publication came out in '76.

What they were doing was more political just because of their situation?

They were behind the Iron Curtain, it was all about repression and stopping of information, and that was the subject of a lot of the art.

So California conceptual art is about color, New York is about black and white? And Eastern European art is about—

Politics. But California by then was not about color and more about body culture. Not a literary, language culture, which is more what New York is about, so those are kind of basic differences. Then the third issue was called New York and I invited eight or nine artists to do six pages. They were who I thought were the most interesting artists of the time, like Oldenburg, Robert Barry, Vito Acconci, Sol LeWitt, Les Levine, Allan Kaprow, George Maciunas, Danial Buren, Carl Andre, Hans Haacke, and Lawrence Weiner. Walter De Maria had eight buff collared pages with his name on the seventh page, another original art work.

And then also Chuck Close, they all did pieces that were to be about New York City. Carl Andre sent me photographs of his first sculptures when he moved to New York, and that was about New York, the grid and all that. Most New York art is about the grid, the city map. So that was New York.

Then the fourth issue was called “Word of Mouth” and we went to an island called Pohnpei. That had three white LPs and we gave talks that included John Cage, Laurie Anderson, Joan Jonas, Brice Marden, Pat Steir, Robert Kushner, Bryan Hunt, Chris Burden, Bill Wiley, and from Europe, Marina Abramovic and Daniel Buren from France, and myself, so everybody did twelve minute talks. We were on this island for a week, beginning January 1980, so the beginning of a new decade.

MOCA was finished and a new era beginning. Because I started MOCA at the beginning of 1970 and the fifth issue was called “Artist’s Photographs,” and I invited fifty-six artists from sixteen different countries to give me a photograph, and that was actually made into a show at the Crown Point Press Gallery in Oakland at that time, and then each issue was a box and each page was the photographic reproduction printed on one side so that several schools made exhibitions out of the catalog by hanging up the reproductions. They were limited editions of 1,000 each.

And there are still some copies?

Except for the first one, California, that sold out.

Did you plan on Vision Magazine being so extensive?

The original idea was that I was going to do an issue on every country or culture, and after the first three, I was going to do Italy and after that Japan. But it was so hard doing business in Italy and getting work by the Italian artists that I gave up on them. Very slow and just a mess, you know, and half the time mail doesn’t go in and out of Italy. But I went to Italy and met a lot of artists, and I already knew Francesco Clementi and several artists.

What was your plan for the Japan issue?

I was planning to do Japan, but I hadn’t gotten to that stage yet, just in the planning, that was going to be the fifth issue. In the meantime, this whole idea of changing the format to spoken word and then the photographs, it wasn’t about culture, it was a mix of culture that was another medium. So the idea changed after the three issues. And also, there’s no way to make any money on it. People were outraged that it cost \$10 for the issue, but I mean it cost \$10 to make it.

People don’t really understand the perils of independent publishing.

No, it’s not a profitable enterprise. No way! Neither was MOCA, but luckily, because what I was doing was so interesting to artists, they weren’t expecting to be paid or anything, they always produced their own projects, and the same with the magazine.

You were getting a little funding from the NEA?

Up until '76 I got three NEA grants. And then for the island, Pohnpei, I went there got a grant, enough to produce the records, pay for them, but Crown Point Press paid to bring the artists there. It was the first year they had made a profit. And that was like thirty-five people all together.

The photos are great of you guys hanging out underneath the waterfall. You were out there for how long?

A week. It was a great experience. Then I did a couple shows for Crown Point Press, the influence of Picasso and Duchamp, the prints that they’ve done by artists with some influence. I did two shows at the Art Institute. In '83 I organized Art Against War and I invited six artists to do works, Chris Burden was one of them, and we did this as a class. The school got a grant to teach a course called Gallery Studies, that was '83, so I taught it one day a week for a year, and because it was from a grant I got paid well, and then at the end of the year we were given the gallery, the main one, where you are director and curator now, to do an exhibition that the class would organize. So we organized the show with six artists, invited six artists to do a piece, and we had Arneson do some heads that were mangled with bullets or bombs. They were clay and then cast in bronze, they were pieces that nobody had seen up to that point. As a class project we painted a copy of Picasso’s Guernica, twelve feet by twenty six feet, actual size on the back wall of the gallery on canvas, and there was scaffolding built and each artist worked on a square. It was a very faithful copy because it’s a black and white painting. Anyway, that was '83 and then in I think two years later in '85 I organized a show called “Inspired by Leonardo,” and included David Ireland, Clayton Bailey, Robert Colescott and Tony Labat.

That’s not when David poured the concrete down the steps right?

No, that was a later show. But he had built slanted walls and covered them with shiny varnish like in his house, and it had markings on it like Leonardo’s drawings of water waves. Then in 1976 at the Art Institute, there used to be a group called the Artist Committee and every year they would organize an exhibition. In the early days it was a jury show, like back in the '50s and '60s. The show that I did was a year-long show because I took the idea of Annual literally and made it a year-long show. So then I invited six other members of the artist’s committee, like Howard Fried, Terry Fox, and others, there were seven of us altogether, so every seventh week one of us was in charge of the space, and I rented a space on 16th Street. It was a storefront space and the invited artist was given a key to take it over. The openings were on Friday night, so they were given the key on Monday and they could keep the space open the whole week. Most of them didn’t, they just had the opening because people usually only go to openings anyways. Howard Fried was in charge of the annual, and he said that for the show we’re just going to exhibit the money for the budget, which was \$4,000. So we had four thousand, one dollar bills framed and hung in the gallery with a guard that stood there, and then at the end of the year that money was turned over to the next year. So I had \$8,000 to do the show with. That was the idea, so that was a good kind of conceptual piece of Howard’s. I was able to rent a space for a whole year. It was cheap rent because it was down on 16th Street.

Would you say that’s one of the first times that conceptual art actually made a lot of money? Bad joke.

Well, in 1981 I issued artist credit cards to artists from a grant I got. It was the first credit card many artists ever had, it was the early days of credit cards...

That brings us pretty much up to now, in 1997 I formed the Art Orchestra, and I invited fifteen San Francisco sculptors to invent their own instruments. We rehearsed every Saturday in my studio for about four months, and I got the Legion of Honor to give me the space to perform. That was the first time we performed my “Beer Drinking Sonata” for 13 players. It was actually fifteen people, but two people didn’t drink at that time, Lowell Darling and Joyce Umamoto, so they didn’t participate in that. Steve Goldstein was the conductor, and then the second piece was—

He was—

The former president of SFAI, and he’s since become a regular of my Wednesday salon. So that was a performance at the Legion of Honor, and then they did a second piece which was Unity Without Uniformity. So similar to the idea of the Society of Independent Artists. Everybody’s an individual, but it’s still a group, and not all thinking the same. SIA was a group that Duchamp co-founded in the early 20th century. When he first showed his urinal, that was in the Society of Independent Artists show, so I took the name from that. And that happened in 1999, when I took that name. Earlier names were Café Wednesday, Café Society, Archives at MOCA, Academy of MOCA, and now Society of Independent Artists. There’s one more thing, so in 2005 when the De Young museum opened, I invited about a dozen artists to make five minute videos. I put them all together and it came to ninety minutes. So they showed it in the theatre over the weekend, the three days, there was an opening, and I put it together and called it a motion picture, so it was enough videos to make ninety minutes. That had all kinds of artists, like Hung Lu, Jim Melchert, Bob Bechtel, William Wiley, Bob Hudson, Paul Kos, Lynn Hirschman, Richard Shaw etc. So now we can talk about the social beer art stuff, if you want.

When was the term “relational aesthetics” coined?

It was some time in the '90s. Nicolas Bourriaud, a French curator, wrote a book called Relational Aesthetics. In 2004 I was in a biennial in Lyon, France, and he was one of the curators of it. But he wasn’t the one who invited me to be in the show. Anyway, I did my one second sculpture and I did my beer installation, because the theme was “time.” At that opening he apologized for not having included me in his book on Relational Aesthetics. He didn’t know about it as it was so long ago! He was a young guy, born in maybe 1970.



David Ireland, Restoration of the Back Wall, Ceiling and Floor of the Museum of Conceptual Art, 1976.



Back Wall of MOCA, after restoration 1976.

But what you were doing and the act of—even though you call it a reception, like when you would do stuff at Breen’s, but like the idea of— Well, Breens, it wasn’t “Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art.” But on Wednesdays it was.

But even having shows there or broadcasting and using it as a space, it’s like putting it into an art exhibition in the context of a more social structure. Yeah, but I didn’t consider when I had the receptions for things like the radio shows as relating to that. I considered that as a reception for the exhibition, just like any museum would have a reception like that. But every Wednesday at Breen’s, it was first upstairs in ’73, and starting in ’76 downstairs at the bar, at these booths we’re sitting in now, people would come and drink. It was the extension of “Beer with Friends.” It was part of that series.

What do you think of Relational Aesthetics, and these younger artists today thinking maybe they’re inventing something new—? It became a movement. Sometime in the ’90s, more in Europe than in this country, but now it’s everywhere in the world, so consequently people are designing shows about this idea everywhere and I get invited either to go there and do it, build an installation, or they ask me, can they do it without me because they don’t have enough money or something. Sometimes I get a fee, and sometimes I just say, okay, well, you have to do it according to the way it’s supposed to be done or I’m not going to let you make my piece into your piece. And that happens sometimes. People say they’ll do it right, but then they don’t.

I guess that brings up issues of how performance exists after it happens for the first time—do you feel strongly that it should exist only as documentation? No, it’s my wish that after I’m dead this piece will live on the same way a music piece lives on. Because it’s about the moment and so it has basic elements now, it has evolved. First it was just the debris was exhibited in the Oakland Museum, no kind of aesthetic concern, everything was just there, like evidence of a party, kind of like that.

But then over the years it’s evolved into a more aesthetic experience, a refined situation, like a Japanese tea ceremony. So it has basic elements when I do it in other places. It has yellow light, has a refrigerator, has a bar, has tables and chairs, it has shelves for the empty beer bottles, and it has a video of beer filling up. If you google “Smart Museum Tom Marioni” you’ll see me talking about it and explaining it with how it looked there.

When MOCA was going on, during the beat generation here in the city they had Gallery 6 and all these different gallery spaces, and you mentioned that there was an SFMOMA show that involved the Floating Museum, etc. What were the other alternative spaces related to conceptual art in the ‘70s in San Francisco? There was Project Artaud, which wasn’t strictly conceptual or strictly alternative art space, and I define an alternative art space as an artist-run space that shows art that’s alternative to the mainstream, and so in the ’70s there were spaces that showed performance and video and installations and stuff, but not painting shows or pedestal sculpture shows. So that’s my definition of an alternative art space. And of course, in the ’80s we had alternative art spaces in San Francisco run by Ann Hatch and Ann McDonald, who were not artists, but they were showing alternative art, conceptual art, although it wasn’t so alternative by then.

New Langdon Arts, and Site Inc. on Mission street, run by Alan Scarritt, and The Farm, maybe eight or ten places in the ’70s, a couple years after I started MOCA. They were all slightly different in their philosophy.

Okay. So let’s talk about conceptual art of the ‘70s, post-conceptual art, neo-conceptualists and your views on where the movement has gone if it still holds the same values or importance? The mediums have changed, but what are your general thoughts when you see younger artists doing conceptual based pieces that might end up being similar to something that was done in the ‘70s? It usually depends on the economy. The economy was good in the 1960s during Pop Art. So art about money and collecting became really big. Then in the ’70s the economy crashed, we were in a recession. That’s when conceptual art was born, and that was art about philosophy, and it wasn’t very commercial or very sellable. That happened in San Francisco, but it was more about performance in San Francisco. And then in the ’80s, the economy became good again during Reagan’s period. The painting returned and art was about money, and performance art evolved into a cabaret kind of thing, skits and plays and more and more theatrical. Usually every movement, for instance, the impressionists were about light, and then the post-impressionists were a decorative version of the impressionists.

So you’ll see that the next generation of any movement is more theatrical and more decorative than the original, because the original is more concrete and real. So that’s what happened in performance art and conceptual art in the ’80s. It was pretty much all painting. The Germans came into the scene at that time. Neo-expressionist painting started with Julian Schnabel in the late ’70s. Then in the ’90s neo-pop came back, another recession came, and that’s when neo-conceptual came back and a lot of neo-other things too. Like Jeff Koons neo-pop and all kinds of stuff like that. So all things go in cycles. But a lot has to do with the economy and on the invention of new technology. You usually don’t get a new movement in art until there’s a new invention in technology, like when photography was invented, it replaced painting in a way because painting was what used to be the accurate record of the time. But photography could do a better job of recording the time than painting did. Duchamp said something like, “I am glad photography replaced painting and I will be glad when something else replaces photography.”

And then film and video moved in. Usually the things that create art movements are war, cultures get destroyed and people start over, or new technology. And in the Bay Area, it’s always been about the figure. The ’50s was figurative painters. The ’60s was funk art, basically still figurative art, and the ’70s was performance art that was figurative, about the body and body art, and then in the ’80s Mark Pauline with his robots and stuff like that. The robots were like figures, like people. So I say that the Bay Area is still a figurative art culture.

I was going to ask you specifically about just your personal connections, what you view is the importance of people like Cage and Duchamp and Yves Klein? I was lucky enough to know John Cage because I introduced him to Crown Point Press, my wife’s printing business.

Was that his first excursion into— Into serious visual art. Yes. In the late ’60s he did some plexigrams, influenced by Rauschenberg. Fragmented images on sheets of plexiglass that were stacked in a box. At the time Rauschenberg was doing very similar kinds of things on plexiglass, things that moved, and that were superimposed and stuff like that.

Like Cunningham too, the three of them were influencing each other, would you say? Johns, Rauschenberg, Cunningham, and Cage were all part of a company. Rauschenberg designed the sets and Cage did the music, and Cunningham did the choreography, and sometimes Johns did the sets too. And anyway, Cage wrote me a letter of recommendation for the Guggenheim, he wrote that I was carrying on the work of Duchamp. And I always thought that that was what he was doing. Duchamp used chance to create art a lot of the time, like his ready-mades. Cage wrote his music according to chance. Anyway, so I considered Duchamp to be the father of conceptual art. So a lot of times, for instance, Sol LeWitt didn’t appreciate Duchamp. He said his work was about irony, and he wasn’t interested in that. He was interested in the Russian constructivists. He was more about geometry than irony. So in New York they pretty much didn’t accept Duchamp or Joseph Beuys at first.

Right, they were challenging the notions of why these people were taken so seriously? Right, yeah. So my influences, which are hanging up on the wall behind me, over my bar, are Leonardo DaVinci, and they’re all artists that influenced me, because they all invented something. Usually the artists that invent something are the ones who live on in history, who are the most influential, and so on like that. Because they’re not working in somebody else’s tradition. They were at the beginning of a philosophy.

As Duchamp says, “Tradition is a prison.” Good. Leonardo invented automation, and Duchamp invented conceptual art. John Cage invented the happening. Joseph Beuys invented the sculpture action. Brancusi invented abstract sculpture. Yves Klein invented invisible art, and Picasso invented collage. So I’ve been influenced in one way or another in different works of mine by all of those artists. So I consider them my teachers. And Kandinsky was a kind of curator too. I did a piece for German radio, a half hour radio play, I called it “Yellow Sound for Kandinsky.” And yellow is a signature color for me.

I wanted to ask you about that. Where did your use of yellow come from? I had yellow lights hanging down in my museum of conceptual art. It was like a funky old industrial space, very beautiful, I thought.

Early kind of tungsten lighting? Just bare light bulbs, like they had in factories a long time ago. When I moved into that space it looked pretty much like it did in 1920 when the building was built and a printing company had moved in there, Bowles Printing Company, it was called. So when I saw the space I thought, boy, this is like a preserved relic of the industrial age, a mechanical age. So I put yellow light bulbs in there because I thought it looked like an old photograph. I wanted to emphasize the feeling of that time, of the olden days, because old photographs are usually yellowed or sepia-colored. So I wanted to make the space look like a sepia photograph, you know. So that was the beginning of my interest in yellow light, but then later I saw it as a way to warm up a sterile white space, and it also had yellow light because—in Canada a critic said I brought California light with me in the middle of winter, to Canada.

I was going to say it is very like sunlight, California light, yeah. Do you own a lot of yellow t-shirts? Yes. I get them at Walgreens! Three for ten dollars.

So Yves Klein, you talk about invisible art, it’s more about the Blue Martini piece or the Void show that he did, where there’s nothing there except the empty case and then the Blue Martini. People drank them, then peed blue the next day. That was the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris in 1958, he emptied the gallery. He had already been in Japan and influenced by the Gutai artists or collaborated with them—it’s always a discussion of whether Klein influenced them or they influenced him. It’s probably 50/50.

Kazuo Shiraga’s mud piece, it’s very much like— It’s very much like his thing.



Art Against War, 1983, SF Art Institute. painting copy of Picasso's Guernica painted with students.



Group photo of Word of Mouth, conference on Ponape island. 1980.

I know the Guggenheim curators of the Gutai show would say that Gutai probably influenced him.

Yeah, but I don't know for sure. So anyway, then he cleaned the gallery and he blocked the windows, and then at the opening—like 5,000 people showed up at the opening and the gallery was in a little alley. The alley was full of people. They couldn't let all 5,000 people in. It was a tiny gallery, the size of my studio. And so they would let people in in groups throughout the night. So it was a historic piece because it was about the void. Then when he jumped out a window in Paris in 1960 and had it photographed, it was about experiencing the void, he said.

Just to go back to Duchamp for a second, he was always an artist, but he stopped producing for a while.

He did stop painting; he didn't stop making art. And, of course, at that time, art was only painting pretty much. Sculpture was just architectural ornamentation up until the minimal art.

Even with the Surrealists or Cubism?

Like Ad Reinhardt said, "sculpture is something you bump into as you're backing up to get a better look at a painting." So that's a put-down the way that New York used to put down California. That's the way painters put down sculptors. Except a few like Brancusi, great sculptures, you know, important, but generally, the feeling was that painting was intellectual art, and sculpture was not.

Even sculpture like the statue of David?

That was part of architecture in the Renaissance. Architectural ornamentation. Figures in front of the building or part of the building. So that's what I mean by that. It's its own separate work, but the kind of thinking was—well, Leonardo said that painters work inside while wearing fine clothes with musicians playing. Sculptors are outside and they're covered in marble dust, and it's like sculptors are just craftsmen. Painters are real artists, like that. That was the attitude for five hundred years, that sculpture was craft and painting was high intellectual art.

Now it seems like everything is on this blurred line.

Oh yeah, there's no more avant garde, everything is legitimate, everything is out there, you can't really say what is avant garde now because everything is neo-something.

It's a mess.

I know, you go to a Whitney Annual and it looks like a flea market.

I think the age of the internet sped that up drastically because I've noticed a lot of artists from my generation, they'll see something an artist does online and just decide they're going to do that. They're going to bring it over—it's like a combined collage of mass media.

When something's done it's immediately known in the whole world.

Then it's forgotten.

Like when Picasso discovered African art, because of Matisse actually, who gave Gertrude Stein who had a salon and Matisse and Picasso were a part of the salon, and Matisse gave Gertrude Stein an African sculpture and Picasso saw that at Gertrude Stein's house and that influenced him to go out and look at African sculpture, which influenced him to do Demoiselles d'Avignon, the beginning of cubism. It developed later with Braque, you know, but actually Picasso in 1907 invented cubism, but it had come from sculpture. The rest of the civilized world didn't know about African sculpture, so Picasso had come up with a whole new thing. But today everybody knows what African sculpture is, they know what Japanese art is, they know what Middle Eastern art is. And so that's why there's no more avant-garde because everything is legitimate.

Or when there is an avant-garde people try and cash in on it, right? I was reading this article in the Financial Times about what's going on in Uzbekistan, or the old Soviet regions. Sotheby's is in there trying to control the market. The younger artists haven't even had a chance to explore their practice. I even had this thought that I need to start doing some stories on what's going on over there. It seems all very strange...the hype.

An Aborigine artist that Crown Point Press did prints with named Dorothy Napangardi, she doesn't know how to read or write, she only knows how to print her first name Dorothy. That's how she signs her work. It's very sophisticated minimal art with little dots, and it's abstract but they're maps that are a tradition thousands of years old, the way they've been doing them. Her paintings that are an old tradition in her culture are now very modern. They sell and support her whole village with money for television sets, refrigerators and Toyotas.

The Global Market. What do you think would happen if nobody made art for a year?

I don't know how you could do that. I mean, people tried to have a day without art for AIDS back in the '80s, stuff like that, but I don't know what it would prove, or if it would even, if it could happen. When Duchamp said he was giving up art to play chess, actually, he thought playing chess was like doing sculpture in your head, where you design the moves ahead of time in your head. So he was making art by playing chess.

Why don't we end with just talking about Howard Fried. We've been talking about doing something for about two years now, and I realize now that that's part of the whole process. I think just back to Duchamp, it's like everybody has this urgency: I need to make, I need to make, I need to make... and you know, maybe everybody should take their time a little bit.

His philosophy is chill out. What a lot of people don't understand is, I've been in group shows with Howard and it was never like that with me at MOCA. When he did something he was always there and on time and everything like that, but that's because I'm a contemporary of his and I'm an artist and there was never any problems like that.

But he has a piece called "Approach Avoidance," and that's a psychological problem that some people have, that he does, when you get closer to the finish and you resist it. The closer you get the more you resist crossing the finish line. So he has lots and lots of unfinished works. Actually Duchamp said about his large glass, when it got broken, he accepted that as a new element, as part of the work, and he declared that it was finally unfinished. So here it is, the final product, but it's not finished. So Howard's work is kind of like that, I think. Finally unfinished, a lot of it. So he makes art about his neuroses, and he uses those psychological terms too. "Sociopath" is one of his works, and "Approach Avoidance", those are psychiatrist terms. So when he does shows and he doesn't finish the work or show up on time, they don't realize that it's a part of his philosophy, and you have to consider that it might not ever be finished.

Or he might change it.

It's his M.O., well people don't usually let an artist—Bruce Connor wanted to do that. He was invited to have a show at SFMOMA years ago and he said, well, he would agree to it, but he wanted to be able to go in and change some things. I mean, the people that own it, it's valuable because it's from 1961 and if you change it - then it's not the same piece anymore.

In 1972 the San Francisco Museum of Art was looking for a director. They had just let Gerald Nordlin go and it was a year and a half without a director. I was in my third year of MOCA and I had been already curator of Richmond Art Center, and most people knew me more as a curator than as an artist in those days. It's a handicap to be an artist and a curator if you're known more as a curator. So I decided to send out this announcement that I was made director of the San Francisco Museum. I mailed it to Museum News, a trade magazine, and they published it, because recent appointments, you know. So, of course, the board was outraged and the art critic, Alfred Frankenstein, said there ought to be a limit to the pranks conceptual artists can pull. So I sent that card out and then like six months later they ended up hiring Henry Hopkins. He never forgave me for that, and snubbed me for years after that. But then three or four years ago they did a show called Fakes and a collector had bought this—

At MOMA?

Yeah, and a collector had bought the card from me and gave it to the museum for the collection, and they put it in the show, and it was in the show of their anniversary just last year, this card. But at the time in '86 it was listed, in Newsweek Magazine, they reviewed the anniversary, the 50th anniversary of SFMOMA and the art critic from Newsweek came out to review the show and he went around before the show opened, like a week before, and reviewed it. He said notable artists in the show were—and he mentioned about five artists, including me—and I wasn't in the show. So this was years after this card had been sent out. So at the opening, Henry Hopkins—and I hadn't seen the Newsweek, it came out that day, the opening—

Announcing that you were the—

That I was in the show, one of the notable artists in the show. So at the opening Henry Hopkins came up to me and said, "Oh, I'm sorry I didn't include you in the show even though Newsweek thinks you're in the show." That was the first I'd heard about it. The next day I bought Newsweek, and thought cool. So a week later I sent him the card and said, "It's not too late, you can put this in the show." And he did, because he was embarrassed for not putting me in the show. So anyway, he never was into conceptual art. He never set foot in my Museum of Conceptual Art the whole ten years he was director.



Andrew McClintock



Chris Burden, Fire Roll, MOCA, 1973.



Chris Burden, Fire Roll, MOCA, 1973.

JAMES TURRELL

With CHRISTINE Y. KIM, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, LACMA
Interview by Rujeko Hockley



James Turrell in front of Roden Crater Project at sunset, October 2001. Photograph by Florian Holzherr. Courtesy of the artist and LACMA.

Over the next year, three large-scale exhibitions focusing on iconic American artist James Turrell (b. 1943) will be on view concurrently at three institutions across the United States. In Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) will present *James Turrell: A Retrospective* (May 26, 2013-April 6, 2014); in Houston, the Museum of Fine Arts will present *James Turrell: The Light Inside* (June 9-September 22, 2013); and in New York, the Guggenheim will present *James Turrell* (June 21-September 25, 2013). Independently curated by each institution, and focused on different aspects of Turrell's work and practice, the three exhibitions are nonetheless in clear and purposeful dialogue. Together, they offer a broad and detailed overview of his nearly five-decade long career. This synergy will allow audiences in LA, Houston, and New York the unusual and exciting opportunity to fully engage with one artist's oeuvre, seeing influences, progression from past to present, and shifts in interest, practice, and output over the course of a life. As a longtime fan of Turrell, I have been looking forward to this moment, and I was thrilled to talk to Christine Y. Kim, co-curator of LACMA's exhibition, about their presentation as well as his work and career.

There seems to be something of a Turrell “moment” happening right now, with your show at LACMA, the show at the MFA Houston, and the show at the Guggenheim all opening in 2013. Why is that? How did this confluence of events come about?

It's been the strong interest of Michael Govan, LACMA's director and my co-curator, to mount this exhibition. Michael arrived at LACMA in 2006 and it made perfect sense, given that Turrell hails from Los Angeles and has deep connections to the area. He was born in LA, grew up in Pasadena, went to Pomona College, graduating in 1965, and had his first studio—the Mendota studio in Ocean Park, Santa Monica—from 1966 to 1974. These were formative years when he developed the base typologies of his light installations and works. Also, the Light and Space movement was forming in southern California. All those trajectories coming together and Turrell's career now marking nearly 50 years, around his 70th birthday—this retrospective makes so much sense.

James has also been in conversations with numerous museums around the country, if not around the world. Many of them have taken it on, but the sheer scale and complexity of a Turrell exhibition, let alone a retrospective of work from 1966 to the present, comes with its complexities. Peter Marzio, the former director at MFA Houston, was a huge supporter of Turrell's. They have very impressive holdings of his work in their permanent collection, which is what they're mounting for their show. Carmen Giménez at the Guggenheim is a fabulous curator, and their conversation to do something in the iconic Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda had been developing as well. So these three shows sort of synergized simultaneously and it just felt like the right moment.

For the retrospective at LACMA, what kind of objects are you including? 1960s to present, early work to now, all elements of his work?

Yes, all elements of his work. The earliest work we have is from 1966, the year he moved into the Mendota studio, a former hotel. In that studio, he first sealed off the interior space. He painted over the windows, and then slowly started making slivers and openings where light would come in. Through them, he would play with the light, by day and night, using the daylight and headlights of cars driving by at night, so that light would really perform for the viewer inside the space. He came up with the idea of doing a light projection when he was in college at Pomona in 1965. He was sitting in a dark art history class, and was more intrigued by the beam of light emanating from the projector than the image being projected on the screen.

When he got into the studio it was this duality: light being projected to create a form or semblance of an object on a wall, but then also playing with the studio space as a camera obscura, where the light would be coming in. These two trajectories were the foundation of his early practice. In that studio, he developed typologies of work such as “Structural Cuts, Skylights”—which became “Skyspaces—Wedgeworks, and Shallow Spaces”. He went on to do his first solo show in 1967 at the Pasadena Art Museum and another in 1976 at the Stedelijk Museum of these and other typologies of work developed in the years following 1966.



“Afrum (White)”, 1966. Cross Corner Projection. LACMA, partial gift of Marc and Andrea Glimcher in honor of the appointment of Michael Govan as Chief Executive Officer and Wallis Annenberg Director and purchased with funds provided by David Bohnett and Tom Gregory through the 2008 Collectors Committee. © James Turrell. Photograph courtesy of the 2013 Museum Associates / LACMA.

So at LACMA, we have work in all of those typologies, with the exception of a “Skyspace or Structural Cut”—we’re not cutting into any of our existing buildings. From the Mendota studio, we have a number of those works as well as Polaroids, drawings, and water colors that he did there. From there, we go all the way to his most recent work: “Breathing Light”, a site-specific commission of another typology of work called “Ganzfeld,” which will cover in total about 5,600 square feet and will be installed on the east side of the Resnick Pavilion. Those works are the bookends. In addition, we have a variety of works in between, including the light installations developed in Santa Monica, as well as a comprehensive section on “Roden Crater”, the extinct volcano near Flagstaff, Arizona that Turrell has been transforming and working on since the 1970s. It will include models, photographs, holograms, drawings, and prints—work in a variety of media.

That really is a retrospective. It is especially wonderful that there are three shows happening simultaneously because, as you’ve said, there are various typologies in his practice and so many different types of work. I recently re-visited “Meeting” (1986), his permanent Skyspace at PSI in New York, and was reminded of how wonderful those works, so strongly associated with Turrell, are. But there is so much more to his practice and career. There were Turrell pieces included in several of last year’s Pacific Standard Time exhibitions in California, but a sense of the scale of what he does, particularly the time scale, hasn’t been clear to me. It’s exciting that we’ll be seeing such breadth. Thinking more about his earlier career, can you talk about the Art and Technology Program, a program that LACMA did in the late 1960s where an artist was paired with a scientist? I’ve read that Turrell participated in that?

Yes, he did; that comes into view in the show. The program went from 1966 to 1971; his involvement was in 1969. At the time, the aerospace industry and technology was booming in southern California. The program was designed as an initiative to pair contemporary artists with scientific researchers and corporations, hopefully allowing them to come up with new and interesting projects. It included everything from Robert Rauschenberg working in the LaBrea Tar Pits, to Turrell collaborating with Robert Irwin and Dr. Ed Wortz of the Garrett Aerospace Corporation.

With Irwin and Wortz, Turrell did a lot of work with sensory deprivation, anechoic chambers, and Ganzfeld spheres. Ganzfeld is a typology of work—“Breathing Light”, the site-specific piece commissioned by LACMA I mentioned previously is an example—but it comes from a phenomenon that happens when you are exposed to a uniform and undifferentiated field of color, like in a blizzard. If you are in a blizzard and see only white, you can lose depth perception. At this time, Turrell was experimenting with Ganzfeld and Perceptual Cells in which a viewer would enter a space and be unable to perceive its depth, but would instead experience a “different kind of seeing,” as he puts it. That was a pivotal time for him and his career. The Art and Technology exhibition was at LACMA in 1971, but by then he had already moved on and was interested in moving to Arizona.

Where he now lives.

Yes, where he started his search for a geologic form that he could turn into a naked-eye observatory. He didn’t stay with the program for its entire duration, but his collaboration was critical to the project, and likewise, the time he spent here, which also overlapped with some time at UCLA, was critical to his artistic development.

Clearly, in terms of his biography, he has a strong relationship to the western United States and California, particularly southern California, but also looking at his work this connection is evident. The scale and the sky—the space—are all hugely important to him. As you mentioned, he is often discussed in relation to Light and Space artists like Robert Irwin, but I also think about him perhaps in relation to artists like Walter DeMaria and other land artists, Minimalists like Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, John McCracken, etc. Do you think that those are accurate connections to make? Who else would you relate him to in terms of his contemporaries? What about younger artists he might have influenced?

I think there are connections between all of them because they’re really thinking about ideas around minimalism—with a lower case ‘M’—and minimalism being a kind of germ in most of these artists’ practices. However, it really took a different shape with Turrell. It became about the object to Judd, Flavin, and McCracken, whereas the light, not as an *enabler* of how we see an object, but really as the object itself, is unique to Turrell. There’s no fixture on plastic object, surface, or image. Additionally, in the 1960s, southern California was developing different types of metals, plastics, compounds, etc. This was something that many of these artists capitalized on, and really started thinking about—how to form and mold these materials into different shapes. Helen Pashgian and Robert Irwin are part of that, and even Judy Chicago.

With Finish Fetish.

Exactly. So there’s overlap with Finish Fetish, and also, Judy Chicago worked in pyrotechnics, which Turrell also worked in at Pomona in 1973. So there are connections, certainly. But as I said earlier, for Turrell, the focus is on light itself. The object of the work is really perception—the viewer’s perception and how we see. This, I would say, is unique to him.

Absolutely. The “Roden Crater” project could be discussed in the context of land art, but it’s actually quite a different kind of project than something like Robert Smithson’s “Spiral Jetty” (1970) or other iconic projects that have been realized in the region. “Roden Crater” has been conceptualized on an immense time scale—geologic, cosmological time. To my mind, this connects it to much larger and longer-lasting concerns, common to diverse societies and cultures

throughout human history. So, I’m not sure Turrell belongs in a discussion on land art at all, but what do you think?

I have asked him flat out how he feels about being called or grouped in with land artists, and he says, “I am not an Earth artist; I’m totally involved in the sky.” The way that I take that is, we are figures in a landscape as viewers, so that is our access point in terms of seeing. With seeing as a focal point of his practice—the entire thrust of it—we are in the landscape to see, so it’s about finding and manipulating and accessing our platform for seeing land, in order to see the sky. Moving on from what he did at the Mendota studio in allowing light to come into the studio through cracks, etc., “Roden Crater” is in essence a gigantic platform, or series of them, from within which the sky can be seen. It’s designed to be a naked-eye observatory from which, thousands of years from now, one will still be able to witness celestial events. The plans have 20 different tunnels and spaces in total. In all of these, there are different auditory and visual features, and astronomical happenings occurring in a variety of ways. To point back to his comment about not being interested in the land but totally involved in the sky, yes, he is shaping the land in this monumental way with this monumental gesture that will span geologic time, but the focus is upward and toward the sky, particularly in terms of visual and haptic experience.

That is a poetic and beautiful distinction, which also highlights crucial differences in focus and intent. In terms of younger contemporary artists, who do you see as being particularly influenced by him? I think of Turrell as someone who is beloved by many younger artists, including some you might not expect.

This is true! It would be interesting to write or think about this because, for example, someone who comes to mind who is obsessed with Turrell is Hank Willis Thomas—and you would never guess that looking at his work. Another artist that comes to mind is Erin Shirreff. She is based in Brooklyn and works in photography and digital media, as well as collage and drawing. She has a video piece called “Roden Crater” (2009), which was acquired by LACMA, where essentially she took multiple photographs of an image of “Roden Crater” on a monitor in her studio at many different times of day and under varying light conditions, and then animated the photographs. What you get is the light changing in her studio—dusk coming, maybe there’s a shadow of a figure, a bright spot of light—with the image of “Roden Crater” remaining constant, but shifting.

So the light coming into her space is what changes?

Yes, but it’s not about the light changing necessarily. It becomes a type of portraiture, using something as iconic as “Roden Crater” and a very specific, well-known image of it, but then depicting it not in actual terms in the landscape, but through its presence in a photographic/digital form in her own space.

She is an interesting example, because we might be more likely to think of artists who work literally with light and space, making large outdoor installations—perhaps someone like Olafur Eliasson. I’m sure Eliasson has been inspired by Turrell, but this more removed approach creates another interesting way to think about how Turrell could be influential for future generations, as opposed to people doing exactly what he does.

And with Erin, even though she lived in New Mexico, it’s not necessarily “Roden Crater” itself that she’s interested in, but rather it’s the idea of this iconic image, this landform that is also a work of art, and using that anchor as an image. So much of her work is about manipulation and collage, with photography, digital media, video, etc. With Hank Willis Thomas and other artists whose practice and interests are quite different, Turrell often comes up as being influential discursively, as opposed to more directly.

So even where the connection is less apparent or expected, it still exists and is important.

Yes. I curated a show before I was at the Studio Museum, around 1999, at a small, non-profit space in Brooklyn called Gale Gates. At that time, they had an emerging curators program and they gave you a small budget and a space to work in. The show was called *The Light Show*; it was about the different use of light within the American landscape. Artists included Rico Gatson—I was interested in his use of light bulbs and fire; Kira Lynn Harris, who created a highly formal installation, with light reflecting off of Mylar on which she had placed and removed black-eyed peas; Matthew McCaslin, whose piece was a video of the sun rising and setting, but installed on a monitor in the back of a children’s red wagon—the idea of the sun rising and setting on the landscape. Olafur Eliasson was also in the show, with a light piece that projected into the corner of a room and appeared to be a very warm yellow light coming in through perpendicular windows, as well as Gerard Byrne, an artist from Ireland, with a series of photographs taken in corners of rooms and in different spaces, where light was affecting different surfaces very differently. So, seeing the uses of light in terms of defining space literally or in the American landscape was an early interest of mine. That was fourteen years ago; now this interest goes much further. Even just thinking about the camera and how the camera operates, letting a moment of light in through a lens, to embed an image and record it on a piece of film—everything from that example to Erin Shirreff.

And all things in between. Like many people, I started my art and curatorial life as an art history student, looking at earlier artists and works before realizing I was most interested in working with living artists. However, I’ve always loved the 19th century American sublime, those vast landscapes by Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, Albert Bierstadt—all these people who went out into the world, moving West. Obviously their work is so connected to Manifest Destiny and the zeitgeist of that moment, but I think Turrell is very interesting



“Milarepa’s Helmut”, 1989. Cast Hydrocal plaster, 21 x 34.75 x 34.75 in. James Corcoran Gallery, LA. © James Turrell. Photograph courtesy of Kayne Griffin Corcoran, LA.

in the context of the sublime and some of these perhaps more old-fashioned ideas that we don’t necessarily discuss in relation to contemporary art. His intentions and practice of course differ drastically, and I think he would rightly be critical of the problematic aspects inherent to that expansionist ideology, but in terms of perception, how we see the landscape, how we think we see, how we feel about what we see—these are very old conversations, in humanity, but also in art and art history.

When he talks about influences in his life and career, he mentions mostly painters, many from a completely different era or generation.

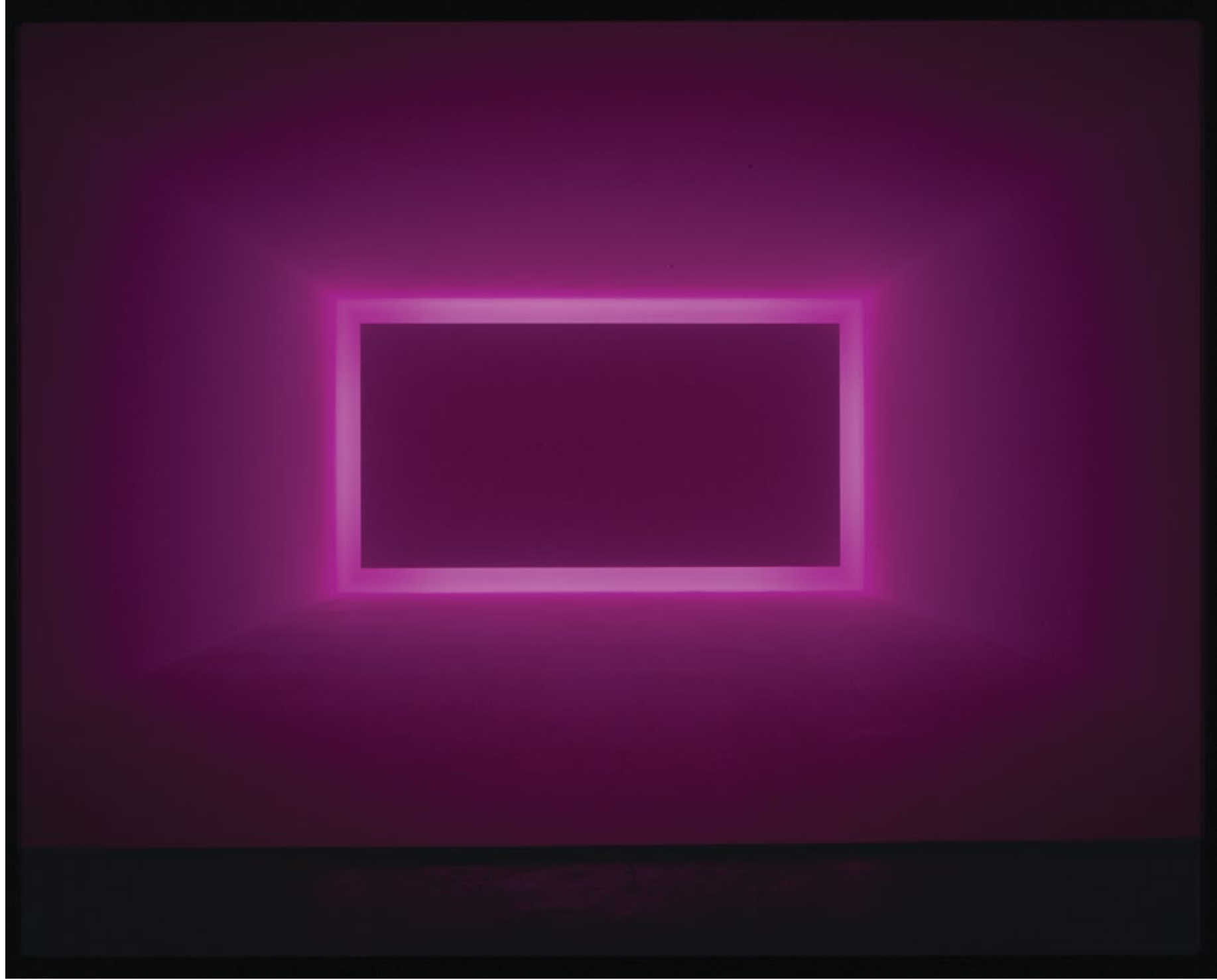
That makes sense to me.

From Monet to Courbet, to Tintoretto, to Rothko, who he says, brings spirituality out of color, and Reinhardt, who brings color out of blackness. There are so many ways that he references these influences, but he says that the way the landscape painters you’re referring to used light was entirely American, and that then it was entirely Los Angeles 1960s to use material and technology to work with light itself in a direct way. Other more historic ways that painters have looked at light—how light hits clouds at an angle, how it lights skin or the face, the quality of paint with Rothko and Reinhardt and the way they’re making paintings and thinking about color—these are all different things, but all very important to Turrell.

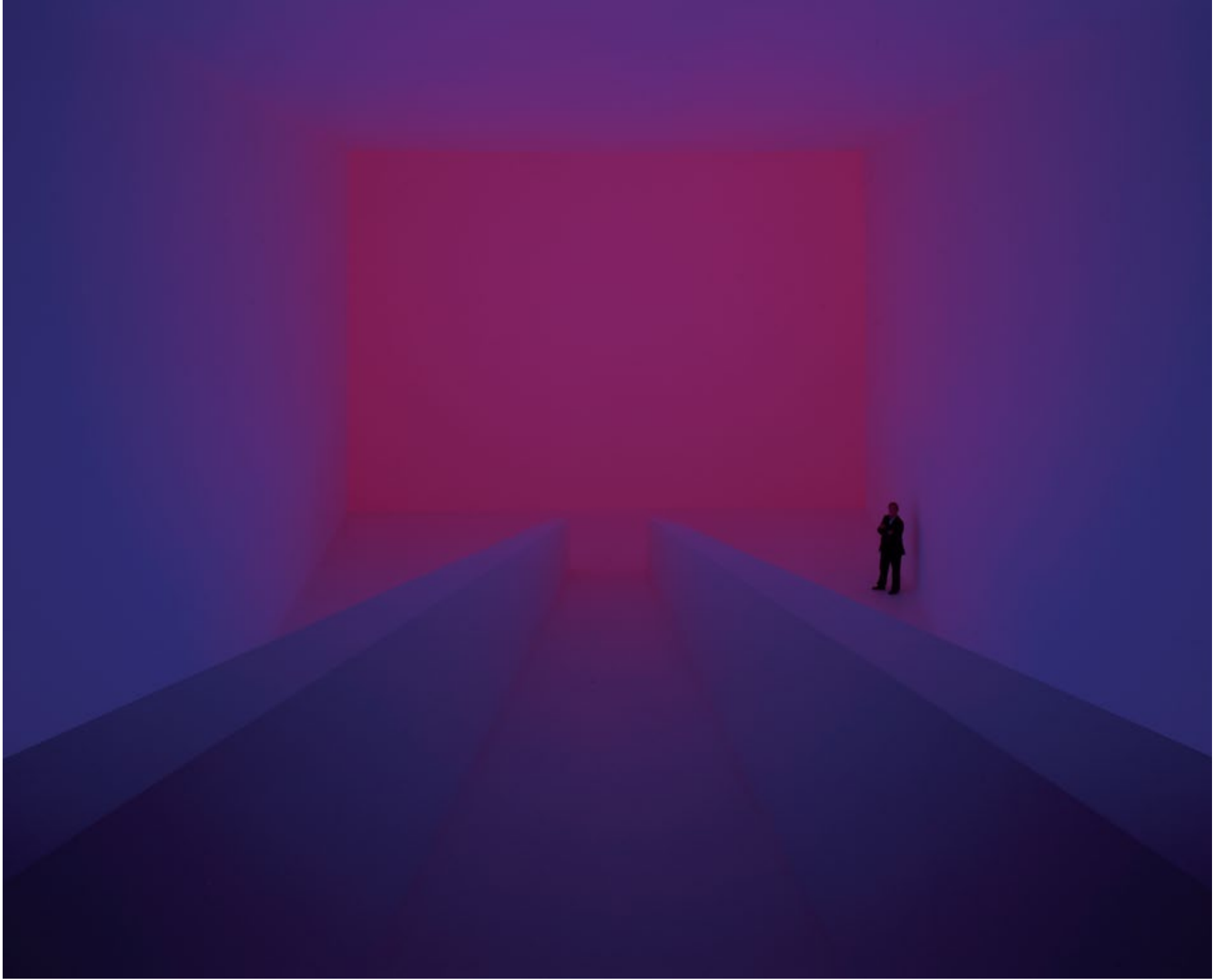
Wonderful! Is there anything else you want to add that is important for people to know about him or the show at LACMA?

No, I think we’ve covered everything. We are thrilled about the show and hope that people enjoy it and come away with a fuller understanding of James Turrell and his work!

Christine Y. Kim is co-curator of James Turrell: A Retrospective (May 26, 2013 - April 6, 2014) with LACMA Director & CEO Michael Govan. She has been Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at LACMA since 2009. Kim co-organized Human Nature: Contemporary Art from the Collection with Terri and Michael Smooke Curator & Department Head Franklin Sirmans in 2011, and she organized Teresa Margolles, an outdoor sculpture project in collaboration with the Los Angeles Nomadic Division (LAND) a non-profit organization for public art which she co-founded in 2009. Prior to her post at LACMA, Kim was Associate Curator at The Studio Museum in Harlem in New York, where worked from 2000 to 2008, and organized numerous solo and group exhibitions such as Flow (2008), Philosophy of Time Travel (2007), Meschac Gaba: Tresses (2005), and Black Belt (2003), and co-organized survey exhibitions Frequency (2005) and Freestyle (2001). Recent freelance projects include Art Public 2011 and Art Public 2012 at the Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, for Art Basel Miami Beach.



"Raemar Pink White", 1969. Shallow space. Collection of Art and Research. Las Vegas. © James Turrell. Photograph by Robert Wedemeyer. Courtesy of Kayne Giffin Corcoran, LA.



"Bridget's Bardo", 2009. Ganzfeld. Installation view at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, 2009. © James Turrell. Photograph courtesy of Florian Holzherr.

THE WATARI MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

With KOICHI WATARI
Interviewed by Gianni Simone



Joseph Beuys and Etsuko Watari in 1984 at the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art. Courtesy of the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art.

A museum is a place where dreams are born

Koichi Watari has breathed and lived art since he was born in 1960. He is the curator at his family-run museum in Tokyo, the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art. The Watarium, as it is also called, was founded in 1990 by Koichi, together with his mother Shizuko and older sister Etsuko. After his mother's death last December, Etsuko has become the museum's director. Since its beginning as a small art gallery, the place has been a trailblazer in promoting Fluxus, conceptual art and other non-commercial artists in Japan.

You used to work as a purchase counselor for the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography. Why is it so difficult to sell photography in Japan?

For commercial photographers it's easy to survive here, even compared to other countries, but if you are a fine art photographer you are in trouble. For one thing, in Japan there are many amateur photographers. Everybody seems to take pictures, and few people are willing to pay for other people's works. Also, there are only a few photography galleries. The end result is that the collector pool is extremely small. Actually this problem extends to all contemporary art. All too often Japanese artists have to go abroad. Only after they have established themselves outside Japan, do they get recognition here.

I'd like to start with your mother Shizuko. I understand she had a gallery from 1972 to 1989 before she opened the Watarium.

Yes, my mother opened Galerie Watari in 1972. It was a commercial gallery, but she invited all sorts of conceptual artists like Sol LeWitt and Joseph Beuys, besides Andy Warhol, Nam June Paik, and Keith Haring. She was never interested in easily appealing art and sellable works.

Where was it located?

Right in the same spot where the museum stands now. It was very small, of course.

How old were you when she opened the gallery?

I was in junior high school; about 11 or 12.

Did your father share your mother's love for art?

Not really. He was a cook and had a restaurant just beside the gallery. Let's say he was more interested in good eating, while my mother nurtured herself through her eyes. So every time we went on a trip, we argued constantly on where to go and what to do. And my mother would always try to drag us to a museum.

I heard that until you reached your twenties you were not really interested in art...?

You could say I positively disliked it, and it was in good part because my mother would always take me and my sister to all these museums. They were very crowded, and I didn't like their atmosphere. Especially in Tokyo, they often were stuffy places; they were closer to a church, and there was nothing fun about them. But then I got a plane ticket to New York as a present for passing the university entrance exam, and I spent two months there. I rented an apartment and passed all the time at museums, bookstores, and going to the movies. It was in New York that I realized how interesting and fun art could be. I went to the MoMA and the Whitney, and I was shocked. Then my sister came up with the idea to open an art bookstore beside my mother's gallery. She is three years older than me and majored in art history, so at the time she already knew she wanted to follow in my mother's footsteps. Anyway, she called me while I was in New York and told me to buy whatever I could find because she had decided that we were going to open an art bookstore. That was how ON SUNDAYS was born. Now you can find some nice museum shops, but at the time we were the only one of the kind, so we attracted a lot of interesting people. I remember that Shuji Terayama and Tadanori Yokoo, just to name a couple, were visiting often. Even now we are probably the only shop in Japan with 10,000 postcards in stock.



Nam June Paik and Shizuko Watari in front of one of Paik's TV installations, c.1993. Courtesy of the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art.

Your mother's original collection already included Fluxus works, right? At the time Fluxus had relatively little recognition, not only in Japan, so I'm sure it was very unusual to show all those strange artists in Tokyo.

Nobody had ever heard of them, and she actually was the first person to show their works in a commercial gallery in Japan.

You seem to be rather critical of the local museum scene.

Well, not really. In Japan there are many museums, some of them better than others. Unfortunately many of them lack character, they all look alike. But our position and approach are quite far from that scene, and we don't really care about what the others do. We are mainly busy trying to survive. The real problem is the way the local and national government support – maybe I should say, do NOT support – contemporary art. Surviving as a private museum is very hard, especially when all you get in one year from the ministry is a mere 500,000 yen. So we have to rely on corporate sponsors. The problem is that as soon as the economy goes into a slump, like now, they cut their funds. So we are always struggling to keep afloat. That's why, apart from the exhibition itself, we do workshops and lectures. And of course the museum shop and café help us pay the bills.

On average, how many people visit your exhibitions?

It really depends on who we show. I'd say 7-8,000 people for young artists, while famous people attract up to 50,000 visitors.

As you know, last year the first big GUTAI retrospective was held at the National Art Center. Did your family have any contact with GUTAI in the 1960s?

Unfortunately not. Of course we knew them, but my mother was particularly into Fluxus and somehow kept a distance from them.

Why did you decide to turn your mother's small gallery into the Watarium?

We felt limited. At the gallery we were only able to show small works and we wanted to do things a little differently. I had also been to some art fairs in America and I was utterly bored. I thought no way I'm going to work in this kind of market. So we decided to open the museum, which is not bigger or better than a gallery, it's just different: three floors for almost 250 square meters of exhibition space. A very sensitive issue for us was that we wanted to be involved in what the artists did but we didn't have the time and energy to follow each of them the way a gallery does, where you sign a contract and you are bound to represent them all the time. For us it's better to collaborate on a one-off project, and if things go well we may want to invite that artist again maybe in five years time. As a museum we can be more flexible. For example I think that now was the perfect time to do "Could Art Change the World" (JR's current exhibition at the Watarium – Gianni) and I'm very proud of it.

Speaking of the building housing the Watarium, why did you choose Mario Botta? Someone said it was an eccentric choice at the time. Do you agree?

Yes, I think you are right. It's just that we saw one of his catalogues and it was love at first sight. So, one month later my mother flew to Switzerland to meet Mario, and one month after that he was here, so it happened very fast. And as you mentioned, many people wondered why we hadn't asked another architect, but the thing is, I have to spend ten hours every day in the museum, and I can't do that if I don't really feel at ease with my surroundings. That's the sense of peace and quiet I feel here, thanks to Mario. This building was completed twenty-three years ago and we haven't made any changes apart from adding this café that previously was our office. That's how much we are satisfied with Mario's work.



Nam June Paik "Eurasian Way", 1993. Mixed media installation. Courtesy of the Watari Museum of Contemporary Art.

Did you have any problems with the design and construction of the building?
We had problems all the time! The project lasted five years, from 1985 to 1990, and Mario came to Japan thirty times to make sure everything went the way we wanted. His staff back in Switzerland once asked him how many buildings he was working on in Japan, but the truth is he was only working on our museum (laughs)! And he did about 1000 drawings just for the Watarium. We were very demanding clients and wanted to discuss everything, like what materials he would use for this or that. Then of course we had to deal with space problems, because as you can see the plot of land on which the museum was built is rather small and it's shaped like a triangle. So we discussed each and every centimeter of the building. The actual building was carried on by a Japanese company, so there was Mario, the building company, and us in the middle. But I know he enjoyed working with us even because this was his first museum, so he was able to use the experience he had acquired here in his future projects, like the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Museum I of the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul, South Korea. And even for us it was a wonderful adventure, so much so that we have exhibited a number of architects over the years, like Carlo Scarpa and Louis Kahn.

I like it here because I find the building has a very flexible structure. Every time I come to see an exhibition, it feels like the whole building is a multi-level installation, as the floors are so organically arranged. What do you like in particular about the way the building turned out?
Mario infuses his buildings with a warmth that nicely offsets their outer look. On one side you have these stern-looking concrete buildings, but they are also full of light and convey a unique human touch. For me the Watarium is like a second home. A guest curator may have some problems relating to this particular space, but for us it's easy to develop a story around each artist and arrange the museum into different environments – a quiet space, a dynamic space, and so on.

Do you like putting up an exhibition?
At first we invited many guest curators. Our very first exhibition, for instance, was put together by pioneer Swiss curator Harald Szeemann. He had been the artistic director at Documenta V in Kassel back in 1972 – where he revolutionized the event by including performances and happenings – and even directed three editions of the Venice Biennale. Another important curator who worked with us was Jan Hoet who directed Documenta IX. For us this was a way to learn how to do things. At the turn of the century we began to curate the exhibitions ourselves, and focus more on younger up-and-coming artists, some of whom were working in Japan for the first time.

Do you share the same tastes and ideas with your sister? Or do you fight at times over a particular project?
We have worked together for so long we understand each other very well, and know what we are good at. For example, Etsuko is very knowledgeable in art history and is very good at curating artist retrospectives, while I'm more into younger contemporary artists.

We have just talked about the inside of the Watarium, but I know that sometimes you like to “break the rules” and your exhibitions spill out into the streets, like when you grew vegetables along Gaien Nishi Street. How difficult is it to organize such exhibitions?
That started in 1995 when we worked with Jan Hoet. We had met in Kassel three years before, when he directed Documenta IX and I worked there as a staff member. In 1995 we organized “Ripple Across the Water.” That was the first international exhibition of its kind and size to be held in Tokyo. We invited forty artists, each of them contributing a site-specific piece inside a 5 x 5 x 5 km triangular-shaped area. It was a huge project, way too big for a small family-run museum, but we didn't want to stop there, so we decided to do something similar, but smaller, every three or four years.

I guess it must be a big challenge for you and your sister. Or maybe not? After all you grew up in this area, and I think you have a deep relationship with Harajuku and the people who live here.
You see, we also like the “white cube” approach, and in that case we can be very strict and anal – we will spend hours arguing about where and how to display a work, maybe one centimeter higher or more to the left. But on the other side we are very curious. We like to just take something and put it in the street, and then see what happens. Art has so many possibilities, and we like to explore as many ways as we can according to our limited means. The only condition is that it must be fun and engaging. So much public art is unbearably boring. We just want to avoid that.

Are the authorities receptive of these ideas? How about the people who live here and the local businesses?
We had many problems with “Ripple Across the Water.” In Japan we have two local councils, the neighborhood association and the shop owner association, and we had to deal with both of them. The chairman at the time was a 70-year-old guy. He helped us a lot, like asking the owner of a vacant shop to let us use it for the project. But at the end of the exhibition he asked me to become the new chairman, and of course I couldn't say no. So I got to know all these people, like the school council and the shop owner association, the Police and Fire Department. It was very stressful, but at the same time it helped us create a network of contacts that we could use for future projects.

So you became a sort of local politician... Are you still involved in this kind of volunteer work?
No, I stopped in 2001 when my father fell ill and I had to look after him.

By the way, what do you think of Tokyo's drive to host the Olympic Games?
That's rather complicated. My four kids love it. They are really looking forward to it. Personally, I'm not completely sold on the idea. Let's say I'm about 50-50. First of all, I was born in 1960 which means I already experienced the Tokyo Olympics almost fifty years ago. Also, I honestly think that if they want to host the Games in Japan, they should do it in Tohoku. But of course politicians only want to show off, so this is never going to happen.

You mentioned Tohoku. How has the 3/11 Earthquake and Tsunami affected your work?
For the first six months I could do nothing. On top of that my father was dying, so it was a very emotional time for my family. But then we decided we had to give a clear and strong message on what we thought about Japanese society and the challenges that lie ahead of us. So we invited some young socially-involved artists, like Kyohei Sakaguchi and Chim Pom, who did a great job. We are very happy and proud of how things have turned out, and people's response.

I read somewhere that in your sister's opinion, your mother's collection was very ideological. Do you think that what you and Etsuko do is somehow political?
That's not our purpose. We choose who and what to show according to our tastes and what we feel, and sometimes it happens that a particular artist or work has a strong political message. But that's not the main reason why we choose them.

Speaking of ideologically charged art, let's go back in time and talk about Joseph Beuys. Did you actually meet him when he came to Japan?
Yes, even though it was my sister who spent the most time with him. They spent a whole day together and she was his guide. They walked around the neighborhood, and she took him to the Meiji Shrine near here. As for me, I remember when he came in 1984 and I have this particular memory of him writing on this big blackboard, covering it with his diagrams.

Beuys had a rather unorthodox approach to art-making. He saw art as social sculpture i.e. a sort of “total art” which had an important role in shaping society and politics. Do you agree with that?
I completely agree. At that time a lot of museums and galleries in Japan didn't care about these things. My family, on the contrary, loved this kind of art, where the idea is far more important than the actual work. My mother since the beginning was never attracted to beautiful objects in the traditional sense. She had a taste for the quirky, the unusual. That's why she was so close to the Fluxus people who were everything but mainstream, especially at that time.



Installation view of Yayoi Kusama's exhibition at the Watari Museum of Contemporary art.

Could you tell me something about your family's relationship with Beuys?
He was a great influence for us. As you know, Beuys saw himself first and foremost as a teacher. He said that teaching was his greatest work of art, and indeed, to us he was like a teacher. He showed us that art could be many different things, so in a sense he opened our eyes. He showed us that everything was possible in art. I learned many things from him, especially the idea that everybody is an artist.

It seems you have embraced his ideas about the pedagogical, educational role of art.
Yes, as I mentioned earlier, we have many educational programs. We do workshops, one specifically for kindergarten kids and another for elementary school children. We also do lectures and invite both traditional and contemporary artists to talk, besides musicians, designers, etc. We have done this for the last eighteen years. One particular series my sister has done for many years now is devoted to gardens, both traditional and modern, that personally I see like installation works. What I like about these lectures is that we all learn together. We sometimes choose subjects we – I mean my sister and I – know little or nothing about, and we do it on purpose, so we can learn new things and maybe use this knowledge later for a future exhibition.

I know your family had a very special relationship with Nam June Paik that lasted some thirty years. You are said to have the biggest collection of his works. How many pieces do you have?
If we include his drawings, I think 100 or 200 pieces.

How did your family come to develop such an intimate relationship with him?
My mother first met him in 1977 at Documenta VI. That definitely was a turning point in her life. Not only were they the only two Asians in Kassel, but Paik could actually speak Japanese, because after fleeing Korea in 1950 his family had moved to Japan and he had graduated from the University of Tokyo. This of course contributed to making them even closer. After graduating, Paik had moved to Germany to study music history in Munich. There he had met many avant-garde artists, including George Maciunas, and it was him who later introduced my mother to John Cage, Beuys, and other conceptual artists. That's how she managed to develop such strong ties with them. They would often create works specifically for her small gallery, and in turn she was able to slowly introduce them to the local museums and collectors.

So they met in 1977. When did he first come to Japan?
One year later. She began to invite him pretty regularly and organized his personal exhibitions about once a year. At the time Nam June was living in New York, but he always said he wanted to escape from America. We usually scheduled his exhibitions in September, and then he would spend another month here. So for him it was part work and part vacation. My family was very close to him and we supported him in many ways, particularly in those years when he was very poor. So it definitely wasn't only a business relationship. It's not an exaggeration to say that he became part of our family.

You were so close that he even destroyed your piano, right?
Yes, my sister's piano (laughs). She had stopped studying music, and I wasn't studying either. It was just sitting in our living room, unused, so my mother gave it to him, and he took it apart. Beuys had just died, and Nam June decided to do a funeral performance in which he combined this installation piece with sounds and noises.

Paik is famous for his video art...
And justly so, but I think that many people misunderstand his work. They only see the first video artist or the guy who played with technology, but for me he was first and foremost a philosopher. Technology, or whatever he did, was just the surface. Actually, he hated watching television; he found it boring – at least the way it had developed. He had a poetic mind. That's



Exterior view of JR's "Could art change the world?", February- June, 2013.

why we treasure him so much even if the art market doesn't care about him. He was always reading or playing the piano – that is, when he didn't destroy them (laughs).

Some of Paik's works are really bulky.
Oh my, I remember when his first exhibition at the Watarium soon after he won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale. He wanted to make an installation using 100 TV sets, so we bought him 100 TVs, and we still have them (laughs)! We could only afford to buy a cheap model because of our small budget, but we always tried to accommodate his wishes so he could realize his visions. It wasn't always like that for him. For example, we introduced him to a couple of galleries in America, and they made some pieces for him, I mean following his instruction. He actually didn't make them himself. Is that art? Of course it's his idea, but for us it's not really necessary. Everything in our collection was made by him, and we were directly involved in their making at different levels. This is something I'm very proud of.

Where do you store all this stuff?
We have two different storage spaces outside Tokyo.

His work is largely based on antiquated technology, so I think it poses many conservation challenges.
So we bought all the spare parts in bulk when they were still available.

By the way, how do you buy works for your collection? Do you go to auctions or art fairs?
No, as I said we are not really into those things. We usually buy directly from the artists. We invite them to do an exhibition here, and when it's over we keep some of their works.

You recently published a book on the museum titled “Yume miru bijutsukan keikaku” (Planning a Museum that Makes You Dream). So what kind of dreams do you have when you think about art?
This is a wonderful book and I hope someone someday will publish an English translation. My mother on one side was a serious manager of the museum, but on the other side she was a dreamer, always looking for unusual things. More than once she managed to surprise us with her choices. For example, it was her who began to talk about doing a series about gardens. When I heard that I was like, “what do gardens have to do with us?”! But she was right. She was always feeding us strange contents, always challenging us to see things in a different way.

You have four children, don't you?
Yes, one boy and three girls, aged twelve, thirteen, sixteen and eighteen.

The Watarium is a family-based operation, so I wonder what your own children think about what you do. Do they like it?
Some they do, some they don't. But you know, when I was their age I used to hate what my mother was doing, so I don't want to force them. But when I travel abroad for museum-related things, I sometimes take one of them with me. For example my son and I met John Lurie in New York, and he absolutely loved it. But ours is not a one-way, teacher-pupil relationship. They teach me many things as well, about pop culture, manga, etc., and I always struggle to catch up with them (laughs).

Absolute Feedback:
Notes on the Discursive Spaces of Video Art circa 1976
by Kenneth White

Out from the photograph he faces us directly, with confidence. Perhaps even with defiance. In crisp focus and bright contrast, the man bares his face to us. The photograph is cropped closely around his head: its composition is reminiscent of official, government-issued identification. One may even imagine that this is a mug shot in some document of culpability. His mouth is pursed in concentration. A spot of highlight from a standard fill-light at three-quarter position may be seen on the left side of his nose; pores are just visible in the full illumination. His shoulders are blurred, accentuating his seeking posture, his slight lean towards us. The word “VIDEO,” from the Latin “I see,” occupies a third of the cover's space. The word holds him back, a barrier. It meets the man just below his lips in a composition that evokes a kind of comic propaganda. One cannot escape without acknowledging the white orbs set where his eyes would be expected to transmit an assertive gaze. These white orbs, almost without shadow, one dares to say without matter but for their perfectly circumscribed form, lock upon a viewer. Their bright solidity, matched by the yellow text, generates an uncanny arrest: the presence of these twinned orbs, such as it is in this photograph, comes at the absence of the man's eyes. The photograph is commanding, unforgettable. And it holds a fascinating contradiction at its center – or, more appropriately, its centers.

The face is that of the artist Tom Sherman in a *ganzfeld*, or “total-field,” experiment. Ganzfeld, developed in the 1930s by the German psychologist and pioneer of Gestalt psychology Wolfgang Metzger, is a means to amplify interior perception.¹ By minimizing sensory inputs, a participant may achieve a heightened state of awareness of one's internal psycho-physiological system and its relation to the environment, immediate and cosmic: “expanded consciousness” according to the phrase of the 1960s and 70s counterculture in which Gestalt psychology received renewed attention in pseudoscientific and parapsychological contexts amplified by hallucinogens. Thus, in Sherman's depicted state, what the artist seeks is precisely the temporary *extinguishment* of external visual information (that is, his photographer, and by extension, us, his anticipated audience, seeing him). Due to the halved ping-pong ball set into his eye-sockets, our image, for Sherman, would disintegrate into a uniform field of white light, a blank array to his starved eyes. We would be invisible to him, out of sight. Not even a specter. How did a photograph of Tom Sherman in a ganzfeld experiment come to appear on the cover of the book *Video By Artists*?

Video By Artists was published in 1976 in an edition of 1000 by Art Metropole in Toronto. AA Bronson, a founder of Art Metropole, and a member of the collective General Idea, designed the book.² Bronson invited Sherman to share his ganzfeld photographs, which were circulating in the Toronto art community under a title constituted by minimal, descriptive language: *The Ordinary Ping-Pong Ball, Cut in Half, Provides a Source of Even White Light* (1975). Peggy Gale edited the book. Gale had recently curated the show *Videoscape* at the Art Gallery of Ontario (November 20, 1974 – April 1, 1975), the first museum exhibition devoted to video art in Canada. She was just beginning her renowned career as an art historian, critic, and curator. *Video By Artists* is one of the first major publications devoted to artists' experiments with video technology: “a source book for the medium.”³ The book includes copiously illustrated portfolios and full curriculum vita from sixteen international artists and collectives. Among those featured include Ant Farm, the San Francisco-based collective; David Askevold, leader of the famed “Projects” classes at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax; General Idea; Dan Graham; Lisa Steele; Vincent Trasov, a.k.a. “Mr. Peanut,” a founding member of the Western Front artist-run center in Vancouver; and the collective W.O.R.K.S. (“We Ourselves Roughly Know Something”), whose profile includes an interview between W.O.R.K.S. member Clive Robertson and Willoughby Sharp. Contributors to the essay section include Les Levine, Askevold, Gale, Graham, Bronson, and Jean-Pierre Boyer. An extensive bibliography concludes the book. Tom Sherman provided the introduction, constituted by previously distinct text works entitled “Adjusting a Colour Television” (1975) and “Voluntary Handcuffs” (1975).⁴ His introduction was complemented by another photograph from his ganzfeld action. In this photograph, Sherman's hair is combed straight back, slick. *Video By Artists* is a selective encapsulation of the state of culture, a rich survey that asserts video as a crucial tool for advanced art. And it asserts video as a powerful social mechanism by which communal action may be instigated. Across the book's pages, video is celebrated as a binding premise for disparate aesthetic agendas. One primary concern shared by the artists and essayists, a concern defining of avant-garde media cultures at large, is a devotion to resistance and analysis of dominant modes of media production; namely commercial television and cinema of the American studio system.

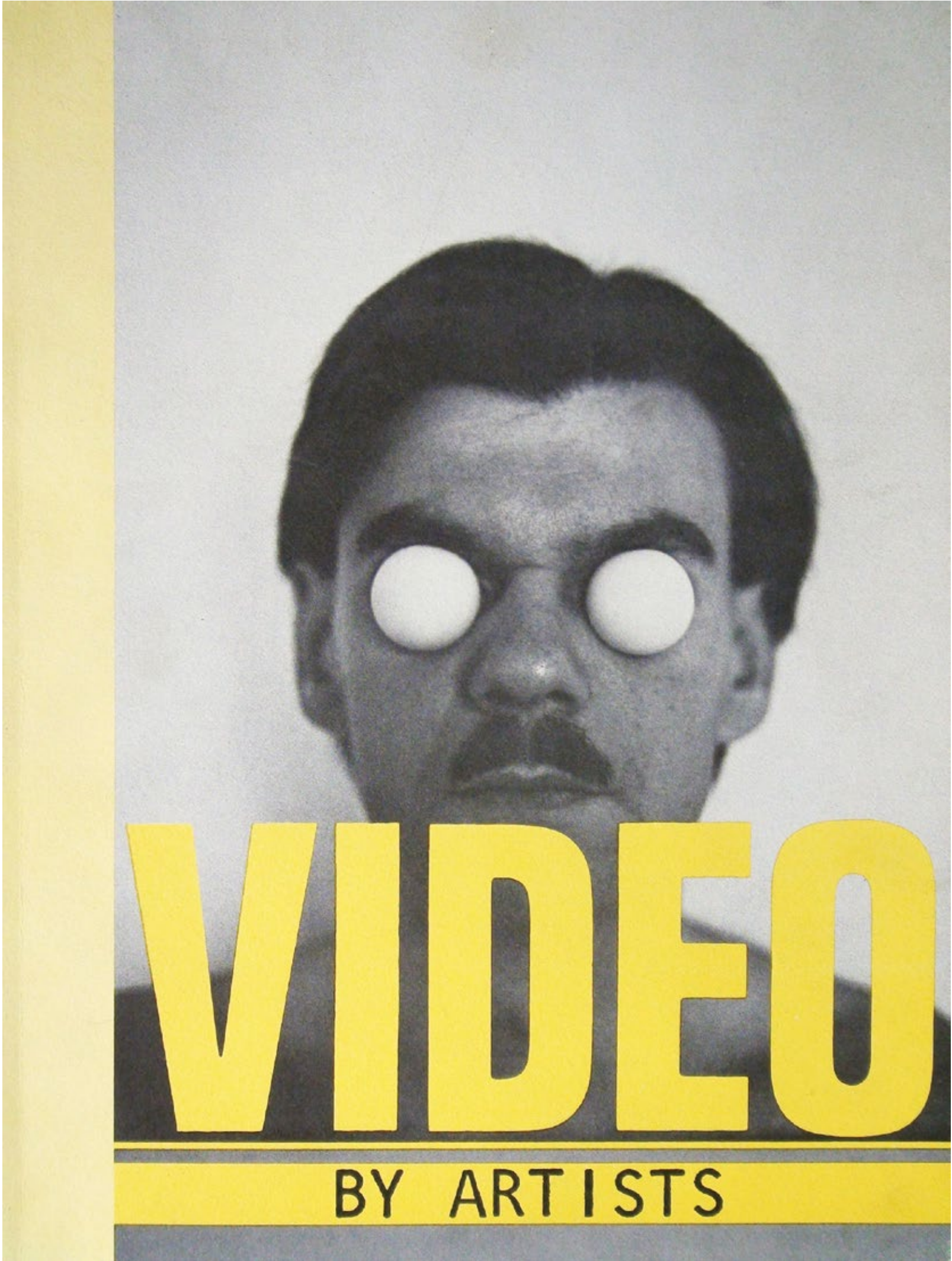
Video By Artists was a major contribution in a cumulative blossoming of publications that defined avant-garde media cultures of the 1960s and 70s. In 1970, Gene Youngblood published his canonical book *Expanded Cinema*. Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp devoted *Avalanche* number 9 (May/June 1974), the first newspaper-format issue, to “Video Performance.” Also in 1974, the catalog to accompany Peggy Gale's exhibition *Videoscape* was published by the Art Gallery of Ontario. *Videoscape* included 49 Canadian artists – “a number surprising to everyone,” she recalls – and five Americans (all based in New York).⁵ In early 1975, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania mounted the exhibition *Video Art*, which subsequently traveled to the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. *Video Art* included over eighty artists. Each was represented in a half-page profile in the catalogue's distinct 11 x 8.5-inch design. In 1976, the Raindance Foundation in New York, publisher of the influential video periodical *Radical Software* (1970 – 74), issued *Video Art: An Anthology*, a 286-page book surveying the work of seventy-three international artists. Bibliographies in these publications include materials dating back as early as 1965. It was in that year that Nam June Paik allegedly made the first work of video art, a recording of Pope Paul IV's visit to New York, with a prototype of the Sony CV-2400 Portapak video system. These histories continue to be charted and contested.⁶

In 1974, in “A New Medium,” her essay for the *Videoscape* catalog, Gale writes: “There must be more curiosity and less information today about video than about any other single medium for artistic expression. In a restless era which tediously proclaims that ‘painting is dead’ and pursues sculpture out into the valleys and deserts, artists seek out new forms that might offer an opportunity for breakthrough into a different kind of sensibility.”⁷ By 1976, artists' use of video accumulated a considerable amount of information. Tom Sherman is one of many managers of that information who found more critical edge than expanded consciousness. On the cover of *Video By Artists*, a book celebrating artists' innovations with powerful new electronic moving image technologies, we see an artist closing down his inputs, as it were. The artist retreats into himself while his representation is set upon by mechanical reproduction, one thousand books in all. In this key image of the Toronto video scene, on the cover of one of the most important publications of postwar avant-garde media art, Sherman faces us, with apparent paradox, as a defiant, impenetrable screen. Contra to the similarly composed celebrity-profile covers of *Avalanche*, Sherman enacts a means to intensified sensitivity to his internal systems and his external environment – to expanded consciousness – at the expense of visual rapport with his viewers, his presumed environment, a video audience. He does not share of himself, rather, he reinforces his separation. What emerges from Sherman's image is not euphoria, but a distinctively Cold War paranoia of infiltration. His interior experience is a self-display that refuses inter-subjective relation. Sherman stages a classic action of the counterculture so to subvert one of its founding conceits.

* * *

The cover of *Avalanche* 9 “Video Performance” (May/June 1974) seems to offer the promise of a new public sphere like the covers of previous issues of the magazine from which the artist-as-celebrity beckons. *Avalanche* 9, the first in the Newspaper format, features on its cover a frontal profile image of Suzanne Harris. Her image is delimited by the curving dimensions of a monitor screen. It originates from the opening moments of the videotape *Prisoner's Dilemma* (1974) by Richard Serra and Robert Bell. She looks into the camera directly, she faces her implied audience with chin slightly raised, braids bound and crossed on the top of her head. An American flag, ruffled behind her, is illuminated from below and behind the artist. Harris is lit by a fill out of frame left. It is a roughly classical lighting schema, emphasizing clarity and drama. Her large crystal earrings catch the light. The composition is reminiscent of those constructed for television news anchors – or, as Harris confirms quickly in her performance, a recitation of the National Anthem in an ironic turn on the patriotic staple of broadcasts of the era.

However, Harris' voice is thin, deflated, even by the tinny standards of video recording capabilities available at the time. Her face gives up no emotion; her effort suggests tradition exhausted, threadbare and flagging, as it were. And rather than marking the close of the day's program, Harris' performance is the prologue to Serra and Bell's dissection of commercial television conventions as the vulgar entertainment form of games of culpability played at the grand scale of the Cold War in their name, against their will, beyond their control. In *Prisoner's*



“Sherman_VBA”: Cover image from Peggy Gale, ed. *Video by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1976). Courtesy of private collection.

Dilemma game theory is a game show set in the New York art world in which the potential hazard is spending six hours alone in a basement: “that’s about the length of the average boring artist’s videotape.” Mutually-assured destruction is another bureaucratic iteration of the increasingly pervasive American media condition. Like Sherman on the cover of *Video By Artists*, on the cover of *Avalanche 9* we find a negatory confrontation.

In the same year *Avalanche 9* was published, Sherman published a short essay entitled “The Art-Style Computer-Processing System.” The artist presents a hilarious, nuanced critique of increasing reliance on computer technologies. Specifically, Sherman considers the effect of computers upon art historiography. The “ASCPS” essay is, more broadly, an example of the artist’s meditation on image/text relationships and their effect on individual expression in an environment increasingly bound to computer technologies. In a droll, bureaucratic voice, the artist describes a hypothetical processing system that is

“specifically designed to manipulate the message transmitted to the two-dimensional surface of the video screen. The message is limited to display on the flat surface of the video screen. An analogy is formed between processing the video message and the act of painting. This processing system provides personal choice of how the message source is viewed, in the same way the painter chooses to view the environment through his or her methods or style of painting. This system is labeled the ASCPS.”⁸

Terms such as “specifically” and “personal choice” flag the barely implicit criticism of the transceivers that the article ostensibly celebrates. The “analogy” of the processing system comes to suggest not only the electronics of video and television, but also the historical tradition of painting. The “Art-Style Computer-Processing System” refers to the fraught rhetorical devices carried by communication technologies. The artist elaborates in machinic, almost pathological, detail:

“The ASCPS is constructed of information obtained from every major historically innovative treatment of the two-dimensional surface. The system contains the concise history of painting. By block encoding historically successful modes of sensing, the system contains a set of period visions. These period visions are methods of seeing the environment. They are rule-governed styles for processing messages. The rules are those instituted by schools of painting dominating particular periods of history. At this time, period visions contained by the system are: Abstract Expressionism, Abstract Impressionism, Action Painting, Arabesque, Art Nouveau, Automatism, Barbizon School, Baroque, Bio-Morphic, Cartoon, Classic, Color-Field, Cubism, Dada, Danube School Divisionism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Futurism, Gothic (Late and International), Group of Seven, History Painting, Hudson River School, Impressionism, London Group, Mannerism, Neo-Classic, Neo-Impressionism, Optical, Orphic Cubism, Painterly Abstraction, Photo-Realism, Pointillism, Post-Impressionism, Primitive, Rayonism, Realism, Renaissance, Rococo, Romanist, Romantic, Social Realism, Super-Realism, Suprematism, Surrealism, Synthetism, Tenebrism, and Vorticism.”⁹

Sherman’s essay is a joke on the rhetorics of Art History. He is in dialogue with contemporaneous concerns over the exhaustion of modernism, the reduction of the strategies of the avant-garde to repeatable templates, to noxious genres. Sherman’s essay claims the dry, dead-pan humor of early video’s “boring” stream of muddled black and white images as an effective means to deflate the history of art into a system of “period visions.” Video processing has the last laugh as the structure and vehicle for Art History, now the content and style of telecommunications hardware. Like the cybernetic discourse so influential upon Sherman while he wrote his essay, the ASCPS as a hypothetical object is an aggregate of disciplinary codes. An essay by an artist deeply immersed in the information environment, one sees an individual striving to manage that environment. Sherman gives us his own ambivalent “period vision” of telecommunications technologies, its predetermined channels that offer the veneer of personal choice.

In Spring 1976, the first issue of *October* was published. It included the now-canonical essay “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism” by Rosalind Krauss, one of the journal’s founding editors. Widely cited and anthologized, the text is often understood to be one of the first critical engagements with artists’ use of video. Krauss’ argument that narcissism is a defining characteristic of video art, even suggesting that the psychological situation of narcissism is itself the actual medium of video, continues to determine scholarship on video and media art. The article is distinguished by a deep ambivalence towards the status of video as a medium. Indeed, for Krauss, video is a “bad object,” pitched against the modernism of painting and sculpture. Krauss suggests that artists’ use of video is not so much one of self-expression as the amplification of narcissistic impulses, a cold loop in which the Other is bracketed out

for the withdrawal into the Self. Through its very dependence on technological means of representation, video pulls one’s attention from the physical world into an echo chamber of solipsism. To describe this situation, in addition to narcissism, Krauss introduces the phrase “absolute feedback”:

“One could say that if the reflexiveness of modernist art is a *dédoublement* or doubling back in order to locate the object (and thus the objective conditions of one’s experience), the mirror-reflection of absolute feedback is a process of bracketing out the object. This is why it seems inappropriate to speak of a physical medium in relation to video. For the object (the electronic equipment and its capabilities) has become merely an appurtenance. And instead, video’s real medium is a psychological situation, the very terms of which are to withdraw attention from an external object – an Other – and invest it in the Self. Therefore, it is not just any psychological condition one is speaking of. Rather it is the condition of someone who has in Freud’s words, ‘abandoned the investment of objects with libido and transformed object-libido into ego-libido.’ And that is the specific condition of narcissism.”¹⁰

The term “absolute feedback” leaps forward. Indeed, video presents a literal feedback system: its ontological status is defined by light passing from a camera that translates that light into an electronic signal, which is then passed through a monitor that translates the signal back into a representational image coincident with that captured by the camera. Krauss, in this early account, dismisses video by interpreting its absolute feedback within the terms of narcissism. However, I would like to suggest, by way of provisional conclusion to these notes, absolute feedback as a potent notion of describing the modalities at work in *Video By Artists*, *Avalanche 9*, Sherman’s *The Art-Style Computer Processing System*, and finally Krauss’ own essay. That is, not aesthetics of narcissism but a historically contingent concern with the Self turning into Other: a Cold War anxiety of infiltration.¹¹

ENDNOTES

- 1) See Wolfgang Metzger, “Optische Untersuchungen am Ganzfeld,” *Psychologische Forschung* 13 (1930): 6-29.
- 2) A more detailed history of Art Metropole, General Idea, their publications, and the broader culture of artist-run spaces is beyond the scope of this essay. Excellent accounts, and comprehensive bibliographies, may be found in Gabrielle Detterer and Maurizio Nannucci, ed. *Artist-Run Spaces: Nonprofit Collective Organizations in the 1960s and 1970s* (Zürich: JRP | Ringier, 2012); Jeff Khonsary and Kristina Lee Podesva, ed. *Institutions by Artists* (Vancouver: Fillip Editions, 2012); Gwen Allen, *Artists’ Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2011); Kitty Scott and Jonathan Shaughnessy, *Art Metropole: The Top 100*, exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2006); Luis Jacob, ed. *Golden Streams: Artists’ Collaboration and Exchange in the 70s* (Mississauga: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
- 3) Peggy Gale, “All these years: Early Toronto Video,” 6. See Chris Gehman, ed. *Explosion in the Movie Machine: Essays and Documents on Toronto Artists’ Film and Video* (Toronto: Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto (LIFT), Images Festival, and YYZ Books, forthcoming 2013).
- 4) “Adjusting a Colour Television” (1975) and “Voluntary Handcuffs” (1975) be found in Tom Sherman, *Cultural Engineering*, ed. Willard Holmes, exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1980), 47 and 91-92, respectively.
- 5) Gale, “All These Years: Early Toronto Video,” 1.
- 6) Tom Sherman argues that Nam June Paik did not have access to the Sony Portapak CV-2400, released two years later in 1967. In his essay “The Premature Birth of Video Art,” Sherman writes: “Some have speculated that Paik had his hands on an early prototype of the Sony Portapak (the CV-2400), sent to him from Japan. Shigeko Kubota, Paik’s wife, told Skip Blumberg that Nam June’s older brother sent him a CV-2400 from Japan in 1965. This cannot have happened, as according to Shuya Abe, Paik’s long-time friend and engineer-collaborator on the Paik-Abe synthesizer, the CV-2400 Portapak was released in the US first, not Japan, in 1967. Sony’s product archives back this up. There were no battery-powered Sony Portapaks available in 1965.” See Tom Sherman, “The Premature Birth of Video Art,” <nettime> communication, January 2, 2007.

- Barbara Moore, art historian, writer, and manager/curator of the Peter Moore Archive, offers a different account. On December 12, 2012, at Anthology Film Archives, New York, in her lecture “Judson Dance Theater in Context 1963 – 65,” she stated that in 1965 Paik was indeed working with a portable video system. However, it malfunctioned ahead of the screening at the Café Au Go Go. With customary wit, Paik told his audience that they were watching his videotape recording when in fact he covered his technical difficulty by turning on the television set and claiming the commercially broadcast images of the Pope as his own work. Moore’s book-length study *Observing the Avant-Garde: Peter Moore and the Photography of Performance* is forthcoming.
- 7) Peggy Gale, “A New Medium,” in *Videoscape*, exh. cat. (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1974), no pagination.
- 8) Tom Sherman, “The Art-Style Computer-Processing System” (1974), in *Before and After the I-Bomb: An Artist in the Information Environment*, ed. Peggy Gale (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2002), 173. Originally published in *Journal for the Communication of Advanced Television Studies* (London, England) 2.2 (Fall, 1974).
- 9) *Ibid.*, 173-74.
- 10) Rosalind Krauss, “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” *October* 1 (Spring 1976): 57.
- 11) I would like to thank Tom Sherman for generously giving his time and attention to my questions. My gratitude also to Corinn Berger and Yan Wu of Art Metropole. My especial thanks to Soyoung Yoon. This essay is an excerpt from my Ph.D dissertation *Libidinal Engineers: Three Studies in Cybernetics and Its Discontents*, Stanford University Department of Art & Art History, forthcoming.



Avalanche issue 9, 1974. Courtesy of private collection.

ANDREA GEYER

Land Art: Between Theory & Social Practice

by Maria Nicolacopoulou

“Yes, *Avalanche* was a publication, a catalogue, a curatorial effort that replicated a show without an exhibition. *Avalanche* was the exhibition itself. And, I may say, it was a better exhibition than the “Earth Art” exhibition was, even though “Earth Art” had some sensational pieces. “Earth Art” catalogue – published by Cornell in 1970 - in no way captured the spirit and the integrity and the importance of that art. It is left to *Avalanche*.”

-Willoughby Sharp

Land Art’s influence on the 20th century goes beyond environmentally conscious initiatives and earthworks, connecting the movement to the onset of site-specific works as well as contemporary ideas of art as social practice. With its most prevalent moment in the end of the 1960s, Land Art’s conceptual context of removing the object’s finite material framework by integrating it as part of a boundless space, was an experimental format responding to the sociopolitical upheaval of the time and another manifestation of process art, similar to Fluxus.

Fluxus was an attempt to de-contextualize the consumerist language of the time and the tendency to commodify, by creating actions and events framed as objects in an attempt to bypass the elitist gallery approach and make art accessible to wider audiences. The object had now exchanged its ‘value’ and ‘form’ with that of ‘information,’ a concept that Land Artists transformed into work. Robert Smithson was interested in the science and engineering of a systems’ entropy, which he expressed in his *Nonsites*, and their documentation in literature. Whether we are talking about *Spiral Jetty* or Walter de Maria’s *Lightning Field*, we see how an informational system was incorporated into the land as a perpetual process artwork, and the earth became a conceptual source of mechanical information silently documenting not only the natural changes of the environment, but also the technological consequences of our human intervention.

The sociopolitical developments of the time [the 1960s being a turning point in culture, economics and politics worldwide] generated artistic turmoil that was received and confronted by a number of experimental movements from Pop Art to Process Art and Arte Povera. It is not a coincidence that most of those movements have at their core the time’s prevalent cultural commodification, as well as the beginning of the media prevalence that Pop Art reflected so accurately. Turning to the land was as much towards nature as away from commodification, in combination with the mass media fascination that was beginning to dominate social and political culture.

A similar condition of technological overwhelm is the result of today’s oversimplification of everyday interactions via digital mediation. With our communication methods being subverted into minimal sentences and social relationships reduced to algorithms of digital interface, it is no surprise that Relational Aesthetics was born. The need for artistic products stemming from the social context of human relationships has never been more urgent than now. Contemporary art is not linear, as art history has recorded past mediums, with one movement being born out of the other. Rather, it is spawned from the reflected contemporaneity of its respective time.

Therefore the link between Land Art and art as social practice reflects how the developments in contemporary society generate similarly subversive work in relation to the sociopolitical developments of the 1960s. We could of course look back at isolated incidents of art with sociopolitical function, like Beuys’s social sculpture, but the tendencies then were not based on a concentrated effort responding to a global urgency for de-centralizing as they are today. As Slavoj Žižek accurately noted during his speech in Creative Time’s “Confronting Inequity” summit, “it is the public space that is disappearing today, not the private space,” so any attempt to create possibilities for public interaction is what is in dire need and why socially engaged art and participatory art have become two of the most important tendencies of the 21st century.

“There are certain aspects that I appreciate in current art practices: one of them is the return of the importance of the body in dialogue with the socio political and historical environment we live in. Sabine Breitwieser recently noted to me that she sees the success of performance on an institutional level as related to an audience’s desire to come together and experience something together which is an interesting observation. It adds to the presence of the performer(s) the bodily presence of a viewer, who experiences herself within a collective.”

-Andrea Geyer

An attempt was made last year at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles to reintroduce the history of Land Art and “de-isolate” it from the prevailing notion of its conscious removal from the art world. *Ends of the Earth, Land Art to 1974*, was a historical exhibition at MOCA during the summer of 2012, which traveled to Haus der Kunst through winter

2012/13. The show traced the movement’s formation, conceptual backbone, and relationship to modern modes, through the filter of institutional history. Curated by Philipp Kaiser and Miwon Kwon, this revisionist show attempted to:

- a.) connect the significance of Land Art’s media coverage and its relationship to the movement’s core existence.
- b.) confront and correct misconceptions of the movement’s separation from the art institution.
- c.) present the international scope of the movement.
- d.) underline the incorporation of urban ground related works shaped by architectural and urban planning concepts that have been previously overlooked.

The presupposition of whether art can exist independently of the institutions that support it is therefore categorically negated here, which can generate problematizing concerns when approaching current issues in contemporary art practice and art as social practice in particular. “The reductive and outdated presumption of opposition between art and art institutions that undergirds such thinking is a cliché that should be abandoned.” (Kaiser/Kwon, 2012, p.18)

The exhibition catalogue also confirms that the issues facing Land Art at the time, in relation to the institution, are, “in many ways urgent concerns for the field of contemporary art in general.” (Kaiser/Kwon, 2012, p.17) If indeed this is the case, we have just agreed that art cannot exist outside of the institution. Therefore, what are the implications for art initiatives that take place outside of institutional parameters today or the dominant western arena said institution constitutes? And how far does the reach of that institution spread in defining art’s ‘claim’ in general? Or was this perhaps Land Art’s success: the ability to expand the institution’s borders outside of the finite confinement of a building and redefine the true notion of the ‘border’?

This exhibition offered an alternative view to what has been more widely known and accepted about the movement’s formation in order to redefine the prevailing perspective behind its framework. Perhaps the timely distance from the movement’s prevalence to today has created a necessary distance for the interpretation and understanding of their spheres of activity to be clearer and more precise. Rather than trying to deconstruct and analyze the different theories as how well they parallel today’s sociocultural realities and the productive agency of contemporary artistic practice, I met with artist Andrea Geyer in order to present them next to the artist’s perspective. As Andrea noted very accurately, “there is a difference between what artists do and what the discourse around art does,” and so it would be fundamental to illustrate the point of view of the artist, particularly one whose practice engages both with Land Art as well as art as social practice.

Andrea Geyer is a German-born artist, living in New York. Andrea has been the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, as well as a graduate of the Whitney Museum’s Independent Study program. Apart from exhibiting in the US in institutions like the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art, Andrea has shown around the world, including the São Paulo Biennial, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Tate Modern, London; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland, Stedelijk Museum.

Consisting of nineteen frames, each combining either two or three black and white photographs with a text, and having taken seven years to complete, her work *Spiral Lands* is an investigation of the relation between land and identity in North America and the Native Americans’ ongoing struggle for justice and the return of their land. By incorporating original texts and treaty passages from Native American scholars on issues like identity, colonization, exploitation and contemporary history, Andrea combines photography and video to illustrate how the relationship of land, ownership, space and history are conditions of the past as well as the global present. *Spiral Lands/Chapter 2* is a 45-minute slide projection of eighty color and black & white slides of landscapes photographed at Chaco Canyon. A voiceover offers a seemingly coherent anthropological narrative, yet becomes an institutional critique to that particular scholarly agency, examining the role of the gaze that artists and researchers hold in relation to this land.

In a conversation Andrea speaks about elements of *Spiral Lands/Chapter 1/Chapter 2* and the process of making it that made her reflect on the Land Art movement today and the echo of the politics behind the creative agencies of social practice that it evokes:

“I have always found it interesting that nowhere in the discourse around *Spiral Jetty*, is it mentioned that if you go to New Mexico, Utah or Arizona, there are spirals everywhere. Everywhere. They are painted and carved into rocks by generations of people. The spiral is a very significant mark for different indigenous cultures local to these lands. I assume Smithsonian must have known about it, because he was scouting the area with Michael Heizer, and Heizer’s father, Robert Heizer, was an important anthropologist of early cultures in the Americas. But even if Smithsonian wasn’t aware of these spirals,



Spiral Lands. Chapter I, 2007, installation with fiber based photographs and text (17 frames 70 x 175cm, 2 frames 70 x 230cm), brochure with footnotes © Andrea Geyer, courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

this disconnect feels even more peculiar, given the suggested meaning of the spiral marks on stone as a particular understanding of time, of a world in motion, which could be an interesting aspect to discuss in dialogue with the spiral Smithsonian added to the existing ones in this landscape.

Spiral Lands / Chapter 1, among many other things, tries to look at the questions raised by these ongoing disconnections that are perpetuated in history. In this way one could say that the work reflects critically on Land Art practices that perceive land as “raw material” and simply project a set of ideas, a set of values, a set of strategies on it. Yet these lands are full of undeniable meaning, of histories and of culture. Therefore we need to ask what labor is necessary to understand what (this) land means, what its actual material meaning is in the artwork. And that’s not only a problem in Land Art, but other type of art projects working in shared space or with marginalized communities. It requires a critical reflection on the historical and intellectual gestures artists employ(ed) in their work and the expanse of their meaning.

I ask myself: Where and how does the position of the artist become part of the discourse? How does the specificity of the motivations and the questions that bring someone to do a certain kind of project get activated in dialogue with other communities that the work consciously or unconsciously? That’s where it becomes social practice. It’s hard to have dialogue with communities and it takes time and humility and the capacity to laugh together at times. It is about establishing new relationships of trust and reciprocity. And it requires critical reflexivity about the consequences of a work’s reception upon the people and the communities where the work has been made. During my work on the Navajo Nation, I was asked many times, ‘why did you come here?’ as a kind of invitation to think about my entitlement to go out West and start photographing. And this is at the foundation of the relationship

between someone like me, a new settler and a member of the Navajo Nation. The event of making a work can no longer be a process of extraction.”

For Andrea, the term ‘social’ is inadequate in trying to describe art as, according to her, art has to be able to have an effect on the social as well as the cultural, the historical and bring all of those elements together. By underlining the social, it’s as if some of the other elements from the equation are eliminated. Land Art of the 1960s, although ground-breaking and expansive, did not incorporate historical or cultural elements of the actual land to transcend the practice into a socially engaging act. It did, however, open the gates to subsequent movements that looked into those ideas in more detail and in that way we can say that it connects to the development of art as social practice today.

“I understand my work as poetic document making, which of course has its own shortcomings. But for me this claim of creating a document is about the concept that art can be understood as a consciously created trace in time, with time. And as such, it offers information and ideas that can travel across time. When it gets re-encountered by viewers, it offers ongoing possibilities to learn something beyond the ideas of the work itself. This is the most important aspect of Smithsonian’s *Spiral Jetty* for me; the fact that I can look at it and understand something about the moment it was made, and by its continued reception, I see what is included as well as what was left out.”

Having had the opportunity to visit the Utah site, I can attest to that claim and the temporal and spatial historicity that the work conveys. Andrea’s claim of her work being a ‘document’ sheds light on the importance of documentation that has been an issue within the Land Art



Time Present (work in progress), 2008, digital C-Print, engraved glass, 86 x 108 cm, aluminum frame. © Andrea Geyer, courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

movement and its perception. Even though there is the notion of the artist documenting the work in various media formats so it “does not go unseen” [discussed in detail in MOCA’s *Ends of the Earth* exhibition], there were those artists, like Michael Heizer and Walter De Maria, who believed that the documentation is not the work. They did not agree to participate in exhibitions with documented material, as for them, the work exists only “out there.” (Kaiser/ Kwon, 2012, p.30)

Andrea’s work is a kind of archival documentation. Not in contemporary performative or institutional terms of collecting, but rather, in a historical attestation, combined with the subtlety of a poetical aesthetic. This can also be seen in *Time Present*, a work in progress manifesting the relationship of an individual and a community to global warming via textual and visual material of tangible objects, like an iceberg. As Andrea explained, she wasn’t planning to make any work around the topic of global warming due to the vastness of the issue, but when she found herself in Nunavut, on the north shore of Canada, and was faced with newly detached pieces of ice melting from ten thousand years ago. It was now a direct experience, the physicality of which, could not be overlooked. The ice now represented and embodied the entirety of the global warming’s politics. “*I take note when I encounter this kind of immediate physicality because I am interested in the embodiment of meaning, of politics, of history as a bodily experience. It is part of the struggle to be present to this time, to this moment.*”

Which is also another way of reacting to today’s technological saturation, responsible for our constant distraction from the here and now, and consequential isolation as discussed previously. Alternatively, as Okwui Enwezor suggests, the turn to the archive, and the form of the document, could also be seen as another view of the same token with the focus turning to the past and towards the contemporaneity of the past’s “moment” where we were virtually

technology free.

These elements of manifestation in Andrea’s work transcend the ordinary definition of documentation into a contemplative vessel of narrative, historiography, land art, identity and social practice. They foreground the fundamentals of any art practice that attempts to implicate the social. With the land art movement initiating the extension of spatial and temporal boundaries of application - further supported and complemented by the sociocultural and historical axis of subsequent movements’ contemporaneity and 21st century’s relational platform - art’s social practice agency attests to not only a continuity with the past, but also towards a future promise.

REFERENCES

- Joselit, David, “Art as Information: Systems, Sites, Media” in *American Art Since 1945*, Thames & Hudson, 2003
- Kaiser, Philipp & Kwon, Miwon, *Ends of the Earth, Land Art to 1974* exhibition catalogue, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2012
- Living As Form*, ed, Nato Thompson, by Creative Time, MIT Press, 2012

ENDNOTES

- 1) Gerry Schum’s Fernsehgalerie, was the first TV exhibition, it was about Land Art and featured artists Richard Long, Barry Flanagan, Dennis Oppenheim, Marinus Boezem, Robert Smithson, Jan Dibbets, Walter de Maria and Michael Heizer. This was aired on April 15, 1969 on Berlin’s Sender Freies channel depicting the land art projects and their making. It was then distributed all over Europe. (*Ends of the Earth*, 2012, p.231)



Robert Smithson, “Spiral Jetty”, 1970. Courtesy of Ferns and Moss.



Spiral Lands / Chapter 2, 2008, installation in an educational setting with slide projection, 80 color and black and white slides, voice over 50 min, brochure with footnotes, exhibition view, Taipei, 2012 © Andrea Geyer, courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

TAUBA AUERBACH

by Kenneth Caldwell

I went to visit Tauba Auerbach at her studio in Brooklyn. A slight rain was falling, and I had no idea where I was. Although the neighborhood appears industrial, there are cafés of the type that suggest gentrification. Tauba’s studio was warm, tidy, and inviting, with a special area for working with spray tools. The purpose of my visit was to interview her about the prints she recently completed for Paulson Bott Press. Very quickly, the conversation strayed in other directions.

Tell me what you’re working on here in the studio.

I’m doing lots of weaving. I’m exploring topological interactions of threads and fibers, using a couple of different techniques. One is this monochromatic system where the contrast in the pieces comes from the difference in the length of the float, which is the term for how long a strip is in the “over” position. In this other type of weaving with two colors, which is something called shadow weaving, it’s a checkerboard weaving pattern. It reverses in some sections, and therefore, the direction of the stripes reverses.

What are you weaving on?

Directly onto the stretcher. First I draw a pattern on the computer using Adobe Illustrator. This pattern isn’t a description of what the piece is going to look like when it’s finished. It’s a description of what position each strip is in. They are like instructions.

Almost like a simple computer program, like we used to do with punch cards?

Yes, but there’s nothing automated about it. I draw every square, but I just benefit from being able to cut and paste on the computer. I make this colored pattern and one person reads the pattern calling out the ‘over’s and ‘under’s, and the other person weaves it.

Do you always stick to the pattern you’ve laid out?

Often, once I get part of the way into weaving, I’ll realize there’s something I don’t like. Then I make an alteration to the pattern.

You go back to the screen?

Yes. This still happens a lot, because I’m still learning how to do this. I’m still making it up. There are some things I can’t predict. For example, I just don’t know how the shadows are going to fall.

The diagram on the computer doesn’t capture light, does it?

I have a flat drawing. And a lot of the visual information you’re getting, especially in the monochromatic pieces, has to do with shadows. Sometimes I make patterns on the computer that look really exciting. And then we weave them, and it looks like nothing. It just looks so flat and boring. There can be other surprises in the good direction, too.

How did this evolve out of what you were doing previously?

I’ve been interested in topology for a long time. That naturally led me to weaving, because when you weave, essentially, you’re working with two complete planes that are changing places over and over again. I also have a fascination with things that I would consider technologies that we don’t talk about as technology anymore, because they’re old, like rope-making and weaving.

Some of the strongest high-tech materials that we use now are woven, like carbon fiber; for example. It’s not just the material properties of the carbon fiber, but also the way it’s arranged that gives it its strength.

As artists, we’re painting on woven material all the time, this sort of invisible support. I thought I’d burrow into the support and into the material and build it back from scratch, in a way.

The third reason is that I was preparing for a show that’s traveling called *Tetrachromat*. A tetrachromat is a person who has a fourth color receptor on their retinas, whereas the standard human has three. There has been quite a bit of evidence recently that there are human tetrachromats—they’re all women, because this is carried on the X chromosome.

I was trying to imagine what the tetrachromat’s world is like. I developed this monochromatic weaving during that time, because one of the things I learned about likely tetrachromacy is that the mutated, extra receptor would not allow a person to perceive colors outside the normal, standard spectrum visible to humans—like ultraviolet or infrared. The perception would be between the red and the green. There would be a dramatic increase in sensitivity and an ability to distinguish between yellows that look all the same to us, or things around the yellow range. So tetrachromacy is the ability to see variety and maybe depth or light or shadow in things that look the same to most people. Weaving seemed like a natural way to try to investigate that kind of variety within one very simple color or non-color.

Wow. A more mundane question. You cut these strips?

Yes. They come on big spools. There’s a very specific spacing. And at the end, we straighten the whole thing with a big long ruler and push all of the strips into a straight position.

And then you have to unstaple it all and restaple it?

I don’t have to unstaple. We staple all the ones going the horizontal way. When we’re weaving the verticals, we just pin them on the back. Then at the end we pull them really tight and staple.

Tell me more about this technique.

I was doing weaving research, and I came upon this technique called shadow weaving. I think it’s called that because, if you were to isolate this shape, it appears that there’s a shadow on this side and a highlight on that side. By reversing it, you get the stripes running in different directions. And I’ve pretty much only seen it used to create straight shapes. I’m trying to see what can happen with something a little bit more complicated than that. This is only the fifth one that I’ve done using this technique. So I feel like I’m really at the beginning of something with this and not quite sure where it’s going yet.

Do you finish one of these and decide it’s not good enough?

Often.

Then, what happens?

I take it apart.

I remember you commented that with some of the other accidental works that involved broken glass, you threw out an enormous amount of work and started over.

Fortunately, in this case, I can just take them apart and reuse all the materials.

How many don’t work out?

Perhaps two out of every three I take apart or alter in a significant way.

This is after you’ve designed it and woven much of it?

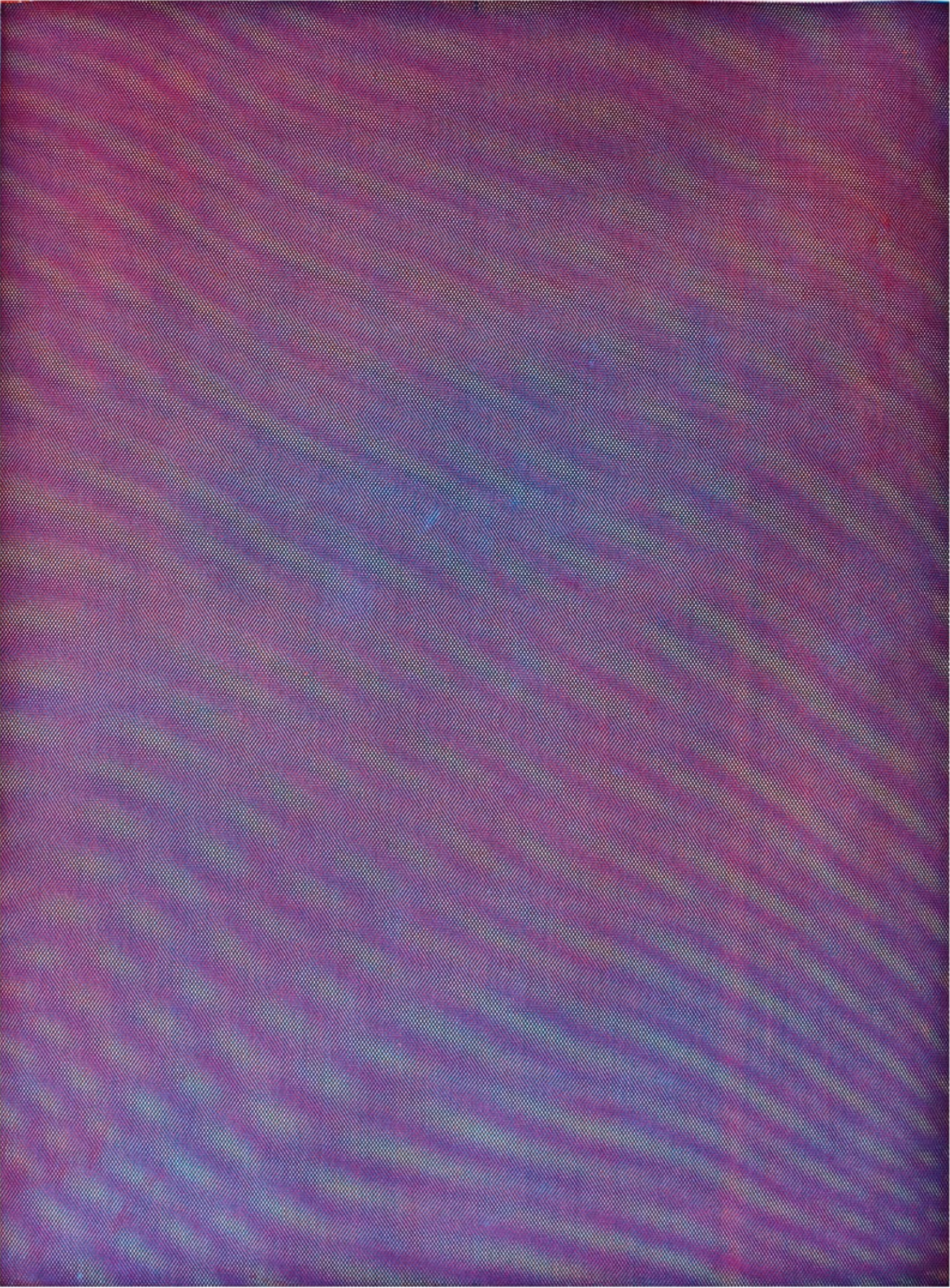
Yeah. Sometimes it’s just taking out a section and reweaving. But I hope to get better at predicting what they’re going to look like.

In one of our conversations a few years ago, you said that there was lot of thought that went into every piece before you made the piece itself. In other words, the work was more in the thinking than the doing. The last time we spoke, you said you were spending less time thinking ahead and more time doing...and then discarding. Now this time it seems like a combination of both approaches.

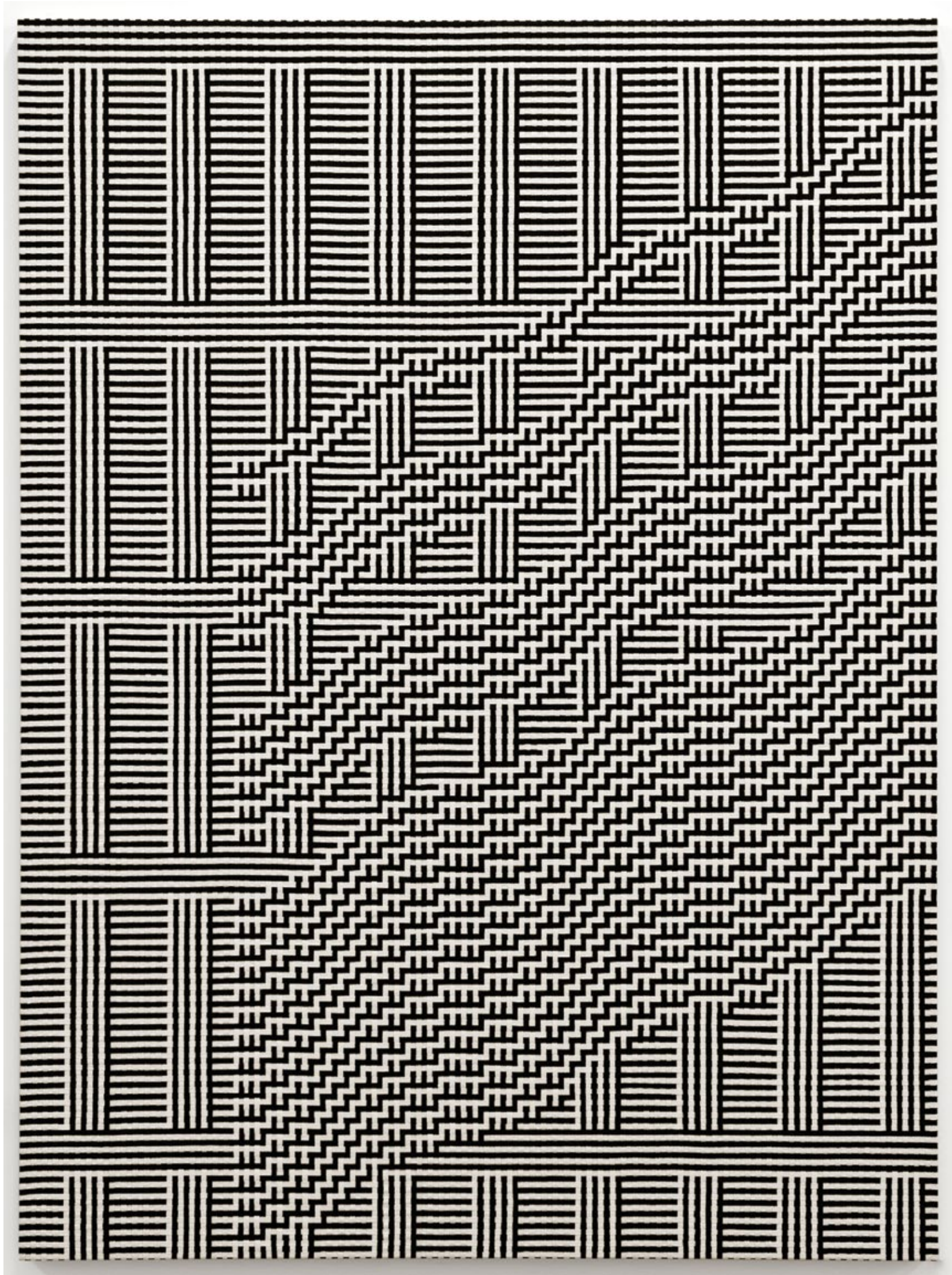
You’re right. I have to plan it out. But there’s still a lot that depends on accident, a lot that I can’t predict.

You were doing a lot of airbrush before you were using this newer technique. Are you constantly looking for change?

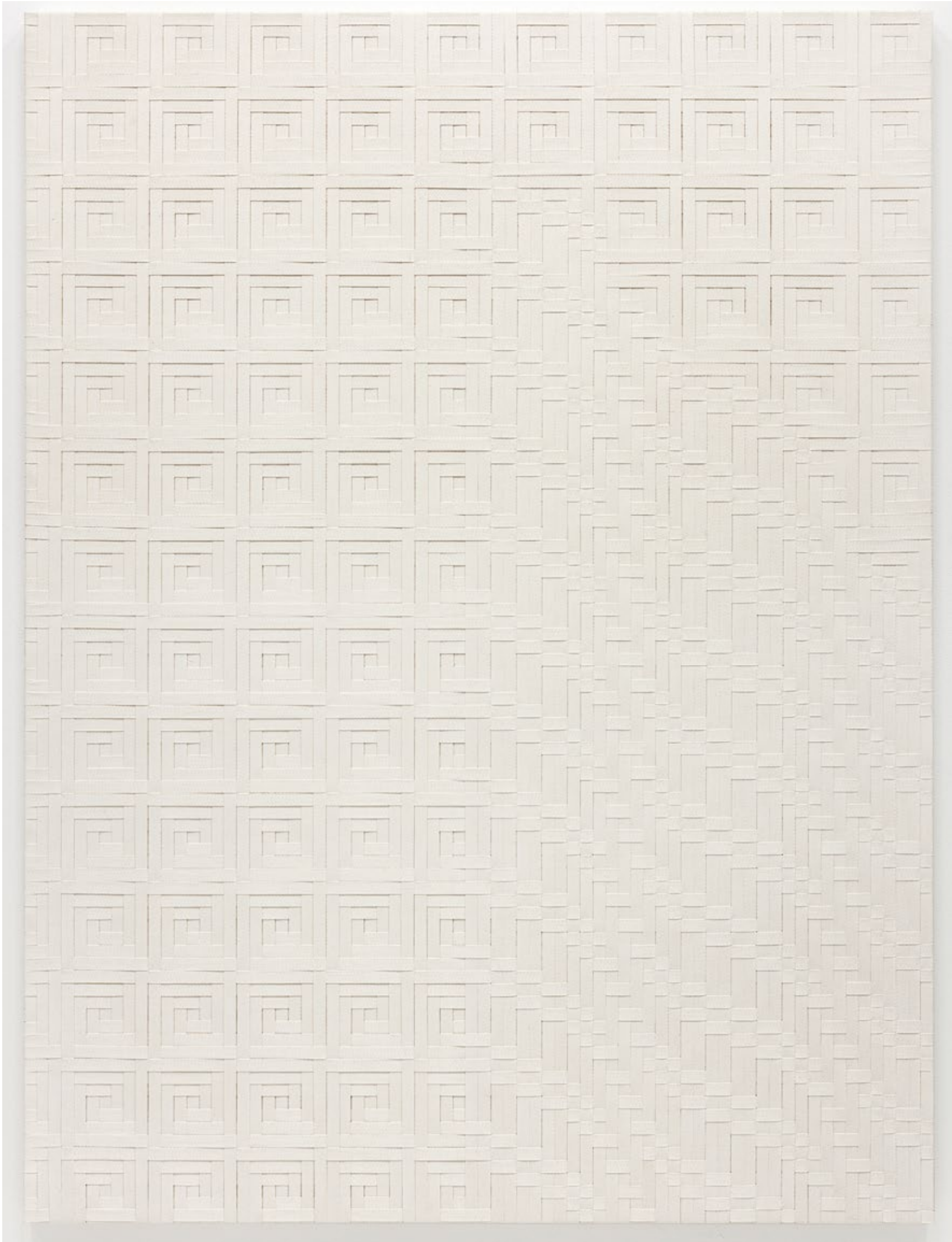
I think change just naturally happens all the time.



“Mesh/Moiré IV”, 2012 Color Softground etching. Paper size: 40 1/4” X 30” Edition of 40. Courtesy of the artist and Paulson Bott Press.



"Split Wave II", 2013. Woven canvas on wooden stretcher. 60 x 45 in. Copyright Tauba Auerbach. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, NY.



"Slice II", 2012. Woven canvas on wooden stretcher. 60 x 45 in. Copyright Tauba Auerbach. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, NY.

ANA TERESA FERNÁNDEZ

IN THE MAKE: Studio Visit
Interview by Nikki Grattan // Photography by Klea McKenna

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Ana in front of her piece “Untitled: Documentation of Jennifer Locke’s Glue Performance”. Oil on canvas, 80”X100”

Magic realism

About halfway through our studio visit, Ana let that pair of contrary words fall out of her mouth. She had been talking about various inspirations, and mentioned that Latin American writers within this literary genre have been influential by her work. She said, “I want to really find the magic in reality.” Beyond that single statement she didn’t spend too much time explaining. But she didn’t need to, those words immediately reverberated.

Magic realism is often characterized by a matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastical elements that reach far beyond the limits of reality. This equal acceptance of the ordinary and extraordinary is noticeably present in Ana’s work, which includes community-based projects, sculpture, performance, video, and painting. Much of Ana’s practice is about playing with expectations and yanking familiar symbols out of context to dramatic effect. In this way there is a dream-like, or magical, quality to her work; it provokes feelings of the uncanny— that unnerving breakdown of familiarity in which something is at once known and unknown. Her work grapples with borders and looks to erase or at least re-draw them, and her performance-based work questions and re-imagines all the geographic, physical, psychological, and emotional delineations we have accepted in society. Ana’s paintings are prompted by her video work; each painting is explicitly based on a specific moment from a performance, documenting and extending acts that often force the viewer to encounter women as more than just a series of stereotypes.

When we visited Ana’s studio, she had several large-scale paintings on the wall. One in particular caught my attention. It depicted a pair of bare legs, high-heeled and elegant, straddling a horse’s submerged body. The horse’s legs churned at the water and sand, the agitated muscles bulging, as the woman’s legs tensely held on. Ana told us she had filmed this video in the jungles of Mexico while wearing a dress and stilettos, riding a white stallion in a sinkhole where virgin girls were once drowned as sacrifices to the gods. Ana’s painting, reproducing a moment from video documentation, looked like a magical happening and yet it was real; that moment had actually occurred. Her performance

and painting had not only subverted my expectation of femininity, it had also written over history by creating a different narrative around that sinkhole, a new mythology, and a more complicated convergence of what is real and unreal.

How would you describe your subject matter or the content of your work?

The subject matter or content is a mélange of bi-cultural experiences I have grown up with/ in and around. Stories I have been a part of, or narratives that get told via my own family, or the news, all affect the core of my work. Statistics that present great divides and unfairness is what fuels my work— I am often coming to my work while I’m grappling with being upset or angry. Though a healthy dose of anger is useful, I try not to create aggression in my work, and instead I focus on observations and questions. I often say that my work originates from my gut reaction to information. It gets processed and comes out in the shape of oil paintings, broken glass on resin sculptures, ice sculptures, video projections, etc.

What mediums do you work with?

I work in so many mediums. The idea dictates the form. However, I predominantly do performances that get documented as paintings. My paintings always come directly from my performative work.

Your painted work is based on documentation of your performances and you have said, It’s important to me that what I paint really happened, that you can see that it is real. Can you tell us more about this idea of something “happening” (but perhaps often going unseen). Specifically, how it plays out in our understanding of femininity, labor, and sexuality?

After I read Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own, it became much more clear to me why and how in creative history (literature, painting) women have been presented: mostly as fictional



“Borrando la Frontera”, 2011. Video, 3:30 minutes, 14 x 22 inches. Courtesy of Kadist Art Foundation

characters depicted by males, and often as the main (male) character’s lover, sister, mother, etc. Women’s autobiographies did not exist for a major part of history, and even less so in the art world. For me painting is a documentation method. It excites me to see it as a medium that can be non-fiction, especially since its history carries the heaviness of fiction, particularly with women.

I am able to take the energy and dynamics I feel exist in performance and use the richness and allure in the beauty of paint, and put it in a blender to tell my story or my experiences. Being heavily influenced by poetic work of magic realism in Latin American Literature, I want to really find the magic in reality... By presenting a real action that seems questionable or not possible, I’m able to highlight a subject that people think is passé. The political can be poetic and subtle.

Do you see your work as autobiographical at all? Does personal history work its way into your practice?

Yes, it is autobiographical— when I’m working I have to access all my experiences and memories, I have to let everything that has happened to me come swarming in, so that I can inhabit the mental space I need to get into my work authentically. But it is also biographical of other people’s stories... My mother’s life is a predominant inspiration for my protagonist, as well as other family members. Their struggle, their cultural frictions are my fuel.

Do you have a day job? What is it? What does it mean to you?

My work is my main job, which includes painting, making videos, sculptures, but also writing grants, applying for residencies, and managing large projects. My part time job is teaching either at university level or high school level. When I teach teenagers it is always at an after school program through a nonprofit that offers art to immigrants or inner city kids. I have

worked with more than six non-profits all over the Bay Area as well as in Haiti, South Africa, and Mexico, offering a more conceptual approach to art making for kids with no resources. The combination of an intellectual exchange with the artists of the future at universities, and the teenagers that are looking at art for the first time is incredibly challenging and rewarding. It feeds my own work constantly and (hopefully) keeps me humble. I love being amazed at my students’ work, drive and tenacity.

What are you presently inspired by— are there particular things you are reading, listening to or looking at to fuel your work?

I’m so inspired by water, the feeling of surfing. I’m reading both Richard Feynman’s Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman! and Viktor Frankl’s Man’s Search for Meaning. I listen to NPR in the car and all sorts of music in the studio; The Beatles, Frank Ocean, Mexican groups like Zoe...

I’ve been reading Feynman’s books because I like how he observes the world, especially communication. He sees communication on both a microscopic level with all its nuances as well as a more expansive cultural vehicle. When I teach or work with different communities or non-profits I constantly try to find out not only what they tell me, but also what they are not telling me and how they act, and how I can best be of help.

When I work in the studio, I can go into the zone as soon as I pick up a paintbrush. I guess it is from all my years of competitive swimming. It is very easy for me to get into it. But when I listen to music I get completely immersed in the lyrics. I pay attention to every word, every instrument, the crescendo... So when I’m listening to someone like The Beatles, I start making up stories to their songs, like with “Norwegian Wood” did they sleep together, did the woman make him wait, was it a one night stand? What really happened!?



I'll put faces to characters in songs and go on tangents of the meaning of songs and life in general. So what does that have to do with my work? I'm not quite sure. I know surfing has made me survive and cope with the uncertainty of the art world.

Is there something you are currently working on, or are excited about starting that you can tell us about?

I'm working on several public art projects. The 5Ws project consists of a collaboration with Johanna Grawunder and Intersection for the Arts where we designed, and are now making, five different large scale light sculptures around the downtown area: "WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY".

Troka Troka is another public art project I'm finishing up that has been incredibly moving for me. There are these home-spun vehicles that circulate the city picking up recyclable cardboard, piling it up so high that someone might be scared to drive next to them. I stopped several drivers as they were collecting cardboard and asked if they would let me paint the wooden panels on the sides of their trucks that serve as walls. They agreed and thus far I have painted four. I developed a really beautiful relationship with them through the process. These drivers are immigrants that work six to seven days a week, having very little time or money for anything else. Jacobo, one of the drivers, had terrible vision. I worked with my sister Maria (who does public health) to find him free eye-care. He called me excitedly when he finally had his first pair of new glasses. They also narrate these beautiful stories as to how people react to their now-painted trucks; kids stop their moms in all neighborhoods in awe wanting to look at them, adults smile and give them compliments. It has changed their relationship to passersby in the city.

What risks have you taken in your work, and what has been at stake?

In Mexico we say, "It's better to say you are sorry than to ask for permission." There are times when I think I'm going to get myself arrested or hurt myself— like when I went to the US/ Mexico border wall for the first time and painted it blue. The police actually arrived on the scene with sirens sounding off and shouting on the loud speakers. I thought for sure I would end up in jail. I had scaled a fifteen foot ladder in heels and a dress holding a paintbrush, but luckily I was able to explain the project and talk my way out of getting into trouble. And I managed to finish the project. I went a second time to the border to re-paint the fence because it had been painted black. This time, two helicopters flew right over me for about twenty minutes. My legs were shaking the entire time.

There is a beautiful quote by Goethe, "At the moment of commitment, the entire world conspires to ensure your success." I have to believe in this. My ideas seem somewhat wacky or actually just insane, but somehow people trust me. I convinced a group of people to help me film a video where I rode a stallion in a sinkhole in the jungles of Mexico while wearing a dress and stilettos. It was crazy— I got stepped on by the horse, kicked, and thrown off.

And then there was the time I decided to make stilettos out of ice. Having to go to a drag queen store to buy enormous stilettos, working for months with a mold maker and the amazing artist Jeremiah Jenkins to make these shoes wearable.

Almost every project I've started has required a leap of faith, working with some unknown medium, or doing an action that's just crazy. And what's at stake? Failure, success, and everything in-between.

Do you intend for your work to challenge the viewer?

My intention is to challenge new ways of seeing old things. My work aims to transcend the given. "A broom is not dirty when placed on the floor, but becomes dirty when placed on a pillow." I take actions and myself and place them in a completely different context. Most often the action and the place make for a really uncomfortable scenario, i.e.: mopping the beach with my own hair while dressed in a cocktail dress, straddling an ironing board while ironing, trying to ride a stallion in the water. In the attempt to do these actions one can witness the beauty, the failure, the struggle, the impossibility or possibility, offering a new context, a new way of hopefully seeing something old with fresh eyes again.

How do you navigate the art world?

Asking a lot of questions and spending a lot of time in the water surfing.

Do you see your work as relating to any current movement or direction in visual art or culture? Which other artists might your work be in conversation with?

I think my work is so not what people identify as Bay Area Art. It is quite the opposite. Maximalist, realist, not-ironic but serious and political. I don't know about necessarily being in dialogue with, but artists that blew my mind are more often writers, like Angeles Mastretta, Octavio Paz, Virginia Wolf and many more.

I'm totally inspired by performance artist Jennifer Locke, and (my teacher) the painter Brett Reichman. I also learned to paint by spending hours looking at Thiebaud's work. I am his number one fan. I wish I could meet him one day.

Do you have a motto?

"Let go."

Also, I drink Yogi tea every morning and there are always little profound sayings on the tea bag wrapper. I try and have those sayings as intentions throughout the day.



"Untitled", Performance documentation at San Diego/Tijuana border. Oil on canvas, 60"X72"

MARK MULRONEY

“Mark and Lucy Talk to One Another”

Interview and portrait by Lucy Mulroney



“Husband and monkey”, Fuji Instamax. Photographed by Lucy Mulroney 2012.

I heard you are working on a comedy routine?

Absolutely. I have been writing down jokes for a few years. But I need to set aside some time in order to craft a comprehensible act because right now it is just a lot of disjointed bits. I don't have any illusions about how popular or funny anyone else will find it. I think it will be a total bomb, but it feels like a worthwhile endeavor anyway. I have a lot of jokes about submarines, gift-certificates for Planned Parenthood, and whether or not the F.D.A. should mandate higher amounts of fiber in edible panties.

Well, you know how I feel about comedy.

I know you are not a comedy fan. But perhaps someday I will write, produce, and direct a comedy about a young woman who escapes her horrible family by running into the woods with nothing but her wilderness survival guide, a compass, and an eight-pack of hot dogs to find that freedom truly does come from within.

Now that sounds pretty good. Speaking of adventures, the other week you made me go out to the old Krispy Kreme donut shop on Erie Boulevard that has been vacant ever since we moved to Syracuse. The weather has been pretty cold and dreary lately, but then the sun poked out for a minute. So you made me get in the car and go with you to the abandoned donut shop. You had a painting that you wanted to throw on the roof, and you wanted me to video-tape you doing it. What was that all about?

Generosity. Anyone who wants to climb onto the roof of the abandoned Krispy Kreme donut shop on Erie Boulevard gets a free painting. Seems like a pretty good deal to me. I have been putting things in libraries, public bathrooms, cruise ships, and out on the streets for years. I like street art, although I don't consider myself a “Street Artist.” Most of what falls under the heading “Street Art” feels like advertising to me. I don't see much of a difference between a Bud Light billboard and Shepard Fairey's posters, they are both just pushing more product.

So that's why you keep hiding paintings in the library?

I just want to promote the responsible use of libraries.

I'm not sure the librarians would call what you're doing “responsible.” But I guess it will keep them up on their shelf surveys.

Libraries are an amazing resource. If a few people who wouldn't normally come to the library do so in order to get one of my free paintings, I hope that while they're in the stacks they realize how amazing it is to be able to use all the materials libraries offer for free.

What if you get me fired?

Then we will move and do something else, like start our band, “Jammy Smears.”

I am excited about our debut album “Sadistic Podiatrist.”

I think “Stinky Doctor, Doctor Stink” will be more of a hit.

Do you want to get our “Exit Plan” down on paper, once and for all?

Sure. It is our pre-arranged plan that we will put into action in the event that we decide to get a divorce. The plan does not take into account children, so if we ever have kids we will have to renegotiate the plan.

But I think in terms of amicably dividing the assets, our plan is solid. All cash and liquid assets are split 50/50. The physical objects will be divided in a way that is similar to picking players for a baseball team. A coin is tossed and the winner of the coin toss gets first pick. The loser gets the second and third picks, and then it just goes back and forth with one pick per person until everything we own is divvied up.

Hold on, you have to explain that we both have to leave the house and leave all of our belongings in the house. So we have to set a date and time -- and we should probably get an umpire -- and then on that day we meet at the house and do the coin toss on the front lawn.

Right, and you only get two minutes to pick and retrieve your item from the house. You can use a friend to help you carry an item out of the house only once, all other items must be carried out by yourself. You are allowed to pick the other person's favorite item and destroy it in front of them, but that means you forfeit all of your remaining picks. We have never owned a home so we need to factor that in if we ever buy a place. Do you have any ideas about how we would divide the property?

We'll just have to become realtors and sell the house. Whoever is the best realtor gets to keep the money.

We'd have to set a price that neither of us could go below.

And no incentives or kick-backs are allowed.

I get my face on the sign in the front yard; you can put yours on the flyers.



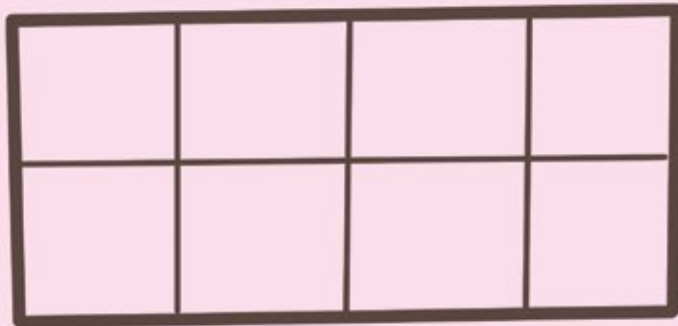
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LIMITED EDITION, SPECIAL OFFER, ONE-TIME ONLY DEAD PLAYMATES CENTERFOLD BOOKLET.

**sobriety and patience
are highly recommended**

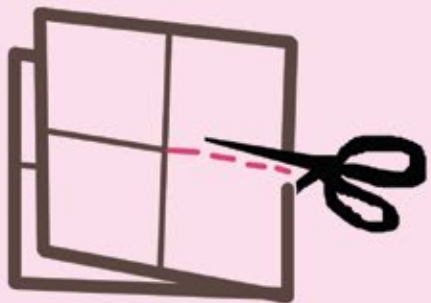
- 1.**
carefully remove the
centerfold and fold it
lengthwise



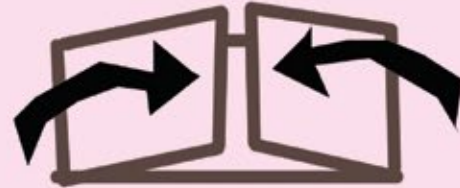
- 3.**
completely unfold your
piece of paper, you now
have 8 nice little boxes



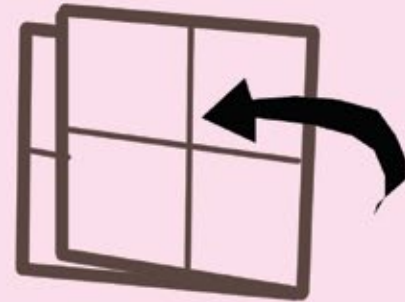
- 5.**
make a cut from the spine
into the center of the folded
paper as seen below



- 2.**
fold the left and right sides into the
center of your piece of paper



- 4.**
fold your paper along the center line



- 6.**
completely unfold your paper again
and have the center image facing up
then fold the paper lengthwise under
itself as seen below

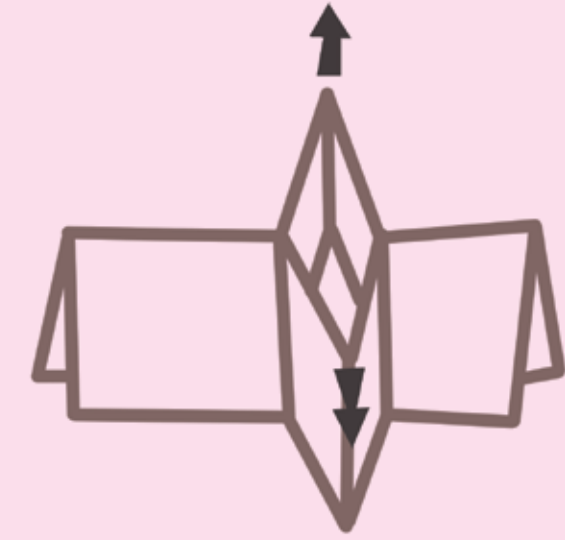


**NOW FOR THE
HARD PART**

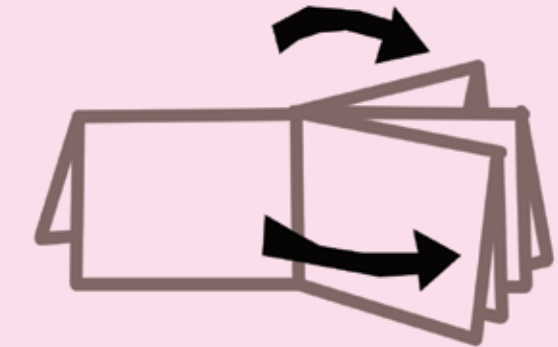
**STEPS 7 AND BEYOND
ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE CENTERFOLD**

MORE FOLDING FUN

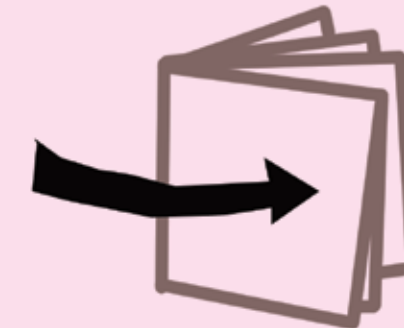
- 7.**
grabbing the centerpoint of
your folded paper pull each
side away from one another
to create a cross shape, this
is a tricky move so use
extreme caution



- 8.**
now fold the top and bottom
sections of your new cross to
the right



- 9.**
the final step is to then fold
the remaining flap to the
right and let it rest along
side the others

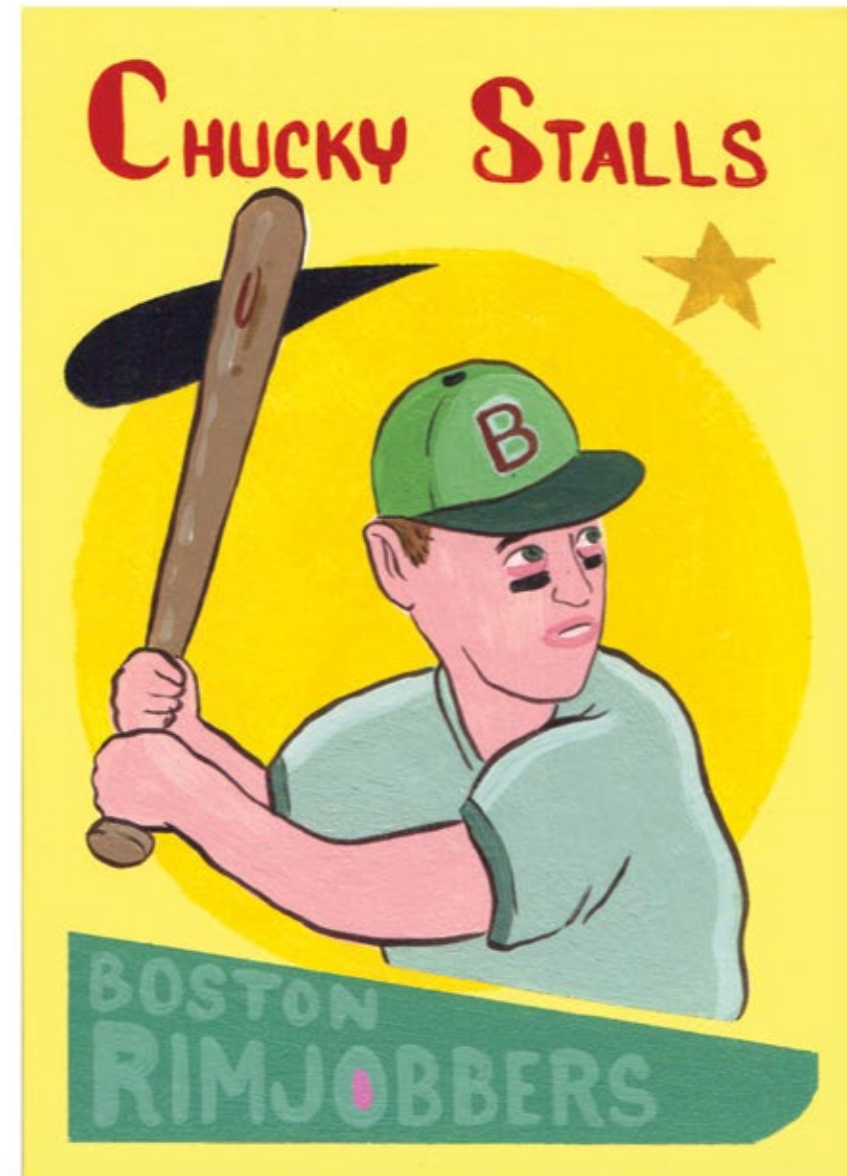
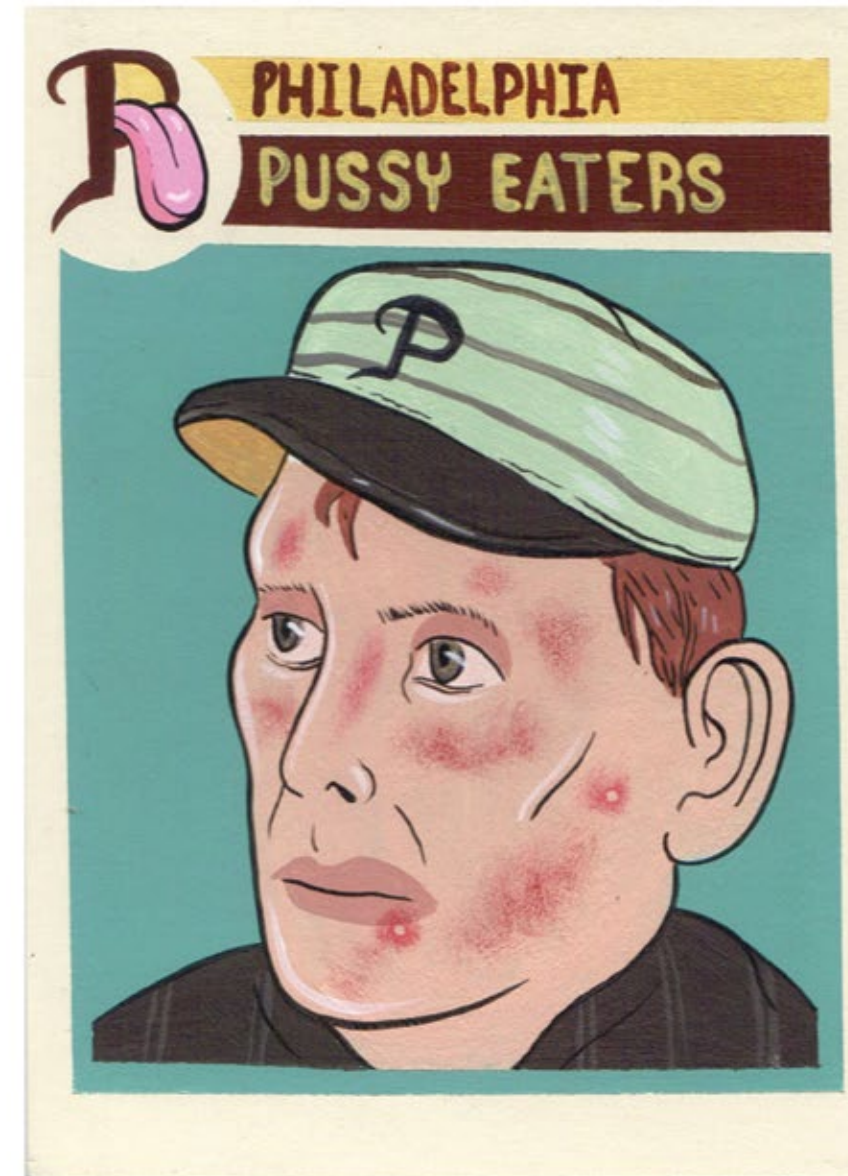
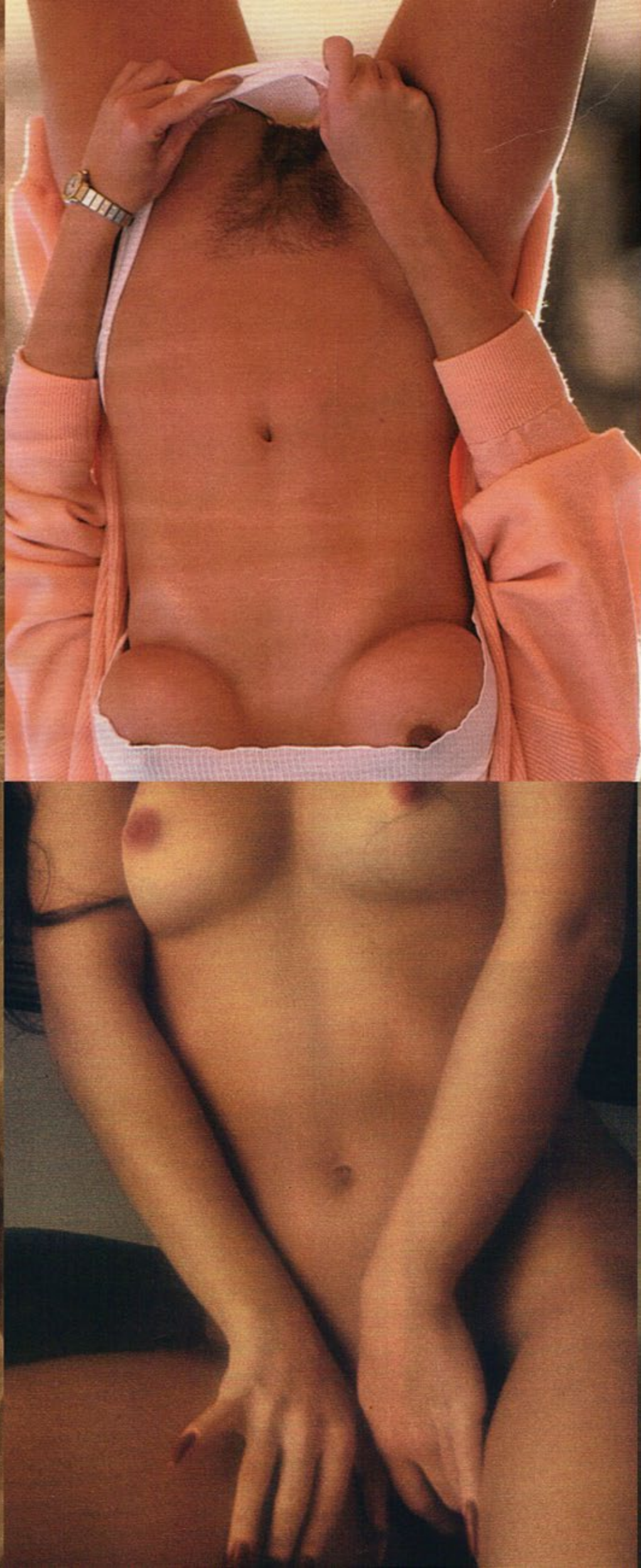
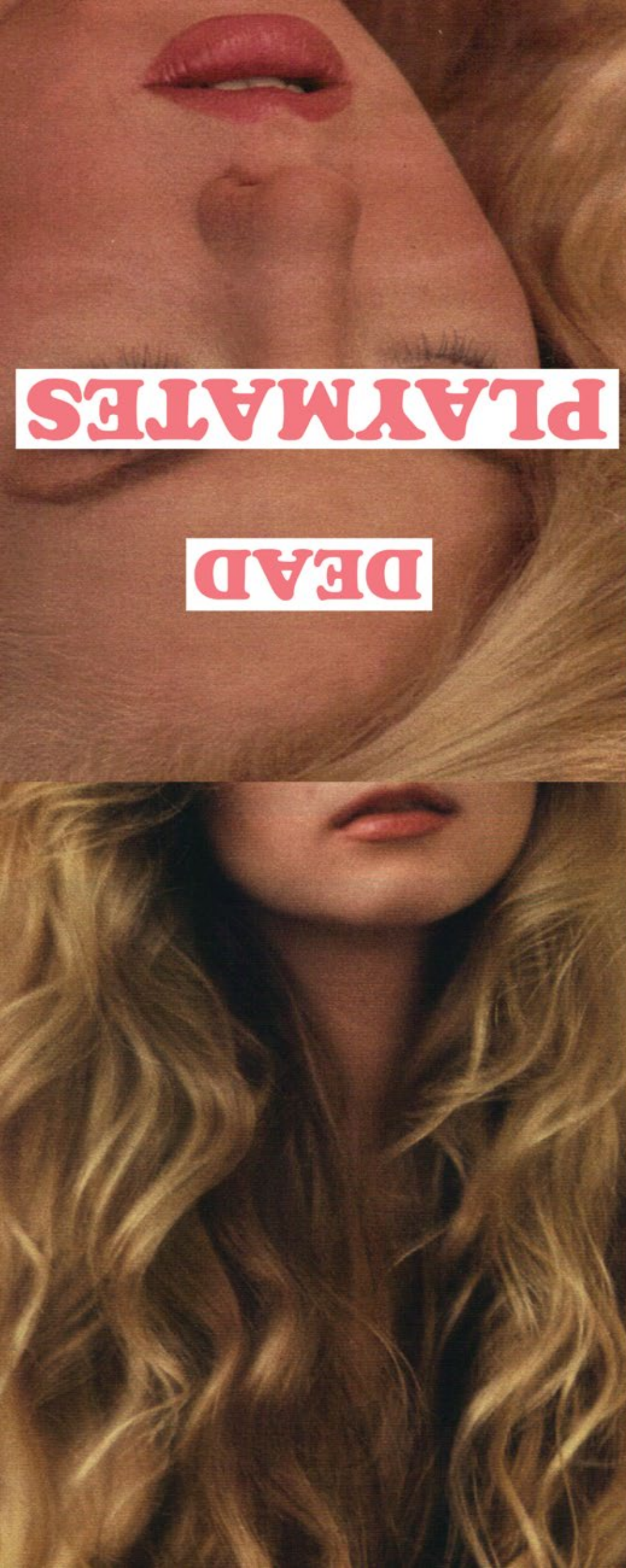


**...and just like
that you have a
snazzy new
booklet.**

THE GIRLS

- page 1. Ronette Vickers-Miss May 1972 found mummified in her home**
**page 2. Lacey Fiore-Miss October 1981 found in a suitcase with teeth
and fingers missing**
page 3. Madelyn Stowe-Miss March 1978 strangled and left in the bushes
pages 4.-5. Nicole Massey-Miss September 1981 drug overdose
page 6. Katie Empey-Miss December 1984 colon cancer
page 7. Deborah Boonstrah-Miss June 1979 suicide by gunshot
page 8. Kerry Willis-Miss February 1986 car accident

**This booklet is brought to you courtesy of the
Mulroney Institute for Confusion Studies**



"Handmade Baseball Cards", 2012. Acrylic on cardboard, 2.5"x3.5". Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.

Fine by me. After seeing what you do to realtors who put their faces on signs, I'd rather keep my face off of it. How has your library book sale strategy changed over the years?

I used to go straight for the "art" section, but no one else ever wants the stuff I like, so now I let other folks pick over that section first. I also really like the "foreign language" section because you can find all sorts of illustrated books that we rarely see in bookstores in the States. That section is usually totally ignored, so if the sale is crowded I can wait to go through that section at the end. When the sale is really crowded, I go for the "children's" section first because there are always a ton of young mothers and elementary school teachers with really sharp elbows grabbing everything in sight, so I try and pick what I can there before moving on to the "hobby" section and then over to "art" and "foreign language" books.

What exactly are you planning to do with all of those baseball cards?

Which cards are you referring to? The ones I made or the ones in the cabinet in the living room?

You've started making baseball cards? Don't we have enough already?

We can never have enough of anything, especially baseball cards. That is probably why I started to make them; it helps me understand why certain things fascinate me. Once I like something I have to somehow make it my own and the only way I know how to do that is to try and make my own version of it.

I think your mom is super creative.

Yeah, she stays pretty busy drawing, making cards, and playing the drums.

You made me promise to tell you if I ever think you are chasing a ghost.

I need you to let me know when I am being unrealistic. My greatest fear is to end up like so many other artists, musicians, actors, and athletes who let their lives go to complete shit while they are chasing a fantasy. I can easily see myself neglecting everything in order to try and make better work, not caring if there's any return, in terms of money, or employment, or fame, or whatever. So far, I think I am okay. It seems like I have a pretty good balance, but perhaps you would know more about that than me. I know you don't like it when I work while I'm brushing my teeth.

Yeah, it's time to go to bed and you're in your room brushing your teeth. You're pretending not to work, but I know what you're doing. Maybe your inability to stop working is why you have such a dark view on life. This winter especially, you've seemed depressed. But then, you love comedies. And you always trivialize really serious stuff. Is that why you use so much pink in your art?

I use pink because it goes so well with that chocolate brown color I really like to use. I don't think my view on life is dark at all, just realistic. We are supposed to believe in the goodness of humankind, but I just don't see it that way. We are all lusty beings capable of incredible violence and destruction. I think we have come a long way as a species, but I still think our basic drive is to destroy. There are plenty of examples of humans doing wonderful, altruistic things but there are also lots of examples of humans throwing their babies out the window.

Sounds pretty dark to me. I guess that's why you've begun making those weird, violent looking carvings.

Those are fun to make. I really like working on paper, but I often need some relief from hunching over my desk all day, so I grab as much wood as I can find on the street and I take it home and make something out of it.

Yes, I am familiar with that pile of crap you have been accumulating. But I do like the carvings.

I know you love it when I bring junk home and drag it through the apartment. Every now and then I find something for you. Like that time I brought you those nudie playing cards I found behind the liquor store.

Remember when we brought home that duffle bag of stuff we found near Polk Street in SF? Randy Higgins?

Of course I remember that, part of me still wishes we had his stuff, but it was clearly evil and had to be removed from our apartment.

We both woke up in the middle of the night feeling really weird. I made you take it all out and throw it in the trash.

Yeah, he had photos of himself with clothespins on his balls, and pencil drawings that he made based on the photos. He also had a CD that he had made of children's music in which he played the guitar and sang in falsetto.



"I'm Glad We're Here Together", 2012. 24"x20". Acrylic on hand carved wood panel. Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.



"Untitled", 2013. Acrylic on torn book cover, 10"x14". Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.

I guess we could have kept his Church of Satan membership card, at least.

Or his HIV-positive test results. He had a lot of intense stuff, but some things are just too full of demons to live in our house.

Your work is always super neurotic. The line quality and the masking, and how precise everything is. I remember when you were in grad school, we'd go to galleries in LA, at Bergamot Station, and you'd walk up to someone's work and say: "Ugh, how sloppy, this guy really needs to learn how the seal the tape."

If you are going for tight and clean, then you need to make it tight and clean. If you only want your work to exist online then you don't have to worry about your technique. But if you put your work in front of an actual person and your skills are sloppy, then you are not fulfilling your job to give the viewer your best effort.

I remember going to see a show of Lari Pittman's work at the LA County Museum of Art ages ago and being totally disappointed. He was my favorite painter, but I had never actually seen any of his works in person. I had a scrapbook of his images that I had cut out of magazines and newspapers and I was totally excited to finally get to see his work. I wanted to see how he was making all these really great paintings. When I actually stood in front of them they kind of fell apart for me. You could see stray x-acto cuts, and areas that weren't masked cleanly, and other areas where it seemed like he didn't trust his hand so he masked off areas that would have been better just hand-painted. I still like his work; I just think his paintings often look better in a printed catalog than in person.

But the work you really seem to love, the work of other artists who you admire, is usually really loose and raw and sloppy. Do you think your work will ever go in that direction? Are you afraid?

I like that type of work because I can't do it myself. I wish I was an expressive painter that let things drip and slide all over the place, but I have tried that and failed. Maybe someday I will evolve and become that, but, for now, that way of working eludes me. I am drawn to it out of envy and the desire to figure out how some of this work was made. Perhaps that is my problem, I am over-analyzing the work.

You said that if I ever died or we got divorced that you could see yourself becoming a bum or a petty criminal.

Maybe not a petty criminal, more of a criminal prankster. There are things I don't do only because I don't want to have to call you from a police station and ask you to come and get me because I got caught trying to steal a painting of J.P. Morgan from the bank lobby.

Also I don't think I would actively try to become a bum. I just think it might happen. I can see myself not doing anything that isn't drawing or painting or whatever and totally neglecting the things that are necessary to maintain the life of a responsible adult. Like making dinner or clipping my toenails.

Uh huh, there's your ghost.



"Untitled", 2013. Graphite and acrylic on found paper, 11"x14". Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.



"Untitled", 2012. Graphite and acrylic on found paper, 33"x28". Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.

CHRIS SOLLARS

by Jasmine Moorhead



“Shave”, 2011, still from video, 3 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Steven Wolf Fine Art.

An Appreciation of the In-Between

From the beginning, Sollars’ video art has been ambulatory. In his very first video piece from 1997, the artist records himself as he wheels a bucket full of soapy water around the city, picking up trash off the street, washing it, then carefully replacing the trash as he found it.

From 2002–04, his series *Come Walk with Me* featured him guiding historical walking tours around the city in the adopted persona of a hippy-like Jesus Christ [his calm demeanor, long flaxen hair, and beard produce a good simulacrum of the American, Sunday-School version]. The videos of Sollars’ tours are actually made up of the footage taken by the “tourists”--actually friends of the artist--who join and leave the performance as it moves through the streets. No one ever breaks character or reveals it as an art piece. And, whether he is pointing out the original home of the Grateful Dead in the Haight-Asbury neighborhood or confirming the Savior’s return to a true-believer at the edge of Union Square, Chris-as-Christ is naturally humble and unsanctimonious. It seems legit.

In a 2012 work called *Saturday Morning Cartoons*, Sollars walks around his Mission neighborhood with a mug of coffee, holding it in the sightline of the viewer/camera, effectively blocking objects in his path. Then comes the classic reveal and we experience the “reality” of the object that was previously obscured—all to a Looney Tunes soundtrack. The piece is complex beyond its conceit because we emotionally experience two different types of relief, one from the presence of the mug and one in its absence.

It is no surprise that when asked about his influences, one of the first names Sollars mentions is Buster Keaton, the grandfather of silent-film physical comedy. The comedian’s impeccable timing and straight man’s nonplussed-ness show their deadpan spirit admirably in Sollars’ work.

Gestures are most often conceived of as simply symbolic. But great video artists, just like their counterparts in physical comedy, have always understood that the gesture is itself something; a mark in space, noted by the camera, whose purpose is both manifest in the moment and self-reflexive. That is the work. The art is the distance between viewer and performer made possible by the intermediary recording medium and device: video and camera.

Sollars is best known recently, perhaps, for a number of video pieces that focus on his substantial beard. Hair has been a favorite subject throughout art history, and Sollars adds to it by approaching from a conceptual angle, while recognizing the beard to be an important set piece in his comedic repertoire.

As early as 1998, Sollars filmed himself shaving with an axe in the Maine woods. Using the discrepancy of appearance between his bearded and shorn self, Sollars subtly but purposely brings gender politics [an important biographical subject for him; see also *Bjorn Again*, 2003, in which he role-plays as a female Bjorn Borg] into this everyday task. When Sollars is shaven, his visage is thin, almost feminine, whereas when fully grown, his beard takes over and he becomes the prototypical hearty woodsman. He re-created and updated this early performance in his exhibition at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts’ “Bay Area Now 10.” He’s also used his beard to hide objects, which are then extracted and used to greater purpose [*Beard Object* and *Dejeuner sur la Barbe*, 2011]. The latter produced a delicious mushroom meal cooked by Jerome Waag].

Chris Sollars is a clear heir to a 1970s video art history that includes Vito Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim, and Bruce Nauman. All performance/video artists who gained notoriety in the avant-garde pages of *Avalanche* magazine. Sollars’ work, like these pioneers who first explored



“Saturday Morning Cartoons”, 2011-2012. Stills from video, 20 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Steven Wolf Fine Art.

the possibilities of video to bear more permanent witness to an ephemeral moment, is bodily, peripatetic, demonstrative.

Yet to see Sollars’ video art as merely an extension of this early moment is to miss that throughout his fifteen-year history, he has consistently used one of video’s greatest capacities, the ability to capture the “in-between,” for very different purposes than his predecessors. The need to carve out space in opposition to the world, using hard boundaries and even violence, dominates those earlier works. But Sollars makes it clear that those boundaries are a lot less relevant now, both in life and art, so it’s therefore less important to know, name, and transgress them. It is possible, he suggests, to make peace with the boundaries, and in doing so, let them go.

To be clear, this eschewing of fixed boundaries does not at all mean a disengagement from difficult subjects. The politics of environment remain a central core of Sollars’ work. In *Pile of Trash*, 2006, he orchestrates and records an action in which people dressed as bags of trash disrupt a busy San Francisco intersection. His documentary *C Red Blue J*, 2008, deftly integrates autobiography and presidential election politics. In *Pacific Puddle Pedal*, 2012, he exchanges a jar full of foaming saltwater from the Pacific with one full of dirt and grit from a Mission alley puddle, a potent and real gesture. But Sollars urges us to see these gestures as part of a larger fabric of communal being.

The poetic power that can result from this nuanced engagement with the individual gesture is best seen in an unassuming but very strong video work from called *Left Behind*, 2011. In this work, Sollars walks through the industrial streets of San Francisco, pausing to create small sculptures out of trash and discarded objects that he finds on his journey. Watching Sollars

construct a work of art (an artwork within an artwork) out of broken, dirty, unwanted objects shifts the viewer emotionally from the everyday weight of social despair to childlike delight. He has taken parts and made a whole.

In all his work, Sollars’ emphasis is on balance and creation, both of which thrive in the “in-between.” This is not to say that a lot isn’t at stake. Sollars knows more than anyone that the delicate balance represents an edge between hope and nihilism. But Sollars does not view these gestures are as merely symbolic; their enactment in time and space registers within and affects the ecology of the world. Video, therefore, is the tool by which this gesture can affect again and again. The beard might be cut, but it will always grow back.

Chris Sollars is a 2013 Guggenheim Fellow.

Jasmine Moorhead is the owner and director of Krowwork, a video and photography gallery in Oakland founded in 2009. www.krowwork.com



"Pile of Trash", 2002. Stills from video, 6 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Steven Wolf Fine Art.



"Street Clean", 1997. Stills from video, 3 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Steven Wolf Fine Art.



"Left Behind Walk", February 2011. Stills from video, 6 minutes 26 sec. Courtesy of the artist and Steven Wolf Fine Art.



JANCAR JONES

With AVA JANCAR and ERIC JONES

Interview by Gregory Ito

All images courtesy of Jancar Jones Gallery

Tell us some history about yourselves before opening Jancar Jones Gallery.

Eric Jones: I went to the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) and got my degree in New Genres. I was an artist and I did performance and video stuff mostly. I graduated from school and then a few years later I met Ava and we decided to open a space.

Ava Jancar:I studied art history at UCLA. I moved to San Francisco after graduation. I was originally moving there to go to SFAI for grad school in curatorial studies when they were just starting the program. When it fizzled out a year later, I stopped attending school and got a job at Jack Hanley Gallery. I worked there for about six years. I think I was the longest tenured employee of the Jack Hanley Gallery in its history at the Valencia Street location in San Francisco. Besides Jack (laughs).

So what year did you guys open up Jancar Jones?

Jancar: In 2008.

What brought you two together to start the gallery?

Jancar: We were a couple and we were just talking about how we weren't really seeing a lot of art that interested us in San Francisco. We saw a lot of art in the city that we liked, but mostly not in a gallery context. San Francisco has a lot of artists per capita but most are underrepresented. So we wanted to create a space where we could show some of the work that we really enjoyed, that wasn't following the trends that were happening in San Francisco at the time with younger emerging artists. I remember that we were coming across a lot of aesthetically and conceptually sophisticated work, but the majority of it was overshadowed by the folkly work which was predominant at the time.

Jones: We also were aware of artists in Los Angeles and other places outside of San Francisco. But there wasn't a place for these artists to pitch their ideas necessarily. The work could fit in with the few younger spaces that were in San Francisco, but these galleries could only support so many artists.

Jancar: We wanted to create a space for artists that would otherwise not have an opportunity because they were so brand new in that sense. Jack (Hanley) or Ratio 3 would go out on a limb for people, but there weren't a lot of other spaces at the time that were willing to put themselves out there for younger artists in that sense. There were also DIY spaces like Adobe Books and so on, which were really cool, but in the end we just wanted to add something.

Jones: I think it helped that we both had similar visions of what was important to us.

So you opened in 2008, can you describe your space in San Francisco?

Jones: Small (laughs).

Jancar: A really little space. I think it was about 120 square feet total. But the exhibition space was 75 square feet. It was the only space on the mezzanine level of an old office building on Mission St. between 5th and 6th, close to downtown, a block or two from SFMOMA.

Jones: It wasn't too far from 49 Geary and other things like that too, which kind of influenced our reasoning for choosing the space. It was cool, it was a nice looking space. We stripped it down and tried to make it a bright little cube in the midst of a pretty run down office building. It seemed like not too much had been done to the building over the past 100 years, aside from bad carpeting in the halls.

Jancar: That building was one of the few buildings that survived the 1906 earthquake. I think it had just been constructed the year before or the same year, and the materials it was constructed with kept it from burning down in the fire after the earthquake.

So you were in a very small room, in a blessed building, in downtown San Francisco. Can you expand on the work you were showing at the time?

Jones: Initially, we had a loose guideline that we were just going to show work that was abstract, formal and minimal because that's what we thought needed the most attention at the time in San Francisco. But we quickly realized that was narrowing our scope too much.

Jancar: We started out showing some of the people that we knew of before opening the gallery, artists from San Francisco like Bill Jenkins, Chadwick Rantanen, Sean Talley and Chris Lux.

So when you started breaking out of those artist circles, how did the progression and programming evolve from there?

Jancar: We held onto some of those artists and began to look around at undergraduate and graduate programs in San Francisco (at SFAI, CCA, Berkeley) and in other parts of California, like Los Angeles, and that's how we found Michael Guidetti, David Berezin, and Sean Kennedy. Also, we would look at work on the internet, which is how we found Alice Tippet, among others. The internet allowed us to see work that we wouldn't have otherwise seen because it was being made in other parts of the world.

Jones: Or sometimes the artists that we showed would bring us other artists that they were interested in or thought that we would be interested in.

When did you leave San Francisco and move to Los Angeles?

Jancar: 2011.

Can you say a little bit about the reasons why you left San Francisco? At the time you saw some things going on, but you wanted some more space. Was that the only reason?

Jones: On a personal level, we wanted a change of scenery. We also wanted to be around more art. In San Francisco there is pretty much one museum. There's more than one, but there's mainly one that has regular shows of contemporary art. And here in LA there are more museums and a lot of galleries.

Jancar: I think the choice to move was mostly a personal thing. We love San Francisco, and we had such a good following there and a lot of support, but we needed a change of pace.

Jones: There was always a good reaction to what we were doing and we were proud of what we were able to accomplish there. But we did want more space for the gallery, which we couldn't find or afford in San Francisco. 75 square feet was getting slightly restrictive.

Then you came here and you moved to Chinatown. Were you familiar with LA when you moved here?

Jancar: Well, I grew up in Orange County so I knew LA to some degree and I went to school at UCLA and lived in Los Angeles before moving to San Francisco. Also, my dad runs a gallery here, Jancar Gallery, which is on Chung King Road. And we have some friends down here and other people we knew.

Jones: Our first show in LA was meant to be a nod to the city, a reference to MOCA's first show at the temporary contemporary, which was called "The First Show" and was a big group show of the museum's collection. We gave our first show the same title.

Jancar: It wasn't meant to be a heavy-handed reference, and we weren't trying to equate ourselves with MOCA. We were just trying to do a small survey of a number of artists that we had shown before and people we were planning to show.

So like an introduction of the artists you work with to the city of LA.

Jancar: Yeah, exactly.

What are your thoughts on the San Francisco art community versus Los Angeles? Because you spent time in both. Definitely the cultural landscape has a lot to do with that. San Francisco is smaller, with less venues, but it's really dense, so there's a lot of co-mingling with all these different artistic endeavors. Los Angeles, there's a lot more venues, but it's more spread out, driving distance from one place to another.

Jancar: Geographically, in San Francisco, if there were openings people would try to go to all of them. They could go, physically.

Like get on your bike and go see every show.

Jancar: To almost every neighborhood unless it was way, way out there. I remember trying to plan our shows to be on the same night as other shows because of that. People would be out and they would plan to run around and see as much as they could. I feel like Los Angeles, people will go out of their way to see a show, but in terms of openings they definitely physical-



Paul Cowan, Cameron Soren, Amy Yao, installation view, Jancar Jones Gallery, San Francisco, 2011



Bill Jenkins, "Lids and Dots", installation view, Jancar Jones Gallery, San Francisco, 2010.



Michael Guidetti, "Bell, Book, and Candle". Installation View. Jancar Jones Gallery, San Francisco, 2010.



Ryan Fabel, "The Amber Room", installation view, Jancar Jones Gallery, Los Angeles, 2013.



Nicholas Pittman, installation view, Jancar Jones Gallery, Los Angeles, 2012.



Claire Nereim, "Scale 5 (Muscle Beach)", 2012. Plaster, chromed metal, pyrite, plums, dimensions variable. Jancar Jones Gallery, Los Angeles, 2012



Chris Lux, "Faux Modernist Posters of Four Letter L Word Nouns". Installation View, Jancar Jones Gallery, San Francisco, 2008.

ly can't get from all the openings in Culver City all the way over to downtown, or Chinatown, all within the span of three hours.

Jones: You definitely can't have a couple beers and a couple beers.

Jancar: You can't stumble from one place to the next and stumble home. You have to at some point get in the car. So I think that that has definitely changed the way we plan - just in terms of openings. We have to either synch up with something very close to us, or open on a night when nothing else is going on.

Do you see any differences in the aesthetic of work being produced from artists here in LA?

Jancar: Yes, I think there are differences. There is more space in Los Angeles. In San Francisco, when we were there, the work was smaller in scale and more intimate. I don't know that the aesthetic was necessarily intended to be different but I think the spaces in which artists were working in SF did ultimately affect what could be accomplished. Just looking at some of the people that we showed in San Francisco who have since also moved to Los Angeles and subsequently had shows in our LA space and other spaces, you can recognize a difference. Since they've had shows here the scale increased. Also their relationship to the gallery spaces changed. Artists here have more space to work and are able to conceptualize shows and bodies of work very differently. People can rent a studio here, whereas in San Francisco maybe they'd be working in their bedroom.

Jones: Also, it's easier to get access to materials and fabricators and resources here.

Jancar: In San Francisco and the Bay Area, it could be a bigger endeavor to find materials, for sure.

Do you think that Los Angeles is more current with what's being shown internationally? People always talk about the bubble of the Bay Area and how LA has a collector base that buys more progressive work that may seem risky to Bay Area standards, which is why the work is less shown up there.

Jancar: I definitely think, on a superficial level, the look of the shows are more contemporary in LA. And LA artists are perhaps looking to and attempting to respond to the work that is being created in other art centers more so than San Francisco artists are. That said, I think San Francisco artists are really smart and equally aware. Both places are provincial in their own ways.

Jones: There might be more contemporary thought here because it seems like there is more of a critical discourse. Contemporary art is a popular subject in LA. But it is really hard to say if one place is more current than the other in terms of the work that is being produced. I think it really comes down to the support structure. LA's structure is definitely more robust than San Francisco's.

Jancar: Also in the Bay Area there are a lot of people who survive off of grants and are career artists in that way. They could just be in their studio and make work, and do residencies. Whereas I feel like in Los Angeles people are hungrier for exhibitions and more intent upon engaging in that way, perhaps with a wider, international audience, though I don't want to generalize.

I want to talk more about your curatorial efforts at the gallery. Can you explain more about the aesthetic of the programming and the decisions you're making with the exhibitions schedule?

Jancar: I think we have a very specific aesthetic, in terms of the work that we are interested in. Often we choose to show work that we think has some relationship to the other work we show. I feel like in a certain way we have created a community of artists - we have been able to introduce artists to one another, and for the most part I think the people we work with are interested in the other people we work with. I think that's a really important dynamic to have and keeps the gallery healthy. We've given people the opportunity to meet when they may have otherwise never come into contact. For example, the next show we're having is a two person show of work by Sean Talley and Nancy White, who are from two different generations, but their work has a strong relationship, even though they don't collaborate.

Because in a way their work kind of speaks to each other because they're all familiar with each other?

Jancar: Exactly. And we've also noticed that a lot of the work that we show and are interested in has some relationship to space and perception. Perhaps it has become more pronounced since we moved to LA. But, how an artist addresses space in their work and in relation to their work, or how work interacts with the space around it and affects how it is perceived, is of interest to us and definitely a consideration when we choose what to show.

Jones: I agree, what we show has become more about perception and space. Like Ryan Fabel's show the Amber Room which is about how space is remembered and how changing certain aspects of a space can effect how a viewer interacts with it. But we don't limit ourselves to showing that type of work. I feel like this is just a trend that we have noticed in our



Sean Talley "WMUZG", 2013. Unglazed ceramic, 12 x 8 x 8 inches.

past year of programming. But there has always been a formal element to the work that we show and a kind of open-ended conceptualism.

Jancar: The formalism was something that was important to us from the beginning, but it sometimes can be a little hard to present to people.

Jones: So we also show work where the aesthetics are secondary. Like it is representational or has a heavy conceptual backing before it can be thought of as formal.

Jancar: It might be about reproduction and legibility. You know, symbols and—

Jones: We also try and keep things open.

What keeps you running the gallery? What fuels this endeavor?

Jones: All the money that we make (laughs). No, it is just maintaining a dialogue with artists and continuing to look at what they do and what they make.

Jancar: And being able to give them a forum where they can show work. That is pretty rewarding.

Jones: And doing it ourselves and not relying on some institution.

DIY shit.

Jones: Punk shit.

Fuck yeah, for sure.

Jones: Yeah, you know what I mean.

Jancar: And I think it gives us an additional purpose when we're looking at art. It sort of informs the way that we see art outside of the gallery. Especially if we're looking at an artist's work that maybe we're interested in showing. I think it's the same as writing about art, too. It helps engage your thought process.

I agree that having the gallery makes you look at art differently. It adds another aspect to your experience with the work.

Jancar: It adds the annoying things too, like, how is that hung on the wall? You know? I think that's also really interesting.

Jones: Every time I go to a gallery I'm looking at the walls and the ceiling, the floor, and the lights and the way it's laid out and thinking about that stuff.

I'm glad you two geek out on that stuff like I do.

Jancar: It's necessary, I think.

It's the other half. The work is half the success of the show and the other half is the—

Jancar: Infrastructure.

Exactly, the space that holds the work within it. What do you feel is the role of the gallery, and what makes a gallery successful in your eyes?

Jones: There are many different roles galleries can take on.

Jancar: I think the primary role is to show the work, which is an important role. And to bring attention to the work. For us it's to show work that maybe otherwise wouldn't be seen, but I think in general it's just to give an artist the opportunity to show a body of work and allow a public audience to see it.

Jones: Yeah and I think that opening the work up to the public, to see the work written about and to provoke some sort of critical discourse are all important aspects to us, as well.

What do you see in the future of the gallery?

Jones: I think we feel pretty good about our past year in this space. We feel like we've done some good shows and we want to maintain that trajectory.

Jancar: Our next show, opening May 11th and running into June, is Sean Talley and Nancy White and then in September we are planning a show of new work by Joel Dean, in late October a show with the now LA-based Rick Bahto and later our first show in a while with San Francisco artist Michael Guidetti, amongst others.

MICHELLE GRABNER

by Griff Williams

Celebrations, Broken Hearts and Autopsies

My friend, artist Michelle Grabner has recently been tasked with being one of three curators of the upcoming 2014 Whitney Biennial. For many of us who have followed Grabner’s career, this came as thrilling and welcome news. Michelle is a Chicago-based painter. Since 1996 she has been the professor and department chair in the Department of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She writes criticism for Artforum magazine, and is a contributing editor at Xtra contemporary art quarterly. For the past 15 years she has run The Suburban, an artist project space located in her backyard with her husband and fellow artist, Brad Killam. They also founded and operate The Poor Farm, a space located in Wisconsin on the site of a poor farm built in 1876. The Great Poor Farm Experiment, or as they put it “The Suburban’s rural cousin,” presents artist projects and year-long exhibitions.

Michelle and Brad began exhibiting their work at Gallery 16 in 1998 and we are looking forward to their fifth exhibition with the gallery in 2014. As part of our 20th Anniversary Conversation series I posed some questions to Michelle about her plans and challenges in curating the Biennial.

Over the past decade you and I have frequently talked about various power imbalances in the art world and your anti-curatorial positions. And yet here you are, one of three curators for the upcoming Whitney Biennial! Does the challenge of selecting living artists and specific artworks for the exhibition pose conflicts with your philosophical position?

Yes, let’s take a moment for that ridiculous bit of situational irony. It is one of the artworld’s many peculiarities: as soon as you tell it to fuck-off, it wants your attention. But to get at your question, I will claim the high ground and say curating the Biennial does not compromise my position. I remain critically opposed to a very specific kind of ‘curatorial think,’ specifically that which flows wholesale from curatorial studies programs. Jens Hoffman, a practitioner of this type of curatorial practice describes the condition by saying, “Exhibitions became the creative principle of so-called exhibition makers who were described as exhibition directors and who became catalysts between the creative individual and society.” That smells like an opportunistic middleman to me. It is a new celebrity industry, professionalizing the curator/artist in all of us.

But regarding my approach to the Biennial, I will organize my part of the exhibition by featuring artists who are dedicated to their ideas and to contemporary artmaking. I will not deploy other artists’ work as a means to illustrate my subjective conceits. No Themes, no thesis, no poetic title.

The Suburban’s greatest success, in my estimation, is in its Midwestern humility and your grounded value system which is at odds with careerist art-world predilections. Your intention was not to redefine the roles of the art world but instead champion art, artists, and their imagination without concern for the market. Do you see your work as an example of how artists can and must create their own value systems in opposition to existing market driven paradigms? Market driven value systems are a reality and I encourage artists to make use of them if and when they are appropriate to the work. Another reality in our artworld is that contemporary criticism is embedded within art’s commercial enterprise. But because of the staggering number of contemporary artists and fast money rapidly pulsing through the system, commercial success no longer guarantees critical evaluation.

Unquestionably, artists today have to accrue influence. That can mean a combination of critical, institutional, and even commercial recognition. But most importantly it demands that you gain the respect of other artists. So this means that one must be devoted to working and to committing a long protracted life in this work. Sure, The Suburban and the Poor Farm invert institutional power structures and make interfacing with art’s unseemly features tolerable. But in the end, Brad and I just want to be close to artists of all stripes, and in continuous proximity to their ideas, work, and processes.

I’ve been interested in your comments about “community” as it relates to your activities at the Suburban and Poor Farm and as it relates to my experience at Gallery 16. You have said that after 15 years of operating The Suburban “I am not convinced that a proper community has announced itself (which might not be a bad thing.) Or conversely, its community is always being refigured,

and I just can’t put a finger on it. What is certain and why I don’t dwell on the question of community is because that I am an unyielding supporter and enthusiastic viewer of every single project. So with Brad and the kids we have a solid community of five. That is really enough.” This is an important and frequently ignored question that goes back to artists defining their own value system irrespective of external pressures.

That is why, despite the many miles that separate Northern California from the Upper Midwest, I feel that we are not only peers, but that we are also long-time neighbors, sharing value systems shaped by criticality and responsibility, as well as our fondness for family. For one thing, we both choose to live in locations that allowed us to develop and evolve our own principles for shaping our theoretical and practical understanding of art and life. I also think we are both distinctly aware and committed to challenging the conventional frameworks we choose to embrace. It is also a political choice to do what we do. Even if critique is overshadowed by a bevy of freedoms afforded by today’s free market, I still feel a profound sense of responsibility toward critical awareness within those freedoms.

Are the curators Anthony Elms, Stuart Comer, and yourself collaborating or are you working independently to develop your exhibitions?

We each get one floor of the Marcel Breuer building and we will share the interstitial spaces offered up by the museum: lobby gallery, courtyard, theater, etc.

How many studios do you expect to visit this year?

This year, conversations with artists will encompass much of my waking life. And as you can imagine, studio visits are the agreeable part of the whole Biennial process.

If at the end of this Biennial experience you have achieved your objectives, what will that look like?

I am not interested in using this platform to “talent hunt.” Instead I am hoping to foreground artists who have made a life out of their dedication to art making.

What excites you most with respect to the upcoming year?

Disappearing into Elaine DeKooning’s old studio on Long Island once the Biennial is launched next March.

Now to the broken hearts question -- given the incredible number of artists you have worked with over the years, have you had to change your phone number since you were announced as a Biennial curator?

Nope. But my inbox is endlessly populating with unsolicited jpegs.

And the autopsy question! The art-world is strewn like a battlefield with the corpses of previous Biennial curators. What motivates your decision to do it given it’s such a thankless job?

It didn’t even occur to me that I could say “no.” This is a big deal and a chance to shape it from an artist’s perspective. Besides, I get to walk away from that pile of corpses and head to my studio in hopes of someday landing on the other pile of corpses, that of previous Biennial artists.

Does the body count of former curators simply point to the inherent subjectivity of these endeavors?

Over the years, the institution has selected curators for various reasons. Early on in the Biennial’s history, curators were practical, in-house choices, sometimes with advisory teams. Obviously in the recent past there was a move toward celebrity curators with international reputations. But happily even this is changing. In 2012 and 2014, the institution selected curators who represent the contextual shifts going on in the contemporary arts. It is not a coincidence that none of the 2014 curators are from New York City. Regardless, there will always be a body count as long as curators are named. The first Biennial Exhibition (1973) was curated by its “curatorial staff.”

Will you wear your Packers knit cap to the Biennial opening?

You will see a green and gold knit cap on my noggin even if the Giants win the Superbowl in February.



The Suburban, Oak Park, IL. Courtesy of the artist.



Portrait of the artist. Pencil on paper by Phong Bui. Courtesy of the artist.



Michelle Grabner and Brad Killam, “Down Block”, Steel, paint, gesso, wood, 2010. Courtesy Gallery 16.

GWEN ALLEN talks to ANDREW McCLINTOCK

My first question has to do with history—both the history of SFAQ and the larger history of artists’ magazines: can you talk a little bit about how SFAQ fits within that history?

The first magazine I ever subscribed to was Thrasher, I used to read that all the time, and then I was introduced to zine culture through my friend PEZ; I was also doing a lot of photography at that time. I grew up with Artforum and Art in America lying around my mom’s house as well as a pretty big collection of artist monograph books. Then in 2006 a friend of mine and I put out this skateboarding / graffiti culture magazine called Rise Above Haters. That was my first shift from zines and artist books to a magazine format. Even though we only put out one issue, it had distribution in New York, London and Amsterdam.

Before all of this, I attended the San Francisco Art Institute. There, I started looking at Ed Ruche’s early books and something popped my head. I became much more interested in publishing; what it meant, the different models, and the separation between a magazine for general distribution versus an artist magazine.

Anyway, after a few learning experiences, I partnered with Greg Ito and started SFAQ three years ago this April.

So, you were a student, you had just graduated, and had you started Ever Gold Gallery yet?

I started the gallery when I was still in school with four other people, that became just Greg and myself after about 17 months. So the magazine was started a little over a year after the gallery. We started it because we—at the time the SF Guardian and the SF Weekly’s level of decent art coverage had really dropped off. There was no real kind of comprehensive art magazines or art guide. Internet based, yes, but if something is only online you have to be tuned in and to go to that website daily. If it’s something around for free all over the city, you can pick it up and it’s much more accessible. You can keep it for an entire quarter on the coffee table and simply flip to the weekend and see what’s going on.

Interesting, so you wanted to publicize the gallery, while also supporting the art world, in the Bay Area and beyond -

I mean it’s not a new business model. I think it’s some type of vertical integration, I’d like to say I want to be the Henry Ford of the art world but to be honest I think that’s a bit far fetched and I’m not in this for a profit otherwise I would have gotten into finance or the good old import export business.

Can you talk about that first issue and what the model was at that time?

So the first couple issues the listings were in the front, the magazine was much smaller and it was much shorter. The cover image was like a broken cement sidewalk with exposed bricks. Looking back at it, it’s pretty funny. It’s really like—I didn’t have a copy editor and it was just pretty bad.

It was just listings?

It was listings in the front and a small selection of features in the back, which came from my interest in working with the oral interview format. The fact that there was no free art magazine around besides the SF Arts Monthly, which in my opinion is relatively behind the times, meant that there was a hole to be filled in the market. The first issue was basically financed by the San Francisco Art Institute’s old president, they took out what I thought at the time was a huge adverting package, which helped fund about 80% of the first issue. That was my first experience with fundraising too.

So you didn’t really have to hustle up additional advertising?

The first issue had like three ads, Madrone Art Bar; they’ve been advertising with us from the beginning, Blue Angel Vodka, and then obviously SFAI. So that was the first issue, and I laid everything out on my computer, which I still do, but yeah, it was totally nuts. We had no idea what the hell we were doing.

How did you get the listings?

Just cold calling, looking at other lists, a lot of phone calls, a lot of emails. A lot of what we do is a lot of cold calling, which is a really scary thing to do at first. And it’s persistence too, as well as my belief in having a strong work ethic. That is very very important for any artist or independent business owner to have, and you have to stay focused and maintain strong relationships with other members of the art community.

So it started at 5,000 copy run and now it’s 13,000. What else has changed, both in terms of the physical format of the publication and its editorial content

In terms of editorial content, the first issue was almost entirely people I knew in the San Francisco art scene. Now I’m able to publish interviews with my favorite artists from around the country and world. Tom Sachs, Vitto Acconci, Chris Burden, Paul Kos, Tom Marioni...so it’s really great having all these people, my heroes in the art world, included in the creative process of the magazine.

I’m curious about how you see the relationship between what you’re doing now and your roots in the artist magazine/ zine culture?

I’m a huge fan of history and knowing the tradition of something. So if you want to break the mold, you can break it, but I think it’s very important to know what has come before. Otherwise you’re kind of in this clueless, internet model: regurgitating everything with no concern for anything. Shoving as much content as possible out into the world...

So I think now that I’ve been doing this for three years, I’m able to have a small amount of perspective. I often find similarities to that original street-level style. There are some things I’ve been doing, even before I became familiar with artist publications, that relate. I see what I’m doing as kind of similar, and I play off that a little bit.

It sounds like you found these long-lost kinships as opposed to intentionally starting off following a model. Has discovering that given you a kind of lineage? Do you maintain a “Golden Age Thinking,” in terms of publishing? Are there things about those moments in history that you miss in some way, or that you feel a lack of?

Well, I keep trying to see who, you know, like died on the day that I was born, so I’m trying to figure that out (laughs)... Seriously though, I think for me what it is, especially after the introduction to Avalanche and artist magazines, that came through the more I learned about conceptual art. Specifically getting to hang out with a lot of the Bay Area members of the conceptual art scene, like Tom Marioni, Paul Kos, you know, even Lowell Darling, and just expose myself to as much as possible. I feel it was a lot cooler back then and who knows, maybe they were trying to emulate something in the past too, the surrealists or whatever... But the original conceptual art movement is definitely one of my favorite movements, and I find it really inspiring from an artist’s perspective as well as a publisher. The content is amazing, and it’s so interesting to deal with issues of that kind of art in publishing. How to publish a performance, or film and video, or something ephemeral.

Do you have a sense of which artists you’re serving as an alternative space for?

You mean the current artists in the Bay Area scene? Well, I really don’t know. I have no idea what the scene is. I think there are multiple scenes that are very insular, but trying to do the same things. Perhaps it’s more neighborhood based, as well as CCA’s very academic approach vs. SFAI’s more avant guard approach, which are both important, but naturally I am a bigger fan of SFAI’s approach.

Right, that’s what’s so interesting, I think in retrospect those things are more clear, but not when you’re in the middle of it—

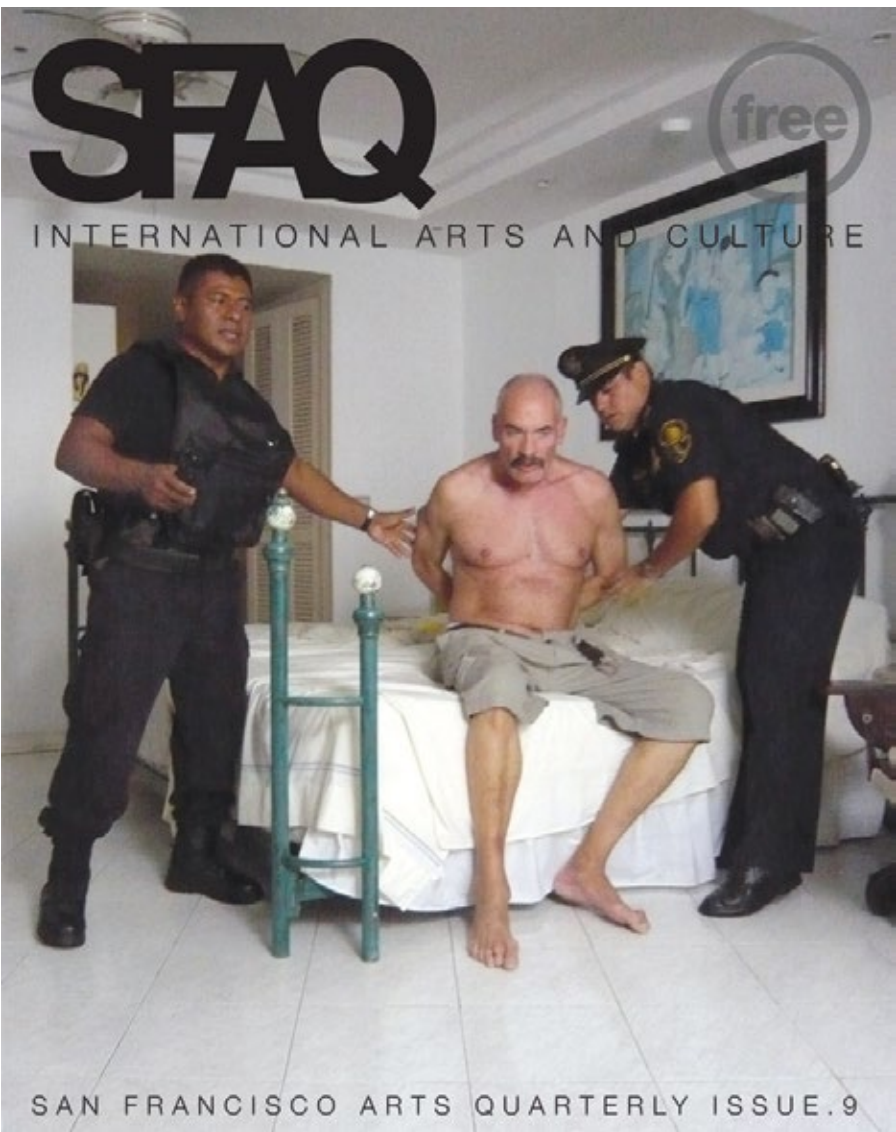
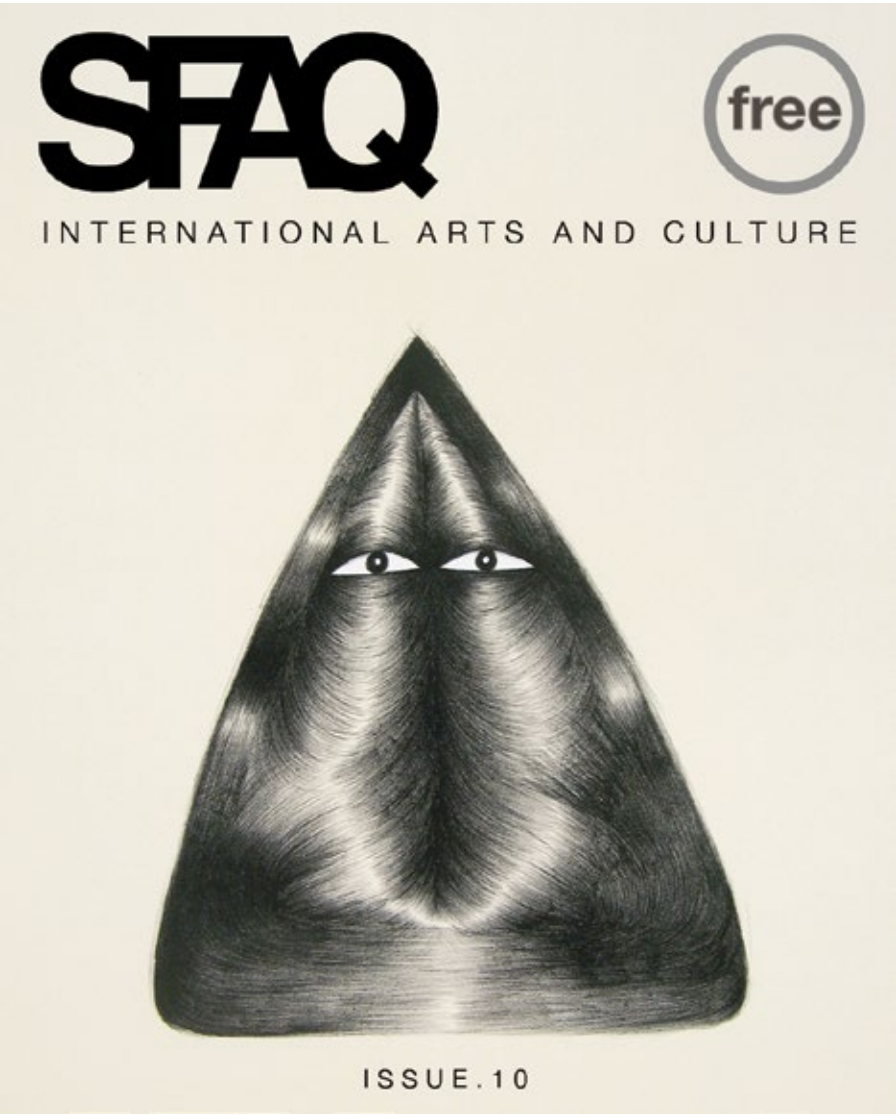
You can’t tell what it is. Even us doing this interview... we should have waited another ten years so I could actually have some perspective. There’s so much art being made too. There are so many people making art, which is great... but maybe too much of a good thing as well.

But how do you make decisions about which artists’ to feature?

You mean for the contemporary scene? That’s a tough one. In this Issue of SFAQ we’re going to have a lot of younger artists that are under 40 in the Bay Area and beyond, spotlights on them. But it’s not—I’ve never really—like oh you know... “these are the young artists of San Francisco!” or whatever, because that’s not productive in this community. To make lists. To make claims of superiority. In the Bay Area it seems to be about the work, not becoming a “star.”

So you don’t have a specific audience you cater to?

I don’t, and I think that’s a good thing because it allows me to explore. Every time I build up an issue I try to think about it as an extension of my art practice. Like curating this space [Ever Gold], and with artist magazines too, because I always have artists create weird stuff in the pages. I’ve tried to do more of that recently because I’ve really found one of these “lost kindred spirits” in the artist magazines of the 1970s and 80s. So I’m going to push that a little



more moving forward, we’ve published some really weird stuff that I’m surprised we’ve never been called out for.

Like what?

Just like making fun of corporations and kind of very strange, bizarre stuff that blends in with some of the ads sometimes. To me that’s the most fun part, but it’s the combination of—

Toying with the format.

Yeah, exactly. But maybe I’m doing it in too polished a way and people don’t see it. Maybe I’m being too precious.

Yeah, I think it’s hard to be subversive today.

I’m trying! But it’s hard! For instance, I used to write fake bios for myself in the magazine. I’d give myself four degrees from Oxford or say I’d done time for serious criminal charges in a Federal Prison. Then I really embarrassed someone who proudly introduced me at a party as an alumni of Oxford. I’m 28, how would I have four degrees from Oxford???

I’ve always had problems with the establishment too, you know, like I’ve always wanted to do my own thing so I think that fuels it as well. I have some pretty strong, not radical, but I definitely strong social and political views. I was talking to Carlo McCormick recently, and I told him that I wanted to yell about the second tech boom and how I feel like it’s ruining culture in San Francisco. He was like, “you can’t, you have to be careful with that, you can’t be the person raising your fist. Let other people do that, let the content speak for them.” And now I’ve also realized that I should channel that anger into trying to expose the young techies to the amazing art in San Francisco that is NOT live painting or street art, because that stuff is terrible.

As the editor?

Yeah, I’ve been trying to work with artists, you know, everything from the last issue with Amy Franceschini talking about urban farming and that side of contemporary forward thinking culture, and then V.Vale talking about independent—having pride in being an independent publisher of independent culture.

That’s an interesting way of thinking about the role of editor. In relationship to content, you’re in charge of the content from this kind of removed place—Back to the question of how the publication has changed, has the increasing circulation and national and international distribution changed the mission of the SFAQ?

Well, there’s a formula. In the beginning it said San Francisco Arts Quarterly on the cover, and the first couple of issues were all neighborhood based, San Francisco-based everything. I needed it to change and grow a little bit, but I didn’t want to change the brand, I had no desire to call it something other than SFAQ, we’re supported by San Francisco based galleries and businesses and we’re a San Francisco publication. Everybody always wants to tell you their opinion and their advice,

“Oh, you need to change it,” I’m not going to change it. “You’ve got to change the logo. You can’t call it San Francisco Arts Quarterly if you want to do anything outside of the Bay Area…”

I don’t think so. At one time the Bay Area was an international epicenter for art and culture. But this aforementioned type of provincial thinking, to me, feels like negative reinforcement. To grow as an arts community, we need to connect our scenes, our movements, into the national and international consciousness. Otherwise we’re all just patting each other on the back in a vacuum.

But back to the progression, underneath SFAQ on the cover it started saying “West Coast Arts and Culture” because we were expanding to LA. Then we started expanding to New York a picking up distribution to European cities out there, and I decided: it’s International Arts and Culture, I stated this thing so we could become that thing.

So then we get into advertising and perception, branding. You know, a whole other side for me that I guess I feel has become part of my practice too: the business side of everything, which I find really interesting, the process of it and how it’s a very conceptual thing. Business Art.

It’s a system, right? And you have to work within it, but also try to get around it.

And I’m a bit of an outsider. I never went to business school, I never studied publishing or journalism—it’s been a really fascinating kind of journey. Even the process of funding, you know? Which I know is very different now. I grew up in this time when there’s already so much corporate immersion and marketing in people’s lives. I feel like if I started publishing in the 1980s, I would probably have been like, “I’m not taking any advertisers! Fuck you!” But now, it’s not necessarily a bad thing, because it’s funding this free publication that’s meant for the community, which ultimately is the most important thing...to get it out there, supported by the right people.

And also that idea that you can be pure from it is so outmoded and kind of idealistic, I think, at this point. So it’s more about how you interface with it.

Definitely. Because I think I’m very pure with it. I feel like I’m very kind of anti-authoritative, but I have very strong convictions. When it comes down to it, I am running a business, so I have to have my own business practices too. Because, Issue 13 of Avalanche—

The last issue.

They published their ledger on the cover. I was joking around with myself, I was like, “maybe I should do that.” Do you think that was bitter of them?

I don’t think it was bitter. I think it was a statement of acknowledgement. I actually don’t see it as a frustration. They decided to end the magazine, I don’t think it was fully financial, I think there were other factors at work. I think it had run its course in a certain way. I think they did that because they were proud, it was kind of a badge of honor in a sense.

Yeah, totally. Because obviously they weren’t getting paid. Like I’m not getting paid. So I feel it’s all a badge of honor - but you know what’s interesting, I think you said something in your book about this, it seems like with all these magazines - there is no alternative to Artforum, even then, and I still feel the same way.

About Artforum? So Artforum is your “Artforum”?

Yeah! Which is funny, it’s been the same thing for forty years or something?

More like fifty. That’s interesting. So that’s the one you feel functions as the mainstream art magazine?

Yeah, ever since I—since the beginning, I guess. It was always this thing that I was almost scared to open and try and read it. It was an entity I knew was important but I didn’t engage with it outside the strange, built in fear and authority that it projected...

What other publications do you see, not necessarily in San Francisco, but anywhere, that are your own kinship in terms of other alternatives?

Like Mousse Magazine and Boudin, it’s so funny, I thought they were based out of the Middle East, and then I was on the lower east side about a year and a half ago and their office was right there. Far out, you know, and I went in and talked to them for a little bit. They were cool. But I mean, there are so many now, which is great, and I feel bad not knowing. I should be able to spout off—

Triple Canopy? They’re online.

And I know there’s White Fungus, Taxi, Journal, Purple and then there are those publications that are just on the internet, they call themselves publications and magazines, which I don’t agree with. If you’re on the internet, you’re on the internet. If you’re in print you’re in print. If you can’t get it together to print a magazine then call your self a website, or a blog - because that’s what you are. No shame in it, just don’t front because I will call you out.

So you have an online presence?

We do, we have a blog, we have different online features, interviews. Sometimes we do reviews on there, because obviously with the time thing, doing a review in a quarterly doesn’t make sense all the time. And we have our listings online.

But your main focus is the printed magazine?

The magazine is the—that’s where all the heart goes. I mean, I actually—the more that I have to do on the internet, the more I hate the internet. I just think it’s a mess and I really don’t want to touch it. I’m forced to interact with it. But I would be happy if the internet was just for research and all this other stuff would just go away, because I think it’s a waste of time. And you get sucked into it so much. I find myself wanting to work on the magazine and print something. Make it be impactful. That being said we do have an amazing website with tons of reviews, blog posts, great interviews as well as some of the printed content reproduced in digital version.

Yeah, I don’t think one can replace the other, I don’t think they’re interchangeable, but I was curious about how you see that relationship. I know my students at State read the magazine in print, so that’s one audience I know of. I’m wondering, who do you think your readers are?

I know my readers are everybody from 17, 18 year-olds to 90 year-olds. I know this because I know people who read it that are everywhere in between. Also people approach me, and I get emails all the time. It’s happening a lot more, random thank-yous, like thank-you notes in the mail. I think the readership is all over the place. But again going back to having something that’s free and in multiple locations, compared to like maybe somebody can go to a website, you might not know, it’s like anybody can go into the space and get it. For example, at Flax, they keep like 1,500 copies of the issue and they go super quickly. Just looking at the demographic that goes to Flax, it’s everyone from artists to soccer moms to crafts people, whatever; you know? But we do have 100% pickup and when we drop off a pickup it goes within a few days.

Out of curiosity, how do you choose the cover image?

The cover image is usually the last thing that I do. I usually have an idea, I have a selection of four to five different images, four or five different stories. But it really is the last thing I do. I try to feel an arc or create an arc, or I feel like I’m curating, and then I feel out what the feeling of the issue is, but it always changes, and that’s another point where I get really excited. I mean, I’m always really excited about it, but when I figure out [the cover] I’m like, “this is great!” I want to make it punch. Not shock value, but something definitely weird, and eye-catching. And that’s how it works.

Interesting. That’s cool. It’s more art than science. So when you imagined doing the publication, I’m curious about the difference between your imagination of what it would be and what it’s turned out to be?

I remember the first time somebody told me this, and I have no idea if it was actually a true thing or not, but it was: *if you get past your third issue, you’ll be okay.* So the first two or three issues I was fucking stressed, I mean, even MORE stressed... I wished I’d had some grand plan or vision, but everything was growing very naturally, and it still is growing quickly. I’m a big fan of just letting it be, and it sounds a little crazy but the way that I view the magazine is like a new being, like a new person. So it’s this person or this entity that I created and through all the content in both the historical and contemporary, teaching this person and also teaching myself, art history and just history in general. It’s like I’m trying to teach this individual about art from the 1950s onward, so sometimes I look at it like that. I’m building my own kind of world around it. The way I believe people raise their children.

Interesting. I like that metaphor. I actually agree, I think that magazines do have a life span. They have a beginning and they have an end. They have a trajectory. I think you’re in the middle of that right now. And it’s something you can’t fully control, it has its own, you know, kind of presence in the world. And there is like a big arc and there’s the arc of every issue.

Have you ever had an issue that you were disappointed in?

No. Maybe the first three or four I find funny at this point. Only ever in retrospect.

At the time you were probably just happy they were published, right? .

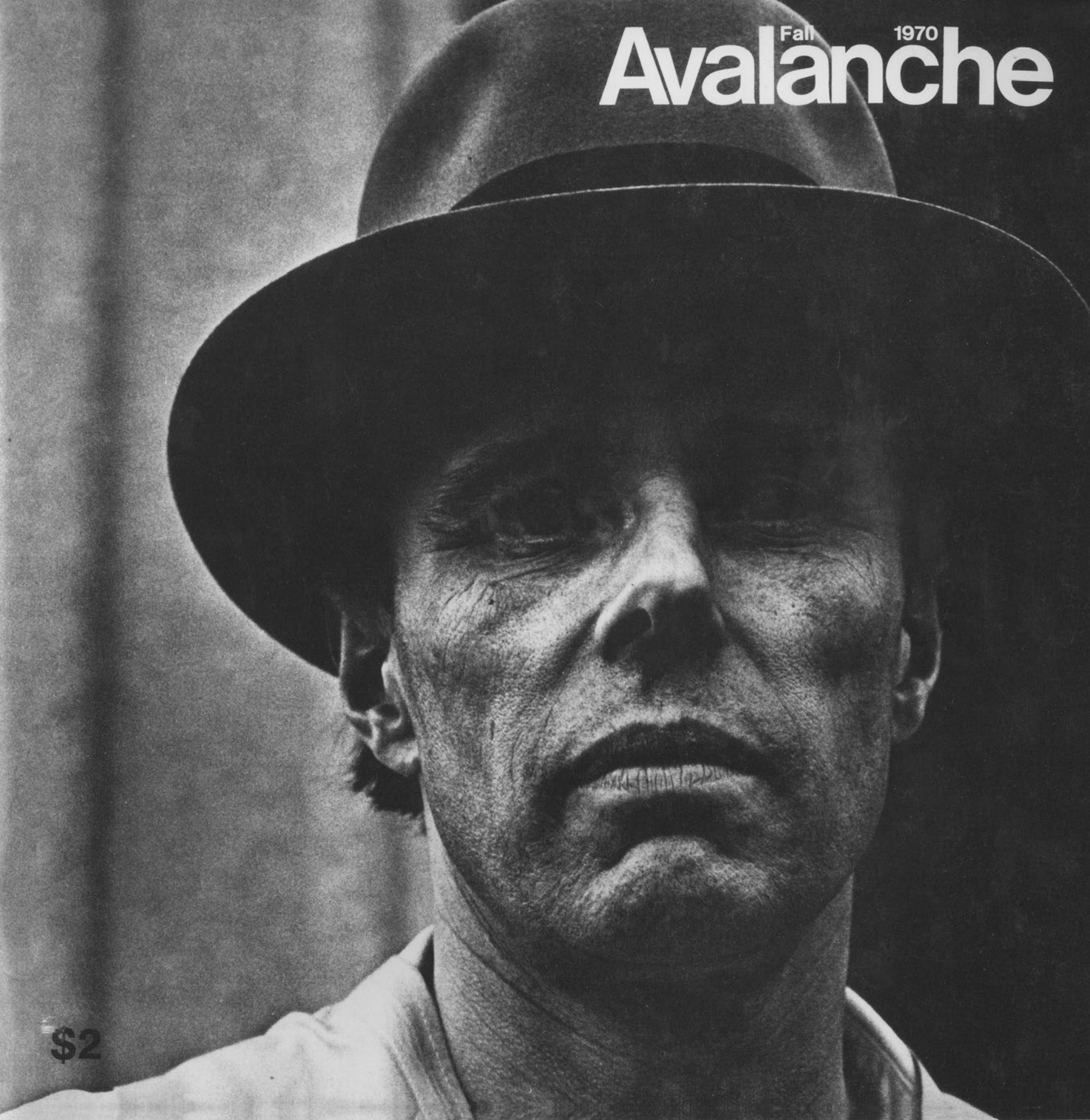
Yes, and I still can’t believe it happened!

Is it distributed internationally?

We ship to about sixteen countries now and have forty locations in LA and NYC.

And the flipside of that question: are there any issues you’re especially proud of?

Yeah, definitely. I would say I’m proud of them all.



Courtesy of private collection.

GUY OVERFELT

by Andrew McClintock

The first time I met Guy he asked me if he could drive his Trans-AM through the front of my gallery's historic 1909 building façade. I knew right away we were going to be friends. Instead of crashing his car into the gallery, he transformed it into a fully functional and free Laundromat, which forced me into the job of laundry attendant, dishing out large amounts of white powder. Being in the Tenderloin, this meant I had to deal with the local flavor of crackheads more than I had ever wanted to. I think this was Guy's plan all along, to put me into an uncomfortable situation.

In early 2012, Guy and I collaborated on a show at Queens Nails Projects, "Assed Out and the Mini Dramas." While preparing for this interactive exhibition we were faced with a worldwide helium shortage, a fistfight, the stomach flu, back problems, the list goes on. It all happened after we added "... the Mini Dramas" to the exhibition title. Together we made everyone feel uncomfortable and on edge, including ourselves.

Last October, Guy had his second solo exhibition at my gallery Ever Gold. Instead of putting me in an uncomfortable situation, he made anyone who walked into his installation, "#BLACKLIGHT," a hasher tribute to Dan Flavin, feel immediately self-conscious. They were confronted by a black light rendition of their facial complexion, exposing any bad skin, makeup or base foundation, bad teeth and dandruff through an infinity mirror room and larger than life double pentagrams. During the private reception none of the museum people wanted to look at themselves.

This February I asked Guy to participate in the "The Experimental Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Mid-Winter Burning Sun: Gutai Historical Survey and Contemporary Response," an exhibition I co-curated at SFAI's Walter and McBean Galleries. He was commissioned to create a contemporary response to Saburo Murakami's 1956, "Passage." While discussing the piece with Overfelt I said, "we could probably do anything except drive a motorcycle through the gallery or on the roof of the school." "Well that's what I'm going to do," he replied over the phone. As the final performance of the opening reception, it was one of the most epic things I have witnessed at an opening. There was danger, excitement, and about a thousand people watching it unfold.

Motorcycle performance as an art performance was not something new to Overfelt. In 1996, one of his motorcycle performances was scheduled for a show at New Langton Arts in San Francisco. Unfortunately the installation was canceled by the curator and gallery director who were concerned about the fumes and burnout marks damaging the floor of the entire space. Aaron Young heard about the piece in an undergraduate class at SFAI. Subsequently in 2006 hired motorcyclist to perform the piece at Harris Lieberman and then again in 2007 at the Armory NYC, which shot him to international art stardom.

Every time Guy texts me, I hold my breath and wait for his next idea. It might be somewhere along the lines of, "I want to blow up your gallery." If we could pull it off I would let him. Maybe if I had Gagosian's budget. Aaron, if you're reading this, maybe it's time to credit Guy and share the wealth.



"Passing Through Moto Redux (After Murakami)", 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.



"Oracle Parking Lot Burnout", 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.



"#BLACKLIGHT (a hesher tribute to Dan Flavin)", 2012. Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.

HOLLY HERNDON

by Joseph Del Pesco

I leave home just as *Terminal* starts.

iPhone in my pocket, earbuds snake out from under a black toque and dart into the front of my puffy black jacket. I look like I'm about to rob a house. I careen into Holly Park, aiming for Bernal hill and a view of the city's horizontal expanse. Just when I turn a corner, the music jumps and bursts open and I look out, over the eastern half of the city and the haze over the bay, light blues and soft pinks stain the sky.

It's twilight, the interval between day and night so different that it has its own name. *Terminal* is sharp and angular, with beats drifting in layers. Its spatial play slips left and right, whispers into the distance, then obliquely slashes up-close. Unlike the tracks that follow, Holly Herndon's vocalizations are only fragmentary for most of *Terminal*, screened beneath the code.

I'm halfway up Bocana Street's slow incline before the second track *Fade* kicks in. Its crisp pulsating beat competes with the ominous underlayer—the sense of darkness approaching. "Reach out..." intones the vibrating vocals, "without." Looking south to the horizon I see the grey-blue fog creeping across the hills. I walk past an empty car with its lights on, they click off. At the end of the next block I see the sodium vapor street lamp flicker to life in the middle of a tall tree flush with budding green. I hear "I'll be there," as *Fade* continues. I reach a road leading around the hill and find a women in black suede boots. Strange that she's so beautifully dressed amidst the runners and dog-walkers. I follow her up to catch the sun's final glow. Over the ridge, the city looks steely, clear. A low hum at this distance. I'm listening to *Breathe*, the sighs and entropic tumbling, moments of surprise, of guttural respiration. I hear my own breath hiss lightly, my heart pumping at the end of the elevation. Pause.

Holly Herndon's recent album *Movement* is my soundtrack, an album that employs the laptop, which she calls "the most personal instrument that the world has ever seen." Her soft intonation and warmly contoured vocals humanize the high-fidelity. It's too easy to call this music. Play.

Leaving the view, I turn back before dark settles its argument with day. *Control And* drops the pitch and crystalline splinters of sound follow me down. The vocals remain atmospheric, floating, and phrases stream into *Movement*, the title track. Seething. Pounding. Clicking. *Movement's* poly-rhythmic loop persists the entire track. It's a song that paces my footsteps. Then a brief but crashing, screaming *Interlude*. Finally *Dilato* which means to extend, or stretch. A solemn but intimate vocal track with choral undulations. The title is spoken, elongated, and time slows and then winds-up. I hear a bird chirping over my head as I pad up to my front door. It's just dark now and the album is finished. Herndon's work is like twilight, somewhere between night and day, between the club and art museum, between elision and eruption.

I dig for my keys and watch the final seconds elapse on the screen. I've crossed from one world into another.



Holly Herndon photographed by Suzy Poling.

A Conversation on Conceptual Art with Mauricio Ancalmo
by Fortunato Tadeo



Mauricio Ancalmo - *Dualing Pianos; [Born Free / 14. Smooth and Striated]*, 2012 Silver gelatin print, photogram 20 x 16 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.

NATE BOYCE

by Daelyn Farnham

With only thirty years under his belt, the San Francisco based Nate Boyce balances an artistic practice that jumps between international museum tours of his experimental music and video art performances and a studio practice that forces video into conversation with traditional sculpture.

When video art emerged in the 60's, it became increasingly interested in exploring the possibilities and tricks of the medium and quickly fell out of step with the formal aesthetic questioning that characterized painting and sculpture of the same period. Though fluent in the language of technology, Boyce brings these formal investigations back to the forefront of his work.

Taking a small hand-carved and airbrushed object as his starting point, Boyce uses an obsolete low-resolution digital camera to capture video of the form slowing rotating. Using cutting-edge computer modeling, Boyce layers a slick undulating surface on the grainy image of the sculpture as it turns. The contrast between the visible grain of the original video and the clean texture of the CGI draws attention to the surface of the screen, evoking the critical history of painting rather than the more narrative tradition associated with film and video.

By its nature, video art disrupts our sense of space, as three-dimensional objects are depicted on a flat two-dimensional screen. Boyce confounds the tension between the two and three dimensional in his work by displaying video of a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional LCD screen suspended within a three-dimensional sculptural pedestal. Early iterations of his sculptures played with the positive versus negative space of the pedestal, by creating a line drawing version of a traditional pedestal in welded-steel. Powder-coating the steel structure in the same pearlescent color as the rotating subject of the video reinforces the feedback-loop between the object and its support.

Recently, the structure of the pedestals have become more sculptural in form. In *Plinth Inhibitor* at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, the armature supporting the screens took an almost reclining form, spreading out across the floor and reorienting the screen upward to be viewed from above. In deliberately confusing the relationship between the sculpture and its pedestal, Boyce revisits the issues that fueled modernist sculpture.

Boyce's facility with technology allows him to re-envision the ubiquitous modernist public sculpture by again subverting the traditional pedestal support. Rather than utilizing a white rectangular form meant to recede into the background, Boyce situated a recent sculpture on an irregularly shaped plinth that he airbrushed with a generic scene of a public park. Wrapping the surface of the three-dimensional pedestal with a two-dimensional image meant to evoke a three-dimensional park scene again disrupts our experience of space. This image-skin alludes to the way in which three-dimensional worlds are created in computer imaging, linking the sculptural support with his video work.



Detail from: "R-I", 2012. Single channel HD video, steel, foam, electronics, acrylic, urethane. 50 x 21 x 13 1/2 in. (127 x 53.34 x 34.29 cm). Courtesy of the Artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

Boyce is actively involved with the experimental music scene collaborating and touring with musical acts including Matmos and Oneohtrix Point Never. The interest in modernist sculpture extends into this realm as well, appearing in *Reliquary House*, a multi-media performance set to the soundscapes of Oneohtrix Point Never.

Boyce's video contribution to the project reimagines sculpture from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, as computer generated images in impossible landscapes. *Reliquary House* has been presented at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Barbican, London, and most recently, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Boyce and Daniel Lopatin of OPN are collaborating on an upcoming installation and performance at the Museum of Modern Art New York, scheduled for Fall 2013.

In a moment when technological obsolescence speeds ever forward, it is unique to find an artist who embraces outdated equipment and sets it in conversation with newer, shinier, cutting-edge technologies. Firmly rooted in the formal and aesthetic concerns of modernist sculpture, Boyce embraces the spectrum of technological means available to depict and manipulate the object in space. As these technologies continue to develop, it will be interesting to watch this multi-pronged practice evolve.



"Untitled (copper)", 2012. Steel, foam, acrylic, HD video, electronics. 49 x 30 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the Artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.



"Untitled", 2012. MDF, acrylic, stainless steel. 40 x 27 x 26 in. (101.6 x 68.58 x 66.04 cm). Courtesy of the Artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco

LEIGHA MASON

by Jarrett Earnest



“Bacilli”, 2013. Charcoal and spit on paper. 40” x 60”. Courtesy of the artist.

Playful, sincere, and often described as “abject,” Leigha Mason is already a major voice of her generation. Her imagery—portraiture, landscapes, still-life—can be described as *carnavalesque*, to use Bakhtin’s term, where reveling crowds and banquet tables freely mix fresh and rotting fruit, young and old, sex and death, in a space of social reversal so characteristic of carnival imagery. It is perhaps better though to understand her art as *Dionysian*, which keeps all the debauchery but carries deeper implications, as when Nietzsche describes the similarities between Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Dionysus: “for both have once looked truly into the essence of things, they have gained knowledge, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; they feel it to be ridiculous or humiliating that they should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint.” Mason looks deeply into the essence of things, and makes these abstract and embodied sensations into “signs” that can be fitted over the vast nausea of the human experience.

Mason mainly works with film and video in addition to painting and drawing—in short, she’s concerned with all aspects of representation, of how we become legible to one another as *being* in the world. One important recent film is “FILM PORTRAIT: MARNIE.YEAR ZERO” (2013), shot on a beach in Los Angeles, near where the artist was born. It is a short portrait of her father who has begun to transition into a new life as a woman named Marnie. The bright sun reflects off the sand and ocean making the 16mm film luminous and almost haptic. Marnie smiles and poses for the camera, brushing her wavy hair back from her face and laughing. The film evokes Marilyn Monroe’s famous photo shoot on the beach, and like Marilyn

there is a poignant double-awareness of the performance of *her self* being turned into an image. “MARNIE.YEAR ZERO” depends on a delicate social mutation typical of Mason’s work, where Marnie is at once the artist’s Father and a little girl, with Mason assuming the parental position making a home movie of her child by the sea.

The film “SPIT BANQUET” (2012-2013) makes the political implications of these inversions more obvious. Mason staged a performance in which participants dressed in black and white were seated at a banquet table with empty silver and glass place-settings. Rather than eating, it was an evening of expulsion—two hours of continuous spitting, which Mason documented on 16mm film. The scenes are repulsive and as a sequence, intoxicatingly beautiful.

All of Mason’s work extends an invitation for a kind of action and seeks to offer, at the level of its form, an experience of radical ecstatic liberation. In this she sees the act of entering a work of art into the world as the most profound political and social gesture: exhibiting one potential new way of being; staging a confrontation with the possibilities of one’s own freedom.



“Spit Banquet”, 2012-2013. Video still from 16mm digital transfer. 8 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

JEREMIAH JENKINS

by Michael Krouse

“Why does shit have to be so fucked up?” asks Jeremiah Jenkins. Because it is! The world has gone mad. Too much money, too much poverty, too many lies, too many questions, and not enough answers. However, as far as Jeremiah is concerned, that’s a good thing, otherwise he might be working at a gas station near the Appalachian Mountains.

While the world may be “fucked up,” Jenkins’ art is decidedly attractive. His artwork grabs objects with an inherent meaning and flips their form into unique relationships, creating a different sense of space, time, and sensation. Whether it’s social sculpture or performance art, the work is accessible, formal, and layered through the use of metaphor.

“Credit Trap,” (2008) pictures common financial choices and predicaments: predatory lenders, banking vultures, consumerism, convenience culture, and the daily grind—all of which can fit into your wallet. It’s a small piece, sneaking in under the guise of “actual size.” The snap would sting a bit, but the image hurts worse when the viewer realizes that he or she is the helpless mouse in the game of consumerism. Jenkins seems to imply that being in on the joke doesn’t get you out of the trap.

“We live in a world where things are pretty fucked up. Organisms are either trampled or eaten by a larger organism or shut down from the inside by smaller ones. Vital water falls from the sky, rushes through valleys, and sloshes around in giant pools. Electricity shoots suddenly into the ground burning everything it touches. Air moves and blows away mountains. Humans have come up with a lot of shit to make things easier. Easy shelter, easy food, easy survival. But somehow all of our shit got fucked up on its own. It’s my belief that things don’t have to be that way.”

-Jeremiah Jenkins, April 2012

“BP Sand Mandala,” (2011) is a piece heavy with inherited meaning. He draws the British Petroleum Logo with brightly colored beach sand, as a medium. A dead pan representation of globalization, oils spills, marketing, and natural resources that sits flat at your feet. Jenkins

seems to present meaning with a purposeful lack of sophistication, but the effect of his materials allows the viewer’s interpretation to expand.

On February 8, 2013 at SFAI’s Walter & McBean Galleries exhibition devoted to Gutai (an avant-garde post war Japanese art group 1954-1972), Jenkins was asked to re-interpret Kazuo Shiraga’s Challenging Mud. His performance took place at the opening reception and was meant to serve as the “American” version. He took on the persona of an wrestler with a steroid infused attitude and the exhibitionist essence of the American Spirit.

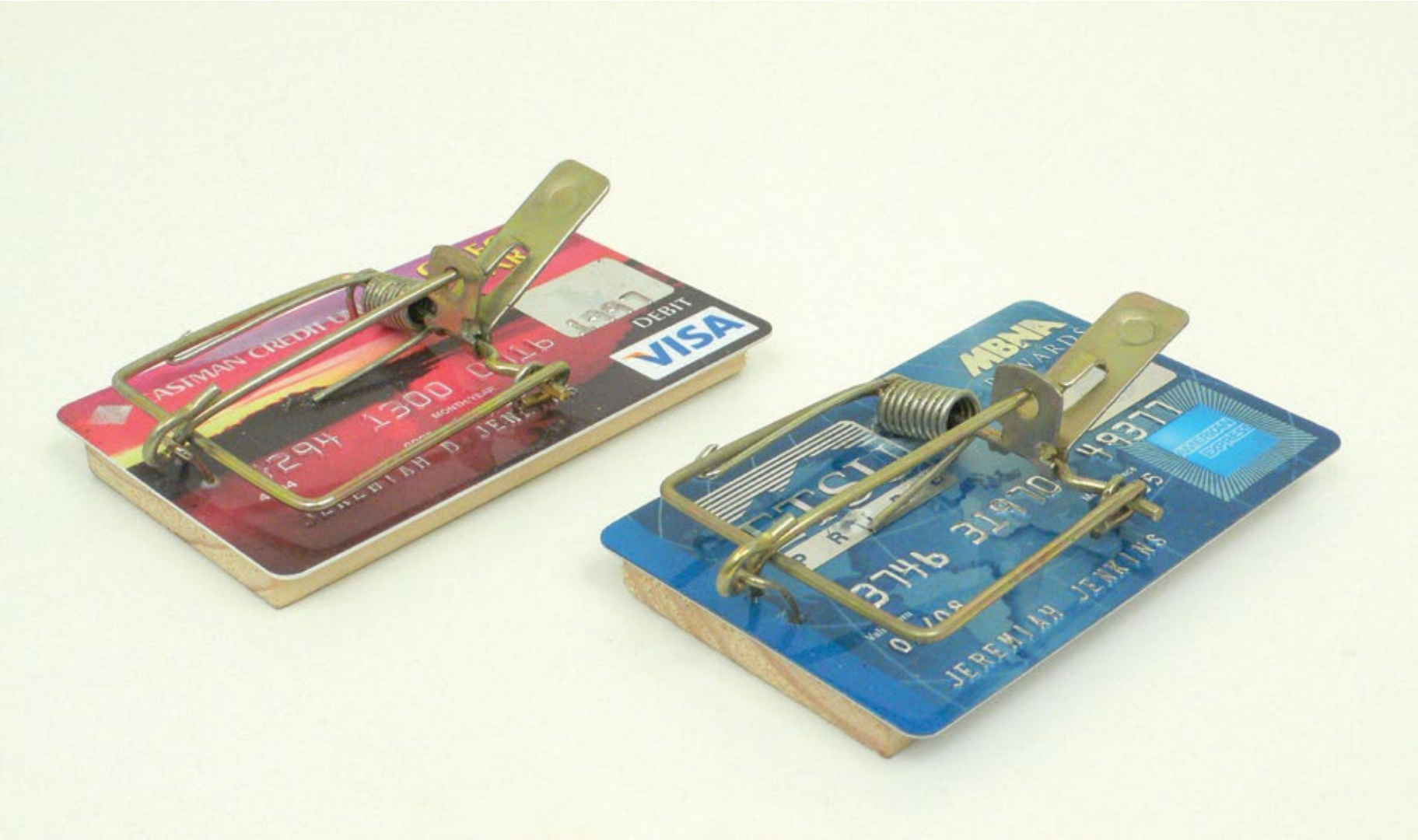
During this action, Jeremiah wrestled himself in a pile of mud. The performance was clearly and intentionally derivative, but stayed well short of the self-refuge of irony.

This is what I like about Jeremiah’s work, shit doesn’t have to be taken so seriously, which in my opinion is so important for the world in which we live. It’s ripe with meaning, but it’s also extremely humorous.

Another of Jenkins’ social sculptures is the American flag made of 100,000 matches. It’s impossible not to think of Johns anytime an artwork incorporates the American Flag—and again, Jenkins doesn’t duck the issue of artistic inheritance—but the physicality of 100,000 matches pulls the piece out of icongraphy and delivers a tinderbox of new and potentially destructive possibilities.

Jeremiah Jenkins work is fresh and above all unpretentious. The ideas he pictures make art more relevant to society, and society more relevant to art. So as “fucked up” as things are, it allows Jeremiah Jenkins to make artwork that is intelligent and thought provoking.

To see more of his work visit www.jeremiahjenkins.com



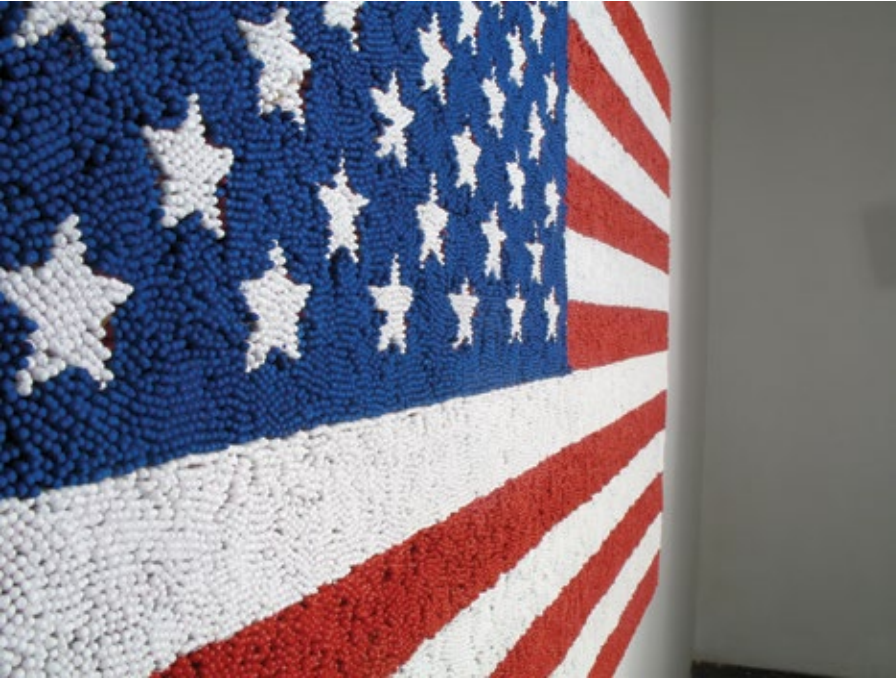
“Credit Trap”, 2009, credit cards and mouse trap parts. Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.



Jeremiah Jenkins contemporary response to Kazuo Shiraga’s “Challenging Mud” (1956), performed at the Walter and McBean Galleries, SFAI, 2013. Photograph by Daniel Morgan.



Jeremiah Jenkins contemporary response to Kazuo Shiraga’s “Challenging Mud” (1956), performed at the Walter and McBean Galleries, SFAI, 2013. Photograph by Daniel Morgan.



“American Flag”, 2007. 100,000 matches, glue, wood. Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.



“BP Mandala”, 2010. Colored sand. Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.

SHELTER SERRA

by Carlo McCormick

Shelter Serra’s Abject Objects of Desire

Hailing from Marin County, California, in the town of Bolinas - a place of such hippie ideals that it is primarily known for removing all roads signs to insure privacy from developers and tourists alike; Raised without a television in a home of artists whose patriarch, Tony Serra, is one of the most radical defense attorneys in all the land; By the time Shelter Serra hit New York City in 2009 (via U.C. Santa Cruz and Rhode Island School of Design) he was already unlike most any artist out there.

Since his arrival in NY, he’s been working for his uncle, that most macho of minimalists, Richard Serra. Though Shelter is also a sculptor, his art bares little resemblance to that of his uncle, the familiar legacy being more about a determined intellectual rigor and studio practice, as well as a process-based work where (to cite Shelter quoting Richard) “ideas are only found in execution.” Simply put, in an age when everyone is striving to be clever, Shelter makes stuff that is smarter than the rest - art that is not premised on some idea, but constructed out of a question.

Shelter Serra’s inquiry into the quotidian and iconic objects that populate our materialist culture is posited on the dynamics of materiality; the process of his re-creation in the studio and the transformation of form, content and functionality that occurs in its new state. Drawing on a lineage of Duchamp, Beuys, Nauman and Johns, he produces the surrogate to fathom the extent of consumer desire - to allow us to see if it’s the form or function we are attracted to - as well as to draw attention to the myriad issues and relative associations these commodities signify.

Early in the evolution of these ideas was Serra’s Hummer from 2007. Created before the massive recession that diminished their popularity to near obsolescence, and in this way prescient with its address of our penchant for grotesque waste, Shelter immobilizes the original, fracturing it (literally splitting it in half) to find the fault lines between the implicit aggression of a military vehicle and its repurposed utility as a vehicle for the conjunctive ego. It serves for Serra as the psychological “interior space of our manifest destiny.” A formal rendering of the emotive meaning of inanimate objects.

He returned to this idea with the seventeen car engine replicas he made last year for designer Helmut Lang’s stores, and a tank he cast in which the detail was stripped away, leaving mostly the abstract as a kind of Barbara Hepworth enigma still grounded with a referential foot firmly in the real world.

A manufacturer of provocations, Shelter Serra’s ersatz merchandise does less to fulfill our insatiable consumer desire than to undermine it. For his installation this Spring at Paul Kasmin Gallery’s PK Shop, Serra produced a series of fake, plaster cast guns. Horrifically timely in light of the escalating violence and doomed gun debate facing our country at the moment, these loaded metaphors hit upon our inherent attraction and repulsion to such artifacts, isolating them in the aesthetic frame of the objet trouve. In this, Shelter Serra returns repeatedly to the mundane for its eerie and disturbing connotations.

Serra’s current solo exhibition, “Balance of Trade,” through the end of May at Anonymous Gallery in Mexico City, features similarly disorienting transpositions:

A casting of a plastic water bottle where this vessel of life becomes a nature morte, a memorial monument to our unhealthy addiction to disposability in the name of convenience;

A drawing of Darth Vader based off the original drawing for the character from Lucas Studios, depicting the manner by which we invent icons of evil as universal commodities;

A replica of a 1967 VW Beetle that, like a post-modern Rosetta Stone, provides the translation for the subjective relativity of meaning, be it the “people’s car” of Nazi Germany, the embodiment of hippie freedom, or (in Mexico) the classic taxi;

A rug piece quilted together from inexpensive scraps that itself weaves together the artisanal craft of the homemade with the patina of a luxury item;

And most elusive of all, a salt lick (as used by ranchers and hunters) recreated in resin, porcelain and stone powder; the ultimate in representational abstraction where form intercedes function and the organic and manmade collide in a brutal confrontation between nature and artifice.

Shelter explains his art as a kind of “existential dialogue” not too dissimilar from the kinds of questions his lawyer father might ask, seeing the artist’s job of “doing things differently to push our culture” as a way of finding resolution to the problem of why all things are how they are. In a culture of conformity where social conditioning habituates silence, Serra’s re-vision of the ordinary may not resolve anything, but it offers a path of inquiry that is both profound and provocative.



“Fake Gun” , 2012 (multi colors). Cast Resin. 5 x 8 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



“Fake Gun” , 2012 (multi colors). Cast Resin. 5 x 8 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



“Fake Gun” , 2012 (multi colors). Cast Resin. 5 x 8 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



“Fake Gun” , 2012 (multi colors). Cast Resin. 5 x 8 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



“Water Bottle”, 2010. Cast Plaster, 8” x 2.5” inches. Edition of . Courtesy of the artist.



“Darth Vader”, 2013. Ink, charcoal and pencil on paper. 60 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



“Salt Lick”, 2013. Porcelain and stone powder, resin. 10 x 12 x 10 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

JASON BRINKERHOFF

by Wendi Norris

Alluring Tensions

It's unclear if Jason Brinkerhoff is foremost a collector, a curator, or an artist. He intuitively walks a fine line between a fetishistic, boundary-pushing outsider, and well-educated artist with an ability to weave fragmented pieces of art history into his own work. Brinkerhoff's source imagery fills his vast studio, located twenty miles south of San Francisco in a row of vintage auto body shops. Orderly stacks of Italian *Vogue* magazines from the 1970s, an entire estate of Polaroid head-shots of beautiful TV stars from 1969-1972, and meticulously sorted vernacular photography collected from renowned dealers, online sources and flea markets take up much of the space. There is undoubtedly a kinship with the relentless vanguard artist Miroslav Tichý (Czech, 1926-2011), whose voyeuristic photographs of women in the 1970s were heralded by *ArtForum* as being "singularly responsible for inventing photography." Brinkerhoff obsesses over the hundreds of fragmented images. "It's something like a dance with the drawings. I can pluck from any of the hundreds at a moment's notice."

Although Brinkerhoff employs a variety of inventive and experimental techniques, he remains singularly focused on images of women. He dissects his subjects, often rendering the head and body separately. Paradoxically, the forms are tenderly drawn with his melodic charcoal line, and colored with a playful array of wax pastel, oil, acrylic and even spray paint. Always collaged onto antiquarian paper, these female forms are revealed in singular or narrative arrangements of intimate, beautiful or erotic poses. All are untitled, as if he is distancing himself from his subject.

According to Matthew Higgs, the White Columns Director who discovered the thirty-eight year old Brinkerhoff as an artist, "Jason obsessively reworks his images; often times producing hundreds of drawings inspired by one simple pose in a Picasso painting. It's as if he is curating

an image, drawing from historical references, or from his own point of view, allowing all of these histories to co-exist."

In 2012, Higgs gave Brinkerhoff his first solo exhibition at White Columns, New York City's oldest alternative non-profit space, founded in 1970, for up and coming artists. The show, entitled "Some Women," traveled to ZieherSmith in Chelsea where it was touted as one of the best shows of 2012 by *Modern Painters* and all 77 drawings quickly found collectors.

Even as Brinkerhoff employs a collector's eye towards editing his own work, his personal collection accumulates. In "Other Bodies" (2012), Jason curated an exhibition of 65 found photographs from a series of 2,000 at ZieherSmith. In the *Wall Street Journal's* review of the show "presumably all were taken by amateurs but they sometimes exhibit effects that professionals would find hard to duplicate."

Jason Brinkerhoff's work evokes an alluring tension. He remains removed from his subject, as opposed to Tichý or even street photographer Gary Winogrand, yet he is determined to mine the mysteries of the female form, and perhaps, the female psyche. Is it an appreciation of beauty or a form of misogyny? The moment the images touch the high quality paper hand-picked from books printed in the 1920s-50s with titles like *Goya, Italian Painting*, and *The Davanzati Palace* the figures become canonized. The women placed atop a pedestal.

With San Francisco's Jason Brinkerhoff, the art world is once again presented with a multidisciplinary art practice, but this one uniquely crosses the vast and prevalent art world divide between collector; curator; and artist.



Found Photo, ca. 1970, Exhibited in "Other Bodies", Collection of Jason Brinkerhoff.



Studio Desk, San Francisco Bay Area, 2013.



"Untitled", 2013, Jason Brinkerhoff, Courtesy of the artist and ZieherSmith.

AMANDA CURRERI

Interview by Joey Piziali

So Amanda, SFAQ invited us, Romer Young Gallery, to write a piece for their 13th issue which features Avalanche Magazine and highlights the influence that the magazine and artists of its time have had on contemporary artists of today. They asked us to write about an artist we felt had some kind of connection – be it in theory, practice, or physical execution of work - to conceptual art, performance, film and video from the 1970s. We immediately thought of you. Obviously we are a bit biased because of our relationship with you at the gallery, but knowing your practice as intimately as we do, both Vanessa and I thought you would be perfect.

Avalanche, right? Funny enough I have three original issues on display at my home on a shelf. One even has a pay stub in it belonging to the original subscriber who worked for the City of New York.

How did you come across the issues?

I was a serials librarian at an NYC art university for a stint: official advocate for the art magazines, small books, zines. Sort of a dream job caring for the holdings of seminal journals, going through the boxes of donations from deceased art collectors (strangely lots of nude photos hidden in between pages), trying to fill gaps in the collection, and cataloguing the odd and forgotten items gathering dust in the basement. Among these ‘basement items’ were a few duplicate issues of Avalanche. The library already had the complete run and a back-up set. So I care-take for those three redundant issues personally, at home.

Care-take? Sounds like a nice way of saying you kind of stole them?! What drew you to the magazine?

I love the mix of messy and tight that this publication represents and the amount of work that went into each issue. This is pre-internet – so most every interview took place in-person and some took place in an altered state, as was characteristic of editor Willoughby Sharp. Liza Béar’s editing becomes all the more impressive in that context. What they end up presenting are active moments and in-flux ideas.

As you go through it, you get an immediate account of a moment in time and a community of people. And the magazine itself functions as a site of production – production of conversations, relationships, artworks-cum-advertisements. I love that the value is located in the exchange between people and people’s agreement to step up into the space of the work. Grassroots activism has a role in this as much as models of conceptual art.

What inspires you about Avalanche sounds a lot like what makes your work great. From your social practice pieces, “Make New Friends” and “Calendar of Events,” to your public collaborative video pieces, “Last Words” or “Call-back” readings & performances, you’re always thinking about the “site of production” beyond the expected economy of your studio or the gallery. You’ve been known to use the gallery as an annex studio, as a site of production during your exhibitions.

Yes, I’m always trying to use the work to get at different representations of the social. It necessarily shifts between an extroverted and introverted focus. Organizing exhibitions and events complements and complicates what I learn from my studio painting practice.

I’ve always thought of your emphasis on the social as a generous, non-bureaucratic access point to your ideas. You even add footnotes to your titles at times.

Right, and I try to build the conversation into the space of the work by making works that ask people to come back to the gallery again for an additional level of experience. I’m asking for something from people, but also giving a lot if they’re compelled to step up and take the time to come back.

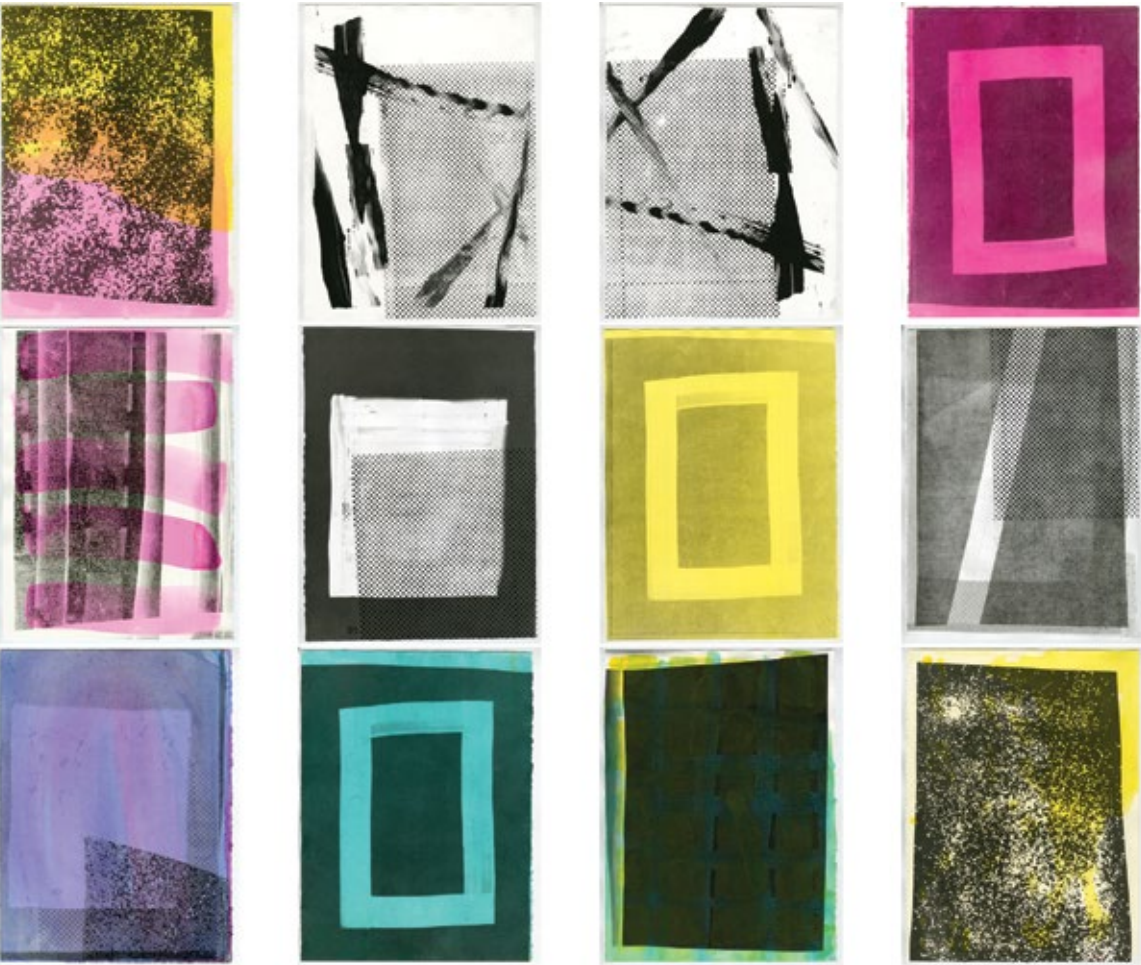
What are you working on now?

Right now I’m excited about the monoprints I’m making at Kala Art Institute, based on some of the absurdist slogans of 1968 like: “Action, Silence, Not Words!”

Can’t wait to see them!



Joey and Amanda g-chatting this interview.



“Silence,Action, Not Words!”, 2013. Monotype prints, each 15 x 11 inches. A selection of these prints will be on view at ArtMRKT SF 2013.

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STEPHANIE SYJUCO

by Stephanie Smith and Ariel Rosen

Open-source Conceptualism

In *Artforum* in 1967, Sol LeWitt famously said, “The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.” This challenge to the cult of the object-masterpiece, to both viewer and art establishment, is as present in today’s digitized and globalized world as it was in the Conceptual Art movement of the 1970s. Stephanie Syjuco is a contemporary artist whose work disrupts normal modes of function and distribution, such as how they challenge the role of the museum and digital copyright. Commenting on over-access and the loss of the object in the digital age, she uses Conceptual tenets of institutional critique, text and a do-it-yourself, ephemeral facility.

As e-books displace libraries and web pages replace the museum visit, Syjuco examines the role of the object in this century. Using images from museum databases to generate “borrowed” or mis-translated artwork, she challenges the primacy of the institution and its collection. In her 2010 project, *notMOMA*, Syjuco worked with art students at the University of Washington, Pullman, to recreate fifty objects from the collection of that “inaccessible, perhaps reluctant art institution located on the other side of the country.” With pixilated JPEGs and scavenged materials, students created an “illicit traveling exhibition” that re-fabricated masterworks from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, such as a Calder made of cardboard. In the same town that hosts the National Lentil Festival, Syjuco orchestrated an exhibition that might convince the average American of its authenticity. The project reframes a question that continues to occupy Syjuco: “Does the aura of famous artworks still exist when remade by others?”

Syjuco makes creators of viewers and often gifts the visitor with something physical to take home. In her *FREE TEXT: An Open Source Reading Room*, she delves into the hot button issue of digital copyright. Using text and viewer interaction as a primary tool, Syjuco opens a dialogue about cultural ownership in the 21st century. At the 2012 ZERO1 Biennial *Seeking Silicon Valley*, she created an inviting library space with the “artist-as-librarian” at her production desk amidst shelves of black bound books, communal tables and benches. Ironically, Syjuco curated and obtained her library contents addressing the copyright issue by downloading texts from illegal, open-source websites. Visitors pulled tabs bearing URLs linking to free texts from flyers that plastered one wall in the library. The viewer is the cog in LeWitt’s proverbial machine and in Syjuco’s project, accessing and disseminating these illicit texts-cum-artworks whether from the exhibition space or home office.

This core notion of access, illegal, over-abundant or denied, interests Syjuco, who continues to probe how culture and taste are assessed, produced, and disseminated. Her delivery system promises to keep pace with evolving technologies.



“FREE TEXTS: An Open Source Reading Room,” 2012, partial installation view, commissioned by the ZERO1 Biennial, San Jose, CA. Image courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery.



“FREE TEXTS: An Open Source Reading Room,” 2012, partial installation view, commissioned by the ZERO1 Biennial, San Jose, CA. Image courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery.

SEAN RASPET

Interview by Jessica Silverman

The images that you use often have digital origins, whether combined and assembled into a single image, transformed through layering materials or edited digitally. What is the importance of using digital images? From where are your images culled? Would you explain your systems?

The majority of images we encounter have been translated into a digital version. There is no discernable difference between many “digital” and “non-digital” images. But, I do think that the digitally based platforms of image production and consumption have accelerated certain tendencies already inherent in photography and image culture.

One aspect of digital image circulation that interests me is stock photography and online image banks. These image banks also existed in various pre-internet forms, but to my mind they have come to reflect the nature of images in the present paradigm: encapsulation within expansive archives, accelerated circulation, increased interconnection and flexibility, and the fragmentation of images into their searchable keyword content. I’m especially interested in the uncanny qualities of stock photographs—how they seem to congeal into semi-autonomous image archetypes or genres. To me they seem to be moving towards an increasingly interconnected and codified system with its own self-referential logic—a kind of strange parallel universe.

After working directly with stock photography for many years, I started on a different project where I began to treat my own photographs as a kind of reusable image bank. I started from an arbitrary group of analog photographs that I had taken in a Burger King restaurant in San Francisco. I then began a process of fragmenting and recombining the digitized negatives. At a certain stage, I would have the resulting image arrangements printed—usually on printable office-type coffee mugs. The mugs would then be arranged and documented as an artwork/installation. This photo-documentation would then be added back into the system of folders of images to be further fragmented and recombined with the other images, which would then be printed on other coffee mugs, etc.

I envisioned the overall process (which is ongoing) as a kind of feedback loop. As the process continued, the image fragments that had resulted from several generations of cropping and recombining became easier to fit into new arrangements with minimal editing. They reached a kind of stasis and lost a certain friction. They also seemed more “aesthetic” and pleasant.

How would you describe your relationship to abstraction?

There are a lot of different ways to think about the term abstraction. I’m particularly interested in an economic or informational sense—abstraction through financial derivatives or data-mining for example.

But as images become increasingly codified through keyword systems and search algorithms, and as they become increasingly self-referential, they have more to do with informa-

tional abstraction. Instead, they move towards a condition where they are primarily referring to other images (which in turn are also referring to other images) in a kind of recursive chain of association.

So, in this sense, one could say that the most clearly recognizable images—the ones that most effectively reference a particular image-concept or genre—are in fact the most abstract. I’m very interested in these processes, and as a side note, I think it’s interesting how, along with the term “abstraction,” the term “autonomy” also gets redeployed within this new context in a way that is almost a complete reversal from, yet possibly somehow still parallels the way these terms were used to refer to early 20th century developments in art.

You mentioned your interest in legal language. What about it intrigues you and how do you see it being an important influence on your work?

This relates to abstraction in a different sense. Legal language often represents a desire to completely define and anticipate all potential variables of a subject or situation. To leave nothing unstated, or where there is ambiguity, to use it as a precise tool. In a sense, that is, to fully reconstitute a subject within the language of the law—and thus to abstract it into this frame. But the resulting abstraction has a materiality and friction that arises from the medium of language and legal language specifically. And this materiality is another kind of entity with its own effects.

I often compare it to programming code, which is another interest of mine. They are both operational languages in that they accomplish something by stating that it is so. Their statements and definitions are self-enacting. In my own work, I’ve been working with the idea of writing “programs” that exist on paper without any sort of hardware basis, which the reader executes in the process of reading. It is a blurring of the line between legal language and programming code.

Who are your key artistic influences?

I always find this question difficult. I feel like I’m influenced by an overall climate, and I find it hard to trace that to particular artists. There would be too many to list. But a few artists/groups that I often revisit are Mondrian and Art & Language.

I think both of these artists/groups deal with the problem of overproduction and pointlessness in art, which maybe becomes a metaphor for the economy at large. The “endgame” of art can’t be to endlessly produce something new, or even to produce at all. For Mondrian it requires boiling down the medium into its minimum necessary components, which can then be reshuffled ad infinitum.

Art & Language do something similar in their shift of emphasis towards the discursive and administrative. I think it’s telling that they resisted the term “dematerialization” in art, since everything that exists has to have some sort of material basis, even if it is fleeting and hard to fathom.



Details from Arrangement 63 (OBSCENITY TRIAL (2)), ((2007)-2012) 2011. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery.



A Modest Proposal, detail of Klecksographie III, 2007. Plexiglas, hair gel, acrylic paint, and mixed media. 28 x 28 x 36 cm / 11 x 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery

ROB CRAIGIE

by Griff Williams

Study and Gift

Imagine this essay is an image of a small hand holding a dandelion. Imagine this essay to be the color of Kate Moss’ face or a beehive, or your own shadow. Imagine this essay to be a portrait of you as a marble collection. Imagine this essay to be an act of sharing. The allowance we give ourselves to imagine such things is at the heart of Rob Craigie’s inventive process.

For the past 20 years, Craigie has quietly produced a dizzying volume of humble, eloquent and conceptually engaging artwork. He is indebted to a range of makers including Tom Marioni, John Baldessari, Robert Smithson and HC Westermann. But, Rob’s work is guided by an intensely personal journey of discovery that organizes the beauty and wonder of a curious mind into systems and structures that attempt to explain his encounters.

As a graduate student at Mills College in the early 1990s, Craigie developed a studio practice that was rooted in Taxonomy; not as a medium in itself, but as a method of indexing his elaborate productions. He drew inspiration from natural systems, notably the beehive, to provide a path for his sculptural installations and the medium for his curious objects was often beeswax and Kool-Aid. Along the way a quasi-scientific inventory and cataloging system for his handmade objects developed and is now integral to his work. These ongoing installations and collections were recently documented in a book, “The Beeswax Studio 1992-1997,” which stands as a sort of field guide to an era of Craigie’s studio practice and taxonomic impulses.

Craigie’s investigations have extended to video, printmaking, photography and philanthropic gestures. His philanthropic work is a social action endeavor as well as a sharing mechanism. The book series “I Artist I Concept,” which Rob and I started in the late 1990s, was designed to support and encourage conceptual artists on the West Coast and presented the work of idea-based artists including Harrell Fletcher and “Creativity Explored” artist James F. Miles, Amy Franceschini, Tucker Nichols, and Alice Shaw.

“Cabinet of Video Parts” is a ten year survey of video projects stemming from Rob’s extensive travels. In Michael Klein’s 2006 essay “Personal Science” about Craigie’s work, he says of the collection, “Because his destinations have included diverse ports of call in Siberia, Papua New Guinea and Malaysia, the diary is entirely visual, available therefore to anyone in spite of their native language.”

Craigie’s art production between 1997 and 2013 grew out of these travels and his discoveries as a parent of two young children. The apparatus of art making and its intersections with parenthood reveal themselves in his project, “How To Make A Butterfly Even If You’re Three.” He developed a simple system of applying oil paint to a sheet of paper and then folding it as a method of instructing his then three-year-old daughter how to create the image of a butterfly. This pedagogical instrument has become a massive project resulting in hundreds of paintings. Rob has said of the project, “I see the paintings as an outgrowth of the Zen arts where the end product does not exist solely for the purpose of having created an artwork.” This axiom supports Craigie’s agenda to make sense of phenomena through personal, private experimentation irrespective of market influences or artworld agendas.

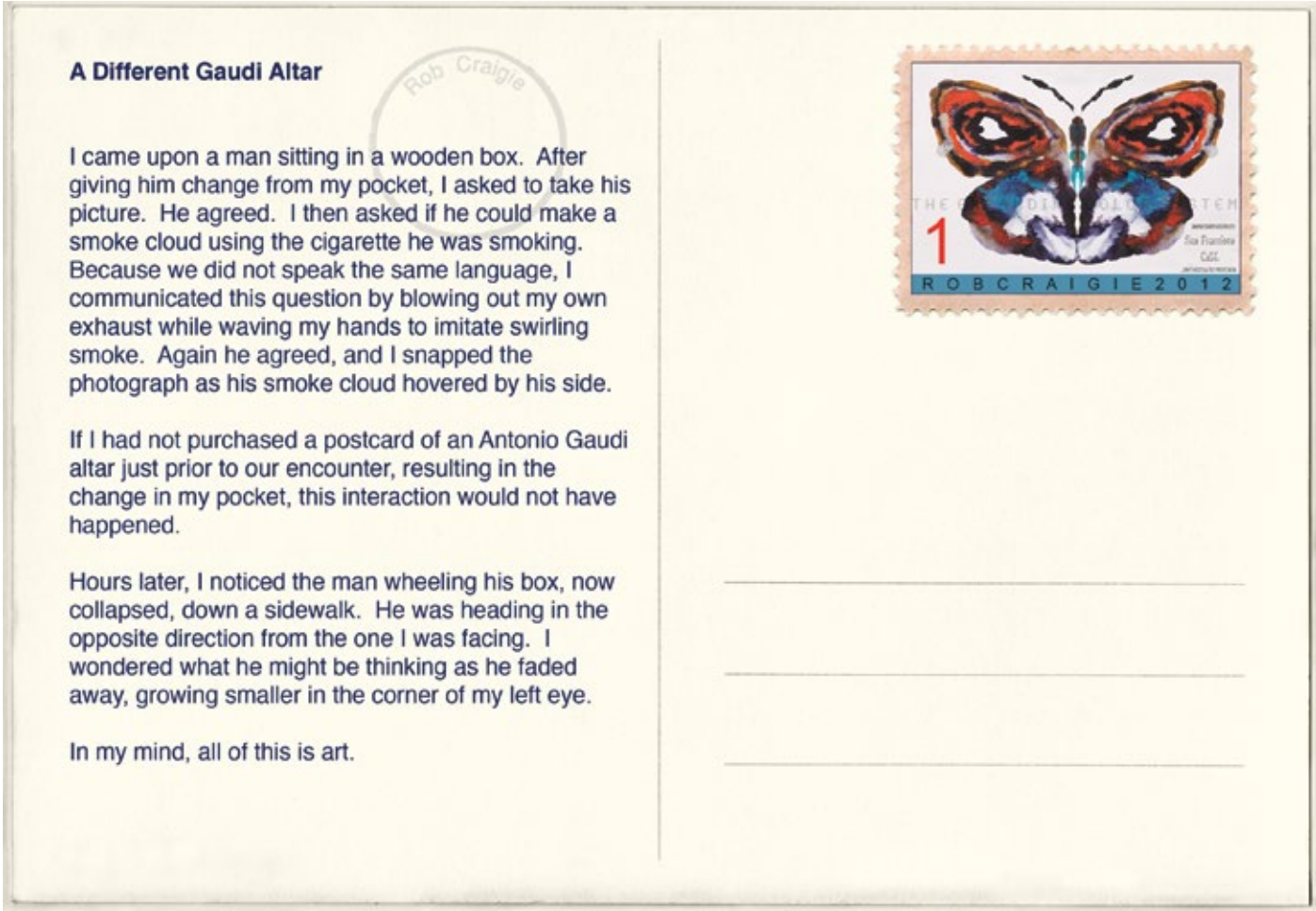
I’ve recently been struck by the similarities between Tom Marioni’s practice and those of Craigie’s. While Rob’s formal concerns vary from Marioni’s, they certainly find kinship in Marioni’s adage, “observe real life and report on it poetically.” The two share in a dialogue where the observance of sacred and colloquial, the contemplative and the social do not necessarily result in the production of static objects. “Medicine Cabinet of the Spirit,” Craigie’s recent public interface recalls Marioni’s legendary and ongoing project “Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art.” For the past seven years, Craigie has created custom bottles of Scotch Whiskey for friends around the world. He often describes these bottles, specifically tailored for each recipient, as time capsules. Talking about his recent Haines Gallery retrospective “The Expanding Color System,” he says, “by incorporating the word ‘expanding,’ I was hoping to infuse the title with the theme of art as infinite.” During the exhibition Rob poured extinct vintages of scotch for gallery visitors, “An important part of art,” he says, “is sharing the work.”



“A Different Gaudi Alter”, postcard (front), 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery.



“Expanding Color System”, Installation view, Haines Gallery, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery.



“A Different Gaudi Alter”, postcard (back), 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery.

CHRIS DUNCAN

by Ashley Stull

The 1960s and 70s were the championing era for initiatives that localized artist efforts outside of the institution. Conceptual Art publications, Land Art, Fluxus and other practices alternative to white cube aesthetics and fundamentals ran rampant with the collaboration of artists, for artists. The Bay Area was certainly not immune to this ideological fervor; and perhaps more than most places became a notable fostering ground for these certain attitudes. Oakland artist Chris Duncan carries the torch of the legacy of the 1970s with his innumerable collaborative projects that bear striking comparisons to an elaborate history of artist magazines, performance and object making that extend far beyond the tactile bits that litter his studio.

Although well known for his evolving series of spiral paintings and cut and sewn collages, Duncan is more discreetly responsible for two of the Bay Area’s most well received artist magazine projects of the past decade: *Hot and Cold*, and *Land and Sea*. Both projects, though spanning several years in origin and form, exist as earnestly constructed publications made by Duncan and a variable roster of collaborators. Each has the expressed purpose of alternatively exhibiting the work of fellow artists in an experimentally democratic and neutral space. *Hot and Cold* has successfully wound down its tenure of “hodge-podge” features, intentionally produced starting with edition 10 and winding down to 0. But *Land and Sea* is still active in its output, featuring the work of a single artist at a time. Having worked with Colter Jacobsen, Sean McFarland, Reuben Lorch-Miller, Kelly Ording and Eddie Martinez—to name a few—Duncan constructs the instantly recognizable photo-copied magazines with as much or little intervention as requested.

Mentioning *Hot and Cold* and *Land and Sea* in succession makes it difficult to ignore Duncan’s penchant for exploring opposite yet complimentary forces found in nature. This is evident in his explorations of pattern and light in his painting and installation work. But more abstractly,

the artist has shown a strong affinity toward one natural element we all share in temporal rotation: the sun. Inspired by a 2008 performance of the Japanese band Boredoms’ *88 BoaDrum*—an 88 drum ensemble playing simultaneously for 88 minutes— at the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles, Duncan utilized his residency at the Kala Art Institute (and later Liminal Space) to facilitate a performative gathering of community through improvisational drumming. The gatherings, occurring in several iterations, became known as “The Sun.” A community of collaborators (adults and children, musically inclined or otherwise) came together in an experiential happening that in Duncan’s words, “is at moments chaotic and brutal, but always ultimately aligns and provides.” Repetition, accumulation and an “everything all at once” sensibility are foundational to the making of his current body of work, manifesting in a multitude of media—increasingly including performance and sound.

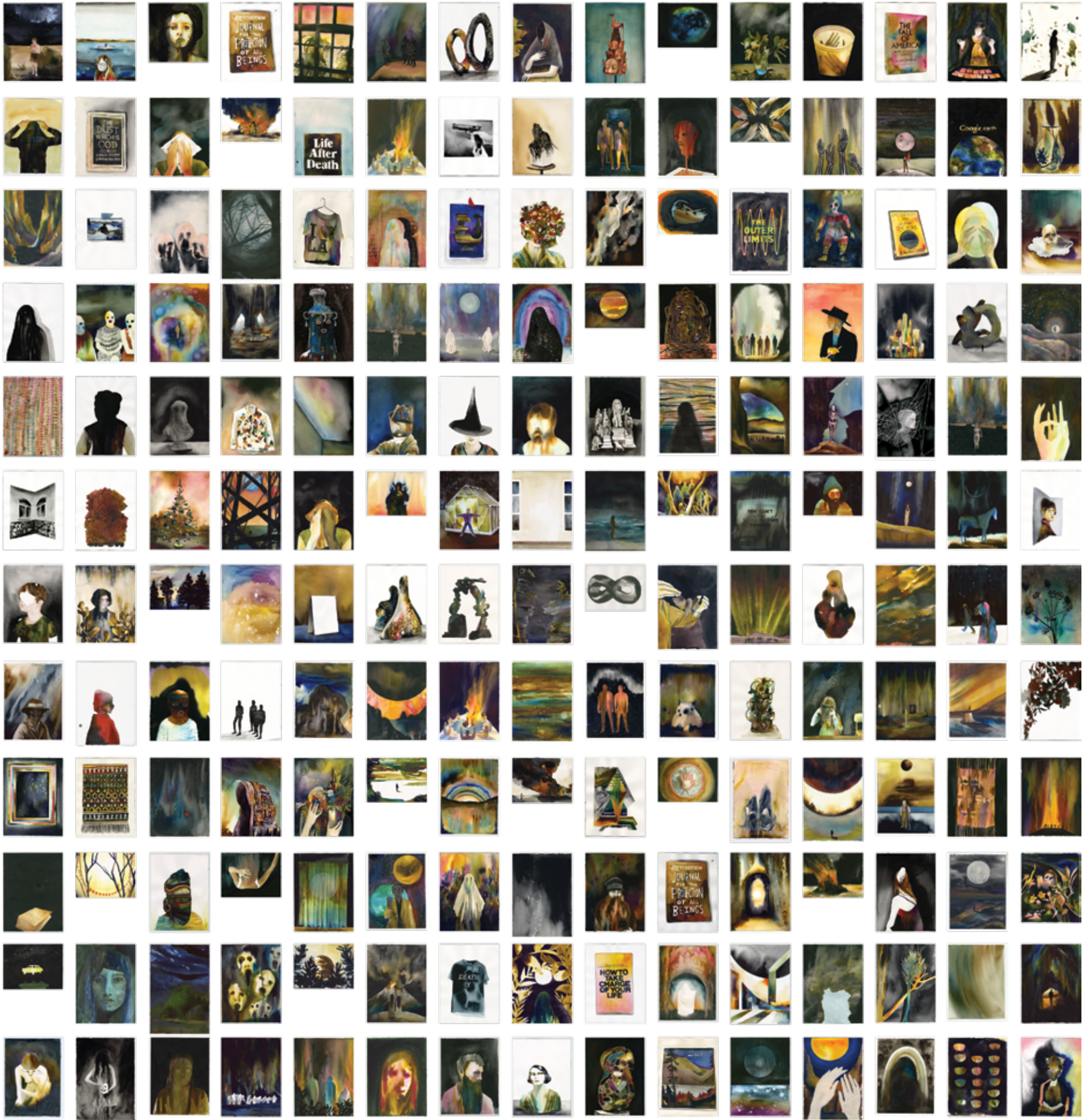
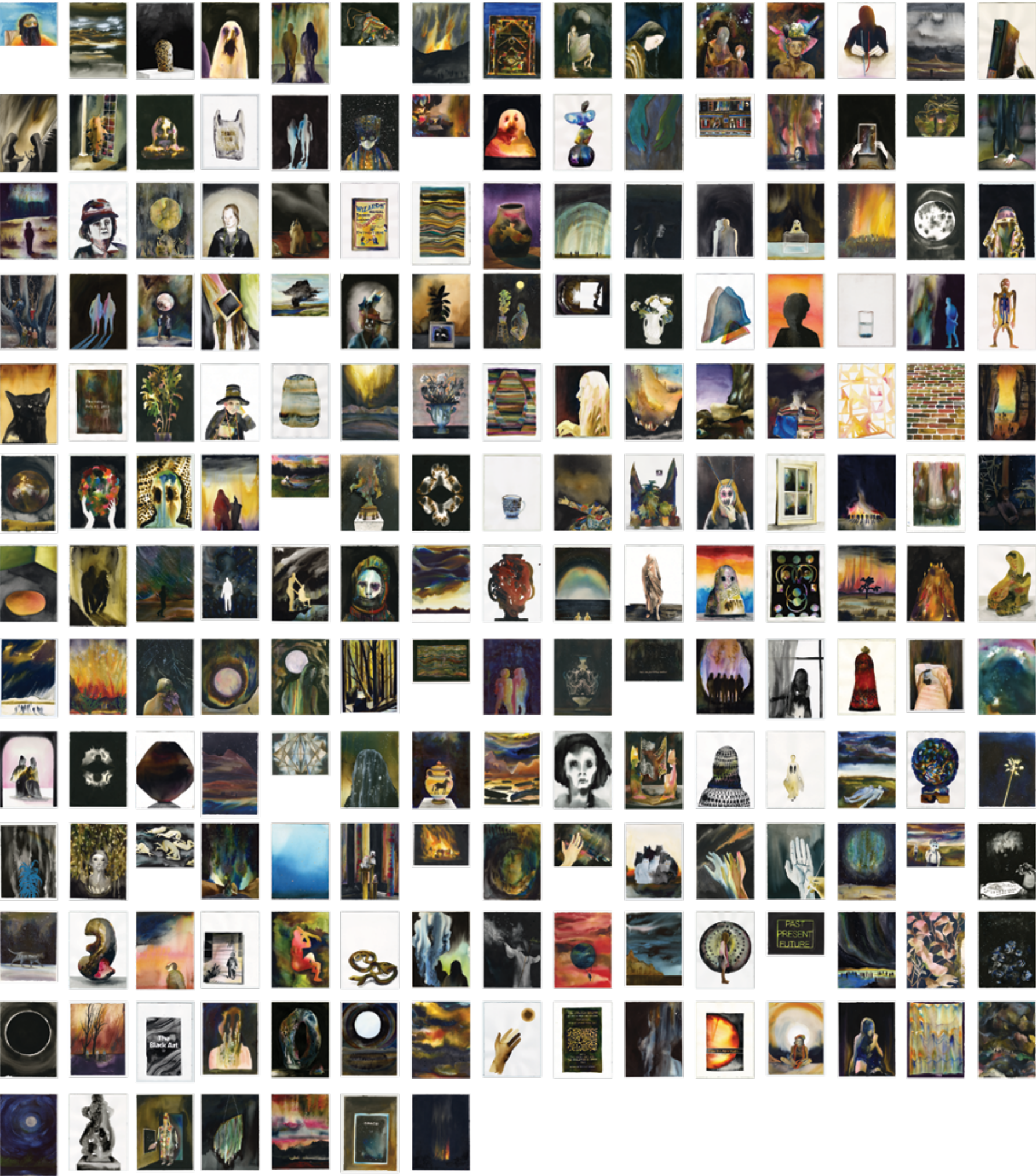
The sun appears again in Duncan’s most recent project, a compilation of 365 photos of the sky, taken every day of the year between May 2011 and 2012. Reflective of a watchful eye for the previously prophesized apocalypse, the images captured reveal an array of weather patterns and flares, but never once the complete absence of the sun. The end of the world, of course, did not come to fruition—but the realized project (part documentary, part overtly skeptical gesture with metaphor at its heart) is one the artist hopes will soon manifest as a monumental installation of printed and shared images.

Only time will tell what will next evolve from Duncan’s explorations of natural phenomena, conceptual performance tactics, and artist magazine projects; but one can say with certainty that his multifaceted approach to contemporizing some of the most iconic practices of the past 50 years is much merited and appreciated in Northern California’s transitioning artistic landscape.



[above] “THE SUN”, audience participatory Summer Solstice sound gathering, June 20th 2012. Liminal Space, Oakland, CA. Courtesy of the artist.
[opposite page] “LESS IS MORE OR LESS” (detail), 2013. Photocopy on paper. 30 x 40”. Courtesy of the artist.

MICHELLE BLADE



Michelle Blade's "366 Days of the Apocalypse" features 366 paintings inspired by the apocalyptic prophecies surrounding 2012. Each painting, completed daily over the course of the leap year, highlight her ritualistic relationship to art-making as a formal routine. Within the series Blade's imagery depicts desolate and phantasmic landscapes, portraits, studies and abstractions each exploring the real and unreal within aspects of the supernatural.

KATE NARTKER

by Ashley Stull

In 1971, artist Hollis Frampton burned a selection of his favorite still photographs. An image of the apartment he briefly shared with Carl Andre and a self-portrait on his twenty-third birthday, among others, were torched in the heat of a stovetop as Frampton verbally recounted their origins from memory. Set to the sound of Frampton’s voice, “Nostalgia” (as the film was named), was a self-professed experiment in memory, conjecture and the multifaceted process of “image making.” In methodical sequence, a series of nostalgic recollections are physically and conceptually dissolved to reveal not only the artist’s abdication of the narrative attached to the image, but the materiality and ephemerality of prints on photo-paper.

Local artist and CCA graduate Kate Nartker’s work exists at the convergence of this sort of unraveling sentiment and a few decades of technological progress. It is not by coincidence, but by pun, that I choose the term “unraveling.” Nartker’s interpretation of setting aflame printed photographs is deconstructing and reconstructing found video footage with the aid of a Jacquard loom. The mesmerizing stills, (beginning as digital captures from an archive of VHS tape and 8mm film), manifest as meticulously hand-woven objects, before culminating as a tactile reel of reconfigured moving frames. To see the remnants of each stage of the process in her studio makes it clear that Nartker’s conceptual rigor exists someplace in the interstices of experimental films from the 1970s. The instant connection to Frampton is not the sole historical tie, but recalls a greater kinship to a movement of Structuralist/Materialist films, predominant in the United Kingdom during the decade. Pioneered by figures like Michael Snow and Malcolm Le Grice, these films in part served to converge the ideologies of filmmaking with the palpable concerns of haptic craft. Nartker’s practice appears in places to be a technological outgrowth of a “little brother” movement that only briefly found its footing state side.

Much like her Structuralist/Materialist predecessors, Nartker gives ideological preference to the materials that compose the image over any narrative quality unavoidably associated with moving compositions. The frames spend the majority of the work’s duration as abstracted, fuzzy strobes that only take recognizable form at the climax of the video. Compared by some to television static, but resembling to others the crackling of a physical defect in worn film, elements of Nartker’s videos cannot help but induce comparisons to works like 1979’s *Sentimental Punk* by Kurt Kren.

Nartker expands her experimentation with tropes of materialist film in works composed of still frames printed on organza. Extracted from a larger sequence of motions, the isolation of individual frozen moments further dissects a scene’s directional movement and how much or little information it takes for an image to become discernable. Thoughtfully layering as many as three frames of only ghostly visibility, Nartker regards the “clumsiness” of the gathered fabric and fuzzy stills as a parallel to the clumsiness of amateur home movies rampant in the 1970s with the popularity of the Super 8 camera. Her work, like that of many contemporary artists in the Bay Area, illustrates a knowledge and respect for a history of filmic experimentation not quietly gone by.



“01:17:42.” Jacquard woven cloth for 30 second animation, 73 x 28”. Courtesy of the artist.



“Ten”. Jacquard woven cloth for 33 second animation, 5 x 7 x 4”. Courtesy of the artist.

JULIEN BERTHIER

by Paul Kos

In 1998, I met young French artist Julien Berthier, (born 1975, right handed and left brained).

He had come to the San Francisco Art Institute on a Fulbright Scholarship. Six months later, I bought, for an embarrassingly low price, his *too big to ship* “Home Cart.”

I called it *French Frou Frou*. Berthier’s piece is a shopping cart fabricated in re-bar with decorative curves mimicking the Arabesques in the French balconies of the XIXth century.

About the same time, my wife, Isabelle Sorrell, who is also from France, played me a song by Les Nuls, *Omelette*. The misheard lyrics are a parody on Paul Simon’s song, *Homeless*, made while in South Africa, like saying “cheese omelets” for “she’s homeless.”

“**Omelette, omelette, aux tomates et aux champignons**
Omelette, omelette, aux patates et aux petites onions
Est-ce-que tu peux mettre des poivrons?
Oh oui! oh oui! oh oui!
Est-ce-que tu peux mettre des onions?
-’nions, ’nions, ’nions!
Est-ce-que tu peux mettre des carottes?
Oh oui! oh oui! oh oui!
Est-ce-que tu peux mettre des lardons?
Ca depends...
Omelette, omelette, bien baveuse avec des croustons
Omelette, omelette, aux tomates et aux champignons...”

In 2011, I invited Julien back to San Francisco to join me in a group show called *Spread* at SOMArts. In the show, older artists chose younger artists working in a similar vein. He arrived and wanted to make something truly indigenous to the city. After a few days walking, gawking, stalking the streets, he spied the billboard of Bay Alarm. Soon after, his piece “A LOST” appeared for the opening.

Working on two levels, Julien Berthier adds in “Home Cart” and subtracts in “A Lost.”

Nice, simple work, like pulling the rug out from under you. Only don’t forget, to make “A Lost”(to *make*, sounding like an additive), required the removal of two words from a large billboard, the *raison d’etre* of the piece, becoming that which the verb states, a thief, a theft! Subtractive graffiti? No, he is not a graffiti artist armed with spray cans, he is an artist thief with a small blade. In this case, less is more. Once executed, it looks like he obeyed the billboard’s new declaration.

-Written on April Fool’s Day, 2013.

Speaking of a rug, **A LOST reminds me of Lawrence Weiner’s **A SQUARE REMOVAL FROM A RUG IN USE**. (They share a common ground, found objects, found situations serving double duty, in form and content.).*



“A Lost”, 2011. Advertising tarpaulin (80 x 200 cm) and colour photograph (58 x 72 cm). Unique piece. Photograph by Aurélien Mole. Courtesy Galerie GP & N Vallois, Paris



“A Lost”, 2011. Advertising tarpaulin (80 x 200 cm) and colour photograph (58 x 72 cm). Unique piece. Installation view at Soma Arts, 2011. Courtesy Galerie GP & N Vallois, Paris



“Home Cart”, 1999. Steel rebar and rubber wheels, dimensions: 90cm x 104cm x 54cm. Courtesy of Paul Kos.

SUSAN HUSKY

by Mark Van Proyen

Avalanche published their last number in the Summer of 1976. The previous Spring, the inaugural issue of *October* came out, so we can easily indentify that three-month overlap as representing a momentous transfer of emphasis (read: power) from the cult of the artist to that of the theoretician. Even in those heady days, this was truly synonymous with the cult of the curator - much more so than it was with the cult of the critic.

Yes, *Avalanche* was not exactly an artist-run publication (unless you consider its founding editor Willoughby Sharpe a kind of con artist), but it was very much an artist-centered publication, meaning that, within its “galley without walls,” the normal objects of its attention were artists who were imagined to be cult figures, rather than the producers of something deemed worthy of special attention. Oddly, in that first issue of *October*, founding editor Rosalind Krauss managed to call Sharpe’s bluff in an essay that she wrote, “Video: The Esthetics of Narcissism,” which was a not-so-tacit castigation of the *Avalanche* project, giving Sharpe & Associates no subsequent choice but to fold like a lawn chair. Art world politics can be a bitch.

So, with a keen grasp of the obvious, we can *that was then* and *this is now* the entire situation. Confusion ensues when we are asked to nostalgically return to yesteryear’s valorization of conceptual film and/or video practices, and then seek out a deserving sub-40 artist whose work in some way connects to that older tradition. After all, in that post-*Documenta V* moment, almost all of the artists who were featured in *Avalanche* had already gained a major market share of the *Artforum*-powered limelight, even if almost all of them were well under 40.

Now the art world’s limelight is much larger and far more diffuse, meaning that we are burdened by a very different fetish-to-spectacle ratio that was the case during Gerald Ford’s

short stay in the White House. The new moment is characterized by an omnipresent dilution of artistic production, creating a much vaster field of action, but one with very little depth, and for that reason, one that sustains very little interest.

So get this: I am pretty sure that the producers of the television program *Portlandia* are all under 40, and their recent episode about conceptual art that is now all the rage on YouTube (rightfully so, I might add) shows us everything that we need to know about how the theory, practice and physical execution of 1970s conceptual art has been extended into the present moment. But even though I like the idea of being cynical enough to say in print that those producers should receive the accolade sought by this section’s query, I am not going to go there. Instead, I will play the part of an earnest Huckleberry who takes the question seriously.

Enter Susan Husky, who showed at the Wendi Norris gallery last November and December. Her show was titled, *Shovels, Physiocrats and the Light-footed Heavy Souls*, its centerpiece being two films featuring people living “off the grid,” as parts of intentional, ecologically-oriented communities. One of these films, *Wash*, (2012, 71 minutes) featured people bathing in captured rainwater. These people were neither naked (i.e. vulnerable) nor erotically idealized as being nude; instead, they simply adopted a businesslike attitude to the task of caring for the body in water that looked uncomfortably cold.

Husky treated her subjects with a light albeit deadpan videographic touch that wryly contrasted the theatrical/anti-theatrical character of the ‘70s body art that was often celebrated in *Avalanche*. Part of the reason for this is that for Husky and others of her generation, video is no big deal; while for many *Avalanche*-featured artists, it had all of the novelty of new fangled technology. Because of that new comfort level, the bathers in Husky’s film seem not so much oblivious to the condition of voyeuristic surveillance that they inhabit, but rather, simply and indifferently acclimated to it; accepting it as a normal and materially concrete fact rather than an occasion for narcissistic shenanigans or puritanical shame.



“Wash”. HD Video (video stills) 2011-2012, 1h14min. Courtesy of the artist.



“Wash”. HD Video (video stills) 2011-2012, 1h14min. Courtesy of the artist.



“Wash”. HD Video (video stills) 2011-2012, 1h14min. Courtesy of the artist.

DAVID WILSON

by Natasha Boas

“Walking, in particular drifting, or strolling, is already – with the speed culture of our time – a kind of resistance... a very immediate method for unfolding stories.”

- Francis Alÿs

Up in the tower in Oakland, at David Wilson’s latest art-project “The Tower Show,” I experience vertigo.

My flash-back comes on suddenly and without nostalgia: I am eight years old and I am watching Gordon Matta-Clark’s tree dance at Vassar in Poughkeepsie, New York. The happening is part of the exhibition “Twenty-Six by Twenty-Six” organized by Vassar College Art Gallery and it is accompanied by the music “Miss Balaton” of the Venetian Snares.

Inspired by Spring fertility rituals, Matta-Clark and others in attendance move through ladders, ropes, and billowing materials built into the canopy of a grand tree. Somehow my aunt is involved in the performance. We are visiting from San Francisco, and my parents are wearing matching patchwork blue-jean flared pantsuits and my brother and I are barefoot and happy. I think: it is beautiful what these people are doing in the tree - hanging and moving like that - and I want to engage in it.

David Wilson’s project took place over the months of February and March of this year. A precarious, unsteady ladder-like staircase leads vertically to a small turret room renovated by Wilson. Audiences arrive through hand-drawn-invitations or word of mouth, and ascend cautiously to be greeted by the artist. Once in the elevated gallery space, the line of sight moves from dramatic views of industrial Oakland to intimate ink, pencil, watercolor and charcoal drawings on found paper that hang salon style on the walls. Drawn quick and loose, and framed within reclaimed wood from the woodshop space on the ground floor, Wilson’s drawing-room becomes the locus of an experience where spectators become participants.

An East Coast transplant, Oakland-based Wilson has settled in just like a *native* --celebrating nature, youth-oriented subcultures, experimentation and community. Wilson’s drawing, created out of his solitary, meditative worldwide meanderings are also the prerequisite for his site-specific signature *gathering* events that incorporate art, music, film and performance.

His work has been shown in venues ranging from the Berkeley Art Museum, the California Biennale, Angel Island and Prospect Park among many others. Presenting us, his audience, with his artistic process, while we participate in it, Wilson fits into a particular strand of Bay Area 70s conceptual art not constrained by any one medium. But in David Wilson’s case, the practice is rooted in drawing—the drawings act both as signs and signifiers, pre and post-performance artifacts, recordings and documents. While Wilson redirects his audience away from the conditions of his drawings by activating a social component, he always returns back to them as the central object of his inquiry.

In the late 1970s, cultural theorist Michel de Certeau wrote an essay, “Walking in the City,” that begins with the author standing at the top of the World Trade Center looking out over Manhattan. De Certeau discusses the experience of walking: like figurative language, which wanders away from literal meaning, the act of walking is a way of leaving fixed places in order to introduce new significations and ambiguities into an established geography. As such, Wilson’s practice intentionally or unintentionally references a long tradition of avant-garde wanderings, from the writings of the nineteenth-century modern *flâneur* to the *derives* of the Surrealists and Situationists.

If Wilson’s work is critiqued, it is usually around the imputation of a touristic artworld privilege—one that does not engage “walking” or “gathering” as potential for intense political activism as it did for many artists who were working in the social climate of the late 60s and 70s. Although Wilson explicitly resists the term “social practice” and does not use the *promenade* as a charged time for encounter, but rather as a private space to make art, he does ask us to rethink public/private models of art-production and exhibition-making. Moreover, like the now decades-long lingering affect of Matta-Clark’s Tree Dance happening, Wilson’s work seduces us to gather and participate in the witnessing of something beautiful... And today, that, in itself, may be very political.

David Wilson is one of three SFMoMA SECA awardees and his project will take place from early September until the end of November 2013 and will consist of a series of interventions in what he refers to as “forgotten sites” around San Francisco involving small and large scale drawings. Sets of directions will be posted on a free standing framed piece in front of SFMoMA .



“Tower Show”, Feb-April 2013, Warehouse of Lucas Ford, Oakland, Ca. Courtesy of the artist.



“Tower Show”, Feb-April 2013, Warehouse of Lucas Ford, Oakland, Ca. Courtesy of the artist.



Tokyo Flower Shop: Japanese brush pen on found paper: 14 1/4” x 17”. Courtesy of the artist.

SARA CWYNAR

by Simon Cole

Sara Cwynar is a Canadian photographer currently living and working in Brooklyn, New York. We sat down to talk about her interest in collecting and photography, and hear more about her most recent project: a solo exhibition at the Foam Photography Museum in Amsterdam.

My work in photography, installation and book-making begins in obsessively collecting and ordering visual materials. Saving, taking and re-composing images in my art practice is a cathartic means of satisfying a constant impulse I have to collect (even to hoard) and to create a tangible record of my experience, grabbing a small piece of the world and reconstructing it under my own terms. The resulting archive is composed of images saved from years of my own photo-taking; from encyclopedias, flea markets, and people I know, as well as objects I encounter. In this process of accumulation, I am interested in the ways in which we understand the world through pictures: how we view ourselves and our history through a shared image-based archive built from cultural fantasies and photographic tropes (examples include the commercial still life, the family portrait, the headshot and the landscape photograph). I am constructing my own personal archive as a way of intervening into the larger archive which I can't control.

At Foam, for the central installation of the show, I reinstalled a documentation of a former installation at Cooper Cole Gallery. I moved everything in my studio into the gallery and installed it according to a plan which quickly began to fall apart as images and objects were not how I had remembered them. At the end of the installation, I threw it all away as a means

of forcing myself to purge the archive. I was also inspired by this short text by Andy Warhol, where he talks about how he hates nostalgia so he doesn't want to keep his ephemera or saved possessions around. But he can't quite get rid of them, so he stores everything in labelled boxes in New Jersey.

I liked the idea of not outright throwing away all of your saved materials, but rather keeping them somewhere for a while. An archive can be overwhelming, especially if you're a hoarder like I am. I took the large-format negative of the documentation of the installation and printed it as a c-print, then affixed it to a wall I had built in the middle of the gallery, I then began to paste and nail other images and objects onto the picture that somehow related to the things in the original installation (both formally and conceptually), in a sense, reinvigorating or giving new life to the flattened image of this accumulation of discarded objects and pointing to the surface, the two-dimensionality of the image by combining it with real objects and images again.

I am really excited about it! I love the idea of taking an old image and giving it a new context and a new life.

www.saracwynar.com



Sara Cwynar / Everything in the Studio Destroyed (Detail) / Installation at FOAM Photography Museum, Amsterdam, 2013



Sara Cwynar / Everything in the Studio Destroyed / Installation at Cooper Cole Gallery, 2012

DORA GARCIA

by Rudolf Frieling

What is a visitor when he is not a visitor anymore? What are readers when they don't read? A wall of sentences in golden letters by Dora García simply states: *Una buena pregunta debe evitar a toda costa una respuesta* (2002) - a good question should avoid an answer at all costs.

Ever since Luigi Pirandello had six characters searching for an author on stage, the self-conscious act of showing and telling has been a continuous presence on the larger “stage” of modernity. A generation later, Bertolt Brecht's didactic dramatic plays helped tear down the fourth wall. Today this theatrical tradition is being reviewed by a contemporary generation of artists. Spanish artista Dora García is one of them. After all, she gave one of the side characters of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, beggar apprentice Filch, a big stage at Münster's *Sculpture Projects* in 2007. But where is Filch now? Or, as she phrases this question: *Where do characters go when the story is over?* [2009]. In a more recent video performance, actors playing Charles Filch, William Holden, and Lenny Bruce met to debate this question that has no answer; which is exactly how she frames her unscripted art of dialogue with people, places, genres, and the audience.

García's hybrid practice between art, literature, theater, and television has produced a body of work that is unique and prolific. An avid reader and huge fan of James Joyce [an obsession we share], her references and direct artistic influences include Abbie Hoffman's 1970 *Steal this Book*, Lenny Bruce's legendary stand up comedy, Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Franco Vaccari's pioneering work in participatory art and Franco Battaglia's seminal work in anti-psychiatry. These criss-crossing interests converge in her focus on the politics and the ambiguities of the place of art, a durational action on a real or virtual stage, often played by actors, that interrupt, question, or upset existing contexts.

An early example is her 2003 project *The Kingdom*, “a novel for a museum” (MACBA, Barcelona) in which the reality of all events in and around the museum was only tentatively verified by their insertion into an ongoing online diary: “The Kingdom's basic purpose is to disinform. The Kingdom relinquishes the spectator's education in favor of his/her perplexity. The Kingdom does not want to enrich the spectator's perception of the world, or his/her perception of him/herself: it questions them.”

Setting herself apart from the charged traditions of 1970s performances, her “inserts in real time” have shaped García's hybrid performative approach for more than a decade. At the Venice Biennial in 2011, her four-month-long performance project and exhibition *The Inadequate* provided a big platform in the central gallery which was used by various performers and guest speakers. The fringe of the platform was occupied by an inconspicuous writer as ‘performer,’

continuously posting updates and opinions that were projected in an adjacent gallery in real time. The work, entitled *Instant Narrative*, began in 2006 and constitutes one of her key exhibitions. It was later shown at SFMOMA as part of the *Descriptive Acts* exhibition in 2012. The observation not via a surveillance camera but a writer who is physically present and is easily mistaken for a staff member, generates a cybernetic feedback situation. The ‘artwork,’ traditionally the object being looked at, turns the gaze around and looks back at itself. Not only that, it also acts in response. “It” being a performer/writer and the white projection screen of continuous narrative. Gallery visitors either become characters in a narrative or not, sometimes being neglected in favor of other events happening at the same time. Visitors cannot be sure that they'll be “seen.” To project their presence onto the writer, some start to act while others flee the scene and lurk outside the vision of the performer. Then there are those who reflect and respond in writing: “I want to disrupt the writer's control of the room. As people flow in and out of the space, I remain stubbornly present and still, continuing to scribble things down into my notebook. If I stand still, she can't write about me. Or perhaps this will give her license to look even closer at me. [Footnote: Tess Thackara account of her experience, published on Open Space, SFMOMA's blog <http://blog.sfmoma.org/2012/02/descriptive-acts-part-one/>]

Much closer in spirit to the restraints of a Samuel Beckett text than to the idiosyncrasies of associative, creative expression, García's insistence on factual observation produces a body of collective writing in which style and content become a function of the gallery events or non-events. Imagine you'd spell out loud all those observations about people that occur in your mind when walking through a busy gallery. But what happens when we're alone and no-one else is around? What emerges when a Cagean silence is not only listened to, but actually described in real time?

Beyond the body-centered performances of the 1970s and the conceptual gestures of relational aesthetics, I find in García's works a structured activity, an ‘open situation’ (as Tino Sehgal would define it), a participation of a whole community, and a text generator – these elements combined make it a contemporary investigation into modes of performing art. I'm interested in this kind of questioning in its specific challenge to a collecting institution. What does a museum do when an open instruction constitutes the art work, however each time it's acted out, it produces and generates an endless stream of effects, experiences and time-based narratives that materialize in text form? In García's practice, these texts often leave the museum and circulate as books. They become part of her Joycean project of describing the world in collaboration with the audience. She signed my copy of her book *All the Stories* (2011), wishing me “a lot of pleasure and endless reading.”



“The Inadequate,” Spanish Pavilion Venice Biennale 2011, photograph by Roman Mensing. Courtesy of the artist.



“A good question should avoid an answer at all costs.” from the series Golden Sentences, ongoing since 2006, gold leaf on wall, photograph by Centro Calego de Arte Contemporânea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Courtesy of the artist.

MICHAEL MERSEREAU

by Glen Helfand

It's difficult to resist cinematic seduction, and Michael Mersereau doesn't bother to try. His primary art interest is in tackling film's multimedia channels, that fusion of time, space, and narrative. He is a formalist who revels in cinematic genres as much as the materiality of the medium. This recent Mills College grad gets away with tackling revered iconic films by dealing with them as objects—for their layering of tracks, the conglomeration of visuals, lighting, composition, sound, editing, and scripting. He separates and reconfigures these elements in ways that are lovingly surgical. That is not to say he repairs them, rather, he opens them up and finds his own way into their structure.

His “*Light Study: (Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, 201 minutes, 1975)*”, 2012 is succinctly described on the artist's website as “An entire feature film's averaged light levels as viewed through the shifting brightness of a 100 watt light bulb.”

He has taken Chantal Ackermann's career-making opus, and fed it through a computer program that does this trick. As an installation, it's a bare bulb hanging in a dark room, a flickering illumination that responds to the illumination of each scene, in which the amazing Delphine Seyrig going from room to room, shutting lights to save on her electric bill, as she dourly turns tricks. We're cast into the light and dark of this almost dialog free, minimalist feature. Ackermann managed to tell a whole lot with minimal means (albeit a necessarily luxurious running time); Mersereau's single gesture is astutely deployed to rethink a classic with only sound and light, the essential ingredients of every film.

He has dared to mess with another masterwork in *Sound Replacement for Dario Argento's 'Suspiria'*, 2012, an audio/video piece in which he recreates the ambient soundtrack for the feature length of the stylized horror staple. Inspired, perhaps, by the strange sense of dubbing in 1970s Italian-made internationally distributed titles think the odd audio of Fellini's mid-period, Mersereau replaced each scene's sound with tones gathered on his own. For an opening airport sequence, he inserts the hum of whooshing electric doors and wind at SF International, gathering other ambient noises in buildings and streets in Montreal (he lives and works in the Bay Area and Quebec). The results are uncanny, a strange, dialog free quietude that alters the dramatic arc. Argento's is a film of brilliant artifice and a notable, anxiety-spiking soundtrack by the prog rock band Goblin. There are beautifully bloody murders, broken glass, blood spilling on vibrantly hued shag carpets. The original film is over the top, but in *Sound Replacement*, it is calmed, tamped down to something we have to consume meditatively. In space, no one can hear you scream.

He works with the illusion of rear screen projection in the video *Reverse View*, 2012. In front, there's a ride through city to country, in the rear view mirror, there's a trip through another landscape. It's a scenario that's vertiginous yet as familiar as any color saturated old movie. Mersereau revels in the ways that we are tricked into a sense of dramatic narrative. Is it a car chase or a dull ride home? We essentially go nowhere, a static, simultaneous forward and back that thrillingly affirms that the medium can take us anywhere.



“Light Study, (Chantal Ackerman's Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles)” 2012. 100w Light Bulb & Mixed Media, 201 min. An entire feature film's averaged light levels as viewed through the shifting brightness of an 100 watt light bulb. Photograph by Phil Bond. Courtesy of the artist.



“Reverse view”, 2012. Single channel video, 8 min. 15 sec. A mundane drive where something is not quite right in our rear view mirror. "Reverse view" is an experimental dedication to driving in film, exaggerating the ordinary through cinematic production. Courtesy of the artist.



“Reverse view”, 2012. Single channel video, 8 min. 15 sec. A mundane drive where something is not quite right in our rear view mirror. "Reverse view" is an experimental dedication to driving in film, exaggerating the ordinary through cinematic production. Courtesy of the artist.

EMMA SPERTUS

by A. Will Brown



“Spirit of the Age”, 2011. Large digital prints on wood, dimensions variable. Installation view at Dorsky Gallery, New York. Courtesy of the artist.

Emma Spertus’ work can be found just around the corner from the Lake Merritt Bart station at “Real Time and Space,” a studio complex housed in an open, almost barn-like building. The building was once a printing facility, which is eerily appropriate as Spertus began her art practice making prints. Originally from Berkeley, Spertus spent three years in New York while enrolled in Hunter College’s MFA program. Upon returning to Oakland, she founded Real Time and Space, which promotes dialogue and community among local artists. Fostering this small but thriving community of artists, curators, and writers is only one of Spertus’ contributions to Bay Area arts and culture. Recently, she completed a two-month residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts.

Spertus’ work is primarily based in sculpture, installation and architectural intervention. One could describe her practice as an ongoing investigation of the interplay between the notions of image as object, and object as image. When looking around the studio with Emma, I noticed a work titled, “For Wall or Floor”, resting, appropriately on the floor and immediately asked myself if it was a work or a part of the space? By placing an image of a power chord on the floor in lieu of an actual chord—taped as though purely functional and part of the trimmings of an exhibition space—Emma intervened in my viewing experience, offering me the chance to evaluate both how and what I was seeing and to think about why she had done this. Strikingly, she did all of this with an elegantly simple maneuver. It is as if she is always one step ahead, offering more with every step one takes. In her words, she is primarily concerned with “unhinging the viewing experience and accepted conventions of objecthood” not just in the gallery, but throughout the spaces in which their lived experiences take place.

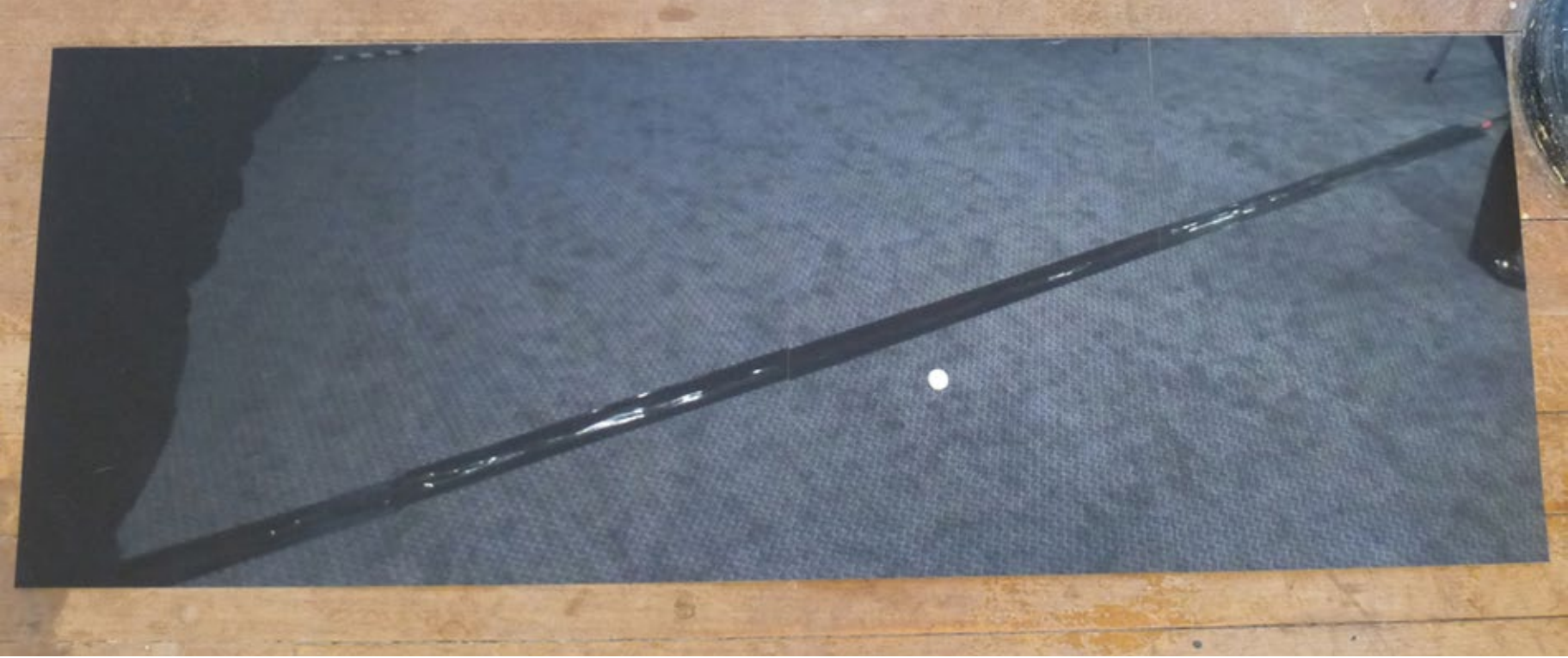
A series entitled “Fake Books”, which was originally made for a group show at the Apartment Gallery in Vancouver, is as the title suggests. Spertus took real books and made fake covers for them, often incorporating imagery and themes from within the books themselves, but altering them with subtle humor and a conceptual rigor that made the texts appear not as art or beautiful objects, but as engaging reading material (what any book, at least traditionally, is meant for). The artist described the process of working with book cover designs, or graphic design pre-computers as an unusual layer, especially as she re-designed the covers with such software. In addition to her interest in images and objects, her work often plays with the subtle differences between digital and analog.

It is remarkable that Spertus makes her work—refiguring complex image-object relationships into readable and thought provoking forms—look simple, clean and effortless; all the while using incredibly simple and inexpensive materials, which one would normally deem of little significance—cardboard, gaffers tape, recycled wood, and photocopied images.

There is a discernment with which Spertus works, that, once you meet her and discuss both her interests and projects, becomes deeply complex and remarkably accessible. The non-pre-tension and deep fascination with the world of images, ideas and materials with which Spertus works is refreshing to say the least.



“Fake Books”, 2011, Printed paper and plastic. Dimensions Variable. Courtesy of the artist.



“For Floor or Wall”, 2010. Cardboard and color printed paper, 44” x 25.5” inches. Courtesy of the Artist.



Anzfer Farms Book Easel

Jonathan Anzalone and Joseph Ferriso from Anzfer Farms have collaborated with The Headlands Center for the Arts to make an indispensable object for your desk, kitchen, study or studio. These hand-made book easels are crafted from wide reclaimed boards of elm, pine, fir and redwood. Each easel is two interlocking parts which disassemble to store flat on your bookshelf. The book easel is a great way to prop open your favorite spread in art books, favorite passage in literature, the recipe of the day in the kitchen or add some character to your i-pad. The easel is hand stamped and finished with Danish oil. Measures approximately 11" x 11". Open Edition. POA

Available at www.headlands.org



The Thing Quarterly Issue #19: David Shrigley

Issue 19 of The Thing Quarterly is entitled "THE TRAVEL ISSUE", produced in collaboration with designer Matt Singer and it consists of a leather travel wallet comes complete with 4 phrase cards and a short, passport size book written and illustrated by David Shrigley. The 24 page Passport Book is a mediation on travel, existentialism, and pool splashing. The issue comes ready for use out of the box and is recommended for all international and interstate travel. It can also be used around town or in the town next door. \$95

Available at www.thethingquarterly.com

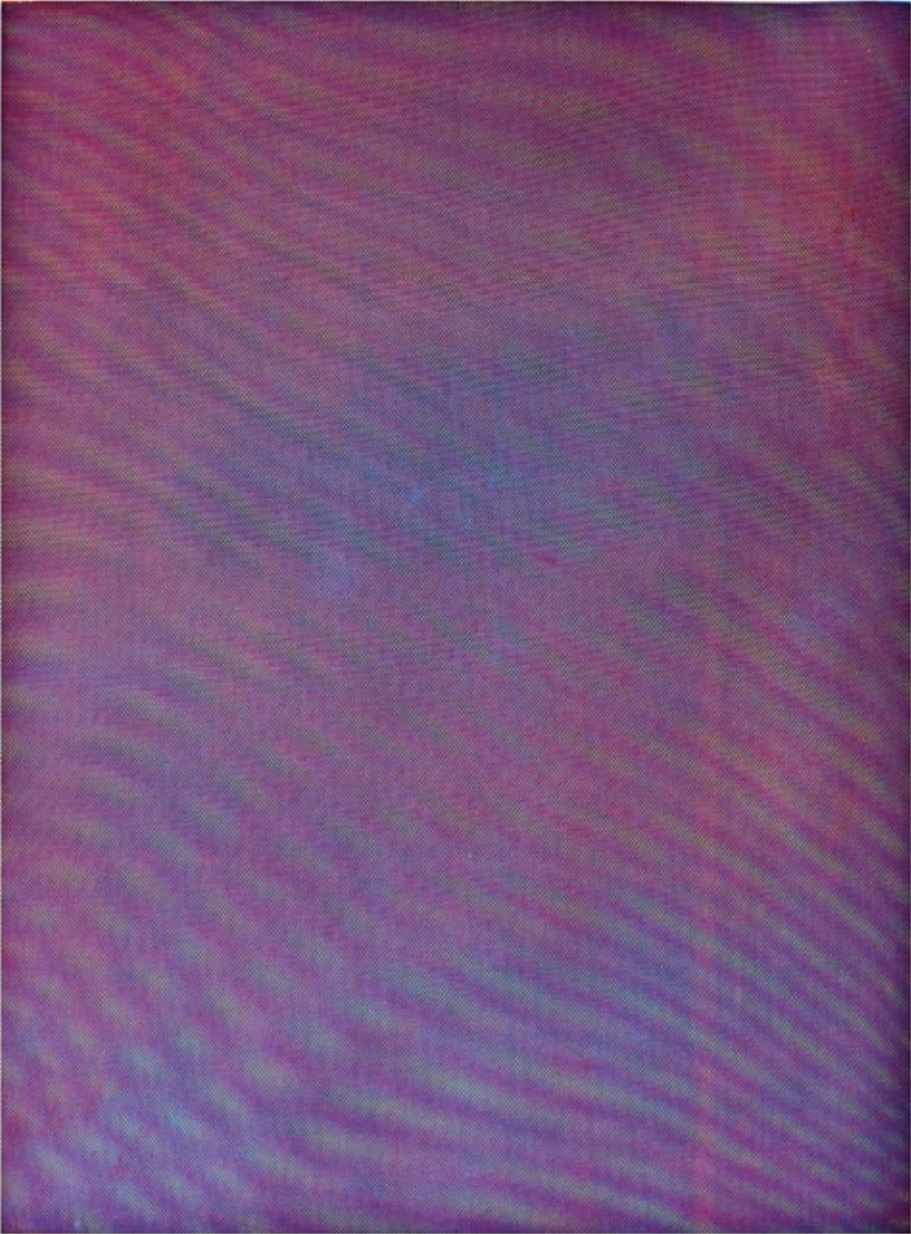


"A Period of Juvenile Prosperity "by Mike Brodie

Brodie spent years crisscrossing the U.S. amassing a collection, now appreciated as one of the most impressive archives of American travel photography. When asked about his approach to travel and photography Brodie has said "sometimes I take a train the wrong way or...whatever happens a photo will come out of it, so it doesn't really matter where I end up."

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Paul Kos, "Sand Piece," 1971.



Aaron Young, "Sand Piece," 2006.

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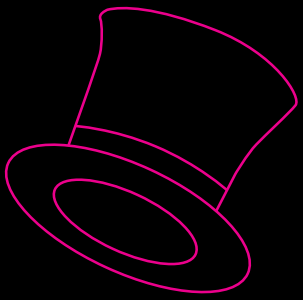
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JURORS:

Monica Ramirez-Montagut: Associate Director & Senior Curator, MACLA
Eli Ridgway: Director, Eli Ridgway Gallery

Justine Topfer: Project Manager, Public Art Program / San Francisco Arts Commission

Exhibition dates: September 11-28, 2013

For more info: rootdivision.org/call_Intro13.html



415.863.7668
www.rootdivision.org
3175 17th Street, SF 94110



Melinda Smith Altchuler, Small Storm Cabinet, 2013. Aviary wire, paper from tea bags, cabinet, light, 65"x24"x15"

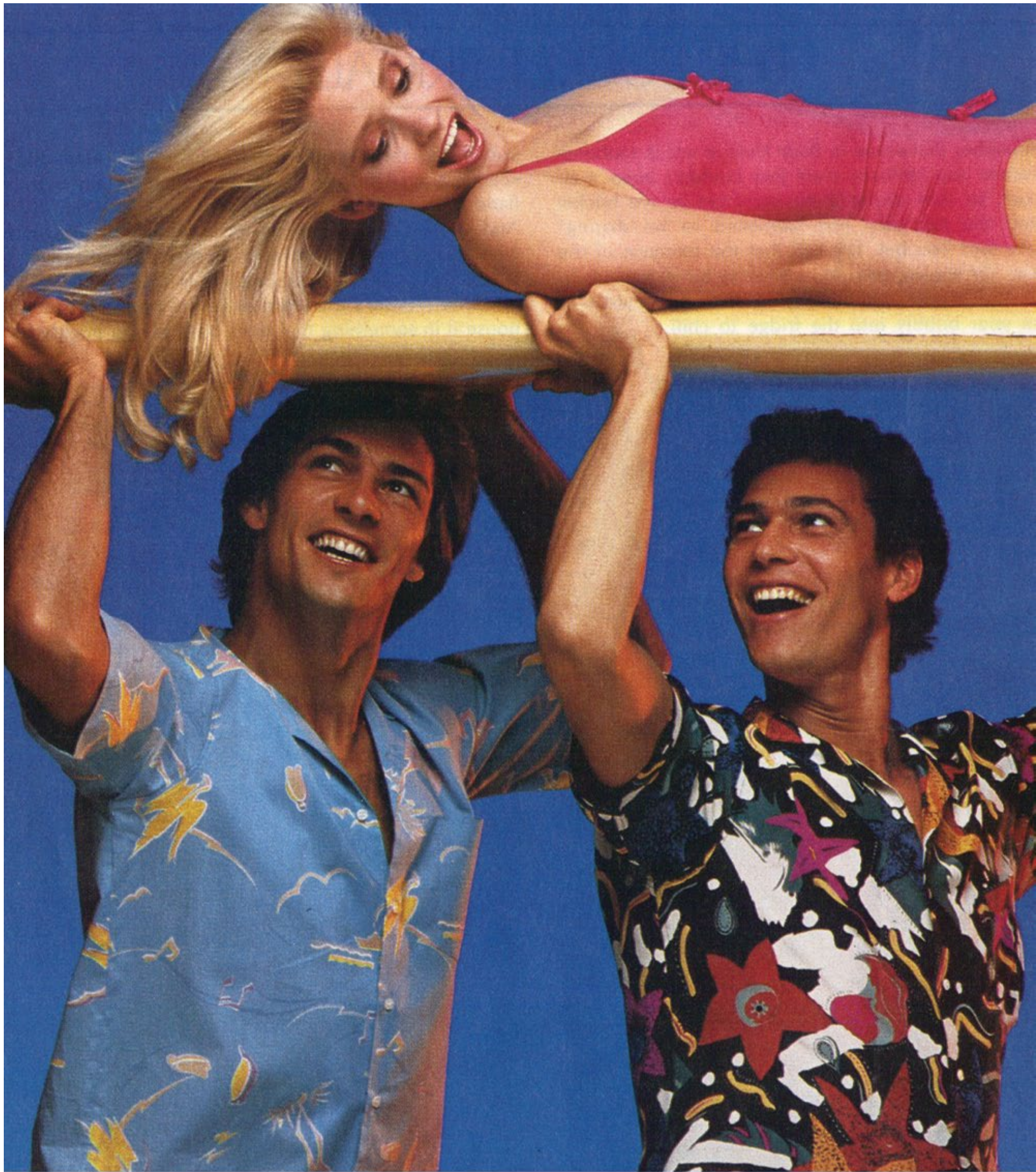
Et al.

A new exhibition space

Kate Bonner
Andrew Chapman
Aaron Finnis
Chris Hood
Cybele Lyle

etaletc.com

620 Kearny
San Francisco, CA 94108
projects.et.al@gmail.com



EVERGOLD GALLERY presents: **A FERTILE MENACE**
a show of new works by **MARK MULRONEY**
opening may 4th -- 441 o'farrell street san francisco

artMRKT [CONTEMPORARY & MODERN ART FAIR] HAMPTONS

art-mrkt.com/hamptons

JULY 11-14 2013

Bridgehampton Historical Society

Benefiting the Parrish Art Museum



>> WONDERLAND SF at 111
Group Show | OPENING MAY 3 | 5pm

>> UNEARTHED
Rob Reger Solo Show | OPENING JUNE 7 | 5pm

>> 111 MINNA'S 20th Anniversary Show
You Won't Want To Miss | SEPT 6



MUSICARTDRINKS



April/May/June/July

On the main wall:

PORTRAIT OF AMERICA

In the front window:

BRENT THORNE

Divisadero Art Walk reception:
Thursday, May 9th // 6pm to 9pm

Followed by NIGHT FEVER featuring Sneak-E-Pete
with old school disco villain, Charlie Hustle!



500 Divisadero Street (at Fell)
madroneartbar.com

EIRIK JOHNSON

May 9 - June 29, 2013

Opening Reception May 11:
Walk thru 3-4pm
Reception for the artist 4-6pm

IAN MCDONALD

July 11 - August 17, 2013

RON NAGLE

June 1 - November 24, 2013
At The Venice Biennale

April 10 - May 4
John Zurier
Eleanor Coppola

Paris Photo Los Angeles: April 25-28, 2013
Paramount Studios
Stage32/Booth01

May 9 - June 15
Deborah Butterfield

artMRKT San Francisco: May 16-19, 2013
Fort Mason Center

June 19 - July 27
Richard Shaw
Ken Graves

Gallery Paule Anglim

14 Geary Street, San Francisco, CA 94108 Tel: 415.433.2710 Fax: 415.433.1501 www.gallerypauleanglim.com

RENA BRANSTEN GALLERY

77 Geary Street San Francisco www.renabranstengallery.com

Eirik Johnson, Cabin 07, Barrow, Alaska, detail, 2010, archival pigment print, 16" x 20"



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