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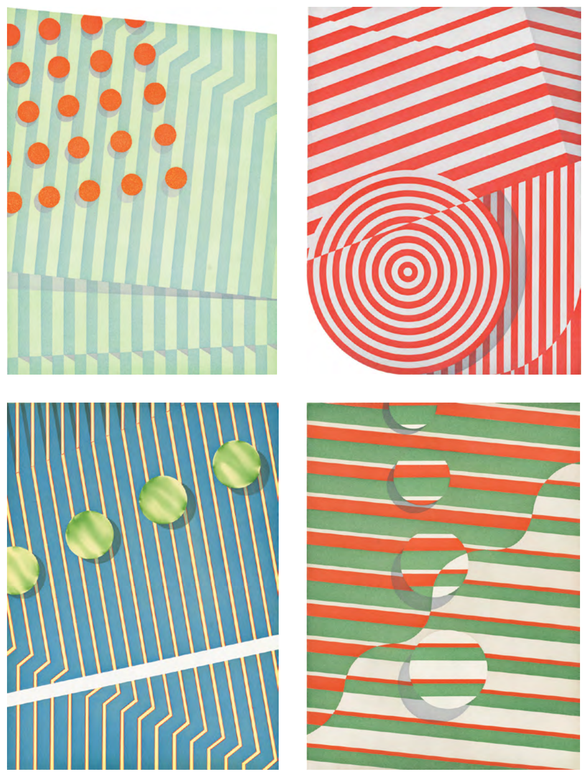

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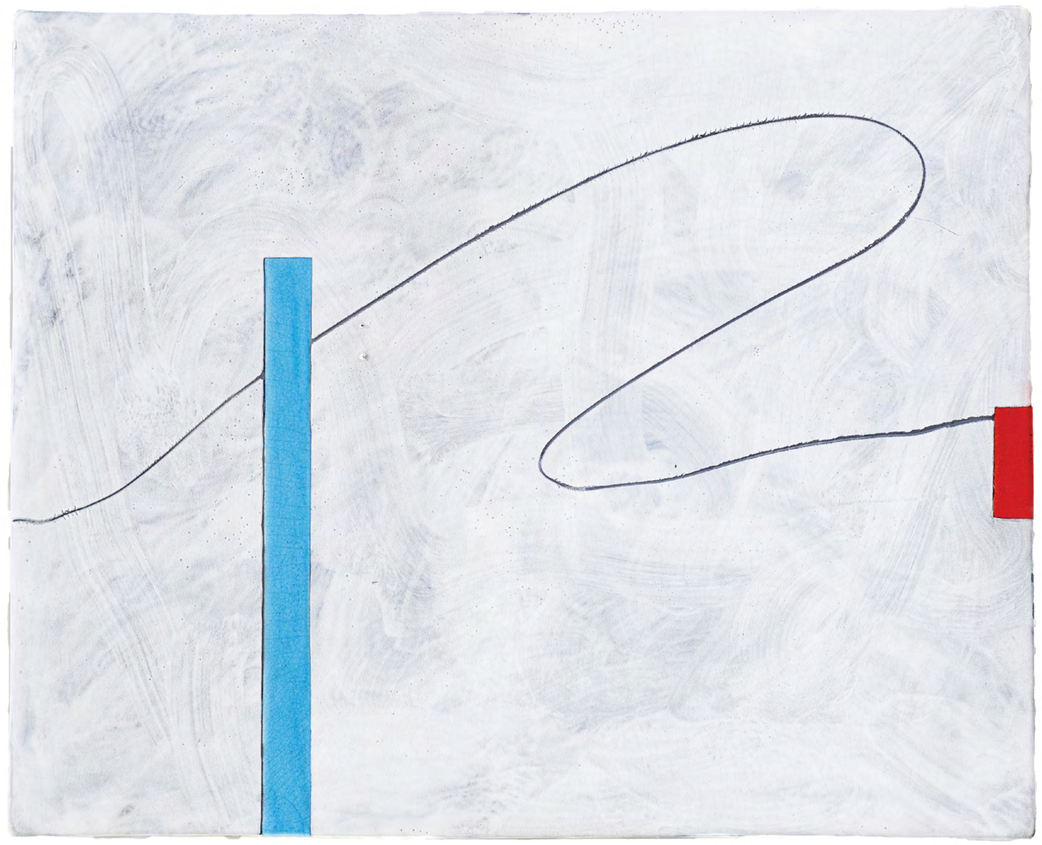

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Petra Cortright
[detail] *2big teensbig* , 2014
Digital painting on aluminum
48 x 91.5 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Contributors

Terri Cohn is a writer, curator, art historian, and fine art consultant. As a writer, her focus includes reviews, features, editorials, and interviews of artists working across the spectrum of modern and contemporary art forms. She regularly contributes to various publications including *SFAQ, Art Practical, Public Art Review, Art in America,* and *caa.reviews*. As a freelance consultant, she advises artists at all career stages, including curating exhibitions, writing about their art, and researching valuation and potential markets for their work. She also teaches core and interdisciplinary art history courses, exhibition and museum studies courses, and career and portfolio development courses for the San Francisco Art Institute and the University of California, Berkeley's Art and Design Extension program.

Marta Gnyp is a Dutch art advisor, art journalist, and art collector based in Berlin who recently finished her PhD research on contemporary collectors. Her book *The Shift: Art and the Rise to Power of Contemporary Collectors* was released in August. You can find more info on her book at www.martagnyp.com

Jocko Weyland is the author of *The Answer is Never—A Skateboarder's History of the World* (Grove Press, 2002), *The Powder,* and *Danny's Lot* (Dashwood Books, 2011 and 2015), and has written for *The New York Times, Apartamento, Vice, Cabinet, Thrasher, and* other publications. He is represented by Kerry Schuss Gallery in New York and lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he is curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson.

Courtney Malick is a writer and curator whose work focuses on video, sculpture, performance, and installation. She received her MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in 2011. She has curated exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Upcoming exhibitions include a two-part project, the first of which will take place at Martos Gallery in Los Angeles in October 2015, titled *In the Flesh: Subliminal Substances,* and the second part, titled *In the Flesh: Reimagined Corporeality*, which will take place at Gallery Diet in Miami in January 2016. Malick is also a regular contributor to *SFAQ, Art Papers, Flash Art,* and is a founding contributor of *DIS Magazine.*

Notes From The Underground

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.
- Albert Einstein

The revolution has always been in the hands of the young. The young always inherit the revolution.
- Huey Newton

All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifcation and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.
-Marcel Duchamp

I force myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste.
-Marcel Duchamp

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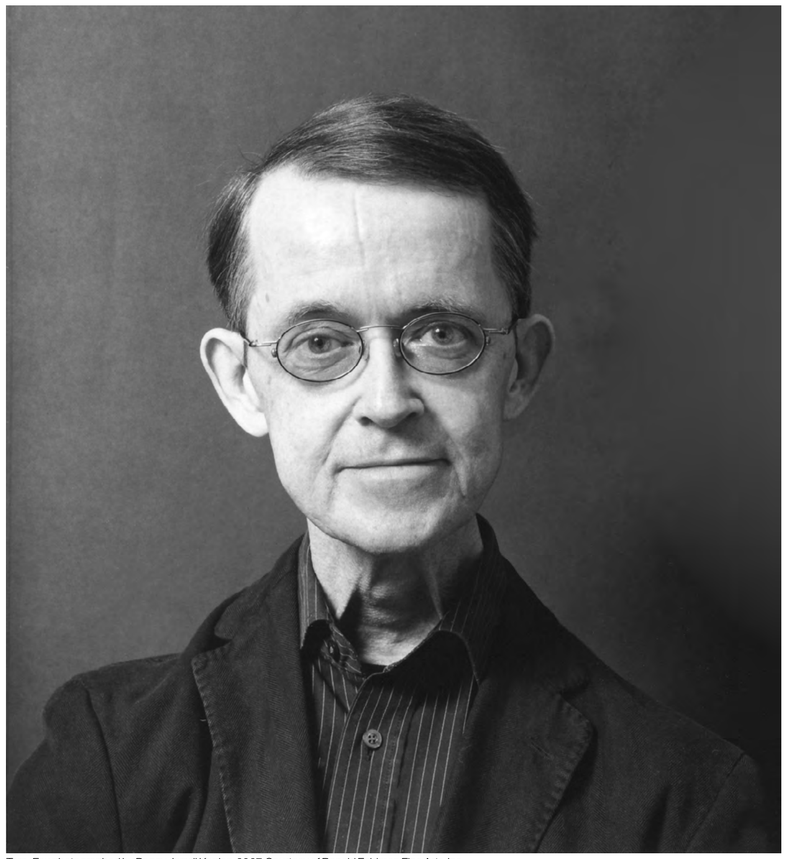
Terry Fox

In Conversation With Terri Cohn

Born in Seattle in 1943, Terry Fox came to San Francisco in the 1960s, and lived and worked between the Bay Area and Europe until he moved permanently to Europe in the early 1970s. Fox was part of the performance, video, sound, and conceptual art movement that defined the period. He created a number of memorable works in public places, as well as at the Berkeley Art Museum and at Tom Marioni's Museum of Conceptual Art, as well as Reese Palley Gallery and the Richmond Art Center. In 1972, Fox's video work was accepted into a show in Düsseldorf, Germany, which also included the iconic artist Joseph Beuys. With the help of an NEA grant Fox was awarded, he went to Düsseldorf and performed with Beuys, an experience that he said "changed my interest in the kinds of spaces I wanted to work with."

This interview was done via phone between San Francisco and Cologne, Belgium, on January 9, 2002. Terry Fox and I edited and completed it with assistance from Marita Loosen-Fox in 2003. Fox passed away in 2008, and Ms. Loosen-Fox agreed to the publication of this interview in 2015. It is with much gratitude for her input and support that it appears here in its original form.



Terry Fox photographed by Peggy Jarrell Kaplan, 2007. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Inc.

Terry Fox: I have a problem with the word "conceptual."

Terri Cohn: ***That's a good place to start, because my first question is, when did you become a conceptual artist, and why did you become one?***
I didn't even hear the word "conceptual" until much later. It may have been when Tom Marioni opened the Museum of Conceptual Art.

So how did you identify yourself? As a sculptor?
Yes. But I was a painter first. I started seriously painting in 1962. I lived in Rome then. I went there to go to the painting school, but they went on strike and closed so I couldn't. But I stayed there for a year and painted.

From there, did you come back here to the west coast?
Yes. I met my future wife in line at American Express in Rome in 1962. I lived and painted there until 1967. She became a really popular designer—she was designing for Alvin Duskin. She got a job and we had a chance to leave the country, so we moved, first to Amsterdam, and then I spent all of 1968 alone in Paris. That was a really wild time.

Were you doing street performance then?
That's when I started. Everybody was doing it, and it was strange for me. I did my last drawings in Paris, and they were the only things I brought back with me that was like visual art. Now the Berkeley Art Museum owns two of them, and The Oakland Museum owns two of them. They're called *The Paris Wall Drawings*. Those were done in 1968.

Can you tell me a little bit more about them? If that's the only thing you brought back from Paris, they must have had great meaning to you.
I was trying to represent how the walls looked at that time in Paris. Now everything is cleaned up, but they were very beautiful at that time. I had been doing figurative painting, and I was trying to move away from that, to do something more abstract. Also, something that would cost less money.

Do you mean less money for materials?
Yes.

Being a painter is very expensive.
Yes. And paper was extremely cheap then. So I just bought ink and paper and started making drawings. From my painting experience, which was very conventional, I needed a subject, so I tried to reproduce the Paris walls.

That sounds really interesting. What happened at that point? It's 1968 and you were in San Francisco again. What did you start doing?
That was actually the last of my visual work. In 1968, the last paintings I was doing were on Plexiglas sheets. They were painted black, totally spray painted black on the back. Then I scratched different colors into the paint with a hypodermic needle. They almost couldn't be seen. You had to get down on your hands and knees and really follow them. I think that was the beginning, for me, of a performance sort of idea. At the same time, I had gone to New York, and I found the whole collection of Fluxus books, so I knew all about Fluxus and their activities. When I went to Reese Palley Gallery and talked to Carol Lindsley who ran the gallery then, I told her all about Fluxus, and I think that's why she accepted me!

A number of artists in your group have talked about Carol Lindsley.
She was really wonderful.

Can you talk about that a bit more, how you saw and felt that connection between doing those drawings and performance?

Performance Sheet, 1969. Polyethylene sheeting, fan. Installation view at Van De Voort Gallery, San Francisco, 1969. Courtesy of the Terry Fox Archives.

Yes. I came from a very small town in Washington, so I didn't know much about how to draw, and I really didn't know much about art history. I mean, the only artist whose book I had was Michelangelo. For me, he was a great artist. I wasn't into contemporary art. I wasn't reading *Artforum* or anything like that.

There's something very pure about the fact that you came to contemporary art yourself, rather than through another artist or set of influences.
Yes, it was like that. So, I moved to San Francisco, and I went through the whole hippie thing, which was also very creative. I lived right across from the Fillmore, and so I went every weekend to the concerts and to the light shows. There was a thing called "The Life-Raft Earth" that was sponsored by Stewart Brand, who made the *Whole Earth Catalogue*. He made a chain-link fence in a parking lot in Oakland, and people were invited in, and could bring a tent. We had to stay there for seven days without eating anything.

How come?
It was sort of a prediction about the future. The idea that if things kept going the way they were, that's how it would end up. It was really funny. People would throw food over the side and we would throw it back. Anyway, Robert Frank, the filmmaker, filmed that. After I met him there, I went to New York for a visit. I can't remember what year that was, maybe 1967. I was there just briefly, and then came back to San Francisco. Then I went to Europe to live, first in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, I had reconnected with Bill Wiley, and I started a dust exchange with him. I would send dust from a certain metro in Paris, and he would send me dust, and we would write letters to each other also, saying where we got the dust. I took dust from the Louvre, and all kinds of very interesting places in Paris, and he would take dust from places like the San Francisco Museum of Art, or the San Francisco Art Institute, and then the dust I sent him from the Louvre, he would put back in the place where he took the dust, and I would take the dust that he sent and put it in the Louvre.

You were cross-pollinating the dust in the world!
Yes. It lasted a long time, I think eight months or so in 1967.

That's so interesting because it was invisible work that only the people involved would know about, because you couldn't see it.
Yes, it was never in any magazines, or gallery shows; there was nothing to show. It was just . . . a dust exchange.

People today would probably be very paranoid because you were introducing spores from one continent to another. But that's about now, and when you were doing your dust exchange people didn't worry about anything like that.
No. It was before anthrax. In 1967, I had also brought with me two paintings on glass, I think they were about 1.5 ft. x 1.5 ft., and as an event, I went to Cologne and was in a film showing. While I was there, I deposited these paintings at Gallery Zwirner, which was the best gallery in Cologne. I don't know what Zwirner did with them. He's not there anymore.

He didn't show them?
He wasn't there when I went there. So I just left the paintings. They were signed on the back, but I don't know what happened to them. Maybe he sold them. Who knows?

Did you mind that you never knew what happened to them?
No. While I lived in Amsterdam, I dug a hole in the wall of the apartment I was staying in and filled it full of fish, and called the piece *Fish Vault*. All these things weren't known. They were private. I did a lot of these things before I started showing in galleries. Like the public theater. Do you know about that?

Why don't you tell me about it?
I just picked either six or eight places that I liked in San Francisco that would be interesting. I did one piece at Anna Halprin's workshop. I used to go there once a week. As for the public theater, I made an announcement that said, "Public Theater, Fillmore-McAllister, 8 PM" on a certain date. At that time, Fillmore-McAllister was a very dangerous intersection. You know, I didn't even go to that performance.

It was the idea that was the important part of it?
Yes. That also came from being in Paris in 1968, the theater in the streets. I was really interested in Artaud at that time, and Grotowski also. I was trying to combine theater and art.

It sounds like it. It also sounds as if you consistently responded to where you were, so when you were in Amsterdam you were responding to that place, or when you were in San Francisco, even though the ideas might be useable in either place, that you responded to the place specifically.
Yes, that's right. I was responding to the situation of the place. That started very early, this very localized response to wherever I am. It's still going on.

Is this still 1967?
No, now it's 1968. At the end of 1968 I moved back to San Francisco. I did a lot of work on Golden Gate Park Beach with free-flying polyethylene sheets, just flying in the wind. Then, in 1969 I had my first show, *Summer Symposium*, at the Karl Van De Voort Gallery. For that I filled the whole basement floor with polyethylene sheets that were powered by a fan, so they rippled like waves. You couldn't walk on the floor, but you could stand on the bottom step and look in. Tom Marioni was in the same *Summer Symposium* show. That's when I met him.

That must have been a significant meeting.
It was for me. Tom was already the curator at the Richmond Art Center. When he invited me in 1969 to be in *The Return of Abstract Expressionism*, I again used flying sheets. Some were outside being moved by the wind, and some were inside. The next thing Tom did was a sort of radical idea. He had hired Larry Bell to visit a lot of artists and look at their work, and pick out three. Then he invited us to a show in Richmond in the *Sculpture Annual* that they had every year. That was 1970. That's when I did my *Levitation* piece.

Do you want to talk about it a bit?
Sure. At that time I had Hodgkin's disease, and I had just gone through an operation. I really wanted to get rid of it, and I really did want to levitate. I was given the big major gallery, and I covered the floor with white paper so the walls, the ceiling, and the floor were all white. It was already kind of like . .. floating.

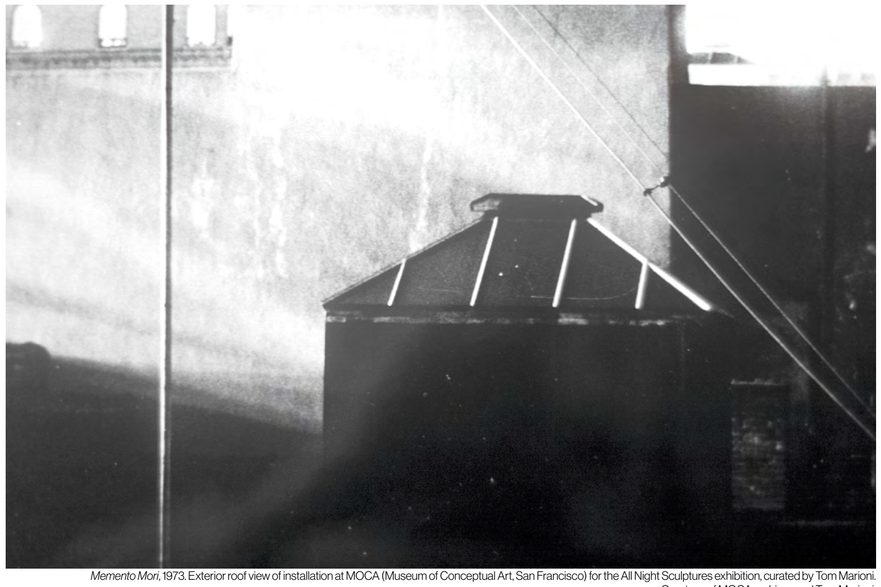
Sort of like a hospital room?
Yes. I lived on Capp Street near Army in San Francisco, and they were just building the freeway there. We rented a truck and took a ton and a half of dirt from there to Richmond, and then I laid the dirt down in a square that was twice my body height on this paper floor. I had polyethylene tubes, and I had some of my blood taken out and I filled a tube with blood and made a circle, like you always see in Leonardo's drawings. Then I lay on the earth in the circle, but I fasted for three days and nights first, to really empty myself. I had four long polyethylene tubes that were much longer than the one full of blood. One was full of milk, and one was full of urine, one blood, and the fourth water. I held two in each hand, and I lay there by myself for six hours trying to levitate. The door was locked, so it wasn't a performance that people could see—nobody was allowed in the room. I really felt like I levitated because I lost all the sensation in my body. I wanted to leave the Hodgkin's behind, and that was a way of doing it.

Did you eventually get rid of the disease?
Yes.

So maybe that helped?
Yes.

It sounds like an amazing experience.
What I was trying to do was to energize that space in such a way that when people came in after I was gone, they could feel the energy. That was the sculptural idea behind the whole thing.

Did the installation stay up for a period of time?
No! But Tom can tell you that story. He got fired because of that. The director, Hayward King, really didn't like this piece at all, and so he brought in the Fire Department, the Health Department, everybody. Of course the Fire Department immediately tore some of the paper off the floor, and said, "That's extremely flammable"; the Health Department guy said, "We don't know where this dirt came from. It could be full of poisons," and so on. I think that the Bay Area was fairly traditional, and that was pretty "out there" for the time.



Memento Mori, 1973. Exterior roof view of installation at MOCA (Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco) for the All Night Sculptures exhibition, curated by Tom Marioni. Courtesy of MOCA archives and Tom Marioni.

Memento Mori, 1973. Interior view of installation at MOCA (Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco) for the All Night Sculptures exhibition, curated by Tom Marioni. Courtesy of MOCA archives and Tom Marioni.

What happened after that, Terry?
When he got fired, Tom decided, since he was a curator, to found the Museum of Conceptual Art. We had become really good friends by then, and I needed a studio. He found an office space across the street from Breens Bar, and that was the first Museum of Conceptual Art. It had a small glass cubicle in the front and that was his part, and the big space I covered with white paper, and that was my part. Whenever he did the shows, I would just clear my things away and we would do it in the back, in my space. Then we both moved together across the street, above Breens, and Tom had the second floor and I had the top floor.

That must have been amazing, to have a whole floor.
Yes, because the upper floor was really in ruins. And there was a totally vacant building next to ours that we could go through the window of, and get into what had been a hotel. It was full of their stuff too, so that whole experience was really wonderful.

What kind of work were you doing at that point?
I participated in all the shows that Tom had in the Museum of Conceptual Art, and I did a piece at the de Saisset Museum in Santa Clara.

I know that a number of artists in your group showed at the de Saisset. Tom had driven his car into the museum as a piece. Lydia Modi-Vitale, who was the director at the time, was very interested in conceptual art.
In 1971, there was a show there called *Fish, Fox, and Kos,* which included Paul Kos, Tom (his pseudonym was Allan Fish), and me. That was another kind of strange experience for me. Again, I did a long fast, and didn't sleep beforehand.

There seems to be a pattern here, that you spent periods of time either not sleeping or not eating prior to an event.
Yes. This was both. It was still in my mind a way of cleansing my body, of cleansing all this disease out. So I bought two live fish in Chinatown, big bass. I used cords and tied one to my tongue and one to my penis. Then I sat up until they died, which was *really* a long time. I thought it would be like twenty minutes, but it was at least two hours. I thought they'd be dead and then suddenly I'd see the tail flip a little bit and I could feel the vibrations really strongly through the cords. With that, and passing whatever I had to them I hoped they could take it and die with it.

I had covered the floor in the museum with a white tarp. About three feet off of the floor, I made a roofing of white tarp over the whole space and I brought the sheets. I retied the fish, and just lay down and then I immediately went to sleep. There was an opening and people could look through the door but not come in the space. So they saw me sleeping with these fish tied to me.

It must have been exhausting too to do that!
No! It was *very* relaxing. It was nice to sleep, because I hadn't slept for so long. I slept through the whole opening. They had to come and wake me up and say it was over.

Your actions seem to have so much personal significance and symbolism connected to them. But you also have a sense of humor, somehow, about your work. Most artists wouldn't dream of sleeping through an opening. Everybody is so involved with their own self-importance. There's something refreshing about that. It's wonderful that you left those paintings at that gallery in Cologne, and you didn't know whatever happened to them; it didn't matter. It was the act of doing it that was important.
Yes, and it was the most important gallery in Cologne.

How long did you stay in San Francisco at that point until you left again?
I left in 1972.

So you only stayed for a few years?
No, I was there from 1962 to 1967.

Did you feel that there was support for doing the type of work you were doing in San Francisco?
At first there wasn't; that's why Tom had to open his own museum. But then people like Carol Lindsley, who was working at Reese Palley Gallery in 1970, let me use objects and paintings and do performances. But the performances also were private . . . actions like asbestos tracking, and pushing the wall as hard as I could. There was a big dip in the concrete floor of the space, so I filled that full of water, and made kind of a huge pond there.

In the gallery?
Yes, a reflecting pond.

It must have been beautiful.
It was. Reese Palley was a really great gallery. They weren't so much into sales, because Reese Palley himself sold porcelain birds. That's how he made his money.

So he could be committed to doing more avant-garde things because he had another source of income?
Yes, that's right.

Are you still doing the kind of work now that you were doing then?
Sort of. I mean, things change.

Of course. It seems you also had a very strong interest in the link between art and life in your work, and in connecting sound and space.
I did change to working more with sound. Also, in 1972 I got an NEA grant, so I bought a camera and started making videos. That really opened a big path for me because I could send videos to shows. So I started being in shows that weren't in San Francisco. There was a show in Dusseldorf, *Prospect '71 Projections*, and it included one of my favorite artists, Joseph Beuys. They paid for my trip to go there, but my main purpose was to meet Beuys. I also wanted to do a performance somewhere. So I went to the Art Academy and I met him. He was really wonderful. His wife and children were gone, so he drove me to his house and made dinner and we talked. He said I could do my performance in the basement of the Art Academy. He arranged to have the poster made; it was really nice. Then he talked to me about a week before, and asked if he could do the performance with me. It was totally incredible for me!

The reason he wanted to do the performance with me was, he had a mouse that lived under his bed and this mouse had just died. I know, the story doesn't sound believable at all, but it's true. Anyway, this mouse had died, and Beuys wanted to do a kind of funeral for it. When he asked if he could do it, of course I was thrilled. So both of our names were on the announcement card and poster for *Isolation Unit*. They were put up on the walls all around in Dusseldorf. He had just made his *Block Edition Felt Suit* and he wore it for the first time to this performance. He had a reel-to-reel tape recorder and he gave the mouse a ride on the reels as it was going. We recorded the whole thing. I had long iron pipes that I banged together, because I was already as interested in sound as in performance; I was changing a little bit, always including sound in my work. I had a window with six panes in the corner and I tried to break the glass with the vibrations from the pipes. When I felt like it was almost breaking, I'd smash the glass with the pipes. I had a candle in the middle of the space with a light bulb hanging right next to it, so you couldn't see the light from the candle except very close up.

Because the light bulb would block the candlelight out?
Yes, that's right. Then with the two smallest pipes—they were maybe a foot long—at the end of the performance I sat and tried to bend the candle flame with their vibrations. That did work. Beuys walked around holding his hand open, showing the dead mouse to the public, who were behind a rope at the entrance. They couldn't come into the room. It was a real dirty room. It was a former coal bin in the bottom of the Academy.

It sounds like quite a contrast to all the pristine white spaces you usually work in.
It was exactly the opposite. After doing that, I changed my interest in the kinds of spaces I wanted to work in, too. I didn't even think about that until you mentioned the white spaces.

What kind of spaces did you decide to work in after that?
Oh, interesting spaces! That performance helped me a lot, because we also made a record, and then afterwards Lucio Amelio, who ran a gallery in Naples, came to buy some work from Beuys. He was looking through a stack of papers and Beuys said, "Oh this is a great artist. You should give him a show." Lucio couldn't say no because he wanted Beuys's drawings. So he said I could have a show in Naples, and my next show was in Naples at his gallery. It just went on from there. I met more and more people, and I really liked Europe anyway. I was in *Documenta* in 1972.

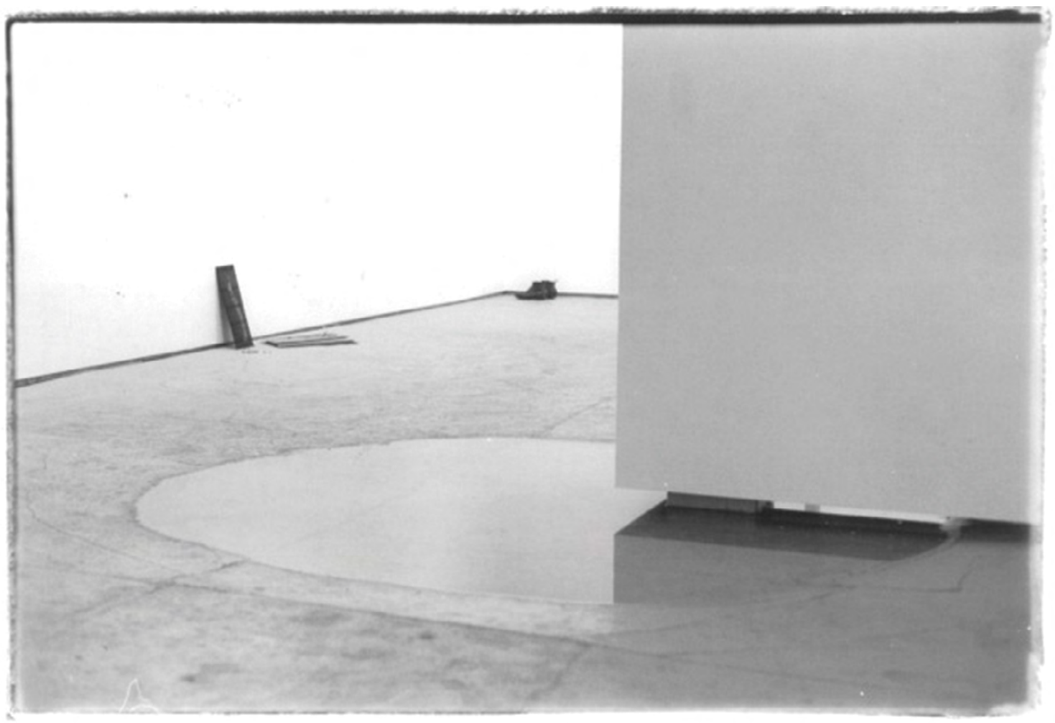
So it sounds like it was a natural progression for you to eventually just stay in Europe and to not come back here.
Yes, I still like it better.

Is that how you ended up moving to Germany?
No, I lived in Italy for 7 or 8 years. The last place was Florence. But at the same time I was taking train trips and showing in Vienna and Düsseldorf and in shows like *Documenta*. So I started to meet more and more people. I had a show in Eindhoven at Paul Panhuysen's space at Het Apollohuis. At that time, I was losing my apartment in Florence, and he told me about Liège, and that his friend Arnold Dreyblatt, who is a sound artist, had just moved there. So I went, and there just happened to be a house available right next to Arnold's. I rented it and then the people from Eindhoven had a truck and I went back to Florence, packed all my stuff and put it in their truck and we drove to Belgium. I lived in Belgium until I moved to Cologne in 1996.

Have you liked living there?
Yes, I like it. When I was still living in Belgium, Marita Loosen, who worked for the television station in Cologne, organized a big sound festival. She came there on the recommendation of Julius, a German sound artist, and invited me to be in it. We met and we fell in love, and we're still together.

Interview conducted via telephone, San Francisco–Cologne, on January 9, 2002. Permission to publish granted by Terry Fox Estate, Cologne, 2015.

Untitled, 1967. Ink on paper. Collection of University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Evaporated, 1970. 25 gallons of water. Installation view at Gallery Reese Palley, San Francisco, 1970. Courtesy of the Terry Fox Archives.

Lita Albuquerque

In Conversation With Jocko Weyland

For more than four decades, Lita Albuquerque has been on a diversified yet aesthetically and conceptually cohesive mission, making installations, ephemeral environments, performances involving the artist alone or hundreds of participants, large-scale public commissions, paintings, drawings, and sculptures. Born in Santa Monica, she was raised in Tunisia and Paris before returning to California. In the 1970s she was associated with the Light and Space movement, creating poetically fleeting pigment pieces in the desert; the beginnings of a lifelong quest to map personal identity in the face of the universe's infinitude; a humanistic investigation of what it means to be one person, alone, yet simultaneously connected to the unfathomable vastness of both outer and inner space. This grappling with the enormity of boundless expanses and eternal time is not mere rhetoric. In Albuquerque's case it is the basis for a heartfelt sifting through of the multiple meanings of what that entails, and she remains an embodiment of unflagging curiosity, vibrant and vital, and very much active in the now. The latest manifestation of that is a dream turned creative reality, a vision of a future astronaut crash-landed in Mali six millennia before Christ.* 20/20: Accelerando, *her new multimedia space and time travel epic, will make its debut at USC's Fisher Museum of Art, opening January 24, 2016.

This might seem like an odd start, but this quote of yours reflects on an extremely important aspect of what you do. My sense from an art historical perspective is that people shy away from talking about this, but it appears to be essential to everything you do, so why not begin there. To paraphrase, you've said, "Consciousness is the prize of life." What does that mean exactly?
I love that you are starting the interview with that question. I couldn't be happier because it really is an integral part of my thinking and what I mean by that is that, in the end what we have left, what we take away from life, is just that: our consciousness, the development of our consciousness. And I believe it goes beyond life—it is the gift of life, that's why I said that. I believe that.

Beyond the corporeal.
Yes, beyond that and, therefore, the most important thing to do is to develop that consciousness. And I don't know why I have such a belief in it, but I do.

Does this consciousness, after the lifetime of one individual, still exist in some form?
Yes, and it did exist before. I'm on the core faculty of the Fine Art Graduate Program at Art Center College of Design, and I took my students to Mexico and to the Yucatán. Do you know what Cenotes are? They're caves that are 30 feet under the surface of the earth and full of water. The Mayans have built ladders down to the water and I took my students there and had this experience: I was in the water lying down, I'm focusing on the time and location and I'm looking up the root of an aloe tree 30 feet up—the roots are hanging down from the surface of the earth—and then thirty feet up through this hole to the sky, and I couldn't help but think in terms of seeing the horn of the Yucatán as if I was looking from outer space, and here I was way underneath the earth, and all of a sudden it was like I really got the connection between—well, what I saw was a robe of thousands of galaxies and way, way, way down there was the Milky Way Galaxy, so it was this kind of relationship of where we are in the grand scheme of things.

So light that eight billion years ago left a star and arrived at Earth and through photosynthesis gave life. Is it at that level of literalness? That this energy of light in particular, which I know you talk about a lot, came here—is it the essence of energy through light that comes through to you or me?
Yes, it's very much about physics, it's that. But also what I got at that moment was the relationship of all these galaxies to the soul, and the correlation between time and space, between the cosmos and the individual. The immensity of the cape was like the immensity of all the lives and that my lying in the water under the earth was just one of my lives, almost as if the millions of galaxies were also the millions of lives?

A transcendence of time. Obviously those are traditional religious concepts, but this has a more scientific aspect to it, a synthesis of the religious and secular, if I understand correctly. And matter doesn't get created or go away, it's always transformed, and energy is perpetually there in some shape or form. I'm not a physicist, but that's the way I understand it. I wanted to ask you that to start because there are other possible interpretations.
Your consciousness is really what you take away from life.

I think of it being an awareness of the other, and an awareness of what is around you, not just taking it for granted. Which I think is often what people do, which is kind of understandable. It's easier.
Yes, the other way is really hard and there are no maps. That's a heavy-duty start to the interview! But just to continue that—there's no such thing as completion, it is about understanding and perceiving the body in space and time.

You also said that you want to "develop a visual language that brings the realities of time and space to a human scale." Does there need to be a translation of the realities of time and space? Is that what your work is about on some level?
Exactly, that's what I'm interested in—the visualization. What I'm trying to do as an artist is on the one hand, create an emotional response with material and color which brings us to the body (or perception), and on another to utilize a more scientific way and visualize some of these concepts through geometry and these concepts always start out as an image.

Like the stranded astronaut from* 20/20: Accelerando, *which we're going to talk more about.
Yes, like the astronaut waking up and just seeing herself, and then she realizes—actually another influence is Egypt. I don't know if you've been to Cairo?

No, I haven't.
The Museum of Cairo is one of my favorite museums. I don't know if you've heard about it. It's, well, a mess.

Like the state museums in China: they're dusty, drab, dirty, and neglected, and that's why I like them.
Me too! So in this one huge room in Cairo are all these sarcophagi and they're all looking up. I've always been fascinated with that upward gaze and what that implies. I also heard that schooling initiates had to go inside the sarcophagus with the lid on top. So I imagine my astronaut like that.

What's compelling is that your work doesn't have a stereotypical science fiction look at all, though there is a science fiction element. A very familiar trope is the traveler in a suspended animation pod that opens up like a sarcophagus and they wake up and groggily emerge after a journey of hundreds of years. What you are describing has a correlation to things that have been visualized in movies and novels, but it doesn't look like that. It's more fundamental.

From space to Earth, related, I know you were quite young, but you spent time in Tunisia, and then you ended up doing work in the desert, and again, the desert is a big part of the science fiction imagination, as in* Star Wars *and* Dune. *When you started doing work in the Mojave was there a conscious connection to the Tunisia of your childhood?
It was all historical. It's interesting, you would think there would be that connection, but really it was seeing earth art, and friends of mine who actually had gone—John Gordon and John Sturgeon, video artists we were in school together—and they went to the desert and did their work. And I was thinking, "Whoa, what if I just put color out there in this minimalist space!" It was the minimalist space that fascinated me.

The blank geological canvas. Were you aware of Michael Heizer at that time?
Yes, of course. At that point I had very little outside influence besides my circle of friends at UCLA. Even with Yves Klein, my friend the artist Susan Kaiser Vogel started using blue which may or not have been influenced by him, and I started using blue inspired by her, but I did not know of him. So it was this indirect lineage.

Let's talk about* Malibu Line, *a blue line leaving the beach. The water is leaving the water, the basin of the ocean, up on to the land, and then presumably to the sky. That's the ocean, and the desert is the opposite of the ocean.
Well, Tunisia has both. So does California.

Those transitory works like* Blue Rock, *where the pigment on the rock gets blown away, there's entropy, and that's part of the universe winding down. And this is back to consciousness—is that piece a small version of that overall degeneration?
Yes.

You're making artwork and you want people to see it and experience it, but it's temporary and disappears.
Totally.

You made* Rock and Pigment Installation *in the Mojave the same year. Is that a landscape painting? They remind me of Yves Tanguy, particularly his* The Furniture of Time. *Do you think of those installations as painting landscapes?
I certainly wasn't thinking of Yves Tanguy or surrealists, but when I applied the pigment to the rocks it was a move from painting to sculpture, it was about time, too, about a gesture. It was the idea of, in a way, a painterly gesture, but also the gesture of a body's relationship to either the horizon line or the sky. *Malibu Line* had to do with the horizon line; *Rock and Pigment Installation* was the first installation where I did a reflection of the stars. *Man and the Mountain #2* was the relationship to the horizon line, how the body is situated almost out of the Earth's plane, but still on the Earth. A gesture in relationship to the horizon, the sun, or the moon. It's very elemental.

People were painting on canvases and, to make a gross generalization, many of them simultaneously in different parts of the world decided to leave the canvas behind. There was something in the air, it seems.
Completely in the air.

What was your personal motive? Was it conceptually really thought out, or was it more an inchoate feeling?
I was really intrigued with moving away from the wall and using the land as a two-dimensional drawing surface. The first one was what I just said in terms of the relationship of the body to the landscape. I was taking dance and I lived on this property, an artist's colony called Coffee House Positano, which had 132 acres of land overlooking the ocean: I really grew up and developed as an artist there. I really became aware of location and space.

To get into painting, your desert pieces started off as what most would consider abstraction. They're abstract paintings in the landscape.

I don't think of them as abstract paintings in the landscape, I think of bringing color to the landscape and making marks that would be gestures in relation to the space around me.

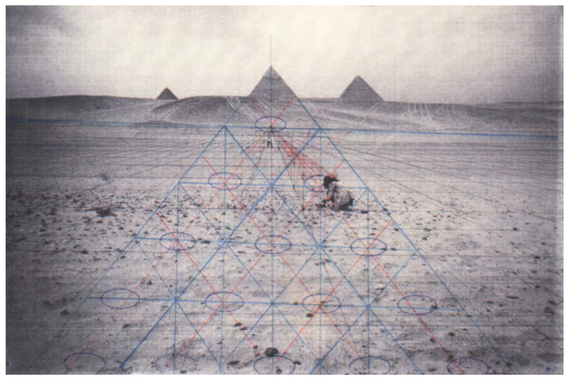
That's intriguing. Prior to written language, symbols—going back 40,000 years or however long—might have developed from trying to mimic the body's correspondence to the Earth. Maybe this is sort of obvious, but in* Man and the Mountain I, *also from 1978, you look at it and there's the shadow and to me it looks precisely like primitive drawings.
Isn't that amazing!

Was that intentional?
No! My friends went up there, and I was like, "Oh my God, you look exactly like the petroglyphs."

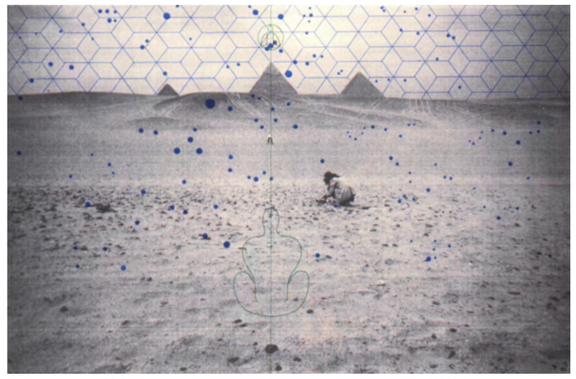
So you noticed that, too. And I was talking about science fiction, but those figures, which are found in petroglyphs all around the world, have a frightening scarecrow-like quality that reminds me of seeing the first Planet of the Apes as a kid.
Yes, it's odd.

There's something foreboding about them. They're simplified, menacing stickmen.
And it comes from shadows.

Malibu Line, 1978. Pigment, 41 feet x 14 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery.

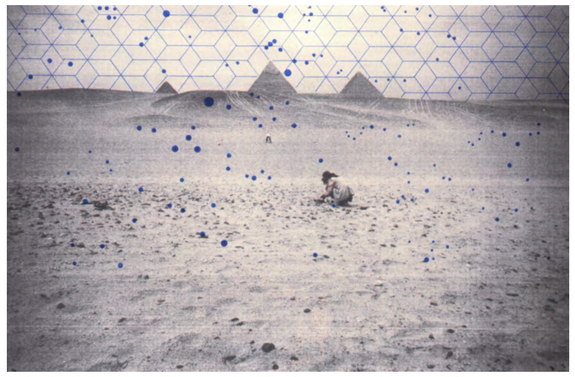


Sol Star (Triangular Grid), 2013 (from preliminary study for the Sixth Cairo International Biennale, 1996). Pigment print on silver paper, 16.5 x 13 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery.



Sol Star (Alignment), 2013 (from preliminary study for the Sixth Cairo International Biennale, 1996). Pigment print on silver paper, 16.5 x 13 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery.

Sol Star (Hexagonal Grid), 2013 (from preliminary study for the Sixth Cairo International Biennale, 1996). Pigment print on silver paper, 16.5 x 13 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery.



Sol Star (Star Map), 2013 (from preliminary study for the Sixth Cairo International Biennale, 1996). Pigment print on silver paper, 16.5 x 13 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery.

Primitive man or woman saw another man and his shadow. Is that the beginning of representation? Wanting to express the idea of the other person or the animal, but not having a tool to do so, and then realizing that shadows could give them a way?
It could be. It would be interesting to find out if it's been written about. And if shadow is the beginning of representation, that's really interesting, because of what shadows symbolically represent, and the relation to the sun.

There's an ironic feature of ephemeral artwork and land art, and specifically with your* Sol Star *installation at the Great Pyramids of Giza, which are in a way the ultimate in land art.
And permanent.

You talk about entropy and impermanence and though the pyramids won't last forever, they've survived longer than almost anything else humans have done. Were you conscious of that at the time? That you were doing something deliberately that wouldn't last next to massive constructions that have?
It was not conscious at the time, I'll be honest, but it's pretty great, the two.

Circles, squares, and triangles. Underlying geometries.
Yes, I was interested in underlying geometries and how the pyramids would fit exactly in an imaginary hexagonal pattern in the sky. I almost got kicked out of the country because originally the piece was going to be this hexagonal pattern in front of the pyramids, and they thought it was a Star of David. But what is fascinating is if you do a hexagonal pattern—which Pythagoras made his students meditate on every day—if you do that over the pyramids they fit into the hexagon.

Again, associated with painting or just modernism overall, the geometric 1920s international avant-garde use of basic shapes—was that at all on your mind? Malevich and the rest?
I love Malevich; I just think he's an absolute champion of art history, but also that entire period. I went to the opening of the new Whitney and on the eighth floor they have some early Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley and Stuart Davis, and it's something I really love, but really it had more to do with ancient man using these very primal shapes. The cross, the spiral, the circle, and the square.

Which are repeated in all cultures.
Everywhere. I was also studying sacred geometry quite a bit at that time.

With the original* Spine of the Earth *in 1980 the participants were in a circle, and in the 2012 iteration at Baldwin Hill in Los Angeles, it was an unfurling of the circle, an unspooling. They walked straight down the path on Baldwin Hill as if the circle turned into a line.
Yes. From a circle to a line. It was like that. And people actually told me they could see it from the freeway! I had called it *Spine of the Earth* when it was flat, and then the 2012 version was literally like a spine.

So you grew up—
I grew up Catholic.

Oh, I wasn't going to that ask, but did you grow up, after Tunisia and France, in California?
Yes, I arrived in 1957. We actually arrived in New York December 31, 1956. We then went to Scottsdale. My mother only had one contact in the United States. She was a playwright, and her contact was a designer for Frank Lloyd Wright, and we met Frank Lloyd Wright.

You met the leader of the cult.
We ended up in Scottsdale for six months, and then we came here. I actually lived in Malibu right over there. I lived on the beach.

Were you into the whole nature scene, hiking and being outside?
I was really solitary. I thought I was going to be a poet, and I loved the beach.

How was the beach?
It was great. I loved it and I loved bicycling.

So you were active, out and about. California in the 1950s might have been as close as you could get to a certain kind of suntanned paradise.
It was golden, it was *Gidget*. I lived next to James Arness.

Really?
I hardly spoke English at that time, I was just learning. So it was like the United States and TV!

That immersion in wilderness, maybe "earthy" is not the best word to use, but what you do certainly reflects an essential physical connection with the Earth.
I go swimming every day.

You're not an armchair nature person. And you've done art in Antarctica and the North Pole, places of extreme climates at the opposite ends of the Earth.
When I did *Stellar Axis: 90 Degrees North*, I lay down on my stomach and lapped the water—the sweetest water I've tasted in my entire life. Just amazing. If I fell in there and died, it would be okay.

There are worse ways to go. You mentioned Yves Klein and your feeling of connection to him. Klein is well known but there remains a mystique even if he's become entrenched in the canon. There's the sensational, naked-women-as-paintbrushes, the* Anthropometry *series, but also varied and arcane territory in the fairly short span of his life. One of those "the light that burns twice as bright burns half as long" situations, to use a cliché from Bladerunner. Obviously, people must ask you about the blue you use, a very deep hue, since it's so similar to International Klein Blue.
Sidi Bou Said and Carthage in Tunisia are very much like Greece, all whitewashed with blue. The Mediterranean, the landscape, the white and the blue, and Klein was from Nice, across the Mediterranean from there. The relationship to the sky is what I was interested in more than anything, to unite the Earth and the sky. And then later on I read about Yves Klein and Arman and how in their twenties Yves claimed the sky, and Arman claimed plenitude. And I wondered, "What am I claiming?" And I made a claim—claiming the relationship between the Earth and the sky.

Bringing them together. So then there's not just the color, obviously.
In his case, it comes from not only the Mediterranean, but also Klein's involvement in Rosicrucianism, Judo, the body, the physicality of it, but more than anything he was able to visualize the Earth from space before we even had that capability, which is extraordinary. A lot of his imagery comes from Rosicrucianism. I didn't know much about Rosecrucianism so I decided I'd better learn about it to understand him, and interestingly the internal exercises I have created over the years bring me to that same place, though it's not necessarily scholarly.

Rosicrucianism is Gnostic, cryptic knowledge, but your work is less scholarly, as you said.
It's less from somewhere external; from something learned and less from specific spiritual or religious practices; it's something experienced.

With Klein the connection is about internality?
Yes, it is about interiority, it comes from within, and I have trained myself through various practices I have developed over the years to sense myself in the *now* in the now of the space time continuum. It may sound . . . but in actually, in terms of physics, it is what is happening in a very objective sense. We just never really think outside of our 3D reality, but we exist in a much vaster and complex system, I am interested in visualizing this, so the viewer can actually get there just by experiencing the work, a tall order I know, I think it is achieved subliminally.

I've done all these practices like automatic writing and going running on the beach while doing these intense breathing exercises. Maybe it's because I was put in a convent for school when I was three—so I was very solitary and I had to go internally, and I also had the whole Catholic pageantry and symbolism. I think all of these more scholarly or more esoteric groups are about—initially it came internally and then started to get passed down from the originator, becoming externalized. And the Rosicrucians talk about blue; they talk a lot about color.

Your pigment paintings are predominantly blue and red. Is it a coincidence they look like those Hubble Telescope pictures? They have that milky galaxy in space look that you get in these photos, or the Aurora Borealis, I'm sure people say.
Or the wind.

Yes, and to extrapolate, solar wind. But those paintings, they have the tie-in with the cosmos and the macro and the micro.
Those paintings come from the wind, but I do think a lot in terms of supernova explosions and the beginning of everything. I'm not surprised that we have violence in us because we come from violence.

The Big Bang was really violent.
Yes! We're completely from violence.

Everyone is in favor of stopping humans from being violent but on a cosmic level violence is a basis of life.
The charcoal drawings from 2005 also look alien, though in that "ancient mysteries" sense, like the Cerne Abbas Giant in Dorset holding a big club and with a really big penis.
Those came from my energetic meditations: You start out running, and inhale from the sun to your heart, and exhale from your heart to the sun ten times. As you do this at different times of the day. It's like living geometry. The next one arms extended, head thrown back, you do 33 breath of fire into the sky. Then you exhale, and when you have completely exhaled the breath, you inhale and spiral the breath clockwise around all the chakras, then you go back and you do it the other way around, and repeat it three times.

That's what's in those drawings?
They're describing that. Another connection that I'm interested in—we are in space.

Yes, we are flying around through space.
We are in outer space, and that's what I love. We really never—we don't think that way, right? It's so interesting to me, how we perceive. If we could see it, we're just one of those little dots out there that isn't seen because planets—we're not a star, so we're not visible. The only way we're visible actually is if we get in front of a star, just this little blip, right?

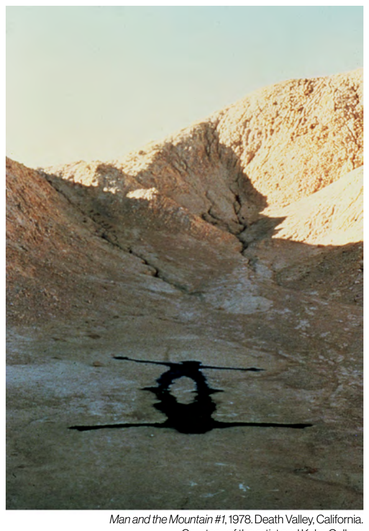
Yes, a negligible speck in the immeasurable sweep. So coming up at the Salar de Uyuni salt flats in Bolivia, for* 20/20: Accelerando, *the crash-landing in Mali six thousand years ago, that's what you are working on now?
What I am working on now is *20/20: Accelerando* which will be exhibited at the Fisher Museum at USC in LA. I am hoping to shoot part of the project at the Salt Flats. My going to Bolivia was originally going to be this 24-hour performance with hundreds of people, but it's 12,000 feet high so possibly not too feasible. I just received a Santa Monica Artist Fellowship grant for my writing and performance work, and now I am thinking of going there to shoot part of *20/20: Accelerando*. So it certainly won't be the whole performance, or it may even be Part II, but it will give me images that I need for this project and I'll be able to understand what I need to do there for the extended piece.

You said you had the origins quite a while ago.
Yes, I wrote the original narrative in 2003, and I did not use it in my work until 2014 with *Particle Horizon* exhibited at the Laguna Museum of Art. But first I want to show you something called *An Elongated Now*, which I did at the Laguna Art Museum in 2014 which served as a prologue to *Particle Horizon*. The original idea was for hundreds of people dressed in white to go on the arc of the beach in Laguna and point to the sunrise, all watch the sunrise, so they would be all pointing, and then at noon, and then at sunset, and then come back. But it was impossible.

Logistically?
Logistically it just wasn't realistic, so I thought, "Okay, I'll just have them come at sunset." They were to stay there and stand there from sunset until nighttime and then go into the museum to be part of *Particle Horizon*. It was quite a feat.

20/20: Accelerando is a development of that work which is about a 25th-century female astronaut who crash-landed in what is now Mali in the year 6,000 BC, and her mission is to show the inhabitants of planet Earth about their relationship to the stars. But when she enters earth's atmosphere she forgets everything and forgets her mission. So she does all these overlays of maps and tries to figure out what is what. The performance begins with the naming of the stars sung in the space as well as on a video that will be projected. In *Stellar Axis: Antarctica*, there were 99 stars that were aligned to 99 blue spheres on the ice of the Ross Ice Shelf in Antarctica, so I wanted to have singers do that which would also serve to contextualize her character and her mission. I'm collaborating with video artist and composer Robbie C. Williamson and there's an alien language with English subtitles sung by Cassandra Bickman. it's how the stars are being spoken, which is kind of wonderful. This is going to be a performance with musicians, singers, and dancers. This part I'm showing to you, with the audio, so you can hear the sound of the stars.

Southern Cross, 2014 (from Stellar Axis: Antarctica, Ross Ice Shelf, Antarctica, 2006). Inkjet print, 50 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery. Photograph by Jean De Pomereu.



Man and the Mountain #1, 1978. Death Valley, California. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery.

Spine of the Earth 2012, 2015 (from Spine of the Earth 2012, performance for the Getty Museum Pacific Standard Time Performance and Public Art Festival, Baldwin Hills Overlook, Los Angeles, 2012). Inkjet print, 50 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery. Photograph by Marissa Roth.

An Elongated Now, 2014. Documentation of performance for the Laguna Museum of Art, Art and Nature Festival. 300 performers dressed in white parallel the arc of Main Beach, Laguna over ¾ of a mile. Laguna Beach, California. Courtesy of the artist and Kohn Gallery. Photograph by Eric Minh Swenson.

Stefan Simchowitz

In Conversation With Marta Gnyp

Are you never tired of Facebook?
No, it's an amazing platform. It's given me an audience of thousands of people for free.

To which extent does the audience influence your choices? For example, if you post an image of a painting on Instagram and get 300 likes, while another one gets five likes, does it influence what you think about the artist?
Absolutely not. Instagram is very random. If you take a picture of a girl in a bikini you'll get 450—it's really just there to message and communicate a story and a narrative for me. It's not a popularity contest. Facebook is like a diary that I use as much to express to the outside world what I'm interested in as to record and remember what I am interested in myself so I can refer back to my page in a notebook fashion.

But the difference is that Facebook is not completely private.
That's not true. Facebook has an extraordinary amount of control for managing privacy in every aspect of your photo albums, individual photographs, your articles, your postings . . . the privacy settings that you can use on Facebook are extraordinary. You can make certain things private, which I do often. I often post things that I make visible only to myself or only visible to friends, or sometimes to the public.

So you are permanently making choices between what you give to whom, more or less.
Yeah, I consider myself very generous with the amount of information that I share, and sometimes when people connect with me on Facebook, I ask them who they are, especially if they don't have much information.

Are Facebook and Instagram very helpful for your art activities?
It works on many, many levels for me. It helps to market my artists and to tell the story, a narrative of my engagement with them, and their engagement with the world. There is a lot of content on my Facebook that has to do with prison reform in the United States or the refugee crisis, and a lot of people don't pay attention to that because they like the more sensational sort of elements of it. If you go to my Facebook it's actually a pretty well balanced smorgasbord of content: a diverse range of interests and articles. I'm interested in history, American history, and I have a lot of followers who actually send me an email every now and again and say, "You've got one of the most interesting, if not the most interesting, Facebook profiles," or in some cases, "the only one I follow." I see it as almost like a service where you're providing content that you've eliminated and sorted for people, in a way like a blog works.

How many hours per day are you spending on Facebook and Instagram?
Instagram I don't spend much time on. I love photography; I shoot with Leicas and other fancy cameras. I'll usually do an upload when I've got something interesting to put up. I don't spend much time looking at Instagram: I'm a content pusher on Instagram as opposed to a content consumer. I like Facebook as a medium because it is three-dimensional—I like the ability to narrate the comments and to create a discourse.

Do you really believe that you can have a serious conversation on Facebook?
Absolutely. Without a doubt.

Don't you think that people are mostly interested in reading their own texts?
We have this sort of delineation between Facebook and the real world. Well, in the real world most people aren't interested in anything except themselves. It's the same on Facebook. But I've met some remarkable people on Facebook. I met a guy named Robert Keil, who's one of the most intelligent thinkers I've come across in my life. He's an amazing writer. He's brilliant. I met Stephen Ellcock, who I think is one of the most significant and prodigious curators of content on the web today. He's got tens of thousands more followers than me, and I've actually communicated with him, and he's been an inspiration to me and to some artists I work with in the pictorial content that he shares. I have a friend named Gilda Oliver who is a teacher and an older artist, who I have a great communication with. I've actually had many relationships with people I've never met. I met a wonderful woman named Tlisza Jaurique, who once attacked me for posting a picture of a friend of mine wearing a Native American headdress. She explained to me that it's very insulting to Native Americans; it's like painting someone in black face. She works as an Education consultant at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and she's very knowledgeable of the history of Native Americans. I've learned a tremendous amount from her.

Speaking about Facebook and Instagram, I would like to go to something different, but related to new media. In one of your talks you called yourself Luther. This comparison makes sense as, among many other things, what Martin Luther did could only happen because of possibilities offered by the new media of his time: the printing press. Luther posted his theses against the misbehavior of the Church. What kind of thesis would you postulate, and against whom?
I wouldn't postulate anything against anyone in particular. I don't have a mandate per se to attack anyone in the system. I believe that the system needs to open, integrate, communicate, and collaborate. I don't call for the destruction of anyone or anything. What I do call for is an open-mindedness and an encouragement to embrace all the different aspects and skills that we all have. The way I read Luther is that the Catholic Church was very singular in saying that they were the only ones that could send you to heaven, and that singularity of idea—that there is only one path—is what I think Luther attacked. I think there are many paths to salvation, and many paths to communicate spiritual redemption. I think the art system is very similar to this singular solidarity in that you have to follow a path that is very structured. You go to art school, you get picked by curators, you get collected by museums, you get collected by the right collectors, you show with the right galleries. You can follow those guidelines, but those guidelines have become corrupted by social relationships and they have corroded the ability for artists who are outside of those systems to find a pathway to success. What I would call for is a questioning of those authorities, and questioning whether they are as valid as they were.

Do you think you can break the system open without breaking the fundaments of the system? Luther never wanted to break the Church, but on the other hand he did it partially by fragmenting the power structures.
I don't think you ever break infrastructure. The Catholic Church never broke but adapted. The Catholic Church today, centuries later, you know, is a very different Catholic Church from what it was hundreds of years ago. I've been reading a lot of American history lately, including Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (1963), which offers some good insight into the adaptability of American spiritual life. He talks about how the strict Puritanism of the early settlers was challenged as urbanization gained momentum giving rise to the more unstructured, tin tabernacles and the Pentecostals, which ran hot and heavy in the cities of the US, offering a different kind of experience for religious observers that today is observed in the mega churches of America and their charismatic TV-ready preachers and practical everyday advice—a far cry from the rigid authority and intellectual strictness of early Puritan theology. Theology went from Saint Augustine to Joel Osteen to Pastor Creflo Dollar. So too will art go from the October School to Instagram. It is neither good nor bad, it is just is. Understand it, accept the evolution, and adapt accordingly.


Stefan Simchowitz. Photograph by Lisa Marie Pomares.

How will such a structural shift work in the art world?
The new world is Instagram and Facebook, the social media platforms that promote the dissemination and distribution of cultural content through validated social networks where no one is in charge. I think that, as with all systems, if there is a strong theology behind the cultural content and a strong intellectual structure behind the emergence of these new ideas, the quality and emergence of those cultural perspectives will be validated and supported very healthily within these new distributed networks and will scale accordingly in reaching larger audiences via non-hierarchical social distribution. It is a much more efficient and scalable mode of disseminating culture, autonomous from the singularity of entrenched institutional thinking and often in direct contravention to the education establishment and their stodgy, outdated modes of thinking about and teaching art production.

What would the new media change in the art world?
It's very simple. In the postwar period we see an idea of a neoclassical economic model where a singular hierarchy of smart people deal with simple situations. We come from a system that is singular to an evolutionarily adaptive economic system where no one is in charge, where there are many, many hierarchies moving toward equilibrium. So eventually, I think the evolution of the art business is really given real force by social media—a guy like me who engages an audience and gets to intimately utilize the consumer mass-market social media tools he has at hand. And many more people like myself are able to come along and do the same thing. That creates a situation where the singular hierarchies are challenged and there are now many hierarchical, evolutionary, adaptive systems in which no one is in charge!

But you are not using this media as the only source of your communication. You are working with artists who are also spread through galleries and institutions, so you are also part of the old system. You are doing both.
What would Luther be without the Catholic Church? What would Luther be without the theological history of the Catholic Church? Nothing.

So you are adding something new, not replacing. What do you think are the consequences of new media?
Amplification. I still need galleries, museums, and collectors—the traditional. But contributions from new media weaken the absolute strength and absolute significance of the monoliths that make those structures so potent. It provides alternative sources of awareness. It doesn't mean in absolute terms they're weakened, it just means in relative terms they are. I think that's an important distinction. You still have to have an understanding of how the system works because you still need the system. Just like Luther still needs God and the devil, heaven and hell—he still needs these elements to base a Christian theology. Just like the Pentecostals and the Tabernacles and the Protestants and the Catholics are all similar in that there is God, there is Jesus, there is creation, the infrastructure doesn't change, it's just—the path to salvation changes, the path to knowledge changes.

Do you think that the current art world infrastructure still has a lot to offer?
The art world infrastructure is very, very valid, and it always has been. There needs to be platforms for exhibitions; there certainly are and always will be experts. There will be people who spend their lives thinking and writing about art; there will be people who are aesthetically framed to look at art. They will always control the lion's share of the discourse. It's just that there are people who come from outside, like myself, who don't have a degree in critical studies, who never worked in a gallery or an auction house or a museum. I have been able to come along and become someone who has a real voice. Jerry Saltz was very similar. He was a truck driver who basically became one of the most well-read and well-respected critics in the world today. He was a great beneficiary of media, of the platform that social media provided to him. I think that's great. Jerry is one of those voices with a great power.

Are you friends now?
I'm not friends with him, I don't know him. But one could say he's got more power than Roberta Smith in many respects. He's certainly better known. I think that no one is right, no one is wrong; it's an evolutionarily adaptive system that is not hierarchical. As human beings we have a very tough time accepting a condition in which there is no order. It's very difficult for us to come to terms with that because we're always looking for systems to move toward equilibrium, or a finite and fixed point where they're defined. There are artists at the museum, therefore you're safe, but this is not true anymore. The sooner we accept that as a condition of life we're able to deal with the circumstances at hand in a much more logical and productive way.

But we cannot do without hierarchies. I think that's how most people function.
They do, but you can have a dictatorship run by one person, or you can have a country like the United States run by Congress and a senate. The hierarchy gets more evenly distributed.

I would like to speak with you now about the position of the artist. We have this 19th-century idea that the artist is someone special, which was created according to the then new capitalistic structures that allowed artists to become autonomous. We created all kinds of autonomous artist models—revolutionary, avant-garde, romantic, someone who has a sixth sense—and up until today these models of the artist remain in place. The ideology of the artist treats him as someone between a priest, a rebel, and a visionary. Do you think this ideology can survive in the current art system?
I think the elevation of the artist today is a problem for both the creative act and for the long-term sustainability of the artist. I think it's problematic in that it creates a completely false mythology where the artist is essentially in complete control. I don't think the artist is in complete control. Artists, like anyone, start young and need guidance and collaboration. All other people are special, based on their achievements and the way they live their life and the decisions they make. A good artist is special, and a bad artist is not.

Do you think artists have a function in our society?
Yes, to communicate ideas.

So they are mediums.
Yes, they're mediums of mankind's experience, to communicate it through an aesthetic lens that can be carried through time and space. They communicate all different aspects of humanity: political, aesthetic, decorative, sexual, psychological, ambition, hatred, anxiety, love, lust, everything.

In your opinion, they don't deserve a special status?
We have this mass "I'm an Artist" club—I suffer therefore I'm special. There's always this excuse of being overlooked for not being talented. I think it creates a problem. Insofar as the physicist is special, the thinker is special, the writer is special, they should be treated as such if they actually are: by denominating his activity as an artist does not implicitly make him special. A physicist who has no grasp of real physics is not special because he's a physicist. But it's very easy for someone to say, "I'm an artist! I'm special!" You experience it in everyday life, each and every one of us will meet some deluded character who is drawing nudes or doing paintings of flowers and thinks he is a genius, and can't tell the difference between himself and Jackson Pollock. We see this delusion because a conceptual framework has been constructed to educate them with it. They've been able to learn the commodity of ideas through art schools, a conceptual framework that validates them, which is false as well. Just like the guy who paints the Sunday painting is false, the guy who spent $50,000 on education arming himself with conceptual ideas can be equally false, just much more refined.

From my conversations with many artists I noticed that almost nobody is interested in previous avant-garde ideas of changing society and being a revolutionary—I think this idea has completely died. Is the artist becoming a profession instead of a calling?
It absolutely is becoming a profession. No question. I know people who are physicists who had a calling to be a physicist. I mean, some doctors have a calling to be a doctor.

Okay, so being an artist is a profession as any other profession. Is art a commodity as any other commodity?
No, it's not; no commodity is the same. It's a different kind of commodity. Oil is a different kind of commodity from wheat. Wheat is a different kind of commodity from the services of a hotelier. All commodities are different.

Would you agree that the moral system in the art market is more present than in markets of other commodities?
Absolutely, but all systems are regulated by moral rules.

Take for example the myth of the good collector who never sells. This is a moral rule that is actually only needed to regulate the art market. It is a mythology, but it's a mythology with a function.
But it doesn't function, because they're selling anyway. I believe in limiting the supply and managing demand of art, and I believe that like any commodity it has to be, to some degree, protected. Farmers need to be protected from oversupply of bad product from overseas for example. But when you've got a bunch of people pretending that they're doing one thing when they're doing another so that they can have status and stature, then they have a problem. We now have this situation.

I think they are pretending because there's a kind of moral pressure surrounding what you should and what you shouldn't do. What about the second myth—which is also very present in the art world—that a good collector buys with his eyes and not with ears?
I think that's a terrible myth because most people's eyes are shit. Most people's ears are better than their eyes. That basically says that if you like it then it's good. Well that's also false, because most people, honestly, have terrible taste and they're not trained to see properly. I think that's bullshit: "Oh I only buy what I like." I mean, you're a hedge fund manager who basically grew up in the mountains of Russia and made money buying and selling aluminum, or you're a hedge fund guy who spends your time behind a computer screen basically trading currency, and you wake up and you're 50 and rich and suddenly you like it with your eyes. The only thing that they're good at is making money. That's why so many of these collections look like shit warmed up.


Petra Cortright, *2big teensbig*, 2014. Digital painting on aluminum, 48 x 91.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist.


Installation view, *NIKI, LUCY, LOLA, VIOLA*, Petra Cortright at Depart Foundation, Los Angeles, 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

And they're all similar.
And they're all similar. I commented on Facebook on some rich guy's house with the two little armchairs next to a fireplace with the typical Anish Kapoor above the fireplace right by Damien Hirst and Rudolf Stingel and Dan Colen with a Takashi Murakami sculpture on the floor next to it, you know? Individually, there might be some quality to the work, but it looks like shit. It just looks like Crate and Barrel for rich people. Breaking that is very difficult.

What do you do in such a case? Do you try to tell someone like him that he has a shitty collection?
I told him on Facebook his collection looks like shit. Absolutely. I posted that this is a typical rich guy's collection that is like a Crate and Barrel for rich people. I don't know how he reacted. Some people get offended and just never work with me again, but what can I do?

You don't believe in this very idea of collecting as a personal discovery?
Yeah, the idea of collecting is an action of discovery, and oftentimes these artists who are collected make some very good work in their time. I mean, Stingel is an amazing artist, Colen has made some very good work, as have Kapoor and Murakami, and as has Hirst. But these collectors just end up buying the sort of commoditized, churned-out, second-rate stuff that these artists manufacture in the more advanced years of their career, so the work has lost its spiritual soul. I can't attack the artists individually, but there is some corruption in the system as these guys expand through the network.

Tell me about your "Trust Me Special," which is something opposite from the personal discovery: with your good eye you are buying works for your collectors without them seeing what you are buying.
I did the Trust Me Special at a time when I was trying to protect myself from a gentleman who would try to copycat me. But the Trust Me Special is good. I think that's fine. I have great faith in my ability and my taste over, frankly, most people. And I think that people would be smart to listen to and to follow me. I've spent my life living, breathing, and eating aesthetics, thinking about culture, and loving and looking at art.

How do you recognize quality?
It's instinctive. I don't know, I wouldn't say it's knowing—we know nothing.

Very often you see something for the first or only time on the Internet. Did you train your eye so well that you can recognize quality from the Internet?
I'm a photographer, I've taken photographs my whole life. I've always, pretty much consistently for 30 years, looked through the lens of the camera and documented things. I think that's been very helpful to me in interpreting how something physical is translated into an image. Actually, for the first time I thought of it in those terms a few days ago, because I see a lot of stuff online. I've been very successful in identifying work that I see in an online-only environment, and I think it's because I understand the translation of object into image quite intimately, and I can—just like when you hold a camera up to someone, you can snap a picture, and you kind of know how the picture is going to look after you've taken it. You can reverse that and see from the picture what the object is like in the flesh. I think that's a skill very few people have. I think photography has this sort of inversion, of being able to document something and to look at an image and un-document something and see what it looks like in its original form.

Interesting. This skill makes you certain about your discoveries and your choices.
I think that's a skill that I developed over decades of taking pictures. There was not a moment in my life since I was 15 years old that I stopped taking various photographs, large format, medium format—I mean, I have tens of thousands of images. Today I consider myself a very, very good photographer, but that is sort of something that I trained my eye to do and see that other people don't really have access to. I have a friend and a client, Alberto Chehebar, who happens to be a very good photographer and also a very adept and skilled collector, who uses social media. I can see from the quality of his photographs that he's able to see things in a way that's probably better than most people.

Is the quality not something that depends on the point of view? The same garden can be seen either as neglected or enchanting.
Most people cannot see quality. They interpret quality based on perception. We're talking about Plato's cave. We're talking about what the shadow is and what is real, and most people see the shadow. But some people go outside and they have a look, you know? I'm sure I would find most houses I go to that are expensive awful and disgusting. Most people come to my house and find it not that impressive. I love my house. Most people are tuned in very basic ways; they register scale, shininess, very basic things.

So the quality, according to you, is something that is there, unchangeable.
Yes.

Who are the artists that you think are the best quality of our time at this moment?
I think there's a lot of good work being produced today. We're in a very competitive environment, in a very well-financed environment for culture, in an environment where there is a lot of training for artists. I think we're actually in a golden age of cultural production with an immense amount of high-quality work. Obviously, the artists I work with closely: Petra Cortright, Kour Pour, Zachary Armstrong, Serge Attukwei Clottey, Oscar Murillo; and artists I don't work directly with such as Sterling Ruby, Jon Rafman, Jimmy Merris, Michael Pybus, Nikolas Gambaroff . . . I can go on and on. I could probably give you a hundred good artists. Easily.

Most artists you just mentioned are younger than you are. What do you think about the idea that you understand best your own generation?
It depends on who you are. I think there's a lot of knowledge that's required to understand anything properly. It's not actually your generation, but it's where your specialty lies, and your open-mindedness. I think it's where you put your time and your resources to understand something. For me, I've spent a lot of resources in understanding the generations around me, up and above, around

Installation view, *Goodnight Bojangles*, Zachary Armstrong at Night Gallery, Los Angeles, 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

Luke Diiorio, *Untitled (Athens to London)*, 2015. Graphite, marker, pigment on hand-folded linen, canvas, jute, and digital print on vinyl mesh, 40 x 20 x 3 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

an age group. I'm 44 and I'm collecting people who are 25, 26, 27; they're not my generation, but they are over the landscape of the world that I see and can understand and can have access to.

Why are you so critical of Paddle8?
Because I think venture funding in these auction systems essentially promises people the opportunity of making money, thereby encouraging those collectors who aren't really collectors, but very silly sort of short-sighted opportunists, to go and buy material from galleries and artists where there's very little demand for it. I think they're very destructive and they create a sense of false liquidity. I don't think it means the market is bad, it just means that you can't buy something and three months later sell it. What's happening is that these guys are buying it thinking they can sell it, and the artist is thinking he's a genius who found a huge supply of collectors, and the gallery is thinking they're brilliant for doing the same thing. These young people who have no real idea how the world works or its complexity essentially overproduce and get overly exuberant and confident because they're naïve. I think that venture funding of these auction houses has been excessive. I think Phillips has been excessive in the amount of material they take. It takes years for material to cook. Art is a lamb stew—you want it in the oven for as long as possible before it's ready to eat.

Will it not regulate itself after a couple of months, a couple of years?
Yeah, it regulates itself, but in between those periods a lot of damage gets done, and it's in everyone's best interest if you can reduce the damage. Did we need the housing crisis to get to the recovery? We didn't really. There was a lot of pain and suffering that was caused, you know?

I found it interesting to see you make a difference between collectors and real collectors.
I absolutely make a distinction. I don't get bluffed by this fake mythology people create through presentation. I'm just less gullible and more sophisticated in my thinking to tell the difference. The galleries have art consultants arriving at the VIP preview along with 9,000 other people, and they're happy to accept the art consultants as representing a collector who has empowered them with the rights to distribution. I'm not impressed by big "name collectors." Most of the time they get the classification because they are rich and rich people tend to buy a lot of different things. I'm impressed by people for real reasons. I'm impressed by the Rubells not because they've got the best taste in the world, but because their commitment for decades has been consistent. I don't think whether or not they sell is relevant. I think their commitment is impressive, and therefore valid. They have contributed over an extraordinarily long period of time.

So where is the art world in 20 years?
It's bigger, it's faster, it's more diverse. You have a much bigger collecting class collecting emerging contemporary. You have more institutions, more museums. You have more players like myself in the market and you have faster Internet and hopefully *SFAQ* in every major city!

Marc Horowitz, *Chad Augustine*, 2015. Oil stick, gaffers tape, acrylic spray paint, marker on linen, 65 x 45 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Serge Attukwei Clottey, *The Displaced*, 2015. Sculptural installation/performance, Labadi Beach, Ghana. Photograph by Charles Whitcher. Courtesy of the artist.

Serge Attukwei Clottey, *American Lottery*, 2015. Plastic, wire and oil paint, 94 x 51 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Math Bass

In Conversation With Courtney Malick

Los Angeles-based artist Math Bass, whose current solo show Off the Clock *at MoMA PS1 runs through August 31st, 2015, has been carving out a dynamic practice that freely shifts from performance to sculpture to painting to installation, taking up all of the images and objects therein in the same way that one might think of a rotating cast of actors whose appearances stay the same while their characters continue to change from project to project. In other words, outwardly, the works themselves often stay relatively the same, but their behaviors and relationships towards one another continually get redirected and configured. Similarly, Bass's work traverses one-off and collaborative performances (in which audience members sometimes participate) that involve sculptural sets and props, singular sculptures, interactive architectural installations, and graphic paintings that incorporate her own lexicon of symbols and signs.*

While Bass's practice continues to evolve, it's an evolution that occurs through conscious recycling and clever interchangeability rather than constantly seeking out the next new thing or drastic change of direction. In this way, previous performances and videos can inform and triangulate a current sculpture or installation, as is the case in Off the Clock, *which brings together an array of works formed over the past three years that speak to each other through their shared histories. Each work has stemmed from past performances or previous sculptural projects and now finds themselves repositioned in time and space as well as within the roles that they play in juxtaposition to one another.* Off the Clock *marks an important and rare example of an exhibition that at the surface seems purely abstract but gradually reveals itself to stand for and interrogate larger questions about perception, language, interchangeability, and perhaps most centrally, where and how the body of the viewer is configured within a given space—not just the space within this show, but space on a much broader and ultimately more intimate level.*

To begin, I wanted to talk about the connection between your current work, which is geared towards the creation of environments as exhibitions, and the strong performative impulse that I imagine is still present in your work but was perhaps more at the forefront a few years ago. Do you feel as though performance continues to be a through-line of your practice even if in a more abstracted sense than in the past?
Yeah, that's true. It's hard for me to always verbally explain the ways that my work has functioned or changed over time.

I know, I realize this is the case for lots of artists as they choose not to express their ideas in a purely verbal way. But with that in mind, it's kind of funny because there is also an integration of vocabularies and linguistic symbols that runs throughout your work, particularly in your paintings.
Yes, that is there. I am really interested in language as a structural and psychic tool. It is a physical thing and yet at the same time it is also so ephemeral and in that way it opens up these psychic spaces. I like to find ways that a single sentence or the coupling of a few sentences can pull in two different directions simultaneously, which creates this tension in between those polarities. It is between those two poles that I find that a space can be activated and where the performativity of language occurs. In that sense, the way that both language and performativity gets carried out in my work is that I continue to return to those kinds of tensions.

Is that something that you plan out ahead of time? Sometimes your work appears as if a specific frame or set of borders have been preconceived and then set into motion through other paintings, sculptures, and objects within the exhibition. Is that the case?
I don't usually approach things from a very premeditated position. I'm never saying to myself beforehand, "If I do *this* I will achieve *this effect*."

That's interesting because something that I noticed from* Off the Clock, *and also at your show* Lies Inside *at Overduin & Co. last year, is that the positioning of the viewer seems as though it is a central concern in the way that both shows were put together. I guess that is not actually how your process unfolds?
I am interested in the way that the position of the body opens up a frame and that depending on where you are in relationship to an object or an image within that space you are opening up different frames while also becoming part of them. So that definitely also has to do with performativity in regards to these installations, though I really don't even want to call them installations, particularly the work in *Off the Clock*.

Oh really, why is that?
Well I don't really feel like it is an installation because everything in it is discrete. I feel like every object or image can function on its own. But maybe I can let go of that idea, maybe the term "installation" doesn't have to mean that everything has to be supported by each other and therefore always stay together.

I think it is kind of important to make that distinction actually. It seems like people say "installation" to refer to anything that is not a singular work, but technically an installation would mean a set of objects that are meant to be exhibited together in the same or relatively similar configuration.

That also leads into something else that I wanted to ask you about* Off the Clock. *Can it be seen as a documentary project since a lot of the work has been exhibited previously but in different formats and contexts? Because now there is this culmination of, as you say, "discrete works" that have been shown in the past in fragments and are now all coming together at the same time.
Yes, for this show I pulled from a few different bodies of work. It was a combination of making new work and revisiting older works and remaking them. It ended up being really important to me that I remake certain pieces and sort of go back into them, rather than show the originals. Even though I thought to myself, "Why am I doing this?! I have already made this!" In some instances it was useful for me to return to them and think through them again, and in other cases it was necessary because the originals had been made quickly and were not in the best condition.

So all of the older works at PS1 are actually new versions of their originals?
Not all of them, but some. Others did not need to be remade and some of them had in the past not been used as sculptures but more as performance props or as parts of sets. I am interested in recirculating these works and thinking of them like characters. I have returned to the same sentences that I have used in songs that appear in multiple projects in different ways—they have been in performances, PowerPoints, texts . . . it's the same idea with the objects that are currently at PS1. For example the cast concrete pants have been used as part of a set that I made for a performance at the Hammer and now they are functioning as singular sculptures in *Off the Clock*. It's interesting for me to see how these characters continue to shift and expand in relation to one another as they progress through different formats.

I am wondering if, after selecting certain older works to include in the show and others to recreate, you began making the new works with the intention of responding to your previous works?
I don't know if I was fully responding to my previous work or more just expanding off of it. For example I made a new piece that looks kind of like two hard-edged dog figures that are connected, which comes from a similar piece that had been two separate dogs. There is also a new version of a piece called *Slingbed*, which looks like something in between a gurney and a lounge chair that had been used in a performance in the past. I also made new paintings that directly relate to those that were in *Lies Inside*. With every project it seems like a mad dash and a huge overhaul, and then after the show opens, and I can finally decompress. Afterward, it is hard for me to find an access point into the work. So *Off the Clock* allowed me to re-enter into a lot of previous work that I felt sort of detached from, which was really nice.

That makes sense. Maybe it was less of a responsive or reflexive approach but more just meditative. Did you make all the new work in New York?
No, most of them I made in my LA studio and shipped to PS1, but I did pour the concrete pants at the museum.

And altogether* Off the Clock *represents at least three or four years of work, right?
Yes, about three and a half years of my work in different capacities.

Wow! They have functioned in different ways throughout various types of projects over that time and now have finally all been exhibited alongside one another. Does it feel as though they have come to some state of completion or will they continue to be reworked into future projects?
I really like the idea of being able to continue to reconfigure works, though some of course get phased out and then maybe reappear much later and by then have become something totally different but have still stemmed from the same sort of visual or conceptual root of one initial, discrete element.

I am interested in work that is able to function in that way as well, particularly because it can manifest in different ways but continue to ultimately convey the same message. I am still wondering how you see all of these pieces, or characters as you referred to them, now that they have all been shown together. Does that somehow change their meaning for you? Would you be able to do another show like this or is this sort of an end point for their ability to work with one another?
No, I don't think I would do another show like this. For me this show is *this show*, and I don't know what my next will be like. But with this one, it felt sort of like an opening up of everything I'd done over the past few years, and then a closing in a way. Of course, I don't want to be too definitive about that because I am not totally sure what will happen in the future.

Right. Does it ever gets confusing for you working in this recycling mode? Do you ever start to question the meaning of a particular piece when you are now inserting it into a context that is so different from the one in which it was initially created? Do you ever worry about its legibility as it flows through these various contexts?
You mean is there an aspect of something that becomes almost autoerotic going on?

Yeah, in a way . . . I guess that can be good or bad depending on how you utilize it.
There is definitely that sort of line that you realize exists when you are essentially creating your own language, and that at some point you can potentially go so deep into it that then you start to think, "Wait, this may be illegible to anyone else."

Is that a concern for you when you think of the viewer?
No, not really.

There is symbology inserted into your work—mainly the paintings—that you must realize viewers are going to make direct references to, like the cigarette, for example, or abstracted letters, steps, or clouds.
Well, some of those symbols that occur within the paintings are more recognizable. I've always called that particular image "the cigarette" when thinking about it, even though I wasn't really trying to depict the actual pictorial representation of a real cigarette. Although, when I first started that series the images were cruder, and the cigarette was much more of a real-looking cigarette. Over time it's become more formalized and it looks like a shape with a gradient and a plume of smoke. So yes, you can still make the reference to a cigarette, but at other times throughout the series it reads as a column, or a matchstick, or sometimes it becomes more abstract and just looks like any other formal or architectural shape. And in that way it gets used as something that breaks up a plane or gets laid on top of another image in order to disrupt its continuity.

Sometimes everything looks as though it is all on one axis and is contained within a grid and then there is this cigarette or other object that comes into that space that tilts and disrupts the flatness. I did always call that particular image a cigarette, but I have names like that for all of the images or symbols that come into my work.

Really? Even for the things that are much more abstract?
Yes. For example, I had made this amorphous green, tarped object and I always called it "the hedge."

So do you mainly give those kinds of names just for yourself in order to keep track of them, or do they end up becoming the titles of the works, too?
Sometimes they do. I find titling works to be difficult. Sometimes I just can't think of anything and don't want to spend hours trying to come up with something clever. But, at the same time, I do think that titles can be a really effective tool for understanding a work, so I do like coming up with them even though at times it can be agonizing.

I often get a lot out of the title of an artwork. Sometimes I may not have known the name of a work and then when I find out it can really add to or shift my understanding of it. Because of that I am always interested to learn about different artists' titling processes. Do you usually come up with yours after having made something or can they be a guiding force at the onset?
It depends. Sometimes it can be helpful to start off with one. For example, I did a two-person show with Leidy Churchman at Human Resources in LA in 2013 titled *Monte Cristo*. It was collaborative in that we were making our own works at the same time and were in constant conversation with each other about them and the show. We had come up with that title at the very beginning, even before either of us had any idea what the work would be. In that instance, as we were making work we were thinking about Monte Christo, and . . .

He seeped in?
Yeah, somehow Monte Cristo came through in both of our works. We each evoked this kind of island that you could really feel within the exhibition. But it doesn't always work like that. Other times I will have already made something and then all of the sudden the title will pop into my head.

As I am looking at your paintings I see a very formal and even palette-based connection to Fernand Léger. Is that someone that you have considered as a reference? His works are mainly figurative, but I am wondering when it was that you first made this transition from more ephemeral, performance-based work to these very formal, starkly color-contrasted paintings that you have been showing recently?
I'd have to look at his work to see the connection, but generally I've incorporated drawing and other 2D work into my practice so it wasn't really a total shift, although earlier on I did tend to use paint more as a prop. I did a lot of these large text-based paintings on raw canvas. They weren't stretched so they were more like banners than paintings. They had phrases painted on them like, "Who says you have to be a dead dog?" or, "Who says you have to be an historical dog?" At that time I was working with raw canvas and gesso and using this font that was really just basic shapes that sort of represented letters.

Did those older works on raw canvas also have the same kind of graphic quality as your current paintings?
The graphic, hard-edged aesthetic I use has been pretty continuous, even with my video work. I have been thinking recently about what a symbol is and the way that it can be understood as the ultimate flattening of a referent or signifier, and that through creating a symbol we can flatten and then easily identify and understand something. So I am generally interested in pictorial flattening.

I realized when working with artworks that comment on the Internet, that when information, even if it is not imagery, is flattened or condensed is when it is easiest to manipulate. Even when just writing an email you realize that you need to structure your ideas a certain way, give the overall message certain contours, in order to make it easily digestible for the person receiving it. And we of course see this even more with text messages or tweets. It kind of gets back to our discussion about legibility.
It's true, I do think a lot about physically compressing in order to expand conceptually or intellectually, and in a lot of ways that is what we are doing all the time with information.

Is condensing an expansive means to an end for you?
I think that using the minimal amount of information necessary in order to convey something is beneficial. Maybe it sounds cheesy but ultimately that is poetry.

Is it a practice that relates to minimalism for you?
I don't think about it in that way. I just think about it in terms of what the fewest number of elements are that can still activate this work as far as it can go. It's also important to know when to cut something—when to realize that something just isn't working and that you need to move on to the next idea or piece. I generally don't like to have a lot of stuff in my life. I don't really own a lot of stuff. For a long time I lived in my studio and there was almost nothing in it.

Right, I read about how the wall pieces that create these thresholds or divisions within* Off the Clock *were directly implanted from the studio to the museum.
Yes, that's Lauren Davis Fisher's sculpture. She measured out this nook in my studio and then cut out this shape that is where the staircase goes to the second floor of the building and made the wall-sculpture based on those dimensions. In a way she took this articulated negative space from one site (my studio) and transposed it into the walls of PS1. There is also a video in the show in which you can see the nook with the cutout and the wall that she made in its image, so you can really get a sense of the relationship there. That sculpture fleshed out a space that doesn't actually exist, so it reads as exposing the interior of this wall from my studio and superimposing one space onto another. That was our collaborative gesture. In one room it is flush with the wall of the museum and in the other room it is pivoted so it is kind of like, as a viewer, you are re-experiencing an environment you just left.

Is this idea of the mirror image or symmetry something that was important for you to run throughout the show?
I do like symmetry but I am mostly interested in the places where something symmetrical suddenly becomes unbalanced. But yes, there are also some paintings in *Off the Clock* that I think are intentionally mirroring that kind of shift that the wall piece really activates. In some of the paintings one image will repeat and then the whole set will shift and continue on with the same elements.

I think it gives the show a great sense of continuity. I guess my last question is, what you are working on for the future and will it include any of these same themes?
I am working right now on a performance-based piece that will be part of *Performa* in New York in November, and it will continue to generally take up some of the same issues that I have been addressing in other recent shows.

Installation view, *Math Bass: Off the Clock* at MoMA PS1, 2015. Image courtesy of the artist and MoMA PS1. Photograph by Pablo Enriquez.

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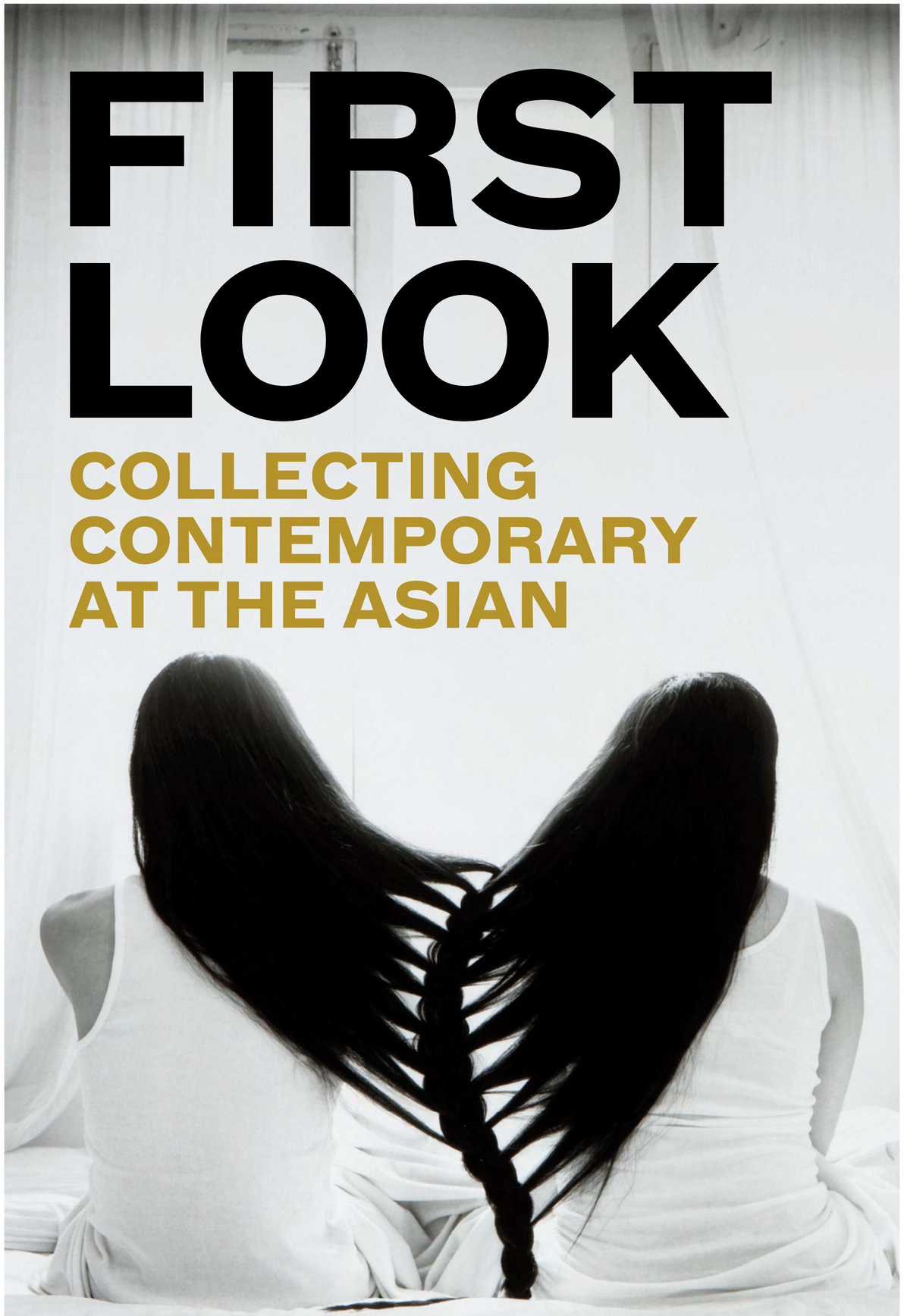

FIRST LOOK

COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY AT THE ASIAN

SEPT 4–OCT 11

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We've got new stuff, and we're ready to show it off. The museum has spent the last 15 years enriching our celebrated collection with outstanding contemporary art, and ***First Look*** reveals highlights from these acquisitions. There's something for everybody, from acclaimed work by Bay Area favorites like Hung Liu to exciting debuts like Ahmed Mater's *Illumination Waqf*. You will also encounter new digital work from Japanese "Ultra-technologists group" teamLab and large-scale paintings by Zhu Jinshi and Manuel Ocampo. These pieces are remarkable on their own, but they activate the rest of the museum's collection in compelling new ways, infusing traditional themes, mediums and cultural history with the urgency of present-day ideas.

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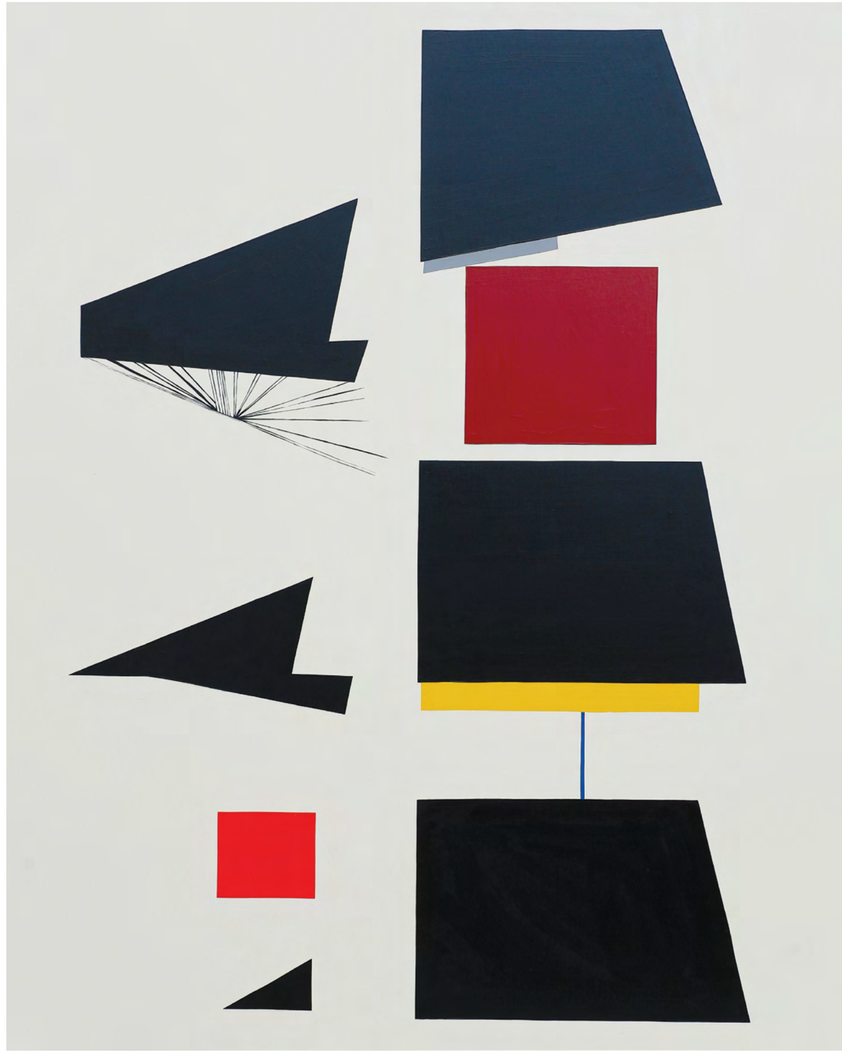

Clare Rojas, *Untitled*, 2015, oil on canvas 50 x 40 inches.

September - October, 2015

Clare Rojas
New Work

Bruno Fazzolari
Seyrig

Gallery News:::

Expo Chicago
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Frieze Masters London, *Spotlight*: Jess
October 14 - 18, 2015 Regent's Park, Stand G20

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