



**Art | Basel**

**Miami Beach | Dec | 1–4 | 2016**







# Laura Owens

## In Conversation With Anthony Huberman

*In early 2015, I approached Laura Owens about doing an exhibition of new work at the Wattis Institute. The Wattis, I remember telling her, would be a good context for taking some risks, for trying out a new idea, or even for experimenting with a new approach. Over the year-and-a-half that followed, we spent a lot of time together, over the course of many studio visits, talking about art, talking about painting, and I knew that her ideas would grow organically from there. In the end, she undertook what was surely one of the the most ambitious projects of her career and produced what some might call an “environment” that covered every wall of the main gallery with hand-made wallpaper. Others might call it a single 16-by-150-foot painting that runs across three walls. A sound element was also included, complicating its status even more. Laura, however, called it something else entirely: “Ten Paintings,” even though those “ten” paintings seemed to be nowhere in sight. Ultimately, the exhibition doesn’t only take on the question of “what is a painting,” but also “where is a painting” and “when is a painting.”*

***I’ll start by taking one step backwards before getting to the Wattis show. What were some of the things that were going on in the studio, or in your thinking, that eventually led to what you did at the Wattis? What was happening that prepared the ground for some of the decisions you ended up making here and things you ended up doing? Are there some previous projects that you feel are relevant to this one, and that played a role in informing your ideas here?***

Definitely. I had done a painting for a group show at MoMA [*The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, December 14, 2014 - April 5, 2015] where I wanted there to be an audio element. So I inserted small, hidden speakers into the stretcher bars. Clips from a pop song would play randomly, but only three or four times a week, hopefully at a time when the museum was open. But I never really heard from anyone saying they had heard it, and I think a lot of the time it might have just sounded like someone’s cellphone was going off in the gallery or something like that. So it might not have been so obvious. This was my first experiment with an audio component prior to the Wattis show.

***But this time, at the Wattis, the sounds were not random, but triggered by people texting the various phone numbers included on the wallpaper. What originally led you to this notion of incorporating sound within a painting? What did that do for you, in terms of making a painting? What did that bring to the picture for you when you first did it?***

It wasn’t just the sound but also something hidden that happened some of the time, not all of the time. I didn’t tell the museum that it was in there, and I sealed the speaker in the stretcher bar with a battery life of about four months. A few years earlier, I sent a painting to the Whitney Biennial that had four additional paintings hidden inside it, so the painting itself was like a suitcase for an exhibition that could be unfolded at a later date. For the MoMA exhibition, I also recorded an audio guide at their request, but that audio acted as an extension of the paintings. I recorded myself reading a performative, poetic paragraph that quoted the lyrics of Miley Cyrus and other current Top 40 hits. I also referred to looking at paintings, read the text that appeared in the painting, and asked about reading didactics or taking photos in the museum. It was alluding obliquely to the hidden audio component of the paintings.

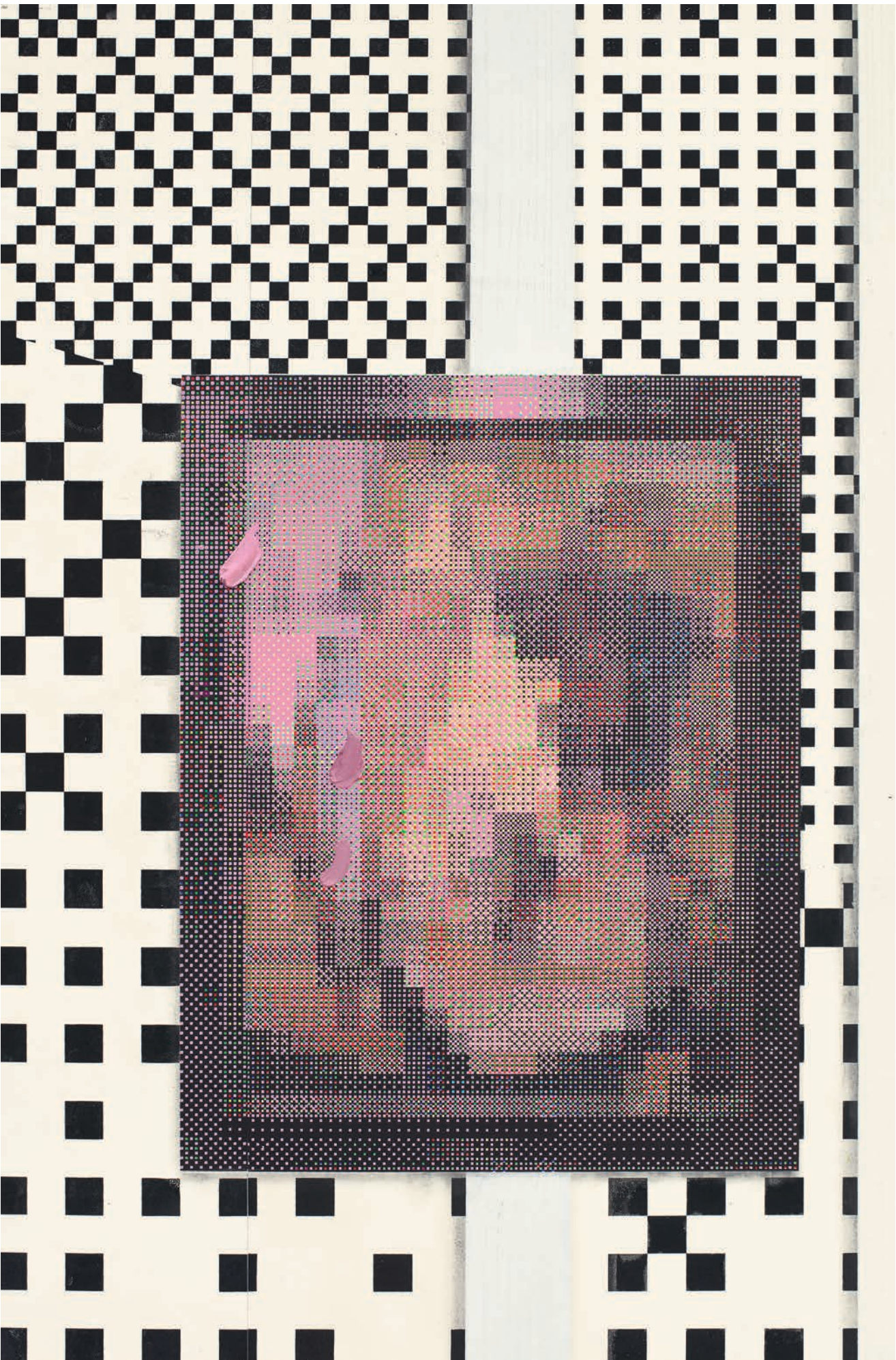
***So those are a few examples of ways in which you have incorporated something within or behind or underneath a painting.***

Right. There is another related project I did for a show in Berlin at Capitain Petzel. The gallery is a modernist glass box built in 1964 in the former GDR. There are floor-to-ceiling windows on all four sides, which means that there is not really any wall space to hang work on. Unless you do a sculpture show or something similar, they have to build freestanding walls in the exhibition space. You might not notice walls like these as much in a museum because they typically are built close to ceiling height, but Capitain Petzel’s space is two stories high with a mezzanine, which meant that I couldn’t just hang a painting on one of those walls without it looking like a sculpture. I just couldn’t get my head around these stand-alone walls, so I decided not to use them. The problem had me thinking about an exhibition I’d seen a few years prior by Chris Williams and Mathias Poledna at the Bonner Kunstverein. They had collected all the walls from different institutional exhibitions in the region—all those floating walls—and left them intact with whatever nails or holes or paint color remained from the last exhibition they had been used for. All of the walls were different shades of white, built to different heights, but I don’t think they arranged them in any aesthetic way. It was more like an archive and definitely alluded to Michael Asher’s well-known show at the Santa Monica Museum of Art. Anyway, I didn’t want to use false walls because it would be similar to starting with a sculpture and then hanging a painting on it, so I thought: What if the painting itself is the wall. Over the years I had thought about painting as a wall, linguistically and metaphorically and conceptually. My friend Blake Rayne had the idea that a painter who hangs a painting on a wall is covering the work of the original painter who painted the wall.

***For me, that idea of a painting on a wall being a painting that sits on top of another painting is a really rich one, and has many implications. And I also think it’s an important or useful way to think about what ultimately led to what you’ve done at the Wattis, this idea that painting is something that involves placing a painted object on top of a painted surface that has already been painted by someone else. So you end up hanging a painting on a painting, and the question becomes: How can you incorporate that original painting into your painting? How do you complicate those two paintings?***

Right, or how to avoid negating the original painter or act as if their work doesn’t have meaning.

***So all of a sudden, the wall itself, as a painted object, becomes a site to think through, as part of an overall history of painting, and this very basic and fundamental relationship between a painting and its wall can emerge as a much more complex and layered one, which I guess is what led to some***



*Untitled (detail), 2016. Acrylic, oil, Flashe, silkscreen inks, charcoal, pastel pencil, graphite, and sand on wallpaper. Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown’s enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain.*

***aspects of the Wattis show, in terms of it being a show of wallpaper—or walls merged with painted paper.***

Yeah, then I began to delve into the history of wallpaper. I didn’t in any way become an expert, but I did read that the original reason to use wallpaper was actually just that it was cheaper than having a room painted, and it was used where people rented more often than owning their own home. Whenever there was a new tenant, the landlord would just paper over the walls as a cheap way of renovating. On the other hand, there is simultaneously the history of really fancy, bespoke wallpaper for royalty in Europe, which was unique, similar to a wall mural. This is in the era when Chinese and Japanese art sort of flooded into craft in Europe, and you get some of the most incredible interior decor. Looking at all that, I thought: okay, maybe it is repeating patterns that are interrupted in places, maybe they get painted over. I tried this idea out in a model and thought it looked really claustrophobic. So I just kept revising the design to make a room I wanted to actually be in and not run away from. Early on, I knew I wanted all three walls of the gallery to have the same height, and at that point I saw that I was going to need a lot of wallpaper up there. I tried going over the entire thing with some of the images I was previously using in bits and pieces, an embroidery pattern for example. All the planning is happening in SketchUp and Photoshop to visualize something that I won’t get to see until it’s actually installed, until it’s actually too late to make a real change. When I saw this version in SketchUp, I almost vomited. I was like, “This is way too much, this is so gross, I will not want to be in there, I’ll want to kill myself.” So then I backed away from most imagery I thought I would be interested in based on previous work of mine that was invested in craft or textiles. I backed away from all of that to just start with more simple forms. I scanned a crumpled-up piece of white paper and converted the image into a bit-map with a custom pattern of quarter-inch, half-inch and one-inch squares instead of halftone dots. This gave me a really simple interpretation of those folds and shadows in black and white, which I scaled way up, so one crumpled piece of paper fills each wall. On one wall I ended up ripping the paper, and liked that it was like, “Okay, it’s just literally a piece of paper, wall paper.”

***Wall and paper.***

I felt intuitively that I had to move away from the more traditional idea of wallpaper.

***Two of the things that characterize traditional wallpaper are, like you said, repeated patterns, and then that it’s something that one sends to the printer. It seems like you explicitly chose to go against both of those fundamental characteristics.***

Yeah. I knew I would want to make it all in my studio. I thought that would be more fun because I would be able to intervene at any point, like, “Let’s change this up.” I would get more out of the project by making the wallpaper myself rather than sending it out to be printed. I’ve set up a studio that’s kind of like a workshop, so we’re able to handle big projects, but this one really maxed us out.

***For me, what’s so beautiful is how you’ve made something so simple into something so complicated. It’s this unbelievable amount of work that tries to take very literally the simple questions of what do walls have to do with paper, what do walls have to do with painting, what does paper have to do with painting, and those three words—wall, paper, and painting—are constantly circling around each other—you never know how to exactly use or distinguish them when you describe this piece.***

And then the interactive texting comes into play. There are phone numbers included in trompe l’oeil images of classified ads, old emails or just written directly on the wallpaper: “text this number,” “got questions?” “text a question” or I think one says “need a studio?” or something like that, and when people send text messages to those numbers, it triggers audio responses that end up like trompe l’oeil horoscopes. I also integrated your didactic wall text into the work by printing it as part of the wallpaper itself.

***I’m also interested in how a site becomes a starting place for you as a way to think about painting. You touched on this earlier when you were talking about the show in Berlin, and how you responded to the fact that the gallery had no permanent walls. You’ve told me that you wouldn’t necessarily describe yourself as a “site specific” artist, but maybe you could talk a bit more about what “site” is for you—because such an important part of the piece at the Wattis is this kind of basic grid structure that exists throughout the wallpaper, which is related to the building itself.***

I did look into the site—what was it before. I can’t remember if it was a Greek restaurant or a catering service. And then I looked up Phyllis Wattis, to see if I could use biographical details from her life to start off the project. In the end, I just went with the most simple jumping-off point, the wood beams that hold up the ceiling—and the angled bars that hold up the major beams. I used the placement of those beams to structure the piece and also incorporated images of the beams into the wallpaper by continuing them down the walls in what I think of as a trompe l’oeil moment. It’s like the ceiling becomes part of the piece even though I didn’t touch the ceiling at all. The existing beams become part of the piece.

***Somehow the building itself becomes part of this painted environment rather than the other way around. So maybe we can say a few words about the ten paintings. There’s a story you once told me, that I think is useful to bring up here, which is a time when you painted the shadow of a beam onto one of your paintings in a past exhibition. Maybe you can tell us about that moment, what motivated it, and what about it interested you, and how the future life of that painting would be changed, and how a painting’s relationship to a place changes once it’s no longer in that place?***

That was a piece I made for a show in London in 1997. I had the idea of making a series of paintings—dawn in New York City, noon in the Midwest and then sunset in LA, with each canvas progressively bigger than the last. It was my first show in England, so I hadn’t been to the space but asked the gallerist



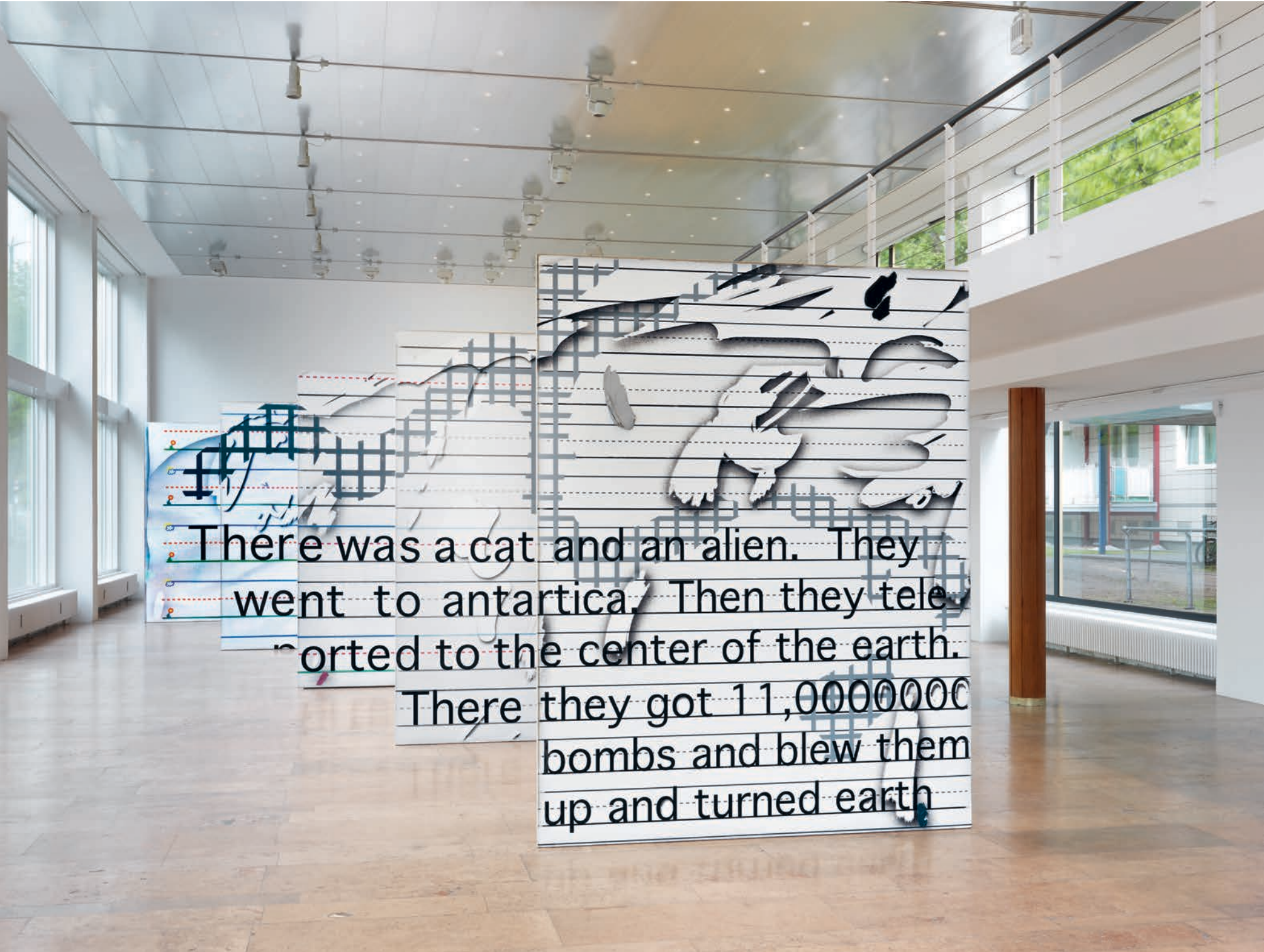


*Untitled (detail)*, 2016. Acrylic, oil, Flashe, silkscreen inks, charcoal, pastel pencil, graphite, and sand on wallpaper. Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain.

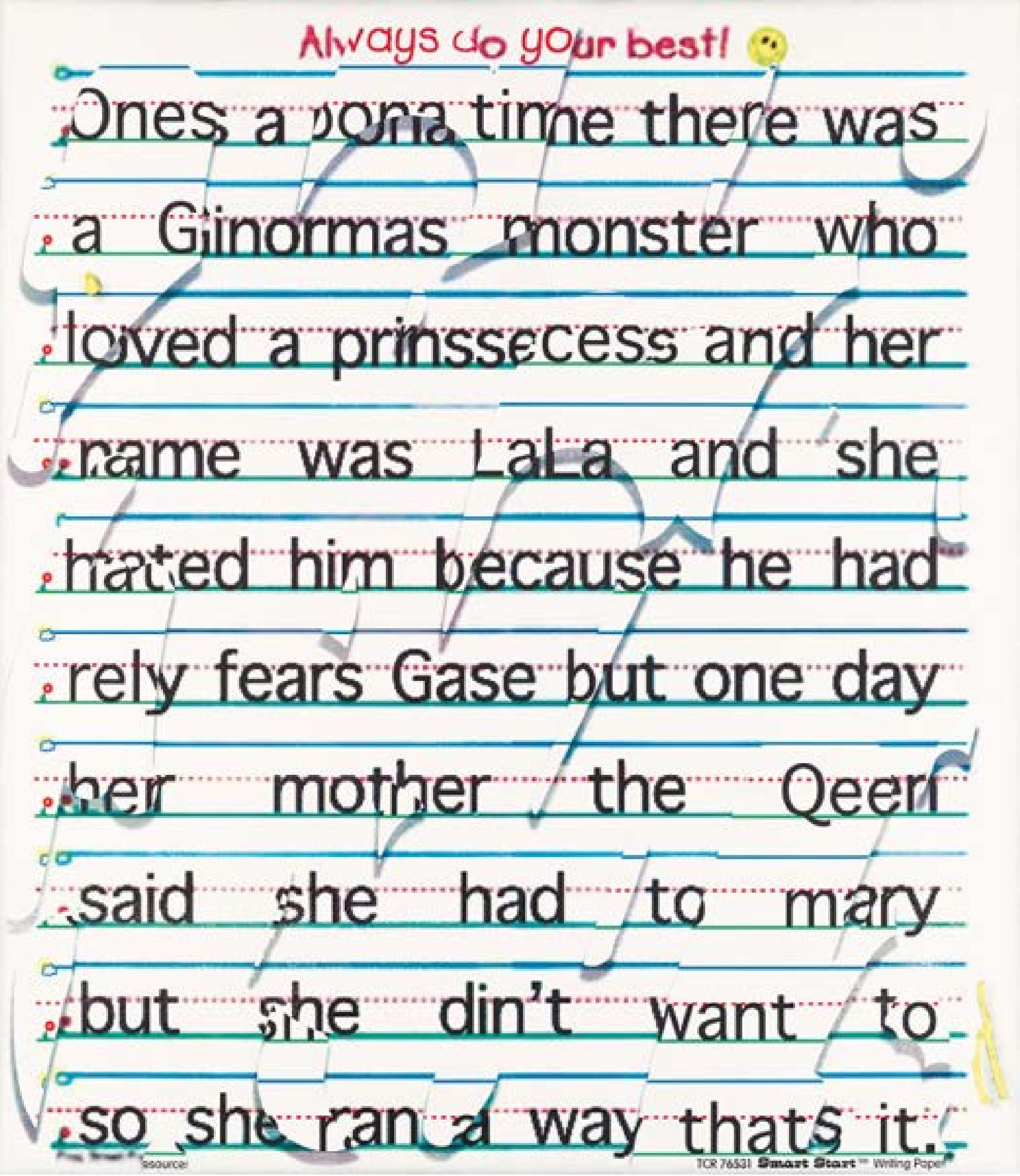


Installation view, *Ten Paintings* at the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art.





Installation view, *Laura Owens* at Captain Petzel, Berlin, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Captain Petzel.



*Untitled*, 2014. Acrylic, oil, Flashe, and silkscreen ink on linen, 137.5 x 120 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain.





Installation view, *Laura Owens* at Captain Petzel, Berlin, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Captain Petzel.

to send as many pictures as possible along with the floor plan. I saw a pole right in the middle of the space. I also saw just a wall of windows on the opposite side of that pole. Across from the wall of windows, I planned to hang an 8-by-10-foot painting depicting a sunset, albeit pretty abstractly. I imagined the sun setting through those windows and casting a shadow onto my painted sunset. I painted that shadow directly into the painting, so that there was only one place the gallery could hang the work when it arrived in London. The painted shadow looks like a strange stripe of different colors going through the landscape. When the painting left the show and moved through the world, it carried this index of the gallery. I've played with similar ideas a lot in my work. At the Wattis for example, the "ten paintings" were hidden within the walls and eventually there will be this other iteration where these 10 panels, which were hidden seamlessly into the installation, come out and become paintings. I was really interested in the idea that you would be looking at paintings without seeing their edges. I had always started a project by asking, "what is a painting, what can a painting be?" But recently, I've begun adding the question of "where is a painting?" I think that painting as a medium tries in the most concerted way to deny what it's about, but there's so much more that's going on in a painting that is outside of itself, a painting that dislocates itself into a biography or anecdote, etc.

*I think you tested that question beautifully in this particular installation. Another thing that's interesting, and maybe this relates to the earlier time you've done it with this painted shadow, is how site-specificity becomes abstraction. I'm imagining that these ten paintings will be shown somewhere, in the future, but these trompe l'oeil architectural beams, the vertical lines of silkscreened wood grain, fragments of which will appear in these ten paintings, are just going to become abstract compositional marks. They can't refer to an actual ceiling or to the presence of a larger architectural place, like they did at the Wattis, because that place will no longer be there. So the nature of those vertical lines or horizontal white lines completely changes in terms of what they refer to and how they create a composition for a painting.*

That's true, but with the way photography spreads over the Internet, it might be easy to trace those images back to the Wattis show. But you're right that on first glance you wouldn't have this information.

*What's interesting is how it's not site-specific in the sense that its existence is not determined by the site. It makes use of a place, but also is not completely tied to it. It can completely survive out of its site, but does so according to a different logic—it becomes a different painting once it's somewhere else. Traditionally, "site-specific art" doesn't exist outside of its original site—once you remove it from that building it doesn't really work anymore. You can't remove a Gordon Matta-Clark from a building. But in your case, a painting can exist in a different site and simply be a different painting.*

Even though it's about place, it's also about time. The wallpaper at the Wattis definitely existed for a duration of time and then most of it was pretty much destroyed in the de-installation.

*Yes, time. If the title of the show is Ten Paintings, not only does one have the question of "where are the paintings" but also "when are the paintings"? Those ten paintings are going to exist at a future date rather than in front of you right now. And then the audio and the text messaging has a whole relationship to time, and the experience of the show changes over time depending on how people are interacting with the phone number. People have been really enjoying that part of the exhibition, of course, and just having lots of fun with it, which actually points to another aspect of your work that we've talked a little bit about, which is the role of humor and the importance that humor plays for you and for your understanding of art in general, or painting. I wonder if you can say a few words about that.*

I don't intentionally go out there and do something funny, you know, "Let's try to be funny," because that would not be funny at all. Giving myself permission to not be cool, or to do something that's a little bit embarrassing and allowing myself to go down a path that maybe makes no sense or has no logic just to see if anything about it interests me is just more generative. After a basic version of the audio apparatus was embedded in the painting shown at MoMA, we found out we could control the playback through texting because the device was part of a cellphone. I had ordered a bunch of these audio devices to be hidden inside some stretchers that were possibly going to go to Europe. It somewhat came out of that, but also to keep following the idea and see where it goes. I don't know, but I think it's important.

*So many aspects of this piece and of your work in general, I think, places painting alongside the notion of performance, or the performative. I tried to write about this a little bit in my short essay, but I wanted to ask you about it a bit more. Many people have written about that idea, how and when and why is painting a performance, and I think you're involved in this in a really distinct and specific way. I wonder from your perspective whether those two categories belong alongside each other. Is that a useful pairing or what does that pairing mean to you?*

I use the word performance, but I don't really think of it that way. I know that's been written about a lot. For me, it's more a question of where the painting is in the gesture or the story of the events that happened when that particular painting was made—just seeing there are more and more possibilities for how you can look at it. So for me, that MoMA audio guide was part of the work.

*So part of the work is in the audio guide, you mean.*

Yeah, part of it is in the audio guide and part of the painting is in the hidden sound component. The painting keeps making itself less locatable within the rectangular surface of the canvas, but that literally opens up painting as a much more active medium. But I don't really like the idea of painting as just this kind of stand-in or prop to signify itself in order for you to think about other things. I am very invested in the idea that what's within that rectangle has the ability to be a potent, engaging, informative, you know, mind-blowing space. So why not do that also? Just to use it as a marker of a painting . . . it's already a marker of itself so that's kind of wimping out, I think.

*I think that's a really good point. You also talked about how a painting is always already art, and is always already a painting, and you don't really need to do anything to indicate that that rectangle signifies painting and art. In a way, the piece at the Wattis is a single 16-by-150-foot rectangle, and within that rectangle are ten 9-by-7-foot other rectangles, which are the hidden paintings, and within those rectangles are thousands of small black and white rectangles, which are the pixelated markers that make up the image itself. There is a range of rectangles set within rectangles, paintings within paintings.*

Yeah, and also in the second gallery, showing the embroidery by my grandmother next to some actual paintings is hopefully sort of saying: "Look at these embroideries, can't you see these as paintings too?" Where do you stop calling something a painting—what does the word mean?

*And then there's this whole play on the gendered aspects of the work. For me, that second gallery enforces or puts into relief but flattens out the gendered difference between embroidery and the mural-like scale of the other painting, of how they both are essentially organized according to the same principles and belong together.*

That's cool.

*Maybe one last question . . . There are a few things that come up in terms of the resonance of the piece in San Francisco. There is the tradition of mural—this town is lucky to have several very famous Diego Rivera murals, for instance.*

Did you go to Coit Tower yet to see that mural?

*I haven't yet, I've seen a couple of the other ones.*

You've got to see it. I think it's better than the Diego Rivera murals, but you tell me. I don't know, maybe I'm remembering it wrong. It's just a small, really specific space. You should go check it out and tell me what you think.

*Okay, I will. But it just feels like your piece is not unaware of that context. I wonder whether in addition to looking at the history of wallpaper, whether the mural form is something that plays a role in your thinking here or not.*

Yeah, I mean that's definitely the art I associate with San Francisco. The art that I was first aware of coming out of there in the '90s—artists like Barry McGee and Margaret Kilgallen. Knowing that they had a totally different aesthetic coming out of both graffiti and commissioned murals, working in a public space. I was aware of that while I was going to art school. I've always thought that making a good outdoor mural is one of the hardest projects any artist can take on. It just seems doomed to fail. It so rarely reaches this level of like, "Wow, that's an amazing artwork."

*That's funny because I remember you being so interested in how this piece can be seen from the street, and that you were using the façade of the Wattis, which is a wall of windows, in order to make the piece kind of behave like it's in a public piece. But do so indoors.*

Yeah, I was really into what it would look like from outside.



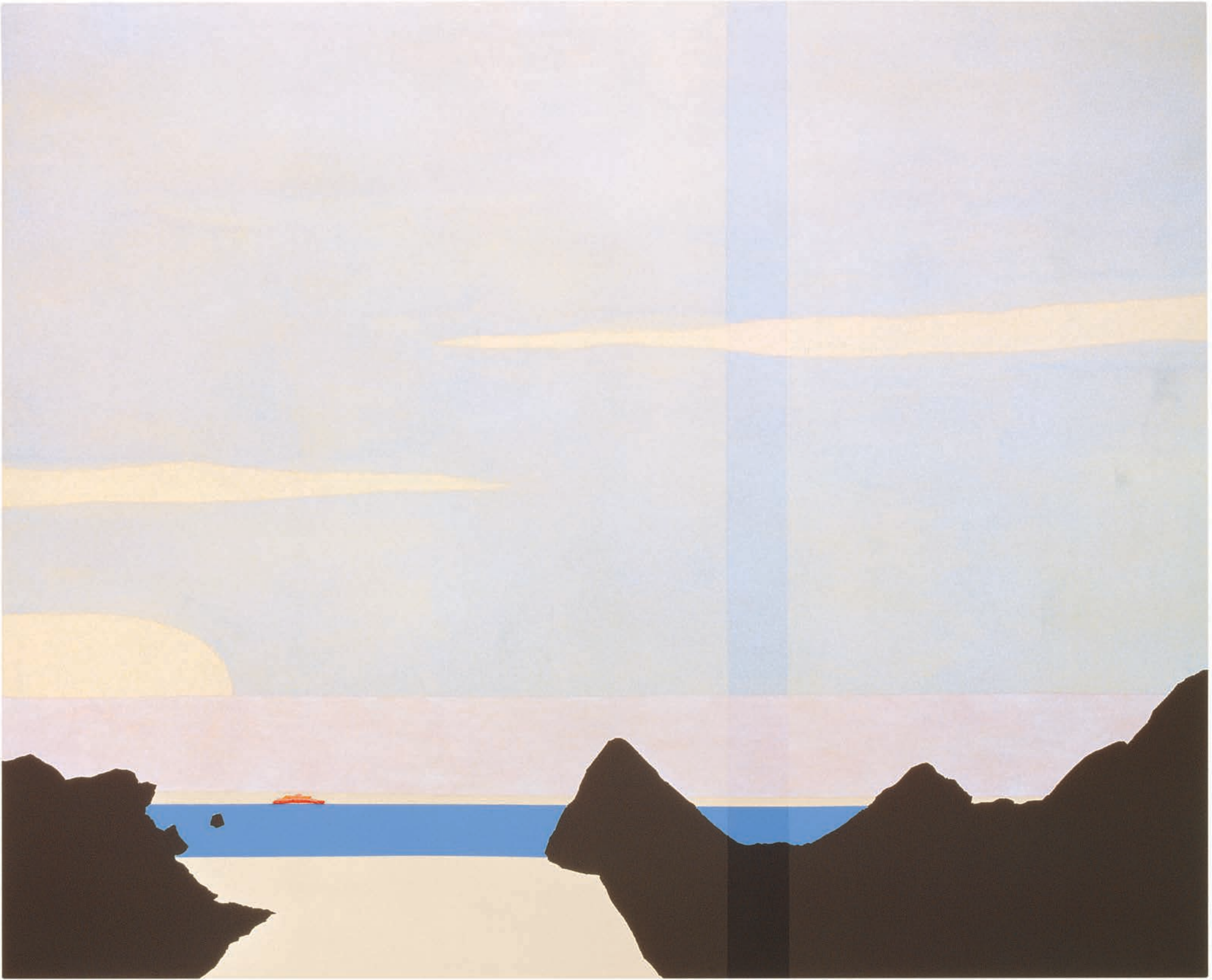


*Untitled*, 2014. Acrylic, oil, Flashe, silkscreen ink, Pantone ink, pastel, paper, and wood on linen, 138 x 104 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain.



Installation view, *Ten Paintings* at the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, 2016. Second gallery view, with paintings by Laura Owens and embroideries by Eileen Owens. Courtesy of the artist and the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art.





*Untitled, 2014.* Acrylic, oil, Flashe, silkscreen ink, Pantone ink, pastel, paper, and wood on linen, 138 x 104 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain.



*Untitled, 2015.* Oil and Flashe on linen, 38 x 42 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain.



# Kour Pour

## In Conversation With Robert Summers

*Kour Pour is a Los Angeles-based artist. Our conversation started via DM on Instagram while Pour was in Berlin and was then followed by a series of emails, phone calls, and studio visits back in LA. I was curious to find out more about his new series of artworks that he displayed in New York at Feuer/Mesler and Berlin at Gnyp Gallery this past spring. The first part of this interview focuses on Pour's newer works where we discuss formal qualities, process, and history. The second part of the conversation focuses more on the ideas and experiences behind Pour's practice as a whole. We move in and out of his carpet works, to his ukiyo-e inspired paintings, to his work with paper and his "ready-made" platforms. Other topics discussed include sushi, the 1970s Pattern and Decoration movement and cross-dressing kabuki actors.*

**You've just returned from two solo shows that you presented in both Berlin and New York City where you exhibited new paintings that reference ukiyo-e prints and Japanese landscapes. The works also look very different from your previous series of carpet paintings. Could you explain how you arrived at this new series?**

I see the new work as a study of Japonisme, the influence of Japanese art and aesthetics on Western culture. For me these new paintings are another exploration into cultural exchange, similar to the way my carpet paintings traced a history of early trade and exchange by depicting imagery and design influenced by different cultures. I got really into Japanese ukiyo-e prints by looking at Western art history and how big of a role ukiyo-e played in the beginnings of modern art. The impressionists used many characteristics from ukiyo-e

prints such as pictorial cropping and clean contours. I wanted to explore this exchange between Japan and the West and started experimenting with the printing process used to create ukiyo-e prints. I then came across these Japanese Geological Survey maps that look very much like abstract paintings from Europe and America, painters like Clyfford Still, Helen Frankenthaler, Nicolas de Stael, Serge Poliakoff, and the camouflage paintings by Andy Warhol. Since the Japanese landscape was a main theme in ukiyo-e, the maps were a natural subject to take on. I started creating these paintings that have the appearance of what I think of as Western abstraction, but using both a process and subject matter associated with Japan. I think the conversation became a lot about authorship, location, and displacement.

**Now before we get into the important discussion of authorship, location, and displacement, perhaps we can start the first part of this conversation talking directly about the works. Can you formally discuss how your new work visually relates to the abstract artists you mentioned?**

Well, for starters, the maps that I use as reference material already look visually similar to abstract paintings with their big blocks of color and a mix of both geometric and more amorphous forms. Ukiyo-e prints are made on paper and are generally small and intimate in scale, but I wanted to blow the maps up in size and print them onto large raw canvas to reference the grand scale and history of abstract painting. Another detail is that, due to the multi-layer printing process, you can see the different layers of color popping through the surface, almost like a pointillist or color field painting. I also use color palettes in some of the paintings that are probably more of what you could expect from a Western aesthetic. Basically any of the formal choices that I made were to reference some aspect of abstract painting from a European or American history.

**You said that you experimented with the printing process used to create ukiyo-e prints. Can you talk more about this process and how you used or altered it to create your paintings?**

The printing process is called moku-hanga. Traditional ukiyo-e prints are printed at a small scale on paper, so they are very fine, flat, and accurately printed. My paintings have a completely different surface because of the large scale; they're super-sized.

My first step is to project and trace the images of the geological maps onto sheets of vinyl, which are then laid down onto wooden platforms with industrial tape. Only one color can be printed per day. Ink is rolled onto the block, and then the canvas, which is attached to a jig system on hinges, is lowered to the platform and hand-printed with a baren, which is a small disc-shaped printmaking tool. The process is slow. Every day that we print a new color, sections of the vinyl are cut and removed from the block. For a printing process the results are quite direct and painterly. The ink can be applied thicker or thinner in sections, there is the texture left by the ink rollers and the jig can shift so the shapes register differently with each print. The weather also plays a big role because if it's hot out, the ink doesn't want to print as well as when it's cooler, so there are a lot of variables that you can't control and you never know how each color will look. It's also a pretty physical activity, because of the scale of the paintings, so my assistant Errol Sabinano and I literally have to crawl on top of the canvas to apply pressure with the hand barens, which causes the surface to crack and shift. Sometimes you can see traces of our palms and knees on the surface of the painting too, which I quite like.

**It appears to be a rigorous and controlled process, but, in fact, it's quite precarious at times. I love how you are deploying this somewhat old mechanical reproduction machine, but the artist's or assistant's hand is embedded in the work. All that said, I want to return to the very wooden platforms that you use in the creation of the paintings. You displayed them as finished artworks in New York and Berlin.**

Because we have to hose down and wash the ink off the platforms everyday, the wooden panels starts to warp and peel over time. After several months the panels need replacing, and the first time we did this we leaned the used platform against the wall and had kind of a moment with it. The platform was covered in ink stains, blade marks from cutting and removing the vinyl, tape residue, and anything else embedded in the layers of shellac that we apply to protect the panel from water damage. It was like looking at a diary of the past year of work. I decided to include them in the show. They seemed really important and not because they show how the paintings are made, but more so because they are something that would



*Dragons & Genies, 2012-2013. Acrylic on canvas over panel, 96 x 72 inches. Courtesy of the artist.*





*Rising Sun (Pacific Ocean)*, 2015. Block printing ink on canvas, 83 x 69 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

usually be disregarded even though they are so integral to the entire process. They are the record of labor, which is usually invisible and I wanted to give worth and weight to the disposable and the ephemeral.

***The discussion of these platforms leads me to another interesting series of work: the ones made from paper. I think these are a critique of modernism—and especially Greenbergian modernism—given the “painting” isn’t just about painting—you use paper pulp. I also think of ephemera. I know papermaking is more of an Eastern tradition, so does this in some way infect the history of modernist painting?***

Yes, you’re right about the papermaking tradition and I looked specifically at origami, and the lesser-known tsugigami, both Japanese paper crafts. In fact, I like that paper is thought of as a craft material, it’s usually more ornamental and delicate. Artists make works on paper as sketches or as secondary to works on canvas; paper has the value of a lesser material. I started to experiment with paper making in the studio, not really knowing what I would do with it. I shredded and mixed pulp out of newspapers that I collected from the markets and delis that I frequent close to my studio in Inglewood. I started dying the pulp with ink, which introduced color. I could work and form the pulp with my hands and feet; it’s quite a therapeutic activity. After playing for a while I started producing large sheets of paper pulp, around five-and-a-half by four-and-a-half feet, and mounted them onto panels that were stretched over with linen. I would then lay these linen panels outside in the parking lot and start throwing down wet sheets of pulp. There is very little control in the process and it’s all very similar to action painting that way. The results are these very visceral paintings, very minimal in color with a lot of physical depth, texture and folds. They are the most painterly works that I’ve made so far and I really love how direct they are—paper on linen.

***I think what’s interesting is that you’re making these different bodies of work that all have different aesthetics and yet there seems to be a line that connects them all. I’m specifically thinking of how the paper works, and even the new ukiyo-e influenced paintings, relate to what you were doing in your previous work where you referenced Asian carpets and weaving. I feel like there is a discussion of the 1970s Pattern and Decoration movement with what you’re doing and how your work relates to ideas of craft, labor, beauty, and feminism—as well as identity and cultural authenticity.***

All the different things that I reference seem to have a commonality, which is that they are based in a specific culture, history, or location, so before I even start the work it’s already embedded in these kinds of discussions. Carpet weaving is historically attributed to tribal and nomadic women’s work, delicate papermaking is an Asian tradition, and ukiyo-e is located in Japan and made cheaply as posters for the masses. These are all ideas that I’m interested in, and I try to transform them or tweak them in a way to experience their value differently, or at least to try to confuse their inherent identity.

With the carpet paintings, I literally translate an image of a carpet into a painted work on canvas. I’m not weaving but painting, and more in the tradition of miniature painting, so the process almost mimics weaving with all the small brushstrokes and careful line work. I wanted to transform the object in a way, or in a manner, that would cause the viewer to question why I would bother reproducing a carpet as a painting. Also, metaphorically, taking a carpet from the floor and putting it up on the wall with the rest of the art is a pretty direct statement about exclusion and value. There is also a conversation about how flatness and geometric forms from the decorative arts moved their way into modernist painting, which is extensively written about in Joseph Masheck’s book *The Carpet Paradigm*. Similar things happen with the newer paper and printmaking works. Their material and process is used in a slightly different way, in a way that references Western art. Or I guess depending on who’s looking at it, the works could be thought of as Western art, used in a way that references more Eastern art forms.

***That’s an interesting point you bring up and something that your work makes me think of: the viewer. Because your references are so varied I can’t help but think about who and where your art is being viewed and how the meanings will change based on these factors.***

I’m glad you brought that up because I spend a lot of time thinking about the viewer. I know as an artist, I’m not supposed to care about the viewer or audience; I’m supposed to just do whatever I want. For me, the viewer is as important as the artist. Meaning is always co-produced—there’s a producer and a consumer, and each is bringing their own references to a work. This is especially true with my work due to the fact that I reference and appropriate almost everything that I make. I think we need to put more emphasis on who’s viewing the work, or who’s writing, curating, or reviewing art. If my identity is used as a point of reference to help explain or better understand my artwork then shouldn’t it be the same for the person writing

about it or showing it? Isn’t their frame of reference a source of bias, just as mine is seen as a source of inspiration? We have identity politics for artists, but what about for curators, dealers, and writers? I think that’s something we really need to look closer at because that’s where a lot of the power lies in how art is disseminated, read, and valued.

***I wonder if we can talk more about how ukiyo-e prints ended up in European hands. I’m thinking about the vehicles of exchange here, how culture is spread across time and location—for example, trade, which has its “dark sides.”***

Ukiyo-e prints arrived in Europe during the Japanese Meiji government’s “modernization” period, although some labeled it as the “westernization” period. Borders were opened up in Japan and Europeans began trade. Ukiyo-e prints and other Japanese arts were exported and made up 10% of the country’s national income at the time, so as you can imagine, many prints were produced. Of course, these prints ended up in the hands of artists like Manet, Gauguin, and Van Gogh and had a heavy influence on their works. Van Gogh wrote about Japanese art often in his letters. Likewise, Japanese art became influenced by contact with Europe and ukiyo-e prints started to include Westerners in European dress. Japanese painters also started producing paintings in the impressionist style—although these artists were disregarded and labeled as inauthentic, their paintings didn’t look “Japanese” enough to Westerners. There were many political and economical reasons that sparked this particular example of cultural exchange and it was interesting to see how they affected artists and art making.

***Does this experience of movement have some connection to your own biography? I know you grew up in England and then moved to Los Angeles. You also have part British and part Iranian ethnicity. Can we perhaps talk about your practice as being diasporic? You previously mentioned displacement when discussing your paintings, what did you mean about this more specifically? I do not mean to conflate the artist with the artwork, but there seems to be a thread here.***

Yeah, it’s fair to say that all these interests stem from my own movement in life. I think my entire practice is based on my personal experiences of living in different countries, having multiple identities and exposure to different cultures. It’s about my experience of being displaced. But there’s so much movement in the world, and I’m pretty sure that most of the





California Roll, 2015. Block printing ink on canvas, 87.5 x 71.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Katsushika Hokusai, *Fine Wind, Clear Morning*, 1830-32. Ukiyo-e woodblock print. Courtesy of the Internet.



Natori Shunsen, *Morita Kanya XIII as Kajiwara Genta Kagesue*, 1928. Ukiyo-e woodblock print. Courtesy of the Internet.



Ando Hiroshige, *Plum Park in Kameido*, 1857. Ukiyo-e woodblock print. Courtesy of the Internet.



Vincent Van Gogh, *Flowering Plum Tree (after Hiroshige)*, 1887. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Internet.



Utagawa Hiroshige, *Full Moon Over A Mountain Landscape*, 1834. Ukiyo-e woodblock print. Courtesy of the Internet.





Installation view, *Onnagata* at Feuer/Mesler, New York, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.



Installation view, *Onnagata* at Feuer/Mesler, New York, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.



Installation view, *Onnagata* at Feuer/Mesler, New York, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.



Process photograph taken at Kour Pour's studio in Inglewood, California, 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

population has shifted from one location to another, locally or globally, so I think we have all experienced displacement in one form or another. So things change and identities shift. For example, I love Japanese food: sushi, ramen, tempura, etc. I didn't know this until recently, but tempura was a Portuguese export. It has become such a staple in Japanese cuisine that the history and origin is forgotten and disregarded, or perhaps just became unimportant. And then you have things like the California roll, where the nori, or seaweed, is rolled inside-out because Americans were originally put off by the sight of it on the outside of the roll. These are the kinds of experiences that influence my practice and that's why you see a rug as a painting, or images placed in a space where they don't belong, or an abstract painting made as a Japanese print.

***One other thing that I've noticed is that up to now, your work has always been somewhat historical. I think the discussions around your practice are quite current and topical, so how come we have only seen references to the past and not the present in your work?***

When you start any new project, don't you always begin with research? And research happens by looking at the past. So, I'm looking at how we have arrived at the present, to try to better understand all this craziness and confusion. But I can definitely see myself referencing the present in future works more directly. What would be the point of all this research if I wasn't interested in the present and the future? My studio is right next to LAX airport so I see all the planes and people coming in and out on a daily basis. I think about what they may be bringing with them, or what they are taking away. I've been doing more travelling myself lately, especially with the two shows where I simultaneously showed the same series of works in different locations. It was interesting to have very different conversations in both cities about the shows and it goes back to what we talked about with viewership and the co-creation of meaning. This experience of cultural exchange is a constant in my life, who and how we influence each other, not just in the past but now.

***Thank you for these insights, Kour. But, one thing we have not discussed yet is the title of your exhibition: Onnagata—which I think you should define and elaborate on. This seems to have something to do with what you mentioned about identity and appearance earlier.***

Onnagata are the male actors who play female roles in Japanese kabuki theater. I came across them as they are often depicted in ukiyo-e prints dressed in kimonos and headresses and covered in makeup; some are really over-the-top and quite comical. I thought that my works shared a relationship with the onnagata since I am also playing with the "identity" of the paintings through the appearance of the painting's surface. This dressing up had me thinking about identity in the context of theater with actors playing roles; this seemed to highlight the way we associate identity with more superficial things like appearance in real life. I think that because we are such an image-based society, especially with social media, appearance has become even more representative of identity than ever before.

***Now, your discussion on onnagata is very interesting to me, given that I work with gender and sexuality in my work on art and visual culture. Also, as some may know the same "playing out" of gender took place in Elizabethan theater: men playing the roles of men and women. It is interesting that we have two distinct cultures enacting what we now call "cross-dressing"—and without either culture knowing the other was doing it. A lot can be said about this: one being the way gender is a performance—an art, if you will.***

Yeah I'm definitely interested in how appearance, or performance as you say, plays a big role in identity construction. I thought about this a lot when I started my carpet paintings, you know, what it means to paint Persian carpets when I have Iranian heritage, I knew people would relate the work to my cultural history. There's no escaping that. The personal is still really important to me, but there are so many things about a carpet as an object that interested me beyond my own cultural representation. Appearance and representation is a conversation in my work now, especially with the new paintings that are referencing specific histories. In a way I'm using appearance to represent a certain identity, but then I want to try to confuse it so it isn't as straightforward or surface based.

***As we can tell based on this conversation, nothing is straightforward or simple. You have not forgotten the complexities of post-colonialism and postmodernism, and you have shown how the past influences the future, as well as how the present influences the past. This leaves me, and I am sure others, with a much more profound understanding of your work. Now, I would like to offer my thanks to you Kour, for your time, energy, and patience.***

Thank you Robert.



Andy Warhol, *Camouflage*, 1986. Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 40 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the Internet.



# Style Wars: Air Pollution, Digital Smog, And The Art Of Citation

## Martha Kenney

*From mid-century Hollywood to the millennial megacity that stands today, Los Angeles has long helped to fashion a global sense of what it means to have style. A regular column in AQ, Style Wars aims to appreciate how critical considerations of “style” can offer opportunities to think across sets of subjectivities and cultural practices that are often disassociated or pitted against one another. On the occasion of LXAQ, guest contributor Martha Kenney responds to this challenge by asking readers to turn their attention towards the City of Angels’ literal atmosphere. She reflects on the ways that contemporary arts practice, the fight for environmental justice, new media economies, and styles of citation and information sharing all become entangled through critical considerations of smog. Unsatisfied with the hazy modes of reporting and thinking that have become all too characteristic of present-day society, Kenney suggests that more particular and situated modes of information sharing and gathering are required if the current information age might serve to address the historical inequities that mark each of our everyday lives in myriad ways.*

-Nicole Archer, Column Editor

Air pollution is central to the Los Angeles imaginary. A perpetual haze hangs over the sprawling cityscape; we breathe it into our lungs in ongoing, corporeal penance for an urban infrastructure designed only for automobiles, for a car culture now so naturalized it seems like culture itself. Smog isn't only an LA aesthetic; it also enacts a spatial politics. The location of pollution sources and the direction of air currents conspire to create an uneven geography of respiration; some breathe cleaner air than others.

### PigeonBlog

Artist Beatriz da Costa created *PigeonBlog* (2006-2008) as a response to the politics of smog. In LA and elsewhere in the United States, urban air pollution is measured via fixed monitoring stations located in low traffic areas, away from proximate sources of air pollution such as power plants, highways, factories, and refineries.<sup>1</sup> While these stations are good for monitoring *average* air pollution in a given city, no comparable data is collected for high traffic areas—neighborhoods near industrial sites like oil refineries that are often home to a disproportionate number of low income people of color. The environmental justice question of who suffers most from air pollution is foreclosed by the standard method of monitoring.

To address this problem da Costa enlisted an unlikely ally: homing pigeons. For *PigeonBlog*, a flock of homing pigeons were fitted with pollution sensing “backpacks” that transmitted pollution and location data. The data was mapped in real time onto the PigeonBlog website, creating a “heat map” of local concentrations of air pollution.<sup>2</sup> Flocks of pigeon-pollution-bloggers were released three times in Irvine and San Jose, garnering positive press in the international news media.<sup>3</sup> The releases also had some unintended consequences: *PigeonBlog* was protested by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and courted by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).<sup>4</sup> Because it was unexpected and charismatic, *PigeonBlog* caused a stir; people in art, science, engineering, and animal worlds took notice and many scholars, myself included, continue to teach *PigeonBlog* in our classes.

Beatriz da Costa died of cancer in 2012. However, *PigeonBlog* remains an important intervention into the aesthetics and politics of air pollution and its measurement. As scholar Kavita Philip argues, art projects like this that bring together unlikely actors (pigeons, artists, engineers, pigeon fanciers) around an urgent environmental health problem offer “collective forms of resistance to the neoliberal systems that accelerate scales of immiseration and render large portions of the earth uninhabitable.”<sup>5</sup> In an era when environmental regulation is met with ongoing, well-funded resistance from multi-national corporations, *PigeonBlog* provides a brief glimpse of another world—a world where we don't entrust environmental monitoring and regulation only to government actors, but rather to flocks of pollution-sensing pigeons that traverse the sky, gathering data to protect those who breathe air polluted by industries that profit at their expense.

### Pigeon Air Patrol

Given the media attention that *PigeonBlog* received, I was surprised to hear in March 2016 about a new project that was being described as “the first ever flock of pollution monitoring pigeons.”<sup>6</sup> *The Guardian* was the first to report the launch of *Pigeon Air Patrol*: a flock of racing pigeons flying above London, wearing pollution sensors (also called “backpacks”) and sharing their data over Twitter.<sup>7</sup> Although superficially similar to *PigeonBlog*, this project was not an art installation nor a “grassroots scientific data gathering initiative,” but a marketing stunt.<sup>8</sup> *Pigeon Air Patrol* was created by Pierre Duquesnoy, Creative Director of DigitasLBI, “a global marketing and technology agency that transforms brands for the digital age.”<sup>9</sup> The purpose of *Pigeon Air Patrol* was to promote Plume Air Report—an app that forecasts air pollution.



Beatriz da Costa and some of her pigeons. Courtesy of the Internet.

After the original article in *the Guardian*, the story spread quickly; over 2000 stories about *Pigeon Air Patrol* ran in news outlets around the world, generating free publicity for DigitasLBI and Plume Labs, their client.<sup>10</sup> Most of these stories did not contain any additional research beyond what was reported in the original article. There was no mention of *PigeonBlog* as an important predecessor, nor any real discussion of *Pigeon Air Patrol* as marketing rather than art, technological innovation, or activism.<sup>11</sup> The media almost unilaterally presented *Pigeon Air Patrol* as a fun, innovative, and socially-conscious project. However, if you compare the aims of *PigeonBlog* to those of the app that DigitasLBI is promoting, a different impression emerges. Whereas da Costa was concerned with social justice and the unequal effects of urban air pollution, the Plume Air Report app individualizes the problem of air pollution, telling users whether or not it's a good time to go for a jog or dine outdoors. For many people who live near highways or refineries, exposure to pollution isn't a matter of optimizing one's lifestyle (should I take a jog now or in a couple of hours?) but an everyday necessity (I have to wait for the bus every day at 6 a.m. to keep my job). By framing exposure as individual choice, the environmental justice questions are swept aside and we fail to hold polluters accountable for their impact on our collective health; we simply rearrange our lives to accommodate the smog—those of us who can afford to, that is.

If the politics of these projects are so different, why were they reported as if they are the same? What is wrong with the optics when an environmental justice project by an artist appears the same as a project by a marketing firm to promote a start-up? Why didn't any news articles reference *PigeonBlog*? Or, more concretely, why didn't anyone involved (Duquesnoy? Plume Labs? Journalists?) just google “pigeons” and “pollution sensor” together and learn that Pigeon Air Patrol was not the first time pigeons had been used for pollution monitoring?

### Digital Smog

We are living in an age of digital smog.<sup>12</sup> An unfathomable amount of information is available at our fingertips, but it seems that, paradoxically, we are becoming less discriminating about how we use it. Information appears to us in an undifferentiated haze, with reliable information interspersed with advertising, propaganda, and conjecture. If you google the famous American science writer and environmentalist Rachel Carson, for example, you are just as likely to be told that Carson is responsible for the murder of millions of people who died of malaria (an opinion propagated largely by corporately funded right-wing think tanks like the Hoover Institution) as you are to learn the importance of her 1964 book *Silent Spring* in launching the US environmental movement.<sup>13</sup> Google's algorithms do not differentiate between good and bad information, marketing and art.

Digital smog is ahistorical, much like the smog measured by da Costa's pigeons. Above Los Angeles, nitrogen oxides combine with VOCs and ultraviolet light from the sun in ongoing chemical reactions; molecules cannot be traced to their sources. They lose their histories. Similarly, information on the Internet seems to come from everywhere and nowhere, claims are rarely tethered to their origins, and false quotes and statistics circulate freely. In the reporting on *Pigeon Air Patrol*, we can see how quickly one version of the story spreads—so quickly that that there was no time to pause and place *Pigeon Air Patrol* within a history (as coming after *PigeonBlog*) or in the context of its industry (as, first and foremost, advertising). This kind of decontextualized information is the product of a digital media landscape that Henry A. Giroux argues “erase[s] history by producing . . . a culture of immediacy, speed, simultaneity and endless flows of fragmented knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> Here, the speed of the news cycle and the fetishization of innovation conspire against rigorous research and citation, which works just fine for DigitasLBI.

For the rest of us, the results are insalubrious, to say the least. Now more than ever, we're feeling the effects of digital smog. We've witnessed the terrifying rise of clickbait candidate Donald Trump, while Instagram celebrities sell us laxative teas claiming they “detoxify.”<sup>15</sup> Although the need for media literacy is higher than ever, I've noticed instead an alarming relativism in how my students (most of whom were born in the '90s) consume media. They tend to see all content online as either equally reliable or, conversely, equally unreliable. It doesn't matter whether the author is an environmental journalist at a national newspaper or paid by an oil company, because it's all biased anyway. This can be a dangerous attitude, as we're seeing in the current election cycle. If we assume that all politicians lie, we don't hold them accountable for their claims; Trump, it seems, is immune to fact-checking.

Granted, the Internet also allows us to “talk back” to misleading claims that circulate in the media. This past fall, for example, I saw an Airbnb ad on a bus shelter that suggested that San Francisco use the 12 million dollars of hotel taxes generated by Airbnb rentals to keep the libraries open later. It didn't seem to me like 12 million dollars was very much money for a city like San Francisco. So I did a “back of the envelope” calculation to see how much of that money would actually go to the libraries and posted the results on Facebook. My post went viral giving

me a platform that would not have been possible even 10 years ago.<sup>16</sup> But these kind of viral phenomena are unpredictable and difficult to leverage when they do happen—journalists contacted me for 24 hours, often with deadlines only an hour or two away; by the time I figured out what I wanted to say, no one was interested in talking to me. Anyhow, I doubt that waiting around for favorable breezes is a long-term solution to digital smog. Although high-profile cases of plagiarism like Melania Trump's convention speech will likely be caught and called out, the case of *Pigeon Air Patrol* makes me wonder how we can actively resist this culture of immediacy and connect things more strongly to their histories.

### The Art of Citation

Citation is one way that scholars situate themselves within a history. Footnotes and bibliographies trace the genealogy of ideas and testify that nothing happens in isolation. Although I'm pretty sure that “cite your source” is the professor equivalent of “eat your vegetables,” I wonder if what we need now is more widespread insistence on citation—not just academically rigorous citation, but citation that's vital, imaginative, and clever. Citation that's sticky, that attaches, sutures, adheres, remembers, that connects cultural production across space and time, that protects against amnesia and appropriation and does it with style. What if footnotes were scattered across the landscape like Pokémon?

Citation is about performing an obligation to the past, to those who came before us and those who make our work possible. This question of obligation offers one way to make a distinction between artists and advertisers in an age of digital smog. Advertisers have a primary obligation to their clients, whereas artists can pursue, inherit, or stumble into other kinds of obligations. *PigeonBlog* was a striking artwork because it gave charismatic form to Beatriz da Costa's commitment to environmental justice, a commitment that insinuated itself when she found herself in LA, breathing in polluted air. How can we give form to our obligations to artists like da Costa when they are no longer with us? How can we continue to invoke their presence, like a mantra, like a séance, like a prayer, before they disappear into the atmosphere?

1) Beatriz da Costa, “Reaching the Limit: When Art Becomes Science,” *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience*, ed. Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge: MIT Press 2010), 379.  
2) The original *PigeonBlog* website is no longer active. You can see an archived copy here: <http://web.archive.org/web/20120111232344/http://www.pigeonblog.mapyourcity.net/>. The current internet home of PigeonBlog is here: <http://nideffer.net/shaniweb/pigeonblog.php>.  
3) In 2006, for example, there were news stories on *PigeonBlog* on the *CBS News*, *New Scientist*, *CNET*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, and the *LA Times*. [<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/smog-blog-takes-flight/>, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg18925376-000-pigeons-to-set-up-a-smog-blog/>, <http://www.cnet.com/news/gps-enabled-birds-pollution-fighters-or-animal-cruelty/>, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/06/arts/design/06fink.html?pagewanted=print&r=0>, [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/10/061031-gps-pigeon\\_2.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/10/061031-gps-pigeon_2.html), <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/aug/10/local/me-pigeons10> ]  
4) Beatriz da Costa, “Reaching the Limit: When Art Becomes Science,” *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience*, ed. Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge: MIT Press 2010), 379.  
5) Kavita Philip, “Art and Environmentalist Practice,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 19.2 (2008): 72.  
6) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJOXBj5-lco>  
7) Adam Vaughan, “Pigeon Patrol Takes Flight to Tackle London's Air Pollution Crisis,” *The Guardian*, 14 March, 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/14/pigeon-patrol-takes-flight-to-tackle-londons-air-pollution-crisis>  
8) Beatriz da Costa, “Reaching the Limit: When Art Becomes Science,” *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience*, ed. Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge: MIT Press 2010), 377.  
9) <http://www.digitasbi.com/us/about/>  
10) This number comes from DigitasLBI's promotional YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIOwFT-6hA>.  
11) The only article from March 2016 to include *PigeonBlog* was on *Hyperallergic*: <http://hyperallergic.com/287229/pigeons-recruited-to-measure-the-invisible-toxicity-of-londons-air/>. The original article didn't reference *PigeonBlog* but when someone mentioned it in the comments section they updated the article.  
12) The term “data smog” was coined by journalist David Schenk in 1997 and added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2004. Ironically, despite the fact that our data smog problem has gotten much worse in the intervening years, usage of the term has dropped. I'm using “digital smog” here because I think it's more in line with our everyday experience—consuming digital media rather than processing data.  
13) Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* (New York: Bloombury Press, 2010), Chapter 7.  
14) Henry A. Giroux, “Anti-Politics and the Plague of Disorientation: Welcome to the Age of Trump,” *Truthout*, 7 June 2016: <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/36340-anti-politics-and-the-plague-of-disorientation-welcome-to-the-age-of-trump>  
15) Chavie Lieber, “Teatox Party,” *Racked*, 27 April 2016: <http://www.racked.com/2016/4/27/11502276/teatox-instagram>  
16) For an analysis of the ad and the rhetoric of the tech industry see: <http://sfaq.us/2016/03/sincerity-camp-and-how-big-tech-got-so-cute/>. The article also includes the image of the Airbnb ad that I took on my walk to work.



# Celebrity Collectors: Leonardo DiCaprio

## In Conversation With Andrew McClintock

**Leo, first off thanks for taking a few minutes do to this interview. It's a great way for us to start off our new "Celebrity Collectors" column.**  
Let me stop you right there—that name is so problematic, "Celebrity Collectors." I am so much more than just a celebrity collector—

**Yes—I understand that and it's not meant to—**  
Do you even know what I'm actually involved with!? Art collecting is just a small part of what I spend my time doing—art should be viewed as a vehicle to making positive change in the world, and sadly, most of the time it's not. As a UN Messenger of Peace, I have been travelling all over the world for the last two years, documenting how environmental crisis is changing the natural balance of our planet. I have seen cities like Beijing choked by industrial pollution . . . ancient Boreal forests in Canada that have been clear-cut and rainforests in Indonesia that have been incinerated. In India, I met farmers whose crops have literally been washed away by historic flooding. In America, I have witnessed unprecedented droughts in California and sea level rise flooding the streets of Miami. In Greenland and in the Arctic, I was astonished to see that ancient glaciers are rapidly disappearing well ahead of scientific predictions. All that I have seen and learned on this journey has terrified me.

**The flooding in Miami last December was definitely intense. Did you buy anything during Art Basel? Or was it more about the scene for you—there were sightings of you going back to your hotel after the club one night with 20 models—**  
Don't ask me personal questions like that or I'll stop this interview. As I was saying before you cut me off—I never mean or need to throw statistics at anyone about global warming. You know them better than I do, and more importantly, you know what will happen if this scourge is left unchecked. You know that climate change is happening faster than even the most pessimistic of scientists warned us decades ago. It has become a runaway freight train bringing with it an impending disaster for all living things.

**Do you collect art that deals with environmental issues, like land art?**  
No, but that is something to think about. From my point of view though it seems that some "environmental art" is actually detrimental to the environment, but I haven't studied specifics so I don't have any to comment on.

**In July, The Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation had their third annual gala at the Domaine Bertaud Belieu vineyard in St. Tropez, France, where you raised 45 million dollars to save the planet. Is it safe to say that you are the biggest public figure outside of NGO's or ex-political figures putting this much work into saving the world?**



Pope Francis meets with actor Leonardo DiCaprio at the Vatican on January 28, 2016. Photograph by L'Osservatore Romano.

When you say putting the work in—I'm just doing what everyone else should do—we're at such an insane moment in time. We are the last couple of generations in the world that can save it!

**The first piece of artwork you purchased was a Jean-Michel Basquiat drawing. Did you have any idea about investing in art before this purchase or was it—**  
It's fascinating to see an artist come out of nowhere and suddenly get so much attention around them. Basquiat is one of them. He's been talked about for years as this modern-day Picasso, but suddenly, like Francis Bacon or Gerhard Richter, his prices have just shot up. So it's cool to see people having this shared epiphany that this guy belongs in the upper echelon of artists. It's fun to see the world pick the next "chosen one," especially when you own some of the work. Ultimately that means for me, auctioning the work off for auction to raise more money to save the planet.

**So you collect because—**  
I only do things if I want to and if it makes sense.

**What's next?**  
Saving the world one day at a time, everything else seems like a moot point. Most likely will nail another Oscar soon too. Going for that hat-trick.

**Thanks for your time Leo! And see you at Art Basel Miami Beach!**  
I'll be there but probably won't see you unless you're at the VIP stuff. I want your readers to take this message away with them—the world is now watching. You will either be lauded by future generations, or vilified by them.

Abraham Lincoln's words still resonate to all of us here today: "We will be remembered in spite of ourselves. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the last generation . . . We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth."

That is our charge now—you are the last best hope of Earth. We ask you to protect it. Or we—and all living things we cherish—are history.



Leonardo DiCaprio at Christie's The 11th Hour charity auction, 2013. The 11th Hour was an evening sale to benefit environmental and wildlife conservation efforts supported by the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation. Auction results totaled just over \$38.8 million. Courtesy of the Internet.

For more information on how to get involved with Mr. DiCaprio's foundation please visit <http://leonardodicaprio.org>.

# Contemporary Poetry

Organized by Casey O'Neal

Zoe Brezsny  
*Feel Sick*

I feel sick so I lie in bed  
and look up Anna Nicole Smith

Did she or did she not  
crawl into her son's casket

crying, wearing a blue taffeta dress?

So I look up all the spiritual books  
in my divorced dad's  
new apartment:

*D.I.Y. Magic,*

*The Places that Scare You,*

*A Brief History of Everything*

So I look up all the skater's nicknames:

Mango, Scarecrow  
Raggedy Anne

So I look up the opening scene of *Ken Park*

where the kid with the eyebrow ring  
goes down on the married, suburban mom

The best poems are written by fourteen-year-old girls  
because they're writing only for themselves

James Gendron  
*From Weirde Sister*

The male member is a malignant growth

Life-threatening to other people's lives

But when detached it makes a lovely pet

As many as twenty or thirty can share a nest

Where they subsist on oats & corn

And all become best friends with each other

They climb into the people-bed at night

Where the area they apportion to themselves

Is comically out of proportion to their size

Sometimes I feed one a blueberry

And she carries it out of sight

I find it later that day in another room

They lay strange leathery eggs we give away

We wonder how to make them truly happy &

Whether signs of happiness we see in them

Are true, as when they stir & sleepily test

The dimensions of the morning with their songs



# Touching To See: Haptic Description And 21st Century Visuality

## Kate Haug

In artist Fayen d'Evie's performative lecture, "The Levity, The Gravity" (Kadist, January 16, 2016), she describes the historic journey of haptic practices within art viewing, from a 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century world of touch to our contemporary hands-off museum practices.<sup>1</sup>

D'Evie's lecture is part of Kadist's ongoing, cross-disciplinary, inquiry-based project "HANDS ON," that also includes writer and professor Georgina Kleege and Kadist curator Devon Bella. Aiming to "investigate the cultural history, social politics and radical potential of tactile perception and haptic encounters with artworks," the project is multi-faceted, not only facilitating access to Kadist's collection for low-vision and blind communities, but also inviting general audiences to reflect on "tactility and alternatives to the ocular-centric norms of exhibiting."<sup>2</sup>

That d'Evie and Kadist's interest in and development of haptic description arises when we are becoming more and more screen oriented is almost radically counter-intuitive. While the screen experience relies on the ocular, haptic handling implies an inquisitive, formal analysis of an object's tactile qualities. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, museums adopted a hands-off policy when their collections became open to larger populations. Prior to that, touching was often included as part of the viewing experience. Visitors to a private collection would pick up, hold, and touch, gaining information through the multi-sensory feeling of an object. Constance Classen notes, "When the underkeeper of the Ashmolean in 1760 tried to prevent a museum visitor from handling artifacts he was accused of incivility."<sup>3</sup>

Currently, museums and art institutions are digitizing their collections so that people can view them online, thus allowing more people to potentially view more artworks. While this practice increases accessibility, it also poses questions about what the viewer actually sees within an online experience as scale, texture, dimensionality, luminosity, and other key elements are reduced to the framework of a screen, whether laptop, phone, or tablet. Like the development of the hands-off policy, which eliminated touch from exhibition practices, the digitizing of artwork reduces numerous physical aspects so that the viewer loses crucial pieces of information about a work of art. Looking at an artwork on screen makes it equivalent to any other image a viewer encounters via the Internet whether it's a J.Crew bathing suit, a juicer, or a hospital bed. The content might be different but the surface qualities of the image will be the same.

One of d'Evie's key references is Robert Hooke, a 17<sup>th</sup> century naturalist, surveyor, philosopher, polymath, and curator of experiments at the Royal Society. Hooke, in evaluating his own moment, saw a problem amongst his peers and their practices. In his essay, "The Present State of Natural Philosophy and wherein it is deficient," Hooke describes a danger in "a contentment with superficial description." He goes on to say, "descriptive casualness has compromised not only the advancement of knowledge about natural phenomena but indeed the descriptions of almost all things." The antidote is "diligent attention not just to ocular inspection but to manual handling." D'Evie continues, "And it is in this regard that levity and gravity appear amidst a taxonomy of tactile qualities not habitually mentioned within contemporary art criticism the clamminess, the slipperiness, the moistness, the brittleness, the dullness, the sonorous. . ."<sup>4</sup> All of these words describe experiences specific to touch—its emotive expansiveness, its temporality, its ephemerality—as to touch is to locate an object within time and space, to locate otherness.

D'Evie's lecture concerns the art object, art criticism, and museum practice, but it can easily be applied to our digital world where the ocular has surpassed the touch as a primary means of knowing. Many people spend their lived time in front of a computer, looking at the flat, smooth, vaguely warm screen—its frame rate consistent, its shape stable, its body comfortably hard, its glow familiar. Our reliance on the screen for information produces our own descriptive casualness. We are far removed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century world of touching, of sensing clamminess, moistness, or humidity. We are server room dry, even after a virtual rain. This maybe why so many of the touch remnants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century now appear as a kind of consumer nostalgia—a desire to purchase artisanal foods, to bury fingers in the wet, rotting dirt of organic gardens. From knitting to glazing thick ceramic cups, people seem to crave the work of the hand, the specificity of something once touched, crafted by human inconsistency, and bound by time. Maybe this unconscious desire for surface substance, for spaces predisposed to bodily accumulation explains the proliferation of beards on some fashionable men; the curling, sponging, smell-absorbing hairs provide relief from all of the smooth, textureless screens.



Brody Condon, *Future Gestalt*, 2012. Video (color, sound, 39 minutes) and replica robe. Courtesy of the artist and Kadist.

Hooke's comment about the compromises of description, of what is lost when "manual handling" is no longer part of our production of knowledge provides a lens through which to look at our screen-dominated, ocularly focused culture. What is compromised when the screen-image supersedes all other forms of communication? What happens when stores, products, people are known not by name but by icon? What is compromised by our descriptive casualness, our over-reliance on the photo or the screen? During a Kadist workshop lecture on July 22, 2016, d'Evie noted that one should consider accessibility not in terms of simply blindness but instead, of accessing the work from a multiplicity of experiences and perspectives. D'Evie's framework for haptic or corporeally based art appreciation acknowledges what is lost when sensory information is limited to the eyes when we let the eye become the totality of the "I."

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then it is probably missing a million sensations. Some call Instagram by the emotion it produces, Envyagram, especially as lives become lifestyle brands, and commodification seeps into notions of self, relationship, and action. A photograph of a woman eating a peach, sitting on a wooden porch, sun-lit, amongst lavender and hummingbirds looks like a bucolic ideal, perhaps, stirring desire within the viewer, a passing want of that same scene for themselves. Yet, to actually sit in the sun, to feel its warmth, possibly to the point of sweating, to catch the shifting light on your shoulder, mildly hot-cold, to negotiate the fragile, sweet texture of peach on your tongue, to brush your feet against the sometimes splintery wood porch is to be present: to touch, and to be touched. To be there is not to envy the moment but instead to stamp oneself in it. You are there and only there. It is the opposite of a networked, image-based culture where information and relationships are dislocated, fragmented, and dispersed.

An ad for the iPhone 6s illustrates the fragmentation that the digital world provides, the young boy being fractured and reproduced, only able to locate himself within a hall of mirrors by touch. He uses his hands, not his eyes to locate himself. We never see the child in his entirety; his wholeness is divided in the image just as it will be when it is sent across the invisible network, (l)phone, the eye/I within the device, the phone, pad, book. Within a matter of moments, the photographer of this photo sends this image of this boy as packets into the wired clouds around us. His self: captured, split, and dispersed to an unknown cadre of viewers, scattered, only to arrive moments later on another screen, momentarily whole.

Within a gallery setting, there is a profound difference between looking and touching. At the Kadist workshop on July 22, 2016, participants were able to touch selected works from Kadist's collection. Touching Pia Camil's *Spectacular cortina* (2012) brought its sensual, handwork quality to life, its fabric soft, comforting, and inviting. Gently feeling the seams which held the patchwork panels together made the work less abstract, more connected to its production, its hand-crafted origins in the work of the seamstresses who Camil hires. The title refers to billboards and wall-scale advertisements seen from passing cars and walking feet. After the paid period expires, the billboard owners rework the panels serendipitously creating abstract murals. This is one way to view the work—from a distance. Another way, by touching, provokes thoughts about the hands which turn the panels, the human-beings behind both the creation of the piece and of the advertisement, bringing the work closer to the corporeality of labor.

The group watched the video *Future Gestalt* (2012), the document of a performance work by Brody Condon. The piece features actors who have been through a series of aesthetically focused psychotherapy sessions and a role-playing workshop. Through these explorations, the actors developed characters with unique communication styles varying from clicks to poetic free association. The actors interact with one another and also with Tony Smith's immense, architecturally scaled, black steel sculpture *Smoke* (1967) which represents their group leader. They wear costumes with geometric patchworks of muted pink, beige, yellow, and green.

Next to the screen, a reproduction of a costume from *Future Gestalt* was laid on a plinth. Toward the end of a verbal description and discussion of the video, one low-vision workshop participant asked why nobody had picked up the costume. Was it fear of touching? Fear of being seen touching? Did we feel it wasn't our turn? What prevented us from handling an object even though we were at the workshop specifically to touch?

At that point, another participant said she wanted to wear the costume. Several people helped her put the heavy, canvas dress over her head. Once it was on, it changed the dynamic of the room and our discussion of the piece radically. Her description of the costume's weight related back to the actors within the video, the quality of their movements, their ability to drag one another across the floor. It brought the conversation back to the corporeal connections between not only the participants in the room, in real time, but between the people on the screen. It gave the participant wearing the costume authority within the group; she now served as a focal point and knowledge producer. She became a performer, a meta-performer, co-author and co-creator of the moment, prompted by the Condon's work and the spontaneous interaction of the haptic encounter. She was the embodiment of future gestalt. In a culture dominated by image and images, where the screen has overtaken the physical—from our friendships to our sex lives—touch enables access to the present. Touch breaks up our connection to the ever-connected digital ether that links us together, wrecked and ruined in disjointed harmony. The individual, the group, momentarily pulling away, pulling together, pulling toward everything and nothing, desperately hoping there is a there, there—on the cloud, within a media feed, beyond the screen.

While the digital world networks us seamlessly together, touch is all seams, it constantly reifies the differences between surfaces, the point where one object starts and another one ends. While the digital world consists of fragments, of data packets, of omnipresence, touch grants the illusion of wholeness, containment, location, and time. Touch can be a portal into our ontological past.

Georgina Kleege, a legally blind professor at UC Berkeley, has developed a language for haptic description. As part of HANDS ON, she has led several touch tours.<sup>5</sup> To watch Kleege physically move through an object reveals the dynamic and perceptive action of touch as completely unique from sight. Kleege sees the object with her hands, fingers, language, and imagination. She makes us aware that lightly tracing with fingertips is an action distinct from grasping or clutching. It's a type of seeing that is located directly in the mind, in language, and in the physical senses, which, unlike our sight, are not yet networked.

In Kleege's *touch tour*, the act of touching requires physical space. Kleege needs space and its distance to distinguish herself from the object. In Henri Bergson's, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, he argues that space is a prerequisite to time, that "externality is the distinguishing mark of things which occupy space" and this externality is necessary for our ontological distinction and movement through time as "in order to perceive a line as a line, it is necessary to take up a position outside it, to take account of the void which surrounds it, and consequently to think of a space in three dimensions?"<sup>6</sup> In psychoanalytic theory, the subject object relationship is a fundamental concept; one of the infant's first acts of selfhood is to distinguish itself from its mother. Merging with others and objects signifies mental illness.

As the spaces between objects diminish through the emergence of lived digital space, objecthood and selfhood will take on new definitions and in Bergson's argument, new consciousnesses. The collapsing and merging of real and screen space in a game like Pokémon GO evidences new ideas around objecthood and space; the game player existing in real space with real objects, the game and its objects existing in screen space. The two-dimensional screen space taking active precedence over the three-dimensional lived space as evidenced by the robberies and accidents which gamers have experienced during their immersive game-play. Within the game, an avatar of the player appears on screen, moving with the player as she moves through real space thus splitting or doubling the person in two places—on the street and on the screen. Walking, the feet hitting the pavement, simulates the computer avatar's movement. The whole game structure, held together by Google's global positioning mapping system, perfectly ties multiple streams of data into a representative holistic experience for the player. This active reproduction of self and dispersion of self within multiple locations in a new experience maybe only analogous to the act of reading where one projects oneself into a narrative.

Touch reinstates the subject/object relationship, which is obscured within a digital framework and can re-assert a different experience of self. Mark Poster employs this concept when discussing the use of the typewriter versus the keyboard: "(t)he shift from the typewriter keyboard to the computer keyboard is ontological: the former instantiates and reinforces a subject-object. The paper page receives the mechanical blows of the keys as the writer presses on the machine and produces an inked page . . . The computer keyboard, by contrast, sends digital signals to a central processing chip through a word processing program, producing letters on the screen that lack the material properties of the typed paper page."<sup>7</sup> If we imagine this in haptic terms, a person could theoretically read a typed piece of paper by tracing the letter forms. Motion, three-dimensional space, and touch are all necessary components—all of which are compromised and circumscribed within digital communication. You cannot touch a screen to know what is written on it.

Blind people produce knowledge in a way that utilizes their senses and conceptualization in a manner different from the sighted. Their unique access to the world makes them a well-spring of information and also offers modes of conceptualization that produce new types of knowledge or knowledge which the sighted can't see until it is described by a blind person. Denis Diderot, the 18<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher, had a famous relationship with a young blind woman in which he was continually impressed by the depth and sophistication of her descriptions and experiences of the world. Kleege writes: "Diderot valued his blind informant not because she conformed to his previously held theories but because she compelled him to examine all that he took for granted. In comparing his imagination to hers, he was not seeking a mirror image. If her mental images differed from his own, it did not make them any less vivid or useful. He accepted that Mademoiselle de Salignac would have developed ways to conceptualize the sighted world. His dealings with her suggest that he was teetering on the edge of conceptualizing blind perception, grappling with ideas about outward reality and inward representations, and the complex interplay between words and images."<sup>8</sup> Kleege understands that modes and uses of the senses produce different types of knowledge, that information is generated by our collective senses, our ontological state.

Tactile experience locates the body in analog time and space. It reinforces a certain type of ontological being predicated on the idea of the whole. In his 2016 article, "Feel Me: What the New Science of Touch Says about Ourselves," Adam Gopnik writes: "Our skin is us because it draws a line around our existence: we experience the world as ourselves. We can separate our self from our eyes and ears, recognize the information they give as information, but our tactile and proprioceptive halos supply us with the sense that we are constant selves."<sup>9</sup> The tactile has yet to be fully networked nor do we have general access to technology, which would disperse our sense of being touched and touching over many, physically discontinuous spaces. At this point in time, most of us can only touch a limited number of people or objects at once. More importantly, we can still, at times, imagine our body as being a continuous surface, which encloses us and gives us shape.

The haptic experience seems, possibly, to be the foil in which the viewer can override the sense of a fragmented, omnipresent self, produced by networked capitalism or in Gilles Deleuze's term, societies of control. By using the sense of touch, the viewer can re-form a sense of wholeness by recapturing a subject/object relationship based within a lived space. For the moment, touch sits outside of networked capitalism although it will quickly become part of our digital ensemble. Before touch becomes virtual, we can relish its ability to place us within time, moment by moment. It exists as a spontaneous, irreproducible exchange between humans, between humans and animals, between humans and nature, and between humans and objects. Touch has not yet been turned into an endlessly reproducible experience, another easy commodity to embed within the digital network, but that is coming.



Gopnik's article describes the technological possibilities of reproducing touch. In the article he quotes a researcher whose goal is "to provide robots with more than mere mechanical expertise. She wants them to have 'haptic responsiveness,' so that the surgeon operating the robot can feel in her own hands the bounce or flab of an internal muscle, or palpate a liver from long distance." She goes onto say, "Haptic intelligence is vital to human intelligence. . . . It's finding your way in the world: it's embodiment, emotion, attack."<sup>10</sup>

In the future, human touch will be usurped by virtual touch. Like our images, our touch will be online. We will be able to disperse our sense of touch through a digital network. This has profound implications for tactile visually—one can imagine museum-goers being able to touch and handle works of art via haptic simulation. It also has even broader implications for our ontological selves as we are able to replicate, reproduce, and disseminate our touch in the same way we currently do our images—an Instagram of touch.

As our bodily senses become more and more dispersed from our corporeal selves, integrated with technology, non-nation state, corporate-based capital, machine intelligence and as seeing, touching, speaking, intuiting machines take on the corporeal acts of the body, the implications for our identities, perception of self, sensing, and production of knowledge are unknown and many. In his essay, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Deleuze uses the mole to represent the analog world of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He employs the serpent as the representative animal for the societies of control. The mole is a low-vision creature, traveling dark passageways by touch, smell, and sound. Serpents do not have arms, hands or fingers, their bodies, a continuous loop of touch. Deleuze describes the man of the societies of control as "undulatory, in orbit, in a continuous network."<sup>11</sup> The man, the snake both moving by undulation, no legs, no feet hitting the ground, the space between the body and earth diminished to almost nothing.



Pokémon GO screen in action. Courtesy of the Internet.

At one moment in her touch tour, Georgina Kleege refers to the "digital." For a moment, I thought she meant zeros and ones, data, but she meant her fingers. Digital for Kleege re-asserts the primacy of our physical bodies, our hands, our fingers, our touch, a specific experience, a type of holistic integrated knowledge production. Digital in the new technology definition implies the opposite—the non-body, bits and pieces of information which may or may not produce knowledge but circulate data to be interpreted by any number of people in any number of ways in an infinite amount of spaces. Deleuze describes the digital functioning as such: "We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become '*dividuals*,' and masses, samples, data, markets . . ."<sup>12</sup>

Our digital world(s) give us information and experience—one the currently analog realm of touch, the other "undulatory, in orbit, in a continuous network."<sup>13</sup> For the moment, the haptic experience might enable us to see like moles with our fingers, our language, our imagination and our temporal selves. The mole relies on its tiny hands and claws to dig its way through the earth, scraping, pawing, pushing its appendages, providing crucial contact with the world. In the future, we might be armless snakes, seeing and touching through a continuous, infinite networked loop where we can feel with hands not our own. As our senses evolve and we develop our sense of self, as we see and feel through new technologies, we may no longer be moles warmed by our blood but receptive reptiles heated by a digital sun. Who knows what we will see?

1) Fayen d'Evie, "The Levity, the Gravity," <https://vimeo.com/154934985>.  
2) Both quotes, Devon Bella and Fayen D'Evie, "Hands On/ Hands Off/ Hand Over: Proceeding from Touch," p. 1.  
3) Constance Classen, editor, *The Book of Touch*, as cited in Adam Gopnik, "Feel Me: What the New Science of Touch Says about Ourselves," *The New Yorker*, May, 16, 2016, p. 61.  
4) Fayen d'Evie, "The Levity, the Gravity," <https://vimeo.com/154934985>.  
5) <https://vimeo.com/154934219>  
6) Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Translated by F.L.Pogson, (London: George Allen and Unwin), p. 103.  
7) David Savat, *Uncoding the Digital: Technology, Subjectivity and Action in the Control Society*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillian), 2013, p. 111.  
8) Georgina Kleege, "The Subject at Hand: Blind Imaging, Images of Blindness," *Social Research*, Vol. 78: No. 4, (Winter 2011), p. 19.  
9) Adam Gopnik, "Feel Me: What the New Science of Touch Says about Ourselves," *The New Yorker*, May, 16, 2016, p. 65  
10) Ibid.  
11) Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Societies of Control," *October*, Vo. 59, (Winter, 1992) p. 4.  
12) Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Societies of Control," *October*, Vo. 59, (Winter, 1992) p. 5.  
13) Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Societies of Control," *October*, Vo. 59, (Winter, 1992) p. 4.

# SADE

Alberto Cuadros

## In Conversation With Mario Ayala

**To begin, why don't you introduce yourself and the gallery where you are the co-owner and director?**

My name is Alberto Cuadros. I run SADE in Lincoln Heights, California. It's about 2.75 years old, yeah, and it's still rolling. What should we talk about?

**I wanted to talk about the space in general, the significance of the location, and your programming. But let's go back to the beginning of the space and where you're at now—perhaps as an attempt to see where it might be going.**

The space was originally the home of Night Gallery. When I moved to LA from SF five years ago, I remember Night Gallery being one of the more intriguing spaces, like they were open after 10 pm and it was always really dark, and it was kind of like one of the cornerstones of the last generation of LA galleries and had more of a DIY feel. When they left, it became mostly live-in artist studios and changed hands several times before I ended up there. I remember getting the keys on New Year's Eve 2013, the walls were still painted black in some areas; it was wild. I think we started TOP40 a few weeks later. Ultimately it developed it into being a full-fledged art space; it's something that is kind of situated in between being an artist-run project space and a commercial gallery.

It's a hybrid that fills a lot of different niches within art, but also music, and we've done a lot of screenings and performances and stuff, so it's a little bit of everything. Most of the programming stems from the collaboration I have with Brian Lee Hughes, who I run the gallery with, and the general program of the space is divided between either emerging artists who live in LA or in California, or artists who have never shown in Los Angeles before because they're either from out of the country, a different city, or they just have never had a solo show before. We have mostly solo shows there. So yeah, it's a lot of introducing artists to the Los Angeles landscape. That program has been strong, it's just a program of firsts, and then in between we have two residencies every year that we normally do, one in the late summer, when most galleries close and then also in that gap between Thanksgiving and New Year's, which is normally a kind of grey area for gallery programming.

We've had a lot of music events and one-off performances, so it oscillates between just being a free-for-all project space and then also being a gallery. I think we're going to maintain that for a while, as long as the neighbors don't yell at us anymore. I've been threatened with violence after doing the TOP40 series, which was two months worth of, basically, after-hours raves. The police don't really come to that neighborhood or respond to calls, so the neighbors kind of take it into their own hands to regulate and make sure everyone is happy with the noise levels. We've been more sensitive to that lately. I think that answered a lot.

**What role do you think the space plays within Los Angeles and the art scene that exists here—where do you guys fit in, or don't? Also how do you relate to any other independent spaces?**

It's been interesting to be part of this wave of spaces opening up within the last couple of years. I remember moving here with Human Resources and various other galleries in Culver City, but it didn't really feel like the downtown thing had popped off yet and so we kind of weren't really thinking about it. A lot of the intention of opening up the gallery, as I feel is common for other people, is to fill in the spaces that I feel like are not yet represented, kind of filling in the gaps a bit in terms of what I'm interested in seeing—doing projects that are exciting or with artists that haven't really had their time in LA at all. I think most of the spaces for a long time have been these communities based around the colleges in the area, like you have the USC crew of people, and the CalArts and UCLA hubs, and that seems a little more mixed together now that there's so many more spaces and so much more crossover. But, it kind of feels like one in five or six artists have now opened up their own spaces, so there are a lot of artist-run spaces that are opening up where people can show whoever they want, and maybe the stakes are a little lower so there can be a little more freedom in the programming, which is really rad.

I mean, even with our gallery, we started a project space within it called NO EgO, which highlights an even more niche collection of artists and musicians, and have started the imprint through that, putting out chapbooks from poets in the area who otherwise wouldn't have their works published. It's kind of exciting that there are so many more spaces. I feel like it's just going to keep happening, like everything can become a space, and I feel like as more people realize that the galleries that exist maybe don't really meet their needs or their interests, the interests of their communities,



Exterior of SADE, 2016. Courtesy of Google maps.



Alberto Cuadros. Courtesy of SADE, LA.



Installation view of Tuomas A. Laitinen, *Sensory Adaptation Devices (SAD)*, 2015. Courtesy of SADE, LA.

they can just start their own spaces anywhere and take pictures of them and share the ideas that way. So that's really exciting. I feel like that should be happening more. I feel like the responsibility of artists—and I think it used to be like this more—is to provide spaces for other artists and to create platforms of exchange. I think it's more possible now than ever, so I hope people keep creating spaces for others. Maybe it means putting out a book or music or putting on an event or creating gallery space or whatever, so that's really exciting. My prediction for 2017 is that every artist will also have a gallery, or maybe two or three. So we'll see what happens. But also, just like galleries not just being white-walled spaces, but kind of just anything, anywhere that you can snap a photo, or maybe there will be more exclusive events where photography isn't allowed or maybe it won't go online. I don't know, I'm really excited to see what will develop in lieu of an over-saturated, image world where everything seems like it's a new gallery anyway. Maybe things will go more underground, which would also be rad.

**The last question I want to ask you is: Where do you see the gallery headed?**

A big part of the space, of SADE, and the identity of SADE, has been its consistency, either it's consistent in that every show is pretty different from the last—that's a consistent thread—but then also just the format and the length of the shows. I think we're going to be doing more guest curating as a gallery, maybe outside of the United States a bit more, or initiate more curatorial projects. I'm interested in thinking beyond the parameters of the gallery too, just for myself and my own, like, curatorial, organizational practice. So I'll probably be organizing stuff. I think ideally, maybe we would move from the space in Lincoln Heights to another part of the city, most likely an area that's more industry-heavy. I feel like that's the appropriate place for galleries, not necessarily neighborhoods where the tone is different.

Lincoln Heights is a very domestic neighborhood of mostly Latinos, so I feel like it's a bit strange when a lot of, like, middle-class privileged art kids are taking over an area without being sensitive to the realities of the people around us. It feels kind of intense. So it's nice when we just go to a part of the city that's just more focused on industry and the art world, or the art industry isn't much different . . . so maybe somewhere it can be a little bit more



Kandis Williams, *Disfiguring Traditions*, 2016. Courtesy of SADE, LA.

anonymous or something, or less obtrusive to the neighborhood. We'd also like to get a space that has a swimming pool. I think there hasn't been a gallery with a swimming pool yet, so if we could just have openings where people could also go swimming in the back, I think it would be really exciting for everyone. Los Angeles is a place that doesn't have very drastic transitions in seasons so it can be 90 degrees in December outside, so that's a pretty good window for swimming. It's just finding the right place that will allow us to swim as much as possible. I think it would be really great. So crossing our fingers that our real estate broker can find something for us, hopefully sooner than later.

**Okay, I guess as we come to the end, I want to thank you for taking the time to let me ask you a few questions. Maybe if there's something that you want to add on to the end of this? Some shout-outs to anyone?**

A shout-out to you, Mario . . . really looking forward to your upcoming exhibitions at SADE. Shout-out to Brandon Drew Holmes and his collaborations with NO EgO. Um . . . the horror that is Social Club, Wednesday night at Taix, that thing has gotten really out of control, and anyone who wants to see some messy spectacle of LA nightlife, that's definitely a strange aspect of that. And what else? I think those are the highlights. Group Anan? William B Gallery?





**AMANDA KIRKHUFF: MILITANT FRICTION**  
Solo Exhibition at LAST Projects Gallery  
Friday Nov 4th - Monday Dec 4th, 2016  
New Paintings, Drawings, & Printed Matter  
Opening Reception Friday Nov 4th , 7-11PM  
6546 Hollywood Blvd #215 Los Angeles 90028

# YERBA BUENA ALLIANCE ARTWALK

**SATURDAY**  
**OCTOBER 15, 2016**  
**3 - 6:00PM**  
**AFTER PARTY 6 - 7:00PM**  
[www.yerbabuena.org/artwalk](http://www.yerbabuena.org/artwalk)

## ART WALK SPECIAL EVENTS

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE

- 2-3:00PM PRE EVENT ART WALK RECEPTION**  
Generously hosted by the  
**California Historical Society**  
678 Mission Street,  
San Francisco
- 3-6:00PM ARTWALK**  
See Participating Galleries  
& Institutions
- 6-7:00PM ART WALK AFTER PARTY & PRIZE DRAWING**  
**Techshop Incorporated 926**  
Howard Street
- 6-10:00PM YERBA BUENA NIGHT**  
[ybnight.org](http://ybnight.org)

**YerbaBuena**  
ALLIANCE  
735 Market Street, 3rd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
[yerbabuena.org](http://yerbabuena.org)

Sponsored by  
**YERBA BUENA COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT**  
**YBCBD**

- PARTICIPATING GALLERIES & INSTITUTIONS**
- The American Bookbinders Museum**  
355 Clementina St  
[bookbindersmuseum.org](http://bookbindersmuseum.org)
- California Historical Society**  
678 Mission Street  
[californiahistoricalsociety.org](http://californiahistoricalsociety.org)
- Cartoon Art Museum**  
[cartoonart.org](http://cartoonart.org)
- The Contemporary Jewish Museum**  
736 Mission Street  
[thecjm.org](http://thecjm.org)
- 111 Minna Gallery**  
111 Minna St  
[111minnagallery.com](http://111minnagallery.com)
- Mirus Gallery**  
540 Howard Street  
[mirusgallery.com](http://mirusgallery.com)
- Museum of the African Diaspora**  
partnering with SFMoMA on the Go  
685 Mission Street  
[moadsf.org](http://moadsf.org)
- Museum of Performance + Design is collaborating with Mexican Museum**  
893B Folsom Street  
[mpdsf.org](http://mpdsf.org)
- RayKo Photo Center**  
428 3rd Street  
[raykophotocenter.com](http://raykophotocenter.com)
- TechShop**  
926 Howard Street  
[techshop.ws](http://techshop.ws)
- Yerba Buena Center for The Arts (YBCA)**  
701 Mission Street  
[ybca.org](http://ybca.org)

**LXAQ / September - October, 2016 Issue 1**

**Publisher & Editor in Chief**  
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**Managing Print Editor**  
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**Senior Editors**  
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**BLACK LIVES MATTER**  
**FREE MUMIA!**  
**STOP THE TPP**  
**SUPPORT PLANNED PARENTHOOD**  
**SUPPORT SNOWDEN & MANNING**  
**DONALD TRUMP IS A SCUMBAG**  
**DON'T KILL THE PLANET**  
**STOP THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE**

**LXAQ**  
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**Laura Owens**  
In Conversation With Anthony Huberman  
Page 4-9

**Kour Pour**  
In Conversation with Robert Summers  
Page 10-13

**Style Wars: Air Pollution, Digital Smog, And The Art Of Citation**  
Martha Kenney  
Page 14

**Celebrity Collectors: Leonardo DiCaprio**  
In Conversation with Andrew McClintock  
Page 15

**Contemporary Poetry**  
Organized by Casey O'Neal  
Page 15

**Touching To See: Haptic Description And 21st Century Visuality**  
Kate Haug  
Page 16-17

**SADE with Alberto Cuadros**  
In Conversation With Mario Ayala  
Page 17

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**Cover Image:**  
**Laura Owens**  
*Untitled* (detail), 2016.  
Acrylic, oil, Flashe, silkscreen inks, charcoal, pastel pencil, graphite, and sand on wallpaper. Courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Gisela Capitain.

**SFAQ** (September - October 2016)  
**Tom Sachs' takeover + pullout zine**

**NYAQ** (September - October 2016)  
**Terence Koh + more**

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**Anthony Huberman** is the Director and Chief Curator of the Wattis Institute, where he has organized solo shows of new work with artists such as Harald Thys & Jos de Gruyter, Sam Lewitt, and K.r.m Mooney. His exhibition of work by Laura Owens was on view from April 28 to July 23, 2016, at the Wattis Institute.

**Robert Summers**, who received his PhD from UCLA as a Cota Robles Fellow, has published essays in anthologies and academic journals, such as Radical History Review and Performance Art Journal. He has also written numerous art reviews for various art magazines and brochures, such as Artforum and Hammer Projects. He has also curated exhibitions on contemporary Los Angeles Art and Andy Warhol, and will be curating an exhibition on queer abstraction. Currently, he is writing a book that reckons with "queer visual tactics," and he has started an anthology titled *Queer(ing) Art History?* -- which a panel will be held, with the same title, at the annual College Art Association (CAA) in New York City in 2017.

**Martha Kenney**, Assistant Professor, Women and Gender Studies, San Francisco State University, is a feminist science studies scholar whose research explores the poetics and politics of biological storytelling. Her current project examines and intervenes in the narratives emerging from environmental epigenetics, a new field of molecular biology that studies how signals from the environment affect gene expression.

**Andrew McClintock** is a first generation American, born to Russian immigrant parents in the Vinegar Hill section of Brooklyn, New York, in July of 1984. At age thirteen, McClintock began a ten year career in the culinary industry, after being hired as the night porter at Les Halles, the downtown eatery made famous by executive chef Anthony Bourdain. Two years later, McClintock became the youngest line cook in the history of Les Halles, before exiting to except a position under Simon Rogan at L'Enclume in Cartmel, UK. After a chance meeting with Bruno Bischofberger in London, McClintock walked away from the restaurant business to pursue a career in the arts. He completed a number of large-scale installation pieces in Zurich that were financed by Bischofberger, earning him the Swiss Cross for Excellence in the Arts Award in 2008. In 2009, he relocated to San Francisco with his twin dachshunds Radley and Dagger, to open Ever Gold [Projects], and look to the world of publishing for a fresh challenge. Since then he has overseen the launch of *SFAQ*, *DFAQ*, *AQ*, *NYAQ* and the new *LXAQ*.

**Nicole Archer, PhD** is an assistant professor in the history and theory of contemporary art at the San Francisco Art Institute, where she also serves as the chair of the BA Department + Liberal Arts. Nicole researches contemporary art and material culture, with an emphasis in modern textile and garment histories. Further interests include critical and psychoanalytic theory, corporeal feminism, and performance studies. She is currently writing a manuscript entitled *A Looming Possibility: Towards a Theory of the Textile*, which considers how textiles are used to produce and maintain the limits of "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" forms of state violence.

**Kate Haug** is a San Francisco-based artist and writer. Her short films have been screened internationally at festivals including MOMA's New Directors/New Films, the London International Film Festival, and the Sao Paulo International Short Film Festival. Haug holds an MFA from UC San Diego in critical theory and experimental film. She was curatorial fellow at the Whitney Independent Study program where she co-curated, *Dirt and Domesticity: Constructions of the Feminine* at the Whitney's Philip Morris Branch in New York City. Her recent projects include the installation and catalogue, *News Today: A History of the Poor People's Campaign in Real Time* which ran from April 9 - June 25, 2016 at Irving Street Projects.

**Mario Ayala** is an artist based in LA.

**James Gendron** is the author of *Sexual Boat (Sex Boats)* and the chapbook *Money Poems*. His poetry has appeared in *Tin House*, *The PEN Poetry Series*, *Witch Craft Magazine*, *The Fanzine*, *Pinwheel Journal*, and *Fence*. *Weirde Sister* is due October 15th from Octopus Books.

**Zoe Breznsy** is a writer from Oakland, California now based in Brooklyn, New York. She received a BA from California College of the Arts and is completing her MFA at Columbia University. She is the author of two chapbooks, *POV* and *Polyorchid*, and is currently working on a full-length collection of her poetry.







# MARC HOROWITZ

*At the top of the embankment,  
a green expanse opens up,  
lit by the dawn of the Zone*

SEPTEMBER 16 –  
OCTOBER 29, 2016

*China Art Objects Gallery  
6086 Comey Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90034  
T: 323.965.2264*

## ***The Cut***

**Adam Parker Smith & Eric Shaw**

Sept. 10 - Oct. 22

Reception: Sept. 10, 6 - 9pm

## **Marc Horowitz**

***Once through the gates,***

Public sculpture exhibition inside the atrium at Minnesota St. Project

Oct. 8 - Nov. 5

Reception: Oct. 8, 5 - 7pm | Artist Talk: Oct. 8, 3 - 4pm

## **Mark Flood**

Solo Exhibition

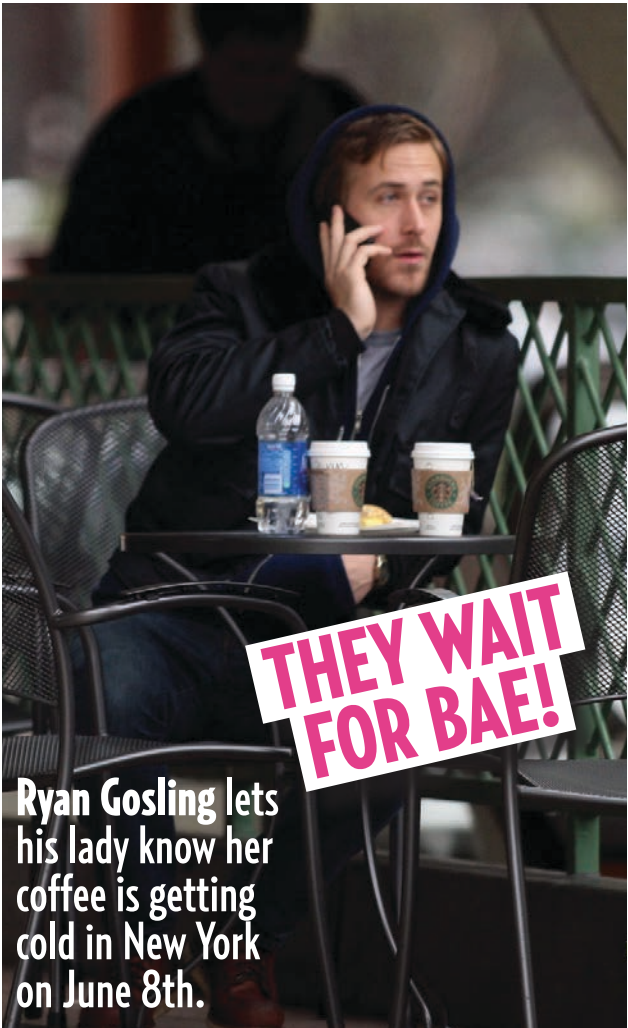
Nov. 5 - Dec. 22

Reception: Nov. 5, 6 - 9pm

**EVER GOLD  
[PROJECTS]**

1275 Minnesota St. / Suite 105 / San Francisco, CA, 94107 / [egprojects@sfaq.us](mailto:egprojects@sfaq.us)





Ryan Gosling lets his lady know her coffee is getting cold in New York on June 8th.

THEY WAIT FOR BAE!



Shia Labeouf makes sure he stretches before a run through LA on July 29th. Sources say he is training for another endurance performance piece.

THEY STRETCH!

David Zwimer world famous gallerist sips some rum on a beach you'll never go to.



THEY DRINK LIQUIDS!



James Franco snaps a quick photo for his story "dog face filter or nothing" he was quoted as saying leaving LAX recently.

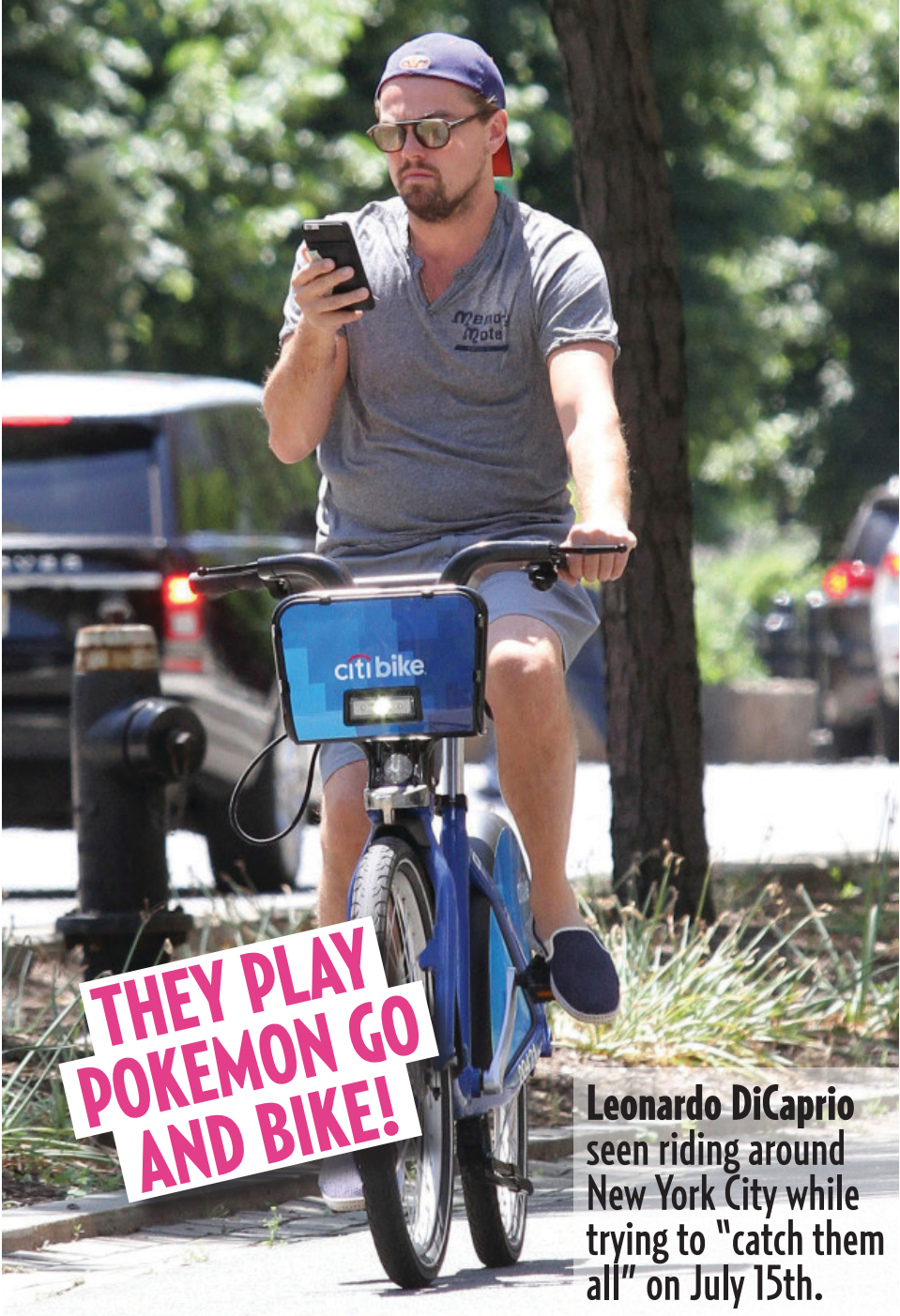
THEY TAKE CONCEPTUAL SNAPCHATS!

Larry Gagosian and Elton John posing for a photo at the Met Gala last June 7th.



THEIR FRIENDS DRESS BETTER THAN THEY DO!

STARS—THEY'RE JUST LIKE US!



THEY PLAY POKEMON GO AND BIKE!

Leonardo DiCaprio seen riding around New York City while trying to "catch them all" on July 15th.



Nothing like painting to work up a thirst! Jim Carrey exits a Starbucks in L.A. on August 1st, wearing the artist's uniform.

THEY SPILL PAINT!