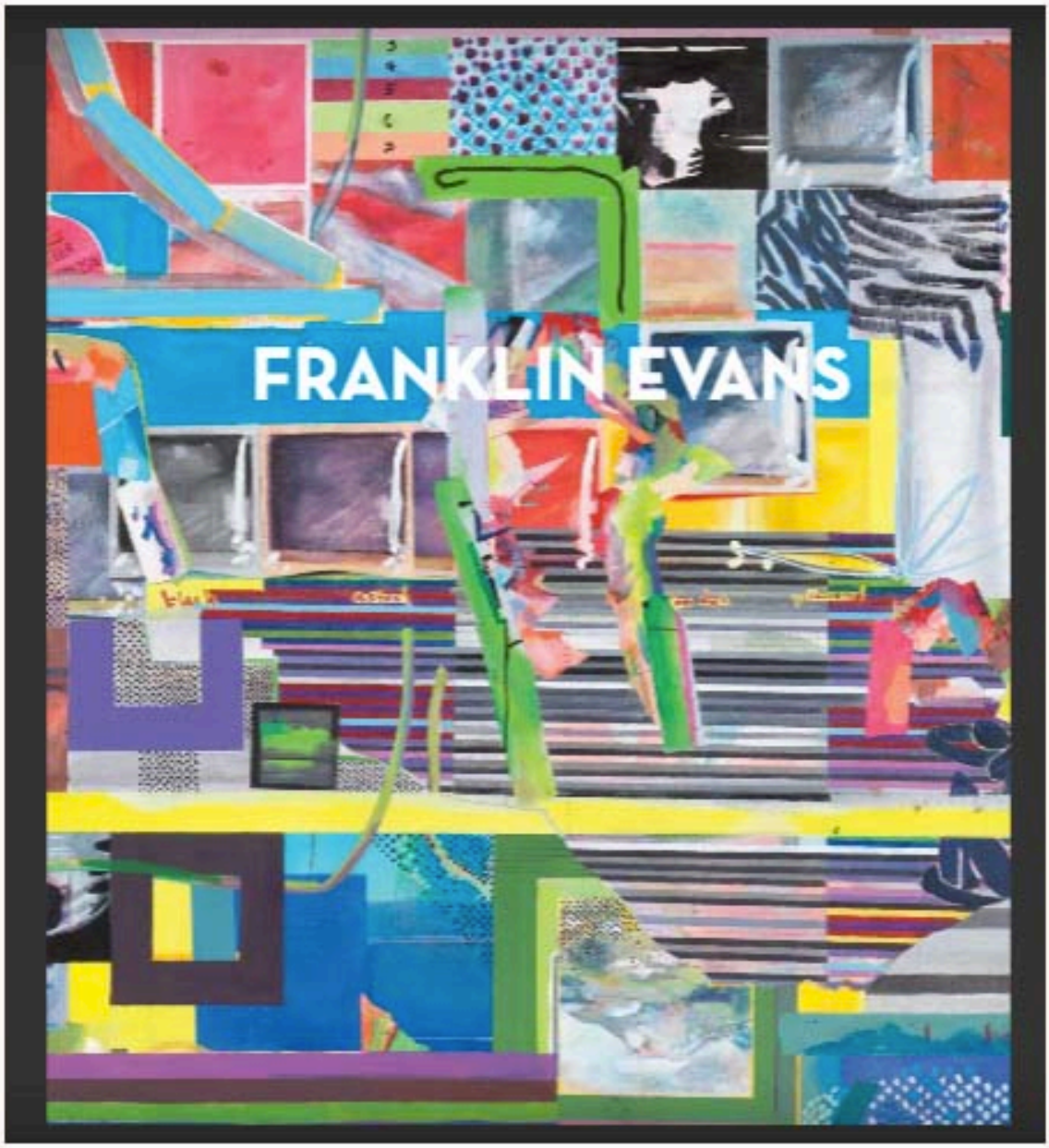


Franklin Evans: The Studio as Episteme

Raphael Rubinstein, 2021

Franklin Evans: The Studio as Episteme

Raphael Rubinstein

Every artist, every writer, every practitioner in any creative field, assembles a pantheon of predecessors and contemporaries. The art-gods given a place of honor in such aesthetic temples can be welcome influences or potent adversaries, they can be figures to emulate, or foils to rebel against, or all these things at once. Various models have been theorized to describe how such relationships function. In his influential 1919 essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T.S. Eliot argued that a poet's full engagement with literary tradition entailed a process of depersonalization: "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." A little more than a half century later, Harold Bloom, in his 1973 book *The Anxiety of Influence*, depicted the dialogue with one's predecessors as an agon, a Freudian battle for psychic and artistic dominance, that often hinges on intentional misreadings.

The same year Bloom's book was published, Philip Guston, by then deep into his late figurative period, created *Pantheon*, a medium-size oil on panel painting of a lightbulb and a tiny canvas on an easel surrounded by the names of the artists who had nourished him: Masaccio, Piero, Giotto, Tiepolo and de Chirico. Of course, Guston had many more influences, many more inspirations, than these five Italian artists. We know, for instance, that he loved the work of Max Beckmann and that Sung-era Chinese painters were his supreme ideal, but in no other painting is he so explicit about his artistic debts.

If Eliot portrays tradition as a means of escaping from the self and Bloom argues for influence as a tense struggle, Guston expresses something more like gratitude and love for the artists who inspired him. Franklin Evans, an artist who has long grappled with questions of tradition and influence, avails himself of all these approaches. In his anthological paintings and installations woven from countless art-historical citations he subsumes his own identity into the visual heritage of the past (and present), confronts questions of originality and

innovation and, last but not least, invokes the artists in his own pantheon with an intensity that borders on obsession.

Like all of us, Evans inhabits a culture increasingly defined by its networks of innumerable, instantly available images. As a painter, that is, someone who produces unique analog objects that belong to a medium with roots in the pre-digital, pre-Internet, indeed, pre-photographic culture, Evans has a choice whether to reject or embrace current technological realities. There are many painters who define painting as a mode of resistance to the visual overload of digital media, while others rejoice in painting's ability to assimilate new visual languages and technologies. Evans partakes of both stances: he is at once an upholder of painting's traditions (it's hard to think of another contemporary as deeply enmeshed in art history) and an innovator guiding (or dragging?) this venerable medium into the 21st century.

As one becomes involved in recognizing (or failing to recognize) the myriad borrowed motifs in one of Evans's tightly packed compositions, it is easy to miss a crucial point: *Evans's paintings actually look nothing like the work of the artists he is citing*. His canvases might be rich with details from Matisse, Bonnard and other modern masters and from accomplished contemporaries such as Laura Owens and Kerry James Marshall, but taken as a whole, in what might be an extreme instance of Bloomian "misreading," the paintings bear little or no resemblance to any of the artists they reference. Instead, they offer patchwork compositions that often resemble crazy quilts or messy desktops. (The only artist who immediately comes to mind when I look at an Evans painting as a totality is Edouardo Paolozzi, whose collage-based screenprints of the 1960s bear an uncanny resemblance to some of Evans's paintings--I say "uncanny" because until very recently Evans was unaware of Paolozzi's work.) It is, thus, in the structure of the paintings--and in the organization of Evans's studio and installation environments--that we encounter the essence of his work.

***

As we look at Evans's paintings our usual habits of viewing and categorizing can fall short. The paintings are not solely abstract nor

solely figurative; compositionally, they are neither exclusively relational nor all-over; many of them contain more visual information than we can assimilate, more citations than we can trace, more cross-references and juxtapositions than we can keep track of, more stylistic diversity (from geometric abstraction to trompe l'oeil, and everything in between) than we can make sense of. Nor does it help that many of the images are positioned upside down or sideways in kaleidoscopic jumbles. We also have to contend with how Evans embraces what he calls "provisional studio processes" by basing his paintings and installations on the teeming temporary arrangements of taped-together collage material he creates on the walls and floors of his studio. All of this results in a marvelous instability that requires constant adjustment on the part of the viewer.

Rather than trying to parse these works in relation to painting alone, we need to expand our scope to encompass video, film, installations and the sprawling wilds of social media. In 2014, Evans presented an ambitious well-received exhibition titled "Painting as Supermodel" at Ameringer McEnery Yohe Gallery in New York. While the primary reference for this show was Yve-Alain Bois's 1986 essay "Painting as Model," Evans was looking at models outside of the medium of painting. During a 2013 interview in *The Brooklyn Rail*, he mentioned his interest in the speed and "discontinuous focus" of Ryan Trecartin's mid-2000s work and the "multi-viewed" effect of installations by Jon Kessler and Yayoi Kusama. More recently, he has felt a strong affinity with the work of Arthur Jafa, specifically his rapid-fire video *Apex* (2013). Evans's willingness to look beyond painting has resulted in a powerful cross-fertilization of mediums.

A different kind of extra-painting references appear in some of his new paintings in the form of sculptural imagery, chiefly classical busts and precolumbian heads. Intentionally or not, the scattered, fragmentary heads evoke the ritualistic practice among the Mixtec and other Mesoamerican peoples of intentionally breaking apart and discarding fired-clay figurines. As well as reminding us of the debt that Western modernism owes to non-Western cultures, and positioning the painting as a kind of archeological dig, the presence of this Mesoamerican imagery is also a reference to Evans's own Mexican heritage.

Further close looking uncovers allusions to current politics, for example an “I Voted” sticker (surrounded by a Kusama Infinity Net painting) just a few inches away from a portrait of Martin Luther King. As usual, the paintings are littered with the signatures of other artists. (One could write an entire essay on how Evans deploys signatures.) Provocatively, Evans pursues autobiographical content via appropriated images. Sometimes this can be a covert operation, as in a recent painting referencing only works from the Figge Museum in Davenport, Iowa, which Evans frequented when he was a grad student at the University of Iowa. As usual Evans relishes unexpected juxtapositions, here planting what looks like a ‘57 Chevy taken from a painting by local Iowa artist John Shepperd in front of a Matisse detail. Letting no square inch go to waste, he turns to a Fairfield Porter landscape for the path of green lawn just in front of the Chevy & Matisse image. A surprising insert in a painting that is otherwise a joyful remix of Matisse’s *Joie de Vivre* and a Cezanne landscape is a grid of X’s from a napkin drawing by the late Tony Feher (1956-2016), whose signature with date is also visible, albeit upside down. I never would have connected Feher and Matisse, but Evans’s painting makes me aware of their similar love of direct, unadulterated, luminous color. I can also see why Evans would be drawn to Feher, who was known for, among other things, incorporating blue painter’s tape into his work.

Among the new paintings are several that feature more open, non-grid compositions. In one, a ground of large biomorphic shapes from Matisse cutouts is overlaid with elliptical target motifs, green and red apples (from Cezanne and Patrick Caulfield), proliferating copies of Roy Lichtenstein’s 1965-66 portrait of art dealer Holly Solomon, that strange child’s head from Matisse’s *Piano Lesson* and other shapes and images (some from California Abstractionist Frank Lobdell, whom Evans studied with). There’s a kind of centrifugal energy being unleashed, threatening to send the elements of the painting spinning off into adjacent spaces.

In other paintings, Evans depicts a work-in-progress on the floor of his studio, rendering it as we would see it in a close-up photograph where the edges seem to fall away. Here more precolumbian motifs appear,

though taken from painted codexes rather than clay figurines. Intensely patterned, the painting begins to resemble a map. A different kind of distortion is visible in a group of watercolors where Evans depicts increasingly pixelated versions of his own paintings.

***

Ultimately, painting is not so much Evans's medium as it is his subject, or one of his them. He pays as much attention to the site where his paintings get made--the studio--as he does to the paintings themselves. In 2017, he explained in a statement written for his "paintingpainting" exhibition (also at Ameringer McEnery Yohe) how for the previous decade he had made "the studio in the round" the subject of his paintings. Another way to think of the studio in Evans's work is as, along with traditional paints and brushes and the inkjet printer that Evans relies on to print out hard copies of his source images, one of his primary tools.

Because of Evans's practice of sourcing images online, some might think of him as a "post-studio" artist who only needs a laptop and a highspeed internet connection, but he is emphatically a studio artist. The conditions of his workspace (its light, its walls and ceiling, its location, and, perhaps most importantly, its floor) are as crucial to his art as his choice of canvas size and type of paint are to his paintings. Another important distinction to make is that rather than working from digital images, Evans always turns to his printer to make hard copies before painting them. As he succinctly explains: "Everything gets printed so I can see it."

For Evans, the studio is the support that receives material and the frame that unites it. As such, it is a contemporary mutation of the "flatbed picture plane" that Leo Steinberg identified in the work of Rauschenberg and other postwar artists. Like the artists Steinberg discussed, Evans alludes to "hard surfaces such as tabletops, studio floors, charts, bulletin boards—any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed—whether coherently or in confusion." (Not surprisingly, Evans is well aware of this affinity: he titled a 2012

show in Milan "flatbedfactum02," a dual reference to Steinberg and to Rauschenberg.) Importantly, Evans's "flatbed" material is by no means limited to screengrabs of paintings. Along with his ever-expanding reservoir of painting details, Evans has corralled documents from the day-to-day operations of the artworld (gallery press releases), texts from the domains of literature and art history, photographs of artists and of his own neatly-ordered bookshelves and various accumulations of information and data. He has also incorporated sound into his exhibitions through audio installations of actors reading from texts that influenced the work on view.

Another useful reference in approaching his work is Daniel Buren's essay "Function of the Studio." It is a mark of changing circumstances that while Buren proclaimed in 1971 that all his work proceeded from the "extinction" of the studio, Evans has built a radical painting practice not on the ruins of the studio but from its repurposed survival. For Evans, the studio is like a Foucauldian episteme, less a space than a condition that establishes what it is possible to say within his work.

Clearly there is an archival dimension to Evans's practice. His thronging compendia of art history belong to a tradition that encompasses Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyme Atlas*, Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project, Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*, Christian Boltanski's *Lessons of Darkness*, Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoires du Cinema*, to which we could add more recent contributions by Thomas Hirschhorn, Walid Raad, Tacita Dean, Loren Munk and Arthur Jafa. We might also add Andre Malraux's *Museum without Walls*--nothing is more Evansian than Maurice Jarnoux's famous photograph of Malraux surrounded by the loose pages of his soon-to-be-published volume of art reproductions, a scene that scholar Walter Grasskamp refers to as "the book on the floor." Yet even as we note Evans's fluency in this archival discourse, we need to always recognize the subjective, personal aspects of his work. For all their precise visual quotations, Evans's paintings are not "gallery pictures" in the manner of the 17th century painter David Teniers, nor are they exercises in "art as critique" in the manner of so many late-20th century artists. Think of them, rather, as citational self-portraits. Evans's subtle

fusion of autobiography and appropriation is yet once more instance of the radically hybrid nature of his project.

juddrules

MONTSERRAT GALLERY

September 17 – December 13, 2014

Franklin Evans

CURATED BY

Leonie Bradbury

Montserrat College of Art
23 Essex Street
Beverly, Massachusetts 01915

CONTENTS

ALL CATALOGUE IMAGES
Franklin Evans: juddrules
installation view
Montserrat Gallery, 2014

Minimalism, Maximalism and Judd as Model

Patrick Neal

To get a clue as to what's on the mind of the artist Franklin Evans, one need only look at the snippets of words and phrases that populate his exhibitions of painting and installation. Evans uses his own studio practices and the process of painting as raw material for his work. This includes all manner of residual painterly activity from cast-off materials and traces of labor as well as source materials like appropriated pictures and text. Amidst bits of personal and statistical ephemera, he likes to theme his shows around art history, particularly thinkers concerned with critical issues surrounding art at a particular time and place. In his last show he had been poring over the essays in Yve-Alain Bois's Painting as Model and for the site-specific project at Montserrat College, titled *juddrules*, he is concentrating on the writings of Donald Judd.

Judd, a forerunner of Minimalism, and galvanizing critic and sculptor was a force to be reckoned with and still exerts a considerable influence in 2014. His art and writings are admired by critics as different as Roberta Smith and Jed Perl. Smith, who early in her career, typed and gathered the writings of Judd, recalled in a lecture at The New School his influence on her,"...encountering Judd was sort of like discovering a world where I was both at home and completely shocked by its intensity, its completeness, its level of purely visual criticality. Meeting Judd helped me find something critical in myself...when you come up against someone like that you can either take it or leave it, I took it."(Smith)

Perl writing admiringly of Judd as a key character in his book *New Art City*, considered Judd to be an artist's artist, who appreciated a wide array of his peers work even as he sought a radical simplification of forms within his own work. Perl examines how around the 1950's attitudes had been developing toward artworks that sought to embody a totalizing "all-in-one"

viewing. Judd advocated for this sort of vanguard, unfettered experience even as he never lost sight of craft and his own personal relationship with the sensual, particularities of his sculptural materials (Perl, 517).

Judd's writing took different forms, the majority being reviews written for Arts magazine around the early 60's. With a few blunt sentences, he could size up the successes and shortcomings of a piece as art. He had a great eye, carefully describing what was in front of him noting what had conviction or appeared fraudulent, all informed by a vast repository of art history. Judd valued progress in art and eschewed the irrelevance of the "old European tradition (Judd, 77)." He held the painter Barnett Newman in high esteem as they both shared a radical, pared-down, allusion-free aesthetic that, at the time, was the hallmark of a new sublime in art freed of all historical baggage concerning beauty (Harrison and Wood, 572-574).

Like Judd, Evans began as a two-dimensional painter, and both artists would move into three-dimensions as their work evolved. Different from the imposing, solid objects Judd created however, Evans's extension outward into the gallery space has tended to be more tenuous and conceptual. Similar to Judd, Evans also works out of tradition, invested in craft but also intellectually curious and pushing boundaries. Evans's work is often discussed around "institutional critique" being that it is cognizant of the social forces contiguous with art world commerce and it is interesting to consider this in relation to discussions of "theatricality" that orbited around Judd's work in the 60's. In both cases, questions are raised over how artworks are tethered to the outside world. When Evans introduces fragmented words and sculptural bits into his work, the viewer viscerally experiences the artist's body and mind at work in a to-and-fro network of self and society.

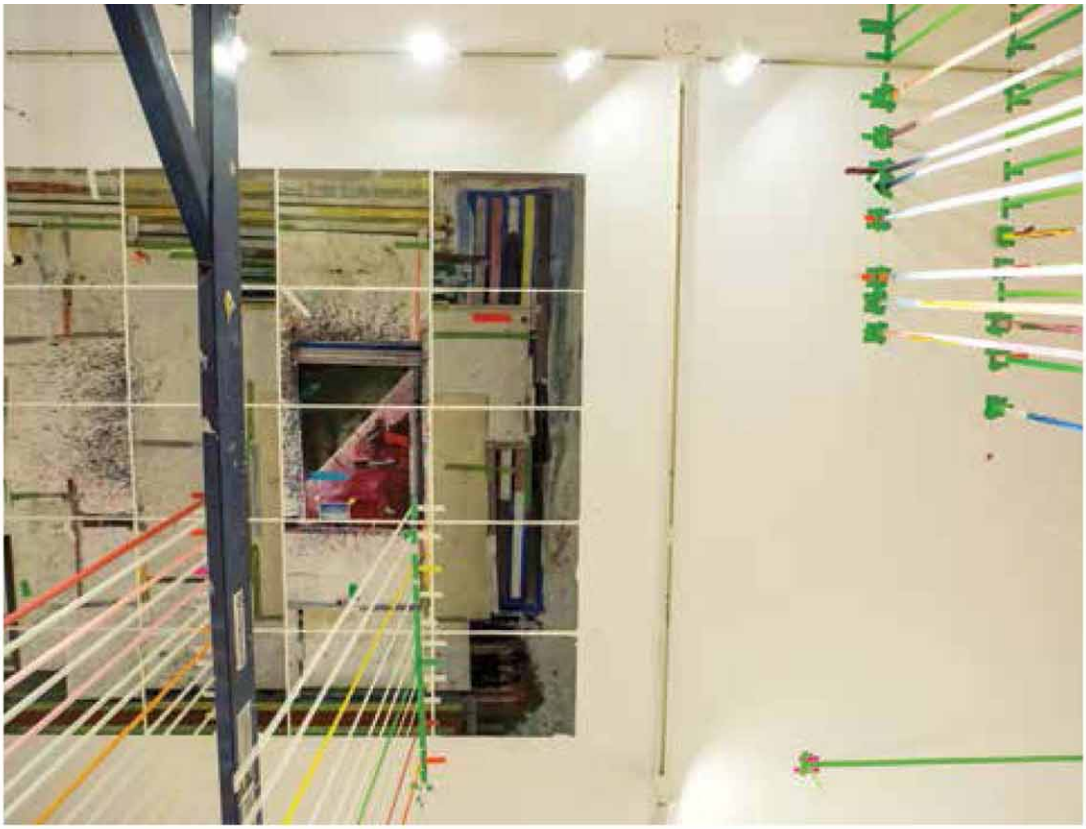
For his project at Montserrat, Evans is perusing a variety of artists that Judd reviewed that range from the obscure to modern masters and, in relation to our current climate, one ponders what Evans finds personally

compelling about Judd. Certainly, the essays get you thinking about why some art lasts or disappears to history and what artists do with innovations from the recent past and present. When Judd mined art history, he was far-seeing enough to know what to keep or discard as he fashioned his own unique works.

In 2005, when Judd's collected writings were republished, the conceptual artist Mel Bochner asked "why now?" the interest in Judd. In a thoughtful essay, Bochner shared Smith's regard for Judd as an authoritative figure with firm convictions and noted the absence of such a character on the scene today. Bochner pointed out that there was a do-or-die urgency to Judd's observations that revealed an artist working out an aesthetic he could believe in Bochner. Fast forward to 2014 and it's hard not to reflect on a situation that is very different; one need only look at the labeling of much contemporary abstract painting i.e. –zombie, casual or crapstraction to get a sense of a more disaffected mood soured by the nefarious influence of money.

There are also new realities confronting artists in the 21st century. David Joselit's recent book *After Art* offers interesting insights on what could be a move away from specific art objects toward the potential for art making to harness the power inherent in various global networks. He makes a case that since the advent of digital technology, images can be recomposed as bytes, disseminated as "populations" and traverse time and space in whole new ways. Images have a newfound "scalability" and "currency" in their global transmission and as such, it may be more appropriate for artists to create "formats" or provisional, connective acts that leverage and capitalize on this newfound plasticity (Joselit, 43, 55). Much of Joselit's ideas align with Evan's art-making practices, but like Judd, I would say Evan's works are further enriched by his facility with materials – particularly paint coupled with a distinct, baroque sensibility.

A case in point is Evans's fondness of watercolor paint. He capitalizes on



the diaphanous, ribbon-like quality of the medium and handles acrylic with a similar light touch working with shadows and residue and overlaying spills, drips, and smudged images. As he moves into the third dimension, he paints with recycled tape that is in turn painted upon and we look at his installations through levitating bands of tape that interact with the surrounding room. One can free associate artists like Robert Irwin or Fred Sandback who also made works that interact with the environment or see traces of Barnett Newman's ideas and process. The illusions keep multiplying as we're swept through scrims and transparencies, recollecting and learning as we do when clicking hyperlinks that propel us through cyberspace or like deKooning's characterization of himself as a "slipping glimpser."

As I write this, Evans is working both in the private and public realm putting together his installation by collaborating with students at Montserrat and inventing stratagems for how the piece will unfold. What the final outcome will be is anyone's guess, but in contemplating Judd, I'm con-

vinced the strength and staying power of Evans's work succeeds on its formal and conceptual complementarity.

WORKS CITED

Bochner, Mel."Conversation Starter: Mel Bochner on the Republished Writings of Donald Judd" in *Art Forum*. Summer 2005.

Joselit, David. *After Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2013

Judd, Donald. *Complete Writings 1959-1976: Gallery Reviews*, *Book Reviews*, *Articles*, *Letters to the Editor*, *Reports*, *Statements*, *Complaints*. Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. 2005. Print.

Newman, Barnett. "The Sublime is Now" in *Art in Theory 1900-2000*. Ed. by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood. Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc. 1993.

Perl, Jed. "Beginning Again" in *New Art City: Manhattan at Mid-Century*. New York: Vintage Books. 2005. Print.

Smith, Roberta. "Criticism: A Life Sentence." New York: The New School. Vera List Center. 5 November, 2009. Lecture. http://vimeo.com/9651694

Franklin Evans : A Moment of Complexity

Leonie Bradbury

Introduction

Traveling, wandering, meandering, Franklin Evan's creations spread across the gallery walls and floors like an ever-growing organic mass. Evans' practice involves the bringing together of items ranging from fully finished large scale paintings, digital printouts, tape scraps, and string from the studio. While on site in the gallery or museum, he then adds even more items, including site-specific blocks of color painted directly onto the wall, printed-out texts from art books and gallery press releases, layering and connecting the various elements into a site-specific installation. Evans describes his installations as, "walking into a painting" and "snapshots of the studio at any moment in time."[1]

In the fall of 2014, Evans was invited to be in residence at Montserrat College of Art in Beverly, MA. For three weeks he spent ten to fifteen hours a day compiling images, printed text, tape screens and a small selection of objects, resulting in the exhibition *juddrules*. Evans considers himself first and foremost a painter, but his installations go beyond any traditional definition of painting. Continuously transitioning, between assembled and dismantled – reconnecting and disconnecting, configuring and reconfiguring form temporary moments of "congealance" in their site-specific installations, whether in the studio or in the gallery.[2]

As the viewer approaches the gallery entrance, they are confronted with an overwhelming presentation of materials that cover the entire gallery floor, each of the seven walls, and part of the ceiling. The overall color palette is bright and broad ranging from earthy yellows to neon pinks and oranges. Brightly colored strips of painters tape hold down and adhere printed reproductions of pages of books, found images, personal photographs and vinyl album to the gallery floor. Visitors are immediately surrounded by

more images on the walls and ceiling and feel themselves become part of the all encompassing installation.

Upon entering *juddrules*, your eyes try to settle on a place of focus and as you are trying to understand what it is you are looking at, you are physically confronted by a large structure that spans from floor to the ceiling. It is a large piece of blue metal and wood scaffolding that has been partially covered with strips of painted painter's tape that connects it to both the ceiling and the floor. On the three-foot high scaffolding platform the artist has placed ten paint trays that show paint remnants in the colors used on the gallery walls.

The painters' tape 'screens' are created by the artist by adhering the end of the role of tape on the ceiling and rolling out the roll until it hits the floor, where it becomes secured. Evans' excessive use of the ubiquitous tan masking or blue painters tape, a medium used to assist the painter in making clean, 'professional' straight lines, is the visual focus of the installation. A product usually relegated to walls in the artist's studio has now been allowed to come into the gallery space, where it is no longer a substrate, or mere tool to aid in the production of a painting, but rather the primary medium.

The tape is used not only to create visual screens but also throughout the installation to adhere the images to the floors and walls of the gallery. Small leftover strips and bits are places on the walls throughout visually referencing the artist's studio walls, as well as, providing a playful color element in the exhibition. The strips of tape move gently and subtly as the result of the airflow in the room. Although visually arresting, the rolls of tape appear fragile and could be easily damaged by a sudden movement by a viewer or collision with a backpack or elbow.

A second wall features a partially defined grid of color blocks, mostly in the mustard yellow color (the color of the artist studio floor), with the exception of a block of purple on the far left. Parts of the grid are paint-

ed, other delineated in tape. The painted grid on the gallery wall roughly uses the floor and tape measurements of the studio floor, but transposes them onto the wall. On the upper right hand corner of the grid blocks of a brighter hue of yellow paint are alternated with 14 x 17 inch printouts. Some are abstract textural details of photographs of the artist's studio and loft (both printed to scale and enlarged), another features the partial torso of a nude male, one image placed sideways at the top of the grid features Henri Matisse's painting *Romanian Blouse* of 1940. Reproductions of this image are repeated throughout the installation and in a variety of colors and states of distortion. At the center of the grid we see a large, mediocre quality print out 'collage' of one of Evans canvas paintings, comprised of a grid of nine rows of nine 11 x 8.5 inch sheets each (the ubiquitous copy machine or home printer dimension).

This paper grid is interrupted in the middle by a gap where the white wall of the gallery partially peeks through and one can see some of the mustard under paint as well. At the center of the gap, Evans has placed a finished stretched canvas painting, the only one in the exhibition. The painting features the same image as the one on the paper grid. It consists of many, multi colored horizontal bands that look like a printed version of the vertical tape screens placed on its side. Near the top of the painting one of the bands is a realistically painted metal ruler from the looks of it covered in paint and strips of painters tape. At the near center of the painting Evans has painted a trompe l'oeil version of one of the Polaroid reproductions as if it's held onto the canvas with painters tape. It reveals part of this painter's process of placing photographic images on the canvas and then copying them in great detail right next to it. As is normally the case for Evans, the original is removed leaving only the copy. Elsewhere in the exhibition, though, the artist has left the printed out image in place next to its painted copy.

The viewer is asked to consider two versions of the same image in different states and different material manifestations. One a highly finished painting, the other a pixelated enlarged version of that same image printed out and

taped together as the interrupted paper grid. On top of the painting itself Evans has placed two laminated images of a work of street art, a graffiti cartoon sun spray painted on a metal garage door, which was located downstairs of the artist's studio and apartment for many years. The images are nearly identical, although one is extremely pixelated and the other less so. To the right of the painting, the grid is interrupted a second time. This time the gap is small (about three inches wide) and features not an image group but rather a tape strip at the width of two strips of tape stuck together. Instead of stretching form floor to ceiling it starts in the middle of the wall and extends out to the floor where after about 20 feet it is held in place with a half full paint can. On top of the can Evans has stacked another laminated image and three rolls of unused painters tape. The image is black and white and features an unidentified painting.

Evans' process is in its essence a blend of traditional and digital technologies. He effectively combines Realist painting methods with computer technology and the Internet, the latter two functioning as tools, sources for inspiration and information simultaneously. They also form a filter through which information is transformed from one form to another. Evans has a sincere interest in the peripheral, ephemeral materialities that evidence one's life and collects digital images and texts in an effort to rematerialize them in his art works. As part of this process, he draws attention to a contemporary or historical occurrence that is individual and/or cultural.

juddrules comes across as a giant, trans-historical mashup of high and low culture: fine art meets digital printout.[3] Evans incorporates elements that could be classified as belonging to each of these binary categories. For example, his exquisitely painted trompe l'oeil paintings are an example of 'fine art' and can thus be classified as so-called 'high culture.' Evans juxtaposes these paintings with popular culture ephemera, or lowbrow images, such as the pixelated print outs of drag queens, porn stars and additionally includes family snapshots and portraits of himself ranging from the artist as a child to a recent photo of Evans at an opening reception of one of his exhibitions.

The obsessive referencing to outside source materials, visual, and textual is an embracing of information overload rather than a critique. Certain sections of the exhibition read like an art history textbook with many reproductions of well-known paintings. Others read more like a Google image search, but one where the images are interrupted, and conjoined by color test prints ands strips of tape. Evans' process reflects our ability to actively consume and produce information using the Internet as a tool. It simultaneously addresses its utility and its overwhelming complexity and contradictory nature.

Gallery as Studio

Evans materializes information that was once immaterial, Internet content and its limitless distribution now fixed in material form, statically suspended on the canvas or momentarily detained in a temporary gallery installation. Likewise he digitizes his own work, photographing it, scanning it, uploading and downloading it, before presenting it next to (or as part of) the original in a gallery setting. The boundary between the studio as a place of production and the gallery as its displaying counterpart is intentionally and creatively blurred.

In 1971, when Daniel Buren wrote that the "analysis of the art system must inevitably be carried on in terms of the studio as the unique space of production and the museum as the unique space of exposition. Both must be investigated as customs, the ossifying customs of art" he was correct in including the artist's studio as part of the art system (Buren 1). The museum or gallery would eventually become a space of production. Buren briefly addresses "those curators who conceive of the museum as a permanent studio"(3). He presents the studio as a "place of multiple activities: production, storage, and distribution"(Buren 3). The gallery is presented as a place of promotion and consumption. The objects need to be portable to move between the two. Buren mourns:

> The loss of the object, the idea that the context of the work

> corrupts the interest that the work provokes, as if some energy essential to its existence escapes as it passes through the studio door, occupied all my thoughts. […] In the studio we generally find finished work, work in progress, abandoned work, sketches – a collection of visible evidence viewed simultaneously that allows an understanding of process; it is this aspect of the work that is extinguished by the museum's desire to 'install' (6).

When we consider Franklin Evans' environments in the context of Buren's post-studio essay, they seem to be an effort to combat this loss of truth through the inclusion of many of the components of his studio – his visible evidence – and presenting them as part of the gallery installation, as part of the work. For Evans, even the works in progress, the sketches and his various collections go out the studio door and land in the gallery space where they are rearranged in new and different configurations. Nicholas Bourriaud's 2002 statement that "the exhibition is no longer the end result of a process, it's 'happy ending,' but a place of production" seems to ring true in regards to Evans' site-specific environments (69). Once in situ, Evans spends days in the gallery working and creating additional connections between the elements he has brought in. Although, Franklin Evans' installations are not interactive and socially motivated in a different way as the exhibitions Bourriaud is referring to in this statement, the gallery has indeed become the studio. For Bourriaud: "In our daily lives, the gap that separates production and consumption narrows each day"(39). In Evans' practice this gap is extremely narrow, as he is simultaneously the producer and consumer of the elements that comprise his works.

Central to Evans' practice is the materializing of the immaterial, whether he is using trompe l'oeil effects to create the illusion of a photograph taped to his canvas or is printing out images by other artists included in the exhibition as part of his own work. These so-called feedback loops create a disorienting effect. According to Alexander Galloway and Eugene

Thacker in *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*: "In the cybernetic feedback loop, in the communications channel of information theory, and in the organic whole of systems theory there exists a dual view of information as both immaterial and materializing, abstract and concrete, an act and a thing"(57). Evans' process of making the abstract concrete, his looping or conceptual doubling and mirroring of information into various states of mediatization is where his work functions as a site of convergence between traditional artistic practices and internet cultures. But how exactly do these feedback loops relate to the culture or structure of a network? Are his installations a visualization of a network; do they simply provide a metaphor for network? Or, as is my argument, do they constitute a network?

Artwork = Network

The concept of 'network' is rapidly becoming the dominant cultural mode. The term network originally was employed in the 16th century to represent the weaving together of sets of material strands (metal, fabric leather, etc.).[4] In the 21st century, 'network' is a way to see and frame everything around us. For example our communications and transportation systems, our social networks, both physical and virtual, even the natural world can be considered examples of networks. Network now also stands for a non-centered, decentered, distributed, muliplicitous, on-linear system of nodes or plateaus that are endlessly connected to each other and inform much of what we see around us. According to cultural theorist and architect Kazys Varnelis, network culture is defined as a broadly historical phenomenon and that the network has become the dominant cultural logic of our times. He argues, "Although other ages have had their networks, ours is the first in the modern age in which the network is the dominant organizational paradigm, supplanting centralized hierarchies"(Varnelis 147). The cultural framework of network has become the way to understand and organize our complex global world.

Connectivity, flexibility, changeability, and mobility are the key concepts of our times and are also key identifiers for a network. We are experiencing

a culture of sharing, of data transfer and instant communication. It is all about the relationships between 'things.' Furthermore, the collision and disintegration of binary realms – high: low, digital: tactile, real: imaginary, private: public – is a signature element of network culture. Networks are in motion, growing, shrinking, but never ending. Varnelis remarks: "In contrast to digital culture, under network culture information is less the product of discrete processing units than of the outcome of the networked relations between them, of links between people, between machines, and between machines and people."(146). He argues that network culture succeeds postmodernism and describes network culture as delivering "remix, shuffling together the diverse elements of present-day culture, blithely conflating high and low [...] while poaching it as found contents from the world" (Varnelis 151). Evans' work is precisely an installation concerned with the space between things, (i.e. objects, people, images, materials, ideas) and it is clear that his practice is closely related to this larger cultural phenomenon of networked connectivity.

For Varnelis, the contemporary subject – unlike its predecessors in the autonomous modernist subject and the fragmented postmodern subject – is "constituted within the network" and has become the networked subject (152). He states that "the subject is increasingly less sure of where the self begins and ends, the question of what should be private and shouldn't fades"(Varnelis 154). For the networked subject, boundaries between self and other, private and public, real and virtual are increasingly blurred. So too in the art world, as it is increasingly less sure where an artwork begins and ends, the question of what should be considered art and what shouldn't fades. Artists with practices as diverse as multi media artists Sarah Sze, Zsuzsanna Szegedi and Kate Gilmore are redefining their artistic practices with notions of artwork as network.

The work of art is now distributed across multiple sites, multiple nodes of content. According to Galloway and Thacker, the notion of connectivity, "is so highly privileged today that it is becoming more and more difficult

to locate places or objects that don't in some way fit into a networked rubric"(26). The relational element is that 'something' which exists between two or more things. They further stated, "a network in a sense is something that holds a tension within its own form – grouping of differences that is unified"(Galloway and Thacker 61). This is a phenomenon I recognize in today's art world and in the work of Franklin Evans' in particular.

This notion, however, is not without historical precedence. In September of 1968, the seminal article *Systems Aesthetics* by Jack Burnham was published in Art Forum. In it he discusses a new art world phenomenon he terms Systems Art. What Burnham means with systems art is really an expansion of the work of art from an autonomous, singular object to a system. He stated, "we are now in transition from an object oriented culture to a systems oriented culture"(Burnham 31). And he follows this with: "Art does not reside in material entities, but in relations between people and people and the components in their environment"(Burnham 31). An example Burnham provides is the exhibition Art by Telephone held at the museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago where "the recorded conversation between artist and manufacturer was to become part of the displayed work of art"(32). He brings up Robert Morris at the 1966 68th American Show at the Chicago Art Institute, who had a piece recreated via instructions rather than shipped from NY: "In the context of a systems aesthetic, possession of a privately fabricated work is no longer important. Accurate information takes priority over history and geographical location"(Burnham 32). Burnham introduced the concept of the distributed work of art, a concept central to the understanding of an artwork as a network.

Aesthetics of Networks

How do aesthetics and networks interact? What does a network look like? There are at present a few dominant modes of visual representation when using the term network. The three primary modes are centralized, decentralized and distributed. It is worth establishing an understanding of these terms. First created by network pioneer Paul Baran while he worked

for the RAND Corporation in the 1960s where he was trying to build a new system of communication using computers. At the time the first two notions of network, centralized and decentralized were already in place. In the process of his research, Baran developed a third model, the distributed network where all the nodes were connected to several neighboring nodes and able to communicate with each other directly without going through a centralized hub first. Each node would have several routes to and from which to receive and send data.

Media theorist Anna Munster in her essay The Image in the Network (2007) argues that "there can be no coherent, global 'aesthetics of the network', and yet there are collective and shared experiences – aesthesias – of networks" (6).[5] She further declared that the vectoral diagram "has come to function as a dominant image of and for networks" (Munster 6). Munster describes the representational dilemma of the diagram as image of the Internet as follows:

> The diagram is therefore not a set of instructions – a blueprint – for mapping or building relations between objects. It is instead a representational mode that hooks one class of objects – perhaps links and nodes – to another class, potentially peoples, cultures and their processual relations within networks. This, of course, is why the network diagram is so thrilling – its spatiality and vagueness harnesses the potential to make it work as a representation of something it is not. […] In other words, if we really believe that the network diagram provides us with an accurate depiction of networks, then we are forgetting the very relationality of both diagram and network (13).

Additionally, the vector diagram is limited in that it chooses to represent something that is multi-dimensional, ever changing, and relational as a fixed two-dimensional image.

In general, and by nature, visualizations of networks are reductive and questions of their topology are notoriously problematic. For instance, the Internet is usually diagrammatically presented as a distributed network that looks like a decentralized network. Perhaps works of art are better suited to accurately representing networks? Is it useful to think of Evans' work as a three-dimensional depiction of a network? If so, what type of network? Are the large canvas paintings hubs from which all other are connected and thus form a decentralized network? Or is their organization more rhizomatic and emblematic of a distributed network? Perhaps Munster's theme of re-lationality offers an interesting way to open up this discussion in relation to Franklin Evans' practice. Her statement: "This is why the network diagram is so thrilling – its spatiality and vagueness harnesses the potential to make it work as a representation of something it is not,"(13) makes me realize that Evans work is not a diagram (an abstract representation or deduction) of a network, or a visualization or image of it, it is in fact a network, or perhaps more accurately a collection of networks both decentralized and distributed that intersect, interconnect and disconnect at various points.

According to Galloway and Thacker, "In networks the individuation of all the nodes and edges that constitute the system, for while the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, it is nevertheless the parts (or the localized action of the parts) that in turn constitute the possibility for the individuation of 'a' network as a whole. The individuation of the network as a whole is different from the individuation of the network components. However, both concern themselves with the topology of the network"(59). Although some elements can be extracted, most of Evans' installation materials comprise a network of connected parts that only function as a work of art when presented as part of a system of objects. For example, think of the strips of painters' tape or the Internet printouts. Like a network though Evans' installation does not present an autonomous whole, but rather a temporary, networked system.

Conclusion

If we compare common images of the American Internet to one of Evans'

installations, there are indeed some similarities in terms of the webbing or creation of pathways. The most obvious difference is that Evans' installation is three-dimensional whereas diagrams are all two-dimensional renderings of something that is in reality multi-dimensional, spatial and temporal. The diagram closes off the temporal, rhythm of movement across and collapses it into a two dimensional spatial abstraction. Networking 'things' move at different speeds, says art historian and network theorist Philip Armstrong: "the network is the spacing of time and the temporality of space."[6] How do Franklin Evans' environments engage with different modes of spatiality and temporality?

The artist addresses space, for example, in multiple modes: symbolic or narrative space, the two-dimensional pictoral or visual space, and the three-dimensional physical or architectural space. In terms of time there are also multiple frameworks to consider: virtual, historic (both personal and art historic) and the present, and the tension between issues of permanence and temporality that Evans' practice brings to the fore. There is a compression of time that happens once the artist gets into the gallery space and begins the installation process. The usual pace of studio of seemingly limitless time is compressed into a limited production window of time within the gallery. Once completed as a work of art, there is evident a refusal of linear temporality in the presentation of hybrid, multiple sections or networks of objects and segments of information whether sound, text or image.

As is immediately evident there are multiple spatiallities and temporarilties at play within *juddrules*, some of them contradictory. The installation is nomadic, temporary, conglomeration of objects and ideas, auditory and visual ephemera. The way the viewer interacts with the piece is also a multipath, multi-sensory and self-selecting experience. Wandering and meandering, both your eye and feet drift through the installation as if a 21st century flâneur, having exchanged the dense streets of Paris for the text and image filled forest of *juddrules*. Another example is provided on the wall to the right when entering the gallery where large sheets of painted paper are

the residue of paintings made in the past year. The artist tapes the paper onto the floor of the studio and uses it to clean brushes as a result abstract builds up over time. Sometimes this occurs systematically (discrete color areas) at other times they are more accidental. These particular pieces of paper were shown similarly along the hall at Ameringer McEnery Yohe gallery installation in New York. According to Evans, "They become both a measurement of time and a transposition of time and space (AMcY hall) to new site (Montserrat)"[7]

Evans' installations embody the dissolution of boundaries between different media, dimensionalities temporal, spatial, and the virtual. They refuse to be singular. Each installation, once installed, is in a temporary state of suspension of its fluidity. They refuse everlastingness as they are merely waiting to be dismantled, disconnected, disassembled and return to the studio to be reconfigured, recycled back into a new network of relations. The installations are, to borrow network theorist Mark Taylor's term, "moments of complexity" and can be described as the embodiment of an onto-topology meaning a system of convergence, connection, and confluence.[8] They are multiplicities, networks, networked, they are collections of objects that are networking mash-ups of the present and the past, the historic and the personal, the provisional and the permanent, time and space. These contradictions, or tensions within the work do not function however, as a series of binaries as listed above, but rather exist within the work as a complex web of interconnectedness, overlapping, conflicting, doubling, continuously looping into a conglomeration of networked networks.

NOTES

1. Franklin Evans, lecture at deCordova Museum, Lincoln MA 3/23/13.
2. Congealance refers to transformation of a liquid from a fluid to a fixed state.
3. Mashup is a term originally used within the music industry where it signifies the practice of mixing multiple songs together into a new song without one song dominating. Within web culture the term refers to data mashups that use open application programming interfaces that integrate information from multiple sources to create new web services.
4. The use of the term as a synonym for a set of interrelated people, by contrast, is a recent invention. The verb "to network," meaning to introduce and be introduced to other people outside of one's immediate social circle, made its first appearance in the 1970s after the deployment of ARPAnet, the precursor to the Internet. See Warren Sack, "From Networked Publics to Object Oriented Democracies," in Networked Culture, institute etc. 18.
5. Aesthesia: "The normal ability to experience sensation, perception or sensitivity."
6. Philip Armstrong, Assistant Professor of Comparative Studies at Ohio State University, in phone conversation with the author, March 21, 2013
7. Artist correspondence 11/9/2014
8. Term is used as defined by Leslie Kavanaugh in *The Architectonic of Philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz*, Amsterdam University Press, 2007, 278.

WORKS CITED

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art reprograms The World*. New York: Has & Sternberg, New York. 2002.

Buren, Daniel. *The Function of the Studio*. Translated by Thomas Repensek in October 10, 1979. (original text 1971).

Burnham, Jack. "Systems Aesthetics." In *Art Forum*, September, 1968.

Castells, Manuel. *Internet Galaxy. Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* (Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies). Oxford University Press, USA. April 3, 2003.

Galloway and Thacker. *The Exploit. A Theory of Networks (Electronic Mediations)*. University Of Minnesota Press. October 1, 2007.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Wiley-Blackwell. 1991.

Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, NYU Press; Revised edition. September 1, 2008.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 2005.

Law, John and John Hassard (eds.) *Actor Network Theory and After*. Oxford and Keele: Blackwell and the Sociological Review. 1999.

Lovink, Geert. *Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media*. Polity; 1 ed. March 19, 2012.

Munster, Anne. "The Image in the Network." In New Network Theory, Collected Abstracts and Papers, Amsterdam, June 28-30, 2007. Amsterdam: Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA) Media Studies, University of Amsterdam and Institute of Network Cultures, HvA Interactive Media.

Packer, Jeremy and Wiley, Stephen B. Crofts. *Communication Matters: Materialist Approaches to Media, Mobility, and Networks*, Routledge. 2012.

Rubinstein, Raphael. "Provisional Painting." In *Art In America*. May, 2009.

Relyea, Lane. "Studio Unbound." In *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*. Edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2010.

Varnelis, Kazys, *Networked Publics*, The MIT Press; Reprint edition. August 17, 2012.

CREDITS

Director, Exhibition Curator**: Leonie Bradbury**

Assistant Curator: **Pamela Caampanaro**

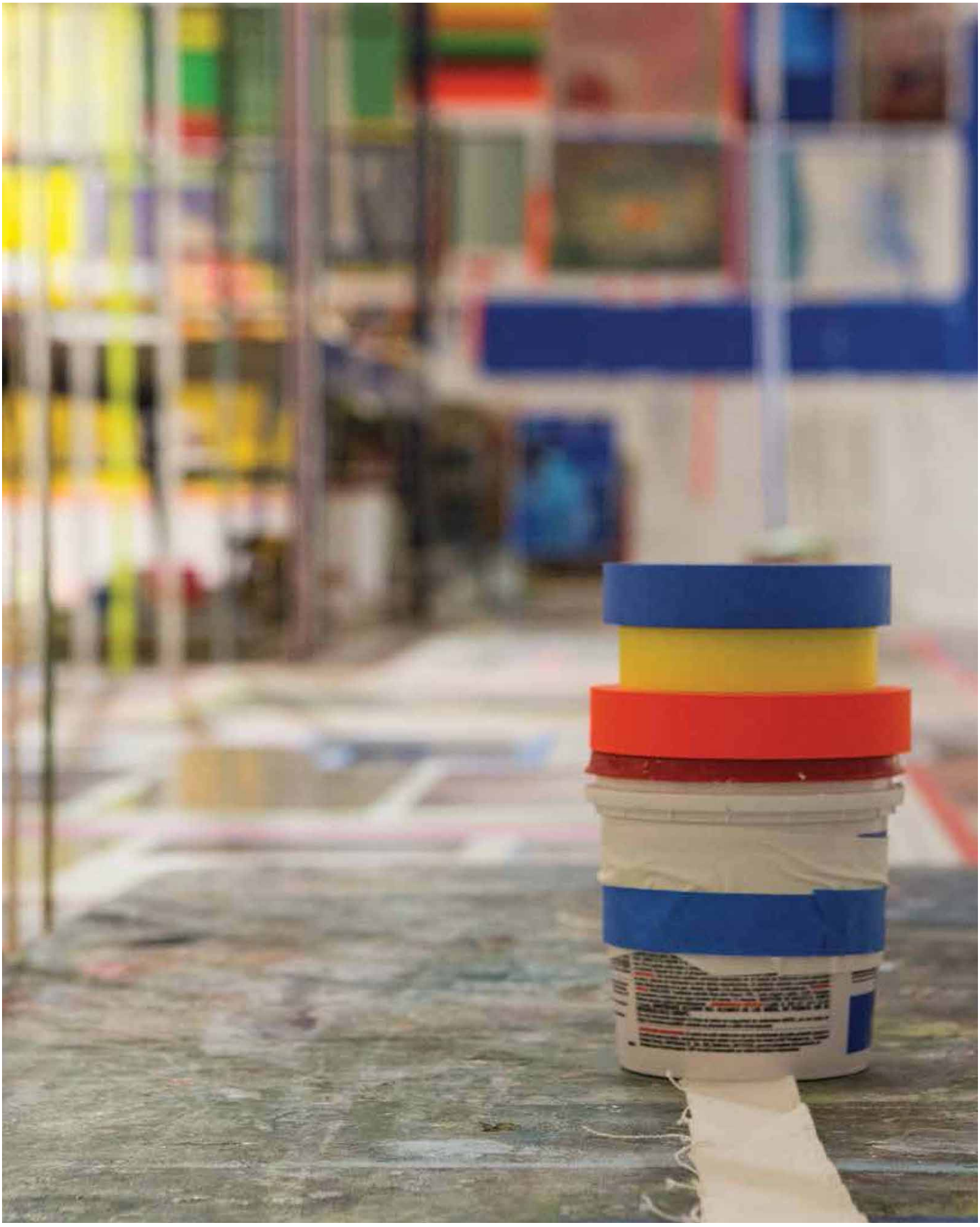
Curator of Education: **Maggie Cavallo**

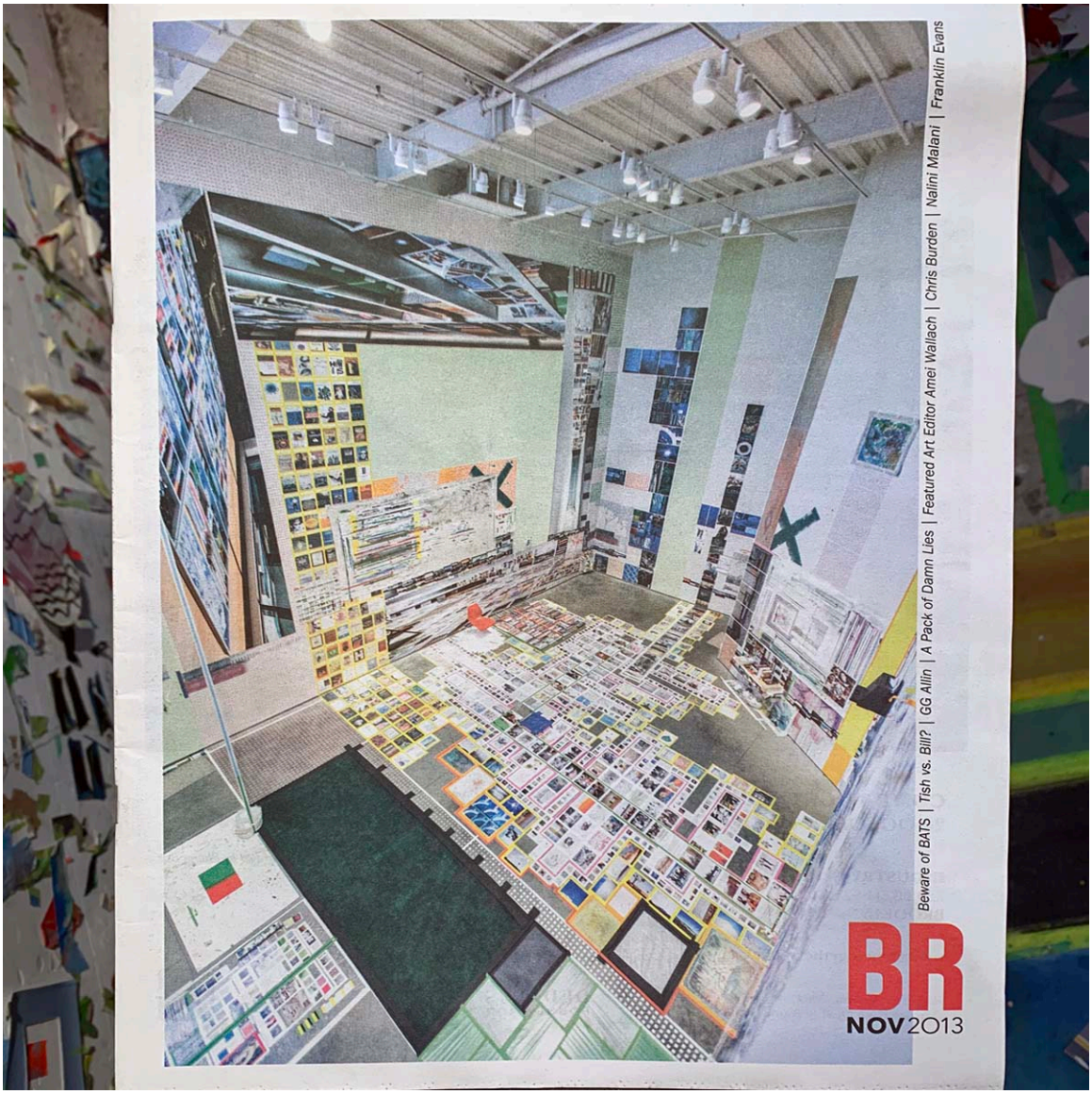
Assistant Curator of Education: **Savery Kelley**

Photography: **Bethany Acheson**, bethanyacheson.com

Design: **John Colan**

Massachusetts Cultural Council





FRANKLIN EVANS

Conversation with Greg Lindquist
The Brooklyn Rail, 5 November 2013

In a series of conversations held over the past summer months and into a fall museum installation, artist Franklin Evans spoke with artist and Art Books in Review editor Greg Lindquist. The two discussed the relationships of Evans's process-based painting installations to Internet media, digital technologies, and the related phenomena of discontinuous focus. Evans's solo exhibition *timepaths* opened at the Nevada Museum of Art on October 5, 2013 and will remain on view until April 20, 2014.

Greg Linquist (Rail): Looking at your studio, with paintings in process on the walls and floor, I am interested in how your work evolves. How do ideas and paintings change over time?

Franklin Evans: Take, for example, this six-foot square painting on this wall [pointing toward a long wall with several large paintings in progress]. It is a smaller canvas in the center, surrounded by several vertical digital prints, each an enlarged documentation of the painting on canvas at the center of the piece. This piece started with the small canvas as the palette on which I mixed paint for other paintings. I then painted on top of the accumulated ground *trompe l'oeil* elements such as [faux Polaroid, faux lamination of documentation of my past watercolors, and the illusion of tape hovering above the surface]. This piece started as a palette, became a painting, and expanded to an installation while simultaneously embracing an independent system as a painting-collage from which I am now making the fully-painted version. I hope to present both side-by-side in the future.

Rail: This notion of mirror image-like copies call to mind Robert Rauschenberg's "Factum" paintings, which inspired two consecutive exhibitions you have recently done. Rauschenberg and also Jasper Johns appear to be important touchstones for your work, though perhaps less obvious ones.

Evans: Yes, earlier they were faux Polaroid. Now the increase in scale and size of what I'm printing is taking over, inkjet prints at 17 at 22 inches or larger. It's amazing what these printers can do. And then to use that as a source for observation to incorporate into the actual painting or the painted painting.

Rail: Rauschenberg was obviously using ephemera and the printing processes of his time in the 1950s. With your work, the nature of the materiality is different and captured in various manners that suggest the ether of virtual, intangible communications. The virtual field of computer screens is important to your work. Translating the multiple windows stacked on top of one another from the inside of a screen into an expanded physical space, in the most non-literal way possible, seems a goal. What is the nature of thinking in this virtual, decentered world? Is it about the way that we often lose focus in this world? Every component is competing for our attention in your installations, which speaks to ways in which we mediate our external worlds, now more than ever.

Evans: Yes, I am interested in the speed that decenters and destabilizes focus. I think that Ryan Trecartin, in the context of the mid-2000s, got close to the speed of how discontinuous focus happens. Although this year in Venice his piece may have been new, it felt surprisingly slow relative to the present. The pacing within his videos remains remarkably fast, but the installation felt relatively static.

Rail: Even though your work incorporates the process and the manner in which we now look at visual images through the mediation of technology, it's not the predominant medium you choose.

Evans: No, but I would love to use more technology in my work. Another artist who gets close to what I would love to do or see is Jon Kessler, but that also feels slow, and not like my experience on the computer. I work with multiple screens as we have laptops, desktops, and maybe a second laptop, and it's all going at once. I think somebody's going to build an environment that's completely surrounded and multiviewed. I don't think I've seen an installation like Yayoi Kusama's "Fireflies on the Water" (2002), where she warps installation space. It's physical, yet not just a single place. It suggests expansion in its use of wall, floor, and ceiling. And through the use of mirrors it also suggests the reflective computer screen, which parallels the virtual realms we now also occupy. I would like to see the compression of Kusama paired with Trecartin's speedy video as medium. It may require a waiver for claim of injury due to dislocation. You could get hurt! Somebody will do this work I am envisioning, and I hope it's far beyond a Disney spectacle. Who knows who's going to do it?

Rail: So why do you continue to emphasize paint as your medium rather than a technological media?

Evans: With my work, I am interested in the materiality of painting. I like those kinds of beautiful painting marks that can be stretched and reinterpreted by digital media. So I combine inkjet printing in front of the other painted things. The materialness of painting with the digitally printed matter is so important to how my work evolves.

Rail: You are hybridizing painting and inkjet prints of a photograph of a painting –

Evans: Over a canvas, that then becomes the source for the completion of the object because I couldn't have envisioned what that would be like without the materiality of the pigment

print. I couldn't have painted that from looking at a reflective, shiny screen. I need to see the scale of it printed. I need to see a blocking of already-painted information alongside its digitally-altered documentation. It has become more about using these devices to make paintings that are incorporated into an environment. I could not have envisioned paintings and environments without materiality.

Rail: You need the physical tactility and the immersive, phenomenological experience of your body in a space, walking around an object, as well as the objectness of the space itself.

Evans: Yes, it's the scale of the body to the environment. I think that brings us back to our previous conversations about Daniel Buren, in a way. I can't make these paintings without considering where they're going to be. I can make them in a studio, but they will look very different in other environments. If I know in advance that I will be doing a show at a particular space, it is necessary to consider the light of the space and also its architectural specificity.

Rail: The specific architectural aspects of an exhibition space are an integral component in your work.

Evans: When I think of site specifically, the specific location is considered. For example, in the PS1 *Greater New York* (2010) exhibition, I was given a room that I didn't know the precedent of – that it once enclosed Gordon Matta-Clark's "Doors, Floors, Doors" (1967). Colby Chamberlain alluded to that in his review, which I've since absorbed. Matta-Clark's collapse and expansion of space preceded my parallel consideration in my PS1 "timecompressionmachine" (2010). My ignorance of the room's history allowed me to explore the rich content of time again.

I also engage with architectural challenges such as a column blocking a view or my 2014 New York exhibition [forthcoming Ameringer McEnery Yohe] in a space with a beautiful window. I'm thinking about how I could travel out to the sidewalk without breaking the window, and how I'd tunnel the light in and possibly negate the immediate seduction of the window.

Rail: So, the site acts upon your process?

Evans: I've been in my studio for 15 years, but I loved moving to the Marie Walsh Sharpe studios for a year. I didn't choose that space, but that space allowed and forced me to think

about new ways of working. Maybe it's from the architecture of it. After my year at Marie Walsh Sharpe, I recognized my unconscious capacity to absorb and copy. Similarly, without knowing Rauschenberg and John that well, I've absorbed several of their interests and approaches. Specifically at Marie Walsh Sharpe, I did many crossing compositions, and my studio view was of Manhattan Bridge entering at a diagonal, intersecting a more frontal rooftop to create a crossing. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was impacted by my view and what I was around. I think the site acts upon me a lot.

But I also act upon it, getting rid of, creating, or using a column, for example, in a different way to create a new architectural pathway. Last year I made an installation at Lehman College for the exhibition *Space Invaders* that referred to Robert Irwin's 1975 Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago column/room. Through the gesture of tape around the floor of the room and through the removal of all the art in the room, Irwin highlighted the column in a room that contained no columns. My columns were constructed of printouts of installation history and of the other installation artists in the Lehman College exhibition.

We have also talked about the *DECENTER* (2013) exhibition at the Abrons Art Center – the 100-year anniversary of the Armory Show. My contribution "bluenudedissent" (2013) was a piece that was driven by the premise of the show. Making a piece about artists now and then, 100 years after the 1913 Armory show.

Rail: Do you think people appreciate it differently because there was a theme you had to incorporate?

Evans: Yes, I used images from art history that I would mostly not have explored at that time. I wouldn't have looked up all those artists to make an artwork; I wouldn't have looked up the legacy of the Armory. It was almost like an assignment [*laughs*] and this sounds really stupid – an assignment that I carried out – but the piece ended up being really interesting. It is something I need to think about more and I have yet to build upon. For *DECENTER,* I received an architectural gift of installing in and around a somewhat awkward wraparound staircase with a central vitrine. The location and function of the stairs ended up being amazing – the center of the show.

Rail: The center of the decentered show? [*Laughter.*]

Evans: Exactly! And you havd to walk around it to experience it physically and texturally.

Rail: Well, discussing site-specificity brings to mind not only Daniel Buren but also Robert Smithson, who has been a formative influence on you. Can you say something about how he influenced your thinking and work?

Evans: Smithson has had a link to a lot of us – think about videos of him cagily discussing ideas and images of him walking on "Spiral Jetty" (1970). The library piece I built – the *trompe l'oeil* library "felibrary2012to1967" (2012) – was born out of finding the index of Smithson's library.

Rail: From the 2005 Robert Smithson retrospective catalog?

Evans: Yes. I also did a Smithson version by trying to find the highest resolution image of the cover of each book on the Internet, attempting to use the appropriate edition. But sometimes I couldn't find the appropriate edition and my library was born out of that lack.

Rail: But it wasn't only his library of books; it was also his record collection, containing an array of influences from Black Sabbath to Waylon Jennings. Some of Jennings's songs were used in a video finished by Nancy Holt in 2004 from their 1968 trip to Mono Lake.

Evans: Yes, this amazing collection raises a lot of issues about what that means. Is it a curated project? There's a link to the idea of things ending through entropy, and a desire to preserve and extend an idea about Smithson. With his great work "Spiral Jetty" (1970), it is my understanding that there was no intent to conserve it and we have, as a culture, a desire to immortalize it.

These contradictions are sexy ideas. How do we set up a situation in our own work that can explore these ideas? With the limitations of mostly being a studio artist presenting studio as a subject, I try not to treat the studio preciously. I let paintings live on the floor and erode, I take pictures of them, and start again. Some of the other stuff I wish I could do is experiment more with external elements, things that are built outside, and let time happen to them.

There is an entropic aspect of having paintings live on the floor, as well as tiled press releases of shows you've seen. That reminds me of Dorothea Rockburne piece discussed in the *High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting, 1967-1975* exhibition catalog (Independent Curators International/D.A.P., 2007). David Reed interviewed Dorothea Rockburne about this piece that was installed on the Bykert Gallery's parquet floor. In this exhibition, Rockburne painted the entire floor white to match the walls, thus extending the wall and the ceiling to

the floor. Throughout the exhibition, visitors created a painting with the scuffs of their footprints, which accumulated over time.

Evans: To reveal the parquet again?

Rail: I don't know if it went that far. But those marks made by the gallery traffic were an incredibly entropic act if you assume that an exhibition should remain pristine. This act evokes our discussion about the processes of the press releases on the floor falling apart during the course of your exhibitions.

I'm curious how the floor functions in your work. A painting begins in the studio on the floor and then is moved to the wall, and then maybe back to the floor. Is this another part of the process of dismantling the picture frame?

Evans: Using press releases to expose the extent to which I explored NYC exhibitions started as an expansion of the frame. At that time I hadn't engaged with the floor other than as a student when I worked on my dorm studio floor. I covered the floor with acrylic paintings. It was functional the, but I stopped when I got a studio with walls [*laughs*]. The press releases were a simple expansion of the frame – the frame of thought and also the visual frame onto the floor and into the installation space.

Rail: After you complete an installation, do you consider it one whole piece or multiple pieces that will then be broken apart and distributed?

Evans: At some point, I would love for it all to be one thing some place, not stripped apart. It'd be really great. Mostly now the parts become isolated into private collections as paintings or sculptures, or reassembled later with new explorations into the next installations.

Rail: How does the system function as a whole? Is this system porous, and fluid, and flexible, and permeable, or is it fixed like a singular photographic image?

Evans: It's more fluid, but there's some part that wants fixedness. Even though most everything about what I do and what I've been doing is not very fixed. But we're adaptable! [*Laughs.*] When I look at this wall in my studio right now, maybe in two weeks it'll be different.

Rail: What will happen with your installation at the end of the *timepaths* exhibition at the Nevada Museum of Art? Can you talk about how you have approached the massive scale and size of this museum space?

Evans: The installation is at a significantly larger scale than I have ever worked, particularly because several walls are around 30 feet tall. One wall is 39 feet wide by 28 feet tall. As a part of the installation, this wall becomes my largest painting to date. I usually do scale studies for exhibitions on the computer, with the likely layouts of the elements I collage and build into the space. For this particular wall, I started with the largest painting on canvas from the studio 144 by 72 inches. I pasted a jpeg of this painting onto my scale study in Photoshop and immediately recognized how small it was relative to the wall. It forced me to consider much larger elements: shapes of painted color and forms embedded in the paintings and also extending from the dislocating architecture of the room (walls that tilted out). I added four, 5 by 20 feet canvas pigment prints of distorted documentation images of my library piece, "felibrary2012to1967" (2012). These effectively expanded the visual field to meet the scale of the room and walls. I am nearing the finish of the installation and it is remarkable how much the scale study and the photograph of this large wall painting match up!

I have gained a remarkable material insight into making such large-scale work. *Timepaths* ends April 20, 2014, but its future began before its installation. Ideas had already begun to be explored in my New York studio prior to my travel to Nevada for installation. Six new paintings began in the later summer, which are not part of this show. With the knowledge gained from the process of this installation, I will return to my New York studio to engage with a past – ready to be altered – for my future projects.

GREATER NEW YORK 2010

FOREWORD

The 2010 *Greater New York* exhibition is the third iteration of the series and the first to mark the second decade of the 21st century. It is an exhibition program that began in 2000 to celebrate the merger of P.S.1 and MoMA, and it was among the first joint curatorial projects between the two institutions. From the beginning, *Greater New York*'s goal has been to showcase the most innovative emerging art in New York City, acting as a snapshot of current and future artistic practices in a city that continues to be one of the major international hubs for contemporary art. *Greater New York* 2010—organized by Klaus Biesenbach, MoMA PS1 Director and Chief Curator at Large at The Museum of Modern Art; Connie Butler, The Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawing, The Museum of Modern Art; and Neville Wakefield, MoMA PS1 Senior Curatorial Advisor—continues this tradition, bringing together a group of artists who advance, expand, and overturn notions of contemporary art.

While the 68 artists and artist collectives in the exhibition are far from representative of the overwhelming quantity of artistic happenings in New York, they do as a whole speak to the diverse approaches and strategies employed by artists, including documentary-like studies, collages that touch on Dada and Surrealist influences, a reexamination of the history of Modernism, and broad political concern that embraces both protest and celebration.

In addition, the 2010 iteration of *Greater New York* adds a polyphony of curatorial voices by inviting four guest curators—Cecilia Alemani, Clarissa Dalrymple, Kate Fowle, and Olivia Shao—to organize installations within the exhibition on a rotating basis, creating a more wide-ranging conversation within the show. Amplifying this is a cinema space programmed by Thomas Beard and Ed Halter, who have been invigorating the film and art community through their nonprofit organization, Light Industry, which is based in downtown Brooklyn. An exhibition gallery is also dedicated to a review of art and culture in New York from the past five years. In this short period, the city has experienced economic highs and lows, the emergence of the Lower East Side as a major artistic enclave, a new biennial of performance, and the growth and expansion of several museums. In sum, *Greater New York* 2010 gives audiences not only the opportunity to look back at this recent history, but also a proleptic sense of the promises of the future.

Glenn D. Lowry
Director
The Museum of Modern Art

INTRODUCTION

Greater New York 2010 takes measure of the diverse artistic practices existing and evolving in New York's metropolitan area, identifying a focused selection of 68 emerging artists and collectives who navigate between various media with ease, making use of video, photography, sculpture, painting, installation, and live action performance to address concerns that are dually of the world and of the studio. Works in the show react to the political debates of the 2008 election, the aftermath of September 11th, the role of race in corporate advertising, and also the material and conceptual possibilities of traditional artistic disciplines—asserting the potential physicality of photography, as well as an elastic notion of painting.

Inspired by MoMA PS1's inaugural exhibition, *Rooms* (1976), a group show whose premise was to offer each participating artist one of the museum's Romanesque Revival schoolhouse classrooms as their own blank canvas, the third iteration of *Greater New York* provides not only ample space for artists to exhibit their work but also studio space to create new works, rehearse performances, and serve as a laboratory for developing ideas.

MoMA PS1 has the rare benefit of being able to offer generous expanses of space, an especially unique opportunity in New York City. As tremendous real estate pressures force young artists to move deeper into the outer boroughs to find affordable studios, MoMA PS1 has provided vital assistance by opening its doors to the artists in *Greater New York*, inviting them to make use of the building as one massive studio space. In this way, the exhibition aims to highlight not only the finished works but also the actual process of creating art, putting on view and center stage the artists, their decisions and choices, their creative experimentation, and the risks they take.

I would like to thank Connie Butler and Neville Wakefield for devoting their time, energy, and enthusiasm to this exhibition. Their perspectives and expertise have brought together a dynamic group of artists. I extend my deepest thanks to all of the *Greater New York* artists, exhibition supporters, lenders, MoMA PS1 and MoMA staff, and recommenders for all they did to support the exhibition. Special thanks also to Terence Koh for his outstanding opening day performance. We have been amazed and greatly impressed by the artists we encountered in researching *Greater New York* 2010, and are immensely proud to exhibit their work.

Each iteration of *Greater New York* questions, researches, and showcases the creative potential brimming in New York City. In times

when the art world has so many centers, such as Beijing and Shanghai, Berlin and Warsaw, Mexico City and Rio de Janiero, just to name a few, *Greater New York* 2010 once more documents that New York City is still a place where artistic experimentation is not only possible, but happens on an extremely relevant and innovative level.

Klaus Biesenbach
MoMA PS1 Director
Chief Curator at Large, The Museum of Modern Art

GREATER NEW YORK 2010

A REPORT BY KLAUS BIESENBACH, CONNIE BUTLER, AND NEVILLE WAKEFIELD

The exhibition curators—Klaus Biesenbach, MoMA PS1 Director and a Chief Curator at Large at The Museum of Modern Art; Connie Butler, the Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawings, The Museum of Modern Art; and Neville Wakefield, MoMA PS1 Senior Curatorial Advisor—report on the development and presentation of *Greater New York*.

Greater New York presents the state of art in the New York area today. Exhibition research, primarily consisting of studio visits with artists, was performed for more than a year prior to the opening. Working from a blank slate, we agreed on only two artists at the outset. We asked fellow curators, artists from the 2000 and 2005 *Greater New York* exhibitions, and other colleagues for recommendations of artists who should be considered for *Greater New York* 2010. The MoMA PS1 Studio Visit website launched in fall 2009 and became a productive source of material, allowing local artists to share images of their studios and their work. In total, nearly 1,000 artist dossiers were compiled and reviewed, and more than 300 studio visits were made by all three curators. After all the artists were chosen, we asked each of them to propose an idea for a performance or an event, which eventually came together to form our *Greater New York* performance program.

At an early point in the research, the juxtaposition of "protest and celebration" was a common thread in many of the artistic practices we engaged. However, as the research process progressed, a broader range of themes emerged. While all of the artists in the exhibition are connected geographically and culturally to the greater New York area, there are no unified, overarching characteristics that truly connect all of their practices. Rather, they represent a critically diversified cross section of the city, ranging in age, race, gender, and nationality. Moreover, they work in virtually every imaginable medium, from painting, sculpture, and photography to video and sound installation, including a number of artists whose work challenges the boundaries between media entirely.

Greater New York 2010 is vitally characterized by a generosity with space, contrasting with the first two iterations of *Greater New*

York, which each featured more than 140 artists. While reviewing the opportunities to create a new template and identity for the quinquennial exhibition, we reconsidered MoMA PS1's inaugural exhibition *Rooms* (1976), in which each artist was given his or her own room in MoMA PS1's former school building. This site-specific, historical example provided the framework for the underlying principle of *Greater New York* 2010, which was the idea that the primary means of support that MoMA PS1 could offer its artists were space and time. In this spirit we invited the artists to take over the building, to utilize the vast space, and to exhibit what might otherwise be considered a collection of small solo shows. Additionally, this version of *Greater New York* has evolved to place a great deal of emphasis on performance, providing yet another forum for unique artistic experimentation and discourse.

Greater New York is a dynamic, living organism that is constantly changing by virtue of the artists' ongoing processes. Individual works in the exhibition mirror this notion of constant evolution. David Brooks' simulated tropical rain forest, preserved by its concrete encasement, takes on a new form each day as the natural processes of decay and degradation consume the piece. The Bruce High Quality Foundation has developed an "art pedestal exchange program," a seemingly minimal installation in which an assembly of brand new pedestals is offered to art schools in exchange for their old, worn ones. Over the course of the exhibition, what began as a pristine white accumulation of monumental forms will transform into a nuanced, variegated environment that itself reflects the multilayered, constantly reactive processes of art making.

The 2010 exhibition is not only comprised of work representative of the past five years, but it also fosters a productive workshop in which artists are invited to experiment with new ideas within the building. A number of artists have been commissioned to work in residence at MoMA PS1 to shoot photographs and video, to rehearse and realize performances, and to expand our notions of sculpture, painting, photography, and video-making. Franklin Evans transformed a gallery into a site-specific environment using the walls, floor, and ceiling as a surface for his abstract explorations of the nature of the artist's studio with his "walk-in painting." Utilizing canvas, tape, paper, and printed matter gathered from galleries and institutions that he has visited over the past months, Evans' immersive installation captures the energy of the creative process. A.L. Steiner's photo-collage installation is composed of hundreds of photographs that celebrate an imaginative vision of sexuality. The piece was assembled over the period of time leading up to *Greater New York*, and Steiner remains in residence in the building making use of

studio space. Dani Leventhal made use of studio space in advance of the exhibition to refine her collages and works on paper, and to edit her video works, which involve a rigorous process of compiling and condensing footage. Ryan McNamara uses the exhibition as a platform to invite dancers, both recognized and emerging, to teach him how to dance in various styles. Over the course of the exhibition, artists including Leidy Churchman, Zipora Fried, K8 Hardy, Tommy Hartung, Lucy Raven, Conrad Ventur, Pinar Yolaçan, and others make use of the galleries, as well as other spaces, to test ideas and realize works they could not have otherwise created.

In addition to the 68 artists and collectives that comprise the exhibition, we selected four guest curators—Olivia Shao, Kate Fowle, Cecilia Alemani, and Clarissa Dalrymple—to organize a series of smaller exhibitions that turn over every five weeks. Functioning as a more singularly focused view of new art in New York, the Rotating Gallery welcomes additional curatorial voices, specifically from curators who are not affiliated with larger institutions that have regular gallery space. Similarly, the 5 Year Review space offers an overview of the highlights of art and culture in New York since 2005. The 5 Year Review was assembled through outreach to a number of our colleagues working in New York, asking them to recommend what they personally deemed to be of cultural importance over the past 5 years. Further, MoMA PS1's basement vault was converted into a cinema with daily screenings of film and video works curated by Thomas Beard and Ed Halter, co-founders of Light Industry.

By inviting artists, curators, musicians, performers, and filmmakers to MoMA PS1 to participate in *Greater New York* 2010, we have attempted to represent the broad spectrum of creative practices and types of artistic practice and production existing, commingling, and evolving in New York now.

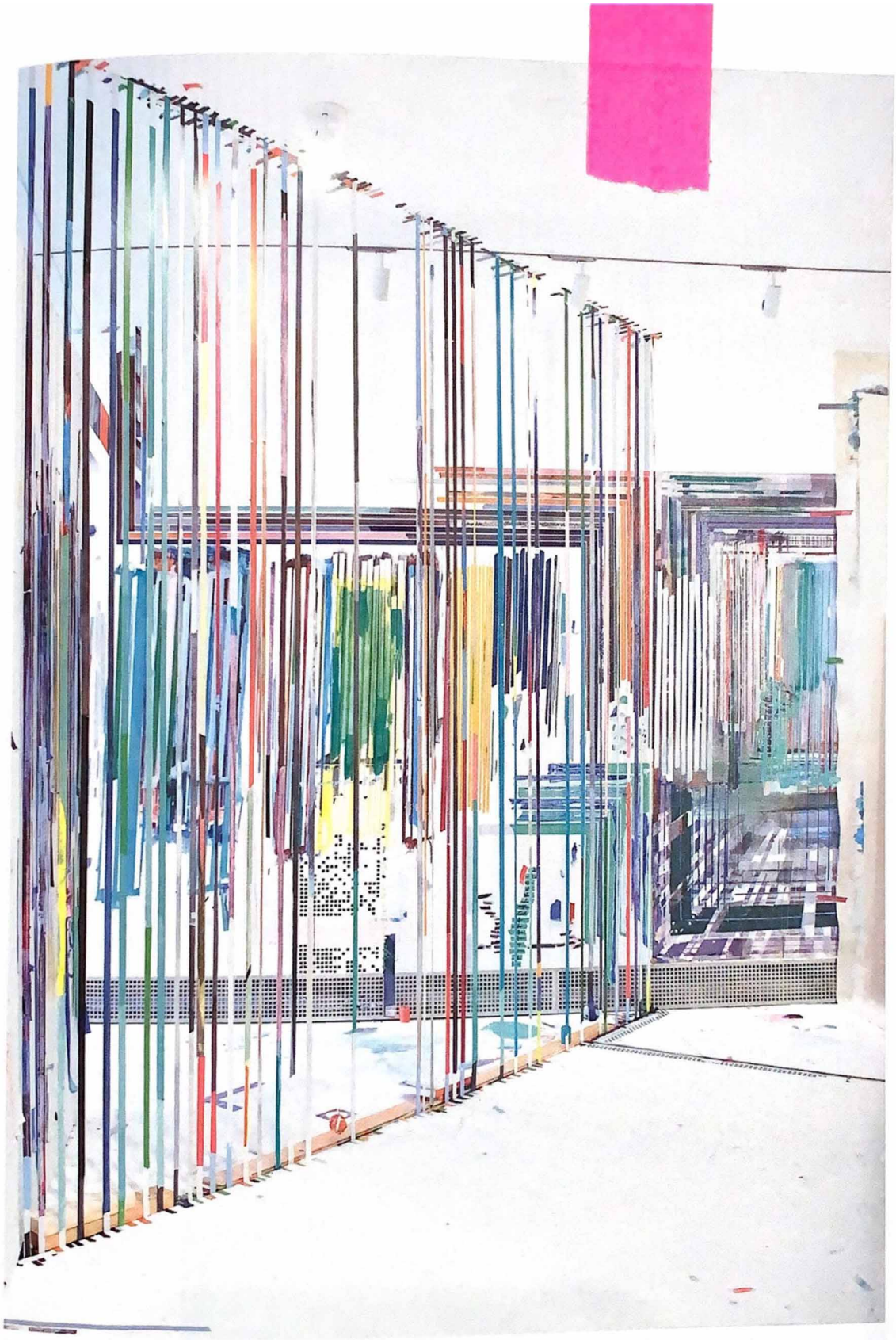
FRANKLIN EVANS
b. 1967

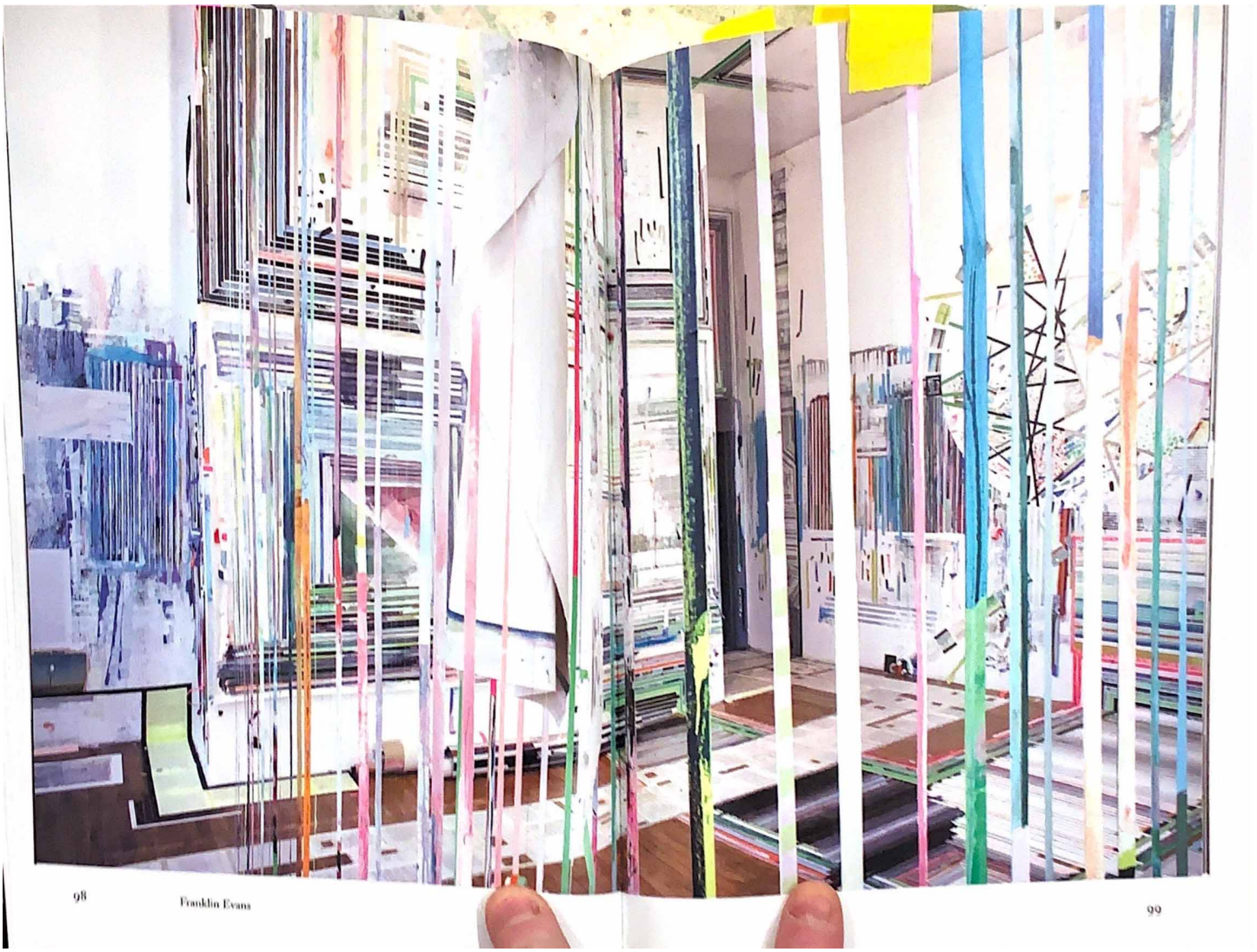
Interested in what he describes as the democratization of product and process, Franklin Evans' installations represent an attempt to probe the nature of the artist's studio. Utilizing a range of materials, including common art supplies such as paint, canvas, tape, paper, and Bubble Wrap, as well as art books and printed matter, Evans creates environments that provide insight into his working process and treat the studio as the site of exploration and possibility. Expanding on his practice as a painter, Evans' use of the studio as the subject of the work itself reflects an interest in the epistemological investigations of conceptual artists such as Mel Bochner, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd, and Robert Smithson, all of whom he cites as influences. Describing his work as the result of "temporally off-balance" collaborations with past artists and intellectual figures, Evans presents knowledge as something fluid rather than concrete; his installations appear to occupy a transitional state, complicating temporal and spatial arrangements.

In his most recent works, such as the large-scale installation *2008/2009<2009/2010* (2009), Evans displays paintings on canvas and works on paper alongside clusters of tape, piles of books, and wall sketches in a labyrinthine arrangement, forcing viewers to navigate the installation and the gallery space rather than to passively view it. Treating the walls and floors as potential painted surfaces, arranging industrial tape into sculptural formations and mesh-like painted screens, and integrating press releases from galleries and art books from his personal studio library, Evans' installations suggest "the not-quite-finished, the in-transition, the nearly-emerging, the slowly-evolving, the near-end, and the move-towards-erasure."

In the installation *timecompressionmachine* (2010), Evans continues to explore temporal shifts, pointing to the emphasis on nonlinear experiences and representations of time in his work. Composed of multiple overlapping pieces with canvas wrapped around walls and tape screens covering layers of process-based painting, the installation thwarts attempts to view it as a complete entity and provides a sense of a work in progress. In producing site-specific environments that only exist for the duration of an exhibition, Evans acknowledges the impermanence of his creations, challenging the common association of painting as a lasting medium.

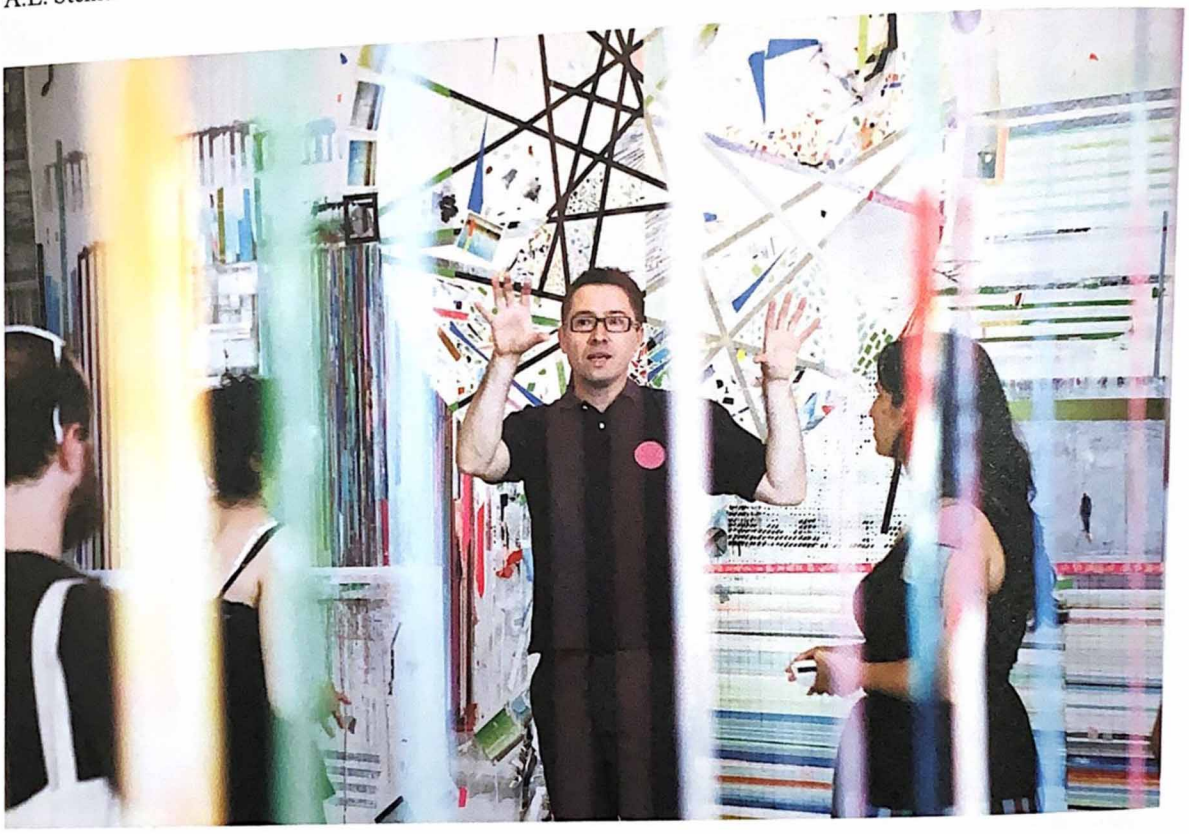
2008/2009 < 2009/2010
2009
installation view with *lookbackstage* and *through-friedrichsfuture*
mixed media (acrylic, painted tape, thread, watercolor on paper, books, text, wood on floors, walls, ceiling and window)
dimensions variable
courtesy the artist, Sue Scott Gallery, New York and Federico Luger, Milan





A.L. Steiner

Tamar Halpern and Debo Eilers



Franklin Evans

GREATER NEW YORK

GROUP PORTRAIT

Photo: Jason Schmidt

BOMB

Greater New York Roundtable: Franklin Evans and Sam Moyer

by Richard J. Goldstein

BOMB's Richard J. Goldstein talks generational differences, scale, and what it means to be a New York Artist with Greater New York artists Sam Moyer and Franklin Evans in this cyber-roundtable.

Sep 7, 2010

Franklin Evans, TIMECOMPRESSIONMACHINE, 2010, mixed medium, dimensions variable. Greater New York 2010 installation shot at P.S.1.Courtesy of Sue Scott Gallery.

Sam Moyer, Greater New York 2010 installation shot at P.S.1. Courtesy of the artist.

In just 10 years, MoMA P.S.1 has invited some 376 artists to participate in its Greater New York exhibitions, and that's just with three shows between 2000 and 2010. With a little more time between shows than the biennial, this quinquennial offers a chance for new artists, approaches, and attitudes in all media to transpire. Looking back at the shows over the decade, one can see these changes within the New York art community. Though, one thing remains constant and that is the energy and level of inquiry the artists ground their work upon—installed throughout this one-time school, a sense of science fair enthusiasm echoes down the halls. Franklin Evans and Sam Moyer, two participating artists in the 2010 group, both agreed to participate in an ongoing email dialogue about the exhibition. The contrasts between their work couldn't be more striking—Evans's colorful and cumulative installations exploding with texture and Moyer's black and bleached prints on panels with all texture relegated to the surface—but the casual elegance of both their works has the ability to totally absorb the viewer. They relate their involvement with an exhibition of this scale and give insight into the position of the often mythologized New York artist today.

Richard Goldstein What did you think of the show?

Franklin Evans I was impressed by the space that the curators generally allotted to each of the artists and by their curatorial decisions to emphasize process/performance-oriented work in this exhibition. Clearly like in any survey exhibition, many vibrant voices are somewhat ignored (painting), but I absolutely respect the choices of the curators not to dilute their idea by presenting an all-inclusive sampling of all media. Moreover, I like the idea of bringing in other voices via the rotating gallery exhibitions in the drawing gallery, which can allow for alternative ideas regarding what is most relevant and interesting now. Finally, there were several delights for me to discover in my initial and return visits to the show.

Sam Moyer The show mimics/mirrors a sense of the experience of New York, the living breathing thing for me. There are parts that are dark and fun, hidden behaviors, interruptive and interactive noise, things I want to avoid (but I'm glad I know they are there), spots I want to return to again and visual moments that stick with me. I am speaking generally, but there is an experiential blanketing effect that works for me. When I walk people through there for the first time they have a "what just happened…" mind set, but over time it wears off and they start to list particular things that struck them. Most "out of towners" are *fascinated*. That seems successful to me.

RG How did you go about making the selections for the show?

FE Klaus [Biesenbach], Connie [Butler], and Neville [Wakefield] offered me time to develop a new installation in a single room. They recognized that time was one of the subjects in the painting/installation language that I have been exploring over the past couple of years, and they suggested that I consider an installation in the spirit of this process-oriented exploration. I was excited to have a contained space (single room) in which to develop and reinvestigate processes that were both familiar and unfamiliar.

SM Well, that was hard for me. Nothing in particular was asked of me other then hearing through the grape vine that Connie would like some drawings in there. So, I made a little proposal…and then waited…

So in waiting I just started working and ended up with a smaller version of the piece I originally proposed, two drawings and a 36-foot sculpture that I kind of sprung on the curators. It all felt very up in the air until it was in the room, and then all of a sudden was very deliberate.

RG What do the pieces say about your practice as a whole?

FE *Timecompressionmachine* embodies my two year investigation that allows for a democratization of object and process. It has a relationship with many past practices, but aligned with the privileging of the individual, it is both my discarded material and my object investigation. It is the fullest installation I have done to date in contrast to recent past exhibitions whereby the processes were more discrete and less consciously intertwined.

SM The installation is a sampling of the different materials and systems I work with, but the goal was to show the crossover of themes and visual language that they share.

The objects I produce can appear very physically disparate but are always approached with the same set of concerns and motives. A large part of my practice is returning some power to the materials, defying their natural or intended use, highlighting their actual nature. Taking away a little control of the hand in the hand made. The list of themes goes on and on, but I feel like I was allowed a nice platform to show a body of work that represents my practice as a whole with pieces that are germane to each other.

RG Scale has always been an important subject of art. What does the exhibition say about the scale of our generation and of our generation's work?

FE I am not sure what you are getting at with this question…Are we the Make It Bigger Generation? I think we are past that (possibly linked to recent economic decline). GNY gave each artist essentially a single room (as did the Whitney) and yet in both cases, most of the work did not seem to be about making it big or small. Nothing felt like Richard Serra's*Torqued Ellipses*, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, or even the maquette for Jeff Koons' *LACMA Train*. The recent economic past may be a harbinger of what's to come (slow decline of economic hubris and transition to more moderate lifestyles) and in ways it may be seen in some of the

GNY work. Matt Hoyt's strange work wonderfully relates (and more than just this) to what I suggest as the current social attitude digesting the socioeconomic decline of America.

SM The scale of our generation…as in the amount of people? This question is tricky for me. It makes me think about scale in a sense of importance for some reason. How important is our generation's work? How many people does it reach? Do we make big things or small things? I think that scale is played with in very interesting ways throughout the show. There are sound pieces that take up huge amounts of space, and video pieces when looped take up infinite amounts of time. Mariah Robertson's photo on an entire roll of paper is defined by scale, a lot of the work is, including my own. I think the show is visually well balanced. I agree with Franklin that some of the smaller pieces take up the most space.

RG In terms of scale, I guess I wasn't as specific as I could be with that one…But I was thinking in terms of numbers, like there are so many artists today whereas in the '50s it was noted that the New York art scene was very small, just a handful. Though, there probably were plenty more people making work off the radar toiling away—perhaps the critics' definition of the scene was very narrow and exclusive then. Maybe today the scale of the scene is a lot bigger and less elite. The Internet increases the scale, everyone's in the pool and that's something specific to this time I guess. And that changes looking; where to look? Things may be less competitive now because there are more opportunities for artists, more galleries, and more alternative ways to get the work out there.

SM I think there is a generation of artists right ahead of me—I'm 27, so let's say 34–45-ish—that were able to saddle up on this incredible boom in the art market. It came in stride for a lot of them, and some just grazed the tail end, but they really showed that it was possible to make a life out of this. It's hard and competitive, but possible. Then once the market crashed all the kids that were waiting around for their turn didn't just give up. They started amazing DIY things, like Apartment Show. Of course the Internet and accessibility and the rejection of the idealized "artist" has broadened the field immensely. Anything goes. In the '50s, photography was barely considered art.

Plus, there is a slower maturation in a lot of ways now. We might know more and be more worldly than our parents were, but we don't have the same get married, get a mortgage, have a baby pressure that they did. We get to stay flexible longer, and that combined with being raised on ideas of being anything we want to be is a recipe for a lot of people doing what they want. Which fills the artist quota pretty fast. There are companies like the 3rd Ward in Bushwick that basically created a "how to be a NY artist" kit, that includes laptops, bikes, studio space, and lessons on how to build a loft. There is an infrastructure laid out that makes the whole thing more approachable and fathomable.

RG Sam mentioned a "blanketing effect" in one of her responses. A similar feeling came over me at the Armory show, but here there is a strong curatorial undercurrent. Is this blanketing something unique to our time? How does this shape work being made now?

FE I don't have the same blanketing experience with GNY, certainly not to the extent that I recently had in watching Chantal Akerman's *La Chambre* where the camera is in repeated 360 degree rotation of a room. On the first pass, I was unclear of the specificity of visual and structural arrangement. My initial experience with GNY (which was a rather cursory view of the show) led to an immediate understanding of what I was seeing and a clear impression of what I wanted specifically to explore further. I was later pleasantly surprised that some of what I had dismissed was far more rewarding than my quick dismissal had allowed for. I don't think that what I understand Sam describing as "blanketing" to be specific to this show or to our time. It could and does happen now (Sam) and at other times (my experience with 1970s Akerman).

SM I didn't intend for the "blanketing effect" to sound like a suggestion of doldrum-ness, more of an overarching understanding. Even though the works are all very different there is an overall thread that links everything, making the show feel connected. I also finished that statement by saying that after the overwhelming feelings of having seen so many different things at once passes, specifics start to pop up. It is the kind of exhibition I need to go back to a couple of times. As far as "blanketing effects" in general, the thing I was getting at is that you don't want to fall into the trend and be pigeonholed or disregarded as another little fish in whatever movement is being defined. You don't want to get *stuck* under the blanket.

Art fairs are not museum shows, they are not trying to do anything as a uniformed group other than have a successful art fair. The "blanketing effect" there, for me, is just seeing cubicle after cubicle of people trying to build the same house with a different set of tools.

RG The New York artist is often championed and maligned, ironic and sincere, naive and clever—an urban legend, that has evolved over time. What kind of picture does the show make of a New York artist now?

FE NY Artist Now: Championed and Maligned—YES; Ironic and Sincere—YES; an Urban Legend still evolving—YES; AND more (ambitious, obsessive, multi-media focused, interested in conceptual reconsideration of the past, process-oriented, mostly reaching outside the exclusivity of the studio, professional and career attentive).

SM I hope it shows that we are hard workers. That's what defines a New York artist for me. You have to work harder here than you would anywhere else. But that's what makes it good.

RG What makes GNY different than other contemporary youth-centric exhibitions like the Whitney Biennial and the New Museum's *Younger than Jesus?*

FE GNY is more geographically focused, slightly less youth-centric than the age-specific 33 of*Younger than Jesus*, but since it is about emerging art, it too is youngish. Whitney seems to have much less interest in age than in defining what the selected curator champions from the recent past nationally and sometimes beyond. GNY allows for a wider period in which to assess emerging work or work of import (past five years), but it still feels weighted toward the more recent past (past year or two) similar to a Whitney Biennial.

SM The community factor is the separation for me. The specificity of place creating the playing field. I like that New York plays a neutral and aggressive role in the creation of the show. We all have that in common. I guess being under 33 is something to have in common…but age is sly, a location is fact.

RG Emerging isn't really the word that best locates your careers, perhaps rising…If GNY marks your career at a beginning, what is the destination for you?

FE It seems like the horizon interminably pushes further into the distance as we pass markers that used to define that horizon. I plan/hope to be in New York for many years to come.

SM To work until I can't work anymore. (cross fingers, knock on wood) I'm too superstitious to say.

At 5:00 pm September 11, 16, and 23, 2010, several performances, on which Franklin Evans collaborated, will occur at P.S.1.

Richard J. Goldstein is a Brooklyn-based painter and writer.

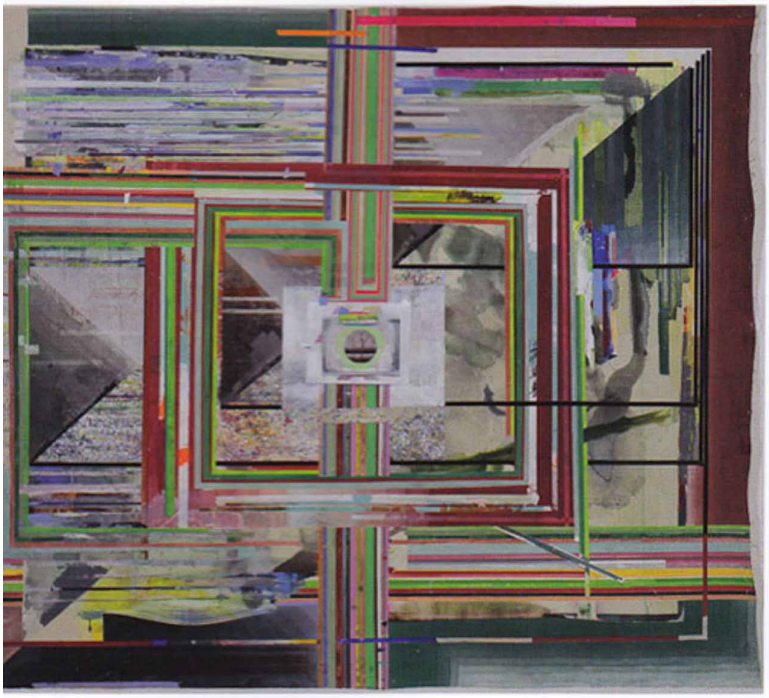
Spotlight

Franklin Evans (Edition #62)

On time, space, Stella, and tape with the New York painter

by Evan J. Garza

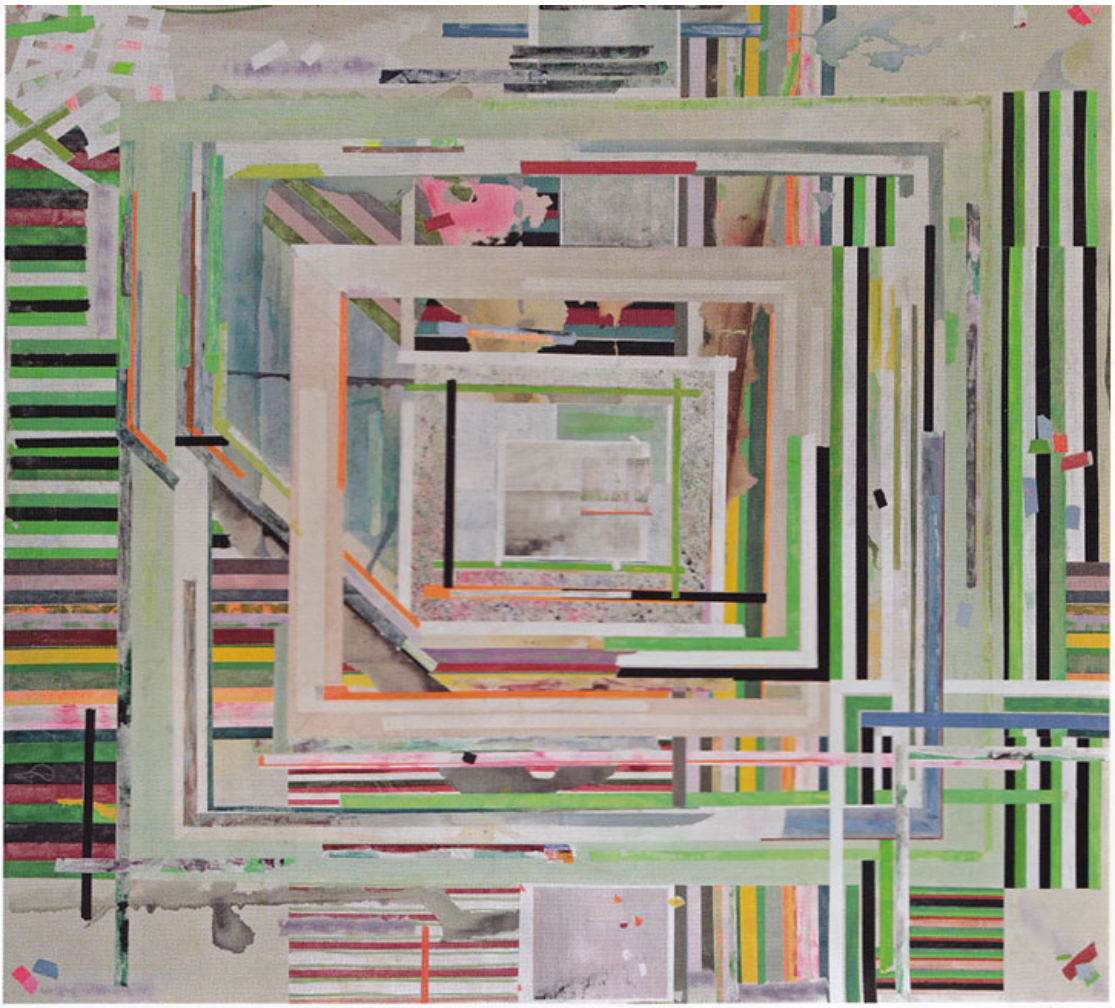
There is a subjectivity inherently built into the understanding of artwork that we all fundamentally accept. You see something, I see something, and collectively we accept the basic, objective characteristics of the object in front of us—what it's made out of, how it's displayed, and anything we can infer from a wall label. Then we each respectively run with it from there. In a sense, a work of art has just as many points of entry as there are viewers to find them. The paintings and installations of Nevada native Franklin Evans not only address this idea of subjective perception in a compositional sense, but in terms of its spatial implications as well.



In bringing their own personal experiences to the experience of standing in front of an artwork, a viewer carries with them an individual narrative that is imparted onto the work as a means of trying to understand it. Evans' recent work poetically and rigorously examines this concept of perspective in both its subjective and formal understandings—as both a way of seeing and a vantage point.

His recent installations for *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1 and Sue Scott Gallery in New York lined entire rooms with chromatically intense bars of acrylic paint on industrial tape, with Evans quite literally taking paint applied on a flat surface and suspending it within the physical space of the gallery. Bands of hot pink, neon yellow, and green tape, covered with layers of multicolored paint, stretch from floor to ceiling, foregrounding themselves in front of the viewer against a backdrop of similarly striped wall space, creating both a disparity and unity between the two. It's a strange and colorful test of depth perception, echoing the likes of Josef Albers and Frank Stella, with the end result being optically charged, spatially engaged, and deeply fresh.

The floor space in Evans' installations is also often activated—with a trail of laminated exhibition media releases, drawings, and studies in the case of his installation at PS1—grounding the physical structure of the paintings against the gallery walls. This exercise



recalls the use of the stretcher within the history and practice of painting, where materials are applied to a flat plane adjoined to a larger architectural frame. It's a subtle gesture, and a straightforward one at that, with incredible implications for the understanding of Evans' work and how we perceive the spatial function of paint.

The lines of tape in his installations form a series of three-dimensional brushstrokes the viewer can walk around, bringing a renewed and rigorous—even experiential—approach to the physical implications of landscape. That relationship to space is evident in the scenery of his native Reno and his early engagement with watercolors.

"[The early watercolors] are still so linked to how I make work," Evans tells me in the salon of his Lower East Side loft, which he's kept for the last twelve years. "They were a simple arrangement and repetition of these bands of color along an edge, very linked to Frank Stella's Black Paintings without even thinking about it; a traced form on the edge, then copied multiple times in several colors, moving things in front of and behind it," he says.

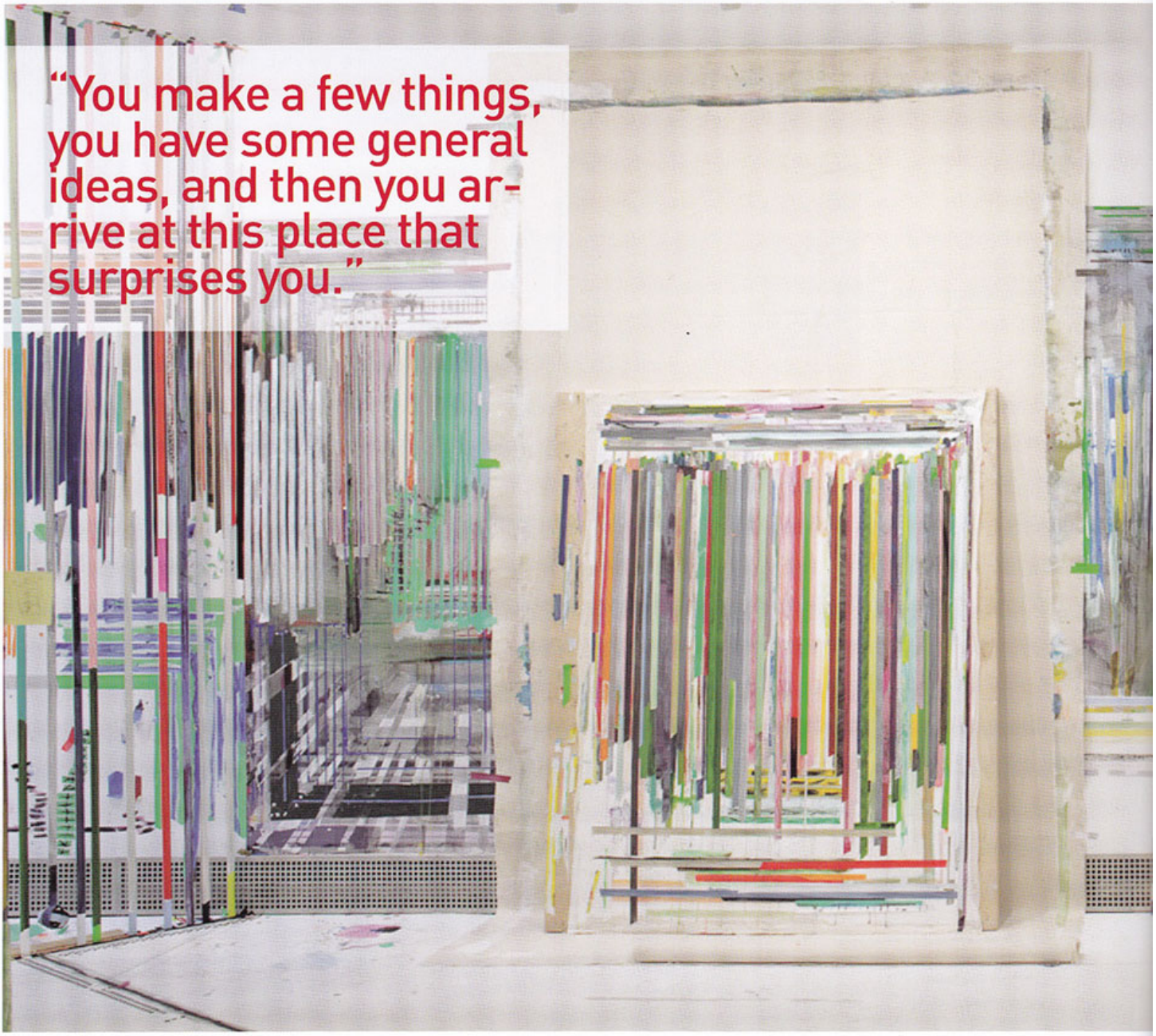
"In doing simple painting exercises, I start seeing forms and space... not trying to depict either one initially, but either creating something slightly more voluminous or a bigger window into space. And [in the early watercolors] there was a link to landscape, those sparse

<

treeandtape
2011
acrylic on canvas
72 x 84 inches
courtesy Sue Scott Gallery, New York, NY

>

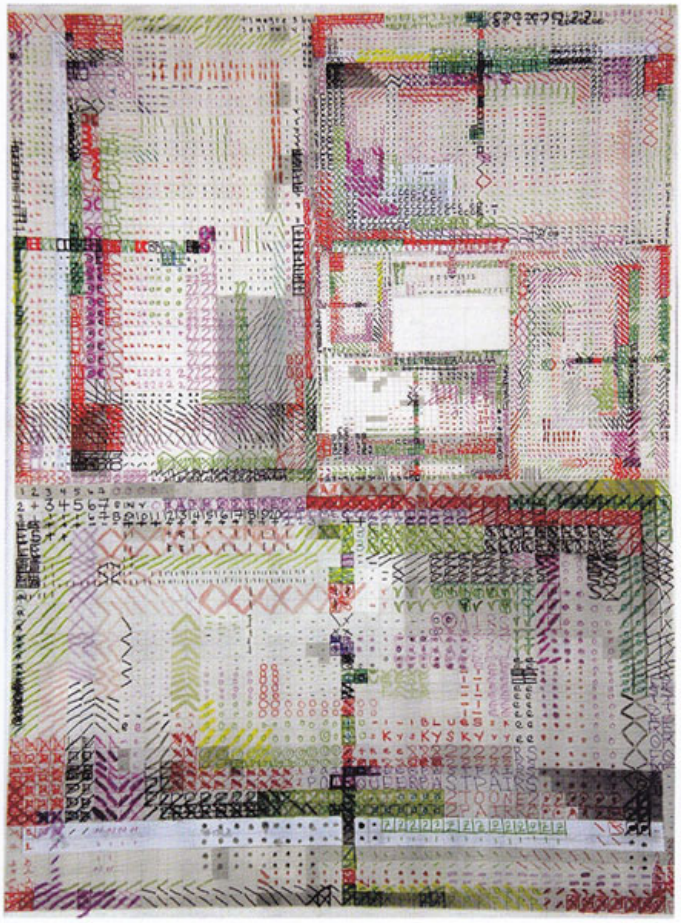
moonscapestacks
2011
acrylic on canvas
72 x 78 inches
courtesy Sue Scott Gallery, New York, NY



"You make a few things, you have some general ideas, and then you arrive at this place that surprises you."

landscapes of the desert West. Not literal depictions, but somehow recalling that space," he explains.

Out of high school, Evans quickly left Reno for Stanford University, where he excelled at math and pursued drawing. His graduate work was in painting at the University of Iowa, where his studio began to expand materially, experimenting with translucency and resins. His subsequent move to New York would leave him without a bona fide studio practice for a roughly five years, during which time he worked for a derivatives firm, attended the Executive MBA Program at Columbia Business School, and held temping jobs at night.



His solid return to the studio in 2001 saw the injection of narrative into his work and the use of watercolors in new and previously unexplored ways. His interest in the spatial implications of the medium became quickly evident in his new work, which featured painted subjects appearing and disappearing from behind tightly wound strokes of watercolor.

Not long afterwards, Evans began using tape to block out paint in his watercolor works, and the residual painted tape later became active in the work itself in 2003, and several of his more recent works were originally conceived and created in the process of washing paintbrushes. This creative submission to the unplanned is not only indicative of the mathematical problem solving Evans was previously familiar with but has become fundamental influence in his art-making practice.

While his works collapse inward and expand outward with visual and spatial cues, it's the referential entry points that are the most profound. His installation for *Greater New York* at PS1, *timecompressionmachine*, 2010, was the product of a near year-long residency in The Space Program of the Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation in DUMBO, Brooklyn, siphoned into a line that passes through multiple planes in a spatial environment. Like Evans' instal-

^
installation view, *2008/2009 < 2009/2010*, Sue Scott Gallery, New York, NY

<
times2atten
2011
watercolor and ink on paper
14 x 15 inches

>
installation view, *timcompressionmachine* at *Greater New York*, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY

lation, time is linear and therefore a kind of formal element that is wielded in his practice as much as the tape that lines the gallery itself.

As for the future and linear narrative of his practice, the use of photographs continue to make their way into the artist's work in more present and focal ways. Evans' most common figurative subject in recent years has been the frequent, hand-drawn pixelation of a photo of a naked tree in a field, culled from a newspaper. When a fragment of the photo was accidentally torn away, Evans kept it as is and reflected the cut shape in his renderings of the image, imbuing the grid fields of his paintings and works on paper with narrative, landscape, and his own subjective experience.

"You can't quite plan for things," Evans tells me, looking at the floor, where a linear series of colorless cut tape pieces have been formed into a makeshift ruler for spacing the lines of his paintings and installations. "You make a few things, you have some general ideas, and then you arrive at this place that surprises you." ■

New Models, Strange Tools

By Raphael Rubinstein

As I sit down to begin this essay I am recalling details from my studio visits to the four artists in this show. At a certain point in Lydia Dona's studio—a clean, quiet space in an anonymous commercial building in midtown Manhattan to which Dona recently moved after many decades in a much grittier downtown studio—the artist dimmed the lights so that different aspects of the paintings could emerge. It was startling to me that as the studio turned dark, certain lines and areas of the canvases began to glow and pulsate, as if the paintings had suddenly become not objects against a wall, but animate, mutating beings. During my visit to Fabian Marcaccio's studio, only a few blocks away from Dona's but very different in style (more like the headquarters of some quirky start-up) I noticed how, as we sat looking at his recent work, a 3-D printer across the studio ran ceaselessly, producing an element that would probably find its way into one of the artist's materially unruly paintings. As Marcaccio explained to me the importance of weaving and knotting the ropes that are the main supports of his paintings, his computer-driven machine obediently pursued its task, suggesting another level of interweaving: the machinemade and the handmade.

At Franklin Evans' studio, in a funky building on the Lower East Side that has seen its share of recent art history (John Currin and Sean Landers worked there early in their careers), I found myself having to take off my shoes so that I could, with the artist's permission, walk over the canvases-in-progress lying on the floor. More paintings covered the walls from floor to ceiling, each of them packed with dozens or maybe hundreds of individual images; my visual receptors were momentarily overwhelmed, not knowing where to start, but then a single small detail, an image I knew from Matisse but had never dreamt of encountering like this, solicited my attention and gave me an entry point into Evans' multifarious array. To arrive at Pedro Barbeito's Brooklyn studio involved a walk from the nearest subway through a bleak mixed-use neighborhood no doubt soon to be snatched up by real estate developers. In the studio, a big aluminum structure, which at first I took for some temporary architectural fixture, nearly blocked off access to one end of the space; it was, I learned, part of the work that Barbeito was making for "Dynamic Pictorial Models." As the artist spoke to me about his work and process, about his interest in particle physics and cosmology, about developing new methods of making paintings, he dropped a reference to something called "strange tools," a concept he'd found in the writings of American philosopher Alva Noë. The phrase stayed with me and I think it might be helpful in approaching not only Barbeito's work but the exhibition as a whole.

Technology is one of Noë's central concerns. Defining it very broadly (the book opens with an account of how breast-feeding can be considered as a technology), Noë describes any "organized activity" as a technology, including such basic functions as speaking, dancing, singing and thinking. At a higher level, he argues, these activities are "put on display," which then allows them to "loop back" and "reorganize" the primary activity. Thus, choreography reorganizes dancing, visual art reorganizes picture making, philosophy reorganizes thinking and so forth. It is these practices, identified in the book as artistic practices, that Noë calls "strange tools." As he explains:

"Art is interested in removing tools (in my extended sense) from their settings and thus making them strange and, in making them strange, bringing out the ways and textures of the embedding that has been taken for granted. A work of art is a strange tool, an alien implement. We make strange tools to investigate ourselves."[i]

In Barbeito's work, there is a great deal of removing things from their original contexts, especially from the realm of science. The large circular element in *Collision Chamber RT* (2015-2016) was inspired by the satellite dishes used in radio astronomy; it can also be seen, the artist explains, as a cross section of a particle collider such as the Hadron collider at CERN in Switzerland. This is also the source for the black sculptural element, created with a 3-D printer, visible through the apertures in the white disk, which is, in fact, canvas stretched on a circular wood support. Arrayed across the surface of this shaped painting are relief images from these and other Big Science marvels, both ancient and modern. Many of the finely detailed motifs visible in Barbeito's work are created with an unusual "pen" invented by the artist (speaking of strange tools) that he uses to extrude paint in precisely controlled lines.

It isn't only science that inspires Barbeito: his work also grapples with the legacy of radical postwar art, including Lucio Fontana's revelation that the space between the surface of the painting and the wall it hangs must also be the territory of painting, and Robert Smithson's vision of the artist as a sci-fi fantasist and cosmic cartographer. By inserting an openwork, and subtly crystalline, aluminum structure between the canvas and the wall (it is inspired by the kinds of scaffolding and support structures found in science labs, radio telescopes and airports), Barbeito dramatically expands the interstitial zone pioneered by Fontana. As we engage with Barbeito's work, our attention has to constantly toggle between binary pairings: the micro and the macro, subatomic particles and distant stars, painting and sculpture, the visible and the invisible. Then, at a certain point, all these oppositions are subsumed into his, and our own, larger project: the visual embodiment of knowledge.

Baroque, entropic, riddled with images of violence and eroticism, throbbing with high-key, artificial color—at first glance the work of Fabian Marcaccio seems impossibly distant from Barbeito's architectonic, neatly executed, perfectly calibrated, white-on-white constructions. What these two artists share, however, is significant. Like Barbeito, Marcaccio has over the decades ceaselessly incorporated new technology into his work, inventing his own set of strange tools and diverting existing devices to his equally strange ends. I would also argue that both artists have a strong relationship to Fontana, evident, chez Marcaccio, in the constant breaking-up of the support and the resulting activation of the real space behind it. On the subject of postwar Italian art, Marcaccio is, it seems to me, one of the contemporary artists who has engaged most directly and most radically with the legacy not only of Fontana but also of Alberto Burri. In Marcaccio's paintings—these tense, gnarly webs of ropes and bungee cords bristling with glistening globs of paint and 3-D printed pseudo artifacts—it's as if Burri's burlap bags have been subjected to a regime of steroids and human growth hormone. But, importantly, Marcaccio does not stop at abstract materiality: his paintings are thoroughly (and literally) enmeshed in the realm of images, especially images that the mainstream media finds hard to tolerate. Sometimes explicitly foregrounded, sometimes slow to emerge, bodies and figures, nearly always charged with socio-political content, are ever-present in his work. In *Scientologists* (2016), for instance, we see the spectacle of actor and Scientology follower Tom Cruise receiving a medal from one of his co-religionists (both figures rendered as disintegrating waxwork effigies). More than any other contemporary painter, Marcaccio relies on paradox, a cascade of conceptual reversals and physical contradictions. Simultaneously pre-digital and post-digital, Marcaccio's "paintants" imply that the medium has undergone a major genetic mutation, as indeed it has.

Confronted with one of Franklin Evans' wall-floor-ceiling installations, or with a single painting such as the recent *artasmodel* (2016), even casual viewers will notice how the artist has seeded his work with references to other artists. For the last couple of years, Evans has been largely focused on works by Matisse (especially *The Romanian Blouse*, 1939-1940), though additional escapees from art history are beginning to infiltrate his work (he seems to be scrambling the rhythmic grids of Mondrian's New York City paintings). Defying those who believe that self-referential, critique-driven art should remain at a safe remove from any kind of visual hedonism, Evans offers explosive fields of color, line and shape at the same time as he engages in deep conceptual conversations.

In recent works, which continue to employ proliferating grids that reside somewhere between the vernacular tradition of quilting and a computer screen taken over by a virus that keeps opening an infinity of new windows, Evans engages canonical texts by Barbara Rose, Thomas Lawson, Yve-Alain Bois and others (including the present author) by painting into his own work images of paintings referenced by those critics. An equal-opportunity appropriator, Evans frequently cannibalizes his own work, reusing parts of previous installations (which here includes painting onto recycled fragments of his 2013 installation at Ameringer McEnery Yohe Gallery). Recontextualizing the hetero-erotic stance of Matisse with an array of boldly homoerotic images, Evans, for all his evident love of art history, does not respect the authority of the masterpiece. When, in 2013, New York's Museum of Modern Art mounted an exhibition titled "Inventing Abstraction: 1910-1925," many observers accused the museum of arrogance and ethnocentrism for its apparent disregard of widespread nonwestern traditions of abstract art that flourished for many millennia before 1910. One of the strongest critiques came from poet Charles Bernstein in an essay titled "Disfiguring Abstraction." Rereading Bernstein's text the other day, I was struck by a passage that seems to perfectly crystallize the mood of liberty and permission pervading Evans' work: "No one owns art history: not the artist, not viewers, not scholars, not critics, not museums. Not even art." [ii]

A deep engagement with art history has long been central to the work of Lydia Dona, yet she is also an artist who is keenly alert to the actual world around her, especially to the volatile nexus of technology, biology and politics. Since the early 1990s, Dona has been crucial to the development of a philosophically-grounded project (she was one of the first painters to draw on the writings of Gilles Deleuze) to redefine painting as a medium of open discourse rather than as, say, formalist exercise, nostalgic recuperation or conceptual illustration. But while her paintings deploy tropes and techniques lifted from specific historical moments (the soaked/stained ground of Color Field painting, the drip of Abstract Expressionism, the strict geometry of Constructivism and Minimalism, the Bachelor Machines of Duchamp), she never falls into stylistic eclecticism, or superficial quotation. Clearly, her painterly abilities help protect her from indulging in artistic clichés, but of equal, or perhaps greater importance, is the fact that her art seeks to confront the conflict-riven contemporary world that all of us inhabit. The linear shapes that drift across her canvases are not simply signs of "the hand," or exercises in biomorphic drawing, but precise images torn from the technical schematics that determine so much of our existence, often invisibly.

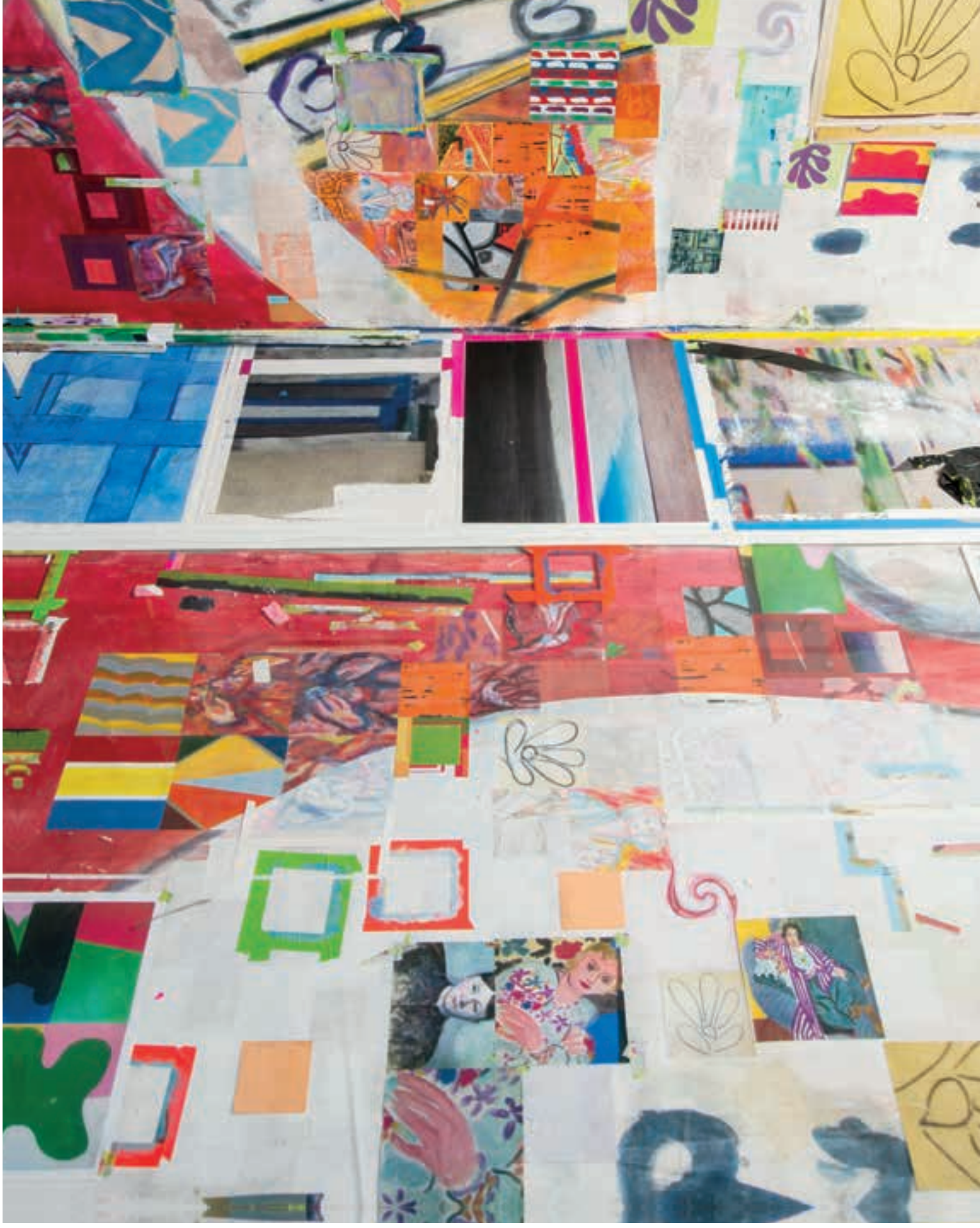
This is stuff from the real world of factories, laboratories, hospitals and urban infrastructures, the world where the membrane between human and machine is becoming everyday more porous. In the context of this show, Dona is the only of the four artists who has chosen to work within the conventions of the stretched canvas, but her work is hardly retrospective. In a painting such as *Bodies of Multiple Dwellings* (2016), the polyphonic spatial and retinal effects force the viewer to conceive new ways of looking at abstraction. The artist's distinctive combination of paint types (oil, acrylic, sign paint and a variety of powdered pigments) contributes to the sense of the unforeseen, as does the delicate violence with which she builds up her surfaces and images. The results are paintings where systems seem to be simultaneously collapsing and emerging, a condition that is true of all the work in this exhibition.

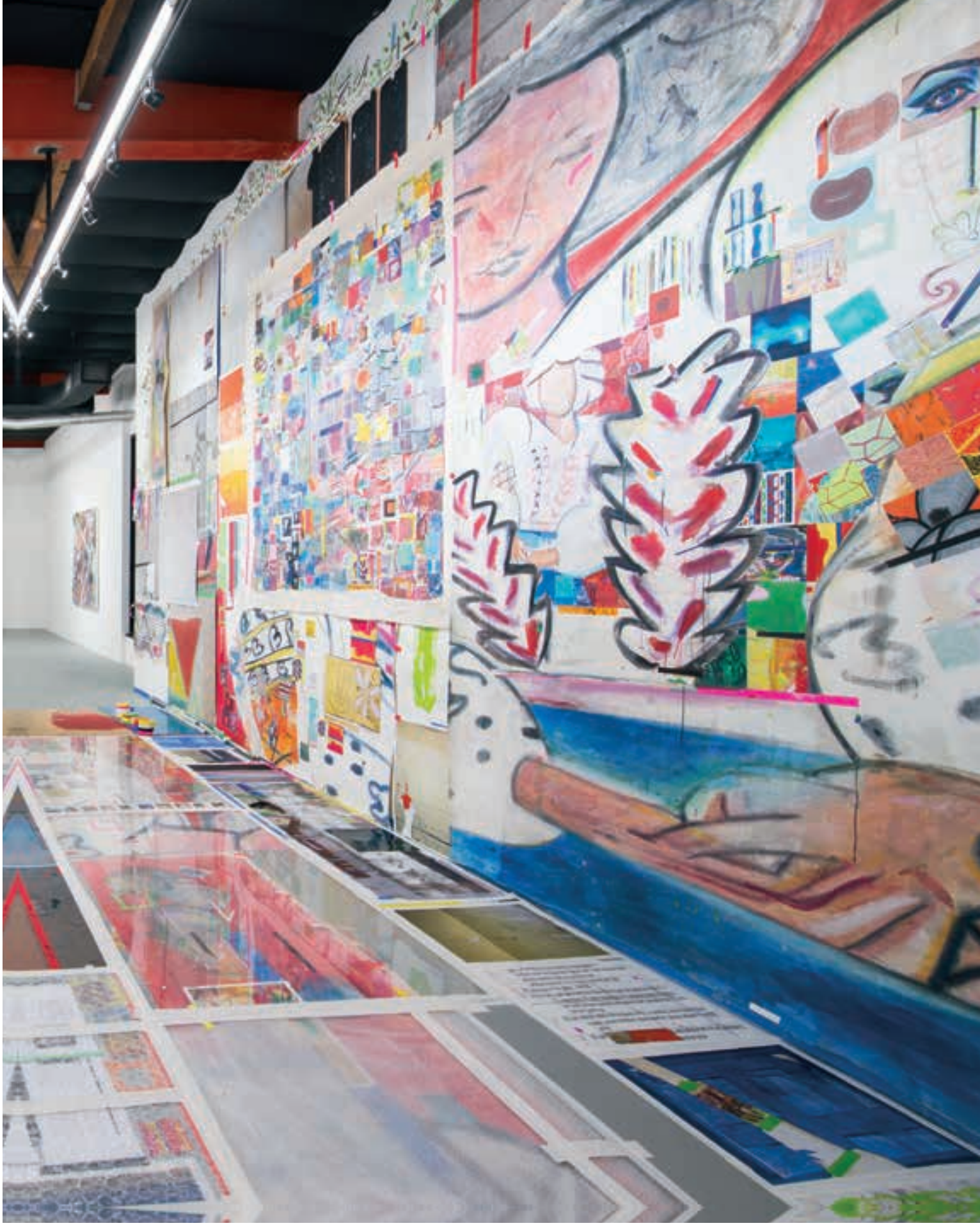
It was 30 years ago that Yve-Alain Bois published his influential essay "Painting as Model" in which he points out that "abstract models" do not precede the artwork but that "the work produces them by itself for anyone who takes the trouble to notice."[iii] This is very much the situation we find with Pedro Barbeito, Lydia Dona, Franklin Evans and Fabian Marcaccio, whose art offers four distinct and deeply interrelated models for thinking, and also supplies us with brilliantly fashioned tools to help turn the direction of that thinking, in all its pictorial dynamics, toward ourselves—which is where it was always heading in the first place.

[i] Alva Noë, Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature, Hill and Wang, New York, 2015, p. 30

[ii] Charles Bernstein, "Disfiguring Abstraction," Critical Inquiry, Spring 2013, p. 497

[iii] Yve-Alain Bois, "Painting as Model," October, Summer 1986, p. 126. Bois credits art historian Hubert Damisch for this insight, citing an essay where Damisch reproaches Jacques Lacan for trying to impose his theories upon French artist François Rouan.





deCordova | Sculpture Park and Museum

PAINT THINGS

BEYOND THE STRETCHER

JANUARY 27—APRIL 21, 2013

INTRODUCTION:
PAINT THINGS AT DECORDOVA

Dina Deitsch

PAINT THINGS: BEYOND THE STRETCHER examines a recent development of contemporary art that blurs the distinction between painting and sculpture. In doing so, the work on view proposes a breach to the spatial and material limitations of painting while permeating the field of sculpture with issues of color, flatness, and the wall. Using Jessica Stockholder's *Kissing the Wall* series from the early 1990s as a starting point, *PAINT THINGS* articulates a trajectory of 'expanded painting' that is centered specifically on the notion of space—that of the painted thing, the actions that created it, and the architectural container that is the gallery.

PAINT THINGS features eighteen artists working today who oscillate in different ways between the spheres of painting and sculpture. This blurring of media is not itself new—as my co-curator Evan J. Garza so beautifully points out in his essay that traces its roots in post-war American and European art—but has hit a crescendo in today's art discourse. *PAINT THINGS* is not the first exhibition to handle this material either. In 1980, Judith Tannenbaum organized *3-Dimensional Painting* for the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, featuring many of the artist precursors to *PAINT THING*—Lynda Benglis and Frank Stella, among many others. More recently, broadening the definition of painting has been the topic of no less than seven gallery exhibitions in the northeast since 2011.[1] *PAINT THINGS*, however, is the first museum exhibition in recent years to examine the distinctly spatial turn in painting, or better still—the painterly turn in sculpture.

"Expanded Painting" is both an idea and a term rooted early in the post-modernist period of the 1960s and 1970s. Whereas FLUXUS artist George Maciunas presented the *Expanded Arts Diagram* in 1966 and Gene Youngblood published *Expanded Cinema* in 1970, it was the art historian and theorist Rosalind Krauss's seminal essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" that wends its way, most

deeply, into our contemporary discourse.[2] In 1979, Krauss famously described the plurality of post-modern sculpture:

> *Over the last ten years rather surprising things have come to be called sculpture: narrow corridors with TV monitors at the ends; large photographs documenting country hikes; mirrors placed at strange angles in ordinary rooms; temporary lines cut into the floor of the desert. Nothing, it would seem, could possibly give to such a motley of effort the right to lay claim to whatever one might mean by the category of sculpture. Unless, that is, the category that can be made to become almost infinitely malleable.*[3]

She goes on to articulate boundaries for the increasingly formless shape of contemporary sculpture by defining sculpture by its negation—not landscape, not architecture (*fig 1*).

The lessons of that period—specifically a negation of categorization in art making and with that a distinct sense of pluralism—loom large today. One would be hard pressed to find a working artist at present who focuses on a single medium. We can credit the continued opening of art to the 1990s, a time in which identity politics—topics of queerness, race, gender, class, imperialism, and all forms of social self-identity—came to the fore within the art world.[4] Artists used strategies from all disciplines, well beyond those of fine art, to critique cultural hegemony.[5] As such, the decade saw a preponderance of immersive installation art (an outgrowth of sculpture), the emergence of which Nicolas Bourriaud termed Relational Aesthetics,[6] and that has now given way to a more overtly political and communally-engaged hybrid of art as Social Practice.[7]

Clearly, the field of sculpture has continued a comfortable expansion into the world. And now, it seems to be marching on over into painting.

Painting holds enormous symbolic power. It can stand in as the legacy of art, as a whole, and all of its associations with wealth and social values. Perhaps sculpture has expanded so far that it has decided to now look at art itself, so embodied by painting, as a cultural production ripe for critique. As the essay that follows notes—the image, the pictorial realm, may well be the next frontier for the sculptural imagination.

However, it is not the goal of this introduction to answer such questions, but to pose them. In fact, it is ultimately the artwork that individually responds to these queries.

The artists collected in this exhibition *paint things*. They literally paint things. And by doing so they welcome the notion of the Thing—the object—into the realm of the image and, in the modernist language of a painting, into the flatness that is painting's historical hallmark. But as this exhibition and the recent history of sculpture make evident, the object itself, this Thing, has been questioned for the

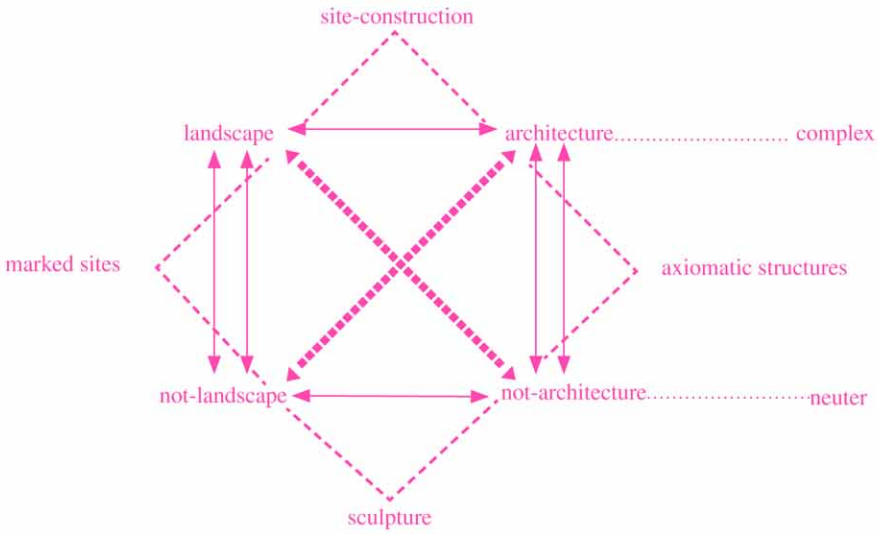


fig. 1
Rosalind Krauss, a diagram of Postmodern sculpture, based on the mathematical logic called the "Klein group." Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October*, vol. 8 (Spring 1979), 37.

past century. Thus, the artists in *PAINT THINGS* use everything from Plexiglas, to performances, to slides, to chairs, to the gallery walls and floors to create their paint things. In short, the Thing itself, similar to painting, has its own potency as a symbol—one of heterogeneity or, in simpler terms, of the world.

In his essay, Evan J. Garza carefully traces what Jessica Stockholder notes as "a way of thinking"—that is a view of painting or sculpture that incorporates everything from the early to mid-20th century, particularly the mindsets of Lucio Fontana, Robert Rauschenburg, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Lynda Benglis. By letting in the world, through the inclusion of the artist's body or simply the unorthodox use of the gallery wall, the artists featured in *PAINT THINGS* present us with a continuum from these historical precedents that demonstrates the power of the artistic gesture to impact our view of the world, and vice versa.

This current rise of "painterly sculpture"[8] or sculptural painting finds its way to deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum at a time when the institution itself has re-asserted its commitment to the Park and the sculpture within it. As New England's largest sculpture park, we are now poised to become its largest center for contemporary sculpture and all the provocative and exciting questions, challenges, and possibilities that status implies.

DINA DEITSCH
Curator of Contemporary Art

NOTES

1—See: *3 DIMENSIONAL PAINTING*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1980, Judith Tannenbaum, Curator; *Painting...EXPANDED*, Espacio 1414 Puerto Rico, 2012. Recent gallery shows include (almost all of which were organized by commercial galleries): *Triumph of Painting*, Saatchi Gallery, London, 2009-2011; *Unpainted Paintings*, Luxembourg and Dayan, New York, NY, 2011; *Not About Paint* (curated by Evan J. Garza), Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston, 2011; and *The Thingness of Color*, DODGEgallery, New York, NY. In the summer of 2012 alone, shows included*: The Big Picture*, Sikkema Jenkins, New York, NY; *Context Message*, Zach Feuer, New York, NY; *Everyday Abstract—Abstract Everyday* (Curated by Matthew Higgs), James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY; *Painting in Space* (Curated by—Tom Eccles and Johanna Burton), Luhring Augustine, New York, NY; and *Stretching Painting* (curated by Veronica Roberts), Galerie Lelong, New York, NY.

2—The term "Expanded Field" has had its own resurgence in recent years. See George Baker, "Photography Photography's Expanded Field," *October*, No. 114. (Fall 2005), 120-140; *Architecture in the Expanded Field*, 2012 CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, CA; Gustavo Fares, "Painting in the Expanded Field," *Janus Head* 7, no. 2 (2004), 477-487.

3—Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October*, No. 8. (Spring, 1979), 30-44.

4—*The New York Times* critic Roberta Smith famously characterized the 1993 Whitney Biennial exhibition (a classic hallmark of a moment) as "a Biennial with a social conscience." See "Roberta Smith at the Whitney, A Biennial with a Social Conscience", *New York Times* (March 05), 1993.

5—See *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere*, Mass MoCA, 2004-2005, curated by Nato Thompson.

6—Art that uses human relation and their social context as its point of reference, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija *Untitled (Free)*, 1992 at 303 Gallery in New York, in which the artist converted a gallery into a kitchen where he served rice and Thai curry for free. In this deceptively simple conceptual piece, the artist invites the visitor to interact with contemporary art in a more sociable way, and blurs the distance between artist and viewer. You aren't looking at the art, but are part of it—and are, in fact, making the art as you eat curry and talk with friends or new acquaintances.

7—See Portland State University's Art and Social Practice MFA, described as "a unique combination of individual research, group work, and experiential learning. The program's blend of critical and professional practice, collaborative social engagement, and transdisciplinary exploration produces an immersive educational environment." (http://www.psusocialpractice.org/)

8—Allison Gingeras, "Profile: Painting without Canvas or Sculpting with Paint: Preparatory Sketch for an Exhibition," *Contemporary Magazine* (http://www.contemporary-magazines.com/profile64_3.htm).

PAINT THINGS: BEYOND THE STRETCHER

Evan J. Garza

THE MEETING OF SCULPTURE AND PAINTING is not a new concept, nor is it a contemporary threshold. The marriage of the object to paint is inherent to the practice of pushing color around on a surface, and as such the practice of painting—like sculpture and performance—is fundamentally bound to space, in both a physical and intuitive sense. Within and around a given work exist multiple forms of space, among them the area between the body and the work, its dimensional space as a container for materials and gesture (painted or otherwise), and its architectural—and contextual—support. Above all, the painting itself is insistent in its three-dimensional presence as a *thing*. It is this reliance on the physical object in space and the performative act of painting with which this exhibition is concerned. *PAINT THINGS: beyond the stretcher* is an examination of sculpture-as-painting and vice versa within the last 25 years, featuring contemporary artists who use sculptural and performative mediums as a means of confronting or investigating the practice of painting.

EARLY SPACE EXPLORATION

Attempts to open the canvas began first with the image. Following World War II, collective understandings of the destructive power of violence found echoes in a myriad of expanded methods of painting worldwide.[1] Like all advancements in painting up to this point, these amendments would begin on the surface. In 1949, Lucio Fontana, who was trained as a sculptor in Argentina and Italy, literally opened the surface of the canvas by puncturing it to reveal the space behind it. These *Concetti spaziali* (*Spatial Concepts*) came in the form of trails and accumulations of perforations made by the opposite end of a paintbrush.

Just as the world had been fundamentally changed by the circumstances of the atomic age, so had the canvas. What was placed on the surface of a painting was no longer just a picture but an event.[2] The work of action painters like Jackson Pollock served to further mark this theory, and the artist's distance from the canvas, chronicled in strokes of paint drips, only seemed to punctuate the insistence of space. The surface was now a spatial field that existed beyond compositionally *implied* dimension. The dimension could be real.

Changes to the physical form of the painting were now inevitable. One of the greatest contributions to this radical shift came in 1954 at the hand of Robert Rauschenberg. The introduction of the artist Jasper Johns in Rauschenberg's life would dramatically alter his work after 1953, and their philosophical exchange and kinship produced a previously absent physical dimension.[3] Johns, who would become Rauschenberg's lover of several years, was not only the catalyst for Rauschenberg's "combines" but was also the author of the term itself. Neither painting nor sculpture,

fig. 1
Ellen Cornfield performing *Minutiae* (1954), against a backdrop of Robert Rauschenberg's work of the same name. Photo by Herb Migdoll (1976). Courtesy of the Merce Cunningham Trust. Art © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

these works presupposed that the canvas was not simply a field but a literal support,[4] and as such Rauschenberg began to place objects upon it. Moreover, he understood the painting to be an object itself. *Minutiae* (1954) (*fig. 1*), a combine he constructed as a stage piece for Merce Cunningham's dance production of the same name, presented an absence of canvas entirely, using a wooden structure as a multidimensional foundation for oil and fabric—the basic elements of a stretcher.

By the later half of the 1950s Fontana was making linear incisions by blade to the surface of the canvas to reveal entire swaths of space, placing black

gauze behind the cuts to mimic an endless void. These radical gestures yielded vast and innumerable possibilities for the practice of addressing the canvas. Painting had depth beyond what could be painted, and it existed in no less than three visible dimensions. Lee Bontecou understood this well. The surfaces of her canvases of the early 1960s, which swirled and swelled with mountains of deep holes and craters, reached out to the viewer sometimes by as much as a yard or more. These works were more than mere accumulations of material on a framed surface, they were cavernous sculptural forms on a stretcher, inseparable from objecthood and space.

In addition to these contributions, in the mid to late 1960s Frank Stella would popularize the concept that painting was not exclusive to a four-sided form. Although constructed in the manner of a traditional painting with canvas stretched across an architectural wooden backing, Stella's large-scale shape paintings and *V Series* works zigged and zagged across the wall in dramatic, colorful, geometrically- and formally-sound physical compositions that more closely resembled Minimalist sculpture. Yet, in the midst of these deep expanses of space, these and Bontecou's works remained almost defiantly restrictive. Like nearly all forms of painting since the Renaissance, they were reliant on the tyrannical confines of a frame on a wall. It had always been this way.

ACTIONS, FOREMOTHERS & THE FEMINIST DECREE

Despite significant achievements from women like Bontecou, advancements in the fields of painting and sculpture (and any blurring therein) were emphatically dominated by men, as with the rest of the art establishment and the patriarchal nature of society as a whole. Organized systems of all stripes, especially those established and directed by men, were under attack by the 1960s. It was at this time that French-born artist Niki de Saint Phalle was out for blood, and she had a gun.

In 1961, following an idea she shared with painter and sculptor Jean Tinguely in which the painting itself would be made to bleed, Saint Phalle constructed large white plaster reliefs with objects affixed to the surface secretly filled with paint, at which she would fire bullets from a rifle. Blasts of colored liquid exploded across the surface, as did the targets themselves, leaving behind open wounds and bloody trails of falling paint. Shootings, or *Tirs*, were staged in Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, Milan, Los Angeles and New York for audiences of onlookers, making observers complicit with her violence. As with the combines of the 1950s, Saint Phalle treated the painting as a collection site for objects and assemblage, and although Rauschenberg would occasionally assist her with the shooting of these works, in a sense the gun was pointed directly at him. The act of shooting the painting was an attack on its own history, and men—all men—were squarely in her crosshairs.[5]

fig. 2
Lynda Benglis, *Contraband*, 1969
pigmented latex
3 x 116 ¼ x 398 ¼ inches (7.6 x 295.3 x 1011.6 centimeters)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee and partial gift of John Cheim and Howard Read 2008.14
Art © Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.
Photograph by Sheldon C. Collins.

Where her fellow Nouveaux Réaliste Yves Klein chose to remove his hand from the painting,[6] Saint Phalle did so by making it bleed to death. The painting had to be killed—and by a woman—so that something new could be born.[7]

In 1968, Lynda Benglis poured colored foam and latex on the ground. These floor-based works of the late 1960s were created out of the artist's interest in confronting the direction of painting set forth by critic Clement Greenberg.[8] Taking aim at Greenberg's advocation for medium specificity and his contention that Modernist painting was still traditional and resisted the sculptural,[9] Benglis pigmented hundreds of gallons of latex in her studio and poured the new paint-like material on waxed linoleum and directly on the floor of the site where the work was to be exhibited. Works like *Contraband* (1969) (*fig. 2*), a more than 33-foot long and 9-and-a-half-foot wide flat field of pigmented latex, rejected the spatial limitations of painting's surface while remaining firmly in dialogue with its fundamental qualities. Through 1969 and 1970, Benglis would vary the placement of these works, remaining on the floor yet moving into corners, using metals like bronze and lead, and exploring the relationships between the blob and the body. Although these works were achieved by using liquid, the resulting solid works on the ground demanded an experience by the viewer akin to the physical examination of sculpture—the observer was forced to walk around them. Through the early part of the 1970s these full-figured masses slowly revealed a distinct kinship with the body in a manner that was more pronounced than in the late 1960s. The 1970s were decidedly Feminist years, and the seemingly genderless works of art by women of the decades

fig. 3
Lynda Benglis, *Artforum* Ad
Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery; Copyright 1974.
Art © Lynda Benglis/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.
Photograph by Arthur Gordon.

prior—produced on the same aesthetic terms as men—suddenly appeared decidedly feminine in their biomorphic, sculptural representations of the body.

It was her own form—naked, oiled-up, and stroking the shaft of a long latex dildo for a 1974 ad in *Artforum*—that would make Benglis a feminist icon, despite the controversy it would invariably cause (*fig. 3*).[10] As she had accomplished with her floor painting and sculptures, she was calling attention to the body (and the use of latex, albeit loosely). Benglis's dick pic maintained her confrontation of a male-dominated class of art-making—and she did it with a bigger cock. Her works—from floor pours to films—document materials and bodies in action. Following the precedent of behavior-based, corporeal, feminist politics charted by Benglis, artist **CHERYL DONEGAN** would swiftly bring this dialogue back to paint in the early 1990s through video. Like the feminists before her, Donegan's reply came in the form of her body.

In a brightly lit corner of an exhibition space, a slender woman in a G-string thong, bra, and boots squats to the ground and pours green paint directly on the floor in front of her. No sooner is the tub of paint placed on the ground than the woman's bare ass is alongside it, buried in paint. Grabbing a piece of paper from a pile near her, she leans backwards over the sheet until her paint-covered rear leaves behind a green butt-print, which she makes again at an opposite angle and follows with a quick brushstroke of paint. It's a painting of a four-leaf clover, which she tacks to the wall with the subsequent three works on paper. A man enters the space with a chair, in which the woman, Cheryl Donegan, sits while he pours her a dark, heady Guinness. Sitting there in her bikini, restful after completing several pieces, she drinks the entire beer, quickly yet elegantly, occasionally looking over her shoulder at the finished paintings.

fig. 4
Cheryl Donegan, *Kiss My Royal Irish Ass (K.M.R.I.A)*, 1993
5:47 minutes (color, sound)
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

In this recorded performance, *Kiss My Royal Irish Ass* (*fig.4*), which took place at Andrea Rosen Gallery in July of 1993, Donegan exercises her body as a medium with flagrant bravado, recalling seminal performative works by Bruce Nauman (*Black Balls*, 1969), Vito Acconci (*Seedbed*, 1972) and the "living brushes" of Yves Klein's paintings of the 1960s.[11] Recorded candidly on VHS, *Kiss My Royal Irish Ass* (1993) is one of several videos by the artist where paint and the body engender a physical dialogue about identity, power, control, history, fantasy and sex.[12] In her most suggestive work, *Head* (1993), Donegan catches milk in her mouth, which spews from a hole in the side of a green plastic bottle. Lapping up the milk feverishly and craning her neck and body in a show of excitement, she licks the bottle up and down. Hard guitar licks by the band Sugar blare in the background over the moving images, akin to the energy felt by beating hearts and quickly stroking hands.

Consistent across each of these works is a series of gestures which directly relate to the body. In these and other videos produced by the artist in the 1990s, Donegan willfully subjects herself to being used as an object. Not only does this suggest an historical attention to male-dominated forms of seeing, but the blurring of machismo and feminine allure in these works is deeply apt in the context of paint and the object—one free to do whatever it pleases, the other voluminous, likened to a container, patiently waiting to be covered or filled.[13]

No living female artist has achieved more recognition by her engagement with painted objects in space than **JESSICA STOCKHOLDER**. Although not commonly associated with feminist artists, nor does she identify as such, Stockholder holds a kinship with artists like Lynda Benglis whose works not only conjure a

three-dimensional dialogue about the distinction between painting and sculpture, but whose practice of making and questioning is unmistakably engaged with the body and a knowledge of materials. Like Benglis, Stockholder's interest in materials is highly contextual. Her practice is largely divided between two differently scaled engagements with space: immense, large-scale site-specific installations of material, objects, and color whose lives extend no further than the duration of a given exhibition, and smaller-format works. In recent years, her installations have also extended to urban settings, street corners, and outdoor sculpture. Despite the magnitude of their scale, with each comes an invitation to question art historical precedent, traditional uses of materials and the picture, and relationships between objects, color, and artistic discipline.

fig. 5
Jessica Stockholder, *My Father's Backyard*, 1983
mattress, chicken wire, cupboard door, paint on grass
Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York, NY

Stockholder's large-scale works began in her father's backyard in 1983 (*fig. 5*). In a quiet neighborhood of Vancouver, British Columbia, she fastened a purple cupboard door and a roll of chicken wire to the roof of a small house. On its flank, she hung a red-faced mattress—as flush with the brown wooden siding as a painting on a gallery wall—and covered a nearby vine and shrubs with a powdery shade of blue paint. The color cascaded down a leafy bush and the side of the structure onto a large four-sided form of painted grass in front of the house. There was a kind of absurdity to the manner in which these materials were used: impractical in their presentation, lively and multidimensional in their palette, every *thing* a surface, every surface dimensional. Flatness appeared voluminous, objects strained to appear flat. Produced while Stockholder studied painting at Yale, this installation, known simply as *My Father's*

fig. 6
Jessica Stockholder, *Kissing the Wall Series*, 1988–1990
metal strapping, spools of thread and wool, plastic cord, cloth, wood, chair, oil and latex and acrylic paint, fluorescent light, paper, and glue
30 x 36 x 54 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York, NY

Backyard (1983) (*fig. 5*), prefigures many of her subsequent formal, material and dimensional inquiries.

And, like Rauschenberg's combines, Stockholder's *Kissing the Wall* series (*fig. 6*), a rigorous body of painted furniture and material amalgamations from 1988 to 1990—of which some of the first works are on view in this exhibition—signaled a dramatic shift in the direction of the *paint thing*. An audacious new direction in painting had again been sculpted by a woman, and once more the work required the viewer to experience it in a spatial context through its relationship to the body and its surroundings. The practices of several artists featured in *PAINT THINGS*, like the interior setting amalgamations of Katie Bell and the decidedly feminist performances with sculpture and paint by Kate Gilmore, echo the art-making structures built by artists like Stockholder and Donegan. *PAINT THINGS* takes this recent material,

spatial and historical context as its point of origin, beginning in 1988 and ending with the present day, citing advancements and contributions to the growing dialogue of the painted thing and its relationship to actions, environments, and bodies.

THE BODY & THE PERFORMATIVE ACT OF PAINTING

The gesture is an inherently spatial and performative act. A brushstroke is no less performed by the body than any other physical gesticulation. The area in front of a painting—that responsive field between the artist or the viewer and the work—is a highly intuitive space. Decisions are made instinctually and contextually, and those choices affect understandings, surroundings, actions, and histories. This is not a radical notion. If art is a material reality between human beings and objects, and between sets of objects in relation to human beings,[14] then the body and its actions are implicit in the existence of art. The movements and engagements by the artist in that intuitive space are performed. They are made knowingly and for a viewership. The act of painting, by its nature, is a performance.

Gestures, however, are not exclusive to the use of paint; they are also symbolic actions. In the case of either, however, gestures must mean something. There must be an intent. Like all art forms, inherent to the nature of performance is the need to render or convey or communicate, even if the intent is to question. **CHERYL DONEGAN**'s work from the 1990s affirms this notion, using herself as a blurring agent of art-making disciplines, roles of men and women, body politics and sex. Performances like *Kiss My Royal Irish Ass* (1993) call into question modes of authorship and the role of the artist and the art-making tool. Although the invitation to kiss her ass is wholeheartedly extended to painting here, in the final scenes of the video they are also extended to an object—the chair. Exhibited publicly for the first time since this performance took place in 1993, Donegan's painted seat is displayed here as sculpture, behaving as a document of an action; a painted surface and support made complete by its interaction with the body.

KATE GILMORE's new work examines these issues in a manner that is equally confrontational and corporeal. For the last decade the Brooklyn-based artist's videos have documented her performing any number of intense, physically demanding activities, all in high-heel shoes and a dress. Each performance, however, is utilitarian and purposed in nature. Giving physical weight to the concept of a woman's work, she punches and kicks her way through physical obstacles, breaking through walls in pumps and pantyhose. Constrictive environments must be traversed and escaped; any and all objects crushed, crumbled, or made to bleed. Goals must be reached, regardless of physical strain or risk of injury. Echoing the volatile work of Niki de Saint Phalle before her, Gilmore takes a destructive approach to building

composition. Commissioned by the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum for this exhibition, Gilmore's newest painting-sculpture-performance-video hybrid finds the artist scaling the sides of a six-foot-tall black wooden structure. Once at the top, one by one Gilmore empties tall paint-filled shafts, whose drips cascade down the inclined slope of the scaffolding into holes and round containers waiting at the bottom. A sculptural and performative contrast to Frank Stella's *Black Paintings*, with the sexual implications of Donegan's impressive *Head* (1993), Gilmore's penetration of sculpture by paint is an extraordinary gesture.

The transformation of a structure into a body is echoed in the installation and performance work of Scottish-born artist **CLAIRE ASHLEY**. Using handmade inflatable structures as her painting surfaces, on site these works are exhibited as bona fide sculpture, puffed and propped up in bulbous spray-painted forms. For *PAINT THINGS*, she converts the deCordova grand stairwell—and with it, the museum—into painted thing itself, with drip-like forms of PVC coated canvas hanging from the second floor. Ashley brings the participant, and occasionally herself, inside these works to move the now living figure around in space. In her performance *Double Disco* (2012), she brings two brightly painted inflatables to life through the blind, choreographed movements of the individuals inside them. Beginning at a snail's pace and gradually becoming more lively to the tune of The Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive," the dancers move through space in these colorful sculptures-turned-figures.

Where these artists turn sculptural forms into bodies, the transformation of painterly bodies into sculptures is explored by Los Angeles painter, sculptor, and filmmaker **ALLISON SCHULNIK** and New York-based artist **SUMMER WHEAT**. In each of her three stop-motion videos on view the exhibition, Schulnik takes subjects and narrative elements from her rich, impasto-heavy paintings and renders them three-dimensionally, maintaining their gestural, painterly figuration by hand-molding her subjects in clay. Through choreographed movements and variations across tens of thousands of photographic frames, Schulnik's subjects becoming living, dancing beings. In her presentation for the exhibition, Summer Wheat's painted busts, with their thick, billowing, tousled undulations of oil and acrylic paint, abandon the stretcher and thicken into solid masses in the form of pedestal-bound paint heads with goofy plastic googley eyes. Oozing heaps of plaster, foil, and oil paint, these deformed renderings of the body take figures out of the confines of the frame, bringing them out into space and saturating them sculptural weight.

Enter **STEVE LOCKE**. For more than 15 years, the Boston-based artist has painted portraits of the male figure surrounded by colorful fields of space. Depicted as objects—of desire, of power, of intimacy, humor, revulsion, and intense sensuality—his painted bodies are built on notions of gaze. This awareness within Locke's work, this exchange of looks, is further acknowledged or contextualized by an engagement with sexuality. Queerness can—and should—be understood as a method of defining by blurring. As such, Locke's recent works take a decidedly

sculptural and three-dimensional approach to the painted portrait, clouding the distinction between disciplines and resolutely addressing a dialogue of bodies. These newly constructed figures connect oil portraits (the face) by way of tall, spray-painted steel shafts (the neck) to colorful baseboards, plinths, and grid paintings (the body). As if conversing with or cruising one another, the exhibited objects face the wall or peer and stick their tongues out at one another, arranged in a manner that suggests a knowledge of each others' presence.

There is a kind of mild absurdity on display here, one that fluidly engages the wall, the floor, the support, and an almost tongue-in-cheek presentation of the painting as on object suspended in space. These traits are wholeheartedly and wittily conveyed in video by Brooklyn-based artist **ALEX HUBBARD**, who presents the act of painting as a series of performed decisions, actions, and retractions. Like a blank canvas, Hubbard's works on view in *PAINT THINGS* begin with filmed depictions of white, empty space, slowly cluttered at disorienting angles by actions and materials overlaid with shots of other actions and other materials. Functioning as compositional elements within the image, these movements are as jocular as they are formally engaged. In *The Border, The Ship* (2012) Hubbard drops plastic skeleton bones one by one onto a red square mat, siphons black liquid through a pipe which splatters and pools at the bottom of the image, and lowers tied bundles of bones into a five-gallon tub of blue paint, defying gravity in the left field of the video and wielding the same blue as Yves Klein's living brushes. Performed by the artist, these seemingly purposeless yet determined measures take place within the expanse of the four-sided "frame" of the video, which, like a painting, acts as a receptacle for these actions and materials.

ON OBJECTS IN SPACE

The painting is a container. It is a repository for an image, for ideas, for decision-making, content, context, form, and materials, for history, precedent, actions, gestures, and all, some, or none of these things. Above all, it is a *thing*. The painting is reliant on dimension for these traits to exist—within it, upon it, and around it—and as such it is eternally reliant on space. Even physicist Albert Einstein would have understood this to be true. Concerned with space on the largest scale imaginable, his description of it as a malleable fabric distorted by matter more closely resembles the physical description of a painting stretcher than any conceivable cosmological or gravitational construct.[15] But a painting does have an inherent gravity, and it tugs on everything around it.

The argument for the painting-as-container does not, however, suggest the *type* of space it is reliant on, simply that it needs it. In tandem with its nature as a possessor of space—including its physical dimensions and any implied or real di-

mensionality on the surface, compositionally or otherwise—the painting is also the author of several kinds of space. For example, there is a very real space between the viewer or the artist and the work, where this tugging first begins to take place. There are also the physical dimensions of the work itself (the space of the painting) and the physical and architectural context in which a work is exhibited (the space around it). As well, arguments can be made for historical, contextual, and performative space, among several other forms.

The works presented in this exhibition can be understood as playing with or examining these fundamental traits: spatial concerns and what may be described as objecthood. Much of what is revealed by **JESSICA STOCKHOLDER**'s work, regardless of scale, is done so through the addition of color to this understanding, and these three basic qualities—space, the object, and color—reflect the foundational makeup of a painting. However, in the face of so much *stuff* in her works, Stockholder solidifies the concept of painting as a thing. Any one discrete painting could be added to the milieu of items in a given artwork or installation by Stockholder, and by virtue of its placement alongside these other colored objects, the viewer would have no choice but to qualify it as just another thing. This is achieved through a small-scale studio piece from 2008 on view here, which makes use of a framed oil painting found at TJ Maxx. In a display fitting with the issues at stake here, Stockholder uses the reclaimed painting as a foundational support for the sculptural dialogue that ensues, using color to exert the existence of a complete 'picture' despite the imbalance or irregularity of its picture plane.

These issues are paramount in the work of Los Angeles-based artist **SEAN KENNEDY**, who constructs and assembles bona fide containers. Suspended from the ceiling, the untitled works on view in the exhibition function as hanging shelves of Plexiglas, on which the artist places all manner of arbitrary objects, from lottery tickets and CD-Rs to pots and pans and store-bought bottles of liquid. When seen by the viewer directly from below, however, the clear underside of the four-sided work suddenly operates as a flat, framed surface. Although in material and dimensional terms we should freely categorize these amalgamations as sculpture, especially since they are devoid of any paint or pigment, by building a makeshift picture plane, Kennedy insists these works be viewed through the lens of painting.

This notion of transforming materials—and transforming painting through the use of materials—is central to much of the work on view in this exhibition. The act of transformation, after all, is intrinsic to the practice of applying color to a surface.[16] For the last fifteen years, the practice of **SARAH BRAMAN** has shifted between cuboid and cornered volumes of colored Plexiglas, cardboard, tents, used campers, and reclaimed furniture, and wall-mounted objects of discarded materials—each spray-painted in whole or in part by a thunderous spectrum of neon colors. Formalist containers in and of themselves, her boxes and perpendicular structures are often set on a delicate incline, as if each were a slippery slope of

Minimalist form in a permanent state of collapse. While working in her Western Massachusetts studio, Braman uses flat panels of plywood as palettes, testing combinations of spray-paint and latex. These pigmented planks are also exhibited as works themselves, as with *Lay Down Down* (2012), serving as wooden supports of inquiry and modification.

Physical alteration is frequently at work in the practice of Los Angeles-based artist **ANALIA SABAN**, who destroys paintings as a means of revealing their making. A native of Buenos Aires, Saban's *Erosion* works use a laser cutter to burn away unpainted sections of canvas, foregrounding singed and sculpted brushstrokes left behind by the artist and revealing the charred support behind it. Her attempts at demonstrating the myriad of ways that paint and the canvas can interact include "acrylic on canvas" cast objects, featuring loosely fitted bed sheets made from a silicone mould, which are then mounted across a canvas stretcher. Other works are just as playful, using primed canvases like bags for oil and acrylic paint, until they solidify and resemble something more akin to sculpture. This is echoed in exhibited works like *The Painting Ball (48 Abstract, 42 Landscapes, 23 Still Lives, 11 Portraits, 2 Religious, 1 Nude)* (2005), a 26-inch sphere resembling a rubber band ball resting on the ground, made entirely of thin slices of more than 100 paintings.

Works such as these incite several fundamental questions about the practice of painting. *Is there a point at which painting becomes sculpture? Where does that point exist and what does it look like?* By mixing and crossbreeding the two disciplines, the distinctions between each erode away until what remains is simply a painted thing. This concept can be understood as a form of abstraction, where what is abstracted is done so as a means of negating the "concrete." **JAMES HYDE** accomplishes this feat with actual concrete. His *Concrete Paintings* are chunks of Styrofoam board coated with concrete and acrylic medium, a tongue-in-cheek nod to the Concrete paintings of the early twentieth-century, a type of non-figurative work termed by Theo van Doesburg in 1930 which, like Hyde's work, was formed in response to abstraction.[17] Recalling more gestural versions of Frank Stella's shape paintings, Hyde's torqued monochromes, including *LOUNGE* (1998), make literal the meeting place of painterly abstraction and sculpture, right down to the strokes of cement impasto.

Debris and detritus are the preferred materials for artist **KATIE BELL**, whose practice hinges on constructing from the destructed. Working from a single pile of matter from destroyed interior settings, the salvaged objects are used to build discrete works and installations on site, only to be returned back to the pile and used again. The daughter of an interior designer, Bell repurposes domestic materials like vertical blinds, house paint, granite, laminate, and carpet to construct wall-hung objects and compositions that reference painting while destroying it in the process. Her attention to interior settings and design elements touches lightly on feminist notions of the role of women. Following the precedent set forth by artists like Jessica Stockholder, however, Bell's works call into question the distinction between sculpture and painting, structure and support, the wall and the work.

SUPPORT FOR ARCHITECTURAL SUPPORT

Were the canvas or fabric surface to be removed from a painting, all that would remain is a wooden architectural backing. The stretcher. A sculptural and architectural object in its own right. Its purpose is to give the canvas its tautness, to achieve the best possible surface upon which to spread paint. In the case of paintings devoid of fabric, as with a panel, there is still a surface in tow. Color must be pushed around on something (or some thing). What this insists, however, is that the canvas, or painting surface, alone is not enough: painting is inherently reliant on a support. *Then why the need for the canvas in the first place?*

Following the object-centric spatial precedent set forth by women like Lynda Benglis and Jessica Stockholder, **SARAH CAIN**'s site-specific installations of paint and objects reject the tyranny imposed by the confines of a frame. She breaches three-dimensional space and questions the limitations of the wall-hung painting, and her works on site expand the field of the picture well beyond the physical restrictions of the stretcher, onto walls, floors, columns, and entire architectural settings. Filling corners, rooms, and formerly occupied spaces, her rich, colorful, dimensional compositions expose stretcher bars and raw canvas backings, adjoining the painting support with the structural support of the room. Cain's installations effectively use architectural surroundings to *build* space—both real and perceived. These environments of shifting surfaces and chromatic intensities are further grounded in an emotional space navigated by the artist, a "driving force" behind the work.[18]

This intuitive understanding of physical conditions is shared by New York-based artist **FRANKLIN EVANS**. Like Cain, Evans' installations impose space upon a given space, rendering entirely new environments from those which already exist. His site-specific installation for the deCordova, *paintthinks* (2013), is lined with makeshift walls of photographic sculpture and bars of colorful, pigmented tape on and around flat, wall-mounted paintings on loose canvas. On the floor in front of them, small areas of laminations, digital prints, and flat trails of books from the artist's library ground the paintings against the walls, carving out walkways for the viewer to navigate the newly designed space. The colorful, painted strips of tape lining the field of the work, and the material joints connecting the floor to the ceiling and the wall, conjure immediate associations with the function of the stretcher: materials and images applied to a flat plane adjoined to a larger architectural frame. Evans converts the support into an extension of the subject.

This concept of presenting the frame as the work itself, shared by a number of artists in *PAINT THINGS*, emphasizes that painting is qualified by something much greater than what is mounted to the surface. The work of Philadelphia-based artist **ALEX DA CORTE** suggests it is how it is mounted. In his recent work, colored metal gridwall panels bracketed to the wall—the kind used in a cheap retail

display—build a literal support for objects and the "picture" placed upon the collective surface. In *Blood Brothers* (2012), diamond-shaped brackets are scattered unevenly behind the mounted grids, functioning as compositional elements alongside silly store-bought items like a porcelain cat, a vacuum-sealed rubber witch finger, and plastic Doritos. Although they would appear as simple knickknacks in any other context, by suspending them against a four-sided, wall-mounted structure, Da Corte imbues the objects with all manner of unexpected painterly understanding. An unraveling nylon cord resembles a brushstroke and paint drips, and plastic toys and differently colored display hooks function as geometric forms in lieu of gestures. Despite its obvious kitsch, the execution is clever, and Da Corte defines the act of painting by simply referencing it with arbitrary objects.

Architectural structures and built environments exist for utilitarian purposes—to reinforce, to divide, to obscure—and for practical purposes, for the utility of life and all the activities performed within those environments. The influence of structures and space on human actions and the body is one of many issues at play in the work of **MIKA TAJIMA**, whose practice is marked by various engagements with sculpture, painting, performance, video, installation, and sound. Riffing off Erik Satie's *Furniture Music (Musique d'ameublement)*, a series of recurrent background music compositions, Tajima's *Furniture Art* series (2011) are also iterated frequently. Using transparent boxes of molded Plexiglas, she inverts the painting site to the interior surface of the plastic structure, reiterating the notion that these compositions are bona fide containers for action and space, with sharp, hard-lined gaps in various pictures revealing the wall or the wooden support behind the work.

Innovative sculptural attempts like these make us question painting's loyalty to, or need for, the frame and canvas. *Is the surface—by definition—just a façade? Is the canvas also a cloak? What would be lost in its absence? Or gained?* The more we examine these questions, the more our understanding of the canvas and its frame seem quite ostensible. Rhode Island artist **WILSON HARDING LAWRENCE** literally tears the surface (and support) apart in search of its truths. In *Sift* (2010), a tall four-sided form is sanded into a gallery wall so gracefully that the picture plane Lawrence has carved out appears painted instead of stripped. At its base it is flush with the wall, slowly deepening upwards until its sharp corners are half an inch into the drywall. Manmade pockmarks formed by years of screws and hardware replace intuitive and gestural propriety, and ombré washes of white to wood hues in the exposed plywood paneling conjure echoes of Mark Rothko's gradations of color. In the case of *Grade* (2012), a hanging skin of sliced wall rests on a narrow shelf placed below, which acts as a literal support for the wilted wall. In these works, Lawrence places architecture on equal footing with the work placed upon it (or made from it), and, like painting, makes the support bear the weight of these gestures.

Through innumerable forms, and across several historically disparate disciplines, the collective actions presented by the artists featured in this exhibition

reiterate the most rudimentary impulses of painting and sculpture. Using a vernacular of *things*, these artists solidify the notion that the painting is nothing if not an object, which itself is the result of something built and something performed. It is the product of actions, events, contexts, investigations, and simultaneously acts as a physical container of each. These collective gestures are performed in space, in tandem with histories, architecture, and, above all, with objects. The artists exhibited in *PAINT THINGS: beyond the stretcher* incite questions about what painting really is by citing examples of what it can be.

NOTES

1—Paul Schimmel, "Painting the Void," *Painting the Void* (The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles: Skira Rizzoli, 2012), 188. Schimmel states, "...destruction was not just a nihilistic act...destruction was in a dialectical relationship with creation, and the void was a space of potentiality. From the embers of the destruction of the picture plane emerged a medium reborn that powerfully registered the complex experience of living in a world perched on the brink of self-annihilation."

2—Upon coining the term 'action painting' art critic Harold Rosenberg determined the following: "...at a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or 'express' an object.... What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event." Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *ARTnews* 51, vol. 7 (1952), 22. See also "The American Action Painters," *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1960).

3—Jonathan Katz, "The Art of Code," *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1993).

4—Ibid.

5—"In 1961 I shot at daddy, all men, small men, large men, important men, fat men, my brother, society, the Church, the convent, the school, my family, my mother... I shot because it was fun and gave me a great feeling. I shot because I was fascinated to see the painting bleed and die. I shot for the sake of this magical moment. It was a moment of scorpion-like truth. White purity. Victim. Ready! Take aim! Fire! Red, yellow, blue, the painting weeps, the painting is dead. I have killed the painting. It has been rebor." Niki de Saint Phalle. Karl Gunnar Pontus Hulten, *Niki de Saint Phalle: Bilder—Figuren —Phantastische Gärten* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987).

6—Yves Klein, *Manifeste de l'Hotel Chelsea (Chelsea Hotel Manifesto*, 1961), Yves Klein Archives, yveskleinarchives.org/documents/chelsea_us.html. In the 1960s, Klein distanced himself from the painting by directing the paint-covered bodies of nude women across its surface, dubbing the women "living brushes." Underscoring these actions as performances, these events were scored by live symphonic accompaniments. As such, Klein also chose to separate himself from action painters like Jackson Pollock. In his Manifesto, Klein states, "Many critics claimed that by this method of painting I was doing nothing more than recreating the method that has been called "action painting." But now, I would like to make it clear that this endeavor is distinct from "action painting" in so far as I am completely detached from all physical work during the time of creation."

7—Schimmel explains, "Recalling Shimamoto's performances, in which he hurled bottles of paint or shot pigment from a cannon, as well as Fontana's experiments, Saint Phalle's Tirs reflect her sense that it was necessary to hasten the death of tradition-

al painting so that something new could be born." Schimmel, 196.

8—Benglis, *Whitney Focus presents Lynda Benglis* (video), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. http://whitney.org/Collection/LyndaBenglis/200814/Video.

9—Clement Greenberg. "Modernist Painting" Forum Lectures, *Voice of America* (Washington D.C., 1960). "Modernist painting shows precisely by its resistance to the sculptural," Greenberg states, "how firmly attached it remains to tradition beneath and beyond all appearances to the contrary."

10—In Roberta Smith's reporting, following *Artforum* editor John Coplans' inclusion of the nude Benglis ad, published for her 1974 exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, two of the magazine's famed critics, Annette Michelson and Rosalind Krauss, abandoned their posts. Considered a catalyst for the Benglis ad, artist Robert Morris posed mostly nude and oiled up in a military helmet and thick chains for an ad for his Castelli-Sonnabend exhibition of the same year. That Benglis could incite such hostility while no mention was made of Morris's sexualized gesture seems to affirm the double standard of power in favor of men. Ironically, the photograph of Robert Morris was taken earlier that year by *Artforum*'s Rosalind Krauss. Roberta Smith, "Art or Ad or What? It Caused a Lot of Fuss," *The New York Times*, July 24, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/25/arts/design/25benglis.html

11—Yves Klein, *Manifeste de l'Hotel Chelsea*.

12—In her 1993 video *MakeDream*, Donegan dons a tank top and shorts and suspends a tube of paint between her legs, carelessly spewing streams of blue liquid across the floor and walls of an exhibition space by gyrating her hips back and forth. As if pissing or cumming on action painters like Jackson Pollock, Donegan gives the term 'gesture' a sardonic double meaning.

13—Angela Carter. "Pornography in the Service of Women," *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (New York: Penguin, 1978). Carter writes, "Man aspires; woman has no other function but to exist, waiting. The male is positive, an exclamation mark. Woman is negative. Between her legs lies nothing but zero, the sign for nothing, that only becomes something when the male principle fills it with meaning."

14—Lawrence Weiner, statement of intent, 1969. Lisson Gallery, London. http://www.lissongallery.com/#/artists/lawrence-weiner

15—Zeeya Merali, "Splitting Time from Space," *Scientific American* (September 24, 2009).

16—In response to Picasso's assessment that any painting contains something worth looking at, Roberta Smith notes, "the idea that every time someone applies malleable color to a small rectangular surface, there will be at least one revealing point of contact is cause for optimism." Roberta Smith, "Finding Something Worthy in Every Find," *The New York Times*, August 29, 2012, C1.

17—Amy Dempsey, *Art in the Modern Era: A Guide to Styles, Schools & Movements* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 159. In his 1930 manifesto, *The Basis of Concrete Art*, Theo van Doesburg distanced Concrete Painting from all forms of representation and abstraction as such: "The painting should be constructed entirely from purely plastic elements, that is to say planes and colours. A pictorial element has no other significance than itself and consequently the painting possesses no other significance than itself."

18—Evan J. Garza, "Spotlight: Sarah Cain" *New American Paintings*. Ed. 97 (Boston: The Open Studios Press, December 2011). In an interview with the artist, Cain expressed to me, "It's hard to talk about emotions in work intellectually. I think a lot of people shy away from it. But it's definitely a driving force behind my work... Many times a piece will start in one emotional space and transform into another one. The work is really the translation of emotional space."

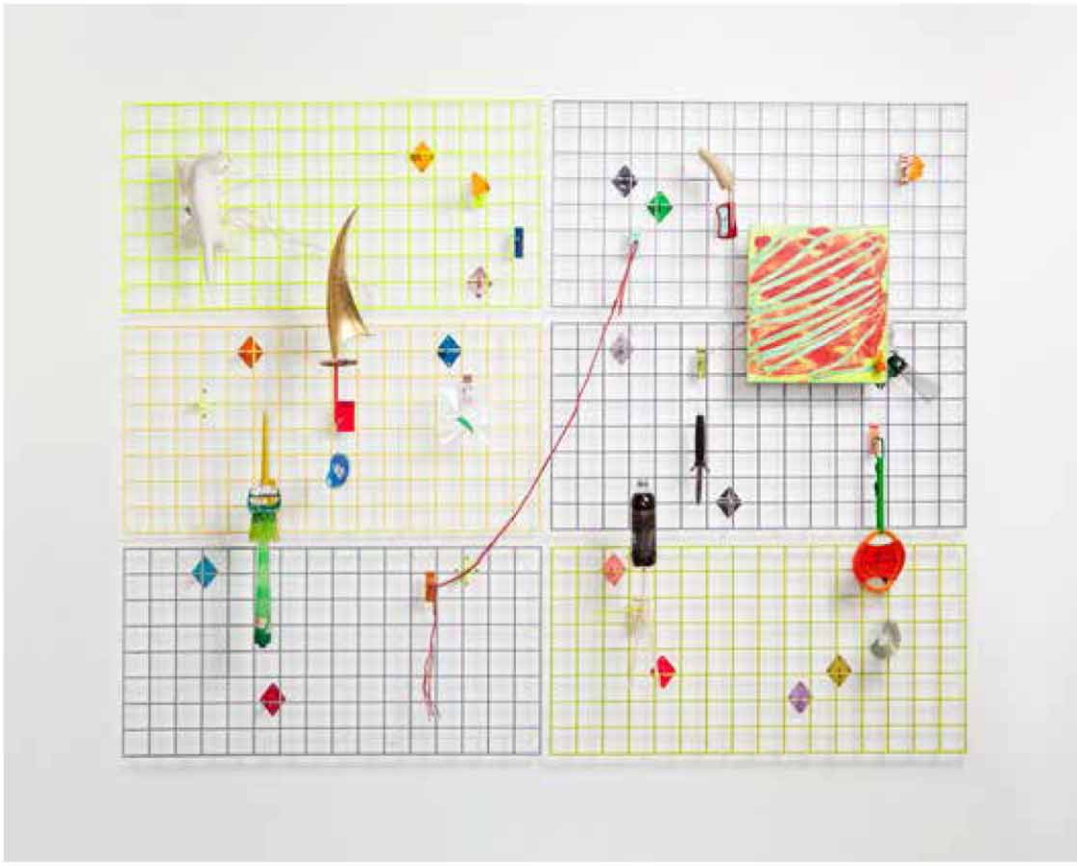
KATIE BELL

The Remnants, 2011

wood, acrylic, carpet, foam, plastic, plaster, window blinds on wall
7 x 11 feet
Courtesy of the artist

ALEX DA CORTE

Blood Brothers, 2012



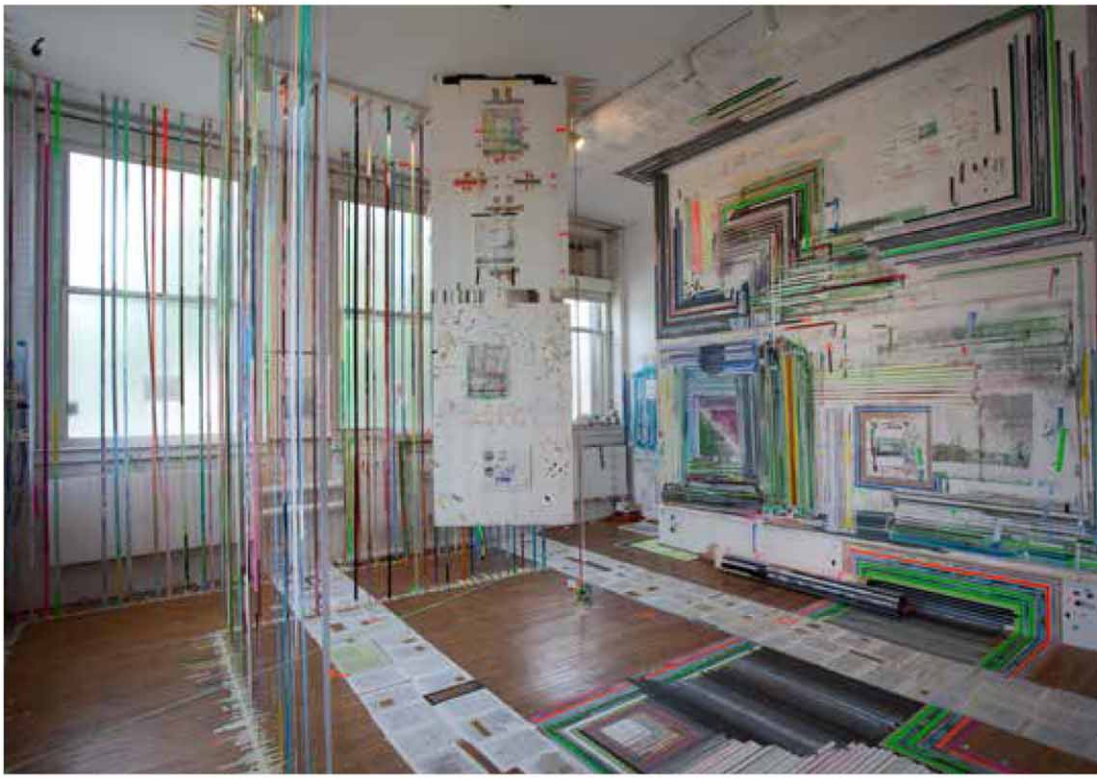
metal grids, enamel, porcelain cat, armature wire, copper wire, brass, plastic toy, candle, aluminum foil, plastic icicle, vacuum-sealed rubber witch finger, Jelly Belly blueberry air freshener, nylon cord, shoe tree, plastic cast wheat bread, Sean Fitzgerald's Brooks Brothers, iPod Nano 3rd Generation, plastic retractable knife, plastic cast Doritos, soda bottle, spray paint, cast silver soda bottle cap, hot glue sticks, zip tie, carabineer, dog toy, blank CD, hair pick, display hooks, hanging brackets

76 x 98 x 6 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Joe Sheftel Gallery, New York, NY

FRANKLIN EVANS

timecompressionmachine, 2010



mixed media installation
MoMA PS1 Greater New York 2010
Courtesy of the artist and Sue Scott Gallery, New York, NY
Photo: Stuart Stelzer

KATE GILMORE

Break of Day, 2010

wood, paint, ceramics
Courtesy of the artist

ALEX HUBBARD

The Border, The Ship, 2011

digital video, color with sound
9 minutes 30 seconds
Courtesy of the artist and Maccarone, New York, NY

JAMES HYDE
LOUNGE, 1998

acrylic on cement and glue on styrofoam
30 x 46 x 17 inches
Courtesy of the artist

STEVE LOCKE

you don't deserve me, 2009-2012

painting: oil and collage on beveled panel, spray painted on rear (10 x 10 inches)
pole: stripped steel pole, and floor flanges (½ inch diameter, overall length 18 inches)
base: enamel on panel with spray paint on bottom (16 x 20 x 1 ½ inches with beveled top)
Turkish prayer rug
Courtesy of the artist and Samsøn Projects, Boston, MA