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CRAFT & FOLK ART MUSEUM

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PAPERWORKS

A core sample of Southern California artists working with paper
September 27, 2015 – January 3, 2016 | Craft & Folk Art Museum

This exhibition and its catalogue were organized by independent curator Howard N. Fox for the Craft & Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles.

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**CRAFT &
FOLK ART
MUSEUM**

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Acknowledgments

Producing an exhibition is always a collaborative project, knitting together the intentions, aspirations, and achievements of the artists, the insights of the curator, the supportiveness of the presenting institution and its independent benefactors, and the specialized talents of the many individuals who bring the actual physical exhibition, its catalogue, and educational components to public realization. One of the true satisfactions of having put together this presentation is the opportunity to thank those who participated in making it happen.

I am extremely grateful for the leadership of Craft & Folk Art Museum Executive Director Suzanne Isken and the invitation to curate an exhibition focused on artists whose primary medium is paper—a millenniums-old invention that is being newly rediscovered as a medium in its own right. Suzanne and Exhibitions Manager Sasha Ali and Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger were especially supportive of my research in generating the actual content of the exhibition; and Sasha was the “line producer” in making every physical aspect of this presentation unfold in real time and real space. I proffer my deepest respect and gratitude to each of them.

This publication was funded in part with support from The Greenberg Foundation, Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser;

my deepest thanks for their friendship and generosity.

Preparator Joseph Rooks expertly coordinated the myriad complex details of mounting the exhibition in CAFAM’s galleries. Michelle Cho designed this exceedingly handsome catalogue, and Pablo Capra proved an expert and eagle-eyed editor of the manuscript for this publication, the exhibition’s press release, and its educational materials. Andres Payan coordinated the numerous public educational events for this show. Curator Julian Bermudez of the AltaMed Art Collection, and gallerists Clyde Beswick of CB1 Gallery, Jane Chafin of Offramp Gallery, and Susanne Vielmetter and assistant Ariel Lauren Pittman of Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects facilitated the loans of several works to this presentation, and coordinated with private collectors who also lent their works to this show. Thanks also to Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles, Western Project, Los Angeles, Gavlak, Los Angeles, and Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica.

Finally, it is the artists whose work is showcased here that merit our deepest interest and appreciation. This show is theirs; we are the grateful recipients of their creative activity.

Howard N. Fox
Guest Curator

Foreword

The interest in paper cutting as an important craft practice has spurred the publication of numerous books that catalog the traditional paper cutting techniques born in Mexico, China, Japan, and Germany. The Craft & Folk Art Museum’s *Paperworks* exhibition began as an in-house research project into contemporary artists who specialize in this very traditional practice of paper cutting; with the invitation to independent curator Howard N. Fox to serve as guest curator, the project quickly grew into an expanded exploration of artists who probe the many forms and material qualities of paper deployed in both two- and three-dimensional works.

The 15 artists represented in *Paperworks*, all based in or with close ties to Los Angeles, are remarkable for the diversity of their art and of their individual backgrounds. They come from various artistic disciplines, numerous national and ethnic lineages, and differing social and sexual orientations, which are reflected in their works. Yet they all share a common artistic interest in paper as a viable medium for their creative and aesthetic practice. This exhibition is notable for both the personal diversity of its participants and the variety of their approaches to their unifying primary medium, paper.

The Southern California focus of this show is in keeping with the museum mission to engage the craft, art, and design communities of greater Los Angeles—one of the most vital international art capitals. *Paperworks*, while not a comprehensive survey of contemporary paper-based art in Southern California, aspires to constitute a “core sample” of the many directions that paper offers to artists attracted to its aesthetic versatility.

The Craft & Folk Art Museum has a decades-long history of exploring the creativity of artists who use materials other than those which art historians and scholars have traditionally identified as “fine art” mediums—oil painting, bronze, marble, and other precious materials—whose very substance connotes nobility, exaltation, venerability, and (often as a propaganda value) lasting truth and principle. This exhibition investigates a medium rarely associated with such vaunted values. As *Paperworks* reveals, while the medium of paper may not have been historically treasured as a substance, today paper is exceptionally valued by many contemporary artists who use its inherent qualities to embody their most stirring creative ideas.

Suzanne Isken
Executive Director

Paperworks

paper (pā'per), n. 1. A substance made from wood pulp, rags, straw, or other fibrous material, usually in thin sheets, used to bear writing or printing, for wrapping things, etc.

— *Random House Unabridged Dictionary, Second Edition*

In the digital age, when astronomical quantities of information are transmitted, stored, and manipulated as binary code in “The Cloud,” paper has come to seem quaint, nearly superfluous; indeed its continued use in daily life often carries connotations of being obsolescent and certainly antithetical to the green ideal of the “paperless office.” And yet in the free-for-all world of contemporary art, this ancient medium is enjoying a sprightly kind of heyday, as artists around the globe explore it as if it were a newly discovered material: that is, not as a surface on which to make drawings or watercolors—a neutral support for whatever an artist imposes upon it—but as a medium in its own right, whose physical properties and aesthetic possibilities are the subject of artistic experimentation, innovation, and expression.

Papyrus, the ancient Egyptian material made from strips of the pith of the swamp plant of the same name, alternately laminated in horizontal and vertical rows, was used for writing scrolls, basketry, and other thatched work as long ago as the fourth millennium BCE. The invention of “modern paper,” fabricated from a pulpy mash of cellulose or other plant fibers derived from cotton or wood,

was invented in China in the second century CE, and was used as a surface for writing and later for watercolors and ink drawings. The paper we use today—typically manufactured from a mash of vegetal fibers and a cocktail of stabilizing chemicals—is among the most versatile and malleable of substances, available in countless variations of texture, thickness, and pliancy, collectively lending themselves to a vast array of manipulations.

Artists working today with paper as their primary medium may engage venerable traditions such as paper cutting and silhouetting, using scissors, scalpels, or even modern-day laser-cutting technology; or they may produce sculptures made of folded origami constructs, papier-mâché forms, or bundled or crumpled reams of paper sheets that take this traditionally flat medium into three dimensions; or they may build site-specific installations of paper and paperboard that immerse the viewer into physically navigable surroundings. The broad range of art and artists represented in *Paperworks* underscores that traditional, even ancient, materials are vital as contemporary mediums, and that contemporary artists are omnivorous in their embrace of mediums.

Howard N. Fox

Guest Curator

Enrique Castrejon

Enrique Castrejon works with cut paper and ripped paper in both large- and small-scale collages that incorporate ink-drawn diagrams, hand-written mathematical computations, angle measurements, and other notations as part of their visual chaos. The overall images look like explosions or collisions or eruptions of visual information and written data. These visual and formal hurly-burlies often derive from a single newspaper photograph, typically of horrific, fatal events such as suicide bombings, massacres, and assassinations.

Castrejon's technique is complex, intricate, and meticulous. First, he selects an appropriately disturbing photograph from a newspaper, cuts it out, lays a piece of carbon paper beneath it, and pastes this "sandwich" onto a sheet of white construction paper. This is the "ur-source" of all that results. Next, using a pencil, he selects parts—but not all—of the image to trace, transferring his tracing, through the carbon paper substrate, onto the white paper base; the resultant outlines are irregular and usually unrecognizable "phantom" forms of three-dimensional objects—people and things in the real world, rendered with fidelity to the photographic source image, though now all but unrecognizable as diagrams. He then cuts out these phantom forms, transferring them to another sheet of paper, affixing them as free-floating shapes, devoid of explanatory visual "connective tissue."

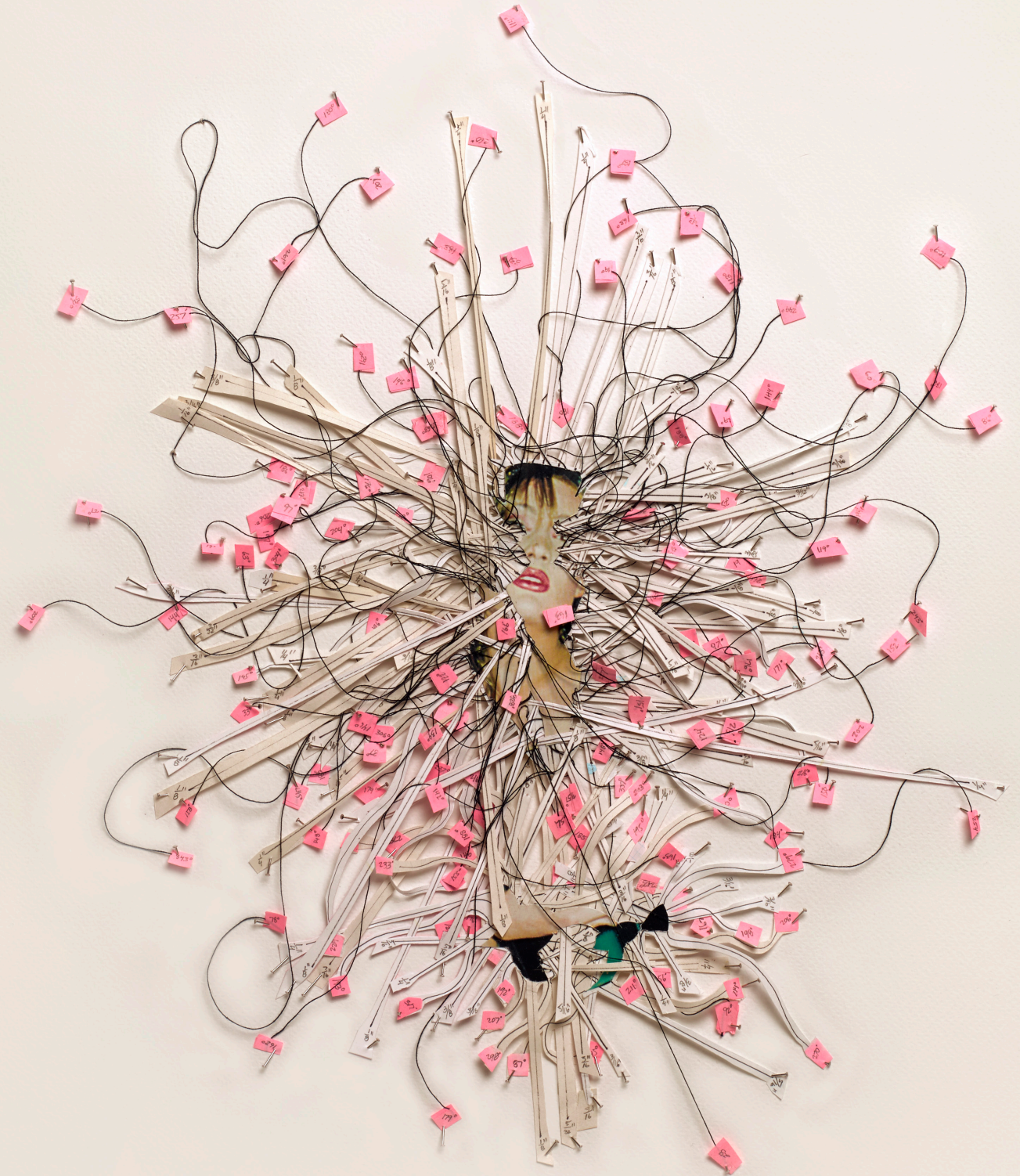
The third step in his usual process is to enlarge the scale of those disjointed—but faithfully interrelated—visual units into large-scale arrangements, using algebraic equations and geometric measurements to establish their relative sizes and positions, depending on the size and configuration of the space where they are to be displayed as finished projects—frequently as installations that spill onto the gallery floor or ceiling. His works included in this *Paperworks* exhibition are considerably more compact and self-contained. But they are made procedurally the same as his much larger works. In this case the photographic source is not a larger-than-life public event, but a minute organism: a single HIV virus photographed through electron microscopy, now enlarged many, many times proportionately greater like his large-scale newspaper photographs.

Curiously—startlingly!—everything that emerges from Castrejon's process is rooted in empirically and visually reliable fact; yet what he extracts from these highly impactful visual sources is almost illegible and insistently baffling. What is most surprising—and perhaps conceptually unnerving—is that all this outsize visual chaos is not chaos at all: it is visually confusing, yes, but it is all carefully methodical, un-improvised, and in fact systemically predetermined.

Like many artists, Castrejon supports his art "habit" with a regular day job. But Castrejon's day job is not so regular: he is a research coordinator for the "mSTUDY,"

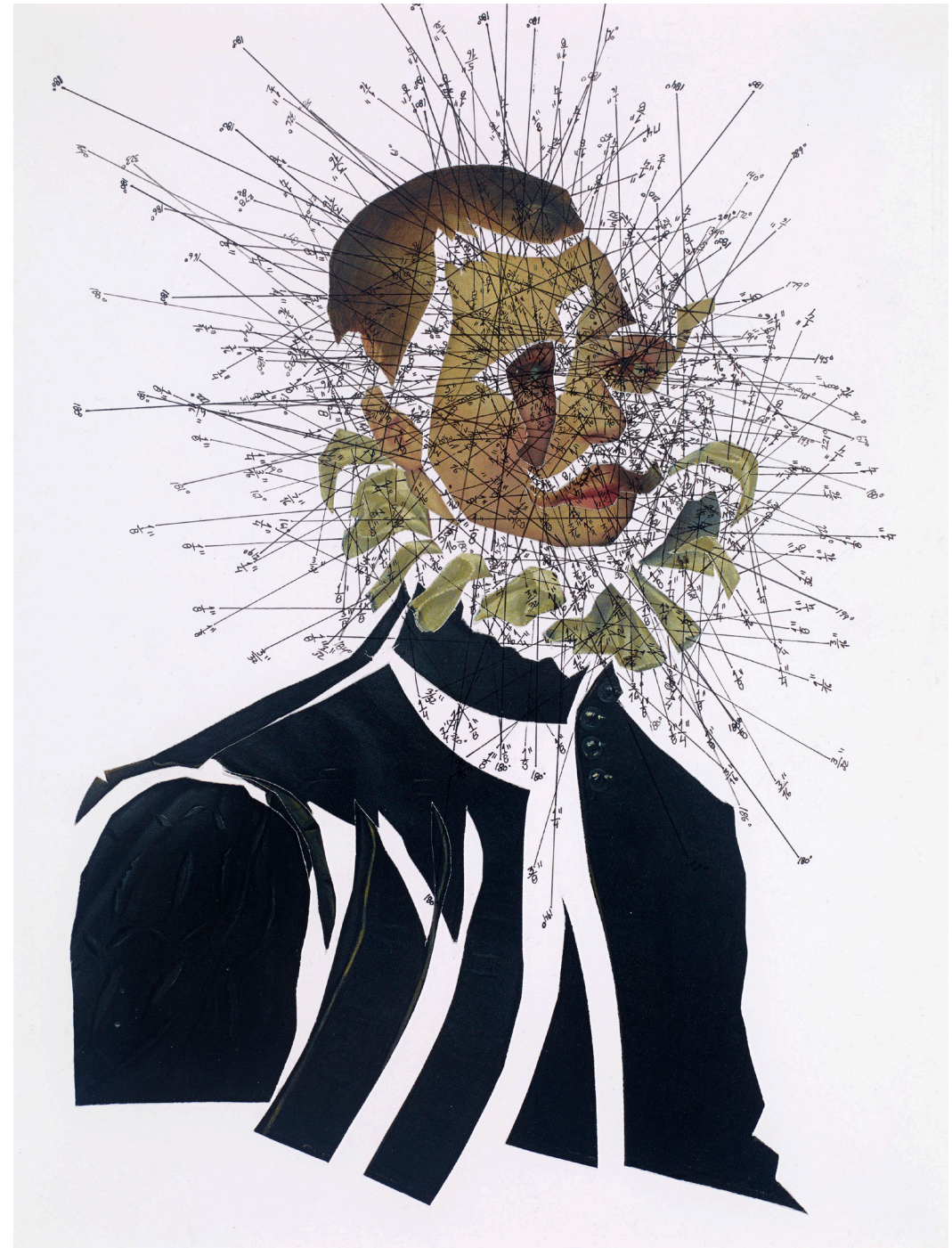
Opposite:
Black Light Special: Post Op T, 2008
Ink, glue, nylon string, paper
24 x 18 in.
Private collection

which recruits male participants to help understand more about HIV progression and transmission among Latino and Black/African-American males who have sex with males. Through Castrejon's involvement in community health, education, access to care, lowering the incidence of HIV/STI infections, and body maintenance and care, he develops a series of systems, networks, connections, and maps; in other words, he utilizes a kind of meta-language, or meta-data—a technique of *assessing* patterns of behavior that he has also long used as the basis of his art. In his art, as in his statistical work, Enrique Castrejon records the actual patterns of observable moments and events in the daily world to probe the *conceptual* (as distinct from the merely *visual*) "connective tissue" that generates each individual's perception of the daily world and to ascribe "meaning" to it.





Investigation of the HIV Cell, No. 1, 2010
Paper, ink, glue
Diameter 15 in.
The AltaMed Art Collection, AArC_12198,
Los Angeles



Portrait of a Lady, 2009
Paper, ink, glue
12 x 9 in.
The AltaMed Art Collection, AArC_12201,
Los Angeles

Lecia Dole-Recio

As observed in a website entry for the Hammer Museum's exhibition *Made in L.A. 2014*, "Lecia Dole-Recio's works revel in an identity crisis. They are not quite paintings and not quite collages. They remain untitled, appended only by an indexical list in a clipped, short form of the materials and motifs that comprise them. These 'painted constructions'—assembled from cut paper, cardboard, paint, and tape—boldly defy being classified."

Dole-Recio's art has always been constructed from visual "information"—simple visual manifestations ranging from squares and circles to curvilinear shapes—which she spreads across her working surface, producing arrangements that might resemble maps, diagrams, or patterns. Maps, for example, are abstracted pictures of actual terrain, whether urban or natural; diagrams, such as blueprints or design plans, are rather like Platonic forms of what non-extant buildings or imagined objects are supposed to look like when they are realized; patterns are representations of formulized samples that might comprise infinite iterations. Dole-Recio grounds her graphic vocabulary in such recognizable semblances of abstract yet loosely definable forms that we are all familiar with—nothing like the irrational, impulse-driven scribbles and squiggles of, say, Dadaist or Surrealist "automatic" artists following the arcane

dictates of their subconscious drives. Her materials are humble, her approach is straightforward.

And yet how she works with her paper patches, her cutouts and stencils, her tape and adhesives, transforms their gradually evolving final forms into enigmas and indefinable realities. At first glance her works appear to be gouaches or paintings on paper; upon closer inspection they appear to be collages, but in fact, they are more like mosaics made not of tiles but of separate patches of painted paper brought together from their disparate sources to form a holistic field. Essentially, they are constructions, not images per se. While they have a visual and formal unity, they nonetheless are a happenstance of minute, parsed aesthetic decisions pieced together from dozens of intuitive choices that Dole-Recio assembles into an overall design. The aesthetic tension, the give-and-take in her art, is in the actual mechanics and the intuited implications of how she literally puts it all together.

Unlike most artists such as painters who create flat (two-dimensional) work, Dole-Recio works on the studio floor, not on the wall or an easel; she sees her activity as closer to that of a constructor or builder of form than a delineator or limner of form (as a painter or draftsman would be). Often she starts a new work by using leftover scraps of painted paper from previous works, which means

Opposite:
Untitled (bl.grn.vllm.bl.dmnds.ppr.), 2015
Gouache, graphite, paper, glue, vellum
79 ¼ x 66 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Gavlak, Los Angeles
Photo: Michael Underwood

that her finished pieces rarely manifest themselves *ab ovo*, predetermined by some aesthetic DNA, but rather develop as fused, combinative forms whose identity borrows from and assimilates previous works as it continues to morph in a protean manner into a new, ever-shifting form. When Dole-Recio decides, intuitively, that a work has finished its myriad internal transformations and finally settled into its own unique form, she knows that part of it will migrate into another embryonic work and continue a life cycle of endless, evolving identities in future works.





Untitled (flr.ppr.rd.wht.bl.dmnnds.), 2015
Gouache, acrylic, graphite, glue, paper
39 ¼ x 32 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Gavlak, Los Angeles
Photo: Michael Underwood



Untitled (flr.ppr.blk.dmnnds.), 2015
Gouache, watercolor, acrylic, graphite, glue, paper
45 ¼ x 37 ⅞ in.
Courtesy of the artist and Gavlak, Los Angeles
Photo: Michael Underwood

Francesca Gabbiani

Francesca Gabbiani works with colored paper to create elaborate, meticulously fabricated collages. Her art couples lavish formal display with radical stylization and an embellishment of imagery that skirts the edge of obscuring its own content. Yet while her imagery is so highly artificial—in the most admiring use of that word—as to be nearly abstract, and although her collage application of bits of cut paper is so intricate and multilayered as to almost become the focus of her works in its own right, her art is nonetheless pictorial, representing highly imaginative, even fantastical, places, and events. Two recurring thematic elements pervade her oeuvre: nature and architecture.

Floral imagery and woodlands are among her most frequent subjects. Garlands of flowers recalling the elaborate carved frames of Baroque-era paintings and mirrors, together with still-life floral compositions, are magnets for Gabbiani's intensely visual evocations. So, too, are the lushly verdant groves of trees—and the wildlife living there, especially birds, whose feathers flaunt her extravagantly collaged plumage—that she renders with an almost *un-natural*, idealized beauty. Her architectural themes usually involve the opulent interiors of Baroque European mansions with their grand salons and staircases and brocade wall coverings; such ornate adornments are an inevitable lure for her collages.

Interestingly, amid these dual themes of nature and abodes, the image of a tree house—the thorough and happy integration of architecture (however primitive) with nature—puts in a number of cameo appearances in her body of work.

But there is a darker side to Gabbiani's art, as well. Counterpointing the fantasy and ornament of her assertively decorative art is her penchant to depict disasters and danger. She has made pictures of a house on fire and produced an especially unsettling image of a blazing bedroom; she has made images of flaming forests and a burning oil slick on a body of water—all grave and catastrophic interruptions to the order and ideality of the world she more often conjures out of her richly hued paper cuttings.

Her most recent series of works, featured in this exhibition, is inspired by black-and-white photographs that she might find in books or magazines or that she might snap with her phone camera. They are pictures of commonplace but decayed dwellings, abandoned houses where homeless people might take shelter or disaffected runaways or drug users might “crash.” With these images as her source, Gabbiani transforms the drab pictures into wonderlands of color, hue, and nuance. These ravishing compositions may have their roots in an unlikely, almost unseemly, part of Gabbiani's personal history. As a youth growing up in Geneva,

Switzerland, Gabbiani sometimes estranged herself from her family for intermittent periods, living on-and-off in abandoned houses with other disaffected and alienated youths.

Viewers need not be privy to her personal past nor be able to “read” her visual content with much clarity in these recent works. Rather, their deeper content may be detected more in inferences and innuendoes and in the clearly projected sense of redemption in aesthetic beauty. Her willfully obscure imagery, yoked with her emphatic impulse to visually seduce the viewer, reflects an urgent, if guarded, desire toward self-revelation.

Leftovers – Confetti Dream, 2015
Colored paper, ink, gouache on canvas
18 x 24 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Gavlak, Los Angeles





Destruction of a Radical Space (4), 2015
Colored paper, gouache, pencil, luan
36 x 44 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Gavlak, Los Angeles



Destruction of a Radical Space (3), 2015
Colored paper, gouache on canvas
36½ x 40 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Gavlak, Los Angeles

Tom Gratkowski

paper-crete No. 36, 2013
Paper, concrete
3 ¾ x 5 ¾ x 3 ¾ in.
Collection of Jill Thayer, PhD



Tom Gratkowski's earliest artistic training was at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; he subsequently studied architecture, largely to explore applying its principles to creating large-scale sculpture, ultimately earning degrees in fine arts and in architecture from the University of Wisconsin and the Southern California Institute of Architecture. His architectural background is overtly reflected in his collages, both small and large, and in his sculptures and installations—not that they resemble architectural renderings of structures that have been built or are conceived to be built, or even elevation or floor plans of buildings. Rather, they are instilled with a keen sense of their own architectonics, their own structural organization and the method in which they are pieced together, much as a building is constructed into an organized entity by the relation and interface of its many parts.

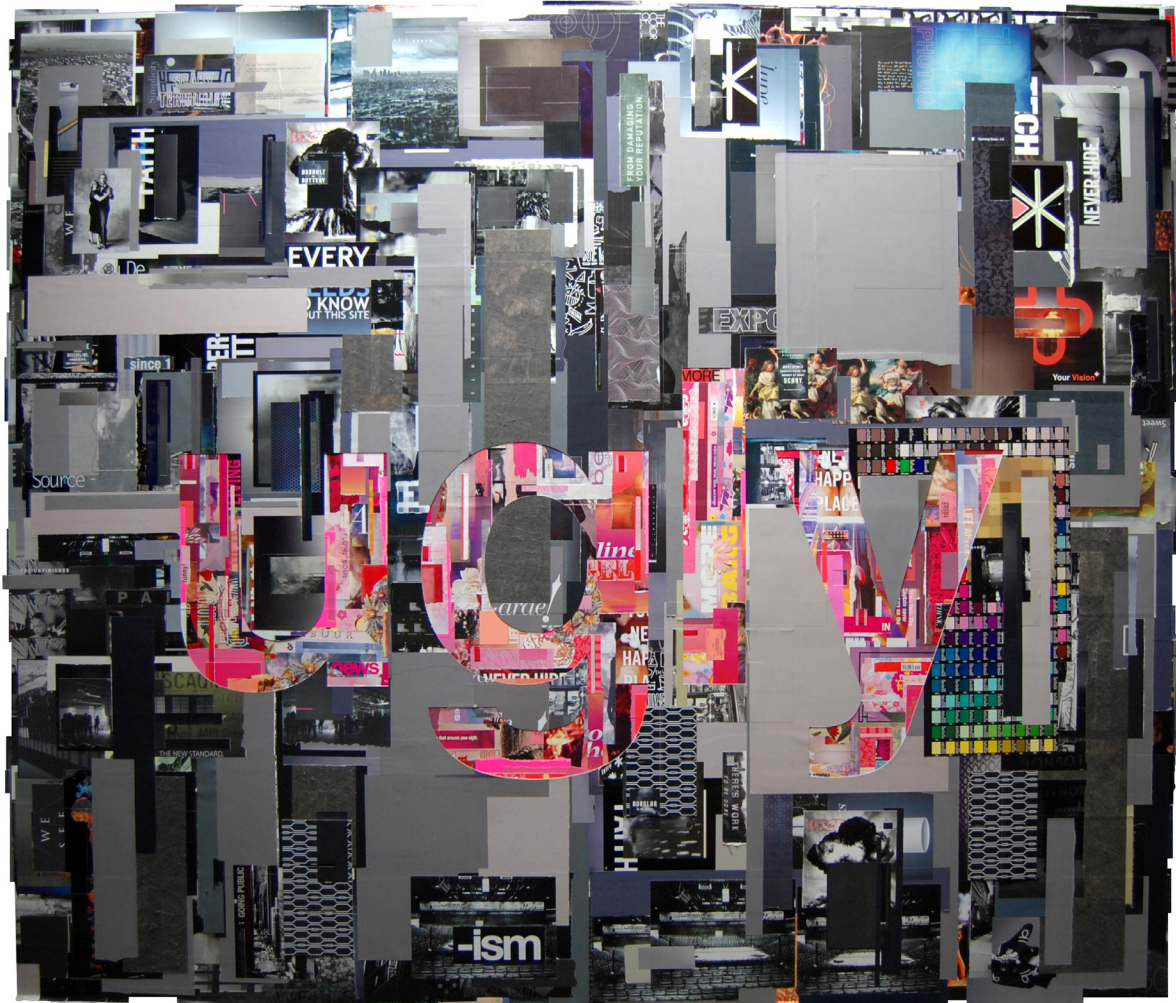
After a tenure as a model-maker in the architectural firm of Frank O. Gehry Partners, in 2006 Gratkowski pursued his career as a visual artist, and his primary medium has always been paper. His early collages were intimate in size, just a few inches on a side, and were meticulously assembled from precisely cut very narrow strips—the broadest of them not more than about a quarter-inch wide—of text and colored illustrations culled from magazines that he adhered in random yet entirely

parallel arrangements from edge to edge across the surface they were attached to. The effect was of an exceedingly intricate field of contrasting colors and patterns that divulged an even greater conceptual complexity as the viewer carefully examined the minute snippets of words and parts of words and slender hints of the pictures the thin strips were cut from.

Simultaneous with his making of small collages, Gratkowski's pursued collages of a considerably larger scale, up to five feet on a side. With his paper snippets gradually growing a bit larger, recognizable words and phrases and photographic images began to peek through—an evolutionary happenstance that the artist came to realize held expressive and conceptual possibilities as new-found layers of content. By the mid-2000s familiar images and phrases extracted directly from print media, including pop-culture magazines, news journals, technical publications, and advertising flyers, populated his collages, deliberately—rather than inadvertently, as in his earliest collages—referencing and reflecting social and political issues ranging from warfare in the Middle East, to gun violence in the United States, to matters of sexual and racial inequality and climate change. Pointedly, Gratkowski never directly proselytized for a partisan viewpoint in these collages but instead introduced provocative issues in a slightly surreptitious manner,

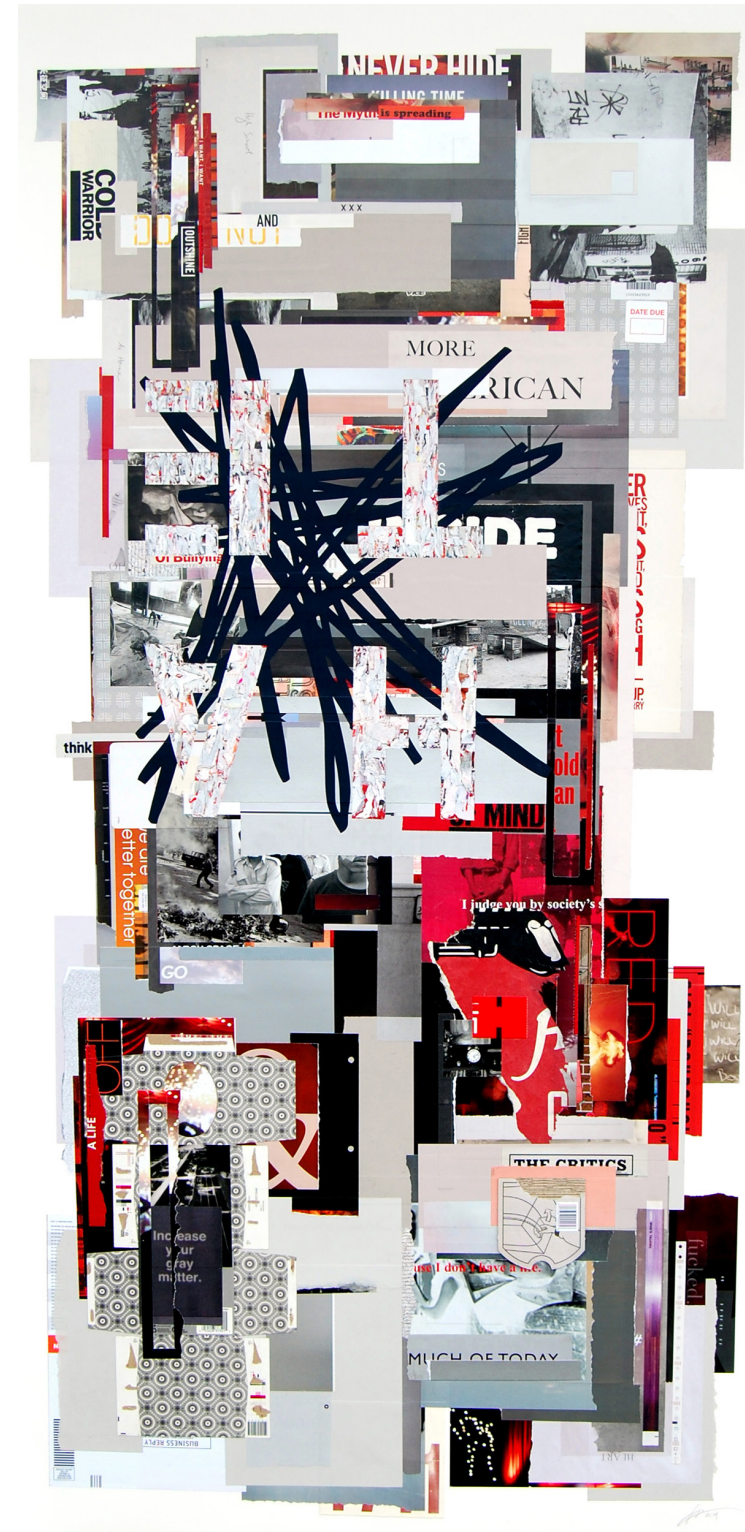
allowing them to linger amid a profuse and visually chaotic field of imagery and phrases. As his embrace of subject matter widened, so did his works widen, sometimes reaching dimensions as large as 7 x 16 feet.

During this same period (2011) Gratkowski began exploring sculptural aspects, first by introducing textured papers and raised surfaces into his collages, and later by using crumpled paper to make three-dimensional objects. His suspended paper "chandelier," *Big Ass Paper Bling Thing*, is an audacious and flamboyant celebration of its own kitschy-ness, rendered out of mere white paper. About a year later Gratkowski undertook a series of "paper-crete" sculptures that improbably juxtapose sheaves of paper with cast concrete. Though these objects are smallish—few are more than a foot tall—and can fit on a tabletop or a book shelf, they have a monumental heft. *Paper-crete #36* (2013), for example, is a rectangular solid of mold-cast concrete from which a cluster of crumpled paper erupts with the visual impact of an explosion. A physically static object, it reads as a powerful force of nature.



Ugly, 2014
 Paper on wood panel
 91 x 106 in.
 Photo: Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles

Opposite:
Hate, 2014
 Paper
 73 x 36 in.
 Photo: Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles



Margaret Griffith

Installation view: *New Sculpture and Foil Works on Paper*, Western Project, Los Angeles, 2014
Photo: Western Project, Los Angeles



The visual motif of a gate is the starting point for many of Margaret Griffith's artworks. The notion of a gate engages diametrically opposite meanings. A gate can either be a portal or a barrier. One concept connotes the possibility of access and privilege; the other connotes exclusion and denial. The inherent tension between these antithetical yet correlative implications has always attracted Griffith's imagination, as has the formal imagery of gates as functional things we use in daily life. In her broad travels she always carries a camera to photograph all manner of gates and fences that range in form and style from all-American white picket fences to the most ornate Baroque designs of gates and other monumental passageways (such as ceremonial arches) found throughout the world. Of course, these cadenced images—the pickets of gates and fences—make their way directly into her art.

In her two-dimensional wall-bound works, Griffith typically affixes an expansive paper sheet to her studio wall and projects a photograph of a gate onto the paper, tracing its essential pattern with a pencil. Once the outline is complete she begins cutting the paper with various implements to create a simulacrum of the original gate, rather like a phantom image—a silhouette, so to speak, of a gate or a chain-link fence, bleached of its details as an *actual*

gate in *real* time and space—and now existing almost as something analogous to a platonic form, with no “natural” context or real-world milieu. These flat artworks are representations more akin to an idea of, or a schematic diagram of, particular gates she discovers in her travels, as distinct from realistic pictures of the same gates.

But Griffith declines to be “rele-gated” or fenced in—puns intended—by the initial source of her imagery. Especially in her three-dimensional works, not wall-bound but free to sprawl into the space they share with us viewers, Griffith unleashes the sculptural potential of her creative process from the stern geometry and repetitive regularity of her sources in utilitarian gates and fencing, bending and cajoling Euclidean geometries into fantasias and arabesques that don't merely defy so much as *refute* order and predictability: two-dimensional grids, sequences of parallel strips, and flat bands of paper leap into weirdly looping, back-flipping, and acrobatically twisting three-dimensional “beings” that obey no clear logic beyond their formal “volition” and energy.

To fabricate these nimble, flamboyant, sculptural orchestrations, Griffith sometimes employs sheet metal and uses water-jet technology to transcribe her designs from their studio origin on paper; but just as often she fabricates exclusively with heavy-weight fine-art

paper, not metal, taking her cutting tools to its surface—all the while evincing a very hands-on, labor-intensive ethos. This labor intensiveness is a shared aesthetic by almost all of the artists in this *Paperworks* exhibition, and is characteristic of many other artists who explore the medium of paper.

For her site-specific project in this exhibition Margaret Griffith works primarily overhead, above eye-level, beneath the dramatically arched, wood-trussed, vaulted ceiling of the Craft & Folk Art Museum's large gallery space. A lattice of beams and diagonal supports defines the overhead space, and Griffith's work seizes the geometry of that space in ways that are bound to subvert its ordered logic while the paper dances and somersaults within it.



Installation view: *Art on Paper 2014: The 43rd Exhibition*, Weatherspoon Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2014
Photo: C. Timothy Barkley

Opposite:
Coringa, 2012
Hand-cut paper
Approximately 12 x 5 x 3 ft.
Photo: Western Project, Los Angeles



Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia

Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia's banners are patently sculptural. This is an inherent anomaly, a paradox, for a visual form that is in essence two-dimensional; and yet Hurtado Segovia expands and extrapolates the very notion of "flat" and "two-dimensional" in the fundamental conception of his paper constructions. While he makes drawings, paintings, sculptures, and installations in a variety of mediums ranging from acrylic on linen to watercolor to woven yarn tapestries to wood poles wrapped in colored cords, Hurtado Segovia usually works with strips of paper that he weaves together in a thatch-work (a process more closely associated with fabric-loomed and basketry) that presents visually complex patterning.

But it is not their woven nature that renders them sculptural. Rather it is the ingenious method he uses to paint the paper strips on both sides in pre-planned monochromatic sequences that are essentially "pixilated" into a grid of colored squares that produce loosely representational pictures, usually landscapes or skyscapes, as the woven result. But even that does not make them sculptural, for the pictures are themselves two-dimensional. In the complexity of his fabrication technique, Hurtado Segovia engineers the finished banner to have *two* faces, each with a totally different pictorial composition. In order to see both sides of the flat banner, the viewer must circle around

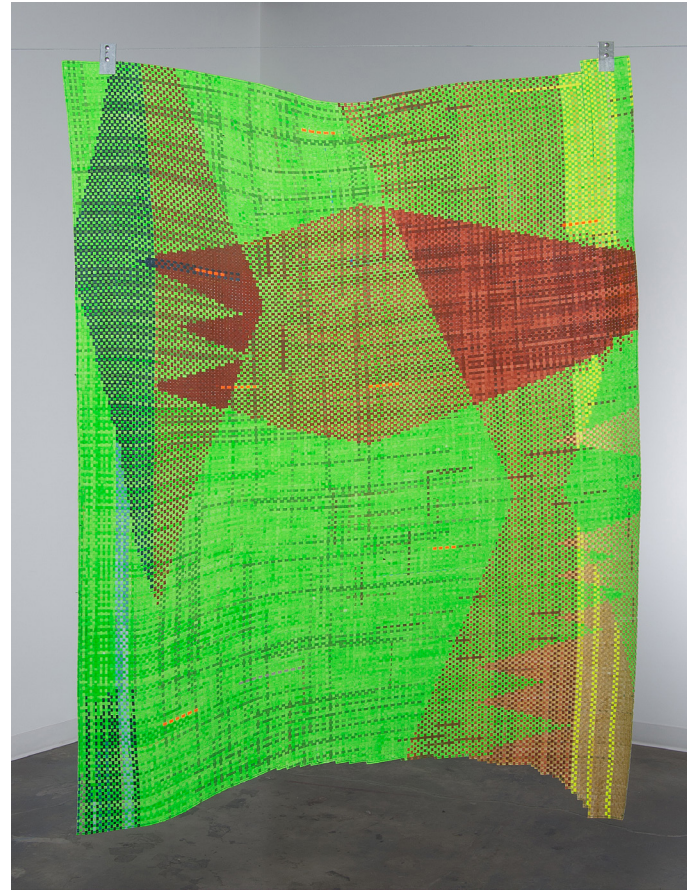
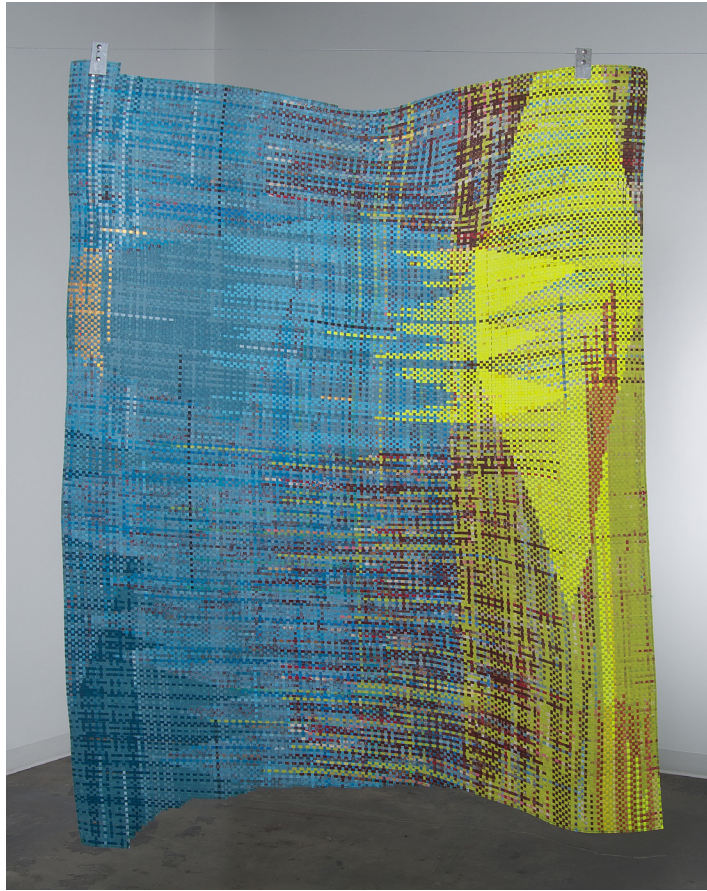
it, exploring it through space, as is necessary when viewing sculptures. And when Hurtado Segovia makes an arrangement of several banners to animate a spatial volume within a gallery, as in his project for this *Paperworks* exhibition, the result is a surrounding presence, beckoning the viewer to explore his work from all angles and to meander about to discover multiple juxtapositions of imagery.

Why would a contemporary artist select the traditional banner as an art form? Hurtado Segovia is a devoted member of the Pentecostal evangelical International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, founded in Los Angeles in the 1920s by Aimee Semple McPherson; today the church has millions of members worldwide. Though Hurtado Segovia's studio practice is secular, as an artist he does increasingly welcome the echo of religious imagery in his work. Banners are a familiar accoutrement in the churches of many Christian denominations, and they play a significant role in ecclesiastical rites and rituals: they announce the fundamental *mythos* of the various denominations—their themes, values, and tenets—in ways that are assimilable to congregations; and while they are not consecrated holy objects, banners, like stained glass windows and priestly vestments, may play an important role in imaginatively projecting elements of the faith.

The banners that Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia is exhibiting for this *Paperworks* presentation are not overtly Christian in their imagery, but they do evoke a sense of "otherness" and realities beyond their own materiality. Using quarter-inch wide flat paper strips that have been painted with various colors in carefully predetermined patterns, and weaving them together in exactly dictated sequences, he produces pictorial vistas that suggest vast landscapes, distant horizons, and infinite cosmic space—on each side of his banners. From flatness of form and humble materials—simple paper and pigment, prepared with no particular expressivity (other than his preconceived final design)—Hurtado Segovia evokes a transcendent vision of nature made manifest by an agency beyond its own material substance.

Papel tejido 49 (Al amanecer, entre la cumbre y el cielo) (front view), 2014
Acrylic on paper
70 x 170 in.
Courtesy of the artist and CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles
Photo: Jay Oligny





Left to right:
Papel tejido 51 (Halo) (front view), 2015
 Acrylic on paper
 72 x 54 in.
 Courtesy of the artist and CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles
 Photo: Jay Oligny

Papel tejido 51 (Halo) (back view), 2015
 Acrylic on paper
 72 x 54 in.
 Courtesy of the artist and CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles
 Photo: Jay Oligny

Opposite, top to bottom:
Papel tejido 52 (Halo) (front view), 2015
 Acrylic on paper
 72 x 84 in.
 Courtesy of the artist and CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles
 Photo: Jay Oligny

Papel tejido 52 (Halo) (back view), 2015
 Acrylic on paper
 72 x 84 in.
 Courtesy of the artist and CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles
 Photo: Jay Oligny

Soo Kim

Soo Kim uses paper-based digital prints made from digital photographs to construct complex renderings of familiar things or places in our daily experience of the world. In recent years, she has produced three main bodies of photographs: trees, cityscapes, and industrial landscapes such as factories and seaports. These heavily manipulated photographic images are multifaceted and fascinating to look at in their own right. But on a deeper level, her ongoing project investigates the nature of the photographic surface physically, formally, and pictorially to probe the question of what constitutes an image in human perception.

Her photographic art is quite unconventional. Her series of trees, for example, are produced as she stands beneath a leafless tree during the winter, training her camera up into the tangle of branches overhead. She then produces a digital print on paper, usually working in a fairly large-scale 4-foot-square format. But the resulting picture is not the final form the photograph takes. Working on a flat surface, Kim takes scalpels, scissors, and X-ACTO knives to the image, cutting away all traces of sky or extraneous content, to leave an elaborately complex and random meshwork of images of branches. Some of the images interlock; many do not. As a consequence, when Kim lifts the cut photograph off the worktable and into a vertical position, many strands of the branchy imagery

cascade downward and clump in a random thicket of paper toward the lower portions of the original photograph. Kim displays her “de-composed” photographs just so—cut, shredded, and clumping—suspended in protective box frames. If trees grow according to some innate natural order, Kim undoes that natural order in her artistic manipulations of the photograph.

Her pictures of cityscapes and industrial sites have an even more involved process. *Midnight Reykjavik, #12* (2006) is an aerial vista of a densely compact seaside city. Following patterns in the buildings’ columns, fenestrations, and other architectural features, Kim cuts away much of the visible content of her image, leaving what can only be described, in visual terms, as the “skeleton” of the city and all its buildings. She turns the continuous image of a city into a veritable stencil of what comprises the city, and displays the paper stencil suspended in front of a white surface.

(Pushes forward, lost in thought) (2011), presenting a view of a teeming urban intersection with tall buildings, stores, and theaters that might be located in any modern American or Asian metropolis, is a composite of two “stenciled” photographs taken at approximately the same spot; the images are a near match, but not identical. Kim superimposes one stencil in front of the other to create a compositional “twitch” or “echo,” causing

Opposite, top to bottom:
(Pushes forward, lost in thought), 2011
Two hand-cut inkjet prints on Somerset velvet paper
28 x 42 x 2 ½ in.
Private collection
Photo: Brian Forrest

(He turns on him suddenly, reaches out a hand), 2014
Hand-cut inkjet print, acrylic lacquer
49 ¾ x 72 ¾ x 2 ½ in.
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Brian Forrest

a visual hurly-burly. The image coheres enough to be discerned as a picture of a city; but in fact any given “bit” of the overall picture is just another moment of visual gibberish that taken together with all the other “bits,” somehow adds up, in the viewer’s imagination and perceptual habits, to a recognizable picture.

The physical surface of a printed photograph is a two-dimensional plane of photographic emulsion or inks or dyes capable of recording the appearance of real objects and suggesting their three-dimensional shape, size, texture, color, and relationship to all that surrounds them. But of course that is an illusion. What we actually see in a photograph is no more real than the colored play of light and shadow projected onto a movie screen or displayed on a video screen. Soo Kim explores the perceptual disparity between what is mere illusion and the representation of what we choose to believe, or experience, about those illusions. Working with large-scale photographs printed on paper enables Kim to quite literally deconstruct them into fragments that entirely fracture the overall image. Yet the viewer’s perceptive faculties insist on “restoring” them subliminally into surprisingly coherent, unified entities.





Midnight Reykjavik, #12, 2006
Hand-cut chromogenic prints
40 x 40 in.
Collection of Jim and Cherye Pierce
Photo: Joshua White



(And whenever one wishes one may return to it), 2014
Hand-cut paper
27 ¼ x 24 in.
Collection of Emily Greenspan
Photo: Brian Forrest



Chris Natrop

Chris Natrop creates artworks in public spaces on a public scale; brass and stainless steel are his preferred and required mediums (for permanence) in these commissions, which dot sites around the United States from Los Angeles International Airport to the shop windows of Harry Winston jewelers in New York and around the world. But these grand projects derive from Natrop's primary interest in paper cutting and assembling paper constructions, particularly for site-specific situations.

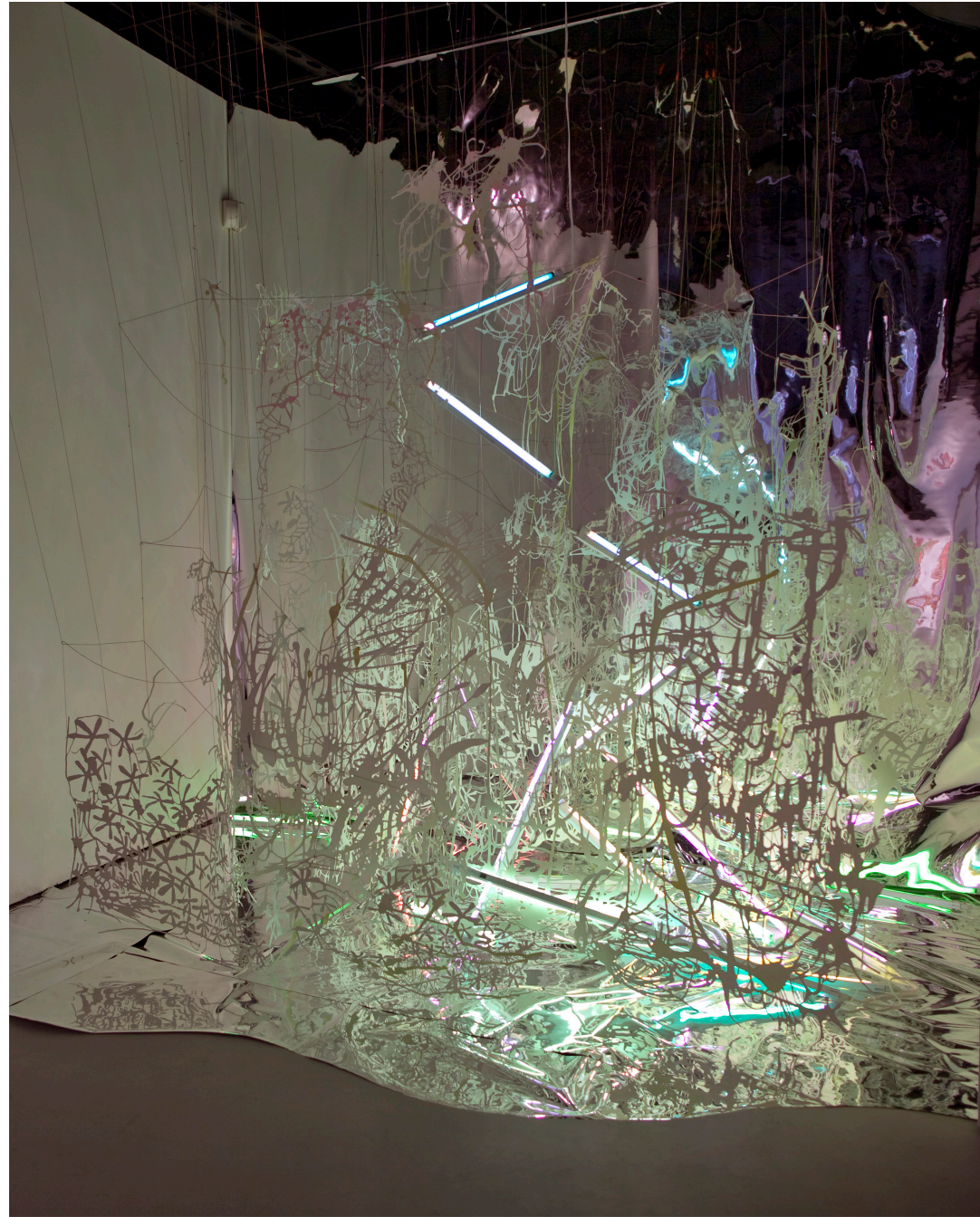
Natrop does not believe in the inevitability of final form and presentations; tentativeness and serendipity are very much part of his aesthetic practice, and he carries improvisation as his working method. Typically, Natrop begins one of his wall-mounted sculptures by placing a seven-foot long (or longer) expanse of unrolled Lenox 100 drawing paper on the floor of his studio and pouring, dripping, brushing, or spattering colored dyes and acrylic paints onto the surface, as he picks up the edges of the paper sheet to encourage the random flow of the paint over its surface. The result is a dynamic, intensely colored abstract painting that is an homage to both gestural abstract expressionism and color-field or stain painting from mid-twentieth century modernism. But Natrop is not content to celebrate the flatness and formal purity that influential art critic Clement Greenberg proposed as an artistic ideal in his lionization of those late modern movements.

Natrop is a bit of an iconoclast and troublemaker for such ideals. Draping his long strip of "painted" or stained drawing paper down the studio wall all the way to the floor, he proceeds to cut shapes out of it. Unlike several artists in this *Paperworks* exhibition who use scalpels and X-ACTO knives, which are prized for their capability to create very precise cuts, Natrop (who reports that he has a neurological disorder that prevents him from making such precision cuts) uses a box-cutting knife—a particularly "primitive" tool whose main use is expressed in its very name. Ripping into areas of the paper, he cuts them away with the crude knife blade, which has the effect of creating a second composition of voids and holes implanted into his painted paper hangings. Often he mounts the resulting painted and cut paper works a couple of inches in front of a wall, creating yet a third compositional layer of cast shadows on the wall of the "white cube" of the gallery space, while sometimes allowing the long painted and sliced objects to cascade onto the floor and to creep up onto the ceiling, sometimes also suspending them in open space as free-floating constructions.

These works, which are hybrids of two- and three-dimensional modes, are visually exciting and a bit unruly. There is a quality of robust visual restlessness and aesthetic muscularity to Natrop's audacious commandeering of architectural space; he seems to willfully vie for attention within gallery spaces

Opposite:
Maybe Matter Matters Most, 2015
Watercolor, metallic powder, glitter on paper
60 x 63 in.
Courtesy of the artist

or public settings. Of course, the same may be said of any but the tamest, blandest works of site-specific or public art projects, but Chris Natrop's work cheekily engages its surroundings, the viewer, and the space they share in the gallery.



Great River Mashup, 2011
 Watercolor, glitter and iridescent medium on cut paper,
 magic string, fluorescent lighting fixtures with colored
 gel overlays, LED light panels, reflective Mylar
 Dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the artist and Fullerton College Art Gallery,
 Fullerton, CA



Post-Sparkle Apocalypse, 2014
 Acid-cut stainless steel, crystals, wood, watercolor on cut paper,
 Mylar tape, 4-channel audio/video projection
 108 x 96 x 120 in.
 Courtesy of the artist and Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA

Rebecca Niederlander

As a visual artist Rebecca Niederlander roves across numerous disciplines, equally in her element working as a digital artist, sculptor, ceramist, fabric artist, and installation artist; it follows that the range of materials she uses in her studio practice is similarly eclectic, including digital prints on vinyl scrim, an array of metals, clay, string, electrical wire, cloth, theatrical lighting gels, zip ties, and anything else that is effective for a given work. But she has a special affinity for paper, a favored medium that she returns to again and again for the myriad forms this protean material can assume.

Niederlander's three-dimensional works are never discrete, self-contained, autonomous objects that occupy a given space in a predetermined way. Rather, they evolve through an indefinite—and potentially infinite—series of repetitions, each building on the previous one, inching, spreading, and finally sprawling, in fits and starts, wherever they want to go. Even if their final forms in a gallery are circumscribed by limits of available space, production time, or budget, the process of their fabrication declares—virtually shouts—that they could continue far beyond what is being displayed. They imply their own infinitude beyond the here and now.

Niederlander accomplishes this metaphysical leap of faith through manifestly physical, and physiological,

references and processes. To begin with, in her paper projects, she often composes at a “cellular” level: that is, she settles upon a given unit or building block of composition—it could be a paper strip, or a loop made of a paper strip, or any single example of a paper shape—to which she then adds another and another and yet another, growing the object like a living organism. Botanical forms—striking sculptural evocations of buds, leaves, flowers, petals, roots, branches—or other biomorphic forms resembling networks of neurons or ganglia pervade her paper works. Characteristically, they gather in masses and clusters that expand rhizome-like—that is, they extend out like an underground root system, sending out shoots almost anywhere.

The endless connections, interceptions, overlaps, and mergers that define the growth patterns of Niederlander's paper works are suggestive of not only the patterns of the physiological development of any living being but (by the extension of our focus on our own humanity) also of the aesthetic/intellectual/spiritual evolution and transformation of our individual selves—values that Niederlander pursues in both her art and her personal life with a devotion not unlike a religious calling. For example, her 2014 project, *What Do I Care? Part 1*, engaged a group of college students to anonymously write down a secret thought on a square of vellum paper which they then folded into the form of a small

Opposite:
There's a Nova in the Bed Next to Mine, 2014
Vellum paper, staples, polycarbonate, galvanized steel wire, zip ties
Approximately 20 x 15 x 9 ft.
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Jeffrey Vaugh

three-dimensional box and left in the gallery. Eventually the boxes numbered in the thousands, with contributors left to reflect on the innermost thoughts of their fellow anonymous participants, whose thoughts might be anybody's—or everybody's.

For her site-specific project in this *Paperworks* exhibition *Blanche Descartes, [You're So Square], Baby I Don't Care* (2015), Rebecca Niederlander specifically sought out a challenging, irregular, architectural oddment in the Craft & Folk Art Museum's third-floor gallery space: a permanent, low-to-the-floor, triangular display platform with its own overhanging roof and an adjoining wall that wraps around to the entry to the gallery, where her paper “organism” shares wall space, and interacts with, the exhibition's title signage. Her objective for her site project, and whatever qualities it may acquire as it evolves *in situ*, is to have a totally symbiotic relationship with its setting.





I'd Like to Thank the Little People, 2003-15
Paper scraps, polycarbonate container
55 x 12 x 12 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Dan Scott



The Devil's Workshop, 2012
Paper, glue, polycarbonate
96 x 72 x 36 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Steve King

Chris Oatey

Chris Oatey explores paper as a medium for gestural mark-making, for drawing pictures, and for making sculptures, installations, and wallpaper. For him, paper and the numerous technical manipulations that he subjects it to, as well as the forms that ensue, are intrinsically and powerfully attractive to his imagination. Curiously his initial forays into the medium were not primarily focused on formal and technical issues; they were pictorial and narrative. These early works were drawings (of a sort) based on newspaper and magazine photographs or video stills that he printed out. The subjects included such “iconic” images as the annual running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain, and journalistic coverage of natural disasters and historic photographs.

To make his drawn images of these appropriated pictures, Oatey deployed sheets of carbon paper—a once-ubiquitous, now nearly obsolete, office supply for making typewritten documents in duplicate versions using a piece of pigment-coated paper sandwiched between two pieces of blank paper: the pressure of the typewriter imprint (or handwriting) on the top sheet simultaneously transfers the visual information to the bottom sheet, making a second copy. (Carbon paper faded from use with the rise of copy machines in the 1960s; surprisingly, in our digital age, with its aspiration to a “paperless office,” carbon paper is

still available—but, ironically, almost exclusively through online sources.) In a laborious—perhaps compulsively laborious—procedure, Oatey placed sheets of carbon paper on a blank expanse of drawing paper, then placed his photographic source material atop the carbon paper and, making tiny hand-drawn circles, mimicked the Ben-Day printing process of newspaper photoengraving that uses countless minute ink dots to produce printed likenesses of a subject’s image, shading, and texture. In his physically and mentally exhausting technique, Oatey went the photomechanical process one better: he produced patterns within patterns so that some of his pictures also revealed gridded zones of differently dotted intensity.

All of this is a method of image reproduction that has little to do with Oatey’s current work; but these early explorations catalyzed his interest in paper’s particular properties to carry and transmit visual information—or to simply be itself, as he worked with it. Over time he became more “clinically” interested in paper’s unique properties. In intermediate works he used carbon compound to produce nearly black sheets of paper that he had purchased as white. He then crumpled them up, mounted them in box frames, and displayed them as sculpture. With their wrinkled surfaces and meteorite-like shapes they are oddly compelling to look

at as art objects. Subsequent bodies of work involved wallpaper expanses that might be crumpled as freestanding masses or mounted in a gallery space, sometimes traversing corners that led to other spaces. Another project from 2010 took the form of hand-stripped paper patterned with gesturally-generated marks—displaying precisely an imprecision *not* found in industrially manufactured wallpaper.

Chris Oatey’s site-specific project for this *Paperworks* exhibition is somewhat improvised. A three-dimensional mass of paper infused with carbon markings is affixed to the gallery wall and climbs that wall up to the overhead space, creeping along until it reaches the ceiling of an emergency-exit corridor—a normally unused area within the Craft & Folk Art Museum—and, while not at all obstructing emergency egress or access, it activates that space sculpturally with a chunky roof of crumple and churn.

Installation view: *Animate Objects*, 2010, CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles





Crumple, 2011
Carbon on Lenox paper
46 x 70 in.
Courtesy of the artist and CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles

Opposite:
Untitled, 2010
Carbon on Lenox paper
14 x 16 in.
Courtesy of the artist and CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles

Echiko Ohira

Echiko Ohira works exclusively with paper to create her primal sculptural forms. In Japan there is a revered, ancient tradition of paper-based art such as origami (the art of folded paper) that depends upon the expertise of master artisans who specialize in hand-making paper in small, custom-formulated batches. Although paper objects and paper-making are not much recognized in the West as art forms (just as the plant-based arts of bonsai and flower arranging are not regarded as much more than polite hobbies in the West), paper-related pursuits are highly venerated as aesthetic attainments in Japanese culture. Los Angeles-based Ohira creates within that Japanese tradition that recognizes paper as an expressive three-dimensional medium.

Surprisingly, for an artist who was born and received her artistic education in Japan, and whose primary medium is paper, she shuns working with “precious” paper made by master artisans. She prefers to work with kraft paper (from the German “*Kraft*,” meaning strength)—the sturdy brown paper used for shopping bags, or as butcher paper. Her attraction to the frankness and utilitarian nature of kraft paper may be a reflection of her move from Japan to the United States, where there is little mystique about the nature and qualities of paper (except for wedding invitations and the like, and for faux-vellum souvenir copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution). But she also admires

kraft paper for its capacity to absorb pigment—particularly cadmium red, her preferred hue—and tea, which she often uses to “age” and “warm” white paper stock.

Ohira’s sculptural artworks echo (but never imitate) natural biomorphic forms—bird nests, marine life, flowers, human and animal torsos, breasts, and internal organs—and she displays them with a nearly ceremonial formality, positioned at viewer eye-level on the wall or directly on the floor (and almost never on a pedestal or within a vitrine); she prefers the intimacy and immediacy of having her objects share the space with the viewer, and vice versa. Her sculptures always engage large kraft paper sheets, cut from wholesale-purchased rolls, which she folds, pleats, bundles, twists, or coils into biomorphic shapes. The resultant objects may be intimate in size—capable of being held in the arms, like a baby—or be large enough to intimidate any notion of moving them at all. In their biomorphic typology and sensual use of paper, Ohira’s sculptures virtually seethe with the energy of living creatures.

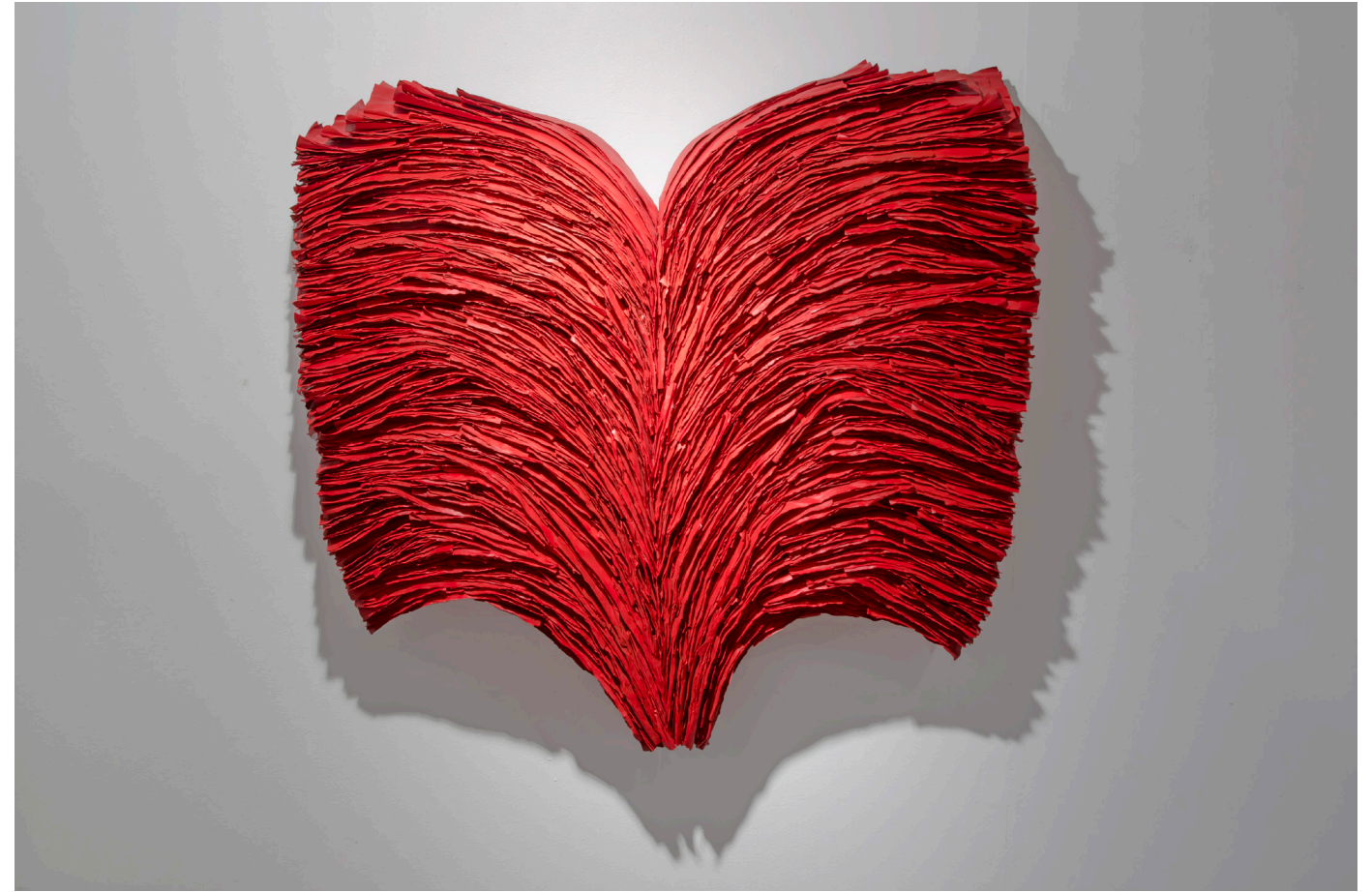
And although there is no outright narrative to her art, Echiko Ohira imparts a great sense of drama to her works. The drama derives from her transformation of inert kraft paper into evocations of recognizable life forms, suffusing inanimate material with a sense of vitality that much art has followed from the time of cave painting.

Whirl, 2008
Tea-stained paper, wire, cardboard, glue
23 x 23 x 15 in.
Courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena
Photo: Susan Einstein





Red Whirl #3, 2007
Paper, wire, cardboard, acrylic, glue
24 x 24 x 14 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Susan Einstein



Untitled Red #2, 2011
Paper, cardboard, acrylic, glue, wood backing
41 x 49 x 8 in.
Courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena
Photo: Gene Ogami

Minoru Ohira

Sculptor Minoru Ohira has long been involved with wood and wood veneer as his primary mediums. He also works with resin, graphite, and slate in combination with wood. But, as paper is the bastard child of wood (as well as the product of such rag-fiber producing materials as cotton and many other plant-based materials), it is a logical extension of Ohira's artistic practice that paper would be a medium of great creative interest to him. His wood sculptures are characteristically organic or biomorphic in form—especially of biologically generative sources of life: egg shapes, sperm cells, male and female genitalia, embryos, and wombs. In a sense, his art is as much about biological procreation as it is about aesthetic creation. Not surprisingly, his formal vocabulary often engages the basic forms of biological existence—circles, spheres, ovals, cylinders, slits, and many other organic shapes.

His works made of paper are basically flat works displayed on a wall. However, they typically display pronounced relief aspects—deep furrows, ridges, raised or recessed surfaces—emphatic textures that are borderline three-dimensional features and reveal his aesthetic foundation in sculpture. What Ohira calls “drawings” (represented in this *Paperworks* exhibition) are really carvings, whose visual and tactile manifestations are not at all drawn with any mark-making implement upon a

surface; rather, they are incised *into* the paper with razor blades to produce cut-out grooves and troughs, transforming the medium of flat paper planes into low-relief sculptural fields.

He begins his process by radically altering the surface of thick sheets of five-ply Japanese paper, applying powdered pigment and graphite that he rubs deep into the surface; the graphite gives the paper a dark metallic-like sheen. He then texturizes the paper with a crosshatching pattern. So far Ohira's labor-intensive technique is concerned mainly with surface treatment. But wielding razor blades, he cuts away thin strips and shreds of paper to produce geometric patterns that essentially render the expanse of paper less as a surface than as a carved, cut-up object. Flat though they are, Ohira's “drawings” are not lines or colors applied to a passive surface; quite the opposite is true: the paper itself becomes the form and the structure of these artworks.

The patterns defined by Ohira's manipulations of paper are usually imprecise geometric forms: interlocking arcs that create visually animated arabesques, grids of rough circles and spirals that extend from edge to edge, or rows of parallel channels. In the modern Western tradition of art and architecture, we often associate repeating geometric patterns with rationality, logic, predictability, and a kind

Opposite:
The Beginning #1, 2015
Graphite, powdered pigment, paper
34 x 26 in.
Collection of the artist
Photo: Gene Ogami

of aesthetic stability. But the features of Minoru Ohira's geometric “drawings” are so varied, so full of embraced imperfection and variability, and so inflected by incident and the hand of the artist, that they project an aura closer in sensibility to something organic and alive. It is his use of paper—the product of a once-living vegetal organism—and his interception of paper with ground mineral pigments and cutting that imbues his art with its sense of animation and the process of its coming into being.





The Beginning #3, 2015
Graphite, powdered pigment, paper
38 x 26 in.
Collection of the artist
Photo: Gene Ogami



My Town #1 (Fall), 2007
Graphite, powdered pigment, acrylic, paper
42 ½ x 32 in.
Collection of the artist
Photo: Gene Ogami

Left to right:
Beach Umbrella, 2011
Kraft paper, cardboard, tempera, gouache
51 x 14 x 14 in.
Courtesy of Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica

Life Jacket, 2011
Kraft paper, cardboard, tempera, gouache, thread
26 x 17 x 6 in.
Collection of Jackie and Stan Gottlieb



Phranc

The artist who goes by the name Phranc is fond of describing herself as an “all-American Jewish lesbian folk singer.” And her studied appearance and persona testify to her notion of a mongrel identity. With her meticulously coiffed flattop crewcut, flannel shirt with white tee underneath it, khaki pants, and combat boots, she presents herself with a decidedly masculine mien, and she speaks at once proudly and playfully of both her butch-ness and her ardent feminism. Phranc’s professional background is similarly eclectic. She has enjoyed a triple career: she began in the mid-1970s and ‘80s as a musician garnering a considerable following in the Los Angeles punk scene and later became involved with folk music, and has recorded numerous albums; and for a time in the late 1990s until about the mid-2000s she regularly sold Tupperware at parties in people’s homes and online; and making cardboard sculptures has always been part of her portfolio.

Phranc’s visual art, like her own identity, springs from an unexpected mix of sources, among them pop art, fiber art, fashion, sewing, painting, and sculpture. To glance at her works casually is to behold assorted articles of clothing—a shirt, a swimsuit, a pair of boots—or a variety of commonplace household items—barrels, a box of candy, a child’s sled. But these objects are not what they appear to be—and that is their point. They are imposters, counterfeits, *trompe l’oeil* lookalikes and have no

practical purpose in life; they are *art*, nothing more or less.

In fact, all these objects are made of either corrugated cardboard or kraft paper—mediums Phranc gravitates to because of their ubiquity, their ordinariness, their lack of precious worth in American culture. (As an artist she also goes by the nickname of The Cardboard Cobbler, a folksy, un-exalted handle, definitely not that of an *artiste*.) To fabricate her kraft-paper clothes works, Phranc makes a pattern similar to the design patterns sold in a sewing goods store. Inevitably, she envisions her designs as printed fabrics on which she hand-paints their “printed” designs. Then, using a 1950s-vintage sewing machine, she pieces the patterns together to form the final “garment,” ultimately applying a fixative to protect the surface of these painted paper sculptures.

Phranc’s artworks are manifestly interested in disguise and false appearances, and they enact a transformative “redemption” of a near valueless material into objects that appear to have some practical use in “real life.” But of course they have no functional value; they are art—nothing more, nothing less. For viewers, her art beguiles in the ways that are at the heart of theater, fiction, storytelling, stage magic, and plain old make-believe.



Cardboard Flexi Flyer, 2013
Cardboard, paper, fasteners, gouache
23 x 11 x 3 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Bianca Dorso



Opposite:
Edelweiss Suspenders, 2013
Cardboard, kraft paper, gouache, thread
23 x 11 x 3 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Bianca Dorso

Susan Sironi

Remarkable and Strange (detail), 2014
Scalpel-edited vintage book
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena



Perhaps one of the most revered uses of paper in world cultures is as the medium for books. When Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press and moveable type circa 1439, ultimately enabling the wide circulation of books, the physical object of the book itself became a treasured object that could be sought, acquired, collected, and prized for its own existence—almost apart from whatever precious knowledge it might contain. Indeed, in recent decades, the form of the “artist book” has become a significant art form for many highly innovative artists. Often book artists create hand-crafted books, sometimes as unique objects and other times as limited editions, that are ornately assembled of uniquely formulated hand-produced paper, printed or hand-inked in stylized lettering, and issued to select audiences—collectors more so than readers, it seems.

Susan Sironi’s studio practice is primarily (though not exclusively) focused on the object of the book. But unlike most artists who make books, Sironi un-makes them. She selects an existing book on a given subject—gardening books are a favorite of hers—and with medical scalpel in hand she cuts out illustrations page by page, or passages of text on a particular topic, or every occurrence of a given word, or some other systemic “subtraction,” as she calls her process, to produce a very different object from the one she started

with. Her book art is emphatically sculptural, and highly conceptual, sometimes scarcely resembling a book at all. Another ongoing (and dauntingly labor-intensive) untitled project consists of thousands upon thousands—perhaps millions—of individual alphabetic characters sliced from printed texts and piled in Plexiglas boxes or in an inches-deep trough about the area of a coffee table. Each slice is about the size of a flake of chad (the paper tab punch-out of now-obsolete ballot cards and old IBM punch cards), about 3/32nds of an inch. Sironi un-does complete books into their constituent letters, which (we may speculate) could be recombined in virtually numberless ways.

Why would any artist undertake to undermine communicative writing? Sironi sometimes cuts up published books from the late Victorian era, or from the 1950s, that prescribe, say, contestable notions of the role of women in society or domestic life and the activities appropriate to (or inappropriate to) that role. In a sense Sironi’s dis-assemblage of others’ writings is a well-founded protest against their content. Indeed, she has remarked in an artist’s statement that “the pieces removed are carefully manipulated and displayed to underscore their significance while rendering them inert.” Yet, from a civil liberties vantage, this strategy may also be seen as a mode of censorship,

or reverse propaganda. In either case it presents an incursion into the fragility of mutual understanding among discussants on any topic of inquiry. We enjoy, as a fundamental intellectual and social value, the notion of mutual understanding, whether that understanding is a principled agreement or a civilized agreement to disagree; but we rightfully distrust the misuse (or dis-use) of language, and we lament the inability to communicate. Susan Sironi’s art plumbs the ethical depths of how we communicate with and comprehend—or do not—one another.



In Our Image, 2014
 Scalpel-edited vintage book, Plexiglas
 Dimensions variable
 Courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena



Untitled (East West Series), 2011
 Scalpel-edited vintage book
 12 x 16 in.
 Courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

Tam Van Tran

Tam Van Tran is a versatile artist who works in a spectrum of mediums, paper among them, and in modes including drawing, painting, and sculpture. He ranks neither the mediums nor the modes hierarchically but migrates freely among them from one body of work to the next. It is not at all uncommon in the twenty-first century for artists to explore a wide range of materials and, incidentally, to elude categorization as, say, fundamentally a painter or a sculptor or a video or performance artist. But Tran likes to skate on thin ice, as the saying goes, skirting conventions and engaging limits of materiality, formal design, and issues of plain old “good taste.”

In his art he often embraces an aesthetic of formal and technical extravagance bordering on excess, yet tamed by an exquisite sense of grace, balance, refinement, and superb technical execution. His large-scale works represented in the *Paperworks* exhibition, dating from 2009 and 2012, are unabashedly decorative in their fundamental impulse and exhibit a material exuberance on the verge of misbehaving in almost any “proper” artistic setting. In a word, they are daring. They immediately confront the viewer with their grand, nearly bullying size. They boisterously intrude on the viewer’s space as deeply undulating structures that billow a foot and a half off the wall while they seduce the eye with sumptuous colors and curvilinear

patterns, swarming and swirling like cosmic rays across their surfaces. These patterns are actually formed by thousands of staples that affix the paper surface to its pressboard substrate; and Tran uses a veritable cornucopia of unusual pigments ranging from earth and mineral-based colorants to organic beet juice and spirulina, a nutritious food and dietary supplement that derives from a kind of algae.

These works would be obstreperous in any museum or gallery setting, and they would be home invaders unless in the most spacious living room of a private collector. Indeed, they seem imbued with a cosmic scale, and evoke a subjective sense of infinitude as their arching patterns seem to want to extend beyond the physical boundaries of their undulating rectangular surfaces. A sense of boundless creative energy and pluck animates all of Tran’s art, often evinced by visual drama, bright and jarring color combinations, erratic geometries, and restless abstract forms. It is as if his works are pushing against their own limits, all but defying their own rules.

Though Tran was born in Vietnam, he grew up in Orange County in Southern California and was raised in its vast Vietnamese immigrant community—the largest outside of the home country. As a youth, Tran was not typically exposed to Western modernist visions of avant-gardism, nor did he encounter

Opposite:
The Radiance of Awareness II, 2012
Acrylic, colored pencil, staples on paper, canvas
81 x 93 x 18 in.
Collection of Cathie Partridge, San Marino
Courtesy of Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects
Photo: Robert Wedemeyer

much of the anything-goes, aesthetic free-for-all that characterizes so much global contemporary art since the mid-1970s, and which used to be called “postmodernist.” Moreover, Tran grew up gay in a cultural and social milieu that still, in some influential quarters, finds the representation of LGBT citizens in the annual Tet parade to be objectionable and unwelcome. Perhaps the edgy aesthetic displayed throughout Tam Van Tran’s painting, sculpture, ceramic art, and paper works reflects a personal, inner declaration of independence.





Conceptual Formation, 2009
Staples, acrylic, spirulina, chlorophyll on paper
68 x 68 x 44 in.
Courtesy of Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects
Photo: Robert Wedemeyer



Beetle Manifesto III (path of no more learning), 2002
Chlorophyll, spirulina, silica, pigments, gesso, paper strips,
staples on paper
47 x 50 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects

Exhibition Checklist

Note: information is as supplied by the artists or lenders; dimensions are height x width x depth. Bracketed numbers following some titles refer to page numbers of illustrations in this catalogue.

Enrique Castrejon

Black Light Special: Post Op T, 2008 [9]
Ink, glue, nylon string, paper
24 x 18 in.
Private collection

Portrait of a Lady, 2009 [11]
Paper, ink, glue
12 x 9 in.
The AltaMed Art Collection, AArC_12201, Los Angeles

St. Madonna of Measures (in inches), 2009
Paper, ink, glue
12 x 9 in.
The AltaMed Art Collection, AArC_12200, Los Angeles

Investigation of the HIV Cell, No. 1, 2010 [10]
Paper, ink, glue
Diameter: 15 in.
The AltaMed Art Collection, AArC_12198, Los Angeles

Investigation of the HIV Cell, No. 2, 2010
Paper, ink, glue
Diameter 15 in.
The AltaMed Art Collection, AArC_12199, Los Angeles

Lecia Dole-Recio

Untitled (bl.grn.vllm.bl.dmnds.ppr.), 2015 [13]
Gouache, graphite, paper, glue, vellum
79 ¼ x 66 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Gavlak, Los Angeles

Untitled (flr.ppr.rd.wht.bl.dmnds.), 2015 [14]
Gouache, acrylic, graphite, glue, paper
39 ¼ x 32 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Gavlak, Los Angeles

Untitled (flr.ppr.blk.dmnds.), 2015 [15]
Gouache, watercolor, acrylic, graphite, glue, paper
45 ¼ x 37 ⅙ in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Gavlak, Los Angeles

Francesca Gabbiani

Destruction of a Radical Space (3), 2015 [19]
Colored paper, gouache on canvas
36 ½ x 40 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Gavlak, Los Angeles

Destruction of a Radical Space (4), 2015 [18]
Colored paper, gouache, pencil, luan
36 x 44 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Gavlak, Los Angeles

Leftovers – Confetti Dream, 2015 [17]
Colored paper, ink, gouache on canvas
18 x 24 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Gavlak, Los Angeles

Tm Gratkowski

paper-crete No. 36, 2013 [20]
Paper, concrete
3 ¾ x 5 ¾ x 3 ¾ in.
Lent by Jill Thayer, PhD

paper-crete No. 43, 2014
Paper, concrete
13 x 5 ½ x 5 ½ in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles

Terror, 2014
Paper mounted on paper
72 x 36 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles

paper-crete No. 45, 2015
Paper, concrete
7 x 6 x 6 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles

paper-crete No. 46, 2015
Paper, concrete
18 x 6 x 6 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles

paper-crete No. 48, 2015
Paper, concrete
12 x 4 ½ x 4 ½ in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles

paper-crete No. 49, 2015
Paper, concrete
12 x 4 x 4 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles

Margaret Griffith

Commonwealth, 2015
Hand-cut paper
Dimensions variable
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Western Project, Los Angeles

Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia

Papel tejido (Halo) 51, 2015 [30]
Acrylic on paper
72 x 54 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles

Papel tejido (Halo) 52, 2015 [31]
Acrylic on paper
72 x 84 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles

Papel tejido (Halo) 53, 2015
72 x 114 in.
Acrylic on paper
Lent by the artist, courtesy of CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles

Soo Kim

Midnight Reykjavik, Study #1, 2006
Two hand-cut chromogenic prints
25 ¼ x 25 ¼ in.
Lent by the artist

Midnight Reykjavik, Study #2, 2006
Two hand-cut chromogenic prints
25 ¼ x 25 ¼ in.
Lent by the artist

(He turns on him suddenly, reaches out a hand), 2014 [33]
Hand-cut inkjet print, acrylic lacquer
49 ¾ x 72 ¾ x 2 ½ in.
Lent by the artist

(That was because this year of course will go on), 2014
Hand-cut paper
66 x 67 ¾ x 3 ½ in.
Lent by Chapman University Escalette Collection of Art

Chris Natrop

Of Night and Light and the Half-Light, 2014-15
Watercolor, metallic powder, glitter on paper, string, customized lighting, video-projected motion graphics
Approximately 16 x 10 x 10 ft.
Lent by the artist

Maybe Matter Matters Most, 2015 [36]
Watercolor, metallic powder, glitter on paper
60 x 63 in.
Lent by the artist

Rebecca Niederlander

I'd Like to Thank the Little People, 2003-15 [42]
Paper scraps, polycarbonate container
55 x 12 x 12 in.
Lent by the artist

Blanche Descartes, [You're So Square], Baby I Don't Care, 2015
Paper, Teflon
Dimensions variable
Lent by the artist

Chris Oatey

Crumple 2, 2010
Carbon on Lenox paper
46 x 70 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles

Untitled, 2015
Carbon on Lenox paper
Approximately 12 x 20 x 30 ft.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of CB1 Gallery, Los Angeles

White Whirl, 2001
Tea-stained paper, cardboard, glue, wood base
58 x 59 x 23 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

Red Whirl #3, 2007 [50]
Paper, wire, cardboard, acrylic, glue
24 x 24 x 14 in.
Lent by the artist

Untitled Red #3, 2012
Paper, wire, acrylic, glue, wood backing
50 x 50 x 12 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

Minoru Ohira

My Town #1 (Fall), 2007 [55]
Japanese paper, graphite, powder paint, acrylic
47 x 36 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

The Beginning #3, 2015 [54]
Japanese paper, graphite, powder paint
42 x 30 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

The Beginning #4, 2015
Japanese paper, graphite, powder paint
30 x 39 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

Phranc

Combat Boots, 1999
Cardboard, paper bag, grommets, paint
11 x 4 x 11 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica

Beach Umbrella, 2011 [56]
Kraft paper, cardboard, tempera, gouache
51 x 14 x 14 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica

Life Jacket, 2011 [56]
Kraft paper, cardboard, tempera, gouache, thread
26 x 17 x 6 in.
Lent by Jackie and Stan Gottlieb

Polka Dot Trunks, 2011
Kraft paper, tempera, gouache, thread
11 x 11 x 3 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Craig Krull Gallery, Santa Monica

Susan Sironi

Untitled (East West Series), 2011 [63]
Scalpel-edited vintage book
12 x 16 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

In Our Image, 2014 [64]
Scalpel-edited vintage book, Plexiglas
Dimensions variable
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

Remarkable and Strange, 2014 [60]
Scalpel-edited vintage books
Dimensions variable
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

You Can Do This or You Can Do That, 2015
Paper from vintage book
2 x 2 x 21 in.
Lent by the artist, courtesy of Offramp Gallery, Pasadena

Tam Van Tran

Conceptual Formation, 2009 [66]
Staples, acrylic, spirulina, chlorophyll on paper
68 x 68 x 44 in.
Courtesy of Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects

The Radiance of Awareness II, 2012 [65]
Acrylic, colored pencil, staples on paper, canvas
81 x 93 x 18 in.
Lent by Cathie Partridge, San Marino, courtesy of Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects

