

*REALIZATION
IS BETTER
THAN
ANTICIPATION*



Reverend Albert Wagner, *Sunburst*, 1988, acrylic paint on plywood, 38 x 37 3/4 inches. Collection of Bonita Wagner Johnson.



Lauren Yeager, *iTunes on Color*, 2013, colored lighting gels, selections from artist's iTunes library, inkjet print on Sintra, dimensions variable.
Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Jennifer J. Smailes.



REALIZATION
IS BETTER
THAN
ANTICIPATION

KEVIN BEASLEY

JERRY BIRCHFIELD

JULIA CHRISTENSEN

JACOB CIOCCI

LENKA CLAYTON

HILARY HARNISCHFEGER

FRANK HEWITT

LEZA McVEY

SCOTT OLSON

MICHAEL E. SMITH

REVEREND ALBERT WAGNER

LAUREN YEAGER



CURATED BY:
MEGAN LYKINS REICH, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND ASSOCIATE CURATOR
ROSE BOUTHILLIER, ASSISTANT CURATOR

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CLEVELAND

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FOREWORD

...Once in a blue moon there is a blue moon.
Once in a blue moon you can see as far as the
Fortunate Isles and the Big Rock Candy Mountains.
Once in a blue moon realization is better than anticipation.
And a kiss shatters a star.
Once in a blue moon Here is better than There...

—Jake Falstaff¹

This poem was included on ephemera for the Kokoon Klub, an avant-garde arts society started in Cleveland in 1911. Principal founders William Sommer and Carl Moellmann brought together a group of artists who shared a “deep-seated need for expressive freedom” and a “passionate conviction that artistic liberation could be achieved through the adoption of modernism in all its forms.”² They organized drawing sessions, printed now-sought-after posters, participated in The Cleveland Museum of Art’s annual May Shows, and partied. Hard. Their annual Bal Masque is memorialized as a truly bacchanalian night where Cleveland’s conservative air was punctured by costume, revelry, and sex. Counting around 60 active members at its peak, the Kokoon Klub embodied a type of collective, alternative spirit before dwindling membership led to its official disbandment in 1956. Note that in the poem, the sentiment “realization is better than anticipation” is not a statement of fact, but rather, the exception to the rule. A case when an array of variables line up just so. However, “realization” is not so staid as, say, “actuality” or “certainty.” Realization holds within it the vision that takes shape. While reality often falls short of expectation, art is something that can create a space outside of both.

Realization is Better than Anticipation features work by 12 artists connected to Cleveland and the surrounding region, including Detroit, Pittsburgh, and locations throughout Ohio. The exhibition brings together emerging and established artists, some with deep histories in the region, others who have arrived from elsewhere, and seeks to promote an open conversation about creative practices that develop in this area. We conceived of this digital catalog to foster dialog, inviting writers from outside of the institution to contribute their knowledge of, and ideas about, these artists and their work. It is an evolving document and images, content, and feedback

will be added over the course of the exhibition.

At its core, *Realization is Better than Anticipation* is an exhibition about making. Focused on the act of bringing something into being, here “realization” is taken as equal parts practical (doing, constructing) and alchemical (magical, transformative). The works on view include painting, photography, sculpture, textiles, ceramics, video, sound, and performance. Across these media, the artists demonstrate a particular sensitivity to their materials and surroundings. Therein, the region has entered their work in a variety of ways: the landscape; the cityscape; detritus; the light; locally-sourced and regionally-specific materials; a rich craft tradition; a spirit of resourcefulness and productivity; working with what’s at hand; the openness and freedom that comes from being “outside the center.” The exhibition focuses intentionally on *how* artists work here, on their particular modes and reasons for making. Through their individual strategies, each of the artists show a responsiveness that is in turns thoughtful, unguarded, and generative.

Starting with pre-existing objects that channel human presence, Lenka Clayton, Michael E. Smith, and Reverend Albert Wagner tend to them in ways that draw out new symbolic potential. Clayton often encounters such objects in thrift shops and at estate sales, archives of lives lived. Her focus on abandoned diaries, correspondence, and ephemera magnifies their value and draws upon their uncomplicated intimacy to address larger themes such as aspiration, longing, and transience. Wagner’s art practice was deeply tied to his religious convictions, and this exhibition focuses on his works that embody a spirited intensity. His sculptures, combinations of found wood and

household kitchenware that become oddly conscious forms, allude to his belief in God's ability to act through inanimate objects. Smith's works are made from materials that refer to the human body in ways that are strange, awkward, and personal. Often installed in unlikely or unconventional ways, Smith allows them to "choose" their own placement—the new works in this exhibition introduce a charged, destabilizing presence into MOCA Cleveland's vaulted monumental staircase.

Jerry Birchfield, Frank Hewitt, and Scott Olson take a studied and exploratory approach to their mediums. In 1960, Hewitt, along with Ernst Benkert and Ed Mieczkowski, formed the Anonima Group in Cleveland, and they set out to investigate the latest science and psychology of perception through art. Hewitt's reflective *Light and Shade Series on Mylar* (1970), stored in an attic in Vermont for most of the past 40 years, shows age while still glinting with a fresh, reflexive currency. Birchfield shares Hewitt's interest in the relationship between perception, material facts, and artistic conventions. Working with a blend of film and digital tools, he uses mundane objects to generate enigmatic images that underline their own physicality, while calling up an expansive range of photographic tropes. Likewise, Olson's paintings engage with the language of painting's history, while at the same time presenting a quality of hesitant coming-into-being. Working on linen and a ground of marble dust and rabbit-skin glue, Olson creates layered, labored surfaces that seem absorbed in their own matter.

Working with raw materials in a highly tactile way, Kevin Beasley, Hilary Harnischfeger, and Leza McVey activate and emphasize their physical properties. Beasley's monoprints show his interest in working with materials in ways that allow them to, as he describes, "take on a life of their own." Made with studio detritus and tar pitch (which remains chemically active and ever changing), their abstract imagery appears photographic and suggests smoke, urban decay, or the night sky. Harnischfeger's sculptures combine pigmented plaster, shattered ceramics, compacted paper, crystals, metal, and glass, and seem to be growing and crumbling at the same time. Inspired by the ancient earthworks and shifting landscape of Central Ohio, they evoke deep time and a precarious combination of earth, minerals, and hands. The exhibition includes several rugs by McVey, a celebrated ceramist who, due to deteriorating eyesight, turned increasingly to textiles near the end of

her life. Most of the works come from Pepper Ridge Road—a cooperative community of Modernist homes just outside of Cleveland where McVey lived and worked for decades—and embody the neighborhood's values of custom craft and independent vision.

With a sense of humor and liveliness, Julia Christensen, Jacob Ciocci, and Lauren Yeager produce collaborative, open-ended works. Yeager reflects on the basic processes and structures of everyday life, often harnessing natural forces as in *UV Index* (2012-ongoing), a series of calendars made from daily doses of sunlight. For *iTunes on Color* (2013), an environmental intervention in MOCA Cleveland's interior staircase, Yeager creates a vibrant atmosphere of light and sound, shifting the highly designed institutional space into a sensorial playground. Christensen's propositional installation, *THE FUTURE IS IN THE LOBBY* (2013) explores art museum lobbies and other non-gallery communal spaces as sites of display, confusion, tension, and creative potential. Installed in MOCA Cleveland's Gund Commons—a free, public, mixed-use space—Christensen's 3D-printed work contains components that local artists and cultural groups will be invited to use in order to occupy the space, and consider its purpose. Ciocci works in a distinctive mashed up-style that borrows from YouTube, comic books, pop culture, and street art. His suite of new videos and collages revolve around Cleveland's Norton Furniture store and its owner, Marc Brown, renowned for wacky DIY TV commercials. The results are bizarre, raucous explorations of consumerism, entertainment, reality, and desire.

Realization is Better than Anticipation is not an exhibition that concludes. Rather, it's an exhibition that proposes, spreads out, and continues. It is one of many exhibitions that MOCA Cleveland will present at its new home to promote critical dialog, support the production of new work by artists nearby, and to forge strong connections with our neighboring cities. We thank the many authors who have contributed thoughtful essays about these artists and their works. And, of course, we thank the artists for their inspiration, vision, and insights that invite us to come to our own realizations.

Sincerely,

Megan Lykins Reich
Associate Curator and Director of Programs
+
Rose Bouthillier
Assistant Curator

¹ Ohio born Jake Falstaff was the pen name of Herman Fetzer (1899-1935), a novelist, poet, and columnist for the *Cleveland Press* and *Akron Times*. This excerpt is taken from Henry Adams, *Out of the Kokoon* (Cleveland: Cleveland Public Library and Cleveland Artists Foundation, 2011), 122.

² Adams, 9.

KEVIN BEASLEY

BEASLEY

KEVIN BEASLEY: A LINE OF SIGHT

EBONY L. HAYNES

Remember the Magic Eye poster craze of the 90s? You could buy one at your local mall. They were in your dentist's office. These computer-generated autostereograms hid a 3D image inside a 2D composition, and the key to uncovering these visions was to stare at the surface, while purposefully unfocusing your gaze. It was frustrating if you were unable to see the sailboat or the colonial-style house claimed to be beyond the pattern. And when everyone else had a "Eureka!" moment, you would wait anxiously for your own successful sighting. Once the lines became sharp and in focus, and the color gradients transformed into something more discernable as tone and shadow, you claimed your prize, your purple whale.

The idea that you can see something by not looking at it is enticing. This relaxed, or more aptly coined "open" way of looking or encountering, points to the necessity of acknowledging the periphery in order to get to the core. The unfocused gaze can reveal connections between what you are looking at or looking for, and what you are seemingly looking past or beyond.

Kevin Beasley's romantic visual and aural compositions—including sculpture, installation, live performances, and photography—invite the viewer to move away from an oversimplified reading towards a revelation of the not-so-obvious. The nuanced combination of site-specificity (Beasley responds to the installation site, while also often making work related to places that he is deeply connected to, such as his family's land in Virginia) and physicality (his objects and materials seem to be magnified, stressed) conjures a larger connection to the great beyond; those vast systems and networks and passages of time that converge

to produce one's immediate experience. The life of Beasley's carefully chosen objects paradoxically exists in their unexpected ephemerality. Throughout Beasley's oeuvre, we are made aware of space and time, or more specifically, a history of space and an elusion of time. Seeking the periphery, his work moves well beyond the present moment or singular visual. Its individuality and abstraction warrants a line of sight that uses various points of entry and illuminates an undercurrent of dissonance (political, conceptual, and material).

The Eames brothers' film *Powers of Ten* (1977) is a recurring point of reference for Beasley's thought process. The film illustrates the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of things within your field of view in its depiction of the relative scale of the universe, rooted in a factor of ten. Beginning with an overhead view of a couple having a picnic, the camera zooms out in continuous increments of 10 meters across, 24 increments in total, to uncover the discernable universe. A square frame acts as the viewfinder and that which it surrounds becomes the point of focus. But in this mathematical encasement of space, the area encircling the frame remains an important component in seeing the big picture.

As an abstract thought, when applied to experiencing Beasley's work, the big picture—the inception, reception, and connection to materiality—becomes the point of interest. His works are composed with a lively murkiness that radiates outward, and do not befit a single point of entry. Time and space are best understood in relation to both that which precedes and that which follows. Through Beasley's own unfocused gaze, and constant awareness of the periphery, a line of sight transforms into a gesture of inclusivity. His artworks catch you in the margins and bring you into their scope.

KEVIN BEASLEY
BEASLEY



Kevin Beasley, *Untitled (Transmission)*, 2011, digital C-print. Courtesy of the artist.



Kevin Beasley, *Untitled (black ephemeral II)*, 2010, paint and tar pitch monoprint on paper, 24 x 19 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and The Butcher's Daughter, Detroit.

ONE THING, THEN ANOTHER, AND: AN INTERVIEW WITH JERRY BIRCHFIELD

ROSE BOUTHILLIER

Jerry Birchfield creates complex images of simple materials using a variety of approaches and techniques, including sculpture, film photography, and digital manipulation. Birchfield's works bring these mediums together in equilibrium and overlap. I sat down with Birchfield on June 10, 2013 to discuss the underlying concerns of his image-making process.

Rose Bouthillier: *I'm curious if you can describe how an image begins for you. Is it something that's envisioned in your mind? Or, is it sparked by an object? Or, does it only begin to take shape in the frame?*

Jerry Birchfield: I'd say the latter. I've been thinking of photographs as being built, and not necessarily taken. So, a lot of the recent photographs have been constructed in front of the lens, like a sculpture or a collage built-up on the surface of the negative.

RB: *What led you to produce images this way?*

JB: In my undergraduate studies at the Cleveland Institute of Art, I was in the photo department. But I always had one foot in photography and one outside. For some reason, it felt right to be working from a photographic point outwards. As I was making sculptures and drawings, I was thinking of them as being part of some sort of photographic practice. I'm still making sculptures, still making drawings, and marks on paper, but the final work is a photograph.

RB: *In terms of the sculptural aspect of your work, can you talk a bit about your installation strategies? For instance, your photographs for Realization is Better than Anticipation are arranged at various heights, some stacked, and with different distances in-between. This seems sculptural, and structural, even though the pieces are arranged on the wall, something that is habitually read as a flat 2D surface.*

JB: I'm interested in all the elements of a photograph being at an equivalent level. The pictorial, the material, the perceptual, and the durational, all occupying the same space. The installation becomes part of that. Simple gestures, like varying the viewing height, or acknowledging a standardized viewing height, give the impression that the photograph is an object that's capable of moving in space, and, even more so, that there are conventions for how this object is moved through space.

The installations always begin with a consideration of contingent elements. For MOCA Cleveland, we [the artist and the curators] decided which images we were going to work with, and in which space. Within that, I wanted the images to develop relationships with one another, and to the wall that they were on. It is sort of arbitrary, in the way that the first becomes related to the second, and the second to the third, but then the fourth is related to the tenth, and the eighth is related to the second. So, all of the photographs together are dependent on each other as a whole.

I'm also interested in the viewer's navigation of the work, particularly with images hung together. From one image to the next, there is an entrance and exit to each work, into and out of pictorial space, through the material conditions of the space in-between. The viewer's eye and body activate those pathways.

RB: *How do you choose the objects in your photographs?*

JB: I'm interested in how the objects build the photograph, not in a representation of the object itself, per se. The objects are chosen based on how they can appear within a photograph. Sometimes they are really ephemeral, built in the studio, and sometimes they are part of my daily life, find a way into the photograph, and then go back to their daily use. The choice of whether the object is included or not can be made only after the photograph exists, and either works or doesn't. I'm really interested in how the traditions and genres of photographic practice, such as documentary, theatrical, or commercial, influence the work. Choices like lighting refer to those things—they become as much of a referent as the object being photographed.

RB: *Some of the objects you use appear in multiple images, or as you say, come from your daily life. Do you find that you develop some sort of pictorial attachment to them, something like an affection that develops through making the image?*

JB: I do have a special place in my studio for the things that are made to be photographed. And some stuff I just can't throw away, because it exists in a photograph and it seems so important. But, the object can't do the same thing in real life as it does in the photograph. So, it's really just for me, it's not for showing. The objects that are part of daily life just go back. One of our rugs was recently part of a photograph. I'm interested in how things like that, that I use daily, can come together with those I produce in the studio, in a way that has an equalizing effect.

RB: *In addition to pictorial and sculptural concerns, a decidedly photographic concern pervades much of your work: original and copy, indexical or virtual. How do those distinctions shape your images?*

JB: I feel like I've had these rules in place for a while that I'm now shedding. Shooting film, or digital, or 4x5, or medium format, printing on certain paper, no digital manipulation, or, if something needs to be fixed, then I can digitally manipulate it, but nothing more. But those rules and choices are starting to feel arbitrary; I can construct an entire image in the camera, or I can do it entirely digitally. Lately I've been experimenting more with multiple images in the frame, images stuck onto other images, so the photographs, materially, are becoming very related to collage. It's all part of a pretty fluid process. Because I'm making inkjet prints that are generated by a computer, they have a very material form. Then they're in the studio and become part of a new photograph, which goes through the whole process again.

RB: *Your works are editioned, and exist as individual prints, yet in the installations you place them in particular relationships to one another, through arrangement. I'm curious as to how you navigate them as singular entities with what seem to be multiple identities.*

JB: I'm interested in things being very clear, physically, about what they are. Although there is abstraction and un-identifiability in the images, I am interested in the medium acknowledging itself to the viewer. Inkjet prints are inkjet prints, and the reality of them is that you can print many very easily. As installations on a wall, they become objects that are affected by the space they are in, and by the viewer navigating that space. So, regardless of their ability to be printed, theoretically endlessly, they become a unique experience within the framework of the installation.

RB: *One thing that we've discussed before is the way an object can oscillate between appearing very simple, or "dumb," and very complex. And it seems to me that potential, that flip, is really tied to indexicality in photography. It's dependent on some kernel of the "real" being transferred/transformed in the image. Based on your growing ambivalence towards the film/digital divide, and manipulation, I'm curious as to how you approach that spark of the index in your work. Is it something that is consciously preserved, or yet another convention to be mimicked and shadowed?*

JB: I'm more concerned with the condition of the photograph at the end. There are varying degrees of abstraction and representation within singular works. Certain areas flatten out, become completely graphic, and present in that way, and then all of a sudden there's a very photographic or depictive moment with light and shadow. I'm interested in the play between those things, and one basically emphasizing the other. So there's a continual shift between entering the pictorial, or even identifying the referent, and then the next thing that your eyes move past pushes you back to the surface of the print, and back into the space that you are standing in. There's a constant oscillation, and that's the goal with most of my work, to find the spaces in-between, like awkward moments, awkward compositions, even awkward tonal ranges. In traditional photography, you want your maximum black with detail, and your maximum white with detail, you follow the Zone System, so that black, white, and nine shades of gray in between are perfectly depicted. I'm interested in what happens when those things are slightly off.

RB: *I've been thinking about your work in terms of Venn diagrams, as if there are circles or zones of qualities or concerns, Abstract/Representational/Material. Within each image there are areas where two, or all three, of those zones overlap. The distribution of information among the zones make for interesting tensions.*

JB: Those areas of overlap are what make the works humorous, or tricky, or self-referential. If it's too depictive, or too abstract, the image just becomes really poetic in a way that I don't like. I'm interested in the thing that stops viewers, the thing that falls, that forces vision to fall back into the present space. Certain decisions, like the matte paper, varying scales, are all part of that.

RB: *This idea of visual navigation reminds me of the work you recently showed in New York, Back and Fill (2013); the title is a sailing term for a series of small maneuvers. It seemed to fit very eloquently with your work as a whole.*

JB: When I came across that term, I knew it was just perfect. I had a lot of trouble making that work. I kept making minute shifts. Looking at it, going home, looking at it again, and then changing everything, but just by a few degrees. And in the end, those are really the simplest works I've made, visually. Plain grey prints in plain white frames. But the decision making process was always shifting. So *Back and Fill* seemed like a totally appropriate title for that work. And it seems to be the way that a lot of things are going in my studio. Some things happen very easily, but most things are continually changing, that's just the way my process is. I also like the other meaning of the word: "back and fill" can mean taking back, or renegeing, on a previous statement or promise. I like the idea of the work proposing something, and then immediately changing its proposal to be something else, so that it's continually oscillating back and forth. Or, telling you the exact opposite of what you thought it just said.

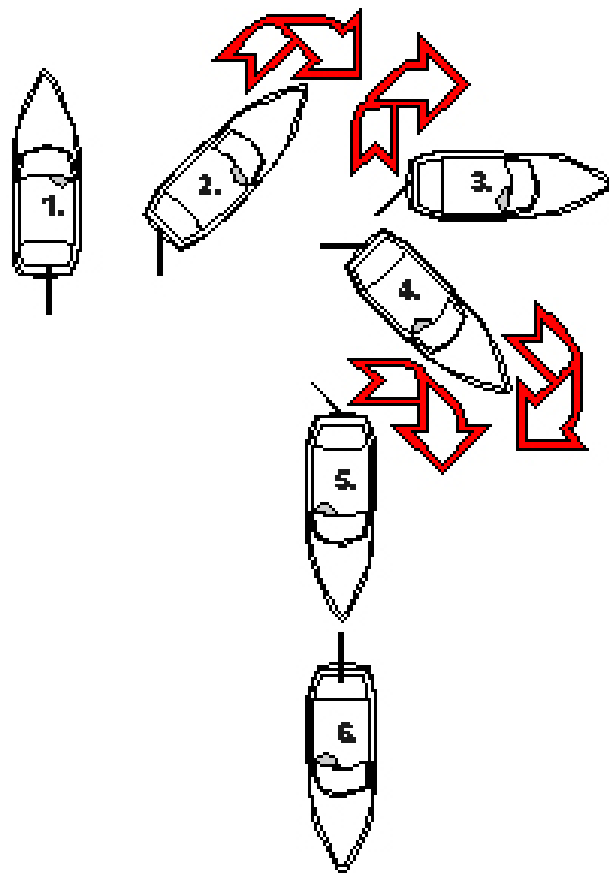
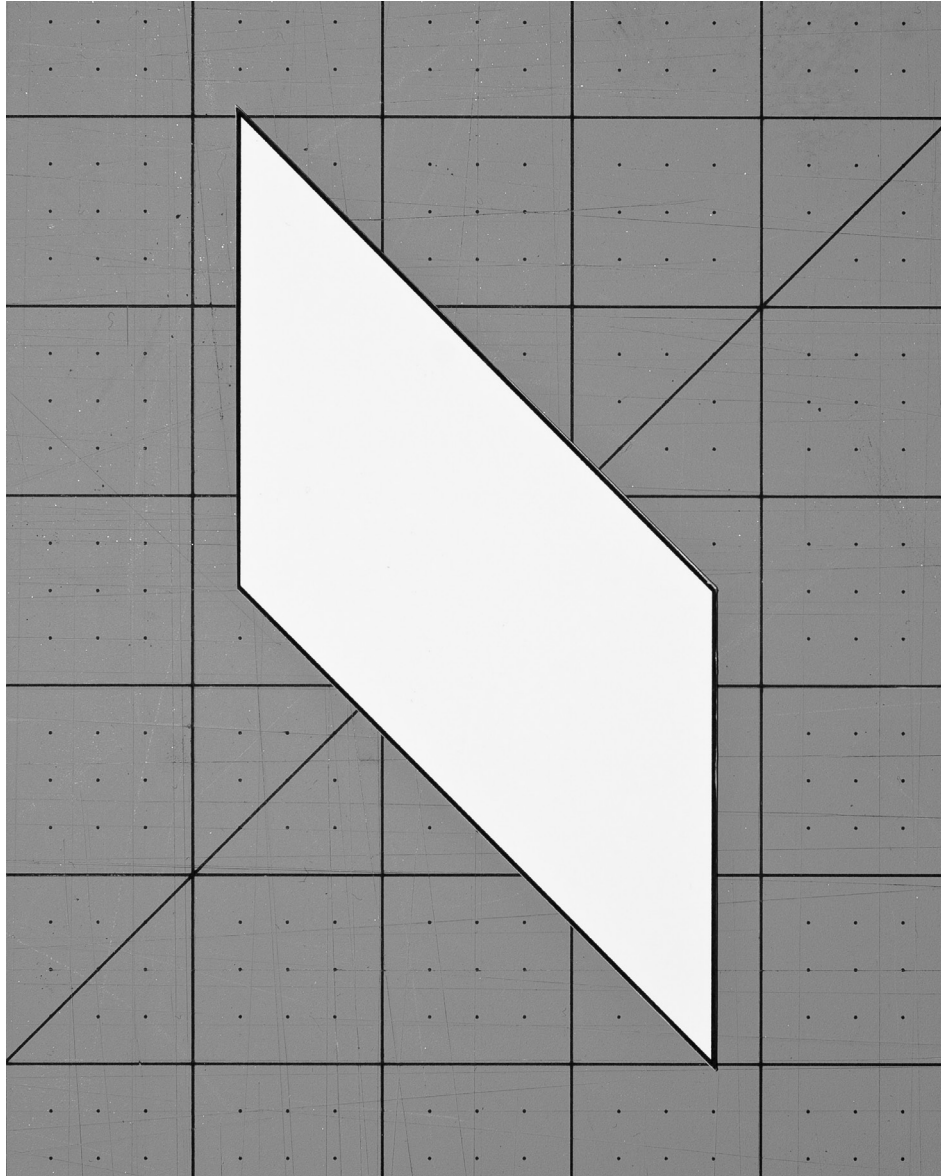


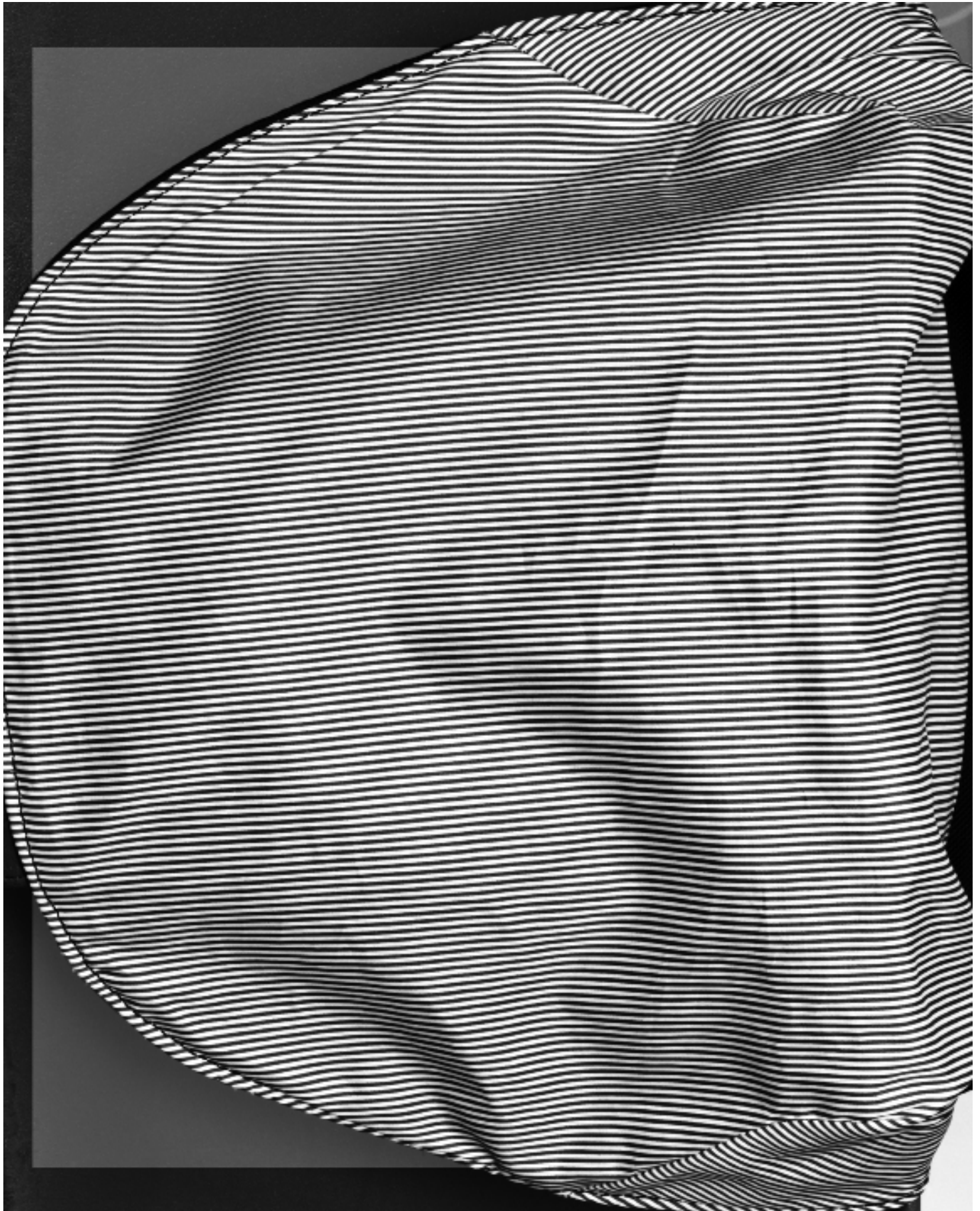
Diagram of the nautical "back and fill" maneuver. Taken from boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/backfill.htm.

JERRY BIRCHFIELD
BIRCHFIELD



ABOVE: Jerry Birchfield, *Untitled*, inkjet print, 2013, 15 x 10 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

RIGHT: Jerry Birchfield, *Untitled*, inkjet print, 2013, 25 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



JERRY BIRCHFIELD

RI . A P I I I I

JERRY BIRCHFIELD:
ON LEVITY,
BAD CAMOUFLAGE,
AND MUTUAL SEEING

SARAH DEMEUSE

**Studio*

The studio.

A place of repetition.

A place for intermediary processes.

Here, objects are built, staged, shot, and reshot.

The images of these scenarios are then
belabored (both digitally and physically)—
they are hung, folded, shot, and reshot.

The cycle can continue, and what may have
appeared as singular endings open for other
beginnings. Overall, these actions give for
built photographs, and for images of specific
constellations in time that generally don't exist
beyond the studio or the moment of the shoot.

[As a place capturing a special moment in
time occurring in a separate environment,
Jerry Birchfield's studio still echoes the
transformative, event-oriented experience of
early photographic space—where people and
objects could be transported to magical places,
and where this *faux* traveling was fixed in time.
As a place where building and photography
meet up, this studio also resembles the
studios of other contemporaries. Consider, for
instance, Erin Shirreff's work with photographic
representations of Tony Smith sculptures for
which she builds new sculptural maquettes that
then serve as temporary models for photographs.
Or think about Elad Lassry's colorful stagings of
consumer goods into sculptural combinations
that echo a modernist formal legacy as well as
glossy commercial pop photography.]

* *Weird Object*

The elements that conform to what eventually appears as a quiet black and white syntactical whole are, in fact, samples of a murmuring universe peopled with *weird objects*. And it is these intermediary *weird objects* that call my attention in Birchfield's work: they float, curl, levitate and have an ambivalent relation to pattern and camouflage.

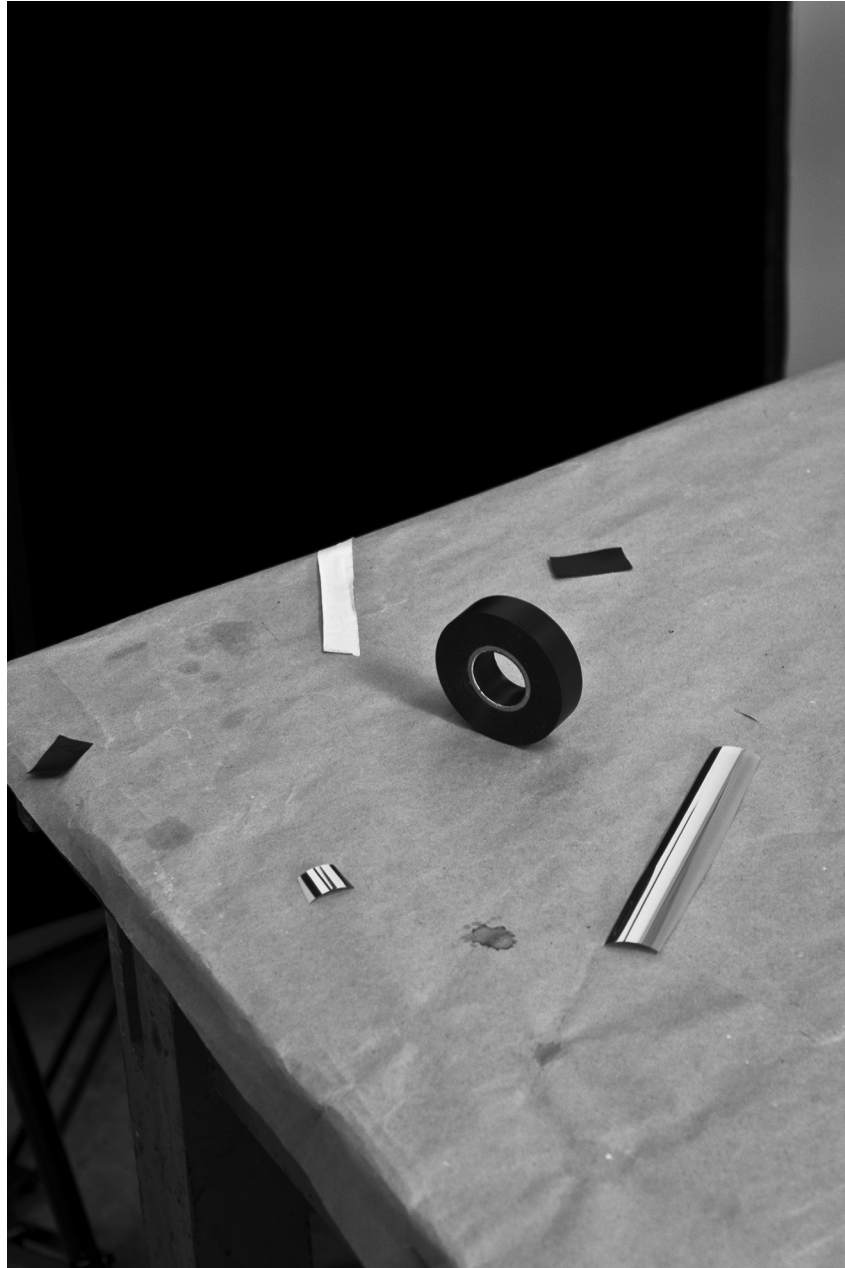
While commercial product photography puts a shiny object against a rolling white backdrop, producing the illusion of context-less-ness to direct the viewer's attention to the surface of the consumer good, Birchfield's objects have an oxymoronic, confused relation with their environment. At times, they echo their backdrop, while at others, they seem to be in conflict with it—like a case of misplaced camouflage, a failed attempt to disappear. In other instances, Birchfield repeats an object in the same print to lift the veil, to show that what may have looked like an object set against a backdrop is, in fact, but another image that can be easily reproduced and displayed differently. Despite the contagion between object and field in Birchfield's images, most objects in his digital prints lack shadows; in this way, they do relate to the glitzy object surfaces of commercial photography. The things posing for Birchfield's camera seem to have successfully freed themselves of this worldly attachment that indicates their position *vis à vis* the sun, viewer, or even other objects. In the ecosystem of Birchfield's studio, relations between the built elements seem to happen without the burden of perspective. If 16th-century illusionistic art intensified the work of shadows and perspective to create a feeling of reality, Birchfield's near-to cancelation of such elements in the pictorial plane transport us to a place of levity that's most commonly associated with the aesthetics of the virtual (understood as opposed to the "gravitas" of the material). Yet such similarity is only partial: the toned-down black and whiteness of the prints, as well as a gallery display reminiscent of an elegantly dancing sentence, contradict the paratactical or screaming chromatics associated with the digital experience.

* *Triad No More*

These unmoored objects, frequently of rectangular shape or set in a stage with rectangular motifs, paradoxically call the viewer's awareness back to the photographic frame. And, hence, to the anchoring force at work in the photographic image; what happens within the pictorial plane narrowly prescribes the act of looking. It's a compositional effect as old as the window frame. Yet, these rectangular shapes or motifs have a trigger-like agency: through a simple doubling of the frame-within-the-frame trope, they remind the viewer that there's a subject staring back. And that is when these *weird objects*, whose life cycle is limited to events in the studio, show us their actual agency. Not only do they exist for the built compositions: they have an impact a posteriori, when the image is viewed. In that moment, the binary setup of an active subject facing a passive object is interrupted. This interruption consists of two active partners affecting each other. I'm tempted to believe that this two-directional dynamic can happen precisely because Birchfield's process in the sheltered studio almost effaces the indexical moment of photography (which tells us that the thing within the picture refers to something in the real world, of which the photographer and viewer are part). In Birchfield's *built photographs*, the real world is the picture, granting full agency (instead of mere representational power) to what is featured in it.

And so, the traditional triad seeing --> seen --> referent makes space for a two-way street proposing the momentary encounter of two seeing beings: seeing--> seeing and seeing <---seeing.

JERRY BIRCHFIELD
BIRCHFIELD



Jerry Birchfield, *Untitled*, inkjet print, 2013, 15 x 10 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Jerry Birchfield, *Untitled*, inkjet print, 2013, 20 x 16 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

BUILDING BLOCKS

MEGAN LYKINS REICH

“Rapid prototyping” is a popular phrase these days. In formal terms, it refers to fabrication methods that use data from computer-aided design (CAD) programs to print small-scale, three-dimensional objects. Informally, the expression has an expanded use in fields like organizational behavior and strategic planning. For artist Julia Christensen, it both defines the production of her work, *THE FUTURE IS IN THE LOBBY* (2013), and refers to the kind of social engagement, and short bursts of activity, that the work encourages.

THE FUTURE IS IN THE LOBBY consists of 55 white plastic pieces, of different shapes and sizes, that attach together in assorted ways. Combined one particular way, the blocks spell out the work’s title. Christensen meticulously designed each block digitally by breaking up the letters into a set of assorted sculptural forms. These renderings were fabricated using a 3D printer, which applies infinitesimal drops of plastic in layers that harden into rigid objects.

The 3D printing process (another term for rapid prototyping) is remarkable, and its potential for making things in the future is mind-bending. Some forecasts suggest biological outcomes—new organs made from, among other things, print cartridges filled with cells. In the meantime, the process allows for the creation of any geometric form one can imagine, at ever-increasing scales and with progressively more diverse materials. It opens the field, not only for scientists, but for artists like Christensen.

It is common for contemporary artists to use external fabricators to produce works they design. Although her process is the most technologically advanced in *Realization is Better than Anticipation*, Christensen is not the only artist in the exhibition whose work is constructed, in part, by an outside “hand.” At the other end of the spectrum, Lauren Yeager relies on the sun’s light to create her monthly calendars. These two works are perfect bookends for *Realization*’s exploration of production, with Yeager using the most natural available resource—the sun—and Christensen employing one of the most advanced manufacturing tools available today.

Christensen’s use of technology points to a growing investment in, and reliance upon, digital technologies as mechanisms for realization. Yet, the work retains a personal touch. The glistening surfaces of Christensen’s objects are striking. Though machine-made of plastic, each block has distinctive textures reminiscent of textiles or carved wood. Some surfaces are woven while others have tiny linear patterns. These delicate, granular surfaces signify the layered printing process; however, they also denote the artist. Tiny inconsistencies in the objects’ forms reveal minor discrepancies in Christensen’s digital designs. Like a brushstroke or fingerprint, they become indices of the artist’s hand—a new kind of gesture.

One of the benefits of rapid prototyping is the ability to model new ideas quickly and effectively. *THE FUTURE IS IN THE LOBBY* provides an opportunity to test the relationship of space and cultural value as they relate to a particularly tentative environment: the art museum lobby. Once an ancillary zone reserved for basic transactions, art museum lobbies have become adaptable spaces, designed to support a diverse array of activities. As analyzed by John Yau in his essay “Please Wait by the Coatroom,” museum lobbies are transition spaces for audiences and also, at times, for artworks that the institution can neither fully

include nor exclude. Unquestionably, artworks placed in lobbies, hallways, or other multi-use spaces have a different relationship with the environment and audience than if they were installed in a designated gallery. Inspired by Yau's text, Christensen's work directly addresses the hierarchy of museum spaces and how they influence the value and meaning of art (and experiences) within them.

MOCA Cleveland's "lobby" is a free, open area that includes a welcome desk, museum store, café kiosk, restrooms, locker area, and Gund Commons, a 25-foot high, 1,500 square foot event space. This communal ground floor does not have a dedicated gallery, but it regularly features art, including installations and projected video works. Intended for use by diverse audiences doing different things, the space is highly flexible; an elasticity that both supports and confounds certain kinds of use.

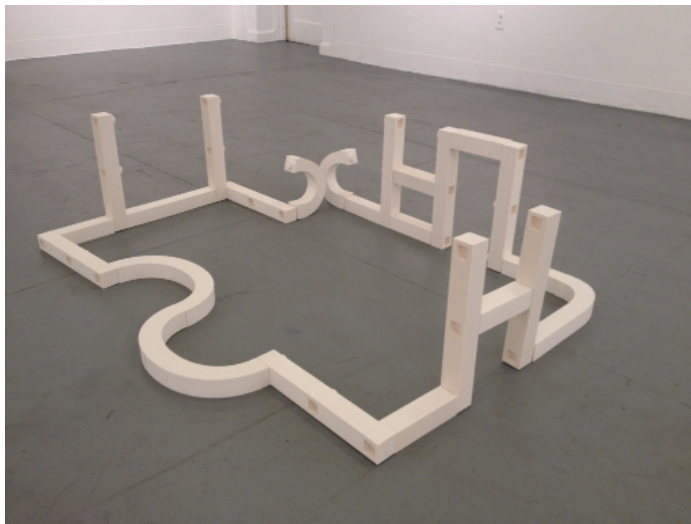
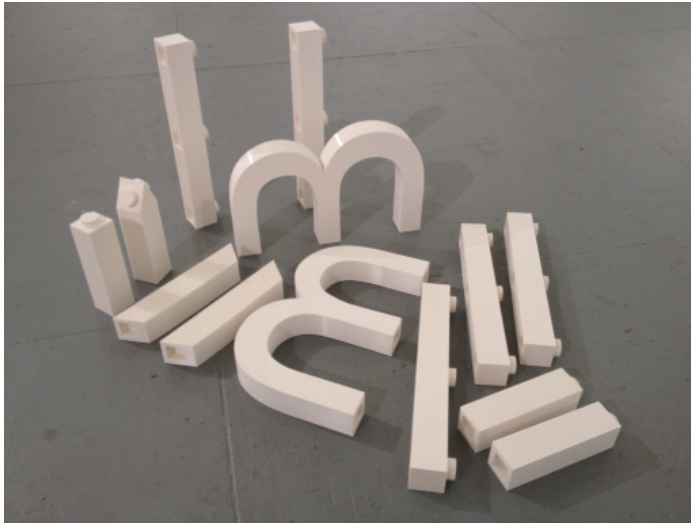
Installed in Gund Commons, *THE FUTURE IS IN THE LOBBY* probes the relationship between value and location within the art museum. When not in use, the objects are enclosed within padlocked, gilded cases. Visible, but physically inaccessible, seductive yet resistant, the objects in the cases—and the cases themselves—function explicitly as art objects, imbued with implicit value and exclusivity. During the exhibition, artists and cultural groups will be invited to the Museum to incorporate the building blocks into their typical artistic activity in some way. For instance, an experimental musician may use the pieces as instruments, while a deportment class may use the blocks to teach proper table etiquette.

Deliberately diverse, and on the periphery of conventional art museum activity, these "rapid prototype" interventions will serve as catalysts for creative conversation and critique about public space and its relationship to art and audiences. Some activities will blend these elements; others will emphasize their symbolic tensions. Quick, experimental, and provisional, these activities are not meant to confirm assumptions, but rather to audition ideas and possibilities.

The looming question for Christensen is how such associations generate new value propositions between action, artwork, and the museum. Although emphasizing the contradictions inherent within the art museum lobby, *THE FUTURE IS IN THE LOBBY* also initiates a dialogue about the space's creative potential. Offering real building blocks, generated by a kind of speculative production, Christensen provides opportunities to assemble new meaning within this complex environment.

¹ John Yau. "Please Wait by the Coatroom: Wilfredo Lam in the Museum of Modern Art," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed Russel Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Cornel West (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 133-141.

JULIA CHRISTENSEN
CHRISTENSEN





Julia Christensen, *THE FUTURE IS IN THE LOBBY*, 2013, rapid prototype components, gilded wood, brass, Plexiglas, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

JACOB CIOCCI



DARK MAGIC

MEGAN LYKINS REICH

“Defense Against the Dark Arts” is a mandatory class at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in which students learn to protect themselves against evil creatures and black magic. In J.K. Rowling’s novel, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), wizard Severus Snape characterizes the Dark Arts as, “[...] varied, ever-changing, and eternal. Fighting them is like fighting a many-headed monster, which, each time a neck is severed, sprouts a head even fiercer and cleverer than before. You are fighting that which is unfixed, mutating, indestructible.”¹

If artist Jacob Ciocci taught this (imaginary) course, he would add the Internet to the curriculum. In fact, Ciocci has used the term “dark arts” to describe the Internet and its teeming swaths of video, photography, digital art, and graphic design, which seem to multiply like Snape’s metaphoric monster.² Adaptable and unpredictable, the Internet provides a perpetual platform for all kinds of artistic expression. Ciocci engages directly and deeply with this “dark art” in his videos and 2D works. He samples both amateur and professional web content, then overlays self-generated imagery and music to create wildly hallucinogenic works with critical subtext. Ciocci’s work emphasizes the power, danger, and potential of this unrestrained environment and its myriad inhabitants.

Am I Evil (2012) exemplifies Ciocci’s approach. The video opens with a plume of smoke revealing a vanity adorned with a mirror ball, skull, pestle and mortar, spell books, and a large “Magic Mirror” (à la Snow White). All of these components are crude and pixelated, a kind of throwback to the early days of graphic software. A rudimentary rendering of Harry Potter slides in from the left and gazes into the mirror. The music, which began as a trill from the Harry Potter movie score, swells with guttural electronic sounds that darken the video’s tone. Inside the mirror, Potter views the reflected image of conservative politician Christine O’Donnell. As the image zooms in, the animated mirror explodes to reveal a fast-paced, magnetic, and creepy amalgamation of found online content and original artwork.

The video’s crux is O’Donnell’s infamous 2010 campaign commercial in which she addresses (through denial) her association with witchcraft.³ Ciocci extracts central lines from the commercial’s monologue, including “WHO AM I,” “I’M YOU,” and “I AM NOTHING.” These phrases and O’Donnell’s face punctuate a wide range of witch-related visuals, from homemade videos of covens and videogame graphics to 1980s cartoon animations and Halloween imagery. Ciocci’s self-produced audio—a raucous, rhythmic soundtrack—weaves together guitar riffs, digital noises, and clips from popular musicians like Lil Jon. Ciocci also integrates his own vibrant imagery including an iconic, bright green, sharp-knuckled witch hand that appears in numerous other works.

More than just an indictment of O’Donnell, *Am I Evil?* questions and draws connections between religious fanaticism, the histrionics of political rhetoric, pop culture seduction, and the contemporary fascination with witches and other paranormal characters. Ciocci serves up this critique using an appetizing music video vernacular: a bright, punchy experience that you can move to. Amusingly, this work suggests that the real “magic” is on the Internet. Viral, open, and unlimited, the Internet as shown here is a magical space where both abject and affirmative expressions share the same air. It is a place of transformation, where a cat in a costume rolling around on an Ouija Board can become a cultural sensation. It is a forum where witches can be simultaneously celebrated, studied, refuted, and hunted.

Earlier in his career, Ciocci was part of a three-member collaborative called *Paper Rad*. Known best for comics, the group produced everything from music performances to elaborate gallery installations that pulsed with vivid colors, mesmerizing patterns, and subversive messages. Like Ciocci’s solo work, *Paper Rad* often drew from print, television, and Internet culture. As Ciocci recalls, “There was a continuum in the work that reflected our experience of the world as active consumers and producers—that we are influenced by and can influence the world.”⁴

Ciocci continues to actively examine the potential of influence in an increasingly self-centered, digitally-focused consumer society. *The Urgency* (2013) is a recent work that emphasizes the bizarre irony of social media: the easier and broader the opportunities for sharing one's life and thoughts online, the more isolated and proscribed users seem to become.

The Urgency flows like an ambiguous self-help video. Ciocci samples high-production commercials that speak to the enhanced slickness of today's online interfaces. The video opens with a blend of solemn monologues and vague hyperbolic sentiments that describe an acute, pervasive crisis of being "trapped in a box." A metaphoric box, of course, although Ciocci stresses its allusion to the devices and programs (computers, smartphones, apps) to which we are increasingly tethered. Perhaps bred from our "share everything" world, here "urgency" is an impulse to break out of this imprisonment.

Parodying contemporary prescription medicine commercials, the work soon reveals that "there is a way" to escape, to find freedom. The way is, of course, entirely cryptic and wandering. As in *Am I Evil?*, Ciocci integrates generic advertising phrases like NOW OR NEVER and FIND A WAY to promote a false sense of control. Yet, as with most of Ciocci's culled Internet footage, the most compelling and alarming aspect of the work is the sincerity with which the original authors created their diverse online contributions. Though not witches or magicians, they activate the Internet's "magic" to deliver personal meditations that are at once earnest and prosaic.

A video portrait by a young male teenager provides a centerpiece for *The Urgency*. After initial remarks about feeling insignificant, the boy unleashes a sequence of explosive bellows to access a carnal energy and release his free spirit. Ciocci shadows this footage with videogame combat imagery and medical illustration that visualizes a kind of "war within" suffered by this and other featured characters.

These components crescendo into a riotous, yet ambivalent, finale that mimics Internet culture-at-large. As with most of Ciocci's works, *The Urgency* reveals the irrationality and diversity of online expression. Although laced with ignorance, ostentation, and egotism, the Internet remains an open environment with rich potential. Ciocci exploits a broad range of web-based content in his works to generate fresh, critical reflections on online creativity and consumption.

Ciocci suggests a bizarre marriage of these two factors in his newest works made for *Realization is Better than Anticipation*. The videos were produced in collaboration with Marc Brown of Cleveland's Norton Furniture, a local personality known for his outlandish self-produced TV commercials. Developed and distributed for over a decade, Norton Furniture commercials have a distinctive approach: produced with an economy of means, they always feature surreal props, bizarre content, and the tagline, "My name is Marc, and you can count on it," delivered with Brown's signature finger point.

Ciocci worked with Brown and his production team to create two new commercials, one for Norton Furniture and one for MOCA Cleveland, which he then mashed up. The resulting standard-definition video, called *The Salesman* (2013) emphasizes the clumsy nature of self-produced commercials while capitalizing on the unbridled creativity and open experimentation of Brown and his team of actors. A motley expression of consumerism, entertainment, and desire, *The Salesman* unfolds into a rapid-fire series of titled segments, including "The Self-Made Man," "Life's Not Worth Living Anymore," "Life Without Help From Anyone," and "It's a Jungle Out There." Ciocci's creepy witch hand makes regular appearances, holding in its palm an icon that switches from money to art to furniture and back again. The swiftly changing imagery touches on a range of topics, from Brown's entrepreneurial spirit and the wildness of cut-throat capitalism to shrewd business marketing tactics and consumerism's (false) promise of social inclusion.

From the utterly absurd (weird costume dance parties) to the intently existential (the repeated line "Time is Running Out"), *The Salesman* revels in but also critiques the uninhibited, fantastical characteristics of homegrown marketing. Here again, Ciocci implies a kind of "dark magic" at work online, on television, even in stores; an endless stream of hexes that charm and persuade us to consume. And consume. And consume.

¹ J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (New York: Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic), 177.

² Jacob Ciocci, "Mabson Enterprises, Mish Mash Mush and The Dark Arts," jacobciocci.org

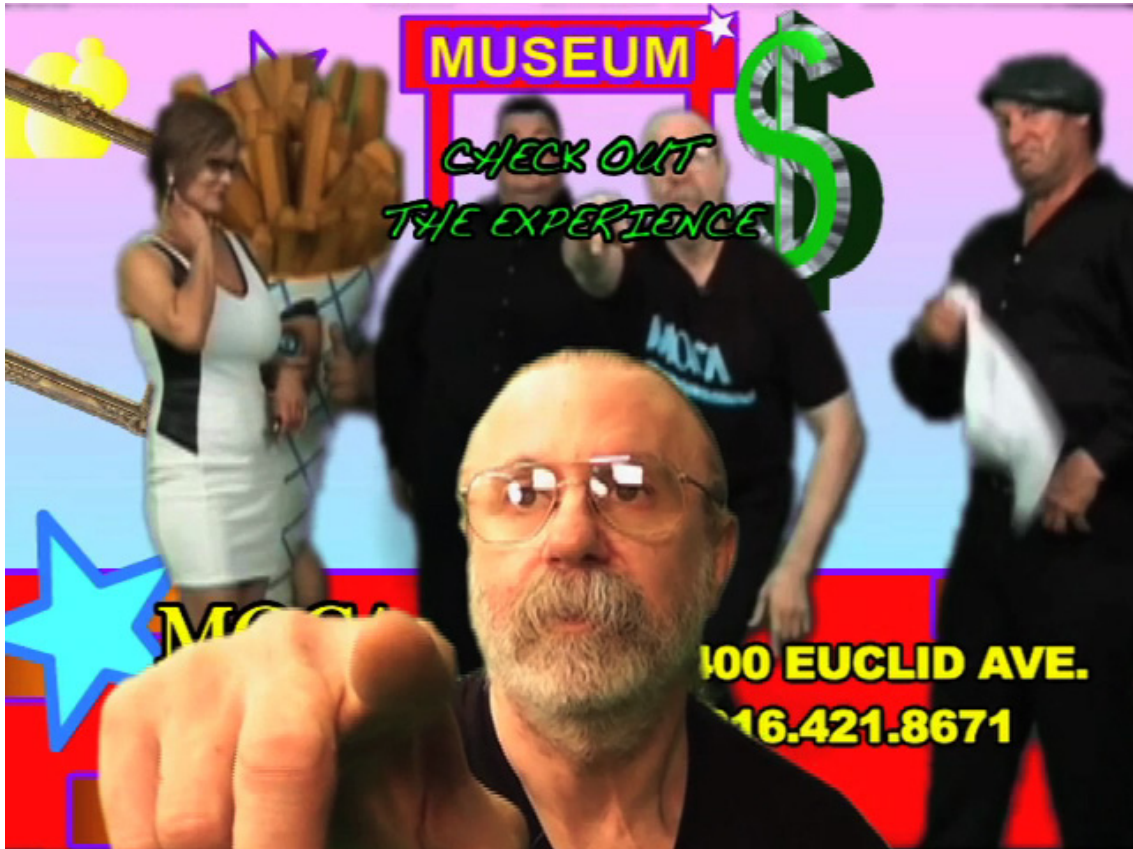
³ During O'Donnell's run for Senator of Delaware, Bill Maher released excerpts from the October 29, 1999 episode of his show, *Politically Incorrect* with Bill Maher, in which O'Donnell, an outspoken Christian, discusses "dabbling in witchcraft." O'Donnell released the political commercial (she denies approving the ad) in 2010 to address questions about her relationship to witchery, which she refuted during her campaign.

⁴ jacobciocci.org

JACOB CIOCCI



Jacob Ciocci, *Am I Evil?*, 2012, still from single-channel SD video, music by Extreme Animals. Courtesy of the artist.



Jacob Ciocci, *The Salesman*, 2013, Single-channel SD video with sound, 04:06 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

LENKA CLAYTON



MUSTACHES & MOTHERHOOD

MEGAN LYKINS REICH

“Our baby is due tomorrow. I forgot this strangest of feelings of waiting quietly for everything in the world to change.”

—Lenka Clayton, *Studio Diary* entry, May 20, 2013¹

Lenka Clayton became a mother when she gave birth to her son, Otto, in April 2011. Five months later, I welcomed motherhood for the second time when my son Jasper was born. Motherhood changes you. Yet, you are still so much the woman you were before motherhood that it is often hard to reconcile the two realities. Right after my daughter Piper’s birth in 2009, I existed in a liminal space filled with joy, confusion, pain, and anxiety. This dramatic haze lifted when my daughter and I had a “moment”—a kind of intimate exchange, an unspoken affirmation of a new world—and something fell into place. A shift at the core. Perhaps the moment I accepted motherhood.

In September 2012, Clayton began an official Artist Residency in Motherhood, created by the artist and supported by The Pittsburgh Foundation. It was originally set to last until Otto’s second birthday, but was extended by the birth of Clayton’s daughter, Early, in May 2013. A steadfast experiment in combining two seemingly incompatible experiences, the project pushes together the open, autonomous freedom of artist residencies and the often isolating, bound routines of motherhood. It provides for things like materials and a travel allowance but also requires accountability. Through the residency, Clayton has produced numerous musings, artworks, project ideas, and collaborative activities. Reviewing this output as a curator, the work is prolific, smart, sensitive, relevant. Reviewing it as a mother, it is authentic, tender, bewildering, accurate.

Clayton works within the physical and emotional spaces surrounding her, often starting with a simple idea or mundane object. Nearly everything, from the items her son places in his mouth (an impressive range) to discarded ephemera in a tiny thrift store, is fodder for Clayton. She applies an intense, compassionate focus to these materials in order to draw out hidden, lost, or new meaning. Clayton’s subtle mediations yield significant, often transformative outcomes, as revealed in the suite of her found text works featured in *Realization is Better than Anticipation*.

Ta Da (2013) is a small blue spiral-bound notebook Clayton found at an estate sale in a child’s magic kit. The cover is hand-decorated with two pieces of electrical tape that form wonky vertical black lines. Inside, an unknown author hand-wrote only two things: an underlined header, “Magic Show,” and one bulleted phrase, “Find the Card.” Clayton had a tiny mechanism mounted to the book so that its cover slowly opens and then quickly shuts, allowing only momentary glances at the content within. *Ta Da* emphasizes the excitement and magic of discovery, both for the original author, finding a new hobby, and the current viewer, glimpsing the book’s “secret.” The work also signifies the struggle to maintain the energy and commitment required to transform curiosity into expertise.

For *100 Returned Postcards* (2013), Clayton resent 100 postcards dated from 1906 to 1992 to their original addresses, located in Cleveland and the surrounding suburbs. To each postcard, Clayton added MOCA Cleveland as the return address. Sent out three weeks before the exhibition, the cards may or may not return to the Museum; if and when they do, they will be displayed in the gallery and available for the audience to read.

Some of these postcards contain short greetings while others convey messages of deep love, longing, sadness, and hope. In its broad range of communications, *100 Returned Postcards* generates humorous, puzzling, and intimate encounters for readers. The work conveys a new notion of preciousness, one found not in each postcard's intrinsic value, but in the treasured relationships they represent. Each simultaneously symbolizes specific bonds and shared experiences.

Likewise, *Two Collections* (2013) and *Accidental Haiku* (2008) underscore the deep potential of personal significance. In both works, Clayton deftly infuses a discarded, commonplace object with enchanting potential. In *Two Collections*, Clayton displays a selection of tiny newspaper clippings that she found at a thrift store, upside-down and floating between two pieces of glass. A mirror positioned below the clippings reveals the collection's unifying element: the Pittsburgh Steelers logo. In *Accidental Haiku*, Clayton extracted chance Haiku poems from a set of anonymous diaries from 1975. In Clayton's hands, the diary's entries—short formulaic notes about the weather and daily activities—become poetic reflections on life:

TEMP 0° TO 20°/
CLOUDY/
TOOK JENNIE UP TO/
HAIRDRESSER

A record keeper herself, Clayton revitalizes these bygone collections, letters, and ideas with a kind of artistic “sleight of hand” that expands their meaning. Clayton's nuanced, incisive aesthetic results in works that are at once fresh and nostalgic. To experience them is to find yourself somewhere between being tickled and rapt. Although couched in daily life, Clayton's art transcends its origins and offers new visions of the everyday.

Which brings me back to motherhood. One drawback of pouring over Clayton's recent residency activity is that it reveals to me my own lack. Not as a mother, but as an observer of motherhood. In preparing for this essay, I considered applying or adapting one of Clayton's actions to my own experience of mothering. It was a fruitless endeavor, in part because the impetus was itself fraudulent. This is important, as it points to the sincerity of Clayton's practice. Her work comes directly from her *self* and the things immediately around her—nearby physical things like people and objects, along with proximate concepts and conventions—in which she finds potential. In order to replicate her kind of earnest engagement, I would have to work within my own sensibilities.

Ultimately, it was my daughter who provided what I might call a “Lenka” moment of creative response. While driving to daycare on a recent muggy morning, Piper exclaimed, “Mommy, the car has a mustache!” I thought I heard her wrong, so I asked her to clarify: “Which car, baby? Did you say a mustache?” Unfazed, she replied, giggling, “No, our car, Mommy. Look, our car has a mustache!” I turned forward again to see a perfectly symmetrical pattern of condensation on the front windshield. Indeed, a perfect car mustache. Even if I wasn't running late or thinking of a million other things, I would never have noticed this humorously-shaped mist cloud. And, without knowing Clayton's work, I might have paid less attention to Piper's observation. I turned off the radio and told Piper that she had made the most creative observation of the day. She was thrilled. I was moved.

In the press release for the Artist Residency in Motherhood, Clayton defines as the primary goal that “fragmented mental focus, exhaustion, nap-length studio time and countless distractions of parenthood, as well as the absurd poetry of time spent with a young child, will become the artist's working materials and situation, rather than obstacles to be escaped from.” Motherhood changes everything. But a dedicated, purposeful look at motherhood (or collections, or neighbors, or old notes, or childhood hobbies), can change how you see and find meaning in life's daily routines.

¹ Details of Clayton's work are available on her websites, residencyinmotherhood.com and lenkaclayton.co.uk



Artist's Statement

In common with all new parents, the birth of my first child in April 2011 changed many things in my life. One of those changes has been the way I and others think about my career as an artist. I find now that many aspects of the professional art world are closed to artists with families. Most prestigious artist residencies for example specifically exclude families from attending. Despite a legacy of public artist/parents it still seems to be a commonly held belief that being an engaged mother and serious artist are mutually exclusive endeavors. I don't believe or want to perpetrate this. I like to imagine the two roles not as competing directions but to view them, force them gently if necessary, to inform one another.

I will undergo this self-imposed artist residency in order to fully experience and explore the fragmented focus, nap-length studio time, limited movement and resources and general upheaval that parenthood brings and allow it to shape the direction of my work, rather than try to work "despite it".

This website will document my attempts.

Let's see.

L.C. September 2012

ARTIST
RESIDENCY
IN MOTHERHOOD

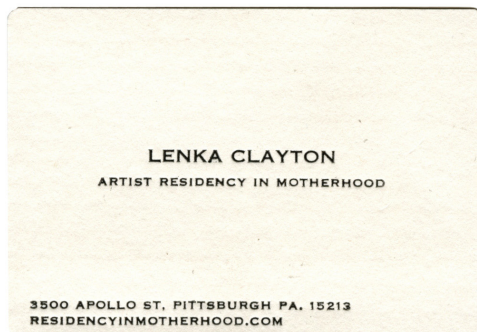
HOME ABOUT STUDIO DIARY ARTWORK INSPIRATION FEEDBACK CONTACT



Between 9th September 2012 and 24th April 2013,***
Lenka Clayton is the official ARTIST IN RESIDENCE IN MOTHERHOOD,
a conceptual Artist Residency that takes place inside her own home
and life as a mother. This website documents the 227 day residency.

*** ARTIST RESIDENCY IN MOTHERHOOD EXTENDED ***

Due to the imminent arrival of her second child,
Lenka Clayton's term as the Artist in Residence in Motherhood
has been extended. It will now conclude on the occasion of the as
yet unborn child's first birthday. Exact date to be announced.



TOP: Lenka Clayton, Screenshot *Artist Residency in Motherhood*, 2012-ongoing. Courtesy of the artist.
BELOW: Lenka Clayton, *Artist Residency in Motherhood Business Cards*, 2012. Printed by Encyclopedia Destructica, Pittsburgh. Courtesy of the artist.



LISTS OF LENKA CLAYTON

DAN BYERS

Lenka Clayton makes beautiful use of people, places, and things. By counting, accumulating, organizing, disorganizing, alphabetizing, employing the possibilities of the post office, local newspaper, and the most common domestic objects—and doing all of these things often to their utmost—she transforms both the world around her (near and far), and the way we each see that world. It's no surprise, then, that museums are often the site of her explorations, being that they purport to provide order, but often end up accumulating and displaying with the same levels of subjectivity, exaggeration, subtly-laced playfulness, and even wonder, which are the hallmarks of much of Clayton's work. What follows is an inventory and classification of many of her projects. Most all can be found on her websites: lenkaclayton.co.uk and residencyinmotherhood.com.

Number of times Lenka counts things (and sometimes puts them in order): **12**

- *1/57th of Andy Warhol*
- *10,000 Pennies*
- *7,000 Stones*
- *Accidental Haiku*
- *Berlin Berlin*
- *Hello*
- *Local Newspaper*
- *Number of People*
- *One Million*
- *People in Order*
- *Same Age Sculptures*
- *Time = Money*

Number of times this counting has involved peoples' ages: **3**

- *People in Order*
- *Same Age Sculptures*
- *Time = Money*

Number of times the number 100 defines the set: **3**

- *100 Returned Postcards*
- *One Brown Shoe*
- *People in Order*

Number of times Lenka employs the number 2, mirroring, or a pair: **10**

- *100 Returned Postcards*
- *Artist Residency in Motherhood Business Cards*
- *Berlin Berlin*
- *Berliner Zeitung*
- *Conversation*
- *James to Lenka*
- *One Brown Shoe*
- *Same Age Sculptures*
- *Two Collections*
- *Voices*

Number of times Lenka puts things in ABC order: **4**

- *Alphabetical Shopping*
- *Berliner Zeitung*
- *Qaeda, quality, question, quickly, quickly, quiet*
- *The Top Deck of the Number 30 Bus*

Number of times when peoples' names matter: **9**

- *Artist Residency in Motherhood Business Cards*
- *Business Card (Adjustable)*
- *Business Card (Romanian)*
- *Hello*
- *James to Lenka*
- *Local Newspaper*
- *Mysterious Letters*
- *The Top Deck of the Number 30 Bus*
- *Women's Intuition*

Number of times Lenka might not finish a project because she is mortal: **2**

- *Mysterious Letters*
- *One Million*

Number of times Lenka makes magic happen in cities: **10**

- *10,000 Pennies*

- *A Walk with Erich Honecker*
- *Accomplice*
- *Hello*
- *Mysterious Letters*
- *Number of People*
- *Palm Tree Interviews*
- *Slow Magic Tricks*
- *Ta Da*
- *The Top Deck of the Number 30 Bus*

Number of times Lenka makes magic happen in the country: **2**

- *7,000 Stones*
- *Amish photographs*

Number of times Lenka makes magic at home: **1**

- *The Baby and the Magician's Suitcase*

Number of times Lenka directly uses her son in a beautiful, non-creepy way that articulates the complexities of motherhood, and the haphazard relationships we all have – to each other and the world around us: **6**

- *An Artist Residency in Motherhood Business Cards*
- *The Baby and the Magician's Suitcase*
- *Maternity Leave*
- *Mother's Days*
- *The Distance I can be from my Son*
- *Things Found in the Mouths of Babies*

Number of times Lenka directly uses her son and the results are uncomfortable, and express the complexities of motherhood: **1**

- *A Nice Family Portrait*

Number of times safety results in sculpture: **2**

- *Childproofing as a Sculptural Practice*
- *Dangerous Objects made Safer*

Number of times Lenka cuts up a perfectly good garment to conceptually resonant effect: **2**

- *1/57th of Andy Warhol*
- *Man, Baby, Boy, Man, and So On*

Number of times Lenka uses the post: **3**

- *Flock*
- *Kite Flown 7055 Miles*
- *Mysterious Letters*

Number of times the newspaper plays an important role: **5**

- *10,000 Pennies*
- *Berliner Zeitung*
- *Local Newspaper*
- *Mysterious Letters*
- *Two Collections*

Number of times Lenka takes trips using a "non-traditional" guidebook or map: **5**

- *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*
- *James to Lenka*
- *Lost*
- *A Day in New York City*
- *The Distance I can be from my Son*

Number of times Lenka gently tweaks the authority, behavior, collections, and atmosphere of museums: **10**

- *Herd*
- *7,000 Stones*
- *Childproofing as Sculptural Practice*
- *Coat Check Exchange*
- *Intact*
- *Iceberg*
- *Man Looking*
- *Maternity Leave*
- *Your Contribution to our History...*
- *Intact*

Number of times Lenka (potentially) breaks the law: **5**

- *Accomplice (Örebro)*
- *Accomplice (Vienna)*
- *10,000 Pennies*
- *Hostile Reconnaissance*
- *Mysterious Letters*

Number of times Lenka (might) make people mad: **6**

- *Accomplice (Örebro)*
- *Accomplice (Vienna)*
- *Hello*
- *Iceberg*
- *Hostile Reconnaissance*
- *Mysterious Letters*

Number of times Lenka uses something seemingly random that she finds in the world, and makes rational meaning and function for it through new context: **8**

- *7,000 Stones*
- *Accidental Haiku*
- *Man Looking*

- *Moons from Next Door*
- *A Day in New York City*
- *100 Returned Postcards*
- *Things Found in the Mouths of Babies*
- *Time = Money*

Number of times Lenka makes something with a rational function or meaning seemingly random or abstracted through a new context of display or organization: **9**

- *1/57th of Andy Warhol*
- *10,000 Pennies*
- *The Baby and the Magician's Suitcase*
- *Berlin*
- *Dangerous Objects Made Safer*
- *Herd*
- *One Million*
- *Qaeda, quality, question, quickly, quickly, quiet*
- *Two Collections*

Number of times Lenka makes art based on the occasion of someone conscientiously seeing something: **4**

- *Man Looking*
- *Number of People*
- *Slow Magic Tricks*
- *Typewriter Drawings*

Number of times Lenka makes poetic, humorous, critical, or whimsical use of the natural world: **7**

- *7,000 Stones*
- *A Piece of the Moon*
- *Flock*
- *Herd*
- *Iceberg*
- *Moons from Next Door*
- *Slow Magic Tricks*

Number of times Lenka talks to or writes to strangers: **20**

- *100 Returned Postcards*
- *A Piece of the Moon*
- *Accomplice (Örebro)*
- *Accomplice (Vienna)*
- *All the Art on Kopenhagener Strasse*
- *Amish Photographs*
- *Berlin Berlin*
- *Conversation*
- *Flock*
- *Hello*
- *Hostile Reconnaissance*
- *James to Lenka*
- *Local Newspaper*
- *Lost*
- *Mysterious Letters*
- *Palm Tree Interviews*
- *People in Order*
- *Sweden (Borrowed and Stolen)*
- *The Top Deck of the Number 30 Bus*
- *Your Contribution to our History...*

Number of times Lenka has built houses without building a house: **2**

- *House*
- *Repairing Lebanon*

Number of times Lenka takes things from people: **4**

- *Accomplice (Örebro)*
- *Accomplice (Vienna)*
- *All the Art on Kopenhagener Strasse*
- *Sweden (Borrowed and Stolen)*

Number of times Lenka has returned something: **1**

- *100 Returned Postcards*

Number of times Lenka gives things to people: **3**

- *7,000 Stones*
- *Mysterious Letters*
- *Your Contribution to our History...*

Number of times Lenka has re-created something using a wildly different material than the original: **5**

- *Amish Photographs*
- *Dangerous Objects Made Safer*
- *Intact*
- *North Korean Pointing Stick(s)*
- *Repairing Lebanon*

Number of times Lenka makes me feel pretty great about being alive, and generally positive about other people: **14**

- *100 Returned Postcards*
- *A Day in New York City*
- *Accidental Haiku*
- *Accomplice (Örebro)*
- *Accomplice (Vienna)*
- *All the Art on Kopenhagener Strasse*
- *An Inadvertent Collaboration*
- *Flock*
- *James to Lenka*
- *Maternity Leave*
- *People in Order*
- *Slow Magic Tricks*
- *The Top Deck of the Number 30 Bus*
- *Typewriter Drawings*

Number of times Lenka makes me feel (mostly) kind of sad, and frustrated with other people: **2**

- *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*
- *Hostile Reconnaissance*

Number of times Lenka makes me feel both pretty great about being alive, and kind of sad: **4**

- *A Piece of the Moon*
- *Conversation*
- *Deutsche Boerse - Anders Petersen*
- *Repairing Lebanon*

LENKA CLAYTON



Lenka Clayton, *Two Collections*, 2013, found collection of newspaper clippings, mirror, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

ROCK, PAPER, HAMMER

DAVID NORR

I was on my way to Newark, Ohio to visit Hilary Harnischfeger, who shares a studio with her husband in town. I had been looking forward to my drive down from Cleveland, as summer had arrived and I could have my car windows open as I made my way through the verdant fields and small towns that dot much of the bucolic landscape of central Ohio. After my visit with Hilary, I planned to see the Newark Earthworks; the largest groupings of Native American burial mounds in North America. A Chipotle sits just across the street and a golf course lays, like a blanket, over some of the earthen forms. As I drove into town, many of the streets were cordoned off. I could see a Ferris wheel spinning in the distance and white tents lining the streets. Later, I discovered it was the annual strawberry festival. I felt happy to be a little lost as I circled the town's one way streets, slowly making my way closer to its center.

The day before, I had made another trip: to Kent State University to see the site of Robert Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970). Though I had been several times, there are no signs, and the site seemed different. Much has changed since Smithson and a handful of Kent students piled loads of dirt on top of the woodshed until its center beam cracked under the weight—setting the work into a state where it could begin to accumulate associations, actions, and attitudes as it decomposed. I had set Google Maps to locate Kent's Liquid Crystal Institute, which sits just to the northwest of the of the overgrown clod of conifers and vines that currently shrouds the site from surrounding parking lots and buildings that make up the sprawl of new construction on campus. When Smithson's piece was made, the woodshed was a forgotten relic, part of an old farm the University had purchased far from main campus. Just months later, four students were killed and nine others wounded by Ohio National Guardsmen during a student protest of events in Cambodia. Sometime over that summer, someone painted in bold white letters on the woodshed "May 4 Kent 70," in memory of the tragedy that took place on campus.

As plans began to develop to expand Kent's campus, the University tried to find ways to make the decomposing structure go away, and decided to encircle the site with fast growing conifers. In 1975, arsonists set the woodshed ablaze, destroying much of the structure. The University's grounds crew became increasingly worried about the safety of the site until, one day, without notice, the remnants

of the wooden structure were removed. The foundation, however, and the growth of trees that encircled it from clear view, endure—like some sort of a shrine.

Within the trees, there are crumbling chunks of the woodshed's foundation and odd shaped amalgamations of rounded stones suspended in concrete with rusted steel mesh and rebar poking out. There are patterned impressions in the concrete, left from the form boards used to cast the runny substance into place. Textures and cavities are now home to lichen and mosses, grasses, and spiders weaving webs. Driving the next day to visit with Harnischfeger, I thought about the way these materials lay strewn about the site, half buried but still overcome with vitality.

When I finally found my way to Harnischfeger's studio, I was pleased when she offered to walk me around town. Our first stop was Cornell Clothing, just next door to her studio. Half the store was an timeworn bar, the town's old hitching post. Now, where pub tables would have been, racks of clothing line the room. Memorabilia is displayed above the wooden bar and inside the cozy wood-paneled booths. Harnischfeger directed me toward the back of the store to the massive display of Boy Scout gear. I felt like I was looking at the paraphernalia of a secret society. The building had been in the family for three generations and so had some of these old uniforms, badges, and handbooks. The owner also had toured with a few Midwest rock bands in the 60s. One large wall was given over to old concert t-shirts, tie-dye, and leather tassels.

We walked around the corner from Cornell's to see the Louis Sullivan-designed Home Building Association Bank. It was built during an economic boom in Newark when the railroad arrived and the population of the sleepy farming town swelled to 20,000. The bank was one of three Midwest banks designed by Sullivan in 1914. In addition to a bank, over the years, a butcher, a jewelry store, and an ice cream parlor had occupied the building. Though vacant, I heard local rumors of it becoming a not-for-profit art center, or maybe a Starbucks.

From there, we could no longer resist the Strawberry Festival. It was a beautiful day and I was hoping for strawberries, but none were to be found. It turns out that many of the strawberry farms have shut down due to global competition. The farms that remain now harvest their

strawberries at a different time of the year. Everyone looked happy despite this curious reality. Teenagers were smoking by an old tree. A few kids on skateboards popped “ollies” on the sidewalk. There were tents filled with farm animals, custom crafters, cell phone service providers, tattoo artists, sarsaparilla booths, and corn dog vendors. I bought a carved-on-the-spot keychain for a friend. As we walked back to Harnischfeger’s studio, a man yodeled and a banjo twanged in the bandshell.

Harnischfeger’s studio occupies an old attorney’s office above a coffee shop. The space was dilapidated, but airy. The walls are a worn out shade of green, darker in areas where the sun seldom hit. I could make out the worn lettering on one of the fritted glass doors trying to spell out “attorney,” and imagined Humphrey Bogart chain smoking cigarettes behind a desk, his hat hanging in the corner. Strewn atop one of the large tables in her studio lay a dusty hammer along with a range of ceramic fragments and pulverized bits in various stages of unbecoming. The partial forms become the foundation to which she compounds into sculptures and wall works.

Harnischfeger’s interest in clay began when she moved to the area. Once an ancient swamp, Ohio is a clay-rich region filled with earthy submicroscopic bits of feldspars, mica, and quartz. The same clays formed during the Pennsylvanian, Mississippian, Devonian, and Pleistocene eras were used by the Adena, Hopewell, and Fort Ancient cultures to shape their effigies and ceremonial objects, are used today to make construction bricks and stoneware. Smithson wrote of the “infinity of surfaces” he found in the abandoned quarries of New Jersey in his essay, “The Crystal Land.” Known as the “Newark series,” the sedimentary rock formations were named for the city of Newark, New Jersey. Smithson cites the variety of minerals found in these quarries:

Paterson, Great Notch and Upper Montclair are the mineral-rich quarries of the First Watchung Mountain. Brian H. Mason, in his fascinating booklet, *Trap Rock Minerals of New Jersey*, speaks of the ‘Triassic sedimentary rocks of the Newark series,’ which are related to those of the Palisades. In these rocks one might find: “actinolite, albite, allanite, analcime, apatite, anhydrite, apophyllite, aurichalcite, axinite, azurite, babingtonite, bornite, barite, calcite, chabazite, chalcocite, chalcopyrite, chlorite, chrysocolla, copper, covellite, cuprite, datolite, dolomite, epidote, galena, glauuberite, goethite, gmelinite, greenockite, gypsum,

hematite, heulandite, hornblende, laumontite, malachite, mesolite, natrolite, opal, orpiment, orthoclase, pectolite, prehnite, pumpellyite, pyrite, pyrolusite, quartz, scolecite, siderite, silver, sphalerite, sphene, stevensite, stilbite, stilpnomelane, talc, thaumasite, thomsonite, tourmaline, ulexite.¹

In another studio room, a selection of Harnischfeger’s near-finished works lie grouped on a table—chunky, jagged, igneous amalgamations of tinted clay, plaster, paper, and crystals. Broken as Harnischfeger’s forms seem, their magic is in how things manage to come together. Surface, support, material, and media are frustrated here. Tracing the outlines of irregular cavities and negative spaces, like a scavenged patchwork of bones, reveals the tectonics of the structures. Fragments and shards of glazed motifs collapse into misshapen entryways, which Harnischfeger leaves vacant or packs tightly with tinted plaster embedded with minerals or stacks of hand-dyed paper. The plaster: like sediments settling into cavities, appears to collect crushed debris and bear impressions like fossils or forgotten actions—sites where distinct temporalities may coexist—as well as their meanings. They feel isolated and removed, yet acted upon.

Appearances, too, are compressed. In moments, they looked like rock formations pulled from an old cartoon, or primitive architecture, or ritual masks from a far off continent. Materials and associations shift readily from one context to another. Working one’s way around and through these conglomerates is part of the archeology viewers must ply through. Their strata, patterns, folds, and spirals are trapped within bare substance; they appear fixed in place, though with neither a center nor a hierarchy. These are mined and we are mining (like the rocks Smithson collected from geological sites and placed within shaped containers for his *Non-sites*, shown inside the gallery alongside maps or photographs, performing like scale-models). Harnischfeger, however, provides no map or compass. Labor, time, and trust unify what was once broken apart into isolated topographies—now formed, together, well off the grid.

¹ Text excerpted from *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, 2nd Edition, edited by Jack Flam (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1996), 7. Originally published in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

HILARY HARNISCHFEGER
REALIZATION IS BETTER THAN ANTICIPATION



Hilary Harnischfeger's studio, 2013. Photo: Jennifer J. Smiles.



Hilary Harnischfeger, *Hopewell*, 2013, plaster, porcelain, pigment, paper, mica, calcite, pyrite, citrine, 20 x 20 x 7 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York.

HILARY HARNISCHFEGER
HARNISCHFEGER



H.P. Whinnery, *Rear View of the Old Fort. Licking County Agricultural Fair Ground at Newark, O.*, late 19th-century, twin panel lithograph of the Fairgrounds Circle.



Aerial photograph of Newark Earthworks. © Larry Hamill.

FRANK HEWITT



THE BEHOLDER'S SHARE: FRANK HEWITT'S LIGHT AND SHADE SERIES ON MYLAR

CORIN HEWITT

The four works by Frank Hewitt shown in *Realization is Better than Anticipation* are part of his *Light and Shade Series on Mylar* (1970), and are the final works he made as part of the Anonima Group. Composed of Hewitt, Ernst Benkert, and Ed Mieczkowski, Anonima was formed in Cleveland in 1960. Propelled by their rejection of individual genius (as promoted by their Abstract Expressionist predecessors), these three artists worked on grid-based, spatially fluctuating drawings and paintings that stemmed from their collaborative investigations into the science and psychology of perception.

The Anonima Group had deep roots in the Midwest, and specifically in Cleveland. Hewitt and Mieczkowski met in 1957 at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, PA, while Hewitt was an undergraduate and Mieczkowski was working on his Master's degree. In 1958, Hewitt went on to Oberlin College for his graduate studies, where he met Benkert, who was a teaching assistant. Hewitt also met his wife and future Anonima collaborator, Karen Kurzband, at Oberlin the next year. Hewitt introduced Benkert to Mieczkowski and upon graduating from Oberlin, Hewitt joined Mieczkowski in Cleveland, where they began teaching together at the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA).

Together they developed an experimental course called "Dimensional Drawing" that explored their shared interests in the way the brain perceives space in a two dimensional image. And though Benkert moved to New York in 1960, the group met up in the summers to paint, first on Long Island, New York and then at Benkert's father's rural mountain house in North Carolina. These summers were focused and productive times for the group. While teaching at CIA, Hewitt pursued a Ph.D. in the psychology of perception at Case Western Reserve University. Although completing his coursework, Hewitt never finished his dissertation, and in 1965, moved to New York to join Benkert.

The Anonima Group's artwork was accompanied by writings: proposals, projects, and manifestos—slightly socialist in nature—which the artists considered crucial to the understanding of their work. Their drawings, paintings, and writings attempted to re-contextualize ideas around the geometric abstraction of Russian Constructivists and early Modernist predecessors in relation to more current research. The work, predominantly shown in non-profit spaces, was included in the seminal 1965 exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Along with several other artists in that exhibition, the Anonima Group's work was incorrectly assigned to the highly commercialized category of Op Art. Opposed to the commercial gallery world, Anonima chose to exhibit on their own terms by renting non-commercial spaces to try to insure the integrity of the intellectual conversation around their work.

Anonima expanded upon their early exhibitions in self-funded alternative spaces in Cleveland. The group founded 10021 Gallery on Euclid Avenue between 100th and 101st Streets, where they mounted three exhibitions of their work. In addition to these shows in Cleveland, and several more in New York, the group participated in prominent international museum exhibitions in Europe, where their interests in early modernist geometric abstraction and artist collectives found an enthusiastic audience. Starting in 1967, as a way to focus and organize their interests, the group embarked on a four-year plan to examine a set of perceptual cues. Each cue stemmed from current research into how the human eye perceives three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. The year 1967 was devoted to "overlap," and subsequent years were devoted to "relative size change" and "brightness ratio." In 1970, the final year, it was determined that the group would focus on "light and shade."

By this time, Anonima was having difficulty maintaining its cohesion; consequently, Hewitt was the only one to respond to the final directive. Benkert and Mieczkowski had become interested in showing their work outside the group, and the Hewitts had moved to Vermont (where Frank was born, and where he accepted a teaching job at the University of Vermont). In his 1971 essay “Current Statements” Hewitt wrote, “[I continue to be] interested in the psychology of perception, especially in fields of limited visual information. Although the Anonima Group never exhibited the final annual project with the focus on light and shade, I completed several series based on this spatial cue....”

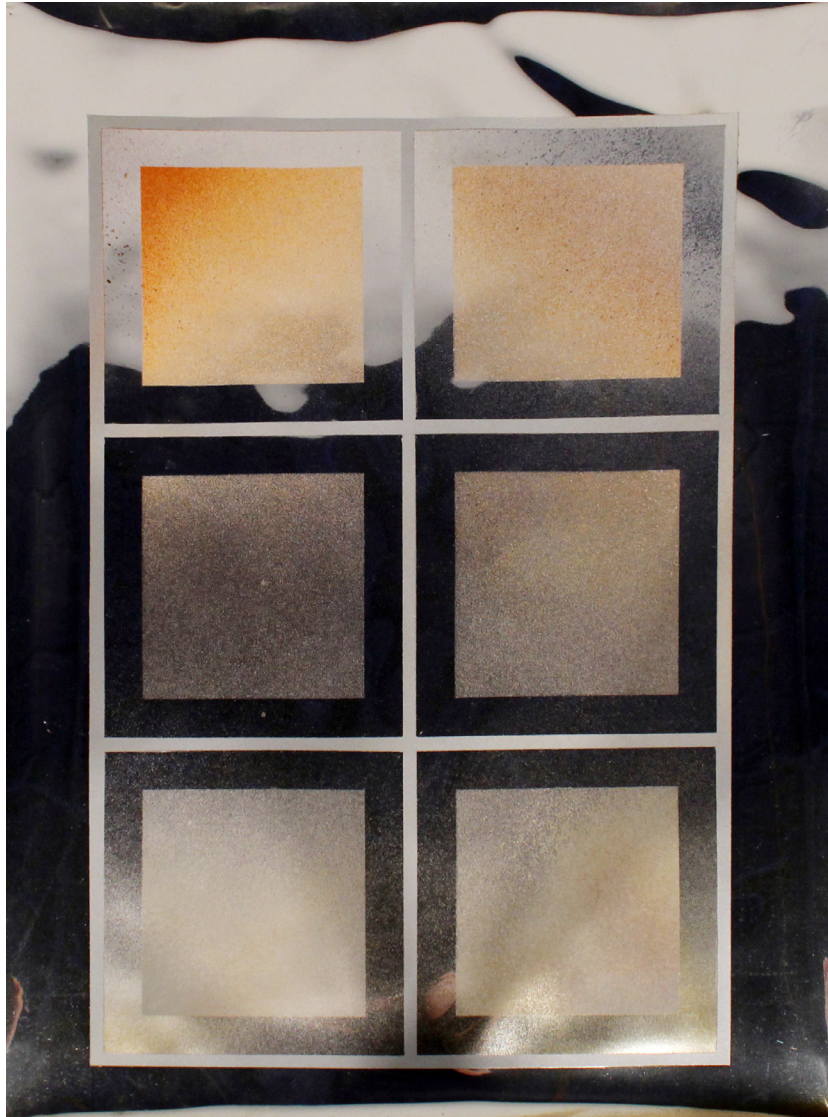
In this series, Hewitt used the relatively new material of Mylar as a ground. Each of the works contains a taped grid where Hewitt created different light and shade gradients with sprayed paint. These works were in some ways a departure for Hewitt and Anonima. The reflective quality of Mylar directly inserts the viewer into the image being perceived. This creates a very different space than the previous works, where a viewer’s self-consciousness would only exist through an awareness of the eye and mind interpreting the flattened play of order and disorder. In the Mylar, viewers see warped mirrored visions of themselves, and they encounter an even more immediate or proximal experiential space. Anonima’s work up to this point had primarily focused on distal cues of perception. Distal visual cues are those where the brain imposes learned rules upon information coming in through the retina (proximal cues); relative size change and overlap are cues largely dependent on previous visual experience. In Hewitt’s works on Mylar, however, the viewer primarily perceives space due to the shifting, reflected proximal cues directly in front of him or her.

The *Light and Shade Series on Mylar* was ultimately a seminal transition for Hewitt. Upon his return to Vermont, he began thinking about the surrounding landscape as a source for abstract thinking. In 1971 he stated, “The process of perception that interests me now is not the pre-coding and uncoding of a two-dimensional information presentation into a three- (or four-) dimensional implied space, but rather that process and tradition of mapping and diagramming other types of information: information about the land, water population and cultural centers, etc.” Hewitt began using dirt in his taped geometries as both pigment and record of place and experience. One might speculate that his interest in Mylar as an experiential space for abstraction was a precursor to his future use of dirt. Both mirrors and dirt are anxious grounds that serve as spaces for reflection, as well as projection. Hewitt continued to think productively about the materiality and surface of painting through the next two decades until his death in 1991. His use of the reflective surface of Mylar as a ground for speculation about abstraction continues to feel both provocative and vital to painting today.

FRANK HEWITT



Frank Hewitt, work from *Light and Shade Series on Mylar*, 1970, acrylic paint on Mylar, 24 x 24 inches. Collection of Karen Hewitt.



Frank Hewitt, work from *Light and Shade Series on Mylar*, 1970, acrylic paint on Mylar, 23 x 27 inches. Collection of Karen Hewitt.

LEZA McVEY

WILLIAM McVEY

LIFE & WORK ON PEPPER RIDGE ROAD

ROSE BOUTHILLIER

Pepper Ridge Road lies on an idyllic stretch of land, just outside Cleveland, in the suburb of Pepper Pike. Architect Robert A. Little designed 11 of the original houses, some of the first modernist homes in the area. Little, along with his wife Ann, and friends Franny and Seth Taft, and Billie Jane and Sam Stubbins, purchased the land in 1950, and conceived the community as a cooperative venture.¹

In 1953, artist Leza McVey and her husband William, a sculptor, moved to Pepper Ridge Road, where they would live and work for the rest of their lives. Visiting the homes today, one can find McVey's ceramic and textile works throughout, sitting comfortably in the modernist spaces. At the Little house (Robert passed away in 2005, Ann in 2012), a wall hanging (*Untitled*, 1980) situated between the library and the kitchen, pulses with a pattern of bright circles. On a coffee table, *Ceramic Form No. 7-24* (1967) shares something of the textile's energy: lively, bubbling, almost psychedelic. The most striking work still in the community—a large hooked rug—sits in Franny Taft's living room. Worn, radiant, its compact pattern of squares and triangles creates a colorful patchwork warmed by light from the adjacent window, which overlooks a pond. Each color is rich, seemingly unique; there's no symmetry to the design, only little blocks and triangles that form striking moments of mini-composition in the rhythmic field. It calls up the Bauhaus weavings of Anni Albers and Benita Koch-Otte, playful asymmetry and roughhewn geometry.²

Franny graciously agreed to loan the rug to *Realization is Better than Anticipation*; this is the first time it has left her home. She wrote the story of the rug for this catalog:

One year Leza did not get accepted into the annual May Show at the Cleveland Museum of Art—a terrible goof. I knew she was hurt and disappointed and I had always yearned for one of her exquisite rugs. I brought her down to our house, sat her down in the living room and told her that I wanted a 9 x 9 foot hooked rug. She was to design it, choose the colors and the pattern, and feel no pressure about getting it finished.

It was to be my present to the whole family whenever it was finished. That was 1972. I talked with Leza now and again and knew she was working on the project. Suddenly Christmas 1974 was upon us and Leza indicated that she was almost finished. I went to her studio to approve and was thrilled with the rug: the design, the colors, the pattern, and the overall impact. She told me it was constructed mostly from Bill's old wool trousers that once worn, she took and cut into thin strips and then dyed different colors. Keeping the design she had created in her head, she began hooking. Leza, due to an early encounter with undulant fever, was slowly losing her sight and by this time she was legally blind. She listened to records for the blind as she hooked away in her studio space. She had a rug hooker's frame, which she put over her burlap base to hold it firm as she plunged her needle through the burlap and pulled up the loop. Most artists make a pattern, transfer it to the burlap or whatever the base may be, and follow it as they hook. Leza kept this complicated design of triangles in her head and controlled the pattern as she went. A remarkable achievement. Two years of persistent, craftsman-like work, inch by inch, produced a superb work of art, ours to enjoy for the next 40 years.

The Taft's shaped their home from the ground up. Seth did the carpentry, Franny did all the painting and tiling, and together they designed and built the furniture. McVey's rug speaks to a particular mind-set, the joy of doing, care in labor, and the relationship between good design and a good life, the concepts Pepper Ridge Road was founded upon.

The rug is intimately connected to the lives and bodies of this community; one can imagine Bill's pants, slowly becoming tatty, perhaps splattered with the residue of his studio, meticulously unraveled by Leza, carefully died in small batches, slowly integrated into the overall structure. The thing itself is so much and yet, so quiet. Intense effort and thoroughgoingness put into an item that is functional, underfoot, supporting. This is a living, breathing artwork—in the Museum, its energy, its condensation of time, permeates the galleries with a thick warmth.

¹ In a 1950 manifesto of sorts, Robert A. Little laid out his vision for this cooperative community: "The AIMS of the project are to provide, on a practical basis, the things that seem desirable for a small community just beyond the noise and smell and traffic of a big city—FOR INSTANCE: Some of us want tennis—Gardens—Room for breathing, seeing the sky, chopping a tree—Variety of people—Water for the kids to play in—Common land for playing softball—& maybe room for a couple of these [horses]—And, tho in range of schools, outdoor, open areas for FREEDOM of kids up-growing—BUT—All planned so that anyone, adult or child, can also have PRIVACY"

² Albers' statement applies to McVey's natural proclivity to ceramics and, later, textiles: "How do we choose our specific material, our means of communication? Accidentally. Something speaks to us, a sound, a touch, hardness or softness, it catches us and asks us to be formed. We are finding our language, and as we go along we learn to obey their rules and their limits. We have to obey and adjust to those demands. Ideas flow from it to us and though we feel to be the creator we are involved in a dialogue with our medium. The more subtly we are tuned to our medium, the more inventive our actions will become." *Anni Albers: Selected Writing on Design*, ed. Brenda Danilowitz (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 73.



Leza McVey, *untitled*, 1974, wool rug, commissioned for the living room of the Taft family on Pepper Ridge Road. Photo: Jennifer J. Smailes.



ABOVE: Sign of house names of Pepper Ridge Road, ca. 1950. Image found in Franny Taft's *Folk Tales of Pepper Ridge Road*. Courtesy of Franny Taft.

BELOW: Road Pool at Pepper Ridge Community, ca. 1950. Image found in Franny Taft's *Folk Tales of Pepper Ridge Road*. Courtesy of Franny Taft.

LEZA McVEY

WILLIAMS

BEAUTIFULLY CONCEIVED
AND FLAWLESSLY
EXECUTED:
THE ART OF LEZA McVEY

MARK COLE

For more than a century, Cleveland has fostered habitation, education, and inspiration for an impressive roster of distinguished ceramic artists, among them the highly talented and inventive Leza McVey (1907–1984). Although best known for her series of asymmetric vessels sporting engagingly curious stoppers—combos offering a decidedly surrealist spin on tradition-based forms—McVey created a wide range of work during a career lasting more than 40 years, until increasing blindness compelled her to stop.¹

Born Leza Marie Sullivan in Cleveland, the future artist attended the Cleveland School (later Institute) of Art (CSA) from 1927–1931, focusing on metalwork and pottery during her final two years of specialization. Upon graduation, she remained an additional year to study with Alexander Blazys (1894–1963), a professor who helped establish Cleveland as a major center of ceramic sculpture during the 1920s—a distinction it held until well into the 1950s.² Around this time she met and married fellow CSA graduate and fledgling sculptor William McVey (1904–1995), with whom she would live the rest of her life, following him on a series of teaching stints in Texas, Florida, and Michigan, before ultimately returning to Ohio. Although living such a nomadic existence in her husband’s shadow thwarted the steady development of her career—a state of affairs exacerbated by bouts of recurring eye trouble—she nevertheless honed her skills as a potter and began exhibiting work in a variety of venues.

Most vital to McVey’s artistic development was her six-year stay, from 1947–1953, on the campus of the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, where her husband taught. At Cranbrook, she gained access to exceptional studio facilities and later set up her own kiln at home, all the while living among a close-knit community of vanguard artists, architects, and designers. Although too advanced for a student-teacher relationship, McVey worked within the orbit of ceramist Maija Grotell (1899–1973), whose example of confidence and sustained determination proved motivational. Amid such stimulating surroundings, McVey was galvanized to experiment freely.

At Cranbrook, she made a daring leap into the realm of asymmetry via her irregular hand-built vessels. In these freeform works, McVey absorbed stylistic cues from biomorphism, a cutting-edge manifestation of post-war design.³ In her own words from this period: “I like plastic ever-changing silhouettes—the sense of organic growth and inner pressure shaping the exterior. I seldom use the [potter’s] wheel now, as I find asymmetrical designs better keyed to the architectural thinking of our times.”⁴ Interestingly, this statement reveals her inspirational debt to a mode of contemporary organic building design—whereby reinforced concrete is used in a dramatically sculptural manner—as in the work of her friend and Cranbrook faculty member Eero Saarinen (1910–1961).⁵

In 1953, McVey returned to Cleveland when her husband landed a position to head the sculpture department at their alma mater, thus drawing to a close two decades of peripatetic living. The couple had a home and studio complex designed for them, with priorities awarded to work areas. Here McVey had sufficient space not only to make ceramics, but to weave as well, for she had developed an interest in making textiles while at Cranbrook. As time progressed, she would devote more time to weaving, mostly because her challenged vision made ceramic production exceedingly difficult.

McVey's work evolved in Cleveland, as evidenced by *Bird Form Bottle* (1959), which features a dynamically patterned surface treatment absent from her earlier creations. During the early 1960s she produced a series of open-mouth functional forms ornamented with vertical stripes, perhaps emulating contemporary Scandinavian ceramics or Italian glass.⁶ By the late 1960s, she had launched a striking series of lidded vessels that were predominantly cylindrical in shape and frequently adorned with slab- or rib-like protrusions (such as *Ceramic Form No. 7-24*, 1967).

While living in Cleveland, McVey for the first time showed her work in New York City, as well as overseas—specifically in Switzerland and Belgium. Closer to home, her private patronage and institutional support blossomed. Commissions from local patrons included rugs, wall hangings, ceramic garden sculptures, and fountains. During the 1950s, the Cleveland Museum of Art purchased four of McVey's ceramic vessels—the first institution to acquire her work for its permanent collection. Furthermore, the Cleveland Museum of Art regularly included McVey's creations in its annual juried exhibitions of local art, known informally as “May Shows.”⁷ In 1965, the Cleveland Institute of Art mounted a retrospective of McVey's career: 75 works arranged in a memorable installation designed by John Paul Miller (1918–2013), her friend and CIA professor. Reviews were enthusiastically positive; in the words of *Cleveland Press* columnist Winsor French, “There is nothing, but nothing, she can't do and her work as an artist stands on its own merit, beautifully conceived and flawlessly executed.”⁸

Eventually, McVey's vision problems took their toll: her output dwindled, and her escalating artistic reputation was compromised. Throughout the 1970s, she continued to work, although at a much reduced pace; it is believed that she created her last ceramic piece in 1981.⁹ During her final years she was legally blind. At the time of her death in 1984, McVey's achievements were mostly forgotten outside of a circle of aficionados in her hometown. But posthumous renown in the 21st-century is growing, sparked in no small part by the publication of a thoughtful monograph. Healthy prices attained for her ceramics at recent auctions attest to a resurgence of interest in her art. Further testament, of course, is found on the occasion of *Realization is Better than Anticipation*, which serves not only to reacquaint an audience already familiar with her notable achievements, but to introduce them to new enthusiasts as well.

¹ The most complete study of McVey's biography and art is Martin Eidelberg's *The Ceramic Forms of Leza McVey* (New York: Philmark, 2002), which provided the vast majority of information contained in the present essay. Primary research material is found in the William and Leza McVey Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

² The tradition of ceramic sculpture in Cleveland art is addressed by Ross Anderson and Barbara Perry in *The Diversions of Keramos: American Clay Sculpture, 1925–1950*, exh. cat. (Syracuse, NY: Everson Museum of Art, 1983).

³ For a discussion of biomorphism and its cultural contexts, see Brooke Kamin Rapaport and Kevin L. Stayton, *Vital Forms: American Art and Design in the Atomic Age, 1940–1960*, exh. cat. (Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2001).

⁴ “Leza S. McVey,” *Everyday Art Quarterly* 27 (1953), 20.

⁵ An early manifestation of this aesthetic in Saarinen's oeuvre is his David S. Ingalls Rink (nicknamed “The Whale”) at Yale University, New Haven, which broke ground in 1953.

⁶ Eidelberg, 68.

⁷ Museum records indicate that McVey exhibited a total of 76 objects in its “May Shows” from 1951–69. Her participation preceded her return to the Cleveland area, for submissions were also accepted for artists born in northeast Ohio, even if they lived and worked elsewhere.

⁸ Quoted in Pauline Thoma, “Nearly Blind, Leza McVey, 77, Created Works of Art Out of Clay,” *Plain Dealer*, September 23, 1984, A-32.

⁹ Eidelberg, 76.



Leza McVey, *Bird Form Bottle*, 1959. Glazed ceramic, 14 1/4 x 6 inches. The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Harold T. Clark Educational Extension Fund, 1959.141.



Leza and Bill McVey with *Untitled*, 1980, wool, 74 x 39 inches. Photo ca. 1980, found at the home of Ann and Robert Little. Courtesy of Sam R. Little.

SCOTT OLSON


SCOTT OLSON, SCOTT OLSON, SCOTT OLD SON

SARAH LEHRER-GRAIWER

I once went to Leo Steinberg's apartment in New York.¹ I know, unbelievable. He was high on the 17th floor of a building near Lincoln Center—requiring ascent. The door was on the right at the end of the hall. I remember entering: lots of warm, yellow light coming in from windows across the room. The light filtered through smoke and particles suspended in the air, which made it, and everything in it, substantial. But it was dim too, at the same time; twilight in a cave. The whole place was shades of ochre and umber, tea and tobacco, old newspaper and breadcrumbs.

The visit was part of a seminar on Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907). Not the first Cubist painting, check. Steinberg's essay, "The Philosophical Brothel" (1972), remains emblematic of the kind of transformational pivot in perspective that looking at a painting for a long time can bring about. But the discursive particulars of that day have since sunk into a deeper, post-lingual level of consciousness. What remains available to me is a feeling for the way we sat around Steinberg like he was a fireplace, on the couch and cross-legged on the floor in a wobbly, hand-drawn ovoid ringing the coffee table. That, and the stale color of the walls, the cumulative effect of countless cigarettes. Color, grit, smell, the way space fits together as interlocking shapes and the translucence of the encounter continue to matter more. Things that are quilted and dense by nature.

The smokiness of Steinberg's living room smelled like history, or the end of a certain way of studying things. "Here was a man," a friend of his remarked in memoriam, "whose mother tongue was Russian, who learned Hebrew, Latin, also German, English, Italian, and I do not know what others and who sits calmly before me at the end of his life declaiming these glorious lines of seventeenth-century blank verse, and he goes on until I beg him to stop because I cannot bear it. Will there ever again be anyone in the world who can do this? Now that people depend on Google and such."²

Scott Olson's paintings look something like the way Leo Steinberg's apartment smelled to me, or the way its smell and light still mingle and hang heavy in memory. Their small scale, polemically anti-spectacle as tabletop constructions, isn't so much intimate as it is domestic and middle-class, insisting on painting as an art to really live with day in and day out; working art. They appear all about history, exuding it from every sanded inch of meticulously prepared white-marble-dust-and-rabbit-skin-gluce ground. Craft and technique are essential, mainly to sustain a connection to the medium's lineage that Olson phrases as "doing something quite useful like protecting a dying language."³ Pre-industrial, let alone pre-digital, handmade-ness is more than a romance, more than nostalgia.

Such obsessive attention to (traditional) materials and mastery of their properties accrues gravitas, hints of that Steinbergian tone of total authority that may or may not make sense in today's blogosphere, but persists as a desire for context in a time of no context. Relating picture plane to wall, gesso to plaster, painting to fresco—a picture of a picture hung on a wall—contextualizes Olson's painting both spatially (architecturally) and art historically. Putting on formal displays of framing, cropping, and belabored

positioning and repositioning, visualizes problems of locating oneself in the scheme of things. Non-objective and arbitrary as life itself, Olson's kind of abstraction reiterates the need to create specific, personally-derived criteria for intentional acts.

Abstraction is the rusted engine of modernism, a past century's legacy that Olson's paintings resuscitate through the familiar European specters of Klee and Kandinsky, Miro and Malevich, Delaunay and early Duchamp, Picasso and Braque. They also hold up distinctly American touchstones, often with strong regional allegiances, like Demuth and Dove, O'Keefe and Hartley, Scheeler and Burchfield that are models for Olson's life as an artist on the so-called periphery of the Midwest. Pictures of distance and time alone in a cork-lined room.

Pictures of the Smoke and when it clears, the Dust and where it settles. I settle on the paintings' hard, matte, smooth surfaces—here bright white, there smudged and muddy—that feel like unearthed bone or the burnished keys of a piano, even as they clearly refer to the plaster wall they are hung on. They are electricity and candlelight together in the same room. Squeezed, soiled, scraped, rubbed, stained, and smeared, as though with dirty motor oil or soot. Instances of clear, vivid watery color are younger and more salient by contrast. Color-block, flat puzzle compositions are employed for their capacity to be distressed and contain the uneven patina of something archaeological, tarnished like silver, old from the attic, antiquated by design. This is for reasons similar to why a premium is placed on faded, torn, and threadbare antiques in the textile stores I shopped at in India: a certain quality of handmade workmanship and design will not be made again. Aging is accelerated, pre-empted and (thus) inverted like Andy Warhol and his white fright wig.

Yes, the work appears to be all about history, in an immediate sense. But that immediate legibility raises a flag over how we cue modernism, and for what ends, in our present. I find myself asking: what does it feel like now to encounter a painting made a hundred years ago, versus a painting made today to look like or pass as or channel the energy of being made a hundred years ago? It feels a little woozy and uncanny, a little hallucinatory, too. Like time-travel. Is regression a way forward? The possibility has its attraction, especially when triangulated between such unsettling modes of non-linear (or hyper-linear, depending on how you look at it) production enacted by the fictional Pierre Menard and the just as unbelievable Sturtevant.⁴

Ultimately, beyond their evident optical appeal, Olson's paintings depict a medium-specific seriousness and exactitude that is their primary subject and which tries to distance them from being merely commensurate with market value. His paintings want to propose, in so many ways, the timeliness and possible urgency of a non-capital, or extra-capital, valuation of manual craft, irreproducible labor, slowness, smallness, and studio solitude. i.e., living in your head with eyes wide open. i.e., "There is definitely existential anxiety about why I am painting these strange pictures, what they are good for and what to do next."⁵

¹ Leo Steinberg (1920-2011) was a prominent art historian and critic of modern and contemporary art.

² Ellen Handler Spitz, "Liminal Leo: Mourning Leo Steinberg," *Artcritical.com* (September 24, 2011).

³ Scott Olson, "A chat with Scott Olson," interview by Johnny Misheff, *Rereveal.com* (2010).

⁴ In Jorge Luis Borges' story "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote" (1939), the eponymous character is a writer who endeavored over his lifetime to compose a text that would coincide verbatim with Cervantes' masterwork. Likewise, Elaine Sturtevant has, since the 1960s, developed an artistic practice based on (re)making works by other artists who are (or were) her contemporaries.

⁵ Olson in Misheff.



MICHAEL E. SMITH

SMITH

OBJECT'S LIVES: THE WORK OF MICHAEL E. SMITH

JENNIFER J. SMAILES

A welder's jacket, a car seat, some feathers, and tape. The reading of the objects that populate Michael E. Smith's work is inevitably influenced by his biography. Though interrupted by his studies at Yale and a recent move to New Hampshire, Smith has spent most of his life in Detroit, a city that, for many, symbolizes the implosion of consumer culture. Within this context, Smith's poetic installations of seemingly discarded everyday materials and found objects (often deliberately chosen from his own belongings), become cenotaphs, physical reminders of a decomposing capitalist system.

Another way to meet these works is to focus on Smith's particular use of these materials and his unique way of installing objects in exhibition spaces. Combining the aforementioned everyday materials into sculptures and positioning them intentionally in the museum space, he highlights not their utilitarian or sentimental value, or even their loss of this, but rather their formal potential, bestowing them with an afterlife in the aesthetic realm. By pairing t-shirts and vinyl, wasp nests and garden chairs, safety glasses and urethane plastic, he draws out and builds up unexpected reciprocal forces. While some items introduce form and structure, others communicate themselves primarily through texture. Holding, accentuating, or challenging each other, their raw and distinct qualities are rendered visible. While Smith's earlier works relied heavily on these contrasts, the more recent ones seem to zoom in on single objects, ripping them open, manipulating their form, or isolating them so that they become abstract, yet emotionally loaded, sculptures. In either case, their original purpose is latent, buried in fabric and tissue.

Furthermore, Smith grants his objects influence over their position within exhibitions. With great sensitivity for architecture and atmosphere, he lets his works settle into places that highlight, flow with, or unsettle psycho-spatial dynamics. At times he follows less invisible forces, like when he places an object, tethered by a magnet, wherever it is drawn to the building's metal skeleton. The idea of the object asserting itself is echoed in language used to describe Smith's works that references living or recently deceased beings: one reads about "layouts of ruined bodies,"¹ works that "seek cover in the room or among each other,"² rest on the floor "like a homeless person,"³ or infect "the entire room with an undead pallor."⁴

The almost human characteristics of Smith's sculptures seems to stem from both his use of certain materials and his organization of these items in strangely emptied-out spaces, hidden in stairways, bathrooms, creeping in corners, or dangling from the ceiling, unapologetically confronting us with their form, texture, and volume. Art historian Michael Fried's critique of Minimal art in his 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood" comes to mind.⁵ Fried bases his unease with the artworks of Robert Morris and Donald Judd on their anthropomorphic qualities, which result from their size and contained form, on the way they form relationships to their spectators, and on the theatricality, even spectacle, this presupposes. Smith's works are usually much smaller than Minimalist sculptures, creating less distance between the artwork and viewers. And they are less reminiscent of human figures than of detached body parts or strange animals, insects, birds, or other organic life forms like corals or fungi. Thus, their theatricality is mostly based on their relationship to space: by the way they are attached high up on walls and architectural structures, how they casually lean in doorways, stand in the middle of rooms far too spacious for them, or slyly linger above a staircase. They become parasitic, territorial, vulnerable. It is their relationship to the spaces which they occupy that gives Smith's works the appearance of being alive. Lighting, or perhaps more accurately a lack of it, enhances this impression. Smith's objects hover shyly in the twilight, assuming

a status of being not quite animated, but not without traces of life either. They exist in a state that Sigmund Freud described as “the uncanny,” which is not the apprehension of the unknown per se, but the realization of the strange in the familiar, or the familiar in the strange.⁶

While Smith, like the Minimalists, uses industrial materials, it is not in the impenetrable surface of steel that we find in his work, but rather, the more structured, layered, and tactile industrial foams, plastics and textiles. In this sense, they are more reminiscent of the Post-Minimalist practices of Eva Hesse and Louise Bourgeois, both of whom used the organic qualities of materials and soft, bulging forms to evoke bodily sensibilities. At moments, Smith’s hardened plastics and ripped rubber foam, similar to Bourgeois’ latexes, seem to perform their own metamorphisms, appearing less sculpted than as though acting out their material qualities. Tracing previous aggregate states or past object lives, they emphasize the processes of their material becoming.⁷

In her essay “Objects beyond Objecthood,” Briony Fer suggests a deeper analysis of the bodily aspects of Bourgeois’s work. Rather than a symbolic or empathetic interpretation of the anthropomorphic forms, which leaves the traditional subject-object relationship intact, Fer reads the work as the embodiment of viewers’ subjectivity through the act of seeing. In this way, viewers identify with the seemingly corporeal substance of Bourgeois’s sculptures, while simultaneously seeing it as something apart from themselves. They can experience a detachment, which is essential for the coming-into-being of their fractured subjectivity.⁸ Similarly, while viewers often see Smith’s sculptures as decayed remnants of formerly whole items, perhaps the loss often perceived in them is not the absence of belonging associated with discarded consumer goods, but absence of the human presence itself.

Like placeholders, the materials take on a potential similar to that of puppet theater: their not-quite-but-nearly-aliveness allows for us to recognize in them ourselves, our emotions, our innermost fears, and our collective memory. Their evocative deformity triggers subliminal recognition, like something on the brink of remembrance, yet their presence as mere objects prevents their complete subjection to such readings. The works evoke a feeling of a dense, perceivable emptiness through their strange misplacement in space, which triggers material allusions that lack definite connotations.

In this sense, Detroit in relation to Smith’s work might be read not as the day after the catastrophe, but as a place that, by virtue of its wide spatial openness, grants the freedom of reinterpretation. This “clean slate” may inform Smith’s ability to create ways of (re)experiencing space through the arrangement of objects and “bodies.” The post-industrial situation as a perceptive trigger recalls Minimalist sculptor Tony Smith’s drive down a desolate New Jersey turnpike, with “the dark pavement moving through the landscape of the flats, rimmed by the hills in the distance, but punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes, and colored lights.” The experience struck Tony Smith with the epiphany that, in the experience of this artificial landscape, there existed “a reality [...] that had not any expression in art.”⁹

Michael E. Smith’s practice relocates this detached reality into the exhibition space. His works transport emptiness. A turn of phrase I recently overheard about a person seemed like it could apply to one of Smith’s sculptures: “when he entered the room, it was like there was one less person there.” Instead of filling a pre-existing space with positive entities, they trace its void and question the wholeness of things and subjectivities, creating landscapes of absence and echoed meaning.

¹ See the Michael E. Smith artist profile, KOW Berlin, kow-berlin.info/artists/michael_e_smith

² Press release for Michael E. Smith, KOW, Berlin: artnews.org/kow/?exi=21717

³ Simone Menegoi, Critic’s Picks, Michael E. Smith at Mönchehaus Museum Goslar. 2011: artforum.com

⁴ “Leza S. McVey,” *Everyday Art Quarterly* 27 (1953), 20.

⁵ Jonathan Griffin, Review Michael E. Smith at Michael Benevento, Los Angeles, *Flash Art*, October / November 2011, 109

⁶ Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, University of Chicago Press, 157-158.

⁷ Following Freud, the uncanny is a form of fear that arises when suppressed feelings or an overcome belief in reality find a way to reenter our perception, i.e. the suppressed fear of mortality and an infantile belief in the living presence of inanimate objects or magical occurrences. (Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” first published in *Imago*, Bd.V., 1919.)

⁸ Ironically, it seems to be this very use of materials as mnemonic devices that render Smith’s work so open to the more literal readings as illustrations of post-industrial collapse.

⁹ Briony Fer, “Objects beyond Objecthood,” *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 27-36.

¹⁰ Referencing Lacan and Merleau-Ponty, Fer describes the dilemma of not being able to look at an object from more than one’s own point of view, while being visible from uncountable perspectives as necessary for the emergence of the subject. The knowledge of us both seeing and being seen is necessary for the subject’s awakening to itself, while at the same time fracturing its self-perception as a homogenous entity. (See Fer, 35)

¹¹ Tony Smith, quoted in Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 157-158).

MICHAEL E. SMITH
SIVILL



Michael Edward Smith, *Fat Albert*, 2013, mixing bowl, T-shirt, 11 8/12 x 30 1/3 inches. Courtesy of Michael E. Smith and KOW, Berlin. Photo: Alexander Koch.



Michael E. Smith, installation view, KOW, Berlin, 2013. Courtesy of Michael E. Smith and KOW, Berlin. Photo: Alexander Koch.

REVEREND ALBERT WAGNER

WAGNER

REVEREND ALBERT WAGNER

ROSE BOUTHILLIER

I first encountered Albert Wagner's work in a catalog for the exhibition *Black Folk Art in Cleveland* (1983), and was struck by its powerful message and singular aesthetic. Love, spirit, darkness, honesty, humor, all coming through an overwhelming sense of physicality. His works are thick, rough, flush, wobbly, bursting.

I sought out one of his daughters, Bonita Wagner Johnson, who was a constant companion to her father throughout his life, and who has continued his work as a minister. Her home is filled with her father's artwork, and she warmly welcomes those who are interested in seeing it. The *Sunburst* paintings that Megan Lykins Reich and I saw during an initial visit there were magnetic, beaming, and clear; they were some of the first works selected for *Realization is Better than Anticipation*, and undoubtedly shaped its focus.

I was able to visit The Wagner Museum in the summer of 2012, before it was cleared out and most of the works within were sold at auction. This was the three-story house in East Cleveland where Wagner lived and worked until his death in 2006. His presence was still palpable; every corner was filled with art; expectant chairs were lined up in the basement congregation. Everything, everywhere, looked like it could be fodder for Wagner's prolific output. Among the most striking works were two hanging in the kitchen, small figures made from sticks and peanut shells glued to Styrofoam trays. They seemed to say: "we are made from nothing, and take the shape of something. There is energy moving through us."

It was there that I first saw the wood-and-pot sculptures also featured in *Realization*. Sharing a table, two of them seemed to pose, nonchalantly, strangely anthropomorphic and totally odd. The combination of two simple objects made each seem strange, inter-reliant, knowing. It was hard to imagine them in their previous lives, unconsidered, washed up on the beach, fallen under a tree, at the back of a kitchen pantry or the cookware section of a thrift store.

During a subsequent visit with Bonita, we inquired about two shattered plates in a display case by her front door, surrounded by an array of plants that cloaked them in a warm light. The plates' miraculous story is intense, and seemed to unite the sculptures and the *Sunburst* paintings. Wagner was most known for his figurative, narrative, and overtly religious works—our aim was to try to draw attention to a different aspect of his practice, one that is singular, spontaneous, and very much about *becoming*. It was not our intention to ignore the religious aspect of his work and message, but rather to highlight his ability to funnel that message into symbols and objects. The plates seemed to illustrate this so clearly: simple items, activated by a simple gesture, that hold so much power and spirit.

What follows are some of Bonita's thoughts on her father's work and the specific pieces in the exhibition, which we recorded during a visit in May 2013.

ON THE SUNBURST PAINTINGS:

My father started back in painting when he was 50 years old, he was just doing sunbursts of all different colors, some of them were blue, light blue, dark blue, oranges, and some reds. I don't think that he had the confidence that he needed to do figures yet.

When I look at the sunbursts, I see all of the strokes, his hand, you know, making all of those strokes. First with the pencil, or charcoal, then he went back over it with the paint. He put a lot into his work, no matter how small or how big. I see his heart is in it. The spiritual thing that I see in them is that he really, really admired God's creations. Genesis talks about how God made those great lights. He wanted to rule by day, he wanted to rule by night. That's just what he's doing. I have seen the sun and the moon out at the same time, hundreds of times, and even when it's daylight, the sun cannot outshine the moon. As powerful as the sun is, when it's dark outside, it can't do anything. You know, it has to let the moon rule. That's what I would say about the sun, that it is God's creation.

What made him get away from the sunbursts was people, mankind. He wanted to tell a story in his art, to help people. Sometimes to make them happy, sometimes to give them a thought. So he didn't continue with the *Sunbursts*, though people sometimes requested them.

ON THE DRIFTWOOD SCULPTURES:

My father made a lot of these types of sculptures. One of the sculptures he called *Moses*. He wanted to show Moses with the rod, that was actually a piece of branch. Moses had absolutely nothing to use when he found out he was chosen to lead the people, he didn't even have a voice, because he was a man of stammering lips, the Bible said. He stuttered so bad that he couldn't even talk. And he's like, "You're telling me I'm going to lead those people that have been down there in Egypt for 400 years? Do you realize that that's thousands and thousands of people?" He said, "What am I going to use?" And God said, "You see that rod? Pick it up. You're going to use that." And so he obeyed, he picked it up. He knew it was God speaking, because he had seen the burning bush. But he still asked, stuttering, "How am I going to speak?" and God replied, "Your brother Aaron is going to speak for you." And that rod went everywhere you know, it did some of everything, it turned into a snake, it opened up the sea, it made water come from rocks, that one simple rod. So that shows us that it doesn't matter how you can speak, or how you look, God uses really dumb, simple things to confound the world with.

And that was a story that Albert wanted to show, that this is the rod, in the physical. He loved sculpture. He told me "I'm really not a painter, I'm a sculptor." And he loved finding objects. Moses was his hero. But his favorite artist was Picasso, because he just did what he wanted to do. A person can't take your gift and say, "No, it's supposed to be this way." Albert used to say, "You know, I'm not the greatest painter in the world, but this is me." He also said, "They have to rename the art, you know, it's not outsider's art, it's not this art or that art, it's just art."

THE STORY OF THE BROKEN PLATES:

My father had gotten up in age, and his knees were bothering him. He had a little refrigerator and a microwave put up into his room, so he wouldn't have to move around as much. And he had a plate, a saucer, a cup, a spoon and a fork, and he would just wash them out in the bathroom and set them back by his bed, on the floor, right next to the hammer and the screwdriver, and all of the things that he would use to put his art together in his room.

So one evening he was just tired, and he went to lie back in the bed and relax. And a still, quiet voice came. It said, "Albert." So he just lay there and waited for it. And it called again, "Albert." And he was familiar with that voice, you know. It said, "I want you to pick up that hammer, and I want you to tap the middle of that plate." And Albert laid there, because he still wasn't all the way sure that it was God telling him to do this. But God was ready for him to know that through all the times, and all of the things and the miracles that He'd shown him, God was saying, "I want you to know, I am with you. Don't have no doubt. I am with you."

So the voice spoke again. "Albert," God said, "I made the plate, I made the hammer, and I made you. I want you to pick up that hammer, and tap the middle of that plate." So he picked up the hammer, and tapped the middle of the plate, and it came out into six slices, with no little shatters or nothing, just six even pieces. And Albert gasped, "Oh my God," and he laid back down, shaking and in fear. "Oh my God, my God." He was about 75, 76 years old when this happened, getting up in age, and the Lord wanted him to know, before he left here, that the Lord was with him, and that he was going with him when he left.

So, he lay back down, and the voice returned, saying "Albert..." And he thought "Oh my God, my God." And the voice said "Albert, I want you to pick up that same hammer, and I want you to tap the middle of that saucer. Remember what I told you, Albert. I made you, I made that hammer, and I made that saucer. I want you to pick that hammer up and tap the middle of it." So he tapped it, and *it* came out into six slices. *Even*. With no shatters, like it had been cut by a machine. After that, if anybody came to see him, whether it was to buy art, or just visit, if he had a message for them, he told it to them. He had no fear, because God had told him, "I am with you." So many things happened for this man, but those plates, they were the last, biggest thing in his life that he saw, that he was able to talk about.

REVEREND ALBERT WAGNER

WAGNER



Reverend Albert Wagner, *Untitled*, date unknown, drift wood, acrylic paint, cooking pot, 25 x 31 x 13 inches. Collection of Daniel Wolf/Donald Rosenfeld. Image courtesy of Gray's Auctioneers, Llc. Photo: Jessica Ramage.



Reverend Albert Wagner, *Untitled*, date unknown, tree branch, acrylic paint, wooden bowl, 36 1/2 x 20 x 11 inches.
Collection of Daniel Wolf/Donald Rosenfeld. Image courtesy of Gray's Auctioneers, LLC. Photo: Jessica Ramage.

REVEREND ALBERT WAGNER

WAGNER



Reverend Albert Wagner, *The Broken Plates*, date unknown, plate and saucer, 17 1/2 x 26 1/2 inches. Collection of Bonita Wagner Johnson. Photo: Jennifer J. Smailes.

1 + 1 LE BLACK BOY. FROM
YES + ER YEAR.

PORTER RANDALL GALLERY
174 Lakesfront Avenue
East Cleveland, OH 44112
GOD. IS GOING TO
PLANT MY FEET, ON THE
FOUR CORNERS OF THE
EARTH.

LAST AND FINAL
CHAPTER.

~~90~~
150

Sincerely yours,
Margaret Porter

~~158~~

I, Reverend Albert Wagner of the Wagner's Museum,
very much for considering my art work in the state.
I'm more than happy to know you count me worthy.

Rev. Albert Lee Wagner
174 Lakesfront Ave.
East Cleveland, Ohio
12161 541-2282

~~160~~

160

Handwritten title for Reverend Albert Wagner's biography *Water Boy, The Art & Live of Reverend Albert Lee Wagner*, 2008, edited by Gene & Linda Kangas. Image Courtesy of Bonita Wagner Johnson.

REVEREND ALBERT WAGNER

WAGNER

TALES OF THE REVEREND

JENNIFER J. SMAILES

“Back then I looked into the sky and saw the airplanes flying over but had never seen one on the ground. I had never rode in a car, only a mule and buggy. I would make fantasy airplanes out of old cardboard and copied cars I saw passing by. My mother looked at me with pitiful eyes and said: ‘Son, if I could send you to school to be an Artist, you would BE somebody.’”

—Reverend Albert Wagner¹

Reverend Albert Wagner was a teller of stories. Confronted with his prolific output, including paintings, sculptures, collages, and sculptures, one has to acknowledge their narrative strength and the artist's irrepressible will to express his reading of the world. Much of his work delivers the Gospel, retold as the struggle of individuals and peoples, and depictions of African-American history, oppression, and trauma. A painting that shows both, *Brother Against Brother* (date unknown), interprets the story of Cain and Abel, but also seems to warn of a contemporary society where violence is handed down within one's family. Wagner's work is mostly figurative painting, but he often expanded into the abstract: heavily layered blocks of paint, strong colors, and figures set in unconventional compositions. For his sculptures, Wagner often used found objects and materials, combining them in a seemingly spontaneous way into meaningful compositions. The imaginative, transformative actions behind his works also tell us something of the way Wagner recast and retold his own identity.

Wagner was born in strongly segregated rural Arkansas in 1924. He left school after third grade; formal art education wasn't an option. In his late teens, his family moved to Cleveland, and during the turbulent three decades that followed, Wagner opened his own successful moving business, lived in four homes (some at the same time), got married, fathered 19 children by three different women (as well as adopted one), and went to jail for a sexual offense. One could read this as Wagner's rebellion against a proscribed place or position, the constant escape from given categories and re-creation of himself as businessman, father, lover, and derelict. Wagner turned fifty before he realized that forces beyond his control had driven many of his choices, and that by trying to deal with his own oppression, he had become an oppressor himself.

This is where another of Wagner's narratives begins, a symbolically laden story of redemption, new starts, and white canvases. Fed up with his adulterous lifestyle and no closer to being *somebody*, Wagner had a revelation. As he would often recount, it was dripping paint which reconnected him to the creative forces of his younger self and reestablished his faith. On the day of his 49th birthday, he wanted to prepare for a party (birthdays, his daughter Bonita recounts, were sacred in his family and always enthusiastically celebrated). As the story goes, he was moving leftover cans of paint to clean the space, and uncovered a striking pattern of spilled paint on a scrap of board. Inspired by the wild and colorful drippings, he had a vision. As he remembered building clay sculptures as a child, and heard the voice of God telling him that he would “plant [his] feet on the four corners of the earth as an artist.”² Believing in this divine promise, Wagner not only started to paint, but became a man of God, the reverend of his own church. At the People Love People House of God, assembled in his cellar, he preached to a growing number of children and grandchildren about willpower, determination, and forgiveness.

In light of the interwoven nature of Wagner's artistic and spiritual awakening, his early paintings are significant to his work as a whole. As a painter, Wagner started slowly, even hesitantly, focusing at first on carefully produced abstractions like his colorful and expressive *Sunburst* paintings. Each brushstroke took on the character of a word, a sentence, cautiously muttered, confirming his status as an artist. In this sense, the finished paintings cannot be read only as objects of color and composition, but as witnesses to

the transformative action that helped Wagner find his artistic voice.

Wagner viewed the art world in much the same way that he had regarded airplanes and cars as a boy. Seen from afar, they both carried the promise of freedom, mobility, and choice, and were something he could model for himself with the barest of means. Later in life Wagner founded his own museum, filled not only with his artworks, but also with self-authored quotations. Visited by many friends and collectors, the Wagner Museum emulated the institutions of art that seemed so promising from the outside, but in reality only granted only a certain kind of limited access.

His relationship to art museums and the art world construct is a complex one. Regardless of whether one believes in Wagner's stories or shares his faith, the way he told stories visually is important to his work and his legacy. Themes of the Gospel, history, and biography in Wagner's art are, though highly individual, deeply connected to common narratives of many self-taught African-American artists of his generation.³ While spontaneity, faith, and an idiosyncratic character play a central role in Wagner's work, he also responded to specific traditions of image production that lie outside of both fine art practice and definitions of "outsider art." Indeed, outsider art as a category says more about the conventional art world than the artists subsumed under this term.³ And yet, the grey zone it defines proved beneficial for Wagner, as it allowed him to enter this sphere, which provided public recognition for his works.⁴

While the topic of outsider status is both too dense and historically laden to examine in depth here, it should be noted that Wagner himself seemed to be very much aware of the potential and limits it bestowed upon him. He was not as oblivious to Western art history as the term outsider implies; he deeply admired a variety of artists, including Picasso, whose approach towards a vast range of everyday materials inspired Wagner, whose financial constraints provided limited access to art supplies. Furthermore, he seems to have understood how currency is established in artistic discourse. In exchange for the public recognition he sought, he shifted his early abstractions towards more figurative subjects at the urging of gallerists.⁵ Or, perhaps it was his impulse to tell stories in a style accessible to both his art audience and his non-art friends and family. Paradoxically, it seems that the way Wagner was cast as an authentic "outsider" may indeed have greatly influenced his style and output. And yet, one can't shake the feeling that Wagner recognized these limitations and used them to express his stories however possible. Self-authorized and dedicated to his cause, he found a way to make them his own and control his narrative.

Just as Wagner worked to escape preexisting categories, his works evade singular interpretations. One can look at a pot balanced upside down on a piece of driftwood, and see an sculpture with echoes of Dadaist assemblage, an impulsive artistic gesture with the most limited of means, or an allegory for Moses. Such is the mutability of Wagner's persona. In *Realization is Better than Anticipation*, Wagner's self-actualization serves as an interesting foil to the works on view—they embody a struggle for voice through material production, repetition, and variation; the story of realizing self through the making of art.

¹ Gene & Linda Kangas (ed.), *Water Boy. The Art and Life of Reverent Albert Lee Wagner* (Ohio: Virtu Group, 2008), 54.

² This assertion is made by artist Johnny Coleman, in *One Bad Cat: The Reverent Albert Wagner Story* (2008), directed by Thomas G. Miller.

³ The tradition of artistic production removed from the arts sphere is as old as the term "art" itself. But while older terms such as "folk art" or "primitive art" relate to visual production that is rooted in social life, community, and collective spirituality, more current terms such as "outsider art," "intuitive art," or Jean Dubuffet's "art brut" describe the work of autodidacts, who invent their own personal iconographies. This shift in terms is based, as Arthur Danto describes in his essay "The Artworld and Its Outsiders," on a shift within the art world itself. While in pre-modern times, the understanding of art was based on ideas of progression, modernity and the avant-garde shifted its meaning towards the production of personal style and expression. This opened up the understanding of who could be considered an artist, and while mainstream artists themselves drew inspiration from arts made "elsewhere," like Picasso's African masks or Dubuffet's drawings by mental patients, art works produced inside and outside the art world became visually less and less distinguishable. Yet the distinctions would continue to exist through the institution of art itself, the traditions and discourses, in which art works are created and reviewed. See Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld and Its Outsiders," *Self-taught Artists of the 20th Century: An American Anthology* (New York: Museum of American Folk Art, 1998), 18-27.

⁴ As mentioned by Bonita Wagner Johnson to the curatorial team of *Realization is Better than Anticipation*.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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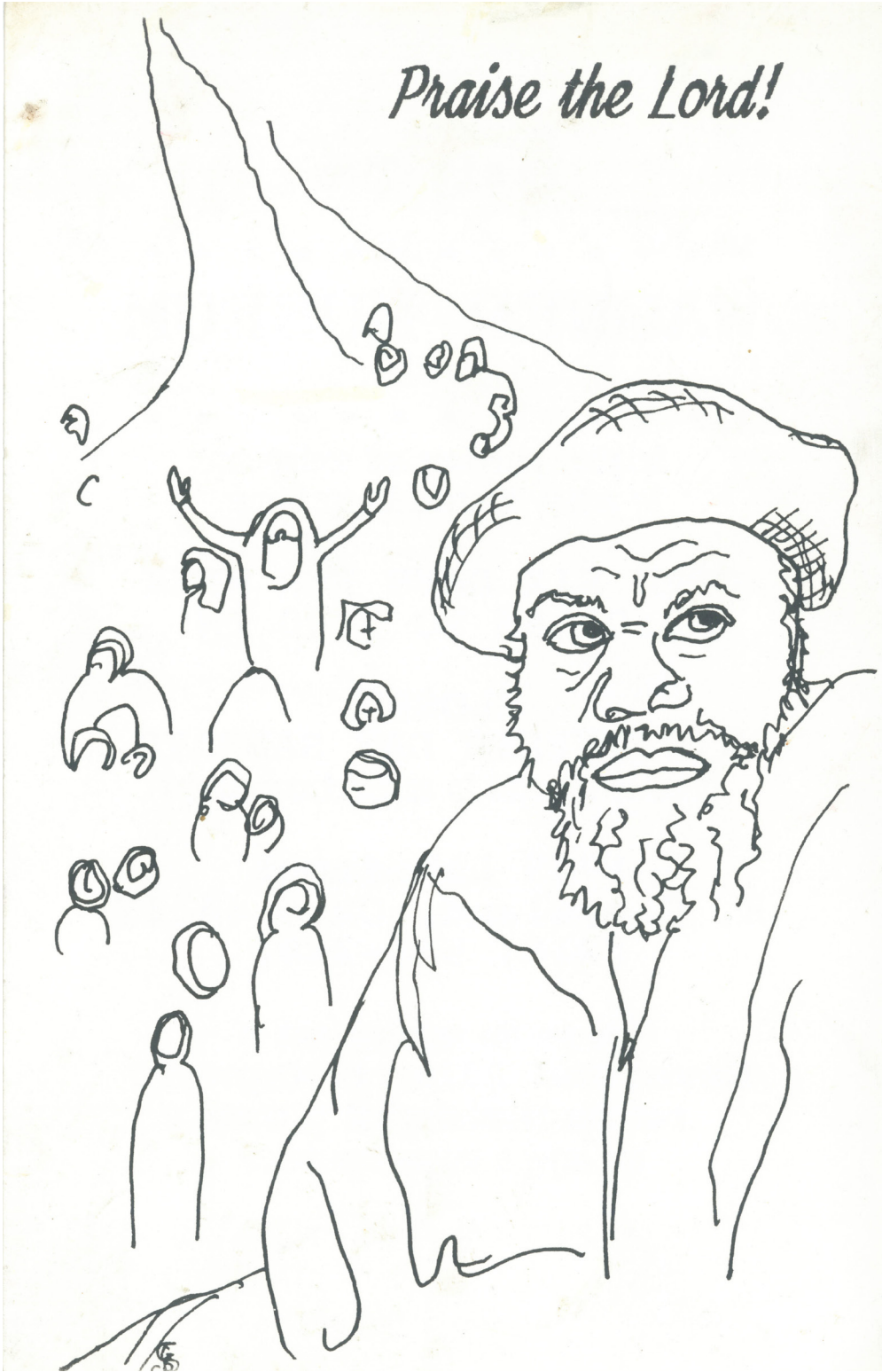
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I Ain't Got No Home
I Am A Lonesome Hobo
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I Am Goodbye
I Am John
I Am Not A Burbot
I Am Somebody
I Am Standing Here
I Am The Odd One
I Am The Upsetter
I Am The Walrus
I And I
I Believe In Miracles
I Believe In You
I Buried A Bone
I Call Your Name
I Came As A Rat
I Can't
I Can't Be Satisfied
I Can't Explain
I Can't Get My Eyes Off
I Can't Get Next To You
I Can't Help Myself
I Can't Quit You Baby
I Chose Horses
I Could Be Dreaming
I Could Stay
I Cover The Waterfront
I Cry Alone
I Didn't Mean To Hurt You
I Dig Love
I Do It For Love
I Don't Believe
I Don't Believe You
I Don't Belong To Anyone
I Don't Get It
I Don't Know
I Don't Live Today
I Don't Need You No More
I Don't Wanna Be A Soldier Mama
I Don't Want You On My Mind
I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine
I Feel Free
I Feel It All
I Feel Just Like A Child
I Feel Love
I Forgot
I Found A Reason
I Found That Girl
I Found The End
I Get Along Without You Very Well
I Get The Sweetest Feeling
I Get Wild
I Go To The Barn
I Got It Bad
I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good
I Got Mine
I Got No Time For Rearviews
I Got The Feelin'
I Got You
I Gotta Right To Sing The Blues
I Had A Real Good Mother And Father

LAUREN YEAGER

V F A I T F R

NATURAL
RESOURCEFULNESS:
AN INTERVIEW
WITH LAUREN YEAGER

JENNIFER J. SMAILES

Lauren Yeager's playful curiosity towards her surroundings makes for a profuse, continual flow of artworks and ideas. For *Realization is Better than Anticipation*, the artist responded to MOCA Cleveland's architecture and daily functions, developing new works for the building's yellow interior staircase, the store, and the galleries. These works showcase a great resourcefulness and wide range of approaches to "making," from the often humorous re-evaluation of everyday objects, to the facilitated coming-into-being of works through controlled chance and harnessed natural forces. On June 5, 2013, I met Lauren Yeager at a café in Cleveland's Little Italy to talk about her work.

Jennifer Smailes: *In terms of humor, what artists do you draw inspiration from?*

Lauren Yeager: A piece that comes to mind is Tom Friedman's installation of stolen balls (*Untitled*, 1992). He started out stealing really small balls like marbles and bouncy balls from convenience stores and then worked his courage up to steal larger and larger balls. For installations, he arranges them in his typical style, with the biggest one in the center, spreading out to the smallest ones on the outside, looking like a galaxy, but very formal. They just happen to be balls that he stole.

JS: *How would you relate that to your own practice?*

LY: I like the irony that comes from the formal display and how the materials were collected, the idea of a professional, well-known person risking it all for art by stealing balls. Most of these balls look like you can get them at K-Mart for a dollar. I like that his concept restricted him to steal them and that he almost becomes a child to acquire these toys. It's a very subtle humor, but I think it's really funny.

I Have A Little Girl
 I Hear Them All
 I Heard It Through The Grapevine
 I Heard You Looking
 I Just Called To Say I Love You
 I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself
 I Just Wanna Get Along
 I Killed Sally's Lover
 I Know
 I Know A Place
 I Know No Pardon
 I Know What I Know
 I Know Where The Summer Goes
 I Learned It All The Hard Way
 I Left The Light On
 I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart
 I Like It
 I Looked At You
 I Lost It
 I Lost My Dog
 I Love My Baby
 I Love My Car
 I Love My Man
 I Love That Man
 I Love You
 I Love You Porgy
 I Made A Lover's Prayer
 I Me Mine
 I Might Be
 I Might Be Wrong
 I Miss You
 I Must Have That Man
 I Need A Man To Love
 I Never Said I Love You
 I Only Said
 I Pity The Poor Immigrant
 I Really Got The Feeling
 I Remember Jeep
 I Remember Learning How To Dive
 I Remember My Youth
 I Save Cigarette Butts
 I Saw Her Again Last Night
 I Say A Little Prayer
 I See Colours
 I See Who You Are
 I Shall Be Released
 I Shot The Sherriff
 I Should Have Known Better
 I Still Miss Someone
 I Still Remember
 I Think I'm In Love
 I Think I See The Light
 I Thought About You
 I Used To Love Him
 I Wanna Be Like You
 I Wanna Ride You
 I Wanna Sleep
 I Wanna Call It Love
 I Want To Be The Boy To Warm Your
 Mother's Heart
 I Want To Hold Your Hand
 I Want To Tell You I Want You
 I Want You Back

JS: *You seem to strike a similar balance between simplicity and absurdity. Like Friedman, you follow self-imposed rules within your work, and this grants it a kind of magic, like in children's games, when things are given potentially nonsensical meaning within the rules of the game.*

LY: Yes, but my rules also get adapted as the work is happening. Like with *Found, Yellow, Pencils* (since Sept. 8th, 2010) for which I collect yellow No. 2 pencils and display them as data along a timeline. While I was doing this, maybe four months into collecting, I started to get frustrated because I would find other pencils and be like "Oh, man, I can't use these, because they are not yellow!" Then I thought, "No, wait, I can have a non-yellow pencil chart, too!" So, I added another shelf to the display, called *Found, Not-Yellow, Pencils* (2010).

JS: *A work in Realization is Better than Anticipation, 216-543-4949 (2013), consists of a mobile phone that is activated by the viewer calling the number of its title. How does this playful type of audience engagement relate to more private works like Found, Yellow, Pencils...?*

LY: By giving the audience the opportunity to activate the phone, I can see their reactions to the work. I toyed with the idea of having the phone in a maze or something comparable, but it seemed unnecessary. I hope by just giving the viewer the ability to manipulate the phone, they can develop their own goals with its movement. They can decide on their own rules and games, like "Oh, let me see if I can get it to move to the other side of the table!" I don't think people need much direction to get interested and playful with it.

JS: *The idea of evaluation, or re-evaluation, occurs frequently in your work. You highlight details that seem irrelevant within a certain context, like the names of colors in your playlist for your installation iTunes on Color (2013). By defining them as criteria for your selection and presentation of materials, you redefine their value.*

LY: The idea for *iTunes on Color* came from a previous work, *Self Portrait* (2011), where I created a list of songs that start with "I." In scrolling through the alphabetical song list, the I's read like a statement. I liked the concept of learning something about myself from my iPod. So I thought, what else can these songs teach me? The concept of color seemed very relevant to me as an artist. When I started searching the colors in my music, I imagined the song library giving me information about how these color names relate to song or how music uses colors to express emotion. But I don't really have to evaluate their worth, I can just imply that it's there and let the viewer evaluate it on their own terms.

LAUREN YEAGER

REALIZATION IS BETTER THAN ANTICIPATION

I Want Your Love
I Was A Lover
I Was Meant For The Stage
I Was The Fool Beside You For Too Long
I Was Young When I Left Home
I Will
I Will I Will
I Will Always Love You
I Will Be True
I Will Call You Lover Again
I Will Survive
I Wish I Was A Mole In The Ground
I Wish I Was The Moon
I Wish, I Wish
I Wished On The Moon
I Woke Up With This Song In My Head
This Morning
I Won't Ask Again
I Wonder What My Baby's Doing Tonight

Lauren Yeager, *Self Portrait*,
song titles from the artist's music
library, dimensions variable, 2011,
courtesy of the artist

JS: *Its installation in MOCA Cleveland's interior staircase has a very different effect. Here, you combine the actual music with the experience of colored light, creating an emotional environment.*

LY: Very emotional. But I still feel it's an extension of the data. It provides the viewer with a physical way of engaging with the color proportions used in music. So, when you are in the blue area, you get a sense that blue is a very dominant color in music. In that way, I feel that the staircase is elaborating on the charts.

JS: *It seems like you often take an approach of explicit de-laboring, a relinquishing of "making" to natural forces. For UV Index (2012-ongoing), you create a faded calendar on construction paper by exposing squares to daily amounts of sunlight. For Transfer (2013), a work of red and white garments washed together, which are being sold in the Museum's store, you create bonds between pieces of clothing through the transfer of dye. Both of these works depend on processes that you set in motion, but do not control.*

LY: I like the idea of harnessing natural forces to do the work. Obviously, the sun already does a great deal of work, and it's going to be in the sky either way. So, if I can harness it to accomplish something for me, it seems like a very efficient way of working. I have another piece, called *Collaboration with Evaporation* (2012), where I allow the glasses of water I use to clean my paint brushes to evaporate until I return. I get really excited if I can think of a way to interact with a natural force, if I can capture it or just take advantage of its motion.

JS: *Many of your works involve such slow processes. Where does this interest in slowness come from?*

LY: I don't think of the processes as being intentionally slow; they just happens to be. But I do have a reoccurring interest in the passing and accumulation. Often, time is like the x-axis of the graphs or data that I present. The pencils in *Found, Yellow Pencils* (since Sept. 8th, 2010) are displayed along such an x-axis; displayed in the order that they were found, so that the amount of them grows over time, while the different heights and appearances of the pencils describe the y-axis. Leaving the work open-ended allows me to stretch out the process as long as it takes to fill it visually.

JS: *And there is also that notion of determination, as with UV Index, which demands that you work on them month after month, day after day.*

LY: It's true, and I tend to set up my works with such a structure, where there is something to do every day, something very easy and slight, like collecting things, recording data, or leaving water to evaporate. It helps me feel active as an artist. Even if I have to go to a job or do other things, I am still participating in the world as an artist. When I am not being really productive, I find relief in knowing that I am being *slightly* productive.

JS: *In a certain way, your work has a very scientific feel to it, like experiments in which you measure mundane occurrences by objective standards.*

LY: I do think of it as pseudo-scientific, because a good portion of my work involves collecting data. But where I think it differs from science is that there are no standards or codes. I am choosing the data set without any real practical or theoretical need for its study.

JS: *When you have gathered this data, you seem to organize it in certain, restricted ways—within lists for example—or rely on multiples and repetition. How do you arrive at these structures to organize your work?*

LY: I often try to go with what seems like the most obvious predetermined structure, the most logical way of organizing the data. My works usually begin with an idea that comes to me as not strongly grounded in material form. So, all the potential decisions to be made regarding its physicality can become overwhelming. That's why I try to find ways of presenting it that are already in place. For example, for *iTunes on Color*, I borrowed much of the formal presentation from the design and format of iTunes. These options for display are already out there, I just have to commit to one of them rather than make a million aesthetic decisions to develop my own.

JS: *This is the process-based explanation, but what is your intellectual interest in this?*

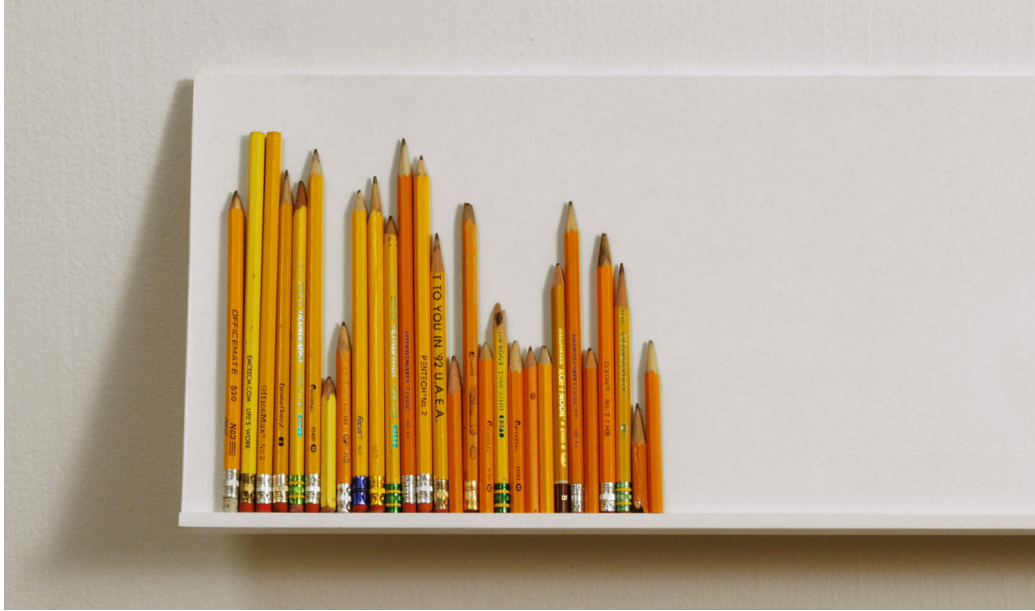
LY: Conceptually, what stimulates me is that these presentations of data become stronger when there is a natural connection to the source. I feel that introducing arbitrary decisions into the final representation would muddy the idea that this is data to be interpreted. I like the notion that someone can approach it, figure out how to make it, and realize that it's possible to make it themselves. I feel this allows the viewer to start interpreting the data in a way that is perhaps more accessible than reading it as an artwork. And then, as the viewer's looks at it, it becomes apparent that there is not one conclusion, per se, or that there is no specific conclusion set out. It's open-ended.

LAUREN YEAGER

YEAGER



Lauren Yeager, *UV Index*, 2013, construction paper, sunlight, 12 x 22 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Rose Bouthillier.



ABOVE: Lauren Yeager, *Found, Yellow, Pencils* (since Sept. 8th, 2010), ongoing, found, yellow pencils, custom shelf. Courtesy of the artist.

BELOW: Lauren Yeager, *Collaboration with Evaporation*, ongoing, water glass, ink and watercolor residue, 3 x 3 x 4 inches each. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Rose Bouthillier.