



DADU : *conversations*
galleryELL



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East Nashville, TN, USA

13 June 2015

Maria Christoforatos
Anna Freeman Bentley
Kariann Fuqua
Jodi Hays
Nancy Hubbard
Kei Imai
Kirsten Nash
Jaimini Patel
John Ros

A culmination of the *conversations* series, curated by
John Ros for galleryELL.com

conversations: SPACE&time
conversations: /HOME/
conversations: exterior—interior

13 October – 09 November 2014
10 November – 07 December 2014
08 December 2014 – 11 January 2015



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Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (DADU), the city code name for tiny homes on one's property, will host quarterly exhibitions in conjunction with the East Side Art Stumble.

The first pop-up is a brick-and-mortar realization of a series of online exhibitions curated by galleryELL's founder/artist/curator John Ros (NYC/London) in collaboration with director/artist Jodi Hays (East Nashville). Notions of home, place and space are contemplated and examined in each artists' practice in this inaugural exhibition.

From Jodi Hays:

My husband and I bought our first home, a loft in an 1888 hardware store outside of Boston, we called it "the space" while it was being renovated. Once we'd moved in, "the space" became instead "place" and then "home." Our inhabiting and sharing of "the space" called for a more intimate name.

DADU: *Conversations* is an investigation into specific ideas within artists' practices, specifically those of space, place, landscape and architecture and how these things affect our own sense of space, place, home, memory, intimacy, ritual, landscape and memory.

I have collected some of the artists in DADU: *Conversations*, and I see and live with their work each day in my home. Kirstin Nash's subtle painting was a house-warming gift to my husband, and greets us as we walk in the door. Kariann Fuqua's color and line in a drawing sits with me in my living room. As John Ros stated in his text on the *Conversation Series*, "Art is about persistence and continuation." I have great respect for all of these artists, whose practices are consistent and long-term, and am honored for them to participate in DADU's inaugural exhibition.

galleryELL is so excited to have the opportunity to reenvision our *conversations* series for the inaugural exhibit at DADU. Events like these represent galleryELL's mission. As a hybrid gallery, our daily activity comes in the digital form. To be able to make these exhibits physical is to take another step for the project, artists and viewers.

Jodi Hays has been an artist with galleryELL since our inception. Her recent paintings were originally included in the *conversations: /HOME/* exhibit, which dealt with the comforts of home and what it means to establish an idea of *home*. Even the quest can be enough for some. Many say, "Home is where the heart is." I think home is everything, from the quest to find a home, the time spent on that quest, and if you are lucky enough, managing to find it. Home is a thought and an energy more than a physical place. Home is our bodily vessel and all that surrounds that vessel. Home is community. Home is country. Home follows you. As an NYC expat living in London, this is an especially interesting concept for me.

The *conversations* series focuses on the dialogues we have with ourselves as artists in the studio and how those exchanges extend beyond our studio walls into our communities. *conversations* opens up each studio beyond the physical artwork and explores how communities in different countries might learn to communicate more spontaneously and effectively. DADU is the perfect place to reimagine this series of exhibits in that it welcomes the communities of East Nashville to the broader conversation. We may settle and get comfortable in any given place. Some may be lucky, while others have to struggle for very little. Our global culture and the influence we have over the things we do and the exchanges we have will have an impact beyond our own borders and help create a more honest future for us all.

– John Ros, galleryELL



Maria Christoforotou

Constructions (series) 2014_1, 2014
collage
15.75 x 12 in.



Anna Freeman Bentley

Closing Time, 2014
Oil on paper
16 x 20 in.



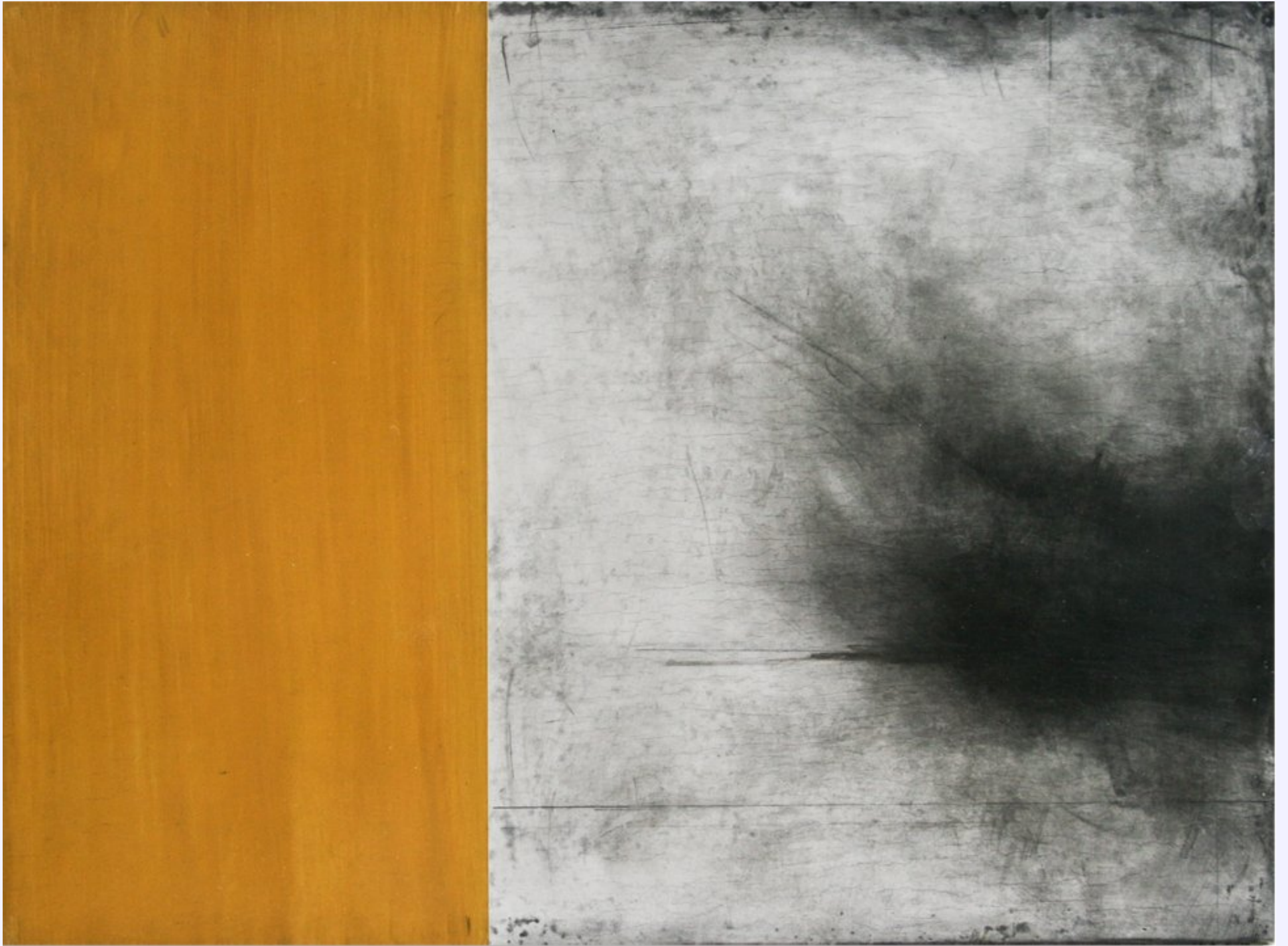
Kariann Fuqua

Too Far Gone, 2014
Gouache and graphite on paper
13 1/4 x 9 1/4 in.



Jodi Hays

Rail, 2013
oil on panel
9 x 12 in.



Nancy Hubbard

Study 1, 2015
gesso sottile, charcoal, graphite, burnishing
clay, pigment, carnauba wax on panel
8.75 x 11.75 in.



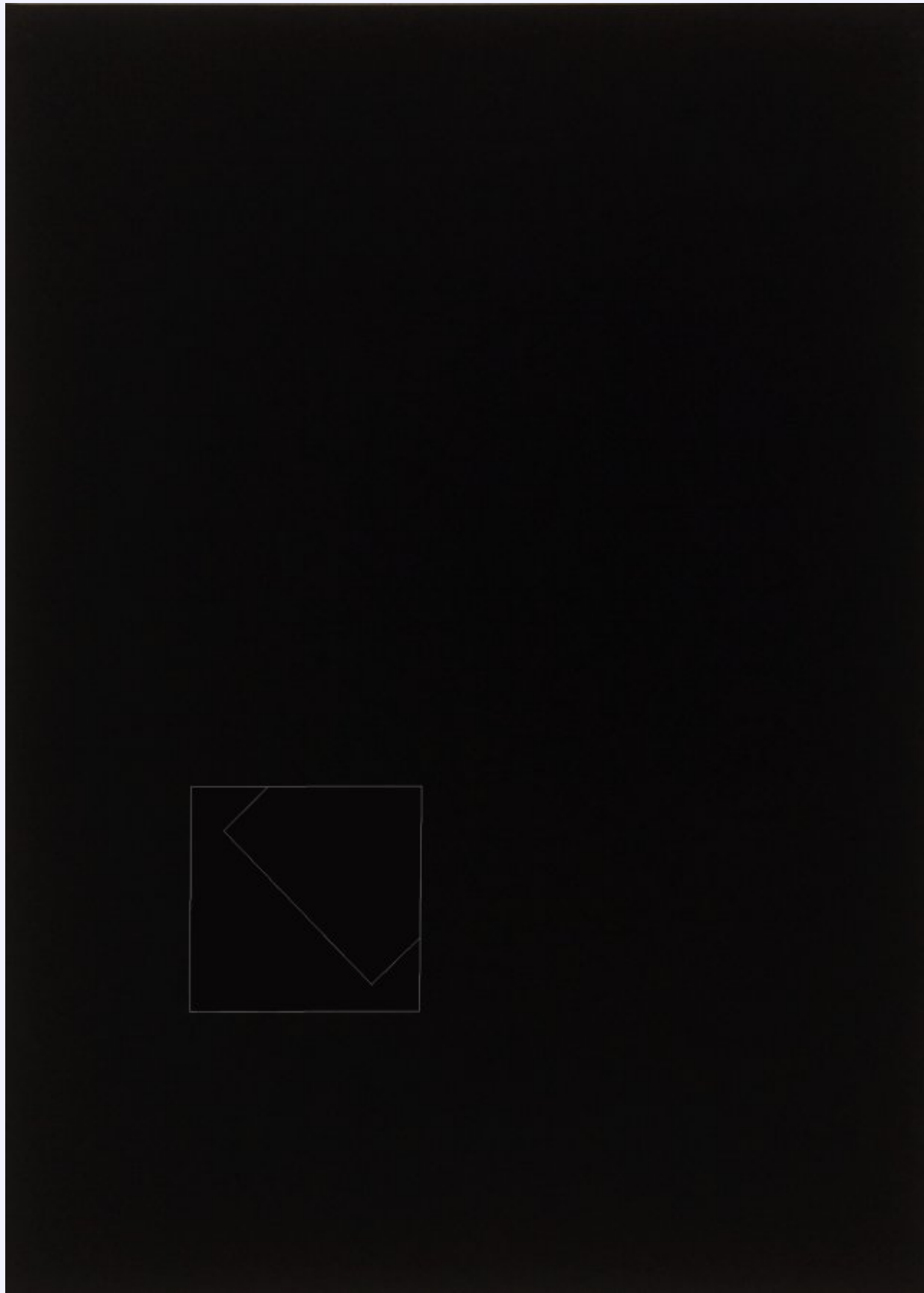
Kei Imai

port-I, 2015
Screen monotype
16.5 x 23 in.



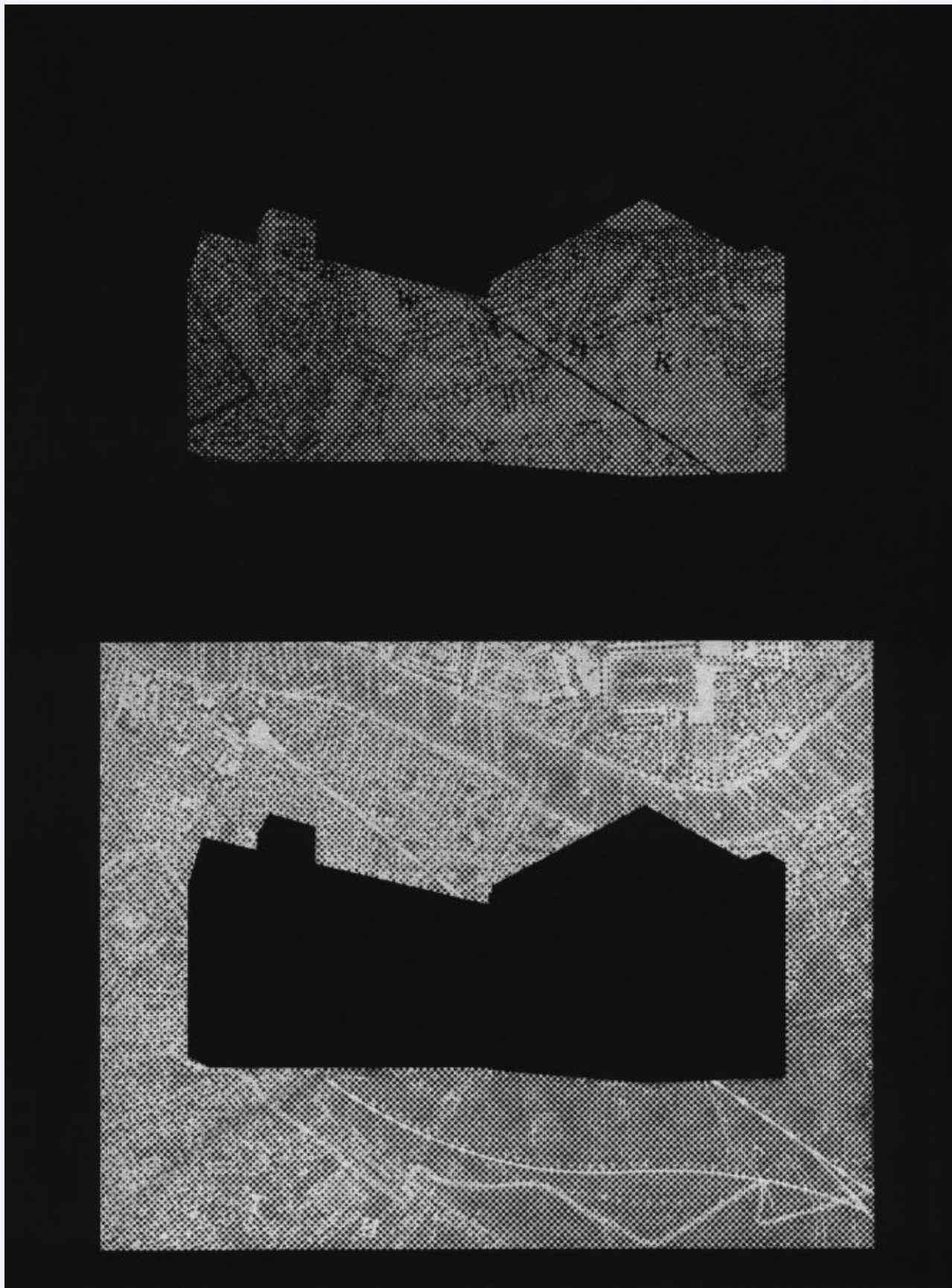
Kirsten Nash

untitled, 2013
watercolor and pencil on paper
16 x 18 in.



Jaimini Patel

Untitled, 2015
carbon paper, blue-tacked
11.7 x 8.3 in.



John Ros

untitled: se 1-49, 2015
silkscreen
edition of 20
15 x 11 in.

Conversations Series on galleryELL.com

This three-part series of exhibitions is an investigation into specific ideas within artists' practices and how those paths unfold into the broader conversation for the audience. Each exhibit will bring artists from the US and the UK together to begin discussions into slightly obscure ideas that resonate throughout broader, less-obvious themes. *SPACE&time*: a look into how space and time may shift and how our own perspectives of each affect our experiences; */HOME/*, a discussion on what it means to be "home" and how artists work to create that experience; and *exterior—interior*, how the morphing of space can allow it to become both interior and exterior at the same time.

The studio is the starting point for all of these conversations. When one experiences an artist's raw, unedited practice, you can begin to better understand the depth of research involved. Not all work is a success, nor should it be. Of those "horrible works", our instinct is to put it away, to bury it, destroy it. At Brooklyn College, Archie Rand always said to keep that piece hung in the studio and to stare at it, to communicate with it, to allow for it to loom over our practice a while. He reassured us that it was a pure and honest expression from our gut and eventually it would reveal its purpose. In a similar vein, Kirsten Nash recently curated the exhibit, *Pleasure & Pain*, for galleryELL.

From studio to exhibition, this series aims to create a venue for honest creativity and a discussion of possibilities.



conversations:

SPACE & time

Brian Higbee
Kirsten Nash
Jaimini Patel
Sikander Pervez

galleryELL

conversations: SPACE&time

When we avail ourselves to experience, we explore our surroundings in our own unique ways. Certain trained modes of observation and response may kick in, and shape our interpretations according to a particular set of parameters followed unconsciously. But what are we missing? Might a small shift in perspective completely change an experience? Are we becoming so familiar with what we think we see that we deprive ourselves of new experiences? When we shift the perspective from which we view something, we create variations of the same moments that, however slight, entice us to richer interpretations. Time itself may pause to accommodate the expanding spectrum of what surrounds us. We are magicians and sages who can open up space and time to reveal a multitude of new experiences. We first have to open ourselves to that possibility.

Space and time constantly unravel in front of us. Not only does time exist in the background, blocking moments and dictating schedules, it functions in the very front of each moment, and has the ability to shift and collapse based on our perception of it. Space also plays a significant role in each of the aforementioned elements and byproducts of time. Memories are solidified and futures planned based on our positions within our own landscapes.

Collectively and individually, the outcomes of any experience translate into drastically different vantage points. Joseph Albers says in, *Interaction of Color*, "Relativity is caused by a variance of measure, by lack or avoidance of standard rules, or by changing viewpoints. As a result, 1

phenomenon has varying views, readings and different meanings.”⁰¹ So, as the red of a stop sign stands in front of ten people, each of those ten people will experience a unique red. As we experience a multitude of stimuli at any one moment, every element of those stimuli may be perceived in a variety of ways. The idea is first to accept this phenomenon, then begin to allow for shifts in our own perspectives in order to more fully see, or experience, each moment.

Using the studio as the starting point for this conversation, we look to Brian Higbee and Kirsten Nash from New York and Jaimini Patel and Sikander Pervez from London.

Sikander Pervez presents the simple, but manages to establish a dynamic, nuanced character within a not-so-simple shift in perspective. In *Untitled (Chair & Orange Plastic) I-X*, 2013, he offers a chair and the remnant trimmings from a rice package. Together, the chair and trimmings create a dynamic sculpture that intimates commentary on labor and food production, politics and the domestic homestead. Though Pervez may accept this interpretation, he is more interested in how complex material shifts in space and time. According to his own need to work through materials, “(t)he transformation possesses an open-ended possibility of what the artwork is able to become...” And though Pervez is ultimately after an aesthetic that works within the constraints of mass and space, he has allowed the element of time to creep in subtly. Through his investigation of placement, activity, inactivity and pressure, Pervez has opened up the interaction of a 3-dimensional object into a 4-dimensional time-piece. The sculpture can no longer stand alone. As a matter of fact, the sculpture almost becomes obsolete, as the memory of the sculpture’s past placement becomes the actual expression of this work. This movement in space through time, albeit in solitude, becomes the



Pervez, *Untitled (Chair & Orange Plastic)*, 2013
OPPOSITE: Nash, *Bounce*, 2013



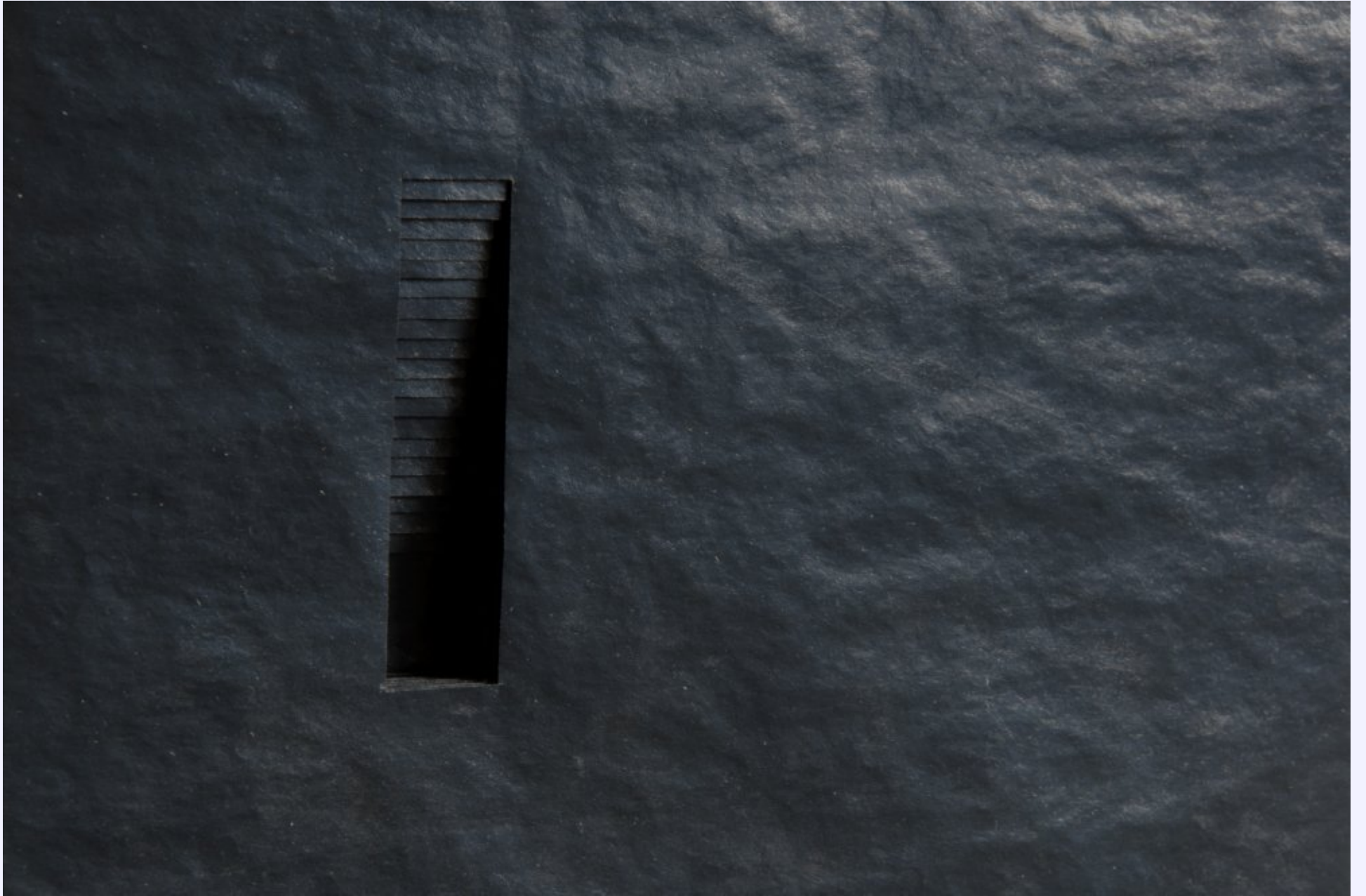
magnificent journey for the viewer to experience, from object to visual life-line. We imagine the steps taken to achieve each new placement. Rather than force-feed this process, Pervez offers a glimpse, during which we are invited to fill in the pieces. It is the active role of the participant we seem to have forgotten — not participation in the “actor” sense, but rather in the poetic sense. Pervez respects the viewer too much to provide us with an answer key.

This same operation, from object to experience, seems to take hold in Kirsten Nash’s paintings and drawings. Nash is fully engulfed in the subtle surfaces of paper and linen — so much so one can imagine these spaces as fully-realized physical places in front of her, as if she were a *plein air* painter working from representation. It just so happens the places *are* in front of her. Nash has such an acute sense of material and strong ability to manipulate image into memory and form, that she creates these massive, yet soft experiences, each a slight variation on the previous. Beyond the physical, Nash warps space as her precious small drawings become fully realized stage sets in scale. She humbly states, “These works represent the manifestation of...thought translated through material and process. Drawing, reflecting, negating, and refining, I am aiming for a raw simplicity and directness that is both in the moment and informed through memory.”

Nash’s directness and aim to achieve simplicity has given her the ability to extend beyond the physicality of the material and onto a broader expansion of durational references. From *Bounce*, 2013 to *Morning Light*, 2013 a shift of tension is activated. Then we arrive at *Giant*, 2013 and the journey suspends in mid-air, not from an oversight or miscalculation on Nash’s part, but as an opportunity she offers the viewer. We are suspended in the space between the greenish-ochre and purple bands.

OPPOSITE: Nash, *Giant*, 2013





Patel, *Retention*, 2014

If we allow ourselves long enough, we can climb through its misty matrix and come out through the other side. Nash offers us multiple perspectives in which to accept these possibilities. It is up to us to do the work and get through them.

Jaimini Patel's work quintessentially addresses space and time as her durational installations unfold throughout given parameters in specific spaces. She too relates to ideas of history and memory running in tandem with time. She states, "When the function of a material or where it belongs is altered, the dissonance between its past and present is amplified. I am interested in the sense of anticipation created by the potential for the work to change, collapse, or become unstable and the interplay between chance and intention." It is within this chance of change, past and present, that Patel's pieces hinge on the viewers own perspective. Taken further, her newest ongoing research project, *Slivers of Time*, 2014, employs a ritual of carefully cutting and layering sheets of carbon paper, which injects history and time as parameters of daily studio practice. This two-dimensional practice, rooted in repetition solidifies theories and intentions from Patel's installation work and opens up new possibilities into layers of perception, quite literally, one sheet of carbon paper at a time. Devotion to a ritual can instill many new perspectives based on ones own acceptance of time. Patel remarks, "Time can be measured in centimeters, packets of carbon paper or the length of a piece of music. Although the activity allows the measurement of time, it also establishes a rhythm in which the experience of it becomes distorted. Sometimes an hour can pass in what seems like an instant, or time can appear to crawl. I enjoy the contraction and expansion, which allows me to become immersed and then to re-emerge." Distortion is where the excitement awaits and where perspective can begin to shift, for the artist and for the viewer. Like Pervez, Patel does not need to show each step of the

journey. By keeping memory and possibility within arms reach, she keeps some of the magic alive for the viewer and for herself.

Brian Higbee takes shifting perspectives to a whole new level in his practice. He has developed a few different ways of approaching his work by actually dividing it into very specific categories. As Higbee explains, "Minimalism Elite re-imagines the past, and Future Living Projects imagines the future." In addition to his aesthetic work, Higbee has been creating art of a critical nature under the name "Associated Artists for Propaganda Research" since 2000, and hosts an exploration of semi-fictional artwork at "The Lost Estate of Ed 'Johnson' Shepard". Higbee has "developed these projects to act as a network of interconnected ideas that address the complexities of multiplicity as a basis for the re-conceptualization of contemporary aesthetics." By doing so, Higbee has created a diverse language in which to open up contrasting conversations, while tweaking them at the very core of their being.

With this in mind, it seems Higbee regularly undergoes his own self-imposed perceptual shifts, literally as well as conceptually. Take for instance, *A Non-Representative Model for Incomplete Ideas (Intricate Structure #1)*, 2013 made under Minimalism Elite and *Journey Into the Realm of Reason*, 2009 made under Future Living Projects. They seem to feed into one another. The latter may have informed the former, but either way, the very act of creating these works under unique auspices arranges an immediate perceptual shift to the viewer. This action not only changes the time and space of the works, but manages to change the very being of the work by way of provenance, no matter how conceptual.

Likewise, *Opposition and Sister Squares are Reconciled SSS #4*, 2014,



Higbee, *A Non-Representative Model for Incomplete Ideas*
(*Intricate Structures #1*) Small Scale Sculpture, 2013



Higbee, *Journey into the Realm of Reason*, 2009

(Minimalism Elite) and *Silence is golden*, 2011 (Associated Artists for Propaganda Research), demonstrate the essence of interplay in these time-space shifts. Perhaps the most exciting part of Higbee's modus operandi is the infinite sense of possibility within it. A single artist can allow himself varied viewpoints and exhaustive dialogues within one topic. One could argue artists do this regularly in the studio, but by categorizing his own viewpoints, Higbee elevates the discourse with a new sense of wholeness as he offers it to his audience.

All four of these artists work tirelessly in the studio. With very different practices, they meet somewhere, in a Venn diagram of possibilities, if only for a moment. They pass on ideas, mix theories and offer new expertise. They converse. At this time we are all invited into this conversation.

Viewers and artists alike must challenge what we experience. As participants in this overly-stimulated visual culture we have to remember the difference between what we are looking at and what we think we are looking at. When we truly look, we begin to accept new ideas and notions from the visual language placed in front of us. When we look we open ourselves to endless possibilities and a better understanding of the nuance of our surroundings. We obliterate all possibility when we experience something as something we have experienced before, or when we think we know what it is we are seeing. We must shift perspective and look at the familiar with fresh vigor, while allowing a sense of excitement to enter new experiences. All time and space, even ordinary, offers potential. A new sense of wonderment will compel our thoughts, actions and engagement into new perspectives and a more fully realized experience.

notes:

01. Albers, Josef. "Interaction of Color". New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1963. print., page 71.



Olivia Bax
Maria Christoforatu
Jodi Hays
Kei Imai

conversations:

/HOME/

galleryELL

conversations: /HOME/

Many of us spend countless hours in search of home. Beyond shelter, home implies so much more. Home is comfort. It is security. Home is family, friends, community. It extends beyond the physical boundaries of our inhabited spaces and travels with us as we move throughout our lives. Home is an orb of energy. It is spirit, love, honesty. It encapsulates our workspaces, our living spaces, and every space in-between. Searching for home can be a life-long task. Some of us are fortunate enough to find it early, others spend endless hours in search of it, and yet others are left no choice but to give up looking for it. This exhibit is a peek into the search for home. Generated from countless hours in the studio, artists create worlds within a world — constantly operating on the boundaries between creativity and life. Some find balance between the two, others find one overtaking the other. There is no right way to operate, as the importance is found in the practice itself. Some may say, even if home is never attained, comfort lies in trying.

Finding a place that feels like home can be a balancing act as one constantly walks a tight rope through space in its pursuit. Immigrants, first-generation nationals and minorities others are often left to walk these lines even as they become frayed, and as the beginnings, ends and boundaries they denote lose meaning. Louise Bourgeois' totems, the first group of pieces she created in New York in the late 40's and early 50's after first arriving from France, come to mind. "The Personages reflect not only the forms of the surrounding skyscrapers... but also (her) relation to people she had left behind in France or met in her new environment in America."⁰¹. This idea of not only looking backwards but also looking

forward is part of the balance artists seek in the studio, regardless of displacement related to finding home. Each of the artists in this exhibition undertakes this task in different ways, resulting in different practices and results. These differences are highlighted as an overall experience within this exhibit, aimed at moving the viewer back and forth, in order to initiate a more open discussion about placement, identity and community in relation to the search for HOME.

Originally from Greece, Maria Christoforatos has studied in London since 2008. Due to a deep sensitivity from childhood, Christoforatos's practice revolves primarily around the pursuit to find home. She explains, "My main concern in my work has been to examine the fragility of the concept of home and the unstable quality of belonging. A major preoccupation throughout my work is an exploration of the close relationship between the emotional and the physical in terms of 'home', and the ways in which art practice can read and mediate that relationship." This relationship is important for her as it creates the tension needed to stay focused on her surroundings. She continues, "My research focuses on experiences of displacement from home and how 'home' is identified, mediated and 're-made' in certain contemporary art practices, as a state of mind that is internalized and carried within. In particular, this research looks at ways in which artists bring home to the audience emotions relating to the experience of personal and also cultural dislocation."

In a recent interview with Kornelia Pawlukowska, Christoforatos goes further, "By home, I mean that first place in a person's life with which a young child may identify and internalize so that it is carried with him or her throughout life. If this internalized home or sense of security, is destroyed or destabilized in any way, it may be possible to suffer a powerful sense of loss or displacement."⁰². This displacement is tangible throughout



Christoforatos's work. Take *Construction Series*, 2012-2014, a series of black and white collages. They are like puzzles completed by using pieces from several different puzzle boxes. There is actual unity in their disjunction. There is a longing to find truth in each space, familiar and yet so distant. We can imagine walking through these spaces, as if in a dream, or what we might see if we walked through a familiar space with our eyes closed. There is a similar sense of longing in the more refined sculptures. Their outlines leave interiors vulnerable to the exterior, while leaving all the surrounding space open to interpretation. This is an important element in the work as it remains open for the viewer to approach, and more importantly remains open for Christoforatos. This openness unfolds itself within ceramic and plaster in *Untitled*, 2007. The solid form, still open to possibility, is filled with shades and hues, as if forming from memories. This simple silhouette form stands in contrast to the subtle complexities within the matrix used to fill it. Memory and a search for home are synonymous in Christoforatos's work. Her play with the past and the present warps time just long enough to get a glimpse at omni-space. She has traveled through time and seen her life-span in a moment.

Like Christoforatos's silhouettes, the forms of Kei Imai's silhouettes are immediately recognizable. There is a softness and ease of handling to the images and oil-based print materials. Imai's restraint is the key to attaining this balance. We are presented with two types of renditions: a straight-on viewpoint and a corner viewpoint. The viewpoints entice us to different approaches, yet somehow manage to create similar encounters with space. The power of these vantage points is that we viewers actually become the subjects and are forced to confront each surface as we would a familiar space. We are faced with varied interiors pressing their textures throughout. This internal air becomes mystical, a soothing unknown place for our minds to rest. Imai suggests the work is, "A time

OPPOSITE: Christoforatos, *Untitled*, 2007



Imai, *winter*, 2007

when I interact with myself, a time I feel alone, quiet and sacred time passes by.” This healing time, represented in contained forms — houses, buildings and shipping containers — suggests a confrontation with space. This is neither an easy or unwelcome struggle, rather, Imai seems to relish in it. Her inquiry into the space she occupies is restorative and comforting.

Prints may seem like a perfect way to understand space as the medium allows for multiples. What better way to attain clarity than through repetition? Imai, however, works against this idea. She states, “many of my pieces do not have editions, and I cherish the randomness that comes by only once. The important thing is a sense of distance and tension with the plate. That is because, if excessive randomness is sought and everything is set free, that will weaken the power of the plate.” In not creating editions of the pieces, Imai is almost working contrary to the very medium in which she has chosen to work. This elevates her work, granting Imai even more knowledge about her structures. Her investigations continue from form to form, moving deeper into a range of possibilities offering deeper knowledge, particularly about the variations of interior textures. The air particles of *winter*, 2007, and *containers*, 2008 allude to the meatier viscosity of *pen*, 2007 and the corrugated nature of *pen ii*, 2007. These combinations form the essence of the questions Imai asks of her surroundings. They are silent in discovery and muted in response. Imai moved from Japan to London just over a year ago. These images reflect the humility with which she approaches her environment and offer a glimpse of the parallels that surround us all.

We move to repetition of a different kind in Jody Hays’ paintings. They are so much about navigating the space around her. They unravel from neighborhood streets and familiar walks to unusual vantage points and second-take phenomena. An underlying tension derives from vacillations



within the paintings' interiors and exteriors melding into the surface. With a concern for clarity within these spaces, Hays negotiates and displays the whole of the discoveries within the American South upfront for all to see. Whether an added brush stroke, cut-out space or masked surface, each layer reveals more layers. Hays acknowledges the influence of physical space on her work: "inhabited space, specifically landscape and architecture and their potential metaphors for the painted surface ... painting (as) an accounting of a composite of influences — from the history of painting to experiences on a walk — serving as a surrogate souvenir." The composite painting that unveils itself is more than just a record. It is the livelihood of home, the presence of space and life that Hays brings to her materials. As Hays reflects on her own relationship to the space, she uncovers what home means to her within her surroundings and more importantly, what the idea of "home" means to her community.

An interplay of synergistic emotion is clear in *rail*, 2013 and *Crunkest Jesus*, 2013. The solitude in which rail sits perfectly content is enough to take notice, but the surface pushes beyond comfort in solitude. Flats versus textured blocks denote form as hazy delineation creates an ambiance of uncertainty. A single white rail cleanly painted is riffed in the back building by a fuzzy red line and to the right by a bowed yellow line. These subtle contradictions hover over the page and animate the space to offer a first-hand experience — as if we are in the paintings. *Crunkest Jesus* again depicts a perhaps familiar space, yet Hays interjects when we feel ourselves getting a little too comfortable. The washed striated feel of the surfaces, built up then covered with strong repeating vertical lines causes us to stir and reposition. This repositioning gives the viewer a wider vantage point from which to view the space — something Hays regularly contends with in these multi-layered paintings. Hays is particular about which focal points lend themselves to reveal the most out of each space. Throughout

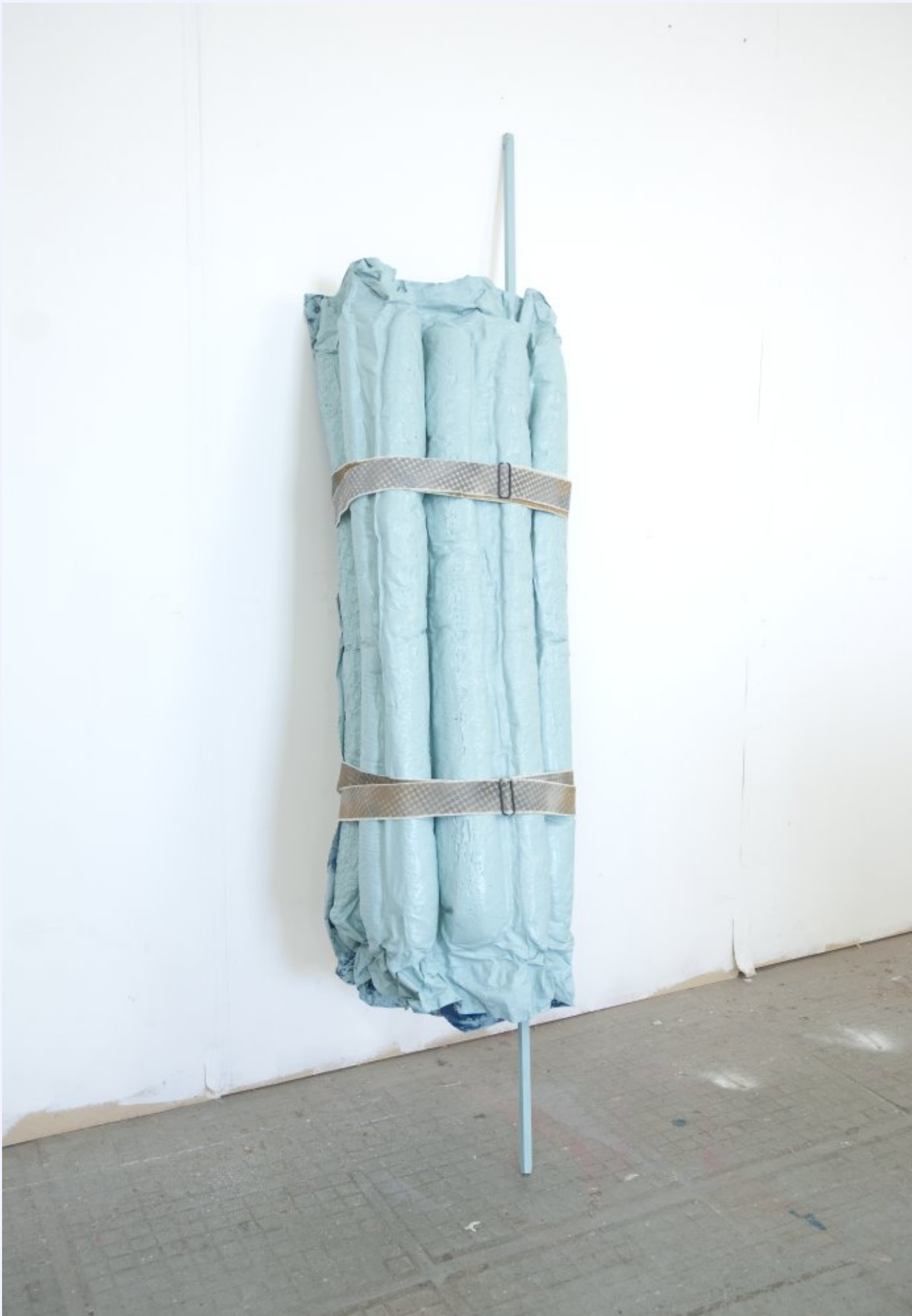
OPPOSITE: Hays, *rail*, 2013

all of these paintings, spaces dance with light, form and color as they peer silently at a segment of time within a moment of life, forming identity within community.

Olivia Bax jumps off the two-dimensional surface and appears to be grappling with issues similar to Hays', only in three dimensions. From Singapore to Scotland to London, Bax has found her way by being ever-aware of her sense of home. Much like Hays, Bax takes this awareness to materiality. She notes, "When inspired by an idea, material or object, I try to explore its every facet. The wealth of possibilities drives me to keep making. I repeat an action — printing, stuffing, casting, cutting, embossing, mark making until I have enough material to use / to create. While encountering problems in the studio is rather mundane — solving them is a challenge." This repetition and re-action is a way into the objects that occupy Bax's sense of space. Bax seems to begin her challenge by contemplating spaces, and the making allows her to wander around just long enough to appreciate its potential. Her action results in a performance. This private dance is not made available to the public, nor is it pertinent to understanding the complexity of the work. It is, however, important to understanding the sheer focus and dignity with which Bax approaches each new problem.

Perhaps an immediate jump to a sense of home may be *Wrap bundle*, 2013/2014. One cannot help but think of a protective layer, or shelter, or even a life raft like those used by many to flee one's home at great risk before finding another. The blue that Bax has wrapped around the foamed material extends to the support on which the material relies on to stand. This solid unity obscures many aspects of identity to bring the form more frontal. Matching straps seem a little too loose to hold in the tension, as if the bundle wishes to set itself free. Similar in touch, *Sac*, 2014 and

OPPOSITE: Bax, *Wrap bundle*, 2013/2014



Package, 2014 take a much different approach. In these two pieces, materials are offered up as consumer goods, as if one has rowed the raft to shore in order to replenish necessities. The vagueness of function (and with *Sac*, vagueness of form) plays to the idea of necessity in identity and the familiarity of the objects we use to create our home. The strength in these pieces is in the honesty with which they are presented. It may not be the product we actually seek, but the pleasure of finding it. These subtle nods reflect throughout each of Bax's pieces presented here. Her handling of surface and material are masterfully honest.

As artist's struggle with balance and the interplay of forces within life and studio practice, one can only hope to accept the inability to contain it. Like this vacillating effect, the artist must approach her work with ease and gusto, almost to snap the balance and start anew. Jochen Gerz describes searching for "a point which does not properly exist, but which can only be conjectured from both contending forces."⁰³. There is a certain amount of faith that falls on the artist to accept his or her destiny with place. Don DeMauro described this as "being thrown". "I am of a certain age, and... because of where I appeared on this globe, I am an existentialist. Existentialism, and not in the way it became a more structured philosophy, but as a kind of inherent sense of thrown-ness...and in that thrown-ness, again, this is an important thing, we are just thrown in time...."⁰⁴. To Don, practice is not about where you are from, but how you become who you are. The imbalance here is that so much of our identity comes from where we are from. What we build from there through our queries and problem solving will reveal our true "homespaces".

Within practice, the artist can only make sense of surroundings and after a certain point, let go. It is then up to the viewer to take a leap of faith. This work does not have to be about the individual tight-rope walk. It transfers

to each and every one of us. We all take this walk each day in one form or another. We must first be aware of our weaknesses before we adapt our strengths, but most importantly, we must realize that everyone else has a unique lens through which they view these steps. Accepting these different modes of viewing the world may help us all realize that we are all not that different after all. All we really want are a few comforts of home.

notes:

01. Morris, Francis. Louise Bourgeois. London: Tate 2007. print., page 208.

02. <http://korneliaviewsart.blog.com/2014/10/17/interview-with-maria-christoforatou/>

03. Von Draven, Doris. "The Stranger within Oneself". Vortex of Silence. Milan: Charta, 2004. Print., page 114.

04. INTERVIEW: Ros, John. Interview by author. Digital recording. Johnson City, NY., 17 June, 2012.

galleryELL

conversations:

exterior — interior

Anna Freeman Bentley
Kariann Fuqua
Nancy Hubbard
Ashley Rich

conversations: exterior—interior

Inside-out. Internal-external. Anterior-posterior. Molecular::Universal. The perceptual and physical split — body, mind and spirit. When I was young I pondered similarities between the frozen forms projected through the lens of a microscope and images captured by the Hubble telescope. How do the minuscule and finite resemble the gargantuan and illimitable? This wonderment persists throughout the world, in art and in the simplest everyday surroundings, within moments that feel like dreams, some offering close-up and fleeting glimpses, and others, a life's expanse — a whole timeline. Throughout life subtle contrasts dance around us, taunting our sense of amazement and taste for mystery. They may present as a sense of déjà vu and unravel complex emotions with a gentle nudge, allowing for vast differences in perspective. Artists create contrast accidentally and intentionally through interplay with materials, availing the viewer of tension that demands confrontation.

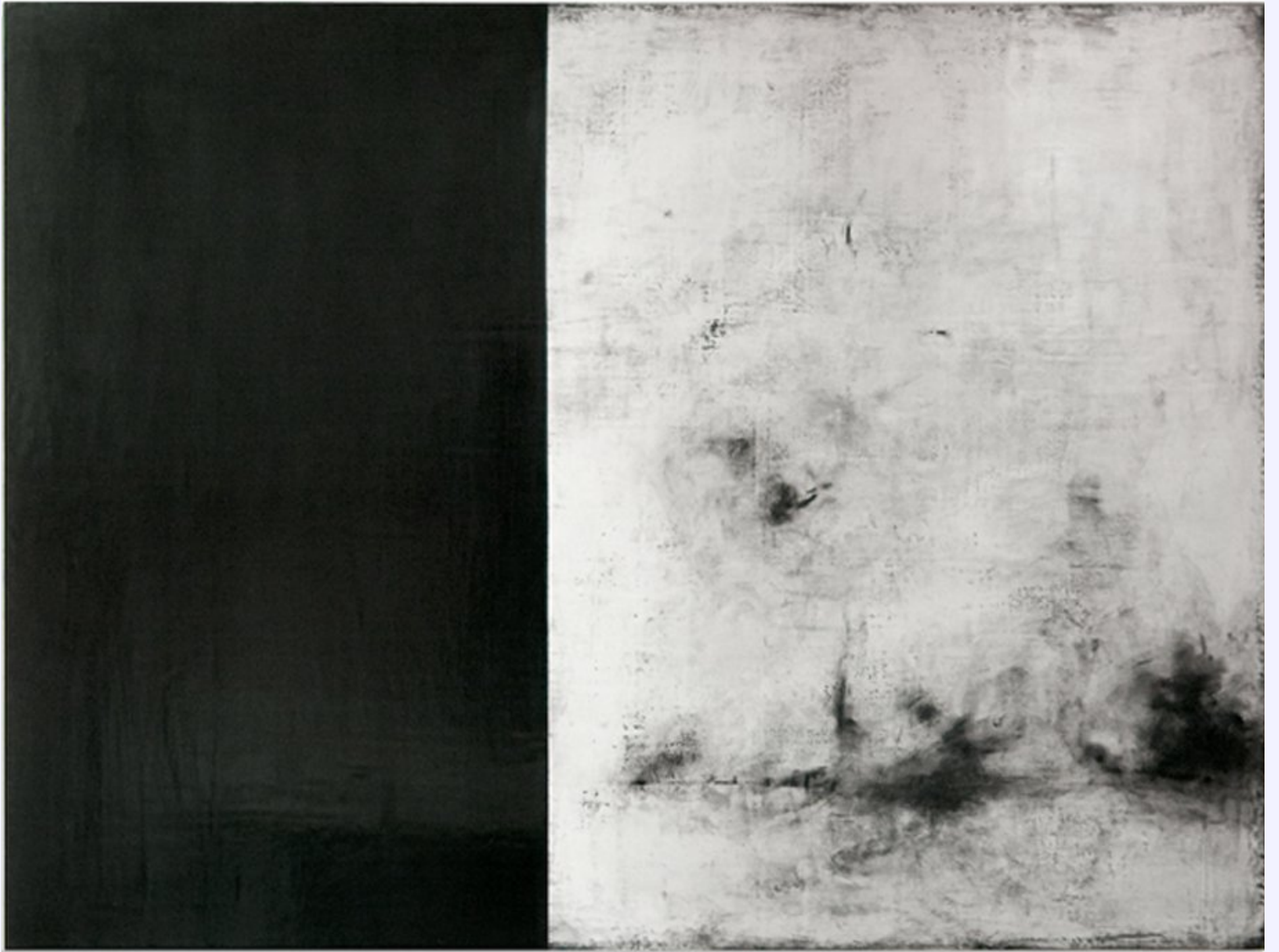
The photography of Sally Mann rushes to contrast and often creates mystery between interior and exterior. Pressing into our memories, Mann employs familiar language on a stage of grainy black and subtle greys. The ensuing space reveals the daunting imagery of death as closeups or landscapes waver inside and out before converging upon a final resting place somewhere in-between the life of the viewer and the stillness of the photograph. In contrast, the miraculous movement of Eadweard Muybridge's *Human figure in motion* brings movement to the still image. Frame by frame, these subtly changing moments spin in an endless loop. They create contrast between inside and outs, vacillating between stillness and motion like a dream or memory. Photography may be the simplest

method of tracking spacial turning from exterior to interior, as its very essence is based on the contrast of light and dark.

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A rotation to interior, then untwist to exterior — these actions trigger emotion within our own viewing spaces. Neither here nor there, both interior and exterior, space exists around us as a constant — free, yet forever trapped in the eye of the beholder. Each moment becomes a new memory, a faint song, a lasting hum. Long ago Kabir wrote “The Clay Jug”,

*Inside this clay jug there are canyons and pine mountains,
and the maker of canyons and pine mountains!
All seven oceans are inside, and hundreds of millions of stars.
The acid that tests gold is here, and the one who judges jewels.
And the music that comes from the strings that no one touches,
and the source of all water.*



Hubbard, *Wuthering*, 2014

*If you want the truth, I will tell you the truth:
Friend, listen: the God whom I love is inside.*⁰¹

I imagine a jug on a table in dark room, and a universe small enough to fit into it. The jug is made of clay from the very mountain it contains and the room floats endlessly around a star, counting time, silently aging. Every journey becomes less motivated by a rigid outline and more intriguing for the faintest possibility within.

exterior—interior, the last exhibition of the *conversations series*, looks to the work of Nancy Hubbard, Anna Freeman Bentley, Kariann Fuqua and Ashley Rich to unravel new mysteries transferred from the studio to the viewer and on to every space in-between.

Nancy Hubbard works on several planes. A rigorous and painstaking practice allows Hubbard to build layers — through patience. Gradual expansion of space fills more than the surface of the panel on which she works — it encompasses the air in a super-subtle time-piece. These scapes consist of tense layers that host duels between landscape and mindscape. They battle for memory and oblivion and bounce between past, present and future. Hubbard states in her own words, “My work examines the mysterious pull of time and memory by reinvigorating old world processes and integrating them with contemporary art-making methods and materials.” Through the material that is of utmost importance to Hubbard, she is as much a diligent craftswoman as she is a thoughtful storyteller as artist.

Hubbard’s stories unfold on boards within layers of plaster and pigment. Short distances may as well be enormous as their impact is exponential. Images play mostly to the land; misty, foggy, soft and silent places of

peace or meditation. But these landscapes begin to shift to mindscapes and dreamscapes as they absorb the viewer. A powerful push-pull can be felt as if the viewer is caught in the breath of a single piece, forced into its lungs, then quickly exhaled. Hubbard achieves this magical trance through her own rigor and meditative practice in the studio. These pieces hover in space and time, and Hubbard politely asks the viewer to trust that they too can float somewhere in this space. More recent pieces, including *Latitude 2* and *Wuthering*, both of which Hubbard completed in 2014, implement a vertical band on the left. By cutting through the picture plane, Hubbard creates a dual image almost like a diptych, and imposes new distance directly on an already established space, which poses the question of which came first. Though we may eventually come to a conclusion the answer is not the important part, as the acknowledgment and placement of oneself into these spaces is the true test for the viewer. We must exhale as we are exhaled from the piece, and accept the distance to which we stand in front, behind, or inside each.

With a similar discipline and patience, Anna Freeman Bentley more clearly seems to render interior spaces with layers of paint. Though there is more intention of interiors, this does not prevent the imagery, or the viewer, from shifting in and out of any particular direction. Like Hubbard, Freeman Bentley's works are open spaces. They pulsate back and forth, from interior to even more interior and from exterior to even more exterior. The works play back and forth in the viewers imagination, prompting varied vantage points in order to take the whole picture in. Freeman Bentley eloquently refers to her paintings as, "Spaces imbued with the tension of simultaneous extremes — empty and full, interior and exterior, lost and found, surface and depth — resonate with longing. By depicting spaces that display an obvious lack or where a change of function has taken place, my painting evokes a longing that may be personal or universal; a



Freeman Bentley, *Build up*, 2013

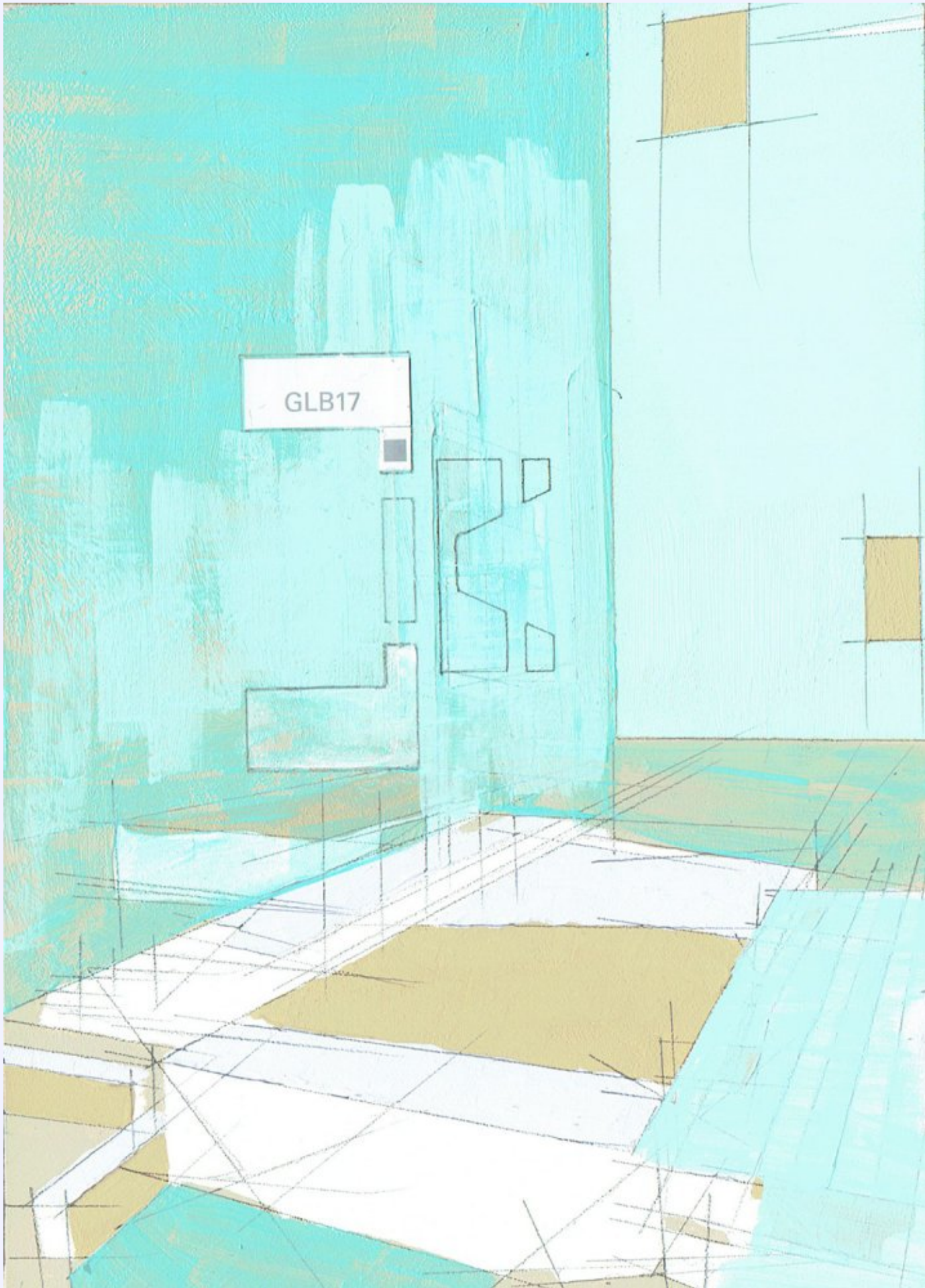


Freeman Bentley, *Orientation*, 2014

deep human desire for permanence in a world that shows signs of decay and wear.” As Freeman Bentley examines and scrutinizes her surroundings, she invites the viewer to do the same.

The aptly titled, *Orientation*, 2014, runs through a series of reflections — windows and reflective surfaces — looking outside from inside, or perhaps from inside to out. Delicate handling of the surface is precise yet seemingly playful. Freeman Bentley meanders back and forth from plane to plane like a skilled ice skater, barely touching the surface, and landing every jump. *Build up*, 2013 has a similar sense about it, as landscape glides over landscape over cityscape within a collaged metropolis. Again, the poise with which brush dances over surface brings this viewer to his feet as he seeks the rhythm to the score of in-between spaces. These pieces ask as much of themselves as they do the viewer. We are on a ledge wanting to take another step in order to find the next place to look. That last step may hold the answer, but likely, it will throw the viewer off to a new space entirely. As we begin to trust the work in front of us, we must also begin to trust our own instincts and decisions.

Whether walking through an interior or calculating it from above, Kariann Fuqua uses architectural references to layer imagery within strata of networked space, plotting, building and laying an intricate landscape. Her earlier, more sparse works, (*Vol 7 series*, 2009) layer color, line and form into intricate spaces onto a prominent white page. Fuqua remarks, “By combining various architectural references, and the negative space in and around them, I am creating a newly constructed edifice. This new architectural landscape is a disorienting amalgamation of the built environment and a renegotiation of our understanding of spatial relationships ... Layering imagery — whether with paint or drawing material — allows me to destabilize the viewer’s preconceived notion of



place. Through my exploration of materials with paint and color, I am establishing a dialogue about place and our consistently fluctuating positions in it." These newly-layered places become start and finish points for the viewer. One can meander throughout each piece, entering new places and discovering something extraordinary at every turn. We may clearly enter a building at one entry point, only to be left somewhere deep in the woods at the blink of an eye. This tension along with the forceful white page evokes double-takes and feelings of familiarity in the unfamiliar.

The more recent works take this process further. Leaving the white page for soft contrasting colors, Fuqua creates a thicker air for us to breath. The spaces are still open, but rather than a variant to be placed behind a corner, she moves it to a new plane directly in front of the viewer. In plain sight, Fuqua plays with a thickness (and thinness) of air on the page much like Hubbard does with the physicality of plaster. Within these newer spaces it is more difficult to distinguish interior from exterior. They may remain as one for a longer period of time, only to eventually slide back to their opposites, tumbling the viewer, as if down a grassy hill, or pushed along by a forceful gust of wind. *In The in-between (GLB17)*, 2014, Fuqua presents us with several planes on which to stand. There is a wall of light-blue in the distance to the right, but more intriguing is the softer, lighter air-wall-space that hovers in front of that back space. The brushy-moist air feels like a fog about to lift, but the density of unseen action behind it is exhilarating. We must move to the back for further discovery. Fuqua's spaces have become more reliant on the memory of what we have just seen, and in doing so, she has successfully dragged us out of our our cynicism of the ordinary and provided us with an air so nutritious it keeps us active within the spaces for longer periods of time. It is as if Fuqua has instilled us with patience by offering us new and impossible notions of

OPPOSITE: Fuqua, *The In Between (GLB17)*, 2014



ourselves.

Taking physical space one step further, Ashley Rich ever so subtly takes us off the page and into the world of relief sculptured paintings and drawings. This shift from two to three dimensions automatically creates a tension — a spacial shift that coincides with the conversation of interior and exterior. These structures intuitively create the space of exterior versus interior, offering only slight hints here and there as to what may be inside. *Untitled*, 2014 and *Stickers 2*, 2013 both present forms on the surface. *Untitled*'s less formal and rugged approach offers some space to breathe, a chance to fill in the blanks. There are more hints as to what lies within the thick plaster walls. *Stickers 2*, though more formal and exact, still offers possibility within space, but in a tighter, more confined way. The impressions laid on the striped surface create soft channels and crevices. I am again reminded of the thin plaster surfaces of Nancy Hubbard's work, but Rich brings these layers to a new a determined actual and tangible depth. The vales and inverted summits hold endless minutiae. We become specks of dust on the surface. Each imprint falls, as if placed systemically, connected in some varied and random way — a map through the material and quite possibly onto the other side.

Rich's focus in the studio deals directly with tension between surface and space. He states, "The visual stimulation that resides on the works' physical facade emerges from a superficial detachment to its influences in modernist architecture and ornamentation ... (T)he work aims to focus on the point where the two-dimensional transforms into the three-dimensional. These elements develop into an interplay between the rational and the intuitive helping to reflect a fragmented vision of urban abstraction." This very interplay keeps the objects vibrating. As we move from space to space, each piece moves with us, embarking on a long

OPPOSITE: Rich, *Untitled*, 2014



journey through history and delving into a vast future of discovery and promise. Rich takes our hands while presenting familiar materials in the most unfamiliar ways. He managed to transform material much like he transforms the spaces in which the material resides. And he does not stop there. Additional interaction happens as a function of the physical placement of objects within a space and in relation to one another. Rich too is a storyteller, leading us from chapter to chapter of an engrossing tale. Only after some time, perhaps even after we leave the work, we discover we are the protagonists.

The artists in this exhibit deal with materials and space as a way of activating the physical, mental and emotional spaces of each viewer. As we approach, we find ourselves floating between places: interior, exterior; near, far; in air, under water; in past, in future. The constant push-pull tension these artists create bring all moments to pause and ask the viewer to contribute to the discussion. As viewers, we contribute by engaging with the work and with ourselves. We are lucky to be surrounded by the generosity of these four artists. They host conversation through their practices. Art does not stop once the piece is hung on the wall, or sold on the secondary market for a profit. Art is about persistence and continuation. Without the brave practices of artists and contributions of viewers, we might as well be living in a vacuum.

Perhaps Agnes Martin said it best,

"My interest is in experience that is wordless and silent, and in the fact that this experience can be expressed for me in art work which is also wordless and silent. It is really wonderful to contemplate the experience and the works ...

(W)ith regard to the inner life of each of us it may be of great

OPPOSITE: Rich, *Stickers 2*, 2013

significance If we can perceive ourselves in the work — not the work but ourselves when viewing the work then the work is important. If we can know our response, see in ourselves what we have received from a work, that is the way to understanding of truth and all beauty.

We cannot understand the process of life — that is everything that happens to everyone. But we can know the truth by seeing ourselves, by seeing the response to the work in ourselves.”⁰²

As viewers, we absorb each new art experience and make it our own. We do this not to impose our own beliefs onto a piece, but to truly converse with a piece and find ourselves within it. As David Ignow wrote, “I should be content / to look at a mountain / for what it is / and not as a comment / on my life.”⁰² This is what Agnes Martin implies: to truly know ourselves is to truly know our world, for we provide the lenses through which we may apprehend the world. To know ourselves, we must know our world. The only way to do that is to shift our perspectives, thus increasing our awareness of our surroundings, and ultimately, of ourselves. Outside and in, we are active and participatory. In this activity we must remain honest and open.

notes:

01. Kabir, version by Robert Bly; Robert Bly, ed. “THE CLAY JUG.” /News of the Universe/. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. 1980. p.272

02. Von Dieter Schwarz, Herausgegeben, ed. Agnes Martin Writings. Ostfildern: Cantz, 1991. print., page 89.

03. David Ignow quote | Robert Bly, ed. /News of the Universe/. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. 1980. p.123

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