JENNIFER BOLANDE

Jennifer Bolande (b. 1957, Cleveland, OH) has had solo exhibitions of her work at institutions and galleries around the world including Kunstraum, Munich, DE; MoMA PS1, New York, NY; Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, CH; Margo Leavin, Los Angeles, CA; Galerie Sophia Ungers, Cologne, DE; Urbi & Orbi, Paris, FR; Nordanstad-Skarstedt, Stockholm, SE; INOVA, Milwaukee, WI; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA and the Luckman Gallery at California State University, Los Angeles, CA. Bolande was recently included in museum exhibitions such as Pictures and After, MAMCO, Geneva, CH; *Drawing Down the Moon*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; *Readymades Are For Everyone*, Swiss Institute, New York, NY; *Brand New: Art and Commodity in the 1980s*, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; *Mixed Use Manhattan*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, ES; *Don't Look Back; The 1990s at MOCA*, Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles, CA; and *This Will Have Been, Art Love and Politics in the 1980's*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, which traveled to Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, and ICA, Boston, MA. Additionally her work was included in *Living Inside the Grid*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY and *The Photogenic*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA. Bolande's work is included in the permanent collection of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, FR; FRAC Corsica, Hause-Corte, FR; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; MAMCO, Geneva, CH; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL; Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, SE; MOCA, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA. She is professor emerita of New Genres in the Department of Art at UCLA, and lives and works in Joshua Tree, CA.

Bob Nickas
January 2024

The Best of 2023, The Worst of 2023 — Bob Nickas

JENNIFER BOLANDE, *Persistence of Vision*, Magenta Plains, New York.
May 4–June 17

One of the most perceptive/intuitive eyes out there, finding visual correspondence and jokes, mystery and wonder in seemingly mundane moments, situations both staged and happened upon, or an orchestration of happenstance, engaging in a poetics of the everyday. How does she do it, seemingly without doing anything at all? Almost forty years on, hers is an undeniable power of observation that delights in how objects, light and shadows align to perform—windows as mirrors, mirrors as spatial displacement, a luminous pile of ice on dappled green grass (she lives in the Mojave Desert). For Bolande, this is by now second nature, finely-tuned. She does what artists in their generosity have always done, and it's why we need them: they reveal something we hadn't noticed, or that we hadn't seen in quite the same way before. Funny how the world we thought we knew is so effortlessly transformed.

Brooklyn Rail
June 7, 2023

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

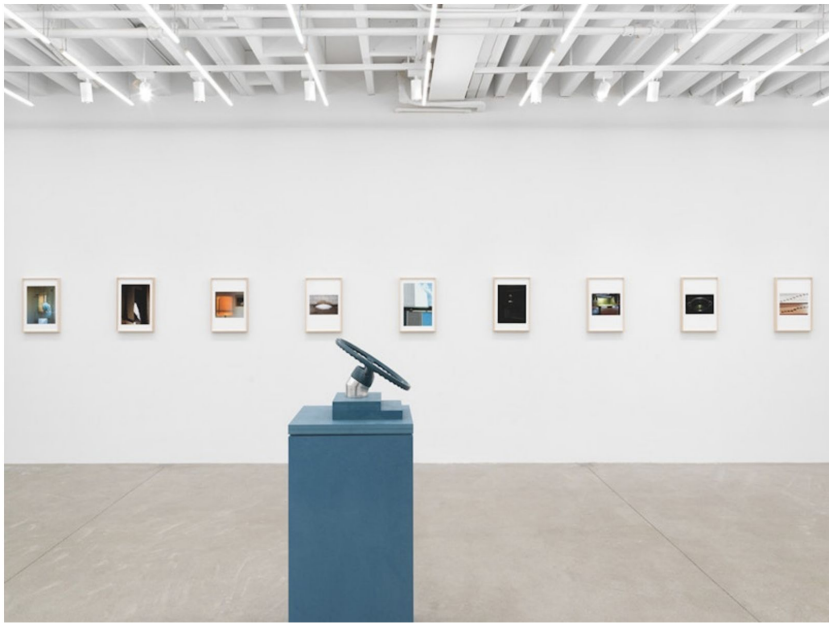
By Tim Maul

"As audience to the world, the objective is to receive as many messages as possible: locating an appropriate rhythm, distance, and angle. Certain things only make sense at this moment, from this angle, others can only be addressed once they have acquired an ambiguous history." —Jennifer Bolande, 1986

Jennifer Bolande, *Mirror Topology*, 2023. Archival pigment print, 19 x 13 inches. Courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

1986! That year the high tide of postmodernism and a vibrant market floated many boats. Locally, the art world cast a decadent eye upon glamorized readymades and cringe-y appropriations of biker culture. Jennifer Bolande's eye, no less decadent, mediated the aftershock of the spectacle originating a complex body of work around, among many other things, splashes of milk, inert Marshall amps, and the neglected furniture in porn movies. The suggestion that a viewer "locate an appropriate rhythm" while an object acquires an "ambiguous history" still swims against today's current of one-look art in the streaming age.

On Magenta Plains's ground floor twenty-eight photographs surround a single, centrally located blue steering wheel mounted on a no-nonsense pedestal of the same color. No junkyard trophy, this is a humble wheel that can be physically turned like in some panoptic arcade game situating you in a virtual "wheelhouse." The same object had been employed earlier in Bolande's *Steering Wheel* (1995) photograph where she compares her own knuckles along the ridged grip. The photographic print for Bolande previously served either as a physical material to manipulate or as a mnemonic site. Here each beautiful photograph is intentional, unpopulated and mostly context free except for the brilliant desert light. Immediate "Fine Art Photography" sources include off-center figures like early William Eggleston, Luigi Ghirri and the Kodachrome urban episodes of Saul Leiter. An upturned glass extends a vaulted dome over postcard *Tokyo Under Glass* (all works 2023); a trio of stones describes a single line of marble which travels across the picture and a nocturnal bird feeder substitutes for a newly discovered transparent deep-water species. Artists with cameras historically gravitate toward places and things that signal or resemble their own art, exemplified by young Robert Rauschenberg's photographs of Rome taken as he improvised his nascent assemblages there in 1953.



Installation view: *Jennifer Bolande: Persistence of Vision*, Magenta Plains, New York, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains, New York. Photo: Object Studies.

Upstairs seven images titled “Monoliths” attend four plaster sculptures, “Drifts,” presented atop highly determined solid pedestals. Each photo is of a single tissue/kleenex promoted to the perpetual “next,” a monolith certainly but also a cartoon ghost or witness to some occult ritual. Bolande’s art has always summoned the meta, so as portraiture a “facial” tissue may offer a surface receptive to a fleeting reproduction albeit in a Shroud of Turin sort of way. As “icebergs,” the handmade objects shift between the ominous and tragic, but I also recognize a Cubist citadel, Gibraltar (logo for Prudential) and cliffs of chalk, a sentimental sign of home for some crossing the channel. Like an object in a dream or a set in an amateur theater, these generalized formations have yet to acquire an ambiguous history.

Bolande’s oeuvre is singularly resistant to the art fair photogenic and, like Arte Povera (Marisa Merz especially), it requires the physical encounter. My own visit(s) involved taking iPhone images for reference which, I was startled to discover, transformed the four standing objects into blue elongated Pop-y tissue boxes with their contents ready and waiting. In other casual shots the “Monoliths” operate as mirrors, each playing reflective host to out-of-register “Drifts.”

The sequencing of the archival pigment prints allows for many inclusions of water in all its forms which I associate with the unconscious nostalgia for analog photography. Here are two captures of ice cubes (white cubes?), clouds, droplets, filled tubs and milky submerged forks. Iggy Pop made a mysterious claim about being an “ice machine” in the droning “Nightclubbing” and Bolande includes an unsettling image of one, a Judd-like configuration, prismatic visor and all. Nothing could be sunnier than the Magritte-ian *Window with Cloud* and more modernist than *Lines in the Sand* an observation of linear alignments temporarily linking parched earth to sky. Bolande’s attraction to maps as malleable pictorialized space continues in *Mirror Topology* where an angled bathroom mirror reflects a topological mountain range, our planet’s erupting “skin.”

Jennifer Bolande’s earliest assemblage and important photo objects anticipated the abject nineties and later tendencies including the “archival impulse” and “affect theory” et al. The exhibition’s title *Persistence of Vision* may be interpreted as either an attitude or a promise.

Jennifer Bolande, *Drift 3*, 2023. Plaster, wood, wire mesh on blue pigmented high-density composite plinth and base, overall: 56 1/2 x 20 x 20 inches, sculpture: 12 x 16 x 6 1/4 inches, plinth: 1 1/2 x 20 x 20 inches, base: 43 x 20 x 20 inches. Courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains, New York. Photo: Object Studies.

The New York Times
April 15, 2020

The New York Times

Jennifer Bolande

Through May 31. Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, 917-388-2464; magentaplains.com.

Jennifer Bolande's "Image Tomb (with skeletons)," from 2014, in the exhibition "The Composition of Decomposition." Jennifer Bolande and Magenta Plains; Object Studies

In "Image Tomb," a stack of New York Times newspapers is "excavated" with a rectangular hole to reveal a photograph. Jennifer Bolande and Magenta Plains; Object Studies

Jennifer Bolande's "The Composition of Decomposition" at Magenta Plains is centered on an installation, "Image Tomb (with skeletons)," in which a stack of newspapers — issues of The New York Times, dating from 2013 to 2015 — is "excavated" with a rectangular hole to reveal a photograph about halfway down. This photo shows half a dozen exhumed skeletons, 14th-century victims of a London plague. It's a powerful idea: On the one hand, it's heady, almost exhilarating, to be reminded that the majestic procession of history comprises nothing but days like today. On the other hand, being part of history can also be horrifying, when it means that medieval London is still just down the block.

Of course, whether you're using the virtual showroom or just the gallery's feed of still images, looking at this piece online is hardly the same as looking in real life. Without the physical presence of the yellowing newspapers, this insight into the nature of time and memory just looks facile. But in a way, that only makes the show even more suited to the moment.

Ms. Bolande's subject, generally speaking, is the way that the information we take in itself constitutes the world we inhabit. And right now, as we depend on the internet more than ever for our social and aesthetic needs, looking at her thoughtful, exactingly rendered show through a flickering, four-color computer screen is positively chilling.

WILL HEINRICH

KEN LUM

Ken Lum (b. 1956, Vancouver, CA) has an extensive art exhibition record that includes Documenta 11, the Venice Biennale, Sao Paolo Biennial, Shanghai Biennale, Carnegie Triennial, Sydney Biennale, Liverpool Biennial, Gwangju Biennale and the Whitney Biennial. Solo exhibitions include *Scotiabank Photography Award: Ken Lum* at The Image Centre in Toronto, CA; Ken Lum at Magenta Plains, New York, NY; *Death and Furniture* at the Remai Modern, Saskatoon, CA and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, CA, among many others. In 2023, Lum was the recipient of the 13th annual Scotiabank Photography Award and the subject of a published book distributed worldwide by Steidl. Lum's work is included in permanent collections of Tate, London, UK; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, SE; RISD Museum, Rhode Island, RI; Museum moderner Kunst stiftung ludwig, Vienna, AT; Helga de Alvear Collection, Madrid, ES; Musée d'art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, CH; Lilac Milne, Vancouver, CA; FRAC Nord Pas de Calais, Dunkirk, FR; Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea, Santiago de Compostela, ES; FRAC Haute Normandie, Rouen, FR; BMO Collection, Toronto, CA; Arco Foundation Collection, Madrid, ES; M+ Museum of Visual Culture, Hong Kong, HK; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, CA; Fundación AMMA Amparo y Manuel, Mexico City, MX; Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, CA; Joanneumsviertel Neue Galerie, Graz, AT; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, CA; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich, DE; Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, CH; Walter A Bechtler Foundation, Zurich, CH; Museum Boijmans van-Beuningen, Rotterdam, NL; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, NL; Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, NL; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal, CA; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo De Huarte, Navarro, ES; Laumeier Sculpture Park, St Louis, US; Long March Space, Beijing, CN; FRAC Ile de France, le Plateau, Paris, FR; Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing, CN; RBC Collection, Toronto, CA. A longtime professor, he currently is the Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design in Philadelphia, where he lives and works.

Designlines Magazine
July 3, 2024

designlines

Artist Ken Lum Captures the Dizziness of Urban Life

We think of cities as places where people come together. The truth is more complicated

To get from the subway to the Ken Lum exhibition at The Image Centre, you must pass through Yonge-Dundas Square, always a destabilizing experience. You're on a hot, treeless expanse of concrete. People come at you from all directions. You can't quite tell where the square stops and the street begins. A guy with a megaphone is preaching the End Times Gospel. There are so many digital ads competing for your attention that you feel like you're walking inside the internet. Nothing coheres. You lose yourself in space and time. A billboard tells you that Janet Jackson is touring *Together Again*, an album from the '90s, with Nelly, a rapper from the early 2000s.

Right now, the square is at the centre of a controversy. The city has moved to rename it Sankofa Square—*sankofa* being a Twi word from the Akan Tribe of Ghana, evoking the importance of historical memory. The change is meant to replace Henry Dundas, the powerful Enlightenment-era Scottish politician who prolonged the abolition of the slave trade. Jennifer Dundas, a retired Crown prosecutor and distant relative of Lord Dundas, is furious. She claims her family's legacy is being distorted. I have no idea if her case has merit, but after a few minutes in the Yonge-Dundas hellscape, I'm convinced that her anger is misplaced. If the City had really wanted to insult the Dundas Clan, they would have left the name of the square as is.

Ken Lum, *Thanh Thuy Vu, Jänner, Gabi Petrikovic, Februar, Hamila De Souza, März, Manfred Klumpp*, April, from the series *Schnitzel Company*, 2004-2023. Courtesy of Magenta Plains Gallery, New York, Royale Projects, Los Angeles.

I'll say this for Younge-Dundas, though: it makes for a good pre-show to the Lum exhibition, which is all about the strangeness of urban life. Lum, the winner of this year's Scotiabank Photography Award, is currently based in Philadelphia, although he came up in Vancouver as a leading member of the city's vaunted photo-conceptualist cohort—artists who work with cameras but traffic mainly in ideas and provocations. I've always thought of Lum as an anthropologist with a taste for the absurd. But the former surely implies the latter. To depict humans in the world today is to be a surrealist, almost by definition.

For the series *Schnitzel Company* (2004 / 2023), a darkly funny work that opens the exhibition, Lum invented a German fast food chain. He then hired actors to pose for twelve portraits, each depicting a Schnitzel Company employee of the month. The images—in which the characters appear in bright yellow work jerseys and tacky Schnitzel Company hats—send up the indignities of late capitalism, which demands not only that people accept lousy work for lousy pay but also that they show gratitude for the arrangement. The guy in the top right corner caught my attention—a dorky dude, improbably named Manfred Klumpp, with a smile that evokes Joaquin Phoenix in *Joker*. It's the look of a man who's about to break. Klumpp was employee-of-the-month in April. One wonders what he did in May and June.

Ken Lum, *Skateboarder* (detail), from the series *World Portrait*, 1991, acrylic on canvas with silk screen prints. Collection of Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.

The second room houses the *World Portrait* series (1991), six white canvasses on which Lum has silkscreened photographs of various urban "types"—women with shopping bags, parents with kids. A city, Lum suggests, is a wildly different entity to its different inhabitants. It is an obstacle course to skateboarders who ollie down its stairways, a *smellscape* to dogs who sniff the concrete, a realm of possibility to folks who wait on street corners for friends or dates, and a zone of privation to unhoused people who dumpster dive for food. Downtown, we're physically close. But the experiential gap that separates us is more like a chasm.

Ken Lum, *Lau Hoi Ting Recalls a Poem of Her Youth*, from the series *Image/Repeated Text*, 1994/2023, powder coated aluminum with vinyl. Courtesy of Magenta Plains Gallery, New York/Royale Projects, Los Angeles.

One feels this sense of dislocation most acutely in the third and final room, which houses six panels from the *Portrait / Repeated Text* series (1994 / 2023)—large-format diptychs with photographs on the left side and chunky wall text on the right. The pieces don't fit together. You see an image of a standing woman and a man in a wheelchair looking out over a concrete fence ("Please forgive me. I sometimes get frustrated"). Or another of a deshelled, balding man sitting calmly by a roadway ("I'm not stupid. I'm not fucking stupid. You're stupid.")

Do words mean anything? Do images? The room—and really, the entire exhibition—feels like a quieter version of Yonge-Dundas. It's lively, disorienting, and vaguely sinister. Is there a deity who presides over this urban milieu? Maybe it's Manfred Klumpp, looking down at us with a smile that isn't a smile at all.

Artforum
November 2022

ARTFORUM

REVIEWS TORONTO

KEN LUM

Joni Low on the art of Ken Lum

Art Gallery of Ontario

By Joni Low

Curated by Michelle Jacques, Johan Lundh, and Xiaoyu Weng

WE LIVE IN A TIME of furniture without memories. Toni Morrison, in her novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970), describes this as "certainly no memories to be cherished." Silent witnesses, our furnishings can evoke inarticulable yet visceral reactions: Take the sofa that arrived damaged, which one still pays for monthly, whose "joylessness stank," to borrow Morrison's words, is "pervading everything." This object bears haunted traces of the indescribable circumstances surrounding our condition. Perhaps the truths of our existence lie furtively between the sad sunken couch and the overarching social architecture of racial capitalism, which whispers how and why dreams die.

Ken Lum's exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, "Death and Furniture," begins with these philosophical certainties, only to unravel them. Through his "Furniture Sculptures," 1978–, a series of mirror works and image-text pieces, Lum deftly conjures the larger social contexts and feelings that exceed language and representation. The show—which was curated by Michelle Jacques and Johan Lundh for the Remai Modern in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, before coming to Toronto; the current iteration has been organized by AGO's Xiaoyu Weng—presents a focused selection of Lum's oeuvre from the past forty years, connecting recurrent threads within the artist's practice: mortality, the instabilities of identity, and difference, filtered through the artist's trademark acerbic humor.

View of "Ken Lum: Death and Furniture," 2022–23. Floor: *Untitled Furniture Sculpture*, 1978–. From the series "Furniture Sculptures," 1978–. Walls: Works from the series "Photo-Mirrors," 1998.

A row of upturned gray-fabric couches cuts solemnly across a gallery like tombstones. Flanking them is "Time. And Again.," 2021, a set of Lum's repeated-text billboards, updated to address the anxieties exacerbated by our elongated pandemic and our cyclical "death while living." The format's tensions oscillate between what is seen and what is said, enacting our subjective interpretations to fill narrative gaps. The subjects portrayed are from diverse backgrounds: a young contract laborer waiting for their next gig, a freshly unemployed elder with a dog, parents struggling with the collapse of work-life boundaries at home. The billboard *I know I'm lucky. I have a job*, 2021, juxtaposes a picture of a masked, middle-aged white woman delivering online orders with the deadpan mantra I KNOW I'M LUCKY. I HAVE A JOB. I KNOW I'M LUCKY, I'M SO LUCKY. TO HAVE A JOB. The work's jarring red letters on a blue background aggravate. Ironically, the delivery box's logo reads FREE TO BE, the hollow slogan echoing the false promises of late-capitalist consumerism.

Ken Lum, *What am I going to do with my kids while I work*, 2021, ink-jet print, 78 × 102″.

With so much death surrounding us, how, and whom, do we commemorate? Lum's "Necrology Series," 2016–17, a group of quasi-fictional obituaries designed in a florid nineteenth-century style, monumentalizes the lives of working-class people doomed by racial and global capitalism. The works' overblown, eclectic typography and irregular kerning perform an absurd parody of traditional death notices, honoring the quotidian lives of people struggling to survive with few avenues for change. YASIR KHORSHED, reads one headline that arches dramatically in an Old Western typeface. Below it is a story about a man who fought tirelessly for garment workers' rights, only to die at the age of thirty-four from cancer caused by benzene, an extremely toxic chemical used in the textile industry. *The Most Unfortunate Case of Lucy Chona Santos*, 2016, set in an archaic serif face, recounts how Lucy supported her family in Manila by gleaning valuable objects from garbage, only to be sentenced to death for smuggling heroin after being tricked by an international drug gang. Indeed, Lum does not allow those who have fallen through the cracks to be forgotten.

Ken Lum, *Mirror Maze with 12 Signs of Depression* (detail), 2002, mirror, wood, Plexiglas, paint, acrylic sheet. Installation view, Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 2022. Photo: Carey Shaw.

In *Mirror Maze with 12 Signs of Depression*, 2002—an installation that deserves mention since it was in the Remai Modern presentation but unfortunately is not included here—we are confronted with ourselves, reflected and fragmented ad infinitum, with no clear exits. Thoughts caused by clinical depression—LIFE IS NOT WORTH LIVING, THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR ME—are etched onto the mirrors, recalling the all-too-familiar hopelessness produced by the pandemic and signaling humanity's wider mental-health malaise. Similar to virtual spaces we've created to try and maintain connection and solidify our existence, *Mirror Maze* presciently warns of the digital realm's disorientations and claustrophobic isolation. As social mirrors, Lum's works map the difficulties of enduring psychological and emotional dead ends. Trapped within these echo chambers, unable to discern illusion from truth, self from other, who are we really projecting to? Could this fragmentation be a death of certain egoistic ideas of what it means to be human, offering another way through?

Hyperallergic
October 18, 2022

HYPERALLERGIC

Ken Lum Holds Up a Mirror to the World

With their sophisticated interplay between image, text, materials, color and driving ideas, Lum's works often have a pronounced emotional impact.

by Gregory Volk
October 18, 2022

Ken Lum, "Anna May Wong" (2021), Canon LED curable inks, mirror, aluminum, 54 x 54 inches (all photography courtesy Matt Grubb, Object Studies)

This is the first solo show in New York in some 10 years for acclaimed Canadian artist, writer, curator, and educator Ken Lum, whose iconic 1989 photo and text work, "Melly Shum Hates Her Job" (not exhibited here), achieved cult status in The Netherlands (and elsewhere) and ultimately inspired a major Rotterdam museum to change its name. The former Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, named after a local street — which itself is named for a virulently colonialist 17th-century Dutch naval offer — is now Kunstinstituut Melly.

With their sophisticated interplay between image, text, materials, color, and driving ideas, Lum's works often have a pronounced emotional impact. That's certainly what has happened in Rotterdam. Spanning photography, sculpture, text, and photo-text pieces, his new exhibition features nine works from four series, making this an impressive survey show in miniature. In one room, two digital prints from the series *Time. And Again* employ a similar strategy as "Melly," but updated for this raw pandemic era.

As a Black woman gently pushes a small child on a swing, she turns her face toward something in the distance — a commonplace image. The text on the right is jarring: "They have no idea how much I work. They have no idea how hard I work. They have no idea what I do."

The word "they" is ambiguous; maybe other unseen people near this urban playground, neighbors or passing strangers, insensitive or hostile manageme at her place of employment, maybe a whole white-dominated culture that consistently denigrates or ignores Black labor and achievements. Lum typica leaves much room for viewers to make their own insights and connections.

"I Lost My Job" (2021) is an unremarkable image of a middle-aged white mar standing with his dog in an urban park. The rhythmic, repetitive, vividly colored text — "I lost my job. What am I going to do? "I lost my job. What ar going to do?? What am I going to do?" — succinctly encapsulates the despair and vulnerability of joblessness and economic upheaval. Both works exude palpable empathy.

Also here are two fictive yet plausible large obituaries from the *Necrology* series. In the typographical style and cadences of 18th- and 19th-century frontispieces, they announce the life and death of an otherwise obscure Camden, New Jersey, clerk-typist/keypunch operator and a woman from the Manila slums who was lured into drug smuggling by a "phony employment recruiter" and ultimately executed in Indonesia by firing squad. Lum invests them with historical drama and grandeur.

In the center of the other exhibition space is a square sculpture formed from inward-facing plush purple sectional furniture ("Purple Square," 2021); it's from Lum's *Furniture Series* (1978-ongoing). This minimalist sculpture consists of mass-produced items. It could easily seem a wry indictment of consumerist culture, until one considers that for many people in poverty (including Lum's family when he was young) this is aspirational furniture signals the likely unattainable good life: the seats cannot be accessed without climbing over their tops.

Four works from Lum's *Photo-Mirrors II* series are arrayed around the room, each on its own wall and featuring a photograph printed on a glass mirror mounted on aluminum. These works extend the artist's *Photo-Mirrors* series, which he began in 1997, and which include viewers and inspire them to question their own identities and biases.

An undulating, grassy plain, with a few protruding shrubs, fills the bottom quarter of "Little Big Horn" (2021); it's an image straight from the American heartland. In the distance is a small copse atop a modest hill, along with a barely visible building. Colors are subtle, yet pronounced: dark and light green, tawny yellow, the gray-black of elongated shadows. Materiality is also pronounced: grass, tufts, the land's slopes and protrusions, the stalwart yet vulnerable trees.

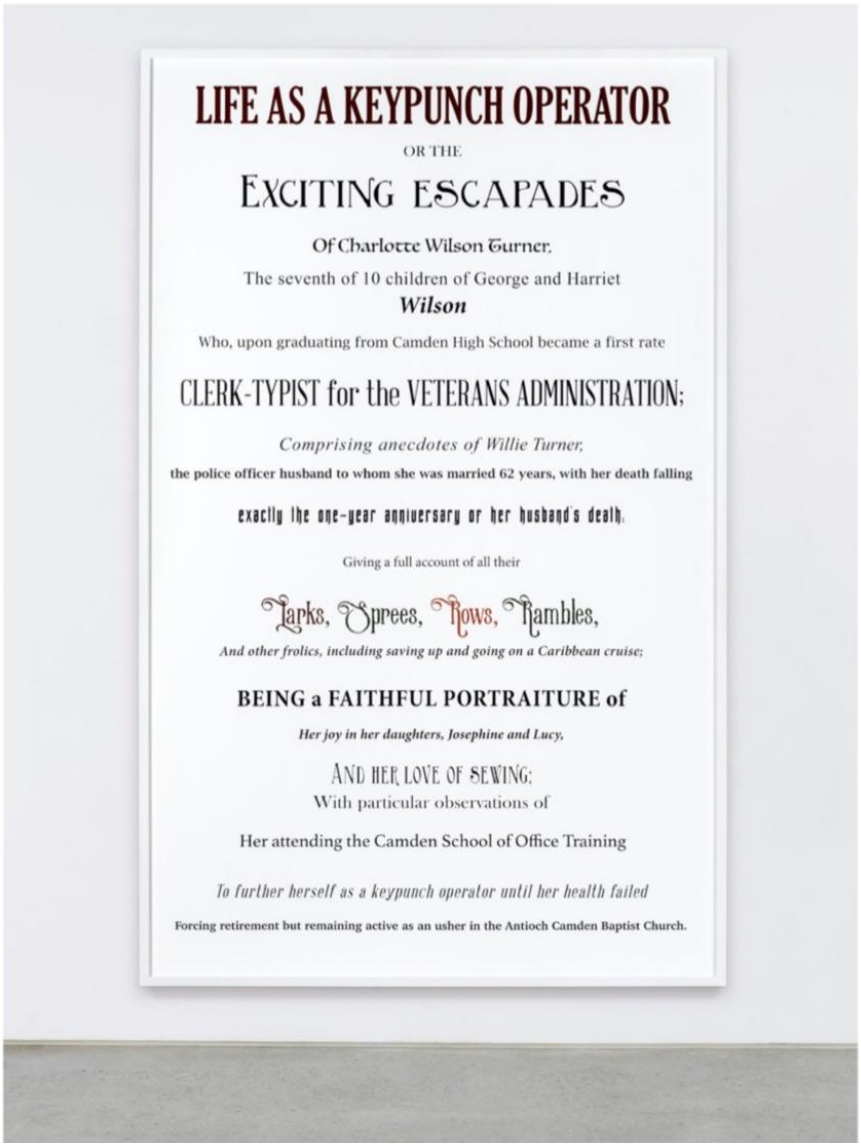
Little Bighorn, in southern Montana, is where in 1876 Lakota Sioux and Cheyenne warriors, led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, warred with and annihilated the invading US Army. It's not their (brief) triumph that has been celebrated in the United States, but instead the "heroic" defeat of the colonizing US troops, led by General George Armstrong Custer.

Ken Lum, "Main Street, USA" (2021), Canon LED curable inks, mirror, aluminum, 72 x 72 inches

The mirror seems, from some vantage points, like a huge, gray sky filling the top three quarters of the work, but from others reflects the surrounding architecture, other artworks, and — importantly — viewers. On an adjacent wall is the startling and, for me, mesmerizing "Main Street, USA" (2021). Costumed Disney characters — Goofy, Pinocchio, Mickey, Donald — along with a marching band member in a splendid white suit, and others, decontextualized, form an enthusiastic, but unnerving and bereft troupe in a void.

From Vancouver, the child and grandchild of working-class Chinese immigrants, Lum relocated to Philadelphia, where he now chairs the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design. His adopted, hugely conflicted country is approached thoughtfully and obliquely, with hints and suggestions.

Witness the Chinese American woman in a hat, wearing a floral blouse, her expression pensive, her face slightly covered by a gossamer veil ("Anna May Wong," 2021). She exudes smart, sultry movie star glamour and for good reason. Anna May Wong (1905-1961), whose birth name was Wong Liu Tsong, was Hollywood's first Chinese American movie star. Appearing in more than 60 films, she was (unsurprisingly) pigeonholed into stereotypical Asian female roles and moved to Europe, where she could be freer and flourish as an artist.



The mirror works wonders, evoking the silver screen, returning Wong to star status in a fresh context, while her portrait evokes the escalating anti-Asian racism and violence (especially against women) in the United States. Both Wong and Lum are from West Coast Chinese immigrant families, both knew privation and faced racial discrimination, both gravitated to the arts.

"America at Night" (2021), likely a satellite shot of the nocturnal country, shows the familiar shape of the continental US, but isolated on a mirror and without neighbors — no Canada to the north, no Mexico to the south. Populous areas (the East, parts of coastal California, large cities) are ablaze with lights; less populated areas are largely dark. This gorgeous work evinces a profoundly divided country and by extension its skewed, increasingly dangerous political system, which favors white voters and rural states.

A remarkable thing about this exhibition space is how these static works are in constant visual flux, always interacting with one another, because of the mirrors and reflections. As one moves about, Anna May Wong appears in Little Bighorn — a fleeting, visual connection between racism, oppression and violence. The Disney characters loom in front of the nocturnal United States. The US appears to balance — precariously — on the sculpture. Lum includes, and directly challenges, viewers in this welcome, and welcoming, show.

LIZA LACROIX

Liza Lacroix's (b. 1988, Montreal, QC) work has been exhibited at institutions such as Neue Galerie Gladbeck, DE (2024); Le Consortium, Dijon, FR (2024); and K11 Art Mall, Shanghai, CN (2023). She has also exhibited at Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2024, 2022, 2021); Tara Downs, New York, NY (2024); two seven two, Toronto, CA (2024); PEANA, Mexico City, MX and Monterrey, MX (2024, 2018); Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, DE (2023); Zweigstelle, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Rome and Naples, IT (2023; 2022); Albertusstrasse, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, DE (2022); M23, New York, NY (2018); AC Repair, Toronto, CA (2016); and Popps Packing, Hamtramck, MI (2015). Lacroix has participated in artist residency programs in Detroit, London, New Mexico, Oaxaca and Italy. Lacroix has published three books: *Liza Lacroix: The Wrong Man.* (published by Ligature Press, 2022, Edition of 500); *You're Laughing. I love you.* (Published by Galerie Gisela Capitain, 2023, Edition of 500) and most recently, *One. Two. Three. [...] Twenty-Six.* (co-published by Ligature Press and Neue Galerie Gladbeck on the occasion of her solo exhibition, 2024, Edition of 1200). Her work is permanently held in collections such as the Astrup Fearnley Museum Of Modern Art in Oslo, NO; the Elgiz Museum in Istanbul, TK; and the Aïshti Foundation in Beirut, LB. Lacroix lives and works in New York, NY.

Hyperallergic
May 19, 2023

HYPERALLERGIC

A Quiet Crescendo at the Hunter MFA Show

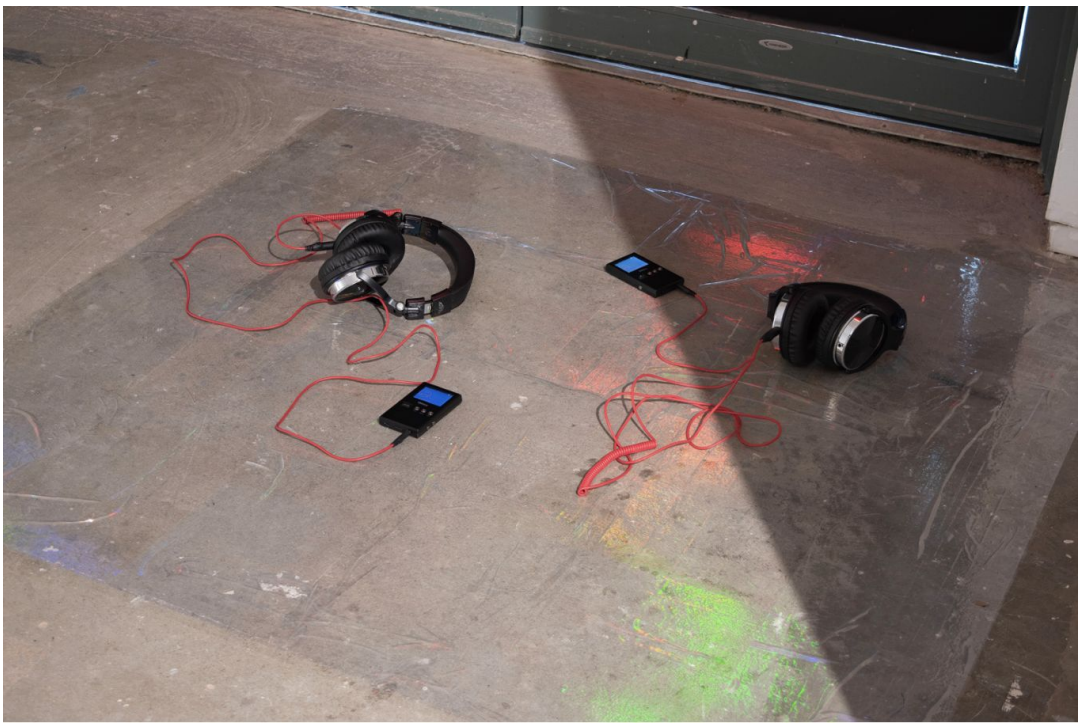
Art

Rhea Nayyar

Worms, A Good Business Model, the second part of Hunter's thesis show, feels like a living, breathing exhibition.

When I first turned up at 205 Hudson Gallery in Tribeca for part two of the Hunter College MFA thesis exhibition, I thought I was in way over my head and simply didn't read enough art theory to decipher what was before me. That anxiety crept up when I passed through the gallery's vestibule as a circular speaker pumped symphonic melodies between two glass doors, and mounted when I stepped into the quiet gallery and felt like I was in a backrooms simulation of a skeletal Bed Bath & Beyond liquidation sale. The exhibition, titled *Worms, A Good Business Model*, felt exceptionally liminal with its sparse attendance at 3pm on a Wednesday coupled with the featured works' stripped-back aesthetics compared to the first part of the show a few weeks ago.

But that breathing room and its accompanying silence conveyed the mutual respect shared between this cohort of five artists whose featured works grappled with the meaning of containment. Through the handy exhibition text and checklist, I learned that the instrumental accost in the vestibule was artist Liza Lacroix's compilation of music collected from famous visual artist biopics, and suddenly everything wasn't so serious anymore. And it really wasn't, as Lacroix told me that the sound installation was inspired by the Getty Center Tram in Los Angeles as well as the waiting line to enter Universal Studios.



Liza Lacroix, "Funeral Song 1-6" (2023), packing tape, MP3 players, headphones, holographic sticker

For this exhibition, Lacroix traded in her paintbrushes and canvases for emotion and intimacy as her mediums through sound work. Across the gallery floors, Lacroix placed several black and red headphones plugged into MP3 players with the same sound composition, "Funeral song 1-6," a lo-fi recording of her singing along to "Let It Loose" by the Rolling Stones — a song connected to a very personal memory — several times in a row. Even with the audio's voicemail-like crunchiness, the privacy of the headphones let me hear every hitch in Lacroix's breath, every wet sniffle, and every crack in her voice over the playback of the song on repeat. I sat on a transparent, holographic square adhered to the gallery floor and listened in full, either stunned by this vulnerability or blissfully unaware of my free will to move from that one spot where I found the MP3 player lying.

What's fascinating about *Worms, A Good Business Model* is that it's a living, breathing exhibition. Things move around, displays shift at the whims of the artists, and sounds reverberate off the viewer and through the gallery. That initial apprehension I felt dissolved when I considered how the featured work behaved much like organs that make up a body — each serving its own function in support of the success of a whole.

Cultured
February 16, 2023

CULTURED

ART

A Mad Dash Around This Year's Felix LA Reveals Domestic Ecstasy

If the annual art fair that runs parallel to Frieze LA is to be trusted as a bellwether, interiors are trending at the 2023 edition, according to *CULTURED* editor-at-large Kat Herriman.

Liza Lacroix, *sits up in bed and opens mouth.*, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains.

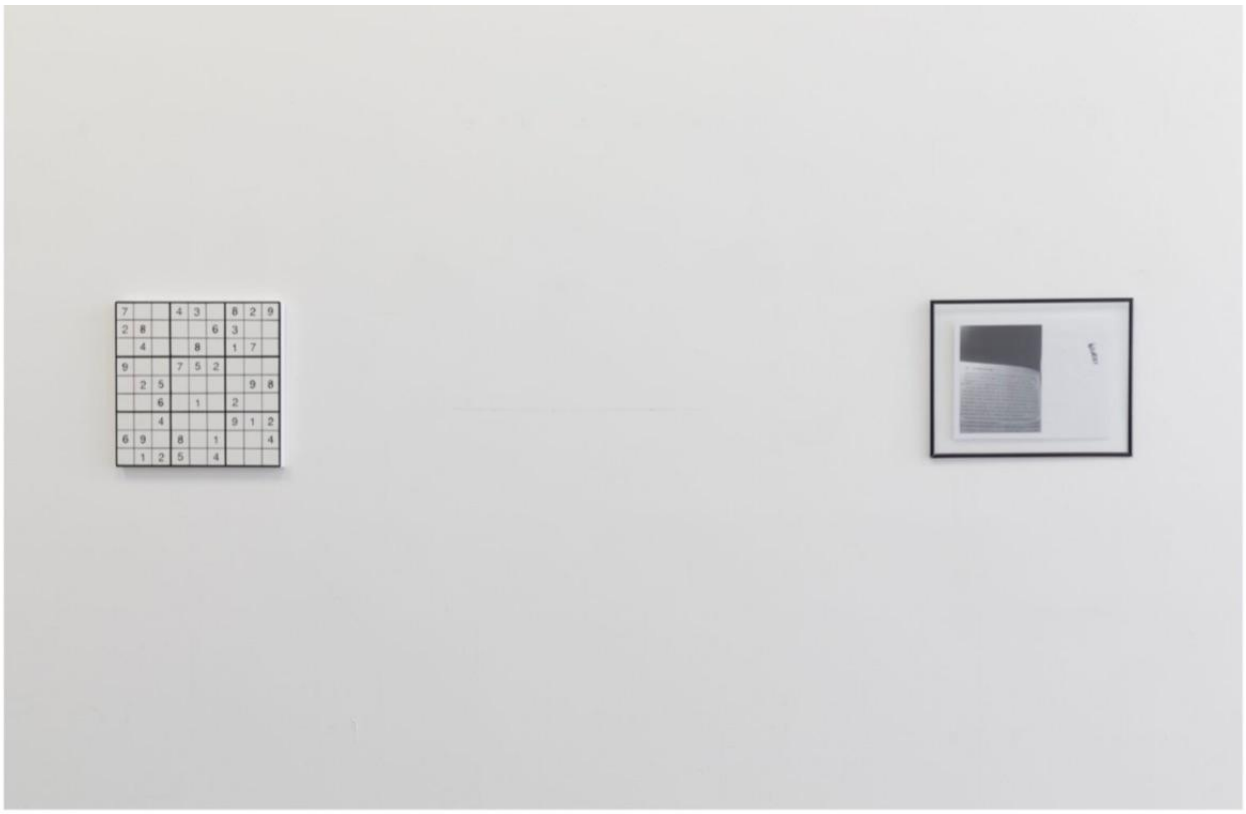
Rent free will stay the suite of works by Liza Lacroix for Magenta Plains. Lacroix's imposing abstractions, under the slightest suggestion, begin to morph into torrid flashes of the familiar. Living somewhere between Charline von Heyl's sallies and Cecily Brown's illegible bedrooms, Lacroix's work builds out an imaginative space large enough to get lost in.

Cultbytes
May 11, 2021

Cultbytes

Liza Lacroix and Reece Cox Puzzle Over Transmediality at Midnight Projects

Anna Mikaela Ekstrand
May 11, 2021

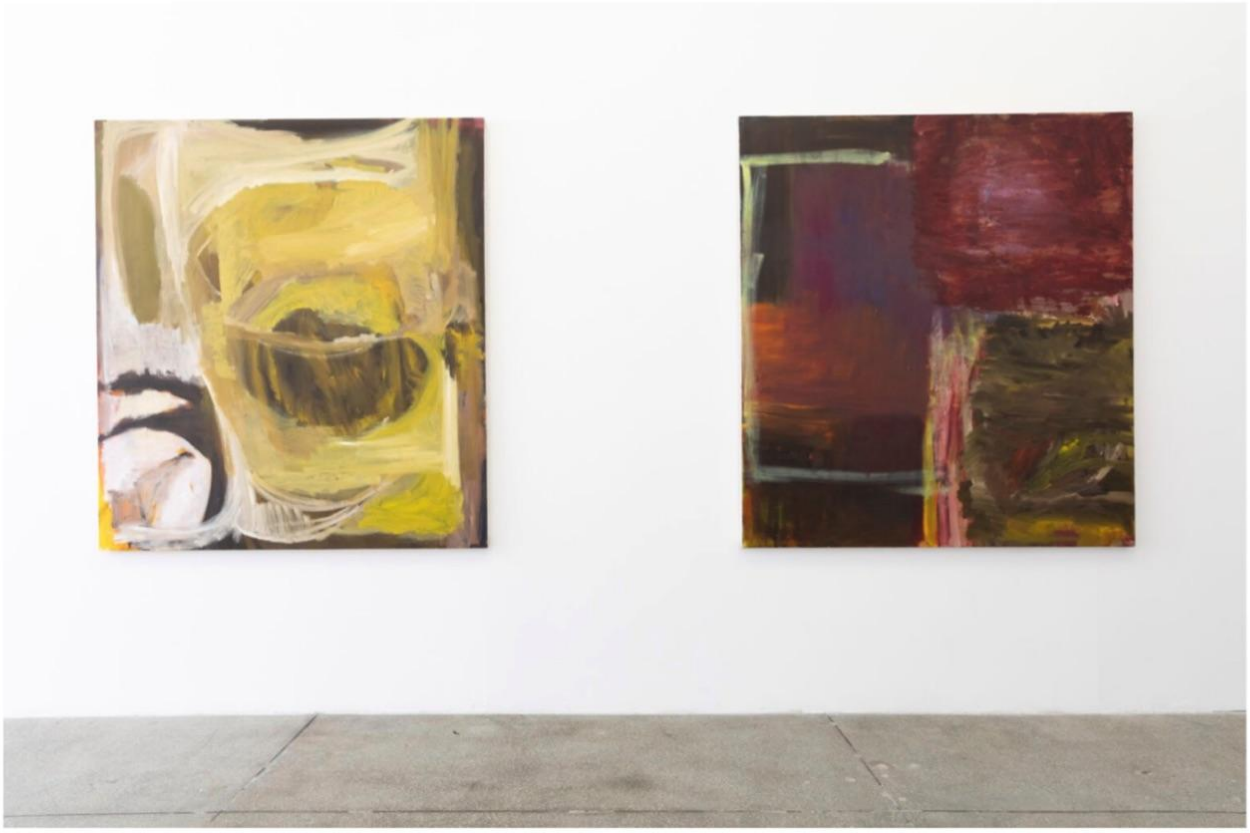


Reece Cox (L) and Liza Lacroix (R) feat. Lode, "a laughing stock or a shocking study of sexual obsession (The medium and the light, Marshall McLuhan)," work on paper, 2021. Photograph courtesy Midnight Projects.

For over a decade, the painter Liza Lacroix and sound artist Reece Cox have been friends, mostly they discuss their studio practice – finding common ground across mediums, but they also share and exchange life events. The itinerant space Midnight Projects second show, "Has This Solved Your Problem of What To Do Next?" presents paintings by both artists, a work from Lacroix's new series based on reworked photocopies of academic text excerpts, and a sound work by Cox. Marked by the pandemic and a balancing act between penetrating legacy and carrying out artistic revolution, the exhibition grapples with *techné*. Igniting discussion of how sensations and experiences can be communicated across mediums it is a timely deconstruction of some of the fragments that fit into the passages of time.

During the pandemic, we have experienced a slow-down in time and, on a global scale, mental health has taken a toll. Daily the New York Times posts a set of three different – easy, medium, and hard – Sudoku puzzles. In the exhibition Cox presents three paintings of the popular Japanese puzzles published in the NYT March 11th, 2020 issue. The date marks the day that the World Health Organization announced COVID-19 a global pandemic. As the virus continues to ravage civilizations, we have all, in our own ways, tried to make sense of the senseless; processing large amounts of conflicting information from the news cycle. Cox piece speaks to the ease in which many of us categorize our days: easy, medium, and hard. Increasingly, for some, becoming harder and harder. The paintings evoke that daunting feeling that we all have; that life is a puzzle too difficult to solve – a feeling that might dissipate as you solve the Sudokus in the gallery space.

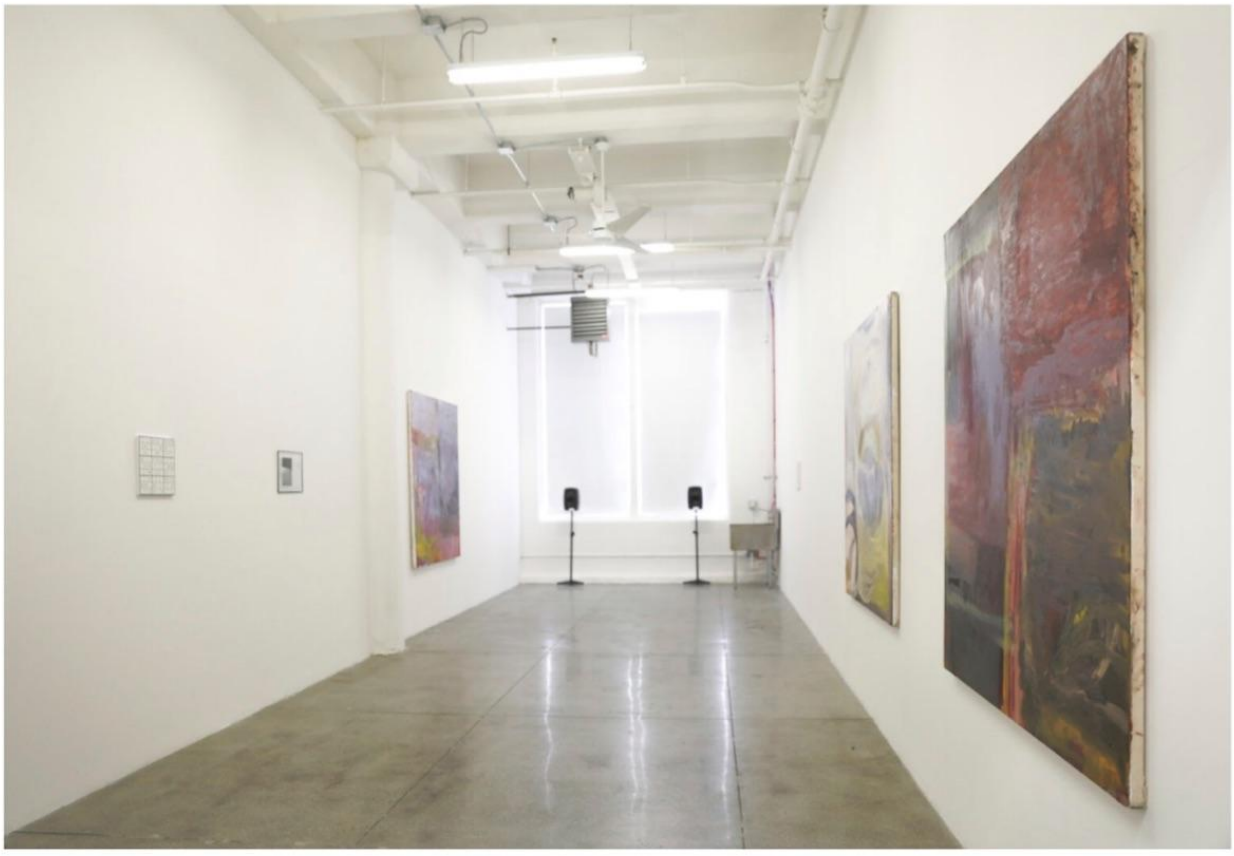
The two artists have been impacted by the pandemic differently, Cox a performing sound artist whose practice is tethered to live performances fueled by tightly packed dancing bodies has changed drastically. Although he has continued to play music live on radio shows and share recordings online he has not been able to play at his regular venues. We have heard our cities change, some sounds disappearing – cars and the late-night dissonance of party-goers, while others, like birdsong, or for those living closer to hospitals, sirens, have become more prominent. In his sound piece “365 Days” Cox examines the sounds he would have played for others if the world were open, snippets of electronic music and sound ebb and flow to the RPM of a heartbeat. Crisp and methodological Cox’s two works represent neatly compartmentalized the experience of collective loss that, albeit at times narrowly, fit within the linearity of time.



Liza Lacroix, ”Man One, Man Two.” (Left), and “Soak,” (Right). Oil on canvas. 2021. Photograph courtesy of Midnight Projects.

Lacroix's work is more energetic, erratic, and humorous, counterbalancing Cox attempts toward structuring, her works instead break boundaries, confuse, and skillfully places the viewer in moments where feelings might conflict. Lacroix works with transferring parts of her emotional life, and fragments of art history onto canvas. The large-scale oil on canvas pictures are both awkward and magnetizing with their odd color pairings and bold use of the picture plane. Art with wit is refreshing in these challenging times. Like jumbled and disorderly musical notes, she uses signifiers – colors, shapes – to create abstract works in which some parts or moments on the canvas bear resemblance to something recognizable, but are hard to pinpoint. The artist cites Cy Twombly, George Baselitz, and Lutz Bacher as a source of inspiration for this series. Lacroix's works were born based on a deep-seated knowledge of the history of painting and conflicting acts of reliance, disregard, and revolt to it.

Through small gestures Lacroix experiments by veering off track from what is traditionally expected from the medium of painting; evoking the human body and its fluids, movement, and sensations of pleasure and pain. An annotated quote by the Canadian philosopher and avant-gardist media theorist Marshall McLuhan further drives home the exhibitions multi- and transmedial angle; "a laughing stock or a shocking study of sexual obsession (The medium and the light, Marshall McLuhan)" is based on a picture sent over text message to Lacroix from Canadian artist Alli Melanson. Together the artists have an attribution system: Lode. As a feminist act of referencing they add 'Lode' to a works' title when it incorporates an idea or element shared or originated by the other. Nodding to Jean-Michel Basquiat and Jennifer Stein's first Xerox series, that unmasks certain colonizing aspects of art historical discourse, Lacroix side-steps or alludes to exploitation by muscularly inserting herself into the McLuhan's writing by reworking the printed page: photographing, photocopying, enlarging, and annotating – a quote has been circled and the word "whore" is scribbled.



Installation view. Photograph courtesy of Midnight Projects.

McLuhan coined the term “the medium is the message” in 1964. “It is only too typical that the ‘content’ of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium,” he wrote in “Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man” which investigated how communications media shaped social change. Overall, the cacophony of mediums that with careful intention are presented in the exhibition and multiple references, mainly in Lacroix’s titles, to the body speak to the ‘sensory turn’ in art history, shepherding the audience to not only pay attention to the visual but also beyond it, to the auditory and sensory experience of the exhibition.

“Liza Lacroix and Reece Cox: Has This Solved Your Problem of What to Do Next?,” April 6-May 6, 2021, Midnight Projects, Mana Contemporary New Jersey. Listen to a conversation between Liza Lacroix and Reece Cox from 2018 on INFO Unltd here.

MATT KEEGAN

Matt Keegan's (b. 1976, Manhasset, NY) work has been widely exhibited in venues including a recent collection presentation at MoMA, NY earlier this year; a public sculpture commissioned by Sculpture Center, New York, NY; at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX: Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, AT;, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, Bilbao, ES, and Berlin, DE; The Kitchen, New York, NY; The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY. In 2025, Keegan will have a solo exhibition at the Athenaeum at the University of Georgia. Keegan's work is represented in numerous museum and private collections worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, among others. He received his MFA from Columbia University in 2004, attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2001, and his BFA from Carnegie Mellon University in 1998. Keegan is currently a Senior Critic in the Painting & Printmaking Department at Yale University, and lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

BOMB
December 7, 2020

BOMB

Matt Keegan's *1996*

(Inventory Press, 2020)

In 1996, Betsy Sussler's editorial letter for this magazine announced that BOMB was celebrating its fifteenth anniversary by going online (with live chats!)—Netscape, anyone? My first email password (suggested by a techy elder) was "forgetmenot"—sometimes I do forget that bygone temporality of slow info, before the algorithm colonized our DNA. Never mind the Wayback Machine: artist Matt Keegan has produced *1996*, a sleek but sensitive compendium of cultural production and politics three years in the making and spanning more than two decades. With the visual sagacity of Brian Hochberger's design, it mimics a glossy magazine (its first spread reproduces the covers of TIME) and echoes the media-obsessive '90s. The book presents critical analyses alongside chatty anecdotes from artists and writers who were young adults in the '90s, plus an absorbing Q&A with those who were born in 1996—linking two generations with very disparate experiences.

The eponymous year was a crucial one in the US, marking President Bill Clinton's reelection. The left's slide to the right had commenced. The North American Free Trade Agreement had gone into effect just two years prior and would irrevocably transform trade, labor, farming, immigration, and wealth distribution for decades to come. The loss of human life to AIDS was then estimated at 6.4 million worldwide, and for those of us who came of age during the epidemic, the message was that sex (and silence) was synonymous with death. Evangelical right-wing ghouls exulted in a danse macabre of homophobia, censorship, and sabotage. It was not a particularly rosy time, but when is it ever?

Still, it's tempting to dip into '90s nostalgia, especially when our present moment seems to be the worst one. As Martine Syms says in a discussion with Nicole Otero: "I'm just trying to stay alive." *1996* ties past to present in an intergenerational conversation across time and place, from a reprinted essay by José Esteban Muñoz about *Real World* star and activist Pedro Zamora to a friendly eight-person trip down memory lane titled "An Aroma of '90s Gay Smells." Michael Bullock's "Cruising Diary: 1991–2001" is a firsthand account of gay online culture; Svetlana Kitto traces the work of activist Charlotte Bunch and others to "codify women's rights as a human rights issue." And Mychal Denzel Smith's study of shadowy Democrats, "A Lesson to Be Learned: On Clinton's Approval of the 1994 Crime Bill and the 1996 Welfare Reform Act," outlines two hostile measures whose repercussions reverberate deeply now.

1996 does not aim to encapsulate so much as contextualize an accelerated trajectory of global transition. Fashion, film, art, riot grrrl, and raves are discussed alongside queer representation, media obsessions, HIV/AIDS, punitive legislative grabs, immigration, and the deliberate suppression of climate science by politicians and the fossil-fuel industry. If it sounds like a lot, that's because it is, and it can't be otherwise. As Black lives are imperiled, as ICE terrorizes people, as we contend with another excruciating election season and crises too numerous to list, understanding what got us here is a means to stave off amnesia. In Keegan's introduction he makes the case for doing the "collaborative and collective work to sustain a better future." With a vigilant spirit of inquiry, *1996* digs deep, extracting clarity from a legacy of deceit, while keeping humor and nuance intact.

The New York Times
June 21, 2019

The New York Times

11 Outdoor Installations to See in New York This Summer

Matt Keegan

Marketing signs for newly-built apartment buildings are everywhere around Court Square Park in Long Island City, along with construction cranes and scaffolding, signaling that more units are on the way. Amid all this is Matt Keegan's "what was & what is." An off-site installation for the SculptureCenter, it consists of a rectangular glass box with one mirrored side. A horizontal scroll reads, "For a long time this neighborhood was about what will be, and now I think it's about what is." The quotation, from a developer, appeared in a 2017 New York Times article about the area's "skyward" development, and exemplifies how real estate professionals sometimes see the city as being in service to new development. *Through Aug. 18.*

Frieze
June 1, 2019

FRIEZE

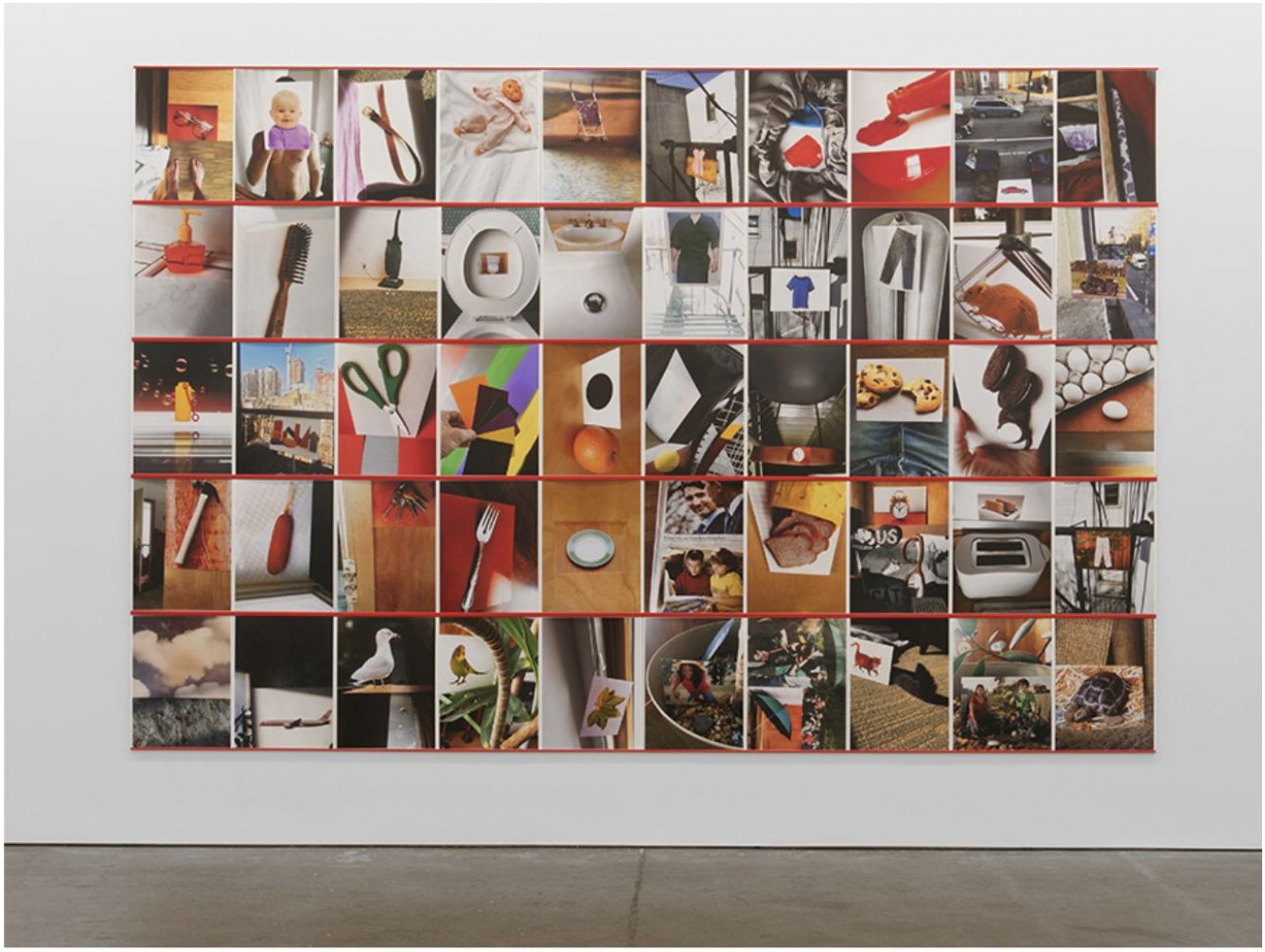
Matt Keegan Complicates Childhood Feelings

The artist walks a fine line between nostalgic irreverence and wry critique

The aseptic white cube is a canny fit for Matt Keegan's newest body of work. Mining an archive of educational tools used in the instruction of language, for his fourth solo exhibition at Altman-Siegel Gallery Keegan has created a series of sculptures, photographs and videos designed to return the viewer to a juvenile frame of mind. Remember the feeling of fiddling with an array of uncomplicated children's toys in a dentist's waiting room, queasily anticipating the hygienist calling your name? The institutional whitewash, the fluorescent lighting play to this feeling of being held, observed, in uncomfortable, dumb limbo, as you try to work out the meanings of inscrutable shapes (Keegan's 'Cutouts', a series begun in 2014, are undeniably Rorschachian), or struggle to decipher the systems that underlie a series of didactic compositions (the large, wall-mounted 'Have You Seen My Language?', 2016/19, comprises 50 C-prints matching mass-produced ESL [English as a Second Language] flashcards to objects in the artist's home). The feeling is intensified by the presence of an iterative sculpture, *Puppy Puzzle* (2019), in which a different piece of an enlarged puzzle is absent in each of three versions. Keegan sourced the original puzzle depicted on the flashcard for the word 'puzzle' from the set used in 'Have You Seen My Language?' but, rather than deploy it in the photographic series, gave it blown-up, embodied form.

Matt Keegan, 'Use Your Words', 2019, exhibition view. Courtesy: the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco

The gesture here – the scaled, perfect enlargement – has been a feature of Keegan's practice for a number of years and is the dominant formal conceit behind the 'Cutouts': a group of symmetrical, wall-mounted, powder-coated steel forms based on original hand-cut paper templates. These pieces do not feel incongruent within the context of Keegan's tongue-in-cheek pedagogical playhouse; they bear a resemblance to kindergarten-classroom paper snowflakes. Though their relationship to language and words is tenuous, they are nonetheless elegant, beautiful objects. A concurrent exhibition at Potts, Los Angeles, pairs Keegan's 'Cutouts (C is for Corita)' (2018), a slew of silkscreened paper cutouts, with Corita Kent's 'International Signal Code Alphabet' (1968), an A–Z, 26-serigraph series in which she whimsically reconstrued the International Code of Signals. There, in affective dialogue with Kent's works, Keegan's intimately scaled cutouts assume a more nuanced, meaningful relationship to their referents.



Matt Keegan, 'Have You Seen My Language?', 2016/19, 50 C-prints, each 51 × 38 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco

Since 2010, Keegan has referred to a deck of amateur flashcards made by his mother, an ESL teacher; each 1:08-minute long video responds to one of these cards. Cobbled together from 1990s-era mass-market print media, his mother's cards reflected the economic – and by extension aesthetic – values of the Clinton years (hammering home the association: Keegan's inclusion of a plaster cast of a Bill Clinton caricature mask). The videos – all 2019 – are: *Ready for Work*, a Teutonic male model dressing for Wall Street; *Fellow Travelers*, a group of New York City subway riders assigned typological epithets ('Chinatown Homies', 'Indian Hipsters', 'Do-Good Bluebloods', etc.); *2 Gallons of Milk*, two fridge-cold gallons of milk beading with sweat; and *College Graduate*, in which a young

Latina speaks in sub-titled Spanish to her abuela at a party thrown in honour of her having 'worked her ass on'. (The English language idiomatic slippage cues the granddaughter's 'haha' correction 'No, it's work your ass off, abuela.') The videos, despite their identical length, do not totally cohere as a group. Then again, close examination of 'Have You Seen My Language?' yields similar inconsistencies: there is no one system at work in the placement of the ESL flashcards – sometimes the relationship is 1:1 (a card of a toilet affixed to a toilet); sometimes formal (a card of a configuration of blocks held before a similarly shaped city skyline); sometimes associative (a card of a pair of glasses placed on a bedside table). Whether this dissonance is intentionally antic is unclear; Keegan walks a fine line between nostalgic irreverence and wry critique of a system designed to educate, though vulnerable to satire.

Matt Keegan, 'Use Your Words' was on view at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, from 28 February until 20 April 2019.

TINA GIROUARD

Tina Girouard (b. 1946, DeQuincy, LA–d. 2020 Cecilia, LA) has an exhibition history that includes a 1983 mid-career retrospective mounted at the Rufino Tamayo Museum in Mexico City, and international events such as the 1980 Venice Biennale, the 1977 Paris Biennale, 1977 Documenta VI and 1972 Documenta V, Kassel. Girouard's work has been exhibited widely at galleries and museums including: Leo Castelli Gallery, The Kitchen, Walker Art Center, New Orleans Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Palais des Beaux-Arts Brussels, Holly Solomon Gallery, David Zwirner, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, and the New Museum. Her work was recently on view in the exhibition *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972 – 1985*, curated by Anna Katz, originating at MOCA Los Angeles, which traveled to the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, NY. Girouard's work is in the permanent collections of the Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; Ludwig Forum fur International Kunst Aachen, DE; Rufino Tamayo Museum, Mexico City, Mexico; and Stedelijk Museum Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium.

Vogue
October 18, 2024

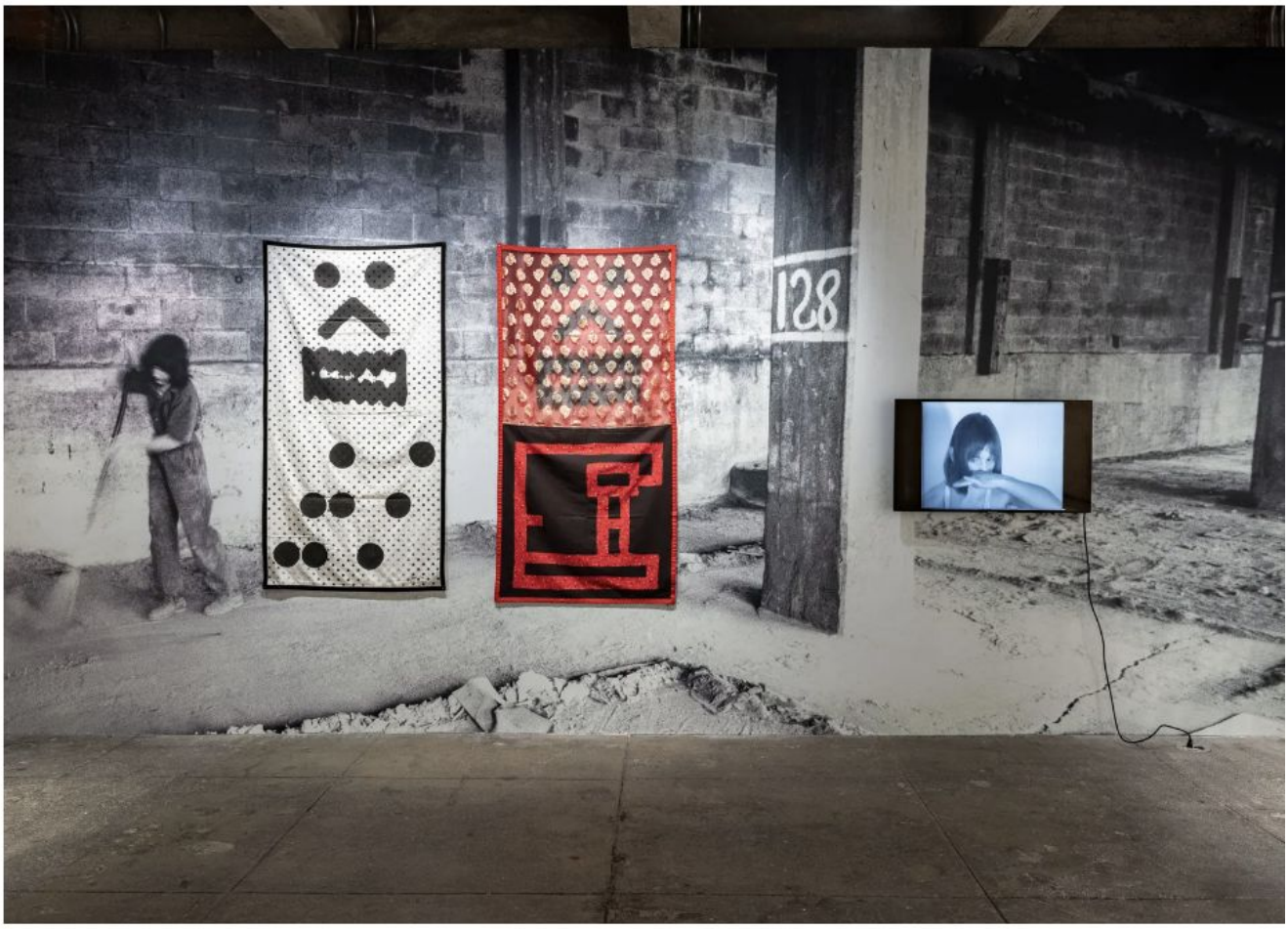
VOGUE

Two New York Shows Examine the Quiet Profundity of Artist Tina Girouard

Installation view of "Tina Girouard: Sign-In" at the Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA), New York, 2024. Photo: Kris Graves. Tina Girouard Art © The Estate of Tina Girouard / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

In 1978 a vicious studio fire led the artist Tina Girouard to move from New York City, where she had been ensconced in the downtown art scene for a decade, back to Louisiana, the state where she was born in 1946. As devastating as the fire was, her pivot home was not a defeat. Girouard, who died in 2020 at the age of 73, was constantly in a state of return—both physically and in broader, more philosophical ways. Crossing time and geographies was a key preoccupation of her multidisciplinary practice.

"This relationship to place, which is not one of permanence but of coming back and leaving, is so ingrained in Tina's story," says Andrea Andersson, the founding director and chief curator at the Rivers Institute, a New Orleans–based arts nonprofit. Rivers worked closely with Girouard's estate and the Center for Art, Research, and Alliances (CARA) to organize the retrospective "Tina Girouard: Sign-In," now on view at CARA's space in New York City after a run at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans.



Installation view of "Tina Girouard: Sign-In" at the Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA), New York, 2024. Photo: Kris Graves. Tina Girouard Art © The Estate of Tina Girouard / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Girouard explored these concepts of time and place across a wide variety of mediums, from humble domestic fabrics to grand collaborative performances. She was a pivotal if under-recognized figure in the avant-garde art scene in 1970s SoHo, helping launch the influential spaces 112 Greene Street (a precursor to White Columns gallery) and FOOD, the artist-run restaurant she cofounded with Gordon Matta-Clark and Caroline Goodden. (FOOD will get a second incarnation courtesy of the artist Lucien Smith in Chinatown later this fall.)

There are many reasons Girouard isn't better-known. Some are obvious: she was a woman; she left "the scene." Yet she also had a practice that was difficult to capture—so much of it was about a spirit of presence and collaboration. She didn't do one thing. She experimented, explored, assembled. "I believe one's life is made up of many parts," Girouard once said, "and that you get your worldview or philosophy by adding up these parts."

Installation view of "Tina Girouard: Sign-In" at the Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA), New York, 2024. Photo: Kris Graves. Tina Girouard Art © The Estate of Tina Girouard / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

"Her work was incredibly profound in the sense of belonging, her ideas of home, her interest in language throughout her life," says Manuela Moscoso, CARA's executive and artistic director. In Girouard's system of symbols, shapes stand in for concepts like "water" (jagged lines), "house" (similar to the outline from *Swept House*), "death" (a sort of frowning emoticon), and "Tina" (rendered in Braille). Girouard pulled from many ancient ideologies and religions to create her symbols–expressions of her desire for connection across disparate cultures.

A deeper exploration of Girouard's invented language is simultaneously on view at Magenta Plains gallery, located just a few blocks from Girouard's first Manhattan apartment, at 10 Chatham Square, in Chinatown. More than a dozen of the artist's fabric works in her DNA-Icons series, made in 1980 in collaboration with the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, hang across the gallery's two floors. (The aforementioned *Death, Tina* and *Death, House* are from this series.) "For us it was important to kind of be a rabbit hole from the CARA show," says Magenta Plains director Olivia Smith.

This DNA-Icons series was likely never displayed publicly, Smith says. When Girouard made them as part of a residency at the Fabric Workshop, she was playing with a technique that was new at the time: screenprinting. "It's very interesting that they're all on essentially industrial, commercially printed fabrics, and she's doing this handmade printmaking process over the top," Smith says. "There's a conversation between her superimposition of her symbols and the symbols that already exist."

Back at CARA, two of Girouard's works highlight how the artist played with the mutability of "home." Archival images of *Moving House,* a conceptual performance piece from 1979, show Girouard and her her husband, Dickie Landry, a founding member of the Philip Glass Ensemble and a fellow Louisianan who was deep in the SoHo scene with her, physically moving a house from one plot to another. "She was really into the idea of labor behind making art," Moscoso says. It's not just about the fact that she moved this house—it's about the shared work and the decisions that made it happen. *Moving House* also circles back to Girouard's ongoing interest in crossing time and space: "She lived in this place that she displaced herself," Moscoso says.

Nearby, bolts of floral fabric from Girouard's *Solomon's Lot* hang elegantly from the ceiling. These fabrics were gifted to Girouard by her mother-in-law, and she used them in various installations and performances around the world, including Documenta and the Venice Biennale. The modest, feminine materials are emblems of Girourd's artmaking, which elevate the quotidian into the sublime with the sheer reverence *she* gave them.

Installation view of "Tina Girouard: Sign-In" at the Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA), New York, 2024. Photo: Kris Graves. Tina Girouard Art © The Estate of Tina Girouard / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Installation view of "Tina Girouard: Conflicting Evidence" at Magenta Plains. Photo: Courtesy of Magenta Plains.

The same goes for an early untitled work made of tin ceiling tiles, mounted on a wall near the fabrics at CARA. It had been hanging in Girouard's Louisiana house for decades, and it's not in the best shape. It's rusted, and in some spots you can even see where Bubble Wrap left little imprints as it melted in the un-air-conditioned home. "With all its withering across time, it is so powerful, and such a testament to her practice," Andersson says. "She could use these pedestrian materials and make these subtle interventions, and then they become transformed."

"Tina Girouard: Sign-In" is on view at CARA through January 12. "Tina Girouard: Conflicting Evidence" is on view at Magenta Plains through October 26.

Artnet News
October 21, 2024

artnet® news

Tina Girouard Helped Make SoHo a Scene. Now, Her Legacy Emerges from Obscurity

The late pioneering artist gets her first retrospective with "Sign-In" at New York's Center for Art Research and Alliances.

For decades, the New York art world overlooked video, textile, and performance artist Tina Girouard (1946–2020), whose presence had been integral to the city's SoHo art scene during the 1960s and early 1970s. Now, however, Girouard's legacy is getting a much-deserved second look in a comprehensive exhibition at the New York's Center for Art Research and Alliances (CARA), organized with the Rivers Institute for Contemporary Art and Thought in New Orleans.

"Tina Girouard: Sign In" represents a long-overdue recognition of the Louisiana native's four-decade career and spotlights Girouard's place at the heart of that avant-garde SoHo art scene in the relatively brief but prolific period from 1969 to 1978. (The show traveled to New York from the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans.)

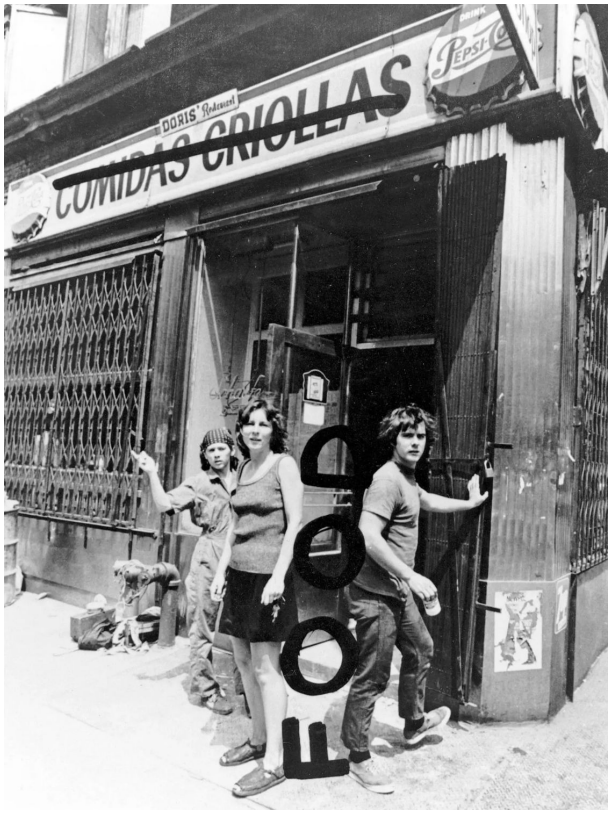
"She was part of a terrifically influential [group], in terms of the arc of contemporary art culture, together with Joan Jonas, and Laurie Anderson, the Philip Glass Ensemble, Gordon Matta-Clark..." Andrea Andersson, the Rivers Institute's founding director and chief curator, told me.

The CARA exhibition is part of a big moment for the late artist, having opened alongside not one but two gallery shows in the city, at Anat Ebgi, which has represented the estate since 2019, and Magenta Plains. Next month, the artist Lucien Smith is opening a revival of FOOD, the SoHo restaurant/art project that Girouard ran with Matta-Clark, Carol Goodden, and Suzanne Harris. (Don't miss the original venture's menu on view at CARA.)

Girouard played a key role in the formative years of notable art organizations and movements such as the Kitchen, Creative Time, PS1, and alternative art space 112 Greene Street (now known as White Columns) in New York; the Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia; Matta-Clark's Anarchitecture Group, and the Pattern and Decoration movement. She also showed with Holly Solomon Gallery.

The incredible breadth of her output may actually have worked against her.

"When artists are multifaceted, they can't be pigeonholed," Magenta Plains cofounder and director Olivia Smith told me. "People lose interest in trying to tell their story because it's more complex.... Tina can be known as a Pattern and Decoration artist, but she can also be known as a pioneer of video art. There's not a lot of artists you can say that about!"



Girouard studied art at the former University of Southwestern Louisiana (now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette), where she met her future husband, photographer, composer, and saxophonist Richard “Dickie” Landry, who would go on to join the Philip Glass Ensemble. (The two married in 1971).

The couple moved to New York City together after Girouard’s graduation and began living with painter Mary Heilmann in a loft at 10 Chatham Square. The building soon became something of an informal artist colony of up to 30 residents. Girouard would cook gumbo and other Southern meals for the various creatives passing through the studio, reflecting the spirit of collaboration and community that permeated her practice.

"There was a thin line between her work and her life—it was almost nonexistent," Manuela Moscoso, CARA's artistic director and executive director, told me.

"General Girouard," as the artist was known, "was a leader in the community in the avant-garde scene in the '70s," Smith added. "Tina brought her Cajun traditions of the home to New York City—the kind of *joie de vivre* of a big family feast and dancing and music. Her Chatham Square loft served as a symbolic home for this growing community of artists."

That hospitality extended into Girouard's art, not only through her work at FOOD—an ahead-of-its-time restaurant that surprised diners with seasonal ingredients, "health food" and unfamiliar dishes like sushi—but with other projects, like the series of "Houses" she created in 1971.

These conceptual spaces included *Swept House*. Girouard created the outline of a home by sweeping the dirt and detritus on a condemned pier—normally a refuge for the homeless—underneath the Brooklyn Bridge. Local children, unprompted, scavenged furniture from the trash to complete the installation. The piece, documented in photographs at CARA, was part of "The Brooklyn Bridge Event," curated by PS1 founder Alanna Heiss for the civic engineering marvel's 88th anniversary.

CARA is also showing *Hung House*, a sculptural installation Girouard created at Chatham Square using objects left behind by party guests and musicians who had been there for rehearsals. Visitors to the studio were free to interact with and sit on the piece, a two-story "home" with a cot beneath a hanging wooden platform upon which sat an open suitcase.

In addition to this literal homemaking, Girouard also turned to a variety of domestic materials, including wallpaper, linoleum, and even tin ceilings and fabric to make work.

"Tina was really coming of age during second-wave feminism and was very vocal about women's labor and domesticity and the fact that she used that as fodder for her Conceptual art," Smith said.

Girouard inherited a collection of vintage 12-by-three-foot silks from a relative in the dry goods business named Solomon Matlock. She would employ these eight bolts of pastel, floral fabrics, which she christened Solomon's Lot, in various performances and art installations.

CARA has restaged *Air Space Stage* (1972), the architectural installation of four of the silks from Girouard's first solo exhibition, "Four Stages," at 112 Greene Street.

Another length of silk hangs in a loop in the stairwell, in a nod to Girouard's performance *Camoplage* (1977) at Documenta 6, in Kassel, Germany.

"She washed this exact fabric and four others in the Fulda River, and suspended them in the trees to dry, where they became camouflaged," Andersson said. "It was a collective ritual practice."

The show also includes a video *Maintenance III: Sewing, Washing, Wringing, Rinsing, Folding Solomon's Lot* (1973), showing Girouard washing these fabrics. (Another video in the "Maintenance" series, on view in the opening gallery, is of the artist giving herself a haircut.)

Girouard retired *Solomon's Lo*t after her 1977 performance *Pinwheel* at the New Orleans Museum of Art for "Five from Louisiana," featuring Lynda Benglis, Robert Rauschenberg, Keith Sonnier, and Landry. Anat Ebgi started its relationship with the artist by restaging the piece at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2019.

The gallery's current show centers around Girouard's 1970 performance *Sound Loop*, in which she recorded sequences of numbers, words, and phrases on a tape loop, speaking into a microphone. In addition to photographic and video documentation, the gallery staged several performances of the piece during its run.

At Magenta Plains, the focus is on Girouard's interest in visual language, exhibiting for the first time her "DNA-Icons," a group of late-'70s silkscreens, printed on commercial textiles at the Fabric Workshop. These bear series of simple line-based symbols, from among a set of 400 devised by the artist. (Related works, both on paper and fabric, are on view at CARA.)

"She researched international signage and ancient petroglyphs and pictograms," Smith said. "Tina was trying to create a universal language through these hundreds of symbols so people could understand the same thing even if they're coming up at it from different sides. I find that very beautiful and very meaningful."

Girouard's remarkably fruitful New York period came to an end when her studio, then on Cedar Street, burned down in 1978. Having lost nearly everything, she moved back to rural Louisiana with Landry, and gradually faded from prominence (although there was an appearance at the 1980 Venice Biennale and a 1983 mid-career retrospective at the Rufino Tamayo Museum in Mexico City).

She spent the rest of her life far removed from the downtown art scene. In 1990, around the time she and Landry were divorcing, Girouard moved to Haiti.

Inspired by the voodoo culture prevalent both in Louisiana and her new home, Girouard kept a studio in Port-au-Prince for the next five years. The exhibition features sequined and beaded works from this period, which saw her collaborate heavily with Haitian artist Antoine Oleyant.

"The thing is, Tina never stopped," Smith said. "But New York wasn't paying attention to the work that she was doing in the South."

Magenta Plains got involved after Smith was introduced to Amy Bonwell, Girouard's niece and estate executor, on a Zoom call. Immediately fascinated by the artist's life and career, Smith suggested a project with the estate to her gallery co-founders, artists Chris Dorland and David Deutsch.

Deutsch, it turned out, had known Girouard well in her New York days, and was immediately on board.

"He said, 'After their fire on Cedar Street, I invited them to sleep on my floor, and Tina and Dickie Landry cooked a meal in my studio,'" Smith recalled.

Girouard hasn't had a New York solo show since 2012. But everyone involved in the three current shows agreed that her singular career was ripe for reappraisal. In fact, as the Rivers Institute began working with the artist's estate, Andersson quickly realized time was of the essence.

Living in rural Louisiana had helped Girouard fall into obscurity. But the weather there had also taken its toll, physically, on her work and archives, which was largely not stored under climate-controlled conditions.

One artwork actually involved transporting the framework of a former general store across Louisiana to Girouard and Landry's property in the small town of Cecilia to serve as their studio. The CARA show includes photographic documentation of the move, as well as sculptural wall-hanging works made from cut tin ceiling panels that were stored there, semi-exposed to the elements.

"When we first went to go see some of the materials, it really became clear it was already withering," Andersson said. "We were working on other projects, and frankly this went to the top of the list from a sheer necessity standpoint, or this work would disappear."

The people who can help tell Girouard's story are also nearing the end of their lives. The Rivers Institute has been working on an oral history of the artist's career, but Richard Serra and Lawrence Weiner both died before they could be interviewed.

Fortunately, Girouard's estate is firmly committed to cementing her long-term legacy. That work began while Girouard was still alive, with Anat Ebgi presenting her last show before her death at its Los Angeles location in 2020. Plans for the current retrospective, and the simultaneous presentations at both New York galleries, began forming three years ago.

"Tina did not know this project was going to happen," Andersson said. "One of the greatest regrets is that she died without the knowledge that she would have this kind of recognition."

"Tina Girouard: Sign-In" is on view at the Center for Art Research and Alliances, 225 West 13th Street, New York, New York, September 20, 2024–January 12, 2025

"Tina Girouard: Conflicting Evidence" is on view at Magenta Plains, 149 Canal Street, New York, New York, September 17–October 26, 2024

"Tina Girouard: I Want You to Have a Good Time" was on view at Anat Ebgi, 149 Canal Street, New York, New York, September 6–October 19, 2024

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A Lexicon of Evidence: Tina Girouard at Magenta Plains

The late artist's 'DNA-Icons,' never-before-seen fabric works, shed light on the re-invention of signs and language.

By Stephen Wozniak • 09/30/24 11:22am

An installation view of "Tina Girouard: Conflicting Evidence" at Magenta Plains. Image courtesy of Magenta Plains, New York

Sometimes, the language we're culturally assigned doesn't do the job intended. Sometimes, words don't add up to the many thoughts that define who we are and the relationships we share. And now, in an age when we're engulfed by the sheer proliferation and profane alteration of diverse data, communications and imagery, wouldn't it be nice

to fundamentally express what we think and feel and––most importantly––be heard clearly? It seems like such a straightforward request with a simple solution. But it isn't.

A few decades ago, I imagine that artist Tina Girouard faced the same question and, like her near-peer Matt Mullican, sought answers. While Pictures Generation artist Mullican focused on knowledge systems, perception and representation in his gigantic, flat, universal-icon wall art, Girouard instead used simple symbols related to women's daily life, work and home in her installations, which mixed live public performance with real objects in here-and-now, multidimensional space. She was always directly involved—in body, mind and spirit—expressing her commitment to the act of making, as much as to the evidence that her act gave birth to. She often seemed to leave some part of her personal experience, like traces of DNA, in that work. This was equally true in her wall art.

"Inventing vocabularies has been and remains my mode of art making." — Tina Girouard (1946-2020)

In early 1980, just three blocks from the Magenta Plains gallery where they currently hang in *Tina Girouard: Conflicting Evidence*, Tina Girouard created her never-before-seen fabric works, the *DNA-Icons*. As a socially forward, multidisciplinary artist, Girouard strove to create a new lexicon that could appeal to and be comprehended by broad swaths of regular folk. Importantly, she used everyday domestic materials in her art—from linoleum flooring to cast-tin ceiling tiles—that most of us recognize.

In the current show, Girouard's base material is commercially printed fabric. With this medium, the artist applied modest, simplified—though adroit—screen-printed images. In one work, *Land*, a large, silky fabric square with blue and yellow, herringbone-like zebra striping, she applied a bold letter *M* in the center. Underneath each pointed crest lie a few thick, horizontal bars that brace the zig and zag of the figure. Together, they form the hieroglyph for a mountain range: so simple, so strong. They declare no detailed narrative but instead reiterate the staccato *M*'s of the background pattern. As such, they display a like-minded, like-bodied continuity of figure to ground, of member to tribe.

In another work, *Child, Tina, Gonna Go, Conflicting Evidence*, Girouard places spare symbols on different fabric backgrounds that—following the title—run clockwise in a square configuration. The first, in the upper left quadrant, is her very yellow, block-headed, signature *Child* with arms in runner formation, which sits on a piece of fabric with

black and white images of classic 1950s Hollywood television and film stars––from Lucile Ball holding a ventriloquist's dummy to Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's Monster.

Tina Girouard; *Land*, 1980, Pigment on commercially printed fabric, 36 1/4 x 36 ¼ in./92.1 x 92.1 cm. Image courtesy of Magenta Plains, New York. Photography © Courtesy of the Estate of Tina Girouard/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

To the right of this is a yellow, black and white, vertically striped square of floral fabric topped with eight screen-printed, burnt-orange circles––some nearly adjoined, others solo––that correspond to *Tina*, the artist. Below this is a colorful, exotic, tropical island print––also from the mid-twentieth century––coupled with Girourd's applied symbol for *Gonna Go*, an on-the-move, humpbacked, spine-covered creature. Finally, in the lower left lies a square featuring yellow, gray, black and white circles with more vertical stripe

patterns. Atop this is the artist's symbol for *Conflicting Evidence*. A flowing yellow shape with a straight line bisecting its writhing curves, the glyph is reminiscent of the symbol for the serpentine, primordial creator of life, Damballa, from Haiti, where the artist later lived and worked on several of her series with local artisans.

Tina Girouard, *Child, Tina, Gonna Go, Conflicting Evidence*, 1980; Pigment on commercially printed fabric, 69 3/4 x 70 1/2 in. Image courtesy of Magenta Plains, New York. Photography © Courtesy of the Estate of Tina Girouard/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

Tina Girouard titled her multipaneled works consistently so audiences could more easily read her core lexicon of symbols. But what do they accomplish together—in this formation, on these fabrics—in *Child, Tina, Gonna Go, Conflicting Evidence*? In many

ways, the piece feels like autobiographical shorthand, a method of reviewing roots. The retro media personalities and narratives from Girouard's formative youth that are featured in the *Child* segment of the work could inspire that child to cavort about or drive her to run from on-screen myths towards tangible earthen realities. The paired and single dots of the *Tina* segment might represent cooperation or independence, respectively––or many other interpretations implied by the infinity of circular forms. The *Gonna Go* animal spines suggest comic book motion lines, living up to the square's title, indicating swift primal movement.

Then there's *Conflicting Evidence*, the last square in the work, featuring the voodoo snake. The interesting thing about this particular archetypal symbol––the benevolent life generator––is that, while this version was originally from Benin in West Africa and later used in Caribbean religious healing practices, snakes were often independently featured in other religious traditions as an evil underworld power, *as well as* a symbol of fertility, life and rebirth––and tied to such Catholic and Judaic prophets as St. Patrick and Moses. Does the difference in the ways various religions use snake imagery make for conflicting evidence? Does this final square represent the generator of the entire cycle we see in the work: a child who learns and breaks from widely accessible cultural stories, develops her personal identity and pairs up within a group, eschews convoluted civilization to find her primal nature in a pastoral setting and finally, perhaps, offers us the god within her, generating life as a provident artist––just like the Damballa? It was the common use of time-honored symbols that Girouard was interested in exploring, combining several from her own updated, re-tooled lexicon in a single piece like *Child, Tina, Gonna Go, Conflicting Evidence*––unified formally by color and pattern––and often revealing contradictory but *coexisting* myths we share around the world and across cultures.

While paring down her language to the barest of visual headwords, Girouard also focused on the unavoidable primary elements that make up this practical life on earth. Immense pieces like *Water, Air, Earth, Fire* and its on-view compatriot *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* point to those respective essentials so integral to the human experience that without them, perhaps, we tell no stories, make no art, see no beauty. *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* intriguingly presents these basic symbols—each with its own titular meaning—directly over lush floral prints, as if to perhaps say that it is they that enable this other natural splendor to bloom. Is one the foundation for the other? Maybe they hold equal footing for us. Or do the human-created symbols––in which we frequently invest too heavily––override or supplant the actual nature represented in the backgrounds?

Tina Girouard, *Air, Earth, Water, Fire*, 1980; Pigment on commercially printed fabric, 137 1/4 x 34 1/2 in./348.6 x 87.6 cm. Image courtesy of Magenta Plains, New York. Photography © Courtesy of the Estate of Tina Girouard/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

Many other great works in this show at Magenta Plains are worth a solid, sustained gander that also point to essential operating procedures, materials and stations in life from which we are made. They are laid out in two entire, dedicated floors of the gallery, a testament not only to the scale of the work but its revelation and great importance today, some 40-plus years after its creation.

If you can make it down to Chinatown, be certain to take in all the evidence, read the signs and find your roots.

“Tina Girouard: Conflicting Evidence” is at Magenta Plains through October 26.