# P!
SELECTED PRESS COVERAGE
2012–2017

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THE NEW YORKER, MAY 15, 2017

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**Céline Condorelli**

For the final show at this experimental space, the design guru Prem Krishnamurthy tapped the London-based artist Céline Condorelli, whose art reflects the gallery's ethos: art meets graphic design in aestheticized self-reflection. A 1930 gouache by Herbert Bayer, titled "Extended Field of Vision," which depicts an eye surveying a range of flat planes, is displayed in a large hole cut into a wall—one of several such interventions—in between an abstract screen print on acrylic by Condorelli and a large plant, which, per the accompanying checklist, is promised to Krishnamurthy's archive. (Although he is giving up his physical space, he will continue to work with artists.) In "It's All True," a four-color lithograph, five years' worth of displays in the gallery's window are seen superimposed. Like many of the preceding exhibitions, this one is irresistibly complex and colorful, if a little hard to decipher. *Through May 21. (P!, 334 Broome St. 212-334-5200.)*

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*The New Yorker*
"Céline Condorelli"
15 May 2017

# Céline Condorelli

## P! / New York

**Céline Condorelli**
*"Epilogue," Installation view at P!, New York (2017)*
*Courtesy of the Artist and P!, New York*
*Photography by Sebastian Bach*

P! is closing, and Céline Condorelli's exhibition "Epilogue" is the gallery's last. The show takes careful inventory of P!'s social, architectural and ideological stock, presenting a series of interventions that amount to a critical biography.

Traces of the last several exhibitions were left in anticipation of the closing. It anticipates works like *Epilogue* (2017), a freestanding room divider composed of custom brackets and cheaply sourced corrugated plastic — something always edges into our vision here. The framed print *It's All True* (2017) depicts a palimpsest of the gallery's exhibitions over the course of its five-year run. A beautiful eulogy in itself, the work also recalls the gonzo experiment when P! thought it could completely rebranded itself as "K-period," and sell a suite of short-run shows as one large project.

P! put art in dialog with design. Or, more accurately, design helped P! interrogate the apparatus of art in a way that traditional gallery models couldn't or won't. It converted the white cube into a tool. Condorelli's show similarly emphasizes the particulars of display to elucidate the gallery's social and ideological entanglements. The artist cut a large rectangular hole in the gallery's east wall for *Alteration to Existing Conditions (II)* (2017). The leftover sheetrock was converted into a bench, which forced occupants to face one another. Over the hole hangs *Extended Field of Vision* (1930), a surreal drawing by Herbert Bayer, an artist and pioneering exhibition designer with questionable ties to Nazism. A tiny figure with an eyeball for a head is immersed in a disorienting, merzbau-like exercise in spatial design — in Condorelli's incisive re-presentation, it's subordinate to a larger story about legacy.

Welcoming and bookish, P! capably contained some problematic ideas along the way — this same attitude preserved a space for mystery in art. It would be sadder to see P! go if it hadn't already taught us that a gallery is actually a set of ideas that prod us to endlessly renegotiate art.

*by* Sam Korman

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*Flash Art*
by Sam Korman
June/July/August 2017

by ORIT GAT

May 23, 2017

art agenda

# *New York City Roundup*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, New York

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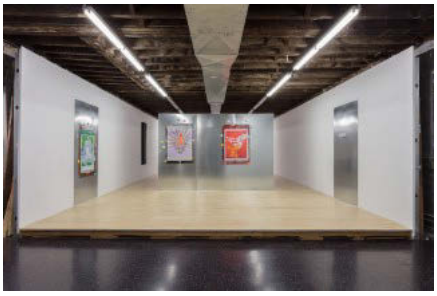
As I missed out on international art events this season because New York is so far away, all I could think of was how unlucky their curators are. You work on Venice or Documenta for a year or two or four. You start out researching when there's a somewhat liberal president in the US and some island off the coast of Europe still considers itself part of the union. Though the war in Syria, the refugee crisis, and economic instability in the EU were already present, there's still a feeling that this past year has served too many blows. And those large-scale exhibitions, years in the making, all opened to a great unknown.

On Instagram, almost all the photos I see from Venice are of the same works, and I wonder how and if they respond to the current situation, whether there is a way for art not to seem detached. In New York, few of the exhibitions currently on view in commercial galleries and museums focus directly on contemporary politics. At Metro Pictures, Robert Longo's show, "The Destroyer Cycle," does just that. It's comprised of large-scale charcoal-and-graphite drawings of riot cops in full gear, prisoners being led to a CIA black site, and a triptych of migrants in a raft in rough waters. It's an aestheticized, grand, spectacular view of politics; as such, it is grim (the black-and-white tones of the charcoal, yes, as well as the subjects) but it says little. Longo replicates imagery from the news, from television, or in the case of the triptych *Untitled (Raft at Sea)* (2016–17), from the cover of a Doctors Without Borders publication, without taking a position beyond inserting an artist's hand. The look to art history, from the obvious reference to Théodore Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (1818–1819) to a graphite-and-charcoal-on-paper replica of Titian's *Venus with a Mirror* (*Untitled [after Titian, Venus with a Mirror, 1555]*, 2017) only makes these works seem further detached and aestheticized, timeless representation rather than a current preoccupation.

A much more engaged stand can be seen in "A Split During Laughter at the Rally," Juliana Huxtable's exhibition at Reena Spaulings. The eponymous video on view includes scenes from a small demonstration in a gentrifying Brooklyn neighborhood, where a number of 20-somethings carry homemade signs and chant the now-classics "No Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA" and "this is what democracy looks like," then stop at the local coffee shop to discuss these chants. Their well-intentioned naivety is interspersed with interviews with people claiming the rhythms demonstrators sing are appropriated from African American culture, and a narration by Huxtable, complete with her trademark blue lipstick. It's a layered text—the script gathers from comments on YouTube videos, right-wing radio shows, and scenes from the recent demonstrations—that exposes the fringe the artist is interested in—conspiracy theorists and online trolls—as well as how that fringe mirrors the feebleness of the sense of political agency in contemporary society.

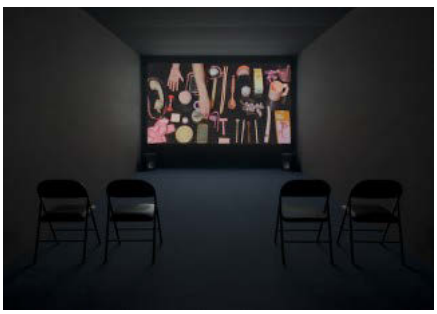
Maybe politics can be found in more nuanced ways, or by handing over the responsibility of seeing the political potential of art to the viewer. Seeing a couple of quick images of a Trump building (not the one on 5th Ave, just one of the other developments, still with a big TRUMP on the façade, still in the requisite garish tones), in Sara Cwynar's film (16mm transposed to video) *Rose Gold* (2017) at her exhibition "Rose Gold" at Foxy Production, recalled to me the infamous image of Trump and Nigel Farage in front of the bejeweled elevator in Trump Tower. "They invented this color, rose gold, and I'm mesmerized," the voiceover goes, "a new object of desire." The film, though similar in form to so many other recent video artworks in its use of a voiceover steadily reading a script while the images shift in quick jump-cuts, uses this standard presentation to offer up considered, sometimes hilarious, and always fascinating research on economies of desire.

**1** Robert Longo, *Untitled (Raft at Sea)*, 2016–2017.



**2** View of Juliana Huxtable's "A Split During Laughter at the Rally," Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York, 2017.

**3** Juliana Huxtable, *A Split During Laughter at the Rally*, 2017. Digital video, 21:41 minutes.



**4** Sara Cwynar, *Rose Gold*, 2017.

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*Art Agenda*
"New York City Roundup"
by Orit Gat
23 May 2017

art agenda

Focusing on one color—rose gold, as invented by Apple—in this work, Cwynar brings together reflections on production, consumption, and marketing, but also the history of color and consumer products and the development of photography. The racial bias of film stock, historically optimized for white skin, is challenged here in the bright photographs of the artist's friend Tracy, which quote old photo studio images and the way our image of history is dominated by photographic tropes.

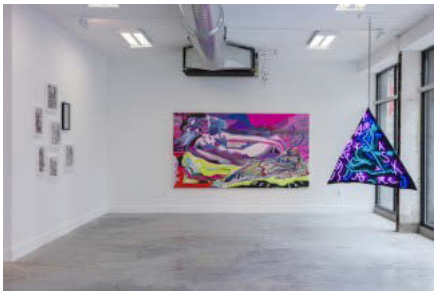
The photographs of Tracy, a beautiful, young woman of Asian heritage, are both old-fashioned portraits and a challenge of the idea of imaging the female body. Compare that with Longo's vacant replica of a Titian *Venus* and remember how far we have come, and yet how much longer we have to go, in releasing the female body from its history of representation. Another artist doing just that is Mira Dancy, who is showing her large-scale paintings of women that do not conform to any art-historical convention of female portraiture at her "Call NOW" exhibition at Chapter NY and in an adjacent exhibition (through Chapter) at 83 Pitt Street. In the latter, Dancy uses the storefront space to introduce a text opening to the street, but what seems most fitting to the location is Dancy's use of neon, creating intimate portraits by appropriating a form associated with sleaze. Her huge canvases in shades of pink, purple, and black do the exact opposite: neither intimate nor confrontational, they're a rejection of the representation of women as any kind of empty, standard ideal.

At the New Museum, "Antibodies," a Carol Rama retrospective, highlights the artist's preoccupation with the body—her own body and sexuality, and the way the female body is monitored and viewed by men. Rama, whose life is a classic tale of a female artist marginalized by a majority-male art world, died in Turin in 2015, leaving behind a huge body of work shown in a museum survey here for the first time. This exhibition excels in a careful, never-prodding discussion of Rama's biography and its link to her work, but also to larger societal shifts. It ties Rama's use of tires and rubber in her work to a time when Turin was becoming a car-manufacturing center; it discusses how personal mad cow disease felt to the artist, whose mentally ill mother was institutionalized and whose father committed suicide when she was twelve. The exhibition is a hallmark of curatorial context: in marking how the personal is always tied to the social, it makes the political relatable.

Down the street, on the orange awning of P!, Céline Condorelli had the word "after" printed in mirror writing. Her exhibition "Epilogue" will be the last in the gallery-project-space-experiment begun by curator and designer Prem Krishnamurthy in 2012. Choosing Condorelli, whose work has long engaged with the architecture and context of the exhibition space, is fitting. Her exhibition is a celebration of the space's architecture and history rather than a mourning of its end. Condorelli builds a bench made of one of P!'s walls and borrows a 1930 drawing by Herbert Bayer, *Extended Field of Vision*, which has become iconic in exhibition design. The artist's work is consistent with what P! stood for: an interest in bringing together art and display in a process that isn't seamless, that is up for discussion. Condorelli's show not only does justice to the commitment at P! to redefine what a gallery could be, it also might give it a brief second life: the artist's upcoming at Stanley Picker Gallery at Kingston University in London will be a continuation of the project at P!.

Back in Chelsea is David Zwirner's first exhibition of works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, whose estate is now co-represented by Zwirner and Andrea Rosen. It's a beautiful display of some of the late artist's most famous works: light strings are installed in the staircase and gauzy curtains on the row of windows on the second floor; two of the "candy spill" works are on view, including *"Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (1991), in which 175 pounds of candy is heaped in a corner, free to take, the diminishing pieces mirroring the artist's HIV-positive partner's weight loss as his illness took over. In the ground-floor gallery are *"Untitled" (Perfect Lovers)* (1987–90), in which two identical wall clocks are hung side by side, synchronized but bound to fall out of synch with passing time, and a billboard work *"Untitled"* (1995), with a gray, grainy image of a bird flying far in the sky.

**5** Sara Cwynar, *Tracy (Gold Circle)*, 2017.



**6** View of Mira Dancy's "Call NOW," Chapter NY, New York, 2017.

**7** (Left) Mira Dancy, *Blue Mirror*, 2017. (Right) Mira Dancy, *Free*, 2017.

**8** View of Carol Rama's "Antibodies," New Museum, New York, 2017.

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23 May 2017

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A few days ago I saw the new AIDS memorial on West 12th street, designed by architects Studio a+i and including a text piece by Jenny Holzer, who had excerpts from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" engraved onto granite pavement underneath the 18-foot-tall memorial. The 1892 version of the poem begins "I celebrate myself, and sing myself, / And what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you." Holzer chose this poem because it was "a beauty from a man in full and glad possession of his body,"(1) and reading it in the street in front of what used to be St. Vincent's Hospital, the first in the city to have an AIDS ward, and is now being developed into luxury condominiums, is chillingly effective. It's a tall order to look to art as a way of making sense of our lives today, a big request of artists to do what few of us can. But it could give us language and images through which to consider, discuss, and maybe reimagine our political predicament. And maybe it can also give us hope. Ambiguous hope, but something nonetheless. At the Gonzalez-Torres show, there are two stacks of white paper ("*Untitled,*" 1989/1990) placed side by side. The one reads, "Nowhere better than this place"; the other, "somewhere better than this place."

(1) Gareth Harris, "Jenny Holzer creates Walt Whitman poetry piece for New York Aids memorial," *The Art Newspaper* (December 9, 2016): http://theartnewspaper.com/news/jenny-holzer-creates-walt-whitman-poetry-piece-for-new-york-aids-memorial/

Orit Gat is a writer based in London and New York whose work on contemporary art and digital culture has appeared in a variety of publications.

**9** Carol Rama, *Appassionata* [Passionate], 1939.

**10** View of Céline Condorelli's "Epilogue," P!, New York, 2017.

**11** Céline Condorelli, *After* (detail), 2017.

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ARTFORUM

# New York

## Céline Condorelli

**P!**
**334 Broome Street**
**April 23–May 21**

**View of "Céline Condorelli: Epilogue," 2017.**

"Epilogue," the architect-artist Céline Condorelli's current exhibition about exhibitions marks the swan song of P!, Prem Krishnamurthy's "mom-and-pop Kunsthalle," which has, in its fleeting five years, staged more than forty shows and offsite projects, many of them prodding the fraught marriage of form and the social. A happy pairing, then, as Condorelli's work has long been invested in ransacking the political implications of historical models of display while proposing new ones. Here, the artist, in the spirit of the gallery, is reflexive: The exhibition takes as fodder the institutional memory of the space while it considers the ways in which display—already a practice of hiding and revealing—is historicized. Condorelli finds the conceit of the afterimage useful. In the print *It's All True*, 2017, P!'s storefront is obscured with a palimpsest of its past shows; *After Image (Bayer)*, 2017, is composed of a series of graphic vinyl forms adhered to the front window, which fractures and flattens our view into or out of the gallery.

Condorelli takes on an interlocutor in Bauhaus polymath Herbert Bayer, a seminal if controversial figure in the history of exhibition design. (Though Bayer's sympathies were ultimately unclear, he designed propaganda for the Nazi party.) She includes his 1930 drawing/collage *Extended Field of Vision*, where an eye in a suit (think of art collective/rock band the Residents) stands before a field of variously hinged planes, their vectors demonstrating the reach of his vision—Bayer was already attuned to the extreme demands the media puts on our attention. The work is installed on a brick substrate that was exposed by the artist when she excised a piece of the gallery's plaster wall. She repurposed the removed part to make an upholstered bench (*Alteration to Existing Conditions [II]*, 2017), a support for conversation. Indeed, though the gallery's legacy will be compressed into digital impressions, it will likewise be fleshed out anew in discursive space.

— *Annie Godfrey Larmon*

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*Artforum.com*
"Critics' Pick: Céline Condorelli"
by Annie Godfrey Larmon
5 May 2017

FRIEZE.COM

# Critic's Guide: New York

The best shows to see across town during Frieze Week New York

BY EVAN MOFFITT

Céline Condorelli, 'Epilogue', 2017, exterior view, P!, New York, pictured: *After Image (Bayer)* and *after* (both 2017). Courtesy: the artist and P!, New York

This site-specific presentation by Céline Condorelli is the very last exhibition at P!, a bite-sized gallery off Bowery run by curator and designer Prem Krishnamurthy. Given her longstanding engagement with architecture and other exhibition 'support structures', Condorelli is a fitting capstone for the five-year project; for 'Epilogue', she's applied vinyl prints to P!'s storefront windows, and cut sections from the interior walls, using the wood for upholstered gallery benches. The show's inspiration, Bauhaus artist and designer Herbert Bayer's 'Extended Field of Vision' (1930), rests in a rectangular excision, like a devotional altar in a wall niche. The diagram – which shows a male figure with an eyeball for a head peering up at a battery of floating wall panels – came to inspire an era of exhibition design that often put creativity and showmanship before viewers' interpretive agency. If Condorelli's interventions extend our field of vision, they leave us free to focus where (and when) we like.

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*Frieze.com*
"Critic's Guide: New York"
by Evan Moffitt
2 May 2017

EPILOGUE

# P! Gallery hosts its final exhibition with artworks by Celine Condorelli

By WILLIAM MENKING • May 9, 2017

Art Design East

P! Gallery hosts its final exhibition with drawings by Celine Condorelli. (Courtesy P! Gallery)

P! Gallery on Broome Street, just off Bowery, has been a hugely important center for displaying graphic arts and design since it opened five years ago. Started by graphic designer Prem Krishnamurthy of Project Projects, it has staged over 40 shows since it opened, but now the gallery is closing. Its final exhibit, created by U.K.-based artist

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*The Architect's Newspaper*
"P! Gallery hosts its final exhibition with artworks by Céline Condorelli"
by William Menking
9 May 2017

Celine Condorelli, is appropriately titled *Epilogue* and focuses on her research into issues of display and "cumulative labor and support structures."

The starting point or inspiration for the exhibit is graphic designer Herbert Bayer's 1930s technical exhibit drawing *Extended Field of Vision* (borrowed from a private collection for *Epilogue*) that features his oft-used device of "an exaggerated eye atop a male visitor's body that observes planes of display in every direction." The exhibit's press release notes Bayer's several "blind spots within existing histories" (i.e. his ambiguous position during the rise of National Socialism) and his later reticence to acknowledge this compromise. Its an important qualifier to the designer's successful later career but the exhibit does not engage these political issues. Instead, the exhibit puts forward and reflects on Condorelli's artistic practice that focuses on exhibition display and design. A second—but equally important—subtext for the show is P!'s five-year-long project of exhibits on design.

(Courtesy P! Gallery)

It begins in the gallery's Broome street picture window, which features a multi-layered window covering that colorfully frames the views between the street and the exhibition in the gallery. A series of Condorelli's exhibit-inspired drawings line the gallery walls and a section cut-out of the gallery's wall is repurposed into an upholstered seating unit for visitors to "rest, converse, and observe." A sculptural corrugated plastic room divider/curtain directs the public into the small gallery space to confront the exhibit and to celebrate the unfortunate closing of the gallery. The installation moves deliberately between historic references of exhibit design and the soon-to-be-shuttered gallery. Krishnamurthy started P! as an experiment in collapsing the boundaries of design, graphic arts, and architecture. He achieved it more than any other space in New York during this period and P! will be missed.

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*The Architect's Newspaper*
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ARTNEWS
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# ‘Push Unusual Ideas Into the World’: Prem Krishnamurthy of P! and Chris Sharp of Lulu Discuss Their Hybrid Spaces

By Andrew Russeth Posted **04/25/17 1:33 pm**

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*Artnews*
“Push Unusual Ideas Into the World”
by Andrew Russeth
25 April 2017


Exterior view of P! in New York during its second show, 'Possibility 02: Growth, Parts I–VI,' November 6–December 22, 2012.

NAHO KUBOTA/COURTESY P!

*It's a strange truth that, even as the art world expanded dramatically over the past decade, the number of truly interesting spaces—those operating in more unusual, riskier ways—remained pretty pretty low.*

*One that would have to be included in that small group, though, is P!, which the polymathic graphic designer Prem Krishnamurthy opened in 2012 on the Lower East Side of Manhattan with a bright red floor and a series of heady shows that radically transformed the space as they spotlighted a diverse array of figures, from Brian O'Doherty to Elaine Lustig Cohen, to artists one would be hard-pressed to see elsewhere in the city. Is P! a gallery, a project space, a seminar room, or a design showroom? It has been all of those things at various times, and often more than one of those things at once. Krishnamurthy, who sometimes refers to P! as a "polemical for-profit institution," kept the experimental factor high, even transforming P! into another institution called K. for a fast-paced five-month run.*

*Another space in that elusive category? Lulu, which the outré-minded curator Chris Sharp and the artist Martín Soto Climent began in the Colonia Roma neighborhood of Mexico City in 2013 as a tiny, immaculate white cube of about 100 square feet, tucked away in a nondescript building off the street. It expanded in remarkable fashion last year by adding another room of—wait for it—about 140 or so square feet with the same proportions as its original space. Despite its very modest size, it has hosted shows by heavy hitters like Nina Canell, John Smith, Aliza Nisenbaum, and B. Wurtz, becoming one of the more closely watched project spaces in the game.*

*Earlier this year, I hopped on Skype with Krishnamurthy and Sharp to hear the thinking behind their hybrid models, how those models have changed over the years, how they interact with the market and the internet, their plans for the future (as you may have heard, P! will no longer have a physical space in New York after next month, though there are other projects in the offing), and a lot, lot more. An edited and condensed version of our conversation follows below.*

**ARTnews: Let's begin by flashing back to when you were founding your spaces—what were your reasons for getting started?**

Prem Krishnamurthy: In 2012, when I was getting started with P!, I felt there wasn't enough attention being paid in New York to certain types of experimental exhibition making and design, as well as alternative curatorial models. P! was a space situated at the intersection of contemporary art and graphic design—as well as

architecture, writing, and music—although I was intentionally more guarded about acknowledging this at the beginning. At the same time, I was motivated to cast light on certain older, polymathic practitioners who hadn't had the kind of recognition that they ought to enjoy.

In addition, I felt the classic nonprofit model in New York was undergoing a transition. Working with other spaces outside the city and other programs with some degree of hybridity, I thought about opening a space that could function somewhere *in-between*—with the ethics of a nonprofit, yet working as a semicommercial gallery, which could represent a mix of different things for different people at different moments. That felt like the right direction to pursue.

Willem de Rooij's *Bouquet IX* (2012) on view at Lulu in Mexico City during its second show, 'Interior,' which ran September 9–November 17, 2013.

COURTESY LULU

**And how about for you, Chris?**

Chris Sharp: For me, it was much more spontaneous and less premeditated, although I feel as if it's gained a lot of clarity over the years. I didn't move to Mexico to open a space. It was a quality-of-life decision and then, soon after, Martín Soto Climent and I said, "Let's open a space." It was really spontaneous. We had various motives. He's an artist. He lives in Mexico City, but he kind of works all over and didn't have much of a relationship to the city, and I have always worked as an independent curator. So both of us wanted to have a stronger relationship to the city, to build something that would allow us to participate and contribute in a kind of sustained way. Being an independent curator, I always had the sense of being parachuted into a site, curating a given show, and then being airlifted out. I had no relationship after the opening.

Also, when I first moved here I was a bit surprised by the informality of the independent space scene. There wasn't that much activity. There was one great space called Preteen, but otherwise there seemed to be a lot of these pop-up exhibitions in semi-derelict buildings with no real curatorial focus, which seemed like more of an excuse to drink mescal than actually to look at art. Which is not a bad thing, but at the same time I thought, What if you had some really alternative and formal space to present art, like a little white cube? So that was a motive.

**How did those plans change over time—how did your exhibition programs develop?**

CS: One thing that characterizes Lulu is thinking about its programming as a linear group exhibition. Ideally, you could take the entire program of Lulu and stick it in a museum and you would have a coherent group exhibition. I'm not sure it would be a good exhibition, necessarily, but it would be coherent. Another big thing is sensitivity to the local scene. I am an American living in Mexico City, a context charged with a lot of colonial anxiety. So there are a lot of different things that I have to keep in mind, one of which is the local context. Like, what kind of art is legible here? How will it impact the scene? Will it generate a productive friction?


Installation view of 'Société Réaliste: A Rough Guide To Hell' at P!, September 5–October 27, 2013, curated by Prem Krishnamurthy and Niels Van Tomme

NAHO KUBOTA/COURTESY P!

PK: Somewhat by happenstance, because of the proximity of my graphic design studio, Project Projects, P! ended up on Broome Street, where it verges on both the Lower East Side and Chinatown. It was really important to me that it have a very public presence and speak to different audiences. I've often referred to novelist China Miéville's book *The City & the City*, which artist Roger White turned me on to years ago. In it, there are two cities that exist in the same physical space but that don't see each other. That was a great metaphor for the fact that you have the Lower East Side with all these galleries and that's growing, but Chinatown is also there and Chinatown is growing; there are codes that make each of these communities illegible to each other. At the beginning, we took pains to communicate bilingually, issuing our press releases in both Chinese and English, and our exhibitions took place in a storefront that could speak to the street.

The primary mode of P! is less about linearity or sequence and more focused on juxtaposition of dissimilar things. Our first exhibition featured three practitioners from radically different contexts, and placed them in a small space together. So rather than showing objects and ideas that are similar, it was about presenting contrasts and then extending this principle over time. Our second year opened with a solo show by Société Réaliste—who to my mind represent a particularly European conceptualist bent that is political, coupled with a very abstract, minimal, and design-oriented approach to display—and then followed with an exhibition by the Hong Kong–born, New York–based artist Wong Kit Yi, in which she invited a *feng shui* master to help choose artists and curate a show. This move juxtaposed two completely different philosophical and visual approaches to organizing a space, one after another.

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Installation view of 'The Ceiling Should Be Green (天花板應該是綠色的),' November 8–December 22, 2013, curated by Prem Krishnamurthy and Ali Wong.

NAHO KUBOTA/COURTESY P!

I've often tried to create a sequence of shows that is quite disjunctive, so that different audiences come to different shows, but then eventually start to visit for the overall program.

CS: That's super interesting, and different from what we're doing. Lulu is very consistent for a number of reasons. One is that I feel the context of Mexico City is dominated by a very specific aesthetic discourse, which tends to be of the order of sociopolitical conceptualism. You see a lot of conceptual art that is totally embedded in language, in which form is secondary to content. One of the main motives of Lulu has been to try to provide an alternative to this mode, where there is no gap between form and content, in which artists think plastically, and in which, most of the time, language is not immediately present.

**It's intriguing that your galleries started around the same time—how did you guys first meet?**

CS: I think it was in Mexico City, when you came down to do Material.

PK: That's my memory too. When I met you there was an immediate familiarity; one of our first conversations was about what it meant to be a semicommercial or project space participating in an art fair. That was the impetus for having this conversation. We thought it could be interesting, because while there are obviously spaces trying to accomplish this in other contexts—I know venues in Asia that are similar, probably related to different funding structures over there—it's not something that most people in the art world talk openly about. I remember a recent conversation with Brian O'Doherty about his own polymathic practice. He said something offhand like, "When people ask you what you do, it's easiest if you just say you do one thing. If people want design, tell them you're a designer. If people want art, tell them you're a curator. When I used to tell people I was a writer *and* an artist *and* a critic, they didn't take me seriously." He probably has a good point. For some people, P! is a project space and for others, it's a gallery. It's easier for them to grasp that way, even if that's only one aspect of the whole.

CS: P! helped me define Lulu. I always have a lot of visitors from the States. People ask me about Lulu and often I mention P! And they're like, "Oh yeah!" It helps them understand what I mean when I say we're not exactly a commercial gallery. We're a hybrid nonprofit. At this point I would say that Lulu is neither a commercial gallery, nor a nonprofit, nor an institution, but all of the above. It occupies no single role, but all of them at the same time. That's one of the reasons I wanted to have this conversation, to define what a hybrid nonprofit is, or begin to define it, or what that means. I don't know if it's necessarily a new or an ideal

model, but it feels special and timely, in that it is a curatorially driven as opposed to a commercially driven model, which is ultimately characterized by an ontological flexibility not currently afforded by any other extant models—models that must rigidly adhere to a given set of conventions and certainties. But these are increasingly uncertain times. It seems that the special agency of the hybrid nonprofit lies within its intrinsic uncertainty, its ambiguity.

Installation view of Michael E. Smith's exhibition at Lulu in Mexico City, December 13, 2014–February 1, 2015.

COURTESY LULU

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*Artnews*
"Push Unusual Ideas Into the World"
by Andrew Russeth
25 April 2017

**That's a nice way of putting it. And I think that is something that really unites you two. I'm wondering if there were models that you had in mind when developing your galleries, whether historical or ongoing.**

PK: At a different kind of scale, one would be SALT in Istanbul, which Project Projects created the graphic design for—so I've been very involved in that institution from the start. SALT is an experimental model that is multidisciplinary and progressive, yet funded by the commercial activities of a bank. Project Projects also once designed and co-edited a book about the MATRIX/Berkeley program—the first project space within a museum on the West Coast. We sorted through the entire archive of exhibitions they had mounted since 1978. There existed spontaneity in how they thought about their program, coupled with rigor; for example, they had a mathematical system for naming each of their shows in sequence. Yet a MATRIX exhibition could be a single wall of the gallery, so there was a kind of informality and fluidity to the program that was compelling.

One space I have never visited but that has been an inspiration from afar is Eastside Projects in Birmingham, in the U.K. It has an ethos in which everything is an actor: the space itself accrues over time, with artists creating work that remains permanently or semipermanently. Elements overlie each other. The space is also very interested in artistic labor and collaboration in multiple forms. Céline Condorelli, one of the founders of that space, is an artist and I asked her to create the final show at P! in New York, "Epilogue."

Another model I've thought about sometimes—although I didn't know much about it before starting P!—is Colin de Land and his gallery, American Fine Arts. I'm friends with some of the artists who showed at AFA, but I didn't know too much beyond the mythology until people began to bring it up in relation to P! and also through my teaching at CCS Bard, where the Colin de Land and Pat Hearn archives are. It's interesting to see that, although it was a commercial gallery, it fulfilled many of the functions that we now consider as belonging to the nonprofit sector. De Land would run seminars there, as a way to earn money and also to gather together collectors as a community.

Installation view of 'Melanie Smith: Fordlandia' at Lulu in Mexico City, August 8–September 13, 2015.

COURTESY LULU

**Absolutely. And how about you, Chris? Were there historical touchstones for Lulu?**

CS: One was Castillo/Corrales in Paris. I was living in Milan when it opened, and later I moved back to Paris. It really became this kind of small alternative institution with a library/bookstore—a kind of discursive program. There were talks and then it had the kind of artists that you just weren't seeing in Paris—it was working on a really small scale and also in a kind of hybrid mode. You weren't quite sure where the money was coming from. It was started by four people, artists and curators, and I've since learned that they made a decision at the beginning to have no state sponsorship, to be totally autonomous and independent.

Another space in Paris was Shanaynay, which was started by a friend of mine, Jason Hwang, who now runs a gallery called High Art with a couple of other people. He started it with Romain Chenais. That was a really interesting program as well that was just about exhibition making.

While I really appreciate the discursive bent of Europe, there was a point when I was living there in the aughts that it felt like the exhibition or the art in the space was almost secondary or even tertiary to discussions about art. I remember there was an essay at one point by Anton Vidokle called "Art Without Artists," and it felt like he had this anxiety about curators creating art, and thus a corresponding loss of agency. I think what he really should have been anxious about was art being totally subsumed by discourse, as in Artists Without Art. That anxiety pushed me toward curating that really focused on exhibition making and on the presentation of objects—their ability to communicate something beyond language, or plastically or phenomenologically—not through language.

Installation view of 'Power Structures,' with
Leslie Hewitt, Karel Martens, and Zia Haider Rahman, at P! in New York, December 17, 2014–January 18, 2015.

COURTESY P!

Another source of inspiration is Midway Contemporary Art in Minneapolis. I don't know that John Rasmussen, the founder who still runs it, is interested in this idea of the linear group exhibition so much as he's interested in a real heterogeneity and quality. I like the way it functions—in the context of Minneapolis. It's a model for us because that's the only place where you're going to see those artists in the area. And Lulu is the same thing. A lot of the artists who were presenting in Mexico City had never shown in Mexico, and some of them not even in Latin America.

**It feels as if you both represent a turn away from what Vidokle was addressing—it's about presentation and the power of aesthetics. And when you started, it felt really refreshing.**

PK: I knew from the get-go that, although I am personally interested in conceptual modes, I would come at exhibition making from a very physical approach. Given my background as an exhibition designer, I've always been tasked with making ideas engaging and accessible. As such, I've never been one to curate "essay exhibitions" that are stand-ins for texts, but rather I create exhibitions that are about artists, objects, and display.

CS: And I'm not saying that I'm anti-discursive or anti-conceptual or what have you, but it just got to the point where art, for me, felt reduced to a form of communication, and art is not communication. It's not about the transmission of information. It's not this one-to-one representation of an idea. It's something much more complex.

PK: I agree. P! will shift its mode after May, but spatialization will always be quite important to me. With Lulu, I think you've done something remarkable: you've created a space that is extremely precise in how visitors experience it physically, while on the other hand the institution acknowledges and plays with its second life online, for the audiences who aren't able to be there in person.


Exterior view of Lulu in Mexico City during the run of 'Martín Soto Climent: Retrospectiva,' curated by Chris Sharp, June 11–August 6, 2016.

COURTESY LULU

CS: Yeah, totally. Our initial space was 100 square feet—about 9 square meters. It was the smallest place in Mexico City and it was incredibly difficult to document, but it immediately became clear to me that only a very small portion of our intended audience would be able to see the show and that each show had to be two shows, so to speak. The most important show is the one in the space. It has to be perfect. It has to go beyond the artists' expectations in terms of an ideal presentation. And then also in terms of documentation and web presence, it had to be equal to the exhibition.

You're in New York, on the Lower East Side, you have a lot of foot traffic, you have great neighbors. (You were there before most of them, but nonetheless.) We don't. We get a fair amount of foot traffic, but our primary audience is international; this is a kind of paradox—not that our local audience is not super important—but when I say that our primary audience is international, I mean that's where the discussion is taking place.

PK: I remember after I visited Lulu for the first time, I called my partner in Berlin and said, "Oh my God, I just visited an amazing space in Mexico City. Maybe I don't need a space in New York on Broome Street that costs nearly $4,000 a month anymore. Maybe I could have a small perfect space in Berlin or another city—it might be even better." It offered the option that, instead of my current setup, I could run a space that's small but precise, and precisely calibrated to its local audience.

In terms of display and architecture: from the get-go, I was trash-talking the white cube. You might remember, I came out of the gate with a bright red floor and a very rough-edged, water-stained ceiling.

**That was a big deal! I remember a New York dealer mentioning the floor to me excitedly when you opened.**

PK: It was a big part of the space, that it represented the opposite of a white cube. But the flip side is that Lulu's white cube really is a *perfect* white cube. The floating floor, every one of the details. I remember walking in there and having an almost religious experience. I was like, "Damn, Brian O'Doherty was right—but what's wrong with the white cube, if it's pushing the right things?"

CS: Like I said earlier, when I arrived, there were all these informal exhibitions in semi-derelict spaces and it felt like the question was, what if you introduced an extreme formality into this tradition of informality?

Another thing that you touched on inadvertently was this sense of hyperbole. I mean, Lulu is absurd. You walk into this crumbling Mexico City pueblo-style apartment, you walk down this hallway, you turn a corner, and you enter this perfect white cube. So there's this kind of incommensurability between it and its immediate context. It's over the top. For me, I'm not necessarily for or against the white cube. I am for finding the best possible conditions to present a given work of art, and that doesn't necessarily mean the white cube.


Early in 2015, P! became K. Here, K.'s first show, 'Real Flow,' which ran March 1–15.

SEBASTIAN BACH/COURTESY P!

PK: I had my own flirtation with the white cube when we briefly became K.—even though we did have a pink ceiling by Julie Ault & Martin Beck, which most people didn't notice. The experience also made me recognize that no white cube is a truly white cube. It's impossible to have a perfect space, no matter how hard you try.

In my time in New York, I witnessed spaces becoming more and more formalized—absurdly pristine. There was a moment of a kind of 1970s throwback: for example, when Artists Space ripped out all its interior architecture under Stefan Kalmár, people talked about the fact that its unfinished wood floors were reminiscent of '70s lofts. But even this kind of roughness is assimilated quickly. I was interested in a kind of "bumpiness," something that's "off" enough in its architecture and exhibitions that you can't help but notice the space in a conscious way.

**Speaking about context, let's jump to art fairs, which are super homogenizing spaces, and how you navigate them in your work.**

CS: We approach context more traditionally than P! I've seen some pretty amazing presentations at art fairs by P! that were totally experimental. In our program, we feature artists who are both emerging and historically established—B. Wurtz, Manfred Pernice. We've featured a lot of institutional-caliber artists. But in terms of art fairs, we try to show artists who are still emerging and give them the opportunity to get exposure and develop a kind of economy. Ideally, we do one-person presentations. It's funny, most galleries want to present an artist and earn some money, which goes back into the gallery, developing a specific identity for the program. But with Lulu, we present an artist one time at an art fair and then maintain the relationship as friends. If Lulu's in a position to do anything, it's maybe to help launch emerging artists.

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*Artnews*
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A work by Aaron Gemmill at P!'s 2013 NADA Miami Beach booth.

COURTESY P!

**How about you, Prem? I remember some wild booths from you at fairs.**

PK: Art fair shows were actually a distillation of our mission, for which we organized very particular presentations. I always considered art fairs a historically significant form: the trade fair, a precursor to the contemporary art fair, was the modern venue *par excellence* for the propagation of ideologies. That's what happened in the postwar period. You'd have trade fairs for consumer goods or furniture or design objects, which communicated Cold War values. Exhibition design played a large role in that.

We participated in art fairs for only two years, but we did several of them in quick succession. They often focused on juxtaposing older and younger voices in some sort of experimental installation. Our first art-fair installation was at NADA Miami Beach in 2013. It involved Karel Martens monoprints on the wall and a floor piece by Aaron Gemmill that broke as people walked on it, which would then become printing plates for a set of future works. It was a small booth that tried to juxtapose these two artists as well as presentation and production. We always tried to use the art fair booth as a way to push unusual ideas into the world. The fairs are also where people first saw us as a gallery; in New York people usually thought we were just an experimental or project space and not commercially oriented. They were often surprised when they found out that things were for sale. But this is different at an art fair: whether you're a gallery or a nonprofit or a magazine or whatever, you're all there to sell, sell, sell.

CS: Participating in art fairs caused a lot of confusion for Lulu. Our first was Material. When we were starting, we applied for funding from a lot of local grant sources, but we didn't get any. Since then we haven't applied for anything. We have such low overhead that we realized we actually didn't need that much money to run the space, and then we began to participate in other art fairs. If we do sell, it tends to happen at art fairs. As a rule we participate only in art fairs that feature other project spaces that are trying to support this kind of alternative mode. We have been approached by a lot of large art fairs, but it doesn't make sense. For us, it's about maintaining a certain baseline economy so that we can present the kind of exhibitions we want to present. It's very practical in the end.

Installation view of works by B. Wurtz in his solo show at Lulu, February 2– April 15, 2017

COURTESY LULU

PK: We also participated in fairs because it allowed us to support the space. Starting P! and considering possible funding sources, I realized that the people who support nonprofits in New York are also important collectors. Rather than asking them for donations, it felt somehow more straightforward (albeit quixotic) to say, "I'll try to make the institution a place that can sell work; that'll be the main way it supports itself."

Our model coincides with a moment in which traditional distinctions between not-for-profit and commercial art institutions—themselves perhaps 50-odd years old—are visibly beginning to erode. Mega galleries have museum-quality education departments, and nonprofits sell prolifically on the art fair circuit; the classical

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divisions between categories no longer hold.

At the same time, another important reason for P! to participate in the market was because of how collections—and here I'm talking primarily about institutional collections—function to create an archive of the present for future audiences. For some of the practitioners I'm working with, especially those who don't come from a contemporary art context, inscribing their work into the historical record is important. I sometimes say that we are a "polemical for-profit institution."

CS: That's a really beautiful way to put it.

When all is said and done, I'm a curator, I'm not a dealer or a gallerist or a writer. That's how I've been trying to fight what I consider to be the good fight. But I've also realized that when we presented Aliza Nisenbaum at NADA she had no commercial representation at all. By the end of the fair, not only had I sold out the booth, I had created a waiting list for her and she had three or four galleries clamoring to work with her. Not only were we able to have a really positive impact on her career but we were able to advocate the kind of art we thought was important to be seen.

Installation view of P!'s final show at its Broome Street space in New York, Installation view of 'Céline Condorelli, Epilogue,' April 23–May 21, 2017.

SEBASTIAN BACH/COURTESY P!

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I was at NADA Miami in December, presenting Daniel Rios Rodriguez, and I ran into a number of colleagues—it's amazing the look on their faces when they see me as a colleague working in an art fair. I undergo an ontological transformation in their eyes. My status as a curator is put in question and undergoes a total crisis, which I think is both funny and something that needs to be considered.

**I think that speaks to the conservatism that still exists about the defined roles that people fall into in the art world, like you were saying about Brian O'Doherty, Prem. As you reach the 4- or 5-year point, I'm wondering how you characterize the state of hybrid spaces. Where do you want to go with the models you've built?**

PK: I do think that I've had a tendency to separate my different roles over the past years. Now, I'm trying to work in another direction, to figure out a way, on a personal and professional level, where I don't have to say I'm *either* a curator or graphic designer or gallerist or editor or teacher. I'd rather be able to say that I'm doing *all* these different things and acknowledge them equally.

The next transformation of P! is moving toward that. After P! closes at the end of May, it will continue to organize exhibitions both in New York and abroad—functioning as a kind of curatorial office, working with specific artists on projects and exhibitions. At the same time, I will continue my work as a graphic designer, directing Project Projects with my colleagues there. In 2018 I'm planning a new kind of space in another city, with a focus on experimental exhibition making. I do believe there's more tolerance for this kind of hybridity in our particular historical moment.

Installation view of works by Anna Schachinger at her solo show at Lulu, which runs April 22–June 24, 2017.

COURTESY LULU

CS: I think that one of the ways we can permit those selves to coexist is through the space. People go to P! and see exhibitions about designers that inform their practice as designer, as gallerist, and as curator. The actual physical space is what permits it. The same thing happens with me with Lulu. It's obviously a very curatorially driven program. We also produce catalogues, and I typically write for every catalogue and write the press release. And if you are so inclined, in most cases, you can buy a work of art from Lulu.

After Lulu's expansion, we're really happy about the size of the space now. We have a street-side space, it's a storefront, so it's accessible that way, which gives it much more of a relation to the local neighborhood and by extension the local art community. I want us to do more publications because I think there is not a huge

production of publications in Latin America. It is more like the United States—it is very different from Europe where you have this kind of surfeit of publication production. I think publications are a different way of making art exist and circulate.

Martín and I are also talking about starting a curatorial residency, because there are almost none of them in Mexico. We're thinking of something where we would invite two curators a year. Something very simple, where they just come and do research or maybe give a lecture or some kind of presentation, but in general just to get to know the scene and make it circulate that way. We're trying to develop the more institutional side of Lulu.

# Wong Kit Yi *Futures, Again*

## *P!, New York 8 March – 12 April*

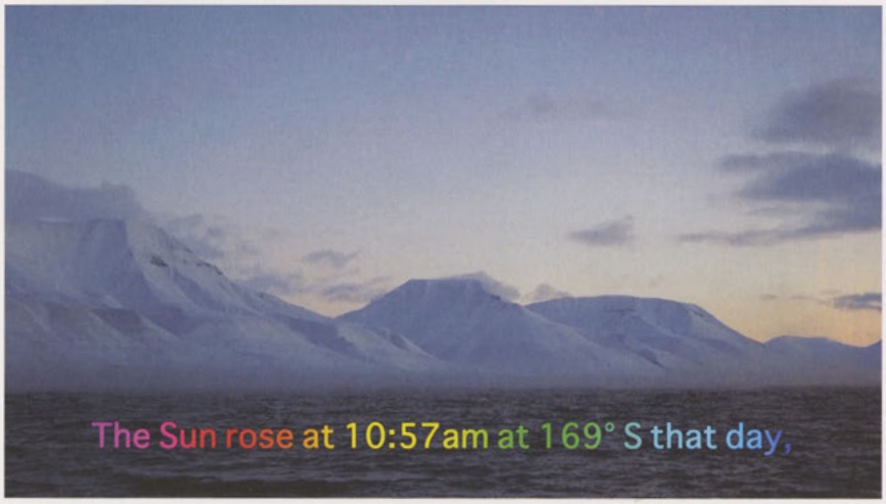
'I thank first of all God, and then my patrons, who have granted me everything.' So Giorgio Vasari rhapsodises in his conclusion to *The Lives of the Artists* (1550). Patronage is no less important to the contemporary artworld, and a bespoke model of it courses through the heart of Wong Kit Yi's exhibition.

This layered show builds on *North Pole Futures*, which took place at P! during spring 2015. For that exhibition, Ali Wong, the artist's self-styled 'investment manager' and alter ego, offered collectors the chance to commission customised works of art in order to fund the artist's stint with the Arctic Circle Expeditionary Residency. Prospective patrons selected a colour, an esoteric English word and a date during Wong's residency when she would produce the tailored work. That autumn Wong sailed to the Arctic Circle for three weeks. In her current exhibition, she displays the fruits of this journey, including a new video, *A River in the Freezer* (2017), while also offering for sale the few remaining dates from 2015: the yet-to-be-commissioned memories from the residency. Should a collector acquire one of these unrealised pieces, Wong would produce a work that evokes the memories of both artist and patron.

Wong recruited fellow expeditionary residents – artists, scientists and writers – to help her execute *October 8, 2015, p.m. / Argus-eyed / Gold* (2015). Bracketed by eight smaller pictures, this piece's central photograph presents eight individuals as they form an outward-facing circle. Gazing out at the surrounding tundra, Wong's collaborators clutch gilt pinhole cameras. Producing the index of Wong's experience, these cameras have created the eight hazy landscapes that frame this work's central image above and below, revealing a black-and-white sense of isolation, absent humans. Other commissioned works, like *October 11, 2015, a.m. / Emmetropia / Forbidden Red* (2015), read initially as arresting, romantic and performative documents of the artist immersed in the natural world. On the fifth day of her residency, the captain of Wong's ship dropped her off on a small landmass so she could create a picturesque image, dramatically staged against the backdrop of pale-blue glacier. Here, the camera framed Wong as an intrepid explorer with a blazing distress flare grasped in her hand.

The artist's rich research-based practice fluoresces in *A River in the Freezer*, a video that nimbly cycles through themes of geologic time, the arctic and cheating death. A soothing male narrator discusses cryogenics while clips of Cygnus Hyōga, an anime superhero who wields icy magic (and has a last name that means 'glacier' in Japanese), flash across the monitor. A biochemist explains the process of coring and studying ice samples. Rainbow-coloured singalong lyrics move viewers from scene to scene, switching between documentary and music video. Auto-Tune voices sing the idiosyncrasies of Longyearbyen, Norway, one of the world's northernmost settlements, where people cannot be interred – bodies buried in permafrost do not decompose, so the dead must pass to the afterlife further south. Addictive and enrapturing, Wong's ode to the subzero world underwrites her commitment to subject matter beyond novel economic models.

*Futures, Again* spotlights a tension some of us would prefer to ignore: the push-and-pull between the financial system in which art operates, and the weighty meanings ascribed to works of art. At one point in the video the narrator asks, "Who owns the right to harvest ice?" Paralleling this question, I think, 'Who owns the right to acquire this art?' The answer to both of these is, ultimately, the same: whoever possesses the requisite capital. Wong's alluring take on the artist-as-entrepreneur is franchise-ready. *Owen Duffy*




*A River in the Freezer* (video still), 2017, HD video, sound, 25 min.
Courtesy the artist and P!, New York



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*Art Review*
by Owen Duffy
May 2017

**WONG KIT YI**, *October 8, 2015, p.m. / Argus-eyed / Gold*, 2015, inkjet on archival paper, eight pinhole photographs on gelatin silver paper, 61x 81 cm. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.

# FUTURES, AGAIN
# WONG KIT YI

MIMI WONG
P!

HONG KONG USA

Wong Kit Yi fulfills a past promise with “Futures, Again” at P! gallery in New York. Two years ago, the conceptual and performance artist proposed a novel idea to fund her three-week-long residency in the Arctic Circle: she sold commissions for customized work to be produced during the expedition. These contractual agreements became the basis for the 2015 show “North Pole Futures,” which was also curated by P!’s Prem Krishnamurthy. “They were basically buying a piece of paper from me,” Wong said of her patrons, who were only allowed to specify a date and time, an unusual word, and a color as prompts for the purchased pieces.

Exhibited in public for the first time, the completed works hang on the walls as a timeline, ranging from the 7th to 18th of Wong's October 2015 residency. "They represent a moment from the past that's now been made visible," Krishnamurthy explained. On the second day of her arctic adventure, Wong asked eight fellow travelers, which included a mix of artists and scientists, to stand in a circle facing different directions while holding pinhole cameras. Solving the problem of digital cameras dying easily in the extreme cold, both the performance and resulting photographs became the realization of *October 8, 2015, p.m. / Argus-eyed / Gold* (2015).

Installation view of **WONG KIT YI**'s *October 14, 2015, a.m. / Chanticleer / Dragon's Blood*, 2015, inkjet on archival paper, one toner print on colored paper. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.

Another instance of puzzle-solving helped produce *October 14, 2015, a.m. / Chanticleer / Dragon's Blood* (2015). Upon learning that roosters do not exist in the arctic, she wrote an apologetic letter to her patron stating that, according to geologist Ólafur Ingólfsson, "the closest substitute would be a small chicken-like bird called the Ptarmigan, which croaks but does not sing." With the aid of a feather duster she found on board the ship, the artist transformed herself into the "alternative rooster" she was searching for, and photographed herself standing in the arctic water.

If the commissioned works gesture to the past, then the newest addition to the show, *A River in the Freezer* (2017), encapsulates the present in terms of Wong's journey. Both the physical and creative starting point, the world's northernmost settlement of Longyearbyen, Norway—and, in particular, its bizarre law that people are not allowed to die there because the frozen ground prevents bodies from decomposing—served as the inspiration for the short film. Weaving together interviews, found footage, anime excerpts and her own photography, the artist-turned-documentarian explores a myriad of topics from glaciology (the scientific study of glaciers) to Cold War intrigue to the socioeconomic history of ice. An electropop soundtrack composed by Kyle Oppenheimer converts her meditative essay into whimsical lyrics, and transforms the experimental travelogue into a kind of educational karaoke.


**WONG KIT YI**, *A River in the Freezer*, 2017, still from HD video with sound: 25 min. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.

**WONG KIT YI**, *Parallel Memory, October 27, 2015*, 2017, laser-etched UV plexiglass, archival inkjet prints, custom sliding frame, 70 × 130 cm. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York.

"I think she's interested not in the static object, but the object that's performative," Krishnamurthy said in describing Wong's artistic philosophy. *Parallel Memory, October 27, 2015* (2017) features two identical photos taken at Longyearbyen that can slide interchangeably back and forth. In one of the frames, a poem recalls her associations with the moon that she observed during the time of year when the sun no longer rose above the horizon: she writes, "It's a time of rejuvenation." This format will become the prototype for Wong's future work, which in this case are the unsold dates from her trip. Should they eventually be purchased, she will collaborate with the patron to generate a "parallel memory" to be determined in October 2017.

"Futures, Again" offers a fascinating glimpse into how one artist uses time not only conceptually but also as a means to sustain her project. In her revisiting of the "past-future" or "future-past," Wong prevents moments from stagnating by continuously mining them for new possibilities.

Exhibition view of **WONG KIT YI**'s exhibition "Futures, Again" at P!, New York, 2017. Photo by Sebastian Bach. Courtesy the artist and P!

*Wong Kit Yi's "Futures, Again" is on view at P!, New York, until April 12, 2017.*

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ArtAsiaPacific.com
"Futures, Again: Wong Kit Yi"
by Mimi Wong
4 April 2017

ARTNEWS

# 9 Art Events to Attend in New York City This Week

BY *The Editors of ARTnews (http://www.artnews.com/author/the_editors_of_artnews/)* POSTED **03/06/17 12:06 PM**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8**

**Opening: Wong Kit Yi at P!**

With news that the Trump administration will significantly cut the Environmental Protection Agency's budget, Wong Kit Yi's show at P! gallery seems timely. A sequel of sorts to the artist's 2015 show at P!, this exhibition will include works related to Wong's 2015 trip to the Arctic. Among the pieces on view will be a new 40-minute film that brings together found and original footage of glaciers melting, a manga character, and documentation of the 19th-century ice trade, all of which are displayed here in a sing-along karaoke format. The show will meditate on what it means to be truly frozen in time and whether anything can last forever.

*P!, 334 Broome Street, 12–6 p.m.*

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"9 Art Events to Attend in New York City This Week"
8 March 2017

Wong Kit Yi: *October 8, 2015, P.M. / Argus-eyed / Gold*, 2015, inkjet print, 24 by 32 inches.

**NO CHILL**

In 2015, the New York- and Hong Kong-based artist Wong Kit Yi had a show called "North Pole Futures" at P! Gallery in New York. She offered collectors a chance to commission performances or conceptual works made in the Arctic Circle, where she was about to travel for a twenty-one-day "expeditionary residency." This spring Wong returns to the gallery with documentation of the completed commissions and other new works made, I guess, while standing on a sheet of melting ice.

# Roger White

## The writer, artist, and publisher shares five recent insights with Ross Simonini.

Roger White spends much of his time in Vermont, surrounded by snow, painting portraits and still lifes. His show at New York's Rachel Uffner Gallery (through February 19) includes pictures of mushrooms he grew from a kit and a portrait of his four-year-old daughter. Despite his rural locale and homespun subject matter, White is a trenchant documentarian of contemporary art. His 2015 book *The Contemporaries* takes a prismatic look at the art world, including MFA programs—he teaches at the Rhode Island School of Design—as well as artists who have willfully dropped out of the gallery system. He is a co-founder, with Dushko Petrovich, of the press Paper Monument, which also produces a journal of the same name. Their latest publication, *Social Medium: Artists Writing, 2000–2015*, "punctures the conventional idea that as an artist you write just to explain your own work," White says. "It should irk people who still want to think of artists as talented idiots."

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*Art in America*
"No Chill"
by Roger White
February 2017

# "THE STAND"

## P!

Just in time for the inauguration of the forty-fifth president of the United States and the announcement from *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* that the Doomsday Clock had been moved forward from three minutes to midnight to two and a half,

View of the exhibition "The Stand," 2017, showing (center) Faheem Majeed's *Fields of Our Fathers*, 2016, charcoal on muslin, at P!

P! staged a version of the apocalyptic nightmares many have been having of late. "The Stand," curated by P! director Prem Krishnamurthy and artist-curator Anthony Marcellini, drew inspiration from Stephen King's novel of the same title—a sprawling epic in which good and evil duke it out in the aftermath of a global epidemic. Featuring the work of twenty-five artists crammed into the mini storefront gallery, the exhibition was bewildering, cacophonous, and surprisingly odorous thanks to a curatorial decision to spread rubber mulch across the floor, dividing it diagonally into a blue section and a black section that loosely demarcated opposing sides of the struggle. Meant as a play on the sandbox Robert Smithson proposed in "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey"—in which the contents of two different-colored sections of sand would inevitably, irreversibly mix, due to forces of entropy—the floor installation undermined what already seemed an unstable boundary between light and dark, with the mulch being tracked back and forth over the course of the exhibition's run.

Hung along the blurry borderline was Faheem Majeed's *Fields of Our Fathers* (2016), a large piece of muslin crisscrossed by charcoal rubbings made from the surfaces of farmlands in Wisconsin, where the work was originally exhibited. This was one of several pieces making reference to the American landscape, whose depopulated locales take on weighty significance throughout King's saga. Another such work, e-team's *Artificial Traffic Jam* (2005), is a video made in the Nevada desert in collaboration with the people of Montello, a remote community of fewer than a hundred inhabitants. We watch a series of dusty automobiles gradually form a bumper-to-bumper traffic line along an otherwise abandoned dirt road, their drivers honking raucously as Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again" plays on the soundtrack.

The familiar voice of the perpetually road-tripping country crooner lent an unsettling irony to the more macabre works on view. These included Xaviera Simmons's *Whatever the Cost, I'll Pay in Full* (2010), a black-and-white pigment print featuring a large owl with a mouse dangling helplessly from its beak, and Dana Schutz's *Bird in Throat* (2011), a woodblock print depicting a man whose neck is agonizingly distended in the shape of a bird. In the company of these avian terrors, the American eagle represented in sculptural outline in Marcos Lutyens's *Bird of a Feather* (2016–17) seemed a sinister national emblem, while a Trevor Paglen photograph of contrails left in restricted airspace above Nevada, presumably by military aircraft, reminded us that our skies are perpetually stalked by the most deadly birds of prey. Jonathan Bruce Williams's *Reception Room* (2017), a blipping and bleeping chandelier made from 3D-printed materials, has a signal jammer nestled within it, evoking the "dark territory" not only of a world without wireless communication, but of a political moment in which much appears cloaked in secrecy.

The show also included a number of seeming counterpoints to these evocations of the state apparatus. The contribution by the collaborative group the Hinterlands from their larger work *The Radicalization Process* (2016) includes archival storage boxes filled with sticks of dynamite, presumably for seditious ends. Edgar A. Heap of Birds's *Genocide and Democracy* (2016) comprises eight red-and-white monoprints resembling protest signs, which intermingle hollow patriotic sentiments with references to the opprobrious treatment of Native Americans.

Needless to say, most of the work on view seemed to amplify the anxieties of the present moment. But there were notable exceptions. Hanging inconspicuously on opposite walls of the space were two small, abstract compositions by Lisi Raskin, each tenderly constructed out of paper and slivers of glued-together wood. Although the titles, *Rise* and *Shine*, had ambiguous connotations in relation to the show's larger themes, they read foremost as subtle allusions to a brighter dawn in this period of last stands.

—David Markus

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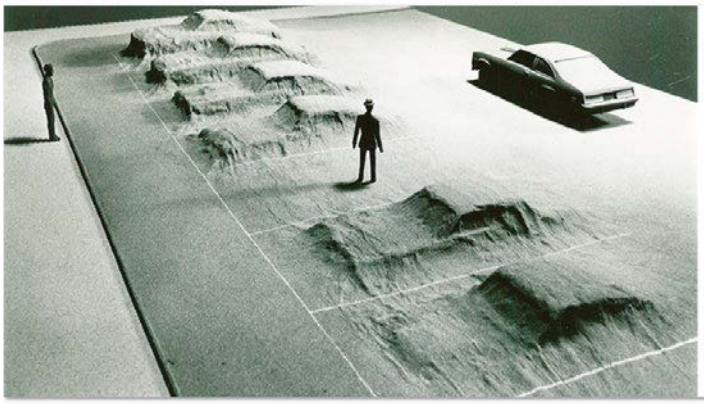
*Art in America*
"The Stand"
by David Markus
April 2017

the village VOICE



# The Stand



*By Rachael Rakes*

Inspired by Stephen King's 1978 dystopian bestseller – read through the dire and bifurcated political landscape of the contemporary U.S. – P!'s current show, "The Stand," is like a micro-size biennial of American apocalypse. It's also an impressive feat of exhibition design: The tiny gallery has made room for works by 25 artists. The several pieces with audio play nicely around one another, creating a fun-house-like percussion but absent the sound-bleed cacophony that usually plagues a/v-heavy exhibitions. Using works spanning from 1969 (Royce Dendler's *Oscillator*) to 2017 (Lisi Raskin's *Rise* and *Shine*, Anicka Yi's *Bathing in Hurricanes*), curators Prem Krishnamurthy and Anthony Marcellini have drawn a landscape of American art in a range of moods and modes that together form a productive pessimistic imaginary. And still, they provide counters to this vision, as in the decision to cover the gallery floor in black and cobalt-blue rubber mulch pellets. At the beginning of the show's run, in January, the two colors of mulch each filled half the room; now, as the show progresses and more people visit, they blend, creating an unsteady and messy but integrated terrain.

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*The Village Voice*
"The Stand"
by Rachael Rakes
22 February 2017

ARTFORUM

# “The Stand”

**P!**
**334 Broome Street**
**January 13–February 26**

**View of “The Stand,” 2017.**

Cobalt-blue and charcoal-colored rubber mulch cover the floor, cutting the space into two triangles of color. More ecosystem than exhibition, the artists in Prem Krishnamurthy and Anthony Marcellini’s postapocalyptic show, “The Stand,” play with light, firmament, plants, totemic forms, and animals. The show changes the doomed mood of the desert playground from *Terminator 2* to one of strange playfulness.

Here, memories of sulky-dreamy Sarah Connor’s muscled arms clinging to a chain-link fence shape-shift. The outstretched arms of a black NBA player in Paul Pfeiffer’s luminous photograph *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (07)*, 2002, points to Basquiat’s pained meditations on black resilience and black death. We see the player’s head, wearing the crown of crowd support, ultralight beamed. The black athlete, name and team number digitally removed from his jersey, is not a commodity, not Samson tumbling the pillars of spectacular captivity. The booming digital glow acts as a shield from the arena’s mob, and the death knell of racial iconography. Beneath the hallucinatory blues and yellows flaring in Connie Samaras’s archival pigment print *The Past is Another Planet: Huntington Desert Garden, Cacti; OEB 1723, Novel Fragment, Parable of the Sower, 1989*, 2016, cactus soil mixes with lines from Octavia Butler’s novel *Parable of the Sower* (1993). While the show takes its name from Stephen King’s 1978 plague novel, Butler’s story of survival yields another insight: “We haven’t even hit rock bottom yet.”

Melancholia seeds this show, as does transformation, formally and materially: Beatriz Santiago Muñoz’s video *Cinema*, 2014, made in the movie house of a dilapidated US naval base in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, loops on an iPad. Light filters into the theater through trees growing out of earth that holds undetonated bombs. Amid hysteria, dynastic decay, and clamors of uprising, “The Stand” poeticizes pluralities of living with death, playing in the US empire’s wake.

*— Rachel Ellis Neyra*

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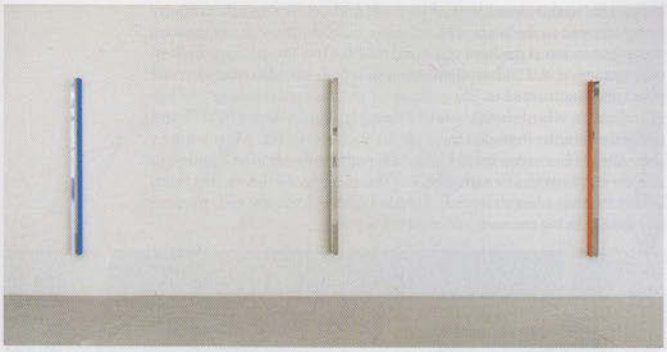
*Artforum.com*
Critics’ Pick
by Rachel Ellis Neyra
10 February 2017

# Brian O'Doherty

SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY

Nearly twenty years after Barnett Newman's second exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery—the now-canonical show at which he presented *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, 1950–51; *The Wild*, 1950; and *Here I*, 1950, to widespread critical disdain—and only a few months after his death, the Irish artist Brian O'Doherty debuted a series of sculptures in the same space. Six feet tall and under three inches wide and thick, these works were each made from two strips of polished aluminum that had been joined together at angles to form a V- or W-shaped groove and then "framed" by strips of painted wood. On the reflective surfaces, O'Doherty had scored a series of lines that somewhat cryptically spelled out words in ogham, an ancient Irish alphabet consisting of lines that ran above, below, or through a centerline. Ogham provided O'Doherty with an elegant way to combine his interest in minimal forms and language—to give a voice to pattern. It is a system that the artist has used since the late 1960s in drawings, sculptures, and, more recently, paintings.



View of "Brian O'Doherty," 2017. From left: *Meribah*, 1970; *Minus Yellow*, 1970; *Places*, 1969. Photo: Phoebe d'Heurle.

"Speaking in Lines," an exhibition mounted at Simone Subal Gallery in collaboration with the New York gallery P!, presented four of these mirrored sculptures, two of which appeared in the early Parsons show. For *Meribah*, 1970, named for the biblical site where Moses created water by striking a rock, O'Doherty brushed the wood edges with a bright sea blue and etched the word MERIBAH in ogham in the aluminum twice: It appears running from top to bottom on the left-hand band and from bottom to top on the right-hand side, so that transliteration is possible no matter which side is hung facing upward. Yet O'Doherty also rendered the writing incomprehensible: Not only does the polished aluminum reflect the viewer and the surrounding gallery space, it also doubles the already doubled series of lines. Since the letters of ogham are asymmetrical—and since it matters which way off the centerline they rise or fall—this doubling makes the characters virtually illegible.

In their proportions and adamant verticality, O'Doherty's ogham sculptures clearly hail Newman's own "skinny paintings," such as *The Wild* and *Untitled 4*, 1950; Saul Ostrow has noted that the titles of several works in the 1970 exhibition, most obviously *Here* and *One*, suggest a link between the two. In fact, a schematic drawing of his planned installation, reprinted in the brochure for the current exhibition, indicates that O'Doherty's *Here* and *One* were situated close to where Newman had placed his own sculpture, *Here I*. In Ostrow's view, O'Doherty's reference to the Abstract Expressionist was meant to critique or even mock the older artist, and there is little doubt that O'Doherty's emphasis on line and the material properties of perception and language were poised against Newman's metaphysical approach. But the thrill of small, tightly focused exhibitions like "Speaking in Lines" is that they can open up such readings to nuance. Here, four ogham sculptures confronted two lesser-known paintings from 1975, each based on the works in O'Doherty's "Hair Collages," 1974–75, series. The small collages, which were not on view, are corporeal versions of Marcel Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages*, 1913–14: O'Doherty plucked a hair from his head, dropped it on paper, and then drew a line of the same length intersecting it. In the ensuing paintings, O'Doherty (at the time showing under his *nom de guerre* Patrick Ireland) perversely enlarged the scale to a five-and-a-half square feet. The curved line of the hair is only relatively related to the watercolor line on canvas; the all-critical indexicality is gone and in its place is a mark that stretches the length of one's arm span. Most importantly, O'Doherty seems to be genuinely invested in the question of scale that had been so critical to Newman. The paintings make a case for returning to his work (and doing so outside what O'Doherty has called his albatross of the white cube) and looking again, ever more closely, to see what else his practice has yet to reveal.

—*Rachel Churner*

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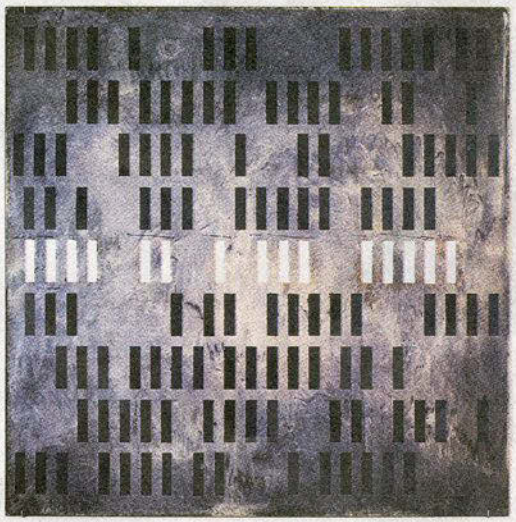
*Artforum*
"Brian O'Doherty"
by Rachel Churner
March 2017

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2017

# Galleries



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, P! AND SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY

**Clockwise from top: An installation view of Matt Keegan's show "Generation," at Participant Inc.; Benny Andrews's "Study for Portrait of Oppression (Homage to Black South Africans)," from 1985; and Brian O'Doherty's "The Late Show" (1968).**

## BRIAN O'DOHERTY

*Through Feb. 19. Simone Subal Gallery, 131 Bowery, second floor, Manhattan; 917-409-0612, simonesubal.com.*

Brian O'Doherty is one of contemporary art's notable polymaths. Born in 1928 in Ireland, he studied medicine there and, already an artist, moved to the United States in 1957. Here he took on many roles, including that of editor in chief of Art in America magazine and part-time director of the visual arts and the film and media programs at the National Endowment for the Arts. He has written epoch-shaping criticism, published novels, and produced a body of art poised on a line between Minimalism and Conceptualism.

Strictly speaking, Minimalism is about blank matter, Conceptualism about dematerialized ideas. The late-1960s and early-1970s work in Mr. O'Doherty's fine-grained solo show at Simone Subal — organized with Prem Krishnamurthy, founder of the art project P! — combines these essences. Four six-foot-tall wall sculptures are as narrow and plain as a carpenter's level, their sides painted with flat Mondrian colors: yellow, red-orange, blue. Their recessed interiors, though, are lined with sheets of reflective aluminum that meet at sharp 45-degree angles and are incised with horizontal lines. Two large canvases, dating to 1975, appear from a distance to be empty, as if they were waiting for paintings to happen. Closer up you see that they're marked with faint, wavelike tangles of colored lines.

These paintings have an organic source: They're magnified versions of small earlier collages made from hairs the artist plucked from his head. The incised lines in the sculptures have an unexpected source too: They're based on the written form of Ogham, an ancient Celtic language dating at least to the first century. It has an alphabet comprising lines of different lengths and combinations, and many of the earliest surviving Ogham inscriptions spell people's names.

So Mr. O'Doherty has merged two modern art styles often defined as fundamentally objective — the one about unmetaphorical matter, the other about abstract concepts — and personalized them, even turned them into vehicles of self-portraiture: physical, in one case; cultural, in the other. And he's done so without abandoning the multitasking complications that make art an invaluable speculative tool. My guess is that the full study of those complications in Mr. O'Doherty's nearly 60 years of work has just begun.

*HOLLAND COTTER*

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*The New York Times*
"Brian O'Doherty"
by Holland Cotter
10 February 2017

ARTFORUM

# Brian O’Doherty

**SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY**
**131 Bowery, 2nd Floor**
**January 8–February 12**

**Brian O'Doherty, *Untitled*, 1975,** watercolor stick on canvas, 66 x 66".

“The grid glides, stammers, and blurts with different lengths and colours,” Brian O’Doherty wrote regarding his use of Ogham, an ancient Irish linear alphabet, in his paintings and sculptures from between 1968 and 1979. In groupings of perpendicular lines, Ogham vowels mark O’Doherty’s quizzical, skinny wall sculptures from this period, tethering abstraction to both language and the body. These wooden constructions adapt Mondrian’s modernist lexicon: Primary colors and black decorate their sides. Mirrored aluminum forms a V-shaped depression in each of their centers, with the Ogham marks etched into the material. This sets up a contradictory optics. One stretches and strains, past language, to see a reflection, with abstraction relegated to the peripherals. This is recognizably Duchampian: Rigid adherence to an obscure code produces mystery and humor.

This exhibition spotlights a little-known phase in the hybrid career of this artist, critic, novelist, and former director at the NEA of myriad alter egos. Cocurated by Prem Krishnamurthy and Simone Subal, the revelation here is O’Doherty’s proximity to, and deviations from, Sol LeWitt’s artist-free drawings of the same period. Consider the two paintings, both *Untitled*, 1975, based on O’Doherty’s “Hair Collages,” 1975, in which the artist would contrast the form of hairs from his head with straight lines of precisely the same length. The body is quantified, then rendered in line, for systematically impure abstraction. In 1976, O’Doherty would famously critique the “white cube.” These forgotten experiments exhilarate as provocations constrained by that very context.

*— Daniel Quiles*

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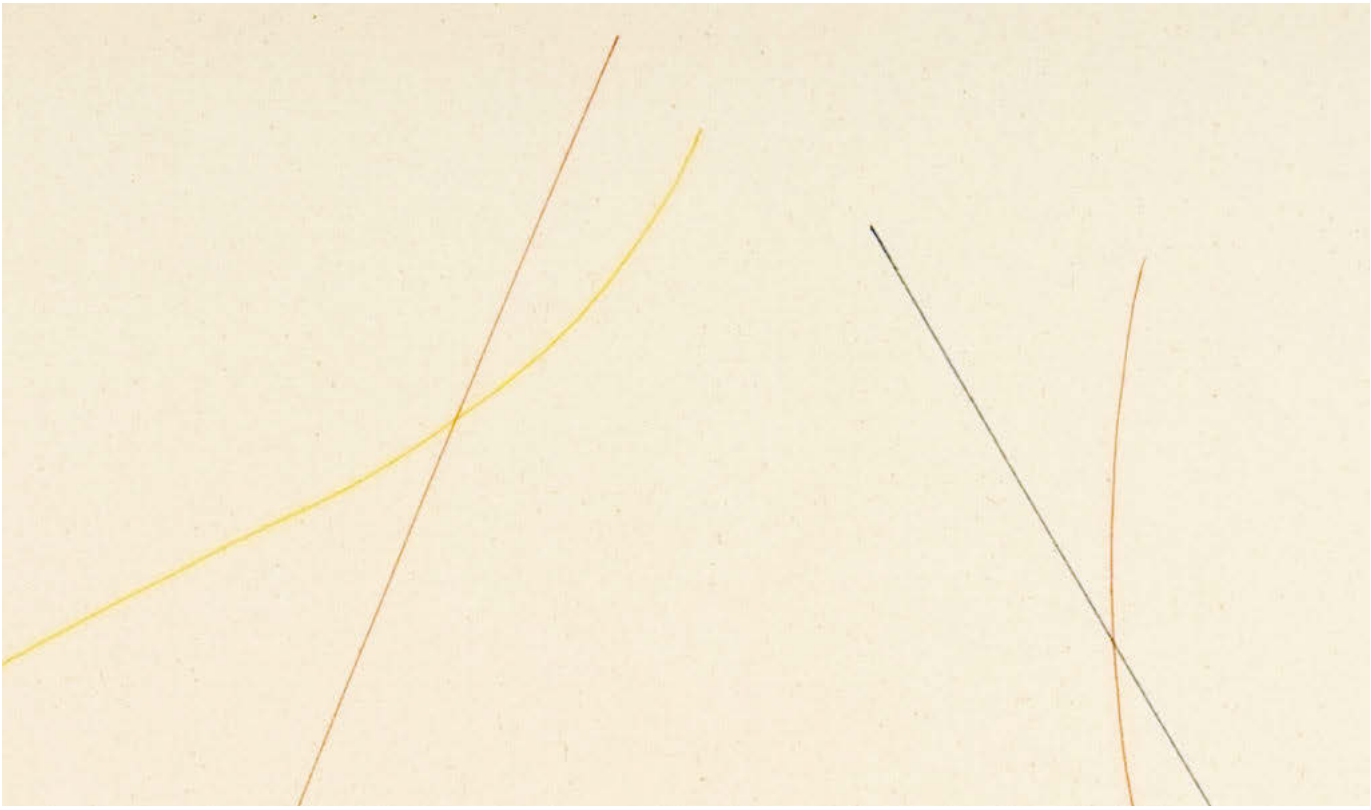
*Artforum.com*
Critics’ Pick
by Daniel Quiles
1 February 2017

**Opinion (https://news.artnet.com/opinion)**

# Brian O'Doherty, Love Child of Marcel Duchamp and Clement Greenberg?

THE DAILY PIC: At Simone Subal, Brian O'Doherty dresses up Duchampian wit and wiles as attractive abstraction.

**Blake Gopnik (https://news.artnet.com/about/blake-gopnik-86)**, January 10, 2017



**THE DAILY PIC** (#1708): This is a tight detail from a big painting made by Brian O'Doherty (later know as Patrick Ireland) in 1975. It went on view Sunday when his latest solo launched at Simone Subal Gallery (http://www.simonesubal.com/here/exhibitions/current/brian-odoherty/) in New York, where it is being co-presented by the space called P!

O'Doherty was one of the very smartest thinkers of the 1960s and '70s – his writings about Pop art are earlier and better than almost anyone else's and his book *Inside the White Cube* is legendary. His art was equally brainy. To generate the pattern in today's Pic, O'Doherty took several of his own hairs – the arcing lines in the painting – and then twinned them with straightened lines of the same length. (See the full painting below, and click on it to zoom in.)

O'Doherty's gesture is clearly indebted to Duchamp (compare the French master's *Standard Stoppages (https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/marcel-duchamp-3-standard-stoppages-1913-14)*) but what strikes me most is how O'Doherty presents that gesture in the formal language of hard-edge abstraction, which was still quite dominant in the 1970s. It's as though he is a member of a Duchampian fifth column, secretly committed to sullying the purity of abstract art. Or think of it as slipping a hair into Greenberg's soup. *(Courtesy P! and Simone Subal Gallery)*

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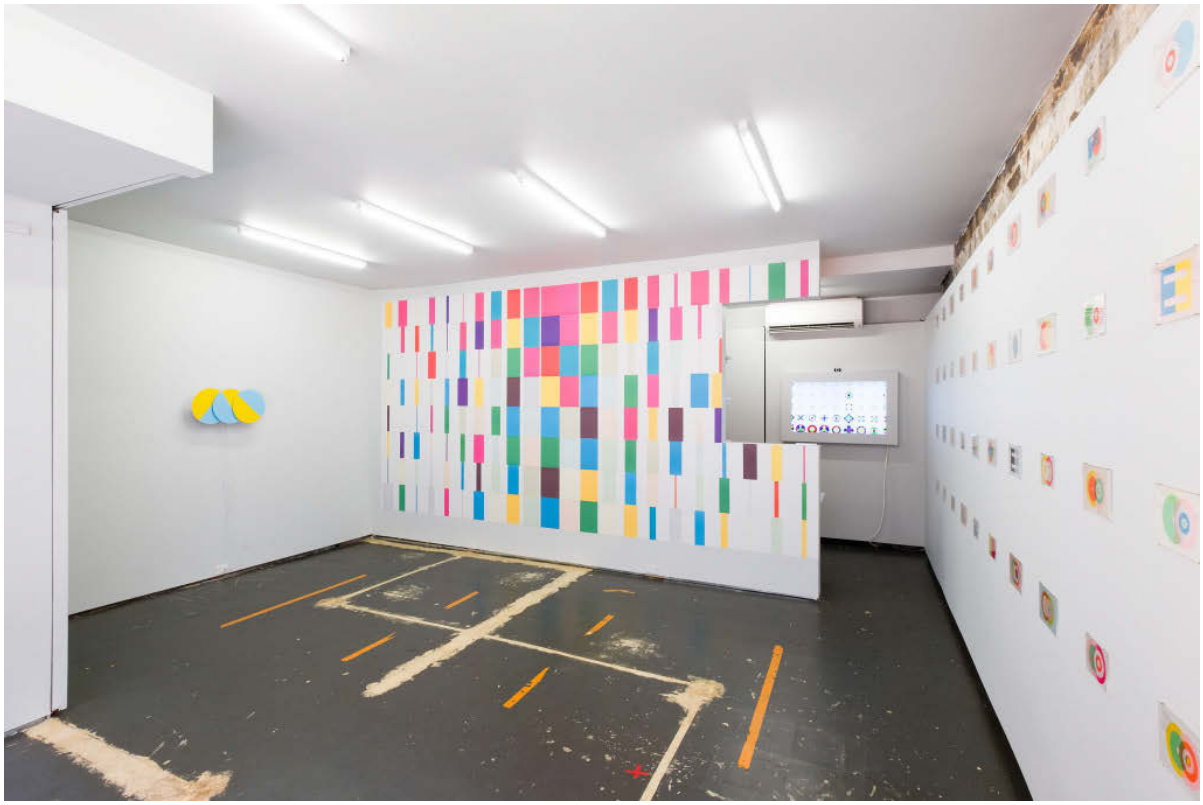
*artnet news*
"Brian O'Doherty, Love Child of Marcel Duchamp and Clement Greenberg?"
by Blake Gopnik
10 January 2017

# Karel Martens, Joy, and Five Years of P!: An Interview with Prem Krishnamurthy

BY BEN SCHWARTZ



Karel Martens, *Recent Work*. Photo: Sebastian Bach

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DATE

October 12, 2016

CATEGORIES

Interviews

Even after four years of programming, the New York storefront P! has managed to elude any form of archetypal gallery classification. The freewheeling spirit of P! can be attributed to its founder, Prem Krishnamurthy, whom many reading this blog know from his graphic design studio, Project Projects. Prem's profound understanding of both graphic design and curating elucidates interesting relationships between the two disciplines. In each show Prem makes it a priority to juxtapose work from a spectrum of fields in order to question boundaries and reveal connections between seemingly disparate practices. It is this sort of inter-disciplinary approach in P!'s programming that we at the Walker design studio find so engaging.

If you've unwittingly happened upon the space over the years, you are just as likely to find a reading room, experimental techno celebration, or currency exchange station. In response to the diversity of work, the architecture of P! finds itself an active collaborator; evolving to create a

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*Walker Art Center: The Gradient*
"Karel Martens, Joy, and Five Years of P!:
An Interview with Prem Krishnamurthy"
by Ben Schwartz
12 October 2016

unique spatial context for each show. At one point this meant a green ceiling under the guidance of a feng shui master; at another, it evolved into a new gallery altogether under the name K. Kicking off the final season in the storefront is the exhibition Karel Martens, *Recent Work*. The show is an appropriate bookend, not only because of Martens's participation in the inaugural P! show, *Process 01: Joy* (2012) but the way many of his pieces occupy the ambiguous ground between graphic design and contemporary art.

In the following interview we discuss *Recent Work*, the relationship between Prem's design and curatorial practice, and what's next for P! after the storefront.


Karel Martens, *Recent Work*, opening. Photo: Emily Smith

*The Ceiling Should Be Green (天花板應該是綠色的),* curated by Prem Krishnamurthy and Ali Wong. Artists: Mel Bochner, Rico Gatson, Tony Labat, Ohad Meromi, Shana Moulton, Connie Samaras, Jessica Stockholder, Wong Kit Yi, Wen Yau (2013). Photo: Naho Kubota

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Michal Helfman, *I'm so broke I can't pay attention* (2015). Photo: Sebastian Bach

**Ben Schwartz:** To begin, could you tell us a bit about putting together the current show, Karel Martens, *Recent Work?* Given Martens's history with printed matter, I'm particularly curious about the inclusion of a sculptural piece as well as a video installation.

**Prem Krishnamurthy:** I've worked with Karel now a number of times. He was included in the first show at P!, *Process 01: Joy,* and was one of the reasons why I opened a gallery in the first place. Since that initial exhibition, we've worked on a number of other projects and presentations of his work in other venues, but this is his first solo show at P!

Our past projects with Karel have focused primarily on his letterpress monoprints, his best known works apart from his commissioned graphic design. Although Karel has always worked across media and scales, there hasn't been a venue for these works to be shown. We've been developing *Recent Work* together for nearly a year; the longer timeframe presented an opportunity for Karel to think through his work since the 1950s and pick up on a number of strands that he's wanted to develop further. For example: the clock piece, *Three Times (in Blue and Yellow)*, is a new work but its origins range back to Karel's early kinetic clock works of the 1960s. And the in-

teractive installation, *Icon Viewer,* is an extension of the custom icon-pixel language that Karel developed nearly 15 years ago. So there is an incredible amount of continuity within the work.

Karel Martens, *Three Times (in Blue and Yellow)* (2016). Photo: Sebastian Bach

One of the things that I admire about Karel's practice is that he has embraced technology with a sense of openness and curiosity. Although graphic design has changed radically over the nearly 60 years since he started, Karel has adopted successive tools and continued to stay on top of contemporary methods. This has allowed him to push his ideas about color, pattern, reproduction, and form further, so that they don't remain static, and to experiment in different dimensions and media.

Karel Martens at the opening of *Recent Work*. Photo: Emily Smith

**BS:** In past shows P!'s role has extended beyond what one would typically expect from a gallery. In many ways the space becomes an active element that works in tandem with the artist. Would you consider *Recent Work* a collaborative effort?

**PK:** This raises the open-ended question around the place of design and curating within the broader realm of artistic production. P!'s role—as well as my own—in a given exhibition modulates greatly based on the circumstances. In some exhibitions, we have a strong hand in formulating the initial framework and creating the context that brings everything together. In this exhibition, as in other solo presentations, our role was quieter yet still present.

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12 October 2016

Karel Martens, *A4 Wallpaper* (2013/2016). Photo: Sebastian Bach

Karel's exhibition emerged from the start as a dialogue between us, but with his practice, rather than a discrete curatorial premise, at its center. We've been in close conversation from the start to decide how to approach the exhibition, what works to display, and how to show them. Together we made models, plans, and elevations of the exhibition, batted around ideas for each part of the show, determined which new works needed to be produced, and edited down from a larger a set of works and projects. However, Karel is ultimately the author of the work and exhibition.

At the same time, I think that this particular show couldn't have taken place right now in another space, whether in New York or elsewhere. It represents a confluence of Karel's work and the unique profile of P!, along with my approach to curating exhibitions. Together they generate a situation that goes beyond the individual components.

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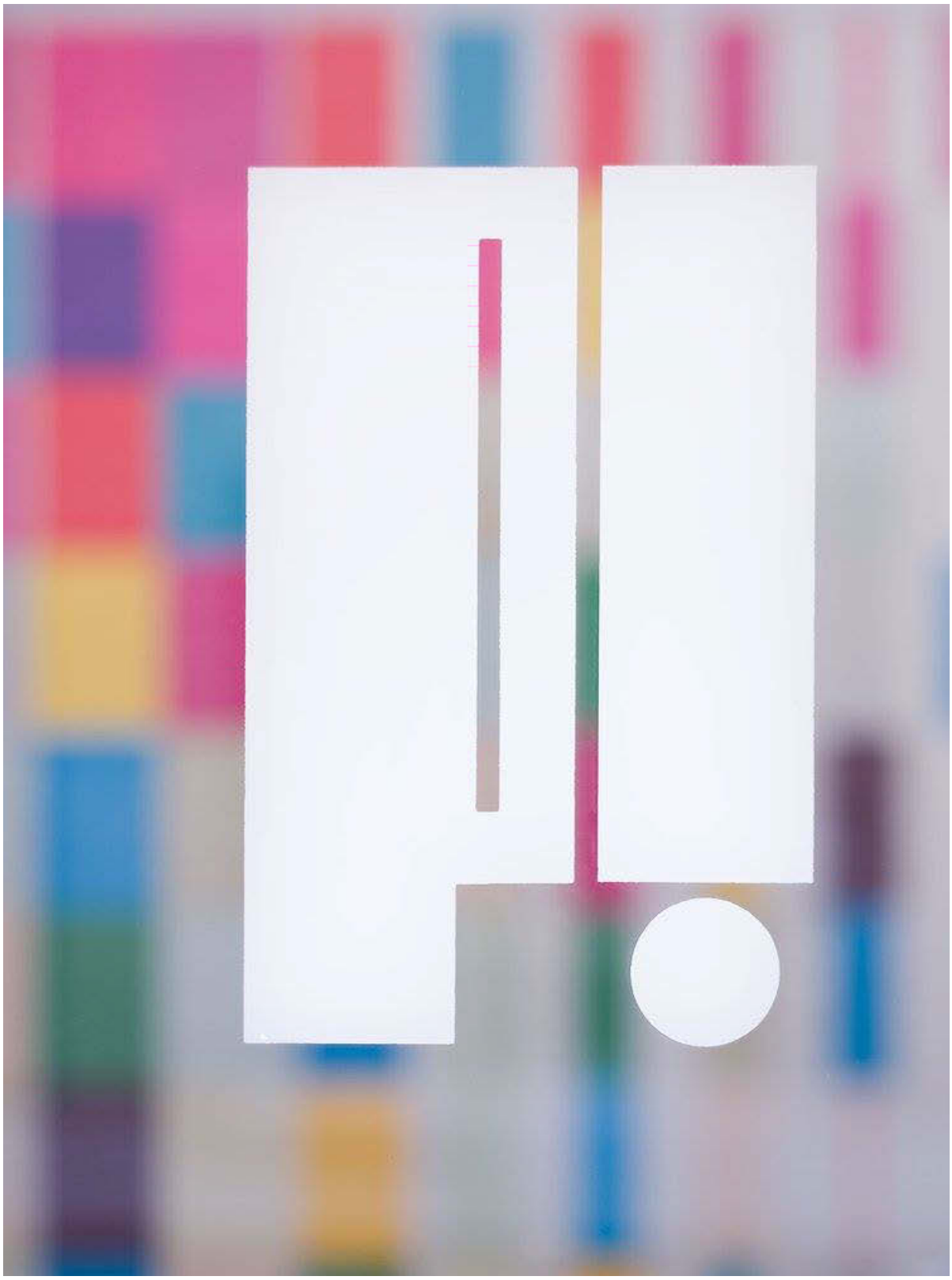

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First P! logo by Karel Martens, 2012, reinstalled in 2016. Photo: Sebastian Bach

**BS:** You and Karel seem to have a very close relationship. Over the years, what have you learned from him as both a curator and a designer?

**PK:** Each of the artists whom I work closely with at P! challenges my ideas and forces me to grow. I'm thinking here of Céline Condorelli, Aaron Gemmill, Mathew Hale, Maryam Jafri, Christopher Kulendran Thomas, Wong Kit Yi, and many others. I've also had the pleasure of exhibiting figures from an older generation—designers, artists, writers, musicians, and more—who have been fundamental to my own thinking. I consider myself lucky to have had a chance to learn from their deep experience and wisdom, while also exposing them to new audiences and approaches. This includes not only Karel, but also Brian O'Doherty and Elaine Lustig Cohen. I am terribly sad that Elaine just passed away recently, but she remains an ongoing inspiration for me through her unique work, life, and generous embrace of new ideas.

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"Karel Martens, Joy, and Five Years of P!:
An Interview with Prem Krishnamurthy"
by Ben Schwartz
12 October 2016

Elaine Lustig Cohen, solo exhibition at The Glass House (2015). Photo: Andy Romer Photography

Over these past years, Karel has taught me a lot. Some things are practical and aesthetic: for example, how he thinks about hanging a show, which is very related to how he arranges a layout on a page. Rather than hanging a show according to classical curatorial or museum approaches, he uses other structures like grids and margins, which give his installations an unusual energy and freshness.

A more fundamental thing that I've learned from working with Karel is how he likes to leave some things unfinished and open-ended. I can tend to be very, very structured and try to control nearly ever detail. Working with Karel, I've observed his tendency to be precise about certain aspects of a piece or exhibition but quite relaxed about others. I think this is what allows the work to breathe.

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Karel Martens' studio, *Full Color*, Roma Publications

For this show, we were trying to settle on the order of the monoprints in the wall grid. As we laid them down to look, I began to shuffle them around in order to achieve the "perfect sequence." I was attempting to account for their size, color, formal relationships, and other variables. After a while, Karel said, "Prem, it's done. Don't worry so much about it. They'll all look good next to each other." I protested and tried to keep fiddling with it, but eventually had to admit that he was right.

Karel also has a Dutch sense of work/life balance—so he tends get a beer or dinner at 6 pm, even if he comes back to the studio or exhibition space later on. I'm still trying to learn from him here, too!

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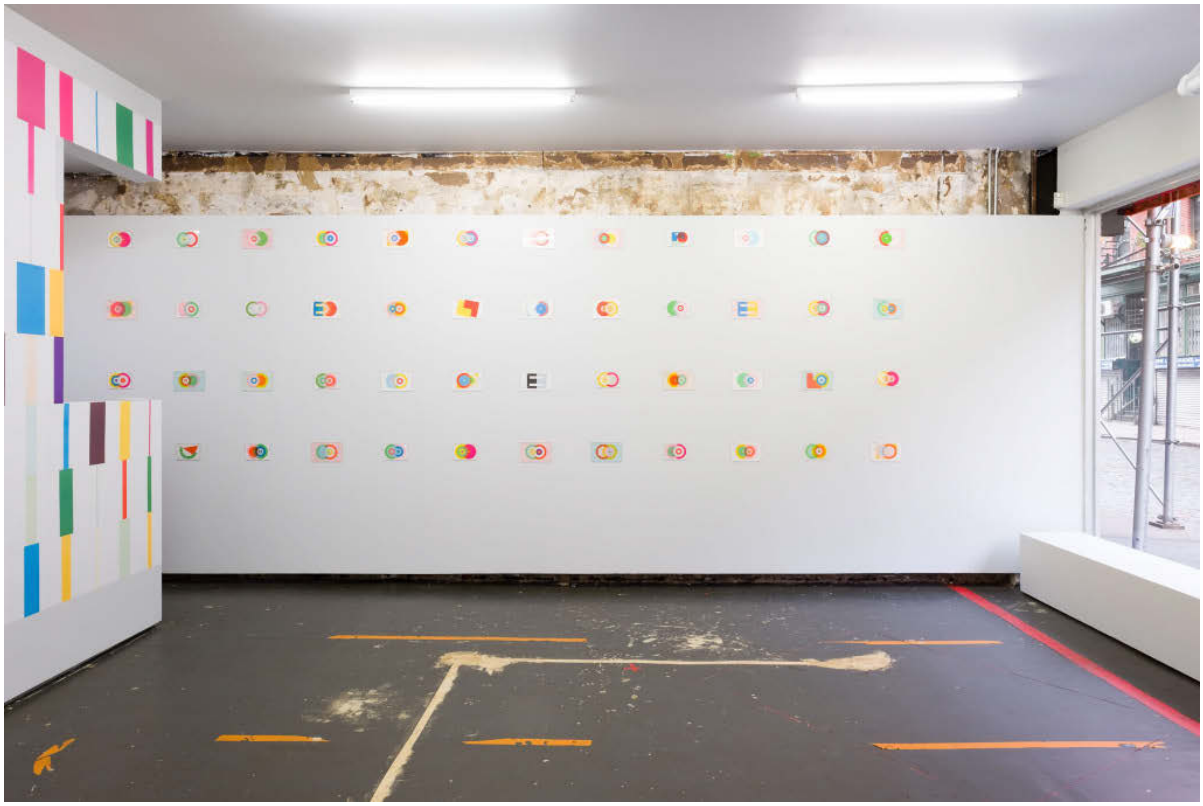

Karel Martens, *Recent Work*, installation view. Photo: Sebastian Bach

**BS:** I've always loved that about his personal work, the way intuition and spontaneity play a large role in his process. Each move is a reaction to what's already on the page and to what he's feeling at a particular moment. The decision-making process seems oppositional to graphic design, where there is the need to justify every aesthetic move.

**PK:** You're right, but it's a specific case with Karel. He's been working for nearly 60 years and so is truly a master of his field. Even his intuitive decisions about form, color, and typography arrive with an incredible degree of innate practice and knowledge.

When I was younger, I used to be a real perfectionist as a typographer. I wanted even the most basic typesetting to be absolutely precise and complete. Something I'm working on in my design and curatorial practice is to have more trust and confidence, to let go just a little bit. Chris Wu, whom I work with at Project Projects, tried to convince me years ago that great design is sometimes all about the gesture—just the right gesture can work perfectly.

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An Interview with Prem Krishnamurthy"
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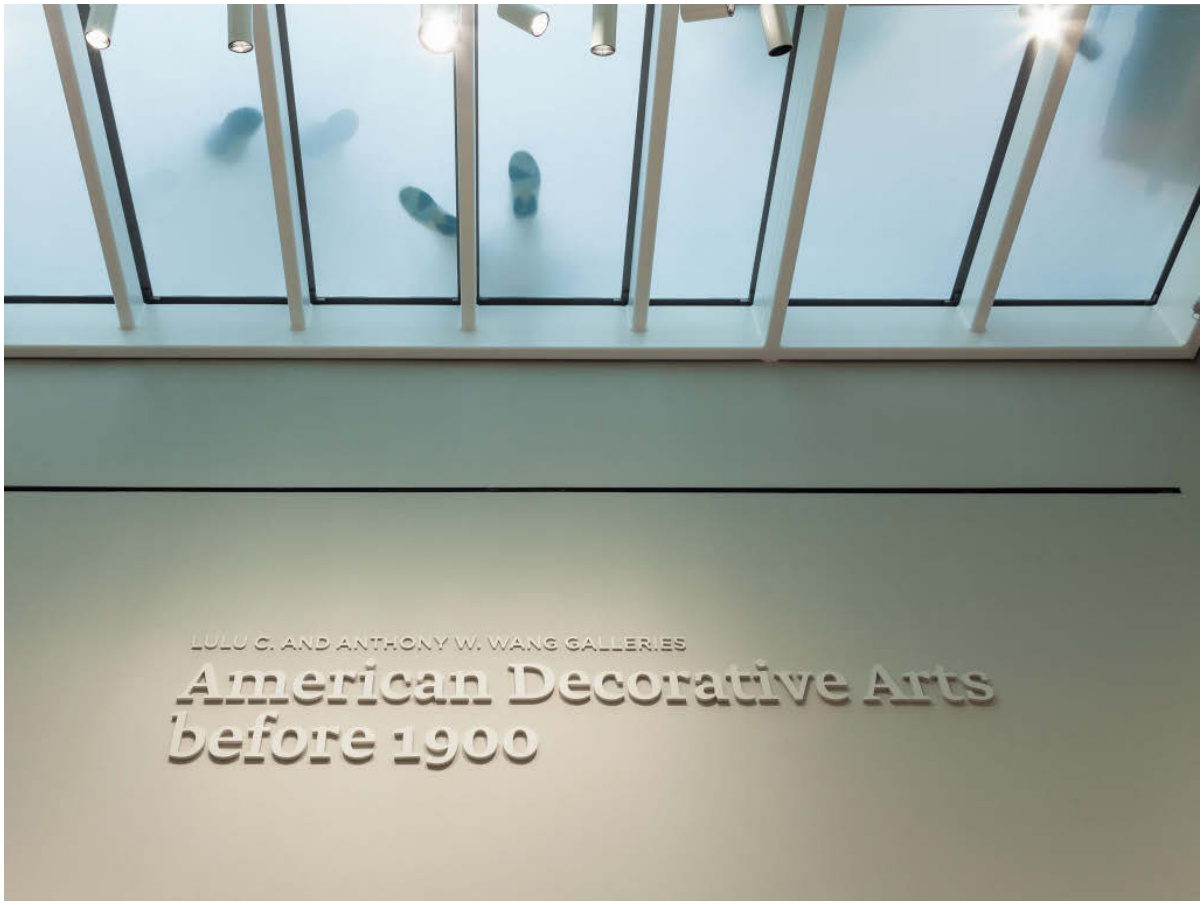
12 October 2016

The question of context and what's already on the page is also very significant here. For Karel, as for myself, there is an interest in what exists before one steps into a given situation as a graphic designer. This happens with his monoprints: he chooses to print on things that already have a past life and a formal order. It's a kind of recycling but also a response to something that's already there. For me, it's about a sense of making history visible.

Several years ago, I was leading the design of the signage program for the Yale University Art Gallery. There had already been a number of signage programs that had existed over the years before we were commissioned. Rather than approaching the project by starting from scratch, I decided that we would retain aspects of those older signage programs, layering our own system on top. This lends the viewer a richer sense of what's been there before, and what's still to come.




Project Projects, design for Yale University Art Gallery signage (2010). Photo: Naho Kubota

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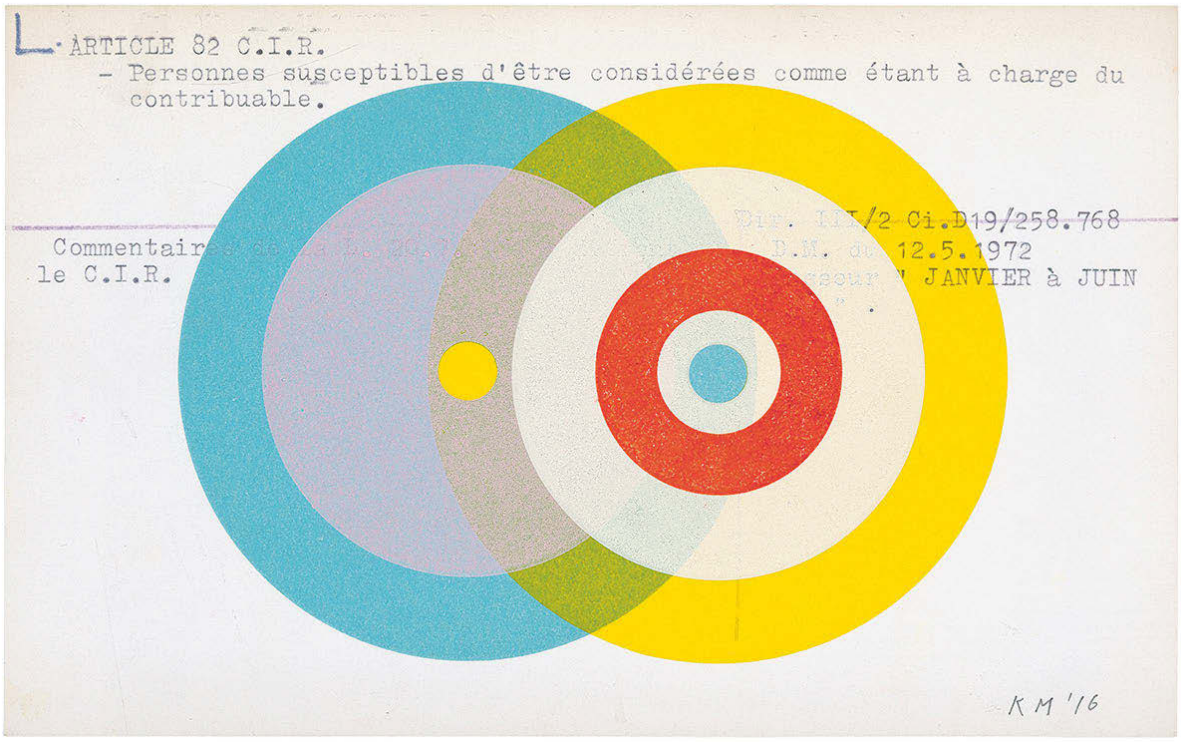
12 October 2016

This is how I approach exhibition spaces, too. I don't look at the gallery space as being a tabula rasa, blank slate, or white cube. One aspect of my exhibition-making is that I consider the architecture and history of a space as inflecting whatever's displayed in it. A show in a gallery is just one more archaeological layer added to the top.

When preparing P!'s space for its final year of programming, I opted to remove a cork floor that had existed since early 2015 and expose the floor panels below. In doing so, I realized that they are nearly a work in their own right. The vinyl flooring, which has been here since I took the lease, makes visible a history of the past floorplans of the storefront, and how it has changed over these past four years. While installing Karel's show, I recognized the connection for the first time: the way that I treat existing spaces relates directly to how Karel overprints on existing cards and ephemera. Both are a form of palimpsest, just in different dimensions and scales.

**BS:** For Karel, I'm curious about what he's responding to on the found material. Is he paying attention to content or is he more focused on formal relationships?

**PK**: He describes it as being a combination of both aspects. On the one hand, he doesn't like to print something with a direct relationship to what's already on the card, as it can result in feeling too illustrative. On the other hand, as he mentioned in the *New York Times T Magazine*, he sees the typewriting and tabular typography on the found cards as being a form of concrete poetry—the poetry of administration—which inspires him to print on top of them.




Karel Martens, *Untitled* (2016) Letterpress monoprint on found card, 8 × 5 inches, unique

**BS:** I think this current show of Karel Martens occupies an interesting space in regards to graphic design and contemporary art. Karel is of course a seminal graphic designer, but the work being shown is uncommissioned. Did you ever feel the need to make the distinction between design and art when putting together *Recent Work*?

**PK:** I don't make that distinction; rather, I try to look at the unique values and qualities of objects, regardless of what genre they belong to. Karel is foundational to the program of P! because he occupies this ambiguous ground between art and design. He makes works that are not commissioned, but sometimes the forms that he create in his monoprints make their way back into his commissioned graphic design work. There is a healthy back and forth. Both his commissioned and uncommissioned works are equally beautiful.

In Karel's case, I see this as a kind of visual research. He's spent the last 60 years experimenting with form and color, constituting a body of knowledge and practice that flows into all of his different work. In this way, he occupies an in-between space. For much of the history of the 20th century avant-garde, there wasn't a strong distinction between applied and "free work." This overlap, exemplified in Karel's work today, is at the heart of my interests and why I wanted to in-

clude him in P!'s program from the first show. We're in a historical era in which there is a strong boundary established between disciplines—which has much less to do with intrinsic distinctions and much more to do with the market and how different kinds of labor are currently valued.


Karel Martens, *Architecture as a Craft* (2009); Karel Martens, *Terra Incognita* posters (1995)

I always ask myself with Karel's work and that of others I'm interested in: Who cares whether people call it graphic design or art right now, but what's this going to look like in 50, 100, or 1,000 years? Many of the things that we value most from past generations may have once been functional, whether they're pottery, printed remnants, or cave paintings. They had one relevance in their original moment but they've also maintained their integrity. Their relevance to us now is that they have acquired a new meaning, which is in excess of the original purpose.

On a panel that I organized recently at the New York Art Book Fair 2016 with Karel and David Reinfurt (of Dexter Sinister and O-R-G), Karel said something that really resonated with me. To

paraphrase him, if you're making a piece of graphic design and you've just fulfilled the project's assignment, then you've only done half of the work. There is a large part of design that goes beyond functional requirements; perhaps this aspect contributes to what makes the work enduring in the long term.

**BS:** Although you mentioned not looking at a hard and fast line between graphic design and fine art, with P! do you feel a particular responsibility to give graphic design more representation in the gallery space?

**PK:** Since I come from a background in graphic design, it's one of the key contexts and bodies of knowledge that I carry with me everywhere I go. Graphic design is an embedded filter for how I think about the world. In a broader sense, the history of graphic design is extremely intertwined with larger narratives of historical and contemporary visual practice. It's impossible to disentangle design from how we look at art since the beginning of the 20th century. Beyond the crossover of the disciplines and practitioners, even the reproduction, publication, and dissemination of art has been traditionally mediated through graphic design.

When I consider what to place into an exhibition space, it's quite natural to me for those things to come from the different worlds with which I engage, whether contemporary art, graphic design, music, or writing. However, with graphic design in particular, I have tended to come at it from two directions. Sometimes I'll show things from a graphic design context that I think are compelling within a broader discourse; other times, I present contemporary art projects that might resonate with graphic design in a significant way.

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by Ben Schwartz
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Vahap Avşar, *Lost Shadows, [AND Museum]* (2015). Photo: Sebastian Bach

In this latter category, I have in mind exhibitions we've done with artists such as Vahap Avşar, who worked with the archive of a defunct Turkish postcard company to make new postcards for distribution. Another example is Maryam Jafri, who examines histories of consumer products from an anthropological and artistic perspective. Her show at P!, *Economy Corner*—I think one of our best—was an exhibition about economics, branding, markets, and class, while also being legible as a show about typography, even if that's not Maryam's primary interest. Another crucial show for me from our fourth season was *Pangrammar*, a freewheeling and highly personal exhibition that mapped my interests in the overlaps between typography and art in a loose, associative way. By mixing works that were art and design, new and old, unique and multiples, within a single idiosyncratic curatorial structure, it gestured towards the more open-ended yet critical ways I'd like these fields to be looked at.

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Maryam Jafri, *Economy Corner* (2016). Photo: Sebastian Bach

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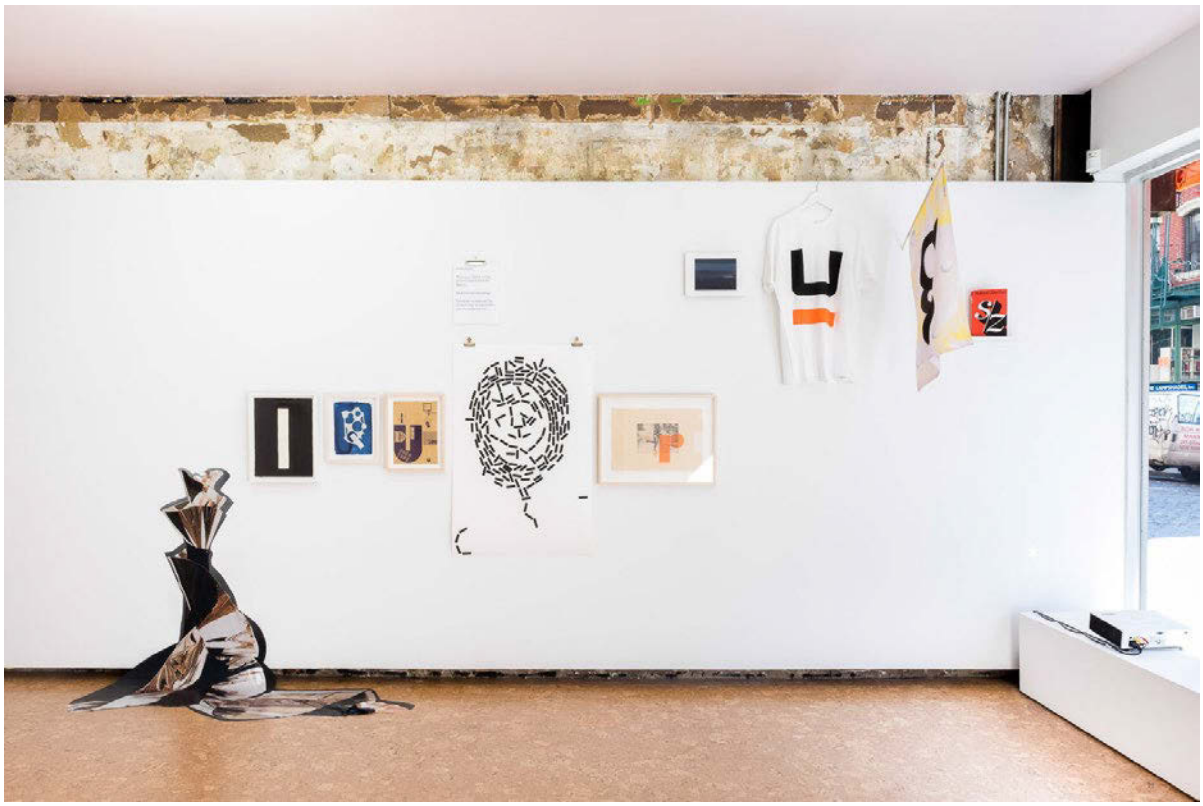

*PANGRAMMAR*, Various artists (2015). Photo: Sebastian Bach

**BS:** When you do include graphic design in particular shows, it's never really looking inwards at the practice itself. I'm thinking of the Anton Stankowski and Klaus Wittkugel show; although both graphic designers, the work seemed to point outward toward larger ideas about East and West Germany. The display of graphic design seems very different than say, *Graphic Design: Now in Production* here at The Walker. How does bringing design into a gallery context change the viewer's relationship with the work?

**PK:** It's good that you bring up *Graphic Design: Now in Production*. As you know, Project Projects collaborated with the Walker on the graphic identity of the show; I then directed the exhibition design for its New York presentation by the Cooper Hewitt. In fact, the show immediately preceded P!'s opening and surely influenced some of my decisions. Curated by Andrew Blauvelt and Ellen Lupton along with a team of others, *Graphic Design: Now in Production* took a more classical approach to displaying graphic design, organizing it according to projects, specific media types, and functionality.

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by Ben Schwartz
12 October 2016


*Graphic Design: Now In Production*, Walker Art Center (2011).

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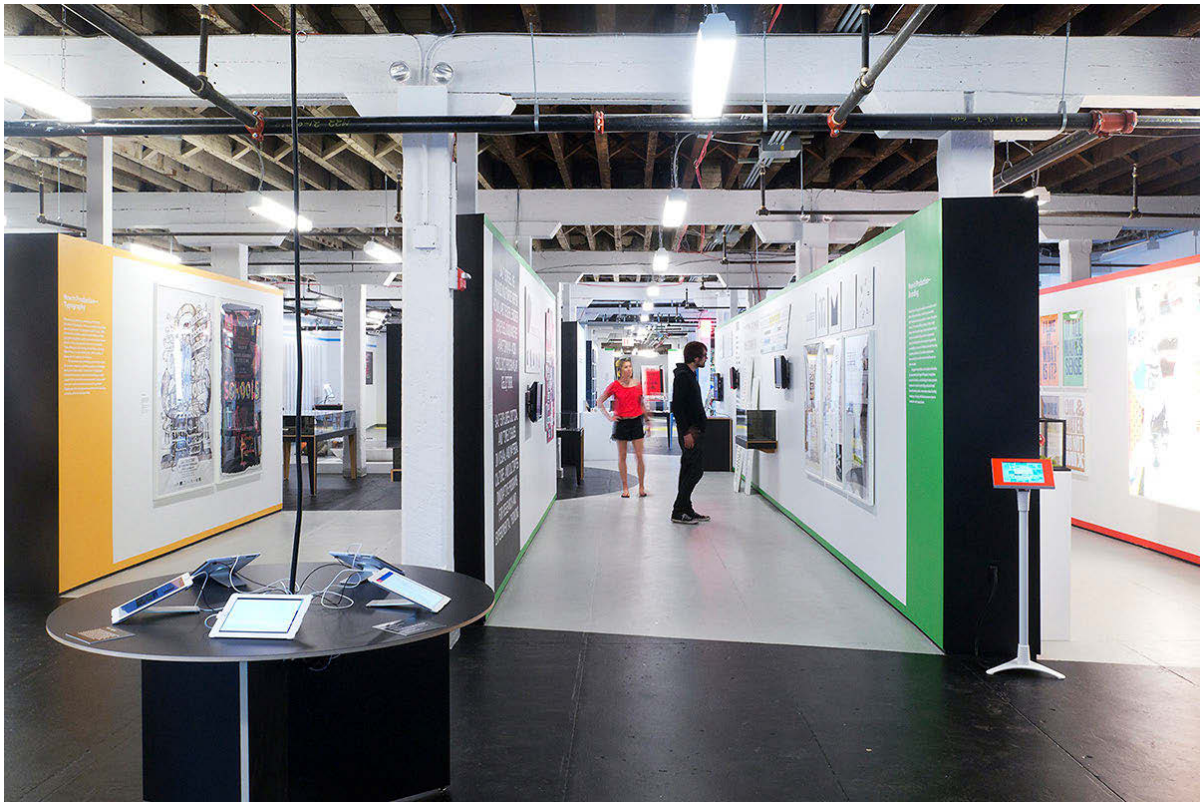

Project Projects with Leong Leong, exhibition design for *Graphic Design: Now In Production*, Governors Island (2012). Photo: Prem Krishnamurthy

This is quite different from my curatorial approach. For me, context is extremely important in looking at design objects—for whom and why was something made?—but I'm equally compelled by a work's broader significance, whether aesthetic, conceptual, cultural, or ideological. The challenge is how to make these registers legible within the exhibition setting, which I've tried to address in a number of ways. The Wittkugel / Stankowski exhibition was one approach, which involved using particular strategies of contemporary art display to present historical graphic design work, freeing it from some of its baggage while also situating it within broader political discourses.

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*OST UND ~~oder~~ WEST*, Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski (2016). Photo: Sebastian Bach

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I'm committed to an approach to presenting design that does not separate it from other fields of visual and artistic inquiry. That's not to say that there are no differences between these disciplines, but rather that I'm interested in their confluences. I take issue both with how graphic design is exhibited in a closed-off way, but also with recent exhibitions of early 20th-century avant-garde figures that focus primarily on their paintings or their sculptures, when they made equally important contributions in graphic design, photography, exhibition design, and beyond. By relegating these practitioners' "applied" work to a secondary status, the exhibitions are actually undoing in large part their intended legacies.

Recently I heard someone voice that typical refrain: "Oh, I wonder if graphic design is still going to exist in 20 years." I'd bet that it will, but that it will look quite different than it does now. Rather than navel-gazing, I'm interested in graphic design's potential to look outside of itself to connect with other discourses.

**BS:** As this is the last year of P! in its physical manifestation, I want to go back and discuss some of the history of the space. As you mentioned, the first exhibition was *Process 01: Joy* which ex-

plored the relationship between joy and practice. In the context of your own work, how has P! been a source of joy for you?

**PK:** Framing the first show at P! in this particular way was both self-reflective and self-deprecating. After all, opening P! alongside my work at Project Projects, my teaching, my writing, and everything else was basically a choice to double or triple my workload! And then to focus first show around labor and name it *Joy* was also a slightly perverse joke. But it also had a very serious dimension. All three of the participants in that first show—Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill, and Karel Martens—had explored, both implicitly and explicitly, the complex relationship between vocations and avocations, labor and pleasure. The show embraced the fact that much of the most significant work, of any kind, falls outside of the typical 9-to-5 workday, while being part of a dialectic with this economy of production.


*Process 01: Joy*, Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill, Karel Martens (2012). Photo: Naho Kubota


*Process 01: Joy* opening (2012). Photo: Judith Gärtner

What creative people produce to make a living is often circumscribed into very specific categories. After the show, I began to look at what works from somebody's practice might be marginalized, and hone in on those. If P! has, in part, created a home for people's "off-projects" that don't fit in neatly with what they're necessarily known for, then I'd be happy.

P! was an activity that complemented my work as a graphic designer at Project Projects, and it was a project of love. On the other hand, I can't overestimate how much it has influenced my own graphic design over the past four years, as much as the space has been informed by the work I had accomplished before it.

**BS:** That's actually a point I wanted to touch on: the relationship between your curatorial practice and graphic design practice. How have the two influenced each other?

**PK:** For a number of years, I've been planning to write a longer text or at least put together a lecture about the relationship of curating and design. Maybe I'll have more time to finish this once P! on Broome Street closes! I hold that the two fields—graphic design and curating—are quite

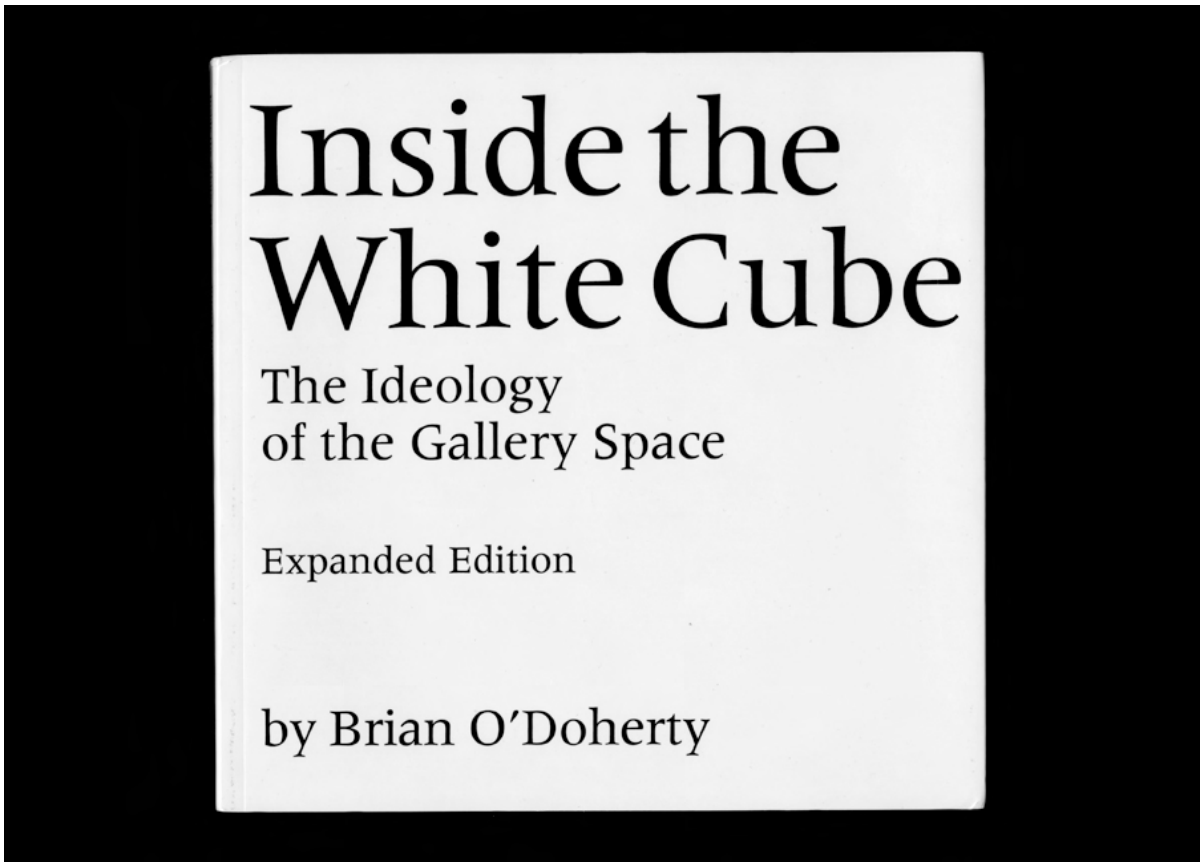
similar in a number of historical, structural, and practical ways. Both disciplines are focused on mediating content rather than necessarily generating it themselves. Curators and graphic designers alike work with other people, other objects, other ideas that are outside of themselves—they're exogenous pursuits.

As a graphic designer, you work with your clients to make their content legible for a set of publics. As a curator, you working with artists to translate their work and interests to a broader audience outside of their studio.


*Matrix / Berkeley: A Changing Exhibition of Contemporary Art*, edited by Elizabeth Thomas and Project Projects, book design by Project Projects (2008)

**BS:** We talked a bit about collaboration. The collaborative dynamic seems at the heart of both P! and Project Projects. In your design practice Project Projects seems involved at a much deeper level than a traditional designer/client relationship. P!'s involvement as well goes beyond the traditional white cube approach. Can you talk about P!'s unique curatorial point of view?

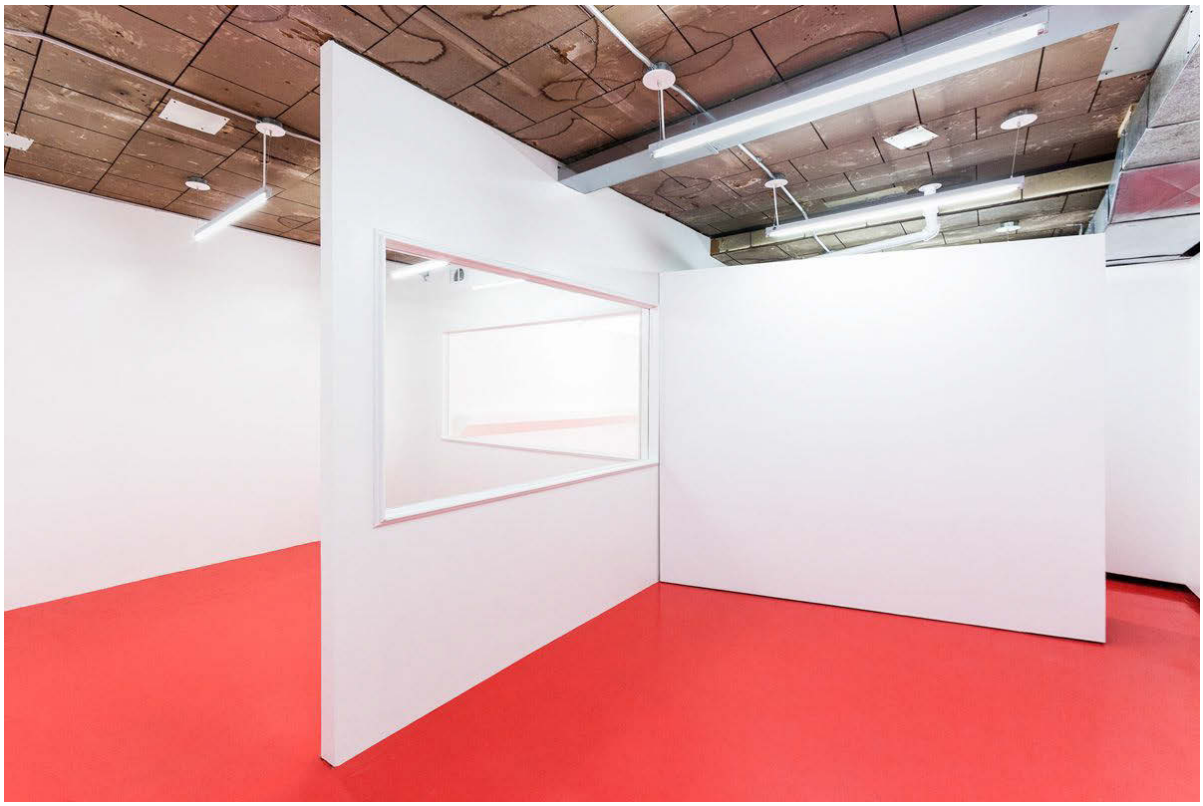
**PK:** From the beginning, I've always thought of the space itself as an actor. This is both with regards to P! and more generally when I'm designing and curating exhibitions in other venues. One of my fundamental texts is Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube*. It dates back to 1976, but Brian's argument still reads quite true, 40 years later.




Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1986) (originally published as a series of essays in 1976)

I believe that the context of presentation, the architecture and the display of an exhibition, can be as meaningful as what's being shown. One of the first decisions I made when after I signed the lease for 334 Broome Street was to talk with Leong Leong, the architecture firm whom I had brought in to work with Project Projects on *Graphic Design: Now in Production* in New York (and who now share a studio space with us). They designed the space in a brilliant way—both functional and conceptual, overt and subtle in the right ways. Their original design also highlighted the context of the storefront space and its previous life, a Chinatown HVAC contracting office.

Over the years, as the space has developed through the interventions of artists and my own curatorial ideas, Leong Leong has remained involved in the conversations around how the space evolves.



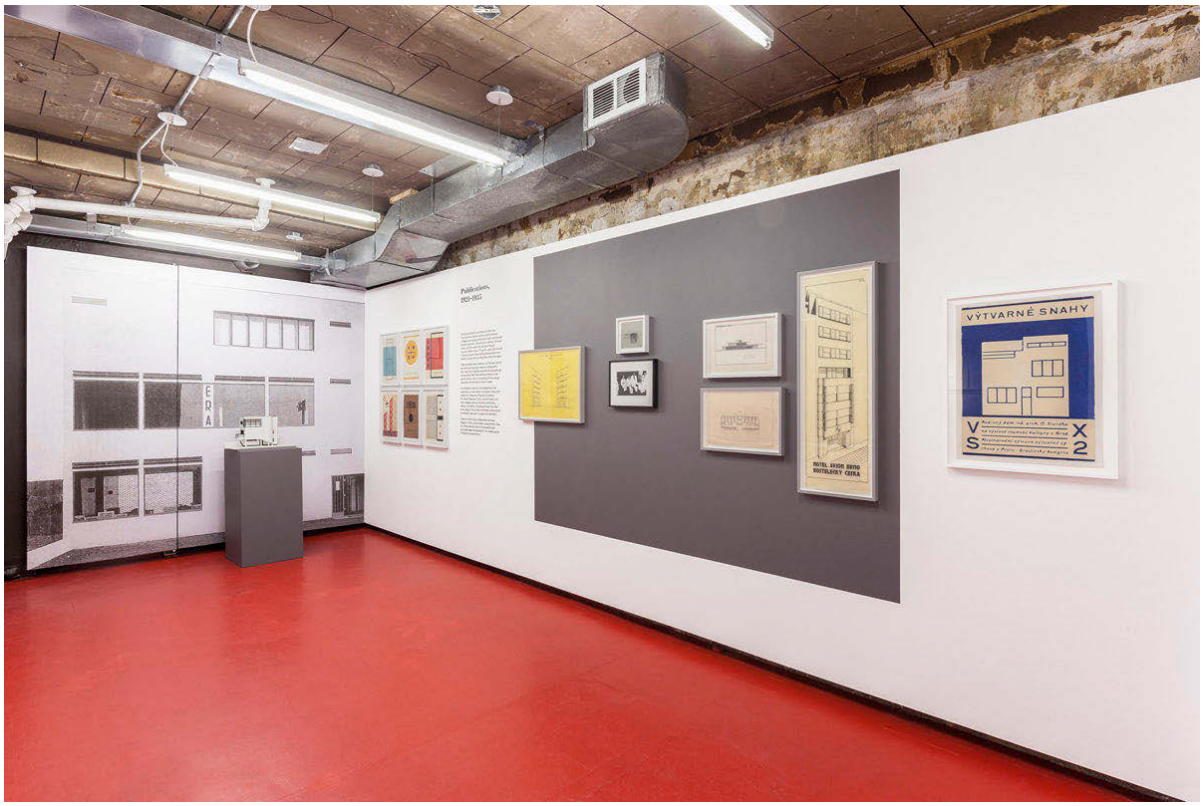
Original architectural design for P! by Leong Leong. Photo: Naho Kubota

More broadly, apart from simply trying to foreground mediation, architecture, and display, I have a strong belief about self-reflexivity and transparency: since curating is a discipline that makes things visible yet also orders the world according to its own agendas, the curatorial act—the very process of framing—ought to itself be laid bare.

One of Brian's core arguments from *Inside the White Cube* is that the white cube gallery makes nearly anything displayed inside of it into a kind of sacral object, increasing its market value. As a counter to this kind of invisible conditioning, I'm interested in trying to expose for the viewer how such operations construct values.

This is also something that figures into much of my design work. For me, the challenge is not just to make a compelling identity, book, exhibition, or website that presents its content in a neutral way, but to also design it in such a way that makes the viewer aware of its own mediation and influence. Undermining one's own authority—or at least, calling it into question—is an important quality.

**BS:** In regards to making things visible, I feel like a lot of that is coming from playing with the context of various disciplines. Placing work in a gallery that may not typically exist there, but also with other practices it may not normally exist alongside. For example, in *Permutation 03.4: Re-Mix* you put Thomas Brinkmann, a DJ, alongside visual artists Katarina Burin and Semir Alschausky, the architectural practice Fake Industries Architectural Agonism, and a video essay by Oliver Laric. In creating these sorts of experiments in recontextualization, what are you hoping to communicate?




*Permutation 03.4: Re-Mix*, Semir Alschausky, Thomas Brinkmann, Katarina Burin, Fake Industries Architectural Agonism, Oliver Laric (2013). Photo: Naho Kubota

**PK:** Thank you for reminding me of that show, the last show of our very first year. It feels like such a long time ago! It was a pretty important exhibition to me. It brings up similar questions around how context and juxtaposition affect the meaning of individual objects. This particular show was also the conclusion of a four-exhibition cycle examining ideas of copying, authorship, and originality. The series had a looping structure in which artworks, idea, and specific display strategies echoed each other across shows.

Through my work as a graphic designer—but also through other interests, including filmic montage and psychoanalysis—I've learned to work with the principle of juxtaposition: if you show multiple objects within the same frame, whether on a page, in a space, or within a limited time period, a connection will be formed between them in the viewer's mind.

Thomas Brinkmann performing at opening of *Permutation 03.4: Re-Mix* opening (2013). Photo: Prem Krishnamurthy

This particular exhibition suggested a set of conceptual, formal, and methodological relationships between the disparate participants. Thomas Brinkmann is an experimental DJ and musician

who had originally studied art and who has worked in a way that resonates with contemporary art practice. In the exhibition, he showed a custom two-armed turntable that he developed in the late 1980s, which can "double" an audio track in a specific way; at the same time, its unique fabrication evokes a Russian Constructivist sculpture. Katarina Burin had developed a fictional female designer of the Eastern European avant-garde whose architectural drawings resonated formally with Brinkmann's work while similarly challenging notions of the copy and the original. Semir Alschausky premiered an unusual and intricate painting on paper that remakes a well-known historical painting using a technique resembling the circular grooves of a record. Subverting the entire frame of presentation, Fake Industries Architectural Agonism appropriated the temporal structure of a recent exhibition at a nearby gallery, in which an artist had shifted the opening hours of the gallery to dusk; Fake Industries simply changed P!'s hours to mirror those (which meant we were open into the evening, appropriate for the musical context of Brinkmann's work). Finally, Oliver Laric's piece was a kind of cover version of a cover version: his essay film *Versions* had appeared in an earlier exhibition of the cycle. Here, an adaptation of the film into a musical play by students at the Juilliard Academy played on a screen, in nearly the same position where it had appeared two shows earlier. A kind of uncanny doubling, taking place over time.

In any case, that's just scratching the surface. There are other ways in which the works spoke to each other. It's like a lively dinner party: the most fun ones include people who are more different than alike!

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*Permutation 03.4: Re-Mix* exterior view featuring Fake Industries Architectural Agonism and Semir Alschausky (2013). Photo: Naho Kubota

**BS:** This season marks the last season for P! in the Broome Street space. I feel like the storefront has played such a major role in many exhibitions, and its location in Chinatown seems to be an important factor. What does the move mean for P!? Does it have to do with a shift in ideology or is it more related to logistics?

**PK:** A "move" is a slight misnomer insofar as we are not announcing a new location after this, at least not for now. It's actually more that P! is shifting its focus. For its first five years, P! existed primarily as an exhibition program housed in a single location, with occasional off-site presentations and projects. Moving forward, P! will take the shape of a dispersed institution that can assume and inhabit different spaces through its programmatic focus. It will still organize exhibitions and presentations, collaborating with museums and other venues. P! will also continue to work with artists, designers, and others on these shows as well as on producing publications. So it's more of an opening-up of the focus of the organization.

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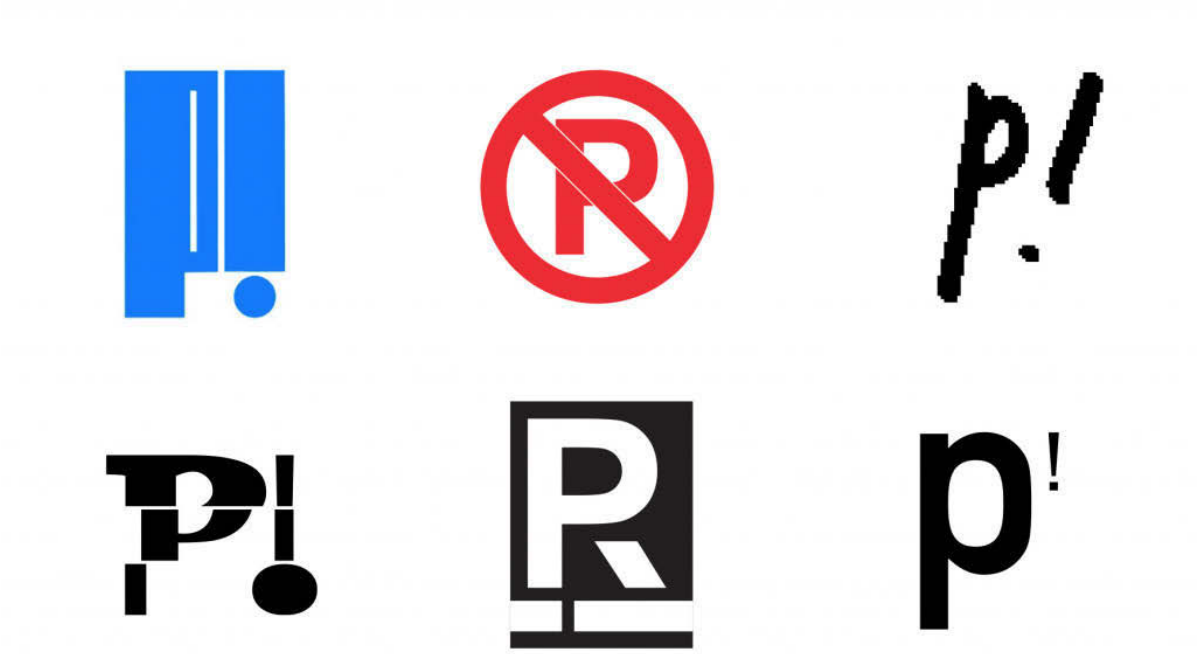
P! as a storefront in Chinatown was always intended as a "limited-time offering," with a start and end date. This accompanies the strong narrative component to its program thus far. Each of the past seasons or years of the space have had a specific structure and arc to them; this even includes the fact that we changed the name of the gallery for a five-month period, becoming another gallery, K. I thought of that moment as our version of a "play-within-a-play." And as with a literary work, there may be an ending, but that doesn't preclude sequels and continuations.



Various P! logos from 2012–2014 by Karel Martens, Aaron Gemmill, Rich Brilliant Willing, Société Réaliste, Rivet, and Heman Chong

**BS:** It seems to me that P! has always been about evolution, whether that be through a changing architecture or a flexible identity system. Now, to not even be tied down to a specific location seems like a logical progression in regards to what's next.

**PK:** Yes. P! has also represented an exploration of a different mode of "institutionality." It's an outgrowth of my many years of work with institutions, especially those that have an unusual, non-normative shape—such as SALT in Istanbul or the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive's MATRIX project space. I've made this part of my program at P!, allowing it to constantly shift its

profile and visual identity, so that it might appear as something quite different to its various audiences.

Bricks-and-mortar spaces are only one aspect of a contemporary institution. While I'm still committed to exhibition-making, the next institutional challenge is how to disperse activities and programming yet still maintain an audience and a community.


Project Projects, identity program for SALT, Istanbul (2010–ongoing)

**BS:** To close things out, I want to ask a bit of a sentimental question. With any sort of major milestone I think it's important to look back on what has been accomplished. Are there any particular memories that stand out to you during your time at the Broome Street location?

**PK:** I liked your question about Thomas Brinkmann and the exhibition *Permutation 03.4: Re-Mix*. For the opening of that show, there was a special performance where Thomas invited his New York friends to bring records to play on his special double-armed record player. Each original record was transformed into something like a slow, dub-inflected shuffle, with a tremendous sense of stuttering rhythm. It turned into an incredible, dance-floor moment, with everyone an-

ticipating what would come next. The floor seemed like it might collapse. It was such a special moment, I remember thinking, we could end P! right now, and it would have all been worth it. We've already accomplished in a microcosm what we originally set out to do: to bring people who would never otherwise know each other into a space together, and to create a dialogue.

"Concept 33" from p-exclamation on Vimeo.

**BS:** I want to really thank you for your time. It's been exciting following what you've been doing with P!, and it has been a real inspiration. Congratulations again on such an amazing body of work, I'm looking forward to what's next.

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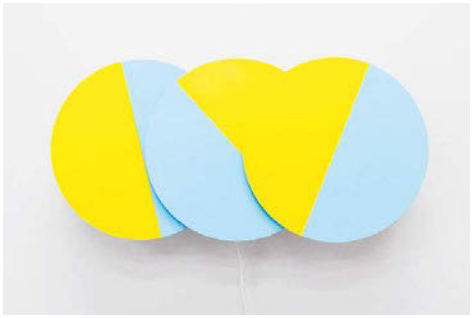
*Walker Art Center: The Gradient*
"Karel Martens, Joy, and Five Years of P!:
An Interview with Prem Krishnamurthy"
by Ben Schwartz
12 October 2016

# THE OFFICE AND THE ORGASM: THE MONOPRINTS OF KAREL MARTENS

The first visual artifact by Karel Martens to catch my eye was the cover of a Dutch architecture journal called *Oase*. In schismatic, isolationist times, I already found the magazine's theme of "crossing boundaries" and "transcultural practices" refreshing. The bold figure of Martens's design added a layer of optimism: two overlapping pieces of what looked like transparent Meccano—one red, one green, both apparently punched with holes, as if ready for construction—created a bold argyll diamond against the white background.

BY NICK CURRIE



There was a sense of yin and yang, of possible futures, things to be built, the appeal of materials, the complementary attraction of opposites. Where the primary figures crossed, a muddy olive green suggested they might be viewfoils made of cellulose acetate, the colored plastic laid on old-fashioned overhead projectors for classroom demonstrations. I noted something sensual in the design, and something didactic.

Googling Martens, the next thing I saw was a video profile on Vimeo of the veteran designer filmed at Werkplaats Typografie in Arnhem, the Netherlands. **Cheerfully unboxing selected highlights of his career in graphic design, Martens spoke of his interest in optical illusions, his use of abstraction, and his discovery that designs unrelated to a publication's themes can attain relevance by osmosis, sponging up the appropriate meanings like a Rorschach blot.**

I then embarked on a Google image search spree, downloading dozens of appealing pictures of Martens's work. I particularly liked a series of letterpress monoprints recently shown at New York's P! storefront gallery. Many of the images came from a *New York Times* magazine feature on Martens.

My first impulse was to upload a bunch of them to my Tumblr page, without commentary. But surely I could add a dimension? I happened to be reading Ted Morgan's excellent William S. Burroughs biography *Literary Outlaw* (1988) at the time. Morgan depicts a writer on a mission—via drugs, anthropology, sex, scandal, and the half-lit sleaze of liminal "interzones"—to get back in touch with an enchanted cosmology, imposing a brightly colored pre-Enlightenment state of mind on the mercilessly stark grid of modernity. Burroughs wanted to revive soul at all costs—even if the human soul turned out to be stupid, lazy, and evil.

Burroughs's writing—and, less successfully, his life—was structured around a vivid dramatization of the tension between pleasure and control systems. Eros and Thanatos, you could say, or Dionysus and Apollo. No one was more aware than Burroughs of how attempts to escape the dead hand of control (via drugs, sex, lawlessness, statelessness, and art) can all too easily lead us into even

**Nicholas Currie**, also known as Momus, is a Japan-dwelling Scot who makes songs, books and art.

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*Mousse*
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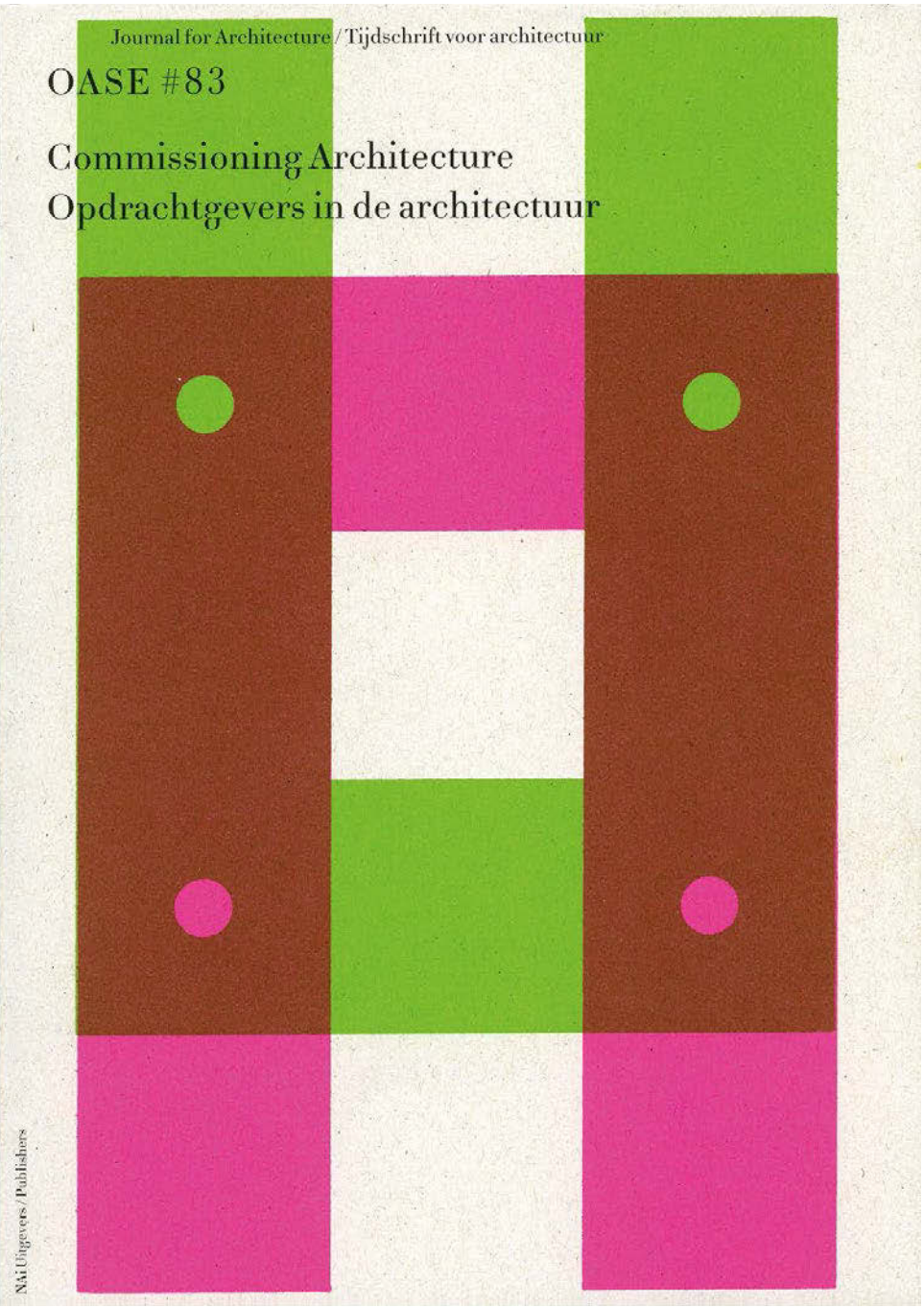
Issue 57, February–March 2017




Opposite - *Icon Viewer*, 2015. Courtesy: the artist and P!, New York.
Photo: Sebastian Bach

Above - Karel Martens with Aagje Martens and Werkplaats Typografie,
Cover design for *OASE* #83, 2010. Courtesy: the artist

P!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*Karel Martens: Recent Work* installation view at P!, New York, 2016.
Courtesy: the artist and P!, New York. Photo: Sebastian Bach

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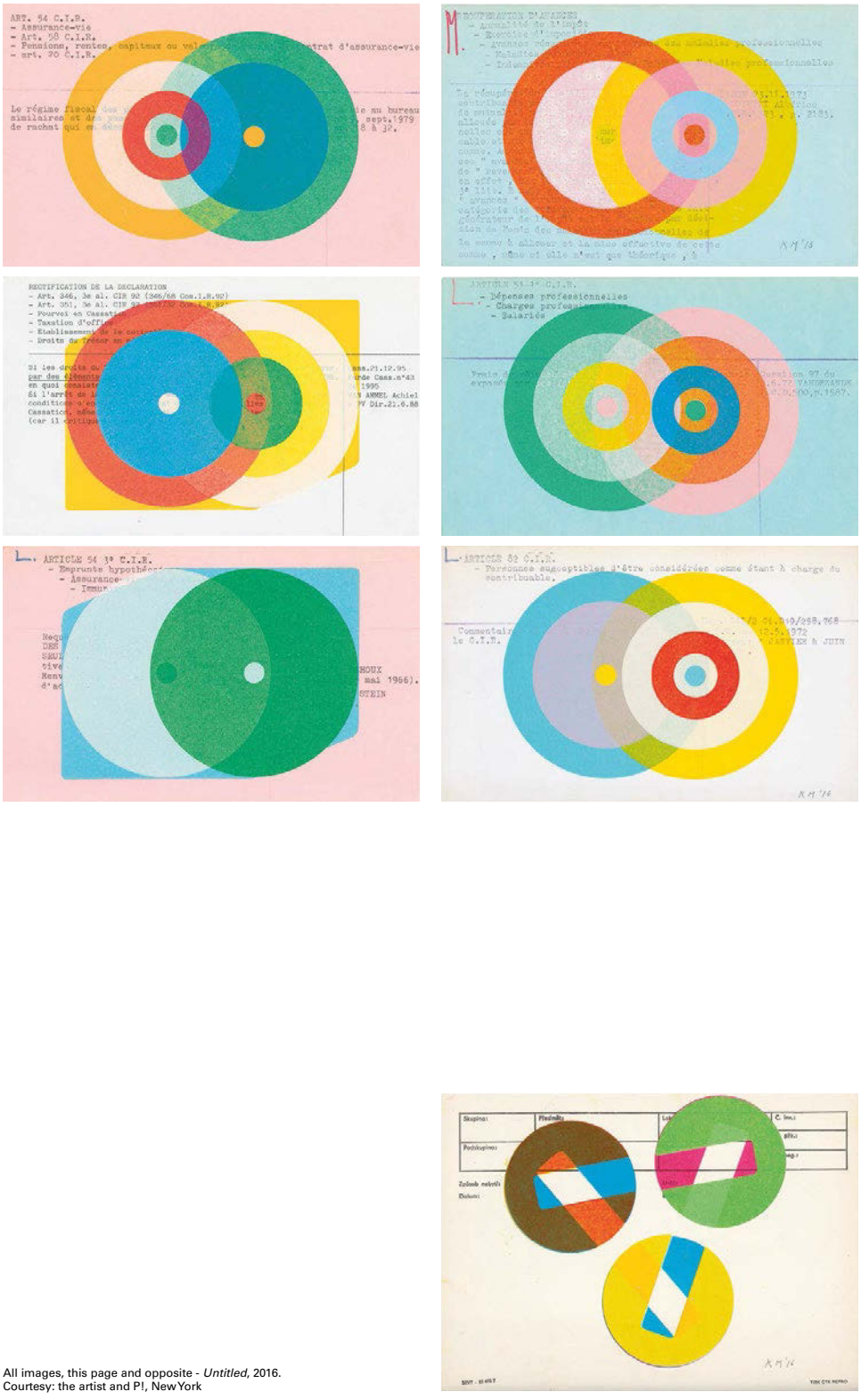

All images, this page and opposite - *Untitled*, 2016.
Courtesy: the artist and P!, New York

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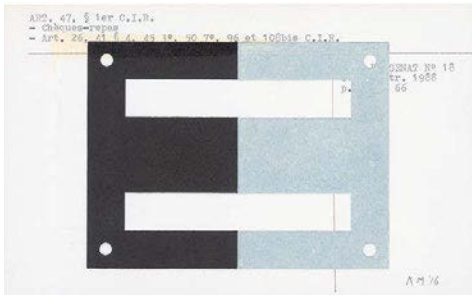

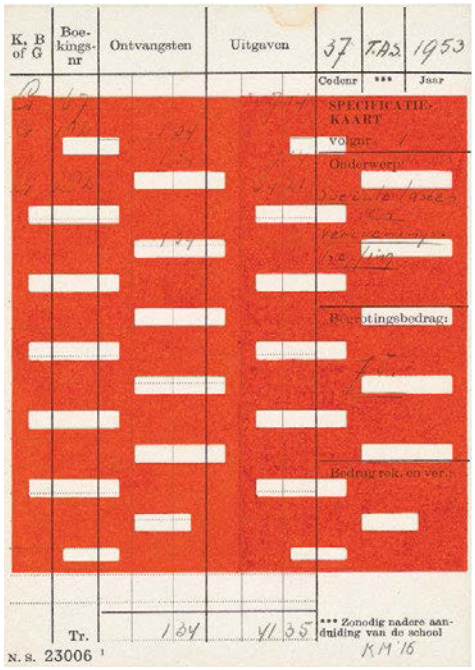


greater deadness, as we descend into addiction, making prisons of our boltholes. By the same token, no one since the Marquis de Sade and Franz Kafka has seen so clearly the irrationality at the core of bureaucratic systems of control. Burroughs lived out these contradictions in his life: his financial freedom came from a private income supplied by a family made rich by adding machines.

So—like a contestant in a *New Yorker* cartoon competition—I set to scribbling new captions. Karel Martens's monoprints made me think about Burroughs, but also Max Weber, and his ideas about disenchantment. Drawing on the legacy of the Romantic poet Friedrich Schiller, Weber described how the destruction of the "enchanted garden" of premodern society had both positive and negative aspects: when we modernized, bureaucratized, and secularized European society we exchanged a kind of childish enchantment—and perhaps a deep understanding of our own irrational natures—for things like security, predictability, and control.

**Art has a way of connecting us back to the enchanted, the primitive, the instinctual, the uncontrolled. Rather than taking sides in the struggle between discipline and sensuality, art simply dramatizes the tension in a compelling way.** For a designer, the relationships—and the divided loyalties—become more complex. The dilemma of the graphic designer in capitalism—tasked with giving an appealing face to things that may be anything but—is in fact the dilemma of the human being in capitalism. How do we negotiate that tense standoff between control and pleasure? How do we work and also play? To what extent should we inject deep human values into a system that seems less and less humane? We have to get these things right when we design our lives.

As well as Max Weber, I thought of course of late Sigmund Freud, who told us (in 1930's *Civilization and Its Discontents*) that human instinct and advanced civilization were never going to reach an easy truce. The orgasm and the office were incompatible. The more optimistic Wilhelm Reich later tried to cure society with orgasms (Burroughs, fascinated by his ideas, built an orgone accumulator in his Tangier garden). "The office" took its revenge: Reich's books were burned, his accumulators were destroyed, and the psychoanalyst died in prison. Freud had apparently been right after all. As Albert Camus put it: "Today the imbecile is king, and I call 'imbecile' anyone who is afraid of coming."

More liberal times followed; in the 1960s, the office and the orgasm seemed almost reconciled. The sun shone, people took acid, colors grew more intense. In the United States, Charles and Ray Eames worked for IBM. In Italy, Ettore Sottsass brought gorgeous colors to the business machines of Olivetti. Burroughs the writer became as famous as Burroughs the adding machine. Later, inspired by the 1960s, Steve Jobs would launch his transparent colored computer, the iMac, with the Rolling Stones' version of Arthur Lee's song "She Comes in Colors."

**When I look at the letterpress monoprints of Karel Martens, it's this 1960s thaw that I recognize, and this typically 1960s association of color with orgasm. Martens's colors are intensely pleasurable, gorgeously sensual.** His Dutchness counts for a great deal, for Dutchness means, stereotypically, both instrumentalization and liberalization. The world we live in—ordered by time management, efficient business machines, global containerized freight—is an extrapolation of the Anglo-Dutch capitalism of the colonial age in which peoples still in the stage of "enchantment" were ruthlessly exploited by peoples already in the age of industrial modernity. Yet Holland still seems (in the architecture of Rem Koolhaas, for instance) like a kind of laboratory for a more liberal—or at least libertarian—version of capitalism.
As Max Weber points out in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), it is above all Protestants (like the Dutch) who

*Karel Martens: Recent Work* installation views at P!, New York, 2016.
Courtesy: the artist and P!, New York. Photo: Sebastian Bach

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have methodically disenchanted the world. And this is the background to Martens's monoprints. He uses old index cards and other official records as his basic background—things he's found on the streets, imbued with the values of his culture. Explaining his use of one particular card, he told the *New York Times*: "It's a specification card for income and expenditure. It makes me think of my father, who entered his costs into a similar ledger book every day."

Who better than the sons, the scions of this deathly Protestant revolution, to free us from it? Burroughs used his insider's understanding of the processes of excessive, deadening control to evade them, and re-enchant his own personal model of the world. Perhaps, in the same way, the Dutch can show us the way out of the industrial-instrumental hell they helped create?

**Martens's card index monotypes remind me of the work of other artists I love for their color—Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, David Batchelor. But while their work certainly plays on the same tensions between structure and sensuality (Kelly, inspired by late Henri Matisse, daubed and collaged his way across pages from newspapers, and Batchelor has superimposed primary color on the austere pages of October magazine), I think Martens's use of—and love of—printed materials makes his work particularly resonant.**

Martens is a working graphic designer. As such, he has work he makes on commission for clients (publishers, institutions) and work he makes for his own pleasure (experiments, obsessions, dabblings). Inevitably, one influences the other. The monoprints are a personal sideline, but have filtered through to the paid work.

The recent reappraisal of Martens's work goes back to a 2012 exhibition inaugurating New York's P! storefront gallery. Curator (and fellow graphic designer) Prem Krishnamurthy invited Martens to join a group show. Four years later came a highly successful solo survey of recent work. Krishnamurthy is particularly drawn to work that crosses the borders between art and design. As he told the Walker Art Center blog, Krishnamurthy almost found his curatorial feeling for the monoprints becoming, itself, deadeningly bureaucratic: "I began to shuffle them around in order to achieve the perfect sequence. I was attempting to account for their size, color, formal relationships, and other variables. After a while, Karel said, 'Prem, it's done. Don't worry so much about it. They'll all look good next to each other.'"

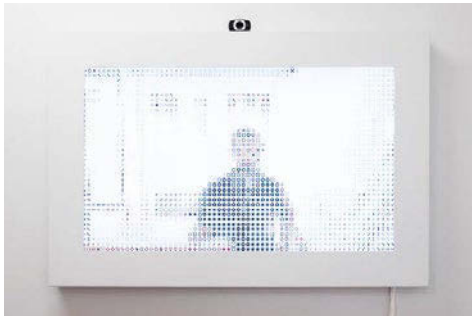
There's an inherent appeal in a series that rings changes on a theme. Looking at the Martens monoprints, and knowing that this is a side project made for his own interest rather than a commission, we can enjoy constructing a speculative narrative for the origins of the work. He's a commercial designer whose daily contact with materials can play into more personal projects. He likes bright colors in layered blocks. He uses abstract, semi-mechanical shapes. A recurrent motif looks like a metal tube frame for a glass-topped table with machine-drilled screw holes.

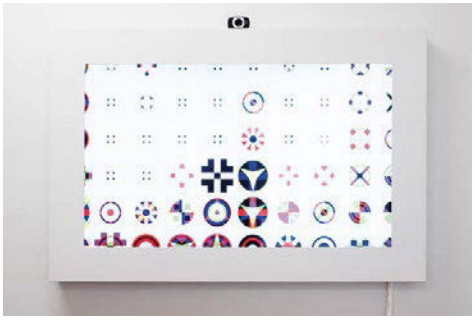
As we drift from image to image, we can imagine Martens dumpster diving in garbage sheds behind insurance offices, see him crate-digging in the moldy basement archives of libraries. "These ones are good because they mix blue biro and IBM Selectric typewriting," he may well be saying to himself. "A blob of red will work well here." His love for filtered versions of the twentieth century is as strong as our own; modernity is our antiquity. Receding from us, getting smaller, it becomes noticeably more cute, even enchanted. Its angles soften. We begin to forget what was pain and what was pleasure.

The cards feature Dutch writing, machine printed with annotations in clerical pen script. The sans-serif faces are already retro. Perhaps a verse from W. H. Auden's poem "The Fall of Rome" pops into our heads:

Caesar's double-bed is warm
As an unimportant clerk
Writes I DO NOT LIKE MY WORK
On a pink official form.

Karel Martens's monoprints summon, for me, an almost impossible but incredibly beautiful world, a place where control and sensuality coexist in the same visual plane, where you love your work, where the circle is squared and the square circled, where the present and the past are simultaneous, where you can have your cake and eat it, too. In that place color sits happily in a grid, and the desires of the office coexist with the logic of orgasm. We're far from it, but that doesn't mean we can't imagine it.





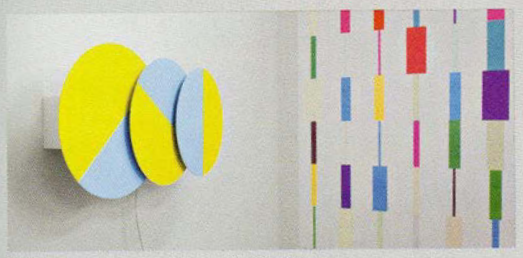
*Icon Viewer*, 2015.
Courtesy: the artist and P!, New York. Photo: Sebastian Bach

BLOUIN modern painters
ART / ARCHITECTURE / DESIGN / PERFORMANCE / FILM
WINTER 2016/2017

## Karel Martens

*P! // September 11–October 30*

The clock exhibited by septuagenarian Dutch graphic designer Martens doesn't so much tell time as make a show of time through color. Three kinetic disks, split in half with lemon yellow and baby blue, slightly overlapping, spin at varying speeds, each coordinated to make a full rotation in one hour, minute, or second, respectively. His wallpaper system—made out of rearrangeable A4 sheets of paper, printed in varying stripes and shades—and a series of circular forms printed on found paper share the same concern: letting precision and accident collide in color, for pure visual enjoyment. –JULIET HELMKE



Installation view of "Karel Martens: Recent Work," 2016.

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*Modern Painters*
"Karel Martens"
by Juliet Helmke
Winter 2016/2017

'There is a whole class of people compelled to rent themselves on the market...', reads one piece, while others dance between hard-line Marxist alienation and ironic romanticism – menace pervades the image's first-person POV. During the 1970s, the work was destroyed when it was removed from the wall; remade, it is a reminder of the relevance of Burgin's semiotic turn: Conceptualism is a form of storytelling that bestows value on objects, mingling epistemology with money.

## On the Lower East Side, hanging out

I saw the show at Bridget Donahue after I had locked myself out of my office, and possessing an unwelcome abundance of time, I also landed at Dutch designer Karel Martens's exhibition at P! In fact, time is central to the collection of experiments in information design, exemplified by *Three Times (in Blue and Yellow)* (2016), a type of clock comprising three overlapping duotone discs. The steady rotation of each disc records a second, a minute and an hour respectively, indicating the time with varying intensity. Two blue hemispheres will align and recede in a calming union; but a moment later, blue and yellow come into contact, contrast and register the hour with a flickering, anxious effect. No keys, no phone, no wallet, no cash, I was left to aimlessly wander the Lower East Side. Like the 24-hour clock, which was originally designed for people whose bio-rhythms are synchronised to alternative, often disorienting cycles as a result of geography, work or both (healthcare workers, pilots, astronauts, even Arctic explorers), Marten's 'clock' grounded time in the senses, reminding me that my body can do other things than work.

In the video BLIND PERINEUM, Matthew Barney, nude save for the mountain-climbing gear strapped to his waist, strains to latch a carabiner to a nearby hook, about halfway through his climb across a gallery ceiling – a potent reminder that the body in process is the central metaphor, if not material, in his work. Yet at his show *Facility of* DECLINE at Barbara Gladstone, the thought made me wonder: why don't more artists cite him as an influence? Duchamp, Thek, Kudo, Kelley, Hesse and Huyghe might offer a better thematic template for the body politics, hybrid practices and petroleum-based medical supplies used by many contemporary artists, but Barney's exhibition, which collects work from his 1991 debut at the gallery, demonstrates his sustained relevance too. The show includes the iconic *Transexualis* (1991), an industrial freezer containing a weightlifting bench cast in petroleum, and REPRESSIA (1991), a wrestling mat underneath an intricate, ceiling-mounted climbing apparatus that resembles a bidirectional phallus. A sternal retractor – the device that holds open the chest cavity during surgery – rends the mat, readying it for the blunt instrument that imposingly dangles above.

The quarter-of-a-century-old works feel prescient today, making it difficult to answer the question above. Younger artists (Josh Klein, Anicka Yi, Alisa Baremboym, Rochelle Goldberg, Max Hooper Schneider and Jessi Reaves, among

Karel Martens, *Three Times (in Blue and Yellow)*, 2016, painted aluminum, acrylic, 3D printed components, electronic timers, motors, 100 × 30 × 15 cm. Courtesy the artist and P!, New York

Matthew Barney, REPRESSIA, 1991, wrestling mat, Pyrex, cast petroleum-wax and petroleum jelly, olympic curl bar, cotton socks, sternal retractors, 488 × 549 × 450 cm. Photo: David Regen. © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York & Brussels



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*Art Review*
by Sam Korman
December 2016

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE | http://nyti.ms/2ctKMPb

**ART**

# An Iconic Graphic Designer on His Process

By KAT HERRIMAN SEPT. 7, 2016

The influential Dutch graphic designer Karel Martens is most strongly associated with typography: He even developed his home country's gold-standard master's degree program focusing on the discipline. But Martens isn't just a serifs-and-kerning guy: He works across video, installation and sculpture, too, having spent nearly 60 years developing a practice that reflects his persistent inquisitiveness. Starting this Sunday, Martens shares pieces — including an interactive video installation, a modular wall-covering system and a kinetic clock sculpture — at his first North American solo exhibition, hosted by P!, a project space on Broome Street. (The Martens show kicks off P!'s final season of programming at the Chinatown location, where it's been based for five years; it's planned to reopen in 2018 in a new space.) But there are plenty of Martens's trademark letterpress monoprints on view, too; and before Martens touched down in New York, the artist gave T a preview. Above, some of his colorful prints explained in his own words.

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*New York Times Style Magazine*
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by Kat Herriman
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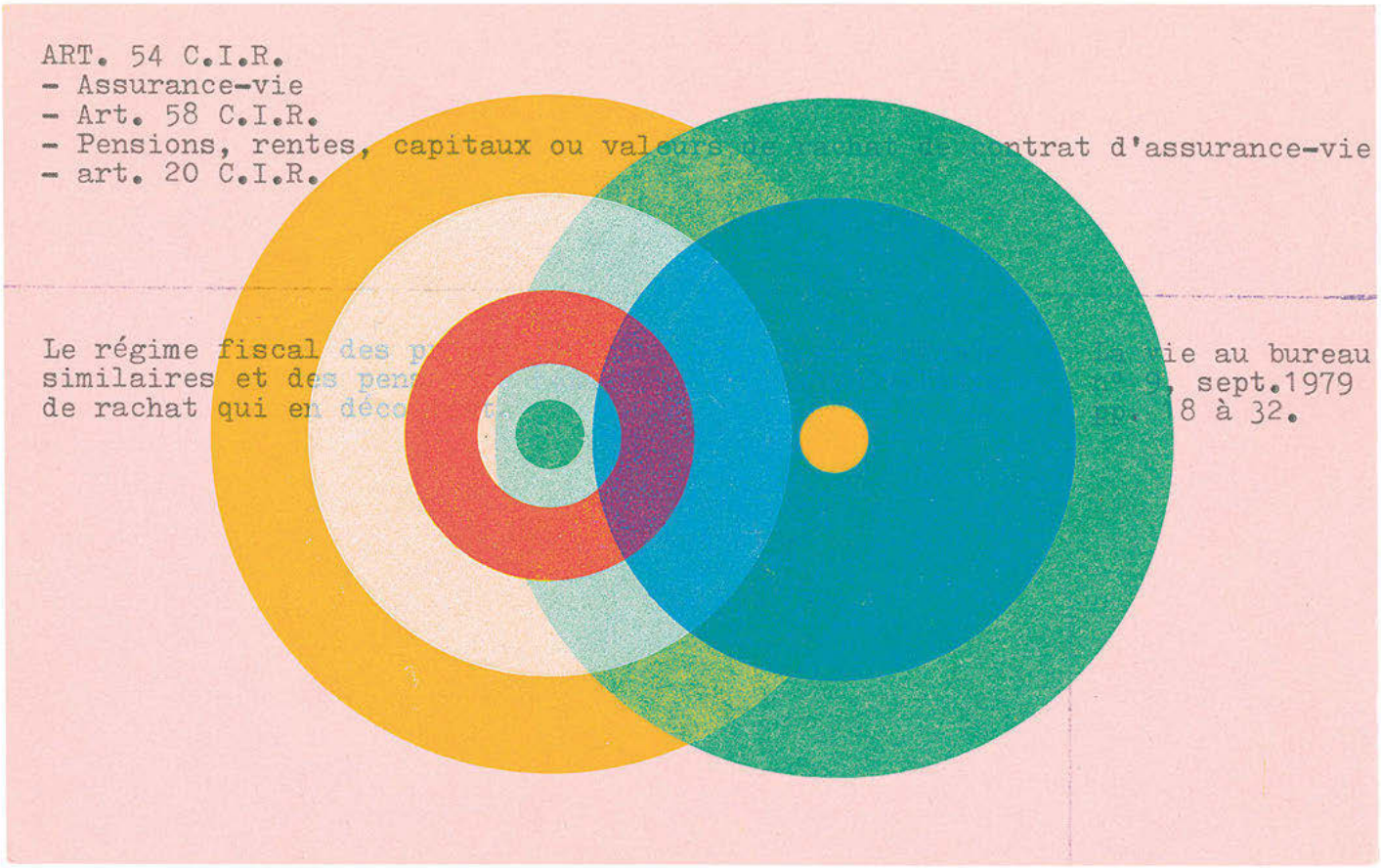


Here, the graphic designer Karel Martens shares the processes behind a few of his signature letterpress monoprints, created on found cards and on view starting Sunday at P! in Chinatown.

"I don't have a premeditated plan when I'm making prints. It's more of a reflection on what's already there: The paper motivates me to do something, to react to what exists. In the case of this new series, which has a lot of circles, I'm curious to see them in combination with the background color of a found card or in relationship to the rhythm of each card's typewriter typography. My method takes time: I print one color, then wait for at least a day for the drying process; on the next day or whenever, I react again to what there is now."

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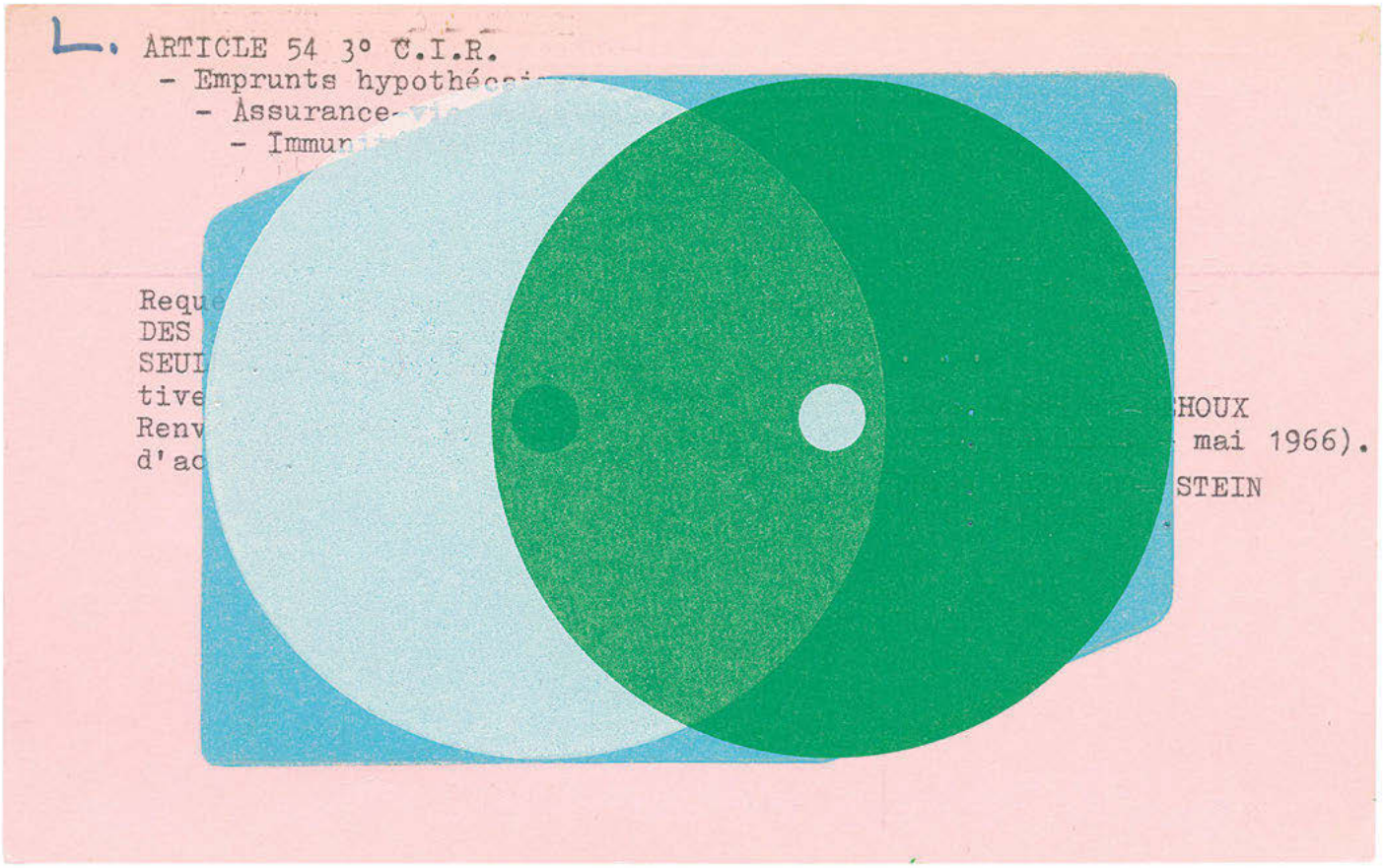


"With this one, I remember feeling, 'It is not finished' — and I liked the feeling. For me, both in printing and in general, it's an important thing to stop at the right moment. I'm also reacting to the rhythm of typographical order, which I see as a kind of concrete poetry. The typewriting on the card is very formal; it comes from a Belgian tax office. A human being once typed out this thing, which makes it look so dedicated and necessary. For me, this typographic form is activating my prints, and my prints place the text in a different context. That gives it a unique expression."

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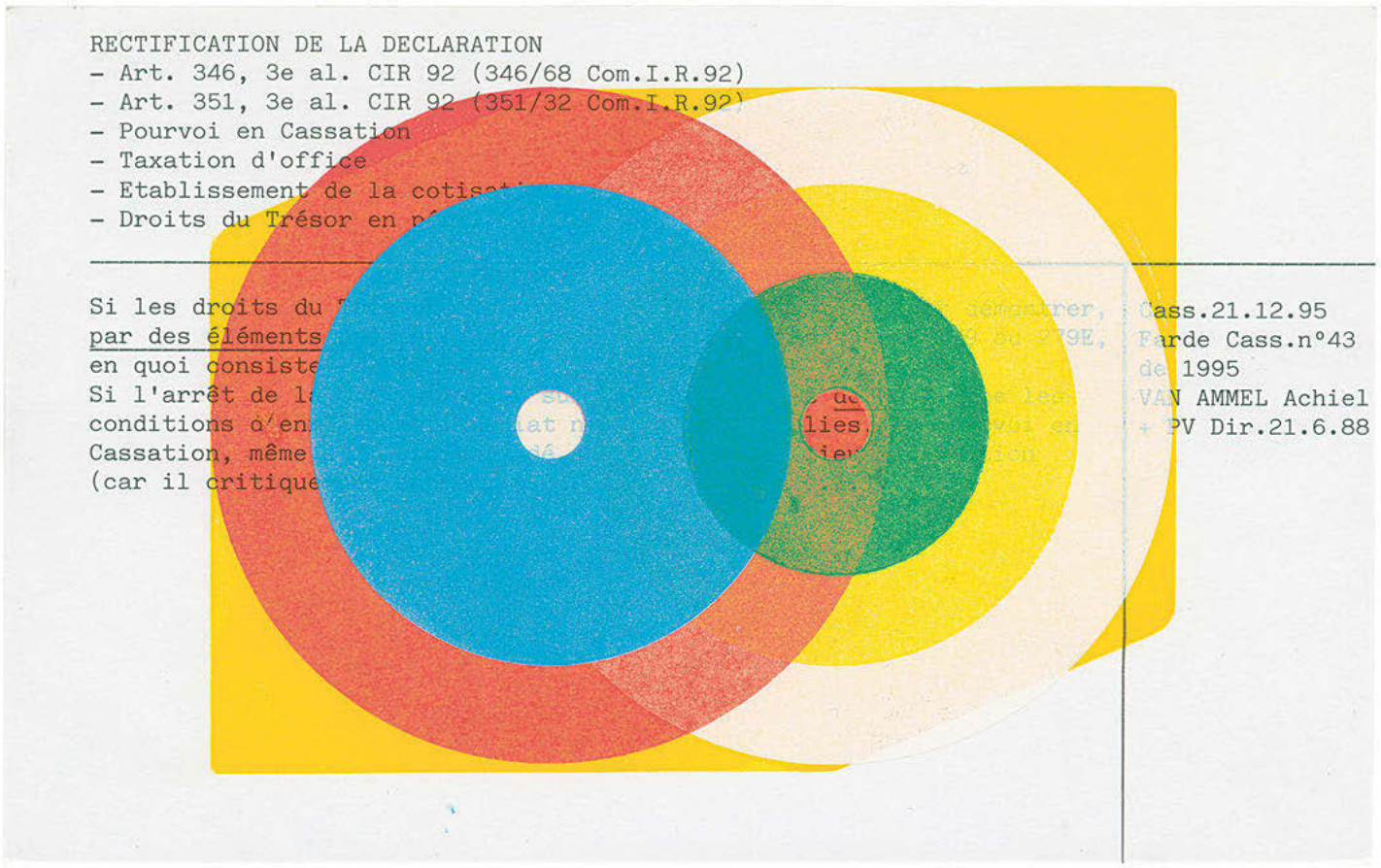


“This print is related to the one before it. The yellow shape is one I was already using as a print on its own, but here it’s a kind of box: a box within the rings, which gives the print a three-dimensional character. When I’m making prints, I’m looking for a moment of decision; I have the desire to create a visual effect that is not known yet. What is the relationship between the clinical, administrative background of the card and the printed part? For me, it has to do more with feeling than with rationality. It’s not about meaning, but comparable to pure instrumental music, which can have the beauty and tension of abstraction.”

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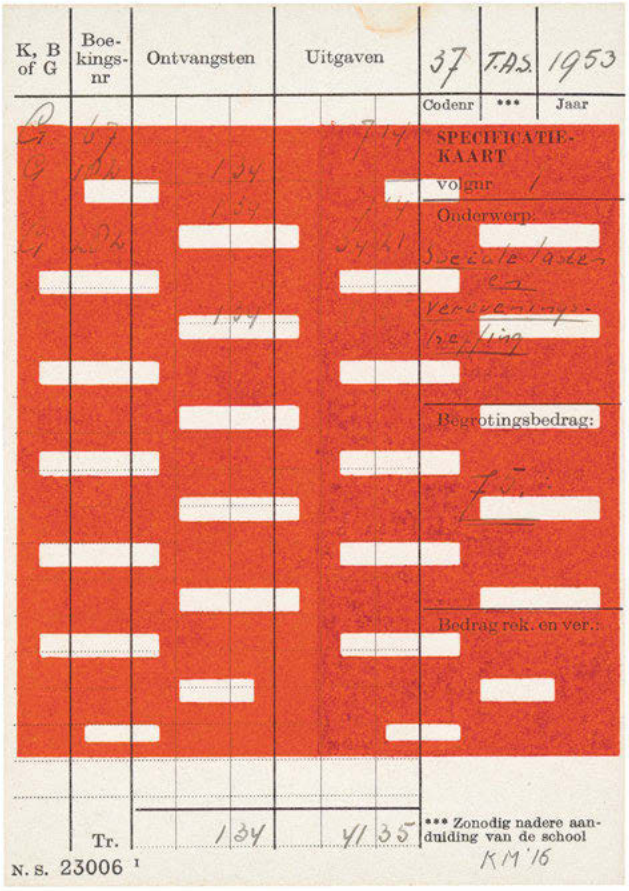


"There are a few of these cards that I found in the same place. It's a 'specification card' for income and expenditure. It makes me think of my father, who entered his costs into a similar ledger book every day. The card shows formal columns in combination with human handwriting. The print on it is very simple, just one metal shape repeated. I found that piece a while ago; it also has a kind of 'list' character, but from a different world than what's in the card itself. The print was motivated by my curiosity to see the two things together."

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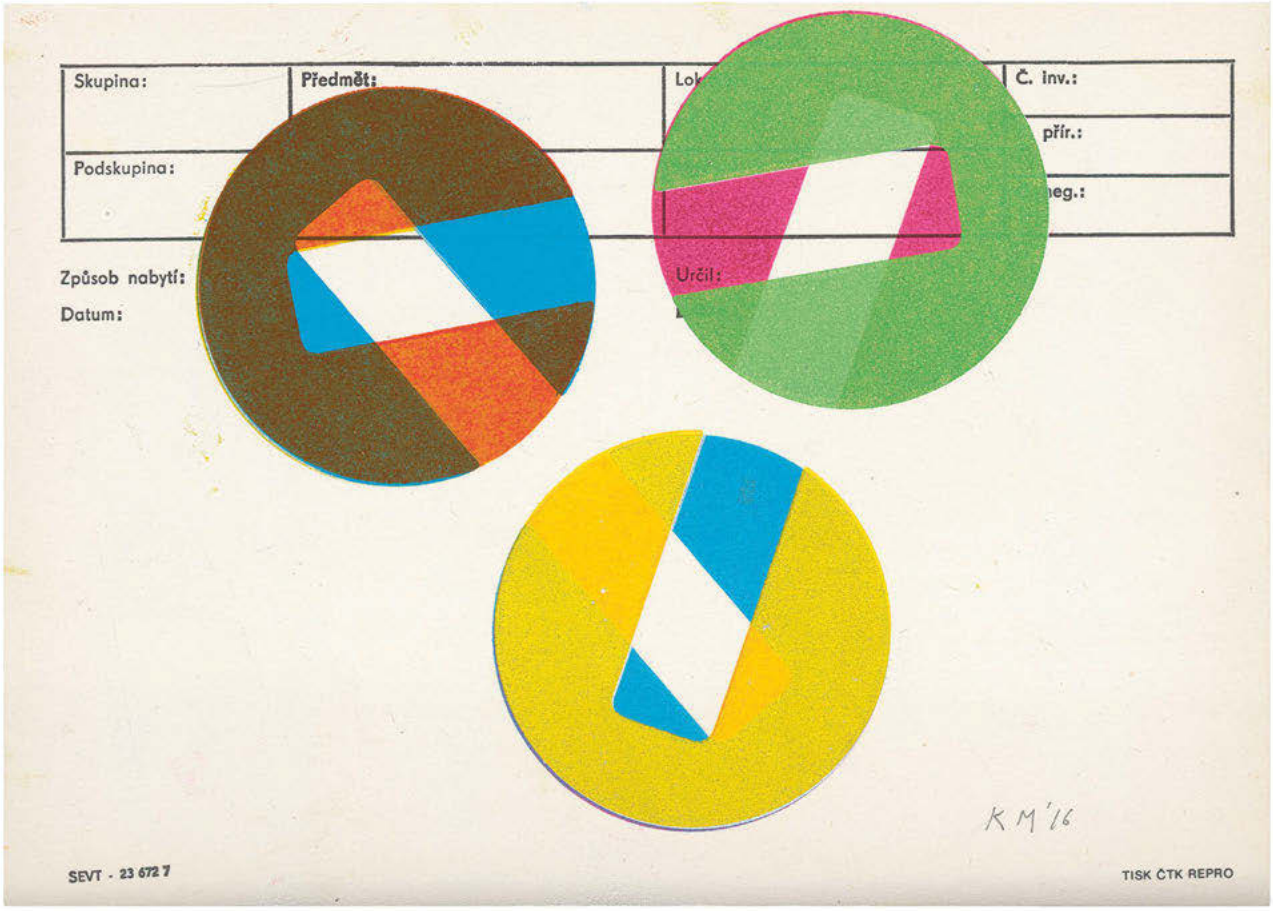


“When I start printing every morning, very often I need something to get the feel for things by going from a known area to an unknown one. I often begin with a print like this, which is overprinted perhaps ten times in total. I cannot explain how I decide what’s next, which is the pleasure of making a print. This particular triangular combination is one that Maharam made a textile out of. So even though it’s an old form compositionally, in terms of color, it’s always different and surprising for me.”

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*New York Times Style Magazine*
“An Iconic Graphic Designer on His Process”
by Kat Herriman
7 September 2016

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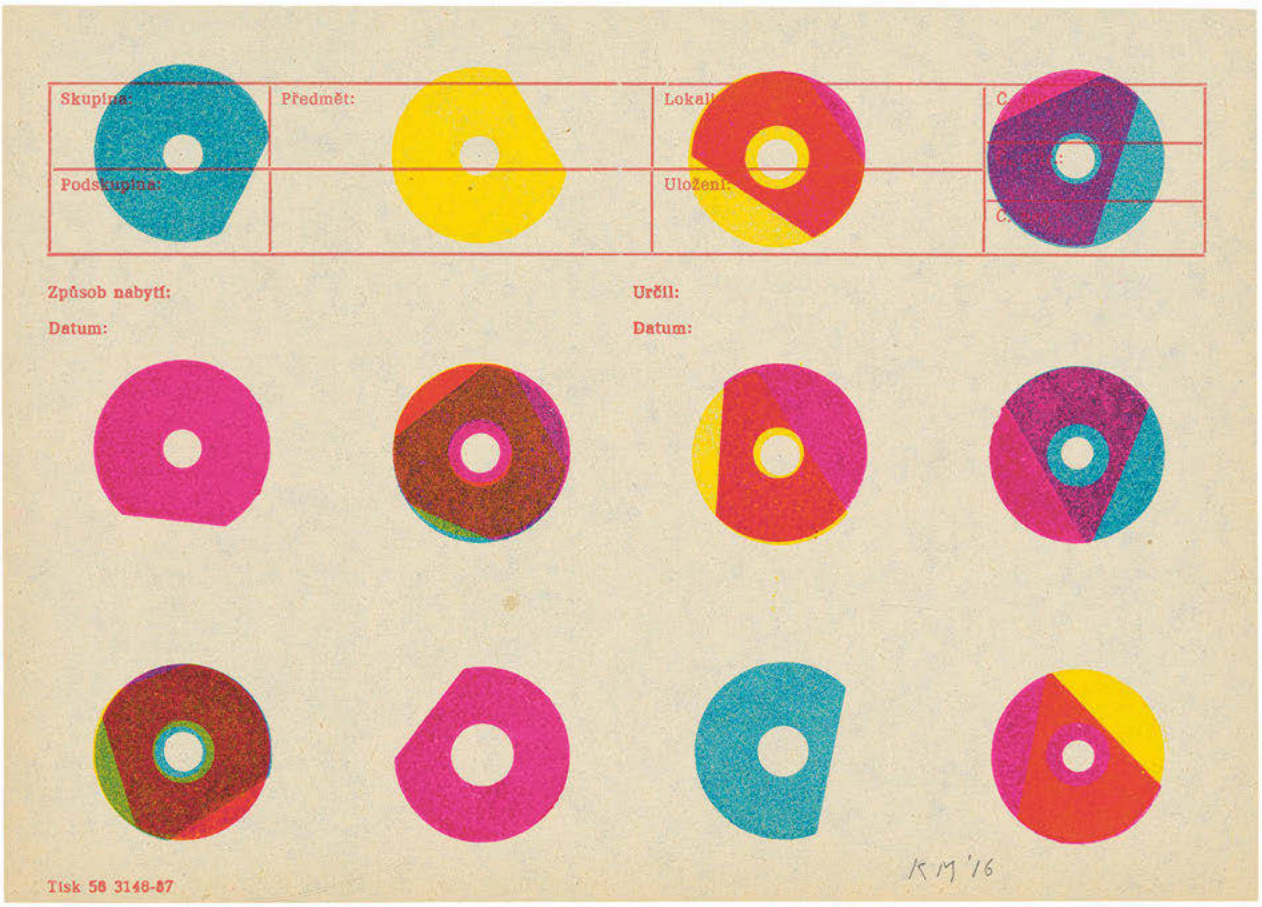


"This print with the twelve circles is the motif from the cover of my book, 'Printed Matter' (1996). It's similar to the print before with the triangles: when I begin every morning, these are the kind of sheets that I start out with. Later on, I move to other prints. Perhaps it doesn't take so much time in terms of how long I actually print it, but it takes a long period of time because each piece lays there for while, and I work on it while moving between other prints. After days or months or years, there is a moment when the print becomes OK, and it doesn't need any more: Then it's finished."

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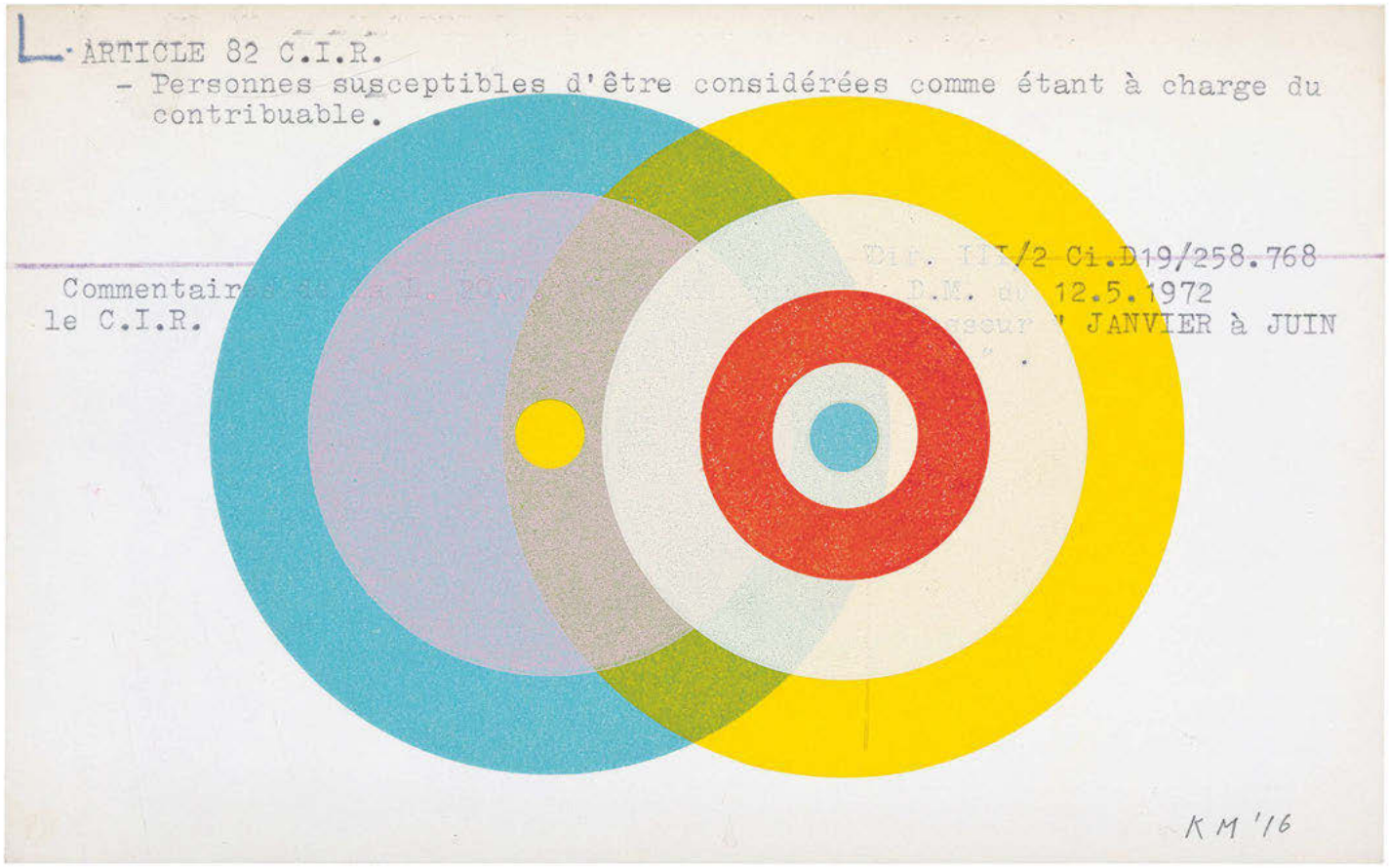


"The white on the right-hand circle is printed perhaps seven times, until it gets really white. And the blue is printed with a white on top of it, but that looks gray, because it's only overprinted two times. In offset printing, this effect is almost impossible, but you can do it in letterpress if you repeat it many times using opaque ink. It was my intention to take the closed yellow circle and make an opening in it. By overprinting the white ink, it becomes the same 'color temperature' as the background, matching the white color of the card. And then the yellow dot pops out — a surprise that you can't plan for. Perhaps this is the best motivation to make work."

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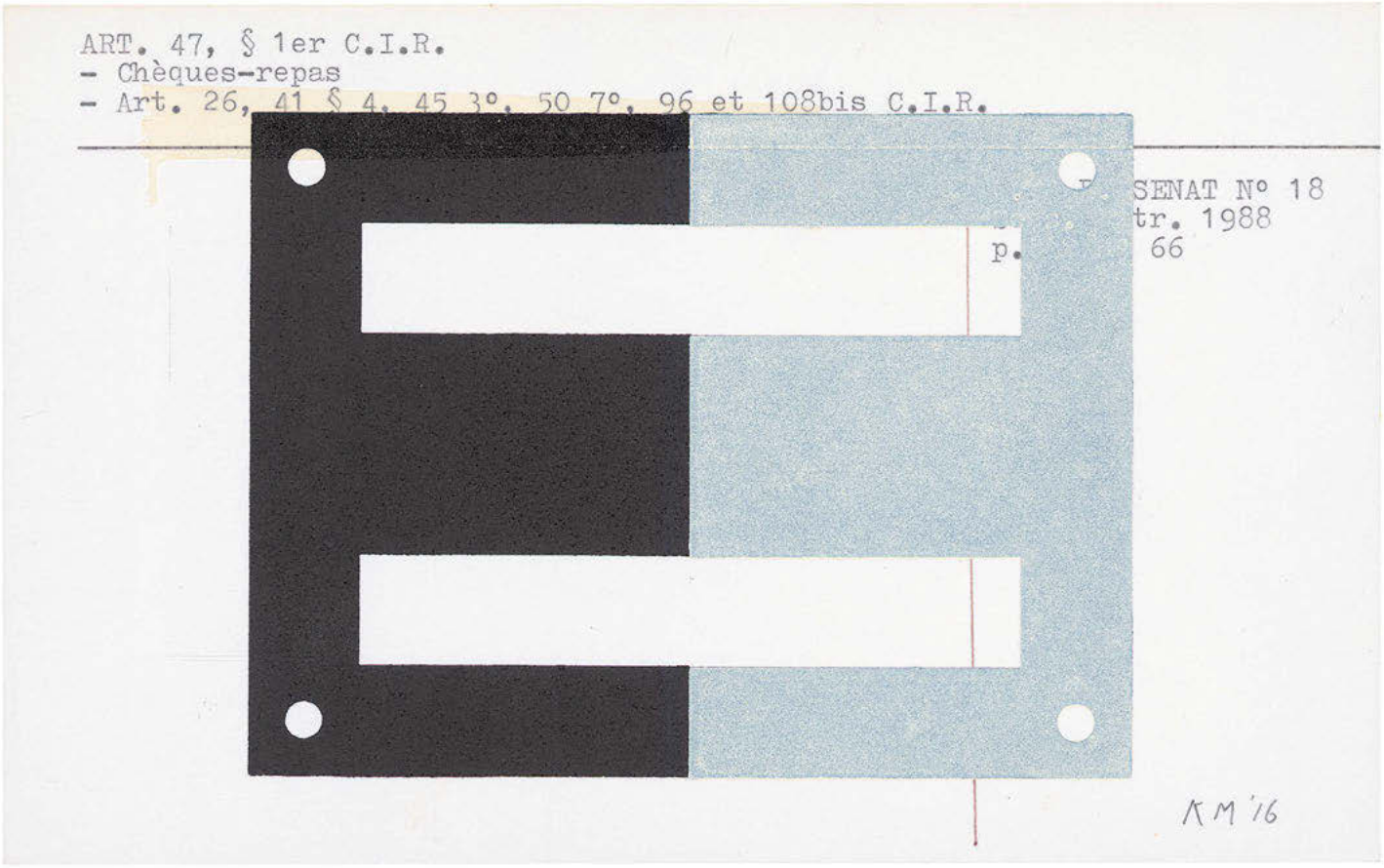


“This one is black and white. It’s printed twice with the black and then several times with white on top. Color is an intriguing thing. The archetypical colors are for me the primary colors, because you can make all other colors with them. I typically start with color. But sometimes, I prefer black; it’s all the colors at once and has such a strong presence. I have been planning to make more black-and-white prints in the future.”

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*New York Times Style Magazine*
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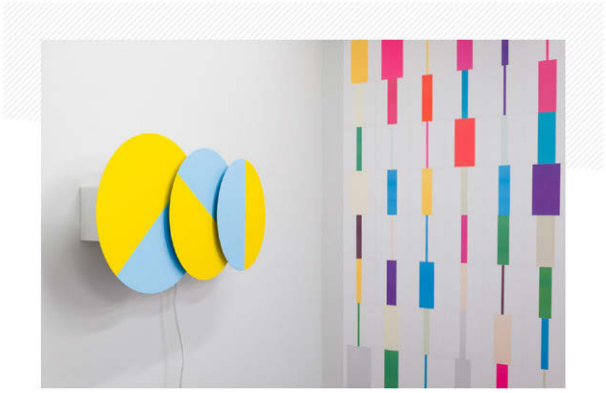
by Kat Herriman
7 September 2016

# What Happens When An Iconic Print Designer Experiments In 3D

At a new show at P! gallery in New York, the Dutch modernist Karel Martens explores systems and abstractions across media.

"Ultimately the thing that carries through all of Karel's work is a deep and profound interest in abstraction, but abstraction that can actually still have meaning," says Prem Krishnamurthy, one of the founding partners of NYC-based design firm Project Projects and director of P! gallery in downtown Manahattan. "For Karel, abstraction, like in music, constructs some kind of new world."



Krishnamurthy is talking about Karel Martens, the modernist Dutch designer best known for his typographic posters, book covers, and letterpress monoprints that layer colorful abstract shapes over found cards. In 1996, Martens published the celebrated book *Printed Matter*, which collected many of these works that he had been making since the 1960s. But Martens wasn't just a print designer, as a new exhibition on his work at P! shows—he also applied his penchant for abstractions and modernist systems across video and installation work as well.

For *Karel Martens: Recent Work*, which opened last weekend, Martens worked with Krishnamurthy for nearly a year to design original pieces for the show. One of the pieces, *Three Times (in Blue and Yellow)*, a kinetic clock, picks back up with the kinetic sculptures he started working on in 1968. The clock consists of three circles that, half sky blue and half bright yellow, rotate at three different speeds: one for the second hand, one for the minute, and another for the hour. As the circles spin, the colors converge and overlap, forming new shapes and showing the passage of time in more of an experiential way.

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*FastCoDesign.com*
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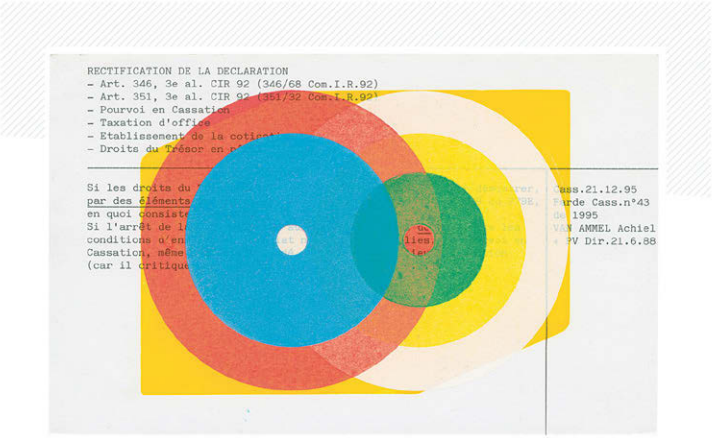
by Meg Miller
14 September 2016




As Krishnamurthy points out, that durational quality is present in the other works in the show as well, even the static monoprints. Martens creates the prints by printing one shape, then letting it dry fully before printing another on top of it—meaning that they sometimes take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Over time, his monographs have also taken on new forms: his new series is made with bright florescent colors that form mostly circular shapes.

The most surprising piece in the show by the renowned print designer is an interactive video piece. In the piece, an icon system made out of Martens's signature abstract shapes are rendered on a screen and respond to the movement of the viewer. Elsewhere in the gallery, he created a more analog interactive piece: a wall covered in offset printed analog pixels creates a sort of DIY wallpaper that end-users can arrange themselves.

Even though they were created with different mediums, all of the works in the show are grounded in tradition. "He comes out of the Modernist movement," says Krishnamurthy. "So since the 1960s he's been thinking about systems of representations and systems of typography, but basically systems of making meaning. It works on different levels: in the monoprints he's creating an image for use, but for the other works he's creating the means by which other people might create an image."

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ARTFORUM

POSTED AUGUST 15, 2016

# NYC's P! to Present Final Season of Exhibitions

P!, an arts venue located in Chinatown that calls itself a project space, commercial gallery, and mom-and-pop kunsthalle, has announced that after five years of experimental programming it will launch its final season of exhibitions this fall.

From September 2016 to May 2017, P! will present five exhibitions, including "Karel Martens: Recent Work," the artist's first solo exhibition in North America; "The Stand," a show that will tie Stephen King's 1978 novel about post-apocalyptic America by the same name with the nation's current political state; and "Céline Condorelli: Epilogue," the UK-based artist's new body of work and the final show at the gallery. P! describes its last season as a group of shows that will engage with questions surrounding display strategies, curatorial models, identity hijinks, conflictual processes, and financial structures.

Founded in 2012 by New York–based designer and curator Prem Krishnamurthy, P! has organized more than forty exhibitions and off-site projects from its location at 334 Broome Street. Even though the experimental exhibition space is closing its physical location, Krishnamurthy said the organization will still be "an exhibition-making machine." In 2018, P! will reinvent itself by expanding its mission, focusing on organizing off-site exhibitions in the US and abroad, developing publications with artists, and collaborating with institutions.

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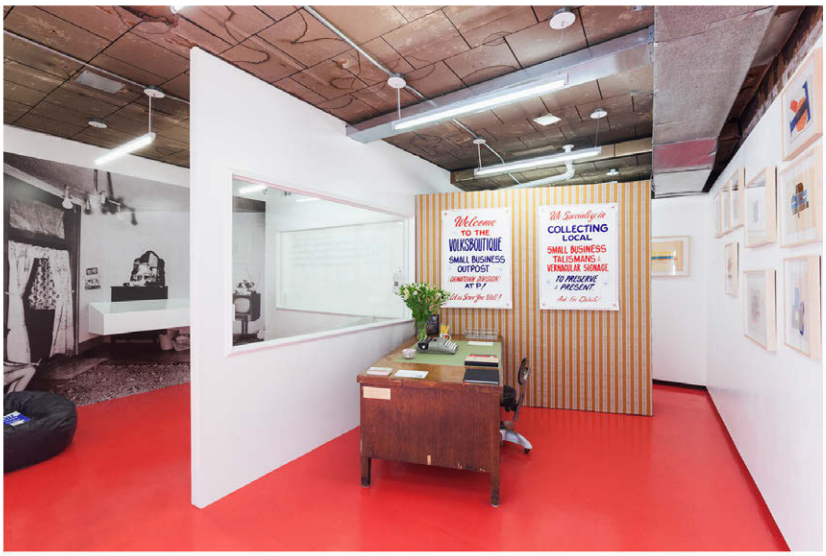
*Artforum.com*
"NYC's P! to Present Final Season of Exhibitions"
15 August 2016

ARTNEWS

# P! WILL END ITS FIVE-YEAR RUN IN DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN IN MAY 2017

BY *Andrew Russeth* POSTED 08/15/16 10:00 AM




Installation view of 'Process 01: Joy,' the first show at P!, in 2012.
COURTESY P!

For the past four years, the modestly sized storefront on Broome Street in Downtown Manhattan going by the name of P! has been one of the trickier art venues to figure out, even for people who have visited regularly. Depending on when you happened to swing by, it would appear to be a reading room, an office, a clothing store, an art gallery, a design gallery, a sui generis amalgam of a few of those things, or some other sort of bizarre place. It opened with a brilliant red floor. Its architecture shifted wildly from show to show. Two years in, a feng shui expert consulting on an exhibition added a bright green ceiling. "P! has always tried to exist in a lot of different forms," its founder, Prem Krishnamurthy, told me by phone recently. "One of the best inadvertent compliments I got in the first year of P! was that people would say, 'What the hell is this?' "

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*Artforum.com*
"NYC's P! to Present Final Season
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15 August 2016

Krishnamurthy is a designer by trade, a founder of the firm Project Projects, and his curatorial program at P! has included designers alongside artists, writers, people who work across disciplines, and people who don't bother much with such distinctions, figures like Brian O'Doherty, Karel Martens, and Elaine Lustig Cohen. He told me that his aim starting the space back in 2012 was to show people "in the context of New York who I thought needed to have a presence here, and also to bring an experimental approach to exhibition making in Chinatown." The space has had an impressive run, and now it is nearing its end. P!'s upcoming season, number five, he said, will be its final one as a brick-and-mortar operation.

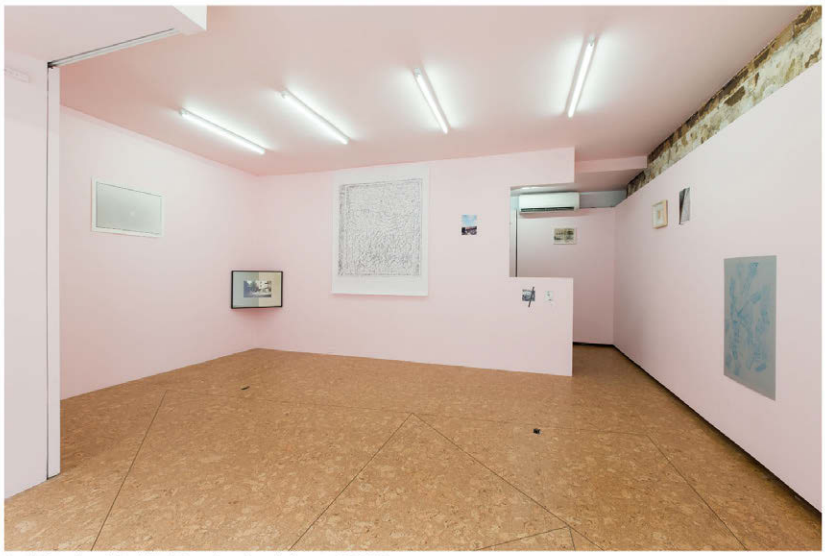
"P! on Broome Street was always meant as a kind of limited-time offering," Krishnamurthy told me. The operation's five-year lease will run out midway through next year, and the entire schedule of shows until then has been planned out, beginning with Martens's first-ever solo exhibition in North America next month. "The fifth season of P! is, very self-reflexively, a looping back," he said, noting that some people and ideas that appeared in the space's first year will be returning.


Exterior of P! during the run of Wong Kit Yi's solo show 'North Pole Futures,' 2015.
COURTESY P!

There will also be a project with students at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, where Krishnamurthy teaches; an exhibition that he is organizing with Anthony Marcellini that takes as its inspiration Stephen King's 1978 post-apocalyptic novel *The Stand*; and the American debut of artist, architect, and writer Céline Condorelli who will have the final show at the gallery, ending in May.

"We already know what our final event will be, which will be on May 31, 2017, which will be the launch of a new company and endeavor by the artist Wong Kit Yi," Krishnamurthy said. "P! on Broome Street will expire, and Wong Kit Yi will launch her new project."

This is not, to be clear, the end of P! Krishnamurthy continued, "We already have a number of offsite curatorial projects and collaborations with institutions and also weirder hybrid publishing slash design editorial slash exhibition projects, which really I think is the sweet spot for P! P! has always believed its role can be very mutable." (Also worth noting: everything to do with Project Projects, whose office is nearby, will continue apace.)



Installation view of 'O / U' at P!, on view through August 20, 2016.
SEBASTIAN BACH/P!

Its hybrid iterations aside, P! is, for another week, playing a fairly traditional role in the neighborhood, hosting a summer show called "O / U" in collaboration with the nearby gallery Room East.

"Chinatown and Broome Street have changed dramatically since I moved here, and for better and for worse P! has probably been part of that transformation," Krishnamurthy said. When he opened on Broome Street in 2012, it felt like a slightly out-of-the-way location, on the edge of the burgeoning arts district. There was only one other gallery on the block. Now there are six in total. "It was really clear to me that there were multiple communities all vying for the same space," he said. "When I moved there, a lot of people called it Chinatown rather than the Lower East Side. Now people call it the Lower East Side."

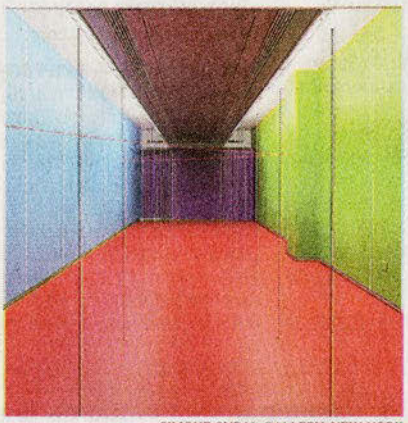
After mentioning in passing that "P! may land at some point in time in another storefront space in another context," Krishnamurthy brought up one of P!'s most peculiar transformations, when it became a new gallery called K. for about five months last year. "This gallery ran an accelerated program of exhibitions that all had to do with financial structures and in a way formed the life and death of a Lower East Side gallery," he said. "After five months, K. disappeared and suddenly P! was back in that space. So in a way P! has already housed other institutions within it, and housed other identities, so that is just one more step in that."

# 'Dis-Play/Re-Play'

*Austrian Cultural Forum*
*11 East 52nd Street*
*Manhattan*
*Through Sept. 5*

"Art exists in a kind of eternity of display," the critic and installation artist Brian O'Doherty wrote in 1976 in his seminal series of essays "Inside the White Cube." "This eternity gives the gallery a limbolike status; one has to have died already to be there." Artists and curators are still grappling with this idea 40 years later. "Dis-Play/Re-Play," organized by Prem Krishnamurthy and Walter Seidl at the Austrian Cultural Forum and featuring six artists, offers an updated response to the white-cube conundrum.

Among the works is Mr. O'Doherty's "Parallax City (Rope Drawing #125)" (2016), a striking installation in which the walls and floor have been painted and the center of the room has been divided vertically by a rope. Judith Barry, another theorist of the art-exhibition space (her 1986 essay "Dissenting Spaces" is cited in a gallery handout) is represented by a retooled version of a two-channel video from 1978, while a third white-cube thinker, Martin Beck (his essay "The Exhibition and the Display" is in the show's handout), has a video with a Muzak-like soundtrack at the front entrance and framed text and images upstairs. Mika Tajima's playful wallpaper and colored plexiglass panels mix art with design; Hermes Payrhuber's graffiti suggests a street vernacular; and Gerwald Rockenschaub deconstructs the Austrian flag with red and white plexiglass panels.



SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY, NEW YORK

Brian O'Doherty's "Parallax City (Rope Drawing #125)" (2016), at the Austrian Cultural Forum.

"Dis-Play/Re-Play" demonstrates how, as Mr. O'Doherty wrote in the '70s, "context becomes content," but also how everyone from artists to architects has revolted against the white cube. This might surprise its modern inventors, who saw it as ideal, universal and equalizing. Perhaps in another generation this view will return and artists will push back against the now-prevalent idea of the white cube as a prison or mausoleum.

*MARTHA SCHWENDENER*

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*The New York Times*
"Dis-Play/Re-Play"
by Martha Schwendener
26 August 2016

# "DIS-PLAY / RE-PLAY"

**AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM NEW YORK**
**11 East 52nd Street**
**May 4, 2016–September 5, 2016**

A loose inspiration for Hermes Payrhuber's multimedia installation *Ode to the Rope with a Knot with a Hole, for Thomas Bernhard*, 2016, is the titular author's 1971 novella, *Walking*. The book, which is about a man triggered to madness by a questionable set of trousers in a storefront, contains frantic and labyrinthine monologues on perception, experience, and the state. *Walking* is an apt metaphor for this show, which seeks to corrupt the white cube's displacing capabilities, despite the modern exhibition's attempts to divorce viewers from realities beyond its parameters.

**Hermes Payrhuber, *Ode to the Rope with a Knot with a Hole, for Thomas Bernhard*, 2016,** mixed media, dimensions variable.

Martin Beck's *one day after another*, 2014–15, reproduces his notes and philological meditations regarding the words exhibition and display on letter-size pigment prints. They confront the show's overarching theme: Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1976), a text examining the history and atemporalizing effects of this (by now) very familiar context for art. Judith Barry's video installation *They Agape*, 1978—depicting two female architects talking against a sound track with songs by Gang of Four and the B-52s—comes to life via a motion sensor, forcing spectators to complete a piece projected across two adjoining walls. Similarly, Beck's appropriation of his own writings highlights what O'Doherty calls the "flow of energy between concepts of space articulated through the artwork and the space we occupy." Beck literally reframes his texts within the idiosyncratic gallery, while Barry employs silence, punk rock, blank walls, and the mundanity of architectural work to reveal the labor of spatial production, and, more pointedly, the erasure of women in said production by the very institutions of representation.

— *Tyler Curtis*

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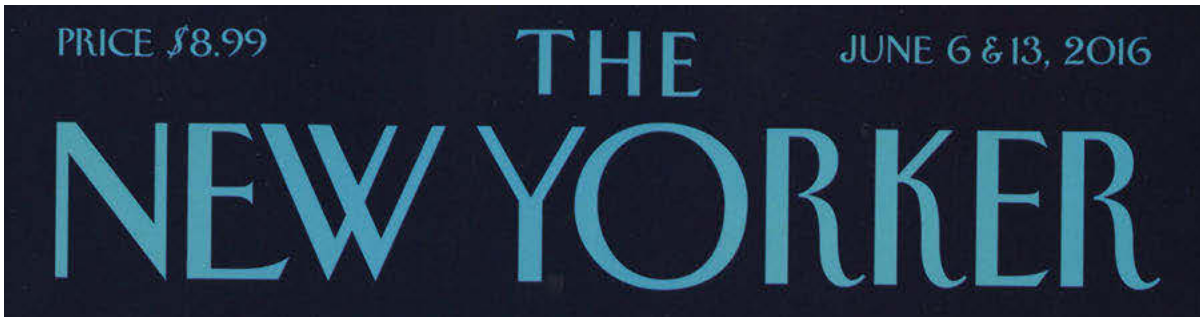
*Artforum.com*
"Dis-play/Re-play"
by Tyler Curtis
26 August 2016




**"Dis-play / Re-play"**
The octogenarian Conceptualist Brian O'Doherty is the star of this strong group show, transforming the narrow building's basement into a trippy theatre of hot-colored walls and gallery-spanning ropes. (The exhibition was curated by Prem Krishnamurthy, who runs the reliably provocative downtown gallery P!) The theme of architecture recurs in Mika Tajima's translucent resin blocks, which hang on wallpaper depicting a spread-eagled athlete, and in Judith Barry's video installation "They Agape" (1978), in which two female architects bicker about their male colleagues—and each other. A Plexiglas triptych installed in the lobby by Gerwald Rockenshaub shares the colors of the Austrian flag. One panel is slightly askew, as if to suggest that national identity is precarious at a moment when Europe's borderless dream seems imperilled. *Through Sept. 5. (Austrian Cultural Forum, 11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300.)*

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*The New Yorker*
"Dis-play/Re-play"
6 June 2016

# Art in America

## MARYAM JAFRI
### P!

The black-and-white generic product packaging seen in Maryam Jafri's recent exhibition "Economy Corner" points toward timely issues: income disparity, the commercialism of culture, and the roles of language in art. Jafri, a Pakistani-American artist who has shown mostly in Europe (including at the 2015 Venice Biennale), presented food and sundries from the "generic" sections of 1970s American supermarkets. (She purchased the vintage items secondhand.) Two white cans emblazoned with the word "BEER" in blocky black capitals—the fonts varying slightly—announced themselves to passersby from a vitrine in the gallery's front window, establishing an energizing conundrum. Was "Economy Corner" an odd bodega, an ethnographic investigation, a design expo, or an art show?

Entering the gallery intensified the questions. Did the containers, some of which looked fully forty years old, have real food inside them? Were they empty reproductions? Learning from the gallerists that there were actual goods as well as copies heightened the exhibition's wry wit. Hung on the walls, black-and-white photographs of similar products, centered against white studio backgrounds, found an analogue in the only photograph printed on a package: a black-and-white image of a bowl of bran flakes, shown without visual context or hype. The similarly blunt lists of ingredients on the products—for instance, "cooked beef, beef, water, salt, sugar, sodium nitrate"—could stand as ironic glosses on Michael Pollan's exhortation to eat "real" food containing only a few simple ingredients.

The stark low-budget style of the generic groceries corresponded to the clean high-end elegance of an art gallery's white cube (even in the small quarters of the critically minded P!), the exhibition drawing savvy connections between buyers of canned goods and buyers of Warhol's canned soups. By highlighting the role of galleries in valuing art objects for consumer markets, it dramatized their function as "stores" rather than just "storehouses" for art. Yet the show served a museumlike function too, offering time travel to the era of America's experiment with generic products. The packaging design was a means of passing savings on to consumers, but despite its supposed simplicity, it gathers together the sometimes wild typographic fashions of those years. Jafri showcases the ballooning letters of Cooper Black on peanut butter; Bauhaus sans serifs gracing green beans; rounded capitals spelling "SOAP" that indeed suggest bubbles. The different typefaces of the word "COFFEE" on two cans—one sans serif and the other a stenciled serif—subtly affect the gestalt of each object.

In foregrounding such distinctions, Jafri elaborates on a semiotic game familiar from Magritte, Kosuth, and Broodthaers, in which a thing, its name, and its visual representation are juxtaposed. Her work departs from those artists' more purely philosophical explorations of signification, and conflates the three registers, finding casually sly humor in local conditions. From the perspective of this election year, there is surreal absurdity in a Texas beer can that commands, "WAKE UP AMERICA!" and displays an unusually long text pressuring consumers to write to their elected representatives with pledges to buy Detroit cars.

Different typefaces speak to different historical moments, social groups, and perceptual associations. Jafri's presentation of a seemingly brand-free brand revealed that simple, black-and-white design can conjure incredibly complex meanings. Similarly, it bears acknowledging: the categories "black" and "white" can become springboards to more complex discussions of race and identity. Wake up, America! Nothing and no one is generic.

—Karen Schiff

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*Art in America*
by Karen Schiff
June/July 2016

# Maryam Jafri

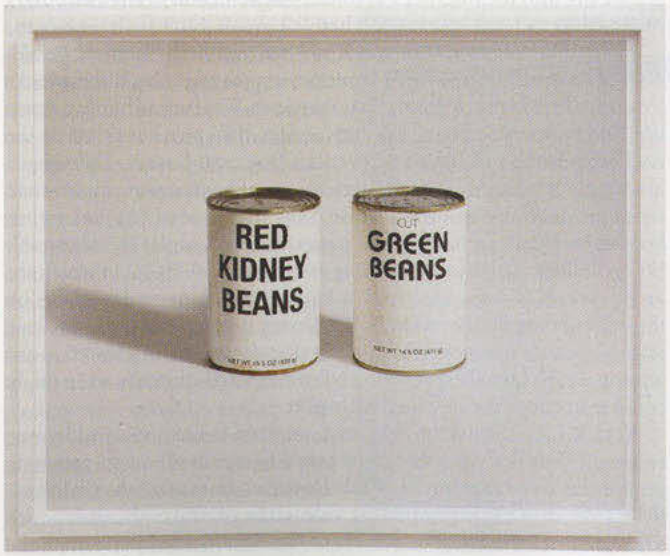
P!

Precious few artists, even in the wake of modernism's varying efforts to demystify and deconstruct originality, would wish to see their work labeled "generic." Maryam Jafri is a notable exception. Of course, it is not Jafri's project itself that bears this dour tag, but rather the curious subgenre of consumer good that she depicts and reproduces. In a flawlessly realized installation of small photographs and objects (most purchased, some reconstructed using photographs adhered to boxes), Jafri explored the phenomenon of the unbranded product, prompting a rereading of these minimally packaged items in the context of the history of art and graphic design.

As Prem Krishnamurthy clarifies in his accompanying essay, Jafri's focus is on the kinds of cut-price staples on offer in the 1970s through the early '80s, initially on dedicated aisles of supermarkets, the basic status of which was signaled by a pared-down livery of simple black lettering on a plain white ground. These humble packages rarely identified their manufacturers, and offered only the most straightforward description of their contents (a tin marked CORNED BEEF, for example, hints that there's nothing more you need to know about this stuff, so don't ask). This sacrifice of the decorative elaboration typically lavished on "name-brand" products lends their generic cousins a bare-bones vibe that hints at wartime austerity or the homogenizing influence of a totalitarian regime. They are recognizably vintage, but there's a futuristic edge to them, too. A tub of Soylent Green wouldn't look amiss. So what exactly remains when the window dressing and self-promotion of consumer packaging are swept away? A surprising amount. Looked at today, these designs seem oddly self-aware, even stylish. Their simplicity, once a signifier of economy and functionalism, now seems to play on the use of text in Conceptual and post-Conceptual art. The typography is remarkably varied; far from relying on wall-to-wall Helvetica, the designers seem to have tried something new at almost every turn, with results that make for an entertaining associative puzzle.

Endearing too is the products' steadfast refusal of luxury. After all, who needs Chanel Gel Pureté when you've got a bar of SOAP at hand? Or a barrel-aged IPA when you've got a can of BEER on ice? In an era when a bar of wholesomely artisanal chocolate is irrecoverably bound to a fastidiously constructed brand, it's refreshing to see the trappings of "image" stripped off. In generic products, aesthetic considerations do of course remain, but they finally come down to nothing more than the play of one font against another. When generics were replaced by in-store brands (a small but important distinction) in the late '80s, designers' focus shifted from eschewal to imitation, and this essential purity was lost. Jafri's project presents a piquant capsule history of the way in which developments in graphic design and production are immediately absorbed into the economics of packaging, and thus intertwined with the onward march of capitalism.

*—Michael Wilson*




**Maryam Jafri, *Generic Corner (Canned Beans)*, 2015**, ink-jet print, 16½ × 20½". From the series "Generic Corner," 2015.

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*Artforum*
by Michael Wilson
May 2016

Curator Prem Krishnamurthy riffs on one of Klaus Wittkugel's works: a poster for an exhibition of posters, on a poster column.

COURTESY P! GALLERY

# GRAPHIC REALISM

**Ost Und ~~oder~~ West [East and West], Klaus Wittkugel**
P! Gallery, 334 Broome St., New York
January 14–February 21, 2016

How does one do good work for bad people? This oversimplified question is especially relevant for architects, and one that the exhibition of work by East German graphic designer Klaus Wittkugel at P! Gallery asks us to consider, while simultaneously treating us to some modernist visual pleasure.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we have been taught that capitalism is the end-all-be-all system to structure our society, and consumption is the answer to our desires—overwhelmingly influencing our aesthetics and our ethics. But looking at the oeuvre of the little-known figure Wittkugel, who was the head designer of the German Democratic Republic's Socialist Ministry of Information, we find an alternate reality: A sense of aesthetic purpose that, while firmly modernist, shows a softer, more figurative and less abstract approach to design. And yet at times it can be reminiscent of Socialist Realism propaganda, which today is usually met with finger wagging and dismissed as kitsch. It is supposedly the preferred visual language of dictators, with smiles beaming sunshine and 150 percent worker productivity embodied in a visual image. Yet what *Ost Und ~~oder~~ West [East and West]* reveals is a more complex relationship between design and power, and the limits of artistic freedom under Soviet Communism in post-war Germany.

The exhibition is not only impressive for the work it contains, but also for how it was assembled. P! founder and director Prem Krishnamurthy spent more than seven years assembling Wittkugel's work into a thorough survey of books, posters, exhibitions, and signage, found in auspicious moments at used bookstores and by scouring eBay. In the process of uncovering this history, Krishnamurthy tells of an early encounter in Wittkugel's career in 1950, when he designed a poster for a GDR Five Year Plan, and was chastised for its abstraction. Some higher party official determined that this abstraction did not adequately service the proletariat. Witttkugel was censured for not being a good enough Communist, and subsequently forced to attend remedial Socialism classes, brushing up on his Marx and Lenin as if that would instill his graphic designs with the proper message.

The work of Wittkugel displayed in the gallery is in a visual style that positions him as an heir to the legacies of early 20th-century design legends El Lissitzky and László Moholy-Nagy, like a long-lost East German cousin of the earlier German Bauhaus and Russian Constructivist diasporas. The judicious use of *mise en abyme*—the graphic technique of creating an infinity mirror, a recursive visual trick where an image contains a smaller version of itself in a window in a window in a window, etc…We might describe this today as "meta." Krishnamurthy acknowledges that one of the things that really attracted him to his work is "a strain of self-reflexivity about the production of graphic design. So you have a poster, for an exhibition of posters, that is a freshly-postered poster column," he said. The P! exhibition continues this game by recreating the poster column on the gallery facade.

All of this is juxtaposed with a companion exhibition at OSMOS gallery on the work of Anton Stankowski, **continued on page 60**

COURTESY P! GALLERY

**GRAPHIC REALISM** continued from page 59

a former classmate of Wittkugel's from the Folkwang University of the Arts, who went on to work in West Germany and Zurich, designing many corporate logos—most notably the minimal Deutsche Bank slash-in-square, which is still in use today. While Stankowski designed symbols of Western businesses and corporations in service of capital, Wittkugel designed the visual manifestation of the political and cultural ambitions of Soviet East Germany in the form of dinnerware, an elegantly embellished cursive visual identity, and signage for the now-demolished Palast der Republik.

While works like Wittkugel's signage for the Kino International relate more directly to architecture, the exhibition offers conceptual lessons for architectural practice about architecture's inevitable collaborations with people whose values may not align with one's own. You can refrain from designing prisons if you object to incarceration, but it doesn't mean some architect somewhere won't design that prison, so why not engage and attempt to design a more humane prison?

The importance of critical engagement is shown in Wittkugel's 1957 exhibition *Militarism without Masks*. He conceived of the exhibition, organized the team, designed it with his students, and ultimately won the East German National Prize. It was a polemical, anti-West German exhibition that featured former Nazis who became part of the West German government, juxtaposing images of Hitler with Henry Ford, snakes, and gold coins. The show featured two levels of narrative: Detailed vitrine presentations with archival materials that told the story of the Krupp family and how they made money from the war, alongside big bombastic moves that allude to El Lissitzky's exhibition designs. Another impressive element was a mechanically louvered sign with vertical, rotating triangular slats to display three images. Also included in the exhibition was a panorama of the *Kurfürstendamm* in West Berlin, portrayed as a wasteland without humans—a newspaper kiosk with militaristic posters on it stands alone. Four years later, in 1961, when Wittkugel did his own retrospective exhibition, he recreated that same newspaper kiosk in the photograph, at a one-to-one scale, thereby showing his exhibition design as an object in his exhibition: it's a very self-reflexive design move.

Any serious international cultural institution would be remiss not to consider this collection of thought provoking but lesser-known work from a precarious moment in design history.

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*The Architect's Newspaper*
"Graphic Realism"
by Jesse Seegers
6 April 2016

ART WORLD

# Maryam Jafri Recalls When Minimal Meant Cheap

Blake Gopnik, Thursday, March 17, 2016


**THE DAILY PIC** (#1513): The décor of my bathrooms took a dive somewhere around 1990, when supermarkets stopped offering their “No Name" products (aka “generic goods"). I had relied on them for utterly plain white boxes of Kleenex, marked only with the single word “TISSUES" in black Helvetica. Those went with my modernist interiors.

I hadn't thought of this until just the other day – I'd blocked out the pain of my loss – when I saw a lovely show of just such products, salvaged from the dustbin of history (and of dustbins) and put on display by the artist Maryam Jafri at the gallery called P! in New York.

On plinths and in photos, Jafri lets us contemplate such glories of design as a jar of peanut butter sold with a plain swath of Cooper Black letters on white, or a can of corned beef whose simple virtues are proclaimed in the pseudo-deco typeface called Bauhaus.

The gallery's excellent essay suggests that the products disappeared when supermarkets developed in-house budget brands whose look was a closer match to established products. That's no doubt right, but I'd like to add a footnote to that explanation: I have a sneaking suspicion that the pared-down design of No Name lines, for all its visual economy and no-nonsense approach, in fact reeked of elite tastes descended from the Bauhaus – and of the high prices associated with such tastes. To really communicate your intent to offer bargains, you had to go for low-end overdesign. I remember the day that my type-on-white “TISSUES" were replaced by a box bearing a sunset in pastels, floated onto a fake wicker background. I wept. *(Photo by Sebastian Bach)*

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*Artnet.com*
“Maryam Jafri  Recalls When Minimal Meant Cheap”
by Blake Gopnik
17 March 2016

**KOMPRESSOR** | Beitrag vom 17.03.2016

Ausstellung über DDR-Design

# Klasse für die Masse

**Prem Krishnamurthy im Gespräch mit Christine Watty**




ORWO Farbdia-Kleinbildfilme (picture alliance / dpa / Foto: Martin Schutt)

**In der DDR wurde "Agfa" in "ORWO" unbenannt, bekam ein neues Design und wurde ab 1964 mit einer großen Werbekampagne bekannt gemacht. Zur Gebrauchsgrafik in der DDR ist im Berliner "Museum der Dinge" jetzt die Ausstellung "Masse und Klasse" zu sehen.**

Seit heute ist im Berliner "Werkbundarchiv- Museum der Dinge" **eine Ausstellung zur Gebrauchsgrafik in der DDR** zu sehen unter dem Titel "Masse und Klasse". Die Schau will einen Blick werfen auf einen Bereich, der immer noch von Vorurteilen umstellt ist: Vom blassen und grauen DDR-Design bis hin zu der These des Philosophen Harry Lehmann, der Sozialismus sei an seiner Alltags-Ästhetik gescheitert.

## Kurator Prem Krishnamurthy über DDR-Design

Einen anderen Blick auf Produktgestaltung in der DDR wirft der New Yorker Grafikdesigner und Kurator Prem Krishnamurthy, der erst Anfang dieses Jahres eine Ausstellung zu dem DDR-Grafiker Klaus Wittkugel (und dem westdeutschen Gestalter Anton Stankowski). Krishnamurthy hatte während seiner Studienzeit in Deutschland bereits zur Gebrauchsgrafik in der DDR geforscht. Mit ihm sprechen wir über seinen Blick auf das Design der DDR am Beispiel Klaus Wittkugels, von dem etwa der Schriftzug des Café Moskau stammt und der in der Schau im Werkbundarchiv mit dem Design von Dekopan-Film-Verpackungen vertreten ist.

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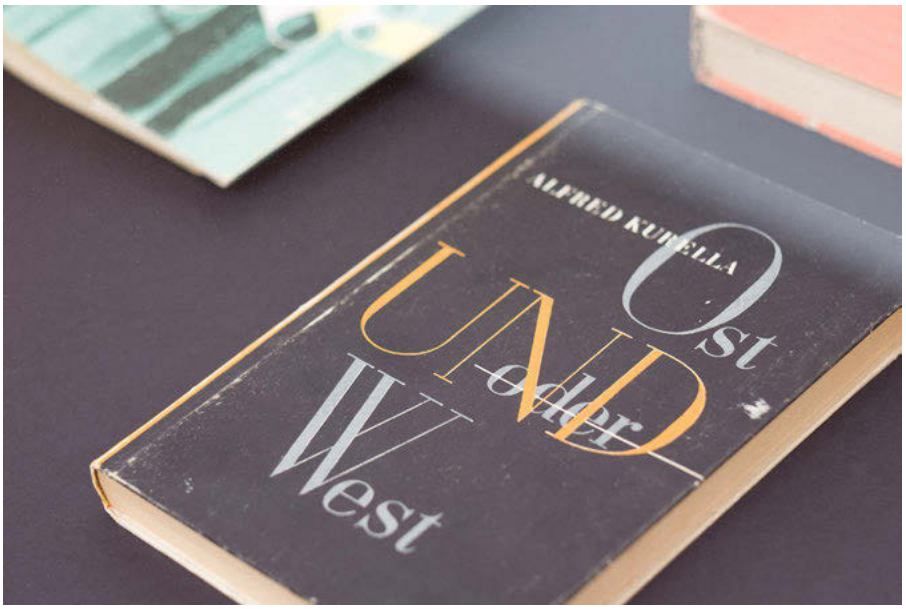
*Deutschland Radio*
17 March 2016

the PARIS REVIEW



A book designed by Klaus Wittkugel on display at P! Gallery. Photo: Sebastian Bach

- In the fifties and sixties, you couldn't step into an East German bookstore (and clearly I speak from experience) without encountering the work of Klaus Wittkugel, one of the GDR's most prominent graphic designers. A new exhibition in New York collects his striking book designs and propaganda posters. If you doubt his significance, just have a look at this unstinting praise from none other than the East German State: "For nearly every important political event in the history of our Workers' and Peasants' State, there exists an artistic statement by Wittkugel, who, through his work, has contributed considerably to the new orientation of our applied graphics."

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*TheParisReview.org*
"Impressive Propaganda, and Other News"
by Dan Piepenbring
10 February 2016

dwell

# A Look at Klaus Wittkugel, East Germany's Most Prolific Graphic Designer

WRITTEN BY: AILEEN KWUN FEBRUARY 10, 2016

On view through February 21 at New York's P! gallery, a new show explores the politics of Cold War-era graphic design with a presentation of works by Klaus Wittkugel—East Germany's most prolific graphic designer. Curator Prem Krishnamurthy walks us through the highlights. On view through February 21 at Manhattan's pocket-sized P! gallery, *OST UND oder WEST* (East and/or West) presents an abbreviated survey of the late graphic designer Klaus Wittkugel (1910–1985), who, despite a prolific four-decade career spanning logos, posters, publications, posters, and architectural signage, has remained largely unknown to Western audiences. The probable cause for Wittkugel's enduring anonymity: his longtime client and home, the East German Socialist state. Though ostensibly focused on the graphic output of a single individual, the show provides a lens into the visual history of the Cold War, and more broadly, the complex political nature of producing work under the commission of a client. The last is a context not entirely unfamiliar to graphic designers practicing even today, Socialist state–client or not.

Inside, the exhibition is filled with contextual displays, interspersed with brief, historicizing texts. In a clever twist of mise en abyme, a slideshow of Wittkugel's spatial designs, mixed with present-day screenshots showing 3D-models of the gallery's exhibition design, project onto a wall-size reproduction of East Berlin's iconic Kino International cinema, for which Wittkugel designed the facade signage.

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*Dwell.com*
"A Look at Klaus Wittkugel, East Germany's Most Prolific Graphic Designer"
by Aileen Kwun
10 February 2016

The sense of nested, underlying messages—indication of the designer's authorial agency, despite working for a Socialist state—permeates the surrounding works on display. The age-old opposition between client and designer was pronounced even in Wittkugel's lifetime, and in some cases, cleverly winked at. Among the meta works is Wittkugel's 1954 *Das Plakat* (The Poster), a flyer for a poster exhibition that self-reflexively depicts a freshly wheat-pasted poster column with a ladder propped upon it.

Out front, an actual poster column protrudes from the gallery's storefront entrance. Neatly pasted onto its surface is a checkerboard of alternating flyer designs—a mix of works by Wittkugel, and some by Anton Stankowski (1906–1998), his West German contemporary, and in many ways, his foil. In what sounds a little Spy vs. Spy, the two designers studied under the same teacher in Essen, each going on to relatively successful advertising careers in the 1930s; after World War II, Wittkugel began working for the East German state, and in the West, Stankowski took up projects with large corporate clients. The pairing, as it were, carries over at the OSMOS project space in the East Village, where Cay Sophie Rabinowitz has installed a show on Stankowski as a companion to the presentation at P!.

Browse the slideshow above for commentary from Prem Krishnamurthy, director and curator of P!, on issues of circumstance, intention, and agency as seen in select pieces of Wittkugel's work.

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"One aspect of Klaus Wittkugel's work that always fascinated me is his self-reflexivity about the process and labor of graphic design," says Prem Krishnamurthy, director of the experimental New York gallery P!, where he has just mounted a show of works by the East German designer. He first began researching Wittkugel eight years ago, when he discovered a book of his work in a Boston bookstore. "In the poster *Das Plakat* from 1954, an exhibition of international posters is communicated through an image of a poster column, just moments after someone has finished wheat-pasting it. The 1957 political poster on the right calls for citizens to run for a local council. It represents a scene-within-a-scene: a worker putting up posters for other candidates as the poster itself."

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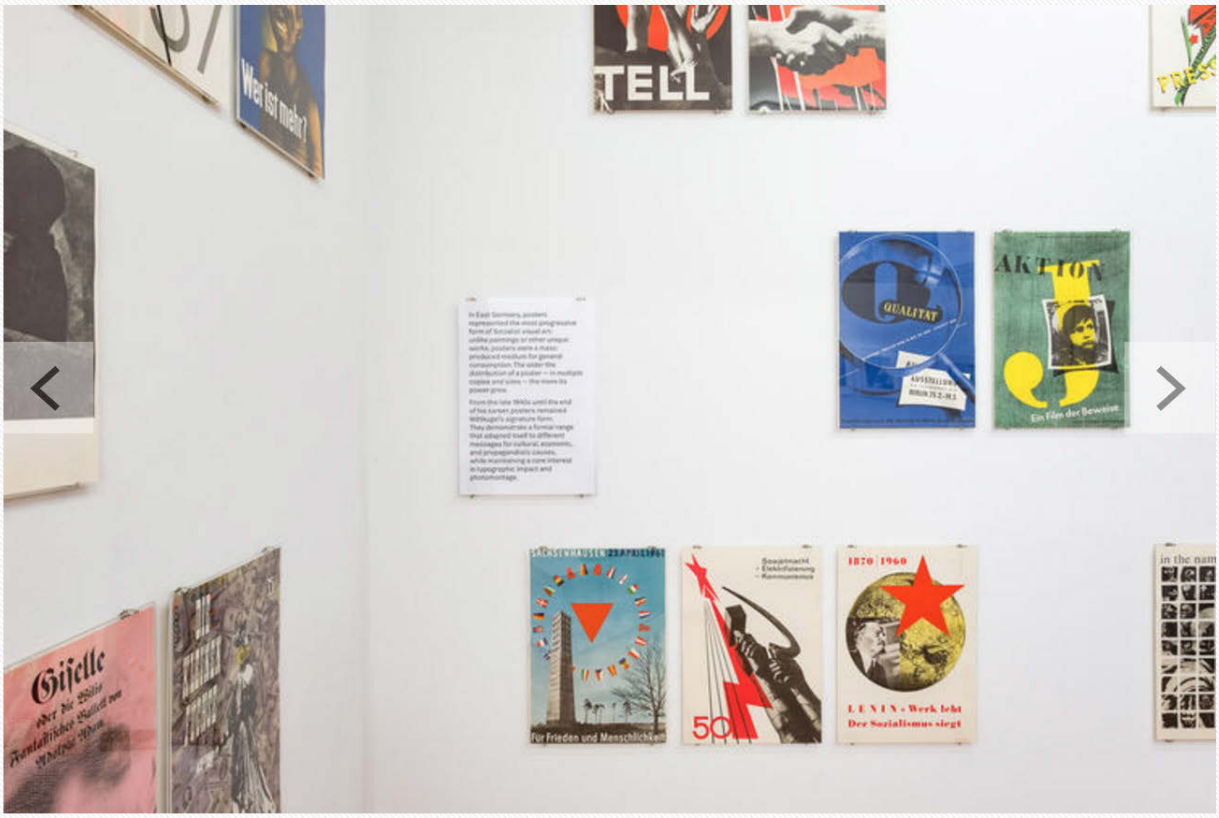


Krishnamurthy on Wittkugel's poster designs: "The exhibition includes a tight selection of posters from the 1950s through 1970s, only a small portion of what Klaus Wittkugel designed over his long career. Wittkugel's exhibition designs for his retrospectives in the 1960s and 1970s were often jam-packed with work: walls full of posters, boards featuring exhibition designs, logos, and more. He even went so far as to include a full-scale reproduction of one of his exhibition displays in a later retrospective. I've taken a more sparing approach to installation, but also refer to his strategies through specific conceptual elements: For example, by presenting my curatorial wall text about posters in exactly the same manner as the other posters."

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"It's hard to pick out any one aspect out of Klaus Wittkugel's work, as he was so prolific and wide-ranging, but I do find his book covers from the late 1940s and early 1950s extremely striking. They are mostly abstract compositions of typography and form, which translate the content of the book into a mini-artwork. If we had more space, we would have presented much more of this type of work," says Krishnamurthy, who is himself a graphic designer and devised the show's exhibition displays. "Here, too, I've inserted my curatorial voice into the form that it's describing—as an open book spread—lest anyone think that this is an unmediated or neutral presentation."

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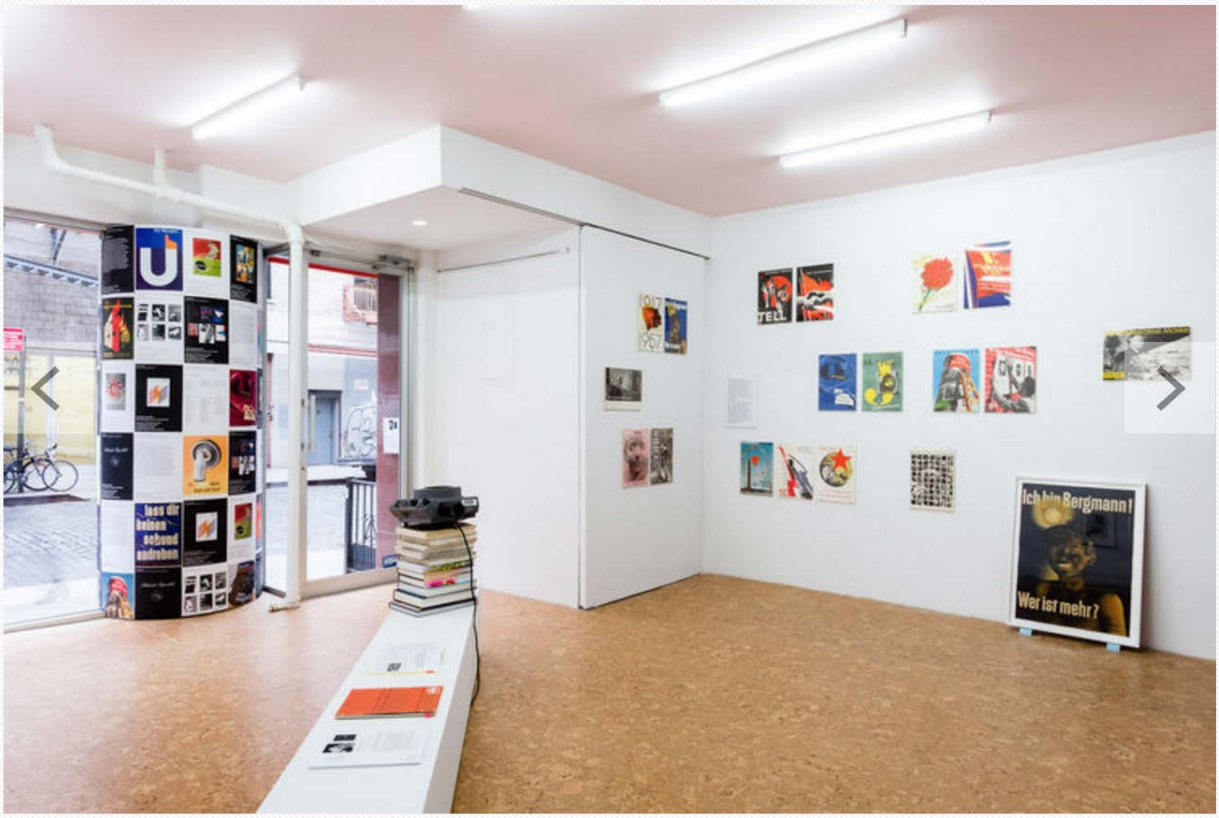


"P! is a particular space: a so-called 'white cube' designed by architects Leong Leong, but with its own peculiarities. Furthermore, the ceiling is a site-specific work, *Pink Ceiling*, 2015, by Julie Ault and Martin Beck. The layout of the gallery is a quirky open-square, which is reimagined for nearly ever show," says Krishnamurthy, who launched the gallery in 2012. "I've used the space to its full advantage here, as I'm fitting a mini-retrospective of almost 50 years of Klaus Wittkugel's work into a single room. Each section of the show is installed in its own manner; they coexist in the space together. Out in the front of the gallery, I've 'exaggerated' an existing column by sheathing it with a cardboard column that is wheat-pasted with reproductions of works by both Klaus Wittkugel and his West German contemporary, Anton Stankowski. It's a comparative treatment, an art historical argument, in physical form."

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"This view captures the main installation gesture of the exhibition and also what's visible from street level. In his exhibition designs, Klaus Wittkugel often used large-scale panoramas of the city to transport the viewer into another context," notes Krishnamurthy. "Here, I'm turning this display strategy back onto Wittkugel himself. This is an image of Kino International, a modern film theater in East Berlin from 1963. For this architectural icon, Wittkugel designed the signage, including a clever spot to hang a poster as the 'space' in the name of the building. Here, I've blown up a historical image of the façade to room-sized proportions and gone one step further: one of Wittkugel's most striking posters, *Das Kalte Herz* [*The Cold Heart*], 1950, hangs framed on top of the building. An analogue slide projector plays a loop of selected images from Wittkugel's exhibition designs, retrospective exhibitions, and architectural commissions, interspersed with contemporary images of those same locations and screenshots of the digital models of my exhibition design that mirror these historical views. Installed as if the spectators out front are watching the projection, this display is the centerpiece of the show."

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As part of the exhibition display, Krishnamurthy installed a large poster column that protrudes from the gallery's storefront facade. "Klaus Wittkugel believed in the street as a primary context for graphic design: a large portion of his work consisted of posters, meant to catch your eye while walking. As P! is in Chinatown and has a very public presence, I decided to extend this gesture and make it a key feature of the exhibition," he says. "In Berlin, you still see a lot of *Littfasssäulen*, a distinctive and typical kind of poster column. Together with Cay Sophie Rabinowitz, curator of the parallel exhibition on Anton Stankowski at OSMOS, I conceived an installation that would display reproductions of work by the two Cold War designers together. There is also a second poster column at OSMOS, which is the 'umbilical cord' between these two otherwise independent exhibitions. The installation echoes Wittkugel's own approach to his retrospective exhibition in 1961, when he covered the poster columns in the city with a selection of his past work, along with the posters announcing the show. Artist Maayan Strauss had the brilliant idea of making the poster column 'break out; of the gallery, so that it seems to literally cross over a border. Wittkugel's first job was as a window-dresser, so it's an appropriate homage to have this kind of attention paid to the storefront window."

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PRINT

# Wittkugel the East German Master

By: **Steven Heller** | February 9, 2016

Klaus Wittkugel was the most significant East German graphic designer during the ’50s and ’60s, but until now he was unknown in the West. Thanks to Project Project’s Prem Krishnamurthy, who has been studying Wittkugel’s output for over eight years, this East Berlin master’s work is on view in New York. Krishnamurthy’s indie P! Gallery has on display in the exhibit *Ost Und ~~oder~~ West: Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski* until Feb. 21 a swath of posters, books, and DDR propaganda that will entice and confound. Enticing because his graphic and exhibition design (for trade fairs) fits squarely in the Modernist camp, yet confounding because it is all done at the behest of his primary client, the East German Socialist state (German Democratic Republic – GDR), which controlled its population through an onslaught of printed missals.

Witttkugel was a devout anti-capitalist, using the design language of Western capitalism along with other techniques. Krishnamurthy quotes from Heinz Wolf’s 1964 monograph in the exhibition keepsake:

“The artist Klaus Wittkugel does not paint pictures nor does he model sculptures. His works are not collected and shown in museums; rather, they work directly in our everyday life. Wittkugel is a graphic designer. He designs exhibitions, trade fair stands, posters, book covers, logos and packaging for our people-owned industry. For nearly every important political event in the history of our Workers’ and Peasants’ State, there exists an artistic statement by Wittkugel, who, through his work, has contributed considerably to the new orientation of our applied graphics.”

*Ost Und ~~oder~~ West: Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski* is curated by Kristamurthy and Cay Sophie Rabinowitz at 334 Broome St., New York City.

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*PrintMag.org*
“Witkugel the East German Master”
by Steven Heller
9 February 2016

ARTFORUM

# Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski

**P!**
**334 Broome Street**
**January 14–February 21**

A column protruding from the gallery's plate-glass storefront is papered with reproductions of 1930s to 1970s posters and graphic design from East and West Germany. Inside, the varied products of Klaus Wittkugel, a central figure in Eastern European graphic design little documented in Anglophone histories of the subject, are arrayed. Though the exhibition focuses on one designer, it more generally serves as an imagining of the curious nature of the profession in the Eastern Bloc, where the state was the client and propaganda the principal product.

**View of "Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski," 2016.**

A vitrine contains artifacts of East German material culture: Wittkugel's designs cover packaging, glassware, and paperbacks, including the Jim Crow–shaming *Auch ich bin Amerika: Dichtungen amerikanischer Neger* (I Too Am America: Poetry of American Negros) (1948). A self-awareness runs through the works but is most apparent in the posters: In *Das Plakat* (The Poster), 1954, a ladder is propped against a column with an advertisement for an exhibition of posters. This nesting is characteristic of the sleight of hand with which Wittkugel stages the interaction with the image, suggesting a spatial relationship between the viewer and abstract subjects, such as electrification, Lenin's political philosophy, or manufacturing quality.

The exhibition itself has reflexive touches as well, signaled by the poster column spilling onto the street, bearing the image of a poster column. The curator, Prem Krishnamurthy, foregrounds the nature of the presentation by embedding contextual texts among the objects, including record sleeves, stamps, and a slideshow that cycles through the artist's exhibition designs, which are punctuated with slides of layouts using 3-D modeling software or Facebook screen grabs. A parallel show at OSMOS Address displays the designs of Anton Stankowski, Wittkugel's contemporary and maybe West German double. The two designers' points of intersection and ways of differing illuminate the contours of the histories being peddled (or taken for granted) on opposite sides of the Berlin Wall.

— *Zachary Sachs*

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*Artforum.com*
"Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski"
by Zachary Sachs
6 February 2016

Design History 101

# The Lost Story of Soviet Germany's Most Famous Graphic Designer

## Wittkugel's designs were far more playful than you might guess for Stalinist East Germany

By Liz Stinson
February 8, 2016

It was 1951 and Klaus Wittkugel had just designed a poster that was going to get him into trouble. As head designer for the German Democratic Republic's Office of Information, the graphic designer was tasked with creating a poster for an exhibition about the Five Year Plan, which highlighted the GDR's Soviet-style economic goals. Wittkugel's poster had an army green background with sans serif numbers "1951-1955" that appeared to be advancing like soldiers. It was simple: clean lines and heavy type. The poster was, by most objective standards, totally benign.

After the exhibition ended—and it was considered a wild success—the

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*EyeOnDesign.AIGA.org*
"The Love Story of Soviet Germany's Most Famous Graphic Designer"
by Liz Stinson
26 January 2016

local newspaper of record ran a piece condemning Wittkugel's work, writing: "An abstract, intellectual play with numbers and format takes precedence over depictions of people and clear symbols… This ever-dominant formalist approach to visual communication continues to find its expression in other experiments that show a hatred of mankind."

***A hatred for mankind***. Despite his loyalty to the German Democratic Republic, Wittkugel was censured because of the design. "He was basically considered a bad Socialist," says Prem Krishnamurthy, founder of Project Projects and P!. "He had to go to reform classes, read his Marx and Lenin. My suspicion is in that moment something started to change in his work as well."

Krishnamurthy co-curated ***Ost Und ~~oder~~ West [East and West],*** a two-part exhibition that looks at the work of Wittkugel and his contemporary Anton Stankowski (through February 21, 2016). The two exhibitions run in tandem; Wittkugel's work at P! and Stankowsi's at Osmos Address, both in New York City. Viewed side by side, they highlight how two graphic designers—both of whom originate not just from the same country, but the same school and teacher—developed their craft as a result of the environments in which they ultimately existed.

Unlike Stankowski's corporate work for Deutsche Bank, Wittkugel's legacy has faded over time. "This history has never been told," Krishnamurthy says. Both Wittkugel and Stankowski studied under the same teacher in Essen Germany, but after graduating their paths diverged. Wittkugel got a job working in Berlin, while Stankowski moved to Zurich and later to Stuttgart where he became one of Germany's most well-known designers of corporate logos.

Wittkugel eventually became the head of the GDR's graphic design program, a position Krishnamurthy says was arguably more valued at the time. "In the East, a graphic designer was the highest form of artist," Krishnamurthy says. Unlike painters and sculptors, graphic designers worked for the people, at least in theory. Their work communicated a message (propaganda or otherwise). Quite simply, it served a purpose.

Over the years, Wittkugel designed some of the most recognizable identity work from the Soviet era. But after his censure, Krishnamurthy notes that Wittkugel's work began to embrace the human form over his more typical Modernist use of typography. One famous poster shows a young coal miner emerging from the darkness, his face covered in soot, the words "Ich bin Bergmann! Wer ist mehr? (Translation: "I am a miner! Who is better?") written below him as a call to action. "It was like the 'We Want You, Uncle Sam poster,'" he says.

Still, Krishnamurthy describes Wittkugel as an aesthetic chameleon who made elegant transitions from style to style. Krishnamurthy

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explains Wittkugel was self-reflexive in his work, often cleverly nodding to the process through which it was made. In one example, a poster for an election depicts a man hanging a poster. Another features a magnifying glass being held to a logo that reads "Qualität" ("Quality"), essentially inviting viewers to judge his work.

**On the whole, Wittkugel's designs were far more playful than you might guess for someone who worked for Stalinist East Germany.**

Ultimately, the story of German graphic design—all graphic design, really—is left to what we choose to remember. Krishnamurthy says much of the history of design that was ultimately written about Wittkugel's time focuses on designers working with corporate partners—the Eames and IBM, Stankowski and Deutsche Bank. "I think we tend to take that as a neutral condition," he says. Holding up a piece of Socialist propaganda as an example of canonical design is, understandably, a less comfortable position, and as a result Wittkugel's work has disappeared along with the dissolution of the GDR.

"On the other hand," says Krishnamurthy, "if we have a designer who works for a Socialist government or a designer who works for the Communist party, we ask these deep questions of them." Questions like, why did you work for that client? Is it ethical? Does that impact the value of a piece of graphic design? To that, says Krishnamurthy, there might be a simpler explanation yet. "The actual answer," he says, "might just be that the East German government was a really good client, and they paid on time."

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*EyeOnDesign.AIGA.org*
"The Love Story of Soviet Germany's Most Famous Graphic Designer"
by Liz Stinson
26 January 2016

alphasixty

# *Graphic Design in Cold War Germany*

P! is an experimental art space in New York's Chinatown. Its name is a pithy play on the idea of permutations—the mathematical conceit meaning different possibilities, depending on positions. OSMOS Address is a venue for contemporary art in the East Village, a sister project of the *OSMOS* magazine, dedicated to overlooked artists and photographers.

There's a dual exhibition that just opened at both spaces, called *OST UND oder WEST* (*East and/or West*). The parallel shows make sense, because they're about the oddly parallel lives of two 20th century graphic designers separated by the real and conceptual divide of East and West Germany.

Anton Stankowski and Klaus Wittkugel were colleagues who studied under the same teacher in Essen, who individually went on to achieve solid careers in advertising by the 1930s. After World War II, Wittkugel was on the East German side, and Stankowski was on the West. Wittkugel went on to become a prominent designer for state material and propaganda (books, posters, and stamps) while Stankowski designed for prominent corporate clients (ads, environments, and logos).

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*Blog.SixtyHotels.com*
21 January 2016

The exhibitions, running now through February 21, display the differences and similarities in designing for Communism and Capitalism. Wittkugel was the head designer for the German Democratic Republic's Office of Information, where he developed designs that communicated the objectives of socialism. He used a modernist vocabulary for his photomontages and typography, and designed for state signage, publications, and identities of architectural landmarks in East Germany.

Stankowski, on the Federal Republic side of Germany, worked at an ad agency and designed for West German corporations and commissioners: manufacturers and financial companies including Deutsche Bank. Contrasted with Wittkugel's work, Stankowski's is more focused on ideas of symmetry, abstract corporate logos, and graphics.

These competing social systems, in the end, have a very similar goal: communicate the message, and convince.

WMS & CO.

**inspirations**
JP Williams

an exhibition at P! has inspired me and made me pull a few books off my shelf to consider the typography of 'neue typogrpahie.' the current exhibition presents the work of klaus wittkugel, an east german designer during the height of the 'neue typographie' movement. i was not previously familiar with his work but am very familiar with the typographic design of this period. i have long been an admirer of this movement in typography and love the contrast created on a simple typographic page.

the owner of P! gallery, prem krishnamurthy and i met when i made a call to visit his gallery i asked to see pieces from the karel martens exhibition. i never saw his exhibition (something i regret often) but, when i finally made it over to the gallery, prem shared many wonderful pieces. i am now a proud owner of an original karel martens monoprint.

there are some excellent specimens of wittkugel's work and, though he does not exhibit the skill or refinement of tschihold it nonetheless excites me to see another designer working at this time. here are a few images from the P! gallery, as well as a few books designed by tschichold and herbert bayer from m collection. i have collected this category of german book design for years and i needed to return to my shelves to explore the similarities. the book, "it lebe in moskay," is designed by wittkugel and the others are designed by bayer and tschichold. they all feel of a family; of a time. the contrast between typographic placement and weight stands out. when visited the used books stores in berlin and vienna a couple of years ago, it was easy to spot these books on the shelf: the spines are distinctive and stand out from the surrounding titles. it is always a thrill to remove one from the shelf and see the credit. similar to the thrill i had in visiting this show. be sure to stop by.

TODAY'S ZAMAN

# Vahap Avşar's 'Lost Shadows' debuts in NY


Artist Vahap Avşar displays 15 postcards created out of an archive of over 15,000 photographs taken between 1977 and 1982 from the image archive of the postcard company AND in his exhibition "Lost Shadows, [AND Museum]," running until Dec. 13 at P! and Protocinema in Manhattan.

November 15, 2015, Sunday/ 16:31:06/ ALEXANDRA IVANOFF / NEW YORK

**Vahap Avşar's "Lost Shadows" collection is the gift that keeps on giving -- a photo archive whose exhibition potential goes into perpetuity. It also conjures up the secrets and mysteries of Turkey's recent past.**

Avşar, in his "Black Album" show at RAMPA in İstanbul in 2013, offered a collection of sculptures, paintings, videos and photos which harbored profoundly enigmatic elements, giving viewers a curious journey through modern Turkish history as evidenced through Avşar's own psyche.

His 2015 "Lost Shadows" exhibit at SALT Beyoğlu in August -- a selection of 50 enlarged photographs from 25,000 images he had purchased from the now-defunct AND Publishing Company -- was not as personal, but those documentary materials still harbored a spooky backward glance into Turkey's time machine.

That exhibit, the first of potentially many, clocked in over 84,000 viewers in six weeks, recorded as the most successful exhibit there. The photos, shot between 1977-1982, were originally intended to become promotional postcards of Turkey. This was an era when there were no cell phones or Internet, and a major means of communication was postcards and letters.

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*Today's Zaman*
"Vahap Avsar's 'Lost Shadows' Debuts in NY"
by Alexandra Ivanoff
15 November 2015

Now, the second installation, “Lost Shadows, [AND Museum],” is running until Dec. 13 at the P! exhibition space in Manhattan. This version, co-produced with Protocinema, is showing 15 photos from his purchased archive, some of which were never published, printed as postcards. None are duplicates of the images used in the SALT installation.

All of the 15,000 photos and 10,000 illustrations in the archive carry a similar, if not more potent, quality of mystery. The cryptic postcards at P!, for which only 6,000 were printed, will remain through to the end date -- or until all of them are sent in the mail: the project's built-in ephemeral nature is designed with that in mind.

## Illusive images

Speaking at the opening on Nov. 8, Avşar described these postcards as a lifelong project. “At the age of 10, I painted [by copying] these postcards. That's how I learned to paint. Later, when I went to Istanbul, I went to AND's print shop and bought their rejected images. Three months later, I went back to buy more. They had shut down their shop, but I found the owners. They had two rooms full of postcards in the basement. I wanted to try to save this archive. I felt I'd discovered something really big. They needed to be cleaned and organized. I found many stories in the envelopes.”

Those stories, the identifying markers of people, places, objects and -- most importantly -- the dates they were taken, are what transform the images into an enigmatic puzzle. “If the photos don't have any documentation, then it leaves it up to the imagination. It becomes a mental exercise,” explains Avşar. “At SALT, people demanded labels, and they were writing letters to me: ‘You have to tell us where this is!’”

Avşar reveals the information, clue by clue. At first glance, they look like ordinary tourist postcards with standard scenery and generic locations. Though most may show a single person or a small group of people, some are aerial shots of crowds in town centers, village pageantry and curious groups of unidentified men. But the context, upon further investigation and some knowledge of 20th century Turkish history, changes the experience from ho-hum to haunting.

“Many of the photos were taken during the height of the civil war; others were taken after the military coup of 1980,” explained Avşar. "During that time, people didn't want their pictures taken because they were so paranoid. These views [of small towns, military zones, public election rallies of former Prime Minister Turgut Özal and more] hide a lot of secrets. The info within is codified; there are clues in the photos about people oppressed by the state. If you lived during that time, you'd know exactly what was behind everything. At that time, the government had a secret police force that traveled around collecting people in their white Renaults [a French car].” In several photos, a white Renault is parked somewhere in the scene, as in one particularly ominous shot of a single white car parked on a road in a mountainous Black Sea area.

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## Postcard of a postcard

Other scenes include a street parade commemorating World War I in the town of Sarıkamış, but the forlorn street is brown wet mud and the parade is a thread of veterans dressed in 1915 clothing led by a horse-drawn cart on a chilly winter day. “I'd like to know why they shot this, and why didn't they print it?” queries Avşar. “That's my interest. There's a tension between the intention and the shop's decision [to print or not].”

A lone soldier sitting atop a steep hill overlooking the old town peninsula in Isparta's Lake Eğirdir is perhaps the most curious. "He's sitting on a place called The Eagles' Nest at the mountain commando school,” explains Avşar. “He's wearing a blue beret, which means he's on one of the elite swat teams. They didn't want to publish images of the military. So the age-old question of who controls the image is still valid.”

Avşar's show at P! is a collaboration with Mari Spirito of Protocinema, a non-profit art organization, and P! gallery’s Prem Krishnamurthy, a curator and graphic designer who has also collaborated with SALT on various occasions. The three met to discuss recontextualizing these images when Spirito discovered what looked like a postcard in the soldier's hands. “Maybe it's one of these,” Avşar mused. “This is the genesis of the P! show, actually.”

But the add-on for the **New York** show is the interactive request for attendees to take the postcards and mail them to people all over the world. “That's part of the artwork,” says Avşar. “I sent one to Cuba yesterday.”

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*Today’s Zaman*
“Vahap Avsar’s ‘Lost Shadows’ Debuts in NY”
by Alexandra Ivanoff
15 November 2015


**"Pangrammar"**
Twenty-six letter-based art works spell out the famous pangram "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog." Mel Bochner's small painting of a drippy white "Z" nestles next to a poster of a lowercase "A" by his onetime professor Jack Stauffacher; a fine cyanotype print by Robin Cameron conjoins impressions of gears and blocks into an ornery "Q." (The "P" and "S" of "jumps" are cleverly provided by Elaine Lustig Cohen's 1966 cover design for the now-iconic show "Primary Structures.") Punctuating the end of the sentence is a footnote of sorts, a projected animation of a gyrating star by the publishing collective Dexter Sinister. Through Nov. 1. (P!, 334 Broome St. 212-334-5200.)

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*The New Yorker*
"Pangrammar"
19 October 2015

# BLAKE GOPNIK on art

**THE DAILY PIC** (#1395): i

i think

i think this is the letter “i" – just as i have now typed it eleven times (not counting the “i" in “times", or in “counting" for that matter, or in “in"). But of course in today’s Pic it’s been rendered in three dimensions, in granite, by Vivienne Griffin, for a witty exhibition called “Pangrammar" that opened Friday at P! gallery in New York. The show includes works of art that represent all the letters, and uses them to spell “the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog,“ the most famous of all alphabet-exhausting pangrams. (The show will be rearranged to form other pangrams before it closes.)

One of the clichés of typography is the desire to turn letterforms into 3D versions of themselves, by adding sides and shadows and other superfluous reality effects. So I love the way Griffin decides to go all the way, by actually turning a letter into a massy object and then letting its dot drop off, as seems to be the first instinct whenever someone decides to make a cutesy animation of the letter in question.

Here the cute gesture has real-world implications: It could break someone’s toe.

*The Daily Pic also appears at ArtnetNews.com. For a full survey of past Daily Pics visit blakegopnik.com/archive.*

Posted at 9:18 PM
[Permalink] 32 notes #art #pangram

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*blakegopnik.com*
by Blake Gopnik
22 September 2015


Michal Helfman: *Give/Get* (detail), 2015, inlaid wood, shell, woven plastic, metal stand, two 3-D-printed dice, dimensions variable; at K.

# MICHAL HELFMAN

## K.

For her first solo show in New York, Israeli artist Michal Helfman presented a taut display that included drawing, installation, a dice game and a video. "I'm so broke I can't pay attention" was the penultimate in a series of six quick-fire exhibitions addressing contemporary value systems (for which the downtown gallery P! temporarily rebranded itself as K.). Passersby were misled by *CHANGE* (2013), an illuminated green sign in the window mimicking that of a currency exchange. Inside, a number of visitors asked to change money at a service window before discovering the ruse. Surprise, one might say, is a form of creative currency.

Helfman's regard for staging and interaction dates to the time she spent working at a nightclub. To the right of the service window, heavy strings of metal piping, ceramic beads, small plastic skulls and shells veiled the doorway into the gallery. This barrier, smartly titled *Certain*, both generated discomfort and focused one's attention. After the clanking awkwardness of getting past it, entering the show's main space felt relatively free. An anthropomorphic metal sculpture, *Attention* (2015), pinned a bundle of dollar bills under one "foot" while the "arms" held an elastic band taut, as if ready to shoot it through a hole in the service window. This impish piece characterized the show's light-hearted, slightly peculiar atmosphere.

The Videofreex and their "Media Buses" at Maple Tree Farm, Lanesville, N.Y., n.d., chromogenic color print. Courtesy Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art.

Two works were particularly potent. The acrylic-and-oil-pastel drawing *One Dollar* (2013) portrays the pyramid vignette printed on one-dollar bills. In Helfman's rendition, perspective has shifted. The pyramid is seen in three-quarter view, while the Eye of Providence looks askance. The ribbon flanking the pyramid bears a faint, demonic visage, and the now-lurid green vegetation, overgrown and seething, looks like the sea. Paradoxically, Helfman's alterations show that none are needed to demonstrate the ghoulish character of a symbol passed daily from hand to hand.

A low dicing table with two stools stood in front of the drawing; the type of woven plastic used on the stools also covered part of the gallery wall, as if to continue the scenario. The installation, titled *Give/Get* (2015), includes a pair of dice with words, not pips, on them: We, Will, For, Get, Give and Not. An accompanying document lists the possible combinations and suggests meanings for them (as in, "For–Give: I cannot forgive that art will sleep in the bed that was made for it"). Riding a narrative of sociopolitical worth, the dice were 3-D-printed at the artist's request on a machine smuggled into Syria by a humanitarian worker to make prosthetic devices.

"I'm so broke I can't pay attention" contradicted the poverty of its title. In the video % (2014), dancers move in a line, breaking into formations but always falling into a collective forward step; in the show, the works likewise inserted themselves into streams of value and skirted them by turns. This waltz of engagement was astute and never earnest. Helfman conjured a lightness of being that shielded the subject matter—money, exchange, symbolism, economies of attention and care—from judgment or consequence. What remained was a stimulating reflection on contemporary value, with artworks as its conduits.

—Iona Whittaker

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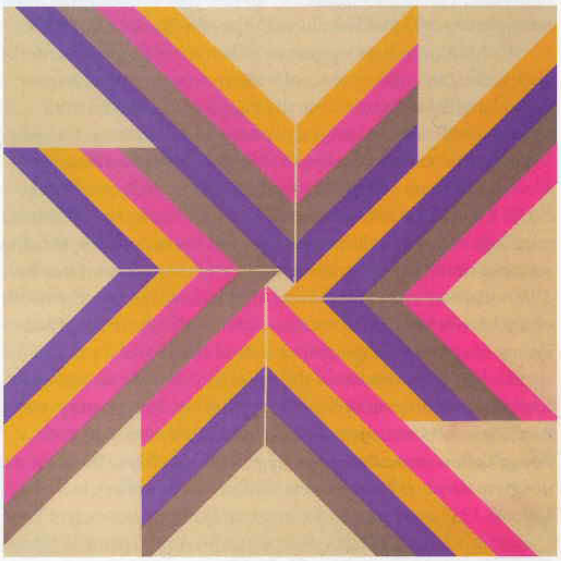
*Art in America*
by Iona Whittaker
September 2015



NEW CANAAN, CONN.

# ELAINE LUSTIG COHEN

## Glass House

ON VIEW THROUGH SEPT. 28

It is more than likely that you have seen Elaine Lustig Cohen's designs for buildings, interiors, books or exhibitions. Stopping on a street corner, you might have lingered over a stack of New Directions paperbacks whose California-hued Constructivist covers caught your eye. If you have studied Minimalism, you might recall the image of a vivid red line snaking through a large P on the cover of the Jewish Museum's 1966 "Primary Structures" catalogue. Strolling through Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson's Seagram Building, you might have noticed the blunt font used on the signage. These are just a few of the projects Cohen realized within the two decades of her design career. Cohen collaborated with Johnson for almost a decade and is now the subject of an exhibition at his Glass House. Rather than illustrate the obvious, the show celebrates a lesser-known part of Cohen's creative activities—her dynamic geometric abstractions on canvas. Nine of these paintings, made between 1966 and 1976, are on view.

Cohen began painting after closing her design studio in the early '60s. She worked in a hard-edge manner, and remarked that one could differentiate the designer's focus on finding solutions from the painter's attraction to unearthing problems. In one of the most alluring works in the show, *Centered Rhyme* (1967), truncated chevrons move toward the center of the canvas. Banded with lavender, mustard yellow, Pepto-Bismol pink and flat gray, they never meet at a point, but instead form a small diamond of exposed canvas at the center. A recurring motif in Cohen's abstractions, the diamond produces an off-centeredness in her compositions, a loss of balance, a problem—defined by an interplay of incomplete lines, non-primary colors and breaks in the puzzle-like arrangements.

Cohen's paintings suggest an affiliation with post-painterly abstraction, an anti-expressionist idiom whose name Clement Greenberg coined and whose distinguishing characteristics include rectilinear and brightly colored mark-making. Greenberg introduced the term in a 1964 exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art that featured Frank Stella, so we take Stella for granted as a member of the style's vanguard. Cohen's paintings conjure Stella's contemporaneous work; but rather than seeming imitative, their structural motifs clearly stem from her 1950s work as a designer. In fact, Stella's line, initially the width of a stretcher bar, can be seen as evolving alongside the visual syntax of commercial graphic design of the 1950s.

Cohen's canvases reveal the possibility of other accounts of hard-edge abstraction in the latter half of the 20th century—narratives that have more cross-fertilization between art and design than is generally acknowledged. Driving home this point are design materials exhibited in the vestibule of the gallery, including Cohen's 1957 brochure for the Seagram Building, her map of New Canaan from the late 1950s and various books and pamphlets made for the Jewish Museum, New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in the 1960s.

The paintings are arranged for visual effect and all but one are on loan from Cohen's own collection. They bear the compositional virtuosity of an experienced artist, a fluid collagist with an understanding of color's expressiveness. They hold the room but do not resolve it as design would; rather, they upend space and continue to intrigue.

—Andrianna Campbell

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*Art in America*
by Andrianna Campbell
September 2015

# Blurring the Boundary Between Art and Design

MARTHA SCHWENDENER
ART REVIEW

NEW CANAAN, Conn. — Philip Johnson left behind a complicated legacy, which is entering an expansive new phase with exhibitions like the current one of Elaine Lustig Cohen's paintings from the 1960s and '70s at his 49-acre estate in New Canaan, Conn.

Johnson, journalism behooves me to say, embraced fascism in his youth: He published articles in right-wing magazines and attended Nazi rallies in Potsdam and Nuremberg before abandoning politics in 1940. And architecture wonks like to point out that his famous Glass House (1949) on the estate was largely copied from his mentor, Mies van der Rohe, who designed and built the pioneering steel-and-glass Farnsworth House (1945-51) in Plano, Ill.

But Johnson, who was the founding director of the architecture department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and had a huge influence on postwar American architecture, also acted much like a modern curator. He championed the artists Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol (who brought the Velvet Underground to play on the Glass House grounds in the late '60s)

**Elaine Lustig Cohen**
*The Glass House*

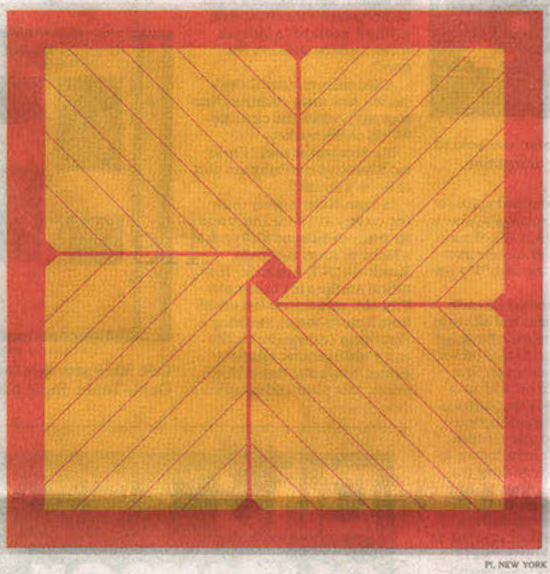
and encouraged Ms. Lustig Cohen, who became an award-winning graphic designer as well as a painter.

In a recent interview with Artforum magazine, Ms. Lustig Cohen recounted that she had never designed anything before her husband, Alvin Lustig, died in 1955. He had been commissioned to create signage for the Seagram Building in Manhattan, and Ms. Lustig Cohen ended up doing the work — and eventually the catalogs for museums designed by Johnson, who died in 2005. Included in a display case here are examples of Ms. Lustig Cohen's design work, including the catalog for "Primary Structures," a landmark 1966 exhibition of Minimalist art at the Jewish Museum; a book about Johnson's architecture; and a 1965 brochure celebrating the Whitney Museum of American Art's new Marcel Breuer building. (The Whitney, of course, recently left that building, which is being rechristened by the Metropolitan Museum of Art as the Met Breuer.)

The 10 paintings on view in the underground gallery that Johnson created on his estate (he called it the kunstbunker) are very much in keeping with her design work. They are hard-edged, geometric and abstract, built of rectilinear forms that radiate from their centers, spilling occasionally onto the sides of the canvases. Ms. Lustig Cohen has said that her paintings were inspired by architecture, particularly buildings by Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler that she saw in Los Angeles. But they hark back, naturally, to pioneers of geometric abstraction like Piet Mondrian, Kazimir Malevich and Aleksandr Rodchenko, and to '50s painters like Ellsworth Kelly.

*"Elaine Lustig Cohen" continues through Oct. 19 at the Glass House, New Canaan, Conn. The show is included in tours of the Glass House, for which tickets must be purchased in advance; 866-811-4111, theglasshouse.org.*

ANDY ROMER



PI. NEW YORK

An exhibition at Philip Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan, Conn., features paintings by Elaine Lustig Cohen, including an untitled acrylic, left, from 1967. Also on view are examples of Ms. Lustig Cohen's design work, including the catalogs for museums designed by Johnson.

Only these are '60s and '70s paintings: rendered in acrylic, the cool, industrial, fast-drying medium of the day. Some '60s touchstones include painters like Kenneth Noland, Bridget Riley and, of course, Mr. Stella.

One of the defining aspects of Ms. Lustig Cohen's canvases is their palette. While Malevich used black, white and red, and Mondrian specialized in primary colors, Ms. Lustig Cohen reached for secondary hues like orange, green, pink and lavender. Later, a '70s palette took hold, with brown and orange dominating. (After the explosion of psychedelic color in the '60s, and with the United States in the grips of Vietnam and Watergate, more somber natural colors like avocado and brown ruled the '70s.) There is a pleasingly retro effect in both Ms. Lustig Cohen's compositions and their hues.

Are they great paintings? Admittedly, they are somewhat second-string. A laminated checklist at the gallery includes images of the Stella works that are customarily installed there, and one can immediately see the difference between painting qua painting — that is, painting that springs primarily from the vocabulary of painting — and canvases that suggest other disciplines and purposes: architecture's axonometric view, the attention-grabbing book cover or the recognizable corporate logo.

For Ms. Lustig Cohen, painting and graphic design are on a continuum, even if their processes differ, from paste-up to applying pigment on a canvas; drawing was the procedural link between the two. However, in the recent interview, Ms. Lustig Cohen said that early visitors to her studio tended to be writers — Donald Barthelme, Ralph Ellison and John Ashbery. The complex relationship between novels or short stories and their film adaptations might be an analogy for the relationship between painting and design.

It is a pleasure to see her work being revived, as is happening for many women active in the 1950s through the '80s. (Although Ms. Lustig Cohen considered herself an art outsider, she was the first woman to have a solo show at the Mary Boone Gallery, in the '80s, which suggests both the increased visibility women have had in recent decades, and their regrettable lack of historical — and market — traction.)

For the Glass House, exhibiting Ms. Lustig Cohen's paintings in this show, organized by Cole Akers, is a way of showing the variety of artists Johnson supported — but also, as any foundation based on a single person's life and work is mandated to do, a way to reconsider his life and achievements. Johnson's worldview was grounded in an aesthetic purity that echoes, at times with troubling overtones, his early political ideology. Ms. Lustig Cohen's paintings, which blur the boundaries of art and design, serve as helpful metaphors for thinking about and consciously grappling with his legacy rather than ignoring it.

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*The New York Times*
"Blurring the Boundary Between Art and Design"
by Martha Schwendener
28 August 2015

ARTFORUM

# Elaine Lustig Cohen

08.11.15

**View of "Elaine Lustig Cohen," 2015,** Glass House, New Canaan, Connecticut.

*Elaine Lustig Cohen is an artist, graphic designer, and AIGA medalist known for her spectacular book covers, exhibition catalogues, and collaborations with architects such as Philip Johnson and Richard Meier. Here, she talks about the intersection between design and architecture in her paintings on the occasion of a show of her early work that is on view at Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut, through September 28, 2015.*

**MY ABSTRACTION NEVER CAME FROM NARRATIVE;** it came from architecture. Even though I had many friends who were writers, I was never particularly drawn to narrative. When I finished my first paintings on view in the show, such as *Centered Rhyme*, I would look at them and there was always something more I wanted to explore, hence the repetition of shapes such as the diamond, the hexagon, and the parallelogram. There was a morphology to working in series like that. Part of my process did carry over to design, but none of my early design work was painted. Since in the early days of design we pasted up the images, they were manipulations of photographs, colors, and fonts. What did carry over to my paintings from the graphic work was in the sketching, because to do anything that hard-edged I had to do a sketch when I planned the paintings.

For me, painting is a combination of the flat plane and the color. When I sit and look at things, it is always about the interaction of the planes. When I was doing graphic design in the postwar period, architecture was going to save the world! We were all going to be good in life because of the space we lived it in. It's a wonderful dream, but that was the mind-set of the time. On Alvin Lustig's shelf, when I married him, were books by Piet Mondrian, Sigfried Giedion, László Moholy-Nagy, and Lewis Mumford. Postwar expression for me was not about individualism or the freedom of a Jackson Pollock; it was about cultural renewal in an architectonic expression.

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*Artforum.com*
As told to Andrianna Campbell
11 August 2015

Architecture was always a part of my informal training as an artist. When Alvin and I lived in Los Angeles, we did not go to museums. There were no museums there in those days, but during 1948 and 1949, *Arts & Architecture* magazine commissioned young architects to design the Case Study Houses in Los Angeles. We spent our weekends driving around and looking at Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler. That was the entertainment. We were friends with the Eameses; Alvin knew the Arensbergs, and we would go to their home to view art. From the very beginning, art for me was about this interplay with architecture.

My solo design career lasted from around 1957 to the mid-1960s, which is a short history compared with how long I have been painting, but it all started when Philip Johnson called me and said, “Get on with it! Do it.” He had hired Alvin to do the signage for the Seagram Building, but when Alvin died he had not designed anything yet. Two weeks or so later, I got the call that would lead to ongoing collaborations with Philip. I had never designed anything on my own in my life, but I did every piece: the 375 address outside, the Brasserie sign, firehose connections, switches, even things that wouldn’t be seen. It helped me survive for three years. I did all the catalogues for every museum he designed, every piece that had lettering on it. Philip was very fast and always had three ideas for every one idea you showed him, but if I stuck to my guns he would always go with my instincts.

When I started having people over to my studio, they were mainly writers—Donald Barthelme, Ralph Ellison, and John Ashbery—but there were artists too, such as Helen Frankenthaler and Robert Motherwell. Everyone was supportive, but I was still an outsider. That is the way history is written. I am still interested in painting, typography, collage, watercolor, and the computer; I still do everything. There is no line for me. You are lucky to be creative and be able to do it.

*— As told to Andrianna Campbell*



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*Artforum.com*
As told to Andrianna Campbell
11 August 2015

dwell

# An Exhibition on an Iconic Modernist Opens at The Glass House

WRITTEN BY: AILEEN KWUN JUNE 23, 2015

On view all summer, a new exhibition at Philip Johnson's Glass House provides the first survey to explore the relationship between the early paintings and pioneering design projects of polymath and modernist icon Elaine Lustig Cohen.

*Installation view of paintings by Elaine Lustig Cohen in Philip Johnson's Painting Gallery*

"Lustig Cohen's paintings resonate beautifully with the Painting Gallery," says curator Cole Akers, who organized the show. "It's as if Philip Johnson designed it just for them." Lustig Cohen's pieces are among the first by a female artist to be shown in the space, and are mounted on rotating panels that house the vast personal holdings of Johnson and his longtime partner, David Whitney, an art curator and prominent collector of contemporary art.

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*Dwell Magazine*
"An Exhibition on an Iconic Modernist Opens at the Glass House"
by Aileen Kwun
23 June 2015

A pioneering figure of modernism, Elaine Lustig Cohen, 88, first began her graphic design practice in 1955, following the passing of her husband and creative partner, the influential midcentury designer Alvin Lustig, and has continued her work for more than 50 years, cementing her position as a legendary designer, artist, and rare-book dealer in her own right.

Organized by curator Cole Akers, a new survey of her work is now on view all summer at Philip Johnson's Glass House, in New Canaan, Connecticut. The choice of venue is historically significant: As a graphic designer, Cohen's first client was Johnson himself, who commissioned her to produce lettering and signage for the iconic Seagram Building in Manhattan. The two continued to collaborate closely over the years, for projects including the Glass House, Yale University, the Lincoln Center, as well as individuals such as philanthropist and art patron John de Menil, who was also a client of Johnson's.

In addition to her longtime collaborations with Johnson, Lustig Cohen worked with architects Eero Saarinen and Richard Meier, and arts institutions such as the Whitney Museum and the Jewish Museum. Her numerous book jacket designs produced for imprints such as New Directions and Meridian Press are commonly regarded as a high point of midcentury graphics, incorporating elements of the European avant-garde through collage, photography, and typographic compositions. Concurrent to her design practice, she has also collected and sold rare books and continued to produce a body of abstracted, hard-edged paintings, photographs, and graphic art.

Installed in the Glass House's Painting Gallery, the exhibition includes a selection of her paintings from the 1960s and '70s, as well as materials from her multi-year collaboration with Johnson. Here, Akers shares a few highlights from the show, on view through Sept. 28.

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OUT THERE

# NEXT STOP, SVALBARD!

## An artist builds trust

**ARTIST WONG KIT YI** and curator Ali Wong are constant collaborators, whether on the exhibitions that feature the former's work or the digital presences they share. They also happen to cohabit in the same physical body: a productive, conceptual split personality. "We have different jobs," the artist explains, addressing the duality. "We take care of different tasks, and have different strong points. Ali makes curatorial decisions; she's very organized. I care only about coming up with crazy ideas and executing them."

Earlier in 2015 the "duo" could be found at Hong Kong's **Oil Street Exhibition Space**, at New York's **K. gallery**, and at **NADA** New York, selling contracts for a body of work yet to be made, in anticipation of Wong's trip to the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard this October as part of the Arctic Circle expeditionary residency program. Patrons were able to secure a commission and personalize it in various ways by selecting a date (when the piece will be made), a color, and a weird word (like *cereology*, *lollygag*, or *Argus-eyed*). These elements will guide the artist, who, once in the Arctic, plans to combine them in a manner "photographic, sculptural, performative, or painterly." The curator notes that in each iteration of the project, the basic premise "is about not fitting into the economic model that currently prevails in the art world." The artist adds, "The primary material in this project is trust."

—JULIET HELMKE

Wong Kit Yi
Contracts included in the exhibition "North Pole Futures" at K. gallery in New York this spring.



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*Modern Painters*
"Next Stop, Svalbard!"
by Juliet Helmke
July/August 2015


Real Flow, *Art Is the Sublime Asset*, 2015
*Prospectus* for financial instruments, 12 pages
Photo: Sebastian Bach

# DERIVATIVE WORK
or
# Not the worlds of art and finance coming together again!
or
# THE ARTWORK AS 'PORTFOLIO MANAGER'
in which
# *Jonathan T. D. Neil* explains the value of an artwork about value and the post-financial crisis meaning of the d-word in art

Since 2008 the word 'derivative' has taken on a new valence in the discourse of art. Formerly a dismissal of art that smacked too much of other, more important art (or of art that seemed to gain traction through its relationship or proximity to other, more famous art – in this, derivative art is akin to the celebrity's entourage), today one can't utter the word without invoking its status as culprit for the global financial crisis.

Derivatives, as most of us now know, are securities contracts that commit one or more parties to a transaction, the value of which is based upon, or derived from, the value of some underlying asset. Mortgage-backed securities were at the root of the 2008 crisis. Stocks and bonds and currencies can also serve as the underlying to a derivative; so can commodities of various sorts, including art.

We don't see wide use of art as the underlying in the formation of derivatives, however. Art funds come closest to this type of offering, insofar as they give investors the chance to own 'shares' of a fund whose value is determined by the portfolio of art that it manages. What any individual investor 'owns' in this case is not a work of art but a claim to a certain amount of the value that each work of art in the portfolio contributes to the whole. A more orthodox derivative with art as the underlying could be constructed from the increasing use of art as collateral. Banks, auction houses and other boutique money shops are loaning money against the value of collections of art owned by ultra-high-net-worth individuals, and it's not too hard to imagine those same firms packaging those loans into securities and selling them to investors as a means of hedging their own exposure.

There are two ways in which derivatives backed by works of art consistently strike defenders of art as odd or unsavoury. First, conceptually, such instruments strip the work of art down to a single attribute: price. From the perspective of the derivative, everything else that one might say or know about the work of art is irrelevant. The derivative instantiates a complete divorce between discourse and price, and in the faux puritanical world of art's autonomy, this amounts to some kind of sacrilege. Second, practically, the ownership of works of art is largely organised around commitments to art's singularity (the work of art as an embodiment of its associated discourse, not its price) and thus to possession of that singularity. Owning a derivative based upon a work of art or a collection of works of art divides ownership from possession and thus from the proximity to singularity that, in this logic, gives ownership meaning.

There is a word for such separations (of discourse from price) and divisions (of ownership from possession), and that's 'financialization'; though it may be regarded as the categorical undoing of art, it may also present conditions for its formal advancement in the present.

Such is the potential of Real Flow, an enterprise of sorts established by Diann Bauer, Victoria Ivanova, Suhail Malik and Christopher Kulendran Thomas. Real Flow debuted at Prem Krishnamurthy's new Lower East Side space K. (pronounced *k-period*) at the beginning of March. According to its own *Prospectus*, Real Flow is a 'portfolio manager' that offers art 'instruments' modelled on financial instruments. *RF1501*, Real Flow's initial offering, includes two series of items: *X001* through *X004*, which, on the occasion of the debut at K., took the form of four mostly monochrome abstractions that fall somewhere between the work of Brad Troemel and Ian Wallace – that is, they signify as absolutely *of* the contemporary international style in painting; and *Y001* through *Y004*, the 'Certificates of Ownership' for *X001–X004*.

With regard to the paintings *X001* through *X004*, what this structure allows for is one party, be it a museum or collector or anyone, really, to 'acquire' the works in order to display them or store them or do with them whatever one would like and is allowable with respect to the moral rights of the artist (which, according to Malik, is Real Flow itself in this case, but it needn't be in the future). The cost of this acquisition is simply the carrying costs (shipping, insurance, installation, conservation, etc) associated with the work, plus 20 percent, which is the 'management fee' charged by Real Flow. A different party is then free to purchase one or more of the certificates of ownership, *Y001* through *Y004*, whose value is informally linked to the *X*-series but the trading of which does not require the physical exchange of those works.



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*Art Review Asia*
"Derivative Work..."
by Jonathan T.D. Neil
Summer 2015

In other words, ownership need not entail possession, and discourse, all that can be said, written and represented about the *X*-series, need not affect nor be affected by price. As stated in its *Prospectus*, 'Real Flow operationalizes financialization's futurity to reconstitute the present of art, its future present and our future.' Indeed, one of the claims made by Real Flow is that the form of the *X*-series works – in this case, abstract paintings of the international contemporary style – is arbitrary. Whatever the 'present of art' or its 'future present' might bring in terms of manifest aesthetic tendencies, whatever tastes prevail, so will go the offerings that Real Flow may 'operationalize'.

A certain amount of this must be taken as tongue-in-cheek, but like the readymade, a certain amount of it is deadly serious. Real Flow's contribution must be viewed as part of a now century-long strategy on the part of artists to internalise within the form of art the dominant modality of its production, consumption and circulation. In 1915, that modality was the commodity; in 1965, it was administration, or at least conceptual art's aesthetic fetishisation of it; and in 2015, why not the security, or the derivative?

As Malik has pointed out elsewhere (see his 'Ontology of Finance' in the most recent issue of *Collapse*), the global derivatives market is, on one view, nearly ten times as large as global GDP, or, on a less inflationary scale, equivalent at least to the GDP of many of the world's biggest national economies, such as those of the US and Germany. In this context, it is not at all unreasonable to claim, as Malik does, that capitalism is simply a special case of finance, that finance is in fact the more general or generic concept and holds greater and broader explanatory purchase on the operations of culture and society, let alone the economy.

Which brings us to Real Flow's second offering: *1502_Zn*. As described in the *Prospectus*, the *Z*-series, potentially infinite in number, operates something like a forward contract on the sales of the *Y*-series of contracts. Above and beyond the direct trading of *Y*-series Certificates of Ownership, the *Z*-series would allow parties to buy and sell claims to the projected profits (or losses) of those trades. For example, owners of a *Y*-series Certificate could hedge their ownership by entering into a *Z*-series contract along the lines of a put option, call it *Z001*, giving them the right but not the obligation to sell the *Y*-series Certificate (the underlying) at a set price on some future date. But of course the counterparty to that *Z*-series contract could in turn enter into a different *Z*-series contract, call it *Z002*, with an entirely different party, which takes *Z001* as its underlying, in essence a speculation on another party's speculation, the chains of which are in principle endless.

Were contract-based artist resale royalties ever to come into wide use, we could see the institutionalisation of something like the *Z*-series in the contemporary marketplace. By giving an artist a claim to a share of (potential) profits garnered by the reselling of his or her work, those claims could be sold on by the artist to another party, who could then sell them on to another party, who could sell them on, and so forth. These rights themselves could be bundled into a further security, and a new marketplace for art-backed derivatives could come into being. But what contract-based resale royalties would do externally, the *Z*-series, and Real Flow, attempt to do internally: to make the derivative a condition of art's very possibility, to install the derivative financial structure as twenty-first-century art's operating system.

Real Flow's trademarked tagline is 'Art is the sublime asset', which invokes both the aesthetic, adjectival notion of what kind of thing art is as well as the active, verbal notion of what happens to it and, really, all material culture when the environmental conditions of capitalism become ever more financial. Real Flow doesn't want a sublime art, it wants *to sublime* art, and not by financializing it, but by offering finance art – that is, finance as a formal resource for art. If the readymade was nothing but the commodity form offered in the place of art, then Real Flow's instruments are nothing but the finance form offered as art.


*Real Flow*, 2015 (installation view at K., New York).
Photo: Sebastian Bach



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*Art Review Asia*
"Derivative Work..."
by Jonathan T.D. Neil
Summer 2015

# Around Town: New York, USA

Time was, you knew winter was over in New York when corpses would start bobbing to the surface of the warming Hudson River. But in today's quiescent city, where the murder rate is at its lowest since records began in 1963, we need new ways to mark the seasons; when your rent gets hiked 20 percent, say, you can be sure that spring has come. Also, exhibitions: timed with Armory Week in March, New York's museums and galleries bring out their heavy artillery. Our larger museums had a mixed record this spring: the New Museum beat expectations with its less-techy-than-feared third triennial ('Surround Audience'), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its largest ever show of Native American art ('The Plains Indians'), but The Museum of Modern Art, with the historic disaster of 'Björk', lost much of the goodwill it had accrued the previous year. More than one critic has groused that 'Björk' would have worked better at MoMA PS1, MoMA's trendier younger sibling, but I'm not so sure. PS1 works best not when it's in arty-party mode, but when it turns its gaze to those artists our larger institutions overlook.

Egyptian artist Wael Shawky filled PS1's largest galleries this winter with dozens of marionettes representing figures of the Crusades, crafted out of glass and fabric in French and Italian ateliers, and displayed like heirlooms in lustrous vitrines. The artisans' marionettes have rich detailing and individuated features, down to their pleated pantaloons and multicoloured glass toes, and their sensitivity reminds you of the importance of 18th-century puppet theatre. However, Shawky's associated films don't, I'm afraid, relying far too heavily on deadpan humour and cod-Brechtian narration to bring medieval holy war to the present day. It is revealing that Shawky places his puppets before a camera and not on stage – the 'theatrical' here is a mere synonym for 'false' or 'unfinished'. Far better videos were just up the road from PS1 at SculptureCenter – recently renovated and doing better than ever under curator Ruba Katrib. She mounted the best show of the season: a retrospective of Thai artist Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, whose mortality-obsessed but even-tempered work earns the overused compliment 'haunting'.

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5

4
Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, *Square*, 2014, stainless steel, wooden base and motor
83 × 117 × 117 cm

5
Jeff Wall
*Picture for Women*, 1979, silver dye bleach transparency, aluminium lightbox, 1.4 × 2 m

Rasdjarmrearnsook transformed SculptureCenter into a thanatorium: she lectures corpses, records wailing mental patients, bottles her dogs' hair. And, yet, death is not the end – her corpse students speak back to her – nor does its omnipresence preclude piercing, almost-indecent humour. In a video from her series 'Village and Elsewhere' (2011), she sits with children in rural Thailand while a saffron-clad monk tries to explain two artistic reproductions: a photograph of Jeff Koons with two women in bikinis on the left, and, on the right, an image of Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (c. 1612). If you were expecting Heinrich Wölfflin-style compare and contrast, that is not how art history is taught in rural Thailand: the monk links the images into a morality play, as his charges gleefully imagine an adulterous Koons having his head lopped off.

In the commercial sector this spring, David Zwirner gave us a solid, truly museum-quality, showcase of outsider art ('System and Vision'), while two of Gagosian's New York spaces were turned over to MoMA curating veterans: painting supremo John Elderfield and photo doyen Peter Galassi, each of them looking at artists' depictions of the studio. The pairing felt imbalanced. Galassi's show was better and wittier, mixing 19th-century self-portraits with bodily experiments by Charles Ray and Hannah Wilke. (It also included Jeff Wall's indelible *Picture for Women*, 1979: still one of the densest and most satisfying art works of the last 40 years.) Elderfield's, by contrast, was a looser affair. For every major work by Jasper Johns or Pablo Picasso, the show also included as many minor studio pictures, and the selections from before 1900 (Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, Thomas Eakins, Jean-Léon Gérôme) were notably small bore. More impressive was a two-hander at Dominique Lévy, pairing the *informel* ceramics of Satoru Hoshino with killer paintings by Gutai champion Kazuo Shiraga, the blood-dark paint slathered across canvases with his feet. It was one of three Shiraga shows this spring (the others at Fergus McCaffrey and Mnuchin) and was accompanied by a scholarly two-volume catalogue.

At times, New York galleries can seem hospitable only to the young and the very old. After Etel Adnan and Carmen Herrera, the latest nonagenarian superstars are Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian – whose Guggenheim retrospective featured impressive geometric drawings and mirrored sculptures – and the polymath Rosalyn Drexler (only 88, to be fair), whose pop tableaux featuring fields of solid colour were paired with more recent Technicolor compositions at Garth Greenan. Mid-career artists have it harder – which is why I've grown to admire the scrappy Lynch Tham, a storefront space on the Lower East Side. Its latest exhibition went to Cuban-born Quisqueya Henriquez, whose photos-inside-photos throw the history of postwar abstraction down a rabbit hole. As for the kids, they're getting smarter about the game they have no choice but to play. At K., successor to the sharp gallery P!, the inaugural exhibition 'Real Flow', by four young artists whose collective bears the same name, proposed an art that exists purely as financial speculation. The four paintings were not for sale; what was offered were derivatives, to be traded and flipped at your leisure without the bother of shipping a canvas. 'Beyond capital is our future,' the artists proclaimed. In New York, everyone got the irony.

JASON FARAGO





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*Frieze*
"Around Town: New York , USA"
by Jason Farago
May 2015

Art in America


# Wong Kit Yi

**at K.,**
**through May 3**
334 Broome Street

"North Pole Futures" offers commissioning contracts for sale in advance of Wong Kit Yi's participation in the Arctic Circle Expeditionary Residency program: a three-week sojourn of artists and scientists aboard a ship traveling within 10 degrees of the North Pole. The project courts the "choose-your-own-adventure" type of patron. Prospective buyers may pick a date of Wong's residency, time of day (either morning or night), one of 21 selected pigments, and one of 23 little-used words in the English language. They sign a contract and pay according to a complex formula derived from climate particularities and market values. The resultant artwork—which may take the form of a painting, photograph, sculpture or performance—will be produced by Wong on the ship, on the appointed day and hour, and will draw inspiration from the chosen color and word. The project, as transient as K., formerly P! (soon to be something else entirely), seeks to redefine the collector-artist relationship, as well as the intrinsic and extrinsic values of art.

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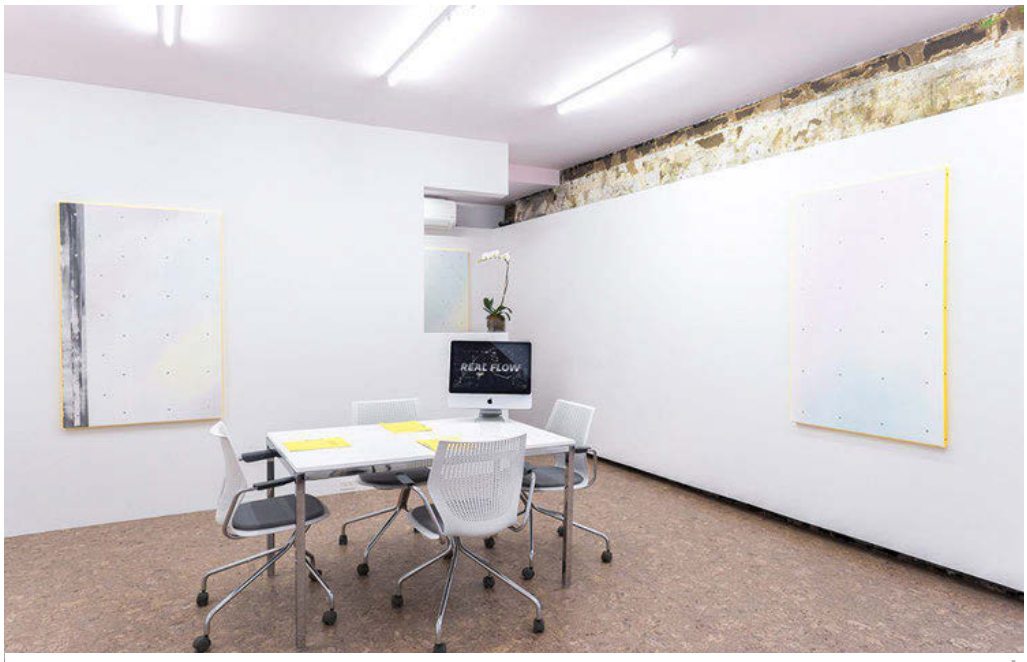
*Art in America*
30 April 2015

# Can Financialization offer art an Exit from Contemporary Art?

Forum

DADABASE 1 9d

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*Photograph: Real Flow, Installation view by Sebastian Bach, courtesy of K.*

A recent exhibition by the Real Flow [30] collective and an upcoming one by Wong Kit Yi both at K. [20] in New York feature w 1 / 31 orate ideas and practices from the financial world either as the exhibition's actual medium or as a methodological about face in the way art can be produced, priced and circulated. The first exhibition borrows heavily from concepts developed and articulated by Suhail Malik, in "The Ontology of Finance" published in the recent issue of Collapse Journal [39]. A theorist and faculty member at both the Department of Art at Goldsmith London and Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Malik is also a member of the Real Flow collective. The exhibition consisted of mid size abstract paintings which could be used as the basis

for the exchange of futures and derivatives. The second exhibition North Pole Futures [14] is produced as a collaboration between the artist and her curator alter ego Ali Wong. It features a web based system which allows collectors to participate in the art production by making aesthetic and conceptual choices from a list of preset elements which will then be incorporated into the actual work of art by the artist on a traveling ship. There are also works either already produced (Where 6: "Prediction," with Sarah Meyohas [10]) or about to be (artist confidentiality) that involve the utilization of cryprocurrencies as either the medium of the work or a part of its production cycle. It seems that through practicing finance, these artmaking strategies, one way or the other, abstract art's mode of financial existence into its general reason dterre. Thus, they attempt to turn art's weakest link, the market, into its strength. The question that arises then is, can critically navigating financial processes and rivalling its dominant currency offer art an exit from contemporary art [32]?

**1 person liked this.**

**AGAGAG** **9d**

no.
the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house, etc.
or...
yes.
u can quit your low paying job in contemporary art and get a high paying job at a bank!

1 person liked this.

**DADABASE** **9d**

I disagree. I think it is extremely limiting to assume that the weapon of the rich under no condition can be used against them. The effectiveness of any recuperation has to do with the specificities with which it is carried out.

3 people liked this.

**Dilettante** **9d**

The key here, as in so many other, (seemingly) disingenuous attempts at exiting, is revealed in this group of descriptors: "artmaking strategies" "exhibition" "art production" "works"

1 person liked this.

Art in America


# “Real Flow”

**at K.,**
**through Mar. 15**
334 Broome Street

The launch of Real Flow, a self-proclaimed "financial research and development company" created by artists and theorists in New York and London, inaugurates K., a new gallery helmed by the inexhaustible brainiac Prem Krishnamurthy. (In addition to running its experimental predecessor P!, Krishnamurthy is a principal of the hip Project Projects design agency.) The premise is a tongue-in-cheek commentary on today's climate of art-market speculation. Three financial instruments are for sale, outlined in a prospectus: exhibition-loan agreements (including a commission for the artists), certificates of ownership (not including physical possession of the works themselves) and an "interlinking contract" that binds the two together. Four bland "exhibitionary elements"—tastefully airbrushed paintings adorned with RF logos—are on offer under these unusual constraints. Want to know more? An information session takes place on Sunday, Mar. 8, from 12-1 p.m., with Real Flow's founders Diann Bauer, Victoria Ivanova, Suhail Malik and Christopher Kulendran Thomas.

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*Art In America*
6 March 2015

# No Neutral Spaces: Material Art Fair 2015

Perhaps no one in Mexico City is more fully engaged with the praxis of merchandise display than the street vendors. Stands hawking nearly identical goods—plastic water guns, cigarette packs stamped with cautionary images of fetuses, striped socks packed in crackling cellophane, and the endless assemblages of Mexican candy (Duvalin, Pulparindo, Lucas Muecas)—are distinguished only by the particular dialogue among the objects. What draws you to this vendor and not to that vendor isn't a certain stick of gum, it's the gestalt.

In its second year, the Material Art Fair has relocated to the commerce-driven street Insurgentes Sur, a short walk from the wide, bucolic avenues of the bohemian Colonia Condesa. Rows and rows of street vendor stalls, conjoined by red vinyl awnings, wrap around the Auditorio BlackBerry like a moat. Steam rises from the grills. At the discrete entrance to the fair, guards in black T-shirts peek casually into your bag before nodding you through the velvet ropes. The stage is set for a metonymous experience of Mexico City. We have a concentric model, wherein the city,the Condesa, the perimeter of vendors, the Auditorio BlackBerry, the interior architecture, and the artwork are all involved in a complex renegotiation of culture and commerce. More than most contemporary art fairs, this one is in dialogue with the exigencies of its own city. As much as it is an international fair, it is undoubtedly a Mexico City fair. The organizers, Isa Natalia Castilla, Daniela Elbahara, and Brett W. Schultz, sourced locally to produce it; for exhibition design, they turned to Savvy Studio in collaboration with Pablo Limón, and for graphic design, Anagrama.

A music venue, the Auditorio BlackBerry reads contemporary cool—cement floors, pendant Edison lamps, unfinished wooden acoustic paneling—and the organizers used every quirk as opportunity. A floating platform served as the VIP area; the space below the stage hosted an art lounge. Working through the fair feels like walking through a series of modulated mood-pods, from underground spaces lit by neon to the ground floor's fluorescent glow, to the sunlit space of the second floor. The majority of the booths are lit with bars of fluorescent bulbs, hung on tresses, mirroring those of the auditorium's elevated ceiling. Schultz explains the lighting choice: "You don't have the spotty yellow incandescence, it's a more generalized lighting. It's clearer, whiter, trying to reflect how galleries typically light their own spaces with general bright light. For the generation that is following galleries on Contemporary Art Daily, it's how they expect these works to look. You come here and you see it in real life, but it also has that relationship to the screen."

On the second floor, gleaming in the natural light that passes through a glass wall, two of Sean Raspet's *Texture Maps* (2015) glisten like hard candy at the New Gallerie's booth. Suspended vertically from the wall by articulated TV mounts, these luminescent Plexiglass panes refract trippy pastel colors in dichromatic film—now pink-yellow, now blue-green—depending on where you positioned yourself. These are prepositional paintings: *through* which and *into* which you perceive shape and color. I wanted to move around them to see the colors change across their glossy skein like a transparent lava lamp, a relief composition of silicone globs, polyurethane bubbles wobbling in and out focus. The ridged linearity of lenticular transparent film creates a depth illusion often used for holographic novelty cards, corrective bifocal lenses, and computer privacy screens. Though the language is borrowed from flat-screen entertainment systems, which invite passive, immobile viewing, these screens resolve themselves optically by means of actively moving to and fro, walking while watching how the light registers here and there. Franklin Melendez, TK, told me, "Sean is certainly aware of the screen, but he also mines how the idioms of display structure our existence outside the virtual. From shelving systems and wall-mounted brackets to window banners and even aisles at grocery stores, our experience is always mediated by these systems of presentation."

[[[[[[[[[[[[[ +++++++ ]]]]]]]]]]]]]

Any art fair challenges the illusion that artwork floats in this weird Platonic white space. The fourth wall disappears. The white cube becomes a vendor stall. What is an art fair but a temporary stage for verisimilitudes of galleries, all lined up and writ small, clinging to the hope that the artworks meant to be seen against the white walls of the gallery still hold up against these flimsy, makeshift ones. The most successful booths are the ones that say, "Oh well, let's play with a new set of signifiers. Let's renegotiate the terms of display." These consider the politics of the spectacle and how we look at art when we know we are looking at art that is for sale.

Tucked into the pit of the performance space, the artist-run studio and project space helper, from Brooklyn, staged a sensually vivid environment of wind gust, a quiet odor of nuked pewter, and the digital murmur of a drone, all surrounded by naked brown drywall. There was zero effort made to establish the bogus aura of the pristine artifact. In Gavin Kenyon and Jeff Williams's *Microwave Mint*

(2014–15), two back-to-back microwaves, ajar and aglow, rotate on a site-sourced pedestal. Hung casually, on a pegboard, are products from a live-casting process involving pouring pewter into impressions made by visitors onto the surfaces of cuttlefish bone, which gives as easily as a foam board and can absorb the shapes of objects such as bottle caps or bottle openers, but results in gorgeously deformed abstractions. On the floor, a monitor shows a short film by Berlin-based artist Marco Schmitt titled *Panopticonthera Subobscura*: or the second coming of *Tezcatilpoca*, produced during his residency in Mexico City in 2014. This psychedelic drone-shot narrative featuring a wheelchair-bound shaman and baton-flailing police atop the Disco Solar works in dream-sequence logic. By extension, other objects on the floor—an assortment of tubular, animalistic ceramic batons/dildos in beautiful luminous glazes, featuring textures erotic and reptilian—appear to have oozed out of the video.

The strongest piece in this booth, and one of the best in the fair (full disclosure: I want it), is Ben Dowell's wall-mounted light machine, a whirling dervish of white glow, giving off the speed and thrust of a propeller and the optical suck of a solar eclipse. *Crippler* (2014) beckons you in to question its mechanism, which, as it turns out, is a wand of fluorescent light—just a line that, with movement, becomes a solid. Nearby, Dowell's abstract paintings offer the most delicious clumps of oil paint. The booth was spectacular spectacle. Sam Stewart, who operates helper along with Nathan Gwyne and Zerek Kempf, explained their response to the materiality of the booth: "We are trying to find a balance between this nuanced approach that we've taken—with the walls, the way your eye moves along the booth—and this institutional critique trope that often happens when you try to do something different."

[[[[[[[[[[[[[ +++++++ ]]]]]]]]]]]]]

In the oft-maligned context of the art fair, the bodily experience of inhabiting the gallery's space can offer us newly radical means for challenging and reinvesting in outmoded presentational systems. Because hardly a month passes when there is not an art fair happening somewhere in the world; because, when not seeing art digitally, we are inside booths, for better or worse, we'd be remiss not to reckon with new apparatuses for display. (Here's Judith Barry, in her catalogue essay "Dissenting Spaces" for the New Museum's *Damaged Goods* in 1986: "One way to do this might be to make threatening the assumed neutrality of the exhibition space itself.") Seduction is not neutral. Sure, a booth inside a fair is designed to make us want to possess as well as be possessed. The reality of commerce is real, but the spectacle should threaten your reality, like when you stand before a diorama of apes and wait for them to blink.

Done well, a display can "follow the logic of context-specificity to an uncomfortable conclusion." As salvo, P! gallery, New York, offered what was unquestionably the most direct confrontation to, in their words, "undermining the easy commodification of the art fair object in favor of a complex investigation of authorship, hierarchy, aura, and influence." Prem Krishnamurthy, founding principal of Project Projects and director of P!, set up shop at the fair through a complex taxonomy of practices: sculpture, painting, printing; assemblage, installation, curation; graphic design, exhibition design, art.

At P!, Mexican artist José León Cerrillo produced two display sculptures, lean geometries of steel that support the works of two iconic artists, Elaine Lustig Cohen and Karel Martens. Conceptually and empirically, these structures are both spindly and Mack-Truck strong. Architecturally, they serve as two walls, completing the illusion of a cube with two existent, bare white walls. Neither shelves nor vitrines, slipping in and out of utility and abstraction, they resist fully inhabiting either definition. Both are titled *Environment 1* (2015). One has been built around three Lustig Cohen paintings of such individual power

as to merit their own discussion, illustrating the problem presented in this artwork, which is both a system and a thing in and of itself. When we talk about a painting, there is no world beyond the frame, so how do we talk about these discrete works, say, when a piece of steel, albeit thin and cocked at a right angle, in conversation with the geometry of the painting, is nevertheless obstructing the line of sight to the canvas? We must invent another verb—not "obstructed." We must invent another way of looking, while Clement Greenberg rolls over in his grave. Anyhow, the paintings are superb and undiminished, even as they rest on the floor, upright in a vertical cage, as though in storage, as if in a permanent fungible state of desire.

The second, more horizontal structure supports, in the manner of a bookshelf, the delicate framed works of Martens, vibrant letterpress pictures monoprinted on discarded Belgian identity cards. First you see the prints, then you become aware of the armature, and from then on, your attention is pulled between the two, utterly unresolved. The pieces, says Krishnamurthy, "underscore the indelible link between object and armature, raising questions of autonomous and contingent display." Indeed, going back to Barry, the vitrines here are non-neutral, enacting control. Here is "an artwork-specific display, which is itself a work of art."

[[[[[[[[[[[[[ +++++++ ]]]]]]]]]]]]]

Nowhere were artists given as much license as at Beverly's basement outpost, organized by Leah Dixon and Dan Sutti, founders of the eponymous New York project space and bar. And nowhere else was Mexico City most used as a material. A found cement street fragment is transformed into a printing press by Amanda Wong (*Dog in Camouflage*, 2015). Hugo Montoya's delicate white paint interacted with a potted plant. But the strongest works in this space were by Miami artists. I might speculate that they possess some innate understanding of the vagaries of Mexico City, or the implicit concerns of interacting with tentative spaces. Sneakily nestled in a sunken understairs nook is Daniel Feinberg's delightful bag o' *LSD* (2015) aglow in pink and leaking. Misael Soto's ongoing goings-on of subtle interventions with art and audience, *Spatial Awareness Exercises* (*for an art fair*) (2015), was the silent magic at the pulse of the neon-lit den. He performed small, spatial-awareness exercises, like pacing, or offered consultations resulting in customized instructions to be performed in an art fair. Art fair–specific artwork. For Soto, "Moving a work like an inch, things that don't matter in the real world really start to become an obsession to curators and artists and people in this profession. I'm taking that to the extreme. For instance, rehanging Michael Assiff's paintings." When gallerists let the artist take control of the politics of display, the politics of display can become art.

**Martha Raoli** *is a writer and artist living in Miami.*

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*The Miami Rail*
"No Neutral Spaces: Material Art Fair 2015"
by Martha Raoli
Spring 2015

ARTFCITY

# A Feng-Shui Master Advises LES Gallery on Redesign

by Paddy Johnson (http://artfcity.com/author/paddy-johnson/) on February 24, 2015 (2015-02-24) · 0


P! Storefront

Three years ago, Project Projects co-founder Prem Krishnamurthy launched P! in an inconspicuous storefront space at 334 Broome. The mission statement describes the gallery as "a free-wheeling combination of project space, commercial gallery and Mom-and-Pop-Kunsthalle"—longhand for an artist-run gallery that exists for a love for ideas and art. In the case of P!, artists with hard-to-define practices (http://artfcity.com/2013/10/11/we-went-to-the-lower-east-side-p-404-disordering-complexity/) are almost always a source of fascination; they are artists who are also designers, architects, writers, poets, and sometimes even chess champions. P! artists are polymaths whose professional connections often inform the group shows curated by P! or with external curators.

Now, come March 1, 2015, K., a temporary gallery conceived by P! (http://p-exclamation.org/post/110609293241/k-opens-march-1) will take over the newly renovated space for six months. Unlike P!, K. will launch solo or two-person shows that switch over every two weeks. Like P!, which often focused on economic systems, K.'s programming will be dedicated to exploring similar ideas. Real Flow, a collective of artists and curators kicks off K.'s launch with abstract large format process-based paintings that involve holograms, and selling derivatives. Other artists slated for shows include Aaron Gemmill and

Matthew Schrader, Mathew Hale, and Wong Kit Yi, among others.

When I visited K., the space was a day away from completion; paint trays were strewn around the edges of the gallery, but all the walls that needed to be removed were gone. The space looked at least twice as big as their former, and they'd not moved.

Director David Knowles and Prem Krishnamurthy talked with me about the decision to change the gallery name. "An artist convinced me of the logic," Krishnamurthy explained. "Since we were going to gut renovate the whole space and have a program with eight exhibitions he said, 'Well, if you're going to change the whole program you might as well go the whole way and change the name.'"

Thus K. was born. The name follows P! and is most obviously a reference to Prem Krishnamurthy's initials. That, however never came up when I asked him what K. means.

"If P! is really excited, K. is very matter of fact," he began. "It's K period. Just K. We're serious." In other words, the sound, shape, and punctuation of K., suggests the form of the gallery; it follows a traditional model. But perhaps K. tells us less about the speed of programming, which occurs at roughly twice the rate of a regular gallery space.

I suggested that exhibition schedule might be a little ambitious, but nobody seemed fazed. "The strenuousness of an exhibition idea has never swayed us from doing anything before, so I don't know why it would now," Knowles told me through laughter. Krishnamurthy nodded, agreeing.

"We've done moderately ludicrous things before," he said. "I mean, the second show we ever did changed every week and rearranged all the pieces in the show, and that nearly gave me a heart attack. We did a 24-channel installation with the Yams [collective] that was installed in three days and up for four." Later he reminded me that gallery shows in the 1970's used to be two weeks long.

Those times were different, though, as Krishnamurthy himself pointed out: There were fewer galleries to visit and people lived closer to the galleries they exhibited in. Now, galleries are everywhere.

And yet, both P! and K. remain distinctive. Some of the best qualities about K.'s new space, for example, are entirely invisible. "There's an orange gourd in the ceiling [above the door] that's going to bring prosperity into the space." Krishnamurthy told me, having followed feng shui master Mr. Ye's advice. Mr Ye was introduced to the gallery back in the days of P! through artist Wong Kit Yi. Now, he was invited to give feedback in the design process with architects Leong Leong. "Ye made sure there was a place where the person sitting in the gallery would have sunlight—so they would not become stupid." Also, there will be a bench near the window to keep money from flying away. Krishnamurthy told me they plan to put the gallery press releases on that bench.

The whole project seemed so thought out, I began to wonder whether P! would feel the need to return to their former gallery design and floor plan at the end of K.'s six months program. Stranger things had surely happened at P! Krishnamurthy didn't think so, though. "You can never enter the same river twice," he said, loosely paraphrasing Heraclitus, "because you are not the same person, and the river is not the same river."

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*ArtFCity.com*
"A Feng Shui Master Advises LES Gallery on Redesign"
by Paddy Johnson
24 February 2015

ARTFORUM

# “Post-Speculation”

**P!**
**334 Broome Street**
**September 1–November 1**

View of “Post-Speculation,” 2014.

I missed “Act I” of this exciting group show curated by Prem Krishnamurthy and Carin Kuoni, but traces of the eleven-day installation by HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? remain in the gallery for “Act II,” on view now. The walls are still painted black, and an edit of the art collective’s timely, twenty-four-channel video piece *The Wayblack Machine*, 2014, plays on a single monitor. It’s a moving montage of material culled from news sources and social media about the police killing of unarmed black teenager Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9. Art’s turnaround time doesn’t often allow for immediate responses to world events, so it’s satisfying to see something made with such apparent urgency on the fly. Slideshows of newly iconic photos—protestors’ hands up in defiant poses of surrender, teargassed faces, tanks—are interspersed with digitally animated tweets that swirl into hashtagged gibberish.

The YAMS installation was billed as the launch for a new Internet archive, thewayblackmachine.net, but that URL takes you to a low-res splash page, a dead end. Maybe the radical project of building a digital repository for the documentation of “activism around black embodiment,” as the press release reads, is a kind of joke, purely conceptual—or speculative, at least for now. The show’s funniest work is Lynn Hershman Leeson’s *Synthia*, 2000–2002, which literalizes the hysterical market fluctuations on which financial speculation relies. A tiny monitor hangs from a chain in a bell jar, showing real-time market data and video clips of a woman in corresponding states of mind. I visited the gallery on a bad day for Wall Street, I guess: Mostly, Hershman’s character slumped on a couch drinking alone. There’s a surprising thread of humor to “Post-Speculation.” While the black walls remind us this is Ferguson October, they don’t dampen the prankish synergy between the works assembled.

*— Johanna Fateman*

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*Artforum.com*
by Johanna Fateman
October 2014

# YAMS COLLECTIVE BRINGS FERGUSON THEMED INSTALLATION TO THE LES

By Rhett Jones | September 12, 2014 - 02:00PM

If you thought the story of Michael Brown, Ferguson, and the racist, militarized, out-of-control police was over, a new exhibition on the LES by the art collective Yams reminds you that it's far from finished.

While the intense 24/7 media coverage of Ferguson has receded, this week alone there were several arrests of protestors following an "insulting" proposal for a police review board. A new video unearthed by CNN showed a witness telling police that Michael Brown had "his fucking hands up," immediately after the shooting. Most importantly, there is still no decision on whether officer Darren Wilson will be prosecuted. Suffice it to say, even when the Ferguson story "is" over, the plot of a lawless police force armed military grade equipment — quietly growing more dangerous and ubiquitous — continues.

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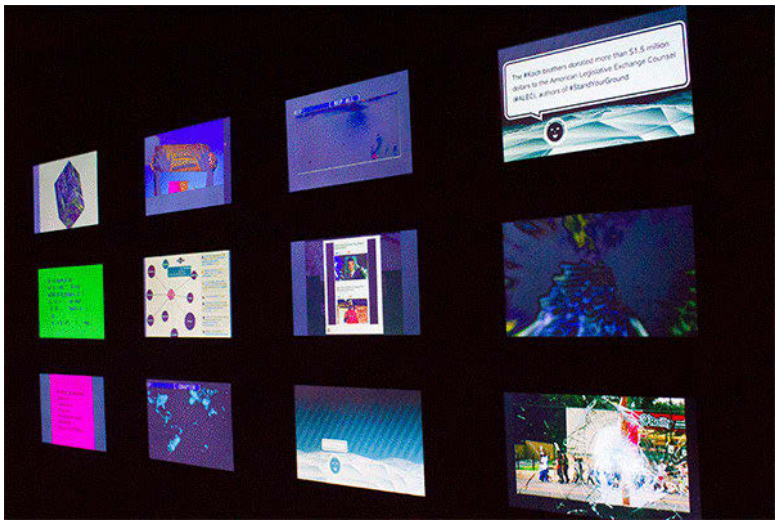
*AnimalNewYork.com*
"Yams Collective Brings Ferguson Themes Installation to the LES"
by Rhett Jones
12 September 2014

At P! Gallery on Broome Street, Yams (short for HowDoYouSayYamInAfrican?) has installed a dark vortex of multi-channel video that displays protests, arrests, tweets, cartoons, news footage, status updates, and 3D graphics. Consisting of two large projections and a wall of small monitors, the exhibition is titled "Post-Speculation, Act I." According to Yams, it is "addressing contemporary conditions such as police brutality, American-funded international violence, and the ways that memes and hashtags collapse and make legible such threats to personhood."

When you walk into the exhibition the first thing you notice is the emergency siren. It turns off and on and makes the pitch-black environment very disconcerting. All around you, screens are the only illumination, and you quickly remember just how much information was streaming through the inter-webs about this small town that no one had even heard of. On the screens, there are animated photos of cops firing tear gas like they're in an action movie, Chris Hayes stating that he's interviewed witnesses that the police haven't, John Oliver giving his post-vacation analysis, and so many people with their hands up. It has an overwhelming effect.



Typically, when people talk about Post-Internet art they refer to artists like Artie Vierkant or Aleksandra Domanovic. These are artists who straddle the digital and physical art worlds, but are most recognized for their digital roots. Yams are usually referred to as a video and performance collective, but what you see at Post-Speculation is one of the best examples of Post-Internet art in recent time. This is work created by a lot of people, living in different places around the country, crowd-sourcing raw material about an event that probably would've received little attention without the internet. In other words, art that wouldn't exist if the internet didn't exist. Then, all of this is presented in a physical space.

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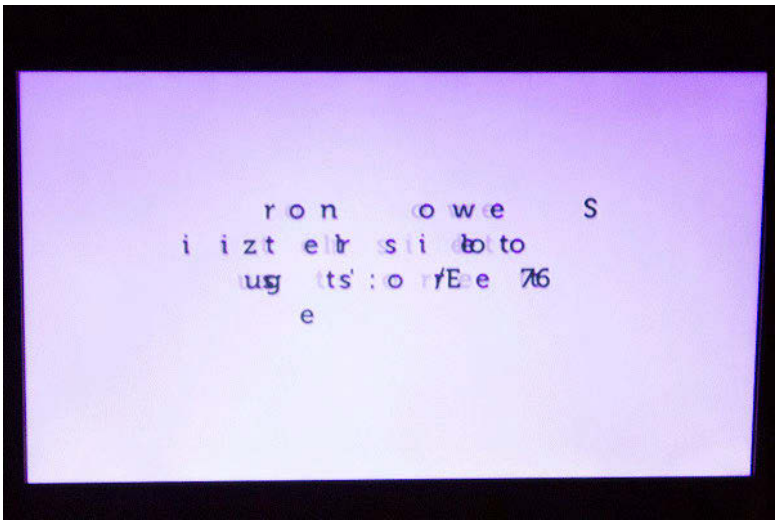
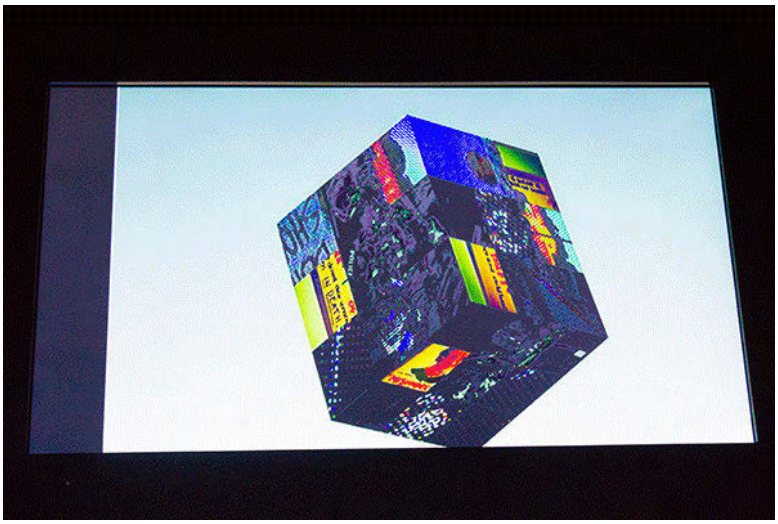


The importance of the internet to this whole affair is key to the Yams end game, which is to launch thewayblackmachine.net on September 12th. Inspired by The Way Back Machine, a project that attempts to archive as much of the internet as possible, the Way Black Machine will be an "archive of activism around black embodiment."

Yams came to attention when they pulled out of the Whitney Biennial this spring over another artist's project that some would argue constituted a new form of blackface. The collective doesn't have a set number of members, and in their own words they are "mostly black, and mostly queer." Designer V. Mitch McEwen, who works with Yams told the *New York Times*, "We're not so much claiming a demographic territory… but examining the question of what makes art universal."



While it's easy to see the show at P! as being primarily about racial issues, it's important to remember an irresponsible and even homicidal police force effects everyone. Reason is not determined by race — it is the process of consciously, logically making sense of things. Plato distinguished speculative reason from practical reason as a way of defining the contemplation of a subject vs. deciding what to do about it. *Post-Speculation, Act 1* cleverly adapts the gallery space as a place for speculative reason, a place to meditate on all of those images and issues. *The Way Black Machine* will embody a form of practical reason, realizing that all of this history needs a place where it can be archived. The Post-Speculation will occur when you visit thewayblackmachine.net and engage in your own contemplation of the issues. What you decide to practically do about it could be extremely important.

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by Rhett Jones
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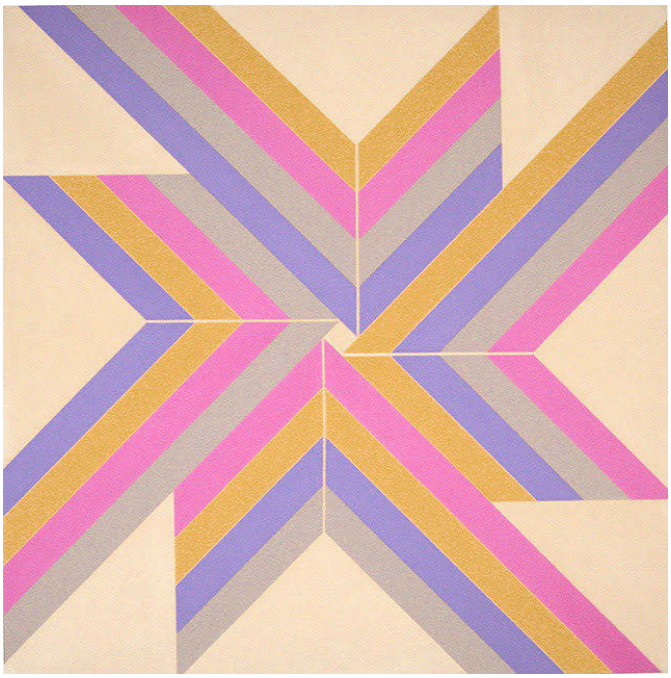
# 9 Things to Do in New York's Art World Before June 9

BY ANDREW RUSSETH AND M.H. MILLER 6/02 11:03AM





TUESDAY | Opening: Ruba Katrib vs. Elaine Lustig Cohen & Heman Chong: Correspondence(s) at P!

Authorship takes the form of a chain letter, or perhaps a delicious, ever-expanding Mobius strip, in P!'s latest project. Let's begin at the beginning: Heman Chong picked out sturdy, elegant abstract paintings by Elaine Lustig Cohen (whose 1967 Centered Rhyme is pictured), then Ms. Lustig Cohen commissioned Mr. Chong to create new paintings from his "Cover Versions" series. Their show together has been hanging at the gallery since early May, and it is stunning. (Meanwhile, P! brought Ms. Lustig Cohen's work to NADA New York.) Now SculptureCenter's curator, Ruba Katrib, will rehang the show, keeping the curatorial flow going. Does it have to end? —Andrew Russeth *P!, 334 Broome Street, New York, 6–8 p.m.*

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*GalleristNY.com*
"9 Things to Do in New York's Art World
before June 9"
by Andrew Russeth
2 June 2014

The New York Times | http://nyti.ms/1fSms9g

**ART & DESIGN** | ART REVIEW

# Gathering of Far-Flung Friends, and Trends

## Pope Chairs and Carpets at NADA NYC Art Fair

By **MARTHA SCHWENDENER** MAY 8, 2014

Within the commercial realms of art, the New Art Dealers Alliance, known as NADA, has earned its good reputation. Founded as a nonprofit in 2002 with the conviction that the "adversarial approach to exhibiting and selling art has run its course," it even has a cool name. ("What are you doing this weekend?" "NADA.")

Technically, NADA has been in the art fair business since 2003, running fairs with Art Basel Miami Beach and more recently in Hudson, N.Y., and Cologne, Germany. The current edition in New York City is only its third here, but it is already one of the better fairs in town.

How so? The sport-utopian-sounding Basketball City is a nice complex for a fair. It's near the Lower East Side galleries that make up much of the alliance's membership, it's on the water, and it's fairly close to subways. And for any art students or struggling artists reading this: The NADA NYC fair is free.

The other thing NADA does well is reach out to like-minded colleagues from other cities and countries. Among the booths here is Springsteen, a year-old, artist-run gallery in Baltimore, which is showing some yoga mats with cutouts by Alex Ebstein that are hung like Asian scrolls. A London gallery, the Sunday Painter, has work by Hannah Perry related to car culture, including a cast of a skid mark done in fiberglass and resin, subwoofers encased in plastic foam and bent aluminum pieces.

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What Pipeline is another artist-run space, this time from Detroit and with a group show shoehorned into a tiny project space. The Green Gallery of Milwaukee, showing eclectic paintings and reliefs by Peter Barrickman, is a well-known outpost. (Among its stable is Michelle Grabner, a curator of the current Whitney Biennial.)

The amusing project spaces along the back wall of Basketball City are so minuscule, they're like an art assignment for exhibitors. One of the best is from P!, which has paintings from the '60s by Elaine Lustig Cohen, including one on the ceiling, paired with a sculpture made of reclaimed window frames by Heather Rowe. The artist Devon Dikeou, also the editor and publisher of zingmagazine, has created a kind of public-service art project: seating for the fair in the form of 17th-century Italian monk chairs, under the title " 'Pray for Me' — Pope Francis I." (Each chair is named after a historical painting of a pope.)

Also on project-space row is a pop-up souk with a lush installation of Moroccan carpets offered by Youssef Jdia, who is married to the artist Katherine Bernhardt. Brian Belott's collages, including many transparent ones made with a laminating machine, are at Essex Flowers. Rob Tufnell of London is presenting the project "LSD": sheets of designer blotter (without the actual lysergic acid diethylamide) by artists like Pae White, David Shrigley, Mark Leckey and Art & Language, with the deadpan explanation that the works "look back to the shamanic, drug-induced rituals of prehistory and to the signatory grid of Modernism."

Some of the fair's better photography can be seen at Miami dealer David Castillo, who is showing Xaviera Simmons's "Index" works in which a sitter (technically a stander) is draped with personal objects to look like a totem, or a human charm bracelet. Klaus von Nichtssagend has a large anti-still-life photograph by David Gilbert (that is, a kind of junk assemblage in a studio), and Glen Baldridge's images made with nocturnal photographs taken by a hunting camera.

A Toronto gallery, Cooper Cole, has works by Sara Cwynar, for which she scanned old photography textbooks and manuals to make new images

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marked with smears of CMYK color (the standard four of color-process photography). Rawson Projects has photographs from Lyndsy Welgoes's slyly titled Suggested Donation series, taken at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (where the suggested-donation policy was allowed to continue by a court ruling).

The fair isn't immune from art-world trends. One is ceramics. Showroom has a nice little porcelain sculpture of a bear cleaning house, made in the Amstel tradition by the Dutch artist Joke Schole. Asya Geisberg has goofy ceramic trophies of a sort, by the Icelandic artist Gudmundur Thoroddsen; Freight & Volume has an installation of humble cleaning sponges cast in porcelain by Ezra Johnson. The Lower East Side gallery Sargent's Daughters is showing ceramics and paintings by Saira McLaren. Ernesto Burgos's sculptures at Kate Werble look ceramic but are instead a clever concoction of cardboard, fiberglass and charcoal.

Poetry of a certain stripe is also popular — that is, from poets like Frank O'Hara (also an art critic and assistant curator at the Museum of Modern Art), who was eschewed by later conceptual poets. On Saturday afternoon, a marathon reading by 30 poets, organized by Sam Gordon, will take place. The alliance's brochure includes this introduction, referring to the O'Hara poem "Having a Coke With You": "When Frank O'Hara wrote 'Having a Coke,' poetry and painting walked hand in hand through the streets of New York." Now it takes place at an art fair in Basketball City.

NADA NYC runs through Sunday at Basketball City, Pier 36, 299 South Street, at Montgomery Street, Lower East Side; newartdealers.org.

A version of this review appears in print on May 9, 2014, on page C35 of the New York edition with the headline: Gathering of Far-Flung Friends, and Trends .

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# Is ninety the new twenty?

*Several dealers at the fair are showing work by artists more than twice their own age*

**TRENDS**

New York. At this year's edition of Frieze New York, numerous dealers are displaying the work of older artists, many of whom are gaining commercial and critical recognition for the first time. As prices continue to escalate in established areas of the market, from very young artists to post-war masters, a growing number of collectors are betting on overlooked talent.

During the fair's VIP preview on Thursday, Lisson Gallery (B58) sold three paintings, priced between $20,000 and $100,000, by the 98-year-old artist Carmen Herrera, while Alison Jacques Gallery (A29) sold two drawings by Irma Blank, who turns 80 this year, for $15,000 each in the first few hours of the fair. Also on the first day, Sfeir-Semler Gallery (B4) sold an untitled painting by Etel Adnan, 89 this year, for €25,000. Just seven years ago, the Lebanese artist was selling similar works from her studio for $800. "The sexiest thing... right now is to rediscover an artist of at least 95 years old," joked Chris Dercon, the director of London's Tate Modern, at a talk last year.

In some cases, dealers are rediscovering bodies of work that were considered unfashionable when they were made but are now back in style. The Tel Aviv-based gallery Tempo Rubato (B30) sold half of its works by the Israeli artist Joav BarEl, who died in 1977 and has never been shown before in the US, for $20,000 to $30,000 each, during the fair's preview day.

Sam Gilliam's *Out*, 1969, at David Kordansky Gallery (C3). The 80-year-old painter's work is proving a draw for collectors and curators alike

"He was interested in these very Western ideas of consumerism and mechanical production," says the gallery's owner, Guillaume Rouchon, of the artist's neon Pop paintings, "but at the time, Israel was interested in expressive abstraction and post-Holocaust art."

Some artists had other jobs and "didn't compete in what they saw as the rat race of the art world", says the curator and art dealer Peter Falk, who adds that he hopes to organise an art fair called "Rediscovered Masters" in either New York, Miami or Silicon Valley. Elaine Lustig Cohen (b. 1927), whose vibrant paintings are on show at the Nada fair (until 11 May), made her living as a graphic designer and rare book dealer, but her art developed a cult following among her friends, including the artist Mel Bochner. Etel Adnan, meanwhile, has painted almost daily since the 1960s but was known primarily as a writer until her work was shown at Documenta in 2012. A solo exhibition devoted to the artist, which has been organised by Hans Ulrich Obrist, the co-director of London's Serpentine Gallery, is now on show in Doha (until 6 July). "She's flattered by all the attention, but she would paint even if nobody was watching," says Sfeir-Semler's Sven Christian Schuch.

> *"It makes sense to seek talent where others aren't looking"*

Other artists have been overlooked by the mainstream market because of "race, gender or geography", says the art dealer Alexander Gray (D26). The painter Sam Gilliam, who is 80 and is based in Washington, DC, showed largely at galleries specialising in African-American artists until an exhibition at David Kordansky Gallery (C3) last year exposed a broader group of contemporary art collectors to his work. Since then, Gilliam's prices have doubled and museums are taking a second look. Walking past Kordansky's solo presentation of paintings by the artist from the 1960s, Dan Byers, a curator at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, said: "We have one in our collection from the same period, but we've never shown it. Now's the time."

For collectors priced out of the blue-chip market, these artists offer an alternative opportunity to buy a piece of history. "Much of this interest has been accelerated by dramatically rising prices and dramatically decreasing supply for the artists who have formed the central canon," says the art adviser Allan Schwartzman. Billboard-sized works by Gilliam can be bought at Frieze for $250,000 to $350,000; paintings by his better-known peers, such as Morris Louis, are more than $1m.

Working with older artists can also be a windfall for emerging dealers at a time when "the more established galleries are going younger and younger", says the dealer James Fuentes (C2). The blue-chip Upper East Side gallery Skarstedt, for instance, is opening an exhibition of work by the 25-year-old painter Lucien Smith (15 May-27 June), while global powerhouse David Zwirner now represents 28-year-old Oscar Murillo.

At Frieze, Fuentes nearly sold out his stand of works by the Fluxus artist Alison Knowles, aged 81, during the VIP preview, at prices ranging from $6,000 to $120,000. "We're still seeking talent, and it often makes sense to go where others aren't looking," he says.

***Rachel Corbett and Julia Halperin***

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*The Art Newspaper*
"Is ninety the new twenty"
by Rachel Corbett and Julia Halperin
May 2014

# NADA New York Delivers

BY ANDREW RUSSETH 5/09 6:54PM



START THE SLIDESHOW

Unlike the other major art fairs in the game this week, the New Art Dealers Alliance's New York fair is free. To everyone. All the time. Even during the quote-unquote VIP opening, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., there was no one checking badges or cards, no one looking up names on iPads. You could stroll in and out as you pleased. And you'll be able to do so through Sunday. You can pick up a taco from the Tacombi stand and go eat it somewhere in the neighborhood, then come back in again and look at some art, maybe eat another taco and then walk to the nearby Donut Plant and have a few donuts. No big deal.

This is NADA's third fair in New York, its second at Basketball City, right along the East River on the Lower East Side. It's airy and spacious in there. You can tell that if NADA wanted to, they could have squeezed in another 30 or 40 galleries, but instead they have kept it to about 80. Pretty chill.

NADA New York's exhibitor list is not quite as strong as the one for NADA Miami—a few top-tier galleries are sitting it out this year—but there is still plenty to get excited about. San Juan, Puerto Rico's Roberto Paradise, for instance, has a little treasure trove of paintings by José Luis Vargas, which he makes atop luscious, folksy paintings by Haitian artists that he buys in street markets, adding little bubbles of text to underscore a work's mystery, or to inject a little bit of humor.

Know More Games, of Brooklyn's Donut District, has a gargantuan canvas by Daniel Heidkamp propped in its tiny booth (it doesn't come close to fitting) that the artist painted from a photograph of his young self swinging a baseball bat. It's gleeful, hilarious and menacing. Its Donut District sister next door, 247365, has a tall, surprising triptych by Jamian Juliano-Villani, who's copped the ghostly, camp album cover for laser harp maestro Bernard Szajner's 1980 album *Some Deaths Take Forever* and made it even more ghostly and campy but also kind of scary.

Those two spaces I just mentioned are in the projects section of the fair, where the most interesting action is. Too many of the full-sized gallery booths, meanwhile, are dominated by safe, conservative abstract paintings that look like other, more-famous abstract paintings. Or worse, they're another layer removed, aping safe, conservative abstract paintings that aim to look like other, more-famous abstract paintings. It's getting bleak out there! I'm tempted to name names, but this stuff is going to be gone so fast—or, at least, I hope that's what will happen—that it seems better to focus on more of the positive.

Toronto's Cooper Cole gallery has a very fine solo booth by Sara Cwynar, for those going through withdrawal since her Foxy Production show closed last week. She scans black and white

pages of a darkroom manual, moving her source material mid-scan to tease out all sorts of elegant glitches (including color). And Essex Flowers has a tastefully overblown booth of quicksilver drawings by the indefatigable Brian Belott, including a few of the gorgeous collages that he makes with a laminating machine. (Have you seen the video he made with artist Annie Pearlman that has him lighting his hair on fire? It's almost too good.)

Clifton Benevento has brought a strong selection of work by gallery artists Martin Soto Climent, Polly Apfelbaum, Gina Beavers, Paul Cowan, Zak Kitnick and D'Ette Nogle, who has on offer 31 works/projects from her *For Client Selection (Conversation Pieces)* series, delicately walking the line between good taste and bad: "A webcam of the artist's studio for one year," "Your spare room listed on airbnb," "A pet."

P! has a Heather Rowe-designed booth (and a Rowe sculpture) with primo 1960s geometric abstractions by Elaine Lustig Cohen, one serving as the ceiling. Eli Ping Frances Perkins has a luxuriously austere booth of shimmering ceramic works (melded with synthetic snakeskin) by Rochelle Goldberg, a displayed they heroically pulled together only last night, when another gallery dropped out at the very last minute and they were asked to step in.

My favorite booth right now belongs to Callicoon Fine Arts, which is showing not only the radiant landscapes of Etel Adnan, not only tight, spry paintings by the polymaths James Hoff and Sadie Benning, but also a long row of the heartbreakingly tender, loving and slyly funny miniature storefronts and apartment buildings that Nicholas Buffon makes out of strips of painted paper, all carefully glued together by hand. They're humble tributes to the city that birthed NADA and that clearly remains, against steep odds, a vital place for contemporary art.

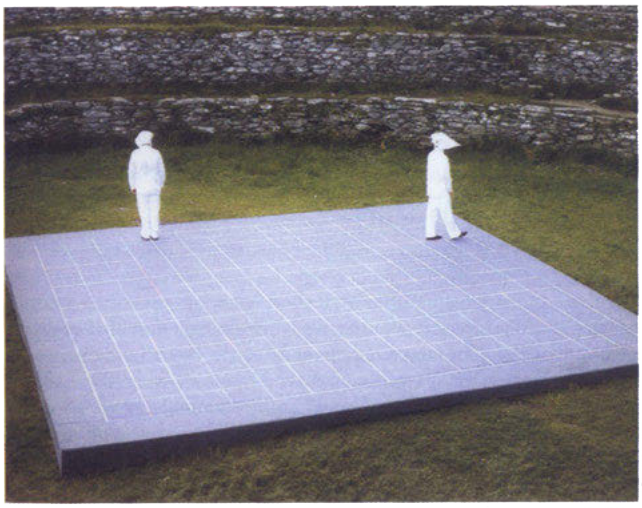
# Brian O'Doherty

## P!/SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY

Artist, writer, editor, arts administrator, and more, Brian O'Doherty has been well known in the New York art world since coming to the city, in the late 1950s, from his native Ireland. His book *Inside the White Cube*, first published in 1976 as a series of essays in this magazine, is a foundational critical text, an analysis not so much of art as of its physical environment—the white-walled modern gallery—and of the sociological and ideological networks invisibly embedded there. This was a context designed to sanctify its content by itself receding from the eye, by going unseen, but O'Doherty saw it, and did so with radical clarity.

If O'Doherty is a little less known as an artist than as a writer—he is also, incidentally, an accomplished novelist—that may be in part because he exhibited for many years under a pseudonym, Patrick Ireland. Adopting the name in 1972 to protest Bloody Sunday, when British soldiers killed fourteen during a civil rights march in Derry, Northern Ireland, he gave it up in 2008, in happy recognition of Irish progress toward peace. Although formally deceased (in fact, buried in a funeral ceremony in Dublin), Patrick Ireland is a revealing alter ego for O'Doherty not only in the name's hyperbolic Irishness but in its gentle nudging of the viewer toward politics, history, and the world beyond the white cube. Indeed, this mainly retrospective, two-venue show, in which most of the works came from the second half of the 1960s, included a good deal of Irish content, and other works involved intensifications or disruptions of perception that pushed viewers toward an activated understanding of the place in which they stood.

Many of O'Doherty's visual and verbal language games of this period are of a piece with the Conceptual art of the time, but are distinctive in the sources they draw on. *Plato's Cave*, 1968, for instance, recalls Joseph Kosuth in its pairing of image and text, but it's hard to imagine Kosuth writing a detailed, indeed near-hallucinatory narrative about a visual experience, let alone one involving the state of *fe geasa*, a magical Irish spell. Diagrams, charts, and grids are similarly familiar as logical exercises in the vocabulary of Conceptualism, but O'Doherty's works in these forms are as much corporeal as intellectual: One, for example, is based on an electrocardiogram he took of Marcel Duchamp (I don't think I mentioned that before entering the art world, O'Doherty trained and qualified as an MD?), and another became the basis for an outdoor performance in Donegal in which costumed men moved, chessman-like, around a board, calling out the sounds of letters in the ancient ogham alphabet of Ireland. (Ogham features in a number of O'Doherty's works.) *A Geographical Notation on Equivalence and Multivalence of Meaning (Arse/Ass)*, 1965, is a witty diagram that seasons linguistic exploration with bawdry—a set of mostly scatological words, with lines and arrows indicating the meanings they do and do not share in their uses in Dublin and New York. If, in *Inside the White Cube*, O'Doherty looked beyond the formal qualities of the art object to the conditioning qualities of its context, works like this one tie the concerns of Conceptual art to body, culture, and place.



Another interest of O'Doherty's is the field of optics—reflected here in works involving mirrors—and, more generally, how we see. Both *Plato's Cave* and a related work, *Past, Present, Future: Portrait of the artist Aet. 7*, 1967, combine a photograph of an urban storefront with a verbal account of it as visual experience, an account so exhaustive as to completely defamiliarize both the storefront and the process of looking at it. Meanwhile, the tour de force work in the two shows was a new rope drawing, a form of O'Doherty's invention in which panels of color painted on the walls align with ropes strung from walls, floor, and ceiling in such a way that as the viewer navigates the piece, these panels can suddenly seem to pop into three-dimensionality. Relating to the ideas of phenomenology and reception theory, the work also explodes the white cube.

*—David Frankel*

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*Artforum*
by David Frankel
June 2014

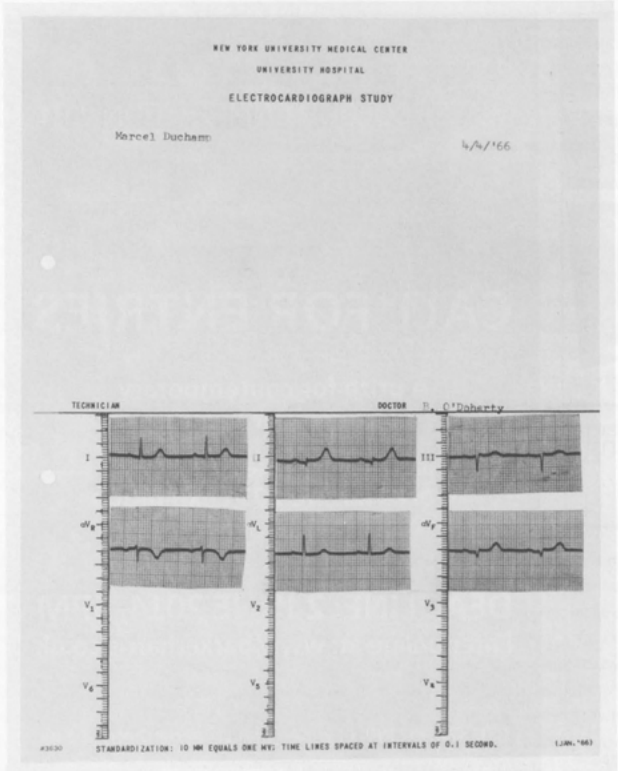
# Exhibitions

## Brian O'Doherty: Connecting the ...

**P! and Simone Subal Gallery** New York
2 March to 20 April

A retrospective of sorts, installed at two galleries, prompts a consideration of the nature of the retrospective as such where conceptual art practice is at issue. Not to worry: the open-ended programmes of these galleries, which often configure themselves as project spaces, offer a less institutional framework than most. Here we find the retrospective as an interpretive hypothesis of artworks which are provisional and yet discursively open ended.

A retrospective may not be all that this pair of exhibitions wants to accomplish, but taking the retrospective framework for Brian O'Doherty (aka Patrick Ireland) provides the context for interpreting the history of his artistic production, starting here with a self-portrait from 1957 when O'Doherty was a medical student studying in the US. And yet the self-portrait provides a baseline for a refined draughtsmanship that is more than adept, which the artist will however decide to largely do without. What he retains is a clinical precision in facture and an analytic problem-solving attitude towards art.




**Brian O'Doherty**
*Portrait of Marcel Duchamp: Mounted Cardiogram*
1966/2012

A touchstone for this career must be the 1966 portrait of Marcel Duchamp. An electrocardiogram taken of Duchamp at three points during the course of an evening's visit, rendered on properly identified medical stationery, gives us a crucial object in O'Doherty's praxis. While not a fingerprint or a voice print, this cardiogram does place positivist information singular to Duchamp as available for our inspection as Duchamp himself. Eschewing optical perceptual art, Duchamp nevertheless utilised such information to show what art is not: here, palpably positive information acknowledges not the optical nature of art but the textual diagram, and so, if anything, furthers the language calculated from this information. O'Doherty, who had come to US for medical studies only ultimately to abandon them, produces a diagram one reads to learn where Duchamp is and once was. The criterion by which to judge it has everything to do with the canniness of the choice of the cardiogram to represent Duchamp's conceptual being. Also on view is a kinetic object meant to keep the cardiogram 'alive' for as long as possible and hence give longevity to the tutelary spirit of Conceptual Art.

Drawing construed from information signifies the will to Conceptual Art. So does the application of a method deriving from a discipline other than art provide the generative grammar for conceptual images and performances predominant in the 1960s and 1970s – and O'Doherty is on the case. His score *Vowel Grid* for the performance *Structural Play: Vowel Grid*, 1970, together with other similarly generated pieces remain some of his most compelling works. Characteristically, O'Doherty has adapted the most salient thought form of the era – the linguistic game – and triangulated it with culturally rich Irish literature elements to make something of his own. Imagine a grid drawn in pencil coloured to encode differing vowel sounds, with this serving as a score for performance of the same by two figures covered and cowled, stepping from colour to colour as each utters the appropriate sound. Five colours, each assigned a vowel, cued the position of figure to board: the two figures moving with respect not to an endgame but to open-endedness. Each scored game is different yet iterable. Cultural homage is paid in this mash-up to Samuel Beckett's *Carré*, here with Ogham, projected as structuralist performance practice. Sol LeWitt, François Morellet, Marc Devade and Guy de Cointet, not to mention Lygia Clark, Theresa Cha and many others – contemporary and younger – further locate the zone of reference for linguistic scoring relevant to certain contemporary conceptual practices.

O'Doherty's works on paper form the crux of his oeuvre, even as artefacts we call painting, sculpture and so on also come about. An exception to this would be *Sight*, 1966, a mirrored chamber within which a head of Narcissus is reflected and proliferates an abyss – an abyss of the selfsame – in its perfected isolation. There is humour, too, in this solipsistic refusal to disclose new sculptural views. Given the fascination with doubling reflected among his contemporaries (as with Giulio Paolini and Nam June Paik), *Sight* finds its context within the era that gave prominence to the idea of the copy as perhaps the most indispensable postmodern topic, and to follow the structural logic consequential to that. Textual strategies worked out on paper with their problem-solving intent also allow drawn writing to manifest itself not as mere technique but as built idea and campaign. Curiously enough, O'Doherty's drawings showing the series and the accrual of marks are the most palpably made, with the mark attended to being rendered with care as the least clinical aspect of the artist's economy. However, the conceptual idea to which the mark is put tends to a reduction, which is very smart but sometimes adolescent in assuming that the undermining of a canonical concept amounts to a philosophical negation.



*Art Monthly*
by Marjorie Welish
May 2014

Conspicuous in the pair of shows is the frequency with which O'Doherty goes directly to the art-world commonplaces and verities of his time in order to encapsulate a problem. The mid 1960s was a time of hyper-formalism, wherein one exacted a scrupulous artefact from painting as a surface, and kept distinct the concerns of painting and sculptural essence. The question then asked was: could these modes retain their integrity even when combined? O'Doherty's answer to this was to create wall paintings from which extend ropes pulled taut to the floor to induce implied volumetric form. Perceiving the volume collapse into painting along certain fixed – even dogmatic – sightlines is deliberately undermined by any movement away from the fixed perspective. Part heuristic, part parody, these constructed works express O'Doherty's approach to art orthodoxy. Actually, *Rope Drawing: Here and Now #120*, 2014, the installed version adjusted to the site of the Simone Subal Gallery, is superior to the version once seen at the Charles Cowles Gallery, and the reason is informative: scaled to this rough space with unequal wall heights and conspicuous utility pipes, the precision of the installed artwork synthesising drawing, painting and sculpture is forced into a necessarily antagonistic relation to its site; and the relatively short width of the gallery further complicates the situation by producing sightlines that interfere with perspectival self-evidence, whereas previously installed in the amplitude of perfected gallery space, the artwork was given to read as a script, with the rhetoric of modernist art getting too much play.

All the more reason to reconsider the format of a retrospective as something other than a self-evident chronological account of an artistic development: this restaging of O'Doherty's life's work in two galleries, distributing well-known pieces in and among works beneath the career radar, is an extremely welcome approach to the historical timeline. It presents familiar works in the refreshed context of exploratory studio practice and access to a headspace not so scripted as the packaging of the art world generally superimposes on studio practice. That he – an art critic at a time when the world tolerated criticism and benefited from a discourse for which not everything was subsumed into public relations – could also find a haven in studio practice wherein he served as a gadfly and mole, makes for a singular form of engagement, and so interesting to test with respect to this long view of a complicated relation to the art world. That O'Doherty crosses the threshold from critic to artist to act as a character within a fiction of potential art-world orders he himself has authored is yet another way this retrospective is a one-off and not at all self-evident. ▮

MARJORIE WELISH's constructed artist book *Oaths? Questions?* was last seen at Cambridge University and at Galerie Peithner-Lichtenfels, Vienna.

*Art Monthly*
by Marjorie Welish
May 2014

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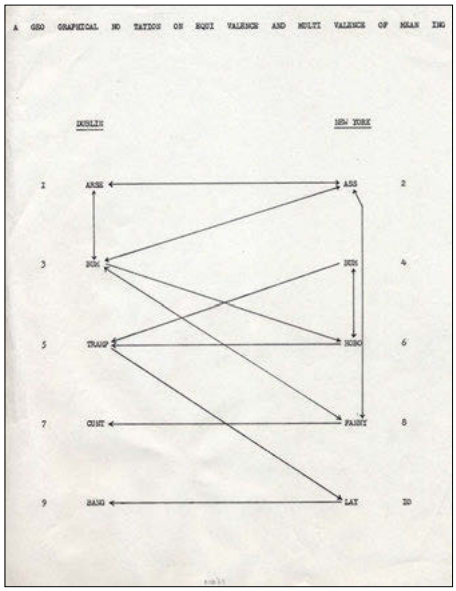


**Brian O'Doherty, *A Geographical Notation on Equivalence and Multivalence of Meaning (Arse / Ass)*, 1965, typewriter and ink on paper, 11" x 8½". Simone Subal.**

# Brian O'Doherty

## P! and Simone Subal

A pair of overlapping exhibitions brought fresh attention to the entertaining conceptual output of Brian O'Doherty, an Irish artist, writer, educator, and one-time editor of *Art in America*. Works from 1951 to a new, site-specific installation were included in the exhibitions. O'Doherty has inhabited several fictional personae, including a British bon vivant and a female art critic, though certainly his best-known alter ego was Patrick Ireland. The name was adopted as a political protest in 1972, and the artist vowed to use it proudly until the last British soldier left Ireland. (He used the moniker until 2008 when a mock funeral for Ireland was held.)

At P! a mixed-media tower stood at the center of the small gallery. Viewers were to peek into the eye-level hexagonal structure of the work, titled *Sight (Narcissus)*, 1966, and witness several reflected reflections of reflections of a classical bust of Narcissus. The work, perhaps a sly reference to Marcel Duchamp's mysterious, erotic *Étant donnés* (1946–66), was also viewable only though a peephole.

Duchamp and O'Doherty were friends and collaborators, sharing an interest in chess, sex, and language. O'Doherty was an early champion of video as a medium for art. Playing on a monitor set on the floor was the video *Structural Play: Vowel Grid* (1970), in which two men are acting out an apparently absurd biomechanical theater piece on a grid. They wear white outfits and cones over their faces and shout instructions in an abstracted form of Ogham, an ancient Celtic language denoted by notches or hash marks on stone. All human interaction in O'Doherty's world is subject to instructions and restrictions. The rules laid down in his artworks are based on empirical observations of humankind as well as on an approach that mingles logic and perception. A sound can become a painting, and human sexual intercourse might be reducible to a handmade spreadsheet.

Simone Subal presented a new installation in acrylic, titled *Rope Drawing #122: Here/Now* (2014). Geometric forms painted on the gallery walls were "framed" by rope tied at angles from the ceiling to the floor. The fractal-like lines of rope outlined the portal shapes, and the work was best experienced with a partner to walk through it while you watched that person with one eye closed. Beside the drawings, sculptures, and the same video that was being looped at P! gallery, there was O'Doherty's 1966 "portrait" of Duchamp—a wood construction with glass and motor and a round hole through which could be viewed the French master's heartbeat.

***—Doug McClemont***

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*ArtNews*
by Doug McClermont
May 2014


**Brian O'Doherty**
Now in his mid-eighties, O'Doherty—a critic, editor, Booker-short-listed novelist, medical doctor, and artist, who frequently showed under the pseudonym Patrick Ireland—is a Conceptualist with a mischievous streak. This victory lap of a retrospective, at two young galleries, concentrates on his early work, which utilized language, mathematics, and logic but frequently turned playful, as seen in a text piece incorporating some very rude Irish and American sexual slang. ("Fanny" means something quite different depending on which side of the Atlantic you're on.) Many of the games and puzzles pay a debt to his friend Marcel Duchamp, whose pulse O'Doherty took for a portrait in the form of an electrocardiogram. Duchamp's heart beats steadily all these years later; your own heart, in the midst of O'Doherty's work, might soon be racing. Through April 20. (Subal, 131 Bowery, 917-409-0612, and P!, 334 Broome St. For more information, visit p-exclamation.org.)

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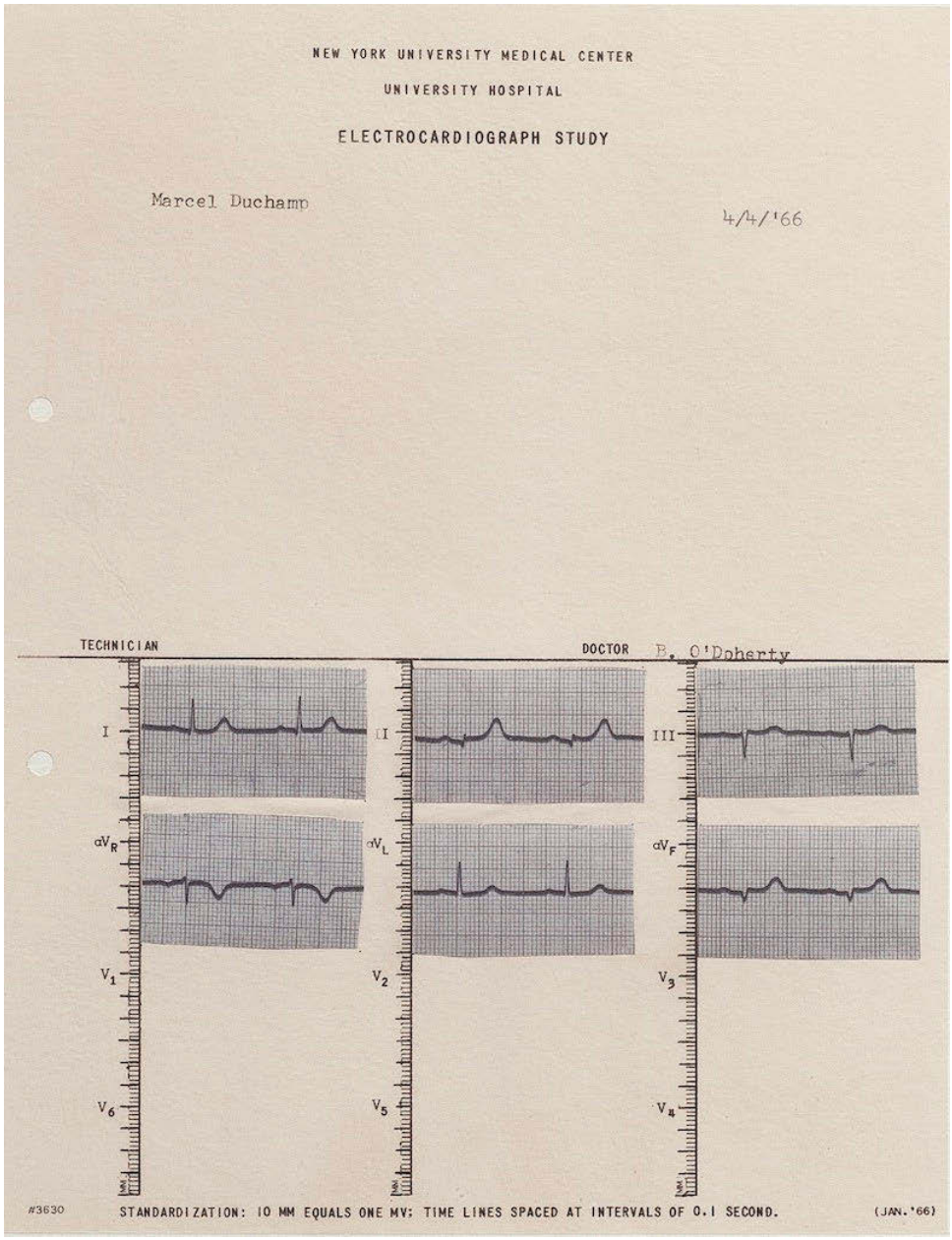
*The New Yorker*
"Brian O'Doherty"
14 April 2014




**Apr 4, 2014**

**THE DAILY PIC:** This is the trace of Marcel Duchamp's heartbeat, recorded 48 years ago today by a doctor named Brian O'Doherty, better known by far as a critic and conceptual artist (often under the pseudonym Patrick Ireland, assumed in honor of his homeland's struggles with England). The heartbeat is on display in a lovely little

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*ArtInfo.com*
by Blake Gopnik
4 April 2014

survey of some of O'Doherty's output, shared between Simone Subal gallery in New York and a nearby gallery called "P!"

Duchamp's EKG is one element in what went on to become O'Doherty's 16-part "portrait" of the great Dada artist, which also includes a kinetic light sculpture that seems to reproduce the oscillograph trace of Duchamp's heart actually beating. (That piece is also at Subal's). And the composite portrait is evidence of a precariously balanced love-hate relationship that O'Doherty had with its subject – the relationship all ambitious artists have with their most important forerunner.

Duchamp once said that "after twenty years [artworks] are finished. Their life is over. They survive all right, because they are part of art history, and art history is not art. I don't believe in preserving, I think as I said that a work of art dies." In his portrait, O'Doherty self-consciously set out to prove Duchamp wrong, by making a piece that would keep the Frenchman's presence and legacy – and heartbeat – "alive" wherever and whenever the portrait is shown. "I've made Duchamp live 250 years; It's very cruel, but he deserved it," O'Doherty told me after a talk that he gave at Subal's. But of course O'Doherty's cruelty is also a gesture of absolute homage, from O' Doherty to a genius – and a friend – upon whom he wished endless life.

It has often been said that a fine portrait confers as much immortality on its maker as on its sitter. But the question here is whether we are contemplating a portrait *of* Duchamp or *by* him – drawn in fact with each beat of his heart. We sometimes come across someone whom we bill as an artist through and through, in every fiber of their body, and maybe here we're seeing Duchamp prove that he's one. *(Image – margins cropped for clarity – is courtesy the artist, P! and Simone Subal Gallery)*

*The Daily Pic also appears at blogs.artinfo.com/the-daily-pic. For a full inventory of past Daily Pics visit blakegopnik.com/archive.*

Posted at 3:00 PM
[Permalink] 1,389 notes #art #marcel duchamp #brian o'doherty #simone subal

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ArtSeen April 2nd, 2014

# A=I O=II U=III

## BRIAN O'DOHERTY *Connecting the ...*

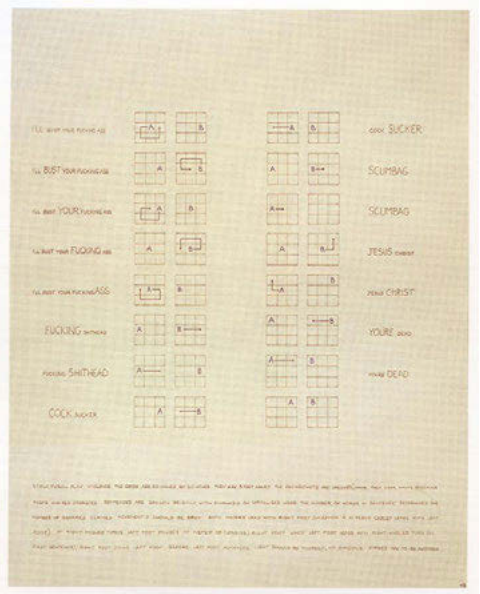
*by Kara L. Rooney*

SIMONE SUBAL AND P! | MARCH 2 – APRIL 20, 2014

It is nearly impossible to summarize the various contributions Brian O'Doherty has made to the art world over the past five decades. Artist, critic, and writer, the famed editor of *Art in America* (1971 – 74) and pioneer of the "conceptual double issue" 5+6 of the magazine-in-a-box *Aspen*, as well as the author of several novels and critical essays, including the seminal text "Inside The White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space" (1976), O'Doherty—until 2008 also known by his artistic pseudonym, Patrick Ireland— has continually slipped the trap of classification. A two-venue exhibition of O'Doherty's visual work, concurrently on view at Simone Subal and P! galleries on Manhattan's Lower East Side, largely examines the output of these prolific years, with drawings, sculptures, and site-specific installations that span as far back as O'Doherty's time as a medical student in 1951, to the present. The mirrored, joint exhibitions offer an eclectic overview of the artist's probing intellectual and existentialist pursuits, subjects that range as widely as the semantic structure of language to our comparative experience of space, the exploration of individual identity, art historical tropes, and a personal (and formative) obsession with chess.

The capacity of language, as a means of approaching relational and individual meaning, has always posed a quandary; what is articulated is rarely what is received, the problem of speech existing in the interstitial gaps that frame our understanding of the self and of others. Along these lines, O'Doherty has made the visual and semantic exploration of language's communicative flaws his life's work. His *Structural Plays,* two-person acts in which performers engage in a type of conversational call and response, illuminate the complexities of context and inflection characteristic of any spoken exchange. "Structural Play: Violence" (1968), one of 10 such works by O'Doherty and exhibited here in the graphic form of ink on paper, consists of 16 movements by two participants. Framed by two 60 × 60-inch grids placed approximately five feet apart, each actor, according to the drawing's instructions, is assigned the task of stating a simple phrase (the script comprised of one of the many conversations overheard and recorded by O'Doherty

during his daily encounters between 1967 and 1970). Each movement placed emphasis on a different word in the sentence: "Sentences are spoken briskly with emphasis on capitalized word. The number of words in the sentence determines the number of squares claimed. Movements should be brisk. Both movers lead with right foot," and so on, the drawing stipulates. The speed of the performers' enactment, their intonation of the script —"I'LL bust your fucking ass; I'll BUST your fucking ass"—and androgynously presented personas, signaled by identical costumes in white stocking masks and red codpieces, determine the Socratic cleverness of the work, where the vernacular patterns that define daily interaction and receipt are repeatedly called into question.



Brian O'Doherty, "Structural Play: Violence," 1968. Ink on paper 29 × 23". Image courtesy of the artist, P!, and Simone Subal Gallery.

"Structural Play: Vowel Grid" (1970), for which both spaces have screened videos of the original performance on floorbound television monitors, also utilizes the rapidity of performed movement, diction of the players, and organizing principle of the grid for its visual and auditory punch. Here, however, as opposed to the aggressively charged verbiage that defined "Violence," the emphasis is placed on the vowel sounds that make up the Celtic Ogham language, where the exclaimed phonic structures—the "broad" vowels A, O, U, and "slender" vowels, E and I— act as a type of cultural reality formation, a notion supported by Wittgenstein's theory of utterance as an image of reality. Via the deliberate actions of the performers and their almost sculptural cries, our connection to sound and speaker constantly shifts. Such powerful aural effects reference the writings of linguists like Walter Ong, wherein exploring the function of sound in primary oral cultures he states:

> the phenomenology of sound enters deeply into human beings' feel for existence, as processed by the spoken word...the centering action of sound (the field of sound is not spread out before me but all around me) affects man's sense of the cosmos, and by extension, his situational place in the world.[1]

Staged within the ancient stone ringfort of Grianan of Aileach, thought to have been built by the Uí Néill prior to the sixth century C.E., the "Vowel Grid" performance assumes specific socio-political, historio-lingual, and aesthetic overtones for O'Doherty—those of Minimalism and Conceptualism, envisioned via the artist's use of the grid as both a practical and conceptual solution for disarming the systematic structure of linear reading, and complex ties to his homeland's turbulent history, visible in the breathtaking views of the Irish countryside that make up the work's dramatic backdrop. For this viewer, however, the experience was much more alien, the juxtaposition of vivid landscape and guttural calls conspiring to produce an approximation of awareness more akin to the subconscious plane.

*The Structural Plays* are children of the chessboard," O'Doherty writes in a letter to the former director of the Orchard Gallery, Liam Kelly, "which is where my grids come from. The idea of chess was fascinating." The plays and drawings thus serve as both vocal and visual scores, producing meaning on multiple levels situated simultaneously within the graphic structure of the grid and verbal recounting of narrative without imposing a hierarchy of forms. With these works, O'Doherty points to and reinvents historical fact. He suggests that relational understanding is just as much about context, about one's history and experience in the world that instructs us how to interact and understand one another, as it is about a set way of interacting within our linguistic environment.

Brian O'Doherty, "Rope Drawing #122: Here/Now," 2014. Acrylic paint, rope 13 × 17 × 19′. Image courtesy of the artist, P!, and Simone Subal Gallery.

Other works in this vein include "AOU, The Broad Vowels" (2005), a 6 × 6-foot painting in liquitex on canvas, that spells out the equivalent markings of the Oghum broad vowels, as well as "One Here Now" (1970), in which the viewers reflection is mirrored by two narrow plinths of aluminum on wood, conjoined at a 45 degree angle, with incised notches that spell out the work's title in the succinct lexicon of Oghum markings. This use of drawn text, particularly in the instance of the Ogham script, whose written language is a matter of charted lines (A=one vertical slash or l, O=ll, U=lll and so on), is thus comprised of warring dualities, apparent in the artist's struggle to free the word from the orderly structure imposed upon it by its written form, while at the same time embracing its most human qualities in the mark's relation to visuality.

Such experiential exploration extends to the notions of space as well, most poignantly in "Rope Drawing #120: Here and Now" (2014), made specifically for the Simone Subal gallery. This bifurcated immersive environment features four portals, two painted on opposite walls and two that open freely into the space, their boundaries delimited by alternating white and orange rope. An elongated rectangular black portal forms the locus of one wall, with a hot lavender pyramidal shape surrounding its frame. Moss green triangular forms lock the purple hue into position equally on the left and right sides, with a royal blue shape hovering above the plotted geometry as if to indicate sky. From this arithmetic wall painting extend multiple pieces of rope, dividing the gallery into identical portals from which one can enter or exit the installation. Depending on one's position within the piece, our optical comprehension of the space is destabilized: as soon as an individual breaks the frame, the illusion of two-dimensional form is shattered.

O'Doherty's occupation with identity formation also appears throughout the exhibition. It is present in the artist's idiosyncratic portraits of Wittgenstein and Marcel Duchamp (the latter of which he made 16 non-pictorial representations in sum), as well as his intimately delicate drawings in graphite, one of himself as a young man in 1957, and two of an unnamed girl from 1951. "Past,

Present, Future: Portrait of the artist Aet. 7" from 1967 confirms this musing curiosity, the handwritten text a meditation on presence and its associated analysis: *Looking at the shopfront, which turned logic into paradox, reversed future and past … his triplicated body was perilously sustained*. The portraits humanize the exhibit, wherein the rigor of intellectual and phenomenological endeavors give way to the infinite array of possibilities vital to the formation of self and memory.

Ultimately, O'Doherty makes what is invisible visible—he points with witty eloquence to the instability of spatial presence, normative speech, and most importantly, our temporal sense of being in the world. His objects and performances, charged with the erratic and sentient markers that define a life lived, are his contribution, for in denying any sense of narrative closure O'Doherty reminds us, often with an invocation of the trickster's playfulness, that we alone are in command of our making and ultimately, our becoming.

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**NOTES**

**1. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1982/2002), p. 72.**

ON VIEW

# ‘Brian O’Doherty: Connecting the…’ at P! and Simone Subal Gallery

BY **WILL HEINRICH** | 4/02 5:10AM



Installation view at Subal. (Courtesy Simone Subal Gallery)

Go to P! on Broome Street. Pause in front of the two typewritten pages of *A Geographical Notation on Equivalence and Multivalence of Meaning (Arse/Ass),* by the artist Brian O’Doherty. (You may know him better by the name Patrick Ireland, which he used from 1972 to 2008.) Chuckle at the possibilities for hilariously blue transatlantic misunderstanding implicit in the word “fanny.” Proceed to the back, past six framed drawings of grids, lines, text and instructions for performances to be enacted on grids; a 3-by-3-foot white grid on the floor next to a monitor in which two men march around a large multicolored grid; and *Sight (Narcissus),* a 6-foot-tall viewing box that makes of consciousness something like the black box of pain at the beginning of *Dune.* You will find two framed drawings, both titled *Drawing of Girl* and showing exactly the same bodiless head in profile. But on the left, a second brief outline hovers before her forehead like a tutelary genius, while cascading waves of graphite hair cover her eyes; and on the right, whether thanks to intervention in flesh by this genius or to the body’s own opposition to itself, she can see. Continue to Simone Subal on the Bowery, where the narrow ropes of *Rope Drawing #120: Here and Now* carry the hard edges of two geometric wall paintings up to the ceiling and down to several screws drilled right into the middle of the concrete floor. Wittgenstein’s face in pencil, Marcel Duchamp’s EKG, another monitor and performance—you will resolve it all or resolve to give up on resolution, with the help of a mirror and Ogham, the ancient Irish tally-mark alphabet, which presses the edges and corners of monuments into meaning by either crossing them or not. If you stick your face into the two tall, perpendicular, aluminum-on-wood ingots of *One Here Now,* you will see yourself double, disappear or move closer, while the needle-like white Ogham scratches—they spell out “one here now”—float on a concurrent plane, either defining the whole or irrelevant to it, as you prefer.

*(Through April 20, 2014)*

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*GalleristNY*
by Will Heinrich
2 April 2014

ARTFORUM

# Brian O'Doherty

**P!**
**334 Broome Street**
**March 2–April 20**

**Brian O'Doherty, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1966,** lead 1, slow heartbeat, wood, glass, liquitex, motor, 17 x 17 x 8".

Attempting to trace Brian O'Doherty's artistic concerns through his seven decade career is akin to falling down a rabbit hole. This would undoubtedly please the artist, who delights in the type of misdirection that aims at inspiring deeper thought. His output includes mazelike grids (*Vowel Grid*, 1970) among other labyrinths-inspired imagery like his rope drawings (notably *Rope Drawing #120: Here and Now*, 2014) in which warrens of colored segments are teased by ropes in three dimensions to create masterful parallaxes.

These works, on view as part of a joint exhibition presented by P! and Simone Subal, demonstrate the continuing currency of O'Doherty's thinking. *AOU, The Broad Vowels*, 2005, comes from the period he worked under the pseudonym Patrick Ireland, which he assumed between 1972 and 2008 in protest over the political situation in Ireland. Here, O'Doherty employs trompe l'oeil through color and line to illustrate how the eye can confuse, mislead, and obfuscate. Also depicted are painted shapes of the titular vowels, which come from Ogham, an ancient Celtic language written as dashes and lines and never spoken aloud, that emphasize his interest in delineating underlying visual patterns to describe systems of existence, thought, and communication.

For O'Doherty, beyond trick lies reason. Just as the artist's "Inside the White Cube" essays—originally published in *Artforum* between 1976 and 1986—indicates how a gallery space is anything but neutral, these paired exhibitions enable a reading of O'Doherty that discusses ways of seeing beyond surfaces. *A Geographical Notation on Equivalence and Multivalence of Meaning (Arse / Ass)*, 1965, describes the potential for glorious misunderstanding when attempting to communicate about sex in Ireland versus the United States—the different meanings of the words "tramp" and "bum" being a case in point. O'Doherty's famous portrait of Marcel Duchamp as an electrocardiogram, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp, Lead 1, Slow Heartbeat*, 1966, is shown here, too. As with Ogham, the heartbeat is unspoken—ultimately, however, what could be more fundamental to a person's existence.

*— Gemma Tipton*

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2014

# Art in Review

## Brian O'Doherty

'Connecting the . . . '

*P!*
*334 Broome Street, between Bowery and Chrystie Streets, Lower East Side*

*Simone Subal Gallery*
*131 Bowery, between Broome and Grand Streets, Lower East Side*

*Both Through April 20*

Brian O'Doherty would fit right in among the artist-writer-curators and assorted polymaths of this year's Whitney Biennial. At various times a medical doctor, television host, novelist and art critic (for The New York Times, among other outlets), he has also been making art for more than half a century, much of it under the pseudonym Patrick Ireland.

His latest solo show is largely devoted to the earlier conceptual and language-based projects he made under his own name from the 1950s through the '70s. Filling two Lower East Side galleries, it also includes a brand-new "Rope Drawing" that articulates one of his major concerns, the interaction between art and the "white cube" of the gallery space. At P!, a series of "Structural Plays" — scripts for performances that were meant to be executed on taped grids on floors — invoke kinds of power games, everything from chess to sex. In the related "Vowel Grid," staged at a fort in Donegal, Ireland, and seen in a riveting video, two men in white suits with beaklike hoods march around shouting vowels from the Ogham language of medieval Ireland.

Other Ogham-inspired works are at Simone Subal, along with more conceptual objects and documents: a framed cardiogram of Duchamp's heartbeat, for instance, which seems to pulse through many of Mr. O'Doherty's other works. The highlight is "Rope Drawing 120: Here and Now," which uses white string to create optical vibrations between two parallel geometric wall paintings.

On the whole, the art in these shows looks most vital when considered of a piece with Mr. O'Doherty's writing. His well-known essay series of 1976, "Inside the White Cube," is an early-postmodernist classic that remains intensely relevant in our age of branded mega-galleries. Among its prescient observations: "We have now reached a point where we see not the art but the *space* first." KAREN ROSENBERG

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*The New York Times*
by Karen Rosenberg
28 March 2014

# Prem Krishnamurthy
# by Zachary Sachs

*Prem Krishnamurthy discusses Chinatown storefronts, the importance of friction, and "P" words.*

*Permutation 03.4: Re-Mix*, Performance view with Thomas Brinkmann, 23 June 2013. All photos courtesy of Naho Kubota.

In September 2012, Prem Krishnamurthy, a founder of design firm Project Projects, opened what he called, "a Mom-and-Pop-Kunsthalle," at 334 Broome Street, in Chinatown. Named P!, the gallery has rotated through a diverse sequence of shows. It opened with *Process 01: Joy*, which included prints by graphic designer Karel Martins, a social sculpture by Christine Hill, and documentary photographs by Chauncey Hare. *Possibility 02: Growth*, and *Permutation 03* accelerated the evolution of exhibition structure, with constantly-changing incarnations of each program enlisting a wide range of collaborators including sonic sculptor Katarzyna Krakowiak, avant-garde clothing designers Slow and Steady Wins the Race, and techno-conceptual musician Thomas Brinkmann. Other recent exhibitions included French cooperative Société Réaliste and *The Ceiling Should be Green*, a curatorial collaboration between Krishnamurthy and Ali Wong, for which they invited a Feng Shui master to advise their choice of artists and installation.

I spoke to Krishnamurthy about the significance of iteration in his shows and the gallery's emphasis on the juxtaposition of disciplines.

Zachary Sachs What first attracted you to the storefront that P! occupies?

Prem Krishnamurthy The first thing was the location. It was right around the corner from Project Projects. But another thing was that it was street-level. The other spaces I'd been looking at, many of them were on the second or third floor. And I think I didn't know it until I saw the place, but I found that it was very important that it be public, on the street level. I liked the weirdness of the space. It used to be an old exhaust systems contracting office, so it was divided up between two offices with interior windows between them, which seemed really strange to me, and I liked it. I saw the interior windows and immediately knew I wanted to project film works on them. And I knew that they presented an obstacle, it's not necessarily a great space for many people who want to run a gallery or exhibition space, because there's only one door. And you can only show work that fits through that door—but to me, it's a great constraint. The elements that I introduced with the architects, Leong Leong, like the moving wall, became an important part of the space, that constantly reconfigures it. It's like a game playing piece. You cannot take it out of the space, because it's too large.

ZS And yet it transforms the relationships between things inside.

PK That's right. It's such a simple thing, but it's these details: the fact that it's not rectilinear—it's a parallelogram. It creates these weird relationships. It was important to me that the architecture of the space not be just a passive thing, but somehow be activated.

ZS Does the architecture change with each exhibition, acting as an equal member, alongside the art? Is it more part of the curatorial voice? Or is that not a meaningful distinction?

PK Well, it is a meaningful distinction, but that's the kind of distinction that I'd call into question. Whether a decision is a curatorial decision or an artistic decision or a design decision or just a decision that is conditioned by the space: all of those things coexist. There's no definitive way to tease out whose agency a particular decision is; those things are enmeshed.

Installation view of *Permutation 03.3: Re-Production* showing work by Peter Rostovsky.

ZS And how do you see the space's context, its being in Chinatown, as participating in—or having an effect on—the shows?

PK The main thing is: if you have a gallery in Chelsea, there's a relatively homogenous group of people that go over there. You have the High Line, but if you're in Chelsea on 22nd or 24th street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenue, you're a person going to a gallery. That's a self-selecting public. The opportunity of being in this particular spot is that it's a mixed public. Broome Street is a major access point in Manhattan—I often try to use the storefront in an active way. To make the storefront as much part of the space as anything inside of it.

ZS And so the image of the outside of the space is an aspect of every show.

PK Exactly. The signage is in Chinese and English, and there are shows that incorporate things that relate to Chinese culture in particular ways. It's true that the majority of people that end up coming here probably are from more or less the same cultural space, but then there are also always people that just stop outside. If people stop outside, even if they don't make it through the door, the space still does something. And that's important to me.

ZS And even if you end up with much the same crowd, that crowd is still taken out of the context of rows of white cubes.

PK Yes. And many people who walk in here don't know what to make of it. That's a positive thing. I'm interested in the space feeling very, very different from show to show. And so when we did a show at the beginning of this six-month cycle on copying, where Rich Brilliant Willing worked with us to make the space into a reading room, you'd be amazed how many people said, "Oh, so you're a bookstore now? You're a reading room?" And I said, "No, it's an exhibition." And they were like, "What do you mean?" I want to create that confusion. When Slow and Steady Wins the Race opened a weeklong pop up shop here, as part of a show, same thing. "Are you a retail store? Are you selling bags or are you a gallery?" And I replied, "Both/and." It's encouraging that people still don't know what the hell we are.

ZS The emphasis on the juxtaposition of design and artwork and architecture, each being its own element of each exhibition, might serve to de-familiarize each of them from each other, right?

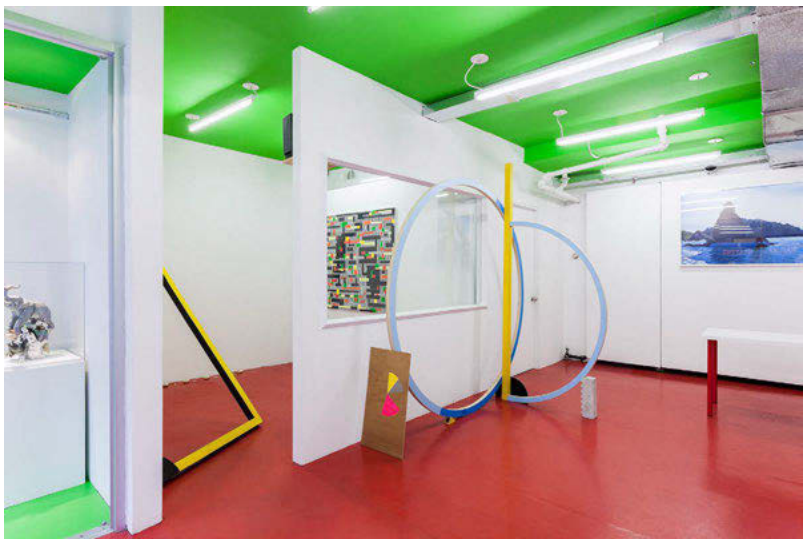
PK That's definitely the goal, but rather than having them be purely separate, we'd collapse the distinctions between them somehow. At the opening of *Permutation 03.4: Re-Mix*, you could think we were a club, or something. Thomas Brinkmann was playing these records on a sound system and people were dancing, for an hour and a half or two, and there were a lot of people there purely because they were techno fans, who heard that Thomas Brinkmann was in town, and they came and they were excited. That kind of encounter is good. If we keep bringing different audiences in, and they encounter other things they might not have seen in their native context, then I think the space is doing what it wants to do.

ZS So part of what it "wants to do," in this sense would be—and correct me if I'm wrong—to break down a distinction between art and design?

PK Well, I wouldn't say it's breaking down the distinction. Because ultimately I would say those distinctions aren't there to be made but are conditional and contextual. What's design and what's art has much to do with who's doing the looking, and at what point we are in the life cycle of the object (now or in a thousand years, for example), as any other factor. So I'm not necessarily interested in the distinction between art and design (or architecture or music or fashion or fiction writing, for that matter), but rather creating a new space of viewership for it all. It's more about putting these cultural objects into conversation, and calling out the fact that sometimes they function in similar and

sometimes in dissimilar ways. Also, I'd like to create a context in which people may work in a way that is non-native to them, to have people doing things in this space that are—not, maybe, outside of their practice, but are perhaps underrepresented in their practice. And that itself is speaking to the question of disciplinary boundaries. Rather than being defined by a particular idea of what an artist does or what a designer does or what a musician does, thinking about how those things resonate with all the other ideas surrounding them. In a way, it's natural that, given that I'm a graphic designer, there's going to be a lot of design, but I don't think about it as being a space about graphic design. I think of those things as being part of the same dialogue that I have with conceptual art, or music, or architecture, and so it makes sense that those things would be brought together.

ZS It sounds like your role as the organizer is to create a place where this can happen. In one press release, I remember you say you seek, "to emphasize rupture over tranquility, and interference over mere coexistence," which in turns reminds me of an Experimental Jetset quote, something like, "design ought to perforate the thing it communicates."



Installation view of *The Ceiling Should be Green*, 2013.

PK Hmm, yeah. I hadn't heard that particular quote, but the idea of perforation is, in some ways, right—in that individual agencies are somehow made manifest, and visible, creating a rupture or break. In most art systems, there is some sort of suppression of certain kinds of agency. In many exhibitions, one talks about

artists, or curators, as discrete entities that do these very discrete things. But it's clear, I think, to people who are working as artists or curators—or as designers or anything really, involved with installation—that there's a lot of overlap and ambiguity between those roles. But most of the time in the end it's cleaned up, there's a way in which things are presented as being straightforward. It's listed, who does what. Coming from a background of designing exhibitions, it seems clear that in curating a show you sometimes function as a designer, but being an artist can also mean you're organizing the work of other artists. Essentially giving a sense of display to things. And with "perforation," if you like, the idea isn't to make things disappear but to emphasize the friction. And since P! is a small space, it would be impossible to achieve that neutrality, where there's nothing else that interferes with a single work. Unless if you only showed one work. In fact, the works are always overlapping: and I think that's generally the case everywhere, but it often seems like there's a desire to push works apart, and give each of them their sacred autonomy. And there are lots of reasons why that happens in terms of the market. In here, it's both an impossibility and an intentional desire to have the works speak to each other in intimate ways.

ZS It seems like lately there's been a return to designing exhibitions in opposition to the white cube. Or as with Thomas Demand's *La Carte d'Après Nature* and the recreation of the 1969 exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* in Venice last year, there's a lot more focus on the relationship between the space and the object. Does that feel like it's an emerging impulse?

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*BombMagazine.org*
"Prem Krishnamurthy"
by Zachary Sachs
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Installation view of *Possibility 02: Growth*, featuring *Provopoli* by Aaron Gemmill, 2012.

PK When I started doing this, I wasn't thinking of it as coming from any particular place, except being a certain curatorial idea, and also a certain idea of how things were going to speak to each other. But I think you're right that one could definitely speak to related approaches in Venice this year. The idea that there are these juxtapositions between works and contexts with totally different intentions, and in being put into a space they start to create a third term. That's very much in the air now. Of course that's what graphic designers have been doing for a long time. If you're Richard Hollis designing *Ways of Seeing*, or any designer making a book, you're thinking about how to put together these essentially disparate forms: text and image, images of different contexts, and trying to create a thing that places them meaningfully within a space. And so I'd say that the classic tenet of graphic design is this sort of juxtaposition. Maybe it's just that it goes in and out of vogue in a curatorial sense. There are moments when one thinks more about the autonomy of the object or the autonomy of the artist, and there are moments when one thinks more about the interrelationship of objects. For example, when you're talking about re-installation of *When Attitudes Become Form* in Venice, that's one of the things you see. You see that, when Harald Szeemann put together the original show, the works are really on top of each other. There are these spaces where you can barely even walk through them, and

maybe you think, "Oh that wouldn't even pass ADA requirements at any museum in the US." Of course in those cases it's more often than not that the neighboring objects are "like" each other. . . But I think there's still a different sense than if you're going to a show where the idea is that it is an *entire space*, or the work should somehow be isolated and create its own sui generis context.

ZS In another place you say you see the gallery as being "visitor-focused." How do you see that differing from, say, a traditional gallery?

PK There was a conversation that happened in Art Basel last year that outlined for me a major difference between my approach and that of a more traditional gallery model. There was a panel about mega-galleries, and a New York gallerist was saying how, as with any small business, he has to think about his clients. And his clients are artists and collectors. And he seemed to say that critical voices, like writers or the press or whatever, weren't his audience. So I asked, how do you feel about a broader public, or a different public? The response: That's not my job, to speak to a broader public. Obviously, with this project I too am speaking to a certain art and design discourse. But it's important to me that people walking by, seeing this work in the store window, don't necessarily know it's an artwork, but they look at it. Both in design, and in curating, it's a Brechtian estrangement, instead of the medium being presented as totally transparent and disappearing. It's going to affect what it's mediating one way or the other, there's no other way that it could be.

ZS Something can't not be produced.

PK Right, it can either pretend that production doesn't exist, or it can acknowledge that it does, and be straightforward about it. And I would hope to be straightforward about the fact that things are being mediated one way or the other.

ZS One line in description of the *Permutation 03.x* caught my eye: "multiples of a religious or political icon extend their reach and efficacy, whereas a duplicated file, painting, handbag, or cityscape violates legal and ethical strictures. Questions of capital and power lie at the core: who owns the original versus who is producing the copy." Is there a specific politics implicit in the curatorial attitude, or merely the existence of politics within this context?

PK No, there's very explicitly a politics. Part of the space is also about asking

questions about commerce and culture and how intertwined those things are. In the case of this show, it's been evoked in a number of different ways. In the previous show in the cycle *[Permutation 03.3]*, Peter Rostovsky was showing digital paintings that are distributed for free online. There was a pamphlet that we produced with him, a new text, a dialogue about painting and politics, and the question of how to create a mass-produced, democratic artwork, that's neither kitsch nor something that's elite. This came out of Peter's involvement with the Occupy movement and the contradictions it raises for artists. Such questions about distribution, and democracy are pretty intrinsic to everything we do here.


Installation view of *A rough guide to Hell* by Société Réaliste, 2013.

The reason that I'm interested in looking into models outside of the white cube is not just because I'm interested in breaking some norm; it's because the white cube exists to create a certain kind of value. It exists to generate a certain kind of object, to sanctify it. Display is an important and powerful thing but it's often not acknowledged. Of course it works very differently in a commercial sphere. But in any case I'm interested in making that thing apparent. It's a kind of self-reflexivity about display and how it produces value as much as it is also about the things being shown.

After all so much of normal gallery discourse is about access to knowledge. You typically have a person who sits behind a desk somewhere, and they hold the checklist and the press release. You walk in and there a lot of things on the wall, and there's nothing that tells you what they are. If you want to know what they

are, you go up and get a press release. I had a strange encounter the other day. I was talking to a performing arts institution about a project, and they asked me if there was admission to the shows here, and that made me realize there's a total gulf there. We go to galleries, we're conversant in the norms. We know that if we want information, we go and ask for the checklist. If we're dressed well enough, we can ask for a price list. We know these modes and we navigate them fluidly. But the truth is many people don't. My parents walk into a gallery, they have no idea what you do there. Unless there's a wall label, they don't know who it's by, they don't know they're allowed to ask somebody. In fact the whole point of the person behind the desk seems to be to scare you into not wanting to ask.

ZS And does that gulf strike you as being another thing you're exploiting in the way you hang shows?

PK In every case we try to tweak some parameter. The second show that we did was about real estate and the scarcity of space, all of the information about the different parts of the exhibition were given on those hanging real estate signs in the front window. That had a description of each of the works and their price, if they were for sale. The idea was, a real estate office operates on a different principle: to make the information visible.

ZS Someone told me the other day that those signs in the windows of real estate offices are often not of available properties, but rather of properties that people want, which are not necessarily available. Not just the ones stamped "sold," either. Just to get people to walk in. In a sense the motivation in your display was almost the same as to the formula you copied. Speaking of which, there was a cycle of exhibitions entirely about copying.

PK Copying, yes. Really that came together from thinking about questions of originality and influence, and feeling like those were questions looming very large in my own design practice and curatorial practice. As well as from the gut impulse, that I've always had, that designers and artists tend to think about questions of influence in very different ways. There's a mode of citing things that's acceptable in one discourse but not another. But then if you cross those lines, you're allowed to steal wholesale. But it depends on whether you're doing it within a disciplinary narrative or not.

There was this book by Marcus Boon, *In Praise of Copying*, that I was reading when I was formulating the series. In his view, everything is a copy, in one way or

another. Thus the name "Permutations." The shows are all, in one sense, permutations of each other. They repeat each other formally, works reappearing and so on. One show has a new version of an Oliver Laric piece that was in a prior iteration of the show. And there are spatial elements that recur. So instead of thinking of something as being original, these things are really permutations of previous versions, and they're circulating fluently, and the point isn't the original idea but the specific substantiation of the thing: taking it in the own context of its making.

ZS Right, and the very word "permutation" reminds me of the *Ship of Theseus* paradox, where the boat is rebuilt plank by plank until no original planks are left. Is it the same ship? is it a copy?

PK In graphic design, I'm always thinking: which things are referencing other things? So, in a sense, this project is also meant as a corrective, because I tend to think of things as being very linear. In *The Shape of Time* George Kubler makes the point that instead of linear cycles of succession and influence, in fact influence moves in various directions, forward and backward.

ZS In a discussion of regimes in art, Jacques Rancière argued that the notion that abstract art was not something that emerged fully formed in the 19th century, but was made possible by an existing a logic of abstraction that was repeated throughout time, so in Veronese for example, there's an underlying sense of abstraction even if the paintings are ostensibly figurative.

PK Yes, exactly, and, again, in Semir Alschausky's Veronese "copy" in *Permutation 3.4*; that's precisely his argument. His discourse comes out of an opposition between socialist realism versus abstraction. The reason why he's interested in Veronese in particular is about how abstraction emerged from color.

Similarly, Robin Kinross cites the origin of modern typography not as the 1920s with Paul Renner or the Bauhaus, but rather in works like Joseph Moxon's 17th-century printing manual. That was the moment when printing, rather than being a "black art," guarded and guilded, started to become a skilled trade. It was the first time someone articulated the principles of typography and how to print. It became disseminate-able and open. That was, for him, the moment modern typography begins.

And obviously that's just another reframing of terms, but I think he sees what we

see as being 20th-century modern typography actually coming out of this much-older movement, which has the same principles but only at a certain moment becomes self-conscious.

ZS Do you see there being any specific predecessors, in terms of curators or historical gallerists who have inspired your approach at P!?

PK The people I feel most inspired by are people like Judith Barry, who is an artist but who moves between the realms of art, architecture, exhibition design, writing, and more. Group Material was really important example for me. I wouldn't say predecessor in a direct way, but I admire them for bringing things of different contexts into a single space. In their case, much more in the mode of making an artwork: which is not what I'm interested in. I guess I also see my influences in this being less curatorial models and more wide-ranging, as design but not just design. I like the idea of a World's Fair. You put all these things together, and there they are.

ZS Okay, so, "Process," "Possibility," "Permutation"—what happens when you run out of "P" words?

PK The dictionary's pretty big. . . And, well, you know, we might be done with that thing.

*Zachary Sachs is a New York-based writer, curator, and archivist. He contributes to* Domus, Artforum.com, *and publishes the music zine* Ply. *Most recently he organized "Primary Sources," a historical survey of the avant-garde at School of Visual Arts from 1966–1985.*

*P! is located at 334 Broome Street in New York. "Brian O'Doherty: Connecting the ..." is on view there and at Simone Subal through April 20.*

on VIEW
AN APPRAISAL OF CURRENT ART OFFERINGS

B6 | February 10, 2014 | The New York Observer

## 'HITTING IT OFF'

**P!**

Is there any gallery owner having more fun right now than Prem Krishnamurthy? A graphic designer by trade, he for the past year and a half has been hosting art shows of unknown and unexpected talents in a storefront space with a signature red floor (and now a signature green ceiling, a feng shui expert's intervention in the last exhibition). P!'s latest show, organized by Mr. Krishnamurthy, Manuela Moscoso and Sarah Demeuse, pairs work from two artists who are relatively obscure in the U.S., the Belgian Philippe Van Snick (born 1946) and the Spanish June Crespo (born 1982). The effect is commendably shambolic—smart in a pleasantly casual way.

Mr. Van Snick's work, dating from 1972 and '73, looks like bone-dry early Conceptualism—a black-and-white video and gridded sheets of paper, each listing two numbers. Give it a moment. That video has him and a friend in the midst of a ping-pong duel, and those papers spell out the score of a match. This is displayed on and around a burly, eat-your-Oscar Tuazon-heart-out architectural installation—it spans the gallery and looks almost like a hunk of machinery—that Ms. Crespo has built from metal scaffolding, cinderblocks, drywall and the odd newspaper to help it fit snuggly. Braced against the walls, it could be pushing apart the room (à la Chris Burden's 1985 *Samson*) or holding it together. It also displays her layered collages with vintage nude magazines and transparent prints of luxury-good ads and news stories. They veer uncomfortably close to Josephine Meckseper's lazier moments, but there's a humorous, densely packed rawness that makes it work.

Things are under construction and—maybe—falling apart. Games are being played, frivolous (ping-pong) and deadly serious (the objectification of money, in brands, and bodies). But wait, there's a final component—a few copies of a little pamphlet that the show's three organizers compiled as a response to a reading group they were in devoted to the fashionable philosophy known as speculative realism. It's a modest, playful object, laid out on Ms. Crespo's shelf in case you're curious: Take it or leave it. Like so much that gets shown at P!, it's just another invitation to a weird wormhole that you can journey down as far as you like. (*Through Feb. 16*) —*A.R.*

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*The New York Observer*
by Andrew Russeth
10 February 2014

Art in America
NEWS & FEATURES EXHIBITIONS MAGAZINE NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBE

PREVIEWS NOV. 08, 2013

# Feng Shui Curating at P!

**by Jessica Dawson**

Connie Samaras, *Grandmother Rock, Pacific Coast*, 2013, archival ink jet from film, 35 by 45 inches. Edition of 5.

On a recent morning at the gallery called P!, on New York's Lower East Side, New York-based feng shui master Ye Lei Ming was putting the final touches on an unusual curatorial experiment. Ye was studying a photograph of Mel Bochner in hopes of deciding where to install one of the artist's 1972 floor pieces.

Ye considered the artist's birthdate. He fell silent for some time.

Nearby, P! director Prem Krishnamurthy and the artist and curator Ali Wong (who also goes by Kit Yi Wong) waited patiently. For $300, the pair had hired Ye to choose the artists and help install P!'s latest exhibition, "The Ceiling Should Be Green" (today through Dec. 22) in accordance with the ancient Chinese principles of manipulating chi, or life force, in an auspicious manner. Ye's efforts aim to subvert the strictures of traditional exhibition design.

"Curatorial practice has become really professionalized," Krishnamurthy told *A.i.A.* in a phone interview prior to Ye's final gallery visit. "There are a set of norms representing rationalist, European ways of thinking about space. This show is about, in good faith, exploring other modes of thinking."

To create "The Ceiling Should Be Green," Krishnamurthy and Wong compiled a list of artists they wanted to work with. They submitted that list to Ye. By analyzing the artists' birthdates and birthplaces, he arrived at nine artists to include in the show—Bochner, Jessica Stockholder and Tony Labat among them.

"He read each artist and told us who was strong and who wasn't," Krishnamurthy said. "'This is a really good artist, you must include this artist,' and 'This is a very tall artist and he will give you trouble, but you should include him in the show.'"

Ye has worked with artists before. In 2011, Wong hired him to advise her on how to improve her creative practice. At the time, she was an MFA candidate at Yale, and Ye's consultations resulted in her using her studio to serve Chinese meals once a week free of charge. More recently, Wong approached Krishnamurthy about applying feng shui to an exhibition. This is Ye's first stab at organizing an exhibition.

Krishnamurthy and Wong were faithful to Ye's suggestions. On his first visit to the gallery, Ye admired the red floor but recommended that the ceiling be painted green—hence the exhibition's title—owing to the strong chi produced by red-green pairings. Ye also insisted that the gallery's rear wall feature a large work depicting mountains and sea.

By the time Ye appeared for his final walkthrough this week, the gallery's ceiling was a brilliant shade of emerald and artist Connie Samaras's large-scale photograph of a mountainous seaside outcropping leaned against a back wall, ready for hanging.

Outfitted in a blue striped oxford, pressed pants and a windbreaker, Ye took the curator's final questions. As he spoke, Wong simultaneously translated his pronouncements—Ye speaks only Chinese—for Krishnamurthy and a visiting critic. Wong held her iPhone at eye level to record Ye's responses. (Wong's footage will be included in the final cut of a video work, made under the name Kit Yi Wong, also on view in the show.)

Gesturing rapidly, his eyebrows moving animatedly, Ye occasionally consulted a weathered yellow book and eagerly made suggestions. He told the curators that he didn't understand Stockholder's piece, so they needed to add explanatory wall text, which Krishnamurthy vowed to produce before opening day.

But by the time Krishnamurthy asked where Ohad Meromi's 2012 plywood installation should go, Ye had grown weary.

"He doesn't want to take care of minor issues," Wong translated from Ye's animated reply. "He says Ohad's work doesn't affect the feng shui, so you should decide yourself where it goes."

*Ye leads a gallery talk Nov. 10 at 3 P.M.*

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*ArtInAmericaMagazine.com*
"Feng Shui Curating at P!"
by Jessica Dawson
8 November 2013

Art in America
NEWS & FEATURES EXHIBITIONS MAGAZINE NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBE




# Société Réaliste

**at P!,**
**through Oct. 27**
334 Broome St

"A rough guide to Hell," the first New York solo show of French collective Société Réaliste, premieres the disjointed font type "media police," here used by the artists for a room-spanning wall text of computer error messages and plastered on the gallery's vermilion awning. (For the show's duration, it's also available to download on P!'s website.) More unsettling is the group's revision of the 1949 film version of *The Fountainhead*, in which they've digitally removed every human being, leaving only the architecture.

ARTFORUM

# New York

## Société Réaliste

**P!**
**334 Broome Street**
**September 5–October 27**

**View of "A Rough Guide to Hell," 2013.**

Jagged text on a new hot-red awning on Broome Street instructs "Lasciate ogne stranezza voi ch'intrate" (Abandon all strangeness ye who enter here). The work, produced by the Paris-based cooperative Société Réaliste as part of their first solo exhibition in New York, jiggers the welcome note to hell from Dante's *Inferno*, which mandates that entrants abandon all hope. That strangeness is commensurate with hope is the backbone of critique in "A Rough Guide to Hell," which includes seven works that dilate the nearly immaterial architecture of computer code to the aesthetic persuasions of typeface, and on to the muscular conduits of capital that are urban designs. Société Réaliste perforates political and economic systems of representation that exploit social and cultural difference

For the video projection *The Fountainhead*, 2010, the artists digitally altered King Vidor's 1949 film adaptation of Ayn Rand's ode to individualism and laissez-faire capitalism to exclude human figures, leaving a barren portrait of New York. A nearby floor-to-ceiling text intervention, *Circles of Errors*, 2013, presents a litany of phrases meant to mimic the cadence of computer error messages. Within this prose, "Idealized Restriction" calibrates to "Restricted Hospitality" and "Imagination Is Fatal" calibrates to "Failed Randomization." These modulations build a loose narrative of the deadening effects of global streams of capital as they run alongside the ever-pervasive information network. The work uses a Frankensteinian font that Société Réaliste developed specially for the exhibition. Titled Media Police, the typeface has been assembled from a collection of international newspapers' logotypes via an exquisite corpse formula. It achieves the fractured aesthetic of glitch, and the regional identities inscribed in each element recombine into a surprisingly functional typeface. The only strange thing about Media Police is its legibility: It performs as a smooth agent of exchange, but represents no place at all.

— *Annie Godfrey Larmon*

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*Artforum.com*
by Annie Godfrey Larmon
21 October 2013

HYPERALLERGIC
Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

# Rainbows to No Place: Société Réaliste and the Ayn Rand Apocalypse

by David Markus on October 12, 2013

Installation view, “A rough guide to Hell” by Société Réaliste at P! (photo by Naho Kubota)

> There is no way out of entanglement. The only responsible course is to deny oneself the ideological misuse of one’s own existence, and for the rest to conduct oneself in private as modestly, unobtrusively and unpretentiously as is required, no longer by good upbringing, but by the shame of still having air to breathe, in hell.
>
> **—*T.W. Adorno,* Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life**

The 1949 King Vidor **film adaptation** of Ayn Rand's ***The Fountainhead*** centers on a headstrong New York architect named Howard Roark, who, at grave risk to his architectural practice, spends his days proffering sleek modernist designs to a society mired in its taste for tawdry neoclassicism. When, early on in the film, Roark encounters his impoverished, disillusioned and half-mad former mentor, he is warned about the costs of impudence: "May god bless you Howard, you're on your way into hell."

Roark never descends to the depths of perdition experienced by his mentor. Buoyed by his faith in the platitudes of Randian individualism, he lifts himself out of the pits of financial ruin and into the rarefied air of architectural greatness. There is nevertheless more wisdom to the old man's words than either can appreciate. *The Fountainhead*, whose script Rand penned on the condition that not a word would be altered, is a turgid love song to the sociopathic limits of modernism's mythos. Rand's New York is one in which in which domestic terrorism is the legal and heroic recourse against public housing projects that diverge from their original design (Roark ends up dynamiting his own building), and where the world's tallest skyscraper serves no purpose other than to posthumously restore its bankroller's manhood with the salve of architectural genius. The metropolis Howard Roark helps re-imagine is not a place to be collectively inhabited but a monument to phallic petulance and Promethean conquest. It is a vision altogether infernal in its own right. If only it were confined to the Randian universe.

When the headline of a *New York Times* article on what is slated to be the tallest residential building in the country reads, **"Another Tower for the New York Skyline,"** it reflects an essential truth about the city: like other **"high-end products"** New York has increasingly become something that is more to be admired at a remove than enjoyed in person. Thanks to an unprecedented collusion between starchitects, megalomaniacal developers and the state legislature, which has extended **tax subsidies** to those least in need of them, the world's most famous skyline has received a multibillion-dollar makeover during the past few years. New York's homeless population has just reached **levels not seen since the Great Depression**; meanwhile, a wave of non-resident investment purchasers has made the daily occupancy rates at some of the city's most eye-catching and luxurious buildings resemble those of beach resorts in hurricane season.

In this context, it is a testament to the Franco-Hungarian art cooperative **Société Réaliste**'s commitment to realism that it chooses to title its first New York exhibition, held at P! on the Lower East Side, ***A rough guide to Hell.*** The centerpiece of this multidimensional installation (curated by Niels Van Tomme and P! director Prem Krishnamurthy) is a timely meditation on the triumph of what, following Walter Benjamin in "**The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction**," we might classify as "optical" architecture: in this case an architecture that not only obtrudes upon the "tactile" experience of ordinary habitual use, but one that has been literally *disinhabited*. Société Réaliste's single-channel video work "The Fountainhead" (2010) offers a silent version of Vidor's 1949 film in which every human being has been digitally removed from the picture. The protagonists of the 111-minute-long work are a series of office desks, modern couches, swooping staircases, and, of course, penthouse views of New York's beloved skyline.

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"Rainbows to No Place: Société Réaliste and the Ayn Rand Apocalypse"
by David Markus
12 October 2013

Société Réaliste, “The Fountainhead (2010), film still

This is by no means a loss to the film, which pairs Rand’s stultifyingly didactic melodrama with low points in the careers of Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal. A soulless but cinematographically adept piece of cinema, Vidor’s film was already an ironic affirmation of André Bazin’s assertion, in “Theater and Cinema: Part Two,” that the actor, in cinema, is aesthetically secondary to “decor and editing.” Société Réaliste has merely elevated to an absolute the modernist to highlight the traits specific to a given medium.

In so doing it has allowed the work’s underlying ideology to achieve its crypto-nihilistic endpoint. Of the man who once belonged to this vanished civilization, the urban dwellings of which lie before us like a photo-spread in Architectural Digest, we may say, as Roark does in his climactic ode to the mythical creative type: “His work was his only goal. His work, not those who used it; his creation, not the benefits others derived from it.” Ultimately, “he served nothing and no-one.” We might add that the colossal city he strove to establish was effectively “no place,” *ou topos*: the only utopia at the end of the Randian rainbow. Indeed, deprived of people, the urban landscape depicted in *The Fountainhead* begins to resemble a set on a Hollywood soundstage, which, as it turns out, it is.

Of course the fact that this ideal metropolis is nothing more than a fairytale — and a nightmarish one at that — has not dissuaded the “unbridled individual” from vying for its real estate. In a work titled “Laissez-faire City” (2013), Société Réaliste replicates an advertisement that ran in an issue

of *The Economist* in 1995, a year of particularly magical thinking, given that it was also the year the World Wide Web went mainstream. The self-described "impressive group of free market individuals" behind the ad proposes the founding of a new metropolis set on 100 square miles of land in Costa Rica. Self-governed, the city would be "based on the ideals and principles of Ayn Rand," whose *Atlas Shrugged* — the apparent inspiration for their plan — is cited as a work of "prophetic genius."

The selling price Société Réaliste has attached to this work is just over sixty-two thousand dollars: the present-day cost of republishing the ad in *The Economist*. As a work of historical irony, its impact hangs suspended between the willful forgetfulness that threatens to swallow the economic crash of 2008 and a more widespread recognition that, for most American urbanites, the laissez faire city is one — **or rather *two*** — in which we have already been living for too long. Staring at this advertisement, which features an Art Deco rendering of Rand alongside a miniature city skyline, it is difficult not to indulge in one's own utopian fantasy: that someone buys the ad, republishes it, and the "impressive" individuals likely to be attracted by such a proposal fly south in droves.

On the awning outside P!'s Broome Street storefront, Société Réaliste has erected a permanent installation. In black letters against a red background we read: "*lasciate ogne stranezza voi ch'intrate* [abandon all strangeness ye who enter here]." The work borrows from words famously engraved outside the gates of hell in Dante's *Inferno* (in Dante, the line reads "abandon all hope…"). In the catalogue for its 2012 exhibition "empire, state, building," co-produced by Paris's Jeu de Paume and Budapest's Ludwig Múzeum, Société Réaliste associates this phrase with the false concern it detects in systems of governance that profess a cosmopolitanism belied by restrictive and assimilative immigration policies. As former residents of Hungary, a nation once cut off from the West, the members of Société Réaliste have the European Union in mind as their most immediate model. Against the backdrop of New York City, however, the appropriation of Dante's phrase more readily appears as a mocking jab at the hospitality extended — with no acknowledgement of its conditionality — to "the homeless, the tempest tossed" on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.


Exterior of P! with awning in media police typeface by Société Réaliste (photo by Naho Kubota)

The injunction to abandon strangeness might also provoke reflection on the work's specific urban context. Since the New Museum took up residency on a stretch of the Bowery formerly known as Skid Row, the area has undergone rapid gentrification under the ever-ambiguous guise of urban renewal. While cultural institutions sometimes provide space for reflection on socio-economic issues, they also contribute to rising rent prices and the displacement that results therefrom. The crop of new galleries that has sprung up in the area, P! among them, is undoubtedly implicated in this process; and while it is a gesture of good faith — indeed, of hospitality — to the surrounding neighborhood that P! lists its business information in Chinese on its storefront window, it also makes one cognizant of the transformation undergone by this section of Chinatown into, for better or worse, a relic of its former self.

The typeface that appears on P!'s awning was created by Société Réaliste and is presented as a work unto itself. It is downloadable from P!'s website during the show's run and also appears on wall labels throughout the exhibition. Created by splicing together the logotypes of world newspapers, it comprises a contradictory patchwork of modern and gothic scripts. It may be going too far, however, to call it "strange." Though it serves as a composite of widely varying cultures and political persuasions, it also evokes the homogenization that is, after all, intrinsic to most typography. Its range of letters is restricted to those of the Roman alphabet, and its individual pieces, diverse as they seem, congeal into a legible assemblage. The font's title, "media police," enforces the impression that this work continues Société Réaliste's critique of the restrictiveness inherent to many of the most exalted partners of "freedom": the free press, economic liberalism and its globalization, and the City of New York, whose mantel of diversity is maintained under the watch of a vast police force notorious for targeting minorities.

The neutralization of political-cultural discord recurs as a theme in “Circle of Errors” (2013). This work, which covers a large swath of the exhibition’s wall space, comprises a series of fake computer error messages — e.g. “Precise Mutation,” “Restricted Hospitality,” “Imagination is Fatal” — printed in white “media police” against a background of varying shades of gray. Collectively, these sometimes humorous, sometimes menacing phrases evoke the auto-censorship and velvet handcuffs that bind us to systems of control and thwart our impulses to break from prevailing discourses.

As a guide to the corridors of a living hell, Société Réaliste’s exhibition is rough to say the least. Like an ant on a Möbius strip, one finds oneself cycling between alternating faces of torment: sociopathic Randian utopianism and the restricted heterogeneity of liberal political enclosures. No exit is provided, except through the gallery’s door.

The members of Société Réaliste are Cynics sensu stricto. In their writings they make repeated mention of the philosophical vagabond Diogenes of Sinope, one of the founders of the cynical tradition, who would seem to typify their rejection of any but the most radical forms of cosmopolitanism. Famously, when asked by Alexander the Great if there was any favor the conquering hero could do for him, the philosopher responded, “Stand out of my light.” Somewhere on the Bowery, amid the few halfway houses that still remain, the shadow of a modern edifice grows long.

**A Rough Guide to Hell by Société Réaliste** *continues at P! (334 Broome Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan) until October 27.*

Tagged as: **Ayn Rand**, **King Vidor**, **P!**, **Société Réaliste**

A20 | Saturday/Sunday, October 12 - 13, 2013 ****** THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

FINE ART | By Peter Plagens

# Lyrical Forms, Social Commentary and Handiwork

## Société Réaliste: A Rough Guide to Hell

◆ P!
334 Broome St., (212) 334-5200
Through Oct. 27

P! self-effacingly describes itself as a "Mom-and-Pop Kunsthalle" that (not so modestly) "engages with presentation strategies and models to emphasize rupture over tranquillity, interference over mere coexistence, transparency over obfuscation, and passion over cool remove." Its current offering by the Franco-Hungarian collaborative team Société Réaliste (Jean-Baptiste Naudy, b. 1982, and Ferenc Gróf, b. 1972) purports (in art-speak) less modestly still to pit "two discrete discursive investigations against each other—the typographic language of global-local media communications and the architecture of anarcho-capitalist modernism."

That sort of conceptual overreach—as common in today's galleries as potted plants were a century ago—is usually fairly off-putting. But with "A Rough Guide to Hell," it shouldn't be. This exhibition is brainy fun.

There are three works in the small, tidy space. The first is a poem—rendered, in white laser-cut vinyl, in a new font the Société has named "media police" that combines three other fonts in each letter—on two gradually darkening walls. It's called "Circle of Errors" (2013) and is derived from computer error messages. The second is "The Fountainhead" (2010), a full-length appropriation of the 1949 film made from the Ayn Rand novel—but with all the human characters digitally excised so that Rand's individualist-materialist tract is all material and no individuals.

Finally, "Laissez-Faire City" (2013), another riff on Rand: a photocopy of a 1995 full-page advertisement in the Economist seeking investment in a proposed government-free city in Costa Rica, to be inhabited entirely by rugged individualists. The piece is for sale for a little more than $62,000, the proceeds purportedly to be used to republish the ad in the magazine at current rates.

A certain lightheartedness (or, dare we say, je ne sais quoi?) pervades the social comment—which is a comparatively mild dig at capitalism—and prevents the exhibition from being drearily arcane.


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*The Wall Street Journal*
"Lyrical Forms, Social Commentary and Handiwork"
by Peter Plagens
12 October 2013

ARTFCITY

# We Went to the Lower East Side: P!, 404: Disordering Complexity



*by* PADDY JOHNSON WHITNEY KIMBALL AND CORINNA KIRSCH *on* OCTOBER 11, 2013 · 1 COMMENT REVIEWS

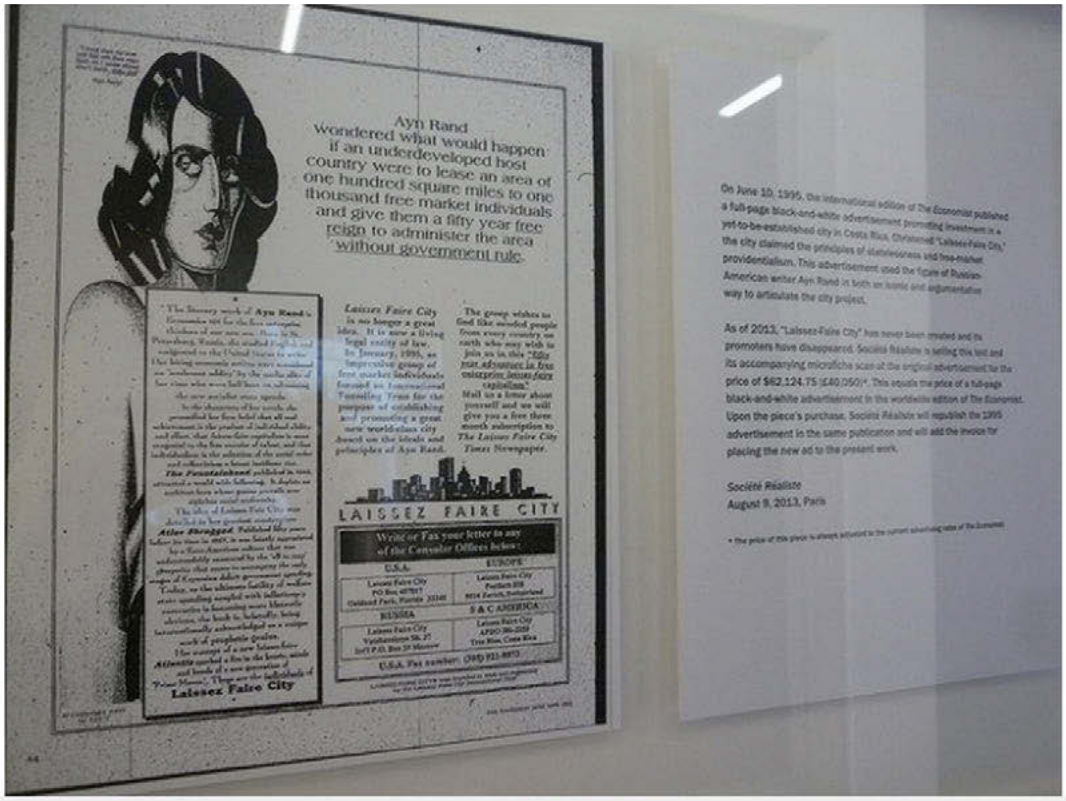

*P!*

## P!

334 Broome Street
Société Réaliste: A Rough Guide to Hell
September 5 – October 27, 2013
What's on view: A new, Frankensteinian typeface called "media police," which combines the fonts of various newspaper logos; scenes from the Fountainhead film, with human figures removed; and a copy of a 1990s advertisement for "Laissez Faire City," a new city proposed on the ideals of Ayn Rand and unbounded capitalism.

**Whitney:** Like Malinowska's A Hawk from a Handsaw, *A Rough Guide to Hell* looks at the consequences of unchecked capitalism, through abstracted paragons like newspaper fonts (evoking tridents and devil tails) and The Fountainhead (through shots of sterile, masculine film sets). It's recent utopia, made to look hellish.

The brutality of Ayn Rand's philosophy doesn't fail here because it's pure evil, but because it's so purist that it's dangerous to take as a blanket prescription for everybody. When I read *The Fountainhead* as an undergrad, I didn't understand it as a capitalist manifesto—I read Howard Roark as an ideologue for artists and freethinkers. Here—in a 1995 advertisement calling for a "Laissez Faire" city in Costa Rica—it's practically fascism.




*Laissez Faire poster and write up.*

**Paddy:** I don't get that from the advertisement, though I agree that Société Réaliste is depicting a rather bleak picture of what Ayn Rand's utopia might actually look like. Fascism is defined by devotion to a single leader, an emphasis on the military, and a love for the state. This ad isn't advocating for that (though admittedly the rendering does remind me of Metropolis).

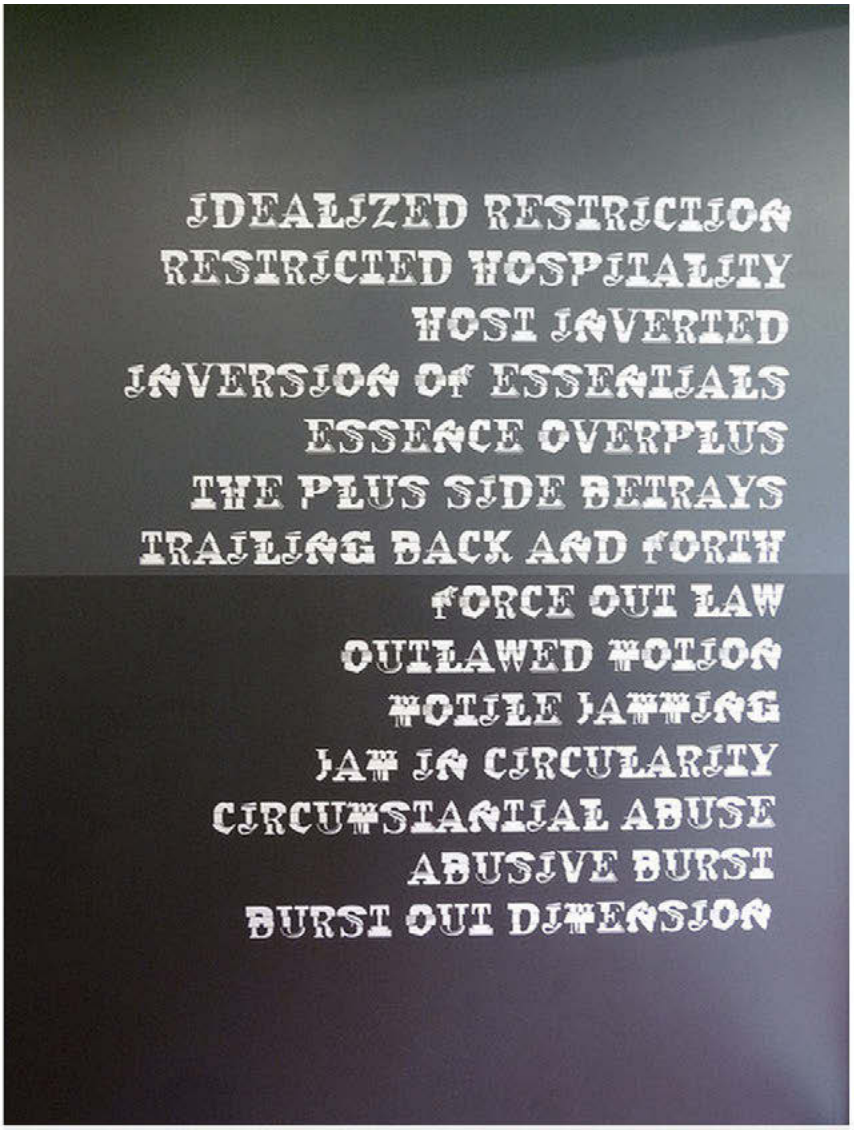
It's worth mentioning that the purchase price for this work $62,124.75, the cost of a full page ad in The Economist, where it was originally run, plus the cost of actually placing it, which the group wants to do. So, in sum, $124,249.50. I like the pricing, but I'm a little disappointed that it would run without modification. Does nobody want to find out what the response to an ad like this might be?

**Whitney:** Do you mean it should be modified because it looks so out-of-date that it wouldn't pass for a real call?

**Paddy:** Yeah, like, none of the contact information listed in the ad would be up to date, so how could anyone who wanted to start an Ayn Rand Island do so? This may sound like nitpicking, but keep in mind, the Occupy Movement was formed in response to a fake ad by Ad Busters. Ideas are powerful but they have to be actionable.

**Whitney:** I thought so … seems like a missed opportunity, now that I think about it ….

Overall, I thought the show was a little too formulaic, and the beauty of the font isn't fully explored. They've used it to spell big paragraphs of "poetic text of common computer error messages" like "Disordering complexity/complete forgery/forget tautology" on grey and black backgrounds. For me, they might as well have written "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog." The same goes for the Fountainhead shots—it's a logical move in the show, but didn't really hit the emotional point it could have.




*The computer error messages*

**Paddy:** Does anyone understand why they're using common computer error messages?

**Corinna:** I spoke with the guy manning the gallery about it because I didn't get how a phrase like "disordering complexity" was supposed to related to a "common computer error message." There is no such thing as a pop-up that reads "404: Disordering Complexity" or "Warning! Complete Forgery." He told me, what they hit on was the rhythm of computer messages—which would've been conveyed better with some numbers, or some sort of visual cue like a pop-up window—with new text. So, yeah, the artists aren't using computer error messages; they're coming up with new ones that you've never seen before.

I mostly buy it.

**Paddy:** I still don't get it. For the most part, it's impossible to figure out that these are error messages at all without reading the press release. Also, what does this have to do with show concept, which is about creating a capitalist utopia? Who sees a nonsensical computer error message as utopic?

**Corinna:** Maybe the utopia bit is being overplayed in the press release. All societies, even utopian ones, deal with power, and who's in power to say "no." You have to say "no" to something; the regulated market is what a Randian society would refuse, I suppose. I see error messages as being one of Society's No's—they tell you when to stop, or when there's no way in Hell you're gonna access a page because you've physically reached an endpoint on the Internet. All that said, that might just be my interpretation, and it might be a little loose. The artists' presentation is not straightforward—I wouldn't have gotten much out of the text if it weren't for talking to the guy at the gallery, or reading up in the press release. The artists have some work to do to make their points clearer.

Now from a design standpoint, I couldn't stand the fonts. They look like some combination of steampunk and stackable cups. But I did think the fonts were smart, and set up a clear set of rules: here is what we know about capitalism, and we're either going to erase it (the Ayn Rand video), cut it up (the fonts), or market it (the ad for Laissez Faire City). Anyway, it was a good show, but maybe it's just good because I thought the critique was pretty straightforward—okay, maybe after reading the text and talking to the dealer in the gallery—and because I like European-style conceptualism (whatever that means).

**Paddy:** Those fonts are smarter than me. They're assembled from different newspaper logotypes and include geographic locators in their names. I get that this is supposed to establish a kind of placelessness, but lacking a background in graphic design I have to be told that's what they're doing to understand the gesture.

That characteristic contributes to a larger issue that we've all identified; it's a clever show that doesn't communicate enough of its ideas through visual assets.

Tagged as: A Rough Guide to Hell, Ayn Rand, Laissez Faire, P!, Société Réaliste

ARTFCITY

# Black and White: Société Réaliste's "Media Police" Font

by CORINNA KIRSCH on OCTOBER 10, 2013 · 0 COMMENTS COLOR WHEEL

*Color Wheel is a new series in which we identify a trending color in art for the week and post a daily image that illustrates its popularity. In honor of PandaCam, this week's color is black and white. Readers are invited to send us images they have on hand so long as they match the profiled colors and we'll post the best ones we receive.*

One of the more thoughtful exhibitions we've seen lately has to be Société Réaliste's *A Rough Guide to Hell* at P! in the Lower East Side. We're profiling that show in tomorrow's "We Went to the Lower East Side." As a preview, we're highlighting Société Réaliste's "Media Police" font, a conglomeration of various news media typefaces, which takes pride of place in the almost entirely black-and-white exhibition. You can download that font through the run of the exhibition; it closes on October 27th.

Since you can't tell from the install view, here's what the font looks like up close:

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

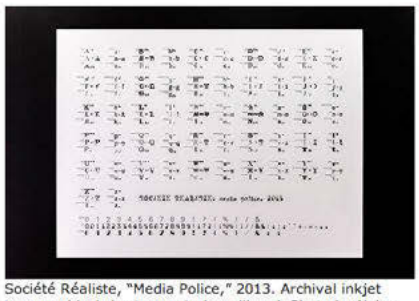
ARTSEEN OCTOBER 3RD, 2013

# SOCIÉTÉ RÉALISTE
## *A rough guide to Hell*

*by Paula Burleigh*

P! GALLERY | SEPTEMBER 5 – OCTOBER 27, 2013
CURATED BY PREM KRISHNAMURTHY AND NIELS VAN TOMME

Black lettering on P!'s deep red awning reads: "Lasciate ogne stranezza voi ch'intrate"(Abandon all strangeness, you who enter here), a loose adaptation of the infamous inscription over the Gate of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*. Hell is the ultimate dystopia, which makes the Inferno an apt reference to begin *"A rough guide to Hell,"* a show that is largely about how early 20th century fantasies of utopia gave way to a dystopic present. The artists—Ferenc Gróf and Jean-Baptiste Naudy of the Paris-based cooperative Société Réaliste—manipulate familiar spaces, both real and virtual, in order to highlight connections between architecture, communication, power, and politics.



Société Réaliste, "Media Police," 2013. Archival inkjet typographical chart mounted on dibond. Photo by Naho Kubota.

The main room of *"A rough guide to hell"* is devoted to "media police" (2013), the most recent in a series of fonts developed by the artists. A large print with the alphabet, numbers, and common symbols rendered in the font also lists its origins, which are existing typefaces used by newspapers around the world. The range, drawn from publications based in the United States, France, Burkina Faso, Turkey, and Nigeria, among many others, make "media police" a global media Esperanto. The letters' intense fragmentation frustrates any attempt to identify the original fonts, resulting in a global language system that subsumes its regional sources to render them part of a unified whole. However, the whole isn't necessarily more than the sum of its parts: it's clunky and difficult to read, as though generated by a computer malfunction. Appropriately, the nearby floor-to-ceiling installation "Circles of Errors"(2013) is a series of phrases, printed in media police font, that evoke technology and its capacity to break down in intentionally elliptical language: "prohibited coordinates....words untagged...concise mutation." While the installation is not as unsettling as the gallery press release states (the font reminds me too much of Microsoft wing-dings), "Circle of Errors" points toward cracks in a system that's not supposed to fail, while "media police" enacts a pointed critique of globalization. The immersive arrangement (the text not only covers the walls but it's used on the awning and all signage) links the font it to the architecture, reminding us that virtual spaces are just as intentionally constructed as brick-and-mortar architecture.

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*The Brooklyn Rail*
by Paula Burleigh
3 October 2013

The highpoint of "A rough guide to Hell" is "The Fountainhead" (2010), an appropriation of the 1949 film directed by King Vidor that adapted Ayn Rand's novel (Rand also co-wrote the movie screenplay). Set in a modern metropolis, the original film told the story of a ruggedly individualistic architect who refused to compromise his artistic ideals in the face of public demand. In Société Réaliste's version, the artists digitally removed all human figures from the film, which is then played without sound. The manipulated black-and-white version is reminiscent of early photography, when extended exposures resulted in images of empty-looking cities, as architecture was the only thing that would stay still for the camera. While the film's spaces are predictably eerie in their forced emptiness, watching Société Réaliste's"Fountainhead" gives the viewer the sense that the missing characters would have only distracted from the story's real protagonist, which is the built environment: the seamless integration of interior design, architectural sketches, and the expansive panned shots of the cityscape are surprisingly seductive. This literal de-humanization transforms the film into a silent paean to an architecture of capitalism, obliquely suggesting that this architecture was never meant for people anyway. Perfectly autonomous, it facilitates the circulation of capital and information. As Société Réaliste's intervention suggests, the human element is extraneous. And yet we're here: the architecture lauded in "The Fountainhead" still dominates our cityscapes. If we're to take Société Réaliste's invocation of Dante at its word, we're living in Rand's dream world, now a modern-day nightmare.

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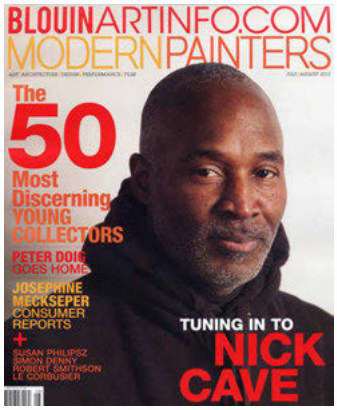
*The Brooklyn Rail*
by Paula Burleigh
3 October 2013




NEW YORK

## "Permutation 03.2: Re-Place"

*P! // March 8–April 21*

THIS EXHIBITION ADDRESSES the astounding capability of contemporary media to metastasize information: The most forgettable music video can spawn YouTube fan versions within minutes of its release, real news gets avalanched under Photoshopped fake news, and our memories accumulate around mediated images of our experiences. But this is hardly a surprise; the copy, in all its forms, may be the totalizing metaphor of our current cultural landscape.

What curatorial strategy can engage with such a dizzyingly overabundant theme? With a show about copying, the world is your gallery. How to set the limits of the inquiry? P! takes an approach simultaneously concise (four artists) and expansive (wildly different subject matter and methodologies) to present ruminations on "replicas, remakes, and recurrences," as the press release puts it.

RIGHT:
Margaret Lee
Installation view of *Dots*, 2013.

BELOW:
Amie Siegel, Abäke
Installation view of *Berlin Remake*, 2005, and *Pietà in Reverse*, 2012.

Visible from the street, Margaret Lee's fruit replicas are painted and placed in a black and white polka-dotted storefront display. Though Lee presents her work like wares—set forth in the exhibition as a wry reminder of the gallery's location on the edge of Chinatown, where small shops jostle one another to sell all manner of enticing goods, particularly fruit—this space of commerce is flattened and decontextualized, and made oddly unreal by the optical pattern.

In the gallery's entryway, the voiceover for Oliver Laric's ongoing video project *Versions*—available in different iterations online—speaks in the cool, detached Mandarin of an Air China flight attendant. The video presents an evolving collection of Internet memes, brief scenes from films, clip art, and other online flotsam, as the voiceover (speaking in British English in one online version) recites fragments of parables from various philosophical traditions. Some of these disconnected statements, such as "if you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup," "an ax that has its handle replaced five times and head replaced four times," or "upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow," suggest that the replica may be the very thread that holds existence together: As soon as there was form, there was replication of form.

The remaining two works are more overtly concerned with the historical and national role of the copy. The Danish design team Abäke hacks the intaglio process by making digital prints of molds of Italian Renaissance statues that are reproduced in Copenhagen, then sent to Beijing. Filmmaker Amie Siegel presents *Berlin Remake*, in which she uses footage from forgotten East German films, reshooting each scene at its original location but without the actors. The new film, with its evacuated cinematic landscape, is shown alongside the old, eerily standing in for an unrecoverable past.

How do such works, which mine the contextual implications of the copy, sit alongside Laric's *Versions* or Lee's dots, which underline precisely the opposite: the possibility for iterations to exist within "the context of no context," to repurpose George Trow's term for the world created by television? For this exhibition, these differences don't seem to matter: The show posits the copy as form, a medium unto itself, and as with painting or sculpture, examples of the medium take different guises. Here, each artist's engagement with this notion is enough: No additional relationship—visual, historical, or otherwise—need exist between the works or artistic practices.

Yet despite the individual fascinations each of the artworks provides, presenting the copy purely in its multiplicity seems, somewhat paradoxically, limiting. Works that speak more directly to each other might have granted a more detailed account of each artist's individual engagement with the ideas. Nonetheless, true to its theme of repetition, P! is presenting a series of programs around the notion of the copy, of which this exhibition is only the second. Perhaps over time, issues that could only be gestured at here will be further elucidated. **—Nova Benway**

BOTH IMAGES: NAHO KUBOTA



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*Modern Painters*
by Nova Benway
July/August 2013


# Permutation 03.3: Re-Production

***Permutation 03.3: Re-Production***
**P!, New York**
**28 April – 9 June**

***Re-Production,*** a group show of work by Arthur Ou, Marc Handelman and Peter Rostovsky, is the third in a series of exhibitions mounted at P! ('p' exclamation), which is the project space of Project Projects, a well-known and admired design studio that does a lot of work in and for the artworld. As a whole, the show could be taken as an attempt to update the conversation on art and simulation. Ou's black-and-white photographs, *Double Light Leak 1* and *Double Light Leak 2* (both 2010), take mechanical applications of paint – from a spray can and airbrush – as analogons of photography's own shadow castings. Handelman, easily one of the best and smartest painters working today, offers *Extrusion/Drift* (2013), a large work that could be mistaken for a slab of marble, were it not for a reveal at the work's left edge, which shows both the unpainted primed canvas and the layer of retroflective screen glass that gives the work its opalescence.

The connotations of luxury and illusion here are rich indeed, and this is where Rostovsky comes in. He wants to toss a brick through the art market's cathedral windows – that is, through the semitransparent glazing of market orthodoxy that casts all art in the light of originals and copies, fetishises the unique and throws vast sums of money at securing scarcity as an elite privilege. Rostovsky's work to this point has taken the craft of painting as a given, while the images it presents, and the culture that encodes them, have been his subject of inquiry. In the wake of the Occupy movements, however, he seems to have arrived at a conclusion that those images can no longer be separated from what paintings actually are: products, with a limited audience – not the 99%.

So no more 'original' paintings. Instead, Rostovsky has taken to 'painting' in Photoshop with the use of a Wacom tablet. Witness *Night Blossoms* (2012), a vase of flowers as seen through night-vision goggles (or a *Matrix* filter on Instagram, if there is such a thing). The image file is free to download. In the gallery, the works – there are two identical iterations – appear as Duratrans transparencies in custom-made LED lightboxes, and the edition of these, just like a download, is unlimited.

The philosophy behind the approach, essentially mass distribution minus kitsch, is presented in a dialogue that Rostovsky wrote to accompany the exhibition. In it there is much debate about the value of art versus the value of our experience of it, but the key moment comes when Rostovsky's avatar asks, 'Did your record sleeves not function like art? Weren't they holy shrines that you studied and revered and that connected you to a community? They weren't limited edition.' As a demonstration, Rostovsky includes New Order's 1983 LP *Power, Corruption & Lies*, whose sleeve art, designed by Peter Saville, reproduces Henri Fantin-Latour's *A Basket of Roses* (1890).

It would be a compelling model were it not for one thing: a dependency upon that cascade of neurotransmission we call adolescence. We're all fetishists at fifteen. Continuing to be so throughout our lives breeds the kind of covetousness that begot 2008, and Occupy, in the first place.

**JONATHAN T.D. NEIL**

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*Art Review*
by Jonathan T.D. Neil
Summer 2013

P!


## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**MARC HANDELMAN / ARTHUR OU / PETER ROSTOVSKY**

This unconventional vest-pocket space continues its six-month investigation into copying versus originality. A big, glittering painting by Handelman lacks any trace of the artist's hand—its cool, crystalline, ground-glass veneer suggests it was produced mechanically, although it was not. Rostovsky composed his paintings of flowers, and of a protester on fire (obscured by a large red rectangle), on a digital tablet and made the files available for free online: they are presented here as elegant light boxes. Ou is the show's lone photographer, yet he contributes its most painterly works: two black-and-white images in which ribbons of graffiti, sprayed onto wood and paper, twitch like live wires. Through June 9. (P!, 334 Broome St. For more information, visit p-exclamation.org.)

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*The New Yorker*
"Marc Handelman/Arthur Ou/
Peter Rostovsky"
20 May 2013

Design Miami/ Design Log

1 March 2013

Exhibitions of Note

## Design and Discourse at P!

Street view of P! gallery. Photo by Naho Kubota

In math, the notion of *permutation* relates to the idea rearranging objects or values. Signified by an exclamation point (*n*!), permutations are used to determine the algorithmic possibilities that different arrangements of numbers can create.

P! is a project-based gallery in New York's Chinatown that encourages the various disciplines of art and design to mingle, collide and collaborate. Started in September of 2012 by Prem Krishnamurthy, who also runs the distinguished design firm Project Projects, P! has hosted radically integrated exhibitions that focus on answering larger questions of concept, history and thought and has been recognized in the "Best of 2012" lists by Artforum, Frieze, and Art in America.

Organizationally, P! develops "cycles" wherein several exhibitions and events are hosted that address the big-picture topic that's presented – resulting in long-form but variegated investigations. For instance, the first cycle was directed at the idea of "Joy." The current cycle, titled *Permutation 0.3x*, seeks to dive into the highly contemporary issues of copying. At a stage of technological development where reproduction of images, objects, and processes is easy and fast, there are looming questions about the "original" and the legitimate vs. illegitimate uses of it. Participants in this cycle include visual artists, curators, writers and researchers (amongst others).

Reading room in P! gallery, designed by Rich Brilliant Willing. Photo by Naho Kubota

Installation view, P! reading room. Photo by Naho Kubota

Rich Brilliant Willing, the lighting and furniture design studio and manufacturer, was asked to recreate the entire space of P! into a custom-made reading room for *Permutation 0.3x*. The red floor, long lines of sight, and clean displays draw attention throughout the space and emit an airy studiousness. On February 20th, 2013, Superscript, an editorial consultancy specializing in content development, held one of their ADBC events (architecture and design book club) at P! where they discussed Orhan Pamuk's novel "The Black Book," and the ways that the book's setting of Istanbul, its architecture, and weaving narratives construct identity.

Theo Richardson, Alexander Williams and Charles Brill

The current exhibition, titled "Permutation 03.1: Re-Learning," ends this Saturday with Sarah Schulman, a writer for Village Voice and influential for her work on social issues. Though this exhibit is coming to a close, the Permutation 0.3x cycle runs through July, so keep a look out for this Chinatown gallery's continued experiments in the rearrangement of art, design, and discourse – and the unexpected and thrilling culminations.


"The Black Book" Reading Group with Superscript from p-exclamation on Vimeo.

Upcoming events:

Friday, March 1, 6:30–8:30pm
Ben Smith (Editor-in-chief, BuzzFeed) leads a discussion on Richard Dawkins' "The Selfish Gene" (excerpt)

Saturday, March 2, 3–5pm
Exhibition closing event with writer Sarah Schulman

- Rob Goyanes

Share / Categories / P!, Prem Krishnamurthy, Project Projects, Rich Brilliant Willing

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*Design Miami Log*
"Design and Discourse at P!"
1 March 2013

19 February 2013

Object of the Week
Documenta 13

# Judith Barry's Guidebook at P!

So, I didn't go to Documenta 13, the major European exhibition that happens every five years in Kassel, Germany. I edited some of the notebooks, a series of short texts that fed into the show's mammoth catalogue. I knew a few of the participants. But for reasons that shouldn't be too surprising, especially to the other freelancer types out there, I didn't go. Which means I'm hungry for any and all objects that come out of Documenta. But this one in particular satisfied: it is a guide to a section of the exhibition deemed its "brain." The "brain" was the place where the artistic director, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, put various objects and artworks that informed her thinking about the show. Themes include classicism, German nationalism, and the photographer and journalist Lee Miller, who took brazen photos of herself and her boyfriend in Hitler's bathtub. Please don't ask me how this all relates or what Documenta was ultimately about. Just focus on this incredible origami construction, currently on view at P! in a brilliant show about copies, facsimiles, reproductions, etc.

Barry really made two guides. The first one featured reproductions of art works, including Miller's photographs. Then the Lee Miller estate protested the use of her images, so Barry remade it by making her own versions of ALL of the images, not just those by Miller, often using watercolors. This was the guide available to the public. It unfolds into a poster, then *refolds* into an asymmetrical polyhedron. It is designed in such a way that there are phrases that are only legible when the guide is in its polyhedron form. This is all incredibly cool, and probably says more about the object, and ultimately the show, than phrases such as this: "Contained yet expansive, exhibition materials are presented in a non-hierarchical, non-linear array, as if to situate its contents in an endless space suspended in time." Huh? I know, sorry, that makes no sense. But trust me, this guidebook/origami really does fuck with the space/time continuum and messes with your head in the best possible way. It's almost as good as actually being there.

Here's a twenty-minute long video that demonstrates how to put the origami together.

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*What's This Cat's Story*
"Judith Barry's Guidebook at P!"
by Claire Barliant
19 February 2013

The Atlantic

# What's So Bad About Copying? An Art Gallery Scrutinizes Unoriginality

STEVEN HELLER | FEB 7 2013, 11:24 AM ET

*New York art space P! is devoting six months to imitations, rip-offs, and reproductions.*

Peter Rostovsky's *Night Blossoms*, a Photoshop painting created on Wacom tablet

Is it possible to have an original conversation about copying these days? After all, it was Picasso who's thought to have said, "Good artists copy, great artists steal." And it was in the early 20th century that the influential typeface designer Frederic W. Goudy wrote that, "The old fellows stole all of our best ideas."

But as those quotes suggest, unoriginality can be valuable. That idea is part of what the new gallery P! (334 Broome Street, New York) will explore over the next six months, with a series of discussions and exhibitions centered around the volatile theme of "copying." As a principal of the New York graphic design firm Project Projects, Prem Krishnamurthy started P! to address issues in art and design that are otherwise under-discussed by the mainstream art world. Like: What, exactly, is copying?

**"There will be works that recur in different versions between exhibitions and a fragmentary copy of a recent show that took place in New York."**

Legally, plagiarism is taking the creative ideas of another and selling and/or publishing them as one's own. But even this definition is subject to considerable room for interpretation. Krishnamurthy is using his gallery space, in part, to examine that copying not as a did-you-or-didn't-you act, but as a spectrum of gradients rooted in three questions: In what context? Through what means? To what end?

"What is labeled as a 'copy' depends very much on both cultural and political questions: who is doing the naming and what they gain from it," Krishnamurthy says in an email. "The boundaries are very fluid and are often determined personally—and in the case of the law, the edges of what is acceptable often follow the interests of those with the most cultural or economic power."

The first phase of Krishnamurthy's planned six-month cycle of exhibitions and programs will center on a reading room created by the designers Rich Brilliant Willing. The space will host twice-weekly discussion groups that look at specific texts on copying from scientific, art-historical, legal, literary, and architectural points of view. Speakers on the schedule range from BuzzFeed editor-in-chief Ben Smith, who will talk about memes, to the curator of the Museum of Chinese in Americas and a researcher from the Metropolian Museum of Art, who will focus on historical and contemporary copying in China.

This discursive program lasts through February and sets the stage for P!'s second act, which kicks off in March and will consist of five one-month exhibitions. Again, art, design, architecture, music, and more will be juxtaposed and take into account copying and repetition in unconventional ways. "In addition to showing artworks and finished pieces," Krishnamurthy says, "there will be works that recur in different versions between exhibitions, a fragmentary copy of a recent show that took place in New York, the premiere of a proposed platform for distributing low-cost art, a monographic exhibition that will be footnoted—literally—with its very sources and appropriations, and more."

Why tackle these issues now? For one, the Internet has brought the question of copying to the fore more than ever before. It's now so easy for something that exists in one context can be easily remade elsewhere in the world either by accident or deliberately. And only recently have graphic designs been accepted as an individual's intellectual property.

But also, copying is timeless. "Some scholars, such as Marcus Boon, would argue that copying and imitation are essential characteristics of human life—that you cannot have creative action without it," Krishnamurthy says. "We never begin with a blank slate; there is always something before us. ... For most of our human history, the study of art consisted of learning from one's masters through copying. Only very recently do we think of originality and innovation—nevertheless contained within a carefully circumscribed discourse, tradition, and frame—as being the primary value."

Krishnamurthy is one of a growing number of design entrepreneurs who have pushed beyond the traditional boundaries of their field into alternative communication platforms. Rather than just inhabiting the online social media "space," he's retrofitting the old fashioned storefront "to start an ongoing dialogue about value—how we determine the economic and cultural worth of certain objects and ideas," he says. "What is it about the unique, the iconic, the so-called original, that we still worship?" The name P!, he explains, stands for many things, and works on multiple levels, one of which is it's emotional: "Excited, enthusiastic, and ready-to-roll." The sentiment may be old, but it's in a very new place.

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*TheAtlantic.com,*
"What's So Bad About Copying: An Art Gallery Scrutinizes Unoriginality"
by Steven Heller
7 February 2013

frieze blog

# Looking Back, Looking Forward: Part 7

JANUARY 07, 2013 *by frieze*

**Peter J. Russo** *is coordinator of the NY Art Book Fair and director of Triple Canopy, a nonprofit online magazine, workspace, and platform for editorial and curatorial activities based in New York, Los Angeles, and Berlin.*

**The many projects of Project Projects**

'Design firm' is simply too restrictive a term to account for the vast repertoire of Project Projects. Principles Prem Krishnamurthy and Adam Michaels both hatched notable initiatives this past year: **P!**, a Chinatown project space where disciplines collide and the conventions of exhibition display are seemingly broken and then reinvented on-the-fly by Krishnamurthy. Michaels, along with historian Jeffrey T. Schnapp, authored ***The Electric Information Age Book***, an invaluable history of 1960s experimental paperback design, with Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium Is the Massage* at center.

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*frieze.com*
"Looking Back, Looking Forward: Part 7"
by Peter Russo
7 January 2013

Art in America

# Top 10 Sculpture, 2012

*by ruba katrib* 01/02/13

*Art in America's* critics write their way through the best of 2012. Ruba Katrib is Curator at SculptureCenter in Long Island City, New York. She recently organized the critically-acclaimed survey of contemporary Surrealism, "A Disagreeable Object."

**P!, New York City**

I am really looking forward to following what Prem Krishnamurthy, of graphic design firm Project Projects, continues to do at this new Lower East Side space, which unapologetically and incisively merges art and design. Since September, Krishnamurthy has laid the groundwork for a program of exhibitions built in stages, showing works by artists and designers like Karel Martens and Sarah Oppenheimer, as well as hosting lectures and parties. P! also traverses the spoken and unspoken parameters of displaying and selling a range of objects and experiences in a storefront space.

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*ArtinAmerica.com*
"Top 10 Sculpture, 2012"
by Ruba Katrib
2 January 2013


11

## PREM KRISHNAMURTHY

*Cofounder, P! Gallery*

**Prem Krishnamurthy's new gallery in New York's Chinatown is named simply P!, as in the first initial of the graphic designer and curator's first name and that of his alliteratively titled studio practice, Project Projects, begun in 2004. Krishnamurthy, 34, has done work for museums and art institutions, including the Cooper-Hewitt's recent "Graphic Design: Now in Production" show, but P!, designed by architecture studio Leong Leong, is Krishnamurthy's first proprietorship. His debut show, which opened in September, featured rare works by graphic designer Karel Martens, conceptual artist Christine Hill, and photographer Chauncey Hare, three disparate artists connected by Krishnamurthy's particular vision.**

What were some of your experiences with curating prior to opening P!?

When I lived in Berlin—that was in the late '90s, supercheap—I used to have events and exhibitions in my kitchen. In school [at Yale] I was working as editor of a lot of things, but Berlin was probably where I became most interested in curating spaces. And then I started Project Projects, and for the first several years we were just trying to get our footing as a graphic-design studio in New York, but I would always try to insert some sort of curatorial thing into other projects that were going on.

Is it true that the logo will be redesigned for each show?

It might be ironic, but there's a German phrase that means "The shoemaker has the worst shoes." It's not that it's the worst ... I wanted the design of this institution to go as far as I could envision pushing it.

If the logo changes with each exhibition, does that mean a graphic designer will be part of every show?

No, not at all. They will be sometimes, but it's not programmatic in that way. Anybody can make a logo. A logo can be many, many things. I think it will be much more interesting when people who are not typically doing that sort of work are asked. Also, between every show I want to change something architecturally about the space. It might be as small as painting the ceiling or the floor, but it might be as large as ripping out walls or changing out the windows. There's this ongoing transformation that happens within the space.

What else do you envision for the gallery?

If there's an ambition to this space, it's to bring together different [artists and designers] who wouldn't otherwise come in contact with each other. And to have people who would otherwise think, "Oh, this is a gallery, this is not for me," come in and have some sort of experience or reaction.

How does graphic design fit into the art/gallery world?

I've always felt there's a lot of affinity between graphic designers and curators. Both are mediators on some level. The thing graphic designers have always known how to do is the means of production, how to distribute. I think a curator does a similar thing, just with space as opposed to other media, and with artists. *Interview by Sue Apfelbaum*


Graphic designer and curator Prem Krishnamurthy in his recently opened Manhattan gallery space, P!. Portrait: Elsbeth Struijk van Bergen. (OPPOSITE) Spreads from *Garmento*.

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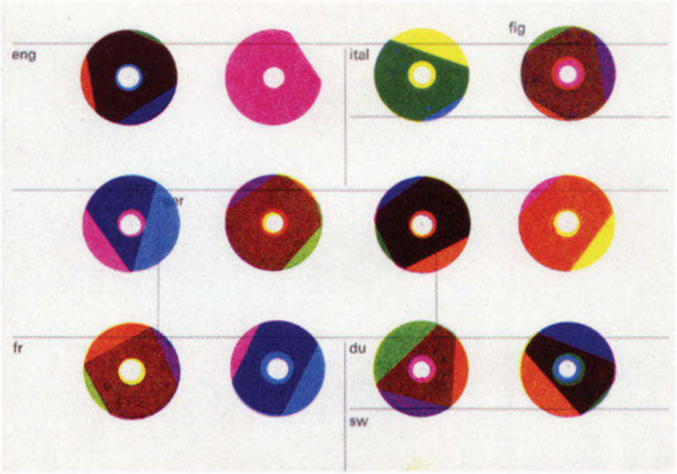
*Surface*
"Prem Krishnamurthy"
by Sue Apfelbaum
November 2012


## Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy

Sofia Hernández Chong Cuy is curator of contemporary art at the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros and artistic director of the 9th Mercosul Biennial, opening on September 13, 2013, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. She lives in New York. (See Contributors.)

7

"PROCESS 01: JOY" (P!, NEW YORK) Prem Krishnamurthy, the founder of this new gallery in New York's Chinatown, is a graphic designer and curator; he also started the studio Project Projects with Adam Michaels, who has his own publishing projects. P!'s program is a mix of art and design and an investigation of communication's uses and applications. Its inaugural exhibition this past fall focused on joy in work and included photography books by Chauncey Hare, monoprints by Karel Martens, and a "Volksboutique" project by Christine Hill inviting neighborhood businesses to bring in their handmade store signs and take versions newly designed by P! Critical, experimental, and participatory—the exhibition was less *about* joy than joyful itself.




4. Left: **Leonilson, *Paulistano está com síndrome de linha cruzada* (São Paulo Inhabitants Have the Crossed-Line Syndrome), 1991,** ink on paper, 9 x 7½".

7. Above: **Karel Martens, untitled, 2012,** letterpress monoprint on archival card with printer marks, 5¾ x 8¼". From "Process 01: Joy."

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*Artforum*
"Best of 2012"
by Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy
November 2012

THE NEW YORKER

OCTOBER 22, 2012

**CHAUNCEY HARE, CHRISTINE HILL, KAREL MARTENS**

The first show at this experimental new space founded by the energetic Prem Krishnamurthy, a graphic designer with ties to the art world, unites three very different artists under the broad theme of labor. Hare, who abandoned a successful photography career to become a therapist and an activist focussed on work-related concerns, exhibits pictures of corporate settings and domestic interiors. Martens, an established designer, creates colorful abstractions using old envelopes, forms, and other business documents. Hill, whose eclectic art practice includes past stints as a tour guide and a talk-show host, has enlisted Krishnamurthy to design new signs for local Chinatown shops in exchange for their old ones; the trade-ins are on view in the gallery. Through Nov. 3. (P!, 334 Broome St. No phone.)

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*The New Yorker*
"Chauncey Hare/Christine Hill/
Karel Martens"
22 October 2012

OBSERVER arts

October 22, 2012

# Controlled Experiments

## 'PROCESS 01: JOY,' AT P!; 'KATRÍN SIGURDADÓTTIR: ELLEFU,' AT ELEVEN RIVINGTON; 'ETEL ADNAN' AT CALLICOON FINE ARTS

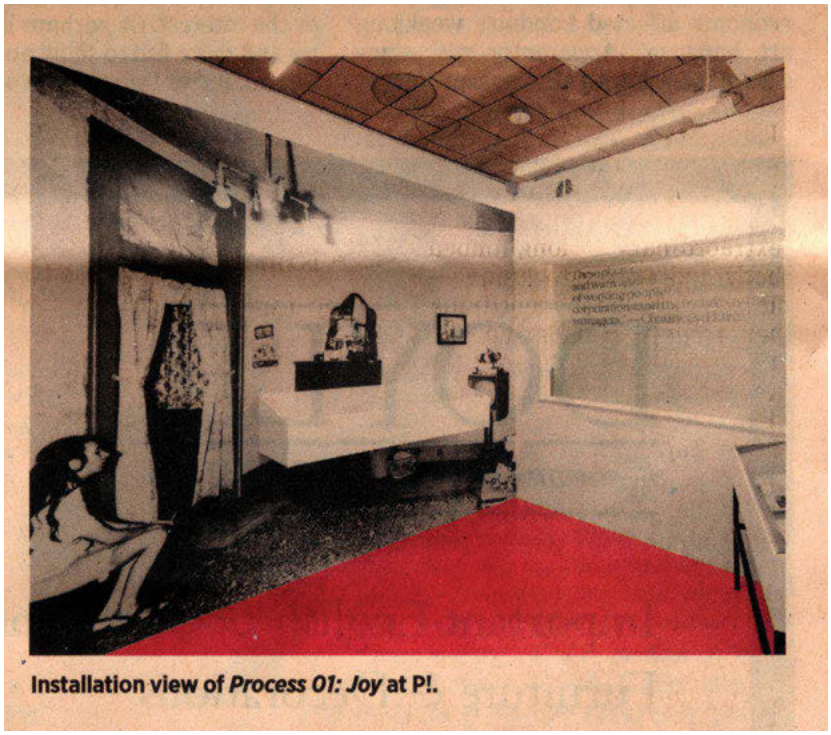
*By Will Heinrich*

**GALLERIES**

When Dutch designer and typographer Karel Martens came to P!, graphic designer Prem Krishnamurthy's new exhibition space on Broome Street, to see the first-ever full show of his letterpress monoprints—installed alongside the aggressively heartbreaking social photography of Chauncey Hare and Christine Hill's installation *Volksboutique Small Business Outpost (Chinatown Division)*—he insisted on some changes. It was the day before the opening, but Mr. Martens felt it was important that the hanging of his prints reflect the loose, spontaneous way in which they had been made. His is the kind of loose spontaneity that results from diligent practice and rigorous editing.

Mr. Martens works slowly, rolling one simple, cheery color at a time onto washers, circuit boards, pieces of Meccano (which are like metal Legos) or "furniture"—the low metal blocks normally used to cram inked letterpress type into place—and then printing simple, graphic forms on found paper with its own aesthetic or historical interest. One Venn-diagram-like figure made from overlapping round C shapes in yellow, blue, pink and white is printed on tissue paper from a box of chocolates; several of the prints use archive cards from the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, which were themselves designed by onetime museum director Willem Sandberg, and which record, in elegant crow quill handwriting, restorations to works by Gerrit Rietveld and Hamish Fulton.

The thoughtful restraint of these experiments allows them to bring into subtle relief the narrow overlap between archiving, curating, and creating, and the intimate interplay between form and function; they creep up on beauty from behind. *Untitled*, circa 2005—the dates are approximate, because Mr. Martens's work is always in progress—shows a six-sided, solid orange-red figure with the outline of a cube drawn in three-quarters view. The color doesn't obscure but rather highlights the printed legend of an archive card from the Moravian Museum in Brno, and the shape, like a Zen painting signed by Yves Klein, at once stamps the card with a new function as art and serves as the product of that function. Claiming nothing, it claims everything.



**Installation view of *Process 01: Joy* at P!.**

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*The New York Observer*
"Controlled Experiments"
by Will Heinrich
22 October 2012

ARTFORUM

# New York

## "Process 01: Joy"

**P!**
**334 Broome Street**
**September 16–November 3**

**View of "Process 01: Joy," 2012.** Christine Hill, *Volksboutique Small Business Outpost (Chinatown Division)*, 2012, mixed media, dimensions variable.

It must take a particular kind of obsession, and a notably self-reflexive sense of humor, to organize an exhibition about feeling lost, lonely, or rebellious in a job, and then subtitle that exhibition "joy." But with the first show to open at this new gallery and project space in Chinatown, director Prem Krishnamurthy, of the design studio Project Projects, manages to delve into the alienation of labor while still deifying the love of one's work.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is an installation by Christine Hill that serves as a remote office and New York satellite for her long-running, Berlin-based *Volksboutique* project. *Volksboutique Small Business Outpost (Chinatown Division)*, 2012, consists of an enormous office desk replete with a typewriter, a blotter pad, a glass dish filled with peppermints, and a vase with fresh flowers, among other effects. The real work, however, is more durational than object-obsessed, less the desk itself than the paperwork being pushed across it for the show's six-week run. Hill collects signs from local businesses, updates the graphics, and returns them to their owners (if they decide they prefer the new sign over the old).

Hill's gesture flirts with generosity on one hand and gentrification on the other. Rather than dodge that ambiguity, "Process 01: Joy" embraces it, folding the *Volksboutique* between two very different artists who take up the pleasures and sorrows of work, and prove them maddeningly interchangeable. Two dozen gorgeous and playful letterpress monoprints by Karel Martens, made between 1958 and 2012, willfully misuse a technology intended for mass production to create unique objects. To the left is a roomful of material related to Chauncey Hare, an engineer who gave up his job at an oil company to pursue photography, only to find museums equally rife with complicities and conflicts of interest. Now a therapist specializing in workplace abuse, Hare is out of the art world completely, but a letter (on view here) to a critic he hoped would review one of his books is a devastating reminder of the work that matters, artwork and otherwise.

*— Kaelen Wilson-Goldie*

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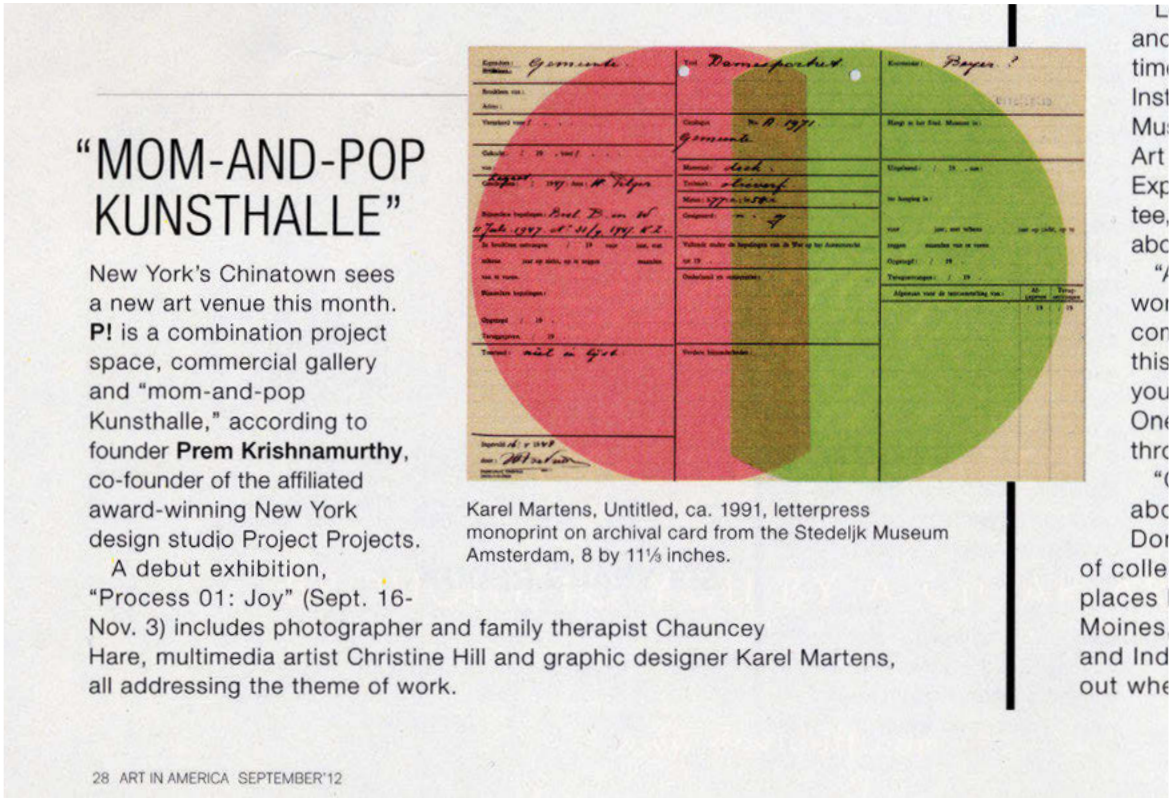
*Artforum*
by Kaelen Wilson-Goldie
16 October 2012

P!

# "MOM-AND-POP KUNSTHALLE"

New York's Chinatown sees a new art venue this month. **P!** is a combination project space, commercial gallery and "mom-and-pop Kunsthalle," according to founder **Prem Krishnamurthy**, co-founder of the affiliated award-winning New York design studio Project Projects.

A debut exhibition, "Process 01: Joy" (Sept. 16-Nov. 3) includes photographer and family therapist Chauncey Hare, multimedia artist Christine Hill and graphic designer Karel Martens, all addressing the theme of work.



Karel Martens, Untitled, ca. 1991, letterpress monoprint on archival card from the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 8 by 11⅓ inches.

28 ART IN AMERICA SEPTEMBER'12

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*Art in America*
"Mom and Pop Kunsthalle"
September 2012

Design Miami/ Design Log

25 September 2012

Exhibitions of Note

# Inaugural Exhibition at P!

**Prem Krishnamurthy, one half of the design studio Project Projects, is extending his curatorial efforts into a new multidisciplinary exhibition space located in New York's Chinatown. Called P!, the space functions as a commercial gallery, project area and what they term a 'Mom-and-Pop Kunsthalle.'**


P! / 334 Broome St / New York

**The inaugural exhibition *Process 01: Joy* opens in September of this year and features the work of Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill and Karel Martens. The architectural concept of the space was designed by Leong Leong Architecture and will evolve for each exhibition that takes place.**

**The exhibition focuses on three topics that are common in contemporary discourse: labor, alienation and the love of work. Each artist featured offers his or her own position on the themes, culminating in an unstable thesis.**

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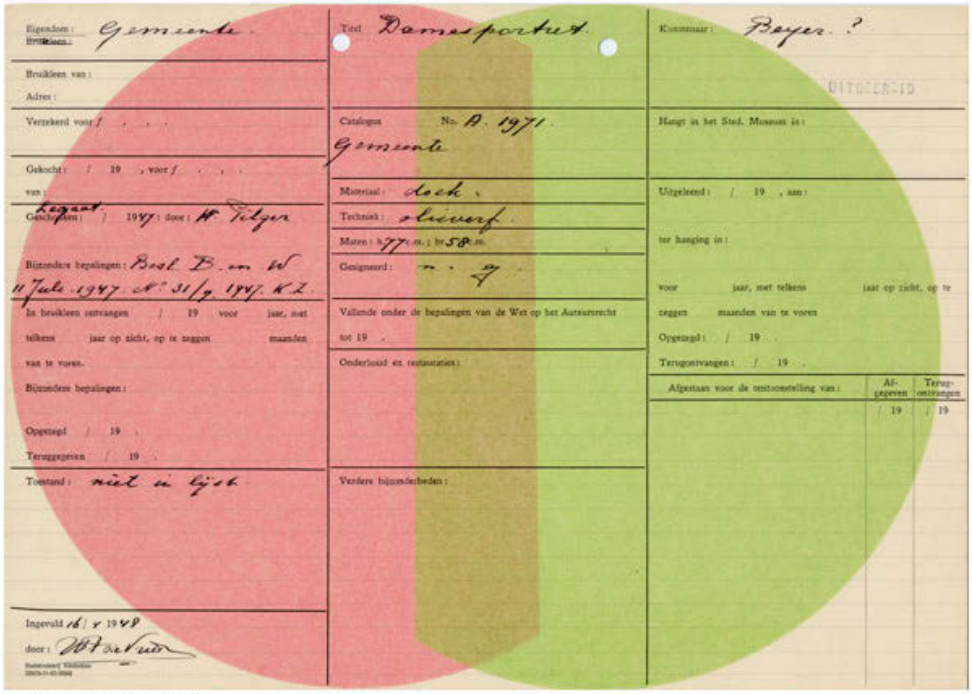
*Design Miami / Design Log*
"Inaugural Exhibition at P!"
by Brandon Grom
25 September 2012




Untitled, 1991 / Karel Martens

**P! presents multiple copies of Chauncey Hare's published books alongside archival and reproduced materials and photographs. And just like punching a time clock, every day at 6pm the pages of books on display will be turned to offer a new interpretation on the balance of life and work.**

Courtesy of Chauncey Hare

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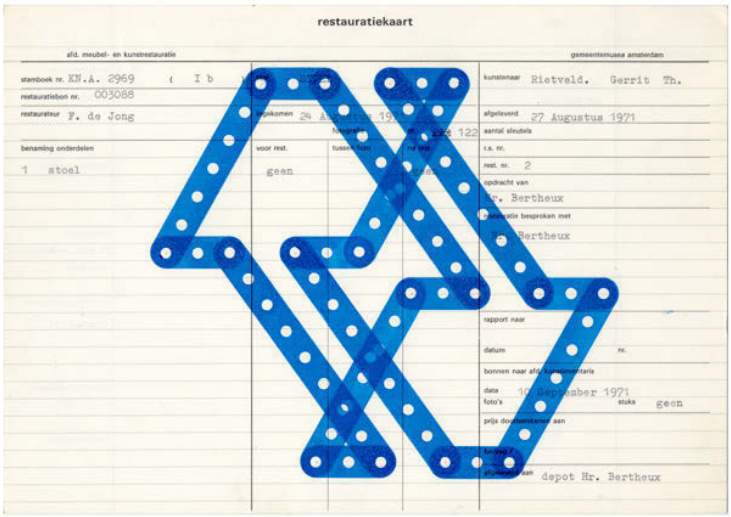
25 September 2012

**Christine Hill transforms P! into a "remote office" to extend her activities of "The Volksboutique Small Business" in Berlin. At P! she is using the office to collect research on local small business. She has lined up eclectic programming that includes lectures by business owners, urban researchers and gentrification experts to create an on-going dialogue between P! and its local context.**


Volksboutique Small Business / Berlin / 2010

**The stand-out of the exhibition is rare and never-before seen work from the graphic designer Karel Martens. Martens creates prints on a small letterpress, often on pre-printed sheets and found material including catalogue cards, collection cards from museums and raw packing materials. On display at P! is a large selection of Martens' monoprints, including archival works from the 1950s and 1960s. Martens also created the logo for P!, the first in a series that will change after each exhibition.**




Untitled, 1991 / Karel Martens

**The exhibition opens September 16th and runs through November 3rd at P!**

**-Brandon Grom**

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*Design Miami / Design Log*
"Inaugural Exhibition at P!"
by Brandon Grom
25 September 2012

Posted 09.24.12 | PERMALINK | PRINT Comments

Mark Lamster

# Joy, Illustrated

I've been stuck in bed for the past week, an unpleasant circumstance that kept me from the highly anticipated opening of a friend's latest project. I refer not to the Barclay Center (Hi Gregg!), which you can read about elsewhere, ad nauseam, but to P!, a new experimental gallery that is the vision of Prem Krishnamurthy, one of the three principals of the design firm Project Projects. It's a small space, but one that is maleable (thanks to an ingenious moving wall created by Leong Leong Architecture), and has a blood red floor that adds a visual kick to whatever happens to be on display.

It should not be a surprise that a designer, who by professional necessity must always be switching intellectual gears for new clients, would inaugurate a gallery with a show based on the diversity and pure pleasure of artistic practice. Such is the case with P!'s first exhibition, "Process 01: Joy," which features the work of photographer Chauncey Hare, artist Christine Hill, and designer Karel Martens. For design nerds, a show of Martens's monoprints alone would be a cause for major celebration; to see them paired here with Hare's enigmatic workspace images and an installation by Hill, who is turning a section of the small gallery into a research office, is gravy.

P! is at 334 Broome Street, just off the Bowery, skirting the edge of Chinatown. In an effort to engage with the surrounding community, its written materials are produced in dual language. At the very least, it's a nice gesture, and one too few institutions make. Check it out. Then go for dim sum.


# Process 01: Joy

**Chinatown's new multidisciplinary exhibition space *P!* kicks off its programming by confronting the work of Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill, and Karel Martens, while simultaneously proposing a series of parallel events. A news report from New York**

Last 16 September, *Process 01: Joy* kicked off the programming of *P!*, a new multidisciplinary exhibition space in New York's Chinatown. Featuring a unique interaction of work by Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill, and Karel Martens, the exhibition focuses on topics that periodically appear, disappear, and reappear in and out of contemporary discourse: labor, alienation, and the love of work.

Rather than attempting to tackle these themes head on, *Process 01: Joy* presents three extremely disparate positions that together suggest a loose and unstable thesis. The materials on view span a range of documentary, anthropological, and performative approaches to questions of labor and, at the same time, enact self-reflexive, parallel spaces of production and "off-time."

The specific enquiry conducted by Karel Martens since the 1950s is further analysed in a conversation happening 22 September, when curators Gary Carrion-Murayari (New Museum) and Kim Conaty (Museum of Modern Art) join Karel Martens to discuss historical questions of labor, disciplinary crossover, and iconoclastic approaches to printing technology.

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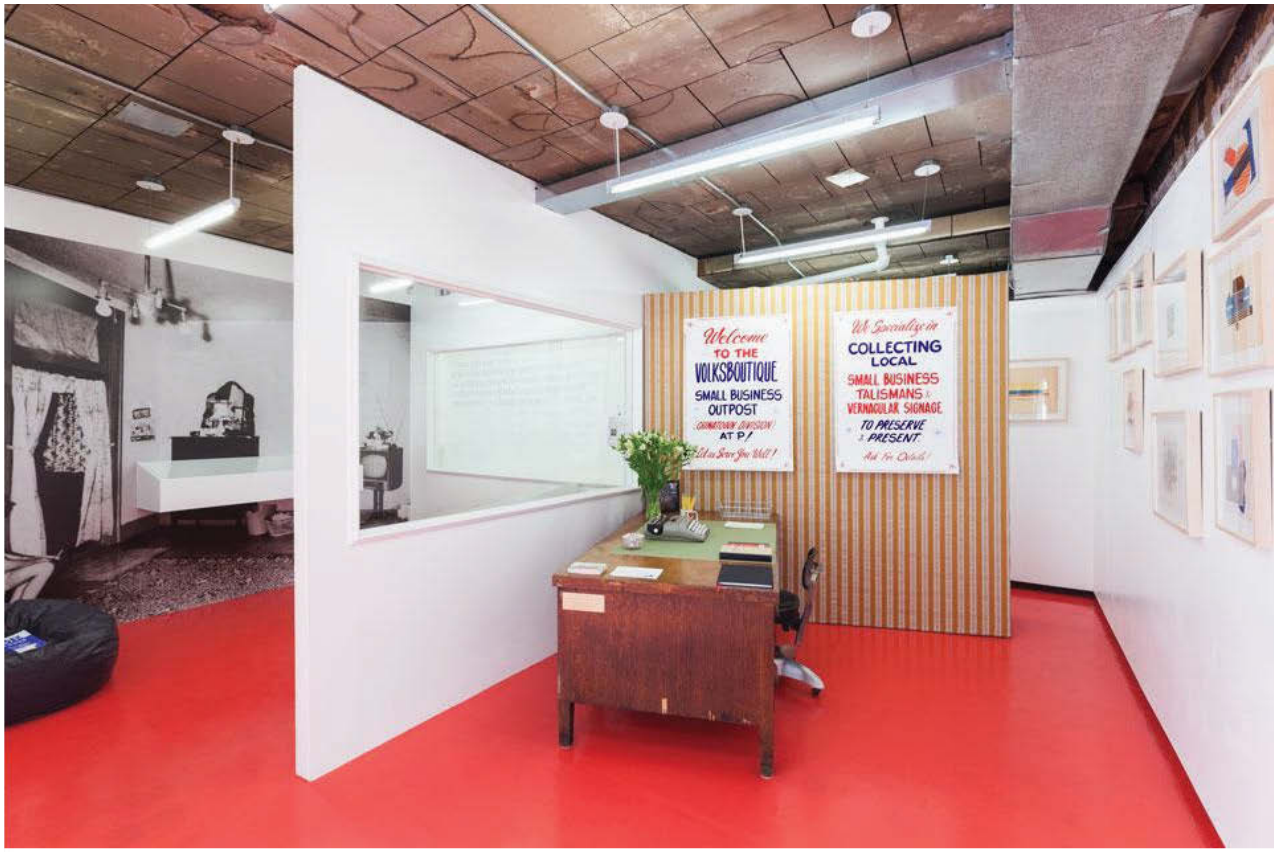
*Domus*
19 September 2012




↑ Top: A scene from the opening of *P!*, a new multidisciplinary exhibition space in Chinatown. Above: *Process 01: Joy* exhibition view, with work by Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill, and Karel Martens. Photo by Naho Kubota

Founded by Project Projects' Prem Krishnamurthy, *P!* acts as an extension to the curatorial, editorial, and publishing work of the studio, and proposes an experimental space of display where possibilities of disparate disciplines, historical periods, and modes of production come together.

The self-described "free-wheeling combination of project space, commercial gallery, and Mom-and-Pop-Kunsthalle" seeks to emphasize rupture over tranquility, interference over mere coexistence, transparency over obfuscation, and passion over cool remove. The space's architectural concept, designed by Leong Leong Architecture, premieres with *Process 01: Joy*, and will evolve with each successive installation at *P!*.

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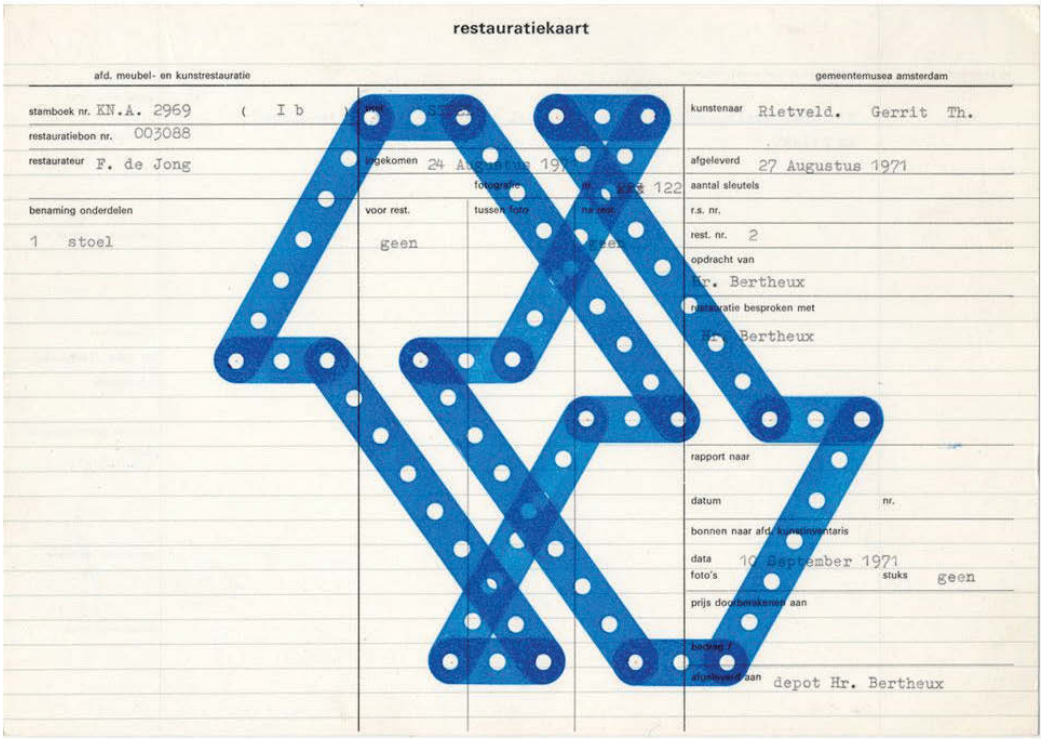
*Domus*
19 September 2012

P!


↑ A scene from the opening of *P!*, a new multidisciplinary exhibition space in Chinatown




↑ Karel Martens, *Untitled*, c. 1991

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19 September 2012

# Open Agenda | P! in Chinatown

CULTURE | By NANCY MACDONELL | SEPTEMBER 18, 2012, 4:15 PM | Comment

Outside P!, Project Projects's new exhibition space on Broome Street. *Naho Kubota*

"I don't want to come off as polemical," Prem Krishnamurthy says as he surveys his new space on Broome Street in New York's Chinatown, "but I want people to know what this place is." Part commercial gallery, part project space, with a design and logo that will evolve with each exhibition, P!, which opened over the weekend with a show called "Process 01: Joy," is not your usual art-world entity. Rather than presenting the anonymous front of the typical gallery, it spells out exactly why it's there and what's on display in both English and Chinese. A sign in the window describes it as a "multidisciplinary exhibition space" and invites passers-by to add their own two cents with a wipe-away marker. "I'm not in a vacuum here — I'm in Chinatown," says Krishnamurthy, who is a co-founder of Project Projects, a graphic design studio whose offices are just around the corner. "There are people who come to this neighborhood to look at art and then there are people who live here and do their grocery shopping here. I'd like them both to feel that they can come in. If they come in and they're not interested, that's fine — at least they know what it is. It's not a mysterious unexplained space."

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*New York Times T Magazine*
"Open Agenda | P! in Chinatown"
by Nancy MacDonell
18 September 2012

The first show brings together three artists with seemingly nothing in common beyond their concern with work: Chauncey Hare, a self-described "working person who made photographs for a short period of his life" and no longer exhibits; the Berlin-based Christine Hill, who will orchestrate various swaps and exchanges with local small businesses during the course of the show; and Karel Martens, a Dutch graphic designer and printmaker whose output has been widely published but rarely exhibited. Both Krishnamurthy and his staff will be laboring on Hill's project during the six weeks the show will be up, further underscoring his desire to integrate the gallery with its surroundings. "We're going to be going out and asking for signs and talismans to swap — you give us your sign and we'll make one for you," he says. "So I'm going to get to know the neighbors."

*P!, 334 Broome Street, New York, is open Wednesday to Sunday 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. "Process 01: Joy" is on view through Nov. 3.*

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*New York Times T Magazine*
by Nancy MacDonell
18 September 2012

GalleristNY

art

# *The Season Begins: Scrappy Expansion, Autopilot Art and a New Avant-Garde*

## Amid all of this bustle there is a discouraging aesthetic consensus, but alternatives abound

By Andrew Russeth 9/11 7:17pm



A still from 'Home 3' by Breuning.

As hard as it is to believe—weren't we just on Randall's Island for Frieze?—the New York art season has officially begun. The first real event came last Tuesday with the premiere of Olaf Breuning's film *Home 3*, a gloriously unhinged panegyric to the city, at Soho's Swiss Institute. It was drizzling, so PR reps were outfitted in Jabba the Hutt ponchos, welcoming everyone back together after their time away, their trips to Basel, Kassel, Genk, Amagansett.

But things really began in earnest on Thursday evening in Chelsea with the first opening receptions of the year. Throngs took to the Chelsea streets. (Doesn't it feel a little bit more crowded every year?) Hope always springs eternal among the city's art types in September, but people seemed especially ebullient this go-'round.

Gagosian's 12th gallery, in Paris. (Jean Nouvel Ateliers)

And why not? New York is a boomtown for art at the moment. Over drinks last week, a dealer marveled at the "arms race"—the space-and-location contest—taking place all around town, and not only at the top end. The expansionary ethos is trickling down. At one end of the spectrum is Gagosian, the original expander, who, with 11 global galleries under his belt, just made a point of telling everyone (via *Bloomberg News*) he is bringing $130 million worth of art to a fair in Rio de Janeiro this week, and who is soon to open a second gallery in Paris and a cafe and shop on the ground floor of his Upper East Side headquarters. Nipping at Gagosian's heels are Zwirner and Pace, which, even as they expand on their home turf, are hatching London branches.

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Autopilot at and a New Avant-Garde"
by Andrew Russeth
11 September 2012

At the other end there are the contenders, the smaller shops looking to stake out a spot in a crowded marketplace. Some are joining forces. Jack Hanley and Nicelle Beauchene just grabbed a new building on the Lower East Side, as has Canada, which has hitched its wagon, space-wise, to the blue-chip Marlborough. Lisa Cooley and Maxwell Graham have traded up, and Laurel Gitlen is on the move. In the West Village and Chelsea, Michele Maccarone and Alexander Gray are growing, and 303 Gallery's Lisa Spellman is eying new-and-improved Chelsea digs.

But amid all of this bustle there is, on the top tier, a discouraging aesthetic consensus. And that, too, has sadly trickled down. Many artists are on autopilot, and it doesn't help that collectors—who continue to gobble up autopilot art—are too, as Jerry Saltz has noted in the past. In polite company, everyone agrees that most shows are *pretty good*—"everyone's going along to get along," as an artist friend put it.

In a recent essay, the photographer Carter Mull lamented the "overabundance of nostalgic abstract painting in the world today." And it is lamentable, but so, for that matter, is all the visually dead nth-generation post-minimalist conceptual sculpture, the half-baked ironic art and the overwrought political work.

Though Mr. Mull particularly chastised the Lower East Side's relatively green dealers for this pervasive conservatism, there, at least, it is somewhat understandable. Profits are smaller at their price points, and one rough season, one bad art fair, can spell disaster. Many L.E.S. dealers say their businesses are growing at steady, sustainable rates these days—and hence those expansions.

(And, really, can we blame anyone—artists or dealers—for not continuing to innovate once they've struck gold? Or for shoehorning themselves into established approaches in order to strike it? Gold is needed: Brooklyn, where many of these people live, is now the second-most-expensive place to live in America, after Manhattan, according to a new study.)

Detail of Lassry's 'Collie (Sky),' 2012. (The artist and David Kordansky Gallery)

Despite its outbreak of conservatism, the L.E.S. is still where much of the most interesting art is being shown, where you are most most likely to get bowled over by something truly strange. Adventurous artists, curators and dealers are testing new models, and, with great brio, risking failure. There is plenty to be optimistic about.

Much of the exciting new art is as modest in scale as the spaces in which it's shown. Unlike the grandiose spectacles so common in the Chelsea bazaar, it rewards close looking. At the most recent Whitney Biennial, we saw that it is comfortable being interdisciplinary and collaborative, embracing dance, music, film and fashion.

I'm speaking here of work that can be deadpan and digital or elegiac and personal and poetic, or all of these things—of artists and outfits like Michele Abeles, Talia Chetrit, Lucas Blalock, Elad Lassry, Ryan Foerster, Margaret Lee, Chris Wiley (also the most astute critic of emerging photography), Josh Kline, Esther Kläs, Amy Yao, Travess Smalley, Zak Kitnick, Georgia Sagri, Dis magazine, Elad Lassry, Darren Bader, Ryan Trecartin, K8 Hardy and A.K. Burns.

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by Andrew Russeth
11 September 2012

Kogelnik's 'Outer Space,' 1964. (The Kiki Kogelnik Foundation and Simone Subal Gallery)

Those are the newer names, and you'll see them plenty this season (some are in hotly anticipated group shows coming up at SculptureCenter and MoMA), but it's not just the youth that's garnering attention. Over the past few years the art world has found a new enthusiasm for older artists, including many not well known in the U.S. At Callicoon Fine Arts, Photios Giovanis is opening the season with octogenarian Lebanese artist and writer Etel Adnan. On the Bowery, Simone Subal has the late Pop artist Kiki Kogelnik. Earlier this year Mr. Graham showed Peter Fend, whose art takes the form of inventive proposals to environmental and political problems—stretching art to its outer limit. MoMA has a retrospective of the great Polish sculptor Alina Szapocznikow. MoMA PS1 has grabbed "Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980" from Los Angeles's Hammer Museum. (PS1 is one of the great institutional success stories of the past year. Though it's easy to lampoon director Klaus Biesenbach's zest for celebrity, he and curator Peter Eleey are moving nimbly to bring in new art as it's made. Even its bizarro Performance Dome has been a vital site for experimentation.)

Alina Szapocznikow's 'Petit Dessert I (Small Dessert I),' 1970–71.

But your best bet for aesthetic revelation will lie with the scrappy outfits—their bills paid by a month-to-month combination of volunteers, day jobs, grants and the odd sale—that are percolating on the periphery of gallery neighborhoods, and that eschew straightforward exhibitions (and, usually, artist representation) for heady admixtures of disciplines and activities, some of which can barely, by conventional standards, be considered art. One example is 155 Freeman, the new space run by the DIY Public School, publisher Triple Canopy and film-purveying Light Industry in the north section of Greenpoint, not far from Rawson Projects, Real Fine Arts and Cleopatra's, two other galleries excelling far from the Chelsea crowd.

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11 September 2012

Christine Hill, 'Volksboutique Small Business Berlin,' 2010. (Felix Oberhage/P!)

Back in Manhattan, Prem Krishnamurthy, a co-founder of the design outfit **Project Projects**, is opening a—yes—project space on the Lower East Side called **P!**, which will showcase anything that happens to strike his fancy. His M.O.: "It's just the idea there are certain things that I would like to see in the world." He elaborated, "It will be a space that can function as a meeting point for different kinds of objects and communities." First up is a show of work by photographer Chauncey Hare, prints by graphic designer Karel Martens and a "performative/relational project" by Christine Hill about neighborhood businesses.

Not far away, down on Division Street, Ingrid Chu and Savannah Gorton, operating under the name **Forever & Today, Inc.**, are hosting unusual exhibitions and events in their 100-square-foot storefront. The multitasking cosmopolitan collective Slavs and Tatars—which also has a show at MoMA—arrives next month. "It's the idea of contemporary art being in the moment, but always changing," is how Ms. Gorton explained her venture's name. "It's also kind of a joke. People would say, 'It sounds like a soap opera,' and we would say, 'Yeah, it is kind of a soap opera, running a little nonprofit.'" Other fledgling outfits in the area include **the Artist's Institute**, which is devoting its season to the consideration of **Haim Steinbach**, and Summer Guthery's **Canal Series**, which hosts periodic events in a space at West Broadway and Canal that have ranged from a film shoot to an Alice B. Toklas–inspired feast.

Ask around the art world and you hear a lot of people who are enervated by the status quo, even as they promote it. (This writer included, sometimes.) But things may be changing. There is a feeling in the air that the excesses that characterize the top end can be sidestepped and countered. New artists and new models offer alternatives. Let's see how the next 10 months play out.

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*(Home 3 image via **Breuning's Tumblr**. Work by Szapocznikow © The Estate of Alina Szapocznikow/Piotr Stanisławski/ADAGP, Paris. Photo by Thomas Mueller, courtesy Broadway 1602, New York; and Galerie Gisela Capitain GmbH, Cologne)*

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# Experimental Entrepreneurial Exhibition Space

by STEVEN HELLER on SEPTEMBER 7, 2012



The headline should read: "Design Entrepreneur Stakes Out New Territory." Prem Krishnamurthy, a principal of Project Projects in New York, has opened P!, a new exhibition space in Chinatown. It launches next week, on September 16, with a three-person show: *Process 01: Joy*, featuring works by the former photographer and now occupational therapist Chauncey Hare, the conceptual artist Christine Hill, and the graphic designer Karel Martens. According to a press release,

> the exhibition focuses on topics that periodically appear, disappear, and reappear in and out of contemporary discourse: labor, alienation, and the love of work. Rather than attempting to tackle these themes head on, the exhibition presents three wildly disparate positions that together suggest a loose and unstable thesis. The materials on view span a range of documentary, anthropological, and performative approaches to questions of labor and "off-time."

Hill, for instance, has transformed the new space (see below) into a "remote office." (If you're in New York, visit P! at 334 Broome Street; *Process 01* runs September 16–November 3.) So, interested by this new turn in design entrepreneurship, I asked Krishnamurthy, the director and curator of P!, to talk about the gallery's mission.


*P!, 334 Broome St, New York / Photo: Prem Krishnamurthy*

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**You've taken an entrepreneurial leap and opened an exhibition space called P!. What triggered this risky endeavor?**

The exhibition space is a proposition: a new venue to present and exhibit works from different disciplines in adventurous ways. This flows seamlessly from the work Project Projects has pursued for almost nine years. Over this time, the practice has grown to intersect with many incredible people, from artists, architects, and curators to academics, activists, policy-makers, and more. What's become clear is that the ideas and discussions one community might take for granted are often unfamiliar within another circle. So P! is a space for different things to interact, generating productive friction.

**What will distinguish your space from others?**

P! sees itself as an essentially public space. It's street-level, it's open, it's transparent about what it does and how it operates. It's in Chinatown—so the signage is in both English and Chinese. There is a desire here to engage and draw in different publics, much as the exhibitions themselves mingle disparate bodies of knowledge, disciplines, and historical periods in the same space. The first show juxtaposes a politically-minded "documentary photographer" from the '70s who dropped out of the art world, unique letterpress monoprints by one of the foremost practitioners of graphic design, and a conceptual artist's project that will establish contact with other small-businesses in Chinatown. It's this kind of unusual mix that P! proposes.

*Chauncey Hare, Standard Oil Company of California, from "This Was Corporate America, 1976–77."*

At the same time, P! takes presentation seriously. Very seriously. The white-cube gallery doesn't present aesthetic objects objectively. It's quite obvious by now that there's nothing "neutral" about the ways in which art and culture are produced and then displayed; they reflect particular economic and ideological positions. P! highlights presentation and mediation itself, as a way to unmask how context influences the way we read things in the world. The space introduces ruptures that ask questions.

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*Christine Hill, "Volksboutique Small Business Berlin, 2010" / Photo: Felix Oberhage*

For the first show, and perhaps beyond, the floor is painted bright red. The storefront window displays an interactive, ever-changing mission statement. We'll invite one of the people of every exhibition to design a new logo for P!. Instead of being fixed, P! transforms with each presentation and different sets of participants. It's not only a space; P! is a way of doing things.

**Architecturally, what is the concept behind the gallery?**

The architecture, developed by Leong Leong Architecture, takes as key themes never-ending construction and the production of architecture itself. Rather than eliminating the quirks of this former exhaust-system contracting office—which included interior office windows, room divisions, window shades, and, unsurprisingly, an overly-robust exhaust system—we've chosen to leave them, while also highlighting their unusual character. We ripped out the drop ceiling and sheetrock walls to reveal the water-stained ceiling and wallpapered exterior walls, then floated exhibition walls on top to emphasize the contrast between original condition and new design. A massive movable partition serves as both room-divider and flexible exhibition wall. Variability is the most significant element—with each show, we will change an architectural feature of the space, whether ripping out a wall, covering over the ceiling, or something else we can't even yet imagine—in order to reflect upon and interact with the work in that particular exhibition. From one show to another, the space is remade anew.

**Why did you name it P!?**

P! is a mathematical expression, a factorial, which represents the multiplication of all the numbers that precede it. For example, "5!" equals "5 x 4 x 3 x 2 x 1." In a similar manner, I think of P! as an accumulation and multiplication of many activities and explorations—giving them a home and launching a space for further experimentation and inquiry. Plus, the exclamation point expresses that P! is always ready to get down on the dance floor!

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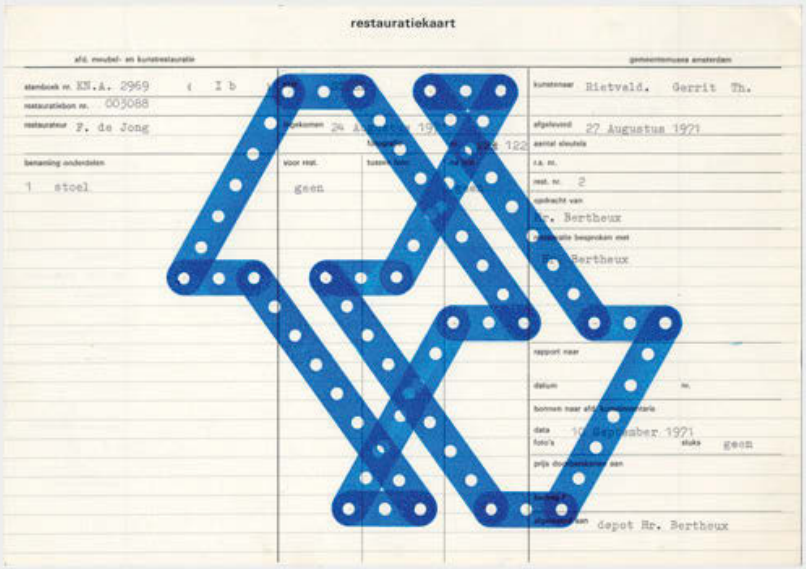


*Karel Martens, "Untitled," circa 1991, Letterpress monoprint on archival catalog card from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 11 1/4 x 7 7/8 inches*

*Karel Martens, Logo #1 for P!, 2012*

[See yesterday's Nightly Daily Heller for a look at the John Birch Society. ]

*Project Projects guest designed* Print's *February 2011 issue—which is now 60 percent off as part of MyDesignShop's big fall sale. Order a copy for $6.48, or get all six of our 2011 guest-art-director issues as PDFs for $7.99.*

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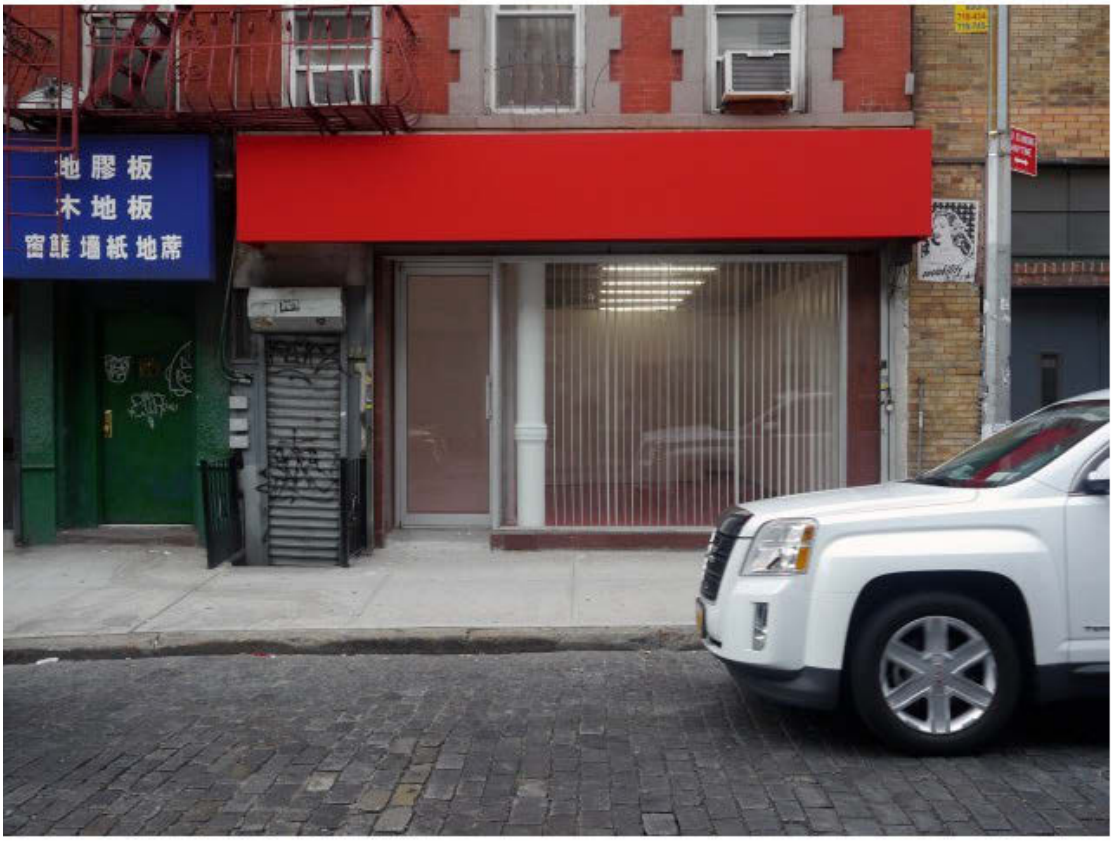
# Project Projects Co-Founder Opens a "Mom-and-Pop-Kunsthalle" in Chinatown

by WILL BRAND AND CORINNA KIRSCH *on* AUGUST 31, 2012 · 2 COMMENTS




If you have any interaction with the art world whatsoever, you've come across a book, website, or exhibition designed by Project Projects: they've worked with everyone from MoMA and the Whitney to Paper Monument and Bard CCS. Now one of the firm's co-founders, Prem Krishnamurthy, will open P!, a gallery in Chinatown, at 334 Broome Street. "Gallery" doesn't accurately describe Krishnamurthy's lofty ambitions for P!, which aims to be more like a "Mom-and-Pop-Kunsthalle." It will open to the public on September 16 with a group exhibition by Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill, and Karel Martens, that has something to do with labor (ew), alienation (ew), and love of work (yes!). We wouldn't be posting if we didn't think it was gonna be good. This is a space to watch.

Tagged as: broome street, Chauncey Hare, Christine Hill, Karel Martens, Krishnamurthy, openings, project projects