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Cover: **DYLAN LYNCH**, *Sucked in Juice Box* 2013, acrylic on steel, 53.3 x 66 x 71.1 cm. Courtesy the artist and The Still House Group.

**STARS + STRIPES: AMERICAN ART OF THE
21ST CENTURY FROM THE GOLDBERG COLLECTION**

STARS + STRIPES: AMERICAN ART OF THE 21ST CENTURY FROM THE GOLDBERG COLLECTION

A Bathurst Regional Art Gallery exhibition in
conjunction with Lisa and Danny Goldberg

Toured by Museums & Galleries of NSW

Curated by Richard Perram OAM

**RICHARD ALDRICH
ALLORA & CALZADILLA
CORY ARCANGEL
WALEAD BESHTY
SEBASTIAN BLACK
MIKE BOUCHET
JOE BRADLEY
MATT CONNORS
ARA DYMOND
JEFF ELROD
SAM FALLS
RICHARD JACKSON
XYLOR JANE
ELAD LASSRY
GLENN LIGON
ISRAEL LUND
DYLAN LYNCH**

**BRENDAN LYNCH
DASH MANLEY
JUSTIN MATHERLY
ADAM McEWEN
YOSHIAKI MOCHIZUKI
SETH PRICE
JULIA ROMMEL
STERLING RUBY
BEN SCHUMACHER
HUGH SCOTT-DOUGLAS
DAVINA SEMO
JOSH SMITH
HAIM STEINBACH
TAVARES STRACHAN
NED VENA
MICHAEL WILLIAMS**

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Published in association with the exhibition
Stars + Stripes: American Art of the 21st Century from the Goldberg Collection

A Bathurst Regional Art Gallery exhibition in conjunction with Lisa and Danny Goldberg, toured by Museums & Galleries of NSW. Curated by Richard Perram OAM

Exhibition Tour Dates:

Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst NSW
3 October – 16 November 2014

Grafton Regional Art Gallery, Grafton NSW
15 May – 21 June 2015

Manly Art Gallery and Museum, Sydney NSW
4 July – 30 August 2015

Cowra Regional Art Gallery, Cowra NSW
11 September – 18 October 2015

Manning Regional Art Gallery, Taree NSW
30 October 2015 - 17 January 2016

Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo NSW
30 January – 1 May 2016

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Wagga Wagga NSW
14 May – 3 July 2016

Latrobe Regional Art Gallery, Morwell VIC
16 July – 25 September 2016

Ipswich Art Gallery, Ipswich QLD
15 October – 27 November 2016

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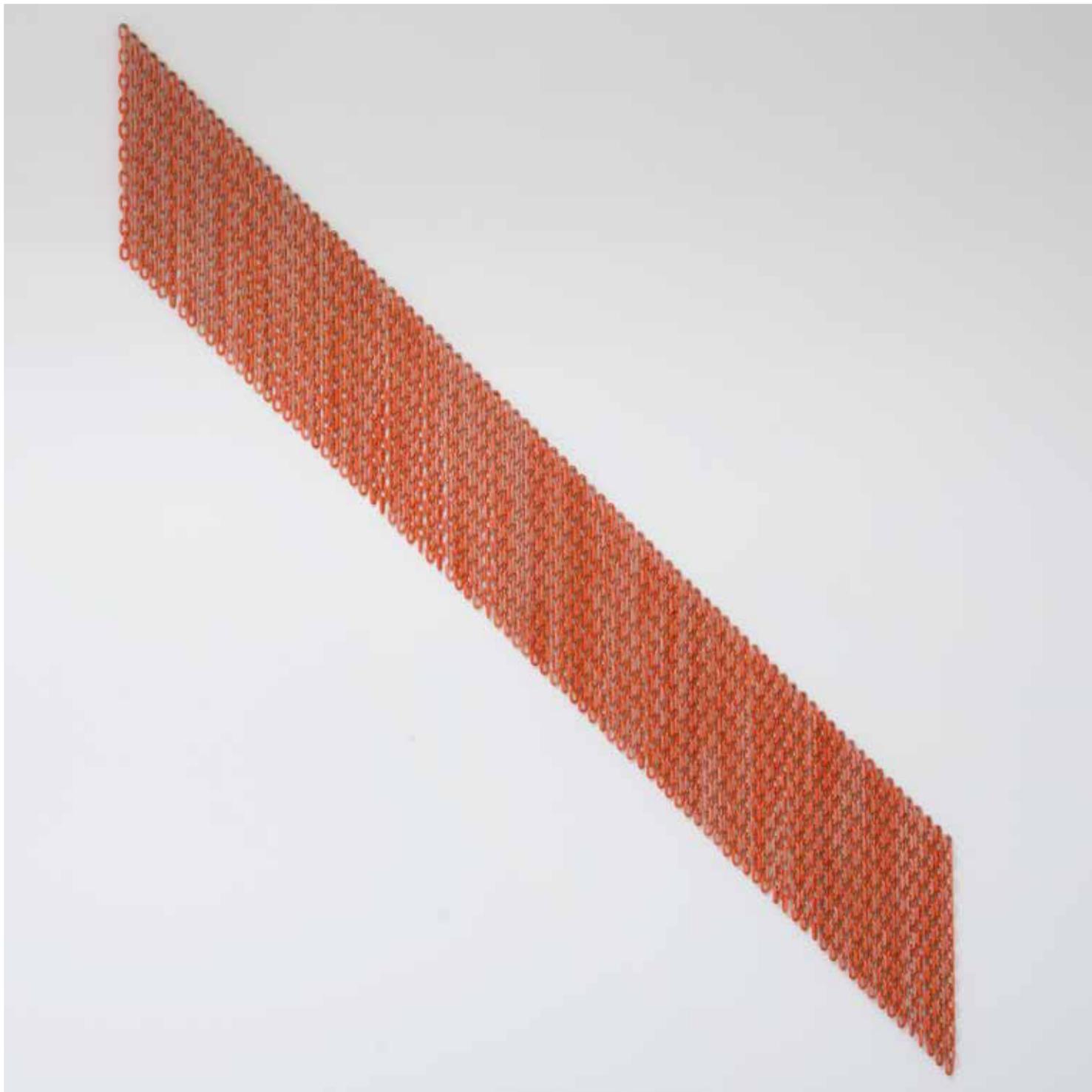
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All dimensions are in centimetres,
height before width



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RICHARD JACKSON

Bad Dog (Blue) 2007,
aluminium, hardware,
MDO, formica, 69 x 76 x
46; Pedestal: 108 x 42.5
x 62.5 cm. Courtesy the
artist and Hauser & Wirth.
Photo: Stefan Altenburger.
Photography, Zürich.

Opposite: **DAVINA SEMO**
*I will be hard and hard, my
face will turn rain like the
stones* 2013, painted steel
chain, 223.5 x 218.5 cm.
Courtesy Marlborough
Chelsea, New York.



JEFF ELROD
FIGMENT 2012, acrylic
and ink on canvas, 198.1
x 162.6 cm. Courtesy the
Journal Gallery. Photo:
Sharon Hickey.

FOREWORD

Drawn from the private collection of Lisa and Danny Goldberg, *Stars + Stripes: American Art of the 21st Century from the Goldberg Collection* is an energetic selection of recent American art produced by some of that country's most prominent contemporary artists.

When approached to consider organising this exhibition and tour I was overcome by the Goldbergs' generosity and Danny's enthusiasm to share. Equally embracing was Richard Perram's desire to curate the show as part of Bathurst Regional Art Gallery's impressive program.

Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) supports a dynamic mix of museums, galleries and Aboriginal cultural centres in both metropolitan and regional areas throughout the state. The regional galleries we work with are among the finest Australia-wide. There is no doubt that relationships established here, between art collector, gallery, contemporary art and regional audiences, will ensure an ongoing relevance and enhanced profile for the sector.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the support we receive from the NSW Government through Arts NSW, and assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Michael Rolfe
CEO
Museums & Galleries of NSW



JULIA ROMMEL
Georgie 2014, oil on
linen, 41.9 x 34.3 cm.
Courtesy the artist
and Bureau, New York.
Photo: Jason Mandella.



DASH MANLEY
*one second loop (grand
palais) 09* 2013
gouache, watercolour,
ink, canvas, coroplast,
lighting gels, acrylic
sheet, and wood, 124.5
x 94 cm. Courtesy
the artist and Jessica
Silverman Gallery.
Photo: Jeff McLane.



STERLING RUBY
SPCE (4423) 2013,
collage, paint and
urethane on cardboard,
196.9 x 170.2 cm.
Courtesy the artist
and Xavier Hufkens,
Brussels. Photo:
Robert Wedemeyer,
Los Angeles.

INTRODUCTION

Bathurst Regional Art Gallery (BRAG) is proud to present *Stars + Stripes: American Art of the 21st Century from the Goldberg Collection*.

This will be the first time in 47 years that a major exhibition of contemporary American art will be seen in Australia.

In 1967 the Museum of Modern Art, New York toured *Two Decades of American Painting* to Australia. That groundbreaking exhibition introduced Australian audiences to the work of a new generation of American artists including Andy Warhol (aged 39), Jasper Johns (aged 37) and Robert Rauschenberg (aged 42).

Stars + Stripes: American Art of the 21st Century from the Goldberg Collection will introduce a new generation of equally important American artists to Australian audiences.

Drawn from the private collection of Sydney-based Lisa and Danny Goldberg, *Stars + Stripes* is a vibrant selection of new American art by some of America's hottest young names, and many of the works have been produced within the last three years.

This exhibition of 57 works drawn from an extensive collection of over 200 includes painting, drawing, photography and sculpture, and highlights the cutting-edge practices of a generation of American artists who explore the creative and conceptual possibilities that these mediums hold.

Based predominately in New York and Los Angeles, the 33 artists include Richard Aldrich, Allora & Calzadilla, Cory Arcangel, Walead Beshty, Jeff Elrod, Elad Lassry, Seth Price, Sterling Ruby, Josh Smith, Haim Steinbach and Michael Williams. They have all carved out international careers and have been highly influential among art students and the next generation of emerging artists in the US and Europe.

The exhibition captures a fascinating snapshot of recent contemporary art from North America and provides a unique opportunity to present works by artists not easily accessible to Australian audiences.

After showing in Bathurst, *Stars + Stripes* will also tour in 2015 and 2016 to Sydney and seven regional cities across Australia: Grafton, Cowra, Taree, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Morwell and Ipswich.

In selecting this touring exhibition, a number of works by artists could not be included either due to their fragile nature, their large size or their weight. For example, works in the collection by artists such as David Hammons and Wade Gyton were not able to be included.

I would like to thank: Danny and Lisa Goldberg for their generosity in allowing their extraordinary collection to be seen by regional audiences; Dr Oliver Watts for his insightful catalogue essay; Museums &

Galleries of NSW for the important role they play in ensuring that regional audiences have access to the best touring exhibitions of contemporary art – in particular, I would like to thank Rachel Arndt and Lillian Lim; and Michael Rolfe, CEO of Museums & Galleries of NSW for offering me the opportunity to curate this extraordinary exhibition. It has been one of the highlights of my visual art career.

Thanks also to Anna Wilson, Personal Assistant to Danny Goldberg, and to all the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery staff, including Curator, Sarah Gurich; Collections Manager, Tim Pike; Education & Public Programs Officer, Emma Hill; and Gallery Administrator, Marion Maskill, for their tireless and dedicated work in bringing this exhibition to fruition.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the valued and ongoing support of funding bodies including the Australia Council, Arts NSW, as well as Bathurst Regional Council.

I hope everyone enjoys *Stars + Stripes: American Art of the 21st Century from the Goldberg Collection*. It has been a great joy to curate.

Richard Perram OAM
Director
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery

September 2014



MIKE BOUCHET
Refresh Everything
2010, artist produced
diet cola on cotton, 120
x 240 cm. Courtesy the
artist and Marlborough
Chelsea, New York.

COCA-CONTEMPORARY AND THE REAL THING. ENJOY!

There is a feeling that anything goes. Contemporary art is characterised by its plurality, so it is difficult and indeed misleading to direct the viewer to any overarching themes or stylistic approaches. Increasingly, it is the critic or theorist's role to ask not whether something is good or bad art but indeed just to ask "where does it fit?" or "what am I looking at?"

FROM MODERN UTOPIAS TO CONTEMPORARY STYLE

The artists in *Stars + Stripes: American Art of the 21st Century from the Goldberg Collection* represent many of the rising stars of American art, and many of their reputations have been established in the last five years. If contemporary art is defined by its "nowness" then this show epitomises it. It is one of the difficulties of contemporary practice to try and put this constant nowness into words. Hal Foster, in a special edition of the journal *October*, asked a number of theorists to define contemporary practice and there were varied answers. In offering a general question on which to comment, Hal Foster wrote:

The category of "contemporary art" is not a new one. What is new is the sense that, in its very heterogeneity, much present practice seems to float free of historical determination, conceptual definition, and critical judgment. Such paradigms as "the neo-avant-garde" and "postmodernism," which once oriented some art and theory, have run into the sand, and, arguably, no models of much explanatory reach or intellectual force have risen in their stead.¹

This exhibition addresses self-reflectively the state of contemporary practice, and the works talk directly to the concerns Foster outlines. There is a feeling that anything goes. Contemporary art is characterised by its plurality, so it is difficult and indeed misleading to direct the viewer to any overarching themes or stylistic approaches. Increasingly, it is the critic or theorist's role to ask not whether something is good or bad art but indeed just to ask "where does it fit?" or "what am I looking at?" The artists in this exhibition have fun playing widely and wildly with art historical conventions and styles. Contemporary art asks us to remain open to uncertainty and slippage.

In broad strokes, the faith in art to lead towards revolutionary end points, to utopian or transcendental worlds, which was so strong in the 20th century, no longer drives us. If the postmodern art of the late 20th century inverted these expectations, calling out the avant-garde for its failure, the works in this exhibition must begin on those ruins. Like a scavenger in the rubble, the artists can reconstruct and re-borrow, bring together old (stylistic) enemies, revisit genres and traditions long forgotten by the modernist avant-garde. Indeed, a number of these artists are called post – or neo-

conceptual, post – or neo-minimal, or other such constructions. These designations work up to a point and are useful enough to explore but they do imply a linear progression that is not there; what they are actually describing is the revisiting of modernist avant-gardism (and its death) in interesting and unexpected ways.

As a strange corollary of the openness in this particular show, we see a return to painting and two-dimensional wall work as the primary mode. The sculptural pieces, too, are more traditional objects than installations. These forms do return in contemporary art but not necessarily as the primary mode; painting is not the premier form as it was in modernism but must run parallel to other media (video, installation, performance, etc.) and of course the hybrid or trans-disciplinary work. The focus on traditional forms in this show sets up a direct relationship with the key works of modernism, its paintings and sculptures. The works oscillate between the celebration of the modernist canon and its declassing, and constantly equivocate. The question of whether modernity is our new antiquity (to be borrowed but perhaps bettered?) was a subject for *Documenta 12* (2007) and is a vital issue for contemporary artists.²

The new constructions of the art market set the major trends and critical flows. The art fair, not the biennale, seems to become increasingly powerful.

HERE, NOW AND LIVE IN CONCERT

Stars + Stripes recalls, as suggested by Director Richard Perram in the Introduction, the other American exhibitions brought to Australia of high modernism in the late '60s, in particular *Two Decades of American Painting* seen at the National Gallery of Victoria (6 June - 9 July 1967) and the Art Gallery of NSW (26 July - 20 August 1967). Of course, Clement Greenberg himself came, spruiking the hegemony of an American, but international, style: abstract and geometric abstraction. He spoke in talking engagements like a slightly drunk preacher extolling a purification of painting down to its barest essentials, stripped of all narrative and representation.

In the '60s it was the critic-theorist who still controlled cultural capital. At the same time, other critics such as the French André Malraux were hobnobbing with John F. Kennedy, sending gifts to America such as the *Mona Lisa* for display. Indeed, we now know that this sort of cultural diplomacy did not cost nothing – it was funded directly by the CIA. The ideologies of free, gestural marks became a metaphor for political freedom in the Cold War so it was exported as cultural ambassadorship.³ The Australian art scene responded directly and promptly to these new standards airdropped from “the centre”.⁴

However, in late capitalism, in a post-national world, the state or the critic is no longer the primary driver. The new constructions of the art market set the major trends and critical flows. The art fair, not the biennale, seems to become increasingly powerful. The artists in this show are already known to Australian artists through the massive machinery of marketing and the proliferation of online art journals and blogs. Young Australian artists pour over gallery websites and room shots from around the world. It is with thanks to the Goldberg Collection that we were able to mount a show like this so relatively quickly without the lag of the “provincialism problem”; it is not an institutional time scale but one of global capital.

This show then is not important because it is the centre coming to the provinces but something else. Many of the approaches and methodologies in *Stars + Stripes* are already utilised in the local scene; if anything, it is like a rock star coming to play live. There is no doubt that the international art market, and the critical evaluation of work, still favours the centres of New York, London, Basel, etc. A number of artists in this exhibition (notably Sterling Ruby and Jeff Elrod) are some of the most sought-after artists in the world at the moment.

There are material concerns and affect that you cannot get on a screen. Regardless of Walter Benjamin and André Malraux' dream of the democratisation of art through reproduction, the aura of the actual artwork still remains. Indeed, in this show, many of the works take this as a theme and insist on the auratic, the trace, the real. The poetic use of media and the appeal to the “real” of everyday stuff will be discussed below and is a major issue at stake. In Terry Smith's 1974 essay “The Provincialism Problem”, he writes that one of his original concerns of the province doomed to constantly iterate its distance was that, as Australians, and receiving all art through reproduction, there is a flattening out and possible misunderstanding of what is actually happening in the work (Australian straight edge abstraction was famously neat, because that is how the work was presumed to look from small thumbnail pictures).⁵ The other haunting suggestion in Smith's essay, and perhaps we can ask ourselves this question in regard to *Stars + Stripes*, is that we receive the work as finished experiments without understanding or being part of the centre's experimentation. How can we enter the conversation whose rules have already been set by the cool kids?

The young Americans, however, have already answered for us. These works are not purified or complete but the very opposite. By declassing Greenbergian positions from the beginning, any claim to Coca-cola-nisation is diminished.

Walead Beshty's work *Copper (FedEx® Golf-Bag Box_2010 FedEx 163166 Rev 10/10)*, International Priority, Los Angeles-Hoofddorp, trk# 799869727005, May 29 – June 4 2013, International Priority, Hoofddorp-Sydney, trk# 796117381500, June 28 – July 3 2013 is a metapicture for the trans-global, international gypsy artist. Here the minimalist work of Donald Judd is turned into the box itself. The perfect "specific object" is undermined and sent on a journey around the world by FedEx. The bumps, scratches and scrapes, the stamps and authorising marks all become part of the ongoing creation of the work, in process. Beshty's work then focuses on the unfinished and unhomed sculpture. Following Marc Augé's ideas of non-place, Beshty's work focuses on the transit lounge, the journey, and other spaces and surveillance of global and capital flow (in an earlier series of photographs he used X-ray technology to scan and therefore "destroy" film which he then printed). In this work he has focused on freight, the art object as pure freight, both box and object in one. Mobility and the lack of roots is the defining characteristic of late capitalism. It is controlled though, stamped and signed for at every customs office. From another point of view, less critical, the work is quite Romantic. It is almost like Foucault's heterotopic pirate ship, an object that travels about from [air]port to [air]port, totally free.

Richard Jackson's *Bad Dog (Blue)* is also a joke against abstract expressionism. The bodily gesture of the genius artist in Abstract Expressionist painting was considered a direct trace of individual freedom, and in much of his work Jackson apes these splashes, exploding and shooting paint through paint guns and other novel ballistic forms. Here, a dog quite effectively repeats the gesture but in doing so debases the humanism and dignity behind the original modernist approach. Jackson seems to suggest that the grand gestures of modernist art are just like men (or dogs) pissing on a wall (a joke Andy Warhol actually made on Greenberg in his *Oxidation (Piss)*

Paintings). Finally, as in Beshty's work, the work is site-specific and illuminates the travel of the "dog" from place to place, gallery to gallery, marking his territory (and in every gallery the paint will be activated again). The contemporary American work, by highlighting its constant flow through space and capital, shows its own impurity as a perfect aesthetic object; it shows its framing directly, something Greenberg totally disavowed. In their own way, the works in *Stars + Stripes* are more pure in their truthful appraisal of art flow, while any sense of America as the centre is played with.

PURE SURFACE TO PLURAL SUBSTANCE

A number of the paintings within this exhibition are purposefully directed against the tenets of modernist American painting. These works, like the minimalist critique of Frank Stella, return the painting to objecthood and away from Greenberg's mere surface. Julia Rommel is perhaps definitive of this approach. Although *Georgie* is all carefully worked surface, in layers of monochrome oil and encaustic (wax), it nevertheless manages to privilege its support. Even more perversely, the exquisite Yoshiaki Mochizuki paintings bring out a sense of painting as object: palladium, the etched gesso, a work like a miniature jewel. The gesture of the artist, so important to the modernist canon, is also effaced in these works. Although all done by hand, the works sit paradoxically between the gesture and the machinic, and oscillate between the two. Perhaps the most surprising attack against Greenberg's rules about painting is the work of Hugh Scott-Douglas. They are all surface, dyed linen, like a Morris Louis (Greenberg's favourite) – you couldn't get any flatter on the road to flatness than this. The dye is not paint but a photographic process, from the early period of photography, breaking the cardinal rule of genre sharing, and de-authoring the artist totally. The shaped oval canvases also talk to an earlier, less pure age of painting (and photographic portrait), while at the same time

alluding to the shaped canvases of Stella and other post-Greenbergian painters; they only further demand that the work be seen as an object as well as a surface. What characterises these works is a plurality of approaches, styles and genre in the same piece. They are not direct in their attack on the modern but still use it as a framing device and a stylistic marker. What they become are self-reflective works on the history of painting that look back to the recent past. The utopian transcendentalism of Greenbergian modernism is replaced by constant reworking and stylistic reuse.

PAINTED OBJECTS FROM SURFACE TO SUBSTANCE

The most lasting contribution of American art in the last decade or so is the bold combining of the idealism of modern abstraction with the materialism of minimalism and Pop (at the time antithetical styles). Another way of putting it is that the materialism that reached its most grungy in the '90s (what Hal Foster called "the return of the real") has now been re-aestheticised and made beautiful. Dan Colen, who is the spectre haunting this exhibition (and whose work was not included for conservation reasons), makes Pollock-like paintings out of stretched chewing gum. The paintings then throw the viewer from the sublime spirituality of the colour and large-scale abstraction back quickly to the reality of chewed gum. It is this whiplash contradiction that re-fires both sides of the equation; in contemporary art, the work can be both idealised and material in the one work (although, like Schrödinger's cat, there is the question of whether that can happen at the same time). Haim Steinbach is another version of this beautifying of the everyday. His work is based on the found object which is distanced from any use value, placed on a special shelf (which has become Steinbach's signature), which forces the viewer to repeat Steinbach's wondrous gaze that chose the object in the first place. It is quotidian and special at once. Sterling Ruby's *SPE (4423)* is both a



SETH PRICE
*Container for Rotating
Sawtooth, Pattern Plus
Abstract Pattern 2013,*
mixed media, 101.6
x 134.6 cm. Courtesy
the artist and Petzel
Gallery, New York.

piece of cardboard from the paint-splattered floor of Ruby's studio and a sublime vision of the infinite sky at night. The measuring tape moves like a comet across the ground while at the same time retaining its "tapeness". Although these cardboard works are also in the lineage of Robert Rauschenberg's cardboard constructions, they are even more knowingly hybrid (really a piece of floor and representing space). As signs of dissent, Sterling Ruby often uses spray paint and other graffiti paint marks; the cardboard floor is part of the classic kit of the B-boy dancer, which also adds a political dimension to his materialism.

Tavares Strachan and Seth Price move this approach in beautiful ways. On one hand, Strachan's work *Where, What, When (Dislocated remnants from Simultaneous Events Providence, RI)* is more conceptual but I would say still connected to painting. The broken windows suggest that painting as a mirror onto worlds has broken but, at the same time, the finely broken glass suggests its own sublimity (while still being broken windows). The work seems to reference Duchamp's broken glass and his attack on representation in *Fresh Widow*. Alternatively, Price moves his works even further towards the corporeal and material. His two works on show here were part of an exhibition that was centred on the envelope as a motif, the everyday item which veils and hides. The shiny black folds still reference the folds of canvas or black material, the surface of an Ad Reinhardt or a Mark Rothko, but they have a particular material affect. The shiny polyester, the buckles and straps, the eyelets all seem to suggest the paintings' transgressive secret life in an S&M dungeon. It is a conflation of subcultural textures with the high elitism of the traditions of canvas. The outcome is not only dark but humorous.

PAINT TO COLA: DECLASSING BUT STILL LOVING ADVERTISING

It is hard to make generalisations about the difference between New York and LA in this

exhibition, the two major sites of art-making in a vast country. Mike Bouchet seems to sum up an LA attitude, which moves away from New York's dryer conceptualism towards something that is even more embedded in subculture and popular culture. *Refresh Everything* again seems to conflate two oppositional styles: the surface of Pop and the text of conceptualism with the material investigation of Arte Povera. Although a slogan, the dirtiness of the sticky cola as paint (what Bouchet calls "colachrome") starts a process of unravelling in the work and, no doubt, as can be seen from his broader oeuvre, a critique against capital and commodity fetishism. It comes out as a more critical and less superficial Warhol. "Refresh Everything!" seems not only a cola slogan but a hopeful, plaintive cry in a post-global-crisis world. As an installation/performance work, Bouchet once filled a swimming pool with cola in which two female body-builders swam, like a hellish David Hockney. Every three or four minutes the women had to get out to be hosed down because the acid was eating at their skin. Was that a metaphor for our relationship with our favourite products?

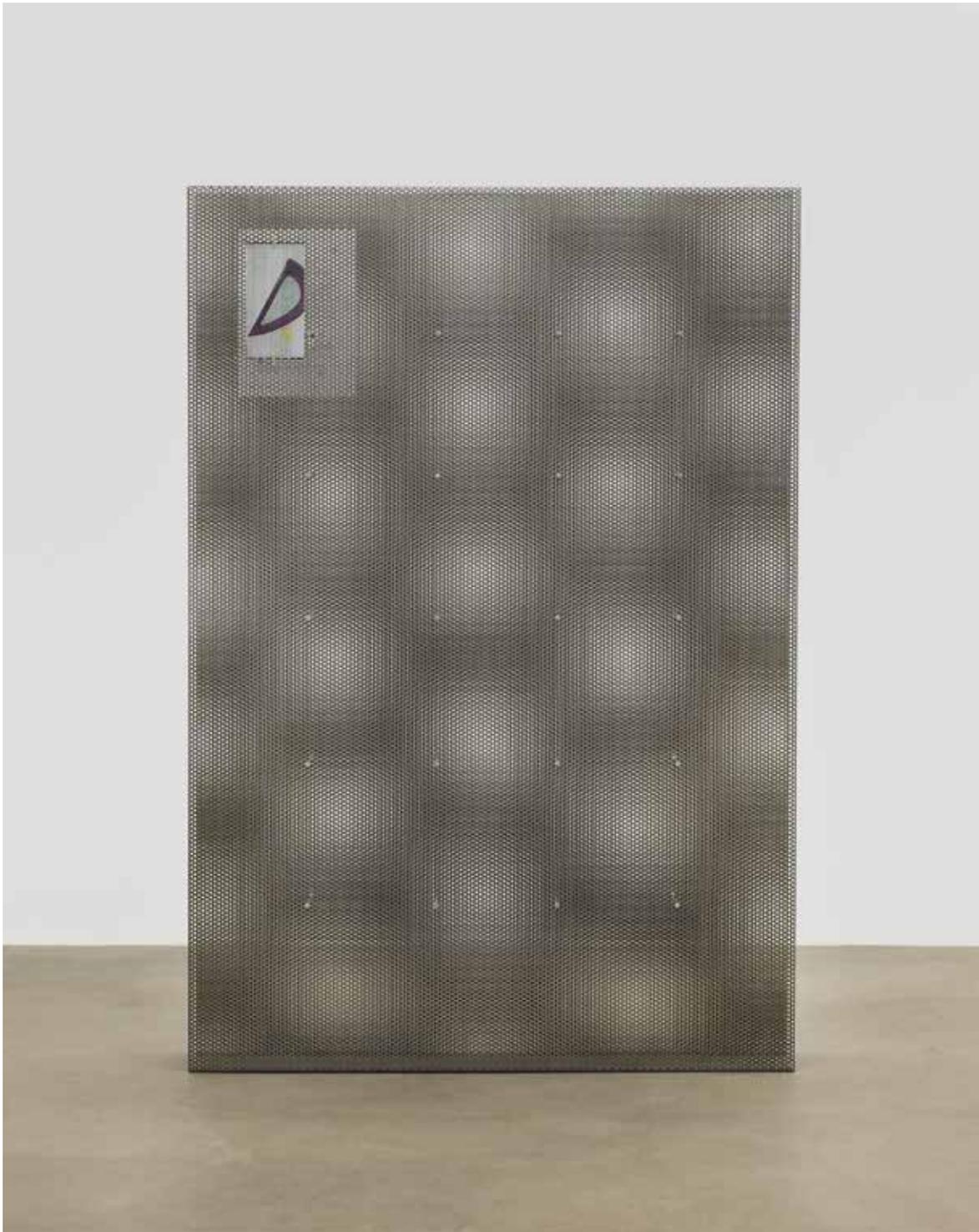
Finally the youngest of the LA artists is Dylan Lynch, whose *Sucked in Juice Box* provides the titular image for *Stars + Stripes*. Lynch's works are like frozen moments of violence: a bowling ball is smashed into a wall; a baseball sits cheekily past a broken window, and here a steel drum has had its air sucked out of it until it buckled. The work becomes a fossil of the force imposed on the everyday by the artist; it is more than just Arte Povera but more like a cinema still that implies movement and time beyond the frame.

New York artists also end up playing with this kitschiness and lifestyle critique. Adam McEwen has a graphite frisbee, half-drawing/half-object. It suggests the fragility of the all-American image of sun, frisbee and never-ending youth in advertising. Ara Dymond's *God and Famous to All Ages - Cameo* looks half-surf video, half-Brancusi.

There is not enough space to go into this in detail, but an unseen supplement to all this work is the personae of the artists themselves. You can see glimpses of it in the works, but many take Warhol's drive to art business fame very seriously. The works in *Stars + Stripes* are controlled and curated but in many of the solo shows we see vast installations and almost hip-hop swagger. Sterling Ruby, for example, does massive spray abstracts, which are as if Rothko was a graffiti artist; he does installations of graffitied buses and stacks of motorcycles. These are images that easily fuse with a Hollywood anti-hero, and their images grace all the important fashion and lifestyle magazines. In January 2014, Belgian fashion designer Raf Simons collaborated with Ruby on his Fall-Winter '14 collection. Simons called the offering "our collection", implying that the clothes were a truly joint vision and not merely an appropriation of the artist's work. Elad Lassry's muse is our very own Rose Byrne. If these works are merely ashes of what is a broader and grander life, as art world's It Boys (and a lot lead hyper-masculine, *Entourage*-like lives), what traces of that performance can be seen here, if any?

CONTEMPORARY BEAUTY AND THE RETURN TO TRADITIONS

Against this fashionable dandyism is a serious engagement with history and tradition. For example, in this collection, Elad Lassry's works are a very formal exploration of various genres from still life to portrait. Although they are obviously found images and viewed through the lens of advertising, Lassry nevertheless reclaims these ephemeral images as something important and worth a second look. The strategy here is to make them link back to tradition. The return to painting as a whole can be linked back to a return to skill and tradition in contemporary art. Against the grunge of the '90s, contemporary artists are allowed to be beautiful again, and there is a lot of beauty in this show. David Hickey is perhaps the leading proponent of what he



BEN SCHUMACHER
351 Berry Street 2012,
perforated stainless
steel, hardware glass,
inkjet on perforated
vinyl, inkjet print on
paper, rare earth
magnets, 155 x 105 x
14.5 cm. Courtesy Croy
Nielsen, Berlin.

thinks of as a critical beauty; it is a beauty that seduces the viewer with its material affect but then, once it has you, hits you in the eyes with its hidden politics or critical meaning.⁶ The return to certain media (ceramics, oil paint, gesso, palladium leaf, graphite, steel sculpture, gouache and watercolour) attempts to link contemporary practice to a deeper past as opposed to video, performance, etc. It is not a linear, historical progression but a total conflation of history.

The paintings of Michael Williams, here represented by *Human Back Page*, are a pictorial equivalent of this playful beauty and conflation of history. As Hal Foster wrote, the “historical rubrics” are now fluid, and Williams remakes and revisits paintings’ many varying marks and expectations, from Dubuffet to Disney, from Cy Twombly to city tagging. The surface is all painting affect and not mere semiotic play. The way Williams makes fluoro-intensity meet oil’s fleshiness is extraordinary. There is an openness and sense of fun here that characterises the show in one canvas.

HESITANCY AND UNCERTAINTY

For Boris Groys, contemporary art is defined by hesitancy, uncertainty, indecision and doubt. Unlike the moderns who walked bravely into a utopian future in many giant leaps for mankind, we know that 2014 does not find us all holidaying on Pluto.⁷ Some of the modernist dreams have dried up or shown to be fleeting. The contemporary artist does dream, and the fantasies and sublime imaginations are here to be seen, but they are not definitive.

In contemporary art, the audition and the sketch are common tropes. It is as if the artist never stops to make his masterpiece but instead privileges the constant becoming or working through. That is why Dash Manley cannot decide which side to show and why holes seem to make the painting fray at the edges. It is why Joe Bradley and Jeff Elrod are represented by the serious doodle; Elrod especially, who painstakingly and at modernist-masterpiece size remakes his frivolous doodles – in *Figment* he does so in a particularly calligraphic

phallic shape (that ubiquitous juvenile marker). But there is a definite aestheticism here, too. What is that strange conflation of the “really nothing” brought into a “possible something”? It is a large, serious painting but, as Pop must have felt in the ‘60s, its scant subject matter and style purposively approaches the limits of painting and its deskilling. Failure is also one of the important tropes of the contemporary as opposed to modernity’s heroism; Sterling Ruby presented knocked down, fallen motorcycles – not proud rebels without a cause, more the delinquent. Bradley also presents the provisional in an ongoing series, *Untitled*. It is a working through of drawing, popular culture and the glut of images we are presented with by our spectacular society. The works present a momentary intensity, through the sketch, that is shared directly with the audience. The images are complex in their simplicity and allow the viewer to project their own resonances.

Joe Bradley’s *TBC* sculpture too seems open-ended and unfinished. A small green, painted head sits above a “rustic” plinth. Modernism came up with the idea of the plinth as part of the work (like for example Brancusi); in this work however the traditional bust is reinstated, placed ceremoniously on a plinth, except here there is that same sense of fun and humour. It is a comic bust (while at the same time speaking to sculptural tradition). It is a hero who is a little unsure of himself.

It is this hesitancy, too, that sees Richard Aldrich insist that his painting *Untitled* needs the supplement of *Sill*. If a supplement shows the lack in the original thing then why does his painting need a sill to complete it? The doubling does not complete the diptych but instead opens it up to a series of puzzling questions.

OPEN-ENDED CONCLUSION

It is this openness that is the challenge in *Stars + Stripes*. The meanings of the works do not close down easily. The works move from the gutter to high seriousness; from sponges

to painterly tradition; from sandpaper to the sublime. This seemingly endless oscillation is something that is contemporary and worth looking into. Although these artists do not feel that they are pushing towards a utopian end point, and instead hesitate and prevaricate, that is not something to be mourned. They are there in the material of the world, from its digital artefacts to its Renaissance portraits, exploring. If they have found some of our social and artistic structures wanting, it is probably better that we come to terms with that sooner rather than later. What comes out in these contemporary works is that there is still a lot of faith left in art itself. It may not directly act on the world but it can still make us see the beauty and poetry, the sadness and the unexpected, of where we are. The works present us with a new way of communicating the present together.

Dr Oliver Watts

September 2014

¹ Hal Foster, “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary’”, *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 3.

² *Documenta 12*, exhibition catalogue, Köln: Taschen, 2007.

³ See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract expressionism, freedom, and the cold war*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, University of Chicago Press Chicago, 1983.

⁴ For a discussion of this history, see: *The Necessity of Australian Art: An Essay about Interpretation*, eds. Ian Burn et al., Power Publications, 1998.

⁵ Terry Smith, “The Provincialism Problem” (1974), reprinted in Rex Butler (ed), *What is Appropriation? An anthology of critical writings on art in Australia in the 1970s and 1980s*, Power Publications, 1996: 131–138.

⁶ David Hickey, “Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty”, in *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty*, Art Issues Press, 1993.

⁷ Boris Groys, “Comrades of Time”, e-flux, 2009, http://worker01.e-flux.com/pdf/article_99.pdf



ELAD LASSRY

Women (055,065) 2012
C-print, painted frame,
36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8 cm. ©
Elad Lassry, courtesy
303 Gallery, New York.



ADAM McEWEN

Wham-O All American
2013, graphite, 24.8
cm diameter. Courtesy
Galerie Rodolphe
Janssen, Belgium.

RICHARD ALDRICH
Untitled/Sill 2012/2013
oil, wax and enamel
on linen/oil and wax
on linen, 2 panels,
213.4 x 147.3 cm each.
Courtesy of the artist
and Bortolami Gallery,
New York.



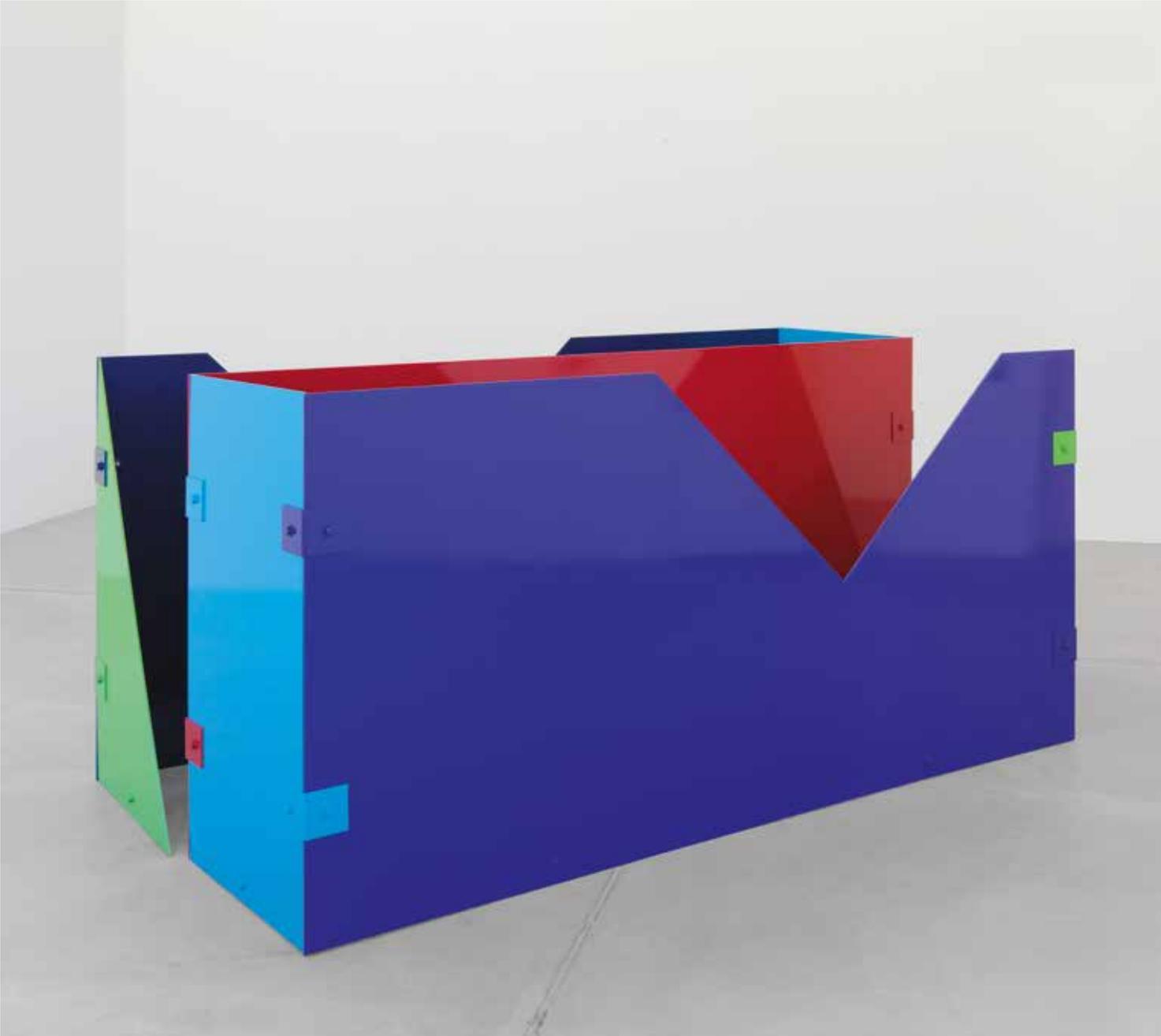


HAIM STEINBACH
Untitled (oyster head)
2012, plastic laminated
wood shelf, straw
Chinese hat, wooden
cone sorting toy, plastic
Tim Burton "Oyster
Boy" figurine, wooden
biscuit cutter, 89.2 x
189 x 55.9 cm. Courtesy
Tanya Bonakdar,
Gallery, New York
Photo: Jean Vong.



TAVARES STRACHAN

Where, What, When
(Dislocated remnants
from Simultaneous
Events Providence,
RI) 2003, wood, paint,
Plexiglas, 2 panels, each
101 x 75.2 x 30.5 cm.
Courtesy Isolated Labs.



SAM FALLS

Untitled (Cobalt, Purple, Red, Sky Blue, Teal 12)
2013, powder coated aluminium and steel brackets. Installation 121.5 x 247.5 x 127 cm. Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich
Photo: Stefan Altenburger
Photography, Zürich.

WALEAD BESHTY

Copper [FedEx® Golf-Bag Box, 2010 FedEx 163166 Rev 10/10], International Priority, Los Angeles-Hoofddorp, trk# 799869727005, May 29 - June 4 2013, International Priority, Hoofddorp-Sydney, trk# 796117381500, June 28 - July 3 2013 2013
polished copper, accrued FedEx shipping and tracking labels, 38 x 40 x 121 cm.
© Walead Beshty; courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles.
Photo: James Horan.





JOE BRADLEY

Untitled 2013
charcoal on paper, 41.3
x 30.2 x 3.2 cm, framed.

Untitled 2013
charcoal on paper, 38.1
x 28.6 x 3.2 cm, framed.

Courtesy Galerie Eva
Presenhuber and The
Journal Gallery. Photo:
James Horan.



MICHAEL WILLIAMS
Human Back Page 2013
oil and airbrush on
canvas, 236 x 188 cm.
Courtesy Galerie Eva
Presenhuber. Photo:
Sharon Hickey.

LIST OF WORKS

RICHARD ALDRICH

b. 1975, Hampton, Virginia, USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, USA

Untitled/Sill 2012/2013
oil, wax and enamel on linen/oil and wax on linen
2 panels, 213.4 x 147.3 cm each

ALLORA & CALZADILLA

Jennifer Allora
b. 1974, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Guillermo Calzadilla
b. 1971, Havana, CUBA
Live and work in San Juan, Puerto Rico

Shape Shifter 2012
sandpaper on canvas
254 x 187.3 cm

CORY ARCANGEL

b. 1978, Buffalo, New York, USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, USA

Timeless Standards 2011
Inkjet print on canvas
142.2 x 101.6 cm

WALEAD BESHTY

b. 1976, London, England, UK
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California, USA

Copper (FedEx® Golf-Bag Box_2010 FedEx 163166 Rev 10/10), International Priority, Los Angeles-Hoofddorp, trk# 799869727005, May 29 – June 4 2013, International Priority, Hoofddorp-Sydney, trk# 796117381500, June 28 – July 3 2013 2013

polished copper, accrued FedEx shipping and tracking labels
38 x 40 x 121 cm

La Religiosidad Americana (August 28th – September 10th 2013: Ceramica Suro, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico) 2013
Cerámica Suro slip cast remnants,

glaze, and firing plate
68.6 x 80 x 52.1 cm

SEBASTIAN BLACK

b. 1985, New York, New York, USA
Lives and works in New York, New York, USA

Period Piece (triptych) 2013
enamel on engraved dibond
3 panels, 121.9 x 22.9 cm each

MIKE BOUCHET

b. 1970, Castro Valley, California, USA
Lives and works in Frankfurt, Germany

Refresh Everything 2010
artist produced diet cola on cotton
120 x 240 cm

JOE BRADLEY

b. 1975, Kittery, Maine, USA
Lives and works in New York, New York, USA

Untitled 2013
charcoal on paper
36.2 x 28.6 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
charcoal on paper
53.3 x 40.2 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
charcoal on paper
41.3 x 30.2 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
charcoal on paper
38.1 x 28.6 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
ink on paper
37.5 x 27.9 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
graphite on paper
37.5 x 27.9 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
graphite on paper
48.3 x 40.6 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
ink on paper
34.9 x 45 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
graphite on paper
37.5 x 27.9 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
graphite on paper
34.9 x 27.9 x 3.2 cm, framed

Untitled 2013
marker on paper
17.78 x 25.4 x 3.2 cm, framed

TBC 2014
painted wood
30.5 x 8.5 x 12 cm, Pedestal:
116.8 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm

MATT CONNORS

b. 1973, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Lives and works in New York, New York, USA

Untitled 2012
collage on paper
40.6 x 30.5 cm

ARA DYMOND

b. 1978, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA
Lives and works in New York, New York, USA

God and Famous to All Ages - Cameo 2013
cotton, aquaresin, resin, polyester filler, paint, plexiglass and sand
213.4 x 81.3 x 71.1 cm

JEFF ELROD

b. 1966, Dallas, Texas, USA
Lives and works in Marfa, Texas and Brooklyn, New York, USA

FIGMENT 2012
acrylic and ink on canvas
198.1 x 162.6 cm

SAM FALLS

b. 1984, San Diego, California, USA
Lives and works in New York, New York, USA

Untitled (Violet 1, Glassel Park, Los Angeles, CA) 2012
polyester and metal grommet
172.7 x 101.6 cm

Untitled (Pale Blue, Glassel Park, Los Angeles, CA) 2012

polyester and metal grommet
172.7 x 101.6 cm

Untitled (Cobalt, Purple, Red, Sky Blue, Teal 12) 2013
powder coated aluminium and steel brackets
Installation 121.5 x 247.5 x 127 cm

RICHARD JACKSON

b. 1939, Sacramento, California, USA
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California, USA

Bad Dog (Blue) 2007
aluminium, hardware, MDO, formica
69 x 76 x 46, Pedestal: 108 x 42.5 x 62.5 cm

XYLOR JANE

b. 1963, Long Beach, California, USA
Lives and works in Greenfield, Massachusetts, USA

Nox Rex #1, Primes Times 2010
oil on panel
40.6 x 50.8 cm

ELAD LASSRY

b. 1977, Tel-Aviv, Israel
Lives and works in Los Angeles, California, USA

Women (055,065) 2012
C-print, painted frame
36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8 cm

Avocados 2012
Edition 1/5
C-print, painted frame
36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8 cm

Two British Short Hair Cats (BSH) 2009
C-print
27.9 x 35.6 cm

Untitled (Car) 2013
silver gelatin print, walnut frame, 4-ply silk
29.2 x 36.8 x 3.8 cm

Untitled (Mantel) 2013
C-print, walnut frame, 4-ply silk
36.8 x 29.2 x 3.8 cm

Untitled (Studio 1) 2013
silver gelatin print, walnut frame,
4-ply silk
50.8 x 39.4 x 7.6 cm

GLENN LIGON

b. 1960, the Bronx, New York,
New York, USA
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Masquerade II, #12 2012
silkscreen and coal dust on canvas
198.1 x 132.1 cm

ISRAEL LUND

b. 1980, Bellows Falls, Vermont, USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn,
New York, USA

Untitled 2014
acrylic on raw canvas
111.8 x 86.4 cm

DYLAN LYNCH

b. 1987, Los Angeles, California, USA
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Sucked in Juice Box 2013
acrylic on steel
53.3 x 66 x 71.1 cm

BRENDAN LYNCH

b. 1985, Los Angeles, California, USA
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Future Monsters 2013
posters, paint and aluminium leaf
on wood panel
213.4 x 182.9 cm

DASHIELL 'DASH' MANLEY

b. 1983, Fontana, California, USA
Lives and works in Los Angeles,
California, USA
one second loop (grand palais) 09 2013
gouache, watercolour, ink, canvas,
coroplast, lighting gels, acrylic
sheet, and wood
124.5 x 94 cm

JUSTIN MATHERLY

b. 1972, West Islip, New York, USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn,
New York, USA

Untitled (version) 2014
ambulatory equipment, reinforced
concrete, spray paint, zip ties
99.1 x 88.9 x 94 cm

ADAM McEWEN

b. 1965, London, England, UK
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Wham-O All American 2013
graphite
24.8 cm diameter

Untitled 2013
inkjet print on cellulose sponge
200 x 150 cm

YOSHIAKI MOCHIZUKI

b. 1961, Tokyo, Japan
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA
Untitled, 9/29 2012
clay, dye based ink, palladium leaf
and gesso on board
40.6 x 40.6 cm

Untitled 8/15 2012
clay, dye based ink, palladium leaf
and gesso on board
26.7 x 26.7 cm

SETH PRICE

b. 1973, East Jerusalem, Israel
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Nothingness as a big mask 2013
mixed media
180.3 x 109.2 cm

*Container for Rotating Sawtooth
Pattern Plus Abstract Pattern* 2013
mixed media
101.6 x 134.6 cm

JULIA ROMMEL

b. 1980 in Salisbury, Maryland, USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn, New

York, USA

Georgie 2014
oil on linen
41.9 x 34.3 cm

STERLING RUBY

b. 1972, Bitburg, Germany
Lives and works in Los Angeles,
California, USA

Basin Theology 2 2000
ceramic
76.2 x 83.8 x 83.8 cm
SPCE (4423) 2013
collage, paint and urethane on
cardboard
196.9 x 170.2 cm

BEN SCHUMACHER

b. 1985, Kitchener, Canada
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA
351 Berry Street 2012
perforated stainless steel, hardware
glass, inkjet on perforated vinyl, inkjet
print on paper, rare earth magnets
155 x 105 x 14.5 cm

HUGH SCOTT- DOUGLAS

b. 1988, Cambridge, England, UK
Lives and works in Brooklyn,
New York, USA

Untitled (HSD_108)/(HSD_109)
2011/2011
cyanotype on linen (diptych)
2 panels, 101.6 x 76.2 cm each

DAVINA SEMO

b. 1981, Washington DC, USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn,
New York, USA

*I will be hard and hard, my face will
turn rain like the stones* 2013
painted steel chain
223.5 x 218.4 cm

JOSHUA 'JOSH' SMITH

b. 1976, Knoxville, Tennessee, USA
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Untitled 2012
mixed media on panel
152.5 x 122 x 4 cm

HAIM STEINBACH

b. 1944, Rehovot, Israel
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Untitled (oyster head) 2012
plastic laminated wood shelf, straw
Chinese hat, wooden cone sorting
toy, plastic Tim Burton "Oyster Boy"
figurine, wooden biscuit cutter
89.2 x 189 x 55.9 cm

TAVARES STRACHAN

b. 1979, Nassau, Commonwealth of
the Bahamas
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

*Where, What, When (Dislocated
remnants from Simultaneous Events
Providence, RI)* 2003
wood, paint, Plexiglas 2 panels, 101
x 75.2 x 30.5 cm each

Matthew 2012
collage and drawing on paper,
Plexiglass
4 units, 76.2 x 101.6 x 5.1 each;
203.2 x 152.4 x 5.1 cm total

NED VENA

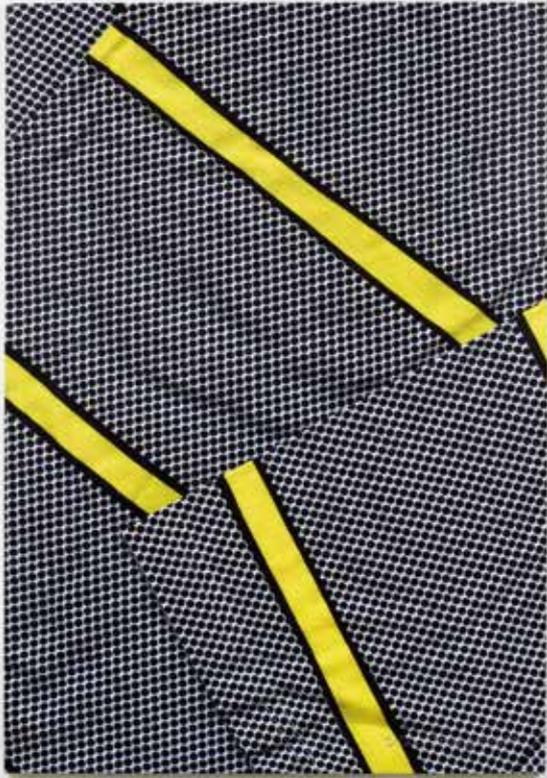
b. 1982, Boston, Massachusetts,
USA
Lives and works in Brooklyn,
New York, USA

Target Painting GG, 2014
polyurethane and rubber on linen
162.5 x 3.2 cm

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

b. 1978, Doylestown, Pennsylvania,
USA
Lives and works in New York,
New York, USA

Human Back Page 2013
oil and airbrush on canvas
236 x 188 cm



CORY ARCANGEL
Timeless Standards
2011, inkjet print on
canvas, 142.2 x 101.6
cm. © Cory Arcangel;
courtesy Lisson Gallery.