

# DOUBLE TAKE



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This catalogue is published on the occasion of *Double Take*, an exhibition organized by members of the Spring 2013 Mills College Museum Studies class: Laura Cirillo, Kate Rhoades, Katherine Rose, Alexasia Salter-Mack, and Darian Volk.

The exhibition was presented at 70 South Park, San Francisco, April 14 through May 5, 2013.

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The Mills College Art Museum is a forum for exploring art and ideas and a laboratory for contemporary art practices. As a teaching museum at a dynamic liberal arts college for undergraduate women and co-ed graduate studies, the museum is dedicated to engaging and inspiring the intellectual and creative life of Mills students through innovative exhibitions, programs, and collections.

COVER: Desiree Holman, *Surplussage*, 2009, color pencil on archival paper, collection Lenore Pereira and Rich Niles, San Francisco



*Double Take* represents the second collaboration between the Mills College Art Museum and Bay Area collectors Lenore Pereira and Rich Niles. Curated by members of the Spring 2013 Museum Studies Workshop, *Double Take*, is a remarkable opportunity for students to learn curatorial practices first-hand through an extraordinary collection of artwork created by contemporary women artists. The Niles have generously invited students to curate an exhibition from their collection in their gallery space, giving the all female group of students a unique opportunity to research and examine the work of an international roster of women artists.

The exhibition explores the ways in which artists revisit and invert common materials as well as familiar artistic processes and subject matter to subtly expose structural, social, and psychological inconsistencies. The works in the exhibition challenge viewers' expectations on a range of themes, calling into question our common assumptions about language, portraiture, urban environments, family values, and everyday objects.

Featuring approximately 40

## INTRODUCTION

Dr. Stephanie Hanor

works, including painting, video, photography, sculpture, and installation, *Double Take* presents work by Tauba Auerbach, Miriam Böhm, Rebeca Bollinger, Rosana Castrillo Diaz, Anne Collier, Tara Donovan, Ceal Floyer, Ann Hamilton, Ellen Harvey, Mona Hatoum, Andrea Higgins, Desiree Holman, Jenny Holzer, Xylor Jane, Lisa Kokin, Louise Lawler, Nikki Lee, Rut Bles Luxembourg, Wangechi Mutu, Catherine Opie, Jennie Ottinger, Gay Outlaw, Danica Phelps, Nigel Poor, Lucy Puls, Beverly Rayner, Martha Rosler, Doris Salcedo, Cindy Sherman, Kathryn Spence, Catherine Wagner, and Francesca Woodman. This exhibition and its accompanying exhibition catalogue inspire a re-examination of things, ideas, and experience that we take for granted.

*Double Take* is curated by Laura Cirillo, Kate Rhoades, Katherine Rose, Alexasia Salter-Mack, and Darian Volk. Their research and writing are featured in this catalogue and bring new interpretations to the significant group of works they have selected for this exhibition.

The members of the Mills College Museum Studies Workshop

and the staff of the Mill College Art Museum thank Lenore Pereira and Rich Niles for their willingness and encouragement in providing this opportunity to learn about and engage with contemporary ideas and practices through their collection.

Tauba Auerbach, *In Order of Popularity (alphabet)*, 2007, gouache and pencil on paper on panel



Kathryn Spence, *Untitled (Pigeons, Sparrows and Blackbirds)*, 1997/1999, street trash, wire, glue

All too often the materials used to make a work of art go unnoticed by a gallery or museum viewer. Except for those who may read the short media list below the piece's title on the wall placard, most of the audience is unaware of the transformation of materials in the objects before them. In this section of *Double Take*, it is the manipulation and unconventional presentation of materials that are celebrated. Consider the control over materials the maker needs in order to tease out such delicate products. What sort of understanding of texture and presence in the source of their objects is needed in order to highlight these normally unnoticeable qualities? It is the creativity in their material selection in the first place that allows these creators such a range of artistic transformation.

As artist Tara Donovan has said, "so much about the art-making process is about paying attention. It's about looking and noticing things."<sup>1</sup> In this portion of the exhibition, the viewer has to look at the art and notice things about that process to fully appreciate the work in front of them.

The works in this selection

<sup>1</sup> Carol Kino. "The Genius of Little Things," *New York Times* (September 2008).

## MATERIAL DECEPTION

Laura Cirillo

necessitate a re-examination because they demand viewing on two different scales: first for the overall impact, and then a second, closer inspection with attention to detail. It is in this second look that the artistic deception is revealed. It is in reconciling the differences of each viewing experience that the complexity of the pieces are really acknowledged. We celebrate the conflicting feelings of initial impressions and sudden realizations. The works seem to change over time based on our level of understanding and appreciation at each viewing.

For some works there is a deception in the materials used. Is the piece made of what you might initially think? The surprise you feel when realizing that Rosana Castriello Diaz's *Untitled* (2007) piece is simply rings of scotch tape causes you to step back again and marvel in the imagination that inspired such a elegant form, changing like an optical illusion from something that seems like a flat image to a three dimensional sculpture. After learning that the image in Tara Donovan's *Untitled* (2005) is made from ink on rubber bands, how does your overall perception of the piece change? From far away it has

so much texture that you need to get closer to be sure it is not more than ink.

You will have to look closer to see how Andrea Higgins layered her paint so meticulously to capture the texture of the fabric she is representing in *Go Fukakusa* (2009). They are so deceptive that you have to look again to confirm with your own eyes that the materials listed are in fact what you see. Higgins says, "I don't work in a way that's intuitive."<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes the deception is in the presentation. Enlarged fingerprints appear to be manipulated designs by the artist in Nigel Poor's *Typology from project: Do you have 30 seconds and can you get your finger dirty* (2007). They draw you in to discover who each person was that naturally created these diverse marks. What is each person's story? What can you tell from each smudge?

And other times the deception is in your response. The materials might be obviously inexact, like the mush of garbage that is bundled together to create Kathryn Spence's *Untitled (Pigeons, Sparrows and Blackbirds)* (1997/1999). They seem

<sup>2</sup> Spark video interview, KQED Public Media. June 2003.

so natural to the pigeon's environment that it is almost as if that was how a pigeon normally looks.

The intuition behind the artist's choices in presenting materials that are unbelievably natural to the subject, or transformed from the opposite to become something completely different, is the focus of this selection of works. Remove yourself from the tricks your eyes play on you and focus on each piece multiple times. Each time, you may see something different.



Tara Donovan, *Untitled*, 2005, ink on Kozoshi paper from a rubber band matrix

Rosana Castrillo Diaz

(Spanish, born 1971)

*Untitled*, 2007

Transparent tape

You have to look close, or you may not even notice Rosana Castrillo Diaz's work. The celebrated Mills College graduate plays in the fine line between visible and invisible so masterfully, that you cannot simply glance over at her piece and expect to take it all in. The mundane office materials she uses to create her works are completely transformed into subtle, elegant shapes.

The ethereal bubbles of scotch tape presented in her *Untitled* piece glow in the natural light and take on a warmth that the viewer finds themselves inching back and forth trying to capture best in each viewing. The materials are so delicately placed in this piece that you will feel the need to hold your breath to get a closer look.

Tara Donovan

(American, born 1969)

*Untitled*, 2005

Ink on Kozoshi paper from a rubber band matrix

Tara Donovan has a unique ability to transform everyday materials. Her pieces utilize manufactured goods of little aesthetic value in their original form, reimagined to evoke unexpected details. As an artist, she is known to spend hours with materials until she identifies the subtle, enchanting quality she wants to promote in a piece. She teases out the natural qualities of the most unnatural things.

In her *Untitled* piece, Donovan's ink print is not at all identifiable as the rubber band matrix used to produce it. Instead, the image is soft like wisps of hair, evoking a texture not easily associated with the heavy and thick materials. It is this initial puzzlement that the viewer feels while trying to put together what they are seeing that is so alluring. Donovan will certainly capture your attention and draw the viewer closer, forcing you to see things in a new way.

Andrea Higgins  
(American, born 1970)  
*Go Fukakusa*, 2009  
Oil on linen

Painter Andrea Higgins draws her inspiration from the culturally universal use of fabric. Her large panel pieces allow the viewer to look closely at each brush stroke—mimicking the woven patterns she drew inspiration from after visiting San Francisco’s Britex fabric store as a child. As an artist she has examined how fabric in itself is art and the power behind fabric choices of women around the world. She focused on powerful outfits of the First Ladies through representations of swatches from memorable looks, before applying her vision to Asia. Each fabric represents the wearer, and in turn, the swatch becomes a portrait of that individual’s presence.

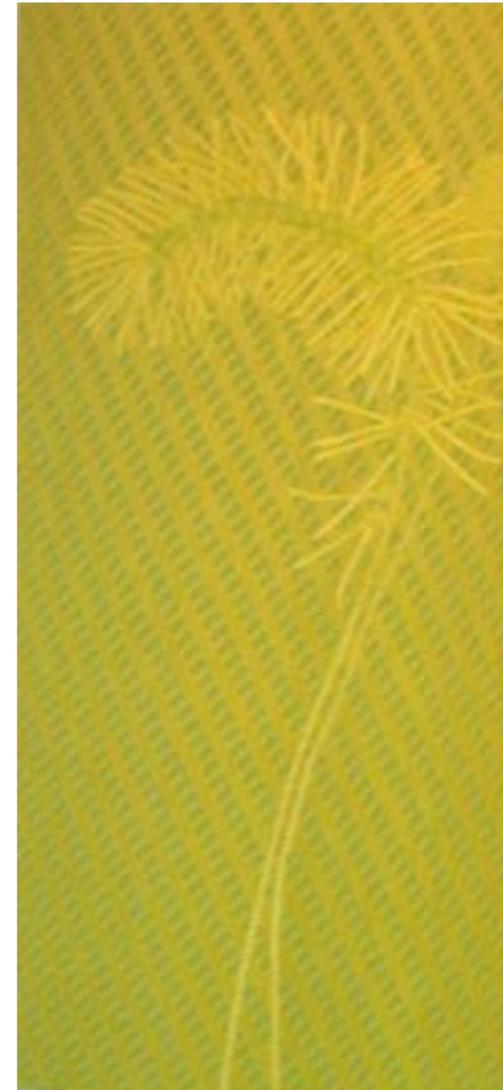
*Go Fukakusa* is an excellent example of Higgins’ attention to detail. Her layering of paint and color choice is perfectly evocative of the Japanese fabrics of the time of the emperor for which the piece is named. The vibrant detail of the floral design makes this work a new angle on the classic nature painting.

Gay Outlaw  
(American, born 1959)  
*Untitled (3-legged Maquette after Gordon Matta-Clark)*, 2009  
Corroplast, hand-painted paper, ceramic with platinum overglaze, roofing material, gouache

From first mention of her name, Gay Outlaw evokes an unexpected humor in her art. All her pieces have a direct energy to them, giving them a sturdy and demanding presence. But the impact of her work comes from the playful dichotomies each represents. Balancing hard and soft, her pieces always trick the viewer’s eye into making an assumption about the materials and process.

*Untitled (3-legged Maquette after Gordon Matta-Clark)* is no exception to this. Using traditional building materials, the result is an architectural construction inspired by Gordon Matta-Clark’s work with architectural space and slicing into old buildings. Outlaw’s piece appears to have been deconstructed because of drill holes in the wood, but in reality it is a fake wood grain creating this illusion. The materials she uses are cleverly manipulated in unexpected ways.

Andrea Higgins, *Go Fukakusa*, 2009, oil on linen





### Nigel Poor

(American, 1963)

*Typology from project: Do you have 30 seconds and can you get your finger dirty, 2007*

Digital print

Nigel Poor's work stems from the art of collecting. Many of Poor's assemblages are archival projects, which have continued to grow throughout her career. She pays inordinate attention to things that are normally disregarded and her art gives each seemingly mundane subject a permanence and importance.

In her *Typology from project: Do you have 30 seconds and can you get your finger dirty* (2007) series she focused her efforts on collecting routine information for personal identification. By magnifying and drawing attention to the fingerprints everyday people leave all over the world around them, she is forcing people to think twice about their own identity and impact. Each fingerprint is an abstract portrait of its creator and a work of art in itself.

Nigel Poor, *Typology from project: Do you have 30 seconds and can you get your finger dirty, 2007*, digital print

### Martha Rosler

(American, born 1943)

*Saddam's Palace (Febreze), from the new series "Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful," 2004*

Photomontage imprime come photo couleur

Photographer Martha Rosler exposes cultural and political struggles through her work. Through the medium of photo-montage, she has captured the irreconcilable duality of the media since the 1960s. Most recently she has returned to themes of war and feminism from her earlier career after reignited outrage over current wars brought up old feelings from her reaction to Vietnam.

*Saddam's Palace (Febreze), from the new series "Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful" (2004)* is a montage of a photograph of Saddam Hussein's palace and an advertisement for household cleaning products, engaging the viewer in a discussion of the destruction and representation of events. It is a contrast of cultural focus and immediate interests. The image challenges you to reconsider the opinions you walked in with.

### Kathryn Spence

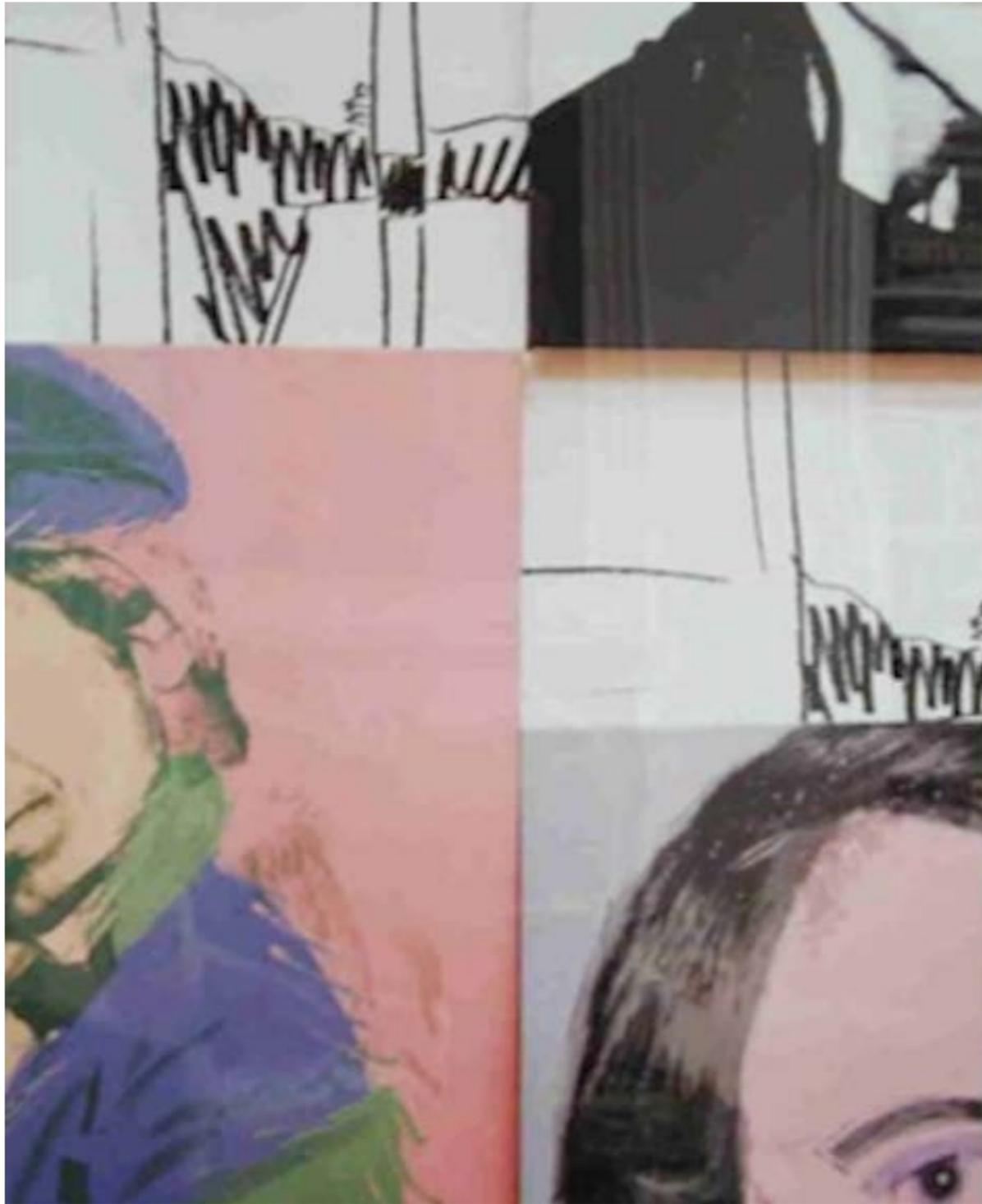
(American, born 1963)

*Untitled (Pigeons, Sparrows and Blackbirds), 1997/1999*

Street trash, wire, glue

Mills College graduate Kathryn Spence is known for her complex, organic sculptures. The wildlife pieces she so often constructs have a dense, natural quality to them that gives them life. Her work has a rough, discarded feeling that gives it personality stemming from her affinity for unwanted materials. The collected textiles and rubbish are given new life as they are recycled into haunting creatures.

The bulky, realistic presence of these pigeons is no exception. The *Untitled (Pigeons, Sparrows and Blackbirds)* (1997/1999) collection of birds is unexpected in any pristine art space. Made of collected street trash, they embody the dirty, grit of the city they came from and huddle, quietly by themselves. Are you viewing them, or are they viewing you?



All of the artists in *Double Take* play with viewers' expectations, but two artists examine this theme by distorting established institutional structures. Louise Lawler is one of a group of artists including Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, and Marcel Broodthaers, whose work has been called institutional critique. By investigating the institutions of art (galleries and museums) and the roles of the various players in the art world (curators, dealers, collectors, and artists) Louise Lawler and some of her contemporaries have forced the art world to take a second look at itself. Lawler's piece included in *Double Take*, *Roy's Eye*, is a photograph of several Andy Warhol portraits as they were arranged at Dia Beacon in 2005. The title refers to the Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, whose eye peers out from the bottom corner of the picture, confronting the viewer. This composition is typical of Lawler's work, and illustrates her precise attention to the relationships between artwork and their environments in her photographs.

Louise Lawler started her career in the 1980s at the height of the private equity and venture capital boom, when money was pouring into the art market from Wall

## STRUCTURAL DISTORTIONS

Kate Rhoades

Street. Lawler accessed auction houses and collectors' homes to document the strange opulence of a shifting art world. A seminal piece was her 1984 photo, *Pollock and Tureen, Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Connecticut* in which the bottom of a quintessentially raucous Jackson Pollock splatter painting is positioned just above a floral patterned soup bowl. Lawler is not only calling into question the value and role of fine art, but also challenging our understanding of the established art discourse. Though we may feel we understand the work of Pollock or Warhol, those assumptions seem less valid when we see the work in these usually hidden or overlooked contexts.

Catherine Wagner is an artist who has more recently taken up this motif of photographing the inner-workings of the art world. In her piece, *Untitled I (Crate and Foam)* Wagner shows us a crated sculpture from the De Young Museum. The crate bears handwritten instructions to the art preparator. Wagner has taken something meant for the eyes of one specialized worker and pushed it out to a wider audience. She is more concerned than Lawler,

though, about the formal aspects of the work's packaging, showing us a secret beautiful geometry that precedes the beauty of the final museum display. Wagner's work often deals with hidden structures, from microscopic cellular structures to architectural constructions; she reveals mysterious worlds lurking beneath the one we see every day. Both of these photographers are asking the viewer to take a second look at the art world. By breaking down the barrier between what is seen in a gallery and how that aesthetic experience is created, Wagner and Lawler give the viewer information that was once prohibited. Their work teases out oddities and inconsistencies, and starts a conversation about how these issues might be further addressed.

Louise Lawler, *Roy's Eye*, 2005, Cibachrome laminated on aluminum museum box

### Tauba Auerbach

(American, born 1981)

*In Order of Popularity (alphabet)*, 2007

Gouache and pencil on paper on panel

Tauba Auerbach's painting, *In Order of Popularity (alphabet)* is a piece that challenges linguistic norms. When confronted with this unfamiliar presentation of a familiar set of symbols, the viewer is granted a new perspective. Auerbach is a Bay Area native and a 2009 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art SECA winner. Much of her work deals in symbolism and visual tricks.

### Miriam Böhm

(German, born 1972)

*Inventory VI*, 2010

Chromogenic color print

Miriam Böhm is a Berlin-based photographer. While her photographs transcend traditional ideas we have about photography, they can also be seen as sculptural. In her practice, Böhm makes prints of her photos and then strategically arranges them in her studio and re-photographs them. This positioning creates new perspectives wherein the physical reality of the subject is distorted, leaving the viewer confused as to what in the depicted space is real and what is an illusion. By merging foreground and background, Böhm has engineered a visual experience that is totally unique.

### Ceal Floyer

(Pakistani, born 1968)

*Ongoing Projection*, 2001

Video projection

Ceal Floyer has suggested language without literally showing it in her piece, *Ongoing Projection*, wherein an open notebook is projected onto the corner of the gallery. As the pages turn, the gallery walls are transformed in to a virtual kinetic sculpture. Born in Pakistan, but based in London, Floyer has worked with subtle site-specific interventions since the nineties. Aside from the art works themselves, which are usually manifested in projections and installations, titles are also a large part of Floyer's work. She often employs word play in the titles, adding a humorous twist to her minimalist artworks.

Ceal Floyer, *Ongoing Projection*, 2001,  
video projection

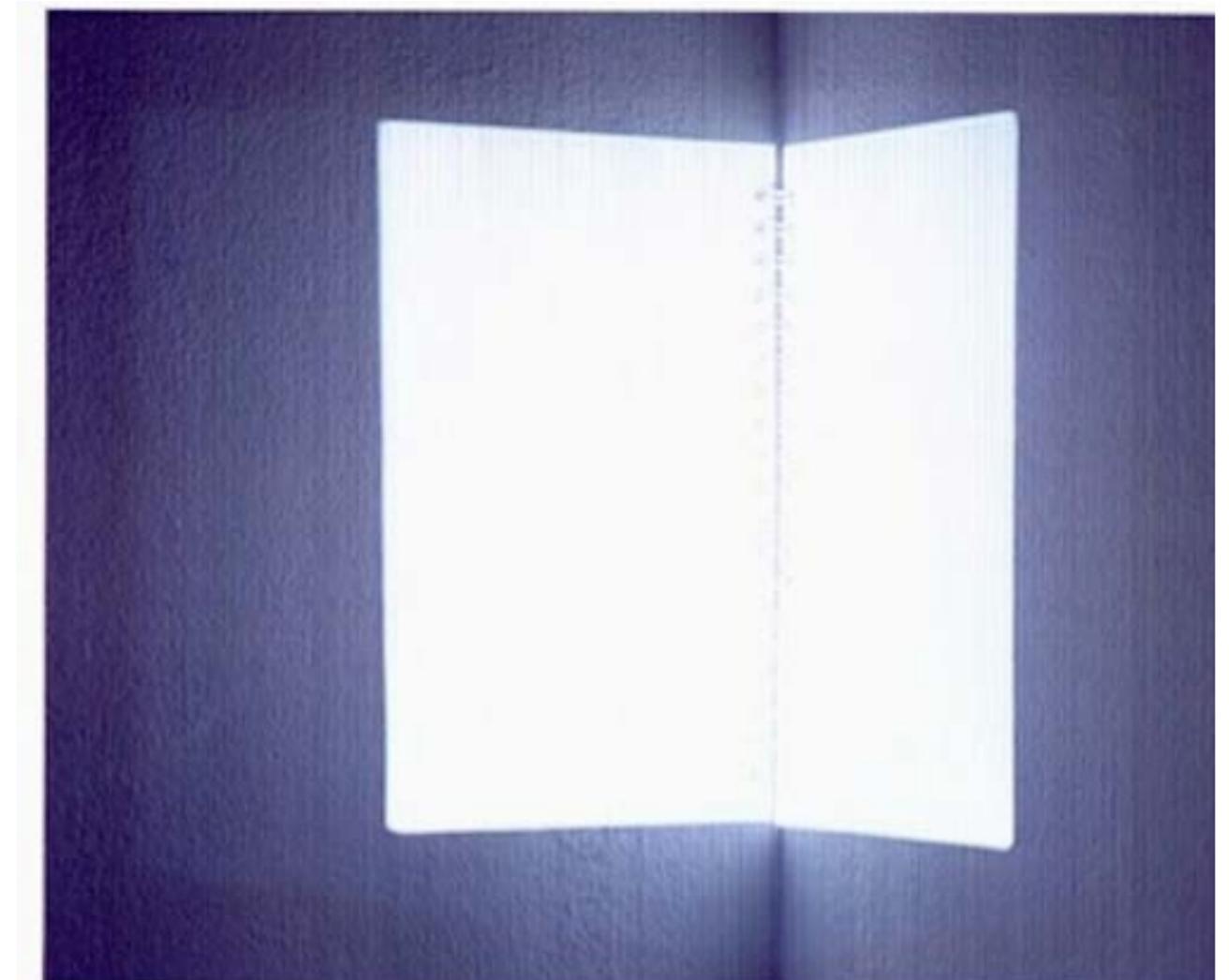
### Jenny Holzer

(American, born 1950)

*Truisms 2*, 1977-79

Electronic LED sign

Jenny Holzer was born in Ohio in 1950. She has shown work at the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Guggenheim Museum. Her piece, *Truisms 2*, breaks down aphorisms that we take for granted. She does this structurally by presenting the words to us in fragments, and conceptually by taking them out of context. This work is part of a series that began with wheat-pasted posters of aphorisms in Manhattan in 1977. Holzer has been a pioneer in utilizing unusual media such as LED displays, billboards, and t-shirts in her work.



Xylor Jane

(American, born 1963)

*Via Curcis IX (Third Fall)*, 2010

Oil on panel

Xylor Jane takes something mathematically commonplace, prime numbers, and reinterprets them through her own visual language. Jane's color shifts and Op-art reminiscent dots elevate these numbers to a hypnotic, sometimes hallucinatory level. Jane is known for her obsessive art practice. She reportedly wakes up before dawn to begin work on her extraordinarily methodical paintings.

Louise Lawler

(American, born 1947)

*Roy's Eye*, 2005

Cibachrome laminated on aluminum museum box

Louise Lawler's work has a political bent. She tracks artworks from their creation to museums, private homes, and corporate offices, and in doing so illustrates the social issues that become attached to the works once they have left the studio. When exploring domestic spaces, Lawler shows fine art as a decorative commodity. In this piece, *Roy's Eye*, Lawler is exploring an institutional space. In many of Lawler's photos, she includes the wall labels that usually accompany museum installations. In this photo, though, she has decided to omit them. Instead she has focused on the relationships between the paintings. During an Andy Warhol retrospective at Dia Beacon, Lawler photographed three paintings hung over a wall that was covered with Warhol's *Washington Monument* wallpaper.

Catherine Wagner

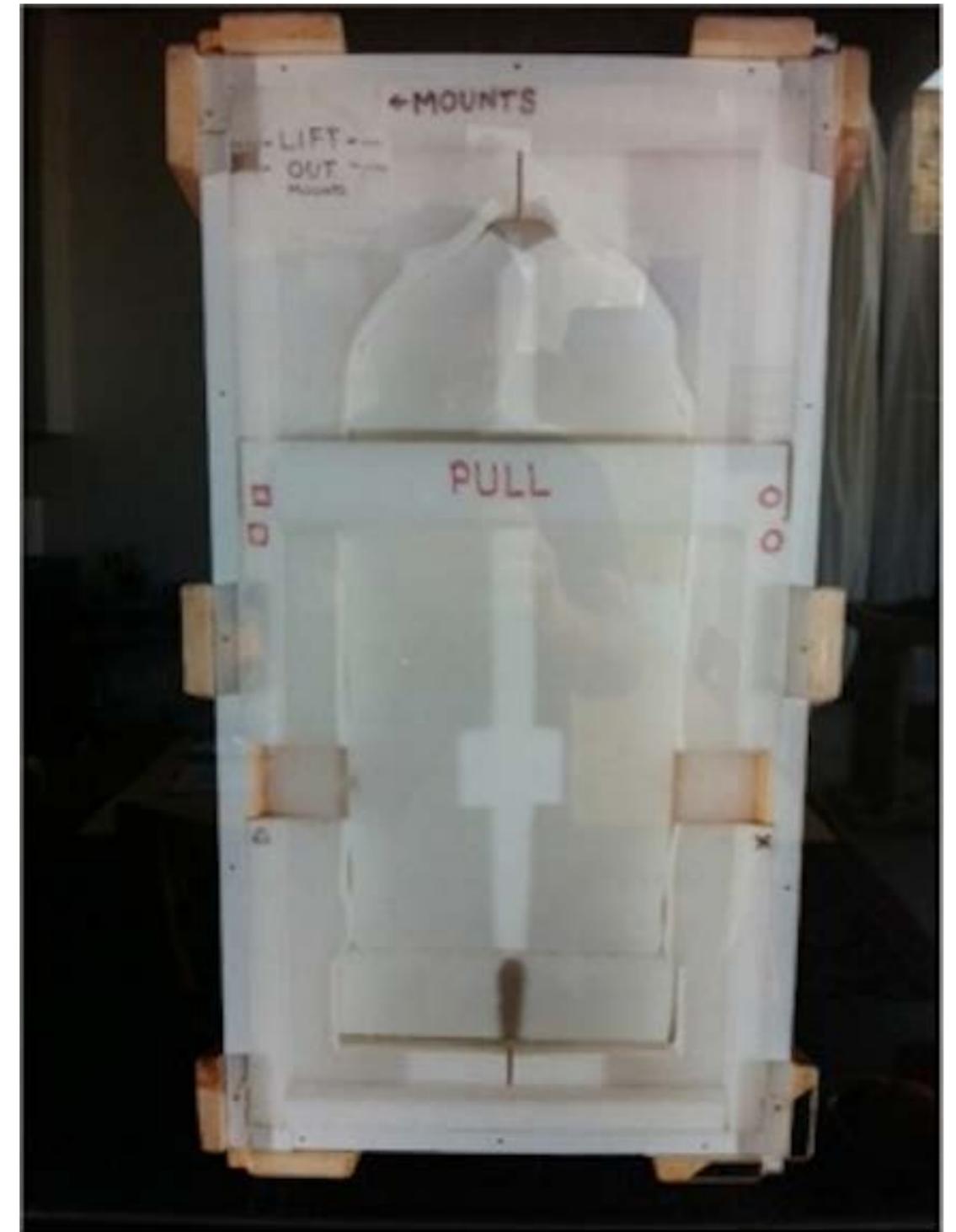
(American, 1953)

*Untitled (Crate and Foam)*, 1999

C-print

Catherine Wagner is a Bay Area artist who has shown work at museums internationally. Her photograph, *Untitled I (Crate and Foam)* is from a project that independent curator Glen Helfand organized wherein eighteen Bay Area artists were asked to explore the role of the museum. Wagner photographed artwork at the De Young Museum while it was still in its packaging as well as in the museum's restoration room. Wagner took the supportive accoutrement of the museum and elevated it to the level of the artwork that it supports.

Catherine Wagner, *Untitled (Crate and Foam)*, 1999, C-print





A photographer turns her mouth into a camera. An artist records all of her purchases and sales in the very drawings that she is selling. An installation artist collaborates with forty senior citizens to create a piece that overturns their perspectives on the town where they live. A woman builds—rather than takes—a photograph out of hundreds of smaller images.

Artists often go to the ends of the earth to create the right image, object, or environment, but some creative processes wind up a little stranger than others. In making pieces through processes that themselves have significance, an artist adds another layer of meaning to the piece, one that may not be immediately visually apparent. In these contexts, not just the piece itself but the history of its creation inform the perception of the viewer.

Though the resulting art objects are all physically stationary, they evoke a sense of time in which the viewer can connect with multiple chronological points simultaneously—the item in the present, and the item in the process of creation. In the blur of Ann Hamilton's *Face to Face* photographs, we can sense the movement of her lips, the

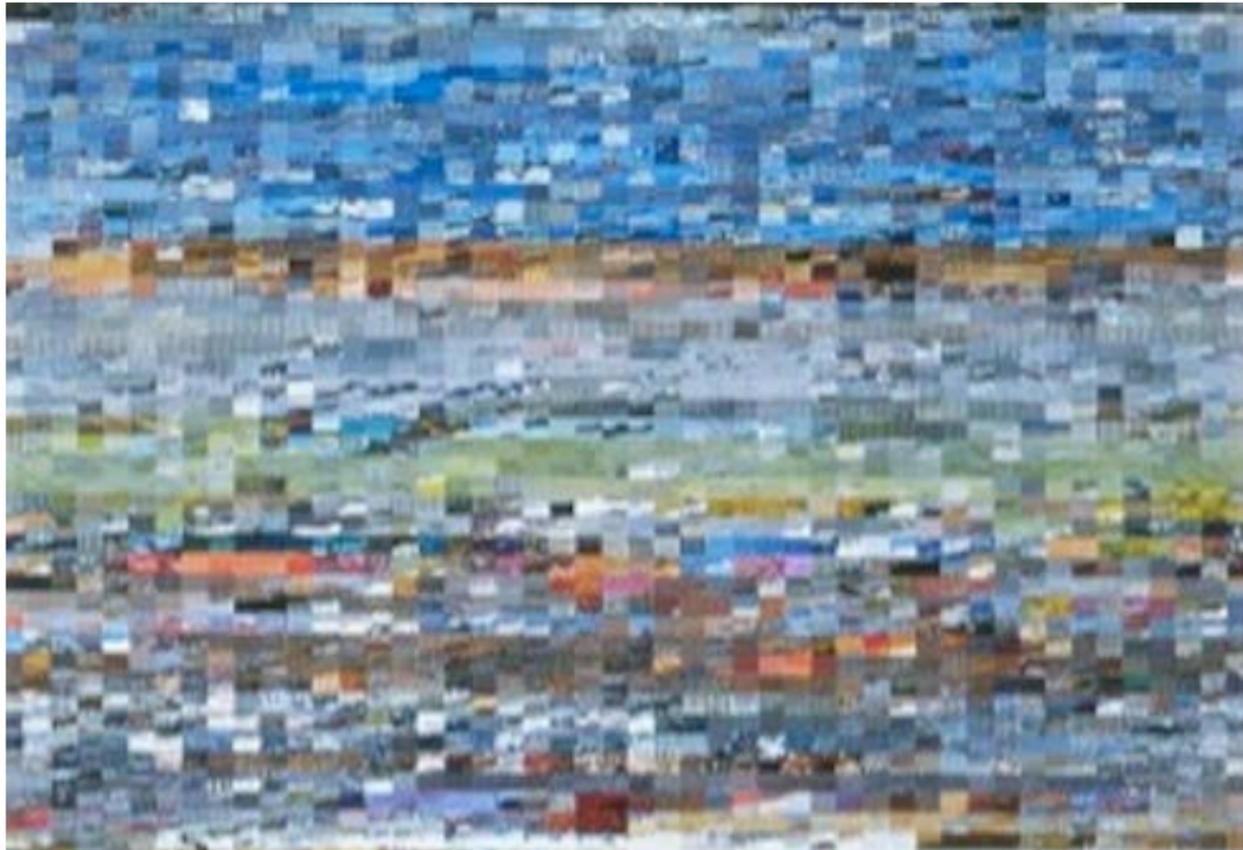
## THE HAND OF THE ARTIST

Katherine Rose

fragment of a second they take to open and close—short to us, but long to a piece of film—and the condensation of her breath in the air. In Danica Phelps' pieces, we can imagine the compulsion to record, the meticulousness of information contrasting with the looseness of the drawing hand. In Ellen Harvey's piece, the spirit of collaboration across a community comes to the forefront, in addition to the artist's voice and unique perspective on the project. In Rebeca Bollinger's *index*, the segmented image disrupts our idea of a typical photographic practice.

Though each different in their methods and effects, these processes transform the way we view these works. Though some are figurative and some not, we can detect in each of them a human company, imbued not through the subject but through the involved creative process of the artist—the hand of the artist is present in each of these works.

Ellen Harvey, *Beautiful/Ugly Palm Beach*, 2006, 80 mirrors, 80 paintings



Rebeca Bollinger  
(American, born 1960)  
*index*, 2001  
C-print

Rebeca Bollinger distorts the readability of photography through various processes, including creating mosaic composites of images, digitally and physically removing visual components of photographs, photographing out-of-focus landscapes through a catadioptric lens, which produces an unusual and abstracting pattern in the out-of-focus areas of an image, and the translation of photographic elements into rough ceramic forms.

In this image, a vaguely photographic landscape is disrupted by what can be read as its fragmentation into—or, alternately, its composition from—numerous smaller images. Neither the whole image nor the smaller images that it is made of are immediately readable; they require a second look to understand.

Rebeca Bollinger, *index*, 2001, C-print

Ann Hamilton  
(American, born 1956)  
*Face to Face–31*, 2001  
Pigment print in artist's frame

*Face to Face–33*, 2001  
Pigment print in artist's frame

Ann Hamilton communicates through a variety of media, from sculpture, photography, printmaking and textile art to building-scale installations. The common thread running through many of these works is *time*. In her *Face to Face* photographic series, she incorporates the process of photography into her own body, through a homemade pinhole camera placed in her mouth, turning her lips into the camera shutter and yielding strange and dreamy images that suggest the shape of the human eye.

Ellen Harvey  
(American, born 1967)  
*Beautiful/Ugly Palm Beach*, 2006  
80 mirrors, 80 paintings

Ellen Harvey creates installations that engage with the structures that inform the perceptions of people around her, encouraging transformations in the ways that objects, locations or ideas are viewed. Many of these pieces, like *Beautiful/Ugly Palm Beach*, are amassed from smaller pieces and are meant to have a cumulative impact. In *Beautiful/Ugly Palm Beach*, Harvey very literally urges a second look at the things that the residents of Palm Beach have seen as inconsolably positive or negative about their home. This resulting image-based dialogue can inspire thought about any community.

Collaborating with forty senior residents of Palm Beach, Florida, Harvey arranged an installation of images that these residents found to represent beautiful and ugly qualities in Palm Beach. By placing them on adjacent walls and interspersing mirrors amongst the images, Harvey formed a display in which the beautiful and the ugly necessarily reflected one another, complicating their relationship.

Danica Phelps

(American, born 1971)

*e.e. #93, 1st Gen, 2002*

Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

*e.e. #35, 2nd Gen, 2002*

Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

*e.e. #112, 1st Gen, 2002*

Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

*e.e. #23, 2nd Gen, 2002*

Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

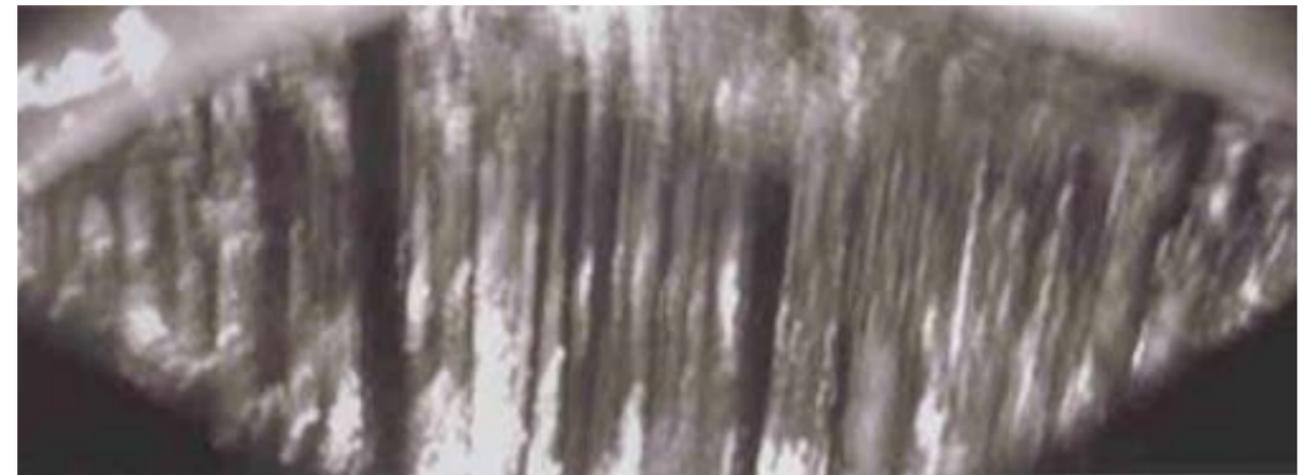
*e.e. #65, 2nd Gen, 2002*

Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

Danica Phelps chronicles, in her work, all monetary transactions that she has made, documented through an invented symbolic system in which purchases and sales become colored vertical lines. Through this process, her pieces become both personal information and a very literal, quantitative confrontation with the creation of value in the art market.

While this drawing contains elements that would at first appear purely visual, anomalous mentions of monetary amounts clue the viewer in that there may be more information encoded in this piece than meets the eye.

Phelps' process of creating "generations" encodes the sales of the works themselves into the monetary documentation within each image. When the "first generation" of a drawing is purchased, she traces it by hand to create a "second generation," which she punctures a hole in and stamps "purchase/ 2nd generation," below which she glues a strip of grey paper with the details of the "first generation" piece's transaction encoded in a series of green lines and accompanied by the name of the purchaser. This process can continue for several generations, the monetary information at the bottom of the piece slowly building over time.



Top: Ann Hamilton, *Face to Face-31*, 2001, pigment print in artist's frame

Bottom: Ann Hamilton, *Face to Face-33*, 2001, pigment print in artist's frame



The exhibition *Double Take* inspires a reexamination of things once taken for granted. This particular group of works addresses the paradoxes our mind and emotions struggle to understand in relation to our existence and reality. The emphasis here is process not conclusion. Each artist's intention is to prompt audience interaction and personalized interpretation; the common element of anonymity allows for this. Through the works in the exhibition, we are reminded of our own agency and encouraged to apply our revelations to the broader scope of society and humanity. These are statement pieces that challenge the status quo; this double take is not a passive reaction but rather an ignition for transformation and action.

A few of the pieces are created with found and collected materials; objects neglected and lost to obscurity were it not for these artists. Lucy Puls's *Continuatio (Encyclopaedia Britannica)* salvages an encyclopedia; it represents a lifestyle and perspective of the past. She has forced us to notice the rubble in the path of progress. Similarly Beverly Rayner's *Submerged passion: letter never sent* reminds us of loss and finality. Yet her piece also in-

## THE VALUE OF A DOUBLE TAKE

Alexasia Salter-Mack

spires hope and imagination for the future. Both works demonstrate that there is value in reexamining our assumptions; it provides an opportunity for pause, appreciation and insight.

The process of reflection is not definitive; we exist and operate on a spectrum. Kathryn Spence's *Untitled (Mud Animal)* is composed of both literal and metaphorical layers to dissect. Her materials—mud and bathrobes—present several dichotomies. Mud is dirty and repulsive whereas a bathrobe is worn after bathing and for comfort. The sculpture carries a tone of defeat and sadness, but it also exudes a presence of permanence and strength. Spence and Lisa Kokin both create life, identity, and immortality by transforming found materials into sculptures. Kokin's *Poetic Justice* addresses social status by sewing photographs into a hierarchical tower and applying the concept of retribution and equity. The spectrum is fluid and multi-dimensional, as is life. Declaring a position or defining poles is trivial. Focus instead on the process and experience of movement.

Within the exhibition there is a common theme of absence and ambiguity created by empty space.

It allows the audience to feel and/or fill the emptiness, thereby personalizing the experience. Rut Blees Luxembourg's *Enges Bretterhaus/Narrow Stage* suctions the audience into her photograph. It surrounds you with sensations; see the dimly lit street, feel the night air, and hear the silence. Francesca Woodman's photographs blur the subject and cover their faces thereby stripping away identification. The unknown in each piece is an opportunity for individual assessment and meaning.

Subtle exposure to inconsistencies in society and the world at large repeatedly reappear in this group of works. Mona Hatoum's *Untitled (Wheelchair II)* positions the viewer as both the able and disabled, each immobilizing in its own way. Who is the advocate and for whom? Doris Salcedo's *Istanbul Project II* draws attention to the repercussions of war for all those involved. Raising awareness is the intention; your degree of association with a specific event, cause, or marginalization is unrelated to the global demand for social equity.

The Oxford English Dictionary

Rut Blees Luxembourg, *Enges Bretterhaus/Narrow Stage*, 1998, C-print on aluminum

defines a paradox as, “an apparently absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition, or a strongly counter-intuitive one, which investigation, analysis, or explanation may nevertheless prove to be well-founded or true.” It is that slight possibility of truth, which places significant value in a double take. It provides a chance for transformation; a second look already implies progression from a first. In reflecting on these works of art, we commit to the process of exploring meaning and reality.



Mona Hatoum, *Untitled (Wheelchair II)*, 1999, stainless steel and rubber

## Mona Hatoum

(Lebanese, born 1952)

*Untitled (Wheelchair II)*, 1999

Stainless steel and rubber

Mona Hatoum’s art expresses dichotomies, forcing viewers to reexamine their own reality. The tug-of-war between our assumptions and our participation with the art reflect Hatoum’s own frustrations with social constructs, social equity, war, and her parents’ exile from Palestine in 1948. She began her career as a performance artist, making bold political statements that placed the viewer front and center. Her shift to creating sculptures in 1989 also shifted the degree and method of viewers’ participation. Hatoum comments, “I decided to set up situations where viewers could experience for themselves feelings of danger, threat, instability and uncertainty through the physical interaction with the work.” A majority of her art is focused on the body and absence, consequently leaving the empty space to be filled by the viewer and their interpretations.

*Untitled (Wheelchair II)* is a stainless steel transformation of the conventional wheelchair. The modifications include the materials, the choice of four wheels instead of two, the serrated blade handles, and the forward-slanted motion of the structure. Imagine the cold discomfort induced by the stainless steel. Note the wheelchair is disabling to both parties involved. The wheels are inaccessible to the person sitting and require someone else to move the wheelchair forward. However the handles to push and guide the wheelchair would immediately inflict pain and draw blood. Once a chair of comfort, safety, and support has been transformed into a perverse vehicle of violence and victimization.

## Lisa Kokin

(American, born 1954)

*Poetic Justice*, 2000

Mixed media, altered photographs

Poetic justice is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the fact of experiencing a fitting or deserved retribution for one’s actions. Therefore how is Lisa Kokin able to represent such an experience when she knows neither the individuals in her work nor their actions? She works with found and collected objects. Generally the photographs arrive to her studio devoid of any identification. She comments, “I will, of course, never know the truth, so I feel its my job to give them new lives and rescue them from the obscurity they would be headed for.” In the process of transforming the photographed individuals’ identities, she’s immortalizes their existence.

The portraits are stacked and sewed into a tower-like hierarchy, creating intrigue for Kokin's process and the story she has woven. There is an obsessive quality to her stitching; she is also left unfinished threads at different points in the piece. Is this to suggest that it is unfinished or that there is potential movement? The many layers of interpretation provoke reflection on the concept of poetic justice applied to our society. Who deserves retribution and who delivers it? The piece brings attention to social issues of class, race, gender, and equity.

**Rut Blees Luxembourg**  
(German, born 1967)

*Enges Bretterhaus/Narrow Stage*, 1998  
C-print on aluminum

Rut Blees Luxembourg lets spaces speak for themselves. She is an internationally known photographer of urban landscapes. Her long exposures and use of a 5x4 camera produce intense clear images. In her series *Liferslied*, she presents shots of London. These are not the typical bustling city images we would expect. Instead it is a collection of spaces overlooked and almost void of life. The lighting is purely that of the street and surrounding buildings. It is the city we would miss if she did not force us to take a double take.

In *Enges Bretterhaus/Narrow Stage*, the viewer is transported to a silent street. We look upon an opened shipping container, the red amongst the dark shadows drawing our eyes further in. Why is the container open? For whom is the table and chair set? She has the impressive ability to create life and movement in a photograph, which implicitly depicts none. Luxembourg aims to capture, "a space that allows for a moment of repose." Taking the time to reflect and pause generally are not associated with a city, especially London.

**Lucy Puls**  
(American, born 1955)

*Continuatio (Encyclopedia Britannica)*, 1998  
Book pages, glue

In this 21st century of instant and digitized information, Lucy Puls has made the encyclopedia relevant again. *Continuatio (Encyclopedia Britannica)* is a reflection of our society's insatiable desires and the consequences of such a lifestyle. She has unbound an entire encyclopedia and fused the pages into a standing tower. This wholistic view presents thousands of pages that are completely illegible except for a few scattered words and letters that seem to fall into nothing.

The waist-high sculpture is a reminder of our past and the nature of evolution. Encyclopedias served as organized compilations of information and history. The digital revolution stripped it of purpose as a physical artifact. Progress is a forward-moving machine; technology is in constant motion to improve the status quo. It is ironic that in bringing awareness to the encyclopedia, Puls' has denied us access to it. This is a reemphasis of the limits and finality of time.

**Beverly Rayner**  
(American, 1958)

*Submerged passion: letter never sent*, 1998  
Mixed media

*Submerged passion: letter never sent* invites the viewer to embellish a romance and unwrap all that lies within the envelope. The title eludes to love and loss; it sets the stage for our imagination. Text is visible but illegible, and we are only provided confirmation of prose. Lips, perhaps a kiss, seal the letter. A seemingly simple piece transports the viewer into endless possibilities of interpretation and meaning.



Lucy Puls, *Continuatio (Encyclopedia Britannica)*, 1998, book pages, glue

Doris Salcedo  
(Colombian, 1958)

*Istanbul Project II*, 2003

Piezo-pigment on Hahnemuhle German etching paper

Doris Salcedo is internationally known for her disruptive sculptures; she toys with our assumptions of both space and society. She challenges the status quo by giving voice, life, and attention to those marginalized in the gaps of society. Yet her work is openended enough to allow viewers to relate their own history and experiences with each piece.

In *Istanbul Project II*, Salcedo fills an urban void with cascading chairs; what is the meaning of this display? Salcedo's intentions were to create a 'topography of war.' Her work is never reflective of a particular war or culture; rather she proposes sculptures that may be interpreted through each viewer's history. It is a statement piece on the repercussions of war endured by both victims and perpetrators. There is no visible life or inhabitation yet you feel the weighted presence of the chairs and the represented lives lived and lost. The piece depicts multiple binaries such as black/white, life/death, occupancy/vacancy, just/unjust, or good/bad. Salcedo forces us to reexamine our position on these continuous spectrums and reflect on the implications such an outlook can have for our world.

Kathryn Spence  
(American, born 1963)

*Untitled (Mud Animal)*, 2001

Stuffed animals, furry bathrobes, mud

Kathryn Spence's *Untitled (Mud Animal)* presents paradoxes and evokes mixed emotions on several muddy layers; it compels us to question and contemplate our reality. Why did she choose found objects, bathrobes, and dirt as her materials; what is the symbolism? Spence remarks, "I have used mud to . . . suggest that in our involvement with life we are physically and psychologically coated by our experiences." The texture developed by the materials relates to the experiences in life that mold and transform our existence.

The sculpture resembles a teddy bear, a children's toy but with a disheartened demeanor. The physical posture of the creature is slumped and sitting. It deeply conveys vulnerability and fragility despite its feature-less appearance. Yet there's also a sturdy quality to it that implies strength and endurance. As an onlooker, you're torn between repulsion and desire to embrace the sculpture. The contrasts created by Spence perplex and encourage the audience to take a double take.

Kathryn Spence, *Untitled (Mud Animal)*,  
2001, stuffed animals, furry bathrobes,  
mud

Francesca Woodman  
(American, 1958-1981)

*N. 303/New York*, 1979-80, 1999

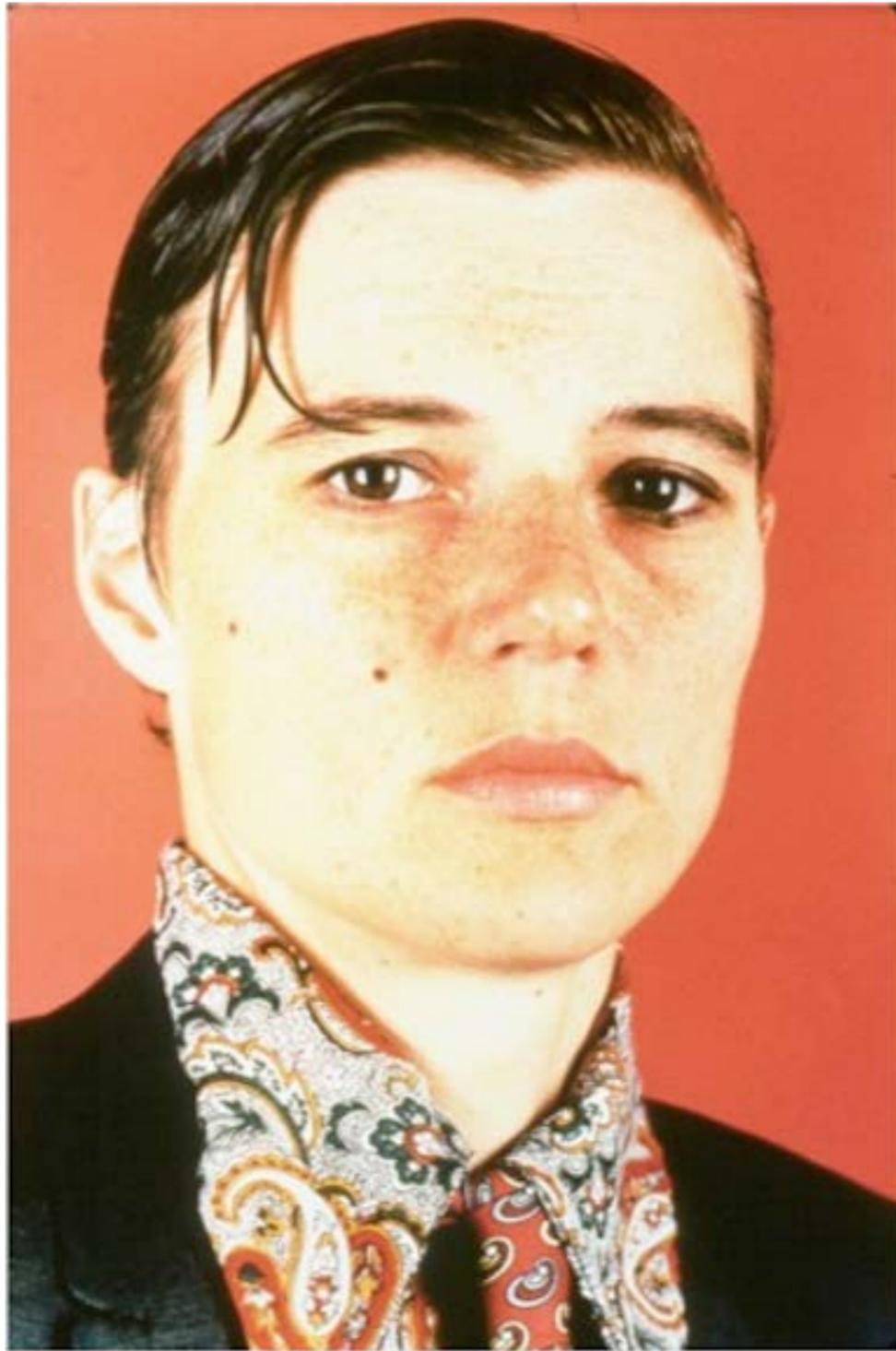
Gelatin silver print

*I. 143.1/Yet another leaden sky, Roma* May 1977-August 1978, 1999

Gelatin silver print

Two small black and white photographs paired side-by-side depict extraordinary space and depth; these are the genius of Francesca Woodman. Despite her tragic death at the age of 22, she has left an everlasting impact on the world of photography. Her ability to transform dimensions and angles, especially in her self-portraits, defied more traditional approaches. In studying her process and eccentric life, a common element of obsession appears. Her photographs generally contain an obscured component, be it blurriness or a hidden face. Perhaps this is not a covert tactic but rather a preservation approach. By slightly withholding she enraptures the viewer into the image—only to then deny them the intimacy of disclosure.





The idea of *Double Take* comes from an irregularity, or something unexpected, that can be seen among the different pieces being shown. Desiree Holman, Catherine Opie and Wangechi Mutu are three of the finest examples of this idea in the exhibition. All of the pieces by these artists cause you to second guess what you see. This is especially true with the Holman's piece *Surplussage* (2009), which at first appears to be a "normal" scene of a mother holding a baby, but through further explanation, we can see this is no common baby. It is in reality a fake baby. Each baby in this series was made by Holman and then used to show everyday mother and child events, like breast feeding. Opie also explores a different underground culture, one in which she in fact participates. In *Angela* (1993), Opie chooses to show the truth behind her leather loving community, so the world can better understand her and her friends' life-style choices. She even uses fellow artists in her photographs, although she was very conscious to not use people from her circle of friends and family. Mutu takes a very different approach to her art, using many materials to make her pieces. Her art uses an overlapping collage technique

## QUESTIONING IDENTITIES

Darian Volk

to show her central idea, which is always about exploring the female body.

In my opinion, it is the stories behind these pieces that are captivating for an audience. While every artist has influences that effect their work, the influences in the work of these three artists are unlike anything I have seen before. Each piece shows a historical aspect, referencing traditional elements used in art. They all have a life-like quality while also feeling very posed and arranged. This is very much like Renaissance portraits: each piece captures the life of the sitter and the idea of "double take" behind our show.

These pieces demonstrate the cultural or social ideas embedded in *Double Take*. This area of the exhibit takes the viewer on a journey of questioning everyday life, whether it is through the subject(s) in the pieces, or the story involved that helped create them. Holman, Mutu and Opie each question everyday life in a very different manner. Holman questions the idea of maternal instinct and how that can impact women's lives. Mutu questions the depiction of the female body through the forms and images she uses in her collages. And Opie questions gender with her por-

trait. As you can see, each piece is extremely different, not only in the content, but also in what the artists question. Yet, they are all connected. They all question cultural assumptions of what is "normal" and the social systems that have been put into place to ensure that we fall in line.

We can clearly see that each of these issues is very important to the artist through the care they have taken in depicting and gathering information on the life-styles of these people. In Opie's case, it is clear why she choose to display these sitters and their life-style choices: because it is her own life-style. Holman, however, chose to portray something that is not a part of her life directly. In Mutu's piece, it is hard to say whether or not the issue she portrays is close to home. I would like to believe it is, however, due to the complex composition and depictions of female African bodies. It is as if Mutu is trying to say that her own life is complex and she is dealing with issues of sexuality and her body as an African-born woman.

These three pieces, in my opinion, capture the essence of this

Catherine Opie, *Angela*, 1993, Chromogenic print

exhibition by showing the complexities of women in society and everyday life in general. All of these works deserve a “double take” from the viewer, inviting you to start questioning your own life and addressing the difficult questions that these pieces bring to your attention.

### Anne Collier

(American, born 1970)

*Women with Cameras (German Photography)*, 2007

C-print

Anne Collier combines still-life photography with well-planned compositions. When photographing, she uses flat, solid colored backdrops and combines them with found photographs with pop culture and mass media references from the 1960s up to the 1980s. Many of her photographs focus on the female form or sometimes explore other photographers' work, with these two ideas often overlapping in her pieces. In *Women with Cameras (German Photography)*, Collier questions sexuality and feminism in a thought-provoking way that is relevant to our time.

### Desiree Holman

(American, born 1974)

*Surplussage*, 2009

Color pencil on archival paper

Desiree Holman is an Oakland based artist, who experiments with props and figures in her artwork. Holman has done a number of series, and *Surplussage* is part of the series known as *Reborn*. The concept explores mothers' relationships with infants. For these pieces Holman made realistic babies, which she notes was a time consuming task, and cast live “mothers” to pose with her sculptures. Holman decided to undertake this project because she was interested in the idea of “mother’s instinct.” This project came to her when she learned of an underground group of women who actually had fake babies and who treated them as if they were real children. She spent time not only making the babies used in her project, but also time with this group to learn more about how they came to have fake babies. In her project, Holman not only wanted to express the idea around “reborns,” but also the emotions these women developed for these children and the psychology behind their emotions.



### Nikki Lee

(Korean American, born 1970)

*The Tourist Project*, 1997

Fujiflex print mounted on Sintra

*The Lesbian Project*, 1997

Fujiflex print mounted on Sintra

*The Swingers Project*, 1999

Fujiflex print mounted on Sintra

Nikki Lee, *The Tourist Project*, 1997, Fujiflex print mounted on Sintra

The 1990s was the decade when transculturalism, transgender, and many others “trans” identifications were established. During this time, Nikki Lee created the idea of “trans-life.” She could be called a performance artist, because she more often than not appears in her own photos. She is very much like Cindy Sherman, but instead of taking on this personality behind closed doors, Lee will go out and live as these people, sometimes for weeks. All of her personalities are New York based, meaning she will take on ways different New Yorkers live. She adopts not only the idea of the personality, but also the way they dress, interact with others, and the places they go. She truly becomes these individuals.

*The Tourist Project*, *The Lesbian Project* and *The Swingers Project* are all part of the *Projects* series, which was done from 1997-2001. In these photographs Lee explores different social and racial groups. Lee was not looking for the beauty in these groups, but rather for a deeper understanding of the people and their idea of identity. When looking at these photographs one must have background knowledge to understand why these images deserve a “double take.” Without this knowledge, these images look normal; in fact several people could have similar photos of themselves. When we realize the meaning behind Lee’s work, it takes on a whole new meaning, in part because of what she is exploring, but also because it is fascinating that for her work she pretends to be other people. Between the dedication to her topic and the process she conveys in her work, the viewer must do a “double take.”

## Wangechi Mutu

(Kenyan, born 1972)

*Swahili Woman, Rashaida Woman Dancing*, 2006

Collage

Wangechi Mutu was born in Kenya, which influences her artwork today. Her art explores gender, sexuality and race. Mutu uses many different mediums in her art, ranging from video to collage to sculpture. For her collages, she will use anything she can find. The content could include abstract images, painting, drawings, and all are used in an overlapping fashion to create a deeply layered composition. *Swahili Woman, Rashaida Woman Dancing* are very tiny pieces, which makes the viewer have to look carefully. I believe this was Mutu’s intent. She wants viewers to look at the small details that compose her work. Mutu’s pieces deserve a double take because it is the only way one can see what is going on in the work; one has to stand, stare, and tilt one’s head from side to side.

Wangechi Mutu, *Swahili Woman, Rashaida Woman Dancing*, 2006, collage

## Catherine Opie

(American, born 1961)

*Angela*, 1993

Chromogenic print

Catherine Opie experiments with the ways photography can impact the world, and she tries to give problems in the world a voice with her art-work. Her work began to be recognized in the 1990s, with a series of photographs of fellow artists who are part of the gay, lesbian and transgender community in Los Angeles. Opie showed her sitters in different situations such as cross dressing, role-playing, and many other alternative life-style choices.

*Angela* is a part of the *Portraits* series which serves as a documentation of the underground sadomasochistic leather culture. Opie wanted to show the world what it was truly like to be a part of this culture, which she participates in, and expose the truths of her world. In this series, Opie places her sitters in front of a colorful backdrop, which she decided was a better way to guide the viewer’s eye through the piece. Opie’s goal with this series was to question the attitudes and assumptions about what is “normal.” *Angela* was chosen for the exhibition because when one first looks at the piece it appears to be a typical portrait. Yet, under further examination, the gender of the sitter becomes a question. The sitter is styled as a man, yet does not appear to have an Adam’s apple and also has a very refined facial structure with no hard edges, which a man’s face typically has. Is the sitter male or female?



Jennie Ottinger

(American, born 1971)

*Beauties (with Announcer)*, 2009

Oil on board

This painting was done by a graduate of the Mills College MFA program. It was at the California College for the Arts (CCA), though, that Jennie Ottinger really developed her unique style. When she started at CCA, she took many drawing and painting classes, but then decided to switch to illustration with the help of one of her professors. This professor also told her to draw quickly and to draw everything. Based on this advice, Ottinger drew anything she could and always had a sketch book with her. Her drawings then and now depict scenes of people's lives. Ottinger was and still is very interested in exploring hierarchies in society, and what drew her to painting *Beauties (with Announcer)* was not the innocence, but the harshness of the girls in the painting. Ottinger says that this image "created a lot of conflicts in me." This piece is included in the exhibition, in part, because the title is so different from what the painting invokes in the viewer; we can see that Ottinger achieved her goal with this piece.

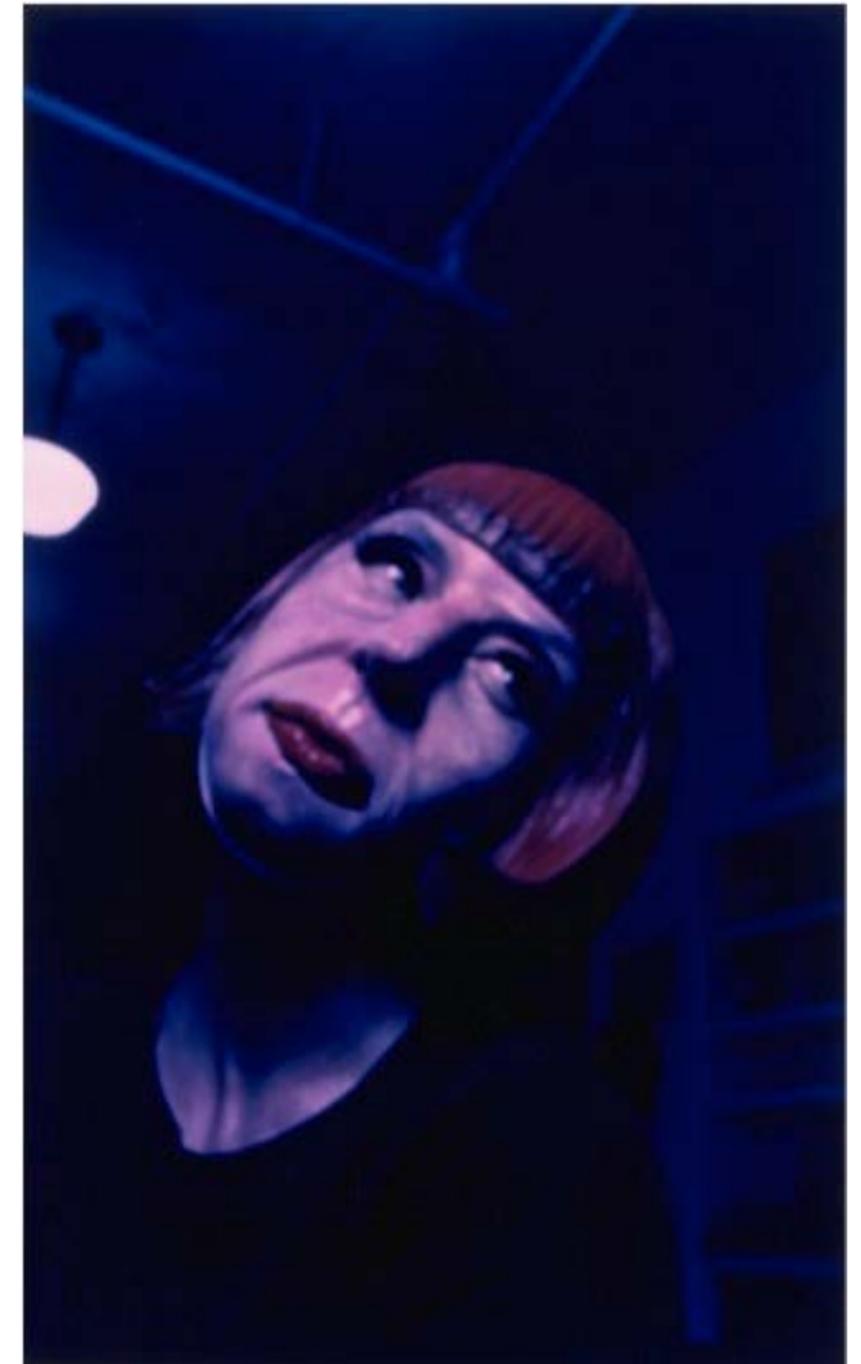
Cindy Sherman

(American, 1954)

*Untitled #28*, 2000

Chromogenic print

Cindy Sherman is one of the most respected photographers of the 20th and early 21st centuries due to the unique way she turns the camera on herself. She photographs her own image, but these are not self-portraits. She uses herself to convey many different roles, including many stereotypical roles associated with women. Her art has changed through the years, from self portraits that mimic film stills, to including doll parts, to showing sexual situations, to referencing historical painting, and back to more traditional portraits. It is said that Sherman knows all the tricks when it comes to modeling and styling her make-up and hair. The viewer can clearly see this is a true statement when looking at *Untitled #28*, due to the unusual angle of the composition and Sherman's wig and make-up work. Sherman is one of the leading women artists to explore different identities, using herself as a model, which has influenced countless other artists whether it is exploring the identities of social or racial groups. In *Double Take* we can see this influence in a number of the works of art, which is one of the many reasons of why Sherman was such a perfect fit for the show.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #28*, 2000, Chromogenic print

## WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

All works in *Double Take* are from the collection of Lenore Pereira and Rich Niles, San Francisco.

Tauba Auerbach  
*In Order of Popularity (alphabet)*, 2007  
Gouache and pencil on paper on panel

Miriam Böhm  
*Inventory VI*, 2010  
Chromogenic color print

Rebeca Bollinger  
*index*, 2001  
C-print

Rosana Castrillo Diaz  
*Untitled*, 2007  
Transparent tape

Anne Collier  
*Women with Cameras (German Photography)*, 2007  
C-print

Tara Donovan  
*Untitled*, 2005  
Ink on Kozoshi paper from a rubber band matrix

Ceal Floyer  
*Ongoing Projection*, 2001  
Video projection

Ann Hamilton  
*Face to Face-31*, 2001  
Pigment print in artist's frame

Ann Hamilton  
*Face to Face-33*, 2001  
Pigment print in artist's frame

Ellen Harvey  
*Beautiful/Ugly Palm Beach*, 2006  
80 mirrors, 80 paintings

Mona Hatoum  
*Untitled (Wheelchair II)*, 1999  
Stainless steel and rubber

Andrea Higgins  
*Go Fukakusa*, 2009  
Oil on linen

Desiree Holman  
*Surplussage*, 2009  
Color pencil on archival paper

Jenny Holzer  
*Truisms 2*, 1977-79  
Electronic LED sign

Xylor Jane  
*Via Curcis IX (Third Fall)*, 2010  
Oil on panel

Lisa Kokin  
*Poetic Justice*, 2000  
Mixed media, altered photographs

Louise Lawler  
*Roy's Eye*, 2005  
Cibachrome laminated on

aluminum museum box  
Nikki Lee  
*The Tourist Project*, 1997  
Fujiflex print mounted on Sintra

Nikki Lee  
*The Lesbian Project*, 1997  
Fujiflex print mounted on Sintra

Nikki Lee  
*The Swingers Project*, 1999  
Fujiflex print mounted on Sintra

Rut Blees Luxembourg  
*Enges Bretterhaus/Narrow Stage*, 1998  
C-print on aluminum

Wangechi Mutu  
*Swahili Woman, Rashaida Woman Dancing*, 2006  
Collage

Catherine Opie  
*Angela*, 1993  
Chromogenic print

Jennie Ottinger  
*Beauties (with Announcer)*, 2009  
Oil on board

Gay Outlaw  
*Untitled (3-legged Maquette after Gordon Matta-Clark)*, 2009

Corroplast, hand-painted paper, ceramic with platinum overglaze, roofing material, gouache

Danica Phelps  
*e.e. #93, 1st Gen*, 2002  
Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

Danica Phelps  
*e.e. #535, 2nd Gen*, 2002  
Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

Danica Phelps  
*e.e. #112, 1st Gen*, 2002  
Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

Danica Phelps  
*e.e.#23, 2nd Gen*, 2002  
Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

Danica Phelps  
*e.e. #65, 2nd Gen*, 2002  
Graphite and watercolor on paper and board

Nigel Poor  
*Typology from project: Do you have 30 seconds and can you get your finger dirty*, 2007  
Digital print

Lucy Puls  
*Continuatio (Encyclopedia Britannica)*, 1998  
Book pages, glue

Beverly Rayner  
*Submerged passion: letter never sent*, 1998  
Mixed media

Martha Rosler  
*Saddam's Palace (Febreze)*, from the new series "Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful," 2004  
Photomontage imprime come photo couleur

Doris Salcedo  
*Istanbul Project II*, 2003  
Piezo-pigment on Hahnemuhle German etching paper

Cindy Sherman  
*Untitled #28*, 2000  
Chromogenic print

Kathryn Spence  
*Untitled (Pigeons, Sparrows and Blackbirds)*, 1997/1999  
Street trash, wire, glue

Kathryn Spence  
*Untitled (Mud Animal)*, 2001  
Stuffed animals, furry bathrobes, mud

Catherine Wagner  
*Untitled (Crate and Foam)*, 1999  
C-print

Francesca Woodman  
*N. 303/New York, 1979-80*, 1999  
Gelatin silver print

Francesca Woodman  
*I. 143.1/Yet another leaden sky, Roma May 1977-August 1978*, 1999  
Gelatin silver print

