

— GROUP
DYNAMIC

— FOREWARD

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— HANDS, HELLO, HAIL (GROUP DYNAMIC) 2012
archival pigment photograph, 20 x 25 inches
courtesy of the artist, François Ghebaly and SilverLens Galleries
created during LACE residency

SUMMER 2012 — LACE, LOS ANGELES CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

— GINA
OSTERLOH





— FOREWARD

It is with great pleasure that we present Gina Osterloh's first monograph, *Group Dynamic*. Serving as both a document and extension of her recent project, *Group Dynamics and Improper Light*, this publication exemplifies LACE's mission to cultivate and promote innovation in contemporary art-making, in all mediums and presentation formats, for the benefit of Los Angeles and the wider world.

Los Angeles photographer Osterloh is best known for constructing and photographing life-size room environments that are activated through still serial performances, paper-maché models and cardboard cutouts. Her investigations into the relationships between group abstraction and individual identity, as well as the nature of the photographic image itself, suggested to us that her practice was ready for a more complex inquiry into overlapping public and private spaces. We invited the artist to relocate her studio into our main gallery to develop a new body of work, and asked her to consider creating multiple opportunities for engagement.

Through the course of her residency, Osterloh worked across a diverse range of artistic platforms that allowed for varied encounters with visitors and project participants in her production-oriented studio, the highly controlled space of her set and the reflective context of the culminating exhibition. This publication further allows the process and evolution of her images to be shared through yet another network of distribution.

Group Dynamics and Improper Light embodies LACE's commitment to fostering artists who innovate, explore and take risks. It also echoes LACE's abiding interest in the creative process as much as the product. This commission, along with other LACE projects such as Mark Tribe's *Port Huron Project* (2009) and Heather Cassils' *Cuts: A Traditional Sculpture* (2011) shares, a multi-sited approach and exploration of the intersections between various publics. Projects such as these allow artists to ex-

plore new contexts and methodologies, which also opens up opportunities for extended critical reflection.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to Gina Osterloh for her willingness and enthusiasm to share her practice with our audiences. We would also like to express our appreciation to York Chang, Sarah Conley Odenkirk, François Ghebaly, Pierre Long, Linus Osterloh and Elinor Turner for their early encouragement and generous commitment to this project.

Very special thanks goes to Theresa Luisotti for her guidance in the early stages of developing this publication, to Willem Henri Lucas for his outstanding design work and to Michelle Dizon, Kris Cohen and Matthew Thompson, whose contributions have helped to make this publication an exceptional moment of scholarship and appreciation to reflect on the trajectory of Osterloh's creative practice.

Finally, *Group Dynamics and Improper Light* would not have been possible without the generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the LACE Board of Directors.

Carol A. Stakenas, Executive Director

Robert Crouch, Associate Director/Curator

— INTERVIEW BY MICHELLE DIZON

MD: We have shared conversation before about how your photographs work at the threshold of visibility. I would love to hear more about the questions of vision and visuality that are present in your work.

GD: I am committed to seeing the most pared-down forms of articulation. In my photographs, I want to ask questions. In terms of seeing - what is the line between formlessness and recognition of a body? How does a body articulate itself as an individual, as a group? For two months at LACE, I traced the shadows of visitors to the gallery. Their silhouettes were cut out and montaged into a life-size set, then photographed to create a *New Family of Chance*. When looking at the photographs, the figures are anonymous to everyone except for the person who has been traced, who recognizes their profile or shape. In terms of material, the photographs present the line, the physical contour, between anonymity and articulation.

MD: there was something so interesting that you said the last time we spoke, which had to do with making every single dot, every single point on the picture plane important. It seems like



a democratic undertaking, an undoing of a Cartesian way of looking at an image, and the subjectivity involved therein.

GD: I feel an incredible responsibility to what I am representing in the photograph. I consider the backdrops active and having as equal a presence as the figure; I want to see the role of my hand in every corner of the picture's construction, rendering both the setting as well as the figure.

MD: Where does photography fit into these questions? I understand that shadow tracings are one of the first forms of photography, but where do you situate this project as well as your larger body of work in some idea of photography?

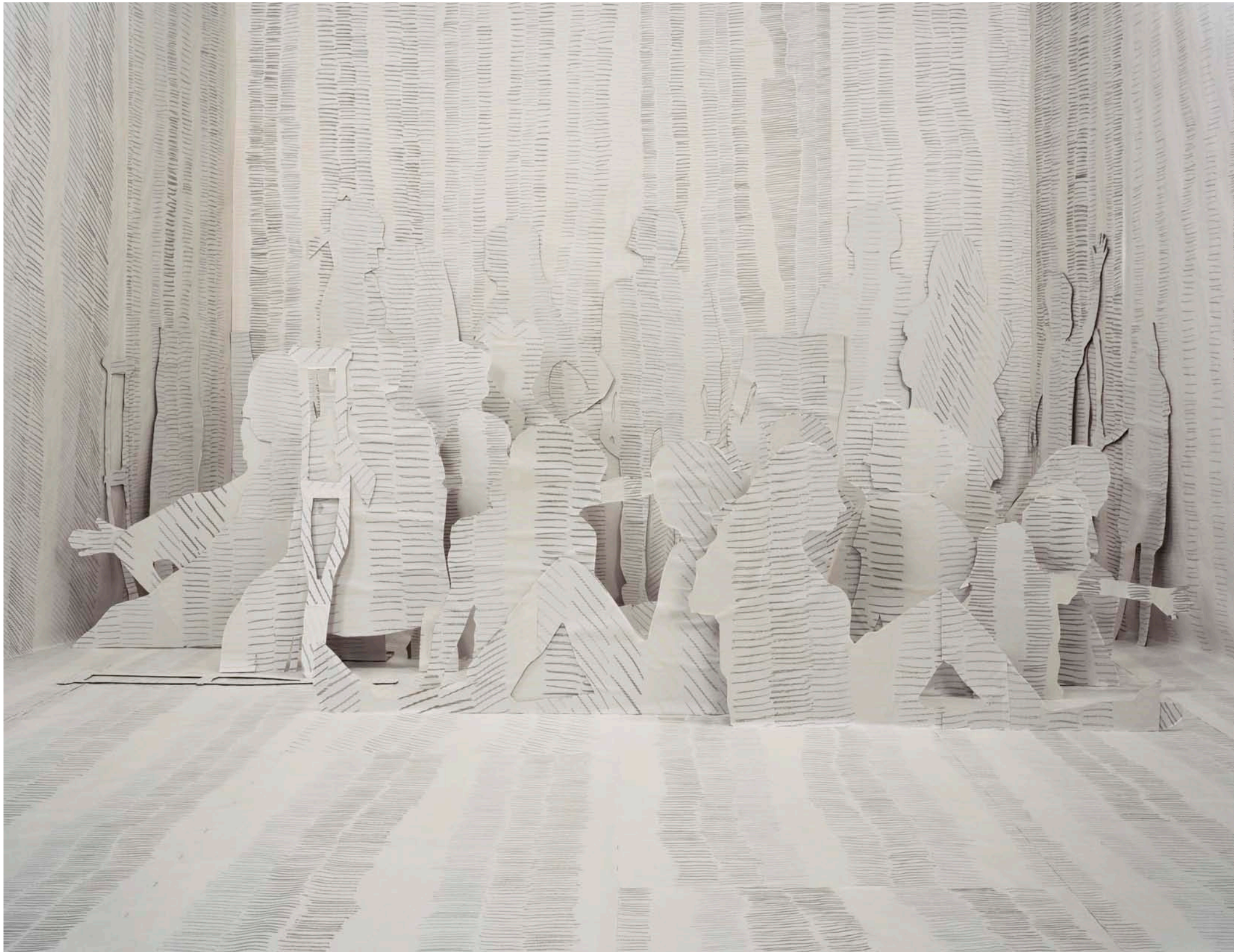
GD: I have to pause and emphasize again the process of tracing, the act of recording the shadows of visitors to LACE during my summer residency. Standing against one wall in the gallery with cardboard, I projected a single light source onto visitors, just as the sun projects an image of self or another person onto a surface. However, the depiction of the shadow in early Greek and Egyptian art is when the shadow became the first recognizable form of representation, one of the first visual manifestations of symbolic order. For example, in early Egyptian paintings, the shadow symbolized the "soul of man" and a visual representation of a person's double. Victor I. Stoichita in *A Short History of the Shadow*, accounts a story



Documentation of shadow tracings and silhouettes, LACE residency, Summer, 2012







by Pliny the Elder on early Greek Art: a girl traces the shadow of her lover who is about to leave for war. Her father fills the tracing with a clay relief of the young soldier to hold the image of his daughter's lover in his absence.

There is an intimacy in the physical act of tracing, clicking the camera shutter, and looking at the material object (the photograph) through, which allows us to see the representation of self and others. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes reminds us that recognition of the other in photography occurs through difference. When recognizing the features of his mother's face in a box of her photographs, he recognizes her "differentially, not essentially." Both processes – tracing/photographing – lay bare the line of difference, the line of recognition.

In terms of photographic space and perception, I am attracted to the shape of the shadow because of the reasons I am attracted to the photograph. The photograph can flatten a figure onto the background or ground - when viewing the shadow we don't know if it is frontal or back. The act of tracing became another way of me seeing the figures that I had been working with, and in turn, became a new way to see the construction of photography.

MD: You have an image with red dots on a black sheet and more hands than the body normally would have. I find those hands very important and in particular, the color of their skin. You talk more abstractly about bodies, but I wonder if a race and



gendered body is very specific within the work as well (see images page 19-20).

GO: My first clear experience of race was looking in the mirror during my freshman year of high school and consciously realizing difference. It was a distinct moment, and I wonder if compared with other stories of experiencing race or difference, it arrived a bit late. It was almost an out-of-body experience. Ohio formed my way of seeing the world. Of course at that age, one can't articulate that it's race they are experiencing, external illogical race constructs. Growing up in Ohio with mixed race parents, there was a literal calling out to me in school, "Hey are you white or black?" At the time I wasn't aware of any mismatch between external projections of identity and internal identity. When I moved to California after undergrad, I was introduced to mixed race studies, while also taking photography classes. I suppose in my first set constructions, *Somewhere Tropical*, I wanted to respond to that question, "Hey you! What are you?" I wanted to respond with a visual blank and interrupt the call-and-response process itself. In terms of subject formation, call-and-response is a perpetual ongoing force we all participate in, and is not exclusive in terms of race. My personal experiences of racial constructs in Ohio have shaped both philosophical and aesthetic strategies in my art practice- to obliterate our current knowledge base, of what we know as identity and language. In my photographs, abstraction is a tool. It's a visual strategy of many to choose from. One I find helpful to reconsider is identity, language, and representation.



MD: Your three channel video installation was conceived during your residency at LACE and it addresses spoken language. Can you talk about the connection between "Pulling Apart Voice" and your photographs?

GD: Both the photographs and video are about articulation. The video, also filmed at LACE during my residency, follows related inquiries of articulation and difference, moving toward verbal language. I am inspired by Bruce Nauman's video pieces which inverts language. While shooting the video, Robert Crouch reminded me especially of Nauman's video *Good Boy, Bad Boy* (1985) – which repeats ubiquitous, often cliché phrases and expressions used in common communication.

MD: At first I thought you slowed down the video. Then I realized the person on the screen was breathing, then started to make a noise, which evolved into a word, such as "Hey You." Can you tell us about pacing of the video and audio, is there a score, or did you give any direction to the actors/artists?

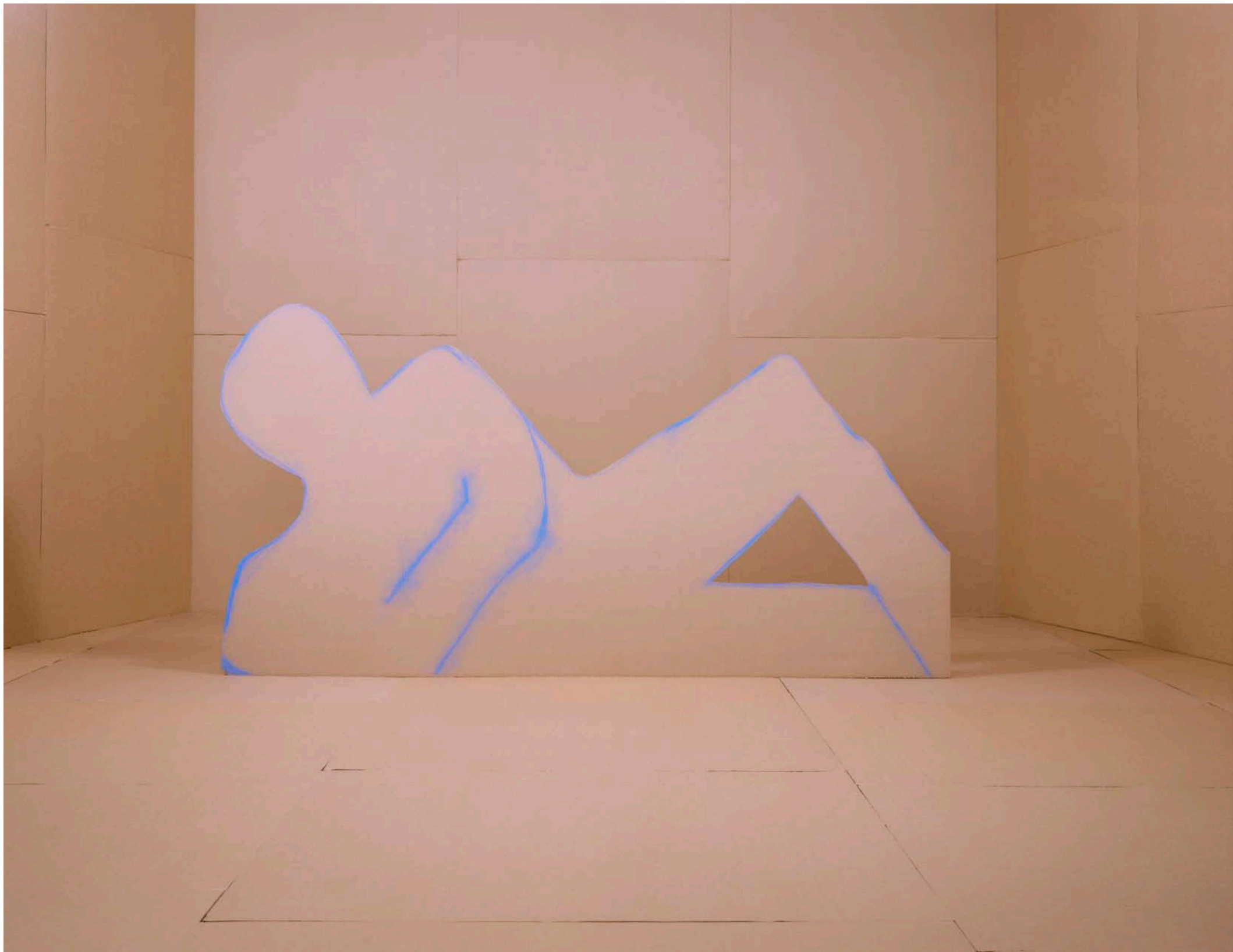
GD: *Pulling Apart Voice* was created with the participation of seven actors and artists who were each given a set of directions. Each take is divided into four progressions: 1. Inner to outer breath 2. The beginnings of articulation,

pronunciation 3. Articulation of the word and 4. Repetition. Each take is one phrase, pulled apart and articulated according to the four progressions. For the exhibition, I assigned the takes to three different monitors: one monitor with the call, and two monitors with the common response phrases. The result is a three-channel chorus, at times with words pronounced at once—at times with moments when a singular word is rendered clear, while another monitor makes audible the breath preceding verbal articulation. The words given to each actor are the most pared-down forms of call and response. Phrases or words include "Hey You," "How Are You," "Good," and "Yes." To experience the piece, visitors to the installation can sit on benches, to face each actor directly while they breath, articulate, and repeat these phrases.

MD: I was struck by how the sound of each actor's voice becomes personal. Yes, the words are ubiquitous, words we say out of common courtesy, all words that are necessary for everyday communication. However, when you give pause and pull apart basic language structures, suddenly there is a point while looking at the actor attempting to articulate a single word, "Hi" - that a very personal voice emerges.

GD: Perhaps it's when the viewer becomes conscious of individuality.







— Documentation of process, set construction for new photographs, with Pejman Shojaei, Getty Production Intern and Nicole White, Production Assistant, LACE 2012



Group Dynamic and Improper Light installation
at LACE, 2012

- PULLING APART VOICE, 2012

3 channel video and audio installation,
table and benches with cardboard,
set walls with cardboard

Pulling Apart Voice was created with the participation of seven actors and artists who were each given a set of directions. Each take is divided into four progressions (scripted on page 18). Through each progression, common everyday words and phrases used for basic communication are slowed down, pulled apart, stuttered, articulated, and repeated. The result is a three-channel chorus, at times with words pronounced at once, with varying moments when a singular word is rendered clear, while another monitor makes audible the breath preceding verbal articulation. The words given to each actor are the most pared-down forms of call and response. Words include “Hey You” | “How Are you?” | “Good” | and “Yes.” Visitors to the installation can sit on the cardboard-lined benches to face each actor directly, as well as walk freely around the installation.

A rectangular frame containing the text "< YES >" in a serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

left monitor

A rectangular frame containing the text "< HOW_ARE_YOU >" in a serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

middle monitor

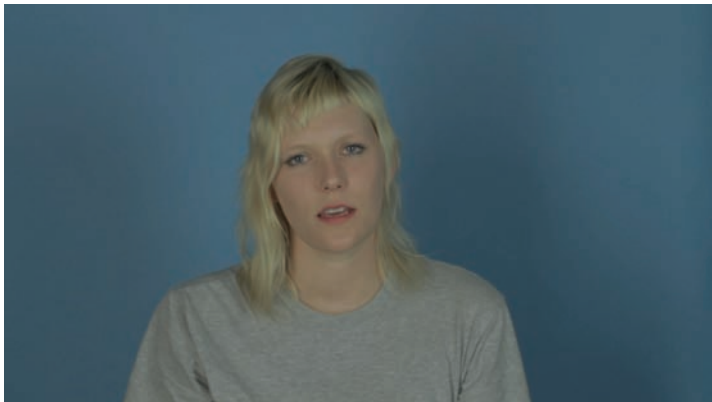
A rectangular frame containing the text "< FINE >" in a serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

right monitor

- PULLING APART VOICE (GROUP DYNAMIC INSTALLATION) 2012
video stills of actors and artists: Nancy Popp, Elana Hill, Tim Brown, Amy Von Harrington,
Justin Streichman and Moises Medina



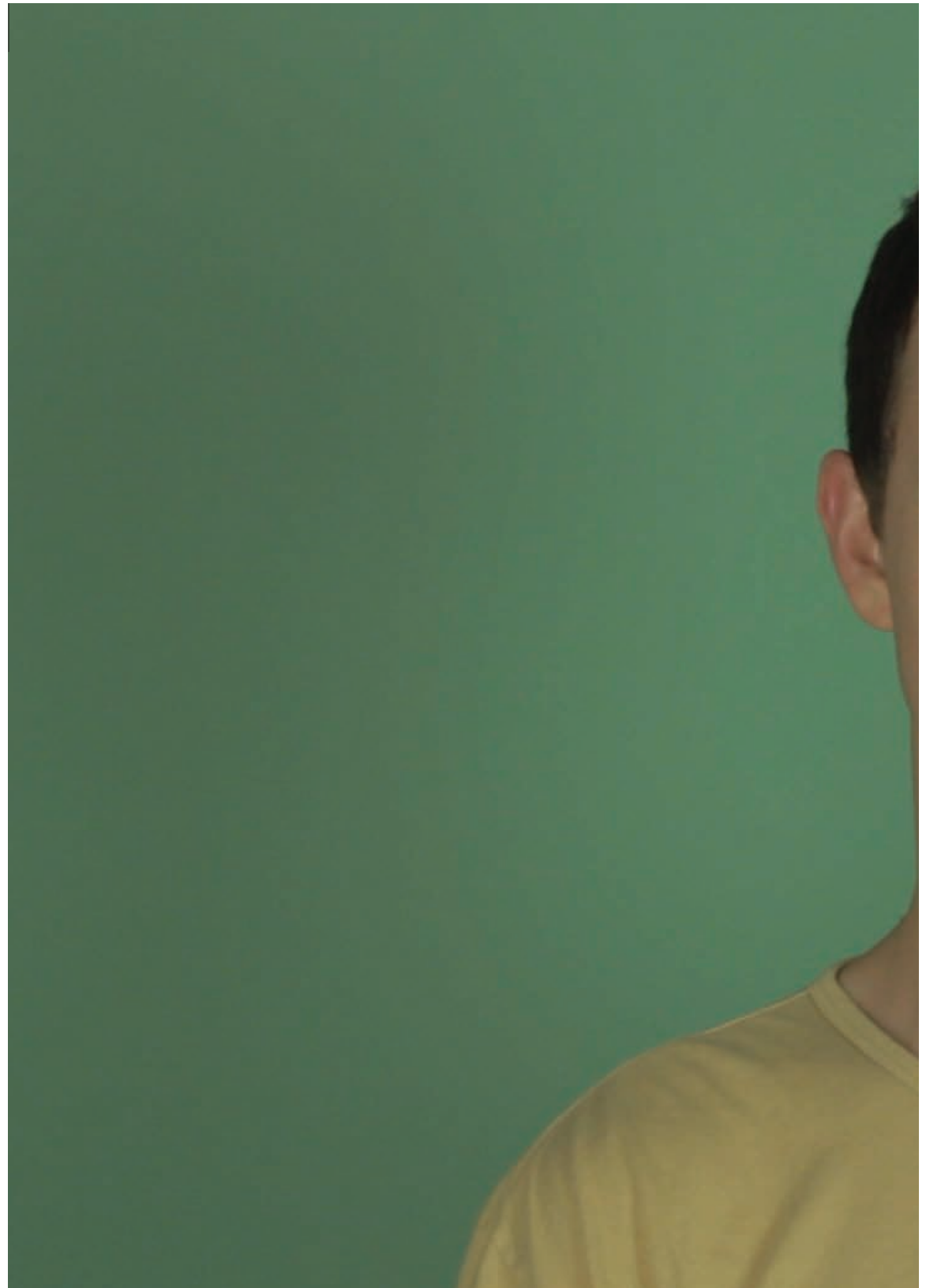
left monitor

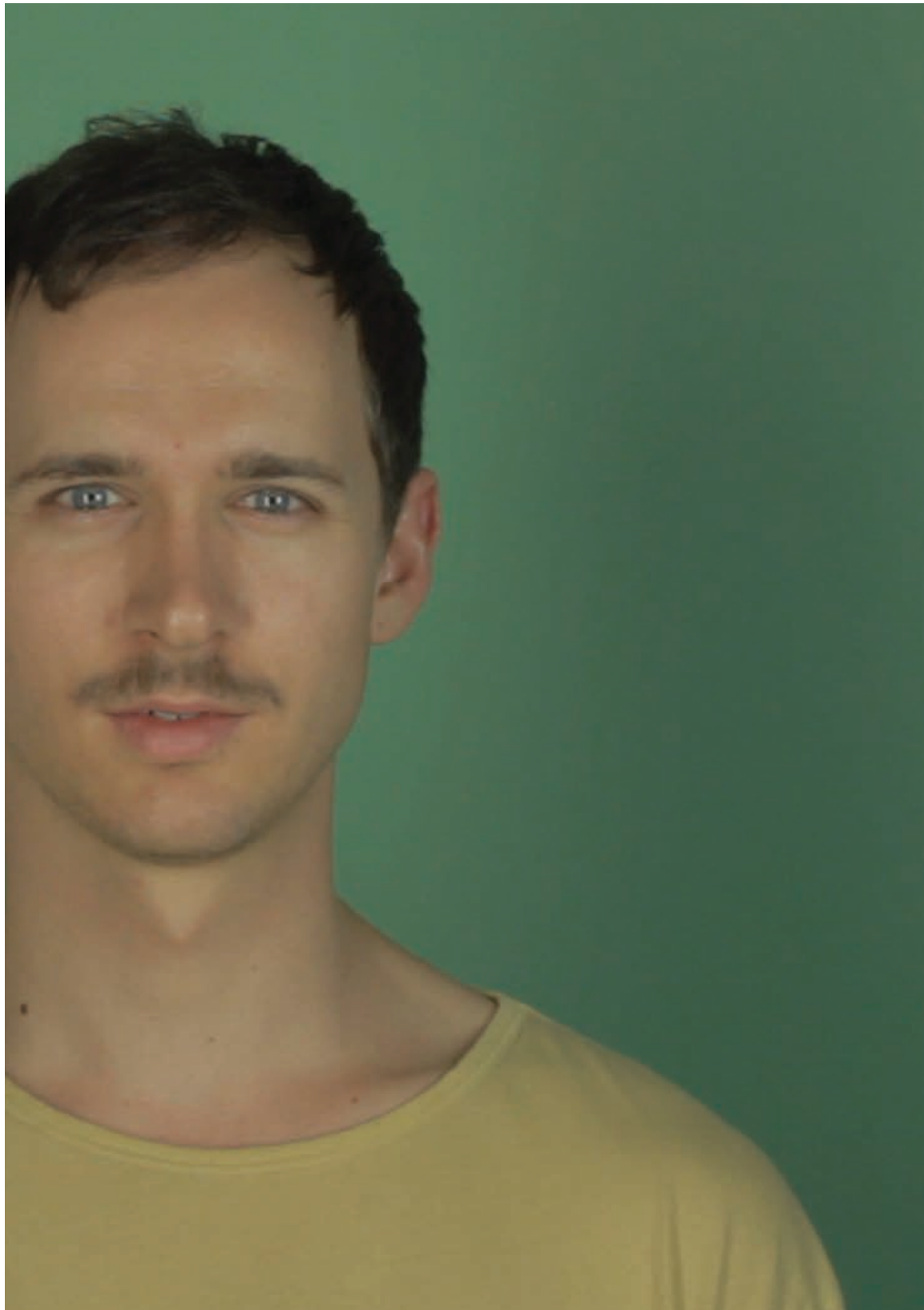


middle monitor

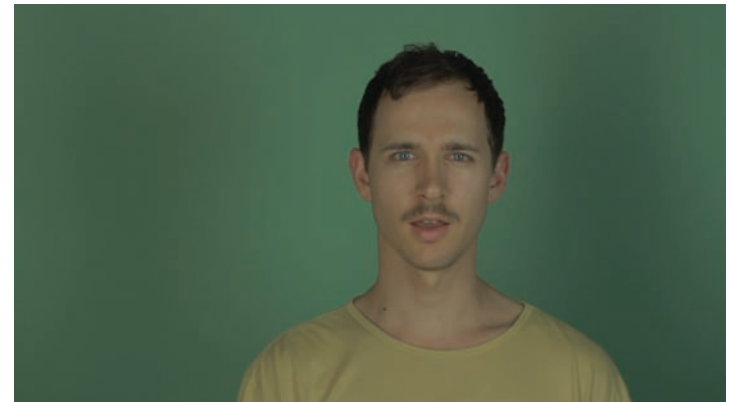


right monitor





left monitor



middle monitor



right monitor

< NO >

left monitor

< HEY_YOU >

middle monitor

< GOOD >

right monitor

DIRECTIONS TO ACTORS AND ARTISTS

TAKE 1

(MIDDLE MONITOR - FACING BACK WALL)

1 minute 30 seconds

00:00

Inner to outer breath

00:15

Audible vowel or consonant sounds, beginnings of articulation

01:00

Articulation of entire phrase

("Hey You," "Hi" -or- "How Are You")

01:15

Repeat word or phrase

01:30

End (at one minute, 30 seconds)

TAKE 2

(RIGHT MONITOR)

1 minute 30 seconds

00:00

Inner to outer breath

00:15

Audible vowel or consonant sounds, beginnings of articulation

01:00

Pronunciate and articulate entire word ("Fine" -or- "Good")

01:15

Repeat "Fine" (or "Good")

01:30

End

TAKE 3

(LEFT MONITOR)

3 minutes

00:00

Inner to outer breath

00:45

Audible vowel or consonant sounds, beginnings of articulation

01:30

Articulate "Yes" -or- "No"

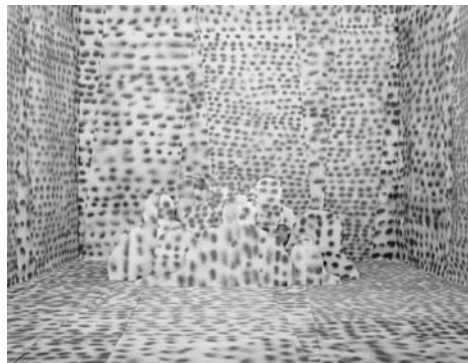
02:15

Repeat "Yes" -or- "No"

03:00

End

— GINA OSTERLOH, BODY PROP

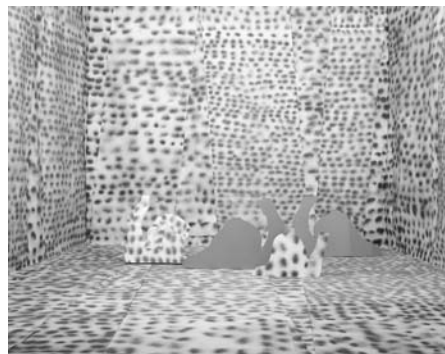


Osterloh's photos offer themselves up to our close inspection, and reward those looking for certain unequivocal answers: that's a body flashing a peace sign (a familiar, even iconic gesture), that's a cut out of a group of people traced roughly from a photograph, that's a piece of paper imitating a shadow. In addition, the paper walls force a perspective that becomes our observation space, one which is enclosed and contained, making the bodies posed in that space appear isolated, observable, available.

Gina Osterloh's photographs exaggerate, and ultimately reconfigure, the processes in which bodies become images and then circulate as such. These processes are photographic, pictorial, and also historical and Osterloh specifically targets the history of portraiture—group portraits as well as individual portraits. In these image genres, quiet representational tactics (stable focus, centered action, clear intent) are often confused with truth, with honesty, or with ideology when viewed cynically. Osterloh's portraits generate a different kind of realism, one in which vision connects less securely to knowledge, classification, and distinction. By flattening the difference between the materiality of representation and the materiality of things, bodies become scenic and the scene absorbs rather than presents its subjects.



Because so much about Osterloh's photographs is apparent, they seem to offer connections of various kinds—knowledge, intimacy, exchange, insight. But the contact we make with one of Osterloh's subjects is intentionally, almost bluntly unreciprocal. This is primarily because her sitters lack faces. The elements of a face which lubricate an imaginable reciprocity



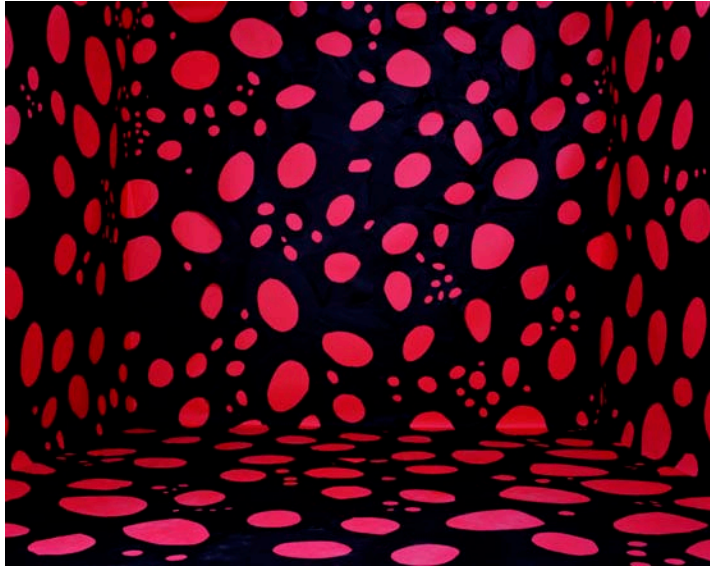
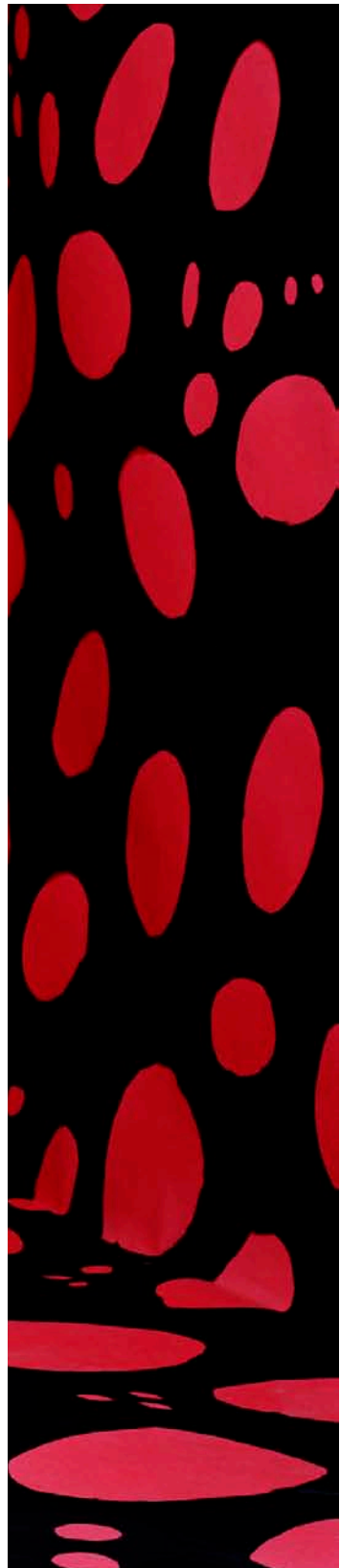
are lost to the same patterning that flattens everything in the photos. But even in lacking a face, they still face us. The figures are poised. And their poses, gestures, and postures are a composure of the body toward connection with the there and then of the future viewer. Like the peace sign, the gesture of the raised arm is a photographic convention and seems directed at us, although it is not clear whether the group out of which the arm arises is gathered in protest or gathered as family. Are the hands raised in greeting or are they fists?

It is the patterned dispersion of vision, a kind of camouflage, that works against the photos' focalizing effects, their apparent availability. The conventions of photographic portraiture accommodate, even coddle the act of looking, making acts like observation, identification, and distinction feel possible, even at hand. But the patterning effaces those distinctions by abstracting them.



In other words, Osterloh's photographs present us with bodies as schema, props for our looking. But what the bodies prop up—the identity of a sitter, the coherence of a group, the alluring availability of a face - has been blotted out - cam-





ouflaged by the echoes of painterly abstraction, although never perfectly. There are always evident seams, jags of distinction. This means that the tactic here is neither negation nor opposition. The tendency, rather, is toward a propping without that which the prop secures, as though in Osterloh's un-teeming menageries, abstraction has effaced representation as the basis for knowing anything about people and their affiliations.

Kris Cohen

Art History, Reed College

illustrations:

1. Anonymous Front (Copy Flat) 2010
archival pigment photograph,
40 x 50 inches
2. Split Peace (Body Prop) 2009
c-print, 8 x 10 inches
3. Collapse #2 (Copy Flat) 2010
archival pigment photograph,
40 x 50 inches
4. Body Prop 2009
c-print, 8 x 10 inches

— BAD CAMOUFLAGE

It was during World War I that visual deception became a necessary military tactic. The introduction of more accurate long-range artillery, combined with aerial reconnaissance and bombardment, dramatically expanded the field of fire that soldiers faced. Being seen meant being in greater and more immediate danger than it ever had before. Seemingly overnight, the regal battlefield dress of previous eras was quickly replaced with clothing intended to blend with the surrounding environment.

Artists and naturalists played a crucial role in the development of camouflage.



Burnt Out Died, Got Some Rest and Then Waited
(Somewhere Tropical) 2005, c-print, 40 x 40 inches

The American painter and outdoorsman Abbott Handerson Thayer, wrote a 1909 book entitled, *Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom: An Exposition of the Laws of Disguise Through Color and Pattern*, which was the first comprehensive and scientific study of the protective coloring that has evolved in animals. The book had a widespread impact on quickly developing camouflaging techniques, and became an indispensable reference for the U.S. Army's newly launched unit of *camoufleurs*.¹ As early as 1898, Thayer collaborated with George de Forest Brush to propose a method camouflaging American ships with wild, high-contrast geometric patterns that were inspired by the counter shading Thayer had observed in a seagull's coloring. In 1902, they jointly filed U.S. Patent 715,013, for the "Process of Treating the Outsides of Ships, etc., for Making Them Less Visible." Later, artists as diverse as Franz Marc, Oskar Schlemmer, Paul Klee, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, Arshile Gorky, and Ellsworth Kelly were drafted into the military and put to work painting camouflage.²

Camouflage was developed to conceal the dangerous, visceral tools of war from plain sight. It became a method of obliterating difference across the visual field—a way of directing vision cognitively as much as perceptually—to hide something threatening. In this way, it is another method of control, redirecting vision through obfus-

cation, misdirection, and trickery—*nothing to see here*. When camouflage patterns and techniques have been employed by postwar artists, they seem to embrace this comforting blanket of anonymity. Andy Warhol's camouflage self-portraits, for instance, hint at the problems of "passing" within the queer community, creating an underlying tension between the individuality of portraiture and the uniformity of the pattern³. Jim Hodges employs a similar logic in his use of camouflage patterns in various paintings and sculptures, updating Warhol's concerns within the context of the queer politics of the 1990s. Outside of literal uses of camouflage patterns, compositional and formal strategies that allow a body to hide or blend into ones surroundings can be seen in a number of diverse practices in contemporary art. Yayoi Kusama characterizes her urge to subsume spaces and objects within her *Infinity Nets* as an attempt to bring her physical environment in line with hallucinations brought on by her mental illness⁴. More recently, David Benjamin Sherry's hybrid landscape and portrait photographs explicitly attempt to meld with the natural environment, achieved through monochromatic color shifts and subjects—often the artist—whose bodies are painted to match.

In each of these later examples, all-over compositional strategies become the basis for camouflaging. This progression—from the literal use of military camouflage to



Looking Back I Accepted Your Invitation
(Somewhere Tropical) 2005, c-print,
40 x 40 inches

the masking effects of a visually exuberant all-over composition—plays out in the recent work of artist Gina Osterloh. In an early series of self-portraits, *Somewhere Tropical* (2005), Osterloh wears actual military fatigues. While the use of fatigues and photo backdrops of equatorial locales refer here to the artist's dislocation and the history of United States military intervention in her mother's native Philippines, they also become associated with an attempt to deny the self. To further separate her identity from location through an obvious mask, Osterloh frequently obscures her own face with her hair or by turning away from the camera entirely. This oscillation between oblit-

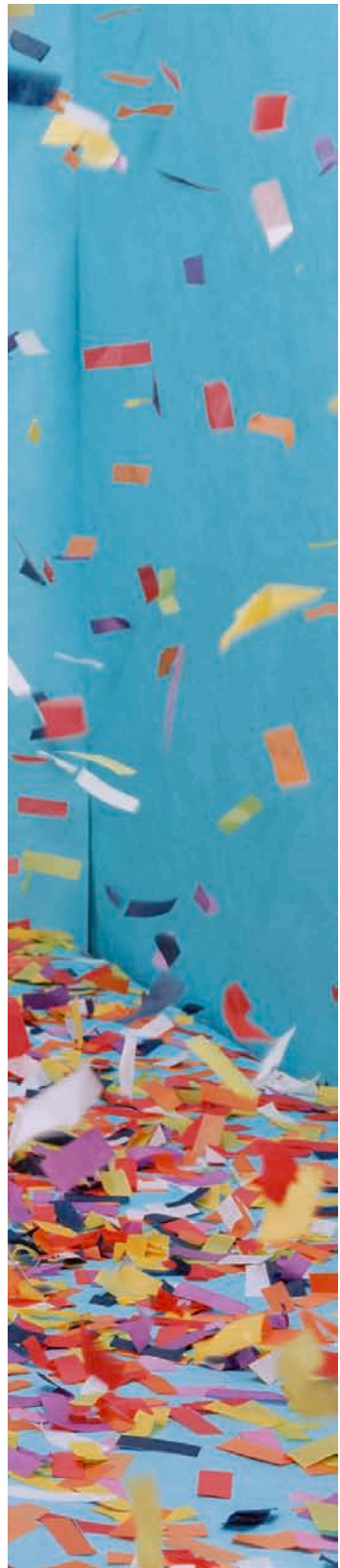
eration and articulation becomes the central logic behind Osterloh's more recent work, and derives from the same impulse that drove Warhol to explore the use of camouflage just before his death. Warhol was fascinated by the fact that by the mid-1980s, the camouflage pattern had gained currency within fashion even as it was still used by the military, becoming, in essence, "an ambiguous instrument that could either conceal or call attention to the wearer."⁵

Osterloh continues to tactically use her hair to obscure her face and to deny the identification and self-expression associated with the self-portrait in *Turquoise*



Mute Rash (Rash Room) 2008,
c-print, 30 x 40 inches





Room (Blank Athleticism) (2007). But instead of fatigues and a naturalistic backdrop, the artist creates an obviously constructed, monochromatic room and partially blends herself into the background with a turquoise shirt. The space can still be easily identified as a studio, especially where the artist's arms and legs punch through a false floor.

Osterloh's consistent use of the studio space for making deliberately (and obviously) staged photographs diverges from the aforementioned uses of the all-over composition. In one sense, this can be seen within a larger return to the studio in recent contemporary art practices, and especially for those that, like Osterloh's, are photographically-based. But it also stems from the artist's interest in the work of Bruce Nauman. Beyond a shared fascination with language and the problems of communication with visual representation, Osterloh draws inspiration from the way that Nauman used his body to explore the role of the studio in artmaking. This idea can be stated the other way around as well—for Nauman, the studio became a platform for looking at and manipulating the artist's body. This constant dialogue between the mapping of studio space and mapping of the body pervades Osterloh's work. Carlos Basualdo has noted that a strong undercurrent that runs throughout Nauman's work is a continual wrestling with the blurry line dividing public and private—extending beyond his studio photographs to videos and installations



Bruise Points and Infinite Pricks
 (Copy Flat) 2010, archival pigment
 photograph, 8 x 10 inches

that employ devices such as video surveillance equipment, constraining corridors, and cages.^b While less sinister on the surface, Osterloh's photographs tangle with these same oppositions, exploring the divide between self and other, or individual and group identity, and using constructed spaces within the studio as a stage to explore real social dynamics. Osterloh's earliest works owed an even stronger debt to Nauman - she began creating videos of extending and repeating a simple gesture, like a two-minute handshake, or a two-minute hug. However, her recent photographs engage more directly with a larger arc in his practice. As Basualdo states, "Nauman has always addressed the investigation to himself and the human being...Nauman's speculative research is aimed at comprehension of how we exist in the world."⁷

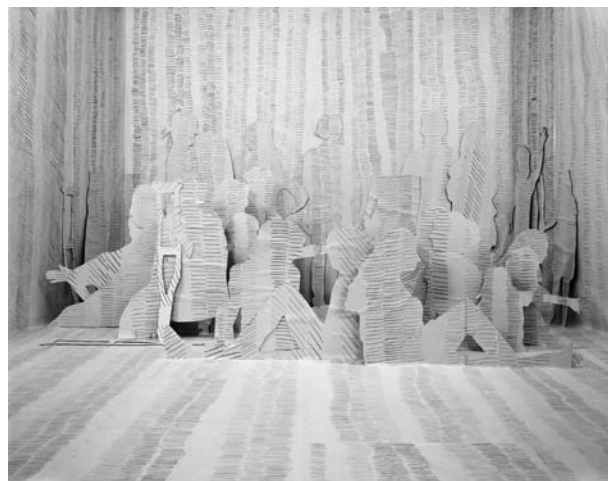
This drives Osterloh's gradual removal of herself from her photographs as well. She began to replace the human subject with constructed surrogates due to her desire to pull the reading of her work father away from the traditions of self-portraiture or self-expression, and she focused explicitly on how these discussions revolved around identity politics and difference in art of the 1990s.^a In the series *Cut Room* (2008), surrogates appear in a generalized, prostrate pose, always on all fours, recalling both the figure in the *Turquoise Room* and the series of sculptures *Blank Attempts*. The repetition of this submissive pose throughout Osterloh's work becomes a slightly sinister, unsettling ripple to the bright colors and luscious textures of her cheery interiors. Another series from 2008, *Rash Room*, carries similar connotation - the subject's eyes and mouth covered, and in one instance with the legs amputated, as the figure sits or lies in a room skinned in hot pink scales.

Though clearly formed around (and in relation to) actual bodies, Osterloh's stand-ins add yet another layer of masking and removal, and further subsume the identity of the subject within an ecstatic, all-over, and, most importantly, materially rich composition. This strategy recalls a subtly subversive aspect of the *Soundsuits* constructed by Nick Cave. Baroquely ornamented and richly textured, the suits draw inspiration from the identity-effacing costume used by tribal cultures, using sources as disparate as Kuba cloths,

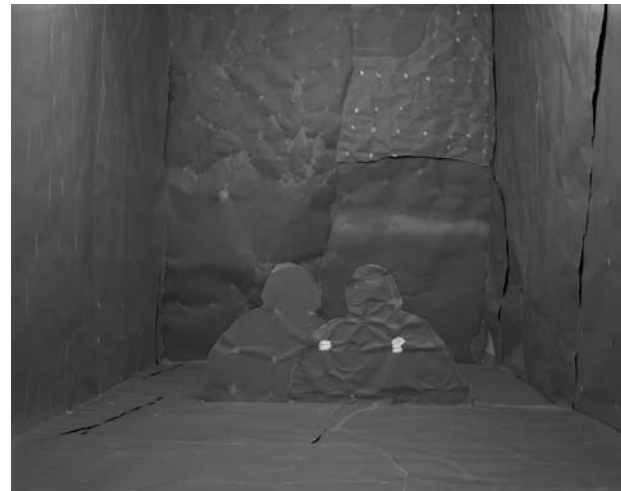
Haitian voodoo flags or Tibetan textiles.⁹ Cave trained as a dancer, and originally constructed the suits to add a sonic layer to his movement, but also to begin to explore a certain power of anonymity. According to the artist, “When I was inside a suit, you couldn’t tell if I was a woman or man; if I was black, red, green or orange; from Haiti or South Africa...I was no longer Nick.”¹⁰ And like Osterloh’s drive to depict a “repetition of the anonymous throughout the visual field, from corner to corner,”¹¹ Cave’s *Soundsuits* seem to simultaneously convey great joy while harboring an underlying sense of “an oppressive external world that needs to be hidden from and resisted.”¹²

The *Cut Room* series also introduces paired figures and group dynamics—a shift away from an examination of individual identity to a broader exploration of identity and how we perceive it, which persists through Osterloh’s most recent work. Osterloh also begins to use both physical and visual texturing to blur and disrupt the lines of the perspectival grid created by her studio space. The artist employs well-established systems of perspective to serve a dual role—on one hand making possible the illusion of three dimensionality on a flat surface, and on the other hand by controlling vision, forcing a certain interpretation of a given scene. Osterloh highlights perspective by eroding it, as in the series *All of Our Edges* (2011), where chalk lines, bleach marks, and rips in the deep blue background be-

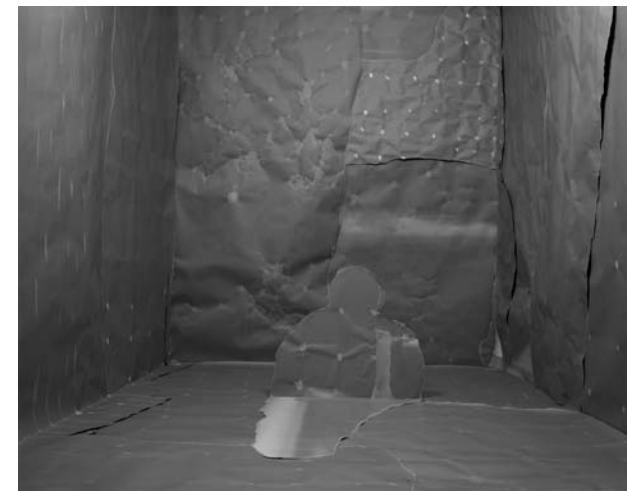
gin to suggest a space without actually conforming to the perspectival grid. Similarly, the spraypainted dot matrix of the *Copy Flat* series (2010)—quick, rough, and uneven—disrupts our ability to read the otherwise clean lines and planes that form the photographic space. In each of the instances, Osterloh presents vision as an equally cognitive and perceptual undertaking. What we think of as seeing is actually our thinking through seeing. Osterloh turns the system of perspective on its head, recalling a similar operation in Mel Bochner’s photographs from 1966–69, whereby distorting the perspectival grid made it “something to look at rather than using it for looking at something.”¹³ Although visually dissimilar, both artists subvert the tropes of perspective to highlight the disparity between the idealized construction of pictorial space and the way we actually see.¹⁴



New Family of Chance, 2012, archival pigment photograph, 25 x 30 inches

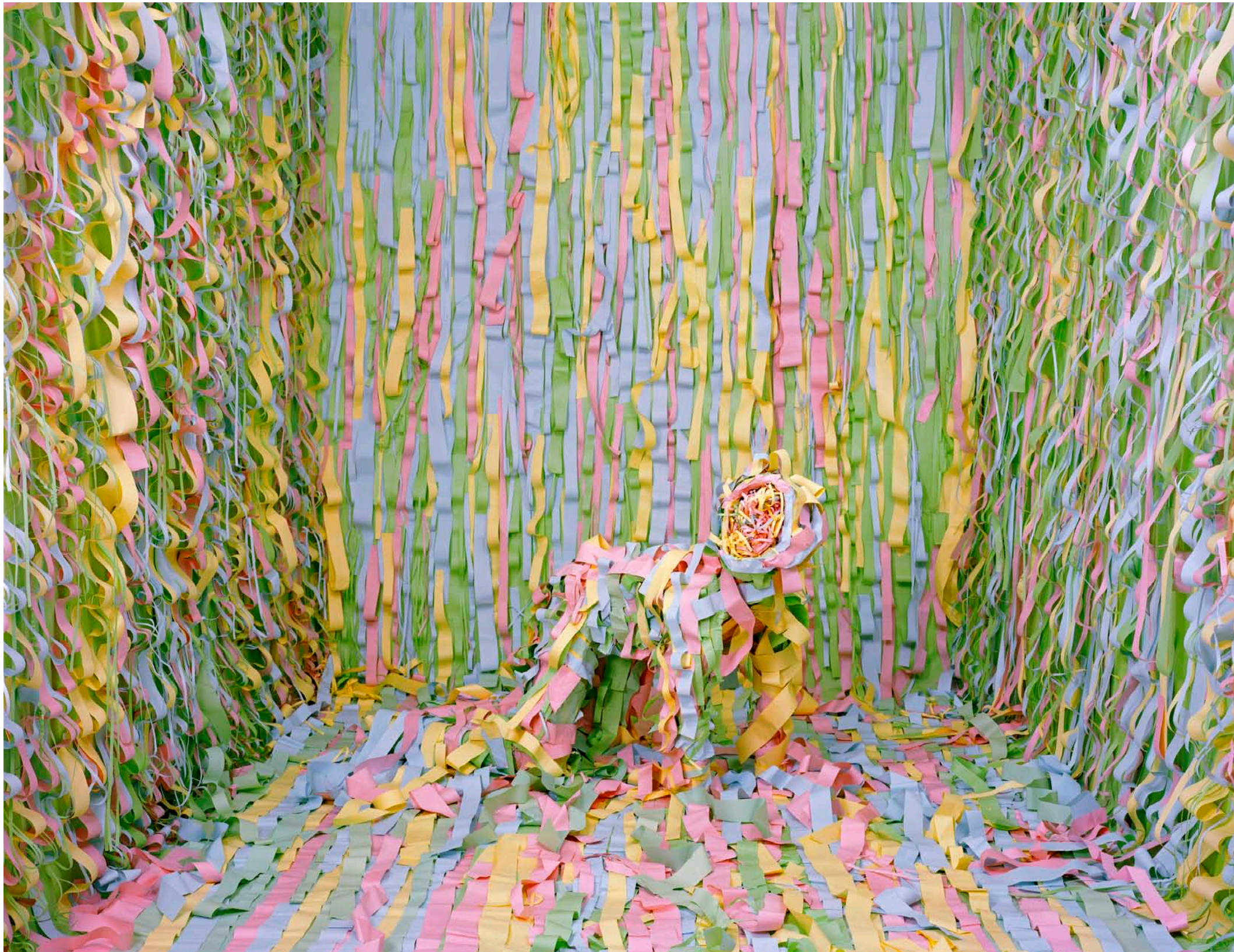


Double Figure, Sun, Water, Bleach (All of Our Edges) 2011, archival pigment photograph, 11.5 x 14.5 inches



Reflection (All of Our Edges) 2011, archival pigment photograph, 11.5 x 14.5 inches

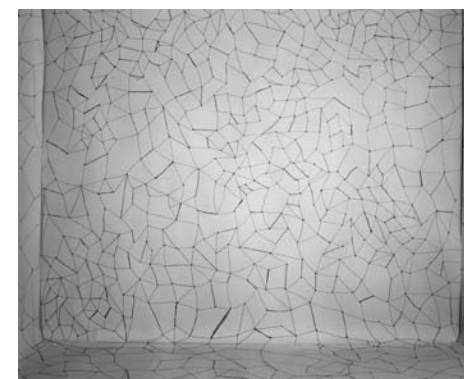
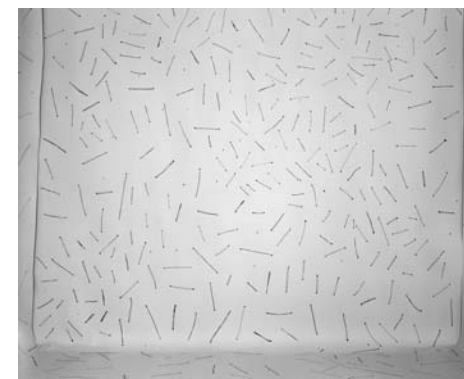
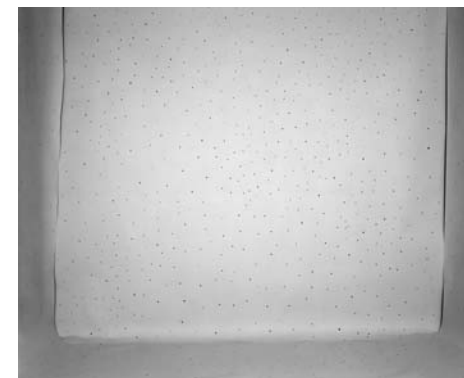




For Osterloh, a sharper focus on the mechanics of vision is achieved in the insistent materiality of her photographs. Their material content is messy and inexact, creating a kind of haphazard camouflage that, instead of allowing the subject to disappear, refocuses the viewer's attention on the psychological and social connotations of visibility and disappearance. Camouflage, as a tool of anonymity, inhibits recognition, identification, and naming, and thus, is intimately tied to language for Osterloh.¹⁵ Just as mimicry and repetition underpin the way we acquire language, it also underlies the logic of camouflage. In the *New Family of Chance* series (2012), Osterloh's bad camouflage draws our attention to mimicry and copying in a material sense, as Osterloh begins to draw or trace actual sitters, creating silhouette sitters that are paired, redoubled, and recombined into different groupings. We begin to see a hiccup between what the body is articulating and what comes through in the tracing or shadow, with themselves as projections of a bad copy. Osterloh's photographic set becomes a visual pun on other types of "sets," conjuring everything from street gangs to mathematical series. Perhaps most crucial within her work, however, is "set" used as an adjective, denoting something predetermined, unchanging, fast. Taken as a whole, Osterloh's work resists this sense of the set within visual representation, imagining a space more fluid, more permeable - a space where our concept of identity can be rebooted to a kind of zero degree of interpretation.

NOTES

- ¹ M.J. Stephey, "A Brief History of Camouflage," *Time*, June 22, 2009. 43.
- ² William Poundstone, "A Prehistory of Cindy Bernard's Security Envelopes," *Los Angeles County Museum of Art On Fire*, November 15, 2010. Accessed online September 10, 2012.
- ³ Ann Temkin, in *Twentieth Century Painting and Sculpture in the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2000. 137.
- ⁴ Grady Turner, "Yayoi Kusama," *BOMB*, no. 66, Winter, 1999. 62-69.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Paola Nicolin, *Bruce Nauman*, *Flash Art*, no. 266, 2009. 106.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Artist in conversation with the author, September 2012.
- ⁹ Jori Finkel, "I Dream the Clothing Electric," *New York Times*, March 31, 2009. Accessed online September 10, 2012.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ REF?
- ¹² Blake Gopnik, "Nick Cave's 'Sound' Bodies," *The Daily Beast*, September 18, 2011. Accessed online September 12, 2012.
- ¹³ Mel Bochner in conversation with Scott Rothkopf, 1999, quoted in Scott Rothkopf, *Mel Bochner Photographs, 1966-1969*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. 24.
- ¹⁴ Rothkopf, 26.
- ¹⁵ Artist in conversation with the author, September 2012.



From series *Three Exercises To Demarcate Space 2012: Dots, Line, Web (Yayoi Kusama Knew This Would Happen)*, archival pigment photographs, each 20 x 25 inches

Courtesy of the artist, François Ghebaly and Silverlens Galleries

GINA OSTERLOH, GROUP DYNAMIC

FOREWARD

by Carol A. Stakenas and Robert Crouch

A CONVERSATION ON TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY
AND THE SUBTLETIES OF BEING SEEN
by Michelle Dizon and Gina Osterloh

PULLING APART VOICES

by Gina Osterloh

BODY PROP

by Kris Cohen

BAD CAMOUFLAGE

by Matthew Thompson

Designed by Willem Henri Lucas
Printed by Typecraft, Wood & Jones

PROJECT INFO

LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) both champions and challenges the art of our time by fostering artists who innovate, explore, and risk. We move within and beyond our four walls to provide opportunities for diverse publics to engage deeply with contemporary art. In doing so, we further dialogue and participation between and among artists and those audiences.

Founded in 1978 by a small group of artists, LACE has become an internationally recognized pioneer among art institutions. Uniquely positioned among commercial galleries and major art establishments, our nonprofit organization provides a local venue that advocates and exhibits innovations in art-making. By encouraging experimentation, LACE has nurtured not only several generations of young artists, but also newly emerging art forms such as performance art, video art and installation-based work. LACE has presented the work of over 5,000 artists in over 3,000 programs and events, which have provided the impetus for dialogue about contemporary arts and culture for over 30 years.



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- Gina Osterloh

