

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Comic Relief

INVENTORY PRESS

Blaffer Art Museum

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Foreword

The Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston is proud to present the first survey exhibition of Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, which spans over twenty years of this artist's vibrant and prolific career. During this time she has identified primarily as a painter, but *Comic Relief* evinces just how widespread her practice roams across this medium to incorporate a variety of artistic disciplines, art historical schools, self-taught techniques, subcultures lived and studied, and communities of students, peers, foils, and advocates. Her *The 95 Theses on Painting* is a foundational case in point, alternating between aspirational manifesto, self-effacing confessional, and acerbic soliloquy as she interrogates the status, currency, and shape of her core discipline. Beholden to no single theory or stance, Zuckerman-Hartung revels in artistic explorations that transgress canons while growing thick with entangled layers of autobiography, art history, cultural critique, sexuality, pop culture, philosophical meandering, and political foment. In the process, she regularly channels formative years in the Pacific Northwest punk movement to foster a mercurial language as fluent in radicality as it is agency. Every ensuing work is another conjugation of this cumulative dialect, expressing vibrant clusters of thoughts and desires in a state of continual revision.

It has been said that Zuckerman-Hartung “destroys form” in transgressive work that bristles with unbridled excess. This survey exhibition offers a wider view where her oscillations within painting accumulate

into a rousing iconoclasm that evokes the body and its very human performance. Her works are neither perspectival windows nor flat abstractions, but rather corporeal accretions that drip, sag, bulge, and habitually protrude beyond the picture plane. Moving across the floor and wall, Zuckerman-Hartung's works are both liminal objects and the residue of performative zeal as she wrestles with both the materials and meaning of making. These patchwork constellations are enigmatic, cagey, and suggestive, but never reticent. *Comic Relief* brings together the irreverent joy, caustic bite, brooding disquiet, and unrelenting energy of this venture to date—assembled just long enough to hazard a provisional history for a ceaseless practice.

We are tremendously grateful to Molly Zuckerman-Hartung for the tireless work she has invested in this exhibition, and for the trust she has shown in the Blaffer to present both the architecture and archeology of her creative practice. We must also give special thanks to Cynthia Woods Mitchell Associate Curator Tyler Blackwell, who has worked closely with the artist to organize a show that is as thoughtful and sensitive as it is vexing and exuberant. Together they have imagined a collection and experience that can never be adequately contained in the following pages. I would like to acknowledge the generosity of Kate Nesin, Lisa Darms, and Annie Bielski for contributing revelatory essays to the catalogue, as well as the work of copy editor Eugenia Bell. Mark Owens has designed an outstanding publication that truly captures

Zuckerman-Hartung's singular practice, and we are grateful for his vision and dedication. We are also exceedingly thankful for the partnership with publishers Shannon Harvey and Adam Michaels of Inventory Press.

I also wish to thank all of the hard-working and dedicated staff at the Blaffer Art Museum who regularly embody the energy, dynamism, and vitality on display in this ebullient exhibition. We are grateful to Dean Andrew Davis, Assistant Dean Beckham Dossett, and all the employees of the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts for their continued leadership and council, as well as the Blaffer Art Museum Advisory Board for their unflagging encouragement and support. We thank all the public and private lenders who entrusted their work to this landmark endeavor, and to Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago and Rachel Uffner Gallery in New York for generously supporting this publication, lending works, and for working hand-in-hand with the artist, curator, and museum. I also gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Lester Marks, Heiji and Brian Black, Marilyn and Larry Fields, and Shirley and John Olar for their support of this catalogue and exhibition. In closing, thank you to our community for venturing out regularly with the Blaffer into terrain that is inspiring, challenging, and unforgettable.

Steven Matijcio
Jane Dale Owen Director
& Chief Curator
Blaffer Art Museum at
the University of Houston

Curator Acknowledgments

I first encountered Molly Zuckerman-Hartung's work in Chicago, in 2010, at Julius Caesar, a collaborative alternative art space that was co-founded by the artist with Dana DeGiulio, Diego LeClery, Colby Shaft, and Hans Peter Sundquist. The exhibition, which she had titled *Scrying*, consisted of photographic collages of studio scenes and an assortment of loose jar and paint can lids caked with multicolored oil and acrylic residues. I remember feeling puzzled, curious, and then exhilarated—a series of emotions that can often describe how one experiences and enters Molly's practice. This intrigue followed me for several years, and when I arrived at the Blaffer Art Museum, I was grateful to be granted the opportunity to fully consider the prospect of organizing a new, expansive project with the artist herself. Now, I am thrilled to collaborate with Molly on this major exhibition and publication, which explores her complex, iconoclastic, and revelatory practice over the last twenty years.

It has taken incredible teamwork to organize this exhibition and publication and to present it to our visitors. I am indebted to Steven Matijcio, Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator at Blaffer Art Museum, for his guidance and unwavering support for this project. At the Blaffer, I also thank Youngmin Chung, Katherine Veneman, Schuyler Shireman, Colleen Maynard, Amanda Powers, Blanca Wilson, and Susana Monteverde for their tireless work on this exhibition. Blaffer curatorial interns Courtney Khim, Carla Jasmin, and Wilma Camarillo provided

meaningful support in the research phases of planning. I would also like to thank colleagues in the Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts and the museum's dedicated board, friends, and supporters for their ongoing enthusiasm, support, and advocacy of the Blaffer and this project.

I would like to offer my deepest thanks to Kate Nesin, Lisa Darms, and Annie Bielski for their exquisite work offering fresh and insightful perspectives on Molly's practice as a maker, writer, thinker, and educator. I remain grateful to Kate for her advice, discussion, guidance, and friendship in the development of the exhibition and my own essay.

It has been a true pleasure to work with the multitalented Mark Owens on the design of this gorgeous book. I deeply appreciate the team at Inventory Press for their patient and reliable partnership and administrative assistance, including Mary Thompson, Adam Michaels, and Shannon Harvey. Thank you very much to Eugenia Bell, our publication copy editor.

Molly's galleries—Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York, and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago—were instrumental in the exhibition and publication in myriad ways. I am particularly grateful to Emily Letourneau, John Corbett, Jim Dempsey, and Katie Cato, and to Rachel Uffner and Rebekah Chozick.

Lastly, I want to extend my profound appreciation to Molly Zuckerman-Hartung herself. It has been an extraordinary privilege to work together over these last years. Thank you for trusting me with your

work and your ideas, and for inviting me into to your home and studio. Your writings, your objects, and our conversations have deeply enriched my own thinking about art and how we move and exist in this world. I am immensely grateful for your openness, humor, rigor, and sincere dedication towards realizing this ambitious project.

Tyler Blackwell

Cynthia Woods Mitchell
Associate Curator
Blaffer Art Museum at
the University of Houston

Artist Acknowledgments

Right now I am in the high desert spending time with my mother after seventeen months of the pandemic. She is seventy years old, and often, especially since her sister died of a rare brain cancer three years ago, talking about gratitude. Yesterday she said that gratitude is much larger and more humble than merely saying thank you. Gratitude is not politeness, it is an act of transformation. The opportunity to have a survey show at age forty-six demands this humility.

I am grateful to my mother, Zena Hartung, and her dear husband, Dennis Rosvall, and to my father, Bill Strouse, and stepmother Polly Strouse. You have all been there for me; made my life possible. Thank you for loving me.

My partner, Fox Hysen, is writing a lecture on groups right now. We speak every day about the relations of part to whole. She is my family; enveloping and propulsive. Daily forms of sustenance and care cannot be quantified, but she is Ground.

This show and book would not exist without the generous and gymnastic efforts of Tyler Blackwell. I am deeply grateful for the care he took in piecing together the scattered and conflicting parts. And to the book's designer, Mark Owens, and the insights and efforts of the essayists: Tyler, Kate Nesin, Lisa Darms, and Annie Bielski.

Geographical context offers order: in the Midwest, I am permanently

indebted to Michelle Grabner, who has pulled me along in her sagacious little cart. Susanne Doremus and Judith Geichman model and share a dreamy spectrum of painting between bombast and distraction. For trusting my meanderings and providing a dense and meaningful ecosystem for exhibition: John Corbett, Jim Dempsey, Emily Letourneau, Ben Chaffee, the rest of the CvsD gang, and long ago, Rowley Kennerk, dancing across the street with a paper bag full of my little paintings. My first platform in the art world was the contentiously collaborative artist-run space, Julius Caesar, Chicago. Thank you to my co-founders Diego Leclery, Colby Shaft, and Hans Peter Sundquist—and especially Dana DeGiulio for helping cure me of my frontality.

And thanks to Gregg Bordowitz, who has taught me about negative capability. On the East Coast, my tough-as-nails, big hearted gallerist Rachel Uffner: I feel so lucky to work with you. This past year I have been sustained by the integrating work of my book/studio group: Lisa Darms, Fox Hysen, Simone Kearney, Juliette Jacobson, and Sarah Passino. We have been weaving poetry and painting together. Mattering matter.

And at the bottom of the page: my roots (not to mention my heart) are on the West Coast, with Gretchen Rognien, Corinne Sweeney, Elijah Geiger, Alex Maslansky, and especially Tracy Heron-Moore and Angelique Hart. Fellow

artists and visionaries, I can't thank them all enough for seeing me so clearly, but with love.

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung

Contributors

Annie Bielski is an artist, writer, and performer. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and her MFA from the University at Buffalo (SUNY). Bielski's paintings, sculpture, and video have been exhibited at NADA (New York), Burning in Water (NYC), Paris London Hong Kong (Chicago), High Tide (Philadelphia), Motel (Brooklyn), Lodos Gallery (Mexico City), the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, and the University at Buffalo, among others. Bielski has performed at SEPTEMBER, Basilica Hudson, the Museum of Modern Art, Allen & Eldridge, Rachel Uffner Gallery, CANADA, and elsewhere. She has collaborated with musician Jenny Hval and performed across the United States and Europe. Her work has been covered by *Art News*, *Hyperallergic*, MTV, and the *New York Times*. Bielski writes for The Creative Independent and has done special projects with Virginia Commonwealth University, the University at Buffalo, and Fort Makers. Bielski lives and works in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

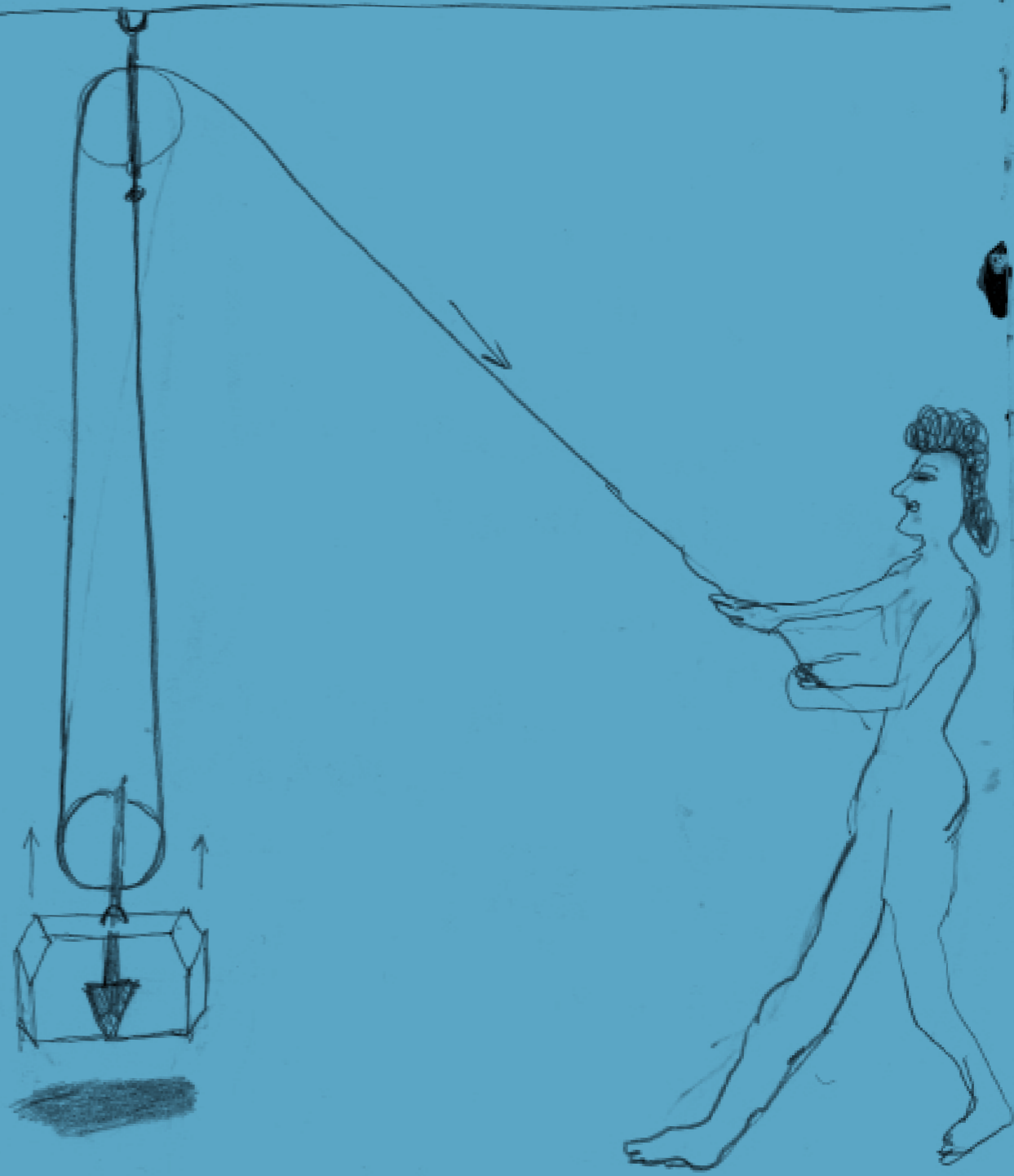
Tyler Blackwell is the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Associate Curator at the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston. For the Blaffer, he has organized or co-organized exhibitions that include *Jagdeep Raina: Bonds* (2021); *Carriers: The Body as a Site of Danger and Desire* (2021); *Rodney McMillian: Historically Hostile* (2020); *Jacqueline Nova: Creación de la Tierra* (2019); *Beatriz Santiago Muñoz: Otros Usos* (2019); *Yoshua Okón: Oracle* (2019); and

Rebecca Morris: The Ache of Bright (2019). Blackwell also organized the Houston presentation of the traveling survey exhibition *Paul Mpagi Sepuya* (2019). Prior to joining the Blaffer, Blackwell served as a curatorial assistant at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago and the Art Institute of Chicago's Department of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Lisa Darms is a New York-based writer and archivist. She is the author of *The Riot Grrrl Collection* and co-author of *Weight of the Earth: The Tape Journals of David Wojnarowicz*. As Senior Archivist at NYU's Fales Library and Special Collections Center from 2009 to 2016 she managed and co-curated the Downtown Collection and was founder and curator of the Riot Grrrl Collection. She is currently Interim Executive Director of Hauser & Wirth Institute, a nonprofit devoted to artist archives.

Kate Nesin is an art historian, project manager, and writer. From 2013 to 2017 she served as associate curator of contemporary art at the Art Institute of Chicago and is currently guest curator in the Art of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Nesin has organized exhibitions with artists Lucy McKenzie, Frances Stark, Kemang Wa Lehulere, and Helena Almeida, among others, and has taught and written widely, including recent texts on the works of Tomma Abts, Philip Guston, Donald Moffett, and Sara Greenberger Rafferty. Her abiding research interests include the failures and efficacies of description,

the lives and afterlives of objects, and the means and terms of reenactment. Nesin received her PhD from Princeton University.



Embracing Unknowing

Tyler Blackwell

For nearly thirty years, artist Molly Zuckerman-Hartung has been busy asking questions. Through a prolific practice that spans painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, performance, and video as well as writing, teaching, and theorizing, Zuckerman-Hartung considers the world we live in with a socially conscious lens. Her artworks are exquisite studies in abstraction and material exploration, engaging and deconstructing art historical lineages of expressionist painting, assemblage, pop culture, and biographical experience.

In her formative years, Zuckerman-Hartung participated in Riot Grrrl—the 1990s underground punk scene that originated in the Pacific Northwest and that exhorted radical female empowerment through collaborative community building and the rejection of male-dominated power structures. This involvement had a lasting effect on the artist, instilling within her a permanent inclination toward inquiry and critique, as well as a deep-rooted sense of creative resistance to societal boundaries, cultural norms, and conventional aesthetics. Since the mid-2000s, Zuckerman-Hartung has primarily identified as a painter, an apt designation in that it provides her with a “structure to work against.”¹

In fact, she terms her dynamic works as paintings, regardless of their components or relationship to the wall or ground; they are often densely stacked, layered, altered, or overworked, creating an aura of impenetrability, discord, or instability. She wields diverse media on disparate surfaces, sometimes collaging, folding, stitching, or wrapping to achieve or emphasize a desired effect. They are generally abstract and feel anxious—brimming with ideas, gestures, references, and (in)decisions—but they also transmit a certain fearlessness or grit, defiantly grisly or flummoxing. Assuredly, dichotomies and inquiries persist throughout the artist’s oeuvre. Some of the many concerns Zuckerman-Hartung’s works submit: How does an artwork communicate? What does it say? How does “this” mean “that”?

It is here that Zuckerman-Hartung invites us into the fold. In contemplating her practice, we are encouraged to inquire about what we know and how we understand, to gleefully embrace the discomfort or tension we encounter—whether it be hers, yours, or ours. With a comic lightness and a scholar’s heft, the artist reflects and reveals the messiness of subjectivity.

Synthesizing a presentation of Zuckerman-Hartung’s works has been a challenge, as her creations inherently resist classification, demand informality, and fundamentally reject linear understanding. Indeed, it is precisely the moment where relations flicker—in our brains, through our bodies, out in the world—that is at the core of the artist’s project. This text serves, too, as a proposal, an offering of observations, methods of inquiry, and key themes present in her practice.

*

In 1992, when Zuckerman-Hartung was seventeen, she attended her first Riot Grrrl meeting in Olympia, Washington, where one discussion started with the question, “When do you notice you are female?”² She would be loosely involved with the movement for another ten years through the organization of queer and feminist music and performance festivals. Zuckerman-Hartung matriculated at the Evergreen State College, a non-traditional public liberal arts institution where she studied French philosophy, language, and literature. These fields provided formative modes of analysis that fed into Zuckerman-Hartung’s larger considerations about how to begin to make sense of her past, present, and future selves.

My undergraduate education ... was progressive. A smattering of humanities: Erving Goffman, Lyotard, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Camus, Guy Debord, et al. One quarter, I and two other women designed an independent project reading

absurdist theater (Ionesco, Beckett, and Pinter) and building puppets for performance. I also took concentrated, year-long courses in Nietzsche and French studies, the latter with a post-colonial approach, taught completely in French. My interest in misunderstanding history, in “petting the cat backwards,” derives from this education, where we delved into post-structural texts without having read the Greeks, or the structuralists. I did not always understand, but I felt desire.³

The notion of learning or understanding in the classically “wrong” order, as well as a bottomless appetite for reading more-more-more, would become a recurring mode throughout Zuckerman-Hartung’s practice as she began to contemplate what it meant to work as a visual artist. For ten years—through college and after—she held jobs in bookstores, furtively “conducting an autodidact’s investigation into modernity.”⁴ This included a six-month stint in Europe, where Zuckerman-Hartung worked and lived in bars and bookstores in Paris, and briefly in Gibraltar.

In 2004, she left Olympia to enroll in a post-baccalaureate (and subsequent graduate) program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She arrived buzzing with ideas and life experience but also with little formal training in the basics of artmaking. After a rough introduction, Zuckerman-Hartung would learn to embrace—and reverse—the possibilities afforded by abstraction and experimentation through painting and drawing.



Fig. 1. Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, *Legman*, 2008–10.

Zuckerman-Hartung emerged from graduate school having devoured the crash course art history lessons offered at the school, as well as the rich collections of Western painting freely available to her at the Art Institute of Chicago. Part of this self-instruction included learning by doing, where Zuckerman-Hartung would make test paintings or repurpose gestures and forms in the style of modern painters like Picasso, Matisse, Hoffman, Klee, the Delaunays, and many others in an effort to understand or inhabit their logics (fig. 1). Like many contemporary artists familiar with the postmodern strategies of stylistic dissection and historical appropriation, she became increasingly interested in fundamental questions about her chosen medium: What is a painting? This multi-pronged exploration, encapsulated in the

form of a broad but singular query, ultimately becomes a thesis unifying Zuckerman-Hartung's oeuvre.

*

Many of the artist's abstract works illustrate an enduring influence of books and zines. They suggest we consider the "language" of painting, as well as the ways in which language or text engages painting. Indeed, for Zuckerman-Hartung, a painting is something to be read. Exercises in legibility come in many forms and often bear on questions of temporality or dialectics, as we see in *What Are Years* (2015) (p. 125) or *History Painting for the New Queer Subject* (2016) (p. 78). Zuckerman-Hartung's compositions are meant to be digested relationally, which here could mean that the "text" of a painting—abstract or otherwise—can potentially be read in any/many direction(s). Her idiosyncratic titles add to the ambiguity, alternately confounding or informing the understanding of any particular artwork. Language, then, becomes both a deconstructive tool and a fundamental structural device for articulating meaning in Zuckerman-Hartung's paintings.

Not unrelated, paintings such as *Flesh-Lack Transport Infrastructure Parts 1 and 5* (2007–11) (p. 32), or *Scalps in French* (2011) (p. 188), *Ulcerous gnawing as a reaction to one's embeddedness* (2009–11) (p. 59), or the later *Perfect Bound* (2015) (pl. 101) contain formal elements that resemble hinges or a book's spine—otherwise perfunctory devices that act

as binding agents to hold information together. Zuckerman-Hartung's attention here reflects a larger interest in connecting or assembling disparate elements or functions or energies, whether across separate canvases or within the same object. These combinatory strategies aid in multiple lines of inquiry for the artist; they suggest networked communication and relational possibilities while also bringing to bear potentially endless additional information in the form of ideas, theories, references, and images. As a result, Zuckerman-Hartung's works can appear disparate or irrelative—relating only through their shared relations, as it were.

Some paintings—*Puberty* (2007–12) (p. 53), for example—are joined together, exchanging or dialoguing via string, lines, and forms, while others like *Ceramic Speakers* (2013) (p. 42) are true three-dimensional repositories of images and found and made objects, assembled and pictorially arranged much like a Rauschenberg Combine (fig. 2). On this subject, art historian Thomas Crow writes, "... the idea of a Rauschenberg Combine does not promise compactness and conceptual economy: standard expectations anticipate the sprawling, random, crowded, and untidy."⁵

In this sense, we can assume that Zuckerman-Hartung takes Crow's assertion for granted with her experimental paintings, sculptures, and in-betweens. Her work becomes an active site for any and all of the artist's formal and intellectual interests,

as well as a potential archive or "dumping ground" for intimate and esoteric concerns.⁶ The 2016 painting *Comic Relief* (p. 29) subtly extends this strategy of accumulation and pile up in a seemingly backward manner. This large work, which features a trio of three-dimensional costumed appendages emerging from the near center of a sumptuously stained canvas (à la Helen Frankenthaler or Morris Louis) to touch the ground, first suggests a playful doubleness that could operate as a commentary on what constitutes a painting versus a sculpture.⁷ Beyond that, the painting also references the sort of anxious reprieve a painter might



Fig. 2. Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled*, 1954. Combine: oil, wood, fabric, printed paper, paper, acetate, paint tubes, glass, and graphite on canvas and wood, 10 1/4 x 7 7/8 x 1 1/2 in. (25.6 x 20.1 x 3.9 cm). Private collection © 2021 Robert Rauschenberg Foundation / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

experience when a canvas is resolved, complete, or full. And beyond *that*, the relief in *Comic Relief* is the unseen volume, or the convergence of labor, of dialogue, of allusions, of theory, and gesture—weight that is invisible but present and at work.

Zuckerman-Hartung's *Lurch* (2009–14) (p. 60) viscerally emblemizes the artist's process of conjoining personal and formal concerns. Assembled from cut T-shirts, coat lining, wool, canvas, and drop cloth that reaches the ground, *Lurch* is among Zuckerman-Hartung's most bodily paintings. Untethered from the uncomfortable constraints of stretcher bars, the potently vertical work appears to be lifting itself off the floor by way of its own clunky tiptoes to reach upward and outward, with only some elements—Zuckerman-Hartung's own clothing items—falling victim to gravity.⁸ Is *Lurch* scaling upward? Or perhaps frozen or “caught”?

The painting is divided into three stacked horizontal planes, with multiple vertical pictorial “containers” or zones of gestures, colors, materials, and forms interspaced across the width of each section. The broad middle area is comprised mostly of the drop cloth, which has been repurposed from its original use on the floor. Sliced and turned upright, the cloth acts as both a new surface for the artist—we see Zuckerman-Hartung's characteristic semiotic studies and trails of spray paint—and a diaristic studio remnant. The work is named

for the '90s music reference embedded within the lowermost plane, which features raw canvas marked with repetitive, organized black paint marks and an old pink Steel Pole Bath Tub band T-shirt (*Lurch* was the title of their 1990 album) that is divided, stretched, and sutured.⁹ In the top plane, the fabrics are also recycled or altered, variously dark, dyed, or bleached. To some degree, the section's central spherical element resembles either a whirling portal or a giant patchwork pocket turned inside out. This sagging part is made up of the external faces of T-shirts and the lustrous inside lining of a coat—a rascally pairing that enables us to register multiple dualities: in and out, hot and cold, protrusion and void, up and down, front and back, to and fro.

Amusingly, the work's title also incites (invites?) multiple readings. Upon first encountering *Lurch*, I recalled the slow, heavy, hulking, groaning Addams Family character, as well as the definition of the word: “to make an abrupt, unsteady, uncontrolled movement or series of movements; to stagger.” Zuckerman-Hartung unburdens our expectations and welcomes contradictions, and her openness vis-à-vis language further leaves room for us to make ourselves at home within the intimacy of her restlessness.

Through Zuckerman-Hartung's objects, we learn to contemplate how and why that can mean this, and this, and maybe this. Both, and.



Fig. 3. Henri Matisse (1869–1954), *Woman before an Aquarium*, 1921/23. Oil on canvas, 31¾ × 39¾ in. (80.7 × 100 cm). Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, 1926.220. © 2021 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY.

*

Like artists before her, Zuckerman-Hartung considers painting as a means towards introspection, psychoanalysis, or ontological inquiry. Henri Matisse's *Woman before an Aquarium* (1921–23), perennially on view at the Art Institute of Chicago, is an early and important touchstone for the artist (fig. 3). The picture depicts a solitary female figure seen in an intimate interior setting, stoically contemplating a goldfish bowl. This somewhat elegiac exchange—meditation, perhaps—is quite static, an example of the “pervasive inactivity”

typical of Matisse's figures in the early 1920s.¹⁰ The cylindrical fishbowl mimes the shape of the universe and its swirling (dis)contents, reduced here to a contained (i.e. controllable) arena. The painting functions as a study of absorption; indeed, a metaphor for the artist immersed in their own headscape.

Woman before an Aquarium also features a blue screen behind the subject and her desk, divided into two panels. They are flat compositional elements that enclose the model, but they also appear to be three-dimensional—made up of patterned, latticed voids

that imply a space behind the screen. Through a subtle shift of gray values between the left and right panels, Matisse suggests the presence of light in the room (another means to symbolize interior versus exterior). To this end, the two panels are likely positioned at differing angles in real space, rendered in a manner that folds light and distance even as they appear flush. The screen, then, also threatens to fully envelop the woman and the scene, an end that would almost certainly find the scene awash in moody hues of blue.¹¹ Taken as a whole, the formal but self-conscious conceits proffered by Matisse in *Woman before an Aquarium* serve as a historical model for what a painting can do, as well as a liberating point of departure for contemporary artists working in the medium.

In this spirit, perceptions of volume, or heft, and measured space are integral to Zuckerman-Hartung's broad considerations of how we contemplate and connect issues of dailiness, history, balance, and being. The artist Fox Hysen has observed that Zuckerman-Hartung "feels space in volumes and not distances, not long straight lines."¹² Here, feeling, and any tangible conception of weight, requires a relationship with the body. Throughout her practice, Zuckerman-Hartung proposes countless ideas toward the creation (and often, illusion) of physical space or the implication of density. Language is again deployed to elicit multiple meanings: an object's "weight" or "heaviness" could refer to its relative significance or psychological importance, or it could

simply signal its pure mass in relation to the ground, to gravity. Similarly, "space" could invoke a sense of planar distribution (think of Matisse's interiors), or space as a time interval—seconds, months, decades, light-years. The artist encourages this muddling of meaning in an attempt to avoid didacticism, acknowledging,

*I have to be careful not to talk too much, to fall back into some sort of explaining. I've kept the studio a mysterious place, a place where accidents can happen. And it keeps me from being too obvious or falling onto something too straightforward, something that would actually kill the thing you're trying to create.*¹³

Zuckerman-Hartung's experiments in generating density or establishing space led her to both paint instances of representational "space" (see her *Going into Space*, 2009 [p. 144] or *au*, 2013 [p. 129]), and to make paintings that hold, contain holes, or lyrically sag, stretch, bulge, pleat, hang, entwine, or wrap. Perhaps most often, the artist folds. In some instances, Zuckerman-Hartung allows the folds of canvas or other materials to transform the surface of a painting, as we see in her *iiio* (fig. 4)—an homage to Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) that also formally recalls the bunched achromatic canvases of Piero Manzoni (fig. 5).

Yet, whereas Manzoni and other ZERO group artists of the 1950s and 1960s sought to discard narrative or downplay evidence of the artist's hand in retaliation to the subjective nature of

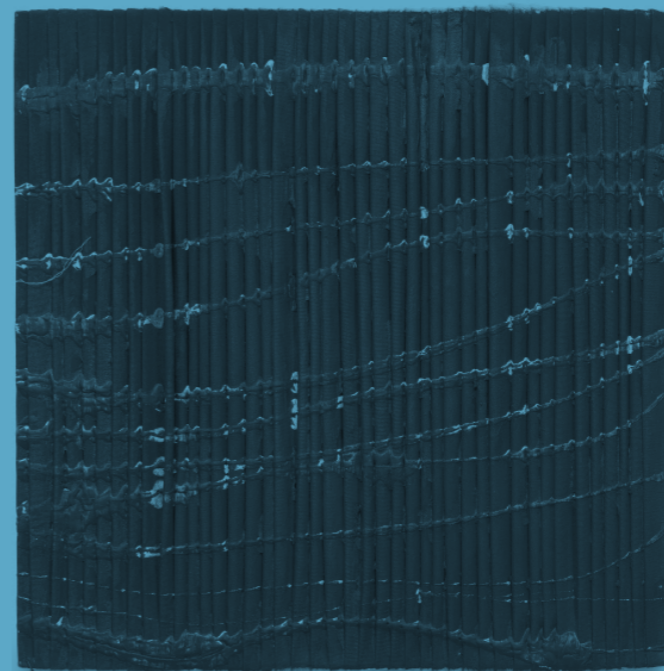


Fig. 4. Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, *iiio*, 2004–13.

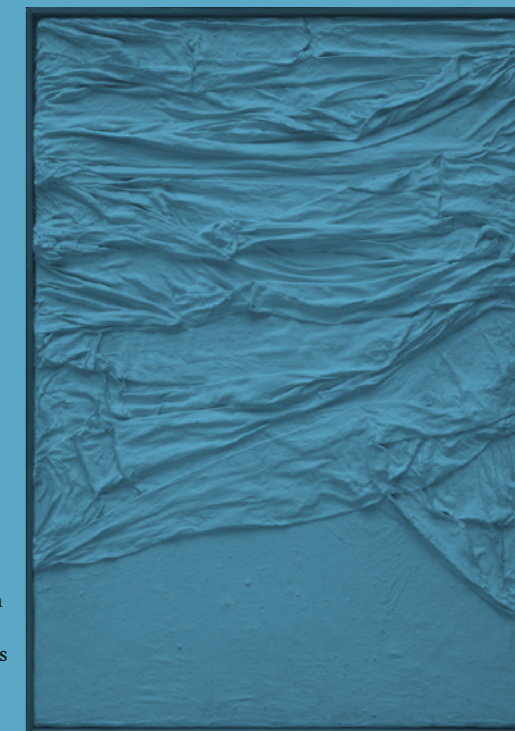


Fig. 5. Piero Manzoni (1933–1963), *Acbrome*, 1958–59. © 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome. Fabric and gesso on canvas. 27 3/4 × 19 3/4 in. (70.5 × 50.2 cm). Gift, Andrew Powie Fuller and Geraldine Spreckels Fuller Collection, 1999 Photo Credit: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation / Art Resource, NY.

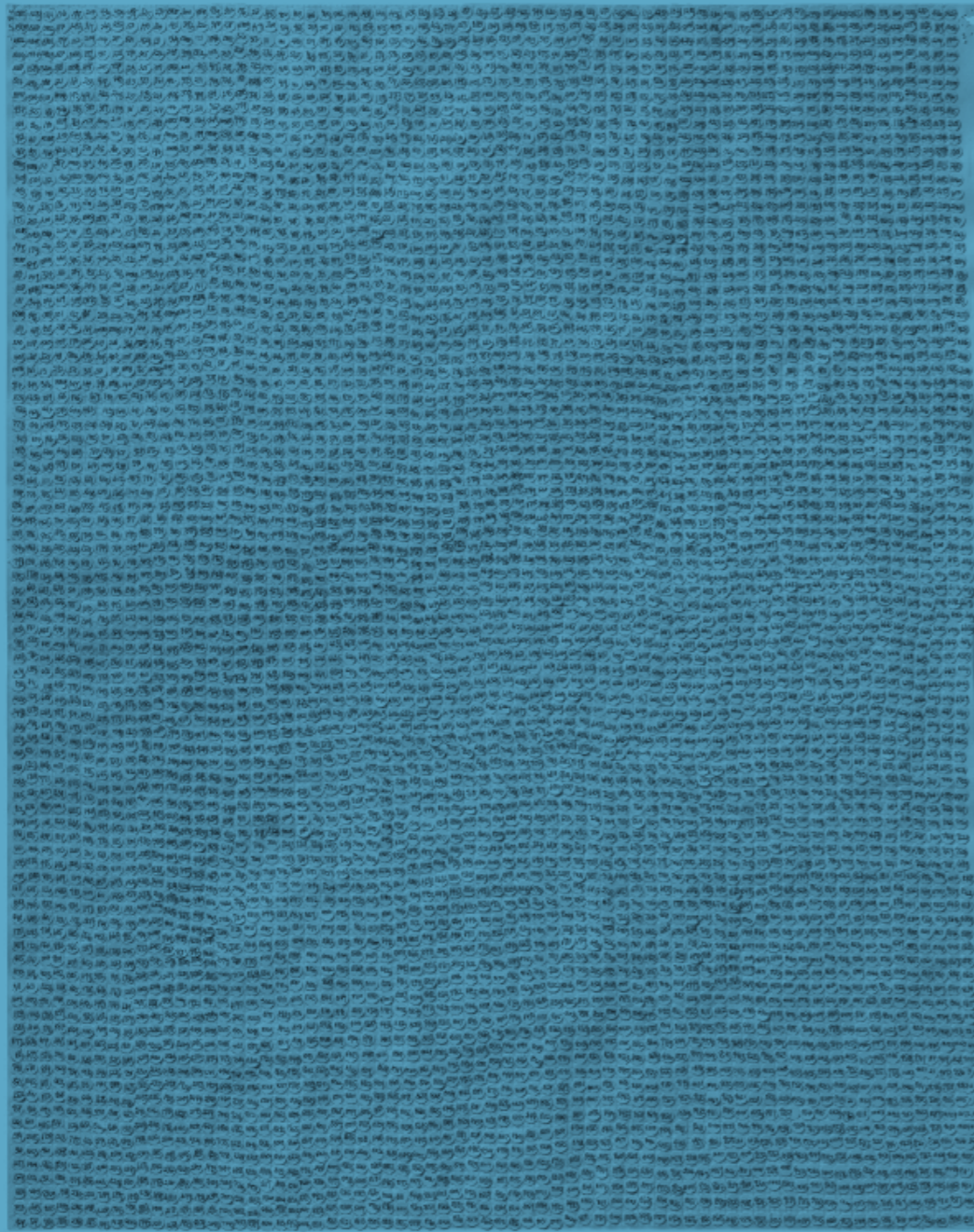


Fig. 6. Howardena Pindell, *Untitled #2*, 1973. Ink and punched paper, graphite, on paper, 22 ¼ × 17 ½ in. (56.5 × 44.5 cm).

the prevailing *art informel* and *tachisme* movements, Zuckerman-Hartung happily subsumes both modes of expression for her own uses. In other folded works, the artist pleats or sews together her materials in various directions or volumes, sometimes introducing strategic splashes of paint or bleach, then releases them. This strategy creates an effectively abstract matrix of marks and gestures, often taking the form of crowded tick marks that find a kindredness with the densely arranged paper chads one might see in a work by Howardena Pindell (fig. 6). In a 2014 interview, Zuckerman-Hartung elaborates,

This process of folding is disorienting—the top is folded under, the underside becomes the top. Yet it maintains a continuous surface, an integrity or a wholeness even as surfaces collapse, exchange, and reverse ... the folds, unfolded, produce a kind of schism in the communication, the “reading” of the painting. How I made the marks is not the same as how you read the marks. There is a breakdown in that kind of direct, frontal address.¹⁴

The rift she describes speaks to another kind of “space”—a gap in understanding between the artist’s hand and the viewer’s eye. This interspace is once again where the discourse occurs; our minds must converse with Zuckerman-Hartung’s abstractions to negotiate her process, and ultimately, assign meaning.

Relatedly, beginning around 2009, Zuckerman-Hartung starts to make

what she declares “Queer Paintings,” or works that explore “difference within sameness.”¹⁵ In two major paintings, *Reading (Citation)* and *Reading (Quotation)* (both 2010–12), Zuckerman-Hartung has performed “belly transplants” on the pair, replacing the centers of each canvas with the other’s (pp. 46, 47).¹⁶ The resultant works, as the artist has intimated, are not necessarily linked but do contain parts of one another—indeed, two inverted selves, existing separately, moving forward in time.

Art historian David J. Getsy offers a contemporary summary of a “queered” aesthetic, characterizing it as a “rejection of attempts to enforce (or value) normalcy” and also “work that flouts ‘common’ sense, that makes the private public and political, and that brashly embraces disruption as a tactic.”¹⁷ Similarly, the impetus for Queer Paintings like *Reading (Citation)* and *Reading (Quotation)* does not have so much to do with Zuckerman-Hartung’s own sexuality but rather functions as a series of polemical exercises in social disruption, reversal, or transformation. She says, “I don’t want to be an identity. I could be a feminist or a queer artist. But that would feel like holding the self back from becoming something else. Those are not irrelevant identities, but giving in to that, to say that’s who I am, that’s horrifying.”¹⁸ (Interestingly, this refusal to be categorized could also be characterized as inherently queer.)¹⁹

In this regard, Zuckerman-Hartung’s Queer Paintings directly engage the



Fig. 7. Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, *Learning Artist*, 2017, installation view.

evolving contemporary discourse around abstraction as a queer, activist methodology, conversing with the work of other artists/writers like Louise Fishman, Harmony Hammond, Gregg Bordowitz, or Amy Sillman. The paintings are also deeply informed by the artist's exhaustive studies in queer theory and affect, which are consequently illuminated by the writings of Gertrude Stein, Susan Sontag, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Adrienne Rich, and many more. Lest we forget: to consider Zuckerman-Hartung's work is to also consider the work of those (and those and those and those) who came before.

We learn from Zuckerman-Hartung that to "queer" painting is also to subvert the medium's history, rules, and authority. Subversion implies a sort of violence, like the Frankensteinian actions enacted in *Reading (Citation)* and *Reading (Quotation)*, as a means towards questioning power—rejecting what is commonly understood, confronting unknowability, empowering the unauthorized, and elevating the alternative. Zuckerman-Hartung's abstractions—even as they themselves are innately undecipherable—invite us to question how we might understand our relationship to our societies and ourselves.

*

In recent years, Zuckerman-Hartung has probed feelings of shame and fear as a model of self-instruction via self-exposure, a project that coincided with the artist's appointment to the faculty

of Yale University's School of Art.²⁰ For her 2017 debut exhibition at Rachel Uffner Gallery on New York's Lower East Side, the artist connected these deeply personal sensations to ideas of teaching, learning, or growth. The presentation, which she called *Learning Artist*, featured a dynamic but dizzying selection of works beyond painting and drawing. Artworks included sewn and painted fabrics, rocks, dried vines, curio cabinets, mobiles, a trapeze of studio ephemera, three-dimensional letters, monoprints, photocopies, pedestals, a lightbox, and other found objects (fig. 7). The gallery's long, darkened entry hallway contained stacked and shelved arrangements of early childhood toys placed in conversation with hand-cut curvilinear forms of wood, plaster, and cardboard, as well as moving and banker boxes and a selection of shadeless lamps. Overall, the exhibition exuded a distinct sense of sheer, unedited output—a sort of unabashed stream-of-consciousness ideation in the form of tinkering and building and adding. In the exhibition's press release, Zuckerman-Hartung relays, "It's like being in the middle of something, a conversation, event, or crisis. The problem with narratives is that they imply a beginning, a middle, and end. I'm trying to denarrativize—to stay stuck in the middle of the muddle. Can I keep my composure (make a composition) can I stay calm here?"²¹

Upon further consideration, the loose three-dimensional curves featured throughout the show came to resemble the lines and forms seen in

Zuckerman-Hartung's paintings, which were strategically positioned at different junctures. Placed in concert with the multicolored toddler's bead maze and the twisting, elliptical orange extension cords that provided power to the exposed lightbulbs (ah, enlightenment!), the artist's neat curves were meant to represent the basic building blocks of form itself—or rather, fundamental elements in the alphabet of shape-making, omnipresent in various cultural conceptions of visual language. In this context, they are the essential starting points of production, and thus, of an artist's ambition.

In the exhibition, Zuckerman-Hartung provides us with some of life's essentialized curves—physical or otherwise—via *Dick Box* (2017), a nearly four-foot-tall sculpture comprised of a crate containing six bowling sticks labeled “SWORD” “DICK” “SMILE” “PENCIL”

“FALLACY” “PHALLUS” (pp. 98–99). In the work, she also includes another curving object that could be described as a sausage, lest we begin to consider her memes too earnestly. The artist's forms-cum-analogies-cum-ingredients, along with the punny but emphatically feminist nature of the piece, work to remind us to slow down our own looking and to consider how we have been taught to piece together an image as something that is read or understood.²²

By this measure, *Learning Artist* also illustrates Zuckerman-Hartung's feverish, unabashed efforts to open up her mind, putting her self-consciousness up for interpretation, debate, and critique. In this way, her practice is akin to a trial by learning *and* fearing—a journey towards understanding without resolution.

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|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, “Paintings Are Specific Conversations: John Corbett and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung in Dialogue,” in <i>Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Negative Joy</i> (Chicago: Corbett vs. Dempsey, 2012), 3. | 4 | Ibid. | | <i>Culture</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 76. |
| 2 | Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, “A Statement (in progress),” 2010, http://www.mollyzuckermanhartung.com/files/A_Statement_in_progress.pdf . For more on Zuckerman-Hartung's early years and her participation in Riot Grrrl, see Lisa Darms' contribution to this publication. | 5 | Thomas Crow, “Rise and Fall: Theme and Idea in the Combines of Robert Rauschenberg,” in <i>Robert Rauschenberg: Combines</i> , ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2005), 231. | 7 | For more analysis of Zuckerman-Hartung's relationship to sculpture, see Kate Nesin's <i>Cup, Disc, Hole</i> in this publication. |
| 3 | Ibid. | 6 | The critic Craig Owens once described Rauschenberg's Combines as “dumping grounds.” For more, see “The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2” (1980), in Owens, <i>Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and</i> | 8 | One of the altered clothing items is a T-shirt made by the Julius Caesar alternative art space located in Chicago's Garfield Park neighborhood. The artist-run outpost was co-founded in 2008 by Zuckerman-Hartung along with Dana DeGiulio, Diego LeClery, Colby Shaft, and Hans Peter Sundquist. Conceived collaboratively, |

Julius Caesar (which is still in operation at the time of this writing) aligns with the robust, long history of alternative and artist-run art spaces in Chicago. For more on this topic, see Lynne Warren, *Alternative Spaces: A History in Chicago* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1984), and Maggie Taft and Robert Cozzolino, eds., *Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

9 The defunct band Steel Pole Bath Tub, which straddled the punk, noise, art, and grunge scenes, was a touring staple in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest while Zuckerman-Hartung was growing up in the area and becoming involved in the Riot Grrrl scene. While the artist has said to the author that she was neither a critic nor a fan of the band, many of her male friends were “obsessed.” Steel Pole Bath Tub was primarily known for their chaotic, offbeat, deconstructed style and frequent use of sound samples from vintage sources—ironically a process that could also be used to describe Zuckerman-Hartung's practice.

10 Claudine Grammont, *Matisse in the Barnes Foundation*, vol. 2 (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 334–39.

11 For a meticulous analysis of *Woman before an Aquarium*, as well as a catalog of other Matisse works Zuckerman-Hartung regularly encountered while attending and teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, see Stephanie D'Alessandro, ed., *Matisse Paintings, Works*

on Paper, Sculpture, and Textiles at the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2019), <https://www.artic.edu/digitalmatisse>.

12 Fox Hysen, *Mountains of Books* (self-published, 2017), 29.

13 Zuckerman-Hartung, “Paintings are Specific Conversations,” 7.

14 Zuckerman-Hartung, “Painting Back to Shore: A Conversation with Molly Zuckerman-Hartung,” interview by Kevin Blake, *Bad at Sports*, March 5, 2014, <http://badatsports.com/2014/painting-back-to-shore-a-conversation-with-molly-zuckerman-hartung/>.

15 See “Evergreen Art Lecture Series: Molly Zuckerman-Hartung,” delivered May 23, 2018, at the Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington: <https://youtu.be/8fSfnROOYXk>.

16 Ibid.

17 David J. Getsy, “Introduction: Queer Intolerability and its Attachments,” in Getsy, ed., *Queer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 12.

18 Zuckerman-Hartung, “Paintings are Specific Conversations,” 7.

19 The artist's disinterest in being defined or classified by her sexuality or feminist stances mirrors the attitude of the late American writer and thinker Susan Sontag, who expressed a general disdain for rhetoric around identity. In 2009, Zuckerman-Hartung

published “Notes on Susan Sontag,” a substantial meditation on the writer.

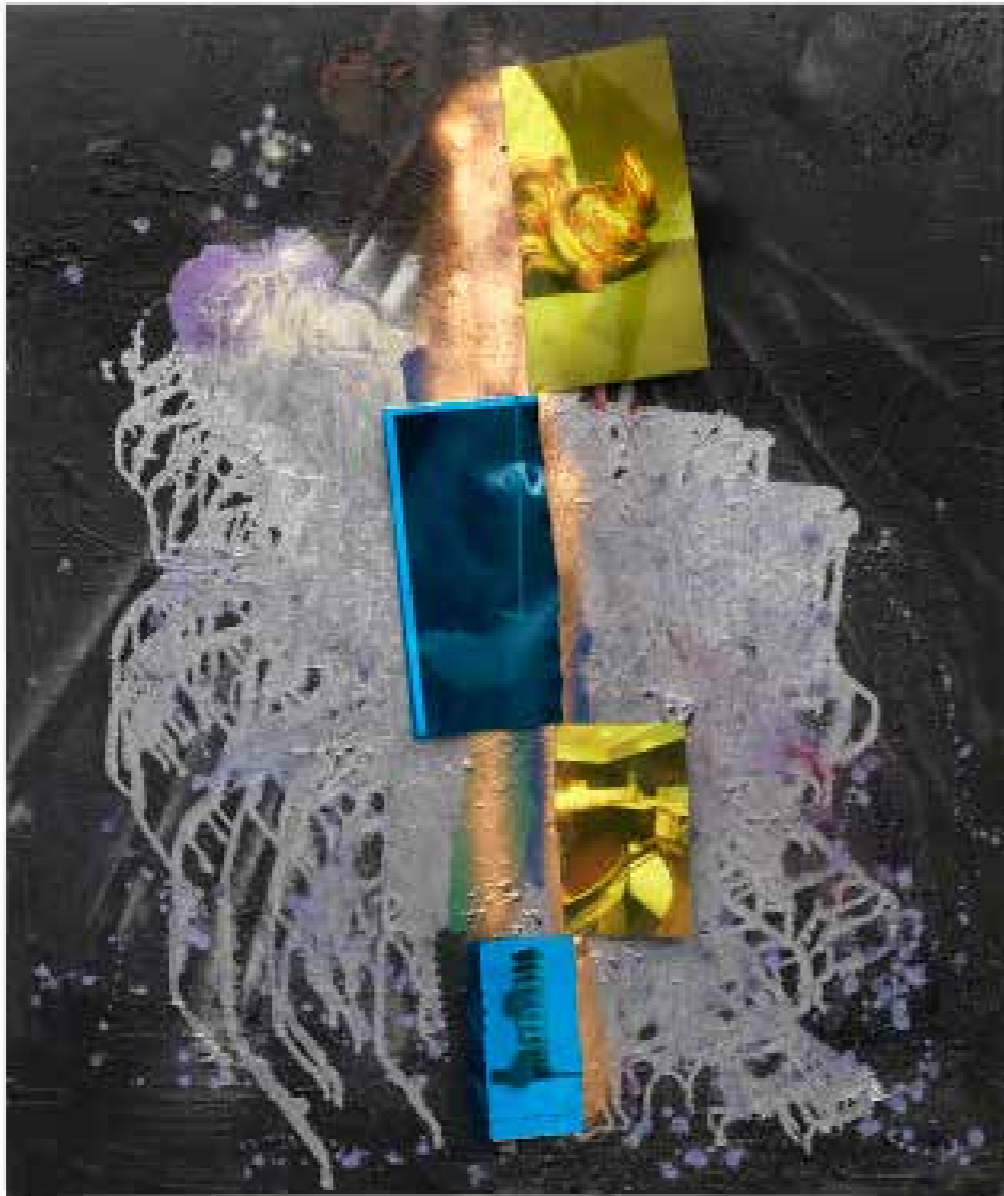
20 While the university is acclaimed, the culture at Yale (for both faculty and students) is also known by some to be conservative, patriarchal, and unyielding.

21 Zuckerman-Hartung, press release for *Learning Artist* at Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York (November 5–December 23, 2017): <https://www.racheluffnergallery.com/exhibitions/detail/molly-zuckerman-hartung/>.

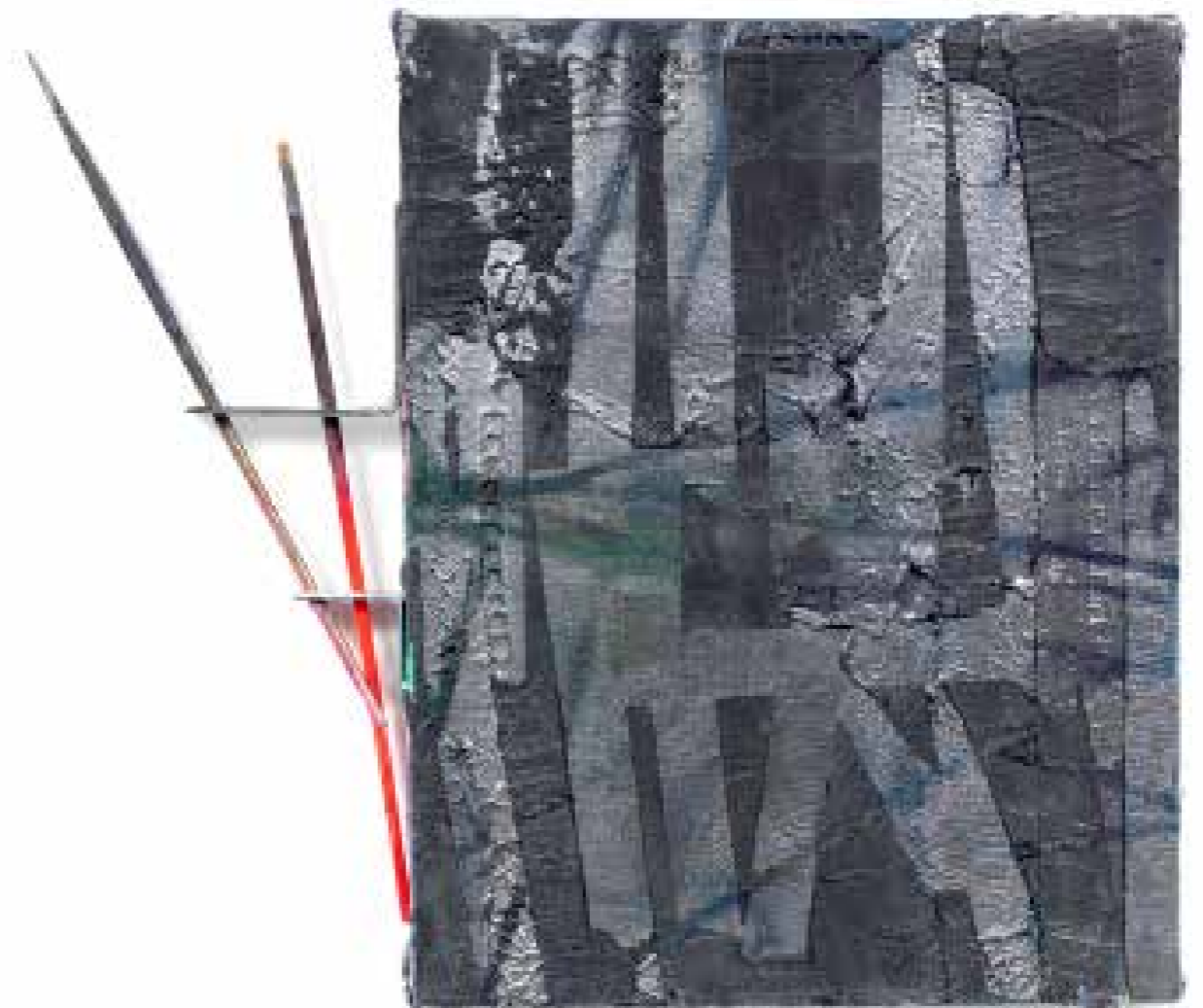
22 For more on the artist's use of curves/forms, see Nesin's *Cup, Disc, Hole*.

















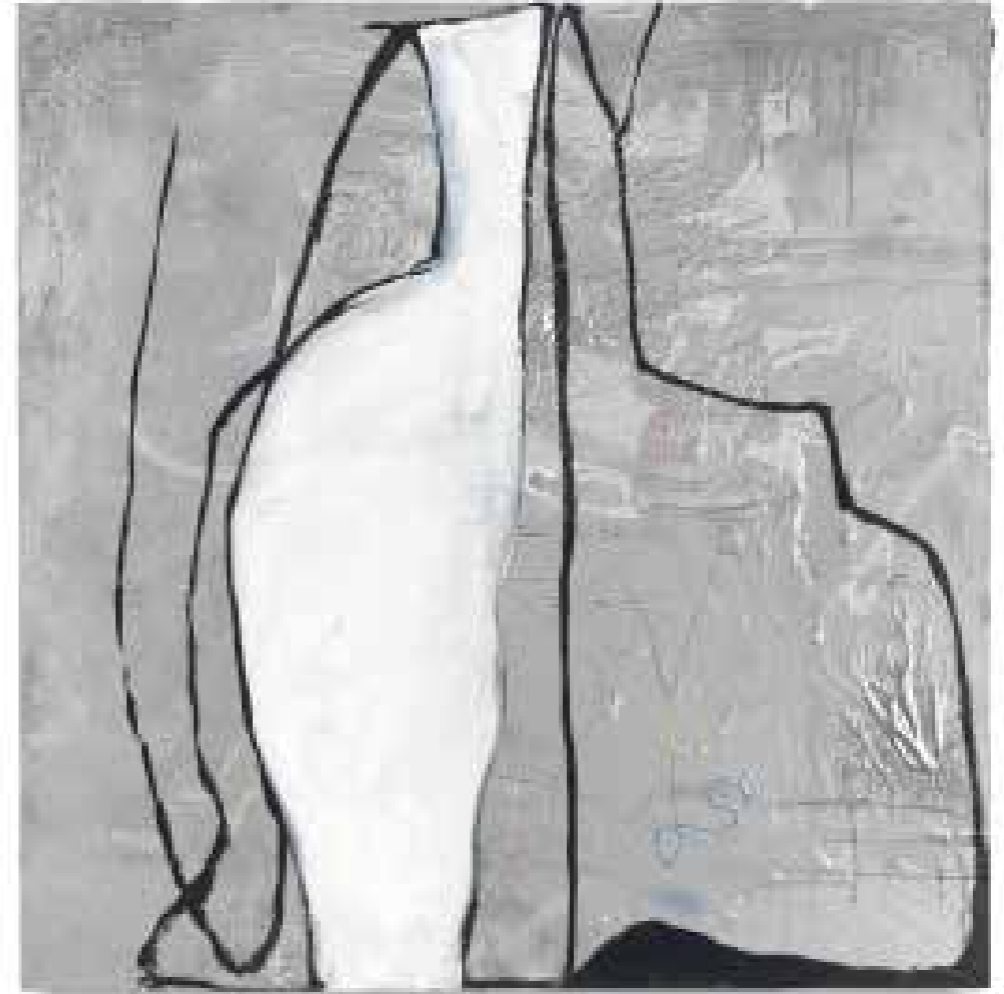


















Cup, Disc, Hole

Kate Nesin

BEGINNING WITH NEVER-ENDING

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung stacked the clear plastic cups of *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie* (2011) rim to rim, so that the structure's contour dilates and tapers, dilates and tapers, in rhythmic succession (fig. 1). The comparison is irresistible: between 1918 and 1937 Constantin Brancusi produced his own such modular figure called *Endless Column*—a vertical sequence of abbreviated pyramids arranged base to base—initially carved in wood, at just over six feet high, later fabricated in metal at just over ninety-eight feet (fig. 2). In 2011, by contrast, Zuckerman-Hartung selected materials transparent and precarious: for a house of cards, this column of cups (disposable plastic denoting a markedly less transcendent sense of longevity, to boot).

The cups appear to have been used for painting before their sculptural redeployment—interiors stained in jewel-like rings and spatters from the pigments they once contained. Studio detritus, receptacles filled for and emptied by the act of painting. Zuckerman-Hartung is a painter, declaratively so. She frequently avows her “chauvinism about painting,” her compulsion toward painting because of its art-historical

status: “The designation ‘painter’ is very important to me,” the artist said in 2012—in an interview, as it happens, capped by an image of *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie*. “What I mean is that it gives me a structure to work against. In everything I make there’s always more, it’s always wandering off from the thing at hand, but I constantly check back in with what painting might be. The compression of the paintings is so important, because the way they want to ramble off and become sculptures is really problematic.”¹

This essay has begun emphatically, perversely, with a sculptural work (fully three-dimensional, at once round and in-the-round), as well as with a direct comparison to a canonical modernist sculpture. And yet *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie* seems to propose thus: if Zuckerman-Hartung’s painting continues—if another cup, and another and another, are filled for, and emptied by, the act of painting—then the sculpture might continue, too.

ANTI-ANTI

The title of *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie* is also a kind of stack. With it, Zuckerman-Hartung tenders a rhythmic succession of halfway homonyms: meanings aside,

Fig. 1. Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie*, 2011

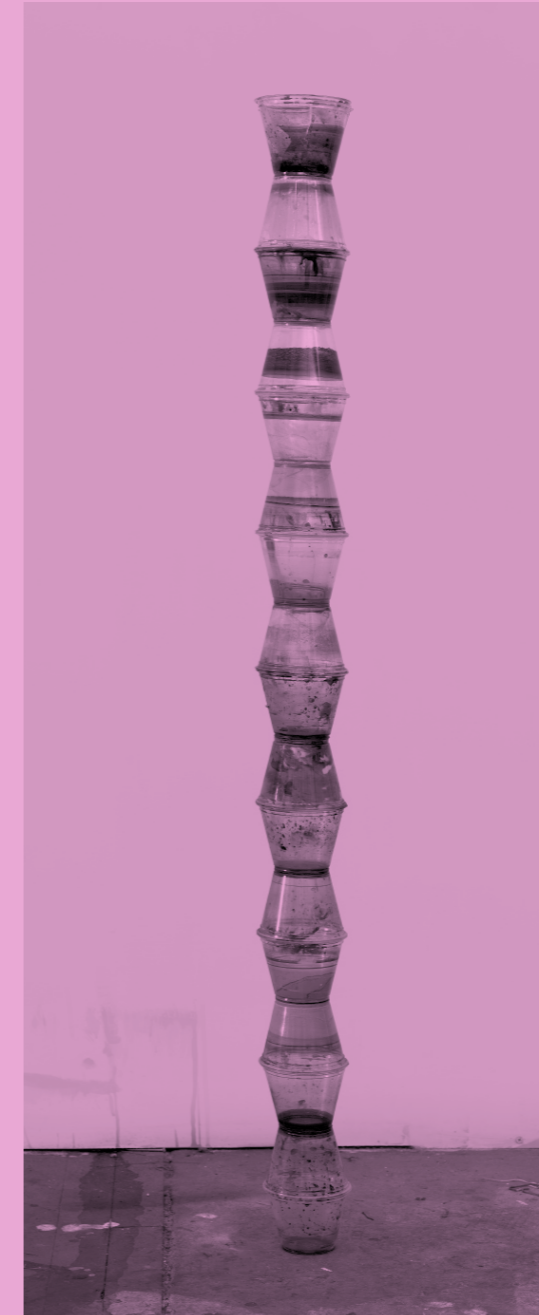


Fig. 2. Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) © Succession Brancusi — All rights reserved (ARS) 2021. *Endless Column*, version I, 1918. Oak, 80 × 9⁷/₈ × 9⁵/₈ in. (203.2 × 25.1 × 24.5 cm). Gift of Mary Sisler. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.





Fig. 3. Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916). *Development of a Bottle in Space*, 1912 (cast 1931). Silvered bronze, 15 × 23 ¾ × 12 ⅞ in. (38.1 × 60.3 × 32.7 cm). Aristide Maillol Fund. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/ Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

the respective letter combinations of “acts” and “ax,” “ante” and “auntie,” can produce sounds so alike that a listening ear elides what a reading eye does not.² Indeed, I take Zuckerman-Hartung’s title as an acknowledgement of her sculpture’s art-historical referentiality—like, but not like. Any reference to Brancusi is somehow both homonymic and antonymic.

Ante/Auntie/Anti: in the same year, Zuckerman-Hartung made *Anti-Expeditious*, the title of which proffers a literal antonym, declaring its slowness by standing against speed and efficiency (p. 88).³ Yet in this case the term’s oppositional stance effects an affirmation. The work itself attests to how much (even if sometimes too much) we might glean from slowing down.⁴ The material surfeit of *Anti-Expeditious*—not least following on the factual emptiness of *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie*—takes time to describe, takes time to see. *Anti-Expeditious* takes time, full stop.

The work’s largest component is an unstretched canvas, a drop cloth and a backdrop, richly stained, splattered, sprayed. It provides a hanging surface for smaller paintings and is flanked by other suspended, tangled, and propped materials. Two lengths of wood lean nearby, connecting wall to floor. And on the floor as well, almost centered against the large, riotous cloth, is a patently different stack from that of the plastic cups—here no elegant modularity implying extension and even infinitude, but rather the syntactical modulation of a sentence.

Either the sentence’s subject or its distinctly attenuated period, a fanlike array of seven compact discs caps this stack. The leftmost disc is more or less vertical, the six to its right staggered as if taking the measure of a 90-degree angle. As if a single disc falling in slow motion, in stop motion. In this way the modest assemblage winks at a number of avant-garde antecedents, from Eadweard Muybridge’s “electro-photographic” studies of animal locomotion (1887) to Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) or Umberto Boccioni’s *Development of a Bottle in Space* (1913, fig. 3).⁵

A viewer’s own potential movements are meaningful, to be sure. Someone facing the work will register Zuckerman-Hartung’s CDs first as prismatic edges—will see first their silvery perimeters, then perhaps the variously donut-shaped and arcing shadows they cast on the expanse of drop cloth behind them. Against such a backdrop they are ordained, in turn, by an azure-rimmed halo of butter yellow paint. Only by shifting to the right side might one note that the front of each disc also reads like a halo, seven identical rings of gold. These are CD-RWs, rewritable compact discs, acquired blank for the purpose of digital storage. Whether or not the discs of *Anti-Expeditious* remain blank or in fact contain still more, invisible, unreachable content, we do not know.

Questions of capacity, flatness, volume, illegibility, and transparency reverberate up and down the stack for which the disc assemblage serves as crown: the overturned mug; the books and magazines inaccessible between bricks; the cubic, Plexiglas box like a tongue-in-cheek sculptural base. The piece of asphalt to which the CDs are affixed implicates the entire stack as an urban variety of geological cross-section, and even the clear box at the stack's base sits upon something else, pinning a black-and-white photograph to the floor. Thus an image (The Image?) either undergirds or is buried by the whole. Moreover, this image captures the head and upper torso of a man handling a snake—"taking up serpents" as a test or proof of faith.

Anti-Expeditions is, on the whole, alive with serpentine strokes and drizzles of paint, found sticks, pictured limbs. Tactility is even more to the point, from the man shown grasping the snake; to the scattered flashes of pornographic magazine cut-outs (most visibly, a CD-sized circle propped directly below the waterfall of physical discs, which frames a close-up of mouth, tongue, anus, and three fingers); to the work's wild range of surface textures—liquid, coarse, wrinkled, featureless. In this image of the taking up of serpents, in its poignant and droll and literal grounding of linearity and tactility, I cannot but find another art-historical reference as well, to the oft-reproduced ancient marble of Laocoön and his sons, entwined by serpents (fig. 4).

DIGRESSION IN DEFENSE OF OVER-INTERPRETATION

According to Virgil, Laocoön was a priest of Poseidon who sought to warn his city of the Greeks' ploy by aiming a spear at the Trojan Horse, and so incurred the wrath of the gods. In Sophocles he was a priest, but of Apollo, and punished for marrying when he should have honored his role with celibacy. Sometimes a pair of serpents emerges from the sea and kills Laocoön's two sons, leaving him to grieve them. Sometimes Laocoön is their victim, too. More famous than this unstable narrative is the ancient marble *Laocoön and His Sons*, also known as the *Laocoön Group* and considered an exemplar of Hellenistic statuary.⁶ Unearthed in Rome in 1506, it shows all three agonized human bodies and two sinuous, ophidian ones.

Despite both its paradigmatic consequence and its physical solidity, the sculpture itself supports contradictory formal and historiographical interpretations. Scholars debate its date of making as well as its status as original or copy, even while the marble, once found, spawned countless plaster casts. Laocoön was exhumed absent his right arm, and in 1510 Jacopo Sansovino's outstretched appendage won a competition to reimagine it. In 1906, however, new excavation divulged an arm crooked backward, a match finally attached in 1957. More than twenty years later again, the sculpture was disassembled for study, revealing internal holes and tenons in apparent

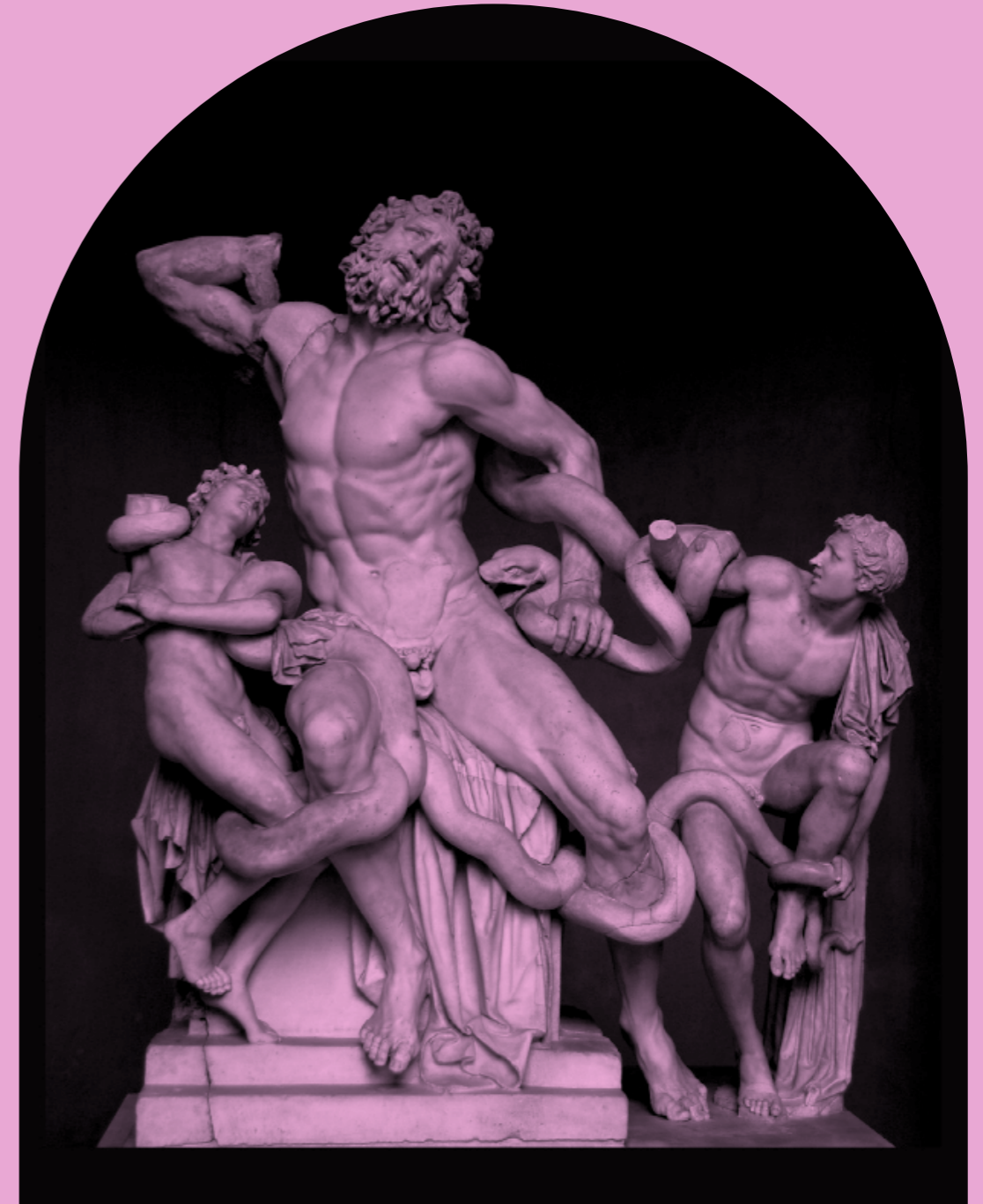


Fig. 4. *Laocoön and His Sons* (Laocoön Group), about 40–30 B.C.E.

ratification of theories that its composition had been reworked even in antiquity—the group intended, from the start, to harbor within it a certain flexibility.

All five bodies conspire to demonstrate stone as tensile rather than rigid, but Laocoön's upturned face, with its endless cry, inspired the most discursive attention: in particular, Enlightenment-era theories of narrativity and expressivity tended toward the regulatory. Most germane, for my purposes, is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoön: An Essay Upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, first published in 1766. In it, the sculpture (one Lessing knew best from etchings) serves as the titular case for distinguishing between poetry's medium-specific powers and those of the visual arts—which the author conflates, marmoreal example notwithstanding, under the rubric of painting. Lessing favored poetry, in his view a temporal project, words unfolding in sequence, as opposed to painting's spatial project, limited to representing a story by a single moment: as if, to cite one modern-day critic, "spatial' means little more than 'atemporal,'" or, to cite another, "even though we de facto always need time, sometimes even a life-time" to view a painting.⁷ Never mind, either, that the Laocoön sculpture makes manifest just how much interpretive and corporeal life an object itself can live.

*

Lessing's nonchalant elision of sculpture with painting and his simultaneously staunch separation of the spatial from the temporal are, together, what compel my attention here. The rivalry known in Renaissance Italy as the *paragone* had long pitted painting against sculpture, parsing their respective capacities as well. Painting reigned supreme for the majority, aided by its flatness: a surface meant to open, by illusion's means, onto other realms. Elsewhere "two" and "three" are entirely proximate (in fact, sequential), but in this context painting's conventionally inherent two-dimensionality therefore appeared antipodal to sculpture's three-dimensionality. Sculpture was both body and object—stubbornly present and just as stubbornly inanimate, at least according to the anti-sculpture camp.⁸

Centuries on, champion of high-modernist medium purity Clement Greenberg wrote, "Towards a Newer Laocoön" (1940), deploying an aptly violent metaphor. "The arts ... have been hunted back to their mediums, and there they have been isolated, concentrated and defined. It is by virtue of its medium that each art is unique and strictly itself." Self-reflexivity as the ultimate, or the only, agency. The medium that counted the most for Greenberg was painting, though now crucially abstract, its teleological advancement conceived as "a progressive surrender" to flatness—to "the flat picture plane's denial of efforts to 'hole through' it for realistic perspectival space."⁹ Not even paint defined

painting, but rather the insistent opacity of a flat support. Of course, the extremity of Greenberg's position was also its vulnerability, for a blank canvas cannot but declare its objecthood, like the flattest kind of sculpture.

Clearly Greenberg invoked Lessing's Laocoön, rather than the Laocoön sculpture as such. He invoked, that is, the era of art history's disciplinary formation, its rootedness in categorical differentiation at all costs. As others have shown, more was at stake than the limits of each medium: the *Laocoön Group* had proved a limit case for aesthetically permissible expressivity.¹⁰ How else could either ancient or Enlightenment thinkers justify the pleasure derived from a sculpture that depicts pain—and not only pain, but the violent meting out of a variably sensible punishment from on high (or, really, from the sea, that most fluid, most ceaseless medium). Which is to say, the *Laocoön Group* is nowhere and everywhere, in all of this. It is a sculpture, bumping up against the limits its medium guarantees. And it has been tirelessly *mediated*, renowned for and used because of its form, but also renowned and used through all manner of two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and textual formats—the sculpture, in the end, a screen for projection as much as it is anything else.¹¹

A screen for projection, or maybe a rewritable disc, harboring its own archive? Then again, the CD-RWs in *Anti-Expeditions* might be blank, vehicles (mediums) merely for the

refraction of light across that larger work's many other surfaces: a different sort of self-reflexivity.

*

I'll be honest, I do not think Zuckerman-Hartung intended to invoke the Laocoön sculpture within *Anti-Expeditions*, either by her chosen photograph of the man bearing a snake, or by the photograph's position at once below a sculpture's base and perpendicular to a painting. Yet for me, it lurks therein regardless—a paragon of extant Greek sculpture that represents its medium in one *paragone* and is subsumed by painting in another; a profoundly emotive artifact, the urgencies of which have been silenced less by stone than by formalist propriety; an object that encapsulates what we can know from what is present and what we still cannot know, even *of* what is present. Narratively, the sculpture's scenario appears dire for Laocoön and his sons. We could not look at it and rightly imagine their escape, only—speaking of limits—their end. But in my view the marble serpents inhabit a distinct temporality (*pace* Lessing). Here they are the bodies, the forms, capable of "compressing" themselves, to say nothing of compressing others, and equally capable of "rambling off," by definition serpentine.

*

Certain Zuckerman-Hartung works read as propositions about, via pointed transgressions of, the traditional limits

of painting and sculpture. Consider: conventionally, painting belongs to the wall and sculpture to the floor. The painted drop cloth of *Drunken Bridesmaid Chess* (2009–13, p. 183) has been thoroughly shredded to form an elegant puddle. From the work's flat cardboard cap, a slender paintbrush juts like a jaunty feather, or like a flag staked for painting, though to wield it would mean to lift this shimmering heap, and so to command a brush that is burdened (by a three-dimensional painting? by the "problematic" rambling off of sculpture?). Consider: conventionally, from the first mark made, painting reveals its two-dimensional canvas as always already a so-called picture plane, an imaginary surface that angles perspectively away from the viewer (this time *pace* Greenberg). The four shelves of *What Is Found There* (2017, p. 194) are, by structural necessity, planes that extend away from us, perpendicular to our line of sight. Further still, this wire shelving, along with its particular, undulant contents, confounds the eye—like so many signals of linear perspective at once realized and misarranged in the round.

It becomes hard not to see snakes, or at least the serpentine, all over, as well as the combination of linearity (conventionally painting's) and tactility (conventionally sculpture's) that the snake has figured for us. Conventionally, too—and formally—the snake is phallic; Laocoön is father to two sons and, as Zuckerman-Hartung has put it, "Painting is dad."¹² Meanwhile, I am prepared to annul the figure of the

snake by invoking the artist's preoccupation with another creature. She has explained her interest in the octopus as to do with its formal in-betweenness: a form in between the hierarchical structure of a tree and the lateral, adventitious growth of a rhizome. Unlike a snake, the octopus has no vertebrae, which also means it "can wrap its entire body around something and ... [have] no idea what it's holding."¹³

Zuckerman-Hartung's desire to undermine hierarchical structures and her vigorous commitment to painting, which ever tops the art-historical hierarchy, are two sides of the same coin. I appreciate this metaphor because of how it complicates flatness, reminding us that even what is flat can have two faces (much as the CD-RWs of *Anti-Expeditious* remind us that they are discs with interiors). And now, at last, the discursive Laocoön can be brought to bear: for what possible relevance does the categorical relationship between two and three dimensions have today if not precisely because the categorical anxieties manifest in the *paragone* have been displaced by the dazzling flatness of our portable touch screens. In Zuckerman-Hartung's work, painting's supposed flatness is—paradox intended—alternately deflated and reinflated, without recourse to the medium's concomitant conventions of illusionistic depth.

To wit, in a show called *That being said, I'm oscillating between Comic Relief and Boundaries, Comic Relief* (2016, p. 29) dominated, a large, stretched canvas

sensuously stained, ragged pools of vibrant colors haunted by a bruise-like bloom just shy of center.¹⁴ Drooping from a vertical seam, three clownish sleeves each terminate in a single work glove. They do not suggest the painting itself as a multi-armed body so much as they seem like appendages that have slipped through a crack in painting's wall. They do tip the work, affectively, toward bathos—an image of anti-climax, of the sublime gone absurd. Not for nothing, the Greek *bathos* means simply depth.

Where earlier I underscored "two" and "three" as technically contiguous numbers, now I want to emphasize the technically infinite decimals between them. Relief is a subcategory of sculpture—indeed, historically it could sound like sculpture either arrested mid-formation or come to the end of its life cycle: a figure either emerging from or sinking into a background plane. Relief is also often what results when a painter operates in excess of her given surface or frame. Zuckerman-Hartung induces us to consider the word's other, non-art meanings. To "comic relief" I would add relief as replacement, as consolation, as respite, as release. The ninety-fourth of the artist's *95 Theses on Painting* gives that, "The movement through [all 95] ... is an agonistic, difficult process I go through again and again, mostly forgetting that there is relief and containment at the end." A test or proof of faith, in order to arrive at a dual relationship to one's

boundaries—and at a dual relationship that thereby abrogates mere dualism.

The Laocoön group *is* frozen in agony, despite the sculpture's own varied life: one long, aestheticized, discomfiting cry. *Anti-Expeditious* is "installation variable"—as such, likely dimensions variable. Feeling is not anathema to form, and dimensions are not only spatial. Further, there are dimensions between two and three, but there are also many more dimensions beyond three; hypervolumes that take into account time along with space (and that might exist on other planes altogether).

Anti-Expeditious achieves slowness by glut. It is, in its scale, a major work for Zuckerman-Hartung, and I have seemed to reduce it to only certain of its details, though it is major primarily because it comprises a superabundance of the minor. Put more bluntly still, I have treated a single, obliquely visible photographic image—to which I found myself at once directed and deflected by those waterfaling digital storage discs—as an utter rabbit hole. Yet here again, we find both: tunneling wildly is not so different from spilling wildly out. *Whole* and *hole* are homonyms, after all. In this sense, the sparseness of *Acts/Ax/ Ante/Auntie* is as relevant as the surfeit of *Anti-Expeditious*; one could argue that containment begets excess, since nothing can exceed without a container to overflow.

CODA: “FORM —IT’S BECAUSE THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES.”

So wrote poet Lisa Robertson as the closing line of her text “7.5 Minute Talk for Eva Hesse,” which she first delivered aloud in front of Hesse’s *Sans II* (1968, fig. 5).¹⁵ Her remarks encompass luminosity, negation, identification, perception—*Sans II* itself a “perceiving device.” The work is a relief sculpture, a grid of empty boxes, five of which were cast in fiberglass and resin from the same mold. Yet because of the vagaries of these materials, each of the work’s five versions is formally unique. Each has aged according to its particular story of storage, display, and geographical locus as well.¹⁶ Consequence is distinct from sequence, Hesse’s grid less the “one thing after another” of (tonally) flat Minimalist dictum than to do with connectivity, relationality: rather like Zuckerman-Hartung moving through her *95 Theses* “again and again.”

It is possible that I have written this essay backwards. Certainly, I have backed into the exigencies of formalism. I might have begun where I will now end, with Zuckerman-Hartung’s own, ever generous language—in this case, describing in 2017 the impetus for a body of more or less flat sculptural works themselves begun by “cutting curves out of scrap wood in the Yale woodshop.” “Cutting concentric parallel bands” apparently “makes the machine whine loudly,” a move the machine resists, announcing its wrongness. This whine is somehow visible,

if not audible, in the awkward intimacies of *Toward Painful Individuation, Toward Uncontrollable Relationality* (2017, p. 203), with its nesting and near-nesting, tangent and near-tangential parts. “The commitment to the curves ... was an exercise in repetition. I’m trying,” she explains, “to refine and deconstruct my relationship with the formal through the use of this curve. The curve is the heart of this work.” Her interlocutor, the painter Fox Hysen, here interjects, “What does the curve have to do with form? Isn’t the curve a line? It’s not exactly a form.” To which Zuckerman-Hartung confesses,

*I’m still trying to understand the Formal, I get tangled between Formalism, Formality, and the Formless. It might be odd, the use of this shape as a form, it throws me for a curve. For example, a figure of speech that reroutes you, the curve is never the thing, it is always the implication: the detour, the bulge, the mountain, the metaphor. Maybe they are opportunities for digression around historical formalist approaches.*¹⁷

Letting these literal curves exercise their metaphorical dimensions. Getting from A to B by elongated rather than expeditious means. At the same time that the curve, the digression, is also the heart: central, vital, innermost, driving.



Fig. 5. Eva Hesse, *Sans II*, 1968. Fiberglass, polyester resin, 38 × 430 × 6 ½ in., five units, each 38 × 86 × 6 ½ in. © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth. Installation view, *Eva Hesse: One More Than One*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 2013–14. Photo: Kay Riechers.

I For the artist's self-professed "chauvinism about painting," see Lisa Darms, "In Conversation: Molly Zuckerman-Hartung," Hyperallergic. <https://hyperallergic.com/119336/in-conversation-molly-zuckerman-hartung/> (accessed October 3 2019). For the longer quotation, see "Paintings Are Specific Conversations: John Corbett and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung in Dialogue," in *Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Negative Joy* (Chicago: Corbett vs. Dempsey, 2012), 3. It is in this same volume—on p. 9, immediately following the interview—that an image of *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie* appears. (Interestingly, the only other illustration embedded within this interview is of Voltaire's death mask, both profile and three-quarter views: the very definition of a three-dimensional surface.)

2 It is worth noting that in a 2013 lecture the artist raised the possibility of "aural painting"—painting for the ear rather than for the eye: see "Studio Talk with Molly Zuckerman-Hartung," delivered February 22, 2013 at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, walkerart.org/magazine/studio-talk-with-molly-zuckerman-hartung (accessed November 29, 2019). Although my emphasis at the moment is their proximate sounds, each of these words contains a wide range of meanings. Acts can be deeds, laws, theatrical routines, parts or divisions of a narrative whole; ax can be a tool, specifically a hatchet, and also to cancel or to end; ante is a stake, metaphorically

speaking, or the Latin *before*, our grammatical prefix for the same; while auntie is either actual kin or an older, unrelated friend.

3 Zuckerman-Hartung calls the work, as a whole, "a kind of non-portable cumbersome, slow, clunky object." Email to author, November 19, 2019.

4 *Anti-Expeditious* was first shown alongside contemporaneous work in the 2012 show *Negative Joy* at Corbett vs. Dempsey Gallery, Chicago—"negative joy" itself a phrase Zuckerman-Hartung borrowed from the late artist Mike Kelley, and which delivers an oxymoron one might nevertheless know viscerally to be true, or at least to be possible.

5 As a Futurist, Boccioni was entirely pro-expeditious, so to speak. Also apt for this essay's purposes: scholar Alex Potts has assessed Boccioni's "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture" (1912), alongside much early modernist interest in three-dimensional "real space," as fundamentally painterly. "In the end, the 'modeling of atmosphere' [Boccioni] has in mind comes down to modeling forms in relief that one can read pictorially as non-literal suggestions of depth, space or fragments of solid shape, as if the forms of a Futurist painting were being congealed in clay" (see Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000], 106).

6 In his *Natural History* (XXXVI, 37), Pliny the Elder describes a work most assume is the

Laocoön Group, attributing it to no fewer than three Rhodian sculptors, Agesander, Athenodoros, and Polydorus. (He also indicates that the sculpture in question was carved from a single block of marble, which we'll soon see is not true of the *Laocoön Group*.)

7 The first quotation is from W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Politics of Genre: Space and Time in Lessing's *Laocoon*," in *Representations* no. 6 (spring 1984): 98. The second is from Sven-Olov Wallenstein, "Space, time, and the arts: Rewriting the Laocoon," in *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* vol. 2 (2010): 5. I am grateful to the artist for mentioning the latter to me.

8 Two primary sources on this topic, for instance, are Leonardo da Vinci's *Paragone: A Comparison of the Arts* and Leon Battista Alberti's *De Pictura and De Statua*. See, for example, Claire Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone: A Critical Interpretation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992). For a synopsis of such debates that picks up in the 17th-century, see Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Blind Spot: An Essay on the Relations between Painting and Sculpture in the Modern Age*, trans. by Chris Miller (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008).

9 Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), in John O'Brian, ed., *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1 (Chicago, 1988), 32, 34. The essay originally appeared in the July–August 1940 issue of the *Partisan Review*.

10 For a potent accounting of this, see Caroline A. Jones, "Clement Greenberg's *Queen Laocoön*" (2004), www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1162/thld_a_00591 (accessed December, 21 2019).

11 The literature on the *Laocoön Group* as well as on its interpretations is vast, but for two interesting takes on this vastness, see Simon Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain: Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, Moritz, Goethe* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), and Richard Brilliant, *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

12 Zuckerman-Hartung declared this near the start of her 2013 "Studio Talk" lecture at the Walker Art Center.

13 Ibid.

14 This exhibition took place at the gallery Michael Jon & Alan, Detroit, November 5–December 3, 2016.

15 Lisa Robertson, "7.5 Minute Talk for Eva Hesse (*Sans II*)," in *Nilling: Prose Essays on Noise, Pornography, the Codex, Melancholy, Lucretius, Folds, Cities and Related Aporias* (Toronto: Book*hug, 2012), 45. Robertson presented this text in January 2010 as part of the San Francisco Museum of Art's program *75 Reasons to Live*: see openspace.sfmoma.org/2010/12/75-reasons-lisa-robertson (accessed November 5, 2019).

16 For more detail on the materiality and aging of *Sans II* see Michelle Barger, "Thoughts

on Replication and the Work of Eva Hesse," in *Tate Papers* 8 (Autumn 2007): www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/08/thoughts-on-replication-and-the-work-of-eva-hesse#footnoteref1_goxly82 (accessed January 7, 2020). Robertson spoke in front of the *Sans II* at the San Francisco Museum of Art; other works by this title are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of Art, New York, and Glenstone, Maryland, for example. In 1992 all five were reunited and installed together again for the first time since 1968 at the Yale University Art Gallery, stretching horizontally to fifty-six feet but suggesting—much like Brancusi's *Endless Column* or Zuckerman-Hartung's *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie*—an at least potential infinitude. The five versions were reunited again for Hesse's 2002 retrospective at SFMoMA, Museum Wiesbaden, and Tate Modern.

17 Fox Hysen and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, press release for *Learning Artist* at Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York (November 5–December 23, 2017), <https://www.racheluffnergallery.com/exhibitions/detail/molly-zuckerman-hartung/installation-stills> (accessed September 23, 2019).

are you trying to blind me? no said the man, i am trying to make you laugh. try harder, said my son, the wife of the mailman and everyone went out of the room to drink a glass of milk, splash some water on their faces and curdle their souls. we have only room for one genius in the family grumbled my roommate under his breath. he was hot and tired from his journey to the laundromat, which is what we secretly called the dollhouse in which he poked his sweaty dick and cackled sweet nothings at the american girl dolls he kept lined up inside.

let me tell you another one and so i left my toolbox in the corridor and before i could run to fetch it, my sister grabbed my nipple and i well, i could not help myself, i grinned because, you know she is right i still have not read enough nabokov to understand the difference between love and laughter.

the chicken was kept in the kitchen so we didn't have to go outside to gather the eggs. cooped up cooking and talking late into the night we almost forgot to eat all the tasty concoctions we had whipped up in a jiffy when surprisingly my cell phone bejinkled itself and every one waited expectantly while i told the white chick who was on the other end to hold on while i farted. it doesn't need to make sense i choked out you only need to make them shut up for a minute and wonder where the money comes from.

i am lonely amidst all this hubbub so i wander outside to gaze at the stars and forget my troubles. meanwhile my ugly cousin no not that one:

I have nearly blinded myself writing this.

the other one was attempting to woo the owls. she wept at their swift ascent toward the heavens or the bar down the street and i went on my merry way or somewhere else, perhaps that place inside my head where it is quiet.

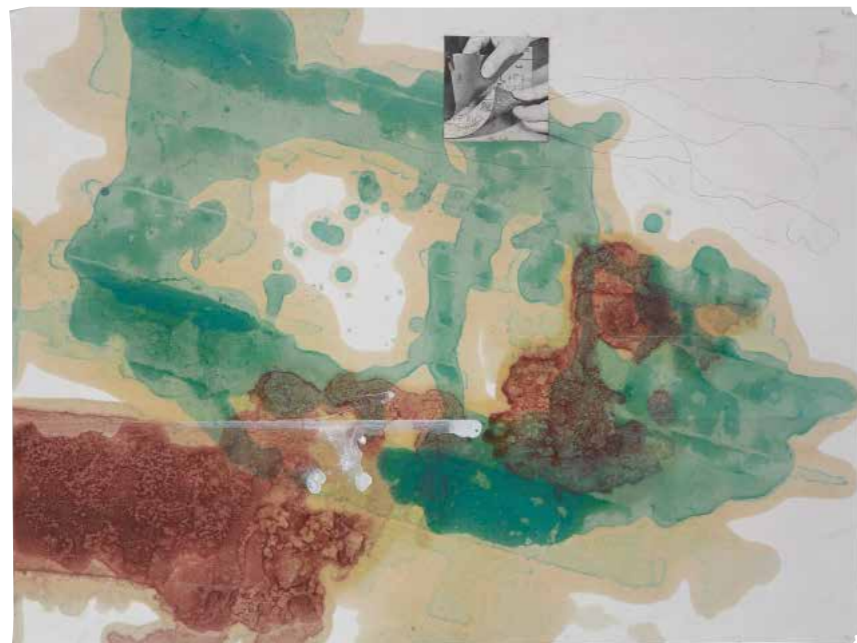
look, i said, no he rebuffed and shook me off like a cop with bad manners or an ill-tempered lover or a wily grizzled hamster. you've never loved me and i think it's time you owned up to your true feelings, you know the blank stare you give me sometimes when you don't know i am watching you. i told you it's not healthy for you to watch me like that. like what? like a freight train with no brakes or a godless cannibal or a butcher or my old blind grandfather. don't you see what i have become? she whispered in her mangled stage voice? i have become what you made me become, what you wanted to be yourself: a watcher, an observer, a commentator. she wrenched the rope from my neck and placed it around her own, her fingers bled, my voice shook. the stakes were high... too high. i would have to go back home - to my home this time.

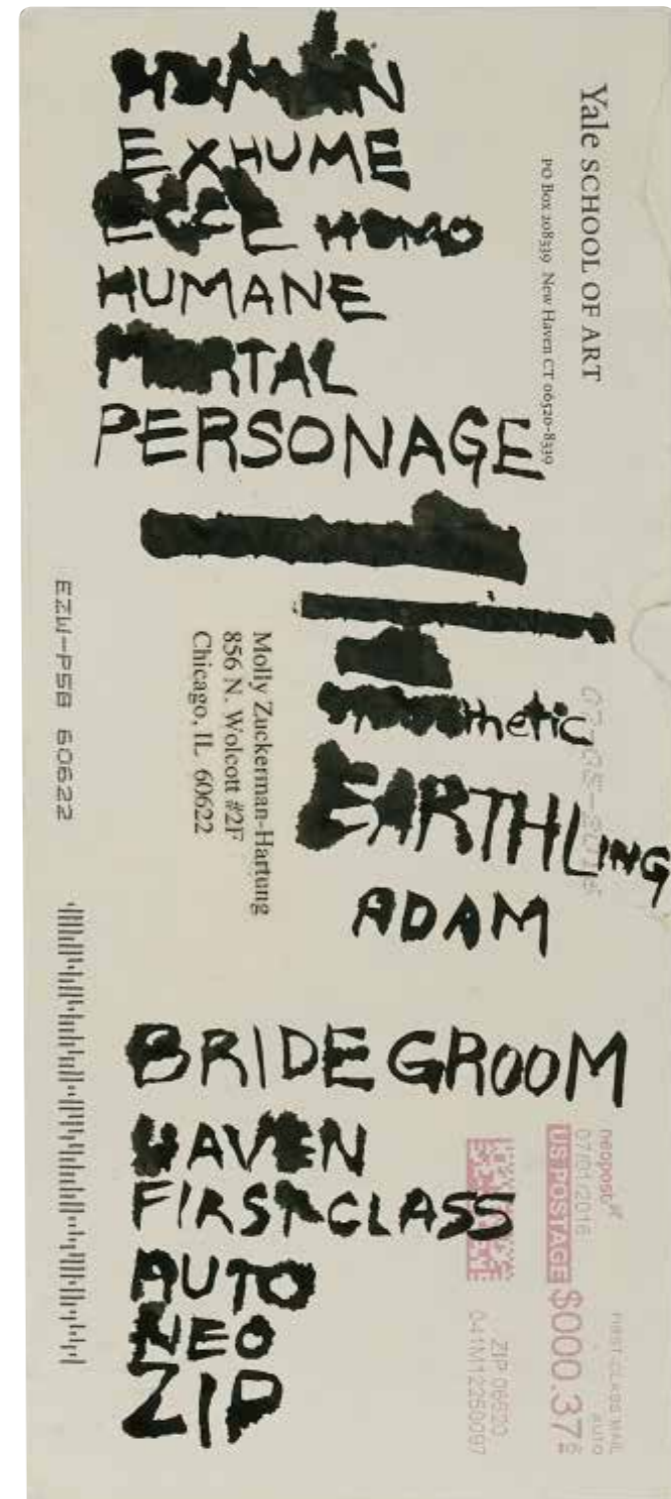
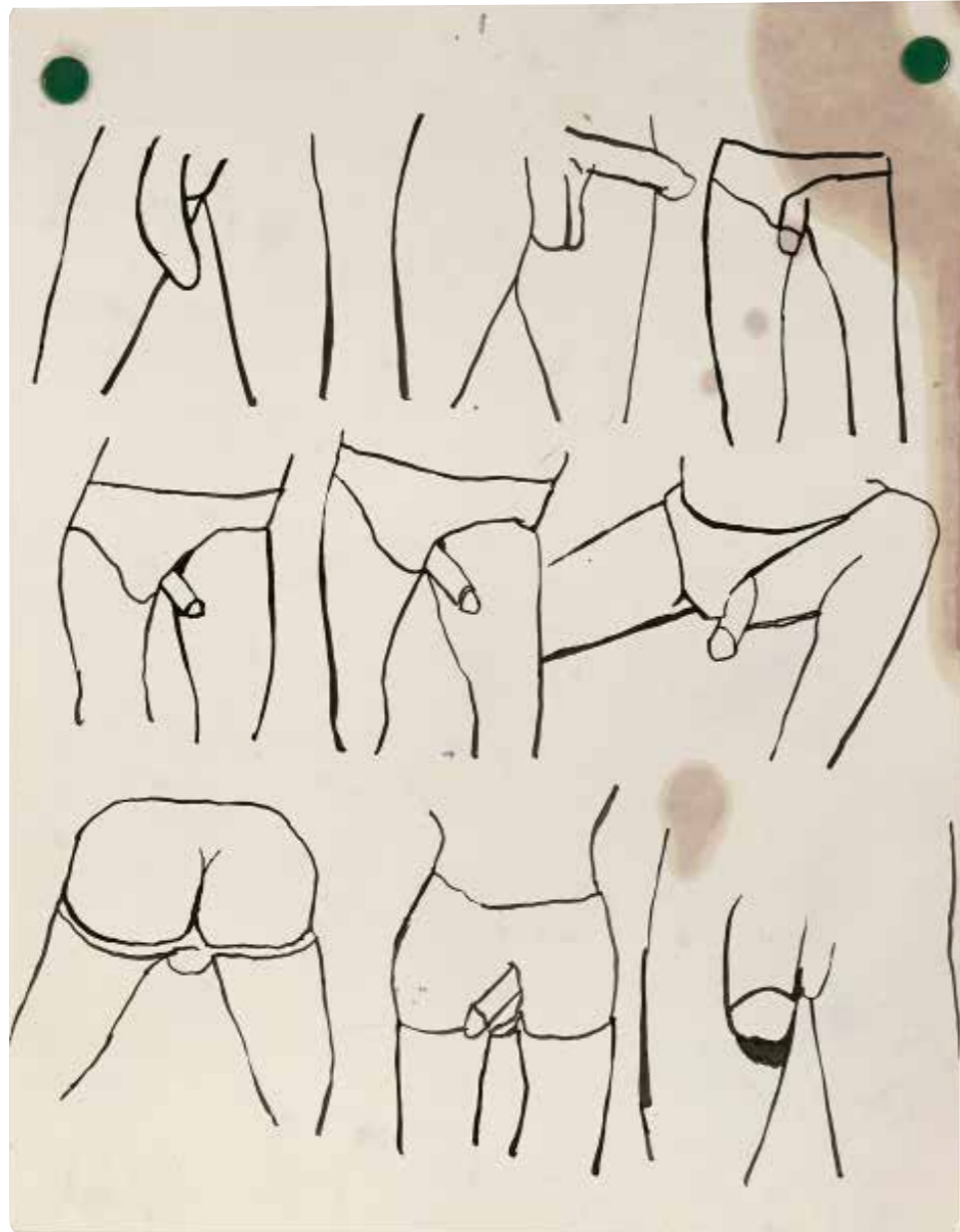
are you men or are you americans my mother always asked us. today i didn't know how to respond. i was a girl, just trying to raise my head in this shoddy old world, just trying to fly my own flag, beat my drum and carry on.

the sirens howled and the drippy faucet gurgled cheerfully. tomorrow, i would try again tomorrow, when the sun came out and i could speak french, the language of my peephole.











Adulterate, 2013





Anti-Expeditious, 2011



Installation view, *Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Learning Artist*, Rachel Uffner Gallery, 2017





The Failure of Contingency, 2012





Dick Box, 2017



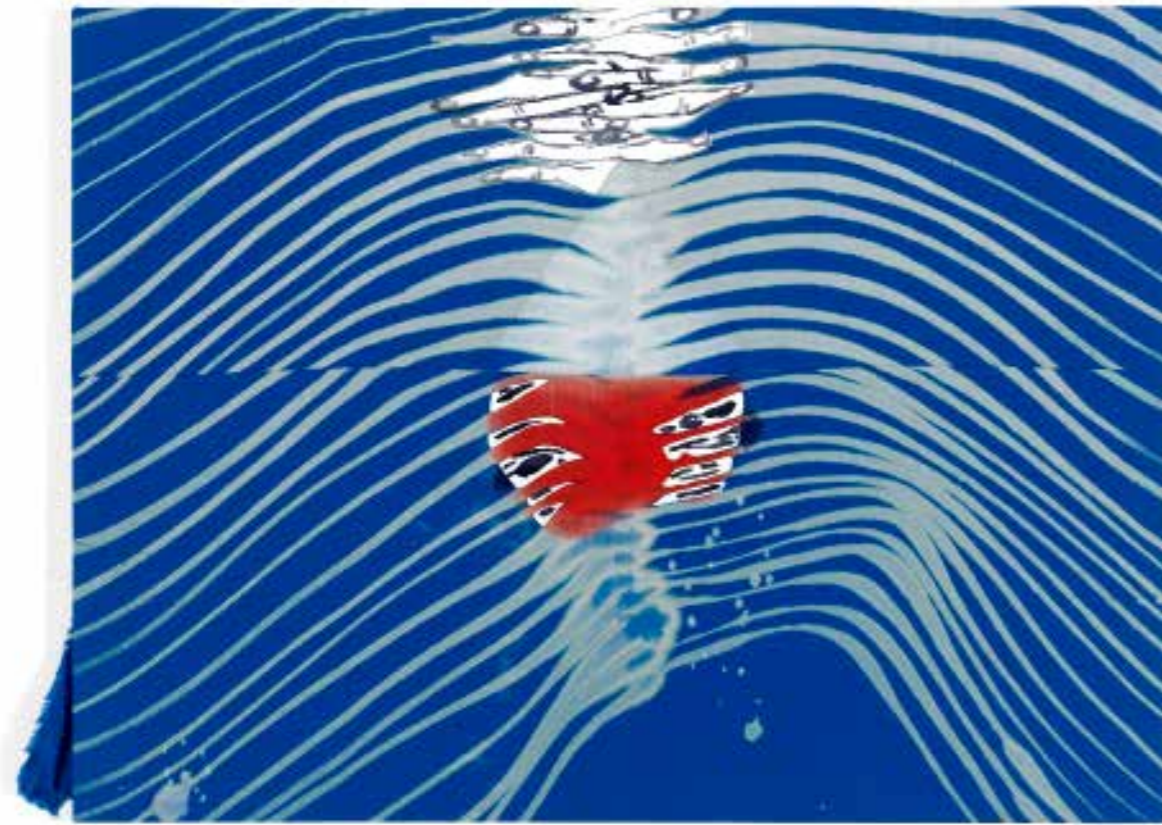
I00

The Necessary (Blushing for Now), 2012



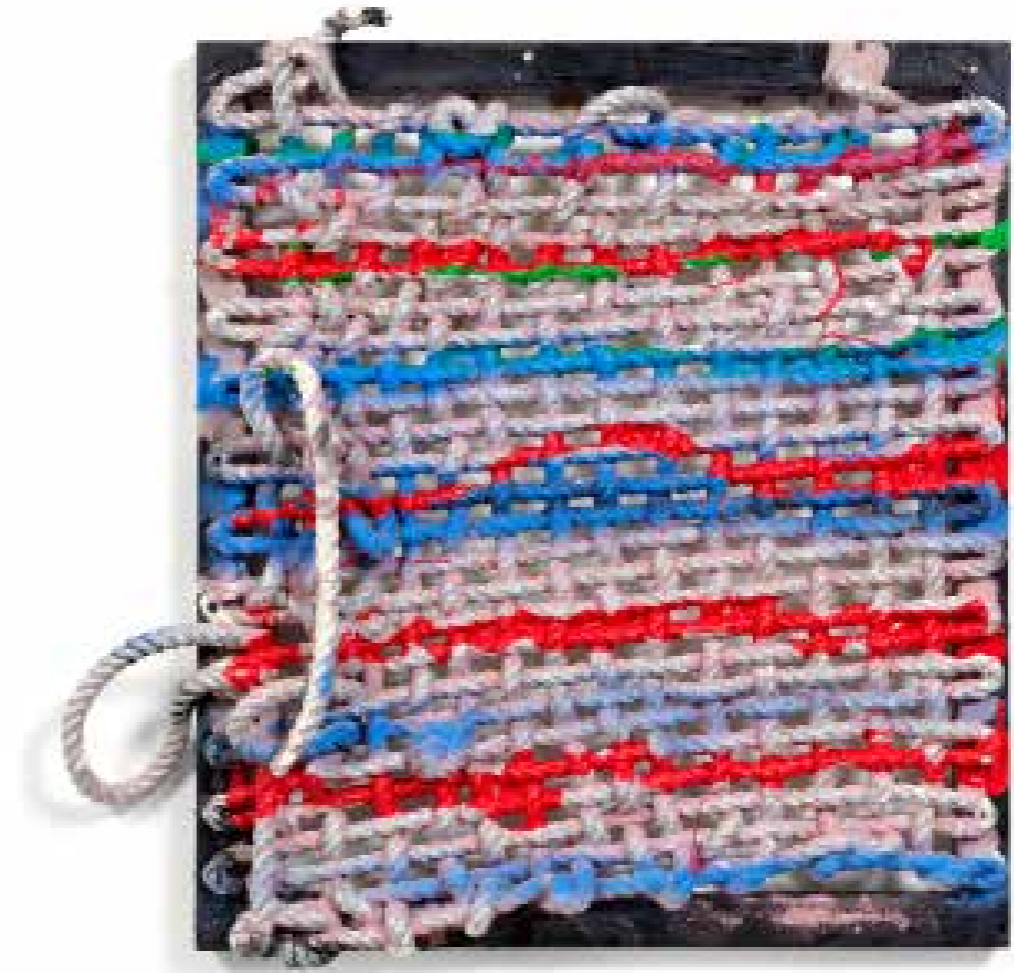
I01

Perfect Bound, 2015



I02

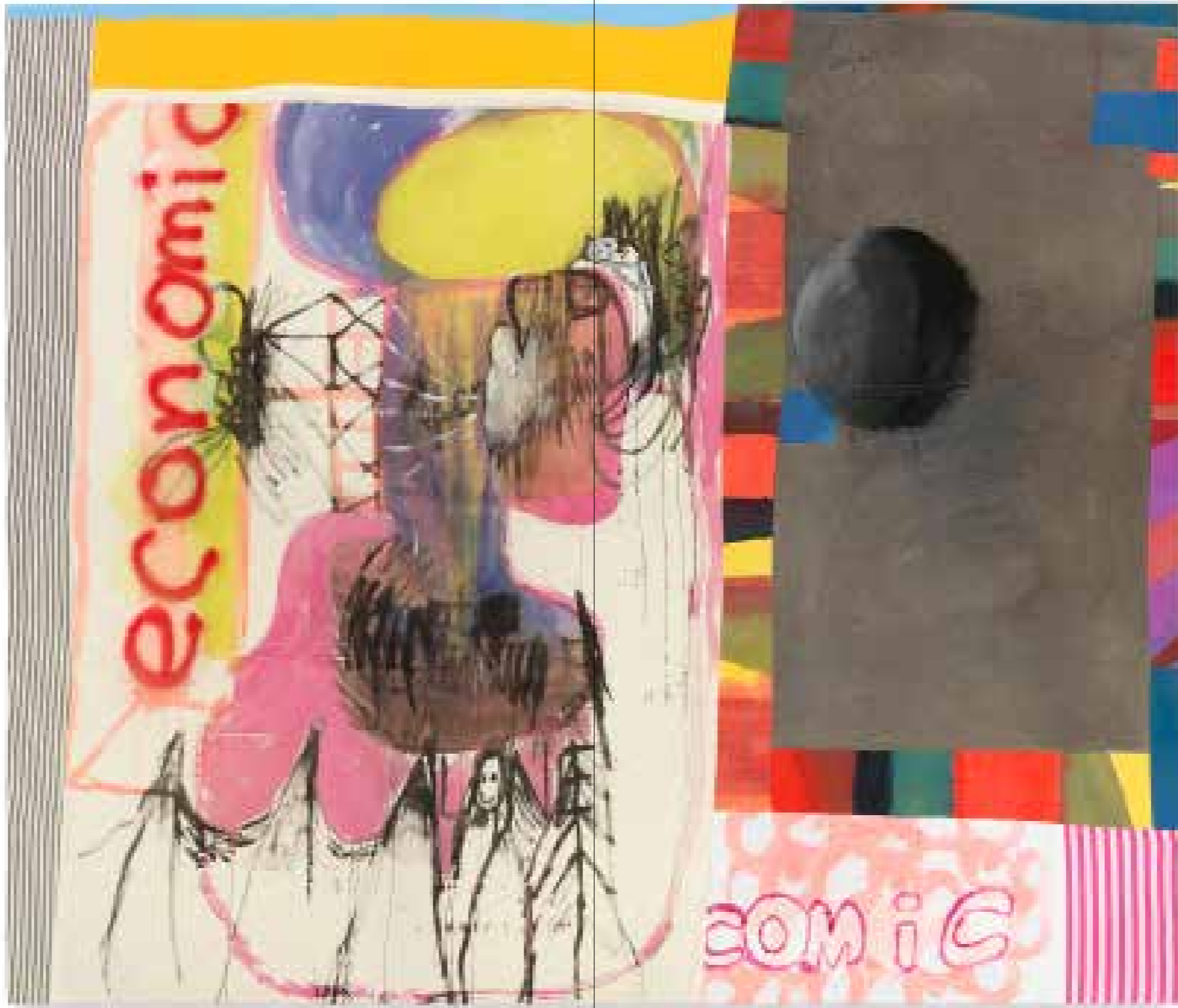
Untitled, 2015



I03

Untitled, 2015







And I hunched in its belly till my wet, fur froze
which way i fly is hell; myself am Hell
hovering and guaging the eize of the entrance
the woman with a bucket and straw hat returns
i think i can hear her mental conflict
she's working something out
without sweatbands, as my Los Angeles performance
friend workg doubt
as a movement from upstage
to downstage

enormous changes unrecognizable because nothing .
stays still in place or stopped in time
danned movers and talkers just bask
and bake in sun-dried kilns
burnt earth-clay colored dirt

a mask for janus by w.s. merwin
black wasp with legs dangling
a buzzing hovercraft
of malicious intent
lowering with sudden violence
to scan my face.

the insect world' is model
for military and industrial design
if a wasp reminds me of a fighter jet
or helicopter beating the sky with stark still
i am not the first

but you without trepidation
armed only with sawblade
striking chinese finger pull mud-nest
sweeping mummy spider corpses
off my virginia porch in amish ohio
i know where my fear jangles and where
I draw a firm line
and I draw comfort
from knowing my limits.



time notes
shadows will lengthen and sway
where growth is topiary
beneath a gathering dark
hills are to be forgotten; the patter of speech
must lilt upon flatness
(a hill is an indicator of time of gone and came.)

Touchy-Feely

Lisa Darms

I am reading constantly ... I never have enough quotes, biographical anecdotes, supporting arguments ... I say it's like going strawberry picking without taking a bucket, so I stuff my face with strawberries until juice is dripping down my shirt, stuck to my cheeks, churning in my stomach. 'Til the brink of diarrhea. And then I begin to write.

To begin with a form is unethical. It curtails discovery, experience, transformation.

—Molly Zuckerman-Hartung,
Notes on Susan Sontag¹

Molly recently bought a house—a vast, run-down clapboard Victorian in northwestern Connecticut. For several decades beginning in the 1970s, it was home to a Jewish commune, and the vestiges of that history persist in patches of vivid wallpaper in wacky, oversized floral patterns. Molly's partner Fox, also a painter, works on the second floor, and the third has been opened up as Molly's studio. Every space in the house is full of things: mostly books and paintings, but since Molly and Fox are renovating, there are also planks of woods, dangling electrical sockets, and spots of pink insulation puffing out from open walls.

During my visit in August, Molly apologizes repeatedly about *the mess*. I tell her it isn't the kind of sedimented disorder that weighs a person down. Everything here is in circulation, active.

While in Molly's studio, I wonder if it's possible to describe her art-making of the last twenty years, which is also how long we've been friends. Her work has a hyperabundant quality, that, like the house, can't really be contained. Her paintings are sinuous, sensuous, jagged, thick, accreted, shiny, and matte. They are glued, sewn, stuck together, coming apart. They *act* in many different ways: they waft, stain, flop, drag, and droop. Sometimes they are just paint, but they are also made of T-shirts, ragged fur, bits of wood. At times Molly's paintings aren't paintings at all: they are piles on the floor, movable objects on a plinth, words. I admit that when I first saw Molly's abstract paintings—at that time, small canvases comprising thick sediments of poured and scuffed paint in murky colors—they did not attract me. But I was open to being seduced.

And of course, I was seduced. I've experienced this kind of aesthetic reversal many times. I think of my life as a set of phases and transitions in which I've acclimated myself to things that

were previously incomprehensible or even abhorrent. Reading Proust, for example, whose writing felt impenetrable and ridiculous, until I gradually learned his language through the process of reading it. Punk, too, when I first encountered it as a shy twelve-year-old, was antithetical to every mode of behavior and appearance that had formerly been deemed possible. Taste is merely a process of learning to love something

Challenge obsessive product making by allowing both "the finished" and the "unfinished" to occupy the same space successfully. Make myself vulnerable, fallible, human.

—Molly Zuckerman-Hartung,
Ladyfest 2000²

Molly grew up in 1980s Olympia, Washington, a small town with an unlikely mix of institutions: state government bureaucracies grouped around the Capitol dome; Evergreen State College, likely the nation's most radical university, occupying a series of concrete Brutalist cubes in a dripping rainforest on the western edge of town; and the last vestiges of the logging industry, still evident in the names of bars like the High Climber Room and the Brotherhood, in the downtown streets where a vital punk scene was also emerging.

In 1992, a seventeen-year-old Molly discovered punk at a small meeting

of young women calling themselves Riot Grrrl. They were part of a feminist youth movement that came from punk—but that, crucially, was also a reaction against a scene that by the late '80s was largely perpetuating the parent culture's norms. Riot Grrrl demanded revolution, exhorting girls to start bands and make zines so they could remake culture in their own image. It called out culturally mandated jealousy and competitiveness among women and sought to create systems of mutual support.

Through urgent photocopied missives, ad hoc bands merging raw amateurism with performance art provocations, and meetings reminiscent of the consciousness-raising sessions of the '70s, girls described the gendered psychic and



Ladyfest 2000 program designed by Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, featuring cover art by Marie Koetje.

**The Revolution starts here + now
within each ONE US.**

Burn down the walls that say you can't:

Be a dork, tell your friends you love them.

Resist the temptation to view those around you as objects + use them.

Recognize empathy and vulnerability as positive forms of strength.

Resist the internalization of capitalism, the reducing of people + oneself to commodities meant to be consumed.

Resist psychic death.

Don't allow the world to make you into a bitter abusive asshole.

Cry in public.

Don't judge other people. Learn to love yourself.

Acknowledge emotional violence as real.

Figure out how the idea of competition (winning and losing) fits into your intimate relationships.

Decide that you'd rather be happy than be right all the time.

Believe people when they tell you they are hurting or are in pain.

Trust.

Flyer, Kathleen Hanna, 1990.



Angelique Hart and Joseph Derousselle in *The Newlyweds*, performing in the basement of Lucky 7 House, Olympia, 1999. Photo by Joe DeNardo.

sexual violence they'd been subjected to, while also defending their right to sexual expression and pleasure. Their quasi-uniform was assembled from the remnants of American girlhood: barrettes, thrifted baby doll dresses, Mary Jane shoes, Hello Kitty stickers. This was both an angry, ironic repudiation of infantilizing feminine tropes and a ludic return to a childlike way of being that many girls had been denied.

After the meeting, when a bunch of girls squeezed into a car, Molly scrunched up on the lap of a stranger, feeling self-conscious: too big, unwieldy, as if there was a cool, right way to behave that she didn't conform to. At the same time, she described it as exciting, queer, liberating. There were implied codes of conduct to decipher and rules to adhere to, but there was also freedom to share her feelings that she hadn't experienced before. Riot Grrrl demanded both a literal revolution that would radically change the world, and a more inward and interpersonal revolution that could transform relationships and the expression of emotions. "Recognize empathy and vulnerability as positive forms of strength" and "cry in public," wrote Bikini Kill singer Kathleen Hanna in a flyer she hung up and passed around town.³

Hanna also exhorted women to "resist the internalization of capitalism, the reducing of people and oneself to commodities meant to be consumed."⁴ Riot Grrrl was explicitly anticapitalist and, like punk itself, a vehement rebuke against professionalization. If

DIY is now understood as a craft or home improvement movement, it was then primarily a concerted form of resistance, a way to create alternative economies to avoid lining the pockets of rich pigs. More subtly, Riot Grrrl sought to counteract the transformation of emotions like anger and vulnerability into products for consumption.

Olympia punk was "always about ethics, and debates/discussions about how to be, in the face of capitalism, against patriarchy, racism, sexism, homophobia," Molly remembers, describing our shared milieu. Earnest self-reflection and analysis of our own racial, economic, and social privilege were part of our everyday lives. But punk was also about style: emaciated boys in white belts and chain wallets, and blunt-banged girls in thrift-store dresses. Even in this small scene, there were aesthetic camps: a crafty, 1950s lo-fi cuteness that predicted (or maybe created) "twee," vs. a '60s soul meets Lux Interior vibe, like Anna Karina after a car wreck. Polka dots and kittens and self-help on the one hand, stripes and leather and debasement on the other. In some ways these opposites mirrored the tension between our hippy-humanist upbringings (*Free to Be ... You and Me*), and the critique of humanism that we experienced through punk and via the critical theory we were learning at Evergreen.

In the '90s, Molly studied French culture at college, did performance art, and made fanzines. She was in love with the aesthetic, process, and tools

of zines: typewriters, Xerox machines, tape, Wite-Out, collage. She wore a homemade black plastic dress with Xeroxed photo booth self-portraits taped to it. She worked at the used bookstore and read like crazy. Molly devoured the few histories of punk that existed at that time: *Lipstick Traces*, in which Greil Marcus introduced us to the Situationist International; Dick Hebdige's class-conscious *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*; later, *Please Kill Me*, the addictive and deliciously self-contradicting oral history of New York punk compiled by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain. Already, she was approaching an aesthetic as an intellectual project, something to read about and research—a lineage to inherit, but also to critique or reject.

Our insular scene was, in some ways, aesthetically and intellectually sophisticated: we read Michel Foucault and bell hooks, saw avant-garde films at the Capitol Theater (which hosted events with underground icons like Kenneth Anger, Udo Keir, and Sadie Benning), and had a vast, cultivated knowledge of obscure music. But to Molly, at least, pre-internet Olympia was an art-historical vacuum, with a limited canon to draw from. The artworks her friends were making seemed to conform to the sleek design aesthetics of Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer, or to borrow blatantly from Cindy Sherman's retro self-portraiture. Everyone admired Andy Warhol. To Molly, it all seemed incongruously tepid. "I thought pop was awful," she remembers.

I was into the barsber kinds of punk imagery I'd seen in ReSearch magazines, I was into freaks and angry women in rock, like Lydia Lunch or Diamanda Galas or Exene Cervenka or Penny Arcade, and I was really into Nan Goldin, and drag queens, but I was not into this kind of prim, clean, pop aesthetic, and especially not the painted versions. They felt scared and boring. And it made no sense to me because [Olympia venue] the Midnight Sun, and all these bars and back rooms were so sexy dingy, dirty, gritty, and our clothes and makeup and everything was sexy and then this art looked so clean.

Molly didn't start painting until 1999. Looking back, she thinks it was a reaction against Olympia's punk scene: "Painting was color, and it had this hint of fluidity or playful flow," she recalls feeling. "Punk was about black and white and stripes and rigidity or rhythm, whereas painting was harmony, and somehow too feminine." She began with portraits and self-portraits.

Riot Grrrl revived the feminist slogan "The Personal is Political," and created the genre of the first person "perzine," often written in a diaristic or confessional mode. Evergreen's photography adjuncts introduced us to the more nuanced use of self-as-cipher in Cindy Sherman's and Claude Cahun's work, and many of us also made self-portrait photographs. In retrospect, our over-self-identification seems solipsistic, a turning inward instead of out into the world, a self-regard instead of concern for others. Taking one's individual experience as paradigmatic

exposed the limitations of a movement that was largely white and often middle-class. But the decision to use the self as subject was also a kind of ethics—a way to avoid exploiting others. The idea of photography as an objectifying, even colonizing, practice was common in our scene, a drama that played out at Bikini Kill shows, where Kathleen Hanna confronted men who took photos without her consent. To make pictures of oneself was a way to circumvent this issue of consent, and to work with a willing subject.

For Molly, portraits were always also self-portraits, as well as attempts to find out how it felt to be a different self. She made paintings of "celebrities" like Joseph Goebbels, Courtney Love, Dolly Parton, and Nina Simone. Painting rocks stars was initially a way to relate to her scene, a way to communicate. "People seemed opaque to me," she remembers. "I couldn't be sure there was something happening inside them. Not like what was happening inside me. I wanted to find out what was inside them, so I offered up these pictures." As she painted, her motivations evolved.

I painted Iggy Pop, and I hated Iggy Pop at the time, I don't remember why. I just had to have strong opinions about everything, so hate was convenient. It satisfied a need. But photos of Iggy had these scars and damage all over his torso, and I was interested in that self-laceration, so I painted it. And this allowed me to use lots of colors (acrylic) and even a little bit of texture, although I had no idea about paint texture yet at all. I really enjoyed the color, and this

puzzled me—how could my dislike of Iggy result in a painting I liked so much?

"Here's the formula: I used to be abject, but now I'm abstract."

—Wayne Koestenbaum,
*My 1980s*⁵

In 2004, Molly left Olympia to attend the MFA program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Art school came as a shock. Molly describes feeling like a "hysterical burden" that the teachers and other students had to bear; she felt too intense, energetically scattered, overly emotional. She remembers being the butt of jokes; even the professor for her class in conceptual painting called her "touchy-feely." Her response was to make a painting.

It is a self-portrait, a fractured face with a smaller, more coherent face emerging from its forehead, and the words *Touch Me Feel Me* painted in block letters along two edges. It was, in part, a painting of what it felt like for Molly to be in her body, like a Maria Lassnig painting well before she learned about the artist. Lassnig painted within a system she called "body awareness." As Lassnig described it, "The only true reality is my feelings played out within the confines of my body. They are physiological sensations: a feeling of pressure when I sit or lie down, feelings of tension and senses of spatial extent."



Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, *Touch Me, Feel Me*, 2004.



Angeliq Hart wearing a garment designed by Joseph Derousselle at Yoyo A Go Go music festival, Olympia, 1997 or 1999. Photo by Lisa Darms.

For Molly, the feelings in *Touch Me Feel Me* were abject. She described the painting shortly after she made it as “worse than humble” and “begging to be destroyed.” But there is some ambiguity in the figure: it’s aesthetically fractured and impenetrable, but also carries a hint of welcome in the smile. Being called “touchy feely” had reduced Molly’s expression and art-making to a gendered stereotype—the “overly emotional” woman. But in the painting, she appropriates the slight in a recuperative gesture she describes as a “salvage operation.” She transforms a wound into a weapon, like a Riot Grrrl writing the word *SLUT* on her body.

Making self-portraits became increasingly pleasurable for Molly. Picking up on her account of painting Iggy Pop—and with fifteen years of committed, empathic teaching to draw from—she describes the process of creating a painting you like out of something you dislike as:

A very common trajectory for a young painter. It is moving from opinion, to desire, to unintentional aestheticizing, to a confusion, or a lightening of the burden of opinion. Slowly we peel back that thick and energy-sucking blanket of judgment and begin to sense more. This is the opening up to abstraction. Just sensing more, getting distracted by that sensing. Following pleasure, and not needing things to connect to such a strict idea of communication or audience.

As Molly pursued this pleasure, the human figure receded, and her practice

became mostly abstract. It was as if the more the paintings contained the marks of her sensing body, the less the body felt a need to be represented.

As much as this move to abstraction was a kind of affirmation, abstract aesthetics can also be a refusal to be literal; a way to say “No” to interpretation, to commodification, to being reduced to one thing or another. As a woman painter, moving from self-portraiture to non-representational painting might have been a way for Molly to say, “Don’t look at me.” These contradictory, concurrent impulses toward pleasure and repudiation remind me of the aesthetics of Molly’s untitled 1999 zine: Its cover, “deliberately lacking in design,” does not invite, but it’s still asking to be read.⁶

The processes that go into making a zine also undergird Molly’s painting practice. In a sense, a zine is a collage in codex form. Like a collage, a zine is (was) made by gathering disparate sources together and putting them side-by-side in a new context. Moving things from the margins to the center, and back again. Collage is punk’s methodology. It appropriates from the past to subvert it. Punk bricolage says that originality is debased, discredited; all we can do is rearrange what is already there. It is a kind of nihilistic recycling. Collage is the tool of both radical politics, and of simple mockery.

Or it is the pleasure of tactility and the excitement of combing through a vital archive of images and texts. Molly

describes the technique of collage as “fondling materials,” a sensuous process that goes beyond mere punk appropriation.⁷ Informed by a decade of making zines, Molly made a large collage in graduate school about the word “cleave.” She was drawn to its dual meanings: to cut apart, and to cohere. It was “all the things I could think of that broke and that repaired: tape, scissors, bridges, money, love, etc.,” she says. But the collage wasn’t merely *about* cutting apart and bringing together, it was these actions.

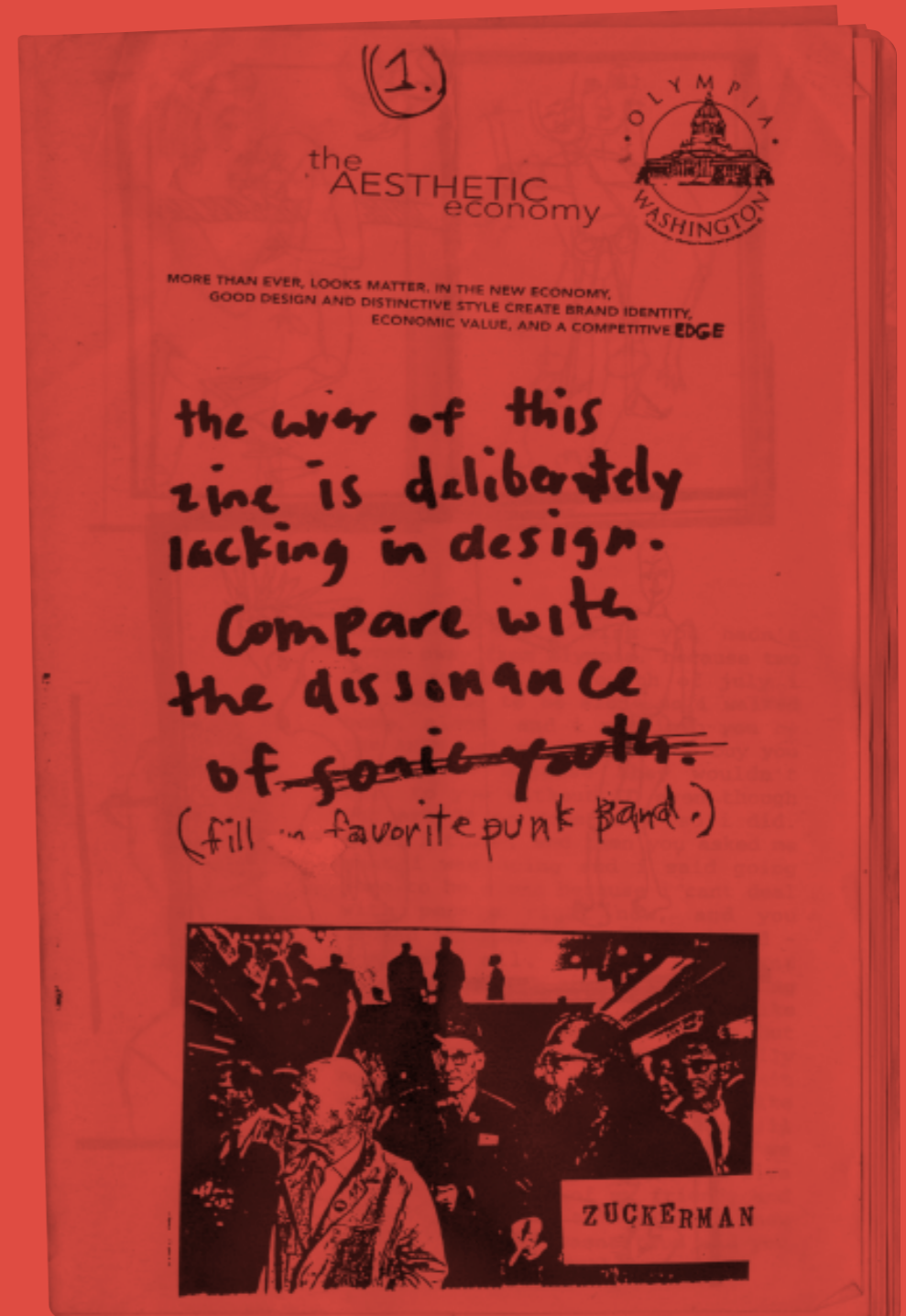
For many years, Molly has cut her paintings up and glued them back together in different configurations. Around 2012, she bought an industrial sewing machine and began suturing painting fragments alongside found fabrics that she bleaches, stains, and folds. “Destruction and repair are integrated into the work through cutting and sewing bits and pieces together in a process related to but not quilting,” she explains.⁸ Collage informs Molly’s process even in the paintings that are all of a piece, not cut or sewn. She brings together disparate materials, or gestures, into the container of a painting. The process is temporal as well as spatial: she describes it as “smuggling in the past and transforming its reception in the present.”⁹

Molly believes a successful painting should have qualities that fight against each other. In recent works, this dissonance manifests in loose, looping “doodles” that interrupt an opposite kind of mark—ones that are linear or thick or

stunted. It’s as if the gratuitous noodly guitar solo of ’70s dude culture—the humanist self-indulgent quest for self-discovery and expression—buts up against the three-chord nihilism of punk. Perhaps this is why Molly’s work has sometimes been described as “ugly.” This visceral reaction might simply be a discomfort with different categories of things—gestures, shapes, colors, textures; but also, times—trying to coexist.

How much of this uneasiness is a response to the paintings’ refusal to behave, or to cohere? Coherence is, in part, by definition, “the cooperative playing down of any individual differences or disagreements.” The will-to-collage, then, might be the exaggeration of difference, expressed through dissonant aesthetics and a refusal to commit to any one style. Does this apparent incoherence represent an ambivalence about belonging? Or does it do something subtler and less oppositional, like the dual meanings of cleave?

Back in Molly’s studio, she tells me her recent paintings have been “in dialogue with childhood.” This doesn’t mean she’s nostalgic for her own vexed experiences of growing up. Rather, she is exploring childlike ways of being—curious, unknowing, vulnerable. She says this has led to something new: for the first time, she has painted the same image or shape twice. Repeated a painting. I’m surprised that she has never done this before. How does one learn, and teach—both modes that are central to Molly’s life—without



Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, cover of zine *the cover of this zine is deliberately lacking in design. Compare with the dissonance of sonic youth. (fill in favorite punk band.)*, 2001.

repeating? She tells me nothing had been worthy of repetition until now. She has not “allowed” herself to be repetitive.

In her 2009 performance and book *Notes on Susan Sontag*, Molly states “to begin with a form is unethical. It curtails discovery, experience, transformation.”¹⁰ As a Gen X-er steeped in the vestigial lineages of Beat and 1960s countercultural alienation-narratives, I had taken Molly’s irreducible anti-style abstraction to be a concerted subversion of the endless cycle of recuperation of radical gestures by consumer capitalism. I saw her commitment to dissonance and refusal to commit to a style as an ethical stance extending from punk’s negativity.

But maybe it’s simpler than that. For Molly, abstraction is both an ethics, and an exultation. Her description of the

reversals in her work gets at the subtle possibilities of “negativity.”

*In abstraction, the figure and ground begin to flip. That’s what’s potent about it, getting your head around that, and getting to understand the power of negative space or negativity in general. These flips begin to make the world so much stranger. When people seem as if they know or understand, it is that turn back to curiosity and enjoying the fact that the world is stranger than what we could imagine.*¹¹

The figure recedes to the background, but ground is not the “negative” of the figure. It is, quite simply, the thing that grounds us, something Molly describes as “dirt, mulch, ash, context, space, school, home, institution, community, nation. Everything which is not figure.” Abstraction, she explains, is “a method for remembering one’s connection to the world; to belonging.”

All quotes are from emails and texts between the author and artist unless otherwise noted.

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| <p>1 Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, <i>Notes on Susan Sontag</i> (Waymade Books, 2009).</p> <p>2 Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, from Ladyfest 2000 program zine.</p> <p>3 Kathleen Hanna, flyer, reproduced in Lisa Darms, <i>The Riot Grrrl Collection</i> (New York: Feminist Press, 2013).</p> <p>4 Ibid.</p> | <p>5 Wayne Koestenbaum, <i>My 1980s and Other Essays</i> (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 2013), 202.</p> <p>6 Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, <i>The cover of this zine is deliberately lacking in design. Compare with the dissonance of Sonic Youth (fill in favorite punk band)</i> (self-published, 1999).</p> <p>7 Artist Talk: Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, March 15, 2019, Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA.</p> <p>8 Ibid.</p> | <p>9 Pam Lins, interview with Molly Zuckerman-Hartung and Amy Sillman in Stuart Comer, Anthony Elms, and Michelle Grabner, <i>Whitney Biennial 2014</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).</p> <p>10 Zuckerman-Hartung, <i>Notes on Susan Sontag</i>.</p> <p>11 “Artist-to-artist Interview Series: Molly Zuckerman-Hartung,” an interview by Harriet Poznansky and Roahn Da Costa, Nomadic Press, https://www.nomadicpress.org/interviews/mollyzuckermanhartung.</p> |
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Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, *Pinhole self portrait*, 1995.

Speak to My Ass

Annie Bielski

I met Molly Zuckerman-Hartung when I was nineteen and she was my painting instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. At the time I was embarrassed by most things I also cared deeply about: making art, articulating my ideas in a group setting, my non-existent mustache, or how I imagined others may perceive me. I was also curious about my own embarrassment and poked around in it. I tried on different modes of being, which felt in turns exciting, terrifying, true, false, foolish, too-much. “Speak to My Ass, My Head Is Sick: Stupidity” was a class Molly created that allowed room for play in the ever-oscillating fool/genius, self-conscious/confident arenas.

What I found challenging about Molly’s teaching style was also its gift: how much of herself she gave to teaching and how much she expected in return. Students phoning it in or presenting with a distant cool wouldn’t work. She questioned it and attempted to locate the real person underneath the persona. The way she connected ideas in class was a mirror of her painting technique: disparate materials, the seductive and repulsive entwined, the high and the low united. As our fool/genius leader, she sat with us in a circle, subverting her authority by asking us each

to teach part of the class one day, and to come to class wearing someone else’s clothes—and persona—another. Once, I wore an elderly woman’s muumuu and felt disappointed in my choice because it felt too familiar to an inner self and too slapped-together.

Why didn’t I take the opportunity to truly go Other for “Speak to My Ass” (the classroom for which was housed in what is essentially the ass of the Art Institute)? My disappointment spoke more to the level of participation she inspired, and less to my self-critical tendencies. I wanted to fully rise to each occasion. On the day I wore the muumuu, Molly wore a backwards baseball hat and what felt like a genuine bad mood. To Be Real.

Molly’s voice as a teacher challenges, questions (history, itself, you), and—when the time is right—fades away into a dried-up tube of something lying around, like a paint-stained genie. It moves and makes a drawing. Like Molly, I wanted to do and be lots of things and felt I could cram everything under the canopy of painting, or perhaps it’s a less conscious decision. One day, I just started cramming. I can take a test like a painter (start in the middle or the end and move around). I can get

dressed like a painter (same idea). I can read a book like a painter (even if it’s left unfinished, I may still quote from it and recommend it widely). Over the years I have written at least four novels (like a painter) to Molly in the form of email, both sent and in draft purgatory. It’s enough to know the receiving voice is there, real or imagined.

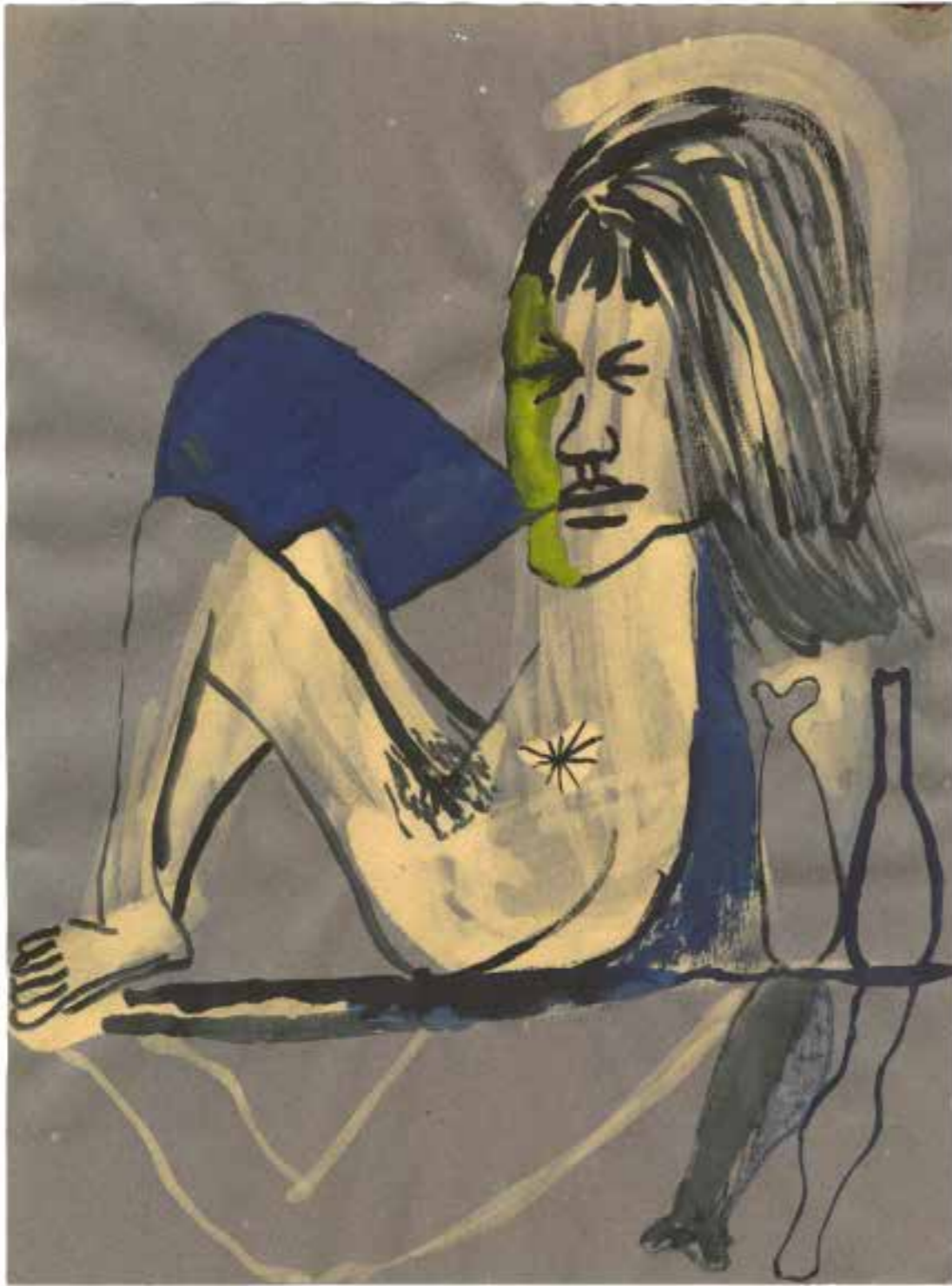
The winter after I graduated, I went to Molly’s birthday party, which was a salon-style reading in her apartment. I read a somewhat somber text, which only became clear to me as I was reading it aloud in the context of a party. It was a short character study about a man’s sleep habits and nighttime rituals, and how, in his mind, they somehow warded off death. There was nothing particularly funny about the passage, though that didn’t stop me from following it up with, “Wasn’t that funny?” to which someone responded flatly, “No.” I was so embarrassed that

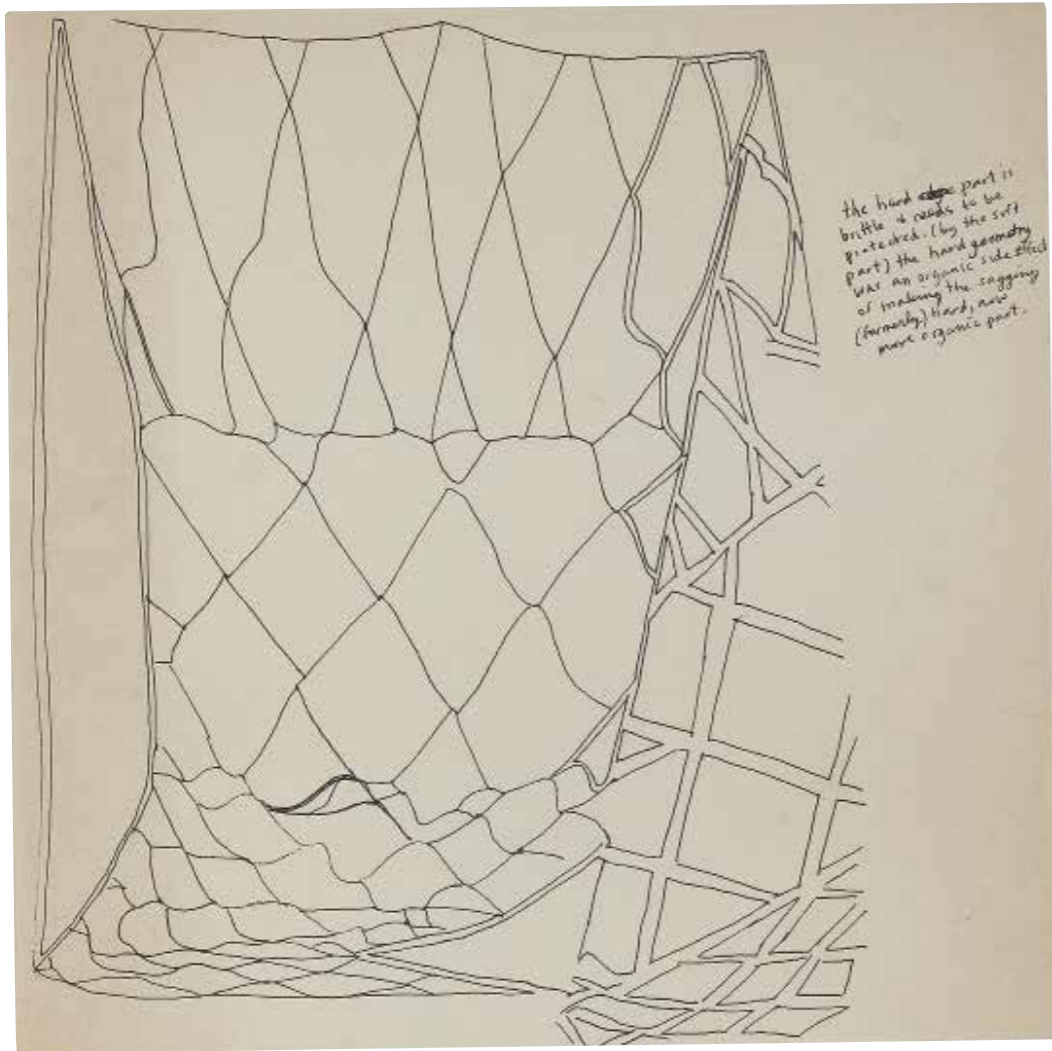
I played the event over and over in my head for some time. My follow-up question was my attempt to make light of my brief darkness, make it okay for the crowd. I had mostly forgotten about this moment but remembered it again recently when I came across a sculpture at one of Molly’s openings. The sculpture was a lightbox with the letters T-R-A-U-M-A cut out of wood and strung together. Illuminated, worthy of looking at, bright, seductive, not so bad, acceptable—funny and gorgeous, even! The sculpture felt like permission: consider any tragic, briefly embarrassing, unsavory, or life-shattering darkness, light it up, put it on display.

Knowing Molly as a former/forever student and friend, the sculpture felt particularly potent and real. There has always been permission to bring all of myself (or selves) to the party, the classroom, or the studio: good girl, bad mood, attitude, muumuu.

eaten from below
eating from below
solitude
feeling like a burden
neighbor with camel, maybe one, maybe two
it's therapy - I can do it
not succeeding at dreams
drawing as habit
doodling passion
meditative - ten hours at a time
losing, loss, people or things
it proves me wrong
frustrating but I love it
shows people
bugs, insect, a bug in a cup for three days
painting is myself - a reflection of me
graduation comes too fast
I feel colors
half painting half sculpture
what are other people thinking
people pleaser
funny painter tricks neat nifty
nails on chalkboard
nose
imagination platform
making something sound puzzle
bats scary in cartoons
battle therapy midway
surprising
hands, analytical but mind id quiet while painting
hand-sized praying mantis at eye level on stair case
not painting wrong
resentment -losing relationship - balance
losing abruptly, no time to prepare
not comfortable: connected to myself
losing someone
fear of conflict
thinking concrete answers
define myself by what others think
but painting is constantly changing
holes - self generating
grotesque not natural
instability of ego, keep things fresh













I34

Untitled, 2013



I35

Untitled, 2008



What paints the toenails red and hides in cherry trees, 2021





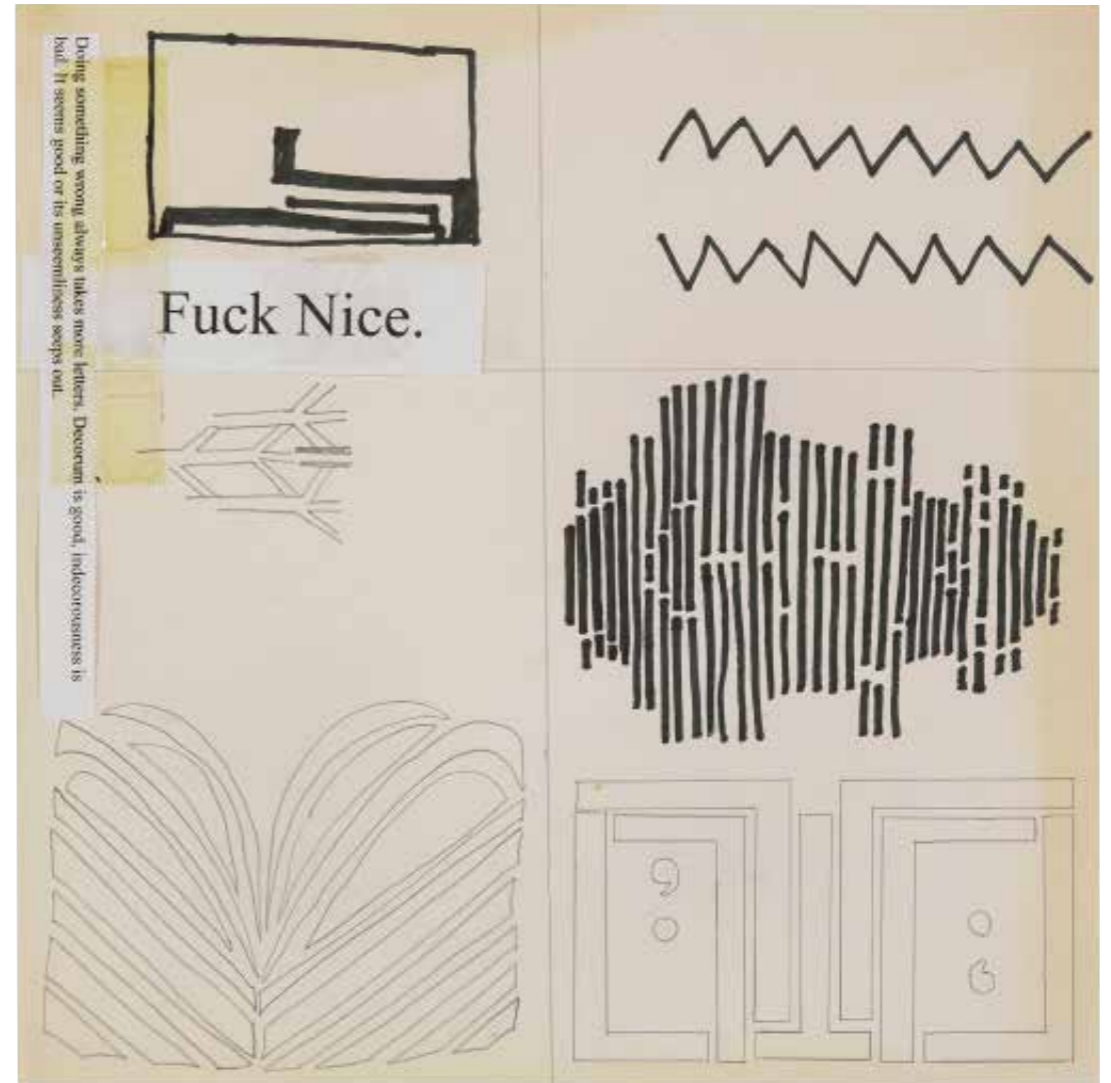
I40

Stays, 2017



I4I

Breathe, 2017





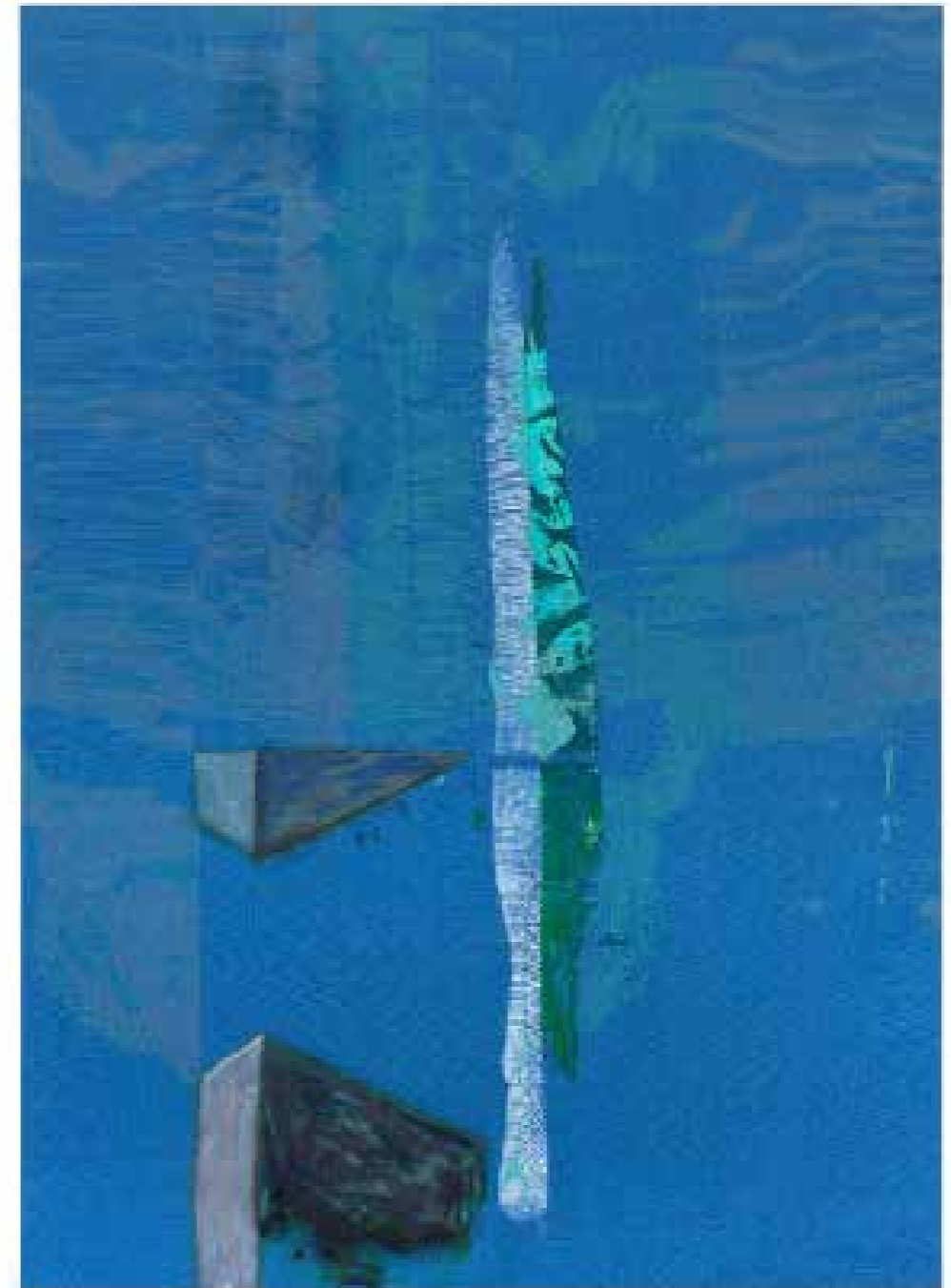
I44

Going into Space, 2009



I45

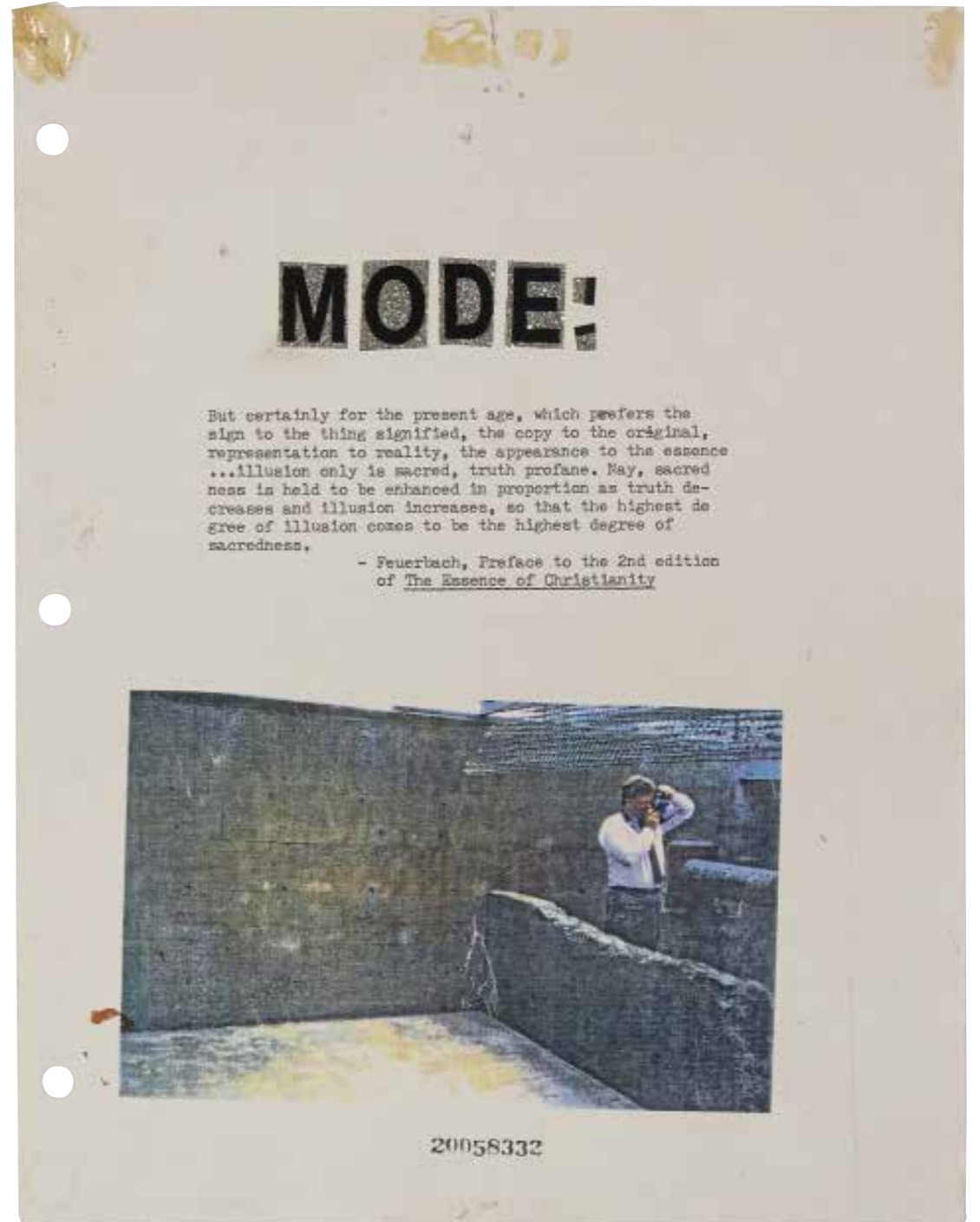
from *Scrying*, 2010





I48

(top and bottom) from *Scrying*, 2010



I49

MODE:, 2002









Interview

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung and Tyler Blackwell

Tyler Blackwell: Tell me about your childhood and upbringing. Did you grow up looking at art? Making it? When did you begin writing?

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: My childhood was fragmented and various, and in my teens and twenties I began writing scraps of text about my childhood—seeking language to form hooks for memories I couldn't access. We moved, and then moved again, to Olympia, where we lived with my aunt Marilyn and my cousins. Sometime around age six, my mom got married and she bought a little house, and she painted my room with the alcove bed a vivid piggy-bank shade of pink. Sometime in these years she went to San Francisco on a vacation and saw a Matisse exhibition. She brought a thin hardcover monograph home, and that book began to affect me. It is the only "high art" I remember from my childhood, and soon after, I had an idea about cutting paper. I would always ask for paper and scissors, and one night my mom gathered these materials for me,

and I sat at the kitchen table for hours cutting little shapes out of folded white paper. My mother saved a few from the piles and framed them and that is the first "art" I can remember making. Besides that, I remember crayons, and coloring in the second grade once. The colors weren't dense enough, and I pressed too hard, breaking the crayons. Then there was an art class in middle school. I only remember one assignment, which I bungled. I felt judged harshly by the teacher, so I didn't try that again, until one spring day in high school when I picked a cherry blossom branch and took it home and carefully drew it. Around that same time, I drew a girl wrapped in colored ribbons, which I drew very delicately, paying attention to the flatness and twist of the ribbons, and shading them with colored pencils. I didn't take art classes in high school, but I vaguely remember the art classroom was large, dirty, cavernous, and filled with intimidating kids, right next to "The Pit," where the smokers hung out, across the hall from the

graphic design classroom, which had an offset press, a darkroom, a few early computers.

The "art" I was into in middle school and high school was mostly two things: one, I was looking at fashion magazines—*Elle* and *Vogue*—and studying haute couture. I was into the weirdest, most elaborate things, and trying to make my own costumes, cutting one leg off each pair of tights to get two different colored legs, that kind of thing. The other form I came up with I called "questionnaires" which I began in high school, writing long lists, from ten to fifteen pages, of questions, xeroxing about forty or fifty copies, in little stapled packets and passing them out to the kids at school. I was extremely unpopular, especially in middle school. The questionnaires were a way to investigate the social world. I could ask all these questions, and when my peers returned them, which they mostly, surprisingly, did, I could read their answers and reassure myself about them. I figured, I had all these thoughts in my head and so they must have all these thoughts in their heads, but I needed to know what they were, so I didn't have to feel so shamed by their mockery and insults. I read recently in an Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick essay that this is called "Theory of Mind"—the extrapolation from one's

own experience of thoughts and feelings, or interiority—that others must also have interiors, but not the same thoughts and feelings.

Later, I was an inconsistent writer in college, never quite able to perform the academic essay correctly. I don't remember writing anything extensive in college except for one play, which was a conversation set in a 1920s Berlin cabaret between myself and Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre, Beckett, and others. I typed the whole thing on a typewriter. Eventually after college I started writing more "critical" pieces, a few zines, some spoken word that I performed, once my friend Seamus invited me to read at a Sleater-Kinney show he organized backstage at the Capitol Theater.

TB: You participated in Riot Grrrl in the 1990s. Elsewhere in this catalogue, the archivist Lisa Darms shares a great perspective on the aesthetic, material, and social histories of the moment, as well as their effects on your practice. Do you see your work as infused with or informed by this punk sensibility?

MZH: The sensibility is probably baked into my core. I know others, such as Lisa, see it more clearly than I do. There are, of course, certain things, a

“rawness” or vulnerability that is deeply rooted in punk, but at the same time I was reacting against the pop aesthetic that visual artists used in Olympia in the 1990s. But there is so much to punk—so many different periods and forms. Some have really stuck with me. Collage of course, which was picked up from Dada. I think something as fundamental as negativity came out of my experience of punk. Negativity is a big subject: it’s everything from critique to complaining, ugliness, offensiveness, failure, depression, No Future, smelling bad, argument, loudness, dirtiness, or just doing something wrong or in an unskilled way. I still wonder all the time about what negativity can mean or do. I think it can clear space and allow for transformation. Or it can be a place to get stuck. Absence, shadows, negative space, emptiness. These are maybe the more mystical end of the negative spectrum ...

TB: How has your relationship with or understanding of Riot Grrrl changed at all as it is increasingly historized or monumentalized (like I am doing in this very question)?

MZH: I don’t think my understanding has been affected too much by the historicization, but it has been changed by the passage of time itself. Back then, we knew

we were doing something meaningful, and we talked about revolution all the time. But the world felt small, local. Everything that mattered to us was in Olympia, or like six other towns throughout the world. Claude Levi-Strauss wrote something about this—about the necessity of feeling like you are doing something important within a limited, rather small group of people. I think that aspect of independent music scenes of the 1990s more generally, is what I am most nostalgic for, and the thing I didn’t understand would be lost. Now we live in a global economy/art world, and there is no sense of that privacy or intimacy, which allowed for confusion, illegibility, dissent, and somehow a rich sense of one’s impact on the world. Maybe this is always the case. There was a texture and a deep sense of community, of being known and connected, that I didn’t know would be lost. My partner, Fox Hysen, is giving a series of lectures at Maryland Institute College of Art this summer, and her first one is on groups. We have been talking about groups of artists, small groups of co-producers/audience, this way of thinking about making, which was that the makers were also the watchers. People who aren’t also making ... was it Greil Marcus or Dave Hickey who called them “looky-loos”?

TB: You identify primarily as a painter, but many of your objects exist beyond the wall or incorporate disparate materials. Why is it important to you to self-describe as a painter? What can be called a “painting”?

MZH: At first it was coincidence: I knew painters and copied them. I went to graduate school and learned about the ideas, the history of abstract painting, the internal conflicts I had struggled with seemed to play out across that history. What David Joselit calls the subject-object was something I sensed immediately—that the mark in painting is always a conjunction between the subjective “expression” and the objective “reference.” This is true in abstraction as much as representation. In French you have a sentence like, *Je me brosse les dents* (I brush my teeth), where the subject and object are right next to each other and refer to the same person: *je me*. I don’t know why, but that sentence has a certain thrill for me. I don’t find it insignificant that it’s about brushing.

I keep floating off from the question. My old answer was about discourse and power. Painting is dead, painting is Dad, painting is at the center of the art world. Painting is (a) drag. But maybe I don’t care about that as much anymore. Still, once you start dragging, it’s hard to stop. I

think a lot about Amy Sillman’s *Me & Ugly Mountain* (2003).

TB: Do the parameters and precedents of “painting” become a sort of bare framework for organizing your forays beyond traditional canvases?

MZH: Yes. Precedent is everything. (limits/parameters are what allow one to act in the face of everything.) When I first started teaching at Yale, I would just tell students to look at an artist from history. My assumption was, you look at this artist, and you see how you have inherited something from them, so you can now argue with it, do something else with it. I suppose that is the same as with your parents. If you can look honestly at the ways you are like them, maybe you can try to veer off from it as well. The clinamen? The swerve? It’s an idea that Harold Bloom’s took from Lucretius for the misunderstanding or “misprision” in *The Anxiety of Influence*. The capitalist culture of individualism makes this harder and harder to teach; everyone wants to be sui generis, self-made. Precedents make people nervous.

TB: How do you judge a painting versus a sculpture?

MZH: Oh, judgment. So hard! I guess at the most mature level, which is mostly, as a teacher,

not the level I get to function at very often. But at the most mature level I think a painting can barely exist. In some very important way, I think painting is preparing for death. It is about becoming almost nothing. Flatness, authority, power, a single self. It is all too much. But sculpture feels the opposite to me—it is about life, collaboration, embodiment, performance. A sculpture can wiggle and dance. Painting has to die.

TB: Speaking of wiggling sculpture—we decided to name the exhibition at the Blaffer *Comic Relief*, which playfully speaks to several different possible uses of the word “relief.” It is also the title of a 2016 painting of yours that has three arm-like appendages, protruding outward, dangling from an otherwise flat color field. How does comedy or humor apply to how you think through your works? Is it related to the awkwardness of the body?

MZH: Definitely the body! I suggested to a group of MFA students hanging around the couches at Yale a few years back, that they might think about comedy. One young woman responded especially against comedy, and I realized that she understood comedy to mean verbal humor, jokes, I guess, or like a comedian with a microphone? It was far from what I meant, but I think I began to research humor more

at that point. I think people use this word awkwardly, but I don’t feel it, I like slapstick or belly flop or shame. I read a biography of Lucille Ball when I was thirty-four, and learned that she played leading ladies until 1945, when she was thirty-four years old.

... I was doing a picture [The Dark Corner] with [director] Henry Hathaway. I guess it's okay to say this since he's dead, but he was not a nice man. Never in my life had I had trouble remembering lines, but one day I got stuck. I got a case of the nerves and I began to stutter. I got petrified, thinking what will happen to me if I stutter in front of everyone? I hadn't been sleeping well, I was lonely, and it was not easy, by anyone's standards. One day I guess Henry decided I would be his whipping boy.

... To demonstrate, she let her hands shake, and her face got scared. Then she set the scene—every actor's nightmare revisited. "I happened to be doing this romantic dramatic moment, when I was thrown completely off. This stutter thing started, and Henry said 'Are you drunk or something?'" Sick was the word. "I was taken home and didn't leave the house for three months, literally. I didn't speak for three months. Only an occasional stutter. (Excerpted from a description of the event in the Los Angeles Times)

Reading about Lucille Ball’s stutter, which was followed by her attending Radio City Music Hall performances, learning to fall, to get bruised and injured in countless ways, and make it funny, sort of opened a new chapter for me. I started falling and teaching falling to students, while I was teaching with my then girlfriend, artist Dana DeGiulio. I had already begun thinking about shame, so slapstick seemed an appropriate form to introduce into my paintings. I like the extreme ends of comedy: melodrama, camp, slapstick. The brutal or embarrassing. And as a woman entering middle age, I was excited about this idea of approaching comedy.

TB: This is a good time to raise the fact that you have been teaching in some form or another nearly nonstop for about fourteen years—a familiar role for many working artists. How do you feel this work as an educator engages your practice?

MZH: It, in the best and worst way, slows me down, and keeps me trapped in language, description, and pedagogy. I am not such a great technical teacher, as you might imagine, but I have been able to help students go deep. The problem is reentering my own depths. But it has affected my work at every level, from the attic to the basement.

TB: Your appetite for literature of all genres across time is seemingly boundless—theory and criticism, history, fiction, poetry, et al. Can you talk about how this consumption plays a role in your thinking? And your making?

MZH: Well, I need to be honest, I am a promiscuous reader. Very cross-contaminating, finishing nothing. I read like a painter—I remember reading that Marlene Dumas was the same way with half-finished books and diagonal attention span. I have always said it is the difference between a “field” attention and a linear attention, which can march in line with the words. So, I start by admitting failure. But it is true, I live in language, not in images. Words are how I hold the world. Whenever I give a lecture at an art school, and I have given many, there is always a male professor in the back of the hall at the end who asks something like, “Why do you talk so much, what about looking, what about making?” I both resent and understand this question. For me, the reading, the ideas, are a kind of cloak, under which I can give myself permission. Certain things I just don’t want to talk about. I have been reading a book by Ron Padgett called *Creative Reading: What It Is, How to Do It, and Why*. Padgett is one of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets who came up in the 1970s and ’80s, and most of whom are

still writing and producing, for me, some of the most exciting poetry. They feel a little like the Pictures Generation in terms of appropriation and criticality, maybe also the interest in being a collective—the necessity of collectivity for a radical experiment to take root. Anyway, this book is amazing, and is sort of written in a friendly tone, like it was aimed at high school English teachers, but is steeped in death-of-the-author approaches to reading as a form of writing. This is so important to me. Suggestions like folding a page of a book in half, and reading across the fold, or reading two books at once and allowing them to affect each other, or cutting an article from the *New York Times* into individual words, placing all the words in a bag and then removing them one by one to make a poem. This kind of breaking of the linear hold, but also reasserting the linear as a way of being in time.

TB: Linear attention makes me think about different kinds of time, or space. Making or introducing “space” is important within or between your works. Your paintings are often the results of considered folding and stitching, sometimes teetering, bulging, sagging, or dragging. In 2014, you described the surface of a painting as an ongoing “crisis” or “dilemma” for you.

How would you describe your relationship with flatness? Is it always your adversary?

MZH: From the moment I began working with abstraction, the problem of flatness was always present. I don’t know why I was completely uninterested in perspectival space. (Only Rene Daniels and Fox Hysen have made that space seductive for me.) But I was very engaged with the canonical theoretical discourse of Clement Greenberg. His definition of flatness as a defining characteristic of modern painting was crucial for me. Why? I think because flatness is taken for granted on screens, and in the heavy image culture we were already living in, and which has only compounded since. The de Kooning quote, “space is the beginning of content,” sticks with me. Desire for depth felt like the tension I needed to push against flatness. Like the curve in Jasper Johns’ *Painting with Two Balls*, I wanted the pressure to be felt. It makes no sense in today’s climate, but I was working for a practice that spoke directly to art criticism, like a discursive painting, but in a comedic register. More performative. I thought painting could be an ongoing argument.

TB: That certainly aligns with the experience of looking at some of your more involved works, which can often take the form

of very large abstract canvases and sprawling wall-based fabric pieces. But, interestingly, you have described your smaller paintings as the true site of active exploration and experimentation. How does your process differ when moving between these scaled starting points?

MZH: I wrote this in 2017 as part of the syllabus for “Space and Abstraction,” an advanced undergrad class I teach every year at Yale: I fell in love with abstract painting through reading books. No, I would go further and say that understanding the hidden arguments and passions, resistance and critique within abstraction has saved my life. “What you see is what you see,” is a Frank Stella quote repeated like a Zen koan amongst initiates, and it’s beautiful and hopeful but wildly untrue, and it’s untruth is the reason to keep digging. Somehow abstract paintings are all right there—available to the eye, in plain sight and yet eluding our understanding. The reasons for this—as T. J. Clark says about modernity that it is “our antiquity”—are complex historical developments—shifts in cultural structures, economic in substance, but myriad in their shifting surface. So, we will engage with modernity (the project of progress) and modernism, (the cultural responses/

reactions) and copy the forms, in hopes of encountering the content, or its ironic reversals, as best we can. This is not to suggest that form can be separated from content, because they cannot! but rather that the context around the forms change so dramatically, that their original content is quickly occulted, if it was ever transparent. Ah transparency, another value of modernism. So many hopeful experiments! So, we will be hopeful too, and build and destroy, in small scale, as thinking models, and perhaps at human scale, as phenomenological tests, to sense what we can of the intentions of the artists of the twentieth century, and even to reinvent their uses for the twenty-first. We will test our own attention (is it true that it has shortened throughout the twentieth century?) and get interested in our own methods of perception and sensation. We will read and think deeply about affect, allowing ourselves to feel a range of responses from boredom to heightened alertness.

TB: Wow, I want to take that class! Relatedly, I think many of us relate to contemporary largely scaled abstract paintings as intrinsically tied to the narratives of mid-twentieth-century painterly machismo or bravado or within a context of emotional or heroic expressionism. Your works can be quite gestural or

spirited, but they are also sometimes rather self-conscious at the same time. How do you situate your own interests in the histories of abstract painting?

MZH: Oh, this is such an important question, and I think it is never answered for me. I do see myself making attempts at heroic gestures, although most often, my athleticism falls short. I am not a jock. I believe in and preach and am thrilled by painting's embodiment, but I am a chubby bookish klutz. I have met many wildly graceful gestural painters over the years. I am not that. But sometimes I can approximate it, through fragmenting the picture plane, through staining and dripping paint, a sensation of wildness can muster a hum. More often, my attempts at heroism result in abjection, which is fine with me. The world is dying; that is material fact. Much painting right now seems to be addressing a tight fantasy of the image world. I live and work turned toward the precious and fragile interconnectivity of the material world. I want my paintings to reflect this.

TB: Each of your works appears to have its own individualized logic, which I find somewhat astonishing considering how prolific you have been. How would you describe how your paintings relate to each other? Or perhaps they don't?

MZH: I am astonished at the ease with which others repeat themselves. And envious. Maybe it means they are able to trust their own work. I am amused and embarrassed to say for me it is more like that film, *Down by Law* by Jim Jarmusch, with John Lurie, Tom Waits, and Roberto Begnini going around in circles in the swamps of Louisiana. This is the comedy I think—the circle can be a symbol of wholeness, or it can be an absurd path; a dog chasing its tail. There are repetitions in my work—it is full of repetition, but it is not deliberate, more like trauma comedy. Also, in the work from 2007 to 2012 or so, there is a lot of attachment between the works, like the string boy in D. W. Winnicott, or cutting of attachments, like the “belly” paintings. More recently I think the seam or the cut, and the fragmentation is so inherent, so built in, that the paintings are all a part of a larger broken whole. This brokenness also allows for something I think of as montage, so that pieces from many years ago can be incorporated into something made tomorrow. This is a kind of long-term time travel—the bringing together of disparate moments. I have begun thinking about the word “interruption” as applicable. There are gaps, and I think these gaps signify a relationship to the self, to continuity itself, which is interrupted. By students, by others,

by losing myself in others. I have always wanted to show that we are constituted by others, that this is what it means to have an unconscious. Could we say that the unconscious of my work is full of repetition?

TB: You often describe having infatuations or intense devotion toward different people—Alice Notley and Lauren Berlant are ones we have discussed in-depth. Your admiration for Notley manifested in the large-scale painting *Notley*, which was included in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. I have read she lives in Paris but makes regular visits to New York. Do you know if she ever saw the painting?

MZH: I have never heard of her seeing the painting, no. I wouldn't imagine that she would care though. I think of that gesture as a way of pointing to poetry, and to Notley's ideas about poetry and disobedience. More recently, with L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets influencing me, the connection to language is getting stronger. Probably this is affording greater distance and detachment. These poets—Rae Armantrout, Charles Bernstein, Clark Coolidge, Lyn Hejinian, and many others—are engaged with language as a shared, received thing. They were/are interested in how language is used in the world, in capitalism. I want the materials of the world to carry their

associations, to remain Other to me, to move into the work as language or quotation. I want Others in the work, so that it is not felt or seen as an ego project. I may have gone about this all wrong, as the first obsession for me was subjectivity itself, but we all travel our own paths ...

TB: Do you think this notion of fixation or fondness relates to how you go about making work? Does it relate to desire?

MZH: My tendency is to complicate things. But here it is simple. It is about love. Making things, for me, requires a sense of devotion, of belief, and love. I have very often started from hurt, from loss, from frustration. But for an object, drawing, painting, to lead me somewhere, it has to be imbued with love. I think my love of writers and the intimacy I feel as a reader is fundamental to making. Right now, I am reading *Queer Phenomenology* by Sara Ahmed, describing orientation. Of course, she means this both as a direction—the East, or as the Occident has called it, the Orient. And also in the context of sexual orientation. The question of facing. When I was in graduate school I made this connection for myself, between orientation and Orientalism, between desire and Otherness.

TB: In your practice, what does it mean to make a queer painting?

MZH: There was a time when it was urgent to talk about queerness in the work. I am not sure why anymore. I suppose it has something to do with an anti-naturalism that felt important back then. To decide, to turn away, to negate, to redact or oppose or entangle or depend or back away, to fail, to fall apart, all these verbs—and especially the negativity—feel political, and difficult inside a capitalist wind tunnel of boring success.

TB: In this sense, then, do you feel as if you are making inherently queer paintings and objects?

MZH: A quick looking up of the word: odd, strange, unusual, funny, peculiar, bizarre, damage, impair, harm, be detrimental to ... this last word “detrimental” is great, reminds me of this song by The Need, a two-person queercore band in Olympia in the 1990s [formed by] Rachel Carns and Radio Sloan. Rachel shaved her eyebrows and drew them back in with thick Sharpie. She played the drums standing up and is pretty much the hottest thing you’ve ever seen, talking into a headphone mic, and Radio played the guitar. They were together, and I still remember when Rachel moved back to Oly and I saw her and Radio together for the first time, walking down the street downtown. They looked like

they were wearing spacesuits, like rock stars walking on the moon. It’s hard to describe. The 1990s in Olympia were weirdly dazzling. Anyway, they had this song, I think it was called “Crown,” where the line was, “you are the king, I am feeling so detrimental, under the crown, my hand felt everything.” Which is of course, in part, a reference to finger fucking ... but this other thing, this feeling detrimental, which is spoken in an almost vocoder barking robotic way, with the syllables broken apart: de-tri-men-tal ... I’m going off. The queerness is maybe about drawing attention to attachment. To what or how we desire or whom or when, and how we signal others to desire us. This is a queer process for queers, and although there have been homosexual artists throughout history, I do think that capitalism in the twenty-first century hails or interpolates us all so intensely, maybe queer was a way to slip the noose, and I am seeking a different one ...

TB: Let’s shift gears a little bit. You often describe your work in terms of an ongoing dialectic between photography and painting. Photography allows for the “ideal” (albeit mechanized) image of the world and then a painting dismantles or reorganizes the perfection of that image. A painting becomes

the “shimmering” image of the world, to use your word. Can you talk about your relationship between these two processes?

MZH: The only art classes I had taken before grad school were in photography, from a professor named Hugh Lentz at Evergreen, back in the mid ’90s. I took introduction to black-and-white photography, and he showed us all the classics—Ansel Adams, Cindy Sherman, Francesca Woodman—and taught us to use the darkroom. I made a self-portrait in which I got naked and covered myself in a middle-value oatmeal paint-paste and posed like a glamour portrait from the 1940s. Sort of blurry, slightly knock-kneed, looking up and off into the distance. Then I built a pinhole camera and a processing darkroom in the garage attic of the House of Doom—a punk house I lived in at the time. I made a lot of pinhole photos and contact printed them there. I remember building three large (thirty-inches square, two-inch-deep) plywood frames, into which I poured concrete and “embedded” my little pinhole photos. Both of these projects seemed to be all about materials—roughness, heavy texture/tactility. I think I started realizing I hated photography, television. Image culture as a whole had been incredibly destructive to my sense of self. I think there

was a surface issue, of feeling ugly in the face of so many images of emaciated “beauty.” But on a deeper level, the structure of images, reflecting the false “wholeness” Lacan discusses in his description of the mirror stage (I have made so many drawings of scissors and reducing a piece of paper or cloth to little pieces) is a sort of compulsive pleasure of mine. Now I am thinking about my use of silver in paintings all the way back to grad school, and wondering if silver, as enamel and spray paint, was also a way to make something feel a bit more like black-and-white photography. Also, silver doesn’t photograph well—it often appears white. This is such a large question. It is a place of such pain, I think. I realize, through dwelling on this question, that I have turned away from thinking about photography as it has burrowed deeper into all our lives. I used to sit for hours with books of photos—I loved Nan Goldin, and David Wojnarowicz—and I had these history books, one of the Berlin Wall coming down, that I would just pore over, literally just gazing at the photos.

TB: In the vein of the photographic, so many of your works have images or patterns or logics that reference previous works or represent your personal inquiries or ideas. Some paintings literally contain printed images of other

paintings. What does it mean to you to rework your own works or repeat yourself or iterate your own visual vocabulary?

MZH: Rereading as a practice was an idea I picked up early in my autodidactic theory-tracing. I never know if I am misunderstanding, but I stopped worrying about that. Rereading as I understand it, is about first seeing, even the act of making, as an act of reading. So, the sort of internal self-referencing is, for me, a way of making my work legible, linguistic, and therefore rereadable.

I also think about sequence, and undoing sequence. In giving an artist talk—something I have done as often as five times a year for over ten years, there is the expectation that the artist will narrate their career—give the work a story. I really enjoy this process of narrating, but also find it produces a skepticism

about the story I am telling. There is an important convention in art-making that you will become self-reflexive as an artist. By telling the story, you produce a kind of history, which argues, or becomes dialectical with its past. I think the images embedded in the works were a way of both doing and undoing this.

TB: I feel like your works could sometimes be described as what it might look or feel like to be in your body or be in your head. Is this an accurate read?

MZH: I really don't know. I am terrible at being in my body. Always starting and failing to run or do yoga. I love to swim. We live near Tobey Pond which keeps me in my body all summer. Fluidity is some painters' friend. And inside my head is either blissfully calm—in the woods, on a walk—or a jumble, or working, and therefore not thinking.



Molly Zuckerman-Hartung as Lucille Ball/Marie Antoinette in *Disaster Kitchen* performance at Dock 6 Collective, Chicago, 2010. Photo by Cole Don Kelley.

STILL
FOLDED
UP

*nothing it lies in the dust you
can pick it up like this the last
word - nothing*

LYING IS DONE WITH WORDS, AND ALSO
WITH SILENCE.

THUS THE LIAR LEARNS MORE THAN
SHE TELLS. AND SHE MAY ALSO TELL
HERSELF A LIE: THAT SHE IS CONCERN-
ED WITH THE OTHER'S FEELINGS, NOT
WITH HER OWN.

BUT THE LIAR IS CONCERNED WITH
HER OWN FEELINGS.









178

channel change, 2014



179

self portrait (exploring the drives), 2002



(top) *Untitled (American Craft)*, 2004
(bottom) *Street studies*, 2005



The World of Matisse, 2010





Damaged Nightwood (Have I not shut my eyes with the added shutter of the night and put my hand out?), 2009–10



North (with Natalia Ginzburg), 2009–11



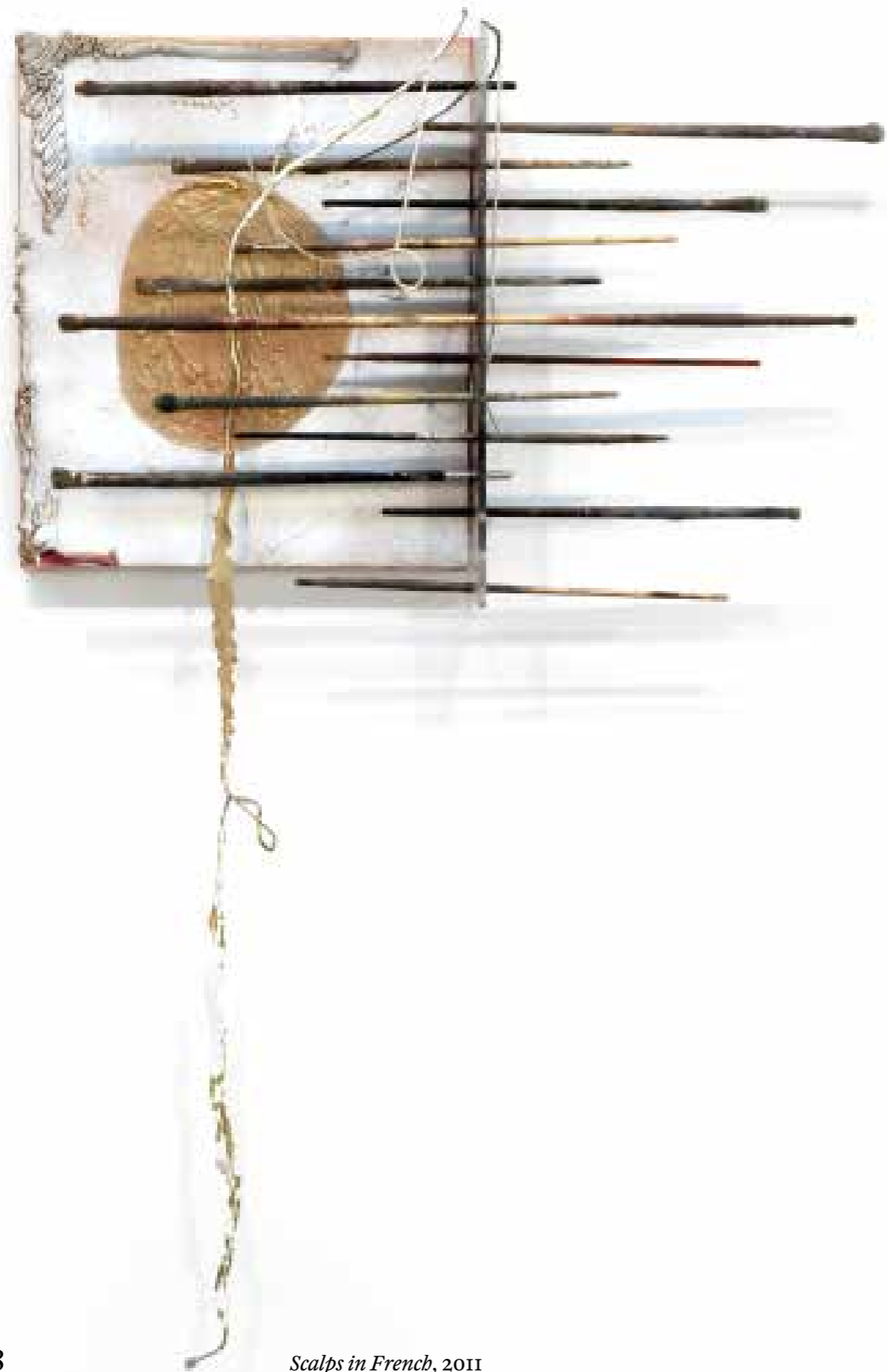
186

For Beth Ditto, 2010



187

The Impossible, 2012







192

The Stepfather, 2006



193

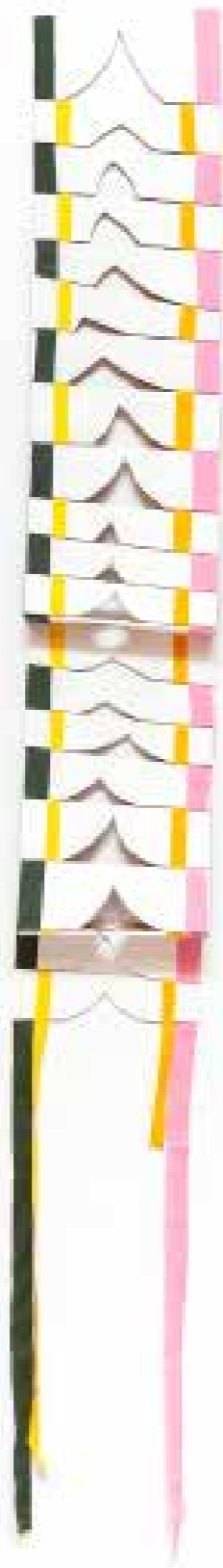
Parapluie, 2010-12













Exhibition Checklist

All works appear courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted. Works without page numbers are not illustrated.

- 121 *Pinhole self portrait*, 1995
Silver gelatin print
5 × 4 in. (12.7 × 10.2 cm)
- Private*, 1996
Pinhole photograph Xeroxed with collage
8 5/8 × 11 1/4 in. (21.9 × 28.6 cm)
- 149 *MODE:*, 2002
Collage and typewritten on paper
8 1/2 × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
- 179 *self portrait (exploring the drives)*, 2002
Oil paint on canvas paper
29 1/4 × 24 in. (74.3 × 61 cm)
- Untitled*, 2002
Watercolor on paper
7 1/2 × 10 in. (19.1 × 25.4 cm)
- 174– *Eve Babitz and Marcel*
- 175 *Duchamp in the Fold*, 2004
Ink on paper
30 1/4 × 22 3/8 in. (76.8 × 56.8 cm)
- from Snake series (esses)*, 2004
Watercolor on paper
15 × 11 1/2 in. (38.1 × 27.9 cm)
- Jimmy Paulette, Ethyl Eichelberger, and me (after Nan Goldin photo)*, 2004
Watercolor on paper
24 × 48 in. (61 × 121.9 cm)
Courtesy the artist
- Sontag Study*, 2004
Watercolor on paper
15 × 11 in. (38.1 × 27.9 cm)
- The Life of a Star*, 2004
Cuts on page from astronomy textbook
7 3/8 × 10 1/8 in. (18.7 × 25.7 cm)
- 127 *Untitled*, 2004
Candy wrappers, page from book, tape
7 3/4 × 9 3/4 in. (19.9 × 24.8 cm)
- Untitled*, 2004
Marker and collage on paper
10 × 12 in. (19.1 × 30.5 cm)
- Untitled*, 2004
Oil paint on palette paper woven with masking tape on paper
10 × 10 in. (19.1 × 19.1 cm)
- 180 *Untitled (American Craft)*, 2004
Collage, Wite-Out, and ink on paper
14 × 17 in. (35.6 × 43.2 cm)
- 28 *Hydra sketch*, 2005
Ink on paper
9 1/2 × 8 1/4 in. (24.1 × 21 cm)
- 180 *Street studies*, 2005
Photographs of Chicago streets
12 × 20 in. (30.5 × 50.8 cm)
- 80 *Untitled*, 2005
Oil on paper
5 × 8 in. (12.7 × 20.3 cm)
- band study*, 2006
Color Xerox collage of book spines
25 1/2 × 9 in. (64.8 cm × 22.9)
- 192 *The Steppfather*, 2006
Watercolor on paper
23 1/8 × 35 in. (58.7 × 88.9 cm)
- Untitled*, 2006
Spray paint on canvas
10 × 8 in. (25.4 × 20.3 cm)
- Obne Titel*, 2007
Oil, string, acrylic on raw canvas
18 × 24 in. (45.7 × 61 cm)
Courtesy the artist
- 32 *Flesh-Lack Transport Infrastructure Parts 1 and 5*, 2007–11
Oil paint, enamel, spray paint, pages from books, Xeroxes, and colored gels on canvas
60 × 50 in. (152.4 × 127 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

- 52– *Puberty*, 2007–12
- 53 Oil, spray paint, screws, furniture tacks, string on canvas, and canvas board
30 × 24 in. (76.2 × 61 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 177 *Relational Energy*, 2008
Watercolor, collage, and string on paper
9 × 14 ¼ in. (22.9 × 36.2 cm)
- 135 *Untitled*, 2008
Color charts and masking tape
11 ½ × 9 ⅞ in. (29.2 × 25.1 cm)
- Untitled—Rowley Kennerk*, 2008
Oil on canvas
18 × 16 in. (45.7 × 40.64)
- Burn Out*, 2008–10
Spray paint, acrylic, oil, hinges on canvas
15 × 14 in. (38.1 × 35.6 cm)
- 16 *LegMan*, 2008–10
Oil and spray paint on canvas
15 × 12 in. (38.1 × 30.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- Aesthetic Diagram*, 2009
Collage and ink on paper
17 × 14 in. (43.2 × 35.6 cm)
- 143 *Exhibition flyer for Fuck Nice, at Julius Caesar, Chicago*, 2009
Sharpie and tape on paper
9 ¾ × 9 ¾ in. (24.8 cm × 24.8 cm)
- 80 *Fingering the Fabrics*, 2009
Oil paint and collage on paper
17 ⅞ in. × 24 in. (45.4 × 61 cm)
- 128 *Fulton Study*, 2009
Ink on paper
9 ¾ × 9 ¾ (24.8 × 24.8 cm)
- 144 *Going into Space*, 2009
Oil, spray paint, collage, and masking tape on linen
26 × 18 in. (66 × 45.7 cm)
Private collection, New York
- 79 *Schneeman with Slacks*, 2009
Paper doll clothing and color Xerox of projection of labia in Carolee Schneeman performance collaged with Hélio Oiticica sculpture and machine sewn
8 ⅞ × 13 in. (22.5 × 33 cm)
- 184 *Damaged Nightwood (Have I not shut my eyes with the added shutter of the night and put my hand out?)*, 2009–10
Oil and spray paint on linen
17 × 14 in. (43.2 × 35.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 35 *Extending*, 2009–11
Oil, shells, tile grout, latex and collage on canvas
14 × 11 in. (35.6 × 27.9 cm)
Private collection, Chicago
- 41 *The Mythical Man-Moth's Tar Pit*, 2009–11
Oil, latex, spray paint, compact disc, slides, foil, tacks on hacked canvas
14 × 10 in. (35.6 × 25.4 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 185 *North (with Natalia Ginzburg)*, 2009–11
Oil and collage on linen
14 × 10 in. (35.6 × 25.4 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 130 *Sbit and Space*, 2009–11
Enamel, oil, pigment, and denim on canvas
60 × 48 in. (152.4 × 121.9 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 183 *Drunken Bridesmaid Chess*, 2009–13
Enamel on drop cloth, upholstery tacks, paintbrush, postcards, and wooden tree element
36 × 36 × 12 in. (91.4 × 91.4 × 30.5 cm), installation dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 37 *To the Detriment of the User (Finally)*, 2009–13
Eyelet doily, L brackets, graphite, oil paint, and brushes on canvas
14 ¼ × 16 ½ × 1 in. (36.2 × 41.9 × 2.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 60 *Lurch*, 2009–14
Acrylic, oil, enamel, spray paint on sewn T-shirts, coat liner, wool, canvas, and drop cloth
112 × 69 in. (284.5 × 175.3 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- Magic Wands/Extensions of Man*, 2009–19
Brushes, fabric, aluminum foil, electrical tape
12 × 2 × 1 in. (30.5 × 5.1 × 2.5 cm) each
- 82 *Cock o'clock (drawings of "Male Time" from the personals ads in Men to Meat magazine)*, 2010
Ink on cardstock with stain and glued on thumbtack heads
8 ½ × 10 ⅞ in. (21.6 × 27.6 cm)
- 39 *Drift*, 2010
Latex house paint, washi ningyo (silk doll), and photograph on canvas, with *The Birth of the Universe* book
18 × 14 in. (45.7 × 35.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- Electrical Face*, 2010
Enamel, wire, and acrylic paint on canvas fastened to panel with upholstery tacks
18 × 13 × 2 in. (45.7 × 33 × 5.1 cm)
- 148 *from Scrying*, 2010
Photo collage with spray paint from *Scrying* project—approximately 270 printed photographs of the artist's studio arranged into collages
6 ½ × 8 in. (16.5 × 20.3 cm)
- 148 *from Scrying*, 2010
Photo collage with spray paint from *Scrying* project—approximately 270 printed photographs of artist's studio arranged into collages
17 ¼ × 10 ½ in. (43.8 × 26.7 cm)
- 145 *from Scrying*, 2010
Photo collage with spray paint from *Scrying* project—approximately 270 printed photographs of artist's studio arranged into collages
14 ¼ × 21 in. (36.2 × 53.3 cm)
- 34 <http://www.hotelhome.com.au/HotelHomeWWW/bedspread/DesignSummary.php?bedspreadid=5>, 2010
Acrylic, oil, spray paint, enamel, and gravel on cut canvas
24 × 20 in. (61 × 50.8 cm)
Private collection, Chicago
- 57 *Untitled with Lapels*, 2010
Watercolor on paper
13 × 19 in. (33 × 48.3 cm)
- 46 *Reading (Quotation)*, 2010–12
Oil and spray paint on canvas
60 × 48 in. (152.4 × 121.9 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 47 *Reading (Citation)*, 2010–12
Oil and spray paint on canvas
68 × 58 in. (172.7 × 147.3 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- A Pedagogy*, 2011
Latex paint, book, linen on canvas
15 × 20 in. (38.1 × 50.8 cm)
- 48– *Bird & Bird (Broad advisory, transactional and contentious capability)*, 2011
- 49 Oil, spray paint, and painted leather connecting two paintings
Left: 15 × 13 in. (38.1 × 33 cm);
Right: 15 × 12 in. (38.1 × 30.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 33 *Readymade Mood*, 2011
Graphite, hardware, T-shirt, and pinwheel on canvas
28 × 20 in. (71.1 × 50.8 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

- Necklace of Smiles, 2011
Chain, string, paperback of *King Lear*,
papier mâché, acrylic paint, cardboard, wire
48 × 20 × 5 in. (121.9 × 50.8 × 12.7 cm)
- 76 *I Have Nearly Blinded Myself*
Writing This, 2012
Print and typewriter
on paper in plastic sleeve
8 ½ × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
- 104 *Methodology: Dissect Unity, Restructure*
Part to Whole Relations, Redistribute Weight,
Add Layers, Bring the Back to the Front, 2012
Dye, acrylic, enamel, paper, ink,
and mixed media on canvas
77 × 56 in. (195.6 × 142.2 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 151 *Microphone to history*, 2012
Oil, acrylic, mesh, string, nickel coin,
mosaic tile fragments, tile grout, paper
collage, and staples on cut and punctured
linen, adhered to cut and punctured
stretched silkscreen fabric and frame
23 × 14 ½ in. (58.4 × 36.8 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 176 *Neo-Liberal Helmet*, 2012
Oil on panel with cut and shaped
color acrylic, metallic tape, metal
tacks, and paper collage
14 × 11 × 5 in. (35.6 × 28 × 12.7 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 94–
95 *The Failure of Contingency*, 2012
Mixed media
30 × 96 × 72 in. (76.2 × 243.8 × 182.9 cm)
Collection Walker Art Center,
Minneapolis, Clinton and Della Walker
Acquisition Fund, 2013
- 187 *The Impossible*, 2012
Oil, glitter, screws, ribbons,
globe scrap, and wire on cheesecloth
24 × 12 in. (61 × 30.5 cm)
Collection Walker Art Center,
Minneapolis, Clinton and Della Walker
Acquisition Fund, 2013
- EP *The 95 Theses on Painting*, 2012
Vinyl text on wall
Dimensions variable
- Untitled*, 2012
Acrylic, oil, and spray paint
on upholstery tack canvas
18 × 14 in. (45.7 × 35.6 cm), double-sided
- 173 *aii*, 2013
Acrylic and spray paint on
sewn found fabric with sewn flag
60 × 42 in. (152.4 × 106.7 cm)
Private collection, New York
- 147 *Calif.*, 2013
Oil, bleach, and latex on stained,
folded, and sewn linen
84 × 60 in. (213.4 × 152.4 cm)
Private collection, New York
- 42 *Ceramic Speakers*, 2013
Assemblage
16 ¾ × 14 ½ × 3 ¾ in. (42.6 × 36.8 × 9.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- Languish Language*, 2013
Ink on paper
11 ⅞ × 9 in. (30.2 × 22.9 cm)
- 109 *Movement from Upstage to*
Downstage (Harold), 2013
Typewriter on paper
8 ½ × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
- 50–
51 *Notley*, 2013
Latex housepaint, enamel, and
spray paint on drop cloth
96 × 132 in. (243.8 × 335.3 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 58 *oe*, 2013
Enamel and bleach on folded
and sewn linen
72 × 58 in. (182.9 × 147.3 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

- 172 *Secrets and Lies*, 2013
Ink on paper
8 ½ × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
- Team Catcher*, 2013
Latex paint, string, nails, and dye on fabric
16 × 16 in. (40.6 × 40.6 cm)
- 134 *Untitled*, 2013
Collage, glitter, ink, and bleach on
handmade paper
11 ¼ × 9 ⅞ in. (28.6 × 23.2 cm)
- And Maybe You Know Better*, 2014
Typewriter on paper with watercolor
8 ½ × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
- Cash Box Purple — Tennessee*, 2014
Wooden cashier's box, latex
paint, dyed fabric, metal urn
17 × 13 × 3 in. (43.2 × 33 × 7.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist
- 127 *Eclipse sketches*, 2014
Oil on paper
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)
- 83 *"Human-ism,"* 2014
Ink on envelope
9 ½ × 4 ⅛ in. (24.1 × 10.5 cm)
- Sequins/Sequence*, 2014
Watercolor on paper
12 × 9 in. (30.5 × 22.9 cm)
- Untitled—Oxbow*, 2014
Bleach, dye, oil on linen, dyed
plywood panel hinged to stretchers
25 × 14 in. (63.5 × 35.6 cm)
- 127 *Ampersand (and)*, 2015
Bleach and oil paint on handmade paper
9 × 12 in. (22.9 × 30.5 cm)
- 124 *Eaten From Below (a list of reasons*
why students at University of Tennessee
make art, noted on the first day of my time
as a visiting artist there), 2015
Typewriter on paper
9 × 12 in. (22.9 × 30.5 cm)
- 133 *Florence (Winfrey) Mills-Baby*
Esther-Helen Kane (On the etymology
of female impersonators), 2015
Fuzzy blanket, dye, oil,
and latex and sewn canvas
96 × 96 in. (238.8 × 238.8 cm)
- 191 *Fruited Void*, 2015
Oil and acrylic on sewn cotton,
linen, and silk
55 ¼ × 65 ¼ in. (140.3 × 165.7 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 101 *Perfect Bound*, 2015
Bleach and dye on sewn linen
62 ¼ × 47 ¾ in. (158.1 × 121.3 cm)
- 126 *Untitled*, 2015
Bleach and ink on construction paper
12 × 9 in. (30.5 × 22.9 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- Untitled*, 2015
Bleach and gouache on handmade paper
12 × 9 ¼ in. (30.5 × 23.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 29 *Comic Relief*, 2016
Gloved appendages, acrylic on canvas
80 × 65 × 4 in. (203.2 × 165.1 × 10.2 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 45 *Dirty Window #2*, 2016
Oil, latex, enamel, and dye on sewn muslin
36 × 24 in. (91.4 × 61 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 44 *Dirty Window #3*, 2016
Latex, bleach, and dye on sewn muslin
36 × 24 in. (91.4 × 61 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

- 78 *History Painting for the New Queer Subject*, 2016
Dye, acrylic, enamel, paper, ink, rope, wood, and mixed media on canvas
80 × 65 in. (203.2 × 165.1 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 189 *Chris Rock Oscars*, 2016
Latex, bleach, enamel, collage, and dye on sewn cotton and linen
77 × 62 in. (195.6 × 157.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- Bathers and Mourners*, 2017
Collage and paint on cardboard
11 ¾ × 10 ¼ in. (29.9 × 26 cm)
- 198 *Big Top*, 2017
Canvas, dye, acrylic and spray paint, wire, plaster
26 × 24 in. (66 × 61 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 141 *Breathe*, 2017
Paper pulp, enamel paint, oil paint, wood
11 ¾ × 6 ¼ × 3 ¼ in. (29.8 × 15.9 × 8.3 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 105 *Chaos and Cosmos*, 2017
Polyester, spandex, velvet, canvas, voile, enamel, oil paint; sewn
60 × 69 in. (152.4 × 175.3 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- Demo Painting — Cal State Bakersfield*, 2017
Sewn fabric and acrylic stretched on wood
9 × 12 in. (22.9 × 30.5 cm)
- 98– *Dick Box*, 2017
99 Wooden wine rack, plaster wrap, latex paint, oil paint, wood
31 ½ × 49 × 14 in. (80 × 124.5 × 35.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 199 *Exercise IV*, 2017
Scrap wood, gel transparency, string
32 × 7 ¾ × 1 in. (81.3 × 19.7 × 2.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- Exercise V*, 2017
Scrap wood, gesso, canvas, polyester
31 × 13 × 13 in. (78.7 × 33 × 33 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- Exercise VI*, 2017
Scrap wood, oil paint, polyester
15 ½ × 19 × 16 in. (39.4 × 48.3 × 40.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- Exercise VIII*, 2017
Cardboard, Masonite, oil paint, enamel
41 ¼ × 18 × 18 in. (104.8 × 45.7 × 45.7 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 195 *Gesture*, 2017
Scrap wood, oil paint, string, hardware
48 × 60 × 3 in. (121.9 × 152.4 × 7.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 202 *Jennifer's Ladder*, 2017
Masonite, gesso, and cotton
67 × 8 × 2 ½ in. (170.2 × 20.3 × 6.4 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 140 *Stays*, 2017
Cardboard, canvas, paper pulp, oil paint, spray paint, enamel
12 ¼ × 9 × 1 ¾ in. (31.1 × 22.9 × 4.4 cm)
Collection of Lester Marks/
LCM Partners, Houston
- Sundial*, 2017
Enamel, acrylic, wood, bolt
20 × 7 in. (50.8 × 17.8 cm),
dimensions variable
- 153 *Synchronic and Diachronic Time in the Same Object*, 2017
Artist's clothing, lunar calendar, bleach, enamel, safety pins
48 ½ × 21 × 2 ½ in. (123.2 × 53.3 × 6.4 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 90– *Tapestry I*, 2017
91 Linen with bleach and dye
57 × 293 in. (144.8 × 744.2 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 203 *Toward Painful Individuation, Toward Uncontrollable Relationality*, 2017
Pine, boards, scrap wood, eye hooks, string, screws, copper wire
54 × 72 × 9.25 in. (137.2 × 182.9 × 23.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 204 *TRAUMA*, 2017
Wood, string, light box
4 × 38 × 17 in. (10.2 × 96.5 × 43.2 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- Untitled*, 2017
Acrylic, paper, crayon, latex paint, wood, brush on canvas
20 × 16 in. (50.8 × 40.6 cm), double-sided
- Architecture and Dance*, 2018
Watercolor and collage on blueprints
13 ½ in. × 24 (34.3 × 61 cm)
- Blanket #2*, 2018
Sewn fabric, acrylic paint
59 × 30 in. (149.9 × 76.2 cm)
- Blanket #3*, 2018
Sewn fabric, fabric dye, oil paint, doll, dollar bill
62 × 35 in. (157.5 × 88.9 cm)
- Death (1 of 7)*, 2018
Silkscreen on Arches watercolor paper
28 ½ × 21 ½ in. (72.4 × 54.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- 87 *Death (2 of 7)*, 2018
Silkscreen on Arches watercolor paper
27 × 18 1/5 in. (68.6 × 46.2 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- Death (4 of 7)*, 2018
Silkscreen on Arches watercolor paper
27 ¾ × 22 ¼ in. (70.5 × 56.5 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
- Demo Painting — Yale School of Art, Intermediate Painting*, 2018
Paper, fabric, ink, and rabbit skin glue on canvas
13 × 9 in. (33 × 22.9 cm)
- 127 *Untitled*, 2018
Acrylic on handmade paper
12 ¾ × 18 ¼ in. (32.4 × 46.4 cm)
- Pointers*, 2020
Watercolor on newsprint
16 × 24 in. (40.6 × 61 cm)
- Stage (Rattle My Buttons)*, 2021
Linen, cotton, string, sharpie, glue on plywood
18 × 19 ½ × 5 in. (45.7 × 49.5 × 12.7 cm)
Courtesy the artist and
Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago

Additional Plates

- 55 *Equilibrium is a precursor to death*, 2005-II
Oil, enamel, silver tape, velvet on canvas
24 × 24 in. (61 × 61 cm)
- 96 *That one thing follows another accounts for nothing*, 2006-IO
Latex, watch, and collage on canvas
24 × 18 in. (61 × 45.7 cm)
- 81 *Necessary Convulsions*, 2007-II
Oil, enamel, spray paint, plexiglass on cut canvas
36 × 32 in. (91.4 × 81.3 cm)
- 156 *Disaster Kitchen*, 2008-20II
Oil, collage, plastic garbage bag, camouflage pants
17 × 14 in. (43.2 × 35.6 cm)
- 43 *Venomous, with four pairs of arms*, 2008-II
Oil, collage, glitter, and wire on panel
19 × 23 in. (48.3 × 58.4 cm)
- 154 *Eonar Avin*, 2009-II
Enamel, spray paint, wood, upholstery tacks, two books (*Leonardo da Vinci; Participation: Documents in Contemporary Art*) nailed to each other, on cut drop cloth
70 × 22 × 17 ½ in. (177.8 × 55.9 × 44.5 cm)
- 56 *Midnight Sun (Protein Pills)*, 2009-II
Mixed media on canvas
20 × 16 in. (50.8 × 40.6 cm)
- 59 *Ulcerous gnawing as a reaction to one's embeddedness*, 2009-II
Oil, enamel, leather, collage with artist's frame on canvas
18 × 14 in. (45.7 × 35.6 cm)
- 186 *For Beth Ditto*, 2010
Oil, tile grout, pebbles, and spray paint on canvas; attached cardboard cutout with acrylic and collage
30 × 23 in. (76.2 × 58.4 cm)
- 181 *The Worl of Matisse*, 2010
Oil, nails, and book fragments on linen
26 × 18 in. (66 × 45.7 cm)
- 193 *Parapluie*, 2010 -12
Pencil, acrylic, enamel, and collage on raw drop cloth
34 × 28 in. (86.4 × 71.1 cm)
- 200- *Acts/Ax/Ante/Auntie*, 2011
201 Plastic cups, acrylic, goauche
51 × 3 in. (129 × 7.6 cm)
- 88- *Anti-Expeditious*, 2011
89 Oil, acrylic, spray paint, cardboard, various objects
90 × 130 in. (228.6 × 330.2 cm)
- 138 *Balancing my Mixed Metaphors*, 2011
Spray paint and acrylic on linen
24 × 20 in. (61 × 50.8 cm)
- 182 *Eve Babitz*, 2011
Acrylic, enamel, string, and cherry pits on linen, on panel
26 × 23 × 12 in. (66 × 58.4 × 30.5 cm)
(installation dimensions variable)
- 36 *Hedda Gabbler*, 2011
Spray enamel, oil, fabric, and thumb tack on canvas
70 × 48 in. (177.8 × 121.9 cm)
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Bernice and Kenneth Newberger Fund, 2012.121
- 197 *Horse Hair Floor Plan*, 2011
Horsehair fabric swatches and enamel on linen
24 × 20 in. (61 × 50.8 cm)
- 188 *Scalps in French*, 2011
Oil, spray paint, caulk, Plexiglas, old paintbrushes, and string on canvas
16 × 34 × 5 in. (40.6 × 86.4 × 12.7 cm)
- 196 *Untitled*, 2011
Enamel and headphones on canvas
19 × 19 in. (48.3 × 48.3 cm)
- 132 *Unusmooth Cut*, 2011
Oil, latex, plexiglas, colored gel, screws, and photo from book on canvas
28 × 22 × 10 in. (71.1 × 55.9 × 25.4 cm)
- 150 *Colon: Battery*, 2012
Oil, spray paint, acrylic, screws, and staples on linen
18 × 15 in. (45.7 × 38.1 cm)
- 97 *Reflection in snow covered hills*, 2012
Oil, wood stain, spray paint, enamel, string, pigeon feathers, safety pins on raw canvas
72 × 68 in. (182.9 × 172.7 cm)
- 100 *The Necessary (Blushing For Now)*, 2012-13
Oil, acrylic, and drop cloth on canvas
70 × 60 in. (177.8 × 152.4 cm)
- 139 *Widow*, 2012
Latex, enamel, spray paint, bleach, collage, tulle, and oil paint on bed sheet
70 × 60 in. (177.8 × 152.4 cm)
- 84- *Adulterate*, 2013
85 Acrylic, bleach, enamel, latex, and paper collage on cut, draped, and sewn cloth and canvas; oil and spray paint on two leaning canvases; found objects
95 × 167 × 12 in. (241.3 × 424.2 × 30.5 cm)
- 129 *au*, 2013
Oil, latex, and enamel on drop cloth
80 × 60 in. (203.2 × 152.4 cm)
- 142 *Bedweather*, 2013
Rabbit fur and spray enamel on linen
60 × 42 in. (152.4 × 106.9 cm)
- 93 *Not a Leaner (Jasper Blush)*, 2013
Latex, ink, spray paint, string, and furniture tacks on drop cloth
72 ¼ × 58 in. (183.5 × 147.3 cm)
- 92 *The Madame of the Painting*, 2013
Acrylic, latex, fabric and paper collage, and black ink on drop cloth
72 ½ × 50 in. (184.2 × 127 cm)
- 54 *oa*, 2013
Oil, latex, enamel, and spray paint on cut linen and folded muslin
72 × 50 in. (182.9 × 127 cm)
- 40 *oi*, 2013
Oil, acrylic, enamel, and spray paint on canvas
72 × 48 in. (182.9 × 121.9 cm)
- 155 *oo*, 2013
Enamel and assemblage on cut drop cloth
58 × 48 in. (147.3 × 121.9 cm)
- 178 *channel change*, 2014
Oil and acrylic on cut and re-sewn canvas
72 × 50 in. (182.9 × 127 cm)
- 106- *Second City*, 2014
107 Acrylic on sewn fabric and spray paint
72 × 84 in. (182.9 × 213.4 cm)
- 131 *Enigma-Riddle-Joke*, 2015
Bleach, dye, latex, and collage on sewn linen, cotton, and polyester
65 ¼ × 80 ¼ in. (165.7 × 203.8 cm)
- 102 *Untitled*, 2015
Acrylic, oil, ink, and bleach on canvas and linen
27 × 36 in. (68.6 × 91.4 cm)
- 125 *What Are Years*, 2015
Oil, ink, acrylic, and bleach on sewn silk, linen, and drop cloth
72 × 59 ½ in. (182.9 × 151.1 cm)
- 103 *Untitled*, 2015
Acrylic and spray paint on woven rope
26 × 26 × 4 in. (66 × 66 × 10.2 cm)
- 190 *Untitled*, 2015
Acrylic and oil on fabric
56 × 56 in. (142.2 × 142.2 cm)
- 152 *Melanie Klein's Part Object*, 2016
Dye, oil, acrylic, and enamel on sewn fabric and leather
60 × 84 in. (152.4 × 213.4 cm)
- 77 *Georgia, or Take Me Back Take Me Way Way Way Back*, 2017
Dye, oil, and acrylic on sewn fabric
72 × 81 in. (182.9 × 205.7 cm)

- 108 *Walking is Sweet Freedom*, 2017
Sewn drop cloth, silk,
tee shirt, nylon, and dye
88 × 60 in. (223.5 × 152.4 cm)
- 194 *What Is Found There*, 2017
Bead maze, newspaper rack, lamp, found
objects, paper pulp, scrap wood
66 × 21 × 12.5 in. (167.6 × 53.3 × 31.8 cm)
- 38 *Crump Hole*, 2018
Silkscreens and enamel paint on printed
and sewn cotton, gessoed canvas, muslin,
Lurex, kimono silk, and polyester scarf
88 × 68 in. (223.5 × 172.7 cm)
- 86 *Trench Boot*, 2018
Silkscreens on cotton, synthetic
chiffon, woven upholstery fabric,
and synthetic plush
76 × 73 in. (193 × 185.4 cm)
- 157 *Sketchbook page*, 2019
Ink on paper
10 × 7 in. (25.4 × 17.8 cm)
- 61 *Sketchbook page*, 2020
Blue ballpoint pen on paper
10 × 7 in. (25.4 × 17.8 cm)
- 13 *Sketchbook page*, 2021
Graphite on paper
10 × 7 in. (25.4 × 17.8 cm)
- 136– *What paints the toenails red*
137 *and hides in cherry trees*, 2021
Watercolor, string, and collage on paper
17 × 34 in. (43.2 × 86.4 cm)

Artist Biography

Born 1975 in Los Gatos, California
Lives and works in Norfolk, Connecticut

EDUCATION

- 2007 MFA, Painting and Drawing,
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 2005 Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Painting and Drawing,
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 1998 BA, French (Language, Literature and Philosophy),
Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2018 Artist-in-Residence, Rauschenberg Residency, Captiva Island, Florida
- 2015 Artist-in-Residence, Cannonball, Miami
- 2013 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award
- 2014 Scholarship Recipient, Ox-Bow School of Art Residency, Saugatuck, Michigan

SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Comic Relief*, Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston
Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Flim-Flam, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 2017 *Learning Artist*, Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
Jennifer Jason Leigh, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 2016 *That being said, I'm Oscillating between Comic Relief and Boundaries*,
Michael Jon & Alan, Detroit
Timeshare, Fiendish Plots, Lincoln, Nebraska
Cameron Martin and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, The Suburban, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- 2015 *Dana DeGiulio & Molly Zuckerman-Hartung: Queen*, Lyles & King, New York
REPRODUCTION, Reproduction, UCR/California Museum of Photography, Riverside
(with Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Rodney McMillian)
- 2014 *Violet Fogs Azure Snot*, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 2013 *Chlorophyll Blues*, Diana Lowenstein Fine Arts, Miami
- 2012 *Humours*, Galerie Kadel Willborn, Karlsruhe, Germany

- Chicago Works: Molly Zuckerman-Hartung*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
Negative Joy, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
- 2011 *Speak to my ass, the octopus is sick*, Anna Kustera Gallery, New York
Hysterical Sublime, Spazio Cabinet, Milan (with David Keating)
Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, Important Projects, Oakland, California
- 2010 *Scrying*, Julius Caesar, Chicago
To Fill a Gap, Insert the Thing that Caused It, Riverside Arts Center, Chicago
(with Dana DeGiulio)
Laziest Girl in Town, Rowley Kennerk Gallery, Chicago
- 2009 *Red Peter*, Dominican University O'Connor Gallery, Chicago
(with Dana DeGiulio)
Fuck Nice, Marcus Brutus, Chicago
- 2008 *An Erotics*, Tunnel Room at John Connelly, New York
Screwing or Sticking, Julius Caesar, Chicago
She-male Guitar Solo, Rowley Kennerk Gallery, Chicago
- 2003 *The Pigment To Say What She Did*, Arrowspace, Olympia, Washington
Le Voyeur, Olympia, Washington

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Feelings Are Facts*, Poker Flats, Williamstown, Massachusetts
- 2020 *Turpentine*, SOCO Gallery, Charlotte, North Carolina
- 2019 *Organic Archival*, studio e, Seattle
Cart, Horse, Cart, Lehmann Maupin, New York
- 2018 *Ten Years*, Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
Bang On, Divine Hamme, Able Baker Contemporary, Portland, Maine
My Vicious Throbbing Heart, Franklin Street Works, Stamford, Connecticut
- 2017 *Elaine, Let's Get the Hell Out of Here*, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York
Surfacing, James Harris Gallery, Seattle
Bluets, Burning in Water, New York
Contra, University of Arkansas Gallery, Fayetteville
- 2016 *Whatever moves between us also moves the world in general*, Murray Guy, New York
Sexting, Kate Werble Gallery, New York
Art in Residence Biennial, Ewing Gallery, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Pipe Dream, Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
Riot Grrrls, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- 2015 *If Not Now, When?*, Duet, St. Louis, Missouri
Greetings from Lake Zwenkau, Fjord, Philadelphia
Other Planes of There, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago
Listening and Making Sound, Poor Farm, Steuben, Wisconsin
Soft Architecture, Galerie Charim, Vienna

- 2014 *The Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Shakti, Brand New Gallery, Milan
Painting in the Expanded Field, Mary S. Byrd Gallery, Georgia Regents University, Augusta
We Should Talk to Each Other, The Cloud and I, Mary S. Byrd Gallery, Georgia Regents University, Augusta
The Great Poor Farm Experiment VI, Manawa, Wisconsin
- 2013 *Michelle Grabner: I Work From Home*, MOCA Cleveland, Ohio
The Program, ReMap4, Athens
Wassup Painters, Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles
The Digital Divide, Sies and Hoke, Dusseldorf, Germany
Painter Painter, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
- 2012 *Michelle Grabner: The Inova Survey*, The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Changing States of Matter, Brand New Gallery, Milan
Big Youth II, Bourouina Gallery, Berlin
The Whitney Houston Biennial, Murdertown Gallery, Chicago
- 2011 *Perfectly Damaged*, Derek Eller Gallery, New York
Unfold, Apart and Together, Golden Gallery, Chicago
A Painting Show, Harris Lieberman, New York
Nasty, Brutish and Short, Peregrine Program, Chicago
Irritable Abstraction, curated by Susanne Doremus, Julius Caesar, Chicago
Group Show, Tony Wight, Chicago
Disaster Kitchen, Dock 6 Collective, Chicago
A Coupling, Hungryman Gallery, Chicago
Material Witness, Anna Kustera Gallery, New York
- 2010 *Informal Relations*, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art, Indiana
Violence, Exhibition Agency, Chicago
No Barrier Fun, Lisa Cooley Fine Art, New York
ONPTG, Rowley Kennerk Gallery, Chicago
Tete-a-Clack, Galerie Im Regierungsviertel/Forgotten Bar Project, Berlin
- 2009 *Thrasbold*, Highland Park Art Center, Highland Park, Illinois
Rettet Die Alten Kirschen Am Knappenberg, Jacky Strenz Gallery, Frankfurt
Still Wet, Julius Caesar, Chicago
Audio Tour, as Julius Caesar, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago
Group Show, Waymaker Gallery, online
Portraits, Rowley Kennerk Gallery, Chicago
Group Show (as Benedutta Magnarola), Julius Caesar, Chicago
- 2008 *Point Vierge*, Rowley Kennerk Gallery, Chicago
- 2007 *Targeting Jobs: The Influence of Jasper Johns*, Gallery Two, Chicago
Ha_and_If, Sound Art Space, Laredo, Texas
No Legs, Alogon Gallery, Chicago
- 2006 *Balls Out!*, E. Erie Street, Milwaukee
Let's Do Lunch, Chicago
Vomitorium, Gallery 40000, Chicago
- 2003 Collaborative performance/painting piece, No Exit, Olympia, Washington

PERFORMANCES

- 2018 *Long-Winded*, three-hour performative lecture on the history of painting, Canada Gallery, New York
- 2016 *Such Wet Eyes*, a four-hour performative lecture on the history of painting, Norfolk School of Art, Connecticut
- Reader in *Moby Dick*, a reading of the novel in front of Frank Stella's *Moby Dick* paintings during *Frank Stella: A Retrospective*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 2011 *Disaster Kitchen*, a three-hour endurance performance as Lucille Ball/Marie Antoinette, Dock 6 Collective, Chicago

ARTIST WRITINGS

- 2018 Beckwith, Naomi, Valerie Cassel Oliver, Marilyn Minter, Lorna Simpson, and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung. "Roundtable Discussion on the Work of Howardena Pindell." In *Howardena Pindell: What Remains to Be Seen*. Exh. cat. New York: Prestel, 2018.
- Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. "Hold Fast." *The Brooklyn Rail* (February 2018).
- 2015 Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. "Zigzag Tunnel." In *Fox Hysen*. Exh. cat. Marin: Headlands Center for the Arts, 2015.
- Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. "Writing Women notes on *Reading Women* by Carrie Schneider." In *Carrie Schneider: Reading Women*. Exh. cat. Milwaukee: Haggerty Museum of Art at Marquette University, 2015.
- 2013 Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. "Do It Clean." In *Michelle Grabner: I Work from Home*. Exh. cat. Milan: Mousse, 2014.
- 2012 Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. "What is the Current that Presents a Long Line." In *Michelle Grabner: The INOVA Survey*. Exh. cat. Milwaukee: Green Gallery Press, 2012.
- Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. "(The 95 Theses on Painting)." In *Chicago Works: Molly Zuckerman-Hartung*. Exh. brochure. Edited by Julie Rodrigues-Widholm. Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 2012.
- 2010 Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. "no title." In *Michelle Wasson & Sabina Ott: Frequently The Woods Are Pink*. Exh. cat. Self-published, 2010.
- 2009 Zuckerman-Hartung, Molly. *Notes on Susan Sontag*. Waymade Press, 2009.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

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