House of Seiko

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The Last Arrangement

September 7 - October 12, 2024

We are thrilled to announce the opening of The Last Arrangement, a project by Gabriel Sierra organized by Diego Villalobos.

This exhibition operated as a sort of kaleidoscope, a source of inspiration, and a testimony to the strategies and experiments used to insert ideas of art into life by a group of artists and creators with dissimilar backgrounds, all related to the Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club.

The Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club operated in a small storefront on San Francisco's Market Street. Its main attraction lay not only in its eccentric and sometimes classic floral compositions but also in its radical forms of display, which often surprised customers and passersby. It was the only store in the neighborhood, and probably in the entire Bay Area, that displayed a single product from its inventory at a time—on a pedestal, on a table, or, if you were lucky, in front of the window. The display changed periodically according to the season, but there was always a single arrangement of flowers, branches, and leaves in an otherwise empty room.

On the occasion of the Horticultural & Flower Symposium that took place in San Francisco in 1975, the Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club staged an exhibition on the thirteenth floor of 140 New Montgomery.

At House of Seiko, the artist Gabriel Sierra and curator Diego Villalobos stage a recreation of this obscure exhibition. Some of the artworks, display furniture, and layout are modified from their original presentation to accommodate the current site. All works are exhibited on specific days, hours, or moments during a particular period of time over the course of the exhibition.

The Last Arrangement features works by Bruno Burri, Ferdinando Cortina, Orri Forslund, Hockto Furosaki, Barry Harper, Pablo Marmol, Lucy Otter, Doroteo Parra, Primo Páramo, Haru Setsuko, Gabriel Sierra, Lucas Scandinavia, Olga Tamaribuchi.

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This exhibition is based on a passage from Gabriel Sierra's, yet to be published, novel Siete Cavernas (Seven Caverns). An arrangement can be understood as a particular situation that occurs when preparing for or during the process of creation. It's an anticipation of the future. To arrange is to put things in a specific order. An arrangement may also refer to a grouping or constellation of things, or to issues pertaining to the visual elements of an image, otherwise commonly known as composition.

Worries & Flowers By Foster Black

Originally published in the San Francisco Chronicle, November 13, 1975

Scholars speculate that the real purpose of the mysterious floral arrangements known as Ikebana is actually an attempt to neutralize the shadows and emptiness that define the vernacular of Japanese architecture. Others claim that the true function of the traditional flower arrangement is to tame the mysterious forces of nature. However, there are passages in classical Japanese literature that mention complex yet simple floral arrangements in Shinto altars, as well as flower offerings in Buddhist monasteries. In the later part of the 15th century, this practice evolved into a flower-arranging technique with strict rules. Since then, the floral art of Ikebana has gone through many phases of evolution. No one knows exactly how or why, but experts and historians seem to agree that it is a ritual centered on the appreciation of natural phenomena.

The critic Nene Hiradaria described The Last Arrangement exhibition as interesting and, at times, enigmatic. In her review for Ikebana-Today Magazine, she wrote, "The expectations of unpretentious beauty and harmony that we usually find in an Ikebana show were present—there are usually no surprises or modifications to the rules. However, in this show, all these preconceived ideas seemed to disappear or be modified in search of spontaneity, an optimism that speaks of fragility and brevity, and the transcendent, ephemeral aspects of the human condition."

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What a contradictory Ikebana show, composed of only a few floral arrangements and a group of artworks—such as drawings, paper cut-outs, paintings, videos, magazine clippings, objects, and slide projections. Three replicas of Alexander Calder's Explosive Object from 1944 sit beside a pile of branches on a table, in proximity to a pile of fresh seasonal flowers placed inside a very modern container on a pedestal. In this show, tradition has disappeared or been reformulated. With the exception of some floral compositions in the purest classical style—one elegantly made with a single structural branch and another with an assortment of green rounded leaves with drops of water resting on them—the rest of the presentation leans more towards the experimental. This includes the display of a tumbleweed, brought from Montana by the author and presented on a plinth with a postcard, and a group of black paper cut-outs shaped like the leaf-like Poker spade symbol, sequentially

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arranged as a frieze throughout the room. One of the works that surprised visitors the most was a real man lying on a desk, dressed in black and wearing a striped bowtie, quietly looking at the ceiling with fresh flowers in his mouth. The man was pretending to be a vase, which was quite convincing since he was a professional actor. The amusing and sometimes cold presentation of what were supposed to be timeless ideas of balance, simplicity, and harmony contrasted with the expectation that an Ikebana exhibition should be captivating and refined, composed of a serene atmosphere.

As an exhibition, The Last Arrangement is a rarity. Nothing stays the same, as artworks come in and out each day during the course of the show, yet the theme repeats itself with each new iteration. Textures, sensations, and accumulation seem to be present in each of the works. While not all of the pieces can be considered traditional Ikebana per se, they are all intensely linked to its spirit. The artworks were installed on tables, plinths, walls, and screens in an empty office space on the thirteenth floor of I40 New Montgomery, as part of the San Francisco Horticultural & Flower Symposium in 1975.

Familiar and strange noises invade the space at times, while emotional symphonic music fragments make you feel as if you are in a movie. Random objects are scattered on a table—some related to the realm of flower arrangements, others clearly not. Bundles of branches, flowers, and foliage are arranged meticulously or intricately organized in a vase or basket. Opinions are divided. While some works relate in an abstract and conceptual way to the floral art genre of Ikebana, others note an alleged absence of beauty. The ancient magic that is supposed to characterize an Ikebana show is displaced by modern ideas in an empty room scattered with office furniture and discarded files. The good news is that Nene Hiradaria concludes her article by telling us that the Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club is actually an extraordinary philosophy school disguised as a flower shop.

Things Seen and Unseen By Diego Villalobos

In 1974, Georges Perec published Species of Spaces, a work that explored in great detail, through scale and taxonomy, how we inhabit our everyday surroundings, both seen and unseen. From the molecular to the incomprehensible vastness of the universe, Perec's text transitions outward like a zoom lens, pulling us away and distorting our sense of perspective as he fits more information into the picture plane. As we gain a wider perspective, things become more distant, and thus, perhaps, the more information we try to grasp, the more unknown things become.

Gabriel Sierra is interested in understanding how the space between things works—from the gap between the words on a page to the air between objects in a room, or the space between knowledge and intuition, fact and fiction. This fascination with the in-between has led Sierra to create a vast body of work that sits at the cross-roads of architecture, sculpture, performance, image-making, and storytelling, where the human body and its relationship to the built environment is always at the center.

Sierra, like Perec, thinks of space not only in material terms but also as an ideological construct. Take, for instance, his Structures for Transition (Estructuras para Transición), 2008 and ongoing, where he alters the framing of passageways (doorways, window frames, etc.) by extending the architectural forms of a threshold or by adding wooden elements to an existing armature. The visual and physical fracturing of the structure not only enables a sense of self-awareness in how one moves from room to room or how new fields of vision can be created through obfuscation, but it ultimately asks us to consider the form and function of an exhibition space, the relationship of a work of art to its site of presentation, and the role of the art spectator as interpreter. Through these inquiries, Sierra's structural interventions remind us that ideology is expressed through architectural forms and spaces and that the larger world is built in relation to our bodies' physical and ideological accessibility to it.

The importance of having the viewer involved for the activation or realization of an artwork are ideas that are deeply embedded in the works of artists such as Helio Oiticica, whose immersive installations and audience participation works challenged modernist principles of categorization; or Lygia Clark, whose modular sculptures called Bichos (critters), made of metal and without a fixed form, challenged conventional notions of sculpture. The Neo-Concrete movement of the early 60's in Brazil, of which these artists belonged to, embraced experimentation with color, form, and space, as a means of creating a formal abstraction that challenged European modernist principles that were dominant throughout Latin America.

Even though Sierra is generations apart from those artists, you can see traces of their work In his thinking—in particular how materials, forms, and space influence our behavior and sense of self. What sets him apart, however, is his more detached, almost anthropological, approach to examining aspects of everyday human behavior.

In works such as Background, Figure, Figure, Background, 2008-2012, Sierra built a white platform on one of the Aspen Art Museum's exhibition spaces blurring the spatial lines between the floor, wall and ceiling, creating a near total depthless white cube where the visitor's presence became exaggerated, and placed in stark contrast to the near total void created by the artist; or in installations such as EndsMeddlesBeginnings, 2012, where Sierra presented a group of panels that at a simple glance appear as minimalist paintings with apertures, but are in fact rigged in such a way that, depending on the day of the week, are opened or closed, granting varying degrees of access to the exhibition space. These installations by Sierra evoke a state of impermanence. Just as much as he pays close attention to the dynamics of space and the porosity of architecture, he also plays with the construction of language as a tool for mediating the world at large and as a means for creating new temporalities.

SPACE TIME CONTINUUM

In 2015, Sierra presented an exhibition at the Renaissance Society in Chicago where the title of the show changed every hour:

10:00 am: Monday Impressions

II:00 am: How the Outside Leaks into the Room

12:00 pm: Smells Like 100 Years Old

1:00 pm: The Room Is in My Eye. The Space under My Body

2:00 pm: In the Meantime, (This Place Will Be Empty after 5:00 pm)

3:00 pm: An Actual Location for This Moment

4:00 pm: Few Will Leave Their Place to Come Here for Some Minutes

5:00 pm: Did You Know Who Built Your House?

This project marked a departure point in Sierra's work, for the most important component of the exhibition weren't the artworks themselves, but the changing title of the show. A gesture that for him acknowledges the specific moment a visitor enters the exhibition and is presented with an ephemeral framework or condition on how to perceive the work. These themselves consisted of minimal objects and platforms of varying scales and designs, with a set of "assembly instructions" on how to make the work, some examples include: "Area to drink a bottle of water and feel that you are drinking the cosmos. Abruptly leave the area when done." or "Pretend to be a fake stone when standing on the rectangular stone. Pretend to be a real stone when standing on the hexagonal stone." Sculpture as a situation has been a constant throughout Sierra's practice. However, the organizing principles for these works require the visitor to put everything into question and engage with his seemingly absurd philosophical questions: in drinking the universe, where does our body end or begin? Or what's the difference between the real and the fake while one is pretending to be the thing imagined?

EDGES OF SPACE

Reality is riddled with fiction. Moving back in time, 8 years before his exhibition at the Renaissance Society, Sierra began working on what may be his most ambitious project to date: a novel titled Siete Cavernas (Seven Caverns). This yet to be published book begins with an architectural project by Arnulfo Cortina, in which a house is designed so that each day of the week corresponds to a different room, and each room can only be accessed on its designated day. The book then weaves together the stories of various lesser-known artists from the 1960s and 70s—many of whom are aligned with the traditions of minimalism, conceptualism, and performance art. Through their experiences and artworks, Sierra crafts a universe that starts on the page and slips into the "real world."

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As Sierra works on his novel, he has also begun exhibiting artworks created by the artists from his book. When experiencing the work of individuals like Hockto Furosaki, Lucy Otter or Doroteo Parra (who are fictional characters in Sierra's novel), viewers engage with both real and fictitious contexts. Just as Sierra's previous spatial installations and sculptures conceptually questioned the figure's relationship to built space and the social dynamics created within it, in Siete Cavernas he uses fiction to question established beliefs about authorship and how the "experts"—such as curators or institutions (galleries or museums)—validate notions of authenticity in art. If experts declare a Lucy Otter painting to be real, does that make it truly real? If culture accepts something to be true, does that make it so?

Sierra's work with Siete Cavernas has echoes of George Perec's literal and metaphoric examination of the totality of space. However, instead of expanding outwards, Sierra takes us into the creative lives and practices of a constellation of artists. Giving him artistic license to explore new forms and narratives that on the surface, might read as distant from the work he is best known for. Sierra is interested in exploring the thin line between illusion and reality, arguing that through fiction (or perhaps the fake), we can access the essence of the real.

LOST IN SPACE

The Last Arrangement is a group exhibition at House of Seiko featuring artists from The Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club and close associates. A press release was written, a checklist was made that included some but not all of the artists' bios, and a review of the show was written. It's an exhibition that takes place in 2024, but is also a restaging of a show that took place in 1975 during the San Francisco Horticultural & Flower Symposium. It's an exhibition about the practice of ikebana, but more truthfully, it's about the subjective act of perception and remembrance, the interplay between visibility and invisibility, and a critical examination of the artistic and bureaucratic means in which art represents the world. Or an attempt, as Perec would say, "to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs."



Haru Setsuko (1943–2018) was a master potter and the author of the book The Flower Clock-Work, a new method of arranging flowers closely related to the ancient Japanese tradition of ikebana. The composition of each flower arrangement is related to the positions of the clock dials.

Hockto Furosaki (1940–2020) was interested in the subject of creativity and was the founder of the Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club. The club originated as a community garden and, after many years of iterations, evolved into a school that uses methods from ancient eastern philosophies as a means of fostering creativity, with the ikebana tradition serving as a catalyst for meditation.

Lucy Otter (b. 1945) created artworks during the 1960s and late 1970s that were exhibited in unconventional forms. Her abstract paintings, devoid of any apparent meaning, were hung or installed in public and private spaces that were not typically associated with galleries or museums. Examples include a laundromat and a cornfield, among other locations.

Pablo Marmol (b. 1941) is a collector and disciple of Thomas Folke. He accumulates parts, fragments, and elements of architecture from towns and cities around the world, such as mailboxes, post lamps, park benches, traffic signs, fences, fireplaces, staircases, bricks, windows, doors, and various unclassified artifacts. He arranges and classifies these items by function, narrative, and social purpose.

Pieter Negelmackers (1910–1989) was born in Bruges, Belgium, into a family engaged in the antiquities trade for generations. An art historian from Yale, he extensively experimented with theatrical language and ideas associated with conceptual art. He opened P-P-P with a group of friends—a gallery disguised as a furniture shop. All his work is are signed under the pseudonym Primo Páramo.

Lucas Scandinavia (1935–2020) was a member of the Scandinavian landscape painters' group known as Fogbounds. His works translate the sensations and emotions produced by the perception of the natural world, understanding nature and the landscape as a metaphysical subject.

Bruno Burri (1945–1991) was a typographer and teacher. He experimented with notions about communication, forms, and formats of language, and was obsessed with the origins of words, signs, symbols, colors, and geometry.

Ferdinando Cortina (1935–1980) trained as a cabinet maker, scenographer, and worked as a commercial architect. His grandfather, Arnulfo Cortina, designed the first house with specific rooms dedicated to dwell each day of the week.

Barry Harper (1945) is a musician and composer who experiments with noise and electronic music. He works with sound effects for movies and plays and collects sounds produced by ordinary objects in relation to their specific context.

Gabriel Sierra (1975) creates work that is often cold, restrained, or elusive and difficult to articulate. He regularly employs ideas about language and communication. His interests lie in the perception and physical interaction with objects and places, contrasting with the human form, and exploring how the space or the elements within it, and its boundaries, create or affect reality.

Foster Black (1940) works as a security guard at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. During his shifts, he studies how visitors interact with artworks and the museum itself. His work consists of making lists, notes, and drawings in a pocket notebook.

Doroteo Parra (1942) worked as an advertisement production assistant for many years. He learned that in advertising, every product or idea is crafted to look attractive and desirable, even when it is not. Marketing is closely related to the visual arts and often represents things that can deceive, manipulate, suggest, or give orders about what to do or not to do. Parra primarily works with photographs, sculptures, and video.

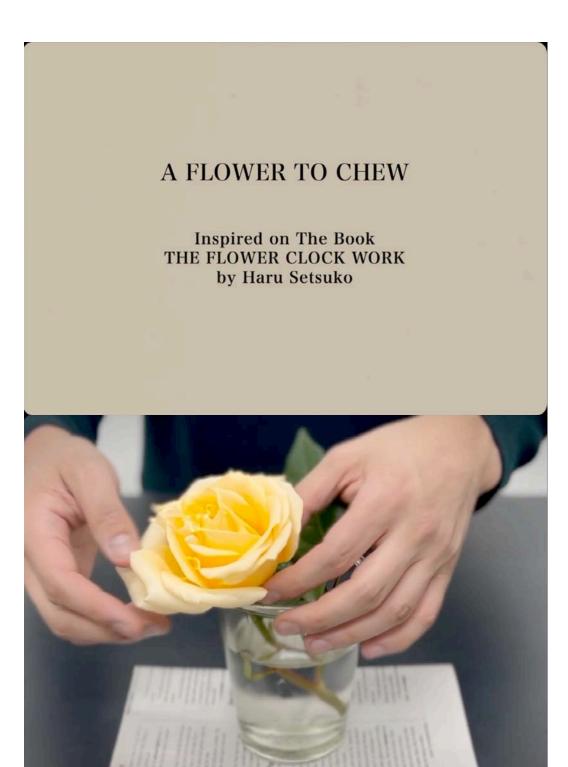
Olga Tamaribuchi (bio missing)

This catalog was printed on the occasion of the Horticultural and Garden Symposium in San Francisco in 1975 and reprinted in 2024 for the restaging of the exhibition at House of Seiko, San Francisco.

The Penumbrasociety

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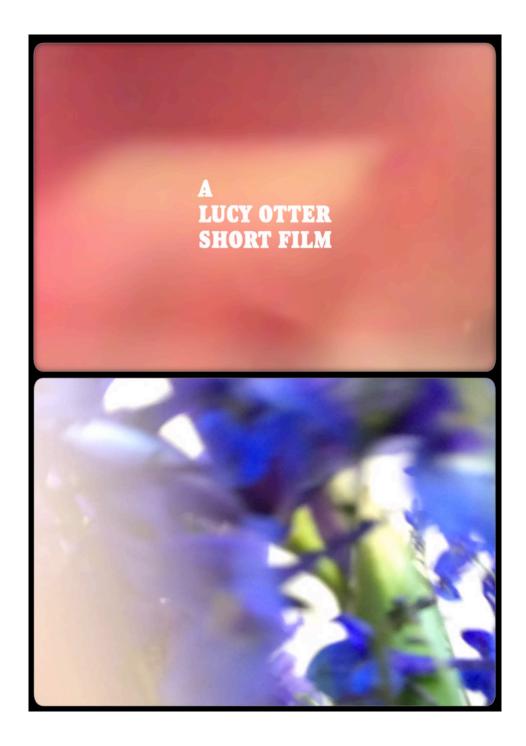




I. Hockto Furosaki, A Flower to Chew, Haru Setsuko, 1964-1975 Color video, silent, 6 min.

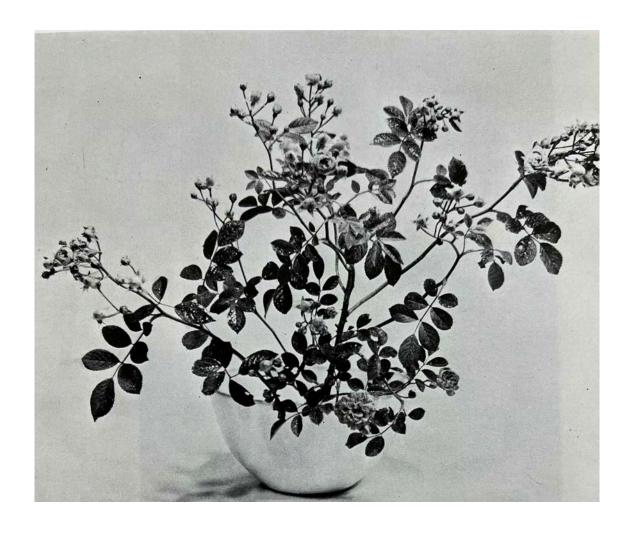
The film depicts a man seated at a table eating a yellow rose from a glass vase.

This work was performed for the first time at the Japan Pavilion of the 1964 New York World's Fair.



2. Lucy Otter, The Inevitable Death of a Flower, 1975 * Color video, silent, 4.30 min.

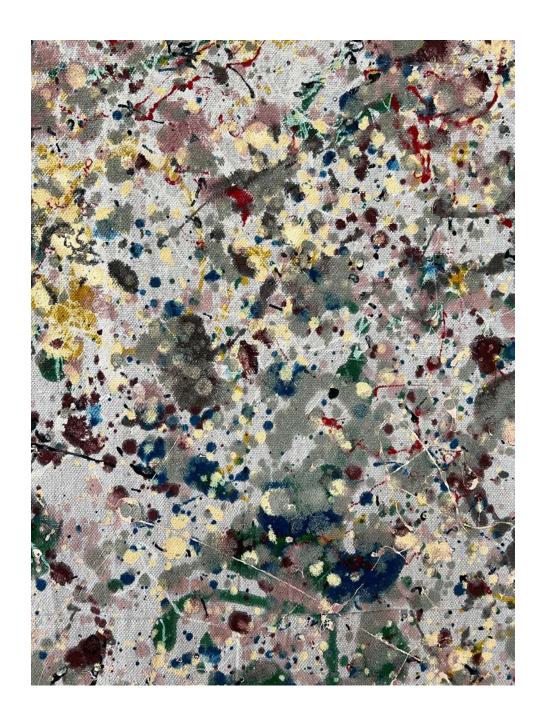
A visual experiment with two juxtaposed television monitors displaying images of flowers in motion, the piece functions as a poem about the ephemeral. Otter experimented with film alongside her painting practice, deliberately avoiding figurative images to focus on the retinal aspect of the image and the cinematic to represent the abstract quality of emotions.



3. Haru Setsuko, Untitled, 1975-2024 Fresh seasonal flowers, leaves, branches on ceramic, glass and cane containers; Dimensions variable

Flower arrangement styles from the Flower Clock Work present a diverse array of creations, each one related to the specific shape and materials of the container and the time of day.

The Flower Clock Work is a new method of flower arrangement, originally introduced by Setsuko as a lecture to her class at the Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club. Years later, it became a book, where the compositions are directly related to the clock hours, with instructions to build the arrangement exclusively using the dial of the clock as a reference for the flower angles.



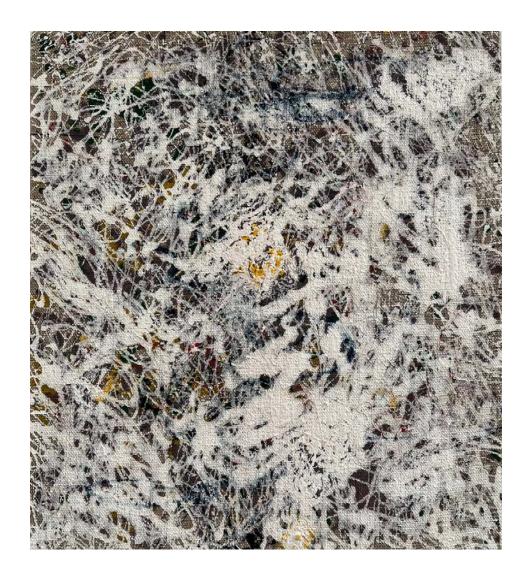
4. Lucy Otter, Otter Juice, 1975 *Canvas drop cloth and Paint; Dimensions variable

During her many visits to Severine Merle's studio, Lucy Otter became infatuated with the infinite layers of paint splashes and drips that had slowly but steadily accumulated over Merle's decades-long practice. Otter later recalled in a conversation with Willoughby Sharp, "I read the walls and their paint splotches as an emotionally abstract landscape. My background wasn't in painting, yet I felt compelled to meticulously recreate on a canvas Merle's studio walls and later the painter's palette."



5. Lucy Otter, Otter Juice, 1975 *
Plastic and Paint; Dimensions variable

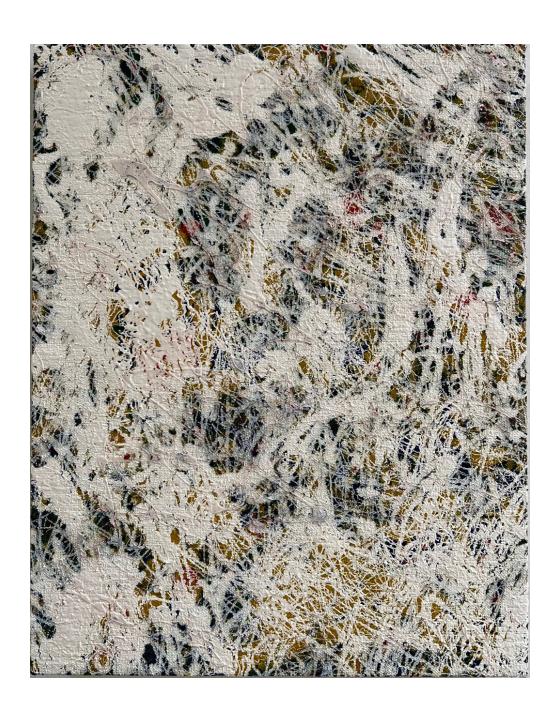
Part of the reconstruction of stains on the walls and floors of the Severine Merle studio.



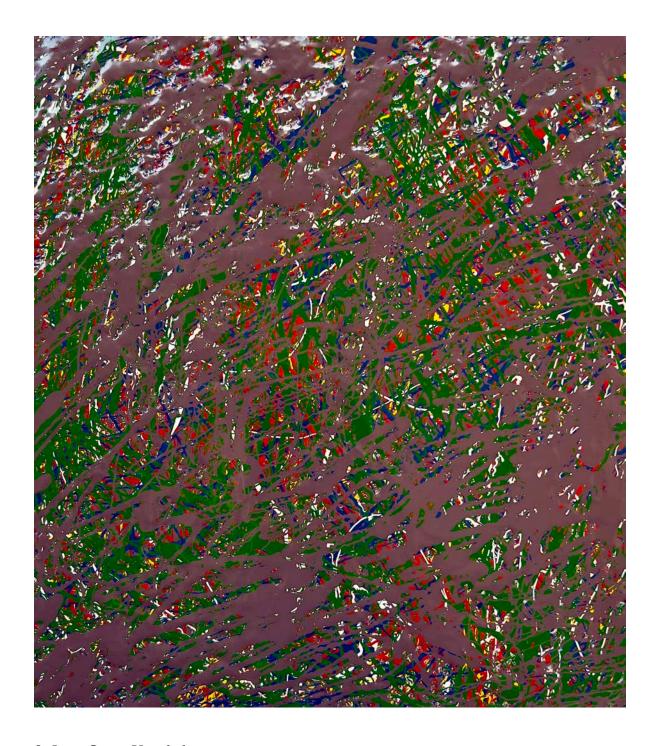
6. Lucy Otter, Untitled, 1979 Enamel on linen; 13.5 x 10.5 in.

In 1979, Otter experimented for the first time with industrial paint on linen. This group of works was a commission for an EP cover for the post-punk band Duchamp Widows.

The term Paintings for Furniture was given to this group of artworks after they were exhibited at Paramo-Prince-Perigot, a furniture shop located on Greene Street in New York City.



7. Lucy Otter, Untitled, 1979 Enamel on linen; II x 10 in.



8. Lucy Otter, Untitled, 1979 Enamel on linen; 10 x II in.



9. Hockto Furosaki, All Branches Are Firewood, 1975 Pruned branches from Golden Gate Park and arranged in a pile on a table; Dimensions variable



10. Bruno Burri, 69 Pikes, 1972Black cardboard silhouettes installed on a wall; Dimensions variable

Originally installed upside down in the reception area of the publishing house Penumbra Society, Burri regularly installs signs and symbols in private rooms and public places to explore the meaning and language of archaic shapes and forms.



II. Doroteo Parra, We-The Original You, 1970-2024 Black and white Postcard

This work was originally a rejected commission for an advertisement and was featured in the Fall-Winter 1975 issue of Octopus Quarterly.

This work was originally a rejected commission for an advertisement. It features a sentence that highlights the importance of education and teachers in the structure of society. The phrase "We—the original you" is related to the slogan of the Hockto Furosaki Ikebana Club, which reads, "We are our own teachers," a creation by Parra.



12. Doroteo Parra, Delito Poético, 1970 Lead plaque and paint

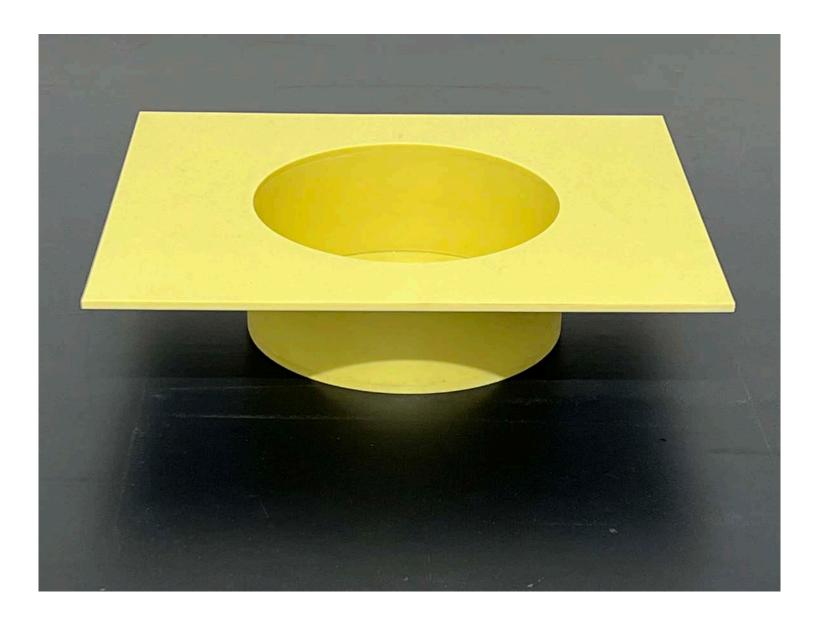
Prototype for a bronze plaque to be installed next to a Greek statue.

13. Pablo Marmol, Poetry for the Future, 1965-1975 *
 14 unopened fossilized stones, concrete block, glass jar, and 3 pine-cones; Dimensions variable

Marmol collects objects, building materials, and items from cities and towns, as well as artifacts from the natural world. He often creates improvisational compositions that resemble movie sets or still lifes.

14. Barry Harper, The last Arrangement, 1973-1975Cassette tape, sound; 60 min.

Harper creates sound effects and music for movies and plays. He collects sounds and noises from various sources, such as crowds in public places, bothersome noises from neighbors, programs and static from radio and television, empty rooms, music halls, machines, and insects. The piece for the show is composed of segments from his sound library.



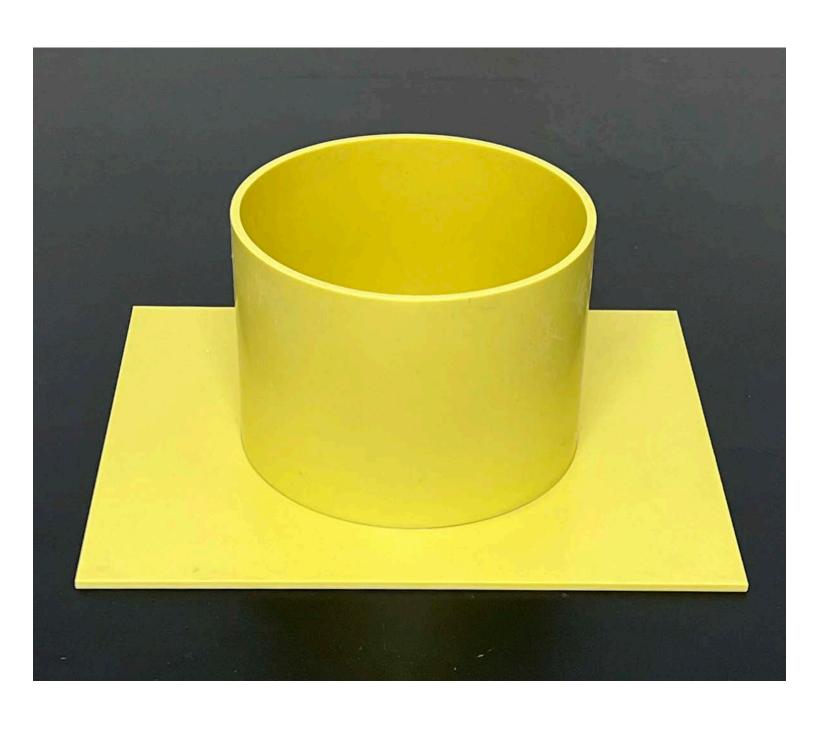
15. Ferdinando Cortina, Calimero Vase (prototype), 1973

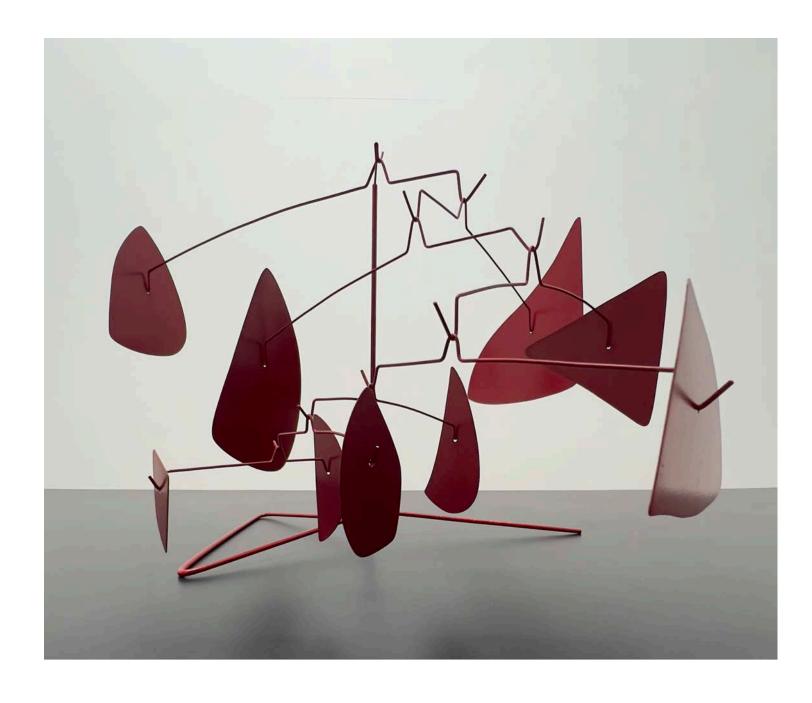
4 PVC pipes and glue; Dimensions variable

Cortina worked as an architect and occasionally designed furniture and objects. The Calimero Vase is a geometric container that resembles a hat. It is fabricated from PVC pipes as an ironic reference to water plumbing.









16. Hockto Furosaki, The Calder Incident, Explosive Object, 1944-1968
Sheet metal, wire, industrial paint

Three replicas of the same work, in different scales, are placed on pedestals in various corners of the exhibition space. The piece is constructed solely using a picture as reference. The metal shapes that hang on the structure are rearranged in a different order as an allusion to the original shape of the work, which was incorrectly installed.



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17. Lucas Scandinavia, It's cold, but feels like sunshine (Diptych), 1973 Linen, stones, plastic, glue, hardware; $8.54 \times 5.51 \times 3.94$ each one

This group of works attempts to recreate the glow of the sun reflecting off the water and rocks of a river stream.

Lucas Scandinavia could be labeled a landscape artist, but the truth is that he is more interested in representing sensations and phenomena from the natural world, such as sunlight, weather, and the smells of



19. Bruno Burri, Minolta Proposition, 1970 Slide projector and slides





20. Gabriel Sierra, Untitled, 2001 * color photographs; 5 x 3 $^{3}\!\!/_{4}$ in. each

Two pictures from a series of photographs of leaves eaten by insects that create Rorschach-like patterns.



21. Orri Forslund, The Perfect Apple is not a Cloud, 1974 * One-hundred drawings, chlorophyll on paper

A failed attempt of representing summer black clouds in the landscape using a half-apple as a rubber stamp.



22. Gabriel Sierra, C-C-C, 2016 Concrete block prototype, resin, hay, honey and vetiver; 10 x 6 x 5 in.

Sierra creates walls and buildings intended to heal and modify the behavior of their inhabitants by adding ingredients and substances to custom-made construction materials. This process is intended to create environments and atmospheres that function similarly to homeopathy.



LOOKY, sachet aux plantes (camomille, pétales de bleuets, de roşes...) repose les yeux fatigués par : soleil, télévision, fumée, lecture, conduite automobile... Trempez-le dans l'eau chaude, posez-le sur vos yeux clos, allongez-vous quelques minutes. En Parfumeries, Pharmacies, Gds Magasins ou ELLA BACHE, 8, r. de la Paix, Paris-2e qui adresse gracieusement son «Livret de Beauté», 40 pages d'information beauté.

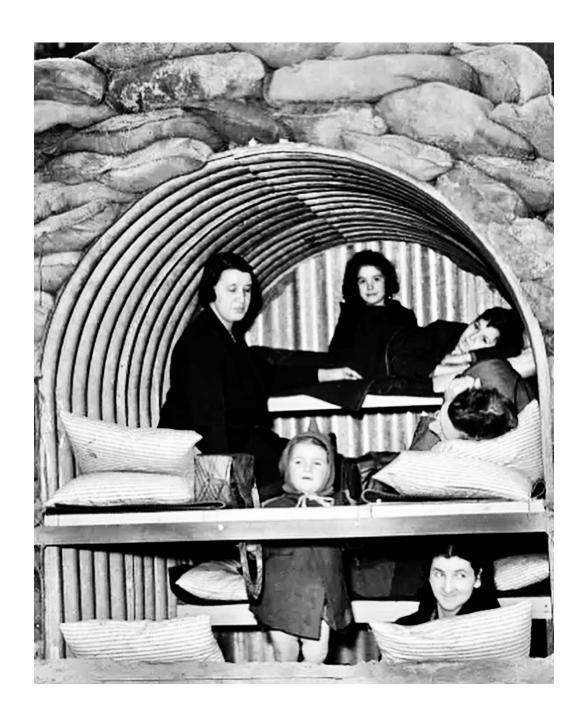
23. Pablo Marmol, Time is Away, 1960-1975 Magazine clippings; Dimensions variable

Marmol is interested in the visual language and correlations of dissimilar, unrelated subjects of images created for advertisement. He regularly makes unpredictable presentations from his vast collection.



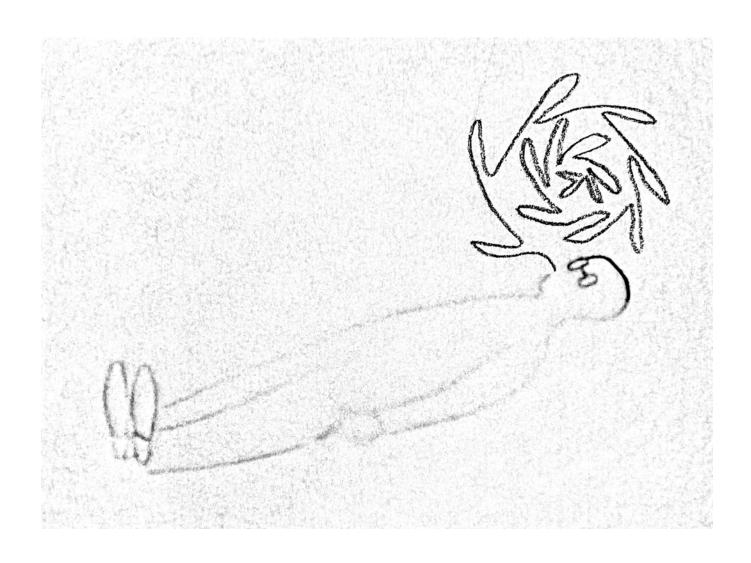
24. Hockto Furosaki, Untitled, 1975Tumble-weeds and postcard; Dimensions variable

Humor and irony are essential to confronting everyday life. Improvisation in creativity is fundamental. This work was a commission for the San Francisco airport lounge: a tumbleweed with an attached postcard of a plane.



25. Primo Páramo, P-P-P. An Educational Archive, 1973-1975 Digitally transferred film slides; 2 seconds per slide

Selected images from the Primo Paramo archive. For his lectures, Paramo uses archetypal images of functional objects and artifacts to teach histories from the ancient and modern material world. Páramo is the founder and creator of the P-P-P furniture shop.



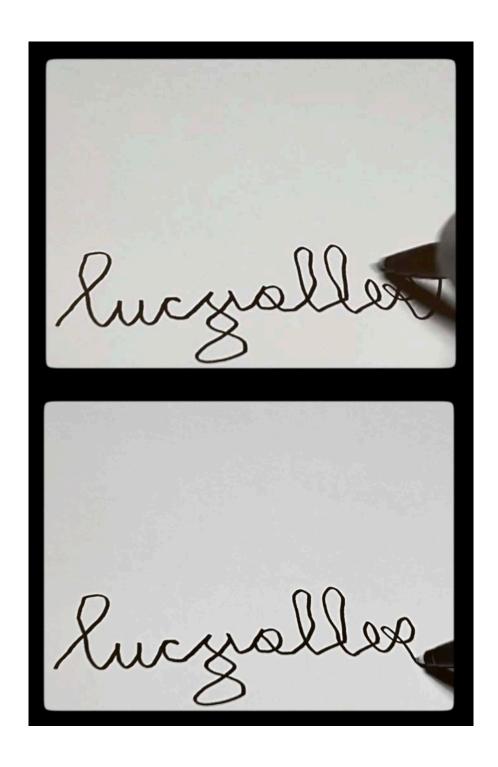
26. Olga Tamaribuchi, Sketch for Rang the Doorbells of Strangers is a Vase, 1972 Pen on paper

Drawings and notes for the performance, Rang the Doorbells of Strangers is a Vase. In this performance, the body is framed as a vessel for the soul, just as a vase is a container for a flower. Tamaribuchi is interested in representing the complex connections between the human body and the spirit.



27. Olga Tamaribuchi, Corridor drawings, right hand, 1973 Pencil on Paper; 8.5×11 in.

Tamaribuchi has a complex approach to art, attempting to represent sensations, emotions, and feelings related to dreams, déjà vu, and near-death experiences. The Corridor drawings capture the tunnel that many people perceive during meditation sessions and just before death.



28. Lucy Otter, The Painter Paints, 1968 * Black and white video, silent; 2 min.

In an ironic response to the absence of a signature on her paintings, Otter made a film in which she writes her name on paper to express her identity as an author.

















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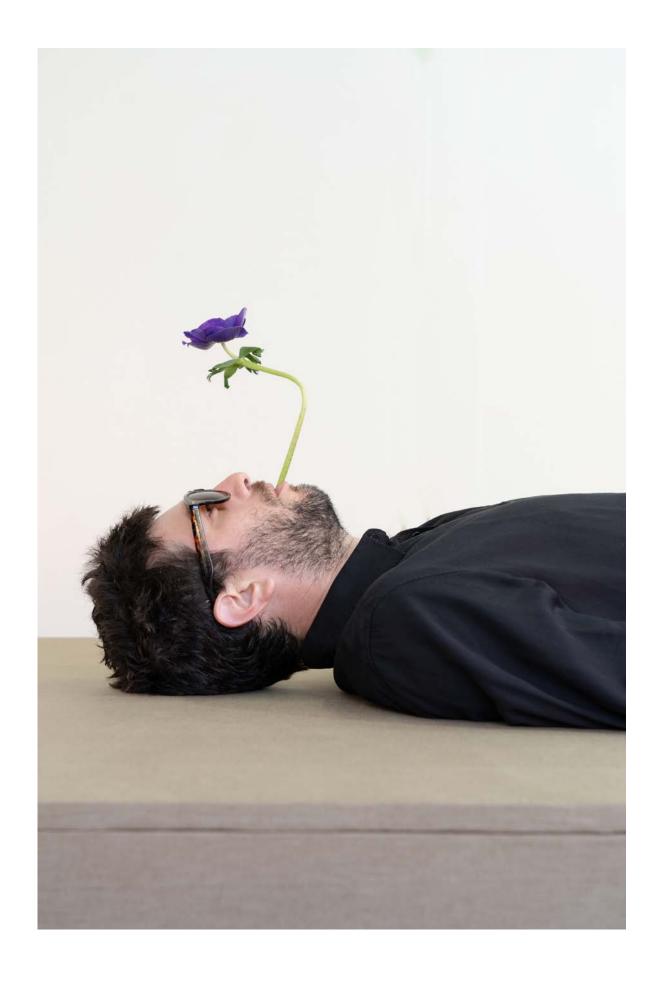


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