

FIELDS+FORMATIONS

A SURVEY OF MID-ATLANTIC ABSTRACTION





Natessa Amin

Weft

2020

Acrylic on canvas

24 x 22 inches

FIELDS+FORMATIONS

A SURVEY OF MID-ATLANTIC ABSTRACTION

Linling Lu

Circle Dance

(detail, front cover, top)

2019-21

Acrylic on canvas on
shaped panel

106 × 165 inches

Maren Hassinger

Wrenching News

(detail, front cover, bottom)

2008/2018

Shredded, twisted, and wrapped
New York Times newspapers

84 × 84 × 12 inches

The Delaware Contemporary

Wilmington, DE

September 3, 2021 – January 7, 2022

American University Museum

at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington, DC

January 29, 2022 – May 22, 2022

04 **Foreword**
Leslie Shaffer
Jack Rasmussen

06 **Acknowledgements**

08 **Art as Another Place**
Kristen Hileman

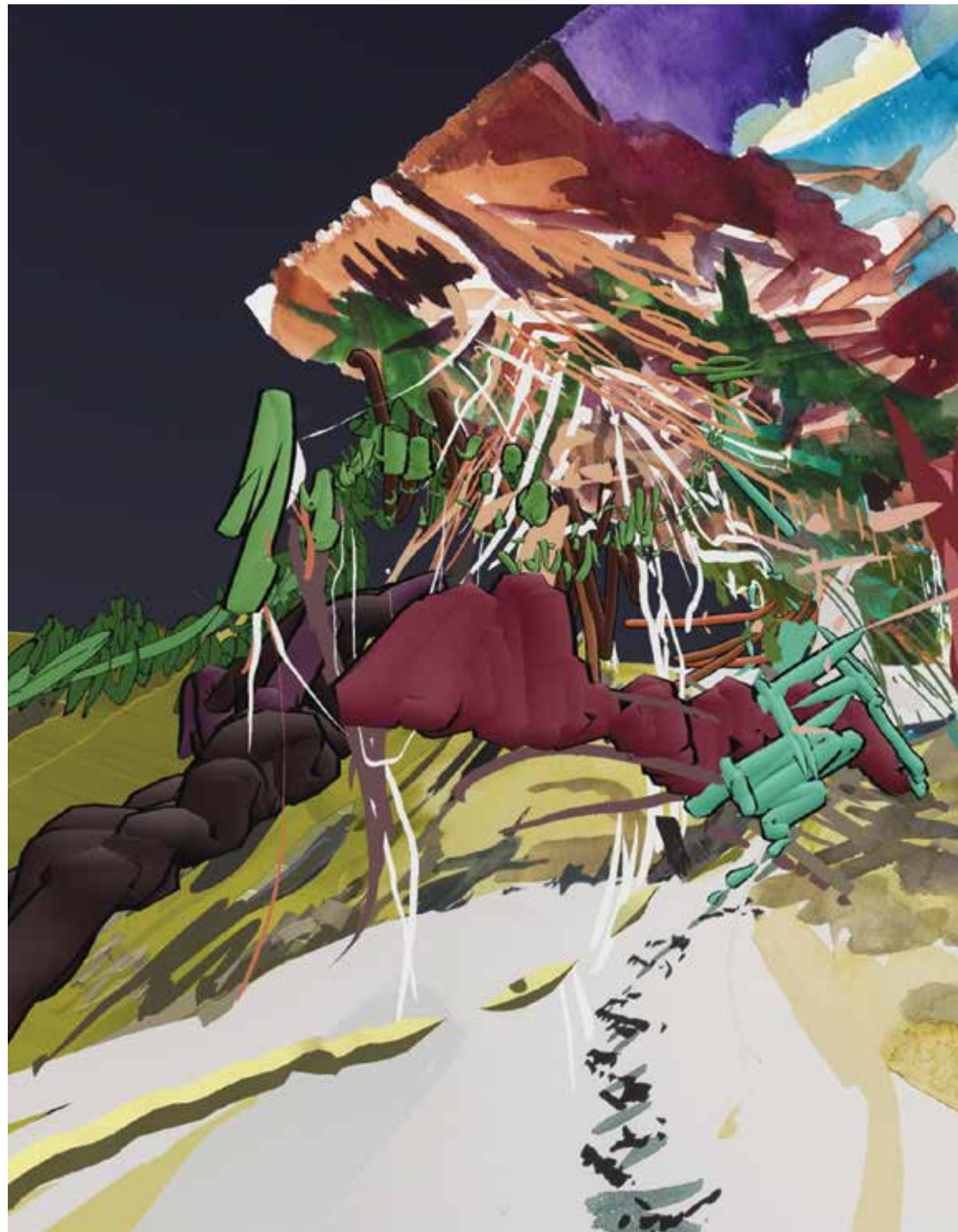
16 **Building a Context for
Fields and Formations:
beyond Eccentric
Abstraction, the Decorative,
and the Post-Minimal**
Jennie Hirsh

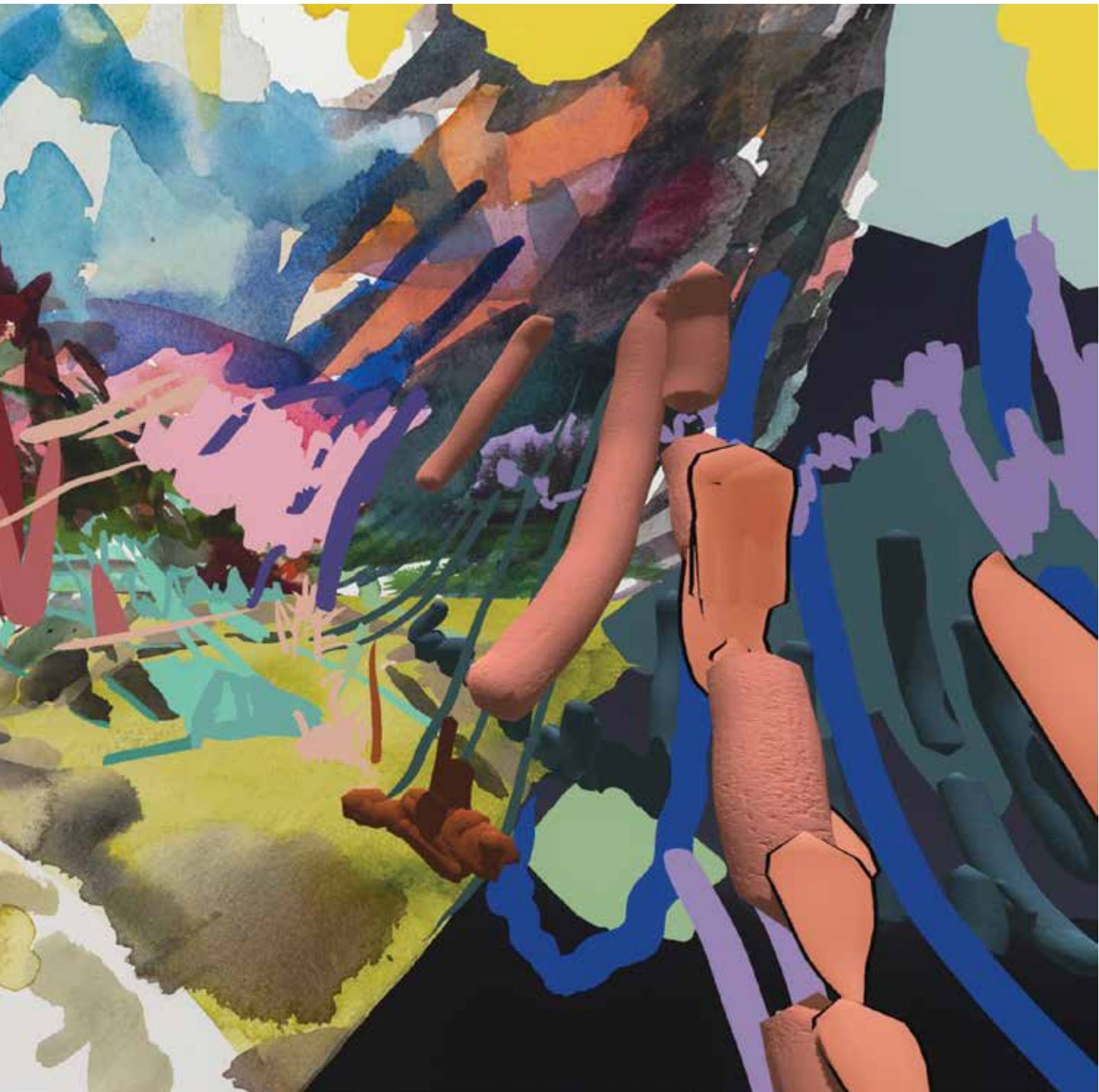
22 **Plates**

46 **Checklist**

50 **Photo Credits**

Arden Bandler Browning
*Middle of Somewhere and
Scenic Lookouts*
2019
Custom interactive virtual reality
painting incorporating digital
imagery of works on paper





Foreword

In 2019, curator Kristen Hileman presented an idea for an exhibition featuring female artists that were aesthetically and regionally connected. The proposal was well-timed to coincide with The Delaware Contemporary's plans to celebrate women in the centennial year of the 19th Amendment and to redefine our exhibition interests with a stronger focus in the Mid-Atlantic region; thus, the project commenced.

What surprised us all was a virus that would have such an impact on our world and would threaten our efforts to produce and deliver exhibitions to the public. As a result, the presentation of *Fields and Formations* suddenly became uncertain.

Two years later, The Delaware Contemporary is appreciative of the opportunity to publish this critical catalogue, showcase this groundbreaking exhibition, and provide novice art viewers and experts alike with a sensational experience. The selected works, now representing both women and non-binary artists, arouse strong emotional and even physical reactions. The exhibition produces a visitor experience that is meditative, provocative, and transcendent. At a time when we are all looking inward to find a place for contemplation, *Fields and Formations* provides a needed recess from daily concerns and creates a space for resolve.

The selection of artists was brilliant, as was consideration for the artworks' presentation within our challenging

industrial galleries filled with steel I-beams and unusually spaced doorways. For The Delaware Contemporary, it was an honor to give a platform to regional artists of such significant accomplishment who deserve more critical recognition, especially those artists who have spent much of their careers living and working in our region.

A special thanks to Hileman for her expertise and innovation in rethinking history. Through *Fields and Formations*, she pushes forward scholarship to more closely examine the aesthetic relationships in these artists' approaches to form, fields of color, and transformation of familiar materials.

A partnership with the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, our contemporary art anchor in the southern part of the Mid-Atlantic, was the "icing on the cake." It was a privilege to work with this highly regarded organization to significantly expand the visibility of the show.

Leslie Shaffer, Executive Director
The Delaware Contemporary

The American University Museum is thrilled to collaborate with independent curator Kristen Hileman and our sister institution to the north, The Delaware Contemporary. Both curator and institution reflect our desire to provide artists of color and women and non-binary artists the space their work has earned in historical and contemporary exhibitions and collections. By joining forces, we move together to highlight these artists and work towards a more equitable future.

Hileman's commitment to women, LGBTQ+ artists, and artists of color was in evidence long before it became fashionable. For two decades, first as a curator at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and then as Head of the Contemporary Department at The Baltimore Museum of Art, Hileman's concern for addressing social, political, and gender disparity runs through all her exhibitions, including the present show of abstractions, *Fields and Formations*.

The mission of The Delaware Contemporary aligns with that of the AU Museum. We believe in the transformative power of art. We work to stimulate positive and meaningful change in our world, while weaving our exhibitions and programs into the fabric of our communities. Finally, our organization extends opportunities for local and emerging artists to showcase their work in the context of regional, national, and international artists and curators.

Thank you for joining us in our presentation of *Fields and Formations*. It is our job to deliver aesthetic, emotional, and meaningful experiences that offer viewers a look at the present in a new light. We do it for ourselves, but we love an audience!

Dr. Jack Rasmussen, Director and Curator
American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center

Acknowledgements

Fields and Formations: A Survey of Mid-Atlantic Abstraction is a dream project come true after over two decades of imaginings and reflection. As a curator who got her start in 1995 at the Arlington Arts Center in Arlington, VA, my formative influences have been artists based in the Mid-Atlantic.

This project brings together several of the great artists who have taught me about the ways in which visual expression strikes profound emotional chords, stirs us to new insights about the world, and creates bonds between people. *Fields and Formations* has also been an opportunity to grow my knowledge of area artists, and I am grateful to Ava Hassinger, Jennie Hirsh, and James Thomas for pointing me in the direction of outstanding artists and new friends. Deepest thanks to all of the artists who are sharing their work through this exhibition and catalogue.

This endeavor would not have been possible without Leslie Shaffer's commitment to showcasing art that stands above trends, has strong community resonance, and gives voice to a diversity of perspectives. Not only as the Executive Director of The Delaware Contemporary, but as an educator and in her past leadership roles at Baltimore arts institutions, Shaffer exemplifies the combination of passion and tireless execution that ensures that local audiences can access meaningful and relevant experiences of contemporary

art. Jack Rasmussen, Director of the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, gave the show its second venue in Washington, DC and has been an unflagging champion and mentor for countless artists in the Mid-Atlantic. Through his curatorial work and leadership in Baltimore and Washington, DC, Rasmussen has made certain that the recent history of art in the region has been sensitively examined, joyously celebrated, and thoughtfully documented for future audiences.

Scholar and essayist Jennie Hirsh and designer Glenn Dellon have brought fresh insights and beauty to this publication, which will also now expand the historical record of Mid-Atlantic arts. Both exhibition and catalogue have been supported by fabulous staffs at The Delaware Contemporary and the American University Museum. Their dedication to serving art and audiences did not waver despite the many obstacles of exhibition planning during a pandemic. It is with tremendous appreciation that I recognize these outstanding individuals:

Kristen Hileman, Curator-in-Residence (2019-2021)
The Delaware Contemporary

THE DELAWARE CONTEMPORARY

Todd Chalk

Business Advancement Manager

Chase Dougherty

Gretchen Hupfel Curator of Contemporary Art

Joshua Hollingsworth

Engagement Manager

Laurel Howard

Gallery Shop Manager and Visitor Services Associate

Erica Loustau

Adjunct Deputy for Design Integration

Cadence Michels

Visitor Experience Representative

Tatiana Michels

Director of Business Advancement

Barbara Mitchell

Director of Administration

Charles Obara

Operations Manager

Brittany Powell

Director of Public Engagement

Dylan Rafferty

Security Guard

Brian Underwood

Security Guard

Morgan Weintel

Visitor Engagement Representative

Courtney Widdoes

Director of Development

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

AT THE KATZEN ARTS CENTER

Sharon Christiansen

Visitor Services and Operations Manager

Elizabeth Cowgill

Marketing and Publications Specialist

Sarah Leary

Operations Assistant (former)

Jessica Pochesci

Acting Registrar

Kevin Runyon

Preparator

Alexandra Schuman

Curatorial Assistant

Kristi-Anne Shaer

Associate Director (former)

AGAIN AND AGAIN OVER THE LAST FIFTY YEARS, ARTWORK has been a means to envision alternatives to the most common, the most visible, and the most dominant aspects of contemporary reality. The conditions of perception and thinking, or more plainly contemplative “places,” that manifest through artists’ efforts might liberate suppressed aspects of life, imagine different models for existing in the “real” world, or even aspire to metaphysical planes of awareness. Writing in 1967, as Modernist abstraction confronted recent Minimal approaches to sculpture, art critic and historian Michael Fried critiqued the newer and, in his terms, more literal work for offering viewers an experience that was too close to interactions with the everyday.¹ In his essay “Art and Objecthood,” Fried advocated for art to occupy a transcendent space, a condition of “presentness” and “grace,” which presumably provides not just a counterpart to, but relief from the mundane.² Fried elucidated these terms through his careful observations of various examples of abstraction, honing in on degrees of difference that registered visually and through an artwork’s physical relationship to the human body.

Among the artworks discussed were the hand-painted geometric sculptures of Anne Truitt (1921-2004), a female artist based in Washington, DC, who Fried positioned as a transitional figure in the move towards Minimalism; she was neither fully Modernist nor fully literal in her approach.³ It is worth dwelling on Truitt’s appearance in

Fried’s influential text as an introduction to the exhibition *Fields and Formations*, a project that presents the work of twelve women and non-binary abstract artists living in the Mid-Atlantic. How remarkable that Truitt, an artist whose gender and geography marginalized her within the art world of the 1960s, claims a significant place in a much-referenced document of that time. Even half a century later, locating Truitt’s subtle abstraction at an intersection of the assertion of concrete properties and more expressive, internal qualities seems correct, curious, and worthy of further consideration. Then, how regrettable that in the intervening decades, Truitt’s unique place in defining an alternate thread for American abstraction diminished in prominence, her legacy eclipsed by male artists, including those who were her cohorts in “Art and Objecthood” such as Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella (on the side of Modernist painting) and Donald Judd and Robert Morris (on the side of Minimal abstraction).

Writing in 2020, well after Minimalism had been fully assimilated into the story of American art, but not so long after Truitt finally began to gain a greater standing in that narrative, writer and curator Legacy Russell also envisioned a place for art outside of the everyday or, in her words, outside of the “normative ordinary.”⁴ Russell’s book *Glitch Feminism* proposes that glitched online spaces (technological events and intersections not deployed as planned) can be artistically generative in and of themselves and also model

Installation view of
**Anne Truitt: Perception
and Reflection**

October 8, 2009 –
January 3, 2010
Hirshhorn Museum and
Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, DC



new paths for creativity off-line. Russell contends that these unexpected pathways provide a space for the self-exploration and expression of bodies – female, Queer, and/or of color – that face barriers in more conventional forums. Not coincidentally, Russell’s glitched encounters are also poised to overcome the obstacle of geographic position, as technology dissolves physical art hubs to position dispersed voices and ideas more centrally. As clearly as Russell’s technophilic imaginings reinvigorate the ongoing call for art to provide alternatives to conventional reality, she also demonstrates that this role for art is essential because the normative ordinary is not neutrally banal; it is privileged, frequently violent, and excludes too many bodies.⁵

Fields and Formations proceeds from this cross-generational desire for art to represent another place, responsive to but different from daily concerns and constraints as it gathers together artists, spanning five decades in age and living in and around Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.⁶ These artists create alternative conditions for feeling and understanding through abstraction. By deploying color, texture, line, shape, volume, repetition, scale, and more, they achieve compositions that evidence balance, liberation, playfulness, eccentricity, and even complexity, disruption, and resistance when and where it does not exist in social or historical reality. For instance, despite the confinement, sickness, and uncertainty of a pandemic, there is freedom, beauty, and resolution to be felt by standing before many of

their compositions. This work manifests qualities that humbly provide comfort and boldly define aspirations. Such an approach to abstraction is strongly affective. As sensitive and deeply personal explorations, these artworks elicit physical and emotive responses in our bodies (not just our eyes) that escape easy categorization and articulation by language or theory alone, much the way that Truitt’s work operates so particularly and independently both in the text of “Art and Objecthood” and when experienced in person.

Quite intentionally, the exhibition artists – female and non-binary, of various races and ethnic backgrounds, and based in East Coast cities other than New York – reflect gender, race, and geography that has often been given less space in the art world’s most prominent exhibitions, collections, and market places. Therefore, in addition to presenting artists who open doors to alternate places of critique, synthesis, and illumination, this exhibition itself seeks to create another place, a robust and celebratory one where these artists are not only recognized but their work is documented. As time moves on, the artists and their art will continue to go forward together in the pages of the catalogue, in memories, and in relationships that might spring from the show. Once again, to frame the project with an eye to past stories of Washington area art made by women, what might have happened if Truitt and Alma Thomas (1891-1978), another exceptional abstract artist based in Washington, DC, had a two-person show together



Alma Thomas
Earth Sermon –
Beauty, Love and Peace
1971
Acrylic on canvas
76 × 52.125 inches
Hirshhorn Museum and
Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian
Institution, Washington, DC,
The Martha Jackson Memorial
Collection: Gift of Mr. and
Mrs. David K. Anderson, 1980

during their lifetimes?⁷ Is it possible to imagine a space where that might have happened? Why didn't it happen? How would it have impacted the audiences of the period and the way we look at their work today? Would it have moved curators, critics, academics, and collectors of the day to directly address the impact of gender and race on the many diverse talents now generally associated with the Washington Color School? And wouldn't it have been a great show?⁸ Beyond interesting speculation, these questions prompt action now to ensure that opportunities are not missed to contemplate the significance of relationships between art and artists in regional art worlds.

A Place beyond Language

Affective abstraction is a place where words and language dissolve and different modes of understanding and feeling are nurtured and emboldened. Such is the case with Maren Hassinger's *Wrenching News*, 2008, a piece formed anew each time it is exhibited. With the artist's guidance, a group of volunteers undertakes the slow work of twisting individual pages of the *New York Times* to bind the social hierarchies, inequities, and traumas reported in the daily news into two large, dimensional disks. While individual words become illegible, their dark ink remains a dynamic visual element, dancing across the surface of the newsprint, which is transformed through the repeated gesture of twisting, a movement that encompasses hands wringing in worry and wringing-out to launder and cleanse. Facing *Wrenching News*, viewers can no longer read about people and events in the distilled and biased language relied upon to convey the "realities" of the world; instead, they perceive visually and feel bodily a far more contradictory reality – a place fluttering with chaos and disruption, but also a place in which every individual story is bound to another within a highly integrated expression of humanity.

linn meyers also uses abstraction to amplify words so their meaning can be felt strongly and expanded. In her *Text Reduction* series, meyers cuts away most of the text from pages of a large bound book, dated 1900, which aggregates various writings by art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) on the British Romantic painter William Turner (1775-1851). meyers isolates fragments of Ruskin's writing anchored by such words as "majesty," "beautiful," "silence," and "self"

on fragile fingers of aged paper suspended in negative space. These voids are a visceral expression of the sublime equation explored by proto-abstractionist Turner: of an individual contemplating their/her/his transitory smallness against the powerful vastness of enduring nature. The *Text Reduction* works are complemented by contemporaneous drawings on graph paper, filled not with emptiness but dense fields buzzing with minute inked marks. In both instances, meyers's abstract expanses offer insights that language cannot.

A Place of Material Transformation

As surely as artists can expand perceptions by altering encounters with language, disrupting interactions with everyday materials can lead to new positions of sensitivity and appreciation. Paper is an essential element in the abstractions of Jae Ko and Alexis Granwell, and it connects their work to that of Hassinger and meyers. In an exhausting process of un-winding and more loosely re-rolling tight, industrial rolls of paper then stacking the newly malleable shapes into massive installations, Ko transfigures a common, functional material into something exceptional and aesthetic. Weight and gravity act on the forms, compressing some of the rolls, while others spill over the stack as if poised to fall. Viewers who stand near the towering arrangement are kept in a state of visual and bodily suspense coupled with awe, recognizing the abundant formation's harmony but also its precariousness. Ko's installations seem alive, recapturing the energy of paper's organic origins to encapsulate states of existence, balance, and transformation.

In the hands of Alexis Granwell, paper pulp also re-animates, blooming into pod-like forms, gracefully bending stems, and delicate blushes of color that sprout from elegant wood pedestals. At the same time, these sculpted paper forms ossify, evoking animal bones weathered and bleached by the sun. Through her tactile manipulations and inventive constructions, Granwell creates a place of curiosity and unexpected possibility. Technically, she infuses volume and irregularities into a material most commonly formed into inert, flat sheets, producing a desire to circumambulate the transformed substance and actively inspect its surfaces. Poetically, she conjures the mysterious contradictions of a

garden of bones and a museum display of otherworldly and still living flowers.

An alchemical, atomized approach to materials characterizes Maggie Michael's painting. Along with the rich colors of her paints, the surfaces of her canvases contain soil, pulverized metal, and other material fragments from places that hold meaning, including locations visited while traveling, her partner's studio, and other sites she encounters while living and working in Washington, DC. Just as these physical particles anchor Michael's abstraction to her individual experience, the titles she gives the work hint at the impact of political figures and events that occur in Washington. Inflected with references to location and time, as well as the intensities of applying paint by pouring, stenciling, and attaching hardened acrylic passages torn from earlier works, Michael's painting is a place in which intangible memories merge with tactile evidence to generate an aesthetic third term that elicits shared contemplation and emotional response.

A Place of Hybridity

The material experimentation and biographical undercurrents of Michael's abstraction lead to the work of Natessa Amin and Jo Smail, but with the awareness that reshuffling the order of this essay text would highlight a new combination of relationships, interweaving the work in different manners. Amin also textures some of her paintings' surfaces with mediums and pigments that contain unexpected elements, including glass beads and pulverized mica. These materials assert their exquisite physicality by reflecting light and posing a contrast to the light-absorbing black gesso that serves as a ground in several of Amin's works. The artist's paintings are intimately-scaled and hang in groupings that heighten both their continuities and differences. Across the physical interactions of ethereal sparkle and dark space, imagery that reflects landscape and textile design emerges, bringing together striking motifs inspired by colors and patterns drawn from Indian, African, and Pennsylvania Dutch sources, all cultures that have played a formative part in Amin's life.

Jo Smail's painting is a hybrid space as well, celebrating richly patterned textiles found in South Africa (the country in which she spent her first four decades) and referencing Western painting, which has informed her development as an artist (a pursuit she continues from her current home in Baltimore). Smail incorporates table cloths and other fabric into her canvases, eccentrically and lovingly equalizing the materials of domesticity with those elevated as "fine art." The artist's irrepressible impulse to replace hierarchy with hybridity continues as she splashes compositions over multiple canvases of both grand and petite scale. These, in turn, might be positioned far-off conventional eye-level hanging height. While she works with the rectilinear space of Western painting, she also creates supports of irregular shapes, appropriated from discrete passages of Matisse's paintings and rendered topsy-turvy through Smail's reorientation. Inspired by the human-made discipline of painting, these highly individualized objects nevertheless resonate with Ko and Granwell's dynamically organic forms.

A Place for All Bodies

A reconsideration of textiles is also to be found in Jesse Harrod's woven paracord formations, which span the oft-separated fields of fiber arts and sculpture.⁹ Indeed, as meticulously crafted as Harrod's pieces are, they remain quite undisciplined in disrupting binary understandings of not only artistic genre, but also gender. Harrod deploys a type of nylon rope that designates traditionally masculine outdoor and sporting activities in the conventionally feminine work of weaving. The resulting neon bright pieces evoke festive garments, as well as the variety of bodies that might boldly wear them. In a related series, Harrod weaves and then paints cotton in small scaled but highly dimensional wall reliefs that seem to merge body and topography. The power of abstraction in all of Harrod's work is that it creates an unfixed space of being not simply both, but more.

The impact and expression of bodies is also felt in Alex Ebstein's work. Resembling early 20th century painterly experimentations in the incipient language of abstraction,

Ebstein's compositions are formed from yoga mats. Recent work features mats that resemble her own skin color, and she adds swatches of sheer nylon and puckering stitches to further render the synthetic mats into the curves and texture of skin. As the artist transfers the physical dynamics of the body onto the operations of painting, she creates a place for contemplating the fraught idealism that pervades relationships to bodies and to art. Gyms are spaces of sociability and motivation, but they are also designed experiences that enhance desire to consume goods and services as much as they improve physiques. Art, too, generates social discourse and inspires, all the while circulating as a commodity that whets a thirst for prestige in unquenchable ways.

A Place for New Navigations

Places of affect are identified and intensified through technology in the multi-faceted work of Arden Bendler Browning. The artist begins with small water colors of landscapes through which she has traveled or, during the past year, the locations she had planned to visit before the advent of COVID-19. Like Michael, Bendler Browning collages fragments from earlier pieces into these colorful, impressionistic images, using artifacts to carry over meaning as they simultaneously generate new work. Bendler Browning then inputs the water colors into Tilt Brush, an application that allows her to create extensive, layered virtual reality environments around the landscapes. After building and exploring this next register of abstraction, Bendler Browning returns to physical paint, sprayed and applied by brush in large scale paintings. While the circular and elliptical shapes of these physical supports reflect the 360-degree VR experience; ultimately the spatial relationships realized through the digital platform are once again rethought and further abstracted back onto a two-dimensional surface. The processes of making and viewing Bendler Browning's work are ones of navigating the different realities of interlaced spaces. Artist and viewer move back and forth constantly from places of memory to places of desire, from places of observation to places of imagination, and from places of physical manifestation to places of virtual discovery.

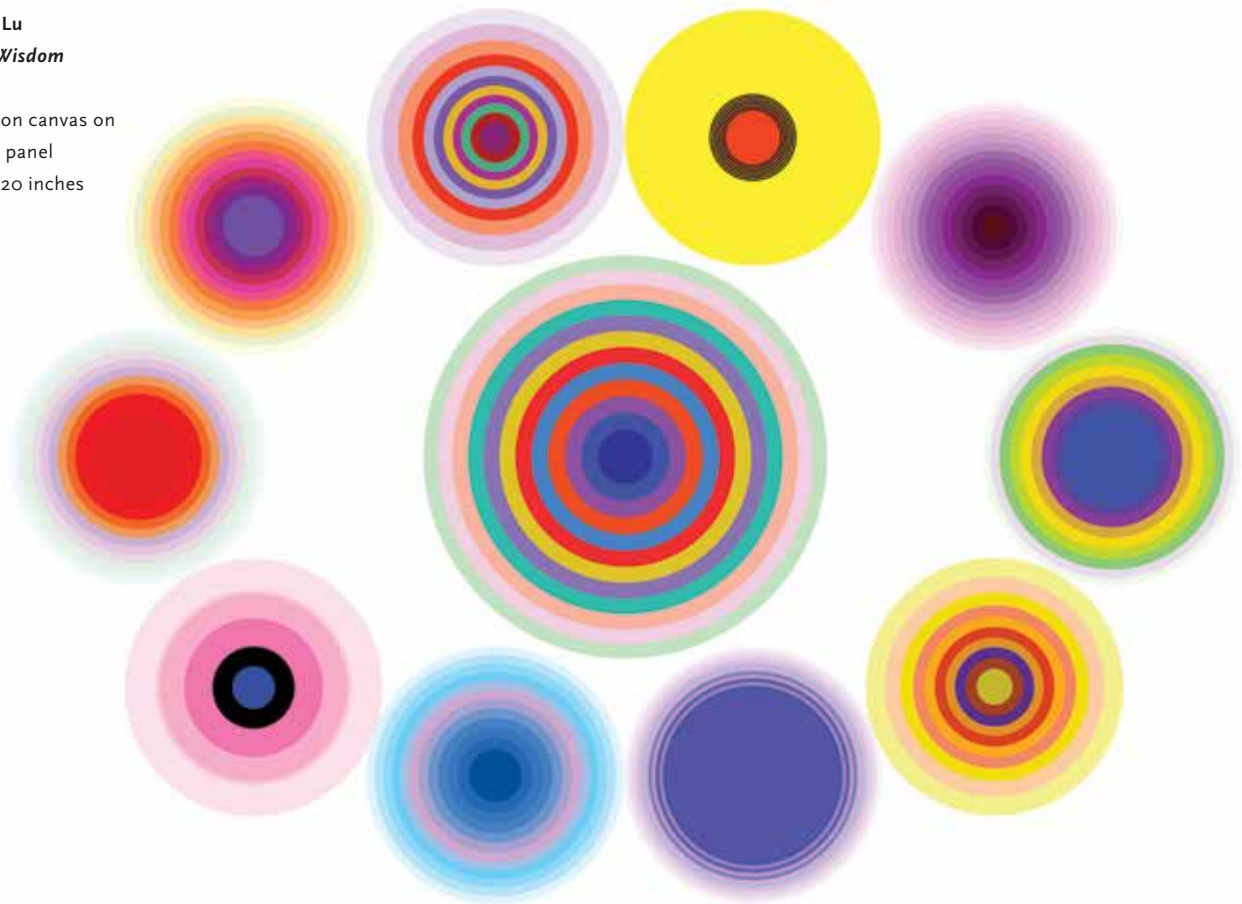


Jo Smail
Gob of Gladness
2012-2020
Acrylic, pen, and
African fabric on canvas
80 x 56 inches

Linling Lu also takes viewers to places that transcend categories. Circular paintings, vibrating with color, comprise her ongoing series *100 Melodies of Solitude*, which now numbers more than 200 works. Lu executes her studies for these works digitally, carefully selecting colors and thicknesses for the concentric rings that form each composition. She then enters a physical stage of making, mixing a nuanced rainbow of acrylic paints and applying them to canvases precisely stretched onto curved frames of varying diameter. As viewers encounter the bands of various hues, some in gradations, some in strong contrast, the flat space of painting expands. An area of one color might seem to sink behind the wall, while another appears to levitate off a canvas's surface. In Lu's works, the limitations of concrete space dissolve and new possibilities of beauty unfold, as if a stone was thrown into still water to produce a portal, described by a rainbow of reverberations.

Space, energy, and vibration also catalyze Carol Brown Goldberg's abstract explorations of human experience. Two of Goldberg's ink on paper drawings from 1978 are, by several decades, the earliest works presented in *Fields and Formations*. The works date to a period when Goldberg attended the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, DC, studying with Color School painter Gene Davis (1920-1985), as well as the younger painter Tom Green (1942-2012) who worked in a more personalized abstract style. Their inclusion is intended to link this exhibition to a longer regional history of gifted abstractionists, all the while providing a powerful example of affective abstraction at work. Goldberg began making these early pieces on paper during her young son's hospitalization. In a deeply internal way, the drawings mirror the processes of Hassinger's *Wrenching News*: the psychological and bodily experience of pain and worry, greater and more real than

Linling Lu
Eye of Wisdom
2021
Acrylic on canvas on
shaped panel
160 x 220 inches



words can ever capture, is expressed in repeated creative gesture – gesture continued until it is resolved visually. Goldberg’s drawings simultaneously achieve a sense of distance and a powerful intensity, as if they were a map of the artist’s emotional state of being. In more recent work, her abstraction continues to adopt a sort of bird’s-eye perspective of not only shapes defined by vital color, but of visual circuitry and interconnected fields of space, which coalesce optically and metaphorically as viewers spend more time with her work.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Fields and Formations began as a curatorial question about whether a Mid-Atlantic regional style of abstraction, anchored in fields of form and color and extending from the Washington Color School, might still exist in the early decades of the 21st century. That question was also tied to a profound interest in foregrounding female and non-binary artists working in the area. Ultimately, the strength of this second desire caused the constraints of the historical question to give way. To be certain, resonances with the Color School artists’ stains, veils, pours, and other formations of colors and shape are found in this work; paintings by Goldberg, Lu, and Michael make particularly compelling comparisons. However, the exhibition follows where the collective work of the artists’ leads: to a place of emotional and perceptual acuity, and of aspirational as well as regional connection. In this connectivity, there is a hopeful proposition: that artworks yield a condition of mindfulness which is largely absent in day-to-day existence. For those who find this proposition to be true, the next step is to return to the everyday – a world of biased short cuts, limiting words, disposable and dispassionate objects, and movement that is at once too rapid and too inhibited – with the attuned sensitivities, non-linguistic insights, and embrace of complexity stimulated by art.

Kristen Hileman is a Baltimore area curator and educator. She has served as a curator at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC and Head of the Contemporary Department at The Baltimore Museum of Art, initiating scholarship on regionally-based artists at both institutions.

NOTES

1. As the J.R. Herbert Boone Professor Emeritus of Humanities and Art History at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Michael Fried is an example of an individual making ongoing contributions to the fields of art history and criticism from a base in the Mid-Atlantic.

2. Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 168.

3. *Ibid.*, 152. Fried’s description of Truitt’s work comes in the form of an extended quotation of the older and quite prominent art critic Clement Greenberg’s discussion of Truitt in Greenberg’s essay “Recentness of Sculpture,” which appeared in the catalogue for the 1967 exhibition *American Sculpture of the Sixties* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

4. Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2020), 83. For examples of early 21st-century interest in Truitt, see James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) and Kristen Hileman, *Anne Truitt: Perception and Reflection* (London: D Giles Limited, 2009). The latter publication accompanied a posthumous retrospective of Truitt’s career. The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC was the sole venue for that exhibition.

5. Examples of the desire for art to model terms for existing and experiencing outside of daily experience and social norms over the last fifty years are too numerous to elaborate here, but

they range from expanded ways of thinking about the categories of visual art through activist efforts around identity and the AIDS health crisis to the utopian ambitions of some artists working in relational aesthetics.

6. Although she currently lives in New York City, Maren Hassinger lived in Baltimore for many years, where she was the Director of the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art (1997-2018). Included in the exhibition is her work *Wrenching News*, first realized while Hassinger lived in Baltimore.

7. Alma Thomas is the subject of the traveling retrospective *Alma W. Thomas: Everything is Beautiful* curated by Dr. Seth Reman and Dr. Jonathan Frederick Walz, with a tour taking it to The Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, VA in the summer of 2021, The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC in fall 2021, The Frist Art Museum in Nashville, TN in winter 2022, and The Columbus Museum of Art in summer 2022.

8. In retrospect, it appears that Truitt and Thomas were proverbial ships sailing past each other with Thomas having solo shows at both the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1972. Truitt was then featured in a solo show at the Whitney in late 1973 and at the Corcoran in 1974. Truitt’s work was included in the Corcoran’s *34th Biennial of Contemporary American Painting* in 1975, while Thomas’s work was in the *35th Biennial* in 1977.

9. Paracord is also known as parachute cord.

Building a Context for *Fields and Formations*: beyond Eccentric Abstraction, the Decorative, and the Post-Minimal

Jennie Hirsh

RESPONDING TO NEW TRENDS IN POST-MINIMAL SCULPTURE that foregrounded form, material, and texture, Lucy Lippard coined the phrase “eccentric abstraction” in the summer of 1966. She then used the term to describe the work of the ten artists in the exhibition that she opened at the Fischbach Gallery on Madison Avenue in New York City in September that year.¹ Although their respective works differed from one another in size, shape, and scale, these artists – Alice Adams, Louise Bourgeois, Lindsey Decker, Eva Hesse, Gary Kuehn, Jean Linder, Bruce Nauman, Don Potts, Keith Sonnier, and Frank Lincoln Viner – created work that departed from what Lippard viewed as the more prevalent vanguard sculptural styles of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In particular, she was responding to the works’ softer, more fluid corporeality, a feminine foil to the imposing machismo of more masculine and hard-edged geometric Minimalist sculptures showcased around the same time in exhibitions such as *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum (April-June 1966) and, soon after, in *The Art of the Real: USA 1948-1968* (July-September 1968).²

What bound together these artists, most of whom were trained first in painting rather than sculpture, was that their non-figurative sculptures underscored “materials, shape, color, and sensuous experience” in a new sculptural language whose syntax infused “intentionally inactive” forms with humor, an inflection Lippard saw as the legacy of Surrealism.³ Put otherwise, these somewhat quirky and

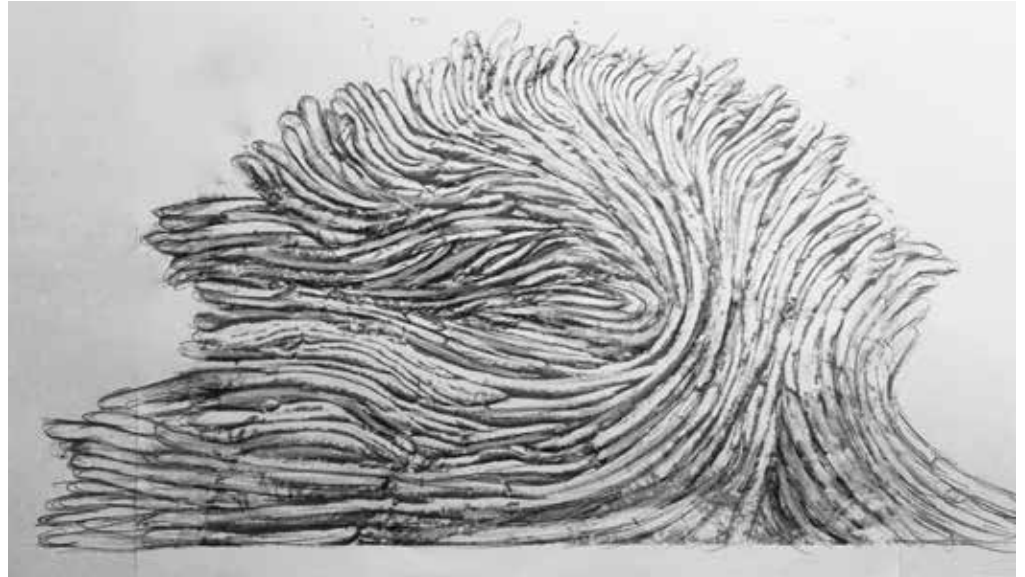
subtly irreverent works achieve a kind of neutralization, or stasis, in which seemingly incongruous choices ultimately balance out one another insofar as “eccentric abstraction is based on the reconciliation of different forms, or formal effects.”⁴ Describing their visual rhetoric in gendered terms (irrespective of the sex of their maker), Lippard saw these subtle yet insistent expressions of softness, sensuality, and, at times, vulnerability in contrast to their more rigid and stable geometric contemporary counterparts, which were described in more self-consciously masculine terms.⁵

Of course eccentric abstraction was far from the only moniker nominated to describe abstraction that deviated from, either formally or politically, the hegemonic characteristics of Minimalism. Amongst the various feminist art movements that emerged in the wake of second-wave feminism, the Pattern and Decoration movement (P&D), with artists based in California and New York, comprised a number of artistic strategies that celebrated, rather than rejected, decorative strategies for ornamentation and art forms typically asserted with the domestic (read: feminine) sphere.⁶ Many of these latter, notably textiles and ceramics, had been previously denigrated as craft as opposed to fine art. Valerie Jaudon and Joyce Kozloff, two of the movement’s protagonists, penned “Art Hysterical Notions of Progress and Culture,” the manifesto of P&D, mapping out the systematic sexism and racism of Western art history, in general, and, more specifically, the

Jae Ko

Sketch for 流 (Flow)

2021



consistent relegation of the decorative to a lower status.⁷ Artists such as Cynthia Carlson and Miriam Schapiro embraced the patterns, textures, and ornament familiar from domestic textiles. Specifically, they indicated and incorporated the woven structure of fabric, as in Carlson's literal weavings of the canvases on which she painted or representational images thereof, or the vivid colors and imagery often featured on them. But like so many movements associated with the domestic and the feminine, P&D fell quickly out of favor, only to be revived critically in recent years.⁸

Nearly three decades after the term eccentric abstraction was coined and a decade after the demise of P&D, a small but important show, *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties*, curated by Lynn Zelevansky in the summer of 1994 at the Museum of Modern Art, explored the ways in which sculptures and installations by Polly Apfelbaum, Mona Hatoum, Rachel Lachowicz, Jac Leirner, Claudia Matzko, Rachel Whiteread, and Andrea Zittel recalibrate some of the formal aspects of Post-Minimalism – “repetition, the grid, and geometric forms” – to contemplate not only aesthetic but also social and political discourses, incorporating more explicit references to not only gender and the body but also exile and social class.⁹ Indeed, as Zelevansky points out, Post-Minimalism, including “‘Anti-Form’ sculpture and Process Art, to Conceptualism and Performance and Body art” did not

accidentally emerged around the same time as second-wave feminism.¹⁰ In setting up the critical success of the artists in *Sense and Sensibility*, Zelevansky reprises the progression of Lippard's own critical and curatorial musings on “feminine” forms and ideas, mapping out a trajectory from *Eccentric Abstraction* forward in the shift from Minimal to Post-Minimal art. In particular, she documents how women artists (and their curators) moved from repressing those tendencies to embracing them as embodying a positive rather than negative aspect of work. Flexible forms, such as Apfelbaum's colorful velvet patches strewn about the floor, or domestic cocoons, such as Zittel's womb-like miniature domestic pods, elegantly and unapologetically assert so-called “feminine” qualities that are “eccentric” per Lippard and/or “decorative” per Jaudon and Kozloff as part of a stable, elegant vocabulary of abstraction. With the passage of time and feminist art-historical discourse now a few decades old, these works and their affective stance were granted a more generous endorsement that has endured.

With these three art-historical episodes in mind, I turn now to consider their relevance for *Fields and Formations*, a timely exhibition that brings together works by a dozen women and non-binary artists whose mature practice unfolded in and around three East Coast cities: Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. Encompassing drawing, painting, collage, installation, sculpture, and thoughtful combinations thereof, this band of Mid-Atlantic artists carries on the tradition of

Jesse Harrod
Installation view of
For the Love of Danny
2020
Paracord and metal
156 × 48 inches



irreverent abstraction in their own region. Both emerging and established, these disciplined yet insubordinate artists weave the threads of their predecessors into new tapestries to produce individual idioms that are both historically grounded and freshly contemporary. Geographically proximate to one another, the artists' respective practices bear formal, thematic, and historic affinities that connect them in ways that merit consideration. To conclude, I will consider a few of those contingent but assertive strategies.

Maren Hassinger's mesmerizing, mandala-like work featuring sculpted newsprint transforms the grit and grief of news delivered daily into fibrous non-denominational *tondi*. With textual language that has been sliced and shredded, stories dissolve into illegible locks, hand-twisted into a nebulous constellation of local news elevated from fodder for the recycling bin to a pictorial pinnacle. Similarly restricted in their tonality, linn meyers's swirling drawings comprise myriad subtle marks that dance gracefully across their paper supports, a sustained labor-intensive practice that reads as unexpectedly aesthetically delicate. Jae Ko's mural-like paper sculptures in her *Flow* series contain rhythmic curves whose organic movements mystically remain liquid yet stay on the gallery wall. In each case, the artist entrances the viewer with ephemeral qualities that paradoxically foreground the material vulnerability that stabilizes their own eccentricity.

Arden Bendler Browning, Jesse Harrod, and Linling Lu perform personalized pictorial exercises that rediscover the energy produced through chromatic relations and references. Bendler Browning's practice weaves together loose, gestural, and, at times, translucent ribbons of color with more opaque and crisply delineated prismatic vectors and organically outlined forms. Whether rendered in paint or painted virtually into digital space, she radically expands the psychedelic parameters of her canvases into infinite imaginary worlds. In parts and as wholes, the shocking neon hues of the fiber bodies composed in Jesse Harrod's sculptures reject recognized pictorial positions, busting out of the frame, rippling off of the wall, and standing indignantly

in spectatorial space; their creative gestures redefine pictorial space by queering conventional categories.¹¹ Lu's floating orbs energetically allude to color lessons gleaned from Joseph Albers and Mark Rothko as well as the simple yet dizzying compositional strategies of Op Art and the trademark targets of Jasper Johns. At the same time, her dynamically colored concentric circular forms offer a fascinating counterpoint to the emphatically red targets of contemporary consumer culture, logos which are their own hypnotic field as compelling as Narcissus' image in the mythological pool.

Echoing Lu's buoyant orbs, bull's-eyes float across the land masses that occupy the pictorial maps expressed in Carol Brown Goldberg's pen-and-ink drawings. The resulting forms ambiguously reference not only the topographical but the biological, offering journeys through highways of arteries, veins, and suspended organs. More emphatically, her larger works are crowded fields that foreground puzzle-piece shapes that fuse colors in territorial blocks. These images simultaneously suggest imaginary landscapes and anatomical drawings of the internal operations of unidentifiable bodies. Natessa Amin's abstract canvases stage conversations between curvilinear and rectilinear, generating her own pictorial logic in which original patterns and other decorative elements decisively produce passages that conflate the abstract with the figurative, infusing pictorial double entendre with a sense of humor reminiscent of the paintings and sculptural installations of Ree Morton.

Clever yet ambiguous, Alex Ebstein's carved yoga-mat graphic compositions defy expectations. They are optic as well as haptic, tempting the viewer to touch their soft, synthetic mass-produced surfaces, which are embedded with playful art-historical allusions to the Dada faces and textures used by Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Ironically echoing the rich texture of needlepoint handicrafts, Ebstein glibly adorns these faces, literally winking at fragments of Salvador Dalí's surrealist iconography as well as the humor at work in Pop Art, especially that made by women.¹²

Painting rather than carving, Jo Smail layers patterns upon pattern on her oddly shaped canvases – some appearing almost like artists’ palettes. Accumulative and occlusive, these spunky compositions weave together painted and real textile threads that perform the idiosyncratic nature of memory and history, blacking out some spots, complicating others.

Presenting abjection as form rather than context, Alexis Granwell (sculpturally) and Maggie Michael (pictorially) create art *as flux*. Granwell’s sinewy, skeletal structures suspended in space swoon toward collapse while laughing in its face through unexpected chromatic flourishes that provide a kind of grammatical pause in their bodies. Hybrid bodies of lumpy limbs and comic color, they too resist conventional boundaries of form. Similarly, translucent layers of natural tones that seem both active and passive, made marks and suspended stains, characterize Michael’s potent pools and

stretches of earthy browns and bloody magentas. Her tactile paintings register almost accidental traces of nature subtly choreographed by the artist’s deliberate hand, creating abstractions fueled by fire, or beautiful catastrophes that bloom into a Phoenix-like recovery.

Indeed, all twelve of the artists included in *Fields and Formations* push forward the very characteristics questioned by detractors of eccentric abstraction and other feminized art movements. Their intrepid and curious, yet disciplined and purposeful works also censure the critical history that harshly exiled softness, vulnerability, ephemerality, and ornament from more orthodox and geometrically driven abstraction. In advancing such previously devalued qualities in new directions and by innovative means, these artists have quietly but confidently marked out memorable territory for the Mid-Atlantic’s legacy of abstraction.



Dr. Jennie Hirsh is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore. Based in Philadelphia, Hirsh is an active curator, author, and editor who has explored topics including Giorgio de Chirico, Yinka Shonibare, Regina Silveira, and contemporary print-making in Philadelphia.

Alex Ebstein

Installation view of

Dream Sellers

September 3 – October 17, 2020

Victori+Mo Gallery, New York

Series composed of hand-cut yoga mats, acrylic, embroidery floss, faux eyelashes, nylon mesh, powder coated aluminum, and hardware

NOTES

1. Lippard lectured on the topic at both the University of California at Berkeley and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in summer 1966, featured it in her catalogue essay for the show at the Fischbach Gallery, and further developed the term in her essay "Eccentric Abstraction," in the November 1966 issue of *Art International* x, 9. This essay was slightly revised and reprinted in Lucy R. Lippard, *Changing. Essays in Art History* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971), 98-111.
2. See *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptures*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: Jewish Museum, 1966), the catalogue for an exhibition that included Carl Andre, Larry Bell, Walter De Maria, Dan Flavin, Judy Gerowitz (who had not yet adopted the name Judy Chicago), Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, John McCracken, Robert Morris, and Anne Truitt. See also *The Art of the Real: USA 1948-1968*, ed. E. C. Gossen (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968).
3. Reflecting on the show just five years later, Lippard acknowledged that similar deviations from the dominant tendencies of abstraction were happening elsewhere in the world around the same time, noting, for instance, the work of Barry Flanagan in England and Emilio Rewart in Argentina. *Ibid.*, 99, note 1.
4. *Ibid.*, 100.
5. Looking at two-dimensional non-figurative work preceding Minimalism, Lisa Saltzman astutely observes the gender-biased language rampant in the critical reception of Abstract Expressionism. Specifically, she compares the turns of phrase applied to the work of Jackson Pollock (and other male painters) with Helen Frankenthaler. Critics declare the active pictorial practice of male Abstract Expressionists ejaculatory; they see the dripping practice of Frankenthaler as staining or menstrual. See Lisa Saltzman, "Reconsidering the Stain: On Gender and the Body in Helen Frankenthaler's Painting," in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 372-383.
6. Interestingly, there have been several comprehensive exhibitions focused on P&D in the last five years, reinscribing this too often dismissed movement into the history of postwar American art from a more critical vantage point. These shows mounted in the United States as well as Europe included *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972-1985*, organized by Anna Katz, Curator, with Rebecca Lowery, Assistant Curator, at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (October 2019-May 2020), a survey of 50 P&D artists, and *Surface/Depth: The Decorative after Miriam Schapiro*, curated by Elissa Auther at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York (March-September 2018), which considered the influence of seminal P&D figure Miriam Schapiro on contemporary art. See Glenn Adamson, "Reassessing Pattern & Decoration, the Last Art Movement of the Twentieth Century," in *Art in America* (September 3, 2019) for an overview of these exhibitions. <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/pattern-decoration-legacy-reassessed-la-moca-ica-boston-63654/> accessed May 1, 2021.
7. See Valerie Jaudon and Joyce Kozloff, "Art Hysterical Notions of Progress and Culture." *Heresies* 4 (1978), 38-42. This manifesto maps out the chauvinistic and Eurocentric context for P&D as well as the movement's angling to subvert the prejudices inherent in such framework.
8. Though it thrived for a decade or so, P&D was then degraded until a comprehensive survey held at the Hudson Museum, Yonkers, New York (October 2007-January 2008) positioned it as the last serious Modernist movement in American art, signaling a major shift in the movement's critical fortune that would resurface a decade later. See Anne Swartz, *Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art, 1975-1985*. (Yonkers: Hudson River Museum, 2007).
9. See Lynn Zelevansky, "Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties," in *Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 7. As Zelevansky notes, her use of Jane Austen's title, *Sense and Sensibility*, self-consciously follows a tradition initiated by Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," *Artforum* (November 1973), 43-53, then continued with *Sense and Sensibility in Feminist Art Practice* presented by the Midland Group in Nottingham, England (November 5-December 4, 1982), and then reprised by Nancy Princenthal for the title of her show, *Sense and Sensibility* at Solo Gallery/Solo Press in New York City (January 9-February 8, 1992). See 34, note 15. In the essay proper, Zelevansky dutifully reprises Krauss's splitting of late 1960s art into mounting private and public concerns. See esp. 8-9.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Harrod's work, in particular, seems to extend and update the practices of resistance at the heart of 1960s and 1970s textile works described by Elissa Auther in *String, Felt, Thread* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), esp. 7-17 in "Fiber Art and the Struggle." See too Auther's earlier critique of the stigmatization of textile works in "Classification and Its Consequences: The Case of Fiber Art," *American Art* 16:3 (Autumn 2002), 2-9.
12. See Sid Sachs and Kalliopi Minoudaki, *Seductive Subversion: Women and Pop Art 1958-68* (Philadelphia: University of the Arts/Abbeville Press, 2010).



Natessa Amin

American, born 1987, Easton, PA
Currently works in Philadelphia, PA

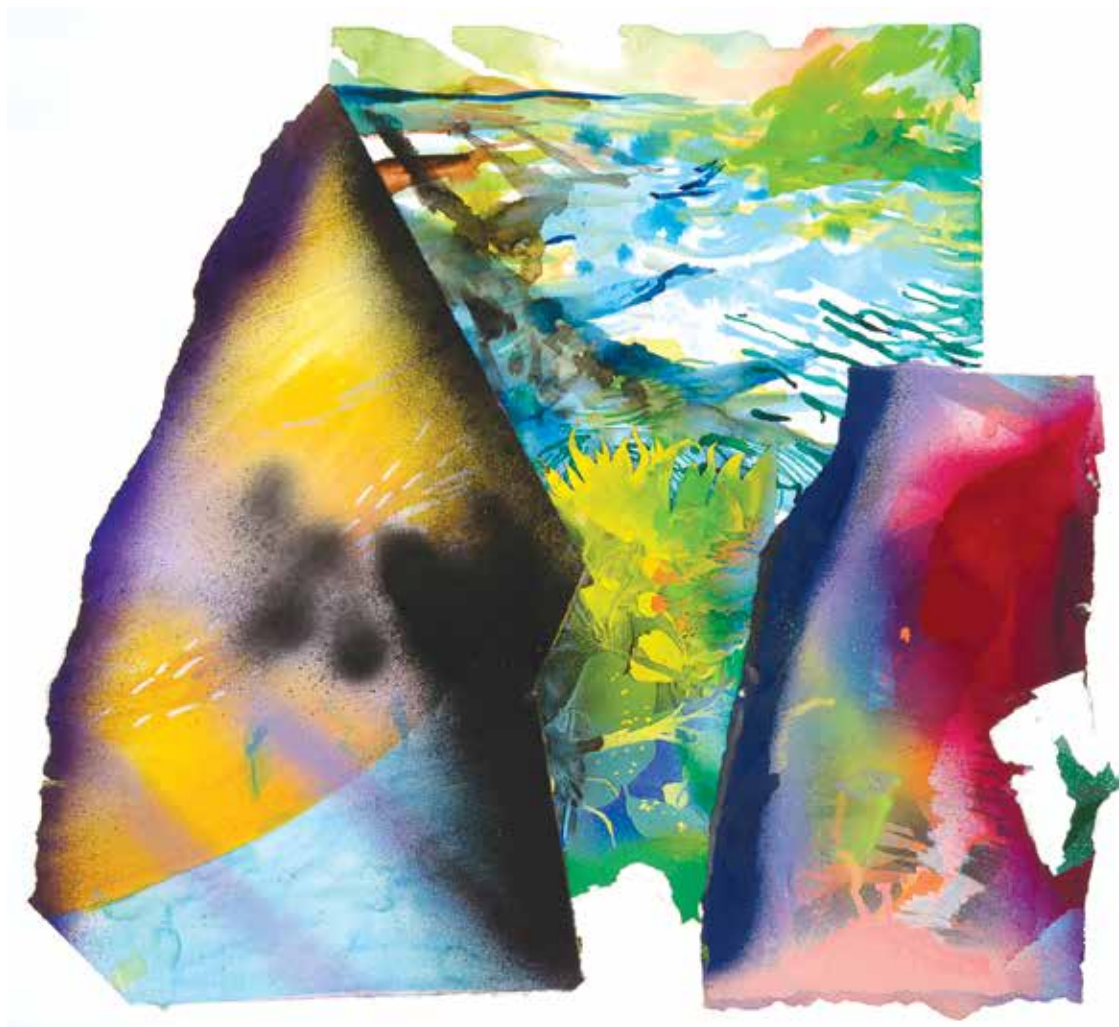
Untitled

2021
Acrylic on canvas
30 x 44 inches



Natessa Amin teaches at Moravian College in Bethlehem, PA and is a co-founder of FJORD, an artist-run collective in Philadelphia. She brings elements of sculpture and drawing to her highly tactile painting practice, which is also defined by an ongoing investigation of texture, reflectivity, and the other subtleties of pigments, dyes, and paints. Alongside natural forms, cultural references influence her sensitive abstraction. She frequently incorporates imagery that evokes Indian, African, and Pennsylvania Dutch textiles as a response to her family's background and the place in which she was raised, lending her forms a simultaneously iconic and emotional quality.

Seeds
2021
Acrylic on canvas
28 x 26 inches



Arden Bendler Browning

American, born 1975, Philadelphia, PA
Currently works in Philadelphia, PA

Virtual Ecuadorean Amazon

2020

Watercolor, acrylic ink,
and acrylic spray paint on
paper collaged on board
19 x 24 inches



Arden Bendler Browning's imagery is inspired by landscapes that she encounters during travel and, more recently, scenes around her home and studio. The artist transforms her observations into abstract, immersive worlds, typically producing small drawings, then creating virtual reality environments, and finally making dynamic, lush paintings with acrylic, gouache, and Flashe on shaped panels. When possible, the artist presents the three stages of her work together to engage viewers in the movement of her process from one stage to the next, as well as to fully absorb viewers in an active exploration of the color and gesture of painting.

VR Painting 12
2020
Flashe and acrylic on
shaped panel
40 x 50 inches



Carol Brown Goldberg

American, born Baltimore, MD

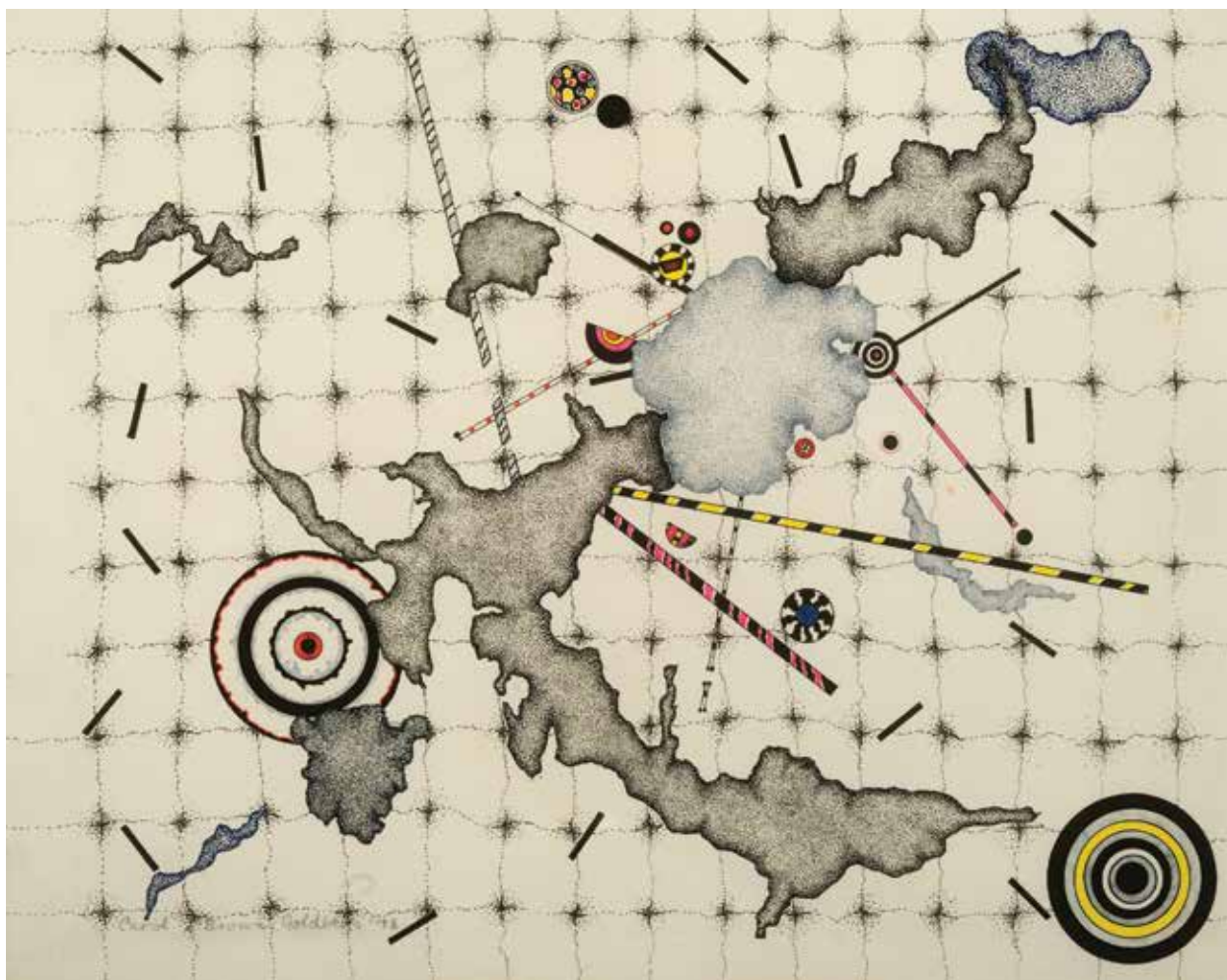
Currently works in Chevy Chase, MD and Chilmark, MA

In What We Take to Be Real

1980-2021

Acrylic on canvas

48 × 48 inches



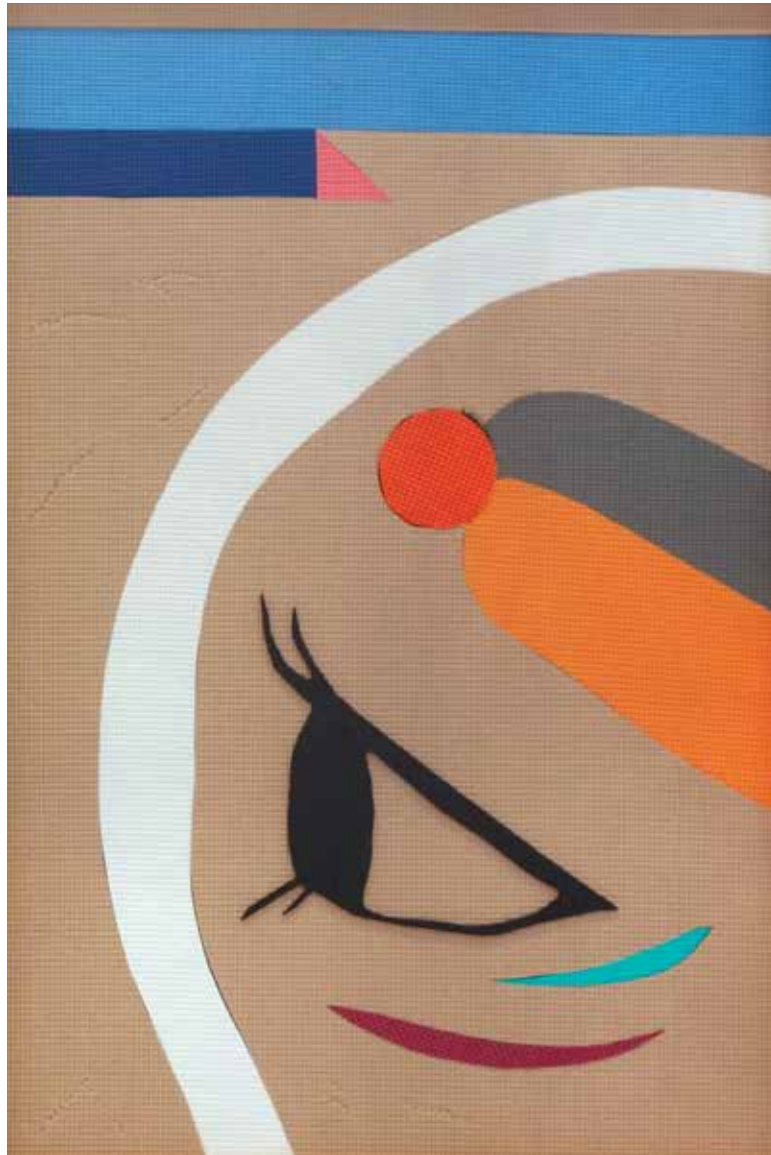
Carol Brown Goldberg has refined her radiant geometric fields over decades devoted to her painting, drawing, and print-making practices. Characterized by meticulous marks, Goldberg's rigorous, repeated forms cohere into optically dynamic fields that flatten then pulse into expansive spaces, evoking either built or natural environments. Goldberg's abstraction, influenced by past Washington, DC-area artists like Anne Truitt and Alma Thomas, holds a personal and emotionally-charged iconography rooted in color-infused geometry. Throughout her artworks, layers of visual information reflect the complexity of human experience.

Hyacinthetical Nebulae

1978

Ink on paper

11.5 x 14 inches



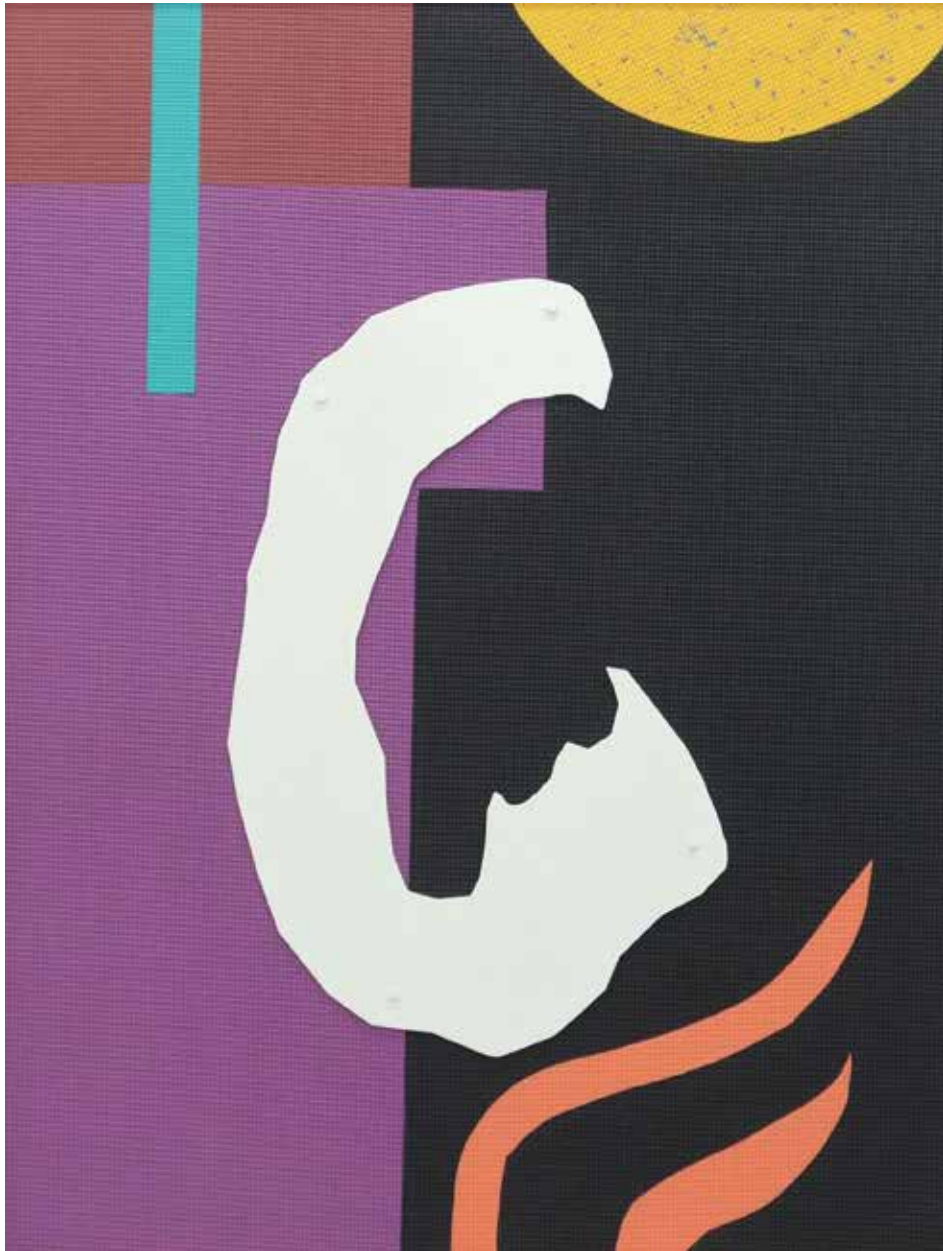
Alex Ebstein

American, born 1985, New Haven, CT
Currently works in Baltimore, MD

Shadows

2020

Hand-cut PVC yoga mats,
embroidery floss, false
eyelashes, powder coated
aluminum, and hardware
on panel in custom frame
36 x 24 inches



Alex Ebstein has extensive practices as both an artist and curator. She is the curator of Goucher College's galleries and founder of Resort Gallery, Baltimore. Often invoking the formal language of early to mid-20th-century abstraction, Ebstein executes her images using cut yoga and exercise mats. While her work observes the rectangular, framed formats of painting, it is highly tactile and employs strategies related to sculptural ready-mades. By using a material strongly associated with women and their appearance, as well as with exercise and "upcycling," Ebstein's abstract forms open new paths for considering contemporary values and experiences, along with their gendered aspects.

Capsule 2

2020

Hand-cut PVC yoga mats, acrylic, enamel, aluminum, and hardware on panel in custom frame
40 x 30 inches

Gently Outwards

(left, rear)

2021

Papier-mâché, handmade paper
with linen pulp paint and wood
70 × 40 × 15 inches

Looking On

(right, rear)

2021

Papier-mâché, handmade paper
with linen pulp paint, denim,
plaster, and wood
66 × 18 × 16 inches

Full Bloom

(foreground)

2021

Papier-mâché, handmade paper
with linen pulp paint
32 × 16 × 14 inches



Alexis Granwell

American, born 1981, New York, NY
Currently works in Philadelphia, PA



Alexis Granwell is a Professor of Drawing, Sculpture, and Graduate Studies, teaching at both The University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She is also a founding member and former director of Philadelphia's Tiger Strikes Asteroid Gallery. Granwell combines handmade paper and a variety of textiles into highly tactile sculptural shapes that evoke and engage the body. At times, she creates works mounted on the wall; more frequently, her hardened paper pulp forms are matched with architectural bases built from wood, cement, steel, and plaster. The weight and raw finishes of the bases' materials contrast with the individualized colors that bloom across the delicate paper surfaces, resulting in a sensual investigation of the different materials, textures, and densities that animate three-dimensional form.

Deluge

2019

Papier-mâché, handmade paper with linen pulp paint, wood, and cement
49 × 13 × 10 inches

Tongue

2019

Paracord and metal

56 x 26 inches



Jesse Harrod

Canadian

Currently works in Philadelphia, PA

Monz 5

2019

Cotton, oil, and aluminum

22 × 15 × 5 inches



The Head of Fibers and Material Studies at Tyler School of Art and Architecture in Philadelphia, Jesse Harrod uses techniques associated with macramé to manipulate materials into abstract compositions that resemble and relate to the body. Harrod works at various scales, creating large, suspended shapes from brightly colored nylon paracord (also known as parachute cord) and also making smaller, wall-mounted pieces with hand-dyed and painted cotton surfaces. In their innovative and encompassing abstractions, Harrod generates visceral, affective, and nostalgic experiences influenced by their explorations of feminist art and queer aesthetics.



Maren Hassinger

American, born 1947, Los Angeles, CA
Currently works in New York, NY



Maren Hassinger lived in Baltimore and served as the Director of the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art from 1997 to 2017. Since 2018, she has worked with students at Columbia University, New York. Through such meditative, repeated gestures as twisting, weaving, and inflating, Hassinger, who has a background in dance and performance, transforms diverse materials like newspaper, wire rope, leaves, and plastic bags into poignant forms that remain abstract while evoking the tangible world.

Wrenching News

(above and at left)

2008/2018

Shredded, twisted, and wrapped

New York Times newspapers

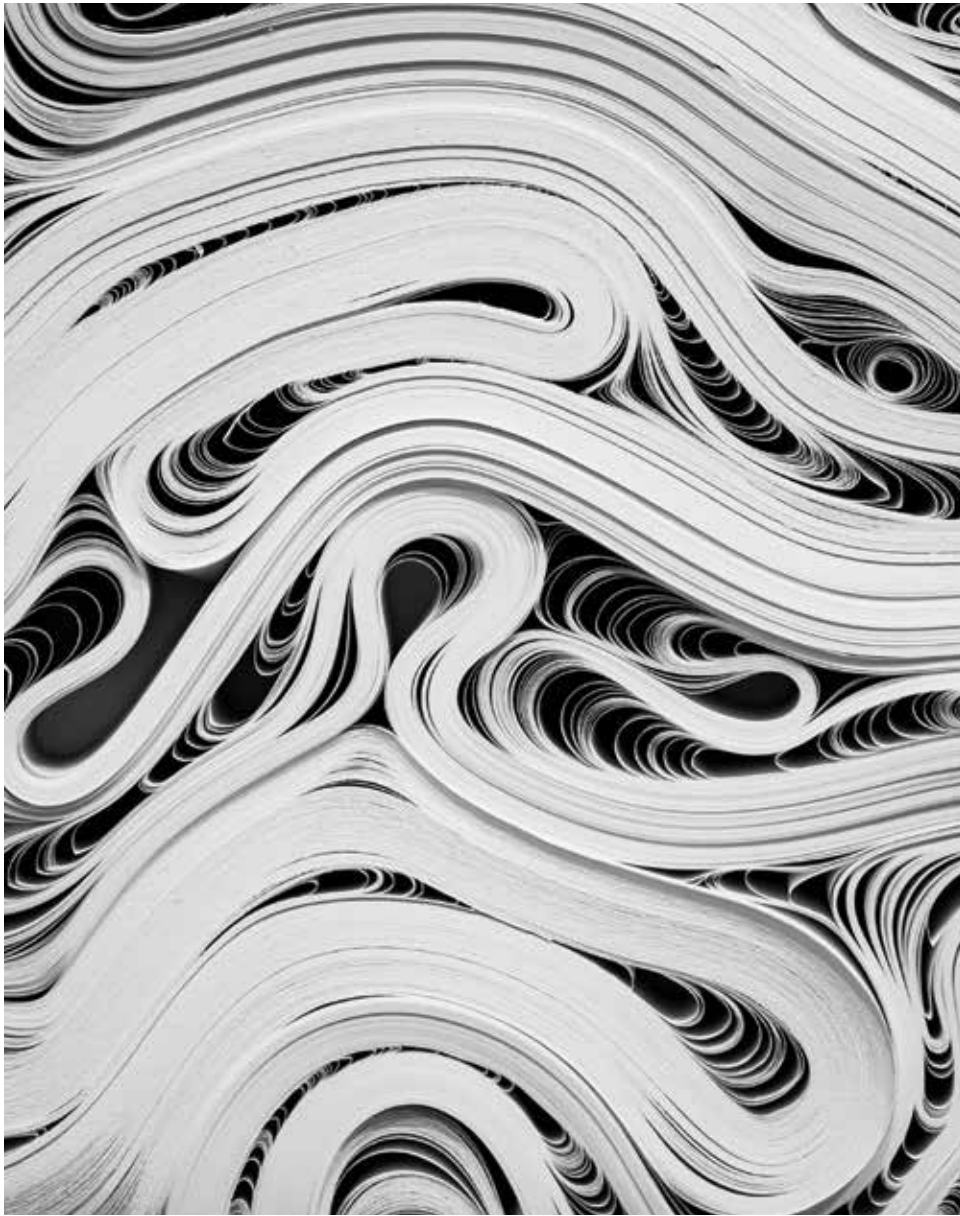
84 × 84 × 12 inches

Installation view of

Maren Hassinger: The Spirit of Things

July 18 – November 25, 2018

The Baltimore Museum of Art



Jae Ko

American, born 1961, Pyeongtaek, Korea
Currently works in Piney Point, MD

流 (*Flow*)
(*above and at right*)
2018
Recycled rolled paper
Dimensions variable



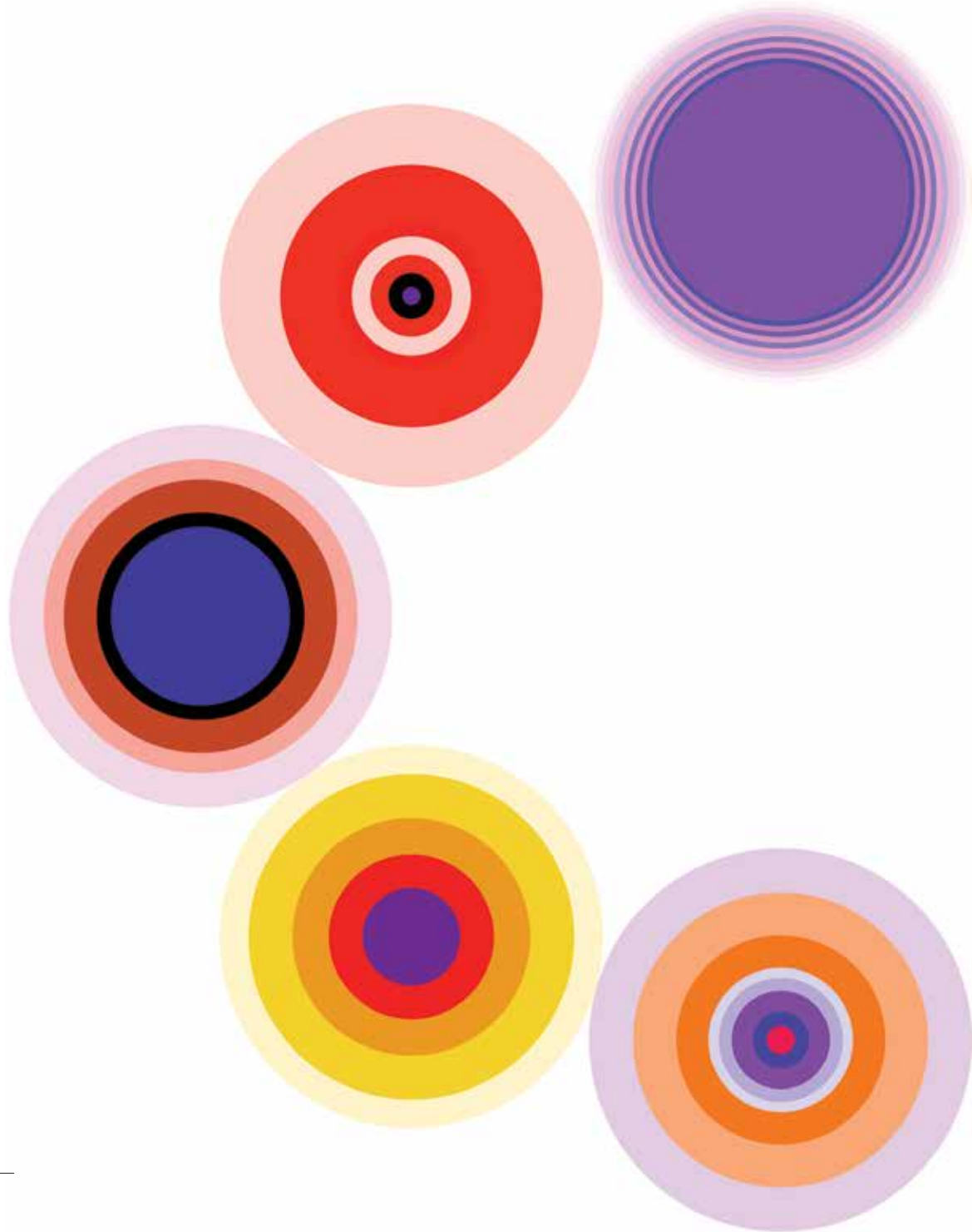
Living and working in the unique landscape of Maryland's Western Shore, Jae Ko unrolls and re-rolls paper in a focused process that yields great intricacy and beauty. In some works, Ko leaves the paper in its natural white or brown tones, elsewhere she dyes her works deep black or lush hues, submerging her paper forms in baths of pigmented water which further alter their shapes. Ko's works are presented both singularly and as massive site-specific installations that immerse viewers in an experience of wonder and reflection.

Circle Dance

2019-21

Acrylic on canvas on
shaped panel

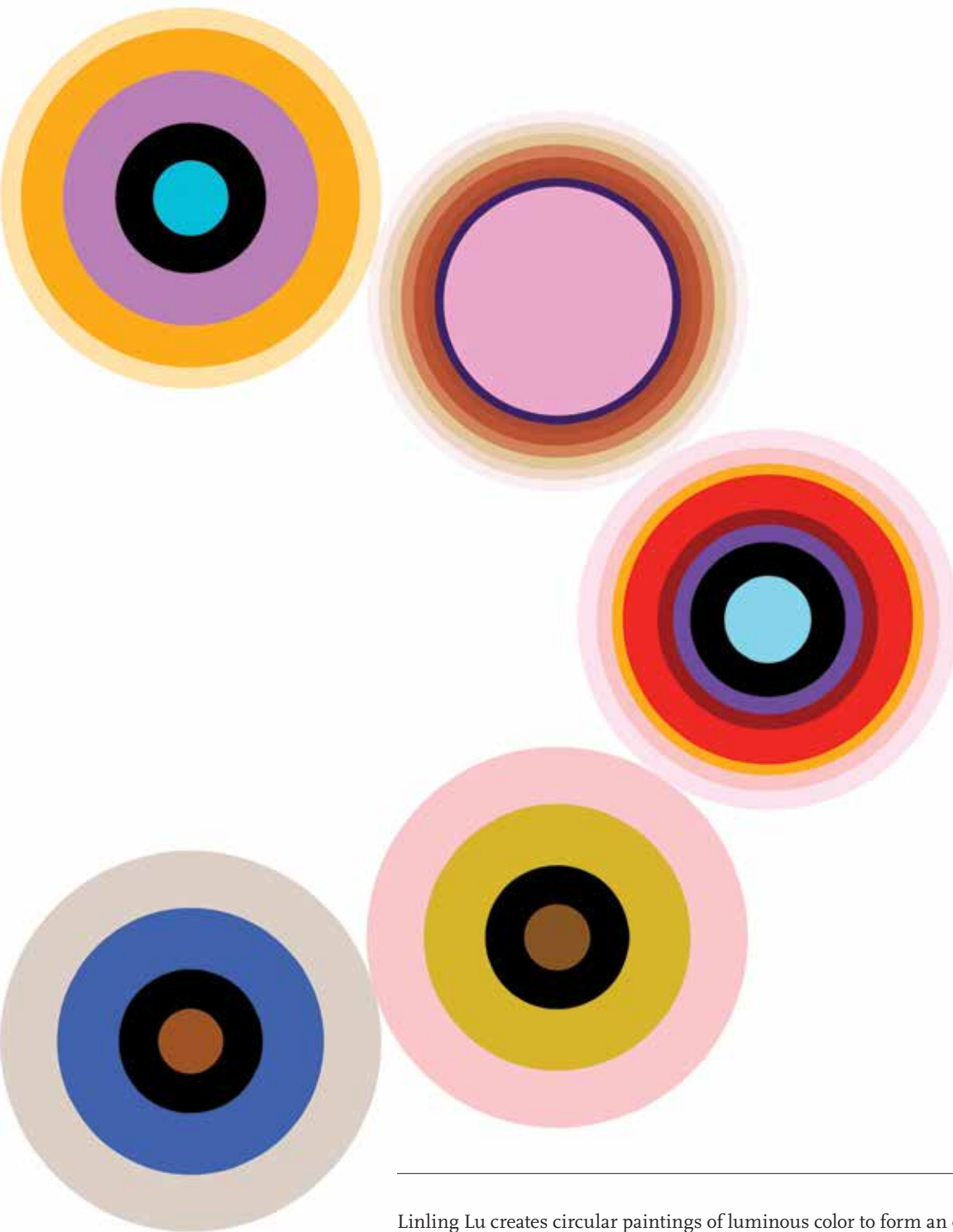
106 × 165 inches



Linling Lu

Chinese-American, born 1983, Zunyi, China

Currently works in Baltimore, MD



Linling Lu creates circular paintings of luminous color to form an ongoing series, *100 Melodies of Solitude*, now comprised of more than 200 works. Inspired by colors in nature, Lu begins her process by digitally planning her compositions. She then returns to the physical world, carefully mixing acrylic paints to achieve a vibrant range of colors. The artist frequently builds ensembles of individual circle paintings into wall or room-sized installations. With hues that vibrate against one another within and between paintings, Lu's work is an exploration of the dynamics of color and space that commands a meditative mode of viewing.



linn meyers

American, born 1968, Washington, DC
Currently works in Washington, DC

Untitled

2021

Ink on graph paper

11 x 8.5 inches



linn meyers, artist and co-founder of STABLE, Washington, DC, realizes her lyrical and meditative abstractions at scales ranging from the architectural to the intimate. She responds to sites with labor-intensive works that fill entire walls and galleries. These site-specific pieces, comprised of countless lines and dots drawn with pens and markers, are always temporary, providing an opportunity to reflect upon the fleeting nature of all things. A similar ethereal yet focused sensibility is brought to her paintings and works on paper, in which undulating fields represent the accumulation of countless repeated marks and gestures. Recent works reconfigure found book pages into minimal poetic spaces through the cutting away of all but a few evocative words. These images then inspire companion textless compositions realized with ink on graph paper.

***“silence is only broken
by motion, and change”***
2020
Cut paper from *Turner and
Ruskin*, published 1900
15 x 11 inches

*Cherry Bomb Drops on
Weeping Willow*

2021

Ink, acrylic, enamel, and
spray paint on canvas

72 x 36 inches



Maggie Michael

American, born 1974, Milwaukee, WI
Currently works in Washington, DC



In ambitious canvases, Maggie Michael combines enveloping veils of paint and accumulations of materials like soil and ground metal to high visual and emotional impact. During the making of her work, the artist relates her imagery to places that have inspired her, as well events that influence the times in which we live. Washington, DC, Michael's home since 2000, has informed her painting through the political and activist events and figures ever present in the city. Michael's process-based strategies for making work, which include pouring paint, imprinting paint through stencils, and transferring passages of acrylic torn from earlier paintings, connect her to earlier Washington-based abstract artists who experimented with the possibilities of newly invented artists' acrylics in the mid-20th century.

Wind, Water, Stone
(Paz meets Lispector on a cliff)

2020

Ink, walnut ink, acrylic,
enamel, metal dust,
ground stones, bronze shard,
and charcoal on canvas

36 x 60 inches



Jo Smail

South African, born 1943, Durban, South Africa
Currently works in Baltimore, MD

Black Egg Hatches

2021

Acrylic, African fabric,
and pencil on canvas
70 x 60 inches



Jo Smail was influenced by American Color Field painting during her studies in South Africa. Influential critic Clement Greenberg, the curator of the 1975 South African biennial, selected three of Smail's paintings for that exhibition. After moving to Baltimore in 1985, she continued to innovate in her approaches to abstraction as she pursued a three-decade career as an influential professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Smail's painting is steeped in the experience of color and shape. Yet, her quirky exploration of the language of abstraction brings its metaphorical possibilities to the surface. In particular, autobiography—including the experiences of a studio fire, a debilitating stroke, and reckoning with the racist history of her homeland—is often expressed on the fields of her paintings.

Back Scratchers

2020

Triptych; acrylic and African fabric on medium-density fiberboard

#1 **Rub**: 15 × 21 inches

#2 **Scratch**: 21.5 × 23 inches

#3 **Buff**: 21.45 × 23 inches

Checklist

Natessa Amin

Family Jewels

2019
Acrylic on linen
14 × 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Hairpin Turns

2019
Acrylic on canvas
14 × 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Spinning

2020
Acrylic on canvas
24 × 22 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled

2020
Acrylic on linen
14 × 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Weft

(inside front cover)
2020
Acrylic on canvas
24 × 22 inches
Courtesy of the artist

The Back Way

2021
Acrylic on canvas and muslin
28 × 26 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Blue Screen

2021
Acrylic on canvas
24 × 26 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Eclipse

2021
Acrylic on canvas
26 × 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Networks

2021
Acrylic, glass beads, and
canvas on wood panel
12 × 12 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Pink Sun

2021
Acrylic and canvas on
wood panel
10 × 10 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Seeds

(page 23)
2021
Acrylic on canvas
28 × 26 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled

(page 22)
2021
Acrylic on canvas
30 × 44 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Arden Bendler Browning **Middle of Somewhere and** **Scenic Lookouts**

(pages 02-03)
2019
Custom interactive virtual reality
painting incorporating digital
imagery of works on paper
Courtesy of the artist
and Galleri Urbane, Dallas, TX

Schuylkill Center Pond in Fall **with Studio Scraps**

2020
Watercolor and acrylic
spray paint on paper collaged
on board
19 × 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA

Virtual Ecuadorean Amazon *(page 24)*

2020
Watercolor, acrylic ink,
and acrylic spray paint on
paper collaged on board
19 × 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA

Virtual Machu Picchu **Collage 2**

2020
Watercolor, acrylic ink, and
acrylic spray paint on Yupo
and paper collaged on board
19 × 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA

Virtual Peruvian **Road Trip**

2020
Watercolor, acrylic ink, and
acrylic spray paint on paper
collaged on board
19 × 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA

Virtual Sacred Valley **Road Trip**

2020
Watercolor, acrylic ink, and
acrylic spray paint on Yupo
and paper collaged on board
19 × 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA

Virtual Sacred Valley

Road Trip 2

2020

Watercolor and acrylic
spray paint on paper collaged
on board

19 × 24 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA*

VR Painting 12

(page 25)

2020

Flashe and acrylic on
shaped panel

40 × 50 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA*

VR Painting 19

2021

Diptych; Flashe and acrylic
on shaped panels

84 × 84 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Bridgette Mayer Gallery,
Philadelphia, PA*

Carol Brown Goldberg

Hyacinthetical Nebulae

(page 27)

1978

Ink on paper

11.5 × 14 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Narsynthetical Nebulae

1978

Ink on paper

11 × 13.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PM 11

2011

Ink on handmade paper

11 × 8.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PM 12

2011

Ink on handmade paper

11 × 8.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PM 14

2011

Ink on handmade paper

11 × 8.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PM 15

2011

Ink on handmade paper

11 × 8.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PM 17

2011

Ink on handmade paper

11 × 8.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PM 19

2011

Ink on handmade paper

11 × 8.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

NT 16

2011

Acrylic on canvas

with polymer particles

60 × 36 × 2 inches

Courtesy of the artist

NT 22

2011

Acrylic on canvas

with polymer particles

60 × 36 × 2 inches

Courtesy of the artist

In What We Take to Be Real

(page 26)

1980-2021

Acrylic on canvas

48 × 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Alex Ebstein

Capsule 2

(page 29)

2020

Hand-cut PVC yoga mats, acrylic,
enamel, aluminum, and hardware
on panel in custom frame

40 × 30 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Figments

(page 20)

2020

Hand-cut PVC yoga mats,
embroidery floss, nylon mesh,
false eyelashes, powder coated
aluminum, and hardware
on panel in custom frame

36 × 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Phantoms

(page 20)

2020

Hand-cut PVC yoga mats,
acrylic, embroidery floss, false
eyelashes, nylon mesh, powder
coated aluminum, and hardware
on panel in custom frame

36 × 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Shadows

(pages 20 and 28)

2020

Hand-cut PVC yoga mats,
embroidery floss, false
eyelashes, powder coated
aluminum, and hardware
on panel in custom frame

36 × 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Specters

2020

Hand-cut PVC yoga mats, acrylic,
embroidery floss, false eyelashes,
nylon mesh, powder coated
aluminum, and hardware on
panel in custom frame

36 × 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Alexis Granwell

Deluge

(page 31)

2019

Papier-mâché, handmade paper with linen pulp paint, wood, and cement
49 × 13 × 10 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Full Bloom

(page 30)

2021

Papier-mâché, handmade paper with linen pulp paint, and wood
70 × 40 × 15 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Gently Outwards

(page 30)

2021

Papier-mâché, handmade paper with linen pulp paint, and wood
70 × 40 × 15 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Looking On

(page 30)

2021

Papier-mâché, handmade paper with linen pulp paint, denim, plaster, and wood
66 × 18 × 16 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Till

2021

Papier-mâché, handmade paper with linen pulp paint, denim, and cement
31 × 16 × 16 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Jesse Harrod

Monz 1

2019

Cotton, oil, and aluminum
20 × 12 × 4 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Monz 2

2019

Cotton, oil, and aluminum
10 × 4 × 7 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Monz 3

2019

Cotton, oil, and aluminum
23 × 19 × 4 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Monz 4

2019

Cotton, oil, and aluminum
20 × 14 × 7 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Monz 5

(page 33)

2019

Cotton, oil, and aluminum
22 × 15 × 5 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Tongue

(page 32)

2019

Paracord and metal
56 × 26 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

For the Love of Danny

(page 18)

2020

Paracord and metal
156 × 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Maren Hassinger

Wrenching News

(detail, front cover, bottom; pages 34-35)

2008/2021

Shredded, twisted, and wrapped
New York Times newspapers
Each component approximately 60 inches in diameter
Courtesy of the artist and Susan Inglett Gallery, New York, NY

Jae Ko

流 (Flow)

(pages 36-37)

2021

Paper
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Linling Lu

Circle Dance

(detail, front cover, top; pages 38-39)

2019-21

Acrylic on canvas on shaped panel
106 × 165 inches
Courtesy of the artist and HEMPHILL Artworks
On view at The Delaware Contemporary only

Eye of Wisdom

(page 14)

2021

Acrylic on canvas on shaped panel
160 × 220 inches
Courtesy of the artist and HEMPHILL Artworks
On view at the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center only

linn meyers

Untitled

2019

Ink and pencil on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2019

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2019

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

**“accostome your eyes to
the darkness, the majesty
of things beautiful”**

2020

Cut paper from *Turner and
Ruskin*, published 1900
15 × 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist

**“the greatest of all feelings –
an utter forgetfulness of self”**

2020

Cut paper from *Turner and
Ruskin*, published 1900
15 × 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist

**“silence is only broken
by motion, and change”**

(page 41)

2020

Cut paper from *Turner and
Ruskin*, published 1900
15 × 11 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled

2020

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2020

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2020

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2020

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2020

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2020

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2020

Ink and colored pencil on
graph paper
11 × 8 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

2020

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Untitled

(page 40)

2021

Ink on graph paper
11 × 8.5 inches
*Courtesy of the artist
and Jason Haam,
Seoul, South Korea*

Maggie Michael

**Spirit in the Sky with Heavy
Earth Minerals (RBG marches)**

2020

Ink, walnut ink, acrylic,
enamel, earth stones,
and particles on canvas
72 × 60 inches
Courtesy of the artist

**Wind, Water, Stone
(Paz meets Lispector on a cliff)**

(page 43)

2020

Ink, walnut ink, acrylic,
enamel, metal dust,
ground stones, bronze shard,
and charcoal on canvas
36 × 60 inches
Courtesy of the artist

**Cherry Bomb Drops on
Weeping Willow**

(page 42)

2021

Ink, acrylic, enamel, and
spray paint on canvas
72 × 36 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Jo Small

Gob of Gladness

(page 13)

2012-2020

Acrylic, pen, and
African fabric on canvas
80 × 56 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Goya Contemporary,
Baltimore, MD*

Offspring #1

2017

Acrylic on board
12 × 9 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Goya Contemporary,
Baltimore, MD*

Offspring #2

2017

Acrylic on board
10 × 8 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Goya Contemporary,
Baltimore, MD*

Offspring #3

2017

Digital print and acrylic
on board
12 × 9 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Goya Contemporary,
Baltimore, MD*

Back Scratchers

(page 45)

2020

Triptych; acrylic and
African fabric on medium-
density fiberboard

#1 **Rub**: 15 × 21 inches

#2 **Scratch**: 21.5 × 23 inches

#3 **Buff**: 21.45 × 23 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Goya Contemporary,
Baltimore, MD*

Totem in Three Parts

2020

Acrylic and African fabric
on wood and medium-
density fiberboard

#1 **Walk Up**: 24 × 13 × 18 inches

#2 **Step**: 4 × 4 inches

#3 **Celebrate**: 24 × 24 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Goya Contemporary,
Baltimore, MD*

Black Egg Hatches

(page 44)

2021

Acrylic, African fabric,
and pencil on canvas
70 × 60 inches

*Courtesy of the artist
and Goya Contemporary,
Baltimore, MD*

Front cover top and pages 14, 38-39:

Courtesy artist and HEMPHILL Artworks;

Front cover bottom and pages 34-35:

Courtesy Susan Inglett Gallery, NY and

The Baltimore Museum of Art; photos

by Mitro Hood; Inside front cover and

pages 22-23: Courtesy artist; photos

by Gordon Stillman; Pages 2-3: Courtesy

artist and Galleri Urbane, Dallas; Page

9: ©annetrutt.org/Bridgeman Images/

Matthew Marks Gallery; photo by Lee

Stalworth, Hirshhorn Museum and

Sculpture Garden; Page 10: Photo by

Lee Stalworth, Hirshhorn Museum

and Sculpture Garden; Pages 13, 44-45:

Courtesy artist and Goya Contemporary,

Baltimore; photos by Julien Davis;

Page 17: Courtesy artist; Page 18: Courtesy

artist and Fleisher Ollman Gallery,

Philadelphia; photo by Elsy Benitez;

Page 20: Courtesy artist and Victori+Mo

Gallery; photo by Ethan Browning; Pages

24-25: Courtesy artist and Bridgette

Mayer Gallery, Philadelphia; photos by

Karen Mauch; Pages 26-27: Courtesy

artist; photos by Greg Staley; Pages 28-29:

Courtesy artist; photos by Ethan

Browning; Page 30: Courtesy artist; photo

by Constance Mensh; Page 31: Courtesy

artist; photo by Jessica Kourkounis; Pages

32-33: Courtesy artist and Fleisher Ollman

Gallery, Philadelphia; photos by Claire

Iltis; Pages 36-37: Courtesy Wavelength;

Pages 40-41: Courtesy artist; Pages 42-43:

Courtesy artist

decontemporary.org

american.edu/cas/museum

THE DELAWARE CONTEMPORARY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Borders
Sandra Borrer
Christine Fischer
Jay Headley
Cheryl Heiks
Berta Kerr
Donna May
Meagan McDonald
Marla Norton
Louis Pacelli
Shawn Barron Pinckney
Pamela Price
Lou Rosenberg
Kina Thornton Frazier
Patrick Toman
Paul Voss
George Watson

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Jackie Cirillo-Meisenberg, *Chair*
Matt Cheney
Linda Daly
Mike Engler
Irene Glowinski
Carol Brown Goldberg
Charles Gurian
Hamoon Hedayat
John Miller
John Morada
Sara Nieves-Grafals
Jenine Rabin
Rajat Sen
Robert Sheehan
Peggy Brooks Smith
James Talamonti

Fields and Formations:
A Survey of Mid-Atlantic Abstraction

THE DELAWARE CONTEMPORARY
SPONSORS

Delaware Division of the Arts
Laffey-McHugh Foundation
Borgenicht Foundation



THE DELAWARE
CONTEMPORARY



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
COLLEGE *of* ARTS & SCIENCES