

Art that Iterates

Exploring change as a condition of the artist's way of knowing, making and doing.

Macy Art Gallery, Teachers College, Columbia University

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Curated by Sean Justice

Catalog designed by John Boudreau, with an introduction by Judith Burton

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Proposition

What is an open art? Can we imagine an art that becomes itself as a condition of its being? If immanence, as a characteristic, were foregrounded, what might such an art look like?

Normally, art resolves as a condition of its being called “art.” Like any other activity (say, cooking), a presumed end-point draws us toward a conclusion (a meal). This end-driven motion implies that the act of making will cross over a kind of action threshold, beyond which everything will be different; in other words, the time for cooking will morph into the time for eating. In effect, the *doing* becomes *done*, and relationships—of maker to participant, for example—are changed, or resolved, as a consequence.

But for artists this resolution feels like a loss; or less traumatically, like a compromise, or an acquiescence to something that is not organic to the practice of making art. That is, in the moment of its re-presentation, the picture, sculpture, or video becomes an artifact that exudes completion instead of immanence—it has been *made* and now it simply *is*. As such, in the gallery or the museum, art can be passive and self-satisfied, awaiting only an audience.

But this stasis—this *doneness*—is false. That is, for artists the *work* of art is never-done. Perhaps this is because in the studio, in its moment of presence, the not-yet-resolved work *becomes*; but in the gallery the work we encounter is like a brick, and the vibrancy of the unpredictable, unfolding dynamic that we once knew so intimately, has been stilled.

I don't mean this in a mysterious or esoteric way, but rather in a pragmatic and ordinary way. I am trying to describe an experience that I believe is common to all of us who have ever lost ourselves in the flow of making, cooking, weaving, painting, or constructing anything—or even, in walking; or in a rich conversation that envelopes you and suffuses you with ideas that appear to coalesce in the very talking and listening that brings them forth. In such conversations, rare as they may be, you suddenly hear yourself saying things you didn't know you knew. And it's exhilarating, a brief moment of knowing that learning never ends. At that instant don't we suddenly realize, too, and just as unpredictably, that the resonance and wonder of the conversation exists primarily in its unfolding? Which is to say that joy *in* the conversation does not precede the conversation, nor outlive it? And that holding this joy within yourself means also—and requires—holding it loosely?

As artists we approach this contradiction as we might approach a kind of blankness—by calling out to it, falling into it, sometimes tentatively and sometimes passionately, but full of wonder and delight and fear and agony. As artists this fullness is the condition of doing art that echoes most profoundly, and keeps us longing for...what? What is the object of art's longing? Can we speak of a longing that is not defined by an end-point? Can such openness, this empty fullness, this evolving, not-yet-final condition, be sustained?

Maxine Green and John Dewey (among others) argue that there is a way of knowing and doing that is rooted in just this kind of openness—an ever-new becoming; an immanent, exploratory unfolding that releases the imagination—and that as human beings we strive after this kind of knowing as we make and re-make our lives. Indeed, I would argue that we long for this kind of knowing and doing as a necessary and intuitive, maybe even a fundamental, condition of our existence.

But back again in the world we recognize the closure of our work. That is, again and again we realize that through our own actions—our desire to finalize our art—we succumb to the worldly insistence that knowing become objectified, and narrowly instrumentalized. And we satisfy ourselves with an art that is finished.

Is there a doing that remains undone?

Goal of the Exhibit

My goal is to describe and explore a space of constant openness, a space between doing and undoing—a space that seems to be a condition of my life as an artist. I want to argue that playfully entering this space opens to ways of knowing that are full of potential for making new relationships in the world, and that this potential is available to all of us, whether we call ourselves artists or not.

I hope that the objects you encounter in the gallery (and in the pages of this catalog) prompt a reconsideration of the notion of the artifact itself, and smear the boundaries between viewer/participant, art/non-art, and mediate/immediate. And I hope that in the spaces between these dichotomies you might glimpse, if only fleetingly, this open unfolding that I am trying to describe, this becoming, and perhaps even encounter it as an evolving condition of our being.

We are crossing into a new age. We hesitate to leave anything behind—and perhaps we don't have to—but moving fluently in our time calls for new understandings of participating, learning, and doing.

I am deeply honored and indebted to all the artists who have so generously given of their time and energy to join me in this exploration.

Thank you!

Sean Justice
Curator, Artist, Educator
Teachers College, Columbia University

List of works

1. **Beatriz Albuquerque**, *LIBERAcTION*, 2012.
Video animation, continuous loop; 3 minutes.
2. **Kathleen Graves**, *Garden Bot_Wall*, 2011.
Archival pigment ink on water color paper; 90 x 66 inches.
3. **Kathleen Graves**, *Bot Studies*, 2012.
Four figures; found materials, circuits, electronics; approx. 5 to 12 inches high.
4. **Erol Gunduz**, *One Thing Led to Another: 3D Sketches*, 2102. Eleven sketches; plaster powder & cyanoacrylate with white spray-paint; approx. 7 x 3 x 2 inches each.
5. **Sina Haghani**, *Me in Progress*, 2012.
Algorithmic animation on video; continuous loop.
6. **Sina Hagahni**, *Unconscious*, 2012.
Video text, continuous loop; 30 seconds.
7. **Ethan Ham**, *Self-Portrait*, 2006.
Internet-based search algorithm; presented on Apple iMac.
8. **Ethan Ham**, *Les Belles Infideles*, 2011. Internet-based translations of a story by Benjamin Rosenbaum; presented on Apple iMac.
9. **Géraldine de Haugoubart**, *Shiprock*, 2012.
Archival pigment ink on transparent film; approx. 60 x 44 inches.
10. **Daniel Iglesia**, *Older Effigies*, 2012.
Real-time video remix software with sound; Kinect.
11. **Richard Jochum**, *Offering*, 2011. Interactive video; face recognition software; computer with webcam; programming by Kevin Bleich.
12. **Nate Larson & Marni Shindelman**, *A Portrait of Rudy Giuliani*, Produced for ConfluxCity, New York, 2009. Inkjet composite print as document of on-site performance.
13. **Nate Larson & Marni Shindelman**, *A Portrait of Dick Cheney, Who Bears a Striking Resemblance to my Father*, Produced for the Houston Center for Photography, 2010. Inkjet composite print as document of on-site performance.
14. **Doran Massey**, *Pretzels*, 2012.
Plastic conduit, sound manipulation software, computer and microphone.
15. **Sherry Mayo**, *Not My Indigenous Habitat—Wanna Hang Out?* 2011.
Collage on giant magnet, magnetized wall paint; 20 x 60 inches.

16, 17, 18. **Robin Michals**, *A History of the 20th Century: 1916 Mr. Peanut*, 2007; *1930 Hostess Twinkies*, 2006; *1964 Fruit Loops*, 2007.

Pigment ink on watercolor paper; 16 x 20 inches.

19. **Jackie Pavlik**, *YOU*, 2012.

Oil on canvas and augmented reality video.

20. **Nandita Raman**, *Remembering Absent Meaning*, 2012.

Archival pigment ink prints, acrylic mirrors; each approx. 20 x 24 inches.

21. **Bill Schuck**, *Np*, 2012.

Sheetrock, grass seedlings; 8 x 4 feet.

22. **Jordan Seiler**, *Billboard Advertising Takeovers by PublicAdCampaign*, *New York*, 2010; *New York*, 2011; *Paris*, 2012 (Photo by OX); *Atlanta, Georgia*, 2010. Four pigment ink prints; 16 x 20 inches.

23. **Jordan Seiler**, *Suitcase: How to Takeover a Telephone Booth*, 2012.

Suitcase, foam rubber, video, and homemade tools.

24. **Jordan Seiler & Keith Haskel** (director), *Spending time with NYSAT*, 2011.

Video documentary; 2min 37seconds.

25. **Matt Siber**, *Billboard Vinyl #1*, 2012.

Used billboard vinyl; approx. 12 feet high as installed.

26. **Felisia Tandiono**, *Haze State: ___*, 2011-2012. Acrylic sphere, moss, fern, steam distiller kit, spices, fragrance pouches, distilled water, ice, cheese cloth, notebooks, glass bottles, hydrosols.

27. **Daniel Temkin**, *Chromatic Infestation*, 2012.

Software, installed on Mac Mini with 22" monitor.

28. **Daniel Temkin**, *Glitchometry*, 2011-2012. Four inkjet prints on translucent film, in light boxes; approx. **size to come**.

29. **Penelope Umbrico**, *Suns from Sunsets from Flickr (from Flickr)*, 2012. Twenty-five inkjet prints, 8.5 x 11 inches, unframed; 15 chromogenic prints, framed, approx. 5 x 7 inches.