



BY GIGI O. KRACHT

NO MOTIFS, ONLY MOTIVATIONS

A WAR CHILD WHO FLED EAST GERMANY SHORTLY BEFORE THE BERLIN WALL WENT UP IS TODAY ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST RESPECTED LIVING ARTISTS. NOW AN OCTOGENARIAN, GERHARD RICHTER'S ABSTRACT ABSTRACT ART IS AS VITAL, ENERGETIC AND INFLUENTIAL AS EVER. AN (EXTREMELY!) RARE INTERVIEW GAVE GIGI KRACHT THE CHANCE TO LOOK BACK WITH HIM ON NEARLY HALF A CENTURY OF «REAL AND TANGIBLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS»...



Gerhard Richter produces large-scale abstract squeegee works in his own studio and is believed to be one of the highest-paid living artists in the world. By utter coincidence, I happened to edit this piece on February 9 - Mr. Richter's 82nd birthday!

I had heard so much about his adamant refusal to grant interviews. I therefore have to admit that, on January 17, I was taken completely by surprise at his kindness in acceding to my impromptu request and generously sharing with me his understanding of abstract art. If I didn't put the interview in print for this issue, I would probably have to be certified as criminally insane!

Richter told me how he was born in Dresden, Saxony, growing up in Reichenau, Lower Silesia, and the Upper Lusatian countryside. He left school after completing 10th grade and began his apprenticeship as a stage-set painter before studying at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts. During the early days of his career, as part of the degree course that earned him the title of bachelor of arts in 1955, he created a wall painting called Communion with Picasso for the academy's refectory. This was followed by a mural called Lebensfreude [«Joy of Life»] for his diploma. Both pieces were painted over after Richter escaped from East to West Germany, two months before the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961. After his escape, he studied at the Kunstakademie [Art Academy] in Düsseldorf. Together with two fellow artists, Sigmar Polke and Konrad Fischer, he introduced the term Capitalistic Realism as an illusionistic anti-style of art. He later painted pictures from black-and-white photographs he had taken from the late 1960s to the early 1970s - pictures of family members, landscapes and anything he took an interest in. His technique was to project the photographs onto canvas and then trace them using his color palate. He took great pains to replicate the look of the original photograph, achieving the «blur» that has since become his trademark with a soft brush, or at times with a hard smear created by aggressively pulling a squeegee. As we talked, he patiently explained where he sees his place along the continuum of chromatic



extremes. To his mind, «the sky is bigger and bluer than I can ever encapsulate, the mountains are smoky, nightshades of mauve, the icebergs glow with a nuclear opalescence.» And to my mind? His very description is a work of art..

Richter's two portraits of Betty, his daughter by his first wife, were created in 1977 and 1988. Three portraits of his second wife, Isa Genzken, were completed in 1993. In 1994, he then produced a portrait of Sabine Moritz, who became his third wife a year later.

Richter was flying to New York on September 11, 2001, when his plane was diverted to Halifax, Nova Scotia, because of the attacks on the World Trade Center. Years later, he made one small painting depicting the uniqueness of his distinct memories of this tragic event. I ventured to ask where the painting might be now, but received no hint of a reply. Richter further shared with me that he had produced a series of works based on scientific phenomena: large oil-on-canvas pieces that show rows of light and dark grey blobs created with a *spachtel*, or scraper. As I was unfamiliar with the German term, he produced a drawing in front of my eyes. The overall appearance revealed no meaning at all as his scraper raced to and fro across the frame - an impression he readily confirmed: «There are no motifs in these paintings, only motivations. The most important aspect is the viewer's imagination.»

When VIEWS went to press, Richter had an ongoing show called «Streifen und Glas» [«Stripes and Glass»] at the Kunstmuseum in Winterthur, Switzerland. The exhibition ends on April 23, 2014. If you are anywhere in the vicinity and get to read this in time, this is one exhibition that is not to be missed! The glass structures are mind boggling in size yet incredibly delicate, while his striped, computer-generated paintings extend for miles on end...

Gerhard, thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet you. I send you enough birthday wishes to last for the next 364 days of this year! And I sincerely hope to see you again soon at our place!

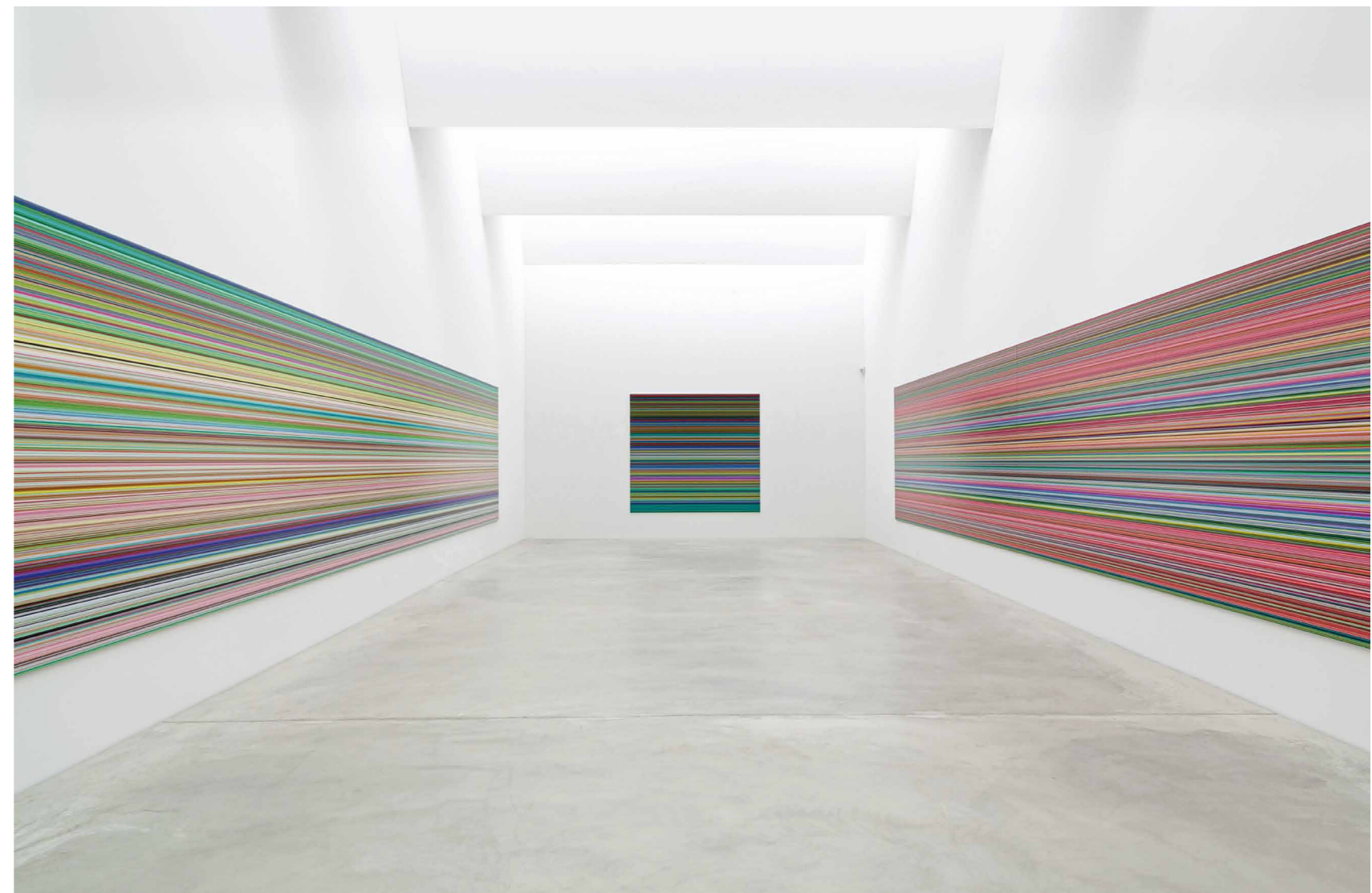


PHOTO CREDIT: RETO KAUFMANN/KUNSTMUSEUM WINTERTHUR



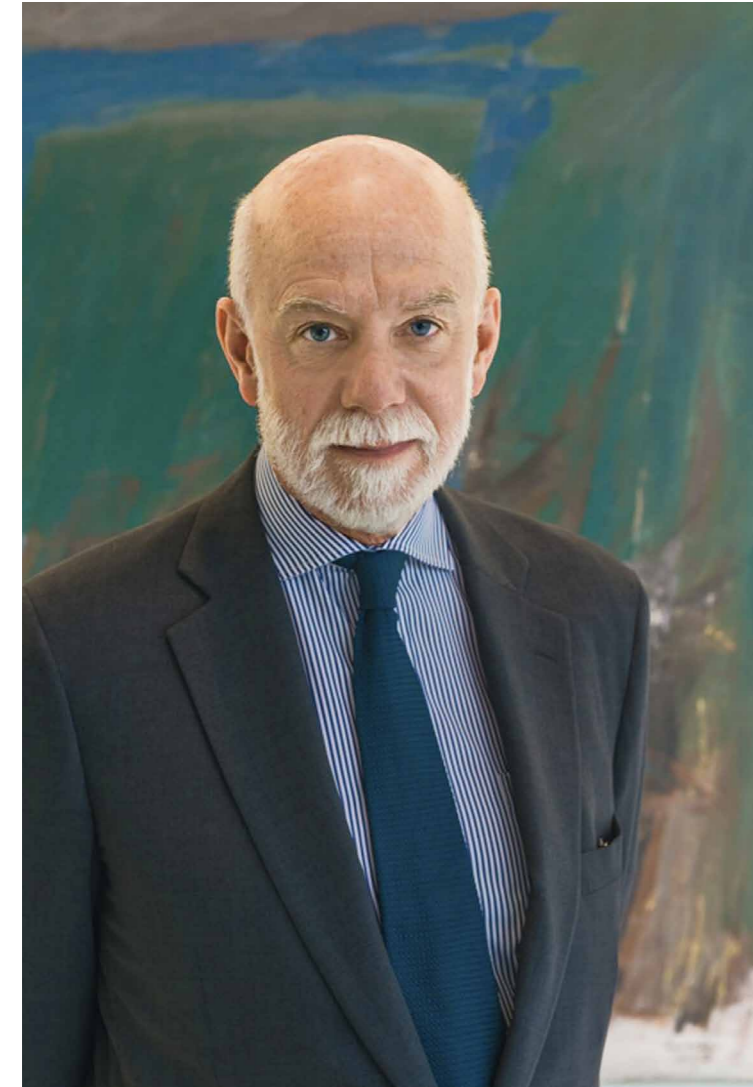
AN AIR-CONDITIONED APPOINTMENT WITH FATE

BY GIGI O. KRACHT

RICHARD ARMSTRONG'S FORMIDABLE INFLUENCE ON THE ART WORLD COMES NOT WITH EASEL AND PAINTBRUSH, BUT WITH DECISIONS ABOUT SOME OF THE WORLD'S LEADING EXHIBITIONS. YET HE STUMBLED ALMOST BY ACCIDENT INTO THE LINE OF WORK THAT HAS SINCE FILLED HIS LIFE.

A few years back, I had the magnificent good fortune to meet Richard Armstrong, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, the organization that operates the Guggenheim Museum in New York and selected other museums around the world. In the months that followed, Richard asked me to join the Guggenheim's International Directors' Council (IDC), which meets twice a year and is mainly responsible for the museum's art acquisitions. Although I generally write about female artists, one of my pet topics, I make no apology whatsoever for including Richard in the 2014 issue. He is quite simply a must!

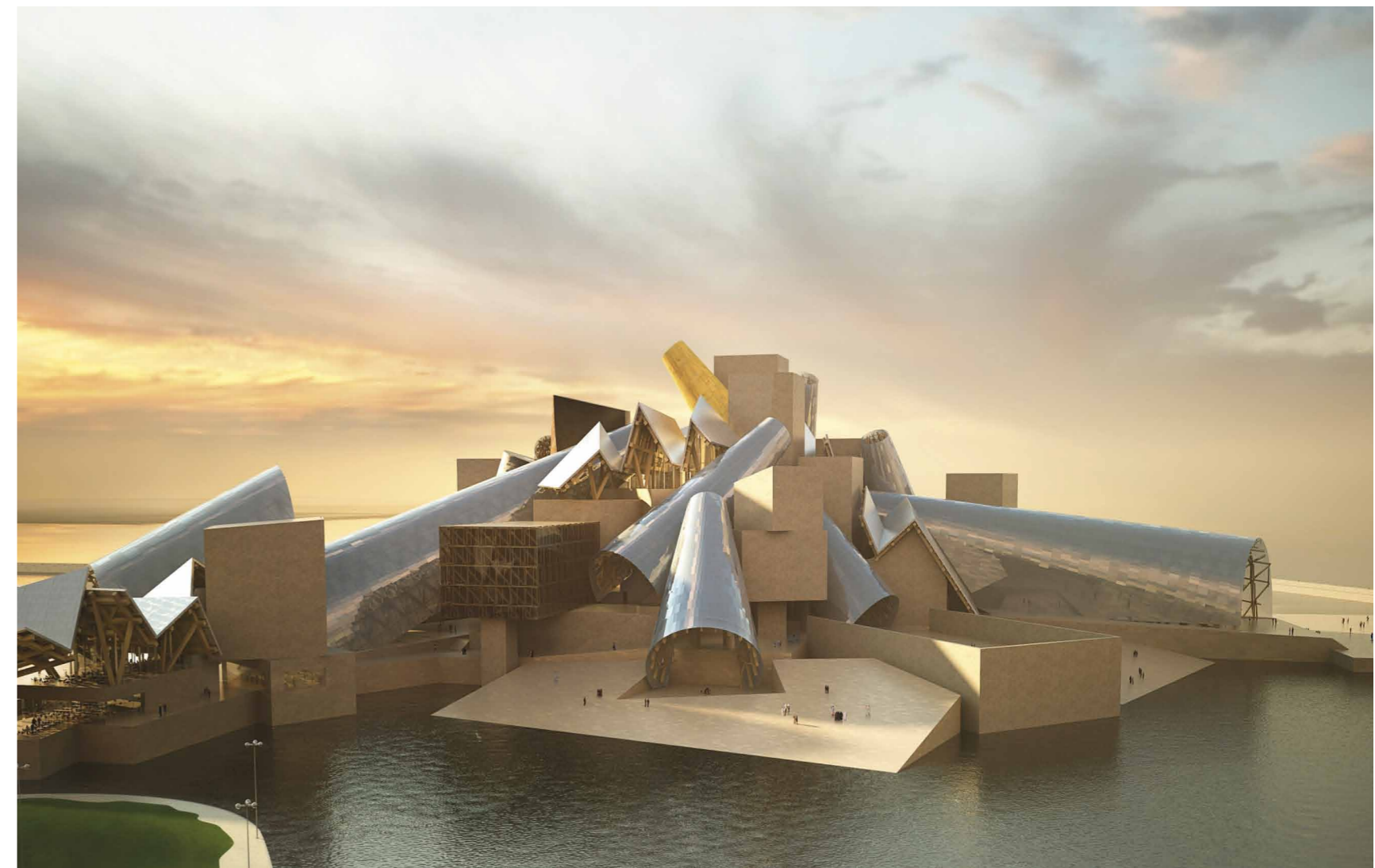
PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID HEALD



Standing 6 feet 4 inches tall, Armstrong towers above the mass of humanity and is a man not easily overlooked! Born on Labor Day 1949 in Kansas City, Missouri, where a few of his family still reside, his academic background commenced at the local school before a subsequent move to Pembroke Country Day School. During the summer months in his youth, he worked as a page for a US Representative and a US Senator in Washington. Mainly just to escape the capital's oppressive heat, he took to visiting the heavily air-conditioned National Gallery of Art. Yet it was this experience that sparked his affinity for the arts. In 1968, after a year at Lake Forest College in Illinois and shortly after the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, Armstrong moved to Dijon, France, studying at the Université de Dijon and later at the Sorbonne, where he explored French art and architecture. He then returned to Lake Forest to complete his bachelor of arts degree in art history.

Before joining the Guggenheim set-up in November 2008, Armstrong served first as curator and later as director of the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, having previously been employed as curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art. When I asked him why he moved to the Guggenheim, his reply was characteristically simple: «I came to the Guggenheim because it is irresistible: sterling collections, iconic architecture, superb staff, devoted trustees, volunteers, plus a worldwide reputation... Nothing beats that!» Supervising the operations of and exhibitions at the Guggenheim Foundation's museums is by no means Armstrong's only assignment: His tenure to date has also involved collaborating with various international organizations to offer programs and scholarships, as well as loans to other institutions, all of which pursues the goal of broadening the foundation's collection and its activities, both geographically and virtually. Armstrong stresses the importance of optimism, of expanding «the taste for the utopian that guided the museum in its beginnings, making sure the foundation's global collections are conjoined and working in harmony with one another.»

Looking to build on the Guggenheim's very solid foundation, Armstrong adds that «the future of the Guggenheim is enviable. Not only are we growing with our sister Guggenheims in Venice, Bilbao and soon Abu Dhabi, but also with the expanding taste for information from around the world. We have previously asserted that the Foundation is global; and we have begun to act that way more recently in our programming, activities, collecting, staffing, and our inquisitiveness.» When I asked him which artist inspires him the most at the present time, his reply was this: «Because the New York museum is presenting 'Carrie Mae Weems: Thirty Years of Photography and Video', I am absorbed by her work with



THE NEW GUGGENHEIM ABU DHABI WILL BE LOCATED IN THE CULTURAL DISTRICT OF SAADIYAT ISLAND IN ABU DHABI

its ferociously brave inquiry into a black woman's place – or better, many places – in society. I am also benefiting from getting to know Carrie Mae better. Her *élan vital* is exceptional.»

Armstrong is also poised to open the upcoming exhibition «Italian Futurism: Reconstructing the Universe», which will be open until fall 2014. It is the largest and most comprehensive look at this crucial 20th century movement ever, and will fill the New York museum. In October, New York will then host «Zero Countdown to Tomorrow», which examines the group of artists – many of them German – who revived the avant-garde in the wake of World War II. Bilbao has just opened a large exhibition of recent works by the ever astonishing Ernesto Neto; and from May through August this year, the Guggenheim Collection will present a remarkable private collection from Switzerland ranging from Mannerism to Surrealism and beyond. «So as you can see,» Armstrong concludes, with almost inexcusable understatement, «all the Guggenheims are in a good moment.»

Richard Armstrong serves in an advisory capacity on several foundation boards, including the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, Kiev, Ukraine, the Artistic Council, the Beyeler Foundation in Basel, Switzerland, and the Al Held Foundation and Judd Foundation, both in New York City. Additionally, he is a director of the Fine Family Foundation, Pittsburgh, as well as being a member of the Association of Art Museum Directors.

Richard, I would like to thank you for making it possible for me to join the IDC. So far, it has been loads of fun meeting with art enthusiasts from different places around the world. I can think of nothing that beats this learning process. Danke, merci, grazie, many thanks... The Baur au Lac awaits your visit again soon!

GUGGENHEIM NEW YORK

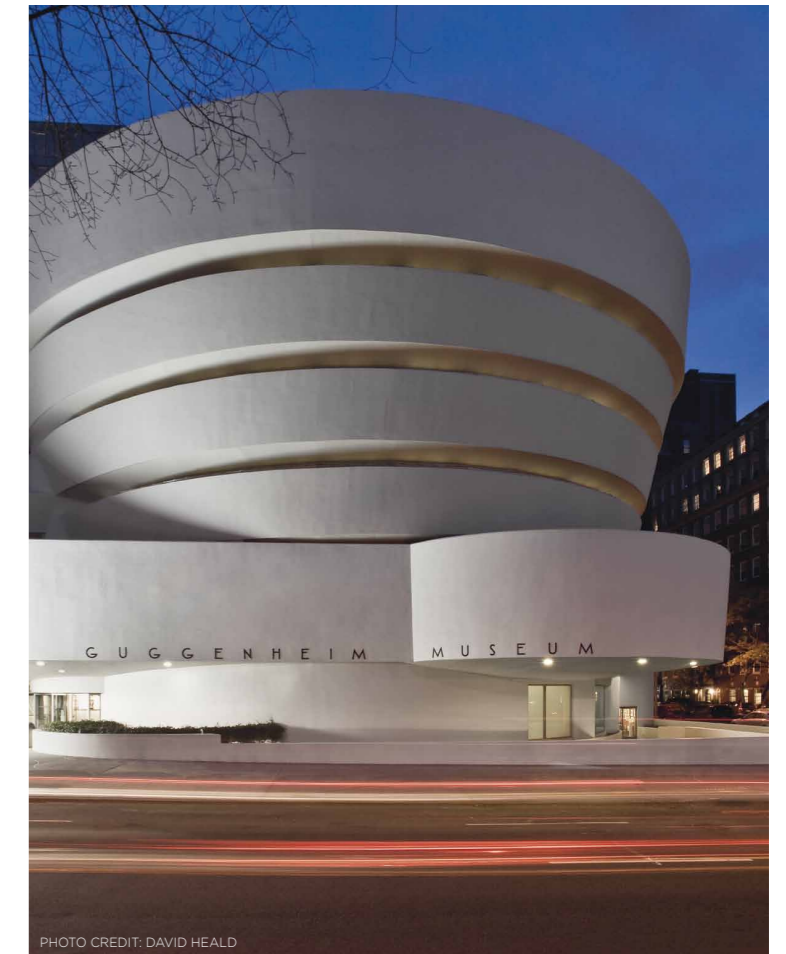


PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID HEALD

INSIDE THE WORLD OF MODERN ART

BY GIGI O. KRACHT

TRYING TO NAIL DOWN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD OF ABSTRACT ART IS LIKE CATCHING A BAR OF SOAP IN THE BATH: YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT IT AND THEN - *SCHLUPP!* - IT'S GONE AGAIN! SO RATHER THAN PAINT A WHOLE DETAILED LANDSCAPE, GIGI KRACHT'S (SOMETIMES VERY) PERSONAL INTERVIEWS GIVES US A FEW BROAD BRUSHSTROKES FROM AN ECLECTIC RANGE OF ANGLES, FROM THE MINUTE TO THE MONUMENTAL, FROM THE ABSTRACT TO THE FIGURAL (SOMETIMES IN ONE AND THE SAME WORK!). THE OUTCOME? A COLORFUL, KALEIDOSCOPIC COLLAGE OF SOME OF TODAY'S MOST WATCHED MODERN ARTISTS.

MARILYN MINTER

Marilyn Minter was first introduced to me at a dinner organized by the International Directors' Council of the Guggenheim Museum. My immediate, intuitive sense was one of warmth and friendliness. The following day, we made plans to meet at her studio and discuss her project for the upcoming Art Basel Fair in Miami 2013.

Upon entering her space, which was relatively modest in size, the first thing I saw was a gigantic painting she had been working on for months on end. It was a «simple» case of painting, then smudging the lines and contours, and painting it over and over! Marilyn Minter explained to me that her works «joins the link between the illusion of glamour and high fashion via advertising in public spaces».

Minter, an American, was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, in 1948, raised in Florida and currently lives and works in New York City. In her youth, Minter created a series of photographic illusions and studies that involved her drug-addicted mother. Another topic - equally taboo at the time - was sexuality, which ultimately set the tone for her later work. Marilyn eventually moved to New York City in 1976 after earning a master of fine arts degree from Syracuse University. Ultimately, with the rise of the nightclub scene in the 1970s and 1980s, she began to add imagery from advertising and the pornography industry to her art. The results are superbly erotic!

Minter begins her creative process by staging photo shoots, using films and darkrooms rather than digital techniques. She then combines negatives to arrive at a complete image which is then turned into a painting, created by layering enamel paint on aluminum. The final layer is applied with the fingertips to create and soften or blend the paintbrush lines - a fascinating methodology that leaves no room for long manicured nails! She also told me that, in 1989, she had created a series of works based on images taken from hardcore pornography. 1990 then saw her first video, 100 Food Porn.

Minter has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions: at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Center for Contemporary Art, Cincinnati; Les Rencontres d'Arles festival in France in 2007; La Consevera, Centro de Arte Contemporaneo, Spain; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; and of course the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg, Germany. Her video Green Pink Caviar was exhibited in the lobby of the Museum of Modern Art for over a year, as well as on digital billboards on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles and on the Creative Time MTV billboard in Times Square, New York City. Minter has featured in the Whitney Biennial and has had solo shows at the Regen Projects in Los Angeles and at Salon 94 in New York. She currently teaches in the Master of Fine Arts program at the School of Visual Arts in New York and is preparing a traveling retrospective of her work, which will open in 2015. Dear Marilyn, thanks for having me over. Learning to understand your unique creative process has been a truly wonderful experience. I am so impressed by your peerless blend of invention!

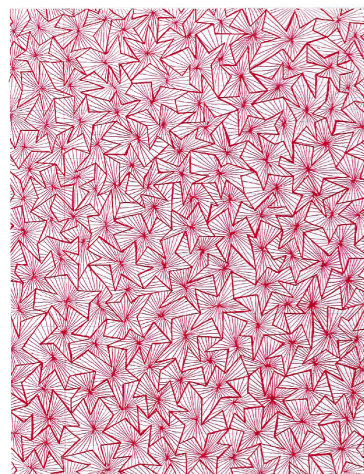




LORI ELLISON

I visited Lori Ellison (born 1958) at her studio in Brooklyn in 2013, on a bright day when the sun incessantly illuminated the elaborate miniaturist freehand doodles she creates with her Bic pens on spiral-bound notebooks, as well as the gouache paintings on wooden panels that she hangs in a straight line by the walls. She also works with glitter, enamels and egg tempera. I have to admit that I was immediately and utterly overawed by what I saw! My friends had been right: She dazzles the crowd with her forms and lines! Ellison informed me that Bic ballpens are no longer manufactured in this day and age, so whenever she finds any in stores or stationery shops, she grabs them all! Not all ballpoints are super-dense!

In 1981, Ellison received her bachelor of fine arts degree from the Virginia Commonwealth University. She later attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (in 1993), before earning her master of fine arts degree at the Tyler School of Art in 1996.



All the lettersize drawings in her two-room studio have one thing in common: smallness! We live in a day when monumental art is the norm. Ellison's small art constitutes a radical departure from this unspoken rule, however. In treading this path, Lori Ellison shows how «compactness and concision can be a relief in this age of spectacle». Indeed, no one else even comes near to her concise artistic aphorisms – except perhaps Japan's Yayoi Kusama! At first glance, her eye-catching patterns appear so simple. Yet the longer I looked, the more the twisting, tentacle-like compositions captivated me. However Ellison arrives at these geometric patterns, ovals, circles in squares and even archaic forms, their secrets remain a mystery revealed only to her own soul. My strong suspicion is that the subtle variations bring the repetitive shapes to life, creating a surface that glints and glistens as powerful images come forth from the depths, unfolding their full force before your very eyes.

In her current solo exhibition at McKenzie Fine Art on Lower East Side in Manhattan, Ellison is presenting 20 gouache paintings on wooden panels and 23 vibrating ballpoint ink drawings on her usual blue lined notebook paper. Most of the works on show were crafted in the last two years. Mind you, none of her works are bigger than 14 x 11 inches – her «humble scale», as she calls it, even though her works so often assume towering dimensions in our eyes! Another quote from the artist herself: «If one is lucky, modestly scaled art goes directly to the heart, or at least the viewer's ribs!» Her art is nothing if not discreet, stripped and cleansed of the whole gamut of artists' tricks and sleight of hand.

Lori Ellison's works have been shown in the New York Times, New York Magazine, Artcritical, Hyperallergic and numerous other publications. Her drawings can be found in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Thank you for meeting with me, Lori. I look forward to seeing you on my next trip to New York in the springtime.



JENNIFER WYNNE REEVES

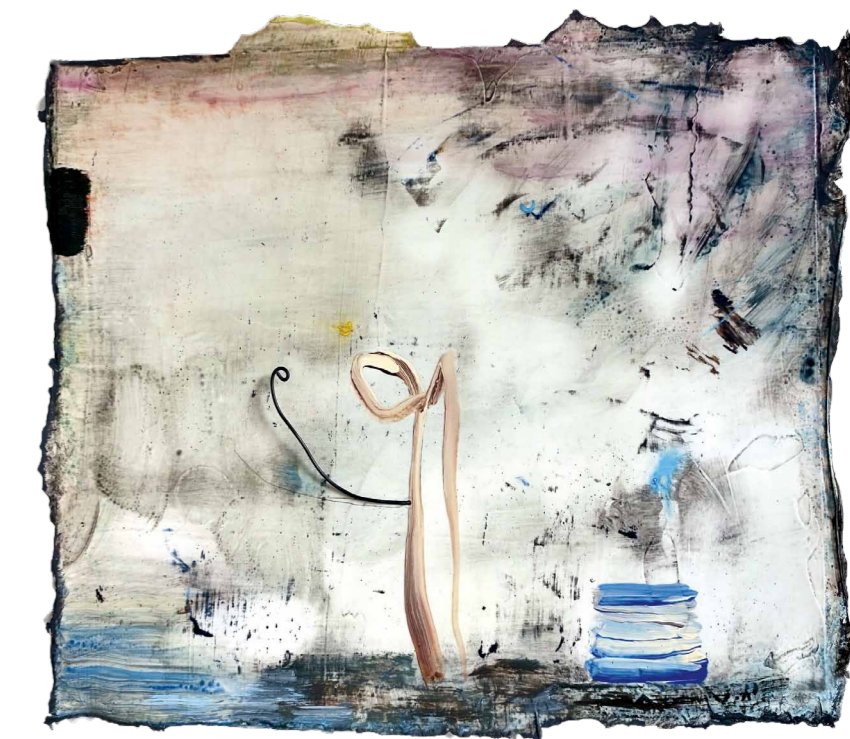
Born into a complex family situation in Royal Oak, Michigan, in 1963, Jennifer Wynne Reeves is the epitome of the intuitive artist. Her creations are best described as an ongoing engagement with the history of painting coupled with everyday 'finds' such as buttons, threads, tapes, wires, strands of hair, pieces of fabric and glass beads – all topped, of course, with thick blotches of garish acrylic and oil colors to conjure up fantastical landscapes of dramatic, imaginary realms. Her work bears witness to the re-emergence of the figurative in contemporary painting. It's as if her paintings are trying to find order in the chaos of this universe. Her small-scale canvases are also dotted with enigmatic symbols, evocative of the subconscious memories of one's life; the happy and the sad ones.

During our conversations, Reeves let me in on a secret: At high school she had been completely immersed in theater, and the students had been free to produce and direct plays of their choice. There was a trap door in the middle of the stage, and everyone would always try to find a use for it. Nowadays, as she crafts her art, finding 'trap doors' – little surprises in a composition – and finding the best use to make of them has become a recurrent theme. In some instances, she will «take an old painting, turn it upside down and see if it wants to be something else, changing it completely or very little at all.» It isn't about the figures being depicted, which are wonderfully rich in and of themselves. In Reeves' own words, «there is a huge difference between a figurative painting that's illustrated and one that has a mystical, inert quality about it!» The artist also writes prose poetry that always relates to her paintings. As a young child she used to paint dead or burnt animals. Today, one of her passages describes a bird in flight: «Flying in roller coaster curves, she throws back her head on the downbeat and drops a white pearl into the river. She's the Hallelujah Chorus in May - a necklace of peace.» Exploring both her writings and her paintings revealed to me the sheer creative force in what Reeves does: I almost can't believe how closely her paintings are reflected in her wording, and vice versa. Superlative technical proficiency also clearly comes through in her work. At times, one has the impression that she is getting away with a lot of stuff men could never get away with in a thousand years! Part figural yet still palpably abstract, her subjects bear silent but eloquent witness to her moods, her physical condition, her peace, her struggles, her passions. An unexpected continuity between forms and the image world emerges. Some critics have gone so far as to call her works «a reaction against Abstract Expressionism», whilst others see them simply as beautiful, sensual, savvy, even sentimental. Reeves' paintings suggest

that abstraction and representation might, at root, simply be two sides of the same coin. The more you study her work, the more you realize the simplicity of it all...

From February 15 through March 23, 2014, «The Worms in the Walls at Mondrian's House», a collection of Reeves' small-scale paintings, have been on show at BravinLee Programs in New York City – a must for genuine art lovers.

The artist lives and works in a small town in upstate New York, quite a distance from Manhattan – and even further from Seaholm High School in Birmingham, the venue of her graduation. At the present time, Jennifer Wynne Reeves has her struggles to deal with. Jennifer, I send you thoughts of peace, contentment, happiness, rays of sunshine, warmth... and a box of dark 1844 chocolates! You will overcome!





JUDI HARVEST

Overlooking Venice's Canal Grande right next to the Campo San Stae vaporetto stop, the legendary Scuola dei Battioro e Tiraoro last year hosted an exhibition entitled *Denatured: Honeybees + Murano* by Miami-born artist Judi Harvest. A friend of mine, Corinne Gautier, had suggested that I pay a visit; and when I did, I was instantly enthralled by the scale and symmetry of Harvest's Murano creations. In conjunction with the 55th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, she dedicated this, her 14th solo show «to raising awareness of both the global environmental threat to honeybees and the local threat to artistic heritage that is represented by the closing of glass factories in Murano». Harvest herself is clearly thrilled by the «brilliant conception» behind the exhibition, which was developed in partnership with *Bees Without Borders*, an organization dedicated to promoting beekeeping skills as a way to alleviate poverty around the world.

In March 2013, Judi Harvest oversaw the creation of a bee-friendly garden on a 250 m² plot, designing an environment with 30 fruit trees and 500 flowering plants that eventually became home to four fully functioning beehives. The hives and plantings remained after the exhibition. They will be cared for by local gardeners and beekeepers who will regularly gather the honey – hence the 90 unique honey glass vessels created in collaboration with the master glass blowers at Linea Arianna. Formidable Murano glass sculptures inspired by the behavior of honeybees, the liquid state of honey and the geometric structures of hives were also on show at the exhibition. No less a mortal than Einstein is said to have postulated that «if the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would only have four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, (...) no more man!»



«The centerpiece of the exhibition,» Harvest told me, «was a monumental, suspended, human-sized beehive constructed from bent chicken wires, to give it a cell-like quality, and glass.» The hive is just big enough for one person at a time to enter. Once inside, the visitor would experience the sound of buzzing bees combined with music and other elements inspired by bees. As intended, this work addressed all the senses. The interior of the beehive is made up of thousands of hexagonal cells and replicates the communal behavioral patterns of an actual beehive. Science has found that honeybees communicate the whereabouts of pollen and nectar to the colony by dancing, always using the sun as their point of orientation. As famous Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner once said: «Genuine art is an affair of the people, essentially social in character. We must learn to bring art into our thinking. All real philosophers have been artists in the realm of concepts.»

Judi Harvest lives a stone's throw from our own apartment in Manhattan and has been exhibiting in Venice since 1987. On graduating from the New York Studio School, majoring in painting, she worked with master glassmaker Giorgio Giومان at the Linea Arianna glass factory. It was here that her love affair with Venice and honeybees began; and she has launched project after project in this unique Italian microcosm ever since. She has also created glass-based public artworks in the city: The aptly named *Fragmented Peace Buddha* was installed in 2003, followed by *Luna Piena/Full Moon* in 2005 and the *Venetian Satellite* in 2006.

If the current decline in beehives continues, honeybees will be extinct by the year 2035. The notion of a world without color, fruit or flowers in less than 21 years seems unfathomable, unthinkable. Yet the real tragedy is that it is neither! Judi, please don't lose your passion for the honeybees and please continue your research. We all look forward to hearing more from you in the future – and to striking a better balance with nature.



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER GALLO PHOTO

SHARON LOUDEN

Although Sharon Louden is my newest friend in the art world, I hold her tenderly in my heart as we were introduced by both of our best friends. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 15, 1964, Louden is the oldest of four daughters. Her education began at Olney Elementary Public School in Washington, D.C., where the family had moved when she was eight years old. Her high school diploma came from Sherwood High School in Sandy Spring, Maryland, where she learned from Mary Bloom and consistently garnered top awards. She received her bachelor of fine arts degree in 1988 from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she studied with Dan Gusting and Susanna Coffey. She received Yale's Schickel-Collingwood Prize in 1990, and went on to receive her master of fine arts degree from Yale School of Art in 1991. Her mentors at Yale were people of the caliber of Mel Bochner, Andrea Forge and Frances Bath, to name but a few.

Having studied figurative painting at the SAIC, her Yale experience later nudged Louden's work into a merger with abstraction, eventually laying a solid foundation for her current work using whimsical, fantasy-like lines. Her drawings, paintings and installations revolve around linear abstractions which she has termed «anthropomorphic individuals». Although her simple metal installations are clearly abstract in nature and have few stories to tell, they appear almost like dancing human tentacles – an impression that has led Louden to be called the Robert Ryman of the 21st century.

Louden's installation *Merge* opened at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, Minnesota in October 2011. *Art in America* described this energetic piece as perhaps Sharon Louden's best work to date. Her works are also on display in the permanent collections of the Neuberger Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Arkansas Art Center, Yale University Art Gallery, the Weatherspoon Art Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She has received a grant from the Elizabeth Foundation and participated in residences at Tamarind Institute, Urban Glass and Art Omi.



PHOTO CREDIT: VINSON VALEGA

Aside from the visual arts, Sharon Louden also edited the book *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life: Essays by 40 Working Artists*. At the time of writing, she was touring various states of the USA to promote it, accompanied and supported by a number of artists along the way. Since 1991, Louden has taught studio and professional practice classes to students of all levels in colleges and universities throughout the USA. For the past ten years, she has also run workshops – which she aptly calls *Glow Town* – in museums and schools. Since 2010, Louden has moderated the Professional Practice Lecture Series at the New York Academy of Arts. In this context, she has interviewed personalities such as Carter Foster from the Whitney Museum, Benjamin Genocchio from Artinfo.com, my dear friend Adam Sheffer, a partner at Cheim & Read Gallery, and Anne Pasternak, a director at Creative Time. As if that were not enough, Sharon Louden sits on the Board of Seed Space and is a founding member of the Arts Advisory Council for the New York Academy of Art.

Sharon, thanks so much for letting me get to know you. Let's talk again when I next visit the Big Apple!

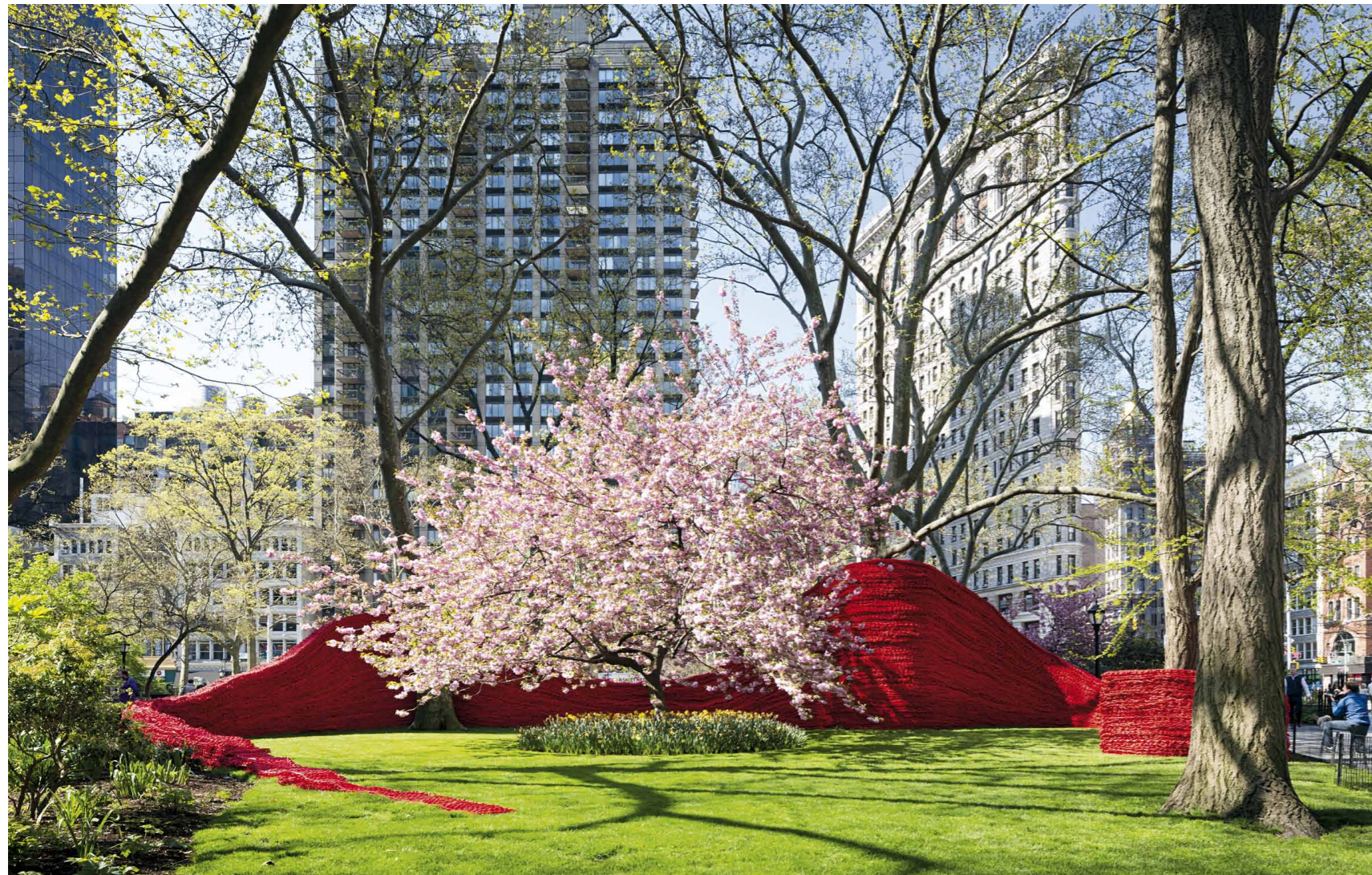


PHOTO CREDIT: JAMES EWING

ORLY GENGER

For the past decade, New York-bred Orly Genger has been known in the art world for the massive, ambitious installations in which she painstakingly 'crochets' and knots discarded ropes to form larger-than-life shapes – an unusual style of work that has earned her the epithet «The Rope Wrangler». Her rope sculptures give the impression of serpents wrapping themselves around trees or gyrating in some lithe but blissfully obscure dance. Originally, the ropes were used by lobstermen; in their new lease of life, they find themselves coated with brightly colored acrylic paints.

In May 2013, Genger created her largest installation to date, «Red, Yellow and Blue», which was set up at Madison Square Park in New York. This monumental sculpture uses an astonishing 1.4 million feet of lobster-fishing ropes that are split into three separate chambers, each sporting a primary color. Over a two year period, Genger and her team hardly ever emerged from her studio, spending every waking hour removing fish bones and bits of lobster from the ropes. In the course of the project, the artist handled virtually every inch of rope herself. Other, similarly gigantic works have been exhibited at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Born on January 15, 1979, in Manhattan, Orly Genger's beginnings were anything but gigantic. She attended primary and high school in the Upper East Side of Manhattan before venturing as

far afield as Brown University, graduating with a bachelor of arts degree and majoring in visual art. Perhaps there is nothing unnatural about her fascination with ropes, colors and forms after all...

Before focusing on rope installations, Genger spent some time casting smaller aluminum and bronze pieces. Traces of her large-scale rope pieces are nevertheless undeniable in her cast sculptures, as are discernible echoes of some of her detailed drawings and collages.

Genger earned a post-baccalaureate degree from the Art Institute of Chicago in 2002 and today lives and works in New York. Her work is on show in many private and public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Hood Museum of Art, Albright-Know Art Gallery, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Hammer Museum of Contemporary Art and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, to name but a few.



Lately, the versatile artist has taken to making rope jewelry in collaboration with designer Jaelyn Mayer. Their latest lines were manifestly inspired by her installation at Madison Square Park, which Genger will reinstall at the deCordova Sculpture Park in Lincoln, Massachusetts, in October. It will remain at this venue for a full year.

My best wishes to you, Orly! See you again soon in the Madison Square Park neighborhood. It was fun having your serpents!



DEBORAH KASS

Meeting Deborah Kass last November 2013 at Paul Kasmin's Gallery on 10th Avenue in Manhattan was a real blast! And why should that come as a surprise, given that she's a child of Aries, born on April 9, 1952, in San Antonio, Texas?

After majoring in painting, Kass received her bachelor of fine arts degree from the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, before continuing her studies on the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and at the Art Students League of New York. She is widely known for her mid-career retrospective Deborah Kass, Before and Happily Ever After at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pennsylvania. A catalogue published to go with the exhibition featured essays by respected art historians of the caliber of Robert Storr, Eric Shiner and John Waters.

The artist's first major body of works, the Art History Paintings, interposed frames taken from Disney cartoons with slivers of painting from Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Jasper Jones and other contemporary sources. Her fascination for the work of Andy Warhol came later, touching on notions of Americanism and popular culture. Her «drag act» reinterpretations of classic Warhol images feature Barbra Streisand. Kass had had the ultimate eureka experience with Streisand in the movie version of Yentl the Yeshiva Boy. And Streisand was, interestingly, one of the few iconic figures to wave aside the artistic overtures of big money – giving Kass a tremendous opportunity to create her own likeness of her hero in various colors, taking full artistic possession of all the connotations of the imagery.

Kass went on to reincarnate other iconic formats too, notably Kennedy's grieving wife in the Jewish Jackie Series from 1992. Others included Marilyn Monroe, My Elvis, Cindy Sherman, Elizabeth Murray, Pat Steir, Robert Rauschenberg and his family, and of course the grand homage to Gertrude Stein. Sadly, my brief sketch cannot hope to keep pace with the manifold pictorial mischief of all of Kass' remarkable paintings. Her Partnering with Andy, as she called it, continued until 2000 in a series of works which she called The Warhol Project. The fruits of this creative period have been widely exhibited: To see them is to love them.

Since just after the turn of the millennium, Kass has devoted herself to «feel good paintings for feel bad times». Picking up on the signature works and styles of some of the 20th century's most iconic artists, she reworks them with a dash of Broadway here and a slice of a Frank Stella cover there, all seasoned with a block capitals snippet from the Broadway show A Chorus Line: «Daddy, I would love to dance.» In the hands of Deborah Kass, Ed Ruscha's MoMA-owned 1962 classic OOF becomes OY and YO – or, at Christmas time, an overwhelming JOY.

Kass' work has been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, the Istanbul Biennale, the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Jewish Museum, New York, and at the National Portrait Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Ms. Kass is a Senior Critic on the Yale University MFA Painting Program.

Deborah, your deadpan messages show such strength of character – yet such playful rhythms too! It has been terrific getting to know you. Let's do dinner on my next hop to your corner of Brooklyn!

