



SHAPING SPACE

OCTOBER 29- NOVEMBER 20, 2011

installations by

**Rachel Hayes
and Liz Miller**

essay by Claire Kovacs

We had two main objectives in organizing this exhibition. Our first was to enhance and enrich the educational experiences of Coe students. This is especially applicable for the studio art and art history students and those taking *Exhibitions and Installation in Contemporary Art* this fall. I would like to note that the students enrolled in the course will have the exciting opportunity to work with our artists, Rachel Hayes and Liz Miller, during the installation, assisting, witnessing and engaging with the artistic process.

Our second goal was to open up a discourse about installation art, as a means to expose students and a broader general audience to the continually evolving notion of art and artistic practice. This will be accomplished not only through the exhibition itself, but also through a panel discussion held on October 29 at 4:00 pm. The panel will consist of the two exhibiting artists as well as Beili Liu-Associate Professor, 3D Foundations, University of Texas, Austin, and Isabel Barbuzza-Associate Professor, Sculpture, The University of Iowa. In bringing together four practicing installation artists, we hope to garner an active and engaging discussion on some of the issues surrounding installation as an art form.

Jennifer Rogers
Gallery Director/Part-time Instructor

Installation Art: A Nodal Introduction

In some ways, installation art has always been with us, from the very beginning. The caves of Chauvet, the earliest known example of human artistic production, function in the same way as contemporary site-specific installations: activating the specific space through an aesthetic engagement. At Chauvet, this intervention comes in the form of painted bison, horses, bears and even rhinos and lions on the undulating cave walls. Thousands of years later, Jean Claude and Christo wrapped the Reichstag (1977), Jenny Holzer digitized her Truisms on electronic displays in the vast lobby of the Guggenheim in New York (1998) and Susan Phillipz transformed the bridges of Glasgow into soundscapes (2010).

Contrary to a tendency to carefully frame a work or place it in isolation on a pedestal, an awareness of the function of art in space is fundamental to many works in the Western canon, for example: the Sistine Chapel, Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*, the Parthenon Marbles. In each, the artist was acutely cognizant of the intended environment and the function of the work in that space, a detail that is often overlooked when the work is extracted from its site, either permanently or disseminated through reproduction.

In contemporary Installation Art, an interest in space and viewer experience becomes the locus of the intention of the artist and his or her work. Instead of discrete objects, Installation Art places a primacy on experiencing the space and object(s) as a cohesive whole. Rather than considering the viewer as a disembodied eye that ponders the work from a distance, Installation Artists often regard the viewer as necessary for the activation of the work itself. Entering the piece, engaging with it through his or her heightened senses of touch, smell, sound – as well as sight – is integral in the completion of the work.

There is an overt Western bias in the foundations of Installation Art: from the experiments towards a Gesamtkunstwerk by the Vienna Secessionists (1902), El Lissitzky's *Proun Room* (1923), Kurt Schwitters' first *Merzbau* (1923-33), the Environments, Assemblages and Happenings of the late 1950s, the Minimalist sculptures of the 1960s, the rise of Installation Art as a practice in the 1970s and 80s to its institutional approval in the 1990s through installations in the hallowed halls of art institutions. While it finds a steady track towards acceptance as an art form, it does not have a straightforward historical development.

Its influences are diverse: architecture, cinema, performance art, sculpture, theater, set design, curating, Land art, and painting – just to name a few. Instead of one history, there instead seems to be several parallel ones, each engaging with a specific repertoire of concerns, which is manifested today in the diversity of work produced under the umbrella of Installation Art.

Robert Rauschenberg stated that he worked “in the gap between art and life,”[†] and perhaps in this liminal zone is an apt place to situate Installation Art, for it shapes viewer experience in the interstice of space and time. The viewer explores an installation in much the same way that he or she would investigate a situation in life: garnering knowledge through an engagement with a space or event in a specific moment. Just as life is made up of ephemeral points in time, incomplete perceptions and non-linear experiences, so also is an installation. In some ways life permeates Installation Art; the viewer cohabitates with the art in an installation: the objects, the ideas and the space itself. By engaging with the activated space in an installation, the viewer can contemplate its physical, aesthetic and theoretical states.

[†]*Sixteen Americans*, ed. Dorothy C. Miller, New York: MOMA, 1959, 58.

While always engaging in some way with the concept of space, Installation Art is not always site-specific. Rather it can be made up of movable pieces, temporary or permanent, that can be transported from site-to-site, sometimes with slight changes to fit a particular context. Losing a sense of the fixity of space can create artists whose practice is “nomadic, fluid and sometimes even virtual rather than restricted to a geographical place or institution.”[†] In other words, the sense of site as integral becomes superseded by the notion of the lack of site, an emphasis on mobility, an itinerary articulated by the artist.

In closing, the ideas around Installation Art considered here are not meant to be inclusive, but rather should function as a series of nodes, a framework from which to begin the consideration of art as installation. It is polyphonic and multifarious.

[†]Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002, 1.

Claire Kovacs
ACM/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow
in Modern and Contemporary Art
Visiting Assistant Professor in Art

Rachel Hayes

I am interested in creating work that functions on multiple levels within a given space—as a fascinating object, as a minimalist sculpture, as an architectural space divider/interrupter, as an abstract painting, or even as a massive stained glass patchwork quilt.

Hand-sewn and often large-scale, my work is in equal measure - both powerful and fragile. Scale and color consume a space yet there is balance with the delicately sewn stitches and understated shadows, therefore maintaining a strong physical and material presence while remaining sensuous and experiential. I am physically attracted to color, and how it can affect my relationship to various materials.

A site will often dictate the scale of my work, and I will try to take advantage of what a given space will offer, such as height and width, natural light or incandescent. Then I muse about how my materials may take advantage of it. I love and hate working within the constraints of a space. After drawing up my plan for 'fitting' my work within the frame of the space, I leave most other decisions to intuition.

I use my sewing machine as a building tool for connecting planes and lines. I see my work as abstract, yet the materials that I use carry a history and weight of their own. Each work addresses balance, space and light in a different way, with unequal emphasis. With one work I may aim to create a stoic space of reverence, with another I may reuse my scraps from a previous work to let my haphazard sensibility take over. With some works I am interested in endurance, while others are concerned with ephemerality. Experimentation and play with materials is an important part of my studio practice. In my studio there are abstract sculptures from found objects, linear drawings, mirrors, rocks, Photoshop renderings, and scale models for sometimes-implausible projects. Bolts and piles of colored fabrics are laid out on my palette. My work can be as massive in scale as a building, but it can also be as ethereal as a shadow on the wall.

Resume (Abbreviated)

EDUCATION

- 2006 M.F.A. – Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
- 1999 B.F.A. – Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO
- 1998 Kansas City Art Institute Study Abroad Program
Florence, Italy and Paris, France

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS & RESIDENCIES

- 2011 Marie Walsh Sharpe Studio Program
- 2009 Augustus Saint-Gaudens Memorial Fellowship in Sculpture
- 2008 Sculpture Space Residency, Utica, NY
- 2007 Art Omi, International Artists' Residency, Omi, NY
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Professional Fellowship in Sculpture
- 2005 Virginia Commission for the Arts Fellowship in Sculpture
Textile Study Group of New York
Nancy and Harry Koeningsberg Award
- 2004 Charlotte Street Foundation Award, Kansas City, MO
- 2003-04 Avenue or the Arts Award, Public Art Commission,
Kansas City, MO
- 2002-03 Roswell Artist in Residence Program, Roswell, NM

SOLO EXHIBITIONS & PROJECTS

- 2010 Wild and Wary Ways,
Augustus Saint-Gaudens Fellowship Exhibition, Cornish, NH
- 2009 Rainbow Conversation, BravinLee Programs, NY, NY
Ice Cold Daydream, Dolphin Gallery, Kansas City, MO
Patient Persistence, Shaw Center for the Arts,
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

- 2008 Re-Reverie, ADA Gallery, Richmond, VA
The Duality of Light Without Violence
Lab Gallery, NY, NY
- 2007 Wow and Flutter, Solvent Space, Richmond, VA
- 2005 Revival Pavilion, Fahrenheit Gallery, Kansas City, MO
- 2003 New Work, Roswell Museum and Art Center
Roswell, NM "catalogue"
- 2002 Sheer Suppression, Joseph Nease Gallery
Kansas City, MO

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 Chutes & Tears, Collaboration with Jiha Moon
ADA Gallery, Richmond, VA
Chutes & Tears, Collaboration with Jiha Moon
Lab Gallery, New York,
Associations, Urban Institute of Contemporary Art
Grand Rapids, MI
- 2010 Museum Interrupted, Nerman Museum of Contemporary
Art, Overland Park, KS
In Context, Bloomberg Headquarters, New York, NY
Informal Relations
Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art
Indianapolis, IN
Flying Hexagons, Alamo, Lafayette, LA
More Mergers & Acquisitions
Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA
- 2009 I Wanna Be Somewhere, 130 Reade St. Studio
New York, NY









Liz Miller

My mixed media installations and drawings recontextualize simplified shapes, signs and symbols from disparate historical and contemporary imagery to create abstract fictions. Existing forms from a multitude of sources are co-opted, altered, and spliced to adopt hybrid identities. Through the process of appropriation and subsequent recombination, shapes lose their real-world connotations and take on fictitious roles. Forged relationships between benign and malignant forms confuse the original implications of each while revealing the precariousness of perception and how easily it can be tampered with.

Recent projects pit Baroque and Gothic pattern and ornament against forms derived from armor and weaponry. Seemingly oppositional pairings create duplicitous environments where conflicting messages are conveyed. The use of felt, foam, and other tactile materials further complicates questions of source, masking the identity of forms while allowing them to inhabit both sculptural and two-dimensional space.

Resume (Abbreviated)

EDUCATION

- 2005 MFA—Drawing & Painting, Department of Art
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
- 1999 BFA—Painting, With Honors, Rhode Island School of Design,
Providence, RI

SELECTED ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 Shaping Space, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA
Redux Contemporary Art Center, Charleston, SC
Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND
Louisiana Tech, Ruston, LA
Illusive Insurgency, 1708 Gallery, Richmond, VA
Ornamental Invasion, Minneapolis Institute of Arts,
Minneapolis, MN
Repetitive Deception Scheme, Haas Gallery
Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, PA
- 2010 Exponential Growth: New Works on Paper,
Sister Rosaire Gallery, St. Mary's College, South Bend, IN
Ornamental Duplicity, Shaeffer Gallery,
Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN
- 2009 Cataclysmic Rescue Mission, Harcourt House Arts Centre,
Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
- 2008 Self-Sustaining Debacle, Contemporary Art Center of Virginia,
Virginia Beach, VA
Techno Deluge, Mercer Union, Toronto, Ontario, CAN
Resplendent Reconnaissance, Sioux City Art Center,
Sioux City, IA 2006 Ostentatious Onslaught
Fort Collins Museum of Contemporary Art, Fort Collins, CO
Systemic Attack, Franklin Art Works, Project Space,
Minneapolis, MN
- 2004 Serendipitous Hybrid, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN
The Failure of an Eloquent Defense
Christensen Center Gallery, Minneapolis, MN

TWO/THREE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 Systematizing, Gallery of Contemporary Art
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO
Systematics, Soo Visual Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN
- 2006 Perform/Install, South Bend Regional Museum of Art,
South Bend, IN

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

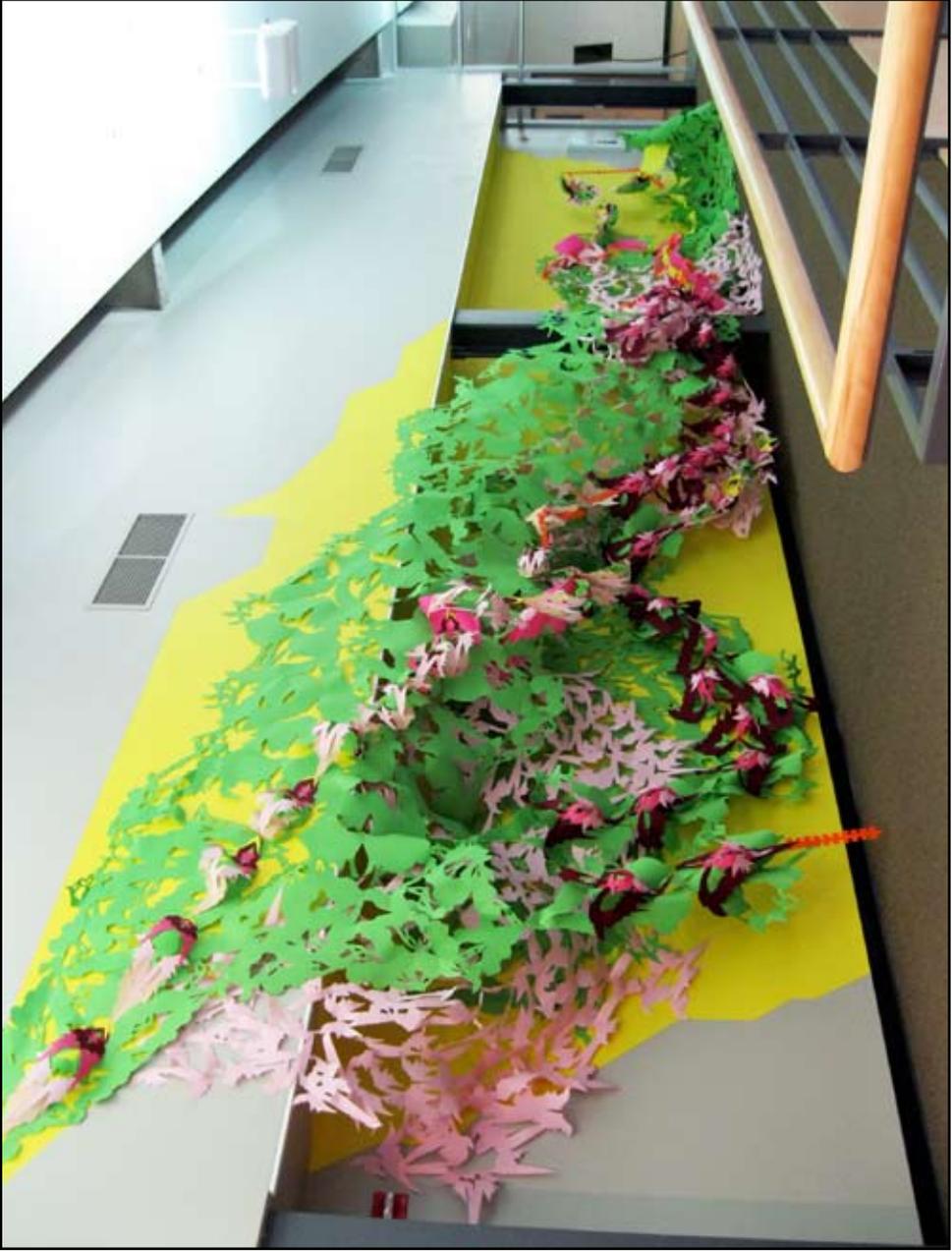
- 2010 Vertical Currency: Five Years of Emerging Artists at RAC,
Rochester, MN
Constant Sorting, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh,
Oshkosh, WI
- 2008 Jerome Fellows 2007—08, MCAD Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
Latitude, NYCAMS Gallery, New York, NY
- 2007 Urban Fabric, Traffic Zone Center for Visual Art,
Minneapolis, MN
Latitude, Fieldgate Gallery, London, UK
Environments of Invention,
Minnesota Museum of American Art, Minneapolis, MN
- 2006 8x8x8: LON/MSP/NYC, The Soap Factory, Minneapolis, MN
- 2005 Trickle Down, Firehouse Gallery, Burlington, VT
- 2004 Proliferate: Drawing in Space, Accumulating in Time,
Foster Gallery, Eau Claire, WI

AWARDS/HONORS

- 2011-12 McKnight Artist Fellowship for Visual Artists
- 2009 Artist Initiative Grant, Minnesota State Arts Board
- 2007-2008 MCAD/Jerome Foundation
Fellowship for Emerging Artists
- 2007 Artist Initiative Grant, Minnesota State Arts Board



Miller 1



Miller 2





This exhibition would not be possible without the support of a number of people and we would like to especially thank the following individuals and groups:

Rachel Hayes

Liz Miller

Beili Liu

Isabel Barbuzza

Marie Baehr

Peter Thompson

Coe College

Coe College Art Department

Sandy Andreson, PIP Printing

Gallery Assistants

Installations and Exhibitions in Contemporary

Art Class

Images List

Hayes 1

This is Happening, Fabric, Mirrors, 9' x 15' x 9', 2010

Hayes 2

Free Energy 2, steel, light gels, fabric, thread, 40" x 30" x 30", 2010

Hayes 3

There Will Come Soft Light, fabric, vinyl dimensions variable. 2010, Commission for Bloomberg Headquarters, NYC.

Hayes 4

All Most All Ways, Fabric, Light Gels, 17' x 25' x 23', 2010
photo credit: Michael Spillers

Miller 1

Repetitive Deception Scheme, mixed media installation dimensions variable. Installation view: Haas Gallery, Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, PA, 2011

Miller 2

Opulent Eco-Storm, mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Installation view: Steinhilber Gallery, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, 2010

Miller 3

Ornamental Invasion, mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Installation view: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2011

Miller 4

Decorative Eco-Disaster, mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Installation view: Gallery of Contemporary Art University of Colorado Colorado Springs, 2010

Coe College

