Seeing Things As They Really Are:
Three-Dimensional Paperworks at Dieu Donné
Curated by Jenny Gerow

June 13 - September 8, 2019

Brooklyn Navy Yard
Yard Work Gallery, BLDG 92, Lobby (Part I)
Dieu Donné, Building 3, Suite 602 (Part II)


What I hope for in my pieces is a balance of seeing what the things really are and all that that implies—their use value, their history, their birth into the world—and, at the same time, recognizing the works’ very formal qualities in terms of color, composition, and line, which is where my part as an artist comes in.
—B. Wurtz

This group exhibition mines the archive at Dieu Donné to examine the organization’s rich legacy of sculptural and three-dimensional papermaking. Founded in 1976, Dieu Donné has been at the forefront of an artistic movement to challenge the notion of paper as mere support for the image. The choice to create dimensional works in paper pulp is not just for the material’s aesthetic and physical qualities, but for the powerfully subversive, humorous, political, and emotional associations that paper and the printed word embody. This exhibition focuses on works whose overlooked and underappreciated subject matter are imbued within these inherent associations with paper: objects like plastic bags, cardboard, chains, plastic tubing, dishrags, and CDs.
Paperworks by Jim Hodges, Lynda Benglis, and Mark Bradford affix the dual bodily traits of fragility and strength onto discarded materials. B. Wurtz and Michael St. John use whimsy and play to render their assembled food objects. Nari Ward molds a cardboard sign, reminiscent of one used by those seeking charity, that relates subject lines from a phishing scam meant to prey on our desires. More elemental objects like smoke, fire, and ice are captured by Rosemarie Fiore and Saul Melman documented in paper, their ephemeral traces imprinted on the rag.

This exhibition is organized by Dieu Donné with the generous support of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.
Dieu Donné is the leading nonprofit organization in the United States developing hand papermaking as an artistic medium. For the past 42 years, Dieu Donné has introduced this unique process to artists, from aspiring students to contemporary career professionals. Dieu Donné also provides competitive, fully-funded residencies to emerging and established artists. Art created at Dieu Donné has been acquired by major institutions including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Getty Museum, MoMA, and The Smithsonian, among others.

Jenny Gerow is the Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at BRIC, a not-for-profit cross disciplinary organization based in Downtown Brooklyn that presents and incubates work by New York based artists.

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Cover Image: B. Wurtz, Untitled (7937), 2015, Pigmented cotton on styrofoam objects with plastic net, wire and wood.