



New
American
Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT

110

Winners: Northeastern Competition 2013

Juror: Al Miner, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art,
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Juror's Selections:

Johnny **Abrahams** | Deborah **Adams** | Rebecca **Adams** | Ivan **Alifan** | Margery **Amdur**
Kristin **Breiseth** | Tom **Butler** | Dana **Clancy** | Seth **Clark** | Sarah **Colby** | Jaclyn **Conley**
Kevin **Fey** | Maya **Hayuk** | Mia Tarducci **Henry** | Megan **Herwig** | Joo Lee **Kang**
Elizabeth **Kostojohn** | Neerja **Kothari** | Ryan **Lammie** | Lindsey **Landfried** | So Yoon **Lym**
Douglas **Melini** | Vanessa A. **Michalak** | Aliza **Morell** | Cobi **Moules** | Russ **Noto**
Meghan **Olson** | José **Ortiz-Pagán** | Erin M. **Riley** | Daniela **Rivera** | Rebecca **Rutstein**
Miljan **Suknovic** | Hooper **Turner** | Ken **Weathersby** | Deborah **Zlotsky**

Editor's Selections:

Katie **Bell** | Anna **Conway** | James **Hyde** | Mike **Lash** | Troy **Richards**

Juror's Comments

Al Miner

Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA



It was not so long ago that revolutionary artists exploded the conventions of painting. While the painters of centuries past were limited to certain styles, formats, and subjects—whether biblical scenes or portraits of nobility—the twentieth century paved the way for the works in this volume. Today's definition of painting continues to expand, and the options available to artists seem endless. Yet the rise of new media and the advances in sculptural fabrication techniques of recent years render these art forms an attractive alternative. So, why paint? Perhaps the challenge of charting new territory in a category that could be seen as staid sparks ingenuity. Painting's ability to playfully comment on or cleverly quote its own long history presents interesting opportunities. Paint's physical properties can produce highly seductive surfaces. Viewers have an unmatched reverence for painting. All these motivations, and more, are evident on the following pages, which hold exciting testaments to painting's undying dynamism.

Figuration dates to the cave paintings of France, and abstraction, though now often associated with Western modernism, has a long history in the decorative patterns of the East. Though some artists combine these visual approaches, the persistent split between pure figuration and abstraction divides the artists featured here almost equally.

Bringing freshness to figurative work may be an intimidating challenge, but, as this volume proves, it is possible. One way in which figuration today departs from its past is the powerful influence that photography now has on painting practice. The closeness of this relationship, particularly in relation to black-and-white photography, is seen in the work of several of the featured artists, who harness photography not only as a tool but as an expressive means of conveying mystery. Rebecca Adams's dramatic chiaroscuro brings a cinematic edge to her realistic figures despite their banal attire. These trends are also visible in the highly detailed and meticulous works of Elizabeth Kostojohn and So Yoon Lym. Despite the representational nature of their work, both artists leave room for interpretation. Kostojohn omits the hands of her subjects, whose posture and expressions alone imply the use of the cellphones that unite them. So Yoon Lym depicts her figures from above, the maze of fine lines that define their hair creating an independent abstraction. Tom Butler utilizes photographs themselves, concealing the faces in vintage Victorian portraits with painted hair, bandages, and other devices that prevent viewers from fully accessing the sitters.

Among the truly abstract selections, a tendency toward intricate patterning and obsessive mark making emerges. The tightly knit lines of Johnny Abrahams's black-and-white compositions make them pulsate like moiré patterns in Op Art. Also indebted to this



Amdur p30



Butler p38



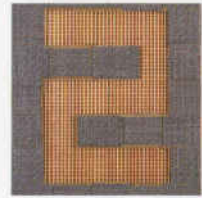
Clark p46



Henry p66



Rutstein p134



Weathersby p146

“Viewers have an unmatched reverence for painting.”

movement is the work of Douglas Melini, whose bright, sharp-edged geometry wraps around stretcher bars, quoting both the appearance and pliability of fabric. For Neerja Kothari, line making is an obsessive pursuit. She builds complex systems of synaptic connections with a light touch, achieving a range of values through accumulation. Rebecca Rutstein’s dense, all-over compositions, with netlike forms built of myriad triangles, are at once oppressive and airy.

Pop Art’s lasting influence is seen in several works. Erin M. Riley channels painting through fiber arts in weavings that takes their cues from Pop’s penchant for simplified forms, commentary on consumerism, and preference for mundane subjects. Directly appropriating Pop subjects, but with a contemporary twist, Mia Tarducci Henry answers Andy Warhol’s soup cans with bottles of antidepressants.

The exploration of architecture as both subject and formal source appears to be a lively trend. The use of oil paint to depict building interiors has a long history. Dana Clancy portrays an atrium rife with such history: that of an art museum. In each view, there is construction underway, which further emphasizes the idea of architecture as subject. Seth Clark’s jumbled multimedia creations show us architecture in ruins. Mixing collaged elements with paint, he evokes the textures of splintering wood and damp drywall in works that are particularly timely in light of recent natural disasters that have destroyed countless homes. As Clark sometimes does, Megan Herwig breaks out of the rectangular format. Her quirky cut-paper houses are contoured to reflect their pitched roofs and projecting porches.

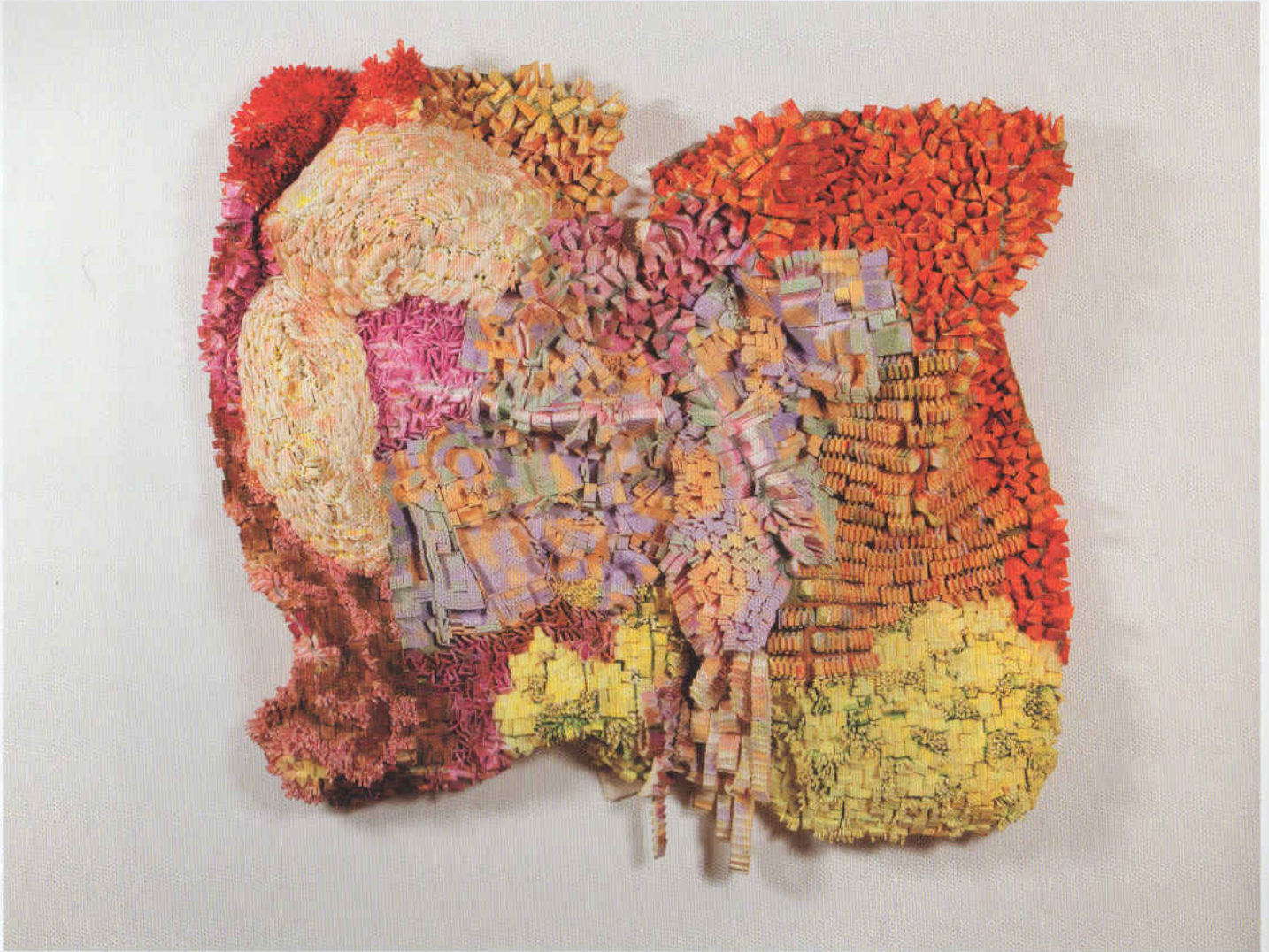
While the three-dimensionality of architecture may have been an inspiration for some of the painters represented in this issue, others make their own work in three dimensions. These artists embrace the objecthood of paintings and, in some cases, question what qualifies as a painting at all. By simply folding her paper, Lindsey Landfried breaks out of the two-dimensional mode, creating hybrid works that demonstrate the dynamic potential of paper as a support. Because Margery Amdur makes her pieces with essentially rectangular shapes, rich colors, densely layered marks, and the scale of Abstract Expressionism, they actively participate in the painting dialogue despite being constructed of protruding cosmetic sponges. Though Ken Weathersby’s format may be the most conventional of this group, he proves the versatility of painting by constructing complex wooden supports for creatively cut canvases.

I have a confession: I paint. The artists featured in this issue encourage my long-held respect for and interest in painting. All the artworks in this publication live up to painting’s rich tradition and are evidence of its potential to continue charting new territory that will engage audiences. The significant percentage of recent art school graduates and even current students represented here attests to this vibrancy. There is much to look forward to in painting’s bright future, as can be seen on the pages ahead. ■



Margery Amdur

Amass #6 | cosmetic sponges, gouache, ink, and pastel pigment on canvas, 108 x 72 inches



Margery Amdur

Amass #9 | cosmetic sponges, gouache, ink, and pastel pigment on canvas, 72 x 72 inches

Margery Amdur

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b. 1958 Pittsburgh, PA

Education

MFA, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

BFA, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA

Residencies

2013 Gulkistan Artist in Residency, Laugarvatn, Iceland

Moulin a Nef Artist in Residency, Auvillar, France

2012 Virginia Center for the Creative Artist, Amherst, VA

Ox Bow Artist in Residency, Saugatuck, MI

Solo Exhibitions

2014 Sarah Spurgeon Gallery, Washington State University,
Ellensburg, WA

Drawing Center for the Arts, Delaware, NJ

2013 Projects Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

The Noyles Museum, Oceanville, NJ

2012 The Kimura Art Gallery, University of Alaska,

Anchorage, AK

2010-12 Southeastern Public Art-in-Transit Permanent Subway
Art Commission

2005 Alsager Gallery, Manchester, England

Solvay Gallery, Krakow, Poland

Gallery X, Istanbul, Turkey

2003 The University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary

Group Exhibitions

2013 *Fresh Paint*, Manifest Gallery, Cincinnati, OH

Pearlstein Gallery, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA

2012 *Art Prize*, Gallery 106, Grand Rapids, MI

Design, Philadelphia, PA

Aqua Fair / Miami Basel, Projects Gallery, Miami, FL

My latest body of work, *Amass*, crosses the boundary between sculpture and painting. It speaks many languages, and is as much about the tactile as it is about the visual. Geometrically shaped cosmetic sponges comprise sensuous otherworldly landscapes. I gather and arrange individual units saturated with soft pastel pigment. I then glue to canvas thousands of these small commercially manufactured pieces, which, though they appear to be rigid, actually yield to the touch of one's hand.

Behind the veil of the everyday is an obsessive need to create. This new body of work, a fresh take on older concerns, maintains my commitment to simple building techniques and commonplace materials. I purposefully work low tech in a high-tech world. My work blurs the border between art and craft, and engages collage, assemblage, drawing, textiles, and public art. What knits it all together is that I am a painter using materials in a sculptural way, asking materials to become form and mass. My work is baroque—embellishment and detail collaborate to create extravagant and ornate surfaces.

