



In Plain Sight

Kathryn Andrews, castaneda/reiman,
Dario Robleto, Weston Teruya

*Daniel Nevers, Joanna Fiduccia, Anne Lesley Selcer,
and Stephanie Hanor*

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MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM, OAKLAND

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Introduction

A Brief History of Hiding in Plain Sight

Daniel Nevers, Curator

The notion of hiding in plain sight originally developed in the 1600s as a military tactic that posited that soldiers could occupy any space on the open battlefield as long as they remained out of the line of view of their enemies. As weapons technology advanced and combat evolved beyond rank-and-file fighting, the concept expanded to include early forms of camouflage.

Some 200 years later, Edgar Allen Poe established himself as the father of the modern detective story with the “The Purloined Letter,” published in 1844.¹ It features C. Auguste Dupin, an amateur sleuth (and the model for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes), uncovering the whereabouts of a scandalous missing letter. The plot hinges upon a trope of the genre that Poe is also credited with creating—namely, that the best place to hide something is often right out in the open.

As a theory, hiding in plain sight relies more on the limits of human perception than outright trickery. The paradox of the visible remaining unperceived is a function of our need to filter sensory information in order to navigate the world. According to Eviatar Zerubavel, author of *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Social Structure of Irrelevance*, the discrepancy between all that we could see versus what we actually notice underscores the critical role of intent attention to our perception.²



https://youtu.be/IGQmdoK_ZfY

The Monkey Business Illusion by Daniel Simons. Daniel Simons, 2010

In 1999, Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris designed a study to test what psychologists call “inattention blindness.”³ Participants in the study were instructed to watch a short video of people in white shirts and black shirts playing basketball and to count the number of times the players in the white shirts passed the ball. At one point, someone in a gorilla suit walks into the frame, looks into the camera, and beats their chest before exiting through the teams of players. Post-viewing, about half of the participants said they had not seen the gorilla.

Focusing our attention on one thing can cause us to overlook another even if the latter is designed to be obvious. At a time when we are bombarded with ever-increasing amounts of information performing for our attention, it is possible to suffer from spectacle fatigue.

There are also social and cultural components to perception, according to Zerubavel. As members of distinct communities, “we are socialized into culturally, sub-culturally (ideologically, professionally), and historically specific norms, conventions, and traditions of attending that actually determine what we come to regard as attention-worthy and what we effectively ignore.”⁴

Seeing, in other words, is not just a phenomenological act but a psychological and sociological one. Perhaps it seems obvious that factors such as family, politics, and geography shape what we deem important, but they also impact how and what we physically see. The implications are far-reaching: Because we tend to take as fact what we see with our own eyes, the notion that our vision is partially shaped by larger influences forces us to question how we know what we know.

Through a sophisticated interplay between materiality, image and idea, the artists included in this exhibition encourage viewers to understand that there is often more to what we see than our senses recognize upon first glance. They purposely deploy strategies that challenge our perception, not to deceive but to reveal.

NOTES

1. Poe, Edgar Allen. “The Purloined Letter” in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Harper and Bros. 1910. <https://bit.ly/2ksYIY4>
2. Zerubavel, Eviatar. “Noticing and Ignoring.” in *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Social Structure of Irrelevance*. New York. Oxford University Press. 2015.
3. Chabris, C., & Simons, D. *The Invisible Gorilla: And Other Ways our Intuitions Deceive Us*. New York, NY, US: Crown Publishers/Random House. 2010.
4. Ibid.

Kathryn Andrews

Censor or Surfeit

Joanna Fiduccia

In 1823, the satirist Ludwig Börne penned an essay titled “The Art of Becoming an Original Writer in Three Days,” in which he advised his readers to record everything that passed through their minds, every opinion and idle thought. This three-day brain-dump was intended to drum out what Börne called the “disgraceful cowardliness in regard to thinking that holds us all back—an anxiety about social approbation, more repressive than the censorship of governments.”¹ It was an idea that would be made famous by one of Börne’s readers: Sigmund Freud. Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) pivots on internalized censorship, and yet it was only two decades *after* its publication that Freud realized, to his surprise, Börne’s early influence on his thought. A striking example of cryptamnesia (forgetting an idea so that it strikes us as our own when the idea returns to mind), Freud’s psychic censorship occurred ironically, as Peter Galison notes, “just at the moment that Freud is addressing the *originality* of his idea of ... psychic censorship.”²

Figure 1



Kathryn Andrews, *Baldessari*, 2010. Mirror, steel and reflection of Goya Series THE SAME ELSEWHERE, 1997 by John Baldessari. 75 x 60 inches. Courtesy Rubell Museum, Miami.

This morsel of intellectual history puts us on the scent of Kathryn Andrews’s work. Andrews traffics in a range of objects and images so generic as to belong to no one, like balloons and baseball caps, stock photography (or photographs Andrews styles to resemble it), and the gleaming chrome or stainless steel elements that appear so regularly in her work as to suggest a signature—except that their primary virtue is to look entirely untouched by anything personal or particular. Other works pressure the terms of Andrews’s authorship: for instance, her puckish participation in the 2010 group exhibition “Support Group,” to which Andrews contributed two billboards braying “it’s all about ... gaylen gerber!”; or *Baldessari* (2010), a mirror installed in the Rubell Collection to reflect, like Perseus’s shield, John Baldessari’s 1977 *Goya Series*:

The Same Elsewhere.³ In these examples, Andrews’s work (her labor as well as her

oeuvre) inheres in a relationship that appears by turns complementary, parasitic, and antagonistic. *Appropriation*, with its neat assignment of authorship and its will-to-mastery, is surely not the right word for it. Instead, like Freud and Börne, Andrews incorporates these objects and artworks only to set spinning the involutions of originality.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the works featured in *In Plain Sight*. Each work in *Black Bars*, a series Andrews began in 2016, consists of an image printed at an imposing scale and mostly obscured by two vertical black bars. What appear from afar like redactions are, on closer inspection, black rectangles silkscreened onto the acrylic picture glass, which is set in deep frames. By approaching the works, one can throw an oblique gaze under the bars to glimpse more of the images: the scrabble of limbs from a Basil

Wolverton drawing, an icon of a broken heart, a sketch from a cartoon sequence in which Bugs Bunny flees a blank box. Violence or its threat provides the through-line. Sandwiched between the silkscreened glass and images of *Black Bars* are a set of objects, including a replica of Wolverine's claw that puns on Wolverton's name, and the gun featured in the movie *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, its barrel pointed down the jagged rift in the heart. These props—a frequent ingredient in Andrews's work—are a near perfect inversion of the auratic artwork of old whose aura is derived from, rather than destroyed by, their existence as cinematic images. In their transition from props to collectors' items, these objects bear with them the trace of celebrity, a value that the otherwise worthless prop acquires post hoc.



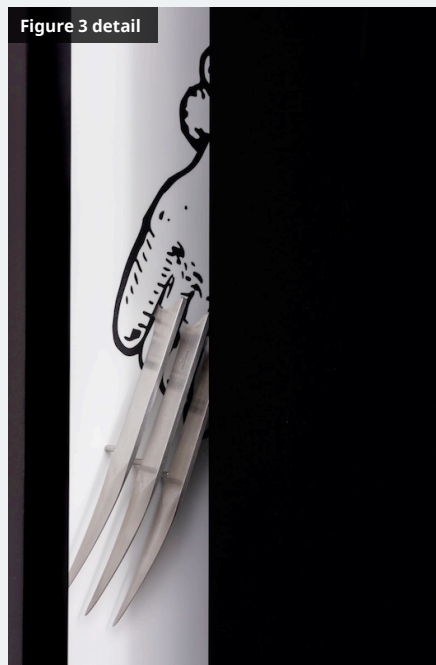
Figure 2
Kathryn Andrews, *Gaylen Gerber*, 2010. Paint on billboards. 84 x 204 inches. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

Figure 3



Kathryn Andrews, *Black Bars: Wolverine Wolverton*, 2016. Aluminum, Plexiglas, ink, paint, replica film prop. 92 x 73.25 x 4.5 inches. Collection J. Ben Bourgeois.

Figure 3 detail



Kathryn Andrews, detail of *Black Bars: Wolverine Wolverton*, 2016.

The prop, however, is something of a MacGuffin. Props provoke us to think about the absent body of the celebrity, but the conspicuously absent body is, in fact, Andrews's. Like Lutz Bacher and Cady Noland, Andrews approaches a critique of power—in the violence of the images she references, no less than in the two art-historical movements amply referenced in her work, Minimalism and Pop Art—through the magnification of dominating structures that appear natural, a matter of course, or merely aesthetic. Andrews reasons that feminist positions in art practice that have historically worked to recenter aesthetic experience on women's embodied existence are too quickly categorized and assimilated. Instead, for a body, she leaves us with one of two things: a line of lounge chairs occupied by a sheaf of rolled-up sun umbrellas, whose stainless steel posts transform the beach accessory into a stockpile of javelins; or the reflection of our bodies as they are caught in the dark glass of the black bars—body as weapon, or body as flattened image.

Like the prop, Andrews inverts the work previously done through the embodied artist—an emphasis on materiality that once complicated our apprehension of the artwork, but now seems mostly to cauterize it. Instead, she doubles down on the sleek and easily incorporated body of cultural objects in order to exacerbate their repressive quality. This is Andrews's tightrope act, a feat of troubling our consumption of images in art by using the most assimilable aesthetics. We might call this strategy "refluxive": a matter of encouraging such rapid consumption of the work that we are left with indigestion. In her work, the body that registers power is, in fact, our own, startled to find itself reflected in the sheen of images.

Figure 4



Kathryn Andrews, *Lounge Chair* (installation view), 2015. Gladstone Gallery, Brussels. Stainless steel, archival dye-sublimation prints on polyester, taffeta, polyester and vinyl. 24 x 112 x 74 inches. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: David Regen.

NOTES

1. Börne, Ludwig, "The Art of Becoming an Original Author in Three Days," trans. Leland de la Durantaye, *Harvard Review* (2006): 75, qtd. in Peter Galison, "Black-out Spaces: Freud, Censorship and the Re-territorialization of the Mind," *The British Journal for the History of Science*, vol. 45, no. 2 (June 2012): 237.
2. Ibid.
3. Curated by Michael Ned Holte at Cottage Home, Los Angeles, with Gaylen Gerber and Mateo Tannatt / Pauline.



Figure 5. Kathryn Andrews, *Black Bars: Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, 2016. Aluminum, Plexiglas, ink, paint, certified film prop 92 x 73.25 x 4.5 inches. Collection Scott Hoffman.

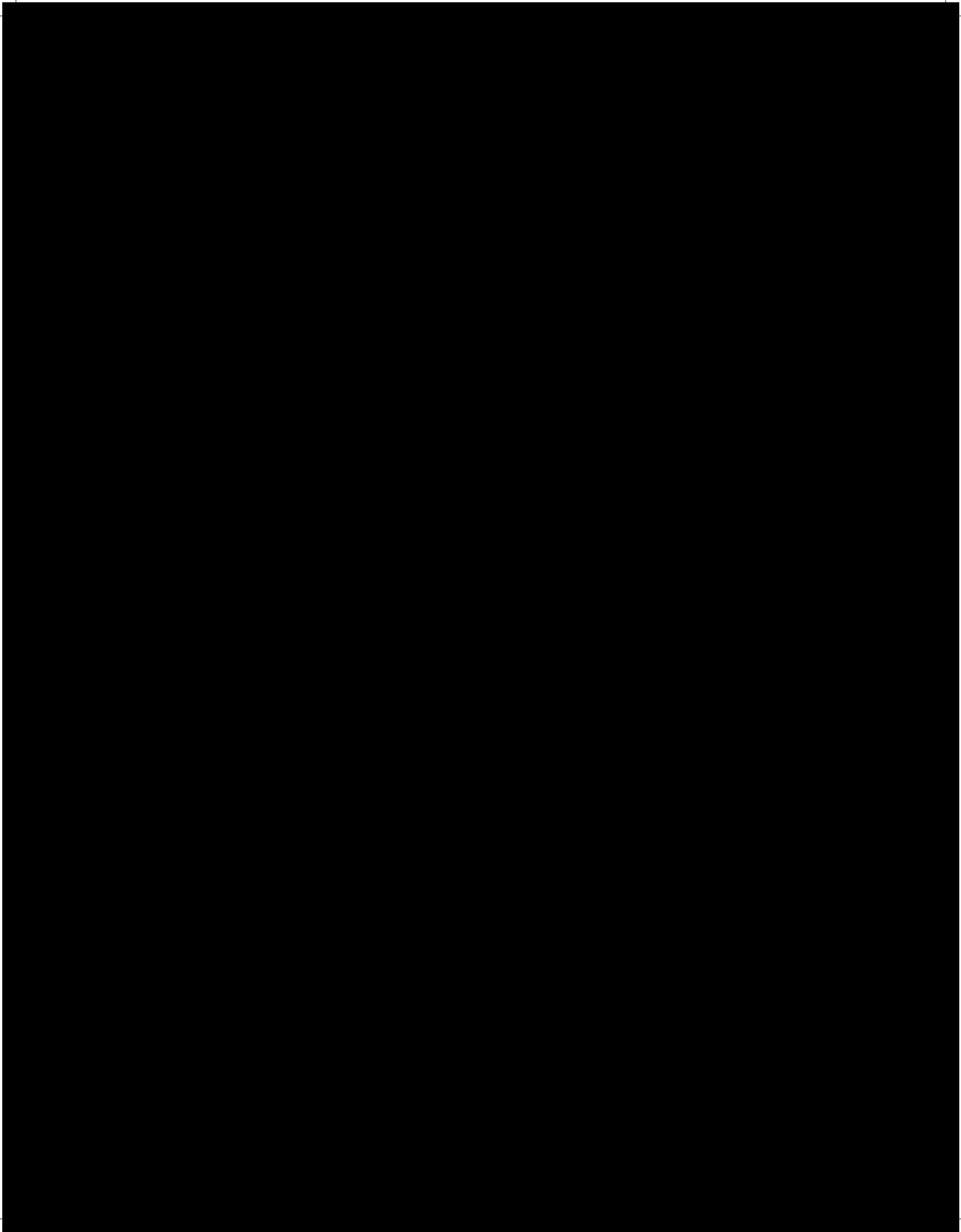
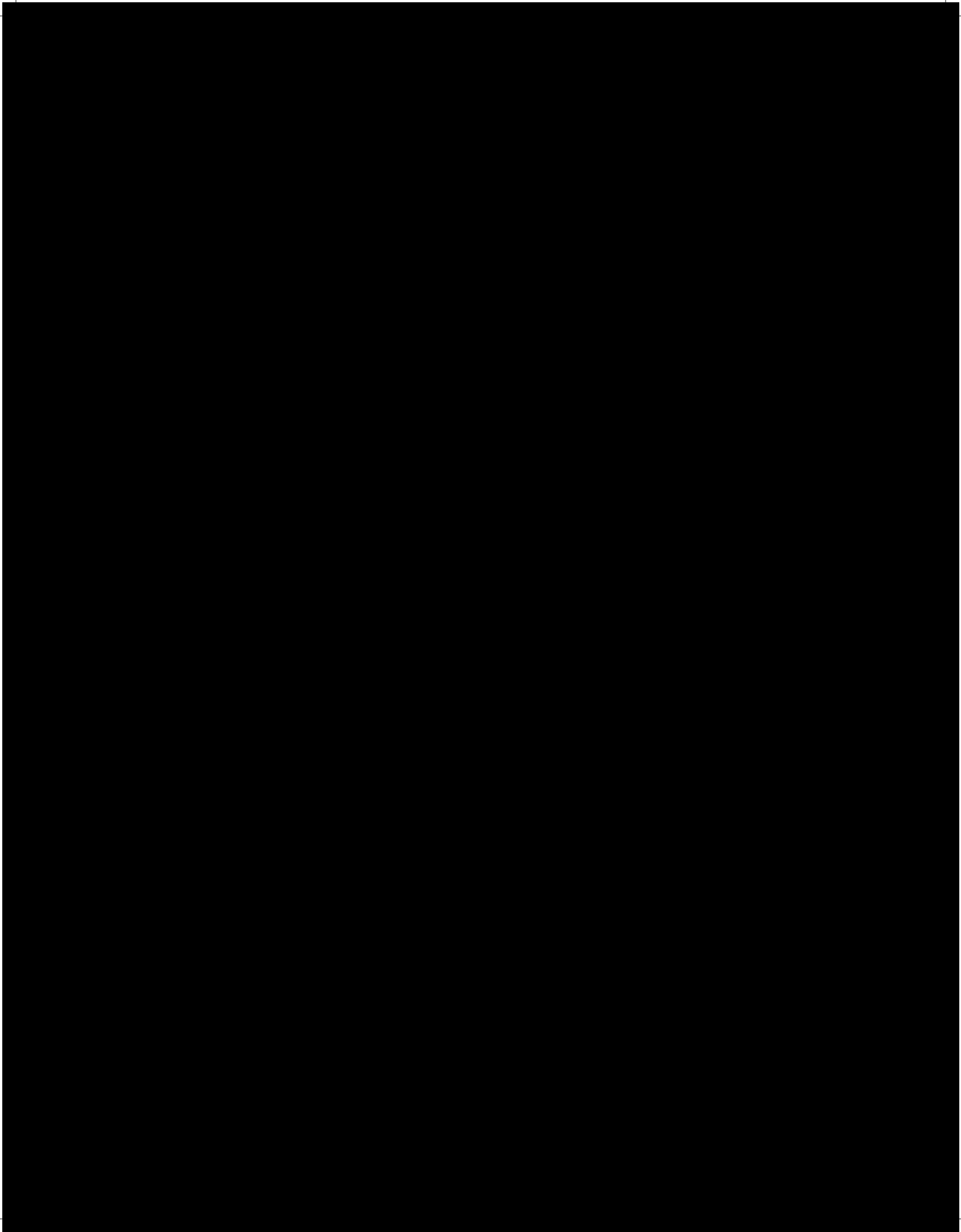




Figure 6. Kathryn Andrews, *Black Bars: Hare-Breadth Hurry (1963-2014)*, 2014. Ink on found drawing and Plexiglas, aluminum, paint. 36.5 x 32 x 2 inches. Collection Greg Hodes



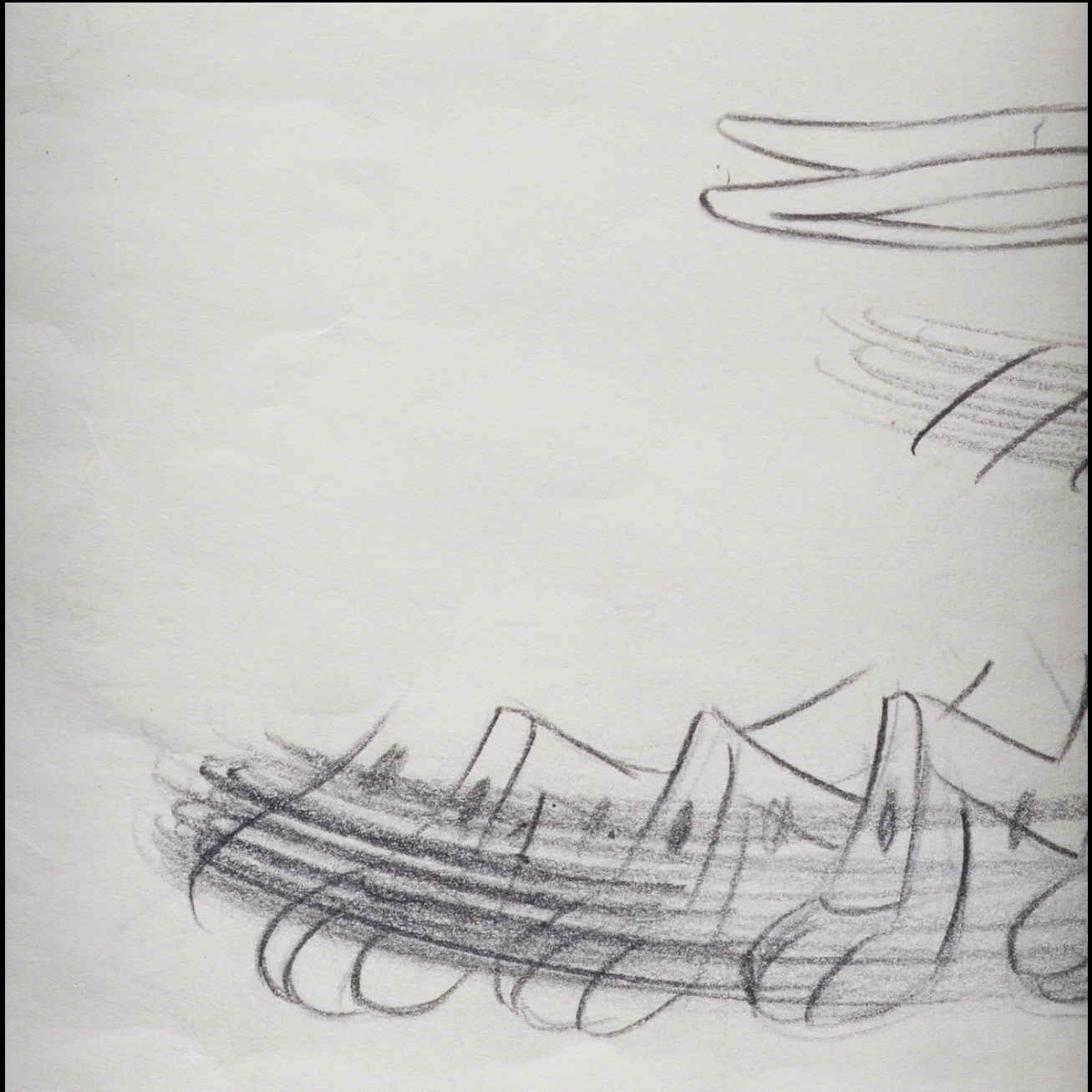
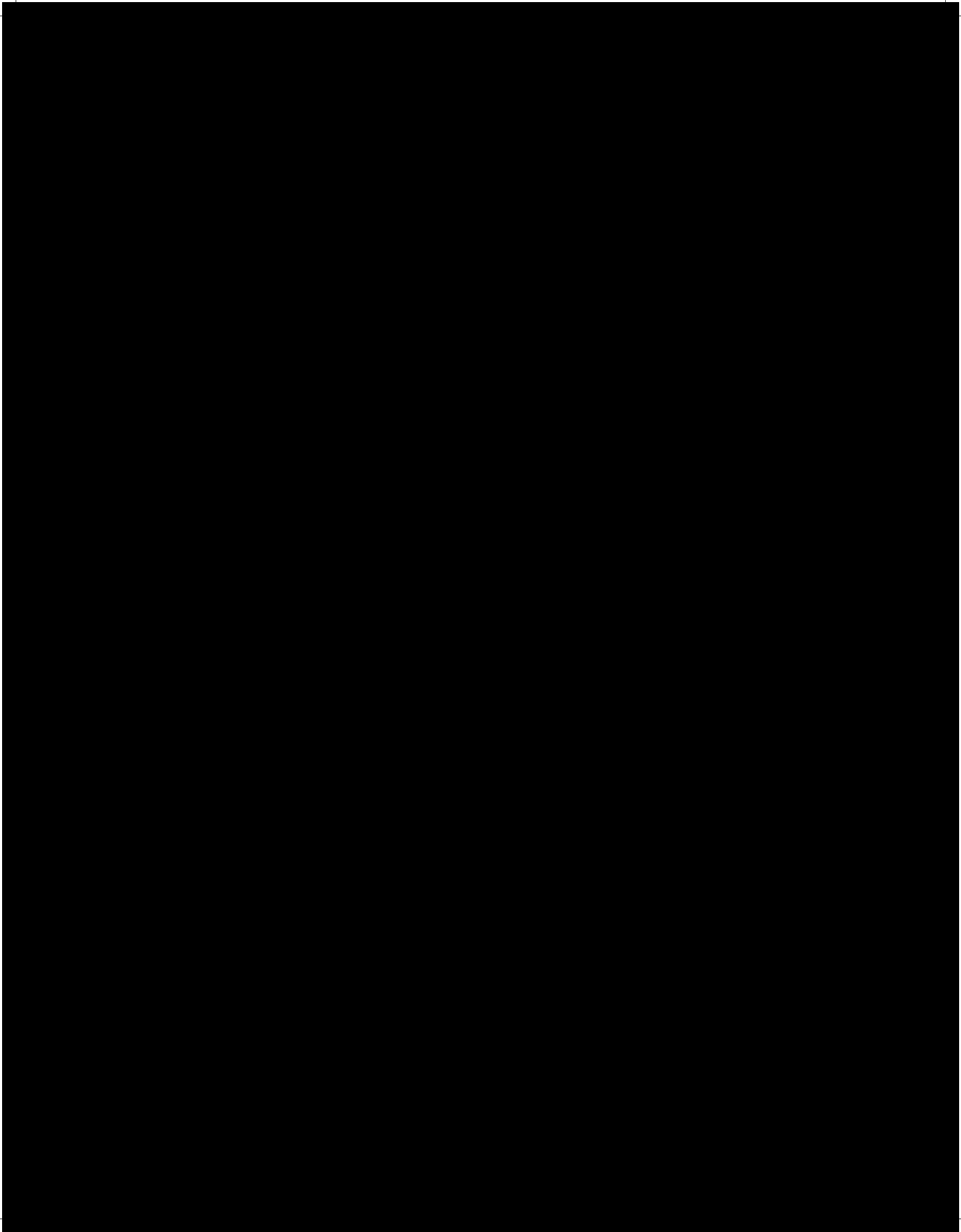


Figure 6 detail. Kathryn Andrews, detail of *Black Bars Hare-Breadth Hurry* (1963-2014), 2014.



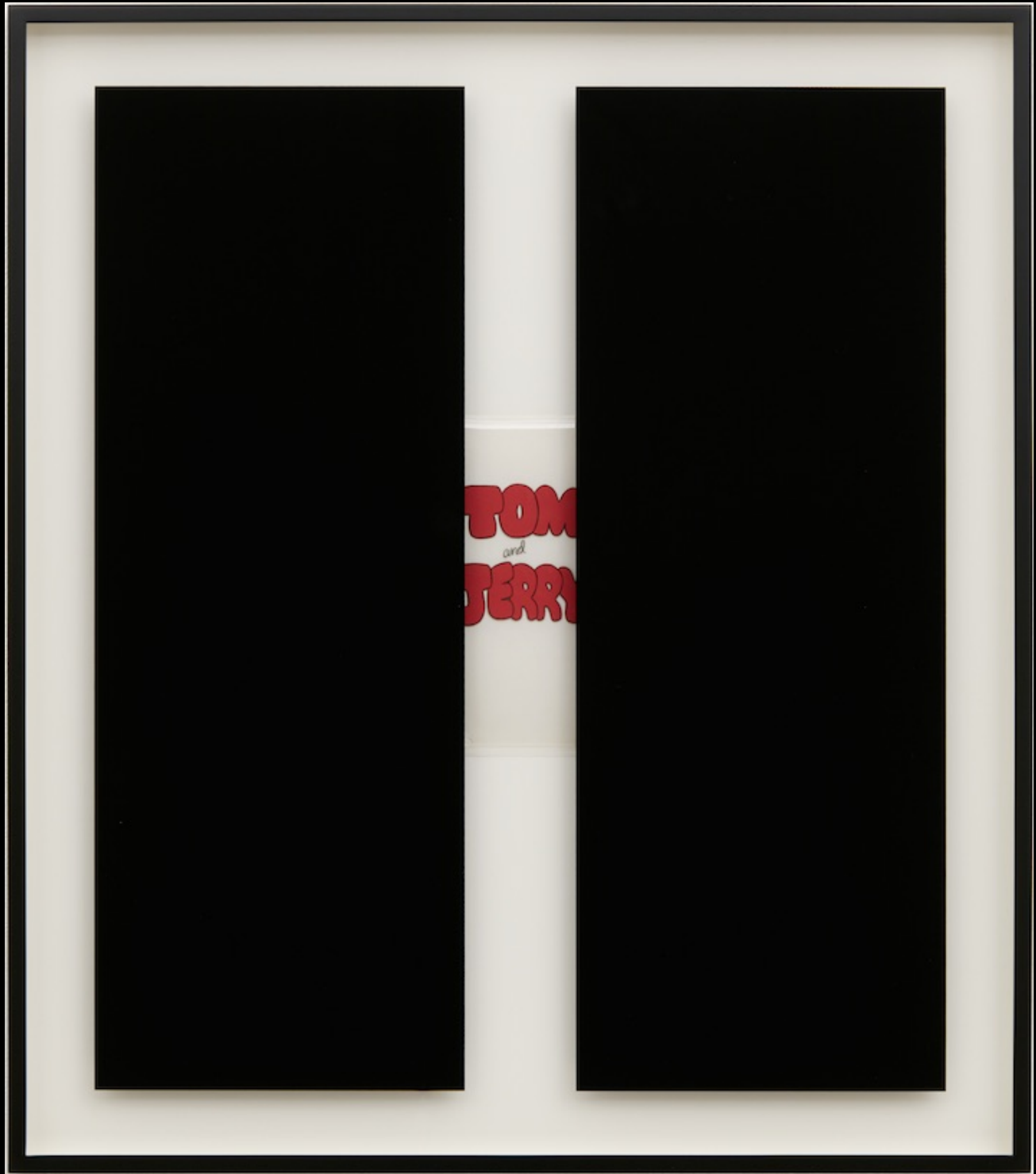
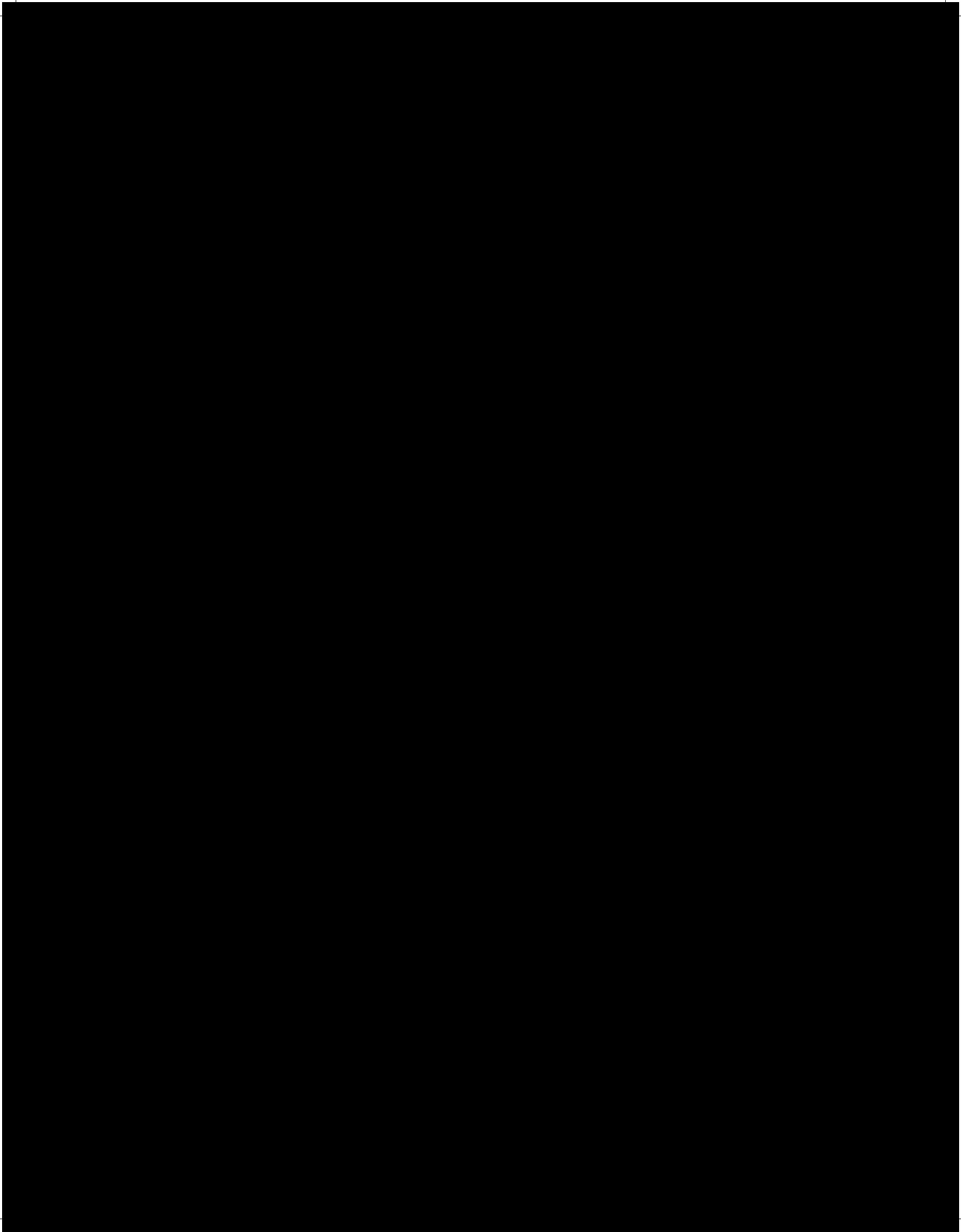


Figure 7. Kathryn Andrews, Tom and Jerry, 2014. Ink on Plexiglas, found drawing, aluminum, paint. Collection Joelle Rimokh



castaneda/reiman

Lay of the Landscape

Joanna Fiduccia

The last time Charlie Castaneda moved, her longtime collaborator Brody Reiman helped transport the apartment’s sizeable collection of landscape paintings to their shared studio. Their first step, however, was to trace the paintings’ frames in chalk on the dove-gray walls. Through these wobbly rectangles, the landscapes found themselves abruptly inverted; from windows onto the wilderness, they became, in their absence, things among things in the steadily emptying rooms.

By now, it is commonplace to recognize landscapes as mediated constructions that represent as well as carry out cultural power—“social hieroglyphs” in the words of W.J.T. Mitchell, encrypting their force in conventionality.¹ But castaneda/reiman’s landscapes are also constructions in a stricter sense: objects to be ferried from one place to another, hung in their homes, and apostrophized in their installations. The outlines of their frames on the apartment walls suggested a new order of classification, by dimension rather than content. At Mills, this order prevails in the museum’s vertical storage. Works in the MCAM collection are hung on a series of sliding walls placed closed to one another on parallel tracks, a system that allows the paintings to be viewed easily by drawing out one of the walls from the ranks, but also entails grouping paintings by the width of their canvases or frames instead of their subject matter or style. In profile, the collection becomes constituted of objects instead of pictures.



Figure 8
Research photo from studio of castaneda/reiman, 2019. Courtesy of the artists.

Castaneda/reiman have steadily amassed their collection of landscape paintings over almost three decades, since the two artists first began working together as undergraduates at Carnegie Mellon in the early 1990s. Most of the paintings were acquired at garage sales or second-hand stores during cross-country trips. They were souvenirs of their travels, albeit often oblique ones, since they most often represented scenery that pointed away from the place where they bought the landscapes, just as one might find a painting of Niagara Falls hanging in a Texas dining room or a print of the redwoods displayed on the wall of a Kansas bedroom. Each painting has therefore been, always already, a sight/site within a sight/site—ever directing the imagination out of its environment, ever nesting one place inside another. This compounded displacement suggests what Rachel Ziady DeLue calls landscape’s “apositionality” or its quality of being “neither foreground nor background, center nor periphery.”² It is a quality preeminently on display in castaneda/reiman’s installations. In these projects, what appear from afar to be clusters of paintings leaning casually against the wall are, in fact, replicas of landscapes in their collection. A nod to the artists’ experience working in construction, these proxies are made from building materials—pigmented drywall mud troweled onto wood boards and MDF; drywall printed with facsimiles; wallpaper that stretches the palette of a painting across the length of a gallery. These components, in turn, accent the materiality of the more conventional artistic supports and processes at the basis of their installations, including photography’s layers and seams and the textures and imperfections of canvas. Taken altogether, the array is disorienting, as though you had turned a corner in your own home and come upon a major renovation by surprise. It is not quite the walls, you feel, that are being dismantled, but the whole solid and yet invisible substrate of your surroundings.



castaneda/reiman, *Portrait of the Ground* (installation detail), 2011-2012. Pigment printed drywall, drywall, MDF, acrylic, wood, latex paint, custom printed wallpaper. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. Courtesy of the artist Courtesy of the artists.

The result is a delamination of landscape painting's domestication of nature, an operation dependent upon the invisibility of the barrier that secures domestic space itself—the paint, drywall, studs, and nails—to keep the outside world on the outside. For the built world is inadmissible both to the domestic interior, insofar as it offers a metaphorical container for the natural self, and to the landscape, imagined as a wild space unaltered by our labors. Consider, for instance, René Magritte's *The Human Condition* (1933), one of several paintings of similar motif, which depicts a landscape on an easel placed in front of—and formally undifferentiated from—the view outside a window. For castaneda/reiman, however, the essential insight is not the equivalence of the painted and the perceived landscape but rather their complex interaction. Their use of construction materials, which suggest the dismantling of solid walls and humdrum images alike, sets a third term between the painted and perceived landscapes that remains unuttered in Magritte's works.

The word "landscape," as Anne Whitson Spirn has pointed out, comes from the Old English *landscipe*, whose root (from the Danish *-skab* and German *-schaft*) meant both "(to) shape"—the active modification of the land—and "-ship," as in fellowship—those who do the shaping. ("There is a notion, embedded in the original word," she writes, "of a mutual shaping of people and place."³) The long-sustained creative fellowship of castaneda/reiman, which at various moments has extended through all forms of labor from their artistic practice to odd jobs, *détournes* the common notions of landscapes as works (of art) or vistas (of properties or of what is proper to—that is, phenomenologically situated in—the individual viewer). They work on landscape as a way of distributing their personal haul of landscape paintings—a work they now perform with Mills's art collection.

Despite their immersive quality, castaneda/reiman's installations are hardly panoramic. Whereas the panorama gives the viewer a sense of mastery over a realm, positioning her at some Archimedean point from which the totality of the landscape is revealed, castaneda/reiman insist on the horizon, the vanishing point of the territory. The artists frequently incorporate mantelpieces or crown moldings, the analog of horizon lines in the domestic interior. These woodworks align and confuse themselves chromatically or compositionally with the ersatz landscapes so that the border of the canvas no longer contains the image. The horizon has a privileged status in castaneda/reiman's practice. Like the slash that cleaves their names, it is the common boundary of the dramatically different landscapes in which they were raised—for

Castaneda, the arid agricultural fields outside of Baja, California; for Reiman, the hills and steel towns of eastern Pennsylvania. Horizon is also the limit of landscape. One thinks of James Coleman's cryptic *Connemara Landscape* (1980), a slide projection that invokes the Irish region through a line drawing that is part sketch and part diagram, something like an allegorical silhouette. Or, perhaps, of Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendentalist vision of landscape: "There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate the parts, that is, the poet."⁴ The horizon is the "best part" of his neighbor's farms, the part they cannot own nor even perceive.

But if this poetic, horizon-seeking eye suggests a total or true apprehension of landscape at its vanishing point, sight has elsewhere been posed as the crux of landscape's embeddedness and ambiguity. We might contrast, for instance, Denis Cosgrove's characterization of landscape as a "way of seeing"—a representational system rooted in ideology—with the somewhat more spurious, if also more commonplace, claim that to truly see a landscape, we must first "clear our heads" of all stock images of wilderness.⁵ This tension between landscape as a necessary mediation of seeing and as its impediment seems to come down to this: either landscape is lens or landscape is clutter, but in either case, it is somehow both inside and outside of us.

Figure 10



castaneda/reiman, *Untitled (Studio Landscape) #2, detail*, 2016. Pigment printed drywall, cast plaster, wood, clay. Courtesy of the artist. Phillip Maisel



castaneda/reiman, *Landscape with Mantle* (collage), 2011. Found mantle, pigment print, paint. Baer Ridgeway Exhibitions, San Francisco. Courtesy of the artists.

Raymond Williams has said that the separation between man and nature that is so defining of modernity for countless modern thinkers is the result, in fact, of an *intensified* interaction between man and nature. It is easy to come by a limited sense of unity with the natural world when we have only a limited relationship to it. Animism, monotheism, modern pantheism all give us ways to describe the simple, orderly interactions with the natural world that belonged to another age. Williams continues, “It is only when the real relations are extremely active, diverse, self-conscious, and in effect continuous—as our relations with the physical world can be seen to be in our own day—that the separation of human nature from nature becomes really problematic.”⁶ In other words, we are not disconnected from nature; an exploitative and, at this stage, ecocidal relationship is still a relationship.

This brings us back to work—or more particularly, to class. It seems hardly irrelevant that the shared horizon of Castaneda and Reiman’s backgrounds are identities bound strongly to class in America: farmer and steelworker, two populations that our politics have set in opposition to the concerns of the landscape and those who seek to preserve it. Castaneda/reiman’s practice resists this partition by making landscape a matter of work, and work a matter of layering. Their layers are geological and discursive as well as technological and material; they are modes of making as well as undoing the madeness of the landscape genre. Perhaps above all, they are indications that the third term between the landscapes we collect and the landscapes we survey is nothing other than those active, diverse, self-conscious relations that frustrate any attempt to separate our nature from our work.

NOTES

1. Mitchell, W.J.T. “Imperial Landscape,” *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.
2. Ziady DeLue, Rachel, “Elusive Landscapes and Shifting Grounds,” *Landscape Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 11.

3. Whitson Spirn, Anne, "‘One With Nature’: Landscape, Language, Empathy, and Imagination," in *Landscape Theory*, 54, 92.
4. Waldo Emerson, Ralph "Nature," in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 9–11.
5. Cosgrove, Denis, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).
6. Williams, Raymond "Ideas of Nature," *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 83.



Figure 12. castaneda/reiman, Research photo of painting storage racks at Mills College Art Museum, 2019. Courtesy of the artists

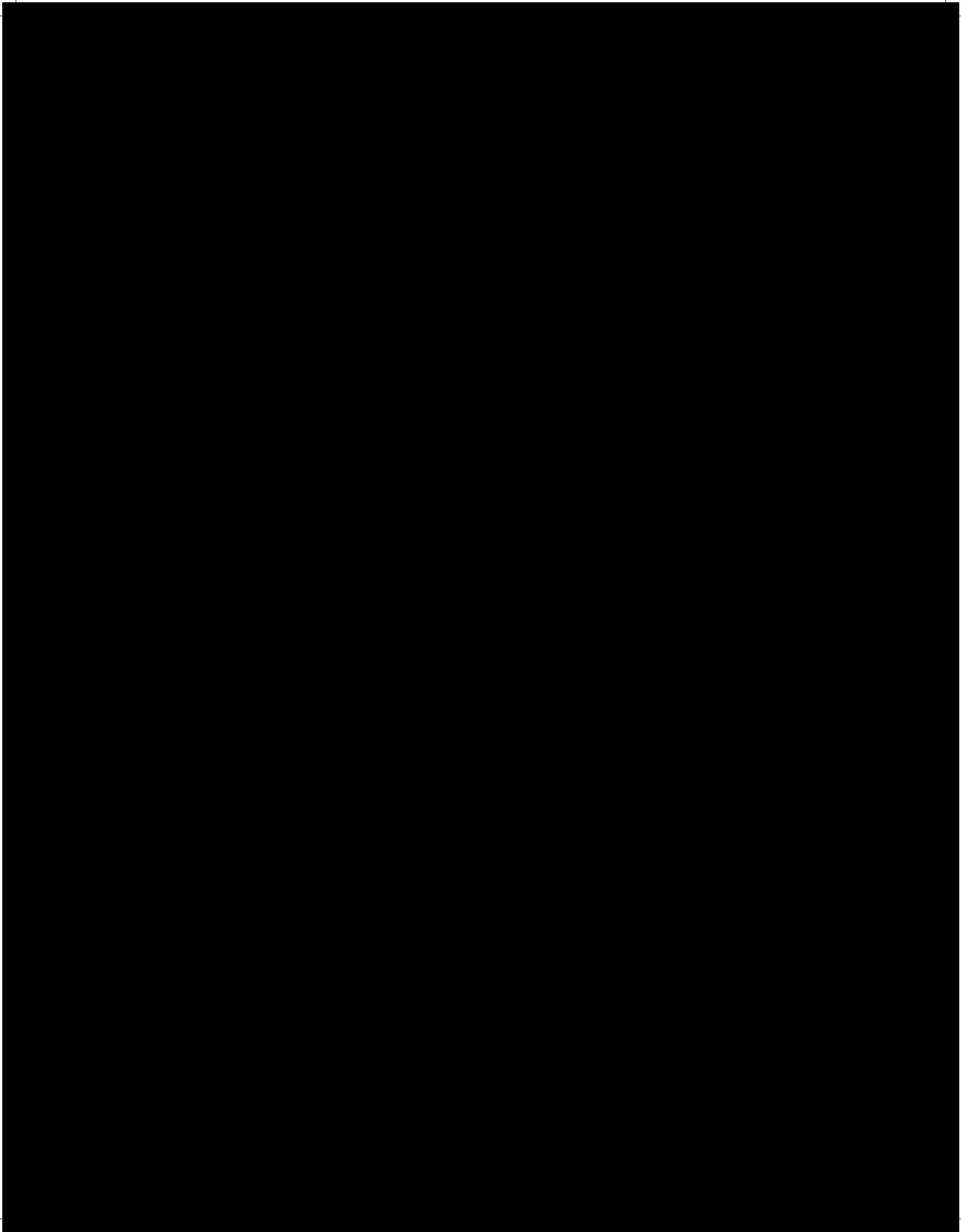




Figure 13. castaneda/reiman, Research photo of painting storage racks at Mills College Art Museum, 2019 Courtesy of the artists.

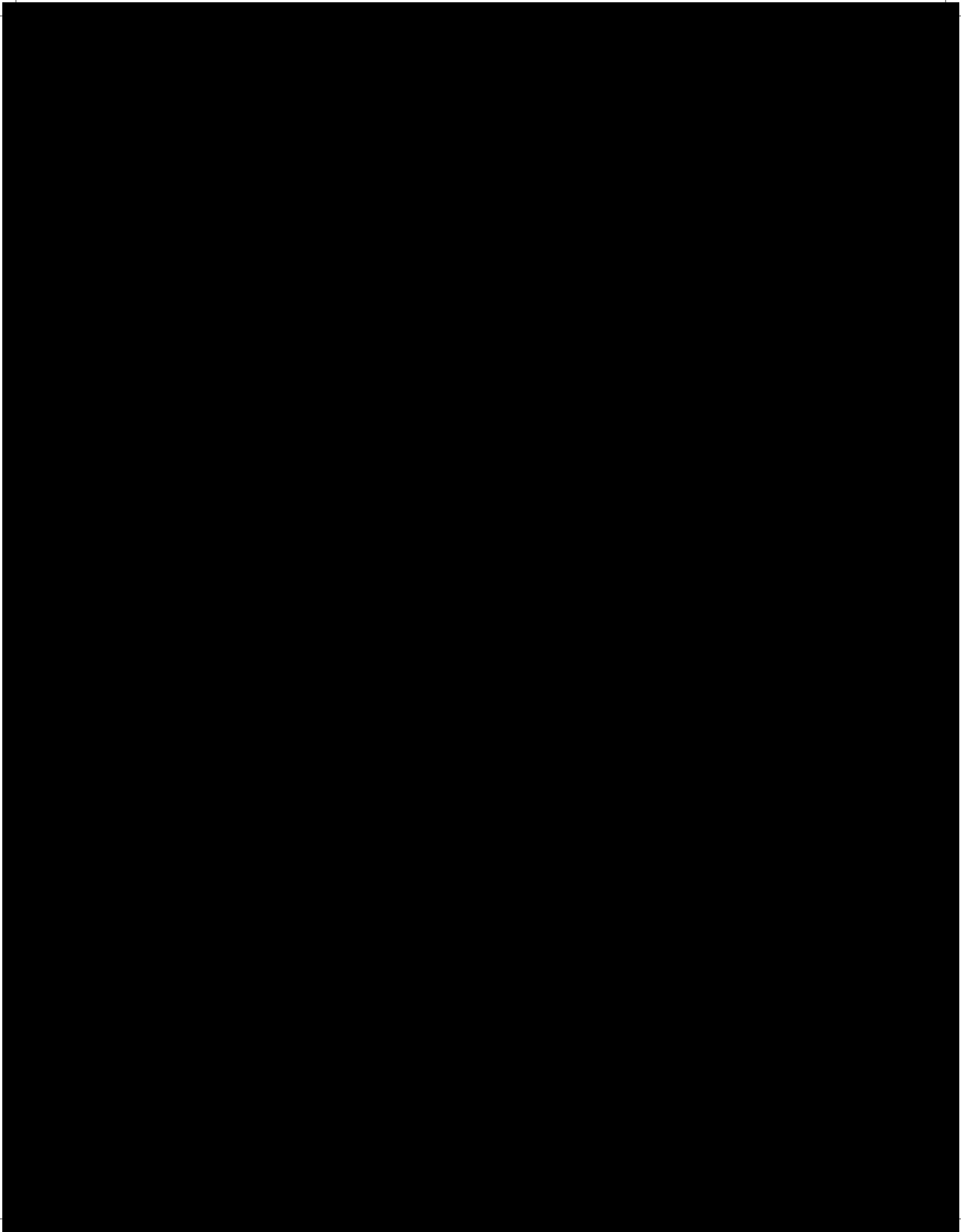
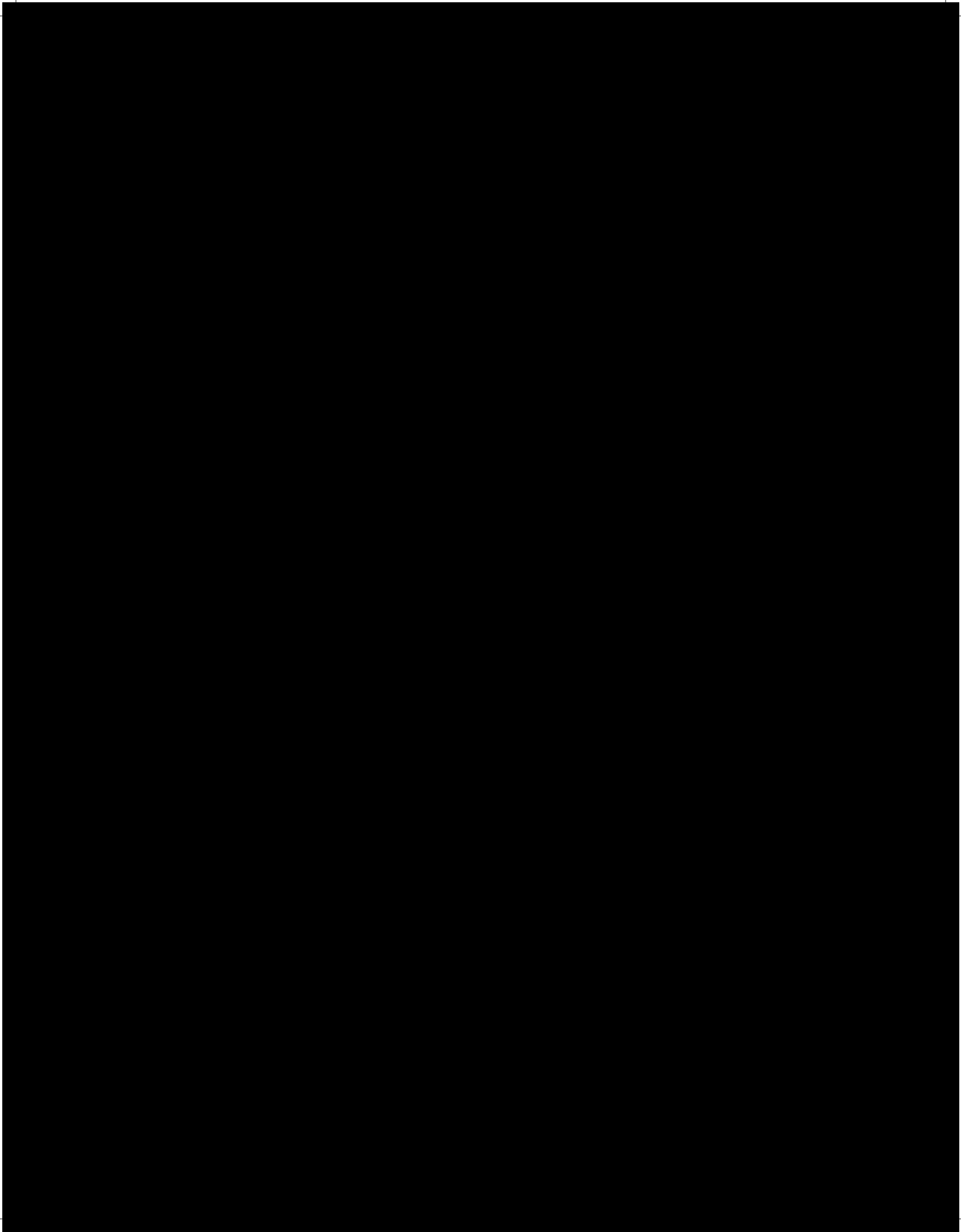




Figure 14. castaneda/reiman, Research photo of object storage shelves at Mills College Art Museum, 2019 Courtesy of the artists.



Dario Robleto

The Heart is a Metaphor, But Also Not

Anne Lesley Selcer

Dario Robleto's obsessions extend inward to the most unseen places and outward to the outermost spaces of the human unknown. He wants to study, understand, and memorialize the cultural objects of these spaces as well as propose new ones. His deeply humanist practice hinges on a drive to research, magnify, and make homage to the human archive.

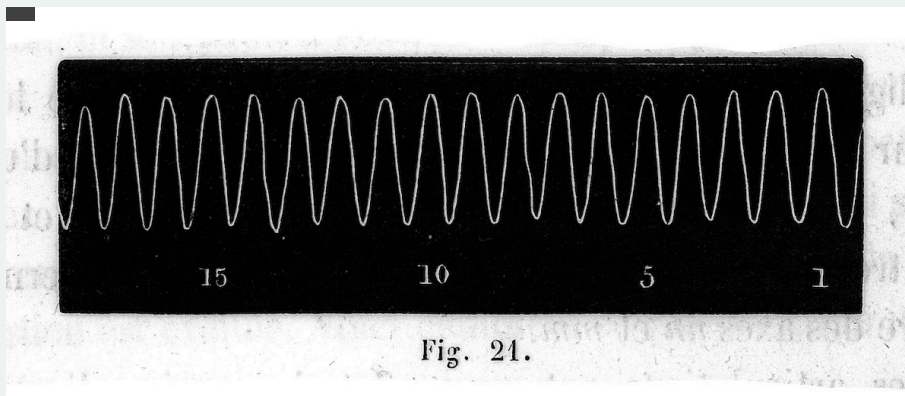
Figure 15



Dario Robleto, *Setlists for a Setting Sun (The Crystal Palace)*, 2014. 60 x 45.5 x 45.5 in. Cyanotypes, prints, watercolor paper, butterflies, butterfly antennae made from stretched audiotape of the earliest live recording of music (The Crystal Palace Recordings of Handel's "Israel in Egypt," 1888), various cave minerals and crystals, homemade crystals, black swan vertebrate, lapis lazuli, coral, sea urchin shells, sea urchin teeth, various seashells, ocean water, pigments, cut paper, mica flakes, glitter, feathers, colored mirrors, plastic and glass domes, audio recording, digital player, headphones, wood, polyurethane. Courtesy of the artist and Inman Gallery, Houston. Photo: Thomas R. DuBrok.

Cyanotypes, prints, watercolor paper, butterflies, butterfly antennae made from stretched audiotape of the earliest live recording of music (The Crystal Palace Recordings of Handel's "Israel in Egypt," 1888), various cave minerals and crystals, homemade crystals, black swan vertebrae, lapis lazuli, coral, sea urchin shells, sea urchin teeth, various seashells, ocean water, pigments, cut paper, mica flakes, glitter, feathers, colored mirrors, plastic and glass domes, audio recording, digital player, headphones, wood, polyurethane. Robleto's art work *Setlists for a Setting Sun (The Crystal Palace)* is an homage to the first recorded music, which was made possible by the enormity of the London World's Fair. On June 29, a Friday, the sound waves of an orchestra of around 500 musicians and the voices of 4,000 people were pressed into the large wax cylinders of a freshly invented phonograph. The recording sounds ethereal and distant today, a thrilling echo. Georg Friedrich Händel's composition was performed for

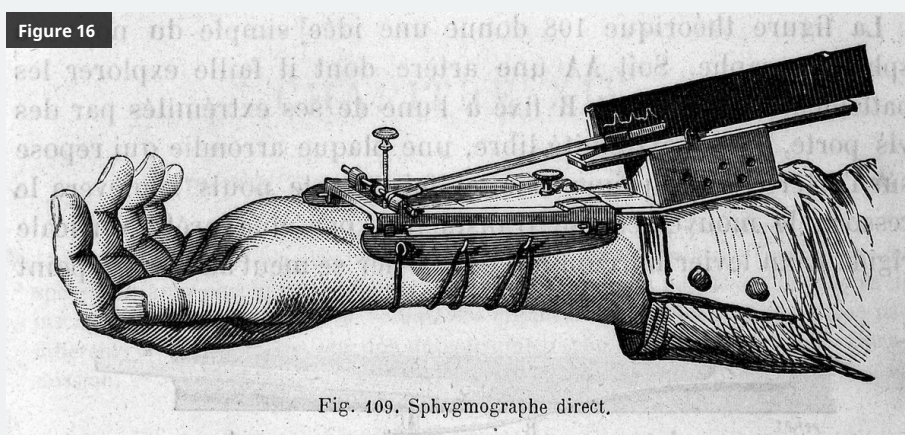
23,722 people, a spectacle made possible by the 956,165-square-foot exhibition hall. The Crystal Palace was the first mass-produced building, and as such, was the perfect site for the brand new forms of infinity announced by this feat.¹



<https://youtu.be/-qDwz3jdD1c>

Edison phonograph cylinders (1888): Handel - Israel in Egypt d60944

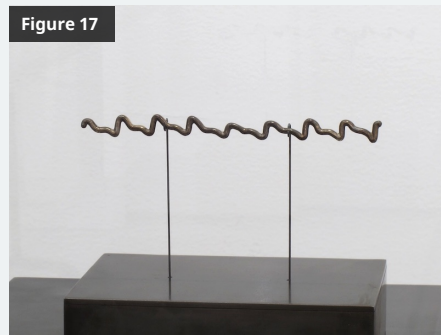
Robleto is interested in human rhythms. Thus, the artist narrativizes representations as human flows archived in cultural form. Just as rhythms can give rise to new forms of representation, representations can give rise to new rhythms. As rhythms and representations repeat, pattern, pick up, and feed indistinguishably into another, admixtures of human culture emerge. When Karl von Vierordt recorded the first heartbeat in the form of a “pulse picture” in 1853,² no material was sensitive enough to record this image without disturbance but a piece of soot attached to human hair. These were the materials of the very first waveform we now recognize as the pulse of the human heart. Von Vierordt recorded 50 heartbeats, birth to death. The monumental pair of sculptures *Love, Before There Was Love* represent the “earliest waveform recordings of blood flowing from the heart both before and during an emotional state (1870).”³ The artist has memorialized this emotional event in large-scale brass-plated stainless steel. There are “outtakes” from this project—the first time the heart was recorded while someone was eating chocolate, the first time the heart was recorded while someone was smelling lavender.



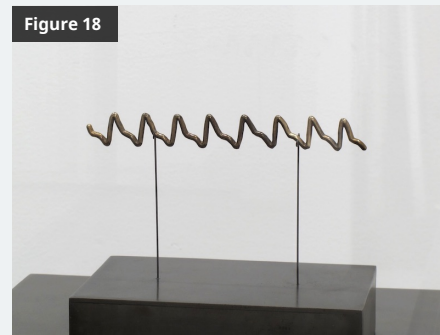
Engraving: direct sphygmograph; E.J. Marey. Wellcome Collection CC BY 4.0.

“The cardiograph was like the microscope or telescope, but it’s not talked about that way—there are a handful of devices that are like that. There is a before and an after,” says Robleto. “Mid-19th century science is really trying to pull the heart away from

mystical understanding. They needed to prove it was not the domain of the social. Yet romanticism and religion were the scientist's personal history."⁴ In a sort of synthesis, Robleto's art both honors and answers science. His work embodies an insistence on seeing the objects of the Western archive complete with their human stories, cloaked in their auras, with their beauty.



Dario Robleto. detail of *Love, Before There Was Love* (before emotion), 2018.



Dario Robleto. detail of *Love, Before There Was Love* (during emotion), 2018.

Cut and polished nautilus shells, various cut and polished seashells, various urchin spines and teeth, mushroom coral, green and white tusks, squilla claws, butterfly wings, colored pigments and beads, colored crushed glass and glitter, dyed mica flakes, pearlescent paint, cut paper, acrylic domes, brass rods, colored mirrored Plexiglas, glue, and maple. The glass vitrine containing *Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas*, full of carefully arranged treasures, is a proposal for an "initial gift" to whatever life may dwell in outer space. Says the artist, "Scientists always send math. They think in light waves instead of sending objects. I like the idea that first contact is an exchange of gifts." He asks, instead of sending the Fibonacci Sequence, why not send the seashell? This gift is arranged as a diorama of strange and luminescent fetishes. They evoke both the design of the past century and a fantasy of the unknown future. The Golden Spiral, the form which results from the Fibonacci Sequence, is "self similar," meaning its shape is infinitely repeated when magnified. Culture works something like that too. Robleto is interested in the rhythms and representations of being alive in human form. Here we have artist-as-lover to human life, the one who attends to, studies, memorializes, embellishes upon, and communicates its events to others, embracing its dearly important moments, creating new representations that carry it on.

NOTES

1. Olalquiaga, Celeste, *The Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
2. *Dario Robleto: The Boundary of Life is Quietly Crossed* (Houston: The Menil Collection, 2015). <https://bit.ly/2lRXWi6>
3. Ibid.
4. Writer's conversation with artist, May 14, 2019.



Figure 19. Dario Robleto, *Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas*, 2017-2018. Cut and polished nautilus shells, various cut and polished seashells, various urchin spines and teeth, mushroom coral, green and white tusks, squilla claws, butterfly wings, colored pigments and beads, colored crushed glass and glitter, dyed mica flakes, pearlescent paint, cut paper, acrylic domes, brass rods, colored mirrored Plexiglas, glue, maple. 75 x 71.5 x 43 inches Courtesy of the artist and Inman Gallery, Houston.

Photo: Jena Jackson.

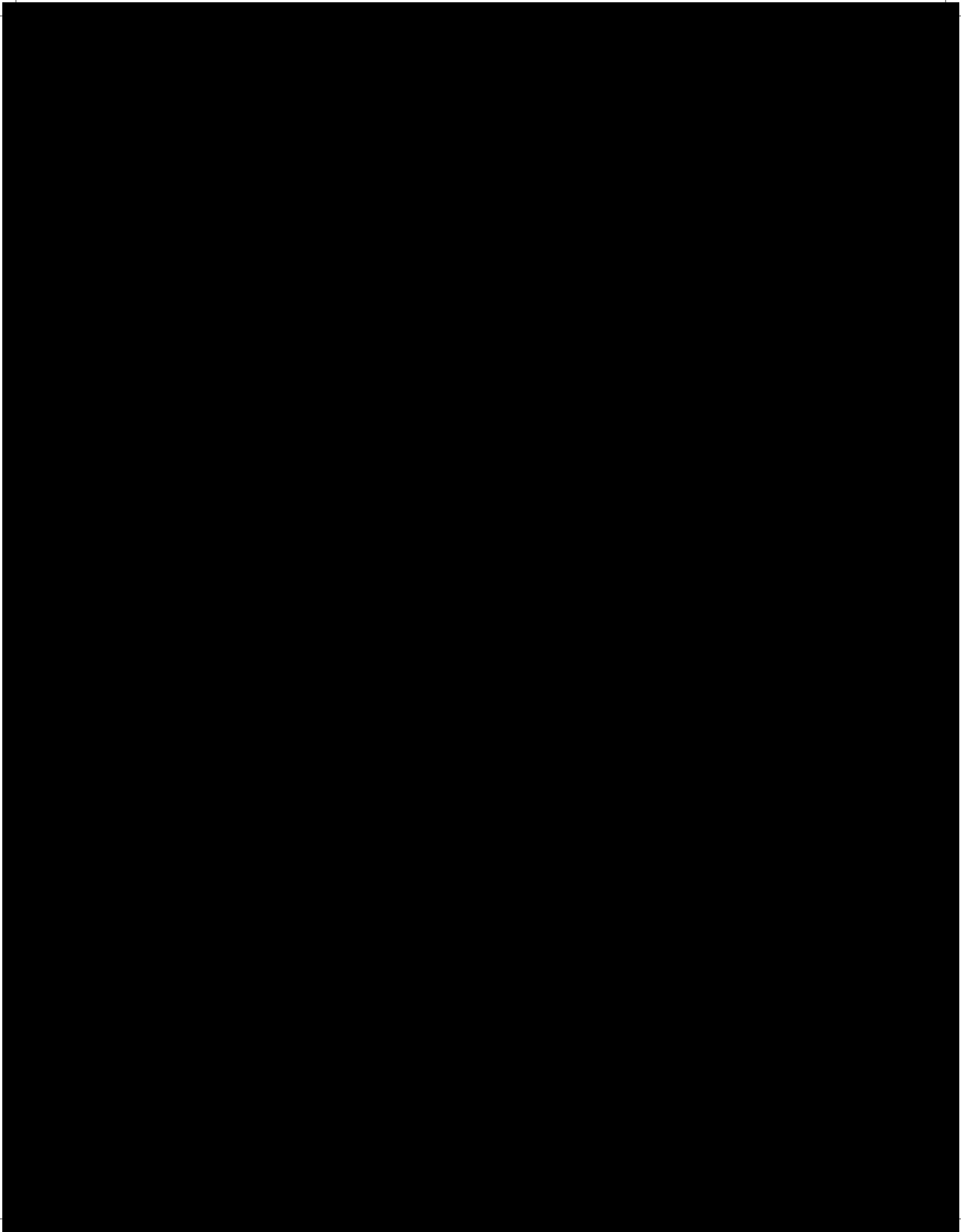
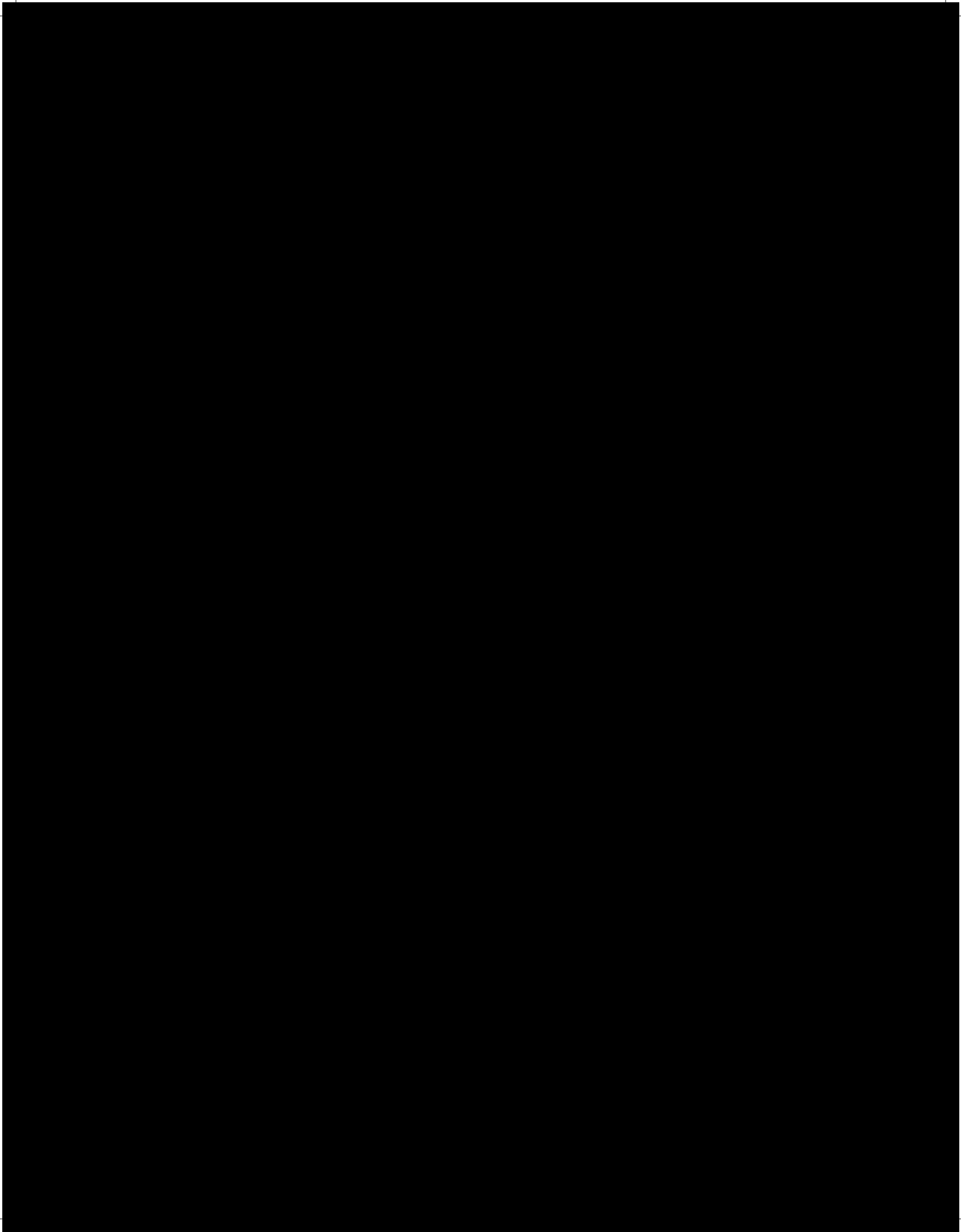




Figure 20. Dario Robleto. *Love, Before There Was Love*, 2018. Edition of 3. Earliest waveform recordings of blood flowing from the heart both before and during an emotional state (1870), rendered and printed in 3-D, brass-plated stainless steel, steeling glass vitrine. Diptych, each 58 x 17 x 17 inches with vitrine. Courtesy of the artist and Inman Gallery, Houston.



Weston Teruya

The Potted Plants of our Undoing

Anne Lesley Selcer

“It’s like that building trapped the sun!” The child and I were walking east on Mission Street one early evening in spring toward San Francisco’s Millennium Tower. Sunlight refracted through the building’s architecture and shot rays magically upward and outward through the cloud that hovered around the top: a majestic five o’clock crown fit for a Gotham City comic book. The child’s words echoed Weston Teruya’s words on international luxury culture in his studio earlier that week. Handing me a photograph of a swimming pool jutting off the top of a tall glass condominium tower, Teruya said, “It’s as if they’ve taken water from the ocean and put it up there to float in the sky.” The pool’s transparent bottom 12 stories up bragged bodies of pleasure-seekers floating through crystal blue.

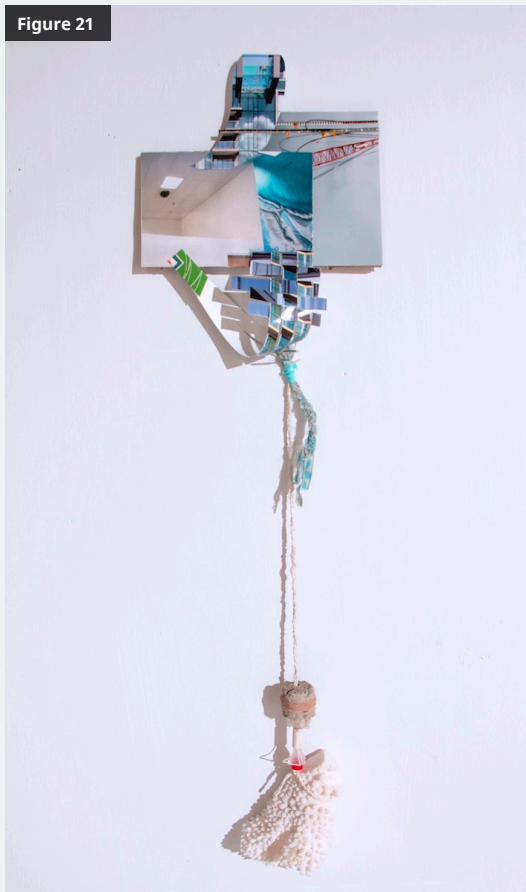


Figure 21
Weston Teruya, *Built upon*, 2019. Found trash, photographs, coral, paper pulp mixed with soil. 24 x 6.25 x 2 inches Courtesy of the artist.

Teruya’s primary-colored assemblages reflect, reverse, and refract this corporate-colonial trick of smooth extractive magic. A potted plant made of green paper grows from a pot constructed from bright white paper. Each spiky-fingered palm frond is constructed from creased photographs of a green glass condominium tower, part of a new 60 acre “master planned” development currently in construction in the artist’s hometown of O’ahu, Hawaii. A construction crane made of yellow paper towers over the plant. Bright orange plastic fencing wraps them both. The paper plant pot rests on several innocuous brown triangles made with dirt from landfills across the street from the condos where bulldozers filled in fish ponds with broken coral, then laid carpets of grass atop. They are paired with grey triangles containing Silicon Valley dirt. The design imitates a new Pacific island tax haven proposed by “tech billionaires

and libertarians.”¹ The artist has sutured Hawaii and Silicon Valley—a particularly live

economic route—into dialog with plastic zip ties. The base of the entire sculpture is a toboggan made of boxes, modeled after the makeshift sleds neighborhood residents used to enjoy the new park’s manmade grass hills.

These assemblages mix Hawaiian vernacular life with post-Postmodern universal condo trash design. A second sculpture balances shiny black rectangles upon the edge of a bright red cooler, one in which families might pack refreshments on a trip to the park or beach. The objects repeat the tiled trimmings, borders and benches of corporate condominium visual language.² In a third assemblage, an object that looks like a fetish or an artifact leans up against a third paper plant pot. Weston has re-created a bumpy white amputation from an occupied ocean—a Frankenstein beach treasure of coral and plastic layers. These “elemental dislocations,” as the artist calls them, float atop a dematerialized privatized ocean in the Cloud. This series responds to deep changes in the seen and unseen ecologies of physical space.



Figure 22
Weston Teruya. *Looking mauka from the park*, 2019. Paper sculpture (with photographs, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka’ako and San Jose, found cardboard, office supplies, and other recycled papers). 59 x 27 x 46 inches
Courtesy of the artist.

The sculptures want to take control over something invincible-feeling and huge. In the cool air of his basement studio, the artist asked, “How do you create something new from things so loaded or poisoned?” According to the research of urban scholar Saskia Sassen, 57 percent of condos worldwide are owned by shell companies as asset-backed securities, abstract financial instruments with materialities attached.³ “Home” is used to anchor oceanic digitized hyper-capital, just as Tahiti may soon literally anchor the tax-exempt fake island. From the cooler, a monster plant grows, its leaves sprouting condo glass. When I point out to the artist that visually, the pieces are still potted plants, sitting ducks, he speaks about their failure at beauty, pleasure: “That’s where I want it to sit.” The corporation building the Ward Village master-planned condo neighborhood underwrites the Honolulu Biennial too. Teruya’s assemblages are the transitional objects of Left melancholy,⁴ rife with irony, latency, failure, and the last vestiges of the Modern ideas that fueled assemblage.

If talismans, relics, and other ritual objects carry power, will, and intention, what do the artifacts of ostentatious international corporate wealth carry? This is Modernism's defamiliarization and appropriation turned sideways. Weston revitalizes the architectural language of revitalized space by embedding it into the complicated layers of the culture it slices into—but the coolers, not the hula skirts. In poetry, reusing language can reassign the rhythms of power. That's the trick of language's universality—it's detachable. These sculptures carry an attitude. If international capital uses art to neutralize, wash away, or butter up its colonization of space, the artist's irony, ambiguity, and playfulness reattaches condo glass and black-lacquered concrete to the spirit with which they arrived.

NOTES

1. Gabbatiss, Josh. "World's first floating city to be built off the coast of French Polynesia by 2020." *The Independent* (November 14, 2017) <https://bit.ly/2lZVc2p>
2. "Of the 7,189 units that have been built or approved in Kaka'ako since 2005, less than 8 percent are affordable for low-income households (low income is defined as 80 percent of area media income, or \$76,650 for a family of four in 2014)...Here, the sidewalks are not pedestrian promenades connecting hip urbanites to their places of work and play. Instead, they are home to a community of roughly 400 houseless people. Dozens upon dozens of tents line each side of the road." Grandinetti, Tina. "Whose Kaka'ako" *Flux Hawaii* (March 26, 2015). <https://fluxhawaii.com/whose-kakaako/>
3. Lecture, University of California, Berkeley, March 13, 2018. <https://criticaltheory.berkeley.edu/?event=saskia-sassen-talk>
4. A term coined by Walter Benjamin in the 1930's.



Figure 23. Weston Teruya, Landscaping, 2019 Paper sculpture (with photographs, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka'ako and San Jose, office supplies, waterproof paper, and other recycled papers), coral, acrylic. 40 x 20 x 28 inches Courtesy of the artist.

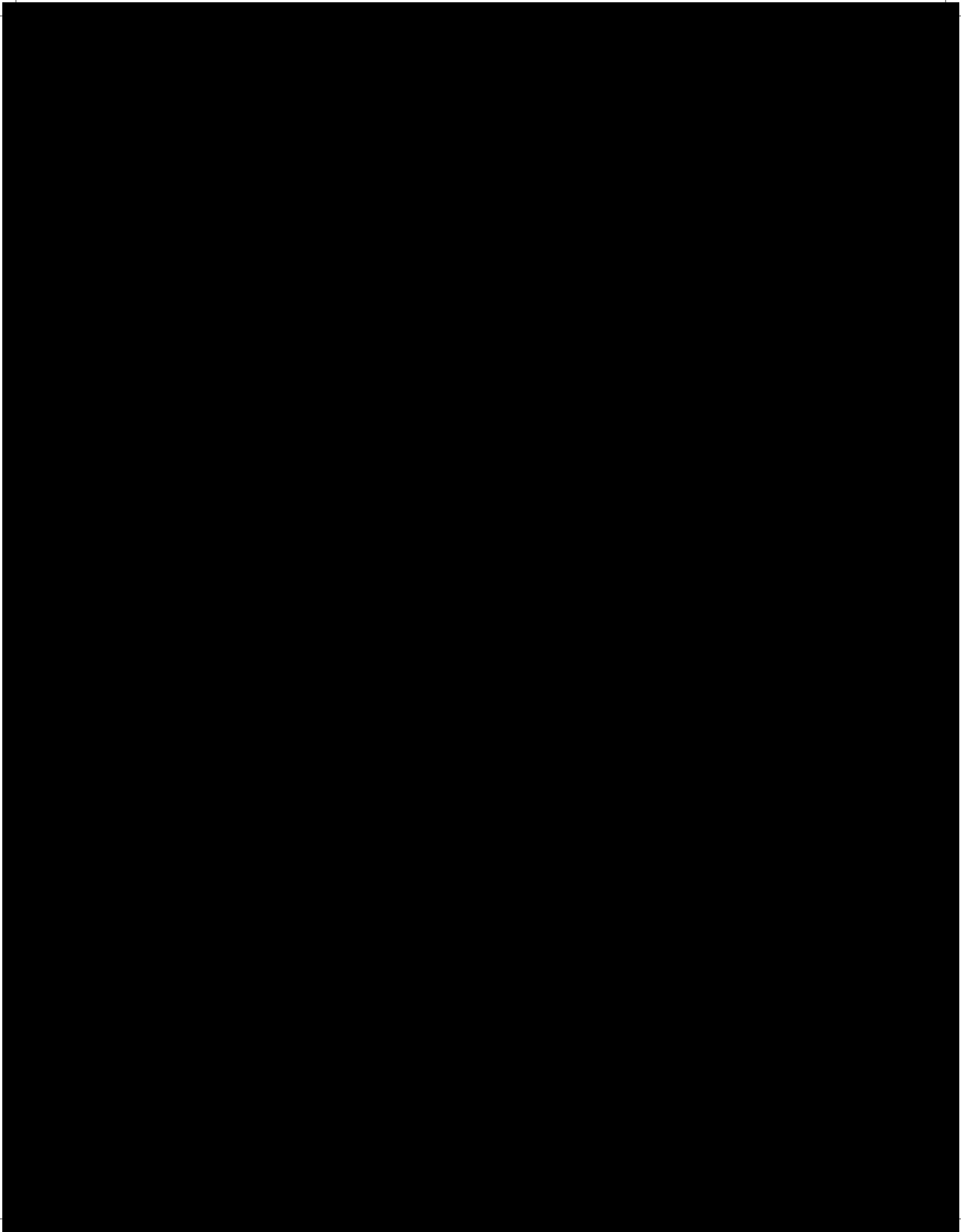
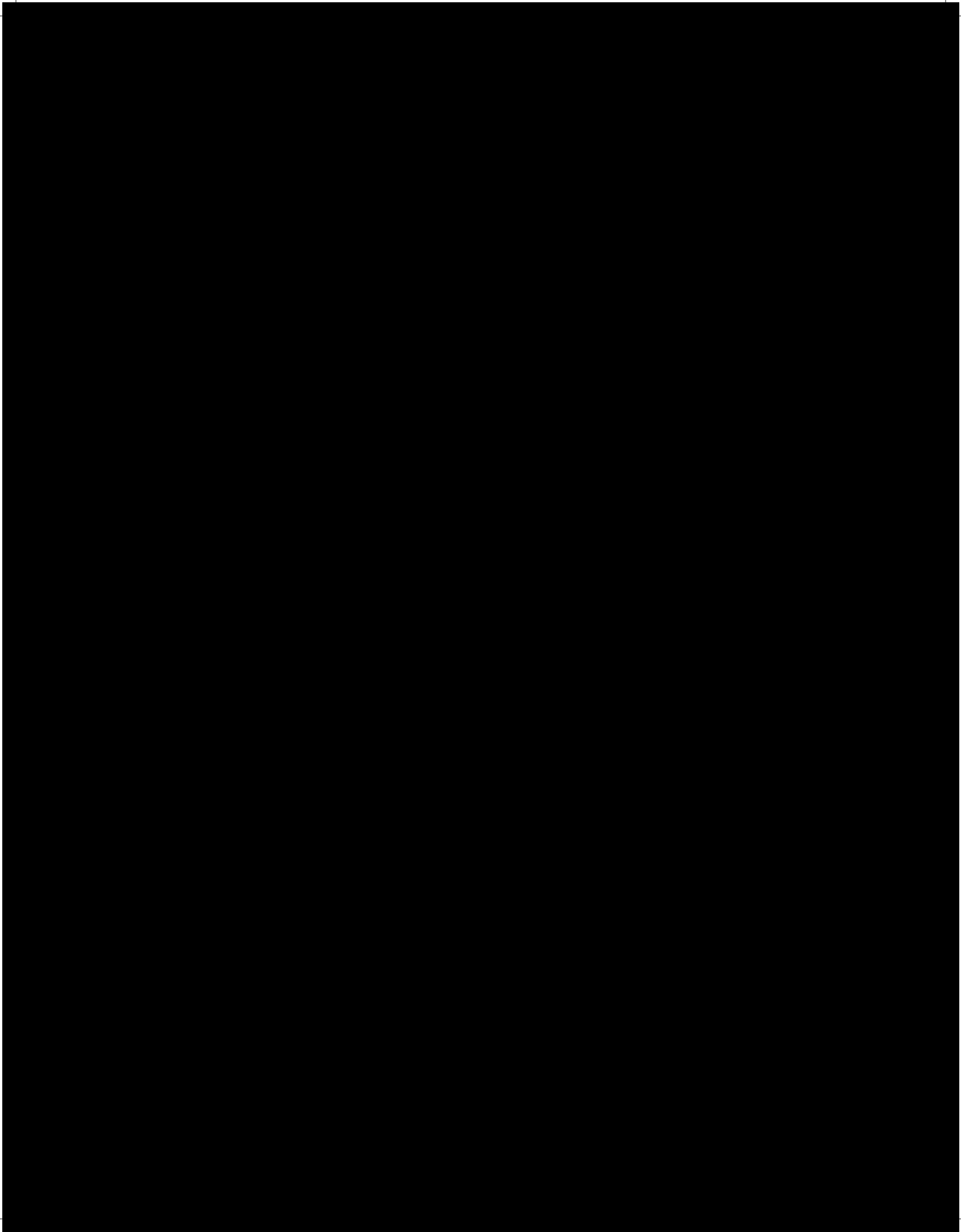




Figure 24. Weston Teruya, *Local culture feature for a developer sales blog*, 2019. Paper sculpture (with photographs, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka'ako and San Jose, and office supplies), coral, found plastic trash. 93 x 55 x 42. Courtesy of the artist.



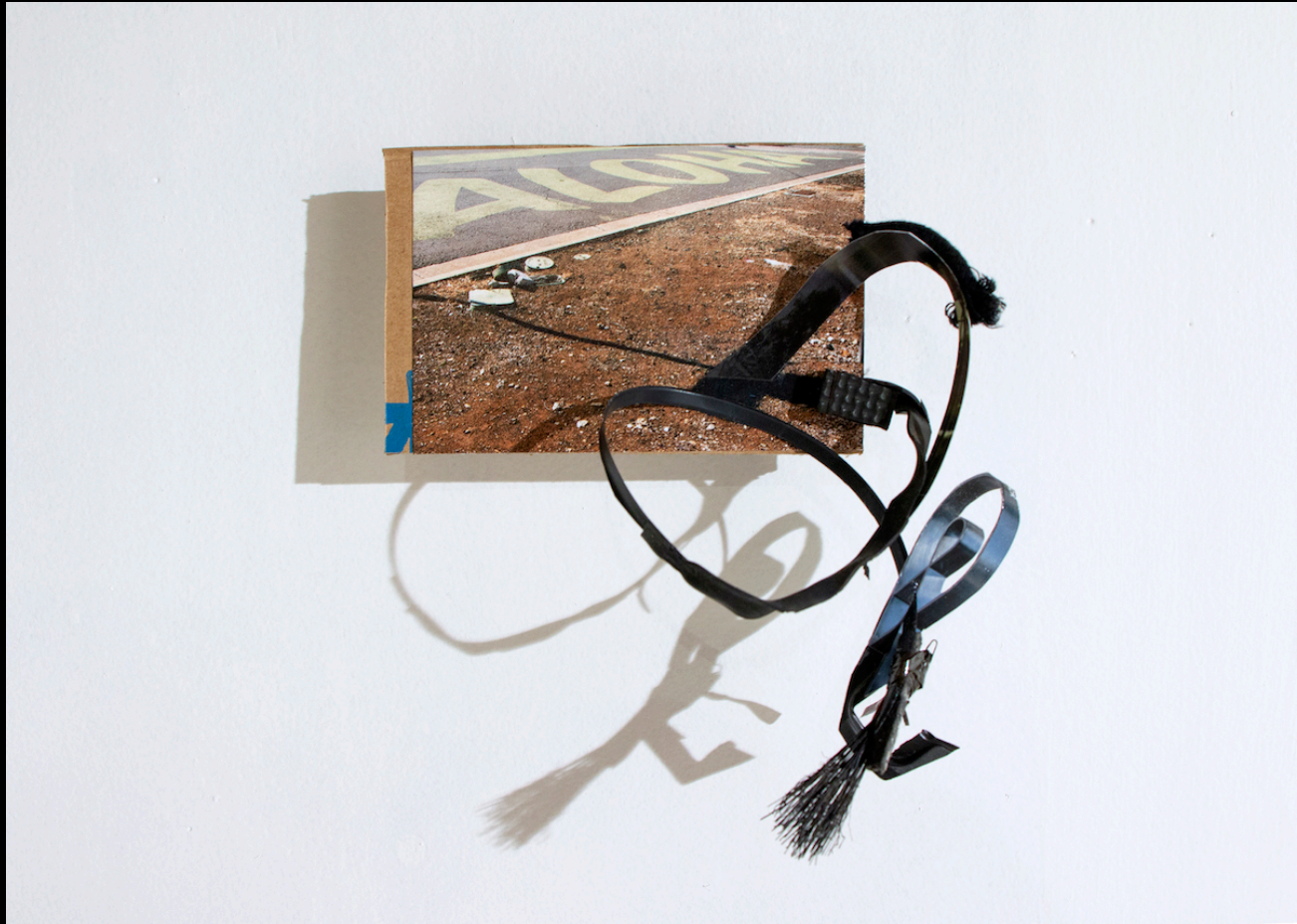
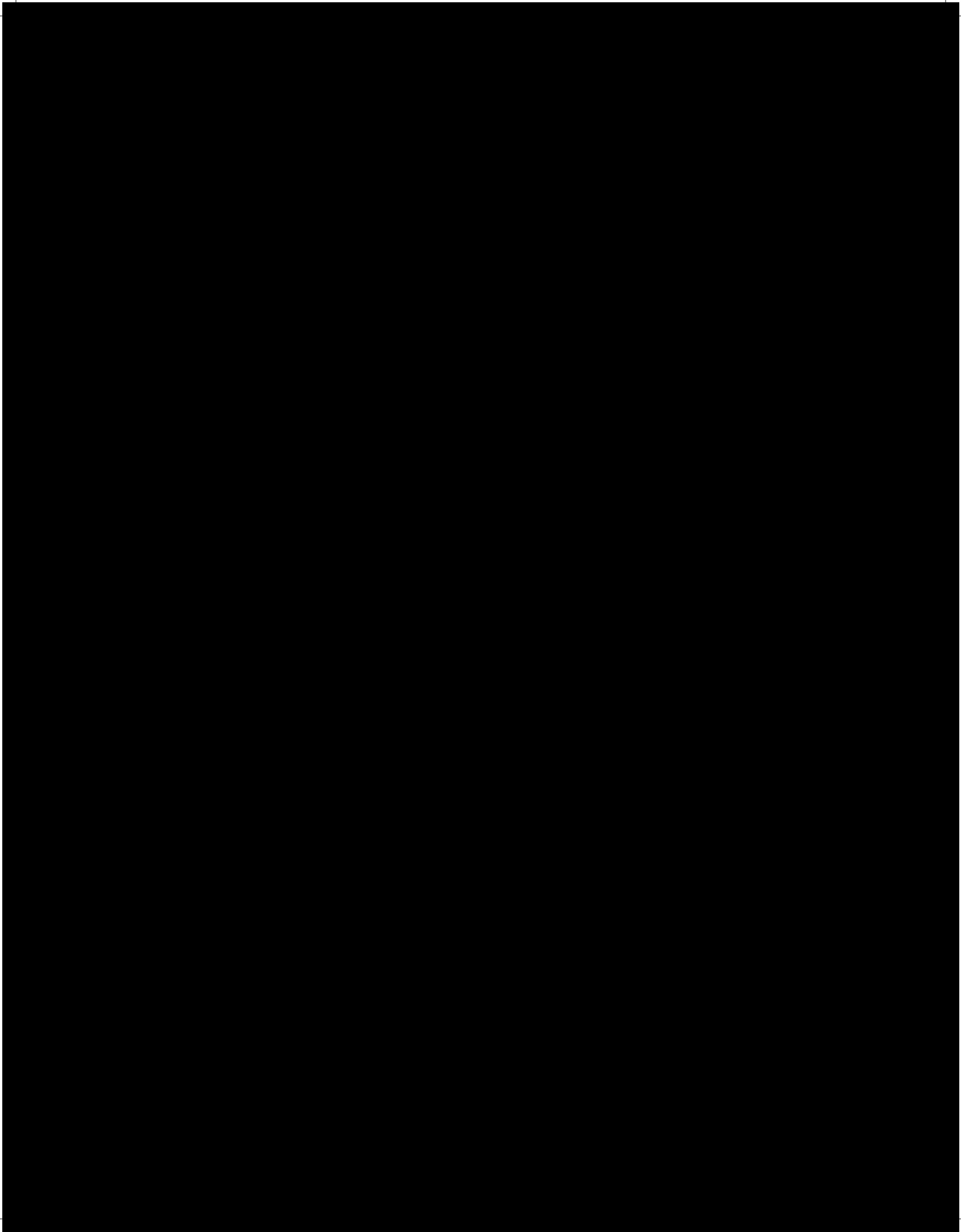


Figure 25. Weston Teruya, *Casting shadows*, 2019. Found trash, photographs. 7 x 6.5 x 3.5 inches Courtesy of the artist.



Contributors

Joanna Fiduccia



Joanna Fiduccia is an art historian and critic. Her research explores the relationship between aesthetics and ideology, centering around the intersection of sculpture and political theory in the modernist return to figuration. Co-founder and editor of the journal of art history *apricota*, she is the author of essays and reviews on contemporary art for publications including *Artforum*, *East of Borneo*, *Spike*, *Even*, and *Parkett*, as well as numerous catalogues. She lives in New Haven, where she is Assistant Professor in Modern European and American Art at Yale University.

Kathryn Andrews: *Censor or Surfeit*

castaneda/reiman: *Lay of the Landscape*

Stephanie Hanor



Stephanie Hanor is Assistant Dean and Director of Mills College Art Museum. Hanor has over 18 years of curatorial and arts administration experience. Her work emphasizes site-specific commissions and supports contemporary women artists, including projects with Sarah Oppenheimer, Trisha Brown, Frances Stark, Hung Liu, and Diana Al-Hadid. Prior to joining MCAM in 2009, she was the Senior Curator and Curatorial Department Head at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. Hanor received her PhD in Art History from the University of Texas at Austin.

Daniel Nevers



Nevers received an MFA in studio art from Mills College ('08) and is currently executive director at the Berkeley Art Center. He has taught studio art and curated independent projects at colleges and galleries throughout the Bay Area.
Introduction: A Brief History of Hiding in Plain Sight

Anne Lesley Selcer



Anne Lesley Selcer is the author of *Blank Sign Book*, a book of essays on art. *Sun Cycle*, winner of the First Poetry Book Award, is forthcoming in September, 2019 from the Cleveland State University Poetry Center. Anne Lesley writes about images, form, beauty, invisibility, formlessness, abjection, political emotion. Recently, she's written on Juliana Huxtable, Ana Mendieta, Janet Cardiff, Ragnar Kjartansson, Dolores Dorantes, Etel Adnan and Ronaldo Wilson. She created and curated the innovative Chroma Reading Series for text based artists, poets and researchers when she lived in Vancouver, British Columbia. More art writing can be found in *Art Practical*, *Hyperallergic*, *Fillip* and the *Cica Museum's New Media Art 2017: Back to Nature*, as well as in catalogs and monographs for the Dietch Projects, the Or gallery and Center A among others.
Dario Robleto: The Heart is a Metaphor, But Also Not
Weston Teruya: The Potted Plants of our Undoing

Acknowledgements

In *Plain Sight* is a timely and ambitious exhibition that perfectly fits Mills College Art Museum's mission to serve as a laboratory for contemporary artists and a forum for art and ideas of our time. The exhibition and publication showcase the work of Kathryn Andrews, casteneda/reiman (the collaborative practice of Charlie Castaneda and Brody Reiman), Dario Robleto, and Weston Teruya. I am deeply grateful for the artists' participation and support of this exhibition and publication—each have contributed thoughtful and ambitious pieces for this project.

Exhibition curator Daniel Nevers has done an outstanding job in bringing together a remarkable group of artists. His insightful line of inquiry provides new and richly complex ways of understanding transformation and authenticity in our world. I appreciate the dedication, creativity, and good humor that he has brought to this exhibition and publication.

This exhibition and publication would not have been possible without the help of a multitude of supporters, partners, and contributors. I am indebted to writers Joanna Fiduccia and Anne Lesley Selcer for their perceptive texts that reveal new contexts and meaningful ways of seeing each artist's work. This publication would not be possible without the hard work and commitment of MCAM's Program Director, Jayna Swartzman-Brosky, who served as the publication's copy editor, digital designer, and coordinator. In addition, I am grateful for the help of staff at the Getty in Los Angeles, who supported MCAM's use of Quire, a new Getty-developed open-source platform for publishing digital publications.

In particular, I would like to thank the following individuals and institutions who graciously agreed to lend works from their collection for the exhibition, helped with research, and provided images for this publication: Alexandra Gaty at David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; Kerry Inman at Inman Gallery, Houston; J. Ben Bourgeois, Scott Hoffman, Greg Hodes, and Joelle Rimokh. Many thanks go to Eli Thorne, MCAM's Exhibition and Collection Manager, for skillfully managing the multiplicity of exhibition logistics, and to our art preparators, Ivan Navarro and Emma Spertus, for ensuring a smooth and beautiful installation.

The exhibitions and programs at Mills College Art Museum are supported by the Mills College administration, and I would like to thank Dr. Chinyere Oparah, Provost and Dean of the Faculty for her encouragement and confidence. Special thanks go to Joan Danforth, whose program endowment helps underwrite this exhibition.

—Stephanie Hanor, Director, Mills College Art Museum

Works in the Exhibition

KATHRYN ANDREWS

Black Bars: Hare-Breadth Hurry (1963-2014), 2014 Ink on found drawing and Plexiglas, aluminum, paint 36 ½ x 32 x 2 inches Collection Greg Hodes

Black Bars: Tom and Jerry, 2015 Ink on Plexiglas, found drawing, aluminum, paint 36 ½ x 32 x 2 inches Collection Joelle Rimokh

Black Bars: Wolverine Wolverton, 2016 Aluminum, Plexiglas, ink, paint, replica film prop 92 x 73.25 x 4.5 inches Collection J. Ben Bourgeois

Black Bars: Mr. and Mrs. Smith, 2016 Aluminum, Plexiglas, ink, paint, certified film prop 92 x 73.25 x 4.5 inches Collection Scott Hoffman

Lounge Chair, 2015 Stainless steel, archival dye sublimation prints on polyester, taffeta, polyester and vinyl 24 x 112 x 74 inches Courtesy the Artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

CASTANEDA/REIMAN

Untitled Landscape (collage and collection, in six places), 2019 Printed drywall and wood, paint, wood, ceramic

Untitled Landscape (system and structure), 2019 Printed drywall and metal, wood

DARIO ROBLETO

Love, Before There Was Love, 2018 Edition of 3 Earliest waveform recordings of blood flowing from the heart both before and during an emotional state (1870), rendered and printed in 3-D, brass-plated stainless steel, steeling glass vitrine. Diptych, each 58 x 17 x 17 inches with vitrine. Courtesy of the Artist and Inman Gallery, Houston.

Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas, 2017-2018 Cut and polished nautilus shells, various cut and polished seashells, various urchin spines and teeth, mushroom coral, green and white tusks, squilla claws, butterfly wings, colored pigments and beads, colored crushed glass and glitter, dyed mica flakes, pearlescent paint, cut paper, acrylic domes, brass rods, colored mirrored Plexiglas, glue, maple 75 x 71.5 x 43 inches Courtesy of Inman Gallery, Houston

Setlists for a Setting Sun (The Crystal Palace), 2014 Cyanotypes, prints, watercolor paper, butterflies, butterfly antennae made from stretched audiotape of the earliest live recording of music (The Crystal Palace Recordings of Handel's "Israel in Egypt," 1888), various cave minerals and crystals, homemade crystals, black swan vertebrae, lapis lazuli, coral, sea urchin shells, sea mirrors, plastic and glass domes, studio recording, digital player, headphones, wood, polyurethane 60 x 45.5 x 45.5 inches
Courtesy of Inman Gallery, Houston. Directional speaker preferred over headphones.

The Sky, Once Choked With Stars, Will Slowly Darken: Nelson/Hopkins, 2011 Edition 1 of 5 Diptych, archival digital prints on Epson Somerset Velvet 255gsm paper. A collection of stage lights from album covers of live performances of now deceased musicians. Rick Nelson—"In Concert / Lightnin' Hopkins"—"The King of the Blues" 44 x 44 inches each
Courtesy of Inman Gallery, Houston

Will The Sun Remember At All, 2011-2012 Edition of 4 + 2 AP Suite of 9 archival digital prints on Epson Somerset Velvet 255gsm paper featuring The Mamas and the Papas—"Monterey International Pop Festival / John Coltrane/Archie Shepp"—"New Thing at Newport / Johnny Cash"—"Live at San Quentin / Jimi Hendrix"—"In Concert / Elvis Presley"—"Elvis in Hollywood / Frank Sinatra"—"Frank Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim / Rick Nelson"—"In Concert / Dizzy Gillespie"—"In Concert / T. Rex"—"Light of Love" 23 x 23 in each 80 x 80 in overall
Courtesy of Inman Gallery, Houston

WESTON TERUYA

Local culture feature for a developer sales blog, 2019 Paper sculpture (with photographs, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka'ako and San Jose, and office supplies), coral, found plastic trash 93 x 55 x 42 inches (w & d variable depending on installation)

Built upon, 2019 Found trash, photographs, coral, paper pulp mixed with soil 24 x 6.25 x 2 inches

Growing on the shoreline, 2019 Found trash, photographs, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka'ako 27 x 11 x 4.5 inches

Casting shadows, 2019 found trash & photographs 7 x 6.5 x 3.5 inches

Landscaping, 2019 paper sculpture (with photographs, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka'ako and San Jose, office supplies, waterproof paper, and other recycled papers), coral, acrylic 40 x 20 x 28 inches

Looking mauka from the park, 2019 paper sculpture (with photographs, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka'ako and San Jose, found cardboard, office supplies, and other recycled papers) 59 x 27 x 46 inches

Ice blocking, 2019 found trash, Riso print, photographs, retail brochure clippings, coral, paper pulp mixed with soil from Kaka'ako 17 x 8.5 x 4.5 inches

Expansion (land.water.sky), 2019 video 4 minutes 43 seconds