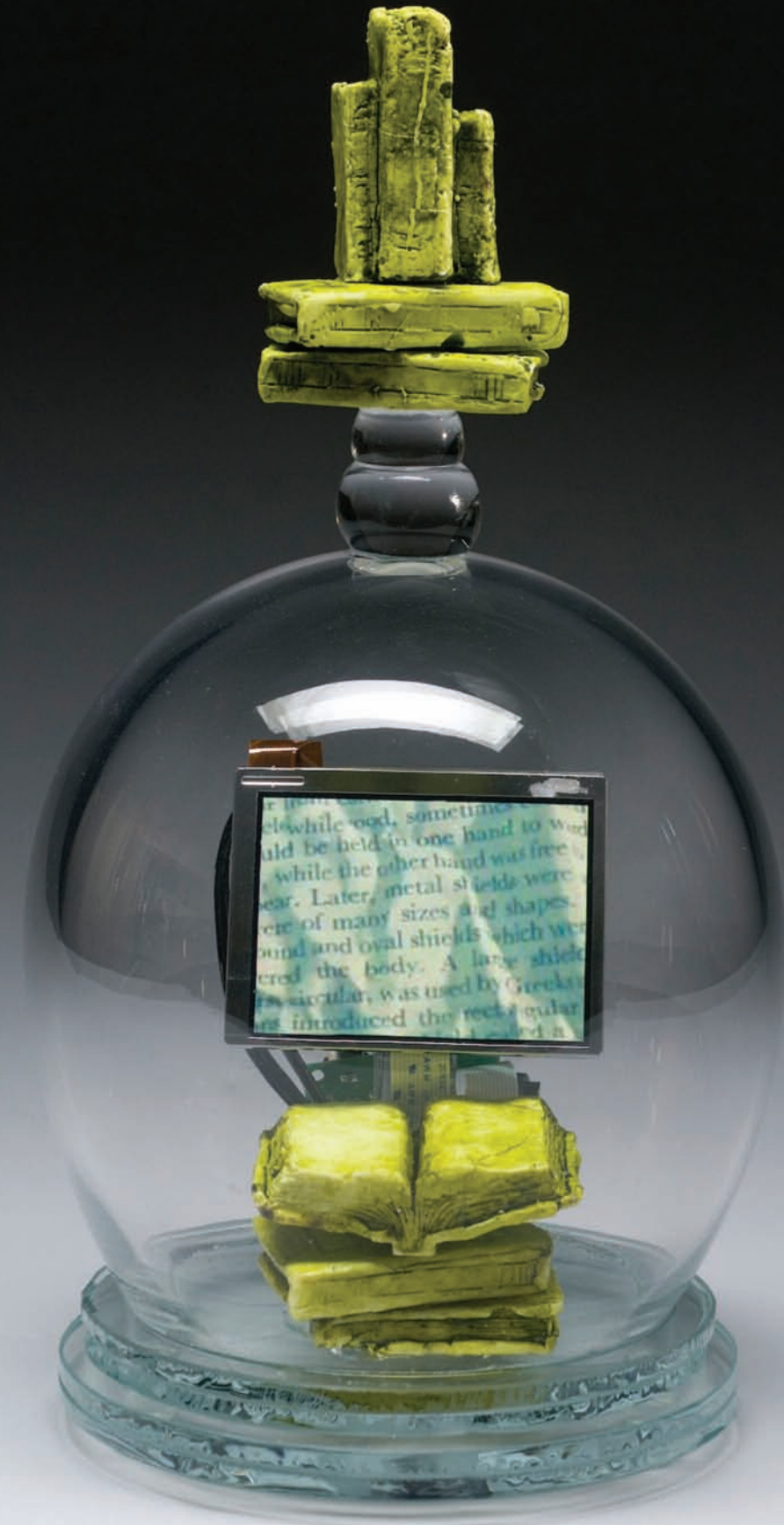


Digital
Dialogues
at the
Boundaries of
Contemporary
Craft



THE NEW MATERIALITY

curated by Fo Wilson



On the cover:
Brian Boldon
Looking and Blindness, 2006

Kiln formed glass, aluminum, steel,
digital glass prints, LED's
56" x 11" x 8"
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Amy Baur

Inside front cover:
Tim Tate
Memories of Reading, 2008

Blown and cast glass, electronic
components, original video
14" x 6" x 6"
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Anything Photographic

Back Cover:
Lia Cook
Face Maps Revised: Lips, 2006

Woven cotton
64" x 53"
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Lia Cook

The Intersection of Technology and Craft

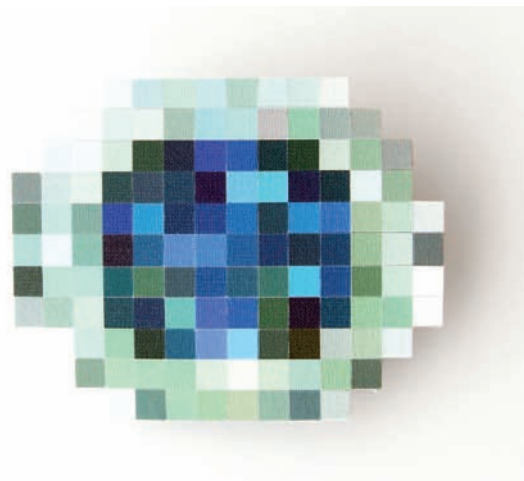
Welcome to "The New Materiality: Digital Dialogues at the Boundaries of Contemporary Craft." Fuller Craft Museum is proud to be the organizing institution for this important exhibition that showcases the work of sixteen artists who are working at the intersection of technology and craft. They are shaping our thinking about craft, an idea that is at the core of our mission at Fuller Craft.

Fo Wilson is an extraordinarily thoughtful and committed artist and curator who was the driving force behind this exhibition. Her original proposal asked provocative questions about the definition of craft, the restraints of categorization, and the new materials and technologies that were emerging. In the years between her proposal and the successful completion of the exhibition, we have all been amazed by Fo's energy and creativity. This catalogue and the accompanying exhibition are intended to continue the dialogue from that initial proposal, and we invite you to become part of the conversation.

As New England's home for contemporary craft, we are committed to leading the creative discourse about craft — both its history and its future — and we are pleased to share "The New Materiality" with a national audience. This would not have been possible without the cooperation of the artists and collectors who lent work to the show, and we thank them for their participation. We also wish to express our appreciation to the local sponsors who have provided essential support for this project.

We hope you enjoy the exhibition as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Wyona Lynch-McWhite
Executive Director
May 2010



Above:
Mike and Maaïke
Stolen Jewels – Hope Diamond, 2007

Leather - printed and scored
Courtesy of the artists

Photo: Mike Simonian and Maaïke Evers

Left:
Mike and Maaïke
Stolen Jewels – Daisy Fellow's
"Tutti Frutti" Necklace

Leather - printed and scored
Courtesy of the artists

Photo: Mike Simonian and Maaïke Evers

THE NEW MATERIALITY: Digital Dialogues at the Boundaries of Contemporary Craft

By Fo Wilson, Curator

Craft practice in America for the first half of the twentieth century was often promoted as a remedy for a change in human values heralded by the Industrial Age. In fact, one could argue that this change was several centuries in the making long before industrialization, modern manufacturing and modernism began to shape attitudes that would affect the aesthetics and philosophies of modern material culture, art and the designed world.

Before George Haussmann and nineteenth-century theories about urban planning rescued France from disease and widened its streets; before modernist architect Adolf Loos professed “ornament” to be a crime;¹ before Margarethe Schütte-Lihotzky offered working-class Germans open courtyards and the *Frankfurt Kitchen*, still considered a model of spatial efficiency in modern interiors; well before technological advances in building construction made the modular buildings of Le Corbusier possible; and prior to John Ruskin’s ideas of social economy and William Morris rehabilitating the idea of the artisan as a prodigious redeemer of social values; a revolution was occurring that slowly trumped the virtues of labor and regard for the hand as a worthy location of human industry and intelligence. As modern philosophical theories were being debated in the seventeenth century and the natural sciences were developing in the latter half of that century and the beginning of the next, a shift was taking place in

how we regard intelligence and where in our anatomy intelligence fundamentally resides.²

The beginnings of modern philosophy during the *Age of Reason* argued that the senses were unreliable sources of knowledge and that knowledge was best confirmed and acquired through our ability to think.³ Darwinists and eugenicists such as Francis Galton (Darwin’s cousin), postulated that “the fittest” were recipients of a superior genetic makeup and ample brain size — an idea that was appropriated to justify the exploitations of colonialism and the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade, and that was used to devastating consequences by the Third Reich. The ability to “reason,” as represented in the hegemony of Western European culture and evolving capitalist economic mechanisms at that time, sought to supplant a historical regard for the artisan and the skilled labor of the hand, the artisans’ role in society, as well as other belief systems common to non-Western cultures.

The hand had been a potent symbol of creativity and accomplishment for centuries, as represented, for example, by the iconic image of God painted in the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo in the early sixteenth century. But the hand lost much of its stature over time, as did organized artisan societies and professional artisans themselves. The importance of the intellect — this ability to reason — became an agent of Modernism, and positioned Western industry as well as

art within a privileged status that has yet to run its course. Although it may be showing signs of loosening its grip, this privileging of the mind and intellectual productivity could be said to be at the heart of the problem of why craft has had such a hard time finding the respect it has been seeking within the hierarchies of art, craft and design.

Over time, as modern universities replaced traditional apprenticeships for the artisan and as the canon of twentieth-century art and design theory and criticism have grown, twentieth-century craft has existed at the margins of any sustained and substantial theoretical discourse and critique. Craft, as Howard Risatti points out in his book *A New Theory of Craft* (2007), has suffered from an anti-intellectualism and lack of the theoretical rigor that would position craft practice within a larger social and historical context beyond elemental discussions about its second-class identity. In writing about the “prestige” that fine art has enjoyed in the marketplace, he says:

“In no small part this prestige can be linked to the tradition of critical discourse surrounding contemporary art ... What this theoretical and critical discourse has done is provide an intellectual framework within which to ground fine art, to transform it, as it were, from a mere object of trade or handiwork into a conceptually and intellectually centered activity.”⁴

Happily, the conditional dearth of craft theory is lifting. In addition to Risatti’s work, the first decade of the new century brought us Glenn Adamson’s *Thinking Through Craft* (2007), where he theorizes craft as a verb and provocatively argues its relevance within contemporary art discourse. *The Journal of Modern Craft*, which Adamson edits with Tanya Harrod from the Royal College of Art and historian Edward Cooke Jr. from Yale, started in 2008 and refers to itself as “the main scholarly voice on the subject of craft.” *The Craftsman* (2008) was written by sociologist Richard Sennett, who argues for a “craft of experience.” And *Makers: A History of American Studio Craft* (2010), a project of the Center for Craft Creativity and Design in North Carolina, edited by Janet Koplos and Bruce

Metcalfe, is the very first textbook and comprehensive history of modern craft in the United States. These are just a few examples of some of the new writing produced or in the works theorizing and documenting contemporary craft practice in the Western world.

Some of the points that Risatti and Adamson bring up in trying to inject fresh perspectives in craft discourse attempt to position craft within a larger and broader artistic framework as Adamson does; or lays out a precise historical accounting of the reading of objects as Risatti does, from which to understand how craft got here in the first place. “Here” is a place that has been largely defined so far by what craft is not. Risatti and Adamson are trying to define what craft is and what it represents in our world today. They and others are trying to take craft’s voice, which was once primarily defined within other systems of discourse, and encourage a craft theory that is defined in its own words, on its own terms from the inside out. These efforts are attempting to transcend exhausted debates around craft vs. art or craft vs. design and to encourage more critical discussion and theories of craft that re-evaluate the value of craft in contemporary creative practices-at-large and in the work of diverse practitioners.

The New Materiality

The makers and artists in the exhibition *The New Materiality: Digital Dialogues at the Boundaries of Contemporary Craft* are also contributing to the discourse and evolution of new ideas about contemporary craft practices today. The exhibition, which I have had the privilege to organize for Fuller Craft Museum, examines the work of sixteen established and emerging makers working within established craft disciplines or with traditional craft materials who are treading compelling territory between their mediums and emergent technologies.

These artists are by no means alone; they are but a sampling of many that are bypassing the restraints of their given disciplines and forging new ground. Ignoring conventional means of categorization, these makers are embracing technologies that are increasingly ubiquitous in the culture at large and using them as

new materials in their work. Their work also shows us how the lines between art, craft, and design are becoming more porous as each area co-opts various theoretical, technical and philosophical aspects of the other, thus asking us to scrutinize the distance between them in contemporary creative work.

Accessible and increasingly inexpensive access to digital video, sound recording and editing, as well as computerized technology such as laser cutting, Computer Assisted Design (CAD), Computer Numerical Control (CNC) and Rapid Prototyping (RP) devices, have been growing in use by makers and designers over the last two decades as efficient production tools. Digital media as a genre of studio art practice is also enjoying wider acceptance and visibility. Certainly the use of these technologies by craft makers is not new, but how they are using them is, and the tension between this development in practices that have traditionally privileged the hand could pose a conundrum for craft theorists.

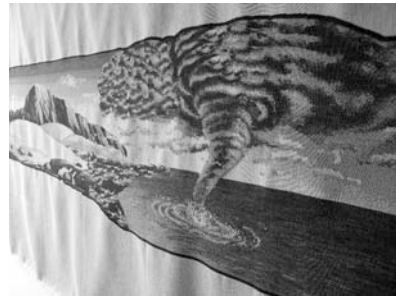
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Theoretical foundations in craft that evolved in response to the Industrial Revolution from late nineteenth-century Ruskin and Morrisonian ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement have prevailed to a large degree throughout the twentieth century. These theories valued the work of the hand and the artisan over “the machine” as represented in manufacturing, industry, mass production and its underlying economic structures. Inherent with this thinking is a respect for the individual worker, who as an artisan offers redemptive and important social value — values that Sennett argues can be applied today just as appropriately to the methods of the computer programmer as to the glassblower. How then

do we reconcile integrating digital content into hand-based work and still consider it craft?

The makers in this exhibition, many of whom sustain craft traditions, are not necessarily using digital technologies to replace the hand, but are materializing them. They are incorporating digital matter into their work like any new material to be exploited, manipulated and co-opted to the will of their creativity. I argue that digital technology is part of a *new materiality in craft*. These new technologies are not displacing components of craft’s heritage, but adding to them and enriching craft expression. In a smart phone-enabled, Internet-happy, laptop culture, where digital objects and dynamic media have become embedded in the material culture of the modern world, it is no wonder that emergent technologies have increasingly attracted the interest of diverse artists and makers.

This exhibition poses a number of questions. If we were to consider digital matter — zeros and ones — as a material like clay, glass, wood, metal, fiber or reed, does that force us to rethink traditional craft views within the “hand vs. machine” debate relative to digital technology? If craft is endearingly tied to the skill of the hand, then how do we judge the skill with which a craft artist and maker uses digital technology and incorporates it into his or her work? How might these issues affect debates around the boundaries between art, craft and design? Should we redefine function in a postmodern context to include the viewer’s experience of a given work beyond ordinary usefulness? What



Christy Matson
Loomscapes (detail), 2008
(part of a series of four)

Cotton and stainless steel,
8-channel audio.
Photo: Christy Matson

quandaries do these new technologies present to traditional makers, and how do they reconcile these issues for themselves and in their work?

The New Materiality seeks to answer some of these questions as a way to examine this phenomenon and assess its impact on contemporary craft and the American craftsperson, thus providing us with new questions and proposing new answers about what craft is and what craft can be.

Coding the human experience with fiber

Weaving is a binary language not unlike computer code. The warp and weft that weavers manipulate to devise unique aesthetic gestures in fibers, and the knit and purl stitches tendered in knitting, share a similar function with the zeros and ones that drive various forms of digital media.

Perhaps an elder among this group of makers, not necessarily by virtue of age but by how long she has been working within the intersections of digital technology and craft, **Lia Cook's** contributions to this exhibition are an ideal place to start to discuss craft practice in the Digital Age. Cook incorporates intimate family portraits in weavings using a digital Jacquard handloom. Her *Face Maps Revisioned: Lips* and the six-panel *Face Maze: Three Generations* (both 2006) straddle the digital and the handmade, fall somewhere in between representation and abstraction, and complicate any easy means of categorization.

Are these works textiles or portraits, or is Cook trying to take us somewhere else: where the textile itself takes on an added subjectivity? Cook does not subvert her craft or the aesthetics of the loom. In fact she deftly and deliberately manipulates them to “magnify the topography of the face.” Using two binary systems of presentation and scale, she brings the human into the realm of the industrial and configures them loosely enough to allow us a view of what’s in between. Warp and weft, zeros and ones all converge in a dynamic and mesmerizing interplay between eighteenth and twentieth-century technology and a skilled maker’s hand.

Sonya Clark is a good study in how contemporary makers are experimenting with uncommon materials that add contextual meaning to their work, and how some fiber artists are venturing in exciting territory on the margins of contemporary textile practices. Clark addresses hair as the first fiber and a cultural metaphor for “the struggle” as defined within African-American culture, and constructs a portrait of the business icon Madame CJ Walker, America’s first female millionaire in *Madam CJ Walker (large)*, (2008). Walker made her fortune selling beauty products in the early 1900s to black women desperate to counter cultural notions of “bad” hair that found no recourse in the general marketplace. With the help of computer pixilation, Clark uses the positive lines of the comb and the negative space of missing teeth to compose a unique homage to this American icon.

In her video *The Important Thing* (2005), Clark resurrects the old mnemonic device of tying a ribbon around a finger to remind us of how the busyness of modern life has mired us in a constant cycle of endless activity. Reclaiming the hand itself as a mechanism of remembrance, Clark mimics the density of information we collect in our hand-held devices on one lone finger. The increasingly accelerated action in the video points out how trying to remember the “important things” has become such a challenge and that perhaps we should all slow down and take life one “thing” at a time.

Much of **Christy Matson's** work uses sound as a meeting ground between the analog and the digital. In her 2008 project *Loomscapes* she appropriates and recombines imagery from the 1990 LucasArts computer game *Loom*. This complex, graphical adventure game, where musical tunes become spells, includes curiously-named characters like Lady Cygna Threadbare, who appeals to the elders of the “Great Guild” to end the suffering of the weavers whose numbers are diminishing. The loom in the game becomes a contested seat of power in this futuristic universe, where the loom can “weave” patterns of influence into the fabric of reality. Although set in the year 8021, the dynamics that users encounter in *Loom* is amusingly reminiscent of the politics within craft discourse. Matson weaves stainless steel into the fabric to produce conductive weavings

responsive to touch that emit sounds created using a digital synthesizing technique.

In the exhibition, Matson’s *Soundw(e)ave* (2004) materializes the actual sounds of Jacquard looms represented from left to right by an entirely hand-operated loom, a computer assisted one, to the fully-automated industrial loom the piece was woven with. Drawing on everyday interactions with technology in her practice, yet somewhat suspicious of the social implications of our growing technological addictions as Clark is, Matson in *Soundw(e)ave* creates a tangible and aesthetic representation of the path fiber and textile manufacturing has taken for us to reflect on. The patterns on the woven cotton — vis-à-vis the sound of the looms — get denser as the technology gets more automated. What does that say about human vs. technological resources, and the sensory vs. digital experiences that Matson and Clark are somewhat wary of?

Cat Mazza pursued an unusual educational path from studio art training at Goldsmiths College in London, to Gender Studies at Carnegie Mellon, to a graduate degree in Electronic Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. She inserts a political agenda in combining digital animation with the aesthetic of the stitch, another example of binary mechanics. Her *microRevolt* video (2009) documents the *Nike Blanket Petition*, a project where international knitters and crochet hobbyists contributed 4” x 4” knitted and crocheted squares to the large blanket petition to encourage fair labor practices for Nike garment workers in sweatshops around the world. Her website *microRevolt.org* mediated social action, as knitters from forty countries signed the petition and sent in knitted squares.

Mazza’s contributions to this exhibition also include *Knitoscope Testimonies* (2009). *Knitoscope* is a custom animation program that translates video into computer-generated knitted images. In *Knitoscope Testimonies*, activists working in the labor movement from organizations in San Francisco, Haiti and the Netherlands testify to the politics of labor. Bringing together the voice of the activist and reviving a

feminist vision of activism that at one time inspired the beginning of labor unions in the American textile industry, Mazza’s combination of the handmade and the technological politicizes a dynamic knit and purl. Her recent project *Knitoscope Sampler* (2009) uses her custom software to create animations of knit patterns that originated in Scotland, which she pairs with video of the Shetland Island landscape on Scotland’s northern coast.

Memory and identity in furniture forms

Mazza is not alone in combining the power of the handmade with a digital delivery around political and social content. In making *You’re a Sap, Mr. Jap* (2008), studio furniture maker **Wendy Maruyama** recalls her initial innocence in growing up and watching Saturday morning cartoons such as *Popeye* and *Looney Tunes*. Little did the young Maruyama know that the cartoon from 1942 referenced in the title was a part of American World War II propaganda aimed at denigrating the Japanese. Whatever side of history one is on, what would cause television executives to think such propaganda appropriate for children is Maruyama’s point. Positioning the video at the viewing height for a child, she covers the piece in tarpaper reminiscent of the material used in the construction of Japanese internment camps in the United States, enacted as Executive Order 9066 by President Roosevelt from 1942-1946.

Maruyama, whose family was directly affected by the internment, has also embarked on a community art project called *The Tag Project*, started during a 2008 residency at SUNY Purchase. She is enlisting the help of community and student volunteers to help her make handwritten tags for her work *Cascade*, with one tag for each of the 120,000 Japanese-Americans who were interned in these camps.

Maruyama is known for working at the conceptual edges of studio furniture practice. She incorporates humor, irreverence and social issues that mine the histories of her Japanese American heritage in beautiful and exquisitely made furniture forms. In *Kanzashi “Stroke”* (2007), she tackles stereotypes of



Cat Mazza
Nike Blanket Petition, 2007

Submissions were received from knitters and hobbyists around the world.
15' x 6'
Photo: Cat Mazza



Wendy Maruyama
Cascade, 2009
(her E.O 9066 Tag Project in progress)
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Wendy Maruyama



Lawrence LaBianca
My Father's Dream, 2004

Neon, transformer, electrical cord, oak branch, steel and steel cable
94" x 24" x 10"
Photo: Ian Green

Japanese women as both "oriental" and "ornamental" objects. Maruyama's five-foot-high "Stroke," which is a figurative representation of the traditional, beautifully ornate Kanzashi combs worn by geishas, includes inlay of mother-of-pearl. It also incorporates a sensuous video that mesmerizes the senses like the role of the geisha, with imagery of a person's scalp being stroked and gently fondled.

There are not many examples in American literature that can claim the place of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* in the American imagination. **Donald Fortescue** and **Lawrence LaBianca**, two San Francisco-based sculptors, evoke this period in literature with *Sounding* (2008), originally created for a project where Bay Area artists were asked to create work that specifically responded to the area's physical, historical and social environment. Fortescue and LaBianca constructed a cabriole-legged table, filled it with beach rocks, lowered it in the ocean for two months and recorded the sounds via hydrophone near where the table was submerged. For exhibition, they constructed an oversized hailing horn-like funnel made of laser-cut polycarbonate connected with zip ties to amplify the recorded sound.

in water, and the artists conjure primal forces with water, sound and the white sperm whale. *Sounding* successfully integrates aspects of art, craft, and design to offer a magnificent sensory and visual experience of dramatic scale.

Both Fortescue and LaBianca work between dichotomies of sorts. LaBianca is influenced by a childhood split between rural Maine and New York City. Both nature and the industrial manage to coexist comfortably in his oeuvre, as in his work *My Father's Dream* (2004) which embeds a neon light inconspicuously inside a found oak branch.

For Fortescue, who identifies as a sculptor and was originally trained as a furniture maker and designer, there remains an obsession with process and materiality that reflects his craft roots and the virtuosity in his work. In *Under the Bridge* (2005), he focuses on geography as a location of identity. The work, consisting of two finely crafted cabinets on tripods modeled loosely in form on portable camera obscuras, have lidded tops that when lifted activate twin videos of moving bodies of water. These representations of water appear to be identical but

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actually exist thousands of miles apart: one from under the Sydney Harbor Bridge in Australia, Fortescue's homeland, and the other from under the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge, in the city where he currently makes his home. If home is where the heart is, Fortescue has represented a dual identity in residence simultaneously on two different sides of the globe in two distinctly different cultures.

Upon approaching *Table I: Murmur* (2007), one has to take a moment to orient to the tilted surface and the rolling tree trunks that are continually moving within the narrow windows routed in the tabletop. Collaborators **E.G. Crichton** and **Susan Working** seem to be asking us to question the stability of matter and, in the case of *Table I: Murmur* (2007), not to take for granted living materials that eventually end up in our homes as useful things. Craft is often defined within the context of function. Here, Crichton and Working use the crafted object as a conceptual device to question our relationship to functional needs and desires.

When asked, anyone would say the table is made from wood. Civilized amnesia dislocates us from the tree as the wood's original progenitor. The video embedded in the slanted tabletop initiates a disorientating and haunting visceral experience. The close cropping, continuous movement, and in this case the absence of sound make the Aspen forest with its black marks on stark white bark appear as eyes in an animated jungle of wood. When something appears as a murmur we have to listen more intently to hear its sound. Crichton and Working's *Murmur* shows that incorporating digital media into crafted objects is not at odds with traditional craft values. It actually brings a new generation of materials to the hand of imaginative artists and makers that sustain values that remind us that civilized life can ironically possess its own brand of poverty.

Originally trained as a painter, **Shaun Bullens** completed training in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century furniture making at the North Bennet Street School in Boston. The school, which has been operating since 1885, is committed to the teaching of traditional woodworking skills. In *Anxious* (2007) Bullens combines a fine-furniture elegance with electronics and digital media to address issues of anxiety and personal space. A parakeet named Bird that appears captive in its cage suddenly takes virtual flight and assumes freedom on a tree limb close by that is emerging from a small table made with carved cabriole legs. The maker asks: are we caged or are we protected; are we free or are we tethered? If so, then tethered to what?

Jewelry as virtual adornment

Nineteen-eighties excesses pale in comparison to recent years. A memorable figure of 1980s extravagance was Imelda Marcos, the widow of the former Philippine president, who allegedly owned 3000 pairs of shoes! Another object of her excessive lavishness was her extraordinarily expensive jewelry collection. Roving the Internet searching for images of Marcos' ruby necklace with diamonds and other examples of iconic jewelry such as the Hope Diamond, designers **Mike and Maaike** found images of these and other expensive pieces and recreated them as a part of their *Stolen Jewels* series (2007).

At a distance these pieces sparkle and read as what they are: big, flashy, "look-at-me" knockouts. Closer examination, however, reveals low-resolution images taken from Google's image search engine — something that many of us use every day — that were doctored and transferred to scored leather. Mike, a native Californian, and Maaike, originally from the Netherlands, work in San Francisco and share a collaborative practice that mixes low-tech and high-tech traditions of craft and industry to create objects with unique conceptual commentary on the human condition. *Stolen Jewels* questions the collusion between monetary and perceived value in contemporary objects that define the nature of modern human exchange.

Digital embodiments in glass

Two works by **Brian Boldon** defy the visual logic that usually helps us understand visual information presented in the three-dimensional world. Boldon's *Looking and Blindness* (2006) and *3-D Chair* (2009) offer a disorientating rethinking of physical embodiment in the new age.

New media theorists such as Mark Hansen connect the "new" in new media art to "...the refunctionalization of the body as a processor of information."⁵ A short walk through any public space, whether urban or rural, would bear witness to a culture that regards the iPod as an essential component and physical extension of contemporary human anatomy. Boldon, like Hansen, senses a new human experience that conjoins physical



Mike and Maaike
Stolen Jewels -
Marco's Ruby Necklace, 2007

Leather - printed and scored
Courtesy of the artists

Photo: Mike and Maaike

and virtual perception to create new art and objects that reflect artful experiences defined in a space between both physical and virtual embodiment. He uses imagery, optics, distortion and developing digital process in ceramics and glass that relocate our usual sensory understanding of objects, and two and three-dimensional form.

In *Looking and Blindness*, the image of the eye is both projector and perceived receiver. In the work's relationship to the viewer, the technology is virtually blind and the looking from the viewer's point of view is an imaginary projection, thus giving credence to Hansen's ideas of embodiment created at the intersections between the two. We also see this in an image of a 1940s office chair fused to intersecting planes of glass in Boldon's confoundingly deceptive work *3-D Chair*. Boldon feels it "... reveals the oscillation between object, image, and material, folding actual and imagined experience together as a simultaneous event."⁶

stories of love. Perhaps Tate shows us more than others the greatest distance between two points: craft tradition at one end and digital technology at the other, making for a beautiful story line within the crafted object that meet somewhere in the middle.

Training in printmaking is the last thing one might think of when encountering the multidisciplinary work of **Mark Zirpel**, who believes strongly in the "merging of form and meaning" and imparting a work ethic that allows for persistent problem-solving and failure in a university studio program.⁸ Zirpel makes engaging, physically robust, sculpture-based, kinetic installations, which incorporate glass and often arouse a sense of wonder more common to the field of science or mechanics. His *Digital Vase* (2009) appears to breathe in response to the viewer's presence, with both literal and mechanical representations of the hand forming bookends in the work, creating a familiar, amusing and welcoming human gesture.

Baskets = science?

Like many in this exhibition, **Nathalie Miebach's** work disrupts hard boundaries between art, craft and design; and like Zirpel, she works within an interchange between art and science. Using basket weaving — one of the oldest craft traditions — she translates and maps scientific data to visualize changes in the meteorological landscape. The resulting objects can potentially be read like a visual textbook: woven pieces that function both as captivating sculptures and novel scientific instruments revealing changing global weather patterns.

Boston Tides (2006) and *Warm Winter* (2007) convert various data related to, respectively, the gravitational influence of the sun and the moon, and data from the Gulf of Maine Observation System, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Navel Observatory into spirited forms that expand visual representations of what is considered, as she says, within "the domain of [either] 'science' or 'art'."⁹ Miebach's current pursuits translate data into another system — that of musical scores — which she uses to make sculptures such as *Hurricane Noel* (2010), as well

as engage in collaborations with musicians who help her aestheticize patterns in the data through sound that she might not ordinarily see.

Toward a "slow hand"

Regardless of how we continue to debate issues around craft, its definitions and relevance to other creative practices, traditional craft values in whatever form they take remain important to our integrity as human citizens now more than ever. Craft, as many lament, is so poorly understood. The values that craft can offer the twenty-first century can be symbolized within the labors of the hand, but go beyond it. One can appreciate the conceptual focus within contemporary art traditions initiated by Duchamp, but can't we ask that art also be well made? And within the plethora of designed objects, can't designers be held accountable for using sustainable materials and practices?

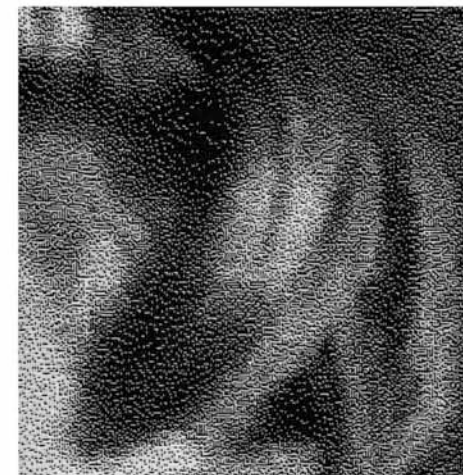
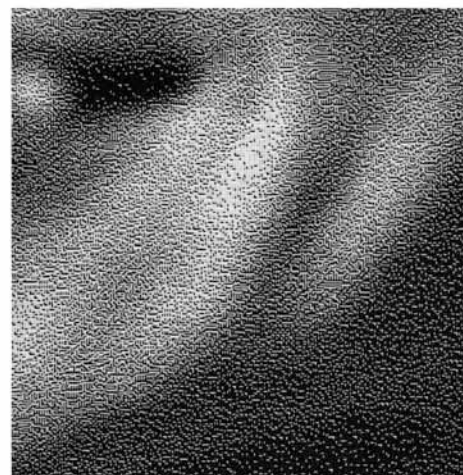
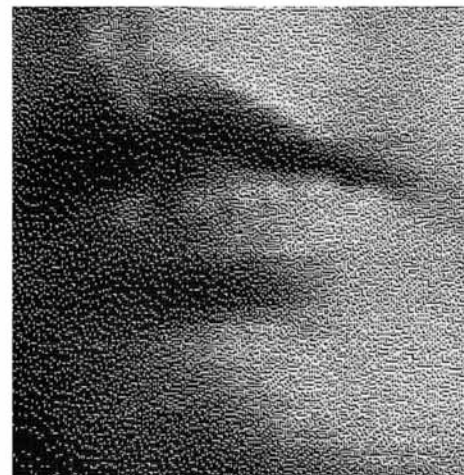
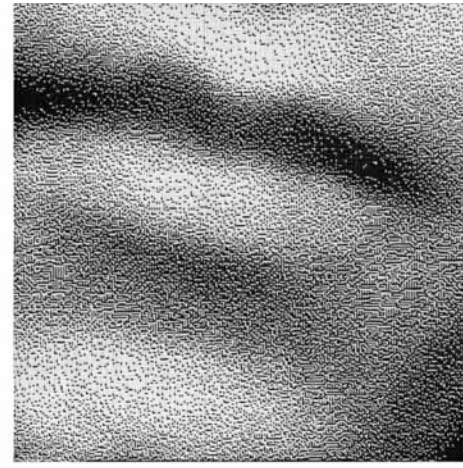
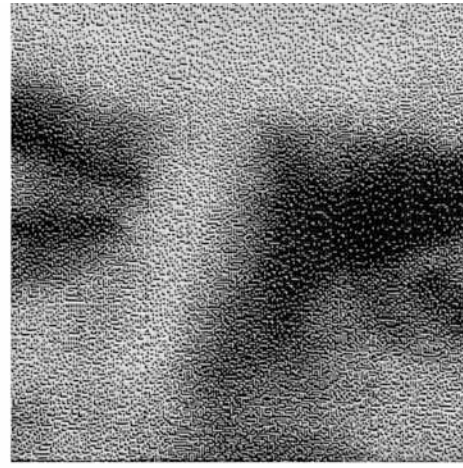
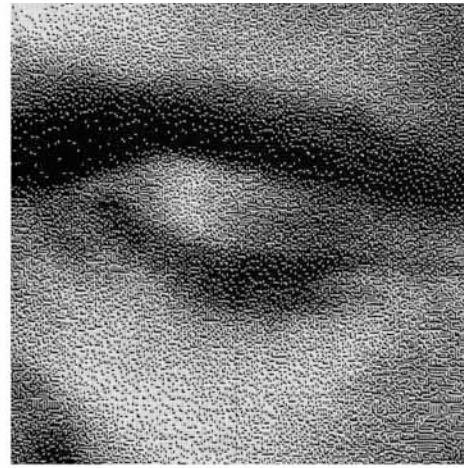
The Slow Food movement and D.I.Y. do-it-yourselfers — regardless of how much craft elites reject them — are an indication that society is looking for something meaningful to steer us toward a renewal of basic human values that have run away on a train of uncontrollable greed and self-absorption. I consider these campaigns part of what I call a "Slow Hand Federation" — crusades that are reclaiming the hand as an agent of a functional humanity. Progressive farmers, cooks, young D.I.Y. knitters and crafters seem to get it. In a twenty-first-century world, the "slow hand" is a useful agent of humankind; and the digital landscape will continue to be rich fodder in the hands of talented makers. ■

Fo Wilson, Curator

An artist, educator, writer and independent curator, Fo Wilson is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She previously taught at the Rhode Island School of Design and University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, as well as the California College of Art and Parsons School of Design. She studied at New York University and graduated from RISD's Furniture Design program in 2005 with a concentration in art history. She writes and lectures about art, design and craft. Her own work has been exhibited nationally, and is included in the collection of The Cooper Hewitt National Museum of Design. In 2005, she co-curated "Bodies of Evidence: Contemporary Perspectives" for the RISD Museum of Art. The exhibition was inspired by the prevalence of contemporary work in the Museum's collection by women that referenced the body and embodied content related to gender, religion, race, sexuality and personal relationships.

Notes

1. Adolf Loos' essay "Ornament and Crime," first published in 1908, is reprinted in *Crime and Ornament: The Arts and Popular Culture in the Shadow of Adolf Loos*, Bernie Miller and Melony Ward, editors (North Massapequa: XYZ Books, 2006).
2. See neurologist's Frank R. Wilson's (no relation) book *The Hand; How it Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) where he discusses, among other things, the symbiotic relationship between the hand and the brain and the essential connections between the hand and this complex organ, its evolution and development. Also in Richard Sennett's book, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), see his recounting of the work of early nineteenth-century anatomist Charles Bell, who Sennett says "accorded the hand a privileged place in creation," and argued that the hand transported more information to the brain than the eye, pp. 149-150.
3. Remember René Descartes' (1596-1650) famous dictum "I think therefore I am," presented as proof of his very existence.
4. Howard Risatti, *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p.2.
5. Mark B. N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 22.
6. From Boldon's artist statement, 2009.
7. Please don't read a practical reckoning as a disdain for books. I love books! And I hope they never die even if they become an obsolete medium in the near future.
8. Paraphrased from Zirpel's artist statement, 2009.
9. From Miebach's artist statement and personal discussions with the artist.



Lia Cook
Face Maze: Three Generations, 2006
Cotton
16" x 15.5" each
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Lia Cook



Cat Mazza
Knitoscope Testimonies, 2009
Video
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Catt Mazza



Cat Mazza
microRevolt video, 2009
Video
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Catt Mazza



Susan Working
E.G. Crichton
 Table I: Murmur, 2007
 (detail shown at right)

Wood, video
 20" x 36" x 28"
 Courtesy of the artist

Photo: E.G. Crichton



Brian Boldon
 3-D Chair, 2009

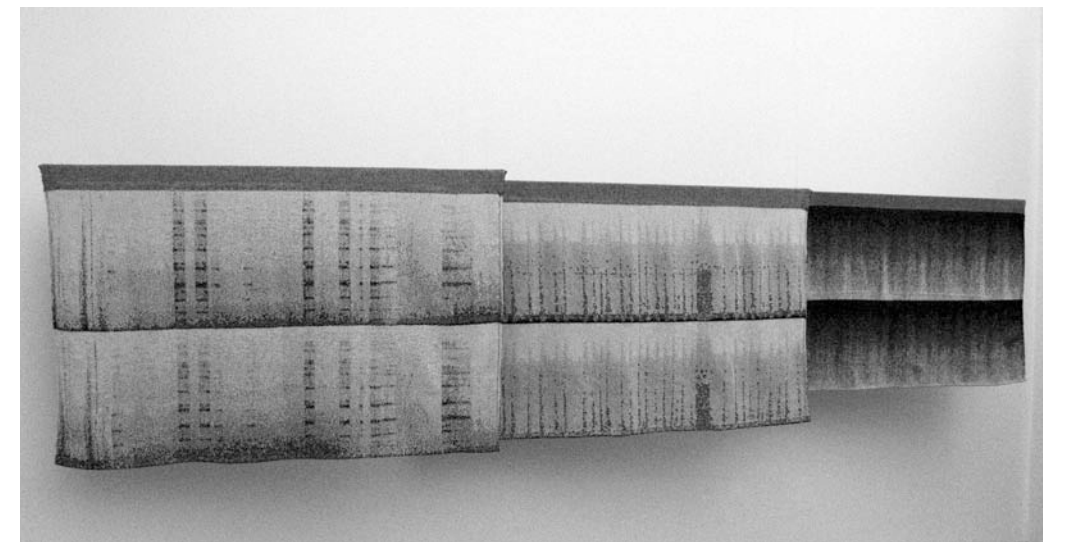
Digital glass decals, float glass,
 epoxy, aluminum
 10" x 18" x 9"
 Courtesy of the artist

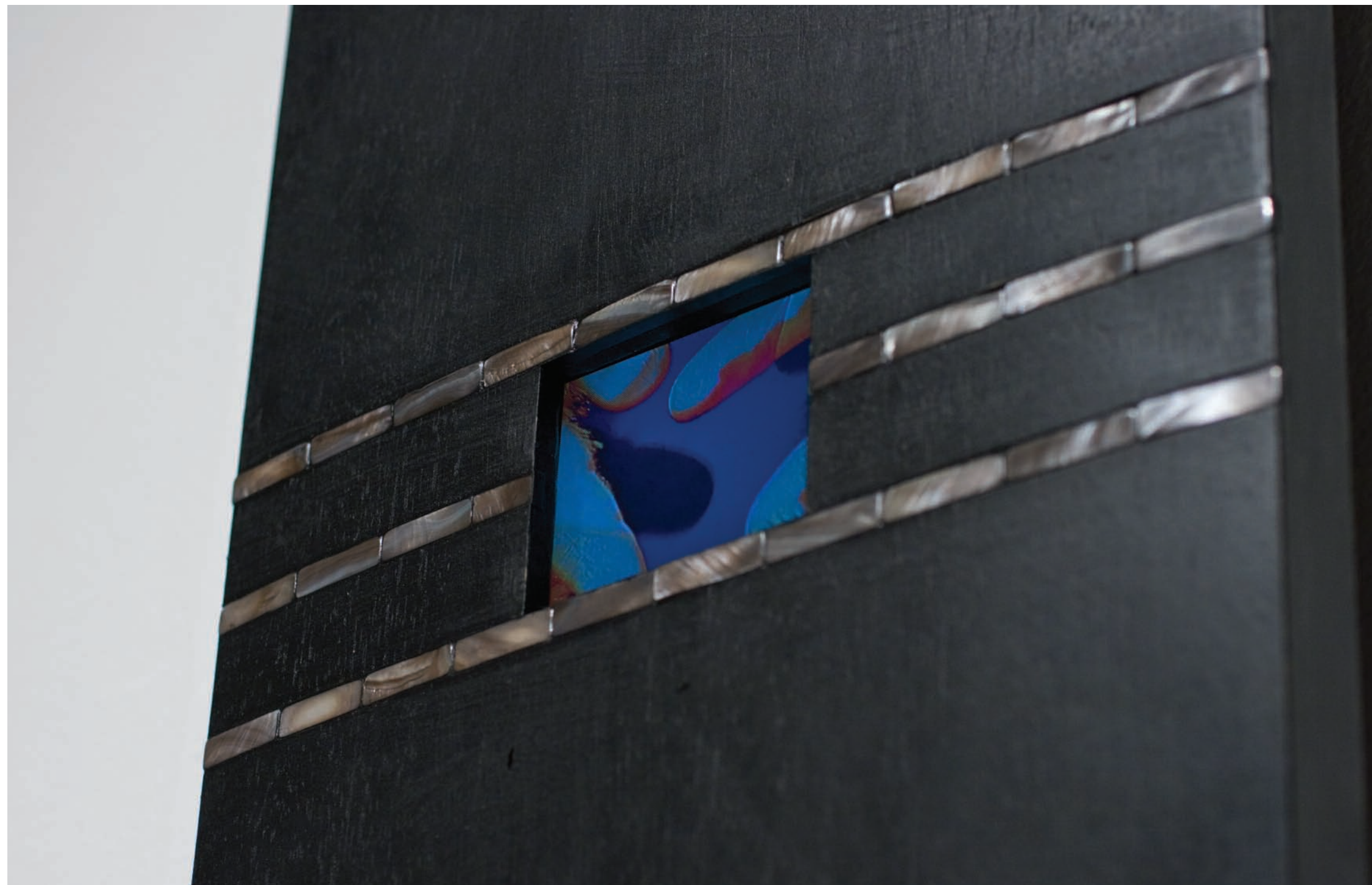
Photo: Amy Baur

Christy Matson
 Soundw(e)ave, 2004

Jacquard woven cotton
 3 sections, 34" x 54" each
 Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Christy Matson





Wendy Maruyama
Stroke, 2007
(detail also shown)

Polychromed wood, abalone shell,
video components
5' x 1' x 4"
Courtesy of the collection of
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wylie

Photo: Jared Nelson



Donald Fortescue
Lawrence LaBianca
 Sounding, 2008
 (detail also shown below)

Steel, rocks, dried aquatic flora and fauna, polycarbonate, zipties, sound
 120" x 48" x 96"
 Courtesy of the artist

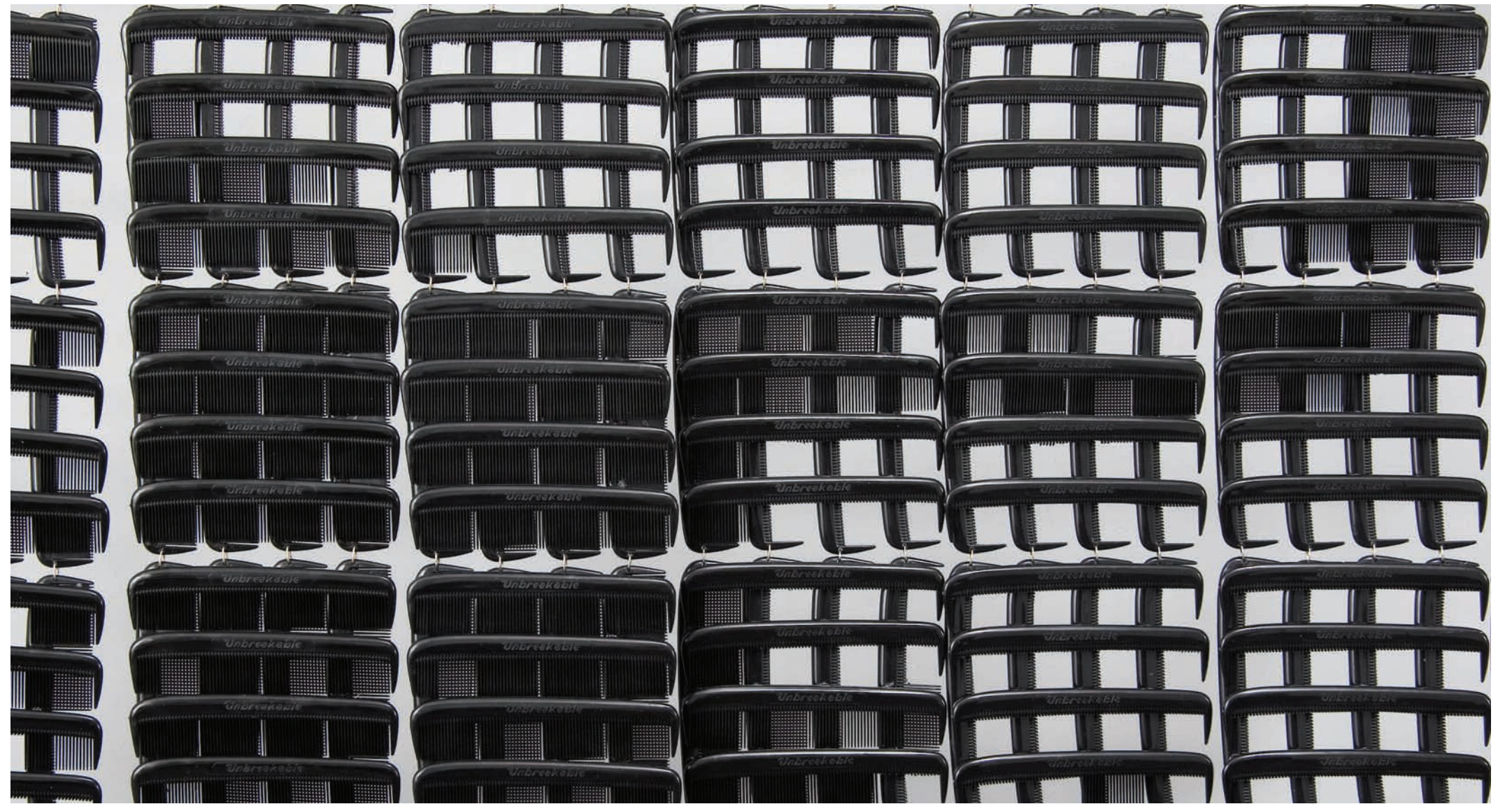
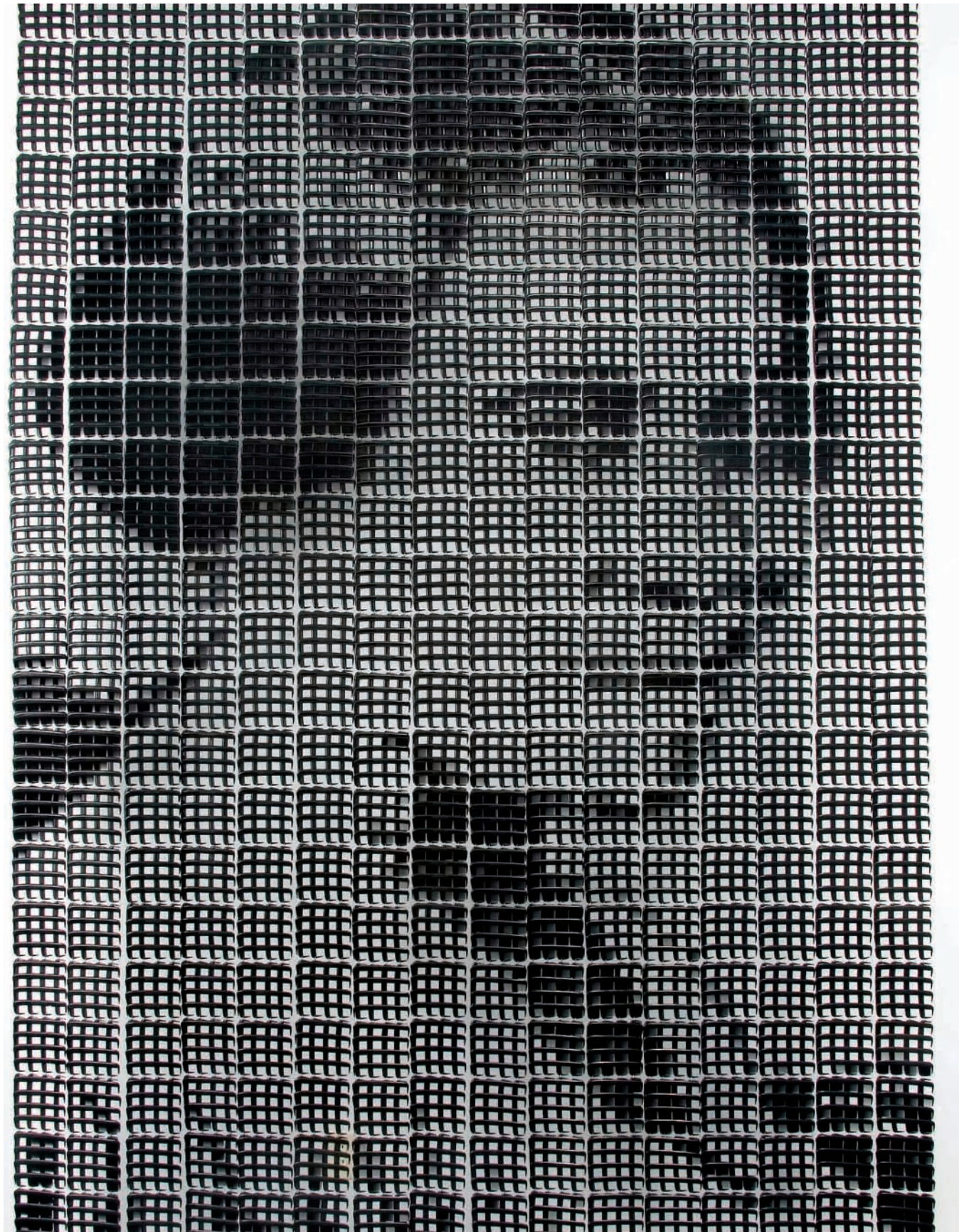
Photo: Bryan Alberstat



Above:
Tim Tate
 Virtual Novelist, 2008

Blown and cast glass, electronic components, original video
 12" x 14" x 8"
 Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Anything Photographic



Left:

Sonya Clark

Madam CJ Walker (large), 2008
(detail shown above)

Combs
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Taylor Dabney

Shaun Bullens
Anxious, 2007

Mahogany, ash, monitors
75" x 40" x 20"
Courtesy of the artist

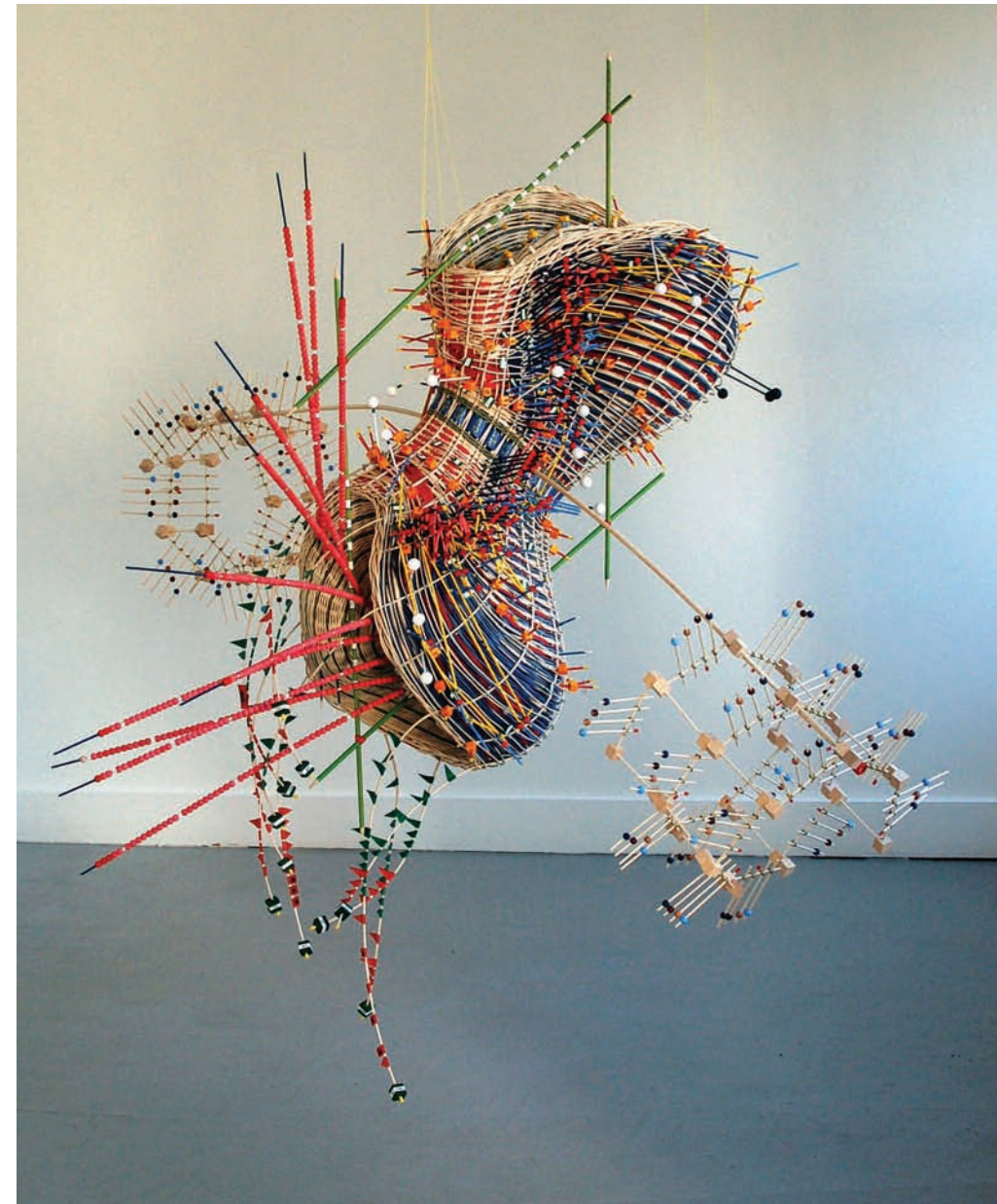
Photo: Shaun Bullens



Mark Zirpel
Digital Vase, 2009

Cast & blown glass, latex, air pump,
motion sensor
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Mark Zirpel



Nathalie Miebach
Warm Winter, 2007

Reed, wood, data
6' x 5' x 6'
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Nathalie Miebach

Artist Biographies

Brian Boldon

Brian Boldon is developing new approaches for digital printing on ceramics and glass, integrating digital media with traditional ceramic and glass studio art practices. Currently he is collaborating with artist Amy Baur to produce large-scale architectural and public art commissions while pursuing his sculpture independently. He received a BS in Art from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. He taught at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY; headed the Ceramics Program at the University of Alaska-Anchorage; and coordinated the Ceramics and Graduate Programs at Michigan State University.

Shaun Bullens

Shaun Bullens' objects and installations combine conceptual curiosity with appropriate artisan craft to articulate complex ideas. He is a co-founder of page-b studio, a fine art and design collaborative, and of "Table Fights," an ongoing tournament-style event that pits fully automated remote-controlled tables against one another. He received his BFA in painting from Massachusetts College of Art; he then studied eighteenth and nineteenth century furniture making at the North Bennet Street School in Boston before obtaining his Masters Degree from the Furniture program at the Rhode Island School of Design. He currently works out of Fall River, MA, and Pawtucket, RI.

Sonya Clark

Sonya Clark is Chair of the Craft/Material Studies Department at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond, VA; previously she taught Creative Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She holds an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago, and a BA in Psychology with a minor in African Studies from Amherst College. Her informal education comes from her Jamaican grandmother, who was a professional tailor, and the many traditional artists she has met in her travels to the Ivory Coast, Indonesia and throughout the world. Her work has been exhibited in over 150 venues throughout the United States as well as in the UK, Brazil, South Africa, Canada, Taiwan, Austria, Australia, France, and Switzerland.

Lia Cook

Lia Cook works in a variety of media, usually combining weaving and painting, photography and digital technology to explore the sensuality of fabric and the human response of touch. She is currently Professor of Art at California College of the Arts. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally, and was included in the "National Design Triennial: Design Life Now" at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC; Boston's

Museum of Fine Arts; the National Collection of France; and the National Gallery of Australia.

E.G. Crichton

E.G. Crichton uses a range of art strategies to explore social issues, history, and site-specific subject matter. She often works within community settings and collaborates across disciplines with performers, writers, scientists and composers, to name a few. She is an Associate Professor of Art at the University of California-Santa Cruz. Her work has been exhibited in art institutions and as public installations in Europe, Japan, Australia and across the United States.

Susan Working

Susan Working is a multimedia artist whose work includes sculpture, installation, furniture design, painting, drawing and occasionally video. Her current work has focused on combining wood with other media such as painting and digital media, and on the process of collaboration. Her hybrid sculptures combining studio furniture, drawings and prints have been exhibited at the Salone Internazionale de Mobile in Milan, the International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York, and in galleries across the United States. She currently lives in Brittany, France where she is the Academic Director of the Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art. She holds a MFA in Furniture Design from Rhode Island School of Design.

Donald Fortescue

Donald Fortescue is Professor and Chair of the Furniture Program at California College of the Arts. A native of Australia currently residing in the US, he holds a BS degree from the University of New South Wales, an Associate Diploma in Visual Arts from the Canberra School of Art, and a Masters of Creative Arts from the University of Wollongong. He maintained a commercial furniture studio in Australia for ten years, and has worked with leading furniture makers and craftspeople around the world. His work has been exhibited widely and is in the permanent collections of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, the National Gallery of Australia, and other public and private collections.

Lawrence LaBianca

Lawrence LaBianca sculpts metal, ceramic, wood, and glass into whimsical and sometimes mysterious forms. His work is influenced by a childhood spent split between rural Maine and urban New York City, an experience that left him with a profound interest in the dichotomy between communities in which people work close to nature, and the alienation of an urban, technological society. He holds an MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts, where he has also served on the faculty. His work has appeared in many galleries and museums on the West Coast, and has also been featured on stage through collaborations with several choreographers.

Wendy Maruyama

Wendy Maruyama is an artist and educator from San Diego who has been making furniture since 1970. Trained initially as a furniture maker and traditional woodworker, for the past 15 years she has been creating works outside the norm in the field of studio furniture. Born in Colorado to second-generation Japanese-American parents, her work is inspired by the memory of her childhood growing up as a Japanese-American, her interpretation of her ethnic heritage, and her observations of the Japanese culture. Her various bodies of work have been influenced by extended residencies and visits to the land of her heritage, Japan, as well as France, England, Korea, and China.

Christy Matson

Christy Matson weaves cloth on both hand-operated and industrial Jacquard looms. A native of the West Coast, she is currently an Assistant Professor in the Fiber and Material Studies Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She received her BFA in Studio Art from the University of Washington in 2001 and her MFA in Textiles from CCA in 2005. In 2006, she was an artist-in-residence at the Experimental Sound Studio in Chicago and at the Harvestworks Digital Media Arts in New York City, and taught at the Haystack Mountain School of Craft.

Cat Mazza

Cat Mazza is a new media artist whose work explores the relationships between craft, digital technology and labor. She received her BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and MFA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She was a founding staff member at the Eyebeam art and technology center from 1999-2002, and has been an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Massachusetts since 2007. She has shown her work in galleries and museums in the United States and internationally, including the Museum of Arts and Design in New York and Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria.

Nathalie Miebach

Nathalie Miebach creates woven sculptures that focus on the intersection of art and science and the visual articulation of scientific observations. Nathalie holds a BA in Political Science from Oberlin College, and both a Master of Art Education and MFA from Massachusetts College of Art. She is the recipient of numerous awards and artist residencies, including a two year fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts Residency, and the Artist in Residence at Amherst College.

Mike and Maaike

Mike Simonian and Maaike Evers are co-founders of the experimental design studio Mike and Maaike. Based in San Francisco, the studio creates experimental designs, progressive ideas

and unexpected solutions for products, furniture, wearables and environments. Their distinct backgrounds — Maaike is from the Netherlands and Mike from California — and experimental approach to design create strong conceptual foundations that often produce unexpected results.

Tim Tate

Tim Tate has been working with glass as a sculptural medium for 25 years, but has recently been incorporating video and electronic interactive elements into his work. A native of Washington, DC, he is co-founder of the Washington Glass School and studio, where he teaches and also provides studio space to professional and aspiring glass artists in the DC area. His work is in the permanent collections of a number of museums, including the Smithsonian's American Art Museum, Renwick Gallery, and the Mint Museum.

Mark Zirpel

Mark Zirpel is widely recognized as a leader in the field of glass art. He was recently appointed to the Dale Chihuly Endowed Chair of Glass at The University of Washington in Seattle, charged with introducing glass into the university's program. Prior to that, he taught at the University of Alaska-Anchorage and the Cornish College of Art, and has had a long relationship with the Pilchuck Glass School. A native of Oregon, he holds a BFA from the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and a MFA in Printmaking from the San Francisco Art Institute.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Wyona Lynch-McWhite, Executive Director and Gretchen Keyworth, Director Emerita, the staff, Exhibition Committee and Directors of Fuller Craft Museum; and Jessie Schlosser, now at The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, for helping bring this exhibition to fruition. I am indebted to all the artists who contributed their work, and to the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and Dee and Charles Wyly for lending us selected pieces. I would like to particularly thank Mark Del Guidice for encouraging me to bring the idea to Fuller Craft Museum in the first place in 2006, and to George Fifield, founder of the Boston Cyberarts Festival, and Bruce Metcalf for consulting with me early on.

I owe Jan Howard at the RISD Museum of Art a note of gratitude for her generosity in providing rigorous curatorial training, and special thanks to my curatorial

assistant Cassandra Mordini from the Art History Department where I teach at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, whose consistent attention to detail made this pursuit so much easier to manage.

The idea for this exhibition was born at a 2004 Furniture Society Conference, where I first heard Donald Fortescue speak about his work and realized that I wasn't alone in incorporating digital media in craft-based work. I wanted to explore other craft disciplines to see if the same were true elsewhere, and I most certainly have my answer. I dedicate this work to makers and educators Rosanne Somerson and John Dunnigan, who steered me on a path to finding a satisfying and enriching life as a maker, educator, curator and writer. John: your words about impeccability still ring in my head. I won't forget them.

Fo Wilson, Curator

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Edited by Janet Bailey

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Exhibition Checklist

Brian Boldon

3-D Chair, 2009
Digital glass decals, float glass, epoxy, aluminum
10" x 18" x 9"
Courtesy of the artist

Looking and Blindness, 2006
Kiln formed glass, aluminum, steel, digital glass prints, LED's
56" x 11" x 8"
Courtesy of the artist

Shaun Bullens

Anxious, 2007
Mahogany, ash, monitors
75" x 40" x 20"
Courtesy of the artist

Sonya Clark

Madam C.J. Walker (large), 2008
Combs
11" x 8" x 8"
Courtesy of the artist

Lia Cook

Face Maze: Three Generations, 2006
Cotton
6 pieces, 16" x 15.5" each
Courtesy of the artist

Face Maps Revisited: Lips, 2006
Cotton, woven
64" x 53"
Courtesy of the artist

Susan Working and E.G. Crichton

Table I: Murmur, 2007
Wood, video
20" x 36" x 28" approx.
Courtesy of the artists

Donald Fortescue and Lawrence LaBianca

Sounding, 2008
Steel, rocks, dried aquatic flora and fauna, polycarbonate, zipties, sound
120" x 48" x 96"
Courtesy of the artists

Donald Fortescue

Under the Bridge, 2005
Australian myrtle, madrone, shell and video
44" x 34" x 28"
Courtesy of the artist

Wendy Maruyama

Stroke, 2007
Polychromed wood, abalone shell, video components
5' x 1' x 4"
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wyly

You're a Sap, Mr. Jap, 2008
Plywood, tar paper, nails, video components
48" x 48" x 3"
Courtesy of the artist

Christy Matson

Soundw(e)ave, 2004
Jacquard woven cotton
3 sections, 34" x 54" each
Courtesy of the artist

Cat Mazza

Knitoscope Sampler, 2009
Video
80" x 45"
Courtesy of the artist

Knitoscope Testimonies, 2009
Video
24" monitor
Courtesy of the artist

microRevolt video, 2009
Video
24" monitor
Courtesy of the artist

Nathalie Miebach

Boston Tides, 2006
Reed, wood, string, acrylic, paint, paper, data
6' x 6' x 2'
Lent by DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA. Museum purchase with funds provided by a private foundation.

Warm Winter, 2007
Reed, wood, data
6' x 5' x 6'
Courtesy of the artist

Mike and Maaik

Stolen Jewels (Series of Six), 2007
1. Imelda Marco's Ruby Necklace with Diamonds
2. The Great Chrysanthemum
3. Daisy Fellow's "Tutti Frutti" Necklace
4. Golden Jubilee Diamond Broach
5. Hope Diamond
6. Van Cleef & Arpels Ruby and Diamond Earrings
Leather - printed and scored
Courtesy of the artists

Tim Tate

Memories of Reading, 2008
Blown and cast glass, electronic components, original video
14" x 6" x 6"
Courtesy of the artist

Page 100, 2008
Blown and cast glass, electronic components, original video
12" x 6" x 6"
Courtesy of the artist

Virtual Novelist, 2008
Blown and cast glass, electronic components, original video
21" x 14" x 8"
Courtesy of the artist

Burned But Not Forgotten, 2008
Blown and cast glass, electronic components, original video
12" x 6" x 6"
Courtesy of the artist

On the Threshold of Liberty, 2008
Blown and cast glass, electronic components, original video
12" x 5" x 5"
Courtesy of the artist

Mark Zirpel

Digital Vase, 2009
Cast & blown glass, latex, air pump, motion sensor
25" x 7" x 8"
Courtesy of the artist



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