

# Layout

1. A structured arrangement of items within certain limits.
2. A plan for such arrangement.
3. The act of laying out something.
4. (publishing) The process of arranging editorial content, advertising, graphics and other information to fit within certain constraints.
5. (engineering) A map or a drawing of a construction site showing the position of roads, buildings or other constructions.

aesthetic  
form  
approach  
arrangement  
attack  
art form  
blueprinting  
charting  
cold-type  
composing  
stick  
conception  
concord  
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deployment  
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symmetry  
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# Layout

CURATED BY SÍOCHÁIN HUGHES

Bill Abdale

Ira Eduardovna

Erica Greenwald

Ellie Krakow

Molly Mac Fedyk

Daniel Nelson

Tom Pnini

Fabian G. Tabibian

September 9 - October 7, 2009

**GALLERY WEST**

SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BRENTWOOD, LONG ISLAND, NY

## Foreword

The exhibition **Layout**, explores the creative intersection of concept, arrangement, planning, design and manifestation of art and idea. The work in this exhibition has been culled from a diversity of contemporary artistic practice, and as such it offers fresh ideas not pre-digested by widespread cultural exposure. Because of this, I encourage you to look carefully and openly at the work, as it often goes beyond the purely visual realm to draw on the viewer's thinking and emotional process to complete the experience. Ask yourself questions, see if you can form relationships and find answers within the work itself. Like reading a text, active inquiry is the most important process you can bring to viewing art. It is present-moment engagement that makes viewing art enjoyable. What questions and thoughts do the works in this show provoke?

## Introduction

The initial concept for **Layout** began with the “Diagram” artworks of **Ellie Krakow**—which at a glance, look like a printer’s signature with all the proofs of color, positioning and scale. However, because such a layout is pointing beyond what is visible—to the content and meaning presented, the theme of **Layout** as an exhibition quickly evolved to include a diversity of work utilizing a systematic arrangement or plan within which to structure its implications.

Exploring the theme and selecting artists for **Layout** has endeavored grappling with the complex study of signs, signifiers and how we arrive at meaning—otherwise known as Semiotics. A road sign, for example, indicates a direction and points to a place that is somewhere else. However, the user of a sign, may or may not “arrive” depending upon their interpretation of the sign. Similarly, words and sentences indicate meaning and cannot, by their nature, actually be the item they signify or control their interpretation. Semiotics is the field that examines all such signifiers in depth, uncovering and deconstructing elaborate systems at the heart of language, society and culture.

Art is inherently semiotic—simply put, images are not what they represent, instead they point to what they represent and the meaning takes place in your mind. Because art is constructed within a socio-cultural system, the society you live in, the groups you belong to and your life experiences shape your perceptions and their meanings. As a viewer of art it is important to recognize these facts, along with the suggestion that meaning is not static or pre-defined and furthermore, such perceptions change with larger shifts in society and culture as a whole. How is the technological transformation that has been taking place over the last 50 years affecting our current society and ways of thinking? How does that inform our interpretation of art and indeed, everything in our world?

Art-making since the 19th Century has been increasingly conscious of its relationship to audience. This can be observed in works that defied social order and promoted extreme scandal and questioning. Such works include Manet’s “Olympia,” where a nude prostitute’s gaze greets the viewing public while assuming a confident pose of power and authority, and Corbet’s “Burial at Ornans,” which depicts the proletariat, (non-land-owning lower social class) in a painting in the grand tradition of history painting, thus challenging the status and endowments of class. Historically, art has been commissioned by the Monarchy, the Church and other ruling authorities and, like the skewed messages of advertising today, the presentation of information was biased by the interests of these voices. Many artists investigate such notions of history by evolving a personal narrative, while using a style reflective of sources that trace history. Incorporating illustrative technique, **Erica Greenwald** draws from the presentation and format of a natural history museum. In “A Natural History,” she pastes down hand-drawn transparencies, including bees, birds’ feet and branches, in a non-linear narrative where the elements combine with the visible traces of manufacture to evoke a sense of the work’s own life and history. In “Tents and Arrows” a similar strategy is at work, yet one might consider the unsettling

implications of battle re-enactments and arrangements created by a child at play. **Fabian G. Tabibian** takes the collection of history into his own hands, assembling the seemingly ephemeral moments of his personal Internet viewing habits and presenting a kind-of self-portrait. In doing so he reveals a disquieting aspect of our time—that advancing technology of surveillance has come to collect even the most fleeting of information.

The video work of **Tom Pnini** makes the viewer aware that they are part of a system of understanding by pointing out theatrical artifice that underlies popular culture. His “Crystal Garden” incorporates a ready-made layout on which crystals will grow in real-time during the exhibition. The use of pre-existing objects appropriated from the world is a strategy that gained notoriety with Marcel Duchamp’s “Fountain,” a re-contextualized object of mass production that provoked the viewer to question the system of art and exhibition, thus exposing the artifice at the heart of the viewing environment. The video work of **Molly Mac Fedyk** presents multiple “screens,” where scenes unfold and interact across separated boundaries. The relationship of the mind to the body and world around are brought into focus, as her interest in the laws of gravity and relationship of the body to this force, reveal systems that affect us beyond the socio-cultural ones that humans have evolved.

**Ira Eduardovna’s** “The Room,” brings psychoanalytic theory to the fore. In contrast to aesthetic theory that over the centuries evolved concepts of “beauty” and the “sublime,” Sigmund Freud introduced the importance of the “uncanny,” or fear of the unfamiliar to the mix. These are themes which occur frequently in Surrealism, an era of art that was concurrent with the work and notoriety of Freud. In **Eduardovna’s** work, the anxious tension and obsessive tracing of the shadow relate to Freud’s concept of “The Double” and examines human repression of that which evokes fear and dread.

In the seminal publication, “On Photography,” Susan Sontag writes, “Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it. . . .” And in a similar way, historically, the picture plane is an illusion that has often been assumed to be the real thing. In his works on panel, **Daniel Nelson** examines the formal aspects of illusory devices, geometry and perspective, and highlights the nature of illusion by introducing physicality. He removes and replaces elements with artificial materials that further illuminate our tender courtship with distortions of reality. **Ellie Krakow** also uses a strategy of removal, but instead of engaging the viewer with visuals, she requires us to fill in the gaps with our mind. In “Nuclear Family,” the familial archetype is conceptualized and reduced to representative formats of text and image. In her “Diagrams,” she collects and reconfigures her previous installation works as a conceptual layout similar to what would be prepared for publication. This “collecting” of her own artwork harkens back to Duchamp’s “Box in a Valise,” a piece which acted as a portable museum of his work and showcased the many overlaps and cross-references of his work—a self-portrait of the artist’s own system.

While **Krakow's** work presents a clear presentation of what is not there, **Bill Abdale's** work presents mixed messages and confusion inherent in an elaborate system of signifiers embedded in pre-defined expectations of reception and the audience. By breaking down communication, he leaves the viewer lost as to what they are supposed to understand. Though perhaps not so obvious to the viewer, the obfuscation of meaning offers an opportunity to actually let go of the system.

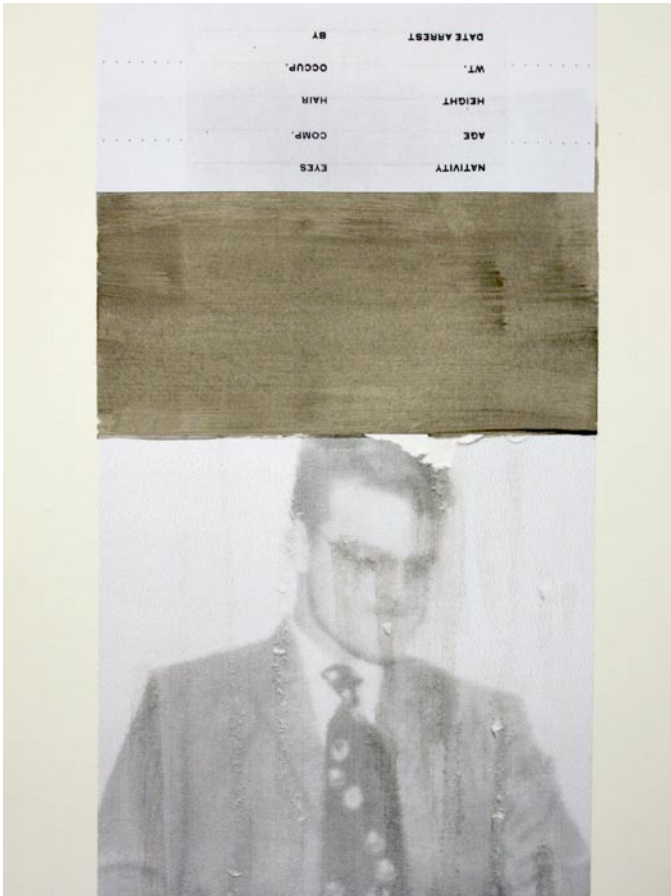
When we consider systems of signs and signifiers integrated within a delicate structure of manipulated references to meaning, we might begin to ask, "what is true?" The field of Semiotics works to clarify the world of ideas, but how do ideas illuminate experience? While elaborate explanations, including the one you have just read, may increase our understanding and awareness of the world—they too are signifiers pointing to constructions of meaning. Plato described truth, non-existent on the physical plane, as the "Ideal." For example, in the case of a chair, truth would be the idea of a chair, not a physical chair—because the physical chair is limited as a "semblance of the existence" of the idea of the chair. Truth would also not be an image or description of a chair, which he considered an "imitation" of a semblance of existence, and thus twice removed from truth, or idea of the chair. However, while according to Plato, truth does not exist in a real-world form, he felt that it is possible to learn about truth from something that is its semblance of existence because it offers the closest direct experience with an ideal. Whereas, what one learns from an imitation is constrained to an idea—not an experience but a pointer to a concept, and therefore has little relationship to truth. While the sentiment of truth found in Plato's Republic is difficult to argue with, it remains dualistic and there are other ways of looking at this. In the history of Buddhism there was a popular saying, "Painted cakes do not satisfy hunger," which refers to the perspective that words and ideas describing the teachings are not the actual experience of the teachings. Like Plato's theory of "imitation," the painted cake saying indicates that explanations are pointers to reality, but are not reality itself. The 13th Century Zen Master Dogen challenges the popular statement by saying, "... in the phenomenal world and the empty sky there is nothing that is not a picture. If you say that a picture is not real, all things are not real."<sup>1</sup> He further clarifies that painted cakes do in fact satisfy hunger, and that aside from painted cakes, there is no other way to satisfy hunger:<sup>2</sup> Could it be that there is hunger that goes beyond the physical sensation? Dogen's non-dualistic perspective calls for no separation of concepts from experience, a complete connection between viewer and that which is viewed.

The works in the exhibition, **Layout**, offer diverse approaches to their respective contents and the investigation of how we arrive at meaning. They challenge many notions of art, while closely examining the structures within which we perceive meaning. So what is true? How do images, words and explanations contribute to experience? Take a moment to view the art and engage as fully as possible. Enjoy the exhibition.

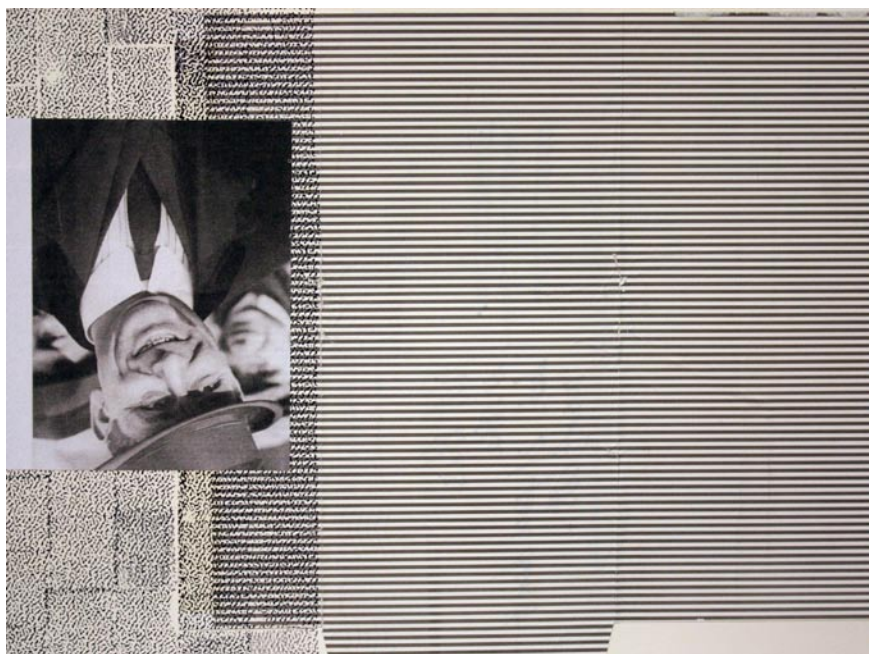
— Síocháin Hughes

## Bill Abdale

My work is a continuing investigation of communication's inherent problems of confusion, misuse, dissociation, inattention, misinformation, and vagueness. Historical figures, powermongers, ne'er-do-wells, song lyrics, and puns show up often. Across various media, the work combines matter-of-fact presentation with a sardonic sense of humor; amassing a sort of rogue's gallery; the rally, the rock concert, the holy book, the secret formula, the slogan, the hit single, the street team, the come-on, the cop, the oratory, the tabloid, the altar, the poster, the free cigarette, the spam email, the encore, the sermon, the security camera.







Left:  
*Boyfriend Potential*, 2009  
Collage and silica on paper; 12 x 9 in.

Above:  
*Nothing beats 'em like a cop*, 2009,  
Collage and ink on paper; 12 x 9 in.

Courtesy of the artist

## **Ira Eduardovna**

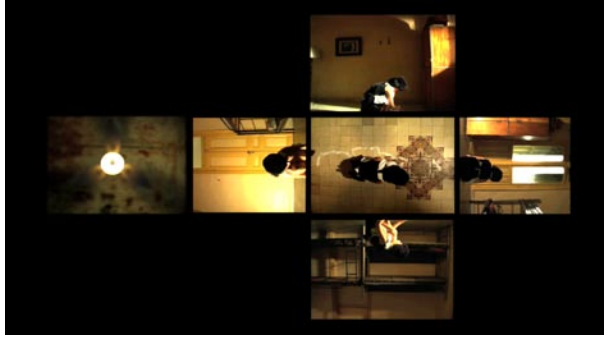
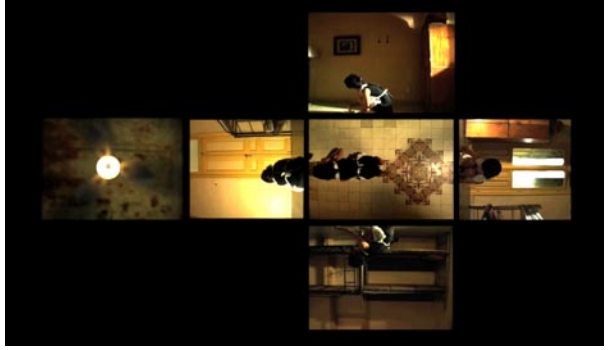
*The Room* shows a layout of a hotel room that is transformed into a train wagon. The artist dressed in a Russian school uniform is shown from 5 different angles. The repetition of the figure emanates an obsessive sense of fateful drive towards death. In the moment that the repeated figure starts tracing her anticipated shadow on the floor; the wagon starts its ride. The shadow, acting as evidence of the body, is predicted and traced, suggesting what Freud called "The Double" or "Doppelganger," a projection of multiple selves that insures immortality in the primary narcissism of a child. Later, when encountered after childhood, this Double invokes a sensation of the uncanny and a return to a primitive state. The tension between the world of the material body—to the world of the revived immaterial Double produces anxiety.

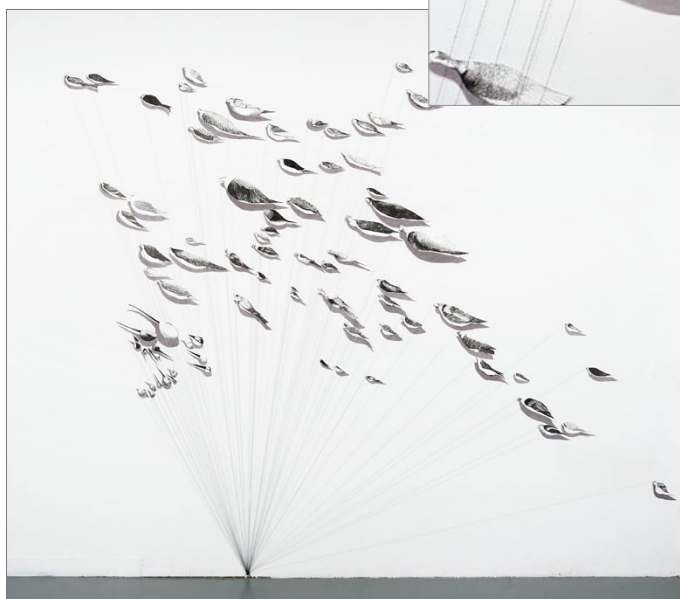
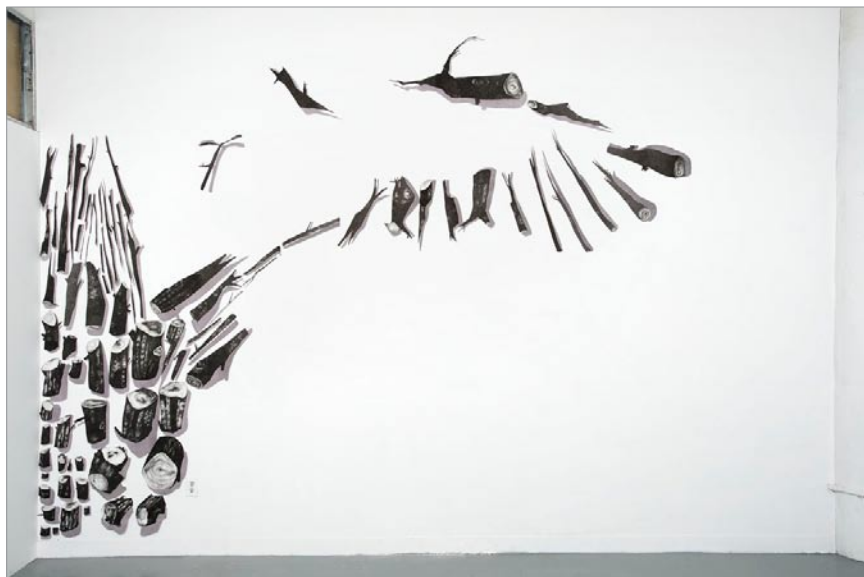
Right:

*The Room*, (video stills), 2007

Single or multi-channel video, dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist





## Erica Greenwald

In investigating our human history's considerable compilation of voyages and expeditions in the name of discovery, I pursue my own longing to find meaning, to attack the vastness of the unknown. Yet, like our all-too-brutal collective past, personal memory contains violent threads—with the search to discover also comes the desire to seize, conquer, destroy, and re-write events. We are capable of brutality even towards our own little histories. Through creating a parallel world filled with images and gestures of a collective's precarious efforts and desperations: settling, voyaging, battling, defending, I hope to explore the fragility and duality of the human condition and the possibility of a shared psychology in our relationship to each other and our world.



Right top:  
*Branches*, 2009  
Ink and marker on paper; 120 x 132 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

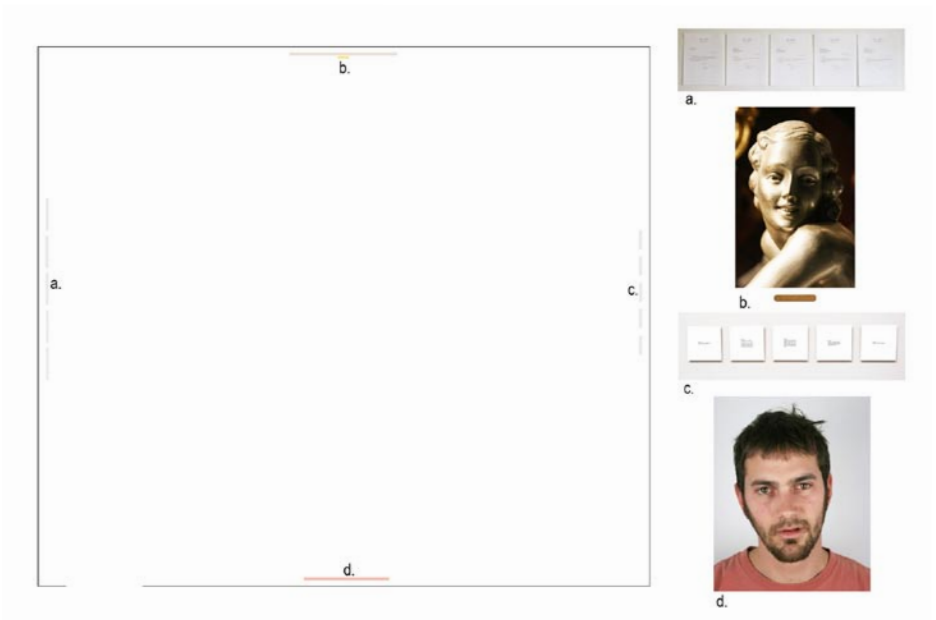
Right, bottom & Inset:  
*Flock*, 2009  
String, ink and marker on paper  
Approx 108 x 132 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

Above:  
*Tents*, 2009  
Wax, ink, packing tape on paper  
2.75 x 6.375 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



*Shine, (video still) 2009*

Voice in video says: "The shot is a close up of the lovers' held hands"



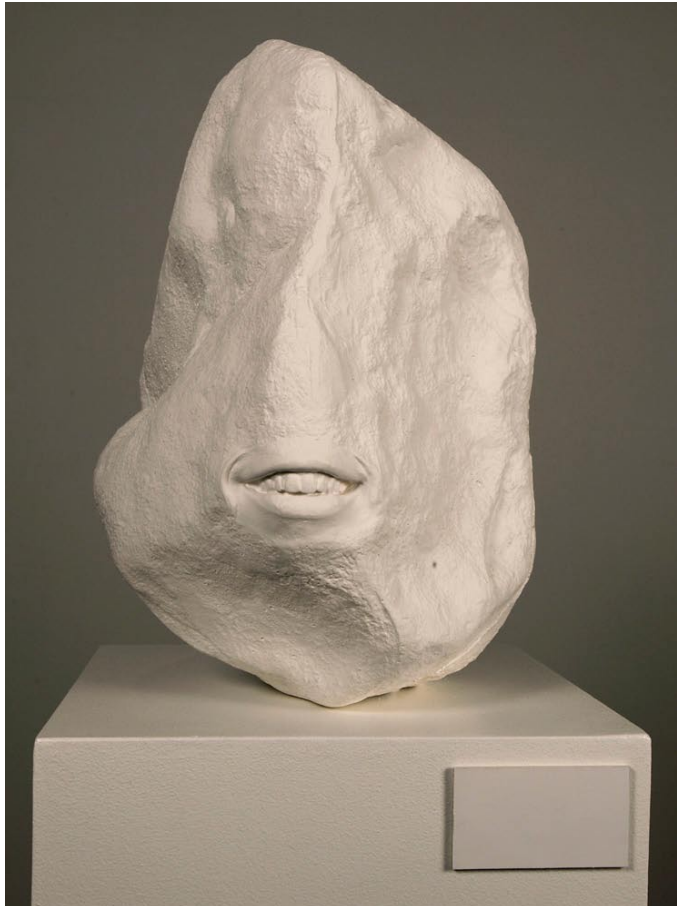
*Diagram #2 (Nuclear Family), 2007*

This arrangement includes four pieces: "Shoot," "Sculpture as Self," "Letters Home," and "Brotherly Love."

Courtesy of the artist

## Ellie Krakow

I make images, objects and texts that center around a focal lack rather than a focal point. I use traditional structures as a starting point for my work because I am able to subvert expectations by replacing or removing particular assumed elements. For example, in *Shine* I replace the lovers' bodies in a generic romance narrative with photo lights; in *Stone Smile* I remove the material and most of the features from a traditional stone bust; and in my diagrams I replace the art and the gallery with a description of the art and the gallery. I do this work both to acknowledge the feeling of loss, and to reveal something profoundly hopeful: when faced with loss we fill in gaps, we congeal broken descriptions, we make sense of partial remains, and ultimately we make new wholes.



*Stone Smile*, 2009  
Plaster, blank text  
14 x 10 x 10 in.

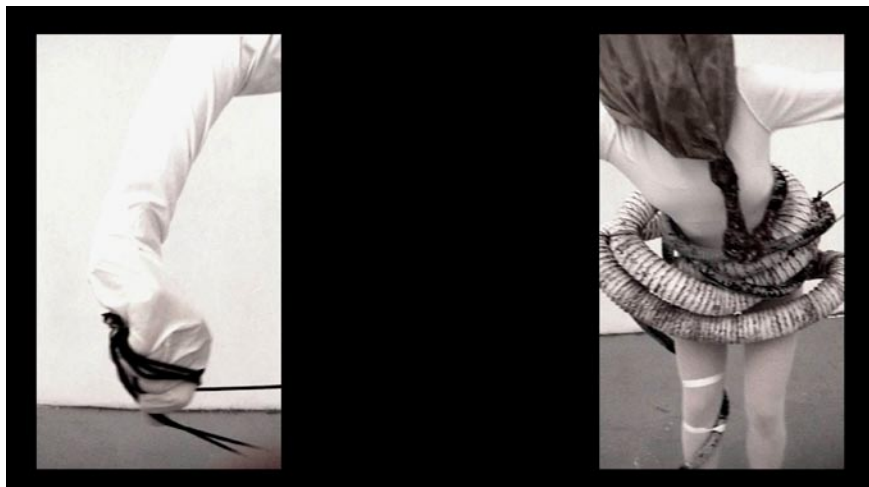
Courtesy of the artist

## Molly Mac Fedyk

My videos and drawings model philosophical physiologies in action. I break into the surface of recognizable anatomical diagrams and suggest alternate visual models with which to inhabit and utilize a body. As I manipulate images and forms of visceral physics, a tangible sense of gravity is extremely important. I work with it as a constant variable that serves as a stable platform for action rather than as an oppressive force that thwarts action. My work suggests that we have a conscious ability to puppeteer ourselves in the face of gravity's constant pull.





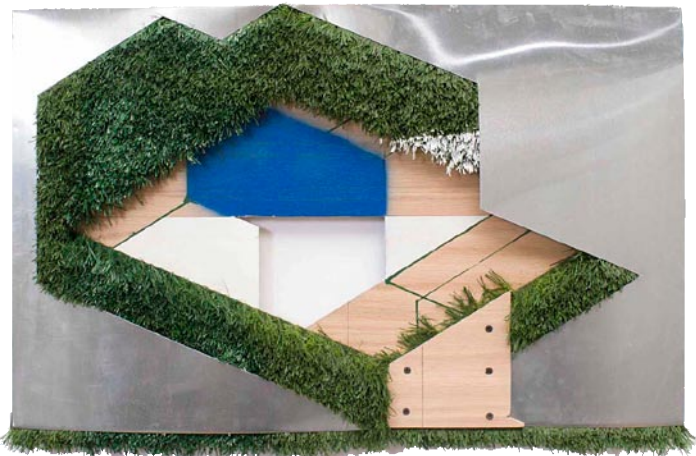
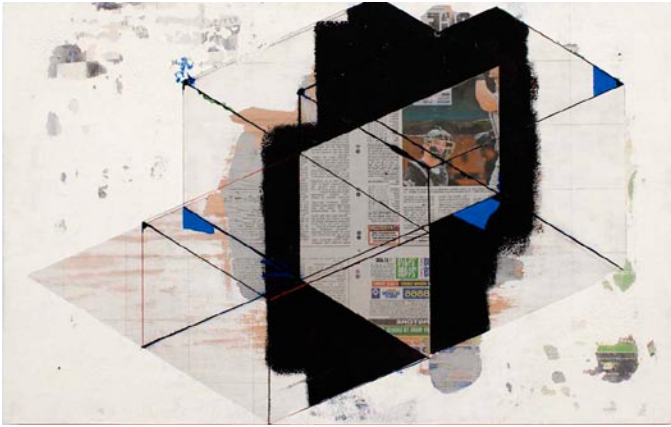


*Aspartamer*, (video still) 2009  
Single or multi-channel video, dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist



Left:  
*Gutpuppet Portrait: Lady Parts Puppet*, 2007  
Digital image, dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

Above:  
*Wait-Think*, 2008  
Gesso, ink, found newspaper image, 4 x 6 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



## Daniel Nelson

The central thesis of this work is the contradiction between materiality and illusionism of the two-dimensional picture plane.

At the outset, an image is offered that is in itself a contradiction, an architectural rendering in isometric perspective creating the illusion of three-dimensional space. This image is repeated in the second panel of the series but then denied: it is cut out of a background of found printed matter originally designed in the “zero-dimension,” and reassembled into three-dimensional space. In the final panel, the image returns as a void of itself—layers of dense, textural material. The idea of a space and the experience of space are inverted three times over.

False dichotomies: material versus image; object versus idea; language versus substance; and picture versus space, are conflated in “grammatical” arrangements. Paradox is utilized as a primary strategy to provoke and transform the perceiving mind's state of consciousness.

Left top:

*Confinement*, 2008

Mixed media on panel, 20 x 36 in.

Left center:

*Plop on, put up*, 2008

Mixed media on panel, 20 x 36 in.

Left bottom:

*Vacation*, 2008

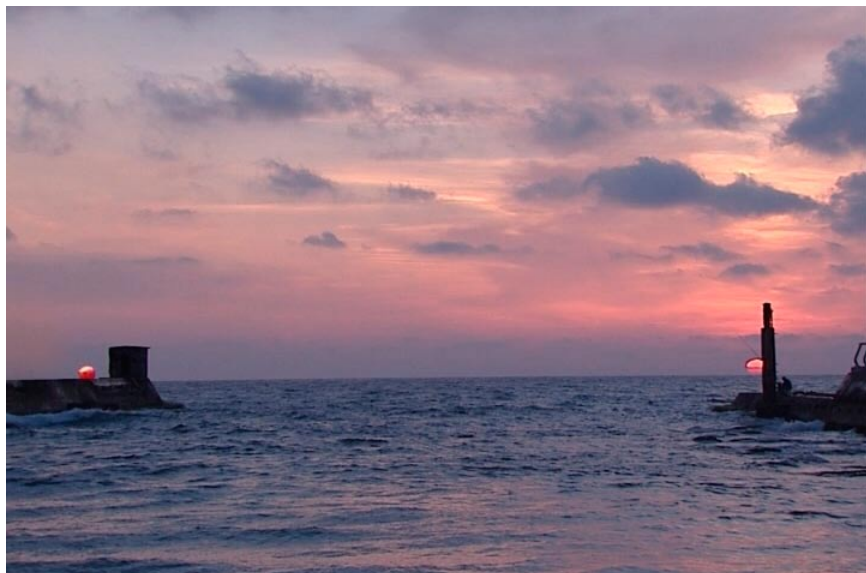
Mixed media on panel; 20 x 36 in.

Courtesy of the artist and GalleryELL

## Tom Pnini

Through my artwork, I explore my fascination with Theatre by placing the viewer where they experience both sides of a theatrical situation, the illusion and its artifice. In doing so, using the medium of video, I question the representation of illusion. In *Volcano Demo*, a giant two-dimensional volcano rests atop an apartment building in Tel Aviv. Four steady frontal shots develop the depicted illusion, while behind the fabrication, a cast of stage workers give life to the volcano with smoke machines and lights. In *Sunset Demo / Sonya*, the camera follows the path of a hand-made, 15-foot, two-dimensional sun on its course from sunrise to sunset. The trembling hand-held motion is facilitated once again by stage workers who support the sun as it makes its way across the sky. While watching the videos, the viewer may choose to rest in the illusion, but they have little choice than to remain aware of how the illusion is constructed.





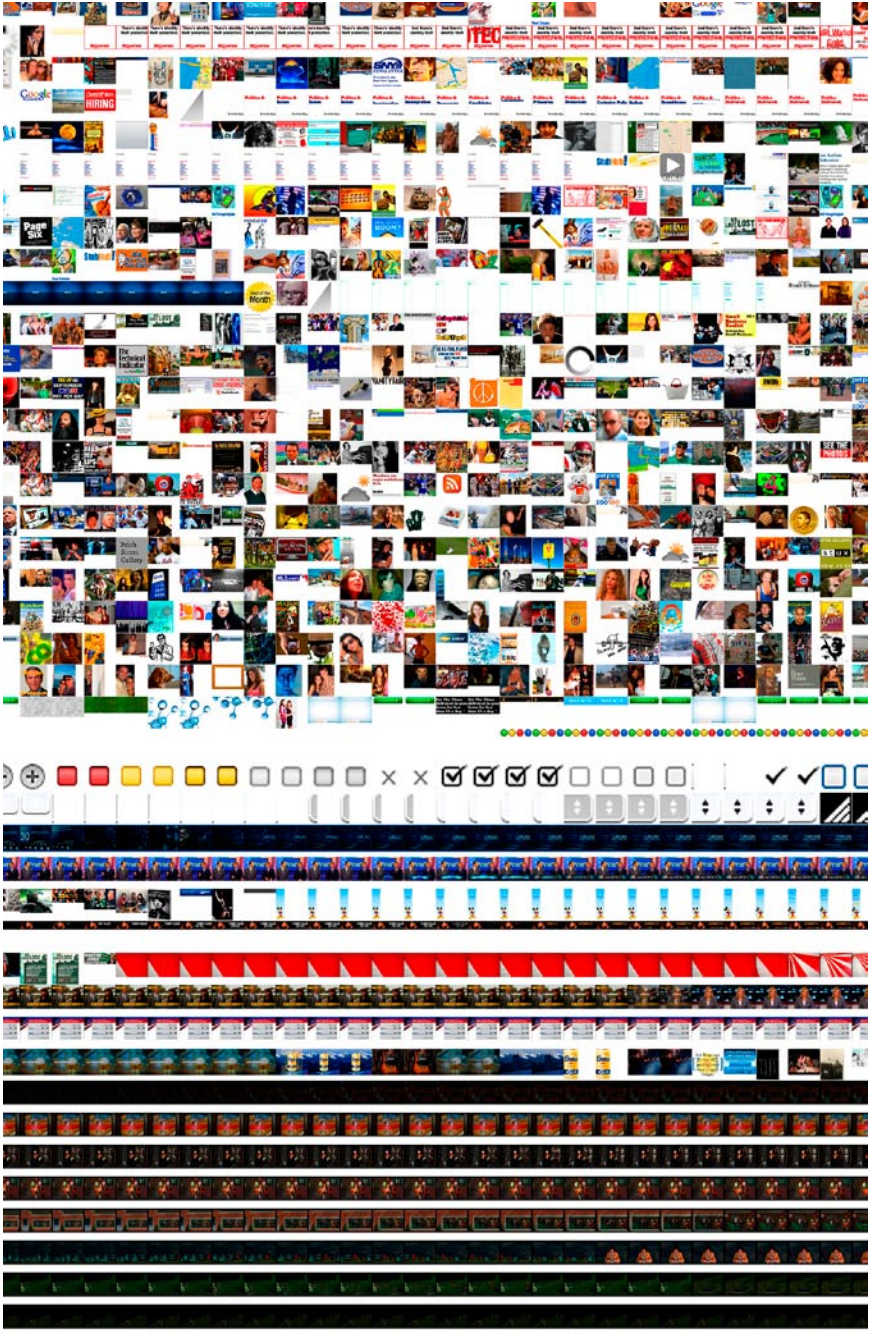
Left bottom & inset:  
*Volcano Demo*, 2008  
Single channel video  
Courtesy of the artist

Above:  
*Sunset Demo / Sonya*, 2008  
Single channel video  
Courtesy of the artist

## **Fabian G. Tabibian**

My current work is likened to Modernist grid paintings perverted by the use of content to create its formal attributes — shapes, lines, and colors. This unabridged collection of visual information from the Internet is compiled within a set time period, a performative act essential to the final work, exposing a diaristic narrative — more than a snapshot, but less than a detailed self-portrait. The pre-determined decisions made for the layout of work is critical to my process as well. The work seduces the viewer with an overwhelming visual experience, but once drawn in, the colored zips break down into recognizable individual elements within the work. Variables manipulated to construct the picture reveal weaved narratives, layers of patterns and associations, and influence formal considerations.





Left:  
*The Creators (Seven Days)*, 2008  
Digital c-print mounted on plexiglass, 72 x 72 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

Above:  
*The Creators (Seven Days)*, (detail)

## Exhibition Checklist

All works courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted

### Bill Abdale

*Nothing beats 'em like a cop*, 2009

Collage and ink on paper  
9 x 12 in.

*Boyfriend Potential*, 2009

Collage and silica on paper  
9 x 12 in.

### Ira Eduardovna

*The Room*, 2007

Single or multi-channel video  
Dimensions variable  
55 sec.

### Erica Greenwald

*A Natural History*, 2009

Ink, packing tape on gesoed mylar  
97 x 42 in. and 42.5 x 42 in.

### Ellie Krakow

*Nuclear Family*, 2007

Consists of four pieces:

*Shoot*

Framed letters  
11 x 45 in.

*Sculpture as Self*

C-print, wood, enamel  
20 x 33 in.

*Letters Home*

Text  
6 x 42 in.

*Brotherly Love (Look at Me Like You Love Me)*

Inkjet print  
8.5 x 11 in.

*Diagram #1 / Facing Pages, Hope and the Bottom Line*

Physical installation: 2007

Diagram: 2009, inkjet print  
30 x 35 in.

*Shine*, 2009

Single channel video  
5 min., 2 sec.

### Daniel Nelson

*Confinement*, 2008

Mixed media on panel  
20 x 36 in.

*Plop on, put up*, 2008

Mixed media on panel  
20 x 36 in.

*Vacation*, 2008

Mixed media on panel  
20 x 36 in.

Courtesy of the artist and GalleryELL

### Molly Mac Fedyk

*Aspartamer*, 2009

Single or multi-channel video  
Dimensions variable  
2 min., 28 sec.

### Tom Phini

*Crystal Garden*, 2009

Mixed media  
10 x 5 x 5 in.

*Volcano Demo*, 2008

Single channel video  
2 min., 47 sec.

*Sunset Demo / Sonya*, 2008

Single channel video  
3 min., 21 sec.

### Fabian G. Tabibian

*The Creators (Seven Days)*, 2008

Digital c-print  
72 x 72 in.



## Acknowledgments

This exhibition was made possible by the energy, enthusiasm, advice and generous real-world assistance of Michaelann Tostanoski, Director of Gallery West. I would also like to thank each of the artists for their contribution of art, ideas, professionalism and continuing dialog about their work—and most importantly for their ongoing commitment to their work and studio practice that provides the source for curatorial projects such as this. My gratitude also belongs to the support staff of Suffolk County Community College, Mary Feder, Lisa Hamilton and the maintenance and security people who assisted us with many details during installation. As well as all of these people, my thanks go to the students of SCCC, as it is your activities fund that supported the presentation of this exhibition and accompanying print materials.

### Cover

Definition for layout: <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/layout>

### Introduction Footnotes

1. Loori, John Daido, "Painted Cakes Satisfy Hunger" Mountain Record 22.1, (2003)  
<<http://www.mro.org/mr/archive/22-1/articles/paintedcakes.html>>
2. Loori, John Daido, "Symbol and the Symbolized," Mountain Record 25.2, (2006): 2-9.  
< <http://www.mro.org/zmm/teachings/daido/teisho50.php>>

### Colophon

This catalog was produced in InDesign CS2™  
It was designed and edited by Síocháin Hughes  
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The text was set in Gill Sans  
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This is the second printing.  
This edition includes a revised introduction © 2009 Síocháin Hughes

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