

CRITICS' PICKS

CURRENT **PAST**

New York

Pat Steir
Paul Ramirez Jonas
"Project Europa: Imagining the (Im)Possible"
Hiraki Sawa
Judith Linhares
Josh Smith
Andy Warhol
Geoffrey Farmer
Feng Mengbo
Mark Bradford

Los Angeles

James Benning
The Date Farmers

San Francisco

Trevor Paglen

Atlanta

Dana Schutz

Austin

Amanda Ross-Ho

Charlotte

Janet Biggs

Dallas

Michel Verjux

Minneapolis

"The Spectacular of Vernacular"

Tampa

Trenton Doyle Hancock

Washington, DC

Cyprien Gaillard and
Mario Garcia Torres

Toronto

Geoffrey Pugen

Mexico City

Claire Fontaine

London

Victoria Morton
Varda Caivano
"Night Work"
Ai Weiwei

Dublin

Richard Tuttle

Cambridge

Lucia Nogueira

Berlin

Bob Mizer
Mark Soo
"When the Neighbor

New York

Pat Steir

CHEIM & READ
547 West 25th Street
February 17–March 26

Nature resounds throughout Pat Steir's four-plus decades of painting, whether in likeness (a pour of paint imaging a waterfall) or as principle (the pour's own willful, wayward paths, lured by gravity). It is amply visible, too, in this searching suite of recent "Winter Paintings"—abstractions of about eleven by eleven feet halved into two tall panels of color. Their diaphanous sheen, which appears to veil vistas or sheath rock faces, marks a shift away from Steir's signature patinas (bleaching cascades, stardusty splatter) and toward late Rothko's wintry horizons. Vertical vitality makes the crucial difference here, along with the depths of Steir's elemental, mineral palette—evoking by turns rust and raw silk, ash glaze and lava flow, and nary a drop in mercury.

The thin shock of verdigris streaking down the center seam of *Winter Group 6: Light Green, Payne's Grey and Red*, 2009–11, flashes a glint of light, or perhaps grows lichenlike, where dusky slate blue meets a blue-brown wash. One half of *Winter Group 3: Red, Green, Blue and Gold*, 2009–11, resembles shadowy gold-leafed snow, while the other burns with the dark heat of peat or flint. Such color tangencies seem to inquire into the energy transfer, adhesive hinge, or potential melting points between evenly forceful precincts brought close. In the smaller, all-red *Valentine*, 2009–11, too, questions of relation palpitate. If its reddest inner flush attests to passionate ignition, an encroaching left edge of sizzling carnelian and scratchy orange splashes opposite bare the wear and weatherings of a heart.

Some months ago, Steir's Ariadnian *The Nearly Endless Line*, 2010, had trussed up the insides of Sue Scott Gallery via one continuous, occasionally knotting brushstroke along its walls. Stand near her canvases here to trace eerier, wirier lines amid the drips, like long cracks in thawing ice. Hinting at seismic activity, they discreetly electrify these paintings' megalithic presence.

— Chinnie Ding

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK \(0 COMMENTS\)](#) [✉ E-MAIL](#) [🖨 PRINT](#)

Paul Ramirez Jonas

ALEXANDER GRAY ASSOCIATES
508 West 26 Street #215
February 23–April 2

New York isn't nearly so crowded with commemorative statuary as many older, European cities, but the grammar of the sculptural tribute is familiar and resonant here nonetheless. In *The Commons*, 2011, the centerpiece of his current show, Paul Ramirez Jonas has taken a landmark statue from the Campidoglio in Rome as his model. Ridding the original's military horse of its imperial rider, Marcus Aurelius, the artist has remade the antique bronze in cork. This isn't the first time that the California-born, Honduras-raised Jonas has employed the distinctive material; for 2009's Mercosul Biennial in Brazil, he used it to render a series of alternative plaques for public monuments, effectively transforming the authoritative labels into a collection of open-access notice boards—all were fully stocked with pushpins.

The Commons plows a similar furrow; the life-size

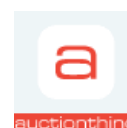


Pat Steir, *Valentine*, 2009–11, oil on canvas, 10' 7" x 9' 1 1/4".



GALERIE
PATRICK SEGUIN
20 TH CENTURY
FURNITURE &
ARCHITECTURE

links



When the Neighbor
Came to Make a Phone
Call"

Porto

"To the Arts, Citizens!"

Madrid

Carlos Garaicoa

Beijing

"Untitled"

Taipei

Jennifer Wen Ma

sculpture's base is dotted with paper ephemera that appear to have been posted there by visitors. Everything—from press releases to cookie fortunes, offhand doodles to gnomonic pronouncements—fights for position. (I left behind a business card and took away a handwritten recipe for spinach lasagna.) It's the kind of neat interplay between the personal and the municipal—with a nod to the literary if we think of Proust's cork-lined study—that might function well as a Fourth Plinth project for London's Trafalgar Square. In a gallery it feels a bit cooped up but remains a strikingly surreal image. The solitary companion work, a drawing of a seating plan collaged with entrance tickets, hints more quietly at thought around popular engagement.

— Michael Wilson

PERMALINK TALKBACK (0 COMMENTS) E-MAIL PRINT



Paul Ramirez Jonas, *The Commons*, 2011, cork and push pins, 10' 5" x 10' 4" x 5' 4".

gellink
gallery

David Zwirner

RHONA
HOFFMAN
GALLERY

Lisa
Cooley



NEWS DIARY FILM

Newest Entries

Melissa Anderson on
Truffaut's *The Soft Skin*
Amy Taubin on the films
of Manuel De Landa
Michael Joshua Rowin on
Certified Copy
Travis Jeppesen on *We
Were Here*
Tony Pipolo on Bresson's
Diary of a Country Priest
Nicolas Rapold on *Putty
Hill*

"Project Europa: Imagining the (Im)Possible"

MIRIAM AND IRA D. WALLACH ART GALLERY

Columbia University, 1190 Amsterdam Avenue, Schermerhorn Hall, 8th Floor

January 19–March 26

This group exhibition, organized in conjunction with the University of Florida's Harn Museum of Art, takes up the democratic idealism and lived contradiction of the European Union some twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. That event in 1989 marked a physical and symbolic turning point, heralding the reunification of the continent, this time under the aegis of an imagined community dedicated to human rights and multiculturalism. It is in the examination of these fault lines that "Project Europa" shines.

As much as it is now convention to refer to Europe as a concrete entity, the themes of boundaries and barriers, be they topographic or social, are foregrounded here as objects of investigation. Francis Alys's video *The Nightwatch*, 2004, documents the release of a fox—traditional symbol of the leisured *chasse au renard*—after hours at the National Portrait Gallery in London, following its clandestine movement between genres and historical periods, in effect highlighting the rigidity of class and social capital in the UK. Bruno Serralongue and Yto Barrada—working in Calais, France, and Ceuta, Spain, respectively—use photographic documentation to articulate the persistent travails of border crossing and migration into Europe's open societies.

While those projects are more geopolitically literal, there is also an undercurrent of contained violence evoked consistently in the exhibition. Danish group Superflex's projection *Burning Car*, 2008, is perhaps the most overt instance, but Andrea Robbins and Max Becher's pictures from 2003 of strip malls in central France suggest the more subtle violence wrought by the homogenizing effects of globalization. More harrowing still, Eva Lietsolf's photo and text series "German Images—Looking for Evidence," 2006, depicts tranquil German towns that were the sites of brutal hate crimes. Lietsolf's pictures are a perfect microcosm of "Project Europa," which manages to concisely look beneath the banal, technocratic veneer of neoliberal Europe, exposing its hidden tragedies and the work that remains to be done.

— Ian Bourland

PERMALINK TALKBACK (0 COMMENTS) E-MAIL PRINT



Eva Lietsolf, *Althaldensleben ("Ollin")*, 2006, color photograph, 32 x 27". From the series "German Images—Looking for Evidence," 2006.

Hiraki Sawa

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

533 West 26th Street

February 17–March 26

Hiraki Sawa's second solo show at this gallery is a multimedia meditation on temporality and texture. Sawa introduces these motifs in "Wax," 2010–11, a series of twenty-four drawings in the gallery's front room. These delicate pencil renderings of intricately mottled orbs, precise sections of which have been copiously erased, represent the waning and waxing phases of the lunar cycle. A composite portrait of time and a study of form and texture, this series sets the tone for the exhibition's title piece: a complex and dreamy video-sound installation in the next room.

O, 2009, is an immersive sensorial experience centered



Hiraki Sawa, *O*, 2009, multichannel video and sound installation. dimensions variable.

around three large freestanding video screens. The triptych's flanking panels evoke the past by demonstrating physical evidence of time in natural and domestic settings. On the left, Sawa focuses his camera on desert geology—deep crevasses and ancient rock formations. The right panel features a dilapidated house where peeling wallpaper, cracked plaster, and remnants of a past life are haunted by the artist's signature digitized silhouettes of birds, trees, and Ferris wheels. The central screen, in marked contrast, follows a flock of birds midflight in a majestic vision of life, motion, and the yet unknown.

O's sound track (a collaboration with musical ensemble Organ Octet) comprises soothing organ music punctuated by errant clatters and clangs. The noises relate to—and seem to emanate from—ten wall-mounted monitors showing video loops of solitary objects (lightbulb, mug, pitcher, and the like) gyrating like wobbly tops that never fall. In fact, the audio plays through five spinning mini-speakers strategically placed throughout the room. The echoing and undulating audio overlays are the perfect complement to Sawa's visualization of time—wherein chronology is irrelevant, and past, present, and future coexist.

— Mara Hoberman

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK \(0 COMMENTS\)](#) [E-MAIL](#) [PRINT](#)

Judith Linhares

EDWARD THORP GALLERY
210 Eleventh Avenue, Sixth Floor
February 25–April 2

In Judith Linhares's painting *Picnic Rock*, 2008, two naked women loll on a blanket *en plein air*, enjoying a feast of chicken and layer cake. Nearby is a simple log cabin, and in the background a snow-capped mountain. It's an idyllic scene, but watching the pair from a tree is a third female nude, her skin tinted purple by shadow. Is she a benign or malevolent figure? What is her relationship to the diners? Are they even aware of being observed? The artist leaves the answers up to us. The ambiguity of *Picnic Rock* is typical of Linhares, whose application, while bold and bright, nonetheless allows for an engaging narrative tension and whose compositions, though outwardly simple, allow for a deceptive breadth of affect.

Linhares is a veteran of 1978's storied "Bad Painting" exhibition at the New Museum, but her broad, faux-naïf brushstrokes and juxtaposition of richly hued *luxe*, *calme* et *volupté* with a purposeful sense of awkwardness and unease align her with several younger artists, from Dana Schutz to George Condo. The large figure paintings in the current show, "Riptide," are punctuated by several studies of animals, and even the most cartoonish of these—the drooling wolf in *Hunger*, for example, or the red-eyed subject of *Arctic Hare* (both 2010)—are more than a little grotesque.

Attracting us with a sensual concentration on sex, food, and the great outdoors, and lulling us into a false sense of security via their lush, likable style, these are pictures with surprising bite.

— Michael Wilson

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK \(0 COMMENTS\)](#) [E-MAIL](#) [PRINT](#)

Josh Smith

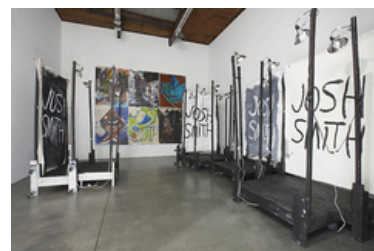
LUHRING AUGUSTINE
531 West 24th Street
February 11–March 19

In his third solo exhibition at this gallery, the indefatigable Josh Smith employs a form of morbid humor through a study of memento mori that treads the line between irony and sincerity. A macabre sensibility lurks in his recent paintings, which might elicit a shudder or a smirk. Scrawled depictions of skeletons, insects, and decaying leaves are a few of the subjects here, all made manifest in an elaborate production that involves an infinite amount of permutations. One room presents several collaged panels made with scans of Smith's previous paintings, their colors warped and modulated, along with layers of silk-screened images and newsprint. These works are hung in an orderly grid, and their imagery emerges from their built-up surfaces, only to disappear into abstraction. As if to foreshadow Smith's signature repetitiveness, a few homemade aluminum stop sign paintings appear as a glib note to self in this room, and yet they are unyielding in their provocation.

The tongue-wagging panels meet the vaudevillian in Smith's "Stage Paintings," 2011, where rough-hewn platforms showcase a draped piece of canvas on which the artist's name is rendered, akin to his



Judith Linhares, *Hunger*, 2010, oil on linen, 22 x 26".



View of "Josh Smith," 2011.

earlier works. Illuminated by clamp-on lights, these stages, supports for the drop cloth paintings, literally collapse and fold up onto themselves, ready to be rolled away for the next show. They are installed as a cluster in the back gallery, and their self-containment—practical in their portability—evinces the forethought of construction. Throughout, Smith generates an experience in this show where painting, in its extension into different forms—as backdrop, as sign, or as memorial—performs in a greater capacity, perhaps for a wider audience.

— Piper Marshall

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK \(0 COMMENTS\)](#) [✉ E-MAIL](#) [🖨 PRINT](#)

Andy Warhol

ARMAND BARTOS FINE ART

25 East 73rd Street

February 16–March 18

Andy Warhol's entire oeuvre could arguably be reduced to a single iconic image: the soup can. It is surprising, then, to learn that since the artist's legendary 1962 exhibition of thirty-two *Campbell's Soup Can* paintings at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, no museum or gallery has focused exclusively on the subject. While a 1970–71 traveling retrospective devoted a section to the cans, only this exhibition—a small, tight collection at Armand Bartos titled "Warhol Soup" and encompassing prints, paintings, multiples, and ephemera—demonstrates how the Pope of Pop developed a singular idea into an artistic assembly line over three decades.

Campbell's Soup I, 1968, a suite of ten screenprints on white, easel-size sheets, hang side by side on the gallery's longest wall. They are crisp, flawless, and nearly identical, with only the indication of an individual can's contents (Green Pea, Pepper Pot) distinguishing one print from the next. Because their straightforward red, black, and gold colors contrast with the jarring combinations of tangerine, fuchsia, and mustard from Warhol's other mid-1960s works, the *Campbell's Soup I* prints perhaps represent a "return to reason" for the artist in the year the Factory took a businesslike turn after leaving its original midtown location—and also after Warhol was shot and nearly killed.

The charm of *Campbell's Tomato Soup (Red)*, 1985, lies in the slightly tilted, black-outlined can on a small canvas with streaked paint mimicking the runniness of soup. Two product labels for Chicken with Rice—not made by the artist but procured from the company in 1965 and signed "A. Warhol"—complement the same label inked onto a solid cast aluminum cylinder from 1966. The exhibition's most mysterious—and unique—object is a Polaroid from the opening of Warhol's 1971 Tate retrospective. The double-exposed image overlays an anonymous, androgynous figure holding a cigarette on top of a black *Campbell's Soup Can* painting. Permeated with an orange glow, the image perfectly embodies how Warhol entwined glamour and the commonplace.

— Christopher Howard

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK \(0 COMMENTS\)](#) [✉ E-MAIL](#) [🖨 PRINT](#)

Geoffrey Farmer

CASEY KAPLAN

525 West 21st Street

February 10–March 19

In his suggestively titled US debut, "Bacon's Not the Only Thing That Is Cured by Hanging from a String," Canadian artist Geoffrey Farmer plays the damaged and delicate against the faux architectural, employing a collage logic that, while stylish, happily never settles into a comfortable groove. Known for a mercurial refusal of fixity and completion—many of his works are designed to change over the course of their public lives—Farmer produces objects and installations that rope found images and forms into a dance of shifting reference and formal tension. In this exhibition, the Vancouver-based artist shows extracts from one distinct series alongside a number of other individual works, all of them colored by a likable feeling for the sheer fun of shoving one thing up against another.

Occupying the main gallery is a forest of hand-built lampposts purportedly inspired by a line from Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *In a Year with 13 Moons* (1978) concerning the satellite's apocryphally



Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Can (Chicken with Rice)*, 1966, solid aluminum and silk-screen inks, 4 x 2 5/8 x 2 5/8".



Geoffrey Farmer, *Pulling Your Brains Out Through Your Nose*, 2011, printed material, cut coat hangers, tape, dimensions variable.

deranging effect on mental health. Each painted wooden post is decorated with a selection of found and adapted bits 'n' bobs and topped with a colored bulb. No individual component is particularly distinctive, yet the whole set feels rather spooky and—appropriately—slightly unhinged. *Pulling Your Brains Out Through Your Nose*, 2011, installed in the gallery's first room, is a cluster of precariously taped-together magazine clippings suspended from chopped-up coat hangers. Again, the artist employs research (his allusion here is to mummification) as a springboard into something altogether more plastic and poetic than the term generally suggests.

— Michael Wilson

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK](#) (0 COMMENTS) [E-MAIL](#) [PRINT](#)

Feng Mengbo

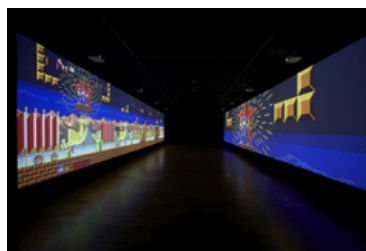
MOMA PS1

22-25 Jackson Avenue at 46th Avenue

December 12–April 4

Every schoolchild in China learns about the Long March of 1934–35, the Red Army's sacrificial trek of retreat from the Nationalists that secured Mao's power and became the CCP's birth saga. Its stark tales of solidarity through adversity—losing comrades to frost or enemy fire, boiling leather and roots for food—show how far the nation has come. A video-game version might seem mere facetious political parody. Yet the bright 8- and 16-bit adventures blinking onto two eighty-by-twenty-foot screens in Feng Mengbo's *Long March: Restart*, 2008, feel both buoyant and poignant, as we follow a plucky Red Army soldier's progress against imperialist US rockets, Soviet tanks, and a giant purple hexapod scuttling across Tiananmen Square.

Subtending the work is a keen wistfulness—for a righteous, unified historical purpose as well as for the wide-eyed glee of starter technology.



Feng Mengbo, *Long March: Restart*, 2008, two-channel video projection. Installation view.

Feng wrote the code himself; anyone can play. A single-player wireless console controls the game on one screen, and the screen opposite zooms in to an extreme close-up on the soldier, so when not pacing along and rooting him on, visitors can surrender to the gentle dazzle of an epic pixel mosaic. Scenarios reference storied episodes from the march (a sabotaged bridge, fatal bog, and icy mountain range evoking heavy casualties that took place at these sites), China's mise-en-scènes of industrialization (steelworks), and bygone agons of the cold war (the Sino-Soviet split and the space race). Well-loved revolutionary songs percolate in MIDI. At unpredictable intervals, like a glitch or dream, Cultural Revolution-era footage commemorating the event flashes through to a recitation of Mao's "Long March" ode.

The levitating walls and weedy islets, Lego-contoured figures, and snow-dots and rain-dashes (punctuation as weather) remind us of the loveliness of low-tech. Yet in contrast to Cory Arcangel's Nintendo modding, Feng's work inhabits this contemporary populist medium to revisit his country's older, bruised ideals of collectivity. When Super Mario himself makes a cameo, cheerily shuffling about the Great Wall, we might recognize this plumber to be our soldier's proletarian friend.

— Chinnie Ding

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK](#) (0 COMMENTS) [E-MAIL](#) [PRINT](#)

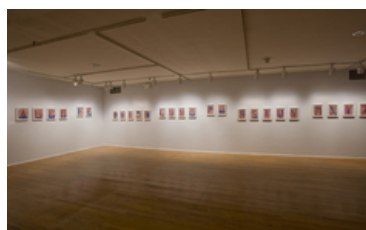
Mark Bradford

THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 West 125th Street

November 11–March 13

Embedded in a field of nacreous blue and silver, each of the twenty-six letters in Mark Bradford's *Untitled (A-Z)*, 2010, appears embossed or set into relief on its individual plate. Affixed to their white frames with clear plastic screws, the individual works are hung on the gallery wall in horizontal clusters, placed at uneven levels. A, B, C, and D form their own quorum, while the more exclusive E and F sit huddled nearby. The seemingly arbitrary parsing of the alphabet underscores what is arbitrary about its signs to begin with. In this sense, Bradford participates in a modernist project that extends back to Raoul Hausmann and Jasper Johns, for whom the letters of the alphabet provided the raw material for explorations both visual and conceptual. So, too, does this project—like Bradford's work at large—evoke the *décollage* practices of Mimmo Rotella and Jacques Villeglé, though Bradford's practice entails a more painstaking recycling of original urban materials.



View of "Mark Bradford: Alphabet," 2011.

The relative simplicity of the pieces suggests a process both time-consuming and meticulous. Bradford has repurposed old posters, layering, stenciling, and setting into relief each letter before sanding them

all back down. The resulting battered appearance of the work suggests both the history of its materials and the labor of the artist's hand. Each letter bears within it the genealogy of other letters, other signs; and each in its singularity thus speaks of a whole city—most notably Bradford's native Los Angeles, out of which he has fashioned an entire oeuvre.

The texture and context of *Alphabet* are echoed in a separate gallery space across the room. A selection of the Studio Museum's permanent collection, currently installed under the title "The Production of Space," features a number of works engaged with urban topography. A chromogenic print by Alice Attie, *Untitled (Memorial to Buster)*, 2001–2004, features the corrugated metal shutter of a shop front. Inscribed with an impromptu tribute to a neighborhood man, the testimonial unfurls between the ridges of the roll-down gate, which also bears the stray spray-painted tags of other neighborhood denizens. At certain points, the paint has peeled away, revealing the marbled sheet of metal beneath. In the light of such work, the formal precision and isolation of Bradford's plates takes on a renewed poignancy. Their framed solitude highlights—and only slightly hyperbolizes—the fate of signs and signatures in an urban palimpsest.

— Ara H. Merjian

[PERMALINK](#) [TALKBACK \(1 COMMENT\)](#) [✉ E-MAIL](#) [🖨 PRINT](#)

[New York](#) [Los Angeles](#) >

[Last Month's Picks](#)

[ARTGUIDE](#) | [DIARY](#) | [PICKS](#) | [NEWS](#) | [IN PRINT](#) | [FILM](#) | [500 WORDS](#) | [VIDEO](#) | [PREVIEWS](#) | [TALKBACK](#) | [A & E](#) | [BOOKFORUM](#) | [中文版](#)

All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York, NY