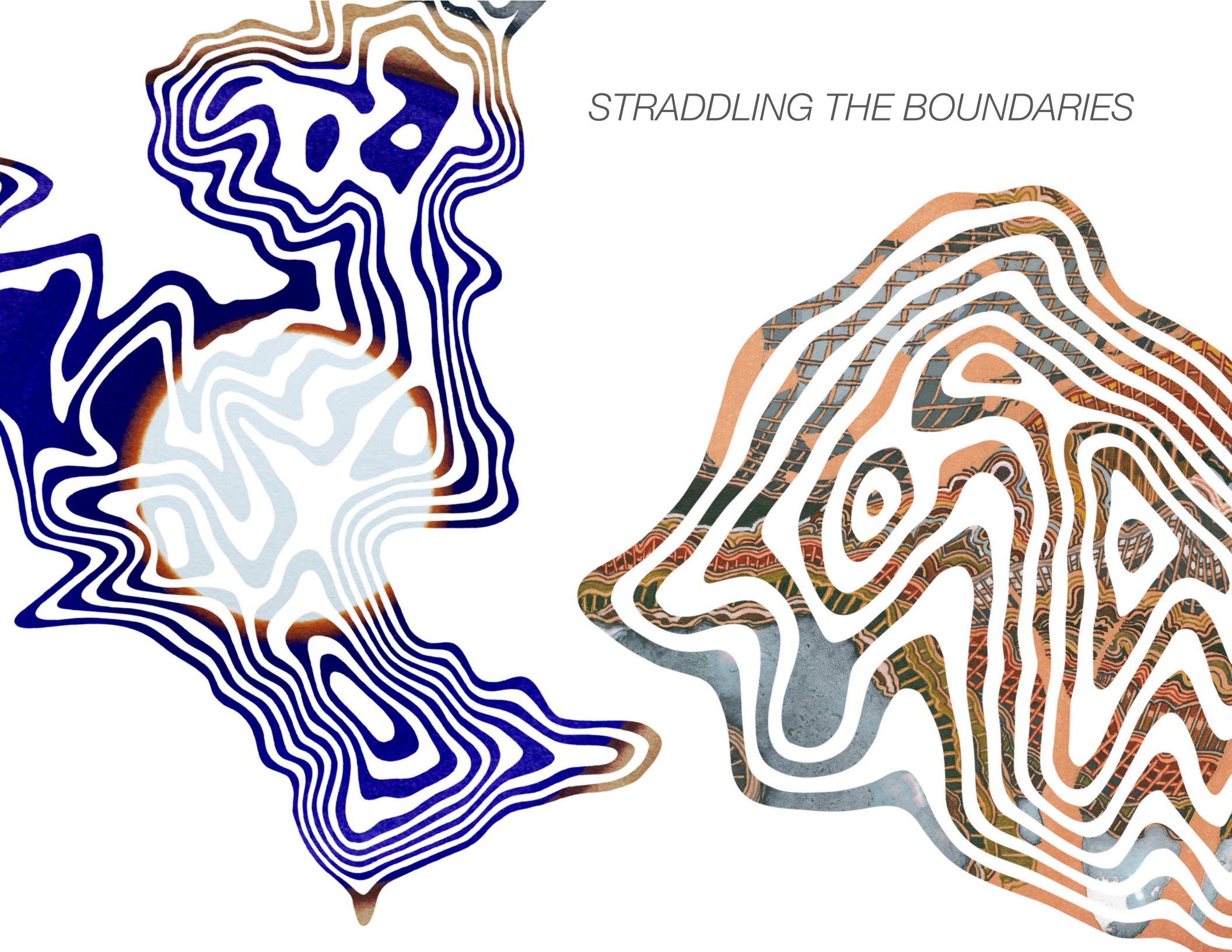


STRADDLING THE BOUNDARIES



Straddling the Boundaries

Curated by Ricardo Rodríguez

In the contemporary art world one could easily think that every “medium” is in crisis. There is constant shifting and borrowing among disciplines. This is not a new way of approaching art-making, but artists are increasingly embracing diverse creative and presentational possibilities in order to enhance their ideas and concepts. The idea of layering and juxtaposing images with materials has been practiced since the “readymades” of Marcel Duchamp. But contemporary artists continue to explore the blurring boundaries between images, objects, process, and media in new and exciting ways.

This exhibition showcases the work of Colin Gray, Melissa Manfull, and Ricardo Rodríguez. Though they all grew up in different countries, there are commonalities in their approach to their work and conceptual interests. Paper and wood form elements of many of the works displayed – either in relation to drawing in the case of Manfull and Gray, or photography in Rodríguez’s work. At the same time, each explores landscapes in one way or another; either by investigating the structure of their media, or by deconstructing the location in which they live.

Melissa Manfull, Colin Gray and Ricardo Rodriguez’s works compose a distinctive exhibition which showcases a hybrid approach to creating and presenting artworks. By borrowing from various different media – two-dimensional and three-dimensional – these artists are straddling the boundaries between them, and liberating themselves from medium-specificity.

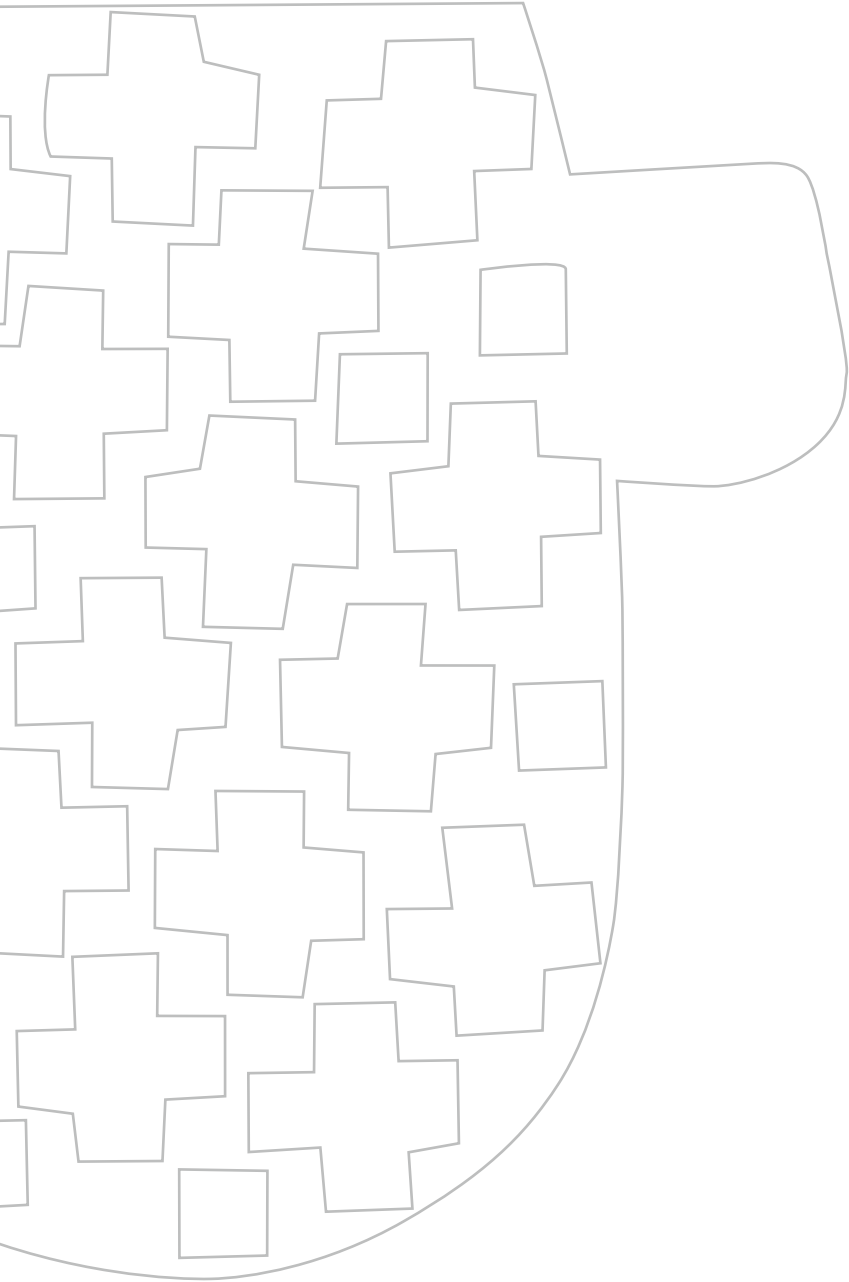


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COLIN FRASER GRAY



Museum for One

There is a wonderful documentary called 'Twenty Feet from Stardom' that came out a year or so ago that caught both my ear and my eye. It is all about the backup singers to the rock stars over the last 30 or 40 years. We have known these people intimately through their voices for a long time, but for the most part have never known their names, or for that matter, cared. The attention is never on them, but on the lead singer prancing around in the spotlight out front. The documentary forever changed that for me, and now, through some internal rewiring, I have more ears, more receptors for these folk, who enhance and frame the main singer, and who, at best, make the music transcendent.

There is a parallel universe of exhibition designers in the visual art world, and they inhabit that same realm of invisibility backstage, but they can make even marginal artwork feel good for the duration of ones tour around a room. I have seen it done.

This new work at FOCA was preceded by installations of drawings, that were mounted on painted walls, like a mashup of color field painting with framed pen and ink drawings mounted on top. I was making a single entity out of a kind of miniature exhibition design, and the artwork itself.

I was looking at Christian Boltanski, as well as the photographs of Berndt and Hilla Becher when I wondered if it were possible to do a Becher type piece but with a series of black and white drawings, instead of photographs. I wanted the eye to jump around, and see all the differing permutations, making the relationship between the drawings and the sense of infinite possibility the content of the work. I have always been interested in creative possibilities, trying it one way and then another, and then another... There is something inherently positive and life affirming about our ability to think of new things out of seemingly nowhere.

Now one would have thought that I had enough on my plate just working in this way, but I started to miss a sense of the absurd. Not just any absurd, but the absurd that is actually sensible, in the light of the fact that we have no idea why we are here on the planet, yet we behave as if we do. This is the absurd, that shows we have things in perspective, like the absurd that shows up in the existentialism of Camus.

Hence I added shelves, with a built in wine glass holder, and a half bottle of wine. This, in the realm of the Museum for one, is for the opening. Yes...true, its slightly melancholy with but one glass and all, but MOCA has not called recently.

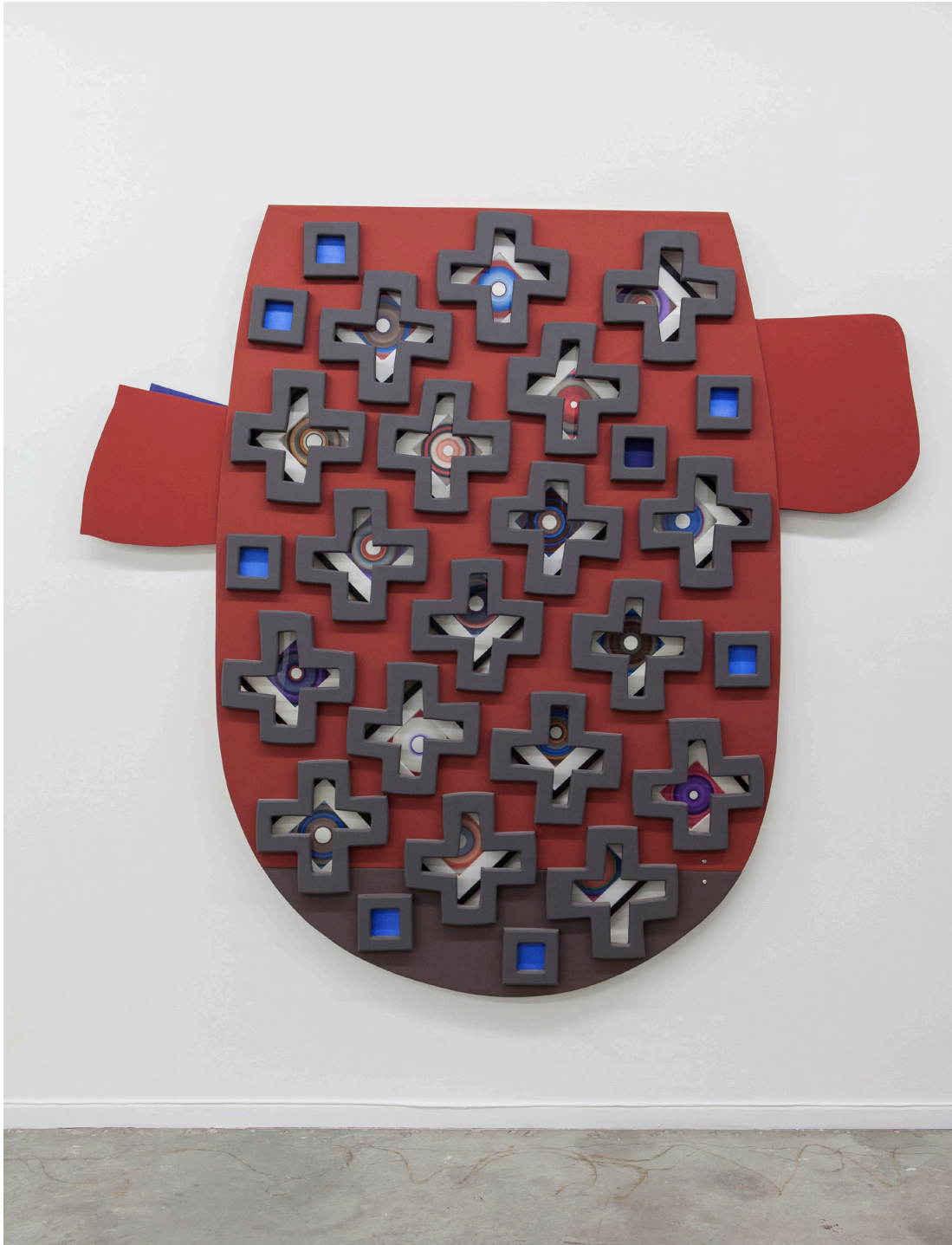
Anyhow, going back to exhibition design, and by extension exhibition space, and in particular the architecture of Frank Gehry. I have noted over the years that his work is art, and 'regular' art looks vaguely daft next to it, or even in it. I was perusing his amazing Brain Center in Las Vegas a year or so ago, and inside the majestic central room was a giant rectangular painting. It looked IMHO, a little odd, like something from another era.

Now I have to be Frank with you Frank, I thought, - you have set visual artists up with a huge challenge; everything was going along swimmingly, and now you come along, and build windows all over the place even on the ceilings. WTF? So the challenge we are faced with, is how can you make art that is as good as the museum that houses it when the museum happens to be the Bilbao? Can we? Is it possible? Or perhaps the art is a vehicle for us to experience the architecture? A good reason to gather at a particular place. 'Museum for One' (Red) and 'Museum for One' (Blue) are my first forays into exploring the idea of a miniature museum, and different ways of exhibiting artwork in non regular buildings and circumstances. If Bilbao ever call me, I am damn well going to be ready.

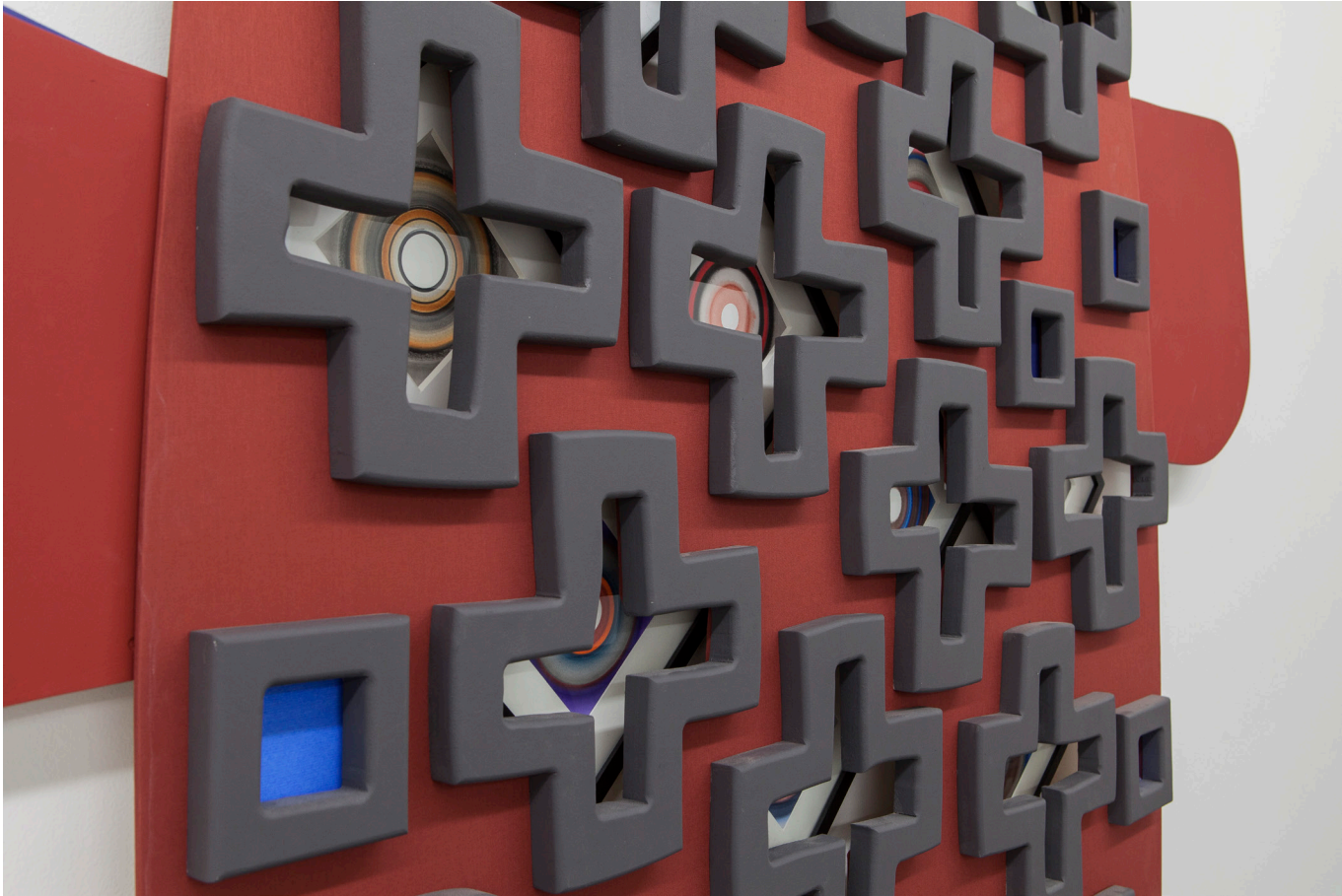


Museum for One (Blue)
Mixed media
66" x 68" x 9"
2016





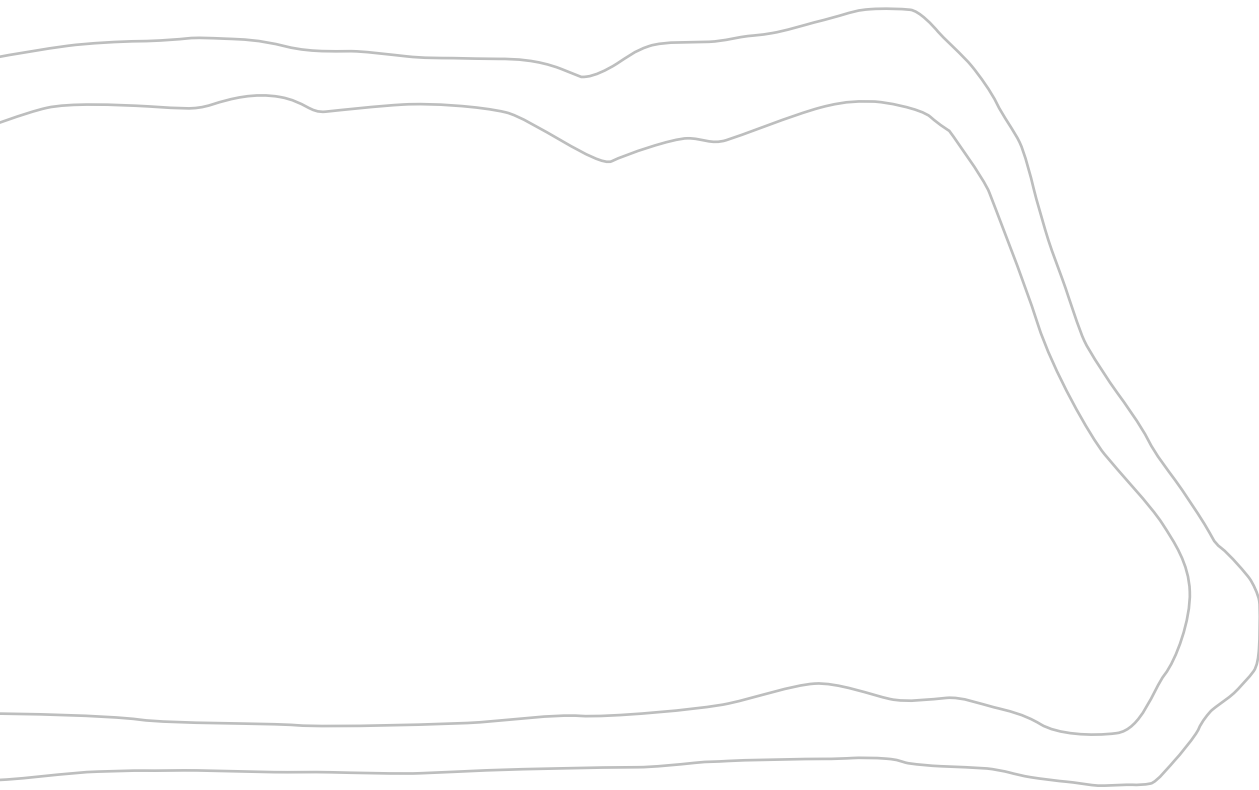
Museum for One (Red)
Mixed media
72" x 76.5" x 3"
2016







MELISSA MANFULL



Totem

In the Totem series, found shards of agate are the starting point for an exploration of geotectonic abstraction and an exploration into psychedelic and meditative imagery. Agate has a reticulating, recursive structure that is at once infinite and static. Fragmentation of geologic time; a looking glass that exposes the metamorphic process. The agate embodies a period of time, a vertical mapping of a temporal experience, evidence of tumultuous events. A physical embodiment of time passed.

These totemic pen and ink drawings mimic this process by reacting to the agate, recording the patterns seen and allowing exploration of those forms through chaos and structure. Exploring the notion of Jung's totems as disassociated parts of a fractured psyche and scattered elements of one's identity, the agate becomes a meditation device to focus on the disjointed parts of the mind.



Totem (Ochre)
Ink on paper mounted on
wood, steel mount
20.5" x 9"
2016



Totem (Sepia)
Ink on paper mounted on
wood, steel mount
19" x 10"
2016



Totem (gray)
Ink on paper mounted on
wood, steel mount
13.5" x 9"
2016



Totem (red)
Ink on paper mounted on
wood, steel mount
12" x 7"
2016



Totem (Green)
Ink on paper mounted on
wood, steel mount
47" x 22
2016



RICARDO RODRIGUEZ



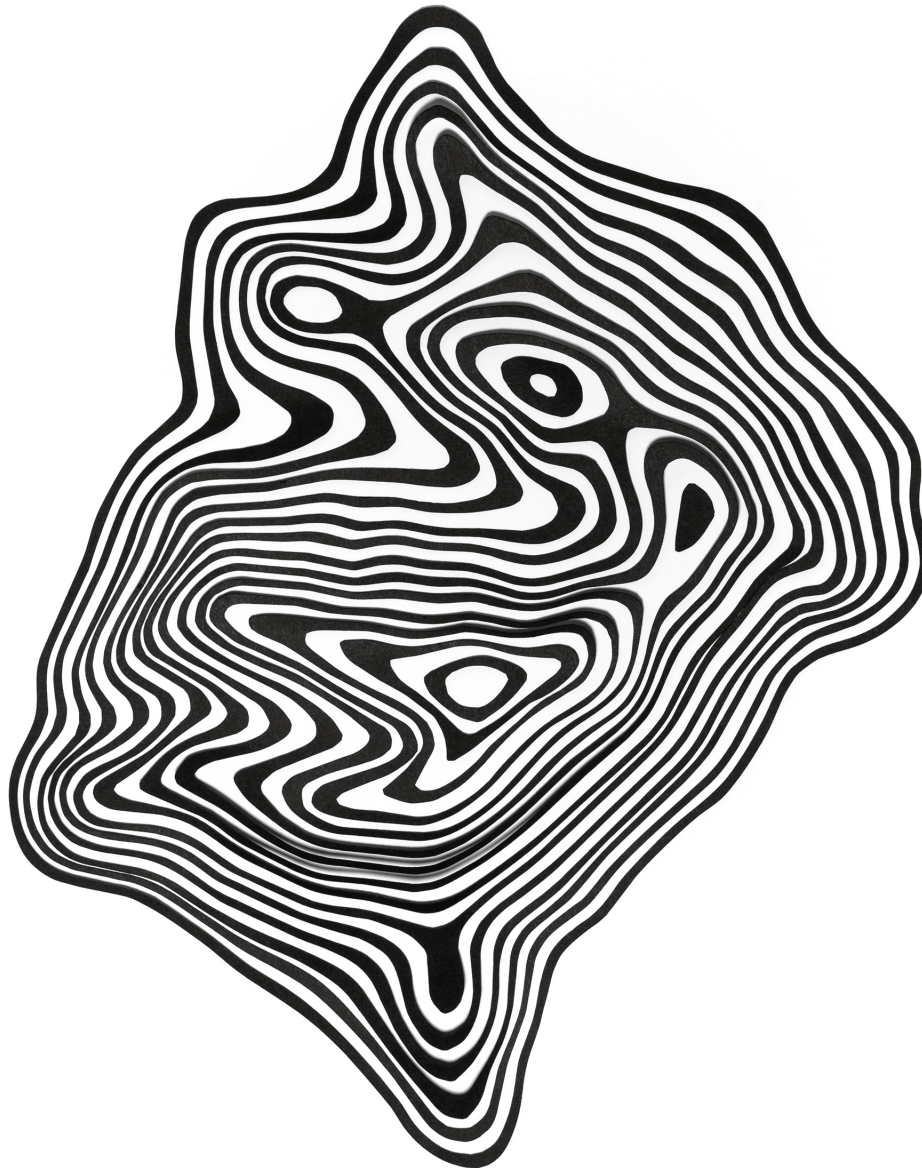
Topographical Studies

Humans have always felt an irresistible urge to represent and interpret their reality. Topographical maps were created to address this intrinsic need. A topographical map provides a detailed and accurate graphical representation of the natural and cultural features of a landscape by means of contour lines. In a similar way, the photographic process takes in information about the three-dimensional world in the form of light, and produces a two-dimensional representation of it. The series *Topographical Studies* examines the physical environments I regularly encounter and how I relate to them. By creating sculptures, photographs, and videos, I address ideas of representation, perception, and identity.

Coming from an island and moving to Los Angeles, I have always been surrounded by mountains. Through this work, I investigate my perception of these different landscapes, and the specificity and authenticity of this perception. In so doing I call into question assumptions about my own identity. Our perception of a landscape can easily be shifted by how we interact with and represent it. By juxtaposing topographical maps of Puerto Rico and LA, I detach them from their separate geographical contexts and they acquire their own reality.

This work also questions the authenticity of perception in the medium of photography by assembling pieces which make us reconsider what we are seeing and how it was created. Topographical maps are drawn and cut on black paper and then photographed. After documenting them, I alter their form and two-dimensionality by mixing and combining the shapes to create a three-dimensional sculpture, which is then photographed again. The result is that we see two images of the same object – presented in different ways, but ultimately both rendered in a two-dimensional format by photographic means.

The world around us is constantly shifting and changing, as is our own sense of identity. We are perpetually forced to revise our assessments of both – to question how things are represented and perceived; to distinguish between apparent truth and obvious fiction. As long as we are driven to interpret what we see, to connect our world and ourselves, we will always strive to create images – even if they offer a deceptive representation of reality.



Topographical Study 1
Archival Pigment Print
24" x 30"
2016



Topographical Study 2
Archival Pigment Print
24" x 30"
2016



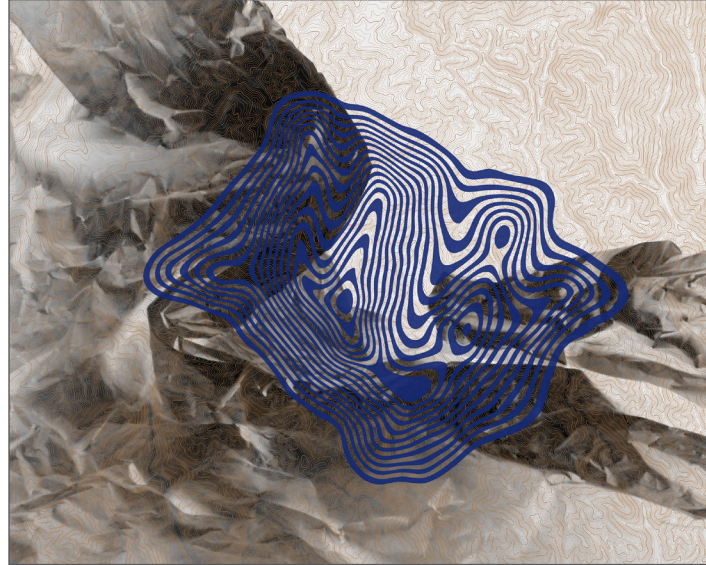
Topographical Study 3
Archival Pigment Print
24" x 30"
2016



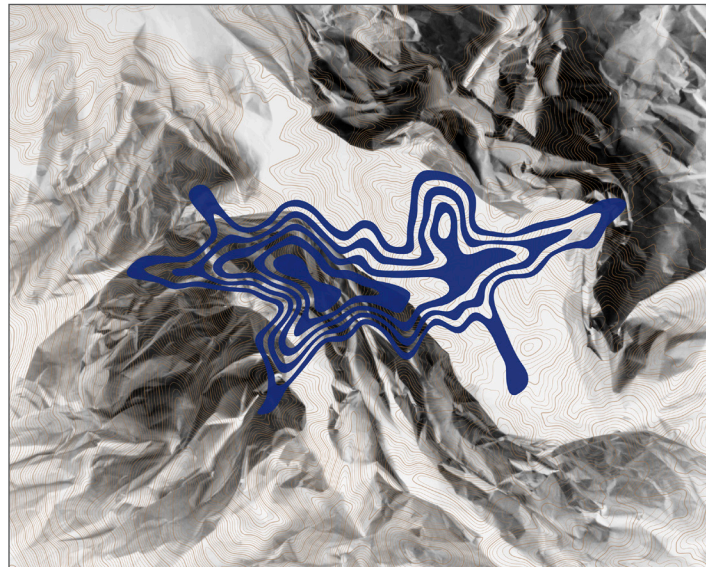
Topographical Study 4
Archival Pigment Print
24" x 30"
2016



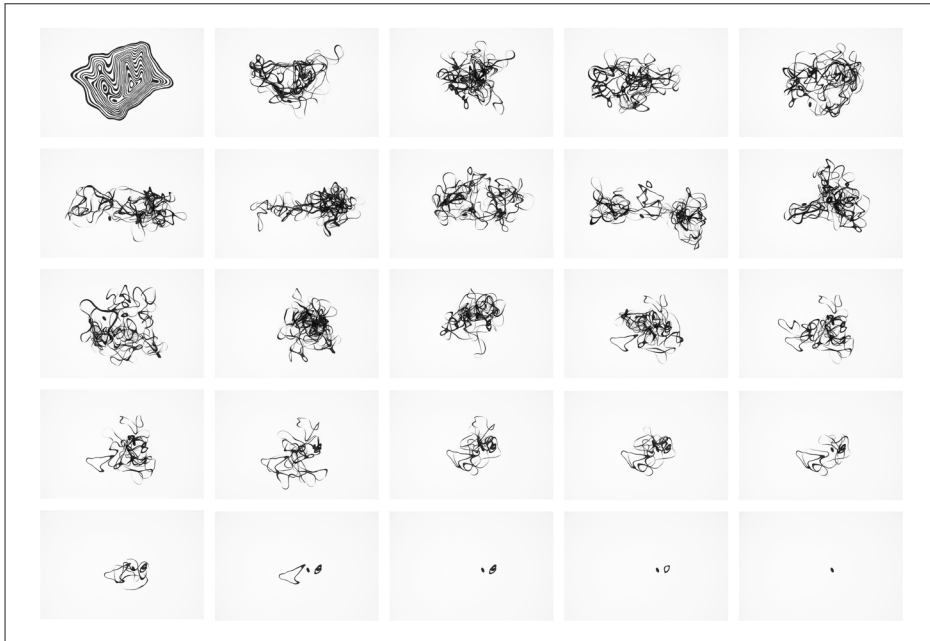
Topographical Study 7
Wood
48" x 36" x 6"
2016



Topographical Study 5
Silkscreen on a photograph
16" x 20"
2016



Topographical Study 6
Silkscreen on a photograph
16" x 20"
2016



(Video still)

Topographical Study 8
 Video Installation (stills of all the
 forms portrayed in the video)
 Dimensions vary
 2016



Topographical Study 9 (Interactive artwork)
 Acrylic
 12" x 10" x 3/4"
 2016

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

COLIN FRASER GRAY

Colin Gray departed England's shores for Santa Barbara 35 years ago, and since that time has exhibited in solo shows locally as well as in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Primarily working in sculpture, drawing, and installations of drawings, he has also completed three permanent public art projects, two in the Santa Barbara area and one in Los Angeles. His artwork has been described as being 'monuments to the imagination', 'simultaneously horrific and ecstatic', 'whimsical', 'wild', 'funny', 'scary', 'improvised but ancient', and 'undeniable'.

He has been awarded several grants, including the Santa Barbara County Individual Artists Award, as well as a Pollock/Krasner. He taught sculpture at the College of Creative Studies, UCSB, for nine years, and still teaches drawing at various places including Santa Barbara City College's Center for Lifelong Learning, and VITA art center in Ventura.

MELISSA MANFULL

Melissa Manfull is a Los Angeles based artist who has exhibited in California, Montreal, London and Boston. Her awards include the Armory Center for the Arts Teaching Fellowship, Palm Springs Art Museum Summer Teaching Residency, and Los Angeles Printmaking Society Scholarship. Manfull received her MFA from Concordia University Montreal, Canada.

RICARDO RODRIGUEZ

Ricardo Rodríguez was born and raised in Puerto Rico where he studied art at the University of Puerto Rico. In 2010 Rodríguez earned his Masters in Fine Arts at Brooks in Santa Barbara, California. Rodríguez utilizes photography, installation, and video to explore the different ways he can approach reality. Since the beginning he has been interested in creating conceptual work, and he is particularly interested in blurring the line between reality and representation. His work is part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach, California and he has exhibited nationally and internationally. As an art educator Rodríguez taught photography at Ventura College in Ventura, California. While living in Ventura he curated the Tool Room Gallery for four years, and was a board member of Bell Arts Factory. Currently, Rodríguez lives in Los Angeles California and teaches photography and video at Glendale City College and Flintridge Preparatory School.

Catalog designed by Ricardo Rodríguez. This exhibit and catalog could not have been possible without the support of FOCA, the artists and my family.

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