

# REDUX

## REPURPOSED MATERIALS

UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON GALLERIES

duPONT GALLERY  
OCTOBER 26 - NOVEMBER 30, 2012

# CURATORIAL STATEMENT

The artists chosen for this exhibition incorporate unconventional materials to create works of art that challenge preconceived notions of purpose. All use these materials in surprising and inventive ways. Some reference personal convictions, memories, and associations, while others call attention to and provide commentary on our disposable and wasteful culture.

Fueled by uneasiness regarding the soulless process of mass production, Danny Baskin's assemblage of countless cocktail umbrellas elevates and pays homage to the common and mundane object through the process of repetition. Harriete Estel Berman cuts and reconfigures discarded tin containers to emulate a pristine square yard of lush grass, referencing conspicuous consumption that, in our society, leads to overuse, waste, and an inevitable impact on our fragile environment. Michael Booker's work is inspired by a family tradition of quilting and reflects on familial and community experiences. Mitra Fabian uses innocuous manufactured objects in a manner that suggests organic substances and matrices, thus blurring the line between the natural and the man-made. Zac Freeman's portraits dissolve into an assembly of disparate objects when viewed at close range, while those objects serve as documentation of society's excesses at a certain point in time. Sayaka Ganz transforms thrift store plastics into fantastic creatures to convey a symbolic social message that many elements can be combined in a unified way. Bart Vargas assembles discarded objects to create playful forms that reflect on our era of vast consumption and waste.

The use of unconventional and discarded objects in creating works of art has played an important role in modern art since the early 20th century. In our contemporary world this use of unorthodox materials also serves to remind us of the need to carefully manage the great abundance that surrounds us. Artists working with these materials are not only creating inventive and electrifying works of art that reflect personal histories as well as cultural concerns, they are also carrying an important message that reminds us to be responsible in the resources we use and how we use them.

Anne Timpano

Director, UMW Galleries

# CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Works are listed by artist in alphabetical order. Dimensions are in inches with height preceding width and depth. All works are lent by the artist unless otherwise noted.

## DANNY R.W. BASKIN | NEW ORLEANS, LA

### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“The nature of my work is repetitive. I repeat an action over and over to come to a resolution about the material or object. This repetition and care for a specific object is also used as a glorification of that object or material; materials like toothpicks, pigs feet, and hammers. I obsess over the many. I care for the mundane. This care that I speak of is very distant from the cold factory mass production that I reference. In this way, I am bringing heart to a heartless action. It is not that I want to do these repetitive actions, but that I must do them. It is a compulsion. This work also references the group mentality. All the materials used work differently on an individual basis. When grouped with many others, the materials change light, form, and weight (visually speaking) to become something different than what they would be separately. When zooming in or out, everything repeats eventually.”

*Untitled* | Figure 1

2012

toothpick, parasols, rope,  
approx. 6000+ drink umbrellas  
dimensions variable

© Danny R.W. Baskin



Figure 1

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“Grass \ˈgras\ 1. having slender pointed leaves characteristic of the grass family 2. an expanse of ground, such as a lawn, covered with grass.

*Square Yard of Grass* raises many points. Blades of grass cut from post-consumer tin containers reflect our consumer society where we think that we can buy everything including happiness. Cut from post-consumer tin cans, each blade of grass is printed with images and advertising.

Ironically, Rance Crain, the editor-in-chief of *Advertising Age*, is quoted in *Buyology: Truth and Lies About Why We Buy* saying, ‘Advertisers will not be satisfied until they put their mark on every blade of grass.’

Grass lawns luxuriate in conspicuous consumption as if to say, ‘I own this space but I don’t need to use it.’ ‘Keep off the grass.’ However, perfect grass is sustained only by spending time and money at an even greater cost to our environment.”

*Square Yard of Grass* | Figure 2

1998

recycled tin containers

6 x 36 x 36

© Harriete Estel Berman

photo credit: Philip Cohen



Figure 2

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“Growing up in a family of quilt makers, my investigation of quilt making has led to the abstracting of its ideals to cross the line from craft to fine art. By breaking it down to its simplest form, fragments of memories, I am able to use the language of quilt making to reflect on issues and experiences that occur within families and communities.”

*Paw Paw's Waiting*

2011

cut doors, shutters, ruler, rosette blocks, shelf, twine, fork, hinges and misc. objects, chair, and pot  
dimensions variable

*Self Portrait | Figure 3*

2010

old clothes, photos, wallpaper, vinyl, food boxes and labels, laminate flooring, caution tape  
30 x 30

© Michael Booker



Figure 3

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"I am a sculptor and installation artist working with atypical materials such as tape, glue, various office and scientific products, and even window blinds. As I build with these materials, I deconstruct them or alter them in such a way that they are not immediately recognizable. The reconstruction is in some way determined by what the material is capable of doing, but not meant to do. The new physical form is always more organic, often mimicking the appearance of tumors, magnified cells, or mold. These materials often perform as a skin—their translucency captures light and plays tricks on the eye—breathing, swaying, or slowly and quietly growing. I use exclusively manufactured materials thereby transforming the artificial, throwaway product into something seemingly natural. This serves as a commentary on the increasingly modified condition of humans, which pits nature against culture and blurs the line between organic and manufactured."

*Cling* (detail) | Figure 4  
2010-2011  
binder clips  
approx. 180 x 360  
© Mitra Fabian  
photo credit: David Pace



Figure 4

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“My work focuses primarily on portraits created by assembling found objects, disposable goods, and the leftover trash of things we consume in our society. I glue the bits of junk to a wooden substrate, a canvas, which forms the image of a portrait. The result is a stunningly realistic portrait at a distance and an interesting array of objects up close.

I am interested in communicating through visual representation in apparent 2-dimensional space and also communicating through the actual objects used for the medium in 3-dimensional space.

It is very important to me that I incorporate the actual objects into the art as opposed to a picture or rendition of it because it better expresses the intention of the artwork. I feel the junk is more powerful being present. It is an actual thing to be reckoned with that existed in this time and place and carries energy in and of itself. The result is a time capsule of objects that reflects our culture.

My assemblage artworks have continued to encapsulate cultural change. For example, grey film canister tops used in my early junk portraits are very rare now as our society has moved to digital cameras. An iPhone used as shading on a cheek looks desired one year and archaic the next as society, technology, and consumables continue to change.”

*Dave*  
1999  
assemblage on board  
48 x 48  
Lent by Mark Smith

*Jerry | Figure 5*  
2007  
Assemblage on board  
39 x 33  
Lent by Mark Smith  
©Zac Freeman

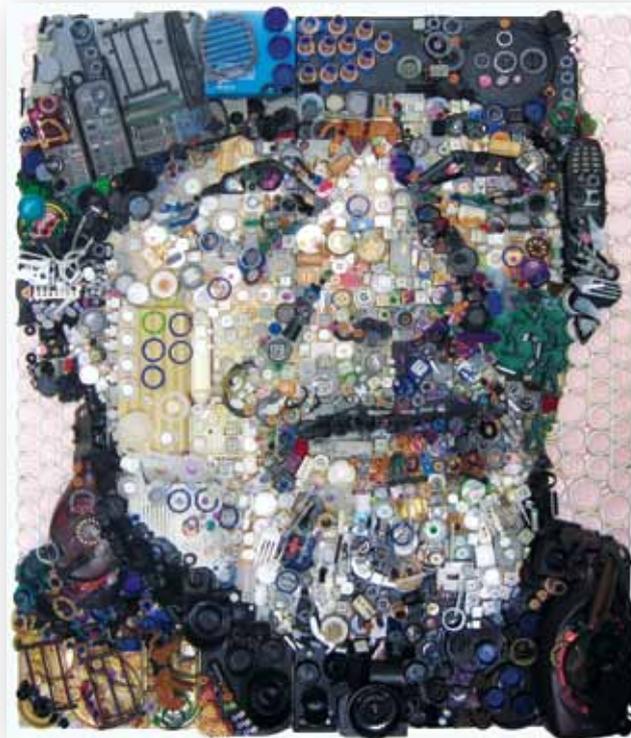


Figure 5

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“Driven by a combination of my passion for fitting odd shapes together and sympathy toward discarded objects, I create animals from thrift store plastics.

I spent my early childhood in Japan but grew up in several different countries. Japanese Shinto belief teaches that all objects and organisms have spirits, and I was told in kindergarten that items discarded before their time weep at night inside the trash bin. This became a vivid image in my mind. I only select items that have been used and discarded. My goal is for each object to transcend its origin by being integrated into an animal or organic form that is alive and in motion. This process of reclamation and regeneration is liberating to me as an artist.

Building these sculptures helps me understand the situations that surround me. It reminds me that even if there is a conflict right now, there is also a solution in which all the pieces can coexist peacefully. Though there are wide gaps in some areas and small holes in others, when seen from the distance there is great beauty and harmony in our community. Through my sculptures I transmit a message of hope.”

Nova | Figure 6

2011

reclaimed plastic objects, wire

54 x 66 x 28

©Sayaka Ganz



Figure 6

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“For over a decade, I have been exploring the artistic potential of trash and recyclable materials to build paintings, sculptures, and installations that blur the identity of these everyday materials, transforming them into playful, thought-provoking objects. I want my creations to act as artifacts and evidence of the early 21st century, and hope to do so by using materials that are no longer needed or valued in an era of limited resources and extraordinary consumption and waste.”

*There Are Places on the Map  
that Do Not Exist, 4.0* | Figure 7  
2010

salvaged keyboard keys,  
industrial adhesive, paint, gaff  
tape, joint compound, spray  
foam, polystyrene foam board,  
recycled plastic bottles, and 12-  
inch cardboard globe  
31 inches in diameter  
©Bart Vargas

*Sodawater Bottle Ball*

2009  
recycled soda water bottles,  
adhesive, 12-inch cardboard  
globe  
20 inches in diameter



Figure 7

# MISSION STATEMENT

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*where great minds get to work*