

## **Thomas Bayrle**

Thomas Bayrle's early works were initially inspired by the explosion of consumer culture that attended the rapid post-War economic expansion in his native West Germany, as well as his political sympathies with Maoism. His "super-forms," of which *Stalin (rote Version)* (1970) is an example, are large images formed through deft, hand-rendered accretions of smaller, related images, which prefigure the look of later computer imaging. On the one hand, these super-forms mirror the standardized industrial production of consumer goods, with which Bayrle was intimately familiar through his work in advertising. Other super-form works, however, relate to the massive choreographed spectacles orchestrated in Maoist China, which reflected the ostensible uniformity and unification of the communist body politic. *Stalin (rote Version)*, is a part of this latter strain in Bayrle's work, but his choice to render the Soviet dictator's face out of his iconic mustache suggests his sympathy for the global communist cause was coupled with a healthy suspicion of its sanctimony.

## **Rossella Biscotti & Kevin van Braak**

For their collaborative work *New Crossroads* (2006), Rossella Biscotti and Kevin van Braak orchestrated the construction of a bright green helical wooden tower in a vacant lot in the township of Crossroads in Cape Town, South Africa. After this monumental geometric structure was completed, local residents were enjoined to immediately dismantle it, and take the wood home for private use. Once disbursed, the vivid green wood of the temporary tower, which residents would often not repaint before repurposing it, could be found in all corners of the densely populated township, woven into the fabric of the built landscape.

## **Lucas Blalock**

Lucas Blalock's photographs are frequently marked by the awkward use of Photoshop, and self-reflexive deployment of photographic studio tropes. For *Numbers* (2011) Blalock arranged and rearranged a collection of stick-on house numbers on a paper studio backdrop to create what appears to be a coded message, or a logic problem. The visible tears in the backdrop provide a partial record of Blalock's spatial and numerical logic, indicating a level of intention behind his decisions, but leaving them nevertheless obscure. His rough, Cubist-inspired digital mash-up *Rocking Chair* (2011) presents two simultaneous views of the same object—a rocking chair on a dirty carpet, inexplicably encased in a black metal frame.

## **Mel Bochner**

Mel Bochner is best known as the father of Conceptual art. In the late 1960s, Bochner undertook a series of photographic experiments, which sought to extend the anti-illusionistic artistic goals of sculptural minimalists like Donald Judd and

Carl Andre, by shifting their rigid, geometric forms out of physical space and into the nominally dematerialized spatial realm of the photograph. Occasionally, these works took the form of wry jokes, as in his series of colorful images of serpentine agglomerations of shaving cream on glass, which appear to mock the expressive pretensions of the Abstract Expressionist painters. Still others, like *Perspective Insert (Collapsed Center)* (1967/2011), suggest a suspicion of the icy perfection of a geometry that denies, in its abstraction, the ineluctable force of entropy, which eventually grinds even the most stubborn forms back into dust.

## **Brody Condon**

Brody Condon's work deals broadly with an investigation of the way in which we perform our identities, and explores the possible avenues—both spurious and serious—through which we might transcend these self-assigned roles. Condon approaches his broad themes through the exploration of a range of diverse cultural phenomena, which include live action role-playing games (LARPing), New Age group encounter therapy, and the creation of digital avatars that inhabit online worlds like Second Life. This latter phenomenon connects to Condon's engagement with William Gibson's seminal cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer*, which has served as the basis of an ambitious, six-hour performance work (*Case*, 2010) as well as the rough inspiration for a series of biomorphic sculptures that appear to have been beamed directly out of a CADD rendering and materialized in physical space. *Vat Flesh on a Pedestal of Imitation Jade* (2010), for instance, takes its name from a line in Gibson's book, in which the main character admires a window display featuring the titular vat-grown flesh. With this in mind, Condon's sculpture takes on an even more surreal cast, appearing to us as a struggling, inchoate form of hybrid life—wavering between the organic and the inorganic in the same way that it appears to hover in the liminal space between the real and the virtual.

## **Guy de Cointet**

Artist, sculptor, and playwright Guy de Cointet had a lifelong obsession with linguistic and visual ciphers. From an early age, Cointet became interested in imaginary languages, logic puzzles, and works of literary figures like Edgar Allan Poe and Jorge Luis Borges, whose stories provided the titles of a number of Cointet's works, and particularly Raymond Roussel, whose absurdist travelogue *Impressions of Africa* (1910) would influence Cointet's interest in rule-based linguistic play. But it was his work in advertizing that ultimately solidified Cointet's understanding of writing as both graphic element and communicative device, whose meaning was often thoroughly coded. After immigrating to the United States from his native France, where he lived first in New York and later settled in Los Angeles, Cointet began creating paintings and prints that were derived from methods of coding of his own devising, which he would also use as props in his plays and performances, some of which Cointet scripted himself while in others he enjoined actors to improvise monologues using his works as a rough score. His work *Page From My*

*Intimate Journal, Part I* (1974) is, as the title implies, a page from Cointet's diary that he has translated into code.

### **Haris Epaminonda**

Haris Epaminonda works primarily consist of reconfigured and recontextualized found materials, many of which have at least an oblique connection to the history of her native Cyprus, which she imbues with a sense of the mysterious through her intuitive, fugue-like museological displays, surreal use of found footage, and spatially confounding collage work. Her early video work *Nemesis 52* (2003) calls to mind a Rorschach inkblot, in which the strange rituals and esoteric symbolism of the unconscious are brought to kaleidoscopic life.

### **Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian**

Through her work in painting, sculpture, print making, drawing and assemblage Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian has, for more than sixty years, sought to bridge the gap between the art of the West and that of her native Iran. In 1944, at the age of twenty, Farmanfarmaian immigrated to New York from Tehran to study art, where she quickly fell in with a group of artists that included Jackson Pollack, Joan Mitchell, Louise Nevelson, and Barnett Newman. Though artistic abstraction was somewhat radical in 1950s New York, Farmanfarmaian immediately divined the affinities between the work of her contemporaries and traditional Iranian art, which largely prohibited the use of representational imagery, and situated her work in this space of overlap. After a 1966 visit with Robert Morris and Marcia Hafif to the magnificent Iranian shrine Shāh Chérāgh, which is renowned for its *ayeneh-kari*, or mirror work, Farmanfarmaian began create intricate, mirror-bedecked geometric abstractions, for which she has become most known. Though these works share affinities with the work of fellow artists who utilized rigorous geometric forms in their cool-handed abstract compositions, like Frank Stella and Sol Lewitt, Farmanfarmaian did not intend her work to be read strictly analytically. Rather, her work's intersection with the lineage of ancient religious mosaics fashions it into something approaching a spiritual geometry.

### **John Houck**

John Houck's photographic work is explicitly informed by his background as a high-level computer programmer. The works in his *Aggregates* series are complex amalgams of digital and analog processes, which begin with a computer algorithm written by the artist. This algorithm is designed to produce all the possible arrangements of given number of colors inscribed on grids of varying sizes, which are indicated in the works' titles. For his piece *Untitled, #18, 65,487 combinations of a 2x2 grid, 16 colors* (2012), for instance, Houck has input 16 colors into his algorithm, which were to be inscribed onto a 2x2 grid, resulting in 65,487 combinations, all of which are visible in the work. Once these thousands of possible configurations have been produced by the computer, Houck produces a large-scale

digital print that he then folds by hand and photographs with a digital camera. This re-inscription onto the camera's sensor of the original algorithmic printout causes color shifts and unpredictable registration errors. These errors are retained in the final work, which takes the form of a print of the digital photograph that Houck has refolded in a manner that clashes with the folds in the image, creating an optical confusion that mirrors that of the camera's misregistration.

### **Will Insley**

From the beginning of the 1960s until the middle of the 1970s Will Insley created a body of work that he collectively title "ONECITY," which detailed the life and architecture of an imaginary, labyrinthine city, two hundred miles square, which he situated somewhere between the Mississippi and Rocky Mountains. Insley formally trained as an architect at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, and, as a result, many of the works in his ONECITY project took the form of intricately rendered architectural renderings and schematics, such as */Building/ No. 14, channel space auto-run* (1969-74) and *Volume Space 4 Section 2* (1972) . However, Insley also created works that related to the elaborate mythology that he devised for the city, such as his abstract, geometric works on canvas, collectively titled "Wall Fragments," that hold the coded information of the city's secret "Opaque Library," which no one may enter.

### **Barbara Kasten**

Since the mid-1970s, Barbara Kasten developed an approach to photography that integrates her early training as a painter and sculptor, creating abstract images that are often produced by photographing elaborate, Constructivist-inspired sets that she builds in her studio. Relatively unknown outside of the world of photography for much of her career, her work has recently been brought to wider attention as an important precedent for the work of a host of younger photographers who have renewed investigations of the wide-ranging possibilities of photographic abstraction and studio-based work. Her series of "Metaphases," which were produced during the mid-1980s, are photographs of playful arrangements of geometric objects, which Kasten bathes in exuberant swaths of candy-colored light.

### **Yayoi Kusama**

Raised in the city of Matsumoto, in the Nagano prefecture of Japan, Yayoi Kusama was drawn to art at an early age, as a method to record and channel the visual and auditory hallucinations that that had she experienced since early childhood. Displeased with her formal art training, which she undertook in Kyoto in her early twenties, Kusama cultivated a link to the American art world through her lengthy correspondences with Georgia O'Keefe, who Kusama had contacted after seeing the artist's work in a catalog she found in a used bookstore. The draw of America led her immigrate to New York, where she spend fifteen formative years, becoming something of fixture in the avant-garde scene, alongside contemporaries like Andy

Warhol. During this time, Kusama developed what she called infinity net paintings—canvases covered in repetitive, loops of paint arranged in loose grid-like formation—whose production was a form of meditative therapy for Kusama, who struggled increasingly with mental illness. After a rapid flare up in her public notoriety in the late 1960s, Kusama suffered a mental breakdown and returned to Japan, where, since 1973, she has lived voluntarily in the Seiwa Hospital for the Mentally Ill and continued to produce her work. This work, *Midnight Eye* (1994), calls to mind a Surrealist reinterpretation of the scientific drawings of German biologist Ernst Haeckel.

### **Paul Laffoley**

Paul Laffoley's intricate, sometimes stubbornly recondite diagrammatic paintings and collages are a result of his decades-long investigation into the nature of reality. Though he received formal education at both Brown and Harvard, the majority of Laffoley's wide-ranging interests have been cultivated auto-didactically, and have resulted in a unique cosmological outlook that he attempts to communicate through his works. Though many of Laffoley's works attempt to tackle large problems and theories, such as the possibility of time travel, the nature interdimensional space, and methods of energy transfer, some works, like *The Sexuality of Robots* (2009), explore more modest aspects of his personal scholarship. Arranged as a taxonomy of sexualized homunculi in popular culture and art history—from the voluptuous forms of ancient fertility sculptures to the chiseled physique of Robocop—Laffoley connects the (sexualized) animation of these almost-human forms to the Tibetan concept of Tulpa, or thought-form, which posits that the mind, as the creator of the world of appearances, has the power to call otherwise non-existent beings to life.

### **Oliver Laric**

Oliver Laric's work seeks to parse the productive potential of the copy, the bootleg, and the remix, and examine their role in the formation of both historic and contemporary image cultures. His series of small, tie-dye-patterned icons, spring from his interest in 16<sup>th</sup> century iconoclasm associated with the Reformation, which he sees as an early precursor to the splicing, remixing and repurposing of digital images that has become a cornerstone of Internet culture. In keeping with this reading, these works, which are based one of nine defaced figures from a pristinely preserved altarpiece found in St. Martin's Cathedral in Utrecht, were produced using a series of elaborate processes made possible by digital technology. Rather than visit Utrecht himself, Laric instead collected a large cache of online images of the altarpiece, taken from myriad angles, and isolated the figure in each one. The resultant images were then sent to a digital modeler in China that Laric hired over the Internet, who used them to create a three-dimensional model of the figure, which Laric then rendered into solid form through the use of a 3D printer. Laric then cast a silicon mold from the 3D printout, which he has used to create his iterative series of brightly hued icons in painstakingly hand poured polyurethane.

## **Ionel Talpazan**

Ionel Talpazan claims that at the age of eight, while playing in the woods near his foster parent's house in the rural Romanian village of Miineasca, he was engulfed by a beam of blue energy emanating from a giant flying saucer. This experience has provided the basis for his singularly-minded, ever-expanding body of work, the lion's share of which consists of swirling, hallucinatory visions of outer space rendered in oil paint, and heavily annotated, colorful schematic drawings of UFOs, which provide a record of Talpazan's attempts to parse the inner technological workings of these otherworldly crafts, and come to a greater understanding of the childhood event that continues to haunt him almost half a century later.

## **Melvin Way**

Sometime in the 1980s, Melvin Way participated in an institutional art program and began to make the densely rendered, note-card-sized ballpoint pen drawings that he has continued to produce ever since. His works are built around an elaborate personal cryptography, which manifests itself in the form of byzantine thickets of mathematical and scientific formulae, whose meaning remains opaque to all but Way himself. But in spite of the recondite nature of his work, Way's project is exacting and ceaseless, suggests a belief that producing and puzzling over these personal ciphers may hold the key to his internal salvation.

## **Stephen Vitiello**

Artist and musician Stephen Vitiello creates works that are often elaborations on the field recording techniques used in Foley work in cinema and in the discipline of ethnomusicology. For this work, *Listening to Donald Judd (Marfa Mix #4)* (2002), Vitiello traveled to Marfa, Texas, the small town where Donald Judd relocated his studio operations in the early 1970s, to make recordings of the sounds in and around the town, as well as, most prominently, the sounds of Judd's sculptures themselves. To achieve this latter aim, Vitiello was permitted to place contact microphones directly on the surface of Judd's sculptures. The resulting sounds, which have an ambient, trance-inducing quality, suggest that though Judd's industrially produced, minimal works may appear mute and unmoving, they hum with secret sonic vitality.

## **Eugene Von Bruenchenhein**

Unrecognized until after his death, Milwaukee native Eugene Von Bruenchenhein spent the free hours between his shifts at a local bakery filling his house with a riotous profusion of paintings, sculptures, drawings, ceramics, and photographs along with reams of poems and philosophical musings. Most of Von Bruenchenhein's work was created with material's he had at hand: his ceramic works were fashioned

from clay dug up in his backyard and fired in his kitchen stove, his sculptures were mostly constructed from chicken bones leftover from his TV dinners that he glued together with model airplane glue and colored with spray paint, and many of his paintings were rendered with a brush made from the hair of his wife, Marie, to whom he dedicated all of his work. Made in during a flurry of productivity in the middle of the 1960s and glued on the backsides of the pages of a large book of wallpaper samples, Von Bruenchenhein's ballpoint pen drawings are some of his least known work. Carefully rendered with the aid of a ruler and a French curve, the works straddle the line between exacting, hard-edged geometric restraint and baroque, decorative panache, sensibilities that often exist in graceful balance within the confines of a single drawing.