

A Lazy J project launched by

Christopher James & George Raggett

gone wild

George Raggett

Justin Beal

Jim Ovelmen

Evan Holloway

Keith Walsh

Katie Grinnan

The Drawing Club

Michael Mahalchick

Pilar Conde

Isami Ching

Nick Herman

Khan Vho

Purtill Family Business

Where does all that art go? With such a glut of artwork being produced a lot of the quaint notions of leaner times beg to be addressed: Is art really the one thing that lasts forever? Do we need to always preserve the sanctity of an artist's production? And do the origins of an artwork's materials affect its outcome or meaning?

By slipping the work of George Raggett's exhibition at the Happy Lion Gallery back out from the "culture industry," we may help to provide some answers to these questions. These plastic, cardboard, wax and glass constructions have gone feral: they have escaped from the demands of commerce and consumption to be returned to the living world of art production where they went on to thrive and develop for some time.

The disassembled sculptures from that show were delivered to the studio of Justin Beal where he, treating it all as simply raw material, used it to produce a piece of his own artwork. He turned George's sprawling art inward, loading all the loose material into a box suggestively titled, *Piñata*. That work continued on to the studios of twelve other artists, who each in turn documented what they received and transformed into their own work. The information within these bookmarks comes from that documentation.

So much artwork was made by so many competent artists, but none of the resulting pieces were seen by many people, existing as most did, within the personal confines of artist's workrooms. This makes a compelling argument for artists' genuine desire to produce, but denies the public much pleasure from it. It is a kind of withholding that flirts with the notion of purity, yet despite its remove, may stand in counterpoint to work that is generated only when called for. The unusual structure of this project may have temporarily relieved the need to both work alone and have a community, to partake but not compromise one's vision.

And did these questions in the end get satisfactory answers? I have seen storage rooms with breathtaking amounts of art wrapped up and sloppily catalogued, their social use exhausted, or just maybe dormant. If we have not left behind an object of consideration, at least we can say that we have not contributed to this. One part of the creative process not often seen by the public is the routine destruction of artworks by their own makers. Artists, after all are the ones most rough with art. A world without one's own art is always imaginable.

Surely George's work influenced Justin's, and Justin's anticipated Jim's, and Jim responded to that, but is the dust that remained, these ashes, the sum of all of these artist's efforts? Did the materials accrue an added value as more thought and effort were applied to them? We almost never consider the provenance of the materials used in artworks; where they originated, how and by whom they were produced. I imagine an object's history is as important as its current or even original state. This is not news to our courtly agents and concessionaires as it accounts for the rise in value of any artwork, but if this notion were pushed backwards from an artwork's point of conception it might reveal some underappreciated terrain. For one thing, I'm sure that no one person ever makes a work of art. —Christopher James

play it as it lays

George Raggett

Six-Pakano

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raw materials

Justin Beal

Piñata



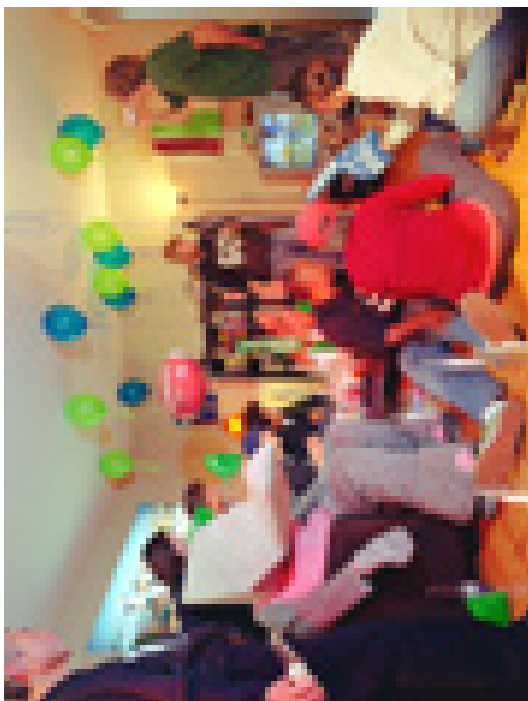


Smart ass white boy.

Jim Ovelmen

Elephant Head | Superbowl Obstruction

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At the end of 2005, I received a polygonal, gourd-shaped sculpture with a skin of gray nap-carpet. It was roughly human-torso sized. You could guess that it was hollow by its constructed cocoon-like look. This is what Justin Beal delivered to my studio along with a sturdy, white-tiled box. This served as a short pedestal on which he stood the piece upright. Justin titled it *Piñata*. The sculpture was, in fact, encasing somewhat heavy, clinking objects. I expected to find George Raggert's empty bottles from his Happy Lion show.

After waffling over ideas of what to do with the piece, I knew at least I did not want to batter or destroy it; but to reject the begging suggestion of a piñata. When I laid the sculpture on its side, it looked, to me, like an angular elephant head, a jack-ball notion of a cubist elephant. I removed one of the bottom panels, where the "neck" of the elephant might connect (that is, if elephant's have necks). With the hole created, the contents inside were removed. Indeed, fifteen or so clear empty beer bottles. Each bottle had a strip of hard wax-like stuff stuck to the inside.

I decided I would incorporate the “elephant head” as a prop in a photo, along with the bottles, and an actor would wear the head. The sculpture was an amenable size for this; the hollowed piece snugly fit over a person’s head. I created eyeholes and air holes so the entire sculpture could be comfortable enough to wear like a helmet.

I wanted to photograph the elephant at The Roost, a low-key bar in the Atwater Village area of Los Angeles, common to many Budweiser-drinking hipsters and locals. “Return to the Roost” came to mind as I envisioned the elephant in the room drinking alone, alienated on a barstool in the dark red-drenched interior. A filmy stylization. My actor would wear the elephant head and a rented elephant costume for the body. The elephant would slump in his stool, the long parade of goners in his drinking wake; the pick-up of empties neglected by the barmaid. This image itself was fairly stupid; moreover, it presented use for all the materials, including the beer bottles, in a narrative web that dissolved all temporal elements of the sculpture. I planned to shoot medium-format to capture the dark-red interior and details of the bar, and create a print from it like a film still. After the shoot, I planned to repair the sculpture to exactly the state I received it, and pass it on to the next artist, unaltered. The photo, then, would be the only record.

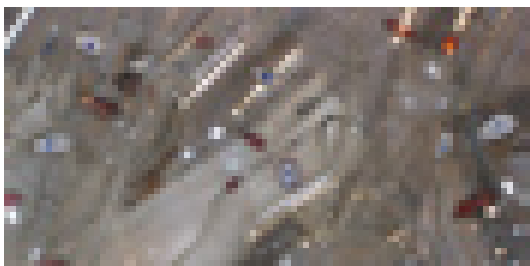
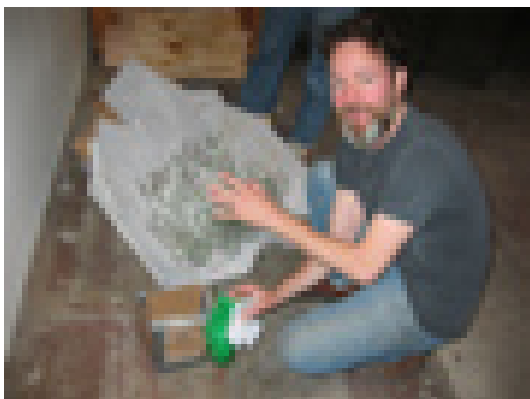
I met and spoke with the manager of The Roost about permission to shoot. He hung at the bar with locals during the day watching the ceiling-mounted TV. He generously allowed I come in on any morning and shoot, just not to interrupt his business, or to photograph any patrons. He insisted I did not even need to schedule a day with him, just to arrive any day before 10am when it is quieter. The Roost opens at 10am, seven days a week. In two weeks I organized the materials for the shoot, rented the photo equipment, the elephant-body costume, the lights; and scheduled my actor, and photo assistant. When I knocked on the door of The Roost at 9am on that Sunday, the manager opened the locked front door. He looked both puzzled and irritated by my presence. He acted like a completely different man. He angrily denied me permission to shoot at the bar. He actually claimed that he had never met me before. Amazing. Adding punishment, he ripped: “...don’t you fuckin’ know today is the Super Bowl?” Peering in the bar I saw it was atypically bright and jubilant. He was in the middle of festooning the place with paper and balloon decorations. It looked like there was going to be a child’s birthday party. I knew it was Super Bowl Sunday, kicking-off after 3pm. I didn’t realize there would be activity in the bar all morning. I apologized and asked him if I could shoot the following Tuesday instead. He said it would now cost me \$400 per-hour shooting fee. I literally laughed. Moreover, something very interesting and unexpected just happened. Certainly, the shoot at The Roost was off... but the Super Bowl was on.

The Super Bowl provided an obstruction as the answer for the piece. With the rented camera equipment at hand, the “elephant head,” bottles, and related materials, I decided to ask friends to quickly come over to my house for an impromptu photo shoot. We all would watch the Super Bowl together. Joined by the alienated elephant, whose slightly more absurd presence is rendered invisible by the TV spectacle (?) Once again, a clichéd image, yet this idea was now about obstruction. Not about reality obstructing the schema; but the obstruction between parody and documentation, and their mutual embarrassment (or counter-obstruction).

The friends that gathered for the shoot that day probably could not even tell you which teams were playing. For the photo, they were asked to become over-actors, simultaneously cheering at the television. All were to be in support of whatever team was on the comeback. A neighbor provided jerseys. Balloons and paraphernalia were bought. I could only pantomime the decorations of The Roost. Its seemed we all became further alienated from the Super Bowl while we were creating this fiction. Arguably, the resulting photo is some kind of documentation of the televised game. I wanted to get the live play on the TV in the shot. Soon it became halftime. Another obstruction: The Rolling Stones. The counter-obstruction: TIVO.

the points are frozen

Evan Holloway



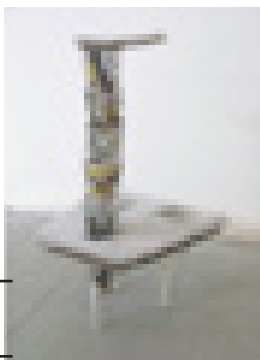


*There is no expedient to which a man will not resort
to avoid the real labor of thinking. —Sir Joshua Reynolds*

Keith Walsh

left to right, top to bottom:

*bed, end table, corner cabinet, chest,
table, sideboard*



On May 5 I met Evan Holloway, Chris and Kristin at Evan's studio. The piece was in pieces—a ragged Mandala of sorts, all piled up and spread out in rough symmetry. Evan mentioned something about it becoming a game. Included in all this were carpet scraps, Superbowl party documents and pom poms; but most noticeable were beer bottles adorned with painted faces. Evan had halved these bottles and they were now razor sharp, but possibly less dangerous than the bottle shards and crystal like dust he collected into a soon-to-collapse box. We took pictures and scooped it all up into Justin Beal's white plexi base.

Several days later, my first inclination was to perform damage-control (tidying up). Things like X-actoin the cardboard edges, excising the shitty caulking from the mouse gray carpets, and carefully choosing which specimens of severed bottles were destined for the trash can. Everything about this fractured stuff pointed to the conditions of the human body, the container where leisure time meets torture-time. It was time to rebuild—to generate form and decoration by way of a new functionality.

From the Mandala came six sculptures; all six that are of one. All of them are variations of furniture types. All of them are architectural in the sense that furniture has its origins as architecture in the miniature. All reinvigorate the symbolism of Late Renaissance furniture's caryatid motifs by reconstituting the mythological body into the work's material structure and appearance. My aim was to produce decadent yet good-looking works. This was guided by a humanism of sorts, where no member of the family could be left behind (at least publicly). Even though glass may eventually spill from an orifice or two, every element found its rightful place and role in service of the object's functionality. Each constituent was endowed with the full (or imagined) rights and responsibilities of self-realization. As for the unused carpet or shattered-bottle orphans, they were rescued. They found their home in the sixth sculpture, the Modernist-style one which was rebuilt from the reproporioned white plexi base (with Justin Beal's signature still visible). This last example is, of course, the most self-reflexive of furniture types. It's the one that embodies the cabinet maker's habit of keeping scraps around for possible future use.

Several grammars simultaneously, always

Katie Grinnan





CBJ This piece looks like a landscape, or really a seascape. Was it made by forces of erosion or by a process of accumulation?

KG *It is a lot like a seascape. It's the first piece that I've made in my new Topanga studio which is a swimming pool, and in spending time at that space I really wanted to do something with the sloped floor of the pool. I thought using it as some imaginary sandy surface for waves might be nice. That pool is so architectural now, I thought it might be a nice contrast. The piece was made both by erosion and accumulation in a way. It took me a long time to figure out what to do with Keith's furniture. It's hard when you see the materials used a certain way to break out of that logic system. Then after some time, I got the image of a shore line in the pool and broke all of the bottles and particle board, cut the carpet up, cut the pom pom, took the Plexiglas tile off the particle board and cut them with a band saw into smaller pieces. pretty much eroding the material into smaller pieces (really I guess that could be erosion or accumulation just making new materials). The process after that was very additive, using my new pieces and trying to make these elements into a unified material or form.*

CBJ So, ultimately the material's history, its previous forms, did not have much of an impact on the outcome. But what about its future, the fact that your artwork is going to be destroyed in order for the next person to make her own work? How do you feel about that?

KG *I think that the material's history did have an impact and I think that the work of each person remains in the piece which I think is really cool. Evan's eyes are in the glass still, and some of Keith's furniture became rocks, and Jim's photos became texture. It becomes an accumulation of everyone's work and process and also this weird sort of editing of visual information. I'm interested in the idea of alchemy and I think that this piece ends up being about that. I'm really excited for the next person to get the material from my part and to see what happens. It was really liberating to make something that I knew would not live in any one form. The whole thing had a really immediate feeling when I had the material and then its really nice to anticipate what's going to happen to it, what's going to be kept, added, destroyed. Its been really nice to see it transform into everyone's work so far.*

CBJ This question from George: Well, as far as things getting added and lost, the project was not purely transferred from the start. How do you feel about items that were initially missing, or withheld, re-integrated with the project when it starts out in NYC? Do you think it would be wise to corrupt the trajectory of the gone wild project as it now stands?

KG *It seems like the rules are open enough to incorporate more parts of the piece especially at the beginning of the NY trajectory. It will be interesting to see how that changes things.*

CBJ So, now the piece has been boxed up for shipment. How many people actually saw it?

KG *Three people including you and me saw it finished. A couple others saw it in progress.*

CBJ What did you have for breakfast today?

KG *Coffee and a blueberry muffin.*

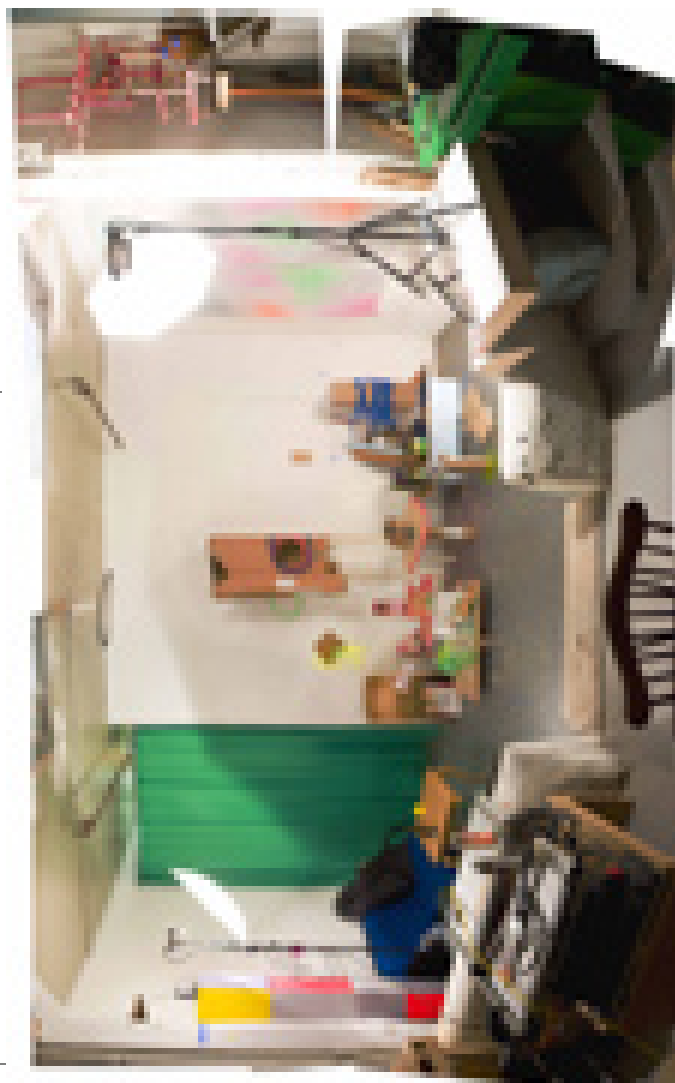
CBJ And, this is the last question: What is your motto?

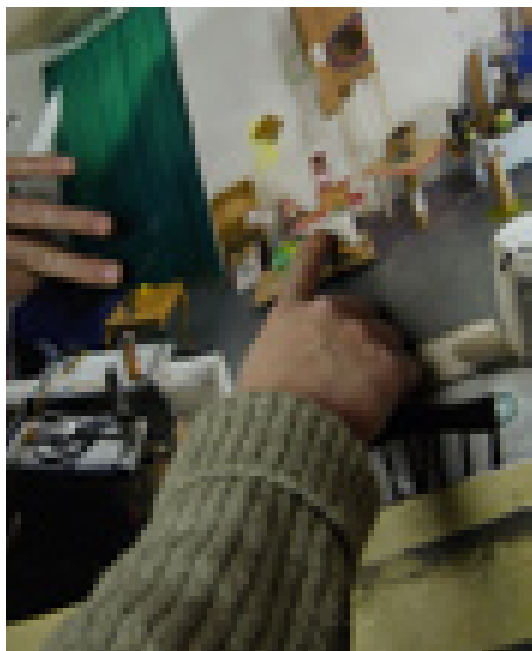
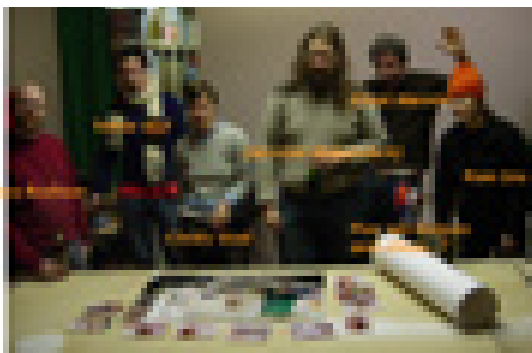
Long way is the short way



The Drawing Club

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We received a box of assorted trash including crumpled photos, broken glass, glass dust, carpet scraps, cardboard and bits of Plexiglas. After adding some of our own trash from the studio, we used the collected junk to make a tableau which resulted in the transformation of all that material into a photograph documenting its transformation into a photograph.

Michael Mahalchick



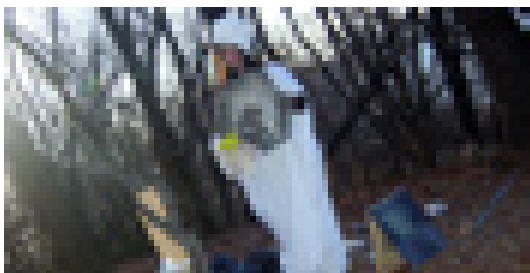


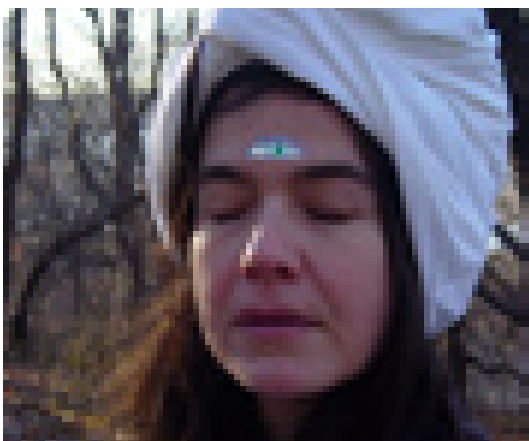
c... I did not feel like over objectifying this piece for our docu. purposes. MM basically pointed to an undistinguishable sculpture among others and said simply, “Here it is.” It was not until closer inspection did I see the main Drawing Club photo and little DC photos physically worked around its center. Michael said something like “I tried to just work the photos into an object, but later decided I needed to basically build a ‘prop’ around the photos.”

I am pleased because the DC decided the “trash” had to be removed and MM decided a new trash/environment had to be added. —GR

Keep it like an egg!

Pilar Conde





CBJ This looks amazing. I just reviewed the Mahalchick images to see what it was you received. Once the piece got to NY it got dematerialized into a picture then started an accumulation trajectory with Michael. What have you added to the materials in order to achieve your objectives with this thing?

PC *I added the dress, headdress and multi-triangular bracelet.*

CBJ Does all that get passed on? Is it part of the piece's material now?

PC *The dress was made purposely crude to rewrap up the scattered pieces (of Michael's work). The bracelet was made to become the tie of the bundle.*

CBJ What occurred during the performance?

PC *This was not a public performance. I was rather communing with the work. I started with the fact that this whole project is transient. I enjoy that the documentation would be neither clear, complete or discernable. This project allowed me to slice out a performative event out of my daily life. The dressing for this event, the manipulation of the sculpture, and finally the symbolic engraving of the work onto my forehead was like a rush of a new tattoo—build up, action, departure. The image of the third eye represents the fact that I have been as affected by the work as I have in turn effected the work.*

CBJ How did the fact that the material (well, in theory) originated with a piece created by your husband influence your approach to it?

PC *I had been privy to the concept and labor attached to George's original piece. I had an intimate understanding of it. It was exciting to see the piece again and surprisingly, it felt like the ghost of the work was still present. In that sense I felt distracted—did I know too much? So I decided that the way to approach this project with fresh eyes was to abandon a sculptural approach...and perform instead. I let my senses guide me through the performance to discover whatever Michael's material had to offer. The "ghost" was then passed on with no one exactly knowing what had transpired.*

We are Now

Isami Ching





George had given me a vague notion of the project; that an object/sculpture/residue would be handed off from person to person. Something like the game telephone or rumor.

I had some strategies in mind but nothing firm. And then some time passed and I forgot those strategies and finally George called me and said, “Okay can you do it? I’ll bring it over tonight, but I need it back in like a week.”

By this time I was moving and firmly mired in packing, and the project sounded like fun—it would be a break.

So George brought over a bag later in the evening. It was a large black plastic bag and seemed ominous. It had all this disconnected stuff in it.

My brain was still in packing mode, I either wanted to throw it away or box it up.

I decided that it was the residue of all this previous effort, and that I should collect it together and make it into one. Make a monument of sorts.

I took the paintings and made a mold out of them. I was thinking of Tatlin’s *Monument to the Third International*. I mixed the remaining bits with plaster and filled the mold.

I had used up all my plaster in filling the mold and I realized I could make use of some stuff I had been hoarding. I used some metallic spray paint I had because it seemed to match my attempts at emulating Tatlin.

This is all a long way of saying that I attempted to make an epic little mountain.

Err on the side of excess

Nick Herman



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RELAXATION BALLS are a series of small, round, translucent objects that Nick Herman has created. They are made of a special material that allows them to be used as stress balls or as decorative objects. The balls are available in a variety of colors and designs, and they are all made by hand. Herman has created a limited edition of four balls, and he has also created one artist proof. The balls are available for purchase on his website, and they are also available for purchase at his gallery.



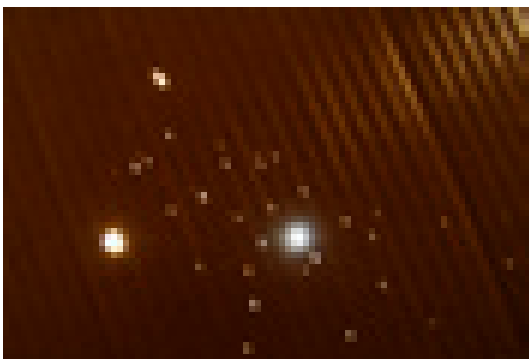
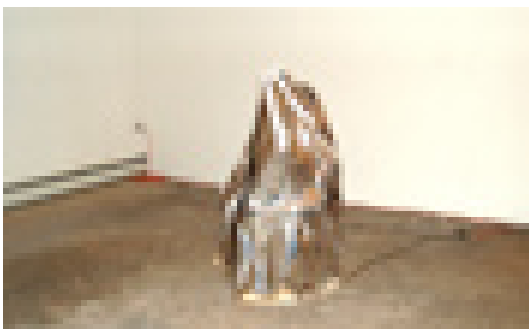
I don't have an image of the object before I destroyed it and mined it for its balls. The balls, which are like old fashioned sleigh bells, were an addition, I think, of Pilar, and were attached to the underside of Isami's magic mountain in clusters like fruit on the vine.

My only recourse, especially given the pervading winds of my life at the time, and the generally daunting composite block I was given, was to destroy the whole thing and try to learn to relax.

Pattern/Eruption

Khan Vho

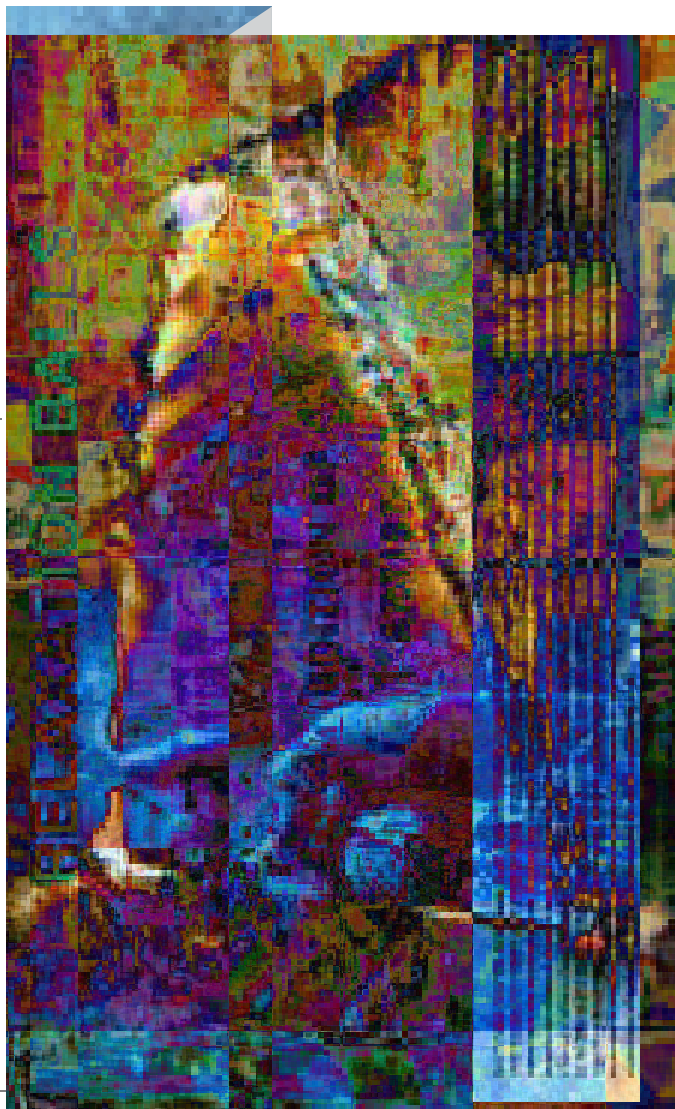


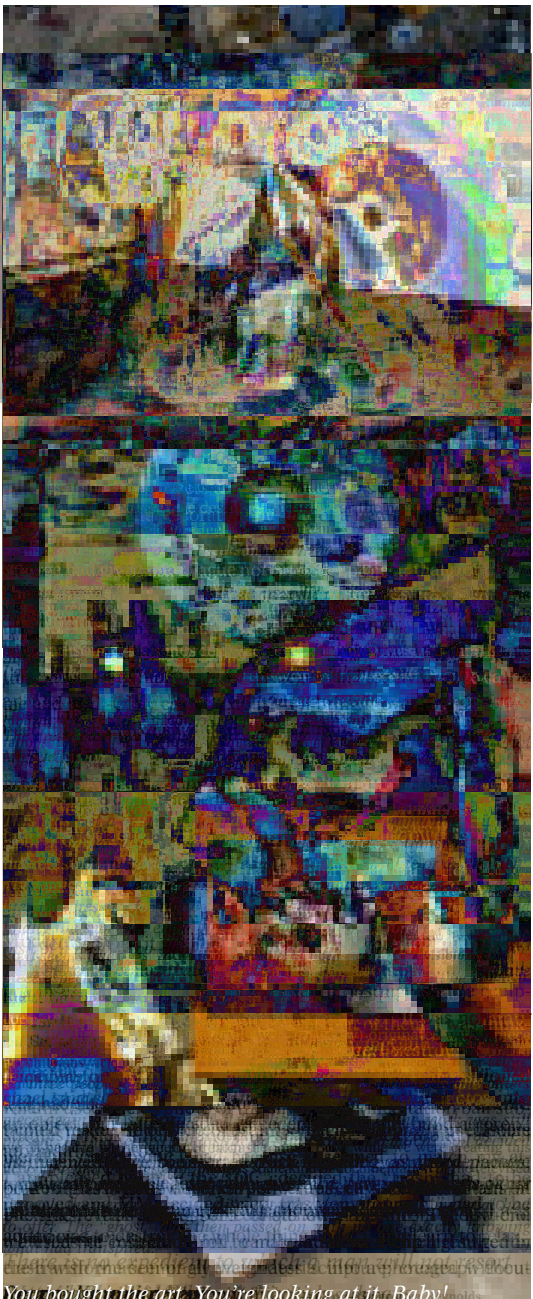


Khan used Nick's photo of the silver bells (meditation ball substitutes), Nick's hand, and blue-space like background, as well as the meditative soundtrack Nick provided, as the departure point of his own new work. A silver reflective zen mountain on one side reveals a cardboard constellation behind. The low-end materials of insulation foil, cardboard, and a clip light, gently clash with the seemingly weightless sculpture; created without extra structure and filled with light. —GR

Purtill Family Business

The House of One Book





You bought the art. You're looking at it. Baby!