



Garry Noland, "The One Thing," 2016. Polystyrene, corrugate with decollage, 21 1/4" x 19 1/4" x 3".
Image courtesy Haw Contemporary, photo: E.G. Schempf.



Marcie Miller Gross, "Gropius, Dessau, Graukarton," archival pigment print, cardboard folios, pins, 11" x 14", 91" x 51", 2016-17



Anne Lindberg, "work of the collective"

"Pattern Languages," Greenlease Gallery at Rockhurst University

by James Martin

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Art lovers seeking to understand the interests of some of Kansas City's leading artists would do well to spend time viewing the "Pattern Languages" exhibition at Rockhurst University's Greenlease Gallery. The show, one of many this year celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Charlotte Street Foundation, features impressive works by 14 Charlotte Street Foundation Fellows.

Kate Hackman, formerly Charlotte Street Foundation Artistic Director, curated a stellar exhibition. She asserts that "[The] intent here is not to argue that these works are first and foremost about pattern, or even to suggest that as one views them here ideas of pattern should be top of mind. Rather, the intent of this, and really any exhibition, is to offer one lens, or one point of entry, to a group of multi-faceted objects whose meanings and resonances are layered and will continue to shift over time and with every change of context."

Nonetheless, compelling themes emerge throughout the exhibition.

A number of works in the front room allude to architecture, building and growth: Anne Lindberg's elegantly spare "work of the collective," a series of 49 small drawings; James Woodfill's "Office Work," a hand-built table with 21 notebooks filled with collaged illustrations; "Gropius, Dessau, Graukarton" by Marcie Miller Gross, a cardboard folio and a photo documenting a large installation; and Glenn North's printed poetic sestina "On the Profundity of Patterns," which works as a literary representation of the Golden Ratio.

Other works in the first room connote more troubling aspects of human existence. In Sonie Ruffin's "Ghost Ships Human Cargo," images of ships imply the slave trade. A video by Jane Gotch and Elizabeth Stehling titled "481 Falls" features individuals falling through midair.

Unsettling layers of meaning also populate the second gallery. Viewed up close, Madeline Gallucci's frenetic and brightly hued "Sweeter Heat (Camouflage)" evokes the eye-confounding patterns of camouflage. Archie Scott Gobber's "Do Not Worry" also refers to camouflage, while the structure of the painting seems unfinished or perhaps coming apart. Works by Marcus Cain and Sonie Ruffin in the room allude to challenges faced by minorities.

Cain's spectacular paintings "Adamas I (for Senna)" and "Adamas II (for Ada)" honor the strength of two of the artist's female Native American ancestors. "Adamas" means unconquering or invincible in Greek, and the Latin form of the word is one of the roots for the word diamond. Ruffin's "Great Migration" brings to mind the mass movement of African Americans in the 20th century from the South to the North, but her reference to the Ghana textile market in her title suggests a different kind of migration — i.e., the history of the slave trade in Ghana.

In the final room of the exhibition, "Rosalinga" and "Mexi-cans" by Adolfo Martinez and "My Beautiful Wall" by David Ford recall the increasingly uneasy relationships between Mexicans and Americans (especially whites) that have developed during the Trump administration. Archie Scott Gobber's "Huh" expresses frustration and disbelief with our current political situation. In Shawn Bitters' three constructions, screenprinted images of meteor-like shapes appear to hurtle through empty space as if on apocalyptic collision courses with Earth. Garry Noland's two works entitled "The One Thing" epitomize his considerable skill with cardboard and decollage — the careful removal of layers to create striking patterns. They also ripple with great irony as these fragile paper works are encased within polystyrene, one of the most notoriously non-biodegradable materials on Earth.

A concern with pattern is just one thing these artists share. The impression one takes away from these remarkable creations is of anxiety and uneasiness about the current state of our world.

"Pattern Languages" continues through Oct. 28 at the Greenlease Gallery at Rockhurst University, 1100 Rockhurst Rd. Hours are noon to 5 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and by appointment, 816.501.4407. For more information, 816.501.4407 or www.rockhurst.edu

About The Author: James Martin



James Martin is an independent consultant, curator, educator and writer based in the Kansas City area. Most recently, he served as guest curator of "Chromaphilia," an exhibition of Kansas City Art Institute ceramics department alumni, on view at the KCAI Gallery through June 4. Since 2001, he has focused on working with art located outside of typical art venues, such as public art and corporate and hospital art collections.