

28

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the
bear
DELUXE

magazine

the
contemporary
art
issue



ORLO: 15 YEARS STRONG

Stephanie
pierce
Smith
Helen
Lessick
Jennifer
Mehra
Kendler
Ryan

Rig 023

Lucy
McRae

Tim
Maslen
Bart
Hess
Stacy
Levy

Linda
Gass
Melody
Fritz
Haeg
Josh
Keyes

SPECIAL CONTEMPORARY ART ISSUE

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Rare and Wonderful by Kristin Rogers Brown.
Back cover photo by Chris Bell.

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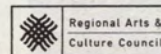
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CURATORS' NOTE

In planning a typical issue of The Bear Deluxe Magazine, the editors and designers look to present a rich blend of content; the best efforts are made to build high-quality stories, art and design that finds cultural and nontraditional connections to so-called "environmental issues." The normal mix includes two to four journalistic features, an artist profile, an interview, reviews, poetry, sometimes fiction and, of course, more than your usual amount of stand-alone visual art. This magazine blend allows each piece to reflect upon itself as well as others. To that end, we aspire to create a dynamic body of work that constitutes a piece of art unto itself. In this sense, every issue is an art issue.

Specially themed issues, however, creatively force the editors and designers out of their comfort zones, to narrow their focus, providing more exploration of one genre while pushing aside other content until future editions.

The Bear Deluxe Magazine #28, the Contemporary Art Issue, follows the special Fiction Issue released last fall and precedes the Creative Nonfiction Issue planned for fall 2009. And here, as is often the case, the best-laid plans evolve and mature to find final expression in the piece that you are holding today.

Originally TBD28 was to serve as survey of what's been happening in the art world relating to an environmental theme during the past two years and looking ahead two years. "Contemporary," that is, in the sense of what is current from a chronological standpoint. The problem? The more we looked, the more we saw. The view became numbing, in a good, unsettling way. In essence, there is so much going on today in this world of "environmental" or "sustainable" art that any sort of survey—less a 300-page tome—would fall short of presenting a complete picture. Nor did we feel comfortable knowing that we wouldn't possibly have the resources to track and review all the different projects, collaborations and individual artists working in the field in this country, let alone internationally.

With sound guidance from advisers more inside the world of contemporary art, we took a different tack. We decided to focus on a smaller number of artists and move from a survey to a series of snapshots. We settled on six individual artists and a series of three interviews (which turned into two

interviews and a curator's statement). As these artists spoke clearly to us, we wanted to share their voices with you. The issue would be rounded out by artists' sketches and musings (inspirations) in the front of the book, to provide a glimpse into artists' ideas at the source, and artists' bios and prompted textual responses in the back of the book to show the variety and complexity of thought (and synergies between them). We moved to let this issue become a megaphone for the artists' and curators' words, including as the primary textual elements artists' statements, interviews, and the prompted responses. The open-ended definition of "contemporary" we worked around was one that would describe contemporary art in the broader art world beyond just environmental art. Less museum, more gallery. Less institutional, more collaborative.

The artists and projects profiled here are ones that the magazine is proud to support and recognize, but they are certainly not "the winners" in a race to nominate the best environmental artists working today. Indeed, some were surprised to be included while others (if not most) would shrug off the label of "environmental artist" faster than a raincoat in July. What brings them together, beyond a loose thematic strand, is a strong focus on voice, aesthetic clarity, art-making ability and, to varying degrees, new or refined models of presentation. And together, they are a collection of small jewels, a wonder cabinet, small glimpses into an art moment.

As interviewee Stephanie Smith writes in the foreword to the recent traveling exhibition *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art* (see page 14), contemporary artists' takes on sustainable art have been spreading "conversational and relational ways of working that derive their meaning in part from interactive processes." And so, in that spirit of dialog and interaction, we encourage you to investigate further the artists and organizations presented here. And so, in that spirit of dialog, we encourage you to investigate further the artists and organizations presented here. Let us know what you think about this issue as well as trends in the field by emailing bear@orlo.org or posting to the new blog "Landscape and Canvas" (landscapeandcanvas.blogspot.com) designed around this release.

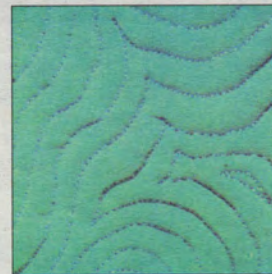
Kristin Rogers Brown
Tom Webb

We moved to let this issue become a megaphone for the artists' and curators' words.





“ Growing up in Southern California during the drought years taught me how



LINDA GASS

www.lindagass.com
Los Altos, California



opposite page
(full art at top, details below):

Dumbarton Crossing

28¾" x 29¼"

Quilted painting on silk

FIRST VEHICULAR CROSSING OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY

ALL PIECES ARE SILK CREPE DE CHINE PAINTED USING ACID DYES AND WATER-SOLUBLE RESIST. POLYESTER BATTING, SILK BROADCLOTH BACKING, SILK DUPIONI BINDING. MACHINE QUILTED WITH RAYON EMBROIDERY AND POLYESTER THREAD.

2006

this page:

Fields of Salt

29½" x 29½"

Quilted painting on silk

SALT PONDS OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY

2007

precious water is. ”

I make art inspired by my passion for environmental activism, especially with respect to land use and water issues in the American West. Growing up in Southern California during the drought years taught me how precious water is.

I make quilted paintings on silk. The paintings are aerial views of human marks on the landscape that affect our water resources, which I then quilt on my sewing machine. My work is informed by visits to a place and historical research based on writings, maps and aerial photographs.

I am drawn to working with fabric because

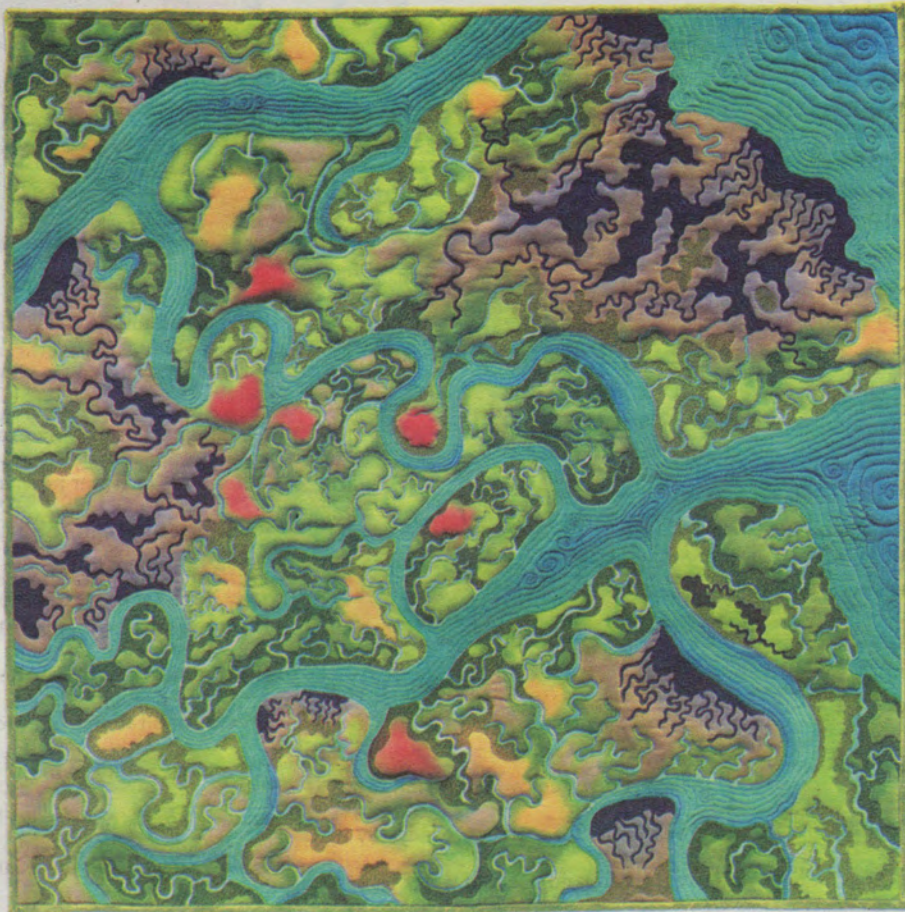
of its accessibility: It has a comfort and a familiarity for me and for people who view my work.

My latest series of work examines the fate of San Francisco Bay, a body of water near and dear to me, as I live only a few miles from it. The bay is an estuary, a partially enclosed body of water where salty seawater mixes with fresh river water. It supports more than 750 species of fish, animals and birds. The wetlands surrounding the bay provide habitat and filter toxic pollution. Lands bordering the bay are essential to the health of the region's fish and wildlife populations as well as the human residents, yet we have developed these lands in ways that threaten our collective health.

I use visual metaphor in my work, by way of color and composition, to explore the problems of wetlands that have been destroyed and to convey a sense of hope for their restoration. Some of my artworks are imagined landscapes of what parts of the bay will look like when they are restored to their wild and natural state.

My stitching lines add texture and information to my artworks. Sometimes the lines represent former shorelines and water channels in the bay, before any development was done. They tell a subtle story of destruction and survival by showing where the bay has been filled and

continued on page 46 >



“ I am drawn to working with fabric because of its accessibility:



where some of the original channels still persist today, despite being fragmented by dikes and highways.

My hope is to use the lure of beauty in my work to encourage people to look at the hard issues we face. I like to think of my artwork as a snapshot in time that I hope we will never return to. If all goes well in the coming years, much of this landscape will be radically transformed into a healthy, natural state. □



opposite page
(full art at top, details below):

Wetlands Dream Revisited

30" x 30"

Quilted painting on silk

IMAGINED LANDSCAPE, BLAIR ISLAND, SAN FRANCISCO

2008

this page

(full art at top, details below):

Threading the Past

29" x 29"

Quilted painting on silk

WETLANDS AND SALT PONDS OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY

2007

it has a comfort and a familiarity for me and for people who view my work. ”



Linda Gass (Los Altos, California)

Who are your favorite artists working today?

Olafur Eliasson, Chris Jordan, David Best, Jim Mason, Ichi Ikeda, David Chatt, Mark Brest Van Kempen, Buster Simpson, Andy Goldsworthy, Judith Content, Robin Cowley, and Miriam Nathan-Roberts.

How do you define "place-based" art?

Art that connects with the history and environment of a specific place and gives that place a voice.

Is your work intended to move a point of view or just engage the viewer?

Both—I try to engage the viewer through the beauty of my art to encourage them to examine what we have done to our environment and how we can do better.

From where do you draw your greatest inspiration?

The wilderness—those wild lands that have been barely touched by humans. It's where I go to recharge my batteries and find magic.

If any, what do you find to be the most common misconception of your work?

I'm not aware of any misconceptions from viewers of my work. However, I sometimes experience misconceptions when I verbally explain my work to people who have not seen it. People hear the word "quilt" and think bed quilts instead of the texture created by the process of quilting.



featured on pages 44-47

MEDIA: ART QUILTS

CURRENT EXHIBITION: SHE MADE IT!, OCT. 2008-MAR. 2009, LEONARD AND DAVID MCKAY GALLERY AT PASETTA HOUSE, HISTORY SAN JOSE, SAN JOSE, CA.

Textiles have been an important part of Linda Gass' life since childhood, when her grandmother taught her to sew doll clothes. In her early adult life, she took a detour through the software industry after earning degrees in mathematics and computer science. She returned to making textiles 14 years ago, this time for the wall, and now exhibits her work internationally in galleries and museums.

Lucy + Bart (The Netherlands)



Who are your favorite artists working today?

When we work together, we tend to rely on our instinct, so it's not about looking to what other people are doing but more about finding what comes instinctually to the both of us, and then see where that takes us.

How do you define "place-based" art?

Sorry, we don't understand.

Is your work intended to move a point of view or just engage the viewer?

We work in a primitive and limitless way working only on a Friday. Our intention is to get rid of all our creative energy that we did not exert during the week. So really it's for us.

From where do you draw your greatest inspiration?

Very ordinary objects and materials inspire us. If we are looking for new inspiration for a project, we go to the supermarket and have a look around. With our newfound material, we exploit its limits and explore its every possibility. It is amazing to see how a material can change in appearance and purpose, when you incorporate the skin and body.

If any, what do you find to be the most common misconception of your work?

That we use Adobe Photoshop.

Where do you see your work going in the next two years?

Nowhere, actually. We just want to make fun together in order to get new inspiration for our commercial solo work. We are trying hard not to make our cooperation turn into work. It has to remain fun. Playing must not become working. Because of this we are not really promoting ourselves in order to get clients. But, of course, every creator wants to be acknowledged for what he or she does. And so do we.

featured on pages 48-51

MEDIA: LOW-TECH PROSTHETIC ALTERNATIVES FOR HUMAN ENHANCEMENT

EXHIBITIONS: LUCYANDBART, BLOGSPOT.COM

Lucy McRae: I recently moved to Amsterdam from Eindhoven. I studied Interior Design at RMIT in Melbourne, Australia and after graduating moved to London to work mostly in architecture. I trained as a classical ballerina for 14 years prior to university, so inherently my work is fascinated with the human body. I am consulting in a far-future design research team at Philips Design as a body architect, developing projects that accelerate a vision for next-generation-sensitive technology mounted under the skin, augmented by human sensation, gesture and touch.

Bart Hess: In 2007, I graduated from the Design Academy in the man and identity department. This department looks at finding new materials, forecasting trends in fashion and culture. I made a collection of fake fur that touches on elements of fetishism, human instinct and new animal archetypes. With that collection I did not try to mimic real animal kingdoms but create a fantasy world of my own.