

MATTEAWAN
GALLERY

**between a place and candy:
new works in pattern + repetition + motif by fifteen artists**

Curated by Jason Andrew

March 8 - April 5, 2014

Opening reception Saturday, March 8, 6-9 pm

Samantha Bittman
Jeri Coppola
Rob de Oude
Hermine Ford
Tamara Gonzales

Libby Hartle
Brece Honeycutt
Mary Judge
John Silvis
Andrew Spence

Austin Thomas
Colin Thomson
Lindsay Walt
Jessica Weiss
Joan Witek

Beacon, New York—Matteawan Gallery is pleased to present *between a place and candy: new works in pattern + repetition + motif by fifteen artists* organized by independent curator Jason Andrew.

The title takes its clue from a phrase by Gertrude Stein, who over 100 years ago seeking a literary equivalent to cubism attempted in her prose to “banish memory” to “articulate a continuous present where writing recreates itself anew in each successive moment.” Stein’s writing, considered both repetitive and illogical, stretched the medium of fiction and reality, time and place.

The work of these fifteen artists should be seen through this early modernist lens. In some form or another artists seek to renew themselves through each attempt at the canvas. Whether consciously or unconsciously it is often through the use of pattern, repetition, and motif (or the combination of all three) that the artist returns almost instinctually to “articulate a continuous present.” It can also be argued that if an artwork remains “continuously present” it is neither finished nor unfinished. Perhaps this is the exact state at which these artists have arrived.

Between a place and candy brings together an experienced and clever bunch. While it may appear that each has devised a system or strategy to compose their work, they all retain a sense of improvisation in the process. In their individual way, each has learned to balance vagueness (romantic value) and clarity (classical value). The resulting work is pushed beyond a mere optical phenomenon. What we are witnessing here is a new chapter in the history associated with the Pattern and Decoration art movement of the 1970's.

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About the Artists:

Chicago-based painter, **Samantha Bittman** obscures or interrupts parts of woven patterns using painted grids, squares, and lines. A trained weaver, Bittman uses rigorous visual systems of lines and labyrinths that keep one's perception in constant flux. Like all good painting, her works literally weave layers of cognition/experience with those of image/structure. This combination of tediously executed patterns and a seemingly spontaneous use of a brush loaded in color is a process quite uniquely her own.

Jeri Coppola investigates narrative and memory. In her photographs, Coppola often gives physical landmarks their own symbols and language: houses become bodies, trees become thoughts, oceans become the rise and fall of a breath. Everything holds memory and for Coppola these memories have both psychological and physical dimensions. Whether recalling memories of family photos or NASA images of the moon, memory invades consciousness when moving through the landscape. Her photographs of the sea are always the same: a repetitive motion of waves on shore and on each other. Just as hearing a word repeated over and over changes how it sounds, repeating images change the story being told over time.

Rob de Oude creates abstract paintings built from the most basic visual element, the line. In the studio he has devised handmade rigs that allow him to precisely measure and systematically paint row upon row of lines. By introducing shifting angles and layers of new color, he establishes self-generating rhythmic patterns and a relentless sense of motion. The layered tightly spaced bands of color and collisions of angled lines produce changing optical effects, including moiré patterns that vibrate his surfaces with an underlying energy.

Hermine Ford makes paintings using visual material from a wide variety of natural and man-made sources including direct observation, topography, cartography, textiles, and mosaics. Over the years, she has spent long periods of time in relatively uninhabited spaces on the Atlantic seaboard, and also long visits to Rome. These locations and their varying 'textures' are the subject in her art.

Tamara Gonzales paints to the optical extreme through her unique process of spray painting through found lace tablecloths, doilies, and curtains. Vibrant and witty, layered and textured, the artist combines large gesture with tight patterns to create compositions that at once mimic the grand heroic gestures of the postwar painters, while capturing an all-over free spirit found in the graffiti that appears daily on the streets near her Bushwick studio.

For **Libby Hartle**, the meaning of a drawing comes from the process used to make it combined with the look that process achieves. Her work develops from drawing open patterns over and over until only a solid field of shiny graphite remains. She then cuts and reassembles the drawing into geometric shapes and patterns. The time spent working and reworking each stage of the drawing, and the imperfect attempts to piece the cut up bits back together, ordering unruly compulsion through form, cannot be separated from her (relatively) finished works.

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Brece Honeycutt's recent series of unfolded eco-prints are made from repurposed cast-off textiles dyed naturally with plants gathered from the land around her studio in Western Massachusetts. While dying these textiles, she folds leaves and other materials to create natural prints. Like many traditional weavers' patterns that have a specific reference to the locations and histories of the peoples that made them, Honeycutt's works spark a conversation about the history of the textile, the object, and the living present of the environment around her.

Mary Judge builds upon classical motifs and proportions in her work. Inspired by the architecture of ancient ritual spaces, Judge calculates the essential elements offering only the most minimal in the mystic image-space diagrams that are her paintings. A refinement of media and form, her works build upon the process of automatic drawing and structured patterns that she has devised and refined as personal vocabulary. Color is added to accent and augment. Symmetry is present, but often subverted as a way of keeping things open. There's a relationship to landscape: just as an architect is attentive to the topography of a building site, her work is attentive to a subconscious landscape where subtlety and simplicity make up the drama. Mining her long history and love of working with paper and pigment, this new work "travels to the same place" both psychically and cognitively, moving motifs from mind to paper and canvas.

John Silvis uses car imagery as existential metaphor. Referencing Andy Warhol's crash photo silk-screens and John Chamberlain's large twisted car sculptures, Silvis' interest in the car as a cultural and historical signifier sits between avant-garde and postmodern modalities, juxtaposing the enduring promise of the machine and its ultimate failure as redeemer. Through installations, sculptures, and photo collages incorporating spray paint, photography, felt and tape, Silvis seemingly sights societies continuing saga with car culture and its ongoing romance with escapism.

Andrew Spence makes emblematic semi-abstractions-distillations of observed phenomena keyed to a hard, bright palette and characterized by densely worked surfaces. They are a mix of Suprematist purity and representational motifs that play on abstraction versus design, process versus hard edge. In most of Spence's work the artist identifies an object then repeatedly simplifies it to its very essence. The process generates something new but not cryptic as his scrupulous attention to surface and color is so very enticing.

Austin Thomas works in collage, sculpture, and social architecture with an over all sense of simplicity. Her varied performative actions and artworks are broadly described as delineating and creating "social sculpture." Thomas's sketchbooks, are deceptively delicate studies, caught sometimes in the act of being done or undone. Whimsical in their use of repetitive patterns, they explore enduring thoughts about the subconscious mind at play.

Colin Thomson derives his compositions from a mixture of graphics and indigenous patterns that recall early pictographs or ancient hieroglyphics. His paintings are a playful yet focused investigation of the relationship between figure and ground, color and drawing. There's a cartoon reference that makes the difficult appear easy. The paintings combine a dissonant vocabulary of

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color, peculiar form, and differing modes of representation into a unified visual entity, creating ambiguities that require the viewer to engage in a constant process of visual and conceptual adjustment. At their best, these pictures balance the phenomenal, the analytic, and the intuitive.

Lindsay Walt is interested in ornamental arts. Beading, lacework, as well as Islamic and Delft tiles, Mogul paintings and children's string games, all come to mind when interacting with Walt's paintings. Her recent work shares an affinity for Chinese landscape painting where the space left empty is as important as the mark left in. A modern impressionist, her tiny brush strokes weave patterns that toss and turn on one another forming elaborate configurations that seem to transcend the very space they are programmed to inhabit. In her paintings formalism, gesture, restraint and precision coexist to convey a sublime inner landscape.

Jessica Weiss has searched for a mark that felt true and in keeping with her fundamental abstract aesthetic. This preoccupation led her to discover wallpaper as both material and the gesture from which she currently draws inspiration. Enamored by the way wallpapers mimetic elements seamlessly merged into abstraction, Weiss silk screens patterns then toys with their motifs. Wallpaper, which is literally a piece of cultural fabric, has become a major source of both content and formal concerns in her paintings.

Joan Witek has used the color black on canvas and paper for her entire life. Appearing as simple and easily grasped, the work presents an ongoing language of proportion and meaning. Black is usually considered the absence of color: it is severe, rigorous, associated with death, or depression or repression. But as Lilly Wei has written: "Witek plays these oppositions in her work: black being ascetic and alluring, meditative and expressive, flawless and flawed, fierce and demure, a distinct unequivocal presence, yet subtle, elusive."

About the Curator:

Jason Andrew is an independent scholar, curator, and producer. Specializing in the field of Post War American Art, Mr. Andrew is currently the Manager of the Estate of Abstract Expressionist painter Jack Tworokov. He has published extensively on the artist and is currently editing the catalogue raisonné of paintings by the artist. A prominent figure in the Bushwick, Brooklyn art scene, Mr. Andrew is the co-founder of Norte Maar, a non-profit now celebrating its 10th Anniversary encouraging, promoting and presenting collaborative projects in the arts.

For his curatorial projects Mr. Andrew was voted "Best Exhibitionist" (2011) by the *Village Voice*, and was a feature in *L Magazine's* "Who Made the New Brooklyn" (2011). From 2009-2011 he co-founded Storefront with Deborah Brown. Last year he partnered with Julian Jimarez Howard and John Silvis to open Outlet Fine Art. His exhibitions have been critically reviewed by *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Art News*, and *The New York Times* among others.

Guarding against special interests in any particular style or genre, his curatorial projects bridge gaps left in art history and reflect the creative imagination of the past, present and future. Recent

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curatorial projects include: *To be a Lady: a century of women in the arts* (1285 Avenue of the Americas Gallery / Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Singapore); the retrospective exhibition *Jack Tworkov: Against Extremes / Five Decades of Painting* (UBS Art Gallery / Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 2009); *Jack Tworkov: Accident of Choice, the artist at Black Mountain College 1952* (Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, 2011).

Mr. Andrew is a patron of young artists and consultant to collectors. He frequently lectures on the creative imagination and its relationship to collaboration within the various disciplines of Art.

He currently lives in Bushwick, Brooklyn.