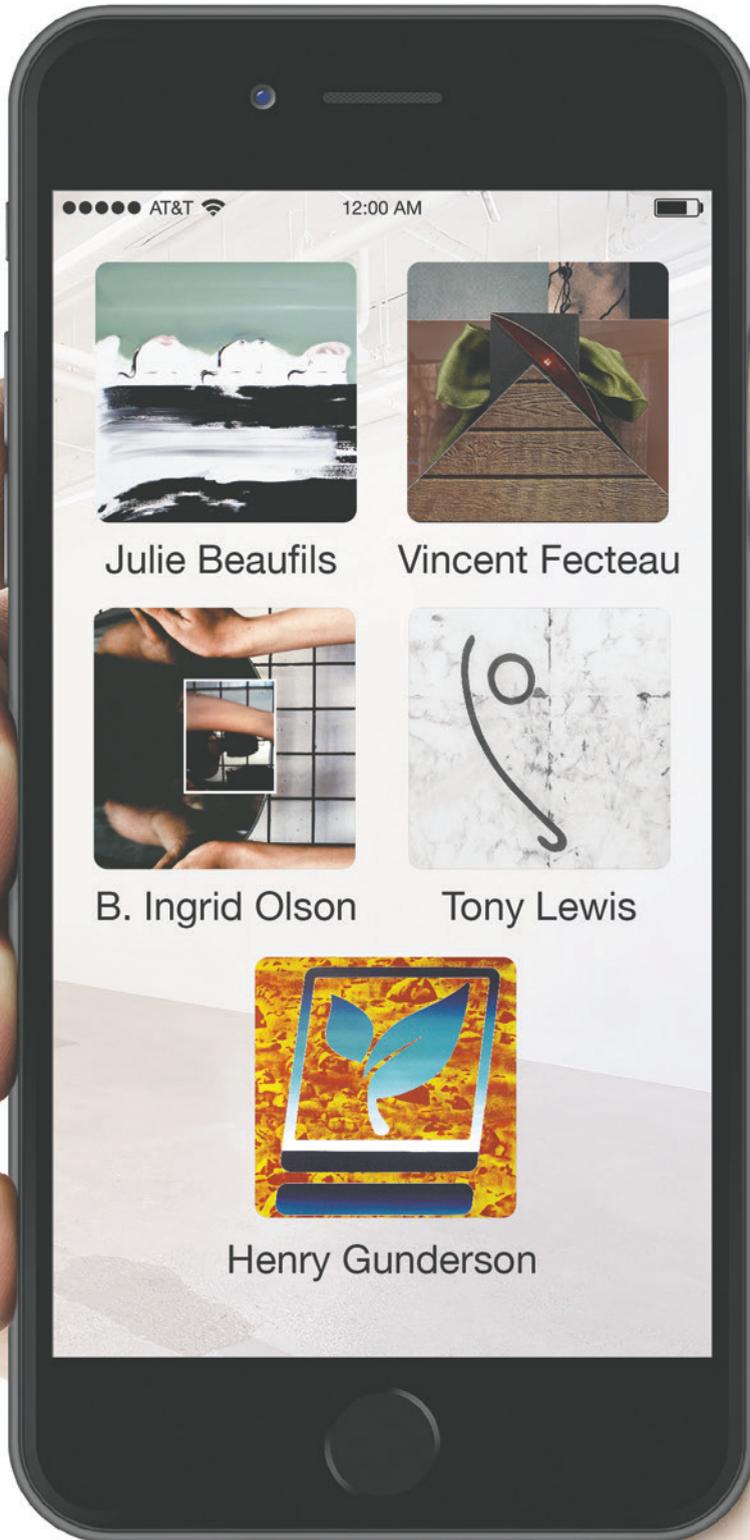


# Synecdoche

July 1 - August 22 2015



**JESSICA  
SILVERMAN  
GALLERY**

# Synecdoche

Julie Beaufile  
Vincent Fecteau  
Henry Gunderson  
Tony Lewis  
B. Ingrid Olson

## Tickle our brain

A zero is there can you see it? It's real, but it's just a place holder where presence  
materializes as a numeral of naught. Now double it and how can you see. . .

What is that? Ah epistemology. Yes the Greeks, for they had words for everything. Synecdoche  
for simultaneous understanding. Now considered a part representing a whole

Curiously looking back at you now, but no you're the viewer and you over there  
you're the maker who takes apart what used to be there

Your picture feels whole in incompleteness, a body described only by legs,  
and even those are turned upside down

How did you figure out that making persuades our senses  
to recognize more than what is

Can you consider presence in absence when narrative flows  
and then opens into blankness, absent vowels, truant bodies

To distill in limited narrative a fullness that we must fill in  
fragments of the familiar, a language changing direction

No hierarchies here, birds flow over and under fields of naught  
picking apart the expected

Curious is it not, that when we can't see it, we perceive even more  
Ah that's what you do. Who are you?

## Signs and Wonders

By Joseph Akel

In his fourth-century BC text, *Rhetoric*, Aristotle set forth the conditions for the use of rhetoric as a means of producing persuasive arguments. Language, if deployed with ill-intention, possessed the intoxicating power to confound and cloud judgment. However, Aristotle also believed it to be a method through which to strike at deeper universal truths. Spoken with good intention, language could, for the Olympian-minded Greeks, be a means by which the speaker – and his/her listener – could grapple with the divine.

For those seeking to commune with the Gods, the principle rhetorical trope by which deductive intellection could be achieved was metaphor, of which synecdoche - from the ancient Greek word for “simultaneous understanding” – was a subset. A figure of speech in which a prominent feature of something is used to refer to the whole, common synecdoches include “all hands on deck,” “the party was full of suits” or “the strings were the highlight of the performance.” According to Aristotle, a synecdoche is a deeply insightful technique through which to learn because one extends a *fortiori* information from the specific to comprehend the whole.<sup>i</sup> If we understand that “grey” is synecdochic for old age, we have understood something about what old age entails. Language then, in Aristotle’s conception of it, operates as a constellatory field of symbolic linkages made between entities, a shared horizon of specific points whose only boundary is demarcated by the mercurial, culturally specific meanings we apply to them. Indeed, as Michel Foucault observed, “At the base of spoken language, as with writing, what we discover is the rhetorical dimension of words: that freedom of the sign to align... upon some internal element, upon some adjacent point, upon

some analogous figure.”<sup>ii</sup>

For the five artists exhibited in the show “Synecdoche,” at Jessica Silverman Gallery, the works of art operates as a visual analogue to Aristotle’s notion of the synecdochic trope as a means for elucidation. Adopting Foucault’s position that “In any representation, the mind can attach itself, and attach a verbal sign, to one element of that representation,” it is understood that in “Synecdoche,” each of the works examine the relationship between images and signification in a manner that connects the artistic gesture with a critical investigation of signification.

In the case of New York-based artist Henry Gunderson’s large-scale paintings, the dominant cultural iconography and idioms that capitalize upon phrases such as “organic” and “natural” come under scrutiny. *Oasis* (2015) is a highly stylized image of a leaf, reminiscent of symbols used to identify “green technology,” which is set against a rocky, Martian-like landscape. Created through a multi-step process inspired by the application of decals to industrial machines, Gunderson’s paintings refer to the constructed relationship that exists between advertising and images, with Gunderson actively adopting the visual language of corporate branding to call attention to the artifice of their union.

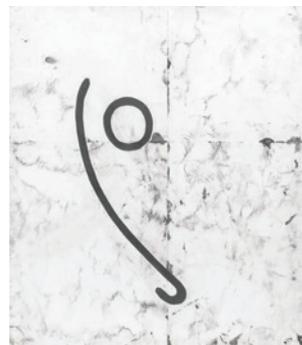
Working within a conceptual framework that calls to mind Roland Barthes’s structuralist examination of



Henry Gunderson  
*Oasis*, 2015

popular culture, Gunderson's paintings aim to foreground the visual mechanism linking corporate concepts with images. And in that vein, Gunderson's neo-pop sensibility and his interest in the subversion of commercial iconography draws obvious parallels to the likes of Andy Warhol and Michael Majerus. As with Warhol and Majerus, Gunderson's paintings simultaneously amplify the ubiquity of the corporate logo, while they also strip it of its potency and challenge its original meanings by placing it in the realm of a new visual vocabulary. Rather than contracting the linkage between image and concept, Gunderson very much expands it.

If Gunderson incorporates symbolic forms in order to subvert their meaning, Tony Lewis's oversized depictions of stenographic markings call attention to their opacity. The Chicago-based artist's grand pencil and graphite drawings, which are reminiscent of the Syriac or Aramaic alphabet, use Gregg shorthand script, a highly specialized language that is largely confined to courtrooms and journalists' notebooks. Works such as *Automatic* (2015) reveal the



Tony Lewis  
*Automatic*, 2015

literal meaning of this code in their title, but suggest much more by placing the greatly enlarged forms over four uneven quadrants of well-worked surfaces covered in graphite powder. The shorthand gesture becomes a figure against an abstract ground in which there is glorious tension between line and language. As Lewis puts it, "I'm at a place where each drawing is a word, each word is a potential drawing and I'm using colloquial structures to organize them."<sup>iii</sup>

Using the visual component of linguistic

forms to draw attention to the underlying power inscribed within them, Lewis's text-originated images posit an understanding of language as a force capable of individual dislocation as much as assimilation. Indeed, Lewis's shorthand works underscore what Glenn Ligon has identified in relation to his worn work as the "cultural presuppositions that come out of thinking about translation." However, whereas Ligon's texts play directly upon our ready apprehension of the terms deployed, Lewis's literal meanings reside with the revelation of the title on the wall label. So the viewer is left to a very aesthetic appreciation of the linguistic marking – one in which the content of the term is given over to the beauty of the mark.



Julie Beaufils  
*Love the view*, 2015

Meanwhile, for Paris-based artist Julie Beaufils, the limitations of language in relation to the body serve as one departure point. In her oil paintings, Beaufils adopts and conquers the violent surreal sensibility of Rene Magritte's *Le Viol* and the sadomasochistic tropes of Anne Desclos's *The Story of O*. In *Love the View* (2015), for example, Beaufils surrounds disparate delicately rendered figurative elements – a solitary gazing eye, tongue-licked lips, the curving buttocks of a crouching figure – with fields of monochromatic brushstrokes that recall Yves Tanguy's restrained vistas.

Beaufils's paintings engage with the female form in order to highlight the synecdochic connection between fetishized feminine anatomy and the greater narrative of unfulfilled sexual desire.

By depicting multiple scenes within a single composition, Beaufils's paintings adopt the structure of comic books as well as Skype pop up windows. They also evoke the non-linear narratives that so often characterized surrealist works such as Andre Breton's novel *Nadja*, which begins with the lines "Who am I?"<sup>iv</sup> Beaufils's paintings suggest such an exploration of identity and gesture toward the embodied whole via the dismembered figure in a manner that refuses the objectification of the surrealists.<sup>v</sup> Indeed, Beaufils asserts her subjectivity and wryly acknowledges the presence of voyeurs with titles such as *Love the view* and *My OWN own*.

The photographic collages of B. Ingrid Olson also explore the observation and self-reflexivity inherent in the production of artistic works. In a *marker of space between*



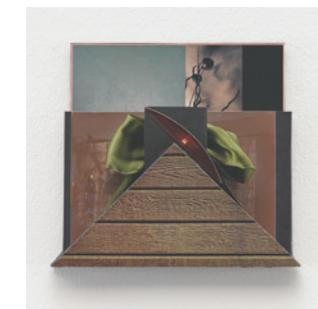
B. Ingrid Olson  
*a marker of space between arms and hands was hands*, 2015

*arms and hands* (2015), Olson follows a multi-step process whereby she first photographs herself – never in full profile, often holding a mirror in which she is partially reflected – and then subsequently re-photographs the resulting image. In essence, these are visual palimpsests in which Olson's process erases the standard markers of depth and perspective – traditional indicators of a photograph's claim to truthful representation – and challenge the

indexicality attributed to medium.

In many regards, Olson's images share a conceptual lineage with the aloof self-portraiture of Claude Cahun and the liminal collages of Robert Heinecken. As with these artists, Olson's photographs present a series of mise-en-abyme perspectives that reveal multiple realities. Olson's images both open up access to the traditional notions of the photograph – as wholly representative of the object being depicted – but also transform the medium into a synecdochic gesture in which the parts stand in for the whole.

The same can also be said of Vincent Fecteau, a San Francisco-based artist whose work often seems to stand in for a larger realm. "Language is a major part of the way we negotiate the world, but it's not the



Vincent Fecteau  
*Untitled*, 2014

only way we think," says Fecteau. "The world around us, even our emotional or psychological world, can be experienced as a continually shifting arrangement of shapes, colors, spaces, textures."<sup>vi</sup>

With his wall-mounted, three-dimensional collage, *Untitled* (2014), Fecteau brings together disparate elements such as a green bow tie, a close-up of wood grain and magazine clippings to form an assemblage that is both symmetrical and off balance in more ways than one. Fecteau's work insists on its formal and geometric dimensions and it fights against the linguistic and illustrative, but it nevertheless has a strangely synecdochic relationship to the real. Like the crown that stands in for the king or the sails that refer to the whole ship, so Fecteau's collages distill and epitomize a universe that is simultaneously odd and just right.

During the course of his investigations

into Aristotle's writings on metaphor, Umberto Eco posited a notion of the synecdochic as being both a mechanism for the unison of two terms on grounds of shared similarity as well as a process of transference – and thus displacement – between them.<sup>vii</sup> Eco's reading of synecdochic function necessarily implied that it operated dialectically – that the union of terms both added to, and subtracted from, the original meaning of both. In other words, the linguistic act that Aristotle understood as leading towards generative comparison, also necessarily entailed, through Eco's interpretation, a degree of antagonism, with one reference necessarily coloring the meaning of the other.

In the case of the five artists included in "Synecdoche," it can be said that the Aristotelian metaphorical device, when understood to operate upon visual grounds, highlights the linguistic systems at work in image production, touching upon the fundamental operations of signification and aesthetic creation. And indeed, such works look to highlight a corollary – whether embracing or refuting it - between the work of the artist and the structures of language. However, far from succumbing to the mantle of meaning – of "how things should be read" – each artist instead expands upon it, and in many cases redefines the linkages made between the visual works they create and the very words used to describe them. These works, as such, chafe against meaning, resisting easy interpretation; each, in their own way, reconsiders the relationship between image and attribution.

## NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, (trans.) Kennedy, George A., (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), III.10, 1410b14f.

<sup>ii</sup> Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things*, (trans.), (London: Tavistock, 1970), 113-4.

<sup>iii</sup> "Tony Lewis's Epigrammatic Abstractions" [InsideWithin.com/TonyLewis.html](http://InsideWithin.com/TonyLewis.html)

<sup>iv</sup> André Breton, *Nadja*, (trans.), Richard Howard, (New York, Grove Press, 1960), 157.

<sup>v</sup> Ileana Alexandra Orlich. "Surrealism and The Feminine Element: André Breton's *Nadja* and Gellu Naum's *Zenobia*," *Philologica Jassyensia*, An II, Nr. 2, 2006, p. 213-224.

<sup>vi</sup> Bruce Hainley. "Back to Front: Interview with Vincent Fecteau" *Frieze* no. 131, May 2010.

<sup>vii</sup> Umberto Eco. *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, (Indiana University Press; Reprint edition, 1986), 91-93.

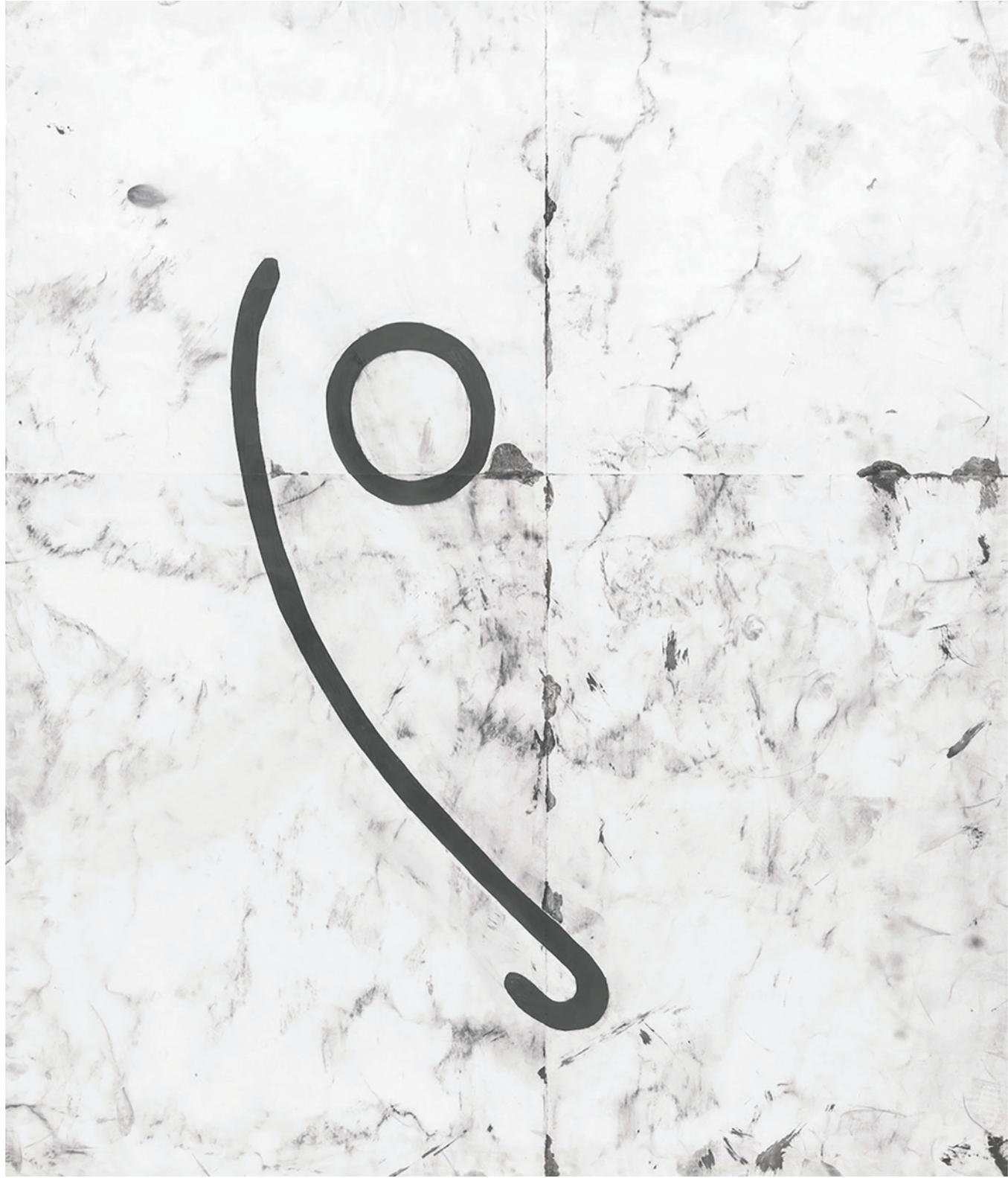


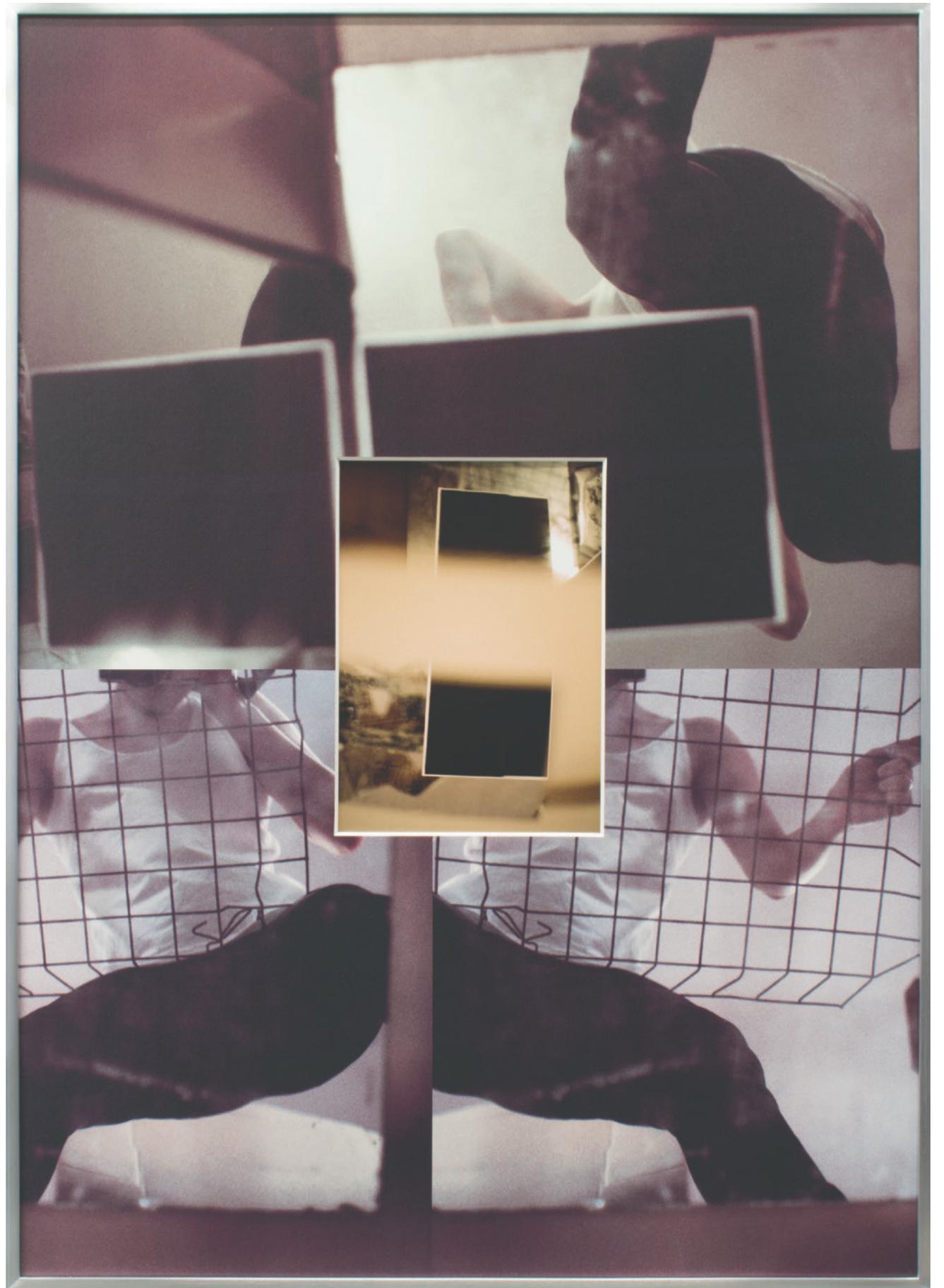
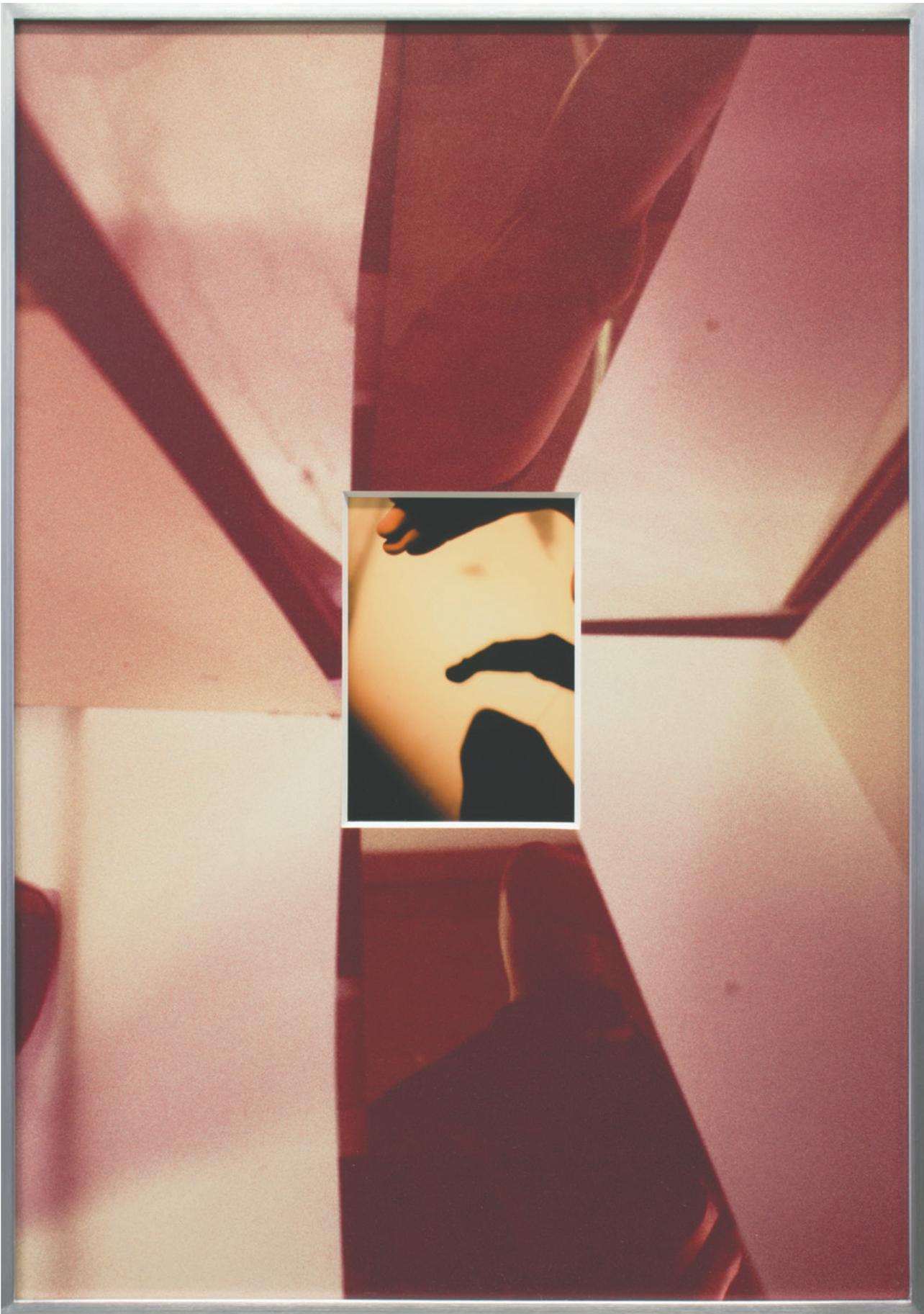
















Julie Beaufils  
*Love the view*, 2015  
Oil on canvas  
52 x 80 inches



Julie Beaufils  
*Touching It*, 2015  
Oil on canvas  
52 x 80 inches



Tony Lewis  
*Automatic*, 2015  
Pencil, graphite powder and tape on paper  
83 3/4 x 71 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist; Shane Campbell Gallery,  
Chicago; Massimo De Carlo, London/Milan



Tony Lewis  
*Chunk*, 2015  
Pencil, graphite powder and tape on paper  
83 3/4 x 71 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist; Shane Campbell Gallery,  
Chicago; Massimo De Carlo, London/Milan



Julie Beaufils  
*From sweet to sleep*, 2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
52 x 80 inches



Julie Beaufils  
*My OWN own*, 2015  
Oil on canvas  
55 x 90 inches



B. Ingrid Olson  
*Holding heel, her sweat, backlit shadow*, 2015  
Inkjet print, and UV inkjet printed matboard in  
aluminum frame  
20 x 14 inches



B. Ingrid Olson  
*Square laid spread*, 2015  
Inkjet print, and UV inkjet printed matboard in  
aluminum frame  
34 x 24 inches



Vincent Fecteau  
*Untitled*, 2014  
Mixed media collage  
5 3/4 x 6 1/4 x 1 1/2 inches  
Collection of Joachim and Nancy Hellman  
Bechtle, promised gift to Berkeley Art  
Museum. Image courtesy of Vincent Fecteau  
and Matthew Marks Gallery.



Henry Gunderson  
*Bio Degradation*, 2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
60 x 96 inches



Henry Gunderson  
*Oasis*, 2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
48 x 60 inches



B. Ingrid Olson  
*a marker of space between arms and hands  
was hands*, 2015  
Inkjet print, and UV inkjet printed matboard in  
aluminum frame  
20 x 14 inches



B. Ingrid Olson  
*Diagram*, 2014  
Ceramic, ink, wood, self-hardening clay,  
plaster, powder-coated steel  
96 x 13 x 13 inches

## Julie Beaufiles

Julie Beaufiles (b.1987, Sèvres, France) has been included in exhibitions at Foundation d'entreprise Ricard (Paris) and the 59th Salon de Montrouge (Montrouge). This summer, she will be included in group shows at Thomas Duncan Gallery (Los Angeles), Parkview (Los Angeles) and Shanaynay Galerie (Paris). Beaufiles lives and works in Los Angeles, CA and Paris, France.

## Vincent Fecteau

Vincent Fecteau (b.1969, Islip, NY) received his B.A. from Wesleyan University. His work is in the collections of MoMA, MOCA (Los Angeles), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), Aspen Art Museum, Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, and SFMOMA. Fecteau has had numerous solo exhibitions at institutions including, The Art Institute of Chicago, Inverleith House (Edinburgh), SFMOMA and has an upcoming solo exhibition at the Kunsthalle Basel in Summer 2015. He was featured in Whitney Biennial of 2002 and 2012. Fecteau lives and works in San Francisco, CA.

## Henry Gunderson

Henry Gunderson (b.1990, San Francisco, CA) received his B.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute. He has participated in group exhibitions at Ever Gold Gallery (San Francisco), James Graham and Sons (New York), Harbor Gallery (New York), and Show and Tell Gallery (Toronto). He has an upcoming solo exhibition at 247365 (New York). Gunderson lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

## Tony Lewis

Tony Lewis (b.1986, Los Angeles, CA) received his M.F.A. from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has participated in group exhibitions at the Hyde Park Art Center (Chicago), CAB (Belgium) and was included in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. Currently, Lewis has his first museum solo exhibition on view at MOCA (Cleveland). He exhibited at Art Basel Statements 2015. In September 2015, Lewis will inaugurate Shane Campbell Gallery's newest space with a solo exhibition. Lewis lives and works in Chicago, IL.

## B. Ingrid Olson

B. Ingrid Olson (b.1987, Denver, Colorado) received her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has had solo exhibitions at Simone Subal Gallery (New York), cura.basement (Rome), Document (Chicago), and a group exhibition at MAXXI Museo delle Arti del XXI secolo (Rome). Olson lives and works in Chicago, IL.

## Rena Rosenwasser

Rena Rosenwasser was raised in New York City. She studied English literature at Sarah Lawrence (B.A. 1971) and Mills College (M.A., 1977). In 1974 she co-founded Kelsey Street Press, which is one of the longest-lived independent publishers of literature by women. Her poetry publications include Elevators (Kelsey St. Press); Dittany (Taking Flight) (Mayacamas Press); Unplaced.Place (Leave Books). She has collaborated with several artists; the most recent is painter Kate Delos, Isle (Kelsey St. Press). She and her spouse Penny Cooper live in the Berkeley hills.

## Joseph Akel

Joseph Akel was born in New Zealand. He received his M.A. in art history from Oxford University and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Rhetoric Department at University of California, Berkeley. His art criticism regularly appears in Artforum, Frieze, and The New York Times, among others. He has contributed essays to monographs and exhibition catalogues, most recently for Doug Aitken's forthcoming retrospective at Frankfurt's Schirn Kunsthalle. Akel lives and works in New York and San Francisco.

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