

Emil Lukas



Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1964, Emil Lukas has exhibited throughout the United States and abroad. Solo museum shows include “Emil Lukas: Connection to the Curious” at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, CT (2005); “Emil Lukas” at The Weatherspoon Museum, Greensboro, NC (2005); “Things with Wings,” The Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA (2005); and “Moderate Climate and the Bitter Bison” at the Hunterdon Museum, Hunterdon, NJ (2008). In 2016, a solo exhibition of his work was held at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA. Lukas’ work has been featured in group shows at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1995), Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (1996); Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (1998); Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City (1999); American Academy, Rome (2000); The Drawing Center, New York (2002); and SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah (2012-2013). His work is in important private and public collections, including the Panza Collection, Italy; the Dakis Joannou Collection, Greece; the

Anderson Collection, Stanford University, California; Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, California; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; the UBS Art Collection; and Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina.

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Emil Lukas
Selected Press

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Baumgardner, Julie. "An Eye-Bending New Series of Paintings, Without Paint." *www.nytimes.com* (*The New York Times Style Magazine*), 4 January 2017.

T THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE



Two works from the artist Emil Lukas's new "Tubes" series. Courtesy of Sperone Westwater

When the artist Emil Lukas decamped from his Harlem studio about 25 years ago, he landed in Stockertown, Penn. — only 90 minutes from downtown Manhattan, but remote enough to include an impressive compound with a barn for painting and an industrial space for large-scale projects. "I moved out here because I wanted to work and be left alone," says the 52-year-old multimedia artist, who considers himself a painter but uses paint about as often as he receives visitors (which is to say, rarely).

Currently, the industrial space — a 14,000-square-foot former factory that dates back to the turn of the 20th century — houses new "paintings" about to be unveiled for the first time this week at his longtime gallery, Sperone Westwater. Lukas is best known for his "Thread" series: canvases overlaid with multicolor woven polyester, using a loom system nailed into the frame, ultimately achieving a unique luminosity. "There has to be an optical excitement that's transmitted from the artist to the viewer," he says. "A 'Thread' becomes more special than just thread."

The show will debut expansions of his "Threads," along with "Stacks" (multilayered towers that are, he explains, "all connected conceptually, physically and visually"), "Bubble Wrap" (an updated take on a series that began in the late 1980s) and his magnum opus, "Liquid Lens," an experiment using tubes from

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last year that's quickly become his latest artistic fascination. "In a weird way, I consider these paintings, because they're a warped surface that been manipulated and altered to create this event," Lukas says of all of his series.



Clockwise from left: Lukas with one of his "Thread" paintings; a detail shot of a "Tube" work; the former factory in rural Pennsylvania where Lukas's studio is located. Courtesy of Sperone Westwater

At first, "Liquid Lens," a 12-by-9-by-3-foot behemoth of welded aluminum tubes, might appear to fall into the realm of George Rickey and other practitioners of kinetic art. ("Everyone loves them; I'm O.K. with them," Lukas quips.) But there's a key difference: "I wanted to make a kinetic sculpture that moves with you but has no kinetic parts," he explains. In creating "Liquid Lens," the first and largest exploration in what has become his "Tubes" series, Lukas concerned himself with the tricks and mechanics of one- and two-point perspective — much as a traditional painter would. Depending on where one stands, sight lines and shadows connect quite literally to the viewer. "People get reconnected to what's on the other side. They move with you, they follow you, in a way," he says. "When you look at something, something has to happen. That's what happens in my work."

Lukas's work may seem conceptual, but he avoids placards or lengthy essays explicating how to experience his pieces. "A painting needs to reveal itself. I think it's generous to leave a work at a point where someone can look at it and figure out what it is, no explanations," he says. "Let it be the way it is. Anyone curious enough can find the truth of the whole thing." For Lukas, who has spent much of his career attempting to understand, interpret and play with the mechanics of the human eye, that truth often lies in the space between perception and optical illusion. "You really just have a few ideas, it's all you've got," he says. "The reason why they're the few ideas you have is because they don't let go of you."

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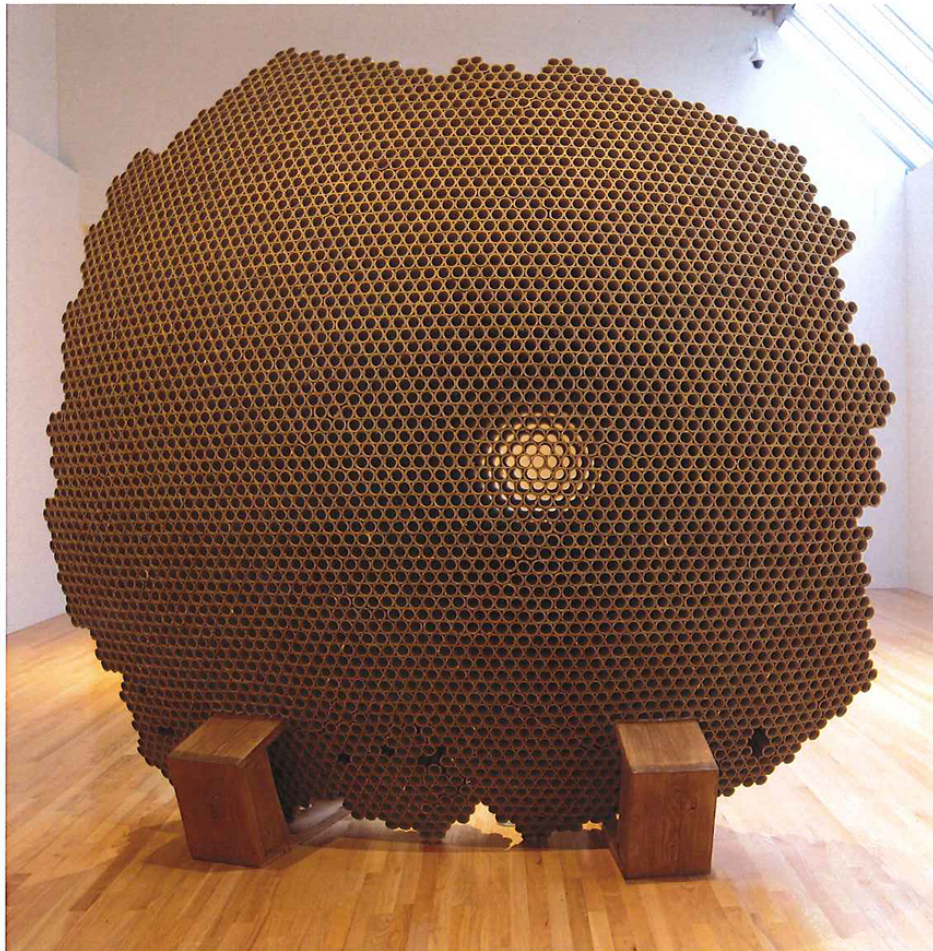
Emil Lukas. Exhibition brochure. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2016.



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EMIL LUKAS

Morris Gallery
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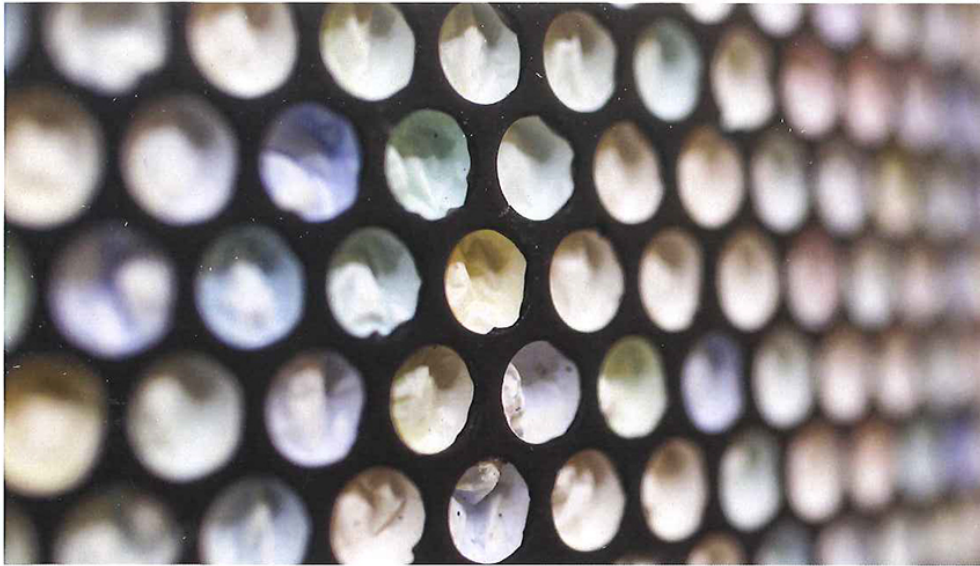
Installation view

The Morris Gallery was a classroom and studio long before it was a site for contemporary exhibitions. Generations of PAFA's artists took full advantage of the sunlight streaming in from the north-facing skylights to explore the translation of perceptual experience into drawings and paintings. Emil Lukas pulls from this same pursuit, as well as his lifelong fascination with the artistic potential of everyday materials, for his Morris Gallery installation.

Lukas remembers as a first-grader desperately wanting to understand how to use linear perspective in his drawings. He was not content simply sketching a symbol of an object—he wanted to give his subjects dimension and life. Years later, this eagerness has evolved into work that probes the basic elements of art—color, opacity, density, and light—and, in doing so, creates a conversation between physical sensation and human consciousness. One expects to discuss linear perspective when considering a realist painting; Lukas separates the technique from the two-dimensional surface in order to experiment with abstraction and visual perception.

Three facets of his most recent work are part of his Morris Gallery presentation: thread paintings, plaster casts of sheets of bubble-wrap, and a sculpture made from carefully calibrated cardboard tubes that represents an exciting new direction for his work.

Lukas works in a mid-19th century barn near his home in eastern Pennsylvania that, much like the Morris Gallery, has skylights that welcome ever-changing waves of natural light. For pieces that harmonize with sunlight, this matching of spaces presents the unique opportunity to see Lukas' work in a gallery that is similar to the environment in which it was created. This is most evident when looking at the thread paintings, in which he creates radiant fields of atmospheric color by criss-crossing layers of thread over a shallow wooden tray. He builds the orbs at the center of these pieces through the improvisational selection of compatible and contrasting colors. Through experimentation with color combinations, he achieves the illusion of depth, opacity, and even motion, as the glowing spheres pulsate in the natural light. The titles of the thread paintings



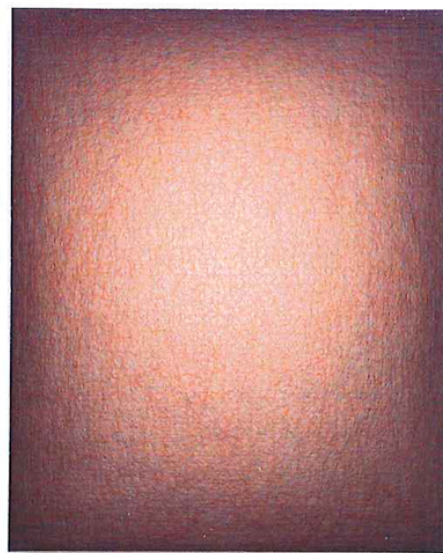
Cloud 1480 (detail), 2015, Paint on plaster, 12 x 9 x 2 in.



Installation view

include the word “hum”—evoking the unification of sound with physical form and an energy that radiates beyond the pieces themselves.

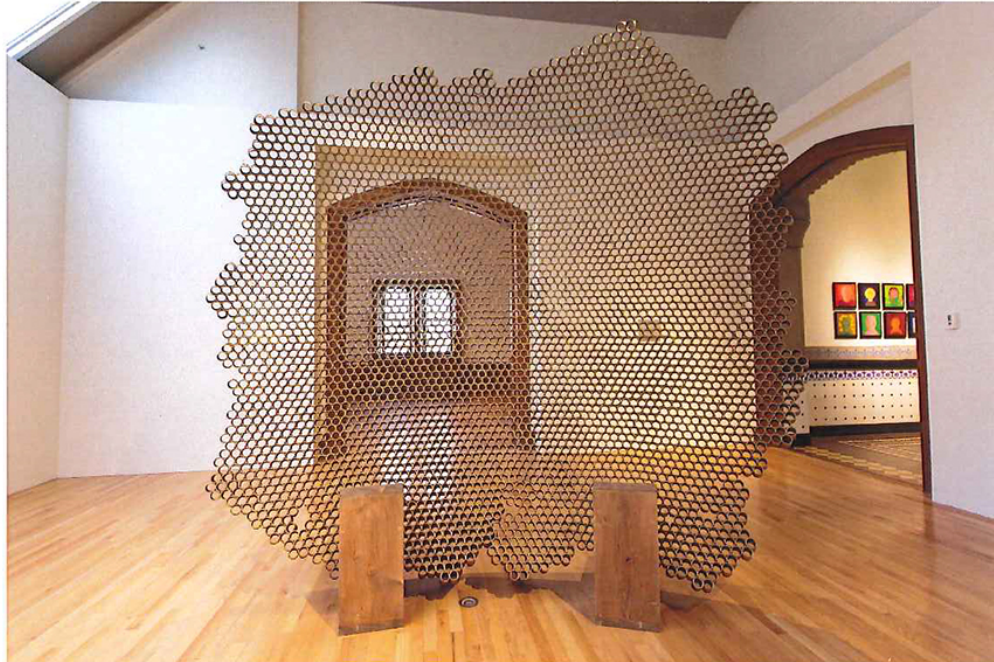
One must experience the thread paintings and bubble-wrap pieces both close-up and from a distance. They are shape-shifters changing in appearance depending on light and vantage point, their physicality always in question. This physical de-stabilization makes one question what he or she sees in the gallery, but also, perhaps, their experience in the world beyond the installation. Lukas’ most recent plaster pieces, *Cloud 1480* and *Cloud 1481*, bulge out from their physical frame. Made through the seemingly simple gesture of making a plaster cast of bubble-wrap, these pieces further represent Lukas’ interest in using his objects to guide viewers in a meditation of sorts that requires both motion and sustained stillness. Each piece asks the viewer to look, re-orient their body and eyes, and then look again. At first glance, the eyes are drawn to the overall honeycomb pattern in the plaster pieces building an awareness of the relationship between depth perception and color. In moving close to the piece, however, one reads



Expanding Hum, 2015, Thread over painted wood frame with nails, 64 x 52 x 3 1/2 in.

the circular indents as individual objects of their own importance. This balance of moving and lingering further destabilizes the viewer’s understanding of the physical object and the relationship between the mind and eyes.

Similarly, *Large Lens*, the centerpiece of the exhibition, requires activation from the viewer. The precise pattern of the carefully glued together cardboard tubes is the result of a long process of discovery for the artist. Recalling his childhood interest in perspective, Lukas endeavored to develop an interactive lens that breaks down the physical elements of seeing on a large-scale. The curved shape of the sculpture is a physical representation of one-point perspective—the form of the piece mimics the way all lines converge at the vanishing point.



Large Lens, 2015, Cardboard, glue, and wood

Unlike in a painting or drawing, however, Lukas' vanishing point shifts according to the position of the viewer. He calls *Large Lens* a "kinetic sculpture with no moving parts—the viewer is the moving part." This was a key motivation as he set out to make the piece. He fully intended for the work to be successful while the viewer was still, walking, or even on a bike or in a car. In fact, he is currently working on an aluminum version of the piece that is meant to be displayed outside for this purpose. As one moves around the sculpture and peers through the tubes, Lukas' joy of discovery while making the piece is transferred to the viewer. *Large Lens* changes how one experiences the gallery space, as well as the physical structure of the sculpture. In fact, one can find a sweet spot of sorts on the inside of the curve where, through adjusting the position and height of the body, the sculpture seems to disappear—finding this is akin to drawing back a curtain to reveal the

world on the other side. The sculpture seems to resist its own material makeup.

This interest in using artistic techniques to convey an illusionistic visual experience connects Lukas with the long history of artistic production. The most special connection that Lukas makes, however, is with his viewers. He demands a lot—one must be willing to engage both the body and the mind to fully experience and discover the intricacies of the work. If the viewer is willing to use all powers of observation, it will seem that magic is at work in the gallery—a sculpture that appears, and then disappears, paintings made with thread that seem to radiate beyond their physical borders. It is precisely this sense of wonder for the illusion and artistry of seeing that Lukas shares whole-heartedly in his work.

Emil Lukas was born in 1964 in Pittsburgh. He lives and works in Stockertown, Pennsylvania.




Cover: Emil Lukas, *Large Lens*, 2015, Cardboard, glue, and wood, 120 x 130 x 30 in.

All images by Zachary Hartzell. All works courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York

In 2015-16, The Morris Gallery Exhibition Program is supported by The Armand G. Erpf Fund, Marsha and Jeffrey Perelman, Angela Westwater, Sperone Westwater, New York, and an Anonymous donor.

PAFA is thrilled to announce a new three-year partnership with SEI as Presenting Sponsor of the Morris Gallery. This partnership launches in April with the Alyson Shotz exhibition, and allows the continued development of the Academy's dynamic contemporary programming. SEI, a leading global provider of investment processing, investment management, and investment operations solutions, is located in Oaks, Pennsylvania.

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Lieberman, Michael. "Emil Lukas at PAFA: Magic made from cardboard, string, and bubble wrap."
www.theartblog.org (Artblog), 29 January 2016.



"Large Lens" (2015). Cardboard, glue, and wood. 120" x 130" x 30". Image courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York.

Five works of art comprise Emil Lukas' exhibit at PAFA's Morris Gallery. Yes, five. And not only are the pieces awesome, but their spare presence makes the austere, skylight-lit Morris Gallery look stunningly beautiful. Okay, the highlight of the show, the sculpture "Large Lens" pictured here, composed of glued-together cardboard tubes, commands the gallery, and it is huge, a good 10 feet in both the vertical and horizontal, and two-and-a half feet wide, and it is curved like one of those giant, otherworldly communication satellite dishes you see here and there. And notwithstanding its size and pedestrian components, "Large Lens" is an enchanting plaything—more on that below. But the four other works by Lukas, though unequal in size, are equally formidable and engaging. So, what you have here is a gorgeous skylit gallery and five totally absorbing works of art which must be seen and experienced to be believed. I should leave it at that.



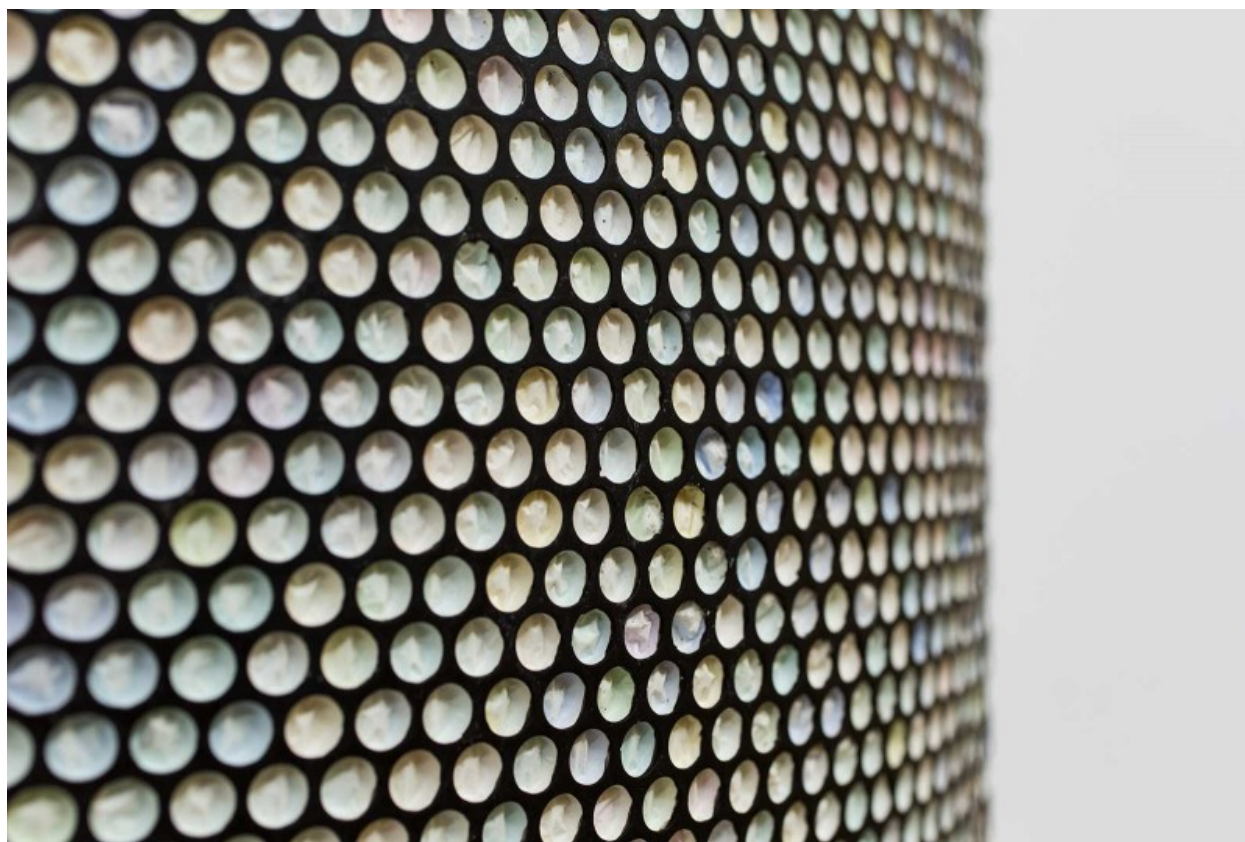
“Large Lens” (2015). Cardboard, glue, and wood. 120” x 130” x 30”. Image courtesy of the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York.

The “Large Lens”

“Large Lens” was conceived by Lukas to be an interactive lens that breaks down the physical elements of seeing on a large scale. The sculpture thus serves as a portal into the gallery, changing the way the viewer experiences the space. Likewise, the physical structure of the piece changes as you move around it.

Facing into the gallery, you will be on the concave side of the lens. Pace the sculpture’s length and an illusory orb of white light glows through the hollow cardboard tubes. The orb shadows your movement, contracting or expanding depending upon your distance from the piece. You might feel as if you’re taking the moon, slightly obscured by clouds, for a walk. From the convex side, the orb, which likewise changes character with the movement of the viewer, is larger and more diffuse, and the ocular impression is quite different, but no less intriguing. See the optical changes of “Large Lens” in a video on the artist’s website.

Experiencing “Large Lens” is like being in the presence of some of the light and space work of James Turrell: that is, the experience is intended to be an act of discovery, and it is.



“Cloud 1480” (Detail) (2015). Paint on plaster, 12” x 9” x 2,” 2015. Photo by Zachary Hartzell. Image courtesy the artist and Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

“Cloud”

The four other pieces in the show are pairs displayed on opposite sides of the gallery. First, the “Cloud” pair. They are small, curved, painted plaster casts of sheets of bubble wrap. Because photographs do not do them justice, I’ve included here an image of the detail of one them. The word that comes to mind to describe these works is “elegant”. Perhaps “brilliant”. Like “Large Lens,” wonder extracted from the prosaic.

The thread paintings

Two thread paintings, titled “Contracting Hum” and “Expanding Hum,” make up the second pair of other works. They are deep, luminous layers and layers of crisscrossed fine, multicolored threads strung over shallow, painted wooden trays, and arranged so that large glowing orbs appear in the center of the pieces. The color combinations of these works create an illusion of depth, opacity, and even motion: the orbs seem to pulse. You feel like you are in the presence of celestial phenomena. Again, photographs do not do them justice. The image above provides a sense of their intricate detail and the almost painterly impression the pieces convey. You can observe the visual effect of the orbs in the paintings, which flank the “Large Lens” in the image displayed at the beginning of this review.

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Photo by Zachary Hartzell. Image courtesy of the artist.

It is difficult to place these exemplars of Lukas' work into an art-historical perspective. As suggested above, there is a connection to James Turrell, particularly with respect to "Large Lens" and the thread paintings. Both artists have focused upon the optical, spiritual, and emotional effects of luminosity. I also wonder whether Lukas has been influenced by Agnes Martin, particularly by the subtle variations in hue of her beautiful abstract grids, which, like Lukas's thread paintings, challenge our perceptions.

Emil Lukas was born in 1964 and attended Edinboro University. He has exhibited throughout the United States and abroad and is represented by Sperone Westwater. Lukas lives and works in Stockertown, Pennsylvania, which is about 80 miles north of Philadelphia in the Lehigh Valley.

This show runs through April 10 at the Pennsylvania Academia of Fine Art's Morris Gallery.

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Baker, Kenneth. "Chance Encounters." *www.1stdibs.com (Introspective Magazine)*, 19 April 2015.

INTROSPECTIVE MAGAZINE



On view at San Francisco's Hosfelt Gallery through May 9 are works from three recent and ongoing Lukas series. Photos by David Stroud

With his latest body of work, Emil Lukas situates himself in a lineage of modern artists interested in surmounting their own conscious creative intentions. Collages of found material by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Kurt Schwitters, like the notorious "readymades" of Marcel Duchamp, allowed chance or mass-produced materials to determine details of novel artworks.

Lukas has added a new technique — "larva painting" — to the repertoire of artistic collaborations with chance. These pieces are among a variety of other recent work now on view at San Francisco's Hosfelt Gallery through May 9. His 2014 canvas-over-panel piece *Cold Slope* may look at first like an exercise in gestural abstract drawing, distantly descended from Jackson Pollock's webs of flung and drizzled enamel. But the graphic energy of Lukas's work lacks completely the expressionist drive and follow-through of Pollock's execution. And no wonder: The ornate tracteries of black line in Lukas's work were produced by ink-dipped fly larvae trailing pigment across the surface.

How much influence 50-year-old Lukas, based in Stockertown, Pennsylvania, has over the movements of his insect collaborators we can only guess, but they generate paths and rhythms unlike anything a human hand might produce. I can think of nothing comparable in contemporary art, other than the chalk floor drawings Japanese artist Yukinori Yanagi has made



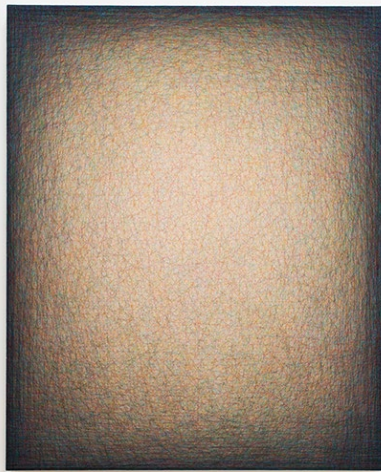
Emil Lukas is dedicated to exploring ways that he can limit his own control over his work, placing himself squarely in the lineage of modern masters from Picasso to Hans Arp.

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intermittently since 2000, which involve carefully following the paths of an ant trapped within a steel enclosure.



For his 2014 mixed-media painting *Cold Slope*, Lukas allowed chance — or, rather, the paths of ink-dipped fly larvae as they moved across the canvas — to dictate composition.



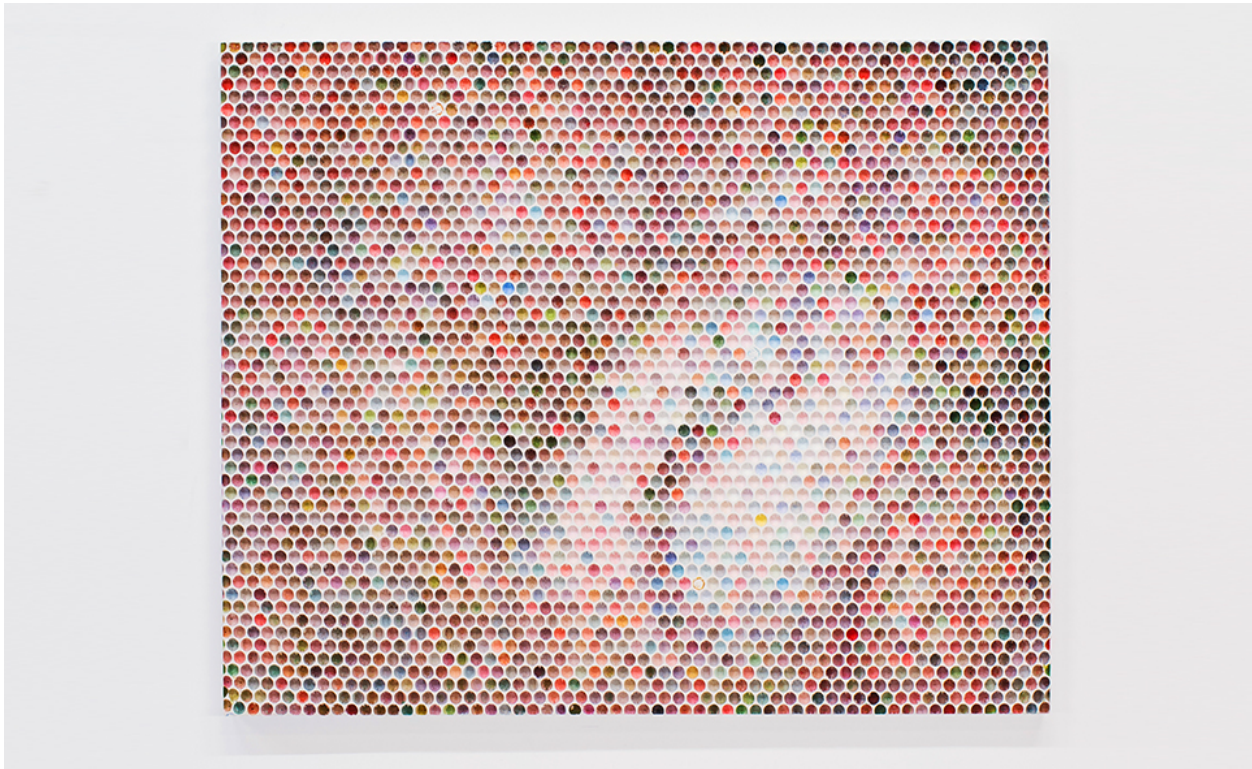
Another facet of the artist's production involves complex networks of colored thread, which he weaves across a frame; *The Ring of Distant Events*, 2015, seems to be lit softly from behind.

A series of very spare ink drawings on panel-mounted paper, also begun by larvae, bring to mind the sparest of Richard Diebenkorn's abstractions on paper. But, again, the starkness and slackness of line in Lukas's work suggest a vitally different approach.

The Hosfelt show samples three other ongoing strains of Lukas's art, which have little in common besides his impulse to limit his own control over the outcome of his efforts. The ongoing "Thread Paintings," of which *The Ring of Distant Events*, 2015, is a superior example, are made by crisscrossing innumerable fine threads over the void of a framed white rectangle. Their randomly sequenced hues create a haze of colored striations through which soft light seems to pulse from behind.

Each "Bubble Painting," meanwhile, comes pock-marked with a grid of semi-spherical indentations — the result of Lukas having molded plaster over bubble wrap. Proceeding intuitively, he then tints each indentation with a color, creating a sort of pointillism so gross in grain that it defies resolution into an image.

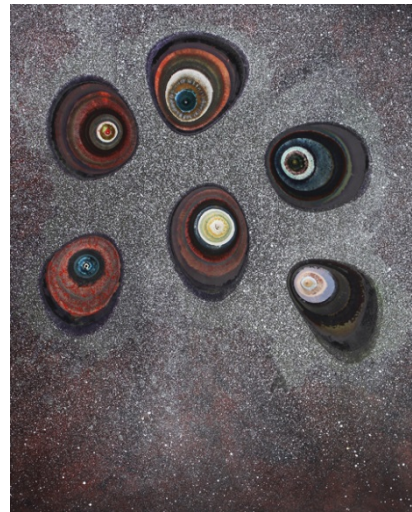
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Works like *Double Bend*, 2015, from Lukas's "Bubble Painting" series, recall pointillist paintings from afar, but, in fact, their honeycomb-like surfaces result from plaster that the artist molded over bubble wrap, creating individual indentations that he then tinted with color.

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The "Puddle Paintings," meanwhile, may be the artist's most improbable inventions. In *Between Stars*, 2015, a black field spattered with white paint, the canvas has six ovoid depressions interrupting it. Each depression is ringed with color, suggesting craters with geological layers exposed. A back view — unavailable to the casual gallery visitor — clarifies Lukas's procedure. To create the depressions, in which he then puddles successive layers of paint, he has threaded his canvas to extensions of the frame, stabilizing the eccentric ovoid forms and incidentally giving a new meaning to the old term "shaped canvas."

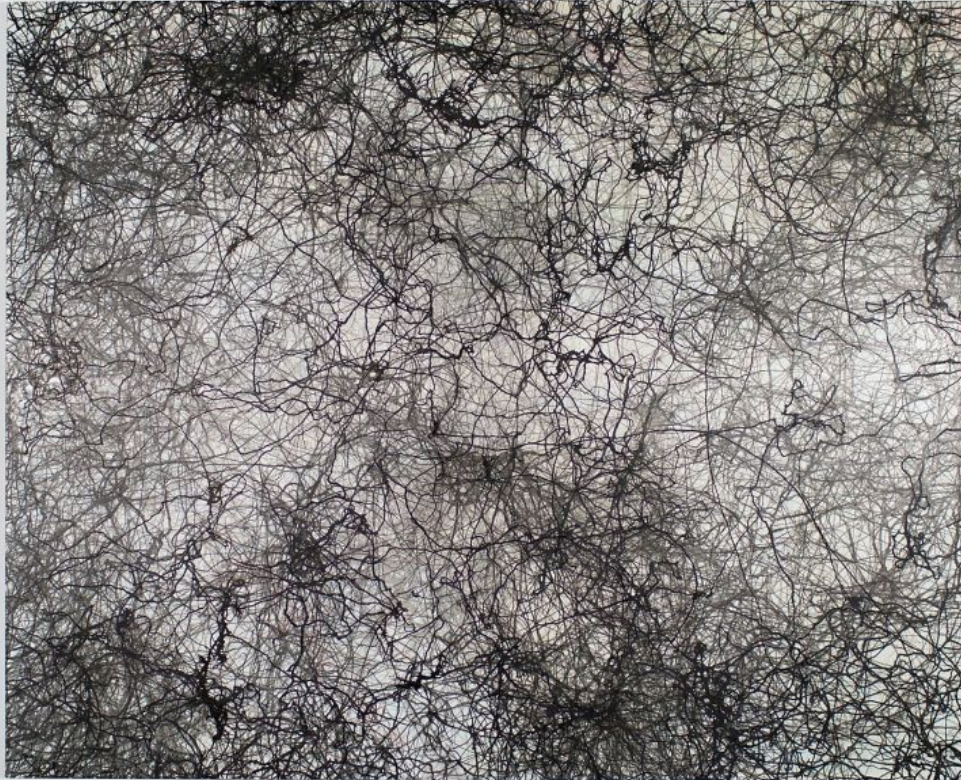


Lukas creates "Puddle Paintings" like *Between Stars*, 2014, by flooding a manipulated canvas with layer upon layer of pigment; the colors pool and dry in the surface's depressions, offering the visual impression of geological strata.

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Chun, Kimberly. "Emil Lukas: Art from maggots, bubble wrap and sewing notions." *www.sfgate.com*
(*San Francisco Gate*), 18 March 2015.

SFGATE



Emil Lukas' 2014 painting "Floating Mat No. 1374," featuring paint and ink on canvas over a wood panel. Photos: Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery

Working with maggots, bubble wrap and sewing notions comes naturally to artist Emil Lukas: He has been experimenting with these materials for years. "It's about making images that line up with what they are, and how the viewer perceives them," he says. Yet an element of the ineffable edges into the picture. "There's the trance I'm in when I make them," he says, "and the trance the viewer goes into when they see them." We spoke to the 50-year-old artist about his larvae, thread, puddle and bubble paintings in his solo show, "Ring of Distant Events," at Hosfelt Gallery, from one of his two studio spaces in rural Stockertown, Pa.

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Emil Lukas' 2015 painting "Between Stars," featuring paint on canvas with wood and thread.



Emil Lukas' 2014 painting "Valley No. 1414," glass and wood.



Emil Lukas' "The Ring of Distant Events No. 1438," thread over a painted wood frame with nails.

Q: How do your larvae paintings work? You use maggots?

A: The larvae move the pigment. It's a way to make a mark that has a very clear intention. So, for example, at certain stages, the larvae want to move away from the light. There's an intention to their marking, and it's a way of having an abundance of markings happening simultaneously. It's a really fantastic way to work within a cycle or season.

I don't really want to create an elaborate apparatus to work against something that happens naturally. The puddle paintings form circles, and those circles form naturally due to gravity and the canvas.

Q: There are two thread paintings in the "Ring of Distant Events"?

A: One of the main inspirations is the physicality of thread. It's a great adhesive, and it's an amazing structural element at the same time. It has amazing pictorial potential. You go to an art supply store and look at paint, and you go to a sewing store and look at a thread rack — it's hard not to fall in love with a thread rack. You go, "Wow," when you see a Gutermann thread rack of 700 or some colors.

Q: You seem to have a complicated relationship with paint and painting.

A: I agree with you. In searching for the potential in the materials you're using, part of that is structure, and that is part of the painting. The thread paintings are very structural, but they're optically read against a wall — they're appreciated the way a painting is appreciated.

This little section of a life cycle of a fly and how pigment separates with gravity into a shape or the breakdown of one color to another — they're all structural elements of how paintings are made, and we're left seeing the visual. There are all the basic formal elements of paintings — transparency, light and color. But a lot of the inspiration is structural, in finding the potential in the physicality of the material.

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Manus, Elizabeth. "Emil Lukas's Abstract Larvae Paintings Are Physical Feats of Creation."
news.artnet.com (Artnet News), 6 July 2014.

artnet® news



View of studio barn. Photo: Zach Hartzel, courtesy the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York.

Many years ago, the artist discovered an alternative for conventional paintbrushes.

In case you missed it, the *Farmers' Almanac*, which for 2013 correctly predicted a colder than usual New York winter, delivered a disquieting forecast for this summer. "Exceptionally hot" is the outlook for much of North America, with the Northeastern region of the country predicted to be "oppressively humid, wet, and thundery."

For Emil Lukas, this may not be unwelcome news.

A sculptor and process painter who once divided his time between a Harlem studio and one in Stockertown, Pennsylvania, he now maintains two studios in the Keystone State, and in one of these he creates what he calls Larvae paintings.

The paintings are not representations of larvae, as you might think. In this case, the actual fly larvae of, say, *Calliphora vomitoria*, the blue bottle fly, behave as tools of his trade. They are what Lukas uses instead of conventional paintbrushes (not exactly Yves Klein's "living brushes," but hey).

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Emil Lukas, *Liquid Reflector 1-6* (2013) Photo: Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.

It is February 22nd when I meet the artist at his downtown gallery, Sperone Westwater, on a bright Saturday morning. The Bowery neighborhood is on the march—to yoga, the nail salon, the Apple store, Falai. But in here, in this space, there is a slow heartbeat, thankfully.

This is the final day of Lukas's solo exhibition, which opened on January 9th. On some walls hang his Thread paintings—works with colored polyester thread (physical, structural, pictorial lines) pulled over painted wood frames and “locked down” (as he puts it) on the edges. On other walls hang the Larvae paintings. It is these that hold my attention.

Lukas and I discuss the role that the weather plays. Consistently hot weather is essential to the work; it's what motivates—literally—the insects during their residency at his Stockertown studio. The temperature determines the speed of what Lukas refers to as his two-month production season. During the doggy days—usually August and September—when the weather is the hottest, the larval life cycle is the most rapid.

Months before the larvae arrive, however, Lukas is hard at work, alone, during dark afternoons. Round about mid-February, he begins fashioning wood panels and stretching canvases. Then he adds many layers of gesso, applied and sanded many times, to approximate a surface as smooth as paper.

Come May (and crocuses), he's applying acrylic paint and introducing color and composition. During these early days, Lukas estimates that he applies between 30 and 50 layers of paint using everything from rollers and all manner of fibrous brushes to splashing to spraying. He tints the primers, puts in lines or circles—to produce a set of compositionally unique “underpaintings.” One might be warm, another cool, another

congested, another light. “I want the paintings to stand in relationship—I want the paintings to stand apart from one another as early as possible, before the larvae,” he explains.

And then, come late June or July, Father Nature sets his schedule, and Lukas is in his hands. The anticipation can be uncomfortable. Lukas says he asks himself a battery of questions: “Is it gonna be hot, is it gonna be cold? Is it gonna work? It is not gonna work? Is it gonna be a good week or a bad week? Am I going to paint *this* this week, or am I going to paint something else this week?”

Any day, Lukas must paint when the weather is hottest because a surprise cool front might always arrive unannounced. “It becomes a real drain by the end of summer,” he says. “It’s fantastic, but after a while, you definitely need a break. You don’t mind it being seasonal.”

How Lukas lures his blind collaborators is his own private, ugly secret about what he terms “the science” of the process. He won’t discuss that part.

“There’s no other insect that makes sense to connect these paintings to,” he says. “What larvae do, why and how they are—it’s the perfect connection.”

But come *on*, I say. Why *flies*?

“What I’m trying to achieve I feel can only be achieved this way, and it’s something that I’ve worked for 20 years to develop,” the artist states.

Twenty years? Actually, a few more than that.

One night during the late 1980s at his Harlem studio, Lukas casually murdered a pesky fly and left it overnight in a four-inch puddle of paint on a piece of cotton paper. The following day, much to his surprise, he returned to a drawing suggestive of a pattern of electricity or lightning. It turns out that his victim had been a life-bearing fly, carrying larvae, and the tiny life forms had tracked paint all over the paper.

Lukas was intrigued and began to conduct research and experiments with many organic materials, such as mold, seed germination, spore drops, carbon, and fat. Only flies (he has not worked with other insects) achieved the status of full-blown obsession and then: art.

Okay, but still: Why flies? (Personally I find them disgusting.)

“I’m after a mark that has intention,” Lukas tells me. “An intention then goes to rhythm, the rhythm goes to repetition, repetition starts to look like the human hand.”

Now I’m beginning to understand.

He continues: “There’s a formula that is very difficult to find when it comes to this intention, the human brain, and patterns. This is a link to a device”—the device being the fly larvae—“that allows me to work in a very clear and deliberate intention without the pattern subscribed by the human brain.”

Of course, Lukas sets countless parameters of play—including lighting (natural, artificial, direct, diffused—the larval visual system reacts to all of these), vibration level (the paintings are on wheels), density of color (Lukas uses a mixture of ink and paint, both water soluble), and the level of wetness of the canvas itself.

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The process allows him “to direct a painting that has millions of lines, and the lines don’t fall into the pattern that a human would have if a human made a painting with millions of lines. That’s one of the things I really love about the paintings.”

I suppose I must love that too. I lean in towards one, then out. It’s wider than I am tall. A wiggly line reminds me of a river seen from 35,000 feet in the air. *Hm*. Now I inspect a coil. *Could* a human brain produce that design?

Lukas describes how he intervenes at one moment of the flies’ life cycle to get this effect. “From the time they are larvae until the time they pupate, I intervene at this little interval,” he says. “We make these paintings, and then the larvae are outside again; they hatch, they fly away—they fly all over the community. There’s something that’s very significant to me. There’s a moment they come in, there’s a moment they go out; and this is what we make.”

He and I pause, we human-brained beings, and look at each other.



Emil Lukas, *Rain* (2013) Photo: Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.

One painting, called *Rain*, has an underpainting of cloudy-day white; the foreground is a brambly tangle. “I want people to look at the paintings, and I want them to think about them like calligraphy or like lightning or roots or the history of painting being applied to a canvas in the many ways that other artists have done it,” he says.

But none of this occurs to me. Thoughts are not formulating. Instead, I begin to peer *into* the abundance of tangle. The mind-feel (for lack of a better phrase) of a small child in the woods comes over me. Somewhere

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beyond that derangement of lines, in the center of the canvas, is a place akin to the Platonic ideal of a clearing. I feel as though I can step into the canvas, away from grownups into a safe place of my own. No flies are here.

I look at Lukas. By virtue of his curiosity, sparked all those years ago in Harlem, he has landed me somewhere realer than fiction. It's possible the expression on my face tells him he has accomplished something unusual.

"Randomness," he mentions, "is a difficult pursuit."

Castro, Jan Garden. "Emil Lukas." *Sculpture Magazine*, May 2014, pp. 72-73.

NEW YORK

Emil Lukas

Sperone Westwater

Something mysterious, cosmic, and deep radiates from Emil Lukas's thread compositions. At times, these works (as large as 78 by 96 inches) appear to be flat. From a distance, they have auras—as though we are witnessing space in slow motion and seeing into and through vast distances. Close up, we think we can see the mechanics—thousands of threads of different colors pulled taut at opposite sides over a rectangular box of wood. Closer inspection, however, reveals that there is no discernable pattern; the colors cross each other in all directions. How did the artist invent this way of working? How does he achieve ethereal effects? How long does this obsessive way of composing take?

Even though Lukas calls his compositions "paintings," they consist of three-inch-deep wooden boxes painted white inside. He works by putting the boxes on sawhorses, inserting small nails into the sides, and then stringing polyester thread in different directions across the open end of the box. His process is slow—he tests the effect of every thread and hue. He calls the works with lighter centers "hums" and the works with vertical threads "curtains." Once hung, each work plays with its light sources. For example, skylights create shadows inside the boxes behind the thread lines. Indirect light creates aura effects in the centers.

In the small, very dense *Heavy Gas* (2013), an ovoid or head-like central

shape appears beneath the blend of mostly darker threads. The threads were spray-painted from behind to achieve the fuzzy effect. Neatly looped over the 18 or so nails on each side, the threads form a zigzag pattern on the wood. Around the lighter central area, red, green, and other hues are layered with deep blue threads on top. In *Red Gas* (2013), a lighter central orb physically under the over-layers appears to come forward. Inside the red layers, many hues are present.

When I met Lukas at the gallery, he told me, "The needle and thread is, for me, the perfect visual and structural tool due to its pictorial line and structural function. I'm looking for the smallest visual mark

that has the greatest impact." In the catalogue accompanying the show, he notes: "The paintings, due to their radial structure, are not on one plane. The depth from the front of the field of color to the white back is about three inches. The space in between is what I mean by atmosphere. Thread paintings engage with density, color reflection, opacity, or translucence very much like an atmosphere does as light travels through it."

—Jan Garden Castro

Above: Emil Lukas, *Heavy Gas*, 2013.
Thread over wood frame with nails,
16 x 14 x 3.5 in.



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“Process – Emil Lukas” *Modern Painters*, February 2014, pp. 30-31.

PROCESS // EMIL LUKAS



New Threads

An artist on how he works

IN THE SMALL TOWN of Stockertown, Pennsylvania, Emil Lukas divides his efforts between two studios. In one, a converted barn, he makes the thread paintings for which he's best known: for these he winds polyester thread in various colors around nails driven into wood frames. The results are cloudlike atmospheres of color that, from a distance of only several feet, look uncannily painted or projected. For his other paintings he collaborates with fly larvae, coaxing them to squiggle through ink or paint, thereby creating extraordinary abstract compositions.

ALL IMAGES: EMIL LUKAS AND SPERONE WESTWATER, NEW YORK



"There are three ways to work on the thread pieces. One is horizontal. Two is on brackets that hold them off the wall at a diagonal. And toward the end, I hang them on the wall and finish them in a vertical orientation."

"I don't work out the color in advance. I start with one, say yellow, and react with a color that's not yellow. You go with it—it's very much like jazz, and I don't really bother trying to explain it once I'm done."



"The larvae paintings are all about control of the atmosphere, because you can't control the larvae. They're going to do what they're going to do. First I prepare the surface—the larvae will care, they do. If it is rough or smooth, they change their mark."



"Are you going to put one larva down or five thousand? The choices change everything. Is it going to be humid or dry? Light or dark? Am I going to vibrate the painting or leave it still? Or am I going to spin the painting? If so, how fast?"



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Tan, Dion, and Eric Gordon. "Emil Lukas, Weaving Art with Nature." www.blouinartinfo.com (*Blouin Artinfo*), 10 January 2014.

BLOUIN ARTINFO



Who might have thought spools of thread in every Pantone shade and trails of ink-covered crawling larvae would be the foundations of a painter's work? Those are the media at the core of new inspirational body of work from Emil Lukas. For his latest eponymous exhibition, the Pittsburgh-born artist brings his layered pieces of thread and larvae paintings to Sperone Westwater Gallery in New York City.

Lukas lives and works in Stockertown, Pennsylvania, where he converted a 19th-century barn into a studio where he weaves his distinctive thread paintings.

He creates his stratified pieces in a silent dance: Lukas loops a line of thread on nails affixed on the sides of a shallow box, stretches it across the face, and waltzes to the opposite border where he takes a moment to observe the composition before locking it down.

"It's a very meditative state," said Lukas. "The relationship is one with light, color, and the relative color that's going on with the painting."

He continues the technique with other strands of thread in multiple shades and he calls the result a "painting". They are dense on the edges and seem to emit an ethereal glow from a distance. However, the individual lengths of raw material and color reveal themselves as one draws closer to the work.

While Lukas' thread paintings suspend in a box of optical-illusion color, his larvae paintings are grounded in complex layers of monotone.

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A few hundred yards away from Lukas' studio was an old Massey Ferguson Tractor dealership factory, which he bought a year ago and turned it into his experimental space for his larvae works.

In the summer, Lukas breeds fly larvae eggs in the space and begins working on multiple paintings at one time. He introduces mature larvae onto a primed canvas and deposits ink next to them. He maneuvers their movement by casting light and shadows while they crawl, dragging the ink across the surface, creating dynamic squiggly lines. He applies a milky wash over the larvae-drawn canvas and repeats the process.

"One of the thoughts is to bring something from the outside, work with it for a short period of time, and then return it," said Lukas. "With that, [I] capture some potential from that experience."

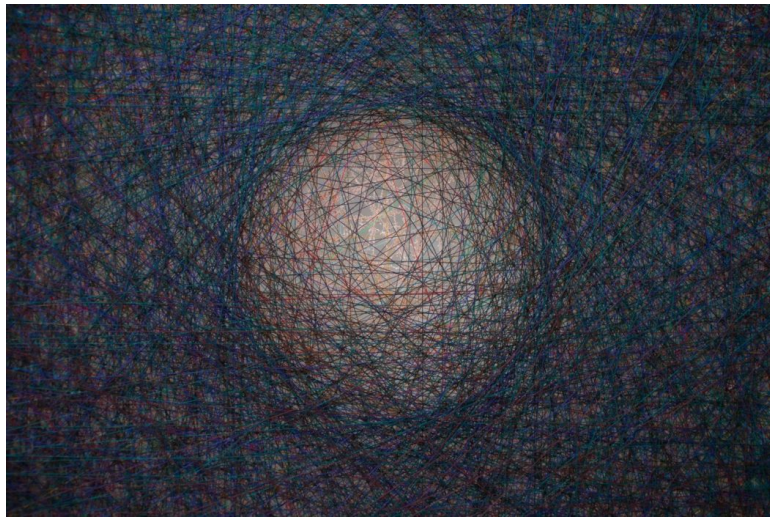
Lukas doesn't keep count of how many larvae or layers he goes through to finish the paintings. But rather, he goes for a "look" or pictorial atmosphere he wants to achieve, often based on the title or relationship it has with paintings next to it.

"We are an accumulation of our experiences," said Lukas. "It's a basic function in life and that function has found its way into my work for the last 25 years."

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van Straaten, Laura. "Margaret Garrett, Emil Lukas, and Melissa Meyer." *www.whitewall.art (Whitewall)*, 27 January 2014.

whitewall



Three new shows of abstract paintings in New York share a musicality and colorful beauty that merit a mid-winter's visit. [...] Then there is the truly elegant display of work from the last year by Pennsylvania-based artist Emil Lukas at Sperone Westwater Gallery. Although not widely known in the United States, Lukas has shown his work throughout Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy, including as part of the renowned Panza Collection in Varese.

Lukas "paints" his so-called thread paintings, to which half of the show is

devoted, by drawing intricate skeins of various colored polyester threads across his canvases.

(The show also comprises one other series, what Lukas called his "larvae paintings." Jeff Koons' dozens of studio assistants cannot compare to the millions of fly larvae Lukas lets loose to eat patterns as they will into freshly painted canvas.)

These thread paintings can read like musical instruments, nearly throbbing with a tympanic tautness. Five of those on view have a glowing circle-within-a-square motif that seems to invert Anish Kapoor's widely exhibited, seemingly floating, two-dimensional, fiberglass wall sculptures. The luminous orbs in these five works appear to be lit from within. Like James Turrell, Lukas can seem like an illusionist, optimizing light, color and the shifting angle of the viewer to create a unique and elusive optical experience.

Unfortunately, as Lukas said when we toured the gallery minutes before the show's opening, "Historically I make work that is impossible to photograph." He's right on this count. No image I've seen has been able to capture either the ethereal luminosity or complexity of craftsmanship of the thread paintings.

In the exhibit's accompanying catalog, Lukas noted that he was "first attracted to thread" when traveling in Germany in the late eighties where he remembers seeing huge racks with hundreds of spools in different colors on display in garment stores and drugstores. "The dramatic visual effect fascinated me."

"For me the thread paintings are about color. They're about compositions of color, light, reflection, and opacity. They're much closer to formal wet-on-wet watercolor paintings than they are to anything in the textile field."

That rings true, because despite the materials, there's nothing artsy-craftsy about these works. If, like me, you've ever admired the artistry of a handmade drum or marveled at the inside of a piano, you will especially like Lukas' work.

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Laster, Paul. "Emil Lukas." *Time Out New York*, 23-29 January 2014, p. 26.

Art

Emil Lukas

★★★★

Sperone Westwater, through Feb 22
(see Lower East Side)

A process-oriented artist, Emil Lukas has a history of making abstract, accumulative works out of unusual materials. In Europe his reputation was boosted by one of the world's leading collectors, the late Count Giuseppe Panza, who acquired 67 of Lukas's pieces. Now the artist returns to Sperone Westwater with two series created during the past five years: the "Larvae Paintings" and the "Thread Paintings." In each, he pushes his pursuit of the sublime in ambitiously new directions.

The former group consists of luminous, large-scale abstractions that are "painted" by maggots under the artist's control. He dips the grubs in ink, places them on the canvas, and directs them with lights and tilting motions, creating patterns that no hand could replicate. He then layers the surface with washes of pinks and blues, letting loose the larvae once again to leave ghostly networks of lines.

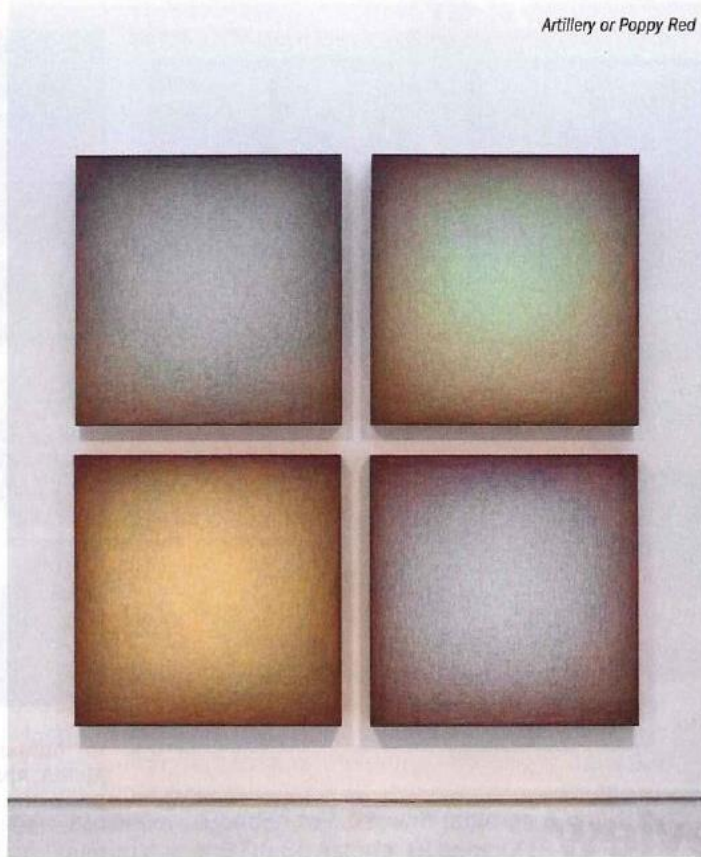
The works in the second series are created by stretching thousands of feet of multicolored thread across wooden frames backed with reflective film. Lukas employs two distinct patterns: webs that radiate from an airy center to a denser

perimeter, and vertical spectra that seem to vibrate as your gaze traverses them from end to end. Compelling and energetic, Lukas's efforts open portals to a realm where

line, color and the mind's eye collide.—Paul Laster

THE BOTTOM LINE The artist finds odd paths to the sublime.

Artillery or Poppy Red



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Sheets, Hilarie M. "Emil Lukas." *Elle Décor*, September 2012, pp. 86, 88.

ART SHOW

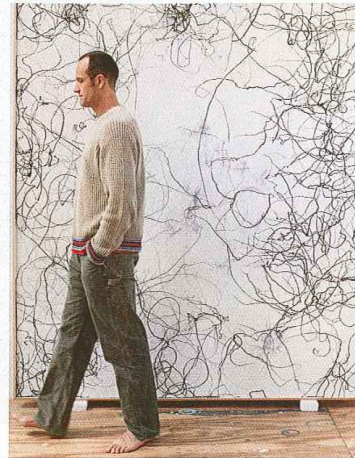


EMIL LUKAS

Using unexpected materials, such as silk and insects, this artist evokes the mysteries of nature. BY HILARIE M. SHEETS



CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: The artist in front of one of his larvae paintings at his studio in Stockertown, Pennsylvania. The interior of the 19th-century barn that serves as Lukas's studio. *Liquid Silk Light*, 2012.



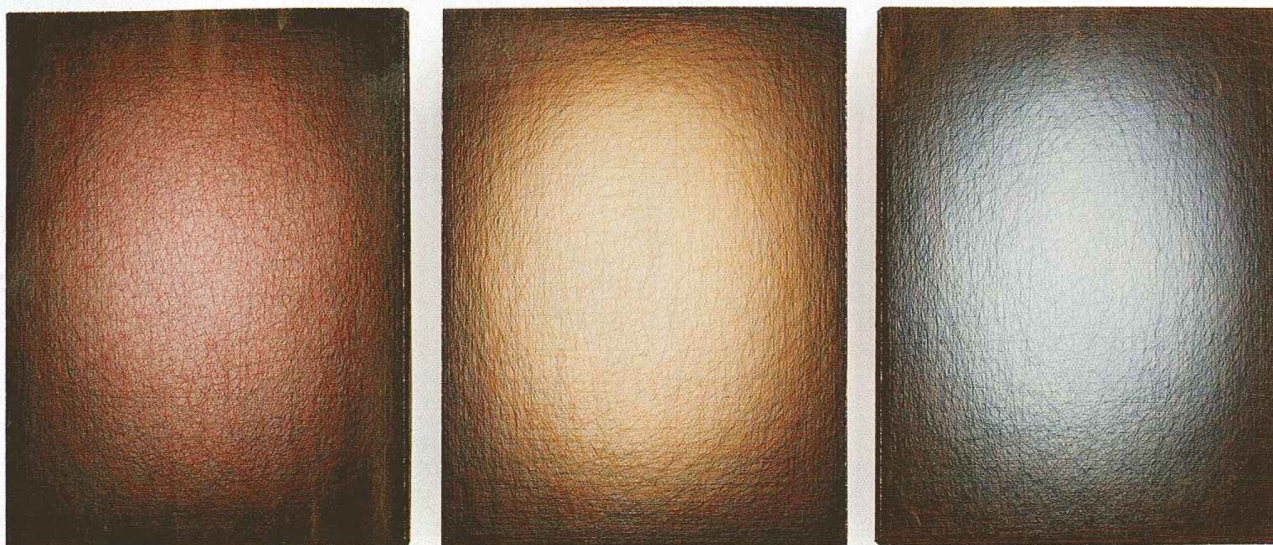
In the agricultural town of Stockertown, Pennsylvania, where Emil Lukas lives and works out of a 19th-century barn, people like to stop by bearing such leftover oddities as a dead turtle, the insides of an old piano, a box of tangled threads on cones.

The gift of unruly thread was a catalyst for a body of work, which Lukas calls "thread paintings," that has evolved over the last three years. He's also collaborated with the menswear designer Ermenegildo Zegna, using a palette of 52 Zegna silk threads for these pieces. From a distance, they seem to glow ethereally from orb-like centers that can look alternately concave and convex. Up close, the "painting" is actually a shallow wood box with nails along the four edges; lines of thread are looped under the nailheads and stretched across the face in all directions. Lukas paints the inside of the box white and achieves the optical effects of luminescence and volume by making a more dense web of threads toward the edges and a sparser scrim toward the middle, where the white panel shows through.

"It revolves around basic color theory and opacity, like laying down one glaze of watercolor on top of another," says Lukas, who estimates he may use up to a mile of thread—and some 100,000 individual lines—in a single work. "To work with the silk is like having liquid in your hands," continues Lukas, who paces around the boxes, unspooling the thread from edge to edge.

While the process isn't complicated, the works completely fool the eye. "From afar they could be glass or paintings," says Harry Philbrick, the former director of the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Connecticut, which exhibited Lukas's >

ART SHOW



FROM TOP: The triptych *Zegna Silk Hum*, 2012. A detail of the middle panel. *Untitled*, 2011.

work in 2005. "Then there's this moment where they snap into focus and you realize it's just a bunch of threads. That experience is magical."

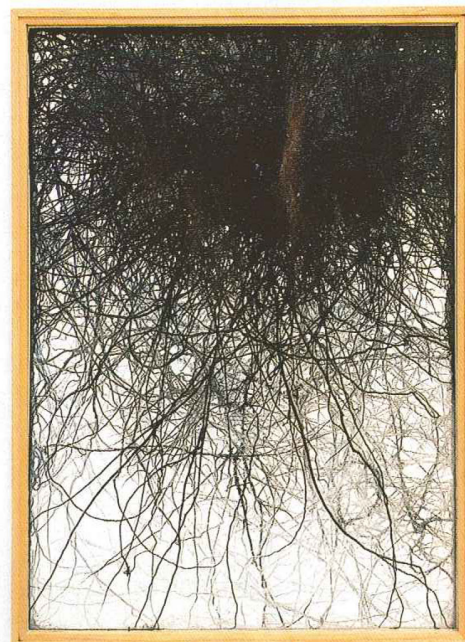
Lukas grew up in Pittsburgh and inherited a love of materials from his mother, who did crafts projects with him. He studied painting and sculpture at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania, then assisted the sculptor Not Vital in Italy before striking out on his own. Lukas has always gravitated toward humble, accessible materials. "The work is about understanding what's already in your shop, what's right next to you, and experimenting with its nature," says Lukas, who in his first exhibition last year with the Sperone Westwater gallery in New York showed paintings made with thread, Bubble Wrap, and, most unexpectedly, larvae.

The chance meeting of a fly with a pool of pigment on a wet painting yielded his discovery of what larvae could do. The following day he was mystified to find lines radiating from the puddle of paint. He realized that pupating worms must have crawled out of the mother fly embalmed in the pigment, all of which he found fascinating.

Through a process of trial and error not for the squeamish, Lukas devised a method of breeding eggs in his studio and introducing clumps of mature larvae to wet, primed canvases covered with a clear plastic membrane to keep the surface moist. Using medical syringes, he deposits dark ink near the creatures and casts light and shadow on the surface to help steer the movements of the larvae, which inch away from direct light, dragging the ink with them. After he releases the worms outside, he applies a beautiful milky wash over the black, spin-

dly lines, repeating the cycle several times. "At the end, it's a painting that was not made by the human hand but was directed by my intentions," he says.

Philbrick finds that Lukas's keen observation of small actions links his disparate bodies of work. "In the thread pieces, it's an accumulation of motions, the same way those squiggle marks in the larvae paintings are the leftovers of their movement," he says. "It's this record of simple motions that become something much more." ■



Di Biase Dooley, Lucienne. "Process." In *Emil Lukas: Structure Becomes Image*. Exhibition catalogue. Sent: Gian Enzo Sperone, 2011.

PROCESS

Emil's work is about an introspective journey in the nature of things. They are stratifications of emotion and potential. It is impossible to look at his installations as a whole, we constantly get trapped in the crevasses of a line or changes of material.

Accumulations of desires and dreams, lost in the darkness of the crevasses, the eye can only go so far to catch them, until we get lost in the impossibility of pursuing them. So, the eye goes to the next crevasse, in a repetition of a similar journey. We follow lines across stories of the creation, across their geological formation and the impossibility to reach the creator.

The accumulations can be vertically or horizontally disposed, and they can take different directions. The crevasses sometimes disappear; we can travel in multiple directions up, down, sideways, diagonally. We can skip one accumulation; go by shapes, materials, and colors. Often we lose the starting point of the story, we go in circles; we try to retrace our steps. When we finally decide to interrupt the journey, and come back to the surface, we are left with a sense of the unreachable. Then, what is left is our desires transformed in fossils on a rock: they are the memories of our dreams.

The "Bubbles", "Larva Paintings", the "Threads" tell these stories of travelers getting lost in the meanders of the human soul and the meaning of things. Emil's work is populated by lines taking uncontrollable directions, like the larvas moving across the black ink. The artist gives the beginning; the larvas move the painting towards an unknown result with no subject known.

Lines cross each other, some are thicker, others are darker. Some are circular, others are torturous. There is no reason to their movements other than being what they are: larva moving across a puddle of ink and staining the canvas in a sort of organized diaspora towards a safer place. The larva looks for a safe harbor, escaping the ink falling from the sky like a divine munition. The only escape to such condition is the liberating death.

The movement in the "Threads" is orderly organized: right-left, left-right, in diagonal patterns. A variety of color is displayed to us. The lines are friendly; the design familiar, reminiscent of a school exercise where geometrical drawings are created on a wood frame. We look closer, we take some distance. Tricked by the familiarity of the design, we are at a loss to give a sense to what we see. What was just seconds before something we could name, it is now unfamiliar and foreign. A forest of lines pursuing each other, with a beginning but no end, meets each other to a sort of central black hole. We want to avoid looking at the center by fear we will never come back. It is a central, unique circular crevasse. There is no reason and we find no reason for such unexpected design. We can only take our distance and try to avoid the attraction of the hole, only to get trapped by the attraction of a thousand more holes.

The Bubble series puts us in front of a sort of repetition with variations. A bubble after a bubble, same shape, same deepness. Each one tells a little portion of the same story. We take it step by step. We can imagine different combinations, different origins, with different endings.

When we think we have finally started to apprehend the artists work, we are suddenly facing a sort of hallucination. The scale of the later production becomes cyclopic. Like Alice in Wonderland, the dimensions are such that we feel like the world has suddenly grown around us and will crash us if we don't take distance. There is a feeling of loss. We finally were able to embrace and control the world presented to us, and again we lose control of the beginning and the end. The process is what is left to take with us.

Plaster, wood, glass, cement, larva, thread, egg shell.
A visual collection of materials, textures, and colors trapping the origin and never giving up the end of the story. Looking to find a subject, but there is no subject. Trying to catch a sense, but there is no sense. As time goes by, the lines, bubbles and larva are condemned to become an archeology of themselves. Impossible to restore, they will disappear with the secret of creation.

Lucienne Di Biase Dooley
Architect

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Halle, Howard, ed. "Emil Lukas." *Time Out New York*, 24 February – 9 March 2011, p. 58.



Sperone Westwater

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Emil Lukas This show features all over abstractions that are often created in unorthodox ways—by using, for instance, insect larvae, which wriggle through paint to form sinuous patterns of lines. Fri 25–Mar 26.

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Hashimoto, Jacob, and Emil Lukas. "Interview." In *Emil Lukas: Accumulate and Dissolve*. Exhibition catalogue. Sent: Gian Enzo Sperone, 2009.

Earlier this year I asked my friend Jacob Hashimoto to come out to my place in Stockertown, PA. Stockertown is 80 miles west of New York City, just across the Pennsylvania border. I work in an old wooden bank barn of Swiss style construction. In the studio were several of the new paintings for this exhibition. The text that follows are some of the conversation we had that afternoon.

DISSOLVE

Jacob: That is a very beautiful painting. given the title "Green Dissolve" where does dissolve come in. Does it dissolve when you walk up to it because the allusion of the surface breaks down?

Emil: Yeah, that definitely happens, there is no doubt about it. But what else happens are the individual efforts unify, they dissolve and fall into one and other. More importantly the Idea behind the making of the paint dissolves. We talk a lot about process and Idea, "the idea of larva are really powerful" or "life and decay, Whatever"! What needs to happen, is the making of a painting has to transcend into something more, other than material power. That is the main thing about Dissolve.

When you walk up to a Larva painting and you see the fly emerging from the pupa, stuck in the paint. You are struck by that event and understand the making of the work. That is what

must dissolve and allow the paintings to return to being just art. It has to go back to being a beautiful painting. In working with these materials there is the danger that the idea become trivialized. "He works with flies, he works with larva, rotting flesh, its only thread, my god its so beautiful and its only thread , blah, blah, blah" that is all trivial bullshit! It all has to dissolve into a great painting.

Jacob: That is basically what Joseph Kosuth called the transparency of media. The idea that the media that you use should be transparent or in other words, you shouldn't think about it as content. But in your work it is actually content. Which is just the problem; it is easy to latch onto it when you are talking about the work, writing about it as content, or speaking about the experience of larva or decay or all that stuff as content. But what you're saying is in the act of making, seeing is primary.

Jacob: So then why the thread? Is that just a means to an end?

Emil: Uh, no, that would be too figured out! For as long as I can remember I have always been fascinated with the physicality of thread. I don't know why, as a child I made and fixed things with needle and thread. I think the fascination is more mechanical than visual. When I look through old work there is a mechanical fascination. I've made a lot of drawings that denies the front and back by stitching through paper. Perhaps thread is also closer to a line than pencil, I

mean pencil line is a picture of a line, thread really is a line, between to point, but I used thread because it's always around.

Jacob: But thread also has a reference to handicraft, to Americana, early, the way your studio is set up with these old hay ladders, and mortise and tenon joinery, you know these kind of things that you don't see anymore. People don't sew buttons back on shirts; there is this idea of a loss of our relationship to the objects around us in modern life. We don't understand how things are made, we don't understand how we fix things, no one darns sock anymore. That was one of the things that my father taught me before I went to college, he taught me to darn socks. You know, I remember teaching everyone in my dorm how to darn socks. There was this thing called a darning ball.

Emil: Oh yeah, they look like an egg on a stick, those things are beautiful! Made of a close grain, dense wood.

Jacob: Yes! We used to use oranges.

Emil: Exactly! Use what you have!

ACCUMULATE

Jacob: I think your work is so not ironic, it is not even a little bit ironic, it is some of the most earnest work. It's playful, and it's full of errors and mistakes and happenstance, but it's not funny artwork and it's not ironic and it's not making comments about things in terms of art historical commentary, it's not art about art. It is art about the world, which is something that you don't see a lot of these days. What happened, I think, starting in the 50's and 60's is as the avant-garde started falling apart, art was talking about other movements in art. So artist talked to the other group of artists that lived down the road, who were making pop art paintings and pop art was talking about Fluxus artists who were in turn talking about Abstract painters and on and on. And then we start getting this arts talking about art and not talking about the world.

You don't live in the city any more. You made a choice to come out here and in a large part because you want to live in the world more. Rather than live in New York City where we are all kind of buried in this hermetic environment where we are making art about art most of the time.

In a way certain artists use their work as a refuge and there is a fantasy element to it. This place where you could go to be safe and deal with finite equations. The thing about these paintings is while they are about infinity and accumulation they aren't Sisyphean. It's not like you are endlessly pushing a rock up a hill. There is a beginning and an end. That is established from the

beginning and there is comfort to that. And so we deal with infinity and we deal with glimpses of infinity, which these painting essentially are, it is important to have a finite glimpse of infinity, as contradictory as that sounds. In my work I love the idea that I have six layers to get in and out. I either have to hit it or I have to start over. There is a very finite space that I have to achieve my goal and there is an end to it. Because otherwise I would tend to just keep working on the same thing endlessly. That is frustrating and probably the ultimate art work, but not a way I want to live my life. So we bite off sections because we can't ever deal with the whole; as a human being we can't deal with that.

Emil: I don't know if anyone gets it, but that is EXACTLY the idea behind all of the stacked works. I have been making these stacks and collections since the late 80's, the sections number in the thousands. In my mind they are all connected, thousands of individual sections interlocking, overlapping and connected. When we see these works they are only a stack of maybe 37 double sided object formed into a column, stacked and unstacked held together with gravity. However they are just a cumulative bite, a section of a greater time line. As much as I love and have loved that idea for the past twenty some years, the thread paintings are very different. The thread paintings are not a section , they are a look at the total accumulation. In fact, as you said "A GLIMPS OF INFINITY"

Jacob: I tend to feel strongly about this idea of accumulation, that we are talking about and the

kinds of images that come out of this, this white light sort of space, which I'm sure a lot of people would love to talk about. If we start talking about infinity and we look at the image that emerges from these accumulations of thread, which is essentially this white kind of infinite space, these huge voids. The interesting thing is that you are either looking at a light coming out of a cave from a dark space or it is a volume. They do two things. The thread paintings both reference the human body, this kind of belly, this fleshy space that you have created, that comes out optically. Or you become a viewer enclosed in darkness looking towards the light. Ultimately they shift back and forth between those two things. Do you see that as a content issue as well? Because you have been working with this motif for a while.

Emil: Yes. I have worked with this motif for a while. The first time was 1987 Lucca Italy in Not Vitals studio. And yes it is also content. Like these painting, the older paintings where bellies. Very much pregnant bellies.

Jacob: I don't think I've seen those. I've seen other belly like shapes in the stacks. The stacks often have these bellies or body like sections. You feel like they are packed with organs, part of the beauty of them is that you feel they are filled with fluid somehow.

Emil: The first belly paintings that mimic the optical affect of the thread painting are made with casting elasticity of a thin membrane and the pressure of liquid plaster. When the plaster

sets, the elastic membrane was removed and the plaster waxed, finished with an amber paste wax. So the painting has this beautiful waxed surface with a very sexy liquid curve, like from the body. Thread paintings may have taken their place, however the thread paintings are not only about the body. Like the bubble wrap works, I need the thread painting to be about simple ideas. How I got to this point with the work is authentic and about using what is at hand, using what you have to use and getting the most out of it. I see it as an issue of authenticity. For example: You have wood thread and the understanding that the complexity of color is inexhaustible. That is more than enough!

Jacob: Yes, well, that's the way you work. I think a lot of artists don't work that way; frankly it's not very fashionable. How do you feel about the ability we have living in a fairly wealthy culture that we don't have to use what is around us, we can travel the world and find the material we want to work with. Because it suits our needs rather than changing our agenda to fit our environment. Especially since the recession started, I've heard artists say, "Dude I'm so fucked because I can't make work because I can't get funding to get the equipment for a project." They become frozen for a year and their job becomes getting the funding.

Emil: Well first I feel sorry for that situation, going through those struggles to create what they want. But what I wish for, is to create something universal, from the simplest means possible. I feel that with the way I work, if I have paper, I should be able to get there. If I can't get there,

then I have not established a sufficient relationship with the paper. I'm still very much in love with the idea of exploring simple, abundant and accessible materials to the greatest visual potential. I still love the quest to make something from nothing. For example let's talk about the larva painting. I put decaying flesh "smelly chicken skin" outside, the flies come from everywhere and lay their eggs. I nurture those eggs to the adult larva stage. I then struggle to understand the relationship between paint, ink, canvas, wood, light, shadow, temperature and moisture. This struggle also includes the agenda of the larva.

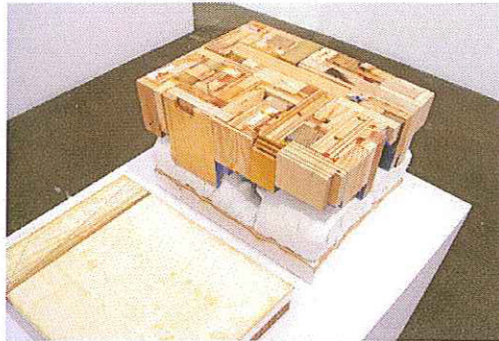
My wish is that in different ways all of the work in this show will have this playing out of potential and that the accumulation of these acts will dissolve into art.

Feinstein, Lea. "Emil Lukas." *ARTnews*, March 2007, p. 124.

Emil Lukas

Hosfelt

In eleven elegant works that bridge the terrain between painting and sculpture, Emil Lukas created a geology of the stu-



Emil Lukas, *Accumulation of Line*, 2006, mixed media, 16" x 16" x 12".
Hosfelt.

dio. The works exemplify the artist's affinity for found materials and his delight in the play of accidental forms against careful geometry. His paintings are sculptural objects; his sculptures are three-dimensional paintings.

For an homage to the slashed canvases of Lucio Fontana, *Fixing Fontana* (2006), Lukas collected cylindrical and circular objects of various sizes—metal jar lids, paint-can tops, drinking straws, and funnels—and inserted them into cuts in the canvas. *16 Supporting 4* (2006) is a color study, a grid of deep wells (paper coffee cups) lined with paint residue, arranged in neat rows against a neutral gray.

Presented on wide plinths, the freestanding pieces *Accumulation of Line*, *Yellow Tip* (both 2006), and *White Center* (2005) are made of stacks of two-sided paintings. From the side, the three works read as cross sections or geological core samples of studio life.

Each of the layers is titled, numbered, and dated like the pages of a journal, and the stack can be taken apart, allowing each level to be viewed separately.

Accumulation of Line has five component parts, each one a variation on the theme of the "line" and carefully shaped to rest atop one another like puzzle pieces, the peaks of one nestling in the valleys of the next. The juxtaposition of a section of blue-painted wood scraps with a soft, inflated-looking white plaster form provided a delightful moment.

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“Emil Lukas: Connection to the Curious.” www.aldrichart.org (*The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum*),
2005.

**The Aldrich
Contemporary
Art Museum**



Emil Lukas: Connection to the Curious
July 10 – October 9, 2005

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum is pleased to present *Connection to the Curious*, a solo exhibition of the work of Emil Lukas, on view from July 10 through October 9, 2005.

Lukas is interested in the beauty that results from an open-ended exploration of materials and the art-making processes. Engaging the viewer's curiosity, Lukas champions non-traditional ways of viewing his work, allowing the viewer to engage and interact with the work in multiple ways. This exhibition will feature an indoor installation of a stacked sculpture, titled *White Center*, made with paper, canvas, wood, plaster, thread, and organic material. Thirty-one double-sided sections are stacked to create the 72-inch high sculpture. In piling the sections one on top of the other, Lukas is shielding the remarkable surfaces and textures unique to each piece, underscoring the inter-relatedness of each of the components. Meant to be

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flipped through like a book, the sculpture challenges our conventional sense of viewing, forcing us to engage with Lukas's work more physically to try to understand his process.

Using a boroscope, or "lipstick camera", Lukas provides the viewer with a peek inside the stack to view the materials that make up his vernacular in the video, *Connection to the Curious*. Filled with complicated layers of materials such as a dehydrated frog, plaster, and the wells of paint that recur in his work, the video offers a peek at the layers of *White Center*. The film transforms the sculpture into an architectural space, the wide-angle lens enlarging the scale and giving the viewer the sensation of passing through the work. In another new work for the exhibition, *Drawing Rocks*, Lukas discreetly places a series of stone sculptures throughout the Museum's property, both inside and outside the Museum. Each of these "rocks" will have a recess filled with castings the artist made from material selected from his vernacular: cement, plaster, plastic, or glass. Visitors are invited to make their own works, by rubbing, piercing, burnishing or embossing the surfaces of the sculptures.

Born in Pittsburgh in 1964, Lukas lives and works in Stockertown, Pennsylvania. He will be mounting a solo exhibition at The Weatherspoon Museum, Greensboro, NC, and in June 2005 and The Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, in September 2005.

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“Emil Lukas: Moment of Process.” www.absolutearts.com (*Indepth Art News*), 30 September 2001.

absolutearts.com
WORLD WIDE ARTS RESOURCES

The fall exhibition in Kidspace at MASS MoCA, Moment of Process, will feature two- and three-dimensional works by Emil Lukas. Lukas works with a variety of organic and inorganic materials, including plants, insects, plaster, canvas, paint, and found objects, to produce abstract paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures.

For Lukas, the processes through which he creates his work and the inherent properties of the materials he uses are central to his art practice. By pulling a canvas taut so that paint drips and puddles in the resulting indentations, or sewing potato chips to paper and allowing the oil to seep through and stain the surface, Lukas sets processes into motion and then enables, as he describes it, marks to make themselves. Lukas's experiments with materials and processes are informed by phenomena in the natural world. For example, in his Larva Painting, larvae coated with paint crawled across the surface of a large canvas, leaving a dense network of interlacing trails. Here Lukas gives control of the work to the materials themselves, thus wedding the art-making process to the life cycles of the insects.

Lukas also works with different printmaking techniques, and two series of recent prints will be on view in the Kidspace exhibition. Press and Vent is a series of 31 prints made in collaboration with students at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. Based on his work with Lafayette students on this series, Lukas has designed an original art project for Kidspace in which all visitors will be able to participate and make their own pressings. Moment of Process also features three new silkscreen prints that Lukas made at the Durham Press in Durham, Pennsylvania, as well as one large painting and three sculptures made of plaster, wood, glass, and other organic materials.

Born in Pittsburgh, Lukas received a bachelor's of fine arts degree in 1986 from Edinboro University in Pennsylvania. He spent eight years in New York and Europe before settling down in Stockertown, Pennsylvania, located near Lafayette College in Easton.

In the past year Lukas has had one-person exhibitions in New York, Cologne, Paris, and San Francisco. He is represented by Gorney Bravin + Lee, New York, NY; Studio la Città, Verona, Italy; Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Galerie Alain Le Gaillard, Paris, France; and Renate Schroeder, Cologne, Germany. Since 1985 Lukas has participated in group exhibitions in museums and galleries around the world.

“Emil Lukas: Moment of Process,” 2001-09-30 until 2001-12-15, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA, USA

Bonetti, David. "Gallery Watch: The seductive lure of 49 Geary St." *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 March 1999.

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

★ Wednesday, March 10, 1999 B-3

DAVID BONETTI

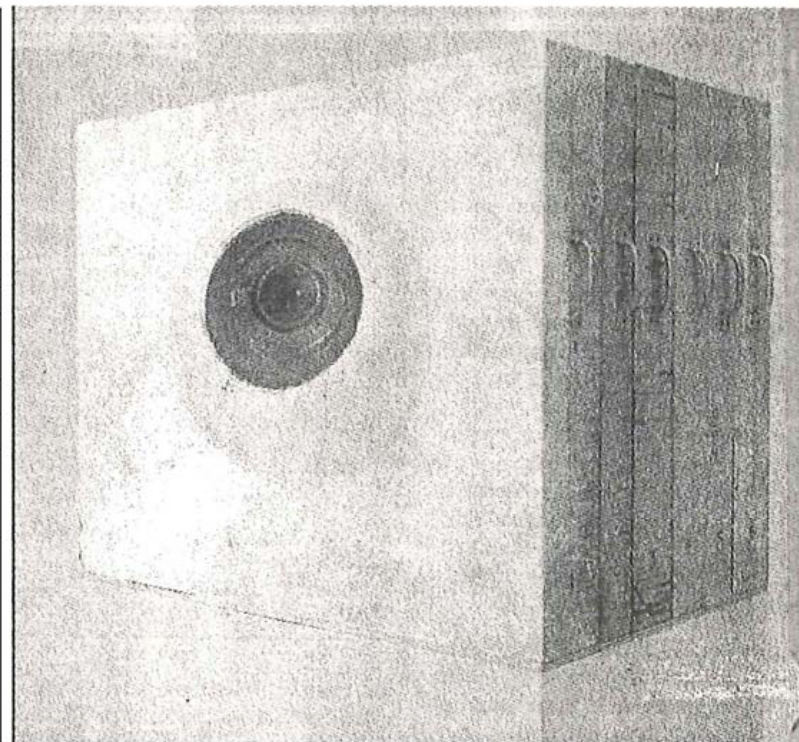
GALLERY WATCH

The seductive lure of 49 Geary St.

WHEN gallery-going in San Francisco, there is a temptation to never go anywhere but 49 Geary St. More galleries are stacked together on its four floors than anywhere else on the West Coast; many of them are among the best in The City. Of course, many top galleries are at other addresses scattered all over the map, but once you get on the 49 Geary elevator, you often end up with no time to go anywhere else. At the moment, there is a healthy number of good shows there. A selection follows:

In "Story Without Words," the Haines Gallery's third show of Emil Lukas, the rural Pennsylvania-based artist continues to explore his quasi-scientific interests in natural science while expanding his investigations into other formats.

Typically, Lukas captures the traces from life to decay of objects from the natural world — leaves, fruits, seeds, insects — by embedding them in plaster forms of various thicknesses. There is one 12-sectioned, 54-inch tall, plaster-with-objects tower that allows the



Emil Lukas' *Image No. 0560* at Haines Gallery: Found object, paper, glass

viewer (with a gallery staffer's help) to turn each section upside down to create a similar, inverted tower beside it, so that each section can be examined intimately from both sides.

Lukas has recently created large horizontally stacked paintings in which he indulges in similar methods. In one piece, he dripped consecutive applications of paint through a hole in the center of the canvas onto canvases underneath it. The surface result, a pattern of concentric organic forms, is reminiscent of early work by Eva Hesse. Each canvas is conveniently equipped with handles on each side to move the heavy work.

Lukas consistently finds beautiful patterns in life cycles, and by physically involving viewers in experiencing his work, he tries to connect them to the life processes

that are his subject.

Haines is also showing a suite of new paintings by local painter **Patsy Krebs**. Titled "Ovum," Krebs' new work is based on the colors of bird eggs. They range from familiar robin's-egg blue to the old gold of the Pallas' sandgrouse and the deep terra-cotta red of the Getti's warbler. Krebs (appropriately) applies egg tempera mixed with marble dust to small wood panel squares, and the results are exquisite. Each monochrome features a slightly darker square floating in its center, requiring that the viewer slow down to see it. Those who do will be rewarded.

(Both shows continue through March 20.)

Bertoni, Mario. "The Time-Space of the Artist-Collector. For Emil Lukas." In *Emil Lukas*. Exhibition catalogue. Verona: Studio La Città, 1998.

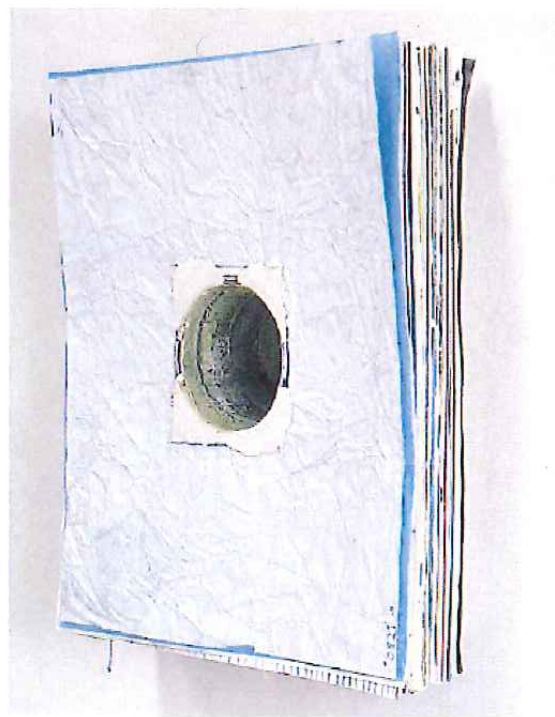
The Time-Space of the Artist-Collector. For Emil Lukas

In a wide and spacious room a sculpture/pillar with a squared off base rises more or less to eye height. It is many-layered, its consistency is wooden, stratified, its colour that of raw wood alternating with various pigments. At times it overflows with material that interrupts its vertical regularity, rounds out angles and corners, models and shapes hollows and excrescences. Seeing it, my thoughts turned to Boetti's *Column* (piles of paper doilies used by cake-makers), to the *Cubic Metre* (various wooden and metal elements completely filling a cube of Plexiglas), and to those other works of his in which heterogeneous materials, simply placed together or heaped one on top of the other, interact with such great impact. With this work, instead, I note the differences, I observe the functions of colour, I become intent on appreciating the step from painting to sculpture and on underlining how and why the act of piling up a given number of canvases reveals the uneasy and heightened character that painting has when it is confined to the limits of its own drips and surplus material.

Such things are noted when a group of people enter the room and one of them begins to take a layer from the column, then another, and another again and, turning them over, piles them up to form a second column. And in doing this the discovery is made that the sculpture/pillar is literally made of paint, for each layer is a canvas or even just a piece of paper painted or elaborated (perhaps on both sides), and that certain of these panels are sinuous and insinuating manifestations of material. Slowly, as one of the columns becomes shorter, the other grows to form an identical but reversed image. I can only marvel at this dynamic outpouring of art hidden inside what I originally thought was a single block. I am perplexed as I watch the visitor's hand displace the individual sections (and am reminded of the taboos broken by Vedova's *Plurimi*) and, by now incredulous, see the pieces invade the floor one by one and occupy a place I think of as that of a ritual by shattering the verticality of sculpture into a horizontal of many small fragments. Where Boetti's compiling stops, that of Emil Lukas only begins.

If I underline this image it is because it was the very first contact I had with this artist's work and because I think that only by narrating this sequence of events can I introduce the concepts of change and stratification in aims and meanings that are contained by his work (and "contain" is a very pertinent verb when speaking of it). Each work by Lukas tends to present itself as a corpus of elements grouped together, as a collection. In fact his work *Collection of Paths* has an emblematic title: *collection*, i.e. something which - starting from the antiquarian endeavours of eight-

eenth and nineteenth century galleries and studios, and, via Fontana's *Quanta*, continued as far as Eva Hesse's *Metronomic Irregularity* and beyond - considered that the appreciation of beauty lies in accumulation, in the multiplication of art objects, in the tension between "piece and piece" and the multiple or interstitial view. Given this, obviously each element is an extract, a moment in a process that was sparked off elsewhere and one that in turn initiates further processes and moments: his re-use of leftovers from previous works is a proof of this. Furthermore the frequent presence of larvae (a metaphoric symbol of change and of proceeding by stages), or the thread-like drawings made by insects strewn with ink and colours, indicates the simultaneous presence of differing painting components, both with regard to their conception and to their compositional strategies and developments. In this way each "piece" of a work becomes a fragment in a process of development and underlines the meaning of the individual "moment" that has been arrived at. But in this way too each of these provisory stages is able to question and redefine and even to negate the formal system that generated it. What is more, given that every stage, being temporary, find itself in a position that has altered with respect to other moments/elements, probably the best approach to Lukas's work is not so much morphological or stylistic, nor is it even historical but, rather, one of *contemporaneity* or of simultaneous presence, an appreciation of his tendency to both concentrate and open out gestures and visual investigation.



Change (becoming), moment (pause-interval), contemporaneity: I believe that the notions used so far indicate fairly clearly just how and how much Lukas uses time.



"In 1987 I came to work with a Swiss artist named Not Vidal, something which opened my eyes. Within that year I found drawings remained stronger grouped in systems with other drawings with the same idea. From work, travel, and change this body of work evolved". This statement, in a letter Lukas wrote to me, is particularly pertinent above all with respect to the themes I have been developing: to enclose time inside the work, to work with time and to force it to reveal itself through a work that evolves from the work: the piece completely eliminates whatever is unambiguous and what, once stated, might lead to immobility and fixity. *Reoccurring Cycle of Energy*, one of his latest pieces, is laid out like samples or swatches. The viewer wanders amongst these canvases and feels dominated by the work which slips away yet presses at his back, just as he is also aware of the limits of vision which is always "lacking" at some point because the eye is always being led on. We read and re-read, turn back to look again at something that tells us the finished work has not stopped evolving before our eyes, because it is not finished. However much each "piece" is finished the work itself is not, it has no end (not: "it is infinite") and, even though each part of the work (the members of its body) are all present, they are not all visible or pre-

sentable at the same time, at once: and this means that something is always slipping away, that there exists something invisible and not presentable.

So this is the reason for the pauses, delays, the re-thinking (re-folding like the pages of a book piling up one on top of the other: and the term "fold" should be understood in the sense of Deleuze as an unpacified "baroque" gaze) that go to make up Lukas's work and the reason that such gestures require an incessant process of conferring meaning. And this too is why there is such a difference between "state" and "state", page and page, sheet and sheet, "piece" and "piece" which range from the lyrical to the aberrant and always live dangerously at an extreme: that of transition, of change, of openness, of inexhaustible process.

The artist-collector's time-space, in all that is fragmentary, dream-like, local or transitory, could not have more allegorical or more physical extensions.

Modena, 7th March 1998

Mario Bertoni



Di fronte/opposite:

***Something about Everything*, 1998**

86 disegni, tazza in polistirolo, pittura su carta con filo, materiale organico, matita

86 drawings, foam cup, paint on paper with thread, organic material, pencil

27,3 x 21 x 6,3cm.

A sinistra/left:

***Detachment from Inner Wall*, 1997**

Gesso, legno, filo di metallo, tela, materiale organico, disegni, carta, pittura, matita,

Plaster, wood, wire, burlap, organic material, drawings, paper, paints, pencil, thread

68,5 x 26,6 x 31,7cm.

Sopra/above:

***Between Life and Death*, 1997**

Gesso, legno bruciato, pittura, carta, cera

Plaster, burnt wood, paint, paper, wax

19 x 9,5 x 9,5cm. (ed. 13)

Koplos, Janet. "Emil Lukas at Bravin Post Lee." *Art in America*, February 1997.

Emil Lukas at Bravin Post Lee

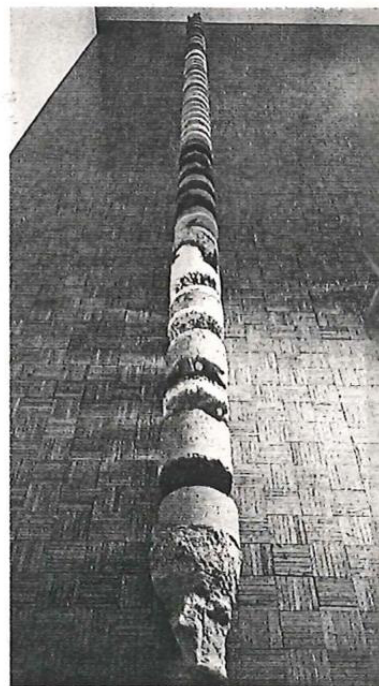
The heart of Emil Lukas's third solo at Bravin Post Lee was a 42-foot cylinder of 40 irregular segments that extended almost the entire length of the gallery's main room. Titled *Time Line Under Pear Tree* (1994-96), it identified the two aspects to be considered in all of Lukas's works: natural materials and the passage of time. He introduces organic irregularity to the Minimalist's serial structure in this sober concrete-and-plaster casting. What we see here is not serial repetition but serial change, as each break in the cylinder reveals the introduction of a new substance—shells, stones, eggs, sticks, leaves—or a touch of color. The segments range from an inch thick to more than a foot long; only the diameters remain constant.

Lukas's absorption in the natural isn't a matter of sentimental attraction; he doesn't go for effects of charm or conventional beauty. *Release* (1996) is a glass box filled with papers that are "decorated" with random splatters, holes, threads, stains and several squashed bugs, some stitched down. *Organic System with Buckets* (1995) is a wall diptych (no buckets are visible) that includes a halo of lines around the circular evidence of some coloring agent dumped onto this canvas ground. The lines are not the product of the artist's hand but the trails of maggots he allowed to flourish in the bucket. The means may be repellent but the effect is not. (The same can be said of David

Nyzio's bug-shit "paintings.") The left half of Lukas's diptych is a shattered sheet of glass attached to the canvas with paint.

The glass represents an instant's action, the maggot trails a somewhat longer interval, the accumulation of pages and residues in *Release* a still longer investment of the artist's time. But *Release*, and also two stacked works of organic materials and trash cast in plaster, *Leaf to Mouth* and *Down Through Center* (both 1996), involve the viewer's time as well as the artist's. In these works, the multiple parts are not simultaneously on view, as they are in *Time Line Under Pear Tree*, but must be viewed in successive increments, like turning the pages of a book or viewing the frames of a film. There is a certain narrative aspect but no real plot: the works are accounts of transformations, with one page or cast related to the next but the direction of the whole unpredictable. Lukas's works seem to be both home experiments and amateur archives. We perceive a reserved or even impersonal quality that gives way, after some thought, to a rather comforting sense of the connectedness of all things.

—Janet Koplos



Emil Lukas: *Time Line Under Pear Tree*, 1994-96, mixed mediums, 40 sections, 12½ inches in diameter, 42 feet long; at Bravin Post Lee. (Review on p. 101.)

Baker, Kenneth. "Emil Lukas." *ARTnews*, May 1997.

SAN FRANCISCO

Emil Lukas

HAINES

We often speak of "reading" works of art when we examine them for meaning and intent. This figure of speech happens to apply to the work of Emil Lukas uncommonly well.

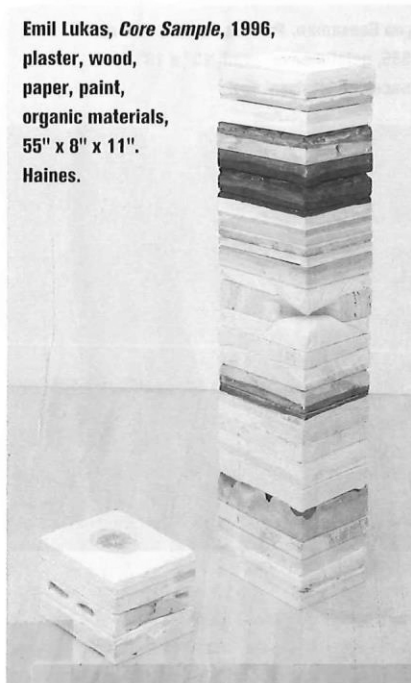
At a distance, most of Lukas's sculptures look like stacked-up books. Many are composed of individual units that measure $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 inches, though they vary in thickness.

Viewers of Lukas's work may still associate stacking with a time in the late 1960s when some New York artists began to build sculpture up from the zero-degree to which Carl Andre had reduced it. Thinking back to that moment, you have to wonder whether Lukas is consciously putting emotional and intellectual content into what was—in the work of Richard Serra, for example—a purely strategic sort of structure.

In any case, you do not get the drift of Lukas's work until you separate its layers. Each element is worked in relief, or polished, painted, drawn upon, or filamented with thread. The relationships between them are formally complex, poetic, or radically surprising.

In the large piece titled *Core Sample*, the top side of one element is a small

Emil Lukas, *Core Sample*, 1996,
plaster, wood,
paper, paint,
organic materials,
55" x 8" x 11".
Haines.



channel of charred wood, enclosed in a blond wood frame. The underside of the same element is a smooth white plaster surface broken only by a tiny web of black threads.

At another point in the structure of *Core Sample*, images of consumption by fire, or of something burned to a skeleton of itself, give way to the veined growth of a leaf or to white panels streaked with watery blue. Filaments of gold thread turn a seemingly random stain on paper to a ginkgo-like leaf. The tiny botanical drawings in Thoreau's "Journals" come to mind.

The slab elements also vary startlingly in weight, adding another, muscular dimension to the aspect of wordless narrative, confirming that a real sculptural intelligence operates here.

KENNETH BAKER

Bauer, Julia. "Local artist discovers realism the natural way — in suburbia." *The Express-Times*, 25 March 1996.

Local artist discovers realism the natural way — in suburbia

By JULIA BAUER
The Express-Times

From the outside, the art studio of Emil Lukas in Stockertown looks like an overgrown pigeon coop, plain and unpretentious. But like his art, surprises lie inside, pages of a book waiting to be turned.

There's a square column four feet tall in one corner. Not much to look at, superficially. The secret, though, are the 32 or so sculptures and paintings that nest in a three-dimensional vocabulary, stacked like a librarian's backlog.

"There are 100 paintings over there, and all you see is a column," Lukas said. He calls it a system or a book, with pages that only make sense if they're revealed in order.

"I've always worked with the same basic materials," Lukas said, "whatever I can get my hands on."

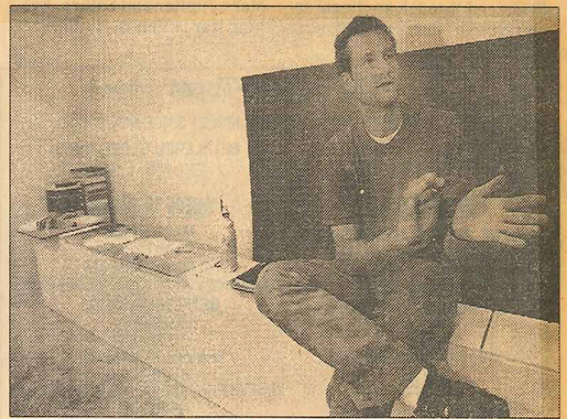
While most mortals see the utility of everyday things, Lukas sees their artistic power. And there are few materials, living

or dead, that are off limits for his nature center-studio.

Birth, death and all the squiggles in between fascinate Lukas. He starts with sheets of 8½-by-11-inch cotton bond paper, then experiments — wood, blood, used motor oil, crushed pencil lead, burn marks, fish eggs, plaster and saw dust, decaying leaves, even the soldiers of decay — common fly maggots.

Dropped in a tablespoon of paint, the wriggling worms head away from light, and drag a thread of paint with them.

"I use them to move the paint," Lukas said. "They're like little paint brushes." The result is a thousand spidery



E-T photo/BRUCE WINTER

Emil Lukas of Stockertown explains his art.

trails radiating from a dark center.

Most of his work is double-sided, with the back as integral as the front.

One of his smaller, horizon-

tal "books," dubbed "Compression," opens to pages of crushed or pressed elements — ragged holes worn

Please see ARTIST /A-2

ARTIST

Continued from A-1

through by a wet fingertip, a graphite lead smashed to a powdery splotch, polyurethane varnish binding sandy residue, black thread stitched back and forth through white paper. At each end a plaster cover carries the impression of compression — a pressed leaf, perhaps, always with the thread of a theme.

"Honesty is really important to me," Lukas said. "There's something honest about marks that aren't hidden."

Like his art, sculptor Lukas is multi-faceted and is hard to pigeonhole.

He's the husband of Claire, his college sweetheart. He's daddy to 6-year-old Jack, 3-year-old Faye, and their only Stockertown baby, 1½-year old Jane.

He's a politician, as one of four recently elected borough council members.

And he's little known locally, though widely respected in art galleries around the world for his minimal-natural art forms.

The Lukases moved from 89th Street, N.Y.C., to Main Street, USA, three years ago, seeking a simpler life for their growing family. It was Jack and Faye, his first two toddlers, who brought the family to Stockertown.

"New York City is a great place to raise kids for anybody, until they're about 3," Lukas said. That's when the family started looking for a

home near Easton, with a 600-square-foot outbuilding.

"Stockertown is where I wound up," Lukas said. As the family settled in, Emil and Claire Lukas started adjusting to a slower pace. It's taken some time, because their city experience was "intense relationships with intense people."

"New York City, like it or not, has the best things in the world," Lukas said — the restaurants, the museums, the art galleries and the expense.

"In New York, there's a \$20 wake-up fee," Lukas said, laughing. That's the out-of-pocket money spent on coffee shops, croissant bakeries and newsstands en route to the subway. "You're walking past 100 great stores."

Reality, though, was the everyday pressures of diapers, groceries and bills. There was little time, or money, for museums and cultural outings.

Beyond that, Lukas found himself and his art changing.

He credits the New York art culture for helping him develop intellectually. "It forced me to think," he said. But over six years' time, Lukas found himself becoming hypocritical. "My art was more about artificialness. I was staging things in my studio."

Now, he walks out his studio door and trips over nature.

"What outbalances everything is how you live, how your kids live, and how you spend money," Lukas said.

A native of Pittsburgh, Lukas began making waves in

the art world during his senior year at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. From there, he returned to Pittsburgh and connected with the curator of the Carnegie Museum. His work evolved through nine months of study with Swiss sculptor Not Vital in northern Italy. And his career-work-love became self-supporting.

Since 1986, his art has been displayed and sold through a spectrum of galleries — Mendelson Gallery in Pittsburgh, Bravin Post Lee in New York City, Thomas Solomon's Garage in Los Angeles, Haines Gallery in San Francisco, Galerie Nova in Pontresina, Switzerland, Studio La Citta in Verona, Italy, and others.

This year, he has two shows — one in June in Basel, Switzerland, and an October showing at the SoHo gallery Bravin Post Lee.

His artist friends in New York City worried that Lukas would miss opportunities by moving away from a metropolitan art market.

"My joke is, 'I'm trying to ruin my career,'" Lukas said. He has a fierce work ethic, and needs every ounce of it to keep up with the demand. Since he graduated from Edinboro, galleries have come to him.

"I haven't promoted myself. I haven't done anything except make my work," Lukas said.

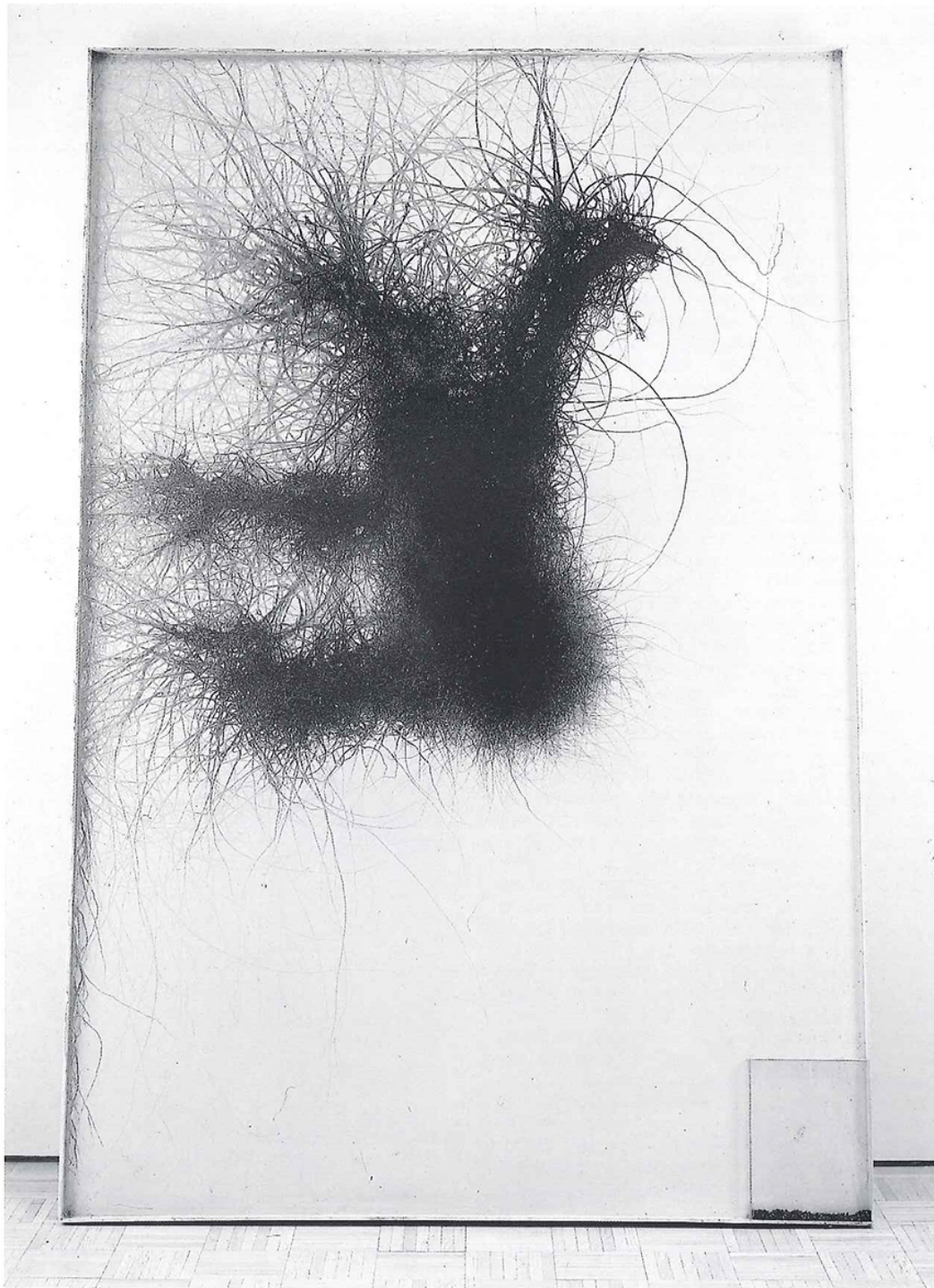
Then he corrected himself. "I did call the Allentown Art Museum after we moved here, but they've never called back," he said with a shrug.



An artwork called "Compression" by Emil Lukas.

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Meneghelli, Luigi. "Sculpture's Secret Face." In *Emil Lukas*. Exhibition catalogue. Verona: Studio La Città, 1995, pp. 6-9



Sculpture's secret face.

How can common things be spoken of, hunted down, roused and freed from the waste which buries them?

(G. Perec, *L'Infra-ordinario*)

It digs away at the foundations of what is typical and spectacular. It hides itself behind what is too visible, what is hyper-real. And it asks questions too: about what is not usually noticed or is forgotten, what is unimportant or what "happens when nothing happens": the passing of ages, the continual growth of natural elements, the harmonising of hidden energies. And yet the work of Emil Lukas seems to set "seeing against sight" and "experiencing against experience".

This seeming paradox results from a double line of action: on the one hand we find accumulation, envelopment, and the unlimited retention of things and spaces. On the other there is ingestion, negation, the setting aside of known meanings and connections. The result is a pristine emergence of relations and events in themselves in the place of pre-established paradigms and closed data banks.

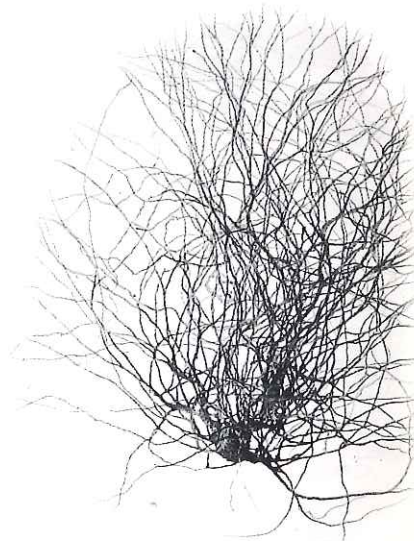
The aim of the work is not to latch on to an object in order to push it to its furthest limits or to give it a formal definition, but to pass simply from one phase of knowledge to another, from one stage of the image to the next. And so what becomes important here, beyond the concept of the work produced and the offering to view of something that has been made, are the traces left by the very process of its creation.

In such a context linguistic distinctions and disciplinary boundaries can no longer hold: the text of the work is determined by a kind of over-spill, by the multiplication by contagion of the know-how of making. Painting and sculpture melt together and are confused: a leaf becomes not only a surface but a component of a three-dimensional body, just as a glass box is not only a container of space, but also a space for containing mysterious meandering signs. What this means is that marks are separated from their familiar associations in order to liberate their meanings, rather like Joyce's "fermented words" which, overflowing as they are with echoes and allusions, expand beyond themselves to multiply and project their sense throughout the whole structure of the book.

So Lukas's work can never be read in a uniform manner but as something in a state of constant transformation. It has to be looked at as "a multiple unit or multiplicity in unity", like a combination of wholes which, however, do not lead the eye to focus on the totality but to linger around its various parts and to investigate the ways that led to their being formed into a body, a construction, a column...

In fact in referring to Lukas's work Brancusi's Infinite Column has been mentioned. But what is of interest here is not the idea of flight to some archaic and primitive heaven but "the essence of flight", which means the demolition of all fossilised situations, the breakdown of limits, and a path towards another way of being: that is, the transformation of material into impetuosity, of heaviness into lightness. What is of interest here is this secret, this almost alchemical metamorphosis, this revealing of the hidden, unexpected yet limitless properties of things. In fact Lukas's research is tormented by the desire to reveal values, behaviour, and states which result from the various elements employed. This is not a question of remaining transfixed by "material intimacy" or mere passive curiosity, but by "an aggressive curiosity, in its etymological sense of inspection", like that of a child searching for the mechanism of a toy, turning it round in his hands, shaking it, taking it apart. For example, in *When Things Begin Small*, which is made up of forty-six different layers, some sheets are delicately yet insistently perforated, wounded, sewn. The intervention is not on the paper but inside it, nor is it a procedure closed within the gesture itself but one which plunges through the surface to reveal its other face - which is not its reverse or negative aspect but its furtherance, its continuation and echo, like the page of a book which lives in the continuum of its writing.

But in this work each section is linked in some way to the succeeding one. Each one contains, even if in a fragmentary or shadowy form, the traces of the other: each is the mother of the following one and daughter of the one that preceded it. Here we find painting symbolically imprisoned between two sheets of glass; glass entrapments containing insects, seeds, flowers, fish eggs; transparent boxes that are genuine experimental fields where the "me-



chanisms of larval life" can be observed... in other words, an inventory of buried things, an underground store house. So much so that it might seem that the work's main objective is to block the process of dissolution, to challenge dust and nothingness: to vitrify, to mummify (with plaster, wood, paint, cement), to create vacuums, to harden what is soft and liquid, to counterfeit what is animal or vegetable by loading it with the consistency of minerals. But in fact Lukas wants his images to flow along and show, not their geological condition, but their continual restarting and recombining according to the inexorable construction of his argument.

However, if Lukas is concerned with concealment he does not do so with the aim of negation but with that of animation. Hidden in a nocturnal space even the muckiest things (organic waste) or the most insignificant (the dust of his studio) can be freed of their physical and psychological weight to emerge naked and regenerated. But then isn't it in darkness, in the womb, that the "world's egg", the beginning of life, originates? Isn't it underground that the seed begins to germinate? Or, to return to the metaphor of the book, isn't it with disappearance that writing reveals itself? For it is with the closing of the page that its questioning begins

But Lukas, after having buried objects, insects, writing, and paintings, deciphers them. After having ordered them and numbered them he allows the seal to be broken in order to analyse this pre-established system. The work invites the viewer to take part in deconstructing and reconstructing its text and to test for himself the intertwining of parallels, inversions, and univocity between the various parts. It is not important to arrive at a conclusion (also because, to refer once again to Joyce, every end contains its own beginning), but it is important to keep playing, rather like the "marvellous rites" of the cadavres exquis or in infantile petits papiers. Or like the movements of a maggot which, as Lukas himself has noted, crawls across the surface, dragging ink and literally creating a work in space and time. Nor does the work end with the conclusion of an action. For example, in this show there is exhibited a work, *Water Study*, formed from blocks of cement in which are anchored objects of daily use such as cups and plates and which is completed by stacking together the sheets of glass used in the construction of the work. The objects allude to a fullness of colour and an emptiness of material, yet the glass reverses the situation by showing the traces of the material and the transparency of the objects' form. Everything conveys the idea of an endless perceptive process, of a problematical cognitive work in progress: the banal object, once having entered the environment of art, becomes an emblem of doubt, evidence of an enigma. It loses its own objectivity and concreteness and becomes

a presence half way between reality and unreality: something recognisable but unnameable, an indeterminate state, the receptacle of metamorphoses. And the very recourse to a lengthy catalogue of materials (canvas, plastic, organic elements etc.) finishes by destroying any possible ordered or balanced vision and eliminates any risk of formalisation (even that which, with the passing of time, might emerge from the most casual disorder).

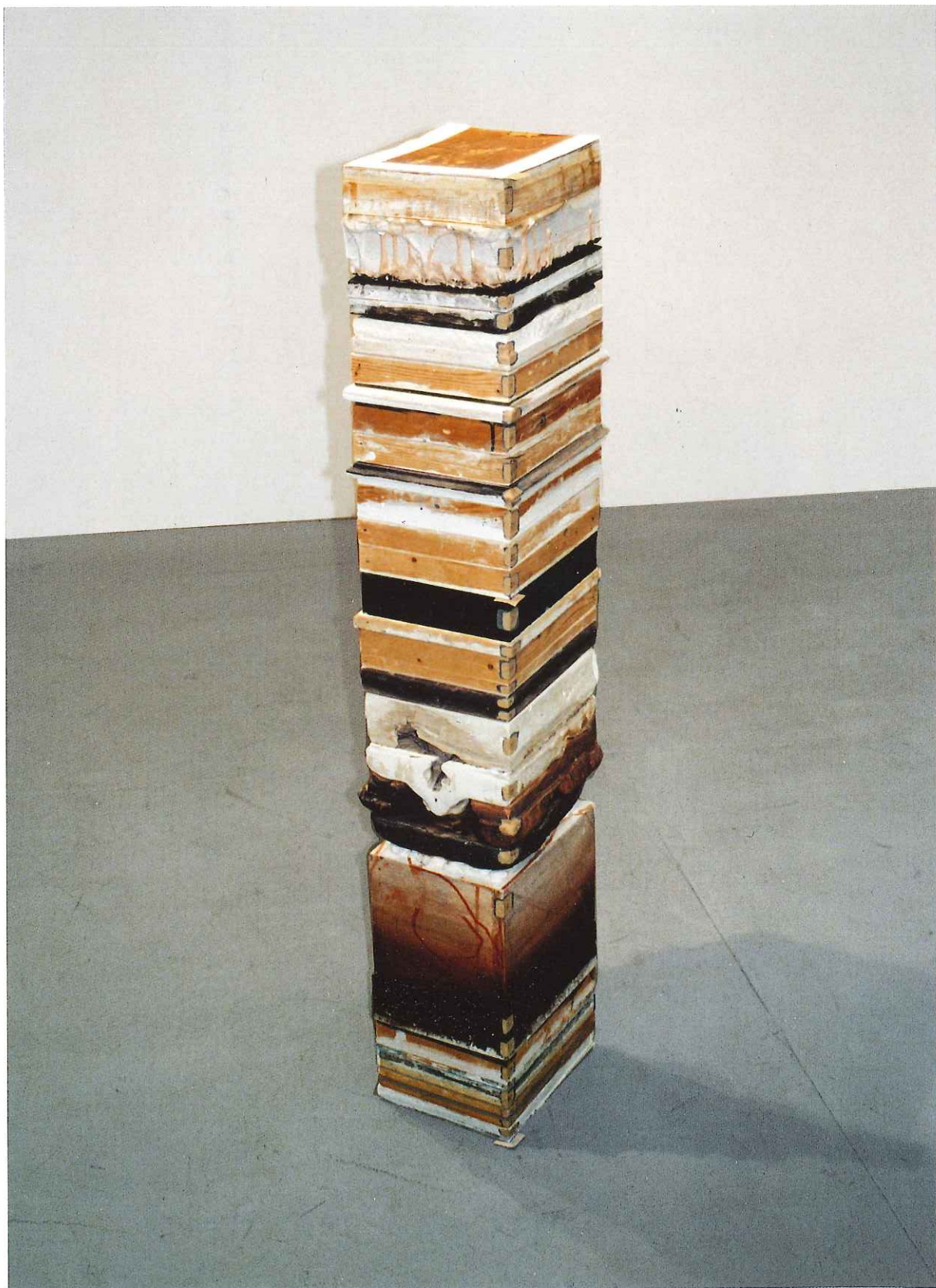
The rules of combination (in a Minimalist sense) are evaded and the elements are forced to deny their simple surface values. Or, rather, they indicate and allow the promise of depth and further possibilities to flourish: they affirm that something unsaid is at work (as happens in certain pieces in plaster which seem to show a genuine process of expansion and proliferation). We are, finally, almost in the presence of "a kind of continuous physical palpitation" (of body, skin, vertebrae, membrane etc.) which continually swamp its own constitutive parts, which swallows and involves them in its own movements, its own heartbeat and breathing: we find before us, not an entity, but a situation; not a figure but a position.

Luigi Meneghelli
Verona March 1995

Sources: G. Bachelard; K. Baker; S. Cavicchioli; G. Celant; G. Perec; B. Rose; G. Scarpetta; F. Nietzsche.

Page 6
On the Bellies of 278, 1994
wood, canvas, paint, glass, maggots
legno, tela, pittura, vetro, bruchi
214,5 x 145cm.

Page 9
When Things Begin Small, 1995
various paints on paper, canvas, glass, wood, and plaster with thread and organic material
pittura varia su carta, tela, vetro, legno, gesso con filo e materia organica
46 sections: 141 x 31 x 24cm.



Baker, Kenneth. "Things Stack Up at Haines." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 September 1995.

Things Stack Up at Haines

Pennsylvania artist Emil Lukas is the standout in a handsome group show at the Haines Gallery.

In "32 Sections About Growth" (1995), Lukas has made an interlocking stack of small panels in wood, plaster and other media that, piled up in order, resembles a stack of books.

Each interface between sections makes visible some connection between them: a transfer of stains through permeable materials, a dovetailing of relief elements.

At one point, an incised leaflike pattern appears, its veined structure magnified to the scale of a tortoise shell. In another, especially grotesque passage, a beaklike fish head serves as a channel to connect three panels.

"Packed System with 11 Drawings" (1995) is a smaller work with a similar structure that at one of its junctures suggests a lidded human chest cavity.

Stacking was a move common in minimal sculpture, a way to get vertical structure without contrivance. Lukas brings a full measure of contrivance to stacking: determinate order, narrative structure and visual, even visceral, suspense.

Any revisionist impulse is a minor point here, though. The bizarre, unpredictable and highly finished quality of Lukas' objects is what makes them absorbing and powerful. Without words, his stacked pieces fulfill the promise of their resemblance to books.

Relations between literary and pictorial experience are an issue in another series of works at Haines: "The Eye of Enduring," a series of paintings by Diane Hall, interspersed with framed panels of poetry by Lyn Hejinian.

Hall's oil paintings, on small, thick panels, each 10 inches square, are snatches of turbulent sky done in an expertly stylized realism that suggests borrowings from Tiepolo. I cannot look at them without recalling Emerson's avowal that "the sky is the daily bread of the eyes."

Like Lukas, Hall is interested in the layering of time effected by the way acts of attention and discovery cut across the ever-changing stuff of nature.

Hejinian's poetry is musically and even philosophically impressive. Its effect here is to alter the rhythms of glancing and repositioning that Hall's many small paintings set up.

I cannot decide whether this collaboration succeeds completely, yet I like Hall's paintings in a matrix with Hejinian's writing better than by themselves. The poetry, on the other hand, does not seem to need the paintings.

Cohen, Michael. "Emil Lukas – Tom Solomon's Garage." *Flash Art*, vol. 27, no. 177, Summer 1994.

EMIL LUKAS TOM SOLOMON'S GARAGE

Emil Lukas excavates the body and nature as sedimentary metaphors for his Beuys-textured painting/sculpture hybrids. Each work in his exhibition requires movement through layered strata of pages and panels to examine the full breadth of its metaphors: decay, death, pregnancy, birth, and their correlatives in nature. Traveling through the traditionally beautiful, organic surfaces of *Egg Rub* (1994), six double sided paintings, one senses a festering, unknown after-birth within each classical structure. However, the sticky residue is not from the balls of tape pushing through the warm-gray surface of his canvas, nor the maggots mixed in with his abstract expressionist gestures, but rather the excluded context lurking behind Lukas's general aura of comfort, safety, and modernist nostalgia.

At the height of their influence, Lukas's forefathers Beuys, Kiefer, and Marden juxtaposed stunning beauty with a conceptual and emotional edge: the political anarchism and fascism of Beuys, the ambiguous relation to nazism and power in Kiefer, and the eccentric personalizing of minimalism by Marden. Those

artists' self-engagement with the tropes of past power symbolized in retrograde art styles is absent in Lukas's work, hence the soothing quality of his projects. This seems less a problem than a sobering reality of American creative technology. As we move into our 500 fiber-optic channels of culture, one can indulge in Twiggy nostalgia when viewing Kate Moss posing for Calvin Klein and nostalgia for the voluptuous body in Guess jeans ads at the same time. In other words, multi-received sign systems can operate simultaneously in computerized postmodern culture. So Lukas relives, through iconographical metaphors, 50s abstract expressionist romanticizations of nature and the body (plus 60s European forms) as if they had never happened. A private space for pleasure is opened, a microchip where heroism, tradition, and the beautiful once again promise fulfillment without political connotations.

Michael Cohen

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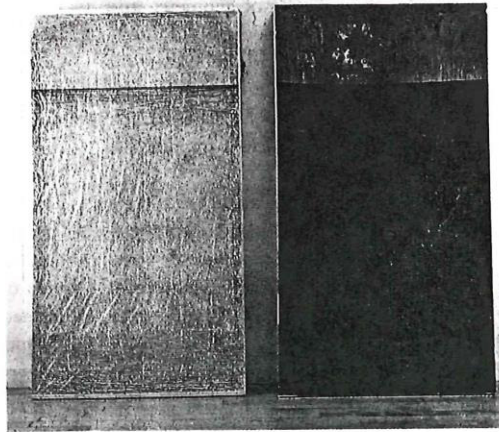
Choon, Angela. "Taking Roads Less Traveled." *Art & Antiques*, May 1994.

Taking Roads Less Traveled

Art that springs from new terrain.

By Angela Choon

Experiencing a work by Emil Lukas, such as *The Crossing (below)*, is like having your tarot cards read: You may see the whole deck laid out, or perhaps only the top card can be seen. In this case, the deck comprises seven paintings, any number of which will be viewed on a given day. "There will be many situations," says Lukas. "The show will be in a constant state of flux." Lukas started working in this fragmented way traveling through Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. There's a sense of impulsiveness in Lukas's paintings, especially when you look closely at the surface. The artist has applied nontraditional materials—blood, coffee, used motor oil, even mag-



got—to give a physical sense to the surface. Lukas, who left New York City a year ago and now lives in Pennsylvania, says, "Even though I make paintings, I see myself more as a sculptor because of the three-dimensional presence of my work. Painting is not just a two-dimensional surface." At Thomas Solomon's Garage, Los Angeles, April 23–May 28, and at Bravin Post Lee, New York, November 18–December 24.

“Art in the 90’s: Emil Lukas.” *The Eye On Art*, Winter 1993, pp. 1-2.

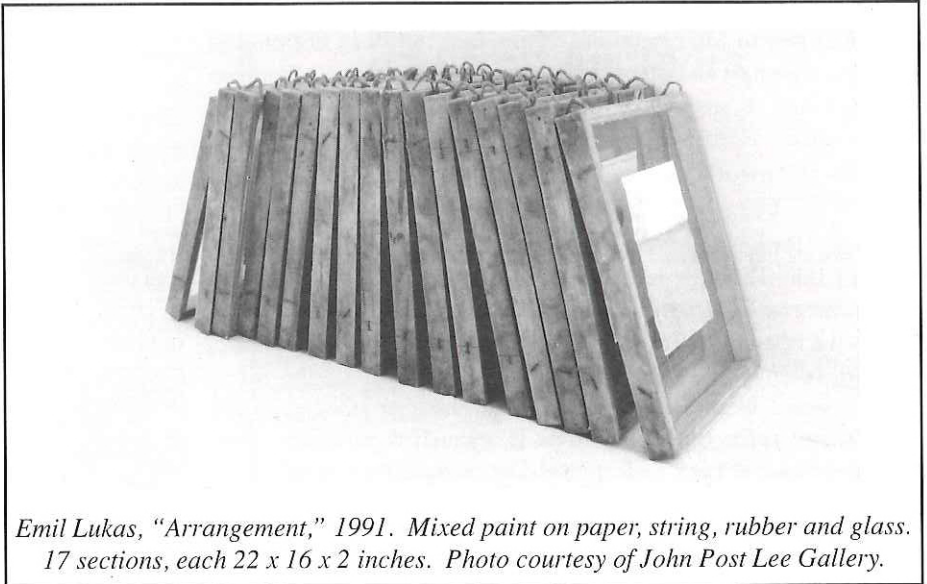
Art in the 90's

Keeping in step with politics, the art world has re-examined the 1980's commodity culture. If the art of the 80's was about demystifying the art object by selling it as just that, a commodity to be bought and sold with the inclinations of the market, then the 90's are bringing the art object down to earth again. Panned by the media and dismissed by collectors, Koons' show “Made in Heaven” was the swan song of a decade of decadence.

The reaction to the 80's among certain artists parallels the anti-Minimal movement in the early 1970's by sculptors like Eva Hesse, Richard Serra and Claus Oldenburg. Rejecting the impersonal geometries of Minimalism, these sculptors re-introduced lyricism, monumentality and humor to the art world.

Georg Herold, Emil Lukas and Leonardo Drew have come out of the past decade embracing the notion of art as material object (an idea at least as old as Marcel Duchamp.) But, in contrast to artists of the 80's, these three artists do not equate the art object with the commodity. Once art was stripped of all spiritual and conceptual meaning, the point had been made that art was a commodity and art makers and viewers craved an artistic concept with more integrity.

In his attempt to flee East Germany in 1973, Georg Herold was imprisoned for nine months until West Germany arranged for his release. Once he arrived in Hamburg, Herold studied with Sigmar Polke at the Academy of Fine Arts. His formative years in an oppressive environment have manifested themselves in a sort of conceptual nihilism.



Emil Lukas, “Arrangement,” 1991. Mixed paint on paper, string, rubber and glass. 17 sections, each 22 x 16 x 2 inches. Photo courtesy of John Post Lee Gallery.

Emil Lukas

Emil Lukas is another artist working in a conceptual vein. Like Herold's brick paintings, Lukas' works do not fall into the categories of painting or sculpture and are concerned with the relationship of materials and ideas. Painting on plastic, wood, ceramic and other materials, Lukas makes tactile, three-dimensional works which can be held, hung or stacked. Each surface of these book-like forms is a finished painting. They have no front or back and can be hung facing either direction.

Common to all of Lukas' recent work (“Predecessor”, “Entry”, “Linkage”) is a physical sense of movement through time, space and history. When “closed,” the piece “Entry” is a striped stack of individual, rectangular pieces which are read surface by surface like the pages of a book. To really experience the work in its “open” state, the viewer must spend the time to peel through the layers, touching, looking and replacing each element of the work. Once inside the piece, the viewer sees how carefully fitted each piece is and the textural variation of each surface.

In a large sense, Lukas' works are a metaphor for time, space and history. But experiencing the work has as much in common with the ultimate personal process of falling in love. The interactive process of demystifying the closed column one layer at a time imitates both the sensual and spiritual aspects of becoming intimate with another person.

Lohaus, Stella. "Emil Lukas." *Forum International*, May-August 1993, p. 128.

R E V I E W S

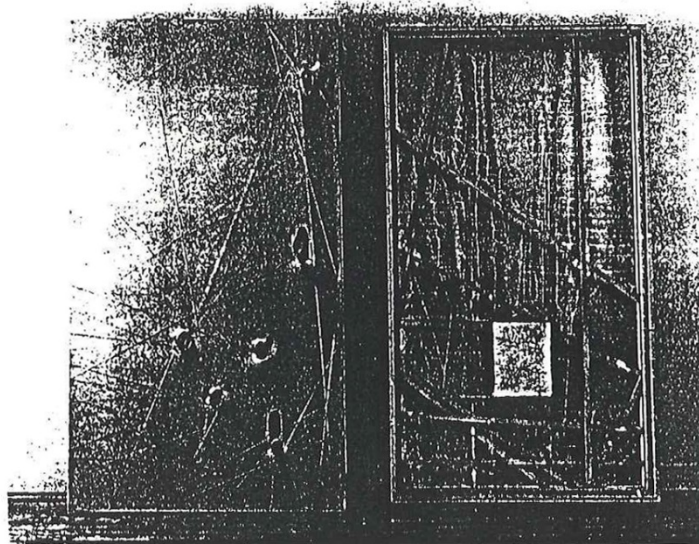
EMIL LUKAS

JOHN POST LEE GALLERY, NEW YORK

FEBRUARY 4 - 27, 1993

At first sight one may be tempted to reject Lukas' work for different reasons: Because we do not want to be taught how to look at art and because we do not feel like participating and collaborating in the game of turning the many panels. Still, the work of Emil Lukas (1963, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) is worth a second observation, a closer look.

Lukas' work is both painting and sculpture simultaneously. Different framed paintings constitute one sculpture, and a small tower of plaster turns out to be a collection of five sections with surprisingly many painting-like characteristics. *Changing Sand* (1990) consists of different rectangular plaster pieces that on each side show either a drawing, a pierced sheet, or a floor sweeping. Both because of its size, form and content, it is reminiscent of a diary, a journal, a logbook keeping track of a travel through the desert that the artist undertook in 1987. This work is one of his earliest so-called "sequential pieces". In these works many paintings, drawings or images are installed in such a way that they remind us of a book. This is reinforced by the fact that one has "to turn the pages" in order to get a full grasp of the work. But rather than being fascinated by literature, Lukas focuses on relations. Conventional hierarchies like the interior, the exterior, the top, the bottom, the inside, the outside, the front, the back, the beginning and the end, are questioned and blurred. Also in *The Crossing* (1993) seven big panels (each 179 x 100 cm.) are arranged in a specific order and every panel can equally be enjoyed from both sides. The different panels are not arranged in a coincidental, but in a specific order. The consecutiveness is essential. Whether you start at the "front" or the "back" is undecided, but the sequence is important and the different depictions are interrelated. Different images and materials reoccur. Especially the piercings and the thread, either sewn in the surface or wound around the frame, deal with the aspect of double sidedness. A hole affects both sides simultaneously, in "damaging" the surface it manifests itself as something powerful, not to be restricted by one "side". The thread brings about the same feeling: It lures the viewer to investigate its path, and it denies the existence of only one "front" side. There is no backside that merely functions as the "negative", but it shows a



The Crossing, 1993, mixed media. Photo John Bessler.

new image, to be continued in one of the following panels. Almost like a repetition of this work, one of the panels again offers a bunch of drawings, like a model on a smaller scale, or like a synopsis.

Although often referred to as a "collection of thrilling stories", Lukas' work does not turn the viewer in a kind of detective unravelling a mystery. There is no mystery, there is no climax, there is no thread to direct Theseus, and there is no Ariadne hidden in the Labyrinth. It is true, looking

at Lukas' work can be associated with reading a text (also the importance of the sequence confirms this interpretation), yet it is not a bunch of thrilling tales. The relation between two consecutive panels can be compared to two pages in a book, in the sense that they add to each others information. But it is not about an accumulative, linear "approaching the end" (because one is also allowed to start at the end), Lukas tackles the relationship and the connections between images. Not every piece is characterized by a sequential collection of panels. *Wall Cutter* (1992) is an "edge" cut out of a painting and installed in such a way that it accentuates and reveals many architectural peculiarities. Being a cross-section of a painting, it brings to the surface different parts of the canvas, the wooden frame, the coat of plaster. All marks are made visible. Whatever might have been hidden, has lost its mystery. And yet, banality is absent.

Stella Lohaus

Seward, Keith. "Emil Lukas." *Artforum*, May 1993, p. 107.

EMIL LUKAS
JOHN POST LEE
GALLERY

Emil Lukas' medium is neither painting nor sculpture per se, but stratification. Though he may begin like a painter, with a surface, Emil Lukas compacts materials such as wood, glass, nails, rubber, oatmeal, motor oil, and paint into strata that encompass and surpass traditional modes of art-making. In *Folded Collection*, 1992, a large, rectangular piece of paper, placed on the floor, is divided into eight separate sections each of which undergoes a different transformative process: some are saturated, front and back, with painted abstractions, others are embroidered with needlepoint stitches that look like veins, one has a leaf sewn onto it. For Lukas, a surface is thus already a layer, something more than two-dimensional but not quite three (a fractal dimension). *Folded Collection* is not to be left lying on the floor—you pick it up like a map, fold it in half to create two strata, fold

it again, and yet again. It becomes a (properly called) three-dimensional object. There were similar "stratified" objects made not of folds but of piles or stacks: you moved through the layers of *Growth Collection*, 1992—an aggregate of what are ostensibly eight large "paintings" leaning against the wall—as you would through the pages of a book. This process of interaction conveys Lukas' strata from the third to the fourth dimension. Undo *Folded Collection* and it unfolds in time.

Lukas creates works that invoke sky (*Corona*, 1993) and water (*River's Skin*, 1993); and others that include "organic material" such as fishheads (*The Crossing*, 1993) or smushed flies (*Changing Sands*, 1990). It is important to specify, however, that these paintings do not represent nature, but, rather, incorporate natural functions, abiding by a kind of "geological logic." Stratification itself is the primary instance of this, but there are others: *The Growth Collection* contains a stratum in which watermelon seeds are affixed to a canvas and allowed to sprout, thus digging holes into the support surface. In this way, the strata-object encompasses its own decay as well as growth.

Corona, a painting about the size of the palm of your hand, does not merely depict a corona, rather, it employs the same effect used by Alberto Giacometti to create sculptures of the male figure that, no matter how closely you look at them, appear to be far away. In other words, it implements an optical law whereby the size of an object is proportional to the distance between the viewer and the object. Indeed, a corona itself is nothing but an optical effect, a ring of colored light seen around a luminous body. Thus, in *Corona*, Lukas does not depict a cosmic phenomenon so much as he creates an imaginary atmosphere (with attendant laws of perception), just as in his strata-objects he presents us with cross sections of a nonexistent earth (that is nevertheless palpably geological).

—Keith Seward



Emil Lukas, *Growth Collection*, 1992, mixed media, 72 x 40 x 20".

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Levin, Kim. "Voice Choices: Emil Lukas." *The Village Voice*, 17 February 1993.

V O I C E C H O I C E S

EMIL LUKAS: Postminimal abstraction at its wit's end goes over the edge between painting and sculpture, process and concept—and survives by stark spatial humor. Lukas stacks big two-sided "canvases" against the wall and leaves it to the viewer to expose the pocked and webbed layers made with both organic and unbiodegradable materials (crushed insects, fish mouths, crinkled plastic, germinating seeds). Some even have packages of drawings stitched in. Even the announcements are embellished by unique coffee stains. Through February 27, John Post Lee Gallery, 588 Broadway, at Prince Street, 966-2676. (Levin)

Braff, Phyllis. "Seven Artists With Bright Futures." *The New York Times*, 13 September 1992, p. 18.

18 L.I.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SU

ART REVIEW

7 Artists With Bright Futures

By PHYLLIS BRAFF

IN its three-season history, the annual "Collector's Choice of Emerging Artists" exhibition at the Vered Gallery in East Hampton has acquired a reputation for introducing recent works by members of the newest avant-garde. These are young artists in their 20's or 30's, all of whom have begun to attract serious attention in New York. As in its previous editions, the show, with seven participants, has a smart and snappy character. The choices this year were made by Ross Bleckner, Jack Chachkes, Jay Chiat, Ashton Hawkin, Anthony Haden-Guest and Arthur G. Rosen.

Most pieces tell us something about current directions. Using totally different approaches, Sean Landers, Emil Lukas, John Bowman and Kenneth Goldsmith strive for a blend of physical and psychological content that gets its punch from the way it defies expectations and tests conventions. Karin Davie, Peter Cain and Tim Steele use a single element in each work, always pushing it toward a superintense transformation.

The Landers and Lukas works are shown in the greatest range, so there is a reasonable opportunity to gain insight into their intentions. Both come across as young men determined to present provocative ideas.

Mr. Landers's program is the most radical. His four categories of unsettling work here are unified only by the fact that in some way the artist himself is the subject. Fetishlike small terra cotta heads on tall poles

tical icons that have no real weight or substance. The single feather, titled "Angel," particularly appeals because of its double meaning and its shimmering vibrancy.

The painting here by Mr. Cain, which presents a section of an automobile as an emblematic form, is far

recall people who have touched his life. They stand in front of a monitor playing the artist's creatively edited video showing himself in the studio.

One wall holds clusters of his small cartoonlike drawings with lettered messages that mock the world, exposing thoughts never uttered in polite company. Tacked to another wall are three handwritten pseudodiary sheets. It is this group that makes the viewer conscious of how Mr. Landers is manipulating spectators, encouraging them to be voyeurs in everyday events, then suddenly involving them in highly personal happenings.

Besides giving information about himself that is not usually part of art, Mr. Landers also becomes the provocateur by presenting drawings on scraps of a lined yellow pad. They suggest that the works are not intended to be permanent and call into question the value of what is generally displayed on walls. His stick figures question traditional portraiture, and his handwritten revelations show a new use for language.

Mr. Lukas also toys with perception by making sculptures that look like they are in the midst of becoming formed. But process is only part of the edgy thrust, for the work suggests incongruities and alters expectations for even the simplest things. For example, what seems to be a sculpture based on books on a shelf is actually an irregular alignment of generalized block forms and a thin sheet of glass. Here, and in his best and largest piece, "Pockets of White," Mr. Lukas tests an innate sense of order and the way in which we respond when it is altered.

less interesting than the rest of the show.

A significant group of Paul Brach's latest mystical and metaphoric Western sky paintings, with layers of transparent colored light, are on view in the second exhibition area.

In the Project Room, Ed Bat-

Testing order is important to Mr. Goldsmith, too. He finds a letter and graphic theme to repeat, but subsumes everything to fit an emblematic form. His largest piece, "Rap No. 21," is composed of scores of words in a column form. Viewers respond to the visual properties of the letter shapes, as well as to the works and their emphatic beat. The beginning is harmlessly rhythmic — "bo bow beau blow crow..." — but the lettering pile becomes more aggressive as it builds its crescendo of vowels, evolves into phrases and ends with, "How low can you go, violent overthrow."

Mr. Bowman is one of a number of artists who are devising new and effective ways of treating the human figure by inventing a context that offers an uneasy ambiguity.

His 11-foot canvas "Sunday Times" is a gray flat field irregularly scattered with a dozen figures faintly defined in brown paint. A newspaper is one of the few objects on the surface of unconnected images, but a centrally placed, menacingly poised dog hints at something sinister.

Ms. Davie's series of "Lazy Susan" paintings are paint spirals that make the red-and-black buttery pigment dominate over any object identification. They have a pared-down directness, but they also toy with perception by allowing paint to drip loosely across what would otherwise be sensed as a light-filled center hole with an infinity type of depth.

By transforming objects like a spoon or a feather into a six-foot powdered-pigment rendering, Mr. Steele turns them into gripping mys-

cheller's series of illuminated glass closeups in grid formation, "Uncertain Nature," is an installation with a certain haunting power.

The exhibitions are on view till Sept. 24. The gallery, at 66 Park Place Passage, is open from 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. Thursdays through Mondays. ■

Kandel, Susan. "Unraveling a Mystery at Thomas Solomon's Garage." *Los Angeles Times*, 25 June 1992.

ART REVIEWS

Unraveling a Mystery at Thomas Solomon's Garage

By SUSAN KANDEL
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Painted, scarred, smudged, webbed, stained, cracked, burned and wax-dripped plaster "sections" fit together like a chain of vertebrae, concave depression locking into convex swell, forming a column as impressive as one by Brancusi. Later, they are laid out along the floor horizontal-

ly. Eight "paintings" made of glass and wood, canvas and paper, rubber and wire, lean against the wall. Earlier, they had been turned around to the other side. Tomorrow, they will be stacked into a sleek wedge.

The art of Emil Lukas at Thomas Solomon's Garage feels something like peeling an onion, digging up layers of sedimentary rock, trekking across a landscape, or unraveling a mystery.

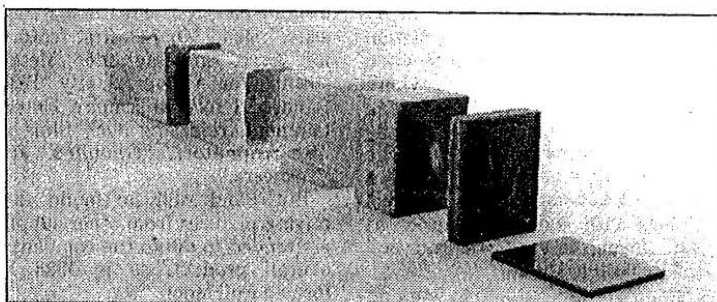
Or, it feels entirely different, for the answer—if it exists—is not lodged in the center, buried at the bottom or waiting at the end. It is wrapped around and tangled into the very process of movement.

Post-minimal and Process art of the 1970s—which stressed the subjective, the shifting and the sensuous over Minimalism's insistence upon objectivity, permanence and geometry—provides an art historical context for Lukas' startling new work. He subverts his art's monumental tendencies in the manner of Robert Morris' early sculpture, while his aggressively visceral materials recall those of Louise Bourgeois and Eva Hesse.

Yet it is ultimately more useful to consider Lukas' art within a different context—that of reading. Certainly, Lukas sets us up for it: "Linkage" unfolds like a book, its thin planks of wood designed to turn like pages; the 93 drawings of the diminutive "Passage to Dusk" resemble nothing so much as bookmarks, cut to trace the passage of time, space, distance and narrative.

However, the work is informed by a specific notion of reading, one resistant to the confines of traditional narrative linearity. It is a notion, in Roland Barthes' terms, of the work as text: open, inexhaustible, indeterminate—a field that takes shape only in the process of being read/rewritten.

This vision of reading as writing erases the stolidly hierarchical distinctions between sender and receiver, artist and non-artist. Through it, Lukas offers us a textual body of art that is not only radiant and intelligent, but profoundly generous, as well.



Emil Lukas' "Linkage": Meaning buried in the process of movement.

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Smith, Roberta. "Casual Ceremony." *The New York Times*, 3 January 1992.

'Casual Ceremony'

White Columns
154 Christopher Street
West Village
Through Jan. 13

This group exhibition at White Columns, an alternative space dedicated to the work of young and unknown artists, is especially good. It focuses on that famous gap between art and life, an interval that emerging artists find as fascinating today as their counterparts did in the early 1970's, when Post-Minimalism and Process Art were the rage.

Tom Friedman has inlaid a well-used bar of soap with a hypnotic spiral that turns out to be made of human hair, creating a tiny wall sculpture that couldn't be more perfect if it were made of inlaid ivory.

With a similar sense of idiosyncratic craftsmanship and perfection, the artist has also rewound a roll of toilet paper without its tube, creating a soft solid cylinder of whiteness.

Related strategies, or ceremonies, by which the non-precious is rendered oddly precious operate throughout the show. Nearly as delicate and obsessive as Mr. Friedman's work is Claudia Matzko's "Memorial: One Day," an expanse of tiny squares of translucent Japanese paper individually pinned to the wall, each perforated with a number that stands for one minute of the day. Quite a bit cruder is Joe Scanlan's "Bathroom Floor," a work that lives up to its title absolutely. It is the black-and-white tiled floor of the artist's bathroom, its irregular geometry hinting at the locations of shower, toilet and doorway. If sold, the piece will continue its life as a low-lying sculpture; if not, it will revert to its original function in the artist's apartment.

The transition from life to art is even more prominent in Siachain Hughes's "Roadkills: Tapes," which features bits of audio tape retrieved

from streets and highways in and around New York City. The fragments are transferred to new tapes and displayed with a map pinpointing their recovery sites, as well as a cassette player in case the viewer wants to sample Ms. Hughes's finds. Paula Hayes offers two scatter pieces that, as usual, present a number of everyday objects and materials in poetic disarray, with an ethereal sense of adolescent fantasy as their primary theme.

The remaining efforts are more simplistic, or perhaps too casual in their art-making ceremonies. Emil Lukas displays a series of portable, stackable paintings, Toby Mott a group of paintings made by rubbing paper against patches of grass or his studio floor, and Ben Kinmont a stack of printed paper plates that are free for the taking. Each plate entitles the bearer to join the artist in his loft for a waffle breakfast. Nonetheless, this exhibition ricochets nicely between the random and the precise, the found and the created, outlining a very active area of contemporary art as it goes.

ROBERTA SMITH

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Kandel, Susan. "Group Show." *The New York Times*, 20 April 1990.

Group Show

Downstairs from Penine Hart, at the Althea Viafora gallery (568 Broadway, through April 28), four young artists are taking a freer hand with the idea of sculpture, yet operating within fairly fashionable parameters, parameters that artists like Mike Kelley, Jessica Stockholder and Cady Noland have helped define. Within them, junk and juxtaposition — the devalued and the unexpected — seem to be the order of the day.

To this end, Emil Lukas, the most "classical" of the four, displays a row of plaster cubes cast in a plastic washtub and fraught with suggestions of unknown substances festering within. Rick Franklin's "Act (Alternative)" consists of a homemade grid structure — among its vectors are an umbrella and an old sword sheath — balanced upon an upturned bucket. In "Chair: Still to Rocker," Michael Minelli has constructed a precarious semblance of a chair, more diagram than object. And rounding out the group is Aki Fujiyoshi, whose "Ambush" consists of a stack of seven feather pillows pinned to the wall by a sturdy nine-foot-high plinth of cement. The arrangement is right out of Richard Serra, circa 1969, but the materials may say a lot about sculpture's present moment, as may the rough-and-tumble energy of this exhibition.

EMIL LUKAS

Biography

1964 Born Pittsburgh, PA.
Lives and works in Stockertown, PA.

Education

1986 BFA, Edinboro University, Edinboro, Pennsylvania, 1986

Solo Exhibitions

2019 "Emil Lukas," Sperone Westwater, New York, 9 January – 23 February
2018 "Emil Lukas: Twin Orbit," Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, 5 May – 16 June
2017 "Emil Lukas," Studio La Città, Verona, 12 October – 18 November
"Emil Lukas," Sperone Westwater, New York, 7 January – 11 February (brochure)
2016 "Emil Lukas," Morris Gallery at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 14 January
– 10 April (brochure)
2015 "Recent Works," Photo & Contemporary, Torino, 15 May – 30 June
"Emil Lukas: Ringing of Distant Events," Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, 21 March – 9 May
(brochure)
2014-15 "Emil Lukas: Large Curtain," Studio La Citta, Verona, 13 December 2014 – 7 February 2015
2014 "Emil Lukas," Sperone Westwater, New York, 9 January – 22 February (catalogue)
2012-13 "Emil Lukas: Curvature," Studio La Città s.r.l., Verona, 10 November 2012 – 9 February 2013
(catalogue)
2011 "in, on, un," Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, 21 May – 1 July
"Emil Lukas: Larva, Bubble, and Thread," Sperone Westwater, New York, 25 February – 26
March
2010 "Recent Works," Photo & Contemporary Gallery, Torino, November – January
2009-10 "Accumulate and Dissolve," Gian Enzo Sperone, Sent, 29 December 2009 – 31 March 2010
2008-09 "Titration," Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, 13 December 2008 – 31 January 2009
2008 "Moderate Climate and the Bitter Bison," Hunterdon Museum, Hunterdon, 10 May – 20 June
2007 "One to the Other," Hosfelt Gallery, New York, 15 September – 27 October
2006-07 "Recent Sculptures and Related Paintings," Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, 2 December 2006 – 20
January 2007
2005 "Things with Wings," The Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, September – December
"Emil Lukas: Connection to the Curious," The Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, 10 July – 9 October
"Emil Lukas," The Weatherspoon Museum, Greensboro, July – September
2003 "Developmental Years," Gallery Otto, Bologna, March – April
2002 Marcel Sitcoske Gallery, San Francisco, September – October
Starks Gallery, New York, 2 February – 2 March
2001 "Emil Lukas: Moment of Process" and "Kidspace," MASS MoCA, September – December
Haines Gallery, San Francisco, May – June
"Exploring the Interior," Galerie Lucien Durand Le Gaillard, Paris, March – May
"New Works," Galerie Schroeder, Cologne, March – May
"Marks that Make Themselves," Grossman Gallery at Lafayette College, Easton, February –
March
2000 Galleria Otto, Bologna, October
Spence School, New York, September – October
"The Use of Evidence," Gorney Bravin & Lee, New York, 25 May – 30 June
1998 "Story Without Words," Haines Gallery, San Francisco
Galerie Schroder, Cologne

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1997	Studio la Citta, Verona, April
	Haines Gallery, San Francisco
1996	Bravin Post Lee, New York
1995	Studio la Citta, Verona
	"The Use of Evidence," Art Museum of The University of South Florida, Tampa
	Haines Gallery, San Francisco
1994	Bravin Post Lee, New York, 17 November – 23 December
	Tom Solomon's Garage, Los Angeles
1993	Studio la Citta, Verona, 2 October – 20 November
	John Post Lee Gallery, New York, 4-27 February
1992	Thomas Solomon's Garage, Los Angeles
	Galerie Nova, Pontresina
1990	Althea Viafora Gallery, New York
1989	Mendelson Gallery, Pittsburgh
1988	Pinta Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea, Genova
1987	Mendelson Gallery, Pittsburgh
1986	Mendelson Gallery, Pittsburgh
1985	Meadville Council on the Arts, Meadville

Selected Group Exhibitions

2018	"W.W.W. – What Walls Want," Marignana Arte Gallery, Venice, 23 May – 15 September
2017-18	"Sculpture, Painting, and Video," The Margulies Collection at the WAREHOUSE, Miami, 25 October 2017 – 28 April 2018
2017	"The End of Utopia: Jacob Hashimoto, Emil Lukas," Studio La Città, Palazzo Flanginni, Venice, 13 May – 30 July
2015	"La percezione del futuro. La Collezione Panza a Perugia," Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, and Museo civico di Palazzo della Penna, Perugia, 20 June – 8 November (catalogue)
	"On Paper: Spin, Crinkle, Pluck," The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, 19 April – September 20
2014	"Prospect 2014," Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, LaJolla, 22 February – 30 April
2012-13	"Stretching the Limits," SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, 22 October 2012 – 3 February 2013
2012	"Tra Natura e Spirito: Omaggio a Giuseppe Panza di Biumo," Galleria San Fedele, Milan, 29 October – 21 November (catalogue)
	"Look Both Ways," Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, 8 September – 6 October
2011	"Nel Frattempo (Meanwhile)," Mercato della Frutta, Valeggio sul Mincio (VR), 23 September – 16 October
2010	"State of Mind," Lucca Center of Contemporary Art, Panza Collection, Lucca, April – August
	"In Full Color," Hosfelt Gallery, New York, January – March
2008	"Group Show," Mendelson Gallery Pittsburgh, May – July
2007	"Whole Parts," Sam Francis Gallery, Santa Monica
2006	"Material Abuse," Caren Golden Fine Art, New York
	"Group Show," Bravin Lee Programs, New York, June – July
	"Studio in the Park," Riverside Park Fund Art Project, New York, May – September
	"Summer Group Show," Marlborough Chelsea, New York, May – July
2004	"Paintings that Paint Themselves," Kresge Art Museum, East Lansing, September – November
	Germantown Academy Arts Center Gallery, Fort Washington
	"Challenged Horizons," Gallery 31 North, Glen Gardner, January – March
2002	"The Drawing Center's 25 th Anniversary Exhibition," New York, 21 September – 25 October
	"Made by Nature," Dorsky Gallery, Long Island City, September – October
	"Group Show," Gorney Bravin & Lee, New York, 15 March – 20 April
	"Officina America," Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Imola; Museo di San Domenico, Censea; Ex-Pescheria, Rimini; Palazzo dell'Arengo, Ascoli Piceno, January – March

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- 2001 "New Prints 2001," International Print Center, New York
 "Lafayette Faculty Exhibition," Grossman Gallery at Lafayette College, Easton, 20 October – 8 December
- 2000 Chiesa di S. Antonio, Breno (BS), November
 Rocca di S. Giorgio, Orzinuovi (BS), October
 Spazio Mostre del Vittoriale, Gardone Riviera (BS), September
 "Dello Spirituale nell'Arte," Torre Avogadro, Lumezzane Pieve (BS), July
 "The Panza di Biumo Collection – Works from the 80's and 90's," American Academy, Rome, March
 Galerie Lucien Durand Le Gaillard, Paris
 "Life Cycles," South Eastern Center for Contemporary Arts (SECCA), Winston-Salem, 18 February – 21 May
- 1999 "Gallery Artists," Gorney Bravin & Lee, New York
 "Morbida Quiete e La Notte," Studio La Citta, Verona
 "Abstract Painting Once Removed," Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City
- 1998 "Abstract Painting Once Removed," Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 3 October – 6 December
 "Interior Landscapes," from the Collection of Cliff Diver, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, 21 April – 12 July
 Bravin Post Lee Gallery, New York, February
 "Landscape & Memory," Haines Gallery, San Francisco
- 1997 "Human Nature," The Work Space, New York
 "Onomatopoeia," Studio la Citta, Verona
 "Obsession + Devotion," Haines Gallery, San Francisco, 15 October – 15 November
 "Le Jardin Complice de l'Art," Fondation d'Art Contemporain Daniel et Florence Guerlain, Les Mesnuls
- 1996 "The Collection of Panza di Biumo," Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Palazzo delle Albere, Rovereto (Trento)
 "Painting in an Expanding Field," Ursan Gallery, Bennington
 "Heineskjerning Og Zenit," Galerie Zenit, Frederiksberg
 Studio la Citta, Verona
- 1995 "La Belle e la Bête," Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
 "Up the Garden Path," The Work Space, New York
 "From Nature," Haines Gallery, San Francisco, 4 May – 17 June
 "A Drawing," Bravin Post Lee, New York
 "Recent Work," Heines Gallery, San Francisco
- 1994 "60 Drawings from Art Hotel," The Drawing Room, Amsterdam
 "Possible Things," Bardamu Gallery, New York
 "Critical Mass," Yale University, New Haven and The McKinney Ave Contemporary, Dallas, 5 December – 21 December
 "Inner Circle," Tom Solomon's Garage, Los Angeles
- 1993 "Between," John Post Lee Gallery, New York
 "Windows and Doors," Holly Solomon, New York
 "Hyper-Cathexis," Stux Gallery, New York
 "Major Medical," City without Walls, Newark
 "Painting as Paradigm," Stark Gallery, New York
 "Group Show," Margulies|Taplin, Miami
- 1992 "New Address," Muranushi-Lederman, New York
 "The Hole is Part of the Sum," Micheal Klein Gallery, New York
 "Collector's Choice," Ruth Vered Gallery, East Hampton
 "10 Steps," Horodner Romley Gallery, New York
- 1991-92 "Casual Ceremony," White Columns, New York, 13 December 1991 – 13 January 1992
- 1991 "Ornament," John Post Lee Gallery, New York
 "James Hyde, Emil Lukas, Vik Muniz," Mendelson Gallery

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- 1989 "Benefit Show," White Columns, New York
"A Question of Paint," Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo
"Works on Paper," Paula Allen Gallery, New York
"Small Works," 80 Washington Square East Gallery
1988 "Selection 46," Drawing Center, New York
Mendelson Galleria d'Arte, Genova
1987 Pinta Galleria d'Arte, Genova
"New Attitudes: Recent Pennsylvania Abstraction," Southern Allegheny Museum, Pittsburgh
"Pittsburgh Now 8 Artists," Three Rivers Arts and Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
1985 "Spring Exhibition," Erie Art Museum, Erie

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- 2013 Burns, Charlotte and Melanie Gerlis, Julia Michalska. "Importance of Being Abstract." *The Art Newspaper*, 12 June 2013, 1-2.
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Emil Lukas: Curvature. Exhibition catalogue. Verona, Italy: Studio La Città s.r.l., 2012.
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- 2009 *Emil Lukas: Accumulate and Dissolve*. Sent: Gian Enzo Sperone, 2009.
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- 2006 Baker, R.C. "Drawin." *The Village Voice*, 4 July 2006.
- 2005 "Emil Lukas: Connection to the Curious." *www.aldrichart.org*, 2005.
- 2001 "Review: Emil Lukas, Turning Circles into Squares." *Art on Paper*, November 2001.
Rondeau, Mark E. "Emil Lukas, Kidspace at MASS MoCA." *The Advocate*, 3 October 2001.

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- Critical Mass*. Exhibition catalogue with text by Charles Long. New Haven: Yale University, Winter 1995.
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- 1994 Levin, Kim. "Voice Choice: Emil Lukas." *The Village Voice*, 6 December 1994.
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- "Skulpturen und Arbeiten auf Papier." *Engadiner Post*, March 1993.
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- 1990 Kandel, Susan. "Group Show." *The New York Times*, 20 April 1990.

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Selected Collections

Anderson Collection, Stanford University
Baltimore Museum of Art
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK
Dakis Joannou Collection, Greece
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego
Panza Collection, Italy
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
UBS Art Collection
Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC