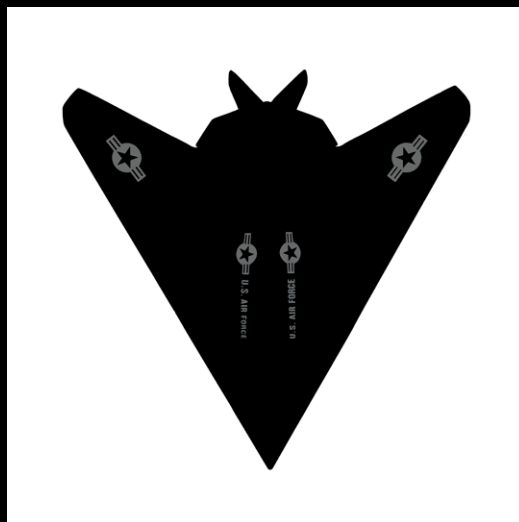


# FEAR: IN THE SKY



**NOM DE GUERRE**



Catalog design by Eden Productions, LLC and Tony Pinto/Vim and Vigor,  
vandvcreative.com.

Special thanks to Valentina Aproda, Daniel Cytron, Jackson Farentinos, Michael Lanham, Esther McGuinn, Nancy Sundquist and Eric Minh Swenson.

All photographs are by Eden Productions, LLC, except Virginia Arnold, page 49; Jane Bauman, page 8, 9, 10, 52; Rob Brander, Page 29; Walter Miadina, page 28; Akim Monet, pg.45; Allen Shaffer, page 1, 43; Axel Wilhite, page 39, 40, 41 and Robert Wilhite page 44, 46.

#### **Collaborators:**

**Jack Brogan** has been The West Coast Art Fabricator Extraordinaire since the early Sixties. Art Critic Peter Frank describes Brogan as “Solving problems of presentation through new means of fabrication with newly available materials and tools. In short, Jack Brogan was the catalyst that solidified the LA Look; ‘finish/fetish,’ light and space, material abstraction or perceptual minimalism” and continues to do so. He has worked with the Atomic Regulatory Commission, Boeing, Cal Tech, NASA, Lockheed Corp., Knoll Furniture, with countless artists and many art museums worldwide. He is a Korean War Army Veteran and cancer survivor. Mr. Brogan lives in Santa Monica and works in Venice at Jack Brogan Studio.  
[https://issuu.com/katherineconegallery/docs/jack\\_brogancataloglupdate1](https://issuu.com/katherineconegallery/docs/jack_brogancataloglupdate1)

**Steve Farentinos** is President of Geoform, Inc, which is a metrology laboratory. He received his BA in Physics from San Francisco State University in 1989 and a MS in Engineering from the University of Southern California in 1998. His work experience includes 3D CAD/CAM, CNC machining, 3D printing, molding, casting, forging and metal forming. Projects include original research in additive manufacturing, methods of inspection for manufactured components using both optical and tactile 3-D scanning, tooling design for metal-forming and casting processes, complex 3-D CAD modeling of aerospace, medical and automotive components. Mr. Farentinos lives and works in the South Bay.  
[www.geoform.com](http://www.geoform.com)

**John Slattebo** was born in Los Angeles. He studied Fine Arts at the University of California, Irvine. After serving as a command rank officer in the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers he sailed off the grid into the South Pacific which inspired his diverse career, that included being a licensed boat captain, seaplane/airline pilot, architectural & yacht designer, boat builder, contractor and practitioner of sukiya-daiku [Japanese style carpentry]. As a cancer survivor, Mr. Slattebo lives and works in Oceanside, California where he specializes in wood and composite materials fabrication.

West Los Angeles College Art Gallery  
2000 Overland Avenue, Culver City, CA. 90230

© John Eden 2020



# FEAR: IN THE SKY

AN EXHIBITION CURATED BY NOM DE GUERRE

## Location:

West Los Angeles College Fine Arts Gallery,  
Director Molly Barnes, September 5 through  
October 31, 2019

- 4 *Curator's Note* by Nom De Guerre
- 6 *Expecting to Fly* Essay by  
Michael Delgado
- 46 *A Chronology: California Art & Aerospace  
Technologies* by Nom De Guerre

## Artists/ *Collaborators*:

- 10 Jane Bauman
- 14 John Eden
- 18 Samuel Erenberg
- 22 Kio Griffith
- 26 Eric Johnson
- 30 Jack McGuinn
- 34 Susan Rankaitis
- 38 Alex Wilhite
- 42 Robert Wilhite

## PLUS

*Jack Brogan*  
*Steve Farentinos*  
*John Slattebo*









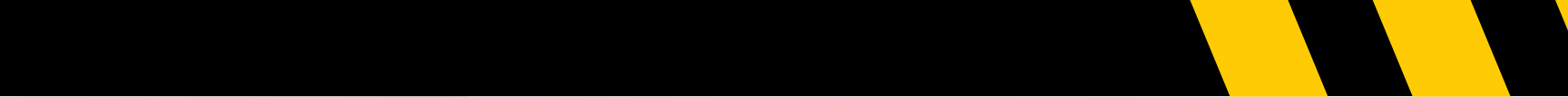
## CURATOR'S NOTE

**AS OUR KNOWLEDGE GROWS, SO DOES OUR NEED** to harness all of its possibilities. That impulse might be modified by ego, but does not change the need—only the results. My attraction to the collaborative impulse didn't come naturally. As my socialization skills have always tended toward being self-contained, which was aptly reflected by my second-grade report card, which stated, "... does not play well with others." However, I have come to realize the value of reaching out to others with skills or knowledge bases beyond my own. That overall collective philosophy is one that I used to create this exhibition under the co-op curatorial banner of Nom De Guerre to illustrate that we are, in fact, at war with ourselves. Who else, besides speculative fiction writers like P. K. Dick would have thought we would willingly allow corporate and/or government entities to implant chips that would track our every move, but, of course, that is what satellites and cell towers have done. *Fear: In The Sky* is about those omnipresent, eye in the sky, big-brother-like technologies that have irrevocably changed our lives. Our aerial veil has been penetrated, and what we once considered private space is now gone—we can run but we can no longer hide, and that is the crux of the show's premise. We are being watched, recorded and objectified, all in the name of security and/or commerce. The bottom line is this—these developing technologies, and their applications, leave no one untouched.

As the idea for this exhibition coalesced around diverse takes on flight and its collateral effects, I realized early on that individual experiences and agendas set us apart in unique ways, but that we could come together powerfully to express—what heretofore had remained unsaid—and concisely reveal the sum of those fears. I saw those differences as strengths, not as weaknesses and felt it only fitting to approach this whole collective endeavor as neutrally as possible, thinking of myself perhaps more as a facilitator than an autocrat. Only two sets of curatorial criteria were used: it had to be about flight and the work had to possess both a level of formal skill and conceptual facility that could be associated with the finest Pacific Rim tradition of Light, Space and Surface.

Nom De Guerre







## EXPECTING TO FLY<sup>1</sup>

*“Space may be the final frontier but it’s made in a Hollywood basement”<sup>2</sup>*

**DOUG WHEELER’S PHENOMENOLOGICAL SPACES** are said to have been inspired by flying over the desert with his father. An impressionable kid in a Staggerwing Beechcraft’s cockpit with a view of light and space that was supposed to be ruled by the maxims of VFR. Instead, the horizon is a mirage, the clouds deceive and you are only weighted when buffeted by an invisible wind. The drone of a motor comforts briefly. Maybe, for a moment, with our hands on its joy stick, we are in control.

That intangible lightness of being is both informed and pierced by the work in this Exhibition. Someone might draw a line from much of this show’s art to Wheeler’s atmospheric explorations, a finish fetish to light and space sort of chronology; but I don’t see a line so much as a contemporaneous fascination with the abstracted tension between surface and space. Abstraction after all is just the dismantling of a specific set of references—in this case the concepts of flight, technology and an impossible-to-grasp scale.

None of the work could have been made anywhere other than in the Southwest, monstrous mother to a wartime boon of mechanized ingenuity that powered a reign of terror and spawned “Little Boy”, the first nuclear weapon unleashed on the world; all the while hawking Jane Russell in a cantilevered bra.

Los Angeles was engineered into existence and wed a dream. With water from nowhere, the coastal desert bloomed. Millions would be subdivided by tract, split and bound by ribbons of concrete, clogged with cars, multiplied by sunshine and whipped by an exponentially dry wind howling out of the foothills. Dissected by a lonely horizon line, wandering, you look upward while improvising survival tactics. Aviation and Hollywood got married in the desert. Imagination, fantasy, world dominance. All could be all designed. Hughes and Disney.

Aviation came to the southwest early and has never left. Early 1900s. Dozens of small aircraft manufacturers sprung up alongside the film dream factories, Angelinos envisioned a future where personal planes would replace cars. “There were 53 airfields within 30 miles of City Hall, because people really thought there’d be a plane in every garage, not a car in every garage.”<sup>3</sup> That particular vision notwithstanding, aviation shaped LA. Now the names chime as if bells from the LA Cathedral: Douglas, Hughes, Lockheed, McDonnell, Northrop.



For many, growing up in post war boom time Southern California meant your dad worked in the aerospace industry; your mom's family sold their orange ranch to a developer, you were weaned on hot rod car culture and probably were friends with a childhood actor. Disneyland was your backyard. You were expected to surf. Consequently, fiberglass and resin is in your veins, metal flake paint is like a spray tan and an ambitious fantasy is your M.O. But your sun also cast a light on the real fruits of the Southern California technology orchard: the warplanes, the massive military installations of Camp Pendleton and San Diego and the other instruments of war. Later, you might have been heir to this legacy and been drafted to Vietnam.

One of three pieces by artist/curator **John Eden**, *Kill Time* perfectly captures this zeitgeist. Measuring 12' x 12' x 13.3', nine immaculately crafted disks float within boxed grids that conjures the Hollywood film title, *War Games* and is reminiscent of tic tac toe. A child's game, but in the space race, as in war, striking first is a huge advantage. The *Roundels* as Eden refers to them, each bear an insignia representing air forces around the world from different wartime eras. Countries as varied as Cameroon, Ecuador, Kingdom of Afghanistan, Malawi, Peru and Spanish Nationalists float alongside more recognized countries like India, Japan, and Germany reminding us why they were called "World" wars.

Walking into the West Los Angeles College Art Gallery, you are greeted by a life size reimagining of Fat Boy, the nuclear bomb dropped over Nagasaki. *The Bomb* by **Robert Wilhite** is meticulously crafted of wooden ribs, and in the Asian tradition, it is lacquered black. It reminds us that sophisticated engineering, craft and imagination are too often used to express ourselves in phenomenally destructive ways. This is unsettling. From then on you unconsciously tread carefully around the other pieces in the show, accompanied by the sound of a dull droning from the hidden motor automating another bomb sculpture by John Eden.

*Utopian Gyre: Bird in Space* is a scaled bomb that spins slowly on its nose over an "X" and "O" platform and is also spectacularly crafted.

Evocative of a slim zeppelin with subtle, faceted panels it glistens lipstick red in a metal flake paint job that is part department store point-of-purchase fixture and part menacing instrument of death. We are also reminded how calloused we have become to being perpetually at threat from mass annihilation.

A number of pieces in the show reference military aviation, dominated both literally and figuratively by the Fat Boy in the middle of the room. Several of the artists/collaborators are veterans and their familiarity with war's indelible stain is palpable even through the preciousness of a "finish fetish" or "California Cool School" sensibility. It's about flight and technologies from a specific era, a particularly seminal time in the formation of our geo-political world order (or lack of it) today.

WWII and its space race progeny are also invoked by another Eden piece in the show titled *Sputniks, The Russians are coming, The Russians are coming*. Despite the gravity of the show's subject matter, Eden can still crack a joke but aims it equally at people old enough to remember the 1966 farcical film of the same title while also referencing the contentious 2016 presidential election. Life size, near replicas of the famous first satellites and the kick-off to the Cold War competition, the mirrored orbs with antennae float above the gallery, moving ever so gently in a soft ocean breeze afforded by the open gallery doors. "Sputniks" translates into English as "Fellow travelers." As doppelgänger twins, Eden's satellites reflect themselves, their Soviet insignias and the gallery surroundings, bouncing light around the room and in a nice turn, look nothing like the harbingers of a race to weaponize space.

Four noir paintings from **Samuel Erenberg's** *Battle of Los Angeles* series were inspired by WWII air raid search lights over Los Angeles that were activated when an errant weather balloon caused widespread panic in the streets. The Japanese are coming! The Japanese are coming! Indeed. Erenberg's paintings are a tonal black that can be likened to the charcoal-ish painting technique found

in Frank Stella's Black Paintings from the Fifties. The modulated darkness is sliced by silvery streaks evoking both light beams and tracer bullets. These paintings convincingly advance the viability of late-modern abstract painting, yet the event itself has been interpreted as the first "UFO Sighting" and illustrates how Hollywood exploited the vagaries of invasion

Across the space hangs *Flight Plan (Perloff Variations)* a large combined media piece on photographic paper from **Susan Rankaitis** that is a powerfully haunting collage of vintage aviation imagery interlaced with what looks to be vapor-trails and sliced snippets of images that feel like a contact sheet exploded. Next to that **Jack McGuinn**'s video monitor continually loops his whimsical *Probable Nuance* short video that documents his opening night drone performances.

Several pieces lighten up what could otherwise be a ponderous show. **Jane Bauman**'s offers a playful triad Sci-Fi/ Pop culture twist with her *Mothra Series*. Combined media photographs with painted vellum overlays, reference the fictional protector of the earth. **Axel Wilhite**'s *Bibliodrones [flying-books]* humorously illustrates how old ideas are elevated and transformed by new technologies. Both **Kio Griffith**'s 2015-2018 *Coral Sea* and *Sangokai* 珊瑚海 [Japanese for Coral Sea] presents a sort of blueprint for a war machine that is part Allied aircraft carrier, part Japanese submarine and part locomotive. Griffith refers to these drawings as "impossible ships" reflecting the fact that his family members served on opposite sides of the WWII conflict. **Eric Johnson**'s *Saucer* is a clever fiberglass approximation of a classic comic book flying saucer. Similar to the other pieces in the show, *Saucer* is impeccably finished with the LA School's "Spectacle of Skill."

Most notable are *Dragonfly/butterfly Gliders* the numerous but tiny pieces of insect-like flying craft from **Bob Wilhite**. All about the gallery and out of reach, the pieces alight like the butterflies and dragonflies whose wings have been incorporated in their construction. They are pinned to the wall, like specimens in a natural history museum but

arranged such that they could be in aerial attack formation. Once inspired to just join such naturally winged brethren and be free in the sky, we are now caged and threatened by our own technology.

Michael Delgado

- 1 Neil Young, "Expecting To Fly", Buffalo Springfield, Atco Records, 1968
- 2 Anthony Keites, "Californication", Red Hot Chili Peppers Californication, Warner Bros, 1998
- 3 Hadley Meares, "How the Aviation Industry Shaped Los Angeles", Curbed.com, July 8, 2019



Santa Clara University, BA  
San Francisco Art Institute, MFA

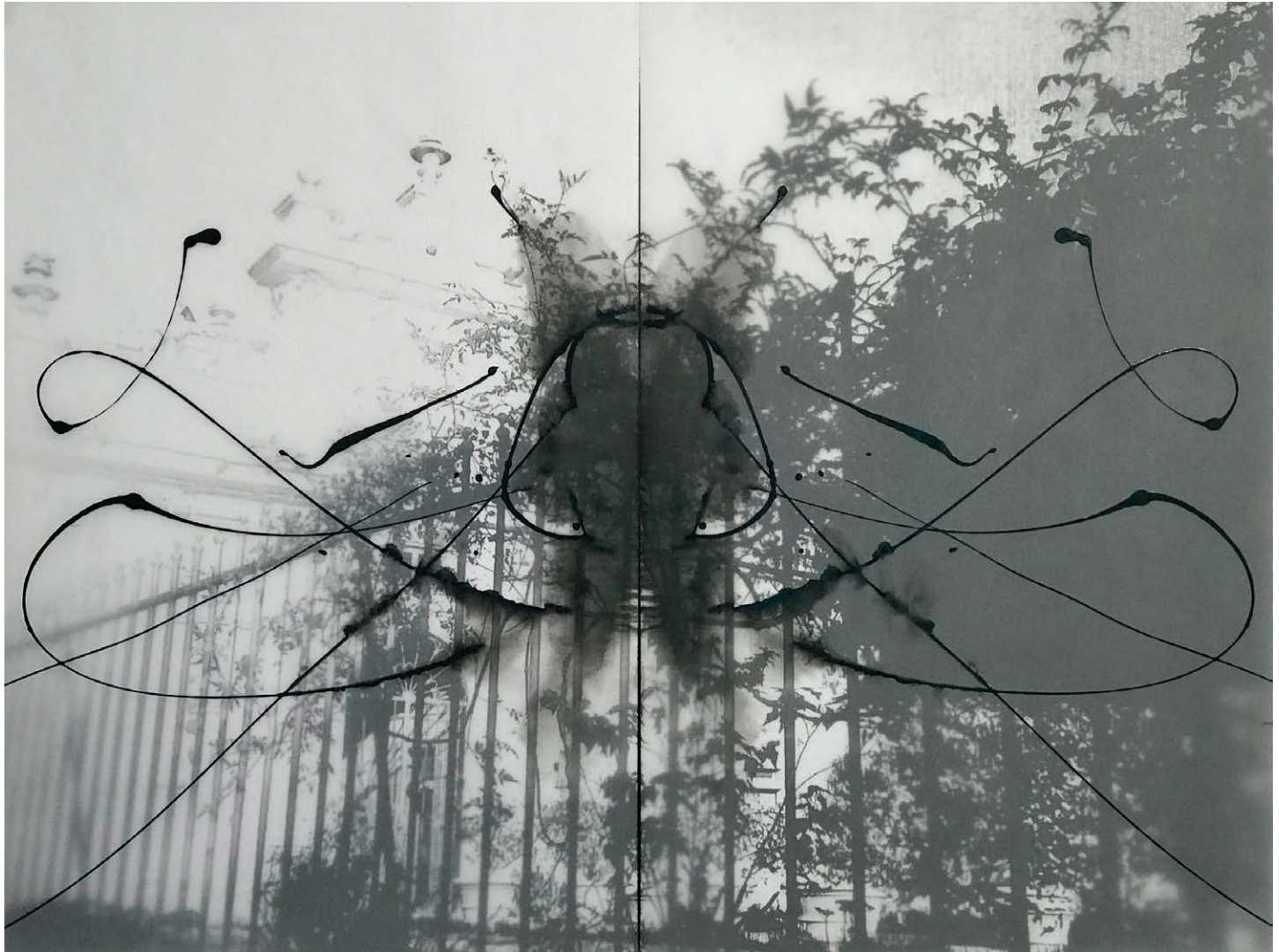
***At The Gate***, from the *Mothra* series, combined-media photographs with painted-vellum overlays, 32" x 37", 2018

***Collateral Damage***, from the *Mothra* series, combined-media photographs with painted-vellum overlays, 32" x 37", 2018 (pg. 12)

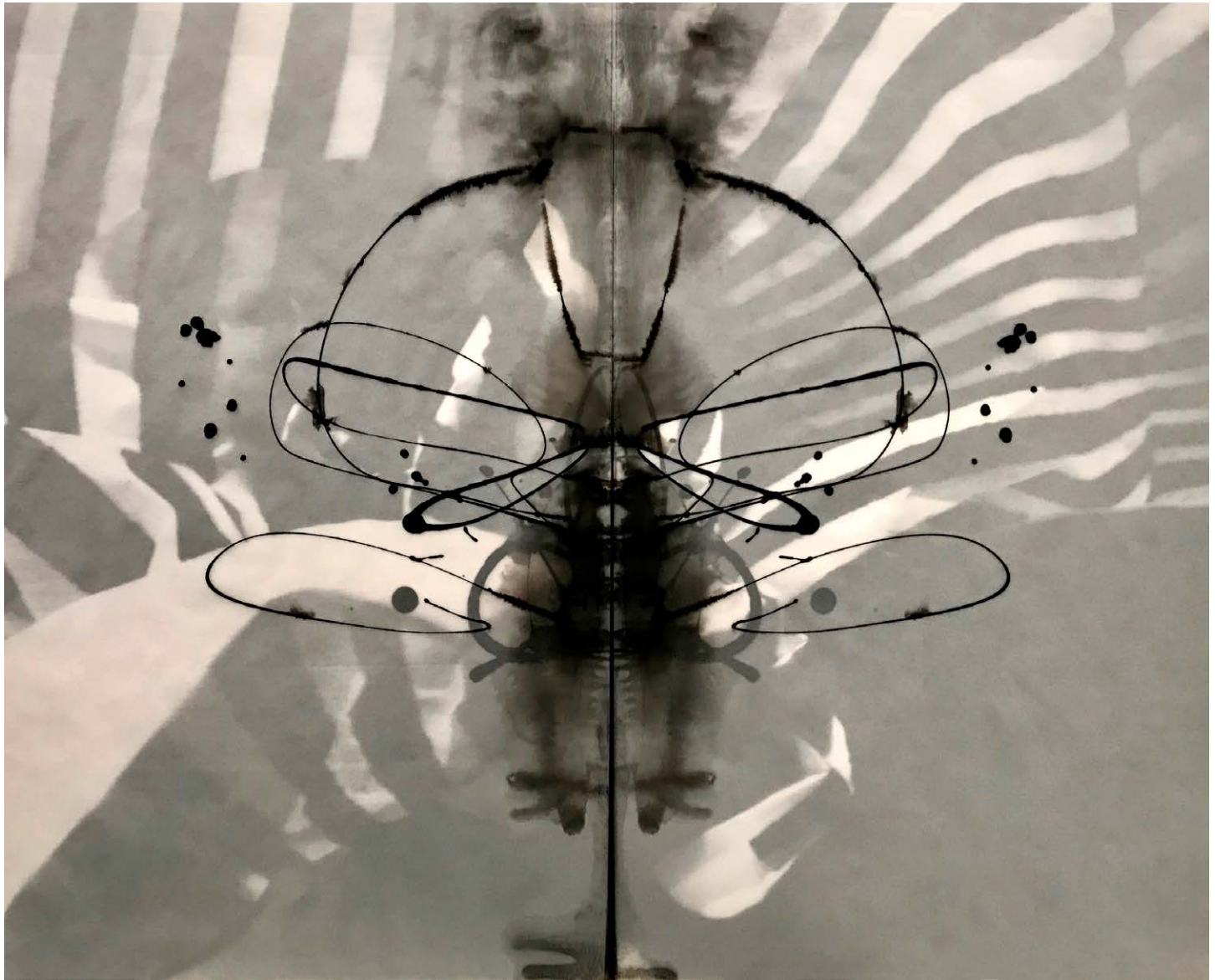
***Pacific Flight***, from the *Mothra* series, combined-media photographs with painted-vellum overlays, 32" x 37", 2018 (pg. 13)

***Mothra Files***, helium balloons from the *Mothra* series, Mixed media, 2017 (pg. 52, inset image)











San Francisco Art Institute, BFA  
California State University, Northridge MA  
University Of Southern California MFA

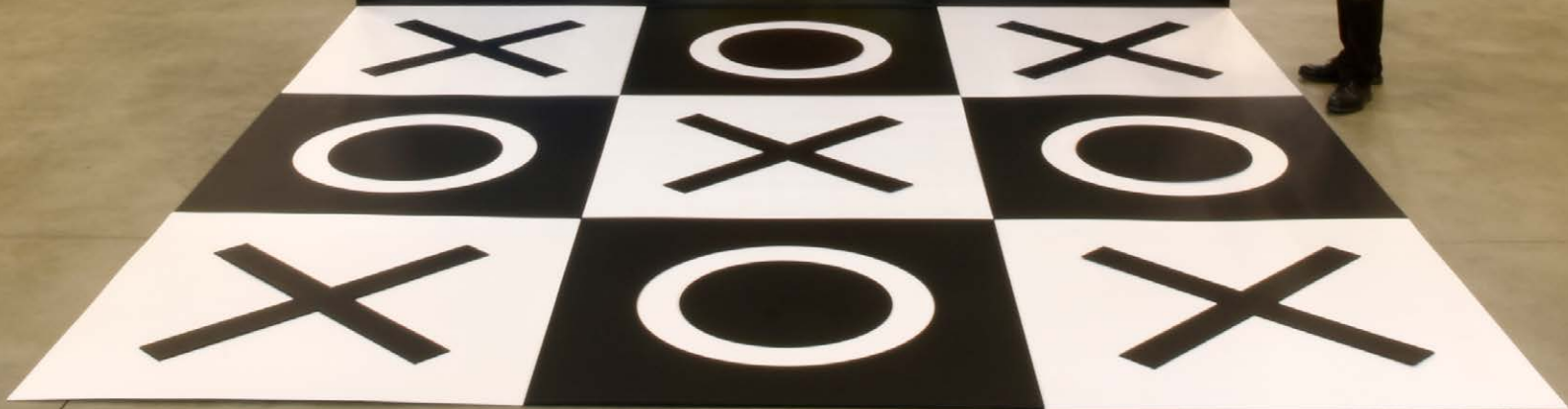
California State Fellowship Grant (a full two-year academic scholarship for graduate studies)

***Kill Time***, mixed media installation, 12' x 12' x 13.3', 2013–18 (left/right, top/bottom): Surrender Japan, Ecuador, Free French, Malawi, Spanish Nationalists, Kingdom of Afghanistan, India, Cameroon and Austria-Germany with tic tac toe–like floor design, from the Roundels series.

***Utopian Gyre: Bird In Space***, combined advanced technology and traditional mixed media, 70" x 18" x 18", 2019. (Pg. 16)

***Sputniks/Спутники [Fellow Travelers]: The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!*** from the *Sputniks* series, combined advanced technology and traditional mixed media, 2 @ 11.75" x 65.5" x 12" diameter stainless steel spheres, 2019. (Pg. 17 & detail pg.4)

***Holding Vietnam***, 2017 image of the artist holding his 28" diameter fiberglass disc. (Pg. 49)









Chouinard Art Institute (Now California Institute of the Arts)

California State University, Northridge BA

University of California, Santa Barbara, MFA

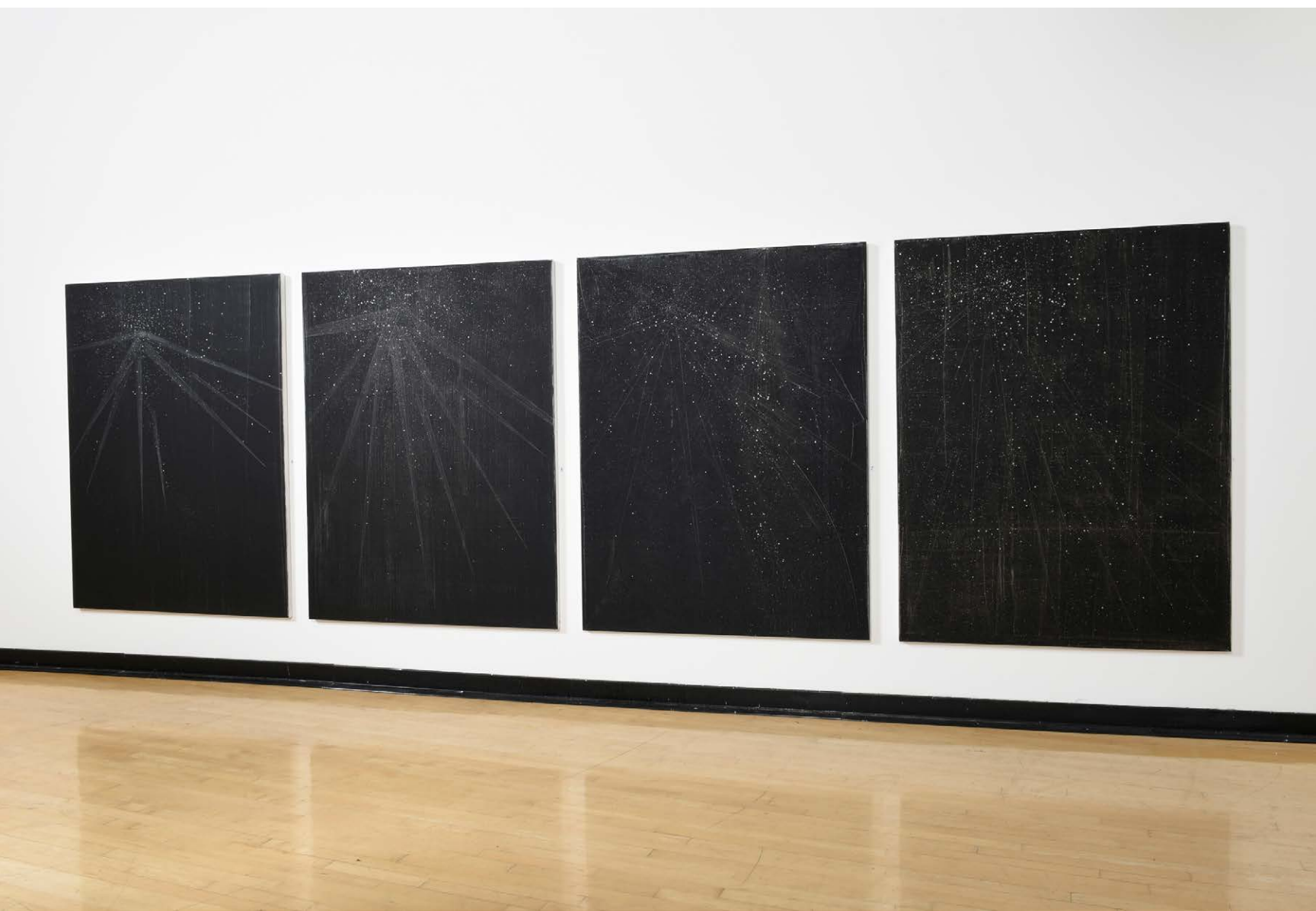
National Endowment for the Arts, Special Project Grant; California Arts Council, Individual Artist Fellowship & Special Project Grant; Awagami Paper Factory, Tokushima, Japan, Artist Residency; City of Los Angeles, COLA Grant, Individual Artist, Center for Cultural Innovation, Los Angeles; Durfee Foundation ARC Grant; University of California, Santa Barbara, William Dole Award; Virginia Center for the Arts, Sweet Briar, Virginia, Fellowship

***The Battle of Los Angeles*** series Installation, (Left to Right):

***Numbers One, Two, Three and Four***, acrylic and oil on canvas, 66" x 206", 2015–17

***The Battle of Los Angeles, Number One***, acrylic and oil on canvas, 66" x 50", 2015–16 (pg. 20)

***The Battle of Los Angeles, Number Four***, acrylic and oil on canvas, 66" x 50", 2015–16 (pg. 21)









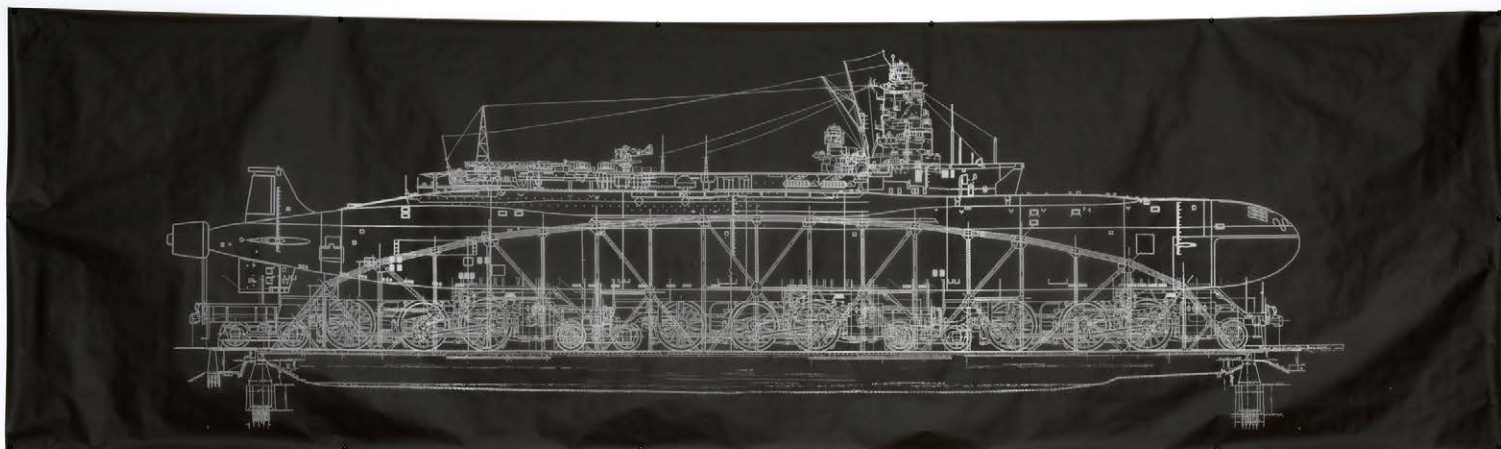
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque  
Otis / Parsons School of Design, BFA  
University of California, Santa Barbara, MFA

University of California Regents Fellowship  
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibition, Emerging Curators Award  
Frame Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland, Curatorial Project Grant

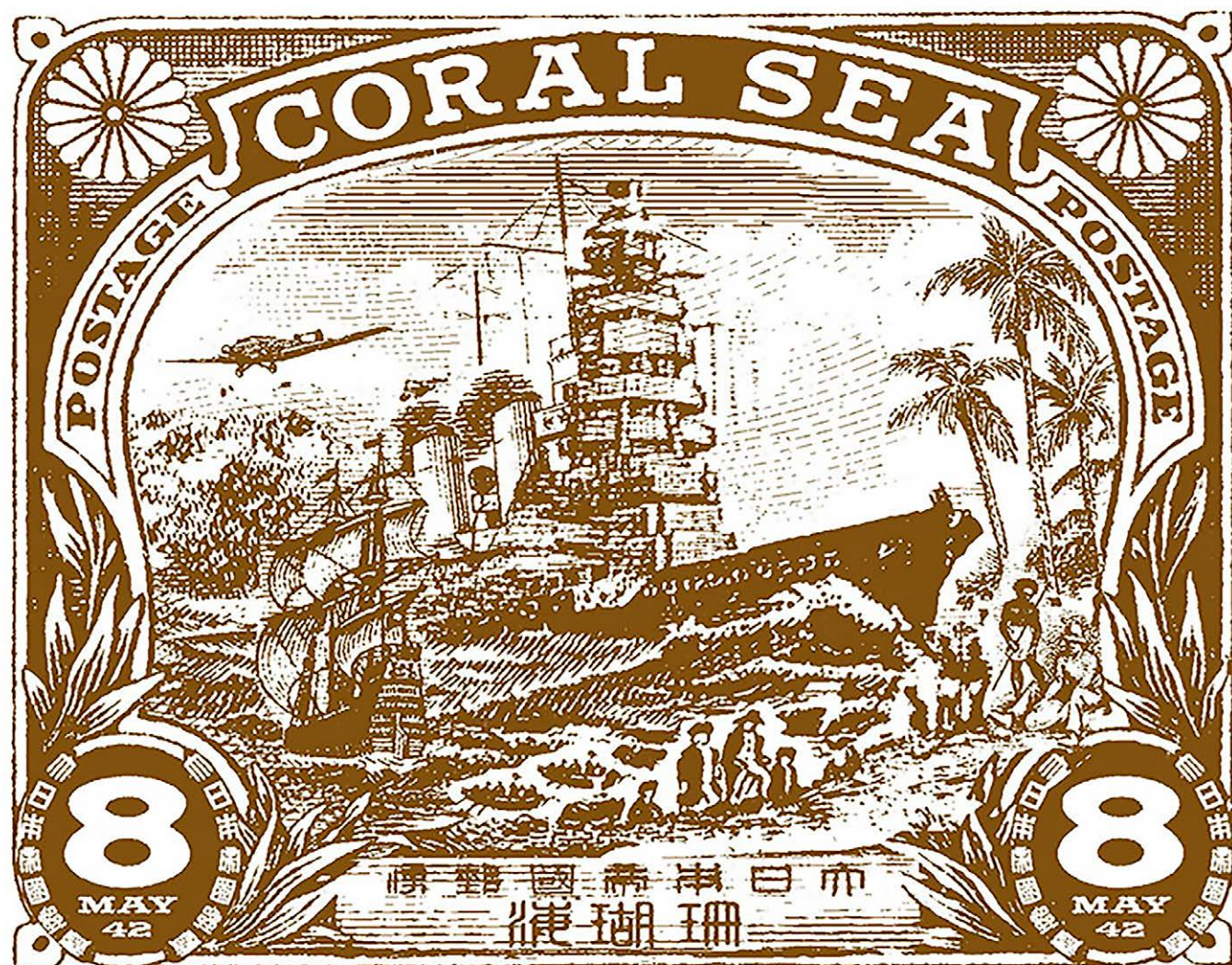
***Coral Sea***, (top) and ***Sangokai 珊瑚海 [Japanese for Coral Sea]***, (Bottom), diazotype film negatives, 64" x 99", 2015-2018

***Coral Sea / 8 May 1942***, (1914 Heidelberg letterpress print) iodine colored ink, 6" x 7", 2015 (pg. 24)

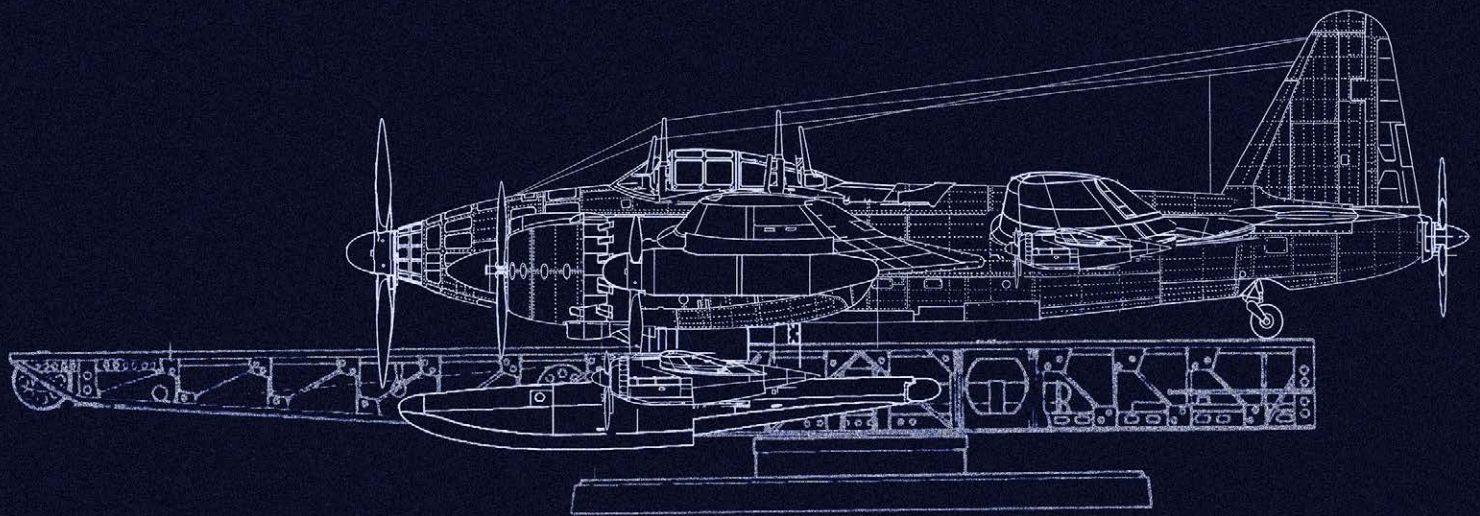
***Reconnaissance Mission A***, giclée print wrapped on wood panel, 12" 24" x 2", 2019 (pg. 25)











Los Angeles Valley College  
California Institute of the Arts  
University of California, Irvine, MFA

University of California Regents Fellowship  
Adolph and Esther Gotlieb Foundation, Grant  
Newport Beach City Arts Commission, Joan Irvine Award

***Saucer***, fiberglass/polyester resin, 24" x 24" x 10", 2002

***Untitled [Study of Turning Sculpture Inside Out], (thrust chamber)***, lacquer, wood and steel, 36" x 36" x 30", 1992 (page 28)

***Mahis***, resin, aluminum and steel, 168" x 168" x 12", 2008 (pg. 29)









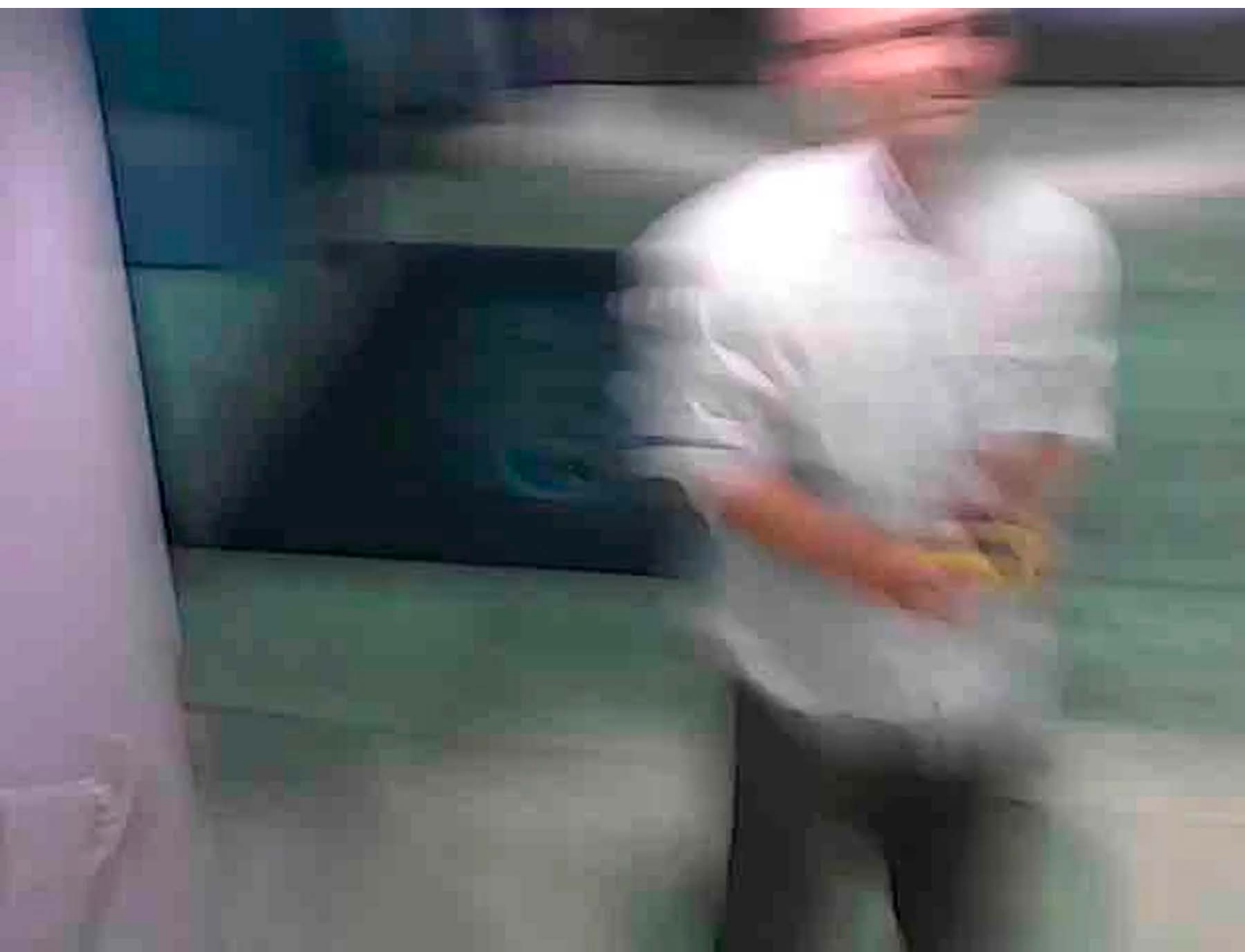


University of Southern California, BA

***Probable Nuisance\_93***, video still from 09/05/2019 Drone Performance, 3:59 Mins., 2019

***Probable Nuisance\_81***, video still from 09/05/2019 Drone Performance, 3:59 Mins., (pg. 32)

***Probable Nuisance\_48***, video still from 09/05/2019 Drone Performance, 3:59 Mins., (pg. 33)









## SUSAN RANKAITIS

susanrankaitis.com

University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, BFA

University of Southern California, MFA

National Endowment for the Arts, Two Individual Artist's Fellowships and one Visual Arts Residency; Durfee/Avery Foundation-American/Chinese Adventure Grant; Borchard Foundation, Artist/Scholar in Residence, Missillac, France; City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Grant; Agnes Bourne Fellowship; Djerassi Foundation Residency; Europos Parkas Art Residency, Lithuania; La Napoule Art Foundation; Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant; Graves Foundation Award in Humanities and the Flintridge Foundation Award in the Visual Arts.

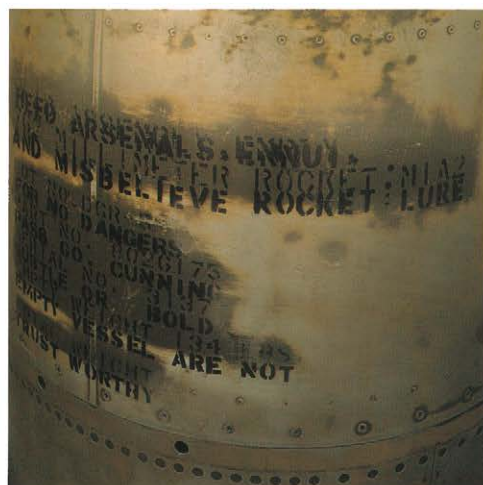
***Flight Plan (Perloff Variation)***, from the *flight* series, combined-media on photographic paper, 42" x 77.25", 1983

***Rocket Lure***, (with detail), from the *Jargomatique* series, paint on aluminum, 115.5" x 27.5", 1990 (pg. 36)

***Luminous Phase***, from the *Jargomatique* series, combined-media on photographic paper, 58.5" x 73", 1990 (pg. 37)









New York University, BA

New York University, MFA

International Budo University, Chiba, Japan

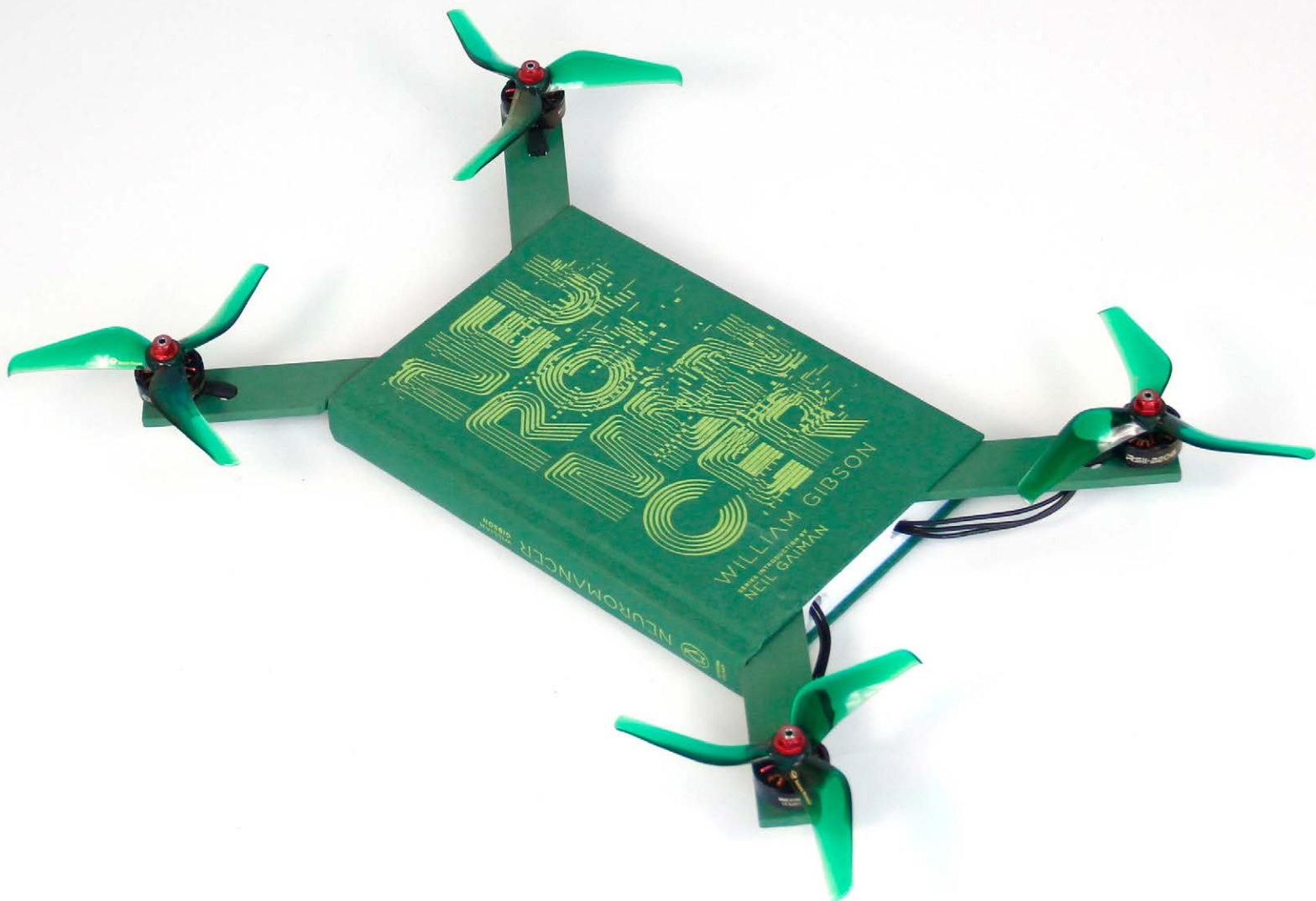
***The Art of War***, from the *Bibliodrones* series, 16.5" x 16.5" x 2.5", mixed-media, 2015-2019

***Neuromancer***, from the *Bibliodrones* series, 18" x 13" x 2.25", mixed-media, 2015-2019 (pg. 40)

***A Theory of the Drone***, from the *Bibliodrones* series, 11" x 16" x 2", mixed-media, 2015-2019 (pg. 41)











University of California, Irvine, BA

University of California, Irvine, Graduate Program

California State University, Northridge, MFA

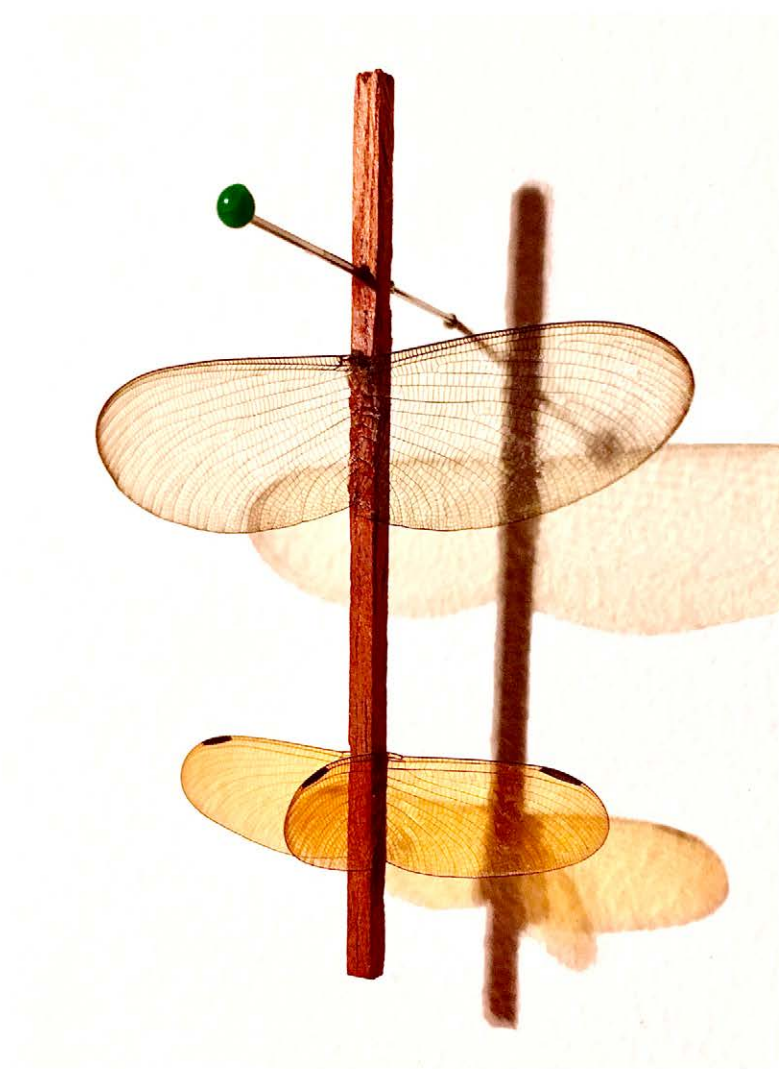
National Endowment for the Arts, two Artist Fellowship Grants and one CETA Grant.

***The Bomb, (actual size)***, black lacquer on hardwood, 75" x 128" x 60", 2008 (front view Pg. 1)

***LA Gliders***, hardwood and dragonfly/butterfly wings with stick pins, approximately 3.5" x 3" x .5", 2019, (Pgs. 9, 44 & 46)

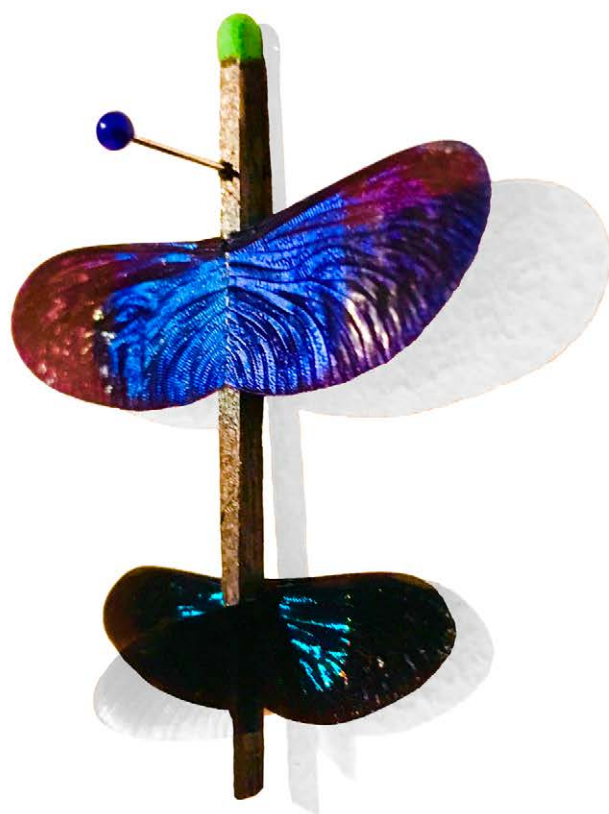
***Davy Crockett Tactical Nuclear Bomb Sculpture (actual size)***, black lacquer on hardwood, 12.25" x 20" x 11", 2005 (pg. 45)











## A CHRONOLOGY: CALIFORNIA ART & AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGIES

**DURING MUCH OF THE 20TH CENTURY** California was the aeronautics powerhouse of the U.S. and quite possibly among the best in the world, due to its open spaces, arid climate and deep connection to early aviation history. Names like Douglas, Hughes, Lockheed's Skunkworks, McDonnell, North American, Northrop and the builder of the Spirit Of Saint Louis—Ryan Aircraft have faded into history, but there are still a plethora of aerospace industries and research institutes located here. Such as Caltech, Edwards AFB, General Atomic, JPL, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, Rand, SpaceX, University of California Berkeley and Vandenberg AFB all generate an environment of fabrication and cross-fertilization possibilities for artists that continues on today.

**Doug Wheeler** was born in Globe, Arizona, in 1939. Wheeler spent his childhood observing various levels of opaque atmospheric conditions, as seen from inside the cockpit of his father's Stagger-wing Beechcraft airplane. The phenomena that he observed and tried to capture or recreate, he referred to as "infinite space." This "torqueing of space" is something that other artists became interested in. I believe this ongoing obsession was the catalyst behind much of the Pacific Rim's Light, Space and Surface phenomenology. Doug's aerial experiences edified what has become one of the West Coast's most significant art movements.

**John McCracken** was another California original who came on the scene in 1964 and created his own visual world. Influenced early on by Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts and many science fiction writers, McCracken made "objects that could have been made and/or understood by space aliens." In a 1998 *Art In America* interview with art historian Frances Colpitt titled "Between Two Worlds," John adamantly postulates about the cosmos and our perceptions of time—past, present and future— as being all rolled into one. He maintained that there is an unconscious, connective thread between all life forms in the cosmos that I would characterize as a sublime singularity. This is heady stuff, but McCracken used his world view to create some of the most unique sculptures of the late-20th century and to quote a mutual friend, "If nothing else, he saw all of this as a rare insight into who we are as much as who they might be."<sup>1</sup>

**Vija Celmins** lived in Venice, California from 1962 through 1980 and while there, she exorcised her war-time PTSD experiences that took place during her Latvian childhood. Similar to German artist Gerhard Richter,

Celmins did this by abstracting graphic images from books and newspapers of war and strife that were already flattened and a step removed from any personal context. By adding that emotional disconnect from those formative experiences, she allowed herself to “go into that little (dispassionate) gray world (each day) and draw her way out,”<sup>2</sup> thereby coming to terms formally with, and containing those inner demons.

Between 1967 and 1971, LACMA's **Maurice Tuchman** and **Jane Livingston** organized under the banner of Art & Technology, a forward-thinking Southern California program that attempted to develop “a collective will in art to gain access to modern industries in the way that the Futurists, the Constructivists and Bauhaus had.”<sup>3</sup> How successful this exhibition program was is arguable, because of the innate conflict between the ideal and how it translated into reality bore diminutive fruit for the subsequent exhibition. Out of the 76 artists involved, only 15 or so produced something tangible enough to exhibit. However, the myth of that collaborative ideal has morphed and grown in stature over the decades.

From 1967 onward, “Light & Space” artist **Peter Alexander**, a native Angelino has made (light to dark) wedged shaped resin sculptures that approximates what water does on coastlines when flying above them. Alexander has also made night paintings

which depict ethereal city lights while flying low over the Los Angeles basin.

**Bryan Hunt** had a background in drafting/design with NASA during its Moon Walk period. He graduated from Otis College of Art, lived in Venice, California from 1971-1976 and produced his horizontally anchored Hindenburg-like Airship series mounted on-high. It seemed to levitate off the vertical structures they were attached to.

Like Celmins, **Jack Goldstein**, who grew up in Los Angeles, also used appropriated photographic images to have others generate his painting's subject matter. Goldstein had his *Salon Paintings fabricated in the late seventies and eighties*, which I think were only superficially connected to Celmins's *Burning Plane* and *Night Sky* paintings.

**Susan Rankaitis** began her professional life as a painter, but with an analytical eye towards science and a scientific approach, over the years that manifested itself in collaborative projects with many professionals from various fields in and out of the sciences. In the mid-seventies she moved West. During that period a pivotal experience for Rankaitis was being shown the combined-media images of Bauhaus' László Moholy-Nagy at the Chicago Art Institute. By 1980 her studio was located in the Hyde Park area of Inglewood directly under LAX's flightpath and Susan embarked upon her

seminal *Fire River/Flight* series that, also used combined-media techniques.

In 1982, **Nancy Rubins** relocated to downtown Los Angeles. After a sojourn to the Mohave desert, where she discovered a graveyard of discarded airplanes, she started creating her stacked airplane parts sculptures. It all began for her with a 1986 piece titled *4,000 Pounds of Smashed and Filleted Airplane Parts*, which culminated in a one-night exhibition at the Alexandria Hotel in downtown Los Angeles and the rest is history.

In late 1985, **John Eden** began work on his revelatory (*Beyond the*) *Pale* series which were abstractions of the torii gate motif that were predicated on his father's WWII experiences with the atomic bomb in Japan. His father had accompanied the first American scientists into Hiroshima, just weeks after the bomb's detonation. Eden served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War Era. He experienced a breakdown of sorts<sup>4</sup> while guarding B-52s, individually loaded with enough nuclear energy to eradicate several cities like Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thirteen years later, he visited Hiroshima's Peace Museum and walked past human shadows etched into stone. The experience of which reinforced his initial unwillingness to serve in that capacity and under those circumstances. *The Pale* series was shown at the 1987 inaugural exhibition



of Ace Gallery on Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. (Figs. 1 & 2, page 50)

Between 1999 and 2000 **Sam Erenberg**, in a funerary response to the Gulf Wars, burned all of his Los Angeles Times newspaper clippings that related to what was essentially the world's first air war campaign. He then mixed that ash with rabbit-skin glue and applied it to fourteen unprimed canvases, creating this series which he subsequently titled *The Ash Paintings*.

Since 2003, **Richard Jackson** has flown unmanned aerial vehicles filled with various volumes of colors into assorted backdrops to create conceptually based anti-formalist happenings as a type of action painting the artist titles, *Accidents In Abstract Painting*. On January 22, 2012, in a spectacular Getty Pacific Standard Time-related performance, he flew a 15-foot wingspan model of an A-10 Warthog war plane into a Pasadena, California wall.

In 2007, **Trevor Paglen** released a heavily illustrated book titled "I Could Tell You But Then You Would Have To Be Destroyed", which dealt with U.S. Black Projects, like Area 51, through their symbols, unit patches and memorabilia. Paglen received his BA. and Ph.D. at University of California, Berkeley. In 2010, he produced a group of semiabstract photographs titled *Untitled (Reaper) Drones*. While mostly photographs

of clouds or sky, the drones that he captured are so small they are nearly imperceptible. More recently, he has focused on nonfunctional, reflective satellites that would be visible from the Earth's surface as they travel around the globe, along with orbital as well as intergalactic time-capsules.

From 2012 to 2016, **Ben Jackel** created graphite-clad drone sculptures that were exhibited in various configurations. Some were attached to the wall similar to giant, pinned-butterfly specimens, while others hung from the ceiling like vintage aircraft in an aerospace museum.

In 2015, **Chris Burden** finished his final, and I believe his best work, titled *Ode To Santos Dumont*. It is a reductive and streamlined unmanned replica of Dumont's dirigible that flew around the Eiffel Tower in 1901. I saw it flown at LACMA as a memorial to Burden and I was astounded by its weightless presence and beauty. No obvious deconstructive intent or postmodern irony, just pure childlike delight felt by those present. Perhaps even on par with what Doug Wheeler, the child, might have experienced way back when. (Fig. 3, page 51)

Nom De Guerre

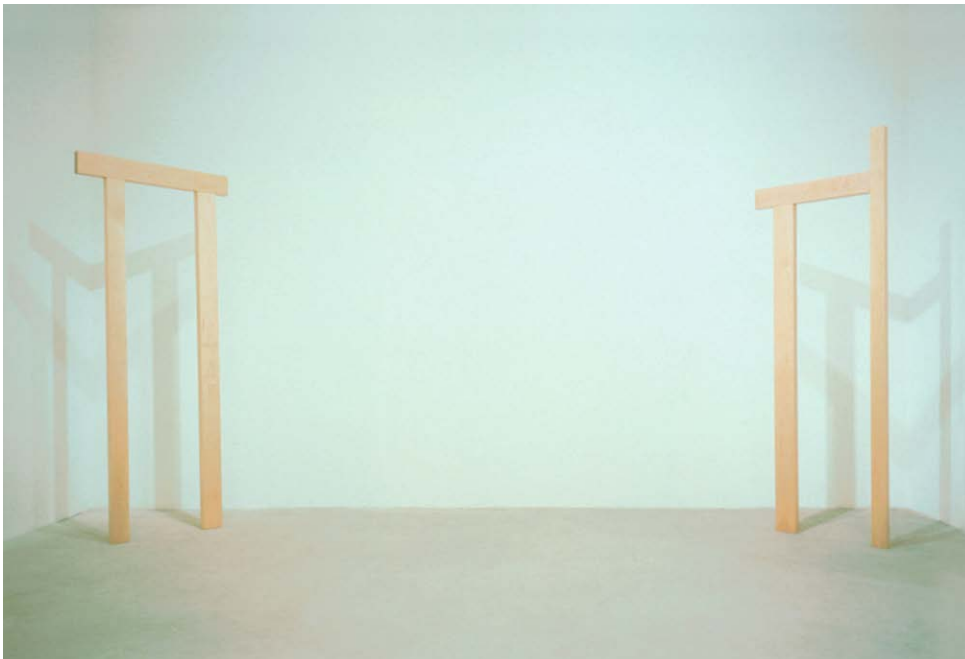
- 1 Kelly Hames in a 2019 email exchange made that observation about John McCracken and UFOs.
- 2 Dave Hickey, "25 Women: Essays on Their Art," Vija Celmins, pg. 41

- 3 Maurice Tuchman's "A Report on the Art and Technology Program at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art," 1971 pg. 9
- 4 Half emotional breakdown/half protest comes closest to being an accurate description of what happened. But the action resulted in his being cross-trained into photography until he left the Air Force. "I just couldn't take part in a nuclear holocaust. It was beyond my notion of acceptable human behavior. That experience of seeing human shadows etched into stone is beyond the pale of comprehension and that truth has remained the subtext of my art."





(Fig. 1) John Eden, *Hiroshima Mon Amour: You saw nothing my love, you saw nothing*. From a vintage 1945 Sepia-tone memento photo of his father standing in front of the Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima Harbor with his female companion, 2016.



(Fig. 2) John Eden, *Untitled I & II*, a 1987 double installation photograph from *(Beyond) the Pale Series* at Ace Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. lacquered white maple planks, 84.5" X 33.75" X 2", 1986 and 88.5" X 28.75" X 2", 1986.



(Fig. 3) **Chris Burden, *Ode To Santos Dumas***, aircraft aluminum quality Erector-set parts, carbon fiber drive shaft, fiberglass propeller, nylon cable, 22' Gondola, hand tooled 1/4 scale replica of 1903 gasoline motor, translucent lozenge-shape polyurethane balloon, 1300 cubic feet of helium, built by machinist John Biggs, 13' x 40' x 8', 2015.







