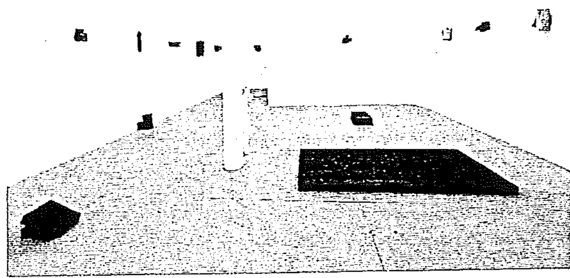


View of "Richard Nonas," 2013.

Unsurprisingly, then, his exhibition at James Fuentes was defined by the careful placement of objects. Eighteen modestly sized sculptures, simple assemblages of sawn lengths of steel bar or roughly split chunks of wood, most less than a foot or two across, were arranged throughout the gallery, either resting on the floor or sparsely spaced along the walls, aligned at roughly eye level. The peculiar thing about this arrangement was that it made it impossible to look at only one work at a time, enforcing a kind of simultaneous awareness of the entire gallery space as various objects flitted across the viewer's peripheral vision. The placement was the result of a painstaking installation process, which Nonas prepared for by drawing (in CAD software) a plan of the space in which he located not only the works but sight lines between them. Thus, the very qualities of the room that made it "uneasy and unsteady" became primary sources of activation. The gallery's single, awkwardly off-center column engaged in parallactic play with any number of the wall pieces, while the room's L-shaped floor plan, which might have created a pocket of dead space, was transformed into an intriguing mystery, as carefully placed floor pieces peeked out from around the corner.

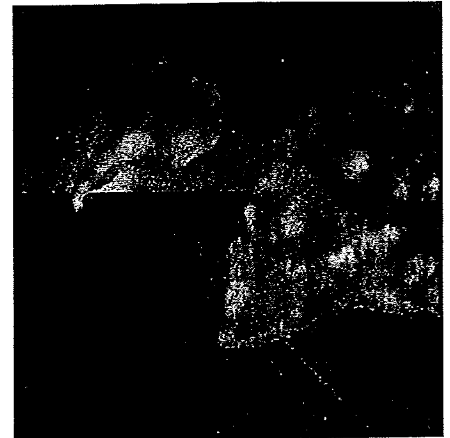
But it is Nonas's works themselves that ultimately sustain our attention. They may echo the form and matter (if not the scale) of Minimalism, but they have an inscrutable structural logic all their own. Nonas's materials are not simply abutted, stacked, or propped: In an untitled steel floor piece from 1985, for example, two hefty blocks have been mitered into what is almost a right-angled joint, but the portion protruding from the floor leans, oddly, just past ninety degrees. In several untitled wall pieces from 2012, two or three wood slabs are pressed together vertically or horizontally, the chance curves and lumps that resulted from being split along their natural grain nested with surprising precision, even elegance. In its efforts to shape space, Minimalism often borrowed not only the scale of architecture but its structural language—it was a tectonic simplicity that enabled its famous shift in emphasis from compositional relationships within the work of art itself to the interaction between viewer and artwork in real space. But Nonas suggests alternative possibilities for interventions in space that need not be so direct or literal—means of fashioning experience not so much on architecture's terms.

—Julian Rose

Rico Gatson
RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS

The five paintings in Rico Gatson's series "Watts," 2011, on view in this show, are adapted from aerial photographs of the Watts rebellion of 1965, in Los Angeles, and address the still raw and unresolved nature of the injustices that trigger urban violence, as well as the news media's recursive tendency to produce the same kinds of oversimplified images of political unrest. In the approximately four-by-four-foot square panels, a textured crust of glitter overpainted in black indicates city blocks, while crisscrossing dark-gray lines represent the intervening roads. As in the source photos taken from the windows of helicopters, the horizon lines of the images are unstable and vertiginous. A spew of wildly colored fire and smoke—bright reds tinged with orange outlined in a penumbra of vivid purple—emanates from a scarcely visible burning building. By schematizing the original photographs and reducing their specificity, Gatson allows his works to bring to mind the widely publicized images of the more recent fires that engulfed the very same Los Angeles neighborhoods following the Rodney King verdict in 1992. Gatson's revamp of the material estranges the familiarity of the airborne reporter's perspective and seems to question the media's habit of representing crime in South Central Los Angeles and elsewhere from an aerial perspective, which results in news coverage detached from human scale.

In another work, Gatson evokes the jubilance that (in some quarters) that surrounded the election of the first black president of the United States in 2008, and the current disappointment (in those same quarters) with Obama's performance thus far. Called *Untitled (Obama)*, 2013, the piece presents the five letters of the president's surname in a sans-serif all-caps font, confronting the viewer with billboard-like immediacy. Each letter was rendered first in glitter and then painted over in black (the same methods deployed in the "Watts" works), and is flanked by black and gray horizontal lines interrupted by yellow dashes. The former give the name a horizontal thrust that, with the yellow marks, begins to recall a road—that of history itself—slipping by.



Rico Gatson, *Watts Painting #1*, 2011, 48½ x 49".

A group of painted black sculptures and rectangular wood slats with red, yellow, and green abstract stripes and zigzags that were also on display were somewhat underwhelming next to the "Watts" works; their invocation of vibrant pan-Africanism can seem decorative in comparison. Spatially, the centerpiece of the exhibition was Gatson's six-minute video *The Promise of Light*, 2013, which lent the show its title. Much like Gatson's previous videos, the work incorporates psychedelic visual effects in which sometimes uncomfortable subject matter is embedded. Consisting of brightly colored disks turning kaleidoscopically around a central axis, the video initially appears entirely abstract. Yet this sense of cheerful radiance does not last; intermittently, historical black-and-white photographs of African Americans—here an outdoor scene of cotton pickers, there a close-up of a man lynched—emerge mirage-like from the background. The seduction of the video's trippy shapes and colors, accompanied by a trancelike sound track of ambient noise Gatson recorded on drives near his home in Brooklyn, creates a mesmerizing work whose visual and aural appeal encourages zoning out. Yet the interplay of those elements with the partially buried images beneath can't help but snap the viewer back to difficult and unmetabolized histories of racial inequality in America.

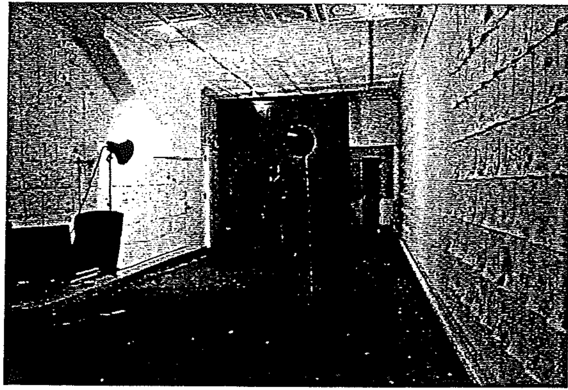
—Eva Díaz

accidents, and deliberate intention, a web of forms and ideas. The common element is the studio, which unites the images and at times seems to generate the work. It is not surprising when some of the main characters appear in other photographs in supporting roles: The festooned slat from *Girlfriend!* can be seen at the very edge of *Web Site*, and the pile of yarn from *Yarnia*, or one very much like it, hides under a table in *Dawn*.

Many of the photos are printed at a large size, investing every detail, every piece of yarn or screw, with a degree of stature. They almost seem alive. In contrast, a group of smaller photographs feel somewhat dull, like snapshots of a chaotic room. In this show, at least, the artist's studio (and the creative process it represents) is more compelling when we can clearly see its moving parts.

—Emily Hall

Jacolby Satterwhite
RECESS



View of "Jacolby Satterwhite," 2013.

Many times when we *say* collaboration, we actually *mean* task-based audience participation, or even, simply, appropriation. Think, for example, of how "collaborative" processes such as workshopping and inviting audience contributions often result in a single-authored artwork—the artist has annexed others' efforts as his own. Jacolby Satterwhite literally dances amid these semantic distinctions, producing a body of work that mines the slippery word for all it's worth. To create his fantastical videos, the artist makes CGI renderings of speculative consumer products drawn by his mother, and pairs these animated digital graphics with footage of his own performing body. In his current show, he also solicits actions from members of the public that later become part of the works. His practice is rooted in a personal history that, to some, would sound particularly fraught. Previous projects have dealt not only with his experience as an African American growing up gay but also with his childhood battles with cancer (at age seventeen he went into remission after several rounds of chemotherapy), and in this exhibition, his mother's schizophrenia was the organizing theme.

But like the feel-good vibe of rhetorics of collaboration that may ultimately veil asymmetrical power dynamics, Satterwhite's use of his mother's drawings in the current body of work is complicated, and in many ways enriched, by her diagnosed mental illness, symptoms of which involve a compulsion to create diagrams for improbable inventions. The devices are sometimes tweaks of existing products—a "carocell," for example, is a rotating complex of reclining lounge-chairs, and a shoe roller-coaster helps organize closets—while some stray into the realm of the bizarre, freighted with sexual connotations. One sketch proposes various flavors of a "lipstick" for "between the legs," while a "whiskey flasher" apparatus with "diamond cocks" can be attached to the tops of liquor bottles. These items are rendered with a feverish pencil latticing that looks remarkably similar to the trusswork of radio towers or the faceted polyhedrons of geodesic domes. Satterwhite inserts digitized versions of the drawn objects into his videos as props for outlandish dances, for which he wears shiny, skintight jumpsuits and preposterous headdresses fitted with glowing screens while voguing on street corners, subway platforms, and other highly trafficked urban areas.

Papered floor to ceiling with taped-up grids of the drawings, the gallery walls presented a disorienting and repetitive agglomeration of designs by Satterwhite's mother. At the center of the space, the artist set up an ad hoc video-recording studio, where audience members were invited to select a drawing from the 260 on display and mime interacting with the depicted item in front of a green screen. Satterwhite was on hand to record these actions, and throughout the course of the show he combined the resultant footage with that of his own performances. On display on a nearby monitor were Satterwhite's earlier works and parts of the videos-in-progress that involve fantasias of penis-like tiered cakes spewing miniature versions of writhing Jacolbys, or of a leaf-blower-like tool (described by his mother as a way to help "turn the smell of pussy off") manipulated by the artist among a crew of mannequins strapped with flaming merkins.

Satterwhite has said that "the blurring of the authorship" in the work is important; he aspires to make "the most personal thing[s] in my life my work." And here is the crux of his form of collaboration: Satterwhite, in his role as artist, is able to organize and reenergize the rituals of therapeutic imagemaking to which his mother, part of a tight-knit family, repeatedly returns, while simultaneously inviting the wider public to engage, possibly empathetically, with the moments of eccentric creativity in her obsessions. In spite of his mother's fluctuating mental health, Satterwhite admires the way she's managed to sublimate her condition into drawings that also serve as creative fodder for his work. In order to effect what he has called a queering of art, Satterwhite tests conventions of race, power, propriety within the family, sexuality, and behavior in public space, and troubles those codes as they relate to others surrounding authorship and originality.

—Eva Díaz

WALTHAM, MA

Jack Whitten
ROSE ART MUSEUM, BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

A visible presence among New York painters since the mid-1960s, Jack Whitten has recently received a surge of attention. Within the past couple of years, his work has been featured in multiple solo gallery shows and major group exhibitions such as "The Encyclopedic Palace" in Venice and "Blues for Smoke" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles—not to mention on the cover of this magazine in February 2012—and a retrospective, scheduled for the fall of 2014, is currently in preparation at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. The theme of rediscovery continues at the Rose Art Museum's small but eye-opening show curated by Katy Siegel, where moments of acquaintance occur for both the public and the artist himself: The exhibition focuses on the years 1971–73, during which Whitten launched unprecedented investigations into the material possibilities of acrylic and pigment. Most of these works had never been exhibited, having been promptly rolled up and stored in the artist's studio for four decades, seemingly forgotten; Whitten himself had never before seen the show's