

## GAGOSIAN HYPERALLERGIC

**Eight Women Visual Artists Use Duchamp's Provocation as a Springboard**  
*Marcel Duchamp's "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" provides a provocative foundation for an exhibition of female artists who riff on the liminal spaces between ideas and events.*

Lee Ann Norman



*Ulla von Brandenburg, "Two Times Seven" (2017) installation view: K21 Ständehaus, Düsseldorf; (courtesy the artist and Art: Concept, Paris; photo © Achim Kukulies)*

Perhaps make

a hinge

picture.

(folding yardstick, book . . . .)

develop

the principle of the hinge

in the displacements

1st in the plane 2nd in space

find an automatic description

of the hinge

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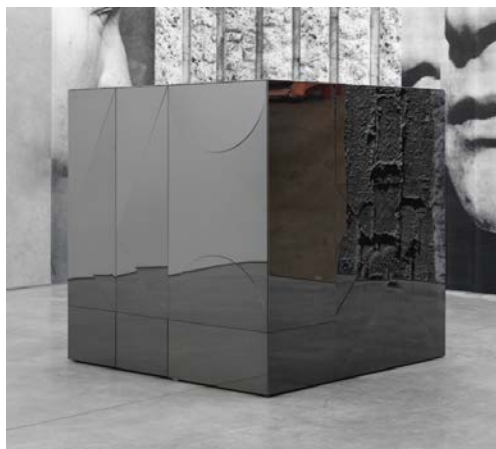
perhaps introduce it

in the Pendu femelle

- (excerpt) Marcel Duchamp, *The Green Box*

Marcel Duchamp's "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even" (1915–23, commonly referred to as "The Large Glass") is a mixed media work that uses oil paint, lead foil, wire, and dust suspended between two glass panes to depict a visual story of desire and eroticism between a "bride," seen in the upper panel and nine "bachelors" gazing at her from below. Despite its function as a somewhat straightforward narrative image, "The Bride" is discussed in the same game-changing context as Duchamp's readymades. Understood in the early 1900s as something akin to a titillation or provocation, the work has gained more recent interpretations that examine its symbolism and power. In the current worldwide #MeToo moment, "The Bride" can be likened to an allegory on patriarchy, dominance and power, personal agency and yielding. What Duchamp wrote about the work then — that the ideas in the glass are more important than the actual visual realizations — certainly applies when considering the work today.

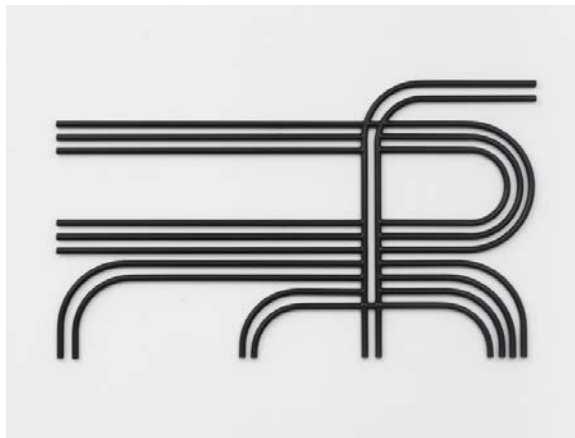
All of this makes "The Bride" a provocative foundation for an exhibition of female artists working to translate their ideas into contemporary visual work. *Hinge Pictures: Eight Women Artists Occupy the Third Dimension* is now on view at the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans, and its accompanying artist book, co-produced by the art center and Siglio Press, was made available on April 23. Like Duchamp's "Bride," *Hinge Pictures* also encourages viewers to explore the uncomfortable and ambiguous space between one gesture and the next. The exhibition wrestles with how one might visualize riffs on the liminal spaces between ideas and events.



Claudia Wieser, "Untitled" (2017) mirror-polished stainless steel and ceramic on MDF 60 3/4 x 60 1/2 x 60 1/2 inches (image courtesy the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen; © Claudia Wieser, photo credit: Hans Georg Gaul)

Using “The Bride” as the starting point, each artist takes on Duchamp’s primary challenge to create a work that comes off the page to escape the two-dimensional plane. The artists — Sarah Crowner, Julia Dault, Leslie Hewitt, Tomashi Jackson, Erin Shireff, Ulla von Brandenburg, Adriana Varejão, and Claudia Wieser — work across painting, sculpture, photography, installation, film and moving image, to engage with and expand upon a canonical version of Modernism. They work in minimalism, abstraction, updated readymade-like sculptures, and repurposed and altered found objects. In the accompanying artists’ book for Hinge Pictures, each artist alters excerpts from Duchamp’s original text using vellum overlays that they have changed in some way using color, another text as overlay, patterns, shapes and forms, or other images as an introduction to a selection from her own body of work. Art exploring feminism and colonial legacies, or works that reveal the artist’s process and hand reify the notion of a palimpsest, turning “The Bride” and the modernist era it convincingly expressed into the flat surface the eight artists use as the “hinge” for their work.

The traces and legacy of “The Bride” act like an opening, making room for artists who are not white, European men and making room for the practices they pursue. Julia Dault’s abstract sculptural paintings engage Duchamp and modernism in their fusion of industrial and handmade materials. For her paintings, Dault has used materials like spandex or silk as the support structure and created sculptures comprised of Plexiglas or Formica that she shapes by hand before attaching to a wall. Claudia Wieser’s mirrors, ceramics, and carved wood sculptures are infused with a dignity and care that acknowledge the spirituality inherent in artmaking, which is an act of creation. Her large cubic sculpture “Untitled” (2017) combines mirror polished stainless steel with ceramic and engineered wood to slice and refract images on the wall behind it which features classical sculpture.



*Julia Dault, “Black Widow” (2018) powder coated, hand-rolled aluminum, 39 x 69 inches; (courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen. © JuliaDault; photo by Object Studies)*

Tomashi Jackson and Adriana Varejão explore color as both an essential component of human life and a potential indicator of a person’s social value. Varejão’s “Polvo Portraits,” an installation that comprises 33 sculptural paintings, recall color wheels that use the range of human flesh tones as the color palette. The words for “octopus” (polvo) and “people” (povo) are similar in Brazilian Portuguese, and melanin is responsible for giving both mammals their coloring — the black color of octopus ink and the color variations in human skin. Expanding on this notion, the companion artists’ book includes Varejão’s annotated lists naming skin colors and their corresponding vernacular meaning in Brazilian Portuguese and English: Amarelosa/High Yellow, Branca Melada/Honey Colored, Pálida/Pale or Pasty [White], for example. Despite its five official racial categories (Branco/White, Pardo/Brown, Preto/Black,

Amarelo/Yellow, and Indigenous), Brazil's postcolonial society has hundreds of names to describe flesh tones. For Varejão, naming skin color is not a neutral act since the act of naming something imbues it with meaning.



*Adriana Varejão, "Polvo Portraits" (2018) oil on canvas. Installation composed by 33 canvases of 52 x 45.5 cm and 12 canvases of 52 cm each (© Adriana Varejão; photo by Adriana Varejão, courtesy the artist and Gagosian)*

Leslie Hewitt examines time as a fluid idea, creating photographed still life compositions, sculptures, and installations that layer multiple histories to make seemingly benign objects into complex knowledge systems. Her images and sculptures draw attention to the significant connections between collective memory and political consciousness in art and life via materials such as personal ephemera, family pictures, and vintage Black pop culture magazines. Erin Shirreff's work skillfully combines the principles of analogue and digital processes to examine how our perception of objects is mediated by still and moving images.



*Leslie Hewitt, "Riffs on Real Time with Ground (Green Mesh)", (2017) digital chromogenic print, silver gelatin print 104.1 x 231.1 x 5.1 inches (courtesy the artist and Perrotin; photo by Guillaume Ziccarelli)*

To critique our inheritance from modernism in art generally and the art world's facile positioning of white, European men as dominant is inherently antithetical to this notion, making *Hinge Pictures* a fitting realization of Duchamp's philosophical challenge.