

I wanted abstraction that was interrupted by moments of awareness of reality, but in a different form. And that's where the scratches, the rough edges, the use of clear acrylic panels come into play. Since there is a physicality to the transparent panel, it is only when the light hits it and throws a shadow that you have evidence of that. It is the shadow that is realistic, but looks abstract. It was a convoluted way to use the form and rely on the shadow to give you physical information. It is the shadow that I wanted to photograph.

ET Besides the video and photographs, will there be other types of work in the show?

BK There will be several sculptures in the show. I did a series of seated fiber forms soon after graduate school at the California College of Arts. I developed them further during a Fulbright Fellowship in 1971-2 in Poland where Magdalena Abakanowicz was my mentor. Made of unraveled sisal marine ropes, which are dyed bright colors, the sculptures become caricatures of body types and personalities. It was a time when artists were using fiber and playing with soft pliable objects. I used a traditional tapestry loom to weave a shape in such a way that when I pulled the warp threads it created volume. The three forms that still exist are included in the exhibit. The video documentary of my collaboration with choreographer Margaret Jenkins for the Brooklyn Academy of Music is being screened. It was an important moment when I could introduce movement and dynamic scale into my work.

ET Looking back to your early photograms from the 1970s, it seems three-dimensional-ity was already there somehow.

BK Photograms have always interested me. The earliest were cyanotype, which only needed sunlight and water to process. Later I used silver gelatin mural paper for six-foot-high photograms that were stretched on painting bars and painted with washes of oil paint and sticks. I made the panels into free-standing folding screens, moving them even further away from expected presentations in both painting and photography. It is enlightening for me to see the continuity of my work over so many years. The diversity of the processes and the spatial concerns that are inherent elements of my practice may surprise some people who have only known my photographs. However, the possibilities that this experience has opened for future new work are extremely rewarding for me.

(Barbara Kasten interviewed by Elena Tavecchia)

ERNIE GEHR: BON VOYAGE

(6) CENTRE D'ART
CONTEMPORAIN GENÈVE
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centre.ch

"Bon Voyage" is the exhibition that Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva has dedicated to the recent work (2010-2014) of Ernie Gehr, a New York artist considered to be among the masters of Structural film. This project, curated by Andrea Bellini, features eight video installations never previously shown in Europe, including the world premiere of Gehr's five latest works, in a presentation that underlines the consistency and depth of an approach to the moving image which crosses the the borders of the media

employed, outlining a "visual theory" of such devices, from the birth of photography to the contemporary digital imagination.

GIULIO BURSI *The exhibition Ernie Gehr: Multi-Channel Digital Installations marks a first for you, in a double sense. Although it represents a return to Switzerland after the memorable "New Forms in Film" series curated by Annette Michelson at Montreux in 1974, this is your first solo show in an European art institution, as well as the first time you've dealt with a space entirely consecrated to your multichannel video installations (specifically, the most recent ones, from 2010 to 2014).*

ERNIE GEHR I don't know how much free time I will have in Geneva, but I definitely look forward to finding and revisiting some of the areas and streets that I encountered in 1974. Perhaps even a small work may materialize out of that adventure. As you know, I just arrived, and I am more than delighted to find out that Centre d'Art is located in a converted former factory. The signs are there as you enter the courtyard leading to the entrance of the building. In the courtyard there are still some rail tracks from the building's former life. I like that very much. In addition, the exhibition space itself retains its aged, worn, and stained wooden floor. It gives the space weight, and a character I much appreciate.

GB *I am interested in how you have assembled the different works exhibited here, how you managed to bring them into dialogue through the exhibition space. For example, in the first as well as in the second and fourth rooms of Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva, you decided to present your installations in the form of double pairs, thus creating a sort of montage which allows the viewer to examine the hidden connections between the images. I am particularly interested in the dialectical comparison between two 2014 works such as Crossing the Bowery and Mist.*

EG I wanted the exhibition to have a shape, a form where the individual pieces could function independent of all the others, but at the same time were in dialogue with each other. Studying the floor plan, the decision was made to use the topography of New York City as a guide. As you know, NYC is a piece of land surrounded by and crisscrossed by rivers and the Atlantic Ocean. So the two themes that are represented in each room are reflections on urban spaces and water. There are, of course, other ways in which the works are in dialogue with each other, such as film and digital media, shadows, projection of shadows and shadow plays (an early form of the moving image), ideas regarding perception, and a representation of a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface...

GB *To follow this line of thought, let me ask you a question which is rooted in my personal experience; or rather to a memory of mine, that is, the first of your films and the first of your videos that I ever watched: Eureka, from 1974, and Cotton Candy, the work MoMA commissioned from you in 2001 for the "Modern Contemporary" exhibition. To me, they represent two experiences that are perceptually very distant from each other (the deconstruction of an early cinema travelogue and a "comic musical"), but I believe that the comparison between these two works which at a first sight may look very different represents one of the main interests of your work: namely, an interest in the device of cinema, in other words the cinematic essence. What remains of that device in the body of your work and where this device is going right now?*

EG Film and digital are both moving-image mediums. But they are very different creatures. However, let me just point out what is happening in one work that is in the exhibition in relationship to Eureka. For example, in *Eureka*, I brought to the foreground the film's photographic emulsion. In *Eureka*, that gesture is doing something to the image that is essential to the piece. Likewise, in *Mist I & II*, the pixels of video are accentuated so that they rhyme with the continual pulsing of the water. Let me also just point out one important approach of mine in *Cotton Candy*: not only are the pixels of video quite visible and pronounced, continually informing you that you are looking at a piece of video artifice, but the "creatures" that seem most alive are pieces of automata, not the photographic movie images of the Mutoscope.

GB *The last question concerns the visual essay at the end of the catalogue. It seems to me that it sums up some fifty years of work on images in movement – composition and decomposition, movement, time – and that at the same time it highlights the evolution of the last few years, revolving around the reworking of the image. It is no coincidence that the essay begins with a frame showing the "split" launch of a boat—a clear reference to the origins of cinema as well as to found footage – and ends with the abstractions of the Brooklyn Series, which remind me of the recent paintings Gerhard Richter realized for his "Strip" series, and which you use to close the exhibition.*

EG You put it so nicely, Giulio. Once again, thank you. I did it because I didn't want to use words. I wanted to do it in a language that I felt I understood better, and where I had a greater ability to compose an ambiguous and more open-ended essay. With words, someone can say "and Ernie says so and so". With a set of images... Well, I'll let others decide.

(Ernie Gehr interviewed by Giulio Bursi)

BEAUTIFUL MONSTERS

(7) GLADSTONE GALLERY
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gladstonegallery.com

SAM KORMAN *Why start with Picabia? Or did you arrive at Picabia?*

DOUGLAS FOGLE The idea for "Beautiful Monsters" definitely started with Picabia, but really from his writing. The title of the show was taken from a stanza of "Baccarat", from 1940:

*I am a beautiful monster
who shares his secrets with the wind.
What I love most in others
is myself.*

I love the contradiction and friction in the words "beautiful monster". It made sense to me when I thought about the strangeness of Picabia's later paintings. Thinking about this phrase led me to look at the fraught, yet inseparable relationship between abstraction and figuration. I had also recently seen some Cycladic figurines in Athens. Their minimalist depictions of the human form felt incredibly modern. A simple line or two can suggest a face, a body, and so on. But how minimal can one go before the figure dissolves into the world of abstraction?

SK *Is the exhibition a theater or staging of the self?*