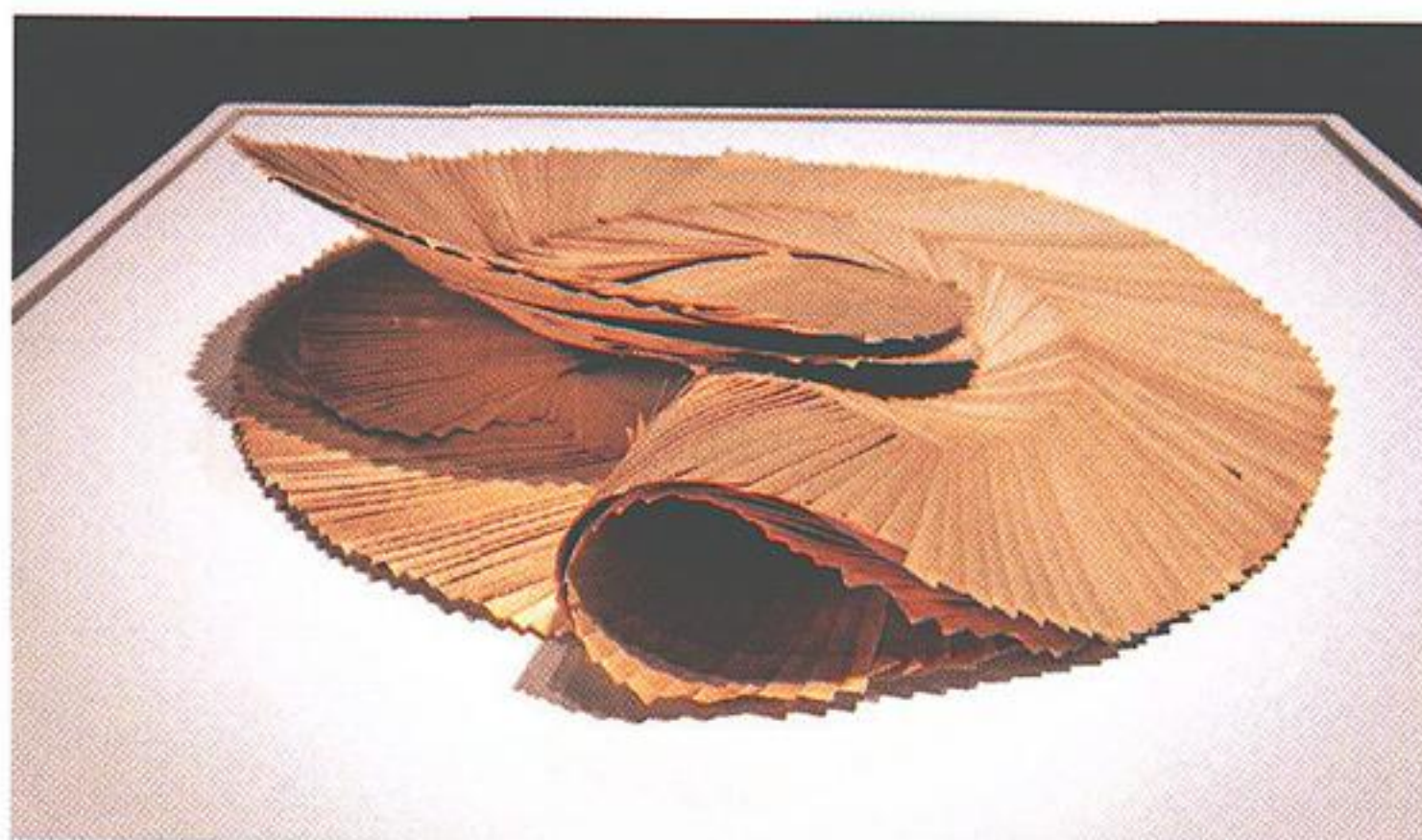


Oscar Santillan,  
*The Castle*, 2009–11,  
book pages, tape,  
glue, 4 x 16 x 16".  
From "paperless."



ubiquitous material, gathering art from fifteen international artists who have sought to reshape, recycle, torture, or dismember as they've mulled over paper's future or elegized its demise.

As might be expected, books figured prominently in multiple works on view. Take, for example, Natasha Bowdoin's *The Daisy Argument (Revised)*, 2011/2012, which featured ribbons of paper inscribed, by the artist with lines from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. In turn, these strips had then been applied to the gallery wall in an effulgent, flamelike arrangement. To make *The Castle*, 2009–11, Ecuadorian artist Oscar Santillan unbound the pages of Franz Kafka's eponymous unfinished novel and reassembled them to form an undulating pinwheel such that the text is obscured, thus paralleling the story's essential inscrutability.

Other works in the show concentrated on disposable media and packaging, such as bags, boxes, and newspaper, rather than the hard-bound word. For *Memorial*, 2008, Santillan gave us a pile of blank newsprint and a miniature deer. According to the artist, the deer had been made from congealed ink chemically extracted from the now-empty section of the *New York Times*—a blank information landscape across which it gazed. Maskull Lasserre, in his *Lexicon*, 2008, also employed newspaper, compressing a thick stack of daily papers, out of which he carved a spinal column and rib cage, expressing, in macabre fashion, the old saw that we are what we read.

Another human shape appeared in Peter Callesen's *Fall*, 2008. Cutting a "tree of life" silhouette from a large sheet of white paper, the Danish artist sculpted the material into a human skeleton, which he sprawled at the base of the paper sheet, below the tree's negative space. The significance of this scenario was augmented by the work's title, which alludes to the biblical fall, but also to paper itself, a commodity in decline despite its overproduction.

Elsewhere, a different kind of interiority was on display via semi-incestuous, found love letters that had been cut apart, shredded, and glued together again by Nava Lubelski to make *Kissing Cousins*, 2012. In this and in *Crush*, 2008—another ripped and reglued letter stash, this one penned by a closeted bank executive discussing his homosexuality—Lubelski transformed the paper-based notation of secretive intimacy into vaguely geological sculptural forms: the archive as melancholic ruin.

More interactively, Simryn Gill lined the base of a gallery wall with volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (beginning with the year 1968) and, via written instructions, invited viewers to tear out a single page. Calling the piece *Paper Boats*, 2009–, Gill included a note that the viewer should fold the sheet into a ship and leave it on an adjacent table—a surface that, by the time I saw the show, was burdened beyond capacity with a veritable armada of improvised vessels. What at first appeared an innocent "relational" work came to seem a disassembling of collective knowledge, the political liberation conjured by the legend-

ary year 1968 tied up by viewers into an unregulated mess of individualized interests or, as it were, private boats.

The social critique evidenced throughout "paperless" was perhaps most delicately rendered by Japanese artist Yuken Teruya, who had cut exquisitely small trees from the surfaces of found paper items, such as dollar bills, fast-food bags, and toilet-paper rolls, while leaving the host objects otherwise intact. In so doing, he prompted an acerbic consideration of the compromises we are willing to make between our self-proclaimed concern for nature and our rapacious desire to own, eat, and, eliminate everything in sight.

—David M. Lubin

## MIAMI BEACH

### Charles LeDray BASS MUSEUM OF ART

Human labor revealed itself as the core of this tightly curated show. Featuring only four of Charles LeDray's meticulously crafted pieces, the exhibition was a concentrated extract of the New York-based sculptor's fifty-some-piece retrospective "workworkworkworkwork," organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston in 2010.

*Mens Suits*, 2006–2009, occupied the bulk of this presentation, as it comprised three tableaux, generously spaced across the expanse of one full, dimly lit floor. The sets—replete with such convincing details as well-worn linoleum flooring, fluorescent lighting, and cheaply paneled dropped ceilings—had been modeled to resemble scenes from a secondhand-clothing store. In one, two dust-covered racks of blazers were separated by a table haphazardly loaded with shirts; in another, a circular table displaying a spectrum of ties was attended by a men's dress form modeling rumpled attire. In the last setup, perhaps the most visually disjunctive of the three, a selection of carefully sewn and stitched clothes hung alongside such back-closet items as laundry bags and bins, an ironing board, and wooden pallets for a forklift. But more uncanny than these scenes' verisimilitude was their disconcerting scale, which was one-quarter life-size. After all, these were "mens suits," or so the title claimed. By creating a discrepancy between what this sartorial designation normally calls to mind—a uniform for heteronormative executives, sold by department stores—and the style of garments, aesthetics of display, and dimensions articulated by the tableaux, LeDray queered the term. In his hands, "mens suits" were not aspirational; they were worn-out, the unwanted garments of subjectivities that white-collar labor, historically, has marginalized.

LeDray likewise subverted expectations with *Jewelry Window*, 2002. Set back into the gallery wall (and so dimly lit that it could have

Charles LeDray,  
*Mens Suits*, 2006–,  
mixed media.  
Installation view.





easily been missed altogether), this to-scale replica contained a surfeit of black velvet forms—the kind of headless busts and pedestals that typically populate jewelry stores. But here the forms were naked, recalling a store window stripped of its goods. The physical disconnect between what we see and what is there and how simply this served as a metaphor for our knowledge of the slave labor that largely underpins the production of luxury gems shifted the experience of this work into an affective register of anxiety and dread.

But perhaps it was the two smallest works on view—*Wheat*, 2000, and *Cricket Cage*, 2002—that seemed the most chilling. Exquisitely carved from human bone, these delicate pieces had been installed near the entrance to the exhibition, both carefully lit against dark grounds. Though many Miami locals may have found little connecting these two subjects, it is well known in China that the cricket's first springtime chirps traditionally signal the start of the wheat harvest. It is important to note, however, that LeDray's cage contained no such creature. Rather, the door was set slightly ajar, the skeletal container empty. As did *Jewelry Window*, *Wheat* and *Cricket Cage* focused attention on that which is absent but nonetheless felt—in this case, the human cost of labor involved in the farming of this staple grain.

As viewed in this show, all of the pieces “worked” to recalibrate our relationships to labor; they forced us to stoop, to squint, to puzzle over absence, as if conjuring the kinds of subjectivities and physical experiences forced upon laboring bodies, only to remind us of the gulf that exists between our subject position and theirs.

—Alpesh Kantilal Patel

## CHICAGO

### Jerome Acks

65GRAND

The aesthetics of record collecting are a lingua franca for many contemporary young male artists exploring their social and creative identity. The adolescent vinyl fiend, it would seem, remains, however anachronistically, a fixture of the art world. So I couldn't help but let out an exhausted sigh as I walked into 65Grand's storefront gallery this summer and saw Jerome Acks's installation of seventy-three altered album covers and a display of related plaster casts. Immediately, the work of New York artist Ted Riederer came to mind; schooled in the DC punk scene, Riederer has been uniting art with record culture for years, most recently with his roving *Never Records*, 2010–, which he describes as a “record store within an art exhibition within a retail space.” Viewing Acks's show, I was reminded of another work by Riederer, a poem titled “In the Heart of Nowhere,” 2010, which takes the form of a bin full of LP covers, each completely blacked out, save for a single word or phrase. It is only as readers flip through the selection that the complete text emerges. Acks, in “smooth square, soft circle,” has also blocked out album art. Yet the result—each cover transformed into an unsentimental, tasteful graphic abstraction—is significantly less romantic.

Having grown up listening to Christian radio, Acks comes to music as a nonfan. Music has never been a defining popular form of entertainment for him, and his handling of the LP as artifact reveals a refreshing degree of disinterestedness. Buying used records from thrift stores, he made these works by first sanding the jackets' surfaces (in preparation for an application of paint) and then, employing a stencil or masking out his desired shapes with tape, rendering his compositions with speed. The end result reveals only hints of the original graphics—the iconic embossed *bird skull* emblazoning the Eagles' *Their Greatest Hits*, the golden palm trees familiar from that band's *Hotel California*,



Jerome Acks, *Album* (#1–80), 2012–, found albums, spray enamel. Installation view.

a partial image of Neil Diamond. Notably, the covers Acks chose to obscure are anything but arcane.

*Album* (#1–80), 2012–, is the inclusive title for all seventy-three covers that were on display. Uniformly distributed on clean white narrow wall shelving that wraps around the corners of the gallery, all the albums were positioned so that their sleeves opened to the right. In several places, gaps in the collection indicated that some albums were missing. Breaking up the grid's regular arrangement, the spaces seemed to function as a reminder that these works, like vinyl, also circulate in a system of exchange. But exactly which market would that be? The art market? The secondhand-record market? The niche vinyl-enthusiast market? This ambiguity provides a compelling subtext to Acks's project. Here, the presentation of altered used-record sleeves—shown in a way that nods, simultaneously, to the aesthetics of contemporary-art display and to the conventions of a local record shop—evoked an economy that could not be named.

Rectangles framing disembodied singing mouths, the italicized word *AGAIN*, a partial close-up of a woman's eye attended by a restrained array of abstract marks, and bits of color and texture establish Acks's unmistakable square fields. These formal investigations appear eclectic yet familiar, even comfortable, within the context of abstract painting today—one haunted by the graphic experiments of El Lissitzky and softened by the elegant process-based abstractions of contemporary artists such as Zak Prekop. The only other work in the exhibition, *Press Mold* (#1–5), 2012, stood in the center of the gallery. A collection of hulking plaster record molds resting atop pristine gray utility shelves, it humorously monumentalize the artist's attempt to make ceramic records, which, of course, can never actually be played. Free of the cultural weight that, say, Riederer must feel when handling the same, Acks can engage these elements as raw material. Yet for the viewer, the signifier of the album—the smooth square, the soft circle—is indelible, leaving even Acks's most abstracted album cover vulnerable to fandom.

—Michelle Grabner

## SAN FRANCISCO

### Katharina Wulff

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

In Sheila Heti's recent book *How Should a Person Be?: A Novel from Life*, the central character culls a list of international cities most populated by “Important Artists” from a digest of biographies. Finding that New York, natch, tops the tally, she promptly hops a bus from Toronto