

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

Lynda Benglis, Eric N. Mack,
Kelley Walker

SEPTEMBER 8 – OCTOBER 10, 2020
524 W 26TH STREET

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NEW YORK—Opening on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 524 West 26th Street, a three-person exhibition of work by Lynda Benglis, Eric N. Mack, and Kelley Walker examines the artists' shared interest in vernacular and the liminal space between media. Their distinct bodies of work are linked by a perceptive and hand-crafted approach to adornment—transforming quotidian or mass-produced materials through layering, draping and collage. The resulting objects impart looseness and raw mutability, seeming to capture a momentary articulation in the life of the form. Working against precious materials and formal classifications of art, Lynda Benglis, Eric N. Mack, and Kelley Walker engage their surrounding environment to generate intimate experiences of perception.

Produced between 2013 and 2018, Lynda Benglis's wall sculptures are made from handmade paper that the artist carefully wraps around an armature of chicken wire. Their white or sand-toned surfaces are then brushed with isolated gestures of acrylic medium, paint, ground coal, glitter, and gold leaf. For some, sparkles are mixed directly into the paper pulp to create a deeply iridescent skin. Contorted into flamboyant, biomorphic shapes, the works appear delicate and airy despite their vigorous torque. Perforations in the paper reveal the metal mesh underneath, as if marked by decay, while its wet application impresses a scaly webbed pattern onto the outer layer. "[The works] are very much about the interior space and their relationship to the wall," Benglis has said. "They're porous, like skin. For me, it has always been related to the canvas in the broad sense. I'm making my own surfaces, so these pieces are about being what they are—chicken wire and paper—but also about the illusion of form."^[1] The glittering totems demonstrate the artist's commitment to surface ornamentation through color, material, and texture, as well as her engagement with the physiology of production. Arranged at varying heights in the gallery, the pieces seem to float across the wall.

The exhibition will include a selection of handsewn fabric sculptures by Eric N. Mack, composed from

assorted garments or textile scraps including printed scarves, polyester, corduroy, oil cloth, and bleached or tie-dyed muslin. The works draw much of their significance from both the symbolic and utilitarian qualities of their medium, gesturing toward a material culture that has its roots outside art institutions. Moored to the ceiling and walls at discrete pivot points, the collaged sculptures hang in loose catenary curves or extended obliques so that they occasionally graze the floor and reframe the room through articulation and collision. “My process negotiates with the materiality connecting with the site,” Mack explains. “I look for opportunities in the architecture, which takes a degree of planning and anticipation. The work seeks intrinsic prospects for intervention, but a degree of improvisation is also a part of it: conjecture and learning in regard to what is possible spatially.”^[2] The resulting compositions are radically transient. Soft and diaphanous and able to expand and contract, they challenge traditional categories of art, residing in an undefined space between painting, sculpture, adornment, and craft.

The melding of various spatial and material conditions is also explored in Kelley Walker’s rectangular *Screen to Screen* paintings—montages of superimposed silkscreened images. To create the works, the artist manually transfers multiple inked layers onto a polyester mesh substrate, the armature for screen printing, held taut by an aluminum frame. Blurring the distinction between the tool of painting and its support, Walker builds a rich multidimensional field through perceptive tactics of collage. The discrete visual elements are themselves quotations of Walker’s previous works—found images relating to music, advertising, graffiti, bricks, and other motifs that Walker scans and reprints with both digital and analog interference. In the finished *Screen*, the ghosts of Walker’s visual idiom drift into visibility, like brief enunciations in the production and processing chain of the image. Also on view are shimmering technicolor wall works composed of thin panels of mirrored plexiglass. Meticulously cut using a handheld router, the abstractions reference the evocative shapes of Rorschach inkblots as appropriated by Andy Warhol. Their broken contours reflect back fragmented images that morph as the viewer passes by.

1. Federica Buetti, “Lynda Benglis,” *BOMB Magazine*, December 15, 2016. ↩

2. Viola Angiolini, “Altered Systems of Value: Eric N. Mack,” *Mousse Magazine* 70, Winter 2020. ↩

For more information, please contact the gallery:
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