



SURPRISES UNKNOWN

The Art of the Wrapping

ARTISTS

Humaira Abid

Robert Attanasio

Claudio Bravo

Nick Briggs

Avital Burg

Christo

E.V.Day

Claudia DeMonte

Paul Fenniak

Janet Fish

Douglas Goldberg

Sarah Hobbs

Leeah Joo

Ray Kleinlein

Lara Alcantara Lansberg

Saul Leiter

Jane Lund

Jon MacGregor

Jean Mazza

Caroline McCarthy

Sarah McKenzie

Margaret Morrison

Kseniya Oudenot

Frank Paulin

Luanne Rimel

James Rosenquist

Antonio Santin

Barbara Segal

Jeanne Silverthorne

Diane Smook

Luis Stephenberg

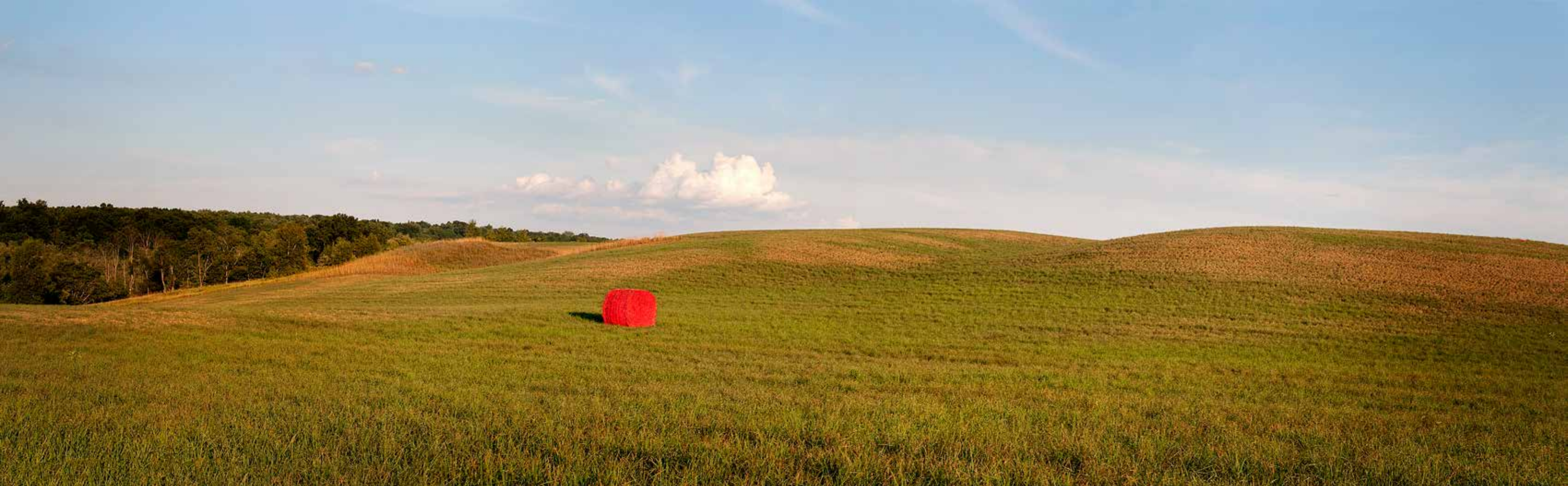
Andy Warhol

William Wegman

Brenda Zlamany



Jane Lund. **Two Boxes**, 2004



SURPRISES UNKNOWN

The Art of the Wrapping

Lehman College Art Gallery
City University of New York



Leeah Joo
Pojagi Ahjumma, 2020

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The art of the wrapping
obscures and reveals



Janet Fish
Plantains in a Box, 1969
Courtesy of the artist and
DC Moore Gallery, New York

E.V. Day
Mummified Barbie, 2010
Day-0116
Courtesy of the artist and
Carolina Nitsch Gallery

THE SHADOW SIDE OF SURPRISE

BARTHOLOMEW F. BLAND

In our age of anxiety, the wrapped object maintains its power to intrigue and to unsettle. Swathed in lustrous gift paper or shrouded in utilitarian plastic, the wrapped form and the “surprise” inside create a charged moment of anticipation or concern for what the package contains. *Surprises Unknown: The Art of the Wrapping* is an exhibition long in gestation but now brought to fruition it speaks to the uneasy moment before the package is opened, its surprise revealed. Thirty-five artists in this show explore a rich territory where revelation meets concealment, where the act of wrapping transforms ordinary objects into repositories of mystery and meaning.



Fig. 01



Fig. 02

The origins of *Surprises Unknown* lie with my interest in still life, a genre where compositions often show boxes and packages that form a particular subset that captures the imagination. Nineteenth-century American artists, such as Joseph Decker who painted the aptly titled *Upset*, 1887, a painting that features opened boxes, often with lids ajar filled with candy, nuts, or other sundries piled in a careless way, were visually appealing but also imbued with vague disappointment because the consumable items within the box are here only until eaten [Fig. 01].

Wayne Thiebaud’s still life art is a worthy continuation of the still life legacy. Often his works show singular objects placed against a stark background, brightly and evenly lit to cast deep shadows that suggest the California sun. Works like his painting *Gift Box*, 1981, continue to intrigue—its image is a perfect balance between the happy surprise of a gift received, and the uncertainty about the gift reflected in the ominously dark shading that lies perpendicular to the package [Fig. 02]. Thiebaud’s composition is a perfect visual representation of the shadow side of surprise. Beautiful but severe, his works have

a singular, almost Protestant, restraint about them. Jane Lund's *Two Boxes*, 2004, more overtly carries the dual sensibility of anticipation and disappointment we see in a paired prettily wrapped package and its pedestrian cardboard box [p. 66].

Continuing the still-life tradition, Janet Fish's *Plantains in a Box*, 1969, demonstrates her celebrated ability to capture the complex interplay of light through transparent surfaces [p. 46]. She builds her work upon both the Dutch still-life tradition and the American Precisionist movement, while anticipating contemporary artists like Robin Eley, who explores the aesthetics of plastic packaging by wrapping images of the Old Masters in plastic and bubble wrap [Fig 03]. Contemporary still lifes hold a strong connection to 17th-century Vanitas-style painting and its preoccupation with our quick passage through life, while addressing modern concerns about consumption and waste. Chilean hyperrealist painter Claudio Bravo's *Untitled (Orange and White Package)*, 2006, converts an ordinary wrapped package into a meditation on light, texture, and form [p. 24]. Why did this artist use his sublime technical skill to represent the wrapping on a package? He answers, "There's some mystery in the wrapping on a package, but what I really wanted to paint was the wrapping. I wanted to give a sense of trompe l'oeil tactility."

Wrapping Monuments and Old Masters

Of course one cannot consider the wrapped object, whether the intimate size of a rose bouquet or the immensity of the Arc de Triomphe, and not think of Christo, whose wrapped buildings redefine how we understand concealment as artistic practice. His early photomontage *Wrapped Public Building (Project for Arc de Triomphe, Paris)*, 1962, demonstrates the simple act of covering that transforms even the most familiar landmark into something strange but compelling [p. 36]. The ghostly shrouded presence of the Arc creates a nocturnal scene that feels both monumental and ethereal. The composition is almost an unwitting Modernist throwback to the romantic nocturnes of Caspar David Friedrich [Fig. 04], with the Arc de Triomphe a substitute reverential object on



Fig. 03



Fig. 04



Fig. 05



Fig. 06

on the landscape, instead of Friedrich's *Cross and Church in the Mountains*. Christo's visionary project, conceived six decades before its eventual realization (in a different form) in 2021, established a vocabulary of wrapping that continues to influence contemporary artists. Christo builds his practice upon earlier artistic investigations of concealment, from Man Ray's enigmatic *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse*, 1920 [Fig. 05]—a sewing machine wrapped in felt and string—to Henry Moore's studies of draped figures, such as *Two Wrapped Standing Figures*, 1951 [Fig. 06], which explores how fabric could both reveal and obscure form and echoes in E.V. Day's *Mummified Barbie* series, 2010 [pp. 38-41].

Surprises Unknown expands from Christo's vast visions to examine how other artists employ wrapping across diverse scales and contexts. In the sculpture *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 2024, Barbara Segal plays with our expectations of luxury packaging by carving a still life from precious amazonite stone—a hybrid "lunch box-gift box." Her piece collapses distinctions between working-class utility and elite consumption, transforming both the childhood lunch pail and the iconic Tiffany blue box into a solid sculpture that can, paradoxically, contain nothing at all [p. 96]. The sense of consumer hollowness is paralleled in Sarah Hobbs's photograph *Untitled (Overcompensation)*, 2009. Its title implies that the splendor of abundance spread across a dining table masks something darker [p. 50].

The Package: Promise and Threat

The wrapped package occupies an ambiguous position in our contemporary imagination. It can signal celebration and anticipation—the carefully wrapped birthday gift or holiday present—but can also trigger anxiety and suspicion. Robert Attanasio's *Suspicious Package* series, 2005-2006, directly confronts anxiety: Attanasio tips the scales against happy expectation by documenting abandoned bags and boxes on New York City streets in photographs that capture ordinary objects transformed into potential threats [p. 22]. In post-9/11 America, the simple act of leaving a package unattended was charged with new meaning.

Atanasio's images of modest packages echo the work of photographers like Walker Evans, *Street Debris, New York City, 1968*, who found poetry in urban detritus, while adding a contemporary layer of surveillance and suspicion [Fig. 07]. Likewise, Avital Burg's battered cardboard boxes found on the streets contemplate that tragic quality of an object with purpose "used up" and then ruthlessly discarded [pp. 28-29].

Conceal To Reveal, Legacy to Now

Many artists explore how the act of wrapping can reveal new aspects of a concealed object. Nick Briggs's *Wrapped Caryatids on the Euston Road, London, 2011* captures a moment when conservation measures transformed classical architectural elements into something mysteriously modern [p. 26]. Two stone female figures, temporarily wrapped during restoration, take on an uncanny presence that bridges ancient and contemporary artistic practices. E.V. Day binds his iconic Barbies in layers of beeswax, twine, and silver glitter so that they hover between cultural artifact and contemporary critique. Day's work connects to both ancient Egyptian mummification practices and feminist artists such as Harmony Hammond, who have used wrapping and disguise to comment on female identity and representation [Fig. 08].

Wrapping is used by artists not, necessarily, to wrap, but to explore cultural identity and tradition. Leeah Joo's paintings of *pojagi*, traditional Korean wrapping cloths elevate these everyday textiles into studies of light and shadow. Her work connects to both Eastern textile traditions and Western painters like Vermeer, who similarly explored the interaction of light and fabric. In *Pojagi Throne* and *Pojagi Fancy* [pp. 54-57], Joo's hyperrealist technique recalls the trompe l'oeil mastery of artists like 19th century American still life painter William Harnett [Fig. 09], while she addresses contemporary questions of cultural preservation.

A significant portion of *Surprises Unknown* shows artists who use wrapping to comment on the human form as they transform it. Jen Mazza's *Nuit Blanche* paintings present pristine white opera



Fig. 07



Fig. 08



Fig. 09



Fig. 10

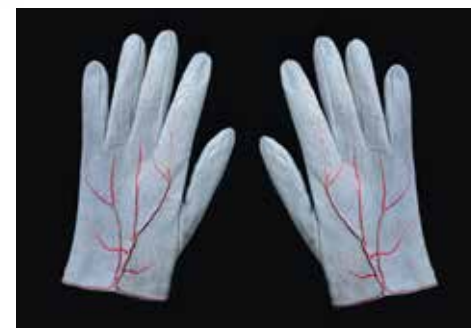


Fig. 11



Fig. 12

gloves that cover hands but also show strategic glimpses of red flesh hemmed in harshly [pp. 70-73]. Her intimate paintings recall Charles Sebree's images of women of color wearing white gloves [Fig. 10], as well as the unnerving, capillary-ridden Surrealist manipulations of Meret Oppenheim [Fig. 11], while adding a contemporary meditation on constraint and rebellion. Antonio Santín's *Annus Mirabilis* offers a figure completely covered by an ornate Persian carpet, creating an uncanny protrusion that disrupts the rug's elaborate patterns [p. 94]. Santín's work connects to the painting *The Lovers, 1928*, where its artist Renè Magritte uses fabric veils to reveal and conceal intimate connection [Fig. 12]. Santín's enveloped figure evokes, too, the draped figures of classical sculpture and the wrapped forms of Islamic art.

Seeing Beyond the Wrapping

Appearing in *Surprises Unknown* are several works created during the global COVID-19 pandemic, when face coverings became a universal reality. A masked face counters our expectation of what a portrait should show. Brenda Zlamany, though, does just that in *Mask Portraits #1-9, 2020/21*, presenting nine oil paintings of masked faces further obscured by painted layers of white mesh [p. 116]. We must see her subjects a new way: not in a painted face but, instead, by gesture and posture. This work connects to both the history of masked portraiture—from James Ensor's carnival scenes [Fig. 13] to Romuald Hazoumè's masks [Fig. 14], and to contemporary artists who explore how identity persists through forms of concealment.



Fig. 13

Knowing and Not Knowing

The wrapped object stands as potent metaphor for contemporary art's most pressing concerns. In this time defined by digital transparency and algorithmic revelation, artists reclaim the power of concealment as an act of resistance, as do today's protestors. At the very center of our current political and social discourse are issues arising from campus protests. How can a protestor who is masked and unidentifiable be held accountable? Masked, he is safe from doxing.

What is hidden can be more revealing than what is exposed, and that the moment of anticipation before unwrapping can be more compelling than the revelation itself. The artistic practice of wrapping, pioneered by Christo and others in the mid-20th century, continues: from William Wegman's wrapped Weimarers [p. 112] recalling both classical drapery studies and Irving Penn's photographs of wrapped figures wearing Issey Miyake designs, to the acclaimed sound suits of Nick Cave [Fig. 15], to Luis Stephenberg's installation *Undercover ID*, 2025 [pp. 104-108], which turned Lehman Art Gallery's Rotunda into a meditation on sensory experience and political control.

Much like contemporary art itself, wrapped objects exist in a state of productive tension: between revelation and concealment, between the tactile and the visual, between protection and constraint. As we navigate a world increasingly dominated by immediate disclosure and constant exposure, these wrapped forms remind us that meaning often resides in the spaces between knowing and not knowing, in the pregnant moment before revelation. Perhaps this is why the wrapped object continues to fascinate—it preserves mystery in an age of relentless illumination. The wrapped object may be the perfect emblem for our times: a tangible reminder that some things remain and should remain just beyond our grasp.

Everyone needs a gift.



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

- Fig. 01 Joseph Decker. **Upset**, 1887. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
- Fig. 02 Wayne Thiebaud. **Gift Box**, 1981. Private Collection
- Fig. 03 Robin Eley. **Girl With a Pearl Earring (wrapped)**, 2018. Collection of the artist
- Fig. 04 Caspar David Friedrich. **Cross and Church in the Mountains**, 1812. Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf
- Fig. 05 Man Ray. **The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse**, 1920 (remade 1972). National Gallery of Australia
- Fig. 06 Henry Moore. **Two Wrapped Standing Figures**, 1951. Private Collection
- Fig. 07 Walker Evans. **Street Debris, New York City**, 1968. The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Fig. 08 Harmony Lynn Hammond. **The Meeting of Passion and Intellect**, 1981. National Museum of Women in the Arts
- Fig. 09 William Harnett. **A Smoke Backstage**, 1877. Honolulu Museum of Art
- Fig. 10 Charles Sebree. **Woman with Gloves**, 1950-1960. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
- Fig. 11 Meret Oppenheim. **Glove (for Parkett 4)**, 1985. Private Collection
- Fig. 12 René Magritte. **The Lovers**, 1928. Museum of Modern Art
- Fig. 13 James Ensor. **The Intrigue**, 1890. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp
- Fig. 14 Romuald Hazoumè. **Nest Violeta**, 2009. Queensland Art Gallery
- Fig. 15 Nick Cave. **Soundsuit**, 2009. Smithsonian American Art Museum

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CATALOG OF THE EXHIBITION

HUMAIRA ABID

In her sculptures, Abid meticulously carves everyday objects to explore themes of displacement and migration. *Zaad-e-raah*, meaning "provisions for a journey" in Urdu, takes the form of a simple sack that Abid renders with extraordinary precision in pine wood. Like real luggage carried by refugees, the sack, a closed bag, completely conceals its contents—perhaps a family heirloom or photograph that, as Abid notes, serves as "one thing, at least, that they can connect with the past." Her second work, *Fragments of Home Left Behind* (following page), echoes the motif of migration in the image of a figure that is seen in the carved rearview mirror, a symbol of this migrant's past being left behind. The figure carries the same sack depicted in *Zaad-e-raah*, creating a powerful dialog between the two works. Combining carved wood with traditional South Asian artistic techniques including gouache on wasli paper, the intimate scale of *Fragments* draws viewers into its narrative of displacement and survival. "I primarily work in wood," Abid explains, "because it's primarily a male-dominated medium, and I thought it was lacking [in] a female voice."

Zaad-e-raah (Provisions for a Journey), 2020
Pine wood, carved, 13 x 12 x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist





Humaira Abid
Fragments of Home Left Behind II No. 3, 2019-20
Pine wood, carved, black wood stain, gouache, pigments on handmade wasli paper, Plexiglas,
9 x 4 ½ x 4 inches
Courtesy of the artist

ROBERT ATTANASIO

Attanasio's images document not just physical objects but also the invisible weight of suspicion and fear that transformed American public spaces early in the 21st century. In this unsettling pair of photographs, Attanasio explores how ordinary objects were transformed into sources of anxiety in post-9/11 New York City. His *Suspicious Package* series documents unattended bags, boxes, and parcels found on city streets—items that once went unnoticed or were objects of possibility but now can trigger immediate alarm. The concealed contents of these packages prey on our imaginations, transforming mundane forgotten items into potential threats—reminding us of the public transport admonishment: “If you see something, say something!” By photographing abandoned objects against urban backgrounds, Attanasio heightens their isolation and ambiguity. Each image captures a moment of tension—the instant when an ordinary package becomes a possible danger, demanding the viewer's attention and concern. The photographs mirror the split-second decisions faced daily by city residents and security personnel—when does a forgotten shopping bag become a reason to alert authorities? The *Suspicious Package* series reflects a fundamental shift in urban psychology where the simple act of concealment creates unease.



Suspicious Package #7, 2006, left

Suspicious Package #3, 2005

C-print photographs, 9 ½ x 7 ¾ inches
Courtesy of Jim Kempner Fine Art

CLAUDIO BRAVO

In his virtuosic drawing, Bravo transforms an ordinary wrapped package into a meditation on light, texture, and form. His masterful technique captures every fold and shadow of the paper wrapping, demonstrating this artist's lifelong exploration of trompe l'oeil techniques. Like the Spanish Baroque masters who influenced him, Bravo, with extraordinarily precise observation elevates a humble subject into a solemn meditation on life's unknown mysteries. Bravo began exploring wrapped-package compositions in the late 1960s, inspired partly by Mark Rothko's color-field paintings that use large areas of flat color and Antoni Tàpies's textured canvases. However, Bravo's initial spark came from a simple domestic scene: packages his sisters had left on a table during a visit to his home. An everyday occurrence, it launched Bravo's sustained artistic investigation that would span decades. *Untitled (Orange and White Package)*, a late work, showcases Bravo's sublime technical skill. Its dramatic play of light and shadow recalls the works of 17th-century Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán, (such as *The Martyrdom of St. Serapion*, 1628). Bravo deeply admired Zurbarán's paintings in which ordinary objects were imbued with transcendent meaning. Bravo recognizing the enigmatic quality of the wrapped package said, "There's some mystery in the wrapped packages, but what I really wanted to paint was the wrapping. I wanted to give a sense of trompe l'oeil tactility."

Untitled (Orange and White Package), 2006
Red chalk, sepia and charcoal on paper, 43 x 28 inches
©Claudio Bravo, Courtesy of Forum Gallery, New York



NICK BRIGGS

Briggs captures a striking moment of architectural transformation, when the historic caryatids of St Pancras Church were temporarily shrouded during restoration. The four classical female figures, normally standing as graceful architectural supports, take on an eerily modern presence beneath their protective wrappings. The ghostly forms seem both present and absent, their identities concealed yet their powerful silhouettes remain. The wrappings transform the neoclassical caryatids into something more ambiguous—figures that could be emerging from, or disappearing into their coverings. The figures have fascinating history. Their sculptor, Charles Rossi, discovered they were too tall but only after installation began. His remarkably pragmatic solution—he chopped chunks from their midsections and then rejoined the sculpted bodies, leaving these London "handmaidens" with dumpier proportions than their ancient Greek counterparts in the British Museum. Through Briggs's lens, the wrapped monuments echo both ancient Greek sculptures and 20th-century artistic interventions, particularly recalling Christo and Jeanne-Claude's famous wrapped buildings and monuments. The black-and-white medium Briggs employs enhances the sculptural quality of the draped forms, while the square format of the print creates a stark, contemporary composition.

The Carytads could be emerging from
or disappearing into their coverings

Wrapped Caryatids on the Euston Road, London, 2011
Silver gelatin print, 15 x 15 inch image on 20 x 16 inch paper
Courtesy of the artist



AVITAL BURG

Avital Burg transforms the overlooked poetry of urban refuse into a contemplative still life. Her fascination with cardboard boxes began during a student exchange at London's Slade School, where the temporary nature of her stay made her acutely aware of these humble vessels of transition. What started as practical containers for her eventual return to New York evolved into rich subjects for her artistic exploration. The artist said, "When I first moved to New York, I was struck by the presence of cardboard boxes in public spaces—the piles left out for recycling felt like installations of consumption and personal memory, each one holding traces of the lives or commodities they once carried." Working directly from boxes found on city streets, Burg observes how each carries its own distinct character—unique hues that challenge her paint-mixing skills, wrinkles and tears that map past journeys, and stamps and tape that chronicle histories. Through Burg's patient observation and masterful oil technique, disposable containers become repositories of memory, each crease and fold suggesting the invisible narratives of lives and objects that once passed through the shelter the boxes provided for a time.



Box in a Corner, 2013
Oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 21 ½ inches
Gift of the William Louis-Dreyfus Estate 2016

Six Boxes, 2014
Oil on linen, 24 x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist



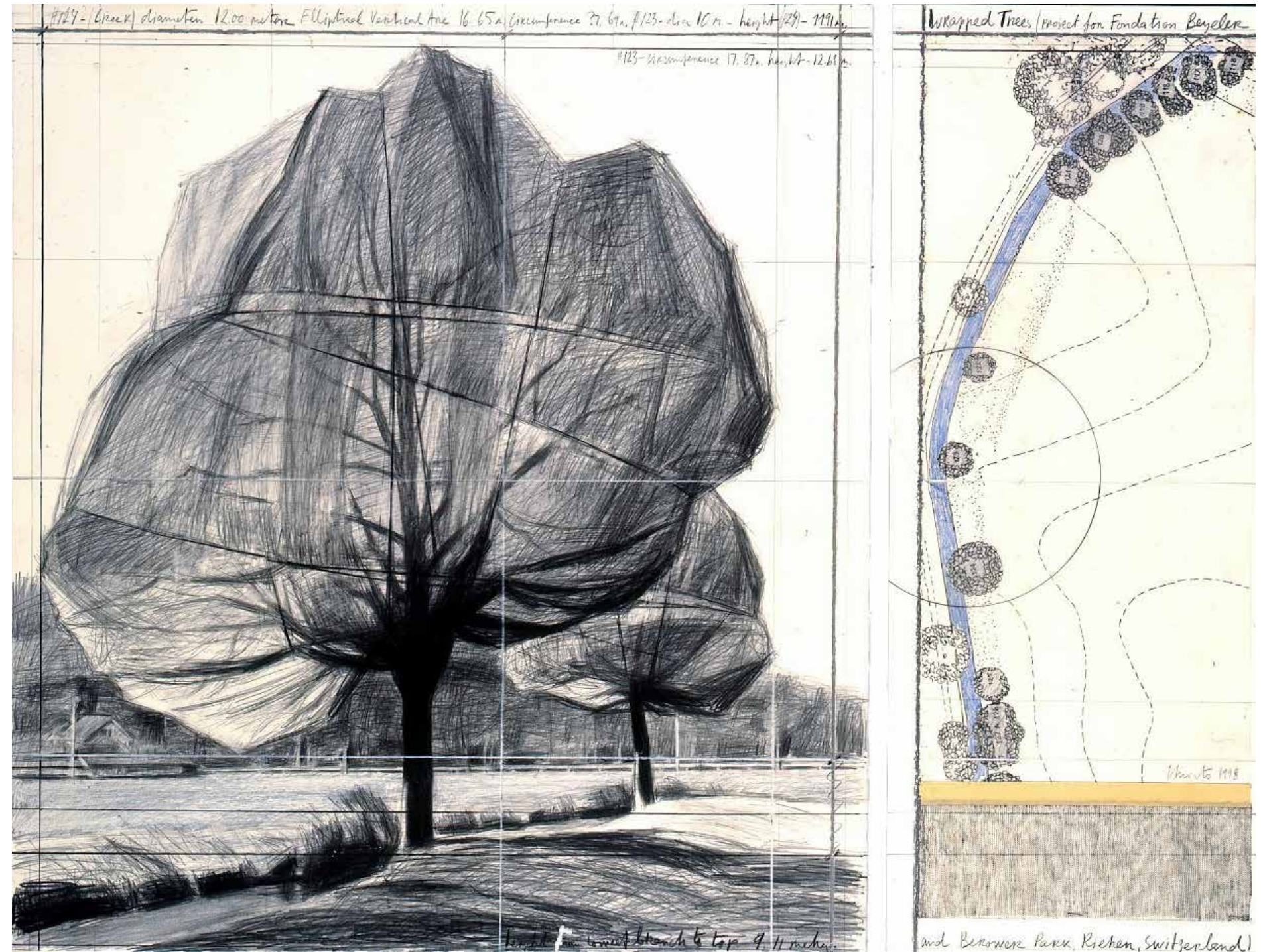
CHRISTO

Wrapped Monument to Vittorio Emanuele showcases Christo's revolutionary approach to transforming public monuments through the act of wrapping. A preparatory drawing, it demonstrates the artist's meticulous planning process for a monumental intervention in Milan's historic Piazza Duomo, obscuring one of Italy's most prominent patriotic symbols. The monument in question honors Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king of a unified Italy, who ruled from 1861 to 1878. Created by sculptor Ercole Rosa and inaugurated in 1896, the bronze equestrian statue depicts the monarch astride his horse, representing the power and authority of the newly formed Italian state. Christo's technique of enveloping monuments transforms familiar public sculptures into mysterious presences, the recognizable form of horse and rider becomes an abstract series of peaks and valleys created by the fabric's folds. Here, we see how wrapping simultaneously reveals and conceals. While the basic silhouette of the equestrian monument remains discernible, the details of Vittorio Emanuele II's features, regalia, and the horse's musculature are obscured. The wrapping creates new formal relationships—sharp angles and deep crevices where the fabric gathers, smooth planes where it pulls taut. These textile geometries draw attention to aspects of the monument's form that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Wrapped Monument to Vittorio Emanuele
(Project for Piazza Duomo, Milan), 1970-74
Graphite, charcoal, wax crayon, and brown paper on cardboard
28 x 22 inches
Courtesy of the Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation



Wrapped Trees, a detailed preparatory drawing, reveals the careful planning behind one of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's most poetic environmental interventions. The double-panel composition combines a dramatic visualization of a wrapped tree with precise technical specifications, embodying the artist's dual role as visionary and planner. In the left panel, Christo renders a majestic tree enveloped in fabric using bold charcoal strokes. The translucent wrapping material appears to both shield and reveal the tree's natural form, its dark branches visible through the silvery covering and appearing like veins against a membrane of skin. The fabric billows and folds around the tree's silhouette, creating dramatic contrasts of light and shadow. A smaller wrapped tree appears in the background, suggesting the project's scale across the landscape. The right panel displays some of the technical work needed to bring poetic installations to fruition. On it a detailed diagram shows the engineering of the wrapping system, with carefully noted measurements and a series of circular attachments running along a curved line—indicating how the fabric would be secured without damaging the living trees. Attention to practical detail was crucial for the project's realization in November 1998, when Christo and Jeanne-Claude successfully wrapped 178 trees at Switzerland's Fondation Beyeler.



Christo
Wrapped Trees (Project for Fondation Beyeler and Berower Park, Riehen, Switzerland), 1998
 Graphite, charcoal, wax crayon, hand-drawn topographic map on tracing paper, fabric sample, and masking tape on cardboard
 30 ½ x 26 ¼ inches and 30 ½ x 12 inches
 Courtesy of the Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation



In *Three Wrapped Roses*, Christo applies his signature technique of wrapping to artificial flowers, transforming these familiar objects through concealment. Created during a pivotal period in his career, this intimate work demonstrates the artist's fascination with the act of covering that both obscures and reveals. Carefully binding the artificial roses in polyethylene and polypropylene cord creates a mysterious presence—the familiar form of these flowers is still discernible, and the striking red of the fake blossoms draws the eye, yet the roses are made strange by the wrapping. By choosing artificial rather than real flowers, Christo plays with multiple layers of representation: the flowers are simulations of nature and are now further removed from their original

reference through shrouding. A smaller-scale work, *Three Wrapped Roses* connects to Christo's monumental environmental installations that he created with his partner Jeanne-Claude, where the act of wrapping transformed buildings, coastlines, and landscapes. Here, the artist applies the same conceptual foundation to modest artificial flowers and suggests how the simple act of concealment can transform our perception and understanding of even the most familiar objects. Through wrapping, Christo invites us to see these roses anew, their forms both preserved and altered by a protective yet concealing envelope.

Christo

Three Wrapped Roses, 1968

Artificial flowers, polyethylene, staples, and polypropylene cord

4 ½ x 21 ½ x 3 ¼ inches

Courtesy of the Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation



This striking photomontage represents one of Christo's earliest visions for wrapping Paris's Arc de Triomphe, a project that would take nearly 60 years to realize. Created through the manipulation of two photographs by Harry Shunk, the image presents a nocturnal view of the famous monument transformed into a mysterious silvered presence in the heart of the city. The dramatic black-and-white composition shows the Arc completely shrouded in fabric, its familiar neoclassical details obscured but its monumental form emphasized by the wrapping. Streetlights stretch into the distance along the Champs-Élysées, creating strong perspective lines that draw the eye toward the wrapped monument. The play of light on the fabric's folds and the glowing streetlamps lend the scene an almost cinematic quality.

An early photomontage, it is particularly significant as it prefigures *L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped*, which was finally realized in 2021, following Christo's death in 2020. While the actual wrapping differed in details and materiality from this 1962 vision, the core conceptual power of transforming one of Paris's most recognizable monuments remains constant. Through this composite image, Christo invites viewers to imagine the familiar made strange, a theme that would define his artistic practice for decades to come.

Christo
Wrapped Public Building (Project for Arc de Triomphe, Paris), 1962
Photomontage of two photographs by Harry Shunk
9 7/8 x 27 7/8 inches
Courtesy of the Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation

E.V. DAY

In her *Mummified Barbie* series, E.V. Day transforms the iconic doll through an act of ritual concealment, wrapping Barbie's familiar form in layers of beeswax, twine, and glitter. A process of "mummification," it both preserves and obscures to create an object that hovers between mysterious cultural artifact and contemporary critique. Through the act of wrapping, Day deliberately conceals Barbie's famous attributes—the impossible proportions, the fixed rictus smile, the ready-for-anything pose—that have made her such a potent symbol of idealized femininity. The resulting form becomes simultaneously sacred and absurd: a glamorous mummy that connects ancient death preservation practices with the torture of modern beauty rituals. The silver glitter on the wrapped surface adds a knowing wink to this transformation, maintaining Barbie's association with glamour, even in her bound state. By mummifying Barbie, Day positions the doll within a longer history of fetishized feminine figures, from ancient Venus statues to contemporary beauty icons. The wrapped form becomes both relic and commentary, inviting us to consider how societies have preserved, presented, and constrained representations of feminine beauty.

Even in her wrapped and bound state,
Barbie is a potent symbol of idealized femininity

Mummified Barbie, 2010
Barbie doll, beeswax, twine, and silver glitter
12 x 3 x 2 ½ inches
Day-0116
Courtesy of the artist and Carolina Nitsch Gallery





E.V. Day
Mummified Barbie, 2010
Barbie doll, beeswax, twine, and silver glitter
12 x 3 x 2 ½ inches
Day-0117, left; 0121
Courtesy of the artist and Carolina Nitsch Gallery

CLAUDIA DEMONTE

Like a genie's lamp waiting to be rubbed or Pandora's box before its fateful opening, DeMonte's vessel, *Magic Potion*, carries the tantalizing promise of the unknown within its sealed confines. The sculpture connects to humanity's enduring relationship with talismans and protective symbols—from the warning hand of Hamsa to the fortune-bringing four-leaf clover. DeMonte notes how symbols can carry contradictory meanings across cultures, such as the snake, which represents evil in Irish folklore but brings good fortune in Indian traditions. Duality enriches the mystery of her sealed vessel, leaving us to wonder whether it contains blessings or curses. As part of DeMonte's broader artistic investigation of women's experiences in global society, her magic potion bottle speaks to the age-old association between women and mystical power. Like the classical Fates who spun, measured, and cut the thread of destiny, this artist presents us with an object that seems to contain transformative potential—yet keeps its secrets tantalizingly concealed, inviting but never satisfying our desire to know what lies within. The artist says her work, “tempts you to open it, to see what it beholds.”



Magic Potion, 2023
Mixed media on wood, 10 x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist

PAUL FENNIAK

A luminous white construction tent acts as a ghostly veil in the enigmatic *House by the Water*. Fenniak endows the house in this painting with mystery. The stark white fabric catches light with crystalline precision yet stubbornly guards its secret beneath its folds—a house lurking, a shadowy, sullen object. The draped form echoes art historical traditions of the covered object, from Magritte's shrouded lovers to Christo and Jeanne-Claude's monumental, wrapped installations, while it maintains its own contemporary mystery. The setting itself speaks to desolate isolation: the suggestion of a winter season in a summer town. Barely discernible in the fog another house stands in the background, the dark water pooling before it is ominously close to the structure. Fenniak's luscious handling of oil paint captures the interplay of light on fabric, water, and architecture, creating an atmosphere that hovers between dreary and divine. The ordinary act of covering a thing—perhaps to protect it from the elements—transforms into a meditation on the things we choose to hide or reveal. We become witnesses to this scene of domestic mystery, invited to contemplate what lies beneath.

House by the Water, 2022
Oil on canvas, 32 x 40 inches
Courtesy of Forum Gallery, New York



JANET FISH

In *Plantains in a Box* Janet Fish demonstrates her celebrated ability to capture the complex interplay of light, transparency, and organic form. The large-scale square canvas presents a deceptively simple subject—plantains contained within tightly stretched plastic wrap—yet Fish transforms this everyday still life into a study of visual perception and painterly virtuosity. Her characteristic attention to the behavior of light as it passes through, reflects, and interacts with different surfaces is on full display. The transparent covering creates multiple layers of visual complexity as we see both through and around it, while the plantains themselves cast subtle shadows and reflections. The artist's precise observation of these optical effects results in a painting that is both hyper-realistic and abstractly composed. Fish created this painting early in her career during a period when still life painting was often dismissed as conventional but her contemporary approach asserts the genre's continuing relevance. By choosing modern materials like plastic alongside traditional still life subjects like fruit she updates the centuries-old tradition of still life, while maintaining its focus on close observation and lighting effects. The large scale of *Plantains* elevates ordinary objects to monumental status, demanding we pay attention to the extraordinary visual qualities of everyday things.

Plantains in a Box, 1969
Oil on canvas, 44 x 44 inches
Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery



DOUGLAS GOLDBERG

Goldberg's enigmatic marble reliefs invite contemplation of how identity persists—or perhaps intensifies—when hidden from direct view. In both works the artist explores the delicate interplay between revelation and concealment. His masterful stone carvings present mysterious compositions whose features are obscured by fabric-like drapery, to create arresting tension between presence and absence. The shadowy surface of *Portrait (Traveling by Night)* enhances the sense of nocturnal movement. The draped form suggests metaphorical mourning, its identity veiled, yet somehow more powerfully present through its concealment. The flowing contours of the carved stone capture a moment of transition, where the act of covering paradoxically reveals something essential about human vulnerability and protection. *Portrait at a Tender Age*, carved from warm creamy marble, evokes childhood's delicate nature through its gentle folds and intimate scale. The wrapped form speaks to the ways young identity is both sheltered and shaped by its coverings. The act of wrapping might serve not to obscure but, instead, to preserve something precious within.

Portrait (Traveling by Night), 2022
Atlantic Black Marble, 14 ½ x 13 x 3 ¾ inches

Portrait at a Tender Age, 2021
Rosa Portogallo Marble, 12 x 12 ¾ x 3 ¾ inches

Courtesy of Ulterior Gallery and the artist



SARAH HOBBS

In Sarah Hobbs's penetrating photographs, domestic spaces are the stages where human anxieties and compensatory behaviors play out in evocative stillness. *Avoidance* presents a front door where metallic foil completely covers its elegant Palladian windows transforming what should be a welcoming threshold into a makeshift barrier. The door, an impervious shield against prying eyes, suggests both a desperate need for privacy and a troubling disassociation from the outside world. *Untitled (Overcompensation)* (following page) captures a dining room where a table groans under the weight of countless Tiffany-style wrapped boxes, their signature color—blue—creating a sea of conspicuous consumption. The excessive accumulation of luxury packaging suggests someone attempting to fill an emotional void through material acquisition, the branded boxes becoming both trophy and symptom of underlying insecurity. Together these works reveal the sometimes desperate strategies we employ to protect ourselves or prove our worth, each image a frozen moment of psychological revelation.

Wrapping becomes protection
in evocatively still scenes

Avoidance, 2009
Chromogenic print, 60 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist





Sarah Hobbs
Untitled (Overcompensation), 2006
Chromogenic print. 48 x 60 inches
Mounted on dibond, with a cleat for hanging
Courtesy of the artist

LEEAH JOO

In this compelling series, Leeah Joo explores the cultural significance and visual poetry of *pojagi*, the traditional Korean wrapping cloths used for centuries to bundle and transport everyday items in colorful wrappings. The centerpiece of the collection, *Pojagi Throne*, commands attention—transforming the humble wrapping cloth into a monumental presence that intimates both royalty and reverence. Delicate folds and precise creases create an intricate dance of light and shadow in *Pojagi Fancy*, while *Pojagi MIL*—its title infers "mother-in-law"—indicates the role textiles play in familial relationships and gift-giving traditions. *Pojagi Ahjumma*, the Korean term for a middle-aged woman, speaks to the gendered history of textiles and their makers. Through her hyper-realistic technique, Joo elevates these objects used every day into contemplative studies of cultural preservation and transformation, which simply and artfully conceal the objects within.

Pojagi Throne, 2017
Oil on canvas
48 x 48 inches
Courtesy of the artist





Leeah Joo
Pojagi MIL, 2019, left
Pojagi Ahjumma, 2020, top right
Pojagi Fancy, 2015
20 x 20 inches
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

RAY KLEINLEIN

Ray Kleinlein reinvigorates the still life tradition through meticulous observation of wrapped presents. His paintings explore the subtle interplay of light on creased paper, elevating everyday objects through careful attention to light, shadow, and surface, in turn transforming ordinary packages into studies of pattern, color, and form. In *Polka Dots* the spotted wrapping paper creates a rhythmic surface that both defines and dissolves the package's form, while *Red and Green Stripes* (Gift) plays on the traditional holiday color palette, while focusing on the precise angles of folded corners and intersecting stripes. Despite festive wrapping, Kleinlein's packages hold unexpected melancholy. Isolated against stark backgrounds, they are monuments to anticipation or absence—cheerful disguises whispering loneliness. Spotted and striped, the packages connect, too, with the still life tradition of concentrating on wrapped and folded surfaces, from Dutch Golden Age paintings of draped tablecloths to Cézanne's studies of gathered fabric. Yet Kleinlein's gifts remain distinctly contemporary, wrapped in store-bought paper machine-printed with patterns that speak to our modern ritual of gift giving, while achieving monumentality through observation and execution.

Polka Dots, 2016
30 x 20 inches
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Paul Theibaud Gallery and the artist



Ray Kleinlein
Red and Green Stripes (Gift), 2019
28 x 20 inches
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Paul Theibaud Gallery and the artist



LARA ALCANTARA LANSBERG

In *Color cover* Lara Alcantara Lansberg investigates the intersection of identity, opulence, and obscurity. The subject's face is artfully concealed, creating an intriguing tension between revelation and disguise that speaks to contemporary notions of presentation and privacy. The patterning that masks the subject deliberately evokes the iconic designs of Hermès scarves, a characteristic blend of baroque scrollwork and geometric precision. Lansberg's visual reference to one of fashion's most recognizable accessories underscores her work's exploration of status and consumption. Like the coveted silk *carrés* with immediately identifiable aesthetic, this photograph speaks to branded patterns that become powerful symbols of affluence and social position. Saturated oranges and violets pulse through the composition, while the binding-like arrangement of the fabric suggests both constraint and sensuality. The work flirts with themes of power and submission, as the luxurious wrapping simultaneously conceals and accentuates the human form beneath. We are invited to consider how we construct and project identity through external markers of status and style, even as our true selves remain carefully guarded. Created in 2020, *Color cover* resonates with that year's global shift toward face coverings during the COVID-19 pandemic, though here the utilitarian face covering is transformed into an emblem of luxury and desire that completely wraps the face.

Color cover, 2020
Photograph, 60 x 40 inches, framed
Courtesy of the artist



SAUL LEITER

Photographed during a snowstorm, this ethereal photograph captures a singular moment of urban isolation. Through his use of soft focus and a muted palette dominated by wintry blues and grays, Paul Leiter depicts a man trudging through a blizzard. The brown paper package he clutches becomes a central element of the image's narrative—its contents unknown, it adds an object of intrigue to this fleeting street scene. The photograph's intentionally blurred quality and emphasis on abstract color fields align with Leiter's unique approach to street photography, which was heavily influenced by his admiration for Abstract Expressionism. Unlike many of his contemporaries who sought documentary clarity, Leiter embraced photography's potential for expressionistic interpretation. *Package* exemplifies Leiter's talent for finding poetry in prosaic moments. The man's dark silhouette, crowned by a distinctive hat, emerges both from and with the snowy haze, his solitude emphasized by the storm's enveloping presence. The vertical format and limited color scheme enhance this image's dreamlike quality, while the wrapped parcel he carries invites viewers to contemplate its mysterious contents and destination. Leiter's image showcases his pioneering role in early color photography and demonstrates how he elevated photography from mere documentation to a sophisticated form of artistic expression.

Package, c.1960
Chromogenic print, 16 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the Saul Leiter Foundation



JANE LUND

Anticipation and aftermath is the deceptively complex meditation in *Two Boxes*. Jean Lund's virtuosic handling of the pastel medium captures every nuance of the hopeful sheen of wrapping paper soon transformed to the defeated slump of spent cardboard. On the right, the wrapped package stands crisp, the untied translucent ribbon embodying the moment of anticipation before revelation. On the left, in stark contrast, its companion sits open and empty, box flaps splayed like shed skin, marking the transition from mystery to mundane reality. The boxes become metaphors for life's cycles of expectation and aftermath, each bearing witness to moments of joy and letdown. Through her attention to minute detail and manipulation of light, Lund elevates her simple pairing of two boxes into a profound commentary on human experience. She sets her boxes against a neutral background to emphasize the psychological tension between promise and disappointment, desire and fulfillment.



Two Boxes, 2004
Pastel on paper, 16 x 21 inches
Courtesy of Forum Gallery

JON MacGREGOR

Jon MacGregor wraps a gift in *The Pink Bow*, subverting expectations of pristine gift presentation and offering, instead, a meditation on improvised affection. Crafted from what appears to be a well-worn blanket bearing faded heart patterns, his wrapping speaks to both resourcefulness and tender sentiment—a makeshift valentine that carries traces of a previous life. The pattern of weathered hearts on the blanket creates a faded motif suggesting layers of the past combined with hopeful anticipation for the future. The pink ribbon, more reminiscent of a casual shoelace than traditional gift-wrap accoutrements, adds to the painting's charming imperfection. This humble detail, along with the visible shoes at the composition's edge, channels the warmth of Norman Rockwell's Americana and like a Rockwell scene is tilted slightly off-axis, enabling MacGregor to capture the spirit of gift giving through unexpected details, rather than polished perfection. The result: a reflection on love's improvisational nature, where the imperfect wrapping becomes more meaningful than any store-bought paper could be. The artist said, “The ideas of concealment and the excitement of a package echoed through my thoughts while painting.”

**The unexpected detail, a reflection
of love's improvisational nature**



The Pink Bow, 2025
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist

JEN MAZZA

In Mazza's *Nuit Blanche* paintings, pristine white opera gloves are the vehicle for an exquisite choreography of tension and restraint. Her intimate paintings capture moments where elegance collides with violence—long formal gloves twist and strain around unseen hands, their immaculate surfaces interrupted by glimpses of red that suggest the pain of the body beneath the fabric. Flashes of crimson transform her paintings from pure studies of formal elegance into something far more visceral and unsettling. The strategic reveal of red through wrist openings in the twisted fabric shows the discord between surface refinement and underlying biological reality, and the artist transforms these accessories of high society into psychological portraits of contained struggle. Her works' small scale and stark black backgrounds focus our attention on the moments of constrained violence she presents, while precise brush strokes capture every fold and shadow of white fabric. The title *Nuit Blanche* is remindful of not just sleeplessness but also the dark undercurrents that pulse beneath society's polished exterior.

Nuit Blanche I (Brown), 2004
Oil on canvas, 8 x 8 x 1 ½ inches
Courtesy of Uterior Gallery and the artist





Jen Mazza
Nuit Blanche 7, 2004, left
10 x 10 x 1 ½ inches

Nuit Blanche 9, 2004
11 x 11 x 1 ½ inches

Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Ulterior Gallery and the artist

CAROLINE MCCARTHY

In her feature-length video *Mansize*, Caroline McCarthy transforms the mundane act of pulling tissues from a box into a mesmerizing meditation on consumerism, gender, and the poetry of everyday objects. A hundred "Mansize" tissues are extracted, one by one, each emerging as a distinct sculptural form, before yielding to the next tissue in hypnotic sequence. The drama of each tissue's emergence is heightened by its initial concealment within the box—we cannot anticipate the exact shape or form, until it unfolds before us. Like wrapped gifts or magic tricks, the tissues remain mysterious until the moment of revelation. McCarthy orchestrates this unveiling with precise attention to pacing and sound. As each tissue emerges, the soundtrack amplifies the violent rustle of paper, creating moments of dramatic tension before subsiding into charged silence. The work's title carries resonance, as the tissue-making company Kleenex retired its "Mansize" branding in 2017—the same year as this film's creation in favor of the gender-neutral "Extra Large." This timing positions the artwork as both a document of changing social attitudes and a wry commentary on how consumer products reflect and reinforce gender assumptions. By focusing intently on this single box of tissues, the artist reveals how everyday objects carry complex narratives about marketing, and social values.



Like wrapped gifts or magic tricks,
the tissues remain mysterious
until the moment of revelation

Mansize, 2017
HD Video Still
Courtesy of Green On Red Gallery and the artist

SARAH MCKENZIE

Sarah McKenzie explores the liminal spaces of art fairs and gallery construction, where temporary architectural wrapping creates an uncanny atmosphere of transition and concealment. In the painting, *Frieze* (following page), McKenzie takes us behind the scenes of Frieze, one of the world's most famous international art fairs. Translucent plastic sheeting stretches across metal framework, concealing the air conditioning units that make temporary exhibition spaces habitable. The interplay between opacity and transparency reveals the orchestration required to transform a tent into a glamorous exhibition venue, while the diffused light filtering through the plastic membrane softens the industrial elements into an almost ethereal atmosphere. *Well* focuses on a partially wrapped staircase, where draped plastic transforms an ordinary architectural feature into something mysteriously sculptural. The creases and folds of the protective covering create abstract geometric patterns, while the exposed steps in the composition are a grounding for the familiar. By focusing on the temporary wrappings that usually go unseen, McKenzie elevates utilitarian coverings into subjects worthy of careful observation, finding poetry in the provisional moments of an exhibition's preparation.



Well, 2013
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 32 x 32 inches
Courtesy of the artist and David B. Smith Gallery

Sarah McKenzie
Frieze, 2014
Oil and acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 inches
Courtesy of the artist and David B. Smith Gallery



MARGARET MORRISON

In sumptuous composition Morrison transforms cake pops into potent symbols of affection and longing, cellophane wrappings and black ribbons converting the humble sweets into objects of exquisite luxury. Each wrapper's shiny surfaces promise pleasure but also withholds its contents from immediate consumption. The precise arrangement of the striped and polka-dotted sticks creates a forest of vertical lines, while the carefully tied black bows and gleaming metallic wrappers suggest the elaborate packaging of high-end retail. The red base and gradated dark background ramp up a sense of drama and the presentation is heightened by dramatic lighting and the reflective surface beneath the confections that move from simple treats we desire to objects we revere. Like Dutch vanitas paintings that used collections of luxuries to comment on the transience of earthly pleasures, these wrapped confections become symbols of temptation and gratification. Morrison's careful attention to packaging transforms the ephemeral treats into lasting objects of desire, suggesting how presentation and wrapping can elevate the ordinary into the extraordinary, making us long for what lies beneath shimmering surfaces.



7 Signals of Love, 2018
Oil on canvas, 54 x 54 inches
Courtesy of Margaret Morrison and Woodward Gallery

KSENIYA OUDENOT

Oudenot captures moments in her paintings *Bedsheets* and *Together*. Volcanic ash and acrylic paint merge with fabric and resin in *Bedsheets* to create a windswept form that appears frozen in motion. The dramatic interplay of black and white suggests a crystalline quality that captures the exact moment when darkness seeps into light. The work's textile foundation, the humble bedsheet, becomes the instrument for exploring themes of intimacy and distance, the domestic and the sublime. In *Together* (following pages), Oudenot presents two silvered heads that appear to meet in an anticipated kiss. Haunting and poetic, the sculpture engages in direct dialog with René Magritte's iconic *The Lovers*, 1928, where the Belgian surrealist depicted two figures kissing through wrapped fabric veils. Like Magritte, Oudenot explores how concealment can paradoxically heighten emotional resonance. While Magritte's wrapped lovers suggest the impossibility of true connection—their kiss forever separated by a cloth barrier—Oudenot's forms seem to merge at their meeting point, surfaces and identities less obscured. The piece captures that ineffable moment when two separate entities begin to lose their boundaries, suggesting both the promise and the terror of truly merging with another.

Bedsheets, 2018
Fabric, resin, sand, acrylic paint and volcanic ash
47½ x 31½ x 7½ inches
Courtesy of the artist





The ineffable moment—the promise and the terror
of truly merging with another



Together, 2018
Metal, plastic, glass, resin spray paint and acrylic paint
16½ x 19¼ x 11⅞ inches

Alternate view, left

Courtesy of the artist

FRANK PAULIN

A messenger of love or loss strides through Times Square in this arresting photograph by Frank Paulin. A man in a leather jacket and sunglasses holds an elaborate bouquet wrapped in crisp white paper, creating a compelling juxtaposition between his cool demeanor and his delicate cargo. Paulin's composition emphasizes this dynamic through his control of light and shadow. The bright white wrapping of the flowers stands out dramatically against the dark leather jacket and sunglasses, while the busy Times Square backdrop recedes into soft blur. A technical approach characteristic of the New York School of Photographers working in the 1950s, it documented the city's endless stream of unexpected moments and chance encounters. The sight of wrapped flowers moving through city streets has always carried emotional charge. Whether clutched in the hands of nervous suitors, jubilant well-wishers, or tender consolers, they signal that somewhere in the urban maze a significant moment is about to unfold. Here, the scale of the bouquet suggests a grand gesture in the making, while the messenger's purposeful stride hints at the anticipation that awaits at his destination. The image raises intriguing questions about the package's purpose. Who will receive this impressive bouquet? Is it a gesture of romance, celebration, or condolence?

Flower Messenger, Times Square, New York City, 1955
Gelatin silver print, printed c.1970s, 16 x 20 inches
Signed and annotated '55-3' on verso
Courtesy of Bruce Silverstein Gallery

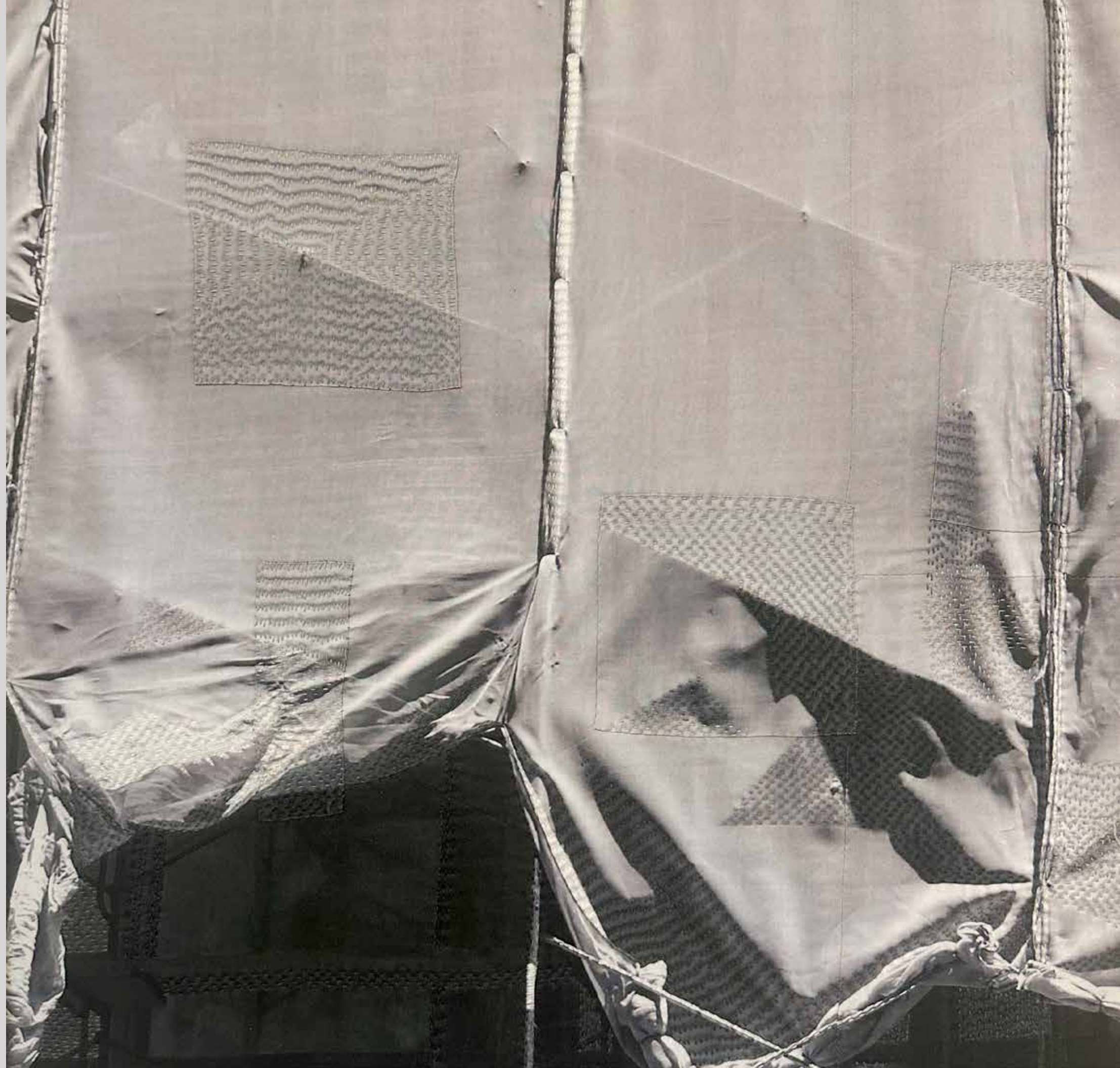


LUANNE RIMEL

In Luanne Rimel's photographs, construction scaffolding becomes a grandstand for revealing the poetry of urban transformation. Capturing the dramatic interplay between concealment and disclosure that characterizes cities, her wrapped works suggest a city in constant change. *Blue Tarp/Manhattan* presents the utilitarian beauty of a construction tarp, its cerulean folds creating accidental abstraction against the geometric precision of scaffolding bars. The fabric's undulating surface, wrapped tightly yet billowing, is translated by the artist onto silk through digital printing and enhanced by hand stitching to transform an everyday protective covering into a rumination on the ephemeral nature of urban landscapes. In *Reveal* (following page), Rimel turns her lens to buildings wrapped in metallic sheeting, where crumpled silver surfaces make a topography of light and shadow. Its composition suggests both a rising curtain and a glimpse behind it, and plays with notions of what lies beneath the surface of architectural metamorphosis. Together the works speak to the anticipation in urban renewal and the suspense between what is hidden and what is about to emerge. By focusing on temporary structures and materials, Rimel elevates often overlooked elements of the urban landscape into contemplative studies of transition. The photographs invite viewers to consider construction sites not as inconveniences but as cocoons of possibility.

Blue Tarp/ Manhattan, 2019
Photographs, digitally printed on silk, pieced, hand stitched
15 x 15 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Duane Reed Gallery





Luanne Rimel
Reveal, 2018
Photographs, digitally printed on silk, pieced, hand stitched
22 x 22 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Duane Reed Gallery

JAMES ROSENQUIST

Piercing blue eyes stare through a sea of crimson cellophane, creating an immediate confrontation between viewer and object in James Rosenquist's *Gift Wrapped Doll*. Drawing on the legacy of Surrealism and the uncanny in Pop Art, Rosenquist amps up the nature of a doll—already a complex object that mimics human features— isolating and imprisoning the doll's penetrating gaze. The eyes, heavily lidded and unnervingly realistic and alert, seem to float in a translucent prison, which Rosenquist renders with technical virtuosity. Each fold and reflection in the cellophane creates abstract patterns that both conceal and reveal, suggesting both gift wrap's celebratory function and more complex undertones of voyeurism and containment. The cropped composition focusing solely on the eyes transforms a seemingly innocent object into something psychologically charged. Rosenquist's handling of color and transparency allows the bright red wrapping to shift between seductive glamor and something more visceral, while the doll's unflinching stare confronts viewers with questions about consumption, desire, and objectification. Through this work, Rosenquist continues his career-long investigation of commercial imagery but pushes it into more psychological territory, creating an image that is simultaneously mysterious, alluring, and deeply unsettling.



Gift Wrapped Doll, 1993
Color lithograph on Arches wove paper
30 x 28 ½ inches
Signed, AP 2/24
Tyler Graphics, Mount Kisco, New York
Private Collection

ANTONIO SANTIN

A mysterious human presence lurks beneath an exquisitely painted Persian carpet in Antonio Santín's *Annus Mirabilis*, creating haunting tension between concealment and revelation. The large-scale circular composition shows a figure completely covered by an ornate rug, both figure and rug merging to create an uncanny dome or mountain-like protrusion that disrupts the carpet's elaborate floral and geometric patterns. Santín's hyper-realistic painting technique captures every intricate detail of the carpet's design. Through his masterful trompe l'oeil, Santín transforms this domestic furnishing into a mysterious shroud, making the familiar deeply strange. The title *Annus Mirabilis* (Latin for "miraculous year") adds another layer of complexity to this work, suggesting a moment of transformation or revelation, even as the central figure remains hidden from view. The piece enters into dialog with a rich artistic tradition of wrapped forms—from Christo and Jeanne-Claude's monumental wrapped buildings to Man Ray's famous visual puzzle — *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse*, 1920. However, Santín adds a distinct cultural dimension by using an "oriental" carpet, an object traditionally associated with luxury and exoticism in Western art. The concealed figure beneath this culturally loaded object creates a complex meditation on visibility, power, and cultural identity.



Annus Mirabilis, 2015
Oil on canvas, 78 x 78 inches
Courtesy of Marc Straus Gallery and the artist

BARBARA SEGAL

Barbara Segal's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* belongs to a series that reimagines 1970s lunch boxes as vehicles for exploring luxury and nostalgia. Taking the utilitarian form of a vintage metal lunch pail—complete with its characteristic handle and boxy shape—Segal transforms this childhood relic into an object of opulence through masterful material deception. At first glance, the piece appears to be a Tiffany & Co. gift box, complete with the iconic white ribbon and bow. By carving this hybrid object from amazonite, a semi-precious stone whose subtle green hue mimics Tiffany's signature color blue, Segal collapses the boundaries between working-class functionality and elite consumer culture. The series draws on collective memories of packed school lunches and metal lunch boxes decorated with favorite cartoon characters, yet here Segal elevates the familiar form with precious materials, including sterling silver details and a pristine marble bow. While a traditional lunch box carries sustenance and a Tiffany box typically encases jewelry, Segal's version transforms both everyday and luxury packaging into a solid stone sculpture that paradoxically can conceal nothing. This artist gave the box of childhood memory a material metamorphosis and so asks us to examine how objects of childhood nostalgia can be reframed as vehicles for exploring status, desire, and memory in the culture we live in today.



Breakfast at Tiffany's, 2024
Amazonite, Statuario marble, aluminum, and sterling silver
11 x 11 x 4½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

JEANNE SILVERTHORNE

Jeanne Silverthorne transforms an ordinary office task chair into a meditation on protection, and the proof concealment. Cast in platinum silicone rubber—a material that mimics the translucent quality of actual bubble wrap—the piece plays with our desire to peek beneath the protective surface of its wrapping, even as the wrapping itself becomes the primary sculptural form. The artist meticulously recreates every detail of the bubble wrap's textured surface, its pattern of air pockets rendered in shimmering metallic pigments that catch and reflect light. Through the layers, we glimpse tantalizingly incomplete views of the chair beneath, creating the push-pull conflict between revelation and obscurity. Like a wrapped present that can never be opened, the sculpture frustrates our natural curiosity, while transforming the mundane act of wrapping into a permanent artistic gesture. The obsessive nature of the wrapping suggests both care and anxiety—an object so protected it becomes inaccessible. Silverthorne's choice of an ordinary office chair as her subject matter adds another layer of meaning, as this symbol of productivity and workplace efficiency becomes entombed in its own protective covering. The act of wrapping, typically temporary, is frozen in time through the casting process, creating a permanent state of suspension between utility and display, protection and imprisonment. Through this meditation on wrapped forms, Silverthorne creates a commentary on our attempts to protect, questioning what we lose in the process of safeguarding our possessions.

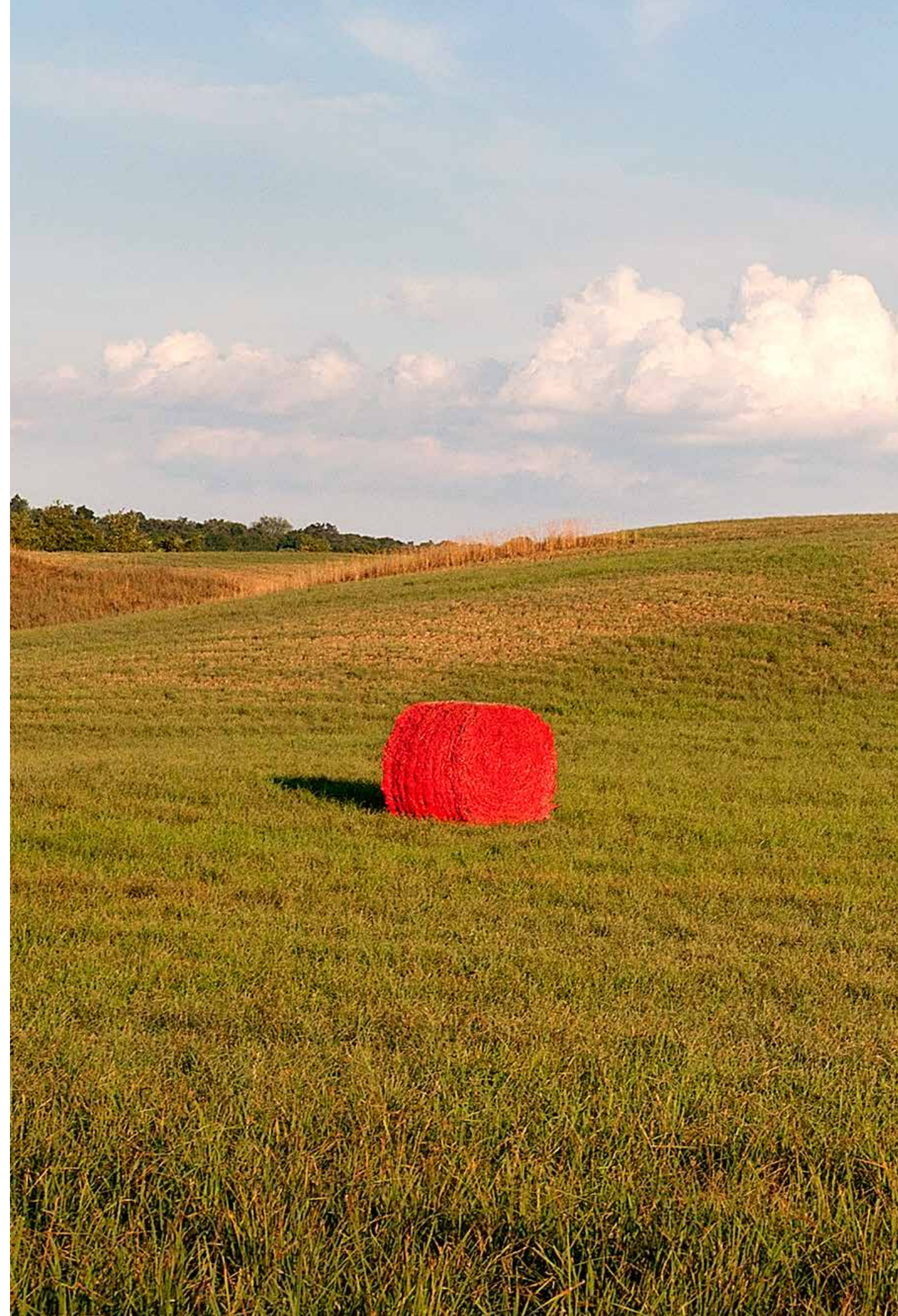
Bubble Wrapped Task Chair, 2016
Platinum silicone rubber, metallic pigment
37 x 26 x 26 inches
Courtesy of Marc Straus Gallery and the artist



DIANE SMOOK

One *Red Bale* captures a singular mystery: a lone crimson-wrapped bale set against undulating hills. In this photograph and in *Route 9* (following page), both from her ongoing chronicle of Columbia County's agricultural landscape, Diane Smook explores the visual language of contemporary farming practices. Her images reveal both intentional and arbitrary aspects of rural labor, in which the farmers' practical decisions inadvertently create artistic compositions on the landscape. Smook, encountering the unexplained splash of color in *One Red Bale*, recognized its compelling visual power. Her photograph's panoramic format emphasizes the bale's solitude, while its bright artificial hue transforms it into an enigmatic focal point in this pastoral scene. *Route 9* presents a more systematic arrangement, where a precise line of white-wrapped cylindrical bales creates an almost architectural presence in the landscape. *Route 9* also documents the shift from traditional rectangular hay bales to modern round ones, protected by plastic wrapping against the elements. Smook, who photographs agricultural scenes near her home, creates an artistic aesthetic that also reveals the consequences of technological change in agriculture, where necessary adaptations articulate the character of today's rural landscape.

One Red Bale, County Route 22, Ghent, New York, 2012. Detail





Diane Smook
One Red Bale, County Route 22, Ghent, New York, 2012
60 x 18½ inches

Route 9, Livingston, New York, 2020
60 x 22 inches

Photographs
Courtesy of the artist

LUIS STEPHENBERG

In *Undercover ID*, Luis Stephenberg transforms the Lehman College Art Gallery's Rotunda Installation into a complex study on perception and containment. Through masterful orchestration of space and material, Stephenberg reveals how our senses shape identity, while shaped by social and economic structures. At the installation's core, four enigmatic figures emerge from a central column, each wrapped form embodying one of the human senses—sight, sound, taste, and touch. Shrouded, these presences stand in silent dialog with the surrounding walls of branded burlap, where carefully placed knots mark points of tension and connection. The circular arrangement of burlap panels, stamped with "Undercover ID" like agricultural commodity bales, create a perimeter where knots punctuate the intersections of supporting ropes. The knots, appearing at regular intervals along the walls, form a rhythmic counterpoint to wrapped figures at the center, suggesting the tension between individual sensory experience and external systems of containment. Two folds in the burlap reveal GPS locations of the Art Gallery that produce dialog between embodied sensation and digital tracking. Stephenberg's use of rugged materials—particularly the branded burlap that recalls Puerto Rico's colonial agricultural past—points to the way sensory experience is packaged within larger systems of commerce and control.



Undercover ID, 2025. Detail



Luis Stephenberg
Undercover ID, 2025
Rotunda Installation
Mixed media, site-specific
319 inch diameter
Courtesy of the artist

Emerging from a central column in Undercover ID, are four wrapped forms

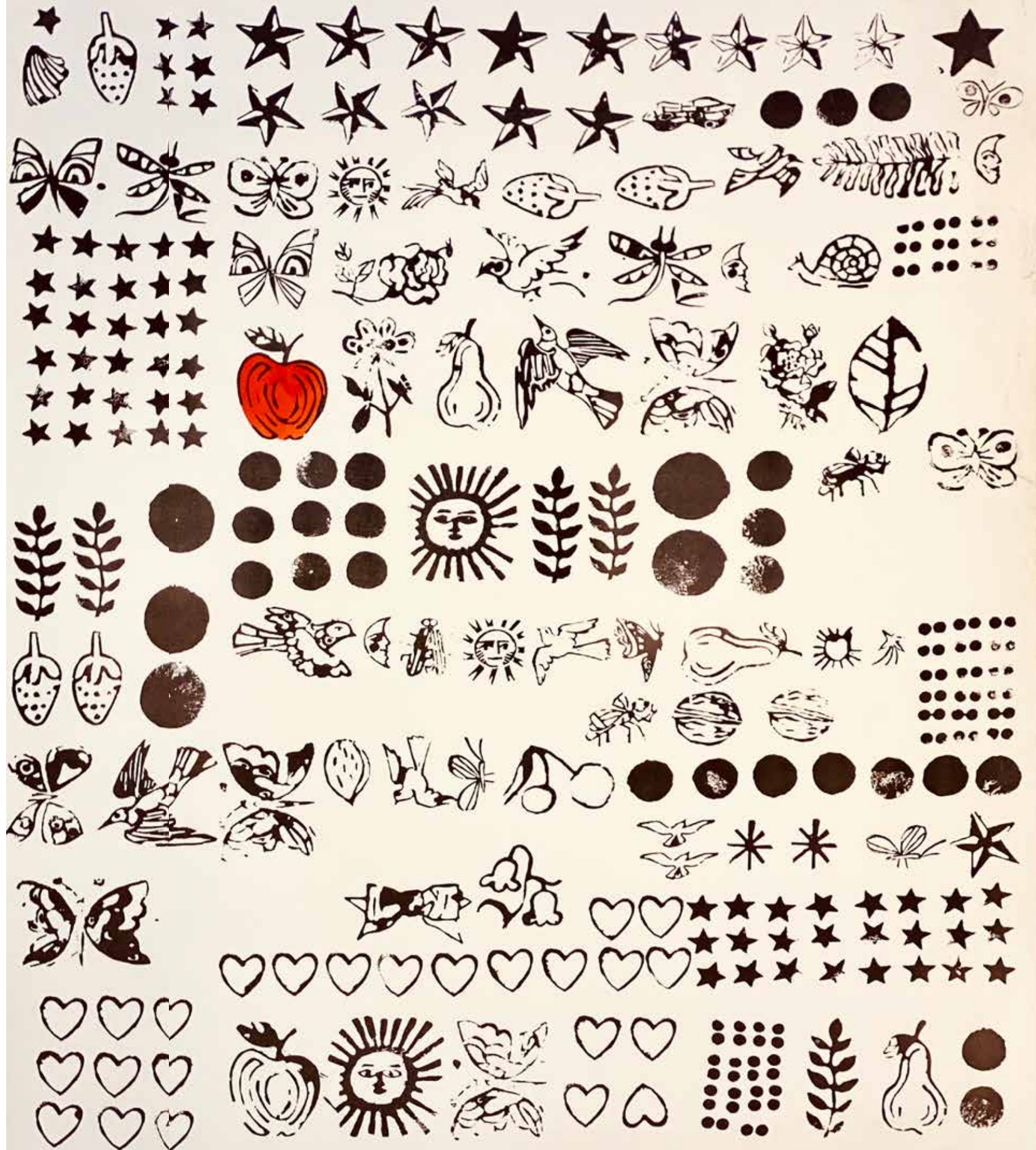


Each form expresses one of the four human senses—sight, sound, taste, and touch

ANDY WARHOL

Looking at *Gift Wrap (Red Apple)*, we witness a fascinating moment in Warhol's artistic journey between commercial illustration and fine art. In this unique piece, Warhol demonstrates his masterful understanding of both design and visual psychology inherent in gift giving. He creates a pattern for *Gift Wrap*, a pattern that is a dance of visual elements, drawing attention and deflecting it. This artist celebrates the anticipation of a gift and the mystery of gift-giving through a delightful array of stamped motifs—stars that cascade in size, swooping birds, flitting butterflies, and various organic elements—all rendered in black ink, except for the single, striking red apple. The strategic use of a solitary red apple reflects a fundamental principle of interior design that Warhol would have known well from his commercial work—the power of a single red object to command attention in an otherwise monochromatic space. Like the wrapped gift itself, the red apple becomes a focal point of desire and curiosity and its origins speak to Warhol's early work where he created illustrations for elite clients, including Tiffany & Co., the iconic jewelry store, and *Vogue* magazine. This artist combines lithography with watercolor to transform what could have been a mass-produced wrapping paper design into a unique artwork that celebrates the joy of gifting and the artful act of concealment.

Gift Wrap (Red Apple), 1959
Unique watercolor & lithograph on paper
29 x 23 inches
Authenticated
Courtesy of Woodward Gallery



WILLIAM WEGMAN

Through the act of wrapping and overlaying his canine subjects, William Wegman transmutes his faithful Weimaraner companions into sculptural forms that hover between recognition and abstraction. His renowned portraits of these svelte canines are famous as studies of concealment and transformation. The distinctive Weimaraner features—normally the centerpiece of his portraits—become mysterious suggestions beneath the various coverings Wegman assigns them. In *Fossil* a translucent plastic bag shrouds the dog's form, creating an ethereal barrier that both reveals and obscures, suggesting archaeological preservation and the passage of time. *Rain Coat* cloaks its subject in diaphanous floral fabric, the delicate pattern playing against the dog's solid presence beneath. In *Game Piece*, strips of colored construction paper envelop the dog's form, creating a Modernist assemblage that recalls the geometric abstractions of early avant-garde sculpture. Through the masterful manipulation of mundane materials—plastic, fabric, and paper combined with the inherent luminosity of Polaroid film, Wegman creates a poetic meditation on presence and absence. The dogs concealment paradoxically reveals new dimensions of form and movement, transforming his beloved subjects into living sculptures that dance between the figurative and the abstract, the familiar and the mysterious.



Rain Coat, 2004, left
Game Piece, 2001
Fossil, 1995. Not shown
Signed by the artist on recto

Color Polaroids, 24 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the artist



BRENDA ZLAMANY

In *World Upside Down*, Zlamany transforms the athletic prowess of aerial silk performance into a meditation on the isolation and revelation that rose prominently during the global pandemic of 2020. The artist's elegant handling of oil paint captures both the luxuriant folds of the commanding red silk, which acts as a theatrical curtain, and the precise technical control of the inverted performer. Dramatic scarlet drapery dominates the canvas, and as its form cascades it both conceals and reveals the scene behind it. In *Masked Identities* (following page), Zlamany presents a striking grid of nine oil paintings that provocatively challenge traditional notions of portraiture. Each square panel depicts a figure whose face is obscured by both a physical mask and a painted layer of white mesh—creating a double veiling. The artist first completed each portrait in full detail, then deliberately obscured it with a painted translucent screen, echoing the physical masks worn by the subjects. Zlamany's artistic strategy recalls Christo's wrapped monuments, where the act of concealing paradoxically shows us new ways of seeing. Here, the traditional portrait's promise of revealing character through facial features is subverted, challenging viewers to find meaning in what remains: gesture, posture, and the subtle interplay of visible and invisible elements. This series of portraits becomes a meditation on identity in an era when masks have become both protective barriers and symbols of collective care.

World Upside Down, 2020/21
Oil on linen
96 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the artist





Wrapping to conceal the face
 shows new ways of seeing:
 gesture and posture

Brenda Zlamany
Mask Portraits #1-9, 2020/21
 Oil on linen
 24 x 24 inches
 Courtesy of the artist



Lehman College Art Gallery

Always free to the public, Lehman College Art Gallery has been serving the interests of our diverse audience from the Bronx and Greater New York City since 1984. The gallery specializes in thematic exhibitions of contemporary work that bring together famous artists with emerging talents. Education is an integral component of the Gallery's programming and provides the basis for community outreach—from young students to senior citizens.

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Image: Antonio Santin. **Annus Mirabilis**, 2015. Courtesy of Marc Strauss Gallery and the artist