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# Sterling Lawrence

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[www.sterlinglawrence.com](http://www.sterlinglawrence.com)

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# ARTNEWS

HABITAT <http://www.artnews.com/2016/01/22/habitat-sterling-lawrence/>

HABITAT: STERLING LAWRENCE

BY Katherine McMahon POSTED 01/22/16 12:00 PM



Sterling Lawrence photographed in his Chicago studio on December 29, 2015.

©KATHERINE MCMAHON

Habitat is a weekly series that visits with artists in their workspaces.

This week's studio: Sterling Lawrence; Pilsen, Chicago. "I try to use material I don't know how to use very well," the artist [Sterling Lawrence](#) said in his Chicago studio last December. "I find when I use materials I know really well, my objects get static really quickly. I'm always trying to use things where I'm not quite sure how they function."

Lawrence originally moved to Chicago to attend the Art Institute, where he studied printmaking but considered himself a "bastard child of the photography department." Lawrence is currently preparing works for a solo show at [Document](#) in March, as well as for a group exhibition at Columbia College, and the Material Art Fair in Mexico City. "Everything's sort of in flux," he said. "I usually make a bunch of objects at one time. It's easier to work on multiple objects than one, then there's a correlation when they are shown together at an exhibition. Most exhibitions have some sort of schematic theme to them."

Lawrence is currently working with materials as varied as ink-jet fabric sheets, prosthetic plastic, aluminum piping, and Kydex, which is commonly used for aircraft pull-down trays. "I've been bending it over my sculptures a little bit. It's kind of scary to think about, because there's not that much heat and this stuff is melting all over the place." When preparing for a show, Lawrence pays careful attention to color so his works can adapt in different spaces. "I usually work with lighter colors or things that have less of an influence, so whenever I go into an exhibition I can deal with whatever the lighting system is in the gallery."

ALL PHOTOS: KATHERINE MCMAHON

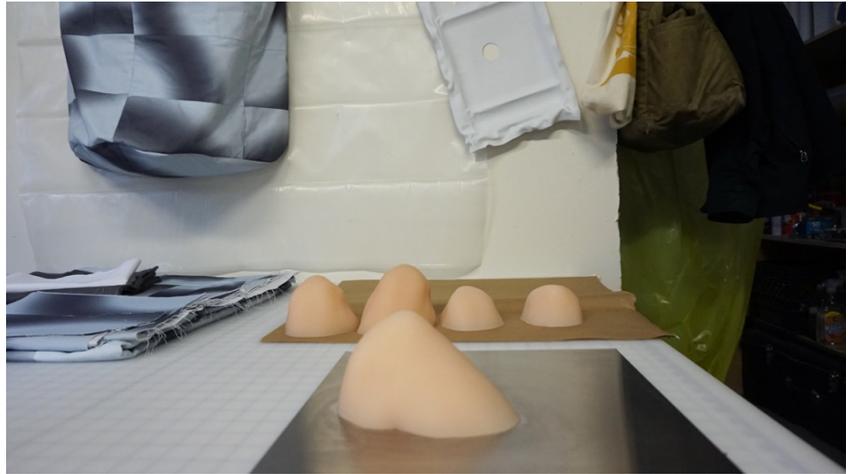
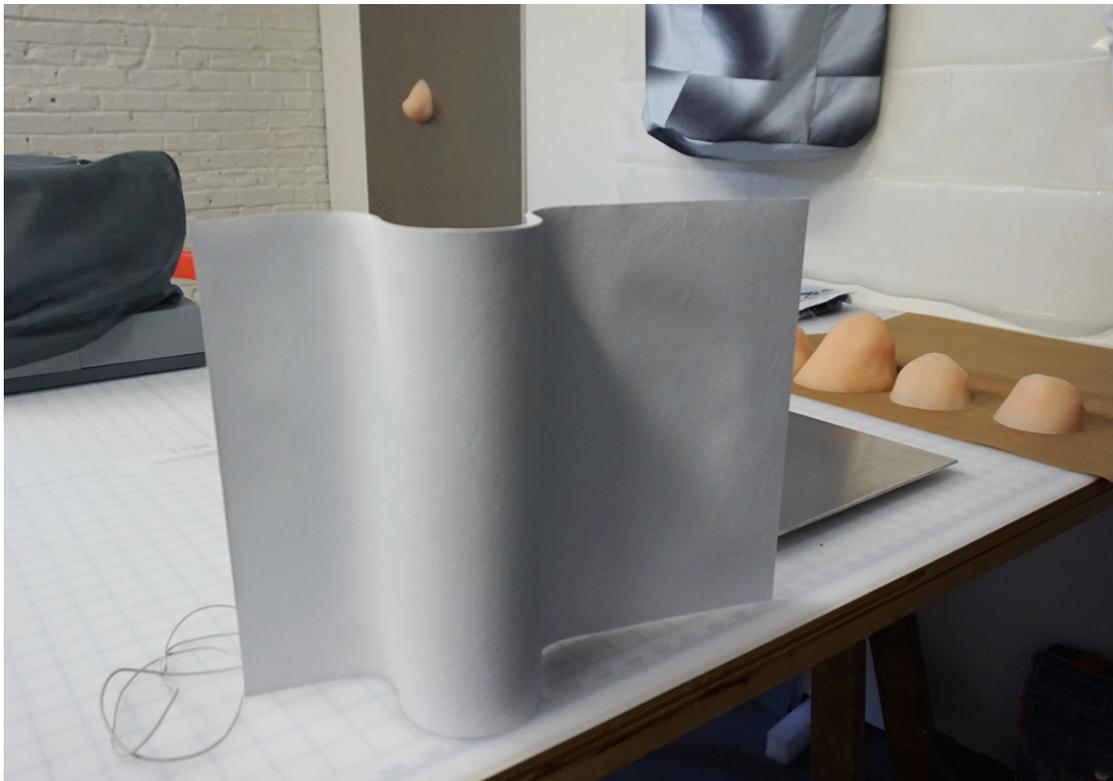


Image 1: "Room Divider" Version 1: Powder coated aluminum, hardware, fabricated moving blanket.  
Image 2: A series of Lawrence's elbows, cast in prosthetic plastic



Testing the material Kydex, which is frequently used for aircraft interiors.

# Artspace

Link: [http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews\\_features/meet\\_the\\_artist/mta-sterling-lawrence-53728](http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/meet_the_artist/mta-sterling-lawrence-53728)

MEET THE ARTIST

## A Few Questions for Sterling Lawrence on How He Turned Empty Shelves Into an Art Form

By Dylan Kerr

MAY 4, 2016



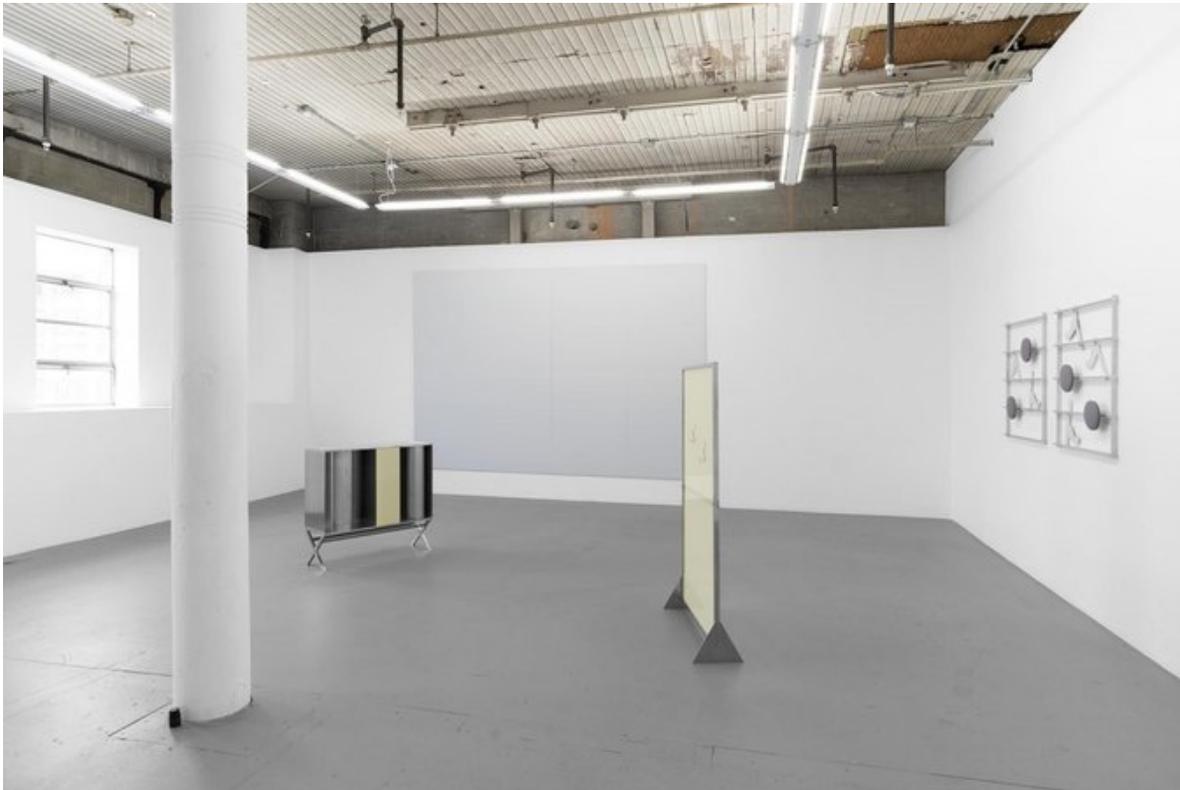
The artist Sterling Lawrence  
**Name:** Sterling Lawrence  
**Age:** 35  
**Hometown:** Grants Pass, OR  
**Base of Operations:** Chicago, IL

**Medium of Choice:** Materials and new ideas gravitate into the studio at a fairly constant rate. Currently I would say that my practice is sculpture heavy, with elements of installation, painting, and printmaking.

**Why I Make Art/How I Became an Artist:** I have always found it necessary to challenge the way I interrupt my relationship to objects, space, and images. This mode of engagement has been the fuel for developing my practice as an artist. For me, the capacities that images and objects have to inform one another develops a context beyond the individual.

### CURRENT PROJECT

I just opened a solo exhibition, "Substitution Play" at [DOCUMENT](#) Gallery in Chicago, which runs through May 7 [installation shots below]. I am also included in a group exhibition up at Glass Curtain Gallery at Columbia College entitled "Terms of Use: Reproducing the Photographic Image."







## WHERE I'M FINDING INSPIRATION NOW

This week, my inspiration is coming from looking at camping gear for a trip this summer as well as the designer Carl Aubock's magazine racks, and from reading an essay by [Dan Graham](#) about John Knight's Journal Piece from 1976.

## ONE ARTWORK I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD (AND WHY)

Heimo Zobernig at Kunsthaus Bregenz — his first floor installation of empty shelves that were in relation to/merged with the figurative model. The work relates to my interest on a simple level, of the appearance of a functional form in relation to the body and space, but also incorporates anthropometry — the scientific study of the measurements and proportions of the human body — and ideas about permutation, the body as a fluid term for encapsulation, intervention, figuration, and the politics of exposure.



### PERSONAL PANTHEON OF ARTISTS

My personal pantheon is periodically raided, torched, then rebuilt, but I would say that today it would be three artists for specific works: the 2015 installation of [Nicole Wermers](#) sculptures at the beach, entitled Frieze Stand that I saw in W Magazine, [Dennis Oppenheim](#)'s Sunburn Remix from 1993, and [Martin Boyce](#) There is No Outside from 2007.



Nicole Wermers's Untitled Chairs, 2015



Martin Boyce's There is No Outside, 2007

## INSIDE MY STUDIO



### STUDIO ITEM I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

I have a fixed arm utility knife, which is always in the position to be utilized. It has been in my tool box since I started making objects.

### STRANGEST REACTION TO MY WORK

I am not sure if I have had a strange reaction. There have been informative reactions, which have challenged the way that I perceive my work, or force me to think about the temporality of ideas in relation to my material in space through time.

### WHAT I'M READING

Teaching part time really tends to make me an erratic reader—I start one book and get interrupted by another, am allotted shorter reading times, et cetera. I recently read [Richard Artschwager's](#) *Texts and Interviews* and *On the Style Site: Art, Sociality, and Media Culture* by Ina Bloom.

### MY PROCESS

My practice develops in units of work, which I use to create character and narrative within exhibitions. I reconstruct recognizable forms with a bent towards function that we utilize everyday to streamline and aestheticize our environment. The alteration of form, materiality, and contextual framing is intended to create a more complicated engagement between the viewer and the work.

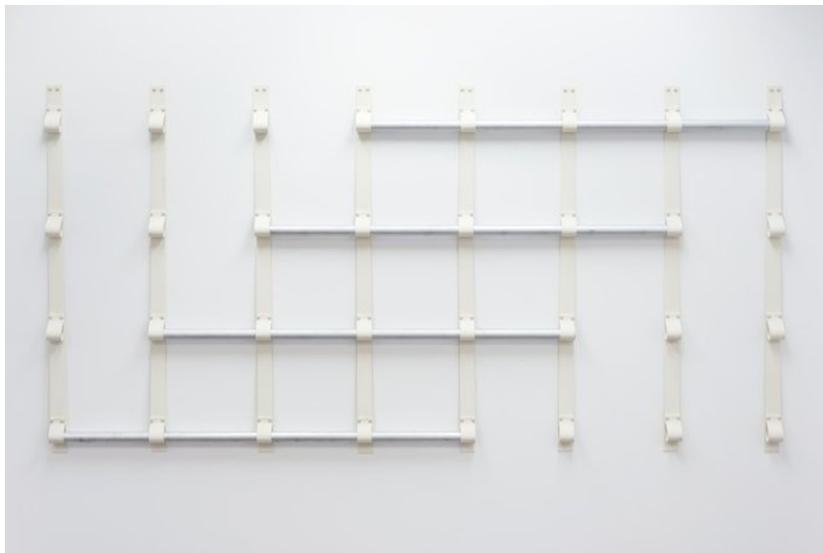


All Labels, 2014

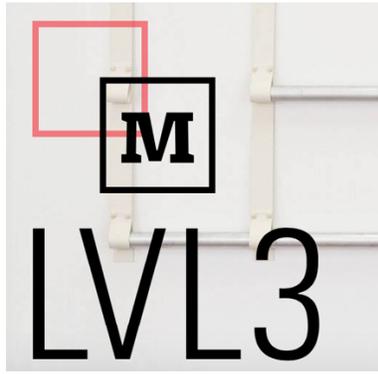


Spill, 2015

While my projects are developed in these types of “units,” similar to serial works, they differ in that I do not have an end point locked into the overall sequence. Sculpture in its outward appearance, and its conceptual meaning, is expanded through an open-ended quality in the form, which expresses the possibility of the work’s use value to viewers. This is the complication that interests me, orienting the relationships to and measure of an object to the viewer’s body, and vice-versa. What are the limits of a visual experience, and how are they encroached upon through the looming image of such a proposal?



Strap illustration version number two, 2015



<http://lvl3media.com/artist-of-the-week-sterling-lawrence-2/> - .WHw-s3eZPR0

### **Artist of the Week: Sterling Lawrence**

Sterling Lawrence is an artist living and working in Chicago. He received his MFA in 2011 from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is currently an instructor in the Print Media Department at SAIC. He has exhibited in Chicago with Document Gallery, Tony Wight Gallery, Devening Projects, New Capital via Forever and Always Gallery, and outside Chicago at Soloway Gallery in Brooklyn, Scotty Enterprises in Berlin, Pacific Northwest College of Art Portland OR, and Launch F-18. in New York.

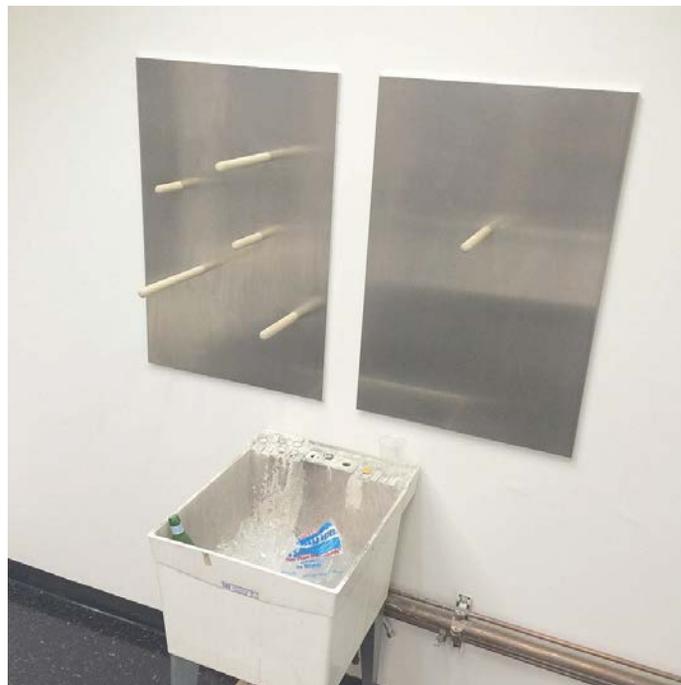


**Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do.** Grew up in a military family. We lived in Frankfurt and Stuttgart until I was entering into middle school. I was living in Portland, Oregon before moving to Chicago. It's going on eleven years living in this city. I keep a studio close to my apartment in Pilsen that I share with two buddies Alex Valentine and Brian Rush.

**What are some recent, upcoming or current projects you are working on?** Back in September I was included in a group show entitled *Split Difference* curated by Samantha Topol in the Mallers Building on Jewelers Row here in Chicago. Upcoming in February, I will be down in Mexico City showing with Document Gallery at Material Art Fair. In March, a solo exhibition at Document Gallery in Chicago.

**What is one of the bigger challenges you and/or other artists are struggling with these days and how do you see it developing?**

Addressing Politics of outreach. How can art traverse its borders and fulfill a life beyond itself? Is it possible to do so now and at what cost?

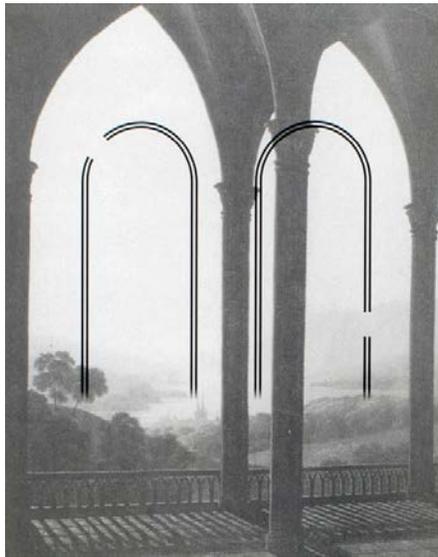


**How did your interest in art begin?** It probably started being an only child and having to entertain myself. My family moved around a lot so we were never in one city for long. Something about being temporary stationed in a place, organizing my environment and then moving again had a large impact.



**If you had to explain your work to a stranger, what would you say?** My work uses the language of sculpture, image production, and installation. I often produce multiple works at once, which creates a unique conversation between them both materially and contextually. Exploring varying topics in my practice, my exhibitions revolve around what I am researching at the moment, which influences the form and content of the work. Some umbrella topics include furniture design and architecture, human factors, anthropometric and ergonomic studies, the body in relation to objects, advertising posters, and lighting, among others. Design seems to be haunted by its historical appearance, so much so that the appropriation of it allows for a gapped perversion of information, which produces an interpretive loop or relay through the handling of materials. Surfaces reflect color cast from wall works. Scale is considered in relation to the body, and knobs, surfaces, and shelves are distorted in measure. Works are not intended to remain together so the temporal nature of the potential network is always at some tension in an exhibition. There is a funny thing that happens when you move. You leave items behind and reorganize the things that were kept from the previous place you inhabited. It becomes an exploration into the presence of occupying space—where the world is a reflection in the surface and placement of the work. I try to make forms and images that confuse the sensibilities of what is being offered, but not explored. Utilizing moments of illusion to enviably dissipate the constitution of an image.





**Do you have any guilty pleasures? I love to pocket lighters.**



**What was the last exhibition you saw that stuck out to you?** Phillippe Parreno's show at the armory *H {N}Y P N(Y} OSIS*. It was the first time I was able to view his video *Marilyn*.



**What artists are you interested in right now?** Robert Gober. He was able to establish a moving state of apprehension by installing his sink series in varying built environments. Nancy Lupo, Nicole Wermers, Robert Grovesnor, and Hiemo Zobernig are also really on my mind.

**What do you collect?** I have a record collection, a rock collection, stamp collection, and book collection. All weigh too much and not ideal when moving, but I keep collecting.



**What's your favorite thing about your city?** The lake is really a nice geographic feature here.

**What is your snack/beverage of choice when working in your studio?** Coffee and trail mix.

**What do you do when you're not working on art?** I really enjoy running, and try to be out doing that four to five days a week. Reading and chill vibes are very important as well.



**Can you share one of the best or worst reactions you have gotten as a result of your work?** At the MFA thesis show I presented these adhesive wall gradient works and a sculptural lamp form, which was on the floor located in a corridor. During the opening as visitors came in the floor space was consummated. My floor sculpture was pulled up against the wall and the wall works were leaned against. These works, muted by their material resist adhered to the wall, became supports for people to lean against and converse. It was a moment where the line between a window and room merged and context in what was important shifted for me.



# ARTSLANT



<https://www.artslant.com/ny/articles/show/28526-back-to-form>

## LIE AND WAIT

STERLING LAWRENCE

Tony Wight Gallery

845 West Washington Blvd, Chicago, IL 60607

October 28, 2011 - December 23, 2011

## BACK TO FORM

BY JOEL KUENNEN

When I came across the promotional images for this exhibition by young artist Sterling Lawrence, I must confess I wasn't too enthused. Large format gradients, abstracted sculptural gestures, clean lines that lead to conceptual destinations within the hyperbaric chamber of the gallery. It was gallery art. Art made for a gallery. I just wasn't feeling it... until I was in the gallery itself.



Installation view of Sterling Lawrence's "Lie and Wait" at Tony Wight Gallery, 2011. Image courtesy of Tony Wight Gallery and Benjamin Chaffee.

Entering the 2nd floor gallery is an enamoring experience. Directly across from the doorway, Wall Gradient 02 is adhered to the far wall. Its presence is a negative value in that the color white is a positive expression of light. The slight gradations, ranging from 90% gray color saturation to 0%, that compose the image are heightened by the intensely white environs which accentuate the natural gradations of shadow that give form to what we can see. OK, so I'm starting to like it.

The first room is a little overwhelming, though, on account of the large Wall Gradient 02. It has a quality similar to watching a video of a computer screen. In this case is due to a translation issue between the computer and the printer, lending somewhat regular lines of gradation amongst the larger gradient. The effect is that your eyes want to travel up but are simultaneously being pulled back down towards the center of the image. I shake my head and rub my eyes and head to the second room to finish my survey before returning to the first.



Installation view of Sterling Lawrence's Gradient 106. Image courtesy of Tony Wight Gallery and Benjamin Chaffee.

Here, two smaller gradient works are hung from opposing walls. Each is comprised of four sheets that curl slightly, but uniformly, on the bottom. The gradient on the left, Gradient 106, makes use of violet and blue hues that tend towards the pastel of a Midwestern sunset. Opposite, Gradient 103, is like a dirty sunrise, an orange sherbet cone rolled in coal dust. The pairing reminded me of an anecdote from Don DeLillo's novel, *White Noise*, concerning the increasing awesomeness of sunsets due to particles of pollutants in the atmosphere. In between these two images, two lamps, Lamp 01 and Lamp 02, sit unplugged, their cords wrapped neatly and secured with ties.



Sterling Lawrence. Rack 02. 2011. Image courtesy of Tony Wight Gallery and Benjamin Chaffee.

They sit as an exercise in intended yet denied functionality: distinct from the space they inhabit, unactivated and unconnected from the literal energy of the room they inhabit. They are simple and again play on the use of shadow to accentuate gestalt. One can't help but imagine the shadow play the light bulbs would initiate were they to be turned on.

In the end, everything seems to come back to form for Lawrence. Returning to the first room, I turned my attention to the less dominant work such as Framed Grey Panel Work 01. A more traditional composition, it is an exercise in deformation through creating a limited pattern and then disrupting it. The first room also has two racks (as seen an above image) Rack 01 and Rack 02, which seem to serve two completely different purposes for the artist. Rack 01 has a dismantled cut-out hung from it like a deconstructed two-dimensional doll. The humanoid remainder is missing and marked by an unadorned peg.

Rack 02 on the other hand has two chalk cones like the kind used in pool halls and what the artist considers natural gradients. Here, materiality, form, and luminosity begin to dissolve incrementally, of course. Chalk, a mineral composed of loosely packed calcite, flakes to the touch and leaves its white traces. While light does not flake, it most certainly leaves its traces in the shadows that determine form.

-Joel Kuennen, ArtSlant Staff Writer

Posted by [Joel Kuennen](#) on 10/31/11

Chicago Tribune

# Top 10 art shows for the fall



Momoyo Torimitsu's "Somehow I Don't Feel Comfortable" is among the pieces in the "BLOW UP" exhibit at the Elmhurst Art Museum. (Kioku Keizo)



**Lori Waxman**  
Chicago Tribune

**Link:**

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/ct-ae-0918-fall-preview-art-top-10-20160907-column.html>

**"OVERRIDE | A Billboard Project"**: Bigger isn't always better, but in this case it is. Fifteen artists take over digital billboards across town at the invitation of EXPO Chicago and the city's Department of Cultural Affairs. Look up for Sterling Lawrence's image of fluorescent emptiness, Tammy Rae Carland's poignantly ruffled bedsheets and Stephanie Brooks' shallowly deep pauses — then look back at the road. *Aug. 29-Sept. 25, on billboards throughout the city, 312-867-9220, [www.expochicago.com/programs/override-billboard-project](http://www.expochicago.com/programs/override-billboard-project)*

**"Ground Floor"**: Every two years the Hyde Park Art Center fills with daringly new oils and websites and performances by a batch of artists you haven't heard of yet — unless you teach in one of the local MFA programs from which they've just graduated. The fourth roundup includes bemusing paint-and-wordsmith Erin Hayden, animatrice extraordinaire Lilli Carre, unseductive seducer Leonard Suryajaya and who knows who else. *Sept. 4-Nov. 6, Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 S. Cornell Ave., 773-324-5520, [www.hydeparkart.org](http://www.hydeparkart.org)*

**"Christa Donner: Our New System"**: Capitalism and anthropocentrism having proved an endgame, Donner proposes new ways of living inspired by adventure playgrounds, matriarchal insect colonies, science fiction and six feminist "foremothers." Cut-paper shadow projections, larger-than-life-size drawings, individual somatic tours and rethinking workshops — with child care provided, natch — flesh out her plans. *Sept. 9-Oct. 22, Gallery 400, 400 S. Peoria St., 312-996-6114, [gallery400.uic.edu](http://gallery400.uic.edu)*

**"BLOW UP: Inflatable Contemporary Art"**: Air fills lungs, the space between us, bouncy castles, balloons, blimps — and art. Momoyo Torimitsu's giant pink bunnies, Guy Overfelt's puffy muscle car and sculptures by a half-dozen others use nylon, electric fans and the ether in uncanny explorations of contemporary existence. Not to be missed, except by the faithful, is the premiere of Jeanne Dunning and Diane Christiansen's "Birth Death Breath," an opera performed by inflatable Christmas lawn ornaments. *Sept. 10-Nov. 27, Elmhurst Art Museum, 150 Cottage Hill Ave., Elmhurst, 630-834-0202, [www.elmhurstartmuseum.org](http://www.elmhurstartmuseum.org)*

**"Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis"**: The civil rights activist, Harlemiter and marginalized abstract expressionist finally gets his due in this traveling exhibition, the first comprehensive showing of his work. About 90 paintings and works on paper from the early 1930s through the late 1970s reveal how Lewis, who died in 1979, moved between representation and abstraction, geometric and organic form, social and expressive issues. *Sept. 17-Jan. 8, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., 312-744-6630, [www.chicagoculturalcenter.org](http://www.chicagoculturalcenter.org)*

**"There was a whole collection made: Photography from Lester and Betty Guttman"**: In addition to working together at Argonne National Laboratory and being keen amateur mycologists, the Guttmans, who were married for 50 years, also amassed an extraordinary photography collection. Several hundred of the 830 works recently gifted to the museum will be displayed, including prints by 19th-century pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot, Berlin Dadaist Hannah Hoch and Malian portraitist Malick

Sidibe. *Sept. 22-Dec. 30, Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood Ave., 773-702-0200, [www.smartmuseum.uchicago.edu](http://www.smartmuseum.uchicago.edu)*

**"Concrete Happenings"**: In 1970, absurdity and environmentalism came together when the German Fluxus artist Wolf Vostell encased a 1957 Cadillac in concrete. After losing its long-term parking spot a few years ago, the 16-ton sculpture has been restored and given a new venue in a garage on the University of Chicago campus. A procession, lectures, screenings and exhibitions honk the horn for its return. *September-June, various sites, 773-702-2787, [arts.uchicago.edu/concrete-happenings](http://arts.uchicago.edu/concrete-happenings)*

**"Moholy-Nagy: Future Present"**: Always ahead of his time, the Hungarian-born artist, who moved from Germany to Chicago to found the New Bauhaus and escape the Nazis, believed in art as a means of social betterment and transformation. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy moved fluidly between abstract art and design, experimented with industrial materials and techniques, and thought that every person could be creative. His first major survey in 50 years includes more than 300 photomontages, films, photograms, projections, hybrid painting-sculptures, graphics and the "Room of the Present," conceived in 1930 but unrealized until now. *Oct. 2-Jan. 3, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 South Michigan Ave., 312-443-3600, [www.artic.edu](http://www.artic.edu)*

**"Selina Trepp: Do you have cents for nonsense? I have cents for sensitive."**: In 2012, Humboldt Park resident, DePaul art professor and new mother Trepp stopped bringing any additional art materials into her studio. The results — photographic portraits, drawings of faces and a silent sculptural animation — are improvisational, witty and unstoppably colorful. Economic paucity adds up to aesthetic abundance. *Oct. 10-Nov. 19, Cleve Carney Gallery, 425 Fawell Blvd., Glen Ellyn, 630-942-2321, [www.clevecarneygallery.org](http://www.clevecarneygallery.org)*

**"Art AIDS America"**: AIDS hit the art world hard, and the art world responded with paint, blood, neon, photographs, bodies, quilts, marches, posters and every other medium imaginable. With 40,000 new cases of HIV still being diagnosed nationwide annually, a survey seems imperative. Including work by nearly 100 artists, from 1980s stars like Robert Gober, Jenny Holzer and Felix Gonzalez-Torres on up to the present. *Dec. 1-April 2, Alphawood Gallery, 2401 N. Halsted St., 773-687-7676, [www.ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org](http://www.ArtAIDSAmericaChicago.org)*

*Lori Waxman is a freelance critic.  
[ctc-arts@chicagotribune.com](mailto:ctc-arts@chicagotribune.com)  
Twitter @chitribent*