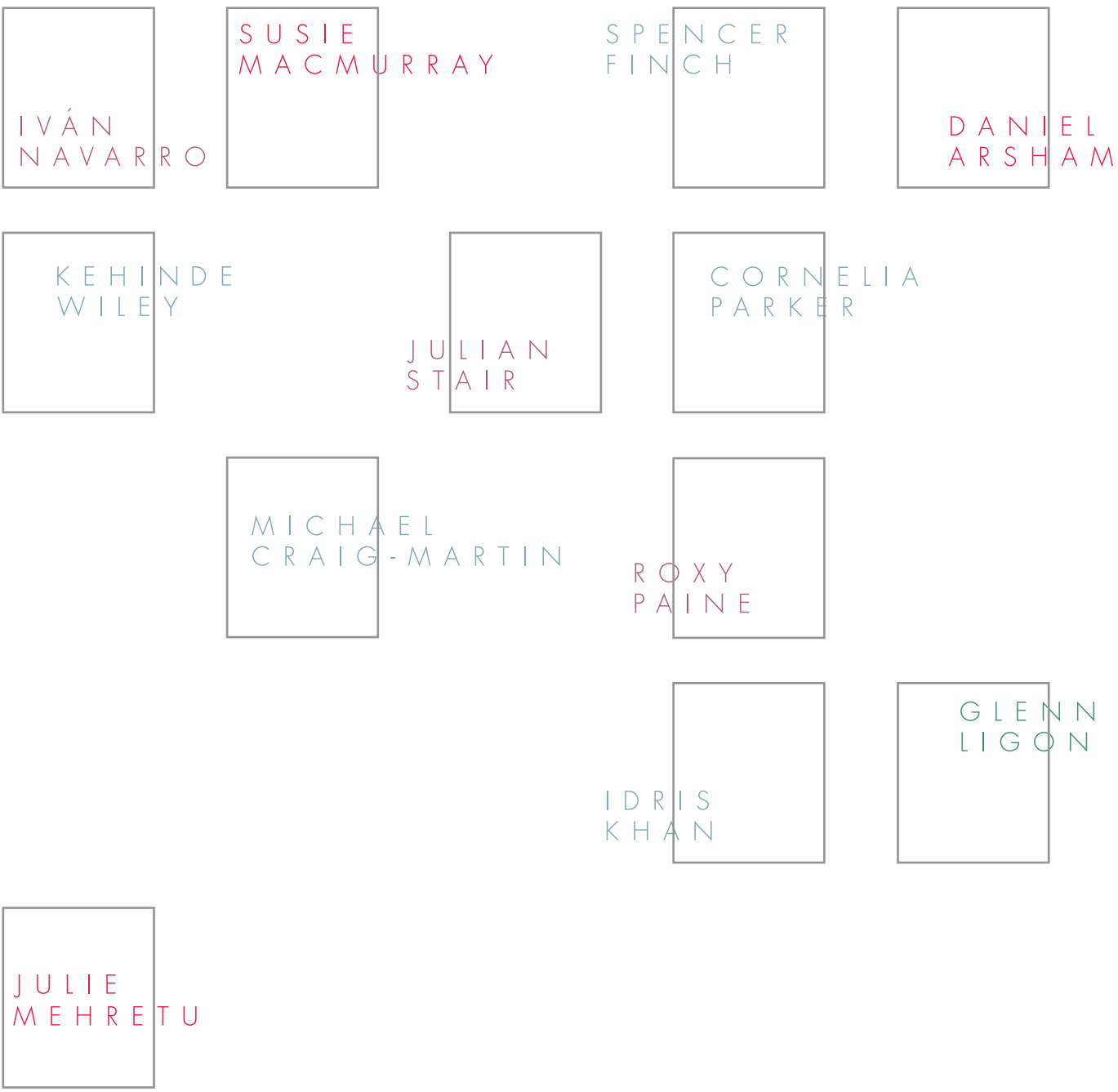
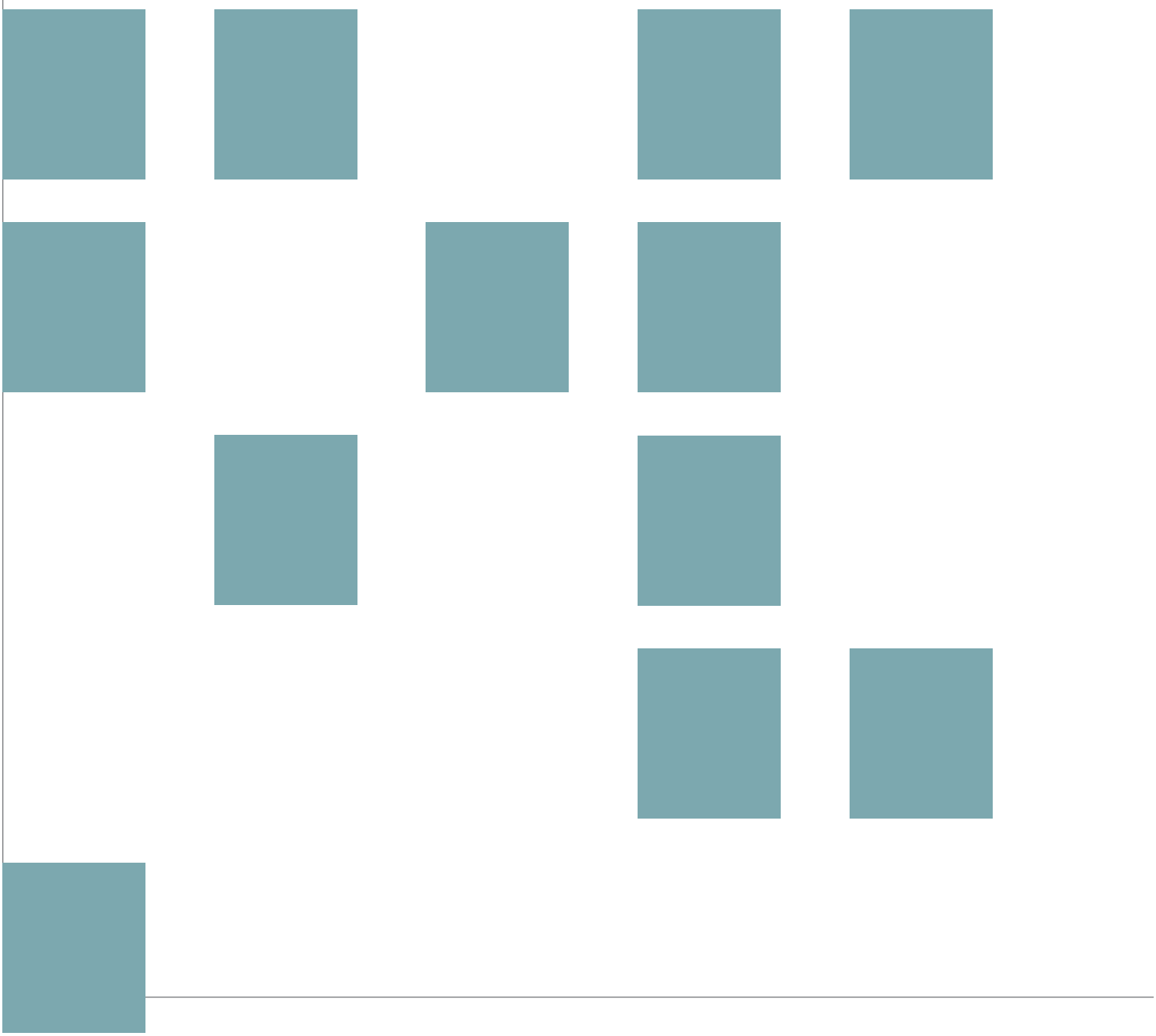
UNITED STATES EMBASSY
LONDON
ART IN EMBASSIES





INTRODUCTION

Before we arrived in London last year a clever person, with many years of business experience in both the U.S. and U.K., advised us never to use the term, "special relationship." It is hackneyed, sentimental, and will make you sound naïve, he explained. His advice was well meaning, but our experience here quickly compelled us to dispense with it. We firmly believe that "special" remains the best word.

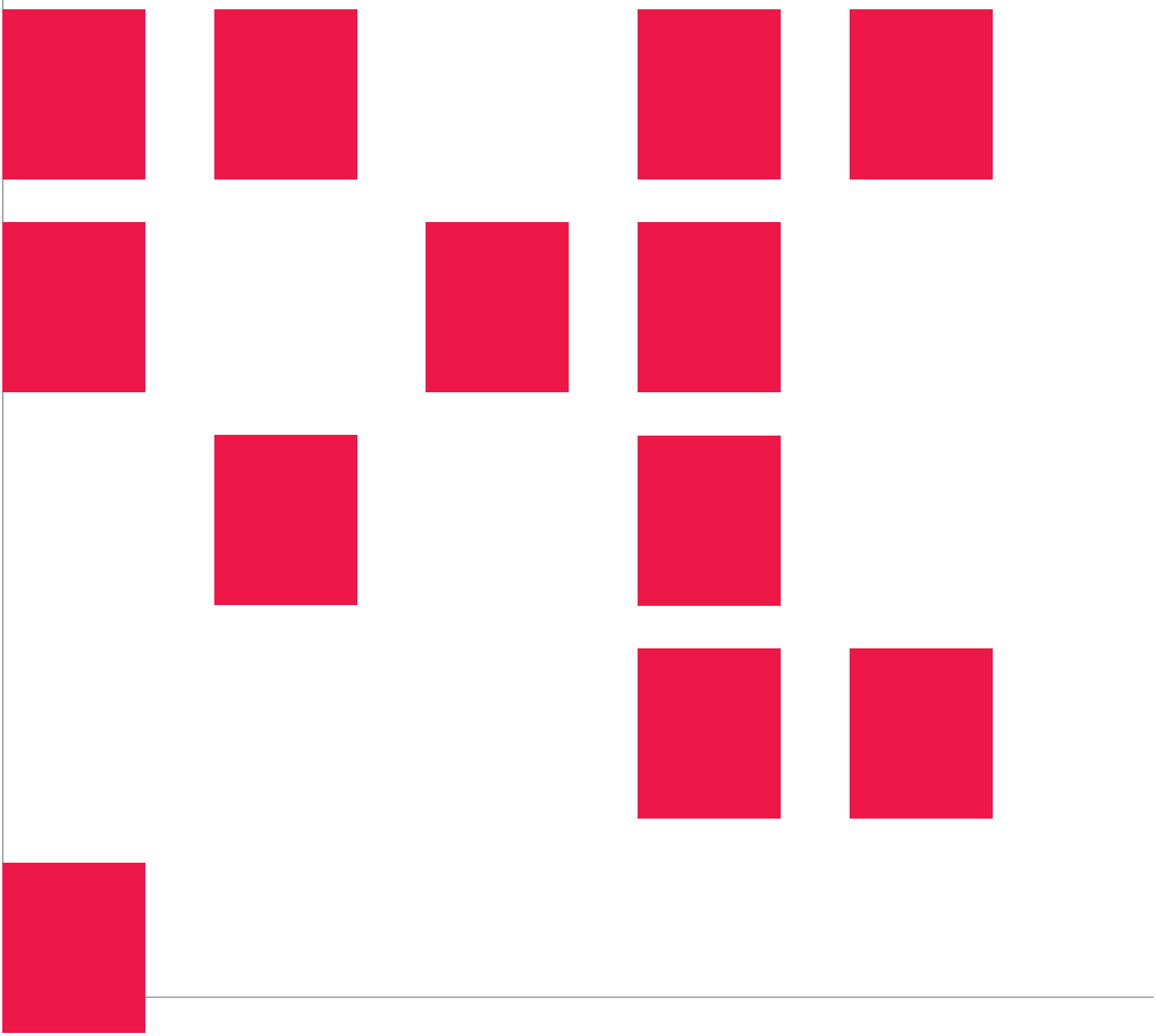
The history surrounding its origin, coined by Winston Churchill after the war, still glows brightly, and, rather than leaving us longing for the past, provides a kind of familial support for growth. "Special" also reflects the nature of our living, breathing exchange of people, ideas, and commerce. And it describes the global significance of our alliance that is the foundation for international work around the globe.

But the strength of the special relationship comes from human ties rather than a bilateral treaty, and even the best relationships need active, ongoing cultivation. This is where cultural diplomacy plays such an important role. It is about people coming together and authentically connecting in heart and mind. Art seeks truth, beauty, and honesty, speaking in a universal language and providing a place to stand on common ground. This exhibition intends to celebrate, examine, and enliven the special relationship in a beautiful space that is devoted to it. It features contemporary artists from both the United States and the United Kingdom, many relatively young, who are still working and developing. Curated together, the works speak to our intertwined, cross-pollenating, and co-evolving cultures.

We are so grateful to the artists for making this exhibition possible, including Daniel Arsham (U.S.), Michael Craig-Martin (U.K.), Spencer Finch (U.S.), Idris Khan (U.K.), Glenn Ligon (U.S.), Susie MacMurray (U.K.), Julie Mehretu (U.S.), Iván Navarro (U.S.), Roxy Paine (U.S.), Cornelia Parker (U.K.), Julian Stair (U.K.), and Kehinde Wiley (U.S.). We would also like to thank the Marian Goodman Gallery, OHWOW, Roberts & Tilton, Sean Kelly Gallery, Manchester City Galleries, Manchester Art Gallery, Frith Street Gallery, Lisson Gallery, Paul Kasmin Gallery, Gagosian Gallery, Marianne Boesky Gallery, and the State Department's office of Art in Embassies, which made it all possible.

Brooke Brown Barzun

Winfield House
January 2015



MEDIA MATTERS

It is with great pleasure that I had the opportunity to curate this Art in Embassies (AIE) exhibition in collaboration with the Barzuns and co-curator Brooke Barzun. Featuring the work of twelve contemporary artists from the U.S. and the U.K., the exhibition not only marks a first for Winfield House, but also demonstrates our newly expanded cultural mission of including site-specific commissions, host countries artists, cross-national artist exchanges, and collaborative partnerships with museums and universities domestically and abroad. From textiles, neon, installation, bronze, photography, pins, paintings, and drawings to sculpture and ceramics, *Media Matters* underscores a dynamic range in material and aesthetic approach by this prestigious group of artists, who themselves embody a diversity of backgrounds: Daniel Arsham, Michael Craig-Martin, Spencer Finch, Idris Khan, Glenn Ligon, Susie MacMurray, Julie Mehretu, Iván Navarro, Roxy Paine, Cornelia Parker, Julian Stair, and Kehinde Wiley. This presentation is a microcosm of what we seek to achieve in our embassies and residences around the world.

Our hope with each exhibition and collection is to design means to extend the cross-cultural exchange beyond the walls of the residence or embassy and the material work itself. Working with artists in countries the world over enables us to build new partnerships globally and foster long-term relationships with artists, students, and communities overseas. As we continue to push the boundaries, we strive to find innovative ways to generate goodwill and connect with the communities and people of other nations.

We invite you to enjoy the exhibition and its setting — one of our most culturally significant properties as listed in the *Secretary of State's Register of Culturally Significant Properties*. Great civilizations are remembered for their cultural legacies. And today we celebrate these twelve artists who continue to leave their mark.

Virginia Shore
Curator

DANIEL ARSHAM

(BORN 1980)

Brooklyn, New York, based artist Daniel Arsham straddles the line between art, architecture, and performance. Raised in Miami, Arsham attended the Cooper Union in New York City, where he received the Gelman Trust Fellowship Award in 2003. Architecture is a prevalent subject throughout his work; environments with eroded walls and stairs going nowhere, landscapes where nature overrides structures, and a general sense of playfulness within existing architecture. Arsham makes architecture do things it is not supposed to do, mining everyday experience for opportunities to confuse and confound our expectations of space and form. Simple yet paradoxical gestures dominate his sculptural work: a façade that appears to billow in the wind, a figure wrapped up in the surface of a wall, a contemporary object cast in volcanic ash as if it had been found on some future archeological site. Structural experiment, historical inquiry, and satirical wit all combine in Arsham's ongoing interrogation of the real and the imagined.

PIXEL CLOUD
2011
HIGH DENSITY
POLYETHYLENE BALLS
AND STEEL
OVERALL: 77 X 65 X 55 IN.
(195,6 X 165,1 X 139,7 CM);
125 LBS. (56,7 KG)
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST
AND OHWOW,
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

PORTRAIT BY STEPHANIE ARSHAM

MICHAEL CRAIG–MARTIN

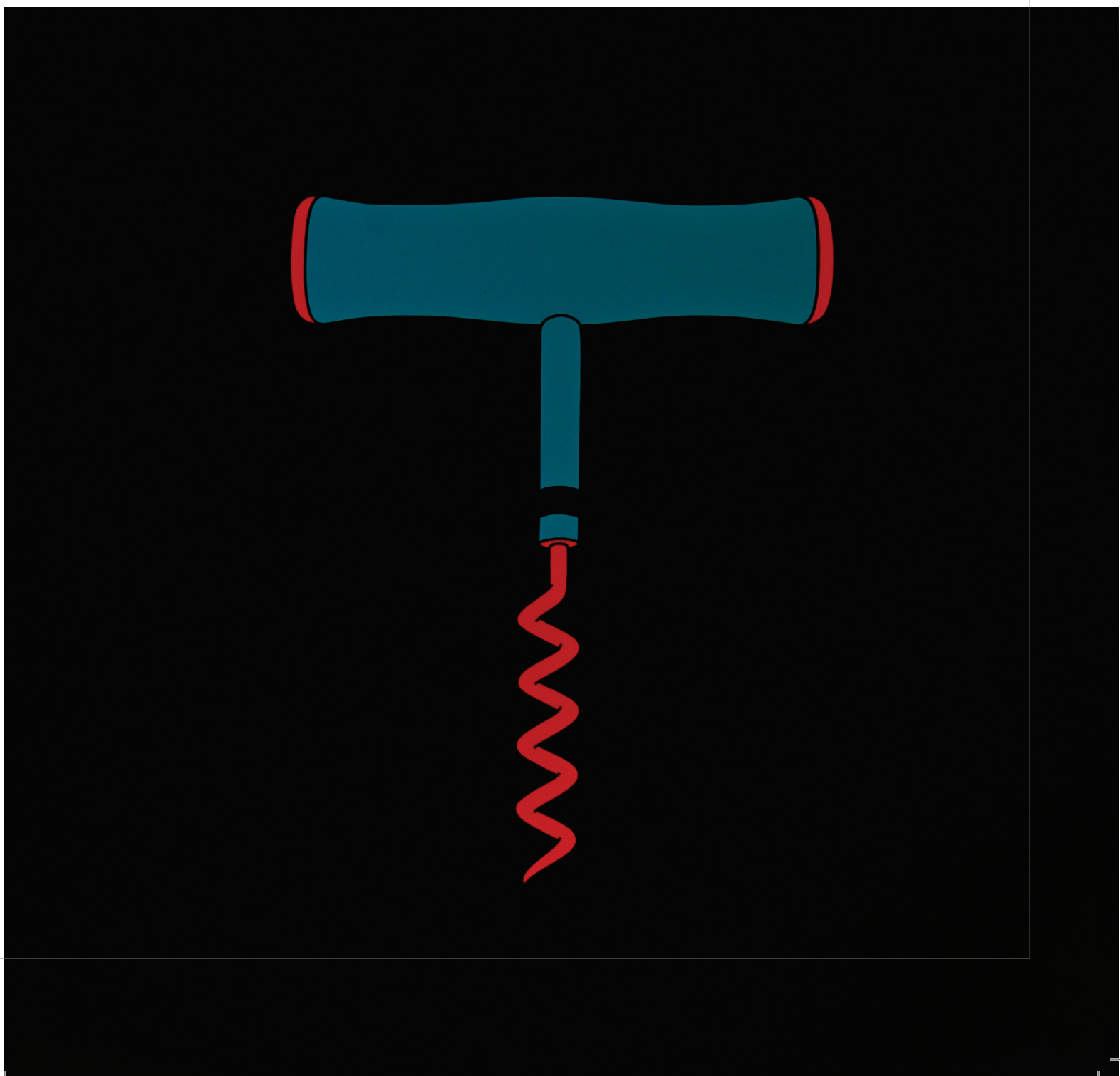
(BORN 1941)

Michael Craig-Martin, born in Dublin, Ireland, but grew up and educated in the United States, and living currently in London, U.K., is a contemporary conceptual artist and painter. Craig-Martin's style of detached conceptualism, minimal construction by the artist and the use of readymade techniques inspired by Marcel Duchamp had a marked impression on his students, as did an educational structure based on multi-media, removing traditional departmental demarcations such as "painting," "sculpture," and "time-based [film] media." He is noted for his influence over the Young British Artists, many of whom he taught, and for his conceptual artwork, *An Oak Tree*.

From his early box-like constructions of the late 1960s he moved increasingly to the use of ordinary household objects, playing against the logic of his sources.… In the late 1970s he began to make line drawings of ordinary objects, creating over the years an ever-expanding vocabulary of images which form the foundation of his work to this day. Craig-Martin continued working in various media, always maintaining an elegant restraint and conceptual clarity. During the 1990s the focus of his work shifted decisively to painting, with the same range of boldly outlined motifs and luridly vivid color schemes in unexpected combinations applied both to works on canvas, and to increasingly complex installations of wall paintings.

PORTRAIT BY CHLOE BARTER

CORKSCREW
2012
ACRYLIC ON ALUMINUM
OVERALL: 48 X 48 IN.
(121,9 X 121,9 CM)
© MICHAEL CRAIG-MARTIN
COURTESY
GAGOSIAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK, NEW YORK



SPENCER FINCH

(BORN 1962)

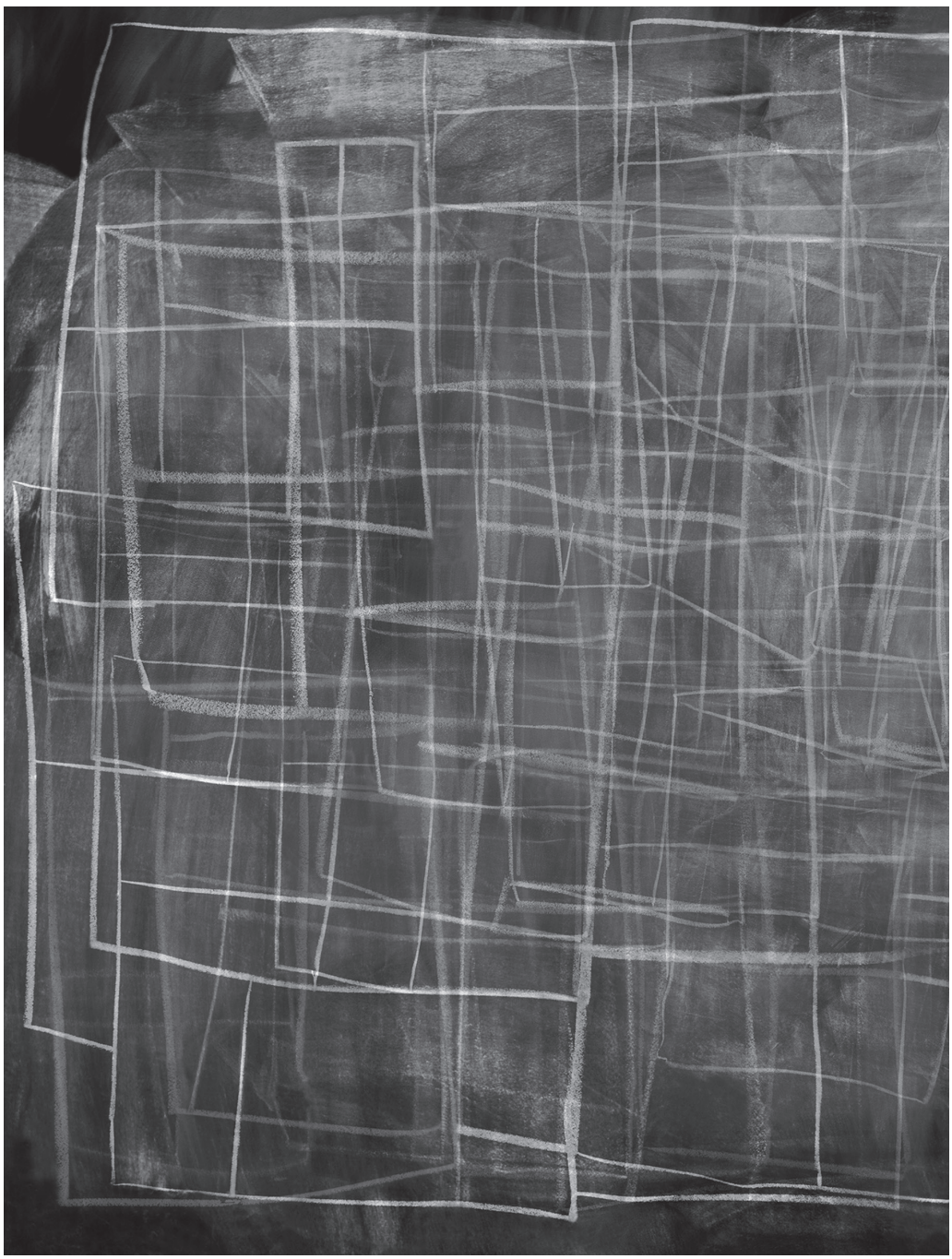
Spencer Finch, born in New Haven, Connecticut, is best known for ethereal light installations that visualize his experience of natural phenomena. His investigations into the nature of light, color, memory and perception, proceed in watercolors, drawings, video and photographs. Finch distills his observations of the world into glowing abstract color but also diverts them through cultural and historical filters: in homage to Emily Dickinson's 1862 poem *Before I got my eye put out*, he measured the sunlight in her Massachusetts garden then recreated the effect of a passing cloud by means of fluorescent tubes covered in gel and suspended theatre filters. He has painted the changing shades of grey on Sigmund Freud's ceiling in Vienna, viewed from the psychoanalyst's couch and later, in *102 Colors from My Dreams* (2002), recorded the colors he saw in his sleep then color-matched inks to make a sequence of Rorschach blots. Compelled by what he describes as "the impossible desire to see oneself seeing," Finch holds up an enchanting prism between the outer world and inner thought.

PORTRAIT BY LUKE STETTNER

MOONLIGHT (WINFIELD HOUSE), 2014
FILTERS AND TAPE
SITE SPECIFIC, 84 PANES, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Drawing on diverse cultural sources including literature, history, art, music, and religion, London-based artist Idris Khan has developed a unique narrative involving densely layered imagery that inhabits the space between abstraction and figuration and speaks to the themes of history, cumulative experience, and the metaphysical collapse of time into single moments.

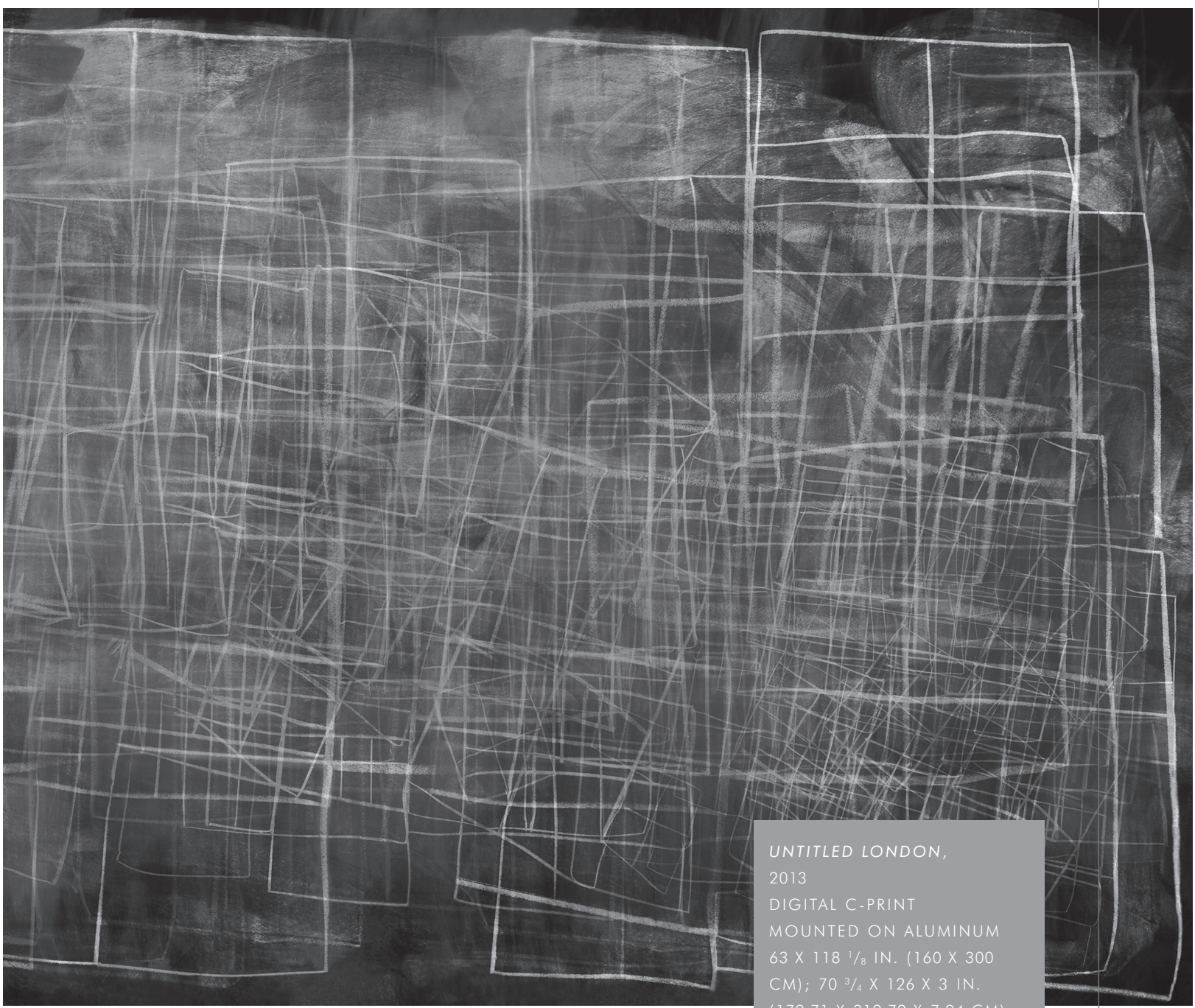
While Khan's mindset is more painterly than photographic, he often employs the tools of photomechanical reproduction to create his work. Photographing or scanning from secondary source material — sheet music, pages from the Qur'an, reproductions of late Caravaggio paintings — he then builds up the layers of scans digitally, which allows him to meticulously control minute variances in contrast, brightness, and opacity. The resultant images are often large-scale C-prints with surfaces that have a remarkable optical intensity.



PORTRAIT BY SUKI DHANDA, 2013

IDRIS KHAN

(BORN 1978)



UNTITLED LONDON,
2013
DIGITAL C-PRINT
MOUNTED ON ALUMINUM
63 X 118 1/8 IN. (160 X 300 CM); 70 3/4 X 126 X 3 IN. (179,71 X 319,72 X 7,94 CM) FRAMED
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SEAN KELLY GALLERY, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

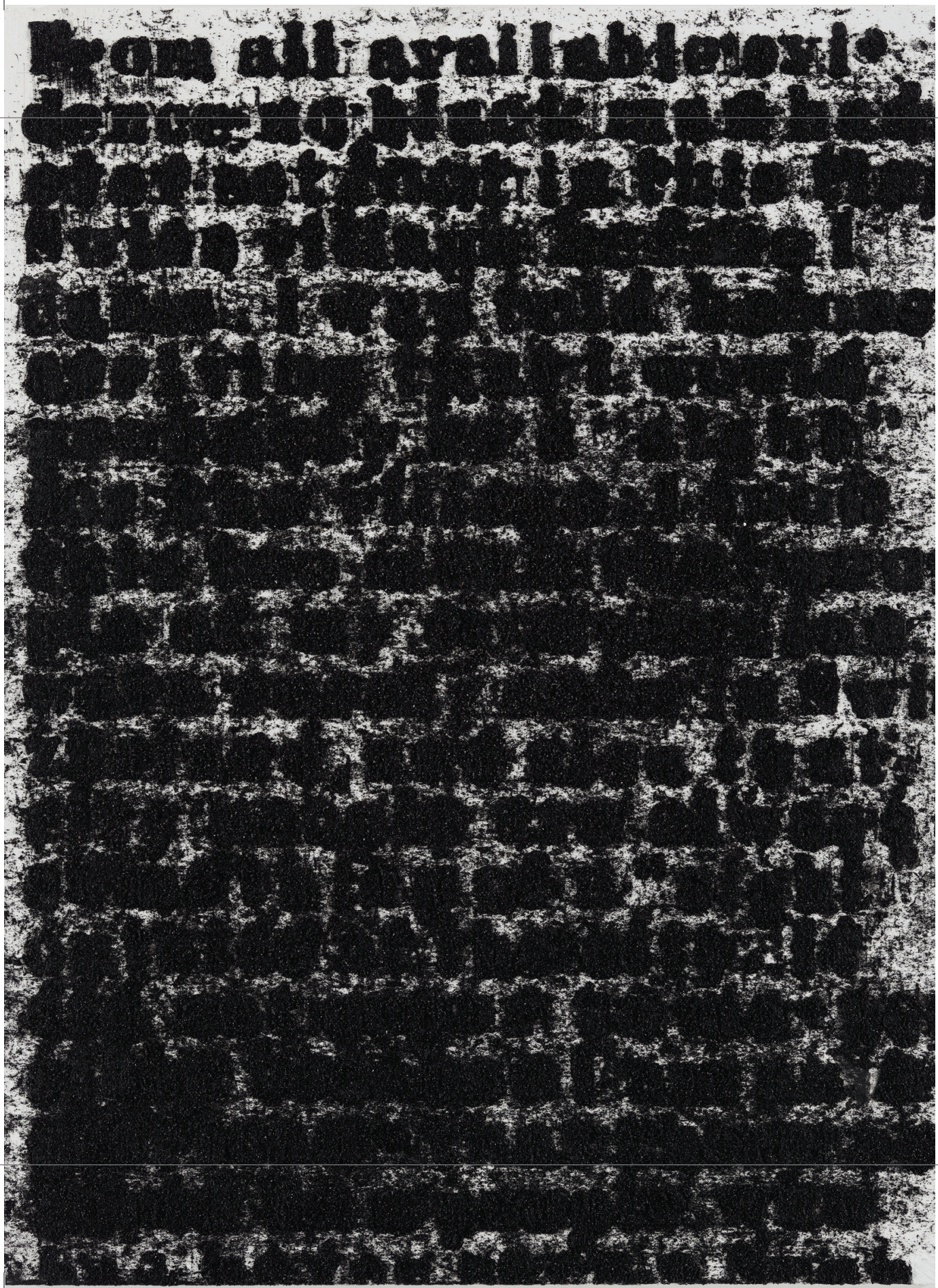
GLENN LIGON

(BORN 1960)

PORTRAIT BY PAUL SEPUYA

Glenn Ligon was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1960. Ligon's paintings and sculptures examine cultural and social identity through found sources — literature, Afrocentric coloring books, photographs — to reveal the ways in which the history of slavery, the civil rights movement, and sexual politics inform our understanding of American society. Ligon appropriates texts from a variety of literary writers including Walt Whitman, Zora Neal Hurston, Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison, as well as from more popular sources such as the comedian Richard Pryor. In Ligon's paintings, the instability of his medium — oil crayon used with letter stencils — transforms the texts he quotes, making them abstract, difficult to read, and layered in meaning, much like the subject matter that he appropriates. In other works that feature silkscreen, neon, and photography, Ligon threads his own image and autobiography into symbols that speak to collective experiences. "It's not about me," he says. "It's about we."

STRANGER STUDY #14
2012
OILSTICK, ACRYLIC, AND COAL DUST ON CANVAS
OVERALL: 40 X 30 IN. (101,6 X 76,2 CM)
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK



WIDOW
2009
BLACK NAPPA LEATHER, 43 KG ADAMANTINE DRESS-MAKER'S PINS, TAILOR'S DUMMY
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MANCHESTER CITY GALLERIES, LONDON, U.K.
OVERALL: 100 X 100 X 30 IN. (254 X 254 X 76,2 CM)

SUSIE MACMURRAY

(BORN 1959)

An engagement with the human body, and continuing exploration of new materials is fundamental to Susie MacMurray's sculptural practice; her role is that of an alchemist, combining material, form, and context in deceptively simple ways to stimulate both physical and cultural associations within those who encounter her work.

Working in installation and sculpture, she has gained a reputation for poetic site-specific interventions in historic spaces. Her work typically references the history of a space and merges the particularities of that history, the specifics of the site, and the meanings of materials to gain insight and raise questions about the relationship between place and people.

Widow represents the pain of a lost loved one. It symbolizes a widow's feeling of isolation and rawness, but also celebrates her strength and ability to survive. The sculpture is the fourth in a series that explores concepts of female identity.

SUSIE MACMURRAY
MASQUERADE
2014
PHEASANT GOLDSIDE
FEATHERS ON FOAM BASE
100 X 100 X 30 IN.
(254 X 254 X 76,2 CM)
COURTESY OF A
PRIVATE COLLECTION

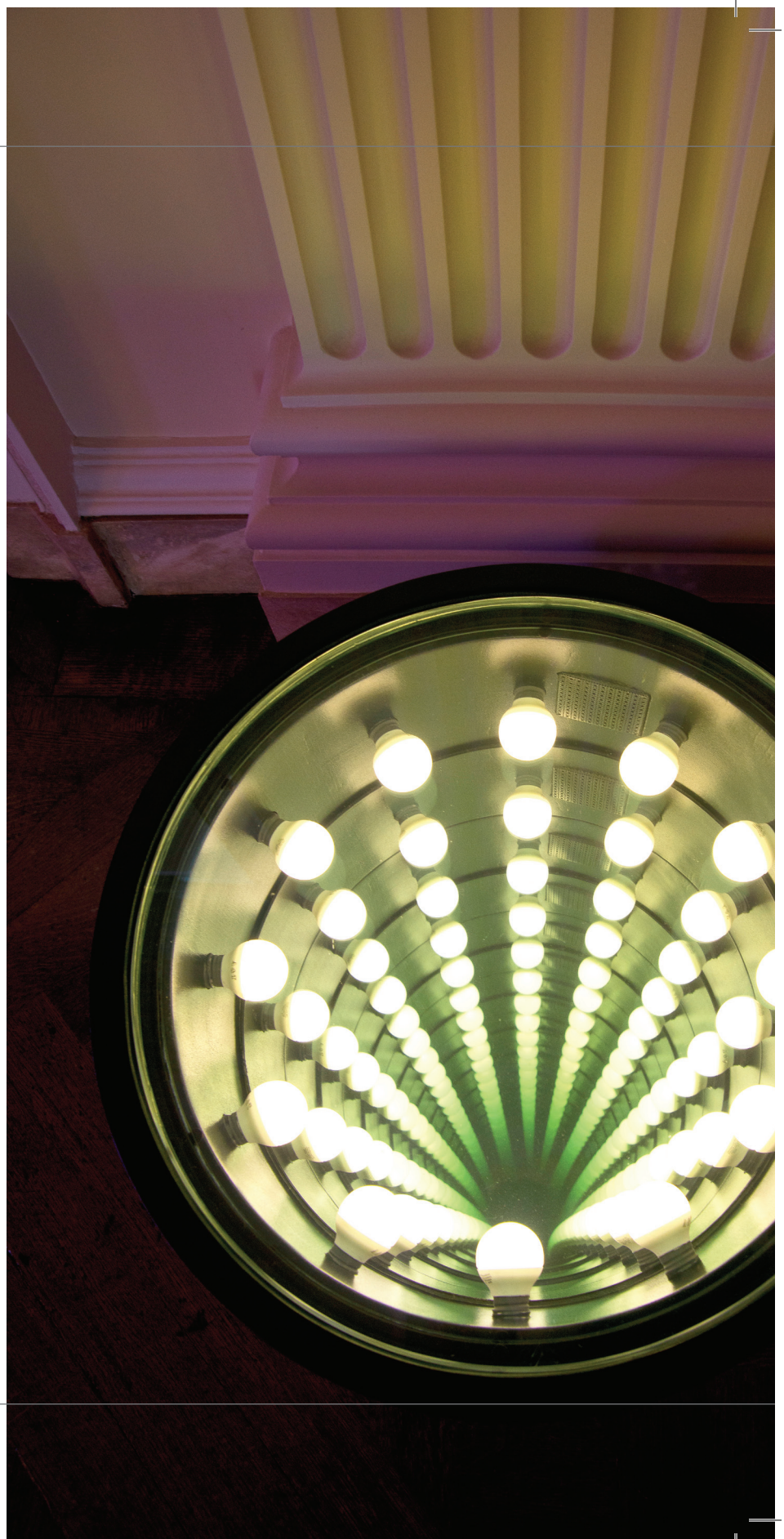
JULIE MEHRETU

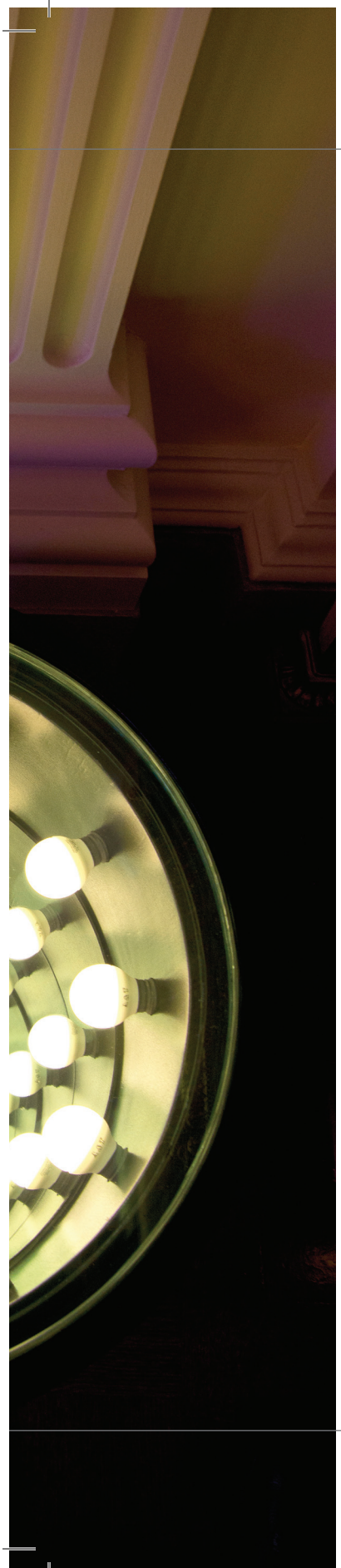
(BORN 1970)

Julie Mehretu's paintings and drawings refer to elements of mapping and architecture, achieving a calligraphic complexity that resembles turbulent atmospheres and dense social networks. Architectural renderings and aerial views of urban grids enter the work as fragments, losing their real-world specificity and challenging narrow geographic and cultural readings. The painting's wax-like surfaces — built up over weeks and months in thin translucent layers — have a luminous warmth and spatial depth, with formal qualities of light and space made all the more complex by Mehretu's delicate depictions of fire, explosions, and perspectives in both two and three dimensions. Her works engage the history of nonobjective art — from constructivism to futurism — posing contemporary questions about the relationship between utopian impulses and abstraction.

SYSTEM
2002
INK AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
39 X 51 IN. (99,1 X 129,5 CM)
COURTESY OF
THE ARTIST AND MARIAN
GOODMAN GALLERY,
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

PORTRAIT BY TEJU COLE





IVÁN NAVARRO

(BORN 1972)

Chilean artist Iván Navarro is best-known for his light works — sociopolitically-charged installations made out of fluorescent, neon, or incandescent lights. Drawing on social issues and political events, notably the aftermath of Pinochet's reign and the scars of other dictatorships in Latin America, Navarro creates light works that reflect on the trauma of recent history. Often constructing works that are shaped like chairs, doors, or billboard signs, Navarro repurposes familiar materials to comment on past events, from an "electrical chair" that references the Chilean governments use of electricity as a form of torture, to a table that features a swastika made out of red flowers.

PORTRAIT BY BENJAMIN ECHAZARRETA

TO REACH
2012
LED LIGHTS, PLYWOOD, ONE WAY MIRROR, MIRROR, AND ELECTRIC ENERGY
OVERALL: 12 X 24 IN. (DIAMETER) (30,5 X 61 CM)
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND PAUL KASMIN GALLERY, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

ROXY PAINE

(BORN 1966)

Roxy Paine's *Mycellium* 3, part of a larger collection of work called *Distillation*, becomes a metaphor for the artist's mental process. Paine re-examines alchemical methods to create a meditation on mystical industrialism. If the process of distillation is an attempt to find purity, the sculpture *Distillation* demonstrates the impossibility of that goal. An apt analogy can be found in Hilary Mantel's writing on the alchemic practice in her 1989 novel *Fludd*, "After separation, drying out, moistening, dissolving, coagulating, fermenting, comes purification, recombination: the creation of substances the world until now has never beheld." Paine describes his process as the fermentation of bundles of information, then the extraction of discrete compounds from the resultant mash, which when fractionated, overlaid, and recombined become a transmutation from the familiar to the entirely new.

Paine's extensive body of work explores collisions between the natural world and the industrial. *Distillation* is an amalgam of structures that refer to vascular, neural, taxonomic, arboreal, mycological, and industrial systems. The sculpture includes elements such as valves and flanges from petro chemical plants, tanks used for food processing, and glass vessels from the pharmaceutical industry. These seemingly standardized elements coexist with constructed parts such as blood vessels, neurons, hallucinogenic fungus, mycelium, bacterial formations, tree branches, a pair of kidneys, and a black box — all of these elements have varying levels of finish, from polished to raw steel to the introduction of paint.

MYCELLIUM 3
2011
STAINLESS STEEL, ENAMEL
OVERALL: 99 X 105 X 2 IN.
(251,5 X 266,7 X 5,1 CM)
COURTESY OF THE
ARTIST AND MARIANNE
BOESKY GALLERY,
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

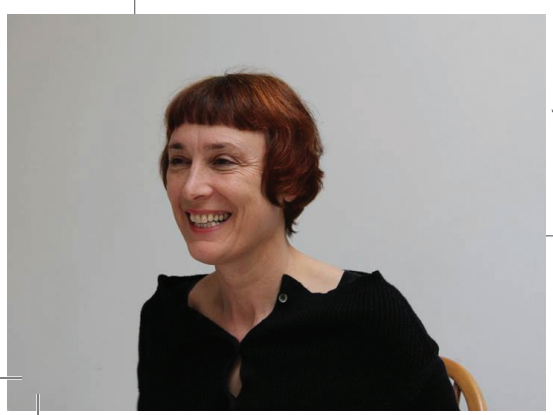
PORTRAIT BY JEREMY LIEBMAN

CORNELIA PARKER

(BORN 1956)

For some years Cornelia Parker's work has been concerned with formalizing things beyond our control, containing the volatile and making it into something that is quiet and contemplative like the "eye of the storm." She is fascinated with processes in the world that mimic cartoon "deaths" — steamrollering, shooting full of holes, falling from cliffs and explosions. Through a combination of visual and verbal allusions her work triggers cultural metaphors and personal associations, which allow the viewer to witness the transformation of the most ordinary objects into something compelling and extraordinary.

THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER
2006
THIRTY SILVER PLATED ITEMS CRUSHED BY 250 TON INDUSTRIAL PRESS, METAL WIRE
43 1/3 IN. DIAMETER (110 CM)
COURTESY OF FRITH STREET GALLERY, LONDON, U.K.



PORTRIAT BY JEFF MCMILLAN

JULIAN STAIR

(BORN 1955)

Julian Stair's works are often described as minimalist. His pieces are noted for their restrained decoration, the elimination of unnecessary details, and the use of a muted color palette. Stair is interested in the place of pottery in contemporary culture and in the ideas of function rather than in the concepts of abstraction and emptiness. The shapes, surfaces, and decoration, or rather the lack of it, all suggest the possibility of use, if not its reality. His monumental ceramic sculptures resonate that of the industrial process, yet provide a poignant reference to the tradition known as Extreme Inhumation. "There is something about clay that is elemental. Many creation myths refer to the forming of man from clay; it's the stuff of the world we live in, it's what we walk on," he says. "Taking that material which symbolizes our origins and then making vessels to house the body to take it back into the ground creates a wonderful kind of circularity."

Stair's work echoes the minimalism of the 1960s in that it can be described as having no internal composition, is a function of the space it inhabits, and has a hint of the prototype about it. Stair also draws on the still life, as genre artists have used traditionally to comment on everyday life and in which every element had a meaning known to both the artist and the viewer. At the core of his diverse practice is the belief that pottery, as one of the most enduring, implicit crafts, can articulate the most complex of ideas.

MONUMENTAL JAR III & IV
COILED AND THROWN ETRURIA MARL. FIRED IN THE KILN OF A BRICKWORKS.
OVERALL: 77 3/8 X 27 9/16 IN. (196,5 X 70 CM); 77 15/16 X 26 3/8 IN. (198 X 67 CM); COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, LONDON, U.K.

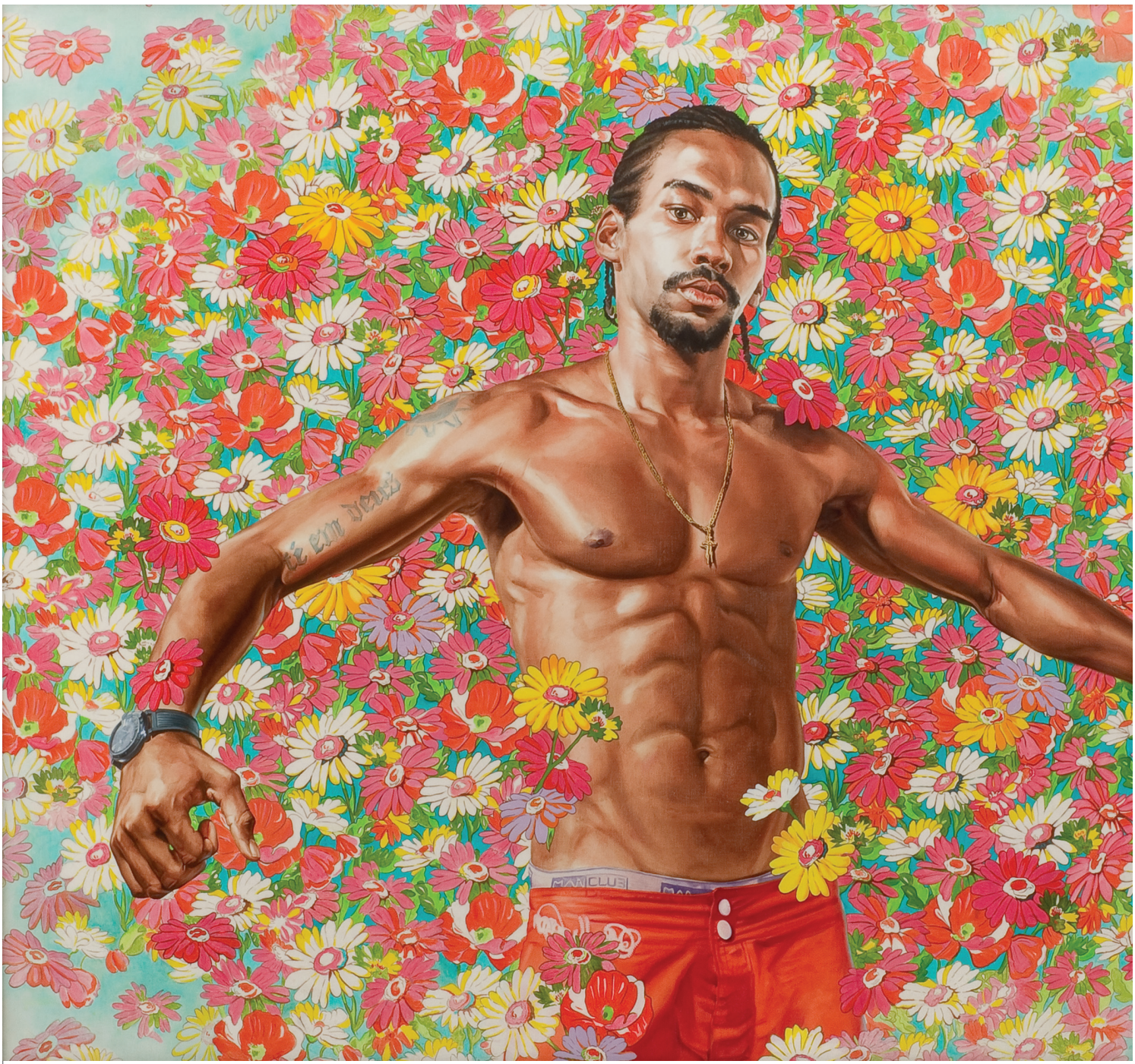
HOUDON PAUL-LOUIS,
2010–2011
PAINTED BRONZE WITH
POLISHED STONE BASE
34 X 26 X 19 IN.
(86,4 X 66 X 48,3 CM)
COLLECTION OF DAN AND
JEANNE FAUCI, LOS ANGELES,
CALIFORMIA. COURTESY
OF ROBERTS & TILTON,
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

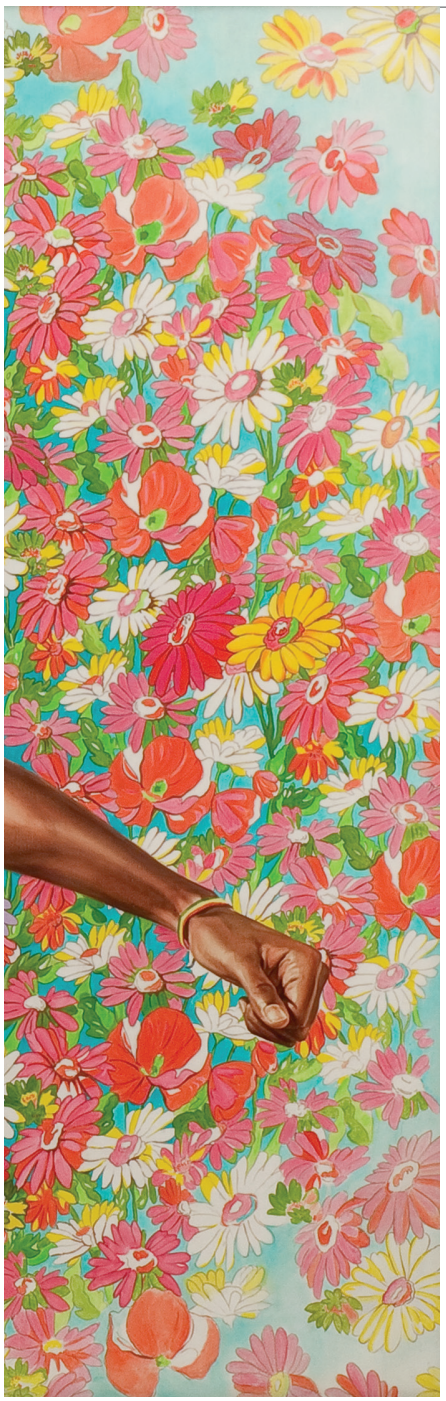
KEHINDE WILEY

(BORN 1977)

A portrait painter for the new millennium, Kehinde Wiley creates works that merge the aesthetics of urban culture with the visual vocabulary of classic European portraiture. Having grown up in South Central Los Angeles and graduated with an Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University in 2001, Wiley is uniquely adept at bridging the two worlds. Wiley's subjects, young black men he encounters on the streets of Brooklyn and urban centers around the world, are portrayed in their own contemporary clothing, in the poses found in both European art history and in public sculpture. Heroically styled and skillfully rendered, Wiley's paintings present a provocative visual juxtaposition and confront the hot-button issues of race, masculinity and power in contemporary culture.

PORTRAIT BY KWAKU ALSTON





KEHINDE WILEY
SANTOS DUMONT–
THE FATHER OF AVIATION III
2009
OIL ON CANVAS,
72 X 96 IN. (182,9 X 243,8 CM)
UNFRAMED
COLLECTION OF DAN AND
JEANNE FAUCI, LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA. COURTESY
OF ROBERTS & TILTON,
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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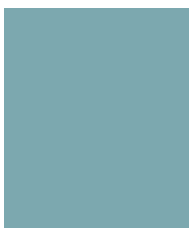
ART IN EMBASSIES

Established in 1963, the U.S. Department of State's office of Art in Embassies (AIE) plays a vital role in our nation's public diplomacy through a culturally expansive mission, creating temporary and permanent exhibitions, artist programming, and publications. The Museum of Modern Art first envisioned this global visual arts program a decade earlier. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy formalized it, naming the program's first director. Now with over 200 venues, AIE curates temporary and permanent exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. chanceries, consulates, and embassy residences worldwide, selecting and commissioning contemporary art from the U.S. and the host countries. These exhibitions provide international audiences with a sense of the quality, scope, and diversity of both countries' art and culture, establishing AIE's presence in more countries than any other U.S. foundation or arts organization.

AIE's exhibitions allow foreign citizens, many of whom might never travel to the United States, to personally experience the depth and breadth of our artistic heritage and values, making what has been called a: "footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art."

"For fifty years, Art in Embassies has played an active diplomatic role by creating meaningful cultural exchange through the visual arts. The exhibitions, permanent collections and artist exchanges connect people from the farthest corners of an international community. Extending our reach, amplifying our voice, and demonstrating our inclusiveness are strategic imperatives for America. Art in Embassies cultivates relationships that transcend boundaries, building trust, mutual respect and understanding among peoples. It is a fulcrum of America's global leadership as we continue to work for freedom, human rights and peace around the world."

John Forbes Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State



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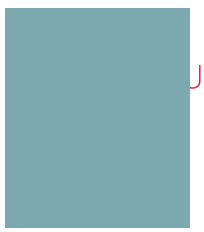

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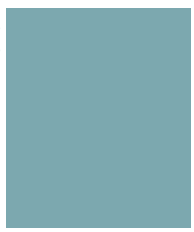

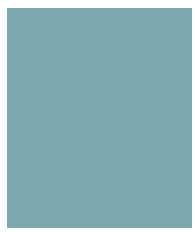

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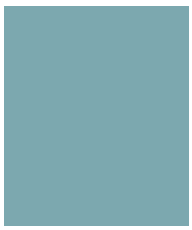

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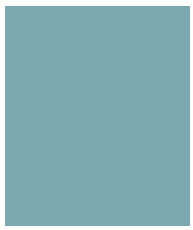

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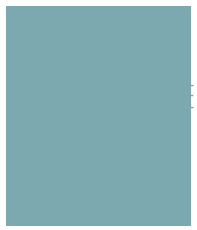

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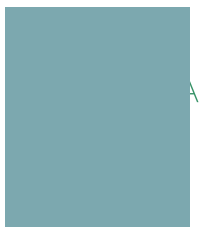

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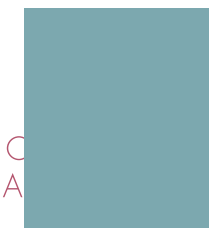

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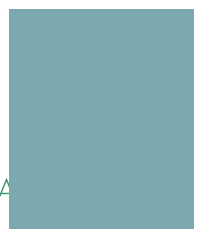

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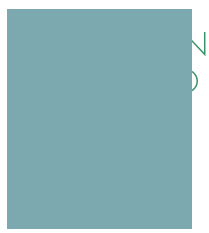

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