

ZONES

GINA OSTERLOH

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and Gina Osterloh. 2018

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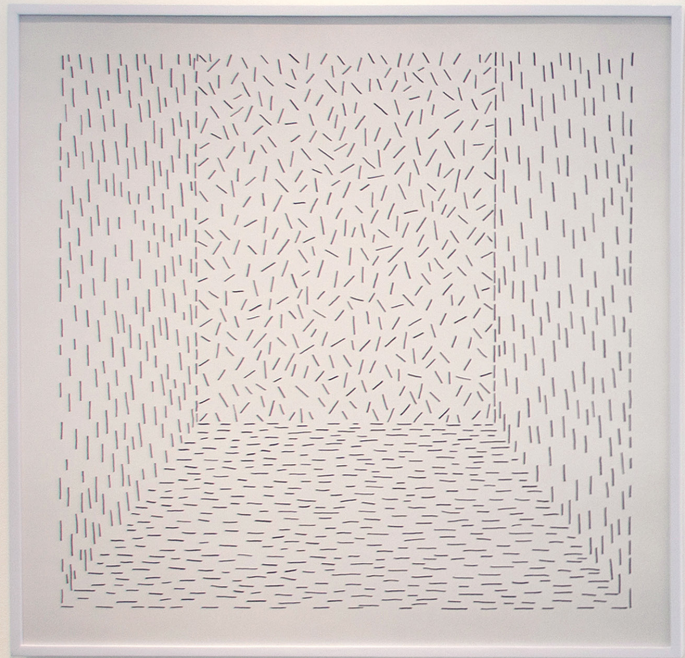
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ZONES
GINA OSTERLOH



Interview with Gina Osterloh
June 15, 2018

What follows is an interview conducted by email between experimental writer [Janis Butler Holm](#) and multimedia artist [Gina Osterloh](#). The occasion is Osterloh's show ZONES, currently on display at Silverlens Galleries in Manila.

HOLM

Much of your past work has subverted the conventions of portraiture--with masked or otherwise hidden faces, figures that seem to blend into their backgrounds, flat cardboard cut-outs without distinguishing features, etc. What has motivated you to reject historical traditions of identity and subject as found in mainstream representations of personhood? I'm thinking here of facial focus, centered and foregrounded bodies, directed lighting, and so forth.

OSTERLOH

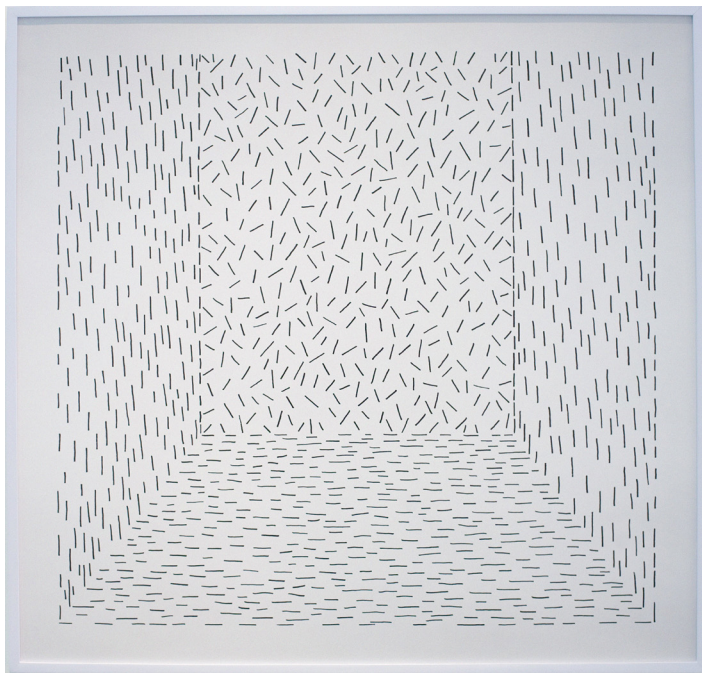
Your question brings me back to the racialization, othering, and alienation I experienced growing up mixed-race in Ohio. From grade school through high school, I had no idea what was going on--as a youngster, you simply register experiences. There was always the question "What are you?" or "Where are you from?" I would respond with "My mother is from

the Philippines, and my father is fifth-generation German-American." As the identity questions persisted even after I moved to California, I found I wanted to respond with a "blank"--sometimes in the form of an awkward pause.

I became conscious that the person asking the question felt the need to situate me in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality--all of these categories--in order to feel "fixed" or stable in her/his own identity by establishing our relative positions in a social hierarchy.

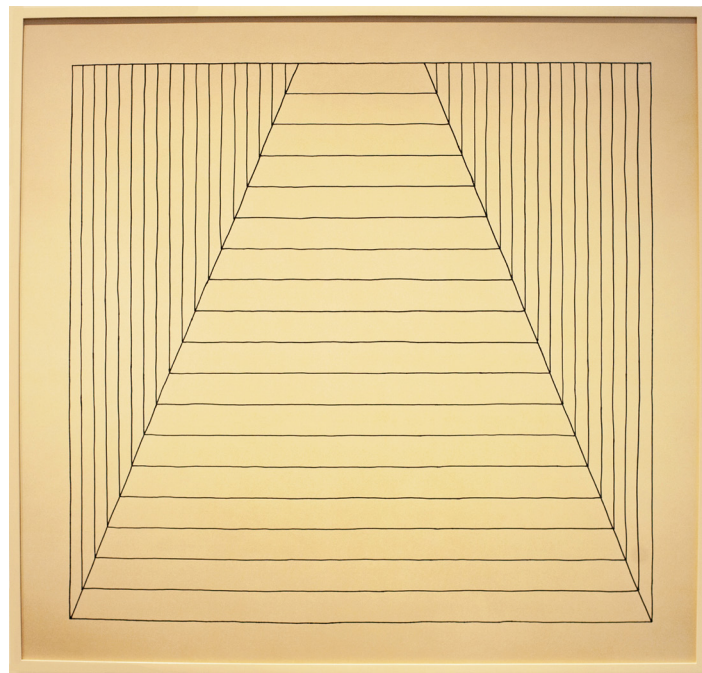
Though I picked up a 35mm film camera when I was an undergrad at DePaul University, it really wasn't until grad school at UC Irvine that I realized photography is the perfect medium for addressing what social theorists call "interpellation"--this call-and-response relationship between larger social constructs and my body, my identity.

Traditional portraiture sets up a similar relationship between viewers and the subject in a photograph. When viewers look at a portrait, they expect to see a face--a socially learned primary marker of identity--that can in turn "locate" their own positions in the world. The masked or hidden faces in my earlier work--and the flat cardboard cut-outs without facial features--were an attempt to interrupt this viewing dynamic. I wanted to present bodies that refuse to be named.



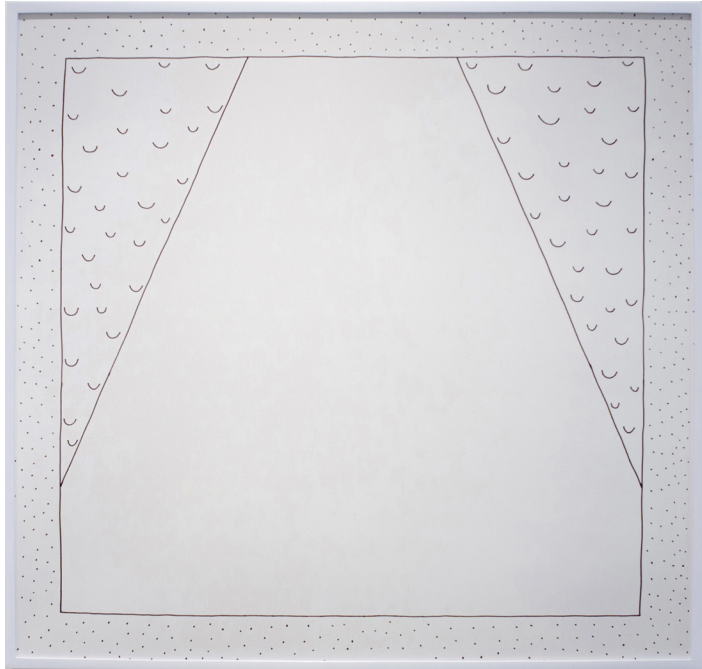
Dash Room Dance

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



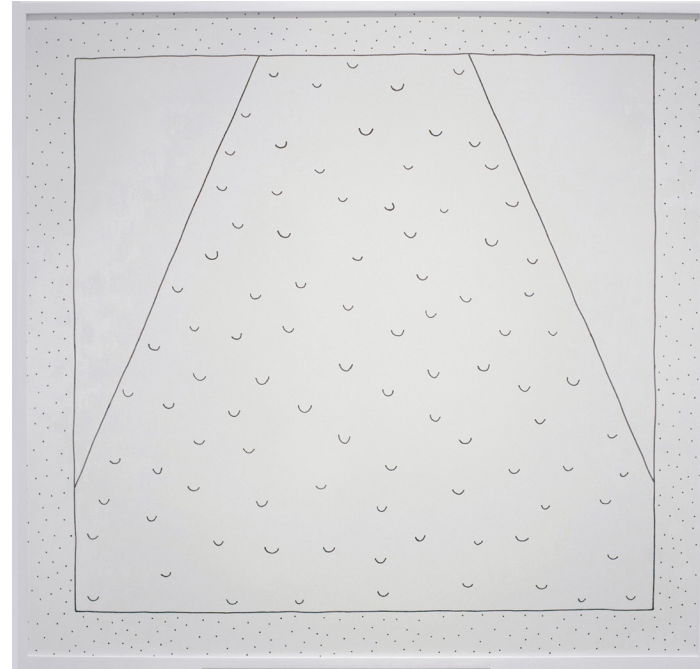
*She Occupies (Sound
 & Sight)*

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



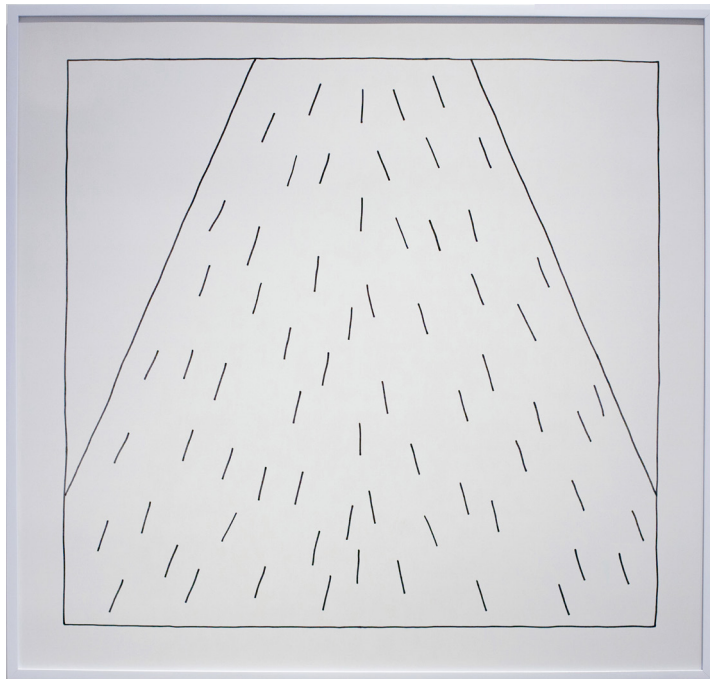
Follicle Folly 2

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



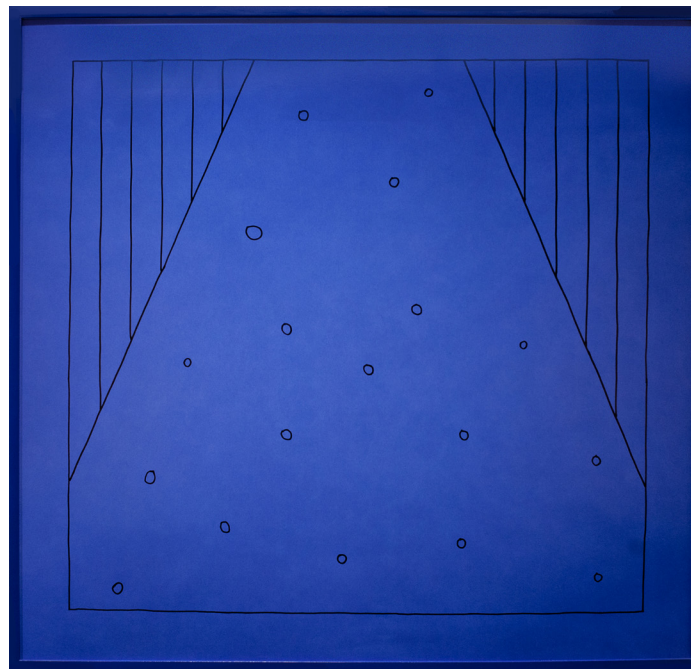
Follicle Folly 1

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



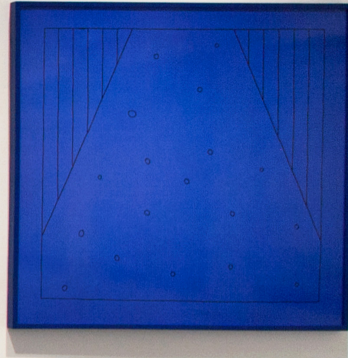
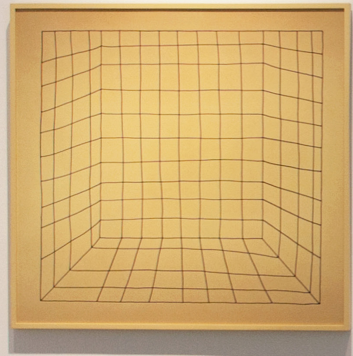
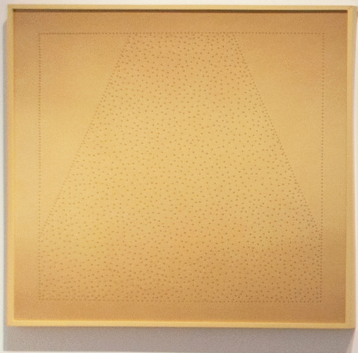
Leg Hair Road

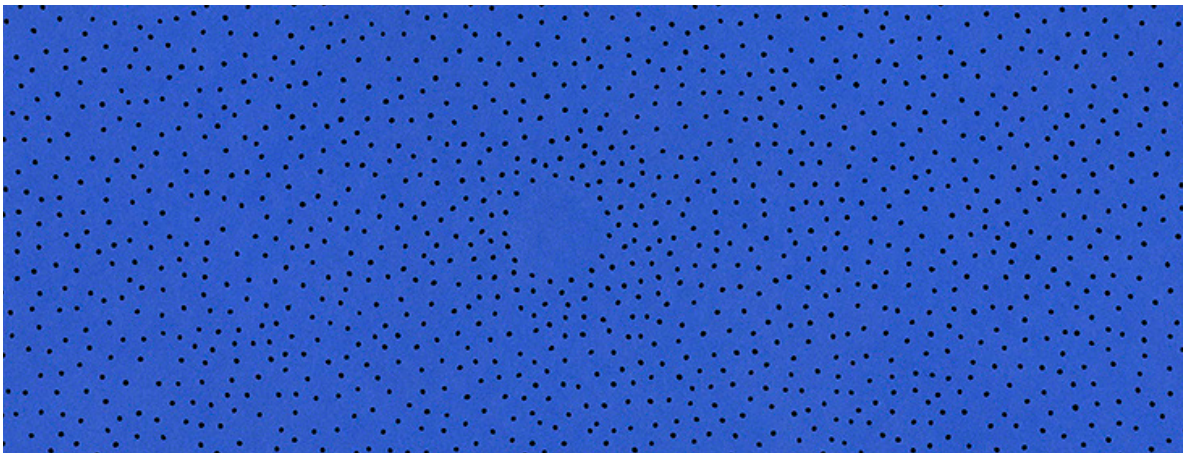
2018
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3



Porous

2018
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3





HOLM

Though you have worked in a variety of media (video, photography, drawing, performance), it is possible to trace a movement from figure to abstraction, such that viewers have fewer and fewer overt clues as to how to interpret your work. This new show, for example, is a series of photographs of drawings in which dots, dashes, circles, lines, and comma shapes appear inside and outside delineated frameworks. How is this work continuous with your previous work? How is it different?

OSTERLOH

Concisely put, the drawings are visual digests of symbols that have appeared in my work over the past decade: the room, the void, the body, the skin, the orifice. They are abstractions in the sense of having been abstracted from more pictorial versions of these things.

But those who are familiar with my earlier pieces might also choose to see these drawings as conceptual abstractions, as abstract images that both embody and trigger the processes involved in identity formation or--as is more likely in my work--in the cancellation of signifiers that inform notions of identity. These new pieces evoke some of my earlier strategies for thwarting identification: camouflage, pattern repetition, the absence of identity markers that tell the viewer how to read the work. For those who have the larger context, it will be clear that questions of perception, particularly of self and other, continue to drive my projects.

Yet these new pieces offer the viewer an even greater interpretive freedom than I've offered before--perhaps to an uncomfortable degree.

HOLM

Some of the drawings suggest room-like structures very similar to those in your earlier photographs. How did you develop the frames and patterns in this new work? Why did you choose to show photographs of the drawings instead of the drawings themselves?

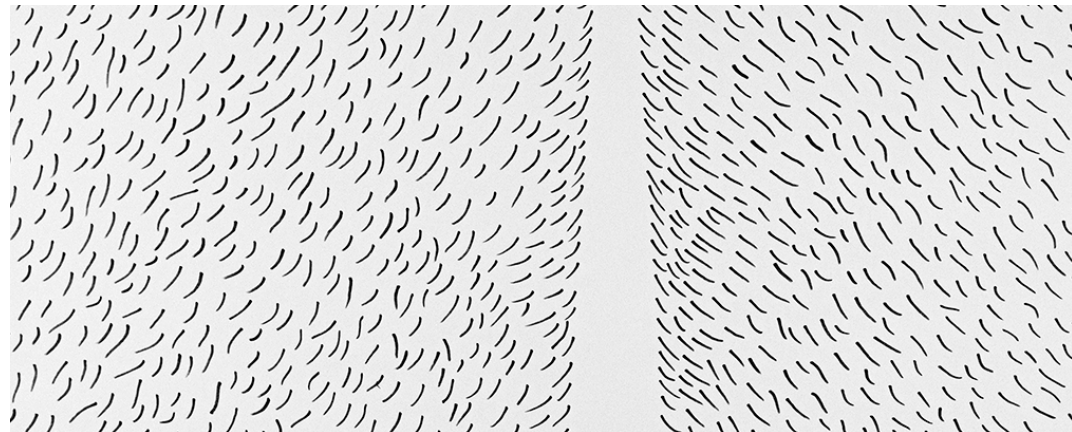
OSTERLOH

From my large-scale photo tableau work to my photographs with walls and floors to the images included in ZONES, everything has begun with drawing in sketchbooks. For ZONES I transferred selections from my sketches to larger drawings on photo backdrop paper, which I then photographed with large-format film. Why did I make photographs of the drawings? In my work, photography has always been a stand-in, a reminder, of the formative constructs we are born into--language, gesture, posture, identity--the visible and invisible frameworks that continually shape us.

For the project that yielded pieces for this show, I chose to compress many of the visual metaphors crucial to my work (especially hair, rooms, orifices) into schemata of uniform dimensions, such that I could imply conceptual movement, symbols in flux, from piece to piece. For me, each image is a portal, a passageway to the next--suggesting, I hope, the fluidity of our perceptive processes and associations.

There's a purposeful order to the sequence of photographs I'm sharing in the Silverlens Galleries. For this show, I'm particularly interested in the spaces women occupy, socially and privately.

My hope is that visitors to the gallery will take the time to sit with each image and to examine it closely. The patterns in some of the photographs involve hundreds of tiny dots. These can't be seen from afar and won't manifest in a tiny cell-phone image. For all the ZONES pieces, scale matters.





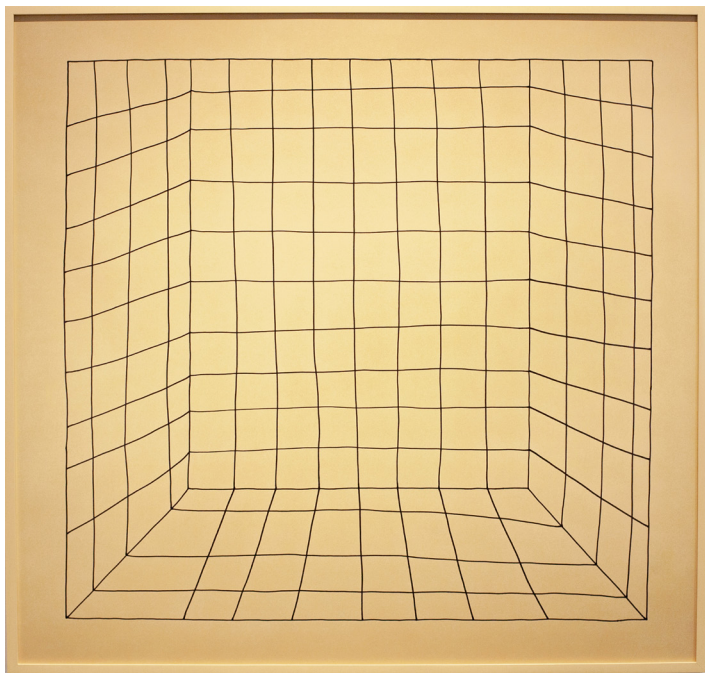
Hair Hallway Boogie, blue

2017
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3



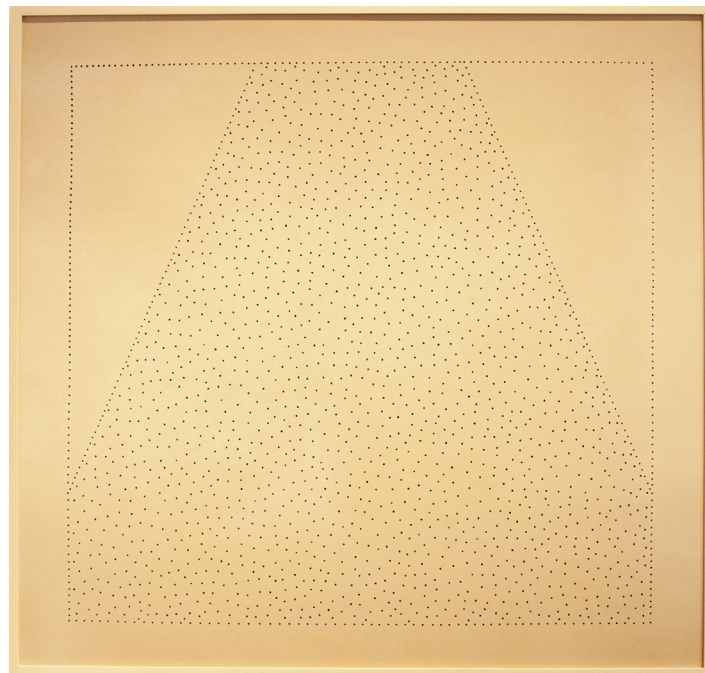
Hair Hallway Boogie, gray

2017
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3



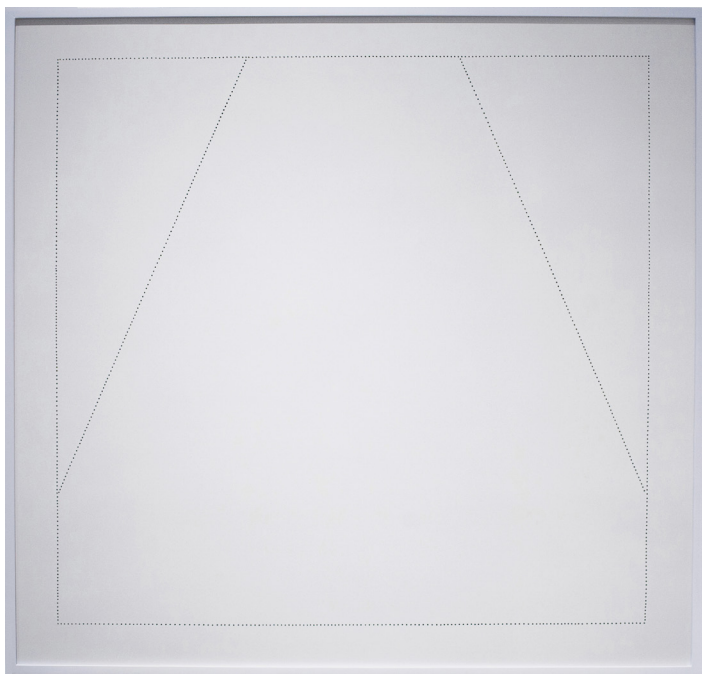
Analog

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



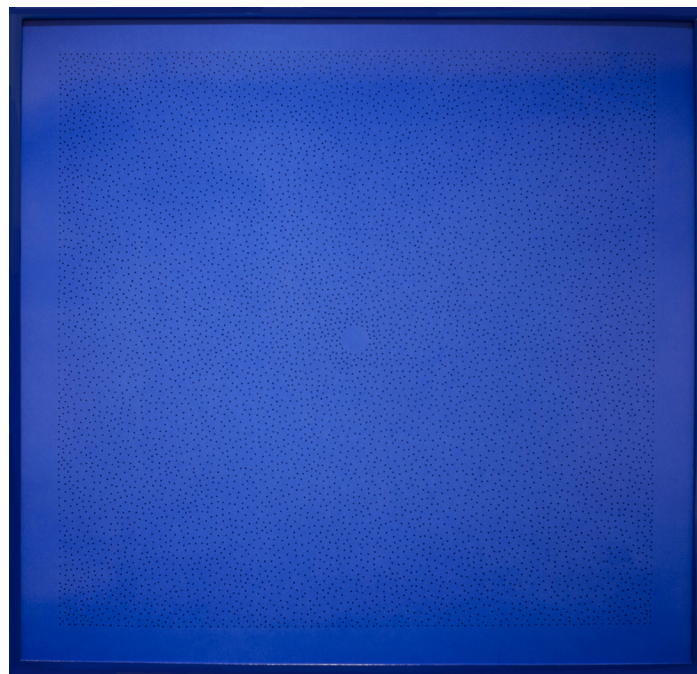
Dot Hallway

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



Dot Frame

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



Orifice, blue (Holding space)

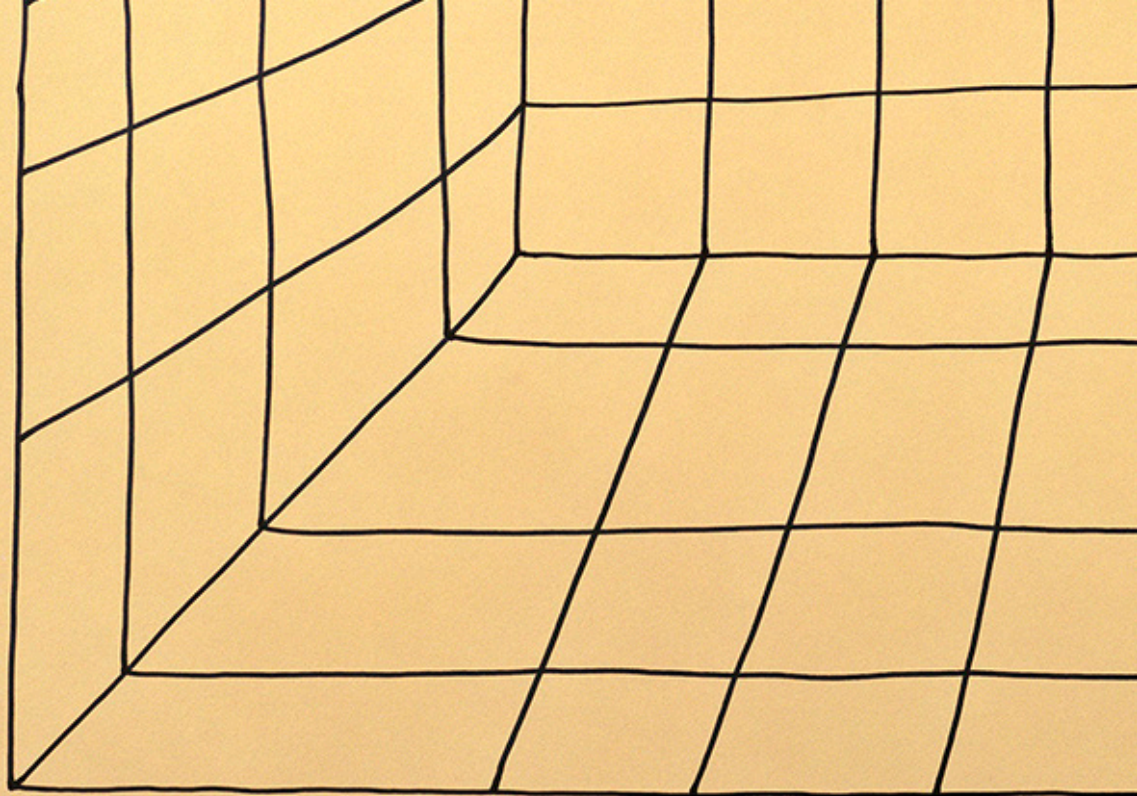
2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3

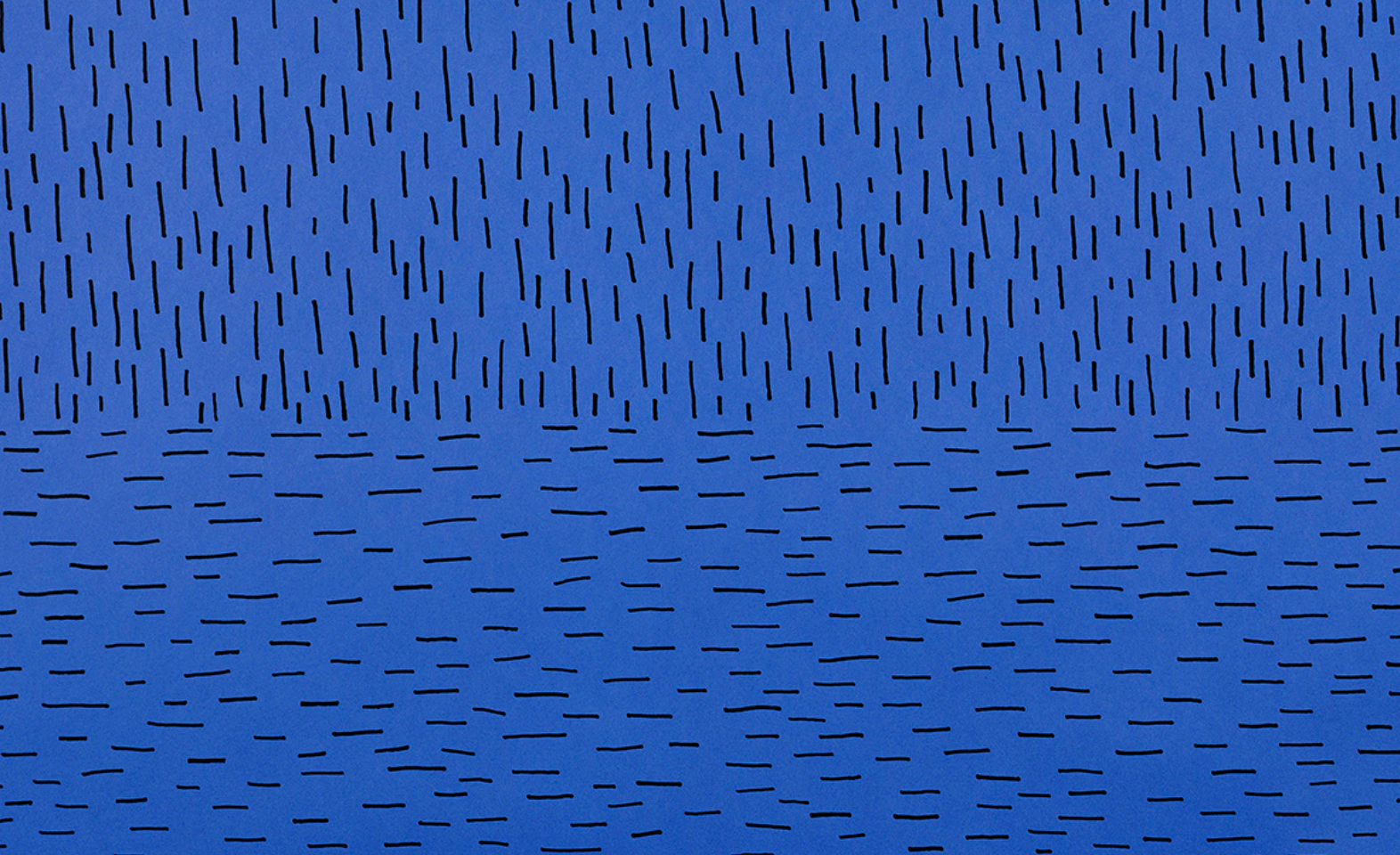
HOLM

How did you decide on the colors of the background paper-- blue, ocher, gray?

OSTERLOH

My relationship to color choices has always been intuitive. (I see intuition as a form of knowledge that we hold in our bodies, often without its surfacing in verbal language.) At the beginning of my project, I simply loved how the black lines interact with backdrop blue and gray. The third color was a tougher decision. I wanted something that would contrast with the blue, so I chose a warm color, a yellow/ocher.





HOLM

Which artists have influenced this most recent work? What features do these photos share with other contemporary art? In what ways do they differ?

OSTERLOH

Of all my work, ZONES is the most "graphic." All the black lines have been drawn with the same mass-produced black marker. Two colleagues, Suzanne Silver and Todd Slaughter (who teach with me at Ohio State University), were quick to mention similarities to the work of Jim Nutt, who founded the Chicago Imagists art movement. I'm excited by this comparison—with Nutt's odd, surreal, beyond-funky ways of rendering figures and space. Some folks have mentioned Pop artists such as Keith Haring. (I've been a Keith Haring fan since I was in high school.) But whereas Haring's kinetic marks and shapes seem to jump off the wall, ZONES is more meditative and quiet.

I have also been inspired by painters such as Agnes Martin, Mary Heilmann, and Rebecca Morse, and by other artists who seek to disrupt binary notions of identity and false archetypes, such as Suné Woods, Antonia Wright, and Nao Bustamante.

HOLM

On a more personal note, do you have a definable work pattern? That is, are there specific steps to your creative process? For example, do you have pre-work “rituals,” things you do to put yourself in working mode?

OSTERLOH

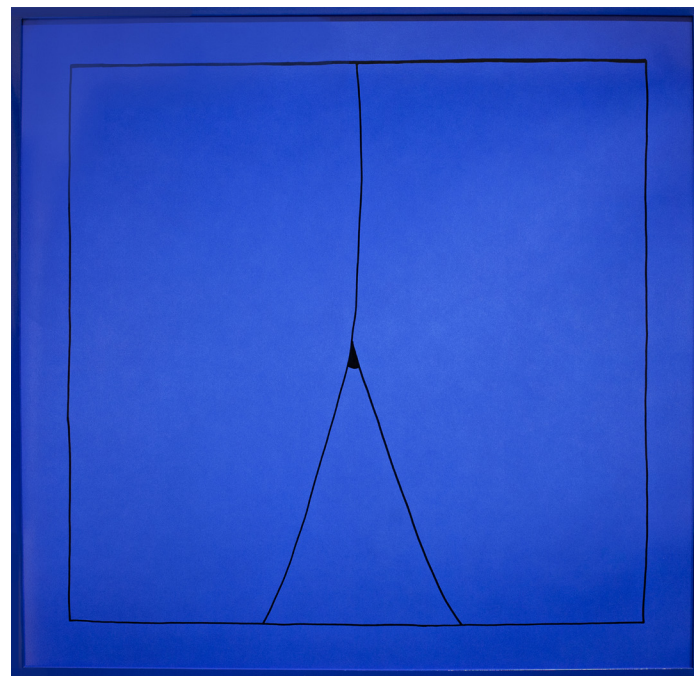
Typically, I need quiet--I can't listen to music when I'm working. But during my work on this project, I sometimes listened to Buddhist talks on Dharma Seed, an online teaching site. I'm not a Buddhist, but talks by Jack Kornfield that address connections between psychology, being, personhood, and sense of self kept me very present for each mark I made. Before and during my drawing on the photo backdrop paper, I sat still. When I created the line work, I felt a very crisp and clear connection between my hand and my breath. After completing a few drawings, I rolled them up and took them to a lighting studio, where I photographed them. I then waited for the contact sheets to come back from the photo lab. Only after a set of contact sheets was returned and carefully inspected did I repeat the process.





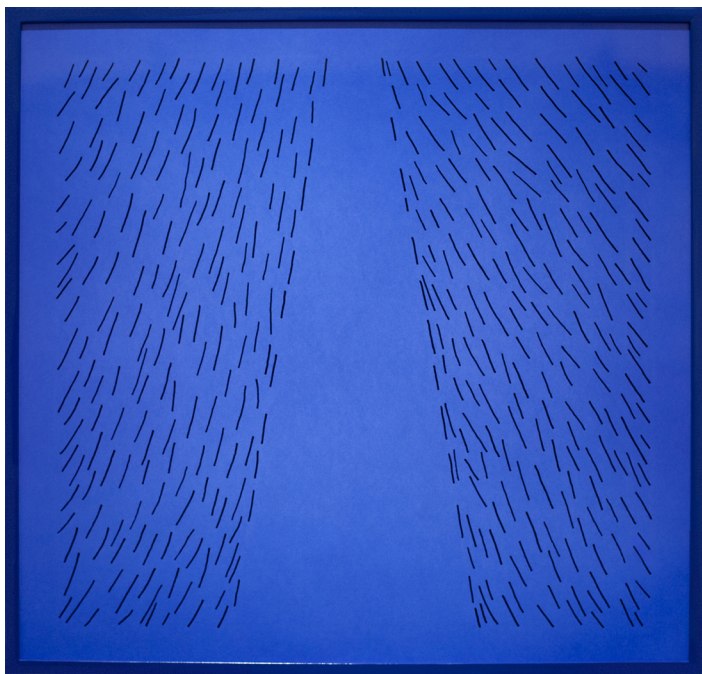
Orifice, gray (Holding space)

2018
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3



Legs and ...

2018
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3



Hair Part Wide

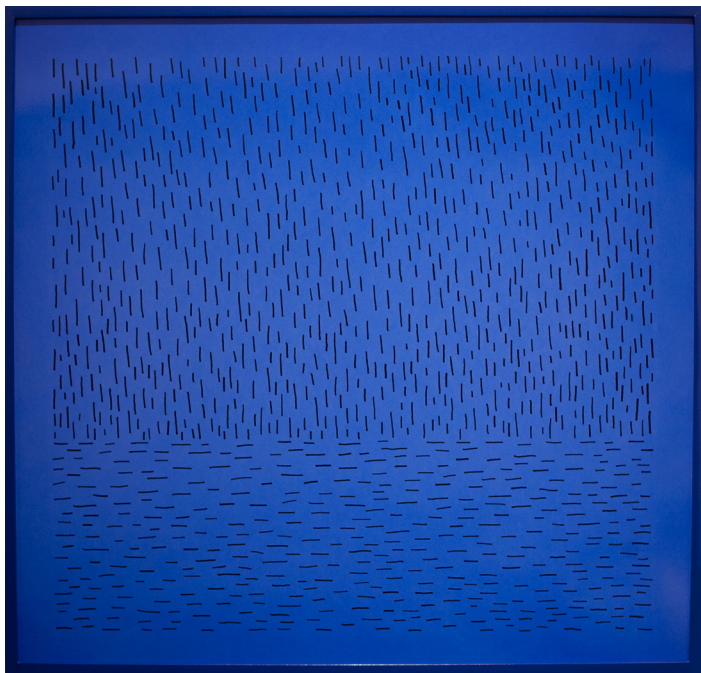
2018
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3



Electro Hallway

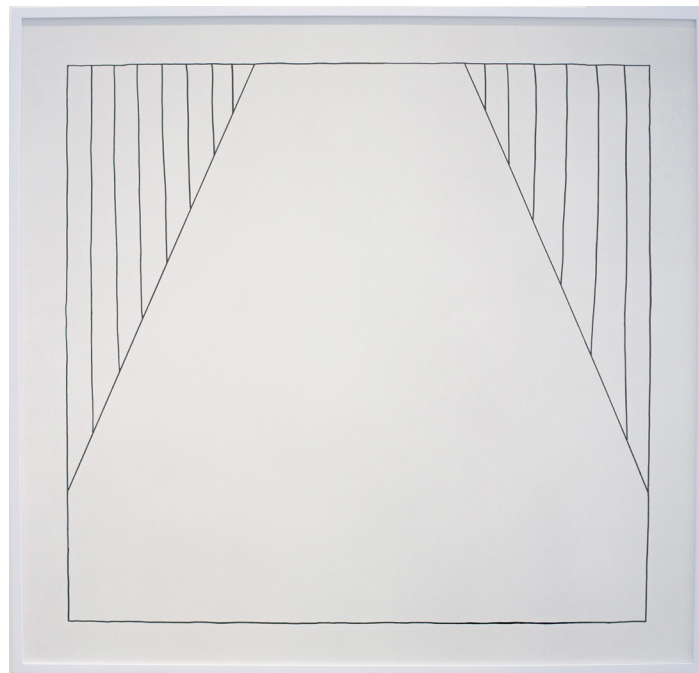
2018
archival pigment print
34h x 35.50w in
(86.36h x 90.17w cm)
edition of 3





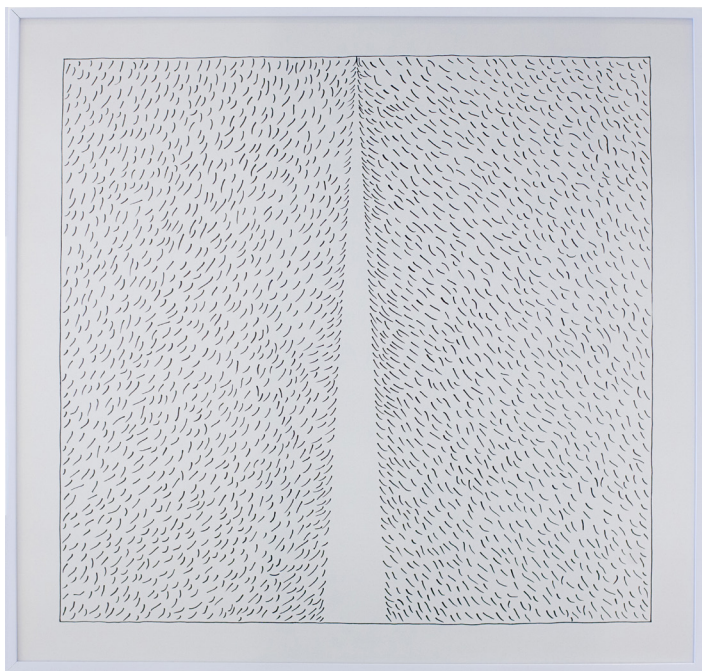
Electro Wall and Floor

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



XY 1

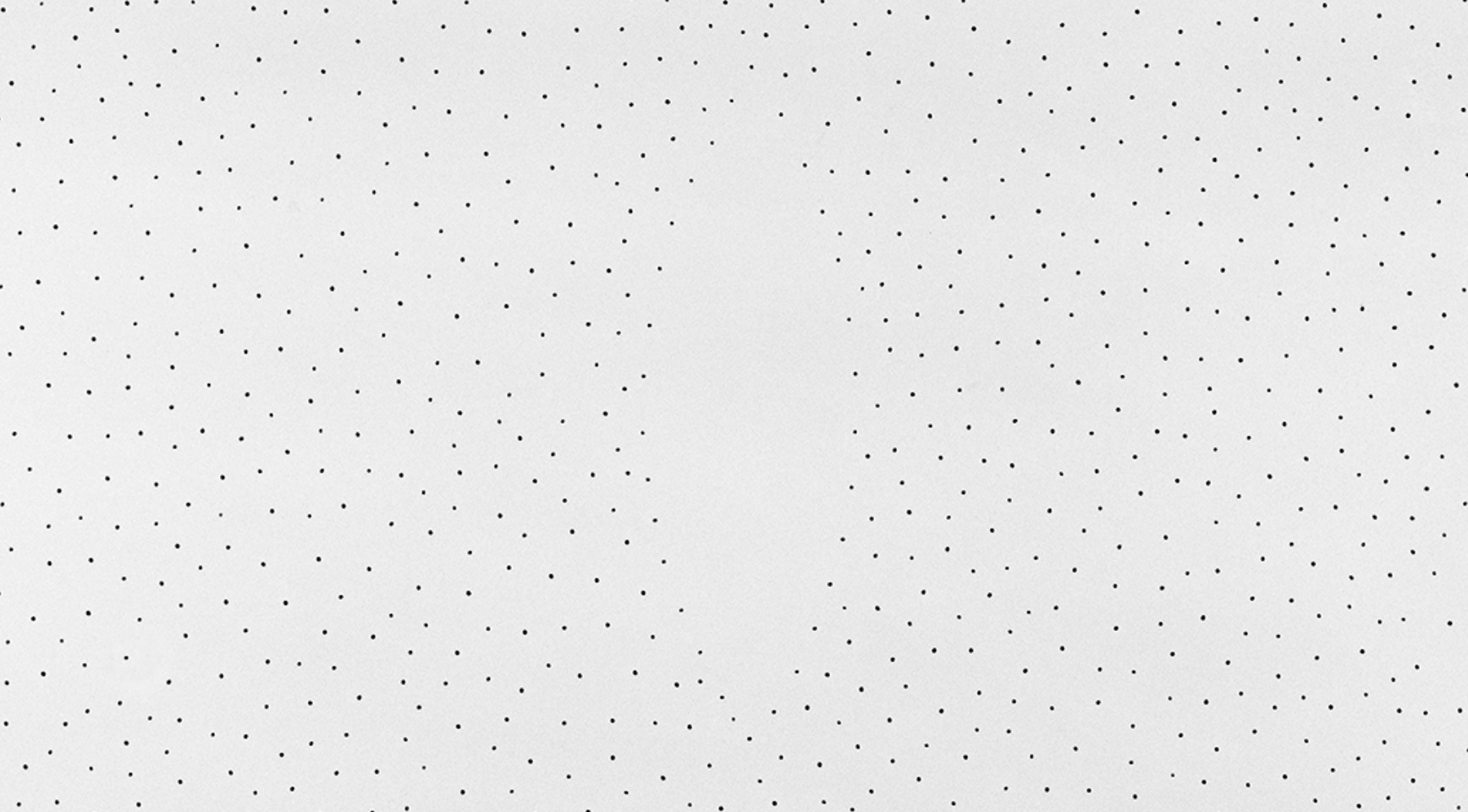
2018
 glossy archival inkjet print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3



Hair Part Curtain

2018
 archival pigment print
 34h x 35.50w in
 (86.36h x 90.17w cm)
 edition of 3





HOLM

If you were asked to describe your work in just a few words, what would you say?

OSTERLOH

Pressing against.



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GINA OSTERLOH

Bio

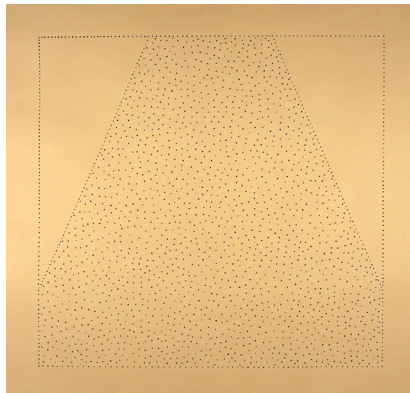
Gina Osterloh's photography, film, and performance based art work depicts mark-making and her own body traversing, tracing, and puncturing photographic space in a quest to interrogate the boundaries of a body and expand notions of identity.

Osterloh's printed photographs depict large scale photo tableaux environments as well as drawing on photo backdrop paper, that expand our understanding of portraiture and what photography can be. Symbolic themes and formal elements such as the void, orifice, and the grid, in addition to a heightened awareness of color and repetitive pattern appear throughout Osterloh's oeuvre. Osterloh cites her experience of growing up mixed-race in Ohio as a set of formative experiences that led her to photography and larger questions of how a viewer perceives difference.

GINA OSTERLOH

Bio

b. 1973, Texas, USA



RESIDENCIES & GRANTS

- 2012 Book Publication and 3-Month Artist Residency with LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions)
Create Cultivate Matching Grant, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions and LA County Arts Commission
- 2011 Woodstock Center of Photography, Artist in Residency
- 2010 Durfee Foundation ARC Grant
- 2008 Silverlens Foundation Completion Grant
- 2007-2008 Fulbright Recipient, Manila, Philippines
- 2006 Medici Grant
- 2004-2005 Diversity Fellowship Recipient, University of California Irvine
- 2004-2006 Graduate Travel and Research Grant Recipient, University of California Irvine

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 *Zones*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2015 *Gina Osterloh*, Higher Pictures, New York
Nothing to See Here There Never Was, Silverlens, Manila
- 2014 *Press Erase Outline Slice Strike Make an X Prick*, François Ghebaly Gallery, LA
- 2012 *Group Dynamic & Improper Light*, LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), Los Angeles
Photo Espagna, Curated by Fumio Nanjo, Director of Mori Museum, Tokyo
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, curated by Julio Cesar Morales, San Francisco
- 2011 *Body Prop*, Silverlens, Manila
Los Angeles, California to Manila, Philippines: You Are My Blindspot (Part I), Thirty Nine Hotel Residency Project, Honolulu
- 2009 *Shooting Blanks*, Chung King Project, Los Angeles
- 2008 *Shooting Blanks*, Green Papaya Art Projects, Manila
- 2007 *Blank Athleticism*, [2nd floor projects], San Francisco

TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 *Gina Osterloh + Brie Ruais*, Gaa Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts
- 2014 *Outside Crease of the Elbow (residency and exhibition with Paris-based artist Ana Vega)*, Commonwealth & Council, Los Angeles
- 2011 *Differentiate*, Allcott Gallery, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 *Liquid Dreams*, Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Multiply, Identify, Her, ICP Museum, New York
Art Fair Philippines, Silverlens, Manila

- 2017 **Race, Love, Labour**, Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, New York
An Idea Of A Boundary, curated by Jackie Im, San Francisco Art Commission, San Francisco, CA
Ours Is a City of Writers, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (LAMAG), Los Angeles, CA
Transición, Inaugural Exhibition, Curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana, Silverlens, Manila
- 2016 **Energy Charge: Connecting to Ana Mendieta**, Arizona State University Museum, Arizona
Art Basel, Silverlens, Hong Kong
Art Fair Philippines, Silverlens, Manila
- 2015 **The Vexed Contemporary**, curated by Josefina Cruz, Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila
Second Sight: New Representations in Photography, Torrance Art Museum, California
Photography Sees The Surface, Higher Pictures, New York
Drawings | Fridges, Greene Exhibitions, Los Angeles
- 2014 **Race Love and Labor**, Samuel Dorsky Museum Of Art, State University Of New York At New Paltz
Life Transmissions, Guggenheim Gallery, Chapman University
Material Object, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles
Frieze New York, François Ghebaly Gallery, New York
Paris Photo LA, François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles
Fragments of the Unknowable Whole, Urban Arts Space, Ohio State University
This Is Not America: Resistance, Protest and Poetics, Curated by Julio César Morales, Arizona State University Museum of Art
- 2013 **NADA Art Fair**, François Ghebaly Gallery, Miami Beach, Florida
Demolition Women, curated by Commonwealth & Council, Guggenheim Gallery Chapman University, California
Show and Tell, Curated by Irene Tsatsos, Armory Center For The Arts Pasadena, California
Color Consciousness, Torrence Art Museum, California
War Baby, Love Child, Depaul University, Chicago and Wing Luke Museum Of The Asian American Seattle, Washington
Asia Serendipity, traveling group exhibition curated by Fumio Nanjo of the Mori Museum, Tokyo: Sala de exposiciones San Benito, Valladolid, Spain
La Termica, Malaga, Spain
Ley Hunting Pt. 2, curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana, Silverlens, Singapore

- 2012 **Ley Hunting**, Silverlens, Manila
Paris Photo, Silverlens, Paris
Asia Serendipity, La Fabrica | Photo Espana, Madrid, curated by Fumio Nanjo, Mori Museum
Out of Sight, Out of Mind, Workplace Gallery, Gateshead, United Kingdom
Art HK 12, Silverlens, Hong Kong
Francois Ghebaly Gallery, Art Cologne 2012, Cologne
Los Angeles Contemporary Tendencies, Curated by Annka Kultys, Helene Bailly Gallery, Paris
Anonymous Front, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco
NADA Art Fair, with François Ghebaly Gallery, Miami Beach, Florida
Paramount Reality, Latned Atsar, Los Angeles
Territories of the Real and Unreal: Contemporary Photography in Southeast Asia, Langgeng Art Foundation, Jakarta
Gathered in a Clearing, Level / Gallery Three, Brisbane
Transitions: Time based Asian American Art, Whitman College, Sheehan Gallery, Washington
On Forgery: Is One Thing Better Than Another?, LA ART, Los Angeles
- 2010 **The Unnamable**, Manila Contemporary, Manila
Let Them Eat Lacma, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
Summertime Project LA, Cypress College, Los Angeles
Psychic Outlaws, Luckman Gallery, Cal State LA, Los Angeles
New Editions, Pepin Moore, Los Angeles
Commonwealth, PØST, Los Angeles
Group Show: Daniel Bayles, Gina Osterloh, and Patrick Jackson, Kate Werble Gallery, New York
Group Show, Art Los Angeles Contemporary, Los Angeles
- 2009 **Uncommon Sense (trauma, interrupted, too)**, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila
Cut09: Figure (New Photography in Southeast Asia), Valentine Willie Fine Art, Singapore
Cut09: Figure (New Photography in Southeast Asia), Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
beyond frame: philippine fotomedia, La Trobe Visual Arts Center, Australia
FuturaManila, Osage Gallery, Singapore
- 2008 **Silverlens Grantee Exhibition**, Silverlens, Manila
Swarm in the Aperture: Recent Photography in the Philippines, Museum of the Filipino People, Manila

- Strain Extension**, MO Space Gallery, Manila
beyond frame: philippine fotomedia, UTS Gallery, Sydney
FuturaManila, Osage Gallery, HongKong
Galleon Trade, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco
Truthiness, California Museum of Photography, UC Riverside
Tints of Majesty, Elizabeth Oliveria Gallery, Los Angeles
Whatcha See Is Whatcha Get, What You Don't See (Is Better Yet), Five Thirty Three, Los Angeles
- 2007 **Trauma, Interrupted**, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila
Galleon Trade, Magnet Gallery, Manila
Marfa—the B sides, Queen's Nails Annex, Marfa, Texas
Body Double, Luckman Gallery, Los Angeles
The Pyramid Show, Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles
Outside In, LACE, Los Angeles
MFA Thesis Exhibition, UC Irvine, Irvine, California
- 2006 **Good Times For Never**, Queen's Nails Annex, San Francisco
Video MixTape 5 (curated by Chris Bassett), Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria
There, There, New Langton Arts, San Francisco
Satellite (video screening, curated by Natasha Garcia-Lomas)
 Elojo Atomico/Antimuseo de Arte Contemporaneo, Madrid
- 2004 **All-City**, Elizabeth Oliveria Gallery, (Project Space), Los Angeles
Subject to Oneself, Playspace, California College of the Arts San Francisco
- 2003 **All-City**, Luggage Store Gallery Annex, San Francisco
Infinite Booty, Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco
- 2002 **12 Artists-2minutes**, SF Arts Commission, San Francisco
Axis of Good, Ze Dos Bois, Lisbon, Portugal

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

- 2011 **Support-System**, co-curated with Marco Rios, Luckman Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles
Each of Our Erasure, San Francisco Arts Commission and The Luggage Store Gallery
Collection Rotation, SF MOMA Blog Archive online
- 2010 **Minimum Yields Maximum**, Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles
- 2006 **Glitch**, LACMA LAB, Los Angeles

EDUCATION

- 2007 University of California Irvine
 Masters of Fine Arts, Studio Art
- 1996 De Paul University - Chicago, Illinois, USA
 Bachelor of Communications/Media Studies

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- 2018 ICP Museum. Multiply, Identify, Her. Exhibition catalog.
- 2017 The Vexed Contemporary, MCAD. Exhibition catalog.
- 2016 Energy Charge: Connecting to Ana Mendieta. Arizona State University Museum. Exhibition catalog.
- 2015 The New Yorker Magazine, Gina Osterloh at Higher Pictures, Review by Vince Alelli
- 2014 Artforum Critic's Pick July 2014 Buckley, Annie. Review of Solo Exhibition at Ghebaly Gallery, LA
- 2009 Art in America, Buckley, Annie, Review of Solo Exhibition at Chung King Project, LA (September)



ABOUT SILVERLENS

Through its artist representation, institutional collaborations, art consultancy, and exhibition programming including art fairs and gallery partnerships, **SILVERLENS** aims to place its artists within the broader framework of the contemporary art dialogue. Its continuing efforts to transcend borders across art communities in Asia have earned it recognition from both artists and collectors as one of the leading contemporary art galleries in Southeast Asia. **SILVERLENS** was founded by Isa Lorenzo and Rachel Rillo in 2004.