



Ryan Cummings, *Morning Cauldron - the Harbinger and the Hunters*, 2004

CONSTRUCTS

Curated by Annah Lee, Block Gallery Coordinator

RYAN CUMMINGS is a painter and muralist from Raleigh, NC. He holds a BA in Visual Design from the NCSU College of Design. Mr. Cummings is a member of the Artspace Artist Association and an exhibiting member of the Visual Art Exchange in Raleigh. He has exhibited his work locally and nationally and will be featured as part of a group exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in London later this year.

www.ryanocummings.com

MEG STEIN is a sculptor and installation artist from Durham, NC. She is currently working towards an MA in sculpture at the UNC-Chapel Hill, where she is also a teaching fellow and online instructor for the art department. She has exhibited work in solo and group exhibitions around the Triangle. In 2012, she won the David A. Dowdy Jr. Award for Sculpture, and in 2014 she will be an associate artist-in-residence at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, FL. www.megstein.com

SARAH WEST is a jeweler and artist from Raleigh, NC. She received a BFA in Metal Design, magna cum laude, from East Carolina University and a certificate in Jewelry Making and Repair from North Bennet Street School. In 2012, she completed the Artspace Regional Emerging Artist Residency in Raleigh and received the North Carolina Arts Council Fellowship Grant. Currently, she maintains a studio space at Artspace in Raleigh and is a jewelry instructor at Pullen Arts Center. She has exhibited her work nationally in group and solo shows. www.sarahwestdesigns.com

BLOCK GALLERY

Connecting local artists to community through ongoing exhibitions and public outreach, the Block Gallery was dedicated in 2006 to honor Miriam Preston Block, a former Raleigh City Council member and community leader. Greeting all visitors to the Upchurch Government Complex, the gallery's marble walls and elegant staircase provide an ideal setting for showcasing original artworks. Exhibits change every eight to 12 weeks.



THE OFFICE OF RALEIGH ARTS, a part of the City of Raleigh's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department, fosters and promotes the arts in Raleigh by administering the programs of the Raleigh Arts Commission and the Public Art and Design Board and supporting the Pullen and Sertoma Arts Centers.

ARTS COMMISSION MEMBERS

Joanne Casey · Joe Cebina · Laurent de Comarmond
Jason Craighead · Linda Dallas · Gene Davis
Diane Kuehn · Clyde Lundy · Andy Martin
Nancy Novell · Sarah Powers

OFFICE OF RALEIGH ARTS STAFF

Gerald Bolas, Executive Director
Sharon Coleman-Bullock, Administrative Assistant
Sarah Corrin, Arts Grant Coordinator
Kim Curry-Evans, Public Art Coordinator
Catherine Hoffman, Public Art Assistant
Rosemary Holland, Communications Coordinator
Annah Lee, Block Gallery Coordinator
Belva Parker, Arts Program Director
Gillian Suss, Registrar

Cover image: Meg Stein, *Untitled*, 2014



The City of Raleigh



Block Gallery & Case Study
222 West Hargett Street
Raleigh, NC 27601
M-F, 8:30am - 5:15pm
www.raleighnc.gov/arts



CONSTRUCTS

Block Gallery | April 3 - June 26, 2014
Opening Reception: Thursday, April 3, 5-7pm

Mixed Media Paintings: Ryan Cummings
Mixed Media Sculptures: Sarah West

Case Study: Meg Stein



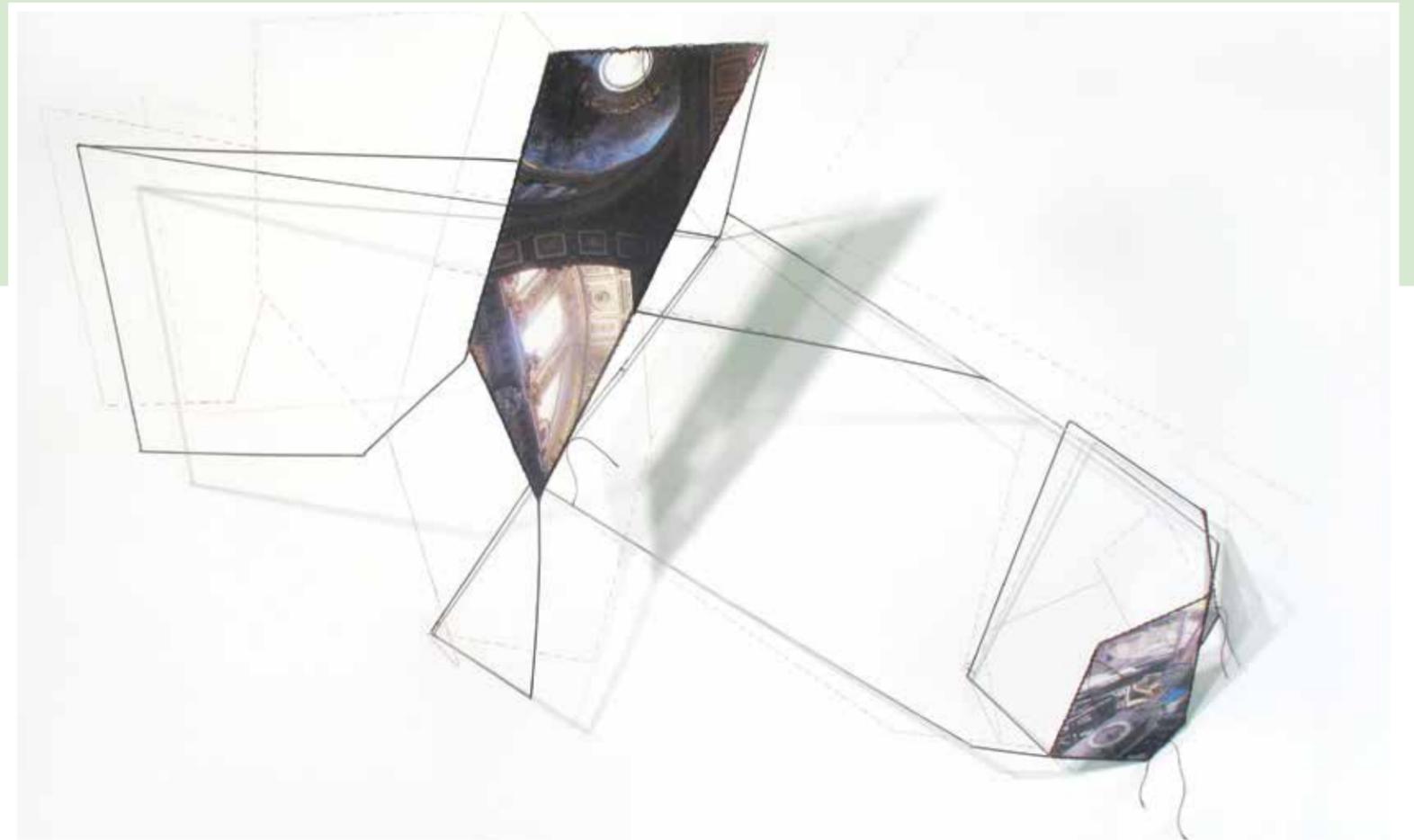
CONSTRUCTS

“The only true voyage...would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is.”

- Marcel Proust

The artists of *Constructs* explore the complexities of memory and dreams as they relate to place. Interwoven with multiple traces of remembrance across time, geographic space is depicted through mixed media applications as an evolving document of richly layered human experience. In her *Memorial Objects* series, Sarah West applies her intricate metalworking skills to create three-dimensional geometric forms laced with transparent photographs that function as maps of emotive landscapes. Ryan Cummings combines old-world painting techniques on plaster with collaged photographs in his *Memory Dreamscapes*, resulting in highly detailed narrative scenes evocative of 19th-century American painting traditions. The artworks on view comprise two distinct bodies of work, both of which function as roadmaps of remembrance, infusing place and time with personal and collective meaning.

Sarah West's *Memorial Objects* series relies heavily on line to convey meaning. Each wall-mounted sculpture in the series is composed of three types of line: the edges of the sculpture itself, drawing, and shadow. Each of these formal elements works in concert to create a composite map of reality. The linear pieces of steel wire that form the sculptures represent lived experience. The drawn pencil lines on the supporting board mimic the form of the sculptures and are representative of memories, linking daily life to the past. The third component, the shifting shadow lines cast on the board from the steel, suggest dreams, offering subconscious pathways an integral place in this constructed representation of reality. For West, “By overlapping line and shadow with imagery, I create diagrams of emotional landscapes that expose the underlying geography of memory and history.” For example, *Memorial Objects/Sacred Spaces/Radio* employs two photographs, one depicting architectural details from a cathedral ceiling, the other an abandoned antique shop with a discarded radio in the foreground. The oculus of the domed ceiling mimics the circular radio dial, while the fragile web of lines connects the images, placing these disparate spaces in visual conversation and creating a profound connection between the two.



Sarah West, *Memorial Objects/Sacred Spaces/Radio*, 2013

Ryan Cummings' paintings function as portraits of landscapes that encompass those who have been touched by or have left a mark on the depicted space. His *Memory Dreamscapes* series places past and present in conversation with one another in order to express the core of a particular place. According to Cummings, “My goal is not only to depict the lay of the land, but to communicate the essence of it, the impression left on the mind while experiencing a moment of beauty.” Cummings employs the use of square cells—some painted, others collaged with photographic images dating from the late 1800s to the present—in his naturalistic landscapes. These cells work visually to pixelate the image, imbuing the space with an ephemeral quality that arouses at once a sense of melancholy and celebration. Take, for example, *Morning Cauldron – the Harbinger and the Hunters*. In this image, a magnificent golden sky illuminates the horizon of an ambiguous landscape made up almost entirely of square cells. Some of these tile-like forms contain symbolic painted elements such as outstretched arms or a black bird; others add textural interest through the use of gold leaf or layers of paint, while photographs animate the imagination of the viewer through their historical power. Each of these cells contributes to the fabric of the space, conveying the importance of the varied voices and stories contained within a single landscape.

CASE STUDY

Case Study, an initiative that provides a public platform for installation artists, presents **Meg Stein**. Characterized by a surrealist use of seemingly disparate daily objects, Stein's work functions to animate inanimate objects and in turn activate a visceral response in her viewers. Using found objects in concord with fabricated forms and organic materials, Stein's aesthetic has a soft warmth that invites close inspection despite the often disconcerting imagery she creates. Stein says, “I transform these items into disturbing, surprising new forms that are charged with more psychology and emotion and appear more life-like while maintaining a semblance to our familiar everyday lives.” In *Untitled*, a sculpture in the installation, Stein provokes the viewer to think about loneliness and longing through the unsettling transformation of mundane objects into an emotionally resonant sculpture. Resting on two pillows, a pair of spherical forms suggests human heads in their shape and depression on the white surface of the pillows. The spheres are covered in charcoal powder that works to create a textural interest while adding a visual density to the forms. Attached to the base of each sphere is a single deer's hoof. The intentionally ambiguous meaning of this assemblage does not offer a single or correct conclusion, but rather asks that as viewers, we take a mental journey and explore the feelings and associations the imagery conjures.