

# HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

## Venturing Beyond the White Box in Bushwick

by [Matthew Farina](#) on June 3, 2013



Nicholas Forker's recent screen prints displayed at Bushwick Open Studios, including "Bushwick Brooklyn Party Naked" (2013) (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

Stocked with Havarti cubes and iced kegs, Bushwick artists swept up and opened their doors to the public this weekend for the 2013 [Bushwick Open Studios](#) (BOS). Air-conditioned workspaces became premium real estate as the festival's seventh incarnation, hosted by nonprofit Arts in Bushwick, welcomed large crowds along with hot weather.

Large studio buildings on Grand, Ingraham, and Bogart Streets were especially energetic hubs for BOS. At times subdivided between three or four artists, small studios were inundated with heavy foot traffic throughout the weekend. [Stacy Scibelli](#), who shares a large studio with several other artists,

explained, “This event seemed to really blow up starting last year. A lot of people have come through, and it doesn’t seem like the majority of them are artists, which is great in a way.” Scibelli reconfigures clothing into wall-hung pieces, playfully outfitting the new garments with two neck holes or slacks with space for five legs.



Stacy Scibelli stands in front of her wall-hung fabric sculptures made from deconstructed clothing.

Scibelli found herself adjusting her dialogue depending on the visitor. “With some people, I can’t tell how far they want to go into it with me. There are all these layers of what I can talk about. A lot of people think my work is funny — that the pieces look like alien costumes,” she said. “In general, people get the creepy monsterish-ness of them.” One of Scibelli’s pieces on display, “Verrazzano Pants” (2013), relates her commute between cities to common articles of clothing, finding a way to rethink the spaces between understood boundaries.





“Neighbor’s Backyard” (2013), a two-day installation by Cibele Vieira, included a sod-covered studio floor that elicited barefoot exploration.

Several artists transformed their spaces specifically for the weekend’s events. [Cibele Vieira](#) placed signs with arrows around the sidewalk and hallways of her studio building, directing visitors to her installation “Neighbor’s Backyard.” Visitors who followed discovered Vieira’s wall-to-wall sod installation on her studio floor and grass-covered cup-and-saucer imagery on the walls, referencing the work of surrealist Meret Oppenheim.

People entering Vieira’s studio often bent down in careful observation of the sod and gently patted the grass to inspect its authenticity. Participants made themselves comfortable once they confirmed that it was actual grass. “People love it — they stay for an hour and have a picnic. They take their shoes off and really experience it,” the artist observed.



Collaborating for the event, Kathleen Vance (left) and Jessica Hargreaves (right) stand in front of their installation that featured a trickling water feature at its base.

Another engaging BOS-inspired work came out of a collaboration between artists [Jessica Hargreaves](#) and [Kathleen Vance](#). Though they don't typically share a workspace, the pair spent months installing a trickling pool of water beneath a decorative dressing screen, which includes over-painting on the opposing side. The partition separated the main studio space from a more private corner, visible through bored holes that encouraged voyeurism à la Duchamp's "Etant donnés."





A viewer peers into Kathleen Vance's "Traveling Landscape (green case)" (2011) at Bushwick Open Studios.

"There is an interplay between the very domestic interior of Jessica's work and then mine, which is very much about the outdoors," explained Vance, whose independent work was also on view, including tiny ecological environments beautifully arranged inside small, barely open travel cases.

As seen in Scibelli's fashion-influenced work, some of the most compelling art on view was rooted in design, including **Nicholas Forker**'s screen prints with frank typographic musings like "Bushwick Brooklyn Party Naked" (2013). Driven by his interest in mid-century furniture, sculptor **Bruce Dow** began collecting fiberglass chairs left on the street and started to reconfigure the parts in his studio, with or without regard for function. The results are highly unique. "The chairs have been a great sculptural material for me. I use a metal cutting blade and plot all the cuts with a razor level," Dow explained.



Bruce Dow's studio included reconfigurations of fiberglass chairs.

For Dow, ergonomics are abandoned for the sake of aesthetic adventure. "This one's got a nice butt," Dow joked, as he turned one black and cream chair over to reveal its seat, bisected into two orb-like halves. As manufacturers like Modernica have begun to reintroduce fiberglass chairs to consumers, Dow sees fewer of them left out on the street as trash.



Jsun Laliberté spoke about his paintings at Bushwick Open Studios.

In general, abstract painting was abundant at BOS, though standout examples were hard to find. **Jsun Laliberté** was one of the stronger ones, with high-key against high-color arrangements juxtaposed in acrylic and latex, depicting an ever-churning flux of sensual light. One of Laliberté's studio-mates, **Talia Shulze**, displayed papier-mâché sculptures that were deliciously raw, far surpassing the merits of her wall-hung work. **Svetlana Rabey**, another color-driven abstractionist, showcased fan-like lozenges of thinned pigment that strike chromatic harmonies through peripatetic drips and dribbles.





Untitled papier-mâché sculptures by Talia Shulze were in progress. The artist explained, “The sculptures tend to migrate around my studio a lot and wind up in interesting configurations.”





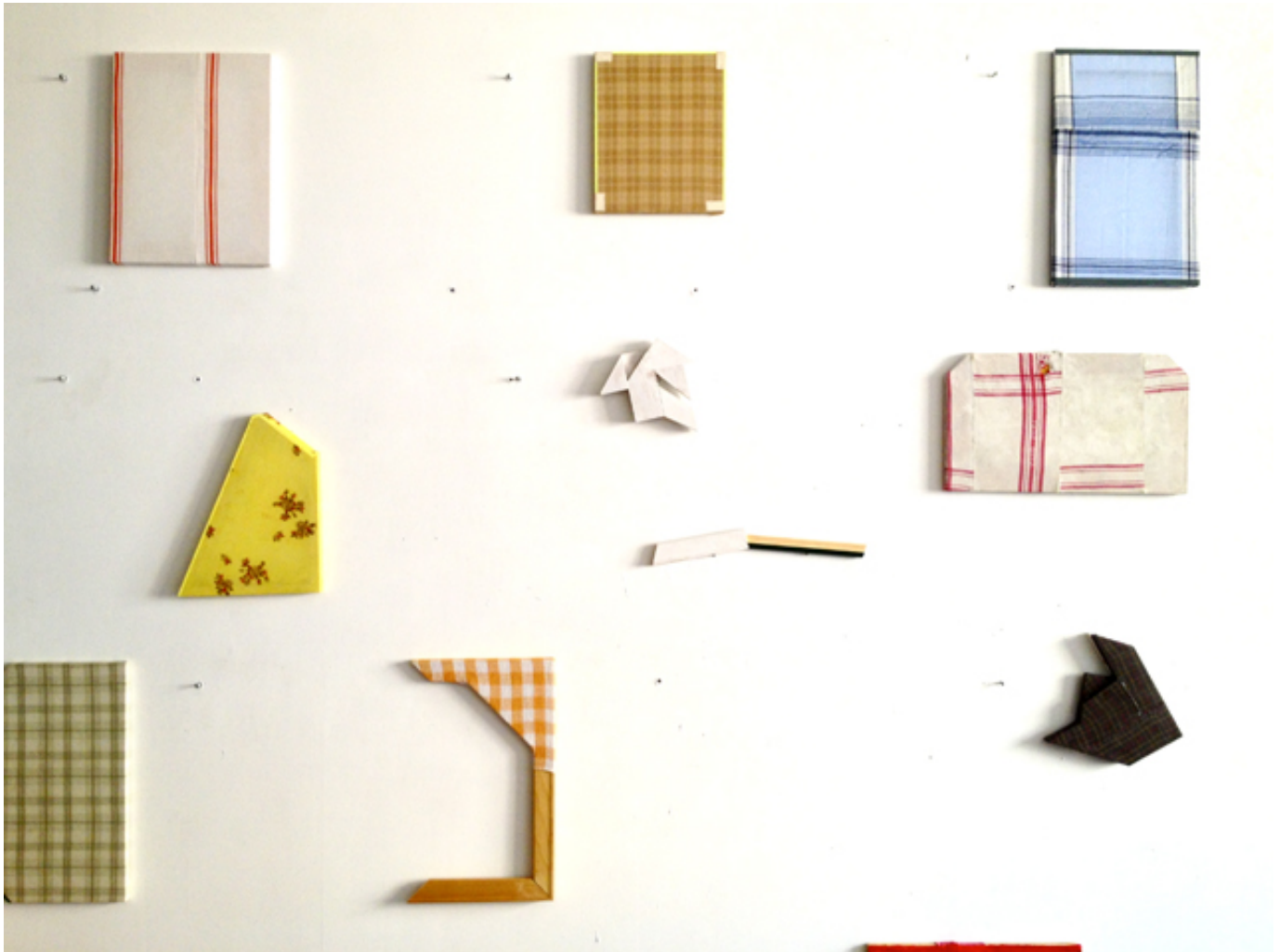
Viewers discuss an untitled watercolor from 2013 by Svetlana Rabey at Bushwick Open Studios.

Husband-and-wife studio-mates **Lael Marshall** and **Michael Voss** presented refreshingly small paintings and collages that engage the couple's mutual interest in subtle geometric tensions. With tidy, equally-sized working spaces, the studio seemed fully synched and more integrated than most shared situations found at BOS, though the couple does not collaborate per se. Remarking on their creative coexistence, Voss said, "We don't usually work here at the same time. And I think we really try to block out each other's influence, but things cross over sometimes when you know someone so well." He laughed and added, "We also don't criticize each other's work."



Plywood works from "Grid" (2003-06), a series by Michael Voss





Mixed-media works by Lael Marshall

***Bushwick Open Studios 2013*** ran from Friday, May 31, through Sunday, June 2, at various locations throughout the Bushwick, Brooklyn.