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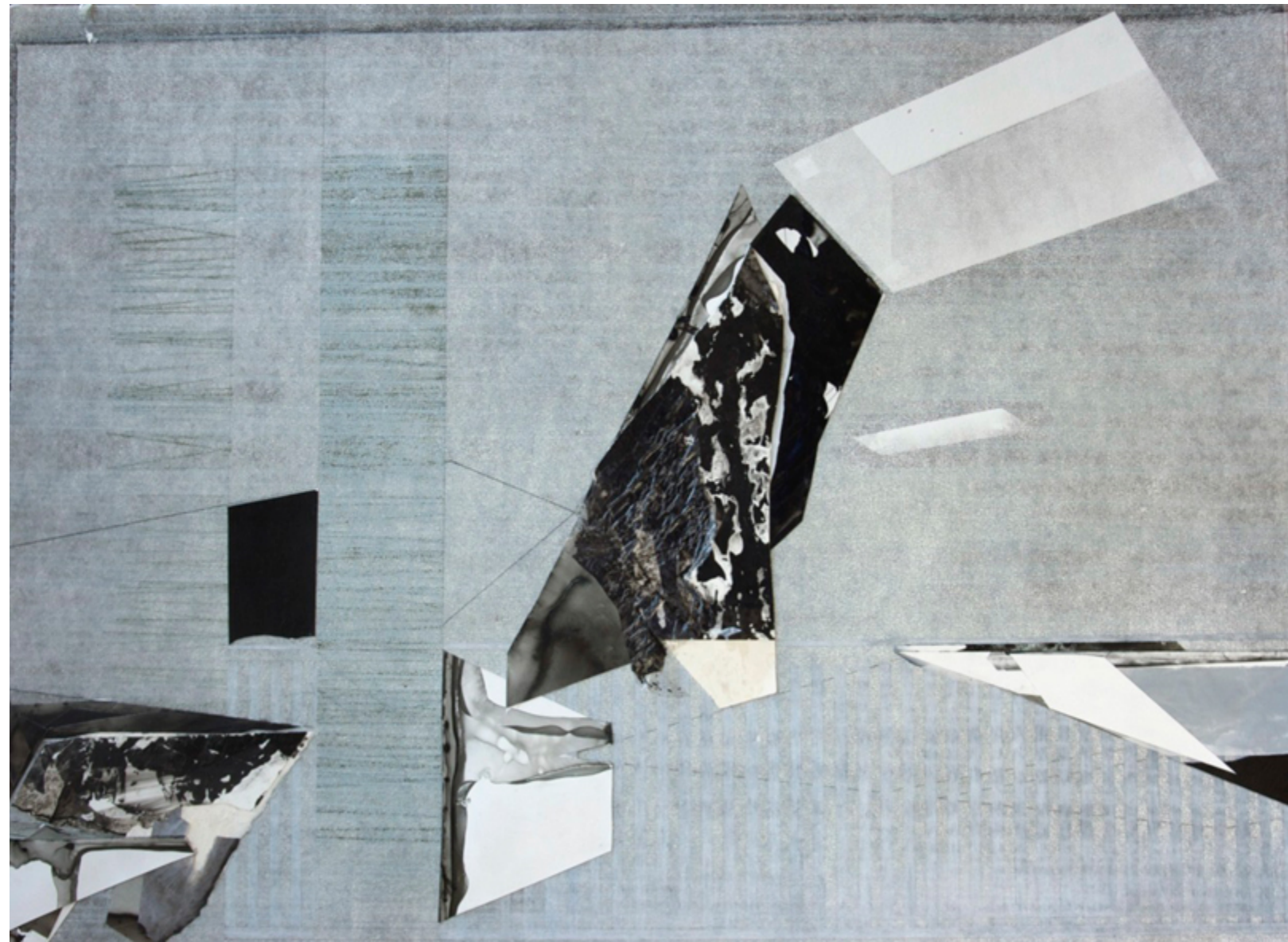
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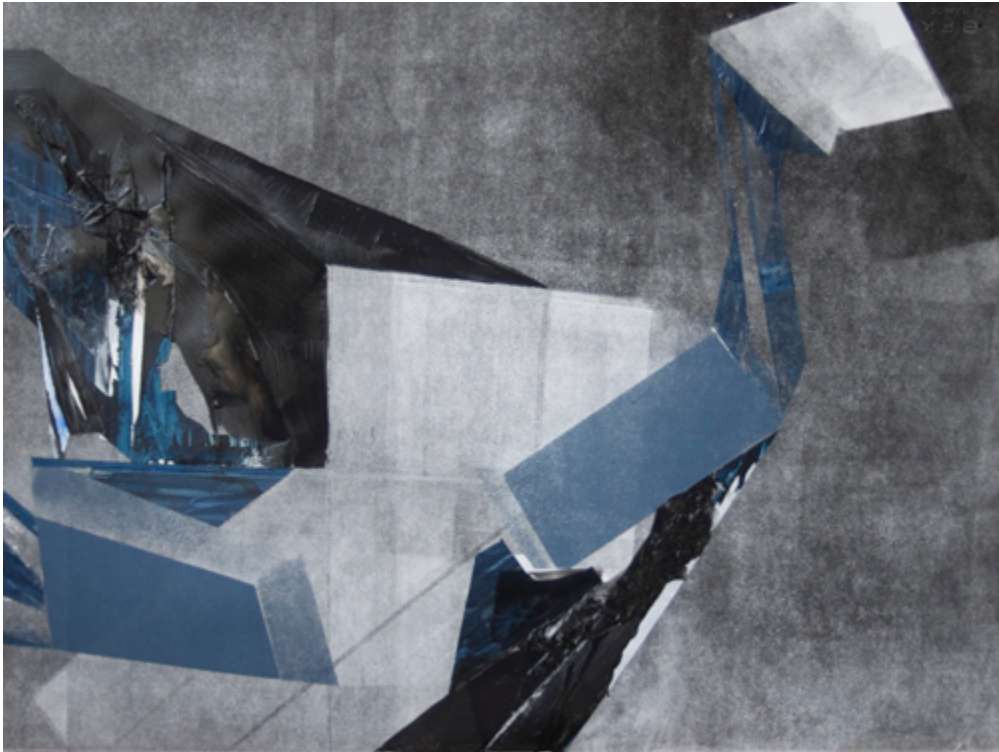


Mara Baker and Rafael E. Vera, *Untitled from Trading Paper* (2011, found residues, tape acrylic, vellum and graphite on yupo).

The Duality of Forms, Flattening Time in the Third Dimension



Mara Baker and Rafael. E. Vera, *Untitled* (2011, basic construction materials, wire, a paint spill that was peeled up from the floor of the gallery, a tarp-like material found in the Home Depot dumpster).



Mara Baker and Rafael. E. Vera, *Untitled* (2011).

Cara and Cabezas Contemporary
 1714 Holmes
 816-332-6239
 Kansas City
Double Tangent:
Collaborative Work
 by Mara Baker and Rafael. E. Vera
 July 16-August 28, 2011

By BLAIR SCHULMAN

Architecture and collage forms are re-interpreted for real-space at Cara and Cabezas Contemporary in Kansas City's East Crossroads. *Double Tangent* featuring work by Mara Baker and Rafael E. Vera promises a great undertaking through their mesmerizing two-dimensional paper collaborations. The actual installation, however, delivers a somewhat timid result.

A series of drawings by both artists begins with a monotype from Vera. A defined space incorporating skylights, incorporates vellum, graphite, oil stick, or charcoal pencil in a somber almost monochromatic evocation of black, white, grey, and mournful blues. Each drawing appears to be seen from the same location and perspective throughout the series. Baker adds thick residues and acrylic that adds an exciting dimension to the work.

Untitled from Trading Paper (2011, found residues, tape acrylic, vellum and graphite on yupo) is a superb example of their "order versus chaos" exercise. The occasional choice of Yupo paper is brilliant; its soft tonality gives off a sensual, milky translucence. All drawings in this series are named *Untitled* and that lack of singular identity makes it difficult to point at specifics without confusion.

After speaking with both artists, it appears neither influences the other in what the final piece will look like. When worked out individually, they are strong sums of an intricate collage-like compendium of a greater whole. These works are something of a blueprint for the three-dimensional form to take shape in the main gallery space.

Finally coming face to face with the installation itself after the intensity of their drawings, however, is somewhat anti-climactic.

As a source for her photography, Diane Arbus often looked for myths and rituals in public events. Contests, dances and weddings, to name a few, were all societal interactions that responded to hierarchy and space. It is with these eyes one can develop an understanding of their own experience in and around an installation. This is how I approached the gallery space; how do I fit into this idea? Am I to be included in their environment or just an observer?

It is interesting to watch viewers respond so strongly and positively to the drawings on the wall. Once the actual culmination of such works is approached, their reaction is almost tepid.

The dimensions of the actual installation, again labeled *Untitled* (2011, basic construction materials, wire, a paint spill that was peeled up from the floor of the gallery, a tarp-like material found in the Home Depot dumpster) are approximately 40 feet long x 18 feet wide x 13 feet. In a room three times that size, the elements of collage and architectural significance are somewhat watered down.

Wood is framed along the floor presented in Minimalist relief that is neither puzzle nor unfinished construction. The uppermost form that serves as the installations' backbone reaches almost to the ceiling. This stands in direct opposition to the look and feel of the drawings' power. This imagery has to collapse and overwhelm you.

A little danger would have gone a long way to recapture the two-dimensional sentiment of disarray and chaos. With approximately 72 hours from their arrival to opening night, it seems the duo opted for neatness over drama.

Four upside-down wooden "L" shapes meant to represent an extension of a ledge on the same wall is oddly out of place with no connection to the larger installation or the drawings. It is difficult to figure why it is there and

what we are supposed to do about it.

The problem from where I stand seems to be Baker and Vera worked too well together. Their ritual of working independently neuters any hierarchy they might have confronted when approaching the site-specific problem of logistics and vision. The element of competition is diluted and with the playing field, so to speak, so even-keeled, unable to dive into the myth their drawings exhibit so strongly.

In the same conversation with the artists while they were creating this structure, each remarked that any problems encountered now would be taken into account and sublimated into their next collaboration. With that, one can look forward to seeing how they tackle their next venture. Theirs could be a coupling that works best alone from the other.



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