

LISA SETTE GALLERY

2012-2013

FALL/VOLUME 15



SIRI DEVI KHANDAVILLI

Darpana Sundari, a startling and sensuous bronze sculpture that artist Siri Devi Khandavilli sometimes mischievously calls her “Golden Poodle Deity,” was made in the manner of the countless temple idols of Hindu mythology. Khandavilli carved a beeswax figure, borrowing the stylized lines of Indian miniature painting, and at an idol-making foundry near her home in Bangalore, a mold was rendered using a mixture of termite mound, river mud, and brick dust. Lost-wax casting produced the final version: a glistening, multifaceted bronze figurine with the haughty snout of a show poodle and the sensuous body of a Hindu temple goddess.

Says Khandavilli, “At this workshop I go to, my sculpture is cast along with hundreds of temple idols. People there don’t know whether it’s a real god or a sculpture; they come to me and ask, ‘what is *this* god?’”

Khandavilli, whose demure manner belies a distinctly playful, subversive streak, takes obvious delight in the confusion, noting the vast pantheon of gods in the Hindu tradition and her sly insertion of the platform-heel-wearing poodle deity into the realm of the sacred. Of the potential controversy of treating her sculptures as temple idols, mounted on traditional lotus-leaf *padma peeta* pedestals, Khandavilli is only slightly conflicted: “Some people here in India might think this is so bad...but I feel in using these traditional methods, I am actually establishing this sculpture as a deity. I want her to be a god. I really want to embed her in the culture.”

Khandavilli, whose recent exhibit at a gallery in Bangalore was titled *Money is My Honey* and included photographs of the artist licking honey from coins, is quick to point out that the idol she’s created is of the contemporary world, representing modern signifiers of affluence and self-absorption: “I wanted to make a deity of the new age, a god that personifies the worship of wealth, glamour, and luxury.”

For all the philosophical gravitas of this undertaking, Khandavilli takes a casual and unselfconscious approach, noting that she herself is subject to fascination with our global culture’s perceptions of glamour and luxury in all its extreme iterations. Khandavilli admits she follows Lady Gaga on Facebook, and even mentions that she hopes to tweak the platform shoes of her sculpture in future versions: “I wish to make even *more* ultra-glamorous poodle stilettos,” she jokes.

Khandavilli’s recent works portray her new deity in various poses and stages of metamorphosis, yet always in the form of an opulent, highly-adorned creature who is both pompadoured poodle and voluptuous woman. Khandavilli sometimes uses familiar Sanskrit terms to name her work: *Darpana Sundari*, or “Beauty with Mirror,” is in fact the title of a similar temple sculpture, albeit one that is far less timely and irreverent as Khandavilli’s version. *Kama*, which features the deity as more animal than woman, is named in part after *Kamadhenu*, a divine bovine-goddess often described in Indian mythology as ‘the cow of plenty’—but, notes Khandavilli, a direct translation would be more like ‘the desire for fulfillment calf.’

While this idol’s origins may be rooted in history and its method of production traditional, her dominion as Khandavilli envisions it comprises nothing less than the motivation for all of our human endeavors, both ancient and modern. Throughout her career, which spans painting, performance, film, and installation, Khandavilli has been drawn to the notion of desire and the

way self-interest manifests in society: “That thread of desire has always been there in my work... What is it that moves people, or what is it that moves the world?”

Khandavilli’s artistic journey toward the ever-expanding cosmology of human longing is echoed in her life’s trajectory: after a traditional, religiously observant Hindu childhood and time spent studying under her aunt, an accomplished Indian miniature painter, Khandavilli traveled to the United States at the age of 19 to be with her husband through arranged marriage. “When I arrived in the US,” she says, “I knew nothing. I was able to explore every opportunity.” The change was so dramatic, she says, “I now think of my life in parts: before, during, and after.”

Now, back in India, Khandavilli revels in the process of making an ultra-modern goddess of vanity and desire in the manner of a traditional temple sculpture. “My aunt doesn’t like this work,” she laughs, but her experiences have taught her the following: “I should do what I want to, and let other people figure out what to do with it. For me, one thing leads to another, my upbringing, the experiences that I have, what I am doing now...my desire is where my journey has taken me.”



Cover: Siri Devi Khandavilli: *Darpana Sundari*, 2012, bronze, 12" x 4" x 5" edition of 7
Above: Siri Devi Khandavilli: *Kama*, 2012, bronze, 12" x 10.5" x 6.5" edition of 7



Enrique Chagoya: *Ghostly Meditations (martyrs of the arts academy)*, 2012, acrylic and India ink on de-acidified 19th century paper (facing pages of etchings from a 19th century book), 14" x 11"



Carrie Marill: *No Chick-Fil-A*, 2012, acrylic on linen, 45" x 31"



DAMION BERGER

Damion Berger's *Black Powder* series documents, in massive and powerfully beautiful representations of glass-plate negatives, the gestural vectors of pyrotechnic explosions launched to memorialize grand celebrations around the world. The British photographer, once an assistant to the renowned fashion photographer Helmut Newton, has chosen fireworks as his subject and captured the celebratory spectacle of worldly events, from the inauguration of earth's tallest building in Downtown Dubai to art performances in the Jardin du Tuileries.

Dating back to the innovation of gunpowder in 7th century China, as a means of either supplication or banishing evil spirits, says Berger, in our age fireworks have come to reflect the deep civilizational concerns of patriotism, pride, and grand-scale social ritual often deployed to fulfill the voracious demand spurred by the interests of marketing, entertainment, tourism, and the conspicuous consumption of our times.

The clear philosophical import of Berger's images is eclipsed by their stark, exhilarating beauty. Intense and fractally layered collections of gunpowder sears, tumbling embers, and fiery trajectories are captured and transformed into ashy, crepuscular abstractions that are as confrontational as they are compelling. While some images in the *Black Powder* series foreground familiar landmarks of civilizational power, like the Tour Eiffel or the Burj Khalifa, others are composed entirely of serial explosions, delineated in stunning lacerations of black and white. Decontextualized, in the absence of sentimental crowds and festive colors, what remains are monumental exposures of finale-like crescendos, a beguiling mix of the the mortal materials of war —guns, bombs and searing chemical blazes, interwoven in a rich latticework that brings to mind botanical gardens and dense tree canopies.

As dramatic as the photographs themselves is Berger's method of capturing them. Berger uses in-camera techniques such as long and overlapping exposures and unorthodox combinations of focus and aperture to select, sculpt and multiply the explosions onto a single sheet of film. He then offers them back to us as negatives by printing facsimile enlargements of the exposed film. Gaining access to many of the occasions Berger documents can take years of preparation and planning but that is only the beginning, as Berger carries out a process at once determined by his instinctual mastery of his equipment in reaction to the uncontrollable nature of his subject and, at the same time, vulnerable to the variables of mother nature and the unexpected.

“Working with a large format view-camera and setting the focus in advance on the ground glass, I load a single sheet of film at a time. Pulling out the dark slide, and holding the cable-release in one hand, I wait to trip the shutter in sync with selected explosions informed by past trial and error. In-between exposing the same negative multiple times and in quick succession, I sometimes shift the camera in and out of focus, vary the duration of each exposure and open or close the aperture to effect the quality and quantity of light on the film. The more figurative photographs require a supplemental long-exposure after the display to burn in the subtle contextual detail that takes more time to register on film than the bright, vivid explosions. The physical act of making these photographs seems every bit as intense as the fireworks themselves.”

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Left: Damion Berger: *Untitled VII*, 2010, pigment ink print on Baryta paper, diasec mounted in aluminum frame, 74" x 61" edition of 7

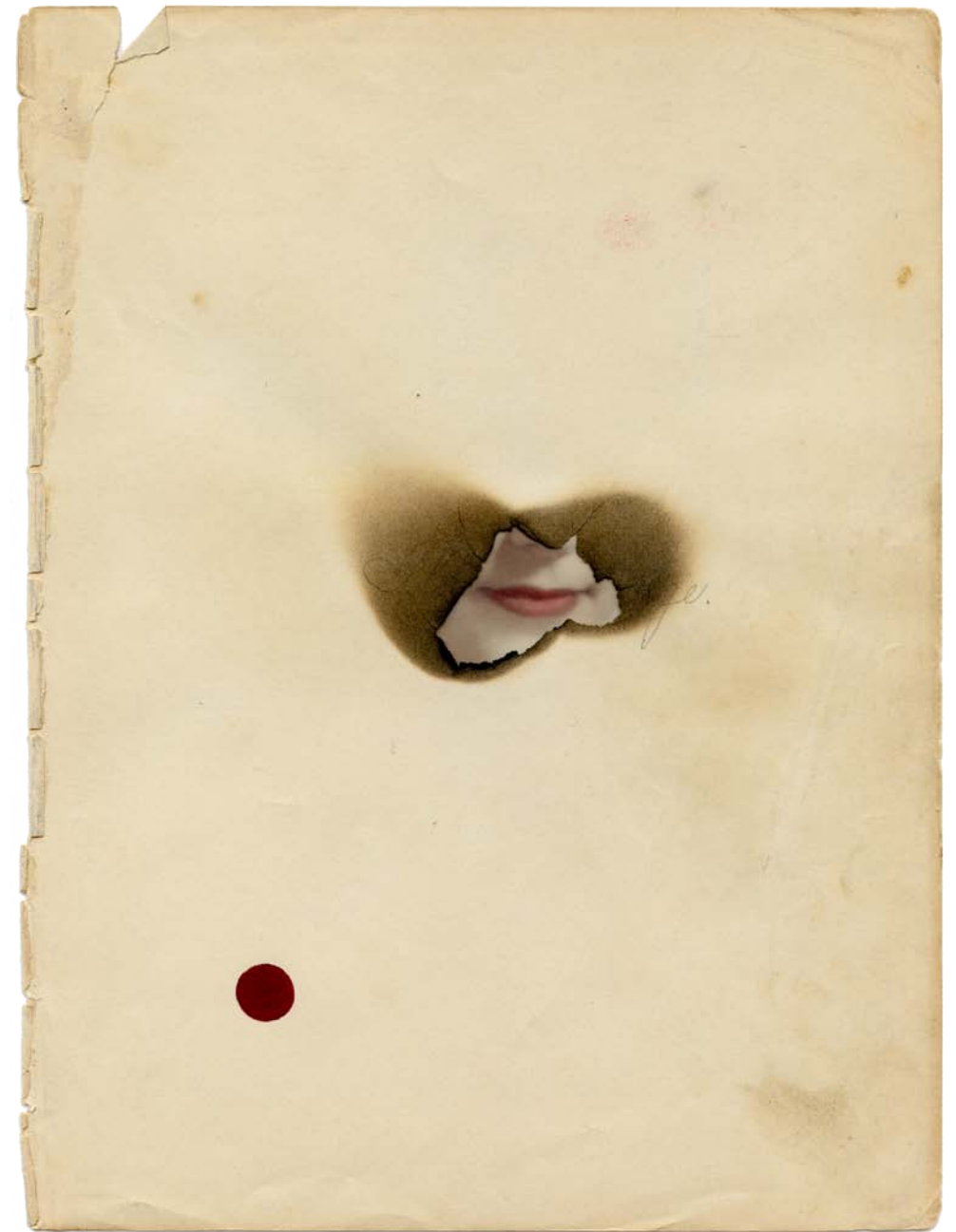
Berger seems to revel the most in those aspects of his medium and subject matter that are unaccountable and uncontrollable; the mysterious confluence of light and time that creates on his negatives moody, sparkling distortions of deep black, or the cherry-blossom hexagons of multiple shutter-openings. “In many of the more abstract images, there are areas that are deliberately out of focus, and sometimes there are these great analogue artifacts sculpted by the mechanics of the lens and shaped by the arrangement of the shutter blades,” he enthuses.

In his use of negatives, his muscular and unexpected take on a common subject of photography, or his ability to coax from the camera lovely and striking effects, Berger’s subject is in part the possibilities of photography as a human-operated tool, and the unique qualities of the analogue medium: “The negative as a delicate and intermediary step in the traditional photographic process, with its inverted tonalities, renders this other-worldly and somewhat magical image... all of this speaks to the analogue process and holds a particular fascination for me,” says Berger.

As photographers like Damion Berger increasingly use the camera to reveal a purer visual poetry than simple reproduction or digital alteration could achieve, it seems there is a distinct place for this technology—the chamber of light—that is as ancient, sacred and vital as those 7th-century explosions in the sky.



Damion Berger: *Italy' Cannes International Firework Festival*, 2009, pigment ink print on Baryta paper, diasec mounted in aluminum frame, 61" x 71" edition of 7



Marie Navarre: *present absence*, 2012, found and de-acidified book page, paper, digital print on vellum, soot, gouache, silk thread, 9" x 7.5"



Rachel Bess: *Traveling Magician*, 2012, oil on panel, 10" x 8"



Above: Kim Cridler: *Field Study 18: Buckthorn*, 2012, steel, bronze, agate, each, 62" x 32" x 42"
Below: Alison Rossiter: *Darko (Sears Roebuck), Rough Glossy, exact expiration date unknown, c. 1930's, processed 2011*, unique gelatin silver print, 5" x 7"



Above: Claudio Dicochea: *de Santanico Pandemonium y el Vaquero, la Vampira del Rio y la Pirateria* (of *Santanico Pandemonium and Cowboy, the River Vampire and Piracy*), 2012, acrylic, graphite, charcoal, transfer, wood, 72" x 96"
Below: Jessica Joslin: *Lazarus*, 2012, antique brass hardware, silver cutwork, steel, bone, glove leather, glass eyes, 16" x 21" x 17"

Mayme Kratz: *Blue Moon*, 2012, resin, shells, bones, seeds, sea life, wood, 24" x 24"

GILBERT GARCIN



Gilbert Garcin seems to possess a magical camera. Step up to one of his images and you'll find a wondrous view: Like film stills from a dream or flickering scenes drawn directly from the well of our collective unconscious, Garcin captures a supernatural landscape in which the absurdity of human existence plays out in clever philosophical tableaux.

At the center of the secret universe conjured by Gilbert Garcin is a universal character we may feel we've seen somewhere before—a tall Frenchman in a trench-coat who admirers of Garcin's work have christened "Mister G." In Mister G's bemused encounters with the deeply confounding circumstances of his world, there is something of the poignant antics of Charlie Chaplin or Jacques Tati. But Mister G is also, of course, reflective of all humanity, of our common tendency to think of ourselves as always in the foreground, and, despite all evidence to the contrary, to remain only fleetingly aware of the vast abyss beyond the frame.

Whether contemplating making a wish upon a larger-than-life dandelion or keeping a hubristic grasp on the tangled puppetstrings of our world, Mister G's predicament is often one of proportion, both literally and figuratively: he must navigate metaphors for our human vanity, complacency, and credulity in the form of actual obstacles represented by oversize objects from everyday life. And all the more reason to believe in Garcin's peculiar sort of magic, that his world fits on a single tabletop. Garcin photographs himself posing as Mister G and places the resulting photo cutouts in small handmade sets that are as simple as they are ingenious, weaving wry existential spells of cardboard and string, bits of sand and sticks, and light and shadow.

"It's a little naïve as systems go," says the artist, "People always think I use all sorts of sophisticated technology. Not at all. It's so simple that no one does it—or almost no one."

That almost no one (certainly no one we know) has arrived at this particular manner of photographic, philosophical marvel speaks of the distinctiveness of Garcin's vision, and of his remarkable ability to encapsulate our tragic flaws and human travails in striking visual puns with so little fussiness and such droll, and disturbing, accuracy. When asked which comes to him first, the "moral" or the visual "story" of his images, Garcin's response is as enigmatic and simple as his works themselves: "It doesn't happen that way: the image and the idea for an experiment come to me spontaneously, as I'm observing the world around me."

"At my age, it feels as though a collection of memories and ideas have accumulated in my mind in no particular order, as in an attic," he adds.

If Mister G is a recent construction, Monsieur Garcin's had plenty of time to observe the world around him. A former manager of a lamp-manufacturing plant in Marseilles, Garcin's career as a photographer began in 1994, at the age of 65, when he entered a photography competition and his works caught the eye of critics and curators. Garcin takes his celebrated second career in stride:



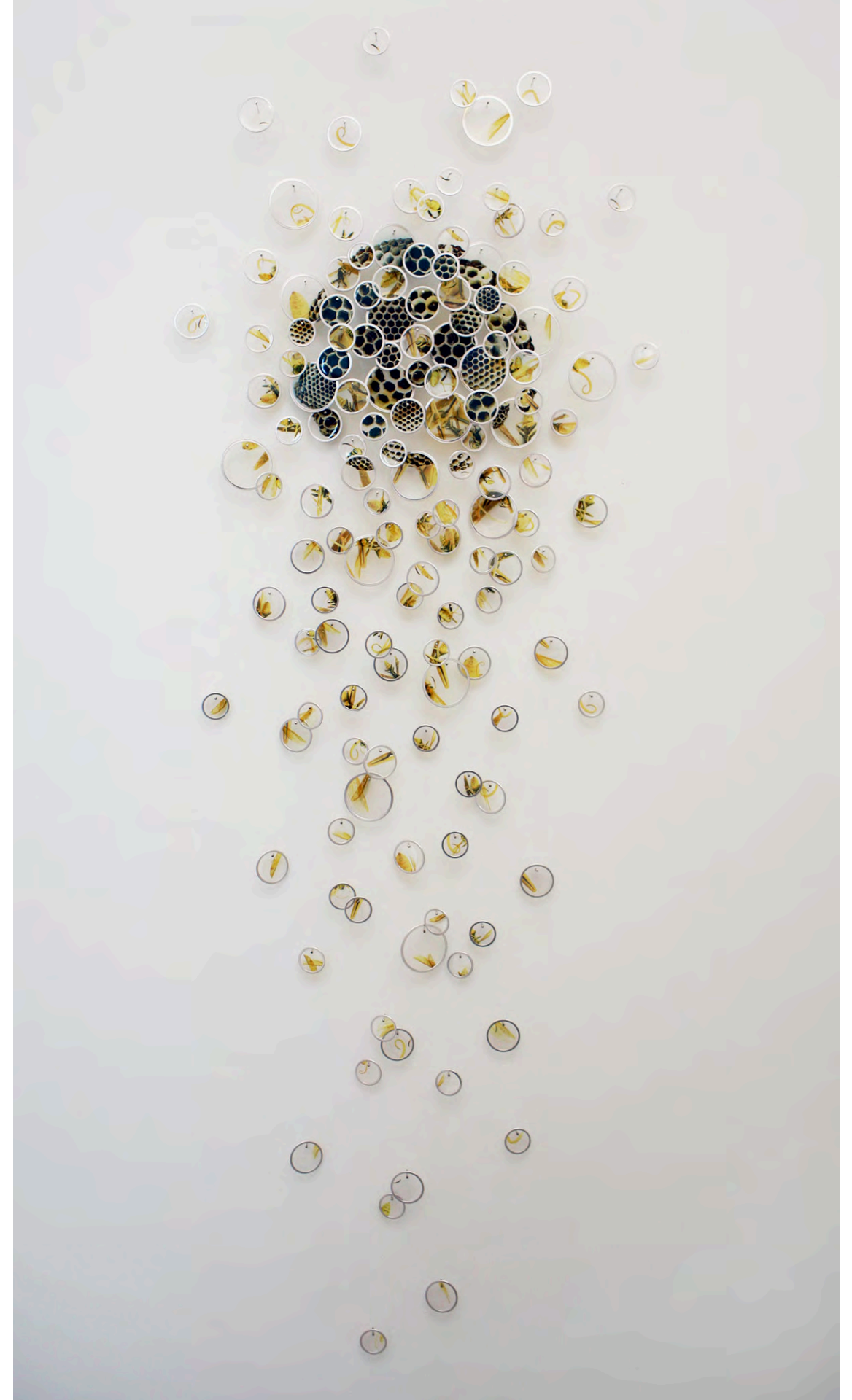
Left: Gilbert Garcin : *Candidat de gauche - Left wing candidate*, 2012, gelatin silver print, 5" x 12" / 7" x 16" / 10" x 24" edition of 12
Right: Gilbert Garcin : *Candidat de droite - Right wing candidate*, 2012, gelatin silver print, 5" x 12" / 7" x 16" / 10" x 24" edition of 12

"I've had two successive lives: that of the boss of a lamp fixture and import business until the age of retirement. And after retiring from that, a new life in photography, with different concerns and different activities."

Now his work is celebrated internationally and Garcin remains humble about his vocation and process. "If I had been a better painter or draftsman, I wouldn't have to use photography," he jokes, remarking on the technical difficulty of creating this philosophical world without the help of digital technology, and the fact that his experiments are discarded as often as they are successful. Lucky for us, then, that in this, the second part of his life, Garcin's enchanting, enchanted camera is his tool, and his attic of notions is ours to see.



Above: Gilbert Garcin: *L'Attraction du Vide (The Attraction of the Void)*, 2001, gelatin silver print, 12" x 8" / 16" x 12" / 24" x 20" edition of 12
Right: Alan Bur Johnson: *Smoke 2*, 2012, 140 photo transparencies, metal frames, dissection pins, 61.5" x 21.5" x 2"





Binh Danh: *Military Foliage 19*, 2010, chlorophyll print and resin, 17" x 11"



Binh Danh: *Military Foliage 43*, 2010, chlorophyll print and resin, 14" x 9.5"



James Turrell: *Air Apparent*, 2012, 30' x 30' x 30', Tempe, Arizona

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE 2012/2013

November 1 – December 29, 2012 Opening November 1, 7-9pm	Kim Cridler / David Kroll
January 3 – February 2, 2013 Opening January 3, 7-9pm	Alan Bur Johnson / Alison Rossiter
February 7 - March 2, 2013 Opening February 7, 7-9pm	Damion Berger / Gilbert Garcin
March 7 – April 6, 2013 Opening March 7, 7-9pm	Gregory Scott / Siri Devi Khandavilli
April 11 – June 1, 2013 Opening April 11th, 7-9pm	Mayme Kratz / Marie Navarre

ART FAIRS 2012/2013

2012	2013	2013
Art Miami December 4 – 9, 2012	Palm Springs Fine Art Fair February 15 – 17, 2013	The AIPAD Photography Show New York April 4 – 7, 2013
The Art Miami Pavilion Midtown – Wynwood Arts District 3101 NE 1st Avenue Miami, FL	Palm Springs Convention Center 277 N. Avenida Caballeros Palm Springs, CA	Park Avenue Armory 643 Park Avenue New York, NY

LISA SETTE GALLERY

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Gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday: 10 am to 5 pm | Thursday evening: 7 to 9 pm | Saturday: 12 to 5 pm
Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Fourth of July

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