

JASON MIDDLEBROOK **LIVE WITH LESS**

February 3 – April 5, 2009

Essay by Dan Cameron
Interview by Mary-Kay Lombino

University Art Museum
University at Albany
State University of New York



CARDBOARD STACK

Inspired by the Countless Trips from My House to My Studio, 2008
Graphite on paper
50 x 58 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York



Cardboard Stack (detail), 2009
Cardboard boxes
35 x 20 x 20 feet
Courtesy of the artist





Cardboard Stack (detail), 2009
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I have followed Jason Middlebrook's work for many years, and it has been a privilege as well as great fun to work with him on *Live with Less*. His monumental *Cardboard Stack* draws our attention to the levels of consumption on campus that so often go unnoticed by those who work, study, and visit here. Its layers reveal familiar vestiges of campus life, while begging the questions: is it all necessary? Is it possible to create a dynamic learning environment while learning to live with less? Many on campus are working individually, and as administrative units, to assure the answer is a resounding "yes."

As always, many people have helped to realize this exhibition and catalogue. I am grateful to UAlbany Interim President George M. Philip and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Susan D. Phillips, whose ongoing support has been critical to this and every project we undertake. Associate Vice President William Hedberg is an advocate and a continuing source of wisdom.

From our earliest conversations, Sara Meltzer has been gracious and enthusiastic; her support has made this publication

FOREWORD

Janet Riker
DIRECTOR

Cardboard Stack, 2009
Cardboard boxes
35 x 20 x 20 feet
Courtesy of the artist



possible. Thanks also go to Rachel Gugelberger and the entire staff of the Sara Meltzer Gallery for their assistance. The generosity of lenders Robert and Meryl Meltzer allowed us to include the signature drawing *Live with Less*.

Thanks go to the University Art Museum staff who worked tirelessly to realize the exhibition. I am particularly indebted to Jeffrey Wright-Sedam, whose problem-solving abilities on a shoestring budget were tested once again; to Corinna Ripps Schaming and Naomi Lewis, who worked closely with Jason to give the exhibition form and to smooth its progress; and to Zheng Hu, who designed this wonderful catalogue. But the rest of the staff—Darcie Abbatiello, Joanne Lue, Wren Panzella, Ryan Parr, and Patricia VanAlstyne—also assisted in their respective and critical areas of expertise. A number of the museum's work-study students played a particularly important role in this installation; we are fortunate that Zohar Lazar and Letha Wilson were able to assist Jason with fabrication and installation.

The museum is grateful to the UAlbany Offices of Environmental Sustainability and Facilities Management for their assistance in collecting cardboard for this project and for their ongoing commitment to promoting environmental accountability on campus. The project would not have been possible without the support of many members of the UAlbany community, including Mary Ellen Mallia, director of the Office of Environmental Sustainability; Professor Ed Mayer, Department of Art; and Tim Reilly, manager of Grounds Operations. Special thanks go to our student volunteers Tegan Barron-Shashok, Dan Foerste, Kris Hauser, Doug Holst, Janae McHugh, Alan Noble, and Ariel Willmott who worked over winter break sorting, cutting, and stacking cardboard.

This is the first exhibition and publication to be supported by the museum's two-year grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. It is a great pleasure to express our gratitude to Program Director Pamela Clapp and to the foundation's board for their confidence and support.

With boundless energy, enthusiasm, and good humor, Jason Middlebrook moved this project from good idea to compelling reality. He has been generous in sharing his ideas and his efforts with all who have been involved in the project. And we are all the richer for it.

Foil Sandwich Wrap—Premium, 2009
Watercolor and pencil on cardboard mounted on wood
18 x 18 inches
Courtesy of the artist



Jason Middlebrook's work explores the relationship between nature and human consumption. He is a longtime practitioner of using recyclable materials such as old wood, cardboard boxes, and plastic bottles to draw attention to the unbridled wastefulness of contemporary living. *Live with Less* is an expression of Middlebrook's artistic and environmental goal: to see beyond the discarded nature of these materials and to re-imagine them in new, resilient forms.

Considered one of today's most socially responsible artists, Middlebrook draws inspiration from a range of disparate sources, including ecology, art history, geography, and politics. In *Live with Less*, he literally brings the wastefulness of contemporary living to new heights with *Cardboard Stack* (2009), a thirty-five-foot tower in the center of the museum. Made from several tons of recycled cardboard collected on campus over a two-month period, the tower's visual stratifications are analogous to the layers of a landfill. Often populated by watchful birds and sporadic weeds, these stratifications make their appearance in many of Middlebrook's sculptures and two-dimensional works, including his most recent paintings done on collapsed cardboard boxes.

Middlebrook's frequent references to the urban environment are tinged with romantic yearning. His wall drawings and large tapestry-like paintings on cardboard evoke the sensation of viewing an illuminated city from an airplane window. This seemingly incongruous stance from an artist with strong ties to the natural world is actually in keeping with his focus on the complexities of contemporary living. Ever mindful of the tenuous balance between progress and a future filled with diminishing returns, Middlebrook depicts dazzling networks of color and light, knowing full well that this beautiful view comes with a carbon footprint.

Middlebrook's continued interest in defining his role as an artist in relation to the larger world takes its most pointed turn in the hand-painted aphorisms found in the museum's lobby. Culled from sketchbook notations, the words, while funny and provocative, take on a cautionary urgency when read carefully. Here again, Middlebrook stresses the need to be mindful of what we discard, this time in the form of thoughts and ideas.

In all his efforts, Middlebrook speaks to our need to live with less, while at the same time he shows us that all is not lost. As he states, there are plenty of regenerative possibilities in "creating something from nothing."

INTRODUCTION

Corinna Ripps Schaming
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR/CURATOR

Live with Less, 2006
Graphite on paper
49¾ x 38 inches
Collection of Robert and Meryl Meltzer

FREE
FREE

FREE

EVERY
STAR
WITH DA

A SHOW OF ALL
DRAWINGS EVER
SHOWN ON
SCREEN
IN HOLLYWOOD
MOVIES

FIVE YEARS FIVE DRAWING BOOKS

Five Years—Five Drawing Books, 2009
90 signs
Cardboard, house paint, acrylic paint, and ink
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist



Why should I lie, I need to make art.

WE WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND TRIBAL CULTURES NEVER

LIV WITH

ALL YOU NEED IS ONE GOOD IDEA

IN NATURE SUFFERING IS PART OF THE DEAL



DO A DRAWING OF BIRDS ATTEMPTING TO SUBDUCE ONE HOUSE

IDEA FOR A PAINTING: A HUGE PILE OF ALL THE NEW MUSEUM'S ARTWORK

EVERYTHING STARTS WITH DRAWING

KEEP FROZEN
IN EVERY WALK WITH NATURE ONE RECEIVES FAR MORE THAN HE SEE KS. JOHN MUIR



DON'T EVER QUESTION YOUR INITIAL IDEA UNLESS IT COSTS A MILLION DOLLARS TO REALIZE

IT MAKES SENSE TO BUILD IN CITIES

I was once invited to be in a show on boat. I stuffed a case of empty wine bottles with messages and threw them overboard. The message in each bottle read 'PLEASE RECYCLE'

PUBLIC SCULPTURE IDEA: VINYL (GRAFFITI) THAT CAN BE MOVED FROM ONE BUILDING TO OTHER THROUGHOUT THE CITY

A SHOW OF ALL DRAWINGS EVER ~~MADE~~ IN HOLLYWOOD MOVIES



GROW YOUR OWN

FREE

ALAN HARTOG DRIVES THE CRUISE

WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO

WILL WORK FOR GREAT IDEAS

HIDE THEM IN AN ARTIST'S BEST FRIENDS

I WANT A CHRISTO DRAWING

THE ONLY LINE DRAWING THAT CAN WITHSTAND THREE METERS OF WATER

I'M A GOD'S ACRES

THE GREEN MOVEMENT IS NOT JUST THE BLUE MOVEMENT

IT MAKES SENSE TO BUILDING IT

TRYING TO DEFINE YOURSELF IS LIKE TRYING TO LIVE WITH LESS

I'M A BETTER ARTIST THAN TIGER WOODS

FREE

THE HIDDEN YOU WORK THE CLOCKWORK

KEEP FROZEN

PUBLIC COMMISSION IDEAS MAKE AN IMPRESSION

WHAT ARE THE THINGS WE CAN'T CONTROL WEATHER'S DECAY LOVE

ARCHITECTURE IS TEMPORARY AN INSTANTANEOUS SHINE

IS PROSTITUTION REALLY THE OLDEST PROFESSION IN THE WORLD? PROVE IT!

The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is the fear of the unknown. - H.P. LOVECRAFT

MAKING ART IS OPPOSITE OF MURPHY'S LAW

RUST MAKES SLEEP THE GREATEST TRAVEL WORLD EYE

Drawing of a face



Jason Middlebrook is a doer, maker, builder, conjurer, moralist, illusionist, environmentalist, humanist, pragmatist, provocateur, and a fervent believer in the power of art to change people's thinking, and by extension their lives. In listing all these possible descriptions of what Middlebrook does, there is of course a potential danger that he will appear to the reader/viewer as a jack-of-all-trades, but master of only a few. A more accurate summation is that Middlebrook is an emphatically post-modern artist, in that he doesn't attempt to dazzle the viewer with the technical skills that are evidently at the core of his practice, nor is he interested in providing us with an easy escape route from the ordinary to the sublime. Rather, the more he becomes enmeshed in the struggles of various social movements to attain a critical mass, the more emphatic his art becomes. A champion of causes that fall far outside the realm of aesthetics, Middlebrook is pursued by the nagging fear that art is a trivial thing, and his efforts to make sure this is not the case are nothing short of marvelous.

The processes of decay and entropy, and the science behind them, can be found at the core of Middlebrook's artistic mission. The first project that I had the pleasure to collaborate with him on as curator, *Dig* (2001–02), involved an ingenious transformation of a newly constructed atrium space created from the hole dug through the ground floor and into the basement of the New Museum's Soho headquarters. The opening had been a construction site such a short time prior to his installation that Middlebrook's intervention, which took the appearance of a loamy stratum of nature shoving its way into view, seemed oddly logical. Although the atrium was clearly not outdoors, nor was there any other reason to imagine that roots, rocks, and fossils were waiting on the other side of the steel and concrete floor to push their way through, most viewers instantly suspended their disbelief the moment they saw *Dig*, in large part because of the way it was sandwiched between two very different levels. The title, which at first suggested an archaeological site, gradually flipped its meaning to indicate a sliver of nature that the architects and contractors had somehow overlooked. It might have started out as a narrow slice of vegetal life, but one day, when the man-made canyons of Soho have disappeared, it might emerge triumphant.

A much more recent collaboration with Middlebrook took place in New Orleans in early 2008, about two and a half years after the devastating floods that wrecked the city when the storm surge created by Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed the fragile levee system that kept New Orleans dry. Although most of the city's neighborhoods had been repaired, rebuilt, and re-inhabited by the

JASON MIDDLEBROOK

Dan Cameron

Vein (detail), 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper
54¾ x 69¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer
Gallery, New York

time of his arrival, it was still possible to find piles of discarded wood from old houses at various points. In short order, Middlebrook located several impressive structural beams, transported them into the wood shop of the Contemporary Arts Center, and deftly transformed them into sturdy public benches. Bearing weathered traces of old paint, the benches retained their historical connection to the city's storied architectural history and at the same time provided a compelling paradigm for salvaging the detritus of large-scale devastation and transforming it into objects that directly served the public good.

Middlebrook's Albany exhibition, while offering an overview of many aspects of his fast-growing oeuvre, is also one of the first efforts to demonstrate how his work consistently addresses the destruction of the planet's resources by our attempts to usurp those resources for our own short-term gain. In particular, fossil fuels, and their ongoing relation to the living samples of wood from which they were derived over the course of countless eons, are only one of the dialectical stress-points that he emphasizes as a way of revealing hidden relations between intention and willful disregard. Equally urgent are the ties he articulates between the artist's desire to make an impact on his or her social environment and the far less benign implications of the materials used for that purpose. In detailing these relationships, however, it is important to emphasize that Middlebrook's purpose in bringing together such seemingly disconnected points of reference is not to make us feel badly about our destructive impact on the world, but, on the contrary, to make us feel good about the fact that we are intelligent and sensitive enough to be aware of the damage, especially when an artist of his immense abilities is the one to point it out to us.

Dan Cameron is founding director and chief curator of *Prospect.1 New Orleans*, a new international biennial that opened November 2008. He also serves as director of visual arts for the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans. Previously senior curator at the New Museum in New York from 1995 to 2007, Cameron is also a member of the graduate faculty of School of Visual Arts (SVA) in New York.

Vein, 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper
54¾ x 69¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

FAR RIGHT:
Wood from Around the World Mobile, 2008
Driftwood, metal, and black paint
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York





Someone's Been Here Before, 2008
 Graphite on paper
 30 x 41 inches
 Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

For over a decade, Jason Middlebrook has been interested in the intersections between ecology and culture, entropy and regeneration, civilization and the wilderness. Recently he has begun to address these themes by re-using discarded materials before they go into landfills, transforming everything from plastic bottles to demolition debris to entire rooms of cardboard into unexpectedly striking objects that embody the ideas behind recycling, while at the same time challenging our concepts of artistic beauty. His artwork is not only evidence of the enormous accumulation of garbage we produce, but a suggestion that much of our trash can be transformed into something new, perhaps even something functional and beautiful.

Mary-Kay: Your last show in Miami, *One Man's Trash Is Another Man's Treasure*, included imitation Andy Warhol Brillo boxes in a state of abandon and deterioration, with plants growing out of them. You are clearly addressing Man's age-old, futile struggle against the powerful force of nature, but is there also a knowing critique of the art world and all its hubris?

Jason: Actually, the Brillo box planter idea came from a personal story. When I first arrived in New York in 1994 for the Whitney Program, I worked for an art dealer doing installation work. We were preparing for a Warhol and Judd show and there were Brillo boxes in the gallery. That week there was a leak in the bathroom, and when the plumber came to fix it he walked in and threw his jacket on one of the Brillo boxes. That was a moment that I will never forget, when I saw the jacket on the box but I was afraid to say anything. I had been in New York for all of two weeks at that point. When the dealer saw it, he flipped. The plumber had no idea what the problem was. It was one of those instances when you ask, at what point does high art meet garbage? So years later, I decided to literally and figuratively turn the Brillo box on its head and fill it with dirt and make it into a planter. I guess that could be considered a critique of the art world, but also homage to Warhol for having done it first.

Also, for me, it's about challenging the hierarchy of the art world and the arbitrary system that sets the price of art. The art world takes these objects and puts them on a pedestal and creates a market for them. I like to take something the art world perceives as valuable and show it in ruins.

Mary-Kay: In 2006 you were commissioned by University of California, Riverside to create *Live Building*, a project in which you made art with all usable materials from the demolition of the Wurms Building. And now here, used cardboard is the material for

GETTING OFF THE GRID WITH JASON MIDDLEBROOK

AN INTERVIEW BY
 Mary-Kay Lombino

the new work. When did you first start re-using discarded materials in your work? What attracts you to those materials?

Jason: My attraction to using discarded materials is to address the sheer volume of refuse our culture creates. In a few recent projects, including the one in Riverside and this exhibition, I set rules or limits for myself. In *Live Building*, I had to make something out of all the material we could salvage from the building, and here I had to use all the cardboard intended for recycling by the campus. I have found that when you put limits on a project, it becomes really interesting. The stricter the rules, the more possibilities you find in order to work within those parameters.

I'm also interested in the inherent beauty and nostalgia of other people's trash. I want to be able to use it in a way that reflects today's zeitgeist—the desires of today's society. How can something be useful the second time around? How can something become beautiful the second time around? Wood and cardboard are perfect materials for this because they're organic and have plenty of life left in them. And of course, using recycled materials is a general design trend, but my work is different from design and architecture in a few ways. One is the limits I put on myself, and the other is the community component—working with kids and college students to bring awareness and appreciation to the materials.

Recently at The Oxbow School I gave students an assignment to draw a piece of wood, then write a fictional story about it, and then work together to make something functional with the material. The project helped them recognize that the wood had a history, but it also gave it a new life, one with a creative solution. Sometimes I get bored by the process and the strategies of making something new, like a painting or a sculpture. Finding a pile of wood and asking, what can I do with this?—that is more exciting to me. It's exciting because most people don't see its intrinsic value.

Mary-Kay: Is your objective more about finding beauty in garbage, or are you trying to decrease the amount of garbage we produce and raise a sense of social awareness and responsibility?

Jason: Decreasing the amount of garbage in the world would be nice, but it's a futile undertaking, so my work becomes more social commentary. Like archaeology, digging through used objects can reveal things about our culture, about our priorities. It presents the question, why do we use all this cardboard? Is it

necessary? Hopefully a few students will stop in their tracks, stop text messaging their friends for a minute, and think about the refuse that comes out of this university and what can be done with it—other than just making more trash later after it gets recycled.

Mary-Kay: To me, your planks are part painting, part sculpture, and part tree. They blatantly refer back to the inherent nature of the material, from the grain of the wood to the shape of the tree they came from. Can you comment on what they mean to you?

Jason: The planks are a lot of things. They started as paintings on these found slabs of wood that were a reference to folk art and vernacular art, like sign paintings or landscapes you see at yard sales that are painted on saw blades—things like that. I wanted to try that on a larger scale—one that relates also to the Native totems I've seen in the Pacific Northwest. But mostly they're a reference to trees with their narrow verticality. I think of them as a way to reveal a core sample of a tree by bringing out the wood grain. The more I painted, the more I began looking at the relationship between hard-edge painting and the natural lines in the material, between representation and abstraction. That's why one resembles Op art and one looks like graffiti, while others represent the urban grid.

I needed a way to resolve their display, and leaning them against the wall seemed to make sense. I have leaned art this way before, and it falls between painting and sculpture in a way similar to John McCracken's high-gloss planks or some of Robert Gober's work that exists somewhere between the floor and the wall.

Mary-Kay: The cardboard you used to make the new works in this show all came from the recycling bins on the SUNY Albany campus, which has an enrollment of 18,000 students and employs over a thousand people. When you began this project, you had no idea how much cardboard you would be given or what condition it would be in. What were your expectations going into it, and were you surprised by the outcome?

Jason: The most surprising thing was the sheer volume of food and books and other products that was delivered to campus. I originally asked if I could have one year's worth of cardboard to use as my material for the art. After a few days, I was told that one year of cardboard would be so immense that it would be a logistical nightmare. Even a few months' worth has been very difficult to manage. The cardboard comes primarily from food

boxes—cereal, pop tarts, milk, eggs, bread, pizza, that kind of thing. At the end of each day there's about a five-foot-high palette of crushed cardboard just from the food deliveries.

The big challenge then became, what do I do with all this cardboard? My interest in cardboard goes back to when I first saw Frank Gehry's corrugated cardboard chairs and Rauschenberg's combines. They blew me away. Since then, I have wanted to use cardboard. It's strong but it will decay and fall apart, which I like. I like the fact that its re-usable shelf life is limited. But it can also be a valuable resource, going beyond its original function. If you're homeless, it can serve as a temporary shelter or a way to communicate. For me, there's something poetic about that. Even though it doesn't have much structural integrity, I love the color of it—this unapologetic brown. The used cardboard I was given is stamped on the outside with logos and symbols that trace its use and implicate us as the users. I try to integrate that into my work as much as possible without being too corny.

I started making signs like the ones that homeless people hold or prop up. The texts that I painted on them came from old sketchbooks where I jot things down—quotes from artists I like, quotes from songs, ideas that have never been realized, impossible ideas, or things that I would only tell my friends because they're so stupid.

Mary-Kay: In this exhibition, I also see inherent conflict in the fact that we use cardboard in such excess, while others need it as a source of survival.

Jason: I like the idea of cardboard becoming makeshift cabins, shantytowns, or someone's home. You don't have to go to architecture school or even read *Dwell* magazine to make your own house. I choose not to buy into the convention, or the pretention, of modernist design in order to create something that is both functional and beautiful. I love the look of Craftsman-style houses and mid-century modern furniture design, but I'm always trying to push against those traditions. I'm looking for the tension between modern design and a more organic way of building things. And cardboard works well for that because it's a subset of a tree; it's a form of paper.

Mary-Kay: *Getting Off the Grid Is Hard To Do* depicts a rustic cabin that is seemingly symbolic of your life in upstate New York. I sense tension between life in the city and life in the country in your paintings, where you often portray an idealized version of the urban and the rural. Does that reflect your own ambivalence or enjoyment of each lifestyle?

Jason: I have a huge appreciation for both lifestyles. I wish I could live in both at once. There's the fantasy of completely isolating yourself and living in the middle of nowhere. And on the other side, there's this romantic idea of never giving up that little rent-controlled apartment in Manhattan, in the center of everything. I have a little bit of the grass-is-always-greener syndrome. Which is why my images of the city are usually depicted from above—many of them look like Los Angeles or New York as seen from a plane at night. This is when the city looks the most seductive to me.

Mary-Kay: Do your northern California roots influence your work?

Jason: I always have a question in my mind about whether I'm going to continue living on the East Coast or go back to California where I grew up. Northern California to me represents an abundance of land and an alternative lifestyle. I grew up in the mountains, I grew up near the ocean, I grew up with hippies and dome houses. After the technology boom in northern California, that earnest hippie quality diminished because there was suddenly so much money spreading out from San Francisco. When I started coming up to Columbia County, New York from Brooklyn, it was the closest thing I had ever seen to the California I remember. It's a rustic area with a community that exists outside a big city, and in some ways depends on the city, but offers a completely different lifestyle that is as close to off-the-grid as it gets. Upstate New York offered me an opportunity to buy a piece of land and live a sort of manifest destiny, the American dream of building a homestead. That idea has a lot of nostalgia for me because it reminds me of what my parents did in Los Gatos, California.

Since I moved up here, I've become more focused than I was when I lived in Brooklyn. The themes of my work have not changed much, only intensified, since I'm living so close to the land now. The closer I get to isolation, the more clear it is to me what my place is in relationship to nature, and that has become a central issue in my work and in the way I think.

Mary-Kay Lombino is The Emily Hargroves Fisher '57 and Richard B. Fisher Curator at The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, where she oversees the photography and contemporary art collections, exhibitions, and publications. She has previously served as curator of exhibitions at the University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach and assistant curator at UCLA Hammer Museum.

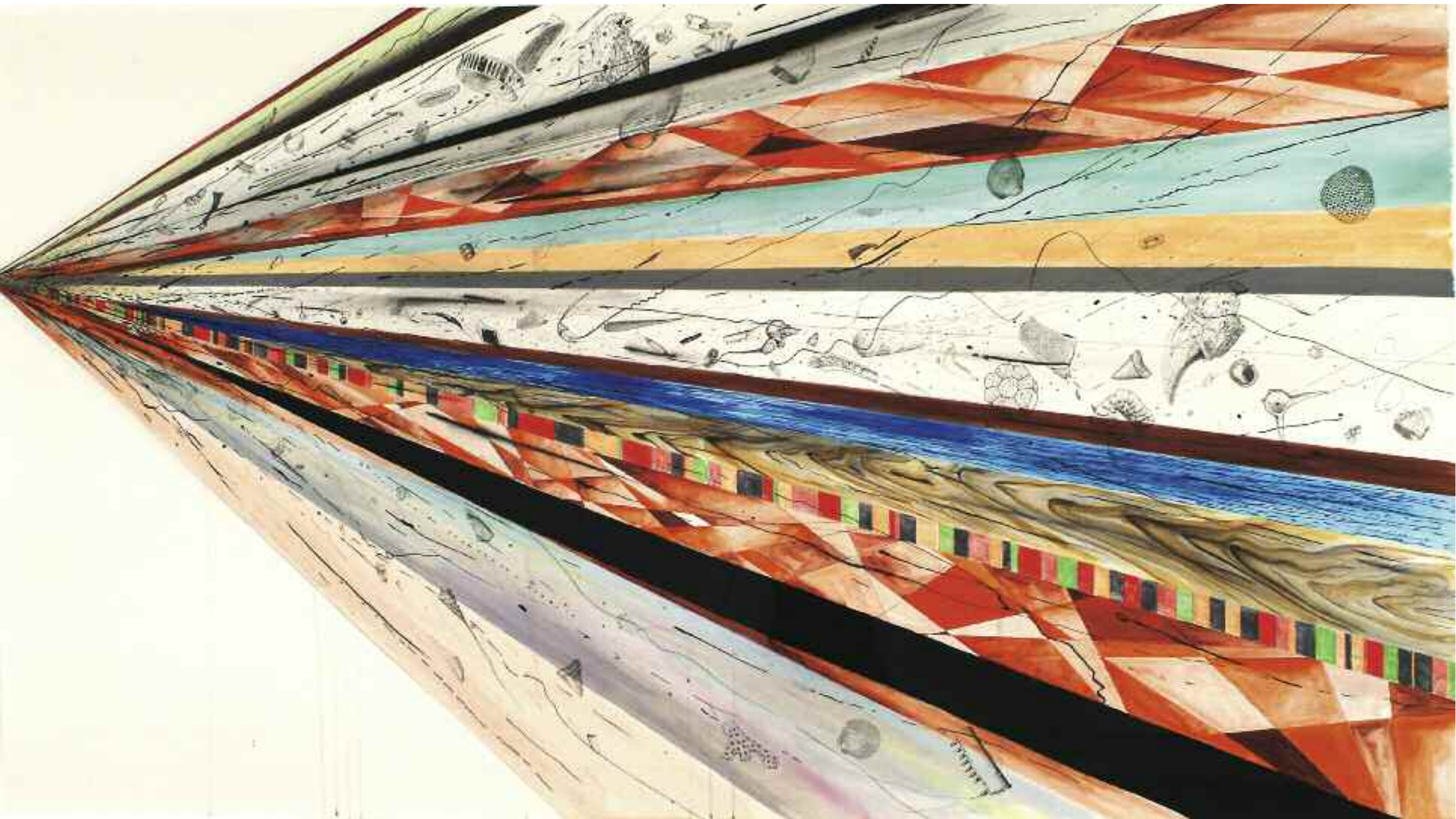


The Difference Between Soil & Dirt, 2000
Graphite on paper
20 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Wall Drawing (detail), 2009
Acrylic paint
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist



Getting Off the Grid Is Hard To Do, 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper
39¼ x 101½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York



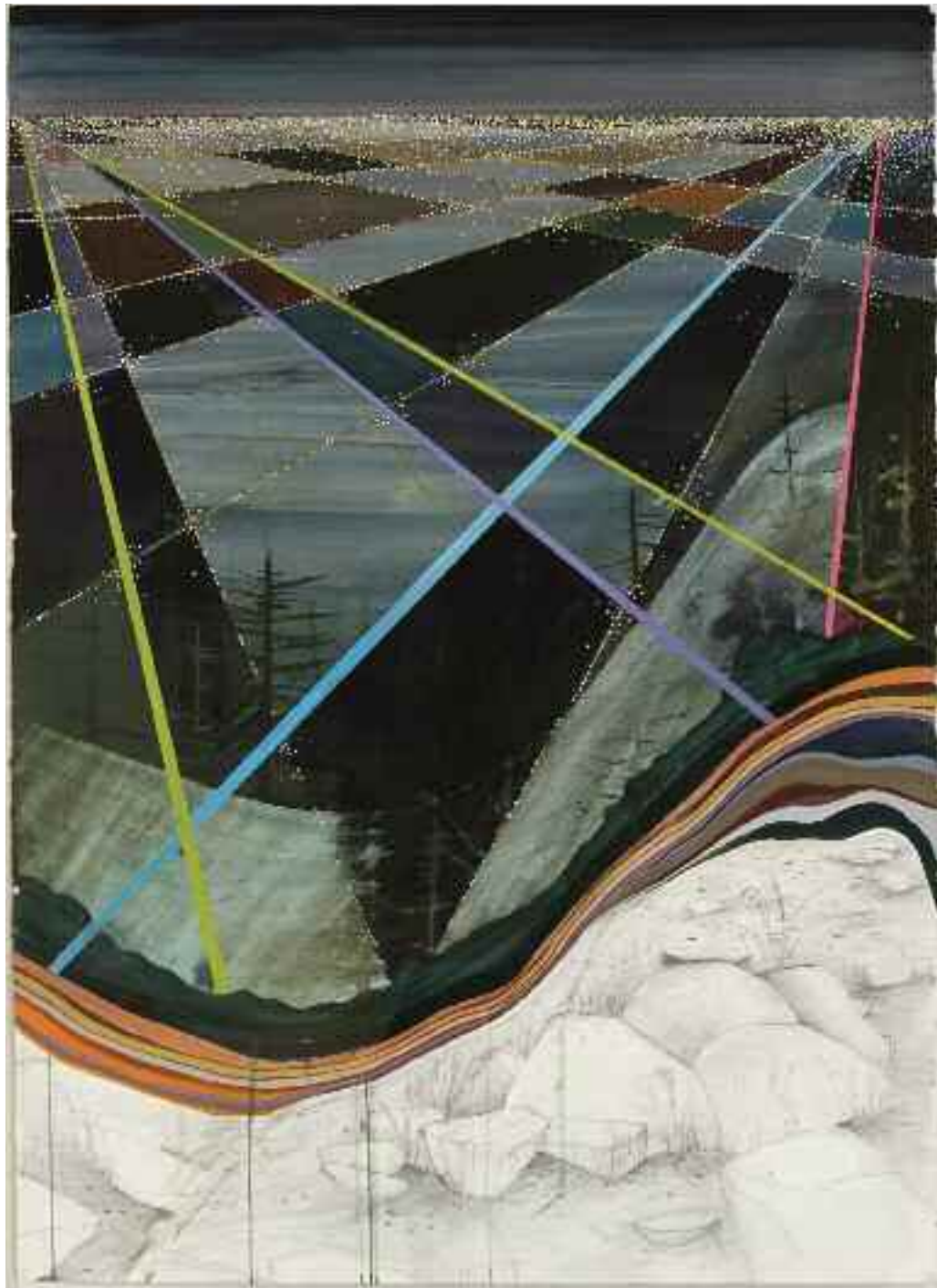
APL #1 *Discovering Fossils*, 2003
Colored pencil, graphite, ink, pen, Xerox transfer, and acrylic on paper
44 x 80 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York



Untitled Painted Planks (installation view), 2008
Acrylic paint on wood

Cast Concrete Plastic Bottles (detail), 2008
Cast concrete
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York





STACKED NIGHT SKY

Maggots on a Steak, 2008
Acrylic, ink, and pencil on paper
41 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York



Stacked Night Sky 1, 2, 3, 4, 2009
All works cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
20 x 5 feet, 6 x 8 feet, 18 x 3½ feet, 22 x 4½ feet
Courtesy of the artist

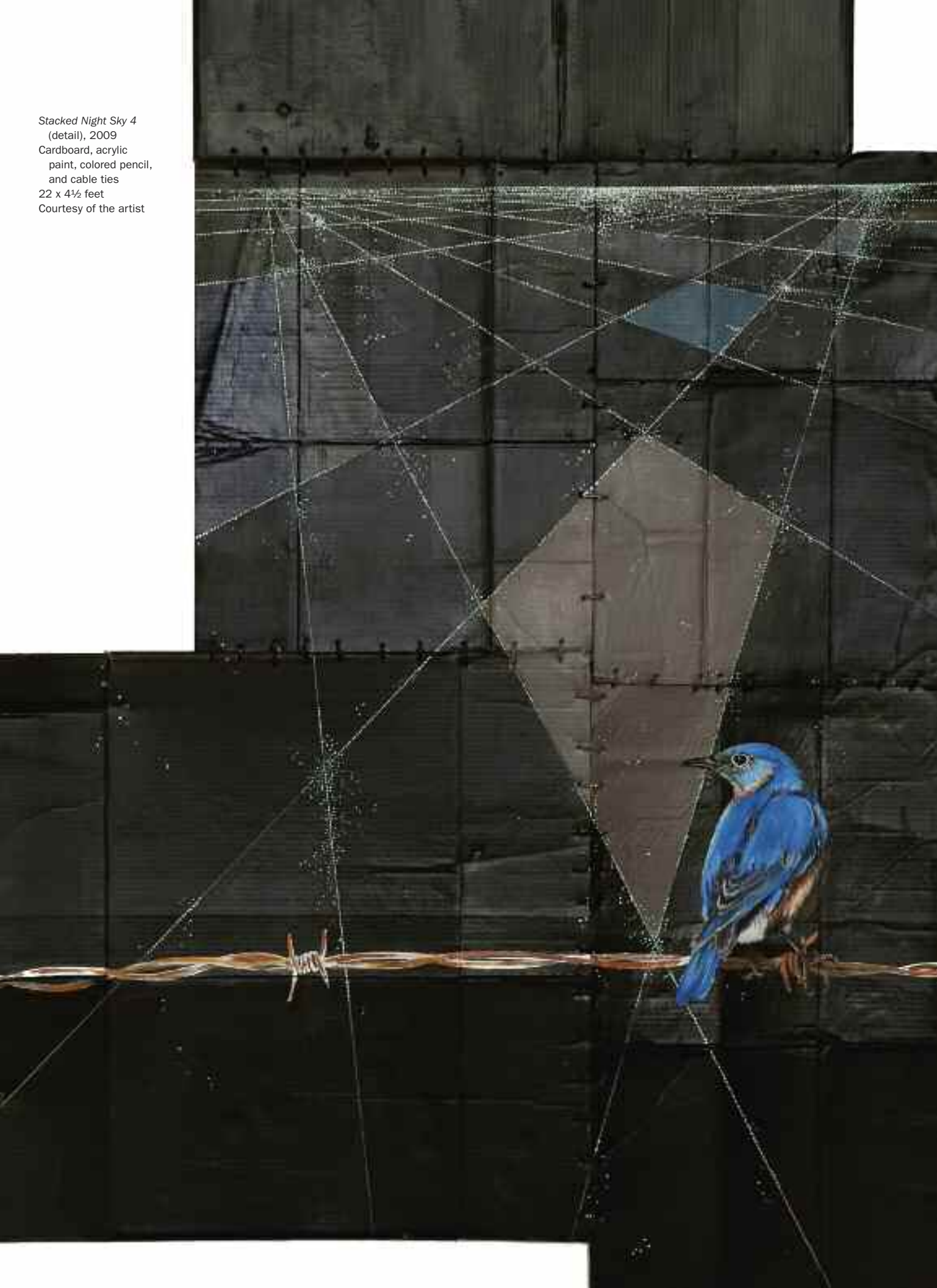


LEFT:
Stacked Night Sky 1, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
20 x 5 feet
Courtesy of the artist

RIGHT:
Stacked Night Sky 3 (detail), 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
18 x 3½ feet
Courtesy of the artist



Stacked Night Sky 4
(detail), 2009
Cardboard, acrylic
paint, colored pencil,
and cable ties
22 x 4½ feet
Courtesy of the artist



Cardboard Stack, 2009
Cardboard boxes, 35 x 20 x 20 feet
Courtesy of the artist

Five Years—Five Drawing Books, 2009
90 signs
Cardboard, house paint, acrylic paint, and ink
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Foil Sandwich Wrap—Premium, 2009
Watercolor and pencil on cardboard mounted on wood
18 x 18 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Grow Your Own, 2009
Cardboard, ash plank, Douglas fir, and paint
18¼ x 126 x 17 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Pile of Buildings, 2009
Cardboard boxes, Christmas lights, and paint
6½ x 14¾ x 12 feet
Courtesy of the artist

Stacked Night Sky 1, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
20 x 5 feet
Courtesy of the artist

Stacked Night Sky 2, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
6 x 8 feet
Courtesy of the artist

Stacked Night Sky 3, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
18 x 3½ feet
Courtesy of the artist

Stacked Night Sky 4, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
22 x 4½ feet
Courtesy of the artist

Study for Pile of Buildings, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, and Sharpie marker
17 x 29 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Twenty-Five Shelves with Cast Concrete Bottles, 2009
Cardboard and cast concrete
14 x 17 x 4½ inches (approx.) each
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled Wall Drawing, 2009
Acrylic paint
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Cast Concrete Plastic Bottles, 2008
Cast concrete
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Cast Concrete Water Bottle Bench, 2008
Acrylic on walnut wood, cast concrete water bottles,
metal washers, bolts, and stainless steel rods
18 x 102 x 13 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Fallen Poplar Tree Bench, 2008
Poplar wood and acrylic paint
18 x 90 x 12½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Getting Off the Grid Is Hard To Do, 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper, 39¾ x 101½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

*Inspired by the Countless Trips from My House to My
Studio*, 2008
Graphite on paper, 50 x 58 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Maggots on a Steak, 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper, 41 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Someone's Been Here Before, 2008
Graphite on paper, 30 x 41 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 1, 2008
Acrylic paint on cottonwood
123½ x 17¼ x 1¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 2, 2008
Acrylic paint on butternut wood, 97 x 13½ x 2¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 3, 2008
Acrylic paint on cherry wood, 65½ x 18½ x 1¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 4, 2008
Acrylic paint on walnut wood, 109 x 16½ x 1¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 5 and Cast Anti-Freeze Bottle,
2008
Acrylic paint on cherry wood and anti-freeze bottle cast
in concrete, 82 x 20½ x 7 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 6, 2008
Acrylic paint on cedar wood, 117½ x 26 x 1 inch
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 7, 2008
Acrylic paint on cherry wood, 81½ x 17 x 1¼ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 8, 2008
Acrylic paint on cottonwood, 124 x 16¾ x 1½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Vein, 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper, 54¾ x 69¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Wood from Around the World Mobile, 2008
Driftwood, metal, and black paint
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Live with Less, 2006
Graphite on paper, 49¼ x 38 inches
Collection of Robert and Meryl Meltzer

APL #1 Discovering Fossils, 2003
Colored pencil, graphite, ink, pen, Xerox transfer, and
acrylic on paper, 44 x 80 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

"Ladies and Gentlemen...the Trees!", 2002
Ink, acrylic, pen, pencil, and Xerox transfers on paper
48½ x 63 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Debris Field, 2001
Ink, acrylic paint, pencil, and Xerox transfer on paper
47½ x 47¾ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

The Difference Between Soil & Dirt, 2000
Graphite on paper, 20 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

BIOGRAPHY

1966 Born in Jackson, MI
Lives and works in West Taghkanic, NY

EDUCATION

1994–95 Whitney Independent Study Program,
New York, NY

1994 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA,
Master of Fine Arts

1990 University of California at Santa Cruz, B.A. in
Fine Arts

SOLO EXHIBITIONS / PROJECTS

2009 *Jason Middlebrook: Live with Less*, University Art
Museum, University at Albany, Albany, NY

2008 *Jason Middlebrook*, Sara Meltzer Gallery,
New York, NY

2007 *One Man's Trash Is Another Man's Treasure*, Kevin
Bruk Gallery, Miami, FL
A Serious Paradise, Gregory Lind Gallery, San
Francisco, CA

What Is Your Hobby? The Fireplace Project, East
Hampton, NY

Craft in Contemporary Art, curated by Evelyn C.
Hankins, Fleming Museum, University of Vermont,
Burlington, VT

Merit Badge 2, Rockland County Art Center,
Rockland, NY

Flow, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of
Nebraska, Lincoln, NE

Green Dreams, curated by Anne Kersten and
Christine Heidemann, Kunstverein Wolfsburg,
Wolfsburg, Germany

Winter Invitational, curated by Wennie Huang,
Wave Hill, Bronx, NY

Traveling Seeds, commissioned by RxArt, Mt.
Sinai Hospital, New York, NY

Jason Middlebrook: Disturbed Sites, Lisa Dent
Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2006 *Live Building: The Recycling and Demolition of the
Wurm's Building*, organized by Ciara Ennis,
California Museum of Photography,
UCR/ARTSblock, Riverside, CA

It's All So Black and White, Sara Meltzer Gallery,
New York, NY

Galleria Paolo Bonzano Artecontemporanea,
Rome, Italy

The Night Time Is the Right Time, Galleri Charlotte
Lund, Stockholm, Sweden

2005 *Alchemical Primordality* (two-person show),
curated by Gianluca Marziani, Galleria Pack,
Milan, Italy

The Provider, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY
Past, Present, Future, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los
Angeles, CA

2004 *The Beginning of the End*, Aldrich Contemporary
Museum of Art, Ridgefield, CT
Outdoor sculpture project, Aspen Art Museum,
Aspen, CO

2003 *APL #1*, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY
APL #2, Els Hannape Underground, Athens,
Greece

Empire of Dirt, curated by Lorenzo Fusi, Palazzo
Delle Papesse Centro Arte Contemporanea,
Siena, Italy

2002 *(De)-Composition*, Art Statements, Art Basel
Miami, Miami Beach, FL
Nylon Gallery, London, England

2001 *Dig* (October 2001–January 2002), New Museum
of Contemporary Art, New York, NY

Museum Storage, curated by Ciara Ennis, Santa
Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA

Visible Entropy, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY

Commission for Wellcome Trust, Euston Road
Hoarding Project, Wellcome Trust, London,
England

210 Gallery Installation, Wellcome Trust, London,
England

California Is Still Falling into the Ocean, Room 02,
Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY

2000 *Jason + Kate*, presented by Sara Meltzer Gallery,
Meat Market Art Fair, New York, NY

1999 *Subdivision*, Steffany Martz Gallery, New York, NY

Grand Entrance at the Commons, Public Art Fund
of New York City, Metro Tech, Brooklyn, NY

I Feel Like Making Love (Sempervirens), Three Day
Weekend, Los Angeles, CA

Service Entrance, Steffany Martz Gallery,
New York, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010 (forthcoming) *Alexander Calder and Contemporary
Art: Form, Balance, Joy*, curated by Lynne Warren,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL

2009 *Lives of the Hudson*, The Tang Teaching Museum
and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga
Springs, NY

Criteria, curated by Jimena Acosta and Emiliano
Godoy, A+D Gallery, Chicago, IL

2008 *The Rain, the Park and Other Things*, curated by
Renee Ricardo, Nicole Fiacco Gallery, Hudson, NY

Field Work, Smart Project Space, Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

Something for Nothing, curated by Dan Cameron,
Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA

Into the Trees, curated by Amy Lipton, Art OMI,
Ghent, NY

*Out of Shape: Stylistic Distortions of the Human
Form in Art from the Logan Collection*, Frances
Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College,
Poughkeepsie, NY

Repositioning the Landscape, curated by Jennifer
McGregor, Westport Arts Center, Westport, CT

2007 *Collector's Choice III. Audacity in Art: Selected
Works from Central Florida Collections*, Orlando
Museum of Art, Orlando, FL

Sheldon Survey, An Invitational, Sheldon Memorial
Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE

Material Pursuits, Fleming Museum, University of
Vermont, Burlington, VT

A Serious Paradise, Gregory Lind Gallery, San
Francisco, CA

What's Your Hobby?, The Fireplace Project, East
Hampton, NY

Craft in Contemporary Art, curated by Evelyn C.
Hankins, Fleming Museum, University of Vermont,
Burlington, VT

Merit Badge 2, Rockland County Art Center,
Rockland, NY

Flow, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of
Nebraska, Lincoln, NE

Green Dreams, curated by Anne Kersten and
Christine Heidemann, Kunstverein Wolfsburg,
Wolfsburg, Germany

Winter Invitational, curated by Wennie Huang,
Wave Hill, Bronx, NY

Petroliana (Oil Patriotism), curated by Elena
Sorokina, Second Moscow Biennale of
Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia (catalogue)

2006 *New York, Interrupted*, curated by Dan Cameron,
pkm gallery, Seoul, South Korea (catalogue)

Twice Drawn, curated by Ian Berry, The Tang
Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore
College, Saratoga Springs, NY

Prevailing Climate, curated by Rachel Gugelberger
and Jeffrey Walkowiak, Sara Meltzer Gallery,
New York, NY

Table Top, Josee Bienvenu Gallery, New York, NY

Manhattan Transfer, curated by John Weber,
ZONE: Chelsea Center for the Arts, New York, NY

Memory, Architecture and Place, Forest Hills
Cemetery, Boston, MA

Nature Is Knocking, Jersey Art Center, Newark, NJ

QED Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Inside/Outside: TreeLines, curated by Amy Lipton,
Abington Art Center, Jenkintown, PA

Among the Trees, curated by Kimberly Marrero,
Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ

Welcome Home, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York,
NY

A Pictorial Point, Monya Rowe Gallery, New York,
NY

2005 *Apocalypse Soon*, curated by Kristin Valabrese,
QED, Los Angeles, CA

*The Obligation to Endure: Art and Ecology Since
Silent Spring*, curated by Nick Debs, New York
Academy of Science, New York, NY

Five Projects, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY

Merit Badge, organized by Jason Middlebrook,
Hudson, NY

Exhibition of Visual Art 2005, curated by Dan
Cameron, Limerick, Ireland

2004 *Art on Paper 2004*, curated by Ron Platt,
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North
Carolina, Greensboro, NC

Print Publishers Spotlight, Barbara Krakow
Gallery, Boston, MA

Crude Oil Paintings, curated by Elena Sorokina,
White Columns, New York, NY (catalogue)

Cleanliness, curated by Adam Frank, Sara Meltzer
Gallery, New York, NY

Possessed, Western Bridge, Seattle, WA

Painting, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm,
Sweden

Manhattan Transfer, curated by John Weber,
Weber Fine Art, Chatham, NY

2003 *The Outlaw Series 2003*, curated by Lisa Kirk,
New York, NY (matchbook project)

Paradise/Paradox, curated by Susan M. Canning,
Castle Gallery, College of New Rochelle, New
Rochelle, NY

Sidelong Glimpse, curated by Omar
Lopez-Chahoud, Im N iL Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

Rendered, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY

Nature Boy, curated by Doug Wada, Elizabeth
Dee Gallery, New York, NY

*Yard: An exhibition about the private landscape
that surrounds a suburban domestic architect*,
curated by Robyn Donohue and Alyson Baker,
Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY

CHOCKERFUCKINGBLOCKED, Jeffrey Charles
Gallery, London, England

*On Paper: Masterworks from the Addison
Collection*, Addison Gallery of American Art,
Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

UnNaturally, curated by Mary-Kay Lombino,
Contemporary Art Museum, University of South
Florida, Tampa, FL; H & R Block Artspace at the
Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, KS; Fisher
Gallery, University of Southern California, Los
Angeles, CA; Copia: The American Center for
Wine, Foods and the Arts, Napa, CA; Lowe Art
Museum, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL

2002 *Hash Brown Potatoes*, curated by Omar Lopez-
Chahoud, Smack Mellon Studio, Brooklyn, NY

Majority Rules: Part One, curated by Letha Wilson
and Tara McDowell, Free Gallery, Glasgow,
Scotland

Building Anxiety, Ten and One Gallery, New York,
NY

What Exit? Paul Robeson Gallery, Rutgers
University, Newark, NJ

Sitelines, Addison Gallery of American Art,
Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

2001 *Baker's Dozen*, Julie Baker Fine Art, Grass Valley,
CA

The Altoids Collection, New Museum of
Contemporary Art, New York, NY

Peaks, Kagan Martos, New York, NY

Wine, Women, and Wheels, curated by Paul Ha,
White Columns, New York, NY

2000 *La Ville/Le Jardin/La Memoire*, curated by Hans
Ulrich Obrist, Academie de France à Rome, Villa
Medici, Rome, Italy

Substance, organized by Robert Heckees, Neo-
Images, New York, NY

Pastoral Pop! curated by Debra Singer, Whitney
Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, New
York, NY

Float, Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY
(catalogue)

Never, Never Land, curated by Omar Lopez-
Chahoud, Florida Atlantic University Gallery, Boca
Raton, FL; Tampa Museum of Contemporary
Art, Spring 2001, Tampa, FL; Rutgers-Camden
Center for the Arts, Camden, NJ

Almost, curated by Regine Basha, Living Room
Project, Los Angeles, CA

San Francisco Art Institute 2000 Art Auction,
Walter McBean Galleries, San Francisco, CA

Ramapo College Faculty Exhibition, Berrie Center
Gallery, Ramapo College, Mahwah, NJ

1999 *Odd Gloss*, curated by Gordon Haines, Rosamund
Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

A Room with a View, curated by Mike Weiss,
Sixth@Prince Fine Art, New York, NY

*Life in Space: Phase 1: The Double-Barreled
Linear Accelerator Model*, presented by Four
Walls and CCAC, CCAC Montgomery Campus,
San Francisco, CA

The Road Show, DFN Gallery, New York, NY

Office, curated by Regine Basha, Staff Gallery,
New York, NY

Gallery Artists, Steffany Martz Gallery, New York,
NY

Friends, curated by John Tevis, Three Day
Weekend, Los Angeles, CA

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Richard, Frances. "Jason Middlebrook. Sara Meltzer Gallery," *Art Forum*, Reviews, January, 210–211.
- 2008 Vanderbilt, Tom. Introduction to "1,000 Words: The Center for Land Use Interpretation" by Matthew Coolidge, *Artforum*, November, 299.
Wehr, Anne. "Jason Middlebrook, 'Vein'," *Time Out New York*, October 30–November 5, 60.
Kung, Michelle. "Trash to Treasure: Jason Middlebrook's 'Vein,'" *WSJ. The Magazine from the Wall Street Journal*, October 10.
Genocchio, Benjamin. "Bend Me, Misshape Me," *New York Times*, Art Review, May 4.
de Brujin, Hilde. "Field Work," *Smart Papers Field Work—Part 1*, Amsterdam SMART Project Space, 12.
- 2007 Cash, Stephanie. "Report from Colorado: The Hills Are Alive," *Art in America*, February, 60.
Lombino, Mary-Kay. "The Shape of Things," *Out of Shape: Stylistic Distortions of the Human Form in Art from the Logan Collection*, Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College.
Scott, Sue. "Audacity in Art," *Collector's Choice III: Audacity in Art: Selected Works from Central Florida Collections*. Florida: Orlando Museum of Art, 33.
_____. "Intervenciones," *artmedia: Arte en Mesoamerica*. San Salvador: Museo de Arte de el Salvador.
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Heidemann, Christine, and Anne Kersten, *Green Dreams* (exhibition catalogue), Kunstvereins Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany.
Hankins, Evelyn C. "Material Pursuits," *Material Pursuits* (exhibition catalogue), Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT.
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Amir, Dalle. "Jason Middlebrook: Lisa Dent Gallery," *Beautiful Decay*, Issue 5.
- 2006 Spaulding, David. "New York, Interrupted. *Artforum* Critic Picks Beijing," www.artforum.com, December 21.
O'Brien, Pat. "Artistic Salvaging," *The Press Enterprise*, December 15, AA22.
Caires, April. "Recycling Demolition at the ARTSblock," *Inland Empire Weekly*, December 14–20, 37.
Muchnic, Suzanne. "Art of preservation in downtown Riverside," *Los Angeles Times*, December 13.
O'Brien, Pat. "Recycled Building," *The Press Enterprise*, December 11, D1.
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_____. "Inside/Outside: TreeLines," *Sculpture Magazine*, Vol. 25, No. 8, October.

- Riddell, Caitlin. "Jason Middlebrook: His Art Reveals the Excesses of Pollution and Global Warming," *Verdant Magazine*, Fall, 93–97.
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Bischoff, Dan. "Exhibit Could Inspire Joyce Kilmer," *The Star Ledger*, May 5–11, 48.
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Marrero, Kimberly. "Among the Trees," Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, 9.
- 2005 Tsai, Eugene. "5 Projects," *Time Out New York*, October 13–19.
Freeman, Tommy. "Jason Middlebrook," *artUS*, May/June.
McClister, Nell. "Jason Middlebrook," *ArtForum*, May.
Pollack, Barbara. "Jason Middlebrook," *Time Out New York*, March 10–16.
Pagel, David. "Pointed warnings to the self-satisfied," *Los Angeles Times*, January 14.
Zannier, Sabrina. "Jason Middlebrook," *The Season* (exhibition catalogue), Galleria Pack, Milan, Italy, 110–118.
- 2004 Ebony, David. "Edgy Armory Show in the Spotlight," *Art in America*, May.
Saltz, Jerry. "Borough Hall," *Village Voice*, May 3.
Mody, Tom. "Paradise/Paradox," *Sculpture Magazine*, March.
Princenthal, Nancy. "Jason Middlebrook at Sara Meltzer," *Art in America*, February.
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Chasin, Noah. "Jason Middlebrook, APL#1," *Time Out New York*, November 13–20.
Powhida, William. "Jason Middlebrook, APL#1," *The Brooklyn Rail*, November.
Kirsch, Elisabeth. "Other Nature," *Kansas City Star*, October 23.
Pratt, Kevin. "Yard," *ArtForum*, September, 229.
Valdez, Sarah. "PM Picks—Gallery," *Paper Magazine*, August.
Auricchio, Laura. "Yard," *Time Out New York*, July 31–August 7.
Mar, Alex. "Rendered," *New York Sun*, July 24.
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Smith, Roberta. "Impressions of the Yard, Visual and Olfactory," *New York Times*, June 27.
Pollack, Barbara. "Nature Boy," *Time Out New York*, June 26–July 3, 54.
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Cotter, Holland. "Hash Brown Potatoes," *New York Times*, July 12.
Piras, Annalisa. "Magic London," *L'espresso*, July 11, 98–101.
Temin, Christine. "The Nature of Inspiration," *Boston Globe*, July 4.
_____. "In Andover, New Project Lines Main Street with Art," *Boston Globe*, May 2.
- 2001 Mather, Annalee. "The Geology of Biology," *Hot Tickets*, October 5–11.
Ollman, Leah. "Giant Genome Art Comes to London," BBC News, October 1.
_____. "The Art of Construction," *Time Out London*, September 26–October 3.
_____. "Go See the Geology of Biology," *The Observer Magazine*, September 2.
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Bowles, Emily. "Jason Middlebrook at Sara Meltzer and the New Museum," *Art in America*, May.
Warren, Meredith. "Group Transforming Town into a Work of Art," *Eagle-Tribune* (Mass.), April 7.
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- 2000 Russell, Candice. "Downing Disney," *Citylink*, December 6.
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_____. "Visit to Never, Never Land Far from Trip to Disney," *Palm Beach Post*, November 10.
Chaplin, Julia. "They Like It Like That," *Smock*, No. 2, Fall/Winter, 42.
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Nagy, Peter. "Against Nature," *Time Out New York*, August 24–31.
Johnson, Ken. "Art in Review: Pastoral Pop!," *New York Times*, August 11.
Smith, Roberta. "Stetching Definitions of Outdoor Sculpture," *New York Times*, July 28.
Johnson, Ken. "Art Review: Wine, Women, & Wheels," *New York Times*, January 12.
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PILE OF BUILDINGS

Study for Pile of Buildings, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, and Sharpie marker
17 x 29 inches
Courtesy of the artist





Pile of Buildings (detail), 2009
Cardboard boxes, Christmas lights, and paint
6½ x 14¾ x 12 feet
Courtesy of the artist



Pile of Buildings, 2009
Cardboard boxes, Christmas lights, and paint
6½ x 14¾ x 12 feet
Courtesy of the artist

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