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What follows is a transcribed conversation between Megan Geckler and Shana Nys Dambrot, who wrote Geckler's catalog essay.

Welcome, this is Megan Geckler and Shana Nys Dambrot and they'll be talking about Megan's artworks, which are the cube here and the two photographs over there.

SND: I guess I will start. I've known Megan for almost too long, because I wish I could just take and instantly download into everyone's mind my perspective on the whole evolution that got to this (gesturing to "Your escape from patterns your parents designed"). Because I think that that is really important, but I do want to focus on the objects we're actually confronting. For those of you who are not familiar – the situation with the patterning and the materials has had a very direct, linear, and increasingly ambitious evolution.

So people might remember in 2008, Megan did the windows at what was then Bert Green Fine Art at 5th and Main Streets in downtown L.A., and the flagging tape was on the windows and also behind them, they have also been free-floated in architecturally responsive areas. Then, as things continued to expand in scale and also complexity, the work started to have to be actually kind of architectural and you started using 3D engineering programs. I like to say she broke one, I know that's not completely true, but she tried to make the most advanced computer program in the world do something it didn't want to do, I just love that story. It's like that time Gary Kasparov played Deep Blue in chess, you know?

So the result has been this kind of amazing thing where it's gone from imagery, to objects that are still flat, to freestanding objects, and now an actual enclosed environment. So I think the evolution of the patterns, color, and relationship to light has been very linear, no pun intended… It makes a lot of sense to me that this would be the end game of that – instead of always having to negotiate the vagaries of the space you're given, to just build your own space and have that be the way you want it. So I love that this is where that went because it makes a lot of sense.

But also, at the same time as that was happening, you rediscovered a previous love of photography and this sort of, like, cutting room floor confetti-chaos (gesturing to the large-scale photographs) of all the little snips and ends. You looked down one day and went, "That pattern is fractal, that math is the opposite of parabolic and linear and structural," and fell in love with that, at the same time. So you, on the one hand have this very straight, very you know, this is only going to get bigger now and the whole thing. At the same time, this appreciation for the chaos that you had spent so much effort keeping at bay in the rest of your practice. So that, to me, is sort of you know what is captivating me about where we are now with these.

But I do think, even if you are kind of sick of doing it, that a little explanation of how you physically make something like this would be very helpful even to me who wrote your essay and still doesn't totally get it. So explain your relationship to your background that is also in math and science. You know, how did you do this?

MG: How did I do this? So I've made things that are kind of painterly and on structures before, on let's say a canvas, you know, and I come with a plan. It's not like I just kind of dream it up when I get here because I need people to help me – it takes a village. So if I showed up with no plan and everybody is just sitting around wondering what's going to happen, we're not actually getting anything done. So most of the work is happening before we even step into here and then because it's brand new work and it is very much a mystery – this structure did not show up in advance at my studio, so I didn't have time to screw around with it before I got here. It showed up, we built it, and you problem solve along the way. And that's the nature of site-specific installation. I think other site-specific artists know that anything that can go wrong probably will – and it will go wrong over and over and it will drive you insane if you let it.

SND: Everything from somebody wrote millimeter instead of centimeter, to like, oh that wall is not load bearing after all…

MG: More like when I'm trying to attach to a soffit and it is just drywall. And how do I do that? So in the other work we end up improving the architecture of the spaces that we work in simply because I want to attach to the ceiling, I get up there, and it's just Styrofoam. You know, so, we build it out to make it look like it already did, but with the structure it was missing because a lot of times architectural plans say one thing, construction workers get there and do another thing, and at the end of the day is what could get done. So a lot of the challenges have been architectural in the past, and a lot of the inspiration has been taken from the architecture too. I get a lot of invitations to make art in spaces that are not architecturally interesting, and for me, that's the question, how do I summon up that inspiration, inside of what most galleries are, which is a white cube – and I still want to show in those places, right? But I felt like I couldn't, so this (gesturing to "Your escape from patterns your parents designed") is the evolution of that.

SND: Right. Because they are also was and still is another kind of sidebar where you do this in a painting format, where you use stretcher bars they way that they are intended, but just for these materials instead of canvas that you then would paint on. So there are freestanding objects for the wall made this way, but this is now kind of marrying them.

MG: Totally, and you can walk into it which is what people have been asking for – for years. Like, "I really want to go inside your installations," and they do…

SND: Yeah, I was going to say, not just asking, but actually going for it.

MG: Going for it, having a dance party on a huge pedestal, and it's like a twenty foot by twenty foot pedestal and people have like snaked their way in there and they think it's cool and there are video cameras everywhere.

SND: It is cool!

MG: It is cool and I can't blame them. I would say the most frequent question is "What is that stuff?" and I kind of wanted to indirectly answer that question by letting you be on the outside of it when the light falls on it, being on the inside of it when the light is being transmitted through it, and to see it from all of the sides I do and then to really see it, up close, macroscopically (gesturing to the large-scale photographs), like this is it. Did that answer your question? And the answer is no.

SND: No.

MG: And it hasn't answered my question either. It's just this mystical thing I found in a bin at the bottom of some dusty hardware store before the internet, so you don't even know what it's called – and then

SND: Flagging… tape???

MG: Yeah - Flagging tape, what's that? And there was you know, you guys remember when there wasn't an internet and you couldn't just go on Amazon and just click "buy now", you know? And so it was a search, a scavenger hunt, trying to find these materials, but I figured it out, and there we are.

SND: Right. And so what becomes interesting about that is because as a non-traditional material, which is an annoyingly ever expanding umbrella that just means making art out of random crap…

MG: People making things with stuff, that's what I call it.

SND: With stuff that was not intended for use as an art making material in the conventionally understood way that that is. So because this is an industrial product, and so its translucency is an accident, a happy by-product. They don't need it to be translucent - they just need it to be sturdy because it's tied to stakes outside. And they didn't pick these colors because they have art students, or are referring to Pantone, or whatever - they all have a meaning in land surveyance. So what I'm about to say is probably wrong because I'm making up but like green is for sewer, and pink is for buried fiber-optic cable, and so it's a code for city maintenance people – it's completely functional for them. It's not about being beautiful. No one, I mean maybe somebody working somewhere – says, "Can I just make one pink, please?" Basically, they just had to figure something out that was legible from far away and durable enough to be outside on a stick. And that's all they cared about. But by needing that material to exist for themselves in this variety they made this stuff. And then here comes Megan, and she's like, "Wow I could really make

something out of this." What I love about it is that it does all the things painting does – light and color and space and it does things that sculptures do, but nothing that you are using to accomplish those goals was intended for that purpose.

MG: Totally. And I like being in that space between the lines. Is it art? Is it design? Is it architecture? Is it a fashion backdrop? Is it advertising? How commercial can you get before it's just commercial? And I love bumping up against those lines, because if nothing else people are asking, "Is that even art?" and that's an important question that has plagued us forever. You know, what is art, and how do you define it? And I think that's really rich territory, and I remember we used to have arguments in the late 90s, like – "Oh, you're a designer… Oh no..."

SND: They'd be like, it's just tape, right? And you're like, yeah, but cadmium red is just paint when it's still in the tube, like what do you want… ?

MG: It's all plastic.

SND: What's been very interesting now is you've been doing this the whole time, but it's become very zeitgeisty this idea of using industrial materials, upcycling… You know – it would be very tempting also to look at this and because it's land surveyance infrastructure tape, if you wanted to have a political interpretation about, for example, crumbling infrastructure, and that's not what you are thinking about, but it's still in there. Just because that's what is endemic to the materials even though that isn't even why you picked them.

Right, so – this is really interesting, what we were speaking about earlier, you know what's new, what's old, what's discontinued. You know when they run out of a certain kind of… Well you know what, James Turrell – they stopped making the light bulbs he made all his art with, so when the last bulb goes out in Houston, they are not going to be able to replace it, so he has to go around to all his installations in the whole world and recalibrate for LED – and that's James Turrell.

So there is a very low quality to the origin of the material, but there is a very unexpectedly logistical component to it as well. When something is discontinued and you have to figure out how to deal with that, or when a material is no longer available, all these kinds of tweaks – but that's partly because it's experiential, like those James Turrell works. You can't just put a different light bulb in. It's a very calibrated experience and you were talking about how the light looks from the inside, and the outside, and all of that. And so, even though it's very easy to on one hand go, "It's tape and metal, don't worry about it…" On the other hand, you're doing all this very serious art historical stuff about painting and light and space while that's going on.

MG: Yeah, I like to say that I'm hanging out between Minimalism and OpArt – right up in there.

SND: Yeah, that's really good! That's a really good point, I never – you know, because Minimalism, everyone… (laughter)

MG: It's a cube!

SND: That's what I mean.

MG: So it was intentional, I really wanted the first freestanding thing to be something basic like a cube structure. I know it's not incredibly basic.

SND: No, it's super basic.

MG: My aim was to, kind of, start simple, and scale up or down from there.

SND: And then my last technical question is – in terms of the pattern itself. So when you say preparation, you are talking about computer programming. So you sort of hacked the program and made it a little more customized because you're using it in a way that other people don't need to who buy it.

MG: Sure.

SND: So in terms of the math, you're doing it in terms of not only the dimensions, but also what those colors are going to be. So you're planning the gradients.

MG: I'm trying to.

SND: As well as kind of where to start the physical weaving. Because even though it's created on a computer, it's done by hand. Maybe talk a little bit about how you actually figure that out.

MG: We pre-plan, but the tapes aren't all the same width because it's not computers doing this, they are people and whenever people get involved human error gets involved and everything gets a little crazy. Like how they make this material is it's basically like the bottoms of white sneakers, they put it through like a wood chipper, they heat it up and it becomes like pancake batter, and somebody adds dry pigment. Well, if he sneezes in the middle of the stirring process, we get color deposits, right? If somebody wasn't paying attention when it gets extruded in a giant film, because they use this for blood pressure cuffs and temporary housing in emergencies, things like that. It has a real world purpose outside of surveying. It's PVC, extruded PVC film, but when it goes out, it rolls up like a giant carpet and then they take a hot knife and they slice it at regular increments to get a standardized width, but sometimes the knife is too hot and the rolls don't completely separate, sometimes it's too cold, it doesn't really slice, so I have bins and bins and bins of rejects - wrinkly tape, stringy tape, strange tape, and we do workshops with kids – kids don't care they are just like "Woo - color!"

SND: Maybe it's better?

MG: You're right; it's better. And so for the construction, I come in with a plan, so I use, if I can keep it simple, I use something like Illustrator and I'll make a rectangle – a real size rectangle and I actually plan the whole thing out and say ok – it's 1.1875 inches by 10 feet. I create the pattern and I use the multiply filter to get the idea of transparency, sort of. Then I'll export those, I'll make a 3D structure of the metal, of the cube, and this is the thing that we all drew in the margins of our high school notebooks – you know the cube?

SND: Oh the two squares and then the lines and it looks like a 3D cube…?

MG: Yeah, totally. So I do that in Rhino and I do a simple rendering, and I Photoshop the rendering and then I take the Illustrator file and warp it and transform it in Photoshop to make a rendering. And that's like the catalog image that you see, which is not at all the same colors, right, but it's close enough.

And so we come in here with that kind of plan and then in terms of logistics, we put strands that went up, over, and down. And then up, wove them, and there are videos of me weaving on my Vimeo channel, you see my red nails coming up and weaving really quickly and then back down. Once those strands were connected to the bottom, then we work from the bottom up and wove the whole thing. So it very much, when I say it takes a village, it very much does, it's one person passing to another person.

SND: When you were talking about the weaving with your red fingernails, I realized that it's kind of amazing to me that it hasn't really occurred to me until this very second, even though I have worked with you for so long, that is a whole other ball of wax in terms of domesticity, craft, and feminine identity…

MG: It's kind of a stitch and bitch session.

SND: So you're weaving like a girl, but with macho land survey tape and rails of steel and computer programs and I think bringing all of those dimensions together into something that is both an object and an experience - I mean there is a lot happening, all at once. But I didn't really think until this moment about the kind of Rumpelstiltskin…

MG: If I have done my job right it looks like a computer kind of threw up in the space.

(laughter)

MG: I say that a lot because I really like to eliminate the hand.

SND: Actually, that's kind of what's going on – over there (gesturing to the large-scale photographs)

MG: Yeah, that's definitely computer vomit over there, yeah. (Laughs) Flattering, right?

SND: Well, no, but I mean – the other thing I was thinking of with this are those Cindy Sherman bulimia portraits where it's a giant pile of thrown up candy and then just her little eyeballs, and she's like, "I just ate all this candy!" It's kind of gross, but compelling. So that giant pile of excess, before it's cleaned up, where it is having its own value as being something that was discarded in this pursuit of perfection. And so again, sort of opposites. I think they really do kind of speak to each other.

MG: They speak of containment too.

SND: Containment, uncontained, and all of that. So those are the questions I had. Maybe they have questions?

Question from audience (QA)– You sort of answered it, but maybe it's still not clear to me… because it's almost unbelievable. Ok I'm getting that you design this on a computer, but it's a wonderful geometric random-ish pattern that I see. It's hard to imagine there is anything that is really repeated when I really look at it, but you design all of that on the computer and you follow it exactly.

MG: Not exactly.

QA: Do you make human mistakes?

MG: Yes! I make a lot of mistakes. For example, I wear the scissors around my neck and they cut things while I am working. But with this, I wanted to play with the silver tape, because it is the newest color that I have found. I wanted to kind of play with the idea of structure (touching the metal), versus the non-structure (touching the tape), and the metal versus the metallic, which gives the illusion of metal. I wanted the metal to feel like it was solid and it's breaking apart, kind of ripping itself apart.

SND: The pixelated quality of the object is unavoidable as well. That speaks to the binary code roots of it even though it's not a direct reference.

MG: Right. It's not ones and zeros anymore.

SND: But it looks like pixels. So you kind of get a little bit of that just still in the background.

MG: Totally. Yeah and I love the idea of the pixel as being represented through this even though they are king-sized and then to play with those (gesturing to the

photographs) which are really hi-res to the point where people are like "How did you do that?" I captured those on my scanner, I turned my scanner into a camera, and now it's three times the resolution of any digital camera on the market. There is a whole community of people who put things on their scanners - usually their body parts, their pets, their food, or their plants. (Laughter) Yeah. But it's an interesting way of capturing an image.

SND: And at that point – digital is digital – right? I mean a scanner is a variety of digital camera. But again, kind of - you're using it a little bit wrong.

MG: Yeah it comes with it's own light source which is cool. I mean there are a lot of perks and a lot of downsides. The scanner sets off an electromagnetic charge that makes your paper stick to the glass and gives you a clear scan, except when you're you know bookbinding, that's when we're all like – damn scanner… But it also collects all of the dust, so to remove all the dust, to make that image as perfect as possible, took forever. So there is an attention to detail in photography that I think we all kind of take for granted, you know how much work went into producing that kind of image, where as over here (gesturing to the cube) we are just fighting the chaos and all the things that could potentially go wrong during installation. Oh, this piece slid against that piece and now it's got a nick, or a tear, or whatever… and it's controlled panic.

SND: And you wanted to talk a little bit about you know, containment, and those things and I think that's really interesting because although I am appreciating what is "opposite", the real reason I am appreciating what is opposite are the coded systems of the things that are related. It's kind of a tautological moment right there.

MG: Yeah.

SND: Your art is melting my brain, it's happening, which you can take as a compliment.

MG: Thank you, I'll just drip it out the sides.

QA: I am a huge fan of your work – it's amazing - the color, the palette, it's always so inviting, I just want to dive inside, literally. I didn't realize that was photography, I thought you could like dive inside of it. There's an incredible amount of repetitiveness in all of your work, and OCD…?

MG: Yeah, little bit.

(Laughter)

SND: Obsession is a theme.

MG: You were in my studio this week, you know…

QA: Yeah, it was scary, I wanted to touch things but I feel like you would know exactly where my fingers were.

SND: Yeah, she would.

QA: So how a part of your daily life outside of your artwork life is repetitive, is OCD, to be able to dive into it? Or do you allow yourself to kind of let go of that. Because a lot of times artists have to let go of that control to create, and it seems like you embrace that to create.

MG: My life is pretty wacky. You know, I think that people who know me know that I'm definitely spontaneous, you know, so this is where I act uptight and serious. Everybody who knows me, and I'm looking at you all, you know that I'm like a wildcard. But when it comes to the artwork everything has its place. Because again, I have to arrive with a plan and then I have to activate people, get them on board with me, and want to do this every day for three weeks, and then replace things, and fix things. It's hard. So yeah, this is definitely where I bring my OCD. My home life, not so much. My husband will tell you that I'm kind of a slob.

SND: Right, we have husband and studio mate here.

QA: There's also this kind of corporation that you are building around your art too, businesswoman. Do you think that's also helped your career propel? I feel like you…

MG: Yeah, you guys to put it really bluntly – we make art, we put it in a gallery or a museum, and maybe it sells? You know? And we all lose money on this thing we call our art practice which is really the worst drug habit ever, right? And so for me, when I work with companies, they are actually funding my artworks in galleries and museums. Well, not this work specifically, because the COLA fellowship helped to fund these artworks. But my gallery and museum practice, that money has got to come from somewhere. And this idea that it is somehow bad to make money, or go commercial – it's not, it actually enriches your process and your progress, because you can afford to make art and there should be no shame.

SND: And God forbid there is some gorgeous piece of art where I decided to have dinner. It's not like that is ruining my day. No. It makes the world better looking. There should be no downside to those kinds of commissions.

MG: And the projects that I do are usually in conjunction with a big festival or an event, like the People en Español Festival, a celebration of Latin culture, and normal people come to these events. I call them civilians; they're just like "Whoa!" They are taking selfies, they're making memories, they're out with their families, and they're having a great time and I'm honored to be part of that celebration.

SND: I like Cheyanne's point, you're like this lady, you're running what amounts to a construction crew.

MG: Yeah, it very much feels like that. We are building a building, you know?

SND: Right, yeah. So I love that too. There is also that type of aspect that pulls me in.

QA: What you said, Shana, at the very beginning, that this is an end game of sorts, I thought was a really great comment, because watching the direction of the body of work – this is the first time that you can be in it. And there has been this trend lately of exhibits of all kinds like the Ganzfeld pieces and the Rain Room…

MG: The mirror box…

SND: The Van Gogh bedroom…

QA: Yeah, they're special, because only a few people can go in at a time kind of thing. Like the Kusama room. What I love about this is that you build, at great difficulty, there is this door, none of those other exhibits can you go inside, lock the door, and I'm in here alone, you know. And that idea that you can decide not to share the experience.

So my question is – how critical was it – because technically, I know that it was difficult, that it be a closeable door as opposed to just an entrance where people can come in and walk out. You actually could in theory close that door and lock it.

MG: The door, physically, is problematic – like for me. I'm in a love/hate relationship with the door. It's annoying and I could talk for hours about how much I hate it. But I thought it was really important that you are able to put yourself inside of it, be immersed in it, and actually have this – because it's very meditative and Zen in there, you know? And I wanted people to be able to close the door and have a moment to just sort of (sigh, long breath) calm down a little. And I think a lot of my work has that kind of like mathematical calmness to it, but it is so spectacular in the sense of it being a spectacle that people kind of get like a little overwhelmed, kids run around like crazy, and people are like "It's like the 60s when I did too many drugs!" I wanted people to come in and to fall in love with the tape the way that I did. And to do that, to really fall in love with the material, it's got to be a one-on-one connection, right?

SND: Even when the door isn't closed, just its existence. OK so now, it's an open door. Right, so even when it's standing open, as an open door – it has a content. Even if it's not being used for the privacy.

MG: Or it implies that you could. And that's up to you, whether or not you want to be inside of it. And it very much did have a lot to do with the Rain Room, The Ganzfeld

pieces, and the Yayoi Kusama mirror box, because there is this idea that even spectacular art can be a personal experience, because it very much is for me.

QA: And that's new because in the past, your artwork has been so large that people can experience it simultaneously.

SND: Well, I have been hash tagging #howmanypeoplefitinthebox

MG: The answer to how many people fit in the cube is four, maximum. I wanted a family to be able to experience it together if they wanted to, or yes, you can also go in alone.