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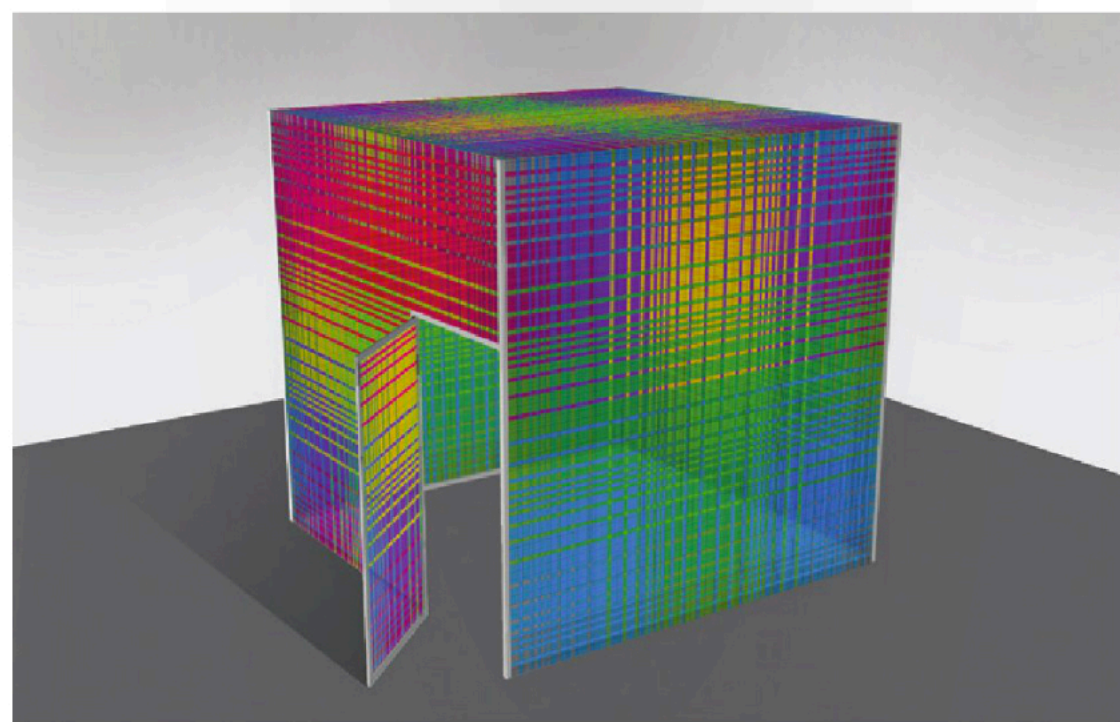
ART ABOUT TOWN

GALLERY REVIEWS

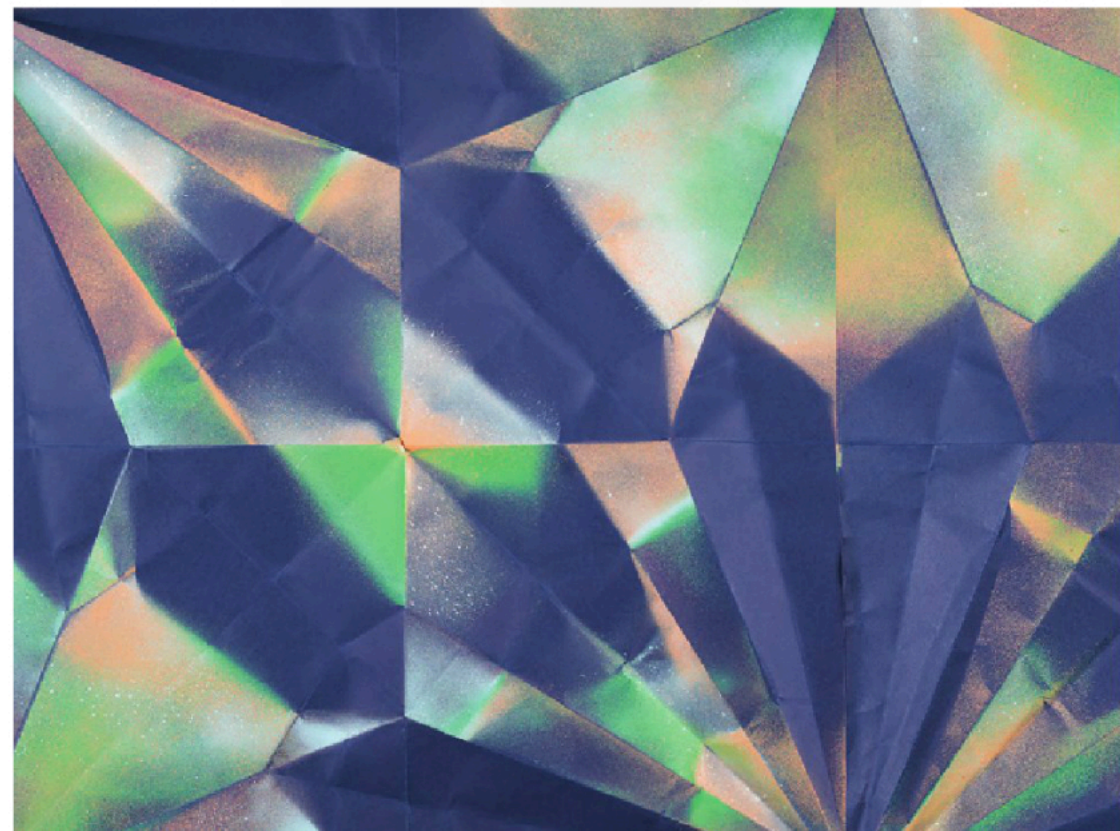
LAMAG AT BARNSDALL ART PARK, HOLLYWOOD
COLA 2016: (City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowships)
(May 15-July 3, 2016)
Words Megan Abrahams

One of art's most exciting intangibles is the element of the unexpected. The 2016 City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowships (COLA) exhibit created a synergistic platform for 12 mid-career artists who run the gamut from puppeteers to poets. Their works explored a diverse array of concepts and disciplines—flavored with a potent measure of the unexpected.

Strikingly, an unusual range of media formed the building blocks for much of the work—repurposed books and furniture, for instance, or porcelain, vintage faucets, ragdolls, flagging tape and a bicycle. This curious selection of unconventional media resulted in a surprising diversity of art objects, from curio cabinets stocked with coral specimens to a multi-colored pseudo-architectural structure. Despite this range of material and underlying themes, the disparate works somehow came together with a spontaneous, surprising and perhaps accidental synergy. Such lucky harmony can't merely be attributed to any curatorial continuity achieved with enticing splashes of color throughout the exhibit, or the consistently innovative use of unconventional



Megan Geckler | *Rendering of Your Escape From Patterns Your Parents Designed*, 2016. Extruded Aluminum and Flagging Tape. 120 x 120 x 120 inches.



Christine Nguyen | *Portals of Light From the Mountain and Night Sky*, 2016. Spray Paint on Folded Paper, Glass, Solder, Copper Foil Tape, Paint on Clay. Dimensions Variable.

media. Rather, the pieces seemed to connect in a more profound way, because of the pervasive level of imagination and ingenuity driving them.

Several of the featured works achieve that unquantifiable quality of unexpectedness—as with Megan Geckler's *Cube*, one of the more prominent pieces. A centerpiece in the gallery space, this-site specific installation is a self-defining hybrid of architecture, sculpture and commercial design. *Cube* is composed of industrial materials, comprising a frame of extruded aluminum with walls and ceiling made of flagging tape woven in complex patterns. This brightly colored tape is Geckler's preferred medium, supplanting paint. Reminiscent of a child's playhouse, the piece is large enough for viewers to enter, with a door that may be closed, cutting off the surrounding world.

Also unexpected was Christine Nguyen's dramatic monumental mural, *Portal of Light from the Mountain and Night*, which enveloped an entire gallery wall. The work carefully married the wall's architectural dimensions in an elegant abstract narrative composed of folded spray-painted sheets of paper pinned to the wall in a mosaic-like composition, with the climactic triangular mountain shape in the center.

Unanticipated, too, was Blue McRight's *Font*, a bookcase filled with predominantly blue- and green-covered water-themed books adorned with faucets and coils of hose, as if to suggest the inherent potential outpouring of knowledge, or that by the process of some metaphoric magic we might turn on the tap of narrative flow.

Unexpected as well was Keiko Fukazawa's *Homage to Ai Weiwei*. In this symbolic installation, a veil of 3,000 unglazed porcelain flowers surrounds a bicycle, its basket filled with silk flowers. The work references the Chinese dissident artist who was placed under house arrest by the Chinese government. In 2013, in silent protest during the course of his travel ban, he placed flowers in the basket of his bicycle parked outside his studio.

These four pieces were prominent among the standouts in an intriguing and varied exhibit, one that annually celebrates individual mid-career artists while giving them the support and exposure they merit.