

the walls of a small gallery. The prints themselves look simple, too, or at least pared-down. But in her crisp, elegant shots, Chetrit makes everything count, bringing sculptural concerns to bear on a two-dimensional form and referring to historical precedents even as she launches an inquiry into the future of the image. There's no apparent digital manipulation here, and most compositions could have been arranged in the artist's studio. Props are employed, but these tend to be portable and often make repeat appearances from work to work. What Chetrit



Talia Chetrit, *Hand/Sculpture*, 2010, silver gelatin print, 24 x 20".

seems to be aiming for is a measured reconsideration of the power and meaning of resonant objects and physical juxtapositions, one that implies the social without necessarily having to state it.

Sometimes Chetrit's props do not merely suggest sculpture but actually *are* sculptures in their own right, though the artist's photographs are never just straightforward documents thereof, and the objects' origins remain unknown. In *Hand/Sculpture*, 2010, for example, a tripartite twist of metal and Plexiglas strips is accompanied by a woman's hand, which snakes up from the back of the pedestal on which the object sits to brush one edge. The distinction between organic and inorganic is immediately obvious but not as visually jarring as it might sound, and the implications of the quiet but insistent feminine "intrusion" are manifold. The same strategy recurs in *Hand/Sculpture (Modular)*, 2011; here, the extremity holds up an irregular loop of thick plastic tubing, the grip this time harder and more suggestive still.

In a forthcoming monograph on the artist, curator Ruba Katrib aligns Chetrit's agenda with an explicitly feminist perspective insofar as it alludes to the systematic objectification of the female body in photographic imagery. Works such as *Handstand*, 2011, would seem to support this view. Here, a woman is shown performing, naked, the titular gymnastic pose in a studio littered with artifacts and materials—an ornate pedestal, a metal rod, a mirrored table, a pane of glass—of the kind that appear in Chetrit's work. But one of these "things" is, of course, not like the others. While consciously adopting a difficult, exposed, and vulnerable position, the gymnast makes visual the artist's desire to turn the whole existing system upside down—or at least to observe it from a radically different perspective.

The unclothed body also appears in *Nude/Grid*, 2011, in which a white plastic lattice covers a pale human back, casting a pattern of shadow that defines its delicate contours. More often though, the human form is represented by other means—by an anthill in *Dirt*, 2011, by a ceiling tile and a cardboard mailer in *Triangle/Tube*, 2011, and more than once by vases. In *Vase/Machine*, 2011, a clear, box-shaped vase with a ribbed surface sits atop metallic corrugated paper. On a purely visual level, the distorted refractions that the shaped glass produces in conjunction with the surface beneath are rather lovely. They recall, as does much of Chetrit's oeuvre, the photographic experiments of Bauhaus pioneers László Moholy-Nagy, Joost Schmidt, and others.

But consider the vessel's anthropomorphic aspects, and remember its long history as an ingredient of the still life, and the seemingly neutral subject takes on an expanded significance. *Drip Vase*, 2011, an inverted image of a pair of vases that seem, in Chetrit's subtly surreal take, to be

oozing from the ceiling, expands the form's possibilities still further. As in *Handstand*, a 180-degree spin sends blood rushing to the head.

—Michael Wilson

Benjamin Patterson

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

Near the end of the 1960s, the artist, composer, and musician Benjamin Patterson began a twenty-year hiatus from making art, during which time he would live an "ordinary life"—but this in fact entailed several unusual careers: He was a the deputy director of the New York Department of Cultural Affairs, a reference librarian at the New York Public Library, an organizer of experimental music events, an activist, and the founder of a music management company. Patterson's ordinary life was not a rejection of the art world, and it had nothing to do with failure. It was also not motivated by any spiritual, deeply personal, or political reasons—though he once noted that it was dispiriting to be the only member of Fluxus attending civil rights rallies. Patterson's various vocations, while not "works," have an affinity with his predominantly collaborative, task-based practice, and this mini-survey of his works at the Studio Museum in Harlem, extracted from a retrospective held last fall at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, displays photographs, letters, business cards, and other ephemera as if they were indistinguishable from the artworks themselves.

The show is a scholarly, well-groomed affair (life is never so tidy): Six vitrines house musical scores dating from 1960 to 2010 in addition to ephemera; framed photographs document past performances, and a monitor plays several newer pieces staged in Israel and various European cities—the only source of sound in the show. The relative lack of sound seems fitting, as the sonic dimension of Patterson's early, chance-driven scores appears to have been a secondary concern: *String Music*, 1960, for instance, is an elegant drawing, in which symbols Patterson devised loosely suggest how one could perform a given note, granting ample freedom for a musician to improvise. Even more unstructured (and curious) is *Ants*, 1960–62, which consists of one typewritten page and two black-and-white photographs of the titular insects. Patterson only recently worked out the actual sounds for that work—perhaps an indication that he truly views his art practice as an evolving, long-term project and not a day job.

During the 1960s, Patterson also composed many overtly participatory scores, such as *Paper Piece*, 1960, perhaps his best-known work, in which audiences are instructed by the artist to "play" whatever paper



Benjamin Patterson, *Ants* (detail), 1960–62, ink on paper, two black-and-white photographs, 11 x 29".

is at hand: cardboard boxes and tubes, even toilet paper. A similar score, *Please Wash Your Face*, 1964, was performed at Third Streaming, coinciding with the opening of the Studio Museum show (with which it was not affiliated). The evening gathered more than a hundred people, and, oddly, only half of them volunteered to freshen up in public. (What did the others expect?)

In the audience was Clifford Owens, an artist who re-performed four of Patterson's scores at the Studio Museum in 2006. (Owens also had his first solo museum show at CAMH in tandem with Patterson's exhibition). He has stated that it wasn't nostalgia that motivated him to remake, for instance, Patterson's *Whipped Cream Piece*, 1964, wherein a "voluptuous white woman" is covered in the fluff and licked by the audience (rather, we can surmise it was an homage). Patterson isn't interested in nostalgia either: That night at Third Streaming, he also used a blow-up doll to perform the work. This embrace of change and open-endedness was noticeable in nearly all of the works in Patterson's Studio Museum show; and, indeed, his ordinary life suggests that he views the role of "the artist" itself as an indeterminate score (or open piece) that can be interpreted in unexpected ways. The art world has never been good with hiatuses, however; when viewed retrospectively, Patterson's might fall in line with his practice, but for many years it was just a falling-out.

—Lauren O'Neill-Butler

Hope Ginsburg

CUE ART FOUNDATION

Hope Ginsburg's ongoing work *Sponge* takes its title not from the cellulose rectangles found on supermarket shelves but from the marine animal, which, with its porosity, adaptability (its cells can repurpose themselves), and ability to attach itself to a variety of hosts, embodies many of the qualities of her enterprise. Headquartered at Virginia Commonwealth University (where Ginsburg teaches), *Sponge* knits together aesthetics and pedagogy, taking the form of workshops, classes, performances, and more, on subjects ranging from felt making to oceanographic robotics, and drawing influence from the philosophies of educators such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire. However, in a manner fairly reminiscent of the experiments of the UK's Artist Placement Group, Ginsburg is ultimately concerned with the possibilities (formal and, indeed, sculptural) generated by the seamless integration of practice and context. For example, when she worked at a textile firm that had developed sustainable fabric that could be used as mulch, she made an oversize wooden compost bin wherein worms could be seen busily digesting the product; in a group show at MOMA PS1, the bin functioned as a sculpture, while in the firm's

View of "Hope Ginsburg," 2011.



showroom it was a marketing display. Now that the context has changed, her work has followed suit.

In recent years, Ginsburg's *Sponge* has seemed more like a nautilus's spiraling shell. In 2008, Solvent Space in Richmond, Virginia, hosted "Meta-sponge," whose aim was to give participants the tools to start similar initiatives of their own. In early 2009, at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies, Ginsburg hosted "Center Sponge," a five-day "experience in total immersion," involving ukulele lessons, field trips to an aquarium and a planetarium, and presentations by a musician (Mirah), a curator (Larissa Harris), and an engineer (David Mindell), among others. To counter the intimate you-had-to-be-there-ness of the project, Ginsburg produced several colorful prints with designer David Reinfurt (of Dexter Sinister), each outlining the various details of the sundry events associated with each presentation of *Sponge* and emphasizing its collaborative and protean nature.

I first saw the prints in the summer of 2009 at Socrates Sculpture Park, where Ginsburg had set up shop, literally. Titled *Makers Market*, the weekend-long project involved a presentation of the scrolls and vibrant handmade felt mittens and booties for sale (her position as a merchant was a far cry from her *QVC Project*, 1996–97, a work that documents her failed attempt to become a host on that cable-shopping network). Ginsburg's recent exhibition at Cue (curated by Regine Basha) featured a similar installation, and the show activated the rest of the gallery by resurrecting other *Sponge* presentations from the past five years—a trippy mural of sea sponges from the Solvent Space show, another mural of a design created by participants in "Colablalab" ("an experiment in curricular ecology" in which Ginsburg and her students enrolled in a VCU biology lab and studied together, their experiences complemented by a book produced by the students). Installed on another wall was a felt-and-metal-covered pencil sharpener dedicated to Sol LeWitt, a prominent champion of collaboration. While all of this provided traces of the learning situations that interest Ginsburg, one wishes the show had offered a fuller picture of her larger endeavor.

Although this exhibition was not in itself participatory, Ginsburg has effectively advanced and promoted the potential of collaboration—within and outside the art world. And yet, she is an artist who remains interested in visual, tactile art objects. One of the most intriguing aspects of her practice is her investigation of the way in which such objects are exchanged and circulated. In the process, she explores how art might represent something, or a multiplicity of things, within the range of contexts—economic, social, historical—that every entity, whether pencil sharpener, sea sponge, or human being, must necessarily negotiate.

—Lauren O'Neill-Butler

Mario Garcia Torres

45 ORCHARD STREET

In May at 45 Orchard Street—a vacant storefront on the Lower East Side serving as a temporary exhibition space for "Itinerant," a series of curatorial ventures orchestrated by Marian Goodman Gallery's Rose Lord and 303 Gallery's Mari Spirito—Mario Garcia Torres presented two slide shows. The first, titled *In a new work*, *Cover Letter*, 2011, takes the form of a job application précis: In a sequence of subtitles, which accompany images of flowers being arranged in a vase, Garcia Torres politely addresses a *Findungskommission* (finding commission), and puts forth his candidacy for a position as director of the Kunsthalle Bern, in Switzerland. He suggests that his artistic career would make him "a valuable asset to the organization," given that his experiences have sensitized him to "the range of meanings and political implications" behind art's production and display. Indeed, Garcia Torres's work has