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Off
the Wall

on the
Boundary of
Painting &
Sculpture

June 15 - July 27, 2018

Richard Artschwager
Jennifer Bartlett
Lynda Benglis
Mohamed Bourouissa
Nancy Graves
Elizabeth Murray
Robert Rauschenberg
David Row
Joel Shapiro
Frank Stella



Richard Artschwager
Untitled (Splatter Desk, Chair, Typewriter), 1997
formica, aluminum and acrylic on wood panel, 89 x 99 x 1 inches

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Locks Gallery is pleased to present *Off the Wall*, a group exhibition that savors the inventive, playful, and subversive deconstructions that take place at the boundary between painting and sculpture. The exhibition explores the Postmodern dissolution of traditional distinctions between artistic media, spanning multiple generations of artists including avant-garde innovators Frank Stella and Richard Artschwager as well as prominent post-Minimalists including Elizabeth Murray, Jennifer Bartlett, and Lynda Benglis, each of whom has exhibited individually at Locks Gallery over the years. Focusing on work of the 1980s and '90s, this installation offers an idiosyncratic snapshot of a tendency in contemporary art that was seeded in the late 1950s, as many artists became interested in paintings as objects rather than illusionistic picture planes, tracing this trend to the present.

The categorizing mind may attempt to navigate the works in *Off the Wall* via the question, "Is it painting, or sculpture?" The makers of these objects, however, were consistently interested in dissolving such classifications. Richard Artschwager's peculiar construction *Splatter, Desk, Chair, Typewriter* (1997), utilizes a right-angled corner of the gallery walls and serves as the thematic anchor of the show by

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dramatizing the act of bending painting into sculptural space. Recent works by Lynda Benglis, in which the artist stretches painted, handmade paper over hollow armatures, may also be viewed as distortions of the traditionally flat, rectilinear painted surface.

Two late '90s works by Frank Stella, who had an immersive, multi-floor exhibition at Locks Gallery in 2000, provide a glimpse of the elastic ways the artist has mixed painting and sculpture over the course of his esteemed career. Stella exhibited his first shaped canvases in 1958, an innovation widely cited as a transitional moment between Abstract Expressionism and minimalism, and his influence is felt throughout the exhibition in numerous shaped canvases by younger artists, demonstrating the ongoing interest in emphasizing a painting's physical parameters rather than the "illusion" of space contained within it. These include polygonal works by Jennifer Bartlett and David Row, as well as the irregular, biomorphic canvas support of Elizabeth Murray's *Sandpaper Fate*, which resembles a painting not so much as an enormous silhouetted organism.



Installation image of Frank Stella's 2000 exhibition at the Locks Gallery.



Elizabeth Murray (American, 1940-2007)
Sandpaper Fate, 1992 - 1993
 oil on canvas
 104 x 102 x 10 inches

Another pivotal figure in the thematic narrative of *Off the Wall* is Robert Rauschenberg, who coined the term "Combines" in the 1950s to describe his Dada-inspired assemblages mixing painting and sculpture. Three of Rauschenberg's later combines are on view here, and many other works in the show may best be characterized by his terminology, such as floor constructions by Nancy Graves in which flat wooden shapes and thin strips of metal overlap with found objects, all painted in vibrant colors. While many works here introduce elements of sculpture to the medium of painting, these pieces by Graves evoke painted gestures floating in space, completing a circular narrative in which painting and sculpture are not categories, but relative terms, forming a range within artists continue to produce unclassifiable, speculative forms.