

fort gondo
compound
for the arts

press release

Becky Brown

“I Am Trying Not to Skim”

Curated by Gretchen Wagner
February 27 - March 28, 2015



Becky Brown, *I Am Trying Not to Skim*, 2015. Acrylic on wood. 13 x 13"

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fort gondo compound for the arts is pleased to present *I Am Trying Not to Skim*, an exhibition curated by Gretchen Wagner of mixed media paintings and drawings by New York-based artist **Becky Brown**. The exhibition will open at **beverly** with a free public reception **Friday, February 27 from 7 to 10 p.m. and will remain on view through Saturday, March 28, 2015.**

About the exhibition:

I Am Trying Not to Skim is a call for close reading and looking through drawings and paintings that examine architecture and language as two distinct but related communicative systems. Markers of space and speech overlap in encyclopedic fantasy-maps; large scroll-like works on paper adapt pre-modern poetic forms such as sestinas and pantoums, making sense of disparity through rhythmic and repetitive sequences. These “universalizing” graphics and compositional motifs (grids, prosody) codify the vast visual world — from Times Square to Chandni Chowk. Brown’s work builds upon both personal experience and research (fact and fiction), yielding film-like journeys from Delhi, Cordoba and the Bronx to other far-flung hallways, boats and markets around the world.



Becky Brown, *Sestina 1*, (detail) 2013. Mixed media on paper. 62 x 175" (full size)

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About the artist:

Becky Brown received her MFA from Hunter College and her BA from Brown University. She has held several artist-in-residence appointments, including ones at Yaddo, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Drawing Center's Open Sessions. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including exhibitions at the Drawing Center, New York; the Poor Farm Experiment, Manama, WI; Kunstalle Galapagos, Brooklyn, NY; YoungArts Foundation, Miami, FL; Cleopatra's Berlin, Germany; Religare Arts Initiative, Delhi, India; and the LeRoy Neiman Gallery at Columbia University, New York; among numerous others. She is also a contributing writer to *Art in America*, the Brooklyn Rail and *artcritical.com*. She lives and works in New York City, where she teaches at Hunter College.

About the curator:

Gretchen Wagner is currently the Artistic Director and Chief Curator at Oklahoma Contemporary (Oklahoma City, OK) and Marfa Contemporary (Marfa, TX). Previously, she was the Chief Curator at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation (St. Louis, MO) and the Assistant Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art (New York). She received her B. S from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her M.A. from Williams College.



Becky Brown, *Sestina 1*, 2012. Mixed media on paper. 62 x 175"

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Becky Brown

I Am Trying Not to Skim

Curated by Gretchen Wagner

February 27 - March 28, 2015

beverly (at fort gondo compound for the arts)

3155 Cherokee Street

St. Louis, MO 63118

All events are free and open to the public.

Hours: Thursdays & Saturdays, 12-4 PM and by appointment.

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fort gondo compound for the arts is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts forum founded in 2002.

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On Being Asked if I Miss You

(A pantoum by Michael Morse)

Sometimes the script and score are seen crowd-pleasers
often making a meal of the temperamentally abstract.
Usually you're a story, but you're no neighborhood,
thinking always of your one thousand decisions.

Often, making a meal of the temperamentally abstract,
I sometimes see a planetary arc that runs across color fields.
Yours is always the face I see when a mood pours in,
although I usually do better when I decide everything.

I sometimes see a planetary arc that runs across color fields
often with tiny details (tube socks, a narwhal),
and usually I do better when I can see everything.
I'm always in layers and crossing the mapmaker dashes

often with tiny details: tube socks, a narwhal,
and a photograph from when we were together
(always in layers and dashing across red borders),
of a snow field, a blue sky, and one red figure as the stitch.

Usually a photograph of when we were together
makes of us a usual story without a neighborhood
but sometimes a snow field, a blue sky, and one red figure as the stitch:
that heart's a real crowd-pleaser that sometimes comes from script and score.

Michael Morse has published poems in various journals—including *A Public Space*, *The American Poetry Review*, *jubilat*, *The Literary Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Spinning Jenny*, and *Tin House*—and in the anthologies *Broken Land: Poems of Brooklyn*; *Starting Today: 100 Poems for Obama's First 100 Days*; and *The Best American Poetry*, 2012. He lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., and teaches at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School. His first book, *Void and Compensation*, is forthcoming from Canarium Books in April, 2015.

After the Teashop

(A sestina by Jen Currin)

The night revolved—bells, veils. I had been reading ghazals
of diamonds, singing a room into singe. Travellers
have many faces—rutted road, crossroads. We kissed the frost
from the glass and promised to shine diamonds
into strangers' eyes. This was read on paper
without memorizing even one word.

In the hospital, her face peeling, her words
gave up: a gurgle. A book of ghazals
on her bedside next to a lamp of brown paper,
a candle given to her by a traveller.
I asked if bells could ring like diamonds.
Did she fancy a walk? But she was already asleep, the soft frost

of her hair lifting with each breath like paper.
I had brought the paper to tell her there had been a frost
in her village which had ruined the crops. A traveller,
she had not been back in decades, since her words
had been banned—though every villager knew her ghazals,
sang them as they cut diamonds

from paper, covered their walls in diamonds.
Everyone read there—newspapers,
books, pamphlets—and whispered when they couldn't sing her ghazals.
One announced the end of a long frost
and began with this word:
"Friends." Many a traveller

had carried this poem tucked in their wallet. Many travellers
had held her words in their mouths like warm diamonds.
Finally she woke and croaked a few unfamiliar words—
I could only recognize "paper"
and hastened to grab some before the frost
completely enveloped her mind, and with it, her last ghazal.

"Don't ever travel," she wheezed, squeezing my hand. "Don't buy paper
or bury diamonds. When the ground glints, when frost
pinches, remember these words: *I am you. I am not these ghazals.*"

Jen Currin was born and raised in Portland, Oregon, and did her schooling at Bard College (B.A.), Arizona State (M.F.A.) and Simon Fraser University (M.A.). Jen currently lives in Vancouver, B.C., where she teaches writing and literature at Vancouver Community College and creative writing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Jen has published one chapbook, *The Ends* (Nomados, 2013), and four books of poetry: *The Sleep of Four Cities* (Anvil Press, 2005); *Hagiography* (Coach House, 2008); *The Inquisition Yours* (Coach House, 2010), which won the Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry and was shortlisted for the 2011 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize (B.C. Book Prizes), the Lambda Literary Award in Poetry, and the ReLit Award; and *School* (Coach House, 2014).