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Protected: Elana Herzog – Plumb Pulp

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by modciti

📅 January 27, 2018

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image above: Elana Herzog, Untitled (P 85), 2013, Hand made paper and textile, 21 1/2 x 27 3/4 inches, framed 27 1/2 x 33 3/4 inches. Courtesy of LMAKprojects, NY

A few weeks ago in the middle of a snowstorm I ventured downtown to the lower east side to check out Elana Herzog's exhibit Plumb Pulp. While I arrived a bit windswept and slightly frozen, I was so very glad I'd come because her work is not only visually stunning, but inspires an emotionally charged sense of wonder and, yes joy. If you're anything like me you might just find yourself instinctively reaching out to touch her work, and stopping yourself just in time, or not.



Herzog lives and makes art in NYC, and over the years her work has been shown at the Brooklyn Museum and Museum of Art and Design, as well as throughout the US and around the world, including at the Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland, Konsthalle Goteborg, Sweden and at Konsthalle Gustavsbergs, and Tegnerforbundet in Norway.

She is well known for creating intense and compelling paper and textile based installations reminiscent of landscapes and aerial views. Fans won't be disappointed because she's included a beautiful installation, entitled "Southern Lights" in Plumb Pulp, but she's added another dimension to her work- a two dimensional one. Pieces that make you actually believe that Herzog has actually found a way to paint with textiles and paper line the walls leading to the Southern Lights.

All of which made me want to know more about Elana Herzog, so I was thrilled when we caught up after the show, discovering that she is as smart and charming, as she is talented.

You have always used textiles in your work, but now paper has become an intrinsic part of your work how did that evolve? What is it about paper that calls to you?

In 2008 I was awarded a residency at Dieu Donne Paper in Manhattan, where I began learning about how paper is made. It was a truly magical experience. Paper is something that I had always understood to be flat, rectangular, dry and monochromatic. Suddenly it was a liquid that could be poured, mixed, layered and played with. It could be lots of colors and even textures and thicknesses. It gets pressed under thousands of pounds of pressure.

Traditionally, paper is made by breaking down another material - often a textile like cotton or linen - by "beating it to a pulp", and then reconstituting it into the finished product - the paper we use every day. That process is very much like the way I have made most of my work - by breaking down materials, de-constructing, tearing apart one material or thing, a textile, in order to create something new - my pieces.



When your immersed in creating a new piece what does your process look like?

When I work at the paper mill I am intensely focused because time is precious. There are other people around, but I am in my own zone. The work is done on a horizontal surface and there is water everywhere. Most of the paper pulp is formed into sheets on metal screens called molds, and then I alter them so that they become more eccentric shapes and surfaces.

I spray them, and cut them, and pour pulp onto them. I have treasure trove of fabrics that I integrate into the pieces to make "collages." Recently I have been printing onto my fabrics before I collage them, which complicates the picture even more.

In the past your shows have been mostly installations, but with the show includes pieces that are more like paintings made with paper. What inspired that change?

Working on this small and contained scale offers different pleasures the does making architectural installations. I love them both, and they are influencing and informing one another. The paper work is intimate and immediate, containable within one view. I am able to construct complex illusionistic spaces within the paper, and tun through lots of ideas and impulses in a relatively short time. The installations require mare planning and production time.

It is wonderful to be able to have both in my life.

Do you have a favorite piece in the show?

That's kind of like being asked if you have a favorite child. Sometimes I may be more in the mood for one than another, but its hard to have a favorite. Each piece is a time capsule of its own making and the strategy or idea that I approached it with. I love them each for something different, and for where they take me – where I go next, what they teach me.

Was one more challenging to create that the others?

The challenge of this installation, and any site specific work is that I don't know for sure if it will be successful until it is installed. I plan it based on a good hunch and irresistible curiosity. I take pictures, and dimensions, and sometimes I make a model of the space, and then I prepare elements in my studio. The way the piece functions in the space only becomes fully apparent when it is installed.

What are you doing when your not making art?

I spend a lot of time in upstate new york, where I love to garden. Gardening is a collaboration between me and forces beyond my control. A long term project, and always a work in progress. I love to hang out with friends and family, to eat good food, and to look at and think about art.

[www.elanaherzog.com](http://www.elanaherzog.com) (<http://www.elanaherzog.com>)

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