

GERRY TRILLING

Constantin Brancusi's Drying Rack
2012
Mixed media constructed painting
58 x 45 inches



It has been well over a century since the proto-feminist author Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote her milestone short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a semi-autobiographical account of one woman's descent into psychosis while confined to a garishly decorated bedroom by her husband. Since its publication in 1892, feminist critics have pointed to *The Yellow Wallpaper* as a crucial piece of literature within the women's movement that debunked Victorian notions of *hysteria* that did not allow for complex considerations of women's experience and psychology. As a result, the diagnosis of *hysteria* has been scrutinized and redefined as *conversion disorder*, whereby physical conditions (numbness, blindness, paralysis) that have no locatable organic cause are believed, instead, to be psychosomatic.

Like Gilman, contemporary artist Gerry Trilling posits elusive, mysterious connections between domestic confinement, the mind, and pattern-design within her own artworks, which she calls "constructed paintings." They are also indicative of Trilling's ability to see the world and make art differently, or otherwise to the accepted logics of painting. Large and geometric, Trilling's artworks are the result of her studied combinations of mass-produced textiles and intricately hand-cut paper or plastic elements laid out like a weaving-pattern upon the artwork's surface. Often Trilling's unlikely combinations of synthetic textile and luminescent, lenticular plastics produce fascinating, irreconcilable tensions between activity and passivity, between flatness and depth, between geometric and organic form. Indeed, in 2012 works like *BL112 Girlie Cubes* and *BL212 Constantin Brancusi's Drying Rack*, the hexagonal shapes appearing on top of much busier textile surfaces are derived from the failure of particular forms of information to convert.

Years ago, while bored at her desk job, Trilling used Excel spreadsheets as a means to dissect the weaving patterns of woven textiles. Cell by cell, Trilling would transform the size, shape, and color of a single cellular unit to match the perceived pattern of a piece of cloth. Yet, upon opening her carefully patterned (if rudimentary) Excel spreadsheets within the much more complex software of Adobe Illustrator, the size and shape of cells appearing within her patterns would automatically reset into more uniform arrangements. The plotline should sound familiar: a *conversion disorder*, followed by a disciplinary and over-simplified act of correction, occurring within the machine.

It is this glitch, and all the information lost between (or beyond), that fascinates Trilling and motivates the making of her purposefully puzzling, optically rich surfaces. It is telling how Trilling's artworks, like the wallpaper in Gilman's story, do seem to come alive with visual buzz the longer one spends peering into and beyond their surfaces. Like the Magic Eye® posters emblematic of hospital waiting rooms and the bedrooms of tired teenagers, Trilling makes work for a viewer to space out on, or to look deeply into. This is because, for Trilling, no matter how precisely patterned, no matter how seemingly mundane, there is something always-already beneath the surface. The wallpaper *is* alive. Like a secret logic, something obscured is patiently waiting to be discovered.

- Danny Orendorff



The Abstract Is Hardly Ever Sure
2012
Mixed media constructed painting
36 x 36 inches