

Related Programs

Exhibition Reception

December 9, 1-4pm

Celebrate with the artist during our Center Day program.

Artist Talk

February 10, 2-3pm

Join artist Marian Carow for a conversation about her practice and work featured in *Salvages*.

Marian Carow: Salvages

October 28, 2023 – February 18, 2024  
Gallery 5



Untitled (8595), 2022, Corrugated cardboard, acrylic, PVA, 27 x 13 x 7 inches

Hyde ParkARTCENTER

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Hyde Park Art Center is a unique resource that advances contemporary visual art in Chicago by connecting artists and communities in unexpected ways. The Art Center is funded in part by the: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harpo Foundation; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; Polk Bros. Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of people like you.





Salvage is the act of rescuing something from destruction and making it useful or valuable. The process of reclaiming materials in architecture ensures sustainable development of new houses or buildings, while honoring the lived history of the original structure. In this current series of work presented in her solo exhibition titled *Salvages*, artist Marian Carow breathes new life into scraps of cut paper and found corrugated cardboard boxes by turning them into provocative collages and sculptures. Influenced by the constant demolition and reconstruction of Chicago’s skyline and streets, Carow’s artworks become abstract diagrams for moving through a multilayered city and challenge our physical and emotional relationship to the built environment.



*Untitled (B74)*, 2022, Corrugated cardboard, acrylic, and PVA, 20 x 13 x 10 inches

The idea that architecture has memory emphasizes a correlation between a building and the human body. Both have vast cavities (rooms), orifices (doors/windows), limbs (hallways) and a skeletal system (frame/struts) to hold them up. Carow’s forms like *Untitled (B74)* are reminiscent of a Classical Greek capital in the ornate Corinthian style while the work *Untitled (8595)* evokes the angular creased facade of the Spertus building in the South Loop by modern architect Ron Kruek. Although it is not the intention of the artist, several of the wall sculptures here simultaneously suggest cultural artifacts or masks when hung at eye-level. The sculptures oscillate between human anatomy and architectural remnants, which heighten the uncanny nature of the work.

Carow makes fragmented objects that break away from the whole form, literally and figuratively. By ripping, folding, crushing, and cutting the material into a combination of rounded and angular shapes, she reinserts control in defining a new structural model or body. Her creative process reveals a negotiation with her materials and a desire to allow for chance, much like the Dadaist and Situationist artists who also used found paper to make work in response to the world around them. She explains,

“I challenge myself to interrupt (cardboard’s) original purpose, using the box

shape as point of departure but negating its utility. Often I intentionally incorporate evidence of its first use: labels, printed codes, tape, cuts and dings, which enliven the surfaces. With no specific idea in mind, each piece is uncharted territory and emerges from an investigative process of playful engagement with the material. I keep working until a form resonates. With a nod to Minimalism, I employ monochrome matte surfaces of house paint, occasionally mixed with coarse additives to create a raw effect as well as to emphasize structural ridges, edges, shadows and voids. The work is about process, transforming material, incorporation of accidents, dismantling and re-configuring structure, things taken apart and re-imagined.”

With the fifth Chicago Architecture Biennial currently activating sites across the city, the small but mighty works of Marian Carow contribute to the current conversation about the relationship between our environments and ourselves. Architectural theorist Anthony Vidler contextualized the fragmentation of architecture as an expression of our postmodern moment. He wrote, “The history of the body in architecture...might in one sense be described as the progressive distancing of the body from the building, a gradual extension of the anthropomorphic analogy into wider and wider domains, leading insensibly but inexorably to the final ‘loss’ of the body as an authoritative foundation for architecture.”\* Within each of Carow’s artworks, there is a constant quest for balance between features –such as negative space, textured layers of paint, or right angles leaning on a diagonal– to hold her authentic structures steady and magnificent in their own right.

Allison Peters Quinn, Director of Exhibition & Residency Programs

\*Vidler, A. (1990). The Building in Pain: The Body and Architecture in Post-Modern Culture. *AA Files*, No. 19 (Spring), 3, 3-10.

About the artist:



Marian Carow (b. 1940) is a Chicago-based artist whose practice in the last several decades has adopted the language of minimalism to develop bodies of works on paper and, more recently, sculpture. In a process -based practice, she works intuitively toward development of idiosyncratic imagery and objects which reference architectural influences, addressing linear and spatial relationships. Her sculptures start with often discarded common materials and incorporate considerations of reuse and ephemerality. She attributes these themes in part to being a witness to the rhythm and dynamics of urban change in the city around her as well as to adaptation to unexpected life events.

A native of the Texas Panhandle, she has spent most of her life in the Chicago area. She holds a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago and has been the recipient of a City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs Individual Artist’s Grant and a residency at Ragdale. Her work has been included in numerous regional juried shows, including Harper College Small Works, the Rockford Art Museum and Evanston Art Center biennials, and has been exhibited at Adds Donna Gallery, Mu Gallery, and 65 Grand. Carow is an alumn of Hyde Park Art Center ‘s Center Program (2016).