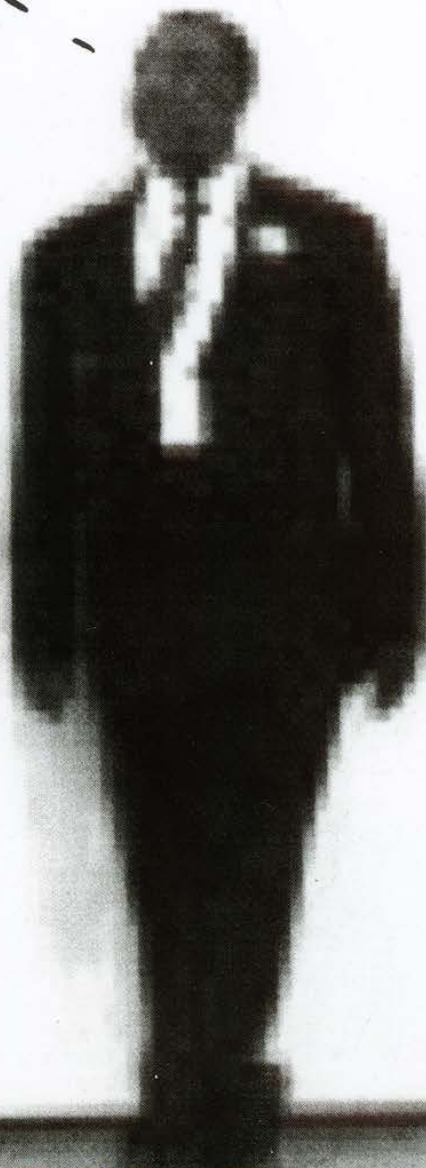


Art in America



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While Zuckerman-Hartung looks back at art history delights in the formal and technical intricacies of action, she is intent on engaging the broader world well. A multipage photomontage that opens the show's accompanying catalogue depicts subjects that have caught attention, from gritty urban scenes to studio installations to a handmade sign emblazoned with the words "Syria Riot"—images that at least indirectly inform and inform her painting.

Unlike works from just a few years ago, these latest paintings are large in scale—some as much as 84 by 60 inches—and seem more assertive from a painterly view. Multiple collage and tactility are still important (in *in vivo*, paint and wax are applied to a pleated canvas), these pieces are as sculptural as their predecessors—no attached found objects and no dangling strips of painted canvas or leather connecting works to each other. At the same time, the imagery is clearer and more vibrant, and the surfaces appear less densely heavily worked.

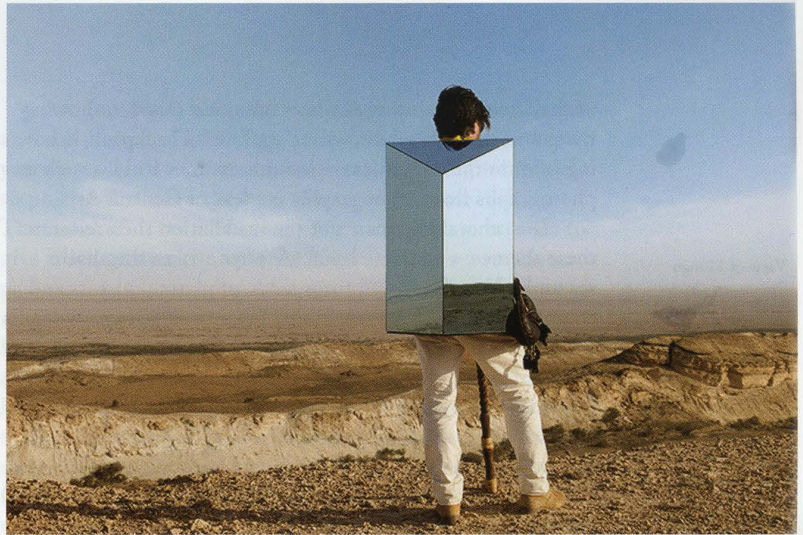
There is little precedent for meditative paintings like *in vivo* (most of the titles are derived from the names of the authors the artist likes, without the consonants). The latter, arrayed along fold marks on navy-blue linen, is a narrow strip of beige linen sewn to the bottom, are zonal rows of dozens of squiggly vertical forms, 1 to 2 inches in height, that look vaguely like human chromosomes. The forms are rendered in black enamel, with white applied to some of them, revealing the naked linen beneath: pale slots that seem to glow when seen from a distance, creating a stunning, enigmatic effect.

Zuckerman-Hartung bought an industrial sewing machine a year ago and began experimenting with sewn manipulated fabric, a technique that harks back to Pierrelina Burri and 1970s feminist artists like Miriam Schapiro. Its use figures prominently in many of these paintings, including the elegant *Calif.*, with its background of sewn-together strips of sea-blue linen subtly stained and rippled, watery forms. In *in vivo*, the artist incorporates upside-down, purchased American flag, an inescapable icon, incongruously pairing it with sewn fabric panels red with delicate washes and splotches.

Among the most eye-catching works in the show is *in vivo*, which is dominated by a shifting diamond mesh pattern suggesting a certain illusion of three-dimensional space. Zuckerman-Hartung cut out the pattern from one side of a drop cloth and employed that as a stencil to apply white image to the other half, which she then stretched and used as the painting's support. Along the sides are dark pools of tan and green latex that were allowed to dry on the cloth. Faint lines of black are flung and dribbled on the surface.

Overall, this is a strong, engaging body of work—the direct counterpart to the artist's Whitney spotlight and a signboard to what are sure to be Zuckerman-Hartung's more lively investigations into abstraction.

—Kyle MacMillan



HOUSTON ANTON GINZBURG Blaffer Art Museum

Anton Ginzburg:
Walking the Sea,
2013, digital video,
30 minutes; at the
Blaffer Art Museum.

A Russian-born artist who has lived in New York since the 1990s, Anton Ginzburg has been pursuing a conceptually driven multi-medium practice that aims to fuse the strategies of contemporary Western art with the cultural inheritance of Eastern Europe. His debut solo show in the United States, "Terra Corpus," presented the first two parts of a projected trilogy, both ambitious works pairing films with Post-Minimal installations that act as glossaries or spatial narratives relating to the films' themes.

The most recent installation, *Walking the Sea* (2013-14), takes as its subject the Aral Sea, a formerly 26,300-square-mile lake between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan that has drastically diminished. Beginning in the 1960s, the waters were diverted to irrigate cotton fields—an ecological catastrophe largely unknown to the international community due to political restrictions on access to the site.

Starting with a shot of unbounded water under a night sky, the film introduces a traveler figure, played by the artist, whose white costume combines traditional Dervish elements with tropes of 20th-century art history, most prominently Robert Smithson's "mirror displacements" and Non-Sites, alluded to by a structure on his back of three mirrors that converge at a tented angle. This avatar treks on foot from one side of the former sea to the other as the terrain transitions from canyons to prairies to salt-flecked sands, revealing wandering camels, carcasses of sunken ships and abandoned island military bases. As the traveler crosses this wasteland, the mirrors on his back refract the surroundings of the seabed, which Ginzburg has likened to "a readymade earthwork."

The poetic allusions of the film are then clarified and given form in the adjoining installation, which acts in an almost literary manner akin to David Foster Wallace's voluminous footnotes. One wall featured a series of contact prints providing keys to the work. Some images are derived from the West—an excerpt from Thoreau's essay "Walking" and a detail

View of Mungo Thomson's *Cricket Solos*, 2014, iPod, mini-speakers, handmade cricket cages; at Artpace.

of the Courbet painting *Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet*, showing the painter clad in white, with a staff and a backpack, heading off into the wilderness—and others from Russia, such as photographs from ethnographic surveys of Central Asia.

The other components of the installation then reiterate these themes: a concrete basin of water evokes the absent sea and a Non-Site; sculptures made of plaster, mirrors and colored resin reference traditional Islamic architectural details from the region; and a tapestry woven from cotton presents aerial images of the sea's gradual disappearance between the 1980s and today. The most complex sculptural element is an Aeolian harp, which plays field recordings of the wind from the Aral Sea in reaction to the visitor's movements.

The other installation, *At the Back of the North Wind* (2011), was previously shown as a para-pavilion project during the 2011 Venice Biennale. Its centerpiece is a lavish, beautifully shot film that follows another figure (again played by the artist) who embarks on an expedition to find the mythical land of Hyperborea, traveling from the Pacific Northwest to the ruined gulags of Northern Russia. The film conflates his search for an imagined paradise with an investigation of the subconscious, represented by a cloud of Jungian red smoke that follows the traveler on his journey. Among the accompanying artworks that materialize elements in the film is a massive sculpture merging mammoth tusks with 3-D-printed distortions of human bones to create an ancient-modern hybrid.

While the themes of *At the Back of the North Wind* prove more elliptical than those of the newer installation, their visual manifestation is often ravishing. Overall, the show served to announce an audacious, questing artistic voice.

—Andrew M. Goldstein

SAN ANTONIO MUNGO THOMSON Artpace

Mungo Thomson's latest project, which translates the often-ignored sound of crickets into music, touches upon a century of avant-garde art-making strategies. In the early 20th century, Wassily Kandinsky proposed that abstraction could capture the essence of life: nature. Decades later, Edgard Varèse and John Cage, both students of composer Arnold Schoenberg, Kandinsky's colleague, organized compositions around noise and silence. In the late 1960s, interest in the "overlooked," presented with minimal expressivity, became a defining feature of Conceptual art. Thomson filters all of this into the exhibition "Crickets for Solo and Ensemble," which fits comfortably alongside his other efforts to turn "background" into an elegant main event. Over the years, Thomson (b. 1969) has created works centered on the sounds of his empty studio (*Room Tone*, 1998), converted images of inky galaxies into colorful murals ("Negative Space," 2006-13), and turned the Whitney Museum's coat check into a system of chimes (*Coat Check Chimes*, 2008).



The work in "Crickets for Solo and Ensemble" started in 2009, when Thomson and composer Michael Webster began exploring whether cricket "songs" (produced when the insects rub their wings together to drive away or attract another) could be reproduced by musicians. Later, Thomson found source material in a French record compiling decades of field recordings of crickets from all over the world, and tracks from that record—some lasting seconds, others minutes—were turned into a score. An ensemble played the work in performances, first in Los Angeles for the multi-venue project "Pacific Standard Time" (2012) and then in Manhattan on the High Line (2013). Along the way, Thomson recorded solos—with flutists, violinists and percussionists—and gathered 17 of the musicians for a film shoot in a black-box theater.

The focal point of this exhibition was the 17-minute video that resulted from the shoot, which was projected on a scale so that it nearly filled the wall of a darkened gallery. It was a serious affair: Webster conducted, and the musicians, who wore formal attire, were instructed to avoid "conveying expressive musical sounds," according to performance notes in a book published in association with the project. Screens on-screen convey details about the original recordings, the locations (including Borneo, Thailand and Cameroon) and non-cricket sounds that are mixed in (like those of frogs and goats), and the years (from 1971 to 1998). The ear-searing acoustic differences arising from the changing variables of the mind ponders connections between the sound-mal movements of insects and those of musicians.

Outside the room with the video, a framed edition of the conductor's score lined a wall. Produced without ink so that the printing-plate impressions are all you see, the works on paper have a light touch that seems appropriate to this act of translation. Downstairs, in a small gallery, the exhibition's third component used similarly miniature means to harness the wild: 11 cricket "solos" played by tiny speakers contained in small, handmade wire cages. The beauty of Thomson's attempts to represent nature through conceptual strategies is that, paradoxically, they drain magic. The results suggest the impossibility of the task, and in so doing evoke the particular wonders of nature and

—Kate Green