

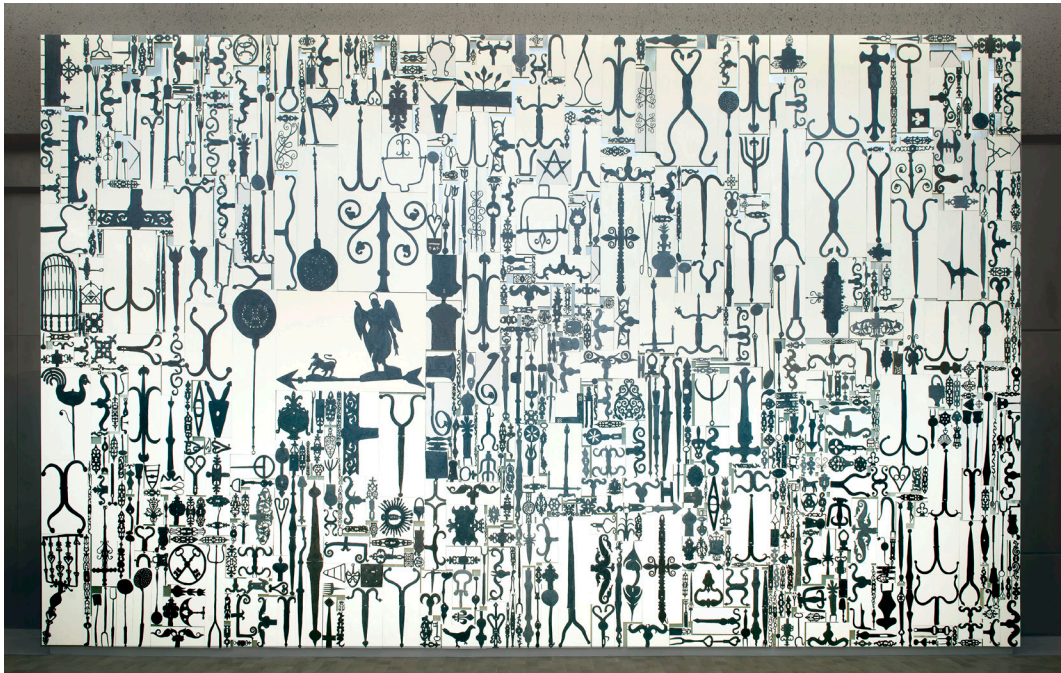
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## Ellen Harvey

*The Painting as Ornament, the Ornament as Painting*

November 11 - December 23, 2020



*Metal Painting*, 2015, oil on 826 wood panels with inset magnets, steel panels, 15 x 25 ft

LOCKS GALLERY



Locks Gallery is pleased to present Ellen Harvey's monumental *Metal Painting* along with recent related bodies of work that invert and re-contextualize the traditionally hierarchical relationship between the fine and decorative arts, between the celebrated artist and the artisan laboring in obscurity.

*Metal Painting* (2015) is a multi-part oil painting comprised of 826 individual "portraits" of all of the wrought iron pieces at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia. Originally commissioned by and exhibited at the Barnes Foundation, *Metal Painting* was created in direct response to the defining idiosyncrasies of the institution—specifically Albert C. Barnes' insistence that his particular installation of his collection be maintained unchanged in perpetuity, and, his decision to hang his paintings alongside his vast collection of hand-forged metal objects which he considered to be of equal artistic value.

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By recasting the functional metal objects as paintings, Harvey's *Metal Painting* challenges the viewer to consider them as purely artistic objects. Reduced to silhouettes on a smooth white background, the wrought iron objects of the pre-industrial craft tradition reveal a surprisingly modernist aesthetic. The heavy impasto of the dark silhouettes vary from panel to panel so that they reference the handmade imperfections of the metal objects themselves. Unlike the fixed installation at the Barnes, *Metal Painting* is different each time it is exhibited and the panels are installed touching one another so that the installation creates one large "painting". Because the individual panels have magnets inserted into their back and are hung over steel plates, *Metal Painting* explicitly encourages the rearrangement of its components. As a whole, the multi-part piece transforms the work of anonymous craftspeople into a collective painting that can be read as a direct challenge to the individualist art canon.

Additional works on view include Harvey's on-going *Crack/Craquelure* series which similarly inverts the traditional hierarchy of value, privileging the accidental effect of time on the painted surface over the intentional marks of the artist. Based on the crack patterns of old paintings, the *Crack/Craquelure* series explores the idea that the surface of painting has a distinct life and history of its own. Few Old Masters paintings today can be seen as they might have been at the time of their making—changes in surface texture and subsequent darkening or tonal shifts often make these masterpieces of bygone eras appear coated in a patina full of imperfections. By focusing solely on the visual effects of age, these works create an uncanny doubling effect where the paint of the painting is both subject and object and where time is both present and absent.

*The Rorschach Ornament* series and *Double Forest* both result from Harvey's ongoing collaboration with the American Wood Column Corporation, a small workshop in Brooklyn that produces hand-molded pressed wood ornaments. Ironically, these ornaments, which were originally intended to provide a cheaper alternative to carved ornamentation, are now in turn part of a vanishing craft tradition themselves. Harvey has been producing a variety of works that use these ornaments to interrogate the liminal spaces between art, craft and industry. In the case of *Double Forest*, Harvey inserts actual neoclassical leaf-inspired pressed wood ornaments onto a painting of a forest to create competing systems of representation. For the *Rorschach Ornament* paintings, Harvey creates silhouettes of the ornaments and then doubles them in imitation of the famous Rorschach blot tests challenging the viewer to provide their meaning.

In 2021, Harvey's mid-career retrospective *The Tourist: Ellen Harvey* will be traveling to Turner Contemporary, UK, and the Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria. Her site-specific installation *Mirror* has been acquired by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA) where it will be reinstalled in a new configuration from November 19, 2020 until April 11, 2021 as part of the exhibition, *Taking Space: Contemporary Women Artists and the Politics of Scale*.



Ellen Harvey is a British-born conceptual artist living and working in Brooklyn. Her work frequently pairs traditional representational aesthetics with seemingly antithetical post-modern strategies, such as institutional critique, mapping, appropriation and pastiche to explore diverse but related issues such as the political meaning of ornament, the ecological implications of the picturesque and the relationship between art and nostalgia.

Harvey is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program, Yale Law School and Harvard College and attended the Berlin Hochschule der Kunste in Germany. She is the recipient of numerous awards including most recently a Smithsonian Artists Research Fellowship and a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. She is the author of *New York Beautification Project* which will be reissued in 2021 and her work has both been included in and been the subject of numerous books and monographs. She has completed several large-scale public artworks, including, most recently for the Miami Beach Convention Center, and has exhibited extensively in the U.S. and internationally. Her work was included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial and has been the subject of several solo museum exhibitions at venues including the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia; the Groeninge Museum, Bruges, Belgium; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC; the Bass Museum, Miami Beach; the Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Poland; the Pennsylvania Academy, Philadelphia and the Whitney Museum at Altria, New York, among others.

The exhibition will be viewable by appointment only. Please contact the gallery directly at [info@locksgallery.com](mailto:info@locksgallery.com) to arrange a date and time. In accordance with recent safety measures surrounding the Covid-19 outbreak, masks will be provided upon entry and must be worn for the duration of the visit.