

ARTnews

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Paper Pushers

Artists are using

paper—folded,

spindled, and even

mutilated—in

innovative, increasingly

sculptural ways



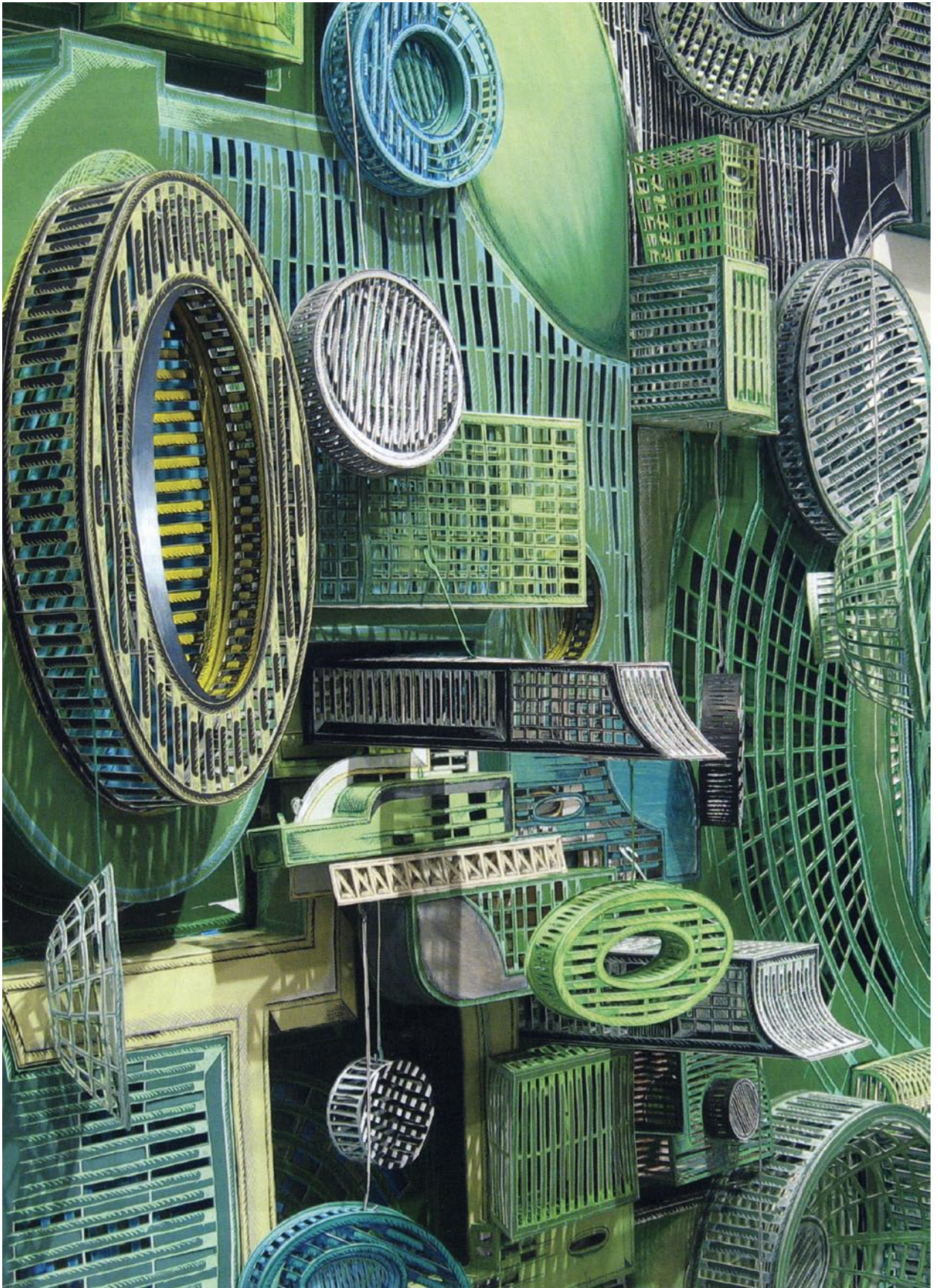
KIRSTEN HASSENFELD's *Offering*, installed at the Jewish Museum in New York last winter, was a translucent white shrine of classical columns and crystalline forms, lit from within to create a warm alabaster glow. Like most of Hassenfeld's works, this one had the decorative opulence of Fabergé eggs. "I was looking at pawnshops and thinking of how

they're like banks for poor people's precious objects," says Hassenfeld, who shows at Bellwether Gallery in New York. "I wanted to create this kind of dream of plentitude." She acknowledges having also been influenced by a stint in the decorative-arts department of Sotheby's, where she typed descriptions of objets d'art. When she first started making her ethereal works, she says, "people couldn't tell what they were made of." The pieces look as if they were glass, crystal, or even silk, but they are composed of paper—specifically, vellum. "I started off using plastic and found objects, but realized I could make these things much stronger and have them actually hang together better if I used paper, since I knew what adhesives to use," says Hassenfeld, who trained as a printmaker.

OPPOSITE **Jane South** built the industrial *Untitled (Tracing Parameters)*, 2006 (detail), from cut and folded paper and balsa wood. LEFT **For Suite**, 2004, **Kirsten Hassenfeld** turned vellum into milky gems and translucent silhouettes.

Today many artists are taking paper in new directions, cutting, folding, gluing, and layering the material sculpturally and architecturally. "There is definitely a trend toward paper right now, and it's partly a reaction against the higher tech—against meta, multimedia installations," says Sarina Basta, curator of SculptureCenter in Long Island City, New York. "It's a kind of *arte povera* thing."

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MAKI TAMURA also creates three-dimensional paper structures, hers inspired by carousels and clocks. For each wall-hung work, she cuts, folds, and glues paper into dozens of tiny boxes. Unlike South, she paints them with highly decorative patterns and figures borrowed from Victorian engravings and children's illustrations, 19th-century china, and Asian art, and then groups the boxes in tidy symmetrical arrangements. Vaguely kitschy yet meticulously constructed, the works are reminiscent of antique porcelain. Tamura plays with the tensions between high and low culture, and her craft process of cutting and folding, paired with the sly naïveté of her watercolor painting, is crucial to creating that juxtaposition. The artist, who shows at Lucas Schoormans Gallery in New York, worked in watercolor before switching to oil on canvas while in art school, then later returned to paper. "I felt a sense of rebellion since paper is regarded as second-rate," she says. "But things like greeting cards, magazines, and other printed materials were a source of inspiration, so it made sense."

Maki Tamura's
Nest, 2005-6,
creates the
illusion of porcelain.

"Paper has this stigma attached to it for not being painting, not being sculpture, being something that is preparatory—a think piece but not a finished

work," says Leslie Jones, associate curator of prints and drawings at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. "I think because of the associations, artists are embracing it." Artists like Hassenfeld, South, and Tamura also embrace paper for its fragility. Their hand is evident in every aspect of their work, even as they mimic more-durable materials,

JANE SOUTH, for example, addresses technology in a decidedly low-tech fashion. A former theater designer, she used to work in steel and concrete. Now, working primarily in paper, she uses a pen, an X-Acto knife, and glue to construct a multitude of mechanical components, which she then paints and assembles into abstract wall hangings that look like complex machines. "I made the switch to paper because it was more direct, spontaneous, and immediate," says South, who shows at Spencer Brownstone Gallery in New York. "It seems less like 'art making' and more revealing of the process to the viewer." *Untitled (Tracing Parameters)*, 2006, on view last March at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria, plays on rotary forms, its large circular base encompassing a variety of wheels and gears painted in shades of industrial green that recall bridges or subway stations.



TOP: TOM POWELL IMAGING/COURTESY LUCAS SCHOORMANS GALLERY, NEW YORK; BOTTOM: COURTESY GUILD & GREYS-KULL, NEW YORK

and imperfections cannot be covered up. "Paper shows the accidents," says Jones. "You can nick it, fold it, spill something on it. Even if you erase a mark, it's still there. But this is appealing for some artists. A work can seem much more immediate if it has this sense of vulnerability." South agrees: "I depend on those imperfections to counter and reinforce the cooler, geometric aspects of my work—to reveal something human going on beneath the more immediately apparent constructed and engineered qualities."

VALERIE HEGARTY works with paper specifically because it is so fragile. For her show "Seascape," at Guild & Greyshkul in New York last fall, she created several sculptural installations based on iconic American landscape paintings. She replicated Frederic Edwin Church's *The Icebergs* (1861) by constructing a

OPPOSITE Layers of decay made from carefully torn paper covered Valerie Hegarty's installation *Landscaping*, 2005.

before digging in to find it. Paper, which retains every crease and mark, is the ideal medium for this created history. "You can't use a fabric or much else to do that kind of thing," Hegarty says.

FOR LANE TWITCHELL, on the other hand, cut paper is a crucial visual and structural component of his finished paintings, and he does everything he can to keep the fragile material intact. Weaving together influences from his Mormon upbringing in Utah and his background in illustration, Twitchell has developed his own vocabulary of American gothic imagery, which he draws onto folded sheets of paper and then precisely carves out. When he unfolds the sheets,



Lane Twitchell's cut-paper "snowflakes" form the basis for paintings like *Lightning Fall*, 2005-6.

he has an intricate silhouette full of dozens of continuous, intersecting motifs. In such earlier works as the series "The Greatest Snow on Earth" (1998), he simply hung the kaleidoscopic "snowflakes," as he calls them, on a colored paper ground. In more recent pieces, however, like

4 A.M. (2005), the snowflakes function as the only figurative element in his colorful paintings. He glues the paper cutouts to painted wood, covers them with Plexiglas, and then paints over that.

Twitchell, who is fascinated with "cheap, wasteful American housing," is currently experimenting with Tyvek—the polyethylene-fiber sheeting used to make FedEx envelopes and to wrap houses during construction—in a series of paintings that will be shown at Greenberg Van Doren in New York later this year. "It comes in these enormous sheets, and you can just roll it right up and not worry about it," he says of the durable, paperlike material. Twitchell acknowledges that the graphic quality of drawing is central to his work, but he considers himself a painter who happens to work in paper: "Once you put something in a frame, it's a drawing," he says. "I didn't want to have a career where I had to look through a piece of glass every time I made something. The art would always be trapped back there."