

## Rosaire Appel and Carmon Colangelo at Schema Projects

By Etty Yaniv



*Rosaire Appel: Untranslated: Sequences, Solos and Books and Carmon Colangelo: Glocal Vocals, Drawings and Sketches and Other Recent Musings both on view at Schema Projects through May 26, 2013. Above, an installation grid of Appel's of abstract comics, created through entirely digital means.*

At first glance, there is no apparent link between Rosaire Appel's compact grids of colorful digitized abstractions and Carmon Colangelo's imposing mixed media installation. However, the visual worlds of these two artists not only co-exist but gradually form a stimulating counterpoint when exhibited alongside one another, as they are in the nicely lit storefront space of *Schema Projects*. A closer look reveals that the medium of digital production methods and the complex narrative sensibility that underlie both artists' work is what connects these two bodies of work into a cohesive visual and conceptual space.



Indeed, both artists not only utilize digital imagery, they also favor an ongoing process of collaboration with others. Appel, a long standing member of the book art community, and an artist and a writer herself, asserts that she is using her vast library of digital images as a source for her artwork. "There is no order in this archive," she writes in her artist statement, "The files often have random numerical titles - locating a specific image is thwarted. This keeps the library alive and unknowable." She adds somewhat slyly, "I access it irresponsibly: responsively." Her collage technique of "using a stylus to draw...cut, paste, erase...fonts and unreadable words" is unabashedly apparent in this body of digital prints.



Similarly, digital media is central in Carmon Colangelo's work, although he layers it with other media such as drawing, watercolor, ink and acrylic. Originally trained as a lithographer, he treats the use of digital media as just another language in an impressive array of printing vocabulary: intaglio, relief, monotype, and screen. The artist, who serves as the dean of the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Art and is a resident of St. Louis, prefers to work collaboratively at Pele Prints in his hometown; Flying Horse Press in Orlando, Florida; and Hand Print Workshop in Alexandria, Virginia. Likewise, Appel discusses her collaboration with the painter and printmaker Myrna Burks. While a bright smile, Appel excitedly describes the horizontal accordion work titled, *2:15 Walk-about*, proclaiming, "Here is our most recent work!" When probed for more details about this collaborative process, she explains that Appel and Burks try to surprise each other, while maintaining lively "visual conversations...side by side, in front of the screen". It is apparent that besides a shared interest in digital media and collaborative processes, both Appel and Colangelo incorporate issues of language and communication in their work.

*Carmon Colangelo pictured in front of his work at Schema.*



*Another gridded installation and view of an accordion series by Appel.*

Language, in Appel's view, is not limited to "words and all their paraphernalia" but rather it encompasses visual elements such as line, mark, and color. She questions whether abstract, non-functional language can be an engaging, or satisfying form of communication. Yet, her impulse is not analytical. It is the search itself that she is after, or, as she puts it, "I don't think about these things, I explore them on the page." Comparing the process of exploration to a construction of a house, Appel states, "Our houses and worlds are constructed with functional stories that act like bricks, solid-until they're not. My narrative constructions emerge and dissolve back into themselves, leaving energy traces in the margins." Indeed, her deconstructed imagery emits the energy of vibrant comic strips, which reflect on an inexplicable microcosmic universe with ambiguous signs, all tightly organized on the walls into orderly grids or accordion books. A native New Yorker who grew up elsewhere and returned to the city at the age of 21 in the 1960s ("I was here and never found a good reason to leave") in person Appel exudes vitality and urban sophistication. Her attention to the rich textures of city life is an organic part of her thinking process: "I look at pavements, the calligraphy of tar, patterns of cracks, puddles, stains..."

The idea of urbanization is central to Colangelo's work as well, although from a different perspective. As an seasoned traveler, he has been working for a few years with the concept of rapid urban growth, its effects on globalization, and how places are becoming more alike. When pressed about the meaning of *Glocal Yocals*, the curious title of his installation, he elaborates, "The word Glocal is a conflation of Global and Local. I did a series of prints recently called Glocal Diptychs...and when Mary Judge (*the curator and gallery owner*) came to the studio and asked me to do a small installation at Schema Projects in Bushwick, I thought it would be fun to continue to play with this theme... of what I perceive is happening with unique neighborhoods and identities." As he spoke, it became evident that the monochromatic part of the top of his installation camouflages two clocks within an array of geometric shapes. "This," he pointed towards the grayish image dotted with sporadic colorful marks, "is *Mecca Time*. I used a picture of a Mecca clock from a Temple in Singapore with images from a street graffiti." Gesturing at the image of black and white stripe awnings underneath, he continued, "These were photographed out of my hotel window in Basel Switzerland and reminded me of a Daniel Buren painting. The juxtaposition of travel and the cannon of art history fascinate me." Lifting the edges of the paper reveals a hidden layer of doodles on ruled yellow paper. Hopefully, viewers will be compelled to look inside the work, as if they are picking behind curtains, he notes with a playful smile.



Curator Mary Judge describes the genesis of the show, "I saw Carmon's work as similar in some ways to Rosaire's but I chose to have him do a random collage installation that would be 'textural' in contrast to Rosaire's formal formats. His work is, lets say, a putting down and gathering of bits and pieces of information that are arranged. After he did his installation, which in both cases, are new arrangements of pre-existing pieces, he did a little painting on it, to 'finish it up', kind of contemporizing it." Judge, like the two artists she shows, also favors collaborative projects. In her case, as the owner of Schema Projects gallery, she teams up with Sonel Breslav of Blonde Art Books: "I saw Blonde Art Books on the street last year at BOS", and liked what they were doing: I could see they were in need of a home... so I invited Sonel Breslav to be here with us. After I decided to feature works on paper, the idea of books of course made it a really logical pairing." This could not be more true, evidence by the success of this dual exhibition.