

Ross Simonini, “Susan Cianciolo: It’s as if I am on a strange middle plane of always knowing I already died”, *Art Review* (Summer 2018), 44-49.

ArtReview

Interview

Susan Cianciolo

“It’s as if I am on a strange middle plane
of always knowing I already died”

by Ross Simonini



Susan Cianciolo. Photo: Paula Court

Growing up, Susan Cianciolo was a runner. Now, as an artist, running has become her philosophy. Here is a natural animal activity that pretty much anyone can do, and yet within that fundamental movement is struggle, risk, visceral exhaustion, ecstatic peaks and the freewheeling sprint of liberation.

From 1995 to 2001, Cianciolo produced 11 collections of her defiant, innovative RUN clothing line, as well as a pop-up restaurant under the same name. (She's also made RUN structures, RUN money, a RUN Library, RUN Church and on.) The clothes were raw, handmade and tender, and had just the right amount of naivety – all uncommon qualities in high fashion. Every strip of fabric expressed its own idiosyncratic personality, its own movement across the body and its own complicated history. She sometimes commissioned materials from seed to cloth, but more often, her fabrics are recycled, gifted, found.

Likewise, her runway shows played like performance art, staged in parking garages and galleries, and her models, primarily women, were often nonprofessionals or children or, on one occasion, aerialists. Since then, she has referred to the RUN project and its community, lovingly, as a 'cult', and she too has achieved a certain cult status from its legacy.

In 2001 Cianciolo experienced psychological burnout and left the fashion industry along with her life in New York. She began focusing on her visual art, which had been quietly running in parallel to her fashion career all along. The art overlapped with her fashion, both in sensibility and content, and her shows seemed casually to ignore any distinction between the disciplines: dreamlike films of women in her clothes, fashion sketches, magazine collages, geometric watercolours and exhibitions of the clothes themselves, which she often referred to as costumes.

Cianciolo also began showing her signature DIY kits (originally called Fluxus boxes). These ragged cardboard boxes were like care packages filled with fragments from her life and work – a doll, a Polaroid, a moment from a scrapbook, a childlike sculpture of popsicle sticks, a page from her actual diary. Cianciolo has said her work is often inspired by her memories, and these modest vessels play with nostalgia, their contents recalling precious keepsakes discovered in a grandmother's attic. In fact, like much of Cianciolo's work, the items in the kits are intended to be used, and the clothing can be assembled at home.

Home is another significant word in Cianciolo's body of work. Raised in the inner city of Providence, Rhode Island, in relative poverty, Cianciolo learned craft early, making her own clothing whenever possible. These days

she works mostly from home and often involves her ten-year-old daughter, Lilac Sky, in performances and in the making of objects. With designer Kiva Motnyk, she also created RUN Home, a line of housewares that includes quilts, cushions, tapestries, table linens, ceramics and furniture. Like the artists Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Alison Knowles, Cianciolo elevates domestic labour and humbles the luxurious pretence of fine art.

In 2015, at the age of forty-six, Cianciolo presented her first exhibition in New York in over 12 years: *if God comes to visit You, how will you know?* (the great tetrahedral kite) at Bridget Donahue on Manhattan's Lower East Side. With bare walls and an austere grid of kits on the floor, Cianciolo created something simultaneously delicate and unrefined, sacred and mundane, inviting and mystifying. The show received a waterfall of long-deserved attention and stimulated a new period in Cianciolo's

“I try to track myself back
to my twenties, in my Canal
Street studio, Chinatown.
Back then, with all those people
around me, those collections
were based on visions,
but it was different. Now the
format is so much clearer.
With meditation, it's not
as if I press a button and it
appears, but there are moments
where *something* appears,
you know?”

career, which has included her second iteration of *RUN Restaurant*, at the 2017 Whitney Biennial, and a screening of her films in MOMA PS1's 2015 *Greater New York* survey.

I spoke to Cianciolo as she was preparing a new performance and a solo show in Los Angeles. She spoke softly, and found her words through long thoughtful pauses. Her answers were profoundly, refreshingly honest, and afterwards I felt much like I did after seeing her work: I had just experienced the very centre of a human. Later, in an email, she revealed to me that she has never discussed “this part of [her] story” publicly.

ROSS SIMONINI *Would you say that you walked away from the fashion industry in 2001?*

SUSAN CIANCILOLO Yeah. When I speak to doctors and healers about it, they say I had

a mental breakdown. But it probably was just an overload, too much overstimulation for too long without any breaks.

RS *Did it feel like a mental breakdown to you?*

SC Definitely. Something went – the wiring was not right when I hit that point.

RS *What did you do to get yourself back to some kind of balance?*

SC Well, being such an extremist – and I don't know if this was right – I just cut all my ties completely. Shut down the studio. Let everyone go. Separated from my husband. I moved out to the Albers foundation for three months and lived completely alone on 75 acres, right outside of Yale. Then I went to London and didn't come back for a year.

RS *What were you doing during that period?*

SC Making films and a lot of work. But by myself. I didn't have the big studio any more. I was travelling and making shows. I stopped working with my agent, but I was still making clothes and presenting them through exhibitions. I was making the kits at that time, which included clothing, but I was calling them games.

RS *Was there a moment when you felt that you had moved past the breakdown?*

SC Well, I moved back to New York in 2003 and I was a little bit homeless for a while until I settled in Brooklyn. But then an unexpected thing happened. I died and came back to life. I flatlined. And that changed my life forever until today. Nothing has been the same.

RS *How did that happen?*

SC I was walking through Prospect Park and I was scheduled, the next day, to have an exhibition of my collages at Sears-Peyton Gallery. I had everything laid out in my little studio in Brooklyn, and I went for a walk in the morning, just to step out of the studio. And that was it: I was knocked down by this guy on a bike. And he beat me to death with a bicycle chain, and strangled me, and raped me. And from that day until now, I've had to work towards recovering. Mentally, physically – I've never been the same. It took years and years and years to walk down the street, to function. And my brain never really recovered. So when I say my 'doctors and healers' – that's why I have so many. I've worked with the best acupuncturists in the world.

RS *Has anything helped?*

SC Meditation. I don't know if people notice, but all my work is connected to spiritual theories.

RS *What's it like to be alive after dying?*

sc It's as if I am on a strange middle plane of always knowing I already died, so there is nothing to be afraid of – and also being so afraid to know it can happen again, at any moment.

RS *How could you stay in New York after that experience?*

sc The only reason I'm still here is because I didn't want to let it beat me. It took me ten years to have the courage to move back to Brooklyn. Now, my daughter and I have been here for six years. But still, it's just constant flashbacks all the time. Just little things. Like, when I had my solo show with Bridget [Donahue] in Manhattan two years ago, that was the first time I had a solo show in New York in 12 years. Because my brain believed that I would just die if I did it.

RS *Right, the association.*

sc And when I did that, I was like, *I've made it!* I've learned so much about the tricks of the mind. I've always been prayer-based, even before all this, but now it's the main part of my life. I've come to learn that I don't even know myself.

RS *Has this experience radically affected your work?*

sc I think that's why there's so much isolation now. To get to the work, I need an extraordinary amount of time alone.

RS *That's surprising, because the work seems so communal – the performances, the collections.*

sc Yeah, it's true. And I even just brought an intern on. And I have another project called RUN Home, and that's my outlet for community. Anytime someone contacts me, that's how I work with them, through RUN Home. But it's true, my shows are performance-based and community-based. That's why I have to make sure I have enough time alone. To get into a meditation. My certain zone.

RS *Lilac is also collaborating on some of the work now.*

sc And it's a constant question: did I make the right choice to have a child? Should I bring her into this life? Because I'm obsessed with my work, and that's the world she's been placed into. And yeah, she ends up helping with a lot

of work. There are a lot of times when we are stuck in the house for endless days and nights, so whatever I make, she makes. I told her yesterday that I titled an edition she worked on as being created by both of us. And I told her she has to sign 100 editions. But she wouldn't do it.

RS *How has motherhood affected you as an artist?*

sc I don't meet many other artist parents. I feel very alone on this island. And it's busy. I have to make muffins today. And I decided to throw [Lilac] this surrealist birthday. It's so much work. I'm always asking myself whether I should have

things. Even the birthday party, I tried to do something normal, but we both ended up wanting to do this wild, surrealist thing at my friend's studio.

RS *I've read you talking about your poverty as an artist. Not eating for weeks at a time.*

sc We were poor. Oh, we were. And that must have really affected her. She's been my whole inspiration to have a good income. It was horrible. She was three, I think, when I finally took the job at Pratt [Institute]. Now I'm on a full-time tenure track.

RS *What do you teach?*

sc I was hired to teach the senior thesis collection, but I also teach an untraditional class I developed at Parsons [School of Design] about fashion drawing.

RS *The format of the DIY kit seems to connect with your teaching. Have the kits always been a part of your work?*

sc Always. And that's funny, because I've changed, but in some ways the work hasn't.

RS *Do you remember how the kits started?*

sc Those early RUN collections got more and more complicated, and the pieces started coming apart. I wanted the audience and customer to use their own creativity and intelligence to put it back together. That was fascinating to me. The early ones were the do-it-yourself skirt kits, and I made a film about them. Then the collections all became kits: 9, 10, 11. Then, in London, I started showing them as exhibitions.

RS *I've heard you say that these collections come from visions, or insights.*

sc I try to track myself back to my twenties, in my Canal Street studio, Chinatown. Back then, with all those people around me, those collections were based on visions, but it was different. Now the format is so much clearer. With meditation, it's not as if I press a button and it appears, but there are moments where *something* appears, you know? I don't know what it is, or how it works, but my teachers tell me that I work with spirits. So that's what I follow and, every day, what I pray for – that I can be that vehicle. I mean, it sounds so arrogant to me to put it into



brought her into this world. It's different, how we do things, and I hope that's okay. I did a RUN Restaurant piece for the Whitney Biennial with her, and she's coming to LA with me for my upcoming show at Overduin & Co. I try to separate, but it all gets mushed together. I wonder if she'd be better doing normal kid

Custom uniform worn by waiters for RUN Restaurant Untitled, 2017, an immersive event for the Whitney Biennial, Whitney, New York.

Photo: Paula Court. © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Bridget Donahue, New York



Items from *RUN Home*, seen in *"Though I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not Love, I have nothing" 'Corinthians'*, 2016 (installation view, 356 Mission Road, Los Angeles). Courtesy the artist



RUN PRAYER, RUN CAFÉ, RUN LIBRARY,
2017 (installation view). © the artist.
Courtesy the artist and Bridget Donahue, New York

physical words. Who am I to even know? But that's why I need more isolation when I'm making the work.

RS *Would you say you're more able to experience those insights now?*

SC Well, there's a show up now at Bard [Fashion Work, Fashion Workers, at the Hessel Museum] of my early work, and when I look at it, it still feels meaningful and intuitive and raw, so I can't say what I do now is better. I still wake up every day and don't know if the next day will come that I'll hear the answer. I go into these shows not knowing if it will even work out.

I really believe that if I don't hear the voice to tell me how to do it, I can't make the work. I can't install that show. Like, right now, I had to put a performance on hold because I haven't heard the voice. People keep asking and I don't know. I can't go forward.

RS *Is that frightening?*

SC Yeah. It's always been scary. Every time. I've learned to have a blind faith in the work. It's the only thing I live for. And that's the concern of bringing a child into it.

RS *Do you still go to an ashram?*

SC That was a place you could bring a child from the day they were born. With most yoga studios, you can't bring a crying baby. You can't even bring a ten-year-old. Yoga studios will tell you, don't ever come back with that child! [laughs] But at the ashram, they let her in. And I started doing kundalini yoga all the time, and it pushed my psyche, and it informed a lot of my work. But now I don't go to any classes. That's not what my meditation is these days.

RS *Do you see your work as sacred?*

SC Yes. Yes.

RS *Are you informed by looking at other historical, sacred work? Do you see your work in that tradition?*

SC It's a good question. I've been asking my teachers about this, because recently I've been seeing physical manifestations. It will be at the most random time and place. And so I draw those things. I think the work is just made for god.

RS *Everything?*

SC Yeah. One of my oldest and closest friends was born and grew up in Jamaica. I've visited her many times, and every time I go, I learn about more of the artists from there. For many of them, that was the sole purpose of their work. That was their only living purpose.

RS *Making art as a form of worship, ritual.*

SC That's how I think of the performances. I went to see the show of my older work at Bard and I heard a voice that said, *you have to*

sc It's all contained within each piece. But really, one show is one piece for me. That's how the fashion shows were. And the exhibitions are just a background for the performance. It's all based on visions. It's all one thing. But in those two-and-half years since I've submerged myself into the artworld, I've really had to learn how shows have to break down. How it sells. It's a business now. I mean, I was so freefloating for so long. I don't even do titles or anything. When you start breaking down each thing from a show, it's so tedious. Bridget [Donahue] usually just makes up the titles, the numbers.

That stuff doesn't interest me.

RS *How has the artworld treated you?*

SC I just try to not overthink it. I don't want to know what's going on. I can't get to shows. It makes me feel too uncomfortable to leave my child. It may seem, from the outside, like we're in the artworld, but we are so out of it. Every night, when there's something going on, we're just making the same cookies, over and over again. That's the truth.

RS *It seems like you used to be a pretty public personality, though, in your twenties.*

SC When I was married to Aaron Rose [gallerist, filmmaker], that was somewhat true. But really, I was always the person who said no and worked.

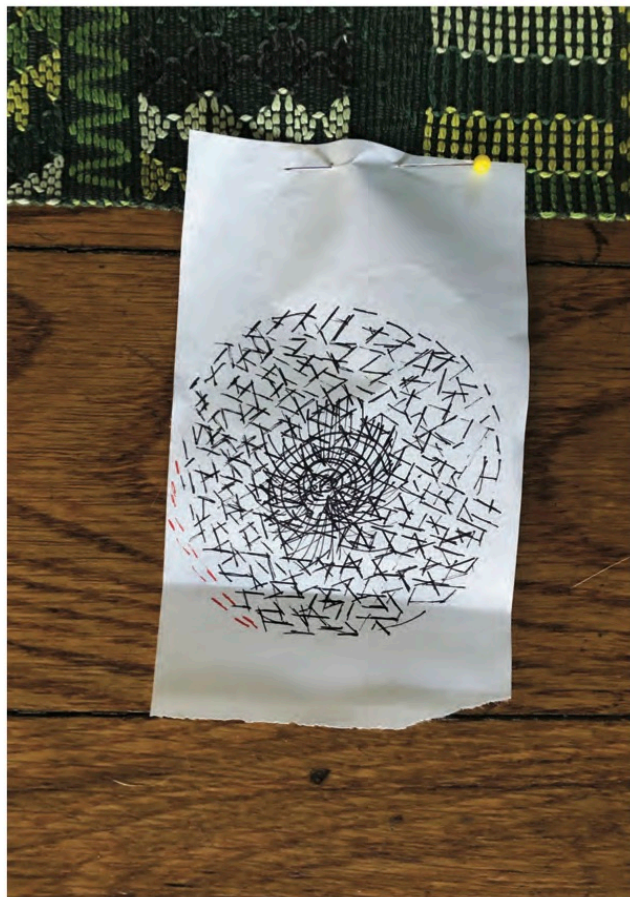
RS *In the future, do you think you'll be continuing the same path as an artist?*

SC No. The show I'm working on now [for Overduin & Co] feels new and different. It's wooden geometrical sculptures that came to me in a vision. There's furniture. There's a sound component of my [meditation] teacher, because I finally got

the courage to ask him if I could use his recordings. It feels like a breakthrough. But is that a cliché? That term? Maybe on the outside it looks the same, but I don't care what it looks like to anyone else. To me, it feels new.

Susan Cianciolo's RUN 12: God is a Jacket is on view at Overduin & Co, Los Angeles, through 23 June

Ross Simonini is an artist and writer living in New York and California



do a performance. But I didn't know how, or what. I had to start studying my old performances to understand. But I know it will be a ritual, a celebration.

RS *Do you think a viewer has to experience the film, the clothing, the collage – all of it – to know the full experience? Or is your whole project contained within each object?*

'I think the work is just made for god':
A drawing of physical manifestations seen by the artist

Alina Cohen, “Susan Cianciolo”, *Art in America*, December 4, 2017 <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/susan-cianciolo/>.

Art in America

REVIEWS Dec 4, 2017

SUSAN CIANCIOLO

NEW YORK

at Bridget Donahue

by Alina Cohen



While children's naive, unfettered marks have long inspired artists seeking to unlock subconscious potential, Susan Cianciolo's recent exhibition at Bridget Donahue featured actual childhood production: the artist's nine-year-old daughter, Lilac, served as collaborator. Glitter glue, cheery kid's handwriting, and handprints on fabric lent an innocent charm to the show, which celebrated creativity in its most unrefined, indeterminate forms.

Three timber structures extended across the gallery, representing a prayer space, a café, and a library. The contents of the prayer space, displayed under wood beams installed in a kind of steeple formation, seemed to promote a hodge-podge new age spirituality rather than an established religion, their aesthetic catholic in the lowercase sense. At the back of this space, below windows overlooking the Bowery, sat a group of plants potted in vessels of varying sizes and hues. A collage taped to the floor featured, among other items, fabric scraps, a square of colorful tongue depressors glued together, and a white Styrofoam tray decorated with multicolored sequins. Along the sides, cardboard boxes contained painted rocks, wood totems, clay

sculptures, and a variety of small, alluring objects. Altogether, the assortment created a playful and inviting atmosphere.

At the café, visitors could sit on white plastic stools at a pleasantly cluttered table. If you rang a bell, a gallery assistant brought a small snack—on the Sunday I went, it was tea in a tiny Dixie cup and a piece of an apricot pastry. The experience was lovely, but having gone to the show alone, I felt I'd missed out. If Cianciolo's spaces invited reflection, they also seemed designed for communion and exchange.

Relics from the artist's life added a strong biographical component to the show. Between 1995 and 2001, the Rhode Island-born, New York-based Cianciolo designed eleven collections for her clothing line, Run. Her recent projects suggest that her art is a natural outgrowth of the brand. During this year's Whitney Biennial, she staged *Run Restaurant Untitled*—a pop-up dining experience (food, drink, music, and performance)—in the museum's eatery. The exhibition at Bridget Donahue was named "Run Prayer, Run Café, Run Library." Between the prayer room and café, a tapestry featuring her garment sketches hung on a wall, while a box in the library contained a book of her Run designs. Throughout the show, Cianciolo brought together fashion and art, performance and installation, past and present, building a creative utopia where visitors could eat, pray, read, and feel inspired enough to go on themselves to innovate, without fear of arbitrary boundaries—with the openness, indeed, of a child.

Cianciolo hinted at a New York of the past but wasn't precious or maudlin about it. Instead, she wove memories into her work less as a glorification of an era than as a backstory to the narrative she's now creating as an artist and mother. She welcomed viewers into meditative spaces that encouraged the enjoyment of the present, one mindful sip of tea or examination of a painted rock at a time. A piece of paper attached to the wall near the door read, THANK YOU FOR COMING / FROM WORKERS in the child's handwriting. Two dashes and a curve formed a smiley face next to the words. It was a sweet final gesture that lingered with me as I headed back out to the busy Chinatown street.

Roberta Smith, “What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week: Susan Cianciolo”, *The New York Times*, November 14, 2017.

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By ROBERTA SMITH, MARTHA SCHWENDENER and WILL HEINRICH NOV. 14, 2017

Susan Cianciolo

Through Dec. 3. Bridget Donahue, 99 Bowery, second floor, Manhattan; 646-896-1368, bridgetdonahue.nyc.



An installation view of Susan Cianciolo's "Run Library" (2016-17). Credit Bridget Donahue

In a sumptuous airy exhibition titled “Run Prayer, Run Café, Run Library,” Susan Cianciolo’s already generous art has become more so, opening out and rising up to an inviting new vibrancy of the architectural kind. The artist’s signature accumulations of small found objects, collages and improvised artworks, previously presented in boxes meant to be sifted through, are now part of more outgoing displays placed in houselike frameworks dedicated to the activities of the show’s title. At “Run Café,” tapping a hotel-desk bell will bring you tea and something sweet to be consumed at a tiny table arrayed with a colorful cluster of small ceramic knickknacks. Tapestries hand-sewn from scraps of fabric cover the floors of these structures, where they sometimes join drawings by the artist’s daughter; other tapestries hang from the gallery’s walls, in one case incorporating sketches of garments for RUN, Ms. Cianciolo’s idiosyncratic fashion line. In a piece titled “Pray Circle,” another tapestry covers the floor while chairs, arranged in a ring, function primarily as pedestals for drawings and collages.

Ms. Cianciolo’s work owes much to Robert Rauschenberg’s already loosely structured combines of the 1950s, built from found objects and images. But Ms. Cianciolo daringly forgoes most traditional building. Hers is primarily an art of arrangement, exquisitely precise for all its seeming casualness, and rarely less than challenging to conventional taste. She proposes an art as social and shared as it is experiential and aesthetic, immersing us in the fleeting beauty of this bountiful intersection.

ROBERTA SMITH

“Susan Cianciolo”, *The New Yorker*, October 30, 2017.



THE NEW YORKER

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Susan Cianciolo

Once better known as a fashion designer famous for her grunge-era makeshift collections, Cianciolo now applies her exacting scavenger aesthetic to life-as-art environments and events. (During the recent Whitney Biennial, she took over the museum's restaurant for a three-day stint, dressing her waitstaff in patchwork couture.) She presents three “houses” here—a café, a library, and a prayer room—each mapped out by graceful wooden frames. At the opening, there were margaritas, quesadillas, and a women's meditation circle; the next day, visitors were sipping tea, eating homemade chocolates, and browsing the library. Furnished with doll-size tea sets, fabric collages, mismatched chairs, and children's art work, the semi-functional installation is an enchanting oasis, whose future programs include an afternoon fabric-painting and embroidery workshop (on Nov. 4; R.S.V.P. essential), and an evening talk about Hannah Höch's garden (on Nov. 16). *Through Dec. 3. (Donahue, 99 Bowery. 646-896-1368.)*

Jennifer Krasinski, “How Susan Cianciolo Spun Art Out of Fashion”, *The Village Voice*, October 17, 2017, <https://www.villagevoice.com/2017/10/17/how-susan-cianciolo-spun-art-out-of-fashion/>



How Susan Cianciolo Spun Art Out of Fashion

by JENNIFER KRASINSKI

OCTOBER 17, 2017



Before Susan Cianciolo began creating her noble, nuanced multimedia artworks, she was one of New York's most beloved avant-garde fashion designers. Having graduated from Parsons in 1992, she came up alongside fellow experimentalists like Bernadette Corporation and Miguel Adrover a few years later. She tried being the designer-businesswoman for a while — producing her Run line from 1995 to 2001 — but the role didn't suit her, didn't accommodate the freedoms her hand and mind required to create the sum total of her visions. Where fashion typically traffics in seduction, Cianciolo's clothes proffered enchantment instead, subtly spinning narrative threads regarding female bodies, the material world, and the conditions required for physical and metaphysical transformations.



“DIY” was the go-to description for her hands-on, collaged aesthetic, but that didn't accurately capture the precision, the canny intuition, with which her garments were conceived and constructed. She repurposed pieces found at thrift stores, cutting them up and incorporating them into her designs. She embellished her collections with embroidery, crochet, and other bits of craft. In her clothes, a body wasn't up for consumption or control; it was something to adorn, and thereby to contemplate. Cianciolo's was a humbler, more spiritual couture. Seams out, her garments appeared vulnerable, ethereal, even as they protected a wearer — not like armor, impenetrable, but like a medicine pouch: assembled, talismanic, healing.



From wearable to habitable, the Brooklyn-based Cianciolo continues to center her art around the body, and what and how it means to be present, to be a presence. For her current exhibition, RUN PRAYER, RUN CAFÉ, RUN LIBRARY, she has created four muscular installations possessed of her signature raw elegance: two designated for the soul's engagement and expression, one for nourishment, one for reading and study. Inside the gallery, the artist invites visitors to explore and use these spaces — entwining the natures of public and private — which offer in turn, and over time spent inside the work, reflections regarding how a self may be dispersed in the world.

The spaces of RUN PRAYER, RUN CAFÉ, and RUN LIBRARY (all 2016–2017) are each designated by light architectural structures, like drawings made in wood and metal, which frame and contain the assorted objects and ephemera they hold. Without walls, these rooms breathe, one flowing into the next, and Cianciolo has filled each of them with collections of things both found and made; here, a sense of placement is as strong as a sense of place. On the floor of RUN LIBRARY are boxes, some filled with papers, DVDs, magazines. In one: a cupping kit, for use in Chinese medicine; in others, Cianciolo has arranged homemade objects including Styrofoam peanuts painted periwinkle blue, tiny clay sculptures, and a small paper doll. A stool and a table stacked with books —among them, *Hysteric Glamour: Terry Richardson*, *Early American Design Motifs*, and *Direct Experience of I-AM APAROKṢHĀNUBHŪTI* — stand in the corner for those wanting to sit and browse.



Cianciolo has always included her personal effects in her work, and though her art also stands as a record of her life, it never dissolves into the confessional. What other artists would guard as archival matter, she uses as material: whether letters or magazine tear sheets, or drawings and other musings by her nine-year-old daughter, Lilac Sky, who is occasionally referred to as her collaborator. Books sometimes serve as filing cabinets of a kind. In one titled *History of Africa*, Cianciolo has stored stacks of paperwork: correspondences from a colleague (“I applied for an apartment down the street from here today. Fingers crossed, it would start in July”), as well as a pink piece of notepaper on which Lilac has written: “Malia is not nice to me she dos not like me for evin being kind to her.” Books, whether we ourselves author them are not, are records of memories — of thoughts and information — so why shouldn’t they hold their keeper’s memories too? (A thought: To connect more deeply to objects like this allows one to disconnect from crude materiality. Another thought: Open yourself up wide enough to your audience, no one can see you. At least, not really).



Ring the bell inside RUN CAFÉ, and treats will be brought to you. (On the day I visited, chocolate-dipped macaroons and cups of tea were offered.) For Cianciolo, an artist must also be of service to her audience; art, at least in part, is a production of gratitude. (Cianciolo has also organized free performances and events that will run throughout the exhibition.) RUN PRAYER and Prayer Circle sit at opposite ends of the gallery from each other, bookending the show with two spaces built for faith. On the floor of RUN PRAYER (as on the floors of all the installations), Cianciolo has placed a tapestry hand-stitched together from odd cuts of different fabrics. One can sit and read the two prayers she's provided or, of course, simply read one's own. Although roomy enough for more than one person at a time, the setup encourages a certain solitude. (Sitting in the middle, one is encircled by plants, and more of her magical objects).

Prayer Circle is otherwise set up as though around a campfire, a hodgepodge of chairs (folding, lawn, office) placed next to bundles of wood logs and kindling. Instead of fire and smoke at its center, strings of yarn decorated with drawings and notes ascend to the ceiling. On the seat of each chair, Cianciolo has left other ephemera: a page announcing grocery store specials; other works by Lilac. This is the only space one can't sit inside during the show — presumably because it's communal, to be shared, occupied, by a group together rather than just by oneself. Asking, receiving, gathering: these too are high art forms, inspired, inspiring, and — as practiced by Cianciolo — restorative of the knowledge that the Greater What and Who outside ourselves is, ironically, what most powerfully sustains us within.



Felix Burrichter, "At Home with Susan Cianciolo", *A Magazine Curated by Eckhaus Latta*, September 2017, #17, 158-167.

INTERIORS

AT HOME~WITH SuSAN CiaNCioLO!!

Interview by
Felix Burrichter

Photography by
MArk mahaney &
SuSAN CiaNCioLO



ARTIST SUSAN CIANCIOLO'S ADDRESS is on a quiet, tree-lined street in the Fort Greene part of Brooklyn, New York. There is a trendy coffee and bike-repair shop down the block, but for the most part the front-stoop-heavy neighbourhood feels refreshingly un-gentrified. Cianciolo only moved here recently, after abruptly vacating a more conventional artist studio in another part of Brooklyn. The 48-year-old artist shares the modest townhouse with her 9-year-old daughter, Lilac, who at the time of the interview is vacationing with her grandmother in Rhode Island. In her daughter's absence Cianciolo and her assistant have taken over the entire house, transforming it into a two-level art studio, laying objects and fabric on all floors, draped over furniture, hanging from the walls and from the small balcony overlooking the backyard. Even the kitchen table we sit at for the interview is covered in a fabric that will eventually be incorporated into one of her installations. Cianciolo, whose soft-spokenness belies an iron will, first came to prominence in the late 1990s as a part of a new wave of fashion luminaries who shook up the collections calendar with shows that were radically different from the overly commercial context of New York Fashion Week. Over the years, Cianciolo withdrew from fashion to focus on her art, only to reemerge a few years later with new collections. Since 2011, she's quit fashion altogether, not least because her art career keeps her busier than ever: following an exhibition at Bridget Donahue gallery in 2016 and her participation in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, Cianciolo is currently preparing two exhibitions which run successively this autumn in London and New York. Nevertheless, Cianciolo found the time – over green tea and with one eye firmly planted on her assistant – to sit down to talk about fashion, art, motherhood and the importance of her physical surroundings to her work.

FELIX BURRICHTER Don't take this the wrong way, but you're almost like a mythical figure for me.

SUSAN CIANCIOLO What? Because I've been around for so long?

BURRICHTER I remember you from when I was an intern for *Numéro* when it started, around 1999. I studied architecture and my thesis project was about building a fashion atelier. I was looking at people like you, Andre Walker, Sharon Wauchob and Lutz Huelle. There was this incredible energy. When I was finally in New York in 2001, I always wanted to go to your shows but never did.

CIANCIOLO It ended in 2001; I moved to London then. I moved back somewhere between 2002 or 2003, when it was more on an art basis. In NYC around 2006, I started making collections again and doing shows until 2011 or 2012. I've now stopped again – I'm sure I have. But I always say that. It just depends on my fulfilment. I'm so fulfilled now with my work, I don't have a need. There's usually this feeling of a certain expression in that medium, but I don't have that calling at the moment.

BURRICHTER Wasn't it about having no boundary between the two for you?

CIANCIOLO That is the myth. But there was for me – and there still is. Right now, I am making art. And recently a lot more pieces have been called in for shoots, but those were really made as costumes for my Whitney performance. It really depends who calls and asks: if it is someone who I like and respect, and if they are careful. That is crossing over, but it is between friends, and whatever they want to do with it is up to them. When it comes back to me it has a different role. It's not like I try and control the pieces; it's rather how I see the work for myself.

BURRICHTER A lot of artists have made clothes, especially these days, and think of Sonia Delaunay and even earlier. But why does one have to make a distinction, if it comes from the same mind?

CIANCIOLO To me, when you are having a fashion show, people are placing orders. That





is a certain way to go about it. There is a structure that I didn't mind to follow. I would be on the fashion calendar; it lets people know where you are.

BURRICHTER You once said that you used the fashion world to reach a bigger audience than art.

CIANCIOLO It is a bigger propaganda, a bigger broadcast system. But I feel right now, there are plenty of ways in this art and commerce setting to be broadcasted. Right now, I am on this big learning curve, working out how that business works efficiently; it's more complex and wild than I ever imagined. It's fast-paced, really competitive, demanding; I like the challenge. It feels new. In some ways, I wonder if this is a bigger broadcast or is it really this tiny microcosm of the world that just seems big within the art world?

BURRICHTER But the art world itself has gotten so much bigger, for better or worse. It is synonymous with the market now. So for better or worse, you can get more attention. I'm curious: As you have had a long career, how have the different spaces you've worked in affected your work?

CIANCIOLO Space affects my work a lot. I had this feeling that I just had to leave my old studio in Bedstuy (Brooklyn, New York,) no matter what, as it was no longer serving the work. But I didn't have a studio to go to. I had so many people come and I gave as much away as possible and then we packed as much as we could in my car and then I just said to Bridget (Donahue) that I would have a mobile studio and go on road trips. At that moment, I was working on this whole series of Fluxus 'kits', and I needed a space to layout and really see them. Bedstuy was this rundown old industrial space with no heat in the winter and so dirty. No bathroom, really. But all of a sudden, it started to catch on and there were hundreds of artists in the building; they were renovating it; the rent was going up. I felt so bombarded by seeing artists all the time. Then it really hit me when I was asked to do the show at the Whitney, which was top secret. I knew I couldn't do that show in that space. I was re-creating *RUN Restaurant*, so I had to have a clean kitchen and a floor. I thought to get a studio out of the city because there's a certain feeling I need, but I didn't have a plan. So I left. It was insane because I had that show and others, but I'm very stubborn. There's a calling, and I have to follow it. I decided I'd look out of the city, but as I said that there was a sign across the street from this building that read 'FOR RENT'. I couldn't read far enough, so an intern gave me the number, and I called and signed that day. It was what my daughter, (Lilac), and I drew as our dream home: two floors and some kind of little garden area. I didn't think we'd find something in Brooklyn that could just be my home studio. It was like magic.

BURRICHTER Wow. This was the dream set-up. Can you explain this?

CIANCIOLO We thought this was out of the city, so that may still come at a different time. There are a few future projects I'm writing that have more to do with land, but I think I have to just wait longer. It was more having to do with how (Lilac) saw it: a home is one floor, there are different floors and an outside space. So our home and studio could be together, because she helps me so much.

BURRICHTER How does this space affect the work? It's very residential. How would you describe it?

CIANCIOLO I'm so single-minded that all I cared about was that I had a year to make the Whitney Biennial *RUN Restaurant*. I just knew I needed something for that. That was the most important thing in my head. After that I had a Paris show, a show in LA and a show in Japan. I had written the manifesto before the Whitney had asked me to do it, so I'd planned this version of *RUN Restaurant* three times in a row. For that I needed a kitchen and the feeling of home because, you know, I'm working around the clock for days and days not sleeping, not leaving. I have to make sure the work has this sort of energy to it - it can't just be an artist making work. I wanted an industrial feeling for the kits, so Bedstuy was perfect. It comes from the spaces you're working in. There were a lot of artists there, and I like to be completely isolated all the time. I don't have very many studio visits.





INTERIOR



BURRICHTER We used to have an office where there were so many creative types, art directors and people like that in the building. I remember thinking: 'Ahh! This is suffocating me.'

CIANCIOLO I know. In some sense, it's community. But in another sense, it's just nice to be on your own.

BURRICHTER Yes. You don't want the noise – even if it's not actual noise. I wonder if there is a spatial analogy between the production of a garment and when you stopped making collections in 2011, and how space might have affected that?

CIANCIOLO Where was I working then? I was working on Essex Street. I was working on a documentary, and I served tea and food to all the people I interviewed; so again, I needed a certain setting for that. It's weird. I loved that building and the

things my studio produced. I started these large tapestries there (*gesturing to a pile of tapestries*); they're all folded because they're going to London in that paper. I've worked on them for years, some ten and twenty years. I kept them up on that big studio wall. They were first shown on a big studio wall in Japan. So now, I've circled around back to them.

BURRICHTER What's the process for those?

CIANCIOLO I mean, there isn't any. They're all very different. (*Pointing around the room.*) This one is hand-dyed with turmeric. It's this combination; there's no format. This is the first I'm mixing textile and paper. These are for a show at Bridget Donahue's gallery. They'll be in these giant houses you go inside. They're going to be life-size 'kits' where you will have a performative and interactive experience. There will be a restaurant inside one, a café inside one, a library inside one, a store, a church and a prayer room. I'm drawing out the floorplans right now. We're back and forth everyday figuring things out. Bridget is helping me determine the best materials and what we can source in London. It's a big group effort between Stuart Shave Modern Art, Bridget Donahue and I: how do we make these? The best builder here, the best builder there, and working with me in my style, which is very 'freestyle'. No building experience. Everyone is so supportive, patient and that makes me feel really thankful that there's so much care.

BURRICHTER When you build an actual space, so much of what you build is based on a special memory – even from the way you perceive space when you were little. I was wondering if that was something you were aware of while preparing this. It's interesting how you're blowing up these small models and turning them into real life. Not that I want to compare your work to a dollhouse, but...

CIANCIOLO That could be a good thing.

BURRICHTER You've worked on dolls.

CIANCIOLO Those kinds of things, the dollhouse (here) was made by hand for me: every quilt, piece of furniture, doll and shingle was cut with an X-Acto blade. That's how I was brought up. You know the little kitchen kids play with? Mine was made completely by hand because I think my family couldn't afford to buy me a fancy one. I think about that now. I want my daughter to be able to have all these things: toys or whatever it is. But I look back and think how nice that was; they'd secretly make all these for me in the basement. You bring this up – it had never occurred to me my daughter Lilac plays with that doll house at my grandmother's. I look in there and am blown away by the insanity of detail; that's what I got to play with every day. Obviously, that was an influence on me. It was studied and it's fascinating. But when you're young, you're kind of embarrassed. I lived with my great-grandmother, grandparents, mother – it was



INTERIORS



different. Right in Cranston, inner city outside of Providence, (Rhode Island). A lot of Italian-American influence. I'm sure that was so influential. All the doll making.

BURRICHTER That's incredible. When did you first start making those dolls? I know that you made some for Bjarne Melgaard, no?

CIANCIOLO Those dolls he bought from me were for a performance piece in Paris in 1996 or 1997 of five life-sized dolls that I made by hand and five models/non-models. I dressed all the dolls and the women the same. I said, 'You have to lay on the floor for two hours and not move.' When you looked in, you couldn't tell who was a doll and who was real. And then I made a silent film of women sleeping in abandoned buildings and parks; Anette Aurell shot it. I asked five people to make soundtracks with the spoken word. You'd go in and put on a Walkman - it was a cassette - press play and either watch the silent film or the silent performance. That was RUN 5 Collection called 'Sleepers'. There were these latex, leather and tulle slippers that were made by a friend by hand. I saved those dolls in an archive; I sold one with the clothes, and then Bjarne contacted me saying he'd like to collaborate. Finally, he came over one day and we talked for hours. Finally he said, 'I've got it! I'm going to do a fashion show, and the models will carry your dolls down the runway. Could I buy what you have and commission some more?' We copied the pattern of the original doll and some have original archive clothes. They're all gone now. I didn't even know what he used them for until I saw some show he did in Paris. I ended up making a couple more because I realised I wanted to recreate the slippers from them for the opening performance for Yale Union in Portland, (Oregon).

BURRICHTER I wanted to talk to you about the idea of healing. You used healing in the context of your *YaloRUN* project in Mississippi. It was really fascinating because, first of all, you said had it been a project in the south of France, it would have been less exotic than Mississippi.

CIANCIOLO That's what I realised. I started going there for a few years and opened up this 'workshop-storefront-quilting-space', and I invested. I borrowed, invested and lost tons of money that I'm still trying to recover, because I just went so gung-ho. It was my life. I felt like I should live there part time. I brought a teacher down there for one summer; this really beautiful kundalini teacher. I decided to make a film,



and she was in it. There was maybe that aspect of healing references, but now I've completely stepped away from the project and want nothing to do with it. I jumped in so deep, and now it's running on its own. I'm onto the next thing. With everything, I take chances, physically, mentally and financially. You never know where it takes you, and I guess that's a part of it.

BURRICHTER So how important is the aspect of healing in your work. Is it there?

CIANCIOLO That's a very private thing for me that no one has ever asked me about. But it's probably the very basis of my whole life existence. It's not something I advertise. I've studied healing for 14 years. It's the biggest part of my life, but I don't want anyone to ever know about it because, what's interesting, is that I've been in some meetings recently where people will really say, 'Oh, we're opening up this space. It's all about reiki-infused this and blah blah blah that.' You know, this is all infused with whatever, but I'm not trying to be that poster child. I'm never going to use that as my gimmick. It's my way of life, but I would never

flaunt that as an advertisement. It's there, and I suppose the work is open for its own interpretation. If you ask me about it, I'll tell you. It's all there to see. But I'm not trying to push anything. There's so many forms of healing.

BURRICHTER I was interested in how the making the work is perhaps the act of healing itself.

CIANCIOLO It's healing for me. I know I don't have a calling to be a yoga or a meditation teacher, even though I spend most of my free time meditating, doing yoga





or learning about healing; I know that's not my path as my profession. There's nothing else. This is what I'm supposed to do. I've spent my whole life questioning why I couldn't do that other thing that would maybe have some better purpose. But through all those other interests and dedications, I've realised this practice is what I find a sense of peace with - and I can't do it without all of those other aspects. When those feelings come in of what I should do next for the work, it is from more of a meditative state, when I'm in the clear. I've come to find that. Those still came into me when I was younger, but you can't really compare.

BURRICHTER Looking around, you could say this house is an unconventional set-up. You could say it's cute and very domestic, that there's a set-up but not a conventional one. The furnishing has a very high level of consideration. How did you perceive this space when you walked in and said, 'This is meant to be this!'

CIANCIOLO You're seeing it when there's a lot of work. All of this is usually put away or somewhere. It's just as simple as possible, generally, as empty as it can possibly be. I like to acquire as little as possible, which is hard in this world we live in. I don't like furniture. If it were just me alone, there'd be much less even. I like to feel the space on its own. I'm collecting chairs all the time for these chair-circle-sculpture-pieces; for a long time, it was just the centre-chair-circle alone in here, until it went to LA. I need the space for now, in this function. All the six houses are in this house right now set-up. That's why I think it's the space in my head too.

BURRICHTER So it really is a reflection of whatever the space you're mentally in leading up to a project.

CIANCIOLO Yeah, and before the Whitney it was all that show in here, in every room. It really is a studio.

BURRICHTER Would you always call it your studio before your home?

CIANCIOLO I pretty much call it my studio, unless depending on who would be coming over - depending on their relationship - to me it would be more my home.

BURRICHTER You can have a complete psychological switch in the exact same space. You feel your home is no longer home but a public space where you're entertaining, and you can switch again when you're very private.

CIANCIOLO Really true. Wow.

BURRICHTER Your daughter's nine and is away now. You use the space as an extension of the studio, but how is it when she's here? You said you work together?

CIANCIOLO Well, not really work together. I'll ask her, and sometimes she'll be into it, sometimes not. She just sits from morning to night and makes things. Then she'll say to me, 'Okay, this stuff you can use, and this stuff you can't.' It's this constant conversation. I'll say, 'I'm working on this tapestry, can you help?' Sometimes she's just involved and really into it. I mean, her choice is to just sit and watch 30 kids' TV shows a day and make thousands of little things. Because tv's not that great for her, we'll argue about that for a while; sometimes it's mayhem, and other times it's okay. She helped me for a year of prepping the menu for the Whitney. People tell me I ask her opinion too much, but she's most of the time the only one I have to talk to! She's just with me. She would write out menus that would have Nutella in it, so then we'd go back and forth. There were about 45 tables at the show, and every table had things that we made - the majority she made. I don't really know how she feels about it in the end.

BURRICHTER She'll probably hate you for it when she's 16, and then she'll love you for it when she's 26.

CIANCIOLO I don't know if that'll be her - that's kind of the obvious way. With her, I imagine it'll be totally different. Who knows! She'll surprise me on purpose, in some weird format.



Photography (inset) by **MARK MAHANEY**, unless otherwise noted.

Photo assistance **ANDREW MUSSON**

Photography (backgrounds) and inset portraits by **SUSAN CIANCIOLO** featuring
Torey Thornton (pages 159 & 165), Tommy Malekoff & Frankie Rayder (page 163),
and Bunny Lampert (page 167).

Kat Herriman, "Dream Catcher", *Cultured Magazine*, photographs by Mary Manning, September 2017.

CULTURED

DREAM CATCHER

ART | SEP 2017 | BY KAT HERRIMAN



Photography by Mary Manning; clothing and styling by Susan Cianciolo.

If you start in Manhattan and follow the Hudson River north, you will eventually hit Ossining, New York. It is one of those edenic hollows that feels light-years from the city even though it's only 90 miles away. Here, on the boundary between the manufactured and the wild, is where I meet artist Susan Cianciolo one muggy August morning.

"We found something on the way," says Cianciolo, pulling a net of logs out of her trunk like a magician with a rabbit. Artist Bunny Lampert modeled the impromptu purse in the parking lot. "We bought them at the gas station," she says striking a pose. Lampert had driven up with Cianciolo. I had carpooled with photographer Mary Manning and painter Monique Mouton.

It is a small crew. This is how Cianciolo prefers it. When producing films and photoshoots, she is a one woman show. Cianciolo plays creative director, stylist and makeup artist. Her one condition is that everyone else on set must be actively involved in each shot. "Small groups allow more room for error," Cianciolo says, when asked her preference. "Subjects are able to be themselves with less of a crowd. There is time to reflect and use instinct and be quiet."



The entire day has a ceremonial quality to it. The setting and the garments that Cianciolo had selected, for example, were inspired by a final wedding scene she never shot for her 2016 film, *When I Saw Your First Eye I Love You*.

We begin our ritual by setting up camp, unboxing tomatoes, plums and cake while Cianciolo pulled clothes out of her Mary Poppins bag. Some of the aprons, belts and shirts had been worn by waiters during the 2017 Whitney Biennial. At the event, Cianciolo had restaged Run Restaurant, her 2001 pop-up diner, with the help of Untitled, the museum's in-situ restaurant.

"They left all sorts of things in the pockets: pencils, credit cards, lip gloss," Cianciolo laughs, unfolding a blue work shirt with postcards pinned to its pockets. These are the kind of axiomatic details that thrust her designs into the avant-garde.

Originally trained as a fashion designer at Parsons School of Design, Cianciolo uses the formal qualities of garment-making to investigate more abstract ideas surrounding the body, memory and value. Cianciolo originally presented her work as Run, a label she started in 1995. Run was an exhibition model that enabled Cianciolo to not only explore sculpture, but drawing, performance, film and photography too.

A pioneer of the non-traditional runway show, Cianciolo debuted her collections in social spaces, namely restaurants and galleries. Her practice evolved in 2001 when she abandoned the fashion schedule in favor of an independent studio.



Lampert tries Monique Mouton's gluten-free fig birthday cake, which she made for her partner, Mary Manning.

Run Restaurant served as a kind of transition piece, a space where her interests—cooking, fashion, sculpture and community—could collide. These days you are most likely to find Cianciolo's work in a gallery or museum. Her garments are no longer presented on catwalks but as kits, an assemblage method, she pioneered at her last official collection, Run 11. At her 2015 Bridget Donahue solo show, visitors were invited to carefully explore each of Cianciolo's "kits." Each box contained different items, from handmade clothing and sculptures to personal photographs and found ephemera. After a celebrated run in New York, her kits traveled to 365 Mission for more viewers to unpack.

While her work often involves handwork, Cianciolo does not see herself as attached to craft. It is a material proclivity she sees more of as fate than choice. "It has been a way of life that chose me," she says.

When donning her clothing one is enchanted by the details, the delicacy, the softness, but it is not the individual elements that transform the garment into a second skin, it is their sum. One can incorporate the piece into themselves or it can stand on its own like a portrait or a ghost. Each garment is artwork that is able to mimic our own paradoxical capacity for both independence and dependence.



“I want people to be comfortable when wearing my clothes,” says Cianciolo, as she helps Mouton into a skirt with a tourist scarf reading “I love New York” patched into its side. The scarf was a donation from a friend. The artist often reappropriates her friends cast offs, as well as her own.

Cianciolo does not obey the production schedule or methods of the fashion world, yet her work retains some of its primal and fantastical essence. Her garments are not made for cold-faced editorials but for storytelling. Each conscious and unconscious detail is another portal, another chapter that fleshes out her world. When unarchiving a kit or watching a film, one feels like they are decoding, unraveling a myth that is equal parts fact and fiction.

This magical quality enters the work at its conception. While watching Cianciolo direct, I’m mesmerized by the way she choreographs serendipity. She dressed us, arranged us into primary scenarios and then lets fate take control. She doesn’t crouch over Manning but instead stands at a distance, as if observing some greater pattern in our movements. It’s a constellation I cannot not see. . . it feels as though she composes each new scene.

“It is interesting to have a dream idea of a very specific place and concept and then the time you want to created it passes and it still happens at another time,” Cianciolo says, reflecting on our day in the sun. “It showed me that linear time doesn’t exist, although I always knew that. I needed to be reminded that some ideas come much sooner than when they shall exist on the physical plane.”



Colleen Kelsey, "Artists at Work: Susan Cianciolo", *Interview Magazine*, August 2, 2017 <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/susan-cianciolo/#>

Interview

ART

ARTISTS AT WORK: SUSAN CIANCIOLO

By COLLEEN KELSEY
Photography TESS MAYER

Published 08/02/17

SUSAN CIANCIOLO IN BROOKLYN, JULY 2017. PHOTOS: TESS MAYER.



This summer, during group shows and ahead of fall exhibition openings, we're visiting New York-based artists in their studios.

Two years ago, Susan Cianciolo debuted her first solo show with Bridget Donahue gallery, a series of Fluxus-inspired "kits" titled, "If God COMES to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)" and was included in MoMA PS1's quinquennial litmus test of the New York art world, "Greater New York." It was, in a way, a return for the artist and avant-garde fashion designer.

Cianciolo, who grew up in Rhode Island and attended Parsons in the early '90s before working as an illustrator for Geoffrey Beene and joining Kim Gordon's streetwear line X-Girl, has always been a unique link between the worlds of art and fashion. She employs an interdisciplinary methodology in a variety of media—making films, considering food, crafting tapestries, and creating books; a variety of her designs are part of the collection at the Museum

of FIT. She showed the inaugural collection of her 11-season RUN label in 1995 at Andrea Rosen Gallery, then on Prince Street, with many of the clothes created in sewing and knitting circles she hosted out of her downtown apartment. RUN Restaurant, in its first incarnation, debuted in 2001 at Alleged Gallery on a stretch of Washington Street in the yet-to-be-gentrified Meatpacking District, and turned the act of eating into an art event. Cianciolo designed the uniforms, arranged the tables, and manned the kitchen, offering a \$10 prix fixe Japanese meal.

Lately, Cianciolo has modeled for young upstarts with a conceptual bent, such as Eckhaus Latta and Maryam Nassir Zadeh, and this past spring, she revived RUN Restaurant, this time in a much grander space—Untitled, the restaurant at the Whitney, as part of the museum's Biennial programming. In September, she will unveil two concurrent solo exhibitions, the first, "RUN church, RUN Restaurant, RUN Store," at Stuart Shave/Modern Art in London, and the second, "Susan Cianciolo: RUN PRAYER, RUN CAFÉ, RUN LIBRARY," back at Bridget Donahue in New York.

Interview recently met with Cianciolo at her Fort Greene home for a studio visit, conducted over spiced tea and honey made by bees living on the roof of the Whitney Museum.

COLLEEN KELSEY: How are you developing these two shows? Do you feel that they are an outgrowth of the RUN Restaurant Untitled series at the Whitney Biennial?

SUSAN CIANCIOLO: Exactly a year ago last July, I was at Stuart Shave/Modern Art for a few days to do a site visit to start to draw the floorplans for the show that I would have a year later. I gave a talk at the ICA and screened a film I had just finished. But while I was there, [Whitney Biennial curator] Mia Locks called me and said, "Would you be in the Whitney Biennial? [Co-curator] Christopher [Lew] and I would like to recreate RUN Restaurant." The first one was in 2001. Considering I had reinvented it through 2008 to 2010 as a mobile restaurant working with farms, she said, "We'd offer you an infrastructure, the Untitled restaurant, and you'd work with a very famous chef, Michael Anthony." It was so shocking and exciting, but I had also already planned that I was going to introduce RUN Restaurant through Stuart's gallery. I'm very stubborn when I make decisions about shows, and I'm very strict to stick with the plans. I knew in some ways it was perfect for my style that I would introduce this really grand RUN Restaurant, and I talked to Stuart about that, and then there would be this surrealist abstract version that I was already planning with him. My concept is, both shows are actually one show, and I'm cutting it down the middle. So Bridget has a version of that too. It's this communication I play with within the shows, within pieces that repeat in different forms, and especially working with bodies in time, so how one speaks to the other. All of this may be one show in a sense. Locations are more objects for me. So it was perfect timing.

KELSEY: How do these two locations work together for what you are going to be showing?

CIANCIOLO: I was happy they were both open to the idea that I would build six life-size houses and they each get three of the houses. But really, those six work together. Stuart gets RUN Church, RUN Store, and RUN Restaurant, then Bridget gets RUN Café, RUN Prayer, and RUN Library. As I've been developing them, it's all at exactly the same time. I want them to have exactly the same attention and intention. This is where I find I trust so much of fate, because we were going to open at Stuart's exactly when the Whitney opened and then Bridget's would follow. And then we moved it. But they committed to the concept, which furthered the excitement for me, the impact of parallel shows. Every day I'm in two places because I project energy into spaces and I'm visualizing, but it's a good challenge for me.

RUN Library, I've been working on that for a year. It's an all new series of handmade books that I've developed. And then I've pulled from my archives, from my own personal library, and that's taking me a lot of time. RUN Café and RUN Restaurant are formations from the Whitney, but pushing it to a more surrealist line of how you sit down and have something to eat and drink. So, you'll be in the performance if you decide to participate in that. RUN Store I've been developing all the pieces that are in that store for a long time. T-shirts, bodysuits, books. Whatever you would buy at a store. Abstract little sculpture items, shoes.

KELSEY: At what stage are you at of finalizing your vision for the concurrent shows?

CIANCIOLO: I'm in the place where in some sense I know the work is done, but then in the other side of my brain, it's never done. So it's a constant, "Well, should I never leave the studio?" But the biggest approach to my work is really in the installation. The making is 50 percent and then the install is where things really come alive. No one could install it. It has to be me. It's this very interesting time, you know? But then in these last weeks, so much comes in that changes everything. I don't know what that will be.

KELSEY: I want to talk a little bit about RUN Church, and as you just mentioned RUN Prayer Room, or is it just Prayer?

CIANCIOLO: Well, my first floor plans, I looked back a year ago and it said "RUN Prayer Room" and "RUN Tea House," but I've decided it's going to be RUN Prayer and RUN Café. I'm trying to simplify.

KELSEY: There's this spiritual component to balance out a place of community, or nurturing, or nourishing. All of these arenas seem to be represented in each location you've created. How would you categorize the idea of community, or nourishing the self, in your practice?

CIANCIOLO: The last few shows, the titles have been direct quotes from gurus that I'm very inspired by, or coming from the Bible. One was from a guru that quoted the Bible. I don't do that on purpose, it was just something that came to me, because I have hundreds of titles I have been working with over the last year. When it comes, it comes. There is a church in one country and there is a prayer room in the other. It's my version of how I see those. The word "church" is obviously so controversial, and that's probably why it's important to me to use it. I mean, in all the work I do, I don't know how it will be looked at or judged. It's up to viewer to interpret. These little installations I'm doing outside are plants that I'm growing and tapestries; that's what will be inside these rooms. It's my definition of what that room is. Those are influenced from my 20 years of going to Japan, and all of the gardens. I would always ask, "Please explain Shintoism," and they would say, "Well, it's when the spirit of God is in trees and plants and flowers and nature." That was one that really stuck with me a lot. Sometimes, I make the work and then I don't fully understand it until maybe many years later. These pieces are like big repetitions and little bits of new parts are added. You know, RUN Store I created in 2001 and it was an installation for one day in New York in a storefront, and then one day in Paris at the Purple Institute.

KELSEY: Do you think much about what the visitor will take out of experiencing, let's say, a visit to RUN Church?

CIANCIOLO: I feel if I do think about that too much I'll destroy myself. I probably would just be frozen, because it takes so much inner determination to stay inside the work. As soon as I step out and think of what someone might think, or interpret, I will really fall so far off track.

KELSEY: We talk about these places, whether it's a restaurant or a church, as umbrella terms for where people come together.

CIANCIOLO: That's true. Being a child, I went to church so much. That built a basis for a kind of spirituality that now is very different to me. But it came from that. I can't erase that, but I filled that house with different beliefs or different objects or different feelings or understandings. With RUN Restaurant, food is so important to me, so I chose the word "restaurant" to represent it. These are places that involve people and community, but it may just be the personal aspect that is drawing me in, more with memories. The work is obviously based on community, because in some of the installations, performances, I need humans to make them exist. But I'm a little bit leery of this word "community." I'm not trying to be a promoter, like, "Community is so important." It's just the style of how I'm working. I work very much alone. Then there is a certain energy I'm looking for within how we pull it off together.

KELSEY: Will there be any performance components of the shows at Stuart's or Bridget's?

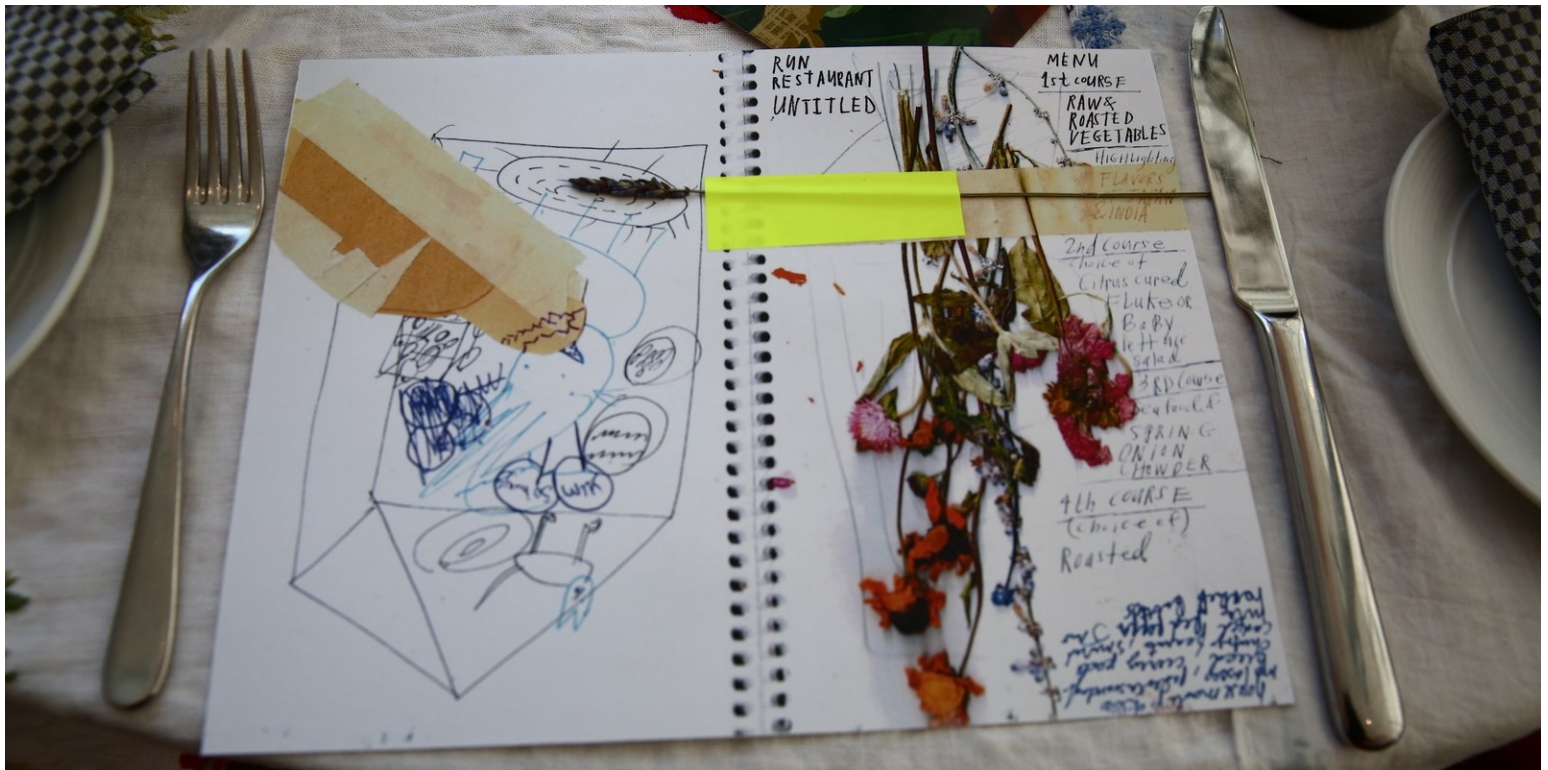
CIANCIOLO: Yeah, but it's very abstract. I'm always playing with this line of question, "What is performance?" It is just so subtle, and there's always a part where it's functional, the performance, and it's interactive, so that you coming to the show, you actually are a part of that performance. You can step as far away back as you want, or you can become very involved. These works' phenomenon will be performative throughout the entire show, and it's hard on the gallery and the staff because they have to commit, but at the actual opening for Bridget's, her and I have already sat down and planned the opening performance. New York is where I'm rooted so I tend to feel I'm able to push some boundaries there. With Stuart's there is this subtle performance. There are layers, and that's why this time it's not all just the physical work. It's also writing and understanding how that is going to be pulled off. Both shows are mirrors, but they will both have very different parts. That's what I like about the work: that you have to be there to experience it. If you miss it, you really miss it forever. I like that it's for this fleeting moment of time that's so precious. Even documentation can't capture it, you know?

"RUN CHURCH, RUN RESTAURANT, RUN STORE" OPENS AT STUART SHAVE/MODERN ART IN LONDON ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2017 AND RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 20, 2017. "SUSAN CIANCIOLO: RUN PRAYER, RUN CAFÉ, RUN LIBRARY" OPENS AT BRIDGET DONAHUE IN NEW YORK ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2017.

Stephanie Eckardt, "A Review of Susan Cianciolo's Restaurant at the Whitney Biennial", *W Magazine*, April 19, 2017, <http://www.wmagazine.com/story/susan-cianciolo-restaurant-run-whitney-biennial-2017>.

W

A Review of Susan Cianciolo's Restaurant at the Whitney Biennial



"I feel so turned on in New York City," a woman wearing a single blue glove and a single lid of blue eye shadow said to a crowd gathered at the restaurant attached to the Whitney Museum on Tuesday night. "Isn't life fecund?" she added, weaving her way between the tables, which had been set with everything from newspaper ad inserts and floral wrapping paper to baskets made of popsicle sticks and clumsily painted wooden blocks.

These were not the typical trappings of the museum's clean, modernist restaurant, *Untitled*, designed by Renzo Piano. The artist responsible for the eclectic redecorating, however, was keeping a low profile. Leaning against a wall, clutching a glass of water with both hands, the fashion designer-turned-artist Susan Cianciolo looked on approvingly at what was the unveiling of the three-night dinner series that marks her 2017 Whitney Biennial project, a full month after the show's other 62 artists have already showed theirs.

In a way, though, Cianciolo has been working on her installation even longer. Run Restaurant Untitled is actually a recreation of a monthlong pop-up eatery Cianciolo first staged 16 years ago, down the block from the Whitney in what was then a very different Meatpacking District.

The venue, Alleged Galleries, which was owned by Cianciolo's then-husband, was essentially a playground for downtown artists like Mark Gonzales and Mike Mills—or, in the words of the New York Times critic Holland Cotter at the time, “a tea shop, an ashram, a mall and a game of Playing House.” Run Restaurant, he continued, had “a faint air of a Krishna Consciousness love feast circa 1968”—a DIY vibe that's carried over to the present-day. The servers' uniforms are hand-stitched, and draw on Cianciolo's long history with patchwork; mobiles hanging from the ceiling are produced by Cianciolo in partnership with a younger artist: her eight-year-old daughter, Lilac.



Cianciolo, in the kitchen of her pop-up Run Restaurant, 2001. Ivory Serra, courtesy of the artist and Bridget Donahue NYC.

The \$10 prix-fixe vegetarian menu of yore, on the other hand, has not aged so well. It's been replaced by a five-course collaboration between Cianciolo and Untitled's two-star executive chef, Michael Anthony, with dishes like seafood chowder and grilled arctic char. They come with a \$125 price tag, with an additional \$50 for wine pairings. (There are also some \$25 tickets for students available, though judging by the crowd of Cianciolo's longtime friends on the opening night, not many took advantage.)

The exception, though, was a 12-year-old named Fox, who takes classes like hip-hop dancing and African drumming at his arts school in Portland, a city that he eagerly informed his tablemates is quickly changing. “Traffic is getting super crazy,” he leaned over and said to three members of the Whitney family, a New Museum curator, and his dad, a cofounder of Yale Union, the Portland contemporary art space where the evening's resident poet, Morgan Ritter, also works.

Meanwhile, Flora Miller Biddle, the museum's former president and granddaughter of its founder, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, asked the table at large if kombucha, which she'd just tried for the first time at dinner, had alcohol.



Morgan Ritter as part of Susan Cianciolo's, *Run Restaurant Untitled*, 2017, Whitney Biennial 2017. © Paula Court

Her daughter Fiona, on the other hand, advised her niece, another Flora, on her upcoming trip to Cambodia. There was plenty of dead air, after all, with the promised interactive art show not so interactive after all.

"Are we the performance?" Fiona asked a few courses in, to laughter.

She was not the only one wondering. Diners picked hesitantly at the first course of raw and roasted vegetables and a miniature Japanese omelet, feeling that they might clink their forks during Ritter's wandering performance—a confusion both artists had anticipated and that will no doubt present itself again the next two nights, which will feature additional performances by 9 Bridges, a group Cianciolo discovered on the subway with her daughter, and Captain Kirk Douglas, the guitarist for the Roots.

"I like that it's a question mark of what will happen," said Ritter, who bonded with Cianciolo after a cabin stay and a few trips to the sauna following Cianciolo's "miniretrospective" at Yale Union last year. She certainly kept the diners guessing—as it turned out, the formal performance had indeed concluded. The guests did not entirely seem to mind. Flora Miller Biddle, it seemed, may have been right. Even when she'd already put her coat on and picked up her cane, Flora, who's in her late eighties, was persuaded to stick around thanks to a new conversation topic. It seemed Cianciolo's attempt to install a communal vibe was indeed coming through, though it may have also been the promise of dessert.

At that point, Cianciolo herself was nowhere to be found. "Her daughter has school in the morning," Fox, the 12-year-old, explained at an hour likely past his own bedtime. By way of explanation, he added, "We're friends."

Alix Browne, “With the 2017 Whitney Biennial, the Fashion Designer Susan Cianciolo is Turning Into an Art Star At Last”, *W Magazine*, March 13, 2017, <http://www.wmagazine.com/story/susan-cianciolo-artist-fashion-designer-profile-2017-whitney-biennial>.

W

who

Total Look

The fashion designer Susan Cianciolo is finally getting recognition as the artist her devoted fans knew her to be all along. Alix Browne reports.

In 1995, Susan Cianciolo made her debut as a fashion designer at Andrea Rosen Gallery, in New York. Two strips of red tape on the floor demarcated a runway, and the first model walked out flipping a switchblade. For the next several years, Cianciolo would continue to stage shows in sync with the New York Fashion Week calendar, but even when she was most in fashion, she was never really of it. In 1996, she showed in an abandoned garage, the makeshift runway cobbled together from shipping pallets she and a friend had fished from Dumpsters and covered with brown craft paper. Another show, in an empty storefront on lower Broadway, included spoken-word performances and programs hand-decorated by skate phenom and urban poet Mark Gonzales.

Cianciolo referred to her collections not by season and year but by the word *Run*, followed by a number. She offered up not only finished garments but also, every so often, a DIY kit that invited women to participate in the making of, say, a denim skirt. The kits were a natural extension of her practice—a way of widening the sewing and knitting circles that she regularly

assembled to help produce her collections, and which included her mother as well as like-minded friends such as the artist Rita Ackermann (and, on occasion, Rita's grandmother). “And, in between, I was doing exhibitions,” Cianciolo recalls one morning in December, as we sit in the sunny living area of the apartment she shares with her 8-year-old daughter, Lilac, in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. “I wasn't just having a normal fashion-designer life.” All around us is evidence of her prolific creative output, which spans films, performances, collages, mobiles, drawings, zines. For Cianciolo, it has always been all of a piece—but just try explaining that to the media. During the 1990s, she says, pretty much every interview she sat for opened with “So, are you an artist, or are you a fashion designer?” It was a question that always incited a sense of panic in Cianciolo—one she could not answer even for herself. “When I was still in my 20s, the New School invited me to give a lecture on being an anarchist,” she recalls, still visibly amused by the memory. “I said, ‘Are you sure? I feel like you have the wrong person.’”

Cianciolo, 47, was born in Providence, Rhode Island. Her parents divorced when she was young, and though she spent time with her father, who moved to Maine, she was raised by her mother, and her maternal grandparents and great-grandmother. The family did not have money (her mother worked for the prison system); Cianciolo says that her handmade clothes and hand-knit sweaters were a constant source of embarrassment. She was allowed to attend college only on the condition that she learn a trade; becoming an artist was out of the question. She was accepted into the fashion department at Parsons School of Design with a partial scholarship but says, “My professors all begged me to change my major to fine art.” She found work as a fashion illustrator for Geoffrey Beene and as an assistant designer at Badgley Mischka, and created window displays for Bergdorf Goodman. When she started *Run*, she was just three years out of school and working part time for X-Girl, the streetwear brand fronted by Kim Gordon and Daisy von Furth.



Susan Cianciolo, at home in Fort Greene, Brooklyn.

HAIR BY SHINED, SHIRT BY AMKA AT THE WALL GROUP, MAKEUP BY JENNYLIS, DIGITAL TECHNICIAN KELSY HALE, PHOTOGRAPHY ASSISTANT KOTI LUZARDER, FASHION ASSISTANT CHLOE HEYMANS, CIANCILO KEEPS CARDIGAN AND PANTS, SUSAN CIANCILO © OUTSTUT, MARIAN WASSER, ZACHARY ROUSE FOR STYLING, PIERCE, AND MORE, GO TO W.MAG.COM WHERE TO BUY APRIL 2017

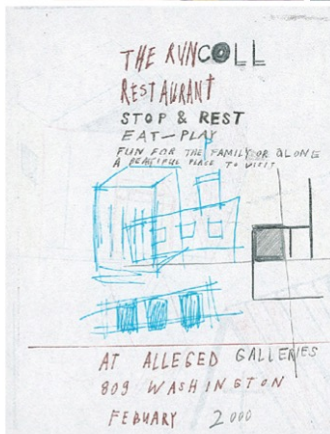
Clockwise, from top right: Cianciolo, in the kitchen of her pop-up Run Restaurant, 2001; the installation, at Alleged Gallery, in New York; Cianciolo's Run 4 presentation, in a storefront on lower Broadway, 1997; a flyer reproduced in *Run Restaurant Fanzine*, 1997; a flyer reproduced in *Run Restaurant Fanzine*; Alix Browne walking in Cianciolo's February 2009 show.

More than 20 years later, Cianciolo has, at last, come into her own as the artist she has always been. In 2015, she was included in "Greater New York," the high-profile survey of local talent at MoMA PS1, in Long Island City, Queens. That same year, her first solo show with Bridget Donahue gallery opened to critical acclaim and then traveled, in expanded form, to 356 S. Mission Rd., in Los Angeles, and on to Yale Union, in Portland, Oregon. This June, Cianciolo will inaugurate a new space for Stuart Shave Modern Art, in London, and will present a second solo show with Donahue in September. And just to seal the deal, she is one of 63 artists selected for this year's much-anticipated Whitney Biennial, the museum's first in its new building in downtown Manhattan.

Over three days and nights in April, Cianciolo will reprise Run Restaurant, a monthlong pop-up she first presented in 2001, at Alleged Gallery, a haven for misfit creatives like Gonzales, Barry McGee, and Mike Mills headed up by Cianciolo's then husband, Aaron Rose. At that time, Alleged had migrated from its original location on Manhattan's Lower East Side to Washington Street, in the yet-ungentrified Meatpacking District—and just across the way from the current Whitney Museum. Cianciolo transformed the narrow storefront into a Japanese luncheonette, offering a \$10 prix fixe vegetarian meal. Not only did she design the interior, dress the tables, and outfit the staff in her handmade garments, she also did most of the cooking. Items like T-shirts and DIY dress kits were displayed flea market-style and available for purchase (as were the clothes off the servers' backs). In his review in *The New York Times*, Holland Cotter described it as recalling "those edifying facilities proposed by the Russian Constructivist avant-garde, where peasant workers could eat and read Marx at the same time."

"That project was prescient," says Mia Locks, who, with Christopher Y. Lew, curated the biennial, referring to the sort of farm-to-table values that have long informed all aspects of Cianciolo's work. "And it held her work together in a performative way." This time around, Cianciolo will not be in the kitchen: She is collaborating on the menu with Michael Anthony, the executive chef at the museum's in-house restaurant, Untitled. But just as she did more than 15 years ago, she will transform the space with collages, mobiles, and table linens; she will costume the staff and curate a lineup of performers including a poet from Portland, Oregon, a pair of Afghan rappers, and a band that she and her daughter discovered in the subway.

After all those years of having to defend her place in the fashion world, Cianciolo isn't entirely sure how to process this moment of not just acceptance but true recognition from the art crowd. "Being in the art world is so different than I imagined," she says. "That's why I sort of flipped out: Oh, my gosh, I don't actually fit in now that I'm in it!" Almost counterintuitively, she recently gave up a big studio she was leasing in Bedford-Stuyvesant and is now working out of the small front room of her apartment, craving, she says, the feeling of domesticity that the restaurant project demands. Lilac, who has aspirations of becoming a chef, is more than happy to take part. And the feeling is mutual. Cianciolo observes that



a lot of artists she knows are able to shut out the world for months at a time and just get into a zone and work. Lilac has taught her it doesn't have to be that way. "All the work is coming from real life," Cianciolo notes. In the living room, three mobiles, destined for yet another exhibition, in Tokyo, dangle from the ceiling. One is anchored by a large triangle fabricated from Christmas wrapping paper. Another is dotted with Halloween stickers. "That's what happens when your crew is an 8-year-old girl and a cat," she says with a laugh.

There are a handful of people, like Cianciolo's close friend and former roommate the model Frankie Rayder, and the artist and filmmaker Liz Goldwyn, who are the de facto keepers of her fashion archive—a trove of beautiful, one-of-a-kind pieces that bear the fingerprints of the artist who made them. I have a long black satin hybrid dress-vest she gave me as a thank-you for walking in one of her shows—and I treasure it. Typically, for Cianciolo (and mercifully, for me), that show did not follow a traditional format. Women of different ages (at 39, I was definitely the oldest)

marked out an unchoreographed pattern, entering and exiting the room almost at random. On the floor was one of Cianciolo's patchwork tapestries.

On the day we meet, Cianciolo is finishing up some of the costumes for the Whitney project, and in the tiny kitchen, an assistant perched on a stool is sewing tags into silk-screened sweatshirts that will be sold as part of her Run Home Collection through Thompson Street Studio, an experimental textile collective with which she frequently collaborates. It's been some time since Cianciolo has produced anything you might call fashion: She has found kindred spirits in the designers Mike Eckhaus and Zoe Latta, and borrows things from them to wear to her openings; she also walks in their runway shows. But it is clear that making clothes will always be an essential part of what she does—and she no longer feels the need to apologize for it. "I've signed with two galleries, so I'm officially an artist. But this is who I am: I'm a textile designer; I'm a fashion designer; and I'm always going to be me—and I have to do a lot of things." ♦

Matthew Domescek, “A Portfolio and Conversation with Susan Cianciolo”, photographic portfolio by Lasse Kusk, *A Magazine Curated By*, February 9, 2017, No. 333, <http://www.amagazinecuratedby.com/news/portfolio-conversation-susan-cianciolo/>.

A MAGAZINE CURATED BY



A Magazine Curated By presents an exclusive zine by Susan Cianciolo, photographed by Lasse Kusk. The portfolio documents a recreation of Susan's performance from and contribution to the *New York New Work* show in Tokyo, February 5th & 6th, 2017. The HPGR Gallery show featured designers Barragan, Chrishabana, Eckhaus Latta, Heidi Lee, Homic, Luar Zepol, Nhu Duong, Petra Ptackovr, and artist Susan Cianciolo's interpretation of the theme 9/11.

The following conversation took place in New York on February 8th, 2017.

Tell us about *New York New Work*.

When I was first asked I declined because of the timing, as it is very close to the Whitney Biennial project, which is a very big investment of time and focus. I asked Kiva, who I make the *Home* collection with, “Why don’t you go and show our *Home* collection?” We went back and forth, but the theme was based on 9/11, which is my birthday and I was the only contributor who was actually there. Everyone else asked was much younger. There were key things I said to myself, thinking this is kind of perfect because I love to be put into situations where I don’t necessarily fit into the group. I love the obscurity of being in a group where maybe I am so opposite to the other designers, but then seeing this one assignment and how we could all interpret it. To put myself out of context was great for me and all the boundaries of asking myself: am I officially an artist now? But then I go to Tokyo and I’m in this designers’ show and I love that. I’ve been doing that a lot lately—putting myself in the context of again being a designer and seeing what happens to the work. Does it change? Is it the same? Do people react differently? Generally it’s my show, a solo piece or exhibition. I’m so obsessed with creating

the energy of the environment. I wanted that exercise; how would I still work with the energy in this room with all these other people whom I really grew to respect? It was so nice to travel with a crew of young designers.

Everyone deeply interpreted the theme in his or her own way. I was connected to 9/11 and 3/11. If you know my work, my answer to that piece was life and death, rebirth, resurrection, after life, past lives, the dream state, healing, and then I create the pieces a lot with my daughter. That's what I'm working with, so it's very easy for me to do a topic that's on death or all of these things that I'm talking about to myself. I just found the contrast fascinating.

Could you describe the performance at *New York New Work*.

It is a replica of a few performances. The original piece took place in 1997 in Paris at Purple Institute called *Sleepers*. Five life-sized dolls and five models. You couldn't tell who was real and who was not because they were sleeping on the hard cement floor for two hours. I made a silent film with Annette Aurell also called *Sleepers*. Recently in Portland, I recreated those dolls. They came back to life too because Bjarne Melgaard bought the originals and I made more for a piece he did in Paris. We figured out how to remake them and we kept going. I realised to recreate the whole *Sleepers* piece in Portland, but I added to the performance a dance set I made in Frankfurt, Germany at the Museum of Modern Art.

The show in Tokyo was a repeat of the original show in Paris, recreated in Portland, with a simultaneous mini-iteration at the Berlin Biennale because I love when things happen at the same time, to connect the energies. That is the piece I brought to Tokyo, but with two live girls, one doll, and a mix of original and new costumes. I included paper mobiles I've been making to hang in the restaurant for the Whitney show. It makes it more sensitive, beautiful, and I like that they are going some place. All these weird parts of different performances that will repeat or have repeated comes from fashion when I believed everything is season-less and nothing goes out of style. I felt if I always repeated patterns and styles it would prove this. Now I have clients who after twenty years tell me 'I'm still wearing the same skirt' and that I feel is my big accomplishment to myself. Fashion used to be truly season-to-season, but thankfully everything has changed. It used to be so rigid.

You are so disruptive of your own archive.

Yes! It all gets caught up and there may not be anything left, but things appear. People send me back pieces too. That's what I mean—everyone is involved. People that are collectors build archives for me of Comme des Garçons, Chanel, Yohji, Valentino... people trust me to cut things up. I cut up my own archives as well. I'm doing it to say I love these designers and it is actually out of respect. You love an object so much that you love it to death. A dress is always in question and a piece will be reconstructed over and over.

When I reached out to speak to you about *New York New Work* and Tokyo, this special zine developed. What brought this about?

I get inspired and happy when I see work that means something. It's not everyday, not at all. That's the same that goes with collaborators, photographers, so I have a lot of these special kinds of relations in Tokyo and that is why I get so wired and my heart is so open with excitement. So much love and emotion is how I feel when I am there. There I have a lot of relationships for twenty years and over those twenty years there are newer ones I've built.

It's a funny coincidence when you contacted me I was in the middle of all these collaboration tests. There are some newly graduated students, young textiles designers, and other young designers—sort of this core group that every time I'm in Japan we meet and they help me. This time we jumped into new ideas and spoke about a film. I was doing collaborations and tests with this photographer I met and I felt an interested fate of time.

How perfect.

The performance pieces are a moment in time and they only really live if they're documented in a documentation that's very official, more than me documenting it. That's what happened, we reenacted the performance for a whole day over, from morning till night. It was a three-day show so the second and third day I am there to meet the press and I was planning to keep it more of a still life, so it was a surprise third day of this performance piece that was recorded. It was not just a photographer recording the performance but a complete collaboration. Shesedo is such a great sponsor for me for these

twenty years and Friday night I worked with their makeup team but Sunday I did the makeup myself, which is what I have been practicing in Japan when I go there, creating makeup myself so that it is its own canvas.

There's something very special about Japan. I go there, I build new work, and then I come back here. It's always been that way for me. It's this portal I go into, traveling, but also this other studio and this other land in a way. I feel so lucky.

The zine acts as a recreation of the performance given for *New York New Work* but you actively don't document things unless the documentation approaches you.

I would have never documented it, but there were all the right moments. Meeting the photographer, you asking me at the right time, and then knowing that it has to be a full piece. I believe we are going to capture the energy on camera. It is very important to me— how I work with the photographers. My whole archives for twenty years are based on this archive of photographers who are the most extraordinary and gifted people that I could be so fortunate to work with. Again, I felt I was there at the right time in the right place. How lucky am I to work with Mark Borthwick, Marcelo Krasilcic, Chris Moor, Terry Richardson, there's giant names and everyone is so special. There's just so many.

My last two films I made with Harry Hughes. When we met, we said it at the same time, we believed we met each other to make these films. For a year we traveled and worked intensely on these two films and it was like we had been working together our whole lives. His whole life is younger than my whole life but he is such a gifted young filmmaker. His editing is so advanced that I don't even think he realises his gift. He did a lot of important documentation for the exhibits during that time. It's a sense of trust and everyone to me becomes family. We will do a body of work and remain in contact, communicating based on love and trust. Everyone uses "community," but I think family is more poignant.

I know you've worked with your model Chie in previous works, such as at Maryam Nassir Zadeh in 2015.

Yes and an important museum show I had at Mito Tower that Nakako Hayashi curated. She's been in a lot of things with me. I only work with people I feel intensely close with, people who I work with in the studio or performers who I work with for years and years. That's what makes it special.

Considering the context of this group show with fashion brands, how do you feel your work intersects with fashion now?

I hadn't been to Tokyo in five years and there are a lot of really strong supporters for me there that, from the beginning, have been fine with the fact that I am half an artist half a designer. So, it doesn't matter to them, if the work is in a giant gallery, museum, mall, or on the street. There's no judgment. The way we view buildings, museums, and galleries versus the way it is in Japan is another incredible example of perception. That trickles down to these questions of 'What is art?' and 'What is fashion?' Hence, there are designers like Rei Kawakubo because it is more naturally in their culture and their history. I feel like I learned from their history and me getting to go to Tokyo for the last twenty years, since I was twenty-six or twenty-seven when I went for my first exhibitions; obviously this had such an enormous effect. When I go there I feel okay, while in this side of the world there's more questions.

It's interesting that geography roots the answer to that intersection.

Every time I am in Japan I try to meet with the designer of *Written Afterwards*, Yoshikazu Yamagata. He is literally half art half fashion. He worked for Rei and now opened his own school. He's young, so incredible, and humble; the students who support me when I go to Tokyo are his. They'll come with me and it's a way I can be, in a very modern sense of teaching, more European. He started this very progressive school and we are always talking about how can we join more. It hit me that I am going to make a film with him. His work is outrageous; I don't feel it would happen here!

I had been on hold with my next film because I hadn't felt it yet, but when they come to me and I have to do them. I get the obsession and I just can't stop because it's a lot of work. This one will be shot half here half Tokyo.

My biggest projects are the Whitney Museum in April, the biennial opens in March but my special performance piece will be April. From there, I'll have solo shows in London and New York, both in September, at Bridget Donahue and at Stuart Shave Modern Art. I'll have that much time to work on the film, amongst other big installations.

You have a tenacity for constant production and constantly starting new projects.

Yes and it is never finished.

Do you look for anything particular in your collaborators?

No, I don't ever look for anything. When they appear, there is this feeling that is very powerful and I know I have to follow it, no matter what. I believe that we even wrote contracts with each other before we came here to make this certain body of work at a certain time. It is very much fate for me. I believe the work was already written; I'm not really doing it. It's the cliché philosophy that there's just a vehicle and it happens. It's out of my hands – I don't really feel it's me doing it at all. It's other people that I'm meant to meet at certain times and record this information, like alchemy or something more, from an older time.

There are spiritual elements to both your process and your work itself.

It's all spiritualist work. More than spiritual, I choose the word spiritualist because when I study musicians that are spiritualist there are a hundred different ways you can do that. There's gospel, Native American, or even some great rappers— it doesn't have to come in a specific package. I love all of it from every religion to every historical way of chanting or prayer. I feel through art it is the same. It's another medium and it can have the same ways to tap in.

How do you feel the vein of womanhood runs through your pieces and performances?

It's my quiet way of promoting women. I feel that a way I can talk about how much I want to support women is through those performances. It's all intended for beauty and love. However it looks on the outside, if there's judgment or question, I'm okay. In the simple aspect it is just fantasy. Creating fantasy and what I see as beauty as how you create. It's very childlike—creating worlds. Sometimes for me the simplicity says a lot for the subversive and subliminal messages. There are men in the films but it's very selected. It has to be someone so sensitive and there's a spark. Someone who inspires me so much; through their style, how they live their life, what makes them different, or to me what makes them beautiful. Everything, all the costumes, is drawn from the performers. You don't have to sing and dance, it can be a subtle movement or an exchange of words.

I know you are a professor at The Pratt Institute. Do you feel teaching interfaces with your own work?

It's a question I come upon for myself. As I go on, I look at how I am a professor. I always want my teaching to be based in a more European style that I learned in the great trips I've taken, teaching at DASS Art in Amsterdam and a school in Frankfurt called The Städelschule School, where I costumed a Portikus production of Hamlet that changed my life. There the way you are a professor is so different from here. I try to mix the American version of teaching with, for example in Tokyo where teachers and students hang out, having a coffee or a beer. It's mixing that with a little bit of the structure; it's all improvisation and whatever comes to me, what I feel the students need and who they are and those that want to jump out of the system to have fun become a whole other friendship and dynamic of collaboration. I always say they are my teachers too. I am in the system playing that game, which was hard at first, but it has come to this really fun place. I see this powerful sense of commitment and passion through the students. This year I am only teaching Freshman Fashion Drawing, which has been so fun. I look at it more as an art practice, but I want the students and myself to be a fashion illustrator. As I sit and draw with them, I feel every week I am learning too. Every drawing I do I take it seriously— half of the work in the collages are coming from the class and the other half come from the days I spend with my daughter Lilac, with also me on my own. In Japan, I got to sit and draw on my own, but it doesn't happen a lot. I am either with my students or with Lilac. My mother can paint perfectly as well. I feel it's a constant exchange with family; students become family and friends become family in that way. It is very touching for me to teach. I feel so honoured.

It's almost symbiotic.

That's how I believe it should be. I've always had this utopian vision of my own school and deep-rooted new forms of teaching, but I realised going into the system and bringing this little by little is just as fulfilling. It took me a while to understand.

Artist: Susan Cianciolo

Subject: Chie Arakawa

Shot by Lasse Kusk

Robin Pogrebin, “Here Comes the Whitney Biennial, Reflecting the Tumult of the Times”, *The New York Times*, November 17, 2016.

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

Here Comes the Whitney Biennial, Reflecting the Tumult of the Times

By **ROBIN POGREBIN** NOV. 17, 2016



The artist Henry Taylor in his downtown Los Angeles studio. Some of his recent portraits will be exhibited at the Whitney Biennial. Credit Monica Almeida for *The New York Times*

FOR the first time in 20 years, the lead-up to the Whitney Biennial coincided with the presidential election, a background that could not help but inform the selection of artists and artwork that will be on view when the biennial opens on March 17, the first in the museum's new downtown building.

"An election year prompts that questioning," said Scott Rothkopf, the Whitney's chief curator and deputy director for programs. "The discourse turns to who we are as a nation."

On Thursday, the Whitney revealed the 63 participants in its sprawling survey of what's happening now in contemporary art — the new, the influential and the potentially provocative.

After visiting artists' studios, dealers and curators in 40 cities during the past year, the biennial's curators — Christopher Y. Lew, an associate curator at the Whitney, and Mia Locks, an independent curator — were struck by themes that resonated with the contentious election: personal identity, social struggle, connection to place.

So much of the artwork "is about the artist or a self in relation to the tumultuous world that we're in," Mr. Lew said.

The featured artists vary in their race, gender, sexual orientation and geographic locations. There are nearly as many women as men; a large delegation from California; and several from outside the continental United States. They work in various media, including technology. (The museum announced in 2015 that the next biennial would be in 2017 rather than this year so curators could adjust to the new building.)

Since moving downtown, the Whitney has tried to better integrate the spirit of the biennial into its year-round activities, by re-energizing its emerging artists program. "A little bit more in the trenches," Mr. Rothkopf said, "a little closer to the ground."

While the biennial includes established artists like Jo Baer, William Pope.L, Dana Schutz and Jordan Wolfson, many are largely unknown.

The curators worked closely with a team of advisers: Negar Azimi of the Middle East publication Bidoun; Gean Moreno of the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami; Wendy Yao of the exhibition space 356 South Mission Road and the art shop Ooga Booga in Los Angeles; and Aily Nash, a curator with the New York Film Festival, who is helping organize the biennial's film program.

"We wanted them to be an invested part of the process from the beginning," Ms. Locks said.

Below is a sampling of some of the lesser-known names in the show.

RAFA ESPARZA (Born 1981 in Los Angeles; lives in Los Angeles) He builds structures from adobe bricks that he makes with his family and friends out of dirt, hay and horse manure mixed with water from the Los Angeles River. Mr. Esparza learned this technique from his father — who built his own home in Durango, Mexico — just after the artist came out as gay. For the Whitney, he will create a room made of adobe that will also display works by other artists.

SUSAN CIANCIOLO (Born 1969 in Providence, R.I.; lives in Brooklyn) Her fashions of recycled or found textiles have been featured in Barneys and Vogue, and in 2001 she transformed a gallery in the meatpacking district of Manhattan into a pop-up Japanese-inspired tearoom, serving lunch to the installation's visitors. For the biennial, she will reprise the tearoom in the museum's restaurant, Untitled, in collaboration with the chef Michael Anthony.

ALIZA NISENBAUM (Born 1977 in Mexico City; lives in Brooklyn) Calling her work "political witnessing," Ms. Nisenbaum makes portraits of immigrants, many of whom she meets through her art classes at the Cuban-born artist Tania Bruguera's community space in Queens. At the Whitney, she will show new large-scale paintings, including one of a Latino runner's club and another of the women's cabinet to the New York City mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, where she was part of the 2015 fellowship program.

POSTCOMMODITY (Founded 2007) This collective — comprising Raven Chacon, Cristóbal Martínez and Kade L. Twist — for four days in October 2015 installed a two-mile “Repellent Fence” of 26 balloons that intersected the United States-Mexico border near Douglas, Ariz., and Agua Prieta, Sonora. The Whitney will feature the collective’s 2016 video installation, “A Very Long Line,” in which the camera rapidly moves laterally along the border to a discordant soundtrack, as if from the perspective of a passenger in a car.

HENRY TAYLOR (Born 1958 in Oxnard, Calif.; lives in Los Angeles) His early portraits of patients at Camarillo State Mental Hospital in California, where he worked as a psychiatric technician from 1984 to 1994, were featured in his solo shows at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2007 and at MoMA PS1 in 2012. His 2008 piece “He’s Hear, and He’s Thair” — depicting a homeless man named Emory who became his friend — sold at Phillips auction house on Wednesday for \$60,000. Mr. Taylor’s recent portraits, some of which will be at the Whitney, feature subjects including friends and family.

JESSI REAVES (Born 1986 in Portland, Ore.; lives in Brooklyn) Having worked part-time as an upholsterer, she makes sculptures that function as furniture: chairs, tables and sofas created from startling blends of foam, sawdust, plywood, plexiglass and auto parts. Examples will be at the Whitney. “She will take polar fleece and use it as a slipcover,” Mr. Lew said, “applying materials you don’t expect, but will recognize.”

MAYA STOVALL (Born 1982 in Detroit; lives in Detroit) Ms. Stovall, who describes herself as a “radical ballerina,” dances in front of liquor stores in her Detroit neighborhood, McDougall-Hunt. She then interviews patrons about her performance and records these events on video, editing the footage and adding a soundtrack. Episodes from this “Liquor Store Theater” will be on exhibition for the first time at the Whitney.

SKY HOPINKA (Born 1984 in Bellingham, Wash.; lives in Milwaukee) In “Jáaji Approx.” (2015), Mr. Hopinka, a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, films his journey through the territory once traveled by his father. Mr. Hopinka pairs the sights through his windshield with stories, songs and conversation from informal recordings he made over a decade. The biennial will feature his new video, shot on St. Paul Island in the Bering Sea, home to one of the largest Aleut populations in the United States.

OCCUPY MUSEUMS (Founded 2011) Emerging from Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Museums is a largely New York-based group that focuses on the relationship between art institutions and capitalism. The collective’s Debtfair project, coming to the Whitney, packages works by United States artists who are in debt



Susan Cianciolo Credit Zoe Latta, Courtesy the artist and Bridget Donahue, NYC



Susan Cianciolo’s “Untitled” (2000), watercolor on paper.
Credit Courtesy of the artist and Bridget Donahue, New York, Collection of the artist



The artist Jessi Reaves at work. Credit Oto Gillen, Courtesy the artist and Bridget Donahue, New York

into “bundles” that can be purchased for the cost of the artists’ monthly loan payments.

CHEMI ROSADO-SEIJO (Born 1973 in Vega Alta, P.R.; lives in San Juan and Naranjito, P.R.) In 2014, Mr. Rosado-Seijo transformed a museum gallery in San Juan into a classroom, inviting students from a school to the museum for daily Spanish class, and exhibiting works from the museum at the school. At the Whitney, he will bring this project to the Lower Manhattan Arts Academy on Grand Street, the biennial’s only off-site installation.



“Idol of the Hares” by Jessi Reaves. Credit Courtesy of the artist and Bridget Donahue, New York

Thea Ballard, "Dress Up", *Modern Painters*, September 28, 2016, 78-85.



Dress Up

BY THEA BALLARD, MODERN PAINTERS | SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

In mid February, the four-year-old fashion house Eckhaus Latta presented its fall/winter 2016 collection along a spiraling runway set up inside the VW Dome in MoMA PS1's courtyard. Zoe Eckhaus and Mike Latta introduced a typically raw and textural collection of layered, deconstructed, gender-indifferent garments in rich gold, rose, and sage. With the presence of industry buyers and magazine editors, not to mention the throngs of people queued outside

assuring security that they were, indeed, on the list, the presentation had the vague air of a performance, the models—a mix including “It” faces India Salvor Menuez and Michael Bailey-Gates and cultural figures like artist and deejay Juliana Huxtable and Eckhaus Latta mentor Susan Cianciolo—navigating the runway to an intense score by DJ Richard. The label’s clothing is particularly interesting to watch on bodies in motion: Eckhaus Latta’s earthy, rounded silhouettes belie an insistent sculptural quality that prevents the garments from easily settling onto their wearer, creating, in motion, a bizarre but also maybe exciting tension—one that resonated with (sometimes constructive, sometimes commodified) conversations about how fashion can help us deconstruct gender.

Inside PS1, a selection of works by the duo was installed in a pink-walled corridor as part of the “Greater New York” quinquennial, including unique items handpainted in tender, feminine pastels by the artist Annabeth Marks. Denim chaps, a bustier-like top, and stacked-heel clogs were each displayed on transparent mannequins. Their inclusion was part of a larger curatorial gesture toward that blurry zone between fashion and contemporary art—elsewhere in the show, one could find installations of clothing by Cianciolo as well as the design collective Slow and Steady Wins the Race. This hybrid territory, while certainly nothing new, seems to be increasingly resonant as of late, from the most staid institutions (see the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s record attendance at its Costume Institute’s 2011 Alexander McQueen show, and subsequent emphasis on its fashion exhibitions as sure bait for hordes of eager visitors) to young, scrappy alternative spaces (like the Melbourne-based, transient space/platform Centre for Style, run by artist and curator Matthew Linde).

In the contemporary art world proper, Eckhaus Latta has seen inclusion in the Hammer Museum’s “Made in L.A.” biennial; Cianciolo, since a stand-out exhibition at downtown New York’s Bridget Donahue in 2015, has already had follow-up solo shows in Los Angeles and Portland, Oregon, with more to come, including another solo at Donahue’s gallery in fall 2017. Meanwhile, luxury brands like Céline and Prada have gladly footed the bill for exhibitions and exhibition spaces alike, from MoMA’s 2013 Isa Genzken retrospective to the new Fondazione Prada in Milan. More than ever, art—considered as a set of social and financial networks bearing distinct hierarchies—seems primed to play a recuperative role in relationship to supposedly “lesser” art forms adopted by multidisciplinary-minded artists, elevating them in a way that perhaps stands to erase connotations of crass commercialism.



Performers activate Susan Cianciolo’s kits at Yale Union in Portland, Oregon.

Also curious, however, is an aesthetic thread that's emerged alongside these partnerships or points of overlap. Projects parsing fashion through an artistic lens have been interested in a post-capitalist realist investigation into seriality and corporatism, as in Art Club 2000's cheeky early 1990s send-up of the Gap or, more recently, the collective/trend forecasting firm K-Hole's introduction of the concept of "normcore"—disseminating a breed of art school cool that hinged on plainness and neutrality, dealing with gender and class difference mainly by masking it. Sharing aesthetic and cultural cues with the decidedly crafty garments being made by designers like Eckhaus Latta, artists such as Cianciolo and K8 Hardy go further to engage with fashion on a level that is atemporal in its relationship to seasonal shifts, trends, and production schedules. They stake themselves instead to an arguably queer time, produced through memory and relationships: What they make is individualistic and intimate in its interaction with the body and, perhaps, liberatory rather than critical. In doing so, they also, if by accident, introduce into a male-dominated art world a set of feminine narratives, characterized by matrilineal knowledge exchange and relationships between women.

But what exactly happens when we bring this all back to the level of the body? In the case of Hardy, an artist working across film, sculpture, and performance, distinguishing between fashion and style is a key first step. Hardy's work often deals in the latter, and not only where it involves actual clothing (as with a fashion show she staged for the 2012 Whitney Biennial) or playful applications of fashion iconography (take the found-object handbag sculptures she showed this summer at an ad hoc Canal Street space called Strap On Projects). Rather, style permeates her practice, intertwined with the forcefully femme ethos she promotes. Hardy is herself an exuberant dresser, as evidenced by her Instagram account, where she posts (alongside the odd eye-makeup tutorial) images (often choppy photo collages) of her daily assemblages of thrift-store layers, all manner of prints, Hood By Air pants, fanny packs, etc. "Our bodies have always been a medium," she tells me. "Before women had access to power, we had access to dressing, and it makes sense that artists would use that tool."

Hardy grew up in Texas, and her appearance and persona can read like a queer reinterpretation of a Southern beauty-queen character (indeed, she refers to her approach to dressing as a form of drag). Her sometimes prickly embrace of the femme communicates a weird relationship to young women's inculcation into regulated forms of femininity in American media culture—a relationship by turns celebratory and tense, and one that offers a universal point of entry into a decidedly alternative practice. Her feature-length documentary *Outfitumentary*, which premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam this past February, semi-chronologically assembles 11 years of footage self-documenting the artist's outfits, all shot on a "shitty" (by her reckoning) mini-DV camera. Begun in 2001, the project predates a cultural turn toward rampant and habitual self-documentation via social media, representing a relationship between woman and camera that's fundamentally different, and more internal, than what now plays out on Instagram or Snapchat.

It's certainly compelling to watch for the incidental narrative that it tracks: A young lesbian artist comes of age in New York City, playing with trends (those L Word-era low-rise jeans!), fucking with her gender representation, and experiencing her body, privately, in ways that are humorous, sexual, and inquisitive. Still, given that the film is a fundamentally structuralist work, it would be reductive to view it only as a history or a document with Hardy as its main character. Through the persistent repetition of roughly shot sequences, the elements that would best propel narrative—the artist, and her clothing—take on a quality that approaches abstraction. Though over the span of a decade we do see Hardy age, her body visibly changing shape on camera, time in the film functions messily, and the way shots are stitched together does little to impose temporal order. Rather than keeping time in service of a grander filmic arc, Hardy's thrifted ensembles act, moment by moment, as a form of mediation between the artist and herself, as well as, one imagines, various social groups existing outside the apartments and studios in which she films herself: friends, the art world, and everyone else on the street.

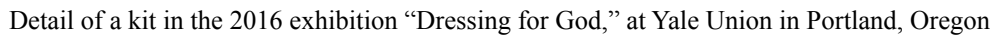
Susan Cianciolo's work, in its embrace of the handmade, proposes its own sense of time as well, in this case in opposition to the cycles of the fashion industry itself. After completing a degree in fashion design at Parsons in the

early 1990s, Cianciolo worked for lines including Badgley Mischka and Kim Gordon's X-Girl. She also befriended a group of artists whose work dealt in some way with fashion, including Alex Bag, Rita Ackermann, and members of Bernadette Corporation such as Seth Shapiro, for whom she worked and modeled. In 1995 Cianciolo showed her first collection at Andrea Rosen's Prince Street gallery. Between 1995 and 2001, she produced 11 Run collections, operating by necessity more or less on a two-seasons-a-year timeline while bucking industry conventions by embracing an intensely collaborative and multimedia-oriented approach to her shows; for Run 4, for example, Mark Gonzales drew envelopes for the show's program, and Gillian Haratani from Art Club 2000 helped with the sewing. (Artist Jack Pierson's dog, at the time under Haratani's supervision, made a surprise cameo as the collection was being unveiled.) Alongside producing such collections, Cianciolo continued drawing and began making videos, which, like her shows, focused heavily on intricately adorned women (a series of them were on view alongside her designs at "Greater New York").

Though there have been moments when Cianciolo made a conscious decision between the realms of fashion and art (as in 2001, when following "a strong feeling" she closed her fashion studio and pursued her practice in a less structured way), between the two, she tells me, "there's no difference in how I work. I just start making blindly. I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm following this voice that tells me 'go and do this, go and make that.'" Meticulous handicraft is central to Cianciolo's garments, but the pieces, and their arrangement on the body, still represent something more fluid and mysterious. "For me, each look is a collage, a painting—an assembly of colors and shapes and materials," she says. Her economical sense of material, which undoubtedly has influenced the combinations favored by Eckhaus Latta, embraces subtle earthiness and brash synthetics in equal measure. Some fabrics are commissioned—she notes both a quilting workshop she founded in Mississippi and a Japanese woman who made organic cotton for her from seed—while others are gifted or found. Each textile, it seems, has a story, whether it's from a former intern or a trip to a warehouse in Rhode Island, and fabric is constantly reused. Textiles, garments, and outfits serve to mediate the self, or to locate the self in regard to place and memory. One outfit hanging in her studio includes a leather jacket, one arm chopped off and a swath of thin maroon fabric edited in its place, with photographs and a small notebook affixed to its back. "That one is based on a beautiful hike in Portland that I'll never forget," she says. "Probably all of the collage pieces are based on good memories, usually nature or work related."

Cianciolo's recent output—her shows at Bridget Donahue and Yale Union—has largely taken the form of "kits," boxes containing patterns, garments, scraps, documentation, instructions, and other assorted ephemera. These began as a somewhat more functional offering in the mid 1990s, with a do-it-yourself denim skirt that came with materials and supplies, offering both interactivity and an affordable, customizable product. The concept grew more freewheeling; Run 11, her last formal clothing collection, included a number of those kits—"some super funny, some intellectual," she says—many of which were conceived of by Cianciolo's fresh-out-of-art-school hires. The kits in their recent form are essentially boxed collages, shifted, accumulated, and reorganized. One in the Bridget Donahue exhibition, a do-it-yourself blouse kit, contained a handmade blouse with a gold Lycra cover, set on a late 19th-century tapestry from Cianciolo's mother's family. The artist's practice, too, is one in which themes, shapes, and concepts are reiterated time and time again. "It's that idea that nothing is ever old or out of style," she says. "When something is repeated it becomes new again, and that's the magic to me." It's intuitive to think of garments in this intimate and nostalgic way as memory objects, as heirlooms or keepsakes. For Cianciolo they also contain a future; that fabric can hold both at once is part of its mysterious power.

That power is also fundamentally mundane. While Cianciolo and Hardy do both operate within an institutional structure, with that support key to sustaining their respective not-quite-traditional practices, their work also lives comfortably outside of a white cube, a portal of sorts to social realities beyond the art world. Artmaking associated with fashion or style runs the risk of an immediate connection to luxury, to what's rarefied and aspirational (this connotation has seemed a convenient excuse for masculinist critics to write off such practices, unfairly equating an outwardly



femme aesthetic with capitalist excess). And, as in luxury, there is a strong sense of individuality in both artists' work. Despite the casual or even punk look that results, Cianciolo has adopted the processes of a couturier; at this point, she produces only one-of-a-kind pieces. Hardy, meanwhile, plays the part of the icon, nearly always in her self-documentation appearing on her own, clad in ensembles that, though certainly inspiring, might just not make sense for the casual viewer to adopt. But there is a communicative nature in both practices that leads to a perhaps incidental but wholly powerful collectivity. Memory and emotion are assembled on the body and worn in the world—a model, at its most optimistic, of seeking connection.

Samuel Anderson, “Nineties Cult Icon Susan Cianciolo Still Believes in Zines”, *V Magazine*, September 2, 2016.



NINETIES CULT ICON SUSAN CIANCIOLO STILL BELIEVES IN ZINES

Catching Up With the designer and artist at her Zine-Making Master Class

September 2, 2016

TEXT: SAMUEL ANDERSON

Last week, in conjunction with the current exhibit-cum-reading room Nieves and Innen Zine Library, the contemporary gallery Swiss Institute held a fanzine-making workshop inside Tribeca’s Swiss in Situ (an avatar gallery spawned by the original Swiss Institute’s ongoing relocation from SoHo). While it’s not every day that two-dozen New Yorkers sit down for an hour of unadulterated arts and crafts, the big draw of the seemingly no-frills evening was the instructor, Susan Cianciolo, godmother of nonconforming fashion.

Zine-making, a pet project Cianciolo shares with her daughter Lilac in between her busy career as a visual artist, suggests her practice hasn’t changed noticeably since her rogue clothing line Run went big in the mid-1990s. Like many zines, her clothes were collage-works of miscellaneous materials, catching the eye of emerging fashion risk-taker Chloë Sevigny, and later becoming a strong reference point for some of today’s most buzzed about designers (Eckhaus Latta, whose idiosyncratic runway shows often emphasize non-conforming models, are such big fans of Cianciolo’s that they had her close out the Fall 2016 collection).

It was around the time of Run’s launch that some of the most notable contributors to the Nieves and Innen library were first creeping onto the scene. In addition to several of Cianciolo’s own zines, works by fellow members of the 90s avant-garde like Kim Gordon, Daniel Johnston and Larry Clark are on display and free for flipping through. While neither the show nor Cianciolo herself are defined by a certain decade, both seem to preserve the scruffy, freeform expressionism that arose in the pre-Y2K New York underground.

“The point is just that anything goes. That’s my belief system,” offered Cianciolo to the class just before the safety scissors went flying. On its face, this motto offered encouragement to the assembly of aspiring authors (ziners? fanz?). More deeply, it reflects the unfiltered self-expression that makes zine-making so counterculture, especially in the paperless digital age.

While the typical 90s-obsessed fashion follower (born post-Y2K, recently grew out of glitter glue and into Instagram) might be shaken to the core by this display of unplugged merrymaking, the exercise perfectly embodied Cianciolo's radical roots in underground fashion scene: delicate yet subversive, and quietly enduring. Despite our failure to produce a zine by the end of the workshop, Cianciolo agreed to take our questions.

This is a pretty un-New York event.

Yeah, I like it when it's just about getting in there and making a mess. I try to promote that.

How did the workshop come together?

Benjamin [Sommerhalder], the Editor in Chief of Nieves, wrote to me and said, "We're doing this show. We want to include you." I was in Portland giving a workshop when he asked me and I had a show there at Yale Union. The closing day of my show I gave a kimono patchwork workshop. It was inside my exhibition so the greatest thing was that we trashed the whole space, and everyone was like laying on top of my artwork. I thought this was interesting because it's so different to [do that kind of thing in New York]. I like to see New Yorkers get messy, dirty, and just mix together.

Why did you start making zines?

I feel it's very therapeutic. If I'm doing this—my daughter and I are making books everyday, basically—that it's like a therapy for anxiety or for staying busy. There's something about it that's a part of our daily activity. It might be replacing other things I might be doing like smoking cigarettes. Or, who knows what? It's a healthy activity.

It started off me doing it with artist friends and skaters and we'd probably drink a forty, smoke some marijuana, and make a fanzine. And now it's like, do yoga, meditate, hang out with your daughter and make a fanzine. So it kind of goes whatever level your lifestyle is.

How does it relate to your previous work?

One of my zines is a cookbook, and I've done a lot of restaurant-related projects. I had an exhibition in 2001 called Run Restaurant, which was a month-long pop-up restaurant at Alleged Galleries. I recreated the whole space and was very much inspired by Japan. And then in 2008, 2009, I did a restaurant called Mobile Run restaurant and it traveled to private events and I cooked for 25 people at a time. We'd dress in costume. So cooking is a big part of it.

Do you keep in touch with Chloë Sevigny? She's reportedly a fan of your work.

I remember when I made my first collection, she bought some pieces... but then after I think the first couple seasons we lost touch. You never know, because my style changes and other people's style changes. So I never like to quote who was my fan, because, who am I to put that on someone? Especially now that I don't make clothes anymore, I feel more shy to be in that world. But she's such an incredible style icon that, who am I to say, oh she wears my clothes, because I don't want to show off.

What is next for you?

I have a solo exhibition opening in London in March at Stuart Shave Modern Art, and then six months after that I have a solo exhibition opening in New York at Bridget Donahue gallery. So that's a very full program with six months in between and they're both solo. And I'm really doing my best to say no to everything else so I can give that my all.

Emily Spivack, “The Hallmark of a Great Artist’s Studio: A Daybed”, *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, August 23, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/23/t-magazine/design/susan-cianciolo-daybed.html?_r=0.



DESIGN & INTERIORS

The Hallmark of a Great Artist’s Studio: A Daybed

The Story of a Thing

As told to EMILY SPIVACK AUG. 23, 2016



In this series for T, the writer and author of “Worn Stories,” Emily Spivack, interviews creative types about their most prized possessions.

In her home studio, the artist Susan Cianciolo’s primary piece of furniture is a daybed, a nod to artists before her, such as Henri Matisse and Donald Judd, whose studios included beds for nap-taking and contemplation.

I like having no furniture — just tapestries and pillows — on the floor of my home studio. It’s kind of a joke with people who visit because they know that when they come to my house, they will sit on the floor. One of the only pieces of furniture in the studio is a daybed from the 1920s that a dear friend, Frankie Rayder, gave me in 2004. I’ll sit on the daybed to do embroidery or meditate. Having a daybed is like being back in a time when there were sitting rooms or rooms to draw or do embroidery.

For a while, I’ve wanted to make an outrageous cover for the daybed, a cover that better suits our house so the furniture becomes a part of the space. This summer I’m finally doing it. I’m using a lot of fabric swatches my daughter, Lilac, has collected for me. I’m also taking apart a kimono I’d used to

Courtesy of Susan Cianciolo

give an embroidery workshop in Portland and I'm reusing an antique Guatemalan poncho with purple cats. I'm covering the whole thing. The only part you'll see are the black wood legs and, knowing me, I may leave a few parts of original upholstery visible.

All of the pieces surrounding the daybed are connected to my family or community. On the floor in front of the daybed is an orange and green quilt made by an artist I opened a store with in Mississippi, Coulter Fussell. There's a quilt piece that was a gift from Gillian Haratani, an artist I collaborated with in the '90s, and a table runner that Kiva Motnyk made with the help of our Run Home Collection team. On the wall are some of my favorite drawings from other artists, an old collage of mine from 1996 and some newer collages from a recent show and film. The daybed is almost like an altar.

I had a day to do research when I was in London recently, and I drove to the Henry Moore Foundation. His sculptures may not be exactly in my aesthetic, but his house — it's exactly how he left it, and it reminded me of visiting Charles and Ray Eames' house years ago in LA. The way I look at those homes — I see them as pieces of art. They made me think about my own home and how I have tapestries on the floor in a way that resembles my exhibitions.

I've seen so many old photos of artists' studios that either have a direct connection to their homes or were in their homes. I want to base my home studio off them. I've seen these beautiful pictures of Matisse on a bed in his studio, and the room is just gorgeous. Or Josef Frank — many of his interior designs for the main rooms where people would sit had a bed in them. They look luxurious. It's made me feel like a studio can be anything you want it to be. Because my work taps into the home environment, I wanted a home studio with a daybed. It's my natural habitat.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

Susan Cianciolo has collaborated on current projects at the temporary home of the Swiss Institute in TriBeCa; and at the Berlin Biennale, with Centre for Style.

Trinie Dalton, “Picks: Susan Cianciolo” *Artforum*, Summer 2016, <http://artforum.com/picks/section=us#picks60930>.

ARTFORUM

Portland

Susan Cianciolo

YALE UNION (YU)
780 SE 10th Ave.
May 22–July 10

Susan Cianciolo’s miniretrospective, collecting over twenty years of personal ephemera, reference material, and fashion sampling, is about invitation at its core. Lavish in its clarity of form, this tactile, spaciously curated series of shrine-like installations includes an arena of chair and table skeletons modeling Cianciolo’s handmade clothing; three tiny houses showcasing videos that chronicle the artist’s history with runway fashion; and over fifty of her carefully assembled “kits,” arranged in a grid on the gallery floor—boxes, piles, and sewn arrangements that display the artist and designer’s personal and professional life in archival splendor.



View of “Susan Cianciolo”, 2016.

Fans of her renowned RUN (an uncompromising and innovative DIY fashion label whose motto could have been “maintain the guidelines of your own design,” in the words of her video *diadal*, 1998) will enjoy spying her deconstructed sketchbooks, photos, journals, and international-travel souvenirs for behind-the-scenes creative insight and odes to friendship. But the meticulous, fragile quality of her sewn quilts and life-size effigies, which pad and guard kits like mummies in a tomb, point toward death and rebirth. The kits’ contents underpin ritualistic themes such as purging accumulated materials or disclosing secrets. One handwritten note sums up the artist’s Zen-like practice to achieve material freedom: “There is much feeling in nothing, accept there is stillness, silence, being oneness omnipresent.”

Casual yet fastidiously organized, some kits are as simple as a box of green glitter—*Glitter and Love Kit*, 2016—while others encapsulate single memories, such as *OSAKA kit* (Run 7 dress, toys, 2 girl dress, ribbon, painted stick, two fans), 2016, and *LET’S TRY TO GET ALONG kit*, 2015. It’s this kind of personalization and care that remind one that dress-up is rooted in, yes, fun and decadence, but also in locating material that makes humans feel comfortable in their skin.

— Trinie Dalton

Stephanie Eckardt, "Susan Cianciolo, the 90's Artist-Designer Inspiring Eckhaus Latta", *W Magazine*, April 29, 2016, <http://www.wmagazine.com/fashion/2016/04/susan-cianciolo-eckhaus-latta-90s-artists-designers/photos/>.



1/32 >

Susan Cianciolo at
backstage at Run
Spring 2012. Photo
by Paul Warner for
WireImage.

Susan Cianciolo, the '90s Artist-Designer Inspiring Eckhaus Latta

Mike Eckhaus and Zoe Latta open up about their connection to Susan Cianciolo, the artist-designer behind the cult '90s label Run.

April 29, 2016 2:00 PM | by Stephanie Eckardt

If there's one fashion show in which it's hard to stand out as a model, it's Eckhaus Latta: Since launching their label in 2012, designers Zoe Latta and Mike Eckhaus have put their designs on a wide spectrum of body types, genders, and ages – not to mention a model wielding a hammer. Being 46, then, is hardly the reason Susan Cianciolo has commanded a presence on their runways, and in more ways than just as a model. The fashion designer behind the '90s label Run, Cianciolo, who put on shows featuring the likes of Chloë Sevigny in between her art exhibits, pioneered the deconstructed, DIY elements so central to Eckhaus Latta's clothes.

"We really feel like amazing people such as Susan have paved that way for us," Latta said of falling into that nebulous space between fashion and art. Both 28, she and Eckhaus first got together at the Rhode Island School of Design, where she studied textiles and he studied sculpture. Since their first official runway show in 2014, they've not only landed critical acclaim from the likes of Cathy Horyn, but racked up some serious art world cred, working with artists like Bjarne Melgaard. Next month, they'll be among the 26 emerging Angeleno artists highlighted in the Hammer Museum's Made in L.A. biennial, and last year, they were included in MoMA PS1's Greater New York show, making them two of the four designers featured among the 158 artists in the survey – one of the others, of course, being Cianciolo.

The three had a reunion at PS1 in February, too, when Eckhaus Latta held its Fall 2016 show under the dome in the museum's courtyard – a slow, choreographed performance of sorts where the only model keeping the breakneck pace of the more conventional shows in Manhattan was perhaps the 6-year-old prancing alongside India Salvor Menuez. It was PS1's first-ever fashion show, and "felt like a natural extension of the exhibition," chief curator Klaus Biesenbach told me at the time. "I don't know so much who's here from the fashion world, but the whole art world, that generation is here," he added.

To Cianciolo, who closed the show, that must've felt familiar. Run's shows were often held at galleries, if only because they were what was available. "From morning till night, all night long, I would walk around the city looking for spaces," Cianciolo said. "Later, it probably became cool to show at a gallery, but it was just only because I needed a space, and whoever I knew I would ask."

Of course, Cianciolo had her predecessors, too: She started her label in 1995, when arty collectives like Bernadette Corporation and X-Girl were already redefining fashion in downtown New York. Cianciolo worked as a production manager at X-Girl, which was helmed by none other than Kim Gordon, and after interning under Alber Elbaz at Geoffrey Beene and designing at Badgley Mischka, it came time to make her own collections. That was when Cianciolo turned to Bernadette van Huy, whose namesake collective was a mix of party planning and a sportswear-inspired women's clothing line, which now seems very prescient.

Cianciolo had participated in some of Bernadette Corporation's "outlaw parties" – essentially public performance art, an aspect that also found its way into Cianciolo's fashion shows, too. Featuring live bands, the shows were not just in galleries, but took over abandoned parking lots and storefronts in the then-desolate area below Canal Street. (The decade's heavy hitters, on the other hand, stuck to the tents at Bryant Park.) Van Huy helped Cianciolo organize and style her first show.

For their part, Eckhaus Latta's shows have featured not only the hammer-wielding model breaking down a wall, but a Twister board-type conglomeration of models curled up in fetal positions while a youth chorus performed in the background, and even head-to-toe blue and purple face paint. "There's a lot more to say at times than just thinking about the clothing itself, and I think we both love putting on a fashion show," Eckhaus said of their predilection for

spectacle. Even when the brand did go more mainstream, collaborating with Nike, they unveiled the finished result at Artists Space, the nonprofit gallery in TriBeCa that showed a retrospective of Bernadette Corporation a few years back.

Cianciolo's also been no stranger to commercial success: Her designs ended up on the racks in Barneys, in the pages of Vogue, and on camera for MTV House of Style – even if they were made of cheesecloth, plastic mesh, and paper. Through all that, her designs remained almost entirely handmade and were produced largely through her sewing circles. “It’s funny to say it now, because it seemed just normal then,” she said with a laugh. “How else would you get the clothes sewn other than just sitting and sewing them?”

“It was just an enormous amount of handwork,” she added. Everything from the dying and draping to the lace and buttonholes were done by her artist friends; Cianciolo's grandmother even tried her hand at the embroidery. “It was for the beauty of the craft,” Cianciolo said. “I mean, that’s my whole investment in my life, is the beauty of the craft. It’s not to just feel like doing it for the hell of it.”

Under the dome at PS1 in February, just after she and Eckhaus garnered a spot on Forbes's 30 under 30 list, Latta told me that a byproduct of the label's success has been the ability to be more ambitious with repurposed materials, which they estimate make up about 90 percent of their designs. “We used these old World War II military blankets that in the past we kind of would have been scared to offer, because they were covered in holes and we have to hand-embroider them,” she said, describing their latest collection. “Now we have a facility to do that, and we’re really excited to offer things that might be more expensive or more time-intensive.”

Even as its reaches expand outside the art world and fashion, Eckhaus Latta hardly seems ready to join up with a luxury conglomerate. “We’re young Americans trying to make stuff in New York,” Latta said modestly. Still, she acknowledges that means a very different thing today than it did in the '90s. “If Susan had been born around the same time as us, I wonder if she would have had to make more commercial decisions, or done more production-oriented designs. Her coming up in New York was a very different scene than ours.”

That might not be a bad thing. Cianciolo remembered the time without nostalgia: “Well, people dying of drug overdoses or I don’t know, being homeless and still making collections,” she said. “We copy periods of time style-wise, but you can’t copy periods of times of living.”

By 2001, Cianciolo “wanted nothing to do with fashion,” she said. The business side was starting to take over the joy of creating. “I didn’t want to have 20 assistants; I wanted to have one assistant, and just show my work how I wanted as an artist,” she said. (She’s returned to the runways a few times since, but mostly makes clothes on a case by case basis, or for her own art installations.)

If there’s anyone to renew Cianciolo's faith in the industry, though, it’s Eckhaus and Latta. From the moment she first discovered their designs through their mutual friend Maryam Nassir Zadeh, she’s “felt that they were the new frontier of a voice for fashion, and I hadn’t felt that way in a very long time,” Cianciolo said. “I feel this is a part of history. It comes in waves. It’s about catching it.”

Jerry Saltz, "11 Artists: Susan Cianciolo", *New York Magazine*, April 18, 2016, 67.

NEW YORK



THE CUT

→
SUSAN CIANCIOLO
MULTIMEDIA ARTIST, 46
A beloved downtown favorite, Cianciolo makes bewitching rabbit-hole installations involving small blankets that display her homemade boxes that open to reveal endless worlds of ephemera, personal notes, ancillary drawings, and personal items.

Crêpe dress, Cianciolo's own, by Vetements, \$2,025 at Dover Street Market, 160 Lexington Ave.; 646-837-7750. Eckhaus Latta suede boots, \$650 for similar styles at Maryam Nassir Zadeh, 123 Norfolk St.; 212-673-6405.

11 ARTISTS

Poised to have breakout years in 2016, and wearing some mix of their clothes and ours.

Text by JERRY SALTZ Photographs by BOBBY DOHERTY

Dana Kopel, "Review: Susan Cianciolo at 356 S. Mission Rd. in Los Angeles", *Blouin Artinfo*, March 8, 2016.

BLOUIN ARTINFO

VISUAL ARTS / GALLERIES / ARTICLE

Review: Susan Cianciolo at 356 S. Mission Rd. in Los Angeles

BY DANA KOPEL, MODERN PAINTERS | MARCH 08, 2016



Left to right: Susan Cianciolo's "Compliment to Mini Me Box," 1990-2015, and "Polaroid Box Kit," 1993-97.
(Photo: Brica Wilcox/Courtesy of the Artist, 356 S. Mission Road, Los Angeles and Bridget Donahue, New York)

LOS ANGELES

*Susan Cianciolo**356 S. Mission Rd. // January 8 – March 13*

Including work from the 1990s to the present, Cianciolo's exhibition comprises various examples of the artist's "kits," cardboard boxes containing a variety of handmade clothing, notes, sketches, and other collected materials. Arranged both on tables, as they were in Cianciolo's 1996 presentation at Andrea Rosen in New York, and on an assortment of found wooden pallets laid out evenly along three walls of 356 Mission's basement gallery, the kits are for the most part displayed closed. Their contents were revealed at the opening by young women dressed in costumes bordering on orientalist—colorful, patterned maxi skirts and headscarves—who meticulously removed each item for public display before placing it back in the kit in precise arrangement.

For Cianciolo, the contents of the kits are not outfits but costumes, indicating a performativity central to her approach: the process of getting dressed and displaying oneself is paramount to her work, though especially apparent in those kits containing an actual costume, such as one—packed with pale pink leggings and a patchwork tank top, shiny painted shoes—created for a production of *Hamlet*. Cianciolo's personal, craft-based aesthetic also characterizes a full-size kit, in which viewers are invited to sit on a patchwork sleeping bag, shoes off, to watch the video *Queens & Kings & Working Class Heroes*, 2015, and a selection of the artist's housewares, on display in the gallery's upper floor. The work feels deliberately sincere—from the obviously hand-sewn, hand-pasted, and found scraps which compose the kits and the clothing, journals, and trinkets within them; to the inclusion of small notes and marker drawings made by Cianciolo's daughter and a scrap of quilt made by her mother; to the work's embrace of a hodgepodge, new-age spirituality, combining elements of Christianity with references to Hindu and Native American spiritual practices. Here, as with the vernissage costumes, her open approach to materials and references sometimes elides the cultural specificity of those materials, despite the care evident in the assemblage and preservation of the works.

The exhibition furthers a renewed interest in Cianciolo's practice, following a solo exhibition at Bridget Donahue last year and her inclusion in this year's Greater New York at PS1. More broadly, Cianciolo is now acknowledged as a significant precursor for the resurgence of attention to fashion and craft—and specifically to clothing's textures and materiality, often employing a handmade or haphazard aesthetic—in recent artmaking. Such a tendency is evidenced in the inclusion of clothing lines Eckhaus Latta and Slow and Steady Wins the Race alongside Cianciolo's work in Greater New York; Zoe Latta of Eckhaus Latta contributed a cloth work, upon which one of Cianciolo's older kits rests, to the show at 356 Mission. Cianciolo's engagement with fashion as art, or fashion through the mores of the art world, suggests a more expansive and collaborative engagement with both fields and reasserts the value, if also the limitations, of sincerity as an artistic approach.

Sabrina Tarasoff, “Susan Cianciolo “Though I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” ‘Corinthians’, *Purple ART*, February 11, 2016.

PURPLE.FR

purple ART

[FEBRUARY 11 2016]



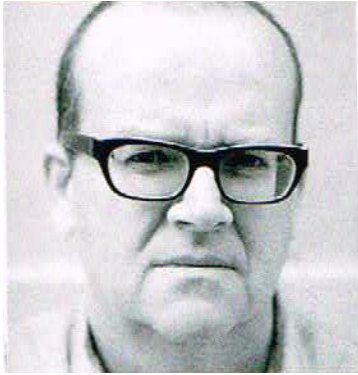
SUSAN CIANCIOLO “THOUGH I HAVE ALL FAITH SO AS TO REMOVE MOUNTAINS, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I AM NOTHING” ‘CORINTHIANS’ EXHIBITION AT 356 MISSION, LOS ANGELES

Sometimes while walking on the streets of LA, one stumbles across doors leading to sparsely decorated spaces intended for displaced parishes. These rooms, if not unremarkable, are mostly scantily clad with standard-issue foldable chairs and tables, intended (surely) to counter delivered souls with the Third Kind through home-made rice krispie squares and cold cuts. At 356 Mission, however, SUSAN CIANCIOLO (with a congregation consisting of, for example, the bicoastal fashion-cum-art acolytes of Eckhaus Latta, NYC high priestess CHLOE SEVIGNY and the artist’s grandmother) has her tables laden with cardboard ‘kits’ for viewers to observe and connect from. During the opening, cherubim-faced disciples (or gallery assistants), shrouded in veils and long tunics, sat carefully picking items from the kits to offer viewers closer looks at their variable contents, prompting questions and inquiries from a cocktail-anointed crowd. Though Cianciolo shrouds her project in an enigmatic lack of information, the exhibition’s thematic title, “Though I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not Love, I am nothing” ‘Corinthians’, gives way, consolidating what was left unsaid in the blatantly obvious. That the art world acts in pious congregation is hardly new to those whom have watched it for a while, and its ironic restaging as a nativity scene with socks, fabric samples and quilts feels like an interpellation from fashion come a decade late. However, sometimes the Word takes time to travel, and—stepping off art’s high horse for just one second to listen to it—maybe Cianciolo’s is a humbling lesson suggesting that we should pay more attention to what is in front of us. After all, love is patient and kind and all that, even if art isn’t (at least all of the time).

Text and photo Sabrina Tarasoff

Matthew Higgs, “Best of 2015”, *Artforum*, December 2015.

ARTFORUM



MATTHEW HIGGS

MATTHEW HIGGS IS AN ARTIST AND HAS BEEN THE DIRECTOR OF WHITE COLUMNS, NEW YORK, SINCE 2004, A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO *ARTFORUM*, HE WILL SELECT THE TENTH ITERATION OF LOOKING BACK, WHITE COLUMNS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION, IN JANUARY.

2

SUSAN CIANCIOLO (BRIDGET DONAHUE, NEW YORK)

This presentation of Cianciolo's "kits" - ad hoc vessels filled with various objects - was a revelation. Working across the thresholds of craft, fashion, performance, publishing, and art, Cianciolo revels in a genuinely interdisciplinary - perhaps even activist - approach to making. Her quasi-hobbyist kits, filled with both found and constructed objects, provoke loose autobiographical narratives, tales that were vividly recounted (on request) by dealer Donahue herself, acting as her own gallery's docent.



Nick Mauss, "Radical Chic: Nick Mauss on the Art of Susan Cianciolo", *Artforum*, November 2015, 244 - 253.



ARTFORUM

NOVEMBER 2015

RADICAL CHIC

NICK MAUSS ON THE ART OF SUSAN CIANCIOLO

HOW DO YOU MAKE FASHION that's not fashion? That's not simply or only aspirational, trending, the eternal return of the new? In New York just before the turn of the millennium, artist Susan Cianciolo responded to this conundrum with **RUN**, a line of de- and reconstructed "costumes" that she produced in collaboration with a makeshift atelier of friends and relatives and presented in shows that turned the conventions of the runway upside down (literally, in the case of the aerialist models who dangled among ropes while showing off the looks from Cianciolo's third collection). Offering craft instead of couture and affect instead of laconic cool, expanding into housewares and perfume, and producing collages, videos, performances, and archival "kits" that both documented and destabilized her brand, Cianciolo deftly created a different kind of culture industry, lending a fresh resonance to Diana Vreeland's famous claim that elegance is refusal. As a series of exhibitions bring new visibility to her work, **NICK MAUSS** proposes Cianciolo's costumes as one element of a singular artistic project. And in a special portfolio for Artforum, Cianciolo presents snapshots of her recent time in rural Maine and New York, experiences that are being woven into innovative materials, textiles, and a film—still another twist in her unfolding involutions of labor, form, and style.



Model in Susan Cianciolo's
RUN 4, New York, 1997.
Photo: Chris Moore.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CONTROL

tofu kequishe

CORN muffins

SeaSOR Salad

Reflections of ouRself

IMAntations of ouR life

Dream of Different tomorrow

—from a drawing by Susan Cianciolo for RUN Restaurant's menu

I WENT TO RUN Store in the fall of 2001. I didn't know what to expect. The shop had been set up for one day in a storefront on Eighth Avenue near Fourteenth Street, and its opening was preceded by rumors and fantasies, the sense of private anticipation that remains the ineffable emblem of Susan Cianciolo's brand of agitprop. This was way before pop-up shops were everywhere, and though it seems strange to bring up that historical detail, it's important to remember that, at the time, it actually felt like an experimental thing to do, this temporary store. I remember it now like a film played at the wrong speed, one in which people enacted various attitudes of service in uniforms that were delicate travesties of utility and futility, ready-made T-shirts that had been cinched and clipped to resemble shrunken waitress aprons with scalloped hems. It was unclear what, if anything, was for sale in this store run by what appeared to be a nonhierarchical all-ages commune or the cast of Robert Altman's film *3 Women*. Models and nonmodels acted like absentminded shopkeepers, as if under a spell or beholden to an oblique subtext. And for a moment, everyone was participating in this projection of an alternate site of exchange and attention, and I caught glimpses of details: ethereally weird makeup, talismans, words emblazoned on clothes held together by spiderwebs and altered with hedge clippers. "It's like couture made by people who really really can't sew and grandmother master tailors simultaneously," a friend offered, as an explanation of how something could seem at once so sophisticated and so willfully naive. Each garment bore the traces and decisions of many authors, and ways of making, of learning and unlearning.

Fashion houses have always been collaborative, but Susan Cianciolo's RUN emerged in a climate in which they were being streamlined to the point of airlessness. Under the pressure of corporatization, designers were becoming carefully marketed caricatures of "the artist"—neoliberal avatars of bohemian creativity—while the clothes themselves were being drained of interest in order to facilitate mass consumption based on predictable trend patterns. RUN, a label that produced eleven collections between 1995 and 2001, went directly against the grain of these developments, proposing a model for generating clothes with many voices and with a disregard for efficiency. Cianciolo's clothes were handmade for particular individuals, designed, assembled, and adorned in a process that pooled various types of knowledge, techniques, skills, and nonskills, in a punk-constructivist reimagining of the production line: couture as collective improvisation. "I have always collaborated with many people," she once told an interviewer. "I have made things with other artists. But everything was like this. Historically, and in everyday life. A bakery bakes bread with everyone. You can't live alone. . . . I feel that I am always collaborating with somebody in everyday life. . . . It is opening yourself up and accepting other people's ideas using you as a filter." For many RUN collections, a group of collaborators would come together to develop and produce the garments—from DIY "kits" to one-of-a-kind ensembles carefully pieced together from an archive of found and altered textiles. These sewing circles were composed of friends, students, even relatives. Cianciolo acknowledged her indebtedness to the matrilineal transference of knowledge and skill by folding her mother's and grandmother's work into her own. Perhaps the most disarmingly uncool thing Cianciolo ever did was directly implicate her own family in her work, making those relationships explicitly visible yet ambivalently coded. Recently, her most intimate and daring collaboration has been with her now-seven-year-old daughter, Lilac Sky, whose hand and touches of glitter were visible all over Cianciolo's exhibition this past summer at New York's Bridget Donahue gallery, "if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)." As Cianciolo gathered her daughter's notes and sketches to include in a work, she asked Lilac Sky for permission to use them and

was surprised by the answer: “You can do whatever you want, as long as we split fifty-fifty.” Her daughter also appears in the 2015 video *Queens and Kings and Working Class Heroes* (on view along with five of Cianciolo’s other moving-image works in the current edition of MoMA PS1’s Greater New York).

The handmade collective deconstruction of what a body can be does not work with factory production. The only way to produce truly new fashion is to inhibit the industrial production of clothes. When Cianciolo says that she makes “costumes” rather than engaging in the “designing of clothes,” one thinks of what it could mean to wear a costume every day, to activate a form of interpersonal ritual within a stream of global trends. On the one hand, fashion connotes an originally Western tradition that is only about five hundred years old, while costume is used by curators and academics to refer to the practices of making and wearing clothing in every place and period. Cianciolo’s chosen term therefore suggests that the wearer of her clothes is somehow outside fashion but still very much embedded in histories. On the other hand, costume is also meaningful in a specific historical context: The 1990s was the era of the Gap uniform at the low end of the market and of understated “minimalism” at the high end, styles that posited attire as a kind of transparent frame that lets the wearer’s authentic self shine through. The idea of a costume—of clothing as performance—violates this logic. Cianciolo’s work seems to aspire to a state of permanent dishabille. Her costumes require a new kind of reciprocal engagement from her clients, who must learn how to wear a piece, how to incorporate it into their lives, and how to acclimate to its constraints over time. In 1996, discussing RUN 3—each collection was simply called RUN and numbered consecutively—Cianciolo stated: “There’s personality in each person’s movement, it’s like any other type of expression. And the industrial fabric [I used in this collection] collaborates with that expression. It doesn’t just become part of the body, it’s like the two are almost fighting together. For that fabric to meet the body is so difficult. It’s a sharp object—you know some of [the clothes] have metal and Kevlar in them—meeting a soft one. Technology, the computer versus the human.”



Bibi Borthwick and Mai Aurell model RUN 11
outside Susan Cianciolo’s RUN Store, New York, 2001.
Photo: Anette Aurell.



I FIRST HEARD of RUN through word of mouth. I was working for Mended Veil, a tiny apartment operation that made fantastical dime-store-meets-Salammbô jewelry. Some of those pieces were shown in Cianciolo's early collections. Nearby, at Colin de Land's gallery American Fine Arts, artist Patterson Beckwith's mother, Jane, was organizing crafting bees called Bee-Ins; American Fine Arts was a few blocks from Cianciolo's studio. Danny McDonald, the genius behind Mended Veil, ran the gallery; I remember Lizzi Bougatsos playing receptionist, waiting for band practice to start, while, in the basement, I drilled holes into quarters from 1984 for necklaces. There was a lot of antic collaboration across disciplines and vested interests, and, more important, injections of eccentric motives into seemingly stable frameworks. It's relevant that some of the most interesting collaborative projects happening at that time, like Art Club 2000 (the artists' group that seven Cooper Union students, including Beckwith and McDonald, had founded with de Land in the early '90s) and the artists' collective Bernadette Corporation, used fashion as an avenue for cultural critique. AC2000 parodied the sartorial monoculture of the Gap in a deadpan performance of selling out, while clothes with the Bernadette Corporation label could be found for sale in Ludlow Street boutiques. But if Bernadette Corporation was performing its own now-famous mystique as part of a critical investigation of the cultural and economic co-optation of "downtown," for Cianciolo the earnest openness of uncoolness was an operative method.

As time went on, RUN became an umbrella for a wide range of propositions that have operated sometimes in tandem with collections and sometimes independently of them, and that continue to this day. One of the earliest was RUN Restaurant, an establishment that existed for a month at New York's Alleged Galleries in 2001 and that, in documentation, looks like a piece of experimental theater, the enactment of a social ideal and an exercise in suspension of disbelief, much like RUN Store. People sit on the floor around a low, cobbled-together table-cum-stage, near a freestanding fence, close to a small hut. Someone is "cooking"—actually, it looks more like they're decorating hors d'oeuvres. The food doesn't have to be real. A man wears an apron with an outsize handpainted gingham motif. Cianciolo's other ventures have included the alternative currency RUN Money, with which people could pretend to purchase RUN kits at the RUN 11 collection presentations; the housewares line RUN Home; a perfume, Chevalier; and, most recently, YaloRUN, a project space in Water Valley, Mississippi, founded by Cianciolo with artist Coulter Fussell and designer Kiva Motnyk, which also functions as a store for textile-craft supplies.

In retrospect, it becomes apparent how defiantly Cianciolo has played with commerce in order to rethink value, insisting on the way ideas, feelings, and intimacy inhere in both production and day-to-day life with garments and objects, on touching and looking rather than being looked at. Functionality is given dreamlike new valences or thwarted completely; often, to use one of Cianciolo's products, you have to love it irrationally, love it for itself (not for its usefulness or for the way it ratifies your status or your identity), even love it enough to sacrifice comfort or security or sense. Shoes are covered in white feathers that will fall off if you wear them as often as you'd like. Sacks made of veiling provide only the thinnest, most porous boundary between your bare foot and the floor—they are just volumes of air with a long zipper to close them up. A swimsuit kit is in fact a canvas book with slits into which your hand disappears to pull out a crocheted bikini. In a 1999 essay, fashion editor Nakako Hayashi quotes Cianciolo: "Most of my work is about happy and sad memories." Hayashi continues, "She once made a skirt where a long, narrow cloth hung down from the waist 'to wipe your eyes when you cry uncontrollably.'" This affective "script" hints at the complexity of Cianciolo's vision of performativity, which in her work is deeply intertwined with lived experience without necessarily being "live"—for her videos and films have always gently pressured the line between performative presence and the moving image. One of her earliest fashion shows, for example, was not a show at all, but a screening of her film *Pro-Abortion; Anti-Pink*, 1996, while her hauntingly elliptical *Queens and Kings and Working Class Heroes*, shot in the Cloisters in New York City and in more bucolic settings in New York State, Maine, and Mississippi, evokes—and features performers who have appeared in—her live shows.

The story goes that Cianciolo "left" the fashion system at the moment it claimed her, when her brand marketability was burgeoning. But it's clear now that she has used fashion as an exploratory vehicle for an ongoing multidetermined performance work that allows for numerous collaborators, experimental venues, and layers of conflicting messages. Still, for a long time, except among true devotees, it really did seem like Cianciolo had disappeared in 2001. And so excitement greeted the announcement of Cianciolo's "return" exhibition at Donahue's gallery this past summer—an appearance that would be followed in quick succession by outings in group shows at Rodeo Gallery's Istanbul and London locations in September and in Greater New York in October, with solo shows planned for 2016 at LA's 356 S. Mission Rd. and Yale Union in Portland, Oregon.



Sign for Susan Cianciolo's
RUN Store, New York, 2001.
Photo: Brendan Fowler.

The Bridget Donahue show, curated by Donahue and artist Alex Fleming, featured thirty-two found or newly made boxes, or kits, laid out on the floor in a loose grid. In the late '90s, Cianciolo began studying Fluxus and developed a relationship with movement historian Barbara Moore. Cianciolo's first group of kits, which she has referred to as "Fluxus boxes," grew out of this engagement; since then, the kits have become a central feature of her work. Each unique kit contains a highly personal constellation of objects. Offering her reconfigured archive in the form of distinct devotional cosmologies, Cianciolo created a complex dramaturgy of intimate tactile conversation, improvised ritual, and hypothetical transaction. She also reimagined the role of the gallerist for this scenario: Donahue became docent, interpreter, archivist, and oral historian. On entering the gallery, at your request, she would begin describing and interpreting, while carefully laying each artifact on one of the small quilts or rug-like textiles on which the boxes were decisively positioned—a tactic that delimited a zone of focused activity in which the boxes became reliquaries, conceptual models, sliced sediments of a life given up for perusal, theater stages, libraries, lamps, even utopian cities. (In a sequence in *Queens and Kings and Working Class Heroes*, Lilac Sky performs a similar role, unpacking one kit's contents on a cloth that has been carefully laid on a bench.) The nonlinear "purpose" of each kit—*Hologram Box*, 2015; *Documentary of Conversations Box*, 2013–15; *DIY Blouse Kit*, 2001—is expressed by artifacts from different points in time, atomizing chronology to illuminate other kinds of relationships among the various items gathered within and across boxes. In this context, Cianciolo's "costumes" became historical events annotated with snapshots and notes. Everything became an asterisk referring the viewer/handler to some other item among a battery of social memories of a particular set of events, casting webs of cross-references throughout the space. Where one box might contain an elaborate necklace-like collar that can also be hung on the wall for decoration, you could discover in another box a photograph of that piece as worn in what looks like a procession through a forest. A pandemonium of artists, filmmakers, photographers, musicians, designers, and stylists from the New York scene were conjured in a zone that connected to other historical legacies: of avant-garde costume design, Futurist books made of sandpaper and wood pulp, and the collaborative modus of Sonia Delaunay, who also reinvented books, blankets, and boxes in her own explicit language of citation, collage, decoupage, and patchwork. As an event, and as a history, the exhibition made sense the same way Cianciolo's clothes always have—obliquely, with an intense vulnerability.

As in other Cianciolo projects, this investigation of the retrospective format not only functioned as a reevaluation of old conventions but also generated its own momentum as a pretext for the production of new images and satellite occasions: a series of posters, a screening of Cianciolo's films at Anthology Film Archives, and a presentation by Moore of never-before-shown slides of the Fashion Show Poetry Event, organized in 1969 by Hannah Weiner, Eduardo Costa, and John Perreault at the Americas Society (then the Center for Inter-American Relations) on Park Avenue and Sixty-Eighth Street. The last of these side events was particularly interesting, as it folded other important microhistories of the art-fashion dialogue into this one. Described by the poets who organized it as "a fictionalized version of a real life event that would appeal to an audience accustomed to sophisticated perception of visual phenomena," the Fashion Show Poetry Event included among its participants Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, and Deborah Hay, all of whom made clothes following sets of instructions provided by the organizers. The poets in turn retranslated these ensembles into "typical fashionese" and read their texts during the catwalk presentation. The audience was asked to contemplate a "slightly insolent creation . . . for the young man about town" as Rene Ricard modeled Marisol's paint-smeared underwear on the runway, while Weiner's design, "Wear Your Own Luggage," was modeled by Bernadette Mayer. "There is a difference between fashion copy and our 'poems' which are imitations of fashion copy," wrote Mayer, Costa, and Perreault. "There is a difference between a real fashion show and our imitation of a fashion show. We are interested in these differences in spite of the fact that we have tried to eliminate them. . . . The Fashion Show Poetry Event is not only fashion, poetry, and art, it is where these arbitrary categories overlap and as categories dissolve and become irrelevant."

The RUN presentations followed in this transgressive tradition—Cianciolo showed clothes in art galleries and public bathrooms, live and on film. For the 1997 collection RUN 5, she introduced life-size dolls, or "sleepers," alongside

living models, followed by abstract bodies—neoconstructivist wooden armatures to support clothing, conceived by artist Aaron Lown—for RUN 9 (1999). But of course, Mayer, Costa, and Perreault’s statement has a broader resonance for Cianciolo’s practice, not just her fashion shows—she, too, has explored and activated the dissolution of cultural categories while, paradoxically, sustaining poetic difference. The invocation of the Fashion Show Poetry Event within the frame of Cianciolo’s exhibition not only situated her in a particular lineage, intensifying the dialogue between “art” and “fashion” in historical terms, but underscored the singularity of her work, bringing into sharper focus her techniques of deconstructive intervention, her coquetry with expectations, and the multiple reimaginings and confluences of spectatorship, consumption, and collaboration within her constantly shifting scenographies.

Greater New York, featuring six of Susan Cianciolo’s films as well as a selection of her costumes and archival materials, is on view through Mar. 7, 2016, at MoMA PS1, New York.

Nick Mauss is an artist living in New York.

Ben Davis, "Ben Davis Selects the 20 Most Memorable New York Gallery Shows of the Year", *Artnet News*, November 17, 2015.

artnet® news

PEOPLE

20 Emerging Female Artists to Keep on Your Radar

Ben Davis, Tuesday, November 17, 2015



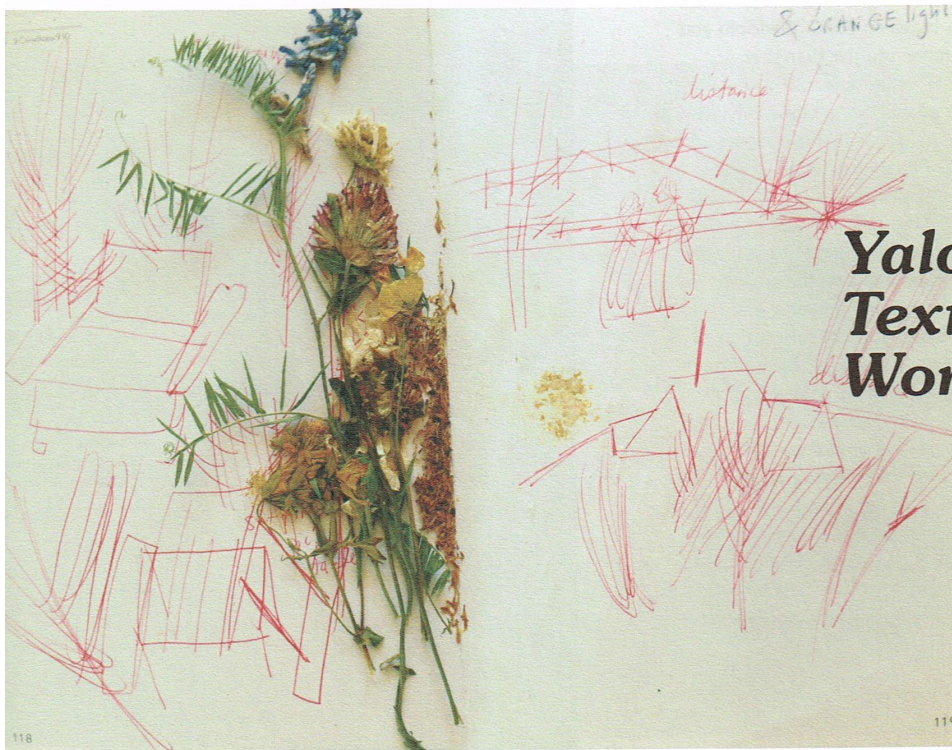
One of Susan Cianciolo's "kits" at Bridget Donahue
Image: Courtesy Bridget Donahue

7. Susan Cianciolo, "if God COMES to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)" at Bridget Donohue, May 16-July 12, 2015

A big year for Cianciolo, whose art-fashion hybrids also found their way to MoMA PS1's "Greater New York." Here, along with zines and costumes, she preempted a retrospective with a series of "kits," each box containing bits of her own oeuvre torn apart and spliced into a personal configuration, time-capsule collages of her own history.

Coulter Fussell, "YaloRun Textile Supply Workshop", *Art Papers*, September/October 2015, 19 – 23.

ART PAPERS



YaloRun Textile Supply Workshop

TEXT / COULTER FUSSELL
IMAGES / SUSAN CIANCIOLO



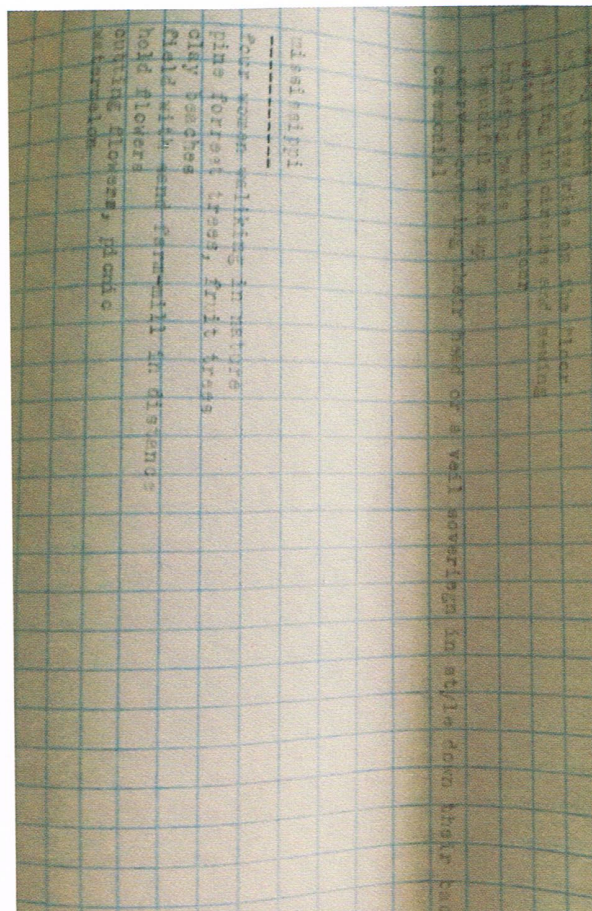
It is an unlikely story that an avant-garde fashion designer from Brooklyn, NY, born and raised in Catholic Italian east Cranston, RI, would meet, befriend, and artistically partner with a career waitress-turned-quilter brought up by an artsy family in west-central Georgia, and now living in Mississippi. And it is all the more surreal that these two should have met by way of a Jewish art collector and former Christie's Auction House appraiser, born and raised in Memphis, TN, now living on the Upper East Side but still summering at her pine tree farm in Coffeeville, MS. The three of us (I'm the former waitress) occasionally share a laugh about this confluence of isolated origins—Italian New York, Jewish Memphis, and bohemian West Georgia (perhaps the most sequestered community of the three)—as they have crystallized into a collaboration in the far-flung hill country of North Mississippi.

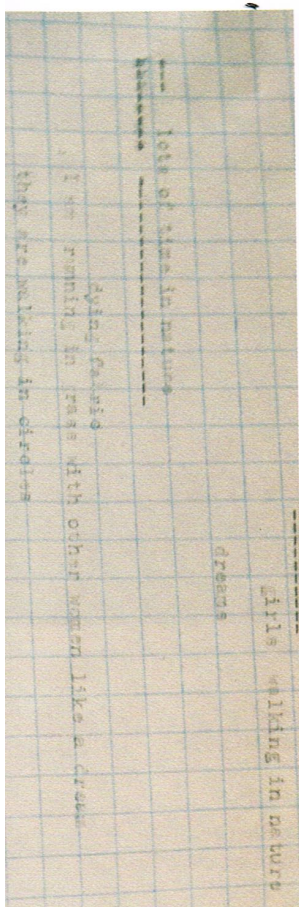
I first met Susan last summer when she was a resident at my gallery, Yalo Studio, in Water Valley, MS. She was hand chosen by Mary Lapides, who runs the Pinehurst Artist Residency out of that aforementioned pine tree farm in neighboring

Coffeeville—a farm she inherited upon the death of her beloved brother, and a farm she devotedly tends during summer visits, and remotely from her Manhattan home throughout the rest of the year. That's the concrete connection between Susan Cianciolo and Mississippi. The other links are much more intuitive than that.

If my bond to Susan was not quite instantaneous, it was only because it took a few minutes for her to pull out her drawings after walking into my gallery for the first time. She was slow-moving and soft-spoken, and I noted that she kind of floated about an inch above the ground as she walked. Her words were deliberate; each one took a half-second longer to come out than you thought it should, but when it did, it was kind, sincere, heartfelt. It was clear that she meditated. She was not like me in these ways. I walk solidly on the ground; I'm sarcastic, full of forced manners when I greet someone, and I can be said to have meditated only if the definition of meditation can be expanded to include closing your eyes at the Sonic drive-through window and thinking "real hard" about whether to get fries or tots.

Susan wore a flowy black dress covered in random safety pins that may or may not have actually been pinning anything. (Only after getting to know her work would I realize that they were very functional—literally the only things holding her dress onto her body.) I wore cutoffs and a T-shirt I'd had since high school, and held a power tool I had been using to badly fix something in my old building. Susan took a handful of drawings on loose paper out of a big cloth bag and started laying them out on my table, purposefully. I was struck at how





much the figurative work reminded me of the drawings of Eddie Owens Martin, aka St. EOM, an eccentric self-taught artist from my birth town of Buena Vista, GA. Stiff postures, in profile, filled the pages like Egyptian queens alongside hieroglyphs—forms that undoubtedly had something to do with the universe at large, symbolisms begun but unfinished, left to be revisited later, maybe on a different day and certainly with a different pen. My family had been friends with St. EOM since I was a kid and eventually became the caretakers of his estate, so I was taken aback to see, for the first time, work out there in the world that even remotely reminded me of his. I greatly wished, right then, that Eddie could have met Susan.

I felt the electricity of our connection again just a minute later, as Susan flipped past several line drawings she had done of cars. Meanwhile, I stood next to a pile of cars that I had shown at the gallery: drawings by my friend John Henry Toney, an 80-something-year-old farmer from Seale, AL, and yet another artist who, until seeing Susan's work, I thought absolutely singular in his style. It was weird. Who was this floaty Italian from New York, and how was she connecting so well to this hot place so far from her world? How did she know?



I imagine that Susan would say it's about something "bigger" than us, and I'd find it hard to disagree. Her latest film includes a scene in which she leads a group of my friends, all dressed in handmade orange clay-dyed dresses, into the warm and shallow waters of Grenada Lake, while a blue afternoon thunderstorm follows the horizon in the distance. The women's dresses linger on the surface of the lake a few seconds longer than the women take to walk into the water, and dirt from the mixed-in material swirls around them. Jesus bugs scatter away, and turkey vultures circle overhead. The most avant-garde fashion in Mississippi had begun its descent into the best crappie fishing waters in the South.

Susan's fabric work resonates so well with my own quilting that we have collaborated on numerous shows and projects by now. We are both lovers of the scrap, the remnant, the leftover: the downtrodden and forgotten work shirt, the paint-laden thigh of a house painter's pants, the crocheted doily torn and stowed away years ago, the fluorescent orange airbrushed tank top that lives beside the 1920s embroidered handkerchief, neither of which gets much use. We base our work on these histories, abutments, and, like painters, materials.

It's from this shared aesthetic that we created our new store: YaloRun Textiles is a back-to-basics quilt shop and experimental textiles school that just opened on Main Street in Water Valley. We adhere to the mantra that all it takes is a needle, thread, and willingness to explore. Do not get overwhelmed. Do not feel intimidated. There is no "fail." There is only doing and making, only fabrics, place, people, and art.

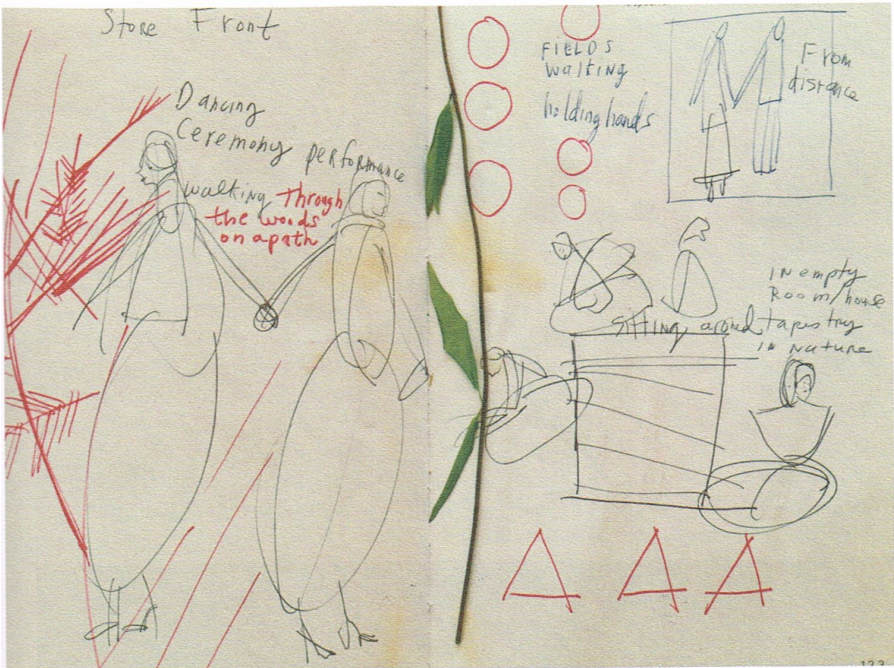


A native of Columbus, GA, Coulter Fussell is a painter and textile artist. She is owner of YaloRun Textiles and Yalo Studio and Gallery in Water Valley, MS.

Susan Cianciolo lives in Brooklyn, NY, where she teaches and continues her live/art practice, moving between fashion, craft, filmmaking, and meaningful collaboration.



*All images:
Susan Cianciolo, Water Valley, MS, 2015
[courtesy of the artist, YaloRun, and
Bridget Donahue, NYC]*



David Everitt Howe, "Susan Cianciolo: *if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)*", *ArtReview*, September 2015, 162.

ArtReview

Susan Cianciolo *if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)*

Bridget Donahue, New York 17 May — 12 July

Susan Cianciolo gained recognition as a fashion designer. After working with Badly Mischka and Kim Gordon's X-girl line, she started her own label, Run, presenting 12 collections from 1995 to 2001. In marked contrast to superpower fashion labels at the time, whose worldwide sweatshops became unfashionable black-eyes, Cianciolo's Run garments were often made by sewing circles and in collaboration with friends and family (Cianciolo's grandmother, and her daughter Lilac). Garments included a 'do-it-yourselfdenim skirt kit', which is featured in her solo exhibition at Bridget Donahue; the skirt comes inside a cardboard 'kit'.

The show features 30 of these small, ramshackle, do-it-yourself kits, or sculptures, each resting atop a textile of some sort. The whole things looks charmingly homespun, though it verges on the twee, with ordinary tape stylishly pinning paper to cardboard, or cobbled together books tied up in string, like giftware. Affected or not, the boxes themselves are fascinating, and unfurling their

contents for inspection becomes something poignantly performative. For visitors, Bridget Donahue herself often takes the honors, telling anecdotes while squatting on the floor, laying out contents like precious anthropological relics. Sitting beside *Mini Me* (2008-15), for example, Donahue laid out the contents of Cianciolo's shoebox: a little wood person no more than 13cm tall, made of a cylinder, a sphere, two small pieces of wood for arms, and two dots and a line for a very simple face, lying in a fabric bed; three small, scribbly paintings on wood; pieces of torn-up drawings; three tiny wood bowls and a tiny wood laptop and book, arranged on a block of wood. Resting on a small piece of vintage embroidery, *Mini Me* had the look and scale of a child's tiny doll's house, replete with infantile scribbles and marks.

In another kit, *Parts/ Do It Yourself Kits* (1997-2015), the do-it-yourself denim skirt is accompanied by photocopies of shoe sketches and drawings, and a gouache-and-ink drawing of colorful triangles, which look like

they have been filled in by a five year old. Also enclosed is a 'Run Home Geometry Kit' made this past year. Less an actual kit than a meditation on geometric shapes, it could become something functional if one willed it, though it's better as a theoretical gesture than an actual garment.

Like a lot of the objects Cianciolo has included here, the line between concept and product is wobbly and arbitrary. A lot of things can be worn if you simply tape them to your body. If you tape them to the wall, they become something else entirely — art or fashion, form or function., it's whatever you want, however you want it. Such open-ended conceptualism is whites so appealing about *if God COMES to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)*. It suggests that the only limits to creative thinking are self-inflicted.

- David Everitt Howe

Alex Fleming, "Susan Cianciolo: Interview", *Flash Art*, Volume 48, No 303, Summer 2015.

Flash Art



1 / 2

Susan Cianciolo, "if God COMEs to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)," installation view at Bridget Donahue, New York (2015). Courtesy of the Artist and Bridget Donahue, New York.

[Arena](#) / August 24, 2015

Susan Cianciolo / *New York*

Susan Cianciolo is a visual artist and filmmaker based in New York. Her recent exhibition at Bridget Donahue, “if God COMEs to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)” included a large-scale installation of the artist’s “kits.” Having emerged in the 1990s as one of the central figures of the deconstructed fashion scene with her clothing label Run, in the years since she has brought her idiosyncratic sensibilities to a staggeringly diverse array of productions and platforms, including performance, sculpture, theater, furniture design, filmmaking and custom-made wearable artworks. Here Cianciolo discusses recent and future productions.

We have spoken a lot about the importance of documentation in your work. Digging through your archive over the past year I saw how deeply your relationships with photographers have impacted your work. Can you talk about how this plays out in recent and future works?

The documentation is the base of all the work and the end result that begins the next work. The study of the images from this recent performance has naturally developed into a series of new films I am currently writing with a collaborator, filmmaker Harry Hughes. Additional components of this process include Surrealist-inspired workshops in different locations here on the East Coast and in the South, at a storefront in Mississippi called Yalo Run that I am opening this summer — where people are joining in to learn in the form of collaboration and exchange. These workshops will feed into a collaborative film with Asher Penn, which will also feature a number of new works, outdoor sculptures, tapestries, functional seating and weather furniture.

I want to talk about your most recent performance. How do you work through the relationship between the designing of the clothes and the live event?

The “designing of clothes” is not a phrase I use in relation to my work. It is more to do with making costumes, and this is developed over a long period of time. With these pieces, I know it appears simple, as if it was thrown together the night before, but I actually want it to seem that way and simultaneously feel like the performers are not completely sure about what is going on. Yet, I place complete trust in those cast. To me this is a definition of a minimalist, mundane performance.

The costumes came from research, from time spent in Beacon over the last year, at Pascale Gatzen’s home and textile studio. I worked from her library and developed some of the textiles in this show, and other research is from my own library where I believe the repetition of studying the same images over many years becomes a meditation and sinks into my consciousness.

What were some of these specific points of inspiration?

Iranian tapestries, Afghani costumes and textiles, Indian textiles, personal friends, the performers themselves. I wanted the whole body covered with many layers to create a mass volume when sitting down. As opposed to all the years of studying movement with shapes, this time it was still forms and an extension of the tapestry so the women existed in a respected place within the room. They were “chosen ones” to speak about the “box kits.”

Speaking of costumes, I wanted to return to a topic we discussed a lot when we first met — your time working with students on the costumes for the Hamlet production by Mark von Schlegell in Frankfurt. A selection of these costumes are on view in the exhibition. What was your experience working on this project?

My experience working on the costumes for Hamlet was life changing. It is difficult to put into words, as what was so crucial about it was the process of working on it together with the extraordinary writer and director Mark von Schlegell, and so many performers and collaborators worth mentioning — such as Sophie von Olfers, who was the curator of Portikus at that time, as well as Michael Krebber. Krebber’s performance each time gave me chills up my spine.

As a collaboration it was so equal. I learned from the perspective of an individual, working together. Autonomy, I suppose, is the word for what happens when strength and taking risks combines with all parties being independent and together. I felt that time stopped; the work covered all my belief systems. Anyone who made costumes performed, as well as anyone who produced, created make-up, performed, cooked lunch, etc. Most of all, the ability to make costumes was irrelevant. This is similar to my current philosophy in my studio practice, which is: the less you know about making any type of garment or anything, really the better you are suited to making it.

by Alexander Fleming

Holland Cotter, “Review: Susan Cianciolo Lets Others Pick Through Fragments of Her Life”, *The New York Times*, July 2, 2015.

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

Review: Susan Cianciolo Lets Others Pick Through Fragments of Her Life

By HOLLAND COTTER JULY 2, 2015

The kind of visual and tactile magic that makes you remember why you loved art in the first place — way back, as a kid — is hard to find. But it's there in Susan Cianciolo's enchanting solo exhibition, her first New York gallery show in over a decade.

In the early 1990s Ms. Cianciolo was best known as an artist-couturier, creator of a hands-on, lo-fi, literally scrappy clothing line called Run. Vogue gave it a big plug; Barneys loved it. Her ambitions expanded. In addition to making outfits, she decided to create a context for them, a place where they could be bought, worn and just looked at. For a month in 2001, she transformed the Chelsea gallery Alleged into a combination teahouse, fashion boutique and art show. The results were terrific, but required a ton of work. So after the show closed, she cut back. The tea went and the clothes went (pretty much), but the art stayed, and that's what we see at Bridget Donahue.

Arranged on the gallery floor are three long lines of boxes that are suitcase-size or smaller, set on little quilts or rugs, and containing a trove of objects and materials: miniature paintings, items of apparel, annotated photographs, rag dolls, Post-it notes and small plastic bags filled with yarn or cut paper. Part archive, part reliquary, part toolbox (Ms. Cianciolo calls them kits), the boxes are packed with fragments of two decades of the artist's life and career. Each one, like a time capsule, has a story to tell.

You can ask Ms. Donahue to guide you through them, or you can pick up clues from the selection of artist's notebooks included in the show, which has been organized by Alex Fleming. Or you can look on your own at these treasure chests made for wondering over, and guessing at, and dreaming about, for taking apart, reassembling, adding to. Each is a complete, coded, portable world. As a kid I would have loved to take one home — I still would — or make one of my own.

'if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)'

Bridget Donahue

99 Bowery, Lower East Side

Through July 12

Andrea K. Scott, "Boxing Days", *The New Yorker*, June 29, 2015.

THE NEW YORKER

Art JUNE 29, 2015 ISSUE

Boxing Days

A creative free spirit contains herself on the Lower East Side.

BY ANDREA K. SCOTT



Susan Cianciolo's show at the Bridget Donahue gallery is a memoir in the form of a Wunderkammer.

CREDIT ILLUSTRATION BY PING ZHU

“Let there be fashion, down with art,” Max Ernst wrote in 1920, in a Dadaist portfolio that pictured an artist in the guise of a tailor. One of the most enchanting shows of the early summer—at the terrific new Bridget Donahue gallery, at 99 Bowery—is by Susan Cianciolo, who has been bridging the worlds of fashion and art in New York for twenty years. In 2001, at the height of her success as a designer—her clothes were selling at Barney’s and had been prominently featured in *Vogue*—Cianciolo inverted Ernst’s fiat, dropping out of the rag trade to become the artist she already was.

In 1995, after stints with Badgley Mischka and Kim Gordon’s X-girl line, Cianciolo launched her own label, Run. It quickly gained a cult following for its willfully homespun garments and friends-and-family approach, in which sewing circles trumped sweatshops, collaborators ranged from Cianciolo’s grandmother to Chloë Sevigny, and distinctions between bespoke, ready-to-wear, and do-it-yourself were a blur. The themes of Run’s collections were quirky, verging on twee; one season, the muses were dust bunnies. The runway shows were just as ludic, staged in art galleries and tea salons. (Cianciolo’s first big art project turned a gallery *into* a tea salon, with a debt to the culinary Conceptualists Gordon Matta-Clark and Rirkrit Tiravanija.) Run was achingly hip, and cool-girl aspiration no doubt played a role in its rise, but authenticity drove its success. It was also part of a Zeitgeist: the style-minded art groups Bernadette Corporation and Art Club 2000 formed around the same time, and Andrea Zittel’s sustainable-fashion Gesamtkunstwerk, A-Z, now based in Joshua Tree, was thriving in Brooklyn.

In the show at Donahue, thirty curio-filled cardboard “kits” rest unpretentiously atop textiles on the gallery floor. It’s a portable survey of Cianciolo’s career, revealing a hunter-gatherer of the flea market and an inveterate archivist of her own process. They’re the shamanic-punk heirs to a lineage of inside-the-box thinkers whose most famous son is Joseph Cornell. (Duchamp’s “Boîte-en-valise,” a retrospective that fits in a suitcase, and the Fluxus multiples known as “Fluxkits” also come to mind.) Guided tours of the kits’ contents are conducted by Donahue on request. Among their treasures: slippers covered in downy feathers, photographs, vintage bloomers, sketches, butterfly wings sewn from linen, a crocheted bikini, stuffed-satin stars, and dolls with wooden-bead heads and Popsicle-stick appendages (made in cahoots with Lilac, the artist’s daughter).

Cianciolo may have turned her back on the business of fashion, but clothing is in her DNA (she now designs one-of-a-kind pieces and teaches at Pratt). As Donahue said recently, while extracting a gossamer child’s cardigan from the depths of one kit for a visitor, “Susan pledges allegiance to the outfit.” Near the entrance to the show, a wall is lined with the costumes Cianciolo designed for a recent German production of “Hamlet,” which paid homage to the coruscating filmmaker Jack Smith, himself no stranger to fantastic outfits. On June 30, the gallery celebrates a new book on that project, with an event co-hosted by the Gladstone gallery. ♦

Liz Hirsch, “Susan Cianciolo: *if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)*”, *Brooklyn Rail*, June 2015, 63.

BROOKLYN RAIL

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

SUSAN CIANCIOLO: *if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)*

BRIDGET DONAHUE | MAY 17 – JULY 5, 2015

BY LIZ HIRSCH



Susan Cianciolo, *if God COMes to visit You, HOW will you know? (the great tetrahedral kite)* (2015). Installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Bridget Donahue. Photo Claire McKinney.

“Think about your grandmother differently,” the artist Robert Kushner said to me last summer, reflecting on the years he spent during the mid-1970s cutting, sewing, and crocheting handmade garments—often out of scavenged and second-hand clothes—then staging them as costumes for live performances and runway shows in downtown New York studio lofts and galleries like Paula Cooper and the Kitchen. Kushner was referring, above, to the questions and challenges he posed of himself and of culture more broadly, at that moment and after, regarding assumptions about gender propriety and the valuation of labor that is culturally ascribed to the domestic sphere rather than to art proper.

Kushner, like many male artists of his own and generations since, speaks about how the maternal space of his youth, and his exposure to skills like crocheting, were crucial to his development as an artist. Wholesale reconsideration of gendered space is a well-understood legacy of feminist experimentation of the 1960s and '70s, thanks to pioneers like Miriam Schapiro. Embedded within this critique is a prying at the perennial tension surrounding the designation of the category of craft. While Mike Kelley took this up in the 1980s, and artists such as Sheila Pepe, Sheila Hicks, and Josh Faught have plotted other trajectories of textile in the expanded field, Susan Cianciolo's work reopens these questions surrounding the matriarch, the amateur, artisanship, and collectivity in the context of the accelerated speed of contemporary cultural production. She does so in a way that crosses these more ambiguous themes with the notion of styling, a mode akin to K8

Hardy's ludic testing of the "outfit." Her embrace of craft is as sincere as it is totally idiosyncratic, that is to say, punk. As is customary in punk, post-punk, or any subculture for that matter, she trades in the minutiae of the scene, but also in that most basic unit of the social structure: the family. It literally gets that tight: fragments of dresses embroidered by Cianciolo's grandmother appear alongside props and toys constructed by her seven-year-old daughter, Lilac Sky, which in turn brush against patterns by Mike Mills, quilts by Coulter Fussell, and photos by Rita Ackermann, Mark Borthwick, Anders Erdström, and many others.

Boxes of different shapes and sizes form the centerpiece of Cianciolo's exhibition at Bridget Donahue. Situated in three neat rows down the central gallery floor, the boxes form aisles, so that you, the viewer, can wander the length as if you were a runway model. Each of these boxes ("kits," as Cianciolo calls them) is placed upon a kind of tapestry: folded, quilted mats, or paper collages, in one instance a knit piece by the designer Zoe Latta with embroidery by Cianciolo. In this "swap meet" meets Duchamp's "Box in a Valise," each package is its own story: variously decorated, intentionally or perhaps unconsciously, to match the contents. There are vast quantities of material here, accumulated over the span of about 20 years, largely relics of the artist's New York-based fashion label RUN, which produced 12 seasons of looks between 1995 and 2001. RUN developed alongside American Manufacturing, United Bamboo, and other home-grown labels representative of downtown New York's DIY culture throughout the '90s, what the collective Bernadette Corporation has called: "THE EMPTY WIDE SPACE trend, a place we can all disappear to, instead of being anti-everything and writing the new manifesto, or instead of being pro-everything and buying the latest CD."

RUN saw considerable success with fashion and art audiences. In 1999, Cianciolo's inclusion in an exhibition staged by Creative Time in the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage prompted critic Roberta Smith to cite her work as reaching a "funky, slacker kind of sublime." The fashion line succeeded commercially until pressures from the industry deterred Cianciolo from growing her production model—which consisted exclusively of handmade garments, already outsourced in a sense, in that they were collectively produced by friends, family, and students in a sewing-circle-type operation—any further.

The kits are densely packed with personal material and references. Apart from "The Source Box Kit" (2015)—the contents of which are suspended from the ceiling in a delightful mobile, a "performance of objects in space," to quote her sketches, a leather briefcase ("Briefcase Kit," 1995–2015) is one of the few containers laying open for everyone to see inside. Inside are stacks of Polaroids, books, drawings, a plastic baggie of torn brown paper, and, on top of a cornflower blue folder, a hot pink post-it note that reads "Love Life" scrawled in red pen. Of course, "Love Life" is a past side project of RUN Collection, but how would you know? It might just as well be a taunt, a gesture towards the secrets that rankle a personal history, that other archive of the creative professional. Legibility becomes a red herring here, as only the most discerning of insiders will get the circuitous references to the many previous lives of Cianciolo's materials. "The underground is now up in the Cloud," remarked the artist Douglas Coupland recently, regarding the increasing placelessness of bohemia. This definitively analog show seems to underscore this point, existing as an unplugged iteration of a very plugged-in practice. "Her project is so inclusive that it begins to resemble a cult," wrote Bernadette Van-Huy of Cianciolo in the first issue of Bernadette Corporation's three-issue fashion magazine *Made in USA*.

if God COMes to visit You, is the first exhibition and is ambitious yet highly selective—not only of Cianciolo's garments, drawings, performances, and videos, but also her vast archive of zines,

research notebooks, backstage photos, animation drawings, screenplays, and related documentation. The show offers an opportunity to connect mentally and viscerally not only with the memory of a downtown scene that ghosts our present, but of a semi-fantastic brand of communalism that may or may not exist depending on who you ask. Curator Alex Fleming's careful combing of the archives and intriguing presentation of documents in the office gallery extends also to a display of costumes in the very front of the space, designed by Cianciolo for Mark von Schlegell and Michael Krebber's 2012 Jack Smith-inspired adaptation of *Hamlet*.

The exhibition's subtitle, *the great tetrahedral kite* has theoretical mileage. Alexander Graham Bell's design for a multi-celled box kite represented, in the late 19th century, a step toward human flight. Indeed the theme of taking flight—of folk religiosity, of utopian aspirations, and perhaps a brand of escapism, is subtly, but persistently, everywhere here. The perpetually packed suitcase, the symbol of a nomadic existence, reminds me of that part in Joan Didion's "The White Album," when she describes the packing list she kept taped inside her closet door in Hollywood while working as a journalist, to help her quickly pull together versatile items like: "pullover sweater," "skirt," "shoes," "bourbon," "mohair throw," and "typewriter." Conscious anonymity in the selection enabled Didion to "pass on either side of the culture." By contrast, Cianciolo's kits are atypical and distinctive, but the notion of mobility, and packaging the mobile self, connects them both to the question of found and chosen community, real or imagined, past and present.

This exhibition is the second to appear at Bridget Donahue's new space on the Bowery, following a monographic survey of the artist and filmmaker Lynn Hershman Leeson, another heretofore overlooked artist pioneering in extreme multimediality. Intriguingly the two seem to have nothing and everything in common, a signal that the program here will be very definitely one to keep watching.

Laura McLean-Ferris, "Susan Cianciolo, New York Critic's Picks", *Artforum Online*, May 2015.

ARTFORUM

New York

Susan Cianciolo

BRIDGET DONAHUE
99 Bowery, 2nd Floor
May 17–June 28

Is it too much to say that the most humane objects—cups, books, shirts, and socks—the things that regularly get intimate with us, often find themselves packed into cardboard boxes? An exhibition of sculptures, costumes, and performance documentation by Susan Cianciolo, "If God Comes to Visit You, How Will You Know? (The Great Tetrahedral Kite)" focuses on the designer and artist's "kits," selections of materials, tools, and ephemera collected in decorated cardboard boxes. Much of the contents are part of Run, her deconstructive fashion line emphasizing customization and personal relationships, for which she collaborated with Bernadette Corporation, Rita Ackermann, and Mike Mills, among others.

Remember Kids Activity Kit, 2004–14, includes a star pin, crystals, elaborately crocheted child-size dresses, skirts, and sweaters, linen fairy wings, clay pieces, inky paintings, and book images. It's difficult to speak of glitter and pins, dolls and bits of string, without feeling twee—but at stake here is the relationship between care, labor, and materials. Other kits contain instructions for making a generic shirt, journals, and sketchbooks, as well as antique and vintage fabrics, which are at once diaristic and instructional. They are small calls to action, ingredients suggesting free-form recipes, invitations to improvise and to depart from standardization: "Make a sweatshirt that's right 4 U!" reads a scrawl on *Do-It-Yourself Sweatshirt Kit*, 2001–15. Performers in a variety of headscarves at the show's opening sat by the boxes and took visitors through their contents. Cianciolo continually reworks the contents of the kits—reconstituting, revising and restarting—offering different reconfigurations to equip for personal care and expression. If most human lives end with boxes, it seems like here that something is carefully trying to begin, and begin, and begin again.



Susan Cianciolo, *Sunburst Kit / Doll In Parts*, 2014, cotton doll parts, knit batten, crochet hat, wedding dress collection, cardboard, watercolor on paper, magazine tearsheets, tape, digital prints, collage from *Angels Do Exist*, *Purple* magazine photos on quilt, 10 1/2 x 54 x 37".

— Laura McLean-Ferris

Michele Filgate, "Sacred Objects", *Interview Magazine*, May 2015, 62.

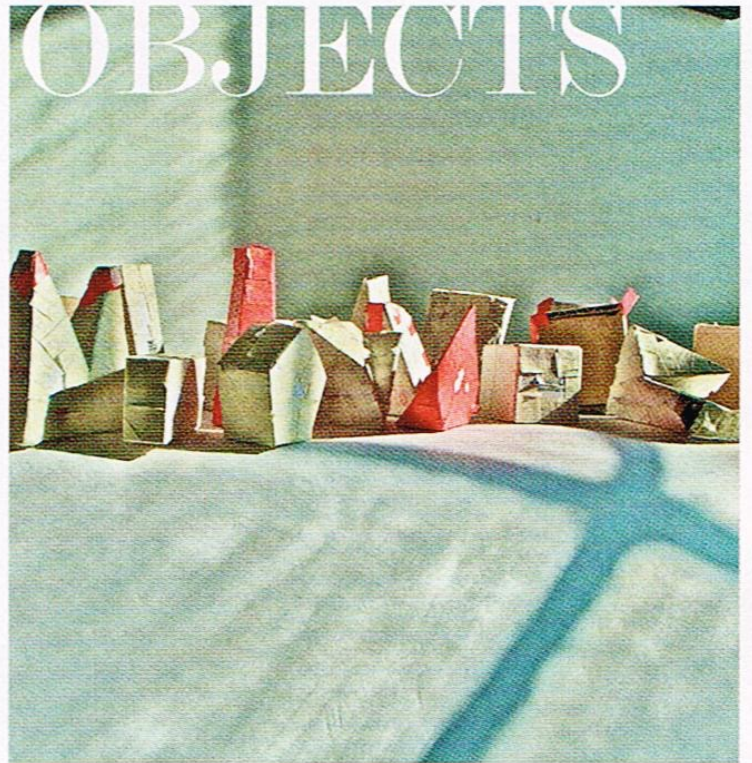
Interview

SACRED OBJECTS

The title of Susan Cianciolo's exhibit, opening this month at New York's Bridget Donahue gallery, hails in part from a mantra she heard at an ashram: "If God comes to visit you, how will you know (the great tetrahedral kite)?"

Cianciolo started out as a downtown artist and fashion designer in the 1990s and has built something of a cult following for her experimental, mixed-media work. Her *Box Kits*, which are "Fluxus-inspired pieces" that incorporate photography, objects, and collage

media, are, for her, "a form of prayer boxes, in a sense." Accompanying handsewn archive books bring context to the sprawling contents. Spanning 20 years of work, the show also includes multimedia components such as a lecture series, films curated by Asher Penn, music composed and performed by Propheta, along with various collaborations with photographers and others. For Cianciolo, "How I document these pieces and who I work with becomes a holy grail or sacred text." —MICHELE FILGATE



Mimi Vu, “Susan Cianciolo Heads Up a Home Goods Collective”, *New York Times*, *T Magazine*, December 2, 2014.



BY DESIGN

Susan Cianciolo Heads Up a Home-Goods Collective

DESIGN, WOMEN'S FASHION | BY MIMI VU | DECEMBER 2, 2014 4:00 PM



The Run Home collection of handmade housewares includes table linens and ceramics. Credit Jung Kim

Since the mid-1990s, the artist-designer-filmmaker Susan Cianciolo has been a fixture on New York’s avant-garde art and fashion scene. A bona fide cult figure, she produces not only hand-crafted clothing that is both high-concept and homespun, but also a body of drawings, videos and performance pieces exploring the social relationships behind her creations. Throughout her career, she’s been championed by everyone from Sonic Youth’s Kim Gordon to *Vogue* — which, during the millennial peak of New York’s downtown fashion scene (when names such as Miguel Adrover, As Four and Bruce came to the fore), enthusiastically advocated for what it called her “home-ec-y” aesthetic.

Now, Cianciolo has taken that fireside ethos to the realm of home goods, teaming up with her onetime assistant Kiva Motnyk to head up a collective of artisans making domestic wares using traditional techniques. The first collection, called Run Home and created under the auspices of Motnyk’s Thompson Street Studios, debuts today at Ralph Pucci International and features an array of items both earthy and ethereal. There are quilts by the Mississippi-based Coulter Fussell and the Paris-based Jessica Ogden (who also happens to make them for A.P.C.), pillows by the designer Julio Espada, ceramics by Jasiu Krajewski, textiles by the Eckhaus Latta co-designer Zoe Latta, photographs by Wallace Lester and tapestries and kimonos by Cianciolo herself.

Collaboration has always been at the heart of Cianciolo’s work. Her custom garments — painstakingly draped on clients’ bodies, then handmade in-house — have always stressed process as much as product, highlighting the intimate social bonds that have traditionally governed the act of dressmaking. Cianciolo has stated that her own family is her dearest inspiration. Likewise, Motnyk, during her years working for Calvin Klein and Isaac Mizrahi, always dreamed of establishing an artisan studio. At Thompson Street Studios, the two foster an atmosphere in which participating artists work closely together, exchanging ideas and support as part of what they describe as a “globalized sewing circle.” Many of the pieces originated as prints or drawings by one member, for example, and then went on to be transformed into decorative objects by another.

Future projects that Cianciolo and Motnyk have planned include a store and a studio in Mississippi where quilters can gather and work. “There’s been a breakdown of our craft infrastructure,” Motnyk says, “and we want to help bring it back in a small way.” And as Cianciolo puts it, “The artisans you surround yourself with become family, and make an eclectic conversation.”

Available at Ralph Pucci International, 44 West 18th Street, New York, ralphpucci.net.

Asher Penn, “Susan Cianciolo ‘Everything was handmade’”, *Sex Magazine*, Issue #9, Fall 2014.

sex

Susan Cianciolo

"Everything was handmade."

Interview by Asher Penn

Portrait by Wallace Lester



Susan Cianciolo is a pioneer of American Independent Fashion. Finding her start in the alongside experimental 90's art brands Bernadette Corporation, Imitation of Christ and Mended Viel, Susan Cianciolo's signature frayed stitching and handmade alterations of thrift finds became an influential aesthetic for decades to come, seen today on Etsy. Despite constantly shifting trends and economics Susan has maintained a prolific and consistent career without compromise or expansion, allowing her to create and share truly unique clothing, artworks and experiences.

Where are you from?

I'm from Rhode Island. I grew up in Maine with my dad part-time, but mostly I was in the inner city right outside of Providence. I grew up with my mom and grandparents there.

What did your parents do?

My dad has done real estate his whole life and had an antique business as well. My mom worked in a prison most of her life. She was a counselor for men's maximum high security. Later on, she became a parole coordinator planner. I remember taking trips to the women's prison on Christmas, working with a lot of different nuns, getting presents for the women that had kids. But she never allowed me to go into the men's prison.

I read in an interview that your mom also made dolls. What were they like?

It could be anything you could imagine. It was always different. I remember one year, we recycled all our walnut shells and that was a little bed for all these dolls and then they became ornaments. She also made me a dollhouse with little curtains, little paintings. It was such a work of art, every little shingle.

Was a lot of stuff handmade for you growing up?

Every sweater I owned was hand-knit. Everyone wore hand-knit slippers. Growing up, my dresses were completely made by hand — whatever you can think of—the curtains, the blankets on the beds.

How did you end up making your own clothes?

My mom bought me a subscription to Vogue. That's how I started. I asked her if I could go buy some Vogue patterns and start making things.

Did you want to dress cooler?

It was more that I was embarrassed to be brought up so poor. Here I was, in this house with grandparents and a great-grandmother, and everyone else had cars and lived in cool houses and had a regular mom-and-dad life. As a teenager it is so humiliating to not be like everyone else and be cool.

"RUN KIT Collection", children's box kit shown at Maryam Nassir Zadeh, 2012

How did you learn to sew?

I learned from a woman who made wedding dresses. I went to Catholic school with her daughter, who was my best friend at the time. So, I asked my friend's mom if she would give me lessons. We'd meet in the evenings. I remember being in the basement and she was so good, I was so thankful she had the patience to teach me.

You went to Catholic school?

Yeah, but it was very experimental. The principal was a feminist nun who ran all these programs in the prison. She was super strong, smart—a real renegade of a nun. There weren't separate grades, so the freshman and seniors were all together. There were no classes either: you had three-month blocks where you did just one subject. I decided I'd create an art studio class for myself. I just sat and drew forever and ever. We didn't have any sports. There was a lot of hanging out and smoking.

What was your religious upbringing?

Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, and Episcopalian.

Wait, how does that happen?

At age four, I decided I was going to become Pentecostal. I joined with this family that had a church down the street. I spent all my time with them, went on tours with them in their station wagon to meet families, or just stay there all day and read the Bible. My dad was Sicilian Roman Catholic, so I would do that when I was with him, and my mom decided to become Episcopalian so I would do that with her.

Were you spiritual from a young age?

Yes, my mom talks about that too. She said it was really scary, very shocking for a young person. I remember giving her talks starting around the age of four.

Talks?

Religious talks. Which is weird because she's always seemed like such a saint in the ways that she's helped so many. And I always wanted to be like that.

Doing good with what you do?



I was really tortured inside. How could I choose fashion when my mom's working at the prison? Couldn't I pick a better way to help humanity? But I couldn't get it out of my head—fashion and art—and I didn't know how that could possibly help anything.

Was the first time you came to New York to attend Parsons?

Yeah, I was 17. We came for the interview and I just said to myself, "I love this place." It was so exciting. I was honestly so shocked by all the other people. It was a big deal. People on my block didn't ever go away, let alone go to college. We had loans and financial aid and all of that stuff.

Haya Maraka for "Hearts Open to Revelation Sky" Collection, 2011. Photo: Rosalie Knox

What did you focus on? Apparel?

My parents did not want me to do fine art. I had to do a year of marketing, merchandising, advertising, and then go into fashion. They said I could do art on the side. It's funny, a lot of the professors kind of begged me to go into fine arts. It was looked at like, "fashion is evil." When I got into the fashion program, every professor said I should be in the fine arts.

You started collaborating with Bernadette Corporation when you were a student. How did you meet them?

Through Seth Shapiro. I don't know how we met, but we'd sit around and talk about God a lot and he asked me to model for him. Then I helped him sew pieces for his first collections. I really wanted to help him. I loved what he was doing. Then I met his cousin Bernadette and joined in on Bernadette Corporation for the performances.

I didn't know you modeled.

I like the fact that I got to know what it was like to be the subject, whether I was treated badly or if it was exciting. I was glad I would always know the rest of my life what that person would feel like if I was to be dressing them and directing them and how hard it is, how much your feet hurt, all the stuff you go through. All the pain was so worth it for that experience.

Were you working while you were at school?

I was lucky. I worked at Bergdorf Goodman and did the murals for all the windows. They gave me so much freedom it was unbelievable. I got to do all the fashion illustrations for all the boutiques, and giant murals in the windows and be up on ladders. I learned how to paint really large scale and just do whatever I wanted in there. I was also working as a fashion illustrator and had graphic design jobs.

Collage from screenplay for "Pro-Abortion Anti Pink" collection with Aaron Rose and Phil Frost, 1995

You also worked for X-Girl...

And Badgley Mischka. They make evening dresses for the Oscars.

Wow. So you were really good at executing work that wasn't really your own?

I feel like it's a good skill. It's really hard. It feels like my soul is dying inside. Around the time I started working at Badgley Mischka, I started really intensely doing my own work. And I always did both, but I was really pushing a lot by the end and never sleeping and then when I left them, I just knew I was immediately ready to open my first collection.

What was your first collection?



I had a boyfriend that really wanted me to clean my act up, get a job, and be more professional. After I left that job and I broke up with him, I said to myself, "I am ready." I got back in touch with Rita Ackerman and showed her all my drawings for my new collection and she said they were great. Then I showed Bernadette and she said, "OK, I'll style it," and Gabriel Asfour helped me. Then we asked Andrea Rosen if I could do my first show there.

That's really brave of you.

I know... You can't just go open a collection. People really did everything they could to convince me, and I was scared to death.

What inspires a collection?

I get these insights or messages. I don't know if you would call it a vision—it's like this lightbulb pops up and tells me, "This is what you're going to do next," and I just put on this tunnel vision and I do it and I never deviate. I dedicate my whole life to every show. I used to push myself to death, like actual hospitalization. I felt like I had to sacrifice my whole self. It's always been sacred to me. It's this offering, and I'm willing to accept if it's hated or if it's loved or if no one comes or if 2,000 people come—it doesn't matter.



RUN 7 Tag, 1998

Where does the name Run come from?

When I was 15, I was training as a runner, racing for medals, whatever. Then I met this high school girl down the street that was much older than me and she asked if I would train with her every night, and we'd do hurdles. My mom didn't believe me. She would sneak down in the car and watch the track. She thought I was out there doing drugs.

Haha.



I was really into running. And now I see I connect it to work. I had to switch to something else because I'm so messed up from it. It's hard on the body. Running is such a basic thing and it came from that deep love. During the Bernadette Corporation times, I would sign everything as Run and then when I was going out—my very few moments doing graffiti with Phil Frost—that was my tag. I realized you can pick really mundane, banal words and you can transform them and then they have other meanings. Like with Bernadette Corporation, we were running from responsibility or anything to do with society. Then it became Run Collection, because the studio became so big at one point. It was this giant collective of artists and Run represented the studio.

Film still of "Pro-Abortion Anti Pink", 1995. Photo: Cris Moor

The first way I learned about your work was from photos in fashion magazines. The photos were always really different. When I began, I really hated fashion shoots. They would make me feel really claustrophobic and I watched them turn into something else in the industry, all this glamour and fluff. I started to remove myself from press and photo shoots because I would get anxiety attacks from the whole experience. Then I met Marcello Krasilic and he started shooting my shows, and photographing me, and doing photo shoots with my clothes. I felt like I had died and gone to heaven, his aesthetic felt like it was my brain. I felt that with Rosalie Knox, too, and Mark Borthwick. They're all very honest.



You seem to switch your self-identification between fashion designer and artist.

Right now, I don't feel at all like a fashion designer. I love fashion with all my heart, but I don't feel a connection with it right now. I don't mean to be confusing, I feel myself to be an artist now, but that's been on and off. It's a curse because it's always so up and down.

I'm sure your patrons don't care. What is your relationship like with clients?

I end up being so in love with my patrons. It's a relationship of deep support and understanding. It's very real, as real as it gets. I would bend over backwards for

them and I'll do any kind of special detail or work. It doesn't matter to me how much they're paying, and most of the time, across the board, they convince me that they want to pay me more. They always double the price—because they know the value. They're not messing around with me.

You wear your own clothes a lot, too.

I mostly used to wear it just so I would know how things felt, especially because we were doing such big production numbers for each collection. Recently I've been really enjoying feeling what it's like in other people's clothes and having that experience. I like all kinds of feelings of clothes. I'm not just into comfort.

How did you start making children's clothes?

I made a ton of dolls for friends who had kids, before I ever had kids. I'm sure I made kids' clothes too. Then I made my daughter Lilac a ton of things and when she got to a certain age, she said, "Sell it, sell it." Since I would always put Lilac in the show, I'd make some things for the show for her friends. Clients began seeing I had all these children's clothes and wanted to buy them.

Lilac likes being in the shows?

Oh yeah. When she walks on stage and sees all the people she brightens up. She wants to be in the show, she wants to help, she wants to be a part of it. Now she's become so much of a director that she wants to say how everything should be.

So she is also a collaborator?

I swear she always adds a better touch. It's so much more courageous. We disagree a lot, but it's great to have her collaborative aspect. There's just so much she's added to pieces that have made them 1,000 times better. And it's a way we can get along.

How have you remained independent for so long?

Well, you have to roll with the punches. I know that when a recession hits luxury items are the first things people drop. But I was never afraid to starve because I grew up so poor I never had anything to lose. I was fine if I was homeless. I went two weeks without food, knowing things would come around. Through all the ups and downs I found a perfect rhythm. Where I'm at now, after so much learning and risk taking, it was all worth it.



Mixed Media, Rhode Island, 2013

“Quilts and Star Belts”, *Ravelin Magazine*, August 12, 2014.



FASHION | 08.12.2014

SUSAN CIANCIOLO

QUILTS AND STAR BELTS

Susan Cianciolo's show *Quilts and Star Belts* opens today Friday, August 1st, 2014 as part of Pinehurst Artist Residency at Yalo Studio. The show is on view from now until September 12, 2014.

In the heart of Water Valley in the hill country of Mississippi, Cianciolo's deep connection to American folklore and craft history aligned with a local community steeped in the tradition of handmade quilts and textiles. The exhibition includes Cianciolo's watercolors and works on paper that illustrate her fashion concepts. These designs inform the language contained in two flags and three large-scale wall hangings. Cianciolo used scraps of distressed burlap and other found objects including sections of vintage quilts, embroidered napkins, faded denim swatches and spools of vintage thread to create abstract geometric patchworks to form the centerpiece of the exhibition.

In an adjacent space, Cianciolo reinvented a tattered American flag found in the attic at the Pinehurst Residency farmhouse. It serves as a quiet memorial to the former owner of the farm, Mark Lapides, who died suddenly at the age of 51 of cancer. Cianciolo's poignant gesture subtly integrated the racially diverse and divided community. One local African-American woman sang praise to Cianciolo for inventing the new flag of Mississippi.

During the making of the exhibition, Yalo studio served as a workshop space where master sewers of all ages formed daily sewing circles, helping Cianciolo create these unique pieces. Cianciolo assembled as cast of models by word of mouth, from toddlers and Ole Miss university students to local pageant contestants from rural Yalobusha County. The group participated in a one-night performance held in the empty storefront adjacent to Yalo Gallery where a blues trio jammed to the parade of models who entered the space and walked in a circle around what was now being referred to as the 'new flag of Mississippi'.

Photos Courtesy of Susan Cianciolo



Laura Gardner, “Clothes for the Body, Clothes for the Home: An Interview with Susan Cianciolo”, *Vestoj*, September 2, 2014.

VESTOJ

THE JOURNAL OF SARTORIAL MATTERS

INTERVIEW

CLOTHES FOR THE BODY, CLOTHES FOR THE HOME

An Interview with Susan Cianciolo

by Laura Gardner

IN MANY WAYS SUSAN Cianciolo’s work evades a formal category. For the most part she is a designer, but also maker, artist, director, among other roles that allow her to create her exhibitions and performances. Her body of work is similarly multi-faceted, with the products she creates under her own name as well as her brand RUN (a label she started in 1995 and has recently revived) consisting of anything from clothing, to tapestries and drink coasters. Each item is part of a whole experience in which clothes, and the way we use and wear them, have a critical role. Her clothes and products which are typically hand-made and finished in Cianciolo’s New York studio, have appeared in exhibitions, retail spaces and pop up restaurant projects across the world. Cianciolo’s work draws on the sensation of wearing, for instance her pop up restaurant creates a dining experience by curating every aspect from food and interiors to the garments worn by the service staff.

From a formal fashion education, to an informal art education, Cianciolo’s practice spans two decades and resides in both of these contexts. Her performances and exhibitions during the Nineties with figures like Bernadette Van-Huy and Rita Ackermann inform a body of work that subverts fashion, though not always overtly so. This living archive is crucial to Cianciolo’s practice, and she constantly draws from her past output, repurposing clothes into new projects and in the process reminding us that fashion can be a continuum – an ongoing process that doesn’t necessarily forget itself with the rigour that mainstream fashion sometime suggests.



Laura: Could you explain your practice as a fashion designer and talk us through how you put a collection together?

Susan: This is actually a question I am always asking myself since I don’t create a collection in the formal sense, even though it’s a body of work that includes clothing. For example, in a few days I’m leaving for Mississippi for a show at Yalo Studio, this is a gallery in a community steeped in the tradition of quilting

and textiles. The reason I took this residency, brought about by the Pine Hurst Artist Residency, is because I like going to different locations where I merge with a new environment. So what I'm doing right now is preparing a collection of clothing or products for the project. I decided for the project to go into my archives and add pieces from it, for example I'm using these body suits from a performance I did at MMK in Frankfurt. I am always looking through my archive and pattern library and pulling things out to recreate them in a new context.

Laura: So it's part of an ongoing process...

Cover of Katrin Thomas book 'Exits, Living Fashion', featuring RUN 2 collection

Susan: The clothing is one part of these projects, they might also involve a performance, drawings, film or animation. It is just one of the mediums in my work. I don't sit down and plan for a season. It all depends on what the exhibition or project is and I make specific pieces for each context. After that private clients come to me, or friends like the retailer Maryam Nassir Zadeh, who sells my work in her shop. But all this happens after, and it's not something I plan for.



Laura: When you say 'performance', what exactly does this mean in the context of your work? Are we talking about a traditional runway presentation?

Susan: It can be anything really, in the last performance I did for an exhibition at Mito Contemporary Art Center (which was later shown at MIMOCA) in Japan I cast girls that worked in local galleries and museums and customised my garments to them. I've also worked on projects with a pop up restaurant that travels to various private homes, and for this I create a dining experience for the visitors. We dress the staff in costumes that we've made, so it's a visual performance as well as an experience through the food, and then there's the music and all the details of the event. Every aspect is hand-made and connected to the experience.

Susan Cianciolo at her recent exhibition at MIMOCA, Japan, 2014

Laura: So it's almost the reverse of the way traditional fashion works in that, instead of putting clothing on a pedestal or catwalk, you're bringing it back into a more intimate context.

Susan: I'm creating an experience or sensation with the clothes, it's important to me that the presentation of the products is as natural as the process, to show

that all the aspects are equal and accessible. Most of the garments and homewares are completely made by hand, so it's a very tailored and labour intensive process. I also try to re-use my archive of works and keep adding or adapting past designs but we also keep making new pieces.

Laura: How is your studio structured? Do you have a production team?

Susan: It changes, but right now there are three people in the studio, which is quite a big team for me. I stopped doing production some years ago because I needed such a big team to do it in-house. At the moment I'm collaborating with Kiva Motnyk in Soho and we're recreating RUN Home collection, which is something we began in the Nineties, so we have a team at her studio and I have a team here at my studio developing the collection, and it goes back and forth.

Laura: What's the thinking behind revisiting a past RUN collection into your current way of working?

Susan: I'm always going back into my archive and using original pieces from RUN in new projects, so there's never a sense of new or old for me. And Kiva and I have been working together for so long there was a real understanding of how we could do something similar in a new context: this collaboration was born from that complicity.



Laura: How does the collection work?

Susan: RUN Home is a collection for the home, and comes out of RUN, the label I originally worked with when I started out making clothes. The collection is made up of all kinds of products for the interior, from bedding to drink coasters. What I'm doing now is making clothes that work with the Home collection, for example a hand-made pillow set comes with a kimono to wear. I'm taking a holistic approach; it's continuum of my work with one-of-a-kind pieces. We're also collaborating with other people: artists and clothing designers like Jessica Ogden and Zoe Latta, Hans Gillickson, who is making furniture, and we have ceramics made by Jasiu Krajewski. So we spend a lot of time seeking out collaborators. But the wearable aspect, like the kimonos, reflects what you would wear if you were in your home, so it is an imagining of what a home space would look like.

Printed matter for a flyer for a pop up restaurant, and a RUN collection opening December 4, 2014.

Laura: How do you exercise control over an aesthetic when you collaborate in this way?

Susan: Well we approach like-minded artisans so that our aesthetics join together. With Kiva, since we've worked together for so long, we already have an understanding of an aesthetic for the collection, so we know if it works or if it doesn't. We share a common language.

Laura: In light of the topic of 'slowness', the theme for the next print issue of Vestoj, is sustainability a conscious aspect of you work?

Susan: A lot of people ask me this and it isn't something I sought out, but it's always existed in my way of working. As 'sustainability' became really popular, I got brought into the conversation, but it's not something I do consciously. I'm not waving the flag of the eco-friendly designer; I feel it's much broader than that. Most of my textiles are either organic or vintage, and I'm constantly repurposing in my studio, so sustainability just happens naturally.

Laura: In terms of your artistic approach and philosophy, I wondered how you see clothes and their role in our everyday lives? How do you hope that your garments are used and worn?

Susan: I don't have any expectation actually, but I would say that I feel a lot of love towards the clients who buy my garments. It's a very intimate relationship between a designer and a wearer. For a personal client, the pieces are custom-made or they've bought pieces for so many years that we have a really close relationship. These clients understand my clothes so deeply, and the amount of sewing that goes into the pieces as well as the level of care. I never project how I want a piece of clothing to be worn, they're free to do what they want with them.

Laura: Since your process is so personal, I wonder if there are particular aspects of the fashion industry that you react to, or are trying to subvert? Your earlier work was more overtly subversive, how does that compare to how you work now?

Susan: Earlier I was really trying to be subversive. I was trying to make a point and it was my goal to be as subversive as I could possibly be; I guess I did a good job. But now I realise that I don't have to try so hard, it just comes naturally by working in a different way to the mainstream. I don't think there is even the slightest bit of me needing to rebel anymore, it's more about accepting that my work will always stand out as different to the fashion industry.

Laura: Could you discuss your earlier work, with artists like Rita Ackermann and Bernadette Corporation, a bit further? Were you exploring specific ideas at this time and do they still come into your work?

Susan: When I remember those first presentations, for me that was the beginning of making a show. What set it apart was very subtle. For example, for the first show I did at the Andrea Rosen Gallery on Spring Street in New York, I put tape on the floor to mark the runway for the models, which at that time seemed so different, but it was just all I had to offer. The first model had a switch-blade that she flipped while she was on the runway, an action that echoed the aesthetic of the clothes. Bernadette Van-Huy (of the art collective Bernadette Corporation) had sliced the tank tops off the shoulder. We also had cheap wigs for the hairstyles and I was really experimenting with styling, so the subversion came out of our resourcefulness and experimentation.



The second show we did was in an abandoned parking garage. A friend drove around and picked up these wooden planks used for shipping crates which we covered in brown paper and used as the runway. I also had the makeup artist do really heavy makeup, so the models looked ugly and sickly in a way. So like the first show, it was very raw and through these aspects, it became a subversive statement.

For the third show, I presented a film, 'Pro Abortion Anti-Pink' which collaborated with different photographers who had never made films before, like Terry Richardson, Annette Aurell, Chris Moor, Cheryl Dunn, Marcelo Krasilcic, Tobin Yelland and myself and we each made a vignette. During the fashion show, the band No Neck Blues played and it was so loud that it was quite bothersome to the audience. It was always one thing after another, and it wasn't about money, it was just ideas and experiments. I think all this work came about from not having any resources, just your brain and your creativity.

A flyer from a 1993 performance with Bernadette Corporation.

Laura: Were you trying to work more in an art context? Or was it a fashion vernacular you were working with?

Susan: Well I didn't have a strategy back then, but now there's a lot of planning in the way that I work. At the time I was married to Aaron Rose who owned Alleged Gallery, so half of my existence was in the art world. I think I was making art, but not intentionally. So many interviewers would ask me 'is it art or fashion'? Having to decide which to align with felt very stressful at the time because back then no one was doing both. But eventually I just thought why not, and why couldn't I?

Susan Cianciolo, “Susan Cianciolo’s Top Ten”, *Artforum*, February 2011.

ARTFORUM

FEBRUARY 2011

TOP TEN

Susan Cianciolo

Susan Cianciolo is an artist and fashion designer who lives and works in New York. Since the early 1990s she has been collaborating with friends and other artists on projects such as her Run clothing label (1995–2001), Run Restaurant at New York’s former Alleged Gallery, and The Lilac Spaceship Fanzine. This month during New York Fashion Week, Cianciolo will launch her new ready-to-wear line, SC3, as well as a special couture collection featuring textile collaborations with Hinaya and Akira Minagawa.

1

HINAYA (KYOTO)

Founded by living textile master Akihiko Izukura, who inherited generations of technical knowledge from his family, Hinaya is one of the few manufacturers that handle the entire process of garment design and production under their own roofs. Here brilliant kimonos are made from bare fibers dyed with pigment derived from raw sources (seed pods, plant extracts, minerals) and woven on wooden machines that Izukura designed to run at the same pace as a person. While Hinaya’s techniques are highly sophisticated, each process remains tactile, the individual elements never abstracted too far from their origins.



Fabric being hung to dry after the dyeing process, Hinaya textile factory. Kyoto, 2010. © Hinaya Inc.

2

HONKE OWARIYA (KYOTO)

I have had the honor and pleasure of eating at this centuries-old noodle house many times, often dining with my friend Ariko Inaoka—a photographer known for her dreamy shots of domestic interiors and faraway places. Recently, Ariko has become more involved with the restaurant. Of course, her relationship to it is a special one: As

pastry chefs to the royal court (when Kyoto was still the capital of Japan), it was her family that founded the operation more than five hundred years ago. I am very lucky to have been their guest, watching and smelling their famous soba cookies being made as I climbed the stairs to their home above the shop.

3

OCCULTER (NEW YORK)

Honeycomb necklaces made of gold, scrimshaw pendants fashioned from salvaged piano keys, a rare book collection installed to seemingly defy gravity—the things that Derrick Cruz creates look like they come from some magical old-world place. But in discussing his newly opened store at 83 1/2 Orchard Street, the artist and jewelry designer explained that occulter is in fact the term for “an instrument used to block the view of a bright celestial object, allowing the careful observation of a fainter one.” Such a description could just as easily describe Cruz himself, his vision always clearing space for others to expand theirs.

4

RITA ACKERMANN AND HARMONY KORINE, "SHADOW FUX" (SWISS INSTITUTE, NEW YORK, 2010)

Rita and I lived together, sharing a studio for a few years in the mid-1990s. Each day I'd watch her work grow and would always get a good feeling inside seeing what new things she'd made. At the Swiss Institute, her paintings on blown-up stills from Harmony's recent film *Trash Humpers* generated the same—a deep sense of mystery, excitement, and always love.

Rita Ackermann and Harmony Korine, Trouble Is Coming, 2010, acrylic on vinyl, enamel spray paint, ink on canvas, 117 x 60"

5

ANDREA DIODATI

A young performance artist, filmmaker, and designer with no fear of color or shape, Diodati creates things that are fresh and so alive. She makes clothes from other clothes and scraps that she finds, letting her seams be crooked and her stitching show. She wears these garments every day but also uses them in her performances—which makes sense, as Diodati's art, far from showing the practiced stoicism of someone like Marina Abramović, is a direct extension of her everyday effervescent self.



6

TAKASHI HOMMA AT GALLERY 360° (TOKYO)

When it opened in the early '80s, Gallery 360° made a latter-day home for Fluxus in Japan. The husband-and-wife team that run it have since taken on many other artists (both old-school and contemporary), including my friend Takashi Homma, who spent the early '90s shooting for *i-D* magazine and the rest of the decade recording Tokyo's periphery, its crevices, and the people who pass through these spaces. Homma's presence is so gentle; through his lens you can see humanity in what might at first appear to be the bleakest places.

Spread from Takashi Homma, Tokyo and My Daughter (Nieves, 2006).

7

"NOT IN FASHION: FASHION AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE 1990S" (MUSEUM FÜR MODERNE KUNST, FRANKFURT, 2010)

A kind of imagemaking came about in the '90s that was more than just photography; it embodied an aesthetic that extended to an entire contemporary ethos—a new way in which we understood ourselves as travelers, writers, and social bodies. In Frankfurt the selection of work represented this powerfully: photos by Anders Edström of Martin Margiela's models standing around, Helmut Lang's backstage shot by Juergen Teller, an installation of Mark Borthwick's portraits that extended onto the floor with lit candles and food . . . I staged a performance showing my work too, and revisiting everyone else's during the week I spent working in MMK's galleries brought me back to a very beautiful time.



View of “Not in Fashion,” 2010, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt. On wall: Nigel Shafran, *Moonflower Concert Onboard the Thekla Bristol*, 1991. Photo: Axel Schneider.

8

KRISTEN STEWART IN JAKE SCOTT'S *WELCOME TO THE RILEYS*, 2010

I am mesmerized by Kristen Stewart's style. In *The Runaways* (2010) she wasn't just dressed as Joan Jett—she channeled her. In *Welcome to the Rileys*, Stewart plays an underage hooker. Most of the time, though, we just see her in baggy jeans and T-shirts. Yet there's a way in which even that nonstyle style truly becomes her. Her sense of realness, of a naturally defensive elegance, inspires me.

9

HERE AND THERE MAGAZINE

One of Japan's most thoughtful and innovative writers, Nakako Hayashi has been single-handedly

directing *Here and There* since its first issue in 2002, asking many of the people who were involved with the early issues of *Purple* and *Purple Prose* to contribute. Nakako is also a mother, and the themes of *Here and There* come from her life experience —“Unexpected Traveling,” “Blue Moments”—things that tend to reflect raw beauty more than gloss.

10

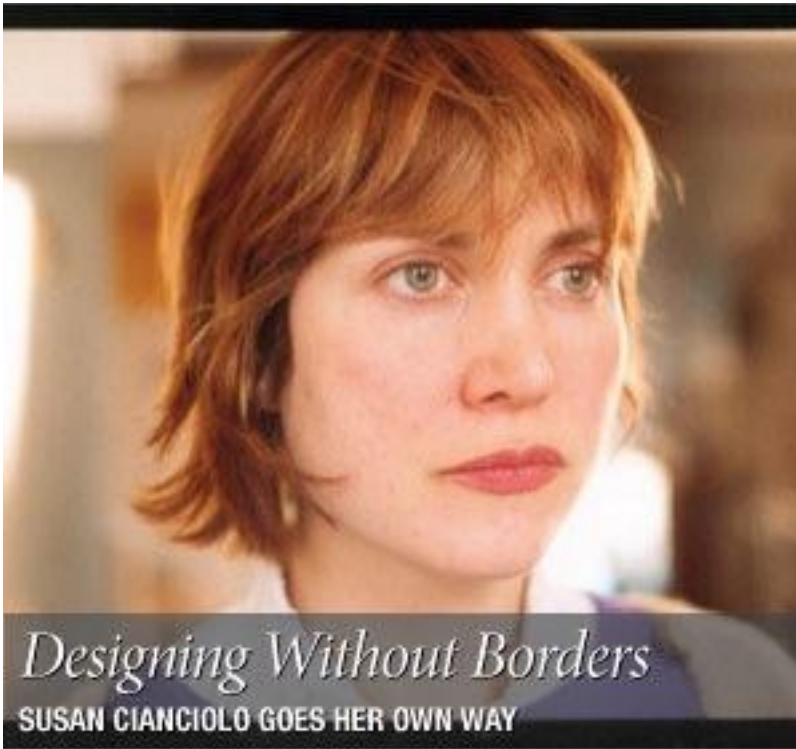
THE TEXTILES OF AKIRA MINAGAWA

I came to know this designer's work when we taped a talk show together (organized by Nakako Hayashi) at Kyoto's Café Bibliotic Hello. Working mainly under the label name Minä Perhonen, Minagawa makes garments and coverings with the most exquisite prints, many of which are narrative—depicting a zoo, a nap (the way the sky might look if you were just waking up from one), or a forest, and all in the most brilliant colors. Both of us got our start in 1995, and I'm in complete awe of how he produces what he produces.

Two looks by Minä Perhonen (Akira Minagawa) for the 2010–11 autumn/winter collection.



“Designing Without Borders”, *Blackbook*, June 6, 2011.



BLACKBOOK

With all the breathless press surrounding the weeks-long kerfuffle that is New York Fashion Week, it's hard to believe there are designers who go unnoticed. Harder still is it to believe that they do it by choice. Susan Cianciolo is one such designer. While hardly a household name, Cianciolo has been operating behind the scenes for over twenty years, and has amassed some serious cred by associating with the right people. (She helped out with Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth's X-girl label, for example). When asked what it means to be a designer operating outside the traditional fashion system, Cianciolo says simply, "There is a new frontier!"

In 2001, Cianciolo had what every fashion designer longs for: a successful line, great press, and a loyal fan base. It was at that moment that she decided to walk away from it all. Although she had the professional success she dreamed of, she admits, "It felt very empty."

Cianciolo believed her work made more sense as art than as fashion. Her former collaborator and the current creative director of Isaac Mizrahi, Kiva Motnyk, agrees. "Susan is by nature an artist and a teacher," she says. Like those who share her artistic spirit, Cianciolo sees no distinction between mediums. She has exhibited her clothing, fashion drawings, films, and books based on her collections in New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo. "Books and films have also lent themselves very well to my craft," says Cianciolo. "Fashion shows and exhibitions are the same to me. I put the same effort and focus into them."

Today, Cianciolo calls her work "fashion meets performance art." Each piece she designs is effectively couture, available only in custom orders. Although Cianciolo now shows each fashion week, exactly how she does so depends on that season's work. She says that each collection comes as "a vision," where the key is "matching an appropriate counterpart" to the clothing. Unlike traditional fashion shows that are confined to runways, Cianciolo experiments with different presentation formats. For her F/W 2011 season, called "When Buildings Meet the Sky," Cianciolo presented her collection as a play, written by Andrea Diodati, entitled *She Stories of the Sky*. Over the thirty-minute presentation, the crowd was blessed with sage, danced around by the non-model models (one of whom was Susan's daughter Lilac), and learned about "sky children's wisdoms." Being blessed with sage is nice, but fashion is still a business, no matter what the sky children say. While Susan admits that "selling pieces is definitely the goal," she also aspires to change the nature of the business itself. Intimacy takes precedent in the Susan Cianciolo model; the fun of her job is "seeing clients fall in love with the pieces" that she makes. Surely, much of her counter-mainstream inspiration – and her rebellious spirit – came from working at X-girl.

Cianciolo remembers her time with Kim Gordon fondly. Motnyk remember helping Susan create her first collections: "I worked with Susan during *Run*, a collection that ran from 1995-2001, and sitting in a sewing circle with the design team, creating the

collection that would be later sold at Barneys.” By focusing her craft on a core set of beliefs, Susan eschews the manufacturing issues most designers grapple with by producing all her clothing in-house and by hand. Being involved in every aspect of the design process is what sets Susan apart from other designers. “She maintains a human touch in all her designs. Each garment is its own, and cannot be duplicated,” says Motnyk.

Susan is very much a word-of-mouth designer, the kind most likely whispered-about by lithe in-the-know types over tea in Chinatown. Patron and supporter Mary Barone first learned about Cianciolo in the “pre-internet days,” flipping through Vogue or WWD. Unlike other designers who’ve embraced reality TV and social media, Cianciolo shies away from such modern amenities. “I don’t even know what a twitter is,” she says. Cianciolo’s most commercial endeavor in recent years was to produce a diffusion line called SC3. While some designer’s presences are inescapable, by her own design, Susan must be chased down.

Susan’s journey to a designer on the edge of the industry has “helped carve the path,” Motnyk says, for “other unique designers such as Rodarte.” Susan is indeed a fashion inspiration with a few admirers,” says Mary Barone. For Cianciolo, it’s about keeping your eyes to the future: “Now is some of the greatest and most powerful times of extreme creation. There is such an incredible openness to new meanings and boundaries. There is a new frontier!”

“A Sunday with Susan Cianciolo”, *Dis Magazine*, March 2010.



A Sunday with Susan

DIS welcomes Spring with a Sunday picnic, celebrating looks from the many collections of designer Susan Cianciolo. We invited our friends Donna Persona, Rumi Misabu, Aaron, Edie Fake, Joseph Keckler, and Fran to try on the spirit of Susan.

































NAME: Susan CiancioloBIRTH DATE: 9-11-69BIRTHPLACE: Providence R.I.ZODIAC SIGN: VIRGO

FAVORITE BOOKS:

KOEKB OXA - Natural dyes and textiles
By - Harald Böhmér
The Bread and Puppet Theatre Volume one

FAVORITE MOVIES:

FAVORITE ARTISTS: Colin Snapp

FAVORITE COMPOSERS:

MOZART

FAVORITE PLACES:

Far east - Bali, China
California, East coast
Eastern Europe, England, Scotland, France

FAVORITE ERA:

141 - 87 BC

WHO ARE YOUR COLLECTORS? friends, patrons, in Fashion,
art, music, film, students

ASIDE FROM YOUR HANDCRAFTED CLOTHING LINE, YOU ALSO MAKE PAINTINGS
AND CREATE HOME DÉCOR. WAS CLOTHING THE STARTING OFF POINT FOR THE REST
OF YOUR WORK OR IS CLOTHING A NATURAL EXTENSION OF YOUR ART PRACTICE?

Both lead to EACH OTHER, BOTH always
working on at the same time,
although the drawing/paintings are most often
the beginning of everything

YOUR PROCESS SEEMS VERY INTUITIVE, HOW DOES EACH COLLECTION EVOLVE?

It comes from a feeling that is
after each collection completed the new idea
appears, it comes from another place and sent to me,
so I listen!

WHERE DID THE IMPULSE TO SEW CARDBOARD AND PAPER DRAWINGS AND PAGES FROM NOVELS ONTO CLOTHING COME FROM?

To show temporary, things of
Elements of the clothing that
would not last such as
Sugar necklaces this season

TELL US A STORY ABOUT ONE OF YOUR PIECES?

a dress that was once a poncho that
was once a large embroidered crest
in an exhibition in Japan,

As it transformed it has been in two
exhibitions and 3 collections and handdyed and
sewn and embroidered by 10 different artists.

DO YOU BELIEVE CLOTHES CAN HAVE POWERS?

yes, to make the wearer feel elated

IT'S HARD TO PICTURE YOU WORKING FOR BAGLEY MISHKA, WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

I sketched a lot! , learned a lot in fittings and traveling to Europe and asia They were very good to me! I will be always deeply grateful to them!



Styling Avena Gallagher

All Clothes Susan Cianciolo

Photography Marco Roso

Featuring Donna Persona, Rumi Misabu, Aaron, Edie Fake, Joseph Keckler and Fran

Dame Darcy, "Susan Cianciolo, 1999", *Index Magazine*, 2008.

indexed™
INDEX MAGAZINE
 INDEX WORLDWIDE™

Susan Cianciolo, 1999

WITH DAME DARCY
 PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROSALIE KNOX

Dame Darcy has been reading palms since she was ten years old. Palm readings are almost the opposite of interviews in the sense that the person who conducts them usually does most of the talking, but the subject doesn't mind in the least. After all, how often do you get to listen in on your own life? So from time to time we ask Dame Darcy to ply her skills on our behalf and speak with a person we're especially curious about. The young designer Susan Cianciolo and Dame Darcy seemed like a perfect match.



Dame Darcy: Your work is really great. I like the way it's hand-stitched and sort of crafty, almost like it's from a special-ed class or something. Like, it doesn't matter exactly how the stitches are done, as long as they're on there.

Susan Cianciolo: All the people who work here can do absolutely perfect work. But I've tried to really enjoy it, because even with the small amount that I'm producing, you have to really get into it so it's not a chore. Right now I'm just working so much, so many hours, and you get crazy, but it's still fun.

DD: Your work looks like you've been locked in an attic for a really long time.

SC: [laughs]

DD: Hand-stitching everything to the point of dementia. But that's the beauty of it. That's what makes it so amazing.

SC: That means a lot to me. It really does. I mean, I am kind of locked in an attic that I don't ever really leave.

DD: And it seems like you've been crafty your whole life.

SC: I always made all my dolls and doll clothes, and my Mom did, too. My aunts made dolls for me, and my grandmother and all their friends. But I never really thought about that as being something different than other people — you make your dollhouse and then you make everything in the house, you make your clothes. One friend's Mom was an expert tailor, and she taught me, and then I studied as well. It was mostly Italian-American where I grew up, and my family and other families just passed down a lot of things. I was married recently, and I received a lot of heirlooms from my grandmother's mother and sisters, and just seeing what they did, it's so amazing.

DD: All this embroidery and all the hand-stitching. It's gorgeous. I should show you my quilt. I've been making a quilt for two years and it's insane!

SC: Oh my god.

DD: I finally found out this new way to take a photo and have it made into fabric, like transfer it to the fabric, and so I wanted to appliqué all these different images onto my quilt — of myself and my dolls and stuff like that. I have to show it to you sometime.

SC: I'd really love to see it. That's another thing I grew up with. My Mom is an incredible quilter. I'd like to start one but I haven't got around to it yet. I always like to see people my age making things like quilts.

DD: You'd like my friends. We have a thing called the Easy-Bake Coven.

SC: What's that?

DD: We do crafts and make dolls. Easy-Bake [laughs] Coven.

SC: That sounds great.

DD: So that's a good introduction, and now I'm going to read your palm. So you're right-handed, I'm assuming.

SC: Yes.

DD: What's this stigmata on your palm? What happened? It looks like a big wound in the center of your palm, with a bunch of magenta ink all over.

SC: [laughs] I think I scratched five layers off of my skin. I was so nervous because of the amount of work I have to finish in the next two days. I sort of can't remember how it happened. I've been dying skirts — there are some behind you, and the ones out front have been dipped in paint along the bottom.

DD: Oh, these are so beautiful! They remind me of life in a trailer in the middle of the woods somewhere cold.

SC: It's hard and cold, but then you're isolated and it's pure, and you just kind of stare into space. Do you know what I mean?

DD: Totally. I can tell that your stuff is coming from the way-back of your id. Like, you're just doing it. You're not even really thinking about it, and the result is pure emotion. [laughs] And people are wearing it.

SC: I know. But now, I'm making a new collection, and I'm thinking much more about it. I know that I can just go off a lot of times, so I'm putting myself on a specific focus.

DD: Okay. Your palm has a lot of lines all over it, a spattering of lines like it's raining, which signifies that you work really hard and that you'll always have to work hard. That doesn't mean that you're not going to be successful, just that you have to work hard. But you like to. You're probably one of those types that gets really nervous if you're sitting still.

SC: Yes.

DD: Do you bring knitting to the movies?

SC: On the train and on the subway, but not to the movies. I rarely go to the movies. I don't like to watch a lot of visuals because it's kind of too much for me — I get too emotional for too many days. But I usually carry a big bag everywhere I go. It's kind of a bad habit.

DD: No, it's a good habit. It's like smoking, but it's crafts. [laughs]

SC: So true.

DD: I knit everywhere. I can't sit still, so I'm always like, "I might as well get this knitting done."

SC: I know.

DD: I should have brought in something I was making. I make these retarded-looking scarves, and the stripes are all not right. Everybody likes them anyway.

SC: Scarves are really important. And really practical. But the way you construct them, they can have no practicality or no structure at all.

DD: And it can still work as a scarf.

SC: Exactly.

DD: So, you have a very long lifeline. When you were younger, things might not have been so easy for you, maybe because you couldn't figure out how you fit into the world and what was going on. I mean, I can tell by meeting you that you're a very dreamy-type person, and I can see how that wouldn't really get you in with the school crowd.

SC: That's really true.

DD: You do a lot of different things, but it's all coming from the same place. A lot of people change their careers three times during their life, but yours is more going to be an evolution — it might evolve into something else, but it's always going to be the same thing, just manifested differently.

SC: That's good to hear.

DD: You're going to live a very long time. You might even live to be 100 — an incredibly long time. You'll have a choice, when you're around 60, to go a different way with your life, or have a different future. But I don't suggest you go that way, because it ends up with a higher chance of senility. It's this line here, the one that tapers off and then starts fraying away. That signifies senility. But this line doesn't. It's very strong and you're still together. You'd have no major accidents or huge traumas. You have a spiritual nature. Are you Catholic?

SC: I was brought up both Catholic and Protestant. So I'm a combination of both.

DD: Because there's something really — and I don't mean to say it like this — but Catholic about you! [laughs]

SC: Yes, I can imagine that. I went to Catholic school. My mother sent me to a special school, which was also for girls who were kind of bad, who'd gotten kicked out of every school in the state. It was run by a good friend of hers who was a really strong woman, a nun, and it was structured so that you could design your own schedule, your own classes. And that included your work, so you could go out and work with children or whatever you thought was important.

DD: In Catholic School they did that?

SC: Yes.

DD: That's so non-Catholic school nun.

SC: It really helped me to understand myself.

DD: You were really lucky.

SC: It changed my life. When I had been in a regular school structure I was totally unable to understand anything — besides getting D's and F's.

DD: That's what happened to me. Straight D's my whole school, and always late. I made up the extra credits by building a giant sculpture of the Mayflower. [laughs] It's the only way I survived. But I think that teaches you how to survive in the real world, too. It gives you a tiny dose of what you're going to have to deal with later.

SC: Totally.

DD: And fortunately, there are people out there who will let you pass because you can make a giant sculpture of the Mayflower! [laughs]

SC: Those few people out there.

DD: Your clothing, is it selling really well?

SC: Well, with this collection I have the most orders I ever had. Although it's still not much compared to most designers. I only know that it's grown slowly, and I'm glad of that, because each time it grows a little bit it's so much more for me to handle. Now Jennifer works with me, and Kim and Andrea, and we do everything. But I used to do all the sales, production and design, and all the sewing myself. And I can't say if I think it's going to be popular, because I think it isn't for everyone.

DD: It's got its weird look, its own look. But it can look really old-style just as easily as it can look really futuristic. It can go either way — which is more of a statement about today. Don't you think?

SC: Definitely. Whenever I make anything it's about right now — whatever I'm working on, I think it's about exactly what's happening.

DD: Your travel line is very long but straight. It doesn't branch off into a million places. So you'll go where you want. You'll probably just go back to the same places over and over rather than to Timbuktu ... All the crazy places.

SC: That makes sense. I tend to do that. You end up getting to understand that place each time you go back. I think it takes a long time to really understand another place. You know, you can go and have inspiration and all of these feelings and emotions, but then it becomes more of a larger circle, like something that's living in you and in your head. And then you can change from that experience. Do you know what I mean?

DD: Yes.

SC: And because of my work I've been able to travel a lot. Which I never would have imagined when I was younger.

DD: Where have you been?

SC: The most recent place is Tokyo — to present this collection. It was amazing. But so overwhelming that I didn't know if I could go back. Now I really feel that I'd rather keep going even if I'm scared.

DD: I'm looking at your headline now, which indicates your personality — who you are when you're alone. You're really introspective, hyper-sensitive to colors and to what other people think and to things around you. You have a very long pinky, which signifies that you're very intuitive, you run on your dreams a lot. Your dream life and your waking life are very similar. The only thing that separates them is that your waking life is sort of a serial dream and your dreams are ...

SC: [laughs] That makes sense.

DD: Your loveline shows that you've had very close relationships in the past, maybe three of them, but none of them run into your marriage finger — your ring finger on your right hand. The lines that come off of that signify your loves, and you only have one — maybe two — running into your finger. They might still be your friends. You also have secret admirers who might not really express how they feel ... Maybe you know, or maybe you don't know. But your marriage will last for a long time. I don't see any big problems or divorce or infidelity or any of those other things that can happen. It seems like you'll have to work on it to a fair degree, though. It's not super-easy, because you're so dedicated to your work. But that's part of your appeal. Do you have any questions you want to ask?

SC: I don't know ... a million questions. I'm trying to listen the best I can and take it all in. I've never done this before ...

DD: Does it seem right so far?

SC: Oh, yeah.

DD: I'm sensing something about a hospital. Did you ever work in a hospital, or have family members been in the hospital?

SC: I've had a lot recently, yeah. And I've been in the hospital recently because my grandmother just came out. And I spent last Christmas in the hospital with my Mom in the emergency room, because she dislocated her shoulder. That was crazy, because you see all of the drunk tanks when they bring the people in ...

DD: That's always entertaining.

SC: Yeah. And then, before that, my grandfather, who brought me up, he passed away with cancer and had been in the hospital. So that's more than I ever had before. I was home for one day on Christmas and I was crying the whole day, but I think it's just because I love to be home and I don't have a lot of time right now.

DD: You can do a lot of different things. I know that, but it's also indicated by your fingers. They're long. You pay attention to details. You also could have played a string instrument, and you were interested maybe in the violin or piano when you were a child, or maybe both ...

SC: Both. All instruments. But I never developed it. I would still like to. Do you play music?

DD: I play banjo. I play like old martyr ballads and stuff from the 1800s. I really like a specific era. But your stuff is kind of coming from that place, that weird hillbilly handcrafted thing.

SC: My grandfather played the organ every day, and also the mandolin and the accordion. They were all instruments he found on the street and fixed.

DD: Those are three of my favorite instruments.

SC: I love the mandolin.

DD: Isn't it great? Really crazy and Old World-sounding.

SC: Mmm-hmm.

DD: You have good directorial skills, but you don't boss people around.

SC: I hope not.

DD: When were you born?

SC: September 11, 1969. I'm a Virgo.

DD: Maybe that has something else to do with the details.

Because your stuff is all about looking really intricately at these little things. It's a puzzle, too. And then you're still confused after you're done looking! You just have to accept it. "What is this? Is this a bag? Is this a potholder?" You can't figure it out.

SC: [laughs] That's good.

DD: Okay, now make a fist ... You're going to have two children in your life. They'll probably be your own, because the lines are very dark. Do you see these two wiggles that are made when you make a fist?

SC: Yes.

DD: Inside of those are how you count. You have two fairly dark ones. One of them I can tell is going to be a girl, and I think the other one is a boy — but I'm not totally sure. You're probably not going to have them for five or six more years. You're going to be really into them, and you'll still have time for them, too. By that time, your life will have adjusted to that. You'll be very close to them your whole life. And I'm almost positive they're your own, because these lines are dark. Some palms have fainter lines. Really faint ones can signify miscarriages or abortions. Other faint lines can signify that you're close to someone else's child or you adopt a child. Then lines that have a Y, that split out like in a Y, are often twins. You don't have that. I'm just saying those are other types.

SC: I'm glad.

DD: You don't want twins.

SC: It would be hard.

DD: Do you have brothers and sisters?

SC: I have a half-sister.

DD: Because I pictured your childhood as being by yourself a lot ...

SC: I was an only child.

DD: I didn't really see a lot of kids in you.

SC: There weren't. It was all adults. I have a half-sister, who's 6 — Eden. I'm very close to her, but I don't see her a lot. And also she's a little girl.

DD: Well, now you can be kind of like her fairy godmother.

SC: Yeah, I am her godmother anyway.

DD: Do you make her dolls and things?

SC: Mmm-hmm. We send back and forth. I send her dolls and she made me that pine cone angel with the paper face.

DD: So is there anything else you want to talk about?

SC: Umm ... I just feel a little dizzy from all the information.

DD: Yeah, palms are kind of overwhelming, because it's your entire life suddenly in your hand.

SC: You bring it all up ... in the middle of the day, and I'm here making my skirts. [laughs] It makes me very floaty. Now I'll just float back to my sewing machine.

Jaclyn Hodes, "A Conversation with Susan Cianciolo", *Vice*, April 2, 2008.



A Conversation With Susan Cianciolo

April 2, 2008

by Jaclyn Hodes



Portraits by Mark Borthwick

Susan Cianciolo is a multimedia artist and designer who has been working for almost two decades both inside and outside the fashion system. She was at the forefront of the customizing, deconstructionist movement of the 90s, and her collections often culminated in presentations that included live music from bands like the No-Neck Blues Band and collaborations with artists like Antoinette Aurell and Mark Borthwick. Cianciolo also showed her collections internationally in art galleries from Alleged Gallery in New York and Tokyo to the Purple Institute in Paris. The clothes were made in the most historically traditional way—a sewing circle, which is actually considered pretty untraditional by the modern fashion industry.

Even as her popularity grew, Susan stuck with the homespun vibe she'd created instead of slipping into the fashion industry's accepted ways of doing things. In 2001, the New York Times declared she was "dropping out" as she announced her decision to work independently as an artist and make one-of-a-kind creations for clients only. Since then there have been retrospectives of her

past fashion shows, which often include her films, drawings, and books in addition to her clothes, at museums all over the world. Recently though, Susan has returned to the fashion world in a new way, one completely in step with—and yet still subversive of—the moment.



Vice: So, Susan, you're back in the "system" now, showing seasonal collections during Fashion Week. How's it going?

Susan Cianciolo: Well, I've done two seasons now with Showroom Seven and that's been wonderful. They're a great agent for me. I feel like we're working together to fulfill this vision of coming back and continuing my work on the runway. And before these past two shows, I had the Cone Denim show at Sears-Peyton Gallery. Cone Denim—the oldest denim company in the US—approached me and said, "Let's do an exhibition, a film, and a book, and let's do it in New York and LA and then we'll see if we want to go to Japan and Europe after that."

I saw that. It was at Fashion Week in 2006.

After the Cone Denim project, I was feeling out whether or not I wanted to line myself up with the system again, and I think it happened naturally. After that, I did the "Queen of Hearts" show. I presented it in New York and LA and then I did a film with the model Frankie Rayder called 1960's Butterfly Girl.

I loved that.

Thanks! So my last two shows have been concentrated and focused on being during Fashion Week. I'm having a great time in a commercial sense of doing it cut-and-dry, with no tricks, and pouring all my energy into the clothes. There's a lot of power within that.

How do you feel about your new collection?

Well, right now I feel this is the best work I've done, but then I always read back on things I've written where I've said, "This is the best work I've ever done." So I'm not sure since I feel like that every time, but there was a certain click and magic that happened in making this collection. There's something that's relative to the current climate that I'm trying to align with.

It's interesting to see how the presentations for your work have evolved over the years. Your earlier shows seemed more aggressive and confrontational about sexuality, especially Run 1, where you had people like Chloë Sevigny and Rita Ackermann painted up and wearing fishnets and lace in a way we take for granted now, but which felt really subversive at the time. I see your new clothes as sexy, but in a different vein. The body is often cloaked and you seem drawn to the fabric and clothing of indigenous cultures.

I was thinking about my influences and realized that I go in on a much deeper level in terms of looking at the customs of Native Americans. There's such a simplicity to be found there in healing and medicine—things that have become so complex today. Certain influences draw me in for that reason. That's also why I looked to the circuses of the 1920s when they made everything out of cloth and wood by hand. It was extraordinarily emotional and beautiful.

But it's not like you're taking these older influences to make something that feels like a nostalgic throwback. Your work is always very modern.

These influences are more about inspiring me to make a feeling from the simplest things. We are so lucky to have all this technology around us, and I'm definitely not against it. I just feel a need to balance it.

I've always loved how your clothes fit the bodies they're on.

All my work is draped for hours and hours. Exactly how it's sitting on the body is the most important part of the dress, even after all the research and the hours of embroidery and beadings. I've spent weeks and weeks on some of the dresses doing the same things over and over. It's all about finding out how it hits the body in just the way that's complimentary and beautiful. People have always said to me that the clothes are sexy and this could be why, because I'm always thinking so much about body shapes.

With your clothes it feels like it's not necessarily a garment that's fitted to particular body types, so much as a form that only specific people can wrap themselves in and inhabit.



I know. I always felt that it was about individual bodies too, and I decided to just work with models this time. I'm always customizing for the person walking down the runway.

So when you're casting models and fitting them for a fashion show, it is really about sculpting the piece directly on them.

And I found beautiful models who really carried the energy that I was looking for too. I've always done the casting myself. It's a great part of the collage process.

Your collections from 1995 until 2001 were all titled Run and then numbered so it was Run 1, then Run 2, and so on. Where did that name come from?

I came up with that name as a tag for myself when I was doing performance art in the early 90s. There was a group called Bernadette Corporation, which was headed by Bernadette van Huy, and we would go out and do what we called "outlaw parties." These were basically performance art pieces in streets and alleys—and then we would get hired to do performance events too. I ended up really taking on that name. If you look at my work, I'm interested in generic names—taking them and watching them gain a whole other meaning. I look at words and how they work graphically because I know they develop and can be used in different ways.

From Cianciolo's Fall/Winter 2008 collection.

And Run worked for you?

Run suited the kind of work that I felt I was doing. Like, Run equals "floating," so that you are not a part of whatever else exists and you're running so far ahead—really running away from anything and everything. You are doing your own work that comes from you. When I opened my first collection and Bernadette styled it, I decided from then on that I wanted to make Run the actual tag. When it grew into this big collaboration with many, many people, I added "collection" to the end. That's the name that's registered with City Hall—Run Collection. Making up names was one of the most fun parts of the shows—coming up with a new generic way to label something that's completely not generic.

It's still kind of subversive though, even though it's generic.

Being subversive was always my main topic, really. Whatever I would be working on—a show, a film, or a book—it was always about how do I make it subversive.

And now?

It's still important to me, but it's in a different presentation. It's much softer now. And, you know, the reason why I chose more to make fashion over other media was because I felt it was the loudest way of communicating what I wanted to say.

Aaron Rose wrote a really beautiful essay concerning the term "collection" and what it meant in relation to the community that you have around you.

From the beginning there were people around me that made the shows happen. In '95 when it began, it was just Rita Ackermann and her grandmother doing the knitwear, plus my mom and whoever came along to intern. That grew and grew. By the time I did

the Run Restaurant project in 2001, there was a big group of people working on it. That's when I decided to scale down. This time, a nice group of students from Parsons who I'll be teaching in September worked on the collection. There was also an artist named Desiree Hammond who came from Holland and worked on the jewelry, embroideries, and beadwork, and this great artist named Aki came from Tokyo and worked with me very intensely on the pieces. It's fun to see the completely naive working with the very skilled. Some pieces were passed around many times and it's kind of a gamble.

Doesn't it scare you that a piece might get ruined?

Sometimes I resist, but then I have to completely let it go. It doesn't matter how it turns out. It's about the experience and what happens while it's being made.

You work with ecologically sound materials, right?

Yes. There's a black lace gown from the 20s that we reconstructed. If you use pieces from the 1920s and before, it's considered organic. Then there was a lot of fabric brought over from Thailand and Japan by friends I worked with. That stuff was all fair trade. I also worked with Jasco, which is a manufacturer of knit jersey that Geoffrey Beene worked with. They now have an organic section. All the yarn is from a farm in Maine that's organic. Everything in the entire collection is fair trade and organic. I love working within clear parameters but making it feel like there are no boundaries.

Nancy Haas, "DROPPING OUT WITH/ Susan Cianciolo; Confronting Reality, Designer Packs It In", *The New York Times*, Style, February 25, 2001.

The New York Times

DROPPING OUT WITH/Susan Cianciolo; Confronting Reality, Designer Packs It In

By NANCY HASS

Published: February 25, 2001

Style

IN the late 1990's, Susan Cianciolo was living the dream of every starry-eyed fashion student who had ever been stuck three-deep in a Williamsburg apartment or waited in line in the rain for standing room tickets to Seventh on Sixth.

Just a few years out of the Parsons School of Design, she had become the darling of the New York fashion scene, a ragamuffin poster girl for the creativity that many said had been missing from the runways for years.

Her purposefully crude clothing line, Run, made from vintage fabrics with button-on appliqués, hand-painted patterns and coarse stitching, was championed by the designer Martin Margiela, the art dealer Andrea Rosen and Flash Art magazine. Her installation-like fashion shows (for one called Run Store last fall, she invited critics and buyers to an elaborately conceived shop she had set up in the West Village) gained a cult following. Vogue editors, eager to show that they were not mere slaves to Gucci, Prada and other sprawling conglomerates, bragged that she was their favorite new talent. Big money offered to back her line. Barneys bought whatever she could make and slapped four-figure price tags on it. She increased the staff at her Chinatown studio to nearly a dozen people.

"I was supposed to be really happy," she said, "but it was really the most ridiculous thing for someone like me. I have no business being in business."

So, in a season when many are questioning whether New York's fashion scene has lost its relevance, Ms. Cianciolo has taken a step that will no doubt be seen as a bold statement. After six years of walking the line between art and commerce, last month she made a choice: she closed her studio in Chinatown and began a career as an artist.

Her newest installation, "Run Restaurant," in the Alleged Galleries, a meatpacking district space owned by her art dealer husband Aaron Rose, is a celebration of her retreat from commerciality. An elaborate Japanese luncheonette, complete with a rock fountain, handmade table linens, tatami rooms and a working kitchen, it runs until March 17. As part of the work, Ms. Cianciolo, a slender 31-year-old with the huge eyes and shy presence of a doe, makes lunch for those who wander in.

Ms. Cianciolo, who seems genuinely flummoxed by even the simplest administrative tasks, never got a city permit to cook and sell food. "I got all the paperwork," she said in her barely audible lilt, "but I just didn't ever do anything with it."

In the exhibition, soft Japanese music plays in the background as a young assistant clad in one of Ms. Cianciolo's homespun designs serves the simple fare of soup, salad and pasta. The tatami rooms, some in plywood lean-tos, are lined with insouciantly crocheted place mats and cushions. There are boldly stitched pairs of slippers with "Run" logos ingeniously worked in, beside each seat. Ms. Cianciolo charges \$10 for the meal, and there are a few of her signature items for sale on a table at the front of the space, including hand-stitched T-shirts (\$150), do-it-yourself dresses (\$1,000) and tiny change purses (\$50).

But Ms. Cianciolo said her days of making money by producing a line of clothing and accessories are over. From now on, she said, she will make only one-of-a-kind work, sewing everything herself. She also plans to put more time into the Japanese-style

anime she produces to go with each installation and video art pieces. "I want to work all the time and be connected to what comes out," she said. "I don't want to be anyone's boss."

She still intends to sell her creations to stores, but no longer by staging fashion shows. As part of Run Restaurant, she hosted an opening night cocktail party for which she outfitted 14 assistants in handmade garments. Two specialty stores snapped up 10 of them that night, she said. The four remaining pieces are still available for sale. "But when they're gone, that's it." Eventually she hopes to open a permanent space where she and other artists can sell their wearable designs. "Ideally we would have tea or something served and a place for readings and a meditation room," she said.

Now that she's dropped out, Ms. Cianciolo looks back with a shudder at her effort to hold her own in New York's steaming fashion machine with its emphasis on finding ways to produce things more cheaply to maximize profits. "I can't tell you how happy I was when the shows came and went this month and I realized I hadn't even read any of the reviews, that I hadn't picked up Women's Wear Daily. It was like being free."

Ironically, Ms. Cianciolo believes she will do better financially by closing her business. "Making the clothes always cost more than I could ever sell them for," she said. "My biggest mistake was never really looking at the books." And having so many employees was, for her, agony. There was always a steady stream of young art school graduates who wanted to be her assistants, but she faltered at whipping them into a team. "That's the kind of thing I have absolutely no talent for," she said. "I think I have some good ideas, and I think they make more sense as art than as fashion."

Photos: Susan Cianciolo at her show, "Run Restaurant," at the Alleged Galleries. (Marilynn K. Yee/The New York Times)(pg. 1); From fashion designer to waitress? At Susan Cianciolo's Japanese-themed exhibition, "Run Restaurant," in the meatpacking district, she and her intern, Junko Fujii, serve non-Japanese fare to gallery visitors.

Annie Leibovitz, "How many people does it take to design a dress?", photographic portfolio, *Vogue*, September 2000, 546 - 559.





HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES IT TAKE TO DESIGN A DRESS

A portfolio by Annie Leibovitz

Ask a designer to identify the people essential to his or her creative vision, and you get more than you bargained for, or so we learned when we began this project. One new fashion talent wished to be photographed with Jesus; another—Signora Prada—with a mirror; and almost everyone mentioned man's best friend (not since Asta have dogs so ably figured in their masters' glamorous and ingenious schemes). Inner circles can be endearingly enclosed.

But what they disclose! The lineups on these pages reveal not a little about the sensibilities and imaginative resources behind the creations we'll wear this season. How perfect, for example, that Susan Cianciolo, purveyor of nostalgically homespun avant-garde frocks, should return to Rhode Island and her extended family; how right that Marc Jacobs and Daryl K's intimates should be so damn cool. If clothes bring us to new places, new ideas, and new identities, these tribes help us to figure out where we're at when we don a dress.

"These are the 27 people who have a real relevance in my life on both a professional and personal level. What's great is that everyone has their own thing going on in terms of style: no clones, just a brilliant mix. This image says it all, really"
—Alexander McQueen

RINGMASTER

In his North London studio, McQueen (FAR RIGHT) directs his traveling band of the ultracool and supertalented. Isabella Blow (SECOND FROM RIGHT), his particular muse, wears a loden tapestry dress. Liberty Ross in beaded horsehair dress. Both by Alexander McQueen.

For more names and additional credits, see page 683.

Fashion Editor: Camilla Nickerson. Sitings Editor: Alexandra Kotur

"My husband, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, collaborators, and neighbors inspire me. The environment that created you is what influences what you create"—*Susan Cianciolo*



GATHERING OF THE CLAN

"I'm the most myself, the most pure, the most unaffected, when I'm with my family," says Cianciolo, posing in her childhood backyard in her own black cotton dress with silk-screened collar. Frankie Rayder (RIGHT FRONT) wears a Susan Cianciolo-Run Collection red wool dress. For more names and additional credits, see page 683. Details, stores, see In This Issue.

Susan Cianciolo, "Loneliness, Confusion.", *Purple No. 3*, Summer 1999, 48-55; 213-214.



Purple



FASHION PROSE, FICTION, INTERIOR...
75 FF, \$14, 11 euros
SUMMER 1999

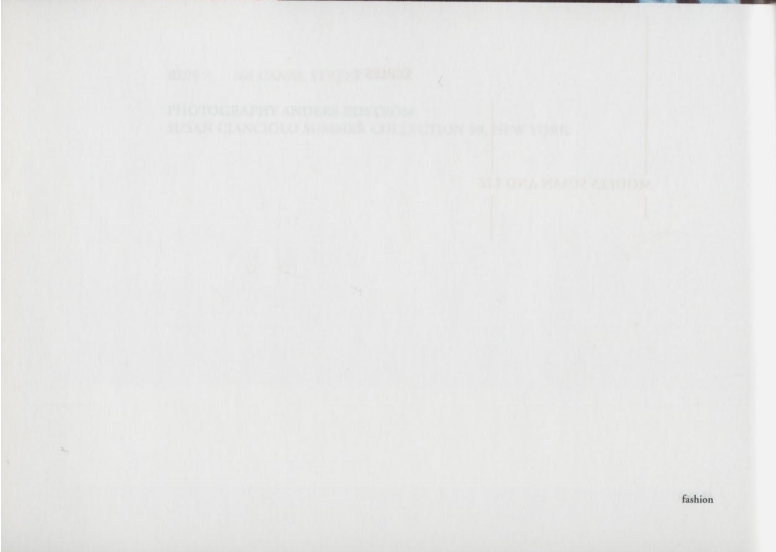
3

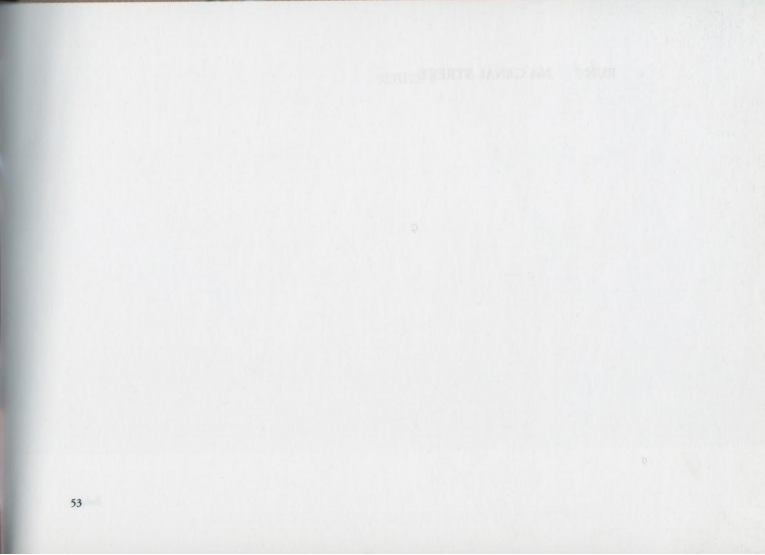
RUN 7 264 CANAL STREET
PHOTOGRAPHY ANDERS EDSTRÖM
SUSAN CIANCIOLO SUMMER COLLECTION 99, NEW YORK

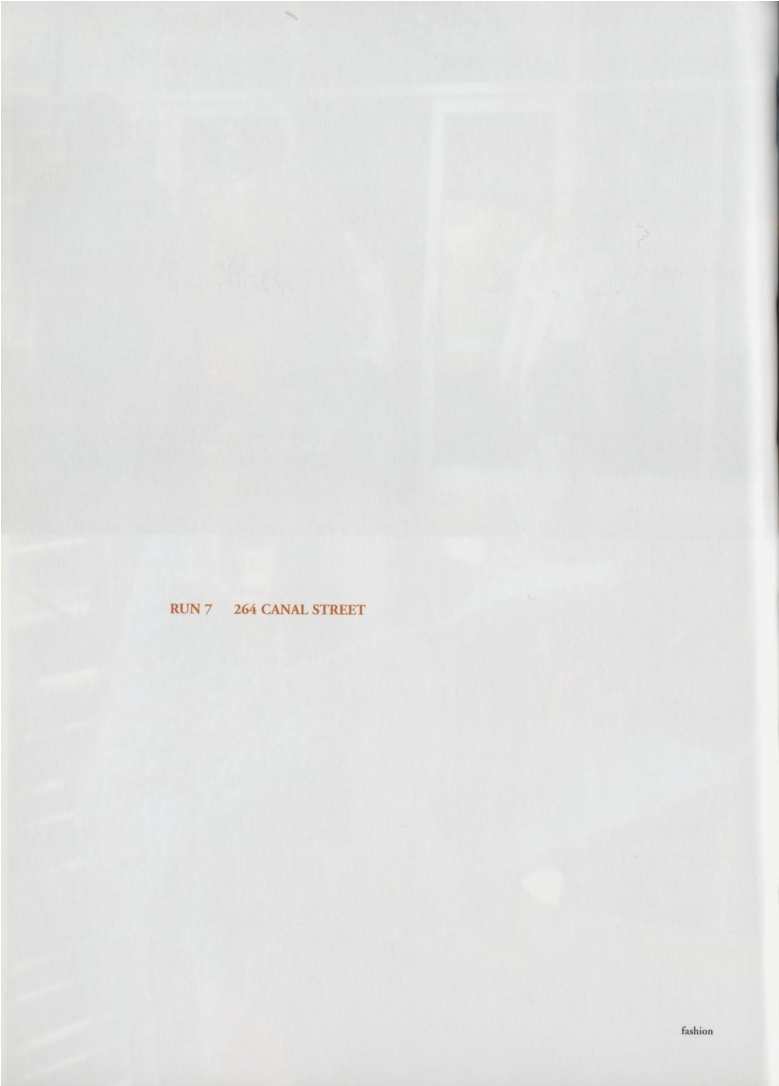


MODELS SUSAN AND LIZ

SERIES 1







RUN 7 264 CANAL STREET

fashion



SERIES 1

Loneliness, confusion.

by Susan Cianciolo

Susan Cianciolo is a New York City based fashion designer, under the creative umbrella of *Run Collection*. Working with a wide array of photographers, producers, filmmakers, artists, musicians, industrial and textile designers, graphic artists and curators, Cianciolo has developed an international network of co-conspirators.

Cianciolo has recently completed her seventh collection under the *Run* banner which marked the publication of her first book "The Run 7 Book" (Alleged Press) as well as installation/presentations of the collection at Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York and Gallery 360 in Tokyo. Susan Cianciolo is currently working on Run 8 which will debut February, 1999 and a large scale installation work planned for the Brooklyn Anchorage in conjunction with creative Time this fall.

by Kim Gordon

I was born in the grey light of Rochester, NY and miraculously we moved to Los Angeles at the age of 10. I grew up in the middle-class environment of West LA attending a lab school and living on 234 hamburgers at Scoff's. We played on these giant dirt mounds that later became freeways and off in the distance my mother would point to the empty fields and say, "Someday this is going to be a shopping mall." She didn't know she was referring to a shopping mall called "Century City." The banality of this reality made me melancholic and I was prone to daydreaming. My father played jazz records on Saturday and Sunday mornings. I would dance around the house choreographing each piece of music. Each record was a challenge, whether it was the Dave Brubeck Quartet, John Coltrane, Louis Armstrong or Billie Holiday, that was my passion. I was basically a model child till age 12. We lived in Hawaii when I was 10. That was my first brush with public school. I surfed, went to school barefoot, was teased for being white and wallowed in the scented trade winds that fuelled my pre-pubescent mind with restless yearnings. This was the year JFK was shot and the Beatles appeared on Ed Sullivan. Everything changed the year I was away. I left elementary school a semester early because they thought I was bored. Going to public junior high was a nightmare. I didn't understand the concept of competitive academics. You couldn't wear pants. In an attempt to fit in I became a juvenile delinquent. My older brother was an intellectual nerd snob. Later he became a cool surfer, then a hippie poet and now a paranoid schizophrenic. We lived in Hong Kong for a year when I was 12. We went to an English school 50 years behind the times. Everyone always asked what my religion was. I didn't have one. My first boyfriend was English, he played the drums. I read Ian Fleming. I was really into the Stones but he gave me this Chad And Jeremy record that I listened to over and over, crying buckets when I left. It was soft, melancholy, baby pop music. I looked old for my age. Sailors would say dirty things to me walking down the crowded, hot streets. I would get my hair shampooed for 25¢ just 'cause it felt good. High school was a little better. Even though I was too young to be a hippie, the movement got rid of the dress code. In 1969 I stopped listening to rock. We listened to Beethoven but mostly jazz--Miles Davis, Archie Shepp, Ornette Coleman, Coltrane and electric blues. I read Nietzsche as a form of rebellion, ditched school a lot, but took art and dance classes outside of school. That's what saved me, I always had that. When I was 14 or 15 I wanted to be Michelangelo. I used to ache over the fact it wasn't going to happen. Anyway, I wandered my way thru various colleges, finally graduating from art school. I moved to New York in 1980 to do art. Los Angeles made me so restless. The pressure to be happy all the time was too much. All my life I wanted to be an artist but I knew I'd never do anything until I left Los Angeles.

01. What is your sex?

Female with male tendencies towards hard, physical labor.

02. Where are you now?

At my work table, out my window, faces the twin towers among others buildings—and is surrounded by thousands of items that represent large amounts of unfinished work that needs to be completed and/or conceived while I Karoke is sung on the floor below.

03. What's your favorite year since 1968?

The memory of 1976, the Bicentennial year, standing on the sidewalk on the hottest summer day, in the pouring rain while the most exciting and beautiful parade passed by. The Bicentennial parade with thousands of police on motorcycles and people very happy and excited around me. A special tzenty-fice cent piece was made for that year, which I collected.

09. An artist, writer, filmmaker, or musician that particularly inspires you at the moment?

Loneliness, confusion.

14. What would you do if you inherited a million dollars?

Divide it up, pass it out, pay bills, go to dinner, invite a lots of people, buy a new pair of shoes, pay my rent and employees in advance.

15. One of your favorite hotels? (send address and phone number)

Savoy Hotel, Florence.