

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





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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).



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?

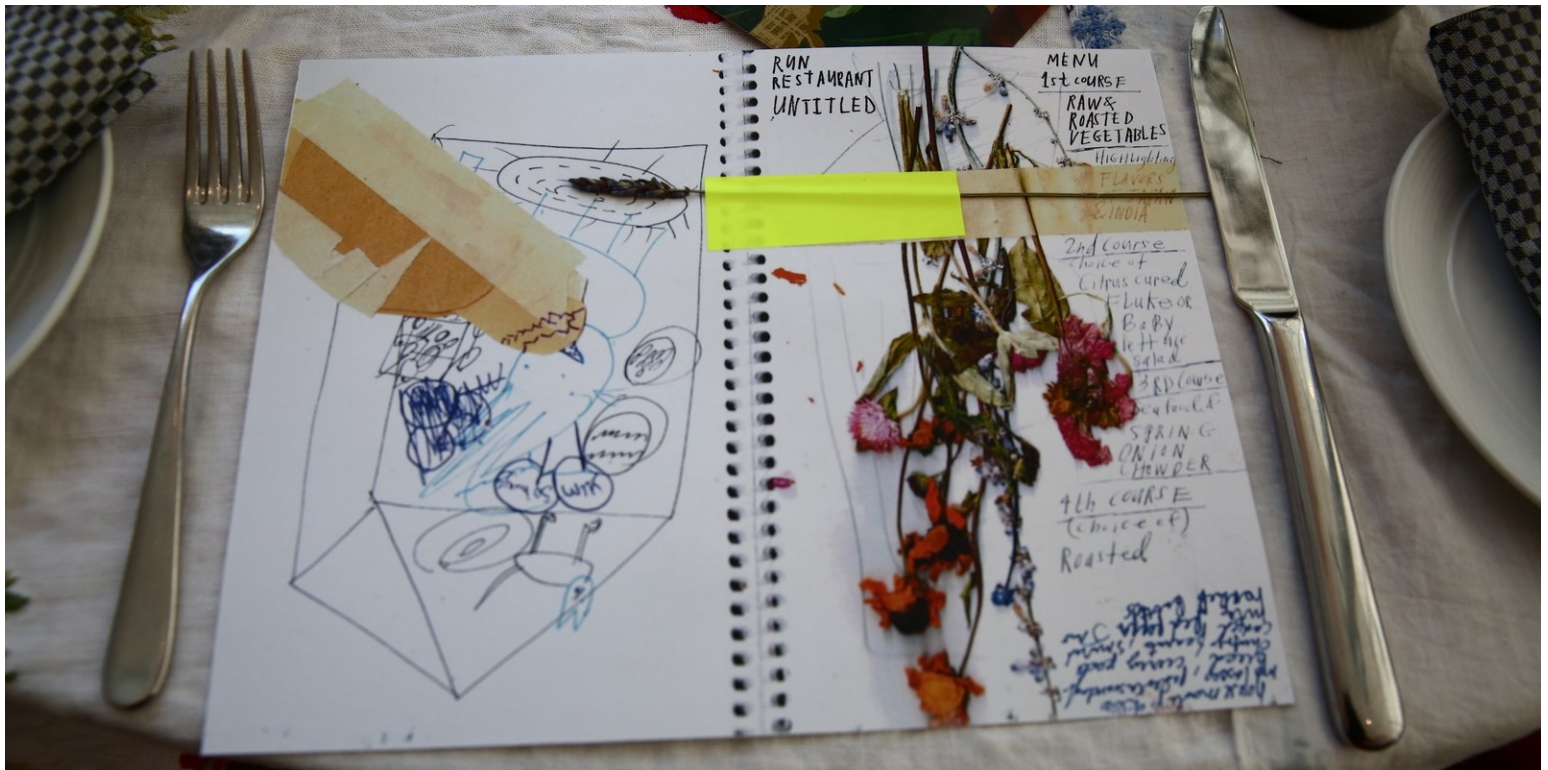
*"RUN CHURCH, RUN RESTAURANT, RUN STORE" OPENS AT STUART SHAVE/MODERN ART IN LONDON ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2017 AND RUNS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 20, 2017. "SUSAN CIANCIOLO: RUN PRAYER, RUN CAFÉ, RUN LIBRARY" OPENS AT BRIDGET DONAHUE IN NEW YORK ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2017.*



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>.

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## 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 RYAN LIZARDER, FASHION ASSISTANT CHLOE HEYMANS, CIANCILO NEELS CARUSON AND PATRICK SUSAN CIANCILO, BOUTIQUE, MARIAN WASSER, ZACHARY ROUSE FOR STYLING, PIERCE, AND MORE, GO TO W.MAG.COM/PHOTO FOR FULL PHOTOS



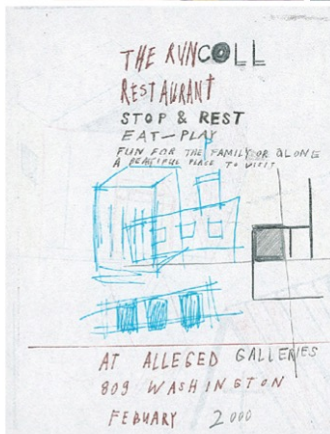
Clockwise, from top right: Cianciolo, in the kitchen of her pop-up Run Restaurant, 2001; the installation, at Alleged Gallery, in New York; Cianciolo's Run 4 presentation, in a storefront on lower Broadway, 1997; a flyer reproduced in *Run Restaurant Fanzine*, 1997; a flyer reproduced in *Run Restaurant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





Detail of a kit in the 2016 exhibition "Dressing for God," at Yale Union in Portland, Oregon

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](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.*

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*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, spaciouly 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/>.



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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.

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)







































































































































































































































