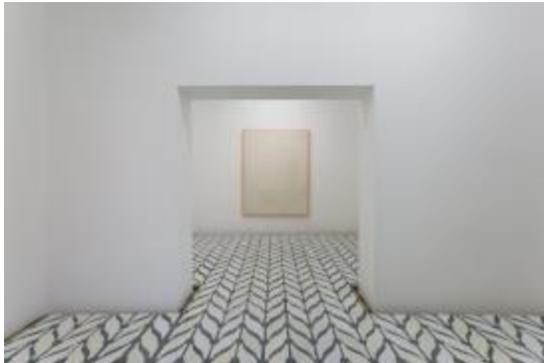


Sarah Crowner: Beetle in the Leaves

Artist's first solo exhibition in a U.S. museum invites visitors to become part of the work



Interiores, 2014 (installation view)
 Site-specific dimensions
 Travesia Cuatro, Guadalajara, Mexico
 Courtesy of the artist

NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS — Sarah Crowner's first solo U.S. museum exhibition features paintings and a suite of major new tile works made especially for MASS MoCA. Mining the legacy of abstraction within both the fine and applied arts, Crowner creates new patterns and makes subtle associations among her works, their architectural surroundings, and the history of art. *Beetle in the Leaves* opens with a reception for the artist on April 16, 2016.

Crowner's studio practice includes ceramics, sculptures, theater curtains, tile floors, and paintings made by sewing together painted and raw panels of canvas. The stitched lines, visible where the canvas panels are joined, recall the sharp edges between areas of color characteristic of hard-edge abstract paintings. Crowner's paintings, however, read simultaneously as both objects and flat image. The same is true of her large-scale terra cotta floor works, which are made by joining together tile with contrasting mortar, much like her canvas panels are joined with visible thread. These works propose that a functional wall or a floor can become an alternative form of painting.

At MASS MoCA, the artist presents a new mural — made of bright blue-green tile — measuring roughly 10 x 20 feet. Installed in a repeating herringbone pattern, the terra cotta tiles were designed by the artist and produced and hand-glazed in Mexico for a raised platform that was exhibited previously in New York. Reframing floor as painting, this work connects Crowner's work to its environment through a shared language of abstract pattern and texture. Engaging with the profusive geometries of the museum's mill architecture, Crowner's works variously mirror or create juxtapositions with the surrounding patterns of the brick walls, the hardwood floors, and the grid of the glass block windows.

The adjoining gallery features a raised floor covered with cement tiles, designed and hand-painted by the artist in Marrakech, Morocco. Partially surrounding this structure are two walls that support three new large-scale paintings. The tiled platform alludes to a stage — the viewer, through the act of stepping up and onto this stage, thus becomes a part of the work, standing on the painted pattern instead of simply looking at it. The tiles, which range in color from the gray of the raw cement to



Sliced Ribbons, 2015
 Acrylic on canvas, sewn
 78 x 60" / 198.1 x 152.4cm
 Joseph Hackney Collection
 Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

white and green, have a straight-edged, leaf-like shape. Both these and the more organic curves in her colorful 8-foot-tall paintings reference the landscape and trees visible through the gallery windows.

The title of the exhibition references “Beetle under the leaf,” the name of a house designed in the 1960s by Gio Ponti that featured a white-tiled interior by designer Nanda Vigo, which functioned as a backdrop for the owner’s collection of painting and sculpture. Crowner’s riff on the title conjures images of nature and architecture as well as relationships of shape and color, figure and ground, and, importantly, context and place. With the selection of works at MASS MoCA, and the artist’s overlapping references to leaf shapes, Crowner prods us to consider our own location upon a painting, within the patterns of the building, and within the larger natural world outside.

In much of her work, Crowner conjoins abstract forms and gestures from multiple time periods and mediums. Referencing images from the worlds of art, interior design, dance, theater, and the every day, she connects the dots between a range of artists such as Ray Johnson and Lygia Clark, to architects and designers such as Josef Hoffmann and Alexander Girard, to set designer Maria Jarema. Crowner’s work is often motivated by the early twentieth-century avant-garde when artists were working fluidly across disciplines. She has noted Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s puppets and futurist theater as influences and often uses the form and grammar of the theater — from curtains to the stage — in her own work, including the raised stage-like platform that Crowner has reintroduced at MASS MoCA.

About the Artist

Sarah Crowner was born in Philadelphia in 1974. She received a BA from the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1996. She studied at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France, and earned an MFA from Hunter College, City University of New York, in 2002. Her work has been exhibited internationally in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; University Art Museum, University at Albany; the Jewish Museum, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels; and the Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. She has completed residencies at Hunter College, the Skopelos Foundation for the Arts in Greece, and the Center for Art and Visual Communication (ARCO) in Lisbon, Portugal. Crowner’s work is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and Walker Art Center. She is represented by Casey Kaplan, New York; Simon Lee Gallery in London; and Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Images

A collection of high-resolution images is available here: bit.ly/1LQpRCY.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world’s liveliest (and largest) centers for making and enjoying today’s most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. Hundreds of works of visual and performing art have been created on its 19th-century factory campus during fabrication and rehearsal residencies, making MASS MoCA among the most productive sites in the country for the creation and presentation of new art. More platform than box, MASS MoCA strives to bring to its audiences art experiences that are fresh, engaging, and transformative.

MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA's galleries are open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition is seasonal and reopens April 30, 2016. Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit massmoca.org.