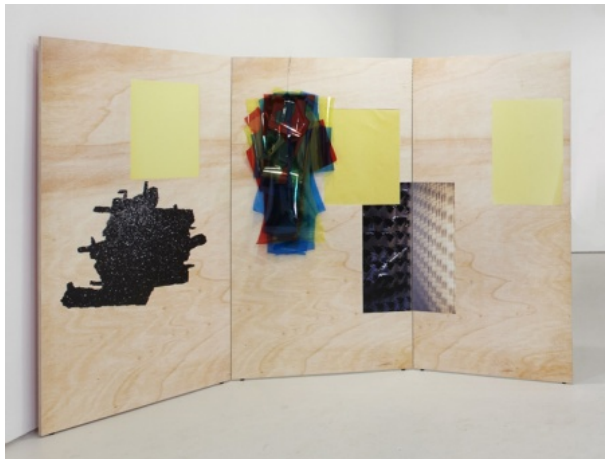


DECODING IMAGES



Meredyth Sparks, *Untitled*, 2010

Mixed Media. Courtesy Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York, and the artist.

Extraction, the most recent series of mixed media collages and installation work by Meredyth Sparks, circumnavigates "abstraction" by offering not an alternative to figuration, but a careful process of addition and removal. Here Sparks discusses the exhibition's largest work, which is both a standing tack-board for the artist to apply materials. In form, *Untitled* references a dressing screen, the environmental structure that allows the body itself to become a site of arrangement:

AGAINST THE GRAIN

I chose plywood for the support because I wanted to incorporate a material in which natural patterning and repetition occurs. Patterns suggest infinite space—there is no limit imposed on a pattern other than the shape on which it is placed. The grain's horizontal direction, as opposed to the vertical direction typical of most plywood, punctuates the overall form and directs the viewer around the piece.

DRESS IT UP

The work alludes to a dressing screen, replete with an outfit made from colored acetate shapes hanging over the top. But the piece also invokes a book that houses a collection of mnemonic and notational references. The images themselves are derived from works I've done in the recent past and intimate different types of space created through light and shadow.

GETTING PHYSICAL

In my figure-based works the viewer's physical positioning is a central concern, and it's especially pronounced in an installation. But viewers are kept at a remove in my more figurative collages, achieved in part by the aura of celebrity [pictured with these figures] and the inability to return their stare. In my *Extraction* series [on view at Elizabeth Dee] I removed the figure, making the pieces more open to a reflection on the physical and material properties of the work. With the screen, in particular, the viewer is led through a series of images and objects around the piece, approximating a linear narrative.

FILLING BLIND SPOTS

There is a crude solidity in the structure of the screen that contrasts with the ephemerality of the images I've embedded into it. The images are documents of other spaces whose physical materiality appears to be subsumed into this representational system—post-it notes often hold places in books or provide a written reminder or instruction of some sort, but, with their saturated color and repetition they can be seen as a visual phenomena of sun spots on the eye or lens; the camera's flash helps animate the surface of an opaque and dense glitter form; and shadows are cast by light filtering through a pattern on a window, refracting the geometric shapes within the expanse of the piece's crease or fold.

MATERIAL HISTORY

The three panels on the front of the piece are directly printed on aluminum sheets that I then laminated on to actual plywood. I wanted to combine the material of the wood with its digital representation within the conceptual parameters of the piece, which is, in part, an exploration of representational modes. The images within the panels consist of scanned wood, post-it notes and two photographs. Hanging from the screen is a colored acetate relief made up of fabric templates used to make clothing. I found the templates in an empty warehouse space next to my studio in Brooklyn, but the template form is reminiscent of my earlier works, in which the collaged elements often mimic the spaces in and around figures. More specifically, the use of fabric templates relates to a series I made using images of RAF member Gudrun Ensslin walking to and from her prison cell at Stammheim Prison. In these pictures, Ensslin is wearing a prison uniform and I was thinking about the fabric of this smock—what it figuratively and literally consisted of at that moment in history. In the *Gudrun* series I incorporated elements derived from Malevich paintings that covered over her dress. A pattern created from these Malevich paintings appear (and are reflected) again in the fold of the screen, seen to the right of the acetate relief.