

MILLER & SHELLABARGER

Dutes Miller b. 1965, Pennsylvania

Stan Shellabarger b. 1968, Illinois

Live and work in Chicago, IL

EDUCATION

Dutes Miller 1991 Bachelor of Fine Art, Illinois State University, Normal, IL

Stan Shellabarger 1996 Master of Fine Art, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

1991 Bachelor of Fine Art, Illinois State University, Normal, IL

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2020 *Homo-entanglement*, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

2019 The Carnegie, Covington, KY

2016 Sindikit Projects, Baltimore, MD

2015 Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

2014 *AGAIN GONE ~ Miller & Shellabarger*. Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL

2013 *Miller & Shellabarger*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL

2012 *Miller & Shellabarger: Hiding in the Light*, Institute of Visual Art, Milwaukee, WI

2011 *Alone Together*, University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, IL

2010 Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

2009 *Dolos*, Gallery Diet, Miami, FL

2008 solo booth, NADA Art Fair, w/Western Exhibitions, Miami, FL

solo booth, VOLTA Show, w/Western Exhibitions, Basel, Switzerland

solo booth, NEXT Art Fair, w/Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

2007 Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 *Let's Do It: Twenty-three Years of Book and Paper – The Center for Book and Paper Arts, 1994-2017*, Glass Curtain Gallery, Chicago, IL

2018 *Cook My Goose*, Baby Blue Gallery, Chicago, IL

Loud Silence: Expressions of Activism, Sordoni Art Gallery, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA

Le Male, Dominican University's O'Connor Art Gallery, River Forest, IL

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS 1709 W Chicago Ave., Chicago IL 60622 USA
(312) 480-8390 | westernexhibitions.com | scott@westernexhibitions.com

- 2017 *Recent Acquisitions to the Permanent Collection*, University Galleries of Illinois State University, Normal, IL
Obsession, Improvisation, Collaboration, GSU Visual Arts Gallery, University Park, IL
Underlying system is not known, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
- 2016 *Century Safe*. Roman Susan, Chicago, IL. May 7 -28, 2016
- 2015-16 *Role Play*, Sun Valley Center for the Arts, 191 Fifth Street East, Ketchum, ID
- 2015 *Cut/Create: The Endless Possibilities of Paper*, Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee WI, Aug 24 – Sept 11
The Gay Mafia is Real, Western Exhibitions, Chicago IL, June 18 – July 19, 2015
The Fig & the Wasp, Hyperlink, Zhou B Art Center, Chicago, IL, May 15 – June 20, 2015
- 2014 *I AM: Assuming Positions*. The Fed Galleries @ KCAD, Grand Rapids, MI. Oct 23 - Jan 31, 2014
Miss Kilman and She Were Terrible Together, Curated by Matt Morris. The Hills Esthetic Center, Chicago.
Tony Greene: Curated by John Neff, with contributions from Elijah Burgher, Edie Fake, Miller & Shellabarger, Paul P., Dean Sameshima, Scott Treleaven, and Latham Zearfoss. Iceberg Projects, Chicago
Sticky Sweet, curated Scott Hunter, Terrain, Oak Park, IL.
Why Marriage: An Arts Festival, The Br. David Darst Center, Chicago, IL
Happy Homemakers: The Pleasures and Perils of Domestic Life, Sala diaz, San Antonio
Strange Bedfellows, A+D Gallery, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
- 2012 *The Mysterious Content of Softness*, curated by Stefano Catalini, Cornell Art Museum, Winter Park, FL
- 2010 *Mind Bending with the Mundane*. Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, ME
The Mysterious Content of Softness, curated by Stefano Catalini, Bellevue Arts Museum, WA
The North Wind and Sun, Diverseworks, Houston, TX
- 2009 *New Prints from Fresh Hot Press*, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
Party Crashers, Concertina Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2008 *Soft Life*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
Michelle Grabner: Remain in Light, Wichita State University Art Museum, Wichita, KS
- 2006 *Michelle Grabner: Remain in Light*, Illinois State University, Normal, IL
Coma 3, COMA, Chicago, IL
- 2003 *Hysterical Pastoral*, Ukrainian Museum of Art, Chicago, IL
- 2000 *Slop's Traveling Supermarket & Catalogue*, United States of America.
- 1999 *Cold Conceptualism*, Suitable Gallery, Chicago, IL

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

- 2019 *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, OH
Untitled (Pink Tube), The Carnegie, Covington, KY
Untitled (Pink Tube), DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL. February 2019
Untitled (Pink Tube), Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, MO. January 15, 2019

- 2018 *Thunderfoxes*, Camayuhs, Atlanta, GA, July 14, 2018
- 2016 *KunstTreePunkt*, Darmstadt, Germany. August 2016
- 2014 *Link Pin at Hub 14*, Toronto, Canada
- 2013 *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Polish Triangle, Chicago. Rapid Pulse International Performance Festival.
- 2012 *Untitled Performance (Pink Tube)*, Begun in 2003, ongoing: Cornell Art Museum, Winter Park, FL; Institute of Visual Art, Milwaukee, WI
- 2010 *Untitled Performance (Graves)*, Time-Based Arts Festival, PICA, Portland, OR
Untitled Performance (Pyre), Michigan, May 30, 2010
- 2009 *Untitled Performance (Pink Tube)*, Begun in 2003, ongoing: Chicago, Cultural Center; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL; PS 1 Contemporary Art Center, Queens, NY
- 2008 *Untitled Performance (Sewn Together)*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
- 2007 *Untitled Performance (Sewn Together)*, 44/46 Lakeview Festival, Chicago, IL
Untitled Performance (Between the Sheets), Western Exhibitions, Chicago,
- 2006 *Untitled Performance (Pink Tube)*, Begun in 2003, ongoing: Illinois State University, Normal, IL; The Suburban, Oak Park, IL; Art Chicago, Chicago, IL
Untitled Performance (Origami Cranes), 44/46 Lakeview Festival, Chicago, IL
- 2003 *Untitled Performance (NUB)*, Center of Contemporary Art, St Louis, Missouri
- 2002 *Untitled Performance (NUB)*, Gallery 312, Chicago, IL
- 1999 *Untitled Performance (Between the Sheets)*, Cleveland Performance Art Festival, Cleveland, OH
- 1998 *Untitled Performance (Origami Cranes)*, Madison, WI
- 1997 *Untitled Performance (Sunburn)*, Slop Supermarket, Madison, WI
- 1996 *Untitled Performance (Beard Braid)*, Mother Fools, Madison, WI
Untitled Performance (Candle Toss), Cleveland Performance Art Festival, Cleveland, Oh
- 1995 *Untitled Performance (Table Top)*, Madison, WI
Untitled Performance (NUB), Normal, IL
- 1994 *Untitled Performance (NUB)*, Madison, WI

COLLECTIONS

Art Institute of Chicago
 DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL
 Francis H. Williams Collection, New York, NY
 Herron School of Art and Design, Indianapolis, IN
 Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, IN
 Joan Flasch Artist Book Collection, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Kishwaukee College, Malta, IL
National Gallery of Canada, Library and Archives, Ottawa, Ontario
Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS
Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ
Ryerson and Burnham Library, The Art Institute of Chicago
Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

AWARDS

- 2019 Artists-in-Residence, Ox-Bow School of Art, Saugatuck, MI
- 2018 Honoree, Bad Wedding: The Annual Benefit for Spudnik Press Cooperative
- 2013 Residency, Center for Paper and Book Arts, Columbia College, Chicago, IL. Summer 2013
- 2010 Residency, "Summer Studio" Sullivan Galleries, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- 2009 Peter S. Reed Foundation Grant
- 2008 Artadia Individual Artist Award
Artists-in-Residence, Spudnik Press, Chicago, IL
- 2007 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Textiles Community and Controversy: The Knitting Map, ed. Jools Gilson and Nicola Moffat. Hemmings, Jessica. "Knitting after making: What we do with what we make," Bloomsbury Visual Arts, London, 2019, 77-94.
- 2016 Liminalities. Myron Beasley, "Introduction: The Pink Tube & The Incurable Disturber of the Peace." Vol. 12, Issue 2: 2016.
- 2014 Art in America. Michelle Grabner, "The People's Palace." October 2014.
Visual Art Source. Robin Dluzen, "Miller & Shellabarger: Chicago Cultural Center." July 2014.
New City. Anastasia Karpova Tinari, "Portrait of the Artists: Miller & Shellabarger." July 18, 2014.
- 2013 Chicago Tribune. Bill Daley, "Artists crochet at MCA." November 17, 2013.
Chicago Reader. Sam Worley, "'The Way of the Shovel' could dig a little deeper." November 12, 2013.
Chicago Reader. Gwynedd Stuart, "Show us your . . . pink tube." November 11, 2013.
Chicago Magazine. Jason Foumberg. "Why Hardcore Craft Is So Popular in Chicago." November 1, 2013.
Big Red & Shiny. Sandrine Schaefer, "Experiencing Rapid Pulse." July 15, 2013.
- 2012 Orlando Weekly. Jessica Bryce Young, "Moral fiber." October 31, 2012.
Chicago Tribune Magazine. Bill Daley, "The Art of Home." Fall 2012.
Sixty Inches on Center. Danielle Jackson, "Exploring Human Relationships: A Dialogue with Miller & Shellabarger. Pt. 1 and Pt. 2." Summer 2012
Wisconsin Gazette. Mike Muckian, "Gay partners put their relationship on display at Inova/Kenilworth gallery." June 2, 2012.

- The Sherperd Express. Kat Murrell, "Miller & Shellabarger: Shadows in the Light." April 27, 2012.
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Mary Louise Schumacher, "Miller and Shellabarger, a lovers' discourse." April 27, 2012.
- 2011 Artlog. Morgan Reed, "Art Chicago and NEXT Discoveries", April 29, 2011
Art Pulse. Jeff Edwards, "Miller & Shellabarger. Long as life, deep as as the grave, direct as a handshake." Pages 40-435: Winter 2010/11.
KUHF / HPR 88.7. Meghan Hendley, "The Front Row – Diverseworks." Radio interview: March 29, 2011.
- 2010 Chicago Tribune. Lauren Viera, "Best of Galleries 2010." December 17, 2010.
Paper Magazine. Gary Pini, "Eight Items or Less," November 11, 2010.
Bad at Sports. Amanda Bowder and Patricia Maloney, "Stan Shellabarger and Dutes Miller." October 17, 2010.
Flavorpill. Monica Westin, "Miller & Shellabarger." October 15, 2010.
The Portland Phoenix. Annie Larmon, "Five artists address intimacy at MECA's ICA: Taking vows." September 22, 2010.
Just Out. Erin Rook, "Underground Art. Chicago artist couple plays dead to illuminate life." September 12, 2010.
The Oregonian. Thomas Boyd, "Artists acting out." (photos). September 13, 2010.
Portland Monthly. Anne Adams, "TBA 2010: Digging Their Own Graves." September 11, 2010.
The Portland Mercury. Matt Stangel, "On Sight Parsing TBA's Visual Art Programming." August 19, 2010.
Chicago Art Magazine. Erik Winnermark, "An Interview with Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger." May 31, 2010.
- 2009 Book by It's Cover. "New York Art Book Fair" (reproduction). October 5, 2009.
Chicago Art Map. Gretchen Holmes, "Stan Shellabarger and Dutes Miller's Untitled Performance (Pink Tube)." September 26, 2009.
Miami New Times. Carlos Suarez De Jesus, "Run, Don't Walk." September 15, 2009.
Fiber Arts. Jessica Hemmings, "Seamless: Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger." Pages 28-29: April/May 2009.
Plum TV. "Art Basel Miami Beach: The NADA Satellite Fair." January 26, 2009.
Can I Come Over to Your House? The First 10 Years of the Suburban. Edited by Michelle Grabner and Brad Killam. Poor Farm Press: Milwaukee. 2009.
- 2008 Artinfo. Sarah Douglas, "Floating Walls and Bargain Hunters at NADA." December 3, 2008.
The Art Newspaper. Javier Pres and Helen Soilas, "Fair feels chill winds of change." December 4, 2008.
New York Times: The Moment. Maura Egan, "Art Basel Miami Beach: In Search of Middle America." December 4, 2008.
Flash Art online. Maureen Sullivan, "PARTYING LIKE IT'S 1999." 2008.
Art Dish. Jane Richlovsky, "MEET ME IN MIAMI" December 2008.
New City. Alicia Eler, "Eye Exam: Chicago In Miami." December 9, 2008.
Artforum.com. David Velasco, "Fair Enough." December 5, 2008.
New York Art Beat. Aneta Glinkowska, "Miami Basel 2008: Nada Art Fair." December 5, 2008.
Big Red & Shiny. Hanna Cole, "A bad year for sales, but silver is in the lining." December 14, 2008.
Artnet. Walter Robinson, "BASELMANIA." 2008.
PissZine. (reproduction). Issue 5. 2008.
Art & Auction "Mr. & Mr. Smith." Page 15: July 2008.
New City. Dan Gunn, "Soft Life." 2008.
TimeOut Chicago. Michelle Grabner, "Soft Life." 2008.
- 2007 Artforum.com. Michael Wilson, "An Affair to Remember." September 21, 2007.

TimeOut Chicago. Alicica Eler, "Miller, Shellabarger." 2007.
NewCity. Jason Foumberg, "Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger." 2007.
Chicago Sun-Times. Margaret Hawkins, "Galleries." 2007.
Flavorpill. Alicia Eler, "Dutes Miller & Stan Shellabarger." 2007.

2006 New City. Michael Workman, "Grazing on Grassroots." 2006.

2000 Frieze. Michelle Grabner, Review of "Cold Conceptualism." 2000.

MILLER & SHELLABARGER

Dutes Miller b. 1965, Pennsylvania

Stan Shellabarger b. 1968, Illinois

Live and work in Chicago, IL

Married artist collaborators Miller & Shellabarger explore physicality, duality, time and romantic ideal in their multidisciplinary work – performance, photography, artists books, sculpture and cut paper silhouettes – that documents the rhythms of human relationships, speaking both to common experiences of intimacy as well as the specifics of queer identities. Their performances, always enacted together in public, push simple materials and actions to almost Sisyphean extremes. Their gestures shift between moments of togetherness and separation, private and public, protection and pain, and visibility and invisibility. Their work is both autobiographical and metaphorical, speaking to common human interaction and queer relationships. Silhouettes of each other, their iconic beards, and their bodies appear regularly in their work. In their signature ongoing performance, “Untitled (Pink Tube)”, a non-theatrical, durational piece, they simultaneously crochet at opposite ends of a long tube of pink acrylic yarn, a metaphorically-loaded object that both unites and separates them. In “Untitled (Grave)”, Miller & Shellabarger dig two holes close together, deep and large enough for each man to lie in. They then dug a small tunnel between the holes that enabled them to hold hands while lying in the graves.

Miller & Shellabarger have had solo shows at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Chicago Cultural Center, INOVA in Milwaukee, the University Galleries at Illinois State University and Gallery Diet in Miami and they have performed and/or been exhibited in group shows across the North America. Miller & Shellabarger are a 2008 recipient of an Artadia Chicago award and a 2007 recipient of a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation award. Their work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, the Newark Public Library, Indiana University Art Museum and the National Gallery of Canada. Their work has been written about in *Artforum.com*, *Art & Auction*, *Frieze*, *Artnet*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Flash Art*, *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger also maintain separate artistic practices. They are represented by Western Exhibitions in Chicagoland live and work in Chicago.



FRAGRANTICA

Exhibition Imaginaries and the Expanded Senses No. 5

By Matt Morris

August 1, 2019

This group of artworks occurred to me while I listened to the svelte stylings of Janelle Monae's "Pynk," and waited to hear news of the outcome of my aunt's open heart surgery (she's since made a wonderful recovery). I was thinking about connective tissue, emotional bonds, and softening breath. I was (I am) looking for models for how to love beyond normative modes of being, for ways to be vulnerable and attached and attentive. Monae sings, "Pink is where all of it starts," and for Maren Hassinger, that seems true in her creative journey. For Miller & Shellabarger, they've embarked together on a lengthy, pink endeavor that will also be where all of it ends. Karla Black renders blush into an enveloping environment, shimmering with artifice and cosmetic surface treatments. For Claire Zeisler and Sterling Ruby, rosiness reddens suddenly into crimson melodrama and dexterously crafted romance. In these works, we are together.

[Dutes Miller](#) and [Stan Shellabarger](#) are both artists who have ongoing practices of their own. Miller makes gloopy, glittery objects and collages of gay porn that signal forms of queer sexuality and magic; Shellabarger generates books, prints, and other records of long walks and other process-based engagements with the effects of time on body, space, and spirit. When their powers combine, the couple makes collaborative work under the moniker Miller & Shellabarger. Throughout the many years of work by [Miller & Shellabarger](#), they have used self-portraiture, laborious material processes, and beautifully attenuated craftsmanship to meditate on love and death. The possibilities of connection, partnership, interdependency, and the eventualities of loss penetrate all of their projects together. The results are brave and loving. Among these works is Untitled (Pink Tube) that they began together in 2003. In this piece, the two artists intermittently sit in public spaces together, continually crocheting on either end of a lengthening pink tube of acrylic yarn. Stages of the piece are visible in shifts in the shades of pink yarn available at any given time. Connective but also gradually distancing, the couple will find themselves in discussions with audiences while they work. These two are among the most genuine people you could ever meet, and in this mode of socializing, we're given glimpses of the lovable, thoughtful personalities that define both artists and their relationship with each other.

They have agreed that when one of them dies, the other will unravel all the crocheting they've done, now more than fifteen years of effort. Poignant, bittersweet, heartbreaking, this project shares in that capacity that draws so many of us to perfume: its temporal beauty. Untitled (Pink Tube) reminds me to stay present and grateful.



In: [Textiles Community and Controversy: The Knitting Map](#), edited by Jools Gilson and Nicola Moffat. Bloomsbury Visual Arts, London, 2019, 77-94.

[Chapter 6](#): “Knitting after making: What we do with what we make” By Jessica Hemmings

Two makers: Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger

Title: *Untitled (Pink Tube)*

Duration: twelve years (ongoing)

Over the past twelve years American artists Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger have crocheted⁴ *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, always working together and in public. The crocheted work has a distinct centre starting point and, over time, variations of pink acrylic yarn have intentionally been bought for the project. The couple recognise that some of the associations we have with the colour – such as breast cancer awareness – did not exist when the project started. Today, over a decade of public performances mean the work is soiled, particularly near the centre where it has spent the most time on the ground.

Miller and Shellabarger describe the work as a ‘physical manifestation and metaphor of our relationship’ (2015). Early in the project the pink crochet tube looked phallic, with time and growth the physical references have shifted to something umbilical or intestinal and now even comic. The couple reflect that living openly as a gay couple was ‘more problematic ten years ago’ (2015) but express frustration that the 2015 legalisation of same-sex marriage across the entire United States is progress, but does not erase homophobia overnight. The public rather than private construction of the work is crucial to its meaning.

One tube twists clockwise, the other counter-clockwise, making the two sides ‘very different – our tension, our difference’ (2015), the couple explain. Their public making rule means that they face regular interruptions, but have ‘no interest in going back. Mistakes don’t matter’ (2015). Even a red wine stain from an exhibition opening remains.



Figure 6.6 Miller and Shellabarger, *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, 2005–ongoing, acrylic, yarn, crochet. MCA Chicago. Image courtesy of the artists.

When there is an opportunity for public exhibition the couple add to the piece. Between public performances the crochet is displayed with photographs that document the nature of its making. At other times they simply take the work into a public setting such as a park or coffee shop and crochet. Transport is a new challenge. Where they once could pop the project in a bag, size now requires that *Untitled (Pink Tube)* travels by taxi. The ongoing work currently resides with the artists. But, in what could be read as the ultimate resolution of Ingold's EWO, Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger have agreed that when half of the couple passes away, the other person will begin to unravel *Untitled (Pink Tube)* in public. This work must commence within one year of the date of death.

Booklyn

Quantum Faggotry and Homo Entanglement

Publication Date: 2018

Artwork type: Print

Medium: letterpress

Dimensions: 23.25 in W x 17.75 in H

Binding Type: loose pages

Edition Size: 2



Miller & Shellabarger have been performing and making art together and separately for decades. Their intimate explorations of human, LGBTQ, and ‘Bear’ cultures center around their own emotional, physical, sexual and social relationship. These two print sets (which are more accurately described as artists’ books in that their optimum function is to be handled in a variable sequence) use various stencils that Miller & Shellabarger have used as templates for other paper cutting and installation pieces. The prints illuminate the very complex dance between the two artists as they explore the choreography of both symbolic emotional entanglement and physical and sexual intimacy.

The titles of the portfolios/books use terminology from quantum mechanics to convey the strength of the invisible forces at play in any human relationship. While the prints are stunning in any gallery installation they come to life as one pages through the portfolio angling the prints in different degrees so as to reveal the myriad compositional possibilities that reveal themselves as the light hits the prints from different angles. This necessary interaction demands a level of visceral intimacy from the viewer engaging the reader in an elegant dance with the prints which evokes Miller & Shellabarger’s own life dance.

Miller & Shellabarger began work on these books quite by chance. Shellabarger had been serving as the ‘master’ printer to various artists with whom he invited to print and in that time became acquainted with the Vandercook letterpress. Both realized they had a trove of stencils that should be used to produce pressure prints on the Vandercook. Conceptually, it made sense to utilize the stencils from their garlands and veils to produce layered prints. Some playful, others more suggestive, but all make reference to the figure and the absence of their physical bodies. Bold and hazy, like shadows they reference, these prints make physical the light and play of shadows. White light is turned into prismatic colors of ink. These colors, along with the shimmering metallics, complement and compete for compositional dominance. The rich textural surfaces reveal and obscure what lays upon each page.

Art in America

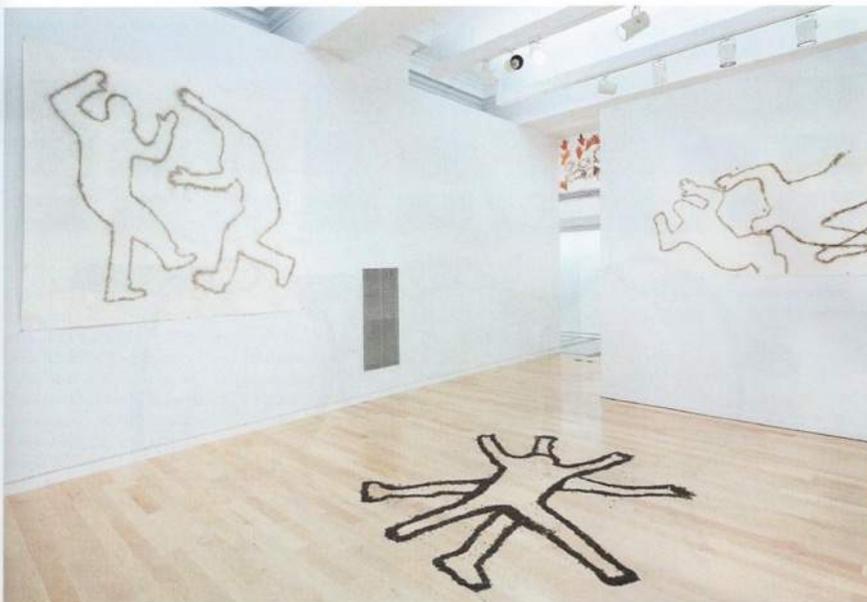
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

The People's Palace in Art in America

By Michelle Grabner

October 2014

ATLAS CHICAGO



View of Miller & Shellabarger's show "Again Gone," 2014, showing two gunpowder residue drawings and, on floor, a sunflower seed drawing; at the Chicago Cultural Center. Courtesy Western Exhibitions, Chicago. Photo James Prinz.

The People's Palace

by Michelle Grabner

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY got its name in 1851, when six Chicago businessmen and three Methodist ministers decided to establish a university to serve America's remote Northwest Territory. I learned this fact from longtime Chicago art critic James Yood, who was teaching a graduate seminar that I attended at NU in the early '90s. He evoked this geographical history not as a point of school pride but because he was developing an idiosyncratic historical context for the Chicago Imagists and their fantastical imagination, which emerged in the 1960s independent of the influences of New York City.

More than 160 years after NU's founding, this once far-off region is now part of America's immense heartland, sometimes haughtily dismissed by our coastal compatriots as fly-over country. Chicago, the Midwest's largest metropolis, is a city that grew inconceivably fast at its inception, burned down in 1871 and caught the world's attention in 1893, when it hosted the Columbian Exposition. The city's 20th century was equally dynamic, shaped as much by progressive social values as by a notoriously corrupt political

system and rampant crime. But despite its complex history (influenced by both the Great Migration from the American South and massive immigration from abroad), its current population of 2.7 million, its extraordinary skyline and roster of famed architects (Sullivan, Wright, Mies et al.), and its endless gridded sprawl, Chicago is still a town. And when it comes to the visual arts, it is a small town at that.

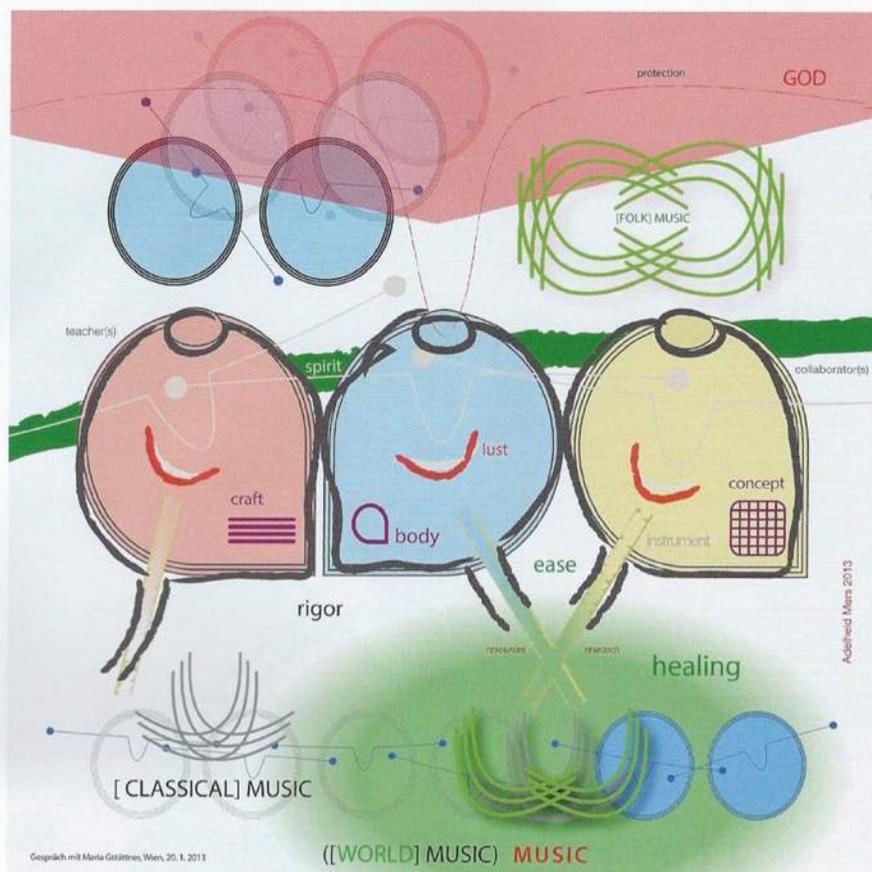
When I say "small," I don't mean to downplay the untold number of artists who call Chicago and vicinity home, or to neglect the city's many MFA programs, galleries and cultural institutions (which, in recent years, have been importing East Coast and European talent in bulk). Instead, I want to highlight the scant number of artworks and art-related texts generated in Chicago that now circulate fluidly via the global market and curatorial/critical networks. In other words, mobility is attained by only a select few midwestern figures and works—a fact with large repercussions. As Lane Relyea, chair of Northwestern's department of art theory and practice, observes in his recent book *Your Everyday Art World*:

CURRENTLY ON VIEW

"Sabina Ott: here and there and pink melon joy," at the Chicago Cultural Center, through Jan. 4, 2015.

MICHELLE GRABNER is an artist and curator who teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. See Contributors page.

Adelheid Mers:
*Conversation with
 Maria Götztner,
 Vienna, 2012-13,*
 inkjet and vitreous
 enamel on steel,
 4 feet square.
 Courtesy the artist.



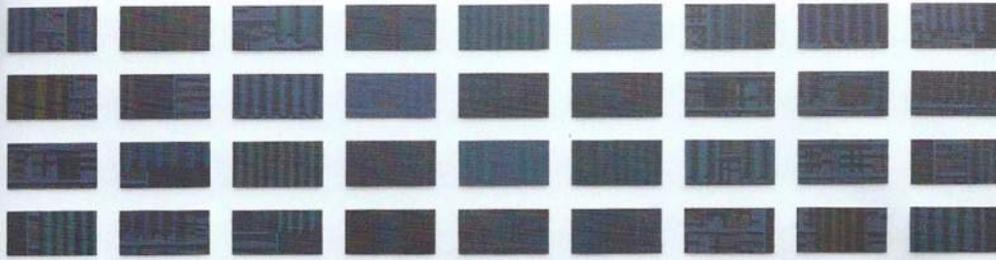
Hierarchies have been realigned, and those without the time, money, and institutional backing to travel constantly are finding it next to impossible to join the elite who can experience the development of today's most important careers and bodies of work firsthand and in the flesh, and thereby talk about it comprehensively, with authority.

Contrasting successful cultural nomads with other, more rooted artists, Relyea claims that "the hierarchy is not between this city and others, between New Yorkers and the rest." But I believe he is wrong about that. Place matters. Chicago is not a "second," inferior cultural city but a distinct and fiercely independent town, complete with its own economies, institutions and critical criteria. The venue that arguably best embodies this cultural distinctness is the Chicago Cultural Center (CCC). Located in the Loop just north of the Art Institute, it occupies a Beaux-Arts building that was Chicago's first central public library. Built in 1897, the structure sports a Tiffany dome 38 feet in diameter. In

1991, Mayor Richard M. Daley declared the facility a free museum and cultural hub, a "People's Palace."

Many area artists yearn—albeit secretly—for an invitation to exhibit at the esteemed 100-year-old Renaissance Society, at the University of Chicago. No institution in the city provides greater international exposure or a quicker boost to one's art world standing and mobility. Yet artists have a better shot at winning the Illinois State Lottery than at receiving a call from the Ren. (No local artist has a solo show scheduled there in the 2014-15 season.)

On the other hand, the Cultural Center, with vastly more exhibition space (21,300 square feet) and an artist residency program, is committed to presenting a mélange of Chicago-made works. With some parallels to European kunsthalle, it also boasts a strong commitment to community education. As a city-administered institution, the CCC is tied to a lumbering bureaucracy that impedes any excessive individual power—a welcome state of affairs, given the perverse and ever-growing tendency of curators and administrators to overshadow artists and their endeavors.



Matthew Girson:
The Painter's Other Library 1, 2, 3, 2013-14, oil on aluminum, 36 panels, each 16 by 32 inches. Courtesy the artist.

THIS PAST SUMMER the Cultural Center mounted four concurrent solo exhibitions by artists who each have a long work history in Chicago. Together, the shows by Adelheid Mers, Miller & Shellabarger, Shane Huffman, and Matthew Girson exemplified the broad range of artistic production in Chicago. (Only the collaborative pair Miller & Shellabarger have commercial representation.) In addition, these shows engaged myriad viewers far more representative of Chicago's diverse demographics than those who pass between the Art Institute's regal pair of lions down the street.

Adelheid Mers's exhibition "Enter the Matrix" featured a series of digitally produced diagrams mapping the jumbled interrelationships that facilitate artistic influence. With a narrow yet seductive vocabulary of info-graphics, these drawings organize words, colors and shapes into compositional symmetries. Employing a stock three-line matrix, Mers tracks contrasting, wryly labeled impulses such as "makers pleasure" and "makers new experience," or "analyze" and "reflect."

Miller & Shellabarger are also beguiled by contours and changes. Their exhibition "Again Gone," installed in the gallery next to Mers's, comprised in-situ floor drawings and large-scale works on paper, all featuring various outlines of their two male bodies. Delineated in gunpowder or black oil sunflower seeds—materials that get consumed by natural

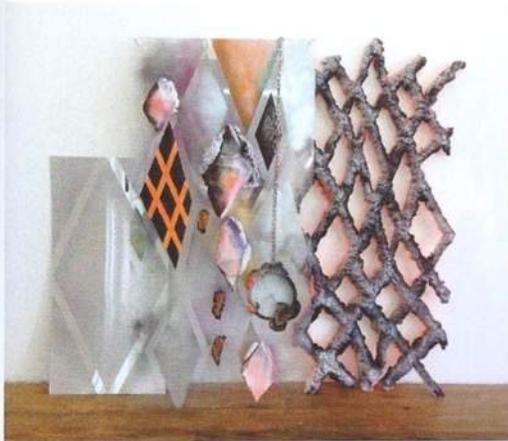
processes (either fire or ingestion)—these drawings underscore the transformations and impermanence of the corporeal world.

In a text that appeared on the CCC website, Shane Huffman introduced his exhibition of photographs, "100 100s on the One and a Half," with the poetic pronouncement "Shane Huffman is swimming to the Moon." Intrigued by sweeping theories of cosmic order and mystery, Huffman uses photography to investigate the nature of light, space-time and movement. In one instance, heavily processed abstract images are juxtaposed with a baby's head emerging into the world from his mother's vagina. A series of text images, created by handwriting with light on photographic paper, avow beliefs such as "LAW: Impermanent," "FACT: Human Interpretation" and "TRUTH: Unrecognizable."

Matthew Girson's "The Painter's Other Library," sparsely displayed in three large galleries on the center's second floor, presented impeccable yet barely perceptible images of books, shelves and the CCC interior. In these darkly painted Reinhardt-esque compositions, the line between abstraction and representation is tenuous. The austerity of the installation, the massive weight of the black velvet curtains that frame the galleries' two-story windows, and a single-channel video titled *Allegory, Allegory, Part 2* (2014), depicting a Nazi bonfire, implicitly questioned the relationship between art and any ideology—whether aesthetic or political—that seeks to limit knowledge and control enlightenment.

At present, the Chicago Cultural Center is showing three site-specific installations by Sabina Ott, who, in addition to exhibiting widely, teaches at the city's Columbia College and runs the outdoor invitational site Terrain Exhibitions, on the grounds of her suburban Oak Park home. This curatorial choice is again exemplary. The CCC sometimes hosts national and even global exhibitions, such as the international Chicago Architecture Biennial, to be co-organized next year by the city and the Graham Foundation. But the Cultural Center primarily—and unabashedly—embraces work produced in the Chicago area. If more regional cities made a major commitment to providing free-to-the-public cultural facilities and programs, perhaps new understandings of mobility and authority would unfold on the contemporary art scene. ○

Sabina Ott: *all this which is a system, which has feeling*, 2013, acrylic mirror, plexiglass, spray enamel, acrylic paint, metal chain, clock and spray foam, 72 by 96 by 12 inches. Courtesy the artist.



Atlas is a rotating series of columns by writers from Chicago, Cairo and Bangkok.

Miller & Shellabarger. Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, Illinois

By Robin Dluzen

July 2014



Miller & Shellabarger, the husband-and-husband artist duo of Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger, are known for their collaborative works that often address their lives as a couple. Mortality is one of the prominent themes in their practice, especially as it relates to the fact that one artist is destined to experience the passing of the other. In this exhibition, “AGAIN GONE,” Miller & Shellabarger continue to address mortality, though here, the works encompass another, broader read.

The walls and floors of the space display a series of works in which the artists have employed their own bodies, tracing the outlines of their figures with trails of loose black oil sunflower seeds on the wood flooring, and gunpowder that has been applied to paper and then ignited. Of the figures depicted, a few are neutrally posed, though most feature outstretched arms, legs frozen in action, as if the bodies were halted as they tumbled or fled. Aesthetically, the works immediately recall two differing references: that of ancient cave drawings, and more poignantly, the kinds of chalk outlines we associate with the scene of a homicide. On display through the warm summer months when Chicago’s gun violence skyrockets, “AGAIN GONE” is in that context suggestive of the city’s most serious issue. Eschewing shock and didacticism, the works acknowledge the fragility and ephemeral nature of life with both urgency and empathy

See more at: <http://www.visualartsource.com/index.php?page=editorial&pcID=17&aID=2360#sthash.r1Zfwo4E.dpuf>

NEWCITY

Portrait of the Artists: Miller & Shellabarger

By Anastasia Karpova Tinari

July 18, 2014

“Western Exhibitions shows all three of us,” say Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger, meaning the Chicago gallery separately represents Dutes, Stan and S&M, their collaborative practice as Miller & Shellabarger. The two met as undergraduates studying ceramics and organically began to work together on artistic projects. Twenty-one years later, the couple shares an Irving Park home and studio where individual art practices continue to grow alongside joint projects. Teaming up as Miller & Shellabarger periodically dominates their individual practices, while at other times independent work demands a hiatus from the collaborative. They have found an effortless ebb-and-flow, and three is not a crowd in this household.

Individually, Shellabarger elevates basic actions like walking or breathing into meditative, durational performances, in which gesture and footprint hold equal importance. Miller creates paintings and collages depicting queer mysticism using craft materials like Martha Stewart paint, glitter and pornographic magazines. Like sturdy rope of interwoven yarn, their joint practice takes on a distinct aesthetic of poignant reflection on shared human life. A push-pull between Stan’s interest in time-based work and Dutes’ occult imagery is perceptible in each Miller & Shellabarger piece. For a recent series the duo pulled hair from their signature beards to stitch imagery like their S&M logo into pristinely white cloth handkerchiefs and pillowcases. In “Untitled (Pink Tube),” the artists straddle a long threaded pink tube and crochet outward from the center. The piece will continue until one partner dies and the other unravels their accrued history stitch by stitch.



Miller & Shellabarger

S & M, 2013

beard hair couched on 100-percent-cotton handkerchief,
10.5" x 8.5" folded, 16" x 16" open

S&M’s gunpowder and sunflower seed drawings, on view in the Chicago Cultural Center’s exhibition “Again Gone,” blend performance, the body and sexual energy. The artists were making their well-known double portrait silhouettes and realized their conjoined beards had become too personal and recognizable. “We wanted something less about our bodies and more universally related to the human body.” In seed drawings one partner lays down and the other traces his form, leaving behind a vacant contour reminiscent of crime scenes. The energy-packed kernels stay sprinkled on the ground. “Ideally they would remain there forever for visitors to scatter, but I don’t think the Cultural Center staff would like us very much,” Dutes explains. Traversable like Carl Andre’s floor works, the loose seeds invite dissipation like Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ candy piles.

The gunpowder drawings begin similarly, but the ammunition is lit and burns grey, whispery curls into the paper. At the Chicago Cultural Center, these drawings softly billow on the wall, disavowing their violent creation—one partner literally setting fire to the other’s outline. Miller & Shellabarger quickly draw attention to this as sound foundation: charged inception and dreamy result.

In their romantic partnership, indistinguishable from their artistic one, Stan and Dutes refer to each other as husband and husband. They adopted this vocabulary thinking legal marriage would never be possible. On the upcoming fall equinox, as a work of life, not art, they will officially marry.

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

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Chicago Tribune

"Artists crochet at MCA"

By Bill Daley

November 17, 2013



Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger have been working on piece for 10 years

Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger have been crocheting a pink fabric tube for a decade now, an ongoing, still-growing (it's about 80 feet long now) artistic expression of their shared lives, work and love.

Since Oct. 15, the Chicago artists have been working on the piece, formally known as "Untitled (Pink Tube)," three days a week at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Catch their last performance 4 to 8 p.m. Nov. 19 at the museum, 220 E. Chicago Ave.

Artist-audience interaction is definitely allowed, says Julie Rodrigues Widholm, an MCA curator. "I've seen our visitors going up and talking to them," she says. "Crocheting is so familiar and it evokes many stories from our visitors."

"The audience has been really, really interested," agrees Miller. "We have had conversations with people from all over the world and all over the city that have been satisfying."

Miller works on one end of the tube, Shellabarger on the other. Sometimes they sit far apart, other times close together, Widholm reports.

The couple crochet about 2 feet of new yarn during every performance, Miller estimates. When the artists are away, their two chairs are left out with the tube hanging in between.

"It's been really nice to have such a long run of this piece. It's the longest run we've had with it," Miller says. "We're satisfied to see how long it has grown."

"The Way of the Shovel" could dig a little deeper"

By Sam Worley

November 12, 2013

A few years ago at a Portland performance festival, a couple of local guys, Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger, dug two side-by-side graves for themselves, with a tunnel in between so that they could hold hands. Partners in marriage as well as art, the pair bring a real sex-death thing to work that often explores queer identity; in a public performance project this month at the Museum of Contemporary Art, they crochet opposite ends of a [long pink tube](#) they've been working on now for ten years.

Miller and Shellabarger aren't the only artists bringing a legacy of grave digging to the MCA this season. Life, loss, and the possibility of early interment are in the air: See also "The Way of the Shovel," a new exhibition curated by [Dieter Roelstraete](#), which sprung forth from Roelstraete's [observation](#) that contemporary artists rely increasingly on archival research and obsess increasingly over historical questions. They've even adopted the language of archivists and archaeologists, Roelstraete says, and begun to refer to what they do in terms of "digging," "mining," and "excavating." This show, then, is about excavation, conceptual and literal, and includes video from a 2007 piece in which Derek Brunen, like Miller and Shellabarger, digs his own grave.

See the rest of the article here:

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/way-of-the-shovel-contemporary-art-museum-dieter-roelstraete/Content?oid=11532404>

"Show us your . . . pink tube"

By Gwynedd Stuart

November 11, 2013



Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger occasionally perform together without being in the same room. The artists are always connected, however, by a pink tube made of acrylic yarn. The tube currently measures 80 feet in length and grows longer as they sit on either end and crochet away—always in public because it wouldn't be a performance otherwise. The piece is called *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, and they've been working on it ten years.

The Museum of Contemporary Art—where they're currently performing and exhibiting—describes the project: "Disarmingly familiar yet poignant, *Untitled (Pink Tube)* explores gender roles, body politics, and artistic labor, with a keen awareness of the growing significance of craft-based production to contemporary art practices."

Miller told me that like a lot of their work as a married couple, it's autobiographical: "It's about our relationship." In 2003 the pair celebrated ten years together and had been discussing the "accumulation of time and material." Plus, both of their grandmothers had crocheted. They didn't know how to when they began but they learned as they went along.

The sight of two bearded men crocheting on either end of a long, floppy phallus or umbilical cord gets a variety of responses from audiences. "Some people think it's hilarious and they'll laugh, some are confused, some think it's charming, others are unsettled," Miller explained. Other people just want to talk to them about it, which they're totally fine with. Miller went on, "It's a performance, not theatrical. We're not actors, we're ourselves; there's no fourth wall." Through November 19 Miller and Shellabarger will crochet live at the MCA on Tuesdays (4-8 PM), Thursdays (2-5 PM), and Saturdays (noon-3 PM).



"Why Hardcore Craft Is So Popular in Chicago"

By Jason Foumberg

November 1, 2013

These four artists prove that Chicago is at the center of the fiber art movement.

Chicago's fiber art movement is not your occasional yarn-bombed lamppost; today's thread-slingers tangle up heady concepts, passions, and personalities in their work. In fact, the city has long been a stronghold of the fiber art movement—a traditional, but contested, moniker. Chicago artists are known for using edgy, epic craft techniques to revamp familiar textile applications. Here are four artists who exemplify the movement's breadth, variety, and politics.

The craft: Crochet

The new tool: Queer activism

The husbands that crochet together, stay together. For the past 10 years, Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger have been crocheting a single artwork together, *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, in public places. The artwork is exactly its namesake—a long, soft tube made from pink yarn—and each of the bearded gents works simultaneously on either end of the tube to add to it, often for hours at a time. The pink tube is currently about 75-feet long, and viewers can catch the artists in action in the [MCA's lobby](#) on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays (through November 19). Their public display of crocheting *Untitled (Pink Tube)* ends if one of the husbands dies, and that's when the whole thing will be unraveled.

See more here:

<http://www.chicagomag.com/arts-culture/October-2013/Why-Hardcore-Craft-Is-So-Popular-In-Chicago/>



BIG RED AND SHINY

Big Red & Shiny

“Experiencing Rapid Pulse.”

By Sandrine Schaefer

June 1-10, 2013

The format of the performance art festival, which has been widely developed in other parts of the world for decades, is seeping into the United States. In the past month alone, three large-scale international performance art festivals have taken place in Chicago, Illinois; Miami, Florida; and Rosslyn, Virginia. This month, Brooklyn International Performance Festival, (BIPAF) will occur throughout various venues in Brooklyn, NY. Each festival varies depending on the organizer, context, and alchemy between the participating artists. However, no matter how varied, there is an unspoken etiquette that has allowed this format to evolve the medium of performance art without the support of art institutions or significant financial backing. The Rapid Pulse International Performance Art Festival that activated Chicago’s Wicker Park neighborhood from June 1-10 stood out as a festival that held true to the medium’s history while creating opportunities to engage unfamiliar audiences.

...

The Power of Two

Rapid Pulse included a large number of collaborative duos, something that Chicago’s performance art scene is increasingly becoming known for. As an artist who has been working with the same collaborator for nine years, I am always interested in experiencing different approaches to collaboration. Interestingly, all of the collaborative duos in the festival created durational pieces. Perhaps, allowing a piece to unfold over an extended period of time lends itself well to balancing the goals and processes of two artists.

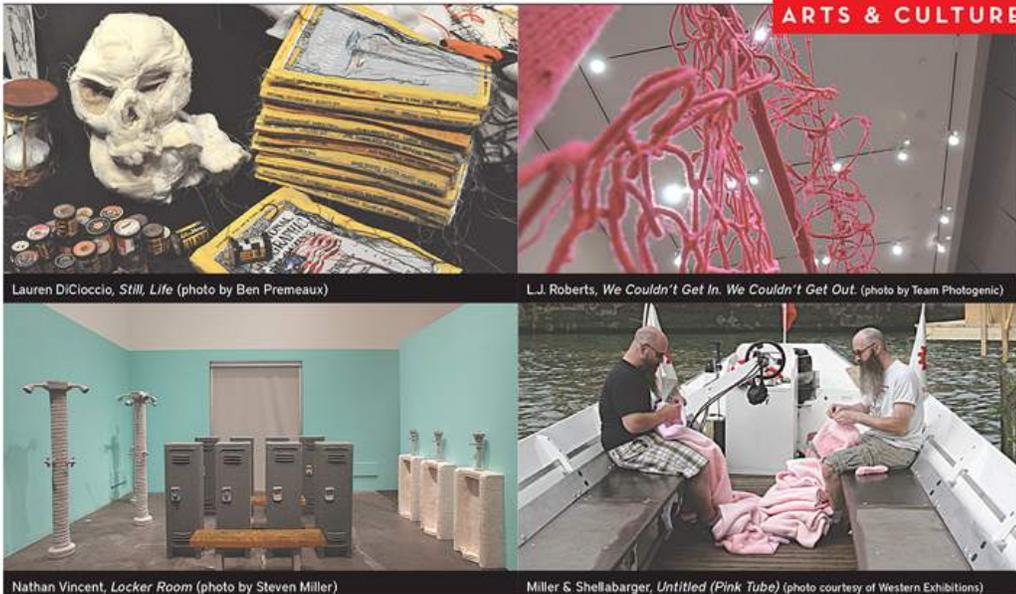
Chicago-based artist couple, [Miller and Shellabarger](#) created a piece that has been active for ten years. The two bearded men sat at opposite ends of the storefront window of Rapid Pulse’s Hub where they spent four hours collaboratively crocheting a pink tube that they have been creating together since 2003. [The performance](#) created a mundane image, requiring little analysis on behalf of the audience, however, the sincerity of their demeanor and commitment to this action was easily understood and profoundly moving. Miller and Shellabarger engaged the audience in casual conversation as they crocheted. The audience discovers that they learned to crochet from a friend, the action is always made in public space, and the last time they measured the tube it was about 70 feet in length. We learned that the piece will continue until one of the men can no longer crochet. Most likely, this will occur at death. When this happens, the other has agreed to unravel the tube. The piece oscillated between tenderness and straightforwardness around the impossibility of forever. In a culture that sensationalizes, sanitizes, and excessively fears death, Miller and Shellabarger’s acceptance of mortality was refreshing.

See the entire article at:

<http://www.bigredandshiny.com/cgi-bin/BRS.cgi?section=review&issue=145&article=2013-06-09-065250430173732759-sthash.i2ilbvXX.dpuf>

Orlando Weekly

By Jessica Bryce Young
October 31, 2012



Lauren DiCioccio, *Still, Life* (photo by Ben Premeaux)

L.J. Roberts, *We Couldn't Get In. We Couldn't Get Out.* (photo by Team Photogenic)

Nathan Vincent, *Locker Room* (photo by Steven Miller)

Miller & Shellabarger, *Untitled (Pink Tube)* (photo courtesy of Western Exhibitions)

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ORLANDO WEEKLY

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Moral fiber

Despite a few didactic moments, CFAM's delightful fiber arts show is a funhouse of sensory overload

BY JESSICA BRYCE YOUNG

The first artist visitors encounter upon entering *The Mysterious Content of Softness*, a group show currently filling three of four galleries at the Cornell Fine Arts Museum, is Nathan Vincent. According to the accompanying wall text, Vincent's work "explores gender permissions" by "creating 'masculine objects' using 'feminine processes.'" To the right of that text, you'll see three traditional ivory lace doilies, into which Vincent has worked male motifs such as a men's room symbol and the circle-and-arrow Mars emblem; turn around and there's a pair of huge screws and a bolt crocheted in gray yarn. OK. We get it. Manly stuff, girly methods.

This kind of literalism may cause some viewers to heave a sigh now and then at this exhibit; about half of the artists are working the same identity theory tropes. But that's no reason not to visit. *Mysterious Content of Softness* is a funhouse of sensory input, a motherlode of distracting beauty. Walk past those opening gambits and the gallery is taken over by Vincent's life-size installation *Locker Room*, complete with showers, benches, urinals – all softly knitted

or crocheted. It's an impressive spectacle, and although it's in the same vein of contradicting gender expectations, the pure fun of it knocks the stiffness out of the theoretical underpinnings.

Next up is L.J. Roberts' equally didactic, equally impressive, equally exuberant and funny *We Couldn't Get In. We Couldn't Get Out.*, a 10-foot-high hot-pink hurricane fence topped with coiling barbed wire, all of it built of fuzzy crocheted tubes of yarn. We don't need to be told that it's reappropriating gender roles and addressing issues of social barriers confronting the gay community – a hot-pink fence is as literal an interpretation of those ideas as I can imagine – but I couldn't help but delight in the ingenuity of its construction.

Through that fence, one glimpses Angela Ellsworth's *Seer Bonnets*, bristling with pearl-headed corsage pins – beautiful on the outside, bloodily painful on the inside. Their unwearability speaks to the pain of femininity's prescribed roles, not just crippling-but-socially expected beauty norms (like high heels – or foot binding), but the internal pain that accompanies or enables

those outward displays. Also in this gallery are Lauren DiCioccio's enchantingly crafted objects – embroidered fabric replicas of everyday articles (magazines, water bottles, playing cards, a skull) almost indistinguishable from the real thing.

Angela Hennessy's dark explorations fill a corner of the back gallery. *Midnight Disease*, a series of delicate lacy jellyfish, turns out to be based on disease specimen slides. Crocheted of black thread, black velvet fuzz and unraveled hairnets, the threadly filaments and tendrils waving and reaching out behind glass frames are unabashedly lovely, even touching. But they're freighted with heavy racial and feminist politics – perhaps too heavy for these ethereal creations. Similarly, Lisa Kellner's pink organza balloons are purely pretty until deflated by the artist's intentions, unpacked via the wall texts.

Husband-and-husband artistic team Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger are the sole performance artists of the show, and have created the most moving work. Their *Pink Tube*, a massive piece of crochet that they add to as an ongoing performance, will continue to grow for as long as the couple is alive and able to work – when one of them dies, the other vows to unravel the piece. In this case, the inherent gender identity critique (the use of feminine processes and the color pink to interrogate queer masculinity) succeeds, perhaps because it is so personal. Rather than preaching a theory, the knit work *Pink Tube* and *Untitled (Graves)* – a pair of graves dug side by side, with a connecting tunnel through which the artists can hold hands – are simple expressions of love and connection. And what, after all, is knitting but a process of connection?

jyoung@orlandoweekly.com

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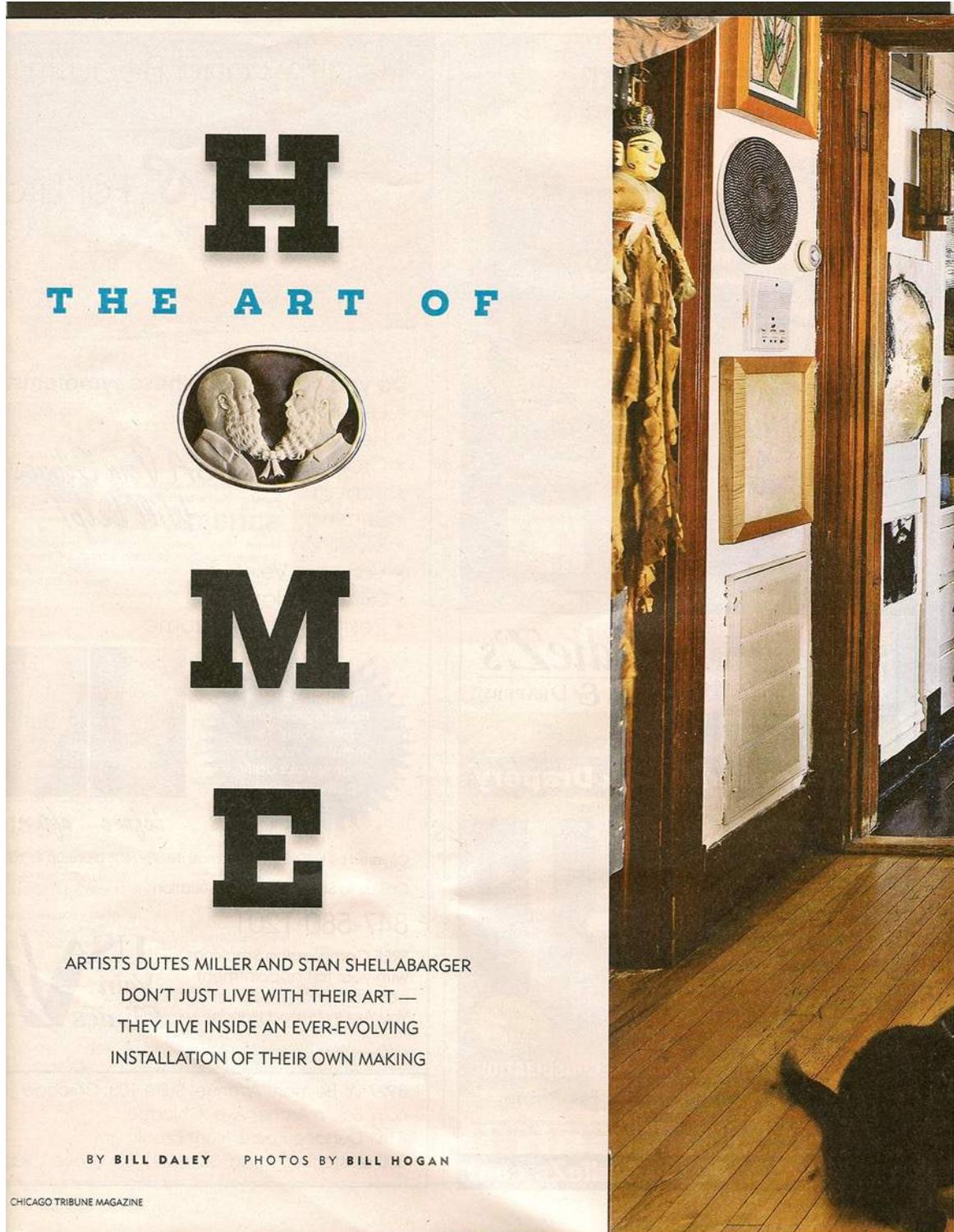
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Chicago Tribune

"The Art of Home"

By Bill Daley

September 12, 2012



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Dutes Miller, seated, and Stan Shellabarger in their Avondale living room, filled with works by artist friends and colleagues. Among the items are pieces from Michael Rae's "Rock-n-Roll" series. Using unfinished wood, the Chicago artist created sculptures of a guitar, amplifier and speaker box. Opposite, a 2009 work by Miller & Shellabarger, Untitled Cameo (Beards with a Bow).

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T

he secret to Dutes

Miller and Stan Shellabarger's home is hidden in plain sight. Maybe it's tucked between the layers of blankets the artists have stacked in the closet. Or the restaurant's-worth of dishware filling the cupboards. Perhaps it's writ large in the implied wink of the sculpture above the bed — eyes that, combined with the steel headboard below, make a face. Or scratched in the impressions left by the pencil attached to the door — positioned to make its mark every time someone enters.

Wherever you find it, not long after you make your way into the couple's Avondale apartment you see past what might appear to be clutter and begin to understand: You're inside a living work of art. Miller and Shellabarger, who have been together 19 years, 12 of them spent in the same two-bedroom apartment, surround themselves with objects they love; all visible and very much within arm's reach.

"We collect these things because we like them and we want to use them," said Miller. And they do, every day.

The apartment functions like a lifesize shadow box. The walls are lined with contemporary art, much of it made by artist friends and acquired through purchase, gift or swap (Shellabarger builds frames for artists in exchange for art). Curios, totems and bibelots, a heady mix of the culture high, low and everywhere in-between, nestle side-by-side.

If all these things share a theme in common, it's that they reflect the keen eye for detail, shape and

emotional wattage shared by Miller and Shellabarger. Everywhere you look — walls, shelves, tabletops, window sills — there are objects begging to tell a story. A wooden Buddha sits serenely on the soap dish in the bathroom. A growing pile of white chicken wishbones preen in a clear glass mason jar on the kitchen shelf. Eyes Open, a wall sculpture by Los Angeles artist John Parot, creates the face above the bed.

Evident, too, in the collections are two somewhat contradictory strands: a tongue-in-cheek innocence that can stray toward camp, and an honest reverence for vintage goods worn by time and usage.

One of Shellabarger's favorite possessions, for example, is an old Ekco spatula that belonged to his mother. The handle long ago melted down to a puttylike knob while the paper-thin metal flippers have eroded into soft, undulating lines. The years, he noted, have transformed this mass-produced utensil into something unique, personal.

Despite the size of their (ever growing) collections, Miller and Shellabarger never index or catalog their items, simply finding what they need when they need it. They also do not dust. Well, OK, hardly ever. But the kitchen counter and stove top are spotless, an indicator that the home never sacrifices function for art. In fact, they not only live but work there.

While they use items from their various collections only occasionally in their artwork — most notably in the silhouettes they cut of each other — Miller and Shellabarger don't draw a dividing line between themselves, their lives and their art.

Colorfully tattooed, they sport long, luxuriant beards that stand out amid the timid whiskerings of most men, and which make featured appearances in their silhouette art. Film critic Roger Ebert certainly noticed when the pair made an appearance in the 2011 movie "Jamie and Jessie Are Not Together," a gay musical comedy by their friend, writer/director Wendy Jo Carlton. The men, wrote Ebert, "pop up all during the movie and are never explained."

"We were the Greek chorus, but we couldn't really sing," Shellabarger says with a wide grin.

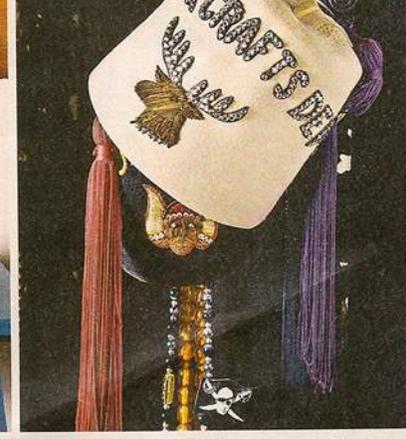
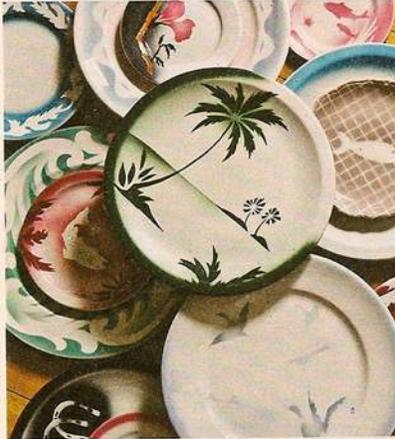
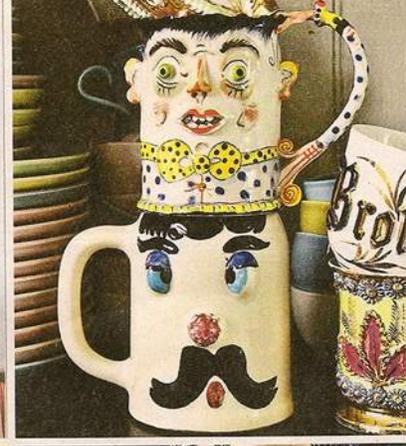
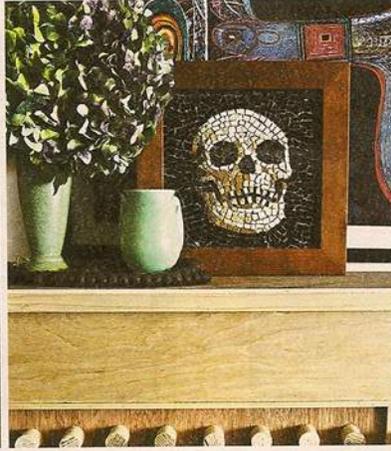
Miller, 47, and Shellabarger, 43 met as art students at Illinois State University in Normal. Represented by Western Exhibitions, a well-regarded Chicago contemporary art galley, the pair have had numerous solo and joint shows. Yet both hold day jobs. Miller is a baker at Letizia's Fiore Ristorante in Chicago's Logan Square. Shellabarger is a barista nearby at New Wave Coffee.

At home, they agree not to disagree, rarely arguing.

"We don't say no to each other," Shellabarger says. They don't actually finish each other's sentences but they know each other so well that missteps are rare in life, in art and in collecting.

A couple of Christmases ago each secretly bought the other an Indonesian shadow puppet as a surprise gift. The two puppets are different but match because the same artist made them. They are proudly displayed atop a bookcase in the living room. The puppets are fitting metaphors for Miller and Shellabarger, who strive to stay true to their vision. It's a message they deliver to others.

"What we tell art students is that they have to love their work and keep making it," Miller said. "It's the same thing in bringing stuff into your home. You have to live with it. You have to love it and not care what other people think of it." ■



Artists in residence Top row: A smooth wooden "stone" banded in metal strips was a gift from a friend; "Skull," a mosaic by artist Jim Bachor; The stovetop double espresso maker was their souvenir of Rome; Middle row: A tramp art box sits in front of a blue McCoy butterfly vase; "Eyes Open," a wall sculpture by artist John Parot hangs over the vintage steel bed; A collection of whimsical cups and mugs; Bottom row: An assortment of restaurant wear made by Jackson China and Syracuse China companies; Two tramp art-style matchstick frames sit atop a blue wooden table; All three pieces were made by Stan Shellabarger; Two fezes, gifts from friends, are displayed in the living room.

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The Chicago Arts Archive

"Exploring Human Relationships: A Dialogue with Miller & Shellabarger, Pt. 1"

By Danielle Jackson

August 6, 2012

In 2011, as an intern at Illinois State University Galleries, I was introduced to husband- and-husband artists, Dutes Miller & Stan Shellabarger. Over the course of a week, I got to observe their performance Seed Drawings and document another performance Sewn Together. I conversed with the artists about life, and watched them transform the bare white walls of the gallery space into an amazingly skilled solo exhibition entitled, Miller & Shellabarger: Alone Together, in which they explored and documented "the bittersweet rhythms of human relationships." A few weeks ago, I got the opportunity to sit down and chat (over beers) with both of them. We spoke about their artistic process, the nature of performance, the importance of human interactions in performance work (particularly as it pertains to their practice), relationships, and historic forms of art making.

Danielle Jackson [DJ]: To start, how would you guys describe your collaborative practice to someone who wasn't aware of it?

Stan Shellabarger [SS]: Lots of times when people ask that question, they want to know what materials you've worked in. So people will often ask if you paint or draw or make sculpture. We don't really paint and we do some things that are *drawing-like* using marks, but they're not really what people would think of as pen, pencil, or charcoal drawings. We end up describing the materials we use because we do performance, but we also do works that are sculptural and works that are two-dimensional that hang on the wall; they're not paintings or drawings. Often times this conversation doesn't end up being about what the work is about. It all ends up being about the materials we use; people get really fascinated with that. Sometimes that's confusing enough that people forget about anything else [laughter]. It's not that I wouldn't want to talk to them about the underlying context of the work. It's just too muddy for them to want to go much farther. Then they're sorry they asked [laughter].

Dutes Miller [DM]: [Laughter] I think lots of times we'll talk to people about it being about human relations and the way that two people get along together in the world.

DJ: Your work deals with togetherness and separation. Going back to your show at University Galleries, the show had this tenderness to it, but it was also kind of melancholy. This is evident when you look at the *Untitled (Graves)* photograph. In it you guys are together, yet you're in a grave. Now it's this moment where you realize one of you could pass away and the other would have to live with that. Can you talk about how that idea manifests itself in your practice?

DM: It's kind of a theme that runs through a lot of the work. I think as we have gotten older it comes through more prevalently just because we are dealing more with mortality in a way. We're not that old, but we're not twenty. You don't think about that so much when you're twenty. Well, I don't think I did. We've also read some Derrida and one of his ideas about friendship is that, "When you become friends with someone, really truly friends with them, at that point you begin mourning because you know one of you will die before the other one." That's particularly true in romantic relationships. It's just in some ways a plain fact, but in other ways it shows you have to have a really strong emotional bond to face that.

DJ: You mentioned the importance of materials earlier. Out of all the materials you have used what is the most satisfying?

DM: I really enjoy the performance work the best. I think we've been doing that the longest. In my solo practice, I don't do performance anymore, so I find that rewarding. For me it's really great to engage in the activity—it's just not something I do anymore. I do mostly collage, painting, and drawing.

SS: There are some performances that are very arduous. While it was a successful piece as a performance, they were just physically arduous. The gun powder drawings are super exciting because you have this **controlled explosion**. There's an element of never knowing how it's going to turn out. Depending on the humidity and the kind of paper, you get different results. We're always experimenting because they're unbeknownst to us. There are these different formulas that work as gun powder, but aren't really truly gun powder. All make different marks or burn differently. They do different things on different paper. That's something I'm looking forward to experimenting with more.

There are certain materials that are satisfying in their own way. The cut-paper silhouettes are very immediate. You trace, you cut, and they have this immediacy to them. **They also have a real fragility to them**. If you're not careful with them or depending on where we've shown them, they'll only get shown once because they're destroyed in the process of being displayed. For me, I don't necessarily have a favorite; they all have their pros and cons.

DJ: How does your process differ from material to material?

DM: I think that you have to approach all the materials differently. Our overall practice and the way that we address things remains the same. It's always coming up with an idea of what we want to say or discussing a certain metaphor. We try to figure out what materials and processes work with that. Then we deal with the physical concerns and complications of those materials.

DJ: How do your solo practices differ from your collaborative practice?

DM: They're just really different in appearance and subject matter. I deal with queer pornography and the representation of sexuality in queer pornography. There are ideas of sexual desire and human appetites. It's a lot messier than our collaborative work. It's more painterly. It's based in materials, but in such a different way that it doesn't visually look like that work at all.

SS: When you're working by yourself, you're by yourself! You don't have someone else to discuss and bounce ideas off of. You don't have this banter back and forth about the way this or that might look. The dialogue, that normally takes place externally is really different. We live together and work at our house, so I can show him stuff I'm working on, but that conversation is with a peer instead of someone you're collaborating with.

DJ: So what are your themes like?

SS: I'm mostly doing things performatively, artists' books, and some print stuff. My work tends to be more process-driven and action-driven as opposed to the collaborative work.

DJ: I was reading about your work [Stan] in an *Art Practical* article. The writer described your walking books as an accumulation of actions whose gestures then become self-portraits. Do you think of the work as self-portraits?

SS: I don't know that I think of them as self-portraits, but I definitely think if you're paying attention then you've figured you know something more about me—maybe that I'm OCD [laughter]. I've been obsessed with the same activity; walking, art making, various ways of mark making, and various ways of trying to make time evident. I feel like a lot of times, I'm collaborating with time. It's difficult because it refuses to say anything [laughter]. So I end up having to figure out what the work has to say.

DJ: The article stated that you restricted your distance.

SS: Yeah, when I was doing the walking books a lot of times, the books would make reference to where I was walking. So if it's a small room then the book is laid out to make reference to that space or that particular spot. I did a really big print (two years ago) that was a six-color reductive woodcut print. It was eighteen feet, which seems really gigantic, but if you're pacing eighteen feet, it's not very far to walk back and forth. You really have to change your gait and your stride so that you don't physically make yourself sick by constantly walking and turning. In that case, I had to restrict myself physically, so I wouldn't get sick when I was walking and also because it was a really arduous task publishing myself. Dutes assisted in the printing process, but I was inking all the blocks.

At Spudnik Press, I was getting technical assistance from the director, but I was still doing it all myself. There were ten prints per block. Every time I printed, it was around a hundred prints. It got much faster. That was partly because as we went on, the surface area of the blocks was reduced each time. I had to put down less ink. I'm not a printmaker, so I was teaching myself about mixing inks, putting ink on the blocks, pressure, and pulling. It ended up being an immense amount of work. It was almost four or five months of arduously walking, printing things, drying, walking on the blocks again, and getting ready to print again. I was really happy with the end result, but I was always anxious about the way it would look. At color four it looks like shit and at color five it looks fantastic. It's like, "I still have one more color. What if I fuck it up?"

DJ: Let's go back to the collaborative work. You mentioned the cut- paper silhouettes earlier. What's your interest in that and antiquated forms?

SS: A lot of it has to do with the accessibility for us as artists. **There isn't really anything high-tech about casting a shadow, but at the same time it can be incredibly expressive.** It also means that an audience can look at them and know its cut paper. There's nothing weird going on. I think people have a real direct tie to the material. They may have cut snowflakes before. They may have done silhouettes at school or at church or something. With that particular material, people have a real direct knowledge of it.

DM: And I think a lot of our work has these really simple materials to them or simple processes. It's deliberate. When people see it they can have an "in" to start thinking about what the piece is. With the *Untitled (Pink Tube)* performance, people have a very visceral reaction to it, not just because it's this long pink thing, but because they understand crochet. They've seen people doing crochet. They have ties to people in their family who did it. All of that comes to mind. It's easy for people to relate to that piece because they have a direct understanding of that. Every

material or process that we do is selected for some sort of representation or metaphor just by the process. With the cameos—they're very romantic—it's a gift that people would bring back when they would go on the Grand Tour in the Victorian Age. You would come back and bring your wife a cameo of herself. It's playing off of what those objects and processes already are.

DJ: So how long have you guys been working on the *Untitled (Pink Tube)*? How big is it now?

DM: Since 2003.

SS: It was over sixty feet the last time. It's in a show in Milwaukee at Inova. That piece then goes to Rollins College in Orlando, Florida. In September we're going down there for the opening reception to crochet and perform. It was originally in Bellevue, Washington, a suburb of Seattle. The Bellevue Art Museum (BAM) had a show called *The Mysterious Content of Softness*.

DM: There's something about that piece that won't be evident until it's "done." We only work on it together and in public. When one of us can no longer do it (probably because of death), the other person is going to publicly unravel it. Once again it's this acknowledgement of death and this absolute possibility that it's going to happen. It also works as a metaphor for our relationship. When the relationship is no longer physically there, it's going to be unraveled.

DJ: That's kind of the grieving process too. The unraveling is a way for you to deal with that process—a way to mourn.

SS: Yeah, when we performed in Bellevue, they were excited because a lot of people came with questions that only we could answer. One of them was if that [the unraveling] was true or not. People had read about the piece, but they wanted to know if it was really true. We told them that it was true and some of them were really upset. They were just like, "It's really a shame that all that work would be destroyed and that there wouldn't be something to donate to a museum or to look at." On the other hand, there were others who thought it was really fantastic that we would have this thing to do after the other person passed away.

DM: And there's so much time and memories involved with having gone to so many places and performed. It's like you're forced to remember.

SS: I was not near as excited as they were about the unraveling of the piece. There was this woman in her seventies. She was a widow, so she had a different perspective. Her husband had already passed away and she was on another side or something. I couldn't join her in the excitement [laughter], like at some point in the future it might be me that has to unravel a tube. It did, however, prompt us that evening over drinks with a friend to sit and have a long discussion about parameters for unraveling the tube. It's not ambiguous now. We came up with clear guidelines for how that might happen, but still leaving a lot of room.

DM: The other person, who has to do it, has to do it, so that there's some decisions left for them. At that point, you can't have the conversation anymore. There were some things that were decided before.

SS: There are a lot of conversations where one of us would say something and then be like, "Oh I don't want to be held to that and I don't want you to be held to it either, so I don't think that should be one of the things you have to do." That was good. It was better to have that conversation than to leave the other person hanging out trying to decide whether they're doing it the right way.

DJ: It's interesting hearing about the different reactions.

DM: One of the great things about performing in public is that you actually get to see and hear people's reactions. People have reactions to art all the time, but artists aren't always present to hear them or engage in a discussion. You never really know how people are going to react. When we did the *Graves* piece in Basel, there was a group of three or five Irishmen who walked up and saw the piece. They thought it was the most hilarious thing that'd ever seen [laughter]. They were just laughing out loud like, "Oh my God, that's hilarious."

SS: Maybe that's just a cultural thing and the Irish have a different way of thinking about that. There were other people that came up and were very upset.

DJ: I think the awesome thing about your performances is that people can talk to you guys. During your *Sewn Together* performance, I remember having a conversation with Dutes about my life and what I was going to do upon graduation. It's interesting to sit with you guys now because I'm doing something totally different than what I'd previously thought [laughter].

DM: One of the things you don't see in the documentation is those exchanges that you have with people. All of those are really a part of the performance, which is part of the reason there is no video documentation of the *Pink Tube* piece or the *Graves* piece. I think when people see that they think that they're really seeing the piece because you're so used to watching things on television and that being "the thing." It's like, "No, things are documented. You can get the idea of it, but there's no replacement for being in the same place at the same time with someone."

The Chicago Arts Archive

"Exploring Human Relationships: A Dialogue with Miller & Shellabarger, Pt. 2"

By Danielle Jackson

August 9, 2012

The following is part two of the interview, "Exploring Human Relationships: A Dialogue with Miller & Shellabarger." While Part I focuses on the artists overall process as well as various themes and materials that accompany their work, Part II concentrates on their inspirations, how their performance work veers from the theatrical aspects of performative works, what they hope the viewer can take from their work, and so on.

DJ: Where do you guys take inspiration from? Who are some artists you're interested in?

DM: At least the performance work is really derived from performance work being done in the sixties and seventies. Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

SS: Burden, Vito Acconci, and Rebecca Horn. There is a long list of people whose work is really body centered and endurance work. There are direct lines you can make.

DJ: I can see that especially with the Vito Acconci and his use of personal pronouns in involving the viewer in the performance. That use of "I," "You," and "We" automatically involves us in that process.

SS: Right, I mean we break in many ways in that we don't have this separation. Performance work and even performance work now is really theatrical in ways that you have a separation between the performer and the audience.

DM: Sometimes performers put themselves in a meditative state, like Marina Abramović. With her work she's physically there, but she's not engaging the audience totally.

SS: And Acconci sort of always threaded that "I'm sitting at the bottom of the stairs. If you come downstairs..." It's kind of this daring thing. Then *Seedbed*, where you're made to be aware, but you can't see him; there is a physical separation.

DJ: At this point in your career you both have traveled around the world. Have you noticed a difference in reactions to your work in other places?

DM: Yeah, when we were in Switzerland the first question that people didn't ask was, "What are you doing?" We'll tell them performance and the response often is "What's performance art?" They were a couple of steps past that. The popularity of performance in America diminished after the seventies. It wasn't very well known with a lot of people, but in Europe that didn't happen. It's more common. Also, the nature of our relationship—of us being lovers and husbands—was something that people just knew. Whereas here people often ask and then don't believe us when we tell them that we're together. The thing that was funny in Switzerland is that there is a part of Switzerland where there are these dairy farmers. They have long beards and they thought that we were Swiss. Somehow, they thought we were dairy farmers who became performance artists [laughter]. That was pretty funny [laughter].

SS: Yes, that confusion was a whole new confusion [laughter]. There was none of that questioning of our relationship, which meant that they had a much quicker read of the piece and what was going on. They had all these questions, but they would skip the first three or four questions that typically came up.

DM: The conversation went further into the nature of performance or the relationship to other performances they'd seen.

SS: They would talk about what the piece meant to them. They knew that we were performing. They knew that we were obviously a couple. They were interested in the metaphors and the materials as a metaphor.

DM: It was also interesting when we performed at PS1 in New York at the *New York Art Book Fair*. There was no one that would act like they were interested. You would see them watching, but they would watch from somewhere else. I think that's because New York has this reputation of being very worldly, very seasoned, and a little bit distant (especially within the art world). That was a very different way of people engaging with us.

SS: People aren't used to engaging in performances. Maybe they were thinking they were being polite and that we wouldn't talk to them. Then they realized that we would. That happens very often.

DJ: When did you first start using your beards as a component of art making?

DM: The first use of a beard was at a coffee shop called Mother Fool's in Madison, WI. We went inside of the window, braided our beards together, and sat there until we couldn't take it anymore. We cut them off. The main documentation is our beards clipped off in frames. One of the things for me is that beards come up at the onset of sexual maturity. It's a symbol of being a mature sexual male. That has something to do with it for me.

SS: A lot of the silhouettes we were doing were single silhouettes that ultimately turned into these large-scale books.

We started doing silhouettes with our beards conjoined (conjoined silhouettes), where we were attached in some matter or were in costume. They're long enough now that we can stand back to back and still tie our beards around our heads if we want to; that's something that we couldn't do before. Also, we ended up using our beards in these monograms, where we actually couched our hair onto textiles. One of which was done as pillow cases with a ciphered S & M. It was this double entendre. Having a long piece of hair makes that process so much easier. The longer the hair, the cleaner the line. It's hard to say if the long beards made us think of that or that it was just fortuitous that we already had the beards to do it.

DJ: Do you guys consider your work to be a commentary on queer relationships or relationships overall?

DM: Yes, both because we're queer and a lot of information we're bringing to it is our information. We hope that it's not too narrow in scope that other people can't think about human relationships in general.

SS: When we were at *Art Chicago* years ago, there was this older Italian woman who chatted with us while we were doing the crochet piece [*Untitled (Pink Tube)*]. She wanted to know how long we would be there, and I'm like, "Oh we'll be here for another three hours." She's like, "Well fantastic. My son is getting married. I think he really needs to see this." She came back later and really wanted him to see the piece. She was like, "This is what you're getting into when you get married." I thought it was very sweet. It didn't matter that we were queer. It was this metaphor for marriage and she just wanted him to sit with it for a while, watch, and talk with us.

DJ: What do you want people to get out of your work?

SS: I kind of hope they get patience from it. While the work is incredibly autobiographical, I see a lot of people come up; both queer and straight. It's a mirror for them. That's when it's the most flattering. I feel that it worked when people make that connection that flips a switch in your head.

DM: It would be great if our work changed peoples' ideas about perceptions of whom and what people are and the way you need to examine the way you look at the world.

SS: It's like black men in neighborhoods that are poor are drug-dealers. They're really going to play basketball—that's all [sarcastically]. Maybe people should think about that. If our work helps people look outside that complacency, that's great!

DJ: Going back to the silhouettes for a minute, I'm curious do you get the Kara Walker reference often?

SS: Oh yeah! I like Kara Walker's work, but our work is not at all like hers. Obviously, there are the cut-paper silhouettes [laughter], but they're really different from one another. Her work is much different in that ours is much more grounded in portraiture, whereas hers is much more grounded in stereotypes and allegory. There isn't the same narrative going on. Her works are made to really intentionally make everyone who looks at them uncomfortable. No one is safe. Everyone is part of it, which I like about them.

DJ: I met her a couple years back. She had a lecture at the University of Chicago as part of their *Art Speaks* series. There's all this controversy surrounding her work—the most famous being the Betye Saar letter controversy. Saar views Kara Walker's work as reprehensible and portraying negative black imagery. When asked about Betye Saar's work at the lecture, Kara Walker said something to the effect, "I'm not saying that work didn't do anything for the discussion of race. I'm saying it didn't do enough." So she's deliberately trying to force you into a dialogue that not everyone wants to have.

SS: It's hard [laughter].

DJ: It is hard [laughter], but I think that's the point. It's like, "We have to have this conversation!"

DM: It's very different from Adrian Piper's work, but in the same way she's not letting anyone off the hook with that discussion. Also, if you're not willing to talk about race, nothing is going to change for anyone because you can't be like, "Everyone is the same." Its like, "No, everyone is not the same and isn't that great."

SS: Everyone's treatment isn't the same and that's where the tension starts to happen. To get it to change, you have to acknowledge it and talk about. It's uncomfortable so people don't want to talk about it. You can't keep passing it on because that's the problem. You keep passing it on [laughter]. It's long overdue.

DJ: Any views on the Chicago art scene?

SS: I always feel like it's so much of it that I don't know anything about. I just know about it really peripherally. I never get to engage with it. In some ways, I'm much more interested in spending time in my studio, sometimes to the detriment of not getting to see stuff that's happening that I am interested in.

DM: I think the Chicago art scene is really great. It's super diverse. On a regular basis, there are probably five galleries that I go to all the time. I think that's what's going on because that's what I'm seeing. Then someone mentions something to you, you look to the side from there, and it's just this amazing breadth of things going on.

It's also really exciting that people are coming out of Chicago and saying they're from Chicago, like Rashid Johnson. He's doing really well and his work is fantastic. I feel pride about that. There are a lot of really great artists here. They also tend to be pretty generous with other artists because it's not as expensive to live here as New York. It's also not that pressure to make that amount of money to support yourself as an artist. People are much more generous with their time. They'll say, "Did you hear about this or that?" and it's like, "Oh I didn't hear about that. I should apply for that. Thanks for telling me. That's awesome." People are really trying not to just squeeze out something for themselves. They want the whole scene to do well. They're generous with trying to make connections for people both professionally and with materials.

DJ: What advice do you have for emerging artists?

SS: Work in your studio! Really work in your studio! While it's important to go to openings and have a community of artists you can talk with—if you're not making work, then you don't have anything to show. Don't overcompensate on networking. You need to keep making work so that your ideas are not just in your head, instead they're manifesting themselves. Do it for yourself to look at and decide that's not what you're interested in doing. You may have discovered this other way of doing something that you didn't know before, which is something that you would've never found out if you weren't working.

DM: I'll say hang on to some of the important relationships you had in art school. Stay in touch with those people who seem to have an affinity for your work and can talk to you in a way that's helpful. People won't talk to you about your work, if they have no history about your work. That's something really important to foster because if you have a show somewhere you're lucky if anyone says anything other than, "Hey, nice show." You need to have your fiercest critics as long as they're friendly and not abusive. They can be your best assets.

DJ: What are some new things you're working on or older pieces you're expanding on?

DM: Well, we recently started working on two new artists' books. One that is sort of based on the *Graves* piece and another one that's more based on the different kinds of silhouettes we've done. We've been talking about doing a performance where we would be hanging from ropes trying to hold each other. We would hold that embrace until we couldn't anymore. We would keep repeating that until it's no longer possible. I kind of want to make a video.

SS: That's just technically a little daunting. It's just trying to figure out how to put it together, so that it's even close to what you have in your head. The show at Inova in Milwaukee has a lot of new work—a lot of gunpowder drawings and a lot of new paper garlands.

DM: We're calling them veils and they're a single row of paper dolls of us in pose; stretched out horizontally. The veil is folded twice, so it flips back and forth. It's like a big curtain with the pose repeated over and over again.

SS: So instead of just going from left to right, it begins to flow downward. That whole pose becomes this curtain. Since we've only made two of them that's something that we would like to experiment with a lot more.

University Galleries at Illinois State University

Exhibition Essay for

"Miller & Shellabarger: Alone Together"

By Tony Preston-Schreck

University Galleries' Curator

2011

Miller & Shellabarger: Alone Together features recent collaborative works by husband-and-husband artists, Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger. Relying upon historic forms of representation such as silhouetted portraits, embroidered monograms with woven hair, cameos, and outlines, Miller & Shellabarger conjoin their likenesses to document what they call "the bittersweet rhythms of human relationships." From larger-than-life paper cut-outs, to the use of outmoded photographic techniques such as the tintype, the artists use cultural history to recontextualize their own relationship. Galleries 2.5 and 3 struggle to contain their various presences.

In the time since their graduation from I.S.U.'s School of Art in 1991, Miller & Shellabarger have grounded their shared artistic practice in performance. Ephemeral by nature, performance is a fleeting process requiring either presence/memory or documentation/retelling. For those present during *Sewn Together* in I.S.U.'s Bone Student Center (January 18) or *Seed Drawings* on the I.S.U. quad (January 19), memory may be their primary vehicle for recounting the artists' actions. For those absent during the performances, documentation offers a retelling of the events and the potential to experience what is/was durational and transient. *Observation of Untitled 1* (Grave, Basel, Switzerland) or *Untitled* (Pyre), provides snapshots as surrogate memory for actions performed in disparate parts of the world.

Miller & Shellabarger rely upon levity as a point of departure. Implicit in their work is a politic, metered by artistic integrity. Their work draws attention to societal norms through a refusal to keep their personal relationship in the abstract. As with many contemporary artists, reliance upon anachronistic appeal is a consistent device. Use of the silhouette to repeat and adjoin likenesses, as in the *Garland* series, strings together narratives. Sexuality, Grecian vessel iconography, and paper doll chains combine to blend history, humor, and heteronormality into punchy décor.

Humor can only temporarily veil the impending reality that death will inevitably separate the artists' bodies. In an attempt to conceal the morbidity of this fact, Miller & Shellabarger invoke their own comedic mythos that sustains and prolongs their collective existence. Paper cut-outs from the *Large Silhouette* series, shift between Rorschachian prints and mythological centaurs. Gunpowder flashes trace bodily perimeters (*Untitled* (Gunpowder)), reducing the complexity of the human form to a simplistic outline that becomes a whimsical, if not ethereal ghost on the wall. We are left in a quandary to consider when to laugh and when to cry.

Alone Together entwines the bodies of Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger, visually and conceptually, to create a new vision of the abject body. In doing so, we are asked to see embodiment as a fiction, humorous or not.

Miller & Shellabarger: Alone Together is co-sponsored by MECCPAC, a Dean of Students Office Diversity Initiative, Theatre of Ted, and the Illinois Arts Council, A State Agency.

Wisconsin Gazette

"Gay partners put their relationship on display at Inova/Kenilworth gallery"(Miller & Shellabarger)

By Mike Muckian

June 2, 2012

To artists Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger, ultimate loss is a part of true love. That duality is a foundation of their truth, and it's echoed both in their work and in their lives. The Chicago-based husband-and-husband artistic team explores the deeper human and artistic continuum in their installation "Miller and Shellabarger: Hiding in the Light." The installation runs through July 15 at Inova/Kenilworth, the gallery affiliated with UWM's Peck School of the Arts on Milwaukee's East Side.

In addition to following their individual muses in a variety of media, Miller and Shellabarger are performance artists, and the statements they choose to make often govern the art form they select. "We use the medium to define the artistic process, and the process is part of metaphor," says Miller, 45, whose unusual first name was also his grandfather's nickname. "My preferred medium for our collaborative work is performance art. For me, that's the most satisfying."

The pair's best-known performance piece opened their Inova showing on April 20, when each sat across from the other crocheting opposite ends of a long pink tube. Known as "Untitled (Crochet)," the artists began knitting the work in 2003, starting with a single chain of crochet that closed into a circle. It eventually grew to its current 65-foot length, and it represents the couple's enduring relationship. "It's not for sale and it's never going to be finished until one of us can no longer crochet. It will then be the other person's job to unravel the entire work," Miller says. "It's a living metaphor of our time together."

The couple's time together began when the two former art majors met in ceramics class at Illinois State University at Normal in the late 1980s. After each earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in 1991, they moved as a couple to Madison, where Shellabarger earned a masters in fine arts at the University of Wisconsin in 1996. The pair then moved to Chicago, where they have continued to practice their art and live their lives together.

With shaved heads, long beards and a work-wear wardrobe that could cause them to be mistaken for northern Wisconsin bachelor farmers or members of a ZZ Top tribute band, Miller and Shellabarger appear an unlikely pair of gay men, especially when crocheting in both artistic and non-artistic settings. They've crocheted in galleries, coffee houses and public parks from Basel, Switzerland, to Portland, Ore., as they continue their work.

The artists are often approached by people intrigued by their unusual appearance and their even more unusual work. They always engage the audience, but they never try to explain their art. "We don't try to tell people what the performance means," says Shellabarger, 43. "You don't walk up to a painting and ask it what it's about. The audience ultimately decides what a piece means."

The same holds true for audience members who learn the artists are gay despite their non-stereotypical appearance, he says. "We don't care that we're queer. It doesn't seem unnatural," Shellabarger says. "Our work is about a relationship. It's not about a queer relationship." Expressions of that relationship extend to everything they do, including the series of silhouettes of the artists that grace Inova's wall. Some show the pair with their beards intertwined, others show the artists making contact in different gentle and meaningful ways.

Over the course of nearly 20 years, Miller and Shellabarger have worked in multiple media, both individually and together, investigating issues of love, relationship and existential separateness. Some of their most popular performance pieces even explore afterlife possibilities. In Portland, the pair mounted a performance piece called "Untitled (Graves)." Both artists dug proportionally sized side-by-side graves, laid down in them and then dug a tunnel between the two so they could hold hands. The work speaks to life after death and the ability of love to endure, Shellabarger says. "When people see the ('Graves') piece, they have a strong reaction," the artist explains. "It's really about everyone's relationship, not just ours."

Given the subject matter of many of their works, it would be fitting for the artists to have an epitaph in mind to define their conjoined career. But Miller hesitates when asked to create the perfect phrase to memorialize them for future generations. "It would be great to be remembered for how we might have changed people's minds about what a gay couple looks like and what love is," he says.

Time will tell. Until then, they'll continue to crochet.

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The Sheperd Express

"Miller & Shellabarger: Shadows in the Light"

By Kat Murrell

April 27, 2012

Chicago-based duo Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger are enigmatic extroverts. Their collaborative art grows from their relationship and transforms their physical bodies into icons. They are intensely personal, yet transcend specific narrative with universal themes of connection and love in works that are lyrical, ephemeral and mysterious as shadows.

Perhaps the shadow reference comes a bit easily, as a number of pieces in the main gallery space at Inova/Kenilworth feature the artists' likenesses in black paper cutouts. They are displayed as pages in monumental books, as large images on the wall, and most intriguingly, as long garlands of figures. These garlands are paper cutouts, but not all figures in the string are the same. Noting their variations is like watching animation unfold in slow motion. They are suspended over the industrial gallery space of the Kenilworth building, which is an especially interesting position as it directs our attention to places overhead. The space of the viewer and the space of art are the same. The cutouts cast shadows on the walls like feathery doppelgängers, counterpoints to the precise shapes in the air. In one corner, *Garland (Yoga)* cascades like a totem or a waterfall, like gods or lovers.

Other works in the gallery are large outlines on paper of the artists' bodies, overlaid and described by scorched tones of gunpowder. With their emphatic verticality, they keep a sense of lightness and liveliness, although the material and outlines of prone bodies easily suggest more violent actions.

The intriguing series *Chromosome Prints 1-5* delves into more esoteric grounds. It consists of embossed sheets with a variety of symbols, some cryptic and some clear. The overarching theme is procreation on various theoretical and philosophical levels. It is like a code to be deciphered, much like the human genome itself. Images are pressed into the paper with emphatic force, leaving only their imprint; no ink, no lines, simply the physical impression on the paper. As in many other works, the iconic appearance of the artists' distinctive profiles and beards form a center point, and from there expand to musings of the body and cosmos.

The exhibition includes small sculptural pieces, textile works, tintype photographs, videos, and an ongoing project involving a seemingly endless crocheted pink tubular form. As the artists work on this piece, they are creating together, yet this action continually moves them further apart.

Miller and Shellabarger present themselves in a way that is visually and emotionally bold, an exposition of profound closeness. But for all their forms say in their work, there remains a veil of privacy. Facial expressions and physical details are not shown, as the emphasis is on the silhouette. The articulation of body language is all we are given, but in that external simplicity lies poetry. The sense of clarity, modulated by shades of ambiguity, makes "Hiding in the Light" quite an apt title.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

"Miller and Shellabarger, a lovers' discourse"

By Mary Louise Schumacher

April 27, 2012

Falling in love and falling for art have more in common than we might imagine. This is the thought that ran through my mind as I explored the work of husband-and-husband artists Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger, now on view at Inova. In one piece, they have marked the days and years they've spent together in stitches. The pink-yarn crochet piece started out in the shape of a ring, perhaps a symbol of their commitment, grew into a phallic shape and eventually stretched to more than 60 feet, an umbilical cord-like sculpture. When the Chicago-based couple started the needlework in 2003, they had to sit close together, of course. Today, they can choose to sit in separate rooms, out of sight from each other, or huddle close with the pink artwork piled between them, a physical manifestation of their relationship. What couple in a long-term relationship can't relate to this accumulated heap? During the opening of their show at Inova, Miller and Shellabarger crocheted their tube together. A pair of chairs, two balls of yarn and crochet needles are left in their absence along with the cozy, cushy mound.

For more than 18 years, these soft-spoken Midwestern artists, each of whom has a long beard, have been committed to each other and to making art like this in public. To say that they are entwining art and life, that they are creating social sculpture, may be true, but it's an oversimplification. They're engaging in a playful but quite serious philosophical reverie about the materiality of the body and the ephemerality of their lives. They are fond of quoting French theorist Jacques Derrida. One of the rules of true friendship, according to Derrida, the artists point out, is loss. There is the inevitable realization that one person will die first and leave the other.

For me, Miller and Shellabarger's works also bring Denis Diderot, the 18th-century French art critic, to mind. Diderot's passionate letters to Sophie Volland were also intensely rigorous and recondite reflections about ideas and aesthetics. Like Diderot and Volland, Miller and Shellabarger are engaged in a lovers' discourse. "The only difference which I know between death and life is that for now you are living as a mass and that once you have been dissolved into molecules, in twenty years' time you will live as small separate pieces," Diderot wrote to Volland.

This sense of loss, the inevitable dissolution of the body, is part of what Miller and Shellabarger observe in their art and relationship. It's particularly tangible in the silhouettes the artists make for large-scale books, wall pieces and Day of the Dead-like garlands, many of which hang in the Inova show. Traced from shadows, the black paper silhouettes are ways to openly share but conceal intimate moments in time, from the mundane to the joyous to the erotic. The ornate envelopment of their beards and hair beautifully illustrates a loving and physical connection.

Those conjoined beards create a womb-like space in what the artists call blind embossments, paper impressed with images but not ink. Like the silhouettes, there is revelation and concealment here, too. You'll have to look carefully to see the unique iconography of these works, in which the artists explored the possibility of fatherhood, among other things.

The artists' coarse and curly beard hair is used more literally in their handkerchief and pillowcase works. Playing with Victorian modes of remembrance and contemporary conventions related to marriage such as monogrammed linens (often given as wedding gifts), these works also mark time and utilize one of the more enduring aspects of the body. The cipher of their initials, S&M, is also flirtatious innuendo.

The fact that many of us experienced the tools and materials these artists use by the time we were in grade school — paper, scissors, needles, thread, yarn — gives us an easy point of entry into the work. The fact that this portrait of the artists is so authentic and loving, if smart and conceptual, makes connection effortless, too.

The artists, who form sentences together when they speak about their art, with one man's thoughts fluidly and knowingly carried forward into the other's, do not go out of their way to be political. But they don't resist it either. And the response they get as a gay couple makes it unavoidable at times. The generosity with which Miller and Shellabarger make their love public gives unusual definition to the notion of gay pride.

The pink tube, by the way, will never be sold or acquired. The couple is committed to working on it until one of them dies. They've agreed that at that point, the one still living will unravel the work, as a way to mark the end of their time together.

Art Pulse

"Long as life, deep as the grave, direct as a handshake."

By Jeff Edwards

Winter 2010/11. Pages 40-43

MILLER & SHELLABARGER

Long as life, deep as the grave, direct as a handshake

BY JEFF EDWARDS



All images are courtesy of the artists and Western Exhibitions, Chicago. Miller & Shellabarger, *Untitled (Graves)*, 2010, Time-Based Art performance festival Portland, Oregon, September 2010.

In a slightly saner world, the art of Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger would be read as intended, without any intrusive political or subcultural glosses. The husband-and-husband team use classic American craft techniques (including silhouette cutting, sewing, crocheting, and bookmaking) to fashion objects and performances about the gentle compulsions and bittersweet detours of married life. The resulting works document the myriad tiny sympathies, anxieties, and negotiations that make close interpersonal relationships as poignant as they are life-affirming. Yet we are not ready to see their works as is. Whether the duo likes it or not, arguments about gay marriage and equal rights under the law loom heavily over their art's intended message.

However, that message is so compelling and so universally human that even the thickest veneer of political commentary can not efface it completely. Two key texts for Miller & Shellabarger's art are Jacques

Derrida's *The Gift of Death* and *The Work of Mourning* (Adams). The entirety of their collaborative output orbits around Derrida's insight that the inevitable end of friendship via death begins at the first moment of acquaintance. Some works seem almost like direct illustrations of this idea, such as *Untitled (Pink Tube)* (2003-present), an ongoing performance in which the artists crochet opposite ends of an ever-expanding cylinder of pink yarn. As time has passed, the product—which has been variously compared to an umbilical cord, a penis, or a baby—has become a sprawling obstacle, sometimes pushing them into separate rooms of the venues they inhabit. The most gut-wrenching element of the work lies in the indefinite future: when one of the artists dies, the other will complete the piece by unraveling it. The comparison to one's own possible unraveling in the face a similar loss is inescapable, and quietly terrifying.

Art Pulse continued ...

Other works recall the mixed comforts and anxieties of sharing one's life with another person, and the juxtaposed creativity and codependency that can result. In *Untitled Performance (Between the Sheets)* (2007), the artists moved their bed into public view and sewed their sheets into a close-fitting pouch that forced them into a tight spooning position. The result was a cocoon that provided privacy and boldly declared their union, at the same time it constricted and (at least potentially) suffocated them. In the recent performance *Untitled (Graves)* (2010), the artists capped the somber act of digging their own graves in an open field, boring a small tunnel between them so their hands could clasp underground and out of public view. Once again, a mixture of mournful and sweet imagery hints at the universal fear of loss that lurks within all deeply committed partnerships.

Even their seemingly innocuous objects hint at an inescapable blending of the intimate and the cynical. Their *Butter Books* are made from the boxes and wrappers cast off during Miller's preparation of pastries for Shellabarger to eat. A carved cameo shows the artists face-to-face with their beards braided together. Under a harsher gaze, the comforting mutual dependence reflected in these works can shift to parasitism in a split second.

Shellabarger has stated that he and Miller find the inevitable gender-political reading of their works to be unfortunate (Adams). It would be naïve to argue that their work completely lacks such politics. In presenting objects and performances that mirror their hopes, fears, and deep commitment to each other, they make one of the strongest and most direct arguments possible in favor of marriage equality. However, it is equally problematic to haphazardly view Miller & Shellabarger's works through the lens of other activist art, even when similarities exist. Their use of traditional (and traditionally feminine) American craft techniques has led writers to relate them to Judy Chicago and refer their works to a prior generation's struggles against the tottering old edifice of Formalism (Holmes). Others have compared their often whimsical silhouette portraits of each other to the works of Kara Walker, perhaps with an eye toward not only their visual resemblance, but also their potential repurposing as tools for exposing the hypocrisies that lurk beneath the surface of American ideals.

The problem is that while such associations are valid up to a point, they seem to miss the deeper and more profound effect of Miller & Shellabarger's works, as well as the very different intention with which those works are made and displayed. The works of Chicago and Walker often thrive on theatricality and some level of confrontation with their audiences, and they also point backward toward musty art world arguments over forms and styles. The early 1970s dust-up between the old guard and the Young Turks of conceptual, feminist, and performance art are never far offstage when such comparisons are made.

Unlike those who once had to fight for the acceptance of media other than painting and sculpture, Miller & Shellabarger take the use of craft as a given, and have instead moved on to explore the ways in which it can serve as a bridge between artist and audience, rather than a podium for sloganeering. During the presentation of live works like *Untitled (Sewing)*—in which the artists repeatedly stitch together and then unstitch the garments they are wearing from ankle to neck over the course of a full day—casual discussions with passersby are as important as the actions performed or the ideas that lie behind them. Spectators' stories about life and homemade art become an integral part of a work's unfolding, and the fourth wall that divides more militant artists from their audiences fades into the background (Adams).



Miller & Shellabarger, *Untitled (Crochet (Pink Tube))*, Basel, Switzerland, 2008, archival inkjet print, 50" x 30"

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Art Pulse continued ...



ABOVE:
Butter Book 2008 (with Italian Addendum), 2009. Butter wrappers (various brands), butter boxes (various brands), linen cord, linen tape, book board, rice paper, satin ribbon, and a bone clasp 5 1/2" x 5 1/2" x 1" (Main book), 7" x 6 1/2" x 1/4" (Italian Addendum)

LEFT:
Untitled Cameo (Beards with a Bow), 2009, carved sardonic shell on sterling silver mount, 1 1/4" x 1 5/8"

Art Pulse continued ...

This is not to say that comparisons with contentious political art are completely misguided or irrelevant, or that the two artists' rapport with their audience is perfect. There is a lot to be gained by considering *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, a 1993 traveling performance in which Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña presented themselves as members of a primitive tribe brought to the civilized world for display as an educational oddity. The resulting spectacle was much more raucous than Miller & Shellabarger's quiet, meditative actions, but both share a deep concern with audience responses, and both point out how willful some spectators can be in denying reality. For Fusco and Gomez-Peña, this played out as a general gullibility that made viewers unable to get the joke, despite the presentation of things like binoculars and a TV set as authentic tribal artifacts. Some viewers take a similar unwillingness to deal with Miller & Shellabarger's sexuality to an almost absurd extreme. Their masculinity and burly appearance clashes with many people's stereotypes of gay men, leading to assertions to the artists that they must be brothers, friends, or simply "not gay." (Rook) While Miller & Shellabarger haven't seen the sort of acting out that occurred during *Undiscovered Amerindians* (including catcalling and groping of the artists), the basic denial of very simple and obvious facts is the same. Unfortunately, the implication that otherness is still an occasion for exclusion from the mainstream is also at play.

Miller & Shellabarger seem to be quietly adapting to the inevitability of this, while seeking ways to break through it. Although they are still committed to documenting their shared experience in a straightforward and often wistful way, a few of their most recent works more openly acknowledge the couple's existence as a threat to some people's sense of propriety. In a recent show at Western Exhibitions in Chicago, gentler images of the artists such as faux-nostalgic tintype portraits were interspersed with works revealing a slightly darker edge. A set of large, overlapping outlines of the artists' bodies on paper used gunpowder as a drawing medium, as if to hint that too much intrusion into their relationship might explode in the viewer's face. New silhouettes transformed the artists into deformed, conjoined monsters that seemed almost like direct translations of nightmare imagery from the deepest levels of the homophobe's psyche.

A final set of cutout silhouettes functioned as both a blunt challenge to disbelievers and the most public profession of the artists' sexuality to date. Formatted as a continuous string of black paper dolls draped across the gallery space, *FlowerFucker* (2010) portrayed Miller & Shellabarger in full nude profile, touching hands in an almost demure parody of the classic macho high-five gesture. Each figure has his penis inserted into a flower belonging to a potted plant standing between them. The medium is classic Miller & Shellabarger, as is the image's reflection of the ways in which couples are just as separated by their collaborative endeavors (in this case, horticulture) as they are brought together. Yet the matter-of-factness of the work's sexuality challenges viewers to get over their hang-ups, acknowledge the artists' relationship for what it is, and get back to the more important business of contemplating the ambivalent stickiness of human relationships. The point, as always, is that surface differences become insignificant in the face of emotions that haunt every single one of us. It's deeply ironic that such a basic truth needs constant reaffirmation by those who suffer from our inability to remember it. ■

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Untitled Silhouette (Conjoined 39), 2009, somerset black velvet on BFK rives, 44 3/8" w x 30 1/4"

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Just Out

“Underground Art: Chicago artist couple plays dead to illuminate life”

By Erin Rook

September 12, 2010

Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger explore the dynamics of love and loss through performance pieces that emphasize the artistic process as a metaphor for the cycles of life and death, of connection and separation.

The Chicago-based couple has been creating collaborative works since they starting dating 17 years ago, bringing together their respective fascinations with the body to produce performance art that speaks to universal themes in relationships in a distinctly physical way.

“A lot of my work is very figurative and deals with pornography and the body and desire,” says Miller, 45, “and a lot of Stan’s work deals with the body in space, time and the marks that it makes on the world.”

Their collective work focuses, naturally then, on the ways bodies relate. Past performances have included braiding their beards together, intentionally acquiring a sunburn while embraced and a project (ongoing since 2003) in which the men crochet opposite ends of a pink tube that both separate and connected them.

Miller and Shellabarger’s art often challenges stereotypes about gender and sexuality, sometimes intentionally and other times inevitably. Many of the couple’s performances incorporate a domestic element—crocheting, sewing, origami—and their masculine appearance alone contradicts perceptions about queer men.

“Whether we want it to or not, because of our relationship to one another, the personal becomes political,” says 41-year-old Shellabarger.

Miller adds that while his individual work has a clearly intentional queer focus, the collective work does not. It’s simply “a matter of fact.”

“Just because we’re two men and we’re in this relationship, it’s queer,” Miller says. “One of the things we hope is that it’s something other people can look at and see themselves in, both straight people and queer people.”

Still, as obvious as the nature of their relationship seems to the artists, it doesn’t always translate. In Europe, the couple has found their sexuality to be both understood and a non-issue.

“It seemed incredibly obvious to them that we were [queer],” Shellabarger says. “So their interpretation of the pieces often didn’t have to do with that. It had to do with this relationship between the two of us, they didn’t fixate on the fact that we were queer.”

In the United States, however, audiences are resistant to even acknowledge that they are queer, puzzling over what the nature of their relationship could possibly be.

“People will ask us if we’re brothers, other people will think we’re friends and some people will be in complete denial even after we tell them,” Miller says. “There’s this denial that masculine men are gay because gay men are always effeminate, so it’s this constantly confronting stereotypes.”

However perplexed some audiences may be by the exact nature of their relationship, the threads running through the couple's recent work could not be more universal. Miller says they have been inspired in part by *The Work of Mourning* by Jacques Derrida.

Just Out continued ...

In the piece the couple will be performing at TBA, "Untitled (Graves)," they explore connection through and beyond death. Miller and Shellabarger will each dig a size-proportional grave ("Stan's will be taller and narrower, mine will be wider and shorter," Miller explains) on the grounds of Washington High. After lying in the graves, they will dig a tunnel between the two through which to hold hands.

"It's a process piece. It's a very short narrative but it's a very long piece," Miller explains. "When we performed it before [in Switzerland] ... some people came back several times throughout the day, which for me would be the better way of viewing the piece."

Whether the graves are a full 6-feet deep will depend on the terrain and weather. But regardless of the depth, Miller says lying in them is a moving experience.

"You're really thinking about death in a very purposeful way that doesn't necessarily occur in life all the time and what it means to anticipate the loss of your lover," Miller says.

"Untitled (Graves)" is not the couple's first piece exploring death. Over the summer, the couple performed "Untitled (Pyre)" in which they each cut up fallen trees and piled them into stacks resembling funeral pyres and burned them.

"The two trees ended up serving as doppelgangers, one for Dutes, one for myself," Shellabarger explains. "We ... stacked them into a funeral pyre so it was very column-like, making reference to the body and then at sunset set them on fire. It was this idea of self-emulation, or the destruction of, the disappearance of the body."

Until that day arrives for Miller and Shellabarger, they will continue to build their pyres out of collected butter wrappers, hair and nail clippings, receipts and other cast-offs of the body's journey through time.

The Portland Phoenix

"Five artists address intimacy at MECA's ICA: Taking vows (Miller & Shellabarger)".

By Annie Larmon

September 22, 2010

The largely performance-based offerings in "Mind-bending with the Mundane" inspect the confusing grayscale of modern relationships and family structures, addressing what contemporary domesticity looks like in a society of convenience and prerogative with diluted and outmoded institutions. Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger, a husband-and-husband team, headline the timely exhibit at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Maine College of Art, with their panoply of playfully smart and simply-stated performance flotsam, video, and Kara Walker-esque silhouettes. Of the work in the exhibit, including three independent artists and the artist team, Miller and Shellabarger most aim to elicit an emotional response, sweetly mocking and observing the specifics of their relationship, relating to the complexities of intimate relationships at large, and also commenting on the public and private struggles of queer relationships.

The artists are similar in stature, but more notably both wear very long, bear-ish beards, an extension of themselves that becomes a motif in their work. Hair as a material conjures the grossness of the realities of intimacy, as well as the fragility of trust. In a series of four untitled silhouettes, the busts of the artists are profiled with their beards conjoined in different fashions in stark black and white paper. In one scene the beard seems to be unyielding, pulling the artists together as they try to yank apart, and in another the men glumly wear clown hats as their facial hair is tied together with a bow. In a nearby shadowbox in the gallery are two scraggly braided beards, snipped from the artists' chins and displayed like some kind of relic.

In the video *Sunburn* from 1997, the artists embrace in a stand-up tanning bed for the duration of the 45-minute documentary, the resulting burn a painful symbol of mutual responsibility and protection. Photographs of their 2008 "Untitled Performance (Grave)" show the artists lying in side-by-side graves dug in Basel, Switzerland, wearing matching outfits. A small tunnel connects the two graves, enabling the men to hold hands in a retort to the traditional marriage vow "till death do us part."

Alix Lambert directly confronts the tenuousness of marriage with "Wedding Project," a 1992-93 performance piece in which she married and divorced three men and one woman in the space of six months. In the gallery are large-scale black-and-white prints of the artist's four wedding photos, with Lambert posing in varying degrees of apathy. A white photo album sits atop a pedestal with a white glove, inviting the viewer to scan through all the required cliché shots of each wedding. The wedding certificates and divorce documents from the weddings (which happened in a New York City courthouse, a drive-through in Vegas, and in Hungary) are displayed in a mantle-worthy collage on another wall, proving the ease with which Lambert sailed through her host of marriages.

Both Allison Smith and Andrew Raftery employ anachronisms to comment on the "sets" and "props" with which we build our lives and identities and frame our relationships. Smith uses a Civil War aesthetic to call attention to current rifts and conflicts in our United States, particularly as related to feminist and queer communities. A calligraphy "Public Address" resides above two small installations in the Evans Hunt Gallery, transcribing a speech Smith delivered in New York in February 2005 as a "call to Art" and an invitation to "show off your revolutionary style."

Raftery's 2008 "Open House: Five Engraved Scenes" depict everyday contemporary narratives through the set of real-estate open houses, implying both the practicality and theatricality required in the banal act of buying a home. His highly detailed engravings expose both private moments and interactions between relatable characters negotiating the concurrent romanticism and potential of a new home and a new life, with the disillusion that sets in with logistics and the passing of time.

Portland Monthly

“TBA 2010: Digging Their Own Graves”

by Anne Adams

Sep 11, 2010

Of course today would have to be sunny. After a week of overcast weather, the sun sprang out just in time to enliven your weekend—and make a grave digger’s job harder. Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger—whose performance-art piece requires them to dig their own graves and then lie in them—have broken a serious sweat as they wedge their way into the dirt on the perimeter of The Works. “We didn’t realize the soil would be this compacted,” comments Miller. “It’s all rock and clay.” But he and his partner are taking it in stride. They’re very patient men.

Both wear long beards, white tee-shirts, and blue jeans. Both wield standard shovels. At high noon, each has excavated about a foot’s depth, and stands chipping away at a rectangular hole. At first, I didn’t know a) if they were the artists, or if the artists had hired some help, and b) if they’d want to talk. But it’s seeming okay. And since “Shellanbarger” is a hell of a handle, Culturephile will henceforth refer to these guys by first name. Meet Dutes and Stan.

I know I can read my program...but I’d like to just ask, what’s this work about? Is it a meditation on mortality? Or does it have something to do with the figure of speech, “you’re digging your own grave?”

The two seem surprised. “We haven’t been asked that question before,” says Stan. “What do you mean?” asks Dutes, leading me to flounder for an explanation. “Well, digging your own grave, typically meaning error, right? Like doing the wrong thing, then doing more wrong things—expending more effort to worsen your results. Or futility.”

“Hm,” they both respond. “No, it’s not really about that,” says Stan. “I guess no one’s asked that because we’ve only done this piece in Switzerland, so maybe there was enough of a language barrier, that they weren’t thinking about the English figure of speech. Maybe more people will ask that here. But—no. It’s really about me and him and our partnership. I was really inspired by two books by Jacques Derrida: *The Gift of Death*, and *The Work of Mourning*. In them, he talks about the responsibility and the rules of friendship, how as soon as you meet a new friend, there’s an understanding between you that one of you is going to die first. And it’s at that point, that you begin the mourning.”

I understand you two are romantic partners as well as art partners. Has doing this piece, and contemplating your and your partner’s mortality, changed your relationship?

Both respond in the affirmative. One says “Definitely,” and one says “Certainly.” “Well, when we get about five feet down, we’re going to dig a small tunnel just here, and then as we each lie in our graves we’ll reach through and hold hands,” says Dutes. “While it’s a very sweet idea that we could hold hands in the grave, underground, of course it’s an impossibility.”

“Yes, it’s changed our relationship and how we think about each other,” says Stan, “but we’ve also been working together for a long time. Many of our pieces are autobiographical; still, we hope there’s enough there that an audience can connect to their own experience. We were part of an exhibit in Maine called *Mindbending With The Mundane*, about marriage equality, where we had images of ourselves with our beards tied together. And there’s one piece we do called *Pink Tube*, in which we’ve crocheted a pink tube of yarn, and when we exhibit the piece, we crochet on opposite ends of the tube. We only work on it in public—we don’t sit around at home crocheting it—but it’s now about 60 feet long. Of course the longer it gets—the longer we work together on it—the further apart we can get from one another. Sometimes when we exhibit it, we’re placed in different rooms. There’s generally a bittersweet aspect to our work.”

So several of your pieces have a long duration then. How do you handle that—do you go into a sort of meditative state? Do you get impatient, or fatigued?

Portland Monthly continued ...

Both laugh a little. “All sorts of things happen,” says Stan. “Sometimes it can get meditative, but then when people engage and ask questions, then it’s not meditative at that point. And of course there is fatigue. With the Pink Tube piece, we pretty much made a pact that we’ll work on it until one of us physically can’t anymore, due to—well, arthritis, or—”

“loss of limb,” Dutes interjects, laughing. “You know, not nice things to think about, but possible.”

“Sure. And when one of us dies, the other one will unravel the tube,” Stan finishes.

Along with the repetitive nature of the work, there must be a lot of repeat questions. What do you guys get asked all the time?

“‘What are you doing?’ is the biggest one,” says Dutes. “And then sometimes they’ll think they’re being a smartass and say, ‘Digging a grave?’ and when we say ‘yes,’ they have nothing else to say. Some people will tell us their own stories, too. Like with Pink Tube, people will tell us about their grandmother who crochets, or with this, people will tell us their own stories about death and graves. We welcome engagement with the public. There’s not the idea that it’s theatrical. There is no ‘fourth wall.’ Our work is concept-driven. We’re not presenting a story, per se, so there’s no feeling that the audience is disrupting anything.”

You mentioned marriage equality. Could the struggle represented in your work, along with the intimacy—be read as a statement on the struggle for marriage equality?

“We always feel unfortunate that our work is political. It’s just because we’re two men, that it’s political,” says Stan.

I say, “Sorry, I won’t frame it that way.”

“No,” says Dutes, “It doesn’t matter; because people will frame it that way. As soon as people read that it’s two men doing this, it becomes symbolic of something political as well.”

“Maybe not so much here in Portland,” I offer.

“Maybe not,” says Dutes. “That’d be great. This town does seem to have a lot of unisex bathrooms; that’s always a good sign.”

I thank Stan and Dutes for their time, and tell them I might be back later to snap a picture. “That’s fine,” they say. “We’ll be here all day.”

Chicago Art Map

“Stan Shellabarger and Dutes Miller’s Untitled Performance (Pink Tube)”

by Gretchen Holmes

September 26, 2009

Since 2003, husbands Stan Shellabarger and Dutes Miller have been crocheting away from each other vis-à-vis a tube of pink acrylic yarn: in their ongoing project Untitled Performance (Pink Tube), the couple sit at opposite ends of an increasingly massive needlecraft and work on making it bigger. The project emerged at the confluence of sculptural and social questions about time, labor, gender, and materiality and has, quite successfully, remained in dialog with these questions for the past six years.

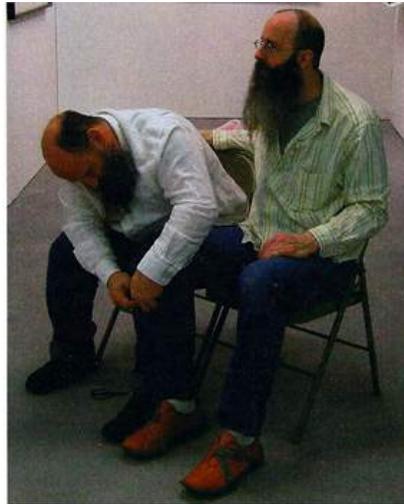
By working with traditional craft materials and processes, Miller and Shellabarger align themselves with a tradition of reframing domesticated expressions of creative genius within the sphere of High Art. This tradition is rooted in the feminist art movement and was pioneered by artists like Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, whose work argues to recognize activities like embroidery, china painting, or quilting as creative practices capable of providing the kind of critical, aesthetic engagement typically associated with Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. In the fifty years since Womanhouse and The Dinner Party, craft-based sculpture has become a wildly important postmodern genre, and, over the past decade, craft-based work has dominated conversations around labor, globalization, formalism and decoration.

Material and process connect Miller and Shellabarger with the challenge craft traditions pose to an ideal of creative genius that precludes comparisons of Michelangelo’s legacy with your grandma’s potholder; but pink yarn and crocheting don’t simply link the piece to some postmodern current, they are also shorthand for femininity, domesticity, and marginalization. As the two men invoke these signifiers, they expose a struggle between queering masculinity and replacing it with conventional femininity: If not blue, then pink? If not hard, then soft? If not chopping firewood, then crocheting in front of the hearth? Where we have become accustomed to celebrating gender and sexuality as a spectrum, Untitled Performance (Pink Tube) suggests that navigating queer masculine domesticity is not a lawless project, rather it is one mapped across already paved ideological paths.

The pink tube’s sculptural appeal and significance as an ambivalent metaphor for intimacy, the work of a relationship, an umbilical cord, a penis, a baby (and the list goes on) provide more than enough to engage the audience, and the object itself announces the labor and process that Miller and Shellabarger present as performance. It is fair to question whether the couple’s live bodies merely replicate the tube’s efforts; however, the labor Miller and Shellabarger stage for their audience becomes a public demonstration of queer masculine domesticity. The men at either end of the soft, pink sleeve activate the object as an extension of their intimacy, and the performance’s informal presentation encourages the audience to converse and interact with the artists. This may not be a radical approach to process performance or relational aesthetics, but the work’s intimate dynamic creates a setting that is both challenging and tender.

Fiber Arts

"Seamless:
Dutes Miller and Stan
Shellabarger"
by Dr. Jessica Hemmings.
April/May 2009
pp. 28-29



Seamless: Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger



DISCARDING THE DIVISION
between artistic practice and rituals of the everyday has long been familiar territory for the textile arts. But the ways in which Chicago-based couple Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger break down this separation are increasingly unusual. Miller, a pastry chef, and Shellabarger, a carpenter, "make art in the three- or four-hour block after work." Shellabarger

explains that commuting time becomes a space to "wind down from [the day's] work and think about [the evening's] work." The former pays the bills while the latter is a collaborative effort that takes the minutia of daily life and translates it into artistic output.

Miller and Shellabarger work across a range of media that includes cut paper silhouettes, artist books, collage, printmaking, installation, and performance art to create pieces that act as a log of shared experience. Performance is often used as a tool to explore their own relationship and the intimacy, as well as distance, experienced as part of being a couple. For example, *Untitled Performance (Sewing)* (2003, ongoing) involves Miller and Shellabarger literally stitching and later unstitching, from ankle to neck, the garments they are wearing while seated in a public space over an eight-hour day. When the April 2008 performance of the piece finally ended at the Chicago-based NEXT art fair, the couple wrestled themselves free of their sewn-together garments, leaving the discarded shells of clothing draped

them tethered as it pushes them apart."

Shellabarger jokes that the couple "would not lose sleep over something that sold," but admits that when artwork has been purchased, the capital tends to be used to realize further projects. Sales notwithstanding, recent years have seen the couple enjoy increasing critical attention. In 2007, they received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award, and in 2008 a sizable Artadia Award. Last fall they were the first artists in residence at Spudnik Press, a cooperative artist studio dedicated to fine art printmaking in Chicago. Miller and Shellabarger have carved a niche for their experimental practice that their busy professional and personal lives might not have comfortably allowed. Perhaps more importantly, the two artists provide us with inspiring evidence of a seamless relationship between life and art. ●

To learn more about the work of Miller and Shellabarger, visit their gallery Western Exhibitions, Chicago, on the Web at www.westernexhibitions.com.

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Untitled Performance (Sewing) (with detail), 2008. Performance view from the NEXT art fair in Chicago. LEFT: *Untitled (Sewn Clothes)*, 2008; denim, cotton, embroidery thread; dimensions variable. From a presentation of *Untitled Performance (Sewing)*. Photos: Scott Spoh.

over their chairs as a sculptural installation.

Untitled Performance (Sewing) reflects not only a coming together of two lives, but the inevitable tension and compromise that often results. *Untitled Performance (Pink Tube)* (2003, ongoing) operates in a similar way. Staged most recently at VOLTA, an international contemporary art fair in Basel, Switzerland, in June 2008, the two artists sat near each other and crocheted opposite ends of a giant pink tube of acrylic yarn. Scott Spoh of Western Exhibitions, the Chicago-based gallery that represents their work, explains that this ever-increasing bulk of material represents "a metaphorically loaded object (penis, umbilical cord, etc.) that both unites and separates them. As the tube grows in length, it accumulates between the artists, keeping



Visit fiberarts.com to see examples of non-performance pieces by Miller and Shellabarger.

Untitled Performance (Pink Tube), 2003, ongoing. Performance view from VOLTA in Basel, Switzerland, 2008. Photo: Deb Sokolow. All images courtesy of Western Exhibitions, Chicago.

Fiber Arts continued ...

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ABOVE: Untitled Performance (Pink Tube), 2003, ongoing. Performance view from VOLTA in Basel, Switzerland, 2008. Photo: Deb Sokolow. All images courtesy of Western Exhibitions, Chicago.

The Art Newspaper

“Fair feels chill winds of change”
by Javier Pres and Helen Soilas
December 4

Nada

Fair feels chill winds of change

Many über-collectors were absent but dealers on opening night said emerging artists were selling well

Miami's temperature suddenly tumbled on the opening night of the Nada (New Art Dealers Alliance) Art Fair. The unseasonable chill matched the mood of collectors. Last year the words “feeding” and “frenzy” summed up the way works by emerging artists were snapped up. Serious collectors including Jason and Michelle Rubell and Susan and Michael Hort turned out on Tuesday, but many fellow über-collectors were conspicuously absent.

The sixth edition of Nada might not have been kicking in terms of done deals, but it was far from dead. The Horts acquired Adrian Ghenie's *The Collector 3*, 2008 (\$45,000), making Mihai Nicodim Gallery's (A12) trip from Los Angeles worthwhile. Mr Nicodim says: “The same collector that would have shown an interest in ten artists last year would only consider two

now.” The collector portrayed in Ghenie's work on canvas was a sinister chap, a dead ringer for the infamous art glutton Hermann Goering.

David Godbold, the co-director of Mother's Tankstation (D3), was content. The Dublin gallery had sold eight of Ian Burns' *Scale Model*, 2008. A riposte to Olafur Eliasson's *Waterfalls* in New York, Burns has taken a kitschy waterfall picture typically found on the walls of Chinese restaurants and added an image of the \$15m Eliasson public art project. The price of each limited edition of 15 is \$1,000, pointedly 1/15,000th of the Icelandic artist's budget.

There were 88 galleries from 19 countries at Nada, 37 of them from Europe. Among them was Figge von Rosen Galerie (G5), Cologne, making its Nada debut. “Our hopes are big and our expecta-

tions low,” said Philip Figge, who was presenting the work of the young artist Bas de Wit, the winner of the 2008 Dutch Royal Prize for Painting. Among de Wit's fantastical sculptures and paintings was *Brother from Another Mother*, 2008 (\$15,000, right).

Silvia Ortiz, co-owner of Madrid gallery Travesia Cuatro (D3), says they were “a little nervous” about coming to Miami, “but we felt a shot of optimism the day before we

ty, performing *Untitled (Pink Tube)*. Begun in 2003 and ongoing, the work shows the burly bearded couple sitting quietly crocheting pink wool. The tube is a metaphor for long-term relationships. The artists intend to keep crocheting for better or worse, richer or poorer.

Javier Pes and Helen Soilas



left’. Ms Ortiz is showing work by the Mexican artist José Dávila, including a Donald Judd-like set of hanging wall boxes made of cardboard rather than polished steel. *Untitled*, 2008, is on reserve for \$16,000 by a European curator. Also on display is a set of Dávila's photos of famous places with the monuments cut out, titled *Buildings You Have to See Before You Die*, 2008. An edition comprising 100 framed images was bought by a US collector for \$30,000.

Opening nights at Nada never used to be a time for sitting around. This year the art fair soon became a sedentary event for many dealers. At Western Exhibitions (G7), from Chicago, the husband-and-husband artists Miller & Shellabarger were sitting pret-



Miller & Shellabarger, *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, 2003-present

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS

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Art & Auction

"Mr. & Mr. Smith"

July 2008, p. 15

Mr. & Mr. Smith?

With some 170 dealers, the April debut of the emerging-art fair Next, in Chicago, drew gripes that there was too much to get through. Hometown gallery **Western Exhibitions**, however, found a sure way to stop traffic. For several days, artists **Dutes Miller** and **Stan Shellabarger** sewed themselves together, stitching their clothes with needle and thread from ankle to neck, then breaking the seam and starting anew. The bearded duo, who are real-life partners,

call the performance, below, a "reflection on their relationship." Did people get it? Yes and no, says Miller. "Some people thought we were playing the brothers on the Smith Brothers Cough Drops box."



Artnet

"Baselmania"

by Walter Robinson

June 5, 2008

Soft Life (review / Miller & Shellabarger)
by Michelle Grabner
Feb. 28-Mar. 5, 2008

“REVIEWS: Miller, Shellabarger”
by Alicia Eler
May 17-23, 2007

Reviews

Miller, Shellabarger

★★★★★

Western Exhibitions, through May 26 (see West Side).

If you were too young (or just not born yet) to enjoy 1970s endurance-based, performance art like Marina Abramovic and Ulay's *Breathing In/Breathing Out*, in which they exhaled into each other's mouths until passing out, don't fret. Artist couple Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger produce modern-day, politically inclined, queer performance work. Although they don't breathe into each other's mouths until fainting, they do sew themselves into bed. On opening night, the two squirmed, embraced and writhed under linens as they performed *Between the Sheets*. The 45-minute performance suggested ways that rampant homophobia restricts their relationship to the bedroom: Desperately seeking safety in the domestic sphere, they simultaneously experience entrapment. A bird's-eye video documentation of the performance is projected onto said bed, preserving bits of the original piece. Politics aside, the two delve into the warm, fuzzy side of relationships. *Butter Books* is a collection of the wrappers from butter they've consumed over the years. (Why so much butter in their diet? Miller is a pastry chef.) At times, however, the lovey-dovey nature of the show goes too far, as with the *Photo Booth Series*; every couple's done this one a million times. Miller's collages revisiting adolescent gay male fascination with homoeroticism redeems the show: He cuts off men's heads, legs and arms, and replaces them with gigantic penises. This show resonates with a smart, queer aesthetic that is both provocative and playful.—*Alicia Eler*

Dutes Miller, from the series
“Untitled Collages, 2006–07.”



TIMEOUTCHICAGO.COM

NEWCITY

"Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger (review)"
by Jason Foumberg
April 26, 2007

NEAR WEST SIDE

Western Exhibitions

1821 W. Hubbard, (312)307-4685. → DUTES MILLER and STAN SHELLABARGER, multimedia. Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger's mini-retrospective of their collaborative art explores ideas of mutual identity, brotherhood and intimacy via such channels as performance, book-making, collage and Polaroid portraits. The duo performed "Between the Sheets" in the gallery in which they physically incorporated themselves into a bed through a sewing process. What we do in bed is often a private affair, but Shellabarger and Miller's public act attempts to represent the politics of love. Also included are a book of silhouettes, origami cranes and a collection of years worth of butter wrappers in hand-bound books. In the Plus Gallery, Vincent Como meditates on the significance of black through drypoint prints, drawings and a cube cast in ink that equals in volume the space inside one's head. Both exhibits present artists who provokingly blend concept and technique. (Jason Foumberg) Through May 26. VINCENT COMO, "In Praise of Darkness," multimedia. Through May 26.

5 SHOWS TO SEE NOW

1

ARTROPOLIS

(Merchandise Mart)

Art fairs old and new

2

ART SHAY

(Chicago History Museum)

Chicago's own great

3

DUTES MILLER AND STAN SHELLABARGER

(Western Exhibitions)

Collaborative love

4

DANNIELLE TEGEDER

(Bodybuilder and Sportsman
Gallery)

Tomorrowland painting

5

ARTHUR MOLE

(Carl Hammer Gallery)

WWI symbols of patriotism

PERFORMANCES

Untitled (Pink Tube)

2014

EXPO Chicago art fair, Illinois

2013

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois

Rapid Pulse International Performance Festival. Polish Triangle, Chicago, Illinois

2012

Cornell Art Museum, Winter Park, Florida

Institute of Visual Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

2009

Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, Illinois

Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, Illinois

PS 1 Contemporary Art Center, Queens, New York

2007

Western Exhibitions, Chicago, Illinois

2006

Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois

The Suburban, Oak Park, IL

Art Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

2003

The Stray Show art fair, Chicago, Illinois



2013 at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois | Photographer: Scott Speh

Miller & Shellabarger have been simultaneously crocheting a tube out of pink acrylic yarn since 2003. The tube is a metaphorically-loaded object (penis, umbilical cord, etc.) that both unites and separates them. As the tube grows, it keeps them tethered together as it pushes them apart. "Pink Tube" is an ongoing performance of indefinite duration, always in public, always together.

Untitled (Pink Tube)

2006

The Suburban, Oak Park, Illinois



2006 at The Suburban, Oak Park, Illinois | Photographer:

Untitled Performance (Sewn Together)

2008

Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, Illinois

NEXT art fair, Chicago, Illinois

2007

44/46 Lakeview Festival, Chicago, Illinois



2007 at *44/46 Lakeview Festival*, Chicago, Illinois

In “Untitled (Sewing)” Miller & Shellabarger sew themselves together and then rip the seams apart, a metaphor for the ever-changing rhythms of human relationships, of working together and coming apart

Untitled Performance (Sewn Together)

2008

NEXT art fair, Chicago, Illinois



2008 at *NEXT art fair*, Chicago, Illinois | Photographer: Scott Speh

Untitled (Graves)

2008

VOLTA art fair, Basel, Switzerland



2008 in Basel, Switzerland | Photographer: Scott Speh

In "Untitled (Grave)" Miller & Shellabarger dug, in close proximity to each other, two holes, deep and large enough for each man to lie in. Upon completion of each grave, they dug a small tunnel between the holes that enabled them to hold hands while lying in the graves.

Untitled (Graves)

2010

Time-Based Art performance festival, Portland, Oregon



2010 in Portland, Oregon | Photographer:

In "Untitled (Grave)" Miller & Shellabarger dug, in close proximity to each other, two holes, deep and large enough for each man to lie in. Upon completion of each grave, they dug a small tunnel between the holes that enabled them to hold hands while lying in the graves.

Photographer:

Untitled (Pyre)

2010

The Farm, Buchanan, Michigan



2010 in Buchanan, Michigan | Photographer:

In this all-day piece outside of Buchanan, Michigan, Miller & Shellabarger found two naturally fallen, moderately-sized trees in the forest and transported them to a clearing. They chopped and sawed the trees into fireplaced-sized pieces, stacked the wood into roughly human-sized forms and burned the pyres at dusk.

Photographer:

Untitled (Between the Sheets)

1999

Cleveland Performance Art Festival, Cleveland, Ohio

2007

Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL



2007 at Western Exhibitions | Photographer: Scott Speh

Miller & Shellabarger, wearing matching pajamas, entered the darkened gallery and climbed onto a transparent mattress, fitted with plain white sheets, atop their own antique steel frame bed. Illuminated from below, the couple sewed themselves into a pouch between the fitted and flat sheet, ultimately arranging themselves into a "spooning" position.

Untitled (Origami Cranes)

1998

Madison, Wisconsin

2006

44/46 Lakeview Festival, Chicago, Illinois



2006 at 44/46 Lakeview Festival, Chicago, Illinois | Photographer:

Miller & Shellabarger sat next to one another on a bed in the window of a Chicago futon store and folded paper into origami cranes, over the course of three Saturdays, 8 hours at a time. The results of this shared activity, a barrier of paper cranes, built a wall of separation between them.

Photographer:

Untitled (Sunburn)

1997

Slop's Supermarket, Madison, Wisconsin



While standing, Miller & Shellabarger embraced inbetween suspended tanning bed lights. They held the embrace for forty-five minutes; the resulting sunburn bore a record on their bodies of their protective embrace.

Untitled (Table Top)

1995

Madison, Wisconsin



1995 in Madison, Wisconsin | Photographer:

The performance began one hour before sunset when Shellabarger lit a match on the zipper of Miller's pants. A very small candle was lit and placed on a table. Miller & Shellabarger sat across the table from one another. As each candle burned down, they took turns lighting another and placing it on the table. Both shared the responsibility of keeping the candle from being blown out. The performance continued until one hour after sunset.

Photographer:

NUB

1994

Madison, Wisconsin

1995

Normal, Illinois

2002

Gallery 312, Chicago, Illinois

2003

Center of Contemporary Art, St Louis, Missouri



1994 Madison, Wisconsin | Photographer:

Miller & Shellabarger sat side-by-side facing the same direction: Miller with five hundred pencils; Shellabarger with fifty pounds of carrots. Miller, using a manual pencil sharpener, sharpened the number-two pencils to within a half-inch of their metal eraser holders. Shellabarger peeled his large carrots until they were a half-inch long and a half-inch in diameter. The remaining nubs were placed into separate containers at their feet. Duration varied: the shortest performance lasted three hours.