

RAWSON PROJECTS

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STRONG FORCE

LEAH BEEFERMAN

Opening reception: Saturday, September 12, 6 – 8 PM
September 12 – October 25, 2015

For immediate release:

Rawson Projects is very pleased to announce its fall exhibition Leah Beeferman: *Strong Force*, the artist's first show with the gallery, opening on September 12. The exhibition is also the artist's first solo show in New York.

Leah Beeferman's ongoing series of digital drawings, *Strong Force (Chromodynamics)*, comes from an interest in the intangible and nonvisual space of theoretical physics and computer-based image-making. Using photographs and scans of objects from remote locations, Beeferman merges a very "real" space (from her own observation and experience) with the flatness and depth of "virtual" space (digital image-making) to create a physical object that lies somewhere in the space between a photograph, a drawing and a sculpture (the resulting works are face-mounted digital c-prints on metallic paper). And it is this notion of "in-betweenness" that connects the artist's ideas about the non-uniform in her work to her interest in theoretical and quantum physics: "True "empty space" isn't something we can access, and neither is dense emptiness" (BOMB — Artists in Conversation: Leah Beeferman by Lucas Blalock).

An interview between the artist and the gallery follows:

Rawson Projects: As this is your first exhibition at Rawson Projects, perhaps you can tell us a little bit about the process of making this body of work. The work combines many artistic practices— photography (though, I am never sure if using as scanner is considered photography or a photogram), digital manipulation, drawing, collage, etc. How did the process develop? Did you study a specific medium of artist practice, and did this development come from or move away from that study?

Leah Beeferman: These pieces, which are from an ongoing series called *Strong Force*, are made from photographs I've taken during residencies in the Arctic and in Iceland combined with digitally-drawn gestural marks and flat digital color. I developed them as a way of combining a "real" space from my observation and experience with an imaginary and intangible one informed by my interests in abstract physics and digital space. I think about my working process as a cross between drawing and photography, but it is crucial that the different elements appear to exist on the same plane, rather than feeling separate, as more traditional collage might. Working digitally allows this to happen. It also allows the pieces to still feel like they are drawings, and for the presence of my hand to remain without the distraction of materiality— which is important for the content I'm thinking about.

My work has been drawing-based for years, but my definition of drawing has always been very open, and has often incorporated digital processes alongside more traditional ones. I've always been very interested in photography, but had never used it in my work until I began this series in 2013. My art studies were very interdisciplinary and didn't require focusing on a specific medium. In college, I did a lot of printmaking, and though I eventually gave it up to make drawings— which are so much more immediate and not process-oriented— I do think printmaking really influenced the ways I think about shape and form. I also spent a lot of time working on digital projects in college and, especially, in grad school. Ultimately, I would say that coming to the processes I am using now has really been a natural progression, one that still allows me to engage many of these ongoing artistic interests.

RP: You also spoke about your interest in abstract physics and intangible space in our studio visit. Can you elaborate on that a bit more? How do these issues present themselves in your work, and how do you think they interact with notions of aesthetics and the artistic process?

LB: My connection to physics really started in grad school, coming out of an interest in architecture and systems. Physics is a kind of architecture, but an invisible one: a set of rules meant to describe how the real world behaves and evolves. I'm most interested in particle physics, quantum physics, and cosmology because they attempt to

describe things that humans cannot directly experience, but which are somehow meant to relate to what we can see, hear, and feel. The idea that phenomena on the tiny scale of quantum physics or on the huge scale of stars and dark matter can somehow come to bear on our experiences in the world is really exciting to me.

A few years ago, I read about a theory in quantum physics which states that pure empty space isn't actually empty, but is dense, turbulent, and active. Thinking about this was really exciting for me. "Emptiness" and "density" are loose terms: they are formal, psychological, and scientific— and also paradoxical and provocative. For these reasons, they lend themselves very well to abstract forms and spaces.

My work largely consists of constructing spaces of flatness and infinite depth which, like I said, combine elements of the "real" world with elements from an intangible one. When I begin a new series of artworks, I develop a system of formal and conceptual rules which guide how all of the component parts in each piece will interact with one another. Each series, then, becomes an exploration and extrapolation of these rules, which grow from my own intuitive interpretations of what I read in physics books and online. I make production decisions to present these images (or videos) as flat and infinitely deep: in-between spaces which are akin to the intellectual and emotional experiences we have of abstract science, but also, importantly, of the digital spaces we engage with so continuously.

RP: What is the relationship between these systems and their aesthetic outcome, is there a struggle to reconcile how the work looks versus the interpretation of underlying ideas? Can you elaborate more on the "rules" that you developed for this series?

LB: I've thought a lot about this, and I have spent a long time negotiating the relationship between the information and experiences that drive my work and the abstract work I make. I'm generally interested in the processes of interpretation that artists go through— where ideas for work come from, and how you get from those ideas to finished pieces.

For me, one of my main goals is that the work gives the impression that it's grown from a system of logic, but it's not at all important if a viewer doesn't understand the specifics of that logic. When I first started thinking about physics and looking at diagrams of data, I thought a lot about how these graphs mean something to physicists but not to anybody who doesn't know how to read them. For the average person, they are abstract, but they're still totally compelling if you let them be. The idea that information is as abstract as it is "informative" has been really important for me to think about.

My rules are largely formal rules, but they are determined for conceptual reasons. For example, I use certain types of shapes and gestures and not others, certain colors and not others, certain photographic images and not others. Together, the forms in the pieces have to achieve a particular kind of hanging-in-balance, flatness, and depth— otherwise they don't work, and that's how I know they're done. Honestly, it's actually really difficult reaching an end-point a lot of the time. My rules aren't arbitrary whatsoever, and I'm really interested in the challenge of making work that is grown from a strict set of parameters look intuitive, animated, and psychological.

Leah Beeferman is a New York City-based artist working with digital drawing, video, and sound. She received a BA from Brown University and an MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University, and has participated in residencies including LMCC Workspace (NYC), The Arctic Circle (Svalbard), SIM (Reykjavik), Experimental Sound Studio (Chicago), K okarkultur (Finland) and Diapason (NYC). Recently, she has shown work at Klaus von Nichtssagend, NY; Essex Flowers, NY; Fridman Gallery, NY; Ditch Projects, OR; and Interstate Projects, Brooklyn. She also co-runs Parallelograms, an ongoing online artist project.

For more information please contact the gallery at info@rawsonprojects.com or call 212 256 0379