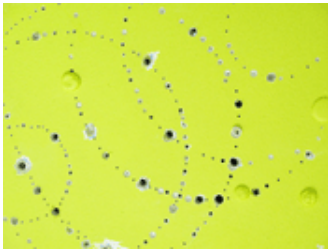




## CONSTANCE S. AND ROBERT J. HENNESSY PROJECT SPACE



**HEATHER HARVEY**  
*Study for Hole Drawing (Smith Chart)*, 2009  
Holes, paint, and plaster  
Variable dimensions  
Courtesy of the artist



*Fractious Happy* installation view  
Photograph by Carson Zullinger



*Untitled (detail)*, 2009  
Plaster, wax, and paint  
Variable dimensions  
Courtesy of the artist  
Photograph by Carson Zullinger

**Heather Harvey**  
*Fractious Happy*  
June 17 - October 11, 2009

Heather Harvey's site-specific installation illustrates the basic principles of sculpture involving the integration of negative and positive forms. Using gallery walls as the very medium she manipulates —by building up and layering with plaster or scraping, sanding, and puncturing, her sculpture embeds itself in the skin of the perimeters of the space.

The sculpted protrusions and drilled perforations in Harvey's installation seem to be enacted forms from Richard Serra's *Verb List Compilation: Actions to Relate to Oneself* (1967-1968)<sup>1</sup>, which has become a handy manual for both artists and art historians in applying and understanding the scope of the conceptual, material, and methodological possibilities of sculpture. A compendium of infinitives Serra wrote down for himself, it starts with "to roll, to crease, to fold," and ends with "of mapping, of location, of context, of time...to continue."

When time and space and context are subjected to such actions that "expand," "surfeit," "suspend," or "dapple," "split," "tear" (all included in Serra's list), the physical or material manifestations of such actions embody properties of fluidity or aggression. It is in the possibility of such contradiction translated into sculptural forms that Harvey's interventions with spaces thrive. *Fractious Happy*, her choice for the exhibition title, demonstrates the deliberate incongruity and elusiveness evoked by her work, which she describes as "shifting and indeterminate in the way an emerging thought is before it is imprisoned in words."<sup>2</sup>

Two walls facing each other seem to have been kneaded and coaxed into seamless ripples, rainwater splashes, or undulating, concentric circles —as if the transformed flatness of the wall had been preserved as it was in the process of liquefying. Swells and dips in plaster applied directly on the gypsum boards render the hard surface of the institutional wall pliant and billowing under our gaze or nearly heaving and stabbing the air with shaped plaster as if the wall were slinging toward the viewer portions of its yielding self.

Harvey's walls intone presence and movement as they frame a space devoid of objects.

The third wall, painted a dark Mediterranean teal, features a throng of black and colored wax-covered plaster disks. Originally trained as a painter, Harvey credits the palette and the mood of this wall installation to the still-before-the-storm in Martin Johnson Heade's *Approaching Thunderstorm*

- > Exhibitions
- > About Us
- > Programs
- > Events
- > Museum Shop
- > Calendar
- > Membership
- > Opportunities
- > Facility Rental
- > Staff
- > Board of Directors
- > [info@thedcca.org](mailto:info@thedcca.org)
- > Press
- > Links
- > Home
- > Support the DCCA

(1859). Abstracted with the energy of upward clustering, the ominous sobriety of the black disks is lightened by the pops of color lifted from the greens, yellows, and reds in the cited painting.

On the fourth wall, the artist uses an approach that feels both aggressive and delicate. After applying a coat of “happy, yellow-green” paint, she drills holes in patterns “poached from engineering dissertations” graphed through the Smith Chart, a visual tabulating aid for computing radio frequency variables. The graphs on which data could be plotted are circular with petal-like waves of lines that fan out. To Harvey, *The Hole Drawing* wall intervention reveals the archaeology of the gallery space as “underlying layers of paint emerge in a stratigraphic arrangement.” The serrated edges around the drilled holes suggest violence, wounds, or scars. She refers to this perforated field as “a constellation-like array of stippled voids...meant to embody loss and emptiness but also infinity and mystery.”

It is in the precinct of this purposeful paradox that seduction resides, variously analyzed and rhapsodized by philosophers and poets. For example, in George Santayana’s study of “why, when, and how beauty appears,” he discussed the aesthetic value of unity in variety and wrote:

*The idea that the universe is a multitude of minute spheres circling, like specks of dust, in a dark and boundless void, might leave us cold and indifferent, if not bored and depressed, were it not that we identify this hypothetical scheme with the visible splendour, the poignant intensity, and the baffling number of the stars.*<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, *Fractious Happy*.

—Carina Evangelista  
Gretchen Hupfel Curator of Contemporary Art

---

1. “Anthology of Conceptual Writing” in Ubuweb, [http://www.ubu.com/concept/serra\\_verb.html](http://www.ubu.com/concept/serra_verb.html), accessed June 10, 2009.

2. Email correspondence with the artist, May 12, 2009. [All subsequent quotes from the artist are attributed to this correspondence.]

3. George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955): 103.

- [Carole Bieber & Marc Ham Gallery](#)
- [Constance S. and Robert J. Hennessy Project Space](#)
- [DuPont Gallery I](#)
- [E.Avery Draper Showcase](#)
- [DuPont Gallery II](#)
- [Beckler Family Members' Gallery](#)
- [Elizabeth Denison Hatch Gallery](#)