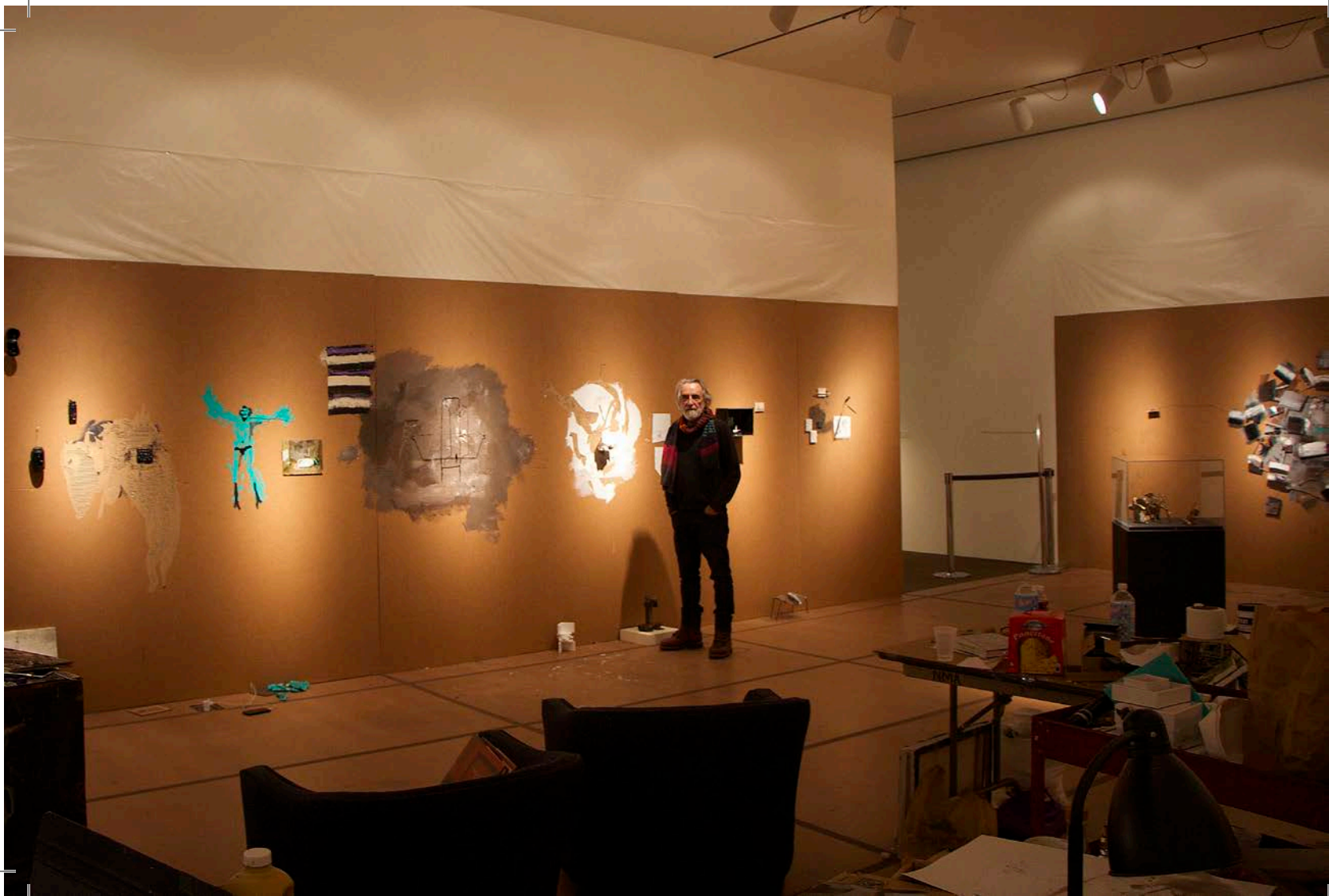




The Studio in the Gallery

Ignacio Iturria In Residence at the
Neuberger Museum of Art



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Patrice Giasson

Neuberger Museum of Art
Purchase College, SUNY
Purchase, New York

This brochure accompanies the exhibition *A Studio in the Gallery: The Playful Universe of Ignacio Iturría*, curated by Patrice Giasson with the assistance of Marianelly Neumann and organized by the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, SUNY.

A Studio in the Gallery: The Playful Universe of Ignacio Iturría

Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, SUNY

September 24, 2017–February 25, 2018

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Antonia Iturría (p. 8, 15), Alessandra Russo (p. 40, left)

Cover: *NS4b*. Figure with mirror reflection cut from floor. Acrylic on masonite. Back Cover: *NS15*. Painted car with mirror reflection cut from floor. Acrylic on masonite.

The image credits *NS* stands for Neuberger Studio.

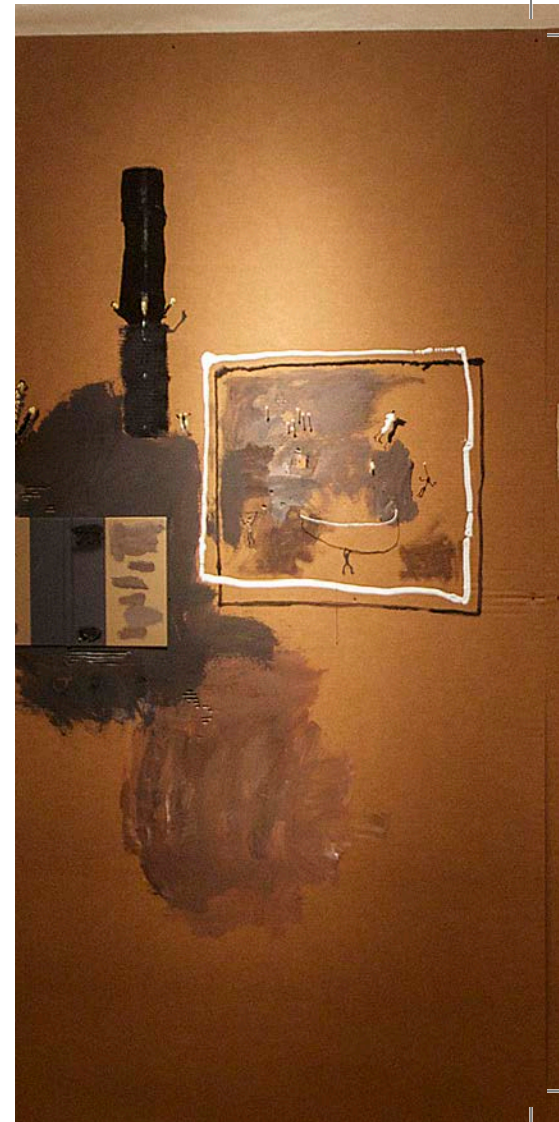


Director's Foreword

It's OK for museums to get a little messy sometimes. This was the mantra of the Studio in the Gallery. And walking into space, tucked behind the formal presentation of Ignacio Iturria's work, was like walking into another land and time, away from the traditional museum. There, in that space, with its walls covered in cardboard, objects would just appear, week by week, day by day—a little box, a new figure, something on the floor. And then those objects would change, week to week, day to day, as inspiration took hold of the artist. From all walks of life, people entered the studio and were treated to a special moment with the artist, who offered his time and thoughts so generously. Truly inspirational to be so close to, not only the finished works of art, but also their making in progress.

Special thanks to you, Ignacio, for giving so much of yourself to us.

Tracy Fitzpatrick Director, Neuberger Museum of Art







Acknowledgments

We extend our most heartfelt gratitude to the artist, for his profound commitment and for the wonderful work he created in the studio, as well as to his wife Claudia, his daughters Antonia and Catalina, his son Sebastian, and his son-in-law Juan, for their enthusiasm and great support.

We would like to thank every member of the Museum's staff for their great contribution: Jane Barry, Director of Operations and Visitor Services; David Bogosian, Director of Facilities and Chief Preparator; Peter C. Cole, Visitor Services Associate; Jessica Denaro, Director of Membership and Annual Giving; Deslyn Dyer, Assistant to the Director; Tracy Fitzpatrick, Director; Kei Horikawa, Development and Membership Coordinator; Avis Larson, Assistant Curator; Kristen Lindberg, Academic Programs Associate; Alison Lowey, Assistant Registrar; Patri-

cia Magnani, Registrar; Helaine Posner, Chief Curator; Diana Puglisi, Education Coordinator; Jacqueline Shilkoff, Curator of New Media and Director of Digital Initiatives; and Jose Smith, Associate Preparator. For their tireless work and creative energy, we thank the exhibition's Assistant Preparators Gregory Beise, Andrew Gordon, Matthew Harle, Kirsten Kucer, and Alex Theodoropoulos, as well as Student Intern Jesse Krim.

We are also in debt to the School of Art + Design, Purchase College, for offering a friendly environment to Iturria during his residency, and for providing both labor and material support. We thank Steven Lam, Associate Professor and Director; Julian Kreimer, Associate Professor; Marc Ganzglass, Assistant Professor; and their students who visited and assisted Iturria in his studio in the Neuberger Museum of Art.

Patrice Giasson and Marianelly Neumann



A Journey into Creation: Ignacio Iturria's Studio at the Neuburger Museum of Art

The works featured here were created at the Neuburger Museum of Art by Ignacio Iturria from September to November 2017, during a residency organized in conjunction with the exhibition *A Studio in the Gallery: The Playful Universe of Ignacio Iturria* (on view September 24, 2017–February 25, 2018). As the title of the exhibition indicates, a studio was built inside the gallery—a living studio in which the artist was invited to create new works and interact with the public.

The first section of the exhibition featured works spanning thirty years of the artist's trajectory, allowing visitors to become familiar with Iturria's world and language. Looking at the works in this retrospective, viewers would be able to see the scope of Iturria's creation

and identify key concepts and ideas elaborated by the artist over the years: the use and depiction of what the artist calls "the box," a box-like perspective that acts as a device to stage and introduce characters; the representation of furniture, such as tables, that are also used as stage devices; the painting and play of shadows around objects and living things; the use of trompe l'oeil effects to force viewers to question what they see; the evolution of a specific palette, which over the years would become one of Iturria's trademarks, with brownish tones, thick brushstrokes, or the use of the spatula to scratch the surface of the painting and provide it with a sculptural dimension; and the mixing of abstraction and figuration, combining geometric shapes and grids with human and animal characters; shaky lines and contours distinctive

to Iturria, which seem to give movement to his objects and characters. Integral to Iturria's work are also the concepts of remembrance, memory, and allusions to childhood; and, last not but not least, the idea that life can be seen as a play and art as a game.

With these concepts and devices in mind, the visitor then proceeded to the second section: the living studio, which gave access to the creation process *in vivo*. This was perhaps the part of the exhibition that most reflected "contemporary art." In this case, "contemporary" meant that it coincided perfectly with the present time of visitors, who were invited to enter the studio and meet the artist. These visitors were not only observers but ultimately companions, such that in some cases they influenced the very nature of the works.

The idea of a studio inside the gallery came to me while looking at two of Iturria's paintings from 2005 —*Ellas (Them)* and *El rincón del pintor (The Painter's*

Nook). Both feature a painter, enclosed by three walls, working on a canvas. By re-creating a "box" inside the museum for the artist to work in, we allowed visitors to become part of that *mise en abyme*, or image within an image, and to enter the artwork along with the artist.

The studio was understood as something organic, in constant movement, and there was no predetermined idea behind it. It was a space of possibilities, of the unexpected, that allowed back and forth, erasing or adding, as in any studio, where the artist tries out and either follows through on or retracts the choice of a figure, a color, a tone, an object. The only decision made prior to the artist's arrival was the choice to cover the walls with cardboard and the floor with Masonite. I knew that Iturria had long been interested in corrugated cardboard, which he appreciates for its texture, its colors, its flat brownish surface that hides a regularly ridged structure, one that can be uncovered by simply

removing a bit of paper from its surface. Cardboard's malleability also allows it to easily form three-dimensional objects such as cabinets or tables. The material thus seemed like the perfect ally for a project of this sort, governed only by the unexpected and freedom. Every day, a new image or object appeared, reflecting the day's fluctuations. As a whole, the studio expanded on Iturria's ability to combine the rules of pure abstraction and concrete geometric art with figuration. The visitor could observe Iturria's plays on shadows and light, sizes and scale (see NS9); his combination of trompe-l'oeil effects (see NS17), and dialogues between material and representation—where real cardboard boxes are placed next to painted images of boxes on a cardboard background (NS19); and where painted metal cans with characters are placed next to paintings reproducing identical cans, as a meta-references to the originals (see NS31b).

The studio also attested to the conceptual blurring of frontiers, in which the objects used to make art become the works of art themselves: a broken spatula plunged into the wall (NS37), tubes of paint tied together to become a miniature cityscape (NS30); colored pencils nailed into the wall with lines of color drawn from the end of each, and with a series of shadows escaping from below, creating an amazing optical effect (NS22). Iturria also experimented in the studio with the concept of piercing, *a la* Lucio Fontana, the Argentine-born painter remembered for his powerful perforated and slashed canvases, which allowed him to expand the artwork into space. But while Fontana avoided figuration, in NS13 Iturria included a character that looks like a conductor and a small rhinoceros that brings to mind Eugene Ionesco's theater of the absurd and his play *Rhinoceros*. Also visible in the studio were Iturria's interventions on existing images, including a catalogue featuring works

by contemporary Colombian artist Doris Salcedo, onto which Iturria painted characters that convert Salcedo's conceptual sculptures into landscapes (NS41).

During his stay, Iturria lived in university housing among students and became very familiar with the rest of the campus. Students as well as professors began to recognize and greet him when they would cross his path. The artist was also invited to collaborate in the painting class of Professor Julian Kreimer, and he found a second home in the School of Art + Design. There he discovered inspiration and friendship, as well as assistance with the creation of some of his furniture and welded sculptures. He also gathered found objects, for the most part remnants of old bronze castings or pieces of metal welded together by students during class exercises. Returning to the studio in the gallery, he would exclaim: "Look at these treasures that I found! They are astonishing, just look

at the shape of these things . . . and people threw them away. I see faces in here!" Lightly intervening with the found objects, he would polish an angle to make it shine while leaving the rest tarnished, creating an amazing contrast. These "treasures" were then placed on pedestals and under vitrines, which provided them with a specific aura as if they were precious archaeological artifacts. But the artist would not end there. A day later, he would lift the vitrine and add a character to lean on one of these structures, making it suddenly appear monumental (see NS43). At the foot of another sculpture he would add a small canvas that highlighted the shadow of a metal rod escaping from the sculpture; looking closely one could see that the shadow had the shape of a man looking toward the horizon. Only the eyes of Iturria could envision something like this in a metal-casting leftover, but his art allows us to see what he sees, to share his mental universe.

Theorizing a bit, we could say that the open nature of the studio allowed the development of a process of constant addition and subtraction—for example, a piece of cardboard can be removed while a piece of metal can be introduced. In the work NS4a the artist removed a layer of the cardboard, leaving a small rectangle into which he placed a piece of metal he had found in the classroom. He then removed only the surface of a section of the cardboard to create a second rectangle, this time leaving part of the rippled paper, which he scratched to create a rough surface. Finally, next to these two rectangles, a third was cut as deeply as the first, but here the bottom layer remained totally smooth. Under the trio of rectangles, he placed a mirror that reflected light from a ceiling projector onto the floor (see NS4b) shining a small rectangle of illumination into which the painter, faithful to his principle of always adding a character to the geometric landscape, painted a small man

lying on his back and staring at the viewer (see cover image). The careful observer recognized this play of geometric patterns made of additions and subtractions, and the final play of projection that gave an added dimension to the experience, by spilling it onto the floor.

The Moment of Crystallization

When the artist departed the studio at the end of November 2017, three months were left before the closing of the exhibition in February 2018. Visitors were still able to enter the studio space, but it remained unchanged. As a curator, I found myself faced with another challenge. What had been an organic, unfinished, art space, transformed daily, was suddenly finished. There would be no more additions or subtractions. The hundreds of floating objects, old brushes and paint tubes, cutouts, wires, pieces of wood, ropes, scraped papers, cardboard, tissues, and other remnants—these meta-objects

surrounding the art, which had previously amplified Iturria's daily motion, suddenly stopped moving. I had to take account of this need to crystallize and fix the experience, to decide on a new flow that would allow visitors to find their way without the artist's presence. The central area of the studio, where the painter's tables were placed, was stanchioned and converted into a space the visitors could view. The tables were still covered with what the artist had left behind, like an archaeological site exposing the fragments of materials he had used in the gallery, helping the viewer understand the process of making behind Iturria's new works.

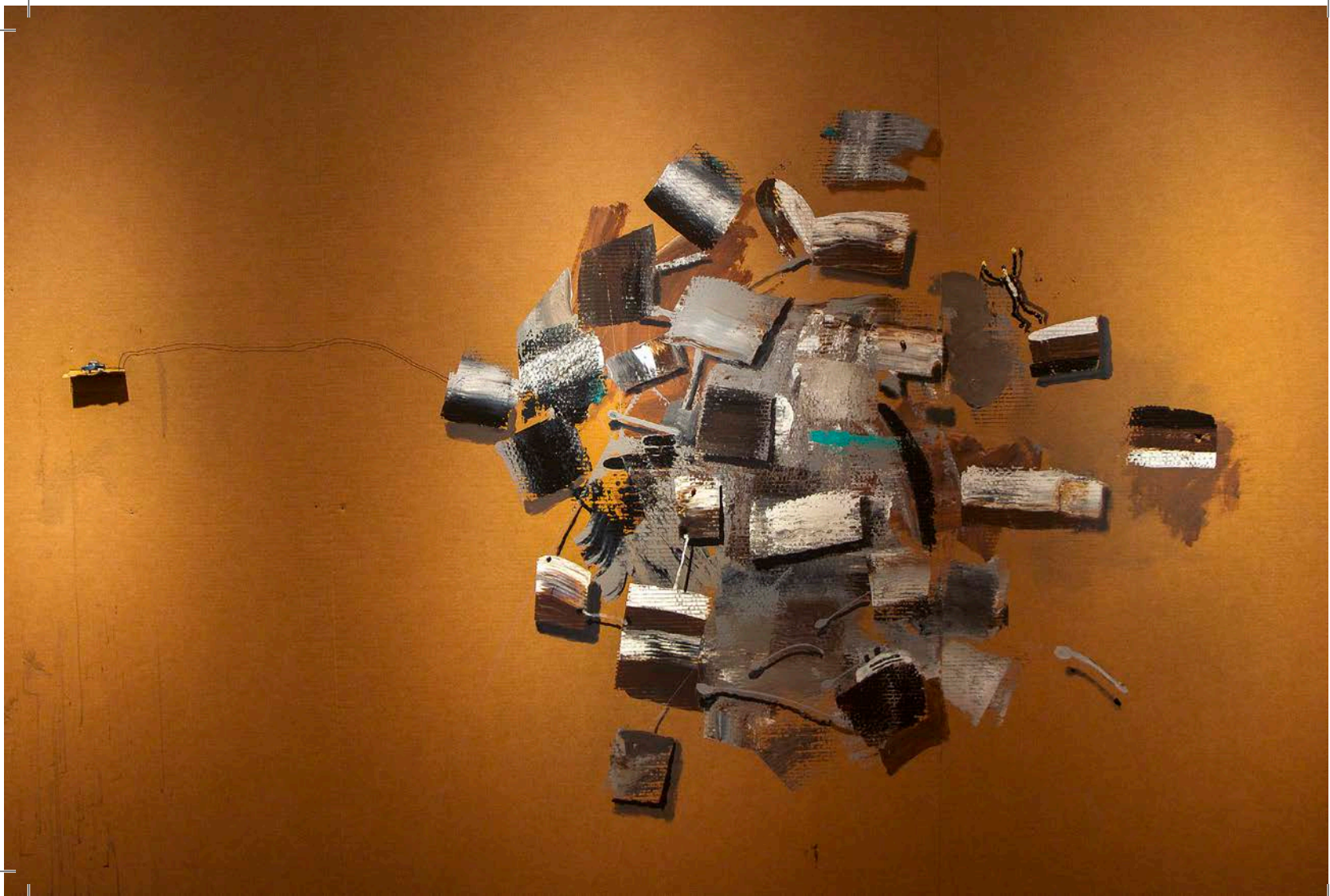
I also chose to place lamps around these tables to highlight the materials, and to bring attention to the vivid colors left on one that had served as a palette. The light seemed to suggest that this place was still alive, that the artist had just left for a minute, to smoke a cigarette in front of the museum, as he had done since the

beginning. It seemed that the spirit of the artist was to remain with us, forever.

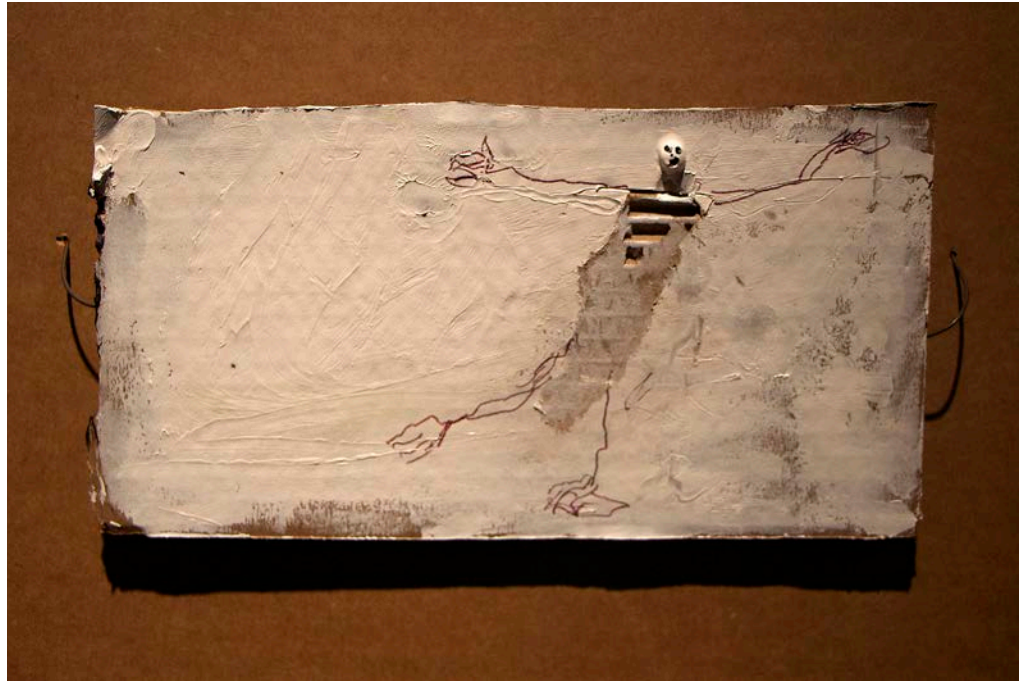
From the start, however, we knew that the experience of the whole was to be ephemeral. Though the gallery should be remembered as a single monumental work, every single part of it had a meaning. Moreover, a series of connections exist between each of the parts. When the exhibition ended we faced a further challenge: to identify clearly which works created in the studio comprised semantic unities. The selection can be seen in this small brochure. We hope that the works, though now separated, still attest to the whole, and that each one can be understood as a small echo of the studio-gallery, revealing what was perhaps a unique experience for the museum, the artist, and of course, the visiting public.

Patrice Giasson Alex Gordon Curator
of the Art of the Americas

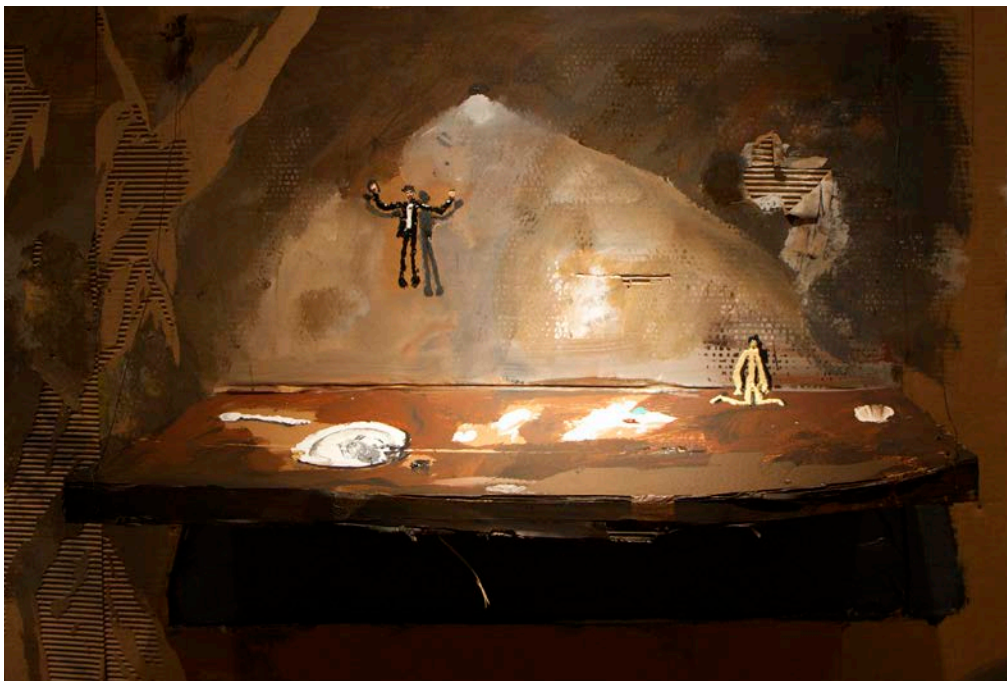




NS1
Oil on cardboard,
plastic toy car
58 x 64 in.



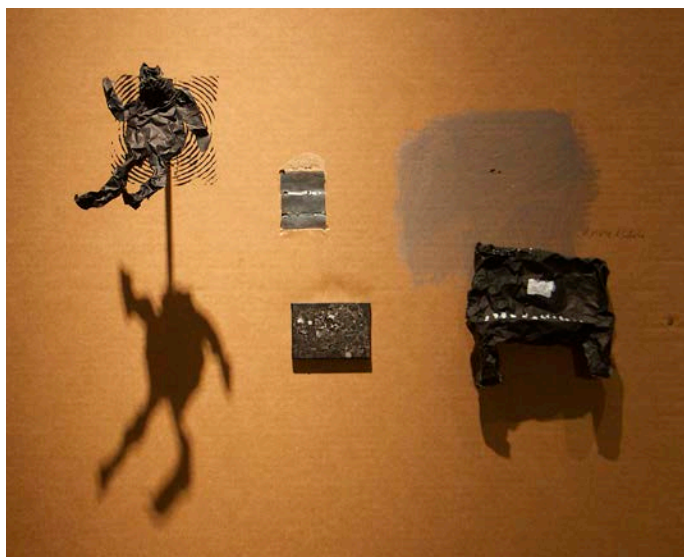
NS24
Acrylic and pen on
cardboard
5 x 9 in.



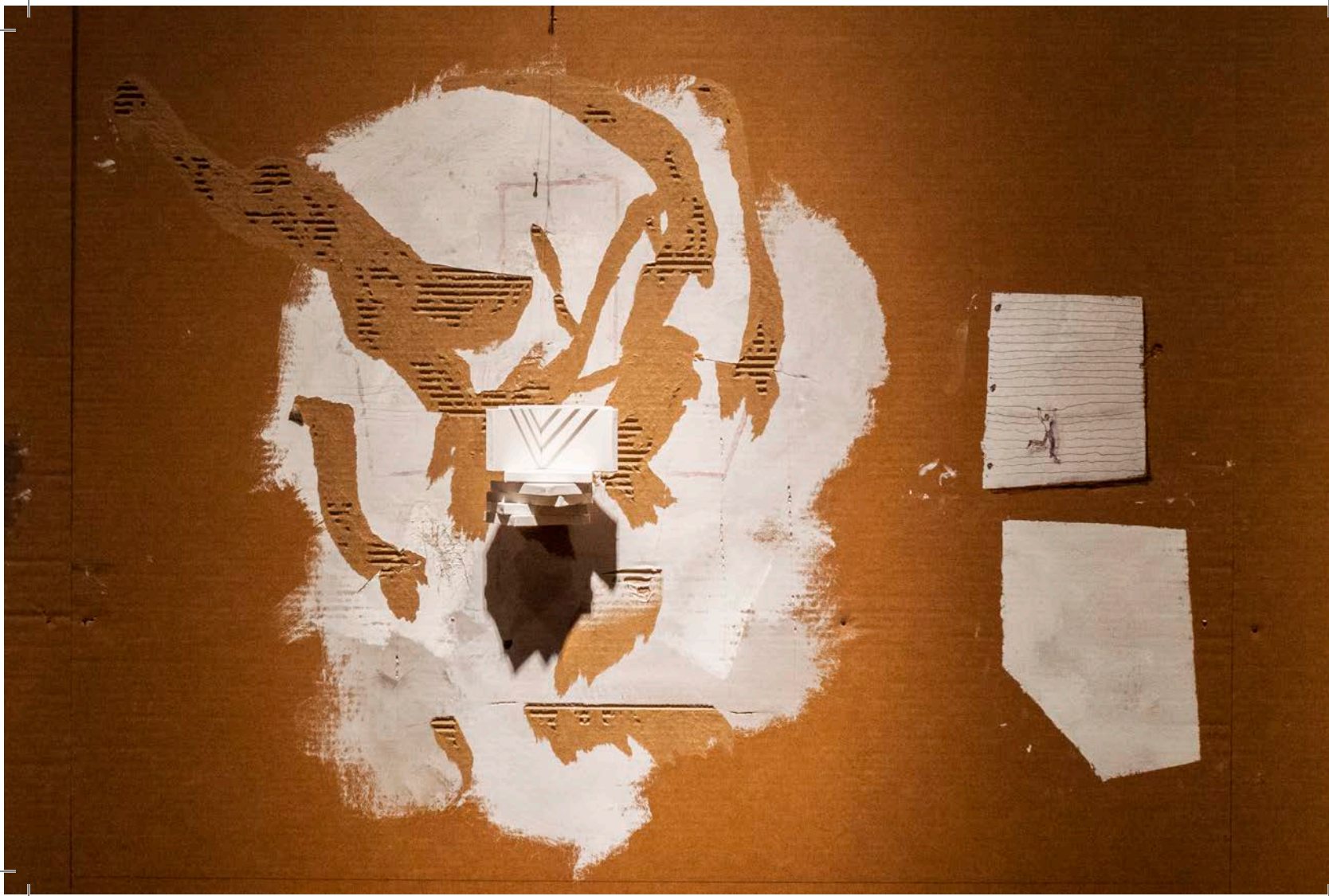
NS14
Acrylic on cardboard
with cutout
48 ½ x 48 in.



Detail of *NS15*
Mixed media, acrylic on
cardboard, masonite
96 x 96 in.



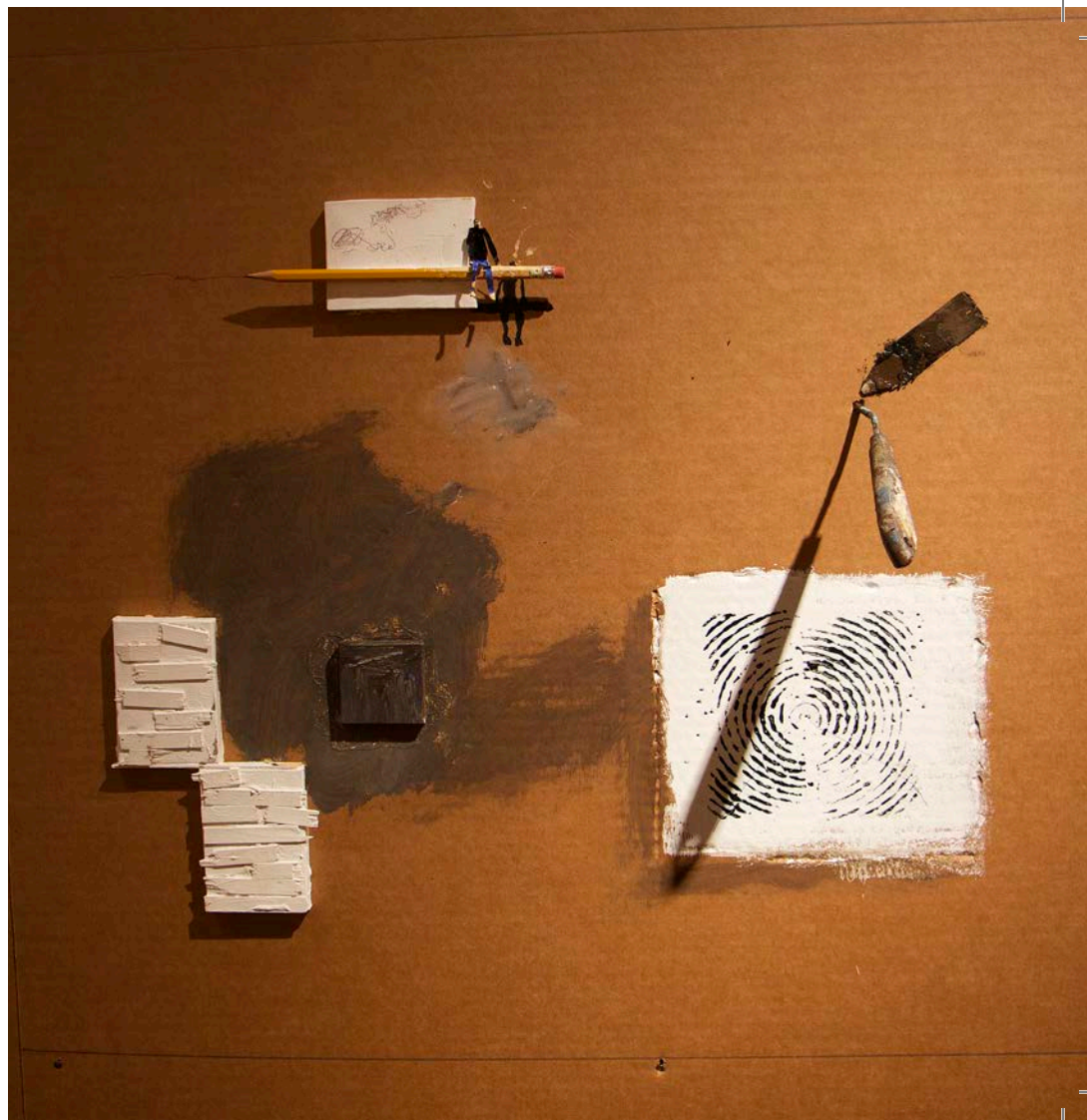
NS9
Mixed media, metal, black
alum flood light shaping
paper, pencil on cardboard
31 ½ x 31 in.



NS35

Mixed media, acrylic
and ink on cardboard
and canvas

42 ½ x 48 x 5 ½ in.



NS37

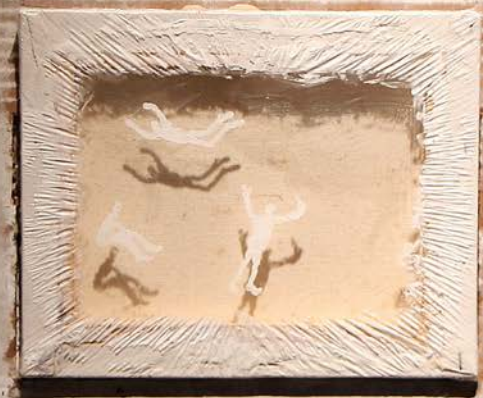
Mixed media, acrylic on canvas
and cardboard, popsicle
sticks, pencil, pallet knife

24 ¾ x 27 ½ in.



NS17
Mixed media, acrylic
and nails on cardboard
24 ½ x 25 ½ in.

NS25
Acrylic and plastic
on canvas and cardboard
16 ½ x 19 in.





From left to right:

1) *NS10*

Acrylic and colored
pencil on cardboard
14 x 10 ¼ in.

2) *NS11*

Ink on white paper
8 1/5 x 5 in.

3) *NS12 a,b,c,d,e*

5 small portraits,
acrylic on canvas
3 ½ x 2 ½ in.



NS8d
Mixed media, acrylic
on cardboard and
altered book cover
7 x 11 ½ x 8 ¼ in.

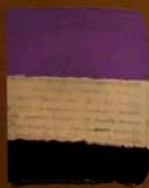


NS8c
Spatula, acrylic
8 ½ x 4 x ¾ in.



NS18
Mixed media,
cardboard, acrylic,
nails and plastic
50 x 48 in.

NS19
Acrylic on cardboard
with cutout, wire
9 ¾ x 12 ¾ in.





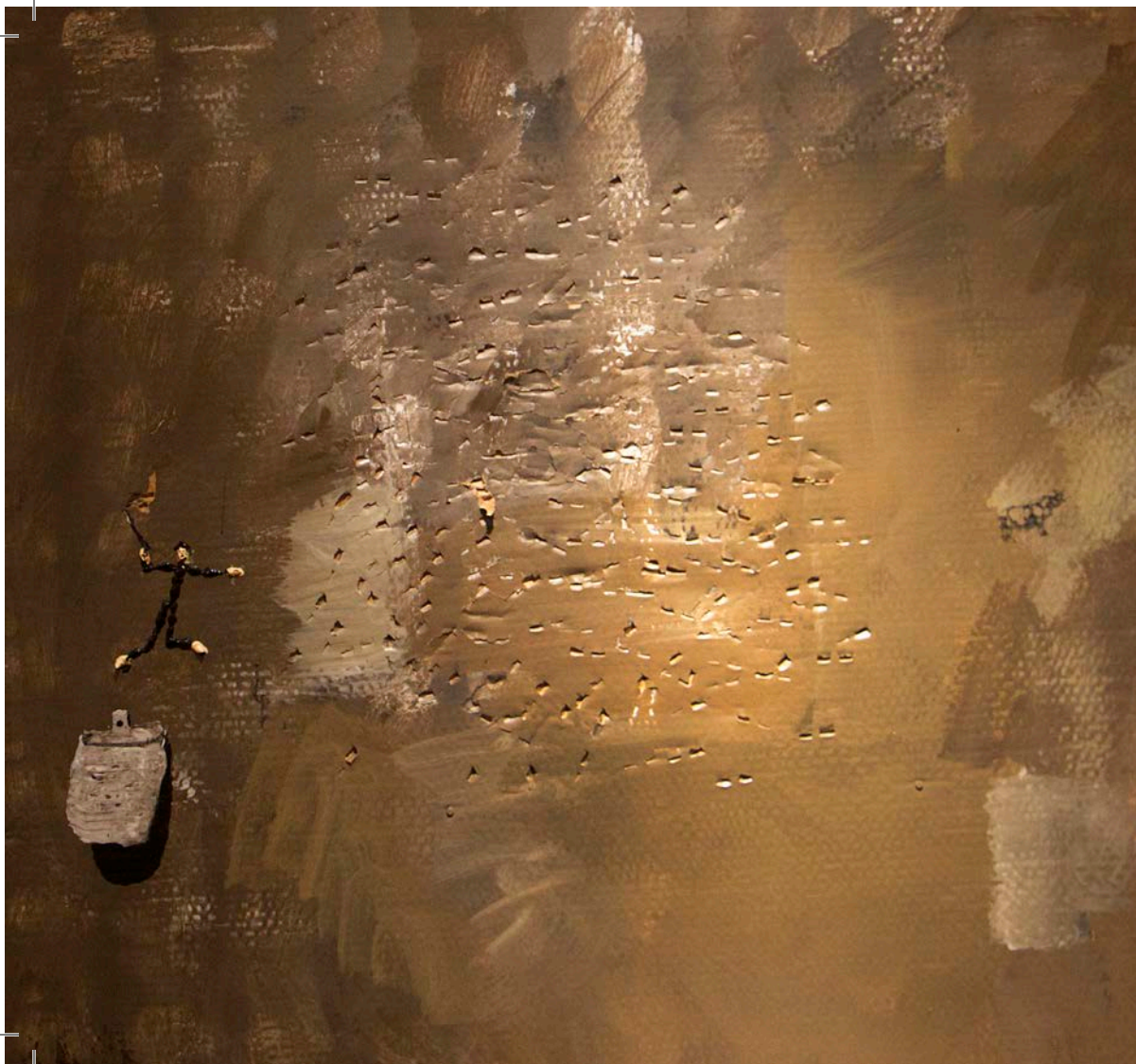


NS7
Acrylic on cardboard
41 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 59 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

NS32
Acrylic and toilet
paper on cardboard
34 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 35 in.



NS5
Acrylic and toilet
paper on cardboard
22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 20 in.



NS13
Acrylic on cardboard
40 x 39 ½ in.

NS34
Mixed media, wire,
acrylic on cardboard
33 ¼ x 33 ¼ x 4 ½ in.





NS6
Mixed media, wood,
metal, acrylic
45 x 18 x 18 in.



Detail of
NS15
Mixed media, acrylic
on cardboard,
masonite
96 x 96 in.



NS20
Acrylic on cardboard
83 ½ x 33 ½ x 12 ¼ in.



NS30
Acrylic on cardboard,
cardboard packages
71 x 33 x 12 in.



NS3
Collage, acrylic on
printed couche paper
67 ½ x 20 ½ x 16 ¼ in.



NS26
Altered photography
(by Cynthia Newman)
with ink
11 x 8 ½ in.



NS4a
Mixed media,
metal and mirror
on cardboard
23 ¼ x 21 in.
8 ¼ x 10 in.



NS16
Mixed media, altered
book cover, acrylic on
cardboard
48 ½ x 19 ½ in.



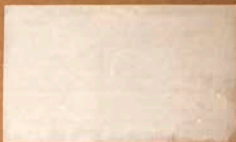
NS33
Acrylic on
cardboard
17 ¼ x 13 in.



NS31b
2 of 4 paintings,
acrylic on canvas
20 x 16 in. each one.



NS22
Mixed media, acrylic on
canvas and cardboard,
colored pencils
37 ½ x 48 x 6 ½ in.

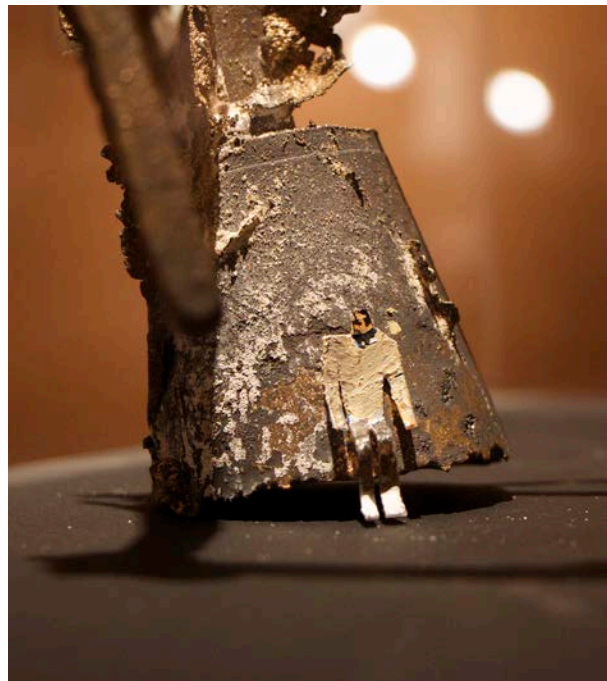






NS23
Mixed media, acrylic and
pen on toilet paper rolls
and cardboard
10 ½ x 15 x 2 ½ in.

NS42
Acrylic on
cardboard paper
3 x 10 x 9 ½ in.



Detail of NS43
Multimedia, acrylic
on cardboard and
bronze samples
Approximately 7 x 7 x 7 in.



Child looking at
NS28
Altered bronze cast,
acrylic on cardboard
and masonite
10 x 10 x 11 in.

NS44
Plastic,
acrylic, paper
15 x 10 x 8 in.



NS41
Altered Doris Salcedo
catalogue, acrylic on paper
11 ½ x 20 in.





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