



Art Notes

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage
1608 Walnut Street, 18th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103

THE PEW CENTER FOR ARTS & HERITAGE / PCAH.US / [@PEWCENTER_ARTS](https://twitter.com/PEWCENTER_ARTS)

Reception Area

Jane Irish

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 2011)

Thay Overdoor, 2014

Ink on paper

42" x 54"

Banyan Overdoor, 2014

Ink on paper

42" x 54"

Courtesy of the artist and Locks Gallery,
Philadelphia



Jane Irish works at the intersection between the decorative and the political, deploying both art and craft with equal engagement (and abandon) to create paintings, sculptures, and objects that stand alone, or are part of elaborate installations. The tension in Irish's work arises from her genuine love of all things Gilded Age—the porcelains, tapestries, and gleaming interiors—and a resistance to the very systems of power that this imagery represents. The Vietnam War has been the subject of much of her work in recent years. In these works, Irish concentrates on the beauty of Vietnam and the spirit of its people who triumphed over French colonialism and American imperialism. Through sumptuous renderings of the Vietnamese landscape and culture, Irish celebrates the aesthetic beauty of the country and her devotion to creating artwork that rescinds the effects of war.

Irish received her MFA from Queens College, CUNY, and has been exhibiting her work nationally since 1983. Her work has been presented in Philadelphia at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), and Locks Gallery, among others; and at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; and the Baltimore Museum of Fine Arts. Her work is in the permanent collections of several institutions including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and PAFA, and she is a 2009 recipient of a Painters and Sculptors Grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

Mark Shetabi

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 2002)

Attic, 2002–03

MDF, balsa wood, acrylic, styrene,

porcelain, halogen light, and peep hole lens

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and

Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York



Concealing landscapes inside walls, accessible only through tiny peepholes, Mark Shetabi creates sterile environments in which sound, light, and architecture collide. These works allow the viewer to enter these spaces, but in sight only, thereby feeding the imagination. In *Attic*, one sees clearly a flight of stairs, but the questions remain as to where these stairs lead and for what purpose do they exist. The peephole gives his audience a solitary connection with the interior space, giving each work a unique intimacy.

Shetabi received an M.F.A. degree from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia in 1996. Exhibition highlights include Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York, Ratio 3, San Francisco, Calif., Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, and White Columns, New York. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Painting and Drawing department at the Tyler School of Art, Temple University.

Wall Text

Essex Hemphill wrote poems as incantations, assertions to be delivered in full, fearless voice. Hemphill identifies the throb of latent emotions straining at the seams of human beings and the equivalent pulse in everything that surrounds them.

This excerpt, from the anthology *Life Sentences*, finds double meaning in the concept of a “vital sign.” The poet acknowledges that vital signs, of breath and a beating heart, are the functions that keep us alive, but that he requires more to live. He wants to be shown a sign, to be guided by an entity that has lived and seen the life that has evaded him, for which there’s only the vaguest, most intangible model. There’s great pathos in the declaration that the narrator is alive by all clinical standards but lacking other vital signs he sorely needs. Hemphill’s proud, sweet, booming diction prevents sympathy or gloom from entering the verse.

Before his November 1995 death, aged 38, from AIDS-related illness, Hemphill found ways to bring his poetry to a wide range of audiences, performing readings and lectures at Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, The University of California in Los Angeles, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Black Arts Festival at The Whitney Museum of American Art, and many others. He was a 1993 visiting scholar at the Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities in Santa Monica. His collected works are compiled in *Ceremonies*, published by Cleis Press.

Essex Hemphill

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 1993)

now show me...

Excerpt from: “Vital Signs, XXXVI The Faerie Poems”

Life Sentences, Mercury House, 1994

Library Door

Stephen Berg was a master of commanding a reader with an elected voice, then carrying them through a narrative as if they were companions on a journey.

The barely punctuated outpouring on the nature of clouds in this excerpt (taken from 2000’s *Porno Diva Numero Uno: An Anonymous Confession*) can be heard as the rant of a self-important didact, a lecturer who enjoys his own voice, and doesn’t care to pause and think of his audience. Yet the tone and phrases elide with further readings, they stop and start on other notes, and secondary voices are able to reveal themselves within the monologue. Ultimately, the narrator speaks with as much vulnerability and innocence as he does with rhetoric and puff. The steamrolling, ungrammatical flow reveals the multi-faceted nature of human speech just as well, and in some ways much more expressively, than so-called ‘correct’ diction.

Berg won many awards, including the Mayor’s Award in Poetry and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Beyond a prolific career of his own published works, he promoted poetry to a vast audience. He translated prolifically (for which he won the Columbia University Translation Prize and a Ford Foundation Fellowship), co-edited several important anthologies, and founded *The American Poetry Review* in 1972, a magazine Berg continued to co-edit until his death in June 2014.

Stephen Berg

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 1993)

as for the hesitant nature of clouds...

Excerpt from: *Porno Diva Numero Uno: An Anonymous Confession*

Hard Press, Inc., 2000

Conference Room A

Astrid Bowlby

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 2005)

Untitled, 2006

Ink on cut paper

Variable dimensions

Installed on a wall 144" x 170"

Courtesy the artist
and Gallery Joe, Philadelphia



With intricacy that approaches the obsessive, Astrid Bowlby creates room-sized installations of ink drawings and cut paper that accumulate to form engrossing, fantastical environments.

Untitled (2006), a work conceived especially for the ThePew Center for Arts & Heritage, is a 12 foot-long work that breathes as living mass. It is a construction and this is construction work, the

physical deployment of matter to see how it grows and how it settles. There's a delicacy to this labor, for the fragile, ethereal nature of her materials launches this topography into the realm of the mind and the places where information organizes itself, where the inchoate volume of stuff around us begins to make sense. It is an unabashedly organic process, one that reflects the artist's passion for work that colludes with itself in order to evolve in the most honest fashion possible.

Bowlby has exhibited often and nationally since completing her M.F.A. degree at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1996. She has been the recipient, through her brightly decorated career, of two Leeway Foundation Window of Opportunity Grants, a Leeway Grant for Excellence, and three Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowships. An installation in the 2003 group show "Internal Excess" at the Drawing Center, New York, confirmed Bowlby's place in a rich, global continuum of ground-breaking work on paper. She has been represented by Gallery Joe in Philadelphia since 2000.

Conference Room A



William Earle Williams is a documentary photographer whose subjects do not overtly assert their story or their intentions. Instead they offer quiet means for stripping away a textbook understanding of America's history, in order to arrive at a more personal, true and useful relationship with what's gone before.

The six photographs on display are superficially

unexceptional landscapes; however, they will forever bear the imprint of slavery. From slave cabins to particularly bloody civil war sites to Underground Railroad routes, the images bring uninvocable events to life and prove that evidence does not evaporate. Dirt, roots and rocks abide, stronger now through the events that they have witnessed and stored. Both a complete command of traditional compositional weight and great prowess in technical black-and-white show Williams' quiet faith in holding strong to the past in order to shape the future.

Williams has been a professor of Fine Arts at Haverford University since 1978, the same year that he completed Postgraduate studies at Yale University. In 1981 he became Haverford's Curator of Photography, a post he continues to hold today. Following substantial museum shows in Philadelphia, Cleveland (solo), Baltimore and Tampa, Williams was honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2003. He was included in 2000's "Reflections in Black," The Smithsonian Institute's definitive touring exhibition of black photography from 1840 to the present.

William Earle Williams

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 1997)

Davis Bend, Louisiana, 1999

Civil War Battle Site

June 2nd and 29th 1864

United States Colored Troops 64th Infantry

Vickers Pottery Barn Ruin, Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1998

Underground Railroad Station

Boyd's Landing, South Carolina, 1999

Hatches' Expeditionary Force

Massachusetts 54th and 55th Infantry

United States Colored Troops 32nd, 35th and 102nd Infantry, November 1864

Slave Cabin, Oakley Plantation, St. Francisville, Louisiana, 2004

Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge, Pennsylvania, 1999

Underground Railroad Route

Civil War Battle Area

Gettysburg Campaign June 1863

Village Square Christiana, Pennsylvania, 1998

Jail Site Christiana Rioters, 1851

Underground Railroad Route

Gelatin silver prints

Three, 7 3/8" x 7 3/8"

Three, 7 1/2" x 7 1/2"

Courtesy of the artist

North Wall

Zoe Strauss

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 2005)

I-95, details

color photograph

2000-2009

11" x 7.3" each

Courtesy of the artist and Bruce Silverstein Gallery



Zoe Strauss is a photographer and installation artist who uses Philadelphia as the primary setting and subject for her work. Her images address themes such as gender and identity, addiction and desire, hope, pride, and joy. Photographing in the streets, Strauss typically documents the people, buildings, and vernacular signage that strike her interest, paying particular attention to the often overlooked details

of daily life in working-class and poor neighborhoods. Strauss's photos of shuttered buildings, empty parking lots and vacant meeting halls illuminate her South Philly neighborhood's gritty character, yet are at the same time elegantly formal in nature. Since 2000, Strauss has produced an annual installation beneath the I-95 Interstate highway. Displaying hundreds of her photocopied photographs on concrete pillars and selling them for \$5 each, her mission with this project is to give the citizens of Philadelphia access to art in their everyday lives. The last installation of this ambitious project will take place in the spring of 2010.

Now represented by Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York, Strauss has exhibited her work at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Acuna-Hansen Gallery, Los Angeles, Calif., among others. In 2004 she was part of the Whitney Biennial, *Day for Night* exhibition, and was a United States Artists Fellow in 2007.

Courtyard Overlook

Quinn Bauriedel

Dan Rothenberg

Dito van Reigersberg

(in collaboration, Pew Fellows in the Arts, 2002)

Geoff Sobelle

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 2006)

with James Sugg

this is the number one...

Excerpt from Chekhov Lizardbrain

Eclectic, multidisciplinary, and seemingly disparate though they are, Pig Iron Theatre Company's works are driven by a common impulse: to use the special tools of the theatrical form to explore new ways of making audiences laugh, cry, recoil in shock, or meditate upon the central issues of our lives and imaginations. Pig Iron's original performance pieces are devised through a collaborative process involving actors, a director, designers, and other outside collaborators. Through intensive, focused sessions of improvisation and conversation, performers bring their own fascinations, fears, and unique physicality to bear on the material.

A poignant, off-kilter comic meditation on consciousness and the stakes of creating art, *Chekhov Lizardbrain* was created together with playwright Robert Quillen Camp, who wrote the text in collaboration with the ensemble of actors (Quinn Bauriedel, Geoff Sobelle, James Sugg, and Dito van Reigersberg) and director Dan Rothenberg. Sugg's OBIE-Award winning performance as a lonely, awkward botanist is at the heart of a dizzying web of stories and memories which combines 19th-century Russian drama and cutting-edge neuroscience.

Pig Iron has received a Total Theatre Award from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival; two OBIE Awards, and multiple Barrymore Awards for Excellence in Theatre. *The New York Times* has hailed Pig Iron as "one of the few groups successfully taking theatre in new directions" and named *Chekhov Lizardbrain* as one of their top 10 productions of 2008.

Panel Room



Wholly informed of art history through the ages, Eileen Neff draws upon landscape traditions to investigate the restlessness of objects in the field. Her obligation is to understand placement, to analyze the almost molecular disconnect between figures and grounds in a photographic instant.

The zipping blur of the digitally-manipulated *Night Falls* (2001) was shot from a moving train, and it's only that sense and the time of day, as helpfully verified by the title, that can safely be confirmed. The remaining facts skid across the frame, leaving the viewer to best consider the nature of the blur itself, an act which would seem quaint and Impressionistic if it weren't for the meticulous care with which this woolly smear has been created. Here is a scene that plays visual push-and-pull games akin to the pulsing power of Rothko's color-field abstraction while encouraging a more complicated tug of war: the one between logic and sensation, the tangible and the unknown.

Equally accomplished as photographer, installation artist and writer, Neff has shown at Julie Saul Gallery, New York, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Locks Gallery and the Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia, the Carnegie Mellon Art Gallery, Pittsburgh, and The Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, among many others. Her regular reviews for *Artforum* magazine have contributed sterling work in raising the global profile of the Philadelphia art scene. Neff has a mid-career survey opening at the Philadelphia ICA in Fall 2007.

Eileen Neff

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 1994)

Night Falls, 2001

C-print

40" x 110 3/4"

Courtesy of the artist and
Bridgette Mayer Gallery

Wall Text

Ron Silliman writes long-form prose poems that indulge in extended play with words and linguistic structure, methods that are often associated with a group known as the Language Poets, but his unwaveringly clear voice offers the reader a clear, often stark view of real-life experience.

A circadian cycle is best described as living with an internal clock that does not fluctuate. Wedged in between "False Start" and "True Start" in this excerpt from Silliman's 1981 book-length poem *Tjanting*, "Circadia" is a hinge around the idea of the forever-cyclic life as either a blessing or as a petrifying bore. Systems are a preoccupying force for the poet, as evidenced by the work's strict structure based on the Fibonacci series. Ruminating thoughtfully on human schedules in five short words and failing to quite make a conclusion, the poet perhaps decides that spontaneous action, "ability," is best. So he dances away from his argument with a tongue-twisting turn on a children's song.

Often noted for *The Alphabet*, a single poem that began in 1979 and was completed in 2004, Silliman has written and edited 26 books to date, accomplishments for which he has received fellowships from the National Endowment for The Arts and the Pennsylvania Arts Council. His career, through stints as a lobbyist, ethnographer and newspaper editor, has thrived through adaptability, a fact most recently proven by the sensational success of his online diary, "Silliman's Blog" an influential poetry and politics blog.

Ron Silliman

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 1998)

False start...

Excerpt from: *Tjanting*

Salt Publishing, 2002

Conference Room B

Virgil Marti

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 1995)

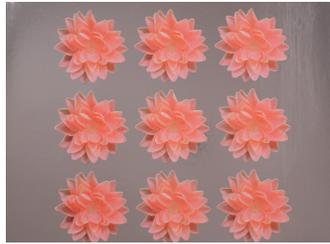
Lotus Wallpaper, 2003

Hand screenprint on Mylar

Variable dimensions

Installed on a wall 144" x 247"

Courtesy of the artist
and Elizabeth Dee Gallery, NYC



Virgil Marti has become known for evoking the kitsch nature of the suburban American home while mutating its elements—including chandeliers and wallpaper—into sensual totems and psychedelic environments.

Lotus Wallpaper was commissioned by the Rhode Island School of Design Museum for *On The Wall: Wallpaper and Tableau*, a wide-reaching group exhibition that also came to Philadelphia's Fabric Workshop and Museum in

2003. Wallpaper forms a large part of Marti's body of work, and the roll on view here demonstrates many of the artist's signature techniques. There's sweet, fragrant subject matter offset by dizzy optical effects, and a deceptively clean look that plays down complex contemporary working methods, perfectly fabricated. And there's Marti's comfortable perch at the nexus of fine art, the rare air of the museum, and the leveling availability of basic interior design. The coziness of home, a place of comfort and calm, radiates from the work, while a full assault on memory and the senses quietly unfurls.

Marti received an M.F.A. from the Tyler School of Art, Temple University, and a B.F.A. from Washington University, and spent a summer's studies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Nationally known, he inaugurated the excellent Participant Inc. Gallery with a "Grow Room" in 2001, installed "Flowers of Romance" on the ICA Philadelphia ramp in 2003, and was selected for the Whitney Biennial in 2004. He is represented by Elizabeth Dee Gallery in New York City, where his second solo show ran in February 2006.

Wall Text

Sonia Sanchez

(Pew Fellow in the Arts, 1993)

to be lifted...

"Haiku"

Like the Singing Coming Off the Drums,
Beacon Press, 1998

A poet with a deep sense of social responsibility who is equally adept at crisp, economical writing and humor, Sonia Sanchez writes so that, in her words, "the foundations of our future are secure, if unknown."

Taken from *Like the Singing Coming Off the Drums*, a 1998 collection of love poems often bristling with erotic heat, this excerpted haiku calls forth the most visceral sensations and passion. In a few short syllables, the reader is vividly prey to the blacksmith: tossed around; taken from scalding heat to cold air; from soft to solid metal. It is not a literal sexual metaphor, but an evocation of the changes in texture that subtly take place during a tryst. Beyond the immediate, Sanchez speaks as strongly of transformation as racial experience, evoking the tumultuous changes of African-American history, and demanding that it be remembered and understood.

Over the course of a 40-year career, Sanchez has authored more than a dozen books of poetry, seven plays, two anthologies, and poetry and short stories for children. Among the innumerable honors she has received are the Community Service Award from the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, the Lucretia Mott Award, the Outstanding Arts Award from the Pennsylvania Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Peace and Freedom Award from Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Pennsylvania Governor's Award for Excellence in the Humanities, and a National Endowment for the Arts Award. She became the first Presidential Fellow at Temple University, where she taught from 1977 until her retirement in 1999.

About The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage is dedicated to stimulating a vibrant cultural community in the five-county, Southeastern Pennsylvania region. Established in 2005, the Center makes project grants in two areas, Performance and Exhibitions & Public Interpretation, as well as awarding grants to individual artists through our Pew Fellowships. The Center also makes Advancement grants, substantial awards to high-performing organizations seeking to make lasting improvements to their programming, audience engagement, and financial health. Each year, Center funding makes possible numerous performing arts events, as well as history and visual arts exhibitions and other public programs for audiences in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. The Center is also a hub for research and knowledge-sharing on issues critical to cultural practice.

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and administered by The University of the Arts, Philadelphia. For more information, visit www.pcah.us.

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The Pew Charitable Trusts (www.pewtrusts.org) is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. It partners with a diverse range of donors, public and private organizations and concerned citizens who share a commitment to fact-based solutions and goal-driven investments to improve society.