

## JULIA HAFT-CANDELL AT CANDICE MADEY

By Darla Migan

In *A Soft Grid*, Julia Haft-Candell presents painting, drawing, and bronze works. Acts of self-apprenticeship led Haft-Candell to materialize new shapes across these various dimensions, organized here through warped netting motifs. Crisscrossing patterns emerge in blue pigment and black patinas or are dug out with a sharp tool to reveal depth and play with illusions of volume. As if pulling the rug out from underneath the traditional fine arts, or excavating not-yet solidified traditions, Haft-Candell burrows into and blows up the sketch—detaching grid lines from their forced regularity. Instead, vitality springs from the artist's focus on the way interlocking gestures inform her lumpy (w)holes. Unevenly skewed bronze spheres seep from canvas and clay, revealing mini honey-gold bumps unashamedly reveling in their messy irregularities. Watercolor floats on a linen surfaces lined with a gritty gesso, welcoming chalk and marble dust, further elevating what once was lost to the ether into the position of fine art.

Adding to Haft-Candell's continuously expanding personal glossolalia of forms, wax molds vanish in an experimental kiln-firing process to reveal the strength of the singular and irreplicable large bronze. Both inky paintings and craggy organs sculpted out of clay fired with embedded glass—each spit out bits of jewelry mashed down and melted in the kiln. Any hard reality suggests another process happening below the surface. Digging and scraping at the edge of what holds, Haft-Candell honors the nothing-everything initiated by the grid's scale and scope through her blurred lines and filmy foci.

The structures which we may have come to depend on, may also only signal the beginning of our own undoing. Through her psychoanalytic investigation of modern art, Rosalind Krauss argues that the grid familiar to early twentieth century European painters acts as silencing machine, quieting the narrative representational quality of art. Krauss writes: "Although this condition [strife between spirit and the secular] could be discussed openly in the late nineteenth century, it is something that is inadmissible in the twentieth, so that by now we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention art and spirit in the same sentence."<sup>1</sup> In Haft-Candell's grids we are not forced to choose between organizing logics of representing nature or pure art. As Krauss confirms further down, we have always been tuned into structures. And yet, Haft-Candell's self-regulating systematicity also does feel like a representation of what phenomenologist Edmund Husserl theorized about inner-time consciousness as absolute streaming.<sup>2</sup> Here, grids seem to find their own style of transcendence by endlessly falling apart

Across the exhibition material that is usually forgotten, or techniques traditionally used in the atelier merely to support the mastery of skill, become central to the multivalent systems on view. Openly revealing what feel like dried tears in the splotchy divisions of her watercolor nets, a paradoxical sense of both being tied to the area of the surface but

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<sup>1</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* Vol. 9 (Summer, 1979):54.

<sup>2</sup> "[Edmund] Husserl consequently operates with three different types of temporality. The objective time of the appearing objects, the subjective or pre-empirical time of the acts and experiences, and, finally, the pre-phenomenal absolute streaming of inner time-consciousness." See Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 87.

also falling through to the other side emerges. A transcendental awareness of being on a journey through unbounded space rises as the eye seeks the substrate.

In the ongoing goo-goo-ing of life expanding beyond the grid—action towards chaos cannot be constrained for long. Like the viscosity of molten lava or the elasticity of woven fibers, the luminosity of the glazed surfaces or glossy bronze bulbs continue to reveal action by illuminating swerves, dips, and the slash-dash marks indicative of active pathways flowing in myriad directions. Think of how sharing images made possible the tech of the green screen both retrains and remains the grid—programmed by flawed humans with data speeds bound by the finitude fiberoptic cable. Even through a programmed illusion of open systems, we still detect traces of routes and the decisions of the maker's hand.

Demonstrations of the infinite fall to earth through interlocking hands. Geological resonances prioritize a semi-hard-soft-bisexual state of flux, attending to the eons of our layered and crumbling rock home. Iridescence becomes an example of an always incomplete, yet completely real appearance—an experience emulating the combination of light dancing in tandem with the movement of the eye across fog. Still, even as various media are hand-calibrated to accentuate bodily sensations, the seemingly exponential possibilities for the transmogrification through dust, iron, heat, and color do not contradict the fact that systems will and do fail, allowing what has previously gone unnoticed to prevail.

In the warp and the weft happening across walls and floor, undulating layers of irregular grids get bandied about, putting the power of the fine line, front and center. The pleasure of marring the net offers productive intrusions on various phases of finishing. Slipping in and out of the meditative process of editing, by both bringing together and bursting through, the net-works in play across *A Soft Grid* become a divining rod...performatively exposing and eliding, tuning into intuitions and embracing detritus, to linger on the extra bits.

- Darla Migan, October 10, 2022