

INCREMENT

Curated by Adrienne Kochman

11/30/18–1/27/19

Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art

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Essay by Adrienne Kochman

Increment, at its simplest level, suggests moving forward in small, compartmentalized steps. Progress may appear slow, deliberate, conscientious, or gradual, but at its foundation lays the notion of measured change. This exhibit focuses on the work of Barbara Cooper, Shona Macdonald and Yoonshin Park - three artists intent on drawing our attention to areas often diminished or overlooked in a world where reaching the end product directly prevails. Their vision asks us to slow down time and consider the space 'in between', where change, however subtle or microscopic, cumulatively shapes substantive meaning.

The transformative process in their work is both interrelated and distinct. Cooper considers form as a record of its development, a historical entity, shaped by its environment. Working with repurposed materials, such as wood veneer, she explores the long-term relationship between wood's origin as a product of nature, and its man-made reconstitution as a product for industry. Manufactured in excess, Cooper repurposes the unused, discarded veneers, building upon their inherent beauty and attributes. However impossible to restore to its original state, she strives to return wood to its original organic purpose, an attempt to reconcile a life cycle derailed.

Landscapes, traditionally 'grounded' in their horizontality, and constancy, are upended by Macdonald as a metaphor for the fragility of human existence through its connectedness to place. Broad territorial expanses are discarded in favor of isolated elements - puddles, bushes, a tree branch - where little foreground or recessive depth exists. Each of these elements will differ the next time we take a look, altered by external forces, such as temperature, wind, sun, an insect perhaps. It is the rhythm of nature, yet our removal from that environment ultimately reveals how bonded we are with it - from our anticipation of weather shifts, the availability of particular foods according to growing season, to daily schedules.

Park, similarly addressing the experience of displacement, is oriented less to a ruptured bond than to examining how inhabited and absent space - by humans or objects - shapes one's existence in subtle ways. In a world where surroundings are new, cultural meaning, social codes, language, may seem arbitrary. One's knowledge base prior to displacement may or may not apply, asking us to reconsider how to begin anew. As our sensory vocabulary grows, we learn for example, what vehicle is producing these new sounds we hear, or how to identify the aroma of a food with which we have no experience. Our physical relationship to external forms in space may also be a marker of change, from the shoulder-to-shoulder proximity of individuals walking on a crowded street on the way to work, to the simple task of sleeping on a pillow. When everyday tasks are the same regardless of place, Park ultimately questions, how we find meaning and come to understand ourselves.

BARBARA COOPER



Barbara Cooper, *Matrix*, 2018, Wood and books, 30 x 30 x 13"

Barbara Cooper works in sculpture, drawing, and public art. Additional projects include gardens and structures for dance and theater. Depending upon the objective of the project, she utilizes diverse media such as wood, metal, paper, glass, and found objects. Manipulating solid material in a fluid manner, forms reference movement and growth. The work is biomorphic in style and process driven, growing from the inside out. Imagery evolves from paring down forms in nature to their essentials, finding common denominators, and eliciting references that blend genres. Utilizing repurposed materials whenever possible, issues of sustainability and an ecology of wholeness are embedded in her work.

A graduate of Cranbrook Academy of Art and Cleveland Institute of Art, Cooper's work is in the collections of Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Wisconsin, the Smithsonian National Museum of American Art, Honolulu's Contemporary Museum, and the Illinois State Museum. In addition to numerous residencies and fellowships internationally, Cooper has taught sculpture and drawing at Montana State University, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and Penland, Haystack, and Anderson Ranch summer programs.

Like ripples in a pond, my path expands from the study of micro and macro forms and structures of growth to that tensioned edge of intersection between nature and culture.

My focus is on how a form records its development, evolving from one condition to another in response to its environment. That process of transformation in nature serves as a metaphor for what occurs in the realm of the personal and political. It is the foundation upon which my work builds.

Influenced initially by animal architecture where form correlates with function, the idea of material efficiency continues to impact how I build structures. We can read a fluid history of growth embedded in solid form, whether it is in a body, a tree, or geological strata, where the immense scope of a landscape and the history that is literally embedded within it spans an amount of time beyond our comprehension. But growth can also be impeded, intruded upon, deformed and compressed by conflict or lack of resources. And that is where I find my focus now—on the environmental issues facing us today.

The materials and processes utilized amplify the concepts of my work. The wood veneer began in the form of a tree and is the result of an intensive milling process. The life cycle of these materials is completed by constructing organic forms from factory scraps that I have gathered, which would otherwise be discarded. Mirroring the efficiency found in nature, I re-purpose this waste product into a new generation of form.

Developing forms that appear to have grown from the inside out is central to my building process. Contrasting this organic quality of expansion with the constraint that appears to have been imposed externally develops the dichotomy that feels so pervasive in both daily life and the bigger picture of how we inhabit this earth. By infusing this paradox with a rugged beauty, I aspire to images that are relatable on a variety of levels and that can pull the viewer in to explore deeper issues.

Repurposing industrial waste in Chicago has been at the heart of my work for the last three decades. Recent pieces allude to embedded histories of our current era. The materials getting incorporated reference that shift. In the last two years, discarded and sliced up books, each with their own compression of ideas, are being added into the layers of forms. These parallel the compacted geographies recorded in tree rings and rock strata.

Related changes are happening in my two-dimensional work. Using collage and ink, new drawings address the junction of the natural and the human. Collages of printed materials (like topographic and road maps) drawn over with walnut ink reinvent a landscape emblematic of the tension between growth and human obstruction.

Barbara Cooper, *Husk*, 2011, Wood, glass and glue, 41 x 40 x 16"





Following page: Barbara Cooper, *Strata*, 2017, Wood and books
left section: 27 x 39 x 4"
right section:







Left: Barbara Cooper, *Maelstrom*, 2017, Wood and books, 27 x 26 x 8"

Right: *Maelstrom*, detail



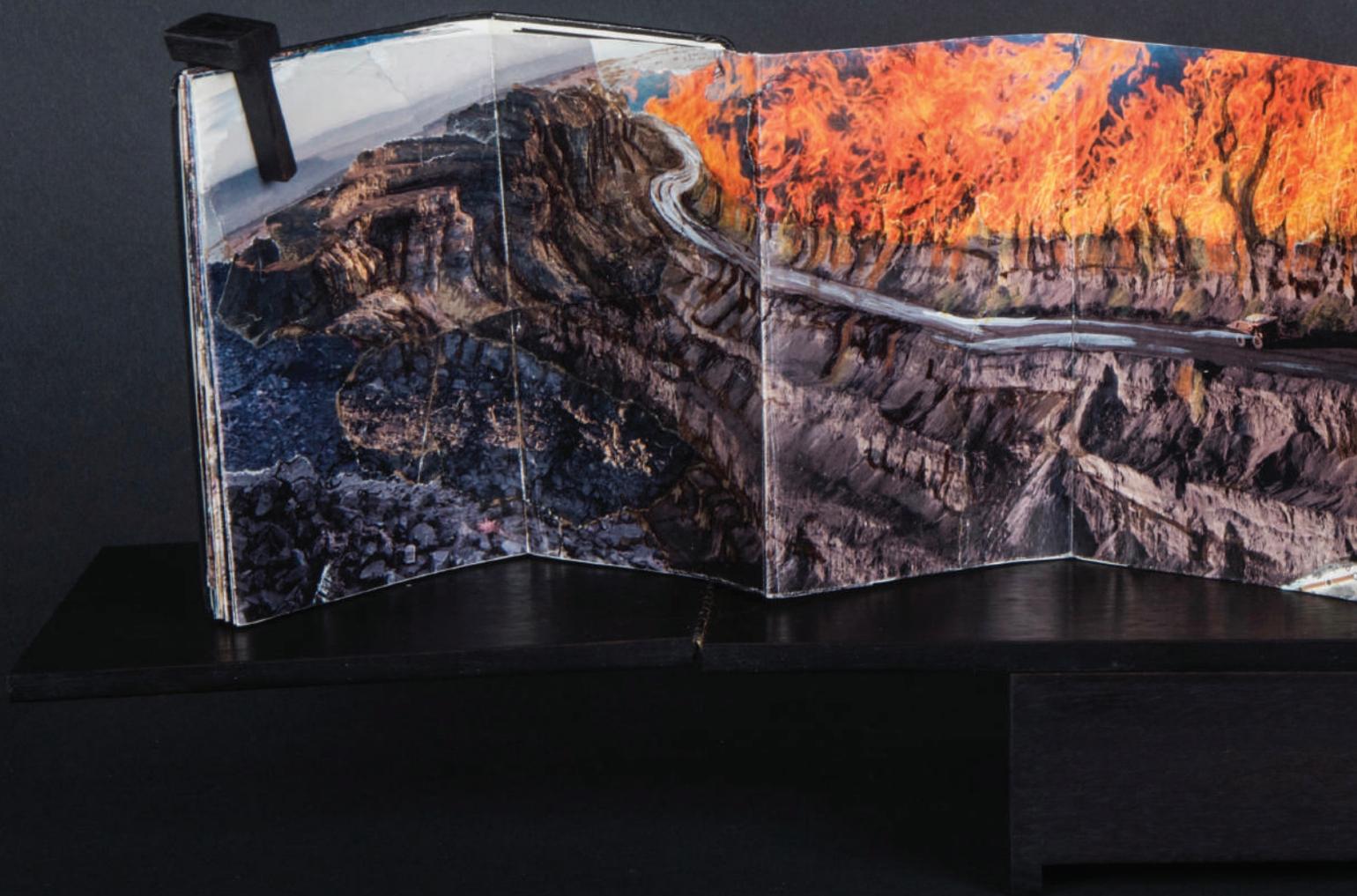
Barbara Cooper, *Fuse*, 2018, Wood, books and glue, 26 x 38 x 9"



Barbara Cooper, *Channel*, 2014, Wood, 23 x 36 x 26"







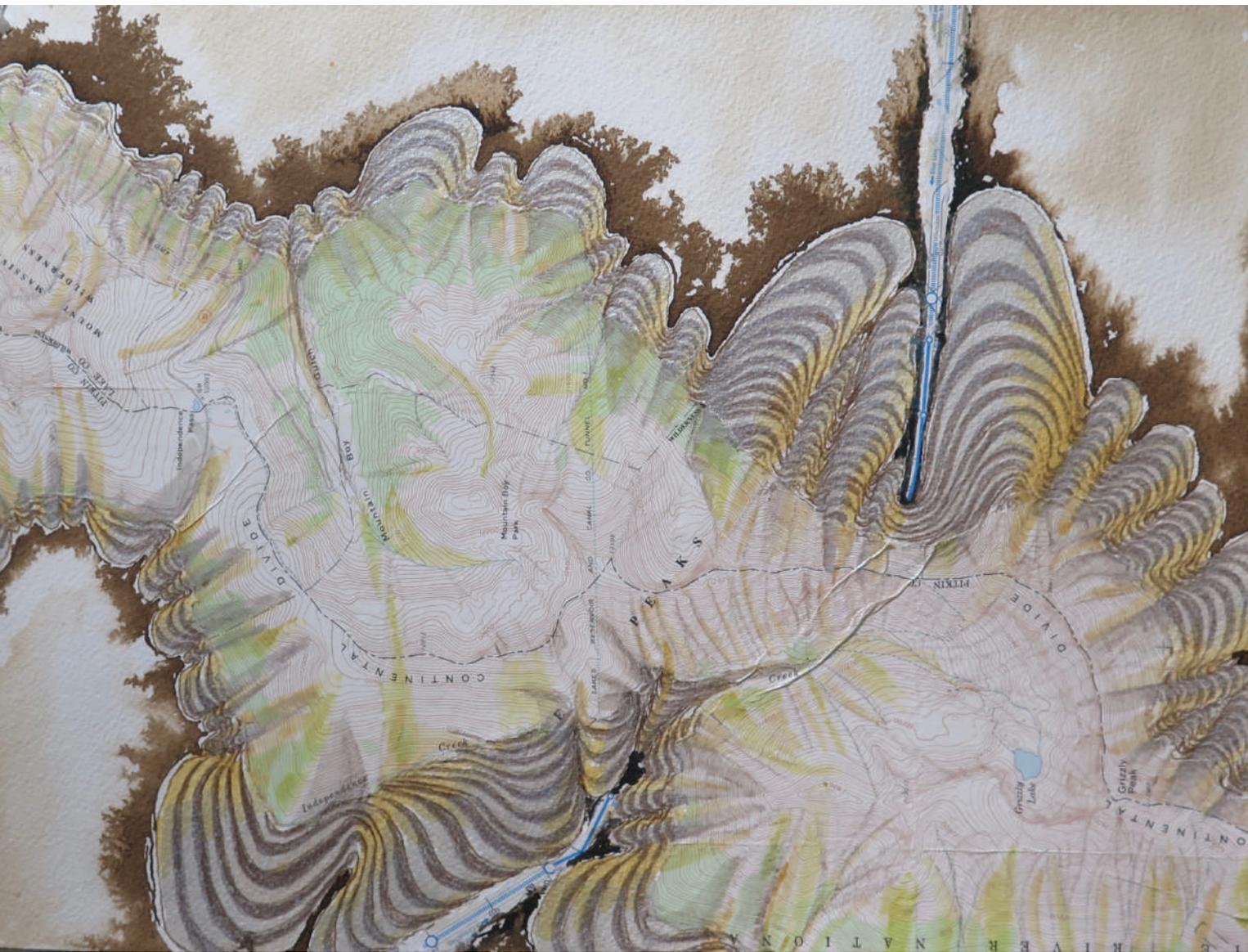
Barbara Cooper, *Steroscope*, 2017, Folding collage and ink book, folded: 6 x 4"





Barbara Cooper, *Steroscope*, 2017, Folding collage and ink book, folded: 6 x 4"





Barbara Cooper, *Landscape Revisions 9*, 2017, Collaged topo maps and ink on paper, 12 x 16"



Barbara Cooper, *Landscape Revisions 10*, 2017, Collaged topo maps and ink on paper, 12 x 16"



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UKRAINIAN INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART (UIMA)

UIMA was founded in 1971 by Dr. Achilles Chreptowsky, Konstantin Milonadis, and Mychajlo Urban in the heart of Chicago's Ukrainian Village. Three storefronts were transformed into a viable museum serving the local community and the greater Chicago area with an ongoing program of cultural exhibitions, literary events, film screenings, and music recitals.

Five to six major exhibitions, often supplemented by catalogues, are held in the main gallery, which occupies 1,200 square feet. One large side gallery houses the permanent collection, which includes the work of Chicago artists as well as that of sculptors and painters of Ukrainian descent. UIMA is also home to a professional storage and research facility.

The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art is open to the public:
Wednesday–Sunday, 12–4 pm

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