

ARTS » VISUAL ART

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Artist On Artist: Gary Sweeney Interviews Constance Lowe

By Gary Sweeney



Courtesy

Artists Constance Lowe and Gary Sweeney stand stiffly in front of one of Lowe's geometric abstractions.

Constance Lowe is a visual artist and University of Texas at San Antonio professor that has been a fixture on the San Antonio art scene since she moved here from Minneapolis in 1991. She is a very serious artist. I had to really be on my game with my questions. Her answers were long, in depth, and given only after deliberation. She is currently showing highly textural geometric collages in a

beautiful show titled "Air to Ground," at Ruiz-Healy Art through February 28.

What was your first art experience?

I actually have two separate ones. One was a making experience — my mother taught me how to draw when I was three years old. The other happened when I was five years old, and enrolled in an art program at the St. Louis Museum of Art. They gave all of us children a part of a famous painting, and we were to run through the museum rooms and find the painting, and then draw the painting with crayons.

What is the best advice you give your students?

I tell them that they need to work through things, not around them, in order to find a unique approach to what they want to create. I also tell them to use art history as their best guide to future work. Lastly, I tell them to not be in too much of a hurry to exhibit their work, and when they do, to be nervous about it.

If you could own any piece of art, what would it be?

Probably a Matthew Barney installation. I respond to artworks that have a lot of incompatibilities and tensions among the elements.

Did you ever have a mentor?

Emphatically, no. However, I really regret it. It makes a difference.

I couldn't agree more. I hate to think how much time I could have saved if I'd had someone helping me navigate the basics of art, and then, later on, the business end. Can you tell me what's happening with this new work?

I've always been interested in geometric abstraction, and in the physical and psychological aspects of materials. I've always looked for the reductive qualities in my work. These works are loosely based on the abstraction of farmland as seen from the air. It's also based on the belief that abstraction can be meaningful on a variety of levels, sometimes in ways we don't always assume.

What's the most annoying trend you see in today's art?

I see several of them. One is the popular entertainment aspect of contemporary art. Another is the disconnect between the artwork and the verbal discussion the work triggers, especially in art writing. Lastly, I'm annoyed by any opening that has a DJ.

What is it we love so much about dogs?

I've always had dogs, and I love the kinds of insights you get from a dog's perspective. Plus, dogs give focus to walks.

If you had to have a career other than an artist, what would it have been?

I wish I'd known about the career of scientific illustration when I was young. I didn't even know it existed. Also I studied graphic design and worked at it for a short while, and have sometimes wondered what it would have been like to pursue that.

What is something that never ceases to make you laugh?

The irony of everyday situations.

CONSTANCE LOWE: AIR TO GROUND

Free, 11am-4pm Wed-Sat, Ruiz-Healy Art, 201 E. Olmos Dr., 804-2219, ruizhealyart.com. Through Feb 28.

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