

rachel uffner



10 GQ-Approved Artists You Should Know at Art Basel Miami: Sam Moyer

by Charlotte Anderson and David Bazner, Photographs by Jace Lumley , December 2014



Moyer dyes fabric to look like stone, then hangs it side-by-side with its geological doppelganger. The result? Wall-mounted sculptures that draw you in like a 1,000 piece puzzle of the Taj Mahal. Using found pieces of granite and marble, she creates works that demand contemplation—it's art that makes you want to kick off your shoes and stay awhile.

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Name: Sam Moyer

Age: 31

Hometown: Chicago, IL/ Los Angeles, CA

Gallery: Rachel Uffner/Rodolphe Jenson

What You're Taking to Basel: "Berocca/2.3 tons of marble"

Tool(s) of Choice: "Measuring tape/garden hose"

Influencers: "I am very easily influenced, but mostly peter voulos"

Twitter Handle: "Non-twitterer"

How important is illusion in your work?

Sometimes I focus on the illusion, but sometimes I feel like I'm trying to ruin it. It's more about the relationship between the two materials. The human mind completing the puzzle for itself helps create a personal relationship with the piece.

Why dyed fabric?

I started when I was on a residency in Switzerland. I didn't have any money so I started dying fabric with ink, which created shadow effects that mimicked photography. I was drawn to that because I studied photography but was never into the technicality of it. When you do something for three or four years straight it evolves, it changes.

How did your education help formulate you as an artist?

At Corcoran, every time I had an idea I would render that idea as fast and efficiently as I possibly could without really caring about craft. Then when I went to Yale I got into sculpture and the idea was the most important thing. I got to ask myself things like, 'what am I going to make today? What do I care about?' My education helped me, but a lot of it I did on my own.

Would you recommend grad school?

Not at twenty-two. I remember being envious of the people who were a few years older. They knew so much. I felt like they were getting more out of it while I was spending so much time catching up.

How do you find the stone?

I go to different marble yards around Brooklyn. It's one of those things where once you get into it, everyone's got a spot they want you to check out. They're all remnants. A piece needs to speak to me before I drag it back here. The stone is what it is and a lot of times you can see what it was meant for.

Sometimes it breaks, or we have to saw it down and adjust it, but I try to leave it in its true form. I think the part of sculpture I enjoy the most is that the material has its own character. That's my biggest struggle with painting is that you're given this blank square and you have to come up with every single part on your own, so it can be daunting when you're trying figure out where to start. With this, I already have a starting point to react to. It becomes a process of reaction and decision-making.

How important is collaboration to you?

I like having other bodies in the studio, but I also like being here alone. The stone I work with is really heavy, so I need a second pair of hands to lift it. A lot of this we're making up as we go along, there's no *how to*, there's no predetermined way to be making this artwork so we're discovering each step as we go.

How do you know when you need alone time?

You feel it. It's like when you have to go to the bathroom.

Do you think about your pieces after they leave your hands?

Yeah, every show sort of feels like a funeral because you might not ever see the sold pieces again. But I don't have any nervousness about where they end up because I know I've done what I can do. The pieces are so alive and active in a studio. And then in a show: that's it. That's what they are. They're marked in history in that exact format.

What can we expect to see at Basel and how will it be different from the other fairs you've done?

This will be the first time I'm exhibiting the stone and fabric together. I find that art fairs are great testing grounds. I think they're amazing places to send work that people haven't seen yet and see how people react to it. It's the most global audience you can hope for. I'm also doing a public sculpture that will be up during the fair.

So it's important to be optimistic.

Yes. There are dark gnarly sides to everything that you do, but you can't let that stop you. You will want to jump off a bridge. It's hard and scary and lonely out there. Art fairs are the kind of things that will make people want to hide in their hotel and cry for four days, but you stay optimistic to keep going. I need to keep the lights on; I have employees that I need to pay. Also, why not? Why not say yes?

When do you feel comfortable accepting the advice of others?

When I already know it. I have a lot of very good friends who are artists and people that I trust. So much of it is wrapped up in your relationship with that specific person. It all comes down to what you already know. I have a person for every feeling.

Do people sometimes think you're a man before they meet you because of your name?

Yes! And sometimes I think I might be a man because of my name. It comes down to people assuming the work has been made by a man and press being really interested in the "women's work" aspect due to the fabric. I think that when people hear the word "fabric" or "fiber" they think of laundry and they think it's a woman.

Some might think the art world is exempt from that way of thinking.

No. Women are the minority. Of course there are champion women artists, but it's still different. There's no equity.

Why?

I don't know why. Are we bad artists? Do we have non-comparative ego systems? I don't know why, but I think every woman artist wishes she did. Why aren't there woman showing at every gallery? Why are only 10-20 percent of museum collections women artists?

Is there a difference in numbers when it comes to the money?

Huge.