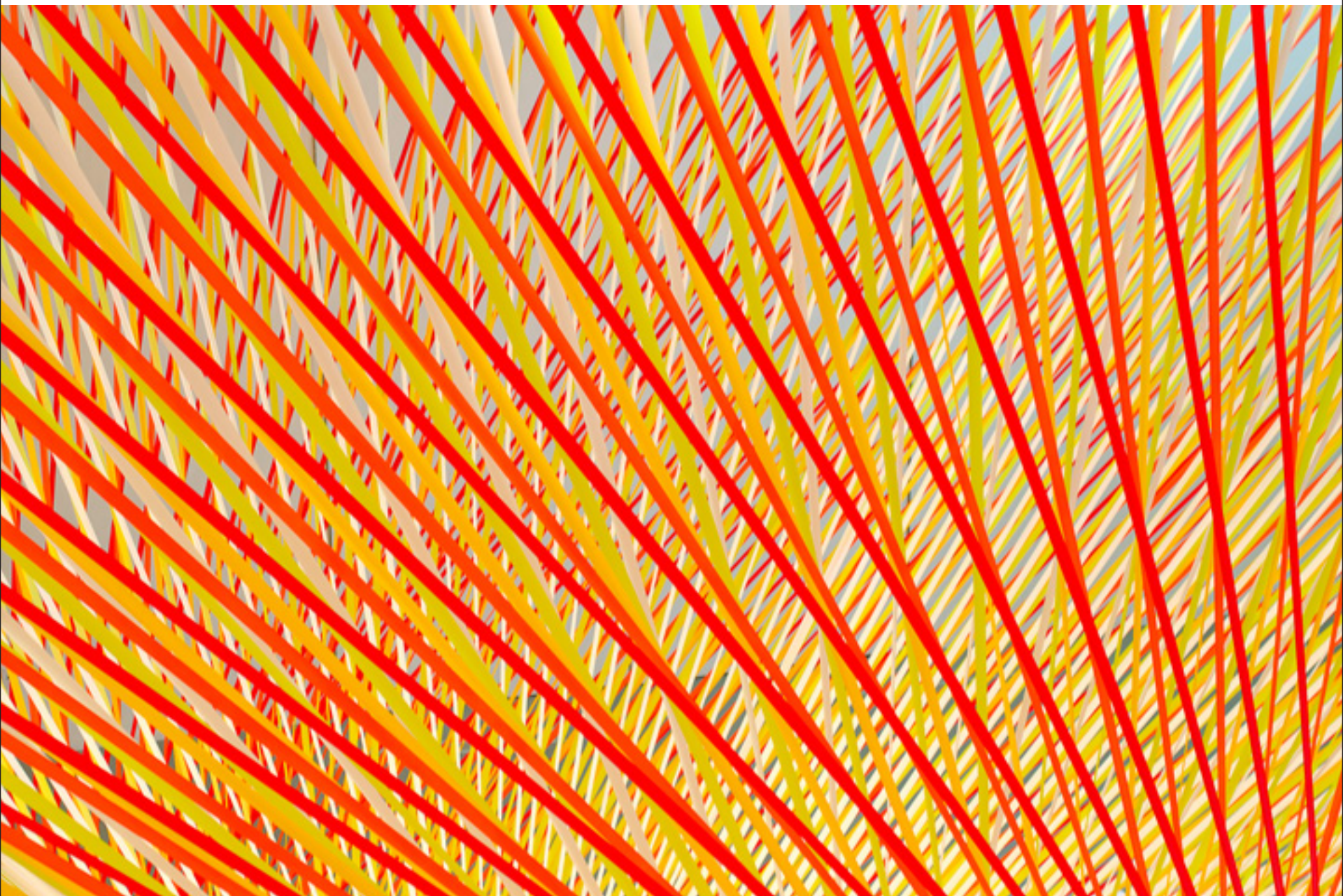


MEGAN GECKLER: *REWRITTEN BY MACHINE ON NEW TECHNOLOGY*



Museum of Art and History (MOAH), 2013

Megan Geckler: Rewritten by Machine on New Technology
Essay by Christopher Michno

Megan Geckler's installations are fun. By design, they are an invitation to play. And it is pleasure that Geckler wants to induce. Her practice of building large scale, site-specific installations out of readily available, industrial, rather than art-specific, materials is, at its core, oriented toward the human figure. Geckler creates a kind of grand spectacle full of pulsating color to trigger the eye, while the scale of her work, as she investigates the architecture of the site, and the manner in which the pieces unfold dimensionally elicits an awareness of space. Contributing to a visceral effect, one may self-inflict a sense of vertigo circumnavigating her installations and craning one's neck at precipitous angles. Her hybrid work draws on the history of geometric abstract painting, late twentieth century sculpture, and contemporary practices in installation while she focuses on the phenomenological experience of the singular viewer, offering an encompassing environment that adapts the vocabulary of minimalism and its use of industrial materials and literalness.

Like any other artist, Geckler obsesses over materials. The translucent-green museum bag that found its way into Geckler's studio more than thirteen years ago provided the seed of her practice as we see it today. Something about the quality of the color, and the luminous possibilities of the material captivated Geckler, to the degree that the bag was much more interesting to her than the art book it contained. And like any other artist who dreams of materials and resolving the technical challenges they present, Geckler is capable of engaging on endless quests. So it was that a short time later, Geckler began amassing every imaginable type of colored plastic material she could find and stacking and arranging the individual pieces in various formations. She didn't know what was next, but she was hooked.

Through a process of trial and error, and what seemed like a lengthy game of Clue, Geckler found what she was looking for, a mass-produced material that came in a limited palette of standard colors and varying degrees of translucence; she had settled on flagging tape, a narrow industrial plastic ribbon used by surveyors and found at construction sites.

Rewritten by Machine on New Technology, Geckler's installation at the Lancaster Museum of Art and History (MoAH), is constructed around a precise set of rules; it is an analytically rigorous engagement of color, space, geometry, and perception. Set at the center of MoAH's main gallery, *Rewritten by Machine* is an array of 720 strands of flagging tape in five colors – red, orange, yellow, green, and white. Geckler sets in motion a system that eliminates the idiosyncratic mark, and like a game, once set in motion, *Machine* plays out to a logical conclusion. Individual strands of tape connect points on the gallery's soffit – 36 on each side –with points along five concentric squares anchored to a pedestal on the gallery floor. Each point of origin along the soffit is an insertion point for a bundle of five strands of tape, one of each color. Attached in a particular order, individual strands are drawn down to the anchors on the pedestal, while the overall shape twists and draws in at the base, creating the impression of a vortex. The colors fan out, traversing space along three axes. Each color – 144 strands – anchors to the pedestal in a distinct square, red at the periphery, and moving inward, orange, yellow, green, with white at the center. Geckler selected the colors to reflect the high desert environment: the intensity of the desert sun, the clarity of the air, the dryness, and the extremes of heat and cold.

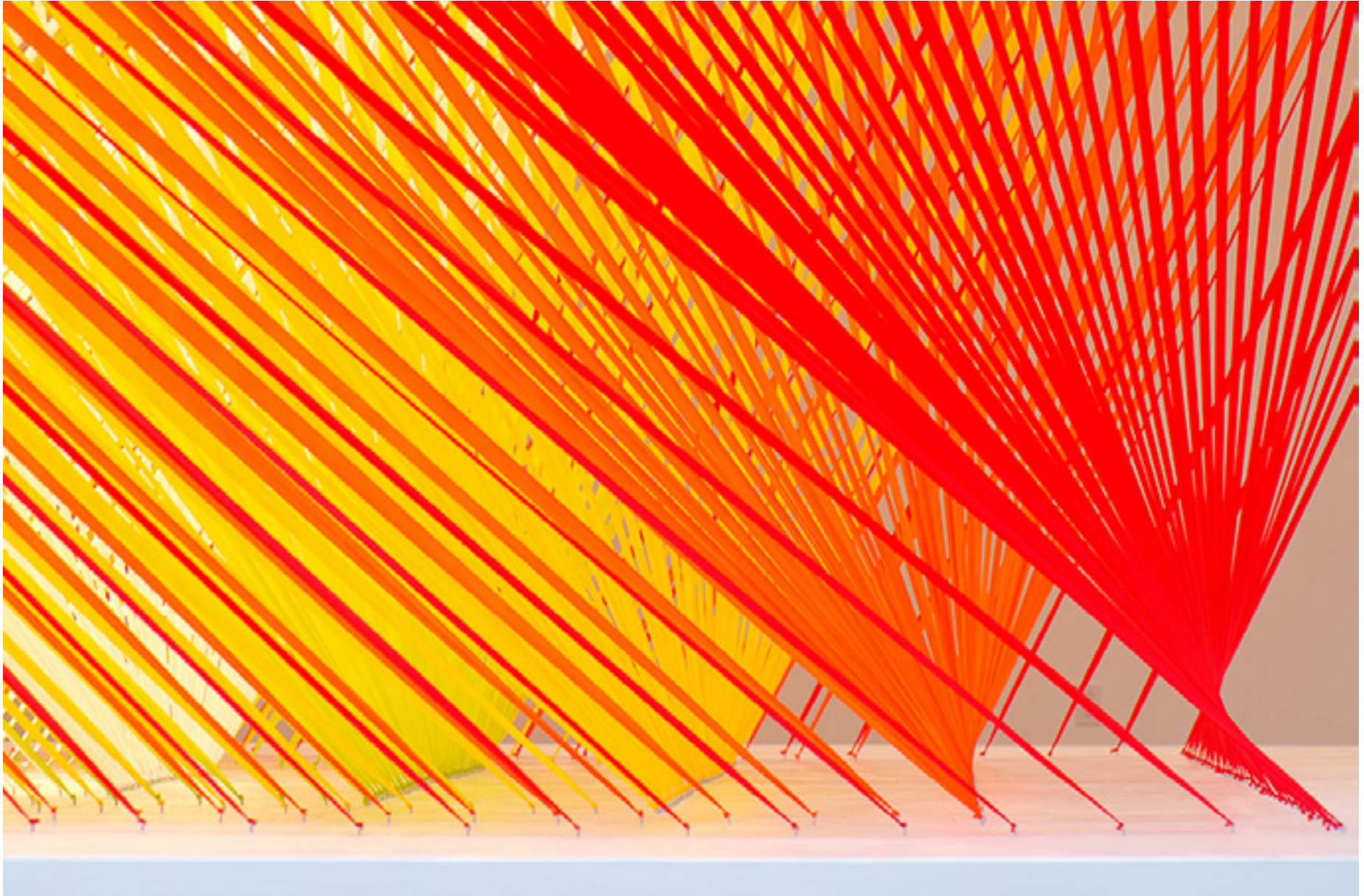


The evidence of the human hand in Geckler's installations is alternately camouflaged and exposed in an ongoing negotiation between the system and the artist's mark. At MoAH, seven hundred and twenty knots are visible where the flagging tape is tied to eyelet screws around the pedestal. Here, the artist reveals her process and leaves a mark -

a hand-tied knot. Above, in the soffit, the tape is fastened and stretched over the side, appearing from beneath to seamlessly flow from the architectural feature.

Geckler's response to the quirks and eccentricities of an architectural space is to provide an illusion of a square where a corner might not be entirely so, or to call attention to the dramatic features of a site while de-emphasizing others. What we see is the space as revealed by Geckler's vision: she shapes our perception while covering up what

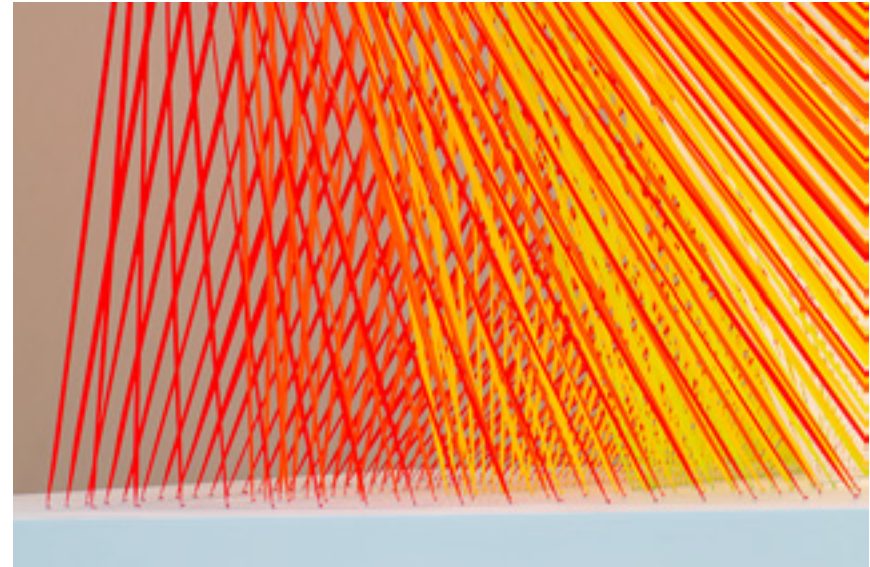
she does not want us to see. The alternation between concealment and revelation goes to the fundamental nature of what art does, focusing our attention on a set of essentials while deceiving us on a certain level to produce an effect.



Thinking of the installation as a set of repeated, sequential actions which unfold in time and space, Geckler documents each installation, recording the process on video from start to finish. The installation, then, takes on the added aspect of performance. Richard Serra's *Verb List* is an early precedent for initiating a sequence of repeated, simple actions to create sculpture. The actions – a not so random sample from Serra's list includes, “to twist, to cut, to fold, to stretch, to hide, to grasp, to tighten” – become enmeshed with the material, while the means of constructing the work is made transparent. In that Geckler considers the install a temporally based unfurling of the work, she appears to blend seamlessly the structure of the building, her materials, and the viewer's consideration of space in a synthesis of action and form. At points, she dissolves the supports of the work into the architectural and structural features of the building, and in the same piece, Geckler makes plain the supports of her work, displaying a bevy of knots and an array of eyelet screws in plain sight.

Rewritten by Machine on New Technology is the first of Geckler's installations to be re-imagined for a new architectural setting, re-engineered, and re-deployed. *Fill It Up and Pour It Down the Inside*, her 2006 installation at the Torrance Art Museum was the first iteration and featured a vortex-shaped twist between two rectangles. *Machine* is about twice the size, and it involves a rhombus and a new color scheme designed specifically for the Lancaster Museum of Art and History. Her new work invites consideration: What does it mean to have created a site-specific, temporally limited work that gets resurrected and transformed? What are the implications now that the work has passed into the realm of an idea, to be retrieved from Plato's cave, as it were, and precipitated, realized as a new specificity?

Geckler's work, in its re-imagination, takes on a self-reflexive quality, but one that is lighthearted and whimsical, rather than ironic. It is a return to the idea, a playful reiteration, and an enchantment with time, place, and perception.





Megan Geckler is an American artist living and working in Los Angeles, California. Geckler was born in 1975 and grew up in Bucks and Philadelphia Counties, Pennsylvania. She graduated with a BFA in 1998 from the Tyler School of Art, Temple University, and received an MFA in Sculpture from Claremont Graduate University in 2001. Geckler's large scale, site-specific installations rely on the unique and vibrant material of construction flagging tape and her work incorporates color theory and mathematical calculations into experimentations with light and space. Geckler's works are playful, emphasized by their kinetic qualities. The artist's work has been exhibited at the Los Angeles International Airport, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Pasadena Museum of California Art, and the Wexner Center for the Arts among others. Awards include the Visual Artists Network (VAN) Artist in Residence at Women & Their Work, in Austin, Texas (2009), and The Durfee Artists' Resource Completion (ARC) Grant (2008). Her work was been widely written about both online and in print by Artforum, Art Ltd., The Huffington Post, ArtDaily, Colossal, DesignMilk, DesignBoom, and many others.

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