

**Faig Ahmed**

Osho, 2015

hand woven wool carpet, unique

Object: 142 x 118 in. (360.7 x 299.7 cm)

Pending Museum purchase with funds provided

by Donna MacMillan



**Faig Ahmed** distorts the patterns of traditional Azerbaijani rugs, dismantling their structure in order to build compositions that trick the eye by appearing to melt off the wall. By rearticulating the original design, he creates contemporary sculptural forms that look like **digital glitches**, patterns flat-lining halfway through a tapestry or gradually morphing into a digital mosaic.

Ahmed explains that his fascination for textiles stems from their historical value, humanity utilizing fabric for nearly the entire length of human history. “Another thing that interests me is pattern,” says Ahmed. “Patterns and ornaments can be found in all cultures, sometimes similar, sometimes very different. I consider them words and phrases that can be read and translated to a language we understand.”

Ahmed lives and works in Baku, Azerbaijan and graduated from the sculpture department of Azerbaijan State Academy of Fine Art in 2004. The artist previously focused on painting, video, and installation, but now currently focuses on textile and sculpture.

***Artist Faig Ahmed on his “cold heart,” carpets and subverting tradition***

by Maisie Skidmore, Wednesday 21 January 2015

Faig Ahmed is an Azerbaijani artist doing remarkable things with carpets. He takes traditional Azerbaijani rugs – enormous, beautiful intricate creations – un-weaves them, and reconstructs them to create new patterns and shapes, subverting traditional usage of rugs as domestic objects to be walked all over, and rejuvenating them with optical illusions and techniques reminiscent of contemporary internet art.

His work is a kind of cultural reclamation – taking an old object of everyday use which is rich in history and transforming it into a new one to be hung in galleries and viewed as an artwork. “The most difficult carpet to work on was the *Recycled Tradition* carpet,” Faig explains.

## **Palm Spring Museum of Art Questioning Strategies Workshop**

“It was a difficult period in my life in general, and the carpet probably marked my transition from one condition to another. Initially I wrote a deep theory about recycled culture analysis. It was a typical cold analysis of the theme that I was working on. But what happened next made a great impact on me, and I feel that this became the true and honest concept behind the artwork.”

It took four months to track down an appropriate carpet, which needed to be between 150 and 200 years old. Faig has a regular carpet supplier who showed him various options until he came across the perfect fit. “I wanted to start cutting it immediately after leaving the workshop. With my heart cold, I asked him where he got the carpet. And he told me the story.

“Some carpet sellers he knew suggested visiting an old woman in Southern Azerbaijan who had a beautiful old carpet in a perfect condition. But this woman rejected selling it because she had inherited it from her grandmother and it was the only thing she could take with her from her father’s house when she got married. It was a tradition in the old days in Azerbaijan: this woman couldn’t take anything from her home because her parents were against her marriage, and only her grandmother had supported her, giving her this carpet and helping her to run away with her lover. After several visits, and after she found out the carpet would be sold to an artist, she agreed to sell it.”

**“I always thought that my mind was cold, and that I’m totally impersonal – that the tradition is only a part of history. But when you touch it directly it changes.”**

Faig continues: “Later on I found the carpet in a historical book. I read that it was the Garabakh carpet, which is another part of Azerbaijan, and the lady can’t go there anymore, because this territory is occupied by Armenia, where there is a war at the moment. So when I took a cutting knife to cut the carpet, I couldn’t do it.

“Suddenly I realised that I am also a hostage to tradition! This story’s impact on me was so huge that I couldn’t destroy this carpet with my own hands. I passed it onto an art production company to prepare it for me, and I didn’t tell them how old it was. I always thought that my mind was cold, and that I’m totally impersonal – that the tradition is only a part of history. But when you touch it directly it changes. I’ve felt responsibility for everything I do, and now this artwork is a part of the recycled tradition.”

From: <http://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/faig-ahmed>

### **Recommended Strategies:**

VTS hybrid

Directed Looking

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**Jim Lambie**

*After the future*, 2016

potato bags, acrylic paint, expanding foam on canvas  
78.7 x 70.3 x 25.2 inches

Pending Museum purchase with funds

provided by Donna MacMillan



Jim Lambie's (b. 1964, Glasgow, Scotland) practice evolves from a response to the psychology of space and colour and is influenced by movements in art and the history of place.

Sourcing his material directly from the modern world, Lambie references popular culture, often drawing his subject matter from music and iconic figures. He makes use of everyday objects and materials – both as reference points and as original objects, transforming them into new sculptural forms, re-energising them and giving them with an alternative function.

Encapsulating ideologies in art history, and arbitrated by cultural deities, Lambie allows himself to work liberally and outside the constraints of a single medium or dimension.

Jim Lambie's work is subversive, but playfully so. The subversion is not in the blending of aesthetic categories; artists have been crossing those lines since the days of Marcel Duchamp. Instead, his work surprises in its blithe, affectionate mix of pop culture and formalist aesthetics. His life as a rock musician and deejay on the Glasgow club scene bleeds into his sculptural objects, which are made of cast-off record covers, turntables, or posters gussied up with glitter, beads, safety pins, junk jewelry, and other cheap trimmings. They fall into the established tradition of assemblage, but lack the angst of Beat-era works by the likes of Ed Kienholz or Bruce Conner. --- Walker Art Museum

**Recommended Video:** <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/jim-lambie-turner-prize-artists-talk>

**Recommended Strategies:**

Bloom's / Socratic

- What symbolism or meaning do you attached to the bags?
- What is the significance of the title?

**Gedi Sibony**

American, born 1973

Untitled, 2005

Wood, carpet, and paint

Object: 80 x 56 x 6 in. (203.2 x 142.2 x 15.2 cm)

Gift from the Collection of Stephen  
Simoni and John Sacchi in honor of  
Donna MacMillan, Chairman of the  
Board of Trustees 2016.21



Juxtaposing a sheet of carpet and an unfitted door, Sibony's *Untitled* disassembles ideas of both architectural space and the selfconscious flatness of colour-field painting. Recontextualised as formal devices, his common household furnishings are made alien and seductive, elevated from their functional familiarity to the status of pure aesthetic. As 'ready-made paintings' they form a strange diptych, their cheap purpose-built textures become oddly possessing through their assertion of autonomy, creating a sense of the sublime through the ordinary fixtures of everyday life.

Gedi Sibony's constructions draw from the traditions of minimalism in their pared down aesthetics and conception of sculpture as selfcontained conceptual objects. Unlike the highly polished works of artists such as Donald Judd or Ad Reinhardt, Sibony's objects adopt an impoverished style and are often made from found materials such as cardboard, plastic sheeting, and wood. Through these media, which are associated with both construction and debris, Sibony's work elevates the humble qualities of everyday 'stuff' to create instances of poetic beauty.

[http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/gedi\\_sibony.htm?section\\_name=abstract\\_american\\_painting\\_sculpture](http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/gedi_sibony.htm?section_name=abstract_american_painting_sculpture)

**Recommended Strategies:**

**Bloom's "speculative"**

- What is sculptural about this work?
- What is painterly about this work?
- Construction?
- Vulnerability?

**David Simpson**

American, b. 1928  
*Silver/Grey Five*, 1994  
acrylic on canvas

72 x 72 x 2 1/2 inches



*David Simpson: Works* features the period of California artist David Simpson's work from 1965 to 2015. The late 1980s signaled a transition away from the "hard-edged," abstract works which characterized Simpson's early career. From contrasting bands of monochrome which hum with vibrant intensity, the artist turned to nebulous washes of interference paint. He has painted mostly monochromatic work that hovers in an almost alchemical realm. Using interference paints, composed of titanium dioxide electronically coated with mica particles, Simpson creates nuanced, mercurial paintings on smooth and active surfaces. The particles of mica act as tiny mirrors, reflecting light back and forth in ever more complicated patterns. The results transcend the very notion of paintings, as they play with the medium of light itself to create the monochromatic shift of color.

Works in the artist's most recent series interact with their surroundings, shifting in color and depth with changing light conditions. Through these pieces, Simpson seeks to "create space." Indeed, the paintings not only create the illusion of limitless space, they persuade viewers to explore their own environment, the refulgent canvases morphing with each subtle change in perspective. This collection of pieces draws its audience away from the frenzied modern world towards a radiant haze, offering a retreat into meditative static.

**About the Artist:**

California native David Simpson is a celebrated teacher and artist, revered in both the US and Europe since the 1950s. His vivid, luminous pieces have been compared to the creations of abstract expressionist Mark Rothko and composer Johann Sebastian Bach. Simpson's work was included in Clement Greenberg's LA County Museum of Art exhibition "Post Painterly Abstraction," alongside pieces by Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Ellsworth Kelly. As an abstract painter, Simpson continues to actively explore and challenge his chosen mode of expression. He embarks in dauntless pursuit of the optimal balance between color and form, an ideal state which Simpson aptly identifies as "belief made visible."

**Recommended Methods:**

Directed Looking

**Sarah Sze**

**American, born 1969**

*Random Walk Drawing (Grey Landscape, 2012*

Mixed media, archival paper, string,

stones, acrylic paint, wood, metal,

Standing Lamp, 120 x 84 x 57 inches

Museum purchase with funds provided by

Donna MacMillan

5-2013



**Information**

Sarah Sze was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1969. Sze builds her installations and intricate sculptures from the minutiae of everyday life, imbuing mundane materials, marks, and processes with surprising significance. Combining domestic detritus and office supplies into fantastical miniatures, she builds her works, fractal-like, on an architectural scale. Often incorporating electric lights and fans, water systems, and houseplants, Sze's installations balance whimsy with ecological themes of interconnectivity and sustainability. Whether adapting to a venue or altering the urban fabric, Sze's patchwork compositions seem to mirror the improvisational quality of cities, labor, and everyday life. On the edge between life and art, her work is alive with a mutable quality—as if anything could happen, or not.

From: <http://www.art21.org/artists/sarah-sze>

**From OCULA Interview**

**You refer to your work as 'constructed experiments'. What is the main subject of these experiments: the materials, the space or the audience?**

SS: The subject of the experiment is a question—which is a much more scientific way to think of it. The way a science laboratory usually works: there is a question that presides over the work. Partly because there is a need for a guiding question, which arises because a laboratory has to be funded and they have to write and articulate a lot of what their project is. But I think what is interesting about laboratory research is when you look at many great breakthroughs in science, more often than not, the question they were asking is not related directly to the answer they found.

A good scientific experiment is like a good artistic experiment—actually the best ones lead you to places outside of your questioning. They take you beyond your imagination. The question is always limited by your imagination, and the moment it arose in, but a good experiment is one that leads to an answer that is beyond the imagined answer.



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Having said that, when the audience enters a space, I want to ensure the question and process of questioning is still hovering there. That relationship with audience is really important. I try and make a space where that process of discovery is somehow live in the exhibition space, and I hope that in every space you have a sense of the work and the decisions being made in real time that relate to the works.

<https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/sarah-sze/>

Sze's installation also presents us with a system of signs, as each of the various objects and materials brings with it an iconography, a set of associations that allow the viewer to make connections between the work and their world. It also does a lot more than that in its presentation of the materials and the careful formal arrangements, which reveal the aesthetic decision making process and make it traceable throughout the works.

<https://artcorejournal.net/2013/07/21/sarah-szes-random-walk-drawing-an-encounter-with-the-hyperreal-by-leonie-bradbury/>

**Recommended Approaches:**

Directed Looking

VTs (Hybrid)

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**Stanley Whitney**

American, born 1946

*Blue Meets Yellow*, 2011

Gift from the Collection of Stephen  
Simoni and John Sacchi in honor of  
Donna MacMillan, Chair of the Board  
of Trustees

2015.63



Drawing influence from a range of sources, including Abstract Expressionism and his African-American heritage, but hewing to none, Stanley Whitney produces abstract paintings focused on color. In inexhaustible variations, Whitney organizes blocks of colors into grids that fill the canvas. He likens his process to the call and response flow of traditional African-American music, explaining: “I start at the top and work down. That gets into call and response. One color calls forth another. Color dictates the structure, not the other way around.” <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/03/shapes-and-colors>

Excerpt from Bomb Magazine

**DR** Your paintings are always special networks of connections between the colors that are next to each other and in vertical and horizontal sequences. To make this all the more complex, the relations between colors work in different ways when moving along horizontally or vertically. And on top of this, there’s not one red, but five reds in the painting. So the reds in a painting have their own separate network of connections. A viewer can connect colors that are alike, or connect pairs of colors or colors along a vertical or horizontal band, or connect same-sized rectangles or rectangles related by transparency or by brush marks. You can look at each of your paintings in a million different ways.

**SW** Painting is like music. When I first saw Cézanne, I thought, This is like Charlie Parker, only painting. It’s like polyrhythm, a beat and a beat and a beat and a beat, like call and response, you know— in the middle of the beat there’s another beat. Cézanne was key and a big source for me. Going back and forth—the music, the color, the rhythm, the beat.

**DR** Your connection between Cézanne and jazz is really beautiful. I’ve spent hours looking at the late multicolor Judd sculptures, trying to figure out his system or decide if there even is a system. Your paintings have that same effect on me.



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**SW** The only system I have really is top, middle, and bottom. Even if I wanted to make a red painting, I couldn't do it. I have to let the color take me wherever it takes me. Sometimes I paint little paintings, not like studies, but just to keep working. And sometimes I go, Oh, I can turn this into a big painting. But then I can't do it because I have to be totally open to wherever the painting takes me. The idea is that color cannot be controlled and that it has total freedom. One color can't overpower another color, you know. It's very democratic, very New York.

**DR** Because it's very hard to articulate what colors mean, color is a great opportunity for painting to give us a way to process our experiences in the world. We don't have the language to describe colors, much less their meanings. So color operates on a more unconscious level than other aspects of the world. All that meaning is there and will come out, even if we don't know how to say what it is.

**SW** If you go to, say, Senegal, or India, or South America—of course, there's a lot of color in these cultures traditionally. But even here in the States or in Europe, people are now much more open to color. There's lots of color in TV shows, in sports. The black culture that has been the underbelly of America is now right there, front and center—color is there. <http://bombmagazine.org/article/7094/stanley-whitney>

**Recommended Strategies:**

Directed Looking

Bloom's / Socratic

\*\* Abstraction / analogy to music

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MAIN IDEAS

QUESTIONS / STRATEGIES