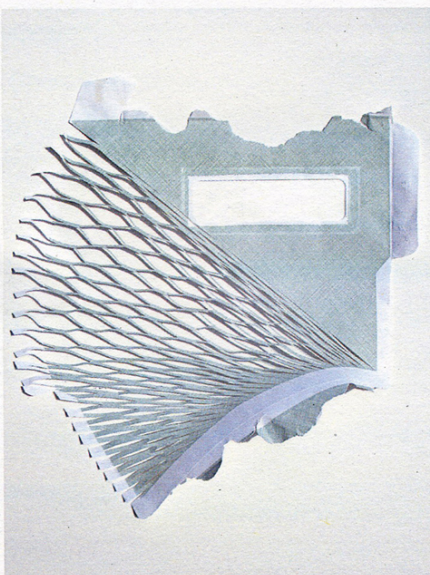


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Kristiina Lahde is an artist based in Toronto, Canada. She received her BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1999. Lahde uses systems and patterns to transform familiar objects into sculptural forms. She often re-works materials that are headed towards obsolescence such as telephone books, newspapers and envelopes. In spring 2011 Lahde created a site-specific installation for La Biennale de Montréal in Montréal, Canada. She is currently preparing for her second solo exhibition at MKG127 in Toronto, opening May 2012. Lahde's work is in the collection of the Canada Council Art Bank.

Describe your studio / work space. I just cleared my studio in preparation for a new series. The space is sparse; a couple of tables and white walls to pin up ideas or new pieces. I'm quite methodical in my approach and my space reflects that; I like to see all the steps or experiments in my process so I can stand back and consider it.

How did you work with paper as a child? Do you remember what you first created with paper? I remember making a robot costume out of paper bags. In my mind the squareness of the paper bags was robotic.

What do you love most about paper? I'm particularly drawn to paper that carries or contains information, like telephone books, envelopes or newspapers. I appreciate the immediacy of these materials, they are commonplace and readily available, and at the same time they are loaded with purpose and meaning. It's this combination that gives me something to really dig into conceptually.

What is your relationship to paper? How different is working on paper to any other medium. What freedoms does it allow and what limitations? I have pushed the limits of the structural capabilities of paper; that's an intriguing challenge that I'm sure to come up against again. The best thing about paper is that what you see is what you get, nothing needs to be rendered, fired, patinated or glazed. It is immediate.

With unlimited budget or geographic reach what is your ultimate art material / materials? When I first started out I chose to work with free paper materials, such as advertising flyers, in part because I had little money for art supplies. This began an obsession with re-working found paper materials, which continues today. If I had an unlimited budget and unlimited geographic reach I would have to completely re-think my way of working. I can envision a project where I bring together all of my talented friends and do a collaborative project in a warm climate, maybe California or Mexico. So, it would be less to do with materials and more to do with community. Or I'd also do just about anything with my favourite choreographer, Crystal Pite.

What artists do you admire and why? There are some early influences that stay with me today: Yoko Ono for her mind-bending imagination; Sol LeWitt for his dedication to process and precision; Hannah Hoch for toughing it out in an art world dominated by men and proving that collage can be its own art form.

Olafur Eliasson is a current favourite; he can take a seemingly simple gesture and make it monumental. There are many artist in my immediate community that I admire; Roula Partheniou, Flavio Trevisan, Adam David Brown and Joy Walker. Whether it's spoken or unspoken, having excellent peers gives you and your work something to live up to.

When is a work of art finished? More often than not, I work out a specific process or set of steps for creating a work. So the production is pre-determined and the work is finished once I have completed the steps. There have been times when I will re-create a work once I have worked out all the bugs, usually to make sure it is structurally up to par.

What art do you hang in your home other than your own... what do you collect / surround yourself with? It's a combination of objects that inspire and art works by friends. I have a collection of folding rulers, dice, and textiles with geometric prints. We have a lot of books and periodicals, too. Our house is pretty sparse so each one of these things has quite an impact.

What are you reading / listening to? I'm really influenced by fiction and music – the poetry can conjure great visuals. In fact, my series of newspaper kaleidoscope collages was inspired by a passage from the Michael Ondaatje book, 'Divisadero' he relates how one describes one's history like the shattered lens of a kaleidoscope, repeating fragments of a story. As for music, old stand-bys include Joni Mitchell and David Bowie. My world changed when I discovered the music of Brian Eno, Leonard Cohen and Bjork. I'm currently listening to Arcade Fire and Fiest, whose new album I'm looking forward to.

Describe what you are making right now? I'm in the midst of a series of experiments – I want to figure out new ways of altering and distressing paper. I'm sanding, scorching, wetting, filing and grinding paper. The patterns that emerge will definitely lead to something new. I want these explorations to result in re-working paper materials, such as cardboard boxes, posters and product packaging.

What makes you feel most creative and most free? Floating in a lake on a warm summer night looking up at the stars.

Kristiina Lahde is represented by MKG127. www.mkg127.com

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