

THOMAS JACKSON

EMERGENT BEHAVIOR

August 26 - October 7, 2017
1315 MASS MoCA Way, North Adams, MA



ARTIST ON SITE AUGUST 22 - 25

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Thomas Jackson, *Necklaces no. 2*, 2014,
archival digital pigment print, limited edition,
Pescadero, California

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Thomas Jackson, *Hula Hoops no. 2*, 2016,
archival digital pigment print, limited edition,
Montara, California

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Thomas Jackson, *Take Out Containers no. 1*, 2016,
archival digital pigment print, limited edition,
Montara, California

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Thomas Jackson, *Tutus no. 1*, 2015,
archival digital pigment print, limited edition,
Montara, California

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Thomas Jackson, *Safety Fence no. 2*, 2016,
archival digital pigment print, limited edition,
Carrizo Plain, California



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HIGHLIGHTS

Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design

Fort Wayne Museum of Art

Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe

United Photo Industries, Brooklyn

The hovering installations featured in his ongoing series of photographs are inspired by self-organizing, “emergent” systems in nature such as termite mounds, swarming locusts, schooling fish and flocking birds. The images attempt to tap the mixture of fear and fascination that those phenomena tend to evoke while creating an uneasy interplay between the natural and the manufactured and the real and the imaginary. At the same time, each image is an experiment in juxtaposition. By constructing the installations from unexpected materials and placing them where they seem least to belong, Jackson aims to tweak the margins of our visual vocabulary and to invite fresh interpretations of everyday things.

Thomas Jackson was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. After earning a B.A. in History from the College of Wooster, he spent much of his career in New York as an editor and book reviewer for magazines. It was his particular interest in photography books that led him to pick up a camera, first shooting Garry Winogrand-inspired street scenes, then landscapes, and finally the installation work he does today. His work has been shown at The Center for Book Arts in New York, the Governors Island Art Fair, the Gallery at Eponymy in Brooklyn and Industria Superstudios in New York. Jackson was named one of the Critical Mass Top 50 in 2012, and won the “installation/still-life” category of PDN’s The Curator award in 2013. He lives in San Francisco.

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INSTALLATION PROCESS



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THE NEW YORKER

PHOTO BOOTH

THE ANIMAL RESTLESSNESS IN ARTIFICIAL OBJECTS

By Max Campbell, NOVEMBER 18, 2016



When the artist Thomas Jackson began working on “Emergent Behavior,” in 2011, he started with found objects. He collected fallen leaves in the Catskills and picked junk off the street in New York, then moved on to purchasing hundreds of cups and cheese balls, construction fences, glow necklaces, hula hoops, and balloons. He assembles these objects on outdoor frameworks, then photographs the installations. The resulting pictures show inanimate objects caught up in restless movement: some circle, some gather, some dip. In the color palette of a birthday party, Jackson’s bits of plastic and rubber evoke schools of fish that move like ink in the water, or birds streaking the sky. “We’ve so successfully separated ourselves from nature,” he said. By imposing the curves of natural systems onto unnatural objects, he bridges that gap and asks us to consider its breadth.

The flocks in Jackson’s pictures are so cheeky and vibrant, so artificial and yet so full of apparent animal instinct, that it’s hard to believe a photographer could have created the tableaux without an assist from digital editing. That’s intentional: “My little inside joke is that I still want my images to look like digital composites,” Jackson said in a recent interview. But instead of Photoshop it’s his sculpting and his scaffolding, which he installs on beaches and in deserts, that give life to the illusions. Look closely at your screen and it’s still difficult to make out the monofilaments stretched between large nets, holding up the whirling tutus and plates and straws—instead, it’s the plastic and fabric and rubber themselves that seem unable to bear remaining planted on the ground.

“Emergent Behavior” will open at the Miller Yezerski Gallery, in Boston, on November 18th, and will be on display through December 23rd.

Max Campbell is a photo producer at newyorker.com. MORE

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