

Martin Creed Plays Chicago

No. 1

January 2012

Work No. 845 (THINGS), 2007

Multicolored neon
6 in. (15.2 cm) high
Collection of
Toby Webster, Glasgow,
Scotland



Installation view from the street

Work No. 845 (THINGS)—the first artwork by Martin Creed to be installed at MCA Chicago this year—makes a simple statement using one ordinary word. THINGS sets the tone for Creed's subsequent interventions, which will appear throughout the building and the city each month of 2012 as part of the artist's residency. This installation is located in the Robert B. and Beatrice C. Mayer Education Center lobby.

Newspaper

Paper beats blog

Welcome to the first issue of the Martin Creed Plays Chicago newspaper, printed monthly on-site at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago for the duration of Martin Creed's 2012 residency. The paper aims not only to document Creed's activities in and outside the museum and across Chicago, but also to invite and present commentary by a diverse range of Chicagoans and MCA visitors. In 2011 we published a blog documenting LA artist Mark Bradford's residency (themarkbradfordproject.org), and we

are publishing one for Creed, too (mcachicago.org/creedplayschicago). With the dual channels of blog and paper, we want to play around with contemporary perceptions of media and distribution: the paper-based content, distributed only on-site at MCA, will often precede content published online, while the blog will supplement the paper with video, sound, and extended texts, accessible worldwide. To complete the circle, PDFs of each month's paper will be available to download from the blog.

Residency

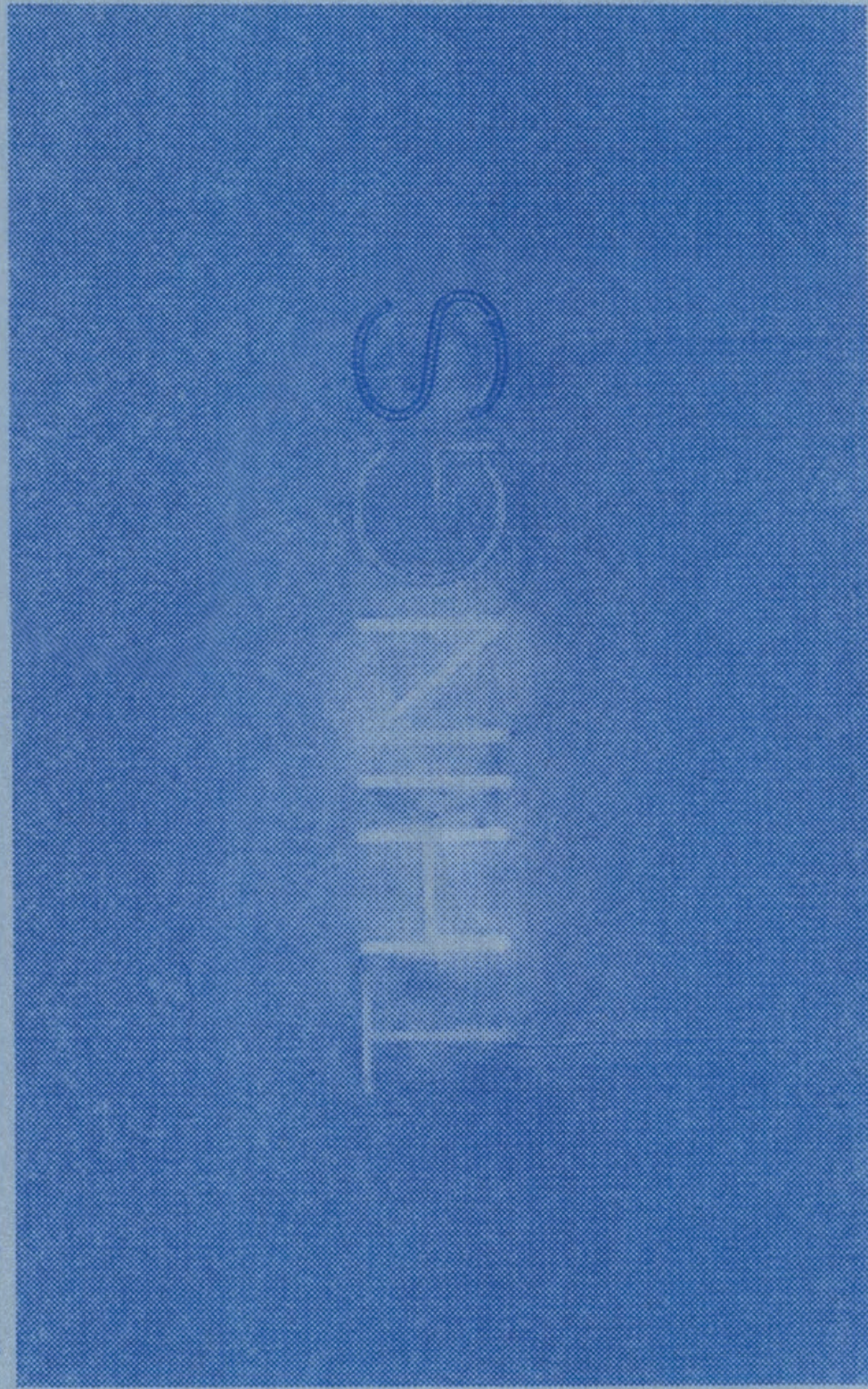
Creed at MCA in 2012

In works that range from intimate poetic objects to large-scale neon signs, Martin Creed (British, b. 1968) reevaluates the status of art with a generous sense of humor. As part of a yearlong residency at MCA Chicago, Creed will bring his avant-garde sensibility to the building and the city. In each month of 2012, Creed will unveil an artwork in a different space of the MCA, progressing upward through four floors of the building and extending his work outward to the sculpture garden and plaza and into the city of Chicago. Some works will live as sculptures in the museum's public spaces, and some projects will be site specific—for instance, murals in the atrium and café. Others still, such as a work that takes the form of crumpled balls of paper

placed in each of the museum's public spaces, will play with the notion of the carefully curated object. Extending his project beyond the MCA, Creed—who fronts a rock band—will explore the city's vibrant music scene as well.

The artist's work and projects will enliven the museum and the city and involve visitors in unexpected ways. As objects are presented throughout the building and city over the course of the year, Creed will also give several performances, building toward the US premiere of his first ballet, which will be presented in the MCA's theater in fall 2012. Martin Creed Plays Chicago connects this renowned artist to the MCA and to Chicago in ways that are as multifaceted as his practice.

Image courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

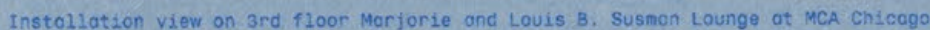


Lyrics

I like things a lot.
I like things a lot.
I feel very well.
I feel very well.
I feel positive.
I like things a lot.
I like things.
I like things.
I like things.
I like things.
I like things.
I like things.
I like things.
I'm happy.
Liking.
Liking.
Things like.
Things like.
Things.
Things.
Things.
No.
No.

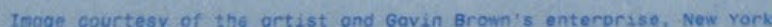
Chicago artist Scott Reeder on *Things*

Scott Reeder is Associate Professor of Painting and Sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work was recently featured at MCA Chicago in the exhibition *Chicago Works: Scott Reeder*.



MCA visitors on *Work No. 405*

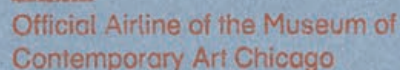
"It's interesting because the videos are exactly the same but completely different. No matter how similar things are, there's always something that makes each thing unique. There are small differences between the videos, but when you watch the videos together those things stand out because they're not exactly the same."



Work No. 405: Ships Coming In, 2005

Synched Mini DV videos
(color, sound)
8 minutes, 30 seconds
Courtesy Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

Lead support for the Martin Creed Residency is provided by Helen and Sam Zell. Major support is provided by Margot and George Greig.



**Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago**

[mcachicago.org/
creedplayschicago](http://mcachicago.org/creedplayschicago)

Produced and printed on-site by
the Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago with soy-based ink on a Riso
MZ1090 two-color digital duplicator on
Pacon Riverside heavyweight
groundwood construction paper (acid
free, 100% recycled fiber).

This is a reprint edition of the issue formerly known as Jan/Feb 2012.

Martin

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No. 2

Extra! Extra!

The Martin Creed Plays Chicago newspaper is produced monthly at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago for the duration of Martin Creed's 2012 residency. With this project, featuring contributions from local artists and writers, responses

from the MCA's Teen Creative Agency, and reactions from visitors in the galleries, we aim to document Creed's activities in and outside the museum and across Chicago while also presenting diverse and engaging commentary.

February 2012

Work No. 405: Ships Coming In, 2005

Synched Mini DV videos
(color, sound)
8 minutes, 30 seconds
Courtesy Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

In the double-stacked video installation *Work No. 405: Ships Coming In*, documentation of a ship leaving and returning to port offers visual manifestation of a cliché about waiting and anticipation. This work is located in the Marjorie and Louis B. Susman Lounge on the third floor.

Response

Caroline Picard on *Ships Coming In*

Chicago writer Caroline Picard on
Ships Coming In

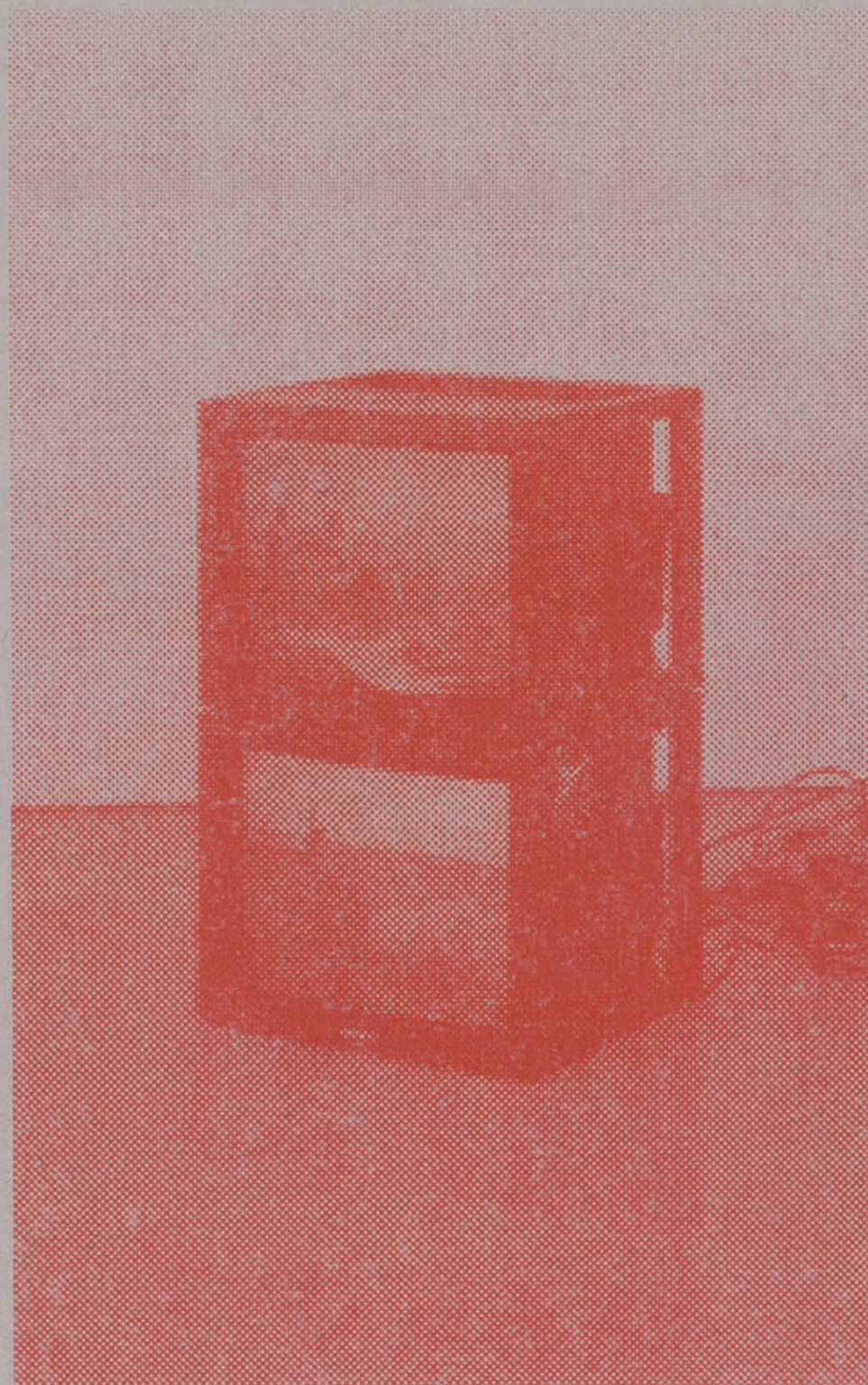
There is nothing curious about the scenario we are faced with. This is a picture of the sea. In fact, the whole sequence of events that is about to unfold will prove itself unremarkable. Precisely for that reason, the detail and difference between loops, the resonant gestures, out of sync but parallel, become sympathetic under the camera's gaze.

In the midst of a wake, the first ship appears, crossing the screen from left to right, almost parallel with the pier's end. Below and shortly after, a second ship enters the screen of the lower television. This one also crosses the screen, ever behind the ship above. The ship above has already begun to veer its nose out to the horizon—it moves farther out to sea—before straightening to face the pier directly and resume its approach toward us. These simple back and forth maneuvers, reminiscent of parallel parking, occupy the majority of this work. They would be banal and quick, save for the physics of water and its relationship to the buoyant ferry. Under these slowed conditions, abstract angles between ship and pier become points of interest. Surprisingly, both ships attain the same goal at almost exactly the same time—the ferry arrives!

An audience gathers on the lower pier to see the ship come in, waiting no doubt to obtain something inside the boat. A small dog, all business and independence, trots through those witnesses, just before a compact truck comes scooting out from the lower ferry's hull, honking its horn like a bleating lamb. The truck is smaller than the palm of my hand. The ship on the top television is not so well attended. When the compact truck exits, long after its lower twin, it does not honk; nor does it seem half as satisfied. One cannot help but wonder about the difference: Are these different times of day? Different days of the week? Different seasons altogether? And then, suddenly: the ships disappear. First, the lower boat, then, the upper: gone, like ghosts, as though they never were. All that remains is the sea—a veneer of stability—and the light.

Caroline Picard is the founding editor of the Green Lantern Press and writes regularly for the *Bad at Sports* and *Art21* blogs as well as for *art ltd.* and *Proximity* magazines. Her collection of short stories, *Psycho Dream Factory*, was published in 2011 by Holon Press.

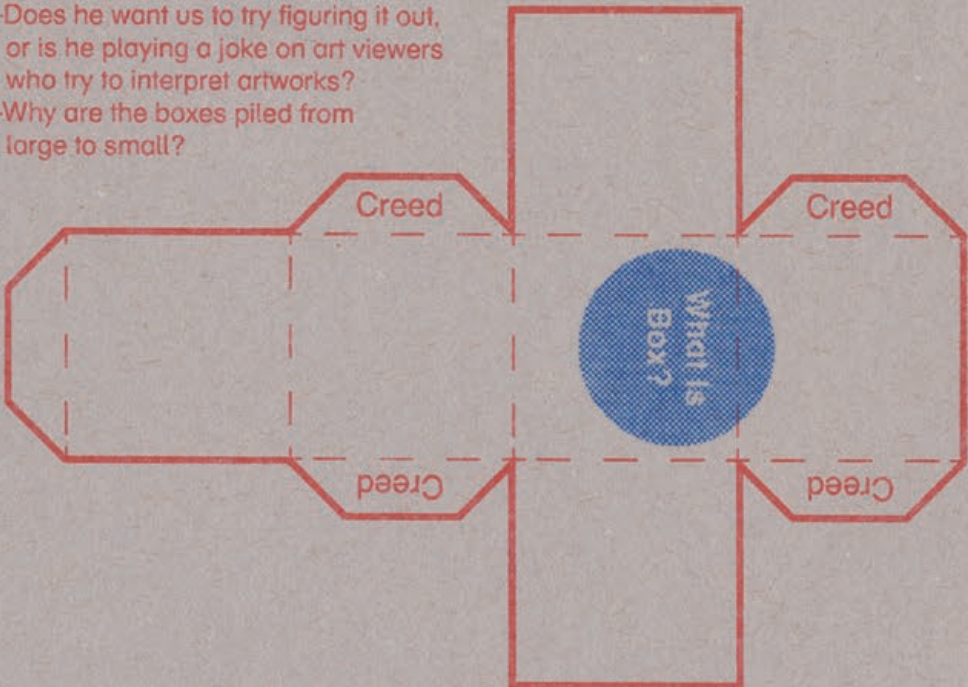
Image courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York



MCA's Teen Creative Agency on Work No. 916

We began trying to understand Martin Creed's work by interrogating it and asking it questions. We also asked museum visitors for their interpretations. We had so many questions that we thought we would share the larger question "What Is Box?" with you to facilitate your own questions. Some of our questions were the following:

- Does the content inside the box matter?
- Does the text on a box matter more than the product inside?
- What does Creed want us to get from his work?
- Does he want us to try figuring it out, or is he playing a joke on art viewers who try to interpret artworks?
- Why are the boxes piled from large to small?



Teen Creative Agency members, aged 15–19, meet weekly at MCA Chicago to explore themes of critical interpretation, public speaking, and cultural participation through the lens of their own questions and passions. As regular contributors to the Martin Creed newspaper, they will offer their perspective on Creed's works and residency.



In the galleries

MCA visitors on Work No. 916

- "I feel like I'm trying to understand something that doesn't have a point."
- "Is there a reason he chose these products?"
- "Is there anything in them?"
- "It kind of looks like a robot."
- "I wonder if this means something with brands, like capitalism."

- "I don't know what he's trying to do. Or maybe he isn't trying to do anything at all."
- "It's a tower."
- "I just realized this was a piece."
- "It makes me think of my credit card bills."
- "It looks like my house."

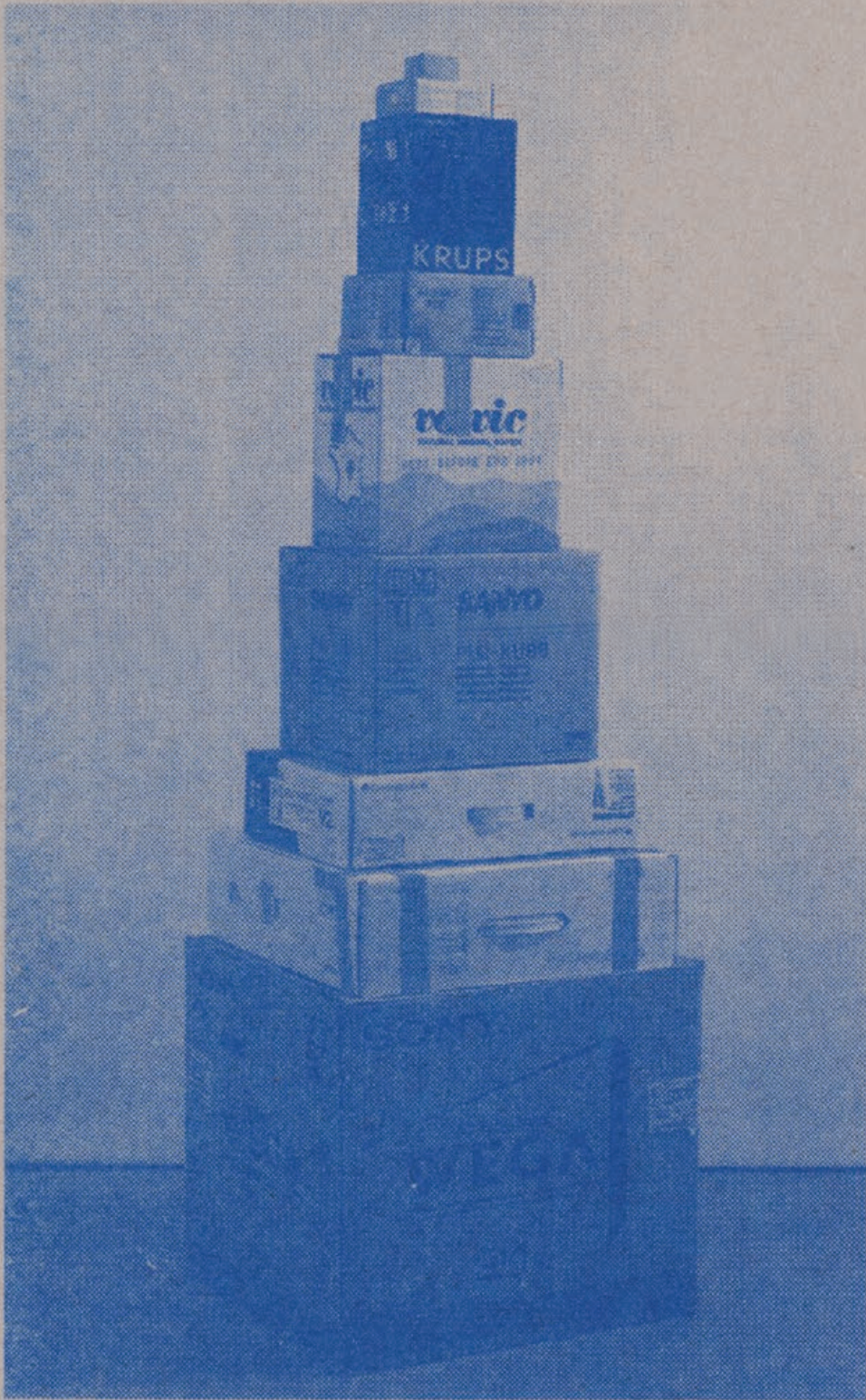


Image courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

March 2012

Work No. 916, 2008

Nine cardboard boxes
78.7 × 24 × 24 in.
(200 × 61 × 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist
and Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

The nine cardboard boxes in *Work No. 916* are stacked on top of each other from largest to smallest to form a tower. The brand markings on the boxes indicate their original contents— various purchases ranging from a television to bottled water. This installation is located in the fourth floor lobby.

Lead support for the Martin Creed Residency is provided by Helen and Sam Zell. Major support is provided by Margot and George Greig. Additional generous support is provided by Helyn Goldenberg.

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Martin Creed

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No. 3*

Paper Archive

The Martin Creed Plays Chicago newspaper documents Creed's 2012 residency at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. As new works and installations are unveiled, we publish new issues of the newspaper,

featuring responses from artists, writers, MCA staff, and gallery visitors. Start your own archive by collecting issues of this newspaper, which are located around the museum in the vicinity of Creed's installations.

March 2012

Work No. 916, 2008

Nine cardboard boxes
78.7 × 24 × 24 in.
(200 × 61 × 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist
and Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

*We are moving from monthly issues to numbered issues to better reflect the fluidity of Creed's residency.

The nine cardboard boxes in *Work No. 916* are stacked on top of each other, from largest to smallest, to form a tower. The brand markings on the boxes indicate their original contents—various purchases ranging from a television to bottled water. This installation is located in the fourth floor lobby.

Response

Jason Foumberg on Work No. 916

Martin Creed has said, "I don't want to be a wanker." He's self-conscious about that, not being a wanker. I'd say he succeeds about 50/50. That's actually pretty common, close to the national average, which includes you and your family and friends—all wankers, some of the time. Anyway, it's not all that bad. It's a pretty good indication that you're alive. You're alive! And there are so many things to experience, so many sensations to be felt, that you've got to get your fill. Desire is a Hydra head; rub one out and two grow back.

Sometimes you buy yourself something real special, a special treat. You bring it home and take it out of its box. You put it on your entertainment center or your hutch or whatever, plug it in and turn it on, and it's seamlessly integrated into your home and a real reflection of who you are right now. Step back to admire it, yeah. When you go to throw away the cardboard box it came in, you notice that the box is immediately occupied again—by your cat, who will defend his new castle to the death. That's what Martin Creed's art is about: having a play-date with yourself despite the other people in the room. Desire is a needy pet. Sometimes it's that thing you have to feed.

Often there are folks standing around Martin Creed's stacked-box sculpture (*Work No. 916*, 2008), pointing and

laughing and waving over to their wives and sisters to laugh at it, too. Your comments would make the artist cringe except the artist would be the first to say, "I don't know what art is." (He has said that exactly.) Here's an art history lesson: People often ask how much art costs. If it is made from gold, it will be more expensive. Empty cardboard boxes, perhaps less so. Old art means you encounter beauty. New art means you encounter thoughts. All the beautiful things you want to have. All the ugly things are important. All the stupid things are true.

Jason Foumberg is an art critic based in Chicago.

Image courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York



Abraham Ritchie on Creed's rhythm

Ships slowly arrive at a harbor, dock, and unload. The sequence repeats. A ziggurat of boxes (perhaps unloaded from the ship), made of large to progressively smaller boxes, rises from the floor. Handmade squares checker a wall across from another wall, where stripes regularly divide the space. In the works by Martin Creed on view in the museum, the artist alludes to the way our lives are reliably regulated by day-to-day activity: transportation (*Work No. 405*), commerce (*Work No. 916*), and labor (*Work No. 798* and *Work No. 134*). The sum total of these actions, the titular work, allows things (a

favorite word of Creed's; see *Work No. 845*) to be brought from here to there, to be exchanged, to be made. It is this kind of stability and structure that the recent NATO protests in Chicago called into question. At whose expense does this stability come? Creed describes the world as a "big mess," and his work reminds us of the importance of reliability.

Abraham Ritchie works at the MCA and is an art critic and historian.

Interview

Martin Creed on repetition

"That's the thing about a rhythm; it's reliable because it happens at predictable intervals, you know. But exactly the fact that it's reliable helps you then to be in this big mess. You know, so those works that use repeated motifs or with intervals between them fulfill the function of giving me basically something like a handrail to hold onto in a constantly ever-changing world."
—Martin Creed

To hear more of the interview and watch the installation of *Work No. 798* and *Work No. 1349*, go to mcachicago.org/channel/videos/all#42.

In the galleries

MCA visitors on *Work No. 798* and *Work No. 1349*

"I like how it feels like each square should be perfect, but each one has small imperfections."

"I like the patterns I see within the whole piece itself."

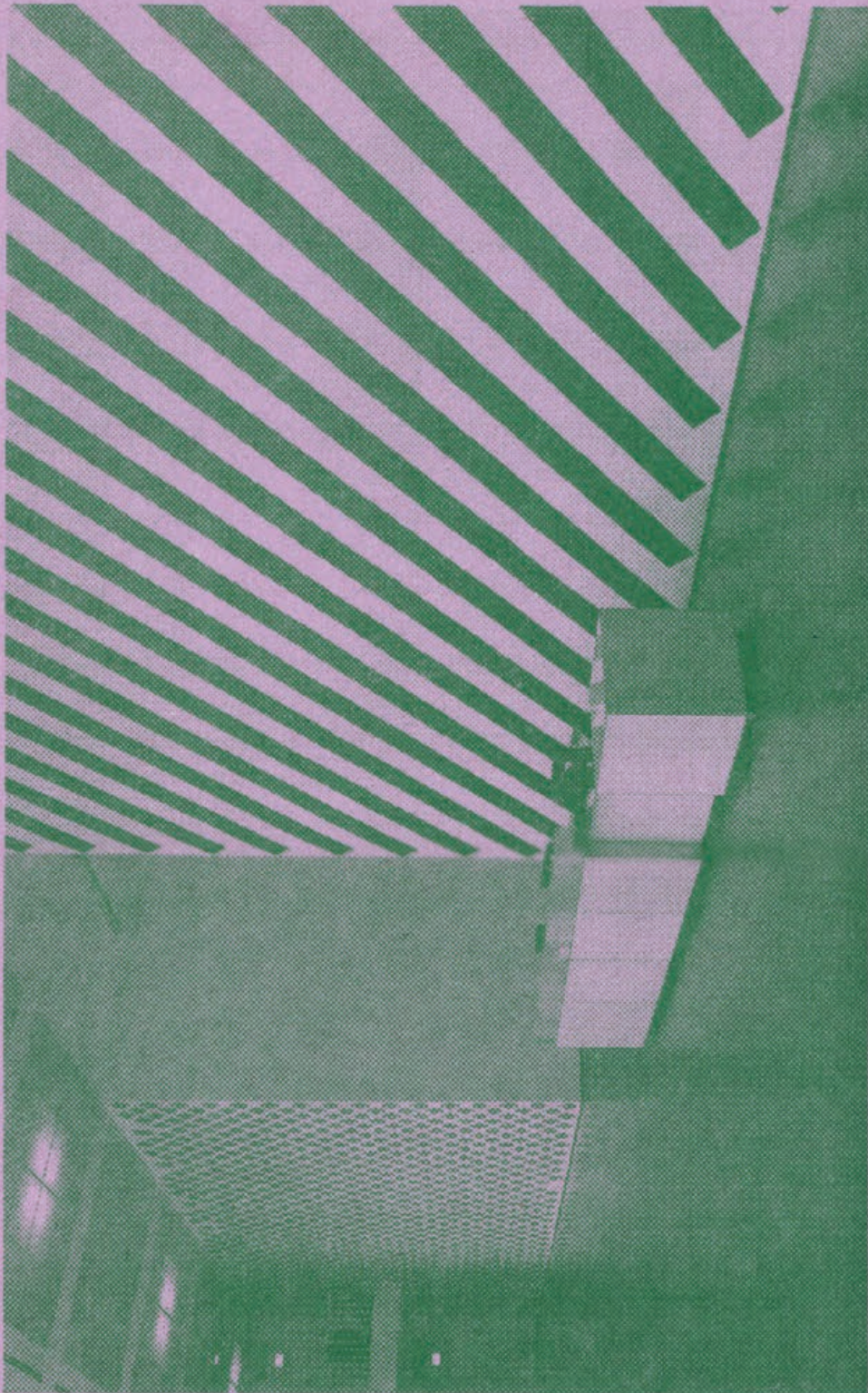
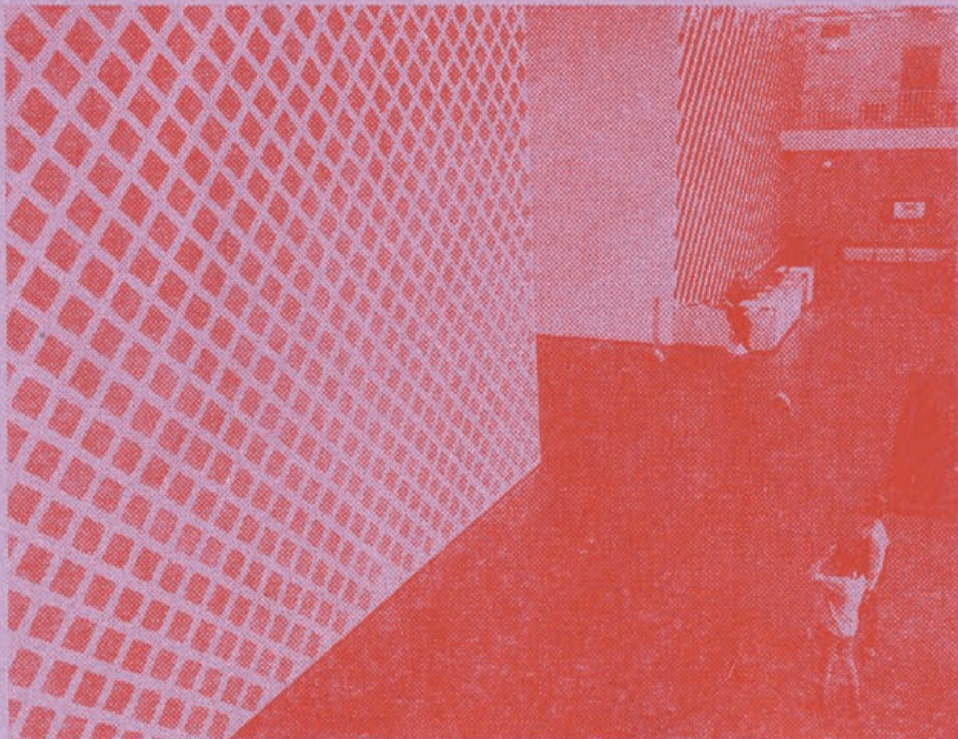
"I think it's very geometric, but there's also character in each square."

"It's like an outdoor space, inside."

"It's quite arresting and bold. I like the way that you can tell it is all hand-done. It's also tough on the eyes."

"It's kind of funny he avoided the electric sockets. He should have just painted over them."

"The red wall is really nauseating, the way it vibrates. But that's not necessarily bad."



April 2012

Work No. 798, 2007 *Work No. 1349*, 2012

Emulsion on wall Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

Creed's paintings, whether they fill a small canvas or, as with *Work No. 798* and *Work No. 1349*, a monumental wall, are often the result of predetermined logic or a few simple rules. The two large-scale paintings that cover the walls in the MCA's Kovler Atrium lobby—one of them conceived specifically for this site—each comprise a repeating pattern in a single bold color.

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Martin

Creed

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No. 4

Martin Creed blog

Not able to make it to the museum to see a newly installed Martin Creed work or pick up the latest issue of this newspaper? Follow the residency online with MCA Chicago's Martin Creed blog, which

features additional, online-only content. You can find the blog at <http://mcachicago.org/creedplayschicago/> or follow the MCA on Twitter (@mcachicago) for other Creed updates.

April 2012

Work No. 798, 2007
Work No. 1349, 2012

Emulsion on wall
Courtesy of the artist
and Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

Creed's paintings, whether they fill a small canvas or, as with *Work No. 798* and *Work No. 1349*, a monumental wall, are often the result of the application of predetermined logic or a few simple rules. The two large-scale paintings that cover the walls in the MCA's Kovler Atrium lobby—one of them conceived specifically for this site—each comprise a repeating pattern in a single bold color.

Response

Dan Gunn on *Work No. 798* and *Work No. 1349*

Mr. Creed tends to make small gestures. These two wall paintings, *Work No. 798* (2007) and *Work No. 1349* (2012), probably had a hidden existence as a set of instructions on copier paper. By following this map, a museum installation crew carefully laid out the diagonal lines with a ruler and a pencil and filled them in with a paint roller while standing on a pneumatic scissor lift. Given their origins as a "to-do" list, the black lines in *No. 798* and the red squares in *No. 1349* are painted so as to be painfully matter of fact. The lack of gesture in the works gives little in the way of metaphor.

Additionally, the patterns are too generic to be revelatory. This is clearly not an attempt at interior decor. What the patterns are, however, is visually disorienting. In Michel Pastoureau's book on the cultural history of stripes, *The Devil's Cloth*, he notes that the medieval association of stripes with the devil drove their use to mark heretics, the diseased, and prisoners. Later, the artists of the European avant garde adopted the stripe for those same rebellious connotations. Stripes themselves still have a complicated social meaning.

From Pastoureau:

"To stripe a surface . . . serves to distinguish it, to point it out, to oppose it or associate it with another surface,

and thus to classify it, to keep an eye on it, to verify it, even to censor it.

[but . . .]

In the stripe, there is always something that resists enclosure within systems, something that brings with it distress and confusion, something that 'makes disorder.'"¹

In all of his interventions Mr. Creed flirts with blankness, with artworks that are so sparing as to not seem like art. These stripes or boxes do not extend to touch the edges of the wall, the ceiling, or the floor. Nor do they interrupt the wall labels, light fixtures, exhaust registers, or donor lists. The pattern politely pushes at the edges of the wall. Mr. Creed's intervention is about filling space—the visual activation of a two-dimensional wall space. These works mark a familiar, anonymous space with a hint of disorder.

¹ Michel Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 89–91.

Dan Gunn is an artist, writer, and educator working in Chicago.



Drawings of Martin

Teen Creative Agency members met with Martin Creed during his recent visit to the MCA. Together they engaged in an open dialogue as he prepared paintings for his upcoming record release. As the teens reflected on their interaction later, they clearly remembered the content of the

conversation (mostly, they talked about boxes) but had trouble coming to a consensus about what Creed looked like. So, from memory, they each drew pictures of Creed—does he have a mustache? Is he tall or short? Everyone agreed that his hair was memorable.



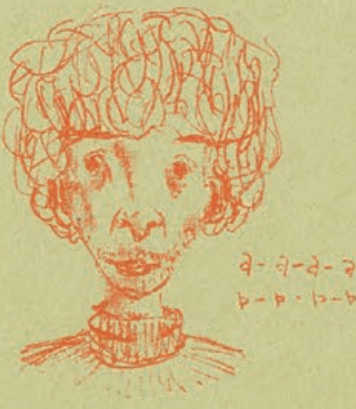
Lucy Wong



Matthew Moen



Benjamin Marshall Jr.



Rosa Novak

Teen Creative Agency members meet weekly at MCA Chicago to explore themes of critical interpretation, public speaking, and cultural participation.

In the galleries

MCA visitors on Work No. 1355

"I don't know. Is that a trick? Has it been made by one of the museum employees or is it a real installation?"

"It's in a perfect place next to the elevator. And it's also a play on symmetry."

"It is art. I see that. I just can't explain it."

"I think it's birth to death. Just don't know which end is which."

"I think it is the path to infinity."

"I think if the artist did more, it would be cooler. It's just like, really? What?"

"Reminds me of a caterpillar. That's what I see."

"I like it from the side best. It's a ladder to heaven from here."

"Are these nails? And what are nails, anyway? That's the question."



May 2012

Work No. 1355, 2012

Nails
Twelve parts;
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist
and Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

In *Work No. 1355*, twelve nails of varying sizes extrude from the wall, evenly spaced in a line. Basic building materials like these nails are not usually visible, in keeping with their purpose, but in this work the nails appear half-exposed, progressing from largest to smallest.

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Martin

Creed

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No. 5

Get online

Visit our blog at mcachicago.org/creedplayschicago to read longer versions of articles you see in our newspaper, extended visitor comments, full-color photographs of Creed's installations, and

additional audio and video content. What do you think of Creed's MCA residency thus far? Interact and share with us on Twitter and Instagram @mcachicago and in the comments sections of our blog posts.

July 2012

Work No. 1351, 2012

Emulsion on wall
Courtesy of the artist
and Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

Creed's paintings are often the result of following predetermined logic or a few simple rules. Like the paintings that cover the walls in the MCA's second-floor lobby around the corner, *Work No. 1351*, in Puck's café, consists of a basic pattern and a playful but systematic use of color.

Response

Café mural colors

While eating my lunch last week, I sat admiring Martin Creed's recently installed *Work No. 1351* (2012). Thick, intersecting stripes of color cover the wall in Puck's café, adding a playful dimension to what was previously a very white and clean-feeling space. This piece feels spontaneous and light. As is often the case with Creed's simple-looking installations, a tremendous amount of planning and carefully choreographed installation took place behind the scenes to make this piece possible. The following is the surprisingly long list of colors that were used by MCA preparators to paint this mural:

Golden Bounty, Luminous Days, Golden Nugget, Sunshine, American Cheese, Banana Yellow, Wasabi, Bright Gold, Goldsmith, Sweet Pear, Sundance, Burnt Cinnamon, Orange, Paradise Beach, Pumpkin Cream, Vivid Peach, Festive Orange, 14 Carrots, Orange Burst, Marmalade, Butterscotch, Beeswax, Dark Salmon, Tawny Day Lilly, Jack O'Lantern, Raspberry Truffle, Rose Parade, Pink Ladies, Hot Lips, Crushed Velvet, Bordeaux Red, Fuchsine, Pink Ruffle, Neon Red, Red, Rose Quartz, Hot Apple Spice, Exotic Red, Royal Flush, Dog's Ear, Light Chiffon Pink, Razzle Dazzle, Peaches 'n' Cream, Magenta, Deep Carnation, Melrose Pink, Margarita, Neon Green, Citrus Green, Grenada Green, Lilly Pad, Avocado,

Fresh Scent Green, Nile Green, Webster Green, Amelia Island Blue, Marine Aqua, Snow Cone Green, Emerald Isle, Mississippi Mud, Wenge, Seed Brown, Falcon Brown, Woodcliffe Lake, Tulsa Twilight, Onyx White, Almost Black, Picket Fence, Silver Lining, Gray Sky, Blue Springs, Albany White, Turret, Sweet Innocence, Desert Beach, Seaciff Heights, Bluebelle, Gulfstream, Deep Royal, Midnight, Spring Sky, Watercolour Blue, Black Satin, At Sea, Brazilian Blue, Baby Seal Black, Poolside Blue, Mosaic, Tropical Teal, Beau Green, Naples Blue, Rhythm and Blues, Dream I Can Fly, Blue Wave, Graceful Sea, Dark Royal Blue, Americana, Mauve Bauhaus, Violet Stone, Scandinavian Blue, Elderberry Wine, Pinot Grigio Grape, Crocus Petal Purple, After the Rain, Dark Lilac, Mystical Grape, Victorian Purple, Trout Gray, Ebony Slate, Espresso Bean, and Cobblestone Path.

Molly Zimmerman-Feeley works at the MCA.



Eliza Myrie on Work No. 792

Work No. 792 (2007) begins from a small green Lego baseplate. Attached to the foundation is a red rectangular brick. Atop this brick is a smaller brick, still rectangular, but white. The structure rises with alternating colors for twenty-two bricks. From this point, the size of the bricks shrinks once again and rises another eighty-eight square bricks. Just shy of the final 111th brick is a single yellow block with two small white eyes.

Creed's choice of two works to flank the entrance to *Skyscraper* materially and structurally reflects a relative simplicity. *Work No. 792* and *Work No. 916* (a stack of nine empty cardboard boxes descending in size from smallest to largest) are a sort of parenthetical to the exhibition. They remind us of one of the most generative stages of a structure's development. Marked by the playful nature of childhood, these stacks are also the eager moments of the architect's first rendering; a space of imagination; a gesture that suggests a drive to heights that complement the extreme angles one is willing to crane one's neck in order to see to the top.

The stacks reflect the skeletal nature of our tall buildings—of their ability to wear and shed various skins. The alternating colors of the Lego bricks are no matter; they can be marble or glass, steel or concrete. The height, the direct rise of *Work No. 792*, is a hanger for our vertical desires. As an advertisement for the feat of ascension

it is also a bit of a weary warning. These stacks are only models. They can be only childhood imaginings. In the same moment of possibility we find the projects that languish, those that must remain unbuilt, left as visionary (or just childish) dreams.

Eliza Myrie was born in Albany, New York, in 1981. She currently lives and works in Chicago. Myrie experiments with multiple forms of popular media, focusing on class, ethnicity, politics, and race. Her work is on view in the MCA exhibition *Skyscraper: Art and Architecture Against Gravity*.

In the galleries

MCA visitors on Work No. 792

"What do I think? Clever, nostalgic, simple. A lot of people don't like to see simple things in a museum, but I appreciate art that gets back to the basics."

"I like the whimsy factor here. Proportions impossibly small and impossibly thin at the same time. Playfulness is my general vibe."

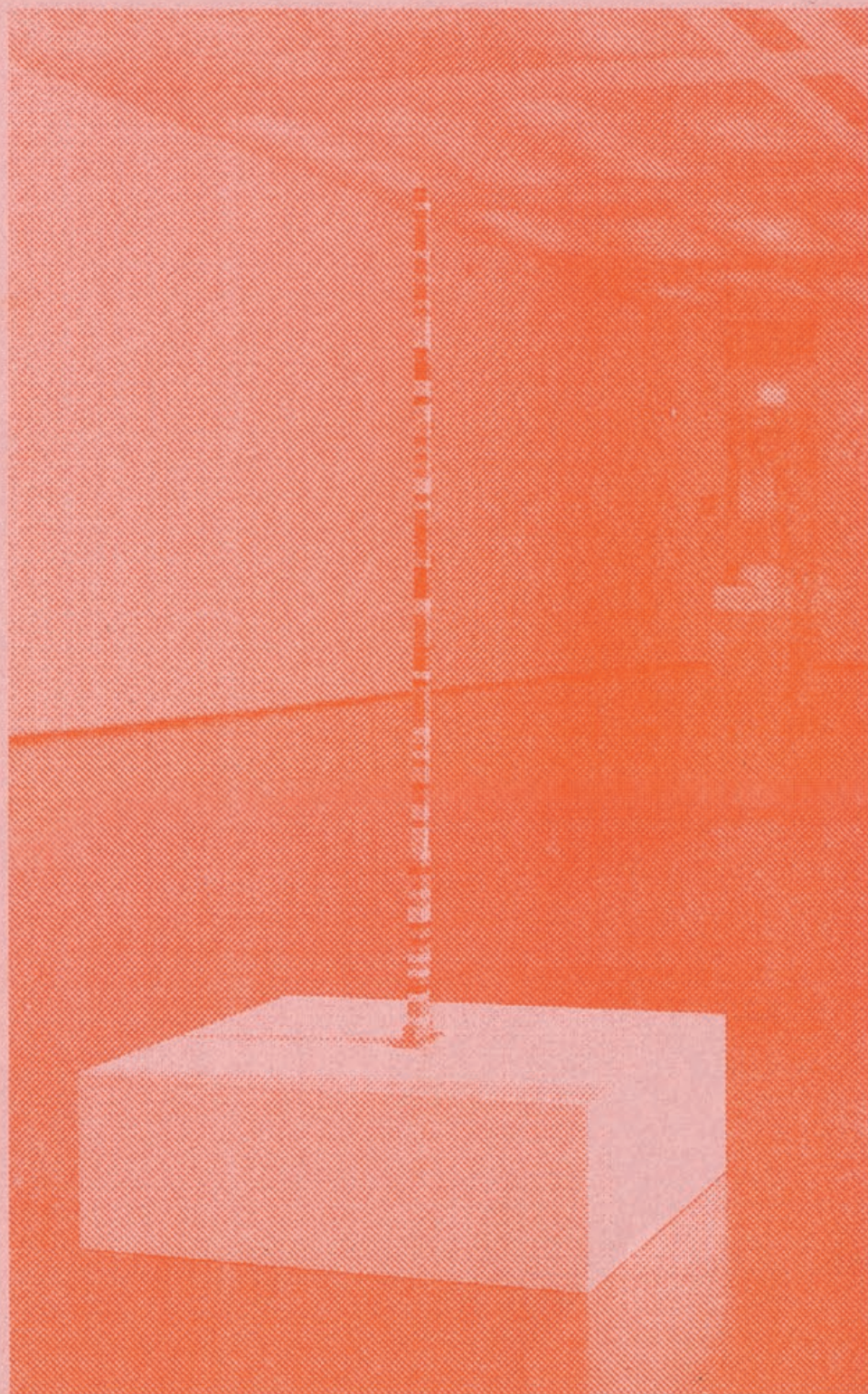
"I noticed the eyeball immediately, and I first thought I saw painted bands, not Legos, probably because I'm in a museum."

"Wow, Creed wasn't shy about doing the phallic thing here. I mean, it's not so subtle."

"It's a tower, a monument. Small, but I like it anyway."

"Well, I work at a preschool, so this makes me think of my job . . . sincerely."

"My wife was all about building blocks. They used to call her Princess Lego. So I enjoy this on her behalf."



June 2012

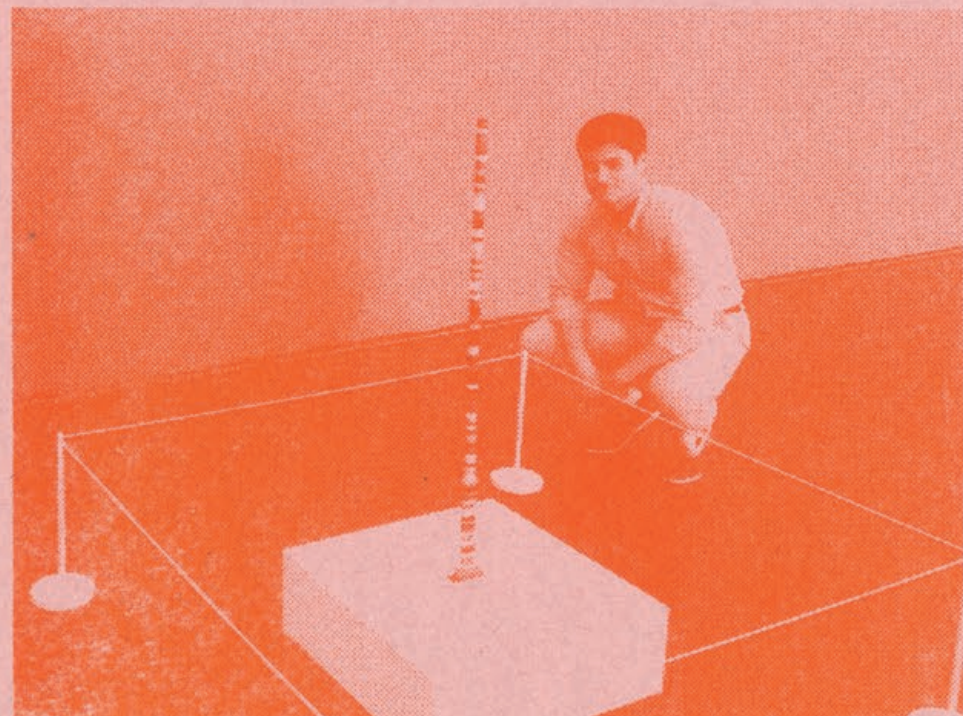
Work No. 792, 2007

Lego
40 1/2 x 3 3/4 x 1 1/4 in.
(103 x 9.5 x 3.2 cm)
Collection of Honus
Tandijono

Work No. 792 is built from everyday materials—a set of the widely available toy Lego blocks—and is strongly in keeping with Creed's interest in formal structure. Here at the MCA, the sculpture acts as a homage to the skyscraper, a symbol of modern development and a notable presence in Chicago's skyline.

Lead support for the Martin Creed Residency is provided by Helen and Sam Zell. Major support is provided by Margot and George Greig. Additional generous support is provided by Helyn Goldenberg.

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[mcachicago.org/
creedplayschicago](http://mcachicago.org/creedplayschicago)

Produced and printed on-site by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago with soy-based ink on a Riso MZ1090 two-color digital duplicator on Pacon Riverside heavyweight groundwood construction paper (acid free, 100% recycled fiber). Students participating in the MCA's Teen Creative Agency selected the paper and ink color for each issue.

All about *MOTHERS*

For issue no.6 of the Martin Creed newspaper we have decided to feature the 2012 MCA Chicago Plaza Project, *Work No. 1357, MOTHERS*. Visitors have shared photos and responses to

MOTHERS with us via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Join the conversation by following us on Twitter (@mcachicago) and reading and commenting on our blog (mcachicago.org/creedplayschicago).

2012 MCA Chicago Plaza Project

Work No. 1357, MOTHERS, 2012

White neon and steel
268 ¹³/₁₆ X 571 ³/₁₆ in.
Courtesy of the artist
and Gavin Brown's
enterprise, New York

This large neon sculpture by Martin Creed continues MCA Chicago's commitment to blurring the lines between the inside and outside of the museum. Creed often uses language in his work, spelling out unassuming words or common phrases. As the word *MOTHERS* spins above the MCA plaza, it becomes a glowing presence that is both celebratory and imposing.

The sculpture has to be large, Creed says, "because mothers always have to be bigger than you are" and because "it feels like mothers are the most important people in the world."

Response

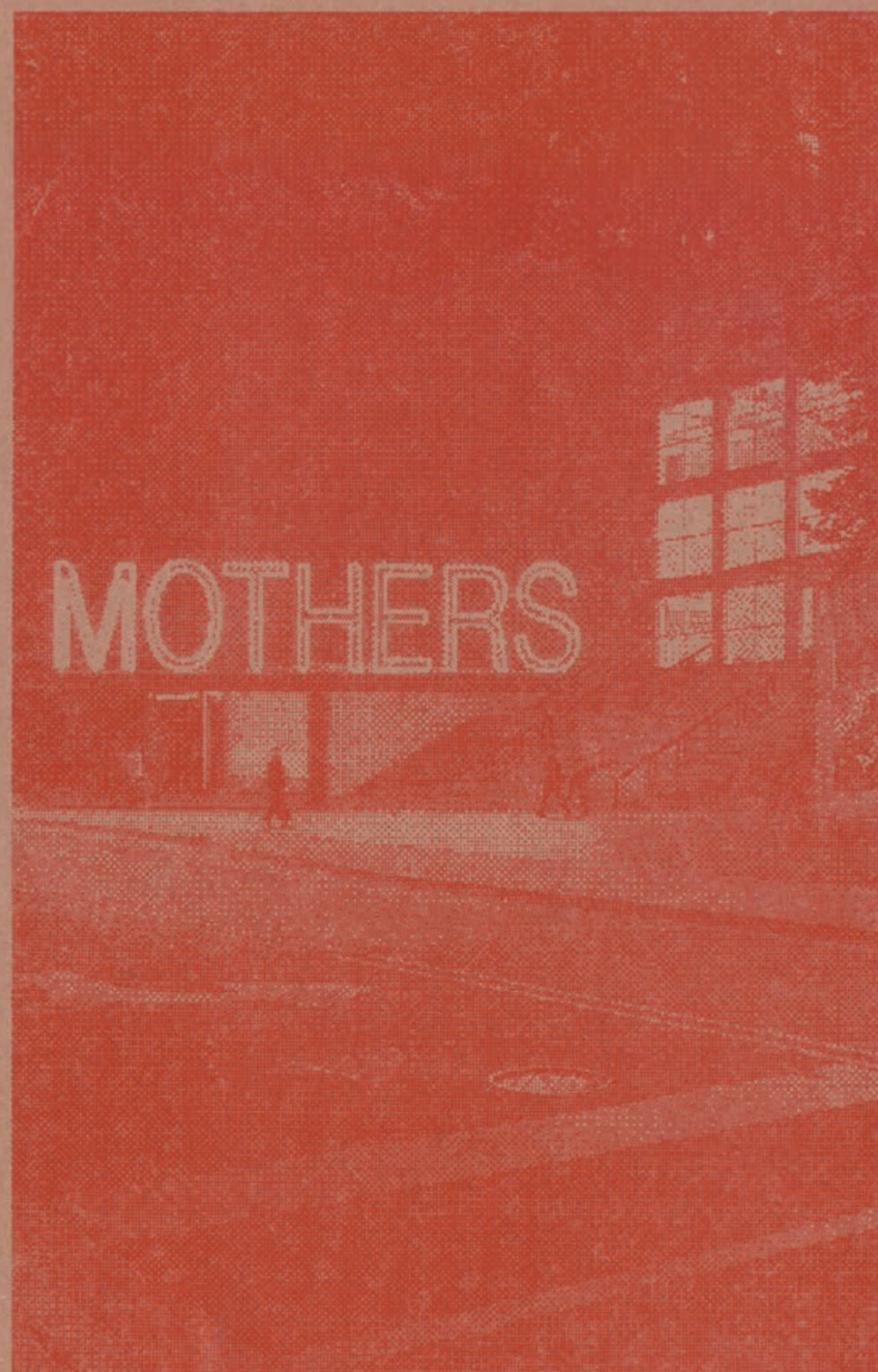
Mia DiMeo on *MOTHERS*

In sans-serif neon caps a single-word marquee spells out the origin of us all. M-O-T-H-E-R-S spreads above the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago's plaza on a steel pedestal that spins the letters high enough to keep anyone standing below from losing their heads but low enough to still feel dangerous. It's the mother of all mothers monumentalized, and artist Martin Creed has said of *Work No. 1357, MOTHERS* that the size of the word is meant to reflect the ultimacy of the relationship as well as the physical scale of a baby in utero. Envisioned to inhabit a public space, *MOTHERS* is the amplified version of the pithy conceptual language Creed uses in his life and art. Unlike the smaller text in works like *Work No. 845 (THINGS)*, the glowing characters, with their stark presence over the open space, feel ominous, as if declaring an unknown wrath in rhythmic rotations—have you cleaned your room, have you spoiled your appetite, have you called your mother today? In plural form the word is all-inclusive and anonymous: mothers are both yours and mine but not just yours and

mine. The term envelops an archetype of a life-giving nurturer and elicits the psychological complexity of a relationship that begins even before the umbilical bond is severed. Even when they do not fit this ideal, the concept of a mother is something we return to—like soldiers dying on a battlefield, we cry out for them.

Creed acknowledges the sentimental strength of the word but recognizes looming maternal power as frequently being the most confounding and overbearing of familial relations. "Words are work," he says. "Words are things, shapes." Visceral associations and anecdotes must strike passersby when they catch sight of Creed's big word. They must tear it apart: Mother ship, Motherland, Motherf**ker, Motherhood, MOTH, OTHERS, HERS. Something women are built to be. Something women shouldn't have to be. Something I don't want to be. A familiar word outlined and hollow, its letters framing the sky, with no easy answers despite the artist's seeming straightforwardness. Like motherhood itself, art is a thing that is hard work.

Mia DiMeo is a Chicago-based writer.



Art students on Martin Creed

In April, three Painting and Drawing MFA students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago enjoyed the unique opportunity to meet with Creed and serve as studio assistants in the creation of several painted works for the residency project. The students assisted in painting the album artwork for a special edition vinyl album Creed recorded while in Chicago as well as several canvases going on display at the MCA this year. Two of the students, Seth Hunter and Ceyda Aykan, share their experiences with Creed below.

Two students, Martin, and Martin's assistant Rob, went for tea. Sitting for three and a half hours, we discussed: portraits not landscapes, smiling not frowning, sick film not well film, balloon work not raisin work, certified art not anonymous art, how children are smart and sneaky not how children are stupid and obvious, drinking too much not drinking too little, vomiting not eating, psychoanalysis not psycho-complacency, therapy not illness, TV not books, parents and children, being a little bad not being a little good. Two students, Martin, and Martin's assistant Rob got up and went home.

—Seth Hunter

I think the charm of Martin's work is its communication with and directness to the viewer. It has playfulness and ambiguity in just the perfect amount to create some space for the viewer to breathe in and play with the work. Martin's works possess a certain attitude, as if they just happened by themselves, as if they are just natural. When you look at them you don't necessarily picture them being made, but rather like plants growing by themselves just with enough water and light.

This is not an easy feeling to capture or an easy task to accomplish. Whether it is a neon sign, a huge installation, or the entire surface of a wall covered with patterns, Martin's work is never under- or overdone. It is always just enough. The work becomes almost transparent because the viewer is able to experience the idea and the playfulness of the process of creation itself.

—Ceyda Aykan

Visitor Comments

MCA visitors on *MOTHERS*

For this issue's installment of visitor comments, we asked vendors and passersby at our Tuesday Farmers' Market for their reactions to *MOTHERS*.

"What's neat is it generates a lot of ideas and questions, which is what art is supposed to do."

"I think of plants and food because I'm growing things, and everything comes from the mother."

"Why does it say mothers? Why not fathers? Both parents are special."

"I saw a couple of mothers pointing at it with their babies, which is cool. Good picture opportunity."

"I did not think it would look like that. I saw it going up last week. But it's cool."

"Definitely not what I expected. It's kind of random that it just says 'mothers.'"

"It's pretty awesome. It's really orderly out here, but the rust of the sign takes you to another place."

"I don't know what to think. What does it do? It turns around. I don't get paid to turn around."

"How heavy is it? Is that support sufficient?"

"I do like it, but I have no idea what it might mean or imply. But aesthetically, I like it."

"Can't go wrong with a theme like mothers."

"I think it's kind of cool, especially when it's moving, but what does it mean?"

"Why only mothers? Why not women in general?"

"I like it because I'm pregnant. Baby is on the mind."

"My first thought was, 'Hey! I'm one!'"

"It's a very strong statement."

"I mean . . . it's just plain cool."

"The piece is very applicable to us. We're on a mothers' getaway weekend."

"I appreciate the kinetic aspect of the piece."

"Honor your mother!"

"Where'd they get the beams to make sure it's structurally sound?"

"I didn't understand it at first and I still don't. You know, like, why does it rest on that pedestal? Things like that."

"Mothers make the world go around."



TCA member

Lucy Wang on *MOTHERS*

As a teenager, I have ambivalent feelings about *MOTHERS*. On one hand, the work is reminiscent of my mother hovering over me, constantly watching and never missing a thing. On the other hand, I'm glad to have someone who's always here to take care of me. Either way this work pays a well-deserved tribute to our mothers and the all-encompassing role they played in our lives as children. On second thought, what if Martin is questioning our undying devotion to our mothers? What if he's asking us if we can over-praise

(if that's even a word) or over-value our moms? What if he's making a statement on how we all focus on the mother and not the father? (Compare Mother's Day festivities to Father's Day ones.) Maybe I'm overthinking it now. Maybe he just wanted to make a nice spinning sculpture.

Teen Creative Agency members meet weekly at MCA Chicago to explore themes of critical interpretation, public speaking, and cultural participation.

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