

# sculpture

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**NEW YORK**

**Joan Giordano**

**June Kelly Gallery**

Joan Giordano's recent exhibition "Woven in Time" spoke to both the history of art and postmodern phenomena. Her constructions, which straddle the boundaries of painting, collage, and sculpture, can be compared to Kurt Schwitters's "Merz" assemblages or Ellsworth Kelly's 1956–57 wall reliefs, though they hold more in common with the post-modern stylistic developments of Marelá Zacarias's "Supple Beat" architectonic sculptures. But unlike Zacarias's colorful, formally bound sculptural reliefs, Giordano's works investigate current issues and the politics of underlying prejudices. She uses newspaper and magazine texts to express her ongoing engagement with events such as the WikiLeaks scandal. The sculptural relief *Free Press* declares Giordano's interest in justice, and like Honoré Daumier's *Freedom of the Press: Don't Meddle With It*, the work is meant as a warning. Like Daumier, Giordano

makes use of satirical, sometimes scathing double entendre, dedicating her work to human dignity, honesty, and fair play.

Although her sculptures are filled with meaningful textual content, they are also extremely beautiful and expertly made works. In this show, they covered the gallery walls, gaining power in their culmination by curving rhythmically in Giordano's inimitably grand style. *Wind Lanterns* undulates, spreading its wings like an eagle into the night, for as purposeful as Giordano's means appear, they also incorporate accident. Using such free and seemingly fortuitous methods—such as the flying white brushstroke that allows some of the background color to be seen—is very daring. It can only come from the confidence gained through many years of practice. Giordano reaches back in time to ancient Egypt to find encaustic and to China for papermaking, mixing them with metal, newspaper, and other modern mediums.

Her process begins when she selects an issue from the global news and prints the sometimes-illustrated article on heavy-weight archival

watercolor paper to preserve it, before rolling, twisting, and/or scorching it. By soaking the paper, she is able to shape it into dimensional forms directly on the wall, which she combines with other materials before painting the entire composition. She uses encaustic, because this wax-based medium intensifies color and permanently seals the surface.

In *Epoch*, Giordano rolled lithographs of *New York Times* newspapers together with real international newspapers to create vertical city-like forms. *The Digital Fortress*, a techno-thriller by Dan Brown, comes to mind. Like Brown, who associates the 21st century with technological advance, Giordano explores electronic government surveillance to expose its potential misuses and injustices. Since Giordano's works are unbridled by convention in their use of materials, her message comes through forcefully, embedded into multilayered palimpsests of form and content, history and contemporaneity.

—Thalia Vrachopoulos

Joan Giordano,  
*Start Spreading the News*, 2015.  
Mixed media, handmade paper,  
archival *New York Times*, and encaustic  
on board, dimensions variable.

