

# HAW/CONTEMPORARY

**Anthony Baab: *Cover the Earth III* & Garry Noland: *New Surfaces*, Haw Contemporary**

James Martin, KC Studio, July 13, 2016



In one of two outstanding exhibitions at Haw Contemporary through the end of July, Anthony Baab's work occupies the northeast gallery, taking it over with a rather overwhelming, labyrinthine installation entitled *Cover the Earth III*. For this project, now in its third incarnation, Baab incorporates constructions that he fabricates from blank sheets of cardboard and commercial cardboard boxes, many of which still bear their commercial logos. The installation is shipped flat to the gallery, bringing to mind modular, build-it-yourself furniture that is shipped all over the world. Some surfaces have been left bare, but in others Baab utilized markers to create wonderfully frenetic edge-to-edge drawings whose forms echo the maze-like layout of the room.

When one attempts to walk between these constructions, there is an overriding feeling of being confined. This can perhaps be read as a metaphor for the consumerism that seems to be slowly but surely choking the planet. All is not without hope, however. In some of his constructions Baab allows a breath of fresh air by cutting out the front plane or leaving the back unfinished and open. In addition, his

process of creatively re-purposing waste evokes optimism for humanity's ability to find imaginative ways to solve its detritus crisis.



Baab graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2004. He then lived and worked in Kansas City for a few years, exhibiting frequently, and won a Charlotte Street Foundation Visual Artist Fellowship in 2006 (among other awards), before completing a Master of Fine Arts degree in interdisciplinary art from Cornell University in 2009. He is currently Professor of Practice in Painting and Drawing at Tulane University.

Whereas Baab's show strikes the viewer as a significant body of work by an up-and-coming young artist, Garry Noland's exhibition, *New Surfaces*, makes a strong case that he is moving beyond his identity as a respected and seasoned veteran and should now be considered a master.

The large main gallery at Haw crackles with the energy generated by Noland's 11 works as they interact with each other. There are four types: free-standing sculptures occupy the center of the room; wall-based sculptures lean against the two long walls and mingle with *Surface Treatment* works of corrugated cardboard and mixed paints, and large collages spread across the end walls.

For many years, Noland has worked with humble materials such as tape, old National Geographic



magazines, atlases, maps, and even postcards much earlier in his career. This past work expressed a roguish, life-well-lived charm, yet seemed to possess a somewhat purposefully haphazard informality. Currently, Noland's skill with his materials, his careful attention to detail, and the rigorous cohesiveness of the exhibition imbue each work with a gravitas that was hinted at previously, but which is now established.



In Large Collage, two spindly shapes bend toward and carefully balance each other as if they were energetic soccer teammates or flexible dance partners. In some areas, the artist has skillfully separated layers of cardboard and tape to reveal unexpected textures, colors and surfaces, much like an oil painter might abrade surfaces to bring out surprises in the under painting.

With his Post and Lintel sculptures of polystyrene, tape and wood, Noland revises a strategy that he has used in the past. A wood prop rests against a polystyrene slab and pins it to the wall at an angle, as if a swinging pendulum has come to an abrupt stop. Noland's new version of the form features a simplified, all-over palette comprised of small pieces of gold tape. The work benefits from the pared-down color scheme, as the character of the underlying block of polystyrene is revealed with all of its craters and long scars. In addition, the tape pieces line up in rewarding patterns and textures that

are more evident than in past works using a greater variety of colored tapes.

The simplest work in the show may be the most evocative. Anchor consists of just three elements: a light blue polystyrene remnant from a boat dock, a wedge of wood cut to match the shape of the polystyrene, and an anchor formed from two long pieces of light blue rebar coupled together. These elements play off of each other like old friends singing a sea shanty in a tipsy three-part harmony.

“Anthony Baab: Cover the Earth III” and “Garry Noland: New Surfaces” continue at Haw Contemporary, 1600 Liberty St., through July 30. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and noon to 5 p.m. Saturday. For more information, 816.842.5877 or [www.hawcontemporary.com](http://www.hawcontemporary.com).