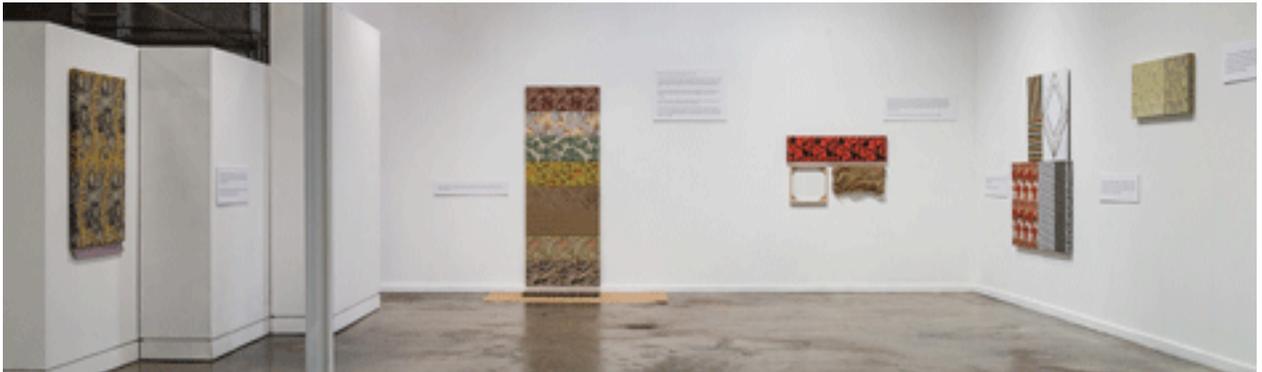


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Gerry Trilling: Narrative Atlas

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Narrative Atlas, installation view at Studios, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri, May 2017.

Gerry Trilling's most recent body of work, completed during a three-year residency at Studios, Inc. in Kansas City, is conversant with many artists reflecting on burdensome chapters of history through a personal lens.

"Narrative Atlas" included twenty 6" x 9" drawings/collages on flooring samples titled *Plaques & Tangles* and eleven "constructed paintings," creating an installation in response to the large gallery space. Both series are the result of the artist's working through familial memories: the first responses to her father's dementia and recent passing; the latter tied to childhood and stories passed down about fleeing the

Holocaust. Like most contemporary conceptual art, viewers will not make these autobiographical connections from any aesthetic cues. Trilling's eclectic material choices—camouflage vinyl, faux fur, plastic fencing, liquid pvc—are tamed onto elegant square or rectangular stretchers, which she subsequently configures, sometimes out on to the floor. The artist showcases the surprising allure of banal materials; formalists will not be disappointed. Hinting at conceptual layers, Trilling opted to include snippets of texts interspersed throughout the gallery. These intensely moving narratives slowed one's experience, communicating the weight of history being relayed through the abstract works. One read:

My grandmother walked through Yugoslavia and took a ship to Palestine in 1944. On the ship she dreamed her husband and his family (all of whom had died) were telling her it wasn't time yet. It so disturbed her that she went on deck to get some air. The ship sank in the harbor. She escaped.



Gerry Trilling, Installation, fun fur, weed barrier fabric, plastic, fiber embedded plastic; dimensions variable (2017)

Thus, the texts are not sentimental, nor are the works illustrative, and the correlation is subjective. Trilling, born in 1946 in St. Louis, is a daughter of Jews who fled occupied Vienna in 1939. Her father opened a men's outerwear business. Growing up surrounded by fabrics made her hyperaware of textures and patterns.



Gerry Trilling, *Activated Shelter*, fabric, pvc; 58" x 48" (2017)

Installation (2016) is comprised of four panels: a horizontal rectangle of orange and white fun fur attached to the wall, two panels leaning against the wall: one standing vertically wrapped in clear plastic, the other horizontal wrapped in dark grey weed barrier fabric; and a smaller panel hanging to the right, stretched with orange fiber-embedded plastic netting. The contrasts of fluorescent colors on top and ashen colors on the bottom, as well as a soft inviting furry texture next to cold and dirty-looking plastics create stark polarities, easily suggesting the coexistence of life and death.

Though not necessarily influences, Trilling cites Sigmar Polke and Blinky Palermo as two artists she has always admired for their bold curiosity and inventive juxtapositions. She also acknowledges a strong connection to women artists who produced work from private

psychological spaces, such as Eva Hesse. (Trilling and Hesse would have had amazing conversations about materiality!) The late German artist may have been most intrigued by Trilling's *Activated Shelter* (2017). This impractical half-tent is a piece of fabric with red and yellow zig-zag lines stretched between two 58" pvc pipes, leaning tediously against a wall.

The artist travels extensively and collects pieces of material culture from around the world. Her continuously evolving studio practice incorporates these finds with personal memories, which viewers easily relate to their own narratives, as well as broader historical frameworks.

"Narrative Atlas" ran May 12 to June 16. Follow the artist on her website, gerrytrilling.com.

By Andrea Ferber