

"I think bragging Luddites are probably some of the worst artists in the world — I mean, even Vermeer used a camera."

— Jo Baer, 2015

[T]he amazing growth of our techniques, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of *The Beautiful*. In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. ... We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art.

— Paul Valery, 1928

(from: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, by Walter Benjamin, 1936)

We are well past the age of mechanical reproduction being new or revolutionary, yet we find ourselves continually referring back to its possibilities as advancements in the field are made every day. Through this, accessibility has become the new social revolution.

Jo Baer has taken the art of painting to a whole new level. A seamless mixture of appropriation, collage, drawing, sketching and printing, a process has developed that enables her to build physical, as well as emotional and temporal layers. This process offers a new sense of livelihood, in the artwork and in the artist.

Technology upgrades have become so relentless that I am not sure our new technologies and hybrid ways of life can be confined by clear-cut nomenclature. It almost seems that Baer's resistance to a fully digital practice is what is of importance here. Baer remains a tactile artist with a tangible analogue practice and yet there is more. Rather than define the medium, it is the practice that seems more fitting to quantify. This *Practice of Hybridity* within the physical and digital — and in between — develops planes of completion, forming an assembled, mixed-media piece of new dimensions.

Digitally and physically layered, this *Practice of Hybridity* develops new mediums altogether. They resemble a new age of mechanical reproduction in a way that is procedural as well as progressive. Baer employs this process not as gimmick, but as necessity. Her intense research throughout life has brought her to many places. Today, digital information can be brought to her. These *spaces* and *elements* are brought alive because Baer has had a physical relationship with them. If she had not, the device would simply become an overused tool, however, because of Baer's empathetic approach to land and history, her present practice fills the studio with life — active in a way that nourishes the viewer — in a way that only the artist used to be able to experience (by being nourished by way of the studio).

Taken from her practice and focused on the most recent body of work, *Towards the Land of the Giants*, Jo Baer offers this folio as a way to disseminate her work and process to a wider audience and to a wider array of venues. I have said in the past that her work is quite generous, but this folio brings a new dimension to the possibilities that lie within the reach of this work. In our own hybrid lives, this folio, which can fit neatly under one's arm, is offered to the many. The pieces within are not meant to replace her larger paintings, but to work in tandem with them — to present the *Practice of Hybridity* by which the paintings are developed. This folio is presented humbly to the viewer as an element of hybridity itself. In the realm of visual saturation and digital noise, we must take pause in these humble prints and accept the offering by Baer to enter her spaces of imagery and practice.

— john ros, 2015