

MONICA VIDAL

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*Falling Hive*



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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MAY 18 - JULY 3, 2013

AUSTIN, TEXAS



*Study for Falling Hive: Maquette*, fabric, foam core, pins and wood, 20" x 42" x 32", 2012.

Cover Panel: *Falling Hive: Gallery View Detail*, fabric, metal and wood, 9' x 16' x 14', 2013. Photo by Ben Aqua.

## MONICA VIDAL

*Seeking Retreat,*

*Finding Liberation: Falling Hive*

*Falling Hive* harkens back to a recurring childhood dream of Vidal's in which the artist visited an arctic world, where shards of ice and glacial monuments decorated the landscape in various hues of white and blue. In the dream, the young Vidal would eventually come upon a large pit in the icy wasteland. She would grace the edge of this icy precipice, attempt to climb down, and tumble downwards into the frozen abyss. It is the first piece in which Vidal has drawn from a dream, and attempted to bring that fantasy world into reality.

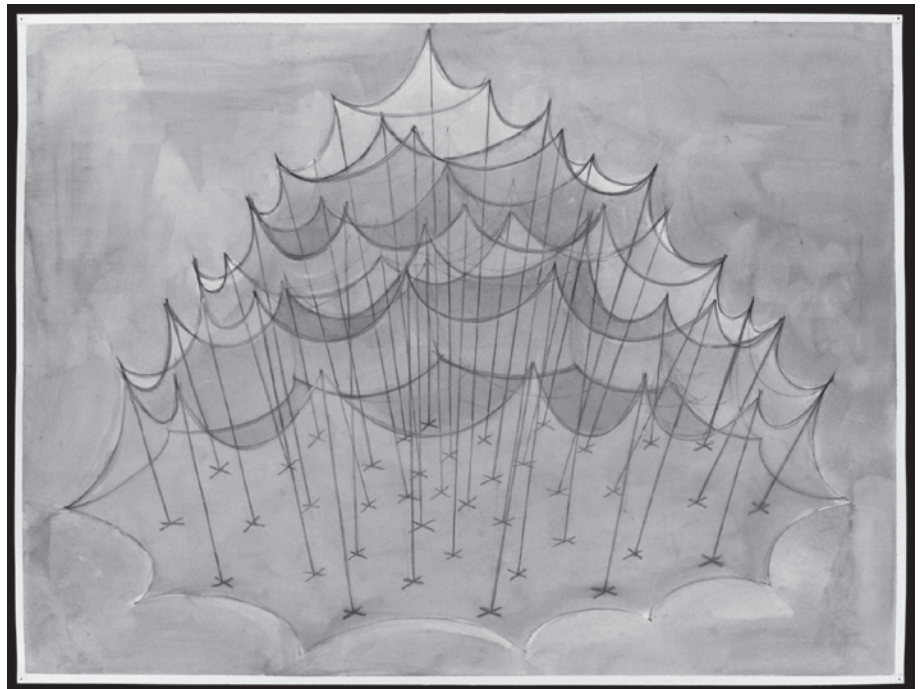
Monica Vidal's *Hive* series bloomed out of the aspiration to create physical spaces which reflect personal nuances and ideologies while simultaneously bringing people together. The project had two installments before the unveiling of *Falling Hive* in 2013; sculptures titled *Tumor Hive* (2009) and *Temple Hive* (2011). *Tumor Hive* and *Temple Hive* portrayed Vidal's reaction to a health scare and the feeling of becoming victim to neurological traps respectively. *Tumor Hive's* bursts of red and swashes of fleshy rawness depicted the vulnerable simplicity of embracing the body's failings. Its pulsating color pattern felt wholly personal, as though audiences were invited to witness Vidal's own body and uncover a great, but unwelcome, mystery. *Temple Hive* was warm and encompassing. Its golden flecks seemed palatial, and unlike *Tumor Hive*, audiences were invited to move through the sculpture and interact with space in a unique way. It seemed a brief journey through the space in which the brain toils over life's secrecies, and thrives off of spiritual undertones.

*Tumor Hive* and *Temple Hive* captured transition and tumult, but didn't offer the artist, or her audiences, an immersive environment in which to launch themselves forward towards the unknown; the sculpture *Falling Hive* fulfills that need. Vidal also felt she should round out her *Hive* series with the last of the primary colors. As *Tumor Hive* had relied on red, and *Temple Hive* was largely yellow, *Falling Hive* became an aesthetic study in blue. *Falling Hive* also completes the arc for this body of work, not only abstractly but also visually.

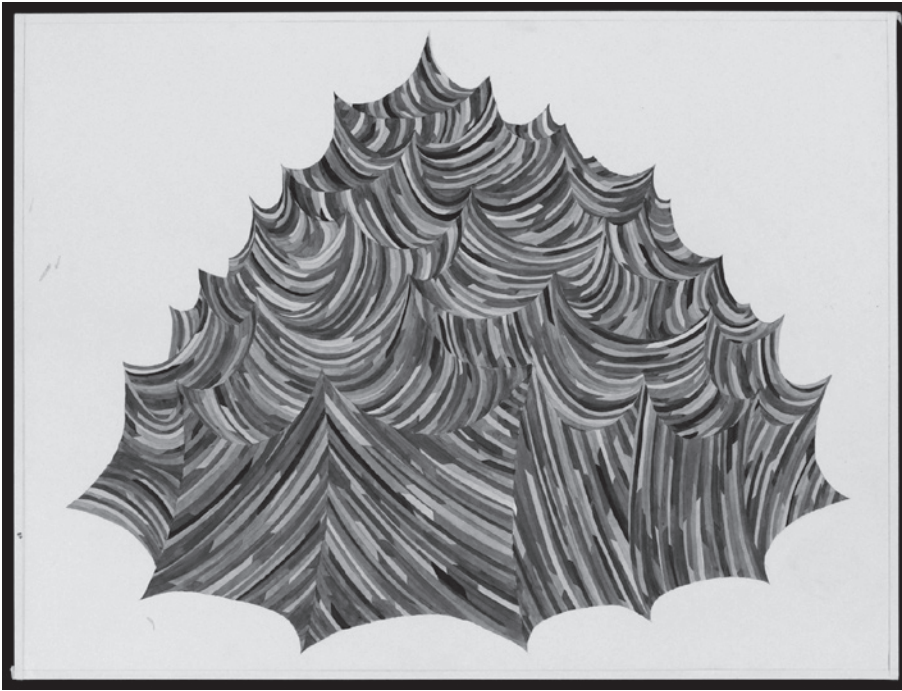
Vidal is unafraid to toy with the familiar. Her story regarding the dream conjures up Lewis Carroll's famed *Alice in Wonderland*. Vidal has also mentioned that the piece is most closely related to a circus tent or wigwam. It's easy to draw parallels in *Falling Hive* but Vidal is quick to acknowledge her true influences, mostly intricate textile patchwork, (the bright quilts of Gee's Bend, Alabama) and structures,

rather than depending on the obvious to help carry her story. In this fanciful terrain, Vidal leaves her audience alone, to build on the open environment for themselves.

As an exhibition, *Falling Hive* moves through the conceptual stages leading towards erection of the show's eponymous sculpture. A rudimentary first sculptural maquette greets visitors at the gallery entrance, and they are encouraged to witness the many stages of the sculpture's growth throughout the gallery space. Vidal expands the exhibition to look at color studies and pattern templates, helping to narrow down the complicated process of determining how to build the structure for the show's focal point. A gouache and ink piece titled *Patterns*, shows the varying patterns of blue-hued fabric Vidal considered drawing from when imagining her sculpture. Chevron stripes, tie-dye swirls, and every variation in-between decorate the structure. It is a playful



*Study for Falling Hive: Blue*, graphite and gouache on paper, 18" x 24", 2012.



*Study for Falling Hive: Stripes*, gouache on paper, 18" x 24", 2012.

rendering, stuck halfway between a child's fort and a frame from a stopped caravan of nomads. It feels timeless whimsical. *Stripes*, a gouache on paper piece, unveils the intricate quilted pattern of stripes that Vidal sought to create with *Falling Hive*. It is an elaborate overlapping of texture and color, with precise curves and points. Both these pieces, and many others in the exhibition, help shape the concept of the piece, and allude to the many deliberations required when constructing such a large sculpture.

*Falling Hive*, as a structure, invokes movement. It feels like a protective wave, guarding against the outside world, and asking audiences to take safe haven beneath its swooping surface. Soft blues and whites paint a picturesque fabric ceiling. The detail in Vidal's hand-stitched tapestry is engrossing, as lines become clearer from the underside. It's truly a feat and a testament to the craftsmanship of

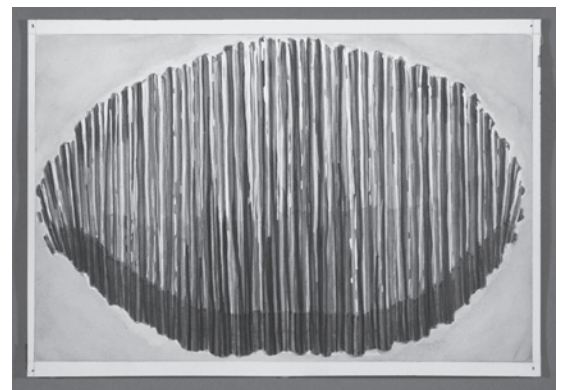
the artist. Each section is unique and individual in its pattern. While the overall effect is a washing image of blues, intricacies burst almost immediately. Shades of blue pop or fade against the many flecks of white and navy. Faintly patterned fabrics sing in a tidal wave of shades.

*Falling Hive's* façade is complex, while remaining familiar. Vidal noted that the type of workmanship utilized for her sewing is a technique used to quilt with discarded scraps of fabric, which blends to create an overall rhythmic surface. *Falling Hive* feels inclusive because it lacks the physical enclosure of Vidal's other *Hive* installations. The artist grew up with older siblings, and would often hide behind the curtains to avoid their unwanted provocation and teasing.

*Falling Hive* feels less like a rendition of the retreat space of Vidal's childhood, and more of a gateway to what's to come. Vidal's *Hive* series has grown conceptually and physically with each new installation. *Falling Hive* suggests a broader, richer narrative. With its raised floor, colorful fabric, and open space, it allows for a whimsical look at the structures that support us.

*Falling Hive* is playful, and doesn't shy away from celebrating its imaginative beginnings. Instead, it seems to embrace them and allows viewers to recall their own fantasies about seeking refuge. It asks its audience to reconsider if that space is in fact a sanctuary or instead a disorienting catalyst towards rediscovery. It allows us to closely examine our foundations, however simple, and take strength in their resilience. At its simplest, *Falling Hive* is a beautiful study of color, texture, textiles, and architecture. Vidal extends herself as an artist, comfortable moving between mediums to make her vision a reality; it is the nuances she creates that help make *Falling Hive* so successful. The installation depicts a story of growth, and discovery, and inspires audiences to embark on their own adventure.

Mary Caitlin Greenwood is an art critic and journalist, living and working in Austin, Texas.



*Study for Falling Hive: The Pit*, gouache on paper, 7" x 10", 2012.

# MONICA VIDAL

*Lives and works in Houston, TX*

## EDUCATION

- 1999 MFA, Tyler School of Art, Temple University,  
Philadelphia, PA  
1996 BFA, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *Falling Hive*, Women & Their Work, Austin, TX  
*Temple Hive*, Living Arts Center, Tulsa, OK  
2012 *Tumor and Temple*, Lawrence Art Center, Lawrence, KS  
2011 *Temple Hive*, Box 13 ArtSpace, Houston, TX  
2010 *Works on Paper*, Menil Bookstore Salon, Houston, TX  
2009 *Blow Up Heart*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX  
2006 *No One Knows About These Places*, The Studio Gallery,  
Houston, TX  
2001 *Introducing Orilage*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *Steamrolled II: Wonderland*, Gallery M2, Houston, TX  
2011 *Construct*, Brazos Gallery, Richland College, Dallas, TX  
2010 *Construct*, Art Depot, Lubbock, TX  
2008 *Dis, Dat, Deez and Doz*, The Joanna, Houston, TX  
*Parachutists are the Loneliest People*, The Joanna,  
Houston, TX  
2007 *Expo 2007*, 500X Gallery, Dallas, TX  
2006 *Drawing Inside/Out*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX  
*New American Talent 21*, Arthouse at the Jones Center,  
Austin, TX  
2005 *Long Division*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX  
*Amarillo Biennial 000: Drawing*, Amarillo Museum of Art,  
Amarillo, TX  
2004 *Monica Vidal and Paul Booker*, Dunn and Brown  
Contemporary, Dallas, TX  
*New American Talent 10*, Arthouse at the Jones Center,  
Austin, TX  
*Registration Marks*, Galveston Art Center, TX  
2002 *SNAP*, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, TX  
*Fully Cornered*, Petite L.G., Houston, TX

## RESIDENCIES

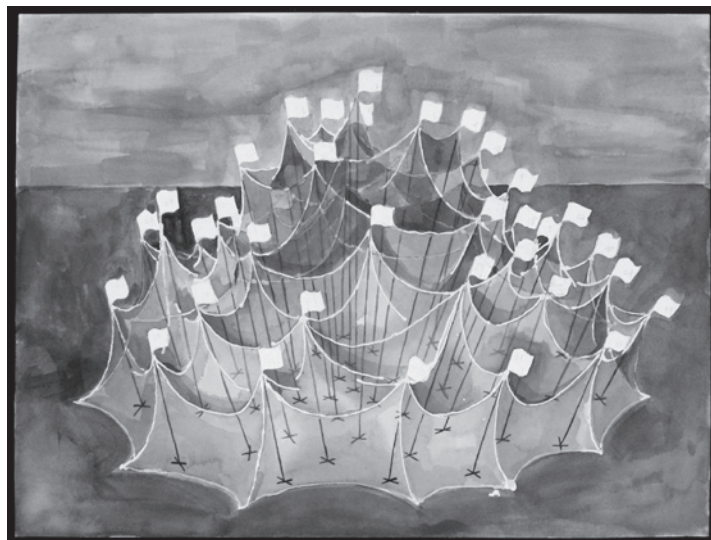
- 2010 Summer Session, Art 342, Fort Collins, CO

## VISITING ARTIST

- 2010 Art Department, Stephen F. Austin University,  
Nacogdoches, TX

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2011 Hancock, Hank, *Box 13 Brings a Snuggly Temple-Fortress, A Stinking Kenmore Icebox and a Horror Show*. Houston Press, Houston, TX, 3 October 2011  
Terranova, Charissa, *Construct: Brazos Gallery*, Art and Culture Magazine, DFW, April 2011  
2009 Schulze, Troy, *Space Invasion*. Houston Press, Houston, TX, 8 December 2009  
2008 Rhodes, Dusti, *Joannaversary: Parachutists Are the Loneliest People*. Houston Press, Houston, TX, 23 July 2008  
2006 Klaasmeyer, Kelley, *Capsule Reviews*. Houston Press, Houston, TX, 26 June 2006  
Thomas, Kelly Devine, *Show and Tell: Louise Bourgeois at her Sunday Salon*, ARTnews, June 2006  
2005 Faingold, Scott, *Art by Numbers*. Houston Press, Houston, TX, 3 February 2005  
2002 Kutner, Janet, *Quick Draw*. The Dallas Morning News, Dallas, TX, ArtsDay, 30 March 2002, 12C  
2001 Davenport, Bill, *Monica Vidal: Introducing Orilage*, Glasstire: Tire Iron #24, 2 September 2001



*Study for Falling Hive: Concept with Flags*,  
gouache on paper, 12" x 16", 2012.



*Falling Hive: Gallery View Detail, fabric, metal and wood, 9' x 16' x 14', 2013. Photo by Ben Aqua.*

## Women & Their Work

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Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 35th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,869 artists in 281 visual art exhibitions, 120 music, dance and theater events, 14 film festivals, 23 literary readings and 491 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, the New York Times, ArtForum and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from

the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 950 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



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Thanks to photographer Ben Aqua and BAH! Design. This publication is supported in part by the Andy Warhol Foundation.

