

## STUDIO CHECK



# Aaron Curry

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARAH TRIGG

IN THE LOS ANGELES neighborhood of Beachwood Canyon, just beneath the propped-up Hollywood sign, flatness is being reworked in three dimensions in the studio of Aaron Curry. Alternating between large-scale sculptures, collages, and installations with Day-Glo colors and graphic patterns, the artist has a sense of form that stems from modernist masters such as Picasso and Miró. Born in San Antonio in 1972, Curry started as a painter at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and then—inspired by the exhibition “Helter Skelter: LA Art in the 1990s” at the Museum of Contem-

porary Art, Los Angeles—moved to the West Coast to study with Jim Shaw, Mike Kelley, Liz Larner, and John Baldessari.

Two years ago Curry and his wife, Jennifer Chbeir, purchased a home that had been divided into several apartments. Since then, the couple has been restoring it to its original state: A residence with a sculptor’s studio attached. “The cabin was built by a French screenwriter in 1919, and a few years later, this sculptor from Italy—Salvatore Cartaino Scarpitta—bought it, and he built this studio in 1927,” Curry explains. “His son, Salvatore Scarpitta, actually showed at

Leo Castelli, and Marianne Boesky is showing some of his work now. He sculpted Marlene Dietrich for a movie here.”

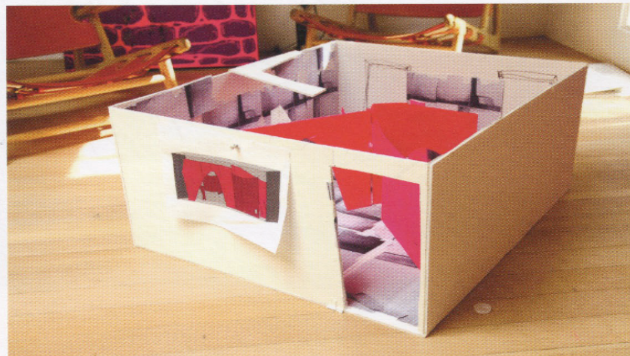
Curry maintains another studio in the Warehouse District, where he has a wood shop, and a third in East L.A., where he produces his wallpaper works. Still, the artist enjoys the intimacy of making art where he lives. “I always wanted a house where I could work at home,” he says. “I used to make these huge paintings and I would move the coffee table and paint them in front of the television.” Curry’s work is on view at Michael Werner in New York from May 1 through June 23.



**PRINTED MATTER**  
 "These are some of the magazine clippings and source material that I use for making collages. I've been collecting images for years now. If I see an image in a magazine or a book that resonates, I put it aside. When I'm working on collages, I like to have as many images around as possible. Sometimes I'll cut a hole in an image and won't use it till two years later when I find its match."



**EXHIBITION MODEL**  
 "This is for my show at Michael Werner. The walls, floor, and ceiling will be wallpapered. There will be paper collages that I have photographed and turned into silkscreens and printed on cardboard. I'm also working on cardboard collages that I'll cut out and sink into the wall. Some of the sculptures will be printed with the same material so they will disappear, like camouflage."



**LIBRARY/OFFICE**  
 "I often take breaks to go back and forth between mediums. I like to keep my source material around so my ideas can flow. I'm a bit of an image junkie and a book collector. When a body of work starts to develop, I gather things that are resonating for me. I probably spend as much time looking through books as I do painting or sculpting."



**MAQUETTE**  
 "This is a maquette for one of the three outdoor steel sculptures I'm working on for the High Museum in Atlanta, all painted in fluorescent colors. I grew up skateboarding and that's where I was first influenced by that kind of color. When I moved to Chicago, I discovered Peter Saul, who has had a big influence on me, as well as the Chicago Imagists. They all used bright colors. This thing will weigh about 1,000 pounds, with rivets and patterns I'm pulling from World War I tanks. I enjoy the paradox that it's this really heavy material, but then painted with this artificial color that makes it feel like rubber or plastic."

**GUITAR EQUIPMENT**  
 "I collect guitars. My first stab at making a sculpture was to take guitar parts and amplifiers and do these chord patterns that were really formal. They would feed back into the amps to create noise. Then I realized I was trying to get them to perform in a way that wasn't necessary. When I started going back into the history of sculpture and looking at artists like Barbara Hepworth and Rodin, I realized you could just walk around a sculpture; it activates itself. I didn't really want it to make noise. I was into its formal qualities."

**COLORED WOOD**  
 "These are all samples for working out color patterns. They're made of plywood that has been stained with color. They have this sort of playful trompe l'oeil effect because of the faux wood grain, drawn on a graphic tablet, and silkscreened on top. I did a ton of samples to try to figure out different methods."