

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Francesca Gabbiani: The Shapes*  
November 3 – December 29, 2012  
Opening reception: November 3, 6 – 8pm  
Artist talk will begin at 7pm

Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *The Shapes*, an exhibition of new work by Francesca Gabbiani. This is the artist's fourth solo exhibition at Lora Reynolds Gallery.

The show includes drawings on mylar and rice paper, a rug, and several of Gabbiani's signature cut-paper collages.

Francesca Gabbiani's collages are made up of hundreds of layered pieces of intricately cut paper. The depth afforded by so many small pieces of paper is fracturing and sometimes disorienting. Neither two- nor three-dimensional space is able to contain Gabbiani's work; the shadows from the edges of each layer of colorful paper force her flat pieces into dimensionality. This makes them feel alchemical, like the tiny shards of paper in a Gabbiani composition describe forms molecule by molecule. The result is uncanny. Familiar imagery becomes strange but not unreal—instead, hyperreal.

The motifs in this exhibition arise from Gabbiani's interest in utopia—an interest rooted in fact rather than conjecture. Instead of imagery from literary utopias, she focuses on actual spaces and forms—ziggurats, geodesic spheres, tree houses—that are emblematic of transcendence, idealism, escapism, or perfection.

The stairway in Gabbiani's work ascends toward the sky, each brick rendered in cut paper. This is an image of the Ziggurat of Ur, a massive pyramid temple from the 21st century BC that remains intact. Ziggurats were designed to connect heaven and earth; gods were believed to live in the shrines at their summits. Although in ancient times only high priests were allowed to climb these holy structures, today they are open to tourists. A ziggurat is a physical space with a long history of religious transcendence, accessible to anyone.

Gabbiani's spiked sphere collages are intense visual experiences; in *Shape (1)* an electric blue sphere glows against a bright red ground. Although polyhedra like this are emblematic of perfection across many disciplines (e.g. mathematics, physics, chemistry), Gabbiani's polyhedra are specifically inspired by the geodesic dome, an architectural structure attributed to Buckminster Fuller. The centerpiece of Epcot at Disney World is a geodesic sphere called Spaceship Earth. The utopian brainchild of Walt Disney, Epcot is an acronym of Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. Although Epcot never became the city of 20,000 people Mr. Disney envisioned, Spaceship Earth remains a symbol of a model community testing innovative city and social planning.

In the tree house collages, dense webs of leafless branches engulf and penetrate fluorescent blue dwellings. Tree houses enable escapism by putting physical distance between children at play and the world grown-ups live in. Or in the case of the Taylor Camp, an anti-establishment hippie community active in 1970s Hawaii, tree houses allowed camp organizers to circumvent the necessity of acquiring permits for building homes on the ground. Whether used for innocent childhood self-discovery or experiments in adult social organization, tree houses are symbols of idealism.

Plato's *Republic* and Huxley's *Island* are thick with suggestions about what the perfect world could look like. Gabbiani, however, is less interested in hypotheticals than in physical spaces and objects in the real world that approach ideality. The utopian spaces she is inspired by offer meditative respite in the face of an otherwise flawed world.

Gabbiani hunted intensively for real, physical utopias and then painstakingly recreated what she found by cutting and collaging hundreds of minuscule pieces of paper. Her practice ranks rigor and labor over postulation. For Francesca Gabbiani, utopian transcendence is not only a thing of fantasy. Hard work and perseverance are the keys to the next level of reality.

Francesca Gabbiani was born in Montreal in 1965, grew up in Geneva, and lives and works in Los Angeles. Her work was just shown in the 2nd Mardin Biennial 2012 in Turkey. She has received the Swiss Federal Award of Art three times and had a mid-career retrospective at the Centre PasquArt (Switzerland). Her work has been shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles) and the Kunstverein Wolfsburg (Germany) and is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), and the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles).