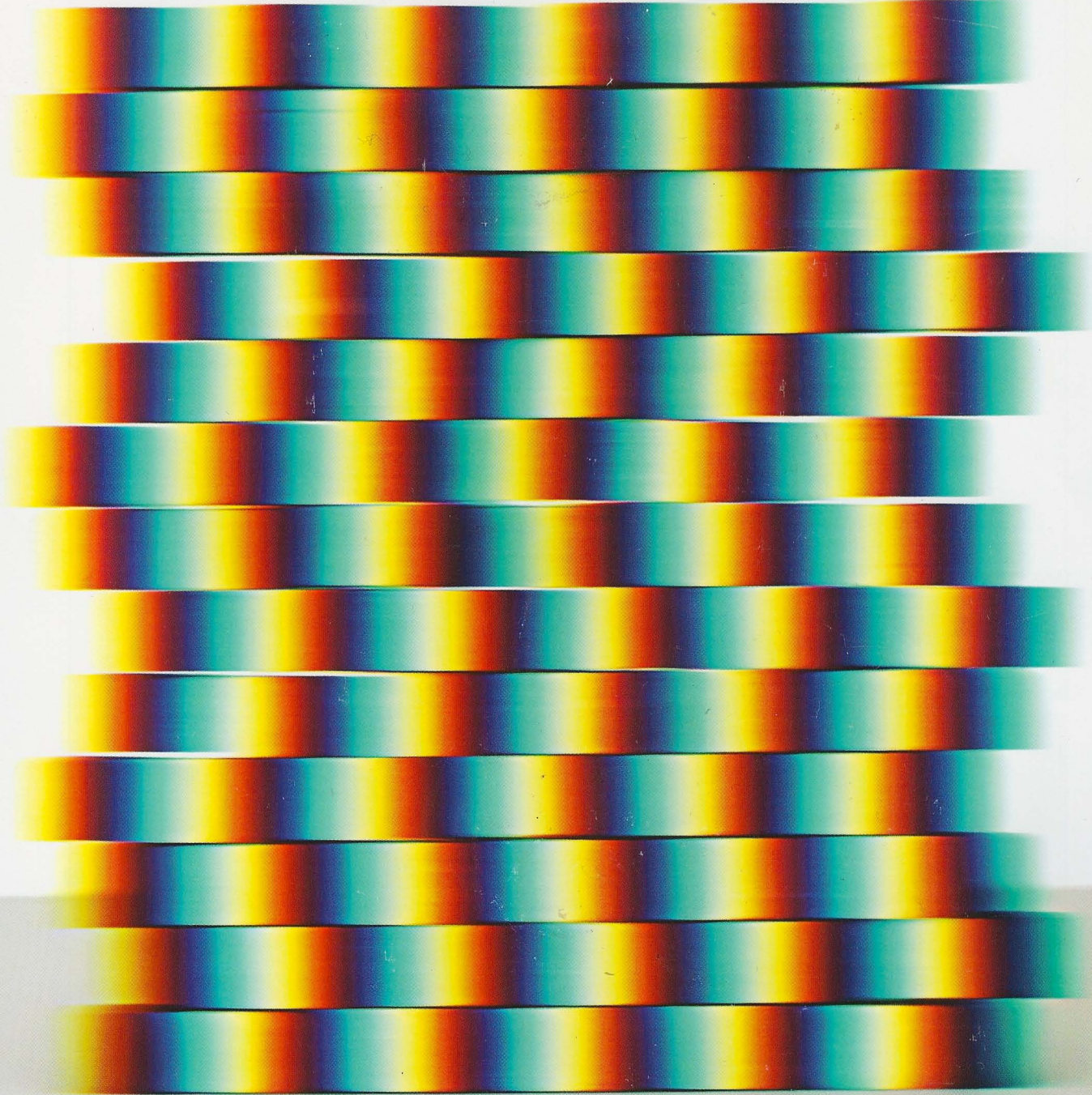


# ARTnews

MARCH 2011



## THE NEW PHOTOGRAPHY

**The Top 10 Photo Collectors**

**Scents and Sensibility: Smell in Art**

**Liu Xiaodong: China's Expressive Realist**



## Reading Between the Lint

Having seen the restroom ruins on Tensint Island, Emile Delilah, the travel-addicted protagonist of **Ben**

**Katchor's** new graphic novel, *The Cardboard Valise*, asks about other attractions. A waiter suggests Seventy-Nine Cent Island, where no lightbulb is stronger than 40 watts. "There's one good museum, but you can't see what's on its walls," the waiter says.

Such is the world of *The Cardboard Valise*, originally a newspaper comic strip and out in book form March 8 from Pantheon. The oddities of far-away places unfold in every frame, mocking society's obsession with diversity and world cultures.

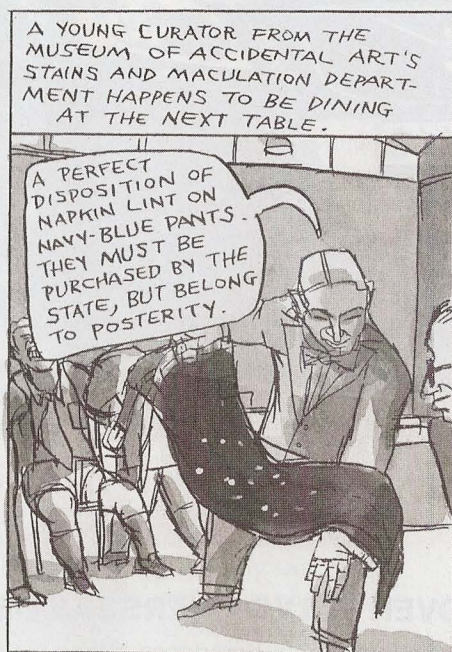
Katchor—the author of two previous graphic novels, both set in New York, as well as the first cartoonist to win a MacArthur grant—describes a group that eats only canned food (especially pea soup) and a country where the national hero is "the man who invented the mechanism for the wireless transmission of scents over long distances."

Museums are a ripe target—and a subject of fascination for Katchor, who has lectured on the culture and design of museum cafeterias. In one frame in *The Cardboard Valise*, set in a museum gallery, the cartoon bubbles inform us that artists have "historically rendered" the people of Outer Canthus with "lobster-red complexions, a convention of painting upheld by lazy assistants and their negligent masters."

Katchor explains: "People expect paintings to reflect the culture, but sometimes the culture is something that the painter invented. That's what this guy is seeing in that museum: this clichéd flesh tone that may not even exist in nature."

In another of the plot's "warnings not to take cultural artifacts too seriously," as Katchor puts it, a young curator

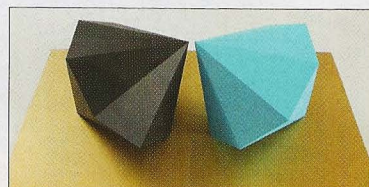
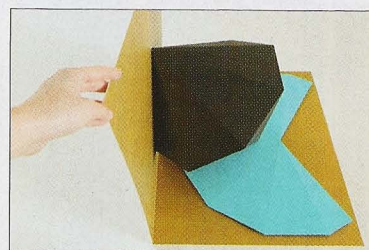
from Museum of Accidental Art strips a man of his trousers. "A perfect disposition of napkin lint on navy-blue pants," the curator declares as he gives them a close examination. "They must be purchased by the state, but belong to posterity." —**Amanda Gordon**



Frames from Ben Katchor's graphic novel, *The Cardboard Valise*.

## INTO THE FOLD

**Tauba Auerbach** likes to play with the uncertain space between two dimensions and three—as in her trompe l'oeil "Untitled (Fold)" series, spray-painted canvases resembling sheets of wrinkled fabric. So it's little surprise that the painter is a fan of the pop-up book. "I love that something flat can turn into something with volume," she says, "the motion they have in opening and closing." The artist, who owns a small collection of pop-up books, recently finished crafting one of her own. "It was just a natural, light-hearted offshoot of the paintings I



In Tauba Auerbach's new pop-up book, two gems appear to touch noses.

was doing," she says. Lighthearted, maybe, but [2,3], out in March from Printed Matter, is also a feat of geometric engineering. Among the book's six brightly colored paper sculptures is a blue-and-red construction, made of 14 Möbius strips, which gracefully curve and interlock across two pages. A monolithic ziggurat, rising to a foot and a half in height, is composed of ten nested black-and-white pyramid shapes. There's also a sphere, an accordion-like arc, and two gems that appear to touch noses—all of which compress flat when closed. But Auerbach, naturally, would like viewers to keep the shapes open. "I think it would be really neat if people treated them like table sculptures," she says. —**Jenny Brown**