

MUD  
PIE



MUD  
PIE

RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN

**LEILA HELLER GALLERY.**

568 WEST 25TH STREET | NEW YORK NY 10001



# NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT

Artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian in conversation with arts reporter Michael Clive

*Mud, mud, glorious mud  
Nothing quite like it for cooling the blood  
So follow me follow, down to the hollow  
And there let me wallow in glorious mud.*

— Michael Flanders and Donald Swann, *The Hippopotamus Song*

**Clive:** Your art is full of icons we can recognize from life — the narcissus blossom, the beauty queen, the Botox bottle, the iPad. Yet there's something different about the figure shown holding the mud pie, and the iconography of her composition. She could be many different icons at once — a little girl, a mother, a waitress — yet somehow we can't be sure, because her head is not visible. Is she a self-portrait?

**Hovnanian:** Oh yes- she is a self-portrait. But she is all of those other icons as well. One thing the objectification of women does to us is to transform us into icons. But for women, society's iconography tends to take power and meaning away from us rather than enriching them as the symbolism of art traditionally does.

The figure in the photograph is holding a pie in a gesture of both creation and offering. She is a young girl playing in her backyard, a mother, a homemaker, a hostess, the origin and nourisher and creator of all of us. And she is an artist. Do you know that line from Veronica Geng — “what is an artist, just someone who makes some little something”? A great truth behind a great joke. Think about that word “homemaker” — a homemaker is an artist. Women remake the world with every generation- with every meal.

**Clive:** I think your work is clear about that, yet it leaves us with very challenging ambiguities in other areas — about what is real and what is fake, what is important and what is trivial. Sometimes I think the iconography is telling me that we yearn for authenticity in an increasingly artificial world. But other times it seems to ask: was any of it real in the first place?

**Hovnanian:** To tell you the truth, I don't love that word ‘iconography.’ It can put these ideas at an academic remove, when the work itself is rooted in the way we all experience everyday life. Of course, art projects meaning iconographically; a great oil painting by a Flemish old master or a masterpiece of medieval stained



glass is, in part, a diagram. It works the same way as a political cartoon in last week's newspaper or yesterday's blog post. But what is iconography, really? Symbols work because they mean something to us, because they make a whole category of meaning seem to resonate. We all go through life as artists creating our own iconography of experience, using memory to invest it with meaning.

We also go through life yearning for experience that seems authentic to us. In a sense, this is the narcissist's eternal quest — a search for the self that never really ends. A yearning that can never be consummated. With today's digital technology and social media, it seems natural for us to surround ourselves with avatars of ourselves and representations of our family and friends. But what is real, and what is fake? You open your iPad, you accept some elements, you reject others, and you become Veronica Geng's artist — remaking the world in your own image. But your friends and your digital world on the screen are like the image of Narcissus in the water. It's captivating, but it's not really there.

**Clive:** And yet we cannot look away and we cannot stop longing for it. Didn't Freud say we spend our lives trying to recapture the things that gave us pleasure in infancy?

**Hovnanian:** Yes, but we mistakenly think that those pleasures are an unchanging memory of what's authentic. Actually, the more we know, the more our memory can fool us. Did you read Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*? This is really what it's about, how our memory fools us. Cognitive science tells us that memory is not what we thought: not a slo-mo replay of mental imagery. Not a repository of past experiences recollected as they actually happened, to be browsed in tranquility like an album of snapshots. Instead, we constantly revise our memories, editing and reinterpreting them to fit the narrative of our invented identities — identities that, at their core, were first encoded in the sights, the sounds, the smells of early childhood.

Which is not to deny the core of inner reality that is there. It is a sensual reality, almost pre-verbal. That is what we are trying to get back to. Cognitive science also tells us that of all our sensory experiences, scent — the abstract, fragile, fleeting, intense smell of something — is our strongest trigger for sense-memory. It just takes one unexpected whiff to bring all the nuanced textures and details of a forgotten moment flooding back across the decades.

As an artist I had the privilege of going back into my own childhood in Texas to seek out these elemental memories — the smells of pie and coffee at the little roadside cafes, the branches I remember swaying outside my bedroom window when I was a little girl, the sky and the clouds as they looked in that particular environment. One thing that Freud was getting at was that these primal esthetic experiences really start with our mother's embrace, the smell of her skin and the very sensual experience of taking nourishment. Nothing is more real than these esthetic experiences. Our ability to make sense of the world really starts there.

**Clive:** And then digital technology and virtual experiences enter our lives, replacing what's real.

**Hovnanian:** Actually, it's not just the digital screen and the virtual world. It happens on so many levels and it predates the information age. This is really the locus that connects the ancient myth of Narcissus to our modern conceptions of beauty. In ancient Greece, the subject of beauty and esthetic philosophy in general were a branch of science, part of the pursuit of truth. Every society since then, especially here and in Europe, has imposed cultural standards of beauty that have more to do with surface decoration than something more abstract and enduring, like truth. In the Christian tradition, true beauty has no physical embodiment and it does not decay. Compare that with the idea European fashion came up with — styles that change from year to year, which directly contradict the idea of beauty as something of lasting value.

But that happened in royal courts, and the level of artisanship — of artistry, if you will — was very high. You can't deny that it is art, that it has its own authenticity. Later, with the advent of industrialization and mass production, we started getting a whole world of ersatz objects and better living through chemistry. Who bakes a pie anymore, or makes lemonade? We really had a whole universe of substitute reality before digital technology came along. All of these replacements involve trying to hold on to something that is temporary — to capture and preserve the elements of self. Of course, the irony is that the self is constantly changing, and in trying to preserve its representation, we can only distort it or lose sight of it. We want to stop and stare at the object of beauty, and to possess it forever. Yet no matter how hard we look at the digital screen, or the



luxurious object, or the person sitting across the table from us, the fact remains that we're not there. In fact, the act of making something permanent destroys it, in a way.

This is one of the lessons of the narcissus panels. In nature, the lifespan of the narcissus flower is quite brief, and its appearance changes throughout the duration of its bloom. Mounted on a panel and rendered in metal, the narcissus flower doesn't change, but it is no longer a flower. And do you know what makes those panels beautiful? The elements around them that are constantly changing — the qualities of changing light, air, movement. These variations are what create the luminous effect that viewers respond to. They find it lovely. But it can also be frightening.

**Clive:** Frightening? A panel of lovely flowers? Why frightening?

**Hovnanian:** Because like the flowers themselves, or like the image of Narcissus in the water, it cannot be made into something unchanging that can be possessed. Even the metal flower changes with its surroundings and must be experienced as a transitory experience of art, rather than possessed as a permanent, unchanging object. In fact, that is one theme that all these explorations have in common. When we try to make a changing, natural object into a permanent object of beauty, we are trying to create an imperishable reflection of ourselves — something durable, like a monument. But the self is constantly changing, like the beautiful object in nature. In fact, that's just what the self is: a beautiful object in nature. We can capture a fleeting moment of the self in transition in art. But if we try to make something permanent to preserve it, that's denial. The only way to keep the self from changing is to deny what it really is.

**Clive:** Tell me about the mud pie. It smells like an apple pie, it's in a beautiful pie plate, but it sure doesn't look like a pie, and I wouldn't want to taste it. Is that an act of substitution, of denial of self, something fake?



**Hovnanian:** Well, not all substitution is denial; it can also be an act of transformation. And that can be something magical and affirmative. I don't think there's any more dramatic example of this, especially for little girls, than making food — cooking and baking. Like all art, you take your materials and combine them in an artistic way and transform them. In this sense, baking is real-life magic: you peel the apples, roll the flour and fat into dough, and add a magic white crystal — sugar — to bring forth pie. How different is that from the idea of transforming mud into pie? One is a natural precursor of the other, and the little girl with her mud pie is an apprentice pie-maker. When she practices this transformation with mud in the backyard, she is like the freemason earning his initiation into secret knowledge. The narcissus panels show transformation too. It is transformation of a different kind, but it is also beautiful.

**Clive:** Yet both of these transformations start with something that seems elemental and pure and basic...a flower in nature, a homemade apple pie. Are you saying that modern lifestyles and technologies destroy the purity of these things — and of the authenticity of self?

**Hovnanian:** It certainly didn't take a digital revolution to overwhelm the mythic purity of American apple



pie. In fact, it wasn't at all sudden. My mother didn't churn butter and render lard for piecrusts; we had grocery stores and packaged ingredients, complete with preservatives. But over the years there has been a continuing increase in consumption, leisure, population density, and reliance on pre-manufactured goods. The distance between factory-made and kitchen-baked has been growing while consumers buy and eat what's in front of them, and eventually one paradigm replaces another.

Did you ever see the humorist Marshall Efron on the 1970s PBS show *The Great American Dream Machine*? He did one hilarious bit where he gave viewers the recipe for a nationally branded lemon meringue pie as if they could make it at home. The ingredients were all lined up in a *mise en place*: lots of impressive chemicals in beakers, but nothing to do with a lemon. To whip up Efron's recipe, you just needed to replace your kitchen with a commercial chemistry lab. How many people do you think make lemon meringue pies at home anymore, as opposed to buying a pie made from chemicals? At a certain point, something is lost. I remember the promotion for Country Time crystallized lemonade mix boasting that it "tastes like real old-fashioned lemonade," as if they had recaptured something from the unreachable past: the possibility of combining lemon juice, sugar and water in a kitchen.

**Clive:** And yet to me your recent work does seem to reach back and recapture the past, conveying a very particular sense of place with, say, a cafe or a dining table. What is it about ambience that you find important?

**Hovnanian:** We create places or we choose them as an expression of self. And we all want that simple place that we connect with on some deep level, a place to go where we can just be who we are. I have to say I was tempted not to answer that way, but to make you tell me — what is a place like that for you? For me, the cafes I remember from growing up in Texas are very important. I couldn't really understand who I am now without remembering the stained wallpaper, the waitresses, the smell of the pie.

The process of maturing and participating in a complicated world subjects us to all sorts of standards that come between us and this understanding of self. A fancy suburban dining table where we're lounging in expensive upholstered chairs while we text our friends in the next room...that has prestige, and we're supposed to want it, but it comes between us and our sense of self rather than expressing it. When we lose touch with ourselves in this way, we lose the ability to understand who we are and the ability to experience life and art in an honest way. It's no wonder we seek out a substitute. That's when we head out to Starbucks for the fake ambience and the six-dollar latte.

*All images are details from Cafe 2012 Installation*



# MEMORY AND TRUTHINESS

*Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.'*

*'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit.*

*'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.'*

*'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?'*

*'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.'*

— Margery Williams Bianco, *The Velveteen Rabbit: Or How Toys Become Real*

The Real, according to the paintings, sculptures, photographs, videos and installations of Rachel Lee Hovnanian, is enigmatic, unattainable, and make-believe. The quest for love and self-regard has been hijacked by the idolatry of beauty as defined by Photoshop and the cosmetic enhancement industry. Dreams of happiness are waylaid by the distractions of technologies which increasingly dominate our lives. Memory itself is corrupted by the absurdities of the present and the falsities of the past.

The only defense against so bleak and armored a view of the world is humor, which Hovnanian wields with outrageous aplomb. It's there in the sly title of this exhibition, *Mud Pie*. In the alluring C-print, *Texas Mud Pie*, the mud pie spreads and splatters, like an abstract painting, though there are the hands of the artist herself to ground it in reality. The hands could be those of a potter at work, or a sculptor molding clay, though they emerge from a white shirt, and evoke images of a beauty salon and a mud facial.

This time, however, Hovnanian has something quite different than beauty in mind. By mud pie she means, quite literally, a pie made out of mud, such as little girls make when they are young, such as she made when she was a girl in Texas.

"It was the first thing I made that was real that wasn't real. I felt it was real. My mother would make pies, and I would make a mud pie, and I almost felt it was a real thing that I had made, even though I knew I couldn't eat it."

So the mud pie becomes a stand-in for the ersatz in an exhibition which probes the inauthentic. And here's where things get really convoluted. Because, in fact, the mud pie is made of something tangible, something actual, something of earth and nature. And that is true of hardly anything else in the exhibition, including that nostalgic mud pie, which, as a C-print, is a simulacrum of a mud pie, a mud pie once removed.

To further complicate matters and fully engage viewers in an authentic experience of the inauthentic, there is Hovnanian's installation/performance piece *Cafe*. *Cafe* functions as the stage set for a drama starring you, the gallery-going audience.

One might say that the waitress who greets visitors at the door of Hovnanian's cafe installation is real. She is a real actress. She speaks in a Texas accent. She is dressed in the kind of grey dress with white collar and apron that waitresses wear in black-and-white movies. However, to further the unreal state of what Hovnanian calls "dream/awake," her nametag is a username, *@CafeWaitress*. The viewer is here in physical time and place, but the virtual is a tweet away.

There is the comforting aroma of apple pie in this *Cafe*, but it wafts from an incense plug-in. The pie itself and the coffee, both of which the viewer can order, is basically flavored chemicals, ditto, the "tacos" on the menu. The windows are, in fact, video screens, displaying *Outside Nacogdoches*, scenes of a picturesquely dilapidated barn and waving grasses, which Hovnanian shot in Texas.

In Hovnanian’s memory, the cafes of her childhood were ad hoc community centers, gathering places now replaced by fast food chains overlooking super highways, because “we don’t need them anymore.” Community centers have fled to cyberspace as surely as real food has disappeared into a cloud of chemical simulation, and real views into parking lot panoramas.

Ah the treachery of memory. I’ve been in the down-home Texas cafes of Hovnanian’s girlhood. The fruit salad was canned, the chicken reconstituted, whatever that means. Ersatz coffee and milk are as old as the Civil War, older probably.

In our memories, however, a sense of what is real attaches to the early years in which memory is first encoded. In those earliest years memory is episodic and intense. Before language seeks to make order and systems of the world,<sup>2</sup> and to edit remembering itself, memory is accessed in emotionally loaded visual flashes – of a raggedy stuffed rabbit, of Hovnanian’s apple pie. The interactive *Cafe* is her most blatant effort to arouse equally loaded, still-unedited memories and emotions in her audience.

The subtext of *Cafe*, like so much of Hovnanian’s work is loss – of childhood, of dreams, of beauty, of the possibility of perfection, of human connection, of life itself. For many years now, she has worked episodically, as in the chapters of a sprawling novel, taking on the big subjects, one by one, in integrated and coherent, multi media exhibitions, in which nearly everything is starkly white.

In *Preservation of the Narcissus*, her first foray into this body of work in 2005, she examined every iteration of a tiny, paperwhite narcissus, named after the Greek myth in which the beautiful and prideful hunter Narcissus falls in love with his own unobtainable reflection in a pool. Narcissus can only gaze at the image of his affection, distanced forever from the possibility of human connection, because the attempt at consummation with the beloved leads to death. Plucked, the narcissus flower brightens our lives for a moment, and then dies.

*Preservation of the Narcissus* obsessively interrogated every method to keep alive the essence of the flower – crushing it for ink, reconstituting its aroma, scenting candles, coating the flowers in encaustic, or layering their image in stunningly poetic paintings. Finally, turning her attention to more contemporary manifestations of the all-pervasive quest to preserve beauty, she constructed mirrors that passers-by could not help but glance into, and festooned them with narcissus flowers preserved in Botox bottles.

The flowers have carried their message of the cost of beauty and the inevitability of loss into every exhibition since. In the 2009 *Power & Burden of Beauty*, the flowers play a secondary role, decorative remnants of their former selves, like memories shaped, hardened, edited, and dimmed to make them palatable. The narcissuses are reduced to swags, which drape Beauty Queen trophies, or are picked out in stylized rhinestones on Beauty Queen crowns. Beauty pageants were the culture of Hovnanian’s Texas childhood, though her parents forbade her to participate.

In *Power & Burden of Beauty* the sculpted Beauty Queen herself takes center stage. A female version of the Egyptian Kouros, equally idealized and stiffly frozen, she makes her way from the *Power & Burden of Beauty* exhibition into the next one, *Too Good To Be True*, in 2010.

By then, however, the tone had altered exponentially, more *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*, than Preservation’s Wordsworthian elegy. The narcissus itself is only faintly evident on the Beauty Queen’s and the Beauty King’s crowns, as introductions to the theme of narcissism. In a series of tabloid photographs, the white trophy sculptures act out a morality tale, The Beauty Queen’s Progress, in which each human encounter is transactional and alienating.

The Beauty Queen trophy marries for money, treads the treadmill, back-stabs the competition and is backstabbed in turn. She does it all, the whole blighted American Beauty dream thing. But as in the Eagles sang, “Every form of refuge has its price.”<sup>3</sup> She ends up in bed with a golf bag in place of a husband, and a dinner table as long as a hearse, at each end of which trophy wife and her moneyed mate face off in isolated silence. Where are the memories? Where are the dreams? “Real,” as the Skin Horse says, “is a thing that happens to you.”

The table is back in 2012, with the *Mud Pie* exhibition, and so are the narcissi, and both are even more chilling than before. For the planar sculptures, *The Gates of Narcissus Metal Panels, Motherboards*, the flowers have been cast in metal alloy and affixed to 7 1/2-foot sheets of industrial steel in magnified riffs on the motherboard. In a computer, the motherboard connects to every process, including the main memory. Any memories accessed here are hardly of organic flowers that live their beautiful lives and die. These thousands of tiny narcissus flowers will never die and disintegrate. Computer parts, as anyone knows who has tried to dismantle them, never die.

Nor does the virtual memory which memory boards process have much to do with those intense remembrances of childhood. This is the computer’s memory. It remembers minute-by-minute minutia from your thousands of meaningless Facebook friends, as well as the algorithms by which advertisers hunt you down in order to remind you of all the reasons you need to buy their products: Lose those last 10 pounds, Never be lonely again! Memory, like the cast flowers, is attached only peripherally to real events though equally capable of arousing emotions.

On the Motherboards the metal flowers gather in undulating planar waves which reflect the light and alter with it, inviting perusal in the actual moment that at once mirrors and defies the ways in which cyberspace “sucks you in,” as Hovnanian puts it, into virtual space and physical isolation.

Which brings us to *Dinner for Two*, that long, white cloth-draped table. The stretched-out table at which husband and wife sit at opposite ends is a trope of wealth and marital distance from Hollywood films and New Yorker cartoons, which Hovnanian manipulates for maximum humor, disorientation, and pathos.

On this table, two candelabra with actual burning candles - the only signs of warmth and actuality in the installation - flank a silver vase of palpably fake flowers. These also appear as multiple photographs. It is possible to imagine those flowers as dusty and forlorn as Miss Havisham’s bridal gown<sup>4</sup>, not many years hence. Miss Havisham was left at the altar, her memories of true love blighted and decayed. But the hip young man and beautiful young woman at opposite ends of this table appear to be dissipating any possibility of love or the memory of it before our very eyes.

It is not only that they themselves are as virtual as the “windows” in the cafe – represented in this case by videos of their faces on LCD panels that are attached to their empty chairs at head height. Sounds of messages arriving or wooshing off into the stratosphere also cue the probability that these two are ignoring one another in actual time and space by tweeting their friends. They have achieved Beauty Queen’s dream, and are too disconnected to experience it.

What will there be for them to remember in the future? They are as isolated in their distraction as the Beauty Queen in her quest for perfection, or Narcissus in his self-love. Beauty, perfection, isolation. In Hovnanian’s dystopian vision, the words have become synonymous. Perhaps for her they always were.

In 2000, long before she jettisoned color and brush in her move towards concept and installation, she painted pastel landscapes. Homages to David Hockney, the paintings were suffused with beauty and longing. They were populated only fitfully by sun-dazed, disconnected people, privileged in their idyll and alone. In the catalogue for the *isolationBEAUTY* exhibition of these painting, she recalled a memory.

“I will always remember swimming to the bottom of the pool to catch light diamonds that are not there.”

The lyricism of the image seemed to be enough for that time and those paintings. Since then she has begun to ask the probing questions: What are these diamonds that memory makes? And why are they not there?

#### by Amei Wallach

AMEI WALLACH is an art critic, author, and filmmaker. She has written for such publications as *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, and *Vanity Fair*. She was for many years on-air Arts Essayist for the PBS Newshour.



## GATES OF NARCISSUS

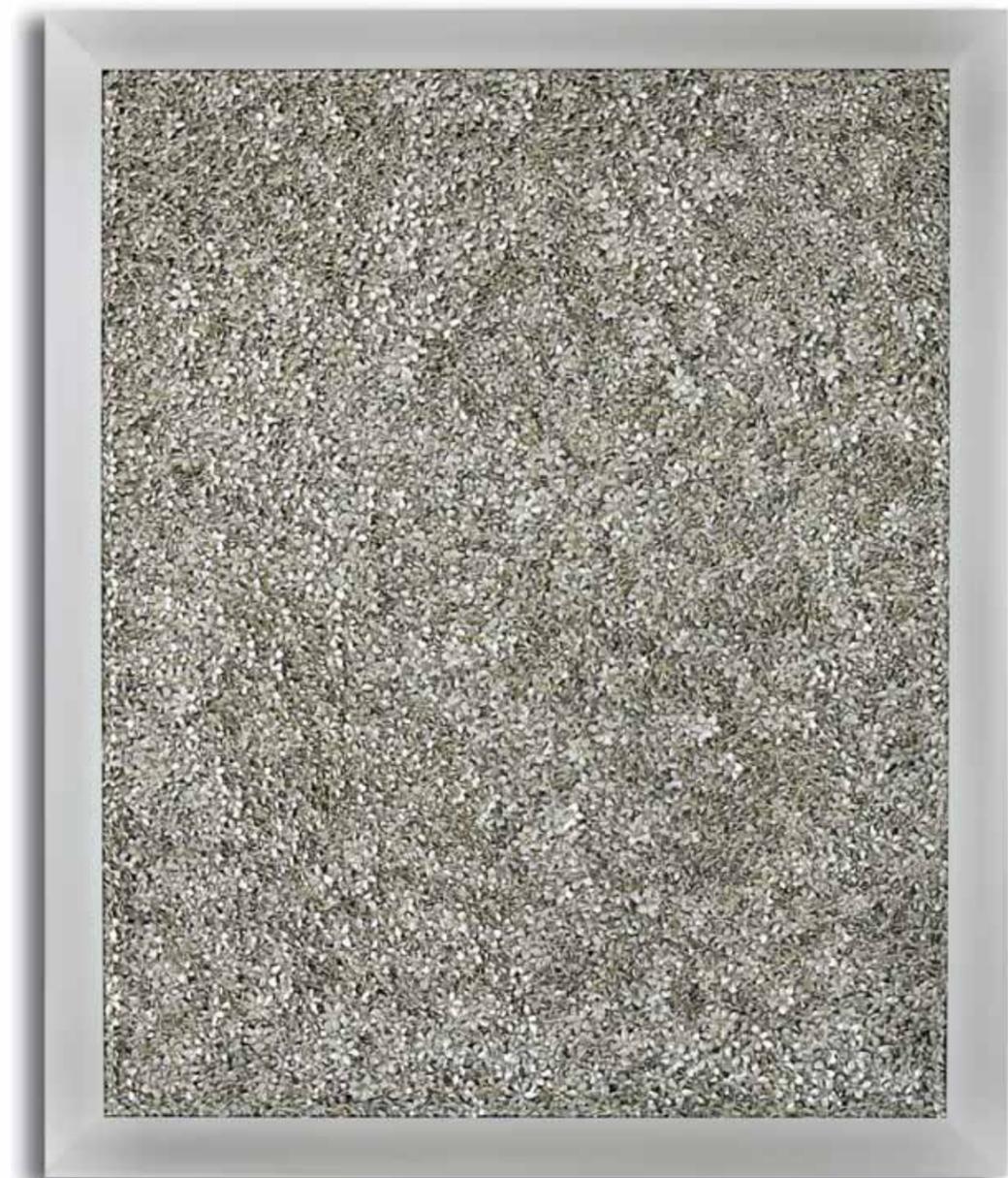
MOTHERBOARDS



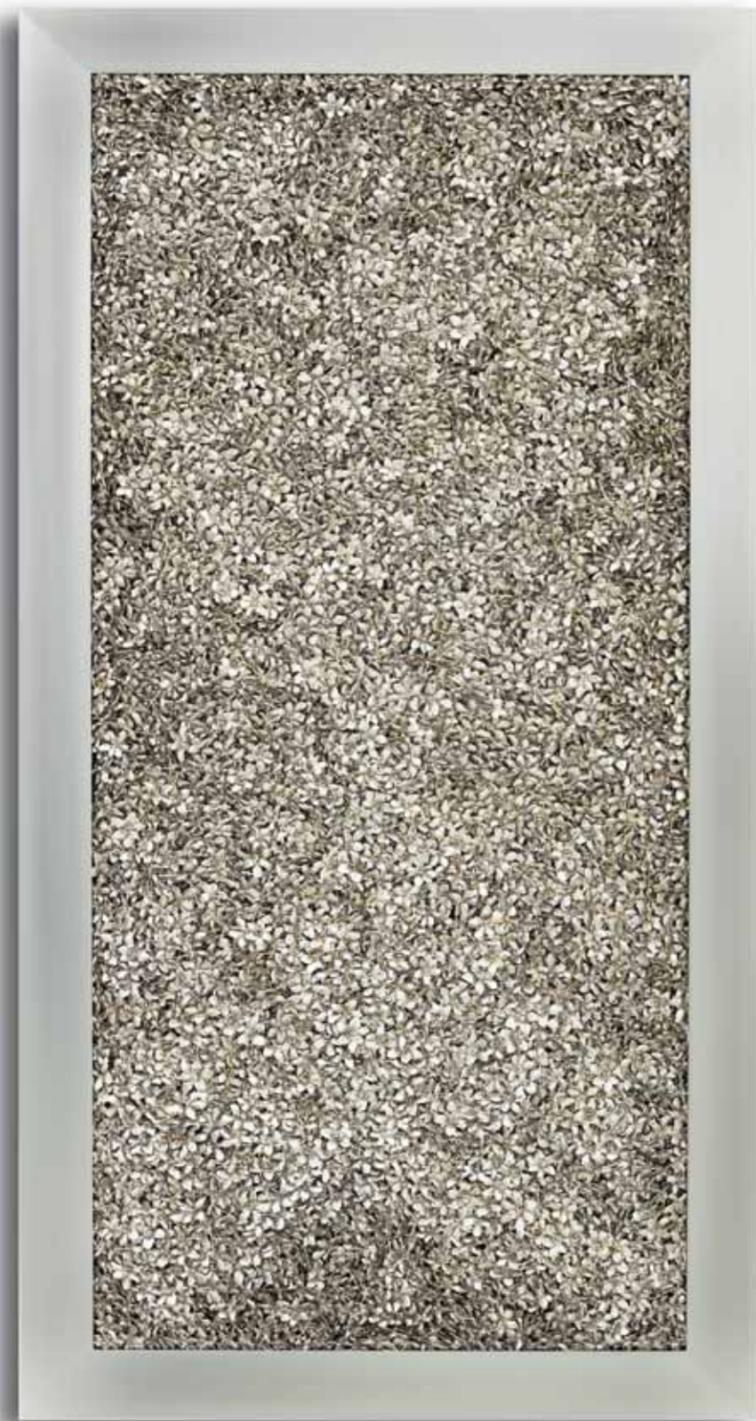
*Motherboard 3* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
59 x 59 in (150 x 150 cm)



*Motherboard 6* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
47 x 47 in (119 x 119 cm)



*Motherboard 4* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
59 x 47 in (150 x 119 cm)



*Motherboard 8* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
60 x 30 in (152 x 76 cm)





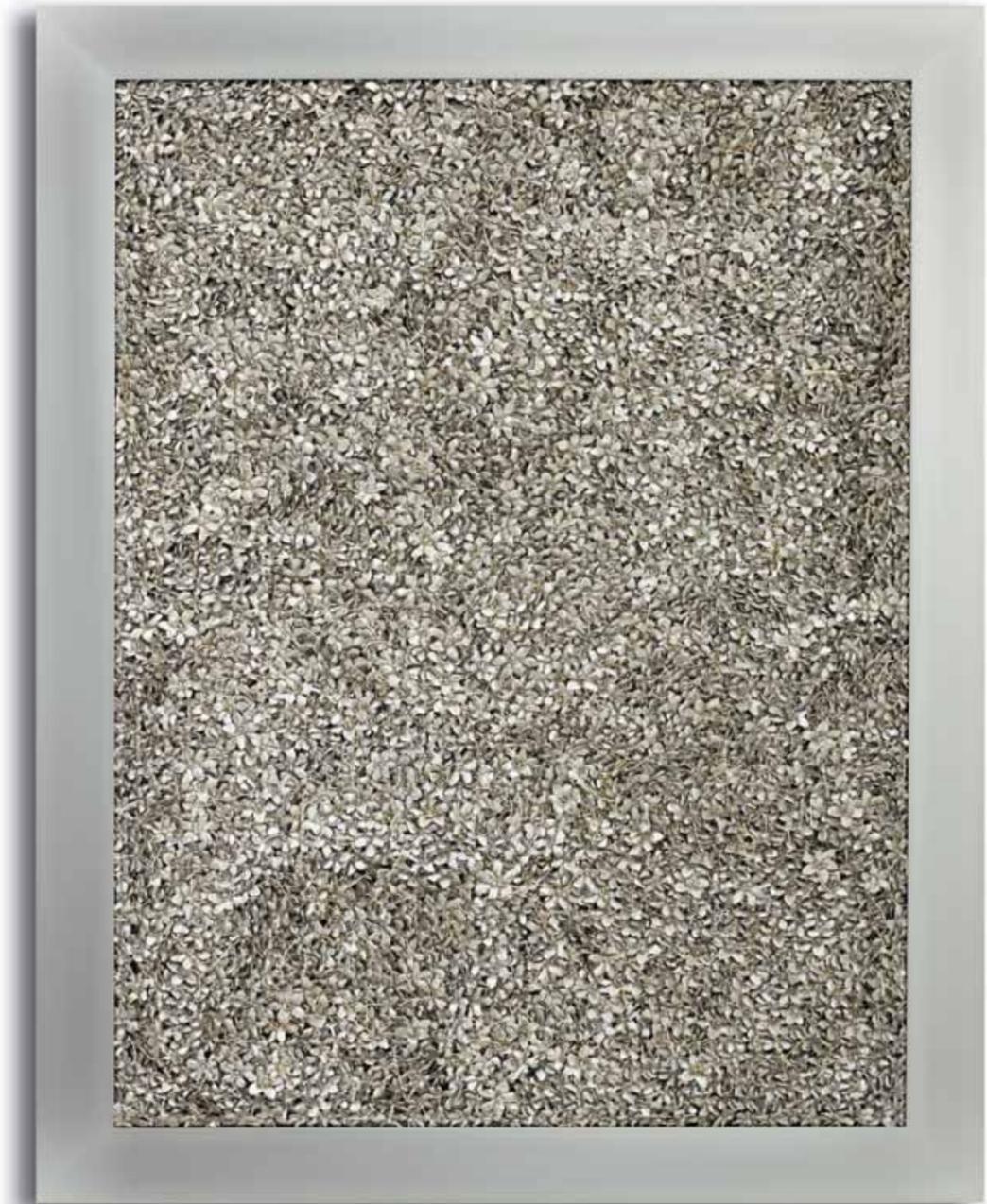
*Motherboard 2* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
72 x 47 in (183 x 119 cm)



*Motherboard 5* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
47 x 47 in (119 x 119 cm)



*Motherboard 1* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
71 x 71 in (180 x 180 cm)



*Motherboard 7* 2012  
steel, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
47 x 36 in (119 x 91 cm)

REFLECTION  
OF THE NARCISSUS



*Reflection 1* 2011  
acrylic on linen, metal leaf, cast metal, leather, in artist's frame  
91 x 91 in (231 x 231 cm)

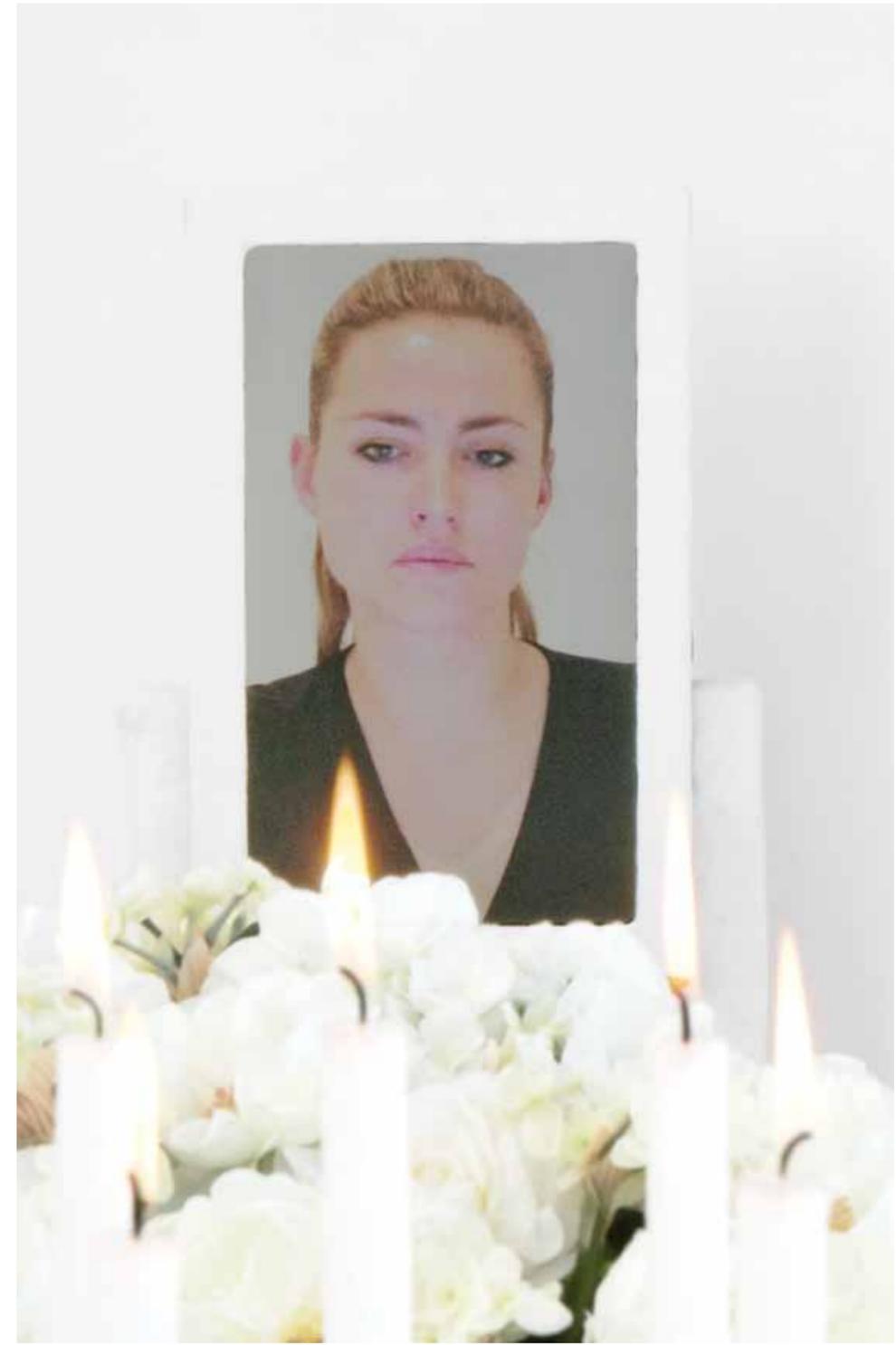
DINNER FOR TWO  
[INSTALLATION]



*Dinner for Two* 2012 (Installation)  
mixed media  
table 16 x 5x 2.3 ft (488 x 152 x 70 cm)



Detail of *Dinner for Two* (Installation)  
*peter@me.com*  
USA, 2012, video, 3:16 minutes, color



Detail of *Dinner for Two* (Installation)  
*jo@me.com*  
USA, 2012, video, 2:55 minutes, color

FAKE FLOWERS



*Fake Flowers, Dining Room* 2012  
c-print mounted to acrylic glass

Large: 40 x 60 in (102 x 152 cm)  
edition of 3, 2 APs

Medium: 30 x 45 in (76 x 114 cm)  
edition of 2, 1 AP

Small: 20 x 30 in (60 x 76 cm)  
edition of 3, 2 APs



*Fake Flowers, Living Room* 2012  
c-print mounted to acrylic glass

Large: 67.5 x 49 in (171 x 124 cm)  
edition of 3, 2 APs

Medium: 50.5 x 36.5 in (128 x 93 cm)  
edition of 2, 1 AP

Small: 34 x 24.5 in (86 x 62 cm)  
edition of 3, 2 APs

CAFE 2012  
[INSTALLATION]



Cafe 2012  
performance detail



Cafe Sign 2012  
neon on plexiglas  
37 x 28 in (94 x 71 cm)



## HOW TO MAKE MUD PIE

### Fixins:

Good 'ole dirt and kind will do  
pie tin,  
bowl of rain water or  
puddle of water after rain storm,  
large kitchen spoon or stick from tree  
various found objects,  
like flowers, stones, leaves and/or  
even cigarette butts

1. Take your shoes off , feel the cool earth under your feet, particularly if ya'll are wore out.
2. Dig up a good deal of dirt with the kitchen spoon and if there's been a drought you may need to use some of the water from the bowl to moisten
3. Add water and mix with hands till good consistency of a cow pie
4. Ladle into pie tin
5. Set aside in the sun for a time and lie back in the grass and watch the wind blow through the trees.
6. Place leaves and found objects on top of the pie till y'all pleased.
7. Serve before you're called in for supper.

# RACHEL LEE HOVNANIAN

Born in Parkersburg, WV  
Lives and works in New York, NY

## EDUCATION

BFA, University of Texas, Austin, TX  
Post-Grad, Parsons School of Design, New York, NY

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 *Too Good to be True*, Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong  
2011 *American Beauty: Too Good to be True*, Foundation Pons, Barcelona, Spain  
2010 *American Beauty: Too Good to be True*, Aina Nowack/AAC, Madrid, Spain  
*Too Good to be True*, Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*Power and Burden of Beauty*, Galerij ARTRA, Kalmthout, Belgium  
2009 *Power & Burden of Beauty*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, NY  
*Power & Burden of Beauty*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston, TX  
2007 *Rachel Hovnanian: Preservation of the Narcissus*, Jason McCoy, Inc., New York, NY  
2005 *Preservation of the Narcissus*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston, TX  
2001 *Isolation Beauty*, David Beitzel Gallery, New York, NY  
2000 *Isolation Beauty*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 *Tender is the Night*, Marine Contemporary, Venice Beach, CA  
*Leila Heller Summer Show*, South Hampton, NY  
*January White Sale*, Loretta Howard Gallery, New York, New York. Curated by Beth Rudin Dewoody  
*Public Exhibition*, Manarat al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, EU  
2010 *East Meet West on the East End*, Tipoli Gallery of Contemporary Art, South Hampton, New York, NY  
*Black and White*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, NY  
*Think Pink*, Gavlak Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida, Curated by Beth Rudin Dewoody  
2009 *Parades and Processions: Here comes everybody*, Parasol unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London, England  
2007 *Flowers*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Options within Realism*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, NY  
2006 *Black and White*, Old and New, Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
*Winter, Gallery Group Show*, Meredith Long Gallery, Houston, Texas  
2003 *Target Benches for Central Park*, Christie's Auction House, New York, NY  
2002 *Landscapes, Gallery Group Show*, Meredith Long & Company, Houston, TX

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Alessandra Codinha, "Rachel Hovnanian's Savage Beauty," *wwd.com*, September 29, 2011  
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### ESSAY FOOTNOTES

1. Rachel Hovnanian at her Chelsea, N.Y. studio in conversation with Amei Wallach, April 2, 2012. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes come from this conversation.
2. Jefferson A. Singer, Ph.D, The Tree of Life and Childhood Memories, in the Life Scripts section of "Psychology Today," August 28, 2011, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/life-scripts/201108/the-tree-life-and-childhood-memories>
3. "Lyn' Eyes," 1975.
4. Charles Dickens, "Great Expectations," 1861.



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