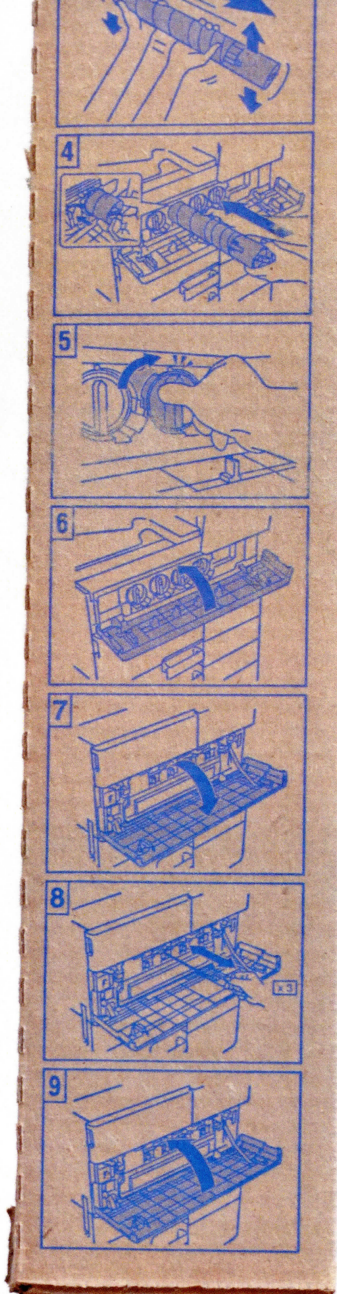
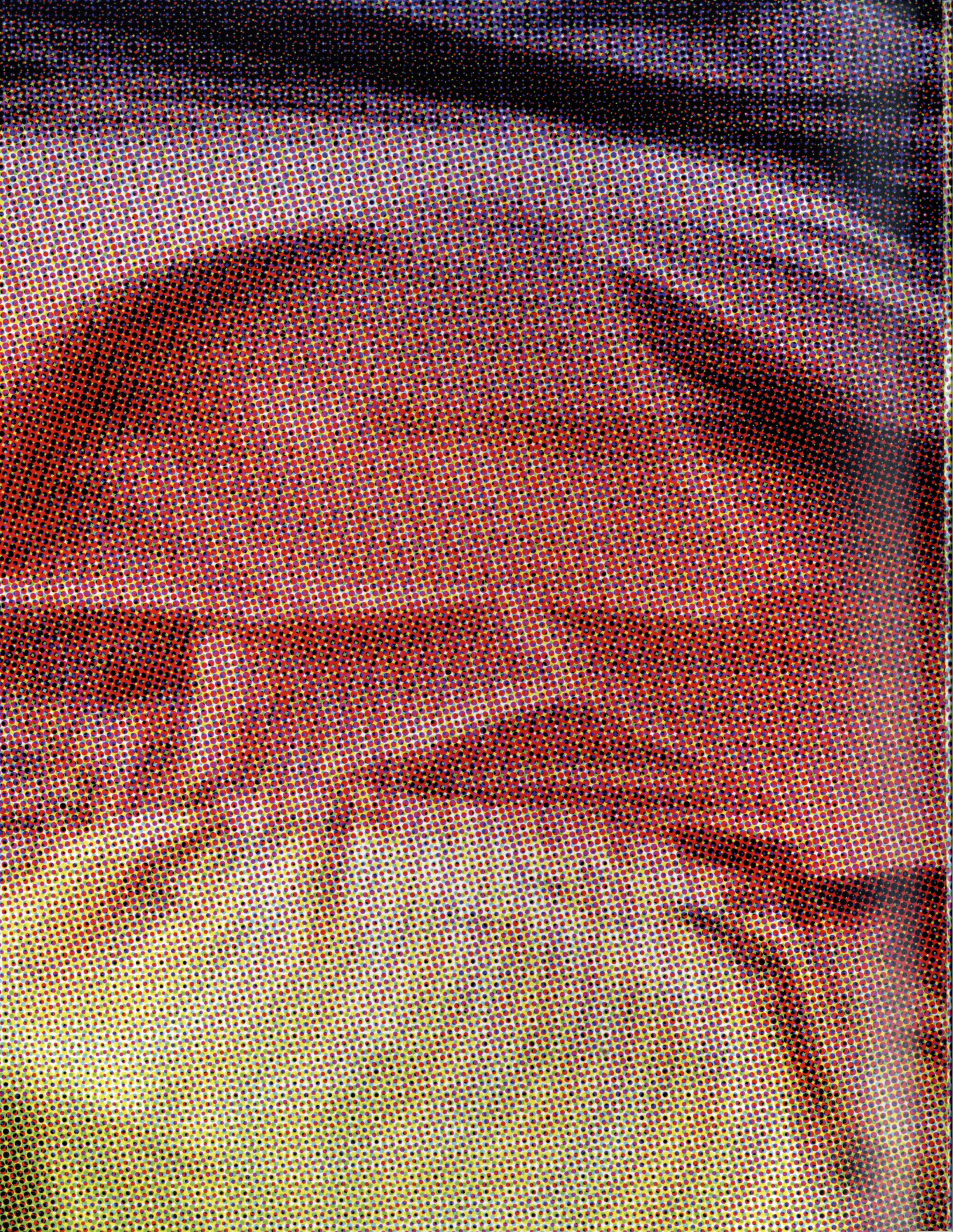


LYNDON BARROIS JR

OF COLOR







OF COLOR

Lyndon Barrois Jr.

Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis  
May 6–August 21, 2016

Sordoni Art Gallery  
March 23–May 21, 2017

Essay by francine j. harris



Sordoni Art Gallery  
Wilkes University  
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania  
[www.wilkes.edu/sordoniartgallery](http://www.wilkes.edu/sordoniartgallery)

Artwork photography: David Johnson  
Layout: WORK/PLAY



## A Signal for Play

francine j. harris

Afterward, you may remember the figures in Lyndon Barrois, Jr.'s "Of Color" emanating more color than they actually do. In their cutout, halftone resonance, the figures positioned in teams atop a gallery-installed asphalt basketball court, pulse a sunniness, a rosiness, a billowing blue. Partial adornments outfit those figures built of toner boxes in neat, asymmetric columns, and the ensembles vibrate diaphanously as modern totems, while the pale, white gallery walls recede into a wash of light.

Barrois suggests this work is, in part, about accessibility. The evocative installation, like its poignant notions of color, requests our engagement with game - depicting teams dressed in "street clothes" you wouldn't expect to find on a ball court, where you wouldn't expect to find a court. The clothing itself, fashionable. Perhaps the fashion rounds out the complex experience I have with this installation.

Of the exhibit, Barrois says it is capable of "posing questions without needing conclusive answers." I find myself engaged with many questions. For such a pleasantly rendered scene (the clothes are fun! the color is joyful!) I am somewhat unhinged by it. What do I know about are these players? How do I know? Where do I fit in?

I can count, on a hand, the number of times I've stepped onto an asphalt court. Growing up in Detroit, it was usually for the express purpose of shortcut - cutting across a park to get to a side street, or a swing. Most of the courts weren't even treated. There were hoops erected on top of cement. Someone drew white lines. Is there a moment in my life when I stepped onto a court to play? To be on a team? What was I wearing? Was I colorful? Did I play well?

Perhaps it is my girlness touching down on the asphalt which makes me feel immediately suspect and out of place. Or the fact that I was so unfashionable as a kid. It may be the fever dreams I had of taking a tiny tool and pushing

enormous polygonal shapes around a maze until they began to talk. Or how I felt when my father took me to see "The Wiz," - both terrified, and enamored, of the white tile columns un-hinging themselves and chasing Diana Ross's Dorothy and crew around the empty subway. And the mere suggestion of toner supplies brings back my secretarial days, and my rampant neglect.

But it is trying to peg my identification with these figures that fascinates me most about Barrois' exhibit. The towers and colored grids feel subconscious. How we "print" memory. How we balance competition with relationship. How we matrix aspiration. For to look upon Barrois' work, as he might look upon Charles Gaines' overtly gridded paintings, is to consider social agreement. Grid by grid, each organized circumference of color emphasizes our triggers for categorization. It asks us what we believe we know about color, as the installation asks what we know about play.

In "What Color is the Sacred?" the cultural anthropologist Michael Taussig, (another of Barrois' influences) argues that the presence of bright color is indicative of danger:

Together with the body-as-draped this environment encircling us "people of refinement" is what we might call the "color danger zone," where exquisite care has to be exercised as regards what otherwise comes across as the polluting and transgressive quality of bright color. A vividly colored tie is okay when the man is wearing a grey or dark suit, but if it's the other way around, watch out! (Imagine a bright yellow suit with a black tie.)

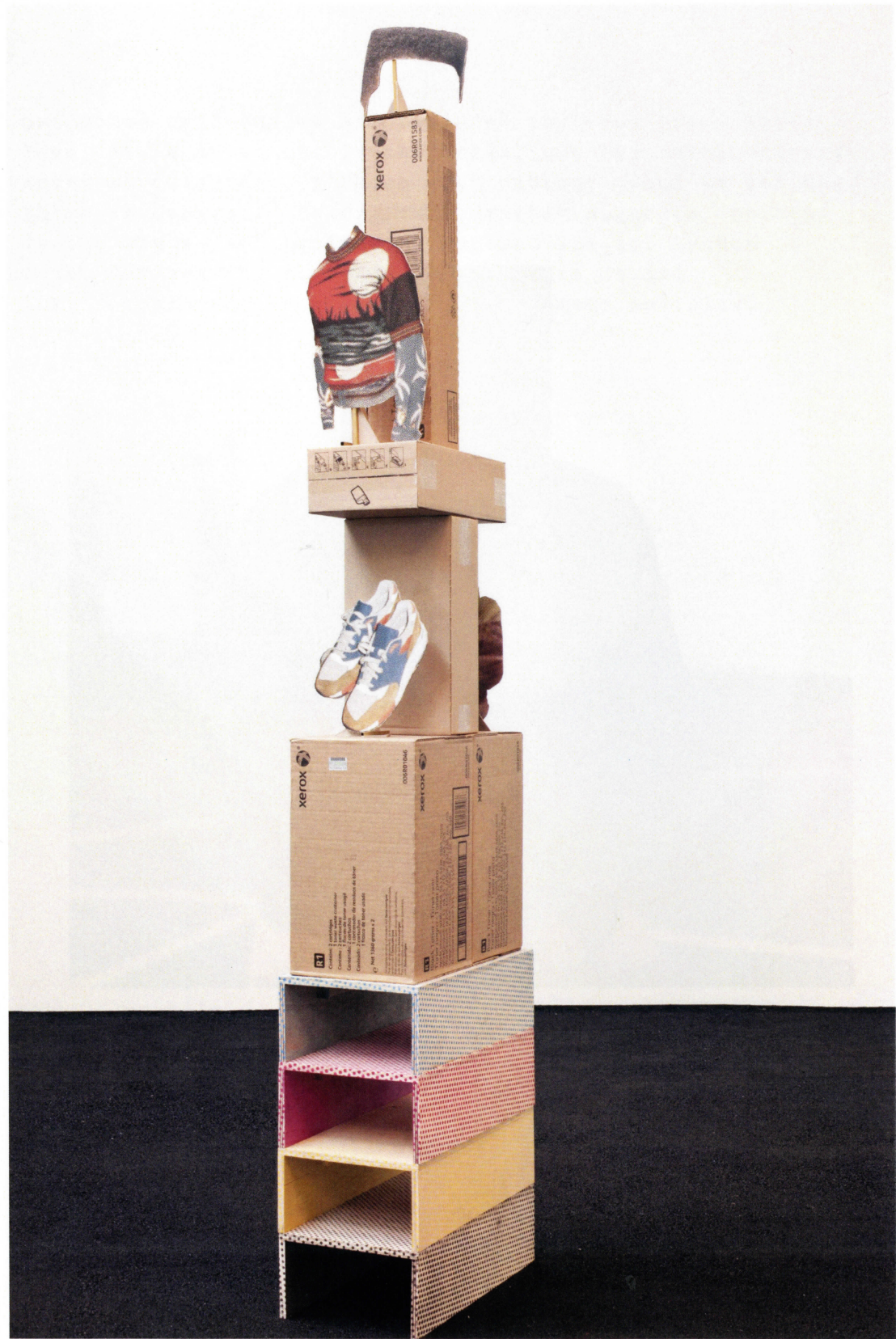
But that final image only brings to my mind the likes of Prince, whose strut in lemon yellow suit of enormously wide lacing, once left his perky ass hanging out on stage - either to be adored, or, should objection arise to its black audacity, to be kissed. For Prince, color was an imperturbable joy. For a separate exhibit on the artist, Barrois writes: "Perhaps the true consideration of him as a great guitarist was delayed amidst the wardrobe and all the other wild shit



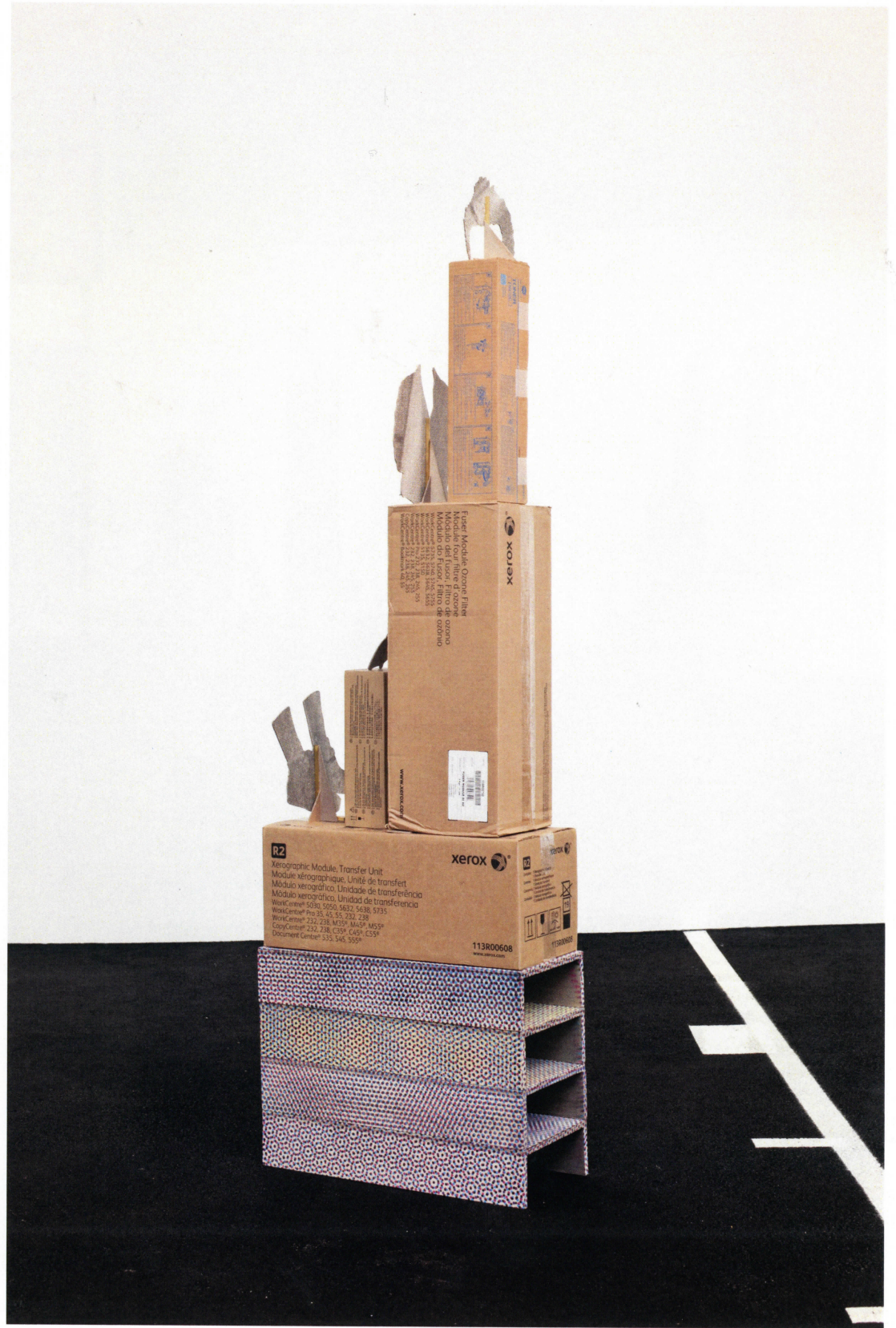
he had going on," and we are reminded that for the artists we love, it is never merely the dress, but the revolutionary artistry we celebrate, perhaps with vibrant color as its flag. If there is danger in color, this exhibit suggests, perhaps it is the way we are trained to hyperbolize it. Lyndon Barrois, Jr. asks us to see color for what it is: an ink, a component, a signal for engagement and play.







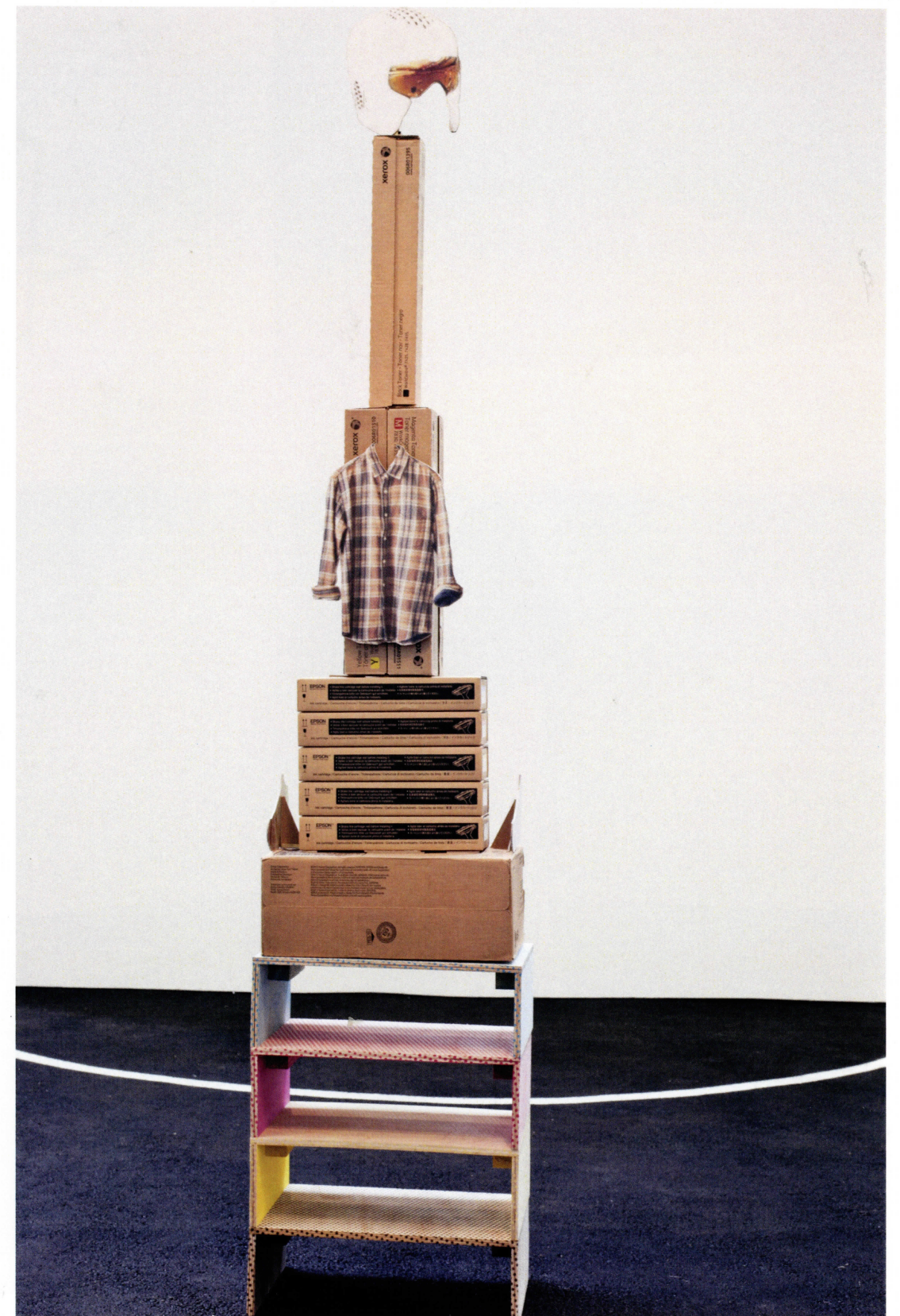








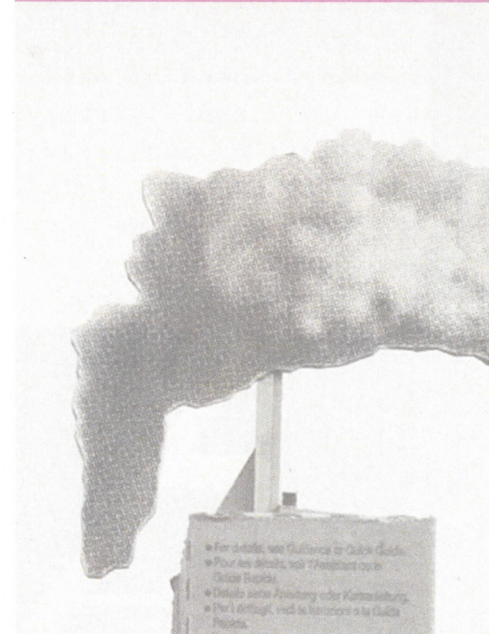
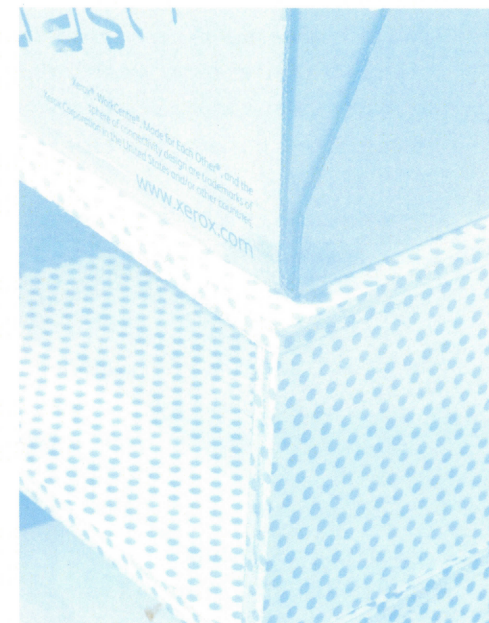
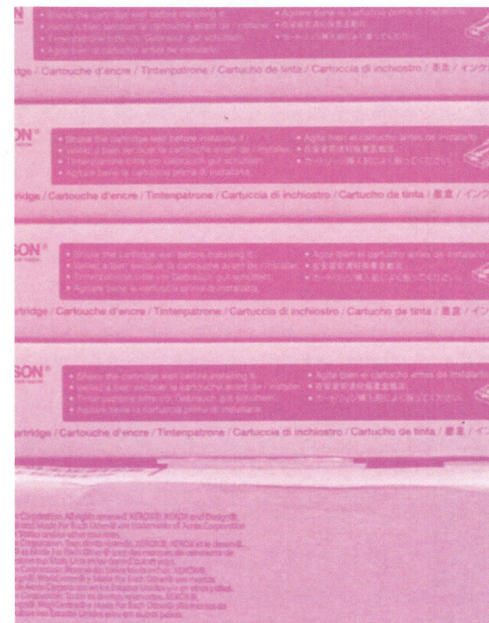
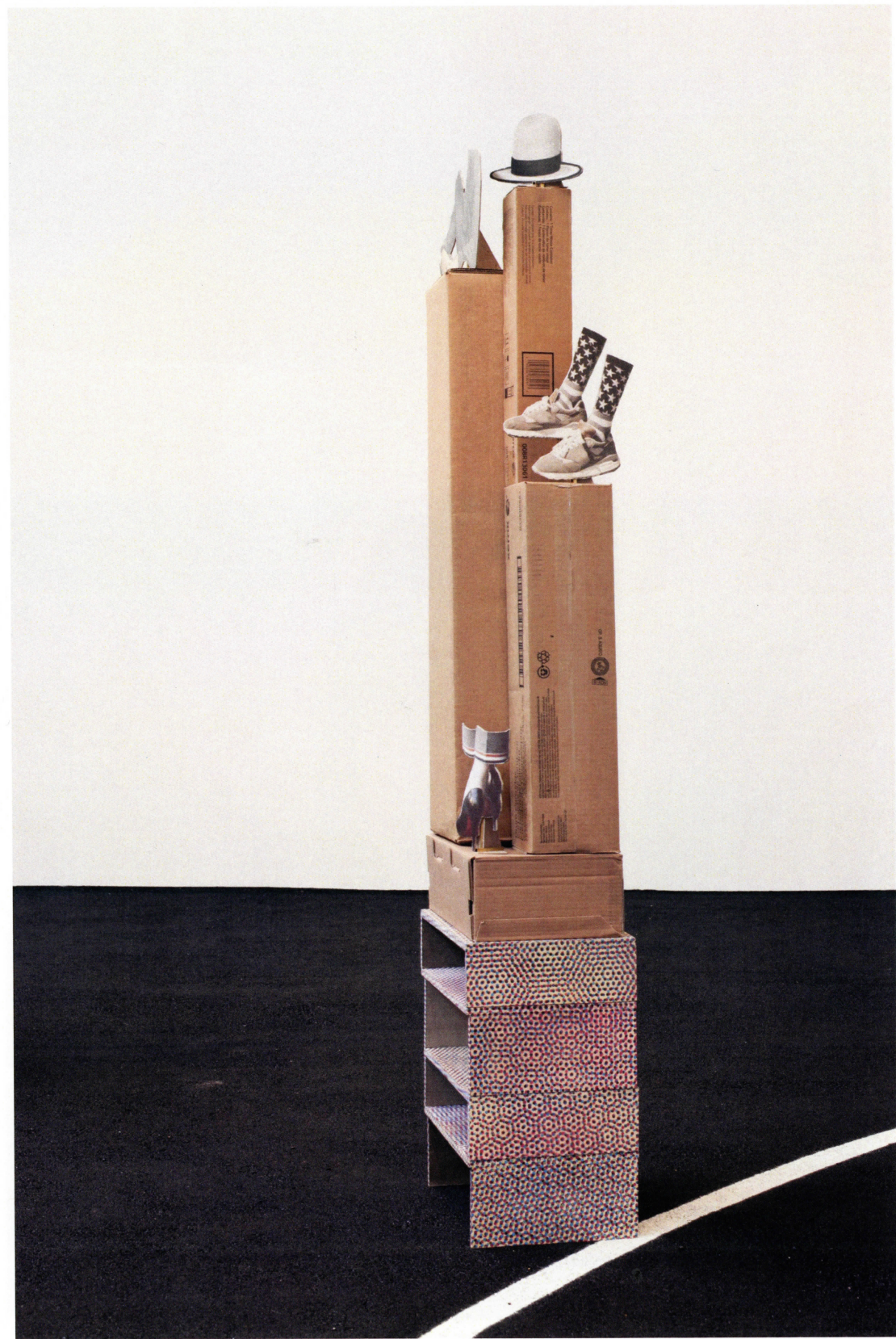




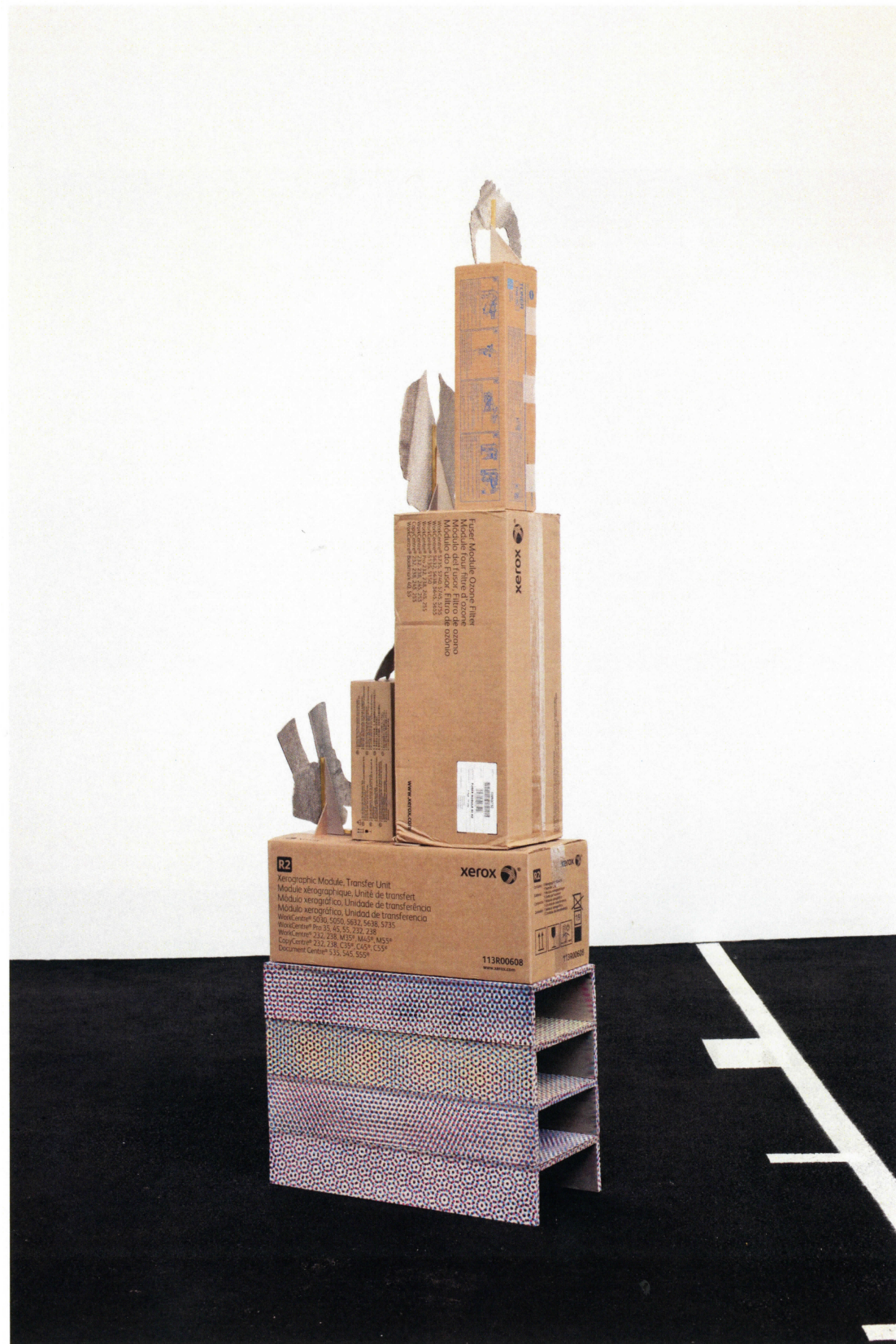












## Acknowledgements

Heather Sincavage, Director

We've all heard the phrase "it's the clothes that make the man" but have we really thought about what that means? It suggests that all we can be boiled down to our appearance. When you think about it, ultimately, how we create identity and what defines style are from 'tastemakers' that we see in magazines, on tv, and in our social media. That's a tremendous amount of power.

St. Louis artist, Lyndon Barrois Jr. accesses the influence media has on identity. His exhibition, "Of Color", evaluates the power of print media and responds to its tastemakers. Appearing in the pages of GQ, Michael Jordan, LeBron James, and Russell Westbrook, have gone from athlete to icon. Barrois intersects the humble beginnings of basket ball by referencing a game of 'street ball' with the gloss of print media in his exhibition in the Sordoni.

"We are actually surrounded BY color, but not able to simply be OF color. Conversely, color is tolerated so long as it is tempered by a lack thereof." -Lyndon Barrois Jr.

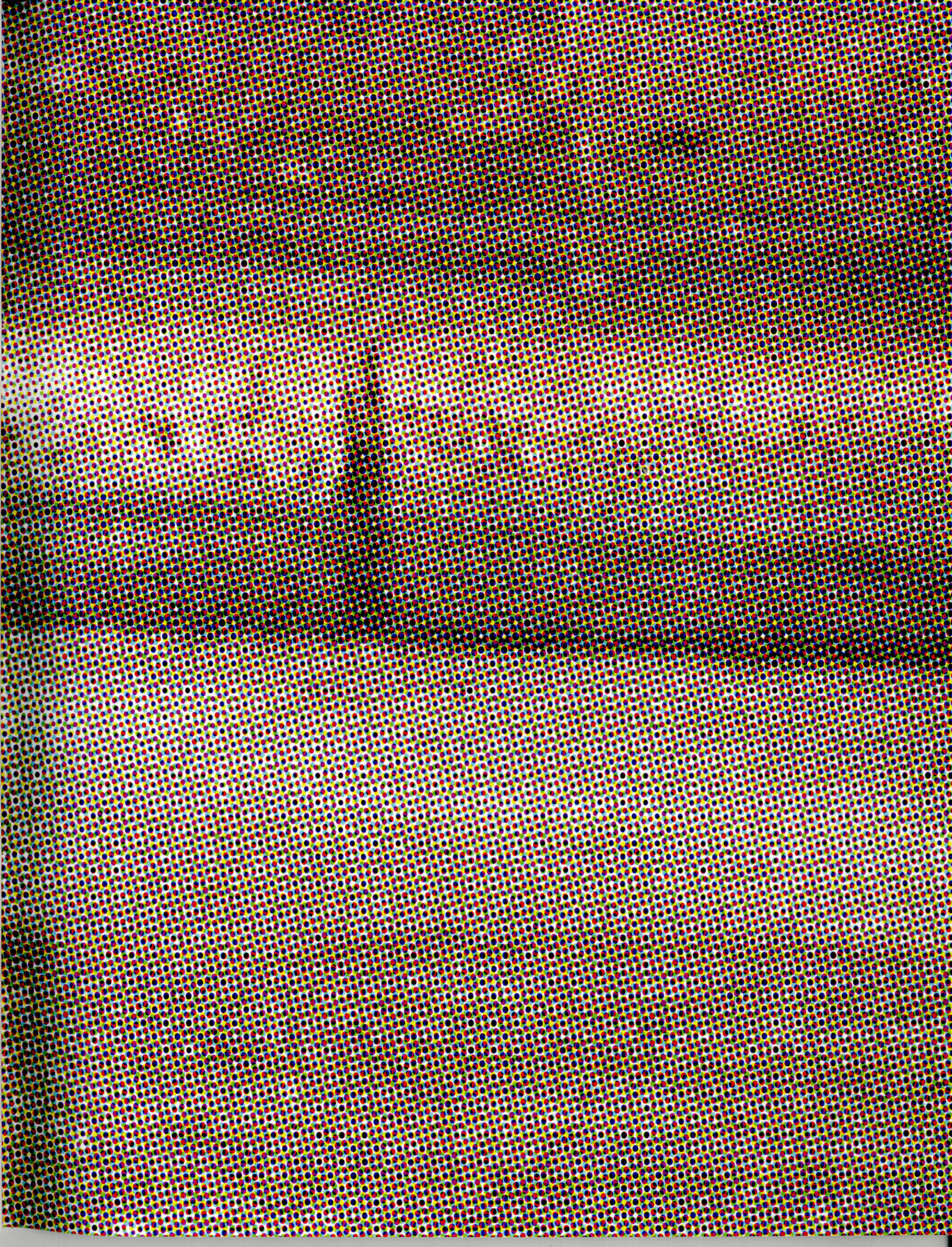
I'd like to thank Lyndon for sharing his work with the Wilkes University community. We are in a time in our country, where conversations on race still dominate our newscasts. I am grateful that Lyndon is so giving of his time and work to the Sordoni so that we might continue the discussion across campus.

This exhibition was originally part of the "2016 Great Rivers Biennial" at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. I would like to thank the museum for sharing Lyndon's work.

I also would like to thank Kevin McCoy at WORK/PLAY and francine j. harris for lending their talents to the Sordoni catalog publication. I am thrilled that they took on the project.

Finally, I would like to thank Dean, Paul Riggs, for his ongoing and generous support of the gallery. From sounding board to art handler, he is always willing to lend a hand.









WILKES UNIVERSITY  
34 WEST SOUTH STREET  
WILKES-BARRE, PA 18766

[www.wilkes.edu/sordoniartgallery](http://www.wilkes.edu/sordoniartgallery)

