

Barrow Parke: Systems and Mythologies

August 7 – December 4, 2023; January 22 – April 3, 2024

1st Floor Main Gallery

ALBANY, NY (July 17, 2023) – For artist duo Mark Barrow and Sarah Parke, weaving is a way of thinking. The subject matter of their collaborative art practice combining handloomed textiles and painting covers topics from world creation myths to computer science to the cosmos, but their work always centers on the craft of weaving: its history, logic, mathematics, and systems, and its intuitive, visual, and tactile qualities. The University Art Museum proudly presents ***Barrow Parke: Systems and Mythologies***, Barrow Parke’s first solo museum exhibition, featuring newly commissioned work, including site-specific wallpaper and vinyl window installations, alongside earlier series showing the arc of their fifteen-year collaboration.



Barrow Parke’s most recent work shows how weaving provides a framework for thinking about systems, such as those in the sciences or anthropology. In *Shapes in Time* (2022), for example, woven and embroidered trees are juxtaposed with painted numbers appearing like computer code. The work conjures associations between natural root systems, “root directories” in computer science, and the numbered shafts and pedals of the eight-harness floor loom used to handweave the fabric itself.

Through woven and painted patterns, Barrow Parke frequently explore the patterns of thinking that form mythological and scientific systems for understanding the cosmos, as seen in the exhibition’s recurring Zodiac figures and Copernican orbits. The newly commissioned work *The Universe* (2023), for example, features fish from a Japanese Ainu creation myth swimming in a sea of patterns that include Zodiac motifs.

Barrow Parke’s earlier *CMYK* (2014-2015) and *RGB* series (2014) explore visual systems. In the latter, select red, green, and blue threads within a woven substrate are individually masked out in black paint, resulting in colors that are optically mixed as with a television or computer monitor. In conversation with the *RGB* works is a newly commissioned piece covering an entire arched bay of four floor-to-ceiling double windows: a luminous translation of graph paper weaving drafts into a grid of translucent red, green, blue, and black vinyl squares that read like stained glass. Earlier iterations of the draft pattern window vinyl projects were realized in New York, Brussels, Milan, and in a permanent installation at Cappella Cavassa, Saluzzo, Italy.

The digital inflection of the vinyl window pixels, as well as the computer-generated patterned wallpaper, push up against the modernist architecture of the museum, designed in 1967 by Edward Durell Stone. In contrast to the expectations of the “white cube” of modernist exhibition spaces, Barrow Parke’s patterned wallpaper domesticates

the space. A challenge to modernist aesthetics was also the impetus for Barrow Parke's earliest collaborations (2008–11), which invert the hierarchy that has privileged painting over weaving by showing how the grid, so crucial to modern abstract painting, has always been inherent in the structure of the woven canvas.

The exhibition also includes works from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections and on loan by modernist and late modernist artists: Anni Albers, Josef Albers, Ellsworth Kelly, and Agnes Martin. All were selected by Barrow Parke to underscore their dialogue with modernism, which in turn informs all the ways they use weaving to think about the world in *Systems and Mythologies*.

Catalogue

A fully illustrated, color catalogue of *Barrow Parke: Systems and Mythologies* will be released later this year, including two scholarly essays contextualizing their work by UAM associate curator Robert R. Shane and art critic and professor Dr. Zoe Stillpass.

About the artists

Mark Barrow (b. 1982) and Sarah Parke (b. 1981) met while studying at the Rhode Island School of Design. They began collaborating in 2008, when Parke first started weaving fabric on which Barrow would paint. As weaving became the primary conceptual structure through which they approached all subjects, they adopted a joint artistic moniker to more accurately reflect how their ideas are generated and spread. Their work focuses on the intersection of weaving (as a spatial and mathematical system) with other visual systems, as well as textiles generally, a medium that has had an outsized imprint on the history and development of culture and civilization.

Barrow Parke live and work in New York City. Barrow holds a B.A. in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and an M.F.A. in Painting from the Yale School of Art. Parke holds a B.A. in Textile Design from the Rhode Island School of Design. They have exhibited widely in institutions including the Shirley Fiterman Art Center, City University of New York, New York; The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; the Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China; Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany; and Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France. Their work is represented in public collections including Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama; the Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles, California; Yale Museum, New Haven, Connecticut; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; the University of Chicago, Illinois; and Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio.

Barrow Parke: Systems and Mythologies and the forthcoming exhibition catalogue are supported by The Coby Foundation, Ltd.



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ALSO ON VIEW

Libros/Arte: Handmade Books from Latin America & the Caribbean

August 7 – December 4, 2023

2nd Floor Main Gallery

Handmade books by small presses push the boundaries of traditional printing techniques while addressing a range of political, social, and cultural subjects.

Supported by the University Libraries and presented in partnership with the University at Albany M.E. Grenander Special Collections and Archives; the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; and the Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies.

Yelaine Rodriguez: EBBÓ

August 7 – December 4, 2023

Nancy Hyatt Liddle Gallery

A story of devotion and defiance is told through Yelaine Rodriguez's short film reinterpreting Louis Aguirre's Cuban chamber opera *Ebbó*.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Museum hours beginning August 7, 2023:

Monday – Friday, 11am – 4pm

Open Select Saturdays 11am – 4pm: 9/23, 9/30, 10/14, 10/21

Closed: 9/4, 10/9, 11/10, 11/23, 11/24

Artists' Reception for all three exhibitions: Friday, August 25, 2023, 5-7pm

For additional programming announcements, please visit our website www.albany.edu/museum or call (518) 442-4035.

Contact: Christine Snyder, Office and Operations Manager, cbatson@albany.edu

Image credit: Barrow Parke, *The Universe*, 2023, acrylic and embroidery on hand-loomed linen, 33 ³/₈ x 35 ³/₈ inches, image courtesy of the artists and JDJ, New York

About the University at Albany:

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