



JOAN GRUBIN
"PAPER OPTICS"

at the Kentler International Drawing Space
Red Hook, Brooklyn

November 9 – December 16, 2012

Whimsy and a poetic brand of minimalism join forces in an exhibition of the paper installations of **Joan Grubin** at the Kentler International Drawing Space situated in the heart of the hurricane- battered Red Hook section of Brooklyn.

The coincidental timing of this show in the context of such devastation has brought the need for an art that can delight and console into dramatic relief. Installing just before and after the storm, Grubin has conjured airy optically quizzical paper structures that seem to sprout from the walls and floor, by making work intimately sited to the quirky nature of the space. In *RE-GROUP*, whimsical plant-like tapered paper forms bloom from the dark brown metal floor panels, their bases seemingly rooted to the floor as color flows upward progressively from umber to increasingly brighter shades of pink.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY, a horizontal stripe construction that presents a lit-up passage of pure chromatic optical madness becomes a kind of mock fluorescent light fixture anchored through carefully matched color to an existing rusted heating pipe in the Kentler space, and includes a faux extension cord made of paper in a huge coil on the wall. Grubin plays with optical ambiguity by making paper masquerade as shadow, and vice versa, drawing the viewer in to deconstruct what is physical and what is visible yet immaterial. Her core strategy of deploying reflected color from unseen fluorescent paint onto the wall draws inspiration from some of the hallucinatory qualities of minimalism, but upends its gravitas with the subversive post-minimal funk of paper fragments. Unifying it all is a spirit of buoyant playfulness and pared-down simplicity of materials and form.

Grubin's work takes on an additional poignant layer of meaning by appearing in the midst of the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Red Hook suffered incalculable damage, and the gallery incurred huge losses through the ruinous flooding of its basement. Grubin had to install the show as troops of volunteers scurried back and forth through the gallery to help with the gutting and rebuilding of Kentler's basement. After thirty years, the Kentler International Drawing Space, a kind of gritty grass-roots non-profit sibling to Manhattan's Drawing Center remains the epitome of the tenacious neighborhood art space, committed to bringing experimental art and drawing to the local community and an art-savvy public.

As the dazed but resilient inhabitants of Red Hook, so many of them artists and artisans, begin to rebuild, Joan Grubin's work appears amidst the wreckage, making art from fragments of colored paper scraps, bits, flaps, and strips – humble ephemera that serve as a testament to vulnerability and survival.