

ARTS

“William Geisler + John Peralta” at Wally Workman Gallery

Peralta's deconstructed machines and Geisler's encaustic abstracts turn painstaking toil into patterns of brilliance

REVIEWED BY WAYNE ALAN BRENNER, FRI., SEPT. 29, 2017

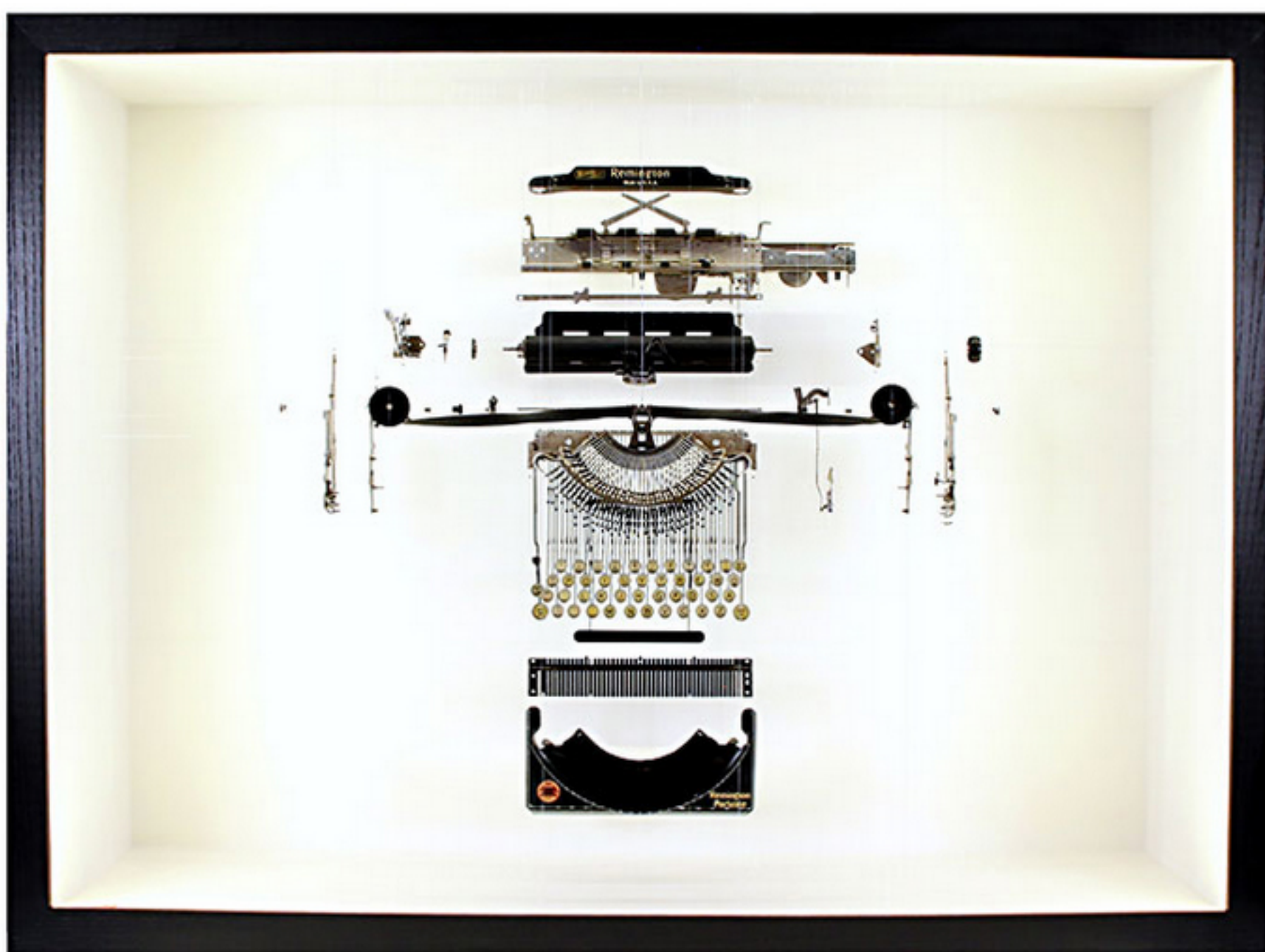
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To Save Time Is to Lengthen Life by John Peralta

You've seen them before, as created by technical illustrators to aid understanding of how a machine works: exploded views, where the components of a manufactured object are separated from one another, as if hovering inches apart in midair, as if the object had been perfectly captured in mid-nova by some high-speed camera that Eadweard Muybridge could've only dreamed about.

There are currently a few rooms in the Wally Workman Gallery that feature such compelling configurations, but for real. The actual objects – vintage typewriters, an antique sewing machine, a silent-film projector, and so on – arranged just like that, their separated parts suspended by a precise array of tension wires, each bright constellation of apparatus occupying its expanded, revelatory space within a pedestal-topping vitrine.

You may have, at some point in your life, witnessed a pristine example of the classic Underwood No. 5 typewriting machine, yes? But you've probably never seen one quite like this. And it and all the other deconstructions are the work of John Peralta, whose elegant red chopmark on the floor of each display suggests a general aesthetic of design equal to that of his rendered machines.

You've seen wax before, too, if only because candles continue to illuminate the more ceremonial portions of our electric times. And you likely know that painting with wax is called, in the art world, *encaustic* painting. And, as with all things creative, there's the truly bad, the more annoyingly mediocre – “Why, I'll paint the same dull still life of fruit as ever, but now I'll do it in wax!” – and then there are the rare brilliances that compensate our efforts toward ignoring all those lesser examples of mucking about.

Here's the work of William Geisler, who is by no means just mucking about and who achieves, again and again, with what must be relentless hours of toil for each piece, that encaustic brilliance. Here at the Workman Gallery is wax thickly forming great flat squares of additive or subtractive texture – complex grids of raised dots or squares – rendered on wooden panels with such precision that you'd suspect one of Peralta's machines, pre-explosion, had a hand (or perhaps a *flange*) in their creation.

Geisler creates patterns of starkly visual as well as topographic comprehension, too, whether through the use of pigmented wax or by surfacing his raised shapes with sections carefully excised from maps of the geophysical world (*Aquamarine* and *Tributaries*). These are the sort of abstract works that entice with potentially ocean-deep if somewhat oblique meaning, that delight and intrigue the mindful eye as much as they impress with evidence of painstaking industry.

This is the sort of show where a person wants to buy – and thus own, and maybe one day have enough residential space to accommodate – every fucking piece that's on display. Aaaaargh. But you can at least get a good look at it all this weekend, citizen, before the show comes down on Sunday.

“William Geisler + John Peralta”

Wally Workman Gallery, 1202 W. Sixth

www.wallyworkmangallery.com

Through Sept. 30