

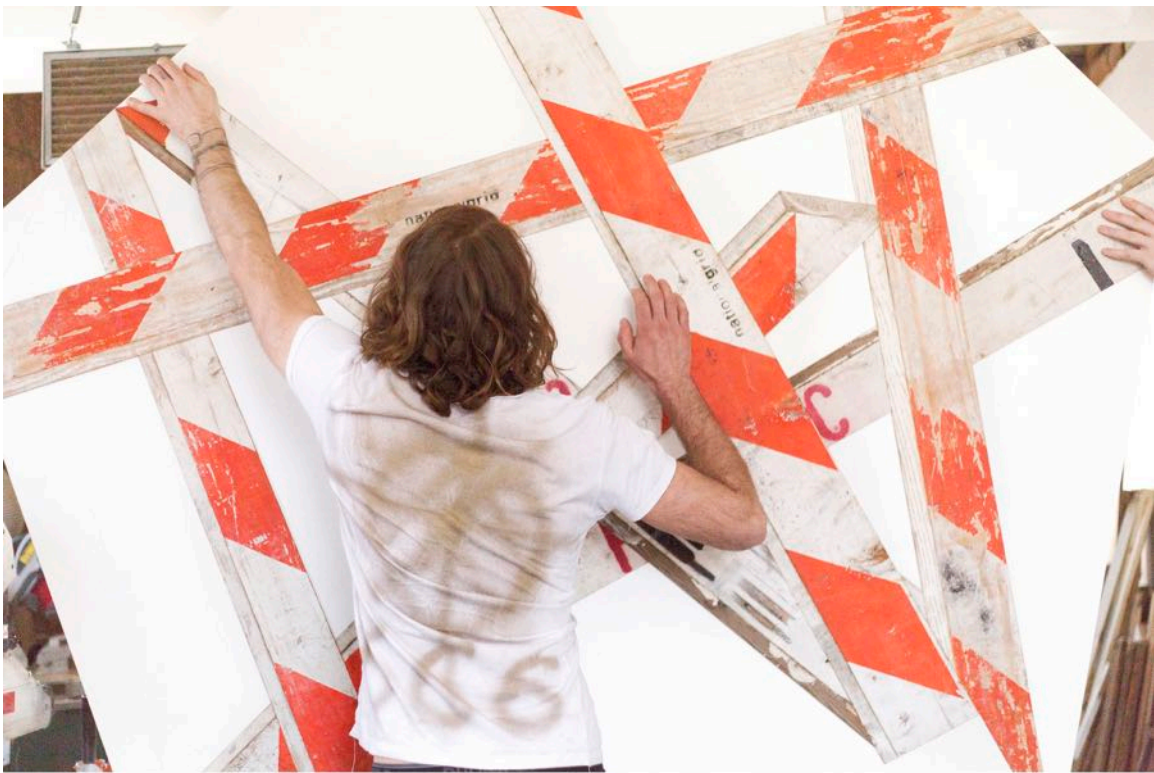
# MIKE WEISS GALLERY



## How Michael Zelehoski Activates the Everyday

By Kurt McVey

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The artist Michael Zelehoski assembles one of the large-scale found-object sculptures that will go on view in his solo show, "New Order," at Mike Weiss Gallery on May 7. *Monet Lucki*

Michael Zelehoski isn't exactly finished with "The Allegory of the Cave." The Massachusetts-born artist, whose first solo show at Mike Weiss Gallery, "New Order," opens this Thursday, first delved into Plato's famous thought experiment when he used it as the subject for his early admissions essay for Bard College at Simon's Rock at the unruly age of 16. "Art is a shadow of a shadow. This is why a lot of these philosophers didn't really have a place for art — they saw it as a distraction," says Zelehoski in his self-built studio in Beacon, New York, where he's been working since a fateful trip to Dia, the minimalist Mecca, back in 2011. For his upcoming exhibit, Zelehoski has transformed found objects, mostly discarded wooden

stockroom palettes and police barricades, into intricately cut 2D, wall-mounted assemblages. The works function as optical illusions that seek to alter our relationship not only to physical space but to the often overlooked, humble, utilitarian objects that move within it.

“I’m using art as a medium to bring us back into contact with the real world,” says Zelehoski, who recently sold his largest work to date, “Open House,” 2012, to the Pompidou in Paris. What exactly constitutes the “real world” in a virtual age is up for debate, of course, as much of our daily lives are spent online, where the proliferation of imagery has moved into stratospheric levels of meta-visual overload. “My work is a rejection of representation, while most artists are just creating images,” the artist says. “We don’t need more images, and we certainly don’t need more stuff. I can solve both problems at once by removing these items from our own spatial continuity.” If, for most artists, the palette is simply a means to another end, Zelehoski is trying to make it an end unto itself. In stripping its function, Zelehoski activates the object on the level of our perception — à la Duchamp — while celebrating its individuality. “You’d be surprised,” Zelehoski says, with a calm sense of urgency. “There’s real intrinsic value in these objects, and if we can find it and perceive it, it might activate our perception of everything.”