

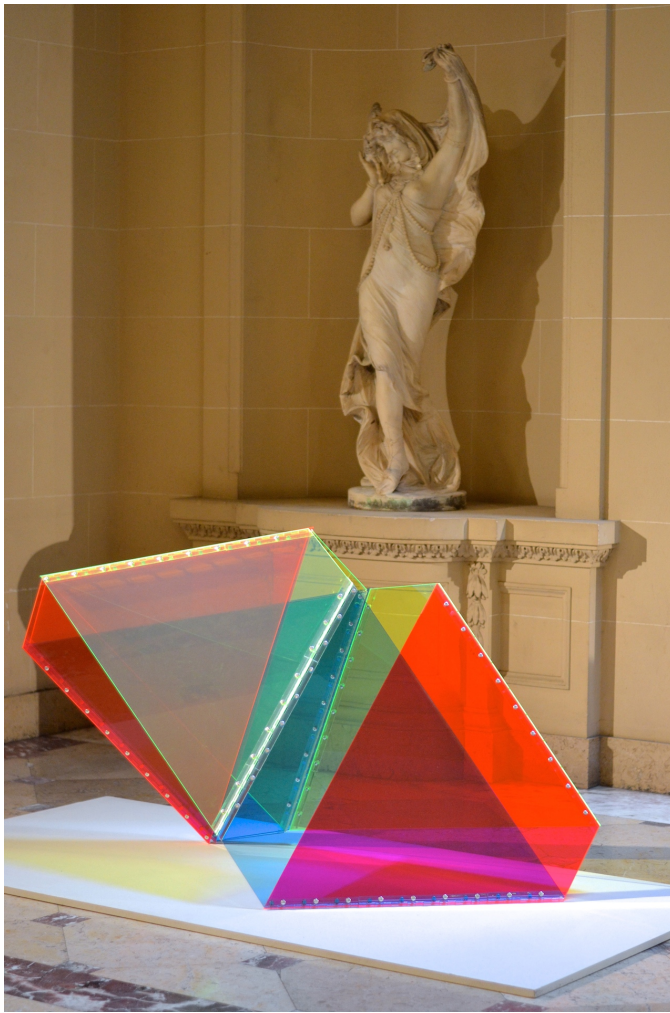
The Infinite Forms of Marta Chilindron's Manipulable Sculptures

by [Sarah Zabrodski](#) on December 2, 2014



Installation view, 'EXPAND//FOLD//COLLAPSE// Sculptures by Marta Chilindron' at the Institute of Fine Arts (all photos by Katharine J. Wright)

A historic building on Millionaire's Row seems an unlikely location to come upon contemporary sculpture, yet the old and the new are currently loosening each other up in a former party mansion on the Upper East Side. [EXPAND//FOLD//COLLAPSE// Sculptures by Marta Chilindron](#) features brightly colored, manipulable works placed within the Beaux-Arts setting of the James B. Duke House. The building, erected in 1912, has housed New York University's [Institute of Fine Arts](#) (IFA) since 1952, when the Duke family donated their part-time home to the school.



Marta Chilindron "Mobius" (2013), acrylic, dimensions variable, closed: 36 x 64 x 63 in (click to enlarge)

As a former IFA student, I am familiar with the normally stiff, intimidating edge of the Duke House atmosphere. But the entrance atrium, referred to as the Great Hall, has recently taken on new life as a space for students to curate exhibitions. The Chilindron installation, put together by two PhD students, Susanna Temkin and Katharine Wright, may represent a rare occasion of minimalist art actually humanizing a space; the vibrant colors and playful tone bring a welcome sense of levity to an otherwise staid location. With only eight pieces, the exhibition is relatively small, but it creates an impressive visual impact. Chilindron's work is typically presented in the austere white cubes of galleries and modern art museums; now I find it hard to imagine her art anywhere besides this type of opulent environment.

As the exhibition's title suggests, Chilindron's sculptures are not static. They expand, collapse, fold, and bend into any number of different forms. Watching one of her sculptures be manipulated into unexpected shapes has a not-so-subtle element of magic to it. This experiential aspect is the source of both the greatest strength and weakness of the exhibition, as casual visitors do not get to witness the spectacle of kinetic art. The IFA has hosted a few events offering the chance to watch the artist and curators manipulate the sculptures (as well as permitting visitors to play with small-scale models of the pieces), but most people will walk away without this integral involvement with Chilindron's work. In the absence of it, the [e-catalogue](#) pictures of sculptures in various states and [online videos](#) must suffice.

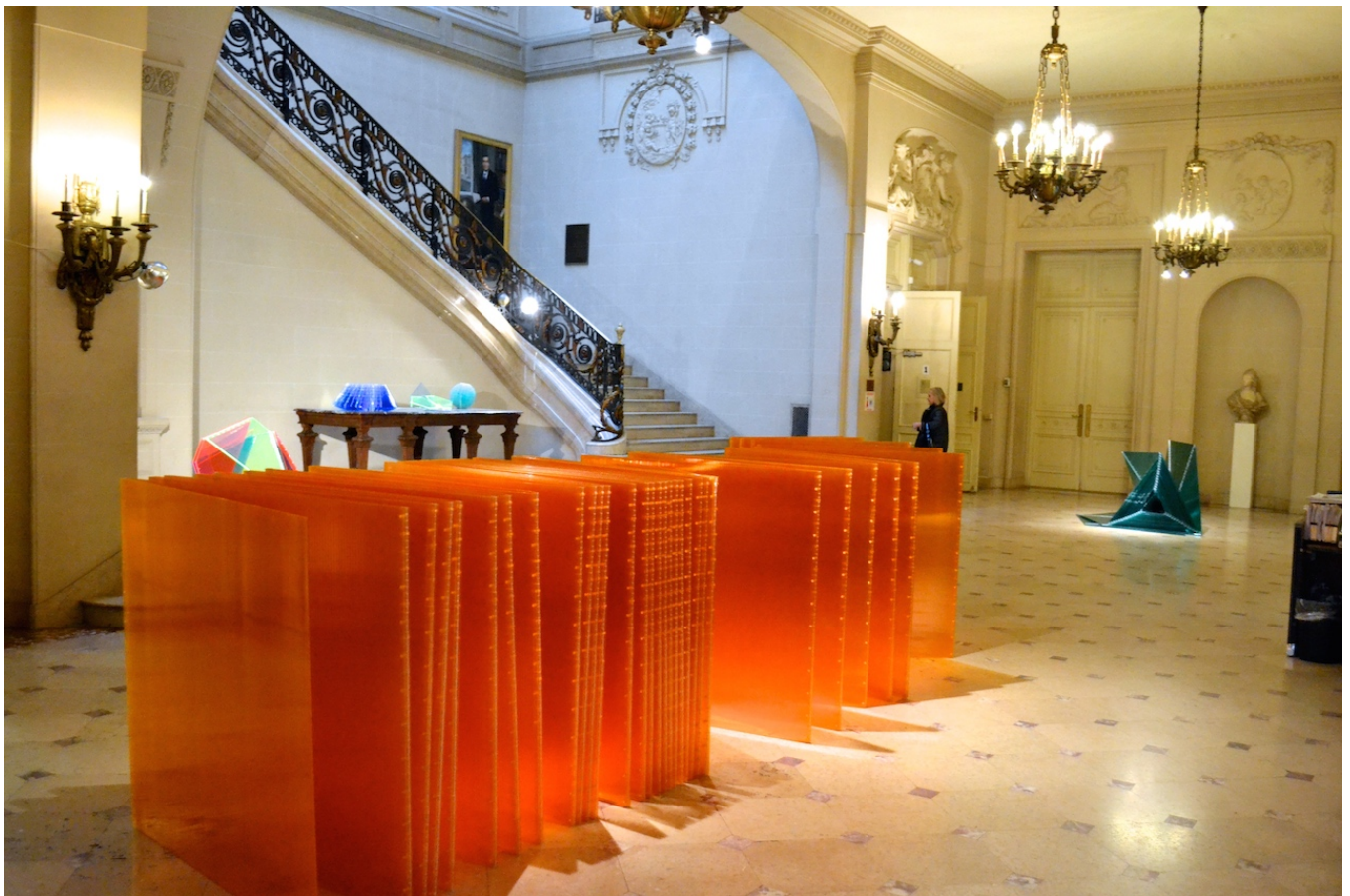
Chilindron is often characterized as a Latin American artist (she was born in Argentina in 1951), but she has lived and worked in New York since 1969. She began as a painter, moved towards sculpture, and in 2000 started using industrial acrylics and then twin-wall polycarbonates in transparent, colorful hues. Her hitting upon hinges was a major breakthrough, allowing Chilidron to create many of the works on display.





Marta Chilindron, "Ring" (2013), acrylic, dimensions variable, diameter: 30 in

The historic architecture and academic function of the building make the curatorial challenges of the Great Hall rather daunting. There's only one vertical surface capable of supporting a hung object, and it's located in the entry vestibule. The curators have placed "Ring" (2013) here (it's displayed in an inverted structure, but the title alludes to an alternative format), and its luminous surface plays off the changing outdoor light quite stunningly. The constant movement of students and faculty through the hall is also potentially problematic, but the curators confronted this issue by assertively placing two large-scale pieces on the lobby floor.



Marta Chilindron "Cube 48 Orange" (2014), twin wall polycarbonate, dimensions variable, closed: 48 x 48 x 48 in

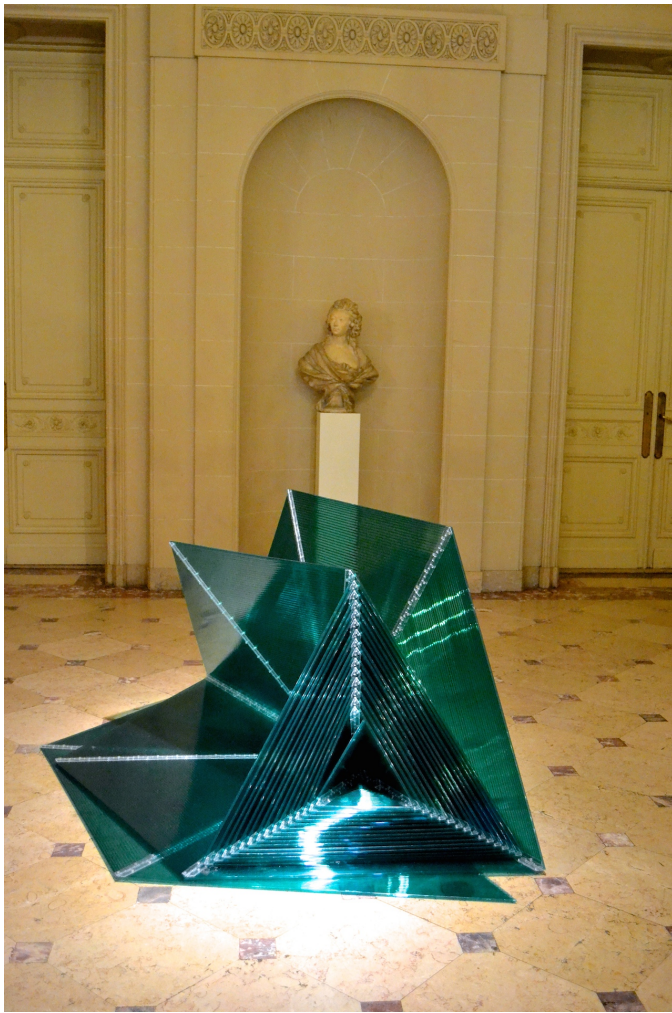
The most immediately eye-catching piece in the show is also the largest: "Cube 48 Orange" (2014). In its smallest shape the sculpture forms a perfect 48-inch cube; when expanded, it could cover an entire New York City block. For the duration of the exhibition it has occupied various lengths in between, continually being adjusted and slowly snaking its way across the expanse of the Great Hall. The other piece on the main floor is "Green Pyramid" (2006),

featured in a new, never-before-shown configuration. A [video](#) of Chilidron manipulating this work illustrates the true physicality and geometric wizardry of her sculpture.



From left: Marta Chilindron “Helix” (2011), acrylic, dimensions variable, closed: 9 ½ x 11 x 25 in; “Convertible Circle” (2009-2014), acrylic, dimensions variable, diameter: 24 in; “Sphere” (2008), acrylic, dimensions variable, diameter: 12 in

Three smaller works are displayed on a marble table set against the grandiose curving staircase. Each one features circular forms that echo both the shape of staircase and its scrollwork detailing. “Convertible Circle” (2009–14) is a hybrid piece created from two preexisting sculptures that the artist took apart and repurposed into one. Although Chilindron resists being categorized with specific art movements or groups, she does insist on the role of nature in her work. This influence is particularly evident in “Sphere” (2008), which opens into the form of a blossoming flower.



Marta Chilindron “Green Pyramid” (2006), twin wall polycarbonate, dimensions variable, closed: 48 x 41 ½ x 39 in (click to enlarge)

Each piece in the exhibition has a distinct geometry and structure — in short, its own architecture. In this way, the sculptures share an affinity with the Great Hall: both showcase a precision of design and a scrupulousness of construction. Former robber-baron homes quite naturally lend themselves to the presentation of Old Master paintings, but the minimalist forms, bright colors, and industrial materials of Chilindron’s sculptures have their own vivacity in such a setting, acting as a meaningful foil to the Beaux-Arts architecture while generating unexpected similarities.

[EXPAND//FOLD//COLLAPSE// Sculptures by Marta Chilindron](#) continues at the Institute of Fine Arts (1 East 78th Street, Upper East Side, Manhattan) through December 5.