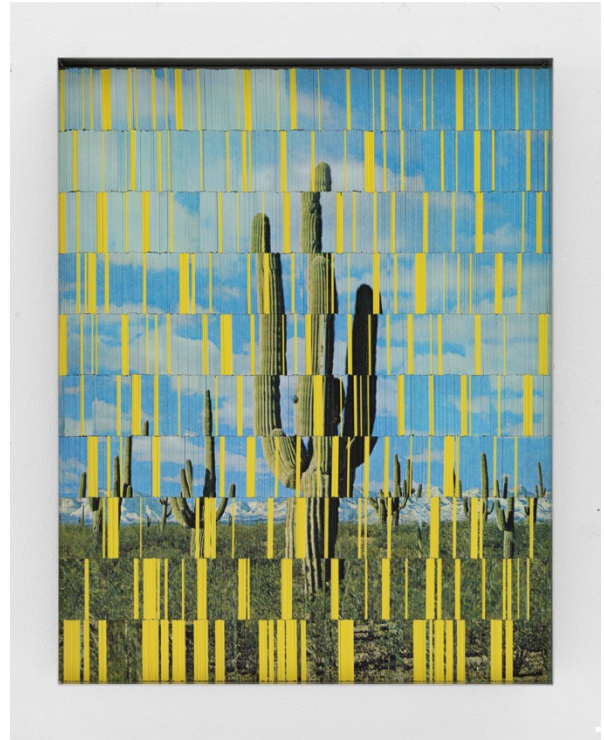


Peter Wegner Case Studies

March 28 – May 23, 2026

Artist Talk: Sat. April 4th – 2:00 pm



Text by Thomas Georg Blank

In the early 2000s, Swiss artist and comedian Ursus Wehrli published *Kunst aufräumen* (“Tidying Up Art”), a book that quickly became a European cult favorite. In its pages, Wehrli takes iconic artworks like Kandinsky’s abstractions, Van Gogh’s *Bedroom in Arles* or Mondrian’s grids, and rearranges them according to a peculiar tidiness. Brushstrokes sorted by color are stacked into ordered piles, furniture is lined up in meticulous rows, and chaos is transformed into a system. It’s a humorous act, but one that exposes something profoundly human: our deep desire to classify, rationalize, and make sense of the world through structure.

Peter Wegner’s work could be understood as a reversal of Wehrli’s approach. Instead of tidying up art, he reintroduces a measured degree of disorder into the systems that promise clarity. His practice begins with the foundational tools of organization like language, maps, or printed color systems, and pulls at their seams. The result is not an outright destruction of order, but a recalibration of how we see. Wegner’s images refuse to stay within their grids; instead, they fold, flip, and multiply until structure reveals its fragility.

A number of the works gathered in *Case Studies*, his first exhibition with Marshall Gallery and first in Los Angeles since 2012, take this investigation directly into the language of color and photographic perception. Several *Color Wheel* pieces revisit one of the oldest visual attempts to systematize sensation. The color wheel is an emblem of modernity's urge to rationalize, transforming something subjective and fluid into a diagram that can be memorized, measured, and reproduced. Wegner's versions are both faithful and subversive: they acknowledge the precision of these chromatic orders while exposing how arbitrary their logic can be.

The work *Sky X / Sky Y*, from 1999, operates like a visual trap. From a distance, it appears as a solid field of immaculate blue, as a surface so even and calm it could almost disappear into itself. Yet, up close, the illusion collapses into an intricate constellation of colored dots, each a fragment in the reproduction of a hue we imagine as singular. What looks like purity is, in fact, multiplicity; what feels smooth is revealed as composite. Wegner's sky is not a depiction of nature but a study in perception's architecture, how the smallest units of information gather to produce the impression of seamlessness.

A group of map-based collages, including a *Reverse Atlas* work, extends this dynamic to the politics of space and representation. Here, Wegner literally cuts apart the authoritative surface of geography, reassembling fragments of cartographic precision into abstract topographies. In these pieces, nations and borders, the visual signatures of order and control, come undone. Orientation becomes uncertain; longitude and latitude lose their function. In *Buildings Made of Sky*, Wegner executes a similar inversion: he turns photographs of the gaps between skyscrapers upside down, transforming negative space into impossible architecture. Together, these works transform systems of precision, the map, the city, the photograph, into engines of uncertainty.

The exhibition's title series, *Case Studies (2025-2026)*, takes this inquiry one step further. Each work begins with found photographs of ordinary subjects, cactuses, mountains, sunsets at the beach, sourced from vintage field guides and nature magazines. "I'm not trying to take a perfect or archetypal image of anything," Wegner notes. "We all know what a cactus looks like. What's important to me about these images is not that they are remarkable but that they are unremarkable—banal, pedestrian. Denotative rather than connotative: this is a cactus. This is a mountain. This is a sunset at the beach. Anyone could've taken these photos, and we all have. Check your phone." By choosing images stripped of authorship or artistry, he isolates the grammar of looking itself, the learned templates through which we decipher the world.

Formally, the *Case Studies* continue Wegner's long-standing fascination with the edge, both as a material condition and a conceptual boundary. The artist cuts and arranges countless slivers of photographic paper on their sides, turning surface into structure. From afar, these pieces read as cohesive images; up close, they dissolve into strata of edges, miniature cliffs of accumulated material.

This mode of construction echoes his earlier paper-based works, where the edge was both the subject and the method. As Wegner has said, “The edge is the frontier, the place where ideas become objects, where math becomes material, where two dimensions become, unmistakably, three. I’ve spent my entire career exploring edge conditions. Early on, that involved translating paper artifacts like a paint chip or printed billboard into a three-dimensional object with a focus on the edge.”

In *Case Studies*, the “edge” becomes both laboratory and metaphor. It is the site where systems of order, optical, linguistic, or material, are tested for permeability. Wegner’s works hover between the analytical and the poetic, as if each were conducting an experiment on perception itself. Across his practice, the tools of categorization inherited from modernity, classification, standardization, and reproducibility, are turned inside out. What emerges is not chaos, but a subtler form of clarity: the recognition that order is itself a human invention, provisional and alive.

Presented within the context of Marshall Gallery’s focus on artists working at the fringes of lens-based media, the exhibition *Case Studies* underscores how images do not merely depict reality but produce it. Wegner’s art invites viewers to dwell in that delicate zone where form and perception meet, at the edge of seeing, where meaning begins to flicker and reorganize.

Based in Berkeley, CA, Peter Wegner (American, b. 1963) has exhibited widely in the United States and internationally, including solo presentations at Lever House, The Bohen Foundation, and Museum der bildenden Kunst. Permanent museum collections include The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Yale University Art Gallery, The San Jose Museum of Art, The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Museum of Contemporary Art, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, The University of Colorado Art Museum, The UNC Ackland Art Museum, and The Henry Art Gallery at UW. Private collections include Collezione Panza, Varese IT and Sammlung Rosenkranz.

Image: Peter Wegner, *Yellow Divided by Cactus*, 2026. SQS UV ink on polystyrene mounted with VHB to anodized aluminum case (7,200 sheets). 14.5” x 12” x 2.25”.

Marshall Gallery

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Gallery hours: Wednesday – Saturday, 12 PM – 6 PM