



New American Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT

88

June/July

Juror's Comments

Barbara O'Brien

Curator, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO



Given the superb quality and artistic range of work submitted for, and eventually included in, this South edition of *New American Paintings*, it seems that the region could well be as cosmopolitan and international an art scene as either the East or West Coast. Having lived for 20 years in

Boston, and recently settled in the Midwest, this is indeed a revelation. Artists have emigrated from countries around the globe to study, teach, or live in the thirteen states and one district represented in this edition, a reflection perhaps of an ongoing artistic diaspora. It was an honor to look at the work of the hundreds of artists in the selection process; a challenge as well as a pleasure.

This competition's winners reflect both my current fascinations (the Neo-Baroque; the history of painting the human figure; the insistence of pattern; the conflation of traditional distinctions between illustration and fine art, between the digital and the weight of line, between time-based and two-dimensional mediums) and a continuing belief in the magic of the artist's studio as a place to gather the inspirations of the world and practice the alchemy of the artist.

It is the role of a curator of contemporary art to ask themselves what's next. This review of painting from the South suggests that the growth of MFA programs and the collegial atmosphere of many parts of the South have added cultural wealth to this region

of the United States. I held the selections in this issue of *New American Paintings* up against the best paintings shown across the United States, and proudly so.

Many of the South winners reinvestigate the presentation of gender, race, and class without falling into an older model of the didactic. Gary Chapman's heroically scaled paintings present an iconography of masculinity both expected (meat on a plate; a muscle man wearing a deep-sea mask) and surprising (a sympathetic portrait of a young man leaning toward and gazing at the viewer; a burning heart impaled on a sword.) A new feminine, romantic, and playful style is presented in Casey O'Connell's paintings—an appealing mix of doodling, dreaming, and painting. These fresh Murakami-like figures are set in relief against gilded patterns recalling the lush surface of a Klimt. In *Deep Down*, a pattern of jewel-tone pinks and reds become a flotilla of air bubbles escaping from the mouths of lovers locked in a deep-sea kiss.

Cultural signifiers from the East and West are often conflated to create complex formal and conceptual meaning. In Hadie Shafie's ink and paper paintings, tightly scrolled and brightly colored rolls of paper hide hand-written text by the artist. Like 1000 blooming targets à la Jasper Johns, these paintings delight with the Op-art sensation of vibrating constellations of color and intrigue, with all the mystery that hidden words hold.

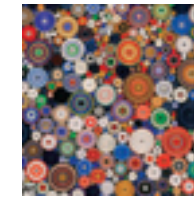
Transforming the function of dress making pattern into a proletariat's march is the end game of John Westmark's *The Tin-derbox*. The high drama of *The Three Brothers* suggests the literary influence of Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*.



Sites p132



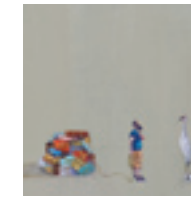
Cavanaugh p31



Shafie p123



Bronaugh p22



Chambers p35



Chapman p38

“...the growth of MFA programs and the collegial atmosphere of many parts of the South have added cultural wealth to this region...”

Joshua Bronaugh's sensual paintings engage with a sense of immediacy; gesture and medium are both expression and experience of the sensual. The media used are surprising; oil paint, motor oil, alkyd, and gold float on a plastic support. The wolf atop a counter in a brasserie in *Change is the Disease, Doctor, Both* is Bronaugh's twenty-first century equivalent of a Joseph Beuys spirit guide, with loose brushwork falling somewhere between the autobiography of gesture and concrete thought (another Beuysian method).

Michael Porten's portrait series, *Symbolic Painting*, juxtaposes a bearded face—viewed in the quietude of a black and white profile—with straight-from-the-tube primaries in a staccato pattern of information icons; the female as a skirted simplified form, or danger as a skull and crossbones. Radiating bands of color emphasize the edge and corners of the composition heightening our awareness that information fires on many cylinders, and that creating meaning is a complex equation.

Whether the scale is intimate as in Ali Cavanaugh's “modern frescos,” or monumental as in Lilian Garcia-Roig's tour de force reinvestigations of the *plein air* painting tradition, or finds the intimate *within* the monumental as in Joshua Chamber's *It's for my surprise*, the paintings I selected share a commitment to creating

a distinctive formal vocabulary with an awareness that traditions (however art historical) and influences (however of-the-moment) each influence the formation of an artist's distinctive voice. ■

Barbara O'Brien is Curator at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri. A native of Kansas, O'Brien holds an M.F.A. from Rhode Island School of Design and both B.A. and B.S. degrees from the University of Kansas. Over the past twenty years, she has curated more than 50 exhibitions of contemporary art. Most recently, O'Brien lived in Boston. As an Associate Professor at Simmons College, she was the Director of the Trustman Art Gallery and head of the Arts Administration program. She was the editor-in-chief of Art New England magazine from 2003-2006. She is an elected member of both AICA and ArtTable, an organization of executive women in the arts.

Noteworthy:

Amy Sherald

Juror's Pick p128

There are formal and conceptual reasons that the oil on canvas portraits by Amy Sherald warrant special attention. (But honestly, I just can't resist these paintings, and isn't the magic of attraction one of the reasons we continue to look at art?) In each of Sherald's paintings a three-quarter figure faces us squarely, in a space defined by a backdrop of vibrating color. A mottled pattern of cherry pink, matching the gingham check of the girl's blouse in *Well Prepared and Maladjusted*, peeks through aquamarine blue. I feel engaged not only in an investigation of painting, but also in a triangulated conversation between artist, subject, and viewer; the often inscrutable nature of communication itself.



Chris Scarborough

Editor's Pick p168

Chris Scarborough's latest work suggests a world in the process of re-ordering itself after some great, undefined cataclysm. Drawing on sources that range from art history to Japanese pop culture, his images seem to separate and coalesce in the same moment. In a way, Scarborough is attempting to give visual form to cultural entropy; he is interested in the breaking down of boundaries and norms, and in the potential that this instability creates for new modes of thought.



Winners: Southern Competition 2009



Juror: Barbara O'Brien, Curator, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO

Juror's Selections:

John **Aquilino** | Anne **Bagby** | Misty **Bennett** | Joshua **Bronaugh** | Luke Miller **Buchanan** | Ali **Cavanaugh** | Joshua **Chambers** | Gary **Chapman** | Mary **Chiaramonte** | Adam **de Boer** | Janet **Decover** | Jeff **Demetriou** | Dara **Engler** | Bill **Fisher** | Lilian **Garcia-Roig** | Charles W. **Goolsby** | Reni **Gower** | Michelle **Hagewood** | Greg **Moore** | Jenean **Morrison** | Casey **O'Connell** | Meredith **Pardue** | Isaac **Paine** | Raul **Perdomo** | Michael **Porten** | Richard **Roth** | Katherine **Sandoz** | Chris **Sedgwick** | Hadieh **Shafie** | Amy **Sherald** | Robert **Sites** | Gregory **Thielker** | Zuzka **Vaclavik** | Jonathan Charles **Vaughan** | John **Westmark** | Rusty **Wolfe**

Editor's Selections:

Gonzalo A. **Fuenmayor** | Nolan **Haan** | Allison **Reimus** | Chris **Scarborough** | Nora **Sturges** | Caomin **Xie**



The following section is presented in alphabetical order.
Biographical information has been edited.
Prices for available work may be found on page 180.



Amy Sherald
The Rabbit in the Hat | oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches



Amy Sherald
They Call Me Redbone But I'd Rather Be Strawberry Shortcake | oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches



Amy Sherald

Well Prepared and Maladjusted | oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches

Amy Sherald

Baltimore, MD

amysherald@gmail.com / www.amysherald.com

b. 1973 Columbus, GA

Education

- 2004 MFA, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
- 1997 BA, Clark-Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA

Residencies

- 2008 Studio Assistantship, Tong Xion Art Center, Beijing, China
- 2005 Private Study with Odd Nerdrum, Larvik, Norway
- 2000 Taller Portobello Artist Colony, Portobello, Panama

Solo Exhibitions

- 2003 *Earth Works*, The Labyrinth, Portobello, Panama

Group Exhibitions

- 2008 *Quasi-Painting*, Randall Scott Gallery, Washington, DC
- Urban Renaissance*, Ramscale Gallery, New York, NY
- 2006 *Femme Effect*, Sub-Basement Gallery, Baltimore, MD
- Museum of Panama, Panama City, Panama

Publications

- 2008 *The Studio Museum of Harlem Magazine*, Fall
- 2006 *Baltimore Sun*, *In This Exhibition the Subject I Women*
- 2003 *La Prensa*, *El Recuerdo de Una Feria*

Collections

- Mr. and Mrs. Eddie and Shannon Franks
- Dr. Broderick Franklin
- FTI Technologies Inc.
- Mr. and Mrs. Pat and Jeanine Turner
- Mr. and Mrs. Marty and Isra Wynn
- Mr. and Mrs. Chuks and Laura Okoro

This work began as an inquisitive journey into my own identity as a black American. I asked myself who would I be and how would I view myself if all the information that I was inculcated with about being black was given to me without the negative connotations so inextricably entwined within the history of our nation.

Ultimately I recognize that the transformation of the meaning of "black," given its various connotations and what it means to be described as such in America, is a constantly changing thing.

With this in mind I use portraiture as a visual alternative to textual explanations of the human condition as it relates to my ideas of "blackness." I synthesize my own archetypes and icons; playful yet sober portraits of black Americans within an imaginative history where I do black my way, in the European tradition of oil-painted portraiture. Ultimately, my work is a conceptual metaphor for who I am as a black American, the by-product of tradition and innovation.

Sherald





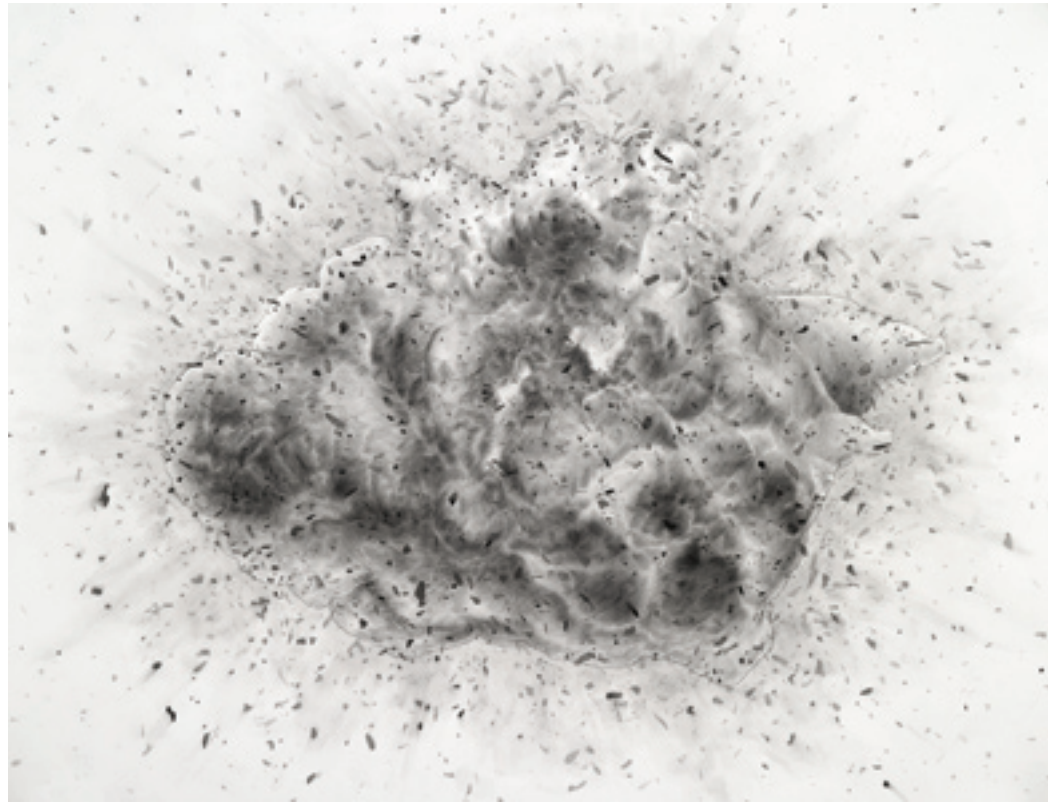
Chris Scarborough

Untitled (Orbital Debris) | graphite and watercolor on paper, 19 x 15 inches



Chris Scarborough

Untitled (The Economist) | graphite and watercolor on paper, 15 x 20 inches



Chris Scarborough

Untitled (Big Bang) | graphite and watercolor on paper, 14.75 x 19.25 inches

Chris Scarborough

Nashville, TN
 404.827.0030 (Marcia Wood Gallery)
 atomicbutter@gmail.com / www.scarboy.net

b. 1976 Florence, AL

Solo Exhibitions

- 2009 Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA
Curator's Office, Washington, DC
- 2008 Foley Gallery, New York, NY
- 2007 TAG Gallery, Nashville, TN
- 2006 Gescheidle, Chicago, IL
Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA

Group Exhibitions

- 2009 Scion Exhibition Space, Los Angeles, CA
- 2008 Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL
Redux Center for Contemporary Art, Charleston, SC
- 2007 Curator's Office, Washington, DC

Awards

- 2008 Artist Fellowship for the State of Tennessee

Publications

- 2009 *Hi Fructose*, Spring
- 2008 *New York Magazine*, April
- 2007 *NY Arts*, January/February and May/June
Dart International, Spring
- 2006 *NY Arts*, November/December and May/June
Art Papers, November/December
- 2005 *Art Papers*, November/December

Collections

- 21C Museum
- Tennessee State Museum
- ReVive Skincare

Represented by

- Curator's Office, Washington, DC
- Foley Gallery, New York, NY
- Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA

I've been making work that explores the idea of an existence after an ambiguous cataclysm like a new Big Bang. Viewers are unsure what kind of bang this was exactly, and now the world they see is similar to our own, but things here are more askew and strange. Using many diverse elements from Japanese pop culture and art history to science fiction, Chinese propaganda posters, and real life, these ideas and elements from our collective cultures have now become literal agents of evolution. When taken into new contexts and narratives, they confront our notions of what is ideal to the human species.

I am compelled to create work that explores the grey areas that form when cultural and contextual boundaries erode and cross paths.

Scarborough



Spotlight

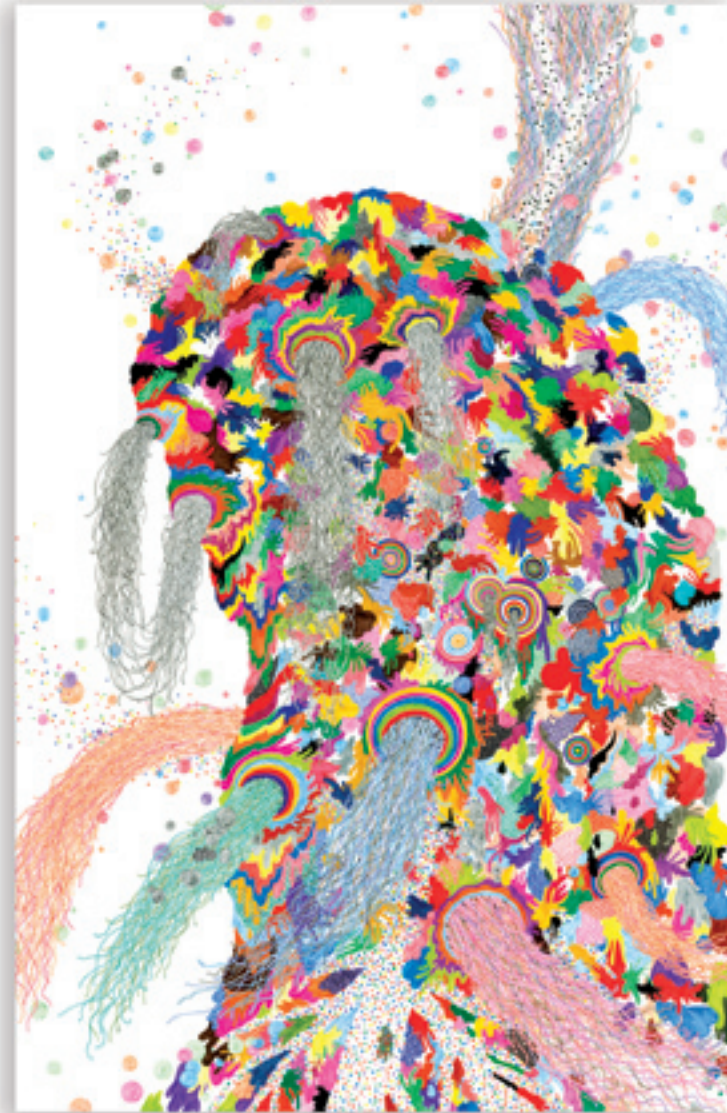
Jen Stark (Edition #70) Speaks to Evan J. Garza

The universe is a vast, endlessly sprawling environment, randomly spotted with dense collections of activity and organic matter. Disparate celestial bodies manifest themselves, each with their own unique properties, in surroundings formed by both disorder and attraction. It is with these qualities in mind that Miami-based artist Jen Stark conjures in her work a kind of controlled chaos.

Her works on paper brim with brightly hued doodles, practically bubbling off the surface with intensely composed explosions of color and geometric forms, as if captured during some neon stellar catastrophe. Her sculptures strongly evoke painterly qualities, as do her animations, and her several practices are each rooted in an interest in abstracting natural forms, both real and imaginary. Stark spoke with me by phone recently to talk about her work.

“I feel like a lot of the designs are influenced by microscopic organic designs in nature,” Stark says. “I try to make my marks not too representational; I want them to be very abstract... I attribute a lot of the color and the layers in my work to the cultural diversity and all the crazy tropical plants that grow in Miami. That’s had a definite influence on my work... I kind of want [my works on paper] to seem like some sort of cosmic, chaotic eruption, but at the same time still beautiful. I try to make them an organized type of chaos, like what happens in nature.”

Born in Miami in 1983, Stark earned her BFA in Fibers with a concentration in Animation from the Maryland Institute Col-



“I attribute a lot of the color and the layers in my work to the cultural diversity and all the crazy tropical plants that grow in Miami.”

RIGHT
Celestial Continuum
2009
felt-tip pen on paper
26 x 40 inches

LEFT
Dark Matter
2009
felt-tip pen on paper
40 x 26 inches



lege of Art in Baltimore. While the two areas of study are quite different, Stark admits that her work in fibers has greatly informed the labor-intensive process of her current technique. Whether two or three-dimensional, her work is ultimately concerned with depth, and much of it is optically illusive—spinning inward or outward—expanding colorfully in every direction.

“The [works on paper] are kind of an escape from doing sculptures. They’re a breath of fresh air because they’re very spontaneous. I usually don’t have

an idea of what they’ll look like in the end. I don’t do any sketches, I just start making marks on the paper and it grows from there.”

Stark’s works truly seem to grow and expand. Her marks are both random and precise, the same qualities found in space, and her drawings frequently evoke images of the cosmos, as if pulling the viewer through the universe with felt-tip pens and brightly colored markers. *Dark Matter*, 2009, might be a bubble gum-colored meteor shooting through space, dotted with

several bright volcanoes firing matter and neon-colored sediment out into space. The title refers to the astrophysical term for the highly theorized, yet undetectable fabric of the universe, and like the elusive substance itself, Stark's multicolored forms appear unbound by spatial limitations.

"I really like the idea of an object, through slow, gradual, layered changes, completely changing over time," she says. "And I feel like a lot of my work comes from that, taking one shape and tracing it, changing it a little bit through the layers of evolution."

"In my early years, my work was really influenced by [that], how you can take a little mark—let's say a circle—and then that will slowly start transforming into a triangle, and then a square, and then from that one mark you can make some other crazy shape that's come from the same thing. I guess that is represented in my sculptures too, how I trace and make the marks organic."

Stark's sculptures are a three-dimensional extension of the artist's painterly fascination with color and dimension, executed with near surgical precision. Drippy cut paper rings ooze out of seemingly hard, flat surfaces, evoking naturally occurring forms with intentionally crafted design. Her most recent sculpture, *Sunken Sediment*, 2010, is a cavernous "black hole" made up of elegant bands of layered paper collapsing inward with a small light at its center. A reflection of her two-dimensional curiosities, Stark's sculptures are amped up in both form and dimension.

Since earning her BFA in 2005, Stark has enjoyed solo shows at several spaces across the country, including LMAK Projects, New York, Civilian Art Projects, Washington D.C., Carol Jazzar, Miami, and Art Basel Miami Beach, and her group shows include exhibitions at MoCA North Miami and the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale. Stark is unconcerned with gallery representation, and with so much interest nationwide, it's not crazy to imagine why.

Once I graduated I was kind of done with the whole schooling thing. I wanted to get out on my own and try it out for myself. After traveling around for about a year, I came back to Miami wanting to do my own thing, wanting to make work."

Stark's guest room is the current home of her studio, the floors of which are densely covered in paper scraps produced while hand cutting her sculptures with an X-ACTO knife. Sprawling her work out across a 4 x 8-foot table, her paintings and draw-



RIGHT
Beautiful Disorient
2007
felt-tip pen and pencil
on paper
19 x 24 inches

LEFT
Sunken Sediment
2010
archival colored
paper, foam core,
and light
25 x 38 x 25 inches



ings are produced on large sheets of watercolor paper with a kaleidoscopic spectrum of colorful brush pens, markers, and felt-tip pens. The work she's created here in last few years has earned her some much-deserved attention with gallerists across the country.

"Usually I work with galleries [where] I get good vibes from the gallerist, and I feel comfortable with them. For me, I usually don't do the whole contract thing where most artists are exclusive to a certain gallery in a certain region, and maybe even that gallery is their only gallery in the world. I want to be more open

and be able to show what I want. I don't want to be tied down by one gallery."

With her multidisciplinary vision, there is an endless expanse of possibilities for Stark, and each of her practices make extraordinary use of otherwise commonplace of materials. Her deft transitions between mediums are as natural as the organic forms she abstracts. ■

Behind the Scenes

Eric Charest-Weinberg

The Miami gallerist speaks to Evan J. Garza

EJG: How do you look for new artists? How is your artist roster developed?

ECW: With a lot of patience (he laughs)... It's a grueling process—it's doing studio visits, it's working with curators, it's working with artists, it's working with people that you trust, and it's word of mouth, really. Who's working in the back of so-and-so's studio? Who's been a studio assistant for many years and always had a passion for work and have been working their ass off for someone else? Those are the kinds of people that really interest me a lot.

There's always the other end of the spectrum, you know, the guy who went to Yale for painting and blah blah blah. ...I think, ultimately, it's based on relationships... Working with curators, working with consultants, working with artists themselves who happen to have friends who are artists, and it just comes around organically. That's really something I believe in, is things developing organically. You can't really rush things.

EJG: Were most of the artists on your roster people you sought out or artists that contacted you?

ECW: Sought out.

EJG: When you seek them out, is it because you've seen them in a biennial or an art fair? What's the context in which you discover emerging artists?

ECW: Not only through word of mouth, it's the gallery seeing something that the gallery likes. And just because you've seen artists at an art fair doesn't mean that you can go and find them and represent them. That whole aspect of it is based on relationships and devel-

oping relationships with the artist and it's really about dialogue, time, and investment into the artist themselves... knowing who out of your friends knows a specific artist and getting introduced to them, but it can take months.

EJG: Yeah, the art world moves at a glacial pace.

ECW: (He laughs.)

EJG: Tell me a little about how you approach painting in your space.

ECW: We really only represent three painters, and I think for me painting is a very historical and very important function in the art world, but I also believe that painting is limited. So for me, one of the reasons why we have a limited number of painters in our gallery is because with sculpture, with new media, with installation, with photography, with conceptual ideas that may not even be physically represented by an object, they kind of go so far into the abstract that you kind of redefine what the possibilities are as an artist.

For me, I'm interested in furthering abstraction, kind of furthering the thought process and really going into larger than life concepts. So, in regards to painting, the painters that we have—namely Marc Séguin from Canada, and Pedro Barbeito, who both live and work in New York—they are very prolific artists and they represent this kind of dialogue that is often found in new media and sculpture. [Their] paintings represent this larger than life embodiment, or ideas that kind of further the dialogue more than just a two-dimensional object.

EJG: How was your business developed? How did you build the gallery itself?



ECW: Through relationships. Unfortunately some people use that to their disadvantage, but other people use their strength and integrity. Good relationships will yield good connections, and so on and so forth. It's incredibly time consuming. You can't expect to be a success overnight. It's really based on the quality of work you represent, the kind of ideas you represent.

EJG: How much does the art market itself influence or factor into who you show?

ECW: The market doesn't dictate anything. *People* dictate the market. The market is set by dealers, set by curators, set by how many museum shows this person's had, how many biennials this person's been in, whether they've been sold at auction—that's the market.

EJG: What advice do you have for emerging artists trying to get noticed by galleries like yours?

ECW: Honestly, the work should speak for itself. It's all about the highest possible quality, it's about the highest quality conceptual idea. There *has* to be a conceptual idea and it has to be articulated perfectly. It needs to be spot on.

EJG: A lot of new painting practices are becoming more multidisciplinary. Is it important for you to work with artists whose work can be contextualized across several mediums?

ECW: If they're just doing it for the sake of doing it, then it doesn't really translate... If you're capable, if you're talented enough to be able to produce work in multiple practices, then I think that's fantastic, and I believe it speaks to the strength of the artist themselves. You look at Matthew Day Jackson for example, who's a brilliant sculptor, but he's also a fantastic draftsman as well. If you kind of isolate the two media, then you would never know what [his] primary focus was... Generally, painters paint. ■

Born in New York City, Eric Charest-Weinberg first apprenticed in Montreal and subsequently became sole proprietor of a gallery/experimental laboratory in Key West. Charest-Weinberg Gallery is located in the heart of Miami's burgeoning Wynwood Arts District.

Juror Q&A

Barbara O'Brien

What artists do you see really influencing painting at the moment?

The dominance and implications of art that is experienced in real time means that performance, film, dance, and music continue to influence painters. *Holding Milk (The Kitchen Series)*, a 2009 video by Marina Abramović in which she holds a vessel filled to the brim with milk, is not only an example of endurance art but also a wonderful metaphor for the artist in the studio.

What is the best painting you've seen in the last year?

I was really stunned by the oil paintings by Julia Fish at the 2010 Whitney Biennial. I simply can't get them out of my mind. They picture the space between two rooms in a one-to-one scale. She is on the top of my list for a studio visit. It is in the studio visit that the knowledge of a curator, at least this curator, is built. The language of the studio visit—conversation, taking some photos with my iPhone, and sharing a coffee (or in my case, hot water with lemon)—creates a bridge over which meaning and understanding can travel.

Do you see any emerging trends in painting?

The figure is back; pattern and decoration are back; color and pleasure are back; theater—both comedic and dramatic—is back. Have any of these ever really gone away? Whatever the subject matter or formal means, the meaning of the work must, by necessity, comment on the 21st century moments in which we find ourselves.

Tell me about the works in your own living room.

I want to be inspired by a work of art, so I rotate out paintings or drawings over my writing area. Right now, there is small 18" x 18"

acrylic on wood panel painting by the Boston-area artist Rose Olson. In the painting, *Untitled*, 2004, shimmering translucent bands of palest periwinkle and blue-kissed whites honor color field painting, minimalism, and the feminine mysteries of Olson's Greek heritage.

What's the first painting or painting movement that made an impact on you?

Discovering the Bloomsbury Group as an undergraduate at the University of Kansas made a deep impression on my ideas (and ideals) of what artistic practice as part and parcel of a community could be. The Bloomsbury artists were emblematic of the "life well lived" and the great liberal arts tradition of engaging with the literary, visual, and performing arts. This was completely at one with my image of myself as a feminist (still the case) who had a desire not so much to create art personally (though I did my graduate studies at Rhode Island School of Design) but to advocate for artists and ideas.

Do you have a favorite piece/artist in the Kemper collection?

This will always be a recent acquisition. As of this moment I am completely enamored of the sculpture *Still Standing* by June Ahrens. Broken and reconstituted glass objects, placed atop a glass table with brushed aluminum base supports, create a theatre of shadow and memory in an evocation of post-9/11 influences on art production. ■