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MFA Thesis Exhibition
Eric R. Hinson and Leigh Thomson
December 4 through January 16
Opening reception Friday, December 5, 5:30 to 7:30 pm
Closed for University holiday December 23 through January 4

Art Museum of the University of Memphis
For more information contact AMUM at 901.678.2828 or amum@memphis.edu

TAKING INTEREST IN ART HISTORY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS
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(Special thanks to the Chair of Excellence in Art History, 2004-2009)

22nd Annual Juried Student Exhibition
January 29 through February 26
Opening reception Friday, February 5, 5:30 to 7:30 pm
Judges: Charles Beene will lecture Thursday, January 31, place and time TBA

Sponsored by the Art History and Art Education Divisions, University of Memphis, the School of the Arts, and the School of Art, Design and Architecture.

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Just when you think the flippant spirit is past and starting again across the weeks to 2005, new galleries pop up on the scene, old ones reopen and art-related matters (or nearly) erupt. Let’s start with nothing (or maybe), it’s good for taming the temperament on these cold days.

Perhaps other towns are experiencing politically motivated episodes of prudery and prejudice, but Nashville has been up a longer. The alternative gallery, Rudy Gurn, a public sculpture for Music Row, and Meadows College of Art attracted negative attention for showing or, in the case of Meadows, refusing to show making. Responding, perhaps, to outbreaks of public hostility, Meadows presented its present path in self-censorship, just that a rabbit run compared to the First Center’s six-June rival that resulted in cancellation of a show, Kickin’ It With Joyce J. Scott, that had been scheduled to open January 2005. Reports in the Nashville papers read like an U.S. s***t. “We didn’t know it included penises!” “Yes, you did know; you saw the show, you said the boiler, the list—everything.” “Nope.” “Yup.” “No way.” “Way.”

Joyce J. Scott, a renowned African American artist who confronts issues of race and view the use of traditional African and African-American craft techniques in the sense of shedding stereotypes and•\-

ing confusion of absence. Among the pieces in Kickin’ It! are ones entitled “Cuddly Black Dick III” and “Catch a Nigger By his Toe.”

Could the First not have known?

For an article for the Nashville Scene, David Maddox and John Spragens interviewed the George Ciscle, curator of the original show for the Baltimore Museum of Art, representatives of the First Center and of the touring organization, Exhibits USA, and the artist, among others. The most credible conclusion is that the First, which was pursuing the show after officials left several years ago in Baltimore, believing decided that the content is too s***t for Nashville’s clientele. All have in its present First State. The cluck up with Exhibits USA shows designed to still the nonprofit for the contracted 59000 exhibit You, a thoroughly utopian vision and one that won’t burnish the Center’s rep in the artist. But, certainly, the biggest concern is that self-censorship by the city’s leading art venues represents a giant step backwards for provocation that implicates not only Nashville, but Tennessee and the South.

We urge that Nashville’s Local brain fluid is not a vital or commercial cultural disease, and that such embellishment will work its healing shame to restore the city’s art audience and institutions to mental and cultural health.

Meanwhile, Nashville, not always a beacon of cultural advancement, is experiencing a winter blossoming of new exhibit spaces.

Second Floor Contemporary has been around for a few years as an occasional exhibition space. Located in an industrial building on South, it is among the most attractive sites for arts in the city and one in which the artist, somehow, always looks good and important. Dan Elson, artist and owner of the building has pursued nonprofit status, and we can look forward to more regular seasons of exhibits. Adding to the critical mass of art sites around Towns, Memphis College of Art has landed a large space on the ground floor of Estes’ building for shows of work by the institute’s artists. At the same time, MCA opened two new galleries in its Graduate Center on Poplar.

On another side of town, Hamblin Dobbs, after years of overseeing Outhellings at Marshall Arts and being curator for Rhodes College’s Doug Ham-son Gallery, has opened his own alternative space, Material, on the ground floor of a Broad Street storefront that also contains his family business and studio. Long a weekly strip of bars and more dubious or least mysterious enterprises, these few blocks of Broad are becoming a magnet for local artists seeking live/work real estate. From the books of it, opportunities remain for the float and credit-worthy.

Back in Nashville on a positive note, the artists’ cooperative, Second Floor Contemporary has been around for a few years as an occasional exhibition space. Located in an industrial building on South, it is among the most attractive sites for arts in the city and one in which the artist, somehow, always looks good and important. Dan Elson, artist and owner of the building has pursued nonprofit status, and we can look forward to more regular seasons of exhibits. Adding to the critical mass of art sites around Towns, Memphis College of Art has landed a large space on the ground floor of Estes’ building for shows of work by the institute’s artists. At the same time, MCA opened two new galleries in its Graduate Center on Poplar.

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State of the Soul

7th Annual Indie Memphis Film Festival
October 23-30, 2004
Waves of Pudgy Rice

The soul of Southern Film is in good hands. DeltaAxis’ 7th annual Indie Memphis Film Festival, rightly self-anointed as “The Soul of Southern Film,” not only reinforced the notion that there is such a creation as “Southern Film,” it also preceded a steady stream of films that demonstrated the diversity, vitality and originality of films by Southerners and about the South.

Politics, food, and music – three passions dear to the Southern soul – dominated this year’s line-up. The opening night selection, Kevin DiNovis’ South and Texas, was a football tale to launch an unrelenting assault on the death penalty. Steve Harris (Eugene in the late, great TV series, Dark Knight) and the venerable Charles Durning dominate the film as a football player on Death Row and his crusading attorney. The black comedy demonstrates again that intelligent humor can transcend the limitations of “no budget” productions. Like the best of the food films, Bluegrass Journey, focusing as much on the fans as the stars. The film delighted viewers with exceptional original score is especially affecting, a welcome companion and guide on an uplifting, emotional journey.

An equally compelling entry in the documentary category, DeltaAxis’ “Road to Newbern” ends with a gripping photo sequence, both filmed live in Gainesboro. William and his home are ambushed by area merchants for daring to register to vote. William utilizes his tools at his disposal to tell the story – photos, news clippings, archival footage, and compelling accounts of the veterans of the struggle. The film’s original score is especially effective, a welcome companion and guide on an uplifting, emotional journey.

With a self-described “Arkansas farm boy” on a journey of discovery into the plight of Puerto Rican refugees, Harriet and co-producer Jocelyn Fletcher avoids the usual Middle East polemics to delve into the personal costs of the seemingly eternal conflict. Fletcher puts his own life on the line in an eye-opening sequence involving Israeli police and live gunfire. The daily “body count” news reports from the Middle East have numbed Americans to the suffering of an “occupied” people, Fletcher manages to humanize the struggle. Like Al Bli (AKA Ourselves, “Road to Newbern” ends with a gripping photo sequence, both filmed live in Gainesboro. William and his home are ambushed by area merchants for daring to register to vote. William utilizes his tools at his disposal to tell the story – photos, news clippings, archival footage, and compelling accounts of the veterans of the struggle. The film’s original score is especially effective, a welcome companion and guide on an uplifting, emotional journey.

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Much of today’s abstract art can seem repetitive and boring; on the other hand, most contemporary work makes beauty or decoration its focus without achieving either. The artists in *Seamless*, taking a more essential approach to abstraction, deal with problems of positive/negative space or layering, about which Hans Hoffman probably uttered the definitive word in the 1950s.

Dan Devening’s muted backgrounds overlaid with dirty, candy-colored ribbons do little else but show that one image was layered over another again and again. A hierarchy of color variations activates the noodles into a field of emerging and subsiding layers. Brian Sharp also works with formal concerns and manages, in his small paintings “seven eves,” to present a diptych of seductive mirror images. Networks of mysterious patchwork blues coalesce to form an irregular puzzle piece that is mirrored exactly in the adjoining work. Unfortunately, Sharp’s “blue diptych 1 and 2” and “untitled (recipe/raw city)” lack the nuance of “seven eves.” These pieces are composed of a line of unvaried weight that superfluous its way back and forth over the smallish canvases creating many small facets. In each painting, one of the angular little shapes is filled in with color: blue triangles for “blue diptych 1 and 2,” and a yellow crescent shape against the red lines and pencil marks of “untitled (recipe/raw city).” Compared to the more sophisticated accomplishments of “seven eves,” these seem like studies in color theory.

James Siena displays a similar but more interesting obsession in his three soft ground etchings. “Two Combs” and “Yellow and Brown” offer thin, concise lines subdividing and enclosed ground, while “Global Key in Four Colors” kicks up the fixation factor a notch by placing tiny circles inside squares, inside grids. The manic repetition of the images plays nicely against the controlled process and craftsmanship of the prints. Nancy Murphy Spicer lures the viewer into her installation piece, “Seep,” with clean lines and well-crafted components made from wood, latex paint and vinyl. Varying lengths and widths of meticulously sanded wood lean at slightly different angles against the gallery wall, creating an interesting mini-sculpture that is neither lost nor prominent anymore. The pieces of wood sit atop “puddles” of poured paint that seem to ooze from the floor where the wood has ruptured it or from the bottom of the lumber itself. The paint makes a welcome contrast to the rigidity of the wood, but the rusty-red pigment makes one immediately think of blood, and this seems too heavy-handed a metaphor for an otherwise subtle piece. A brighter color, such as one Spicer uses in the pieces showcased in the gallery literature, would have more gently nudged the viewer to the same conclusion.

Formal concerns are evident, but, rather than being the whole idea, we see how the playful workings of the artist’s mind. In Chris Nau’s large wall installation, “Inhabitant X,” a meandering graphite line outlines and overlaps to create a rounded form. Segments of the line are painted over, becoming barely visible, while others are exaggerated by being incised into the drywall. This allows hard-edged shapes within forms to be emphasized and, where the cut away portions meet, they bend slightly outward, giving the impression the entire piece is under tremendous pressure and could collapse upon itself at any moment. These ideas of pressure and restraint are married perfectly to the simplicity of materials and processes that Nau employs.

All in all, *Seamless* is an interesting show that offers the viewers a variety of approaches that indicate how many contemporary artists are approaching the ideas of paint and abstraction. It is at its best, *Seamless* is most successful when the seams show.

Paul Behnke
Paul Behnke is a painter and writer living in Memphis.
Adrienne Outlaw Interviews Helena Reckitt

This summer the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (ACCC) director Helena Reckitt visited artists’ studios in Georgia, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Alabama and Mississippi in preparation for curating the 2005 Atlanta Biennial. She chose to expand the Center’s traditional biennial, which normally focuses on Atlanta artists, to highlight those working throughout the Southeast.

Reckitt shared impressions of her visit with Adrienne Outlaw via e-mail.

You must have received hundreds of submissions for this show. How did you decide on whose studios to visit? I visited artists whose work enticed me. In some cases it was hard to tell if the work was genuinely strong, completely wack, or perhaps a combination of the three. The work – such as installation and painting – can be hard to capture in slides. If it looked like an artist was working with a level of ambition, of formal or conceptual experimentation, I could set up a visit. There are plenty of galleries in Atlanta where you can find fine, well-made, but ultimately bland art. The Contemporary is one of the few places committed to showing challenging, experimental work – whatever that looks like or means (which of course changes and shifts all the time).

Did you find strengths or weaknesses in terms of the art centers in the cities you visited? I visited a number of individual artists’ studios.

What type of artists are you interested in for the biennial? I was impressed by the high level of professionalism. Many artists had gone to great lengths to set up their studios for the high level of professionalism. Many artists had gone to great lengths to set up their studios for

What type of work did you see? What kind of artists go to support their work – not just in terms of materials and equipment, but space and time.

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Balancing Act
An interview by Tad Lauritzen-Wright with Leandra Urrutia following her recent show Descended at Clay Works Memphis.

Your work is a curious blend of history and culture as well as containing concerns addressing contemporary society. How do you try to create a balance between these?

The idea of relationships, home, family and religious cross historical and cultural boundaries. It is important to me that a viewer from any background could simultaneously come to the work and find meaning in the symbols and metaphors I choose to compose. The ability to find a common thread between personal experience despite historical or cultural gaps. I am aspiring to recreate feelings of faith or mystery that I associate with things like saints, shrines, family and home. I am completely fascinated with the constant evolution of relationships through time and social pressures that call for conformity. The essence of which is still in debate and able to influence public and political policy. The focus of the work could be described as a balancing act of many things that don’t usually fit together.

Your art is filled with symbols and metaphors (bones, eyes, homes, bodies). How do you explore your use of these?

These are “Golem” figures that have worked to develop over the years. Each has meaning separately. Each is influenced or enhanced when associated with seemingly unrelated things. Some of the individual components of larger pieces could work separately and are currently thinking of ways to accomplish this. What have been the influences on your work? Whose work inspires you?

I am most inspired by things I read, social issues and my Mexican American heritage. My step-father was very involved in civil rights and instilled his belief in freedom and equality of expression early on. I still have a lot of questions in terms of strategies for solving social problems and my own heritage that I would like to investigate in future work. The first sculptures I made were clearly closeness, hand- touching experience with these amazing wooden replicas of existing historical sculptures at our family church. I can remember being captivated by the detail and gesture of the hands and feet. In terms of influential artists, it’s hard to choose because I admire and appreciate so many. I think I remember feeling very close to the sculpture and drawings of Henry Moore and the clay sculptures of Mark Handforth.

Can you explain the part that nature plays in your work?

The human race has been working with clay since prehistoric times. It’s such a friendly material, easy to find, easy to form. I like it. It’s used for the earth. I like that it transforms through fire and that it has a memory. It is chaos asking for direction. I think it is unfortunate that we as humans have had the tendency to intellectually and physically separate from the nature or animal side of our being. I place natural objects in my work as reminders of our humble, helpless, infant beginnings, and of our likewise departure from this life. You combine your materials in unusual ways, placing wooden looking materials with bones new shing objects such as gold. What is the importance to you of these combinations?

I like to challenge the reality of what we perceive to be true. For some, an unrealistic representation of an object is their reality. For others it is an abstraction. I could create a screw out of clay or use an actual screw. Someone said pastimes and artists are two steps removed from reality. Is what the artist creates art? It seems to me that the artist’s status of reality is what determines success or failure in any endeavor. Sometimes we are delineated before we begin. Likewise, sometimes we’re even before we’ve started. Several times in your work you have presented having what appears to be the stone, hair and written fortunes placed in their eyes. This seems to bring the viewer in closer to examine what the eyes have become. What were you trying to achieve using these materials in place of eyes?

These materials are close to me for many reasons. The grass comes from the lawn of the first house I’ve recently purchased. The fortunes were made by myself and my fiance. I asked him to think of a specific number of things he would want for a child. Wants or wishes for others originate from what we want for ourselves. Perhaps children are created in an attempt to further or make better what limitations or society have placed on us individually. There is a story of Jewish origin (in the Kabbalah) about the creation of a “Golem” or soulless creature. This creature is made from clay and stone and is soulless. I thought it might be interesting to try and create the perfect child (as in the sitting lady). In the screw-headed piece, I was thinking of what is created when two people commit to one another: an infant of sorts. Does your passion for teaching relate to the importance art-making has for you? Could you say something about early influences with out teachers?

Teaching brings a new understanding to what I am doing in the studio. I ask a lot of my students, and I think a good leader leads by example. So the commission and passion lies in doing what I hope they will spend their lives doing: developing discipline in their practice and learning to communicate as clearly and effectively as they can visually. I am not interested in making little clones of me and what I do just as I am not interested in making work similar to others in my field. Teachers must be careful. I must stay focused on what is working successfully or unsuccessfully in student work. Our opinion of good or bad is unimportant. What is important is that they are doing what they set out to do. There was a teacher early on who told me I’d never be an artist. I turned his comment into a personal challenge to prove him wrong.

When will your work go from here?

I am going to push some interesting elements in the pieces I have done recently in separate work. I am trying to avoid being a teacher dealing with relationships, family or coarse are enhanced. I want to work more with different materials. Gov’s and other I am the two I’ve gotten to work best for me at this point. I am thinking about doing an installation in the near future using light and materials.

Leandra Urrutia; Image courtesy of Clay Works Memphis.
In the exhibition Otherside at the Power House, Melissa McGill is concerned with turning negatives into positives. According to the artist’s statement, these works are an investigation of the interior, the unseen and the other side. Visually, the show is an exploration of frozen moments that are somehow still in motion, calling into question the interactions between a person and an environment.

Upstairs in the North Gallery, the viewer encounters the installation called Shadows, a collection of silver gelatin prints and porcelain figures. The prints, which are a series of inverted street scenes from early morning, come grouped into two categories: those with referents and those without. Facing the viewer at entrance to the space are three prints, all of which show a collection of figures walking on the street. As the series progresses, the viewer moves through the scene with the subjects of the work. The shadows turn into positive forms with the inversion of the photographs. Due to the time of day, the figures are strangely abstracted and distorted. They are squished down to a fraction of their size and oddly elongated. The adult forms, although clearly viewed in the photographs, do not translate as such in their shadows; they look like children at play.

The remaining photographs do not have humans to anchor the scene, an aspect that divorces them from the other works. Objects find an upside down world, their distorted shapes rippling over the pavement. The aspect of distortion is carried into the other works in the North Gallery. The sculptural pieces, which were brought into existence through casting the interiors of figurines from flea markets, are abstracted figures executed in white porcelain. The large group consists of four of these castings, three of which are arranged in a mime of conversation, their heads cocked to the left and right as though they are listening to one another. The fourth figure surgeon is an audience that is not seen. Overloading this scene is a large bust, whose head has been left open in the back and glazed with silver. The glass creates a funhouse mirror in which the outside world is reflected, but not clearly articulated. Much like the photographic works by the artist, these sculptures seem oddly fluid. Their distortion is much like the abstractions that occur when running water is poured over an object. Their presentation seems temporal, as if at any moment the tension will break and everything will change.

Downstairs in the South Gallery, this theme continues. The two works in this gallery, Here and Now and Boomerang, are series in blown glass. Here and Now, 10 pieces of black glass situated on the white gallery floor, reflects the space around it with alien distortion. The sizes and forms of the egg-shaped objects vary, but each shows 180 degrees of the gallery space in its reflections. No two are alike, so the reflected world that the viewer experiences is different with each drop. Reflected in the window above, the viewer’s notion of their orientation within the space is distinctly defined by these objects. The work Boomerang slings off the space in the gallery, calling attention to the building and its wounds. The pure silver color reflects the space, but on a much smaller scale. Points of light from the windows and fixtures are the only distinct reflective aspects. Situated in the pockmarks in the walls, hugging from the remnants of industrial scars, and clinging to corners, this work makes the gallery appear almost as if it were bleeding.

These two pieces create the space of the gallery as a living entity. In her statement, McGill states that the works are completely activated by their environment in the Power House. However, it would seem that the converse is also true. The South Gallery becomes a living entity that reflects and interacts with those who come inside. As in the photographs and porcelain works of Shadows, there exists a tension and sense of frozen movement that is a powerful interactive force. Presenting the world in a different light, the installation pieces in Otherside emphasize that sometimes it is important to create presence from absence.

Natalie Harris

Natalie Harris is a graduate student in art history at the University of Memphis.
Junko Barnes, who came to Mississippi from Japan in 1996 to attend Millsaps College, was unusually moved at a recent cultural exchange event on the campus of her alma mater—a fashion show of kimonos from the Cultural Foundation for Promoting the National Costume of Japan that also featured performances of Japanese folksongs by the Millsaps Singers. Hearing songs that reminded her of her childhood in Japan was a very emotional experience, according to Barnes. She served as master of ceremonies for the program and translated the exhibition’s narrative.

The exhibit’s Mississippi venue is a result of cooperation between the foundation, Nissan North America in Canton, the Japan Association of Mississippi, the Japan-American Society of Mississippi and Millsaps College. Every year, the foundation, based at the Hakubi Kyoto Kimono Schools in Tokyo, chooses one American city to host the exhibition—yet this year, the foundation made an exception and visited Jackson and New Orleans in late October.

THE KIMONOS

During the program, Japanese models demonstrated 31 kimonos, ranging from the casual summer yukata to the formal suikan, the ceremonial kimono worn by Japanese samurai in ancient times. While the kimono informs much of Westerners’ visual image of the Japanese people, many Japanese reserve the national costume for the most traditional and formal of occasions—weddings, graduations, funerals and certain cultural celebrations, according to Barnes. Kimonos come in various patterns, colors and styles, and the type of kimono worn depends upon status in the culture. For example, children wear formal kimonos to the annual Shichi-go-san celebration, held on November 15th for seven-year-old girls, five-year-old boys, and three-year-old boys and girls. These kimonos are usually brightly colored to reflect young children.

Opening the Millsaps College exhibition were examples of the furisode, an unmarried women’s formal kimono. Three types of furisode differ by length of sleeves. The longest one is the obi-furisode and is worn by a bride in traditional marriage ceremonies. The other two types are the chu- and kofurisode, worn during New Year holidays, the coming-of-age ceremony for 20-year-old women, college graduations, and wedding ceremonies. Barnes still has her kimono from her Seijinshiki coming-of-age ceremony—a gift from her grandmother, who made it especially for that event. Other formal kimono patterns and styles are reserved for married women, bridegrooms and married men during other formal occasions.

According to Barnes, aside from such formal garments, the most common kimonos seen in Japan, particularly during the warmer months, are the yukata, also on display during the Millsaps event. Made of cotton, the yukata is popular among men and women for summer evening festivals to make an atmosphere different from working time. These kimonos are often fashionable and colorful, with patterns and hues constantly going in and out of style among Japan’s younger generation.

While the kimono does still have a place in Japanese society, education about traditions is an important issue for scholars in the field. Barnes said, that even she was unfamiliar with the traditions of the kimonos presented in the second part of the program, titled “Japan’s Courtly Elegance,” which focused on the historical kimonos rather than the more contemporary ones. “You don’t get to see those old kimonos anywhere, except on TV or in very old ceremonies,” she said. Such educational exchanges are essential to the Japan-American Society of Mississippi’s mission, according to Phillip Pierce, vice president of the Japan-American Society of Mississippi. The advent of Nissan’s location in central Mississippi and the subsequent opening of the door to other Japanese companies to locate here have made Pierce feel a responsibility to open up channels of communication between the two communities. Making those kinds of connections between Mississippi’s Japanese community and interested Mississippians was the goal in bringing the exhibit to the state, according to Pierce. “This is a central part of their culture, ever since ancient times. If you know the story of kimono, you understand a great deal about their culture.”

Julie Whitehead

Julie Whitehead is a writer in Jackson, Mississippi.
Keith Harmon, a Nashville artist’s co-op, opened a new space with a solo show by Keith Harmon on October 16, 2004. Located in a residential neighborhood, Plowhaus is the first art gallery to open in East Nashville, a core of the 20th century working class enclave across the Cumberland River from downtown. In its spunky attitude and community-savvy outreach, Plowhaus is emulating the enterprising Position East of the early 1990s that showcased the work of East Nashville artists in conjunction with real estate open houses. Its members have recruited nearby businesses, coffee shops and restaurants for assistance with fundraising and called on musicians and other creative people who dwell nearby for support. For the past couple of years, the Plowhausers have dedicated themselves to the sale of art, pure and simple. Their group shows have been primarily thematic, embracing non-threatening exhibitions and attracting those who have a little money to spend on art. That the co-op has managed to survive on sheer chutzpah, small sales and mass volume support. For the past couple of years, the Plowhausers have reached, Plowhaus is emulating the enterprising Position East

Entitled Live, Harmon now works record the Nashville night scene of music clubs and bars, whose denizens are any and all of us on a given evening. He spends time sketching on site, recording the look and ambience of people in public, noticing particularly the actions of those he describes as “taking ownership” of Nashville nightspots. He captures the glasses and the players. Chris Whitley at Third and Lindsley (for example, improvising an intricate guitar solo, with head bent and body weight shifted onto one leg, and Twelfth and Porter Playroom with its upstairs bar balcony. Harmon’s oils on paper and canvas are loose and free, with strands of backwash purposely initiating sound and gesture. They are part Loring Harmon in their flashy brushwork, and yet they flow with a relaxed energy that perfectly echoes a guitarist’s stance.

Harmon records Nashville particulars, such as a female couple leaning against each other in the window seat of a crowded club, a couple having a serious conversation at a bar table, or two single girls, perched on high stools, quite aware of their alluring presence. Surrounded by a gallery full of seven-foot tall paintings, viewers cannot help but feel the electric energy and aliveness. Harmon’s work’s canvases似乎 several at a time, leaving one for another whenever he starts to feel forced. He wants to keep them open, he says, so that the paint, and the energy it captures, can lead him along. As a result, his works seem at times unfinished. But the pieces are successful: in their confidence, sheer size and audacity, in expressing familiar moments in today’s music city.

Susan M. Meunier
Susan, M. Meunier, an independent curator, has organized numerous museum and gallery exhibitions and is the Tennessee editor for Art Papers. They are part Leroy Neiman in their flashy brushwork, and yet they flow with a relaxed energy that perfectly echoes a guitarist’s stance. Harmon records Nashville particulars, such as a female couple leaning against each other in the window seat of a crowded club, a couple having a serious conversation at a bar table, or two single girls, perched on high stools, quite aware of their alluring presence. Surrounded by a gallery full of seven-foot tall paintings, viewers cannot help but feel the electric energy and aliveness. Harmon’s work’s canvases seem several at a time, leaving one for another whenever he starts to feel forced. He wants to keep them open, he says, so that the paint, and the energy it captures, can lead him along. As a result, his works seem at times unfinished. But the pieces are successful: in their confidence, sheer size and audacity, in expressing familiar moments in today’s music city.

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As of December 2006, there are no assignments listed on the website. 
Visit the site for an overview of the assignments and submit "reports" to the website.

In addition to its current web presence, LTLYM also exists as a series of temporary installations with which we share the world and that encourage us to take an active role in our communities. It may address millions, but it addresses them one at a time. LTLYM gives us a model (if somewhat modest and flawed) of Kaprow’s ideal of a democratic cultural and social activist movement at all. Indeed, the weakness of LTLYM is endemic to the Internet, its chosen medium. LTLYM does offer a glimpse of hope that things are changing in the commercial world of contemporary art. Change has to start somewhere. And like Oldenburg, LTLYM teaches us to see the beauty in some historical perspective and a few sorely needed, post-election-day words of encouragement.

On the night that LTLYM opened, I arrived late. I had been downtown at the National Civil Rights Museum for the opening of “The Whole World’s Watching: Peace and Social Justice Movements of the 1960s and 1970s,” an exhibition of photographs of the political and social activist movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Tom Aughen, co-founder of Students for a Democratic Society, co-author of the Port Huron Statement, and member of the Chicago Seven, was on hand to provide some historical perspective and a few sorely needed, post-election-day words of encouragement.

Bill Anthes
Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Memphis.