Teacher and Student: Abstract Works of Marie Hull and Andrew Bucci

June 28 – September 18, 2010
Opening Reception Tuesday, June 29, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

The University of Mississippi Museum
University Avenue & Fifth Street | Oxford, MS 38655
Tuesday - Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
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This exhibit is organized by the Mississippi Museum of Art and supported with funds provided by the Museum’s statewide Traveling Exhibition Endowment, a fund made possible through significant private contributions matched by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, with additional funding provided by the Mississippi State Commission for the Humanities.
This is the first editorial that I have written. It, fortunately or unfortunately, will also be the last. I have enjoyed the past three years with this publication, but it is time for me to step aside so I can perfect my chicken wing recipe. It is time for new blood in an organization that has been around for 20 years. There are changes that have been set in motion that I hope will keep Number around for another 20.

So, for my first and final editorial, I have just a couple of thoughts on the state of the arts, if you will, on this and not use it as an excuse on why we can keep Number going. It is time for new blood in an organization that has been around for 20 years. There are changes that have been set in motion that I hope will keep Number around for another 20.

For my first and final editorial, I have just a couple of thoughts on the state of the arts, if you will, and movies based in Memphis? The Memphis Beat, The Polar Women of Memphis, and Footloose, are all current shows or movies based in Memphis but filmed elsewhere. The film community of Memphis must do whatever it takes to make that happen. Now, I know they are working on it and that tax incentives and cheaper costs make filming easier elsewhere. How- ever, something must be done on the state and local levels to ensure that Memphis will be able to take advantage of Hollywood here in our backyard. The Police Women of Memphis, and Footloose, all communities growth.

3. Nashville and Memphis need to quit fighting. I have said it many times myself, “Nashvillians are a bunch of elitists,” “They think they are better than Memphis because they are so much cleaner and have all that money.” Unfair I know. If the cities were to have a good summer. I look forward to seeing the exhibitors of the future and continued growth of the visual arts communities. And good luck to the future endeavors of Number.

4. Quit making bad art about nothing. This is the easiest one. You make bad art about something, now were talking. This will make you more interesting. We need to capitalize on this as well as on the state and local levels to ensure that Memphis will be able to take advantage of Hollywood here in our backyard.

5. Memphis is always on the verge. Do not worry, this is a good thing. This “always” provides Memphis with the edge, the grit, most cities do not possess or enable them to be interesting. We need to capitalize on this and not use it as an excuse on why we can and will not move forward.

2. Memphis looks good on paper. It has to right? Have a good summer. I look forward to seeing the exhibitors of the future and continued growth of the visual arts communities. And good luck to the future endeavors of Number.

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Video as a Flexible Medium

In 1960s, artist Howard Wise mounted the first exhibition of video art, TV as a Creative Medium, at New York’s Gallery. The show featured twelve artists and included Nam June Paik’s seminal collaboration with Charlotte Moorman, “TV Bra for Living Sculpture.” In this work, Moorman manipulated Paik’s electronic images through her musical performance. As stated in the on-line history of Electronic Arts Internationale, a nonprofit organization founded by Wise in 1971 to support video as an art form: “In the late 1960s and early 1970s, video art was one of many new art movements — such as conceptual art, performance art, and digital art — that challenged the notion of the unique art object as a commodity. These alternative art movements were also part of larger social and cultural forces that defined the era, from feminism to countercultural and activist political movements.” While Paik and his contemporaries in the 1960s and 1970s used video as a vital part of their experimental practice, video as a medium is no longer “new.” Video art has a 40-year history grounded in painting, cinema, performance, and conceptual art. Like most contemporary genres, there is no definitive approach marking current video art. Some artists use video in conjunction with new media technologies, like interactivity and computer animation, while others reflect the digital era through references to pop culture, identity politics and globalization.

Artists such as Camille Utterbach and Jennifer Steinkamp straddle video and new media through their reliance on computer programming and interactive systems. Utterbach’s, a 2009 MaArthur Fellow, utilizes digital technologies and large-scale projections to create interactive video installations and reactive sculptures. Through software and interface development, Utterbach makes systems that respond to human movement. Her 2007 public work, “Abundance,” featured a three-story projection of a dynamic animation onto the San Jose City Hall. As pedestrians moved through the plaza, their trajectories generated graphic elements that responded and changed in accordance with their pathways. While technology often produces detachment from the body, Utterbach brings awareness back to human physicality through her playful participatory works.

Like Utterbach, Jennifer Steinkamp utilizes digital animation to create immersive virtual environments. Steinkamp presents uncalming, full wall projections of lush, organic imagery that envelop the viewer. Her 2009 exhibition at Acme Gallery in Los Angeles featured the “Orbit” series that is composed of layers of twisting branch-like forms. The pastel-colored limbs bend and flow towards the viewer producing a dizzying sense of space. While entirely digitally produced, the projections evoke the sensation of lying beneath a forest of swaying trees on a blustery day as confetti-like petals waft to the ground. The experience is uncanny, like sitting inside a video-game, where the virtual feels more vivid than what is real.

Kate Gilmore’s performative video work “Blood from a Stone” shows the artist struggling to lift ten bloodless history of minimalist art. There is futility in the action, a struggle that leads to defeat, which is a recurring theme in Gilmore’s oeuvre. Like Bruce Nauman’s 1970s body works, Gilmore uses video in a straightforward way, to capture simple participatory works. Gilmore challenges stereotypical expectations of women by setting up absurd physical challenges that end in disappointment. In “Star Bright, Star Mighty,” the artist forces her head through a star shape cut from plywood. Her red lips grimace in pain as she struggles to force her face through the jagged opening. While she succeeds in breaking through, the star is destroyed and she is left looking like a humiliated victim trapped in the public stocks.

Kagyu Lincy and Ryan Trecartin spread soap opera and teen melodramas, exploring sexual identity and fragmentation in contemporary culture. Both create disturbing and absurd videos that mimic low-budget TV and cable access programming. Lincy works, produces and stars in his works, often in drag, playing the role of a bellowing woman. His DIY style exploits the glitches of the medium with poorly dubbed dialogue and rough editing. The Hacienda and heart-breaking works are really a beat away from the hybrid confessions featured on Jerry Springer-type shows, where the transference of the taboys becomes a compelling tragedy. Lincy plays around with identity through a raw and sometimes raunchy directness that exposes the depths of human passion and loneliness.

Babbling teens in off-kilter wigs, cheesy special effects, creepy digital voice manipulation and a general malaise of contemporary culture fill the video works of Ryan Trecartin. His odd and jarring videos are a hybrid of Paul McCarthy’s transgressive performances, adolescent sitcoms and cheap advertising. The works jump and shift in time and space and develop a queer sense of displacement. His characters are grotesque portraits of a youth culture suffering from multiple personality disorders. There is a sense that nothing really connects in these works; the narratives erupt and layer without ever evolving into a coherent story. Trecartin’s work, “Tommy Chat Just E-mailed Me,” features a cast of characters engaged in a manic exchange through electronic media. They screen into cell phones and send frantic e-mails, but can’t seem to relate to one another. Trecartin doubts upon the utopian promise of a global union through technology by creating lurid nightmares of isolation through a cultural obsession with the media over the message. Trecartin’s all-consuming technology highlights the potential of video art for mass transmission. Video art has always achieved commodification, but in the past it was also inaccessible outside museum, gallery or archive. These days, artists can post their work on their iPhones or home computers from Minter’s website. Cross-fertilization between computer and video technologies will certainly continue to influence the field. For example, in 2007, The Contemporary Museum in Baltimore mounted the exhibit Cell Phone that featured over 30 works created with and for mobile devices. The ubiquity of handheld video devices creates a real potential for art works, especially videos to be transmitted to a wide and mobile audience. The mass dissemination and accessibility of video promises a continued legacy of video art as a non-commodity form, while breaching the potential for a diverse audience outside of traditionally sanctioned art spaces.
Mixing board and assorted electronics actively pro-
an endless collection of drones and chant-like audio
Along with that grounded musical foundation surfaced
tunes we could all easily connect to Southern aesthetics.

Museum of American Art. Against the backdrop of the
entitled POSEIDON/SERENADE (2009) by Pond,
microphones and object-oriented programming. Earlier
animal hides, cameras, projectors, custom built speakers,
sculptures and environments using computers, amplifiers,
computer programming, web, sound, video and a variety
artists. In Tennessee, a growing number of artists and
of evolving technology and media by contemporary
bizarre to the piece. Set outdoors, the three-headed
adding a new dimensionality of the familiar and the
of the performance were electronically regurgitated,
bursts that fluttered across the landscape. Live samples
programming what can only be described as digital noise
work materializes into photographs, video, animation and
the compositional structure is entirely dependent
physical architecture and the objects within that
field. The compositional structure is entirely dependent

In their work entitled Dada Hero 360 (2009), the
artists confront the question of how to form the greatest
band of all time. The piece consists of a four screen
video projection with sound of the newly formed band.
Using sampled video footage of four different musicians,
Black and Jones employ computer programming (Max/MSP/Jitter) to select randomly the in and out points for
the audio and video clips, thus producing a new evolving
composition and performance. The piece staggers and
shifts along as each video clip drops in and out, creating
unpredictable combinations of rhythms and hues. Perhaps
one of the most obvious and humorous parts of the piece
is the selection of musicians assembled into this single
unstoppable musical force. Black and Jones combine
The Edge on guitar, Glenn Gould on piano, Bubly Rich on
drums and Kell Black himself on vocals. As an awkward
and inappropriate collection of musicians from classical,
rock, and punk, this collage is a perfect evolution to the

Phillip Andrew Llewellyn is a curator living in Chattanooga. His research photography and media art at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.
In the last 15-20 years, the tools to make such work have become widely available and the approaches of experimental music have extended to other forms. Perhaps the best way to refer to this type of work is techno-aesthetic, meaning that the digital media are self-referential, in full view, and integral to the form and content of the work. These specific attributes give rise to unique possibilities.

On September 24, 2002, I was on a farm, making noise in a barn with other musicians and artists. Drum kits, saxophone, electric guitars, sticks beating the tin roof, electronic tambura, effects pedals and laptops created a rolling, headless dragon of sound, sometimes dense and rich in that echoing tin and wood chamber and, at other times, fractured and discordant. A playful, collaborative anarchy ruled. Derek Shartung, artist and member of the band Taïwan Deth was using Pure Data on his laptop, an open source graphical programming language where one draws a data flow diagram on screen rather than scripts code line-by-line. This idiosyncratic platform for audio processing can also generate video and 3D graphics and control digital and mechanical interfaces. It is used by a number of artists, performers, software and electronic engineers around the world. As I learned later, Pure Data’s creator, Miller Puckette, grew up in a house overlooking that farm. This encounter started me down the DIY, wired path of FLOSS. A few months later, I sat down with a friend to teach ourselves PD. At the same time I started using another FLOSS language, Processing. Other new media initiatives, Anarky, Anarky, Linux, Creative Commons, Rhizome and more, followed. This artistic subculture is expansive and spreading on-line and in a number of venues around the world. In the ensuing years, I have pursued this work in this region and elsewhere. Despite the hometown connection between this region and some of the most important contributors to FLOSS, there are few regional hubs for its production. There are a handful of users and groups, most just getting started. While encouraging, their long-term impact is yet to be determined. Neither is it apparent that Southern art and culture have had much impact on the genre.

There is also something more important about this lack within the region. DIY/FLOSS culture is independent and collaborative. Work is shared so it can be re-mapped onto one another in a way that either discourages it or fosters other modes of production. Derek Shartung works deep in the shadows of the glam of Nashville’s steel guitars. Such is the case for the small number of techno-aesthetic artists who live down here (Phillip Andrew Lewis catalogs a number of them elsewhere in this issue). They have left the region altogether. While migration to larger artistic centers outside the South is common among contemporary artists, techno-aesthetic art is arguably the most under represented in this region. Few galleries, museums or other institutions are capable of exhibiting such work, and there is a severe lack of critical discourse in or out of art institutions to foster its growth.

There is also certainly a general aesthetic found in much new media art that does not align well with the history of Southern art’s Vernacular based in narrative traditions of literature and documentary. In its current forms, techno-aesthetic art may not reflect the South’s own social realities as expressed by some of the region’s best contemporary artists, Dolph Smith, Terry Rawlins, Aliza Henry, Andy Saffel, Jeff Whitestone and Creeley Myatt, all of whom have made significant contributions and have been widely recognized for their work.

In spite of this factor, I find some encouragement in Bob Osterberg’s essay Why Computer Music Sucks (2007), which outlines the shallowness and failures of new media’s standard forms and advocates new approaches. If the South’s social and artistic movements that have had far-reaching impact on the American cultural landscape can somehow be plugged in, then perhaps real innovation can take place. There is advantage and opportunity in working outside the institutionalized aesthetic standards that are often too inwardly focused. The underground and independent nature of techno-aesthetic artwork being made in the South seems ripe for the anarchic culture of new media. However, while the on-line networks provide some form of community, they cannot completely hold the local. Whether the two cultural landscapes can be re-mapped onto one another in a way that allows the artistic history of the South to continue to hold tightly to its regional focus will determine the degree to which the drawl will reflect the syntax of computer code.

Greg Pond is an artist and critic living in Sewanee Tennessee. He was co-founder of Fugitive Projects and has exhibited, curated, and lectured in the US, Europe, and Middle East.
Kenneth Coker

Kenneth Shofela Coker (Magna Cum Laude, I might add), originally produced as his senior project for the Bachelor of Fine Arts Show in Spring 2009. The film is visually amazing, and even if you don’t have the slightest idea what’s going on (which you probably won’t, at least not specifically), the tone and mood are pervasive enough to drag you in and hash a packed theatre for its duration.

Iwa began as a 2D animation based on a similar story with the same main character done in about a month for a class assignment in 2007. Later, unhappy with it, Coker rewrote it during an internship with Sensory Sweep, a video game company in Salt Lake City, during the Summer of 2008. Coker began pre-production, character development and storyboarding in December 2008 and by April 2009, it was ready for its debut in the college’s Main Gallery.

The story behind Iwa, however, is so simple. Coker is from Lagos, Nigeria; he is the second of three siblings. He traces his interest in 3D-rendering back to Ife, a civilization that predominantly thrived in the 13th to 19th centuries. There was no written word or drawing but their art was entirely sculptural, primarily concerned with the physicality of things. Coker’s work is obviously the product of a deep understanding of the human form, combined with an instantly recognizable stylization that is influenced by African patterning and art. Although Coker is from Nigeria and enjoys working with stories of what he thinks is a culture he experienced but never fully understood, his aesthetic preferences and creative inspirations span broader than his nationality.

Among other influences, Coker counts the flat color and ornamentation of Art Nouveau, the simple handling of Ludwig Holwein and the inking of Aubrey Beardsley. Nigerian influence is more reference than style than taking on a pseudo African style,” he said. “A lot of African artists end up doing that because they feel they have to produce that kind of art to sell it and don’t explore their own desires in terms of visual aesthetics.”

Coker is developing the story for his next 3D animation, about people from Ijebu-Ode, specifically about a girl who is kidnapped. He explained that the result should be a good example of why he uses parts of these cultures to define his characters, because it makes them more interesting and world specific. “The visual language defines the worlds I create because it’s important to base your visual language in reality.”

Lauren Rae Holterman is a full-time student at the Memphis College of Art & a revolutionary in training.

Visual Storytelling from Indie Memphis Film Festival

The balance between history and individuality is a daily creative struggle that Coker keeps in mind when writing stories and developing characters. “It all depends on the story I’m telling, really, but when it comes down to it, I want people to know my work by me, not the place I come from.”

Kenneth Coker, Still from Iwa (2009), 3D Animated Short. Courtesy of the Artist.
At the writing of this piece, workers were still adding the finishing touches to the Space for New Media at Tennessee State University, north of downtown Nashville. But by the time this reaches our readers the new project will be a reality for both TSU and Middle Tennessee.

The Space for New Media is more than just a gallery: it’s a library, a meeting space, a multimedia learning center and a gallery, complete with permanent, multidisciplinary technology and Jodi Hays-Gresham: a curator with big ideas about new media.

Made possible by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the Space’s mandate is to create an environment that champions technology and inter-disciplinary work, ensuring the relevancy of TSU’s creative programs by offering what no other school, gallery or museum in the region can: A high-tech project space leveraged as a tool for multi-disciplinary learning.

Hays-Gresham’s role as the curator and gallery director of The Heron Van Gorden Memorial Gallery will now expand to include the new space as well. We met Hays-Gresham at the about-to-be-finished addition to discuss media. What is it like? Here’s our first look:

"Space for New Media" by Jodi Hays-Gresham

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**The sense of action:** making space for art, making space and not “museum” or “gallery.” The words Jodi Hays-Gresham: We named the new gallery the Even the name implies this is something different.

Even the name implies this is something different. The words "Space Age" New Era for TSU and Middle Tennessee.

The gallery contains four, permanent plasma screen monitors and 10 X 20’ projection screens. In addition, the New Media Workshop – which serves as the core center for the gallery – will expose TSU students to Watchout: a multi-display production and presentation software that is widely used in live music and theatrical productions in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. Nashville’s own live entertainment projects may soon find themselves revolutionizing their productions with TSU’s students utilizing this brand new tool leading the way.

The immateriality involved to describe media makes the category mutable and complex. Just when it seems like the boundaries have begun to stabilize, an unexpected combination of technologies leads to a novel commercial or artistic outfit for new sounds and ideas.

Tell me a bit about how this new space is expanding your knowledge base.

The gallery will be a reality for both TSU and Middle Tennessee. What has just put these two state schools at the cutting edge?

State schools and their departments must continually think about enrollment and relevancy. What can be more relevant, at this time in what Richard Florida coins the “creative economy,” than offering a way for students to learn, hands-on, the nature of new media, technology and video documentation? It really adds to and transcends what most people assume they will learn at art school.

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What is your dream show for this new space?

One of my favorite artists, William Pope Jr., has been in conversation with us to make a project he has been thinking about for some time. The projects I think will be most successful are those that celebrate or reflect thinking about for some time. The projects I think will be most successful are those that celebrate or reflect what this might mean to a new media artist.

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Do you think of yourself as performing in a middle ground, not a video artist or singer, not a musician, not an artist? And if so, what unique vantage point might this give you?

It certainly is a wonderful place to be unfettered or cross-defined. I think a lot of artists feel comfortable there. I think that most of us are hybrid people of type or another; however, the redefinition of those spaces cannot be politically charged and NOT identifying yourself as one thing or another can incite criticism of another.

In "Jahbody II Lolly," the female character moves from bride to sexual and seductive. In the "State of Things," the bride strips. In the "social" performance, is your role as a bride, is your role as a bride purely iconic?

My mother is an American Indian storyteller. Storytelling is her role in her community as well as our tribe, the Seneac-Cayuga tribe of the Iroquois nation. I did a lot of thinking about nature tales in works such as this. I was a Baghdad club when the time of the real

beginnings of the Internet, and it fascinated me that someone was their online persona at the club as well as in the chatroom (or message board), but there was that time from 9pm when they were just Kathy or Rob. But after 9pm in晋ク球 or the weekly club night they participated in, they were Evangeline, darkies, C3K or speedball. I think that now with Facebook there is more transparency in web presence.

It has dragged some out of the anonymous web presences but pushed others further into an Internet subculture. So maybe there was initially this idea that the Internet would be this huge dumping of people living out secret fantasies and personas, but things like Facebook meant that the nation is online for a significantly longer period of time, and it’s just the number of times the Internet on the web or the way that, given the chance to recreate a persona via technology, often the result isuario.

The bride for me is the most recognizable American symbol of a ritual. The ritual isn’t being married, the ritual is wearing this strange dress. I used the wedding dress and the image of the bride because it’s universally associated with an American ritual that has been exported and embraced by many cultures. It’s often written that American culture has less and less rites of passage. I wanted to reappropriate a hollowed-out symbol. There is no universal meaning of “bride,” but I wanted to use this ritualistic costume to speak about ancient legends and myths.

Is technology a neutral tool? Does video innately cause a sort of theatrical/fake still, an acting, suggested by the "Crying on Cue" piece? The term "second life" (a virtual world on the internet) itself suggests a sort of infinity of selves. Is it alienating or the creation of a new community? I recently wrote a response to a "Crying on Cue."

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"Space Age" New Era for TSU and Middle Tennessee.

"Crying on Cue" doesn’t sound like it’s ever going to be the Internet, but it’s puking us at the way we "amoritize" on the web or the way that, given the chance to recreate a persona via technology, often the result isuario.

*Are you hopeful about the widespread digital use of video? You have a new piece called “The Transformation of M-trigger.” Are you skeptical about the political unconsciousness of this sort of political stance? 

*"M-trigger’s" wasn’t her easying by laying it out on the dance floor, but was written and performed for the audience of YouTube viewers. What does that mean?" I think it has a lot of implications. I think that she entered into a space where everyone gets to be a comedian or video response to her effort. Often times Internet work can cut down the most sincere of efforts but every so often there are those comments that while delivered in a cynical tone can just put it all in perspective. You can watch MacLaren’s performances and video at www.stuttle.com
Ming Donkey:
By The Least Means Necessary

Ming Donkey is a pacakter. He probably owns 500 art books. They line shelves, floors and countertops in tittering stacks. A draft desk takes up half his workroom, despite the fact that it’s layered with too many student portfolios to actually use. Heavy panels-cum-canvases, power tools, camera bags, projectors and a hair dryer cross the remaining space. Even the window is occupied, literally, with tiny plastic soldiers marching across the sill. Another room functions as a music studio, crowded literally, with tiny plastic soldiers marching across the wall. He can be utterly disengaged and then a vague some strength forward intensely. It’s something that happens often. “It’s the idea of process versus product. Where does the art lie in this product the artwork, or is this result, is it ephemera or documentation?” Ming ponders.

Inside Ming’s rambling abode, a music studio, a drawing room, a guitar, a video editing suite, a filing cabinet and the clutter of a thrifter, the idea of working with rhythm and movement, the formal aspects of what you’re doing, and the groups of sound and the stories of sound, is the same principal. It’s just that the plane becomes aural rather than visual.

Ming applies geometric logic to his own musical performances, visualizing the stage the same way he would approach a sketch. “With the layout of the equipment, you think how the sound is going to come out of these speakers and project. You want certain things to be balanced and other things to stand out,” he explains, illustrating the layout with gestures that resemble key kung fu. His stage is his gallery, employing props and lighting to achieve an overall effect. “I like to use the space as a pictorial plane that has visual references. My props reference God and the Devil, and the songs are kind of doing that too,” he adds.

“On the 90’s, Ming played under punk soundtracks, writing the occasional mention in Thrasher or Maximum Rock and Roll. He labels punk “avant-garde,” because, “at the time it came about — the late ‘80s — performance art was a big thing. And punk is definitely more of a performance than a recital.” Which is true.

“Tidies” song was known for cutting himself and clambering in licorice and licked peanut butter off the mic. Most people were the audience, because “at the time it came about — the late ‘80s — punk is definitely a performance art was a big thing.” Which is true.

“People aren’t people, they’re characters in an elaborate enigma within a seemingly straightforward situation. This is obvious in a dollar store. She told the cashier, “Honey, I’m the sole provider,” and suddenly the reified concept and championing constraint as a path to originality.

Ming spends his daily life striving for fresh perspective and championing constraint as a path to originality. “It seems cheesy to say I’m an artist, but that’s how I think of myself. I don’t attach myself up with limits. Some songs are dictated by the least means necessary.” He started plucking minor guitar melodies while kicking a cardboard box, eventually adding vocals and harmony and promoting the box to a kick-drum/lymbo combo. Ming Donkey’s One Man Band was born. “Obviously, in that situation I can’t work a snare the way I could if I wasn’t also trying to do other rhythms with my hands, so I’m setting myself up with limits. Some songs are dictated by these limits, even during the creative process. Maybe as an experiment, I’ll try to write a song using a specific beat because the beats are more restricted, rather than taking a more traditional point of departure [like the melodic],” he expands.

“Rock and roll had lost a certain soulfulness, and punk was a reaction against that, a return to immediacy and desperation. The whole idea was to dissolve the distance and the hierarchies between the audience and the creator.” He draws his glasses and shifts restlessly on the green vinyl. “Or at least, that’s what I get out of it,” he qualifies.

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Ming spends his daily life striving for fresh perspective and championing constraint as a path to originality. “It seems cheesy to say I’m an artist, but that’s how I think of myself. I don’t attach myself up with limits. Some songs are dictated by the least means necessary.” He started plucking minor guitar melodies while kicking a cardboard box, eventually adding vocals and harmony and promoting the box to a kick-drum/lymbo combo. Ming Donkey’s One Man Band was born. “Obviously, in that situation I can’t work a snare the way I could if I wasn’t also trying to do other rhythms with my hands, so I’m setting myself up with limits. Some songs are dictated by these limits, even during the creative process. Maybe as an experiment, I’ll try to write a song using a specific beat because the beats are more restricted, rather than taking a more traditional point of departure [like the melodic],” he expands.

“Rock and roll had lost a certain soulfulness, and punk was a reaction against that, a return to immediacy and desperation. The whole idea was to dissolve the distance and the hierarchies between the audience and the creator.” He draws his glasses and shifts restlessly on the green vinyl. “Or at least, that’s what I get out of it,” he qualifies.
Life as a journey, particularly through a dense forest, is a common but compelling metaphor. One of the most celebrated literary incarnations of this symbol begins Dante’s Inferno: “In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost.” The “dark wood” for the Italian poet is a place of testing, perils and pain. Creating fresh visual expression to this time-honored metaphor in a series of 11 monumental sculptures titled Obstacles to Departure, Duane Paxson has created abstracted equivalents to significant moments in life’s trajectory. Melding gnarled, spiraling lengths of wood to fiber glass configurations, Paxson crafts a kind of “forest,” the understated humor of “Love Loops” giving way to the diurnal continuity of nature’s vital patterns extending up into the “grave marker,” subsume individual mortality. Eaching this intuition of life’s indifference to individual humanness or suffering, “Across From” is a curving triangle whose opening — like a passage for the soul — is obstructed only partially by a metal grid set diagonally against the bottom. A placket of lively, spiraling branches, however, seems to sprout along the upper rim, pointing to the askance nature of nature’s vital patterns of renewal.

An inverted triangle whose corners are rounded, “Curtain Call” (2009), with stately formality, presages the end of life. Like curtains drawn upon either side, lengths of bent wood and metal wires create an opening as it for departure. An arc over the work evokes the outline of a tombstone, its projections suggesting an aura. But the finale is “East That” (2004), repeating the oval enclosing an ellipse of barbed wire seen in “Enter This,” the first work of the series. Dearly, the artist implies, it is no pleasant afterthought, the “borders” of life on this last piece are uplifted, almost as if applauding a job well done or perhaps that it’s all over. Whereas Dante’s experience in the dark wood led him finally to joy, Paxson’s journey ends with a question.

Obstacles to Departure
Myers Gallery, Athens Academy
Athens, GA
August 19 - October 9, 2009

Multiple X Multiple: A Survey of Contemporary Print Media
Ewing Gallery, University of Tennessee
Knoxville October 8 - November 8, 2009

Printmaking is one of the youngest of what is considered traditional art media practiced today. Developed in the 15th century in Europe, parallel to the invention of the western printing press and the importation of papermaking technology from China, printmaking’s connection with the spread of literacy and education places it on the vanguard. Multiple X Multiple: A Survey of Contemporary Print Media curated by Beauvais Lyons and the students in the graduate printmaking department of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, examined the expansive directions that the medium has headed into today. Art as wallpaper, designed by Flavor Paper’s Josh Minnie, encased entire modular walls with vertical rows of knives and sharp tools decending toward the floor like rain silhouetted white on a red background. In a second sample, giant squids and whales swashed each other diagonally on a metallic blue background. “Comic books” by Chris Ware, created for visual inventiveness and mood rather than dramatic narratives, were displayed by tiling all individual pages onto a wall. Their subtle coloration showed the strong influence of recent trends in graphic design.

In “Across From,” the third work of the series, death, the artist implies, is no pleasant afterthought, the “borders” of life on this last piece are uplifted, almost as if applauding a job well done or perhaps that it’s all over. Whereas Dante’s experience in the dark wood led him finally to joy, Paxson’s journey ends with a question.
were absolutely no barriers (money, time, social actually continue the attitude of this work. Kooning in Rauschenberg’s “Erased de Kooning.” I wouldn’t actually destroy anything but would undo deserves a somewhat sly response, here is mine. I This seems like a somewhat sly question and I believe 1. If you could walk into any museum or collection from Greely’s past students and colleagues and artists Because of this I, decided to break from the traditional interview process and request anonymous questions. Greely Myatt and the 20 years that he has spent living, teaching, and making work here. The artist has had numerous shows written about him over the last several months and has had captivating exposure with 10 local shows. Because of this, I decided to break from the traditional interview process and request anonymous questions. From Greely’s past students and colleagues and artists who are familiar with his work, I requested that each person send one question that they would like to pose to Greely. 1. If you could walk into any museum or collection in the world and destroy a famous sculpture, which one would it be? This seems like a somewhat sly question and I believe destroys a somewhat sly response, here is mine. I wouldn’t actually destroy anything but would undo one of my favorite pieces of art. I would reduce the de Kooning in Rauschenberg’s “Erased de Kooning.” I always loved this piece and the complex twist it involves. I don’t want to destroy any art, but feel that this would actually continue the attitude of this work. 2. What artwork would you like to make if there were absolutely no barriers (money, time, social or otherwise)? The barriers are what form my ideas, so without them I’m stuck, but I would like to make everything I think about. 3. Did you make art as a child...and how did you know you wanted to be an artist.... did that idea begin in childhood...? I’m still a child because I make art. 4. Did seeing all your work on exhibit at one time done or will do. No, but it did let me realize that I am continuing to say the same thing even if it looks different. 5. What was the best learning moment you had pulling out all this work from the last 20 years? Was there one piece that you thought about or that you remembered? There were many interesting moments and some surprises. Generally, I was surprised how well the work had held up in a physical sense. I was also pleased to see how there were carvers from the older work to some recent pieces. But the single best moment and the forgotten thing was the label on the bedspreads in “Best Rest, 1993.” The label was from the company that made the bedspreads. This company was located in Memphis and the line of bedspreads was Best Rest. I remembered all of this but was surprised to see the “Guaranteed 20 Years.” This was amusing with the 20 years of work and is why it was used on the poster. 6. What would the 20-year-old Greely Myatt think of 56-year-old Greely Myatt’s art? I hope he would get it and laugh a lot. 7. Can art be taught? What is the true role of the artist in the modern corporate university setting? Probably not taught, but encouraged and supported. As others have said, the university system has served as the Modo of the modern/postmodern era. 8. How has teaching affected your artistic practice? At this point what role does teaching play for you? Has it supported it. Teaching keeps me moving, amused and informed in ways that I might not be, if I were alone working. 9. Where would you place your work in art history? What would the piece representing you in the textbook be? I don’t know where to place it, but I suppose on the last page of the most recent book and the piece would be the last piece I made. But that is someone else’s job. I’ll just have to trust them to get it right. 10. Now that your work is receiving international attention, in your opinion does this the influence of the Southern Vernacular limit its appeal to a new audience? I was in a show in Holland about the middle region of the US, which includes the South. So I believe it actually helped, but I believe that boxing it up isn’t accurate. My work is more influenced by minimal, post-minimal and conceptual practice than the Southern Vernacular; however, I live within that context and content is important to all of those approaches. But I am whole work is from the view and is limited. I hope the work will be seen in a broader field. 11. Humor vs. irony. Who wins or is it just geography? Neither wins but neither loses, that is what is great about art, no one idea in an art gallery. 12. What is the best tool in your studio, the one you would push out the door if the studio was about fire and why? Hate to admit it but I would first grab my laptop, but be right back for my band saw. 13. Why are your best works always handmade using recycled materials? Well thanks for thinking it is my best work; it is actually most of my work, however it probably is the the least fearsome work, because there isn’t much to love. I say “love” the handmade and I love finding use in what has been discarded, so maybe that passes comes out of the work. I don’t actually know. 14. Would you steal for your art? My lawyer has advised me not to discuss this. 15. I have heard you speak about the influence of music on your work. Do what do you look for in a musician or band? Hmmmm! Blond hair and cool t-shirts? No, really, the influence music has played is primarily in the lyrics, so I am actually more interested in songwriter than bands. The narrative and the poetry within the combinations of words are what draw me. I find the same innovations in words, not reference music more because it seems more accessible. The other thing that draws me to music is more to do with its form than-with-the-musicians and that is the way that music, or sound, can seem to physically occupy or fill a space, while not existing as a physical entity. No storage problem with music. 16. After viewing the full complement of exhibitions, I wonder — and the question has been posed to me by other admires, too — how you come up with the huge numbers of ideas and themes in your work? Twenty years isn’t really that long a period of time to have produced so much varied material. Well I don’t really see it as that varied. There seems to be the same discussion going on, however, sometimes the specific subject is different and generally the materials and sizes are varied but all of it comes from the same place. I suppose the shows, which included only a fraction of the work actually produced over this time, make it appear to be a bit scattered. I do work in various ways, but push it around a lot, so most of the pieces in these shows have several variations. I tried to build bridges between the pieces that ended up being shown here and tried to make work for viewers to see crossovers. I’m sure it isn’t very clear in places and of course I’m not objective. 17. When you feel like you’re hit a brick wall, and your work is too much the same ole, same ole, who or what do you turn to? How do you get out of that stuck place? For example, some people do something in another medium or do an exercise to replicate (in some fashion) a favorite piece by someone else, usually someone very different. Good question, but I don’t have a good answer. I don’t mean to suggest that there aren’t other ways, but at this point I have more ideas than I can do, so the bigger problem is time rather than hitting walls. 18. Did doing all of the work involving the work of Philip Guston change your outlook or course as an artist? Not really, or at least I don’t think about it that. I had returned to carving when doing the bottle pieces and that did change my direction, but the Guston derived pieces were simply a way to continue that direction. And of course within those works are references to other artists as well, primarily Brancus. 19. What living artist’s work do you admire the most? Probably Robert Gober, but there are others. Martin Puryear, Charles Ray also comes to mind. I like James Surls a lot and Mauricio Cattelan. 20. This year has been a personal and professional milestone. What are the differences, if any, between your previous and present goals? This has been an extremely interesting time. However, my goals are the same – to continue working and exhibiting the work.
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