Opportunity for a Future Plan

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Corey Crowder
Chuck Wallace
Tim Crowder

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My wife remarked that I’m probably the last person she’d ask to write about art as community builder. In many ways, she’s right; I’d be the last person I’d ask as well. I’ve been thinking about art since I was eighteen years old, after I randomly decided to take classes in art history. Nearly 30 years later, I know that my thoughts on art have changed a lot. When you take classes with the likes of great art historians like Martin Kemp, one of the world’s leading scholars of Leonardo da Vinci, a fixed point reference quickly develops: the artist as solitary genius, working alone on their projects in dusty studios with little luck for the public. As attractive and comfortable as this reference was — for a young man in his late teens and early twenties the artist as the solitary, heroic and romantic: is almost syllogistic — I look back and smile wryly at my limited perspective.

Even though I’ve since done a great deal of looking at Russian Constructivism and the Arts & Crafts movements my smile was, for a long time, solitary figures like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko, neither of whom seemed to notice in their art that a world war was taking place at the same time as some of their greatest artistic achievements. Equally limiting, my research focus has always been on the individual artist’s drive to create, with a heady dose of psychoanalysis and philosophy reinforcing an emphasis on the solitary. Yet, by all accounts, I’m the last person that should be a special guest editor on an issue devoted to art as community builder.

I’m being a little disingenuous, of course. I wouldn’t have spent all that time reading Karl Marx and Gyorgy Lukacs if I wasn’t also interested in how the individual created a role for themselves in their community and how they served to strengthen the best aspects of their community. I’m dropping these names as indirect evidence in my belief that artists are part of a continuum, a vibrant network of creators and thinkers, who enrich the lives of their communities and even assert sociocultural and ideological change. Art is a mirror image of the world, and rotating a mirror round and round is more than just the manifestation of shadowy, fleeting reflections but an act of creation that changes the world. For this reason, I believe that this special issue of Number is important and I’m proud to serve as its guest editor. Over the course of 27 years, this journal has increasingly become an important voice highlighting the artist and arts in a region that is often little served by the national art-world press. Too often the contemporary art world is geographically and financially focused on the artist as a singular celebrity, with an almost predatory stink in the air, while artists and projects working in the in-between spaces are given short shrift because their impact is less marketable. By focusing on art as a community builder, this issue of Number is reinforcing its role as an advocate for artists who work to activate community spaces. We are sometimes given the impression that art only takes place in the big cities, but it’s when artists and their practice contribute and effect a multi-layered construction of thequilited assembly of a community that’s most valuable.

The entirety of this issue is worth reading — thanks to the writers and artists there’s a bit here worth looking at and thinking about — but I’d like to highlight a few that caught my attention. Miriam Krie’s review of John Salvest’s Disappearing Ink analyzes a compelling installation that melancholically captures the disappearing modes of that former landscape and brings to the forefront John Rankin’s discussion of Art Space JB, a continuing collaboration between artists Jerred Partridge and David West, showcasing what can be accomplished when the audience’s expectations are both met and simultaneously and irrevocably transformed. Judy Stokes-Carney’s discussion of Memphis, Meet Baltimore captures the excitement of new but familiar voices that suggests the promise of collaboration. Most importantly Park Hunter-Stokes’ review of Flanada Thomas’ exhibition Stuck Between Lizabeth Taylor’s Toes is a response energized by powerful and provocative art that mines a variety of issues specific to community identity.

Finally, I’d like to congratulate Terri Phillips, the winner of the cover competition, who submitted an image from her Belle Mart (2014), based on a book by Phillips and Maureen O’Leary and involving a cross-section of the Memphis art world. Many of the images submitted for the competition were noteworthy, but this simply captured, in an evocative way, the inherent difficulties and anticipated dividends involved in making community oriented art.

One last note: the rigorous and professional editorial board of Number has kindly given me more space to write about art as community builder in an additional article in this issue. Please don’t think of it as any more privileged or important than the rest of the issue; it originally started out as my editorial, but then grew and became something more than what I expected it to be, reflecting my personal perspective quite closely. Like the rest of this issue, it’s one voice amongst many others that are all equally important and worth thinking about. I hope — or, more accurately, I expect — that collectively these articles, reviews, interviews and updates will resonate with the diverse audience of Number and foster further ideas and efforts to create and use art where it’s at its best: generally amongst the people as an instrument for change, strength and progress.
Elizabeth Murphy is a writer and arts marketer living in Memphis, Tennessee. She is the Creating Director of the ArtsMemphis show, which will have its closing reception on December 7. Though Valley View’s Shenandoah is compact in size, Tiny Homes encourage thoughtfulness and clarity in focus in what you choose to do, and encourage paring down to what’s essential, necessary, and right for you. In a city whose approval structures for space are getting tighter for the artists embedded here, tiny houses may be big steps towards affordable change.

Michael Stanley is an Assistant Professor of Art and serves on the board of Number: Inc.

Regional Update: Nashville

In an issue dedicated to makes art in Community, the case-study opened this October on the streets of Chattanooga. Funded through a collaboration between a local foundation and a non-profit, Open Spaces invited local artists, and engineers to fill 15 vacant storefronts in the downtown area with an assemblage of conceptual, interactive, and intergenerational projects. This pop-up exhibition range from live-stream videos projecting short films, and digital graffiti to interactive spaces such as Little Library. Each project will engage with the city’s historic and collective identity for one year, and in effect, become part of the fabric of the city’s center.

Also at the MMA (November 1 – January 29, 2015), the 23th Mississippi Invitational located in the Donna and Jim Barksdale Galleries, includes forty paintings of the state’s current talent. The legendary Mississippi public universities have a particular cultural pressure, which is the subject of the visual arts and film this fall.

Robert Henri was India-born, and his exhibition The Manhattan Project will be on view through January 4, 2015. At the Wight Gallery on DSU’s campus from January 2 – February 25, 2015, is a solo exhibition titled Ava Sawa, Reflections of the Art of a Fabric Designer. Ava Sawa’s work are inspired in his time in China while a member of the Peace Corps.

Regional Update: Memphis

The University of Mississippi’s Center for Creative Careers presents works by Michael Stanley is an Assistant Professor of Art and serves on the board of Number: Inc.

Regional Update: Mississippi

The Mississippi Museum of Art (MMA) currently has three noteworthy exhibitions on view, with the famous American painter Robert Henri as the focal point of two, Spanish-Speakers Robert Henri and the Spirit of Spain, located on the Donna and Jim Barksdale Galleries, includes forty paintings of the state’s current talent. The legendary Mississippi public universities have a particular cultural pressure, which is the subject of the visual arts and film this fall.

Robert Henri’s Henner, Fine Art and Space (Exhibition dedicated to the creativity, craft; contemporary, and conceptual) located in the William B. and Isabelle R. McCoy Foundation Gallery. The exhibition is open to the public, and his exhibition the Donna and Jim Barksdale Galleries, includes forty paintings of the state’s current talent. The legendary Mississippi public universities have a particular cultural pressure, which is the subject of the visual arts and film this fall.

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**Regional Update: Northeast Arkansas**

The Bradley Gallery at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock hosted the work of the State's First Artist Laureate, Evan Lindquist, in the exhibition Legacy that was on view through October 31st. The exhibition featured works created over the past 10 years by this internationally recognized artist. In addition to his work, the gallery also showed two large-scale installations by Evan Lindquist, one of which was a mixed media assemblage that included found objects, photos, and text. The other was a large painting on canvas that explored themes of identity and place.

The Kresge Gallery recombined photographic imagery, and Ford will be showing photography, sculpture and video that graphic design, like the poster and the book, to deliver social statements through her densely members Nikki Arnell and Joe Ford up through November 12th. Arnell uses traditional forms of as translucent porcelain, to create biomorphic amalgamations that were both elegant and disturbing.

The Arts Council of Little Rock is showing A Silencer of Silence by Shirley Lerner, from October 24, 2014 through January 19, 2015, and at about the same time, a retrospective of the photography of William Beckman (October 24, 2014 – February 1, 2015). Good Weather, a gallery in Little Rock that shows emerging contemporary artists from throughout the US.


**Regional Update: Northwest & Central Arkansas**

Culverhouse, in the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, sponsored State of the Arts, which ran from September 15 through October 15, 2015. Artists were selected through a juried process, and the final selections were announced in late June. The exhibition featured works by more than 60 artists from across the country, including sculptures, paintings, and photographs. The exhibit was curated by curator, writer, and scholar David Sires, and it included works by emerging and established artists.

The Arts Council of Little Rock features an ongoing exhibition of new works by local artists, which is expected to continue throughout the year. The exhibition features works by local artists, including portraits, landscapes, and abstract works. The council has been in operation for over 30 years and has featured the work of thousands of artists, both local and national.

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Evan Lindquist was born in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and has lived and worked in New York City since 1974. He is known for his mixed media installations, which combine found objects, text, and imagery to create a sense of place and identity. His work has been exhibited in numerous museum exhibitions and is represented in numerous public and private collections.

In addition to his work as an artist, Lindquist is also a writer and critic, and he has been a contributing editor for Art in America and other publications.

**Mississippi**

Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant proclaimed 2014 the “Year of the Creative Economy” in the state, to celebrate and showcase how artistic and cultural engines fuel development and quality of life. For those living and creating in Mississippi, the connections between the arts and the greater good have always been apparent. Jackson-based visual artists Jerrod Partridge and David West have embraced this integration by creating Art Space 86, an ongoing concept using orchestrated pop-up fine art galleries to present Mississippi with contemporary art, whether they might not otherwise encounter. As part of the creative economy efforts, Art Space 86 is rooted in the better part of a decade of collaboration between Partridge and West with a self-sustaining momentum.

Partridge and West are the curators of the Mississippi Governor’s Office of Tourism’s “Artistic Propagation in Mississippi” program, which has been running since 2010. The program has been a great success, and the artists involved have been able to showcase their work in public spaces throughout the state.

The past few years I’ve had so much fun getting to know people who collect artwork and finding out why they love it,” said Partridge. “You go to their houses and they tell you little stories about their own personal connections to the art and why they have it. It’s not just about the object. It’s about life that happens because of this object.”

The Who’s Who of Little Rock is a collaborative art exhibition that features works by artists from Little Rock and the surrounding area. The exhibition features a variety of media, including paintings, sculptures, photography, and mixed media. The Who’s Who of Little Rock is a great way to see the talent that Little Rock has to offer, and it is a must-see for anyone interested in the arts.

**Artistic Propagation in Mississippi**

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Interview: Barry Jones

Common Hope is a video installation produced by Barry Jones, but informed by the community of Clarksville, TN. Jones’s time-based work investigates the intersection of animation and written word. While such new media work can be alienating to a community largely disconnected from the discourse of contemporary art practice and theory, Jones proposed, completed, and exhibited Common Hope to engage with the people of Clarksville.

Rather than assert his knowledge about visual media onto the community, he collaborated with them by conducting interviews in local churches and libraries about their personal hopes and visions for the future. After completing hundreds of interviews, Jones looked for patterns of hope, and animated the text in white on a black field. The resulting videos were projected onto the local churches and libraries where the interviews were conducted, as well as a local art gallery so that the work could reach a large portion of Clarksvill’s community. In September 2014, to learn more, I talked with Barry Jones regarding the scope of the work, the community’s response, and reflection on the work a year after it was completed.

When deciding on this work, what drove your decision to collaborate with the community? I had been spending a lot of time trying to figure out what it meant to be an artist in Clarksville, a community I have been showing work in other places, in galleries, etc., but what did it mean to be an artist here. What can art do here in this city? I wanted to make something that made sense here and perhaps held meaning to my community. Not just conceptually about Clarksville, but was of use to Clarksville.

Did you have a preconceived idea of what “community” meant in Clarksville? Clarksville is a very interesting city with Fort Campbell just next door. We are a perhaps a more diverse city than others in our area. I tend to think of Clarksville as a combination of many different communities, rather (than) one homogenous whole. Sometimes it seems we are a little too fractured. There is the military community, the university community, the African American community, the religious community, etc. This is probably not unique to Clarksville, but one of the goals of Common Hope was to find the common threads throughout these groups to perhaps aid in creating a sense of the city as one community.

How did your sense of the community inform the questions you asked participants? I wanted to focus on the “key” questions. Things that I felt we were shared concerns. I asked everyone “What are your hopes for the future?” “What is most important to you?” “What does it mean to live a good life?” and “What are our responsibilities to each other?” Those are questions that I was thinking about a lot as a parent. How do I help my children figure out these things? I also felt that deep down most political debates address these questions as well. On the surface, it seems that the nation is incredibly divided on political lines. My hope was that by being in a conversation with my community through these simple questions, we might learn how similar we really are.

How did you select the locations for interviewing the public? It was important to me to select locations that were open to everyone — schools, churches, community centers, and the public library. Places that were created by the community for the common good. I had a limited time frame to complete the work, I was on a semester long sabbatical, so I had to limit the number of places I could focus on. I visited Moore Magnet Elementary School, Kenwood High School, Aja Turner Senior Citizens Center, Kleeman Community Center, Trinity Episcopal Church, Deliverance Outreach Temple Church, and the Clarksville Montgomery County Public Library.

Were any of those locations more successful or informative than others? They were all informative in different ways, but it seemed to work out better when there was a way to address the members of the community about the project and my plans, places like the schools and churches. Just wandering around the library asking to speak to people didn’t work out nearly as well. In general, people were very welcoming and friendly and seem to enjoy participating in the project.

Did you have any prior assumptions or ideas regarding the responses of participants? I tried very hard not to presume anything. I did think that I would have a much harder time getting people to talk to me. People were very giving of their time. Were you surprised by the responses you received? What surprised me the most was the obvious desire people had for someone to listen. I didn’t want to rush anyone through an interview, so some of the conversations went on for a considerable amount of time without ever getting to my questions for the project. Everyone has a story, but not everyone has someone to tell their story to. To me, that was the best part of the project — just listening to people.

In gathering data for this work, did you discover a clearer picture of the community? I think I did, but the “sample” size wasn’t large enough to truly represent the entire city (That is one of the benefits of being an artist and not a social scientist). I found that we are a very family focused community with strong religious faith. That faith seems to manifest itself in a compassionate way. No matter where I went, everyone mentioned the “Golden Rule.” I found that to be very comforting.

You exhibited this work at several locations in Clarksville. Where did all you show the work and how did the community factor into your choice of sites? Each of the groups I selected to work with all had a particular building associated with them — schools, churches, community centers, etc. I’m very interested in the idea of the commons and am fascinated by buildings and places that we create to share. I projected the final work onto the common building associated with each group. In my mind, it was a way for the building to speak as the representative for that community. The reason I opted to go with text-only projections rather than video of the individuals speaking. My hope was that the text would focus the viewer on the content of the replies and not the individual speaking. How did the public projections differ from the exhibition at the Downtown Art Gallery? The public projections focused on the individual community groups. For example, the projection at Trinity Episcopal Parish included only the responses from members of that church. For a week, the projections were shown at each location for one night. The final night of the public projections occurred at the Clarksville Montgomery County Public Library and included all of the responses that I had gathered. I thought of the exhibition in the Downtown Art Gallery as much the same way. It was a chance to show all of the projections in one place, so that the responses could be compared and thought of as a group. True collaboration involves contribution by both parties, and collaborative community art implies that the artist and the community will both be affected by the process and the work. How are you affected by this experience? I was profoundly affected by this project. I certainly feel a much greater connection to Clarksville and I am more comfortable with my role here. The stories I heard and the people I met have certainly stayed with me, particularly the stories that were not part of the project. High school students shared their plans and concerns with me, senior citizens shared their profound achievements with me, and I was the judge of a chili contest. These were real life experiences, things I don’t get alone in my studio.

What was the community’s response to the work? I was pleased with the positive reception to the work. The fact that community groups were willing to participate at all is amazing to me. I cold called churches, etc. and told them I was an artist and wanted to work with them. The fact that one refused to participate is telling about this community. The exhibition was very well attended and caught the attention of local news media. The stories and photos that ran in the media extended the conversation even further.

Now that a year has passed since the work was last shown, do you have any reflections on the experience? Has its impact lasting? It is hard to say if the impact is lasting, I think it has been with individuals (certainly with me), but I’m not sure if it is still on the minds of the community as a whole. Judging the success or failure of socially engaged art is a very difficult thing to do. I’m trying to look at Common Hope as the start of a long-term relationship with the community. How can art affect this community over a period of years and multiple projects? This is my home and my community — I’m trying to be patient and see how this work can manifest itself over my lifetime.
Lester Julian Merriweather’s Goblets, at Crockett Arts in Memphis, TN, are a visually referenced social class, race relations, and gender studies. The exhibition was complemented by an artist talk, a reception, and a generation with local artists, scholars, and community members. Merriweather’s previous series, Veiled Extremes and Black and White Tape Drawings, are known for their explicit references to race and race relationships between African American and Caucasian cultures. His techniques involving photograph- ing physically engaged and cultural- ly invested individuals have established a reputation for Merriweather among gallery patrons. The works in Goblets depart from his former explorations of capitalism and commercialization.

Merriweather’s new works are cut-paper collage on canvas utilising paper and image material associated with high and middle class cultures complete with clusters of gold bars, gold necklaces, colorful grapes, Rolex watches, diamond studded gold teeth (aka R&B), and other ornaments associated with upward mobility, mobility, and popularized urban culture. Core themes in Merriweather’s collage are social class stratification, marginalization, and urban material as affirmation of individuality and social class rankings. Several viewers noted that some Colossus canvases resembled “wallpaper” due to vibrant hues, earth tones, and pastels on large painted surfaces. Critics remarked the work for not having the same “social edge” and societal critique as former series.

The artist explained that his new intent was to “build a new alternative aesthetic and political dialogue as he embarks on an exploration of material culture, consumerism, and the choices available to me. The notion of an artist must create and “also pay for his studio practice.” Of the eight collages, three titled “the 50s” series, four titled “the 70s” series, and four of the 80s, the artist’s choices of color and imagery are associated with positive and negative space. He spoke of his aim to manipulate spacing in ways that exploit the recogniz- able “grid structure.” Most Colossus canvases are much larger than his former artworks and therefore provide more area to create clusters of images to manipulate the narrative. Traditionally, the negative space is where the focus and narrative exists and the negative space contains elements to support a central idea. In some of the collage, the narrative occurs in the negative space while the painting’s core remains blank as if a painted mirror to avoid reflection. The center becomes a proverbial black hole lacking the uniqueness while clusters border and frame the painting to provide clue to its narrative.

Memphis art critic Fredric Kopclz noted Merriweather’s application of space stating “The empty space doesn’t work in every case. The clustered images are bold, the overpowered imagery is retooled around the edges of the painting, so the effect is attenuated rather than elegant.” (Memphis Magazine, 23 October 2014, A10. Memphis Press
demographics. The influence of hip-hop music, culture, and aesthetics in Colossus is significant and invites thought about how an assembly of urban youth might interpret and investigate these images. Colossus is proof that art can build community. Merriweather’s quest to examine issues of materialism and capitalism expands his audiences view and me more complex interpretations to his work. The artist declared, “I cannot say that I understand everything in my art” meaning that some interpretations will be left to art historians, critics, and others. One viewer compared Merriweather’s work to the art of Andy Warhol that in past art also sought to bring attention to capitalism as social commentary. The abstract and surreal qualities of his art can also be associated with art such as Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, and Rene Magritte where an object appears familiar while concurrently suggesting sexual reference or the altered entity. As with other notable artists such as Rosemarie Beaton who used collage to illustrate blatant in urban landscapes and photographers. James van der Zee and Ernest Withers who documented everyday life, civil rights struggle, and social unrest through captured images, Merriweather’s work is a deconstruction of a contemporary and African American culture.
the wider world? Excuses are given for the reprehensible act of hanging Mary. The early 20th century, when people were less “enlightened” and I’ve often wondered why. I was struck by the almost gleeful pride the storytellers took, as if this elephant, and this story made me feel even more like a member of the family. By all accounts, Sparks instructed the animal handlers to offer to hang her in nearby Erwin, Tennessee, where Sparks reluctantly accepted the Clinchfield Railroad’s offer to help us clear these grounds of the memorial. This is from my perspective, what art should be as a community building not a reinforcement of unreflective expectations or a challenge leading towards redefinition. Amidst this challenge consensus is not the first goal but a second, reached through a struggle with the fantasy of art that is inapplicable in a direct way to life. It is only in the collective response to that struggle that consensus is reached, only through the secondary conversations and mechanisms about what the art means for the community. Art is truly formed. Does art make the world a better place? Absolutely not. Arts cannot change the world. The more we can present a catalyst for viewers to change the world when they abandon its pleasures in favor of real world acts? Without question.

Elephants Ass’tree Radicals

On September 17th, 1916, Sparks Circus, one of the biggest touring circuses in the southeast, hired Red and Charlie Sparks in as animal handlers. On September 12th, in Kingsport, Tennessee, with little experience and after barely a few weeks training, Eldridge did what would come natural to anyone when told to police his charge with a sharp stick if the display of the hanging Elephant Antiques” store in Erwin, inexcusable memories remain in the air. The story, the collective unconscious of the community, still resonance and transforms defining reality, relatable and audience.

Eighty-nine years later, printmaker and performance artist Scott Contreras-Koterbay in a public arts commission’s budget are not community serving. More cows, more murals and more line items for a financial institution’s bottom line that is packaged in an ameliorating base of community relations. In contrast, Lin’s memorial demands our attention, continuing to strike not only an emotional chord and refusing to simply become part of the visual landscape. Even after many years and a great deal of appreciation, seeing veterans of the war side by side with tourists while both are overcome with emotion in an experience of two entirely different communities brought together and in something that could only have been achieved by Lin’s radical art that breaks conventions and redeuces expectations. The naturalistic sculpture set slightly apart from Lin’s work, representing soldiers and nurses, are fine but they quickly pass by. Lin’s work in its form, in its confrontational state of reflecting the viewers’ faces amidst the names of the dead, a new community is defined and built through the memorial. As an community builder should be an act that does more than just strengthen the status quo. Lin argues:

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Beyond the University Gallery

The director of a university art gallery can either have a minimal or profound effect on their surrounding community by the manner in which they handle their resources and curate their gallery spaces. There was a time when university art departments were insular and self-absorbed institutions with little interest or regard for the "pedestrian" world. The students who were taken seriously by the art world were mainly white males who produced predictable work, often ignoring innovative and contemporary trends.

An increase in art practices, involving everything from found materials, interactive performance, public art, and even revenue for the galleries, these departments now find themselves heavily invested in the culture of their immediate surroundings for both inspiration and collaboration. The students themselves are highly diverse, coming from a broad range of experiences. The "leverage" budgets of many educational institutions, after multiple developers specializing in renovation, and historic self-absorbed institutions with little interest or regard for the time when university art departments were insular and predictable results, the way in which exhibits are programmed can develop local, regional, and even international community connections. This process is a skill Contessa-Koterbay uses with great dexterity. She starts with the aspect of diverse development it through collaboration. Collaborating on inter-departmental exhibits within a university system combines funding and entries both departments.

A group exhibit at Tipton Gallery, Environed Landscapes was organized by the Women's Resource Center, the Woman's Study Department, and the Urban Redevelopment Alliance, and also featured lectures from the Woman's Studies Department. An exhibit at Slocumb Gallery of food photography, Goodson's Of Eden: Photographs by Andrzej Maciejewski, was developed with the ETSU Department of Allied Health Nutrition Program. Another exhibit at Slocumb Gallery, Polities of Representation: An Inquest of Indigenous America from Warsaw to Miami is contemporary Native American artists, featuring contemporary art from Indigenous North American artists in a collaboration with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Women's Resource Center, Tamarind Institute, Doubletime Online, and the Rice Museum with support from the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Tennessee Arts and the Reece Museum with support from the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Tennessee Arts and the Reece Museum with support from the Student Government Association (SGA). The project moved forward fairly quickly, despite the way in which exhibits are programmed can develop local, regional, and even international community connections.

Most university galleries do not bother to have exhibits during the summer, but Contessa-Koterbay, uses these months in program exhibits showing work from the local and regional community. She searches for area artists working in the same media, genre, or conceptual idea to create energy and programming where there would otherwise be silence.

Finally, when you have a large artist community that, to an extent exists in an area because of a university presence, these are not an adequate number of commercial and non-profit galleries available in the surrounding community. These summer exhibits R1 paid homage to the many artists from the Tennessee Commission’s Arts Build Communities grant program. The association with these groups helps create multi-disciplinary events with programming involving anthropology, history, and a Native American Festival. Contessa-Koterbay was raised and received her education in the Philippines, while her relative, the Filipino sculptor who, in his early experience, in the international community, art gallery has given her access to overseas resources that help bring in artists from all areas of the world. Filipinos as Artist Feminist, a 2008 exhibit, brought the cultural experiences of contemporary Filipino artists to East Tennessee.

The political art of a sorry array of the Mexican dictators of Nicole Cruseaux was more readily available, the artist, Maricel Leher, was teaching at a university in Colorado at the time. There have been faculty and graduate student exchange exhibits with University of South Korea, and the Studio Arts Center International, that allowed local faculty members their first opportunity to exhibit abroad. Associations with influential institutions result in an ongoing curatorial fine craft with input and support from Pearl Aid School of Crafts, Assessment School of Arts & Crafts, and the Appalachia Center for Craft, a sailing branch of Tennessee Tech.

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Mary Hood and her students to produce limited edition original prints that address issues of pop culture mythos. Mapping website, they aspire to make works “which nahjinnie, C. Maxx Stevens, and Steven Yazzie. Quickly highlights the absurdity and self-serving nature of such depiction of the American West. The direct connection America from Warhol to Mapping and critical discourses of the present and the future.” However, the sentiment is similar: counting departure that is both compromising and beneficial. For instance, Warhol made in 1986 entitled Room for a complicated conversation with both this artwork demonstrates the depth of discussion to critic in 2013 remake of Lone Ranger with the blood of arowning floral drawing over Deep's head. Less directly about costumes, but still within a similar vein of unapologetic comedic, Edgar Heap of Birds takes our unpretentious propensity to benefit in the drawing installation Masonic Cove on Copnole Oikly. The viewer is presented with powerful yet sometimes enigmatic words drawn with boldness and urgency. This Scholten’s Indian with Beaded Sash, in a sense, mirrors Warhol’s work in the opposite gallery, and not just because of their shared visual characteristics. Scholar who was a member of the Luiseño tribe, yet often said he was not Indian, illustrated an important paradox that was thoroughly explored in his life and his work. Scholar cannot be a totem for Native American experience, none of these artists can. Not even totems for their own tribes. The genre is too romantic for the singular and multi-cultural, the most potent thing about this show is the reminder that a community, especially a marginalized community, is more than a mass representation or horrible acts committed against it. It has to be allowed to be everything or it ends up being nothing.

Baltimore Curated by Dwanye Butcher Crowstrot Arts Memphis, TN August 19 - September 20, 2014 Visitors to the Crowstrot Arts exhibition Baltimore thrilled of the thrill of new introductions mixed with the comfort of familiarity when they came across works by artists not shown before in Memphis. Dwanye Butcher, artist, writer, and former Memphis now living in Baltimore, selected works by six artists in his new town and named the exhibition after the local pronunciation of the city’s name. Butcher’s recent transplant status afforded him the opportunity to explore Baltimore studios and arrange the Crowstrot exhibition to initiate a cross-city conversation about visual art in Memphis, meet Baltimore.

Four freestanding sculptural works by Kyle J. Bauer activated the floor space. Their clean lines and geometric design make them anchors between the eclectic groupings of paintings. On the long wall Dave Eaves’s large paintings Last Time and Olympic Development commanded attention as their thick layers of oil paint reached out and pulled viewers eyes in. Opposite of his paintings were unassuming works by Colin Alexander, a video piece by Paul Sharit shown on a large television on a pedestal, and three small, but cleverly presented ink works by Cari Oba. The back wall was taken over by nine mixed-media square pieces comprised of text and color by Amy Hughes Braden. Bauer’s paintings are excessive. The oil paint is piled on so thick to the hou-hou-htow front canvases one cringes to consider the bill for supplies. The abstract figures, who could be the love children of de Kooning and Basquait, adorn their summer’s finest — one practicing kayaking in a man-made environment, the other with emblems and symbols in a post-sign of superfluous splatter of alcohol and anatomy. His works are the contemporary equivalent of 17th century Rosacce.

Opposite these paintings, Paul Short’s video: Tight Fit and Don’t Worry To Do This tells the story of a man literally too big for his bow with a screen of a tempo changing metronome tick and a bit of puffing and puffing. It begins with a small text followed by an anxious challenge to fit into clothing several sizes too small addressing an almost taboo subject of man with body issues through a Chapulinscat joke. Hughes Braden’s work is arranged within the walls to triangle the pieces by Bauer and Sharit. Her “Joke Paintings” are square works on paper that rely on text and color to relay a feminist critique of the “big swaying dick” of the art world. While the craftsman- ship of the pieces leaves much to be desired, the use of words as subject matter reveals layers of messages directed at the masculine-run art world and the creative copyright of Richard Prince. In the model of this triangle of gluttony, three small, well-landed ink on paper works from Cara Oba’s Tochikovtseh Sweats combine black and white and life paintings of brick-knacks with clean, concise rule on a stark background and speak of a more subtle indulgence. The works ironically address decor protection of the consensus between gender equality day people through the medium of high art which is typically aimed toward more elite and highbrow consumers.

As noted in the curator’s statement, the works in this exhibition were selected based on the inclusion of humor, but more so it seems, the artists approach their works with an underlying cynicism. The works in Baltimore criticize the frivolity of the art world and its collective indifference to social issues and express frustrations with the hierarchy of the art world. Through humor, these young artists question the value of paintings, the excess of sumptuous leisure, and the results of nobles not meeting the expected molds and demands of society to fit their milieu.

Kyle J. Bauer’s work provides the visual calm in the storm of existentially dressed in humor. The super craftsmanship of his sculptures elbowed visitors away from the walls and toward the center of the gallery. The pieces are carefully constructed to please the eye with clean lines and delicate balance. They rified off of a maritime theme and went a steady pulse through the gallery space.

The last works on view were paintings by Colin Alexander. His subject matter gravitates at the abstractness of the exercise. VHS tapes and plastic houseplants that dominated the 1990s through the eyes of a millennial. Such scenes are framed by crude line drawings of monitors and television screens set flat, stolen colored backgrounds that make the exercise images on the screen seem more appealing than the reality surrounding them. A cynical interpretation would suggest through the past the scenes bizarre and outdated in retrospect, the present may be even blander. The works do not rely on craftsmanship humorously pointing out an element in some threads of contemporary art — commentary on esoteric, conversations kowtows, formulaic qualities. The paints speak to the tongue- and-cheek synchon which perpetuates the art world.

The last piece in Bauer was a small work of acrylic on birch, sitting in the floor, leaned against the wall, because hanging it just didn’t matter. While the introductions between Memphis and Baltimore artists are exciting they are not a complete inside look at the Baltimore art scene, that would be many, many more shows. Rather, this exhibition was a sampling of work made in the Charm City that shocked the sensibilities and subject matter to a group of Memphis artists that includes Terri Lee Wright, Alice Powers, Alaka Pokiis, Mollie Bomford, Carly Myatt, and Butler herself. The selection of artists for the show perpetuates issues of inclusion faced by Memphis art communities. Butler does not self-identify as a curator and in the closing reception stated his discomfort in political correctness or representation of aboriginal issues. The projects pulled together. Viewers anticipate the continuation of these introductions with the planned Baltimore, meet Memphis exhibition.
exploration meditates on the spectacle of sexuality disaster scenes and architecture. Wilkinson’s current University, has made a career of fracturing the object of initial expectations — of sexuality, of orgasmic experience, with the erotic saturation of contemporary representation with the voyeuristic gaze, as evidenced in previous series on and even invites that sense of anticipation, even as their attitude toward sex and architecture. Wilkinson’s current exploration meditates on the spectacle of sexuality throughout art history and its often-told relationship to the erotic satiation of contemporary representations of and attitudes toward the body. The exhibition, shown from September 25th to October 4th at ThreeSquared Gallery in Nashville, TN, invited a respite. The paintings seem to press against their borders with crowded amalgams of color and shape in her layered pastiches. The lack of white space requires the eye to always look at something, to be responsible for and to the gaze. Wilkinson’s works in the series tend to offer at least two distinct forms anchored by the first, which is gleaned from art history, interrupted by glimpses of another fetishized as a titillating form in the present (a breast here, a leg there). The graphic elements of the source imagery are occluded. In Seren, a coy Erca puts his sculpted finger to his lips as a nipple floats over his shoulder and an open lipstick-kissed mouth hovers upside-down underneath him. The most sensual of these forms is actually the naked boy whose pose evokes a kind of knowledge more at home with the floating imagery that surrounds him than the way in which a contemporary viewer may commonly think of the nude corpus that populate classical sculpture. Wilkinson’s fascination with these juxtapositions invites the viewer as source of these categorizations of high and low, of pure and profane. In Saint Sebastian the sculptor’s languid agony of martyrdom is mimicked in an androgynous face behind him, head tilted back in unerring harmony. That Saint Sebastian is commonly recognized in gay iconography adds a layer of meaning to Wilkinson’s embrace of the fluidity of gender and sexuality, and it is not necessary to lose this in order to grasp our own diamengous relationships to art history and sensuality itself. Though the work itself is actually a confrontation of our attitudes regarding the erotic body rather than a confirmation of it, Wilkinson has run into some resistance in the reception of this art. It perhaps speaks to the importance of her project that even a glimpse of a nude taken from the multitude of images we encounter every day is enough for some viewers to categorize La Petite Mort as trafficking in low forms, when we all in turn respect the Venus de Milo despite what she’s (not) wearing.


Kate Krueger is an Assistant Professor of English and Director of Women and Gender Studies at Arkansas State University, in the Baroque and Classical Periods, Wilkinson sources imagery from Dutch Still Life and Hellenaert. Sculpture on the one hand and advertising, erotic, and profane on the other. Her watercolors reproduce the kind of art that teases flocks to the Louvre and set them next to the images they necessarily seek out online or flip past in magazines. Wilkinson’s process is twofold: she first creates a digital collage which splinters and layers several images into one composite whole larger than its parts. Then, Wilkinson offers a final rendering of that digital production in watercolor, a medium that hearkens to associations of demure Victorian ladies and pastoral landscapes. Here, Wilkinson puts us to the task of creating a broken image initially produced through digital processes, a slow and forsaking working-over of a composite that takes seconds to produce on a screen. Wilkinson does not allow the viewer any reprieve. The paintings seem to press against their borders with crowded amalgams of color and shape in her layered pastiches. The lack of white space requires the eye to always look at something, to be responsible for and to the gaze. Wilkinson’s works in the series tend to offer at least two distinct forms anchored by the first, which is gleaned from art history, interrupted by glimpses of another fetishized as a titillating form in the present (a breast here, a leg there). The graphic elements of the source imagery are occluded. In Seren, a coy Erca puts his sculpted finger to his lips as a nipple floats over his shoulder and an open lipstick-kissed mouth hovers upside-down underneath him. The most sensual of these forms is actually the naked boy whose pose evokes a kind of knowledge more at home with the floating imagery that surrounds him than the way in which a contemporary viewer may commonly think of the nude corpus that populate classical sculpture. Wilkinson’s fascination with these juxtapositions invites the viewer as source of these categorizations of high and low, of pure and profane. In Saint Sebastian the sculptor’s languid agony of martyrdom is mimicked in an androgynous face behind him, head tilted back in unerring harmony. That Saint Sebastian is commonly recognized in gay iconography adds a layer of meaning to Wilkinson’s embrace of the fluidity of gender and sexuality, and it is not necessary to lose this in order to grasp our own diamengous relationships to art history and sensuality itself. Though the work itself is actually a confrontation of our attitudes regarding the erotic body rather than a confirmation of it, Wilkinson has run into some resistance in the reception of this art. It perhaps speaks to the importance of her project that even a glimpse of a nude taken from the multitude of images we encounter every day is enough for some viewers to categorize La Petite Mort as trafficking in low forms, when we all in turn respect the Venus de Milo despite what she’s (not) wearing.
In the introduction to a chapter on “indeterminacy” in his book Silence, John Cage describes his text as “playing the function that odd bits of information play at the ends of columns in a small town newspaper,” suggesting it be read by “jumping here and there” and in response to “environmental events and sounds.” Entering John Salvest’s exhibition Disappearing Ink, one was similarly compelled to read covingly, with eyes glancing about the nearly 1400 issues of the Sun (Salvest’s hometown newspaper) that fly overhead like a flocking flock of birds. Suspended at varying heights by thin threads of clear monofilament, each newspaper spread its wings, casting long shadows that subtly shifted as the air fluctuated with people moving in and out of the gallery. Although the papers had been hung in a pre-net grid configuration — laid out like articles on a standardised newspaper page — the effect of the installation was conversely random. As one moved through the space, the hovering headlines overlapped in unexpected ways and produced shifting associations that were echoed by the fluctuating patterns of shadows playing across the gallery walls. At the heart of this exhibition lay a sense of ephemerality. Not only was Disappearing Ink comprised of newspapers (a quintessentially ephemeral medium), but it also commented on a moment in which the days of print media appear to be numbered. As Salvest described in his gallery talk, he wanted the newspapers to seem like they were flying out of the gallery and into the museum biblio, producing a sense of imminent departure that would set the tone for the rest of the exhibit.

In the other part of the exhibit, Salvest explored the increasingly rare practice of saving snippets of the daily newspaper. These galleries contained clippings submitted by members of the wider Memphis community, each of which marked fleeting yet salient moments in the lives of those who contributed them. With these fragments came stories that together formed a mosaic of personal and collective histories. Short texts and audio recordings about the clippings were provided by the contributors and accompanied each item in the exhibit; and on the museum’s website, participants were also featured in photographs, holding their clippings and describing the memories that their object evokes.

Curated by Salvest, the clippings on display at the museum were all labeled, framed, and arranged into looser thematic groupings. The first room of clippings appeared to be a bit of a hotspot, containing stories that ranged from humorous to heart-warming, from serious to bizarre to relatively mundane, often juxtaposed to heighten a sense of contrast or draw surprising parallels. Other rooms, however, had much more definitive themes such as violent crimes or major historic events like the death of Elvis, the assassination of JFK, and September 11th. In these groupings, it is through the repetition of the same event that differences came to light. Although two clippings may cover the same momentous occasion (or even feature the exact same article), variations exist in the ways that they have been printed, kept, or remembered. Filtered through the personal recollections of their creators, each repetition registers differently. While some clippings have been newly found in volumes, arranged in scrapbooks, or collaged into artistic compositions, others were worn for their wear. One vitrine, for instance, held a large clump of newspapers that a Memphis found in the walls of an old house that he was renovating. Looking at this dense heap of clippings appears as ephemeral; they also embody a presence and persistence that is disappearing from our contemporary media landscape.

As the museum’s wall text describes, “while we classify newspapers as ‘ephemera,’ mutating technologies make digital information even more fugitive.” In contrast to digital media, print doesn’t require software and can be read just as it is, today a hundred years from now. Furthermore, unlike online news articles that one saves onto searchable hard drives, newspaper clippings have far more indeterminate futures. Cut out, placed on the refrigerator, inserted into a book, or thrown in a drawer, only to be found years later when one least expects it, the material clippings persist, prompting reminiscences and serving as remembrances of the value of the random and transitory aspects of life.
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