

N·O·A·R

THE NEW ORLEANS ART REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF ANALYSIS

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2013



Double Issue: Fall - Winter

David Borgerding - Edward Burtynsky - Camille Henrot - Gene Koss

"No Dead Artists" - Anastasia Pelias - Brett Reif - Dan Tague

THE HARVARDWOOD INTRODUCTION TO PROUST



STEVE BACHMANN

ABOUT THE BOOK: This concise overview makes a sweeping, timeless literary classic more accessible to modern readers. The year 2013 marks the centennial of the publication of the first volume of Marcel Proust's masterwork, *À la recherche du temps perdu* or *In Search of Lost Time*. The first volume was titled *Du côté de chez Swann* or *Swann's Way*. The full story extends to more than a million words. While it is a masterpiece of world literature, it is not something that can be digested with the ease of, say, a sonnet by Shakespeare, or a painting by Matisse. The goal of this brief introduction from Harvardwood Publishing and Unlimited Publishing LLC is to democratize Proust, and also to induce more readers to celebrate him. It includes extensive references for scholarly study.

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Cover — Edward Burtynsky: *Cerro Prieto Geothermal Power Station, Baja, Mexico* 2012
Chromogenic print, 39" high. Courtesy Arthur Roger Gallery.

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Anastasia Peliás: *Elaine, for Elaine*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 72" high. Courtesy Octavia Art Gallery.

Anastasia Peliás: On Method & Meaning

BY TERRINGTON CALAS

ANASTASIA PELIAS
New Paintings
Octavia Art Gallery
New Orleans, LA

ANASTASIA PELIAS'S ART is as much about the pleasure of process as it is about any further idea she attempts to convey. Process is what strikes you first. A second, and allusive, layer soon emerges. And the play of these two—indeed, the hegemony of one or the other—is at the center of our experience of her work. It is a question of sustained aesthetic tension.

Peliás has long been a color abstractionist whose penchant for fluent yet unfettered gesture, actually an idiosyncratic “touch,” at times, seemed to define her work—proclaiming it an issue solely of technical performance. Technique itself, arguably, was her meaning. Now, in “Ritual Devotion,” her recent series (at the Octavia Art Gallery), there is the sense of protracted intent and, at best, a new richness. In earlier works, gesture often stood alone. And it worked solidly. There was a singular insouciance in her method that was more than gratifying. Brushstrokes seemed almost to fall into place. The new canvases, more than ever before, feel like zones of color in which gesture is pondered, deliberate,

occasionally tortured. And palpably “meaningful.” This revives the old modernist wrangle about abstraction and thematic content, and, polemically, whether such a thing really matters at all.

Many people think it does not. Mark Rothko, probably the greatest American abstract painter—and the master whose shadow looms behind this show—thought it did. He took issue with the very word abstract. “Get one thing straight . . . I’m not an abstractionist.” When he said this, in the midst of his signature period, he was profoundly serious—as he was about everything—and he was hardly alone in making the assertion. It was a time of conferring on painting an unattainable ambition, also a time that demanded of the viewer an extraordinary faith. The viewer was asked to locate—in even the purist, most extreme pictorial reductions—a subject matter that purportedly existed beyond the visual boundaries of the canvas. In a word, to see the invisible. For Rothko, that subject matter was religious, spiritual and, he insisted, “tragic and timeless.” And, generally, for the larger audience, such meaning remained invisible. Despite years of zealous, and often droll, persuasions by a phalanx of Rothko apologists—sometimes actually invoking Renaissance annunciations and the *Pietà*—what his famous, quavering color-clouds ultimately deliver is something purely aesthetic. As one critic remarked, on the occasion of a definitive Rothko survey,



Anastasia Pelias: *Ritual Devotion Two*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 72" high. Courtesy Octavia Art Gallery.

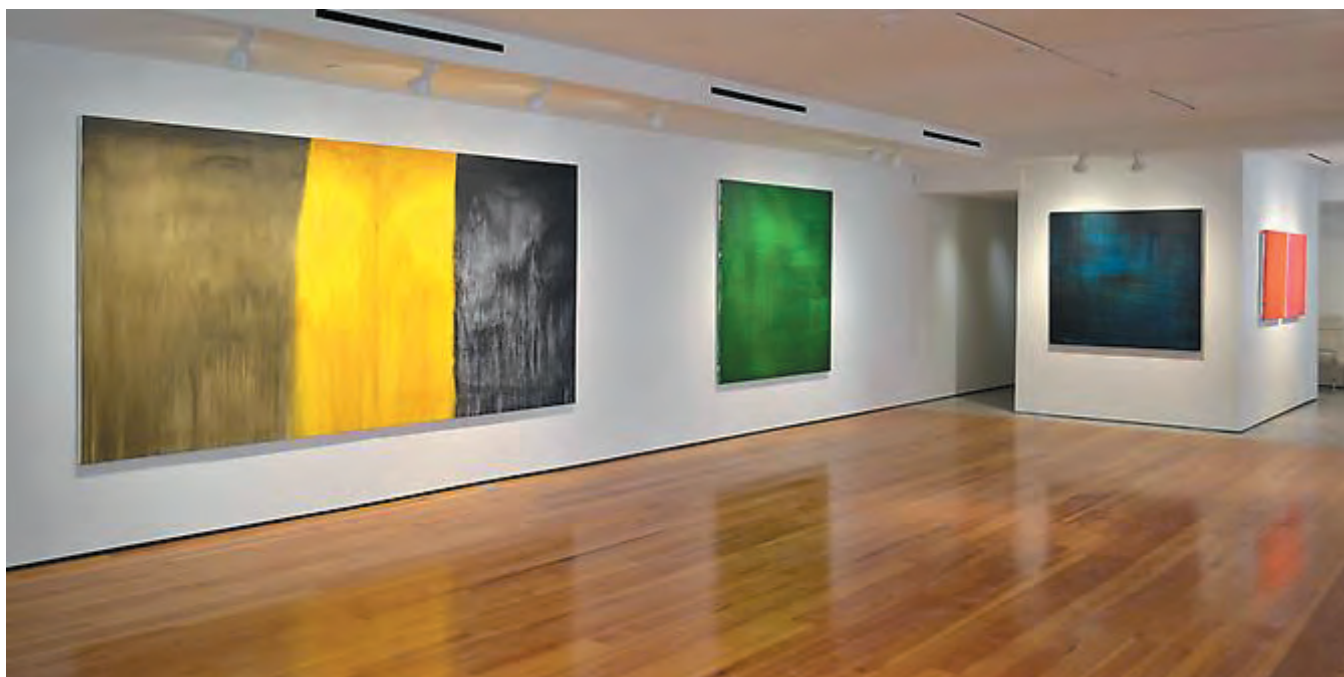
“perhaps the most beautiful failures in the history of modern art.”

Of course, he meant “failures” in the context of the artist’s intention. In lieu of Rothko’s declared metaphysics, he saw a painterly phenomenon—certainly ravishing, certainly majestic, but shy of “the spiritual.” That critic’s standpoint is common today. And in this down-to-earth climate, Pelias settles into the tradition; or rather, thrusts deeper into it. As I say, her new work takes technical strategy, fairly, as a studied enterprise. Her brush handling is no less deft, but now less of a goal. That goal, it would seem, is allusive content—a courageous venture, to say the least.

She does this by way of nuance—that is to say, nuanced color. Decidedly, color is the triggering force in these paintings. Not the delicate, feathery color of Rothko. Rather, as in *Ritual Devotion Two*, it is a matter of broad swathes, walls of color that vaguely override each other. And the nuancing is a

result of adagio daubs and strokes, downwardly and almost cursorily blended. Pelias’s breezy approach is undiminished. In this instance, her technique contrives a fiercely dramatic arena, a sense of restive space and of space menacingly shrouded. You perceive a “proscenium” whose drama is unseen, but keenly felt. The painting is unabashedly sensuous, an expanse of lush crimson and blue. But at issue now is a sense beyond the engaging surface. These chromatic walls, or curtains, stir your imagination, suggest scenarios, suggest climaxes and dénouements. They are not, assuredly, about manipulated paint and lovely color.

Elaine, for Elaine is a somewhat similar instance, but this is a tougher painting. It is a wide charcoal grey and ochre business—what might be called “good taste” colors, nothing merely pretty, nothing jewel-like. A question of utter restraint. And yet, the same carefree, adagio brush-handling obtains; and it leads to



Anastasia Pelias: "Ritual Devotion." Installation view, Octavia Art Gallery.



Anastasia Pelias: *Delphi*. Oil on canvas, 55" high. Courtesy Octavia Art Gallery.

the same aura of dramatic tension. There is, too, the same vague illusion of an uneasy, animated space largely hidden. The distinction has to do with one's perception of color, or, faced with those deadly greys, anti-color. For me, the theatrical effect is exalted. The charcoal grey looks scrubbed, loosely striated; and this causes it to advance, and to dominate. Pelias has it flanking the whole—a somber portière on either side. And the golden ochre is squeezed at center, like a distant and coveted clarity soon to be obscured. The feeling of dark encroachment is unmistakable.

This expressionist reading of "Ritual Devotion" is certainly personal, but it points to a particular achievement. I mean something that one might call an insinuated aerial perspective—a technical maneuver, to be sure, but an unusual and effective one. Earlier, when I advanced the idea of nuance, it was to em-

phasize how Pelias, so given to fortuitous method, had created such intriguing spatial illusions. In the strongest pieces here, her singular brushwork—often abrupt, always intrepid—engenders a consistent foreground-background skirmish. But the backgrounds haunt you. You feel a kind of perspectival drop-off, a suggestion of cosmic boundlessness. In *Delphi*, the rich blue background is overlaid, or scrimmed, by rushes of another blue—a sooty, umbered blue. The sense is a mysterious deep, deep realm that might elicit any manner of interpretation—a facile one, of course, about process itself; but also a cogent one that intimates direful emotion. It calls to mind the immense sadness perceived in Whistler's nocturnes. In this painting, as in much of "Ritual Devotion," Pelias manages to transcend pure technique. She approaches that unattainable "tragic and timeless." □



Camille Henrot: "Cities of Ys," Installation, New Orleans Museum of Art.

Camille Henrot

BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

CAMILLE HENROT
Cities of Ys
 New Orleans Museum of Art
 New Orleans, LA

THE LOUISIANA COAST constantly faces the threat of becoming New Atlantis. New Orleans, at least, and Atlantis are strikingly similar – both glowing cultural jewels have also been marked with confrontation. Plato discusses a brief history of Atlantis as a foil to ideas about a perfect State – a fluid, utopian civilization – in his *Timaues*. After ultimate defeat, a series of violent natural earthquakes and floods demolished this shining city, submerging it under the Atlantic sea, creating impassable passages of waterways in its wake. It was imperfection and irrationality that brought its demise.

Raphael pictured Plato holding his *Timaues* in *The School of Athens*, one of the frescoes in the Stanze della Segnatura in the Vatican. With his other hand, Plato points to the illusionistic skies in the composition, suggesting his belief in a gorgeous and

ordered universe that is the constant and static basis from which our observable world reflects. The story of Atlantis is an example of the chaos that results in our imperfect reality, but the State that is possible, according to Plato's writing, is the perfection humankind might achieve.

Raphael himself was an example of perfection in some ways – his character fit that of the ideal artist established by the architect and artist Leon Battista Alberti in his book *Della Pittura*, or *On Painting*. Raphael, who definitely included his own bright, clean visage in the lower right corner of the fresco, purportedly also represented his contemporary Michelangelo as a dirty, emotive, brooding figure in the foreground of the *School*. Michelangelo is Heralclitus, a Greek philosopher and champion of balance and the necessity of opposites. Heralclitus saw humanity blindly fumbling through life, unconscious of experiences that are the foundation of the checks and balances that create unity. Raphael and Michelangelo's characters represent the kind of opposing forces that Heralclitus discusses – the ideal versus the mad genius. Their characters also parallel Plato's ideal State and the ignorance



Camille Henrot: Study for *Cities of Ys*. Courtesy of Galerie Kamel Mennour.

of humankind inherent in the Atlantis.

Legends of another submerged city - Ys - abound in French oral traditions. In one iteration of the story, a princess opens floodgates that immerse Brittany lands in a deluge, with no chance for escape. Both Atlantis and Ys could be considered reflections of the reality of our landscape here – prone to conflict, threatened by sublime nature. Essentially, the histories of Ys and Atlantis are stories about imperfection, but this emphasizes the absence of the ideal. Optimistically, that ideal is obtainable by recognizing and analyzing experience, through sharing that experience and knowledge, by active participation in the examination of opposites in an effort to achieve unity. And that is what artist Camille Henrot appears to attempt in her current installation at New Orleans Museum of Art, titled “Cities of Ys.”

In this exhibit, one of Henrot’s sculptures, *The Descendants of Pirogues*, inconspicuously extends into an adjacent gallery. It forms a literal bridge between two exhibits that are intricately related in her installation – the culture of the Houma tribe native to southeastern Louisiana. The sculpture crosses the wall separating an exhibit of Houma basketry and weaving and Henrot’s own in-

stallation, and immediately recalls the theme of water with which both Henrot and the Houma identify. Henrot’s French heritage ties her with the legend of Ys and floods; it also ties her with the French language employed by the Houma. In addition, Houma lands are linked by passages of water, the pathways between their communities and a source of their commerce. The pirogue references not only the vehicle which once traversed those now non-existent pathways, but the conversation Henrot initiated with this tribe, over water, to examine ideas of cultural identity and linkage.

The pirogue is stacked with smaller variations on its shape. A white sphere balances between them. Inevitably, this conjures the generations of people within this culture – larger gives support to smaller. Houma history clearly describes definite links in the tribe’s genealogy, but dispute over this has led to difficulty in obtaining official recognition from the United States government. As stated in the exhibition text and the United Houma Nation’s website, the tribe has struggled for centuries to overcome official bias. The argument against them involves the water itself, which divides lands among different parishes to which the historic Houma moved in the eighteenth century, and therefore divided



Camille Henrot: "Cities of Ys," Installation. New Orleans Museum of Art.

members of the tribe. Thus, the disagreement concerns whether the United Houma Nation and the historic Houma are tied due to movement not only because of migration, but due to marriage. Henrot's pirogue suggests these layers of history; the sphere, in its multiple directions, suggests the myriad ways the two ends of this culture are distinctly tied.

Videos also layer multiple images and multiple objects. Collectively titled *Plasma Plasma Stealth*, this part of the installation positions eight video screens showing piles of clips from interviews with Houma tribe members, drawings, close-up shots of faces, images of basketry, and, most tellingly, water. In one, Henrot juxtaposes underwater clips of children swimming in a pool with above-surface vantage points of a shallow, oil-sheened river. In another, a hand, palm-up, ripples with minnows in a motion-frenzied pool. In a third, cropped images of a waterfall or the wake of a speeding boat peek from behind the guitar-shaped door of a cabinet. Each monitor is plastered with various objects: paint chips, wood blocks, and images of birds. Several share cutouts of the guitar, which, according to exhibition text, serves as an American icon – linking the Houma with the rest of the nation.

As in *Grosse Fatigue*, the video that earned Henrot

the Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale this past summer, and in previous installations, the artist absurdly combines disparate objects here. The tenuous links between these objects, videos, sculptures, and prints – silkscreened images of guitar cutouts, again – suggests the intangible but discernable threads that link Henrot with the Houma. In form, this work is more closely linked with the bronze and steel constructions by Jean Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp nearby. But, by examining and analyzing opposites, she attempts to create unity.

The absurdity lends a sense of superficiality to the piece as a whole, and does distract from determining and even accepting the content of the work. Her attempt to observe and explore globally common themes is a broad stretch, and as the artist states on her website regarding *Grosse Fatigue*, extremely weighty. It verges on mythical. However, supposedly a team of United States scientists, according to National Geographic, has found the mythical concentric circles of the city of Atlantis. If this city has finally been located, then Henrot might be reaching in an attractive and timely way for her ideal. □



Edward Burtynsky: *Colorado River Delta #3*, 2013. Arthur Roger Gallery.

Reflections on Water

BY KARL F. VOLKMAR

EDWARD BURTYNSKY
Photography
Arthur Roger Gallery
Contemporary Arts Centers
New Orleans, LA

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: IMMACULATE surfaces, varied lines and shapes, contrasts and harmonies of color, rhythms and textures evoking an elusive sense of the familiar, of mystery, wonder, and delight in the interplay between precision and ambiguity, abstract patterns, designs, and suggestions of the representational with the possibility of evolving into the beautiful, the sublime, and the merely interesting that, as photography, challenges Benjamin's lament of the destruction of *aura* 'in the age of mechanical reproduction'.

At first the exhibit seems a visual extravaganza without any apparent unifying theme, a polysemous conflation of works by different artists, even though the title clearly states that these are photographs from Edward Burtynsky's *Water Series*. Slowly one focuses on individual photographs, responding to each on its own terms, and only then developing some understanding of visual and conceptual interrelationships within and among through shared associations and significant differences as the overwhelming initial reaction (if they were not contained within the solid black frames they might fly away) evolves into a sense of coherence.

A ghostlike line limns the silhouette of a tree-like shape echoed in smaller siblings on either side. Their curvilinear, bifurcating limbs extending outwards, reaching upwards, contrast with the random striations and frail ambiguous planes of a grayish brown ground. A dense acidic yellow green mass arches upwards like a syncline rising through layers of the earth's crust. The edge where the arching green pushes against the ground, the tree-like forms themselves, seem as if illumined by a mysterious light.

What it is is elusive until one reads the name stating that this is a representation, #4, of the *Colorado River Delta, Near San Felipe, Baja, Mexico*, a specific geographic feature at a specific place easily located through Google Earth. The satisfaction of one's curiosity is temporary, however, lasting only until one notices the so very different *Colorado River Delta #3* also near San Felipe, Baja, Mexico. Automatically beginning to compare the two representations of the same place using the information in each to understand the other, one realizes the inadequate, even misleading, nature of the linguistic metaphors used to describe as one succumbs to the portrait format of the photograph. Comparing the two with their respective aerial and oblique perspectives, the dark areas in one light in the other and the light areas of the other dark because of the angle of the light, unsure if one is seeing the same specific place from two different vantage points, one's mind continually drifts back and forth between the informational and the purely esthetic in reciprocal dialogue between subject and object.



Edward Burtynsky: *Markarffot River #2, Iceland*, 2013. Arthur Roger Gallery.

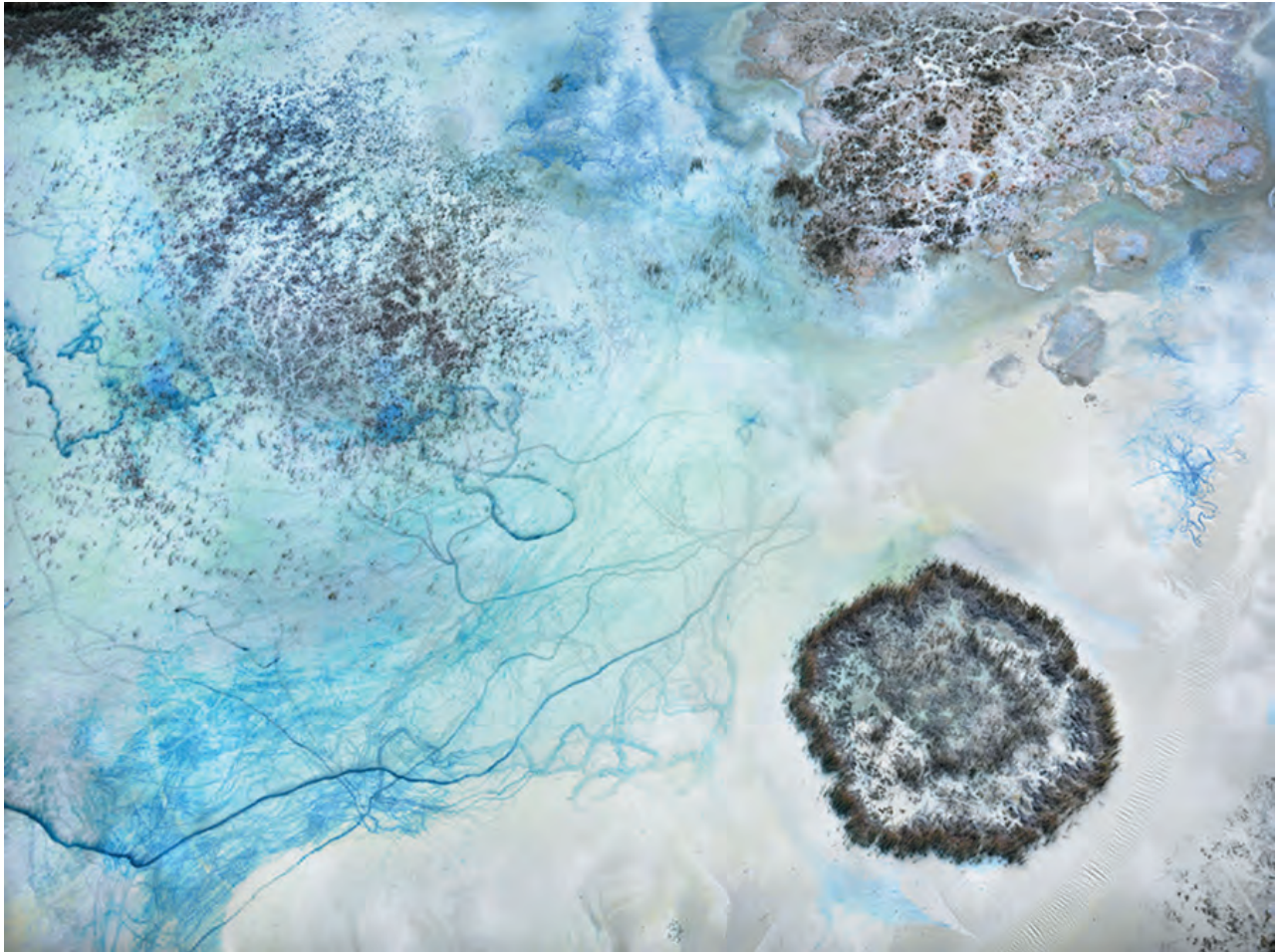
The silvery interlacing threads of the *Markarffot River #2, Iceland* flowing over the dark obdurate rock of Iceland bears an eerie similarity with the interweaving veils of oil and water in their beautiful but deadly parody of the dance of Salome performed during the *Oil Spill #2, Discoverer Enterprise, Gulf of Mexico, 2010*. Each is an interesting study of fluids from subterranean flows rising to the surface under different conditions in very different latitudes. The effects are similar in color and pattern as if demonstrations of the laws governing fluid dynamics under different conditions as Impressionism was interested in the physics of light and the physiology of perception and the representation of the envelope of atmosphere between artist and landscape. As much as an awareness of contemporary science might inform one's understanding of some Impressionist paintings and the importance of what Pissarro referred to as sensation, it was the intuitive intellectual efforts of the artist that found a way to represent the fluid nature of seeing using the fluid substance of paint.

Although one might be tempted to use impressionistic or abstract expressionist references to characterize *Phosphor Tailings Pond #2, Polk County, Florida, USA* and *Oil Spill #16, Mississippi Delta, Gulf of Mexico, USA*, and such references might be useful for describing a specific viewer's personal, subjective response, one must be wary of going down the dangerous path of pathetic fallacy. (The erroneous popular assumption that similar appear-

ances signify similar essences has been a frequent subject in the work of artists as diverse as Neo-Dada's Rauschenburg and Johns, Post-Painterly Abstraction's Mitchell, Sheri Levine and others) Neither should one fall into the Pictorialist trap that equates obscurity with the poetic sublime or picturesque or the irony of Richter's 'Capitalist Realism' for Burtynsky's photographs are of the visible world.

The criteria for assessing photography enunciated by John Szarkowski in *The Photographer's Eye* (1966) provide a sound basis for thinking about Burtynsky's photographs: as things in themselves, not the equivalent or surrogate of reality; the artist's interpretive response to the world expressed in the qualities inherent in its invention as well as the ongoing popularity of photography, i.e., clarity of detail; and that the photograph represents a fragment of reality reflecting the framing and vantage point taken by the photographer.

Burtynsky's work, as is that of all photography including the journalistic and documentary witness to that which is true, is abstract and arguably expressive in its reflection of the artist's values. In the photographs, what one might be tempted to refer to as 'impressionistic' is visual reality; and the artist may well have responded to the esthetic character of what is being seen. The photographs are good and interesting and even beautiful, regardless of their referents. The good and the interesting and the esthetic are



Edward Burtynsky: *Phosphor Tailings Pond #2, Polk County, Florida, USA*, 2013. Arthur Roger Gallery.



Edward Burtynsky: *Colorado River Delta*, 2013. Arthur Roger Gallery.

engaged in dynamic dialectic.

Considering Burtynsky's work from the perspective of straight photography poses its own questions. Although Alfred Stieglitz stated that he was attracted to the abstract qualities of what became the well-known *The Steerage*, one can also reasonably analyze it as a social document. One's fascination with the sublimely picturesque naturalism of Ansel Adams' *Yosemite Valley* photographs is not conditional to buying into the artist's spirituality. Walker Evans, hired by Stryker to document the effects of the Great Depression to support government efforts to ameliorate the consequent conditions, was fired because his photographs were just too beautiful, effectually overriding the desired empathy and thus persuasive power desired by the FSA.

Before predicating an interpretation of Burtynsky in terms of a cultural narrative from the perspective of water as a vital resource essential to the future of life on this planet, one can

gain insight from the example of the dramatic shift of Palmer from his absolute insistence on naturalistic photography in one year (1889) and his absolute about face the next year 1890 in *The Death of Naturalistic Photography* which gave impetus to Pictorialism and its conceits. One might also argue that Szarkowski's photographic minimalism represents a turning away in the manner of Aaron Siskind and Minor White from the world with its overwhelming and seemingly insurmountable problems while at the same time embracing a focused and framed realism. At issue is the interrelationship among, and the competing claims on the viewer's attention of, the esthetic experience, the representational/documentary, and a perceived cultural narrative.

In revisiting the *Colorado River Delta* one must move past the wonder of pure seeing, beyond pattern, beyond representation, to context, asking why the artist has chosen the Colorado River Delta as subject, one of the most plundered waterways in the

world, its waters siphoned off for irrigation and recreation and water needs, transformed into a poisoned stream carrying away waste and chemicals leached from the soil as its flow diminishes on the path to the sea.

How should one respond to the numinous apparition of *Phosphor Tailings Pond* when rewritten as a narrative of Baudelairian decadence, the unnatural beauty of a deformed nature, the blossoming of flowers of evil created by the extraction of elements from beneath the surface, transforming the ecosphere? Even if one accepts the photograph as a thing in itself, one must ask why the photographer is there, why this particular medium, when if one were truly concerned would not one join with Mel Chin and Robert Smithson in redressing the corruption, Suzi Gablik's art of ecological redemption of the disruption of deep ecologies, of Andy Goldsworthy's celebration of natural flow?

Interesting alternative readings suggest themselves when juxtaposing two or more photographs that may at first seem unrelated as when the comparison of *Markarffot River* and *Oil Spill #2, Discoverer Enterprise* on the basis of shared formal qualities leads to fluid dynamics. If one then reframes fluid dynamics as a phenomenon of dispersion and extend this to the distribution of people over surfaces in social situations as in *Kumbh Mela #2*, one may begin to identify a tendency to pattern similar to those observed in Iceland and the Gulf. And one might compare this with differences between the patterns of dispersion of people on the beach and in the water as in *Benidorm #1, Spain*. And if certain formal similarities bring one to juxtapose *Benidorm #1, Spain* and *Cerro Prieto Geothermal Power Station, Baja, Mexico*, one might imagine them as essays on the effects of human presence, on the ebb and flow of the tides and rhythms of life.

The artist's series of photographs representing the accidental art created by differing agricultural practices in China, Spain, and the United States is fascinating on every level: abstract esthetic, representational, and conceptual. Each reflects a unique cultural history determined by differences in crops, natural terrain, and available resources.

Viewed from directly above, on the normal line whose perpendicular intersection with the plane of the terrain reinforces the severe geometry of the plowed field and the perfect circles of pivot irrigation, and the vantage that provides the most perfect view, *Pivot Irrigation #21, High Plains, Texas Panhandle* records the traces of humankind's interaction with the land, on the relatively flat terrain of the high plains, ancient ocean floors now covered with layers of alluvial and windblown accretions. The abstract beauty unintentionally created by plowing and planting and watering leaves unaddressed the implications of large-scale agribusiness and the need to import water resources in order to transform what were ancient grasslands, implications that destroyed a way of life eighty years ago.

Dryland Farming #24, Monegros County, Aragon, Spain, and *Rice Terraces #3, Western Yunnan Province, China* represent the agricultural landscape in areas as geographically and culturally different as China and Spain. The abstract flow of lines and shapes, of tonal harmonies and passages from plane to plane like a Picasso, Picabia, Gorky, or De Kooning, are the byproducts of extracting

sustenance from an unforgiving nature that grudgingly yields its resources. The beauty of the patterns elides the harshness of the circumstances, the unending labor, and the precariousness of the endeavor in its fragile beauty.

The continuation of traditional, pre-industrial agricultural practice in Spain and China, by hand, is partially determined by working land not amenable to mechanized agriculture. Water intensive rice farming had to adapt to the mountainous terrain of Western Yunnan province with terraced paddies. The results are irregular shapes dictated by the terrain, and an oblique aerial vantage point capturing the evanescent silvery reflections of sunlight off water and the contour shadows delineating of shapes.

Simple beauty can disguise the potential for ecological disaster when growth and progress outstrip the ability of nature to provide the needed resources, as in *Shasta Lake Reservoir* and *Oil Spill #12, Q4000 Drilling Platform, Gulf of Mexico*. A deep underlying conceptual link connects these two color studies from very different geographies, the mountains and the oceans. The cool, iridescent blue color of the reservoir complements the warm tones of the exposed rock; the dark green foliage and foreground clarity becomes increasingly less distinct in the distance. Intense cyan blue gulf water, the silvery gray forms of the platform and vessels, flecks of color, intense fire and arcing water is visually arresting. But it is the nature of that which we are seeing, what we know, that is even more interesting, and seemingly disconnected from the visual.

The Shasta Lake Reservoir is an artificial impoundment supplying water for a culture living beyond regional natural resources. Water for urban and suburban population growth, for irrigating on arid land, for recreation required the destruction of the natural ecology, gaining an initial advantage but ultimately becoming dependent, subject to changes, drought, filling up, at the same time as artificially enabled growth was stimulating more growth. The visual beauty of the water and its complement is a result of lower water levels that itself threatens the culture it enabled.

Burtynsky's photographic record of the appropriation of earth's natural resources, whether building a reservoir for water or exhuming the remains of ancient life trapped beneath the surface of the earth, to fulfill the needs and satisfy the desires of post-agricultural civilization represents both esthetic harmony and ecological disaster, the Janus face of progress. Burtynsky's work is an ongoing epilogue to the western survey photographers of the late nineteenth century whose photographs paved the way for imperialist expansion. Perhaps the artist's photographs are the late capitalist response to Watkins' commercial sublime that suggested the possibility of harmonious coexistence of pristine nature and industry.

Ah, the beauty, the mystery! One may become fatigued with warnings of looming disasters regardless of the science and reason behind them and lower one's defenses. But the beauty remains, for some an escape, for others a reminder that will never be forgotten, and the question of whether humankind is approaching peak water as well as peak oil. □



Saskia Ozols Eubanks: *The Divine Twins*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 48 x 96 in. Søren Christensen Gallery.

Art Principles Revived

BY JUDITH H. BONNER

SASKIA OZOLS EUBANKS
Søren Christensen Gallery
New Orleans, LA

UPON ENTERING SASKIA Ozols Eubanks' exhibition at the Søren Christensen Gallery, the visitor will be delighted to observe her overall understanding and usage of the elements and principles of art throughout her artworks. Eubanks, who trained at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts, earned an M.F.A. at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, receiving solid instruction in both institutions. She uses the spectrum of artistic elements—line, shape, form, space, texture, value, and color—to her advantage. Eubanks' works in this exhibition, although minimalist in some respects, are evident. More encouraging is her subtle employment of the principles of art: balance, emphasis, movement, pattern,

repetition, proportion, rhythm, variety, and unity. The full range of elements was often deliberately ignored in minimalist works through the mid-20th century. Its reappearance in art of the past couple of decades is reassuring, and especially in this exhibition.

Eubanks has mastered the full run of traditional subjects: portraits, figure studies, landscapes, marine scenes, genre scenes, animal studies, and still lifes. Several paintings focus on mythology or the evolution or dissolution of living creatures, particular human beings. Eubanks mastery of anatomy in human figures, animals, and architectural structures is evident immediately in these paintings. Her bravura brushwork reveals an artist secure in her skills. Her paintings, without exception, are harmonious and well balanced.

In paintings like *The Divine Twins*, tactile and smoothly painted areas are well balanced, as are areas of thicker and thinner application of paint; linear contours are fluid and elegant. The



Saskia Ozols Eubanks: *Dance I*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 in. Søren Christensen Gallery.

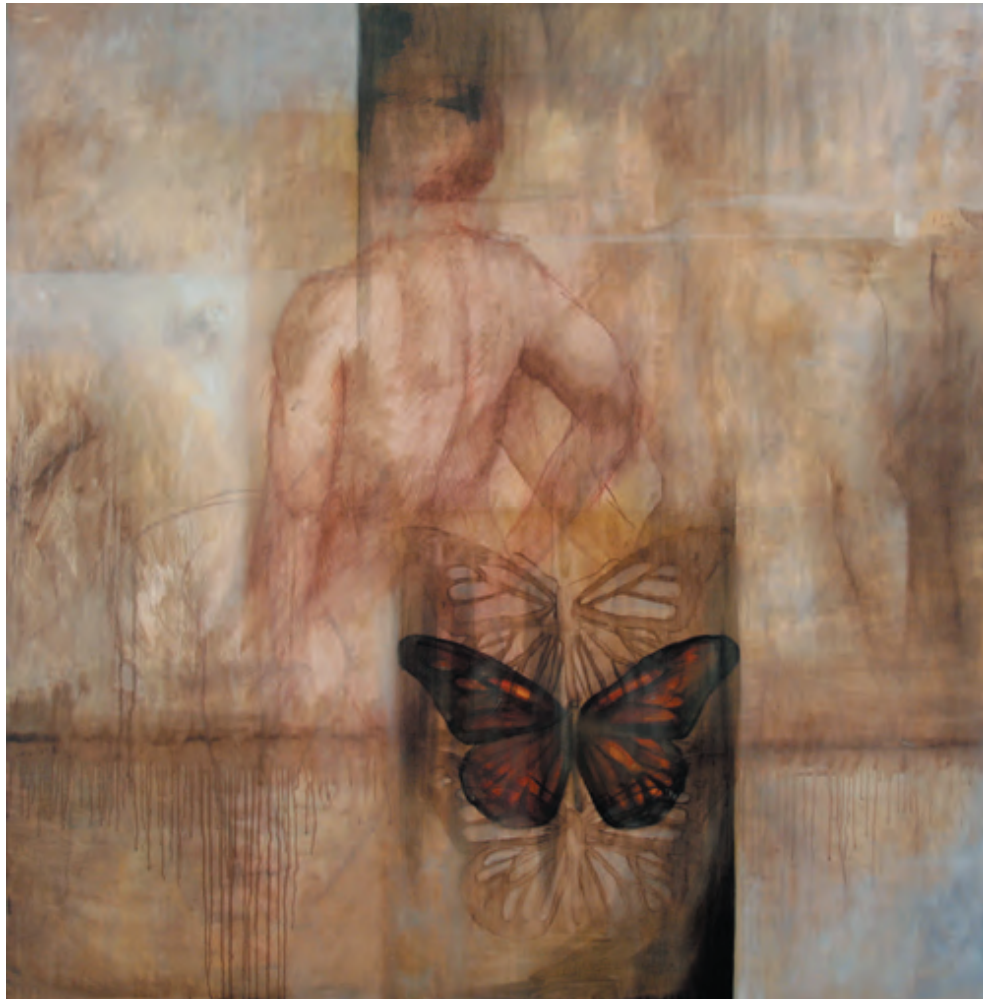
rhythmic repetition of the wings in these compositions creates a fluttery appearance. The nudes resemble playful Rococo putti, while at the same time they are characterized by a Michelangelesque robustness. Although several of Eubanks' paintings have terpsichorean themes, *Dance I and II* conveys a somber effect. In this large near-monochromatic work, the linear contours of two horses are executed with a sure hand.

Many of the compositions display her interest in the changing of the seasons or the time of the day. In the upper squares of a quadripartite work titled *Night and Day*, two horses could be dancing or fighting. While the title could refer to the time of day, it could also apply to the extremes between directly opposite states of mind. *Dopplegänger* portrays two ghost-like nudes who move as if in unison, an obvious reference to a counterpart or alter-ego, perhaps that of the artist.

Vulnerability shows three wolves, who appear as if

they are moving; a male infant below clearly refers to Romulus and Remus, twin brothers who were nurtured by wolves. A disembodied man's hand moves over the child's head; orange drips can be interpreted as blood. Although the viewer can interpret the narrative differently, the similarity to Romulus is undeniable. Romulus, who eventually killed his twin in a story parallel to that of Cain and Abel, became the founder of Rome. This is another work that can be interpreted as underscoring the artist's uncertainty of her creative talents as she forges her career, for it reveals the understandable characteristic of serious artists. The success of this exhibition, however, should dispel the artist's uncertainty of her talent and skill as her artistic development continues to mature.

Obsolescence which focuses on butterflies—a symbol of rebirth or transformation—shows two faintly delineated butterflies, while a fully developed third butterfly emerges on top. The oversized showpiece of the exhibition, *Day's Triumph Over*



Saskia Ozols Eubanks: *Obsolescence*, 2013. Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in. Søren Christensen Gallery.

Night, shows a ten-point deer and a winged female figure; again the viewer perceives a sense of movement in the winds and in a disembodied arm. The dark area representing night seems to banish the black wings.

Another scene focusing on struggle, *Day and Night* is busy in its underlying composition; one feels a sense of flight throughout, while at right a black bird's feet, extended downward, claw the air as if preparing to grasp an unseen prey. The sense of conflict is emphasized through a larger indistinct creature in upper right, with light flashes and dripped paint suggesting the primal instincts in nature.

A near-monochromatic work, *Narcissus Echo* shows two males figures, one who relines as if emerging from sleep. Rendered in sienna, umber, and gray, other areas are highlighted with white for emphasis. *Conflict/Resolution* shows three figures closely

intertwined as if engaged in movement or in struggle. While this is one artist's interpretation, the subjects of life's struggle and conflicts can be universally understood.

A number of small works feature the usual academic subjects, specifically floral and vegetal still lifes and landscapes. Generally, these are simple compositions with some being more textural in their rendering than others, particularly landscapes like *Field of Wildflowers*. For those that are smoothly more finished than others, Eubanks evades the dryness that is inherent in some trompe l'oeil paintings. Indeed, this exhibition is characterized collectively by a sense of freshness in the rendering of paint. The gallery visitor to Eubanks' exhibition will depart with much to ponder, including her subjects, her well-balanced compositions, and her sense of restraint. □



Kate Samworth: *Maria Posed for Frida*, 2013. Scratchboard, LeMieux Galleries.

Art Historical Allusions, Timeless Interiors

BY KATE BRUCE

DAVID LLOYD
Jean Bragg Gallery
KATE SAMWORTH
LeMieux Galleries
New Orleans, LA

KATE SAMWORTH'S EXHIBIT "The Immortal Charles Peale," at LeMieux Galleries on Julia Street, takes the viewer on a vivid journey through the imagination of the trained artist. Samworth, who obtained her B.F.A. at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, pays homage to the school's founder, the late 18th/early 19th century artist and naturalist Charles Wilson Peale, in her exhibit of over twenty-five works. Her varied storylines incorporate celebrated individuals in art history's rich and storied past. Her stoic mentor often appears in select works, as well as the celebrated Mexican artist Frida Kahlo and two meninas girls from Spanish artist Diego Velázquez's elusive painting *Las Meninas* (1656). These figures wear period dress and at times contrast

with the style of the scene in which they are set. They appear in oil on canvas paintings, etchings, mixed media, and drawings. Samworth, an illustrated book author, explains that these images tell a story, one centered "around Charles Peale and his search for a new specimen." Samworth continues to describe, writing, "as the four of them enter new paintings, I want imagine their response not only to a change in time and scenery but to the change in light and varying modes of representation and abstraction."

Near the entrance of LeMieux, Samworth's *Snake Charmer* greets the viewer. In this lively and colorful depiction, Frida and her two Velázquez companions enter a mystical forest to watch an exotic snake charmer. The style and composition of this image shows a possible influence of Eastern art. Her characters appear again in the oil on panel painting *Frida Needed to Rest Again*, which mirrors post-impressionist artist Vincent Van Gogh's well-known painting, *The Bedroom* (1888). In this work, the artist shows Frida and her two companions sitting in the bedroom so famously painted by the Dutch artist. While some scenes appear



Kate Samworth: *Charles Peale and Autumn in the Garden of Earthly Delights*, 2012. Oil/panel. Le Mieux Galleries.

playful in their rendering, Samworth at times presents complex themes to the viewer. She interprets Netherlandish artist Hieronymus Bosch's detailed triptych, *Garden of Earthly Delights* (c. 1500), in her oil painting *Charles Peale and Autumn in the Garden of Earthly Delights*. The viewer sees the style of British artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler in the background of her quirky painting *He Struggled to Keep Them Aloft*. Here, Samworth paints a smooth sky and a horizon line in the style that Whistler was known to have painted in the 19th century. In the foreground, a figure resembling Peale tries to keep an air balloon aloft as it travels over the river.

The exhibit continues with works such as the Cubist-style painting "*No Reason to Panic*" *Thought Charles* and the graphite on paper drawing *Frida Arrived Before They Returned*. Though not as overt as the pointillist-styled oil painting *They'd Never Dreamed of Such a Picnic* by Samworth, the composition of *Frida Arrived Before They Returned* is also suggestive of French artist Georges Seurat's famous composition, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884). Are those seashells on Frida's collar? The artist's strongest imagery appears in the form of five scratchboards that are displayed on a central wall in the gallery. These works are comparable to engravings completed by German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer, and are visually and thematically striking.

Her scratchboard *Instigators* resembles a surrealistic scene in both composition and style. In this exhibit, Samworth's montage creates a cohesive and interactive display for the viewer. One can visualize how these images could be transformed into a children's book, with her suggestive titles appearing as captions in the book, and we, the viewers, become active participants in the story. The significance of these artists' lives on through her imaginative telling of this story.

Also on Julia Street is David Lloyd's exhibit "Abode" at the Jean Bragg Gallery. Lloyd, a self-taught artist living in Houston, Texas, explores the confines of acrylic paint in this exhibit. As noted by the Jean Bragg Gallery, the artist "manag[es] to keep the fluid painterly style characteristic of oil." Though it is evident that the artist uses acrylic paint, the canvas has the same surface quality found when using oil paint, a sign of the artist's proficiency. While Samworth focuses on intricate storylines and multiple characters within the composition, Lloyd focuses solely on the theme of one's interior space, as the title of his show suggests. This theme, paired with his polished brushwork, makes for an inviting presentation to the viewer.

It is notable that figures are absent from his paintings, yet the human presence is still there. This presence is accomplished through his compositional arrangements and particular objects he



David Lloyd: *Claudia's Chair*, 2013. Acrylic on panel, 12 x 9 in. LeMieux Galleries.

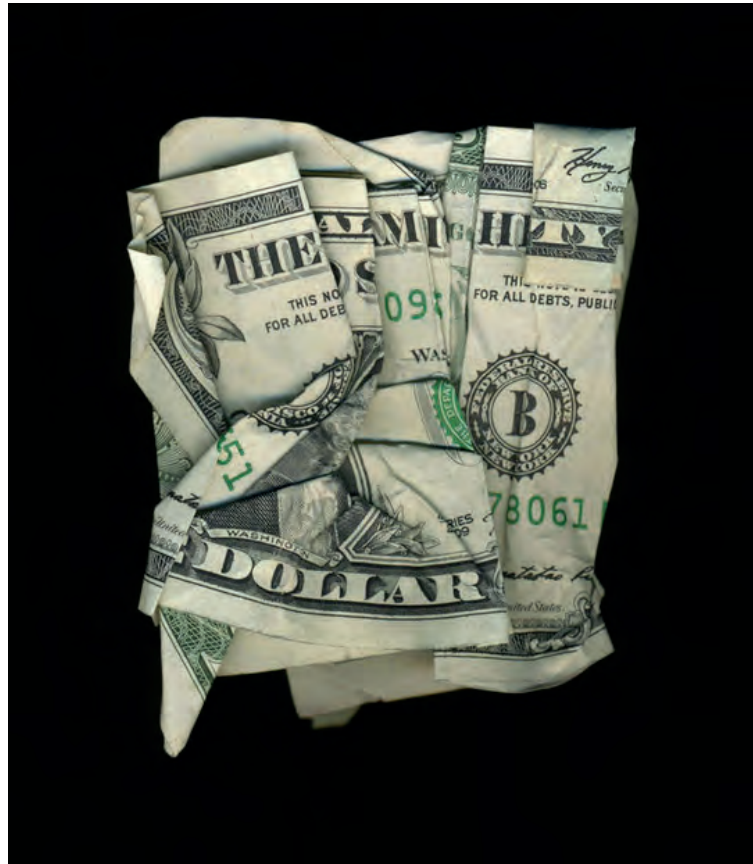
chooses to incorporate into the frame. These everyday scenes depict sitting rooms, kitchens, and bedroom spaces. Lloyd includes two paintings of the kitchen space in his show. In his painting *Kitchen with Cooking Pots*, Lloyd shows an expansive and impeccable kitchen, with cooking pots of various sizes hanging neatly on the back wall. Has lunch already been prepared, or is it late afternoon, just before dinner preparations begin?

His interior paintings are painted from photographs. The artist writes, "I rarely develop works based on sketches...I love sketches for what they are and consider them finished work in their own right. For major works, I just dive right in." At times, there is a photographic quality to some of his works, as in the painting *Roses*. Lloyd's fluid brushwork creates a glossy background, bringing focus to the abundant bouquet of roses set on the table in the foreground. His painting captures the moment when some petals have fallen from stems and settle on the patterned chair next to the table.

There is, at times, a distinction between the feminine space and the masculine space in these paintings. These opposing

"abodes," capture just how private spaces can become. Lloyd's painting *Secretary*, depicts a well-used personal desk. Papers are scattered about, and a pair of masculine reading glasses rest on top. An empty teacup is set to the right. The feminine teacup contrasts with the dark masculine coloring of the heavy brown wood of the desk. Another painting, *Claudia's Chair*, shows a bright room colored in light pinks and creams. The title suggests a woman's favorite chair, reserved especially for her during afternoon visits over coffee or tea.

There is a timeless quality to his paintings, leaving the viewer to question the time period. His image *In the Garden District* illustrates this theme. Lloyd paints in a dark palette of oranges and browns, and depicts a grand sitting room filled with elaborate furnishings. A large-scale painting hangs in the background, and in the center of the room a gleaming chandelier hangs from the high ceiling. This bygone era reflected is still alive today, really, because New Orleans itself is a city steeped in rich history. □



Dan Tague: *The Almighty Dollar*, 2013. Archival Inkjet Print on Rag Paper. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

Tague's Folded Fury

BY MARIAN S. MCLELLAN

DAN TAGUE
The Almighty Dollar
 Jonathan Ferrara Gallery
 New Orleans, LA

GRAFFITI HAS BEEN around for a very long time, way before the spray can, and it was not always considered vandalism. On the contrary, graffiti often served as evidence of a particular group of people's existence, circumstance, and level of literacy or non-literacy. In its various forms the word means "scratched" or "to write" and certainly, without graffiti preserved by elemental time on stones, such ancient languages as that of the Sufaitic people, would be lost. Furthermore, even followers of Christ were graffiti practitioners, back in the day, leaving their marks in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the setting where Christ is said to have been crucified and buried. Thus, graffiti has graced many surfaces in a wide context.

So, it is only fitting, in the 21st century, that graffiti find its way back into the comfort of four walls, albeit 2000 or so years

later, and into the hands, literally, of modern day crusader Dan Tague who is gaining national recognition. His work is included in the recent book of contemporary art, *For Which it Stands: Americana in Contemporary Art* and in the collection of the Whitney Museum, plus the New York Times commissioned Tague to illustrate "A Washington Riddle: What is Top Secret?" with one of his bills, *Cyber Warfare*.

Tague's exhibit "The Almighty Dollar" at the Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, continues this civic-minded artist's tag of manipulating actual one dollar bill's typeface to tout sardonic one-liner catch phrases of commerce related to corporate and government pursuit of happiness at the expense of those outside the loop. However, unlike typical, first person graffiti, Tague's folded dollar bill commentaries are individually photographed against black backdrops and enlarged so that the resultant, limited edition ink jet prints word marks are no longer the fine print of the feds. Rather, the words and messages, most often, are loud and clear with sarcasm, like "Drill Baby Drill," "All You Need is Love," and "Change is Coming."



Dan Tague: *The Root of All Evil*, 2013. Archival Inkjet Print on Rag Paper. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

To be sure, Tague's expectation that his audience view his very slick reproductions with more than a grain of sincerity might be asking a bit too much given the fact that the work, as a whole, lacks that key ingredient of graffiti, the immediacy of hand to surface. These inkjets could serve as clever ads announcing one cliché or another.

But therein you have it, the *modus operandi* of Tague, who is forever re-appropriating, recycling, and in the case of "The Almighty Dollar"--reprinting the printed, reissuing the already issued, and reinforcing the fact that the currency in our pockets is a hand me down note of faith, passing from one person to the next in the fleeting quest for the American dream of financial freedom, but always in the name of God and country. Money does indeed talk a twisted, deceptive language, and Tague capitalizes on that with his tightly folded fury. Lest we forget that the words "In God we Trust" were first printed on the two cent coin back in 1864 (and one hundred years later added to the paper dollar bill) after a minister advised the Secretary of the Treasury that including that

phrase was the way to prevent other countries from viewing Americans as heathens. Naturally, Tague gives us the flip side, with "The Root of All Evil," straight from the New Testament, wherein I Timothy states "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Speaking of coveting after, much of the stuff Americans buy is made in China, hence Tague's label-friendly "Made in China" which might also be a prompt for one to question the source of the cotton and linen used to make our bills, while alluding to the far-reaching grip of China in the world market.

Like the graffiti of the past, Tague's "The Almighty Dollar" prints act as signs of the times, reflecting the sound bite language of the present, in which money is the source of power, determining, even, whether or not a national park is open to its public. Nevertheless, while money shut down the government, it undoubtedly kept flowing in drug trafficking circles since U.S. paper bills are the favored method of transaction. And Tague's, as well. □

A Flavor for Every Taste and Then Some

BY KARL F VOLKMAR

NO DEAD ARTISTS
17th Annual Juried Exhibition
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery
New Orleans, LA
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HOLIDAYS WERE ALWAYS something to look forward to, especially when it was traditional to give and receive boxes of assorted chocolates, even more so when the boxes contained two layers. Then began the guessing game, in the days before that information could be found inside the top, as to which were the caramels and which the creams, which the cordials and which the chocolates, which ones were soft, or chewy, or hard, depending on one's personal preferences, for they were all good. The older members of the family might remember which were which from one year to the next but this was not always reliable among different confectioner.

And so it has been with the Annual No Dead Artists shows at the Jonathan Ferrara Gallery for seventeen years, even as the location has changed several times during this time. This year's edition of the Jonathan Ferrara Sampler presents a variety of styles, media, and concepts for the discriminating viewer. Experience may be of some use as a guide but dedicated tasting is in order to discover the flavor of each work. And no fair putting a half bitten piece back in the box! =/;-)>+<-<

The viewer is greeted by Cristina Molina's large, eight feet by four feet *Dearest* upon entering the gallery. The intricate, elegantly engraved design of this interactive work translates the idea of the greeting card used to express one's most intimate feelings into a huge scale around and into which the viewer walks rather than turning the card in one's hands. The personal sentiments usually given voice in quiet communication are on public display, as subtle as a billboard or an Oldenburg Pop Art work.

To the right are Kristin Meyers' five mixed media sculptures, *Shamans Allies*. Individually named after African animals (*Baboon Shaman*, *Elephant Emir*, *Giraffe Monarch*, *Impala Empress*) or the MaShona/Shona people (*Mashona Consort*), the artist's creation of a personal orisha mirrors the artist shaman of traditional African cultures in the gathering of various materials whose specific powers are conjoined in the ritual of selecting, organizing, combining, twisting, folding, wrapping, tying et cetera as a means of invoking the spiritual forces that shape human destiny.

Do an about face and discover the several small circular portraits by Kathy Halper displayed on the white painted brick wall in the front of the gallery, each measuring fourteen by eleven inches and made using embroidery floss, cotton, and hand painted frames. The portraits parody the nineteenth century fascination with the relationship between affective psychological states and their presumed expression in body language and facial expressions recorded in photographs by researchers in the slowing emerging

field of deep psychology like Duchenne De Boulogne, Rejlander, and Charcot.

The identification of each emotional state represented with the related acronym and its translation, i.e., *ROTFL* (*Rolling On The Floor Laughing*), *YOLO* (*You Only Live Once*), *WTF* (*What The F**k*), *TTYL* (*Talk To You Later*), and *LMFAO* (*Laughing My F**king A** Off*) makes one aware of the nature of cultural determined semiotics of expression. As the meaning of the acronyms has been established by consensus, i.e., is not intrinsic in the conventions of expression, so has research revealed that the characterization of psychological states, especially those that are considered abnormal, reflect normative cultural values and thus are subjective, not objective.

Turn clockwise a quarter turn. Along the left wall are three mixed media collages on canvas by Eugene Campbell: *Where There's A Will*, *The Rose That Grew From Concrete*, *Holy Water*. The amusingly ambiguous titles suggest an affinity with the dialog between titles with their suggestive narratives and technique in the work of artists like Joan Mitchell and the delightfully puzzling relationship between form vis-à-vis content in post-painterly abstraction.

Imagine the absurdity of a natural thing growing out of artificial stone, the stained concrete floor, the stack of books, and the bowling pin in *The Rose That Grew From Concrete*, and then call up Rauschenburg's *Canyon*. Perhaps *Where There's A Will* represents a similar sense of art making as play, the bringing together of materials and techniques as ad hoc as the Neo-Dada/New Realism of some second generation post World War II American art? If Campbell had explained that he was influenced by the work of Diebenkorn, the strongly rectilinearity in both would make that agreeable. And is it where there's a will, [there's a way], or, where there's a will, one does not die intestate?

Did you notice the small sculpture installation just to the left of Campbell's works as you were turning, in the corner where the inner front wall meets the left, now right, hand wall? That is Todd Kunkler's *Untitled (Cups)*, not another Campbell work, a work seemingly sympathetic with *arte povera*. The illusion of the weight of cups crushing cups, cups as objects not just as containers, is a malleable installation that could be rearranged in numerous ways. It would make sense, logically, along an outside wall next to a potting shed, but perhaps even more, situated in a gallery, isolated, by itself, and allowing the viewer to examine the work as a whole, each cup individually and serially, and their decoration.

Rotate clockwise ninety to one hundred twenty degrees and there on the opposite wall are nine montages composed of digital images of architectural details on transparent sheets by Gwen Samuels like imagined elevations by visionary architects. The emphatic symmetry of the designs, the general patterns and



Manju Shandler: *Leviathans I*, 2013. India ink, grease pencil and acrylic paint on sewn and printed polyester film, 60 x 42 in. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

small details, the insistent geometry and hand stitching are shared with Shandler's *Leviathans I* (see below). The commingling of fiber, fabric, and fabrication arts, of text, textile arts, tectonics, and architecture of dreamers like Erastus Salisbury Field and designs for the Chicago Tribune Tower (*Rooms with a View*), interesting combinations of Art Deco (*Rhythm and Blues*) and the International Style (*Portals and Passages*), and the synthesis of details and general character from different and historical world cultures, of Vienna Sezession textiles designs (*Inside and Out*), of Chinese pagodas (*Re-Invented*), LeDoux's Neo-Classical theoretical fantasies (*Classical*), and the contrast between the geometrical, inherent in traditional architectural design, and the softness of the fiber arts, of Tiawanaku and Chavin de Huantar metamorphic substitution (*Double Entrance*) in intimate conjunction of buildings and beings, and of Japanese Samurai costumes (*Fortress Gate*).

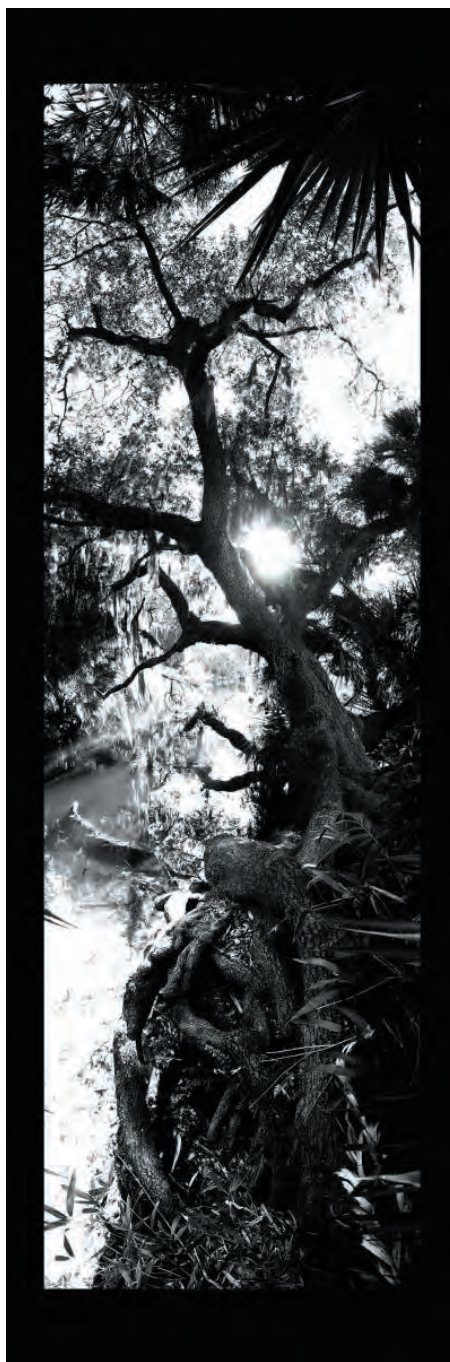
As one turns to move deeper into the gallery one might notice two works, each by a different artist, like *kongorikishi* at the entrance to a Japanese temple, Manju Shandler's *Leviathans I* on the left and Margi Weir, *Antimacassar 2*. Although they are very different in appearance, both artists have chosen synthetic grounds for their work, Shandler printed polyester film and Weir 2 mil vinyl. And both involve qualities typically associated with fiber arts and textiles, Shandler sewing and piecing together and Weir the look, and imitation of, textile designs.

Shandler's work is a patchwork polyester quilt of mythi-

cal landscapes and narratives made with India ink, grease pencil and acrylic paint reminiscent of Tibetan thangka with a central cluster of vignettes surrounded by details. The multiple scenes echo Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Piranesi's *Carceri* etchings, of Blake's heroic expression of Dante's *Inferno* and Dore's luminous Christian fantasies, and Blakelock's and Inness' dream-like fantasies like dimly remembered histories before the beginning of time when the titans reigned.

Weir's design parodies the antimacassar for protecting furniture, notably the arms and backs of stuffed sofas and armchairs. Traditionally lace at grandmother's house, and later plastic, these tatted designs may protect furniture from wear but they were always needing readjusting when used, or were hot and sticky and uncomfortable when plastic, something to look at and not sat upon. The geometric design and individual motifs have been appropriated from various cultural traditions.

The five three feet by one foot black and white photographic prints by Jonathan Jahnke along the left wall of the middle passage -- *The Journey, The Reach, The Rise, The Weight, The Yearning* -- represent the objectification of phenomena in the manner of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Pictorialists and Stieglitz's straight photography *equivalents*. The definite article transforms journey, reach, rise, weight, yearning into substantives for which the tree and the photograph are the medium of their manifestation. The extreme perspective angle view and the



Jonathan Jahnke: *The Journey*, 2013. Photographic print, 36 x 12 in. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

consequent foreshortening effect, challenging for the manual artist but inherent in the very nature of the photograph, is accentuated by the tall proportions and the clarity of the intense fabric of details. While the Chinese literati painters of the Yuan might selectively represent nature as symbolic of character traits, Jahnke had to find a balance between the abstract as symbolic and the literalness of the photograph that might draw the viewer away from the artist's subtler intentions.

Greer Dauphin's *Wire Mesh Burst I, II, and III* on the opposite wall present a three dimensional contrast to Jahnke's photographic prints. The artist represents the phenomenon of bursting with wire mesh and monofilament line in a time-lapse sequence of exploding form and expanding volumes from the confined energy

of *I* beginning to burst from its containment to the erratic contours of *III*. The exploding nebulae of hyperbolically expanding transparent planes are analogous in an intriguing way with Albers' series of expanding rectilinear colors, shadow and substance serving as mutually iterating multiple layers of form and movement.

Now one becomes aware of Rebecca Braziel's *The Wood of Nahunta, Part 1* and *Part 2* with their intriguing names by, one on the nether side of the column (*Part 2*), and the other (*Part 1*) lying on the floor between the preceding two artists. Braziel's two pieces are similar to Kristin Meyers' shaman fetishes, suggesting that these two artists are connecting with their individual cultural heritages different from western representational and expressive traditions. Made of tree bark and beads and named with the Iro-



Christopher Lowther: *Tease*, 2013. Boite d'optique; mixed media, 13 x 24 x 12 in. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

quois word for a tall tree, *Nahunta I* and *II* expresses the artist's spirit consonance with nature, a feeling of what Baudelaire called correspondences, responding to, selecting from, and isolating as one abstracts the essence of experience embodied in material substance and visual form, in colors and textures and allusions, and the thing itself.

Luis Sahagun fifty two by one hundred two inches drawing on cardboard *Prisoner* floats on the dividing panel like a Japanese *raigo*. Prisoner of what? The idea of a prisoner, of being restrained, constrained, isolated, stripped out of context is represented with a limited range of values, and could be placed anywhere, meaning that it belongs nowhere. Even his pose, the expression on his face, is without resistance, an existential listlessness, like something torn from a page. Yet there is a seductive sensuality about the color as the prisoner floats in the ambiguous ambiance of the middle of the gallery, as if he were silently introducing the theme of the show, also placed on the divider like the balloon in a cartoon, without boundaries, like poetic text afloat in mid air in the white space of a Chinese landscape painting.

Continues beyond the dividing panel in a small spatial complex, in the center of which, posing on a pedestal, is Christopher Lowther's *Tease*, *Boite d'optique*. The finely crafted box as such they were made when in vogue might interesting in itself as a retro device but one must look inside to really understand Lowther's work, to the degree that one can, and that is part of its interest. Inside is a small elegant room lined with ornate deep red wallpaper, a parquet wood floor, beautiful wood paneling, and a large relative to the scale of the room portrait of a well dressed gentleman, all of which is parodied by the modern large flat panel screen on which a cinema verite film is being shown, the modern analog of the portrait painting.

Three paintings by Margaret Munz-Losch are lined up one side of the space, each made with acrylic, colored pencil and

enamel on panel. Each panel, with presumably the artist as model in the manner of Cindy Sherman, represents a different shamanistic priestess or sprite, with faces recalling Bronzino's *Fraud in Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time*. Flocks fly around the youthful childlike face with its implications of innocence at home with wild birds in *Early Bird*, brightly colored birds with beaks and bodies and dripping pigment are perched here and there on the multicolored body. The wide open yellow eyes of the Black Cat echo the blue eyes of the woman. In *Pink Prêt à Porter*, the body and bonnet are covered with blossoming flowers signaling her kinship Flora.

Opposite is the single work by Marna Shopoff, *Down the Hall*. This five feet square oil on canvas pointing could be imagined a portrait of a neo-geo installation or with planes and vectors of intense warm colors red, red orange, and yellow with bits of green and blue, dynamic interplay between orthogonal lines and planes, and structure of space as design. The perspective effect of the values in the border like a Robert Irwin illusionistic light piece frames the two horizontal areas as if in relief in interplay between design and illusion and expectation.

On flip side of Sahagun's *Prisoner*, are small two-dimensional works by two different artists, including four giclee prints by Shannon Blosser-Salisbury. Blosser-Salisbury simulates vintage popular photography that combines photographs and hand painted landscape. Titles like *Ceremony*, *Fig. 42 from 'The History of the Dalek in the United States, Vol. II'* (from Doctor Who series), *Furbaby*, and *Visitors* imply intimate family histories and adventures that tease the imagination to invent narratives yet at the same time that imagination is thwarted by anachronistic references like the red, white, and blue fire hydrant in *Fig. 42 from the History of the Dalek...* and the tall buildings in the right back ground of *Visitors*. The simulated/actual worn antique frames make the illusions even more convincing. Viewers familiar with vintage postcards and cartoons from early twentieth century periodicals



Wenxin Zhang: *The City Suburb in the Dark*, 2013. Inkjet print, 20 x 24 in. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

like those from their parents or grandparents may feel a sense of nostalgia.

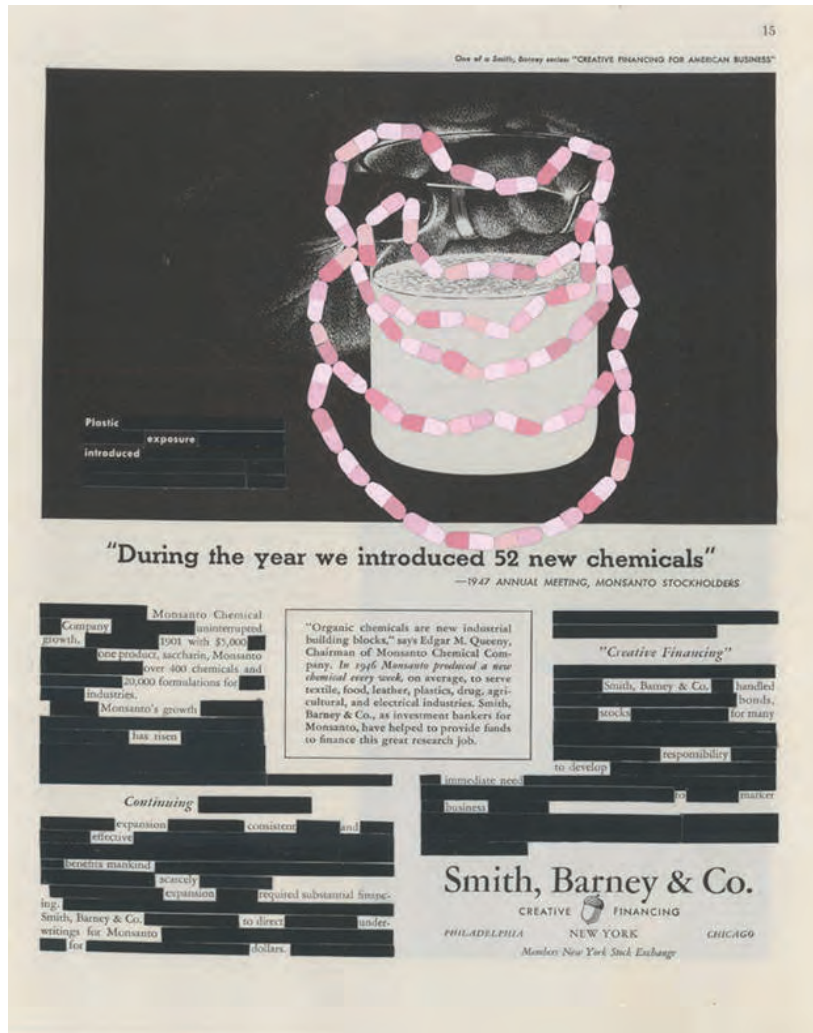
To the right of these works are three inkjet prints by Wenxin Zhang hung, in descending order, *Man in a Green Room*, *The City Suburb in the Dark*, and *Mom Sleeping*. Light and shadow transforms the left arm and hand of the androgynous body into shape in a way that elides the boundary between representation and abstraction. A delicate balance is maintained between the ethereal softness of the light and the softness of the flesh, the delicately talon-like hands hanging without a hint of tension like those of Adam by Michelangelo in an intimate pictorialist interior. Nighttime light diffuses in the humid atmosphere of *The City Suburb in the Dark*, the cool blue of the foreground subtly, eerily complementing the pale luminous greens and violets of the middle ground. *Mom Sleeping* is disturbing in its ambiguity. Is this the expression of an incestuous intimacy, of the artist's friend? The texture of light, light as texture, the softness of her legs and belly and arms contrast with the almost metallic character of the sheets enhances the sense of intimacy that draws one towards and pushes one away simultaneously.

As one turns to move into the rear gallery space, one faces three portraits by John Norris of individuals representing different social roles. The *Manufacturer*, wearing a denim jacket, may be a worker who manufactures or he who owns the means of production. Presented in classical profile, his head is swaddled in brightly patterned ties. He cannot see. The *Announcer* cannot announce. His head is wrapped in newspapers, a question mark for an ear. One can read what he would have said but there is no need for him now, the announcer as superfluous, only introducing, no

content whatsoever, a fixture, a function, an important element in modern media as ephemeral as whatever the news is now will be in the next fragment of time.

In the last space, around corner, on the right, is Raluca Iancu is represented by a single work, the large woodcut on paper, three and one half by six feet, *Corroded Mammoth*. *Mammoth* is an interesting juxtaposition of time: ancient mammoth, traditional woodcut and paper, and diesel locomotive, and perhaps the plains where buffalo once roamed, the orange colors on the sand (?) like blood staining the earth. Contrasts of colors and of values, the pale blue sky and dusty pink plains, the rich blue of the locomotive and pale orange rust, the mechanical form of the train and the irregularity of its rusting carcass, and the amorphous landscape into which the train will disintegrate into the final state of highest entropy, Matthew Arnold's two images of *Bunker Z84, Wadi Zitoun Battlefield, Libya, and, Bunker Z84, Wadi Zitoun Battlefield, Libya, Artillery Emplacement* and *Gun Emplacement*, are realistic landscapes without connotations of the picturesque or modern cities. They are just arid, barren emptiness interrupted by human violence, contrasting the human made mechanical and plane geometry and the irregularity of nature, a place that looks absolutely inviting. One wonders why anyone would want this bleak, sere, dusty, desolate place where men have died defending it. There is no living human presence, only the remains, where even the minimal plant growth is cover with dust. There is no sense of scale. They remind one of the U.S. Army field uniforms, so pale and dry looking that they make one's mouth feel parched even in the humid climate of Louisiana.

The landscape theme continues in the imaginative repre-



Kirsten Stolle: *52 New Chemicals*, 2013. Vintage magazine, advertisement, collage, 13 x 10.25 in. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

sentations of Mark Taylor. The verdant geography of *Landscape 5* and the area desert of *Landscape 4* float in the whiteness of the paper, the abstract areas of colors and textures subverting illusionistic tendencies. The large barren western desert landscape *I Hear Landscapes Are Hot Right Now* plays with the double meaning of *hot*. *Buried In Ice* amuses with its dramatic juxtaposition of the Empire State Building and overwhelming mountains of ice.

The rearmost wall has been reserved for the very thoughtful and biting work of Kirsten Stolle and Hannah Sanders. Their work underscores the contrast of the promise of material wellbeing vis-à-vis reality. Stolle creates collages of excerpts from vintage magazines and advertisements related to the self-promotions of the Monsanto Chemical Company and how advertisements were used to sell products such as treating wooden bridges (*Proceed At Your Own Risk*), the marketing of new chemicals (*52 New Chemicals*), the use of chemicals in rocket launches (*Protecting Its Own Tail*), and several others. Blacking out the text in the advertisements to create the titles and critique the chemical industry itself, Stolle's work is an explicit critique of what once represented the American dream, the blind faith in progress through science and technology, and the role of business in making profit.

Hannah Sanders' take on the oil industry, shades of Robert Warren, in her series of *Flocking the Pump* drawings. Using a line that combines qualities of Goya etchings and Schiele's Vienna Sezession, the sensuality of the pin up and the harshness of the oilfields, *Rocinante* parodying the crude sexual language of oil-field roughnecks, fucking or getting fucked, literally or figuratively. A bizarre mother nature floats over eroding coastal marshes. Another, naked legs spread open, starts and sits up from the rumpled blanket on which she was lying at the sighting of black smoke from a fire. A gigantic woman bigger than electric transmission towers leans forward staring at a colorful clutch of gas cans rests in a nest resting atop one the towers. Streaming flocks of pelicans, some with women's breasts, and raptors fly through the skies carrying gas cans in cloth slings like storks carrying babies in diapers in a vision that contrasts the sensual and sexual and maternal, streaming into or out of the foreground like the birds in the frontispiece of Goya's *The Sleep of Reason*.

This concludes our tasting of the Seventeenth Annual No Dead Artists show. There are many different flavors. Some will enjoy them all. Some will appreciate only a few. But you will have to see the show to know. □



Brett Reif: *Cloudy*, 2013. M/M, 55" high. Courtesy Du Mois Gallery.

Brett Reif: Bath Tiles & Beyond

BY TERRINGTON CALAS

BRETT REIF
Bathworks
 Sculpture
 Du Mois Gallery
 New Orleans, LA

THE JOLT OF Brett Reif's art is the strained conception that certain mundane articles – stock bathroom tiles, drains, and stoppers – might be coaxed into something approaching formalist sculpture. But that is precisely the initial effect of his new suite “Bathworks,” lately on display at the Du Mois Gallery. The jolt fades quickly. What you see is a peculiar industrial eloquence, and, it would seem, a blithely flippant one. Reif adopts this aggressively banal vocabulary as if it were conventional, fashioning what appear to be conventional aesthetic objects. In the process, he transmutes that vocabulary, almost sanctifies it. His *Kink #22*, thus, seems as elemental and as vaguely numinous as a Jean Arp marble. It employs a variant of the biomorphic forms

that Arp sought to infuse with “mystical reality” – a part of his exalted view that art, if formally pure, obviates mere aesthetics, that it might have a regenerative function, that it might rival nature itself. And, in Arp's work, undulant, organic shapes would provide the metaphor – intimating a mystical fecundity.

The notion is a fantasy, to be sure, but a beguiling one. (That alone, perhaps, justifies it.) And in Reif's work, you feel a consonant nod to nature's lyrical mechanism – up to a point. His pieces are precision-wrought wall-hung abstractions – curvilinear, at times tumescent, at times implicitly erotic. When most asymmetrical, as in *Cloudy* or *Slits*, their shapes appear to flow, as if unchecked. The implication is a kind of erratic metamorphosis, indeed like nature. Indeed, as if the artist had an *envie* for the true halcyon days of purist sculpture, the days of Arp and Constantin Brancusi.

But of course, that is saying too much. As I say, there is a flippant tone, actually an insolence, that pervades the whole of



Brett Reif: *Seal Ring*, 2013. M/M, 25" high. Courtesy Du Mois Gallery.

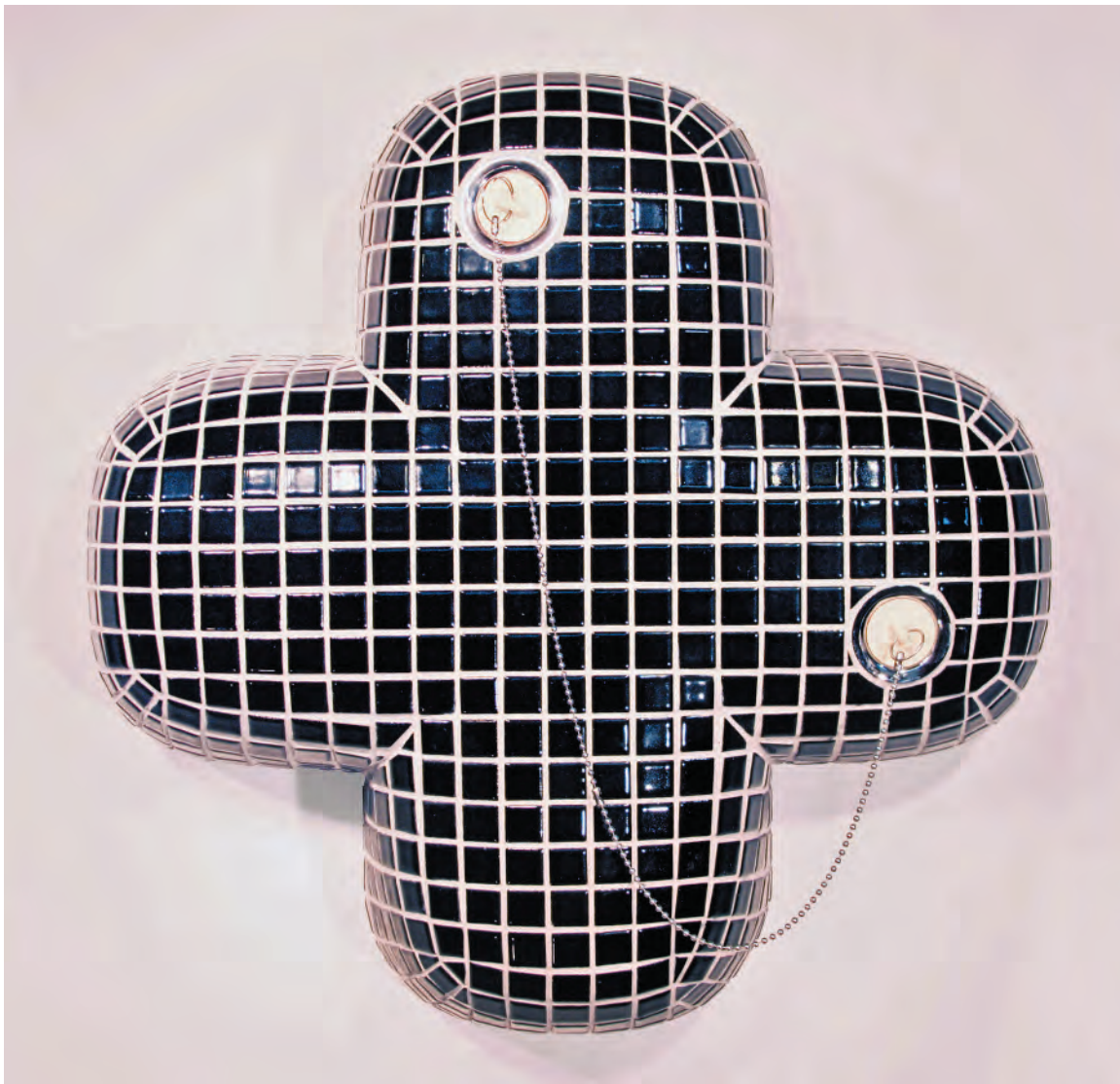
“Bathworks.” That, and a keen intelligence. The technical strategy here is a refined variant of assemblage, that familiar mode wherein the artwork annexes the environment itself or arises literally from it. (In a sense, it is art as cosmic fetishism.) And certainly, for the assemblage artist, these tiles and drains—mass-utilitarian spare parts—would seem predictable resources. But Reif’s maneuvering of them is hardly predictable. This is the stuff of Home Depot gone high modern. In pieces like *Fountain* and *Seal Ring*, he marshals the bath tiles into schemas of classic abstraction—formal yet visceral essences. The ebony-clad *Seal Ring* suggests a scrupulously balanced riff on Isamu Noguchi’s “primal” black *Voids*.

What Reif offers is a collective echo of the consummate moment in 20th century sculpture, and you see that moment intruded, smirched by pre-fab materials. Here, in the rarefied context of his art, these materials project a certain rude authority. These are not merely vernacular artifacts, not merely

mass-issued products. These are commercial products for outfitting the basics of the home, complete with instructions. They come to us pre-designed and pre-patterned, to be deployed in yet another pre-design. Their manufacturers, as a consequence, succeed in imposing a stock “creativity” upon us. A sort of friendly mandate. It is the “creativity” of homogeneity.

With the sly irony of his wall-pieces, Reif underscores this ostensibly trivial circumstance. At the same time, perhaps, he betrays a tacit activism, a thought to social imperatives. From these sculptures, we might leap beyond the benign reality of our increasingly mass-devised homes. We might consider the demoralizing issue of mandated sameness. We might consider its ultimate sources. And further, what does it say about our society?

On the other hand, another not-so-sinister impact of these works is immediate. While operating in the tract between art and artifact, Reif seems, at once, to abjure and embrace mass-industri-



Brett Reif: *Seal*, 2013. Tiles, drains, m/m, 20" high. Courtesy Du Mois Gallery.

al manufacture. You sense a resolute hand-crafter who must enrich any material he uses, even the banal and the aesthetically mute. His *Seal* is almost a paean to the well-made—rows and rows of tiles, stoppered drains, faultless design, everything machine-efficient. The commonplace perfected. But the piece is also disarmingly classical. Its motif is a distant allusion to the Greek cross. It manages to desert the realm of contemporary bathrooms, or anything practical, or anything pre-fab. It is, ultimately, a burnished, formal abstraction, something wielding its own force. This, and much of “Bathworks,” could be construed as a means of rejoinder—a means of countering the purgatorial tedium of our mass-culture by poetizing its appurtenances. The fact is, in this exhibition, forgettable tiles and drains suddenly look appealing. The final sculptures refute the very idea of the mundane. They submit a conduit away from what Wallace Stevens called “The malady of the quotidian.”

In customary understatement, Andy Warhol once described Pop as being “about liking things.” And any artist who shares in Pop’s legacy (and, broadly, in the legacy of Dada and

Neo-Dada), must acknowledge the lure of the quotidian. This is notably true of assemblage artists. Certainly, Reif’s meticulousness would suggest a warming to his selected artifacts. (And who among us can resist the aisles of the hardware store?) What matters here, however, seems to be the metaphoric charge that these artifacts carry. I see the artist’s grasp as both comic and serious. The comic element: consistently elegant yet biomorphic forms presented in relation to the most private of domestic spaces. Another is this: the irreverent surprise of this theme-and-material conflation.

The serious implication: a pathos that hangs over this body of works. Every sculpture is fashioned from rigid, recalcitrant materials that are mass-produced for mass design—a small fact that betokens a great deal. Reif has conquered both the materials and, by implication, the cultural manipulation. It is gratifying that objects of pure formalist grace might be possible from such unlikely mediums; it is even more gratifying to consider that individual creativity, in the midst of pervasive cultural dictates, still counts for something. □



Flying Saucer Development Corps: Installation view, 2013. L'Entrepôt Gallery.

Installation & Fantasy

BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

COLOR ATLAS
L'Entrepôt Gallery
New Orleans, LA

CRAIG DAMRAUER
Ogden Museum of Southern Art
New Orleans, LA

ANTHROPOMORPHIZER!!
Contemporary Arts Center
New Orleans, LA

THE MEDIUM OF installation, or the transformative, sculptural use of space, became popular in the mid- to late-twentieth century. It lent itself to the anti-heroic, experiential kind of art championed by Post-modernists. It physically involves the viewer in the work, affecting its audience by immersing it in the art itself. Much like sculpture formed the aesthetic and conceptual focus in the opulent hallways of such Renaissance families like the House of Farnese, sculpture is the focus in the medium of installation. But in some ways, it is the opposite of sculpture in-the-round.

It does require the viewer to move three hundred sixty degrees in space, but the viewer is surrounded, not the sculpture itself.

Installation also requires a degree of performance, whether more akin to the ritualistic work of Joseph Beuys or the somber humanity of Eva Hesse's skins. Both artist and viewer participate in the work by moving through it and around it. Hence, the experience of the work is different – it dissolves the white walls of the gallery or museum into an often-startling new place.

New Orleans hosts three installations that opened for August's White Linen Night. On that evening, masses of people in white moved like a giant river through the spaces created for their experience, fluidly stepping against each other in the sweaty heat. All of the installations are site- and time-specific – created with the crowds of White Linen in mind. Consideration of site and time are qualities inherent in the medium. Outside of that context, though, the solitary viewer can still appreciate the content of shaped space without the critical mass of people present during opening night.

Three installations merge as one at L'Entrepôt, which opened on Julia Street in July of 2011. Collectively titled "Color



Five-D: *Sahasrara Bound*. L'Entrepôt Gallery.

Atlas,” it focuses on the Fall 2013 Pantone color scheme chosen by New York designers. The context suggests the popularization of fashion as art promoted by the Metropolitan Museum, especially in its recent traveling exhibit, “Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity.” But, slyly, the artists in this exhibit were asked to appropriate colors from within the scheme to create sculptural interiors designed beyond the parameters of spaces in fashion magazines. The results are hyperbolic in a different way than Pantone’s poetic descriptions of the palette.

The Flying Saucer Development Corps, a collective of artists within the Mystic Krewe of Chewbacchus, brought Pantone’s “Samba,” a rich red, into their science-fictionalized space. Artists and “Chewbacchanaliens” Ryan Ballard, Brennan Steele, Brett Powers, Meghan Ballard, Martin Childs, Richard Valadie, Dennis Groome, Veronica Sharkey, and Paul Patecek used collanders, hubcaps, lasers, a fog machine, and a de-humidifier in a gigantic, interactive kinetic sculpture hanging from the ceiling. Samba-red and moon-cheese green lasers interlace with the physical work. These everyday objects and party-trick devices create a network of celestial bodies simultaneously reminiscent of Calder’s circus and abstract mobiles – bizarre, yet meditative in its dance

across the ceiling, as it turns and floats through a layer of mist.

An arrangement of Samba-colored fake fur repeats the number forty-two on the floor. This is a direct reference to *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, as well as the entrance fee to Chewbacchus membership. Forty-two is the ultimate meaning in the universe; though in this installation, that meaning can be trod upon with bare feet, tickled by the non-sequitur.

The science-fiction aesthetic continues in the installation titled *String Theorem 3 (Safety in the Waves)* by String Theories, comprised of artists Sean (ISSOFRESH) Hernandez and Crystal Green Bivalacqua. Their environment utilizes Pantone’s Mykonos Blue. Their installation contains a suspended, faceless “astronaut” wearing a white work jumpsuit (also resembling a HAZMAT suit or protective painting jumper) hanging amidst tiny, fiery white lights in a rectangular-shaped enclosure. It references all the elements. Land is pictured in cyanotype-like prints of trees positioned at the ends of the box containing the figure, and sea metaphorically flows in the undulations of blue tarp. Giant dream catchers suggest air flowing through their tangles of blue yarn, but, more literally, the flow of the subconscious through this icon of dreamland.

Weird brown nuggets hang from filament across the front



Craig Damrauer. Installation, Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

of the piece, suggesting meteorites, human excrement, and, frankly, potatoes. But, this surrealistic element enhances the emotional content of the work described in their statement. The free association connects viewers through their abilities to imagine, a way of tapping onto the unseen strings that vibrate and attach all things in some dimension. We are never alone, we all dream, we are united by water, as Bjork suggests in the song “Oceania” from the album *Medúlla*.

Five-D’s *Sahasrara Bound* also suggests human interconnections in time and space, but from a Buddhist and Hindu belief in the cycle of life from birth to death to rebirth. Kyle Nugent, Elijah Chong, Aubrey Schwartz, Martin Benson, and Ingrid Anderson’s use of Acai, a deep, bruised plum, appears in tints and shades on footprints placed in a cyclical path around and through the installation. Portraits of spirit animals – bear, fox, owl, and bison - are emblazoned across large plywood-cutout hands attached to supportive poles decorated with calligraphic script. The footprints lead the viewer to and from a central structure in which two snake-sculptures entwine, reaching for a suspended pinecone. These underworld slitherers are symbols for earthly wisdom in this context, and, with the pinecone, could reference the bodhi tree under which the Buddha found nirvana. More ac-

curately, the pinecone is the symbol for the pineal gland, which is regarded as the “third eye” – the seat of intuition and the means to seeing an inner light, or truth. The two snakes are the core of the caduceus, a Greek mythological symbol attributed to Hermes, who brought souls from one world or plane to another.

The interrelation of these three installations in one space communicates about human interconnectivity, through space, time, the elements, our life cycles, and the idea of faith. Craig Damrauer’s installation at the Ogden Museum also suggests the link between individual human life and the world in which it exists. The installation is playful and quirkily humorous in some ways, similar to the surrealist bizarre/bazaar at L’Entrepôt. However, its underlying message is far more sinister.

In his statement, Damrauer says he has been cutting and “editing” tree branches back together. Each branch is comprised of a few dozen segments of different woods, each about three inches long. The arm of the branch leads into a puff of delicate tendrils, some with fragile leaves still attached. The segments recall the rings in tree trunks, which by itself conveys the idea of the passage of time as well as interconnectivity. However, Damrauer intimates the future, not prior experiences.



Miss Pussycat: *Anthropomorphizer!!* Contemporary Art Center.

In each of the dozen or so branches hanging in one of the three, tight-walled galleries taken by the work, a tiny propeller responds to a computer program compelling the gadget to whirl, forcing the branch to spin. The eerie dance that ensues from the computer's command is matched with the tiny buzz-saw sound of the spinning propeller. Though the delicate movements are at once comfortably entrancing, the sordid truth quickly becomes apparent. Human-built technology controls this once living nature, forcing it to respond to stimulus like grotesque puppets.

Art history records humankind's attempts to control nature. The Romantic notion of the sublime is the go-to for this kind of content in this context, but the upside-down suspended branches also suggest the world turned upside-down – that space of the carnivalesque and the underbelly of normalcy. It could be said that part of Sisyphus' underworld punishment required repeated attempts to defy and control gravity as he pushed his boulder up the hill. Damrauer suggests that these attempts at control will only be met with disappointment, and at worst, total destruction of our physical and mental reality.

At the Contemporary Art Center, a different kind of puppetry fills downstairs gallery. In essence, puppetry is the culmination of all aspects of installation. It requires sculptural space, artis-

tic performance, and the viewer's interaction to be effective. This summer, New Orleans' premiere puppeteer, Panacea Theriac (a.k.a. Miss Pussycat), is transforming one of the galleries into "the puppet's candy palace" in the performance and exhibition "Anthropomorphizer!!" Theriac moved her workshop into the space to create one hundred new puppet creatures. As always, she will use these to transport her viewers to other states, to experience the surreal world the puppets inhabit. The kind of magic she creates is the same kind embodied in the art of installation – the ability of the medium to completely alter space and thus displace the viewer into a new world.

New Orleans is a fantasy in many ways. Escapist practices like costuming or inebriation disguise or deny the facts of its decadence. The appearance of one residential block changes within a matter of seconds, as one saunters through the streets. The prevalence of medium now might be described as meta-installation, a physical transformation of a physically transforming space. The micro-spaces erected for our experience will eventually transform back into their original states. But, the specificity of the site of New Orleans for the medium of installation constantly invites new spatial investigations. □



Patch Somerville: *Threshold*, 2011. Oil on linen, 72 x 60 in. Academy of Fine Arts.

Somerville & Monk

BY JUDITH H. BONNER

PATCH SOMERVILLE & MARY MONK
The New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts
New Orleans, LA

TWO SOLO EXHIBITIONS at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts present work by local artists, Patch Somerville and Mary Monk. The style and subject of each artist differs in approach, but there are similarities in their awareness of their environment. While Somerville's oil paintings are freely brushed, Monk's pastel drawings are controlled and structured.

Patch Somerville's subjects include figure studies, interior and genre scenes, still lifes, and near-abstractions. A couple of his still lifes are presented as simple grisaille compositions, while other works are views through windows and doors, including one looking into a bedroom. *Two Marigny Lions* shows these guardian

lions depicted in gold, suggesting the handiwork of student pranksters. Similar to his gray still lifes, here the frame house behind the lions is grayish, with the steps leading to a dark porch. A watercolor painting titled *UH, November 22 11:15 am*, which shows a house hidden by trees and other foliage, is sensitively rendered; with careful applications of washes.

A garden scene, *Our Backyard*, also shows the lush growth that is typical of the verdant grown in this locale. The composition, which is executed primarily in green, blue, brown, and gray, features a simple splash of orange paint in the foreground to bring life to the cool palette. In lower left a largely hidden child's toy in the shape of a horse's head, underscores the artist's family life. More obvious in its subject of family, *The Porch Fall-Spring* depicts two figures seated on a porch swing, the two figures merg-



Patch Somerville: *Outlet*, 2011. Oil on linen, 60 x 72 in. Academy of Fine Arts.

ing into a unit, so much so that it is difficult to decipher which figure is the child and which is the adult. A pair of shoes, thrown casually on the floor in front of the swing, provides a sense of normalcy in the day-to-day habits of youngsters. Vehicles, which are seen parked closely along the street beyond the foliage behind the veranda, hint at technological advances that intrude into city life.

Perhaps the most memorable of Somerville's works is painted in oil on linen and titled *Outlet*. This large interior scene is essentially a still life, but the subject here is a rack of clothing with a space heater situated near the rack in lower right. The scene, which suggests frugality in acquiring material belongings, could actually be a corner in a student's apartment, with a pole suspended by pulleys as an improvised closet. The composition is varied in color, line, pattern, and in the heavy application of paint.

Another painting on linen, *Box Fan* is an unusual choice for an artistic subject, its grill offering a natural division of shapes. Somerville balances areas of primary colors with grays and other neutral shades. He takes inspiration from his textbook, *Apple NYC Art Book*, at PrattMWP, where he took his early training in art. Another small still life depicts a bottle, bowl, and drawing paper set against a printed tablecloth and viewed from a bird's-eye view. Although he is currently a student at Tulane, Somerville's viewpoints are creative, with his artistic talent still emerging.

Plein Air artist Mary Monk already has an established reputation, and although she received her art training in classical

drawing lessons, she is a self-taught pastellist. Her works belie the usual concept of "self-training," for she adapts her skills as an accomplished artist to her pastel compositions. She is adept at rendering landscapes, marine scenes, and street scenes.

Monk's landscape, *Blustery Day* is minimalist in its approach, with large areas of white "canvas" that can be interpreted as white sand. Other works are deeper in color and value. Her interest in the four seasons is visible in a number of these landscapes, with each composition rendered in colors typical of the different times of the year. The roadway in the foreground of *Changing Seasons* leads to distant "tent like" structures; the tall grasses are brownish typical of late autumn or winter scenes. *Evening Marsh* reveals her interest not only in the seasons, but in the changing times of the day. A cluster of seven daisies in the center left near ground draw the viewer's eye forward to observe the distant blue trees and pink sky that are reflected in the bayou in the foreground. Images of *Old Docks*, showing remnants of piers as they arc toward the distance, also suggest the passing of time.

Other works focus on the subtropical climate. *Rainy Evening*, *Twin Span* clearly acknowledges weather conditions that frequently visit the Gulf South. In *Windy Day*, the effects of the wind are seen in the bayou waters, grass, and clouds. In *Up River*, a tug pushes three barges through the choppy water of the turbulent Mississippi; faint images in the background suggest Louisiana's industries through what appears to be grain elevators and an



Mary Monk: *Secluded*, 2013. Pastel, 11 x 20 in. Academy of Fine Arts.

elevated trestle. A scene typical of southwestern Louisiana, *Vanilla Sky* appears painterly in its rendering of the pastel; its sherbet colored light yellow orange and pink skies suggest an atmospheric motion or convection.

Sunset, Fontainebleau Park captures the coolness of pastel water washing ashore along the sandy beach, while the trunks of the trees at right subtly reflect the warmth of the setting sun. Conversely, in a work called *Pasture in Morning Light*, Monk captures the soft glow of early light on a cow and in the tall grasses of the pasture.

Monk also turns her eye inward to the cluttered cityscape, with such scenes as *Streetcar in the Afternoon* and *Decatour and Dumaine*. The latter shows the details of the street, with vehicles, signs, pedestrians, structures with balconies, and trees in their gray winter dress. *The Path to the Degas House* takes viewers along a

shadowed walkway under arched shade trees toward a house that is barely visible behind lush foliage—it's only easily identifiable feature is the tri-colored French flag.

The distant telephone poles and wires visible in *Jack Lloyd Road* acknowledge contemporary reliance upon technological means of communication. Fall colors appear in the marsh grasses with water puddles spread through an unimproved roadway. Like Somerville, Monk has an interest in the guardian lions frequently seen in the city—here lions are not in front of a residence, but in front of the peristyle pavilion in City Park. The verdant landscape, offset by the tall columns of the peristyle, is clear evidence of man's intrusion into the scene. Monk's thematic overview is well-developed and focused throughout her exhibition, with her encompassing physical environment dominating her attention. □



David Borgerding: *Kitstip*, 2013. Bronze, 11 x 39 x 7 in. Callan Contemporary.

Borgerding: Organic Fulcrums

BY MARIAN S. MCLELLAN

DAVID BORGERDING
Callan Contemporary
New Orleans, LA

BALANCE, IN ALL its manifestations, is one of the most important principles of life. But, as much as humankind needs balance, the demand to disturb the harmonic flow is forever at play. Which might be why sculptor David Borgerding pulls discordant shapes out of thin air, metaphysically speaking, and allows them to free fall where they may.

Borgerding's solo exhibit "Recent Sculpture" at Callan Contemporary presents a cohesive display of curvilinear, non-representational forms made of fabricated bronze. In order to achieve these organic constructions, the sculptor begins with sheets of bronze, shaping and polishing them to a uniform luster. In an artist's statement, Borgerding, a recipient of a career opportunity grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, insists that he abandons a preconceived notion of how each piece will ultimately look in favor of allowing the material and the moment to be his guide. The result is a push/pull, this way and that, arrangement of smooth textured juxtapositions.

To be sure, there is something Quixotic about the sculptures. Despite their streamlined and minimal appearance, they do seem to mirror Borgerding's thought process. Perhaps the

artist had just been out on the course when creating the horizontal "Kitstip" since the graceful work invokes an abstraction of a pair of golf clubs. As awkward as that may sound, "Kitstip" is graceful, with flattened and pinched lines that glide above a simple punctuation mark. Our gaze is fastened on the elongated nestling of form and incongruous weight.

Several of the sculptures do recall equivalents, such as the vertically oriented "Varudur," the dominant girth of which resembles a whale who has inexplicably aligned and abutted itself with anonymous, glistening splinters. As with "Kitstip," mass succumbs to the stability of purpose.

The quiet array of Borgerding's sculpture, seen as a whole in Callan Contemporary's open space, resembles a harbor of ancient forms, like driftwood and sea creatures whose former selves have been whittled away by time, beaten and carried by wave after wave. One of the tallest pieces, "Algonac," is also one of the simplest, merely a post in the port, upon which possibly a fish skull and bit of driftwood have landed, for eternity.

Something of a dichotomy is "Deto," a pedestal piece that balances a cluster of shapes on one end and emptiness on the other. In keeping with the majority of the works, "Deto" is stabilized by an organic fulcrum, and if you look at it just right, you will see that it is a sword, left by none other than Don Quixote. □



David Borgerding: Installation view. Callan Contemporary.



Mac Ball: *Blue Hole/Allegory*, 2013. Acrylic on canvas. Cole Pratt Gallery.

Mac Ball's Implied Narratives

BY KATE BRUCE

MAC BALL
New Paintings
Cole Pratt Gallery
New Orleans, LA

MAC BALL'S CURRENT exhibition of landscape paintings at the Cole Pratt Gallery, "Modern Life," reflects the artist's keen interest in life's ordinary occurrences. On view in the main gallery, his works vary from brightly illuminated landscapes to muted scenes of highways and winding thoroughfares. Ball, whose artwork has been featured at Cole Pratt before, is a highly regarded architect who has been deeply involved in the revitalization of the infrastructure of post-Katrina New Orleans. His deep appreciation for the community and for the arts, and his creative skills, have made him one New Orleans' preeminent artists.

As Ball explains, the show reflects the "everydayness of life," as embodied in Walker Percy's classic novel *The Moviegoer*. Unremarkable scenes that appear seemingly mundane become

focal points for Ball. In oil paintings like *Blue Hole/Allegory*, normally ordinary scenes unfold before the viewer in a captivating way. This painting depicts an enclosed watering hole. Here, a boat rowed by a lone man in the central part of the canvas attracts the eye, and the viewer follows the scene. Other paddlers are also in motion, one along the right edge of the canvas, others near the embankment opposite from the viewer's vantage point. Two figures stare impassively in the foreground while resting on a white diving board. The dynamic composition juxtaposes figures in action versus figures in repose, yet both activities are types of leisure. Ball's active brushstrokes throughout the canvas and the activities displayed echo the artist's statement, where "images of both movement and stillness, frozen in time, allow us to reflect on the often under-appreciated beauty present in our daily lives, in the modern world."

Ball is fascinated with highways and the term given for Frontage Road, the name given across America to those roads that follow the path of the busy highway. In *Frontage Road*, Jeaner-



Mac Ball: *Drifter*, 2013. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36 in. Cole Pratt Gallery.

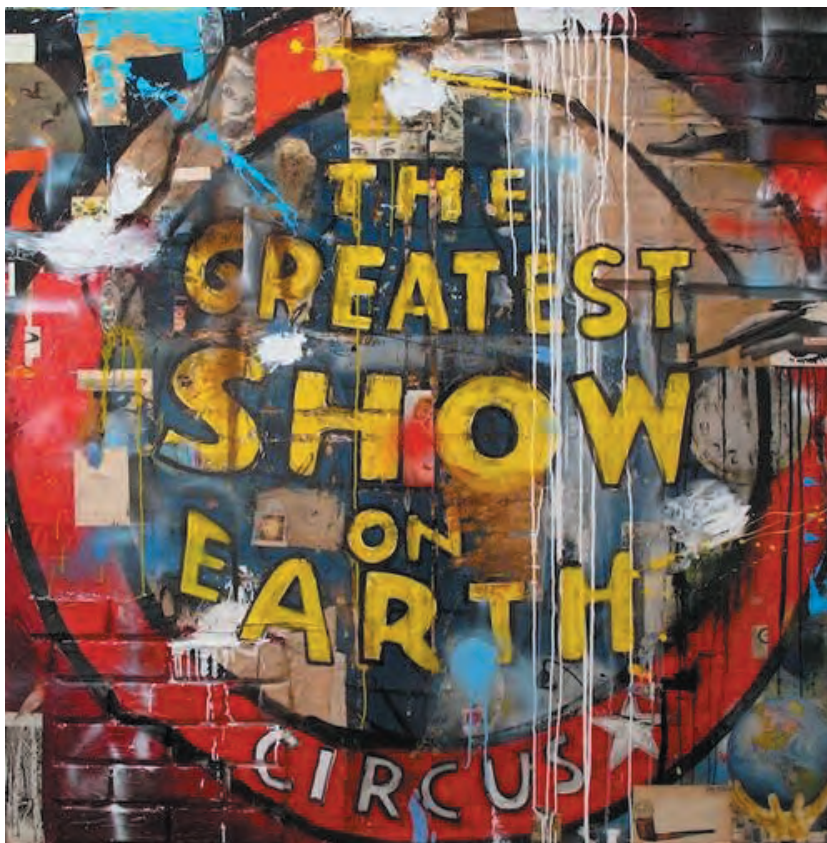


Mac Ball: *Frontage Road, Jeanerette*, 2013. Acrylic on canvas. Cole Pratt Gallery.

ette, the viewer stops for a moment to contemplate a rural scene on an autumn or winter day. Vivid brushstrokes of oil paint set a trio of buildings within a colorful landscape of trees and lush grass, all painted in a predominantly glossy finish. Another painting, *Penned In*, takes on a more muted tone. Here, horizontal bands of white pigment are painted over the entire scene, and this characteristic gives the painting a veiled appearance that is in contrast to some of his brighter landscapes in the show. In *Penned In*, these bands of muted paint echo the barrier of the interstate that cordons off the bustle of the interstate from the residential neighborhood that is painted in the background.

For the artist, “life is not a static condition, but an ever-changing fascinating conundrum.” His painting, *Drifter*,

exemplifies this observation. In this work, Ball depicts a scene familiar to many. A lone figure stands on the edge of an interstate, luggage by his side, with his thumb held up. Is the truck slowing down to accept the drifter as they round the bend? Luggage appears again in his work *Two Trucks On a Bend In the Road*. This time, no one is seen along the curve of the highway, just two trucks that move steadily ahead, leaving the lone piece of light green luggage behind. The viewer can’t help but wonder if a drifter is again part of the scene here, and whether or not luck has been in his favor. These implied stories by Ball make for compelling compositions by the artist who feels an “immense joy...in the act of painting, getting lost in the work.” □



Greg Miller: *Greatest Show on Earth*, 2013. Boyd Satellite Gallery.

Gallery Walk

BY MARIAN S. MCLELLAN

ROBERT HODGE, GREG MILLER, JASON VILLEGAS
Boyd Satellite Gallery
New Orleans, LA

NIKKI ROSATO
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery
New Orleans, LA

MARGARET EVANGELINE
Callan Contemporary
New Orleans, LA

—

“COMBINE” IS A readymade word that seems perfectly coined for current urban *mélange*. Robert Rauschenberg, the native Texan, used it in reference to his readily accessible combination of found

objects and paintings, and now at Boyd Satellite Gallery, we see a trio of artists, also with Texas ties. Oddly enough, their combined efforts clearly evoke Rauschenberg’s play on Americana. Almost suitable for FAO Schwarz are Jason Villegas’ wall-mounted sculptures, which includes *Boar Head*, an actual boar’s head covered in shredded jersey cloth, thus transforming the deceased creature into a piñata. Festivities continue with the mixed media paintings of Greg Miller and Robert Hodge to further enliven the gallery with a vintage carnival of thought. Hodge’s *The Great Electric Show and Dance* hawks the title’s words, incised across a tattered, yellow billboard, as though peeled from a minstrel show of yore and then attached with stitchery, an addition Hodge includes in several of the paintings, possibly an allusion to the days when baseball ruled the airwaves. Likewise, Greg Miller’s *Greatest Show on Earth* beckons us to enter beyond the emblazoned title’s words and find



Robert Hodge: *A Memory Worth Fighting For*, 2013. Boyd Satellite Gallery.



Nikki Rosato: *Untitled (Connections)*, 2013. Boyd Satellite Gallery.

our way through the filtered collage of color. There's a strong hint that participants will not find their way out of a show that used to be.

Taking us on perhaps a more introspective journey are Nikki Rosato's human road maps in "Cut" at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery and Margaret Evangeline's "We Thought We Were Drowning But it Was Only Love" at Callan Contemporary. Rosato's medium of hand-cut maps is used to describe two- and three-dimensional human form as in *Untitled (Connections)*. Here, a pair of figures juts slightly from the wall and appears as a shroud of lace over the

emptiness of time, an unseen force which we humans must look to technology to gauge its passage. Evangeline incorporates another type of in-flux overlay, fluid lines of paint that dance and hover against uniform mists of color. The effect often conjures upturned roofs that pave the way in dense fog, much like Japanese maritime prints, as in the monochromatic *Pequod Meets the Bachelor*. And what are upturned eaves? Why, they are merely stylized waves that suppose a cover and suspend our thoughts, much like love, so that the path in Evangeline's painting is not so terrestrial as it is subliminal, always leading us to where we began. □



Gene Koss: *Drawing A*, 2013. Cast glass and steel. Photo courtesy: Michael Smith. Arthur Roger Gallery.

Gene Koss's New Work

BY KARL F VOLKMAR

GENE KOSS
New Sculpture
Arthur Roger Gallery
New Orleans, LA

LIKEABLE. GENE KOSS'S work is likeable. And I like looking at his work. Seeing how earlier themes continue to evolve, what new variations on the theme of, for example, *Disc Drawings*, have been developed, what new huge piece has taken form, and what new ideas have been added too the artist's repertoire, as some idea are revisited and renewed, while others are new. This new exhibition at the Arthur Roger Gallery is no exception.

Especially interesting is to see the new large work that the artist has conceived, *Line Fence* in this exhibit. Working with cast glass as his primary medium, which he often combines with various and sundry other materials and found objects, Koss's work challenges whatever reservations one may have, with respect to a medium conventionally associated with utilitarian objects, about the viability of glass as a material for conceptual art. Combine

Koss's wit, expressed in titles evoking amusing associations that offer multiple paths for approaching the work, with the artist's use of glass in ways unexpected by those unacquainted with its potential, and the confident craftsmanship of the mature artist produces work that represents a confluence of formal strength, humorous associations, and syntheses of multiple historical antecedents.

In the current show at the Arthur Roger Gallery, Koss continues to build on ideas and materials referenced to the artist's early upbringing on a Wisconsin farm. Building on America's nostalgic love of roaming through flea markets and old stuff stores and delight in unusual tools from a bygone age when inventiveness manifested itself in machines, gives his work its special tactile, and visual, appeal.

The artist's fine feeling for the evocative power of transposition and re-contextualization, resituating objects from the everyday to the art, is empowered by conceptual precedents: the ready-mades of Duchamp, Picasso's assemblages, the *Nouveau Realisme* of Tinguely, and Rauschenburg's anything goes. Koss's playfulness is even more delightful because of the slightly askew



Gene Koss: *Fence Row*, 2013. Cast glass and steel. Photo courtesy: Michael Smith, Arthur Roger Gallery.

character of his creations. Viewers are invited to guess for what function some of the found objects were designed. Unusual juxtapositions challenge one to imagine just how these new objects might function. It's good fun.

Fascination with Koss' work, indeed Koss' own motivations, may be attributed, at least to some degree, to an American love of gadgets which continues unabated in this digital era. Contrast the fads for *iThis* and *iThat* that celebrate coolness over content (what content?) with bucolic nostalgia for a pre-industrial, pre-digital age with its chimerical fantasy of an idealized existence when life was easy, nature was abundant, and families worked close together tending the soil day in and day out, year after year, manual labor adding value, toiling under the sun, welcoming the rains, husbanding the growth and harvesting of other living things to provide for human needs. Curiously, a similar fascination with materials qua materials characterized Minimalism as it appeared in the sixties as antidote to the subjectivities of expressionism and Modernism messianic ideals.

Line Fence is a large, more than seven feet high and twenty-five feet in length, construction of cast glass and stainless steel, on the scale of public art that must command attention when installed in an open air setting. Displayed in the enclosed space of

the gallery, it may seem as if the walls have been built around the artwork rather than the sculpture being inserted into the confines of the gallery. The experience of walking around the work is rather like visiting a factory production facility with its immense machinery. Yet there is also an approachable character to *Line Fence* that may be due to its rural roots as one watches other visitors on the further side and feels the urge to chat with them. Certainly the gallery situation with its huge quantities of daylight coming in through the windows has a way of surrounding Koss's with a field of light, giving rise to an impression of fusion with surrounding space not unlike Donald Judd's one hundred untitled works installation at the Chinati Foundation near Marfa, Texas.

One can appreciate *Line Fence* from several perspectives: historical, formal, and poetic. From the historical perspective, the use of stainless steel and ground moiré surfaces evokes David Smith's *Cubi* series. The long shape dividing space in such a way that one must walk around to experience it fully is like Richard Serra's somber COR-TEN steel *Tilted Arch* reconceived on a more human, and humane, scale. The artist's use of elemental, clearly articulated forms hints at an empathetic identification with Modernist abstraction. The simple industrial materials mirror those of Minimalism.



Gene Koss: *Sunrise*, 2013. Cast glass and steel. Photo courtesy: Michael Smith. Arthur Roger Gallery.

Conflations of simple color and texture in the arrangement of a series of bluish green glass slabs along the top may evoke memories of glass insulators on old-fashioned, creosote-soaked utility poles, or birds perching along a telephone wire [remember them?]. One might even imagine a connection to Oldenberg's Pop Art if one reads the form as a highly abstract toothbrush or swivel-headed Trac II razor.

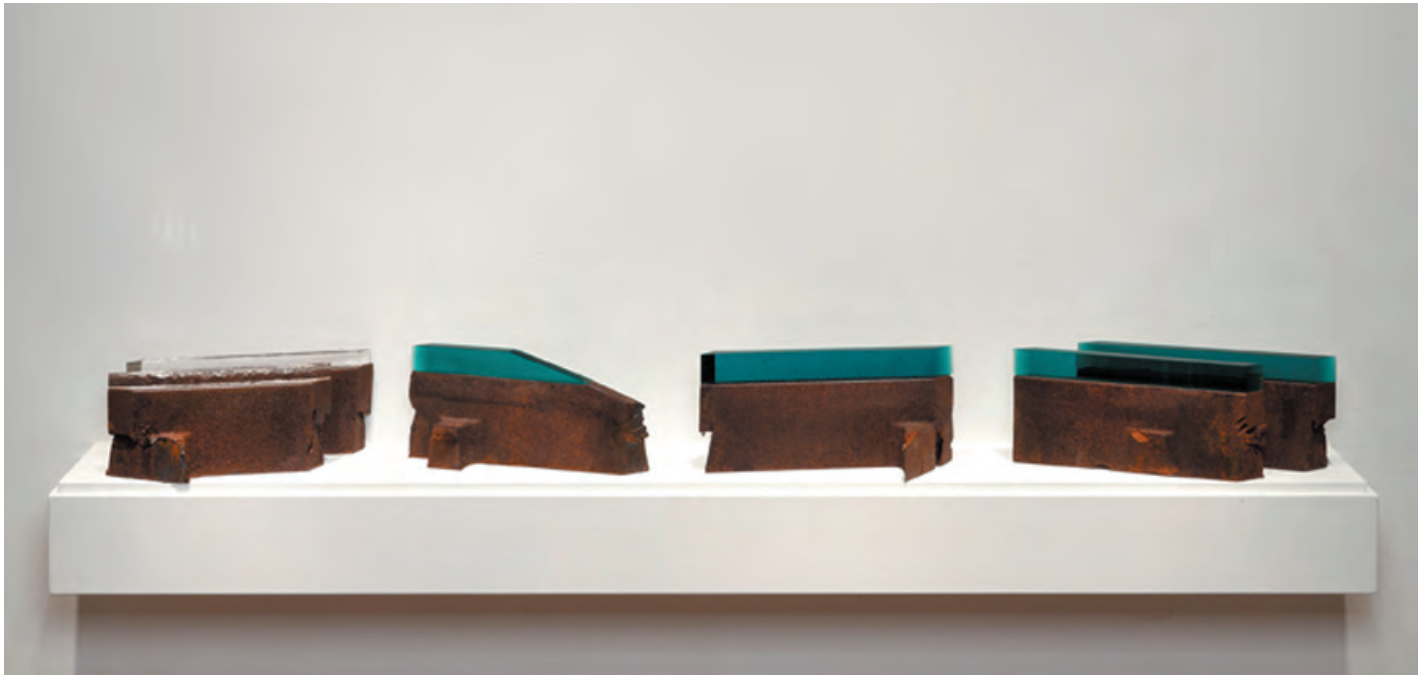
The two large works from the *Totem Series* are each over seven feet in height. *Totem Series (13436)* with its strong contrasts of large dark timber and light cast glass might be a Dogon-like mask worn by a race of giants from Easter Island or a relative of a Cajun tree spirit. Closer inspection, however, reveals that the shape of the large glass cotter pin matches the intaglio shapes cut into the timbers, suggesting that the whole was [also?] conceived as mold and casting.

The word *totem* comes from an Ojibwee word meaning "his kinship group." From this perspective, Koss's totem works seem to have a closer kinship bond to the totem concept as interpreted in the work of numerous twentieth century artists rather

than to the totems of the indigenous people of North America's Pacific Northwest Coast. While the sensitive, delicate crafting of Louisiana sculptor Clyde Connell's work reflects the indigenous spirituality, Koss's totems are more akin to the interpretations of Archipenko, the totemic character of Smith's sculpture, Nam June Paik's *Internet Dweller*, and the carefully crafted constructions of Monster Roster artist H. C. Westermann

Totem Series: High Honor-William Koss suggests affinities with the rough cut lumber of Minimalist Carl Andre and Robert Arneson's tongue-in-cheek humor. The concentric arcs made by the saw shaping the timber have a textural kinship with the moiré surfaces of *Line Fence*. A workman on a construction site might put his lunch pail or toolbox on top, except for the extreme height (eighty-seven inches). Perhaps a punning play on the pedestal displays in galleries and museums, but, oops!, someone forgot their toolbox! Or is that the art?

The three *Levee Sculptures* are assembled from rescued material, various scrap parts, and found objects that are transformed into art like a folk artist creating little whimsical critters



Gene Koss: *Levee Break*, 2013. Cast glass and steel. Photo courtesy: Michael Smith. Arthur Roger Gallery.

and nonfunctional machines. Inspired by the ingenious devices designed to control water flow or irrigate rice fields, one may not be able to figure out just how Koss's *Levee Sculptures*, and the *Bridge Series* piece would work, and that can be part of the fun. But they certainly look like they have been used, and hard, perhaps recovered from a pile of used machinery dumped alongside the irrigation levees beside the road. The appearance of questionable efficacy does not exclude the possibility that they just might work, like Klee's *Twittering Machine*, Calder's toys, or Nancy Graves' critters. Although Koss sometimes refers to these smaller pieces as maquettes, meaning that they might serve as models for one of his larger works, they serve well as independent pieces.

The *Ridge Road Climb* and *Disc Drawing* series are made using slabs of glass with lines of colored glass threaded through the mass of glass. The uneven surfaces, edges, and contours of these amoebic slabs of transparent glass are memories of the tools used to shape and have a character similar to the gestural strokes of abstract expressionist paintings. The molten streams of color winding through the translucent volumes, casting shadows within the masses through which they twine, are fascinating, like cream undulating through a glass of iced coffee, like strands of DNA rapt in an evolutionary dance.

The interplay between transparency and translucency, reflection and refraction reminds me of one of my favorite paintings, often found in art history survey and appreciation texts, the *Peaches and Jar* fresco from Pompeii with its careful observation of reflected, refracted, and absorbed light as it makes contact with the glass of the jar, the liquid inside, and the stair steps. Moving around *Ridge Road Climb*, viewing it from various angles, provides additional opportunities to enjoy the complexities of the irregular helices of the threads of colored glass and the

shadows they cast. It is fun to imagine a miniature self at the wheel of a tiny sports car following the routes delineated by the undulating serpentine lines. Maybe even with accompanying vrrmmvrrmmmming sounds to make it even more fun!

Childlike, perhaps, but another way of becoming fully engaged with the work, a virtual, literal way of putting oneself into the works. Calder, I suspect, would agree. Anything to subvert tendencies to merely stand in front of each piece as if it were a relief sculpture whose whole truth was revealed from the front. This one dimensional fixation can be expanded to involve every dimensions as one moves around the work, perhaps moving the light source, adding additional sources, illuminating the work from multiple perspectives, perhaps even placing the sculpture on a rotating base like Moholy Nagy's *Light Space Modulator*. The *Disc Drawing* pieces are similar to *Ridge Road Climb*. Numbers 13419 and 13421 rest on large bases rather than pedestals producing the effect that the shadows of the threads and points are cast on the surrounding surfaces like the variegated shadows in Renoir's *Le Moulin de la Galette*.

Completing our tour of Koss's work is a brief look at a subspecies in the *Totem* theme. Made of dark brown glass like *golems* made of clay, one subgroup includes lumpy fetish-like forms like Paleolithic fertility figures or genetic anomalies distantly related to Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds. Another subgroup includes several slender plantlike forms, each just beginning to differentiate itself according to its unique genetic coding, like polyps or hydrozoa of the imagination. Their biomorphic character identifies them as belonging to an order in which one also finds work by another artist who works primarily with glass, Dale Chihuly. It is an important order within the domain of art with only a few extant examples and practitioners. □



Still from Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*.

The Mysteries of Anatolia

BY JOHN MOSIER

ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA
Director: Nuri Bilge Ceylan

ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA, directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, won the grand prize at Cannes in 2011. It unfolds like a documentary, as though we are simply observing a slice of a rather mundane reality. A man has been murdered. The murderer has confessed, but the judicial system requires that a body be produced. So the prosecutor, the local doctor, and the police chief must go with the murderer and his accomplice to where the victim was buried.

The complication is that Kenan, the murderer, can't recall exactly where he and his friend buried Yasar, the murder victim. So the three officials, together with detectives, helpers, and a sergeant from the national police, spend a long and tedious night driving from place to place.

It's dark. We're out in the country, a countryside with bad roads, no lights, and hardly any people. No lights: whole scenes are illuminated by nothing but the headlights from the police jeep. Long shots of the little convoy traveling down some obscure country road emphasize the desolation, the solitude, the bleakness, of this land.

For most westerners, the last time they heard the word

Anatolia was probably in connection with Greek or Roman history: we've been calling Anatolia Turkey since the fourteenth century. Not that the two are exactly synonymous. Technically, Anatolia is the western two thirds of the modern state. Roughly. But the word has a nice resonance on the order of the "land time forgot," and it's a mild shock to see Naci, the local police chief, answering his cell phone.

This routine expedition drags on and on. Kenan's recollections are vague. He can't—or won't—remember, although given the monotonous landscape revealed by the headlights, one has a certain sympathy for him.

Now none of this at first glance suggests a film that only the most diehard cinephile would be able to sit through, since it's a solid two and a half hours, most of it shot in the dark.

Nor does Ceylan's method of story telling—and there are all sorts of stories hinted at as the night progress-es—offer the viewer much help. The film is almost completely bereft of any sort of exposition. *Anatolia* opens with the camera slowly closing in on three men drinking and eating. We can't hear what they're saying, never get close enough to them even to fix their faces in our minds.

In fact, this segment ends with one of them coming outside to feed scraps to a dog.

When the next segment opens, all we see is headlights traveling a winding country road. Two cars and a jeep stop, men



Still from Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*.

get out, and gradually, we piece together their mission: to assist the murderer in finding where he stashed the body.

It's pitch dark. The only illumination comes from the headlights of the cars (mostly the jeep). The police chief, Naci, is hectoring Kenan, while Doctor Cemal and Prosecutor Nusret stand around in the cold windy night.

It is a very frustrating odyssey. Naci gets angrier and angrier at the sullen vagueness of Kenan. Nusret is equally irritated at being up all night waiting for the resolution of a case he was assured was down to a few formalities, and Cemal is simply observing.

He's talking to the chief driver, nicknamed Arab Ali, and the driver assures him that he'll have a story. A story that he can tell he can tell his children. "Once upon a time in Anatolia," you'll say. The only reference to the title, and at that point—we're early in the film—it seems pointless. What story?

But actually, this bit of dialogue is a clue. When Sergio Leone made two films with that phrase in the title (*Once Upon a Time in the West* and *Once Upon a Time in America*) he clearly had it in his mind to tell a story that would typify both settings. West was a riposte to the usual Western, with its stark moral delineations, its notions of the frontier and the importance of the rule of law. America, with its band of Jewish children who grow up to become criminals and do themselves in, was a sort of counterpoint to *The Godfather*.

And although Ceylan is much more subtle about it, the lack of a straightforward exposition of the plot, giving the story out in small pieces, one at a time, is very much in the style of Leone. So is the constant shift between close ups of faces and wide screen shots of the landscape.

None of this should be taken to imply that Ceylan's work

is derivative. In most respects he's about as far removed from Leone as a filmmaker can get and still be using a camera. Rather it's a hint, a helpful signpost that reminds us to pay attention, that there's a story here, if we'll just be patient and watch and listen. It's also a hint that the true subject is Anatolia. Anatolia rather than the idea that comes into our mind when we hear the word Turkey.

So, instead of a simple resolution, what we get is a series of mysteries, each one revealed through stray re-marks and facial expressions. By the time the night is over, we know these four men in a way that we hardly ever know anyone.

Visually, this is one of those films that mesmerizes you: the bleak landscape revealed in the headlights, the wretched desolation and poverty, the alien customs and concerns. It's difficult to turn away, despite—or perhaps because—nothing's happening.

But the more we learn about these men, the more we realize that we share a commonality. Naci wants justice, Nusret insists on following procedures. You can't beat up prisoners to make them confess he lectures Naci, even though he understands the temptation.

But the slow revelations into each man's life establish not only their basic humanity, their complexity, but also the fundamental mysteries of their lives before we see them on this expedition.

Take Kenan, for instance. Is his behavior that of a sociopath or a martyr? Why did he kill Yasr? Eventually we learn why it was that Kenan killed Yasr, just as Kenan is eventually able to recollect where he buried him. But even there we are confronted with unsolved puzzles. Is Yasr's son really his? What was the relationship between Kenan and Yasar's wife? Why does Kenan burst out at his confederate, telling him to shut up?

Towards the end of the film, when, finally (!!) it is daylight, and Kenan is being transferred to the police station, there's



Still from Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*.

an angry mob that has to be held back. One of them, a boy, throws a rock that hits Kenan. We infer that this boy is Yasar's son, although he may be Kenan's, that the woman staring daggers at Kenan is Yasar's wife (she is, in fact). So why, then, does Kenan start crying?

Again, there are hints, but there's never any resolution. We're left to piece the motivation for the crime together on our own.

Then there are even deeper secrets. Did Nusret's one night stand really drive his pregnant wife to kill her-self? What sort of strange illness is it that makes Naci's son so dependent on medication? Was Yasar still alive when he was buried? What will be the ultimate fate of the graceful and attractive young woman, Mukhtar's daughter, whose beauty so rivets all the men when she waits on them?

We infer that the photographs Cemal stares at in his rooms the next day are those of his ex-wife, but we're never told why they divorced. For that matter, we're never told that the pictures are of his wife.

In a story that unfolds mostly through elliptical hints, much depends on the actors. These are not exactly household names, even in Turkey, but each one brings a presence to the role. Taken together, they certainly seem to typify the complex reality of Anatolia. They're human beings first and types second, but in reflecting on the film, it is difficult to escape the notion that they resonate with a national reality, that when we follow them through their odyssey, we come face to face with Anatolia, that is to say, the real Turkey as opposed to the fiction most of us accepts as reality.

Yilmaz Erdogan, who plays Naci, is what we might call a representative of the old school. As his frustration, his anger, mounts, he has to be physically restrained from attacking Kenan. But his violence comes from a certain fundamental moral rectitude. He's confronted with a brutal murder that has neither rhyme nor reason, and with a murderer who is either passive aggressive or crazed or devoid of humanity. Naci is a simple man struggling with forces he can't understand.

And Kenan (Firat Tanis) really does appear at first to be crazed, some kind of psychopath. It's only slowly, in dribs and drabs, that we understand his motivation, and see what appears to be genuine remorse.

Or is it? Another mystery.

Still, to most Westerners, Naci comes across as a sort of national stereotype, one reinforced by his stocky figure, his use of his fists.

Taner Birsell (Prosecutor Nusret) is brashly confident, contemptuous of Naci. He's well dressed and well groomed, very much the lawyer from the big city who's forced to waste his precious time on a wild goose chase conducted by country bumpkins. His slow physical deterioration as the night comes to an end is accompanied by his emotional disintegration as well.

A chance remark by the doctor destroys his comfortable suspension between the rational, scientific, west, and the magical, fatalistic east. His descent is painful to watch, no less so for being ultimately ambiguous at every level.

But all this is in the background until the very end of the film. Daylight brings with it truths, although these are still obscured.



Still from Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*.

If Nusret represents the brash and self confident face of the emerging elite, Cemal (Muhammet Uzuner) is another familiar type. He's the thoroughly alienated intellectual, adrift in both worlds, aloof and abstracted, the perennial observer. But then he's buried himself in this isolated little town, which suggests a certain idealistic impulse to help people, and may even be the reason he's no longer married.

Or perhaps he's simply depressed at his life, and what he sees unfolding around him. That's one of the strengths of the film, that these men don't become simple types, but emerge as genuinely complex people, so that the viewer is never really sure of the story that lies behind each man's life.

Goodness knows the film reveals a mass of contradictions. Naci has a cell phone, but at one point the decrepit sedan he's in has to be jump started by pushing. When the corpse of Yasar is finally exhumed, Nusret is basically doing the official report right on the spot. So the officials are all standing around the site, while he dictates to a man who's taking down his words on a laptop.

And when they start to carry the body to the morgue, the liquid petroleum gas tanks in the trunk take up so much space they have to cram the corpse into it (the cars have been modified to run on LPG rather than gasoline, a common dodge in rural areas). In the morgue, Sakr (Kubilay Tunçer), who actually performs the autopsy while Cemal observes and dictates, is indignant over the primitive equipment he has. He's been to another hospital, he explains, and they have modern equipment, not like the junk he's forced to use.

Cemal listens to this with the same weariness he's had all night. He knows. He knows nothing can be done, that this is his life.

Once Upon A Time in Anatolia is mesmerizing. It sucks you in, in a way that is reminiscent of Tarkovsky, although Ceylan is actually a much more interesting director. Ultimately Tarkovsky's mysteries degenerate into a cliché, as in, say *Stalker*. The end result is a bit of shaggy dog story.

By contrast, the hints and the puzzles are never explicitly resolved. As the film draws near its end, we surmise that at least now we know what motivated Kenan to kill Yasar. But just at the point that we are congratulating ourselves on having solved what appears to be the central mystery of the story, we are hit with another one.

Look at this, Sakr says to Doctor Cemal. Do you think he was buried alive?

Cemal changes the subject, does so in such a way that we can't tell where he disagrees, or whether it's just not worth going into.

What Ceylan succeeds in doing is investing every shot with a solemn sense of importance, of mysteries half revealed, so that when we observe Cemal watching Mukhtar's beautiful younger daughter, Cemile (Cansu Demirci), we sense not only how attractive she is—we've already seen her effect on the other men—but we see into Cemal's head, understand his thoughts, his regrets, his broken dreams and painful memories.

Absorbing, mysterious, and devil's own text to write about. One of the best films of recent years. □



Kate Blacklock at Arthur Roger.

Calendar

COMPILED BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

A GALLERY FOR FINE PHOTOGRAPHY – 241 Chartres St. 568-1313. www.agallery.com - Beyond Thought: **Joséphine Sacabo**, through December 1

ACADEMY GALLERY– 5256 Magazine Street. 899-8111. <http://noafa.com/> Annual Miniature Exhibition, through December 6

ARIODANTE GALLERY– 535 Julia St., 524-3233. www.ariodantegallery.com - **Myra William-Wirtz** (painting), **Sandra Maher** (ceramics), **Chester Allen** (jewelry), **Matthew Greig** (sculptures/tables), **Timothy Maher** (paintings); **Louise Guidry** (painting), **Peg Martinez** (woodwork), **Peggy Logan** (jewelry), **Trent Marek** (furniture), **Rhonda Corley** (painting), December 7-31.

ARTHUR ROGER GALLERY – 432 Julia St. 522-1999. [www.ar-](http://www.arthurrogergallery.com)

thurrogergallery.com - New Orleans from Above: **John Hartman** (painting), Cultivar: **Courtney Ega** (video and sculpture), Water: **Edward Burtynsky** (photography), through November 23; Still Life/Nightscape: **Katherine Blacklock** (digital), **David Halliday** (photography), Chromaccumulations: **Pard Morrison** (painting/sculpture), December 7-28; **Holton Rower** (painting), **James Drake** (multimedia), January 4 – February 15, 2014

BARRISTER'S GALLERY – 2331 St. Claude Ave. 525-2767. www.barristersgallery.com - Heads of State: **Von Hoffacker** (painting), through December 8; **Tim Best**, **Dennis Couvillon**, and **Euphus Ruth** (photography), Pop Up Exhibit: **Artemis Antippas** (photography), December 14, 2013 – January 4, 2014.

BOYD SATELLITE – 440 Julia St. 899-4218. www.boydsatellite-gallery.com - **Vito Giallo** (recent works), January 4-29.



Will Ryman's *America* (detail) at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

BRUNNER GALLERY— 215 N. Columbia St. Covington, 985-893-0444. www.brunnergallery.com - New Sculpture and Furniture Designs: **Rick Brunner**, Gallery Artists Group Show, ongoing.

CALLAN CONTEMPORARY — 518 Julia St., New Orleans, 525-0518. www.callancontemporary.com - We Thought We Were Drowning But It Was Only Love: **Margaret Evangeline** (painting), through December 30

CAROL ROBINSON GALLERY — 840 Napoleon Ave. at Magazine. 895-6130. www.carolrobinsongallery.com - New Work: **David Goodman** (wood) and **John Oles** (ceramics), November 2-27; Virtual Exhibition, ongoing

COLE PRATT GALLERY — 3800 Magazine St. 891-6789. www.coleprattgallery.com - Modern Life: **Mac Ball** (painting), through

November 30; Liaisons: **Wallace Merritt** (photography), November 30 – December 30

COLLINS DIBOLL ART GALLERY — Loyola University. 861-5456. <http://www.loyno.edu/dibollgallery/> - Horizon: Guild of Bookworkers Traveling Exhibition (paper), through January 23, 2014

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER — 900 Camp St. 210-0224. www.cacno.org - The Great Picture: The World's Largest Photograph: The Legacy Project Collaborative (photography), through December 15; Water: **Edward Burtynsky** (photography), Visual Artists Network 2013 Annual Meeting Exhibition (mixed media), through January 19, 2014; Submerge: **Lee Deigaard** (installation), Walking, Sometimes Standing Still: **Brendan Connelly** (video), The Delta Demitasse: **Sarah Quintana** (film), through February 2, 2014; Unfolding Images: Juried Exhibition for PhotoNOLA



Tina Freeman at the Octavia Art Gallery.

(photography), December 2-30; 30 Americans: **Nina Chanel Abney, John Bankston, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Mark Bradford, Iona Rozeal Brown, Nick Cave, Barkley L. Hendricks, Rashid Johnson, Glenn Ligon, Kalup Linzy, Kerry James Marshall, Rodney McMillian, Lona Simpson, Shinique Smith, Jeff Sonhouse, Henry Taylor, Hank Willis Thomas & Mickalene Thomas** (mixed media), February 8 – June 15, 2014.

d.o.c.s. gallery – 709 Camp St. 524-3936. www.docsgallery.com - Burned Again: **Adam Farrington** (sculpture), through December 5; Solo Exhibition: **Allen Wynn** (sculpture), December 7, 2013 – January 30, 2014

HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION – 533 Royal St. 523-4662. www.hnoc.org - Civil War Battlefields and National Parks: **A.J. Meek** (photography), through April 5, 2014; Occupy New Orleans! Voices from the Civil War, through March 9, 2014

ISAAC DELGADO FINE ARTS GALLERY – 615 City Park Ave. 361-6620. Fettle and Tender: Alumni Invitational, through December 5

JEAN BRAGG GALLERY OF SOUTHERN ART – 600 Julia

Street. 895-7375. www.jeanbragg.com - One More For the Road: **Ann Strub** (painting), through November; Louisiana Waterways: **Daven A. Anderson, Terry Kenney, Don Reggio, and Carol Scott** (painting), opens December 7

JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY – 400a Julia St. 522-5471. www.jonathanferraragallery.com - The Almighty Dollar: **Dan Tague** (print), Cut: **Nikki Rosato** (installation), through November 30; circa: now: Generic Art Solutions (print), Fallen Animals: **Marcus Kenney** (photography), December 1 – December 31

LeMIEUX GALLERIES – 332 Julia St. 522-5988. www.lemieux-galleries.com - Nondescript Landscapes: **Elizabeth Chen** (installation), through November 30; Spiritus Sanctus: **Mary Lee Eggart** (painting), November 23 – December 28

NEWCOMB ART GALLERY – Tulane University. 865-5328. www.newcombartgallery.tulane.edu - Women, Art, & Social Change: The Newcomb Pottery Enterprise, through March 9, 2014

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART – City Park. 606-4712. www.noma.org - The Making of an Argument: **Gordon Parks** (photography), In Motion: **Lin Emery** (kinetic sculpture), through



Gina Phillips at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

January 12, 2014; Photography at NOMA, Water: **Edward Burtynsky** (photography), through January 19; Cities of Ys: **Camille Henrot** (installation), Woven Histories: Houma Basketry (fiber), through March 2, 2014; Chinese Jades from the Collection of Marianne and Idore Cohn Jr., through February 23, 2014.

OCTAVIA ART GALLERY – 454 Julia St. 309-4249. www.octaviaartgallery.com – **Tina Freeman**: “Artist Spaces: Close to Home” (photographs); **E2 (Elizabeth Kleinveld, Epaul Julien)**: “The Art of Empathy” (photographs), both through December 28.

OGDEN MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN ART – 925 Camp St. 539-9600. www.ogdenmuseum.org - A Sense of Place: Ten Years of Art from the Ogden Collection, Art of the Cup, ongoing; Scrapbook of a Fringe Dweller: **Jim White** (photography), through December 8; The Mythology of Florida: **Joseph Janney Steinmetz, Warren Thompson, Walker Evans, Michael Carlebach, Todd Bertolaet, Tom Wik, Lisa Kereszi, Lisa Elmaleh**, and others (photography), The Underwater Mermaid Theater: **Annie Collinge** (photography), Into the Light: Photographs from the Permanent Collection, Selections from the Permanent Collections: **Will Henry Stevens**, through January 5, 2014; I Was Trying Hard to Think About Sweet Things: **Gina Phillips** (fiber installation), through January 27, 2014

SOREN CHRISTENSEN GALLERY – 400 Julia St. 569-9501. www.sorenchristensen.com - Selected Works from the Roster: Group Show (mixed media), through November; The In-Between: **Brooke Shaden** (photography), Witness: **Gretchen Weller Howard** (painting), December

STELLA JONES GALLERY – Place St. Charles, 201 St. Charles Ave. 568-9050. stellajonesgallery.com – Trailblazers: 20th Century Works on Paper: Radical Art by Black Artists, through November 30

STEVE MARTIN GALLERY– 624 Julia St. 566-1390. <http://www.stevemartinfineart.com> - **Steve Martin** and Emerging Artists, ongoing

UNO ST. CLAUDE GALLERY - 2429 St. Claude Ave. 280-6410. Objects In Mirrors: **Bill Finger, Chris Jordan, Akihiko Miyoshi, Susana Reisman**, curated by **Ariya Martin** (photography), through December 15; Chubby Crimson Bottoms: **Peter Hoffman** (painting), Keep It Up: **Vanessa Centeno** (installation and painting), Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibitions, January 12 – February 2, 2014





PHOTOGRAPHY AT NOMA

**Selections from the
Permanent Collection**

Through January 19, 2014

www.noma.org

NOMA
New Orleans Museum of Art

IMAGE Ilse Bing, *New York, The Elevated and Me*, 1936, (detail) gelatin silver print,
Museum purchase through the National Endowment for the Arts Matching Grant, 81.49

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