

N·O·A·R

THE NEW ORLEANS ART REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF ANALYSIS

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2010



*Leslie Dill - Walker Evans - Noël Rockmore
Ed Ruscha - Keith Sonnier - Thomas Woodruff*

MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT



MIGNON FAGET

HERIARD-CIMINO GALLERY
HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

N·O·A·R

THE NEW ORLEANS ART REVIEW

VOL. XXIX NOS. 1-2

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THE NEW ORLEANS ART REVIEW is published bi-monthly during the art season (October, December, February, April, June) by the New Orleans Art Review, Inc., P.O. Box 51181, New Orleans, LA 70151, a non-profit organization funded in part by grants from the Louisiana State Arts Council and the Louisiana Division of the Arts, as administered by the Arts Council of New Orleans, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment of the Arts. Subscriptions: fifty dollars for five bi-monthly numbers. (noareview@netzero.com) Advisory Board: E. John Bullard (New Orleans Museum of Art), Mrs. Thomas Bernard, Mrs. M. M. Calás (Dubuisson Foundation), Mrs. James Coleman Sr., Mrs. Haydee LaFaye Ellis, William Fagaly (New Orleans Museum of Art), Mrs. Sandra Freeman, Mrs. Eugenie Jones Huger, Mr. Keith Marshall (Madewood Foundation), Mrs. Françoise Richardson, Mrs. Louise Reiss Rogas, Timothy Slater, Eugenie D. Vasser, Mrs. John Weinstock, W. Thomas Young. Editorial Board: Stephen R Bachmann, Marilyn Brown, Terrington de Martain Calás, Calvin Harlan, J. Towne Peabody. Editor-in-Chief: J. Towne Peabody. Managing Editor: Terrington Calás. Associate Editor: Stephen Bachmann. Contributing Editors: Thomasine Bartlett, Dale Betancourt, Judith Bonner, Marilyn Brown, Simeon Hunter, John H. Lawrence, Carol Leake, Leah Levkowitz, Peggy McDowell, Marian McLellan, John Mosier, Natalie Rinehart, Kathy Rodriguez, Karl Volkmar. Original Graphic Design: T.M. Calás, Greg Leonard. Graphic Artists: Natalie Rinehart, Chris Lewis. Graphic Assistant: Michael Curry. All opinions printed herein are the opinions of the authors and do not reflect those of the New Orleans Art Review, Inc. or its board members. Communications can only be returned if accompanied by a SASE.



Noel Rockmore: *The Sorcerer*, 1967. O/C, collage, 64" high. Courtesy NOMA.

Touring

TERRINGTON CALAS

SWAMP TOURS:
Exploring the Louisiana Contemporary Collection
New Orleans Museum of Art
New Orleans, LA

EVERY SUMMER, for many years, a group of locals, all afflicted with Art Passion, visit the New Orleans Museum of Art, tourist-like, to seek out – and skirmish about – personal favorites in the permanent collection. The object: to register our changing tastes, to re-examine previously disregarded works, to re-savor enduring gems. Summer is ideal for this. The crowds are thinner. The pressure of grand or ambitious exhibitions is off. And, not insignificant, NOMA's galleries are a cool alternative to *al fresco* New Orleans on a July afternoon.

Usually we find the project most interesting in the modern and contemporary galleries where displays frequently change. This year, the museum unwittingly stage-managed our activities

for us. Curators William Fagaly and Miranda Lash mounted the irresistible *Swamp Tours*, an exhibition of “rarely seen works by notable Louisiana artists.” Lash promised “unexpected works” even from the most famous names. The ultimate benefit, as Fagaly noted, would be “an expanded understanding” of the 22 selected artists. This meant, in certain instances, an opportunity to see a richness of sensibility that may have seemed dubious before. Or, perhaps, an unforeseen profundity might emerge. Or merely some courageous, if errant, artistic maneuver.

The immediate surprises were pieces by a couple of legendary names: Noel Rockmore and Clementine Hunter, both relative outsiders. Rockmore has long been on my short list of New Orleans greats, and, admittedly, his notorious bohemian life contributes to his appeal. But his work was and is singular. Even when he was producing his well-known neo-romantic portraits, you felt this was far removed from traditional realist painting. (This was made clear a few years ago in a NOMA retrospective.) Some observers have called the portraits technically uneven



Clementine Hunter: *Chevron Quilt*, c. 1951. Cotton, wool, 73" high.

– zones of painterly virtuosity coupled with throw-away, inchoate passages. This, it would seem, is a sign of a long career in the throes of aesthetic conflict and, arguably, of brilliant and deliberate transition. Those virtuosic zones, mostly scrutinized faces, are as affecting as Théodore Géricault's studies of the mentally ill. And, in fact, they are darker and more penetrating. Rockmore was, at heart, a psychological figurative painter. (One might recall the grave portrayal of jazz historian Bill Russell and the numbing, merciless likeness of Rockmore's own father, aged and nude.) The recurring inchoateness suggests an uneasy rebellion against a tradition he was at pains to abandon.

His best resolution was in a work such as *The Sorcerer* (1967) in "Swamp Tours." Here, his engagement with the figure – personality, attitude, character – is undiminished. The canvas is

a depiction of rapt, costumed, enigmatic diners, rendered partly with Rockmore's customary somber chiaroscuro, but set in a high modernist arena of flattened form, decorative color, and mesmerizing juxtapositions. There are Matissean cut-outs, the tilted planes of cubist space, the floating biomorphic forms of surrealism. The effect is that of a hallucination somehow structured and balanced – but still, unquestionably, a hallucination. One has the sense of an artist clinging to timeless content, all the while manipulating the imperatives of classic, form-obsessed high modernism. It is remarkable how natural this amalgam seems. Remarkable, too, that Rockmore created it years before postmodernism.

THERE WERE THREE Clementine Hunters in the show. But her *Chevron Quilt* (c. 1951) is something apart. It is a six-foot



Charles Blank: *Cybernaut Theatre*, 2001. Acrylic, M/M on canvas.

high, startlingly sumptuous object, fundamentally dissimilar from the folksy delight of her better-know paintings. The piece is about pictorial intelligence: an absolute mastery of pattern – the sort of unanticipated pattern that would please late-1960s Frank Stella. It is also about a wonderful facility for subtle chromatic shifts – dusty pinks rhyming with pale grey-blues, red/blue blends that read as maroon in one instance and then as wine in another.

Usually, with a measure of arrogance, we think of artists like Hunter as naifs or innocent bricoleurs. We tend to value them for their charm – a sure sign of condescension. This is like declaring the limitations of the art, as if we expected more. As if we expected some instinctual, untutored grasp of philosophy. That is hardly the province of naïve art. (For that, look to a different kind of “outsider.” Like Rockmore, certainly. Another would be the peerless Roy Ferdinand.)

Far from naïve, Hunter’s *Chevron Quilt* proves the folly of any condescension. It re-alerts us to the force of natural gifts in great self-taught artists – and to their delectable, unwitting defiance of “high art” paradigms. The quilt’s design, set generally in a grid – boxed chevrons, a pattern of a pattern – feels unprecedented. The effect, initially, is formality amplified. But then,

it is homespun – conspicuously. Perhaps it discloses the kind of brain this lady had. We see an apparent pursuit of order and decorum (something also present, in a different way, in her painting). But the pursuit is compromised. This is not the apollonian order of geometric abstract painting, despite the similarities. Here, function and materials are permitted almost to dominate. The quilt had a purpose. We quickly sense it. And its cloth falls and moves, rather formlessly, defying the notion of the perfect rectangle. Defying the rectangle, that symbol of Western culture since the Greeks. Hunter’s rectangle is a rectangle for real life. Despite the quilt’s undeniable beauty, its dignity resides in its authenticity.

Other notable selections in “Swamp Tours”:

Charles Blank: *Cybernaut Theatre* (2001).

It is unfortunate that we see Blank’s work so seldom. There is a searing, whelming gravity in most of what he does – something that might redeem an art scene plagued with more than enough dunderhead symbolism and outright fatuity. Blank’s strength is probably his idiosyncratic style, one of the few examples of cartoon-like imagery that seems anything but child-



Robert Gordy: *Study for Women and Boxes*, n.d. O/C, 26" high.

ish. In *Cybernaut Theatre*, his preternatural “battle of the giants” somehow evokes Giotto – sturdy, intense, and monumental figures in the midst of a world-changing moment.

George Dureau: *Sailing on the Lit de Repos* (1969).

One of Dureau’s finest paintings – and something of a milestone in his oeuvre. It looks better now than ever. Its power is multi-layered: that famous signature line and subtle modeling of form are at their best; with umbered tones, he all but declares his mastery of chromatic restraint; and, above all, by means of a shrewd surrealist maneuver, he conveys what may be the most poignant subjective assertion in New Orleans art. A good number of our neo-surrealists could learn something here.

Robert Gordy: *Study for Women and Boxes*.

Gordy’s expressionist works from the 1980s were forceful, unambiguous, imbued with torment. His classic 1970s paintings,

on the other hand, were symbolist poetry on canvas. “Swamp Tours” offered two of these: the magnificent *La Toilette (Dark Version)* and this smaller piece. It presents the nude female figure as an emblem of generalized fear. It is also a depiction of containment. Typical of this phase, Gordy utilized art deco elegance to manipulate emotion and narrative. He layered meaning with just enough chic to enrich it. The consequence is a dream-like lyricism that feels peculiarly welcome now.

Jim Richard: *In the Parish: Sculpture Encounter IV* (1988).

This is an instance of re-savoring an old favorite. The canvas is a reminder of Richard’s long and indefatigable analysis of effective pictorial structure. This series in the 1980s was probably his gentlest, his most understated – so many close harmonies, so many thoroughly invented hues. Works like *In the Parish* are the sensuous Francophile progeny of his early garden-scapes.

□



Thomas Woodruff: *Grim Weeper/Sweeper*. From "Freak Parade," Contemporary Arts Center.

Parade

BY KARL F. VOLKMAR

THOMAS WOODRUFF
 "Freak Parade"
 Contemporary Arts Center
 New Orleans, LA

THOMAS WOODRUFF'S "Freak Parade" is the most delightful menagerie of the inane, insane, zany, loveable, huggable, and the just plain weird from the worlds on the nether side of Odd. From Bambi-Lynn (or is that limbs?) strutting her stuff to the *Stunning Conclusion* (of what?) and the *Grim Reaper/Sweeper's* tidying up, Woodruff's often hilariously sinister denizens from the not so dark regions of the collective unconsciousness are as intensely engaged as they are delightfully engaging, each self-absorbed in her/his/its own little world like characters in rolling enactments of some fantastic, hitherto unknown, and previously unpublished medieval mystery play.

The *Sweeper* wears a be-sequined, beaded as if squeezed from a pastry tube, sheath of a costume decorated with bright pink bows and bedraggled streaming ribbons. Standing like the

avenging archangel in Van Eyck's *Last Judgment* and wielding a long-handled broom qua rose-bladed grim reaper's scythe, the grim reaper/sweeper sweeps together the fallen blossoms and fronds left over from last night's party (isn't that what grim reapers and last judgment archangels do?) like the cleaners following a circus parade or the clean up crews that follow the Mardi Gras krewes as they begin their work at the stroke of midnight when, instantaneously, Mardi Gras ends and Ash Wednesday begins.

The black ground that confines attention to the narrow slice of space in the fore has a rich and multifaceted pedigree: the dark grounds of late medieval and Renaissance paintings (Van Eyck, Cranach, Holbein portraits), their survival in colonial American limners (The Freaque Master), quietist Spanish still lives (Cotan) and saints (Zurburan), and the tenebrosos of Caravaggio and Gentileschi. Streams of smoke-like substance solidify into multiple typographies to scribe texts suspended in space like late medieval frescoes and newspaper comic strips.

Wittily absurd words and phrases -- "*The grim reaper/sweeper... (aka the Jack the Ripper/ Swiffer) sez Gone Home... Done...P.F.F.F.T!...fin* -- written with the eloquence of a sideshow



Thomas Woodruff: *Bambi-Lynn*. From "Freak Parade," Contemporary Arts Center.

barker beckon one to enter into an otherwise impossible world where lobster women and alligator men might live comfortably with grim reapers/sweepers. Letters, words, and phrases combine in sentences strewn along undulating ribbons and written on medallions floating miraculously in mid air like in ancient manuscript illuminations and tempera panels. The grim reaper/sweeper sports an odd and ill-matched pair of black high-top work boots and wears a coat with a tail so substantial that it just might hide an appendage like a gigantic mud-dauber stinger, lizard tail, or fantastic ovipositer.

The artist's aesir of imaginative beings could just as believably be characters visiting from the set of Fellini's Satyri-

con as from a planet in another galaxy, engaged in delightfully absurd, and perhaps disconcerting for some, behaviors. Punning allusions of form and text might challenge the patience of the overly serious observer in this adult parody of Looney Tunes. Florid arabesques, elongated serpentine curves, densely compacted and precisely delineated details, and absurd juxtapositions and circumstances infuse each character with an intrinsic and unique *élan vital* that suggests a spiritual kinship with Schongauer's demons and Bosch's fantasmagorical earthly delights.

Humorous tweaks transform what might otherwise be frightening and macabre into the amusing by virtue of the artist's



Thomas Woodruff: *Siamese Twins in Sheep's Clothing*. From "Freak Parade," Contemporary Arts Center.

sympathies for the natural that can only come from careful study of organic form. (Redon would be impressed!) Whether carefully and uniquely rendered letters composing each text or ribbons that flutter like epiphytes ornamenting the trees in a Costa Rican rain forest, each and every detail of each and every object and effect appears as if animated by its own vital energy. The credibility of Woodruff's characters is a tribute to the inventiveness of the artist, his ability to endow and infuse his creations with a sense of being independent life forms, projecting onto as if into every form a self-conscious sensibility such that one struggles

to remember that "Freak Parade" is mere artifice (It is, isn't it?).

In another work, multi-breasted *Bambi-Lynn* struts her stuff like a drum majorette during half-time at a Friday night football game, one of the modern (?) world's incarnations of male lust disguised as wholesome entertainment and descended from ancient fertility goddesses. *Bambi-Lynn's* multi-breasted torso echoes that of charity. Her eyelids are closed as if in some sacred ritual trance or erotic ecstasy a la Santa Teresa.

Bambi-Lynn wears a tall drum majorette's hat decorated with a large carrot. Fringy, frilly carrot tops swirl in response to

the twisting motions of her voluptuous body as she twirls her tree branch baton with both ends flaming brightly in the darkness. A giant moth flutters dangerously close to the flames, a traditional reference to the dangers of yielding to temptations of the flesh.

Whirling around her in sympathetic dance, a long dialog ribbon reads "*Bambi-Lynni has everything! Looks! Brains! And a breezy sense of style! . . .*" printed in elegant calligraphic letters. Bland platitudes of a beauty contestant praise her wholesomeness: "*She'd love to settle down one day to raise a family . . . Her platform is to raise awareness on the issues of equality, world peace, and global cruelty.*" Pudgy legs, thin arms, freckled flesh, and long flowing red hair complement the stereotype.

The *Woodpecker's Epitaph* greets one with the words "*When I am dead and buried and my putrid bones are rotten you'll read this and remember me, so that I am not 4 got 10.*" A large birch stump rises from a mass of mops. Roots straggle around the edges. Misplaced carrots lie here and there among the stubby roots. Bits of moss and grass and weeds are scattered there and here. Thin bark peeling back, curling into scrolls, surrounds the epitaph inscribed into wood. Five woodpeckers rest on branches, bark, and stump-end. A candle burns brightly. The flowing molten wax mimics roots below and branches around.

Like the minute renderings of a fifteenth century northern European painting with its precisely defined details or the primeval forests of the Barbizon, it is as if every detail is animated by its own consciousness, aware of itself, alive and interacting with every other detail, forming a symbiotic unity by virtue of the willful cooperation of a multitude of wills, like a hive swarming with thousands of thriving individual bees that, collectively, form a dynamic whole like an Arcimboldo portrait head. Woodruff's imaginative agglomerations, birthed in the same womb as the Addams Family characters, remind of an ancient vitalistic world where the infinitesimally small is the foundation of the whole.

The name of the quietly zany piece *Root-Hare Float* is a homo-nymal/-eidetic pun on root beer float. Six of the strangest rabbits, i.e., root-hares, one has ever seen extend their long sinuous necks upwards and outwards to reach carrots dangling just beyond reach from a strangely red tree with wood the color of mazanita shrubs. "*How do you make a root-hare float? (I don't know, Alaska) Animalia Chordata Vertebrata Mammalia Eutheria Lagoramorpha Leporidae Oryctologus Cuniculus Cygnus (thus explaining the long necks?).*" In silent darkness like a seventeenth century still life, the *Root-Hare Float* glides slowly on its top-hat-plus-table-top-on-wheels float.

In *Sires of Atlas*, giant moths hold intricately interwoven strings attached to balloons tied into animal-like forms like the assembled characters created by clowns at a Chuck E Cheese children's birthday party. The text reminds of the ever-omni-presence of death, a memento morii, emblem of Thanatos, inspired, or in the spirit of, medieval emblemata.

Please Clear a Simple Path, the title phrase, written, appliquéd, embroidered, and drawn, is framed by large purple bows like the first place winners at a county fair. intrigues on several counts. A great lampshade (or is it a backpacker's shower?) hangs from a branch, as gnarly as high desert junipers, held aloft by a purple hand. Inside, a barely visible character with feathered antennae tipped by anemone bursts of light stands on an odd four-toed foot decorated with pearl ankle bracelet paired with an even odder foot

looking more like a carrot cross-bred with a mandrake root. A tantalizing bit of transparent lace like the long train of a bridal gown and veil rests upon the ground. A bit of speckled tail raises its tip as if to converse with the approaching forms. The more one looks the more one discovers the inventiveness of the artist in creating his magical world. Intruding from all directions, candles, carrots, and flowers thrust in like an all-out missile attack or curious crowd of phallic voyeurs awaiting the revealing final moment of a striptease show.

In *Siamese Twins in Sheep's Clothing*, shaped text composed of run-on words combines with arbitrary spacing offers, in an elegant sentence worthy of a Faulkner, a semantic/syntactic analogue to the unexpected juxtapositions and non-hierarchically detailed image: "*New for Spring! Sparklin' Fleece! The Ultimate In eye-poppin' statements for The conjoined Lupine to Ovine Transvestism Enthusiast Whisperingnothingso neofakinditemsfortwoo ntheaisledudesuntame dproverbiallyclassic flatteringlinesjuscounthemgoesfrom daytoeveningbyclev erylaccessorizin gletyourimagin ationgowild? Bahbah Good Bye*" In responding to these Dadaistic non-sensical and quixotic allusions, one is readied for its encounter with the unexpected. With minds attuned to multiple meanings, aware of multiple allusions to transvestitism and trans-sexuality and whatever else one might imagine being or becoming, *Siamese Twins in Sheep's Clothing* draws one into a labor of fascinating discovery of minute details, the deciphering of the written text, and an obsessive fascination with minutia that mirrors that of the mentally unique, and as interesting as anything that takes place in the downriver end of Bourbon Street on Mardi Gras day. Search as one may for certainty in explanatory prose, the text provides only the vaguest hints for one's interpretation of what in the world is the story behind the two bodied as one dog with equivocal expression on its faces, and wrapped in sleepy sheep's coat as if it were a satiated and satisfied lover lying atop.

In these several, and all the other works, the characters in Woodruff's "Freak Parade" are delightful (I keep repeating that word!). The artist's whimsical inventions, arising from an imagination where the odd and unusual defines the norm happily invite/demand that the viewer let go of her inhibitions, allow the enchantment of *Siamese Twins in Sheep's Clothing* to take over one's mind, and accept, on its own terms, and enjoy, the irrational irrationality of *Root-Hare Float*. With the artist's self-proclaimed liberation from the inhibitions of critical theorizing that can bind art to the shackles of intellect, "Freak Parade" offers, a sympathetic, obverse parody of *Freaks*, a positive affirmation of life in all forms. □



Leslie Dill: "Heaven Heaven Heaven / Hell Hell Hell" gallery installation, Arthur Roger Gallery.

Texting: Dill, Sardi, & Sonnier

BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

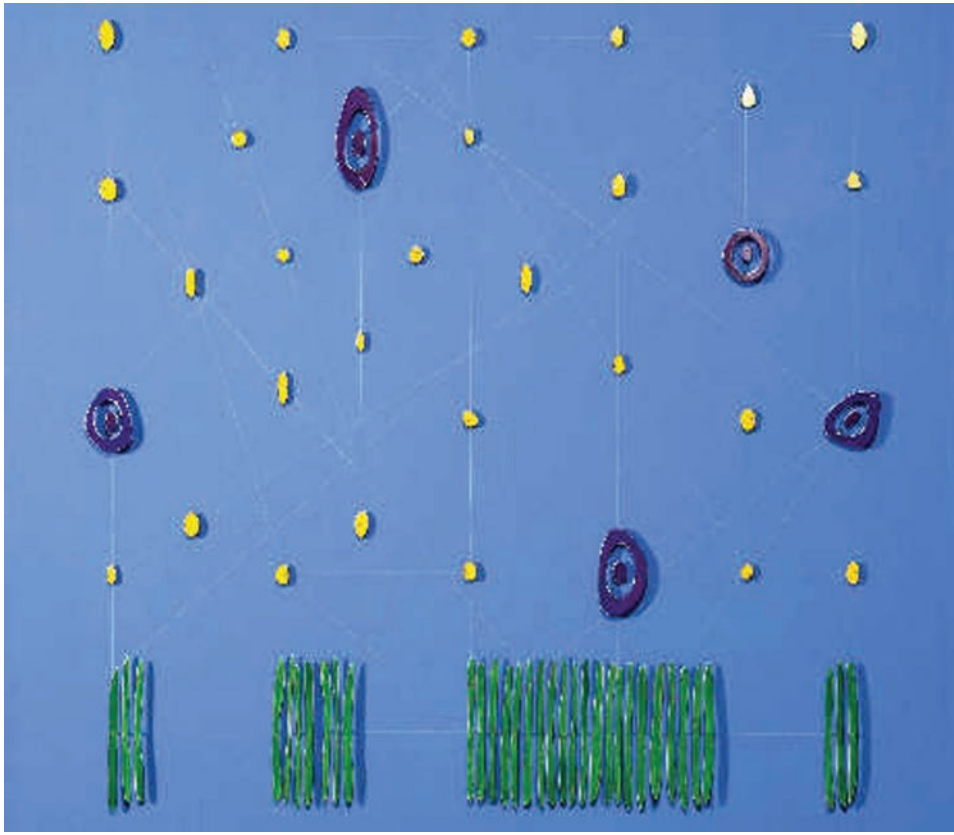
LESLIE DILL
Arthur Roger Gallery

CAROLINA SARDI
KEITH SONNIER
Heriard-Cimino Gallery
New Orleans, LA

AT FIRST GLANCE, three exhibitions at two venues share the visual vocabulary of text as image. Lesley Dill's installation "Heaven Heaven Heaven/Hell Hell Hell" at Arthur Roger is a personalized

biography of 20th century, Ninth Ward missionary and visionary Sister Gertrude Morgan. Dill uses text, sculpture, and the space of the gallery to convey her perception of the power of Sister Morgan's own visual language and lifetime, which relied on spoken word. At Heriard-Cimino, both Carolina Sardi and Keith Sonnier each use a kind of text, which, at its basic level is a set of abstract symbols linked together by some kind of grammar. They state messages through the repetition and grouping of these symbols, though that message may only be translated at the individual and subjective level, by the viewer's personal rules. In each of the three shows, the artist seems to have a different and separate relationship with the nature of the "text" than the viewer ever can.

Dill says her encounter with Morgan's paintings at **the**



Carolina Sardi. *Starry Night*, 96" high. Courtesy Heriard-Cimino Gallery.

American Folk Art Museum awoke her own inspiration. Both Morgan and Dill share a penchant for text; often Morgan wrote lines from the biblical book of Revelations into her compositions, and Dill culls words from the work of Emily Dickinson and other poets. Morgan's palette has been described as sexy and hot – she used a multitude of intense reds and oranges in her work. Dill spices her otherwise achromatic installation with pinches of these colors, which emphasize a frieze of silhouette miniatures lining the wall near the ceiling of the gallery space or a single letter within a composition of text. In the 1960s in New Orleans, Morgan recorded *Let's Make a Record*, a series of songs in which her voice is accompanied only by tambourine (though she played a variety of instruments). The compositional design of large-scale black and white drawings that line the walls of the gallery have a starkness and rhythmic quality much like the music of Morgan's album.

Cloth and clothing are familiar media to Dill's work; in this installation, she has created two dresses and a series of monumentally scaled, multi-colored necklaces sandblasted with poetry. The first dress is made of black cloth and draped over a headless mannequin. The words "Heaven" and "Hell" are repeatedly sewn over its surface. Said to represent her early life, the headlessness of this piece suggests a lack of identity or full intelligence. A second, headed mannequin behind this first wears a bridal gown and

veil that stretches into gauzy banners attached to the ceiling. Suggesting that angels hold her wedding train, this dress is meant to symbolize Morgan post-calling, after a revelation that she was the bride of Christ and thus marking the beginning of her missionary vocation. Multi-colored words like "power," "glory," "Jesus," and "dazzle" cover the dress and infer a rich and varied experience in this role. Within this context, the necklaces may relate to the decoration a bride wears to beautify herself and dazzle her spouse. Dill created this entire space in an effort to celebrate the life of Morgan; it is also a reflection of that moment, in that museum, when she first encountered the work. The viewer is better informed of her biography by the installation, but it is also a glimpse to the power of Dill's personal interaction and blossoming connection with the work of Morgan.

Between You, Me, and Us consists of the cut and painted steel sculpture of Sardi, who uses a limited set of symbols in various combinations and repetitions to create minimalist messages that seem almost like Morse code. Sardi's dashes and dots evoke the staccato clicking of a coding machine, and her use of spectrum colors give this sense a vivacity that suggests childlike play. It is easy to read representational imagery in some of her compositions. Short intense green vertical stripes form a pattern that suggests grass in *40 Elements* and *Starry Night*, or rainfall or drips in *Pink*,



Keith Sonnier: Installation, Heriard-Cimino Gallery.

Red, and Green. Taken apart and rearranged, her shapes make a personalized language that is intentionally ambiguous to easily allow subjective interpretation. The iterations of these symbols seem endless; Sardi is continually creating new and site-specific “words.” However, her minimalism makes it difficult at times to understand what she wants to say, other than to leave it up to the viewer to interpret, or to simply facilitate the sensual experience of looking.

Sonnier’s small installation, “Flocked Relics and Light Sculpture,” is a claustrophobic space situated behind Sardi’s more open exhibition at Heriard-Cimino. His text is a wallpaper of Times-Picayunes about the BP oil spill and its proximity to Katrina-anniversary events. The papers are juxtaposed with various sculptures flocked in gentle pastels to a velvety texture. Oddly, these sculptures are not necessarily of pastel or velvet nature; they include an African mask, a precariously balanced tower of oversized teacups, and an abstract elephantine shape. These are paired with several light fixtures made of curved neon tubes from which gangly wires protrude. The overwhelming text encroaches not

only on the viewer but on these objects, which in themselves create a kind of tension by their absurdity. Sonnier seems to be asking us to find logic in this chaos, when there is none to be had – perhaps similarly to attempts to interpret the events of the spill. But, as with much minimalist sculpture, the relationship of the artist to the work is somewhat hidden; what seems to matter is how the viewer interprets and interacts with the space.

Even though a language is recognizable and therefore potentially legible, it can be rearranged or re-contextualized to create new meaning. Text as image creates this opportunity. The typography of each artist’s “words” successfully evokes a mood or a temper to the overall design of the shows. But each is drastically different, and tied to subject matter which is often mysterious to the viewer. The tension that mystery engenders is tantalizing – it is difficult to deny an attempt to interpret the work, whether the result disregards the artist’s intent or not. In the end, it may be that the original intent was to simply create an opportunity to look and consider. □



Jesse Poimboeuf: *Blue Jay*. Le Mieux Galleries.

Flights of Fancy and the Fanciful

BY KARL F VOLKMAR

JESSE POIMBOEUF
Paintings

TOM SECREST
Drawings

Le Mieux Galleries
New Orleans, LA

AFTER A VIRTUAL night of thrashing trees and brutal winds, with coulees still overflowing and bayous running backwards, who are the first to know that the storm has passed, and this is not just the deceptive quiet of the eye? Who are the first to awaken and announce the coming of the day in the darkest hour before dawn with their mellifluous murmurings?

Through naïve sensitivity to phenomena beyond the range of human cognition, providing signs that the storm is really over, that the first light of the morning sun along the eastern horizon is imminent, and whose stillness creates an intense, almost palpable, silence indicating that something not the norm is about to happen, birds serve as an extension of human consciousness.

As symbols, birds have often been used to represent humankind's grandest ideals and greatest fears. The fabulous *Roc* of the *Arabian Nights*, the *Phoenix* in the Harry Potter tales, the Native American Thunderbird and the American Eagle, the beautiful Quetzal of Mesoamerican lore, the raven that quoth "Nevermore," the bluebird of happiness, and the robin as harbinger of spring et

cetera serve as expressions of our wonder at the world and embody ideals of power, beauty, elegance, and ugliness.

Birds are also fascinating for what they do just because they are birds: the hummingbird who seems to burn more energy that can be ingested and flies great distance without respite, the falcon that spies its prey from great altitudes and streaking down to catch its prey like an arrow shot from the highest power bow, the ability of the humblest bird to balance easily on wires blown by the wind, and elegant acrobatics that outshine the most accomplished gymnasts and the most technically advanced fighter jet and the like. With the eye of a naturalist, the skills of a lyricist, and a taste for the macabre, artist Jesse Poimboeuf presents an aviary of paintings featuring representations of birds in their many and various roles. A group of portraits of single or a few testify to the artist's powers of observation. In *Blue Jay*, the body of the blue jay, tail cropped by left edge of matting, is represented on a scale more expressive of the jay's noisy self-image than its natural size. The generally light blue body, delicately laced with pale pinks creating impressions of lavenders and gentle violets, stands in front of an ambiguous light green ground. The painting amusingly rests on the floor and is pleasantly composed and rendered as if we are watching alongside the artist as the blue jay ignores our presence.

In *Page Seven*, the red crested bird, shown with three-quarters body and profile head, leaning forward from beyond the right side, stands against a neutral ground with no suggestion of a specific milieu. Two fierce-eyed chickens sitting/standing in the neutral space of 8,9,10 generate our perception of space by their presence in an interesting essay on the formal interplay between



Jesse Poimboeuf. Le Mieux Galleries.

spaces and volumes and the imposition of personality on the likeness of this mindless species. *Cardinal Sing* and *Fatherly* are a pair of paintings of perky bright cardinals viewed within their green habitat. *Mimus Polyglotos*, i.e., the northern mockingbird, is a synthesis of *One-Cornered Ma*, in the bit of tree in the lower left, and James Audubon with its asymmetrical composition of swirling birds having at each other to the tune of a middle range of neutral grays against a pale yellow ochre ground.

Poimboeuf combines individual avian portraits, seen from different angles of view, in different poses, as if they were an experimental notation system, to create the visual compositions of *Happy Dance* and *Warbling Bishop*. In these lyrical compositions, individual and pairs of birds stand, twisting and turning their bodies at different angles, their tiny feet gripping invisible surfaces suggesting a multiplicity of ambiguous planes.

These self-centered birds, behaving as birds are supposed to do, have no concern whatsoever that someone might be watching them, and somehow soothing because they are as indifferent to our human gaze that has no meaning for them in inverse proportion to the degree we are fascinated by the joys of pure seeing.

The close up and cropped portrait of *Cardinal Landing* represents what is virtually impossible for the unassisted eye to see, isolated individual moments in a continuous sequence of movement. Not until Marey's and Muybridge's development of chrono-photography to record sequential motion provided the information for artists like Duchamp (*Nude Descending a Staircase I and II*) and the Italian Futurists to represent transient experience in four dimensions in two dimensional drawing and painting (although the Hellenistic sculptor of *The Nike of Samothrace* and several Chinese and Japanese painters had also been successful

each in their own way) was humankind able to accurately represent kinetic phenomena.

In Poimboeuf's painting, several elements play off against each other to make *Cardinal Landing* more than an illustration of motion for the cardinal stands rather like a full-bellied human figure, at casual attention like Rodin's *Balzac*, with rounded shoulders sloping towards sunken breast, eyes glistening in the large head, the iteration of wing feathers more like the waving of an arm than the arcing movement of a wing employed to control the descent of the lowering body and effectively brake forward momentum. The result effect is a blending of the anthropomorphic, the avian, and the quasi-scientific attempt at simulating movement.

One need only recall James Audubon's birds for an enlightening comparison. In Audubon's works, while first impressions may be of a realistic representation of each species, the carefully controlled drawing so strongly echoing the neoclassical precision of an Ingres, the spatial and temporal ambiguity that isolates the birds from the exigencies of time, and the carefully contrived poses and positioning contribute to an aura of being more than illustration. Modern ethological research has, indeed, demonstrated that animals do indeed think, solve problems, feel emotions et cetera with species like the corvines, which include crows, rooks, and ravens, being quite ingenious in quickly solving new problems. The artist seems to have an intuitive awareness of the personality as he creates avian characters and scenes involved in ambiguous narratives.

Cardinal Landing also has interesting esthetic qualities rendered in overall tonal harmonies involving a close range of reds, the intertwined serpentine lines of the background like a section of a Gothic rayonnant style window or network of capillaries in a thin



Tom Secrest.

membrane. The bold shape of the cardinal, the fluttering feathers a countermovement to the rhythms of the background.

In *Children of N O*, another cardinal urgently flutter its wings to escape the threatening approach of cats walking lithely forwards anticipating some sport before a quick meal. With a nod to Bonnard's color and the composition of Matisse's *Dejeuner*, the painting conveys an urgent and insidious quality. The disjunction of the two cats and the cardinal each existing in their own spaces like an inept copy and paste Photoshop project is somewhat elided by the implied narrative of cat and panicking bird prey. The allusion to New Orleans is not a happy one in its analogy between predatory felines and innocent prey and the children of the Crescent City.

A majestic pair of just barely pink cardinals poses as lord and lady of the laundry line beneath a cloud-covered sky that could be early morning or after a storm that has passed (*Double Vision*). In *Ancient Paintings*, other cardinals are playfully (work for them?) zipping and zooming around trees, a tree house, and backyard deck like a pair of battling fighter jets.

The Vision is a curiously strange cabal of bird subjects worshipping a supreme cardinal being. A variety of species are gathered together as if attending an avian aesir or a meeting of crones in one of Goya's late eighteenth century covens. Coexisting in a camaraderie that belies their natural territorial differentiation, the conflation of cardinals, blue jays, terns et cetera defies rational interpretation. Only the supernatural world could host a vision involving an unlikely convening of disparate species. In an interesting way, however, as is the case with other of the artist's works in the gallery, the narrative in its defiance of easy explanation can

lead to one becoming disengaged from efforts of interpreting the narrative and the individuation of species, and, for a while, focusing on the handling of the medium, the physical properties of the surfaces, and color and shape qua color and shape.

In *Silent Borders*, birds hover and zoom over hazy pastures where mindlessly feeding Angus cattle watch the phenomenon indifferently. A single bird rises from beneath a mountainous landscape, perhaps inspired by a recent exhibition of Marsden Hartley paintings, like an intercontinental ballistic missile rising from its silo in *Balthus Mountain*, which may be a punning reference to Mussorgsky's tone poem *Bald Mountain* as well as Balthus' neurotic melancholy.

Bees, not birds, are the subject in *The Facts and Empire of Dust*. When one does appear (*The Facts*), the bird seems to express surprise, perhaps at finding herself amidst a fleet of bees. What a strange juxtaposition of a bird and bees, and the pun on the vernacular metaphor for human sexuality, i.e., the birds and the bees. They are quixotic works that exude unease through a disquieting juxtaposition of scale as well as the implicit humor of the pun. Pale pastel pink and blue skies are swarming with bees flying this way and that way like the angels in some of Giotto's *Arena Chapel* frescoes in Padua, celebrating in their apian way the joys of bee being, gathering nectar, with whatever it is that constitutes apian joie de vivre.

THROUGH THE MEANS of an anxious, quasi-macabre sensuality, Tom Secrest's drawings repeat a narrow range of themes -- woman's head, clown, skull, self portrait et cetera-- with one or two few exceptions. The delicate sensuality, expressed through the me-



Tom Secret: *Death of Love*.

dia charcoal and paper, contrasts with an array of shapes and objects that populate each work like the elements in a cubist collage -- bits of coiffed hair and pieces of jewelry and clothing swarming around skulls and women's heads like a swarm of bees around a hive. A fragile neurasthenic line, developed through the artist's work as a printmaker, maintains a distance between observer and image that keeps each work beyond the reach of tactile perception. Images seem to hover on the verge of disintegration and disappearance, emitting an insistent aura of something having been lost. Conjured out of ambiguous substance into tenuous existence like visions imagined in effervescing streams of smoke, lines, signs and symbols exist in a state of dissolution like eerie somethings stored in dusty jars in a musty room in one of Anne Rice's macabre stories. Secret's obsessively iterated and re-iterated visions survive precariously in a tenuous, ambiguous existence through intense reworking of his anxious, Rouault-ish line.

The works in the exhibition can be divided into two general groups. One centers on the head of woman surrounded and/or surmounted by various objects like a pumpkin, cross, eye, parachute, starfish, and/or cone hat (*Woman's Head with Cone, Hat & Parachute and Woman's Head, Pumpkin & Cross*, for example) with the singular exception of *Woman on Cross*. The second group includes skulls, a self-portrait with top hat, red and black crosses, pumpkin, eye, cone hat (*Pumpkin, Skull & Eye* and *Skull with Red*

& *Black Cross*), and the intriguing and unique *Death of Love* with its echoes of Redon. Common to all is a pervasive sense of absence, loss, distance, of images and objects so close yet so far, beyond reach, frightening in their sense of loneliness, decadence, as if their creation were the effort to fend off processes of disintegration and decomposition.

When photographing Secret's drawings, the reflections on the surfaces of the Plexiglas captured in the photographs add a layer of ambiguity that seem quite appropriate to the ambiguous existence of form and space. The apparent anomalies of *The Death of Love* and *Woman on Cross*, the implicit but esoteric narrative content, the images of emotional or physical suffering may remind one of retablos depicting the sufferings of saints, of recuerdos assembled for *El Dia de los Muertos*, or a *Santeria* altar. Secret's work seems to make sense as remembrances of something that has been lost and forever elusive, an experience unhealed through the essential process of grieving, but also a certain existential angst akin to the expressive figuration emerged in the first generation of post-World War II European artists like Bacon and CoBrA. One might consider Secret's work as the distillation of expressionism from abstract expressionism. □



Kathleen Banton: *I will never forget that face down feeling from the pressure of the undertow at Fort Walton Beach, 2010. A/C.*

Composing Feeling

BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

KATHLEEN ARIATTI BANTON
“The River of Forget”
New Works
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery
New Orleans, LA

—

ABSTRACTION IS THE visual language of feelings. Vasily Kandinsky described discovering this after an epiphany sometime around 1909, when a painting revealed itself to him in his studio. In the late afternoon light, Kandinsky saw one of his own works leaned sideways on a wall emanating a glorious light from within, a combination of shape and color that was completely abstract. It gave him purely intense feeling, with no associations or obstruction. The next day, the same painting had lost this glory, and Kandinsky had lost his particular feeling for it from the night before. Subject matter revealed itself once the light changed and the pic-

ture was righted. The purity of the completely abstract moment – the direct avenue to feeling – was gone, never to be recaptured in that same exact way.

Feelings are fleeting and change, much like Kandinsky’s perception of this particular work in that particular moment. They collect somewhere in memory, culled through remembrance, but different because they are never part of the same moment again. Even feelings about memories are mutable; as other experiences inform our perceptions of the past, events or emotions can be remembered differently. The process of abstraction, of distilling subject matter – fully-fleshed moments – into the basic components of visual composition, is like getting to the feeling without the remembrance. The process of addition and subtraction of material changes the overall image, leading to a complexity of feelings that change with passages of color or shape or line, or turning an object in space. In the resulting abstract objects, this complexity leads to different levels of interpretation.



Kathleen Banton: *Cargo ships cruise cautiously on the Mississippi*, 2010. A/A, 40" high.

Kathleen Ariatti Banton uses abstract language to suggest the constancy of change and the mutability of memory in a series of paintings and sculpture titled "The River of Forget," her third solo show at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery. Banton derives the title from Greek mythology, in which the dead drink from Lethe, or the "river of unmindfulness," to forget memories of earthly life. This subject matter forms the basis of the work; Banton says in her statement that this series addresses both her mother's dementia and the questionable need for New Orleans to forget its past in order to fully recover. Both relate to being lost in memory that changes, that seems to become present but never actually is, ever again.

Water is an appropriate metaphor for constant change and feeling. In her statement, Banton remarks that New Orleans is surrounded by water and that painting itself is fluid, beginning with a process of staining and mark-making that creates the presence of her emotions. *I will never forget that face down feeling from the pressure of the undertow at Fort Walton Beach*, a window-sized acrylic on canvas, is a contrast of cooling blues and fiery warmth. A wild tangled texture of energetic yellow paint crackles in the upper border of the picture plane. This is interjected by the large presence of blue fracturing the space. In this jagged area, hazy horizontal strokes in tints and intensities of aqua and ultramarine suggest looking up and through water, towards a deepness occu-

ried by the unknown. It also suggests the interjection of a memory on top of another, the mutability of the remembrance of the moment.

In this piece, the crush of the water is palpable. Everything is pushed toward the front of the picture plane with the same kind of pressure suggested by the title, attempting to drown the viewer by its force against the thin membrane of the canvas, the only thing able to contain this moment. An area of texture contrasting with the thin paint creates a negative space that reveals a soft curve reminiscent of a river, but also a lifeline. Here is something physical to hold on to; its emphasis through texture grounds the viewer in place. It is also a reminder that the image in the painting is a pathway to a feeling, and that a moment can be an anchor.

Next to this work is another canvas titled *Rebuilding is a red hot topic; it's all about working together, piece by piece*. The title directly references post-Katrina reconstruction, but the composition evokes fractured memory. The intensity of the color and the fracturing of the space create a concentrated patchwork tempered only by suggestions of soft value. Bold primaries create fragments delineated and separated by shades and tints of pink and blue. Wispy strokes of white float above intense red rectangles, framed by a thin boundary. These rectilinear shapes are again joined by a curve reaching from the bottom of the picture plane, another



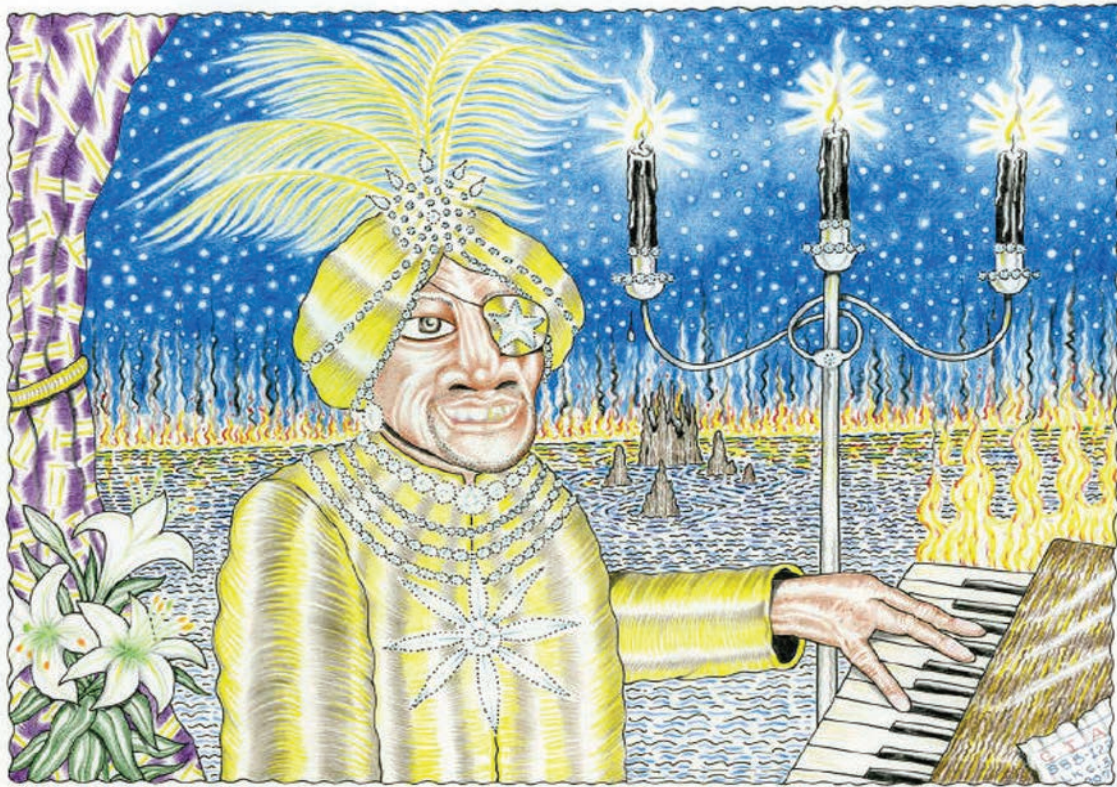
Kathleen Banton: *You cnn take the girl out of New Orleans but you can't . . .*, 2010. M/M, 48" high.

hand-hold. The shapes build up towards the surface of the picture plane, suggesting a slow but energetic process of moving toward a finish. Cloudy white strokes rest at the top of the flat surface of the canvas, like a barrier of more present experience obfuscating the past. Banton's use of primary colors indicates variety which is unified by the distributed weight of red, a warmth or a blood that is common among these disparate parts. By overlaying them with wisps of white, she suggests an overarching reality blurring precise memory of the past.

Several three-dimensional works provide contrast to the wall hangings. These whimsical sculptures temper the heavy history and authority connoted by painting. But, their content is belied by their playful, yard-art appearance. One sculptural wall piece inscribed in gold leaf with the words, "Louisiana, The Perennial Garden," suggests the shape of a crab whose legs are made with familiar wrought-iron fence decorations. Banton seems to reference the recent oil spill and sullyng of the Gulf. Though playful in primary colors, the piece seems like a memento mori for the creatures whose sustainability in these waters is still somewhat uncertain. *New Orleans, brightly and quietly, emerges after long*

Katrina winters rises from a pedestal like a new species of flora, a monument to re-growth. Its blossom is a tombstone, listing the neighborhoods inundated by flood water and the date of the levee break. Appropriately, this exhibit occurred for White Linen Night in August, the month of the five-year anniversary of this tragedy. Banton comments by the juxtaposition of these two objects that strangely, this momentous occasion is marked by yet another disaster.

Banton uses a vivid palette and quirky formal elements to relate to events of immense gravity. This is the spirit of a true New Orleanian, one who rebuilds from the lost past with a lightness of feeling that is the only thing capable of lifting the heaviness of the heart and mind. Her language is forceful and touching and direct; the compositions are unafraid of the space surrounding them, sensitive in their content, and pointed in their address of the difficult feelings they portray. Their abstractness creates a direct emotional experience concerned with the infinitely changing universe, and how to best try to remember it. □



Bunny Matthews: *The Bayou Maharajah*, 2010. Courtesy Arthur Roger Gallery.

Gallery Walk

BY DALE BETANCOURT, TERRINGTON CALAS & PAT LANDRY

Bunny Matthews: “Black and White” *Arthur Roger Gallery*

I have known *Vic n’ Nat’ly* for about eight years. Before 2002, I had only glimpsed them, in the summers, during my annual visits to grandparents in the city. They seemed to be everywhere, but mostly in our favorite seafood restaurants in Bucktown and in our absolute favorite: a wonderfully anachronistic place in St. Bernard. That periodic glimpse amused me, because, as a relative youth, I was easily amused. And I was naïve enough to see only the surfaces of people and things. These folks were “characters,” true New Orleans characters, people who contributed to the unique pleasure of the city.

But in the Fall of 2002, we were formally introduced, so to speak, via Bunny Matthews’ drawings – a trove of *Offbeat* magazines kept by a relative. From that moment, I was enthralled by Matthews’s art. I soon realized that his periodic narratives were something beyond conventional cartoons. And they were beyond the familiar “yat” accents and local references that make you smile. Matthews was attempting to produce the sort of cultural-

social commentary that only a few Sunday Morning cartoonists have ever done with any success. Fairly often, he succeeded superbly. I was reminded of this recently in the exhibition at Arthur Roger’s 434 gallery (incidentally, one of the most ideal, most unobtrusive display spaces in the New Orleans).

The show’s title “Black and White” has more than one allusion, but it is especially appropriate considering the centerpiece, a bold adaptation of Picasso’s *Guernica*, the famously monochrome painting that has become the prototypical anti-war icon of the modern era. Matthews assumed the grand panorama format of *Guernica*, called it *Nin’t Wardica*, and proceeded to fill the composition with some of his signature local imagery, but now with a tragic turn – *Vic n’ Nat’ly* in the apocalypse. The whole suggests a memorializing of the victims of the post-Katrina flood waters. This idea may seem preposterous or even silly at first, but the effect is staggering. You soon realize that Matthews’ technical mannerisms are ideal for weightier themes. In a case like this, his eccentricities wake you up to important realities. This work deserves to become one of the symbols of our metropolitan area.

Matthews’ use of Matisse, the other great 20th century master, seems more subdued. In a way, this is not surprising. The harsh expressionism of Picasso’s post-cubist style is made-to-order



Bunny Matthews: *Nin't Wardica*. Courtesy Arthur Roger Gallery.

for such an earthy view of New Orleans topics. Matisse's elegance generally is not. And yet, Matthews' sexy take on *La Musique* is a marvelous jolt.

"Black and White" has several other gems – as usual, zany but shrewdly evocative. Especially notable is Matthews' *The Bayou Maharajah*, an absolutely spectacular pictorial celebration of the late, great vocalist-pianist James Booker. You come away from this piece with a renewed admiration for the remarkable performer and a reassurance that, for Matthews, the label "cartoonist" is wildly inadequate. Look closer at *Maharajah*. As Booker sits at his keyboard, glittery and overdressed, behind him is a swamp in flames and, nearer to him, a floor candelabra with burning black candles – a strong, funereal note about a lost genius and about Louisiana's precarious wetlands.

— By Dale Betancourt

Walker Evans' Louisiana

Ogden Museum of Southern Art

Walker Evans's artistic rigor can be disquieting. At times, his pictorial structure seems eerily flawless, impossibly so. But it created one of the great photographic documents of America

– documents of pristine, silent objectivity. Evans' best and most characteristic work – the images of the Depression-era South – are paradigms of aesthetic reserve. He laid down the facts of a grim historical moment, but did so with the formal structuring of a cubist and, more important, with the serene logic of a grand siècle classicist. He was, in effect, the Poussin of American photography.

And, unquestionably, he was also one of the three lode-stars of 20th century camera art. His work is the perfect counterpoint to Henri Cartier-Bresson's human comedy and to Robert Frank's socio-political ideologues. In his art, Evans resisted declaratory comment. In its place, he proffered astonishing clarity. His Southern pictures have become icons.

The most familiar of them were made in Hale County, Alabama in the summer of 1936. His work in Louisiana, however, is on the same level and, arguably, truer to his classicizing vision. This idea is fully verified in "Walker Evans' Louisiana: Photographs from the Collection of Jessica Lange" at the Ogden Museum. As in most of Evans' 1930s work, architecture – chiefly vernacular architecture – plays a central role. He seemed to relish the banal. His eye set it apart, ennobled it and, as I say, clarified it. A perfect example is *Greek Revival Townhouse on Street Corner with Men Seated in Doorway, New Orleans, 1935*. The work suggests a fierce concentration. A numbing deliberateness. The con-



Walker Evans: *Greek Revival Townhouse with Men Seated in Doorway, New Orleans, 1935.* Jessica Lange Collection.

sequence is a quotidian event completely transformed. His bleak street scene has become chastened reality – but not chastened with the prettiness of pictorialism, the style that was barely lingering at the time. There are no flourishes, no mitigation of form. The image of this townhouse does not look noble or even classical. It looks like timeless art.

Quite a bit is said of Evans' objectivity. But, perhaps, we overstate it. I always sense an astute note of humanism. To my mind, his famous detachment can imply countless human stories. His *Townhouse* induces us to consider the lives of the idle men. He achieved this with technical control – with an angle of the camera, with a particular cropping of imagery, with his obsessive tidiness. To the thoughtful viewer, that visual tidiness can be shattering.

— *By Terrington Calas*

Déjà vu All Over Again:

Generic Art Solutions (Tony Campbell and Matt Viz)

New Orleans Museum of Art

I visited this exhibition with two other staffers from the *New Orleans Art Review* — one of them my editor, a demonstrably opinionated fellow. After about 25 minutes, he said, “This is not merely a declaration of our regional frustrations. It speaks of our times. Chiefly our times in this country.” We then talked a bit about the state of the United States economy, and that of England, and that of France. Quickly, we moved on to governmental management. I quote him again, “Has there ever been anything so egregious?”

Of course, this was spurred, for the most part, by some brief comments we all made in front of *The Raft*, Tony Campbell



Generic Art Solutions: *The Raft*, 2010. Photomontage. Courtesy New Orleans Museum of Art.

and Matt Viz’s ambitious retake on Gericault’s *Raft of the Medusa*. Theirs is an enormous photomontage that, in part, mimics the original, but, ultimately, serves as an assault on the corrosive, but “perhaps unassailable system.” (Another short quote.)

As we spoke, government and corporate misdirection melded, and we conceived of the populace, at every turn, as marooned victims. What I editor said next especially interested me. “These times are the capacious fodder of some new romanticism. I mean a romanticism in art. And that is precisely what I see in the work of these two men.” He meant, of course, the sort of romanticism that lashed out, often in grand — even melodramatic — terms against blatant and not so blatant abuses of power.

I had seen Gericault’s *Medusa* only once, as a travelling student. To me then, it seemed like pure theatre — melodrama indeed. It was a Louvre showpiece. Now I understand why. Certain historical moments require excessive gestures. And, obviously, some audacious and thoughtful adaptations of great art. Campbell and Viz seem fully aware of this. — *By Dale Betancourt*

**The Art of Country Music:
The Marty Stuart Collecton**
Ogden Museum of Southern Art



Marty Stuart: *Johnny Cash, Dressing Room, Madison Square Garden.*

This exhibition caused something of a stir around the New Orleans Art Review. That is because one of our editors is a true country music enthusiast. No, that's too mild a word. A better one would be aficionado. It's one of his music passions (He has several). But his interest is not in the typical commercial stuff that Nashville mostly generates. Certainly not. He prefers the authentic "folksy" country, the famous "high lonesome sound." Apparently, his brand of country falls under the "roots music" category. And it is the music from the world that musician Marty Stuart so proudly chronicles here. It was our good fortune that the Ogden Museum's chose to showcase it in New Orleans.

I was asked to write this brief commentary, because my knowledge of the country field was only rudimentary. I, too, had always enjoyed the "real" variety, but I knew little of its background. I would have to do some research. It has been a true joy. And it makes Stuart's efforts doubly rewarding. His gathering of mementos and artifacts, of course, has proven to be a treasure trove. Taken together with scores of photographs – his telling photographs – it represents and delivers a musical tradition that, like all art forms, says a great deal about American culture.

Actually, items like the Nudie suits and famous guitars symbolize the American dream. They do so in much the way that

fur coats and long Packards do in a Ver der Zee photograph of the golden 1920s. The difference is that, as my editor says, "the country icons still resonate." Thousands of people are still mesmerized by the rise of George Jones from a rural East Texas boy to the voice that signified the reality of generations of Southerners and Southerners-at-heart.

Among the photographs, one popular favorite is the shot of Johnny Cash preparing for a performance, spraying his hair. Some people are unnerved by it. Others are amused. It says show business, a distinct kind of show business. These are people who, mostly, came from humble origins and re-invented themselves so that they might interpret and declare the hearts of their brothers and sisters. Listen to George Jones in "A Good Year for the Roses," or Loretta and Conway signing "After the Fire is Gone," or Dolly singing "Put it Off Until Tomorrow." Then, Stuart's collection will seem to reflect all of us.

— *By Pat Landry*

□



Barbie L'Hoste: *If I go to Heaven I Swear You'll Go with Me*, 2010. M/M, 50.25" high.

No Dead Artists

BY TERRINGTON CALAS

NO DEAD ARTISTS
National Juried Exhibition of Contemporary Art
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery
New Orleans, LA

SALON-STYLE EXHIBITIONS like “No Dead Artists” tend to validate the assertion that nothing new is really possible in contemporary art. In this 14th edition of the Jonathan Ferrara Gallery’s annual survey, one could make antecedent allusions – both stylistic and conceptual – for every piece on view. But that does not negate the possibility of the most crucial kind of newness: the newness of a truly engaged spirit, a spirit in which an artist accepts or defies – but never eschews – the verities of now. Especially when those verities have a measurable impact on personal life. The way each

creative and intelligent artist confronts this is indeed something new. In “No Dead Artists,” certain talents confirm this – artists, most of them young, proving themselves at a time when registering a singular and persuasive imprint is more difficult than ever.

A separate difficulty is the ineluctable *mélange*. So, of course, is the gallery’s charge: to assemble a fairly seamless presentation of so many disparate artists. Too often, such displays confront us with aesthetic frictions at every turn – opposing sensibilities, opposing tactics, opposing views on what, at this moment, is worth doing in art. In this instance, however, the recurrent antinomies are mitigated. It’s true, your eye moves from Grant Newman’s formalist work and lands quickly on the quasi-surrealist paintings of Barbie L’Hoste. But the experience with each artist is adequately rich, sustained – certainly more so than would have been possible in the past. The gallery assured this by installing distinct



Hannah Chalew: *Four Corners*, 2010. Ballpoint and ink on paper, 26" high.

groupings, mini-solo shows, a consequence of this year's pared-down list. For once, we see enough to understand an artist's tenor.

In the best cases, this means a posture more about emotion than form. Emotion – with a conscious nod to nostalgia, mild sentimentality, and, for one artist, to fantasy. It's a posture that looks disarmingly traditional, and yet it feels entirely fitting now. There is the sense, in these works, of opting for an inner life, perhaps a spiritual one. Considering our times, one might perceive this as either escapist or a form of defiance. Both seem valid.

A clear example is the mixed-media painting by L'Hoste, *If I Go to Heaven I swear you'll go with me*. The work reads, initially, as sheer pleasure, consuming pleasure, but it leads to a realm of guarded personal feeling. I say guarded because the image is radiant with chromatic flourishes that overwhelm you utterly. L'Hoste is a gifted colorist. Her washy greens and yellows and ultramarines effectively veil the title's Cytherean dream, the impossible dream of eternal love and youth. Behind the colors we can discern idyllic figures – blissful children – lolling or exploring in this sweet paradise. The consequence is something vaguely Matissean – a visual hedonism that seduces, and, at the same time, provides an oblique – and thus, captivating – glimpse of a universal desire.

Notwithstanding the judicious, mostly equitable installation of "No Dead Artists," certain works simply need to be seen entirely alone. This is particularly true of delicate monochrome drawings. Fortunately, Hannah Chalew's suite of ink-

line landscapes was permitted to dominate a separate, somewhat enclosed space. And, by chance, this placement also amounted to a sort of tribute via isolation – a deserving gesture for the quiet gems of the exhibition. The drawings are records of post-Katrina streets and roadways. Chalew's intent was to "create a map of time," noting the "open spaces left in transition" and the scene as "nature begins to reclaim the human-made."

What we see, in a piece like *Four Corners*, is an elegiac tone-poem comprised, implausibly, of power poles and wires, fragments of buildings, an occasional vehicle, one or two trees, and, above all, broad unpopulated terrain – emptiness. The elegiac sense may result from Chalew's linear technique. This drawing is a prodigy of discretion. Her line seems tentative, but, in fact, it's coolly idiosyncratic: an almost sketchy abandon, sobered by an elusive, sometimes feathery touch. Her way with composition is equally discreet. Here, as in most examples, the foreground is barely articulated; it is chiefly expansive negative space. She uses diagonals – the poles and wires, sidewalk curbs – to direct our gaze toward the anti-climax: lonely building clusters in the far distance. This is bleakness newly defined. This is also an affecting take on the emotive possibilities of landscape.

IT IS PERHAPS a benison that "No Dead Artists" has only a few political or issue-engaged works. Today, most art of this kind is either gratingly tedious or peremptory or too obvi-



Ashley Robins: *You Must be at Least this Tall to Enter*, 2010. Acrylic on birch, 30" high.

ous to have and appreciable impact. Ashley Robins's *You Must Be at Least This tall to Enter* is an exception. The piece epitomizes alertness and sings with a forthright energy. It embodies the legendary *Innocent Eye* stance, as if it were a knee-jerk, ingenuous reaction to the immigration issue. We see a parade of American locus-icons surmounted by the giant, jaunty figure of Mickey Mouse and the legend "Freedom Land." The result is an image that has the feel of inevitability, like a long-standing emblem. In our culture of signs, this seems an ideal weapon.

Robins's method is a painted variation on the quaint cut-paper silhouette. The medium was revived a few years ago by Kara Walker, an artist who, with considerable controversy, takes on the issue of racism in American history. Besides the silhouette, not much else connects the two artists. Walker's art seeks to devastate, and it does. Robins, on the other hand, appears to engender optimism, hope.

She seems to say, "This is the absurd truth and we can change it."

Considering our current sociopolitical malaise, her near-buoyant tone is a bit jarring. But that, actually, is what works. She faces a ponderous question head-on, with no trace of hostility or desperation. The cartoon character is the key metaphor – and the buffering presence. It also posits something unexpected, and too often absent – the value of the pleasure principle. This is an affable brand of political art.

By evidence of these, and a few other examples, the 14th "No Dead Artists" was blessed with discerning jurors. From the outset, our confidence was raised by two of the names: Beth Rudin De Woody, a near-legendary collector/curator and Donna Perret, whose peerless eye transformed Galerie Simonne Stern into one of New Orleans finest galleries. □



Ann Hornback: *Al Dente*, 1984. Watercolor and gouache on paper.

Personal Reflections

BY THOMASINE BARTLETT

Women Artists in Louisiana, 1965-2010
 New Orleans Museum of Art
 New Orleans, LA

WALKING INTO THE current collaboration between the Historic New Orleans Collection and the New Orleans Museum of art, *Women Artists in Louisiana, 1965-2010*, felt like going to a party with lots of old friends and many new faces. Colleagues, collaborators, mentors, teachers and students were all there – causing me to re-consider the New Orleans art world, in both the scope of its complexity and its interwoven intimacies.

I was amazed to discover a personal connection to sixteen of the forty artists represented in this show. These artists, working in as wide an array of styles and mediums imaginable – constitute the culmination of a women’s art movement begun in Louisiana in the 19th century and continuing today. Last spring’s collaboration

between NOMA and the Historic New Orleans Collection, *Women Artists in Louisiana, 1825-1965: A Place of Their Own*, laid the foundation for the current show. Considering that women artists in the United States did not have much opportunity to have their work seen or reviewed until after the abstract expressionist movement of the 1940s and 1950s – and then only through the efforts of pioneering feminists like Helen Frankenthaler, Miriam Shapiro and Judy Chicago -- to see such an impressive array of work by women, all connected in some way to Louisiana, from a time when women were only beginning to be recognized as a force within the art world, is staggering. Realizing that I could not do justice to 44 works by forty artists with no unifying theme other than their female-ness, in a single review, I decided to stroll through my personal experiences with the artists I know – hoping to relay a sense of their interconnectedness. My experience covers only about twenty years of the period represented, and is in no way a qualitative representation of the artists included in this exhibition. It does,



Christine Cozic: *Banana Tree*, 1994. Watercolor, The Historic New Orleans Collection.

however, reflect both the intimacy of the world of women artists in New Orleans and the vast variety and influence of their work.

In 1990 I enrolled in the MFA program in Tulane's Newcomb Art department. The year before, I had taken classes with George Febres, adjunct faculty at Tulane, and the de facto leader of the Visionary Imagists through his Gallery Jules La Forge. The Visionary Imagists were a loosely associated group of artists who focused on meticulously rendered naturalism, slightly skewed. The artists associated with the group, in addition to Febres, and Douglas Bourgeois, included Jacqueline Bishop (*Memory of Instinctualism*) and Ann Hornback (*Al Dente*), both represented in this show. George is also represented in the show, in a photograph by Tina Freeman, showing him in the Marigny courtyard where I spent many hours assisting him in cataloguing his work before his death.

In 1992, when I was selected as the artist-curator for a summer show at the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center, I asked George for help in recruiting participants. The show, *Impostorphobia*, featured 11 men and 11 women responding to a poem of the same title by Cynthia Wakeley (now Mitchell). Evelyn Menge (*Perdido*), Shirley Rabe Massinter (*Malcolm Rex*),

Ann Hornback and Ronna Harris (*Dead Bride*), all participated in *Impostorphobia*; Harris was chair of my MFA committee at Tulane, where I watched *Dead Bride* come into being in her studio across the hall from mine. With an introduction from Gene Koss, also Tulane faculty, I met with Ida Kohlmeyer (*Encircled 3; Mythic Throne*) and visited her studio, although she later decided she did not have time to make a specific piece; I was Menge's Friday substitute for a semester at the Louise S. McGehee School while she created and installed a running border of street name tiles at City Hall.

I received my MFA from Tulane in 1993; soon after, I began taking courses for an MA in Art History, eventually earning an interdisciplinary Ph.D. from Tulane. While the Tulane/Newcomb art department has produced many "greats," the current "awe-inspiring sisterhood of alumni (known to all of us at Tulane)," includes Ida Kohlmeyer, Mignon Faget (collection of jewelry inspired by architect H.H. Richardson's building that now houses the Ogden Museum) and Lynda Benglis (*Vulpecula*, 1984). As mentioned, I met Kohlmeyer when curating *Impostorphobia*; Benglis was an early consideration as a dissertation topic. The first gift my daughter ever arranged for me completely on her



Shearly Grode: *Conglomerate #2*, 1978. M/M with gold leaf and silver leaf., The Historic New Orleans Collection.

own was a Mignon Faget monkey from Faget's Animal Cracker series. At an informal coffee shop meeting to investigate possibilities for a retrospective show for Franklin Adams shortly before his death, I sat next to Carol Leake (*The Last Comus Parade*), across the table, from Mignon Faget; she and Adams maintained a lively repartee throughout the meeting. Carol Leake and I both serve on the visual arts faculty at Loyola University. Another "great" – or, a woman artist from Louisiana who has had a share of the international art scene spotlight – Lin Emery (*Mobile Sculpture with Orange*), is my real estate attorney's cousin.

I also teach an internship class at Tulane. Heather Lane, one of my first intern class participants, did her internship with KK Projects on Villere Street in downtown New Orleans. Through her internship, she was inspired to open a gallery, Byrdie's, on St. Claude Avenue. For her opening show early this past summer, she invited her teachers and friends to participate. I was included in that group, along with Dawn Dedeaux (*John Wayne ¼*), who Heather met at KK Projects. I had first become aware of Dedeaux's work on a tour led by George Febres at the CAC, where a large installation by Dedeaux occupied center stage.

I have met others of these women through teaching. San-

dra Russell Clark was a friend of my drawing student Babs, now married to Richard Johnson, Art Department Chair at UNO. I first met Monica Zeringue at UNO, where she was working on an MFA. During the semester in which she took my contemporary art history class, I visited NOMA, where I encountered *Navigation, 2002*, the piece that also hangs in this show. Debbie Fleming Caffery (*Sugar Cane Worker*) has become a favorite of mine since a student selected Caffery as the topic of a research paper, thus familiarizing me with her work. I spent a lovely afternoon several years ago in Raine Bedsole's French Quarter studio, preparing a review of New York show of five Louisiana women artists post-Katrina, a show that also included Jacqueline Bishop.

My personal experience with some of the artists represented this month at the New Orleans Museum of Art, while underscoring the interconnectedness of the New Orleans art world, does not really impart the variety of work the show encompasses. For that, one must experience this show in person. □



Ed Ruscha: *Please*, 1985. O/C, 59" high.

Nature's 137 Elements & Counting

BY KARL F VOLKMAR

ELEMENTS OF NATURE:
Selections from the Frederick R Weisman Art Foundation
Contemporary Arts Center
New Orleans, LA

"ELEMENTS OF NATURE" is an eclectic assortment of works that, according to the curatorial statement, draw on nature as influence, object, or idea. Themes range from the quality of light experienced in a specific geographic setting to abstract expressions of elemental energies, from animals like crocodiles, wolves, frogs, and butterflies to implied, ambiguous narratives. For the viewer, the exhibition is a demanding one, because of the large number of works, and the exhaustingly different and disparate themes. As one moves through the exhibition from one work to the next, the viewer finds herself continually resituating her mind to respond to something quite different from the work before, and the work that follows. The key is to pace oneself, allowing time to enjoy the kaleidoscopic variety, to allow time for one's internal cognitive map to recalculate and reorient itself and to mentally organize the various works into more easily digestible groups.

Several artists, like Isamu Noguchi, Srdjan Loncar, and Timothy Tompkins, have been inspired by natural topographies. The surfaces and forms of Noguchi's black granite *Uncertain Sea*, animated by glistening reflections and dark matte substance, may be easily understood in relation to the viewer's personal

repertoire of experiences even before the title clues one in. The approaching viewer must imaginatively adjust her scale to that of the piece itself that is represented in the scale of a coffee table.

Noguchi's consummate sensitivity to the physical qualities of the granite heightens one's awareness of the medium in and of itself such that one's appreciation of his art as material object extends to the entirety of nature's physical being. Deeper understanding grows from acknowledging the importance of Noguchi's Japanese ancestry, and knowledge of the Zen gardens at Ryoan-ji whether gained through personal experience or its surrogate -- coffee table books -- and how the artist's work represents a synthesis of traditional and popular cultures.

Loncar's *Mountain* is an inkjet print of an eroded desert landscape (from the Grand Canyon?) that has been attached to a crumpled aluminum surface, effectively mimicking the irregular contours of canyons, mesas, and buttes. German artist Caspar David Friedrich is one of the influences on Tompkins' *Highway 89a (After Friedrich)*. Simulating the technical process of color printing using color separations, a process distantly kin to Hans Richter's manipulation of color transparencies for one series of Richter's work, Tompkins has translated his personal experiences from a road trip through states of photography and color separations into paint. Using muted tones and softened edges, Tompkins' mimicking the soft focus look of Romantic landscapes mirrors Richter's parody of the romantic sublime in the latter's commercial realism.

Torben Giehler's large *Mont Blanc* uses the iconic mountain in the Western European Alps (eleventh highest in the world) as a foil for resolution of the topological mapping



Elizabeth Shannon: *Hommage to the Comeback of the American Crocodile.*

problem of how few colors are needed to distinguish distinct areas without the same colors abutting each other. Giehler translates the complex forms and surfaces of the mountain's geography into a colorful map of irregular polygons that may remind the art historically literate of certain paintings by French Orphists Robert and Sonia Delaunay and Swiss artist Paul Klee.

Christopher Le Brun's *Headland* alchemical wedding of Boecklin's bizarre dark impressionist visions and Gustave Moreau's murky melancholies (and perhaps Yves Tanguy too) creates an imaginative vision of a surreal world in which thin slabs of paint stand like chromo-liths in a vertical landscape.

Attracted to the incipient beauty of a specific site, Karen Heagle presents a still life of starfish snarled in seaweed and stranded at the edge of a sandy shoreline. With a feel for the flow of forces that have abandoned them there, Heagle represents the swirling arabesques of dark green seaweed, nacreous water, and streaks in sand in *Low Tide at Rialto Beach*.

Billy Al Bengston's abstract *Klenator Dracula* is the artist's response to the light impressions at a specific place. Inspired by "rippling pools of light moving in water," Bengston paints silhouettes of individual iris blossoms within surrounding circles of light floating within larger overlapping shapes. Pairs of thin parallel lines traverse the planes like the traces of subatomic particles in a cloud chamber. The subtly varied brushwork of the painted surfaces, the transparent circles through which one sees clouds floating in the blue sky beyond (or are they reflections from the sky above?), and a vocabulary of lines and shapes and colors have the character of a sophisticated textile design inspired Kandinsky's later work.

The warm opalescent tones of Edward Ruscha's *Garden of Paradise* are a reflection on the light of southern California skies. The words *garden*, *of*, and *paradise* block printed in paint across the luminous surface contrast with the crepuscular rhythms of evening skies. The contrast between sensual and conceptual may be an enigmatic allusion to a California (or in a Baldessari photograph) where one is never surprised to find text in the most seemingly pristine environments. The adjacent painting, Joe Good's intense, blue field called *Ocean Blue No. 27* echoes the semantic undertones of Richard Diebenkorn's *Ocean Park* series.

Ruscha's witty humor appears again in the florid red sunset of *Please....* A carrot dangles from the end of a long cane pole angling across the long horizontal field of a gorgeous sunset. In contrast is the minimalist simplicity of Andy Moses' *Vrindaban*, a field of subtly modulated intensely saturated reds, and the glowing, creamily textured surface of Jimi Gleason's *Vapor Pearl*. A subliminal energy pulses slowly beneath the glistening blue membrane of Jack Goldstein's (*Untitled*) with a quiet intensity distant cousin to Yves Klein's blue paintings.

IT IS AN entirely different task to compare Sush Machida Gaikotso's *Au for Cat (Contemporary)* with Isamu Noguchi's work discussed above from the standpoint of their mutual Japanese ancestry. The first impression is that Gaikoso's mice cavorting with a reclining feline has nothing in common with Noguchi's *Uncertain Sea* unless one points to the similar horizontal orientation and background. One's appreciation of Noguchi's *Uncertain Sea*, however, as commented on above, is informed by an historical hyperlink to the traditional

Japanese art of Zen monastery sand gardens. In the curator's text accompanying Gaikotso's work one reads that *Au*, as the symbol for gold, alludes to the popular Japanese expression "to give a cat a gold coin [when the cat really wants mice]," a phrase which has a meaning similar to the western "to cast pearls before swine." Thus, might one argue, just as Noguchi has drawn upon traditional Japanese cultural practice, so has Gaikotso's flatness of figures and use of unmitigated color reflect the look of contemporary anime and popular *Ukiyo-e* prints from the Edo Period in Japanese history.

Another artist who employs an animal as motif is Christoph Schmidberger, whose *Swan Lake* is a punning parody of Tchaikovsky's classical composition of the same name (See <http://www.nzwide.com/swanlake.htm> for a most extraordinary performance of *Swan Lake*). Tchaikovsky's piece has been performed so many times in so many venues that it can be considered as much a part of popular culture as *The Nutcracker Suite*. Images of choreographies and memories of familiar melodies spontaneously arise from time to time in one's mind. The composition and the choreography have displaced natural inspiration to the degree that, when watching one more performance, again, the movements and the melodies can seem oh so familiar. Schmidberger's *Swan Lake* reminds viewers of the composer's inspiration in the simple, elegant poetry of a swan gliding gracefully across a pristine mountain lake, and serves as a reminder of from whence art comes.

In Elizabeth Shannon's *Homage to the Comeback of the American Crocodile*, a life-size gilded crocodile crawls up the gallery wall as easily as a gecko or chameleon across a window screen. The gleaming gold sheen, the natural scale, and the scaling of the wall quickly grab the viewer's attention as any life size golden crocodile crawling up the wall would do. The sheer mesmeric force of the physical being draws one's eyes ever closer and closer until the viewer can examine at close range the details of this survivor of the antediluvian whose very existence challenges all ideas of what it means to be modern. On a different scale, Lia Menna Barreto has arranged hundreds of rubber geckos to form blossom-like patterns which are themselves arranged to form a larger radially symmetrical design like some fantastic lichenous growth or monstrous snow crystal in *Roda des Lagartixas*.

For those who might prefer amphibians instead of reptiles, Frank Fleming's *The Prince* is a duded up frog who, one can easily imagine, would a-wooing go. Distant kin to the intrepid Mr. Toad of *Wind in the Willows* fame, Fleming's Frog-Prince parodies the fairytale trope of the prince who becomes a frog who becomes a prince at the kiss of a princess. As a caricature of all grotesque males who dandy up in a hopeless attempt to make themselves attractive to young woman, such as one might find in a social satire like Goya's *Los Caprichos* or one of Aesop's fables, Fleming's character serves as a reminder that, regardless of how well dressed a frog may seem to be, a frog will always be a frog.

Cindy Wright and Red Grooms are two artists who play with humankind's idealization of nature as a place of special beauty and regeneration. The seductive beauty of the intricately patterned wings of the butterfly in Wright's larger than life *Poisonous Wave* belies its deadly poisonous body. On the flip side is Red Grooms' *L'ours (The Bear)*. Always good for a laugh, a bear walks through the door in Grooms' hand carved wood tableau of men dressed in their manly woodsy costumes in a cabin in the woods. The startled men are pushing away from their rustic chairs and table as they realize

they will soon have more intimate contact with nature than they had anticipated, if fact, they will be the prey instead of the predator.

Perhaps the most unusual work in the exhibition is Veronica Brovall's *Wurzell-Fuellung II*. Toothpicks and kebabs skewers are used to reconstitute that which had been destroyed in their creation. The fusion of human and tree iterates the symbiosis of humankind and nature often represented in the pathetic fallacy of anthropomorphic embodiments of natural forces and the shamanic such as one sees in the work of artists like Rebecca Horne and Joseph Beuys.

A NUMBER OF artists have created ambiguous, implied narratives inspired by the capability of elemental natural forces to overwhelm. With a mindset descended from the ancient practice of personifying life and nature as [Hindu] deities, [and Classical] gods and goddesses, these artists have written their neo-Romantic visions using a syntax of dynamic vortices, vector paths, and pullulating forms first explored in art movements like Impressionism, Italian Futurism, and Anglo-Saxon Vorticism. Each artist is different, some working as romantics (neo-platonism, pan-en-theism, and abstract expressionism), and others just telling a good story.

With the swirling energy characteristic of the graffiti artist he once was, Emilio Perez combines clearly defined shapes, flesh-like tones, and ambiguous forms in *Do the Monkey II*. The composition suggests a story line in the manner of Lichtenstein's transformations of comics. Like Mannerist anamorphic images, Perez' painting teasingly suggests that, if one would only shift one's angle of vision just so, the subject and the narrative would be revealed. Infusing his work with tantalizing possibilities for multiple interpretations, *Do the Monkey II* has a slick quality like a *Ukiyo-e* print partying with an Art Nouveau quality of line.

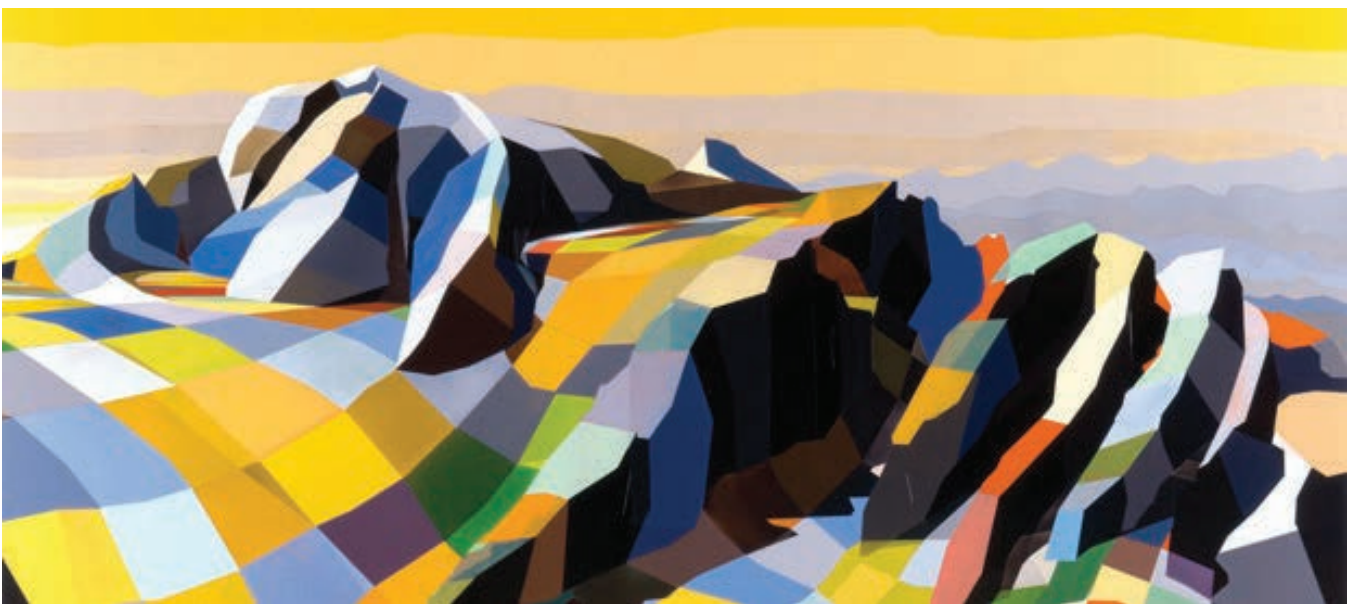
A similar dynamic, visceral quality animates Nicholas Holm's *Untitled I*. An asymmetrical vortex of oxymoronically exploding/implosioning biomorphic forms evokes memories of Picabia's early paintings with their undecipherable names. One imagines an expanding crescendo of light and color and shape, a synaesthetic symphony performed with succulent gestures and clearly defined shapes in a state of continual morphing. The non-allusive title allows each viewer to imagine narratives to complement the formal complexity.

What an appropriate name for Lance Winn's work *What?!* The iteration and continual variation of forms vaguely reminiscent of Arthur B. Dove's *Foghorns* appear to be the expressions of an inner directive that expands and grows outward like a monstrous growth. The range of grays, light yellow greens, and overlapping shapes create a sensation of pulsing expansion, of organic amoebic growth, with forms, shapes, and edges vibrating and oscillating forwards and backwards, inwards and outwards, oozing down and out like an octopus sliding over a rock. With an understanding of the nature of organic life that comes from intuitive understanding with natural laws, Winn recapitulates ontogeny with the creative process.

Louisa Chase's *All Fire All Flame* is aptly named. The artist shares a penchant for warm colors and dynamic compositions with Andrew Schoultz (see discussion below) and Nicholas Holm (see discussions above and below). Subtle shadows are created by light broken up by the low relief of the textured surface. Paint flows across the ground as if poured a great caldera of magma, seething, roiling, bubbling up, and involving into itself like a cosmic conflagration signifying the end of a world or the



Roger Brown: *Saguaro's Revenge*.



Torben Kiehler: *Mont Blanc*.

beginning of a new, or the churning of cytoplasm within a cell. Indeed, it is this double sense that contributes to the painting its evocative energy, like an igneous substance in flux capable of being physical, biological, and psychological simultaneously.

Untitled by Nicholas Holm (since there is more than one work by Holm in the exhibition, the curious reader will have to compare this text to the several works in the exhibition to see which applies to which) is an imagined sub-aquatic world of invented beings viewed through a window below the waterline. The oozing, rhythmically flowing, organic chromo-beings might be an algae laden pond or coastal tidal pool from an unknown planet. With a playful, Calder-esque sense of humor one might even see cute little pellets and puddles of pooh pooh.

The title of David Jones' *Implosive Neuro Polymorphism/Conjoined Arena/Section 3* may have required as much time to create as the work itself. Jones' work is not unlike Chase's *All Fire All Flame* such that one might wonder if there was some direct or indirect contact between the two artists, and who saw whose work first. Jones' *Conjoined Arena* includes allusions to figural forms that is different from the entropic ambiguity of Chase, and one might conceptualize Jones' effort as the product of cross fertilization between Perez and Chase.

Works by other artists involve more explicit narratives. Jen Lis' *Brethren of the Stone: Paul's Visions (Three Worlds Under a Mushroom Cloud Sky)* is a detailed description of a visionary universe of precisely rendered structures rendered in an illustrational style. With the spatial complexity of late medieval last judgment scenes, viewing Lis' work is like looking into a geode that has temporarily opened itself like a womb giving birth. While discovering ever smaller and smaller details one may find oneself inventing a story in which all the details make sense. Mark Chariker's *From Nothing Comes Something* is also done in the style of illustration. The cleanly drawn shapes presented as flows of pure energy moving through layers of space suggest spirit-like beings acting out roles in an unexplained narrative.

In Andrew Schoultz' *Illuminati Slaveship Explosion in the Sky*, bodies have come into being or are in the process of being consumed in a revolving concentric matrix of flame-like forms. The title and warm colors suggest affinities with Turner's *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhoon Coming On* (1840) and the Turner's essays inspired by Goethe's color theory. An apocalyptic quality, and the reference to the Illuminati (an eighteenth century group dedicated to bringing about a new world order that has been recently revived as an anonymous group operating behind the scenes to bring about a new world order), heightens the dramatic tension. Could Schoultz be responding to a conscious or subconscious sympathy with the Illuminati and his activities as an anonymous graffiti artist? The artist's dynamism is not unlike that of the Italian Futurists and their modernist, messianic ideals.

Stephen Heidacker's *Young Man with Bread* melds the technical perfection of rendering and computer animation crossbred with Social Realism. Clear delineation of form and surfaces has been combined with proportional (in the figure) and scale (figure in re building) disjunctions. The result is an odd sort of look, in one moment humorous and the next eerie, like a wedding between the proto-surrealist Scuola Metafisica with its disorienting and delightful (for those with a taste for the unexpected and unusual) ambiguities and Thomas Hart Benton's baroque Regionalism.

The titles for Daniel Dove's *Sequel* and *Eye of Providence* suggest an underlying explanatory narrative but the two paintings can be viewed as essays in formal contrasts independent of any story. Dove's love for geometrically structured spaces, his feeling for tonal harmonies, and the muted color scale contribute to an aura of mystery. If someone were to explain that Dove's style was indebted to some degree to that of American Futurist Joseph Stella, to American Precisionism, and, especially with *Eye of Providence*, to Neo-Geo, it would seem quite believable.

IN ADDITION TO the topographical, animal focused, and implied narrative works, a number of artists have worked with mixed media installations. Lita Albuquerque's *Elle et Lui* (The words in the title, Elle and Lui, French for She and He, reveal the theme) is a retablo composed of a central panel flanked by a narrow vertical section on each side which includes the wall of the exhibition space within the design. A large object framed by the lighter colored wall serves as the central focus like an idol on an altar. This central motif is itself framed by rectangular shapes arranged five high and six wide on which are painted white lines and star shapes against a blue ground like a section of the nighttime sky and signs of the zodiac. Round this a wide, warm toned, dark orange-red metallic copper frame complements the dark blue sky. On each side two blue spiraling forms echo the lines outlining the constellations within the blue as they writhe within their separate frames like the flagella of swimming spermatozoa, or a crocodile.

Thomas Rose's *Out of the Garden* is a playful work that used mixed media in an interplay between two dimensional and three dimensional. In this renewal of late nineteenth century American trompe l'oeil painting, one cannot be sure without close inspection what is what it is, and what is illusion. Employing oil on wood with photographs and other media, Rose creates a composite view similar to Egyptian fresco painting that juxtaposes views from above and views from the side, intermixing painted illusion, photographic verisimilitude, and physical objects referencing themselves.

Brandon Graving's *Ephemera: River with Flowers* is a large embossed monoprnt with blasting sand and river sticks. Inspired by the large shoji screens painted by the Japanese Kano School, *Ephemera* transforms the wall into a huge landscape print, using real sand and wood limbs arranged on the floor in front of the print to extend the illusion in real space. Rectangular shapes and floral motifs ion the surface of the print iterate the flatness of the image while simultaneously affirming the illusionistic in the manner that makes the Kano School shoji so visually appealing. The bold scale, not typically seen in printmaking with a few exceptions like Titian and John Buck woodcuts, contributes to the visual impact.

These few works discussed above can only suggest the rich variety of inspiration and approaches to making art on the general notion of nature. One needs to spend time in order to not be overwhelmed. Do not be concerned if nature's inspiration is not always obvious. The exhibition title may be misleading, or its appropriateness so arcane as to not be worth any time taken to decipher. Experience each work by itself. Take each as it comes. Come back a second, and a third, time. Even then one may find it difficult to assimilate more than a few. □



Mitchell Lonas: Gallery installation, 2010. Gallery Bienvenu.

Wrenched

BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

MITCHELL LONAS
Gallery Bienvenu
New Orleans, LA

AT FIRST GLANCE, Mitchell Lonas' work is three-dimensional. In the introductory piece to his show – *The Wrench Series No. 33* - and most of its successors, a two-dimensional frame confines an absorbent black abyss from which tendrils of fine silver wire appear to thread their ways outwards. They are like streaked light eking out from an iridescent nebula made of a cloudy tangle of line, which, though floating off-center in deep space, anchors light to itself. The shape and mark-making that creates the nebula evokes a nest, a whirl of threads spun together to enclose and hold space. This first impression, however, is mostly an illusion.

In actuality, the works in the “Wrench Series” at Gallery Bienvenu are strictly two-dimensional. Lonas adapts the centuries-old sgraffito technique of scratching through a black background

to reveal a contrasting image. Shining threads of metal sheeting and faint patinas of soft color hidden beneath the darkness meet light after being found through excavation of the surface. When light hits the curvature of the revealed lines, the threads that form the nest shapes seem to remove themselves from the picture plane and push into our space. But, the only sculptural element is the faint burr left ridged in the substrate by the carving tool. As critic Richard Speer notes, the simplicity and straight-forwardness of the meditative marks recalls the austerity and delicacy of Japanese ink painting and calligraphy. There is a suddenness that suggests moments of Zen-like enlightenment in unkempt “threads” spraying from otherwise meticulously woven networks of line. Their seeming spontaneity evokes the moment of finding a nest tucked in the branches of a tree. They are surprising and fresh, and result in images that are compellingly mysterious and almost without precedent.

The wrench is a fictional bird created by Lonas' mother, who found a nest made of hair from his father's horse and gave it to the artist. In a short video created for the artist by the Our Voice agency in Asheville, North Carolina – where the artist resides and



Mitchell Lonas. Courtesy Gallery Bienvenu.

for which he participated in an auction – Lonas reveals that, when asked what bird created it, his mother mistakenly combined the words “finch” and “wren” into the name for one mythical animal. In this show, Lonas displays three of these tiny horse-hair “wrench nests” like precious artifacts. They sit underneath a plexiglass case, protected and pristine. As art from nature, they are marvelously perfect in their construction, immediately reminiscent of home, safety, and evoke the care and time taken to create them. It is easy to imagine an egg softly cupped in these forms, protected by a watchful mother.

The tree from which some nests came is reproduced in *Southern Yellow Pine*, which hangs at the rear of the gallery. Its white background and delicate line work makes it unlike everything else, appearing quieter than the other works. In the design of

the show, this piece has the sense of a mother who once provided nests to her young. Tucked away in the corner, it is unlike and separate from what she helped nurture. Though formally different than the other pieces, it seems appropriately included in the lineage and progression of the work.

The disparity between the softness of the actual nests and the sharp contrasts of the hanging pieces enhances the sense of difference and separateness suggested by the tree. Void and loss are contained in the spaces embraced by the cut lines, which, though delicate, also show the raggedness of the tools made to use them. The sharp contrast also suggests a kind of scientific inquiry; the nests in the hanging pieces seem to float outward from a background to which they might be pinned, like a specimen on display. The images are separated from their natural environments through



Mitchell Lonas: *Cardinal Nest*, 2010. Incised painted aluminum, oil, 59" high.

representational, two-dimensional reproduction and through their isolation in negative space. In a sense, Lonas seems to investigate the forms he chooses as much as celebrate and reinvent their beauty with his glimmering materials.

The titles create a kind of taxonomy that furthers the idea of scientific observation and categorization. Lonas specifies the shapes of nest by type of bird, as in *Robin Nest No. 1*. This form is densely knit with lines that swirl toward a solid rim and enclose a long and narrow space. In contrast, Carolina Wren Nest loosely encircles a soft, dark space accented by wild tendrils. The peculiarity of each form suggests the uniqueness of home, of individual protection and nurturing met distinctly through the features of these structures. Other nests are given only numbers, indicating one in a series, such as Nest No. 404; it is like the natural nests under the plexiglass in shape, but seems more generalized than the others by its mechanical reproduction on panel. This is perhaps to suggest that sometimes, home is wherever it can be found, or taken.

Lonas states that his aim was to create “something original” through unconventional means. While there are formal precedents for the work, the objects that result from his process are neither painting nor drawing nor sculpture. They are in a category by themselves. The contrast in both the form and levels of interpretation provokes conversation, as does the uniqueness of their making. They embody oppositions of lost and found, occupied and abandoned, floating and grounded. The tension is part of their beauty, as is the mystery of the illusions of space they create and the unlikely combination of materials and effects. Lonas has created an intriguing body of work that suggests both the familiarity of home and displacement from it, summing up a drama of existence in what ultimately reads as a quiet spindle of threaded experiences. □



A still from *Okuribito*.

Departing for the Sweet Hereafter

BY JOHN MOSIER

OKURIBITO
Directed by Yojiro Takata

EVER SINCE THAT fateful night in Karlovy Vary in 1978 when a group of somewhat inebriated international film critics managed to persuade the Motion Picture Academy's talent scout that a fourth-rate Soviet film about a dog was worthy of an Oscar nomination, the idea that the award given to best foreign film had any meaning has pretty much gone down the memory hole. Increasingly, with every town in the universe hosting a film festival and giving out awards, and with a growing divergence between critical judgments and audience responses, the whole notion of awards is increasingly questionable.

To the extent that nowadays, when the tag line "best foreign language picture" appears, the tendency is an indifferent shrug.

So to the small but vocal to the point of tediousness minority who insist that art has to be politically polarizing, shocking, and innovative, the Japanese film *Okuribito* is simply a confirmation of how far the art slash industry has fallen, and how relentlessly commercial Hollywood remains. Just imagine! Giving an award to a film that doesn't sensitize/radicalize us to the plight of the poor, oppressed (fill in the blank here with words of your choice) and demand that we storm the barricades of the greedy,

evil, and downright wicked (select the company, country, or individual all right-thinking people currently loathe and despise).

That failing aside, *Okuribito* is a pretty good film. The situation it considers is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, to the extent that one suspects that the first reaction of any viewer is on the order of 'do they really do all this stuff there?' But the film strikes universal notes deep inside. By the end of it, a good many viewers are apt to strike a contrary note: 'I wish we did things that way.'

The explanation for both remarks, as well as the title, is a tad complicated. The English title is *Departures*, which is, unfortunately, also the name of the glossy travel magazine *American Express* sends out to its elite tier customers. As if that isn't confusing enough, the main publicity shot shows a man playing a cello with a landscape in the background. Taken together, they're not very helpful, and may very well constitute the single worst marketing and public relations snafu of the internal film industry.

But then neither Yôjirô Takita, who directed the film, nor Kundo Koyamawho adapted the story from Aoki Shinmon's autobiographical book, had any notion of making a film that would have any sort of audience outside of Japan. An understandable mistake, given the subject.

Okuribito is a Japanese word that refers to a concept that



A still from *Okuribito*.

basically does not exist elsewhere. Literally it means “those who send,” as in “those who send them on the way,” the “them” being clearly understood as the deceased (in Japan, anyway). So although the main character, young Daigo Kobayashi (Masahiro Motoki), actually is a cellist, his main job is being a *Nokanshi*. That’s not a word we have either. Basically, a *nokanshi* goes to the house of the deceased, where the body is laid out on a mat (as in old fashioned wakes in the Anglosphere), and prepares the body for being put into the coffin and transported to the crematorium.

As a result of the peculiar Japanese mixture of Buddhism and Shintoism that dominates Japanese culture, most people are cremated, even Christians. Funeral services end not at the cemetery with interment but at the crematorium with immolation. The practice is well nigh universal in Japan, although there are cemeteries. Not very many, judging from Japanese movies. About the only movie that depicts an actual burial is the wildly bizarre and erotic (albeit a trifle on the sado-masochistic side) *Beautiful Prey*.

Obviously, we don’t have any of these concepts. When people die here, they’re hauled off to the morgue, then to the mortuary, are prepared out of sight, embalmed, encoffined, and then buried. Whether the deceased is ever seen after death is a matter of individual preference, like whether or not there’s an actual burial service.

So there’s nothing in the rites detailed so scrupulously in this film that relates to anything anywhere else. *Departures* celebrates an aspect of Japanese life that’s even more alien to outsiders than the arranged marriage of *Maborosi*.

Basically, the *nokanshi* arrive at the house of the deceased, who’s laid out on a mat with the face and body covered, the family members all arrayed, kneeling. The profu-

sion of food and drink is probably the only connection between this aspect of Japanese life and the west, but even that’s tenuous. Once upon a time, wakes were held in the home, and food and drink was served—often with mixed results, as the famous Irish folk song, “Tim Finnegan’s Wake,” attests. But that was then. Nowadays everything is held within the carefully sanitized and hideously cheerful confines of the funeral home.

Once the *nokanshi* arrive, and greet everyone, they prepare the body for encoffinement. The film doesn’t make the transition very clear. The company where Daigo works sells coffins, and the vehicle they travel in is hearse shaped, but it’s not until the very end of the film that we’ve witnessed enough to understand the entire process.

As the family watches, the *nokanshi* cleanse the deceased, dress them, and even apply makeup, so that by the time they’re finished, the person’s face appears natural and in repose, appears to be sleeping rather than dead.

Although this bare description makes the process sound rather morbid, as it unfolds over and over again in the film, we see that it is actually a ritual, one in which the body is treated with great respect as well as privacy. Although the ritual seems largely devoid of any religious overtones, it unfolds as solemnly and precisely as any funeral service.

Equally remarkable is the extent to which the transformation of the corpse is the change from the death mask to a countenance that is naturalistic and relaxed. It is a far cry from the stiff waxen poses that can be seen in the standard funeral home display.

One says transformation, but the best word is metamorphosis. The end result reclaims the body from the ravages of death, and the relatives are both audience and participant in the process.

The ritual allows for closure, and the *nokanshi*'s respectful handling of the body makes him a sort of proxy for the family's bereavement.

It also allows for small, personal touches. Two schoolgirls want their grandmother to have a pair of their strange schoolgirl socks, because she always admired them. Another girl picks out her Mother's favorite lipstick, and her grieving husband, seeing her in those final moments, breaks down, exclaiming she's now so beautiful.

Although the film works pretty well as documentary of interest to morticians and cultural observers, it is by no means a documentary film. Daigo is a cellist (hence the poster publicity). He has great ambitions in that regard, has spent every last yen on buying an expensive cello. He's even managed to snag a job in a symphony orchestra, and at the start of the film we see them giving a concert. Not any people in the audience, so it's no real surprise that at the conclusion, its announced that the orchestra is finished, is being disbanded.

So Daigo has no job, owes a fortune on his cello, and, as a musician, has little that makes him employable, talented musicians being as plentiful in Japan as everywhere else. His only recourse is to take his wife and move from the city back to the small town where he grew up, since his Mother, now deceased, left him the family house.

He sees a somewhat mangled advertisement in a local newspaper, which gives him the idea that it's a firm looking for a travel agent. He's not happy when he discovers his error, but the money is impossible to resist.

At first we assume that his negative reaction is caused by the fact that the job involved working with dead bodies. That's certainly the case, and when, after having been called to the scene of an old lady who's apparently been dead for some time, he comes home and sees what his wife is preparing for dinner . . . well, his stomach can't handle the contrast between decaying flesh and food.

That's understandable. However, as the story unfolds, we begin to realize that there's more to it than squeamishness. *Nokanshi* have a rather low status in Japan. The days of clans and samurai, great warlords and the geisha, are pretty much over, along with *bushido* and kimonos. In fact, in contemporary Japan young women have to take lessons in order to learn how to wear the latter.

But beneath the surface, remains of the world of class and caste are still operating. Daigo's wife is a pleasant and empty-headed young woman who seems to be able to accept serious reverses with impunity (like being broke and losing your job), but she can't deal with his new profession, and when she finds out what it is, she's so mortified that she leaves him. In that sense, she's somewhat of a cross between the chorus of a classical Greek tragedy and everywoman.

But like everything else in this film, that realization sneaks up on us. Initially, for most viewers, Mika Kobayashi (Ryoko Hirose), Daigo's wife, is the weak link. She moves from relentlessly cheerful to distraught, abandons her husband, and then, when she discovers she's pregnant, returns—only to put more pressure on him to quit. What will he be able to tell his children?

Compared to Ikuei Sasaki (Tsutomu Yamazaki), the older man who runs the agency, and his enigmatic female assistant, Mika comes across as a total ditz, and her behavior seems completely contrived.

It takes a while to grasp the point. Mika is a walking, talking, giggling, stereotype of the Japanese female, and deliberately so. She's pretty but not beautiful, docile, obsequious, cheerful to the point of being totally superficial, conventional to the point that

makes you cringe. It takes some reflection to realize that this is exactly right. Just as Daigo is the proxy for the family's feelings towards their loved one, Mika is the audience's proxy for their feelings about his profession. Playing with stereotypes is tricky, but there's an interesting dramatic payoff when it works, as it does here.

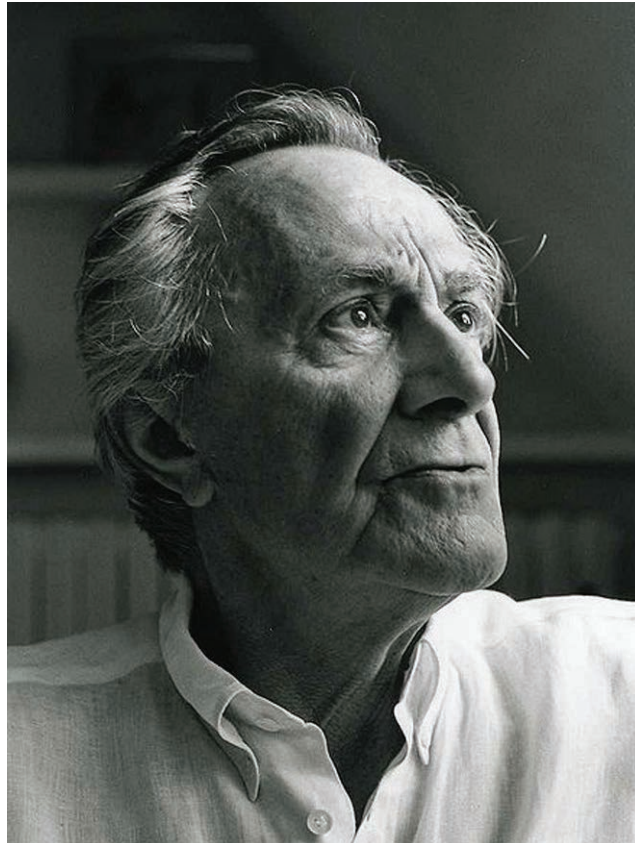
First we see how Daigo brings relief to the bereaved. As we see the ritual repeated, we discover that, but then so does he. The chief character and the audience are on the same trajectory. Incidentally, this process is a great example of doing something that only the cinema can do, as it shows not only the ritual, which we begin to understand through repetition, but it shows us the comfort it brings to the bereaved, bit by bit. What's even more impressive is that even though the whole notion is completely alien to western audiences, through repetition we begin to understand how the rite works, appreciate the comfort it brings.

When Mika returns, the trajectory is repeated. When they moved to this small town, there was an older woman, a family friend of Daigo's, who instantly took a liking to her. She runs the local bath house, the two women become close. When she dies, Daigo is called to prepare her. As Mika watches, she goes through the same experience that both Daigo and the movie's audience have had earlier. Although the status of *nokanshi* is problematic, the relief they bring to the bereaved attests to their importance.

The film ends with Daigo preparing his dead father, whom he has never seen, as he abandoned his Mother when he was an infant. This final twist suggests that the preparation rite is as important to the person performing it as to those watching, which is an intriguing insight.

Although the theme of the film is serious, there's an unexpectedly humorous side to it. Daigo's introduction to his new profession is replete with all sorts of blackly humorous touches, such as when he discovers that he's going to be the model for a training film on how bodies are prepared.

But much of the humor comes through strategic repetition, as in the marvelous eating scene towards the end of the film. Attitudes towards food have already surfaced: Daigo's retching when he sees Mika's dinner preparations, the transformation of the hostile widower, who rushes out to give the two men some food left over from the wake. But now it's Christmas, Daigo's wife has left him, so he's sitting in the cramped quarters of the office, together with his boss and his assistant. All three of them are devouring fried chicken with obvious relish. There's no dialogue, just shots of them pigging out, enjoying life to its fullest. In the midst of death, life goes on, might as well enjoy it. And afterwards, he plays for them on the cello. A very nice scene in a surprisingly moving film. To anyone doubtful about the extent to which the cinema can leap across cultural boundaries, educate as well as move and delight, *Departures* is the perfect antidote. □



Jean-Francois Lyotard.

Postmodernism and Network Capitalism

BY STEPHEN R. BACHMANN

POSSIBLY 100% of all religious controversy and maybe 80% of all philosophical controversy might be found in the following verses from the gospel of John:

[1] In the beginning was the word, and the word was with god, and the word was god. ... [14] and the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld the glory of him.

The traditional interpretation of these lines is that Jesus is and was the Word, He is and was with God, and he assumed human form in the form of Jesus and stayed around long enough for people to appreciate this.

So far, all well and good, but the interesting stuff begins when one returns to the original Greek and note that the Greek word for “word” is “logos.” Lidell and Scott’s Abridged Greek Lexicon tells us that logos is

“I. the word by which the inward thought is expressed: also II. The inward thought or reason itself.” [416]

The interesting stuff continues when one explores the gap between (I) and (II); or, more precisely the gap between “word” and “inward thought.” Is a word the same as the inward thought it tries to articulate? Can a word (or words) ever adequately express any inward thought or internal experience? How about through treatises, philosophy, theology, novels, or poetry?

By way of example, if I use the word “lemon” how can I be sure it will adequately intersect with my listener’s responses when she hears the word? For me “lemon” may be associated with acidic visual sensations of yellow associated with Bonnard, or a singular tryst with a former flame when we drank tea—my friend’s

sensations may be infected by the fact that some spoiled lemonade made her sick for a full month during an otherwise pleasant supper.

The contrast between the logos as expressed word and logos as internal thought is elaborated by Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998) who spent much of his career discussing the difference between discours and figure. Figure is “the artistic experience which cannot be incorporated into signification.” [323] Figure is to be contrasted to discours, which, “at best ... can only ever struggle to grasp figure, which becomes the core of the real that cannot be contained in a representation.” [324]

Lyotard’s figure correlates to Kant’s “sublime,” which “does not come from the object (e.g., nature) but is an index of a unique state of mind which recognizes its incapacity to find an object adequate to the sublime feeling.” [328] The oppositions can be summarized with sublime, figure, and logos as inward thought on the one side, and mere discours or logos as word on the other.

Religion and philosophy explode over the degree to which any gaps do in fact exist between logos as word/discours and logos as thought/figure. Islam is fairly straightforward on the matter: God speaks directly through the words of the Quran, the Quran is written in Arabic, so if you want to know God, learn Arabic. For Catholics the question becomes a little more complicated, because whether Yaweh spoke Hebrew or no, Jesus spoke Aramaic. However, Pope Benedict solves the problem in a few sentences:

“The basic reason that man can speak with God is because God himself is speech, word. ...“In the beginning was the Word [logos], and the Word [logos] was in communication with God.” . . . [T]he Christian mysteries are Logos-mysteries. They reach beyond the limits of human reason, but they do not lead into the formlessness of frenzy or the dissolution of rationality in a cosmos understood as irrational. [162, 174]

For Benedict there is no gap between word and thought. Language can apprehend anything because language/word/reason equals God. For his part, the Lutheran martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written that

“we regard reason as having been entirely involved in the Fall, while according to Catholic dogmatics reason still retained a certain essential integrity.” [146n5].

It would be safe to argue that Bonhoeffer might accept Lyotard’s argument that gaps do in fact exist between logos as word/discours and logos as thought/figure. Certainly it stands consistent with premier currents in thoughts produced by Lutherans, e.g., leaps of faith (Kierkegaard) and a-rational vitalism (Nietzsche), existentialism (Sartre) and disbelief in absolute proofs (Goedel) or objectivity (Heisenberg). Beyond that, it provides an interesting commentary on the words of John. If Jesus is logos in Pope Benedict’s sense, everything He is about is amenable to human apprehension. However, if Jesus is logos in the sense of an articulation which is inherently inadequate, then comprehension of Him eternally remains an open enterprise. (And consistent with this, one might observe how the New Testament presents at least 5 versions of Jesus (Paul’s is the fifth); and that Jesus did not help Benedict--or Mohammed--by leaving behind anything in writing.)

Before turning to our next point we might note how the philosophical position of Benedict correlates to conservatism and fundamentalism. These people believe that human conceived categories fit reality precisely. Their path opens directly to dogma, because dogmatists believe they can perfectly apprehend what is natural, authentic and original. For

these people, gays create existential panic by challenging all the confident categories set out in the Old Testament. For these people there is such thing as a U.S. Constitution whose “original intent” can be ascertained and applied in all places and at all times. If nothing else, these people live in a comforting world.

Whatever his status as a theologian or philosopher, Lyotard has made a place for himself in art/cultural history, given that his 1979 essay *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) is often said to represent the beginning of Postmodern thought. Whatever may have happened to the concept of “postmodern” since then, Lyotard’s stance on the matter is relatively clear, at least light of his differentiation between word/discours and thought/figure and his insistence on the gap that exists between them.

In his essay, Lyotard argues

Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enters what is known as the postmodern age. [3] ...That is what the postmodern world is all about. Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative [41] ...Here, the relation between the scientist’s statement and “what ‘nature’ says” seems to be organized as a game without perfect information. The modalization of the scientist’s statement reflects that fact that the effective, singular statement (the token) that nature will produce is unpredictable. All that can be calculated is the probability that the statement will say one thing rather than another. [57] ... We no longer have recourse to the grand narrative [60] ... Consensus has become an outmoded and suspect value [66] ... This orientation [which favors a multiplicity of finite meta-arguments] corresponds to the course that the revolution of social interaction is currently taking; the temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family, and international domains, as well as in political affairs. This evolution is of course ambiguous: the temporary contract is favored by the system due to its greater flexibility, lower cost, and the creative turmoil of its accompanying motivations—all of these factors contribute to increased operativity. In any case, there is no question here of proposing a “pure” alternative to the system: we all now know, as the 1970s come to a close, that an attempt at an alternative of that kind would end up resembling the system it was meant to replace. [66]

Against the “grand narrative” Lyotard presents an alternative idea of “paralogy.” I couldn’t find the word in my Webster’s, but in my Greek lexicon I found “para-logos,” translated as “beyond calculation, unexpected, unaccountable.” The “quest for paraology”

... bears witness to the existence of another goal ... knowledge of language games as such and the decision to assume responsibility for their rules and effects. ...the stakes would be knowledge (or, information if you will) and the reserve of knowledge—language’s reserve of possible utterances is inexhaustible [66, 67]

Thus, with Lyotard, there exists word, discours and logos on the one side; and on the opposite side there is thought/figure and paralogos. The postmodern condition is that which accepts the latter side as controlling.

It should be acknowledged that Lyotard does not help to clarify things (for people in the art world) when he applies his analysis to art (“Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?”) His world of word/discours/logos versus thought/figure/paralogos remains, but on the obtuse bad side he places academics and realists. On the intelligent “good” side he places modern AND postmodern artists:

The task which academism had assigned to realize: to preserve various consciousness from doubt ... to stabilize the referent... the painter and novelist must refuse to lend themselves to such therapeutic uses [74] Realism, whose only definition is that it intends to avoid the question of reality implicated in

that of art, always stands somewhere between academicism and kitsch [75]

I shall call modern the art which devotes its "little technical expertise" ... to present the fact that the unrepresentable exists.... [78] ... modernity takes place in the withdrawal of the real and according to the sublime relation between the presentable and the conceivable ... [79, 80] The work of Proust and Joyce both allude to something which does not allow itself to be made present... [80]

In the end, Lyotard suggests that if there exists any difference between modern and postmodern art, it is that the former mourns the gap between word/discours/logos versus thought/figure/paralagos, while the latter celebrates it:

Modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form ... continues to offer the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure.... The post modern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them, but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented. [81]

Lyotard concludes his essay by explicating the political implications of

... We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible ... can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return to terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality. The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us active that differences and save the honor of the name. [81-82]

So far so good. Lyotard's analysis seems compelling to the point of sounding like conventional wisdom or common sense. Yet as devastating as his critique of "general narrative" in general might be, one "general narrative" in particular might claim to right of reply. That "general narrative" comes from Karl Marx, and that "general narrative" alleges that ideas are determined and limited by political economics from which they emanate. Political economy is structure, ideas are superstructure. "Of course Lyotard will sound like conventional wisdom or common sense," Herr Marx would say, "this is because his theories grow out of material practices, and that is why we call it superstructure--and sometimes we call it false consciousness."

In allowing Marx a riposte to Lyotard, I will rely on the work of two other French academics, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, and their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. I acknowledge in advance that whenever I refer to them, I may be being inadequate, inaccurate, crude or unfair.

Boltanski and Chiapello are sociologists. Their general stance is that any social/political/economic order requires a narrative (which they call Spirit, esprit, and which I would be inclined to call "ideology"). Not only will the narrative explain to people what they are doing in society and how they fit; it will also argue what is, is right; that the strong are not just strong, but great, and deserve their desserts; and that the weak should accept the status quo as legitimate and natural. The narrative need not be adopted by all members or society; it need only elicit support from enough people who are ready, willing, and able to join it and then enforce it. Thus, the narrative for medieval society claimed something to the effect that

God set up an order where aristocrats fought, priests prayed, and peasants ploughed. While it remained "successful," this narrative managed to mobilize sufficient social actors to maintain the system; and thus, e.g., medieval society did not rely solely on the brute force of the aristocracy. The Church gave avenues of advancement for the talented but ill born, and they in turn helped to legitimate and channel the violence of the aristocracy; and, with their (the clergy's) education, keep track of their (the aristocracy's) wealth.

Of course as Lyotard might tell us, there always exists a gap between description and reality. Narratives rise or fall on the degree to which significant and sufficient people perceive the gap as narrow. For Boltanski and Chiapello, the gap is usually evaluated from either a social critique perspective (which focuses on things like poverty and exploitation); and from an artistic critique perspective, (which on issues of liberation and authenticity). When the gaps exposed by these critiques grow too wide, there will be change, sometimes involving rebellion or revolution. For example, the medieval narrative experienced its cracks when enough peasants decided their poverty and exploitation had grown intolerable. In France it dissolved when members of a growing and aggressive "third estate" decided that the medieval narrative failed to allow them sufficient liberty and wealth; and failed to justify the peacock and perverse shenanigans of the aristocracy and clergy. Again, a narrative need not enjoy the assent of ALL members of society. What it does need is the support from enough persons of power, wealth and/or intelligence to keep its system going; to mobilize and recruit talented people into the system; and to protect it if people subscribing to alternative narratives wish to challenge the incumbent system.

The focus of Boltanski and Chiapello is capitalism, which they define in the following terms

...an imperative to unlimited association of capital by formally peaceful means. The constant reintroduction of capital into the economic circuit with a view to deriving a profit---that is to say, increasing the capital, which will in turn be reinvested---is the basic mark of capitalism, endowing it with the dynamic and transformative power that have fascinated even the most hostile of observers. [4-5] ... In many respects capitalism is an absurd system: in it, wage earners have lost ownership of the fruits of their labour and the possibility of pursuing a working life free of subordination. As for capitalists, they find themselves yoked to an interminable, insatiable process, which is utterly abstract and disassociated from the satisfaction of consumption needs, even of a luxury kind. For two such protagonists, integration into the capitalist process is singularly lacking in justifications. [7]

For Boltanski and Chiapello, capitalism has existed in three forms, each with its own justifying narrative, and each facing its own social and artistic critiques.

The first phase (spanning roughly 1780-1880) might be called family capitalism, where the family firm constitutes the premier operating entity. The winners are celebrated as risk taking heroes (e.g., Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Rockefeller). The system is justified by the emancipation it provides to people in terms of liberty, wealth, and progress, particularly when compared with the corrupt and stupid Old Regimes which it displaced. (Progress, protection, and opportunity beat potato famines, Prussians and pogroms) Yet family capitalism faces artistic critique when artists call the heroes boring and anal (cf. Balzac and his monstrosities, and Baudelaire and his dandy). It faces social critique when critics mark the radical economic depredations that are still visited on many people (e.g., Dickens and squalor, Engels and the English working class).

The second phase (spanning roughly 1880-1980) might be called managerial capitalism, where the large corporate enterprise becomes the premier operating entity. The winners are celebrated as rational mandarins (Alfred Sloan, Robert McNamara). The system is justified by the emancipation it provides to people in terms of the security, welfare, mass consumption, and economic rationalization, particularly when compared with the chaos and radical poverty of the family capitalism which it displaced. Yet family capitalism faces social critique when critics note its inequality and its degradation of work (Taylorism). The artistic critique arises when artists mock the heroes as conformist, authoritarian organization men (“squares”) and condemn the degradation of consumption (massification and standardization in markets). [440]

The third phase (beginning around 1980) might be called network capitalism, where the network is the premier operating entity. The winners are celebrated as team leaders. (who...“manage not in an authoritarian fashion, but by listening to others, with tolerance, recognizing and respecting differences” [115]) The production methods of Ford give way to the production methods of Toyota. The system is justified economically by allusions to adaptation, change, innovation and flexibility [71]. Much of the emancipation it supposedly provides derives from the artistic critique of the second managerial phase. [24] The watchwords become autonomy, self-realization, liberation, authenticity, emotion, creativity [the cult of] individualism, etc. Consumption is adjusted to this ethos, with

goods that are always new (the famous imperative of continual managerial innovation) wise novelty and limited distribution when they are first introduced temporarily assuages anxieties about massification. [99] ...the critique developed by intellectuals or artists is rapidly hailed as “biting,” “disturbing,” or “radical” by the major media and adversaries whom it was supposed to scandalize. ... They have thus contributed to a market demand for products labeled “transgressive,” [and] “taboo” [313]

If the reader senses that Boltanski and Chiapello entertain their reservations concerning this network phase of capitalism, she is correct

Capitalism attracts actors, who realize that they have hitherto been oppressed, by offering them a certain form of liberation that masks new types of oppression. [425] The promised liberation is in fact replaced by a new form of slavery [427]

Network capitalism is vulnerable to social critique in that it destroys economic security: employment is casual (subject to vagaries of outsourcing and immediate demand”), social safety nets become unrealistic.

Network capitalism stands vulnerable to artistic critique in the workplace because work discipline becomes internalized the only solution is for people to control themselves, which involves transferring constraints from external organizational mechanisms to people’s internal dispositions, if not being [80, 465]:

A multiplicity of mechanisms ... have aimed to develop people’s involvement in work, to encourage them to assume responsibility and exercise self-control. Preserving jobs or gaining access to one, more flexible and versatile ways of organizing work, which are gradually replacing old Taylorist methods, has provided an opportunity to secure greater commitment in the work situation and a reduction in critical distance from it. [285] ... The transition from control to self-control ... may be regarded as the most significant features of the evolution of management in the last thirty years. [81]

Outside the workplace, network capitalism confronts desire, liberation, authenticity, and real human relations, and turns

them into commodities (e.g., tourism, the hotel business and catering, adventure holidays, fashion, interior decoration and design, cultural activities, personal services, leisure, green consumerism, ecological marketing, 442, 443, 444, 447, 448). Network capitalism provides “the liberation offered by consumption,” “liberation via the commodity,” the commodification of desire [437-438]

Additionally, network capitalism is antithetical to traditional notions of authenticity:

In effect, the deconstruction of the old notion of authenticity—as loyalty to self, as the subject’s resistance to pressure from others, as a demand for truth in the sense of conformity to an ideal—goes hand in glove with the concept of a network world. In a connexionist world, loyalty to truth defined by the identity between a representation and an original is regarded as a failure to understand the infinite variability of the beings who circulate in network.. [451]

To adjust to a connexionist world, people must prove sufficiently malleable to pass through different universes while changing properties. ... Considered from the standpoint of this new model of excellence, permanency and especially constancy to oneself, or enduring attachment to various “values,” are open to criticism as misplaced, even pathological inflexibility, and, depending on the context, as inefficiency, rudeness, intolerance and an inability to communicate. [461]

Thus transformation of a coherent person into temporary fragments is the essence of network capital.

Social life today is no longer presented in the form of a series of rights and duties towards an extended familial community, as in a domestic world; or in the form of the wage-earning class within a hierarchical body whose rungs one climbs, where one spends one’s whole career, and where professional activity is clearly separate from the private sphere, as in an industrial world. In a [network] world, social life is composed of a proliferation of encounters and temporary, but reactivatable connections with various groups, operated at potentially considerable social, professional, geographical and cultural distance. The project is the occasion and reason for the connection. It temporarily assembles a very disparate group of people ... [104]

Boltanski and Chiapello’s depiction of network capitalism seems viable, and so do their critiques. If problems arise, they occur when one realizes the degree to which Boltanski and Chiapello’s network capitalism correlates with Lyotard’s postmodernism. Recall Lyotard’s remarks from 1979:

This orientation [which favors a multiplicity of finite meta-arguments] corresponds to the course that the revolution of social interaction is currently taking; the temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family, and international domains, as well as in political affairs. This evolution is of course ambiguous: the temporary contract is favored by the system due to its greater flexibility, lower cost, and the creative turmoil of its accompanying motivations—all of these factors contribute to increased operativity. [66]

It would seem that what Lyotard celebrates as postmodernism is what Boltanski and Chiapello might condemn as a pathology of network capitalism; and that Boltanski and Chiapello might suggest to Lyotard that his postmodernism is simply a symptom of that pathology. Is Lyotard guilty of yammering mere superstructure for and from the emerging structures of network capitalism? Is Lyotard now able to dismiss the “grand narrative” because big, managerial capitalism is giving way to a more segmented and fluid network capitalism? A couple sentences after the preceding citation, Lyotard writes “We should be happy that the tendency toward the temporary contract is ambigu-



Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

ous: it is not totally subordinated to the goal of the system, yet the system tolerates it.” [66] In response, B&C might contend that the “temporary contract” has in fact become the system. In spite of himself, Lyotard may be developing a new grand narrative; or worse, an ideology to disguise a new system of oppression.

In the end the question may turn on what it means to have a grand narrative. Boltanski and Chiapello, for example, do not claim to have some “grand narrative” of their own. They do, however, claim the right to critique. But once one claims the right to critique, to that degree one is advancing some implicit grand narrative. If Boltanski and Chiapello embrace a social critique (which focuses on things like poverty and exploitation); or an artistic critique (which focuses on issues of liberation and authenticity); then the fact is that they are taking a stand AGAINST poverty and exploitation, and FOR freedom and authenticity. Some grand narrative some where is telling them that poverty and exploitation are bad things, and that freedom and authenticity are good things. But these propositions can be disputed. Social Darwinism might say that losers are losers and deserve to be poor and exploited. Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor would say that freedom and authenticity are pish posh. Some grand narrative some where is telling B&C that poverty and exploitation are bad things, and that freedom and authenticity are good things.

Lyotard stands in a similar situation. Whatever he says about “grand narratives,” the fact is that he stands for something. He likes “paralogy.” More specifically he wants

groups discussing meta-prescriptives [to be supplied with] the information they usually lack for making knowledgeable decisions.... The line to follow ... is, in principle, quite simple: give the public free access to the memory and data banks. [67]

In other words, Lyotard likes things to be open, and

thinks every body or group should be allowed to participate in the general conversation. But these propositions too can be disputed. Authoritarians and fundamentalists do NOT like things to be open. Elitists don’t think any Tom or Jane should be able to formulate moralities. Capitalists don’t like to give anything away for free, especially information in this new economic world we see developing in front of us. (That is why we read so much about copyright, trademarks, and intellectual “property” these days.)

Perhaps Lyotard and B&C are advocating a grand narrative which remains conscious of itself as a grand narrative, and which will remain open to self-revision. There is a certain appeal to this. Yet when Boltanski and Chiapello describe the brave new world, votaries of Lyotard must realize the degree to which their postmodernism may be being co-opted as an apology for or emanation of the brave new world.

In the end, it may be too early to tell what is going on here, because we are in the middle of a new form of life which is developing, viz., the order of network capitalism. In *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel observes:

One word about giving instruction as to what the world ought to be. Philosophy in any case always comes on the scene too late to give it. As the thought of the world, it appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. ... When philosophy paints its grey [theory] in [an aging] grey [world], then has a shape of life grown old. [Philosophy’s grey in grey] cannot be rejuvenated, but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk. [12-13]

I have suggested that Boltanski and Chiapello have parceled capitalism into three phases, from about 1780-1880, and 1880 to 1980, and 1980 onwards; which suggest that Minerva’s owl may not be ready to fly until 2080.

□



Liz Noble at Brunner Gallery.

Calendar

COMPILED BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

A GALLERY FOR FINE PHOTOGRAPHY – 241 Chartres St. 568-1313. www.agallery.com - **Herman Leonard**: “Above All Enjoy the Music,” November 7 - December 15; Sebastião Salgado, October 2 - January 1, 2011

ACADEMY GALLERY– 5256 Magazine Street. 899-8111. Annual Miniature Exhibition, November; closed in December.

ARIODANTE GALLERY– 535 Julia St., 524-3233. www.ariodantegallery.com - **Susan Landry** (reverse painted glass), **Claudia Lynch** (drawings and giclees), **Chester Allen** (jewelry), and **Craig Taylor** (wood works), November 6-30; **Louise Guidry** (painting), **Adriana Penco** (jewelry), and **Christine Ledoux** (mosaic), December 7-31.

ARTHUR ROGER GALLERY – 432 Julia St. 522-1999. www.arthurrogergallery.com - **Nicole Charbonnet** (paintings), November 6 - December 24; Diffuse: **Stephanie Patton** (video and sculpture) November 6 - 30; Hell Hell Hell/Heaven Heaven Heaven: **Lesley Dill** (installation), thru November 27.

BECA GALLERY– 527 St. Joseph St., 566-8999; Albuquerque, NM. www.becagallery.com; <http://www.becaicad.org/>. BECA Benefit Art Auction, thru December; Article 19, November 2-16.

BARRISTER’S GALLERY – 2331 St. Claude Ave. 525-2767. www.barristersgallery.com - **Like A Prayer: Reflections of the 21st C Feminine**, group show, November 13 - December 30

BRUNNER GALLERY– 215 N. Columbia St. Covington, 985-893-0444. www.brunnergallery.com - Fall for Art: Group Exhibition featuring **Rick Brunner** (sculpture), **George Dunbar** (mixed media), **Babette Beaulieu** (sculpture) and **Mary Monk** (painting/drawing), October 16 - November 6; Three Rivers Festival: **Liz Noble** (painting) and **Mike Swain** (mixed media drawings), November 13 - December 31, 2010

CAROL ROBINSON GALLERY – 840 Napoleon Ave. at Magazine. 895-6130. www.carolrobinsongallery.com - **Poesia: Robert Malone** (painting), November 6 - December; continuing virtual exhibition

COLE PRATT GALLERY – 3800 Magazine St. 891-6789. www.coleprattgallery.com - **Bill Iles** (paintings), October 31 - November 28; **Leslie Addison** and **George Yerger** (photography), November 28 - December 26

COLLINS DIBOLL ART GALLERY – Loyola University. 861-5456. <http://www.loyno.edu/dibollgallery/> - Courses of Empire:



George Havard Yerger at Cole Pratt Gallery.

Allan de Souza (photography), November 9 - January 20

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER – 900 Camp St. 210-0224. www.cacno.org - **Aye-Ti Mounn Yo** (“Yes to the people and children of Haiti”): A cross cultural conversation between the children of New Orleans and Haiti, November 6 - January 9; Elements of Nature: Selections from the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, November 6 - February 27.

d.o.c.s. gallery – 709 Camp St. 524-3936. www.docsgallery.com - **Nikki Jackson** (sculpture), November 6 - December 2; **Busch** (painting), December 4 - February 3.

GALLERY BIENVENU – 518 Julia St. 525-0518. www.gallery-bienvenu.com - Recent Sculpture: **Pablo Atchugarry** (sculpture), October 2 - November 22. **Jose Maria Cundin**: Twelve Anti-Portraits (painting), December 2 - January 29, 2011.

HERIARD CIMINO GALLERY – 440 Julia St. 525-7300. www.

heriardcimino.com - **Elizabeth Shannon** (sculpture) and **Beth Dary** (sculpture and encaustic), November 6 - December 1; Louisiana Artists (group show) and **Loren Schwerd** (sculpture), December 4 - 31

HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION – 533 Royal St. 523-4662. www.hnoc.org - **Mignon Faget**: A Life in Art and Design (jewelry), thru January 2; Residents and Visitors: Twentieth-Century Photographs of Louisiana, September 29-March 27

ISAAC DELGADO FINE ARTS GALLERY – 615 City Park Ave. 361-6620. Everyday Hybrid (group show), November 11 - January 27.

JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY – 400a Julia St. 522-5471. www.jonathanferraragallery.com - Other Living Things: **Brian Borello** (mixed media), September 25 - November 22; Vines and Leaves: **Daisuke Shintani** (sculpture), November 5 - December



Jose Maria Cundin at Gallery Bienvenu.

28; *Déjà vu All Over Again: Generic Art Solutions* (photography and performance), October 20 - February 13

LE MIEUX GALLERIES – 332 Julia St. 522-5988. www.lemieux-galleries.com - Metaphor Boxes and Related Drawings: **Beverly Erdreich** (sculpture and drawing), November 6 - 27; Works Curated by Dan Cameron: **Sam Still** (drawing), November 6-27; Paintings: **Alan Gerson** (paintings), December 4 - 24; Persistent, Transient Objects: **Brice Bischoff** (photography), December 4 - 30

NEWCOMB ART GALLERY – Tulane University. 865-5328. <http://www.tulane.edu/~newcomb/artindex.html> - **Fashioning Kimo**: Art Deco and Modernism in Japan, November 3 - January 9

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART – City Park. 606-4712. www.noma.org - **Great Collectors, Great Donors: The Making of New Orleans Museum of Art, 1910-2010**, November 14 - January 23; Selections from Projects 35 (video), thru January 30; Residents and Visitors: Twentieth-Century Photographs of Louisiana (photography), thru February 13; *Déjà vu All Over Again: Generic Art Solutions* (photography and performance), thru February 13; The Most Beautiful Day of My Youth: **Bernard Faucon** (photography), November 14 0 March 13

OGDEN MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN ART – 925 Camp St. 539-9600. www.ogdenmuseum.org - Art of the Cup: Functional Comfort (ceramics), **Robert Julian Onderdonk** (paintings), **Walker Evan's Louisiana: Photographs from the Collection of Jessica Lange** (phtography), One Block: A New Orleans Neighborhood

Rebuilds (photography), thru January 2; The Big Spill: **Justin Rothshank** (ceramics), thru December 5.

SOREN CHRISTENSEN GALLERY – 400 Julia St. 569-9501. www.sorenchristensen.com - Conglomerate: New Works by Gallery Artists, New Work: **Tom Seghi** (painting), November; Small Works: Group Show, Debut: **Ann Schwab** (mixed media), December

TAYLOR BERCIER FINE ARTS – 233 Chartres St. 527-0072. www.taylorbercier.com - Collages: **Billy Renkl** (collage), Altered Intaglios: **Ruth Marten** (printmaking), Found Objects: **Michele Muennig** (painting), November 4 - December 27

STELLA JONES GALLERY – Place St. Charles, 201 St. Charles Ave. 568-9050 . <http://www.stellajones.com> - **Donald Locke** (sculpture), October 1 - November 30

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

3 RING CIRCUS GALLERY – 1638 Clio St. 569-2700. www.3ringcircusproductions.com - **The Upward Spiral: Group Exhibition**, November 6 - 29

UNO ST. CLAUDE GALLERY - 2429 St. Claude Ave. 280-6493. Continuing Exhibition.



CALENDAR SPOTLIGHT



KATHY RODRIGUEZ

**BIG TOP
3 RING CIRCUS GALLERY**

CALENDAR SPOTLIGHT



JACOB EDWARDS

THE FRONT

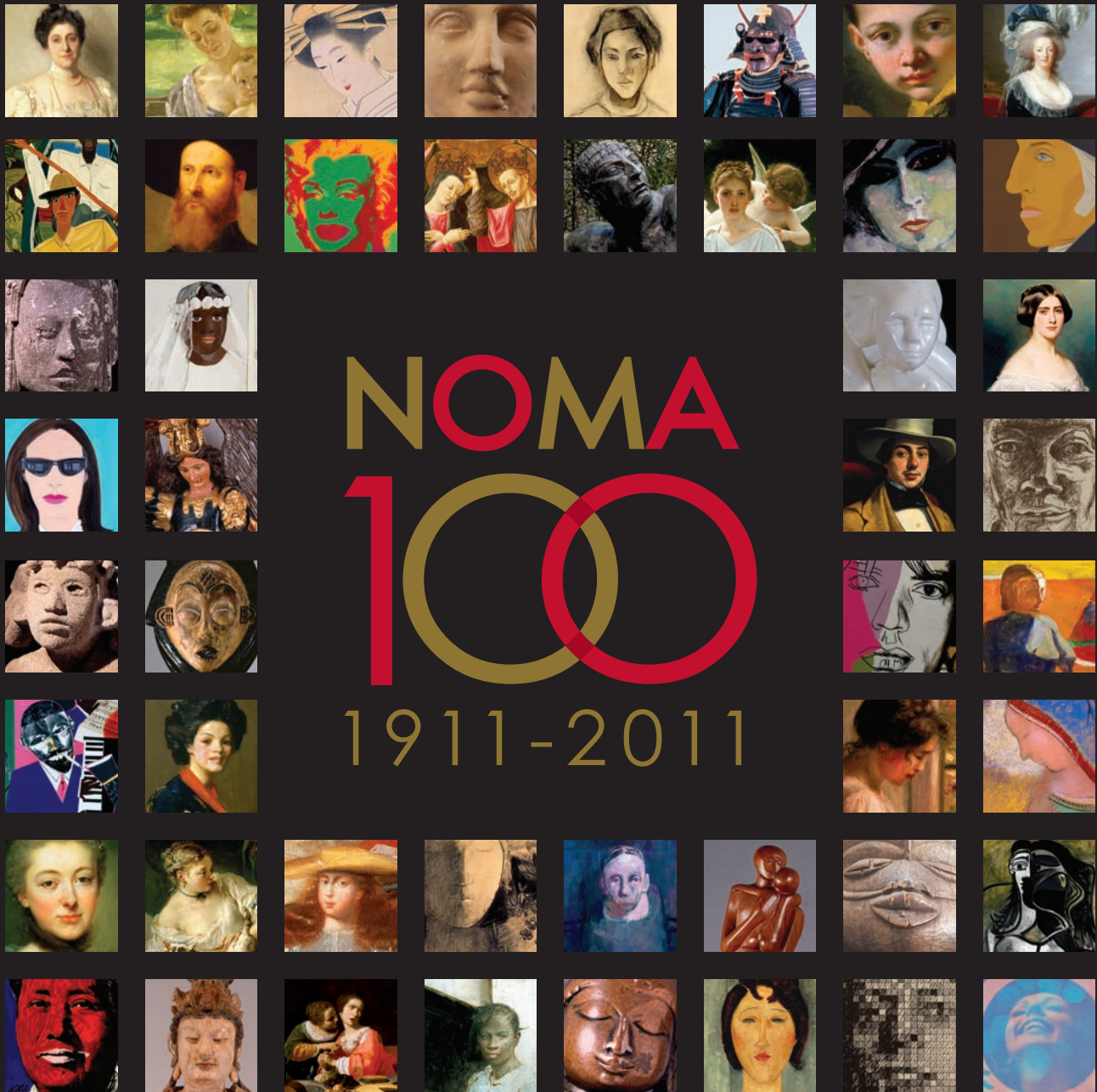
CALENDAR SPOTLIGHT



ELIZABETH SHANNON

HERIARD-CIMINO GALLERY

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART



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The Sound of One Hand:
Paintings and Calligraphy
by Zen Master Hakuin

MAY 13 - JULY 17
Ancestors of Congo Square:
African Art at the
New Orleans Museum of Art

AUGUST 5 - OCTOBER 23
The Elegant Image:
Hindu, Buddhist & Jain Bronzes

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