

Ringer: Contemporary Portraiture

February 21-March 14, 2019



ATHICA: Athens Institute for Contemporary Art is an independent, non-profit gallery promoting and supporting innovative contemporary art and artists through exhibitions, education, and events.

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Artists

Stanley Bermudez, Joshua Bienko, Matthew J. Brown, Shawn Campbell, Ally Christmas, Jackie Dorsey, Jaquelynn Faass, Broderick Flanigan, Laurel Fulton, Mary Beth Garrett, Greg Harris, Tommy Kha, Ray Lee, Noah James Saunders, Justin Schmitz, Katherine Schuber, and Kim Truesdale

Curator's Essay by John W. English

When the Obamas commissioned their official portraits in 2017, their choices of artists (his by Kehinde Wiley and hers by Amy Sherald) drew national attention to just how fresh and bold interpretive likenesses could be in this Age of Selfies. The Obamas chose hip, contemporary painters who represent the evolving nature of figurative art, though they no doubt knew staid portraits have made powerful impressions for the last five centuries. The Obamas' departure from tradition predictably sparked controversy, but, as the works of the eclectic artists in this exhibition illustrate, the Obamas' portraits are still old-school conservative in comparison.

Twenty-first-century portraiture has become daring, experimental, humanizing, sometimes abstract, conceptual, zany, and just plain weird. Contemporary portrait artists go well beyond creating recognizable representations; they seek to illuminate a subject's individuality, to depict facial emotions from joy to angst, to show vulnerability, high spirits, and empathy. Their inspiration appears unbridled.

These highly expressive portraits often reveal as much about the artist as the subject. Their collaboration itself is sometimes part of the creation. Some works are playful, others contemplative, a few burst with surprise. Self-portraits reflect intense autobiographical insights. There is a new egalitarianism about who gets immortalized in a portrait. Artists now decide who captivates them; the range of individuals they choose represents a broad spectrum of society. Ordinary folks are typically shown as they are, warts and all. Diversity of artistic expression is also on display here. Artists are liberated to experiment with unique working methods in a variety of media, colors, and styles. In this show, artists have created portraits in unconventional formats such as video, audio, manipulated wire, and found-object sculpture. Fast and crude renderings are just as revealing as painstakingly meticulous work. Settings and props contribute nuance, from serenity to dramatic.

The aesthetic of contemporary portraiture is no longer about power, authority, or beauty; artists take risks to show despair, desperation, and torment. The spectrum of ideas is expansive. Newly defining characteristics such as spontaneous action, informal attire, and character quirks have replaced stodgy poses and somber affect. Interpretation, style, and attitude are the artists' primary emphases.

Today's portrait artists are re-inventing an old genre with flair, vision, and a wholly contemporary anything-goes sensibility. Proof of that assertion is demonstrated throughout the exhibition. My initial reactions to these works was volatile, as the works themselves are haunting, chilling, endearing, confounding, amusing, passionate, defiant, resolute, insouciant, goofy, furious, outrageous, and political. That's quite an astounding emotional ramble!

While I greatly admire the Obamas' portraits and acknowledge that those two artists have nudged the public perception of portraiture forward, I also believe the works here offer an exciting and wide-open view of this genre's directions.

Stanley Bermudez
Athens, Georgia

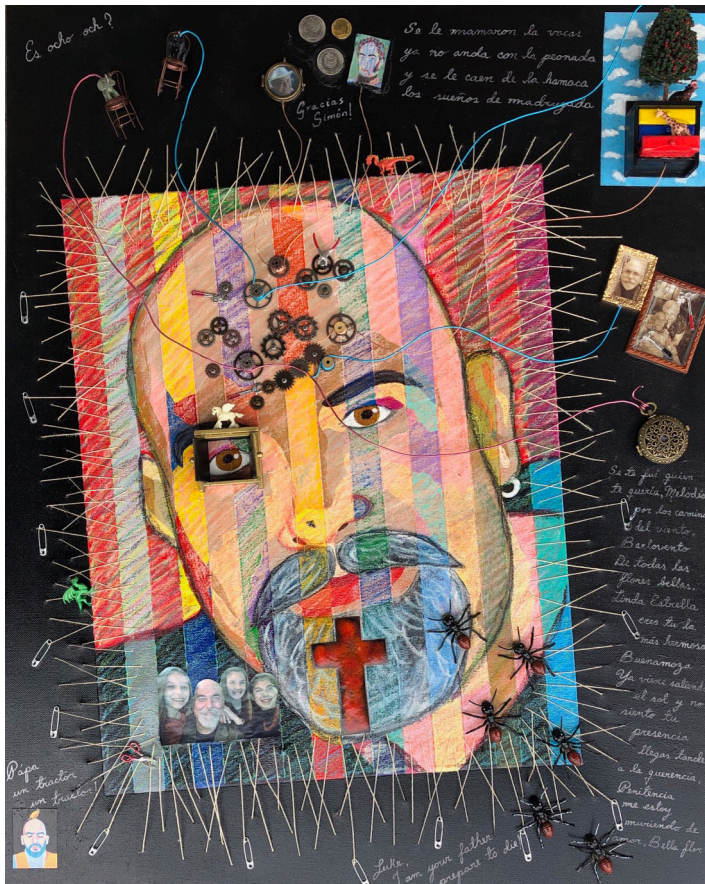
La Maquina de Sueños

2016

Mixed Media

30" x 24"

\$700



Sueños de Ayer y Hoy

1986 - 2019

Mixed Media

49" x 12" x 12"

\$700



Artist's Statement

I consider these two pieces of art surrealists works even though I am not known as a surrealist artist.

The painting *La Maquina de Sueños* is a self portrait about my dealings with divorce, a sense of loss and confusion, family, and my home country of Venezuela. I used a variety of objects, images, and writings, inspired by Dali and Magritte as well as my daughters and Venezuela.

The sculpture *Sueños de Ayer y Hoy* is also a self portrait I started many years ago. The pink bust is an image of myself I did back in 1986 when I was studying at a community college in Texas. Last year I decided to paint it pink and placed it in a cage and the cage on a stool surrounded by marbles and lifted by crutches, a golf club, and a badminton racket. The sculpture does not have a specific meaning and it was mostly created as a fun creative experiment.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

I guess you could say that most of my portraits, if not all, could be considered unusual because I do not use local colors, but arbitrary colors. I also break my images into shapes of light and values and fill them with colors. However, the two pieces in this exhibition are really unusual in the sense that they are, first of all, done in a surrealist style as opposed to pop art style. They are also unusual because I do not do self-portraits often. Finally, both pieces use a variety of found objects as well as bought objects, which I have not done since graduate school. I was happy to experiment with three-dimensionality again.

Biography

I am originally from Maracaibo, Venezuela, where I started making art at a very young age. My mother is an artist and both my sisters studied graphic design and are artists. Art was something that we did all the time, a form of play and entertainment. I moved to the USA in 1983 to go to college; I earned a B.F.A and a M.F.A. Today, I continue to create art and also teach.

I work with acrylics on canvas using a hard edge approach where I do not blend any colors. My process is very similar to the process that Roy Lichtenstein used; however, the end result is very different. One striking characteristic of my paintings is the use of vibrant colors, which I believe comes from growing up in Maracaibo, Venezuela and being exposed to the colors of the city, to Venezuelan folk art, to the work of the Guajiro Indians and their tapestries, and to the work of Venezuelan contemporary masters like Carlos Cruz Diez and the late Jesus Soto. My paintings can be dynamic, vibrant, funny, surrealistic, and sometimes have a pop art/op-art quality.

www.stanleybermudez.com

Curator's Thoughts

Bermudez's lively color palette and distinctive stripes have become signatures of his artwork. His surreal self-portraits reflect the recent turmoil in his personal life as well as in his native land. The two pieces honor different historical phases, from the caged bust to the fragmented, off-center likeness. While revealing those complexities, these portraits also indicate a resilient and playful spirit.

Joshua Bienko
Knoxville, Tennessee

Ever So Much More So (Duchamp)
2008/2019
Shoes, oil paint, photographic print
Dimensions variable
\$2,500



Artist's Statement

Ever So Much More So is a series of oil paintings on the bottom of Christian Louboutin shoes that antagonizes the use value and exchange value of an object of desire. A shoe with an oil painting on the bottom of it renders use the value of the shoe as such, as valueless. The inside of the shoe is autographed by Christian Louboutin. The shoe can not actually even be worn without some sort of destruction to the art object. The exchange value, however, continues to accelerate. The object itself is stuck between two places. To wear the shoe is to disallow its exchange value. To hang the shoe on the wall is to disallow its use value. One is either honoring Duchamp's artistic achievements or dishonoring and dismissing his achievements by equating them with the dirt and muck of the ground. The object then is purposely suspended in conflict with itself.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

This question might be better left to the organizers of the show.

Biography

Joshua Bienko (b. 1978, NY) received his BFA from the University of Buffalo in 2000, and his MFA from the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia in 2008. He has exhibited at Dallas Contemporary (TX), Artpace (TX), Labor Ebertplatz (Köln), Vox Populi (PA), Big Medium (TX), OUTERSPACE (facebook) and the Guggenheim Museum (in collaboration with YouTube Play Biennial). Most recently he has had shows in Las Vegas, Nashville, Baltimore, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Brooklyn. He has curated shows in Brooklyn, Queens, Seattle, and Gainesville and is one of the founding members of the artist-run space Ortega y Gasset Projects in Gowanus and C for Courtside in Knoxville, Tennessee. He is a 2009 Tanne Foundation recipient, and a Hambidge Residency and V.C.C.A Fellow. Joshua is an Associate Professor at the School of Art at the University of Tennessee, where he teaches drawing.

www.joshuabienko.com

Curator's Thoughts

It's axiomatic to say that shoes make statements about their wearers. But when you raise the bar to fashion-designer stiletto high heels, by Christian Louboutin in red, for chrissakes, the branding of your "canvas" is stratospheric. Bienko paints a reflective Duchamp on one "magic slipper" and slyly references his famed urinal on the other. He reveals his images on the bottom of the shoes by having his model wearing them and posing on her knees. The pose may signal sexual submission, but the shoes flaunt Dada humor.

Matthew J. Brown
Kingsport, Tennessee

Advice for the Young at Heart

2018

Digital Video

3:37

\$50



Artist's Statement

The Oxford American on Matthew J. Brown's recent body of work: *New Developments*, 12/4/18:

In the artless, tender images that make up his project, *New Developments*, photographer Matthew J. Brown investigates the fluctuating story of land use in his home state of Tennessee, where agricultural regions have gradually given way to instances of retail and commercial real estate. These encroaching businesses—primarily box stores and food chains—often serve a short tenure on their lots before packing up and vacating, only to be replaced by similar, if slightly rejuvenated, enterprises. Along with the images of *New Developments*, Brown writes of his work's mission to document the phenomenon of Tennessee's 'perpetuating dead market cycle,' using the lens as a tool to frame examples of a "nation in transition, one which fosters a culture built on convenience and comfort through familiarity and pleasant consumer experience."

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

Charles Dickens described the sight of a human billboard as "a piece of human flesh between two slices of pasteboard." This astute observation from a centuries-old writer on an equally centuries-old form of communication hasn't wavered in its utility. It is a practice conventionally reserved for the sign spinners, who guide you to the promise of cold hard cash or the two month parade of the Lady Liberty Tax Wavers. But what if a determined someone was compelled to become a human billboard as their life's passion? On their own accord. No compensation necessary. *Advice for the Young at Heart* reflects on these thoughts and how they can apply to the process of making art and being an artist.

Biography

Matthew J. Brown is a Kingsport, Tennessee native, former Office Depot employee, and a current MFA candidate at the University of Georgia.

www.matthewbrownphotographs.com

Curator's Thoughts

There are more portraits in this video than just commentary about empty commercial buildings vacated by fast-food chains. The title of Brown's piece is the clearest clue. On-the-street solicitation hints at desperate times and, with no response indicated over its duration, one must assume his somewhat humiliating efforts are futile and, thus, sad. In these days of Tinder, he could also appear to be a game, but lonely, troupier attempting to find companionship on a desolate streetscape. Brown suggests that his commentary could also extend to the plight of an artist, presumably his own career. The viewer has to admire his pluck for putting himself out there and trying to generate a response.

Shawn Campbell
Athens, Georgia

The American Fabius
2019
Paint and canvas
40" x 50"
\$3,000



Artist's Statement

Engaged with the military, football, power, religion, propaganda, and government, my work forges unexpected relations between these cultural phenomena and investigates the idea of spectacle within civil, financial, and political power. Across diverse mediums including photography, sculpture, video installation, and painting, my work borrows from the aesthetics of minimalism, the baroque, pop art, and bizatian while using readily available building materials such as plywood, commercial advertising, and obsolete objects such as monitors and slide projectors. In this way, key systems appear, granting pieces within the overall body of work the ability to collaborate with one another through aesthetics and language—working in a broad and open manner, presenting questions, and granting the viewer the opportunity to connect within the work openly. The concept of violence is laced throughout the work. I utilize physical and psychological play in order to point out how violence has become a central and pervasive phenomenon within contemporary American culture.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

I am interested in the idea of removing the figures that interact within my area of research and looking at how the systems that surround them develop the outcomes and structures we interact within everyday.

Biography

Shawn Campbell is a artist located in the Southeast United States. He is a MFA candidate at The University of Georgia and has earned a BFA from The University of Akron. His work explores the interactions, bounds, habits, and values of people who have come from different backgrounds, goals, and beliefs. He is attracted to the interactions, experiences, and lives that bring groups of people together. By documenting and participating, Campbell is able to bring an authentic experience to his viewers.

www.shawncampbellstudio.com

Curator's Thoughts

The title of this clever conceptual piece refers to a Roman general who outfoxed Hannibal by avoiding decisive battles, and hence was successful by being cautious and dilatory. The tri-cornered hat, an early American military symbol, floats above the background indicating that no one fits that description or, alternatively, that anyone could step up and fulfill it. I admit that I laughed out loud when I discovered its hilarious and searing commentary.

Ally Christmas
Grinnell, Iowa

The Extended Self(ie)
2017
Digital Video
13:43



Artist's Statement

My artistic practice and general aesthetic are characterized by a constant process of filling and emptying – of materials, of time, of myself. I am particularly concerned with this self—whether I'm myself or my selves—and how this self or these selves are performed, split, and extended throughout all the areas of my life. Since I have created and uploaded another version of myself online through various social media platforms, job websites, and food ordering services (among many other sites), I have become a digital file, composed of ones and zeros ready to be encoded, spread, and manipulated at any given whim. This is the human-as-data: a mercurial entity with which I have become deeply fascinated, specifically turning to myself as a site of complex intersections and overlaps. When navigating the interlaced space between myself and my carefully curated digital representation, it is sometimes difficult to determine how, when, or where I begin and end in that seemingly endless online void that constitutes the topography of my datified self—we're just floating around through the digital ether, up in The Cloud (wherever that is).

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

The piece I've submitted, *The Extended Self(ie)*, is a self-portrait that interrogates my own notions of selfhood and performance of the self. My inspiration for the piece came from reading *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which led me to think about the split between how we present and perform our selves in public versus private.

Biography

Ally Christmas is a visual artist currently living and working out of Grinnell, Iowa. After earning her BA in Photography from the University of Virginia in 2013, Christmas worked at the school for another year as a recipient of the 5th Year Aunspaugh Fellowship. She is an active member of the Society for Photographic Education, from whom she received a Graduate Student Award in 2017 to attend their national conference. She recently received her Masters in Fine Arts degree with distinction from the University of Georgia in Photo/Video. She is currently teaching video art and contemporary photography courses at Grinnell College as an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Studio Art.

www.allychristmas.com

Curator's Thoughts

This self-portrait was created in digital video. Yet the artist presents herself publicly in a contrived theatrical setting—a stage curtain, an oriental carpet, table set with candle, and a short stack of books. She is seated, dressed demurely, and engaged with the camera. Over the nearly-14 minutes of the video, she presents a solemn resting face with minimal body movement, though she does occasionally smile, adjust her feet, and once, impatiently checks her phone. In an era when selfies are quickie snapshots, this extended version, even though mostly static, invites viewers to slow down and to ponder the artist as herself.

Jackie Dorsey
Athens, Georgia

Blue Heat
Date Unknown
Watercolor
35" x 28"
\$1,100



Blue Tattoo
Date Unknown
Watercolor
30" x 35"
\$1,500



Artist's Statement

Like many artists, I paint what I love. For the last couple years I have been painting people in Athens to represent what I love most about this community. As my homage to our vibrant music scene, many of my paintings are of musicians. This painting of Adam Poulin, titled *Blue Heat*, celebrates one of our local musicians. Almost anyone who listens to live music in town knows Adam. He is beloved for his fierce, versatile, and accomplished style. The second painting, titled *Blue Tattoo*, is an even more personal example of painting what you love. This is a painting of my son Ryan. He is also an artist and the tattoo on his arm is of his own work.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

In the paintings exhibited here I embrace a level of realism in my work but try to balance that with more painterly techniques only available in watercolor. This is primarily seen with the use of lost edges, pouring, and splattering.

Biography

Jackie Dorsey is an award-winning artist based in Athens, Georgia. Her work has been shown in local, state, national and international shows. She is a signature member, board member, and former President of the Georgia Watercolor Society. Her work is primarily in watercolor and ranges from vibrant and bold landscapes to realistic still-lives and portraiture. She was and continues to be inspired by the vibrant art and music scene in Athens. Her work is also inspired by her travels to Peru, New York City, and Aspen, Colorado. Some of her work can be found on her website: jackiedorseyart.com or her business Facebook page www.facebook.com/jackiedorseyart, including samples of her commissioned portraiture.

www.jackiedorseyart.com

Curator's Thoughts

These realistic portraits illustrate the presence and power of watercolors. The artist concentrates our attention on her subjects by neutralizing the backgrounds and using other refined techniques. One can almost feel the intensity of the music as we look up into the violinist's face in his enthralling performance. Dorsey also captures the nonchalance of her youthful son in everyday attire. His cool indifference is as hip as his au courant body adornment.

Jacquelynn Faass
Athens, Georgia

What Did We Do?

2016

Oil on canvas, yarn

55" x 36"

\$3,200



The Gaze of Let Down

2017

Oil on canvas

24" x 36"



Artist's Statement

I paint to explore the qualities and stories of an individual. Upon reflection of this life, I have come to the conclusion that people are among the most interesting and most important thing to explore in my work. Each is a vessel of emotion, thoughts, talents, and history. Each has an elaborate tapestry within them, waiting to be shown to the world. I use my paint strokes and color palette to show that each person is made of so much more than flesh and bone.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

In my work, I look to the work of Jenny Saville, Lucian Freud, Camille Pissarro, and Robert Henri for guidance and inspiration. I absorb myself in the language of the human figure, studying facial expressions and body language throughout my work. I create images where viewers can reside and further develop a sense of empathy and wonder about the piece of work and themselves. I strive to understand the complexity of my subjects, capturing aspects that are otherwise missed in mundane life within my mark-making.

Biography

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, Jaquelynn Faass received two Bachelor's of Fine Arts degrees from the University of Georgia: one in Art Education, the other in Painting. She currently resides and works in Athens, Georgia as an art teacher and painter.

www.jfaassart.com

Curator's Thoughts

In an inventive patchwork-style portrait, Faass depicts a quizzical child uncertain of what she'd been scolded about. Her raised shoulders confirm the confusion in her eyes. The extreme close-up of an older man is also a bit of an emotional puzzle. His bespectacled blue eyes are intensely focused straight ahead, yet his furrowed brow hints at a troubling moment. Faass' astute fixation on emotional complexities shares her subjects' humanity.

Broderick Flanigan
Athens, Georgia

Saltwork
2019
Site-Specific Installation / Salt / Other Materials
24” x 36”

Image Not Available

Artist's Statement

Experimenting with various media has been one way to further my interest in capturing the human form. Working with salt as a medium has challenged me to move beyond lines and brush strokes in a traditional sense.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

Portraits are my primary source of expression in my artistic practice.

Biography

A painter born and raised in Athens, Georgia, Flanigan is dedicated to inspiring others through art. He began his art career in 2013. He loves to capture the human form in representational portraits. He is the owner of Flanigan's Portrait Studio. He also uses art to raise awareness and fosters inclusion through his helping art reach public spaces initiative.

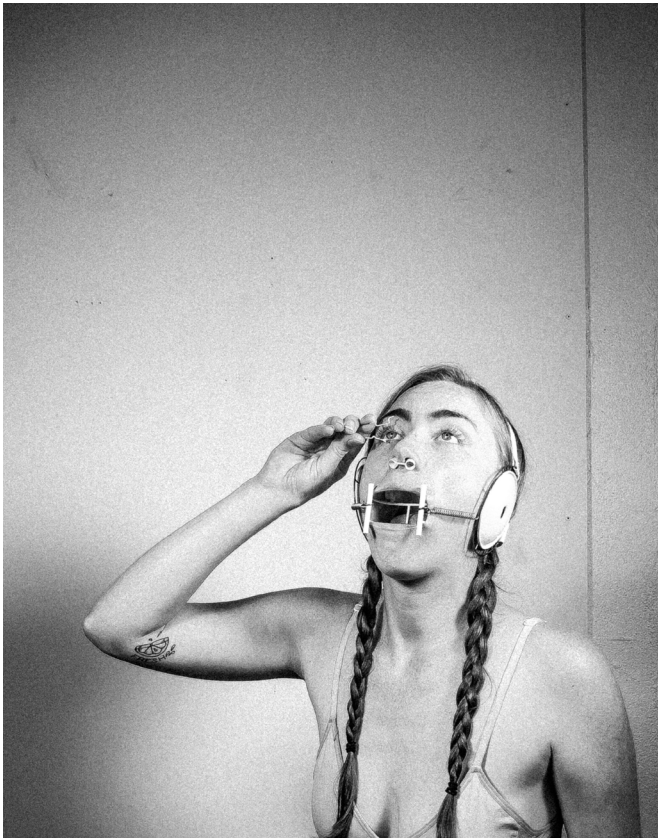
www.facebook.com/flanigansportraitstudio

Curator's Thoughts

Flanigan creates traditional portrait paintings but also is challenged to experiment in different media. Here he creates a site-specific portrait in salt of Mariah Parker, aka rapper Linqua Franca. Parker is also a doctoral student at UGA and the Athens-Clarke County District 2 Commissioner.

Laurel Fulton
Athens, Georgia

To Keep Yourself Open
2018
Photograph
17" x 22"



To Keep Yourself Open
2018
Steel, copper, brass, fabric
6" x 6" x 18"



Artist's Statement

I am interested in the connection between our physical body and our psychological condition. Using the tool as a mediator and signifier of an emotional state the function of these objects is to regulate the psyche through the body. The tool is a powerful symbol throughout human history, it is the way that we have evolved, survived, discovered and one way we doctored our bodies. Since the beginning of their incorporation into human activities we have been using tools as an extension of our hands and our hands an extension of our minds. Although the objects I make are only marginally referential to devices, tools, and apparatuses, in use their intended purpose is to perform an interaction with the body that suggests the emotional state of the wearer. They become the physical expression of seeking to mourn a loss through the body.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

My work uses the body as a location to deal with things such as loss, mourning, and the need for human connection. The portrait inevitably finds its way in as a location for the objects I make. The images I make give the objects themselves context on the body and hopefully allow the viewer to place themselves in relation to the wearer. Portraiture, as I see it, is a way to translate the emotional state of one human being to another.

Biography

I was born and raised in Colorado with my two younger sisters. My mother is a creative and my father is a very analytical thinker; both influenced how and what I make. As a child of the arts and sciences, I was drawn to the glistening tide pools at the beach, the slimy things under rocks, the cabinet of curiosities I would find at my grandmother's house, and figuring out how things were put together. I enjoy using alternative materials such as steel, copper, brass, acrylic, collected material, and wood to create both functional and object based work.

After receiving my undergraduate degree, I was a public high school teacher for four years before taking the opportunity to become a resident artist at Pocosin School of Fine Craft for 14 months. During my term there I decided to go back to school. I'm currently at the University of Georgia in Athens working on my graduate degree in jewelry and metal.

www.laurelfulton.com

Curator's Thoughts

To fulfill her objective in her title, Fulton has concocted some exquisite sensory hardware to assist her in that goal. While her "tools" may be fanciful, her exploration of ways to stay open to the human condition and to improve interpersonal bonds is admirable. Though her creation appears delicate, in use it appears absolutely tortuous.

Mary Beth Garrett
Athens, Georgia

Back to the Regular
2018
Sound / WAV file
2:36
NFS

Image Not Available

Artist's Statement

Constructed from voicemail snippets and a slowed down section of Etta James' "I'd Rather Go Blind," this portrait of my grandmother reveals her spirit and humor. Evident within the voicemails are expressions of care, markings of time, and a relic from a brief period in 2015 when my grandmother wanted the family to call her Grandma Etta. As much as this piece is about my grandmother, it is also representative of the discomfort that often comes with being away from home, and my desire to savor the communication I have with loved ones.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

With *Back to the Regular*, I approach portraiture from a non-traditional perspective. By drawing from my personal digital archive, I patched together a sound portrait of my grandmother based on the things she has chosen to communicate to me via voicemail over the past few years. Though listeners will not know what my grandmother looks like, they will hear her voice, get a glimpse of her personality, and understand a little bit about what is important to her.

Biography

Mary Beth Garrett is a teaching artist based in Athens, Georgia. At the moment, her work focuses on how digital technology functions in her relationship with herself and others. She graduated with a BFA in photography from the University of Georgia in 2018, and recently returned to pursue a master's degree in art education.

www.mbgarrett.com

Curator's Thoughts

This sound portrait extracted from old phone messages constructs an aural impression of an elderly family member and allows listeners to form their own visual portrait. After the subject's recent death, her familiar voice becomes a haunting reminder of loss.

Greg Harris
Athens, Georgia

Doing America
2018
Oil on canvas
74" x 57"
NFS



Artist's Statement

This painting represents President Trump and what he may be doing to America, depending on the viewer's political position.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

I suppose the only thing I can say is that with this project I have taken a very contemporary event or subject matter and applied very old-fashioned painting techniques to accomplish my goals.

Biography

I am an artist living in Athens. I do mostly oil on canvas of any subject matter. My style is rather old fashioned and a bit too realistic for the "real" art world.

Curator's Thoughts

Doing America is the title of Harris' hyper-realistic and provocative portrait of Donald Trump in flagrante delicto, which clearly implies a metaphorical screwing of the country rather than an actual sexual conquest. Harris bolsters his perspective by fabricating desk portraits of Trump's Russian counterpart and his daughter. His deftly rendered, large-scale painting is meticulous in detail. Obviously a work of imagination, the in-your-face painting is an aggressive political statement in a polarized society. The explicitness of the scene is startling, absurd and gross, offensive and demeaning to women, outrageous, and yet affirming of a political point of view many share.

Tommy Kha
Brooklyn, New York

Assembly (I)
2018
Puzzle on digital C-type
16" x 20"
\$2,750



Buckhead (I)
2018
Unique silver gelatin print
8 3/8" x 14 3/4"
\$1,650



Artist's Statement

My photography is about the representation of Otherness. I'm interested on the divide between our physical bodies and our photographic selves, referencing how Western media and art histories influences how one is imaged or photographed, and perceived.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

Through the framework of the self-portrait, I explore self and otherness while looking at Western canon and media on how it informs how we image ourselves. Both the photographic self and photographic print constantly changes unsettle in its form, similar to how one's identity continuously shifts.

Biography

Tommy Kha (b. 1988, Memphis, Tennessee) received his Photography MFA from Yale University.

His work has been published in *Vice Magazine*, *Musée Magazine*, *It's Nice That*, *Modern Painters*, *Humble Arts*, *Slate*, *the Huffington Post*, *BUTT Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *Buzzfeed*, and Miranda July's *We Think Alone* and exhibited at Leslie-Lohman Museum, LMAK Gallery, Deli Gallery, Foley Gallery, Ryerson Artspace, Georgia Scherman Projects in Toronto, Aperture, Signal Gallery, Johalla Projects in Chicago, Yongkang Lu Art in Shanghai, and Kunstverein Wolfsburg in Germany.

He was an En Foco Photography Fellowship recipient, and artist-in-residence at the Center for Photography at Woodstock, Light Work, Fountainhead, and Baxter Street at the Camera Club of New York. Through Aint-Bad, Kha published his first monograph, *A Real Imitation*. He appeared in Laurie Simmons' narrative feature, *My Art*. His image appeared on the cover of *Vice Magazine's 2017 Photography Issue*. He currently lives and works between New York City and Memphis.

www.tommykha.com

Gallery Representation: LAMK (New York, NY)

Curator's Thoughts

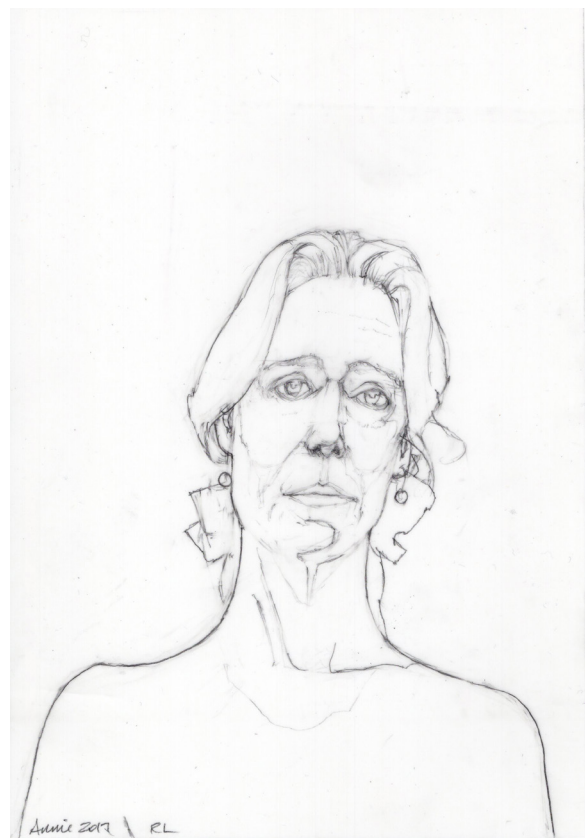
Half a puzzle is a pretty honest self-portrait. The parts not depicted refer to mysteries he may still have about himself. In another inventive self-portrait, Kha has a disembodied hand holding his face, which faintly echoes the image of Hamlet with a skull. The format mimics the vertical four snapshots spit out of old photo booths.

Ray Lee
Athens, Georgia

Self Portrait
2018
Graphite on paper
7" x 5"
\$150



Annie
2017
Graphite on mylar
9" x 6"
\$190



Artist's Statement

I work in both representational and abstract modes. In the representational mode, I work from direct observation. The abstract work is a distillation of color, shape and feeling. Sometimes the representational and the abstract are indistinguishable. All my artwork is a response to my perceptions of the world, typically the mundane, the overlooked or fleeting moments that we encounter every day.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

My portraits tend to be made with an economy of marks. Every line contributes to the whole, but the whole usually appears unfinished, a balance between the necessity of capturing a likeness as a portrait and ensuring that the quality is sufficient and pleasing as a drawing.

Biography

I was born in Germany, but otherwise have lived in the American South for most of my life (Mississippi, Florida, and Georgia). I was a teenage surrealist enamored with Salvador Dali and Yves Tanguy. I started as an art major in college and finished with an AB in religion. I live in Athens with my wife Shary and our dog Otis.

www.jraylee.tumblr.com

Curator's Thoughts

Lee's elegant and spare graphite drawings appear incomplete or unfinished, but they are exactly what he intends. The viewer's imagination can fill in the rest. Lee sketched the model Annie live, handily capturing her regal demeanor. His partial self-portrait is imponderable and alluring.

Rich Panico
Athens, Georgia

Mark
2018
Pastel on paper
11" x 14"
\$450



Yellow Head #1
2018
Pastel and conte on paper
11" x 14"
\$450



Yellow Head #2
2018
Pastel and conte on paper
11" x 14"
\$450



Ophelia
2018
Charcoal on paper
11" x 14"
\$450



Artist's Statement

The life work of the artist has been centered around the inevitable suffering of living organisms and the adaptation and means of relating to that suffering. These drawn images do not attempt to create discursive representation of those phenomena but rather a deep perceptual experience of human vulnerabilities prior to language and concept.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

Contemporary portraiture spans a vast number of genres and, in my mind, a growing virtuosity, from fan art, and the inevitable vanity portraits, to the reemergence of classical realism. These particular portraits are clearly influenced by classicist and academic threads present today, with representational concerns of volume and form and the movement of light and line over those volumes. Like Lucian Freud, Odd Nerdrum, Jean Michel Basquiat, and Marlene Dumas, I make no effort to fix or disguise the subjects' relevant existential journeys. In the manner of Giacometti, Auerbach, and Diebenkorn, line becomes a process of exploration and discovery. Purposeful erasures, alcohol washes, redrawing, and dry brushing over homemade clay and gesso underpainting creates depth and a narrative complexity. These constructive and destructive processes also give rise to novel, unexpected visual phenomena and reinforce the necessity of creating "possibility" during the dark events that often arise in a given life. Evidence of these endeavors and ghosts of previous images appear beneath the finished drawing. In homage to Matisse, color is often used as value. A debt is owed to Whistler as well, who used colorful pastel in thoughtful ways to create delicate and surprising passages of hue. I hope, to a mindful observer, these images create perpetual discovery on levels of not only technique and skill, but also in the inevitable human encounter with suffering and hard-earned narratives of hope and resilience.

Biography

Rich Panico is a physician with 40+ years of clinical practice. He is an artist with experience in ceramics, painting, and drawing. He lives on a small farm with his wife Manjula.

Curator's Thoughts

The soul-searching nature of these portraits can be disturbing and haunting. The artist's distillation of character is exemplary, and his technique of layering probes his subjects' intimacies. Anguish is not easy to look at.

Noah James Saunders
Athens, Georgia

Oui ca va bien

2014

Galvanized steel wire

20" x 25" x 10"

\$5,500



Artist's Statement

The day I made my first wire face was also the day I discovered wire as a medium. For me wire and faces are inseparable—like taste to the tongue. I'm not a portrait artist as such; my work is less about the subject than it is about the act of creation. I speak only in wire, and faces are my language. But how to explain the longevity of my artistic project now in its twenty-eighth year? The reward keeps increasing with every sculpture. Wire, the most innocuous of items, found in the back of every junk drawer, is a medium with potential that has only barely been tapped. With every new sculpture, I'm building on the last sculpture's discoveries, while finding even newer concepts to explore.

Before I discovered wire as a medium, I experienced a series of life events affecting my physical, mental, and spiritual self. These set me adrift from my fellows; I could no longer connect to the community I was raised in. I soon discovered that by creating a face in wire I could circumnavigate the aspects of myself that ostracized me and I could connect deeply and directly with those energies that bind all humans together. This connection has allowed me to rebuild myself and to develop a deep sense of optimism. Now when I enter the studio I am almost in prayer. Art helped me transcend great difficulties and I hope that my art inspires others to find the same optimism within themselves.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

Wire is a very much underused and thus undiscovered medium in the world of art, so to render a face in wire is to reside on the very threshold of our collective conception of what portraiture can be.

Biography

Noah James Saunders, was born in 1980 in Atlanta, Georgia. He has worked as a full-time sculptor in Georgia for the past 25 years. Noah has made Athens his home for the past 18 years.

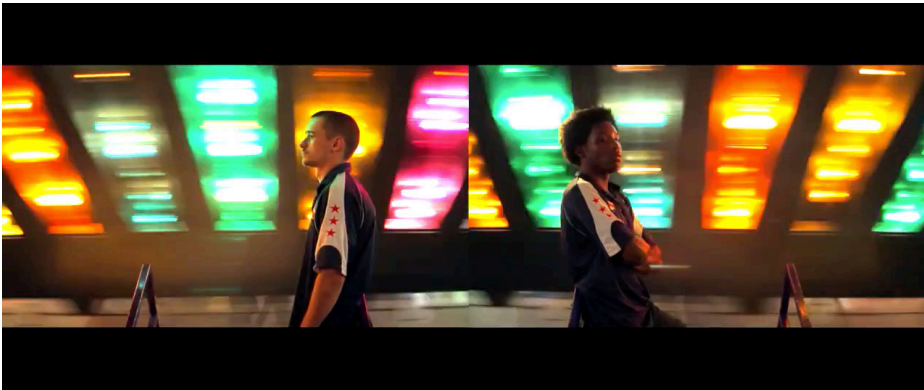
Gallery Representation: Hofp Gallery (Columbia, SC)

Curator's Thoughts

The bold features embodied in Saunder's 3-D sculptures show astounding strength of character. Creating facial details such as cheekbones and penetrating eyes out of wire is an impressive creative endeavor. Adding movement to the work enhances the image to holographic dimension. Clearly everything is all right, as the French title asserts.

Justin Schmitz
Crystal Lake, Illinois

Gravatron
2013
HDV
3:15
NFS



Apparition
2018
Archival Inkjet print
22" x 30"
\$850



Artist's Statement

My work is a witness to the rituals of youth. I am interested in Friday night football games, riding shotgun, empty parking lots, and that spot in forest no one else seems to know about. I see the events that take place in these spaces shaping and affecting my subjects, leaving a lasting impression. I use my photography to traverse a cultural and emotional landscape that exists in American suburban adolescence and to explore ideas of self, identity, and isolation. I want to understand how we grew up. I feel a connection with my subjects because they are a manifestation of my feelings about what it is to be in transition. I am interested in moments that are unexplainable, the things we try and understand, the weird feelings, the upset stomachs, and the awkward glances.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

I am interested in how my subjects reflect or reveal my thoughts about the world.

Biography

Born in Peoria, Illinois in 1981, Justin Schmitz is an artist working in Chicago, Illinois. He received a BFA from Columbia College Chicago in 2004 and an MFA from Yale University in 2013. He was awarded the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship by the Yale University School of Art and the Tierney Fellowship for Excellence in Photography by the Tierney Family Foundation. Schmitz is also the recipient of The City of Chicago Community Artist Assistance Program Grant, The Union Civic and Art League Scholarship, and The Albert P. Wiesman Scholarship. He was a finalist for both the Honickman First Book Prize at Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies and the Photography Book Now Prize. His work was part of The Museum of Contemporary Photography's Midwest Photography Project. Schmitz has exhibited in Chicago at Johalla Projects, Gardenfresh, Heaven Gallery, the Evanston Biennial, and Version Festival. Schmitz has exhibited artist books with The Donut Shop at The Chicago Artist Book Fair and the Chicago based Medium Cool. His work has also been exhibited at M+B Gallery in Los Angeles, The Aperture Foundation in New York, and Les Rencontres Internationales New Cinema and Contemporary Art Festival in Paris and Berlin.

www.justinschmitz.com

Curator's Thoughts

Thrill-seeking at the fair is a bond many teenagers share. Despite the whirling bands of color from the Gravitron, the two amusement-ride attendants here appear to be isolated outsiders and seemingly oblivious to risks riders are taking when the bottom drops out and they're pinned to the wall by centrifugal force. The attendants toil in a lively environment of music and colored lights, yet appear nonchalant about the altogether safe but thrilling rite teens experience under their supervision.

The young man in full military gear replete with an Arab neck scarf appears empowered by his assault weapon. The foggy atmosphere accentuates his isolation and dramatizes his war games pretense. It's a chilling reminder of the fantasy world some teen warriors inhabit.

Katherine Schuber
Athens, Georgia

Kyiv Priest
2015
Oil on canvas
18" x 30"
NFS



Rossi Alabastri
2019
Oil on canvas
26" x 38"
NFS



Artist's Statement

My work can primarily be described as classical realism. I strive to create images that are both beautiful and meaningful.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

Both of these portraits tell a story. They are not necessarily flattering images of the people pictured, but rather an invitation into their experience. Both are created with an extremely limited color palette that allows for the attention to be focused on the image itself instead of its beauty of color.

Biography

I started my pursuit of art as a child. Over the years I experimented with different types of paint mediums. Like many artists, I chose a very non-traditional route for my life. After spending several years living overseas, I returned to my hometown of Atlanta, Georgia to study under renowned portrait artist Chris di Domizio. During those five years with di Domizio, my love of portraiture was born. Through studying the old masters, I was equipped to begin a career in art. Some of my first clients were fellow students. Over time, word spread and my clientele grew, developing my practice into a full time profession. With an emphasis on oil portrait paintings, I now accept commissions in a wide variety of subjects and mediums. I feel so fortunate to be able to pursue my passion of art as a career. I love spending time getting to know my clients and discovering their uniqueness. My goal in art is to create lasting works of beauty that not only portray a likeness, but tell a story.

www.katherineschuber.com

Curator's Thoughts

These storytelling portraits capture their subjects in defining moments. This priest in Kyiv (Kiev,) Ukraine, is resolutely defiant in front of a phalanx of soldiers with shields. He personifies resistance and makes a powerful statement about church versus state. Schubert also honors a craftsman immersed in his production. His expertise and handiwork surround him. Her portraits have a muted palette that emphasizes the central figure.

Kim Truesdale
Athens, Georgia

Fed Up #1
2019

Polymer clay and gel, acrylic, pastel,
and polycrylic on found photograph

8" x 10"

\$200



Fed Up #2
2019

Polymer clay and gel, acrylic,
pastel, and polycrylic on found
photograph

8" x 10"

\$200



Artist's Statement

My work explores the loss of women's identity and individuality referencing erasure, power, and domestic labor. The mixed media series Fed Up was inspired by observing the conservative Southern women in my family serve others to the point of exhaustion. After a loved one, who was a homemaker, was subjected to a tragic and mysterious case of neglect(,) I turned to look for physical, societal, and psychological evidence.

How does your work relate to the theme of contemporary portraiture?

I unearthed a series of scrapbooks when cleaning out a former high school home economics classroom. These scrapbooks ranged from 1956 to 1967 depicting a local chapter of The Future Homemakers of America. I began to use portraits of "future homemakers" suppressing their sensory organs as a means of expressing subjugation. I am further interested in women's complex relationship with food consumption and preparation and how this relates to self-worth and body image. This work investigates the absurdity of gender roles that should be extinct.

Biography

Kim Truesdale was born in 1984 in Camden, South Carolina. She currently resides in Athens, Georgia where she is a Graduate Teaching Assistant pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the Lamar Dodd School of Art. She graduated from Coker College with a BA in Fine Arts in 2008 and the University of South Carolina with a MAT in Art Education in 2013.

www.kimtruesdale.myportfolio.com

Curator's Thoughts

The title of Truesdale's portrait series makes her gender-political assertion that women no longer need be identified by food preparation and she executes it precise, playful and delightful absurdist humor. Truesdale repurposes classic yearbook-style portraits with ersatz food items she creates to make a serious point in an amusing way.

Exhibition Events

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 21, 2019, 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Listening in the Gallery III: An Interdisciplinary Concert Series Exploring Sound and Light, Saturday, February 23, 2019, 7:00 pm

Panel Discussion: Sunday, March 10, 2019, 4:00 pm

Movie Night / Closing Event: *Portrait of Jason*



Movie Night / Closing Event: *Portrait of Jason* Thursday, March 14, 7:00 pm

“[Filmmaker] Shirley Clarke was brilliant, scandalous, bold, and incredibly talented. Had she been a man, film historians would have long ago placed her in the pantheon of great auteurs, alongside Orson Welles and John Cassavetes. Today, her triumph can be recognized in her ability to be herself— one of the great originals of her time. A true artist, Clarke combined her innate impishness and sense of adventure with a dancer’s aesthetic and her tremendous drive to battle injustice to make films that dazzle, challenge, and beguile the audience.”

Milestone Film’s *Project Shirley* has been working to discover, restore, and make available the works of this important talent.

“[...] for decades, Shirley Clarke’s powerful and transgressive *PORTRAIT OF JASON* was unavailable and its original elements were thought to be lost. [...] Milestone worked with the Academy Film Archive and Modern Video Film to create sparkling new 35mm prints and DCPs of *PORTRAIT OF JASON*. [...] Now, almost fifty years after it was filmed, *PORTRAIT OF JASON* is also a potent reminder of what the world was like for black gay men in the heat of the Civil Rights movement and before the Stonewall Uprising. [Jason] Holliday talks about serving time at New York’s Riker’s Island jail after propositioning (or being propositioned by) an undercover cop. And his observations on the casual racism he experienced are funny, stinging, and painful.”

— Quoted material from *Milestone Films*

Exhibition Credits

Curator: John English

Curatorial Advisors: Stephanie Sutton, Jon Vogt, Lawrence Stueck

Preparators: Jon Vogt, Ty Jones

Graphic Design: Camille Hayes

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