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Allie Linn

**YOUTH DEW
@
SPRINGSTEEN GALLERY
(FLANNERY SILVA)**

Though it is unusual to see Springsteen's lights dimmed during open hours, the current exhibition by Flannery Silva opts for a muted darkness and curtained-off front window to house its collection of digitally collaged posters, ceramic figures and ballet barres, and embroidered banners. Moving away from the net-ready, pristine shows Springsteen has consistently curated, Youth Dew offers a selection of carefully crafted and often times peculiar artifacts that feel like a secret or whisper offered by the artist and necessitate being explored in-person to fully resonate.

That said, navigating the space is much like navigating Silva's diaristically structured website: a labyrinth of images and links fusing fragments of Little House on the Prairie, Little Women, and The Glass Menagerie among others. The characters from these stories seem to act as surrogates for the artist, and Silva shape-shifts between roles in Youth Dew, merging her own hand with the likeness of Laura Ingalls, ballerinas, and Precious Moments dolls. Silva's interest in these childhood depictions of girlhood surpass nostalgia and border on obsession/fixation, making it difficult

to distinguish the boundary between fact and fiction, performance and reality. Simultaneously imbued with tenderness and threat, Youth Dew blends young naiveté of melancholic reminiscence with something more sinister.

Akin to a crime scene, or perhaps the opening montage of a crime television drama, small vignettes of fabricated ballet barres, footprints indicating ballet positions, and spilled baby bottles lay on the ground untouched, softly lit in the otherwise darkened room. In one corner, a grey and black wooden cutout of a simplified, featureless figure in a bonnet hangs from white rope. It is unclear whether her hands are bound or she is innocently swinging. On the opposite wall, a triangle of fabric machine-embroidered with a poem hangs by two oversized hair clips. Splotches of juice or dye allow the white-on-white text to emerge more clearly, revealing collections of phrases both light-hearted ("a feeling i only want to poke with a stick"; "qUiLt TiL u WiLt") and more threatening ("Drawers Hiked, Ode To Bloomers/ milk-teeth missing, lips bee-stung, nipples swell/nothingness for baby"). Throughout the gallery, hands are bound,



faces are obscured, and shapes reminiscent of tears and flower petals litter the ground.

The exaggerated sadness of Silva's arrangements references the performance work of laurel nakadate, while ties to artists bunny rogers and collaborative partner filip olszewski emerge in the imagery and content on display as well. Recently highlighted in Joanna Fateman's article "women on the verge: art, feminism and social media" (Artforum, April 2015), Rogers employs a similar language as Silva, combining found text, crafted objects and websites, and appropriated imagery to explore cybermythology and child sexuality. Probably the most disturbing yet all-encompassing phrase cited in Fateman's article is lifted from a poem of Rogers': "Adorability is fuckability / because children are adorable/ and men want to fuck children/ Acknowledge or die wow/ You are dead to me."

And there is something mildly disturbing about encountering so many characters and figurines intended for a young audience in Silva's show, although this exploration of the uncomfortable intersection between trauma and innocence remains intriguing in its taboo

without ever becoming overly didactic. Moments where these two subjects merge, as in the image of a young toddler crawling on all fours, cradled by the words, "This little country girl is all ready to be hung from your tree," become the keystones for *Youth Dew*. Not explicitly erotic or violent, but certainly interpretive as such, these works provide only murmurs of their histories. Even the show's title offers liberal interpretation, simultaneously referencing infancy, spring, freshness, perfume, perspiration, a water drop emoji, and a tear.

Youth Dew was viewable at 502 W. Franklin Street, Baltimore, MD 21201 from May 9 through June 6, 2015.

About the Author

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THE SEARCH FOR THE SATISFYING SNACK¹

by Fiona Sergeant

¹“I can never not eat the whole bag. Except usually I’ll stop when there are just 5 chips left at the bottom because I know that if I take one more handful I’ll have eaten the whole thing. So I always have a bunch of bags of chips with chip clips on them that have only five chips inside.” -anon.

THE REALIZATION OF THE SEARCH

There is a system or cycle of thoughts that exists in this world that I have only recently begun to consider actively and find words for. It is something of a snack cycle that is made up of a continuous flow of small desires and potential small satisfactions. In this cycle there is generally a moment of desire followed by one of three temporary resolutions:

1

I acknowledge a loose desire for some kind of satisfying snack but am overwhelmed by the options when I press the decision further. I ultimately postpone the search.

2

I determine a specific snack that I hope will be satisfying, but upon eating it I decide that it is not quite right and am still left unsatisfied. I might feel a little bit bad about consuming meaningless, unsatisfying calories.

3

The third (and most rare) situation is that I make a lucky selection and am satisfied by the snack. Even in this best case scenario, the satisfaction that I feel is only moderate, and I generally feel a new craving for the next snack within (at most) a day.

THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SNACK

It is empirically felt that snack consumption has been on the rise in the United States during the last few decades. Various studies show that there has been a significant increase in both the average number of snacks consumed daily by individuals as well as in the percentage of daily calories that are consumed through snacks. According to Richard D. Mattes, Ph. D., professor of foods and nutrition at Perdue University, “between 1977 and 2006, snacking in the American diet had grown to constitute a ‘full eating event’ or a fourth meal, averaging about 580 calories each day.”² Another report put together by the NPD group, a market research company, shows that the traditional three meals are getting smaller, often becoming “mini-meals” while snacking is on the rise. The report states that “one out of every five eating occasions in the U.S. is a snack and over half of Americans (53%) are snacking two or three times a day.”³

This data is not surprising for anyone active in the American public sphere. The idea of leading busy, hectic lives has become built-in to the contemporary American Identity. There is a desire to participate in the growth and prosperity of the contemporary world; to experience this directly is to feel overwhelmed and hyper productive. The very existence of on-the-go and convenience-oriented foods may function especially to reinforce the idea of the always-busy, on-the-go American who doesn't have the time to sit down to a full meal. By choosing the product for the busy individual, the individual tells themselves (and others) that they are busy.

An increase in snacking may also be due to the incredible abundance of snacks available in the contemporary environment. Aside from the overwhelming diversity of snacks one can experience at any local convenience store or supermarket, “Mintel Menu Insights data shows that restaurant menu items incorporating the words “snack,” “snackable” or “snacker” have risen 170 percent since 2007, and further growth is expected as restaurants pile on this new trend.”⁴

In contemporary culture, food and food marketing have become incredibly developed languages. Food objects and situations have gone beyond acting as passive signs where they are read for their often slowly established, passive, historic and cultural connotations and have now become a language that is heavily written by food marketers attempting to keep up with the contemporary conceptions of reality. It is the aim to both give the people what they want and make them want things they had not expected. One of the key strategies of food marketing today (and

5

always) is to sell people on the new. Because of these marketing efforts, products in the snack, candy, and cereal aisles of any given supermarket seem to mutate like bacteria, there is a line-extension to fit any taste.

There is an inherent lack of limits built into the concept of the snack. Snacks can be any food (or really, anything); snack-time can be any time (as long as it involves a snack), and the creation of new snack foods embraces the unorthodox. In some ways, snacks and treats function as the fiction and fantasy of food in the same way that America (or the idea of America) functions as the fiction and fantasy of countries. They are both in some ways connected to a history, but that history is defined by youth (that is to say, by a state of freedom from the weight of history) and revered more for its power of influence than any other factor. The more important aspects of these fantasies are tied to the ideas of creation, innovation, and the progress of technology. Both attempt to offer innovative formats for easy, accessible, modern living, and both exist heavily in media [they are heavily mediated].

THE 100-CALORIE-SNACK-PACK

A key period in the recent history of American snacking was the rise and fall of the 100-calorie-snack-pack. In theory, the idea makes sense; if people are simply given smaller bags of snacks and told their caloric worth, individuals will have no problem knowing when to stop. They were marketed as a form of pre-fab portion control. The catch is that these smaller packages tend to cost twenty to thirty percent more than their large-bagged counterparts. For a while, people seemed to be willing to pay the price. They were introduced by Kraft in 2004 with the launch of Oreo Thin Crisps, Wheat Thin Minis, and Nabisco Mixed Berry Fruit Snacks, and in July of 2007 the New York Times reported⁵ the sales of these 100 calorie snack packs to be past “the \$200-million-a year mark.” They quickly fell out of style, however (notably during the onset of the financial crisis), and by June of 2009 were dead enough to warrant the article title “The Demise of the 100 Calorie Pack” on the marketing blog MarketingProfs.⁶

It is both ironic and telling that as a culture we have arrived at and gotten past the point of pre-portioned 100-calorie-snack-packs of processed foods since it was the discovery of basic cooking, initial forms of food processing, that allowed our ancestors to access and consume the calories necessary to support the cranial development that makes us human as we understand it. The 100-calorie-snack-pack marks the concrete moment when it was literally more valuable to the consumer to have less than to have more. Here, now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, it is our extreme proficiency at gathering and consolidating calories that has become one of our main cultural epidemics.

POST-UTILITARIAN CONSUMPTION: THE SNACK

Snack foods, as they exist in America, are made to be fun (60% of Americans report snacking for fun rather than hunger).⁷ Snacks let you treat yourself and take a break. In kindergarten, snack time is generally built into the schedule. Although there are some diet plans built around having many small meals throughout the day rather than the standard three square meals, generally people don't eat snacks to survive. In the case of those diets, one eats mini-meals rather than purely snacks. Because snacks are primarily non-utilitarian, they enjoy the most freedom in expression.

When I was a kid, I used to (and still do) take enormous pleasure in trying to think up new snacks and treats. While lying in bed trying to fall asleep or staring out the bus window on the way to school I used to think up fantasy treats; I performed numerous experiments on the textures of various things after being microwaved or frozen (there was an especially in depth series of experiments regarding the achievable textures of marshmallows in the microwave). This kind of experimentation is at the heart of snack culture. Nothing is sacred and everything is at least worth trying. Snacking is a perfect low-risk environment for play and creation. I was not the mother of the house; I did not have to cook and provide for the family. I am the daughter who is free to cook to provide for her own interests and imagination. Because snacks are frivolous, they are free.



DOUBT AND A LACK OF SATISFACTION

The grand total of all varieties of snacks available on Walmart.com (including candy, cookies, chips, crackers, nuts and trail mixes, and granola bars) is 4879 options, as of November 2013. When attempting to make the right choice regarding the search for the satisfying snack, this overwhelming number of options is the primary hurdle. I, at least, experience a slight doubt that I'll choose correctly when the options become too great (this is common, also, at record and thrift stores where most options are probably great, but I have no way of knowing which are the best). Mathematically, the odds of choosing correctly are not in your favor. What ways can one ensure a correct choice? A friend recently told me, "If I only have rice to eat, I will be satisfied with rice." With this thought, it seems that one way to achieve satisfaction is to deal with the reality of the situation and decide to be satisfied.

But what if there is satisfaction in the lack of satisfaction experienced in the search for the satisfying snack? At our most ancient cultural roots, humans are hunter-gatherers. The acquisition aspect of the utilitarian hunt has become too easy to be totally satisfying. The never ending search for the satisfying snack comes about as a way of staying un-satiated in order to never tire of and never complete the hunt. There is something pleasurable about wanting.

INFO-SNACKS

Snacking today is not just limited to food-snacks. Rather, snacking has become our primary mode of consumption in most areas. Food, media, relationships, thoughts, even the acquisition of objects. We deal in frequent short bites of varied things; with the advent of the internet and the ever growing global economy, the proliferation of accessible, consumable goods has followed. Snacking is just a way of coping with this information overload, this overload of possibilities as it allows one to make more choices and sample more bites. While the world has always contained more than any one human could comprehend, humans were rarely ever confronted by the whole world all at once. Now, even just one company, Google, can provide access and answers to more inquiries than any individual could ever ask (even if all the questions were asked, there are still the images to browse and the maps to wander).

This overwhelming everything has created a new system of self-definition. Rather than being defined so heavily by what you do and where you are, it seems that a lot of how people are defined today is by What They Are Into and How/How Much They Are Into It. With the accessibility of information and quasi-experience available through the internet and other media, there are no longer many limits of what an individual may have been exposed to given their geographic location or social status. Anyone has the ability to have heard of or to be interested in anything. This makes it seemingly all the more important to define and declare oneself. This declaration has become especially image-based rather than action-based due to the rise of screen-based living. Much of life on the internet centers around consuming and producing all of the info-snacks that make up the whole [persona].

As our known universe continues to expand with the progression of history, invention, and discovery, there will continue to be more and more of everything, but the individual will continue to be individual. Individuals may not be able to act of the scale of the universe and take it in all at once, but we can always make the attempt to sample it all and eat on the go. In an article titled, "Snacking Could Be the Future of Eating," Gary Stibel, executive of New England Consulting Group (whose clients include Frito-Lay) predicts that "You and I will continue to snack more and sit down to meals less."⁸

Who knows.

²“Snacking Constitutes 25 Percent of Calories Consumed in U.S.” - IFT.org. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Dec. 2013.

³“U.S. Consumers Adhere to Three Meal Times Daily But Define Meals Differently and Snack Often, Reports NPD.” – NPD. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Dec. 2013.

⁴“Bite Sized Bliss.” Food Processing InPerspective™ by Cargill Salt. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Dec. 2013.

⁵Peters, Jeremy W. “Fewer Bites. Fewer Calories. Lot More Profit.” The New York Times. The New York Times, 07 July 2007. Web. 05 Dec. 2013.

⁶Mininni, Ted. “MarketingProfs.” MarketingProfs Daily Fix Blog RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Dec. 2013.

⁷Wyatt, Sally L. SNAXPO2013-for-Webinar. N.p.: SymphonyIRI Group, 2013. PDF.

⁸“Food Processing.” Food Trends: Snacking Could Be The Future Of Eating. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Dec. 2013.

About the Author

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Evan Roche & Harrison Tyler

TREVOR SHIMIZU @ ROWHOUSE PROJECT

Trevor Shimizu is the third artist to show at Rowhouse Project, a curatorial endeavor located at 2640 Huntingdon Avenue, Baltimore, MD. The duration of this project spans three years and features the work of a different artist each season. With each season, the formerly unoccupied and decrepit row home is revealed further along in the process of its renovation, leading towards the property's eventual realization as a livable space. Evan Roche and Harrison Tyler (two members of the group jimmi-research) discuss Trevor Shimizu's recent show "Trying To Be A Good Person" here.

-Editor

Evan Roche: Trevor's show featured one of the most visible changes in the house thus far in the project, this was the hasty whitewashing of all of the interior's (deteriorating) plaster walls, which were previously wallpapered, orange or green. This definitely led to a far clearer boundary between art work and house decor than in the shows previous.

Harrison Tyler: Yeah, having only seen Trevor's past work online, this seems like one of the first presentations of his work outside of the strictly gallery environment. I think the installation is a good opportunity for Trevor's work to be explored in a more challenging way, but I think this also turned out to be a strange and unforeseen turn in the three year renovation project of this rowhouse property. The sloppy whitewashing of the walls is clearly not a long term renovation effort...

Roche: And also kind of an oddly ordinary move to make in such a distinct space, no?

Tyler: Yeah, it is funny that while this appears to be a first step out of the gallery for Trevor's work, the row house has been pushed as far back into gallery territory as possible, at least in comparison to the previous two shows in this space that really responded to the existing qualities of the architecture and domestic detritus.

Roche: It is a little confusing to me as a curatorial decision, why not bring in work that is more challenging to the space that is provided? This being said, I think that Trevor's paintings, generally depicting sadly mundane and introspective household activities, really do work very well in this setting. The paintings are placed throughout the house so that the situations depicted in the paintings reflect the rooms they are displayed in (a painting that depicts a couple farting in bed is placed in the bedroom) and they also suggest tragic psychologies of the characters inhabiting these spaces.

Tyler: One distinct stylistic element lingers throughout the show also: a scarcely dry brushed, even economical, image with a figurative subject, blurred and dryly smudged, within elements of some vague environment. These nebulous images lacking specificity and detail introduce an eerie mystery surrounding the character of the painter; at times introspective, at others voyeuristic.

Roche: The house itself is old and decrepit and has some real bad juju. I think the eeriness of the house brings out a darker and subtler side of Shimizu's humor that I am really fond of, one that is so subtle that it might disappear in a different environment. The painting of the man blowing the cat comes to mind here. It has a quieter, darker, underlying metaphor: that the man has lost himself and his individual willpower in the effort to maintain equilibrium in his household.

Tyler: In a different setting that humor might just become more slapstick.

Roche: Yeah, maybe become more slapstick. Many of the works are right on the edge here—coming close to being a slapstick, even raunchy, a sort of shock-comedy. I think this is also really tempered by how vague the images are. This has a lot to do with the stylistic elements that you described previously: the dry and smudged brushwork that lacks specificity. The images are often so vague that they do not present enough information to commit to the punchline of a slapstick joke, and instead they remain naïve. This is a delicate balance that I really enjoy in these works.

Tyler: Maintaining equilibrium is a recurring theme... I really liked the painting of the couple smiling and farting in bed, each content with each other and sweetly entertained by their own bodies. This isn't a bored acceptance or a compromise for the sake of others, but an example of equilibrium, a dreamlike contentedness with reality in this house. This was a point in the show where the lite humor and vagueness started to grow into a more developed narrative for me.

One piece that I liked for setting up some logic in the show was the painting of a person washing dishes hung in the kitchen towards the back of the first floor.

Roche: Out of all paintings in the show, the placement of this one was the most literal - a painting of dirty dishes hung above a pile of dirty dishes.

Tyler: Right, the painting is hung in-the-mix directly on the cabinets in the kitchen. The dish washer scarcely dry brushed and smudged together with his own dishes is also smudged, overlapping into this IRL kitchen-gallery scene with our empty beer cans. This begins to outline the relationship of Trevor's work to this new and lived-in space, and while maybe a moment of clarity, its simplicity and literal placement is far less engaging than some rooms upstairs that are more thematically challenging.

Roche: The sea otters were thematically challenging. How did you feel about those?

Tyler: Ok, yeah, the back end of the second floor started to get really strange as it diverged from the more explicit thematic foundations set up in the kitchen and bedroom. The last room in the very back of the second floor contained a wall sized mural of a river scene with otters—this room was very surreal compared to the other rooms, and even darker for me as I had to fit it in within the format set up by previous works. I thought, “Is this the nursery? Or the kids room?” This non-domestic otter scene was a very strange and complex format for content from previous work to come and rest. However, while this room was powerful to me, this complexity and poetry was severely dampened by a smaller, sketchy drawing hung on the wall across from the mural depicting a masturbating man watching porn on a TV. A lonely and dreamlike space with naïve, guilty pleasures was naturally implied in this room and didn't need an explicit and obviously kinky cartoon to hint at any content.

Roche: (~~There were guilty pleasures implied in the room with the otters?~~) I think that's a really accurate way of describing that room. The image of the man watching porn lost all of the vagueness that was what made the other works more complex. I think a big part of this was the line quality. The image you speak of was drawn with a thick marker line—every element was clear and legible—as if a cartoon, compared to the vague dry brush of the other pieces. This work kind of threw off the rest of the show for me—it was like a foil to the vagueness that was established so strongly elsewhere—confirming a more slapstick read of all works.

Tyler: How would you sum up?

Roche: The vague brushwork alone created a pretty fresh naïvety in Trevor's works and I found this far more compelling than when the works seemed self aware or clearly intentional in their joke. I think they could stand on the naïvety alone - there is skill in this naïvety and in the vagueness of depiction. The naïvety in these images is difficult to come

to terms with and I like that—the intentional joke I can understand too easily.

Tyler: Overall, this show left me with an impression of uncertainty at the fault of some unclear directions, that some works being too explicitly slapstick brought down the complex and dark humor found in other works. The exhibition had the opportunity to defy my expectations of the whitewashed walls and create a complex psychological space, but that experience was muddled by works that seemed too jokey and of a cynical humor.

About the Authors

Evan Roche and Harrison Tyler manage the 3d printing company and project Jimmi~Research. They have developed a 3d printer that is notable for its material flexibility in research applications. Tyler lives and works in Baltimore, MD while Roche operates in Vancouver, BC.





SOMETHING CROSSED MY MIND
@
COPYCAT GARAGE

Works (Events? Shows? Exhibitions?) like *Something Crossed My Mind* are difficult to quantify; to address it as a singular entity would be doing a disservice to the complexities of each individual artist's work, and to treat each component as separate would be to ignore the intent that goes into curating something of this kind. This is made even more complicated by the fact that, while at its heart, *Something Crossed My Mind* is a fashion show, things like the room's design and the soundtrack have been treated with as much intentionality and care as the collections themselves. It could be argued that the actual work is the interaction between these components, and between these components and their audience.

The show is set in the garage of the Copycat Building, a cavernous, windowless space with large pillars running down the center of the room. Colin Foster has constructed a series of fountains out of ultramarine plastic barrels and PVC pipe that are scattered between the pillars. The barrels rest on rectangular plastic mats of a similar color which catch the splashes of water while the fountains are running. These assemblages have a flatness that gives them a quality not unlike a rudimentary, untextured form in a computer graphics software. They are the schematic of a fountain; reduced, yet recognizable. The starkness of these objects contrast them sharply against their weathered surroundings, and they seem to float above the ground rather than rest on it. The space is lit with large cinema lights on tall stands placed in the corners, which tower above the crowd, casting elongated, dramatic shadows.

In one corner, Colin sits in the driver's seat of a parked car with a PA system set up in the trunk. It is from here that he performs the soundtrack for the show, a seamless set of pseudo-club tracks which transform and evolve throughout the night. The audience gravitates to the perimeter of the room, clinging to the wall, meaning that no matter where one stands, they'll be directly facing someone across from them. The din of Foster's fountains creates an aural screen that intersects the room, assuring that while you can see

who's standing opposite you, you cannot hear them. This dynamic sets the tone for the night, where one feels more like a voyeur than a viewer. Perhaps the greatest feat of this show's design, is that by the time the procession of models begins to move through the space, the audience is already well inundated in the show's atmosphere, blurring the lines between viewer and participant, show and prelude, runway and room.

The four collections presented make up a cohesive whole, without any two designers' work feeling overly similar. Lucia Maher-Tatar's collection is shown first, which is constructed largely from dark denim and pale neutral fabrics, with a few pieces in a reddish pink hue. Upon first glance, her garments seem fairly conservative (and relatively speaking, they are). They are recognizable as clothing, and point to pieces of clothing that came before them (a coat, a dress, a blouse, jeans, etc.), yet these categories simply serve as a point of departure from which the pieces take shape. Certain motifs such as exposed seams, tied closures, and raw edges unify the garments and suggest a sort of amorphousness or adaptability. This is emphasized by the actions of the models, who remove and reconfigure their ensembles as they move about the space. The collection's use of denim is unique in that it avoids the trap of seeming nostalgic, a difficult feat when using a material so imbued with cultural significance.

The second collection, designed by Marines Montalvo, is a jarring shift. It relies heavily on printed fabrics, ranging from plaid, to camouflage, to a striped fabric adorned with the designer's first name. The allusions to luxury brands are evident, and many of the outfits consist of matching tops and bottoms, establishing them as a sort of uniform. Montalvo's play on patterns are subtle; a black and white camouflage pattern that is doubled over, similar to a printing error, or a knockoff of the iconic Burberry fabric with areas that have been digitally altered and distorted. The most extreme example of this is a light purple textile that is printed to depict distressed denim,



and then actually torn and tattered in places. It's effective tromp l'oeil which cleverly highlights the absurdity present in this sort of commodification of damage. This collection seems most focused on apparel's role as a signifier of status, and is choreographed to call attention to interpersonal interactions, as the models stop in the space and share eye contact before moving on.

Where Montalvo addressed luxury, audrey gair's collection seemed to instead draw from necessity and thrift, featuring garments that are rough edged, patched, and tied together, and props like plastic bags and styrofoam cups. It is also the only collection of the four that includes footwear, such as bulbous assemblies of athletic socks worn over sneakers, or sandal soles lashed on with cord. Although aesthetic choices such as these run the risk of coming off as a gimmick, here they are tastefully executed, suggesting resilience as opposed to a fetishization of poverty. The prevailing trend of the collection is baggy, sacklike garments adorned with eyelets and belt loops, that suggest an adaptability to a wide range of body types, and perhaps a practical usage as well (à la cargo netting). Other garments feature clever details like panels of terrycloth, or

a two part coat that slides off the shoulders to become a set of dangling sleeves, almost resembling those of a kimono.

The final collection, designed by sonja solvang, assumes a childlike playfulness. Some of it's outfits execute this quite literally, with oversized sleeves that hang long past the hands of the models, or ruffled tulle skirts that are reminiscent of a tutu. Other pieces are a nod to arts and crafts, such as a paper chain crafted out of leather, or a series of garments fashioned out of a neon plastic mesh that resembles strings of dried glue. Solvang's work draws parallels between youthful experimentation and garishness in high-fashion which, similarly to Montalvo's collection, serves to point to the arbitrary lines between class and crass. Of the four designers, Solvang's garments are some of the most alien, with cartoonish silhouettes that render the models as caricatures.

Something Crossed My Mind is an exercise in juxtapositions, and is successful due to the skill of its players. Maher-Tatar, Montalvo, Gair, and Solvang have each executed collections that are both aesthetically strong and thought provoking, Foster has constructed a fitting environment for the audience to engage with these



collections (in addition to creating objects that would function just as well in a different setting), and Co La has composed a score which complements each collection individually without sounding unfocused.

If there is a weakness to this show, it's that ultimately, it still adheres to the established format of a runway show, which can feel linear and reductive (an alternative could be seen in the structure utilized by conceptual fashion label Bless, in which the models are positioned naturally throughout a room, rather than walking through it.) That's a minor criticism however, and while the show's basic structure didn't match the ingenuity of its other components, it doesn't detract from them either. Overall, *Something Crossed My Mind* is a show whose sum is greater than its parts, and it succeeds in uniting the work of six artists as a cohesive whole.

About the Author

Nate Grossman is an artist and curator in Baltimore, MD. He recently received his BFA from SMFA in Boston, MA. He is a co-director of the gallery *First Continent* at 500 W. Franklin Street, Baltimore, MD.

Something Crossed My Mind was a one night event on April 4, 2015 at 1501 Guilford Avenue, Baltimore, MD

photo credit page 7: Nate Grossman, page 16, 17: Tim Mahoney
designer credit page 7: Lucy Maher Tatar, page 16 spread left to right: Lucy Maher Tatar, Marines Montalvo, Audrey Gair, Sonja Solvang

Colin Alexander

JORDAN BERNIER OF FRANKLIN STREET

Franklin Street was an arts space located on West Franklin Street in the West Downtown neighborhood of Baltimore, MD. Curator/artist Jordan Bernier sat down to talk about the project before its close in Spring 2015.

-Editor

CA: *When did you start Franklin Street?*

JB: I got into the space on May 1st [2014].

CA: *Was that directly following sophiajacob or did that have some overlap?*

JB: Yeah, it must have been just a few days later. I signed the lease when sophiajacob was still going on. So there's overlap in that way, but no, the spaces were separate.

CA: *When you started, had you been thinking that you wanted to do something solo? Or just that it happened to work together with that timing?*

JB: Yeah, it was like, keeping projects going, but trying to put stuff together myself was the direction I wanted to attempt.

CA: *Do you know how many shows you've done at this point since May?*

JB: Well, the space opened in June—

CA: *Oh, ok, first show.*

JB: —Right, fixing the space for a little bit. I don't know. Twelve? Fifteen? Including performances and, you know. [Actually 22 shows in 7-8 months -Ed. note]

CA: *Yeah.*

JB: Some months it's two things, and some months it's three things. Have you been to a bunch of them?

CA: *I haven't been to even half. Or, maybe I've been to half. I've seen a good number, but not every one.*

JB: Right.

CA: *Do you have a strong intention that you're working with when you're going through each show, curating, finding artists, or do things just happen and then you work with them?*

JB: There's a little bit of both. I mean, you try to work with your friends, you know? And work a little bit outside that realm, but mostly, it's my friends. So in that way I kind of know what I'm getting personality wise, but I don't know what I'm getting content wise, maybe. Things will show up and i'm like, "OK, where do we put that one?" But yeah, so I guess it's a little bit of both.

CA: *Do you strictly draw from a pool of Baltimore artists? That seems to go hand in hand with working with your friends, I guess, but, has that stayed consistent in the project?*

JB: It isn't a strict rule, but you're right, most artists in the program are currently living in Baltimore. The most recent show with nick mayer is an exception, he's from New York at the moment. He used to live in Baltimore though!

CA: *I think that going to those shows you can get the sense— I guess its funny because the crowd is always very similar and so it feels like there's a community that revolves around it, but they're always casual enough that it almost feels like a studio visit made formal—*

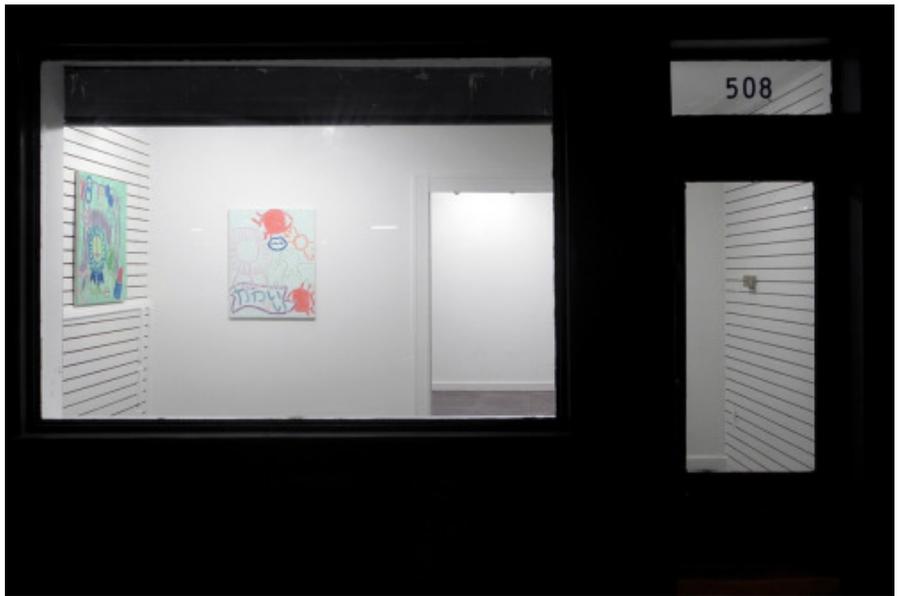
JB: Oh, OK, yeah.

CA: *—that is just a platform with which to have a community meeting around.*

JB: Yeah, so maybe you've picked up that it's a little bit less rigid than our sophiajacob project right where it was like, "This is the opening, Saturday night, this time," or whatever, and that's awesome, but this was kind of like, "Loosen up a little bit." Yeah, I'm glad you picked up on the— hopefully its not too cliquy or anything— but I do want it to be a positive space for people. Not too stand off-ish or something.

CA: *Yeah, I think it always has a sense of openness (rather than exclusiveness), but I guess something that goes along with that is— well I guess, first, do you promote any of those shows online?*

JB: There's a mailing list and a website, so if you're signed up to the mailing list (and anybody can sign up) then you get the emails, and if you check the website, I try to update every



week, but I don't do any social media.

CA: Yeah. So, that's like "the thing."

JB: It was actually the one thing that when you asked me about this interview that I was like— because Post-Office is like a Tumblr format, right?

CA: Yeah.

JB: And I was like, it's a social media thing.

CA: Oh, true.

JB: But you're my friend and I thought it would be a fun conversation.

CA: Do you use social media in your personal life or does that come from a specific view towards social media in the arts? Or is it just not something you're interested in?

JB: Not in my personal life.

CA: The way I was leading into that, I was thinking that those shows are probably some of the most well promoted shows, physically, in a way. I mean you always have the screen printing set up very— like, there's never a show that goes non-promoted physically, and it's probably the most substantial flyering around baltimore [at this point].

JB: Oh, cool. Yeah, I'm trying to do that. I mean, "posters" has been my thing for a while, you know with the sophiajacob lectures. It took a couple shows to figure out that format, and

once I figured it out, I was like “Okay.” I mean it’s a fun way to keep my hand in the art work.

CA: *And it is nice to have something so consistent, I mean I was trying to figure out— “Jordan must spend a lot of time—”*

[Both of us laughing here]

--*Not that they’re super involved; Obviously, it’s a simple and meditative task.*

JB: Yeah, like the color stencil, that’s always there. And it’s just mixing, finding the right color to go with the show.

CA: *That’s nice. I guess going from that, it is funny to me that the crowd does feel consistent, or that something does feel communal, that the same people keep coming back even though it does have a strong promotional thing.*

JB: Sure, sure.

CA: *It’s like, on paper, “Well, he hit this many intersections...” and then it’s still the same people coming out. Maybe it’s the graphic design or something, maybe there’s a [visual] language in the public sphere that has a certain graphic design that lends itself to certain audiences.*

JB: It could be. I mean I try to make it open—I put my phone number on them, there’s the website, the email— I do try to make it as open as possible, but you’re right, we still have this consistent base that shows up at every show. I would like to, of course, if anybody’s curious, it would be cool to have them come out. Or send an email for an appointment. What I’m saying is, I hope the design isn’t too stand-offish or something.

CA: *Yeah. I mean it’s hard to know, I feel like I go to the shows and that I’m welcome, so I don’t know if someone who was not an artist or something would just be like, “Times New Roman?—”*

[Both of us laughing here]

CA: *“There’s no flash?” or, you know? You look, like, at “On Purpose: Women” [pointing to a magazine stand across the room] and it has to go through a certain number of hoops to fit into that demographic of graphic design... I dunno, we don’t need to harp on this for too long, it’s something I’m curious about: how these languages get set up and how you might determine—and this is going separate at this point, but—how stores can kind of choose their demographic by choosing graphic design. So, you can tell when a store is going to be a “Hipster Cafe” or something, because they do the circular, very clean, nostalgic looking font vs. 99¢ SALE ALL ITEMS READY TO GO etc. etc.*

JB: Yeah.

[Jordan later explained that his particular design is actually lifted from a Netherlandish Beach Boys album release]

* * * *

CA: *Working as a curator who has played the curatorial role pretty extensively at this point—*

JB: —For a couple years.

CA: —*For a few years, you know, but, pretty actively.*

JB: That’s good to— yeah, haha, hopefully.

CA: *I don’t know if you designate a specific painting practice or if you hold an all encompassing practice (or if you feel like there’s any overlap), but — the basic question being, do you feel like [your painting and curatorial practices are] separate, and if they affect each other in a certain way?*

JB: They definitely affect each other, especially time-wise. There are definitely times when you don’t have any time to get into the studio. So, there’s that effect, of course. But I do try to incorporate them. Maybe the collaborative paintings might be the best analogy in a visual art or a painting way, because the collaborations between caitlin or steve or john bohl— it’s like, that’s how I see putting together the shows at Franklin Street, you just collaborate with somebody. Whether it is the poster or the actual design of the show. As much designed as they can be. Hopefully they work together, I mean, there’s times when I don’t see them fit as well as they could, but I don’t know. So maybe it’s for other people to decide, I don’t know. But, I do try to maintain a consistent studio thing going on.

* * * *

CA: *How do you feel like Baltimore as a community, or a space, lends to your practice, if that’s a driving force?*

JB: It’s hard, because I don’t know what it’s like to work in other cities that much. I know Portland because I lived there for a little bit, but then I moved back here because of the availability of space. And yeah I do like the community. It is good.

CA: *It is good.*

JB: I mean nothing’s perfect. Haha. But like the landscape for artists in the past 10 years has — it’s so much better.

CA: *Mmhmm*

JB: Definitely. When I think about the projects that were going on when I was in undergrad, that was like— it was cool, there was excitement. But now it’s opened up for people a lot, and I

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page 19, Amelia, Buddy, Elena, and Steve
page 21, flyer for Lindsay and Brendan
page 22 top, Nicholas Lynch
page 22 bottom, Steven Booth

think it's just way better now.

CA: Yeah, I've been thinking about Baltimore a lot recently, trying to figure out which thoughts are valid, which ones are naïve because i'm young and trying to be idealistic, and which ones are because I just don't have enough information since I've only been here for five years. But one of the things, to hear you say that it's way better now than it was, is super interesting because I'm frequently thinking similar things.

* * * *

JB: As far as working here— I mean its the same thing as everyone says. You have a warehouse with space, you know, it's not that expensive. But really it's like: my friends live here. That's the way it is.

CA: Build a community, then you know it.

JB: I think every city has its spot, not because there are warehouses but because that's where your friends live. I would like to think that that is the reason why.

CA: I grew up outside of Cleveland, Ohio, and I was there until I was 15—my family moved to New Jersey after so I was there during high school—and then came here, but I was immediately drawing connections between Cleveland and Baltimore just because what the ports [and mills] were for Baltimore, steel was for Cleveland. And being in such a similar position, growing up and reading news articles talking about the decreasing city populations, and now beginning to hear Cleveland listed along with Baltimore and Detroit and other rising —

JB:—"Up and coming," you know—

CA:—Yeah, cities. And they're so quick to make those claims in the papers... Prospecting, I guess?

JB: Sure, sure.

CA: In a direct kind of code language for developers that is like, "Now's the time to start thinking about real estate."

JB: And that's why I say there's good and bad. I feel like at the H&H, every couple months you hear word about development plans and it's definitely— I don't know if scary is the right word, but it's definitely uncomfortable to hear that stuff. And any-time things change, it makes you feel a little uncomfortable. And that's just the way it is.

* * * *

JB: Franklin street is not really a gallery in some ways as much as like— the way things move along, I don't want people, at least

the people that go to the shows, to have that idea that, "This is a gallery, and this is the way the lighting is and it's up for this long and it's on this cycle that's predetermined." Or something. Hopefully the project (and it will end at the end of April) will help break that down a little bit. I don't know, maybe it doesn't make any difference. Maybe people see them as, like, really straightforward shows.

CA: I can't always tell.

JB: Hahaha.

CA: That's nice.

About the Author

Colin Alexander is an artist, curator, and writer working in Baltimore, MD. He is a member of artist-run collectives bb and Open Space and is the founder of Post-Office Arts Journal.

April Camlin

**REAL ROCKS ARE HEAVY AND
HARD TO FIND @ GALLERY FOUR
(BOUCHÉ/SYRELL)**

Real Rocks Are Heavy and Hard To Find is a collaboration between James Bouché and Ryan Syrell. The show translates familiar materials through a grammar of signifiers that Bouché and Syrell have developed to address ideas of time, illusion, reflection, and process.

From the moment the elevator doors open directly into the space, I lose all sense of the typical feelings of anxiety that permeate most of my art-opening experiences. So much consideration has been given to the arrangement of the space that it becomes impossible to focus on anything but the work. This is a strong, ambitious show. Syrell and Bouché address the ubiquitous material object in a way that both highlights and obscures its materiality, showing us works that become more than themselves, or the ghost image of themselves. This can be seen in a series of five pedestals that are arranged in a linear alignment throughout the course of the show, moving in gradient from light blue to black. Displayed on each pedestal is a grouping of bricks and rope that have been subtly transformed from conventional materials into a new object that feels simultaneously familiar and unknown.

I laughed when, while studying the obliterated homage to Maso di Banco's St. Sylvester (a 14th century fresco), a fellow visitor leaned over and asked me if the work was part of the show. I could only assume that he was confounded by the presence of a Renaissance painting amongst domestic building materials. By the way, the only information yielded from my research of this painting was that St. Sylvester slew a dragon that was killing a lot of people with its toxic odor. I appreciate these hidden jokes within the works.

Here and there, little remnants of blue tape are left behind, feigning intentionality within the context of the expertly installed works they accompany. In the final

room of the show, pieces of sandpaper are treated with a sawdust flocking that form caricature-like references to Bouche and Syrell's collaborative works. These are also available in a folio as a take-home set.

The work is technically and structurally on point while still retaining the feeling of an intuitive process. Forms are placed in orientations of constant activation by the preexisting architecture of the space. And the space itself is one of the most brilliantly present aspects of this show – every element is considered, engaged, and negotiated. Implications of structural elements are placed centrally in every room, giving the feeling of potentials – objects caught in the act of fulfilling their latent capabilities. By repeated use of columns and arches (and the literal or probable acts of obliteration connected to these objects), Syrell and Bouché subvert an architectural canon that is buried deep in our subconscious.

It surprises me that I've gotten this far without talking about my favorite work in the show: a piece simply titled Drywall. On a large wall, tinted joint compound creates a three-dimensional grid that is so optically deceiving that my eyes would not believe it was flat even as I stood inches away. Full disclosure: I've spent the better part of a year obsessing over the binary relationship between the eyes and the brain created by optical illusions. Drywall interprets these complex principals using the most basic materials; this juxtaposition of conceptuality and universality perfectly exemplifies the statement written by the artists for this show. Bouché and Syrell refer to the "threshold of art" as the resting place for the work, speaking of an intuitive making process that is dictated by materials. Their quest for de-individualization is a noble one, although it's impossible not to pick up on various cues that reference each artist's personal practice. But I think that's ok – their two voices are never dissonant together.

About the Author

April Camlin is an artist living and working in Baltimore, MD. She is a chronic stitcher, ventriloquist, and the drum half of her band Wume. She recently received a BFA in Fiber at the Maryland Institute College of Art. She is a member of the Baltimore based Wham City collective, and was the co-organizer of the original Baltimore Fashion Week.

photos courtesy of Gallery Four, Real Rocks was viewable from March 28 through May 3, 2015 at 405 W. Franklin Street, FL4, Baltimore, MD 21202



Kyle Tata

CONFLICT UNKNOWN @ OPEN SPACE (LALE WESTVIND)



Conflict Unknown: Drawings, Prints and Paintings by Lale Westvind is the latest exhibition at open space's new location at 512 W. Franklin street. The exhibition reflects Westvind's prolific artistic output by containing an immense amount of work in a variety of mediums. The works on display are taken from, or inspired by, *Trial One*, Westvind's third and final book in her comic series *Now & Here*. A majority of the work in *Conflict Unknown* are graphite drawings done on approximately 11"x17" paper hung in single rows on the two opposite walls entering the space with larger paintings and screenprints hung on the the far wall. In addition to the works on the wall, there are copies of *Trial One* and Westvind's previous comic books on for viewers to look through. This is the second exhibition of *Conflict Unknown* which was shown in a different format

at the booklyn art gallery last November.

Open Space's poster for the exhibition is conceived in a similar typeface as the original posters for Ridley Scott's 1982 classic movie *Blade Runner*. The two share similarities both formally and theoretically in their view of an dystopian, authoritarian environment, but personally, I can't help but think of this superficial relationship due to the coincidence that *Blade Runner* happened to be showing the same week in the revival series at the Charles Theater. Both have imagery based around futuristic realms where cold steel machinery and human flesh are simply interchangeable materials that collide into each other in countless ways.

The strength of Westvind's work is how she takes these recognizable and almost clichéd science fiction motifs and perverts them to elicit an original guttural

reaction from the viewer. Throughout the exhibition, there are references to different forms of futuristic transportation. The combination of intergalactic travel and the automobile is a familiar one that has been around since the inception of science fiction. However, Westvind reimagines this old trope by rendering the cars and planes in the paintings “Hax 1 & 2” with surfaces that exist metallic and fluid simultaneously. These vehicles appear more like living organisms than the actual human characters in *Trial One* which sometimes look cold and synthetic. In “Shields”, Westvind mounted three vintage hubcaps to the wall of the gallery, as if to create a realm where automobiles concurrently present themselves as antiquated artefacts and futuristic vessels.

Throughout the different mediums, Westvind’s characters are presented in constant motion, being blurred and abstracted. Her aggressive use of graphite portrays them to be uncontrollably hurdling through space, barely being contained in the two dimensional format. They are almost inseparable from the motion of the environment they occupy and become one with the exploding machinery around them.

Halfway through the opening of *Conflict Unknown*, Westvind did a reading from the series of *Now and Here*. As her voice echoed through a guitar amp a seethingly loud ambulance siren could be heard passing by on Franklin Street. This coincidental noise added to the cacophony of Westvind stream of consciousness writing. The siren accompanied the poetic urgency that was felt through the reading and created a synesthetic effect with the visual work on display, instilling an overall feeling of abjection.

While Westvind’s paintings and prints in *Conflict Unknown* seemed to challenge the layout structure of the comic in an intriguing manner, the graphite drawings in comparison had a hard time visually existing outside the context of *Trial One*. The sheer amount of different types of work on display may have been a strength and weakness. While it did reinforce Westvind’s idea of multiple realms existing at once in *Trial One*, it also felt too much to visually digest for one exhibition. It is hard to have these graphite drawings exist alongside the more developed work and not have them not appear simply as working sketches. Likewise, while both the screenprints and paintings were compelling pieces on their own, I found it hard to view them together due to their differences in how Westvind handled each medium. The screenprints utilized the flat, hard edged vernacular of both screenprinting and comic books, compared to the

paintings which were realized in a more viscous manner accentuating the constantly melting and exploding flesh of the characters in *Trial One*.

There is an inherent difficulty in creating a new exhibition based around an artist’s pre-existing work. Especially when that work occupies a completely different format such as a book. In this case, *Trial One* becomes a text with all the work on display nearly becoming secondary information. *Conflict Unknown* definitely had it’s beguiling moments, but at times felt as if it was too invested in sharing Westvind’s career as a whole instead of focusing on the singular exhibition context of Open Space.

About the Author

Kyle Tata is a Baltimore based artist and recent BFA graduate from the Maryland Institute College of Art. His work has been featured at galleries and institutions such as the Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland Art Place, The Light Gallery (MD), the George Segal Gallery at Mont Clair University, The D-Center (MD), Petrella’s Imports (NYC) and a forthcoming exhibition at the International Print Center of New York. Tata is currently on the faculty at Baltimore School for the Arts.

Conflict Unknown was viewable at 512 W. Franklin Street from January 31 through February 21, 2015.

by Colin Alexander

RIGOR RAGING RIGGER @ FREDDY (THORNTON/FOSTER)

Colin Foster and Torey Thornton show collaborative work as well as individual work in the [then] current exhibition at Freddy Gallery, *Rigor Raging Rigger*. On entering, the compact space is crowded by a large floor pedestal that supports a sci-fi acrylic and wood table. On the table, a variety of objects sample one substance for this, another substance for that, forming an array of shapes that seem to have neither history nor future. To the left, a large red transparent vinyl covers the front window.

A few wall pieces by Thornton experiment with the context of OLD WOOD (which, in the context of particle board and depicted gum in one piece, I can't help but think of as a sign increasingly owned by yuppie food establishments). A blue, "+" shaped cardboard collage is forgettable/unnervingly tidy in the mad (material) scientist atmosphere that everything else works to establish. Foster's pieces each seem to embed some sort of overwhelmingly human narrative within their otherwise industrial/analog electronic Hobby Hell aesthetic.

The link between these practices seems to stem from a material dissonance, an ambivalence towards just how comfortable both might be with the found and manipulated material vernacular available. I see a sort of flattened timeline of cutting edge and antique materials, of natural and unnatural qualities forced to interact outside of their themes. Where Thornton's work remains relatively sober, Foster's work feels erratic and difficult to parse.

Though *Top Ribbon (Disturbed Mono)* by Thornton and *Selling Shoes on the Beach* by Foster are both non-collaborative, they mark where the artists most closely brush shoulders in practice. They seem to be the

strongest pieces in the show in their ability to point to that link (a squished material timeline) and employ the separate strengths of each artist's practice.

That the gallery text and title offer a roll of possible labels that function more as phonetic textures (pick your poison: beatnik poetic, summer camp icebreaker, dada, hashtag list?) than as specific descriptors is a nice coupling for work that relies so heavily on the physicality of objects.

As a collaboration, *Rigor Raging Rigger* is a treat to explore even with the few pieces that seem engaged in a different conversation. Thornton's blue "+" still seems unfitting here, but the formal effort to match it (or to be matched by?) Foster's large red vinyl window highlights the conscious efforts of the two to commit to the sort of material choreography that ultimately holds the show together. Perhaps a second collaboration is the stage for further grace in that dance—I'd be curious to see it.

About the Author

Colin Alexander is an artist, curator, and writer working in Baltimore, MD. He is a member of artist-run collectives bb and Open Space and is the founder of Post-Office Arts Journal.

Rigor Raging Rigger was viewable at 510 W. Franklin Street, Baltimore, MD from May 9-June 6, 2015. Photos courtesy of Freddy Gallery



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Daniel is survived by his wife, his
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I've spent a lot of time reading each
publicly available piece of writing that
I've been able to find from you, which
feels strange because so much of that
is posted or published in obscurity
(both digitally and physically) and yet
I sort of gobble it up. I don't know
if other people do the same thing,
maybe there's a handful of people who
could say the same. Or maybe they
were more in your immediate social
circle when the physical stuff was
being produced, so what I've found
deep in cardboard boxes and trunks,
maybe you were showing it off around
then.

I catch myself comparing my writing
to yours trying to make sure that it's
not too close in style. That's how you
really know you're in the hole.

I'm hoping that we can work together
collaboratively sometime in the near
future. I sort of feel funny that we
haven't yet, since I think you'd agree
that we've become peers over the
past couple years. But maybe that's
the kind of thing that you just need
to wait on; the right opportunity
and setting climate presents itself or
it doesn't. With some people, you
can kind of just reach out and make
something happen out of sheer will.
I'm not sure I'm going to make that
leap yet--I have a little more faith than
that.

Post-Office Arts Journal presents its
first edition release at NYABF '15.
Arts Criticism and the Arts Outpost
transcribes a panel discussion between
Alex Ebstein, Max Guy, and Marcus
Civin on the topic of criticality in
smaller arts communities. Find it at
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About Post-Office Arts Journal

Post-Office Arts Journal was founded in December 2014 with the intention of promoting local criticism in Baltimore's alternative and artist-run arts venues. It is currently operated through a writer/sponsor model, in which writing is donated to Post-Office pro-bono.

Vol. 1 no. 1 is the first physical adaptation of the website post-office.tk, and draws from articles published and unpublished articles from February 2015 through August 2015. You can support Post-Office by donating through our fiscal sponsorship with Fractured Atlas or by contacting us about advertising.

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