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One of the first ideas for Post-Office was that the coverage would be limited to artist-run and alternative venues. It seemed like a simple enough tenet to stick to and yet magnification always reveals previously invisible layers. How to categorize artist-run non-profit (i.e. institutionalized) venues, or artist-run commercial ventures (increasingly common), or the museum that operates only in temporary venues? Do these all count towards the same ideal?

Maybe that ideal never existed. For artists, there's a certain point in which a decision is made: whether or not to self-identify as an artist, and that is whatever you make it out to be. There are no implications of ideology or pragmatism or commercialism. You either identify or you don't.

There's an album I've been meaning to listen to for a long time called *Freedom is a Hammer: Conservative Folk Revolutionaries of the Sixties*. I really want to have that cognitive dissonance: the medium that so belongs to a progressive anti-war message made surreal in the hands of the opposite party.

When we archive work, it's best not to do so with an agenda. We should do the work, archive it, and then continue to work.

-Editor

Post-Office
Arts
Journal

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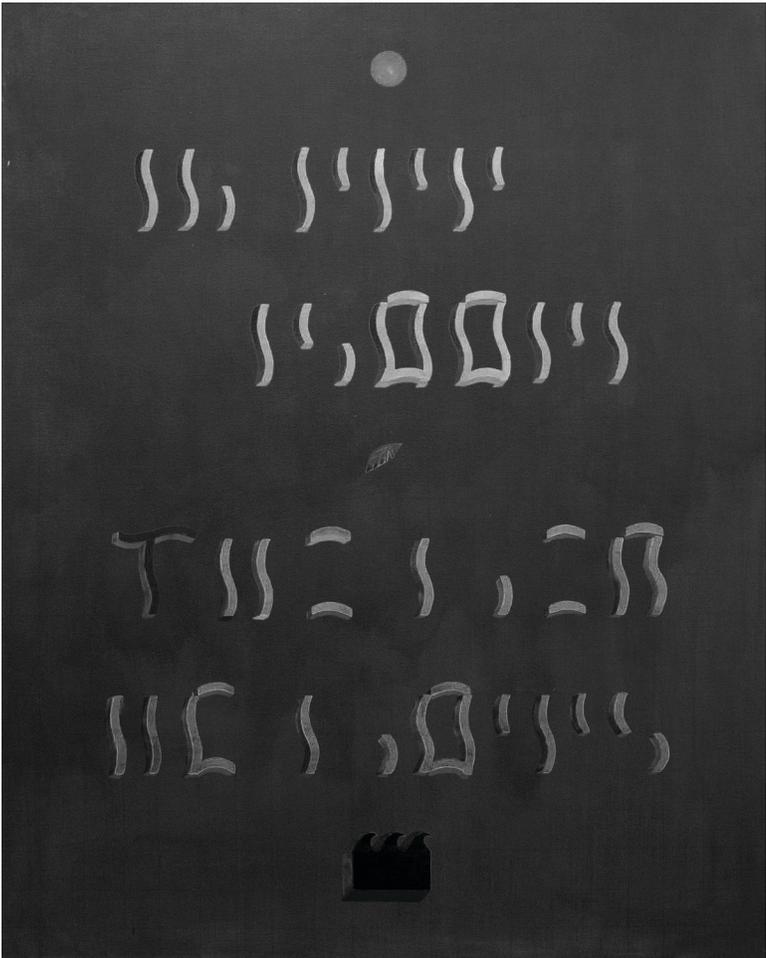
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LANGUAGE IS A CONSTRUCT; LET'S BUILD THE ONE WE WANT

"I think I am done with many of the words of the past hundred centuries.—I am mad that their poems, bibles, words still rule and represent the earth and are not yet superseded."

—Walt Whitman, *An American Primer*

There's an idea floating around that language is changing rapidly right now thanks in large part to the omnipresence of the internet, that a new brand of English is being forged on the web and is rife with misspellings, abbreviations and slang. The accusation, of course, is that the way our language is changing is bad, that this change shows how dumb we're getting. The suggestion is that the English language is a static thing and that any changes to it are negative, but this ignores the fact that English has been and still is a constantly-changing form, ever-fluctuating to suit the times. Over 150 years ago, people were having very similar conversations about English as it was spoken in America and Walt Whitman participated in this conversation by writing "An American Primer." The Primer is an unfinished essay written by Whitman sometime in the middle of the 19th century which was posthumously published by an acquaintance in 1904. For reference, I'm looking at is the City Lights 1970 first edition, which includes a forward by the original publisher. It's short, 35 pages of easy to read ranting and you can read the whole thing online.¹

It's hard to find information on this weird essay, and actually I don't know what led me to it in the first place. Briefly, the Primer is a treatise on and defense of American English. It is an unfinished essay, full of pieced together half-thoughts and weird, erroneous mis-information. Some of Whitman's commentary is a little bizarre, but when he gets it right, he gets it really right. I've found that though there are definitely more scholarly, researched, and organized essays on American English to study, these essays don't suit the big, goopy mess that is the English Language or Language In General. "Do you suppose the liberties and brawn of These States have anything to do with delicate lady-words? With gloved gentleman-words?" begs Whitman and answers himself

resoundingly, "no." An American Primer is a coarse, scattered, erratic exaltation of the English language as it was and is spoken in these United States of America, and is perhaps the most appropriate defense of a fluid, changing English language.

Whitman wrote the Primer at a time when "America" was still a new concept, and in the essay, he argues that Americans should be speaking English differently than people who speak English in other places because America is different than those places. He says Americans, for example, might name their child Tom instead of Thomas and that the reason is that Americans are always in a hurry and like to be direct, that they are a candid and straight-speaking people. In the same way that the English language is a mush of all the languages of the many peoples who occupied, resided in or conquered England, American English should represent the many languages of the many people who reside therein. Additionally, says Whitman, the language should reflect the landscape, the plains, the mountains and rivers, the language should reflect the uniquely American lifestyle, the American industries, struggles and victories.

Whitman advises casting away "names" (words) that don't fit us. Once we do, it quickly becomes clear how much of contemporary culture is still made up of archaic structures. Let's look at the calendar, what does the word "July" have anything to do with Americans and the way we live? July is a word that celebrates the birth of Julius Caesar, wouldn't it be better if we had a word that celebrated the birth of our nation? Or a name for how hot July is, or how sunny, or how merry? Whitman encourages us to find the words that suit us, but acknowledges that this is not a thing that happens overnight. A good word is like a good nickname; it sticks when it's right, when it's familiar and natural. This is how our language is formed; we all decide on a name that is the right one for "the thing."

It's useful to think of language as a social contract. As speakers of English, we agree that certain sounds in con-

junction with one another indicate certain ideas. “T-R-E-E” signals a big plant with leaves and a very hard sturdy stem. Or “C-O-M-P-U-T-E-R” signals an object that takes a user to the internet where they can spend hours looking at Facebook. The way we use these sounds, or “words,” is constantly changing. We don’t have to say “yea and verily” every time we want to say “rite”. Same goes for outmoded vernacular like “in a jiffy” or “lickety split” or “jive” (that seemingly can now only be said with a self-aware twinge of irony) -- we can break that clause and feel totally fine and normal about it. If the best way we have found to communicate a lighthearted tone through text is “LOL,” then that is the way we should be communicating.

“language is so cool,” says Steve Roggenbuck, self proclaimed internet bard, “i can type out these shapes and you can understand me.” Roggenbuck is a member of the Alt-Lit movement, where writers are manipulating our web dialect as a way to communicate more meaningfully with their audience. For Roggenbuck and others, the platform is as important as what’s being said. When the poem should be abbreviated, its Twitter, when it needs to be shown and heard, he creates a video for YouTube. “my message is this: if our job is to move people with our language, these platforms give us endless and powerful new ways to do that. the tools to make our language visual and auditory have been democratized”. This includes the tools to build our language and spread it, to decide what parts of it are important. Roggenbuck embraces typos, spelling errors, etc. because this is part of the way we communicate online.

Within the social contract of “language,” spelling is a clause that says “this is the way we will mark down this series of sounds so that the sounds can be recreated in the mind and mouth of the person who reads it.” But spelling changes as often as words do. “For many hundred years there was nothing like settled spelling,” says Whitman, and he’s right. Looking at ancient English manuscripts, you’ll notice that words often aren’t spelled the same way twice, even in the same piece of writing. Whitman lays down this beautiful battle cry for anti-spellers everywhere; “the spelling of words is subordinate.” Even going on to say that “morbidness for nice spelling ... [means] ... impotence in literature.” In this sense, Roggenbuck’s poetry actually gains strength from its “errors” because it is communicating directly to his audience in the language they speak. Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, originally

abhorred by critics and censors alike, struck home with America’s populace and is considered an American masterpiece because it embraced the informal, ever-changing language of the American people. Our language grows and adapts to fit the terrain, and to be strict about how our language is spoken or written eliminates the opportunity for this growth and stunts our ability as speakers to understand and be understood.

* * *

A dialect is defined as “a particular form of a language that is peculiar to a specific region or social group.” If you grow up in the south and you don’t speak the dialect, you are less likely to be understood by your fellows. Dialect is important as a way of communicating directly to the people who are your peers, a way of excluding outsiders and infiltrators and making a safe space for yourself in language. In the second chapter of her book *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks outlines the development of the black vernacular as a counter-hegemonic tool, a way to reclaim the space slaves were forced into.² “To heal the splitting of mind and body, we marginalized and oppressed people attempt to recover ourselves and our experiences in language. We seek to make a place for intimacy. Unable to find such a place in standard English we create the ruptured, broken, unruly speech of the vernacular.” When older generations don’t understand new slang, when white folks don’t understand black vernacular, or when tourists have difficulty understanding the locals, it’s because they are intentionally excluded from participating. It’s the utilitarian purpose of that dialect to exclude those that won’t understand, no matter how it’s said.

This concept falls in line with Edward T. Hall’s theory of high-context cultures,³ and is applicable to the vernacular of native persons, working- and lower-class persons, foreign persons and all those who would be forced to adapt their language to suit the class structure. Dialect in these cases is resistance. From Whitman, “The words continually used among the people are, in numberless cases, not the words used in writing, or recorded in the dictionary by authority... Many of the slang words among fighting men, gamblers, thieves, prostitutes, are powerful words. These words ought to be collected—the bad words as well as the good. Many of these bad words are fine.” These words garner shame because they are words of the classless, the uneducated, and the dangerous to society.

“Words are not original and arbitrary in themselves—words are a result—they are the progeny of what has been or is in vogue,” Whitman reminds us. Those who act like words are anything else, the people who say slang is not a normal part of how people speak, actually shame people for speaking and writing that way, as though there haven’t been countless ways of spelling and speaking English over its thousands of years of existence. When we shame others for how they spell and speak, we are really trying to shame them for where they grew up, where they went to school, how much money their family makes, their ethnicity, and so on. Shaming people for how they speak and write is an act of class warfare. Being attacked in this way is a challenge to build a language that defies class and the construct that there is a good way and a bad way to speak.

Here, how we communicate and comment on the internet is very important. The internet is a new frontier for language platforms. When we are limited by the factors of the medium (the very quantitative, SMS defined character count of twitter; the haste of texting; the bizarre syntax of memes; or even just the implied attention span of the average scroller), the way we speak changes. Abbreviations, changes in spelling, syntax, typos, intentional or not, it’s all there. But there’s more to it than that, as predicted by Marshall McLuhan; the internet has made us a global community with a global dialect.⁴ We are more able than ever to police language that is no longer relevant, that is insidious, that reflects problematic social structures. Conversely, we have a platform to create words, images, and hashtags that empower us; the ability to cast out sexist, ableist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, hateful words from our global language and to build a language that suits the diverse and powerful people that inhabit this community is a crucial part of this relationship. Roggenbuck reflects “if u complain about they/ them pronouns not feeling natural or being “correct”... who cares? refer to ppl how they want, & shut up. it’ll b Ok”

We can stop pretending that language isn’t something we just made up and start reveling in the power we have to shape language as something that is useful for us. Instead of criticizing things as being “politically correct,” it’s time to celebrate that we have found more tolerant ways to speak, to break down the need to label different types of people all together, to destroy the language of caste, categorization, separation, segregation. Let’s build a language of help, health and support. Break all the rules of lan-

guage, make our own rules to be broken again. Whitman says, “The English language is grandly lawless like the race who use it,” but I would go so far as to say “language is grandly lawless like the race who use it.” It’s time to embrace our lawlessness and build the language we want.

About the author

Anna K. Crooks is a poet and artist living and working in Baltimore, MD. She is a member of the artist collective Open Space and co-founded the poetry program Proliferate.

Illustration

Page 2, Cheyenne Woodward

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**WORK HARDER UNDER WATER @
ROWHOUSE PROJECT (AJAY KURIAN)**

It is fitting that Ajay Kurian's show at Rowhouse Projects uses the word "work" in its title: *Work Harder Under Water*. The mega exhibition, consisting of three floors (several rooms to a floor) indeed shows a lot of work. The install utilized a multitude of media including the aroma of freshly fried fish prepared by Kurian's mother, and served, at times, by the artist himself throughout the opening. The home cooking and inclusion of family nicely complimented the ever-present domestic atmosphere of Rowhouse Project's interior on its opening night.

The home cooking was not the only reference to consumption or childhood in the show. Upon entering the foyer of the house, you were greeted by a sculpture of a black frog serving a speaker on a platter garnished with an assortment of faux leaves. Adding to the prankish absurdity, the frog's pants were pulled down revealing heart patterned boxers. Catching the waiter in this goofy yet humiliating state of undress was erksome and there was a sadness underneath the lightheartedness of this sculpture. The encounter with the humiliated frog waiter as an entry to the show is emblematic of the title of the exhibition, "*Work Harder Under Water*." The waiter's work is undermined by his appearance of ineptitude. The voyeuristic quality of this moment was just a taste of what more was to come further on into the exhibition.

In the same room, a caricature of a high school aged Kurian was silkscreened on the maroon red wall in butter. The cartoonish portrait depicted the artist as a hairy ape with a human face. The greasy substance made the image only faintly visible and suggested certain racial slurs like grease monkey etc. The ape-man caricature is particularly poignant considering the press release for the exhibition, which details the artist's experiences growing up as a person of color around the time of 9/11. "The membership into a white world that I had so assiduously earned was then called into question," (speaking of the post 9/11 political climate). "The jokes and playful fears manifested in suggesting I better not grow a beard when I go to New York were meant to show that I wasn't a terrorist, but that I'm one facial hair mishap away from fitting the description," reads the press release.

Continuing through the house, you came to a beer-pong sized folding table supporting a ten gallon Igloo water cooler in bright orange (a humorous decoy to the beverages typically provided at openings).

Within the belly of the cooler was a silver ironman looking mask submerged in a lemon-lime colored liquid. The way the mask glimmered under water (another tie in to the title of the show) resembled shiny change in a fountain, tossed in for good luck. The liquid softened the exaggerated masculine features of the mask making it appear more as an illusion of masculinity rather than a symbol of it.

Just past this room, Kurian's mother fried the fish in the house's kitchen. The staging of this scene reads like a snapshot made to be viewed in real time. To quote Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, "We realize that the calendars of our lives can only be established in its imagery." Through this scene, the theatre of memory is revisited and the physiological reverberations of the act are absorbed in the walls of the house along with the aroma.

Positioned there on a wooden shelf was a derelict sculpture presenting a much less edible food; two Styrofoam containers from Cup Noodles were placed several inches apart. In one of the containers was body hair from Kurian soaked in about two inches of Neem oil. The adjacent soup container held the recently extracted molars from the painter Jamian Julliano-Villani, also soaked oil. These object cast offs can signify our mortality while also provoking disgust at the fate of our ultimate decay and the messiness that goes along with it. The primal body is treated in pieces and sorted as a doctor might while performing an autopsy. In this tableau, the fragility of the body is gently contrasted with the stark materiality of the synthetic soup containers.

The oil has Old Testament significance as well. Oil as a magical material, one that can mysteriously extend its own life, etc., offers a trace of hope.



Up the stairs and to the right is a large room in which three child-sized figures engage in a homoerotic display of pre-pubescent debauchery. One of the boys (he had a clear piece of vinyl tubing in place of a phallus indicating that he was male) was urinating into the mouth of another figure positioned directly beneath the first while another one of the figures watched in giddy anticipation. Or was it horror? These figures looked like skeletons from hell dressed in Old Navy mimicking a frat house hazing session. Physically the “boys” were in different stages of decomposition or deconstruction. Parts of their armatures were left exposed. Their wigs hastily positioned atop uneven skulls. The voyeur of the group, the child who was not peeing or being peed on, had black skin while the other two characters skin could be described as white. I am having a hard time deciphering what the significance is for the black kid to bear witness to the sadomasochistic performance of the white children but to say that it was a hellish scene and the figures all appeared to be demons in it.

The fluids from this perverse vignette trickle down the house, unseen, literally soaking the foundation of the institution in the depravity. The “urine” eventually

reaches the intimate space of the basement where it is caught in strategically placed cookware (pots and bowls). The basement or cellar of a house signifies the irrational. According to Bachelard who wrote; “In the cellar, “rationalization” is less rapid and less clear; also it is never definitive.” If the structure of the house mimics the human psyche the subterranean space of the basement, inherently dark and damp, is where secrets are kept. “The cellar dreamer,” states Bachelard, “knows that the walls of the cellar are buried walls, that they are walls with a single casing, walls that have the entire earth behind them. And so the situation grows more dramatic, and fear becomes exaggerated.” It is where one might give in to temptations, or regress to the primitive.

Perhaps this is why, in this same space Kurian hung electric neon light in the shape of the neighborhood watcheye pointing out the relationship between light and vision. But in this case vision is also a stand in for power. The neighborhood watcheye, a symbol for vigilantes, disrupts the nature of the cellar. The cellar cannot be a space to stowaway childhood fears because it is under surveillance. “But the unconscious mind cannot be civilized,” Bachelard writes.



Back upstairs, themes of race, power and consumption are subtly carried through in a video of a black police officer puppet attempting to eat his arm. Using the body and a nonsensical gesture, the piece looks like Sesame Street appropriating Vito Acconci's early video work.

The show utilized every corner of the space with objects both deeply rooted in personal narrative and universal concepts; race, coming of age, consumption, violence. Children's toys were used in several sculptures tracing the subtle significance of those objects on the psyche of the adult they help to shape. An oversized Jacob's Ladder hanging in the stairwell of the house was particularly metaphorical. Climbing a Jacob's Ladder does nothing to bring you forward while climbing the stairs in the house is what one must do to see the piece. The Jacobs Ladder, like a stationary bike, contradicts itself. It is the children's equivalent to the myth of Sisyphus summed up in one elegant object.

The installation also made exciting correlations to Bachelard's theory that the structure of the house parodies the human psyche. The functions of rooms of the house correlated poetically to the sculptures they harbored. In

several pieces the artist used water or, "being under water" as the title phrases it to symbolize how one might struggle with the themes presented in this show. Like trying to run in a dream, working harder under water is futile and all efforts at it are ultimately doomed to fail.

Work Hard Under Water was on view from September 26 through November 14, 2015 at Rowhouse Project, 2640 Huntingdon Avenue in the Remington neighborhood. All images courtesy of Rowhouse Project.

About the author

Quintessa Matranga is an artist/writer/curator living and working in New York, NY. She is the former curator for Mission Comics in San Francisco, CA and recently completed projects at Kimberly-Klark in Queens, NY as well as at Rope in Baltimore, MD.

VISA: YES : PENTHOUSE GOT LIAN A VISA

For recently graduated international art students, the OPT (Optional Practical Training) visa presents a challenging way to remain in the United States. The visa offers a year renewal for maintaining a job in the field that you studied, but fails to acknowledge that, in the case of studio (or post-studio) artists, relevant paying positions very well might not exist. The rare administrative position becomes the expectation; actually maintaining one's practice becomes a naïve dream.

Lian Tsai, a Taiwanese national living in the U.S. since 2008, found obtaining even one of these administrative positions next to impossible after graduating from the Maryland Institute College of Art in May 2015. In September, Tsai moved into the collectively run, live/work project space Penthouse Gallery without plans for how to handle her quickly approaching October 1st deadline.

After a series of conversations between Tsai and Kimi Hanauer (a member of the Penthouse collective), the two settled on a curatorial project that would have Penthouse Gallery hire Tsai as its new Gallery Manager. Hanauer wrote a letter of hire for Tsai's visa agent and the two quickly received notice that Tsai's visa had been extended by one full year. As part of the contract the two wrote in this project, one of Tsai's initial responsibilities was to organize Penthouse's October opening. "Penthouse Gallery Presents: Lian Tsai," documented the visa process, celebrated Tsai's newly acquired OPT visa, and recorded the occasion of her continued residency in the United States through a durational performance performed by Tsai.

According to Hanauer, the performance went like this:

"Audience members walked in and were greeted by artist Marcelline Mandeng, who offered them a cupcake or a beer. Tsai was in the central space. She had coded a program that would translate the tone of her voice into high pitch piano sounds. She paced around the space while talking into the mic, and the program modulated her voice into those piano sounds. On the other side of the room, artist Chris Zickafoose used an actual piano to converse with Lian's synthetic piano sounds. Lian carried a large inflatable planet on her back. She placed pumps on her hands that could inflate the planet and approached audience members, touching hands and squeezing the pumps throughout the event. This slowly inflated her planet. People sat on couches, drank beer, ate cupcakes, and blew bubbles."

-Editor

Kimi Hanauer: What was your experience leading up to getting the visa?

Lian Tsai: It was so stressful before I talked to you. Trying to find an arts related job. It felt a lot like this OPT visa was a trap to get free labor in the U.S. for immigrants who are just getting out of college, people that have been living in the U.S. for some time and are desperate to stay. Under this visa, companies that employ us don't have to pay us, and it's totally legal. So I was feeling a lot of dark energy around that. When I talked to you and you came up with the idea of hiring me to work for Penthouse Gallery, I didn't know if it would work...

Honestly, I thought there was no way.

Yeah. It sounded so simple, like, "I'll just work for my friend. I'll just make it work." And I was running out of my grace period. So, I kind of just sent the email to my visa representative not taking it too seriously. And then

she replied, said "OK," and sent the information along. The only thing I had to change was that I had to request more hours to work at the gallery, at least 20. Which is kind of crazy if you think about it: we are legally permitted to be working for 20 hours a week unpaid.

How did you come up with the idea just on the spot?

I thought, why not? I mean, it is legitimate. There is so much work to be done around here. I wish Penthouse could pay people, but that's not how it is. I didn't think it would work honestly, I just thought of it as a good gesture we could make, whether it worked or not. But I thought it was worth a shot, that there was a chance it might work.

So much of the artist-run activities that happen here happen without money, nobody gets paid for what they do, but then that doesn't mean it's not important. Why should Penthouse not be seen as legitimate? Real

things happen here and it takes a ton of invisible work that is constantly being put in for no monetary return.

I kind of puts us all on the same plane. Because so many of the artists here are underpaid, I don't feel like I am being taken advantage of by the system for not getting paid. I mean, I've had companies tell me that they just wouldn't pay me, but that I could work for them. And this makes me feel like I am being taken advantage of.

What's the difference here then?

I guess because here, everyone is working towards a similar thing and on equal terms, and everyone is putting energy into it. And these companies definitely could pay me, they have enough going on that they could support another person for their work, but they choose not to because they don't have to and they will have someone else trying to do it if I don't. While this is more like we are all helping each other out. I'm putting my energy into this and you are holding me up.

Yeah, it's not a hierarchical and capitalist structure. It's rhizomatic and none of the artists involved are really making a profit or realizing their dreams at the expense of the exploitation of someone else. This is a collective project, where those involved are mutually invested.

* * *

You were talking about how not a lot of people know about what happens here?

I feel like everything that happens here, or maybe just a lot of artist-organized activity, is really fleeting, or you know, just not kept track of or documented well. Things just sort of happen and then they go away. And the people who are here for it know about it and experience it, but then nobody else does. And that's kind of why it's beautiful, why it is what it is. There is some power in that type of independence and existing outside of a traditional structure or platform.

But it's also kind of like – what the fuck? – amazing stuff is happening everywhere and no one has access to it, almost no one can see it! The fact that even though this activity is not visible or accessible in a lot of ways, can get someone a visa, a completely life-changing thing, the fact that you can stay in the United States for

another year because of this bullshit we do—it kind of legitimizes what happens here while also playing the system. We were able to use this system, that otherwise seems very oppressive, in order to legitimize work that also exists outside of dominant institutional platforms, such as art venues that exist inside of people's homes.

Yeah I like how you are talking about how it legitimizes the Copycat venues [live/work warehouse space in Baltimore], it is proof in a way. Like a medal.

Exactly. But why do we have to feel like we're playing the system? Maybe we're not? This is a real job. The work is extremely time consuming and makes real things happen... for some reason, in my head I still feel like it's not legitimate. I still feel like we are getting away with something, when really, "Gallery Manager of Penthouse" is a real job that has to get done. If it doesn't get done there'd be a major Penthouse void!

Why does it have to feel sort of 'unreal,' doing what we do?

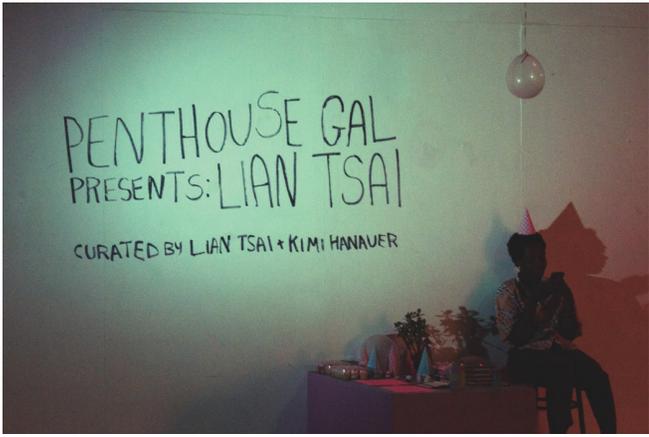
I feel so complicated about that, too, because now, I do have an art related job, that actually pays me (!) and it's not exactly what I do in my art practice, but it is related for sure.

It just makes me question my choices. Like, why didn't I major in Graphic Design and Sculpture instead of just Sculpture? Something more "practical..."

A degree in Sculpture can sometimes seem pretty useless in the eyes of the capitalist work force and the capitalist business owners when compared to Graphic Design. And why is that? It's not as if we worked any less hours. If anything I'd say Sculpture majors are some of the hardest working, sharpest students I know.

We learned how to make things happen.

Exactly. But then, how do the skills we learned fit into a capitalist system? As opposed to Graphic Design, where you can just help sell people products. Our work doesn't always lend itself to that system, and even when it does, I don't know if we'd want it to. Maybe that's why so much of what happens here is insular, because it mostly appeals to other artists who do the same weird shit.



* * *

I think what makes events at the copycat so magical is that they bring you to another space. That's what I was thinking when I was performing – transforming this space into a non-space.

Yes, such a migrant theme...

Everywhere could be my home, but nowhere is really my home. But then this place, Penthouse Gallery, lets me not worry about that and lets me create my own space without judgment or anything, it becomes a non-place for me.

So, what makes Penthouse a non-place?

I guess just how open and malleable it is. Its identity was built on by the people who make this place. Instead of trying to mold the artists or the people that are here into a certain 'cool' style.

Yeah we hate "cool"!

We just like to play!

Somehow – your visa has legitimized all artist-run activity in Baltimore. We need you to exist now.

It's almost like a governmental stamp. Saying, "Ok. You guys are legit now." The Penthouse Gallery is in federal documents now. The government knows. Even though being undocumented gives you a type of freedom, being documented makes it legitimate in a different way. They have my time sheets, my working hours, your name, and Penthouse's name. If me taking care of Tony [the Penthouse cat – ed.], dying plastic and making patterns for my planets counts as a legitimate job to stay in the United States, then everyone at the Copycat, just living their lives, taking out the trash, doing whatever is legit... it's a government approved job.

* * *

Back to my role as Gallery Manager, I have been thinking about how I could use my background to make this gallery more diverse. Sometimes I feel like people see women or non-white people as accessories. I've been told to embrace my Asian background more by people,

like people want to be able to label me more as an Asian Artist.

What happens when you are labeled in that way?

I feel like when I was younger, I was really into calligraphy and other things that related more to my culture, but now that I'm here, when I'm labeled that way it just feels really limiting. It makes me into an exotic object that a white audience can look at, "she is a small Asian girl that does little Asian things." It feels like I'm made into a fetish.

Yeah I understand. I used to just not tell people I was Israeli, I would just leave it out. But now I've sort of started to do the opposite. And it's not because I'm proud of that place. But I want to embrace that even though I come from this place that does terrible things and where terrible things happen, it doesn't mean that I do terrible things. Being Israeli can also mean being a pacifist. Not that the prominent perception of Israel is anywhere near the truth, many news platforms seem to completely disregard Israel's violent and oppressive occupation. Also, I feel like it's important that as an Israeli, I can also be in a position to be critical of that place.

Yeah I do feel like that's something that's easier to do when you are from that place.

But also, as a migrant, when I am critical of Israel, how does that come off to people or my family members who actually live there? It's like, well "Who are you to say that, you don't even live here." But, I wonder, when you are in a position where you have to constantly think about your safety, when you are living within a conflict, how can you also be thinking clearly about the morality of this or that action? In that way, migrants do have a certain special ability to be critical and thoughtful about a place. It's because we are not really allowed to lay claim to just this or that place, you're not really from here and you're not really from there either.

Maybe that's why I love Penthouse so much, it is a non-place, like you said, but its something I can finally lay claim to which also rejects that idea completely (through its non-hierarchical network of collaborators). It's interesting that many artists take

the role of protecting art platforms in general, and sometimes this means their physical manifestations, like protecting Penthouse Gallery. This is similar to my experience of being a migrant, I think. In the sense that you have to prove that this is your place, that you can be here, that what you do and how you think is legitimate, that you are legitimate... Just attempting to own that ground, to keep a space alive, becomes your work and your life. But Penthouse can't be claimed, and it shouldn't be—it's inherently a huge, non-hierarchical collaboration.

Do you feel that towards the United States? About criticizing the United States?

In one sense I feel like, "Wow, this place is amazing." If I didn't live here I would've just been getting out of the Israeli army. Instead, I just graduated from a world-class art school, have a rad job, and am able to do projects I care about. However, while living in the U.S. has been really great to me, this place is also really terrible to many of its own people. How crazy is it that I, as someone who isn't even originally from the United States, has had an amazing experience, while so many people who were born here, who grew up here, live in worse conditions than I would ever even experience?

I have this intuitive feeling of thankfulness to the country that I struggle with. How do you feel about the thankfulness you have for America? For me, I feel kind of resentful towards it. If I feel too thankful, then I lose my power to America. It's like they give you just what you need, nothing more, just to keep you working. But at the same time, hearing from what you just said, it is such a great thing that we are here.

I understand what you're saying, and I do feel really thankful that I live here. My brother pointed out to me recently that maybe we shouldn't feel thankful for a government or social structure for simply doing the right thing, what they should be doing anyways. Like granting people's basic freedoms and rights and having a minimum safety-net like a welfare program, and for not making military service mandatory so people aren't forced to fight in unjustifiable wars. We are allowed to be critical of the country we live in and still appreciate living in that country.

About the authors

Kimi Hanauer is a Baltimore based mobilizer from Tel Aviv, Israel and Pittsburgh, PA. She is the organizer of Press Press and Alloverstreet. Currently, she is a resident artist at Penthouse Gallery and is program coordinator for Station North Arts and Entertainment District.

Lian Tsai is an artist focusing on 3d applications and performance studies. She is the gallery manager for Penthouse Gallery and lives in Baltimore, MD.

Ms. Kimi Hanauer
Senior Vice President
Penthouse Gallery
1511 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Ms. Kimi Hanauer,

Thank you for emailing the job offer today. I am writing to confirm my acceptance of the position of Gallery Manager at Penthouse Gallery with great pleasure.

The Penthouse has been close to my heart as an inspiring organization that fosters the young art community in Baltimore. As we discussed during the interview, the visions and duties you outlined for this position are well matched to my abilities and I consider it a privilege to join your organization.

I look forward to contribute, learn and explore with your amazing team. As well as expand our relationship with the East Asia art markets with my international background. I appreciate your confidence in me and am very happy to be joining the Penthouse Gallery.

Sincerely,

TSAI LIAN 蔡禮安.

Lian Tsai
Gallery Manager
Penthouse Gallery



JOSHUA ABELOW OF FREDDY GALLERY

Freddy Gallery was a curatorial project located on Franklin Street in the West Downtown neighborhood. Curator/Painter/Blogger Josh Abelow sat down to talk about the project in October.

Colin Alexander: Every interview you've done so far has been under the Freddy moniker, right?

Josh Abelow: Yeah, everything I've said about Freddy in an online platform has been through the "voice" of Freddy, but I also think by now most folks know it's my thing. Well, I dunno, maybe there are plenty of people who have no idea? Anyway, I think it's fine to say you're interviewing Josh Abelow about it.

So, we've talked about this a little bit personally: what the aspect of anonymity offered that curatorial project. And what nuance levels there are to that? Because there's a difference in maintaining a full cloak of obscurity so that maybe no one would know you and you wouldn't show up at all.

I mean, as an idea, I really like the concept of complete anonymity.

What's the name of the artist... God, I'm forgetting... Anyway, I'll come back to it. Oh, Vern Blosum! So, the story is that there's this AbEx guy who, in 1961, decided to make (invent?) Pop Art paintings under a false name as a kind of joke. The paintings look a lot like early John Baldessari (before Baldessari did them).

Blosum was represented by Leo Castelli and I think MoMA bought one of the paintings and collectors were buying the work and what not. Basically, somebody got suspicious because there was no biographical information about Blosum and called the whole thing into question like, "This is fucking bullshit." And after this artist going up and up and up, he just disappeared and all the works went into storage for 50 years. Maxwell Graham of Essex Street Gallery organized a show of these early works in 2013 and that was the first time I had ever heard the name Vern Blosum. In today's world, where everyone knows everything about everyone because of social

media, the concept of anonymity is especially attractive and interesting because it's so rare.

All that being said, that level of commitment to anonymity was impossible for Freddy and it wasn't really an objective—I was more interested in the idea of information about the gallery traveling around in the form of rumor—it was kind of inevitable that the cat would come out of the bag.

Right. Just the nature of gossip in smaller places.

Exactly.

It's funny with that Blosum story. They're all insincere works... is that the case?

I guess so. They're satirical works, I would say.

Do you think that those works were valued for their attempts to fake it?

Well, I think they were valued because nobody had any idea that they were, essentially, joke paintings. To me, it seems like whoever made the paintings wanted to mess with the establishment through an act of infiltration.

—Yeah.

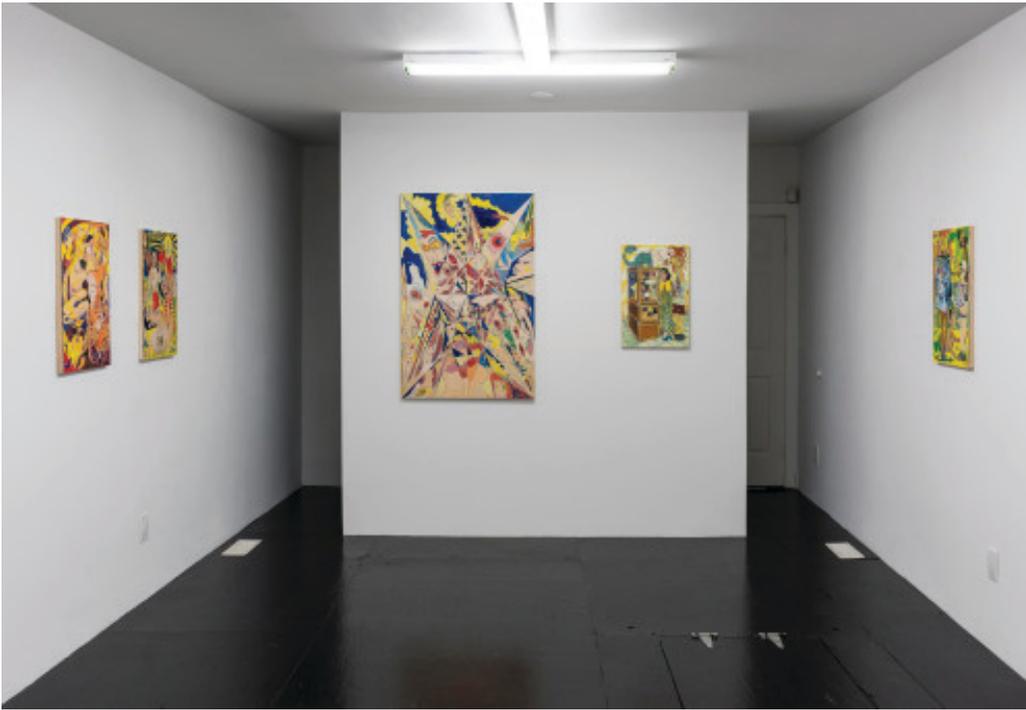
—And now, I think people are interested in the work and the idea of a fabricated identity because it relates to our relationship to the Internet and how we use Facebook or whatever to craft personas. There are so many artists who have careers based on playing pranks and that kind of thing. You know, Richard Prince's joke paintings or Maurizio Cattelan hanging his entire Guggenheim show from the ceiling; I mean, there are so many examples. So, I think it's an early example of that "pranking the art world as art" idea, which is very Dada.

* * *

Do you picture the Freddy character as the prankster then?

Yeah, I do.

When I got to grad school in 2006, I was so frustrated with this idea of the painter with a capital "P"—this



person, alone in the studio, working on masterpieces with his or her big canvases and brushes. You know, like the romanticized idea of what it means to be painter.

So, I was fed up with this idea and I was trying to come up with different ways of staying committed to painting but, at the same time, I wanted to undermine it, critique or, to the best of my abilities, get out from underneath a purely narcissistic kind of practice.

I began to overproduce paintings as a form of defiance; Instead of focusing all my time on one large work, I would make like 60 or 70 or 80 small paintings and then I'd line them up in rows or grids like an assembly line. I was interested in a read of the work that would take into account this hyper-obsessive activity. All this led to an interest in doing my art blog, which, for me, was the antithesis of the lone painter in the studio.

Mmhm.

Freddy was sort of a segue into finding a middle ground between this Internet activity and getting back into having an actual space, talking to people, and dealing with objects. I was hoping that my blog viewership would bleed over into the Freddy audience, which I think it did.

* * *

With Peter Eide being the first Baltimore based artist that you showed, did that show have a difference in the way it came together than the shows that had happened previously?

I was excited to show Peter's work because he was the first Baltimore artist. I had seen Peter's work on Facebook probably a year before Freddy opened and I remember thinking, "This stuff is nuts, I really like this." And I sort of put it on a shelf in the back of my mind and just let it be. When I got down to Baltimore, Jordan and I were talking and I was like, "Who should I go visit?"

He said I should go check out Peter Eide—and when I looked at his work on his website, I said, "Oh, this is the guy! I love this stuff." Jordan said, "Oh, you met him last night at the opening!" and I was like, "Oh shit, really?"

So, I went to Peter's studio which is in a small town (New Windsor)—it's actually the town where Clyfford Still used to live and work at the end of his career. It's outside of the city, maybe like 45 minutes, kind of in the middle of nowhere next to a corn field.

I was intrigued by the whole thing because it was just fun to "discover" an artist working in relative obscurity in an old house, you know. He's painting in his living room; there's no proper studio. It all seemed very authentic.

And I was excited because Peter had never had a solo show in Baltimore despite the fact that he went to school here. So that was cool—to introduce the work to the local audience and also to a bigger audience via the Internet.

In the way that you talk about your own work (that is, pushing against the solo artist myth, the painter alone in the studio), does it feel funny to lock on so much to Peter’s work when it is so framed in that myth? Like the way you just described it: “In the Clyfford Still town!”

Yeah! Yeah, totally. Curating allows me to fully embrace certain parts of my thinking that I wouldn’t do otherwise. To fully embrace Peter’s “Painter’s Painter” thing is so gratifying to me. And on the flip side, to work with Kenneth Goldsmith, who doesn’t make objects, is also extremely gratifying. Because that’s another side of my interests.

Did you feel like the curatorial impulse changed at all after there was criticism, like my writing¹ or Michael Farley’s writing² or that facebook conversation³

Yeah, I think so. When I came down here, I knew that there were four or five shows that I wanted to present. I wanted to work with Kenny Goldsmith, the Ross Bleckner dick show, William Crawford, I knew I wanted to do the

Albert Mertz show. There were some very specific things I wanted to present in this context, but that wasn’t to say that I wasn’t interested in showing people who lived here; it’s just that up until 16 months ago, I wasn’t living in Maryland and my access to the scene was extremely limited. I knew a couple people in the community like Jordan, Steven Riddle, Seth and Alex. I had a kind of peripheral interest in Baltimore for quite a while but, also, I was an outsider. I didn’t know people well. So my intentions were to get down here, get the ball rolling, get to know people, and see what would come out of that. But, when Freddy started getting all that criticism pretty quickly, I made a conscious decision to speed up that process.

* * *

One of the questions I wanted to ask was just to touch on the gallery backing stuff, since there was gossip about backing from James Fuentes. How did that play out? What was the story with it, etc.

Well, first of all, talking about money is always weird, but—

—I only bring it up because, when I look at the art scene in Baltimore, so much of it depends on, “Where’s the space?” We just talked about the request for proposals



Top: June Culp
Bottom: Rosy Keyser
Page 15: Keith Mayerson
Page 18: Peter Eide

on Howard Street, and how if something like that went through for any project around here, because of Baltimore's size, possibly the entire trajectory for what people in town are making is altered. So it's funny to see the way that real estate and money actually affect our creative output. So I don't know—

—Yeah.

—It's something I think about.

Yeah. In terms of the practical side of how the project came about, I had been following sophiajacob, specifically. They had invited me to participate in one of the lecture series events and I wasn't able to do it, but I liked that they had reached out. I was following their program and I was posting their stuff on my blog. And at one point, near the end of their run, I was given an opportunity to co-curate a show in New York and I was interested in the possibility of including work by an artist from Baltimore. Which sort of goes back the fact that I'm from Maryland and I feel a connection to this city.

Also another part of it—I feel like, in New York, curators think they're being adventurous if they show an artist who's in NY, but didn't go to Yale. Like if you don't have an MFA from Yale, you're a self-taught wacko or something. Like, "Whoa, you're really thinking outside the box..." Anyway, I thought (and still think) that there's talent in other pockets waiting to be discovered. And I thought (and still think) that Baltimore has a lot of creative energy. There are a lot of people making things that deserve attention.

So, I did a couple studio visits down here. I met with Jordan and Steven and talked with them a good bit about all these kinds of thoughts. I didn't end up including a Baltimore artist in the New York show for various reasons but, during that visit Jordan mentioned that the sophiajacob project would be ending soon. I said, "Whoa, really? What's happening with the space? What is the rent?" Jordan said, "The rent is \$300 and it's gonna be available." This price would never be possible in New York and, honestly, I was shocked. I'd struggled with the high cost of living in New York since I moved there in 1999. I find it extremely stressful and, in many ways, the antithesis of making art. Money is like a virus there; it just infects everything.

So, I sort of just made the decision to make this Freddy idea happen no matter what. I'm struggling to pay my rent, I don't even have a proper studio, but I have to seize this moment. So I called my gallery in New York and said, "Hey, this is what's up, are you interested? Would you want to partner with me or help me fund this and I'll pay you back?" And at first he said yes and then he said no. Then he said yes again and we made it happen.

And the amazing thing I've learned is that, even though there's cheap rent, the cost of doing this project is actually really expensive, and there's no way we would've survived without the auction I organized with Paddle8—Freddy would've ended like 8 months ago. It was never about making money and it didn't make money, but when all's said and done I will hopefully break even. It was really just something I wanted to do and I figured out a way to do it.

Cool, that's good to understand a clear picture of that.

Well, I think there's an assumption that New Yorkers are rich—how else could they afford to live there? "That gallery or that artist must be making lots of money because they are in New York." And having lived in New York for a long time, having practiced art for 20 years, having worked with more than one commercial gallery for more than five years, I can tell you that most artists and galleries (even the ones that are very visible) are not putting away stacks of cash. There's a lot of smoke and mirrors in the art world.

If anything, I have this new level of respect for Lower East Side galleries that, you know, take risks. But even this last trip to New York, I noticed a lot of the spaces on the LES showing work that looked kind of safe, kind of salable, and what that signifies to me is exactly what I'm talking about. In order to stay afloat, these galleries are forced to show what the market wants. They do fluff shows so they can afford to stay in business. Then, hopefully, they can do a show with an artist who's making more exciting, more interesting work who is maybe not so commercially viable.

* * *

How do you reflect on the project now that it's done?

The project has been super refreshing in a lot of ways.

The fact that Freddy generated conversation, that it got a community of local artists (and maybe elsewhere) thinking and talking about these ideas is a good thing in my opinion. To be down here, to be part of a smaller scene, and also, sort of on a personal level, to see the tightness of the community has been inspiring. And it's been great to be a part of it. Working with Jordan has been amazing, discovering June Culp's work has been amazing. Peter, Stephen Booth—there're so many interesting artists.

I have a young artist friend I was talking with the other day about how she's so nervous about this show she has coming up in New York because, "if it bombs," her career's gonna be fucked and she's not gonna be able to sell anything for the next five years and that kind of thing. And on one hand, there's a side of me that's like, "Ah God, don't think like that. That's horrible." And then there's another side of me that's like, "God, you're kind of right. It's fucking very cut throat." It's a weird time to be a young artist, specifically in New York. I think it's a bad time.

It's very strange in New York—a particular artist might get some visibility in the scene and suddenly that person Has All These "New Friends." It feels very disingenuous. In Baltimore, a lot of the artist friend groups and support seem to come from a more genuine place. And I have found that to be—I think that's what I was looking for, that's why I left. It's kind of exceeded my expectations actually.

When you say, "Won't be able to sell work for the next 5 years," I think, "How can that not affect your output?"

Yeah. I think it's crazy. I think it's not a good place. I hate to sound like the Patti Smith lecture, like "Artists should leave New York! New York sucks!" but I feel very similarly to her. Have you ever watched that movie Downtown 81 with Jean-Michel Basquiat?

Yeah.

He goes down to the East Village and he goes to the Mudd Club and the LES looks raw and dangerous and fucked up. It was such a different scene and artists and musicians and creative minded people were all going there because it was fucking bombed out and it was cheap and

there was an openness in terms of what was possible. It wasn't about selling; no one imagined that they would be making money. Now, New York is just so sanitized; you can't even walk down the street without seeing Citi Bikes everywhere. People could argue, "Well you know, that's Manhattan but you still have the other four boroughs to explore." But even that's changing—I just read a big article in the Times about how Ridgewood, Queens (where I was living) is the new hip spot.

I sublet my apartment for a year and went back to move my things out when I decided I didn't want to live there anymore and there was a new hip coffee shop right there on the corner next to my apartment. And it makes me depressed because there are generations of families that have lived in these neighborhoods that are gonna get pushed out. The rents are gonna go up and it's just what it is.

There's just something great about being down here where there're still warehouses that artists live in and weird noise shows at someone's house. And people are doing it because they wanna do it and they believe in it and they're doing it for their friends. And that's the kind of stuff that made me want to be an artist.

Right, but I think people see the Ceremony Coffee shop pop up in Baltimore and everyone's like, "Shit." I feel that everyone here is super, super sensitive to any changes in that direction, because they're like, "Well, this is it. Here it comes."

Yeah, and I think, speaking to that, I can understand why people were freaked out about Freddy at first. Like does a New York based artist doing a project in Baltimore signify that the underground scene in Baltimore is gonna get fucked up?

I think that is part of the aspect in the question about the money— about people getting backed, various ways of "Testing Market Waters," and seeing the Ceremony Coffee pop up, because, to an extent, that gossip stuff is real. I mean, I have some friends that, when they moved into their house a few years ago, went to the lease signing and the landlord said something like, "By the way, you're going to be paying \$50 more per month."

They're like, "What? You spring this on us when we're

sitting down to sign the lease?” And he just pulls out a flyer and says, “If these guys in Mt. Vernon are charging this much for a one bedroom, why can’t I?” Everyone is working on the same amount of information, it’s a weird social space to be in.

I’m also curious on your thoughts regarding the music scene as it relates to the art scene—like, in the last 10 years or so, there have been a number of bands coming out of Baltimore who have received national and international attention—I’m thinking of Beach House, Dan Deacon, and more recently Future Islands (among others). But it seems like with music, maybe if you’re in a cool band in Baltimore that the world doesn’t know about yet—do you think that folks want to blow up? Do they want the world’s attention? And, likewise, do you think young artists want to be engaged in a larger, more global dialogue—showing nationally and/or internationally?

Well, I think picking up on the different sects in Baltimore is super important, like you were saying, because you could point to anyone and the answer would be different.

I guess I mean the scene you’re involved in.

Yeah. The importance of the cultural scene here for me has, to an extent, hinged on its autonomy, or its self sufficiency as a wildly dynamic space, as being able to function almost entirely without having to pull from other spaces or communities (like waiting for A Big Band to come to one of the more legit venues). The style has been that other communities would suck in Baltimore stuff, you know, pay \$40 a ticket for a Baltimore act and then, here—

—Go to their house.

—Yeah, see them play a \$5 whatever show. I mean especially with music, I would see so much of it get sucked into New York or other cultural centers. I feel like the questions that I bring up in [the art] conversation—we’re on the East coast, so everything above a certain point has to pass through New York and below a certain point, Miami. But, compare it to the way things have progressed in Europe: maybe it is biennial culture that has made smaller cities there much more apt for being able to support their own art historical lineages.

Absolutely.

When I graduated from college, I didn’t have a computer and the Internet was not developed like it is now. People were using AOL dial up to get online...

—Live journal just invented, right—

I remember there was just this tremendous push, like, if you want to be an artist, you gotta go to New York—otherwise you don’t fucking exist.

And, of course, there are always gonna be people that don’t buy into that, like “Fuck that, I’m gonna stay in Providence.” I was more interested in what New York might have to offer. I wanted to see my work in a white cube. That, to me, was interesting. I’d only seen my shitty paintings in shitty rooms. So living in New York at that time, my knowledge of the art world was pretty much extremely New York centric. I didn’t know what was happening in Europe or Los Angeles or wherever else—I was in the dark.

In 2006, I met a guy who had been living in LA and he knew all these artists and galleries out there that I had never heard of and it was like somebody lifted up a curtain. In 2008, I moved to Berlin for a period of about nine months. That was an extremely stimulating situation because I was exposed to a whole other world of contemporary arts spaces, like in Germany and even doing a little bit of traveling and seeing interesting spaces in Prague and elsewhere. You know there were all these spaces in out of the way places in little nooks and crannies throughout Europe—that doesn’t really exist in America. If you want to see contemporary art, you basically go to the LES or Chelsea and you walk a couple of blocks and that’s where all the shit is. It’s like spoon feeding you the stuff.

So the point I’m trying to get at—I’m pretty sure it was 2008 when Contemporary Art Daily came on to the Internet scene and that was (and still is) highly influential. And one of the things that I like about it a lot is that it’s not New York centric. So I can visit that website pretty much any day of the week and see an artist I’ve never heard of in a gallery I’ve never heard of in a city I’ve never heard of. That’s amazing. I think that becoming more aware of various artists and galleries in many parts of the

world helps keep it interesting.

I would think that it's going to have an impact on... I guess what I'm trying to say is that, I think way before Freddy got here, I saw artists in Baltimore and other cities like Philadelphia extending their dialogue out to New York. Nudashank in particular, really generated a good amount of visibility for Baltimore and some of its artists. I was impressed to see Springsteen becoming a member of NADA—A small gallery in Baltimore, MD doing NADA with galleries from Zurich and Prague and the world—right on, I thought that was so cool.

So there was that desire (at least in a certain portion of the art scene here) in wanting to engage in a broader conversation. And that was also part of my thinking—I was like, “Cool, I want to be a part of that.” I was curious to see how a smaller community of artists would respond to the work I planned to exhibit.

Yeah.

But, it always comes back to money doesn't it. People are afraid that rent's gonna go up and you might have to move to a different neighborhood and, as a result of that, I think people are kind of fearful and opposed to what might come in from the outside. So I think it's a really strange thing for you to have to navigate, for you guys, as young artists working here. How do you, if you want to engage with a bigger conversation, allow yourself to be open to that, but at the same time, to some extent, protect what you have.

There is that push and pull. Part of me is always urging against globalism because I have all these negative connotations with homogenized culture (which is the way of the world, I guess), but the aspect of seeing the way that Europe is able to have all these non-central centers that are just killing it—

—Yeah.

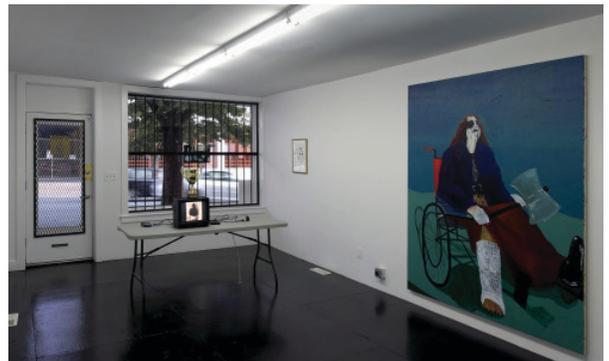
—**That they are able to exchange as equals, and that they are just [different] “cultures,” that is very interesting to me.**

And maybe that is simply from the historical [and imperial/colonial] power of Western Europe from the past 500 years, where the art scenes had overbearing histories behind them because they were directly

supported by a lot of money and resources. You know, patrons commissioning “This or that scenery of our estate and it's beautiful and we're painted into it and it shows how rich we are.” Maybe because there is art historical reference within their own cities, they might not have the same need for validation from another place.

There was an interview with the late Mike Kelley that I was watching recently, he was saying how American culture is vehemently anti-intellectual. Which I think is true. And having spent some time in Europe, it's truly not the case over there.

I think that's part of it, too.



Top: Nick Buffon
Bottom: Phillip Hinge, Brad Phillips, Aaron Carpenter

Photos courtesy of Freddy Gallery. Freddy was a curatorial project that ran from June 2014 through September 2015 at 510 W. Franklin Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

About the author

Colin Alexander is an artist/writer/curator living and working in Baltimore, MD. He is co-founder of the project space Bb as well as a member of the Open Space artist collective. He is the founder of Post-Office Arts Journal.

1. <http://flashlighto.tumblr.com/post/97274090211/freddy-gallery-located-in-baltimore-md-by>
2. <http://bmoreart.com/2015/02/100-yes-vs-love-art-hate-the-art-world.html>
3. <http://baltimore-art.com/files/pdfs/FREDDY.png>

SIX @ SIX



I especially appreciate when an idea is courageous enough to venture into the “real world,” its “real problems” and “real communities” exponentially more apparent than in the temporally frozen space of an institution.

Six @ Six was held in the Unpretentious Motor Inn with free Wi-Fi that is Motel 6. The rooms that were rented/ parceled out were the six rooms closest to the entrance of the Motel itself. The show spaces were ground floor and all in succession to one another. I did not find much to engage with in a large percentage of the work exhibited in this show, which is not to be considered a demerit to the work itself. I believe regardless of what the work may have been about, I found myself put at an incredible distance from any of that prospective meaning by the mechanics of the works’ handling of the site.

Some of the inconsistencies I find with the show become more apparent when it is compared to a haunted house (which the show could have been easily mistaken for). People were led in groups into highly thematized spaces

where we witnessed various amounts of acting/performing. There was lots of laughter and an undeniable giddiness in the air. This is not successful in that most people go to haunted houses so that they may be entertained by being scared. In an endeavour to be entertained, most people pay for a modular experience and, with that awareness, the experience turns from one of being scared, saddened, or surprised to one of being entertained, which might be analogous to the modularity experienced when viewing art.

It may have been this expected modularity that caused the motel rooms to feel more like sets rather than real spaces being responded to. If it was too scary, one could, at any moment, stop or remind themselves of the simulation’s presence. It is a form of spectacle that is especially apparent within performance; it either works or it doesn’t (it seems).

What I found to be especially frightening was the light emanating from the second floor rooms atop the

exhibition. It was suggestive of another presence outside of the work/the group of mostly young people. It would be wrong to assume that whoever was in those rooms was using them for the motel's intended purpose; it may have in fact been for equally bizarre reasons as the show (though those reasons were hidden from the public eye). I believe the foreignness of the work being presented at the ground level led me to feel as though everything else was just: everything else. This is an imposition that I don't think the show was interested in enacting. The art becomes the art and its spectacular showing is so loud that it groups everything else together as "other." Motel goers become thematized into being exactly what we think of "them" to be.

Despite some of those shortcomings, I found the sixth room of the show to be incredibly successful. The room, directed by Marcelline Mandeng, Keenon Brice and Emilia Pennanen was most striking in its avoidance of giving the viewer anything they would immediately expect or want, things they probably received in the rooms preceding. Viewers were denied the assumption that they, too, would have the same metaphysical implication of modularity, or distance, that we usually expect to have while looking at an artwork.

The door was locked shut (though this was not the only room to do so) and the viewer waited to be allowed in. All three performers were wearing masks and rarely spoke. The door would fly open and Marcelline would quickly pull out a gun and hold it to viewers who were otherwise expecting to be allowed in (they were not). If they were lucky enough to be let in, they would be pushed to do things that some believed were pushing the boundaries of their own personal limitations. A woman was made to leave the room after having her hand dunked in what appeared to be a lube-like substance. A friend of mine was escorted out after having a pomegranate smooshed against his face and shirt while being told to call his mother and count to one hundred. Another friend of mine never got the opportunity to go inside the room because they never let her in. I even heard that someone was thrown in the shower and soaked.

People want equity, people don't want to get their clothes dirtied or to be treated in a way that might discomfort them in a nonconsensual way. That said, what could have been a better embodiment of the atmosphere exuding from Motel 6 for the two hours that the show took place?

Emilia's, Kenan's, and Marcelline's room remained in avoidance of becoming a spectacle because it remained true to the individual's experience rather than focusing on the politics of curation or performance, politics that don't register with importance given the site's context.

Six @ Six was a one night only group show at the Motel 6 on North Avenue (The Motel 6, 110 W. North Ave, Baltimore, MD 21201) on November 6, 2015. The event featured six site-specific installations and performances. Work by: Forced Into Femininity, Julie Libersat, Sashenka López & Miguel Mendías, Marcelline Mandeng & Keenon Brice & Emilia Pennanen, Adam Void, and Laura Weiner. Curated by Miguel Mendías.

About the author

Bailey Sheehan is an artist and writer living and working in Baltimore, MD. He will receive a BFA in Interdisciplinary Sculpture from the Maryland Institute College of Art in May 2016.



**HALF PAST, TWO ROCKS BACK @ OPEN SPACE
(HAINES/MAHER-TATAR)**

In Open Space, work populates the wall and the floor. Lucia Maher-Tatar and Christina Haines use language of simplistic measure in the recent show Half Past, Two Rocks Back, denoting time through the physical and, in this case, the rudimentary and sometimes the rudimentary domestic.

Lucia Maher-Tatar's piece A Rook, A Rock, A Crooked Café is hung on the wall from a rod. It talks like a curtain, but acts more like a tapestry. A conspicuous but complex composition creates a space where time is imprinted into symbolic anecdotes, spilled out, nonlinear and landscape-like. What lay obstructive were moments where the craftsmanship felt filled in, such as a shimmery swatch of black hastily stitched rather than carefully placed, leaving disjunction from the beautiful and the strange— little waves puckering in a brown rectangle, like they would delicately make the sound of a mouth rising out of the water.

A ladle made of links/a scythe?

Forceps near a vessel.

Stitches to the left, some careful, some not. Leaving some strips vacant, for rear access, or for economy.

Grommets large and in numbers, that allow dedicated access to the inside of the piece.

Just a big pocket.

The cutting, stitching, and displaying of personal symbols allows the artist's mind to come through their hand. The work combines the liminal as object and as function. The same could be said about the other Maher-Tatar piece, Untitled, involving brown patchwork terrycloth on the floor of the windowed display areas.

Christina Haines' work includes six rectangular pieces on the wall all titled Burnout 1 through Burnout 6 and a glazed ceramic and rock assemblage titled A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud. The Burnout pieces have a luring quality; for me, it could be an attraction to the texture of destruction. These pieces are cracking and reveal sediment, washed over and dried, showing the waistline of a pair of jeans or sweatpants—starting and stopping at the edges of the rectangle, as if I were looking at a thumbnail of a body,

buried in the river.

They became landscapes.

Belt loop is a bridge.

A cracked, then peeled opening (the only one) leads to an underbelly. Some pieces have little green dots. A man has a small green tattoo behind his right ear. The pieces themselves have goose bumps.

I found them almost too laconic. The nature of the material blocked off into rectangular shapes was very tidy. Without matching directness in the imagery, they almost meander into dullness.

In the piece A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud., the ceramics look like polished stones, perfect objects, revealing layers from formation but with sensually smooth and unassailing surfaces. These ceramics felt texturally uncomfortable stacked, sandwiched between their pre-manicured cousins, as if they might scratch. I have to remind myself I am talking about ceramics and not actual polished stone.

The artists as a coupling: Haines let the material speak unhindered, and Maher-Tatar intrudes on the fabric's material quality, neither insincere, and both intelligent observers of their respective material.

A friend says, "I keep looking for the rest of the stuff." and I must agree. There is a craving for more to grasp onto. And I think it has less to do with "stuff" and more to do with striking the senses of the viewer. Give me something to grab, or put me in your place. The style is LARPing, conspicuously mimetic, though there should be a push towards an embedding, which I know they are capable of. My hope is for them to wield their sensibility with a stronger conviction.

Half Past, Two Rocks Back was on view from February 27 through March 26, 2016 at 512 W. Franklin Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

About the author

Matt DeLong is an artist and writer living in Baltimore, MD.

Now that we are no longer
in the presence of angels,
I carry a stalk and marbled chalice
a cup, a cup for saving.
I box and un box,
seeking some justification
in God and in quiet places
I wish to replay,
replay being a word,
originating in technology,
in some new media,
a word disconnected but feeling.
Not an approachable word to those
who are no longer human but paradise.
I think that understanding would
be lacking, if she were to see me
see me step, step back and forth,
into and out of grief.

To reenact meeting,
to engage with tulips
knelt down in tulips
with love

They wear dresses
of flowers, different flowers
by name and by nature.
A conversation to intimidate,
to put down and cut off.
All the women in my life
are flowers in flame.

A forty three year old man
in bucket hat and all white,
he smiles,
“I forgot my youth at home
but here I am on the shore.”

A baby on the carpet,
she on the carpet, crying
All white and functions as
a kind of carpet, a floor
to walk on and across.
She celebrates.

All the friends listen
to ill sounding yodels,
my song bird vocals,
I fresh and new, crying in
the lowering,
we watch the lowering,
see monster trucks called
Grave Digger,
dig the grave,
quick toss,
box tossed about, to think of
the human without.

About the author

Grace Davis is an artist, writer, and school teacher in Baltimore, MD. She teaches at the Bolton Hill Nursery.

**SUMMER PAINTINGS @ TERRAULT
CONTEMPORARY (RYAN NORD KITCHEN)**

My memory of “The Serial Garden,” a short story I read when I was ten or eleven years old, is foggy, but the plot revolves around a boy who assembles a paper model garden from the back of a tasteless cereal called Brekkfast Brikks. After discovering that singing the Brekkfast Brikks ode written on the box allows him to enter the garden, the boy begins to withdraw more and more into the partially real, partially fabricated landscape that he has constructed both physically and, possibly, mentally. Inside of the model garden, large portions of the idyllic flora and fauna fade into a dreamy fog where the neighboring models have not yet been attached. Until the adjacent models are linked, the garden exists as an unfinished world.

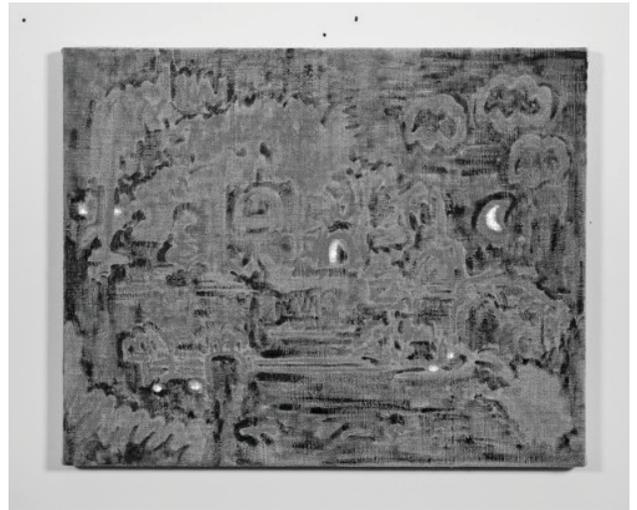
I was reminded of “The Serial Garden” for the first time in many years, while viewing the simultaneous flatness and hazy depth of the mostly blue and lilac August Moonlight, one of ten paintings by Ryan Nord Kitchen recently on view in “Summer Paintings” at Terrault Contemporary. The reliance on signifiers of the landscape (moon, tree, cloud) hinders August Moonlight from falling into total abstraction, but the ample use of blue and exposed linen accentuate the painting’s surface. Loose outlines of clouds and bushes in the foreground trail off into a collapsed, blurry backdrop in the center, drawing on traditional elements of perspective to create a deep space while concurrently acting as a wall, obstructing the landscape behind. The distortion of the dryly applied brush marks does somehow translate into a muggy and heat-shimmered atmosphere, and there is something inherently magical about a garden bathed in blue when the familiar urban landscape so frequently glows a noxious orange.

The palette for most of Kitchen’s paintings relies on one dominant color straight from the tube, interspersed with other primaries. The childlike color and mark making is most effective in works like Ponds 2, a field of green speckled with an archetypal corner sun, a puffy cloud with a perfect drop shadow, and a series of red tick marks making up a bridge or jungle gym. The pure yellow of Summer Painting, too, functions as a warm ground for

a landscape of bushes and clouds, emanating heat and feelings of mirage and distortion. In some cases, the deliberate wiggle of a line even closely resembles a word, almost spelling out “wind” or “pond,” but ultimately these lines dissolve into indecipherable loops.

Some of Kitchen’s compositions seem to borrow elements from Chinese shan shui (aptly, “mountain water”) scroll painting, stacking mountains and skies and suns from multiple points of view, especially in the more graceful linework of Garden and Fountain. Fittingly, many of these Chinese landscapes, primarily from the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties, depict nature as a place of retreat or sanctuary in times of political instability. Perhaps Kitchen’s paintings do the same, relying on the garden as a space for escape and blissful daydreaming amidst a grim political climate. The only accompanying text for the show, “Some are cloudy days and others are sunny days,” mimics the childlike mark making of these paintings. What does it mean to equate the unending atrocities of recent current events (a Texas grand jury declined to indict anyone in the death of Sandra Bland, Boko Haram, now ranked as the world’s deadliest terror group, continues terrorizing Nigeria, recent mass attacks by ISIS in Beirut and Paris) with cloudy days? The depicted gardens here provide, as so many before have in the canon of landscape painting, a temporary retreat to a saturated wonderland that feels very pleasant, if slightly naive.

Even after all of the Brekkfast Brikks models have been assembled in “The Serial Garden” to form a complete garden, the boy returns home one afternoon only to find that in the midst of spring cleaning, his mother has burned the paper model in the furnace. There is no trace of any other Brekkfast Brikks boxes or means of returning to the utopian garden again. Maybe it is a reminder that these moments of escape can only be short-lived. Kitchen’s depictions of perfect, summer days likewise can only momentarily provide a distraction, but for that moment, they do emanate a certain tangible warmth.



Top: August Moonlight, Oil on linen.
Bottom: Summer Painting, Oil on linen.
Photos courtesy of Ryan Nord Kitchen

About the author

Allie Linn is an artist, writer, and curator in Baltimore, MD. She is a collective member of Open Space and co-founded Bb project space.

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I freaking love my roommates Esther Hwang and Amy Stober and I'm so sad that we are not going to live together next year but I love you girls thanks for living with me for past 3 years <3

to the one wearing the springsteen t-shirt with the red blazer on i just want to say thank you. i loved watching you shake that booty of yours. if your single and would like to go out email me back at springsteengallery@gmail.com

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