



New American Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT

88

June/July

Juror's Comments

Barbara O'Brien

Curator, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO



Given the superb quality and artistic range of work submitted for, and eventually included in, this South edition of *New American Paintings*, it seems that the region could well be as cosmopolitan and international an art scene as either the East or West Coast. Having lived for 20 years in Boston, and recently settled in the Midwest, this is indeed a revelation. Artists have emigrated from countries around the globe to study, teach, or live in the thirteen states and one district represented in this edition, a reflection perhaps of an ongoing artistic diaspora. It was an honor to look at the work of the hundreds of artists in the selection process; a challenge as well as a pleasure.

This competition's winners reflect both my current fascinations (the Neo-Baroque; the history of painting the human figure; the insistence of pattern; the conflation of traditional distinctions between illustration and fine art, between the digital and the weight of line, between time-based and two-dimensional mediums) and a continuing belief in the magic of the artist's studio as a place to gather the inspirations of the world and practice the alchemy of the artist.

It is the role of a curator of contemporary art to ask themselves what's next. This review of painting from the South suggests that the growth of MFA programs and the collegial atmosphere of many parts of the South have added cultural wealth to this region

of the United States. I held the selections in this issue of *New American Paintings* up against the best paintings shown across the United States, and proudly so.

Many of the South winners reinvestigate the presentation of gender, race, and class without falling into an older model of the didactic. Gary Chapman's heroically scaled paintings present an iconography of masculinity both expected (meat on a plate; a muscle man wearing a deep-sea mask) and surprising (a sympathetic portrait of a young man leaning toward and gazing at the viewer; a burning heart impaled on a sword.) A new feminine, romantic, and playful style is presented in Casey O'Connell's paintings—an appealing mix of doodling, dreaming, and painting. These fresh Murakami-like figures are set in relief against gilded patterns recalling the lush surface of a Klimt. In *Deep Down*, a pattern of jewel-tone pinks and reds become a flotilla of air bubbles escaping from the mouths of lovers locked in a deep-sea kiss.

Cultural signifiers from the East and West are often conflated to create complex formal and conceptual meaning. In Hadie Shafie's ink and paper paintings, tightly scrolled and brightly colored rolls of paper hide hand-written text by the artist. Like 1000 blooming targets à la Jasper Johns, these paintings delight with the Op-art sensation of vibrating constellations of color and intrigue, with all the mystery that hidden words hold.

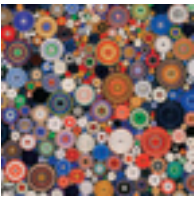
Transforming the function of dress making pattern into a proletariat's march is the end game of John Westmark's *The Tinderbox*. The high drama of *The Three Brothers* suggests the literary influence of Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*.



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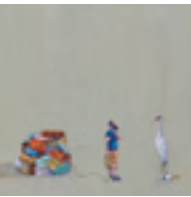
Cavanaugh p31



Shafie p123



Bronaugh p22



Chambers p35



Chapman p38

“...the growth of MFA programs and the collegial atmosphere of many parts of the South have added cultural wealth to this region...”

Joshua Bronaugh's sensual paintings engage with a sense of immediacy; gesture and medium are both expression and experience of the sensual. The media used are surprising; oil paint, motor oil, alkyd, and gold float on a plastic support. The wolf atop a counter in a brasserie in *Change is the Disease, Doctor, Both* is Bronaugh's twenty-first century equivalent of a Joseph Beuys spirit guide, with loose brushwork falling somewhere between the autobiography of gesture and concrete thought (another Beuysian method).

Michael Porten's portrait series, *Symbolic Painting*, juxtaposes a bearded face—viewed in the quietude of a black and white profile—with straight-from-the-tube primaries in a staccato pattern of information icons; the female as a skirted simplified form, or danger as a skull and crossbones. Radiating bands of color emphasize the edge and corners of the composition heightening our awareness that information fires on many cylinders, and that creating meaning is a complex equation.

Whether the scale is intimate as in Ali Cavanaugh's “modern frescos,” or monumental as in Lilian Garcia-Roig's tour de force reinvestigations of the *plein air* painting tradition, or finds the intimate *within* the monumental as in Joshua Chamber's *It's for my surprise*, the paintings I selected share a commitment to creating

a distinctive formal vocabulary with an awareness that traditions (however art historical) and influences (however of-the-moment) each influence the formation of an artist's distinctive voice. ■

Barbara O'Brien is Curator at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri. A native of Kansas, O'Brien holds an M.F.A. from Rhode Island School of Design and both B.A. and B.S. degrees from the University of Kansas. Over the past twenty years, she has curated more than 50 exhibitions of contemporary art. Most recently, O'Brien lived in Boston. As an Associate Professor at Simmons College, she was the Director of the Trustman Art Gallery and head of the Arts Administration program. She was the editor-in-chief of Art New England magazine from 2003-2006. She is an elected member of both AICA and ArtTable, an organization of executive women in the arts.

Noteworthy:

Amy
Sherald **Juror’s Pick** p128

There are formal and conceptual reasons that the oil on canvas portraits by Amy Sherald warrant special attention. (But honestly, I just can’t resist these paintings, and isn’t the magic of attraction one of the reasons we continue to look at art?) In each of Sherald’s paintings a three-quarter figure faces us squarely, in a space defined by a backdrop of vibrating color. A mottled pattern of cherry pink, matching the gingham check of the girl’s blouse in *Well Prepared and Mal-adjusted*, peeks through aquamarine blue. I feel engaged not only in an investigation of painting, but also in a triangulated conversation between artist, subject, and viewer; the often inscrutable nature of communication itself.



Chris
Scarborough **Editor’s Pick** p168

Chris Scarborough’s latest work suggests a world in the process of re-ordering itself after some great, undefined cataclysm. Drawing on sources that range from art history to Japanese pop culture, his images seem to separate and coalesce in the same moment. In a way, Scarborough is attempting to give visual form to cultural entropy; he is interested in the breaking down of boundaries and norms, and in the potential that this instability creates for new modes of thought.



Winners:
Southern
Competition 2009

Juror: Barbara O’Brien, Curator, Kemper Museum
of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO

Juror’s Selections:

John Aquilino | Anne Bagby | Misty Bennett | Joshua Bronaugh | Luke Miller Buchanan
Ali Cavanaugh | Joshua Chambers | Gary Chapman | Mary Chiaramonte
Adam de Boer | Janet Decover | Jeff Demetriou | Dara Engler | Bill Fisher
Lilian Garcia-Roig | Charles W. Goolsby | Reni Gower | Michelle Hagewood
Greg Moore | Jenean Morrison | Casey O’Connell | Meredith Pardue | Isaac Paine
Raul Perdomo | Michael Porten | Richard Roth | Katherine Sandoz
Chris Sedgwick | Hadieh Shafie | Amy Sherald | Robert Sites | Gregory Thielker
Zuzka Vaclavik | Jonathan Charles Vaughan | John Westmark | Rusty Wolfe

Editor’s Selections:

Gonzalo A. Fuenmayor | Nolan Haan | Allison Reimus | Chris Scarborough
Nora Sturges | Caomin Xie



The following section is presented in alphabetical order.
Biographical information has been edited.
Prices for available work may be found on page 180.





Amy Sherald

The Rabbit in the Hat | oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches



Amy Sherald

They Call Me Redbone But I'd Rather Be Strawberry Shortcake | oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches



Amy Sherald
Well Prepared and Maladjusted | oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches

Amy Sherald

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	b. 1973 Columbus, GA
	Education
2004	MFA, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
1997	BA, Clark-Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA
	Residencies
2008	Studio Assistantship, Tong Xion Art Center, Beijing, China
2005	Private Study with Odd Nerdrum, Larvik, Norway
2000	Taller Portobello Artist Colony, Portobello, Panama
	Solo Exhibitions
2003	<i>Earth Works</i> , The Labyrinth, Portobello, Panama
	Group Exhibitions
2008	<i>Quasi-Painting</i> , Randall Scott Gallery, Washington, DC
	<i>Urban Renaissance</i> , Ramscale Gallery, New York, NY
2006	<i>Femme Effect</i> , Sub-Basement Gallery, Baltimore, MD
	Museum of Panama, Panama City, Panama
	Publications
2008	<i>The Studio Museum of Harlem Magazine</i> , Fall
2006	<i>Baltimore Sun</i> , <i>In This Exhibition the Subject I Women</i>
2003	<i>La Prensa</i> , <i>El Recuerdo de Una Feria</i>
	Collections
	Mr. and Mrs. Eddie and Shannon Franks
	Dr. Broderick Franklin
	FTI Technologies Inc.
	Mr. and Mrs. Pat and Jeanine Turner
	Mr. and Mrs. Marty and Isra Wynn
	Mr. and Mrs. Chuks and Laura Okoro

This work began as an inquisitive journey into my own identity as a black American. I asked myself who would I be and how would I view myself if all the information that I was inculcated with about being black was given to me without the negative connotations so inextricably entwined within the history of our nation.

Ultimately I recognize that the transformation of the meaning of “black,” given its various connotations and what it means to be described as such in America, is a constantly changing thing.

With this in mind I use portraiture as a visual alternative to textual explanations of the human condition as it relates to my ideas of “blackness.” I synthesize my own archetypes and icons; playful yet sober portraits of black Americans within an imaginative history where I do black my way, in the European tradition of oil-painted portraiture. Ultimately, my work is a conceptual metaphor for who I am as a black American, the by-product of tradition and innovation.

