EXTRA ORDINARY

MASTER of ARTS in STUDIO ART

Exhibit 2015
TAVARUS BLACKMON
ELIZABETH COURTNEY
KA YI LEUNG
MICAH THOMAS

MASTER OF ARTS IN STUDIO ART EXHIBITION
May 5-23, 2015
Library Annex Gallery
R. W. Witt Gallery, Kadema Hall
California State University, Sacramento
INTRODUCTION

Extra-Ordinary takes as its subject recent work by four graduate students in the MA Program in Studio Art. The exhibit highlights exemplary final work by three painters and an installation artist resulting from over two years of classes, critiques, and countless hours in the studio. While each student’s artistic vision is by nature unique, they all share an interest in exploring the materiality of their medium - or various media - and to mold this raw material into something that truly is transformational.

Tavarus Blackmon invites the viewer into his autobiographical narrative space, filled with familiar figures from nursery rhymes. His gingerbread man, a sort of questioning alter ego for the artist, oversees a host of challenges. Job Hunt/My Career is Over plays out the anxieties of the artist, who is questioning his future options. A skeleton grasps at him, as the gingerbread man swings on, dangling over a sea of maddening questions. Using automatic drawing and writing as the basis for many compositions, Blackmon is comfortable with the idea of using quick gestures. His candy-colored patterning of space, highlighted by the neon of cell vinyl paint used in animation, imparts hues and textures reminiscent of candy. By adapting the vocabulary and vibrant colors of the storybook, he transforms a common subject into an evocative personal one.

In her paintings, Elizabeth Courtney begins with a direct encounter with ordinary things: house paint, water, a bit of hairspray. She pours or drips paint onto the canvas, working the canvas in all directions, using rope or sticks dipped in paint, in order to let go of a predetermined outcome. Her work plays at the intersection of chance and intention, celebrating the ‘happy accident,’ as well as her need to clarify forms with line and color. Her Ostrich is both a denial of the subject and a naming of the bizarre bird-like form that arose spontaneously from layering marks and biomorphic disks of color.
Micah Thomas’ large-scale paintings also strive to mediate between the ordinary and the exalted, the random and the delineated. Thomas began his series of paintings on drop cloths that once served to protect his studio floor from spills. Fascinated by the piled up mixing of primary colors, he flipped the utilitarian object up on the wall as his subject. Afterward, he used cardboard to apply the paint, troweling areas, sanding it, and re-applying areas of dappled pigment to create floating forms that hover at the surface of the picture plane. *Violet Meditation*, the first in the series, shows Thomas’ keen ability to create movement through repeated shapes, lines, and gestures. Carving his shapes out of space, they become sculptural, threatening at once to break out of the surface.

Ka Yi Leung’s installation pieces are both presence and absence. They stretch out to mold and define three-dimensional space, leaving a rubbery scent in their path. Forcing us to twist, turn, and carefully plot our footsteps as we navigate her structures, Leung plays on our sense of nostalgia with her choice of medium. Harkening back to her childhood memories of Hong Kong, when chains of rubber bands functioned as jump ropes (“more friends, more links,” she says), Ka Yi intentionally chooses colored bands to provoke our associations with the object’s original use (green and blue are for produce, orange for medical use). The splattering and soaking of bands in inky black relates to her current interest in Chinese brush painting. Her pieces *One* and *Two* respond to each other as life forms, with their magical play of rubber tendrils and cast shadows. Her work results from no conscious pre-planning, only relying on trial and error; in this way, she turns an ordinary object meant for utilitarian purposes into an extraordinary one, capable of conveying a multitude of meanings and aesthetic purposes.

In all, I wish to thank the students for sharing their stories on their art, process, and meaning, and hope that all who view this exhibit will be drawn in by their distinctive voices and drive to share their vision with others.

Natalie Nelson, Director/Curator
Pence Gallery, Davis, California
TAVARUS BLACKMON
With all the talk surrounding art with little object matter, with all the confounding and conjecture, the obscurant information and literary obfuscation, all the talk of plasticity before the time that plastics filtered into our blood streams, why not? With all the time spent deliberating on the medium, why not enter this space? And, see if all the grand ‘knowing,’ all the postulating, and empty, verbal gesticulations can stand up to all the things that aren’t being said. Some art is indifferent, some distanced, but my query is such: would you like an indifferent parent or a distanced lover? I fear authoritarian intellectualism is truly undermining the sense of American indivisibility. I create a nexus to an inclusive forum. Let’s have a difficult conversation.
SHE CREATURE
oil and acrylic on canvas, 84” x 72”, 2015
I am interested in agency, and in the interplay between chance and intention. My paintings are initially generated by a variety of gestures that incorporate a willingness to let go of the desire for a predetermined outcome.

I start by pouring or dripping paint onto the surface. I draw with rope, rubber tubing or a stick dipped in paint because these methods offer me little ability to control the line. While reminiscent of Abstract Expressionism, my work seeks to dissect the gesture. It is grounded in the concept that painting may be used to question itself as a visual language.

OSTRICH
oil and mixed media on canvas, 84” x 72”, 2015
Despite my attempts to generate “chance” compositions, I am always led back by the need to clarify, to seek form, to recognize figure and ground relationships. Allowing the paintings to emerge from an unrecognizable place and then shaping them into something coherent creates an image that is at once familiar and strange, one that opens up the possibility of a new way of seeing.
Ka Yi Leung
As far back as I can remember I’ve been fascinated by texture. The feel, the weight, the smell of objects, those sensations were more visibly clear than seeing from my own eyes. There is something innately satisfying about touching an item with your bare hands. When I make art, it is the same. I pay close attention to the texture of my materials: the weight, the overall physical aesthetics of the finished piece. I want the viewer to experience what I experience during the process of making my work. I want all five senses to be used when viewing my pieces, and for the reactions to not be solely based on one’s eyes.

Two
rubber bands, 12’ x 1’ x 8’, 2015
Ka Yi Leung

One
rubber bands, 12’ x 5’ x 5’, 2015
Micah Thomas
Paradox is the nature of the creative act.

Transcendence is a way of perceiving.

Dreams are perceived in remembered light.

Color is the shape of light.

Light is Transcendent Paradox.

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VIOLET MEDITATION
house paint on canvas, 5’ x 15’, 2015

left:
SEMIOTIC MEDITATION
house paint on dropcloth, 5’ x 9’, 2015
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Master of Arts in Studio Art graduating class of 2015 wishes to express its gratitude to the following individuals:

Andrew Connelly, Graduate Coordinator

Catherine Turrill, Art Department Chair

Art Department full-time faculty: Pattaratorn Chirapravati, Rachel Clarke, Andrew Connelly, Sarah Flohr, Ian Harvey, Tom Monteith, Elaine O’Brien, Robert Ortbal, Scott Parady and Catherine Turrill.


Art Department Staff: Sherry Arrowood, Ruth Hansen and Kevin Ptak.

Gallery Director Phil Hitchcock and Leslie Rivers of the University Library Gallery.

Additionally, we would like to thank Natalie Nelson for her curatorial contribution and efforts in planning and assembling this show.