

GreaterRestonArtsCenter
Winter Focus 2011



(UN) NATURAL Travis Childers
GUILT Matt Ravenstahl
MENAGERIE Ellen Cornett

(UN) NATURAL

Like a lot of artists today, I use everyday materials as the starting point for my work. I enjoy the challenge of transforming something commonplace into a new object, keeping in mind the original purpose of the material when giving it new meaning. Although the materials I use are ordinary, I still think they can make interesting statements about the world around us and human nature. With the new objects, I try to invoke a response by playing with scale and repetition, as well as with feelings of repulsion, intimacy, and sometimes preciousness.

With the work in this exhibition, I was thinking about how we use man-made materials to create our own nature, whether it takes the form of a habitat or some action we do everyday like work. Our survival no longer depends on how well we hunt, but how well we are able to compete in the office and move up in our jobs. We tear down forests only to replant trees using our own manicured sense of style. Natural materials, some taking centuries to form, become our disposable tools, used up and tossed away without a second thought. People see pictures of nature in magazines without ever experiencing it first hand. We are part of nature, whether we want to believe it or not, which leaves me wondering: If we keep moving away from it, what will we become?

Travis Childers



BRICKSCAPES (DETAIL) BRICKS, MODEL MATERIAL, FOAM, GLUE INSTALLATION APPROX. TWENTY BRICKS 2010



VEGETATION IMAGES OF PLANT LIFE LIFTED OFF NEWSPAPERS WITH CLEAR TAPE ON CANVAS 40" x 40" 2010



HIVE PEN CAPS 9" x 7" x 5" 2010

MENAGERIE

I explore the world around me by manipulating people, animals, and puppets on paper. Some paintings originate from familiar tales, and some of the narratives are highly personal. This is the stage on which I can arrange characters to create improbable pairings of people and animals, mixing body parts or assigning unexpected roles. A chicken can be a chicken or a bride; a dog can be a demagogue. Creating the unexpected, I juxtapose elegant drawing and vivid color with disturbing content to disarm and then surprise the viewer.

Ellen Cornett



FALSE IDOL PASTEL ON PAPER 34" x 26" 2010



THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS AND THE ROBBERS PASTEL ON PAPER 34" x 46" 2010



DOMESTIC CHICKENS PASTEL ON PAPER 20" x 26" 2010

GUILT

My pieces are physical manifestations of the internal experience of guilt. I hope the repetition and physicality of the documented activity conjure up feelings of obsessive thoughts, aggression, and torment. The videos are direct, raw, and immediate documentations of compulsive, expressive action and aggression. The works in this exhibition are related in content, material, and process.

Slave Block is a piece of marble cut into the rough shape of a slave auction block. The video documents the supposed destruction of the block. This action references imprisonment and the labor imposed on criminals, meant as punishment, as well as the labor imposed upon slaves. The attempted destruction of the block can be viewed as an attempt by a white American male to free himself from the crimes of his gender and race. In reality, its supposed destruction is a re-formation. Like racism, it reshapes and manifests in more obsequious and deeply ingrained perceptions.

Throwing Stones is one of those manifestations. It references the cliché and the idea of blame and pointing the finger. This concept is rampant in society and a common response to guilt is to blame the victimized. The video documents me throwing the marble fragments created from the destruction of the Slave Block. They are being cast directly at the viewer, slowly scarring the glass, taking the focus of the camera from the perpetrator to the wounds. This is the perpetuation of racism, alive in all of us.

Matt Ravenstahl



THROWING STONES DIGITAL VIDEO 5 MINUTES 2010



SLAVE BLOCK DIGITAL VIDEO 5 MINUTES 2010



SLAVE BLOCK DIGITAL VIDEO 5 MINUTES 2010

TRAVIS CHILDERS, born in Nashville, TN, received his BFA from Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN and his MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, MD. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally and was a semi-finalist for the Sondheim Prize in 2009 and 2010. Washington Post art critic, Jessica Dawson, chose Childers as one of ten Real Art DC Finalists in 2010. Childers has worked in a variety of museums throughout the United States and is currently employed at the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum in Washington, DC. Childers lives in Fairfax, VA. mtchilders@hotmail.com

ELLEN CORNETT, born in Kensington, MD, studied at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, WS and received her BA in Studio Art from the University of Maryland, College Park, MD. She has exhibited her work throughout the metropolitan area and received two awards from the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Cornett, an illustrator and graphic designer, also teaches drawing and painting at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop in Washington, DC. Cornett lives in Cheverly, MD. www.wellencornett.com

MATT RAVENSTAHL, born in Pittsburgh, PA, received his BS and BFA from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Indiana, PA and his MFA from the University of Maryland, College Park, MD. He has exhibited his work nationally and received critical notice from The Washington Post, The New York Times, and Washington City Paper. Ravenstahl teaches International Baccalaureate Visual Arts at South Lakes High School in Reston, VA. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, International Sculpture Center, and Governor's School have recognized him as an outstanding educator. He is currently an Ed.D candidate at the University of Durham, England. Ravenstahl lives in Herndon, VA. MJRavenstahl@fcps.edu

Acknowledgments

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GreaterRestonArtsCenter

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