

MANIFEST

v29



Master Pieces 2008

MANIFEST

CREATIVE RESEARCH GALLERY
AND DRAWING CENTER

volume 29

**2nd Annual
MASTER PIECES**

MANIFEST is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

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Manifest Creative Research Gallery and Drawing Center

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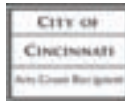
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2nd Annual MASTER PIECES

Chris Bohach

Andrew Dailey

Thea Augustina Eck

Christina Empedocles

Metra Mitchell

Svala Olafsdottir

Gayle Shaw Clark

Ming Zhou

July 18 - August 15, 2008

Co-
curated by Jason Franz

This second annual presentation of the Master Pieces project reveals the intensity and professionalism of students working towards their terminal academic degree and the title of Master. Often the most exceptional work results from these artist-scholars' immersion in their culture of study and intellectual pursuit. Therefore, Manifest's goal for this project is to select and present works that in the truest sense of the word are contemporary masterpieces – works that set the standard of quality that the artist is expected to maintain (or better) throughout his or her professional career. This exhibit catalog serves as a permanent document of these artists' own benchmarks for years to come.

This second annual Master Pieces project received over 300 entries by 136 artists in 25 states and three countries. The final selection shown here includes 13 works by eight new masters from seven states and eight different academic programs.

Chris Bohach

MFA 2008, University of Kentucky

The body of work that I am currently exploring is inspired by the literal visual forms brought to mind by the idiomatic phrase “the birds and the bees.” Utilizing this reference to sexual reproduction, I expand its meaning and form to speak more of the entire lifecycle: birth, life, and death. The large scale sculptures/installations make reference to points within the lifecycle, gender, human anatomy (both physical and psychological) as well as social institutions including religion and science. Furthermore, the work utilizes all of the viewers’ senses; beyond the visual encounter I want the audience to experience smell, sound, touch and taste as they maneuver through the fabricated environment. My aim is to create a physiological effect for the viewer where familiar forms take on new meaning and thereby create a new and unique encounter for the viewer.

For *Axis Mundi (To Distill)* I created a bird form from blown glass that was filled with honey, which leaks from its anus. Surrounding this perched bird on the floor is a series of wire and wax forms that suggest hive remnants or pollen on a macro level. This piece of work represents death. Whereas the bird makes reference to the soul, and the leaking honey speaks of resurrection, the pollen forms represent the remains of the body: the remnant of that which was. The implied meaning of this work is the separation of body and soul, the distillation of human essence.

Although some of the symbolic references that I make may be cryptic, or historically obscure, the need for some sort of esoteric knowledge is not necessary to truly experience my work. My goal is to create metaphors from familiar forms that encourage the viewer to take a second look and consider the underlying meaning of abstract concepts. In a process of deciphering my own internal symbolism, I hope to present forms that on some level are a part of my shared cultural experience.



Chris Bohach

Axis Mundi (To Distill), blown glass, local honey, steel, poultry fencing, beeswax, wax, dirt, 6.25' x 10' x 12', 2008







Andrew Dailey

MFA candidate, Miami University

I strive to create images that are visually and psychologically compelling. Creating these specific human interactions and behaviors in the media of painting and drawing creates work that speaks of my technical and conceptual sensibilities. Although much of my recent work is in the medium of painting I consider figure drawing to be the formal core of my work. I have had a long standing fascination with the human image that continues to provoke new work.

My most current work centers on an interest in the human interface with manmade objects. The figures' interactions with these machines are narrative events that serve as vehicles to speak about broader social and psychological interests. These paintings serve as observations or commentary on the dependent, complex and sometimes absurd nature of our relationship to each other and the things we create.



Andrew Dailey

Pinsel, acrylic on panel, 81" x 48", 2008



Thea Augustina Eck

MFA 2008, University of Michigan

I am interested in the poetic nature of shifts: the emotional web created through textual and visual storytelling. At times, my research into a specific topic combines the role of the historian with the privilege of an artist. Facts and fictions are allowed to fluctuate until they are inseparable, until they become moments in knowing and not-knowing. By working in various mediums such as photography, sculpture and drawing, a landscape for 'events' is created where presumed dialectics may come into conflict: presence and absence, tension and embeddedness, stasis and movement. My current work investigates the emotional state of the Arctic and Antarctic regions during the 19th and early 20th century exploration explosion from Europe. Approaching it as a lone soliloquy instead of the traditional group mentality accentuates the psychological aloneness of foreigners in a cold foreign land. The act of trudging and tragedy, brooding landscapes and Cartesian systems, and the gesture of claiming land are all ripped apart.



Thea Augustina Eck

It Is Never Tomorrow #4, acrylic mounted photograph, 20" x 30", 2008



It Is Never Tomorrow #5, acrylic mounted photograph, 20" x 30", 2008

Christina Empedocles

MFA 2008, California College of the Arts

As a kid, I was the one who tore apart leaves to see how the veins connected. I learned to identify the animals in my neighborhood and would crawl through grass and bushes looking for them, putting my hands in the dirt to see what was there. I studied the sciences at Oberlin College and started a career as a geologist. But what initially seemed like a way to more closely understand the natural systems of the world, turned out to increasingly separate me from it, and I found myself everyday dressed in business casual, hands clean.

The work I have made to complete my Master of Fine Arts degree at California College of the Arts focuses on accumulating and assembling found objects and images that stand in for the things I've lost touch with over time. By painting what is obviously a facsimile, I attempt to monumentalize the distance between myself and the original, using the intense act of looking as a futile means of getting closer to the things I represent.



Christina Empedocles

Ocean, oil on panel, 36" x 36" x 3", 2008



Christina Empedocles
Storm Clouds, oil on panels, 60" x 72" x 3", 2008





Metra Mitchell

MFA 2008, Fontbonne University

My curiosity is steeped in the flooding of paint and the search for something which is unbeknown to me. I question the act of seeing, which alternates between the sight that occurs and the ocular sensing of inner complexities through external appearances. The reflection is more illusion and distortion than solid and knowable form. I distrust perception, while relying primarily on this very act to find each final presence, its form and space. The intense confrontation through the looking glass and the realization that the self is fleeting, motivates the creation of my artistic fictions. The mirror becomes a personal link between self and representation of the self.

Each character, haunted or haunting, develops from an observed gesture. I aim to sustain this gesture by relishing in the locomotion of things. They become both the created and the creators. I mount interrogations and attacks against the form to pronounce its struggle, but make it necessary to never betray the potential of self, which is becoming. Each curio is found through dissecting lines and overlapping forms in order to create pressures and tensions located both above and below skin. We are not seamless. This is why I focus on the mutable body where flesh moves, changes, and has infinite variety. I feel myself crawl over body, traveling the corporeal topography that is body. I rely heavily on memory as a tool for marrying light-heartedness and dark-heartedness and desire fusion between the beautiful and the macabre.

The surface evolves through a maturation in the heavy layering of paint, both solid and residual, that allows for connective spatial echoes to form a confluence of thought. Through this evolvment, space becomes a playground for form. I build up and carve out, glaze over and blend away. Floating marks, marks of recession, the residues, and results over time reveal a text of breaths, struggled over, which combine to hopefully find some momentary reality of the human condition. Each piece becomes about the vocabulary, the words and grammar of painting, about pressed limitations. Each has a dialogue with and speaks from the borders of the frame.

I believe in making as a means to further understanding and thought and am drawn to the physicality and psychology possible in anatomy and through space. I create from a place of questioning and I see my work as asserting itself through an evolving subject, containing both strength and vulnerability and the gradations between. Each piece finds origin in the coexistent and contradictory worlds of self-doubt and extreme conviction. I return, I reconsider, and I change through the flooding of paint.





Metra Mitchell
Chord, oil on canvas, 48" x 36", 2008



Metra Mitchell

Figurine, oil on canvas, 48" x 36", 2008



Cessation, oil on canvas, 48" x 36", 2008

Svala Olafsdottir

MFA 2008, New Mexico State University

Contrary to what is suggested by the humanist claims made for photography, the camera's ability to transform reality into something beautiful derives from its relative weakness as a means of conveying the truth.

- Susan Sontag, On Photography

My work is inspired by fables and children's stories from my native Iceland where oral story telling has a long history in the culture. I derive inspiration for my work from this tradition, yet I am not a storyteller in the traditional sense. It may be more accurate to describe me as a story facilitator, for my art is based on narrative. Whether in reference to memory, novels, or magical fairy tales, the dissection and examination of narrative is a crucial thread that runs through my artistic undertaking. My work is about fracturing narrative to foster a more nuanced understanding; it is about the mystery of storytelling.

I often play with grouping of images and grids to explore "non-linear narrative." I use "non-linear chronology" as a form of investigation to explore ideas about chance, fate, memory, experience, and the pursuit of the unspeakable. So depending on which way you go, the meaning changes. What I try to do is make the piece "seductive" enough to draw people in, to make them want to move back and forth and spend a little more time looking.



Svala Olafsdottir
Untitled #2, photography on canvas, 20" x 20", 2008

Gayle Shaw Clark

MFA 2008, Georgia Southern University

Life is one beauty pageant after another. There is always competition, be it physically or mentally. Societal rules have always determined the constructions of gender both accepted and taboo. My creative research explores how these social constructs pertaining to sexuality began and how they have been perpetuated throughout history in art. My specific focus is the construction of female sexuality as manifest in beauty and competition.

Linda Nochlin's landmark essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* inspired me to extensively investigate women's history and our present position in society. My research on the construction of gender consistently reveals a dichotomy of both delight (learning about accomplishments and progressive women and ideas) and dismay (obstacles and restrictions forced on women through history) and has set my path of research and artistic expressions. I am continually unveiling reasons why women have to compete, why beauty is so important, and how sexuality is power.

I create flower forms to symbolize women by reason of their similarities in the model of beauty and sexuality. These pieces have sensual qualities but my goal is not to portray women as purely sexual beings but to expose the beauty and grace that all women inherently own. In these representations, I would like the viewer to look past physical flaws, think again about the construction of a woman's identity and see authentic beauty. I want the observer to be drawn to their elegance feeling a desire to interact with them; to touch them.

These clay sculptures are surfaced with a consistent covering of white to represent morality in a world where it has become an invisible and fleeting attribute of beauty. My contestants rely on inner beauty. They embrace their physical flaws and, with confidence, stand under bright lights to be judged by society. These flowers hold in themselves what I want to hold.



Gayle Shaw Clark
Contestant #8, white stoneware, 26"x14"x14", 2008



Contestant #13, white stoneware, 28"x14"x14", 2008



Ming Zhou

MFA candidate, University of Missouri-Columbia

My husband has modeled for me many times, since he is not only the most readily available model, but he also provides me a wide range of opportunities to explore freely, without being worried about clients' preferences. To me, depicting my husband is a continuing investigation into the relationship between physical and psychological aspects.

This is the most personally direct and probably the most autobiographical portrait I have produced thus far. The abruptness of the cropping, and the full-frontal vantage point, as well as the very warm red color seemed to me to provide a neat parallel of his life at this time. Here, I chose a particularly strong composition which trimmed all unnecessary details, since what I want to do is to focus on the very personal, psychological aspects of him. I thought that anything related to his social status would weaken the theme.

In this painting, my husband meditatively gazes outside of the frame without an exact focal point. This makes his expression almost self-forgetful. I attempted to render his pondering mood with an active red, as well as through the small wrinkles around his eyes, which suggests not only his physical and ideological maturation, but also his powerful internal spirit and enthusiasm.

Over the past a few years, I have been exploring the portrait genre. I am working in a long tradition of portraits that stretches back from Albrecht Durer, John Sargent, through current artists, such as John Currin and Lisa Yuskavage.



Ming Zhou
In Front of Fireplace, oil on canvas, 16" x 20", 2006

About Manifest

Founded in May of 2004, Manifest Creative Research Gallery and Drawing Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization headquartered in the urban neighborhood of East Walnut Hills in Cincinnati, Ohio. The elegant street level exhibition space is minutes away from downtown Cincinnati, and the numerous academic institutions of higher learning in the region. It is also within easy walking distance of a diversely populated historic neighborhood with residents from all walks of life. The galleries are free and open to the public five hours a day, five days a week, presenting works by students and professionals from around the world. The Manifest Drawing Center Studio is located in the nearby Walnut Hills Essex Studios Complex.

Manifest is supported by grants and public donations and has the goal to support student professionalism, integrate the arts into the urban residential community and raise the bar on artistic standards. The mission also includes the exploration of the relationship between art and design, as well as the ongoing support and display of drawing in all its various forms.

Mission Statement:

Manifest enhances the role of art and design in society by cultivating and focusing the transformative power of creativity in the visual arts. Manifest benefits people in the global and local community, including professionals, students, and the public, by creating quality-centered experiences focused on contemporary visual arts and related activities in the context of creative exploration.

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