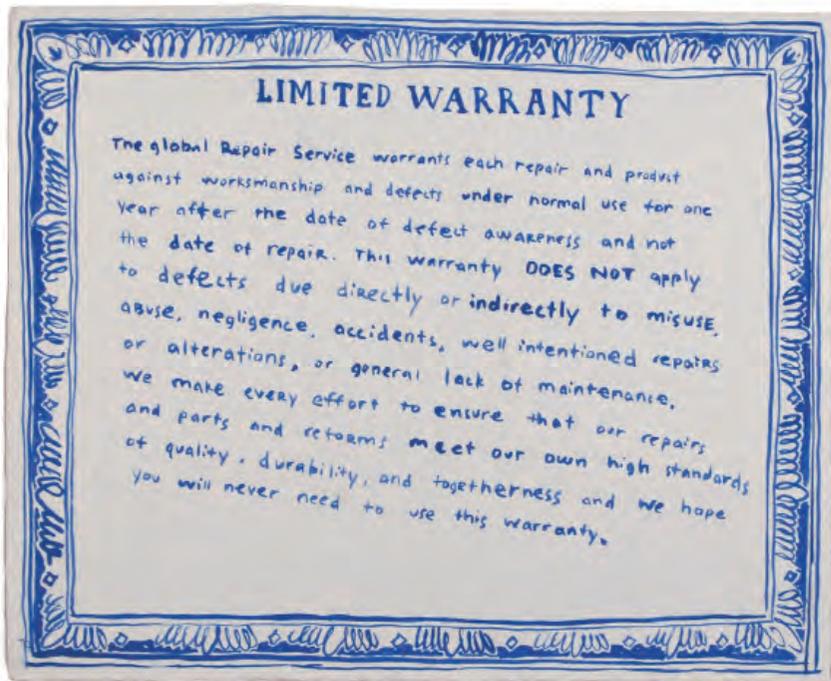




Global Repair Service Fleet: Fixer Upper Van, 2007, watercolor on paper, 10x15 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bruno David Gallery.



Is there a warranty on this thing?, 2008, Flashe on blue paper, 7 x 8 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Corey Escoto (born 1983, Amarillo, Texas)

Corey Escoto has exhibited nationally, internationally, and widely throughout Texas, his home state. He has been included in the Texas Biennial, Dougherty Arts Center, Austin; Selections From the Texas Biennial, Blue Star Art Complex, San Antonio; Souvenirs, ACC Galerie, Weimar, Germany; 7 Days Brunch (a satellite exhibition to Art Basel), Basel, Switzerland; Lucky Stars, Fauftown Projects, Santa Monica; Biennial Southwest, Albuquerque Museum of Art and Art History, Albuquerque; How to Be a Leader, Dallas Public Library, Dallas; and the Amarillo Biennial, Amarillo Museum of Art, Amarillo. Mr. Escoto is a recent graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program at Washington University in St. Louis.

Artist Acknowledgments

Special thanks to my family, Elizabeth Ferry, Steve Wright, Ron Leax, Patricia Olynyk, Washington University, Bruno David, and all my friends and supporters; to Ian, Dave, and the two random guys off the street who helped us unload a really heavy table saw; to the Contemporary staff, and of course to the Gateway Foundation.

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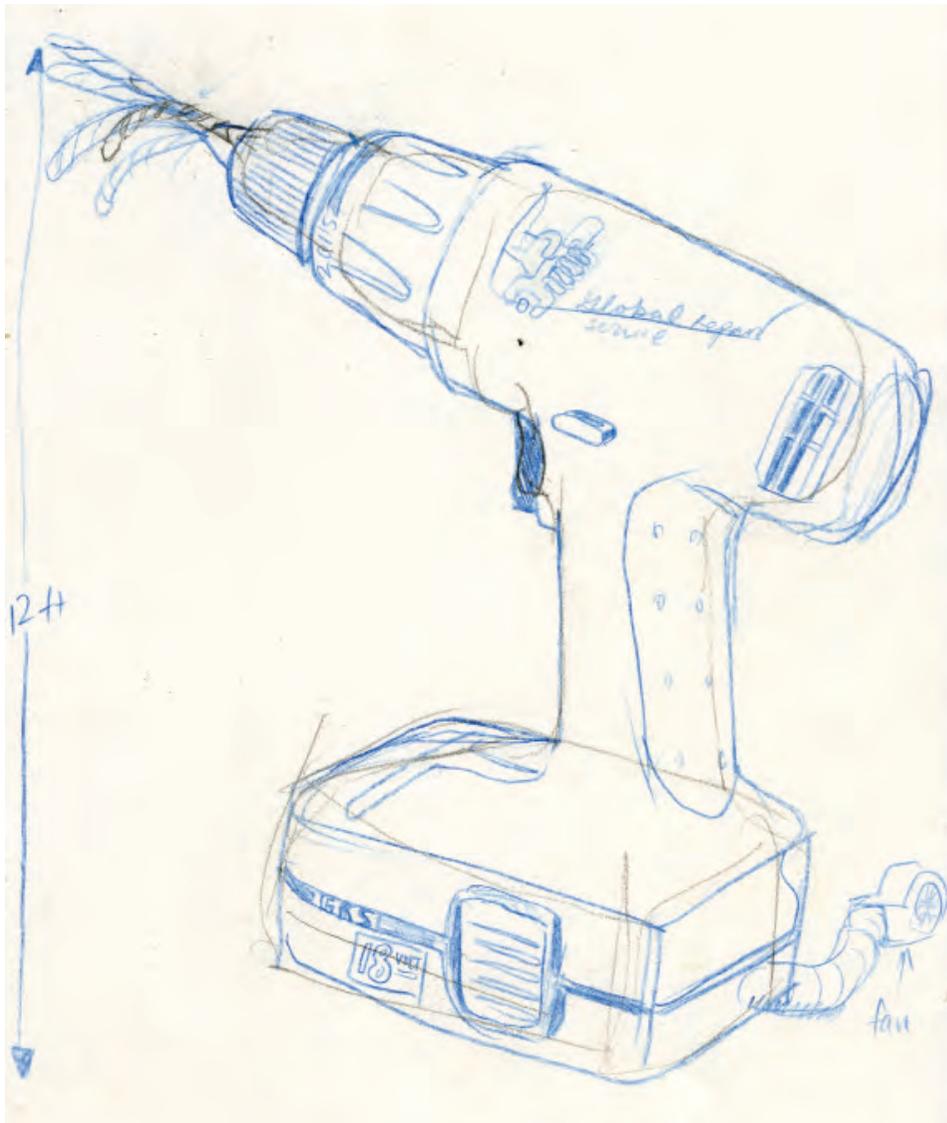
cover image: Global Repair Service Fleet: Tool Truck, 2007, watercolor on paper, 15x13 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bruno David Gallery.



Great Rivers Biennial 2008
Corey Escoto: GIT It Together

February 1 - April 20, 2008

CONTEMPORARYARTMUSEUMSTLOUIS



Drill Sketch, 2007, blue pencil on paper, 8 x 6 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Corey Escoto: GIT It Together

Corey Escoto's work explores the inevitable conflict between idealism and futility that results from endeavoring to better a troubled society. For the Great Rivers Biennial 2008, Escoto has created new works on paper and a sculptural installation, drawing from the style and utopian ideals of United Nations memorabilia, the Do-It-Yourself movement, and self-help culture. From a Lilliputian "inspired individual," to a series of watercolors depicting a fleet of Global Repair Service vehicles, his work offers a complex critique of world-reform organizations through the lens of economics, religion, and global politics. Here Escoto and Assistant Curator Laura Fried discuss the Global Repair Service aesthetic, Claes Oldenburg, and the role that drawing continues to play in his work.

Laura Fried: The Global Repair Service (GRS), your invented world-reform organization, has been "in operation" for a while now, to the extent that you have been able to brand it fully into your current show, GIT it Together. Here you continue to develop the GRS identity with logos, slogans, even a characteristic color palette, which is clearly informed by the United Nations memorabilia you collect. Could you elaborate on the GRS movement, and your interest in the phenomenon of the global governing body?

Corey Escoto: My interest has developed from observing the growing unrest in regards to a confluence of problems or buzzwords such as global warming, war, terrorism, security, and experiencing anti-American attitudes first-hand in trips abroad. While shopping for self-help tapes (another topic of interest) at thrift stores, I encountered a United Nations cookbook that embodied a sort of optimism and interest in cultural understanding that was contrary to the pervasive negativity that makes up 90 percent of "news." The cookbook began my collection of vintage UN memorabilia and led to my imagining of The Global Repair Service. My conceptual goal for the work was to develop a sort of (a)political art approach which emphasized the importance of people/the individual, and offered an honest and often humorous appraisal their/his/her hopes, capabilities and flaws.

LF: Right Tool for the Job—you had spoken of this new work, this monumental inflatable, and an interest in Claes Oldenburg. Indeed, here you have the measure of two classic Oldenburg terms: the iconography of every day life and the vocabulary of monument. In recent studio visits I pressed you about your interest in promotion and advertising—campaigning for The Global Repair Service—which I see very much linked to this elephantine power-tool. But it seems that it is the grand-scale gesture itself that interests you here...

CE: Not so much the grand scale specifically, but more a general nod to Claus Oldenburg's Lipstick (Ascending) sculpture (1969-74) at Yale, which was placed near the WWI Alumni War Memorial and adopted as a landmark of student dissent for both anti-war movements and women's rights movements. Some say history repeats itself.

LF: Could you speak a bit about the other "tools" in this show? On the one hand, you have this giant drill, a monument to The Global Repair Service. On the other, you present two more functional extensions of the GRS. The first is a hand-made coin funnel that you discovered is promoted as "the most profitable fundraising device of all time," and the second is a vintage GRS detector. How do these objects function in The Global Repair Service scheme?

CE: Given the hardware store, Tonka Truck feel of the show, there is a sort of Mr. Fix-It quality—with one hell of a problem. The intention is to give the overall feel of a well-intentioned organization, whether the job is construction or repair involving a drill or mine detection using the metal detector. In the case of the metal detector, I was thinking that it was more like a finely-tuned instrument that seeks the quiet whisper of one's conscience. The coin funnel speaks specifically to my ambivalent feelings toward the booming practice and business of buying and selling carbon offsets, which I refer to in my project as Global Misuse Offsets. My funnel operates on an honor system of self-recognized guilt, betting on the strong likelihood that more than a handful of us will forget to turn off the TV or worse. To take the words of Friar Johann Tetzl, "As soon as a coin from the coffer sings, a soul from purgatory springs."

LF: This year you have turned your attention to a more sculptural, object-based practice, when your focus until recently has been tied largely to the drawn image. And yet, we have had several conversations about your work that still very much tied to, and rooted in, the practice and process of drawing. I wonder if you could reflect a bit on this new work in these terms, and perhaps elaborate on your process in relationship to drawing. I certainly see your GRS Fleet drawings, for instance, as autonomous works.

CE: Drawing is central to my process. It is a way for me to work through the construction of a project—be it 2-D or 3-D—so that the content and form work in support of each other. As I progress in my work it seems that I move more toward the realm and practice of design, where I envision a project by drawing it or even just seeing in my mind's eye and then executing it. There normally is not a lot of deviation from the envisioned idea and the outcome, which in all honesty can be dull sometimes, so that is why I love working in my sketchbook. I do all kinds of stuff from listing, noting random thoughts, stream-of-consciousness drawing, project proposals for things I'd like to do but may never get the chance, and of course more finished drawings. In contrast to painting, which is burdened by the history of painting and often carries a goal of trying to fool the eye through a process of layering and covering up previous marks, I find drawing interesting because of its honest simplicity, where every mark is apparent along with the paper on which the marks sit. The display cases, which hold the small drawings, are a better way to view small work—orienting the viewing plane at an angle more suitable for rigorous examination. It adds an element of seriousness to the work which otherwise may be dismissed as "just silly drawings."

LF: GIT stands for "Gross International Togetherness," a slogan that appears in your works on paper and one that works to raise questions of cooperation and progress that you continue to pose in your work. Following that, the tension between disenchantment or skepticism on the one hand, and genuine idealism on the other, is evident throughout the Global Repair Service project. Do you see your work, especially as it aligns itself with the grassroots culture of the Do-It-Yourself movement, situating itself in a particular camp: that of the cynic or the dreamer?

CE: I am often asked to pick a side and I do my best to sidestep the question or at least answer the question in a way that reflects how I really feel, which is not so black-and-white. I am pretty rational and I will often take contrarian viewpoint for the sake of thinking things through from different angles. It seems, however, that in the field of contemporary art, especially in political work, artists tend to express their feelings primarily through negativity, completely ignoring the good in the world. For me it is easier to be a "cynic" while surrounded by the calm and security of my suburban hometown. I am definitely much more optimistic than pessimistic, so long as I have a problem or project to work through... I see myself as an observer and participant of a rapidly changing global culture. I think there are many shifts that are quietly happening all around, from social entrepreneurialism to digital activism. I am hopeful that systems of all kinds are reorganizing themselves with respect to a growing self-awareness and increasingly audible world conscience rather than operating strictly toward profit, growth, or security to the exclusion of all else. I am interested in basic human qualities such as tolerance, understanding, fairness and a pursuit of subjective life satisfaction.



Pencil, 2008, Flashe and pencil on paper, 2 x 16 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



CWO, 2007, charcoal, gouache, colored pencil, and ink, 9 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



CWO, 2007, charcoal, gouache, marker, watercolor, graphite, 9 x 11 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Juan William Chávez (born 1977, Lima, Peru)

Juan William Chávez has exhibited widely in Chicago and St. Louis, and has participated in shows at Gallery 400, the University of Illinois at Chicago, Art in General, New York, and the Portia K. Bakes Cultural Centre, Kastori, Greece. In 2006, Chávez founded Boots Contemporary Art Space, an art lab and project space located on Cherokee Street, and he acts as creative consultant for Boot Print, an artist-run contemporary visual arts publication. Chávez received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Kansas City Art Institute and a Master of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Artist Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Gateway Foundation and the CAMSTL cast and crew for giving me this grand opportunity. Cheers, to my family and friends for all their help and support. A twenty-one gun salute to the Boots agents, Georgia Kotretsos, Bryan Reckamp and Jon Peck. And last but not least my mother and father for being the coolest. Special thanks to Pat and Manuel.

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cover image: CWO, 2007, charcoal, gouache, marker, watercolor, graphite, 14 x 17 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



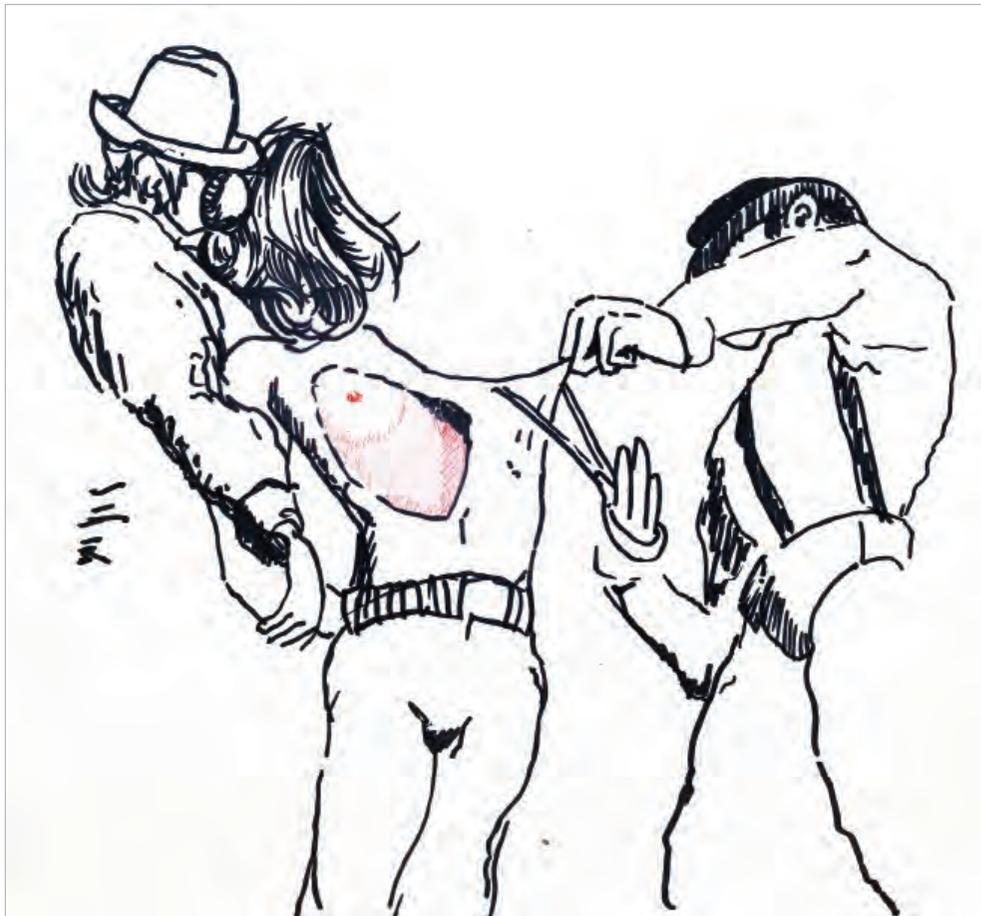
Great Rivers Biennial 2008

Juan William Chávez: Drawings from the Cave

February 1 - April 20, 2008

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CWO, 2007, permanent marker and color pencil, 9 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Juan William Chávez: Drawings from the Cave

Interested in the relationships between drawing and cinema, Juan William Chávez creates series of “live-drawings” from films and videos that have deeply impacted his artistic practice. As he constructs a sequence of storyboards he re-animates to video—creating what he calls “hyper-alive situations”—Chávez aims to stimulate both the practice of drawing and his role as a spectator. For the Great Rivers Biennial 2008, Chávez presents a series of drawings and two video works, employing Stanley Kubrick’s 1971 film, *A Clockwork Orange*, as his primary source material. Here, Chávez and Laura Fried, Assistant Curator at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, discuss his new work, Stanley Kubrick, and the horror genre.

Laura Fried: To begin, I am wondering if we could talk a bit about the film, *A Clockwork Orange*. Your project *Drawings from the Cave*, in no subtle way, takes as its subject this iconic Stanley Kubrick film. I imagine your series of “live-drawings,” as you call them, act as film stills, appropriated but re-inscribed back in to the form of the story board. Then of course there is the theater in which you project your videos, which couples the drawings, presented in sequence, with *A Clockwork Orange*’s original sound. So my first question: why Kubrick, why this film?

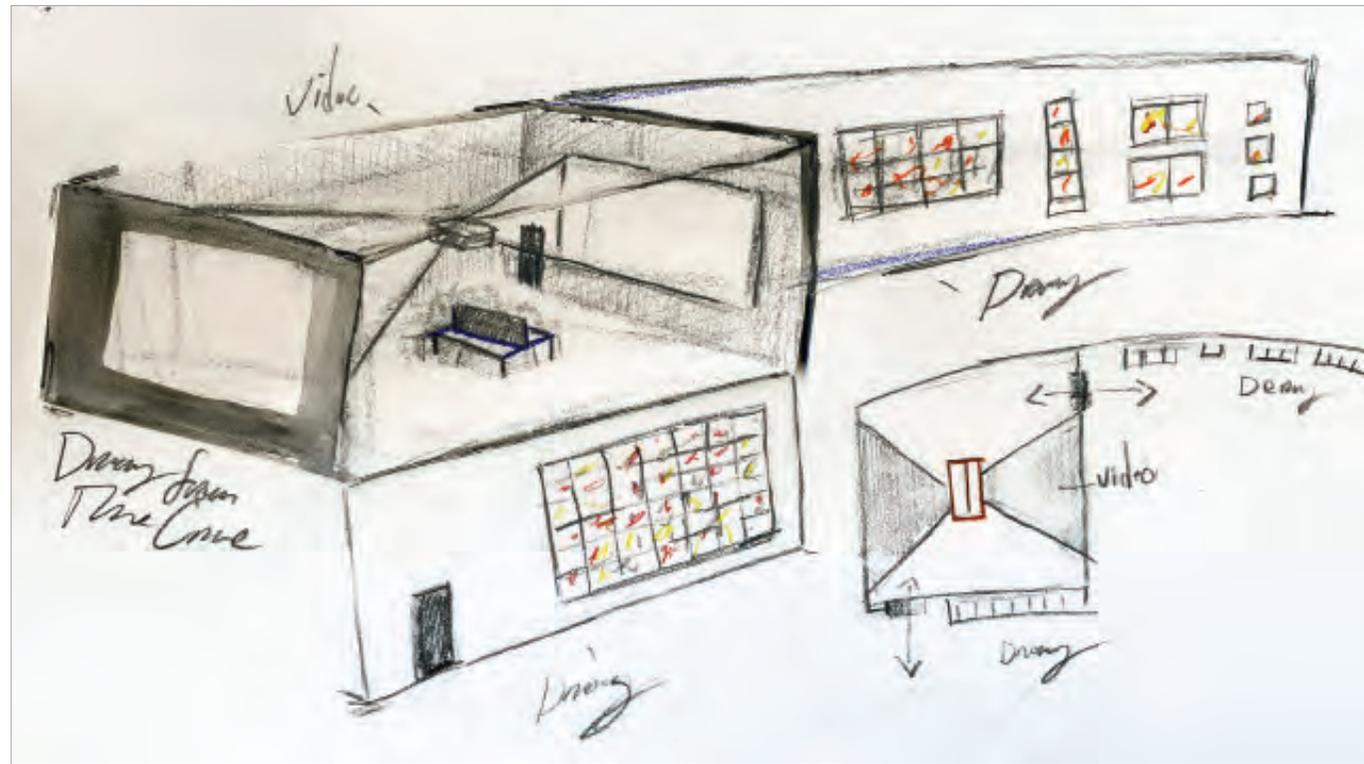
Juan William Chávez: Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* is a film that I have been going back to and analyzing since 1999. I saw it for the first time with my roommate when I was an undergrad at the Kansas City Art Institute. I’m not sure how the movie got into our apartment, but it was one of three in our possession. Also, the TV never worked, so when we were bored we would pop in the movie and break it down. Sometimes we would just watch certain scenes other times we would watch the entire movie. The film embraces many human experiences: comedy, violence, sexuality, indulgences, taboo subjects... It also highlights architecture, fashion and dialogue; it was really an art high and gave me a buzz that I liked. Unconsciously I think the film has been on the docket for a long time, and I was just waiting for my studio practice to catch up.

LF: You have been developing your work with the “live-drawings” since graduate school. Could you describe your technique and interest in the process?

JWC: I have a very strong interest in sociology and especially notions of collective thought and actions. My inspiration comes from situations or moments that involve the “collective.” These situations are typically time-based, with a beginning and an end. To understand the subject you have to witness the situation in its entirety. It’s like watching a soccer game. To understand the game you have to watch the entire event. The image of a goal is just one still moment in the game. To really understand the game you have to be in the crowd, you have to chant. You have to see the game unfold—from the warm-up to the climax—ending with the suspense of victory or defeat. The adrenalin of live-drawing helps me to connect and participate with the subject’s social experience and at the same time fuels my own art/artist experience.

LF: Not to be ignored, of course, is the extreme violence for which *A Clockwork Orange* is most famous. In the film, we follow the character Alex through the dystopian police state of Future Great Britain. As is so palpably evident in the two video works from your project, the juxtaposition of the “uplifting” musical score against the images of sadistic rape and brutal, bloody gang beatings is jarring. Is there something about this cult of violence—be it obscene or pornographic (as it assaults us or “entertains” us)—that hold special interest for you and this project?

JWC: When you take on a subject matter like *A Clockwork Orange* you have to go for the jugular. Kubrick led the way, I just followed. All subject matter is fair game for me, and violence is just one of many topics. In *A Clockwork Orange*, I was deeply impressed by the two scenes I chose to feature in my project. I like to compare this experience to the first time I saw Goya’s *Disasters of War* prints. I had never seen drawings like these and the impact was profound. The film moved me in the same way. The drawings in this exhibition are drawings of this epic film—still-lives of a time based subject.



Install Sketch, 2008, watercolor, graphite and color pencil, 9 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

LF: It has been said that the controversy surrounding *A Clockwork Orange* illustrates the ideological stakes governing different spectatorial positions. I see *Drawings from the Cave* as an interpretation of this issue. That is, you are very aware of the precise position of your spectator, and the space in which he encounters first the drawings then the two video works. Indeed, you have created a “theater of space” in which the viewer must negotiate two screens on opposite walls, not knowing when to expect one to shut off and the next to begin. How does the spectator fit in to your conceptual project?

JWC: *Drawings from the Cave* drew inspiration from cave drawings, as a primitive example of the relationship between drawing and cinema. In the cave-like environment, the shadows produced by projected light create a combination of the still and moving image together. My intention for this installation is to show the dual nature of drawing: drawings as small intimate images presented in a traditional gallery setting, and drawings as large-scale images that are transformed and intensified when projected in the space of the theater or cave.

LF: There is another project I have seen of yours, in which you create live-drawings from *A Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. In it, you focus on the twilight shot of the murderous maniac performing a kind of ballet mechanic with his chainsaw—quite a beautiful sequence when stripped from its horror context. I’m wondering if you could elaborate a bit on the development of beauty and horror in your work, particularly within the frame of the classic B-Hollywood movie.

JWC: Beauty and horror is like seeing a bull carcass in the market. There are blood and guts, but there is also shape and color. Add movement to that and you have *A Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.



Middle, 2008, colored pencil and graphite on paper, 50 1/2 X 89 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Cutout, 2006 – 2007, gouache, colored pencil, and graphite on paper, 78 1/2 x 51 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Michelle Oosterbaan (b. 1967, Boston, Massachusetts)

Michelle Oosterbaan has exhibited work at The Drawing Center, New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Morris Gallery, Philadelphia, Abington Arts Center, Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Art Alliance, Philadelphia, The Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, and Fleisher Art Memorial in Philadelphia. She has been awarded residencies at the MacDowell Colony, as a John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Fellow, Peterborough, New Hampshire; Cité des Arts International, Paris; Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, New York; and at The Gil Society (Gifelagio), Akureuri, Iceland. A graduate of Washington University St. Louis, Oosterbaan received her Master of Fine Arts in Painting from Indiana University and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at Washington University's School of Art.

Artist Acknowledgments

I deeply appreciate the generous and timely support from the Gateway Foundation, everyone at the Contemporary Art Museum, and John and Alison Ferring. I am honored to exhibit alongside Juan and Corey. Being in gifted company creates a brilliant dynamic. My heartfelt thanks goes out to Laura Fried, Shane Simmons, Bruce Burton, my family, my friends, Shannon, Christine, Liane, Jen, Karen, and Leslie for their favor, and Bryan, Christine D, Amelia, Tori K, for their many enthusiastic hours of support.

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cover image: Drop off Dark Star, Amber Babes & Bedrock (detail), 2008, colored pencil and graphite on paper, 51 X 120 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



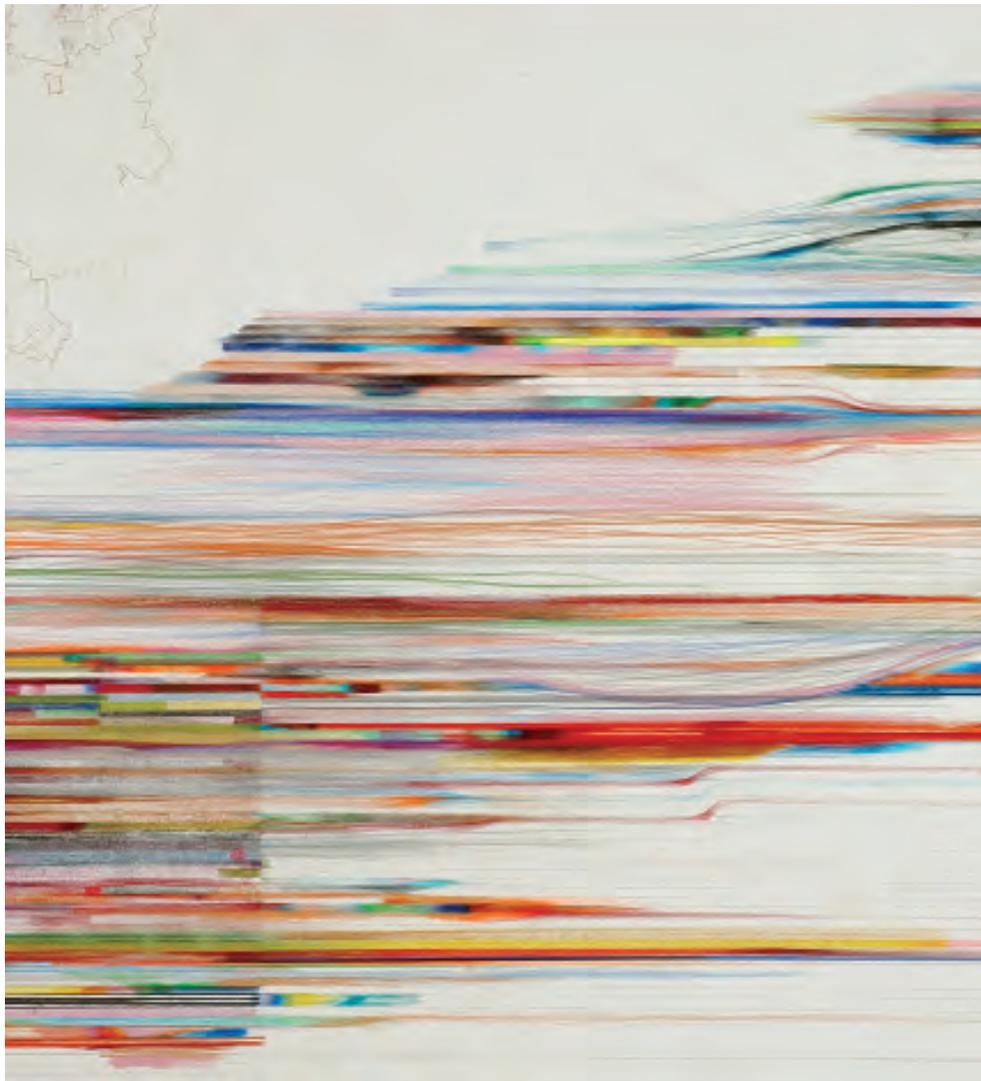
Great Rivers Biennial 2008

Michelle Oosterbaan: Living Room

February 1 - April 20, 2008

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Drop off Dark Star, Amber Babes & Bedrock (detail), 2008, colored pencil and graphite on paper, 51 X 120 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Michelle Oosterbaan: Living Room

In Oosterbaan's drawings and installations, both myth and memory play important roles. Blending imagined narratives with personal history, she explores both the formal and psychological relationships between line, color, and architectural space. For the Great Rivers Biennial 2008, Oosterbaan creates a site-specific installation, Living Room, constructed from a series of silhouettes and large-scale works on paper. Together these works—from linear mappings of time to finely rendered animal forms to topographical "dust drawings" on the floor—form a contained environment, an "ecology" of images, in which Oosterbaan explores definitions of place, passage, and personal journey. Here Oosterbaan and Assistant Curator Laura Fried discuss the element of time and storytelling in her work, and her recent interest in sixteenth century tapestries.

Laura Fried: We have often spoken about the relationship of time and the timeline to your new work. On the one hand, you often integrate the "timeline" graphic—color bands that act not only as the literal representation of time passing but also as formal interstitial spaces between these concentrated "events" on the page. On the other hand, perhaps this project Living Room takes as its most fundamental subject and structure the linear narrative, the timeline. How do you respond to this question of time in these drawings and the extent to which chronological systems inform this work?

Michelle Oosterbaan: Each drawing relates to time in a spatial construct. I consider the page to be a contained space in which an event unfolds. I add images, whether geometric or organic, and assess how the presence of each new form will affect or alter the immediate environment—how it will change the ecology, if you will, and message of the work. Sometimes these events happen simultaneously, stacked on top of or alongside one another, becoming another way to mark a record of time passing. This process is filled with gaps of quiet concentration, stillness and reflection of where I am in the world I am creating, noting each step. I often consider how spaces are constructed in Egyptian steles or medieval, Byzantine, and Indian miniatures paintings. Japanese wood block prints (Hokusai and Hiroshige especially) intrigue me quite a lot. More broadly, I am attracted to the idea of the timeline because it orders something which seems so amorphous and intangible. I see time as a series of interconnected relationships, which reveal cause and effect, tangents and detours and main roads. In these drawings, I am interested in both micro and macro divisions of space and time. I start with individual incidents and events but realize that the whole system is continuous, linked, where small and large events are equally significant to the passage and transition of time.

LF: Following that, I wonder if you might reflect on the particular relationship between the practice of drawing and time. Certainly, you strike a balance in these drawings between expanses of empty space and suspended concentrations of color and hyper-fine detail, which suggests a labor-intensive process. Moreover, I imagine that you work towards a particular process of "reading" for your viewer, who follows your constructed narrative across the space. Could you speak to your relationship to line, on the one hand, and of the viewer's encounter, on the other, to the subject of time?

MO: I make these detailed drawings to investigate critical moments that define one's life. In this way, memory becomes concrete. I am interested in anchoring moments within transitions—architects call it "wayfinding"—which reveal both order and chaos within a larger context. Details require time to absorb; they slow down the process of looking, and they bring the viewer close. I use contour line with attention to edge in a sometimes spare, minimal fashion and other times in dense layers. I like watching the growth of lines, paying attention to how marks and flecks relate, echo, vary, and build upon each other...and how they can behave as abstractions and fuse into a picture at once. Employing different stylistic approaches in drafting encourages an open ended interpretation of plot and place and form. I want to be sure the viewer slows down and looks for as long as it takes to encounter, digest, and interpret images into a story of his or her own. Gaps between images allow the viewer to process the story at various degrees of speed and depth. The symbols' fluctuating patterns set up zones of space akin to the phases of memory—like an image flitting in and out of conscious focus. With multiple perspectives and shifts in scale, each drawing becomes a theater of space navigating a place where the mundane journey merges with the mythic narrative.

LF: On a recent visit to your studio, you brought out these incredible images of 16th century Renaissance tapestry, and we discussed the surprising simplicity of their formal structure and color foundations. There is indeed a connection between this historical embroidered medium and your recent drawn work—the continuous narrative structure, the commitment to color, the object-without-frame—but you drew my attention to the notion of the epic, which seems to hold special interest for you here. Could you elaborate on your recent fascination with these images?

MO: The tapestries are from Belgium by Bernard van Orley at the Met and Louvre. You mean the scene called Killing Wild Boars; it represents December. I like the weird arrangements and collections of unlikely partners in the story. There are such beautifully rendered and exquisite color combinations, stunning detail and refinement in the expression of figures and animals and vegetation. There is a rich description of every part of the story. ...the landscape, the time of year, time of day, costume, and expression on faces. The abundance of information... so much is happening in practically every square inch of these tapestries. It's both inspiring and, in the true sense of the word, awesome.

LF: The Living Room drawings are ripe with familiar forms: from the suspended contours of fire and water to the fine-lined exotic cats and canines that populate the installation. You maintain that each of the figures and forms acts as a metaphor for a moment in your own history. Here you have created a network of icons, or symbols, that together construct what is ultimately a very personal narrative. I wonder if the serial forms (the wild dogs across the window) further insist upon this kind of iconographic system you construct. I am hoping you could elaborate a bit on the personal iconography you create and how such a system, and those individual signs, are manifest formally?

MO: As I draw, images collect and accumulate. The evolution is both intuitive and improvisational. As if keeping a diary, I create and follow events in my everyday life on these pages. They begin almost as streams of consciousness, yielding very focused layers of a particular event that unfold. Drawings for me usually start as a kind of question, some of which are very simply, "How did I get here?" (like the David Byrne song). Others are life changing. I include single images that document and pinpoint particular visions, which together become a network that achieves a form of truth.

My process is about balancing the "air" of the space with visual weight of an image not only to tell a story, but to develop simultaneous senses of sparseness and intensity, of aggression and harmony. They appear dream-like, yet the images are scripted from daily life. Seeing these images and figures side-by-side and in repetition underscores this point.

I am searching for primary images to represent, or symbolize, moments and places. I realize they are recognizable, yet not necessarily tied to the same meanings, associations, and the same world from which I construct them...I invite the viewer to put his or her imprint on the isolated images—to apply multiple interpretations of work—an act that maintains a sense of mystery and curiosity and in the end increases the layers of the story's potential.



Constellation (detail), 2008, colored pencil and graphite on paper, 51 1/2 x 48 inches. Courtesy of the artist.