

Elise Co

Nik Pashenkov

Shervone Neckles

Will Corwin

Clara Fialho

Tommy Mintz

The Young and the Restless

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Ana Finel Honigman

The Gordon Parks Gallery, February 14 - May 3, 2009

The Young and the Restless

The Young and the Restless seems an apt title for this exuberant, diverse and innovative exhibition of new work by Will Corwin, Elise Co and Nik Pashenkov, Clara Fiahlo, Shervone Neckles and Tommy Mintz. Full of the energy and optimism of youth, the six artists on view here are not bound to the marketplace or defined by convention of medium or style. Rather, they maintain an art of unconstrained fluidity where often unusual materials, such as paper bags and dolls, LED lights and paint, and even plaster dust are joined with the techniques of photography, video, installation, quilting, painting, assemblage, and sculpture to create art works exploring a range of interests. Letting their materials speak for them, these artists use any means necessary toward their expressive end. Freed from the limitation of medium or methodology, open to exploration and experimentation, unafraid to make a statement, these are six artists on the move. Their art—experiential, open-ended and engaged—beckons, inviting us to interact and react, to contemplate and investigate these embodied narratives and the possibilities of vision.

The title also plays on the name of a popular soap opera, which might initially seem like an unusual way to join together such a varied group of earnest artists. But just like these daytime melodramas which have a way of culling current concerns and issues into an accessible format for popular consumption, these artists are all about art which engages the present day. And similar to that dramatic form, the artists here are joined together less by the arc of a no longer remembered storyline than by complex connections and relationships that can only be discovered by the audience's thorough and total immersion in the experience of the individual art works. Once drawn into the multiplicity of narratives, provocative and insightful juxtapositions can be discovered, ironic twists unraveled, ties revealed or concealed as the viewer engages themselves with the main dramatic event-- that rich and potential space of seeing as the artist.

We are invited then to question war and wander with the oppressed, to be illuminated by the magic of painted light, caught up in the instant or collision of time, even lured by the ephemeral possibilities of the dream and the ruins and conspiracies of the architect's master plan. Mutating and shape-shifting, manipulating and directing our eyes and bodies, these conceptual schemes become sculpture, paintings, photographs or video. Shed of their commonplace associations and with materials often recycled, borrowed, and re-worked through the resourceful curiosity of youth, the multiple narratives of the art works on view here urge us to press further, to find within this engaging exhibition by these young and the restless emerging artists, the relevance of politics, the lure of desire, the persistence of memory, the lingering of fantasy and fear and, above all, the realization of aspiration.

A Professor of Art History at the College of New Rochelle, Dr. Susan Canning is also an independent curator and art critic. Most recently she organized "Tales of Wonder and Woe: Fable and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Art" for the Castle Gallery at CNR. Currently she is serving as a consultant for MoMA for the upcoming exhibition (June, 2009) on the Belgian artist James Ensor and is completing a book-length study on the artist entitled "Vive la Sociale!: The Social Context of James Ensor's Art Practice".

Elise Co and Nikita Pashenkov

Most people come to MIT to study particle physics, apply the applied sciences or, in the case of Matt Damon, prove they're smarter than your average janitor. The school, in other words, is not known for its artistic tendencies.

Yet it was there, on the banks of the Charles River, that Elise Co and Nikita Pashenkov first met. As graduate students in the university's Media Lab, the duo began exploring the intersection of design, technology, fashion and architecture – elements that would later inform their artistic collaborations. More than eight years later, that collaboration has spawned exhibitions in New York, London and Tokyo; Aeolab, a design and technology firm; and, most importantly, a family. Earlier this year, Co and Pashenkov welcomed their first child. And you thought MIT was just for repressed mathematicians.

Co and Pashenkov's current installation is titled *From the Collection of Roy Godfried Biv*, a play on Roy G. Biv, the mnemonic for the sequence of colors in the visible light spectrum. Evoking an apothecary's cabinet – an apothecary who specializes in colors rather than potions – the piece can also be considered a sort of palette for the modern visual artist. A palette of lights rather than paints. A mixing and matching of wavelengths and intensities to produce specific colors. Colors that are not just the base materials for creating art, but the art itself.

The use of light has always played an important role in Co and Pashenkov's work, from massive LED installations to smaller, more intimate studies to unique pieces that combine elements of fashion and technology. Previous projects have included: *Oscillator 2007*, a series of "electronic canvases" utilizing phosphorescent inks; *The Puddlejumper*, an electroluminescent raincoat that illuminates in response to raindrops; the *Lumiloop*, a bracelet that translates movements of the arm into illuminated patterns; and *UFOS*, illuminated sneakers that translates the foot's motion into a visible reflection of the wearer's unique stride.

This focus on light has an obvious root in Co and Pashenkov's background in technology and design. But there's another, more aesthetic, reason for their interest in the medium.

"Light has something that you can't quite capture," says Pashenkov. "These magical qualities. It's there, it's physically there, but it doesn't leave a trace. You flip a switch and it's gone."

Paul Fruchbom is a screenwriter living in New York. His most recent script, Winter's Discontent, is being produced by Sony Pictures and was one of the top 10 screenplays on the 2008 Hollywood Black List.



Our Daily Bread, carbon on bread, dimensions variable, 2008

Shervone Neckles

Scraps of fabric catch her eye. Picture this: a tall, striking sculptor of Caribbean descent, picking through piles of cast-off upholstery, seeing not only what is, but what could be: a small doll, dark and featureless, like a silhouette, sitting at a miniature school desk fashioned out of scrap wood, reading a “Dick and Jane” book—wondering where she fits in this whitewashed world.

Like the doll of her imagination, Shervone Neckles scrutinizes cultural hegemony in the form of illustrations from history books—they never capture the drama, never capture the “layers.” So she builds up layers of fabric and ironed-on images in her own version of the Amistad story, *1839 Ship Quilt*, a patchwork of curtain and upholstery remnants on which she’s transferred a collage of old engravings depicting the famous ship, mid-revolt. A little white-faced doll in colonial garb lurks on the edge of the frame, pulling on a cord, as though pulling the curtains open—or perhaps in the act of closing them. We’ll never know—which is perhaps the artist’s point.

We’ll never know the true texture—the fabric, if you will—of those lives lost to oppression—but Neckles seems determined to unravel the lies, to weave anew. She also turns close to home for raw material—snapshots of her family in Grenada, before they moved to Brooklyn; snapshots of herself, growing up. In one such self-portrait, she’s printed on a rectangle of old wallpaper a picture of herself as an adolescent, her left eye perfectly obscured by the center of a fleur de lis. Can she see us? Can we see her? Like the narrator in Charlotte Gilman Perkins’ short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the deeper we look, the more uncertainties we unearth.

Neckles’ work blends surface with depth, past with present, real with imaginary—even the serious with the playful. *Our Soldier Boys*, printed on found fabric, introduces us to two rows of soldiers—one marching towards us, another marching away, each delineated by a dashed line, like paper dolls, ready to be cut out. We are exhorted to “bring the war home to [us] with [our] own personalized stuffed troops.” We peer closer at the rows of soldiers, searching for hints of drama, but, like the history books that disappoint her, the artist has not granted them the luxury of individuality. They march as a solid, uniformed mass, suggesting how the misery of war—the ragged truth of systemized killing and being killed—is obscured by dominant state-serving narratives of bravery and romance.

Like her images of herself, in which she is literally woven into images of her family, Neckles reminds us that the events we allow to happen—the stories we choose to tell, versus those we choose to deny—create the layers of our present moment, and our future as well.

E.A. Durden teaches expository writing at NYU and recently received first place in the Glimmer Train Magazine Fall Short Story Award for New Writers.



Will Corwin

The works of Will Corwin suggest a passionate embrace of past, present, and future. The plaster - dripping, peeling, cracking into shards - evokes thoughts of destruction and of lessons unlearned while the materiality of the surface and the immediacy of the simple shapes confront us with their physical presence. At the same time, the pencil like notations, the rough slashes of paint - pastel and earth color - produce evocative shapes - sometimes abstract and sometimes figurative - which by their very presence, lead our thoughts simultaneously to the future.

Take for example works from the Mendelssohn series. We see figures - of the composer Felix and his sister Fanny - rendered by tiny, finite, gray pencil lines crossing over the plaster rectangles that make up each portrait, partially obscured by brutally shaped gouges, especially those exposing the blue support beneath the plaster. Figures from the past - of a German family whose great achievement was their contribution to music - Felix now considered one of the major composers of nineteenth century romanticism and Fanny acclaimed now as one of a very few females in the field - are brought into the present by Corwin's process. For the gouges evoke the disfigurement produced during the nineteen-thirties by the German National Socialists, when consumed by virulent anti-semitism, they sought to deny the very existence of the Mendelssohns by prohibiting the playing and recording of all their compositions. That their assimilated Jewish family (who had baptized their children as Lutheran) was well-regarded in both German and international circles during the nineteenth century, did not prevent the Nazis from attempting to erase any memory of their contribution. As we confront these works, we become entangled with their multiple meanings. Identities of the past become present and attempts to eradicate ethnicity, religion, color, or class become part of our future consciousness.

Along with the Mendelssohn series, *Nomadic Ruins* particularly expresses this structural process. But these simultaneous concepts underlie all of Corwin's works. What you see is not exactly what you get. Ambiguity takes hold and the contradictions inherent in the twenty-first century are writ large on Corwin's surfaces. Whether his works are physically large or intimately small, or photographed memories of site-specific objects, the simultaneous evocations are meant to reach out to you - the spectator - and to invite you to participate in understanding.

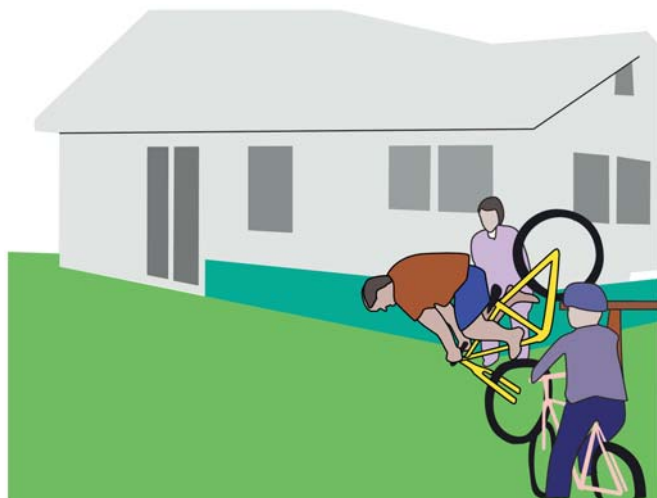


One More Sun, mixed media on plaster on foam , 96" x 64", 2008

Rose-Carol Washton Long, Professor of Art History, The Graduate Center, City University of New York
Long has published the books Kandinsky (1980), German Expressionism (1993), and numerous essays on art in Germany during the Wilhelmine Empire and the Weimar Republic. Jewish Dimensions in Modern Visual Culture: Antisemitism, Assimilation, and Affirmations, the anthology she co-edited with Matthew Baigell, will be published in the fall of 2009.



Master and Wet Nurse, ink on paper, dimensions variable, 2008



Clara Fialho

Clara Fialho's canvases contain densely packed designs, broad intentions and a luscious profusion of complex colour relationships. Yet the overall effect is alluringly light and harmonious.

"My work is intended to take the viewer away from the world of thought," the Brazilian-born and New York-based Fialho declares in her artist statement. "[My paintings] reveal universal forms, which are innately present in every human being . . . Art, being a response to society, has the potential to serve as its mirror, and at the same time, point towards what is behind it. My work projects a desire for equilibrium with the physical world."

The delicate balance that the recent Cooper Union graduate achieves with her lyrical abstraction is reminiscent of the graceful beauty in Miro's iconic canvases or the lovely marriages of colour found in blown glass or lively clay beads. Like these decorative items, Fialho's paintings are strikingly elaborate for their scale. However, her paintings are more universal than these delicate, feminine points of reference.

Instead, they exhibit wider conceptual concerns associated with organic and biological forms. Some works appear as imaginary landscapes blossoming with lush and ripe mystical gardens; the forms in her imagery also evoke cellular structures or romantic visions of unseen solar systems. Her 2008 *Green for the Bartender* offers a thick and vibrant spread of delightful amoebic forms and floral designs.

Fialho's mixed-media on paper compositions reveal the deft thinking underpinning her complex and captivating canvases. Her intensely constructed and attractive water-color, ink and graphite drawings demonstrate her assertion that, "[My work] is often a struggle against society's moral dissipation, a personal detachment from the world around me."

Without expressly depicting her concern with an uncaring and morally disconnected culture, Fialho presents work whose sheer beauty and evident pleasure is an enticing and convincing counter-argument to the broad and insidious issues she rejects.

Ana Finel Honigman is a New York and London-based critic. She writes on contemporary art for fashion and art magazines including *British Vogue*, *Art in America*, *Artnet.com*, *Art Journal*, *ArtReview*, *Time Out*, *Dazed & Confused* and the *Guardian Unlimited Art & Architecture* blog.



Green for the Bartender, oil on canvas, 36" x 48", 2008

Tommy Mintz

Tommy Mintz's *Crash* is a thematic and technical culmination of his previous work. Since 1998 Mintz has decontextualized images of movement and people in photographs where space and time are themselves destabilized, sometimes seeming to be on a collision course with each other. In *Crash*, Mintz uses similar techniques while turning to literal collisions for his subject. Mintz capitalizes on the human "rubberneck" reflex to slow down and gawk at car accidents by lifting the images of several mangled vehicles and stretching the detritus across the horizon of the picture. The viewer is compelled to stop and look at the (satisfyingly) terrible details: the crunched-up bumper, the caved-in passenger door. Mintz includes a lone human figure in each landscape of destruction: their rescue-worker garb magnifies the sense of crisis. The verticle singularities repeated in each picture – one tree, one rescue worker – give the images a kind of physical and emotional scale, reminding us that each vehicle is the sad remnant of a "real" accident, while they also contrast the multiplicity of the horizontal pile of vehicles. Car after minivan after truck after car are all stopped in time, frozen in wreckage.

The sheer number of them creates a law of diminishing return; the artificially extended length of the "crash" destabilizes the pathos of each particular, potential tragedy. Mintz therefore evokes a series of disjointed responses: the witness's awkward voyeuristic thrill from a spectacle of destruction might be heightened by a sense of awe at the magnitude of the crash-collage, while it is also tempered by a boredom evoked by repetition. Moreover, the banged-up automobiles are removed from geographic specificity into a luminous white field, a dislocation that softens the traces of violence that call forth the gawking reflex. *Crash* trades on the voyeuristic desire to gape at tragedy. The photographs implicate the viewer while subverting his or her base desire for images of violence through the unsettling effects of repetition and decontextualization. If *Schadenfreude* is a subtext of *Crash*, it is the text of *Schadenfreude Sketches*, a series of stills from YouTube videos rendered in line drawings. Mintz outlines moments of physical calamity and personal embarrassment, those familiar, unintentional pratfalls that usually garner laughs from witnesses. Stripped of everything but the barest essentials, these sketches spark a question: how much detail is necessary for humor? In the style Mintz calls "Ikea Instruction," the extreme minimalism of the pictures both challenges and indulges the human tendency to find another person's suffering funny. Does a face-plant without a face still evoke a chuckle? The bloodless abstraction of the figures both denies and encourages human empathy, thereby playing on the blade of the uneasy identificatory process at the heart of *Schadenfreude*: relief that it's not you being laughed at. Meanwhile, the visual style of the instruction manual carries with it a trace of DIY construction; these images implicitly ask our brains to assemble familiar visual and emotional impressions in a new way.

Diana Colbert is studying for a Ph.D. in English Literature at CUNY Graduate Center, and currently teaches literature and composition at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Crash #3, ink on paper, 24" x 70", 2008



Gordon Parks Gallery
School of New Resources
John Cardinal O'Connor Campus
The College of New Rochelle
332 East 149th Street
Bronx, New York

Opening Reception Feb. 21 4 - 7
Gallery Hours: Friday, Saturday 1-6
and by appointment
RSVP appointments (718-665-1310)

Directions:

Subway: ② ③ ④ or ⑤ train to 149th and Grand Concourse, then walk east.

Or, ⑥ train to 149th and 3rd Ave and walk west.

Car: I-95 to Bruckner Expressway to I-87 North; exit at Grand Concourse and 138th Street, taking Grand Concourse to 149th Street, make a right and continue to 332 East 148th Street (the campus).

Katrina Rhein, Director of Gordon Parks Gallery,
Dr. Kristine Southard, Chair of the Curatorial Committee for GPG
Elza Dinwiddie-Boyd, Dean of the School of New Resources.

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