

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A RECEPTION  
CELEBRATING OUR INAUGURAL EXHIBITION  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2005 FROM 5 TO 7 PM:

# NO PLACE LIKE HOME

September 8 - October 1, 2005

Ali Fitzgerald received a B.A. with honors from Davidson College in 2004. Her upcoming exhibitions include On Virgin Land, a solo show of Fitzgerald's work at Art Palace, Austin, November 18 – December 15, 2005.

Erick Michaud graduated from the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design in 1997. His work will be featured in Terra Cognita, part of Cinematexas 10, September 14-18, 2005. This fall Michaud is also included in Up In the Old Hotel at Austin's Blue Theatre.

In 2002 Jared Steffensen completed a B.F.A. in Intermedia Sculpture at the University of Utah. Look for his work in Dallas when 5 x 7 travels to Conduit Gallery this fall. Steffensen is also included in Up In the Old Hotel at the Blue Theatre.

David Woody received a B.F.A. in Photography from Colorado State University in 1996. Next year he will have a solo exhibition at Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, California.

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**Ali Fitzgerald**

**Erick Michaud**

**Jared Steffensen**

**David Woody**

ORGANIZED BY GALLERY  
CURATOR AMANDA DOUBERLEY

Established in 2005, Gallery 3 at the Co-op is a student-run exhibition space sponsored by the University Co-op, in association with the Department of Art & Art History at the University of Texas at Austin. Gallery 3 presents exhibitions year-round of work by students, faculty, staff and alumni in the Department of Art & Art History drawn from a semi-annual call for proposals, as well as juried exhibitions and shows organized by the gallery curator. Please visit [www.gallery3atthecoop.com](http://www.gallery3atthecoop.com) for more information.

Gallery 3 at the Co-op  
2246 Guadalupe  
Austin, TX 78705

Hours: 8:30 to 7:30 M-F; 9:30 to 6 Sat.; 11 to 5 Sun.

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## The Secret of the Ruby Slippers

by Amanda Douberley

Where is home? Is it the place you live, the town where you were born, or the house you grew up in? How does a new environment become home, or at least like home? Is home even a place at all, or is it no place, more a memory or illusion than an actual location? We typically think of home as a stable place, fixed in one location, embedded in our everyday lives as a source of comfort and ease. Being at home is a physical state as well as a psychological condition, however, and just as where you're living now may not feel quite like home, where you're from may eventually end up being a place you can only visit in your memories. These competing interpretations of home are examined in *No Place Like Home* through paintings, photographs, sculptures, and videos inspired by the places where these artists live and work.

The physical passage from one place to another, from home to "where I'm living now," leaves us psychologically homeless, at least until the latter becomes home. For some artists in the exhibition, this transition drives work that reflects their efforts to make a home in Texas. **David Woody** and **Ali Fitzgerald** take opposite approaches; while Fitzgerald explores Wild Western stereotypes, reveling in cowgirls, cacti and cowpokes, Woody focuses his large-format camera on the individuals he encounters in his wanderings around Austin and beyond.

Like all of the artists in *No Place Like Home*, Fitzgerald moved to Texas to attend the University of Texas at Austin's graduate program in studio art. She was soon captivated by the larger-than-life-size mannerisms of Texas culture. Fitzgerald's initial research on rodeo life led her to look more broadly at pop culture images of the Wild West. In the painting *Heyra Hankshaw*, *Tommy Faye Buffalo* and the *Cowering Cowboy Castrati*, she combines dime store novel graphics, televangelists, and elements of a book by Tom Robbins. Her hitchhiking cowgirl is a reinterpretation of the freedom we associate with the Wild West, albeit a freedom achieved through hitching a ride on a semi rather than riding off into the sunset on a horse. Fitzgerald's over-the-top style, which seems based in part on her experience as a newspaper cartoonist, is a perfect match with the Baroque excess of her subjects; after all, the surest sign of wonder is exaggeration.

As a newcomer to Austin, photographer David Woody set out to familiarize himself with the city by picking up his camera. Instead of photographing Austin's landmarks, he approached strangers to pose for a portrait. Woody did not shoot these photographs in a studio or even inside his subjects' homes, but instead took them on the spot, frequently outdoors—under a bridge, atop a parking garage, or on a suburban lawn. The young men and women pictured here appear utterly relaxed in front of the camera, with more than one laying on the ground, gazing into the distance, seemingly lost in thought. Woody clings to the periphery of the city in his vision of Austin, juxtaposing the portraits with images of a cookie-cutter housing development and an empty, overgrown lot. This combination begs the question of whether Woody's photographs picture a community, or point to his place outside of it as Austin gradually becomes home.

Other artists in the exhibition look back on the places they consider home, inspired by a sense of longing for the things they have left behind. **Jared Steffensen's** recent sculptures are born out of homesickness, nostalgia, and reverie. Based on elements of the Salt Lake City landscape that he left two years ago for Austin, these portable, often wearable sculptures literalize the idea that we carry our past around with us—or at least that we wish we could. For example, a batting-stuffed, felt-covered rolling mountain trails a loop of rope for easy transportation. Steffensen's *Landscape Shoes* feature model plants and animals, and, like his *Tree Watch*, are almost useful. The toy-like features of this work, however, hint at its place within a fantastic world. This domain springs to life in the artist's videos, where the rolling pine tree or shoulder tree might become a prop. Although deeply idiosyncratic, Steffensen's work expresses a set of emotions about home that are widely felt and collectively understood.

In the video *Garage Sale*, **Erick Michaud** addresses another widespread experience: his hometown is slowly disappearing. This summer Michaud returned to Madawaska, Maine to find the town dotted with "For Sale" signs. He spent four hours walking up and down the streets of his old neighborhood and nearby downtown, surveying the impact of recent layoffs at the local paper mill. The relentless repetition of signs on the video loop reflects Michaud's mounting anxiety as he trudges past favorite hangouts and childhood haunts, all soon to be vacant or already abandoned. His frustration lies not only in the thought that some day he may not have much of a town to return to, but also in the loss of a way of life as factories across the United States continue to be outfitted with machines that take the place of workers.

For the artists in *No Place Like Home*, home is in a state of constant flux, characterized more by instability than permanence, constantly recreated and reformulated as much by global economics as individuals' decisions to leave town and start again some place else. As Salman Rushdie writes in an essay on *The Wizard of Oz*, "...the truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started out to make up our lives, armed only with what we have and are, we understand that the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that 'there's no place like home,' but rather that there is no longer any such place as home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz: which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began."

Dave Hickey, "A Home in the Neon," in *Air Guitar* (Santa Monica: Art Issues Press, 1997): 18.

Salman Rushdie, "A Short Text About Magic," in *The Wizard of Oz* (London: British Film Institute, 1992): 57.