

GALLERY3

at the co-op

Jarrold Beck earned a master's degree in architecture from Tulane University in 2000. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at MASS, Austin (2005) and Leslie Lohman Gallery, New York, NY (2004). In 2006 Beck participated in the twelfth Performance Studies International conference at Queen Mary University, London with the paper "Untitled Disorderly Conduct: The Infected Urban Space."

Erin Curtis graduated from Williams College in 1999 with a B.A. in Liberal Arts. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions around Austin, including Making It Together at Creative Research Laboratory (2006), Terra Cognita, part of Cinema Texas (2005), and Fuse Box at the Blue Theater (2005). This summer Curtis was an artist-in-residence at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vermont.

In 2000 Aron Johnston completed a B.F.A. in Painting and Drawing at the University of North Texas, Denton. His solo exhibitions include Post Exodus at the Upstairs Gallery, Arlington, TX (2003) and Illuminations at Boushari Art Gallery, Kuwait (2001). Last year Johnston was one of Till Richter's picks for Rising Stars Vol. 2 at Austin's Studio 107.

Exhibition curator Amanda Douberley earned a B.A. in Art History and English Language & Literature from the University of Virginia in 2000. She is a doctoral student in Art History at UT-Austin and curator of Gallery 3 at the Co-op. Douberley writes frequently for the Austin Chronicle and Glasstire.com, where she is a contributing editor.

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.

new work by
jarrod beck
erin curtis
aron johnston

recent work by ut austin
mfa students in studio art

organized by gallery3 at the co-op
curator amanda douberley

august 31 - september 30, 2006

outside area

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 for more information.

Located adjacent to the Co-op's new Art Department, Gallery 3 deepens the University Co-op's commitment to supporting the arts at the University of Texas at Austin with a permanent exhibition space. The University Co-op is a non-profit organization, and a true cooperative. One hundred percent of after-rebate profits are used to support university-related projects and activities. The Co-op is continually talking to various University departments and organizations about their needs for assistance in updating or enhancing their student-related facilities or projects.

The Department of Art and Art History is one of the largest and most diverse art departments in the US, with an enrollment of over 800 undergraduate and graduate students. The distinguished faculty and excellent facilities support many unique course offerings and special programs. *US News and World Report* has ranked the Department of Art and Art History among the top ten graduate programs in the country.

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Outside Area

By Amanda Douberley

Studio art graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin each choose an area of concentration as a focus for their studies in one of seven fields: ceramics, metals, painting and drawing, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and transmedia (time-based art). On an administrative level, these divisions establish the makeup of students' advisory committees and the location of their studios. Within artistic practice, however, the boundaries between areas can be quite fluid. Outside Area engages three MFA students who work outside their academic area of concentration, combining disparate media and modes of production to create hybrid forms that resist easy categorization.

When discussing any artwork, though, it is hard not to fall back on disciplinary labels. As a curator, I have a hard time framing the work in this show in any terms other than "painting," or "video," or "installation." The challenge, then, is not just the making of hybrid forms, but also the establishment of a language to describe them; or, perhaps, an acknowledgement of the fact that these labels describe media as well as a set of questions investigated within each area. So for example, when **Aron Johnston** (an MFA student in painting and drawing) makes two paintings into a housing for a video, he not only juxtaposes different art forms, but also brings video issues into his painting-based work. The problem seems to be more in how to best present an idea than to make a video or painting for its own sake. To put it bluntly: there are things video can do that painting can't, and vice versa.

Johnston's paintings reference billboards, vintage mural advertisements, and, for Outside Area, the fable of the ant and the grasshopper (transformed here into a mantis samurai). Johnston and I had a long talk about why he chose to project a video of grass on the base of this piece rather than using a painting of grass or a photograph of grass. The key here seems to be an alteration of our perception of time and space on three levels: within the paintings, within the video, and within the installation as a whole. The stand Johnston created for his paintings makes them into a sculptural object—they become freestanding rather than wall-bound. Add in the video, and the installation as a whole expands even further. The grass becomes a literal ground for the object, but also transports the viewer outside and skews the scale of the whole so that, even just for a second, we are not standing in a gallery and our feet are firmly planted outside, on the ground, looking at a billboard which, if we try to keep the scale sketched out here, means we're about the size of a bug. The joke, it seems, is on us. But are we ants or mantis samurai? Savers or consumers? What, exactly, is Johnston selling us with his billboard? The layers of this narrative don't quite add up, which seems to be part of the point. Johnston is more interested in how we make sense of the information presented to us through signs than a seamless story or direct message he can communicate. Video, made alongside his paintings, adds another element to the chain of information.

Jarrod Beck entered the MFA program in 2004 with a concentration in printmaking, but his current work may appear more reflective of his background in architecture. Over the past two years, he has made several large-scale, environmental installations for exhibitions around Austin. Beck's formal vocabulary encompasses ready-made materials, specifically metal studs used in wall construction, which he manipulates to create discrete spaces within the gallery. These works have been read as studies for buildings, as well as ritual spaces. They are often dark, disorienting, and erotically charged. For Outside Area, Beck presents an array of drawings, prints, photographs, and other materials based on his three-dimensional work that is more akin to an architecture studio pin-up than a studio art installation.

Amongst the materials presented here, there is a stark contrast between the photographs and drawings in terms of the presence of the figure. Beck's photo documentation of his installations is uniformly empty and depopulated, even for the purposes of establishing scale. In contrast, many of his recent drawings prominently feature the figure, and function in this context as atmospheric studies for the viewer's experience of his built work. According to Beck, the drawings mediate between his installations and the documentary photographs of them. The drawings' role as arbitrators also pervades the scale shift between the studio wall and the gallery installation, similar to the difference between plan and section, drawing and model, and model and building in architecture.

As in architecture, Beck's pin-up can be read as a diagram that leads the viewer through different iterations of a concept. The work is at once documentation and a stepping-stone for his next move, as well as a time-line of sorts, beginning with the prints at the left-hand side. In Beck's work, the modes of scanning and reading disparate types of information from studio art and architecture collide, bringing issues related to documentation in installation art into sharp focus, and a different light.

Erin Curtis' recent paintings depict mural-size views of compressed interior spaces. Architectural space is one of Curtis' primary concerns, which she also explores in three-dimensional work. For Outside Area, Curtis decided to fill a corner of the gallery with smaller paintings, collages, and some of her source material, which, of late, has included images from old house and garden magazines. Like Beck, with whom she collaborated on an environmental installation last year, Curtis, an MFA student in painting and drawing, works in a variety of forms that interweave within her larger practice, each informing the other across media and modes of working.

Curtis' installation is as much about its individual parts as their placement above, below, and beside each other. The flooring she has installed creates a room within a room, and draws attention to some of the gallery infrastructure that most artists hope will quietly disappear: the rubber strip at the base of the wall, the wood molding near the ceiling, and a massive light switch right in the middle of the corner she has staked out as her own. Curtis' paintings and collages fluctuate between individual artworks, which the viewer can absorb singly—somewhat like the floating images projected in slide lectures, the photographs of paintings reproduced in books, or a framed artwork—and an environmental installation that can be physically inhabited. Within the latter perspective, the viewer is embedded in a space that becomes a sort of hall of mirrors as she stands before a crowded wall filled with images of other interior spaces, some of which are hung with artworks in a manner similar to Curtis' own installation.

The mix of images presented here—some manipulated by Curtis, and some that are more straightforward source material—is speculative and disorienting. The work fluctuates between a formal gallery work and a representation of the artist's studio, minus the paint drips on the floor. Of all of the work presented in Outside Area, Curtis' is the most in-flux, standing as a beginning point on a process continuum that moves through Johnston's billboard/video and paintings—the most gallery-ready of the three artists' work—and, at the opposite end, Beck's studio pin-up, which reflects a more meditative moment, an after-the-fact and at the same time a place to begin anew. Curtis highlights the experimental nature of working "outside area," in a fuzzy place between painting, collage, sculpture, and installation. But what to call it? I'm not quite sure, yet.