

Greetings from
NASHVILLE

15 JANUARY - 23 FEBRUARY 2019

**MOLLY BARNES
MATT CHRISTY
MARLOS E'VAN
JODI HAYS
ARMON MEANS**

Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art's mission is to present the highest level of fine art experiences and to create an active space for robust discourse of vital issues facing our society. It is a space where the local and academic community share ideas about contemporary art and our wider cultural experiences. Art breaks barriers between languages and brings us together to be inspired and knowledgeable citizens, no matter where we come from.

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Greetings from Nashville
15 January – 23 February 2019

Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art at James Madison University will open the group exhibition *Greetings from Nashville* on Tuesday, 15 January 2019. The exhibit, curated by Gallery Director and Chief Curator, John Ros, will be on view through 23 February 2019. Artists include: Molly Barnes, Matt Christy, Marlos E'van, Jodi Hays and Armon Means.

Nashville, TN recently overtook Austin, TX as one of the fastest growing cities in the US. *Greetings from Nashville* takes a look at what it means to be an artist in a growing city. Not only when it is advantageous to move to a growing city, but when a creative acts as a visionary on behalf of the larger community to build a better community for all. Barnes, Christy, E'van, Hays and Means have all, in their own ways, played roles in elevating the art scene of Nashville throughout the years. This exhibit is a visual conversation about community building and social awareness with a focus on symbol as activator and metaphor and will feature photos, cyanotypes, quilts, ceramics, sculpture and mixed-media paintings.

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Molly Barnes (b. 1993 Nashville TN) received a BFA in 2015 from Mississippi State University and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2017. She focuses primarily on everyday domestic space. Barnes believes that everything contributes to her artistic practice from doing the dishes to pulling weeds. When she was asked what words she would use to describe herself she said “gold, home, quilts”. Barnes is currently working on an artist book about the dyes she uses and the history of quilts.

The smell of honeysuckle. My grandmothers irises are blooming in my mother's garden. When can I put the seeds in the ground? What's a flower and what's a weed? The creek never quits. We can't eat another frozen pizza this week. The grid is an observational drawing. Teaching observational drawing on Monday. Stir the indigo vat everyday. Agnes, don't bother the snakes. We are out of WiFi. Harvest the last Anemones. Spooky eats them. Bumble bees and hummingbirds. Humble bees and bumming birds. Dip the linen in the indigo vat, hang it on the clothesline, do it again. Sewing machines always break. It's ladies day at the antique store. Make a cyanotype between the clouds. I could live off the smell of rain and honeysuckle.

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Matt Christy (b. 1983 Nashville TN) is a multi-disciplinary artist, writer and educator. He received a BFA in 2007 from Watkins College of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of Oregon in 2015. He has won multiple honors and awards such as the Frank Okada Scholarship 2009-2011 and the Graduate School Research Award in 2013. Christy is currently writing his first novel.

Future Flags

These paintings hang like banners or flags loose from the architecture of a frame or stretcher. They are built out of variations on the “x”, a symmetrical shape that cancels and standardizes the composition. I read the “x” as a stand-in, a sign that constantly deters the naming of its object, leaving the center of meaning open and unknown. They are flags for a missing people or a community that doesn’t yet exist, a fictional community. They are pre-coded symbols. They mark a territory and take up space. They usher in the future. They call to war. They are electroshock for the rebel flag and its defenders, but also a barrier to the new world beckoned forth by the good intentioned, liberal gentlemen. I’d like these flags to call for future refusals, and celebrate smaller, more fragile collectives. They are propaganda for ambiguity.

A new flag needs a new subjectivity.

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Marlos E'van (b. 1989 Tupelo, MS) received a BFA from Watkins College of Art in 2016. From street art to canvases; from performance art to filmmaking, E'van interweaves different mediums in order to represent the harsh ideologies that America has built; such as cars to fast food culture. E'van cofounded and co-organizes M-SPAR, McGruder Social Practice Artist Residency out of a family resource center in North Nashville and is the co-founder of M-CRU, a creative partnership between Vanderbilt, TSU, Fisk, Barea, and Tougaloo Universities.

Flags, Guns, & The American Dream

Growing up in Mississippi, I was exposed to flags from the schoolhouse, on the beach, all along highway 90, and in museums or government buildings. 2 Flags in particular stood out, both the Confederate flag and the Mississippi state flag which still contains a confederate flag on the upper left hand corner of it. Back in school, we used to pledge allegiance to this flag, eventhough most of the schools I attended were very diverse. As I started growing up, I realized something was quite wrong with this picture, so I decided to make a Mississippi flag of my own as a way to have this conversation with both myself and the history of the flag itself.

By doing this, I tied in other themes like the satirical Banana that touches back on the history of associating black people with apes. At the same time, the Banana also symbolises the fool, which is how I feel looking back on the fact that we were forced to pledge allegiance to a flag that stood to keep people of color oppressed, stupid, and overworked.

The Naked Pray sculpture is a direct response to the 1965 film, *The Naked Prey*, directed by and starring Cornel Wilde. In this highly stereotypical film, Wilde plays a white colonizer in Africa that gets into trouble with the native tribes. While captured, Wilde's character, simply known as the "Man" escapes on foot, with only a loin cloth covering his genitals, and manages to outwit, outfight, and outlast all of the natives that are chasing him. In my opinion, this film tried to uplift the idea that white men were far more superior to any other race or gender, while making a bold statement that Blacks were far too stupid and incapable of stopping one man from running wild in their own territory. In effect, my sculpture *The Naked Pray*, poses a statement of; "Oh this is how you see us".

The American Gothic piece works like a Transformer (yea the car transformers). Here, I have a huge hand painted American flag, with an unfired clay sculpture of a hand and gun sitting on top of a nightstand. Put together, these pieces come to form a part of the American Dream; for every household to have a gun tucked away in a nightstand. I'm not saying this is the ideal American dream but over time it sure seems to have become a part of our fabric and sense of security. While our parents made sure this was true, no one knew how we, the children, would be affected once we found what was in the nightstand. Suicide and murder followed, then the tears.

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Jodi Hays (b. 1976 Hot Springs, AR) is an artist and curator. Hays received A BFA in 1998 from the University of Tennessee and an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Art in 2006. She lived and worked in Boston for a number of years where she was Assistant Director at the Cambridge Art Association, moving to East Nashville in 2005 where she maintains a studio and pop-up gallery Dadu. Her practice includes work with COOP Gallery (a Nashville-based curatorial collective for which she was a founding member) and teaching in the graduate program at Watkins College of Art. Her work is represented by Red Arrow Gallery (TN) and Flat File Art (NJ).

I am interested in the intersections of iconography and abstract painting: walls, grids, fences, gates and posts. The metaphorical extensions of a fence or wall or gate are myriad, including but not limited to inclusion and exclusion, themes worth considering in our current bizarre politically-charged contemporary moment.

Landscape has been a consistent touchstone in my work—sometimes overtly, sometimes not—perhaps related to having almost literally grown up in a National Park in Arkansas. Living in cities for my adult life, I began to collect images of construction sites that I could then isolate to speak to disparate issues of time, upheaval, restraint and abandon, and progress. The grid can contain most of these references, and the flatness of a painting.

My paintings extend from an interest in the visual language of space, landscape and architecture. Usually parallel to titles, my work is a composite of influences, from the history of painting, to soundbites, to what I see on a road trip or walks, to the color of a Play Doh container. The pieces come from the specificity, density but possibility of intimacy with images and text we process. Interior textiles and exterior structures, concrete slabs and language from podcasts are deposited as a unified visual mass.

I am working with the language of materiality in Painting. Though one could discern recognizable “stuff” in the work, I am interested in defining the image on its own terms, out of context or within a new one, a “referential” abstraction.

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Armon A. Means (b. 1976 Indianapolis, IN) is an instructor, curator and program director. Means received a BFA in Photography in 1999 from Cleveland Institute of Art and an MFA in Photography from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2002. Means was an Assistant Professor of Photography at Kansas State University and Coastal Carolina University (Conway, SC) and has taught at Belmont University (Nashville, TN), Middle Tennessee State University (Murfreesboro, TN).

North American Portraits: A Quintessential Road Trip

The traditional idea of community structure was founded on the idea of individuals forming living groups, derived from families, built through apprenticeships, seeking education, and either a return to, or remaining in or around the area where one was raised (generally within a 20 mile radius). In contemporary modernized society this idea has become a way of the past as individuals no longer feel the need to remain within a distanced range of their place of birth as immigration, social change, and a variety of other reasons bring more and more people to North America each year.

The paved interlacing of concrete veins and asphalt arteries known as the interstate system, is what somehow acts as the circulatory system for our nation and beyond. It ties commerce and transportation into one, it allows for the exchange of ideas and location, building of relationships, and exposure to new areas in ways not before thought possible. Through examining locations connected by the roadway, this work is meant to explore the aspect of interconnectivity and how this forms a larger identity, as seen through a structure that connects individuals across the continent. There may be a question as to why individuals now reside and / or travel from place to place, as seen through the lens of individual experience and connection. Though ultimately we are all provided the same potential for relocation, exploration, and traversing large distances via this structure of roadways through the use of our own vehicle, public transportation, or otherwise. This potential is something that is realized by many, romanticized historically, and necessary for others. It is also a structure created by the government for the elimination of unsafe roads, inefficient routes, traffic jams and all of the other things that got in the way of “speedy, safe transcontinental travel”. Essentially a method of connection created to allow people access, and it is now this access that is so often questioned when taken advantage of by people from outside an existing community.

As immigration, travel, gentrification, relocation, etc., are so much more common, it is partially this same structure of transportation that aids individuals in their ability to have access to new locations. The search for one thing often reveals its opposite and in this venture the search for national identity and connection also reveals examples of individuals who feel as if this country and the promise of the “American Dream” failed them. The same system that interconnects locations creates a divide amongst its people as expressed through ideas and conversations about gentrification, nationalism, and xenophobia. Both parties in duality are expressed here through the presence, or lack thereof the portrait, at the request of that subject based on their comfort level with being photographed and portrayed for general consumption.

By addressing issues of self and place as navigated through location and context, I seek to explore how viewpoints of one’s own identity, safety, security, and community may vary and alter over geographic, demographic, and cultural differences throughout North America. As I continue utilizing the classic “road trip” as an “all -American” experience, a universally accessible structure and a systematic approach, this serves as a way to connect the individuals interviewed and photographed, while also allowing the viewer an understandable way in which to “navigate” geography, culture, and their own place in this larger national and cultural identity.

EXHIBITION RELATED EVENTS

04-25 JAN 2019: EXHIBIT / VA-AIM 2018: *Participation*

Arts Council of the Valley, Downtown Harrisonburg, VA

Virginia Artists in the Marketplace Cohort Exhibit: partnership with studioELL

studioELL is an artist-run, community-minded organization

22 JAN, 2019, 5.30p: VA-AIM 2018: *Participation Artist Panel Discussion*

Arts Council of the Valley, Downtown Harrisonburg, VA

24 JAN 2019, 6p (doors open @ 5.30p): Artist Film Series

The Cool School: The Story of the Ferus Art Gallery

by Morgan Neville (Arthouse Films), 2008

Massanutten Regional Library, Downtown Harrisonburg, VA

An object lesson in how to build an art scene from scratch and what to avoid in the process. The film focuses on the seminal Ferus Gallery, which groomed the LA art scene from a loose band of idealistic beatniks into a coterie of competitive, often brilliant artists, including Ed Kienholz, Ed Ruscha, Craig Kauffman, Wallace Berman, Ed Moses and Robert Irwin.

The Ferus also served as launching point for New York imports, Andy Warhol (hosting his first Soup Can show), Jasper Johns, and Roy Lichtenstein, as well as leading to the first Pop Art show and Marcel Duchamp's first retrospective. What was lost and gained is tied up in a complex web of egos, passions, money, and art. This is how LA came of age.

28 JAN 2019, 12-1p: Panel Discussion

Artist-Run Initiatives & the Importance of the DIY Movement

Panelists: Jodi Hays (DADU); Jon Henry (Old Furnace Artist Residency); Rob Mertens (Modular Project Space); Katie Mills (Pop-Up Art Collective); John Ros (studioELL)

Duke Hall Room 2036, JMU

Creating a dialogue about the importance of artist-run totems throughout our communities. Discussion will include sustainability, practicality and service to the community at large, but also the community of member artists. How does this interaction maintain itself and what does it mean for the artists involved?

28 JAN 2019, 5-7p: Reception: *Greetings from Nashville*

Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art, JMU

29 JAN 2019, 7p: Artist Lecture: Jodi Hays

Duke Hall Room 2036, JMU

01 FEB 2019: GALLERY OPEN FOR FIRST FRIDAY

07 FEB 2019, 6p (doors open @ 5.30p): Artist Film Series

I Am Not Your Negro

by Raoul Peck (Kino Lorber Edu), 2016

The Golden Pony, Downtown Harrisonburg, VA

Special discussion led by Dr. Joanne Gabbin

I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO explores the continued peril America faces from institutionalized racism.

In 1979, James Baldwin wrote a letter to his literary agent describing his next project, *Remember This House*. The book was to be a revolutionary, personal account of the lives and successive assassinations of three of his close friends--Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. At the time of Baldwin's death in 1987, he left behind only thirty completed pages of his manuscript.

Now, in his incendiary new documentary, master filmmaker Raoul Peck envisions the book James Baldwin never finished. The result is a radical, up-to-the-minute examination of race in America, using Baldwin's original words and flood of rich archival material. *I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO* is a journey into black history that connects the past of the Civil Rights movement to the present of #BlackLivesMatter. It is a film that questions black representation in Hollywood and beyond.

21 FEB 2019, 6p: Artist Film Series

Our City Dreams

by Chiara Clemente (First Run Features), 2008

Duke Hall Room 1032, JMU

Five Women. Five Artists. One City.

In this "lyrical documentary about the intersection of location and imagination" (*The New York Times*), filmmaker Chiara Clemente shines a light on five women artists whose inspiration is fueled by living in the "cauldron of creativity" - New York City. The artists - Nancy Spero, Marina Abramovic, Kiki Smith, Ghada Amer and Swoon - are at different stages of life and have widely varying cultural backgrounds; each has a distinctive passion, character, motivation and artistic style. But they all have one thing in common: the city to which they have journeyed and now call home.

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