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Leidy Churchman

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THE ART NEWSPAPER

Leidy Churchman : Inner Dialogue

Vue de l'exposition « Leidy Churchman : Inner Dialogue » à la Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.
Photo : Martin Argyroglo. Courtoisie de l'artiste et de la galerie Chantal Crousel

Inner Dialogue est un grand tableau de Leidy Churchman d'un genre indéfinissable. Il est composé de plans géométriques colorés et modelés, d'une vue de mer et d'une autre de montagne. Un grand oiseau bleu exotique et une vulve y trouvent même leur place, tandis que des mots désignant des réalités visibles ou des abstractions sont distribués un peu partout. C'est l'union du diagramme, de l'abstraction, du paysagisme et du surréel. À défaut d'être une somme ou un manifeste, ce tableau offre une bonne introduction à l'univers de Churchman. Cellui-ci, fortement marqué par l'enseignement du bouddhisme tibétain, peint des œuvres inspirées de figurations traditionnelles de cet univers ainsi que les représentations qu'iel se fait de certaines de ses notions clés. Mais iel peint aussi des images de son quotidien, sa vision d'une réalité dédoublée, chargée de magie. Le logo de Mastercard et la figure de la girafe y font des apparitions récurrentes.

Patrick Javault
Leidy Churchman : Inner Dialogue
The Art Newspaper, September 13, 2024.
https://urlr.me/9HcFz

À côté de peintures du Bouddha directement inspirées de l'art tibétain, on trouve l'effigie de celui-ci au milieu d'objets divers, de coquillages et d'une boule de cristal. Dans nombre de tableaux, Leidy Churchman répand des points de couleur correspondant aux *tigles*, ou gouttes d'énergie. Dans *The Inner Paradise,* la faune se réduit aux girafes et celles-ci naissent dans des fleurs de lotus. Au sein de ce qui ressemble bien à un parcours spirituel,on rencontre de petits tableaux et même de minuscules qui ressemblent à des prises de notes. Y alternent observation, inventions, citations d'œuvres d'autres artistes, épiphanies. Nommant Marsden Hartley au rang de ceux qui l'ont influencé, Leidy Churchman trace une voie entre le conceptuel et le spirituel.

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The Modern

FOCUS: LEIDY CHURCHMAN

January 22–March 21, 2021

For the artist Leidy Churchman, no subject matter is out of bounds. Since 2007, their paintings have included crocodiles, corporate logos, figures from Tibetan Buddhism, and advertising visuals, as well as renditions of art book covers and artworks from Henri Rousseau to Marsden Hartley to Barbara Kruger. Their strikingly diverse output reflects not only traditional modes of visual reproduction but also the proliferation of images that we see today on television, in Internet searches, and in our social media feeds. In selecting subjects from this broad, generic flow, what Churchman paints is indicative of their idiosyncratic interests at the time of each work's making, and the paintings act as a personal archive of their pursuits of knowledge—not unlike the cache of a web browser. By translating these widely circulated images into paintings, however, the artist transforms their status from commonplace duplicates to the level of hand-painted original. To Churchman, their paintings are also about the complexities of the mind and how each of us brings a subjective set of conditions based on our experience and past that lead us to perceive visual culture in unique ways.

Alison Hearst
FOCUS: Leidy Churchman
The Modern, 2021.
https://cutt.ly/owtTCrnQ

Churchman is devoted to testing what painting is and what it can be. Even their earlier work in sculpture and video often points back to this key medium and its creative processes. In the video series *Painting Treatments*, 2009–10, the artist invited friends to participate in performative scenes where their bodies became canvases for dripped, spattered, and smeared substances. The contrast between these group "spa treatments" and the "manly, authoritative, and triumphant discourse" of Abstract Expressionism was pointed and tongue in cheek.[1] As Churchman recently said on the medium's enduring potential, "The way painting died and came back is something I love. It is only waiting for the inspiration and failures of another in order to come upon some new combination that has a way of moving."[2] The *Painting Treatments* videos are early signposts to Churchman's current work, which continues to create unexpected relationships between the traditions of painting and the world around us.

Churchman's interest in upending expectations regarding the mass-produced and the original is especially clear in their use of images from the Internet. In the pivotal painting *Tallest Residential Tower in the Western Hemisphere*, 2015 (Whitney Museum of American Art), the artist appropriates a computer-generated image: an online advertisement for luxury apartments in the mega-tower at 432 Park Avenue, New York, featuring a penthouse bathroom with a large tub and a $95-million view. Often in appropriation art, the borrowed imagery is closely copied in an effort to question the authorship, value, and originality of the source material. However, Churchman's painting transforms the computer's cold, uncanny rendering into a painterly vision of Manhattan seen at dusk, metaphorically taking ownership of one of the most exclusive and controversial vistas in the world.[3] The work counters the well-known concerns of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin regarding copies; he argued that original artworks have an "aura," but that "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."[4] Given that imagery found on the Internet lacks the singularity described by Benjamin, Churchman's highly detailed, hand-painted canvases use appropriation to make originals out of source materials defined by multiplicity. Churchman thus suffuses the found images with an aura and gives them physicality. The time and the labor of the artist's hand imbues the mass-distributed images with value, and the resulting paintings are unique and authentic.

For Churchman, an interest in knowing a subject more intimately is how the paintings begin. As the artist has stated, "I love the surprise element that comes from giving attention. . . . The surprise comes from the thing, or idea, merging with painting. The painting ultimately takes over. It is more powerful than the information."[5] The artist's *iPhone 11*, 2019–20, exemplifies this process, taking a common object and casting it anew. The painting features a finely detailed, realistically depicted view of the back of a phone against a deep black background. The focus is on the device's three, eye-like camera lenses, and, as in its original context—a billboard the artist saw while driving in New York City—the image reads as oddly anthropomorphic, as if the phone is surveilling the viewer. The painting thus builds tension between seeing and being seen. Though the subject matter is humorous, Churchman's detailed, careful handling of the oil paint lacks irony.

Recent work by Churchman uses painting to bridge the physical and spiritual realms, drawing on the artist's practice of Buddhism, begun several years ago. *Buddhadharma Fever*, 2019, is set in the dreamlike, interstitial space of a nocturnal, orange-lit bedroom; on the floor, an oversized scorpion scuttles toward us, holding two

Alison Hearst
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The Modern, 2021.
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miniature humans in its claws. The room mirrors Churchman's bedroom at their father's home in Maine, reinforcing the painting's representation of, in the artist's words, "a kind of unknown place that feels familiar." The creature is the nine-headed scorpion from the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, a symbol of life's impermanence. Another painting, the expansive *Reclining Buddha*, 2020, is set within an altar-like, egg-blue niche embedded in the wall, lending it a quasi-religious status. Here, Churchman painstakingly paints the details of the historic Shakyamuni Buddha carved in the rock face at the Gal Vihara temple in Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka. They give equal attention to the sculpture's modern-day surroundings—a low brick wall, stanchion posts, and a stool—rooting the nearly thousand-year-old Buddha in its contemporary reality as a twenty-first-century pilgrimage site. Such specifics also help identify the source Churchman copied for the painting: a photograph easily found at Wikipedia when searching the term "reclining Buddha."[6] This online repository, a free encyclopedia crowd-sourced by amateurs, clashes with the painting's elevated shrine setting, giving the work an ambiguous, even humorous, edge.

Pictured through Churchman's lens, spiritual and philosophical concerns have equal footing with the ordinariness of everyday life, and no subject is glorified above another. From iPhones to Buddhas, the paintings present beauty in unanticipated ways, forming especially cryptic combinations when they are grouped together in an exhibition. "Painting can be extremely literal and at the same time wild and easy and unknown," Churchman states. "I see a painting as a kind of filter that can pick up sediments of mind over periods of time, as it becomes something that emerges." These nuances, along with Churchman's ability to demystify the mystical and mystify the banal, remind us that wonder can be found in unexpected places.

–Alison Hearst, associate curator

1. Amy Sillman, "AbEx and Disco Balls: In Defense of Abstract Expressionism II," *Artforum* (Summer 2011): 325, https://www.amysillman.com/uploads_amy/pdfs/abex.pdf (accessed October 13, 2020).

2. Leidy Churchman, email to the author, October 25, 2020. All subsequent quotations from the artist come from this source, unless otherwise noted.

3. Matthew Haag, "How Luxury Developers Use a Loophole to Build Soaring Towers for the Ultrarich in N.Y," *New York Times*, April 20, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/20/nyregion/tallest-buildings-manhattan-loophole.html (accessed October 26, 2020).

4. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, edited by Clive Cazeaux (Routledge: Oxfordshire, 2000), 324.

5. Leidy Churchman, quoted in "Merging With: Leidy Churchman Interviewed by Tausif Noor," *Bomb Magazine*, October 3, 2019, https://bombmagazine.org/articles/merging-with-leidy-churchman-interviewed/ (accessed October 26, 2020).

6. *Wikipedia*, "Reclining Buddha of Galvihara at Polonnaruwa (Sri Lanka, 12th century)," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reclining_Buddha#/media/File:Galvihara-sunny.jpg (accessed November 19, 2020).

Pictured, top to bottom:

Tallest Residential Tower in the Western Hemisphere, 2015. Oil on linen. 72 x 60 1/8 inches. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez.

iPhone 11, 2019-20. Oil on linen. 9 5/8 x 15 1/8 inches.

Buddhadharma Fever, 2019. Oil on linen. 86 1/8 x 102 1/8 inches.

Reclining Buddha, 2020. Oil on linen in niche designed by the artist. 48 x 79 inches.

The staff of the Modern gratefully acknowledges Leidy Churchman's studio and the staff of Matthew Marks Gallery in making this exhibition possible.

Alison Hearst
FOCUS: Leidy Churchman
The Modern, 2021.
https://cutt.ly/owtTCrnQ

TRICYCLE

A Brush of Dharma

By painting thoughts on canvas, Leidy Churchman explores the subtleties of the conditioned self.

For the Flower There Is the Wind (Perky Snow Lion), 2018, oil on linen, 46 x 65 cm | Artwork © Leidy Churchman, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery

An artist and a student of Buddhism, Leidy Churchman was born in 1979 in Villanova, Pennsylvania, and lives and works in New York City and Maine. Churchman's most recent solo exhibition opened in February at Matthew Marks Gallery in New York; a survey of the artist's films, paintings, and ceramics was held at the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, in 2019. Churchman (who uses the pronouns they/them) spoke to *Tricycle* from their Maine studio about the relationship between their painting and their Buddhist practice.

Anne Doran: Knowing a bit about you and your art, it doesn't seem to me as though becoming a student of Buddhism would have been a big leap for you. But I'm wondering at what point you started taking a serious interest in it. Leidy Churchman: It's a bit difficult to peel back the layers and find that moment. It's the same with art. The more years go by, the harder it is to remember why I even became an artist.

That was going to be my second question. I do think that finding a place in yourself where you might start an art practice and finding a place in yourself where you might start a Buddhist practice are similar. Just now, I'm rereading Chögyam Trungpa's *Dharma Art* again.

Anne Doran
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https://cutt.ly/GwtDRzA1

That book is a bit cryptic, because Trungpa points at things rather than spelling them out. Which can be frustrating because you're always chasing after him, and he is relentless! But after reading it a lot of times, I think Trungpa's pointing at that place of practice and how we understand ultimate and relative symbology. I started making art because I realized that that was where I could bring things to think about and work on—and be surprised. I could bring life there and work with it in a way that I couldn't do anywhere else.

And so, when I think about the art I made before I was studying Buddhism, it's not like there isn't dharma there. It's not like my art has changed; it's still a container that I put what I'm thinking about into, see what it looks like in there, and watch it in a space outside of normal life. I think Buddhism functions in that way as well.

Whom do you study with? I don't have a main teacher right now. I've been pen pals with Reverend angel Kyodo williams for a few years now, and recently I've been attending her online teachings. I have spent a lot of time with my Buddhist mentor Gayle Hanson. We practice together. I was going to Shambhala for a while. I've been looking for a teacher for a long time, but I've learned it's not so easy to find one.

"It's important to take risks. If it feels like the right thing to paint at the time, I'll just go for it."

Gayle and I do a family-style Zoom class together. We've gone back to basics. Gayle was only going to teach me, and then a bunch of my friends said they wanted to do it too. It wouldn't have happened except for the pandemic. I have taken a class on mahamudra [an advanced Tibetan Buddhist meditation] at Nitartha Institute, and I plan to attend Ponlop Rinpoche's Summer Institute, which this year will be online.

They say you find your teacher when you're supposed to find your teacher and you find your sangha when you're supposed to find your sangha. I would love to practice somewhere in person with a great teacher and a cool sangha, but how people connect to the dharma was changing even before this pandemic, with new teachers and communities and new ways to find them.

I think that we will go back to going on retreats and things like that. But maybe online teachings will be a permanent part of how the dharma gets transmitted.

Anne Doran
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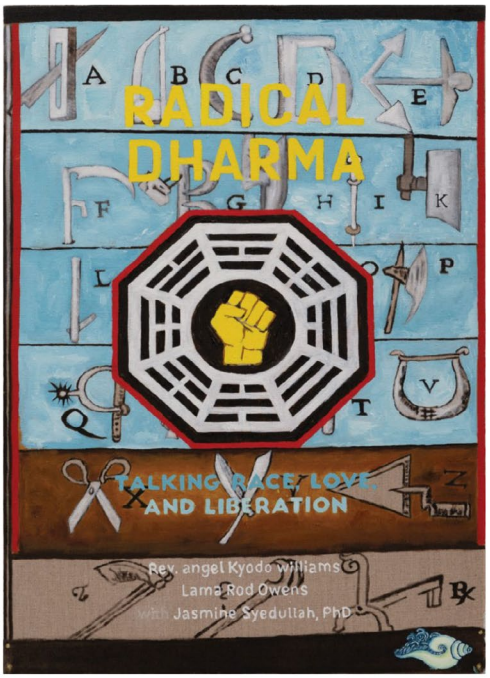
I see in your art that you are interested in depicting lots of different things. And, as you say, it is a bucket into which you can pour all those things. Now, obviously, that includes your Buddhist practice —just as your Buddhism bucket, I presume, will hold your art. But I have to say I don't see a huge difference between the art you were making before you started studying the dharma and the art you make now, in terms of specifically Buddhist content. That's because I think that it is clichéd to make art about Buddhism or the Buddha. I remember at one point I was like, *Oh my God, is that what I'm doing?* But it's also important to take risks. If it feels like the right thing to paint at the time, I'll just go for it.



The Teachers, 2018, oil on linen, 76 x 58 cm | Artwork © Leidy Churchman, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery

I like that about your art. I like that you can do a painting of a buddha and you can do a painting like the one I was just looking at of a chest of drawers and a snake titled *Ourobureau*, which made me laugh. You can produce a work that seems quite devotional like your painting *Reclining Buddha* and then one that incorporates this rather terrible pun. Yeah, I think that the range comes from making paintings in groups altogether at one time, or over time together. I don't tend to paint variations on a theme or subject, or work in series. In a way, I could be painting anything. I was just reading an article by the Tibetan Buddhist teacher Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso about perception. He says that first you see. Then you look. And then you start to comingle with the thing you're looking at. The thing you're looking at starts doing its thing, and then you just merge with it. I think that's what happens, in a way, when I paint something. I have a kind of certainty that this is something I can paint. And then you have this ongoing exchange with the thing you are painting where you are watching what it's doing and then you are doing something and you're having a back-and-forth.

Anne Doran
A Brush of Dharma
Tricycle, Fall, 2020.
https://cutt.ly/GwtDRzAl

Black Painting, 2018, oil on canvas, 66 x 51 cm | Artwork © Leidy Churchman, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery

I get the impression that you are never trying to produce an iconographic image, an "important" image, which stands on its own. I once did a painting of a Tibetan rug that was in the "Rugs and Ritual in Tibetan Buddhism" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010–2011. And I chose that particular rug because it was the one on the poster for the show. So I do sometimes pick a popular image over one that's more obscure.

But you're right—I do feel free to make a painting of something really odd, because the last one was of the Mastercard logo or a Pepsi machine. I'm always trying to start from a different place and see what happens. A lot of it is holding back and seeing what the painting is doing on its own. I love how painting can be so ordinary, too. Yeah, there's definitely no part of me that wants to show you my skill, or my big idea.

Your work certainly always seems to me to be more in the nature of an investigation. I've been thinking a lot about the pandemic, but if I just made one painting about it, it would be so dead on arrival. I want my paintings to be free not to stand in for a universal truth. So if you see one on its own, there's a lot that's not being said but that's OK.

Speaking of the pandemic, I see that the world, and especially America, is being taught a big lesson in interdependence by the coronavirus. And I also see a lot of pushback against that lesson. I saw a placard on the news the other night that read "selfish and proud of it." Well, reality has changed. I can't really talk about the politics of it. I just think that everybody's egos have been hit hard. There is a gap, which feels like boredom, that I think is interesting.

Anne Doran
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Buddhadharma Fever, 2019, oil on linen, 219 x 259 cm | Artwork © Leidy Churchman, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery

I'm interested in why you find that interesting. Because things have been taken away. For instance, mental projections about the future have hit a dead end. I'm interested in how that has moved us into a quite raw and spacious moment where the future isn't yet known. I'm recognizing that even for someone like me, who doesn't mind being alone for long periods of time, isolating is hard. But then something opens up, and that claustrophobia actually becomes space again.

I'd like to ask about your interest in teachers like Reverend angel Kyodo williams and Lama Rod Owens, who are both queer people of color. They are both exceptional teachers who are expanding the context for receiving the dharma. They are promoting change. At Shambhala I could see how everybody was preserving a certain institutional structure. If somebody asked me where they should study painting right now, I would think about the teachers that would be good for them, not the institutions. I wouldn't put my trust in any institution right now. Or not in the way one might have before. The question for me is where you want to go with the dharma. What is it that you want from the sangha?

So it isn't only about what teacher might be good for someone but also about who they are catering to. Who are they making sure to include? Racial injustice in this country is pervasive. And that is where the dharma can actually go. If people are rooted in a dharma practice and connected to a sangha, then they can study who they really are and who they are not. They can contemplate what conditions have affected how they know and see themselves, and how, with the help of a sangha, they can take that apart.

"A lot of it is holding back and seeing what the painting is doing on its own."

Anne Doran
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There is a book out now called *Buddhism and Whiteness: Critical Reflections* (Lexington Books, 2019) that really feels like a follow-up to *Radical Dharma* (North Atlantic Books, 2016). It's a real recognition of what has to happen if Buddhism is going to be a means to liberate oneself in America.

For me, on a very personal level, practicing meditation, learning dharma, is a way to go beyond my best ideas, to be with my mind, and to further dissolve the conditioning that I have been subject to, as well as the conditioning I've not even noticed yet.

100 Billion Sadhana of Mahamudra, 2020, oil on linen in artist's frame, 71 x 86 cm | Artwork © Leidy Churchman, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery

That sounds to me a lot like how one finds one's way as an artist. Yeah. Things happen so subtly. Maybe somebody you admire comes to your studio to see your work. And they can point out things you might not have seen in it yourself. Because you are blind. You can't see what you're doing. Maybe the dharma's something like that.

Anne Doran
A Brush of Dharma
Tricycle, Fall, 2020.
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The New York Times Style Magazine

An Artist Whose Buddhist and Painting Practices Converge

Leidy Churchman's latest show encourages a focused, joyful kind of looking that feels deliberately at odds with our increasingly distracted world.

The artist Leidy Churchman in their Brooklyn studio with their work "Kishkindha Forest (Jodhpur)" (2020). Jacob Pritchard

Tucked at the end of an unassuming alley in Red Hook, Brooklyn, amid 19th-century red brick houses originally built to accommodate fishermen, Leidy Churchman's studio feels like a refuge — a minimalist retreat that exudes the kind of tranquillity found in the artist's meditative paintings. The 800-square-foot space, located on the first floor of a former industrial building, is unfurnished but for a trio of stainless-steel and wood work tables, which are entirely covered with palettes, brushes and oil paints — mostly Old Holland but Churchman, who uses "they" and "them" pronouns, favors Gamblin for white and sap green.

Osman Can Yerebakan
An Artist Whose Buddhist and Painting Practices Converge
The New York Times Style Magazine, March 5, 2020.
https://cutt.ly/fwt1a4qg

On a breezy afternoon in February, they stood surrounded by five large-scale paintings — including “Kishkindha Forest (Jodhpur)” (2020), a vibrant landscape populated by monkeys and bears that’s based on an 18th-century Indian work by an unknown artist, and the abstract “Groundless Ground” (2020) — which they completed for “Earth Bound,” their current exhibition at Matthew Marks Gallery in New York. Their dog, a black Saluki-and-Doberman mix named Sarah, sat alongside Churchman as they put the final touches on the works.

It’s been six months since the artist moved into this studio — previously, they rented a space on the Lower East Side not far from their Alphabet City apartment — and working in the former port neighborhood has grown on them. “I see trucks and forklifts coming and going, I hear people fixing motors and engines. I enjoy being the only artist in this building,” they say. But now that they’ve finished the 21 paintings for the Matthew Marks show, they admit they’re already eager to move on. “When I devour a space, I believe I am done and ready to go,” says Churchman, who spent just three years in their former studio. The sparse furnishings in the Red Hook space are, in part, a reflection of the fact that they are just passing through.

Churchman, 40, is known for their contemplative, detailed explorations of a broad array of themes relating to memory, pop culture and art history. If they have a signature, it is perhaps the diversity of their subject matter, which has included exotic animals, Tibetan Buddhism, maps, online videos, paintings by other artists, from the French Post-Impressionist Henri Rousseau to the American Modernist Marsden Hartley, and book covers. In fact, they compare a painting to a good book, one that reveals new depths with each reading — though they often like to present multiple images within a single canvas without any clear hierarchy, as if inviting the viewer to sequence the narrative as they please. Last year, the more than 60 diverse paintings in the exhibition “Crocodile” at the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, which remains the largest survey of Churchman’s career to date, especially highlighted the artist’s wide-ranging interests.

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One work — “Don’t Try to Be the Fastest (Runway Bardo)” (2019), a 32-foot-long collagelike painting spread across the museum’s floor — included images of a scene from the 1982 movie “E.T.,” a notecard bearing a Buddhist Lojong slogan (“Abandon Any Hope of Fruition”) and a skunk captured mid-spray. Another painting, “Disappearing Acts” (2019), was inspired by the conceptualist pioneer Bruce Nauman’s “Contrapposto Studies, I through VII” (2015-16).“There is so much detail and nuance surrounding us,” they say about the abundance of seemingly ordinary images that we have the potential to overlook.

The work “Karma Kagyu & Essex St. (Yellow Studio) (Devotion)” (2020), one of the new paintings on view at Churchman’s show at Matthew Marks Gallery in New York. Jacob Pritchard

Buddhism, which Churchman has practiced for six years, is a primary theme in their new show. “Karma Kagyu & Essex St. (Yellow Studio) (Devotion)” (2020), a large yellow-drenched painting, shows a Buddhist ceremony taking place in a room that resembles both the Karma Triyana Dharmachakra monastery in Woodstock, N.Y., which Churchman visited shortly before making it, and the artist Zoe Leonard’s former New York studio (some years after Leonard left that building, Churchman occupied the adjacent space and that connection lingered in their imagination). “Buddhadharma Fever” (2019), another vast painting in autumnal colors, is an ode to both a bedroom in Churchman’s father’s house in Maine, where they often spend time and sometimes paint in the garage, and to the same Woodstock monastery. “What I didn’t quite realize was that the monastery there is modeled after a traditional one in Tibet, and that we would actually be chanting in Tibetan,” they recall. “So much seeped in and manifested there — my yearslong Buddhadharma fever transitioned into something much roomier, an easy, breezy devotion that feels like letting go.”

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Working in contrasting scales — “White Girl” (2019), which depicts a young woman on a kind of recumbent bicycle, measures just 9 by 11 inches — allows the artist to engage their viewer more actively in the practice of looking, inviting them to move closer to or farther from a canvas, an exercise they consider especially urgent in our era of iPhone snapshots that are forever an arm’s length away. “Looking at paintings is healthy for us,” Churchman says. The idea for “iPhone 11” (2019-20), a painting in which the device resembles a planet or spaceship floating within an infinite darkness, came to the artist while they were navigating the F.D.R. Drive en route to their studio: There, above the parkway, was a gigantic billboard promoting the phone’s three-lens technology, the positioning of which recalled a human face. Removed from their original context in Churchman’s work, those lenses seem to stare quizzically back at the viewer, all but demanding you stop and meet their concentrated gaze.

As we took shelter in the studio from the blustery day outside, Churchman made cups of espresso, opened a can of dolmades and answered T’s Artist Questionnaire.

Churchman usually works alone in their studio, though their dog, Sarah, often keeps them company.
Jacob Pritchard

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While the artist makes large-scale paintings in their studio — pictured here is a selection of their tools and a jar of turpentine in their Red Hook space — they also make smaller works at their Alphabet City apartment. Jacob Pritchard

To create "Kishkindha Forest (Jodhpur)" (2020), Churchman used a projector to trace details of the original 18th-century Indian painting on which the work is based onto their canvas. Jacob Pritchard

What is your day like? How much do you sleep? What's your work schedule?

My schedule depends a lot on my dog. If I don't bring her to the studio, I leave her with my Buddhist mentor, Gayle.

How many hours of creative work do you think you do?

Around eight hours every day, although it depends on whether I'm working from my studio, my apartment or Maine. It's a 10-hour drive from New York to my father's house, so when I go, I tend to spend a good amount of time there.

What's the first piece of art you ever made?

I believe it was a sculpture that I made as an undergrad at Hampshire College in Massachusetts. I just took stuff — a coffee pot, for example — from all over the place and wired it together to create a human figure.

What's the worst studio you ever had?

Probably my Columbia University studio during grad school. It was a small space right next to the boiler with no windows. A studio with no windows can be really depressing, but this one led me to create video work, which benefits from darkness, so it turned out O.K. in the end.

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What's the first work you ever sold, and for how much?

I had a painting in one of those coffee-shop exhibitions, and a man paid me $100 for it in cash. This was in Amherst, Mass., in 1999, while I was in college. They kept the painting up until the exhibition was taken down, by which point I had lost his phone number. I guess he never received that painting.

How do you know when you're finished with a work?

I believe I'm not done most of the time. But that's why we artists always have to look. If we turn around, close our eyes and then look back, we see what the painting is doing by itself. We have to closely watch what we're putting out there.

How many assistants do you have?

I use temporary assistants once in a while. For example, I had a few people help me paint "Kishkindha Forest (Jodhpur)."

Have you assisted other artists before? If so, whom?

I helped my friend MPA do her hair for one of her Los Angeles shows, which was in the same vein as her show "Red in View" at the Whitney in 2017. We once lived in the California desert together, and we also did a performance together, in the Netherlands in 2012.

"Groundless Ground" (2020) is one of two new paintings that Churchman named after a principle of the Mahamudra meditation tradition. The artist started the work in Maine and was inspired by the region's rocky landscape. Jacob Pritchard

Osman Can Yerebakan
An Artist Whose Buddhist and Painting Practices Converge
The New York Times Style Magazine, March 5, 2020.
https://cutt.ly/fwt1a4qg

Churchman, seated in front of "Reclining Buddha" (2020). Jacob Pritchard

Churchman mostly favors Old Holland brand oil paints but uses Gamblin for certain shades. Jacob Pritchard

When did you first feel comfortable saying you're a professional artist?

I don't think I feel comfortable with it. I don't like saying I'm an artist because people don't have a reference point for being an artist as a profession.

Is there a meal you eat on repeat while you're working?

My mom bought me this water bottle that has motivational instructions on it to remind me to hydrate. I'll usually eat something on repeat for a week, and then move onto something else. This week is dolmades, as you can tell.

What is the weirdest object in your studio?

Maybe my sun lamp. They also call them SAD lamps for people with seasonal affective disorder. I admit that I bought it on Amazon.

Are you binge-watching any shows right now?

I really like "Real Time With Bill Maher." And I was sick a couple of weeks ago and binged "Cheer." I think I identify with Morgan the most — I loved her hair!

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How often do you talk to other artists?

I keep in touch with Nicole Eisenman; we send each other pictures of what we're working on. Also, my mom (who is not an artist) gives me really good advice on my work.

What is the last thing that made you cry?

Listening to the votes come in from the senators during the impeachment trial.

What do you do when you're procrastinating?

I text people or look at Instagram. I sometimes delete the app and come back to it.

What do your windows look out on?

A cobblestone courtyard full of rusty junk and old vehicles.

What do you bulk buy with the most frequency?

Granola bars and espresso pots.

What's your worst habit?

Vaping.

What embarrasses you the most?

Spending too much time alone.

Do you exercise?

I jog with my dog in the East Village.

What are you reading right now?

A book about two prominent teachings of Tibetan Buddhism called "Wild Awakening: The Heart of Mahamudra and Dzogchen."

What's your favorite artwork by someone else?

"Monkeys and Bears in the Kishkindha Forest," an 18th-century painting by an unknown artist from Jodhpur.

This interview has been condensed and edited.

Osman Can Yerebakan
An Artist Whose Buddhist and Painting Practices Converge
The New York Times Style Magazine, March 5, 2020.
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GALERIE
CHANTAL CROUSEL

BOMB

Merging With: Leidy Churchman Interviewed by Tausif Noor

On mystifying moments big and small.

Leidy Churchman: Crocodile. Installation view. Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. Photo by Chris Kendall.

Leidy Churchman has been painting the world as he sees it, accumulating a catalog of things, people, places, events, and ideas of astonishing range, from zoo animals and mythological creatures to book covers and branded credit cards. He is as likely to be inspired by the modernist canon as he is by a string of words or a stray ad on the internet, and he filters these inspirations through his canny gaze and commitment to Buddhist philosophy. What emerges from these two purviews is a style defined by clarity and grace, an even-handedness that extends to the way our conversation developed over the course of several weeks during which we covered the surprises that come with paying attention, painting with and for your friends, and the importance of complete and total freedom. Like Churchman's paintings, our correspondence was grounded in the tangible, real things that surround us, but also extended into the singularly enchanting musings of an artist in tune with a larger, metaphysical universe.

—Tausif Noor

Tausif Noor
Merging With: Leidy Churchman Interviewed by Tausif Noor
BOMB, October 3, 2019.
https://cutt.ly/MwtFIjnG

Tausif Noor
Let's start with *Don't Try to Be the Fastest (Runway Bardo)* (2019), a site-specific floor painting you created for your exhibition *Crocodile* at the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College. Was the process of making this piece different from other floor paintings you've done? It pairs beautifully with your video work and a new painting, *Disappearing Acts* (2019), which is of Bruce Nauman's 2015/16 video *Contrapposto Studies*. There's a kinetic quality that unites these works, even if they are technically different mediums.

Leidy Churchman
This floor painting was different than others I've made. I think previous ones have been more related to video, gravity, and objects mixed into painting. This one is about the pictures' signage and positioning as they seem to drift and transform along the runway. The Nauman painting brings a kind of highly fractured momentum. I like how they work together: in both pieces, there is a sense of forward motion but also a kind of pause within a heightened and groundless atmosphere.

TN
In the exhibition catalog, curator Lauren Cornell refers to you as a "sign-painter—someone who crafts literal messages, often copied directly from the world." You've suggested that paintings are similar to signs in that they can open up and be available to the viewer through multiple points of entry. I'm wondering if this "openness" of painting is something that you've come to as you've progressed in your career, or if this is how you've always approached painting.

LC
I think it is possible for my paintings and my artwork in general to go in any direction. The way I am able to get into my work and feel motivated to try painting again and again is by letting things go and moving into the larger notion of complete and total freedom. When I begin, all possibilities are on the table: there is nothing I *should be* doing. I think this "openness" is not just about variety; it is about working with things as I see and feel them, and I was going to say demystifying, but maybe also *mystifying*, that is, the way we look and think our way into things, into our moments, from the big spaces and thoughts of and in our collective mind to the small voice in our stomachs that once in a while we acknowledge.

TN
Part of what motivates that question is thinking through the boundaries between the world and the self in your work, and what being present in the world might look like. I'm thinking of *Is the Universe a Simulation, Moderated by Neil deGrasse Tyson* (2017), a painting of the 2016 Isaac Asimov Memorial Debate. More accurately, it's a painting of a *video* of that debate, as indicated by the little volume bar you've painted at the top. Someone is there, watching and being present—in one sense—for the event that's happening.

LC
Something funny I remembered recently was that in 2016 when I painted Barbara Kruger's piece that says "Seeing Through You" I was on some website and a small advertisement came up telling me that this work was available at auction that day. There are no particular requirements I have, but in this case the work was so stunning and fit nicely with the other paintings I was working on. Plus, it was having a live moment.

Tausif Noor
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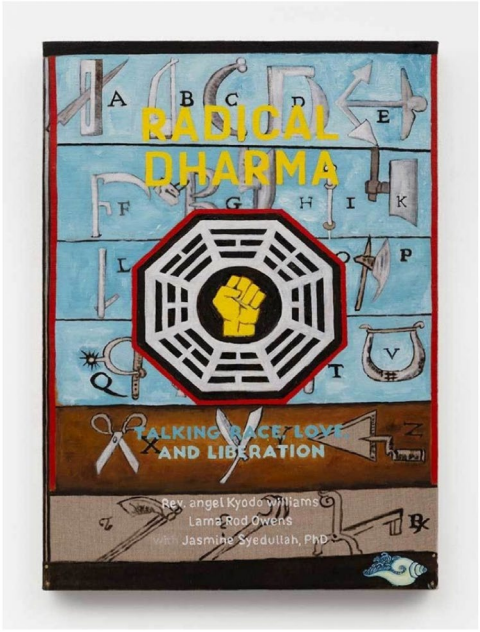
TN

Being present in a metaphysical sense is also something that runs through your practice. We see it in a title that's cited from the Buddhist meditation master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Knowledge Must Be Burned, Hammered and Beaten Like Pure Gold* (2018), or in the painting *The Teachers* (2018) for which you've reconfigured the cover of the book *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation* (2016). Simone Weil thought of attention as a form of prayer. I'm wondering how your attentiveness to the quotidian bits of contemporary life might constitute something similar.



Leidy Churchman, *Radical Dharma "The Teachers,"* 2018. Oil on linen. 20 × 16 inches. Collection of Scott Lorinsky. Courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery. Photo by Aaron Wax.

Leidy Churchman: Crocodile. Installation view. Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. Photo by Chris Kendall.

Tausif Noor
Merging With: Leidy Churchman Interviewed by Tausif Noor
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LC

I think that might be true. I love the surprise element that comes from giving attention. There is always more to be seen. In some moments, with some things, I feel that they could become a painting, but not for the purpose of transcribing those things. The surprise comes from the thing, or idea, merging with painting. The painting ultimately takes over. It is more powerful than the information.

TN

What if an observation or an idea that might become a painting *doesn't* become one? Do you ever become obsessed or attached to those ideas? I tend to think of Buddhist philosophy as one that rejects attachment to the material world, but I wonder about the world of ideas.

LC

It is definitely okay if something does not become a painting! There is always another painting. The painting is the thing that happens, not the idea. But ideas can leave and return again. Just as you look back, it's there.

Leidy Churchman, *Antique*, 2018. Oil on linen. 66 × 76 3/16 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Rodeo, London/Piraeus. Photo by Lewis Ronalds.

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TN

Your paintings take stock of the world's ephemera, but you also make references to a smaller network of artists and art history, like in your Marsden Hartley paintings or a painting after a photograph by Emily Roysdon, who is now known as Every Ocean Hughes. Making art can often seem like a solitary, lonely activity; but your paintings embrace artmaking as a social activity.

LC

When you are on your own—solitary—those are the times when you can get such a sense of how much the world is within you. The biggest things you can imagine comingle in your mind and your open heart. I love concentrating on other artworks because of that intimacy. And the longing. I love the longing. *The Piers Untitled by Emily Roysdon* (2016) came about as a painting from looking at a mix of photographs that Every Ocean Hughes took of the old Christopher Street Piers. This is a landmark in the queer community, a place to which in the past people could escape to be themselves, together. Maybe I would paint it sometime, but this particular painting is about Every. This painting *is* because Every went there in a boat to take pictures on what turned out to be a wildly rainy day. And I love that, and I feel that very much.

Leidy Churchman: Crocodile *is on view at the Hessel Museum of Art in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, until October 13.*

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HYPERALLERGIC

The Beautiful Peculiarity of Leidy Churchman's Paintings

Churchman seems to be painting as a way to better comprehend his subjects; the canvases feel like dedications, striving to embody someone or something's true nature.

Writing on the birthing process of a lone argonaut in the poem "The Paper Nautilus" (1941), Marianne Moore calls its wispy, secreted eggcase a "perishable souvenir of hope … glossy as the sea." Life here is just beginning and the moment is wondrous, apprehensive, and mundane all at once. These conflicting feelings somehow hold together and result in empathy. Perhaps that's why Moore kept returning to animals as metaphors in her poetry, for their ability to express and process the emotions we can't, or we don't want to admit to.

I thought about this walking through *Crocodile*, Leidy Churchman's first US survey, at the Hessel Museum of Art. Curated by Lauren Cornell and including over 60 paintings of everything from the blue Maine coast to thickly laid abstractions to appropriations of other people's art, *Crocodile* brims with a genuine curiosity and care. Churchman seems to be painting as a way to better comprehend his subjects; the canvases feel like dedications, striving to embody someone or something's true nature. Many of the paintings feature animals, their expressions so coolly composed you can't help but admire how well they seem to understand themselves.

In "Giraffe Birth" (2017), spittle drips from a newborn's snout, barely poking through a red, glistening amniotic sac. Legs buckled out in front of its face, the newborn is wide-eyed and looks ready to run. By contrast, the mother giraffe stands unfazed amid the dry savanna. Her shadow is painted as a limp reflection smeared in the dirt, an odd detail characteristic of Churchman's occasionally loose style — used to great effect when rendering light in water, streaky clouds, or even the wear on a photocopied sign.

This technique is prominent in the *Hardbacks*, a 2010 series of oil-on-wood book covers, the selection of which can be read as a bibliography of sorts. "Donald Judd" has "JUDD" in such big, macho block letters it's almost comical; "Fuck You" even mimics the globs of caught ink in the scrawled handwriting on the magazine's cover. Churchman's *Hardbacks* show where he began to stop looking and start riffing.

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The Beautiful Peculiarity of Leidy Churchman's Paintings
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https://cutt.ly/uwtF87v4

He continues working with maps, posters, and the like in “Billions of Never Ending Universes” (2015). A map of the world is composed of names of nations on a bright, patchy goldenrod ground between two blue horizontal borders that represent the night sky, flecked with stars. “Billions” has the charm of an old homework assignment; its uneven paint application and hand-lettering project a sense of ingenuousness while the subject matter evokes the childhood realization of how endless and diverse the universe is.

At the center of *Crocodile* is a gallery containing over 20 variously sized paintings, all created between 2014 and 2018 and hung cheek by jowl in a line around the room. The subjects rarely correspond to one another, emphasizing Churchman’s style of painting as a way to take in his surroundings. His technique ranges from unrefined but sincere, as in the lopsided gold amoeba surrounded by cracked red paint in “Golden Vagina Mouth of Time” (2016), to decidedly meticulous, as in the darting boats and bridge piers in “Japanese Airport” (2015). Walking among these works is like trying to follow all the turns in a Marianne Moore poem. Just as Churchman’s “Basically Good” (2013) pictures a field rat staring at its reflection in a puddle, Moore’s “An Octopus” (1935) begins with a description of the “deceptively reserved” animal. Both re-imagine animals in nature as unexpectedly relatable without anthropomorphizing them.

Leidy Churchman, “Mother” (2018), oil on linen, 66 1/2 x 42 3/4 inches

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The key to Churchman's visual and symbolic world might lie in "Mother" (2018), a jigsaw puzzle of influences that crowd the canvas like a foreboding dream. A backlit weed grows in the corner, and the words "Taxi," "Egypt," "Jazz," and "Mother" — the last ominously rendered in dotted letters as if they were poked out — appear like stressful thoughts streaming into the brain. A black zigzag vertically bisects the canvas at the center, its edges trimmed with white, making it appear 3D as the void of the zigzag is pushed further into our space. "Mother" looks like one of Stuart Davis's Jazz Age parties gone darkly haywire.

Often in *Crocodile* it's the weirdest paintings that are the most poignant. "Untitled (Billboard of an Empty Bed)" (2018) refers to Félix González-Torres's 1991 work of the same name. However, the lightly impressed, still-warm pillows in Churchman's painting are above a whirlpool threatening to drown some crocodiles at an Egyptian temple, rather than an unoccupied bed. The water is a lambent azure, pulsing and receding in passes — up close the content is almost obscured by the paint's oily glare. Nearly washed out at the bottom is a stone carving of a siege of mice, crawling over a fortress wall. "Untitled" heightens the intimate absence in González-Torres's bed by pairing it with a civilization on the brink of becoming just a myth; Churchman renders the flash of vulnerability that accompanies trying to be brave in the face of an overwhelming problem.

"Transcave" (2018) illustrates a similar drama, though on a much more quotidian level — it's a bird's-eye view of a geometric seagull and crab trying to stop the rushing spill of a shamrock-green glass bottle. The linen is still visible through the thin white paint of the gull's wings, and the shucked-off cap is painted so flatly it looks like the moon. Faint gray dots on the crab's vermillion shell make it seem like a mask uncannily scuttling by. The animals' frantic, caring collaboration under stress makes "Transcave" an unexpectedly heartfelt painting.

Churchman's paintings are captivating for how they make the absolutely mundane seem awesome, and this informs his immense floor painting, "Don't Try To Be the Fastest (Runaway Bardo)" (2019), commissioned by the Hessel and made with the help of Siobhan Liddell. The painting is composed like a long carpet, scattered with sketches and images sourced from a *Vogue* cover, E.T. biking across the moon, Chinese painting, the animal kingdom, Churchman's own previous paintings, and bolts of billowing, patterned fabric. It also includes Tibetan Buddhist Lojong cards that read "In postmeditation, be a child of illusion" and "Sending and taking should be practiced alternately. These two should ride the breath." These sentiments seem to sum up Churchman's open, sincere practice of reflecting the world.

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Installation view of *Leidy Churchman: Crocodile* at the Hessel Museum of Art (courtesy of the Hessel Museum of Art)

Spending time with *Crocodile* is like scrolling through memories via your phone's camera roll. Not everything makes sense — in this case, two early videos Churchman made that show instruments like sticks pushing around paint, or the abstract, somewhat pretentiously titled monochrome, "Knowledge Must Be Burned, Hammered and Beaten Like Pure Gold. Then One Can Wear it as an Ornament. So When You Receive Spiritual Instruction You Do Not Take it Uncritically. But You Burn it, Hammer it, You Beat it Until the Bright Dignified Color of Gold" (2018) — but it's all part of his process. Churchman's paintings are replete with the beautiful peculiarities in the world around us. They recall, for me, something Manuel Álvarez Bravo said in a 1990 interview about "discovering" photographs, not looking for them: "You bring your accumulated life to the moment that something sparks you to make an image. Everything influences you. And it's all good."

Leidy Churchman: Crocodile *continues at the Hessel Museum of Art (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York) through October 13. The exhibition was curated by Lauren Cornell.*

Alex Jen
The Beautiful Peculiarity of Leidy Churchman's Paintings
Hyperallergic, October 2, 2019.
https://cutt.ly/uwtF87v4

ARTFORUM

I OF THE STORM

DANIEL MARCUS ON THE ART OF LEIDY CHURCHMAN

Leidy Churchman, *Don't Try to Be the Fastest (Runway Bardo)*, 2019, oil on linen, 7 × 32'.

TUCKED WITHIN THE DENSE ARRAY of canvases in "Leidy Churchman: Crocodile," the artist's survey exhibition currently on view at the Hessel Museum of Art in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, is a small painting of a rat perched on the edge of a body of water. Pressing its nose close to the water's surface, the rodent appears vexed by the sight of its inchoate reflection. Created in 2013, the painting was first exhibited in 2015 under the title *Narcissistic Rat*; Churchman later retitled it *Basically Good* in 2017, as if to allay its protagonist's dysmorphic concerns. Does it matter what species we see when we look in the mirror? Or what gender? Or what shape? Not really, *Basically Good* reassures us. Still, something is not quite right about this scene of pondside self-examination: Churchman handles their rat Narcissus with Bonnardian wit, picking out the whites of the rodent's bulging eyes and the hairs of its penile tail; yet the reflection in the water looks more mouse- than ratlike, its beady eyes peering meekly from an inscrutable face. Rather than resolve these differences, the painting seems to articulate the terms of their mutuality, positing rat and reflection on either side of an unbridgeable, but paper-thin, divide.

Basically Good is emblematic of Churchman's unlikely—and often disquieting—approach to representation, which, while never depicting the artist's own countenance per se, nonetheless toes the boundary between ego and imago. Of course, the coexistence of subjectivity with alterity furnishes one of modernism's core teachings, a legacy stretching from Arthur Rimbaud's dictum *Je est un autre* (I is someone else) through Adrian Piper's exaggerated self-portraits and beyond. For Churchman, who is both trans and a student of Buddhism, Rimbaud's mantra resonates in several directions, echoing queer-theoretical accounts of gender (and gender transition) while at the same time resonating with aspects of their own identity—including their racial positionality—that might well give the rat pause.

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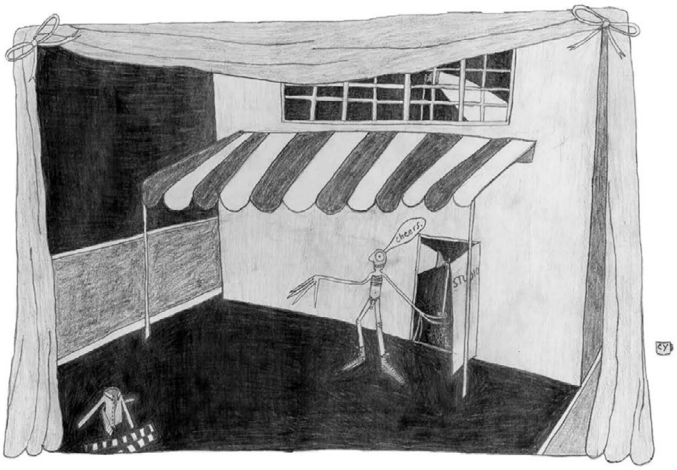
https://cutt.ly/UwtFtKou

Leidy Churchman, *Basically Good*, 2013, oil on linen, 12 × 13 1/2".

THE PREDICAMENT OF CHURCHMAN'S rodent owes much to the legacy of queer theory. It is, perhaps, especially indebted to Judith Butler's still-powerful critique of identity as a lived social category. Attacking the foundations of the gender binary, but with the entire philosophical edifice of identity in view, Butler emphasizes the inevitable failure attending each and every performance of self-coherence: It is just because identity *cannot* be adequately performed, she argues, that we are condemned to repeat its scripted gestures, enacting time and again "the vain and persistent conjuring and displacement of an idealized original, one which no one at any time has been able to approximate."[1]



Leidy Churchman drawing from *LTTR* 1, "Lesbians to the Rescue," 2002.

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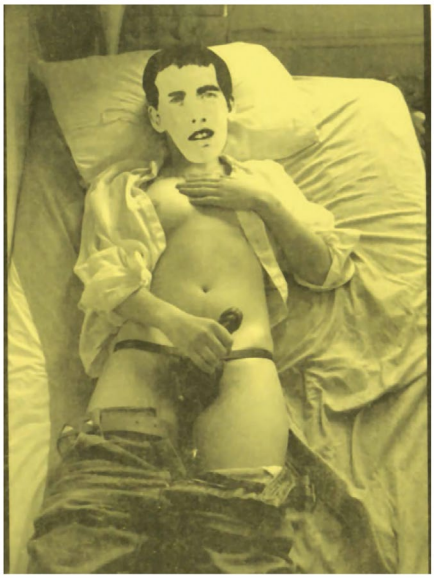
These lines set the tone for Churchman's early experiments with performative self-representation. They publicly presented their work for the first time in 2002, while they were still an undergraduate, in the context of the New York–based queer feminist journal and art collective *LTTR*. Cofounded in the wake of 9/11 by K8 Hardy, Every Ocean Hughes (formerly known as Emily Roysdon), and Ginger Brooks Takahashi, who were later joined by Lanka Tattersall and Ulrike Müller, *LTTR* aimed to multiply rather than synthesize the diverse strains of new-millennium feminism (including transfeminism, then taking shape), while at the same time, and with increasing stridency, advocating street-level resistance to the forces of Bush-era neoconservatism. A friend of and collaborator with the group, Churchman contributed a drawing to the journal's first issue in which they confronted openly, albeit enigmatically, the theme of gender transition. Framed with a proscenium, with heavy curtains tied up in neat bows, it depicts a skeletal cyclopean figure who sports a strap-on cock and tightly bound chest. Posing beneath the awning of a film studio, and gesturing with Scissorhandsian fingers, the cyclops offers a simple greeting: "Cheers."



Every Ocean Hughes (formerly Emily Roysdon), *Untitled (David Wojnarowicz project)*, 2002.
From *LTTR* 1, "Lesbians to the Rescue," 2002.

It is hard to imagine a better alter ego for *LTTR* than this. From the beginning, the aims of the collective were frankly (and often uproariously) libidinal, defined in opposition to the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identities and subcultures. Eschewing calls for gay and lesbian visibility, the journal's editors advocated a politics—and an aesthetics—of queer invisibility, proposing "a fluidity of names and gestures, outfits and pleasures, spaces and meanings," in which each new role or pose is shed without hesitation. Churchman's drawing resonates with this project of transgressive self-performance, echoing Hughes's defense of the subversive potential of "dramatic arts." (On *LTTR* 1's cover is a photo of Hughes wearing a David Wojnarowicz mask and a strap-on erection.) "Not an example of what has been termed 'post-identity,' implying progress beyond or transcendent of all categories," as art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson argues, *LTTR* advanced "a vision of a more permeable, unbounded sense of possible identification."[2] Writing in the opening pages of *LTTR* 1, Hardy offered a slogan for this queer unboundedness: "Everyone in their own uniform!"

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Flyer for the *LTTR* #4, "Do You Wish to Direct Me?," release party, 2005.

In everyday practice, social identities are harder to escape than Hardy's cheeky slogan admits, race and class in particular. Yet the journal's openness to transfeminism, and its centering of trans voices, was exceptional given the pervasiveness of transphobia even within feminist and lesbian circles at the time, and it remains exemplary. While there was little emphasis on passing in *LTTR*'s milieu, the importance accorded gender fluidity (or, per Hughes, "invisibility") in queer circles often placed trans artists in an ambiguous position. Reflecting on the stakes of transfeminism in the journal's first issue, theorist and activist Dean Spade, who had recently founded the Sylvia Rivera Legal Project, a legal-advocacy organization serving poor and marginalized trans communities in New York, countered the charge that trans men and women had betrayed the gay and lesbian cause with a rousing assertion of the subversive power of gender transition: "All of our bodies are modified with regard to gender, whether we seek out surgery or take hormones or not," Spade argued. "I want to be disturbed by what you're wearing. I want to be shocked and undone and delighted by what you're doing and how you're living. And I don't want anyone to be afraid to put on their look, their body, their clothes anymore."[3]


Leidy Churchman and Luis Jacob, *Make Out Make Out Make Out Couch*, 2004, at the *LTTR* 3 release party, Art in General, New York, August 5, 2004.


Leidy Churchman cutting Math Bass's hair at the *LTTR* 4 release party, 22nd Street, New York, September 24, 2005.

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As *LTTR* morphed from a curated publication into a roving program of exhibitions and public events, Churchman's contributions to the collective took an increasingly participatory form. For example, on the occasion of 2004's "Explosion LTTR: Practice More Failure," an anarchic series of workshops, film and video screenings, lectures, and installations held at Art in General, New York, Churchman teamed up with artist Luis Jacob to produce *Make Out Make Out Make Out Couch*, a plush sofa intended for amorous use. Answering *LTTR*'s call for practices of queer jouissance, Churchman and Jacob's contribution also responded to the group's assault on artistic norms, recasting the framework of success and failure in terms of collective libido. The following year, on the occasion of *LTTR*'s fourth-issue launch party, Churchman offered free haircuts to their collaborators; the gesture made use of their talents as a hairdresser (their day job), but also made space for social transitivity, affirming the participants' desire to change hairstyles at will. Mobilizing the prefix *trans* in a spirit of deviant self-fashioning, these undertakings drew strength from transfeminist accounts of performativity and self-modification, celebrating failure as destiny and inadequacy as basically good, or good enough.

Leidy Churchman, *Purple Pals*, 2008, oil on wood, 31 × 23".

This embrace of illegibility, misrecognition, and failure informed Churchman's nascent studio practice as well. In a statement posted to their personal website in 2008, they declared their commitment to "mak[ing] transgender pictures," linking the in-betweenness of trans experience with "the humor of uncertainty, and relationships of supposed opposites. I see people and their environments morphing into transsexual, not as a definitive destination but a space of complexity and amusement."[4] Although a handful of Churchman's early paintings openly represent gender play, such as the dildo-wearing duo in *Purple Pals*, 2008, the impact of trans-ness in their art, and of their formative experience with *LTTR*, is best understood in terms of their release from the burdens of consistency and selfsameness.

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The impact of trans-ness in their art, and of their formative experience with LTTR, is best understood in terms of their release from the burdens of consistency and selfsameness.

Leidy Churchman, *Martha*, 2015, oil on linen, 39 1/2 × 32".

This "practice more failure" ethos was equally pronounced in Churchman's forays into video, as with their *Painting Treatments*, 2010, in which they and associates apply various raw substances —paint, but also potatoes, wooden planks, and charcoal powder—to the bodies of assorted friends, who lie naked together on the studio floor covered in towels and slathered in detritus. As Amy Sillman noted in these pages, Churchman's videos treat mise-en-scène as a substitute for the painter's blank canvas, rehashing the gestures of Pollock's drip paintings and Yves Klein's "Anthropometries" "not by a parodic emasculation or a cynical recapitulation, but with a newly enthusiastic form of painting as nudie activity."[5] Not unlike other, equally unproductive group nudie activities, 2010's *Painting Treatments*—and a related 2009 piece—give full rein to pleasurable excess; that they fail to coalesce into a fixed form (the videos loop before any "complete" pictorial state is achieved) is par for the course. Around the time they made these videos, Churchman began to experiment with sculpture, generating awkwardly painted facsimiles of commonplace objects—including a dildo in a sock, cigarettes, a wilted tulip, an oversize piece of Brie, and the then-ubiquitous *Art in Theory, 1900–1990* sourcebook—in a queer repetition of Claes Oldenburg's flaccid commodities.

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Leidy Churchman, *Antique*, 2018, oil on linen, 76 × 66".

AROUND 2010, Churchman dialed back their work in painting and sculpture to devote themself to a new series of videos. At least partly necessitated by their residency at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende in Amsterdam, where they committed themself to making large-scale floor paintings as "sets" for videos and performances, the hiatus also followed from the dissolution of *LTTR*, which published its fifth and final issue in 2006. Upon returning to easel painting around 2013, and now working exclusively in oil on linen, Churchman devoted themself to the medium more fully than ever before, in the process summoning a new constellation of art-historical forebears—trading Pollock and Oldenburg for Marsden Hartley, Henri Rousseau, and Chaim Soutine, among other modernist lodestars.

Like semi-inscrutable posts, Churchman's paintings since 2013 often cull their subjects from the internet's churn.

Churchman abandoned video when they returned to painting, yet they insist that this change of medium grew out of their work with digital technology, aligning the tabula rasa of the canvas with the performative space of the film studio—and also, importantly, with the networked spaces of social media. Like semi-inscrutable posts, their paintings since 2013 often cull their subjects from the internet's churn, making the task of parsing their studio output in the aggregate akin to surveying an unfamiliar Instagram account. ("I can't believe how many images I've seen," Churchman admitted to a recent interviewer. "I'm in a scrolling world.") In some cases, the subjects broached in Churchman's paintings are unmistakably personal, as with *New Dawn Marsden Hartley Soutine*, 2014, their copy after Hartley's beefcake painting *Madawaska—Acadian Light-Heavy*, 1940: Like Hartley, Churchman has put down roots in coastal Maine, where *Madawaska* was painted. Both artists approach the question of masculinity from a queer perspective, Hartley as a semi-closeted gay man, Churchman as a trans person.

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Still from Leidy Churchman's *Painting Treatments*, 2010, two-channel video, color, sound, 25 minutes 1 second.

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Still from Leidy Churchman's *Painting Treatments*, 2010, two-channel video, color, sound, 25 minutes 1 second.

Yet even in Churchman's homage to Hartley, the differences between prototype and copy signify in ways that verge on illegibility: As its title suggests, the painting ranges promiscuously in style, as if treating Hartley's *Madawaska* to a process of Soutinification, rendering the beefy model's torso more literally beef-like. (Churchman's liberal application of red pigment, streaked with chalky white, recalls Soutine's paintings of flayed beef carcasses.) There's a shift from sculptural solidity in the Hartley toward flat artificiality in Churchman's copy, but this flattening effect is countered at the painting's upper edge, where the model's coiffure spills over onto the frame, as if projecting (ejaculating?) beyond representation into reality. The opposite of parody, *New Dawn Marsden Hartley Soutine* expresses an unrestrained zeal for its source, as if the copyist were bent on unleashing the erotic charge pent up (repressed, albeit only barely) therein.

Leidy Churchman, *New Dawn Marsden Hartley Soutine*, 2014, oil on linen, 34 1/4 × 28".

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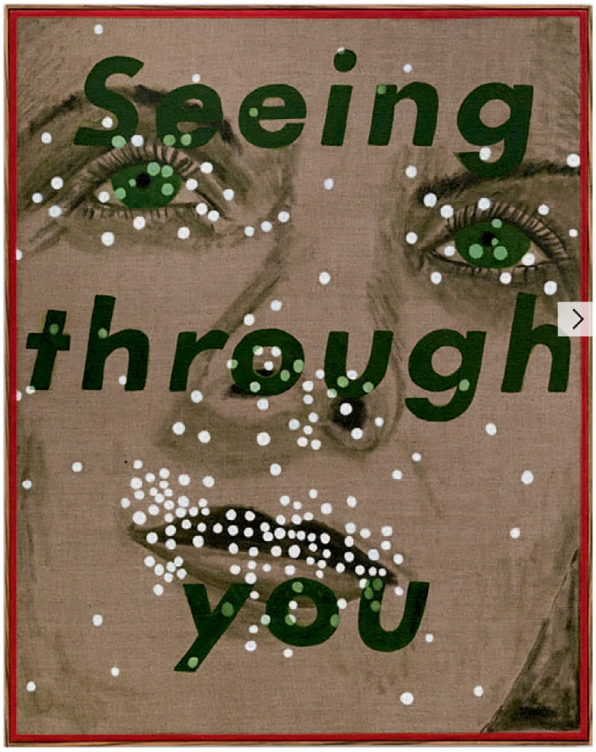
While Churchman's appropriation tactics might recall the anti-authorial (and anti-patriarchal) gestures of Sturtevant and Sherrie Levine, the "I" remains an open question in Churchman's art, a signifier neither empty nor full. How, if at all, might Churchman identify with the taxidermy passenger pigeon in *Martha*, 2015, the very last member of its now-extinct species? What led them to discover the Bauhaus toymaker Alma Siedhoff-Buscher, whose wood-block sailboat is the subject of Churchman's *Bauhaus Boat Building Kit*, 2014? Did the image, a jpeg that has made the rounds on Pinterest boards, find them instead? In *Antique*, 2018, is the zebra who returns our gaze in the ornate bureau mirror Churchman's mammalian avatar or a smoke screen: the personification of the self's inaccessibility and vacuity? And what is to be made of their copies after friends and peers—see, for instance, Churchman's *Kruger*, 2017, which translates verbatim a photograph of Barbara Kruger's, *Untitled (Seeing through you)*, 2004, into oil on linen? Likewise, in *The Piers Untitled by Emily Roysdon*, 2016, Churchman copies a photograph by Hughes; elsewhere, they have appropriated an image of Frank Benson's *Juliana*, 2015, a 3-D-printed sculpture of artist Juliana Huxtable, and Cameron Rowland's *National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association Badges*, 2016, as seen on the Museum of Modern Art's online database. What does it mean, moreover, that Churchman's appropriations of these works (should we call them Regrams?), and of other imagery as well, circulate not through the palimpsestic spaces of online social media—at least, not primarily—but within the closed circuit of the art market, where the codes of authorial self-expression remain as guarded as ever?



Leidy Churchman, *Kruger*, 2017, oil on linen, 33 1/2 × 26 1/2".

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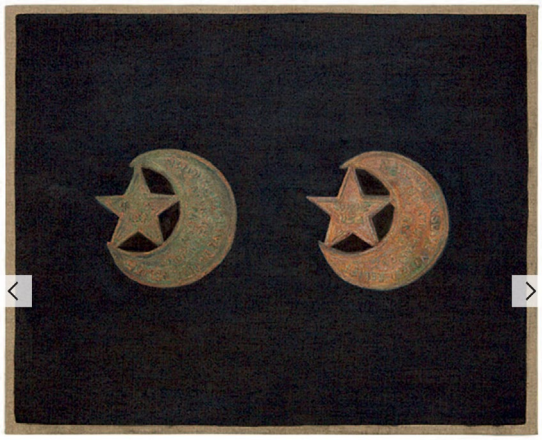
Leidy Churchman and TM Davy, *Juliana in Art*, 2017, oil on linen, 8 1/2 × 10 1/2".



Leidy Churchman, *National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association Badges by Cameron Rowland*, 2016, oil on linen, 21 × 26".

Leidy Churchman, *The Piers Untitled by Emily Roysdon*, 2016, oil on linen, 40 1/2 × 45 1/2".

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These questions can't really be answered; nor should they be. If Churchman's return to painting implies a departure from the queer-communitarian framework of *LTTR*, accepting studio solitude and the valorization of individual authorship, their work remains steeped in the collective's core values: illegibility, misrecognition, and failure. Devoted as ever to *LTTR*'s tactics of invisibility, Churchman's art thrives on the tension between contradictory models of selfhood and alterity. This tension becomes especially pronounced in their paintings of nonhuman life, such as *Giraffe Birth*, 2017, a work derived from a BuzzFeed listicle, "Tour Operator Captures Incredible Pictures of Baby Giraffe Being Born." Typical of its genre, the BuzzFeed post aggregates a group of images shot by photographer Andreas Knausenberger into run-of-the-mill clickbait, tracking the newborn giraffe's progress out of the womb and into the world (the listicle ends by showing the baby giraffe's confident first steps). Isolating the first photograph of the BuzzFeed series, Churchman's painting calls attention to the mother animal's unexpected stoicism; indeed, were it not for the amniotic sac and the stray pair of legs protruding from her hindquarters, we might not guess that anything out of the ordinary was transpiring.

Leidy Churchman, *Giraffe Birth*, 2017, oil on linen, 51 1/2 × 75 1/2".

At first blush, *Giraffe Birth* seems to celebrate the miracle of nonhuman nativity, perhaps aligning the infant animal's phallic protrusion with the self-birthing experience of gender transition. Yet the painting's subject—and its hero—is unmistakably the mother, not the child: Notice how Churchman leaves the body of the giraffe—at least, the pale parts of its reticulated coat, up to but excluding the animal's head—unpainted, letting raw linen show through, so that the central presence in the image turns, on close inspection, into an eerie vacancy. Likewise, the shadow cast by the giraffe, which barely registers in the original photograph, becomes a dark stain in Churchman's painting, its arboreal shape impressed on the grass like a burn mark or discarded skin. Then, too, the whole subject of the painting, a female giraffe in the throes of labor, points toward the political significance of pregnancy in trans communities. In any case, the enduring presence—or rather, the presence-as-absence—of the mother giraffe, the "I" of the painting, is unmistakable.

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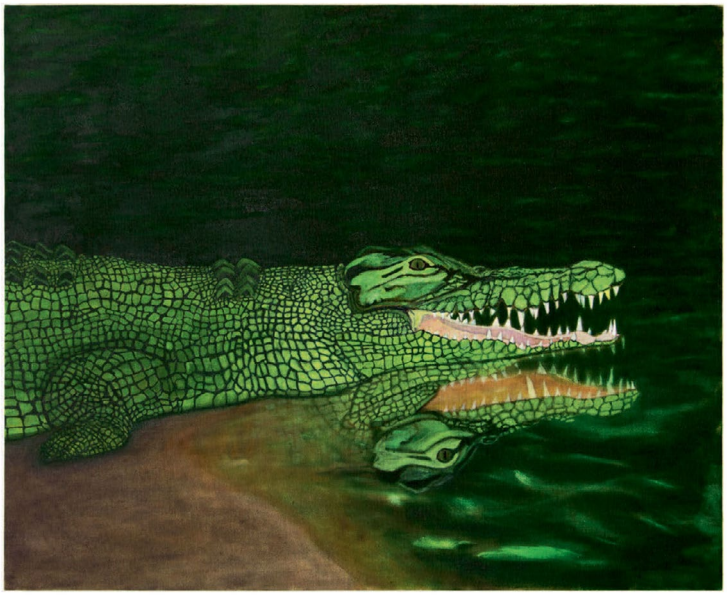
Leidy Churchman, *Is the Universe a Simulation, Moderated by Neil deGrasse Tyson,* 2017, oil on linen, 12 × 26 1/2".

Other aspects of Churchman's paintings seem calculated to highlight their own awkward presence-as-absence as painter: For instance, in a diminutive painting titled *Is the Universe a Simulation, Moderated by Neil deGrasse Tyson*, 2017, Churchman renders a paused image of the American Museum of Natural History in New York's 2016 Isaac Asimov Memorial Debate, including their video player's volume bar at the top of the canvas—a marker of the artist's power to amplify or mute their sources at will. In other works, Churchman expresses their authorial role in quieter ways, by marking arbitrary borders around the edge of a painting or decorating its four corners with small circular marks, as if to emphasize the artist's paradoxical status within and outside the field of representation. While Churchman's paintings (including their paintings from photographs) rarely fail to make the artist's hand felt, the feeling is most often equivocal, communicating imposture more than mastery.



Leidy Churchman, *Crocodile,* 2016, oil on linen, 32 × 39 1/4".

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THIS AWARENESS OF IRRESOLVABLE DUALITY, and especially of the artist's dual role as author and receiver, stems from Churchman's study of Zen Buddhism—an aspect of their recent work about which they are unusually voluble (unusually, insofar as artists and their critics rarely admit to the significance of spirituality as motivator). Placing themself within a rich tradition of modernist and queer Zen, from John Cage's aleatory experiments to the writings of bell hooks, Churchman has come to describe the task of self-unfolding (and self-othering) in their paintings as a practice of mindful self-emptying. Consider Churchman's account of their painting *Crocodile*, 2016, a picture born after an unusually long gestation: "In 2013, when I was living out in the desert town of Twentynine Palms, a line came into my head: 'A crocodile walks into the water.' It was such a plain sentence, so I Googled it and found a couple of images that pictured my feeling. They gave off a stunning sense of immersion, of going *into* the world—farther." Speaking with art historian Arnisa Zeqo, Churchman attributed this unbidden catchphrase to their yearning for a "feeling of meditation, a glimpse into a mind so large, reflecting, empty, endless, aware, and awake, with no time at all or all the time." The crocodile thus becomes "a portal into the self," Zeqo suggested. But it is also, simultaneously, a portal *out* of selfhood, casting the artist as an unfathomable reptile—a figure, like the rat Narcissus, poised at the limit between identity and difference.

Churchman has come to describe the task of self-unfolding (and self-othering) in their paintings as a practice of mindful self-emptying.

Leidy Churchman, *Infinitely Rich Qualities of Mind,* 2017, oil on linen, 35 × 45".

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Several recent paintings make Churchman's debt to Buddhism explicit: In *Infinitely Rich Qualities of Mind*, 2017, for example, a pearlescent (and not subtly clitoral) chinoiserie pattern, painted against a Robert Ryman–type background, figures the mental void multiply, as arabesque, as cloud, as genderless bodily substrate. In *Own-Being Emptiness*, 2016, Churchman depicts a solitary console table, its wooden body left unpainted, highlighting its thingly impermanence; *Relief of Weariness by Ultimate Mind*, 2017, juxtaposes the artist's empty shadow with a menagerie of bugs and cats copied from a medieval manuscript. Each of these works is a meditation on subjective vacancy—less a glimpse of the artist's mental furniture than an attempt at opening the mind to what exceeds it.

Leidy Churchman, ***Relief of Weariness by Ultimate Mind,* 2017**, oil on linen, 47 1/2 × 44 1/2".

Churchman's effort at mental exfoliation informs their largest, most ambitious work in "Crocodile": *Don't Try to Be the Fastest (Runway Bardo)*, 2019, a massive floor painting on linen, thirty-two feet in length, made with collaborative input from the painter's Buddhist mentor, Gayle Hanson, and friend Siobhan Liddell (who helped embroider its framing edge). Images of all kinds appear laid out in trompe l'oeil fashion across its throbbing red ground; as Churchman explains, the painting was meant to "have a runway effect." Rather than articulate a fixed web of relationships, however, the runway evokes a void as capacious as the mind; the images—which include NASA's ubiquitous black-hole photo, an April 2019 cover of *Vogue Paris* featuring model Adut Akech (an homage to the late Karl Lagerfeld), paintings by René Magritte and Giorgio de Chirico, a kente cloth, and a trans-rights poster emblazoned with the words safe space—scatter like paper in the wind. Interspersed throughout the composition are mind-training cards bearing slogans of the twelfth-century Tibetan Buddhist master Chekawa Yeshe Dorje: in postmeditation, be a child of illusion; self-liberate even the antidote; abandon any hope of fruition.

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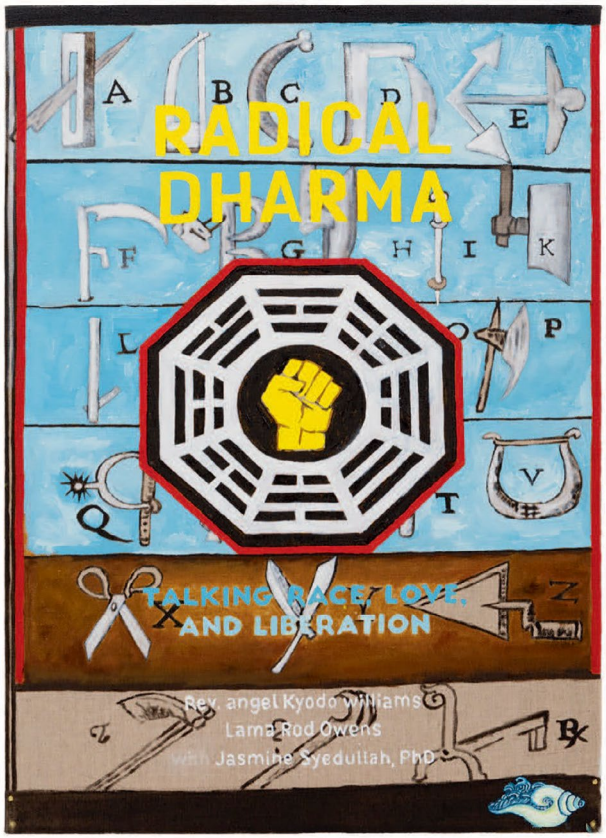

Leidy Churchman, *The Teachers*, 2018, oil on linen, 30 × 22 5/8".

Dorje's slogans chime with *LTTR*'s "Practice more failure," albeit in a more personal, self-hectoring vein. As Avram Alpert has recently argued, while Zen Buddhism is often misinterpreted as a call to blissful self-erasure (self and world becoming one), its theorists emphasize the necessity of "return[ing] to the world not with demands but with gifts of clarity and insight."[6] Drawing inspiration from the Reverend angel Kyodo williams, Lama Rod Owens, and Jasmine Syedullah's 2016 book, *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation*, which aligns the path of self-awakening with the difficult work of racial consciousness, Churchman has come to locate race—implicitly, whiteness—at the root of their Buddhist practice: Insofar as the "sociopathic environment of white supremacy plays out through minute, fractured thoughts that race through the analytical mind and make everyone sick," they suggest, *Radical Dharma* attempts a "conversation from this abstract place of self. It is different from trying to be effective; it is trying to understand the truth."[7]

Wealth is power, and power keeps the police in uniform. The mind can be emptied, after all, but power, unlike evil, is mindless; it keeps its hold where all else is swept away.

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Leidy Churchman, *Chief Police USA*, 2014, oil on linen, 35 × 31 7/8".

It is hard to say, though, where truth—and especially the truth of identity and difference—might find a viable outlet in Churchman's art. In a series of works from 2014, painted during a high-water mark of recent black liberation struggles, they come near to addressing their own position as a white artist—see, for example, *Chief Police USA* or *Flotsam & Jetsam (Jail)*. Distinguished by their foregrounding of logos and text, these works largely abandon Churchman's premise of ambiguity; easily read and comprehended, they offer little room for tactics of authorial invisibility. Legible as confessionals, they lay bare the artist's position within networks of economic power and state violence, figuring whiteness in place of the "I." As exercises in self-exploration, they reveal familiar truths, but ones art rarely lets be seen or said: Wealth is power, and power keeps the police in uniform. The mind can be emptied, after all, but power, unlike evil, is mindless; it keeps its hold where all else is swept away.

Leidy Churchman, *Flotsam & Jetsam (Jail)* (detail), 2014, oil on twelve linen panels, overall 13' 9 3/8" × 1' 5 3/8".

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If self-emptying is self-othering, how are we to arrange ourselves before a binary that cannot be so easily circumvented, that resists performative imitation and self-transfiguration alike? In a recent interview with Sara Ahmed, Butler offers a tentative answer, reframing the question of identity and alterity in terms of mutuality and copresence: "What if we shift the question from 'who do I want to be?' to the question, 'what kind of life do I want to live with others?' . . . If the I who wants this name or seeks to live a certain kind of life is bound up with a 'you' and a 'they' then we are already involved in a social struggle when we ask how best any of us are to live."[8] While the truth of white privilege, and of other forms of privilege as well, can't be performatively sidestepped, as Churchman's project makes clear, we can nonetheless imagine a framework in which such truths might be lived with—not singly, solipsistically, but reciprocally, in a space over which no one (neither identity nor difference; neither "I" nor "you") can exercise full sovereignty. Letting hope of fruition fade, we might learn to cultivate this fragile mutuality, a place of common life—and also, necessarily, of common failure. It wouldn't be everything, wouldn't solve anything; but it would be basically good.

"Leidy Churchman: Crocodile" is on view at the Hessel Museum of Art in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, through October 13.

Daniel Marcus is the Roy Lichtenstein Curatorial Fellow at the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio.

NOTES

1. Judith Butler, "Lana's 'Imitation': Melodramatic Repetition and the Gender Performative," *Genders*, no. 9 (Fall 1990): 1.

2. Julia Bryan-Wilson, "*LTTR*: Repetition and Difference," *Artforum*, Summer 2006, 110.

3. Dean Spade, "Dress to Kill, Fight to Win," *LTTR*, no. 1: "Lesbians to the Rescue," 2002, 18.

4. Personal statement posted to www.leidychurchman.com, accessed via the Internet Archive.

5. Amy Sillman, "Ab-Ex and Disco Balls," *Artforum*, Summer 2011, 325.

6. Avram Alpert, *Global Origins of the Modern Self, from Montaigne to Suzuki* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), 275.

7. "Lauren Cornell and Leidy Churchman in Conversation," in *Leidy Churchman: Crocodile*, ed. Lauren Cornell, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schroeder (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College; New York: Dancing Foxes, 2019), 141.

8. Sara Ahmed, "Interview with Judith Butler," *Sexualities* 19, no. 4 (2016): 491.

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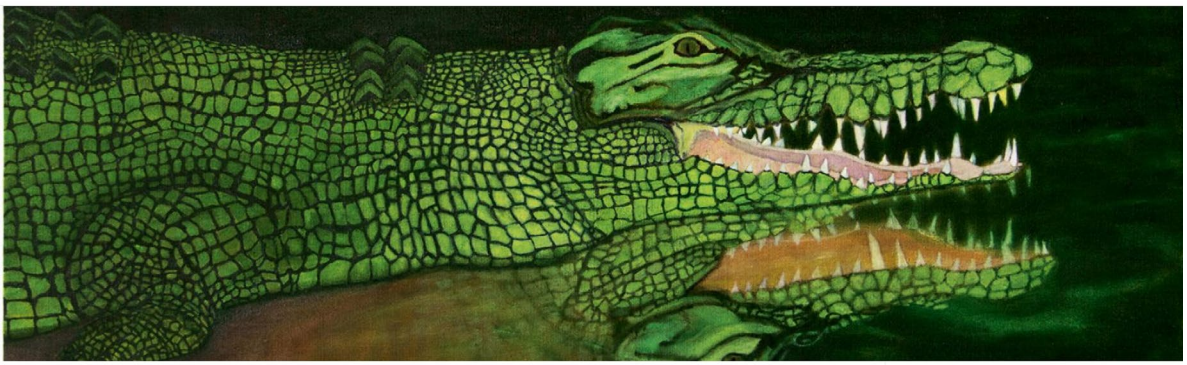
FRIEZE

In Leidy Churchman's 'Crocodile', the Animal Kingdom Mirrors the Human World

The artist's survey at the Hessel Museum of Art at CCS Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson, links life on microscopic and cosmic scales with moments of spiritual self-searching and reflection



Main image: Leidy Churchman, Crocodile *(detail), 2016, oil on linen, 81 × 100 cm. Courtesy: Matthew Marks Gallery; photograph: Aaron Wax*

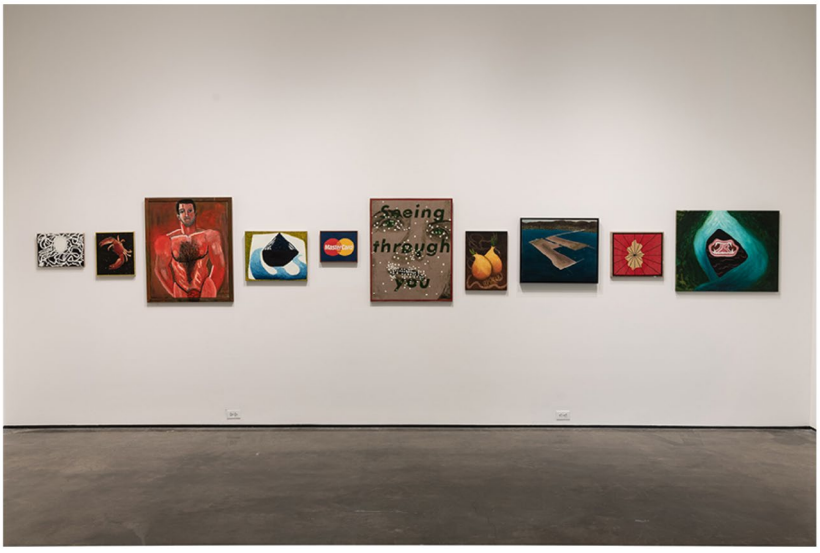
'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form': so teaches the Heart Sutra, a text central to Buddhism, emphasizing that all phenomena are interdependent and no one thing can exist on its own. Artist Leidy Churchman seems to channel this sentiment across the more than 60 paintings that comprise 'Crocodile', his first museum survey. A range of styles and subjects – Buddhist symbols, Maine landscapes, corporate logos, animals, tombstones – fill canvases both small and large, as well as a mural-sized floor piece commissioned for the show. Over time, though, such disparate imagery coheres into a broad vision of nature and cultures as interconnected.

Churchman's paintings have a dreamlike quality, their idiosyncratic subjects – such as the crocodile creeping into dark waters in the exhibition's titular work, from 2016 – rendered slightly hazy by soft, sometimes smudgy surfaces. You can feel unmoored before one, from the expansive Atlantic Ocean vista of *The Oceans Blew as Blue as Your Eyes* (2018) to the silvery surface of the Hudson River in *The Piers Untitled by Emily Roysdon* (2016), from which rises the lone remnant of a pier.

Natalie Haddad
In Leidy Churchman's 'Crocodile', the Animal Kingdom Mirrors the Human World
Frieze, August 22, 2019.
https://cutt.ly/kwtFKDFW

Leidy Churchman, *The Piers Untitled by Emily Roysdon*, 2016, oil on linen, 1 × 1.2 m. Courtesy: Matthew Marks Gallery; photograph: Aaron Wax

An alluring palette of oceanic blues and pastoral greens saturates many of the canvases, from the emerald and chartreuse of *Crocodile*'s scales to the deep indigo sky in *Relief of Weariness by Ultimate Mind* (2017), which frames the silhouettes of a human and various animals, evoking the vastness of the cosmos.



'Leidy Churchman: Crocodile', 2019, exhibition view. Courtesy: Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; photograph: Chris Kendall

Natalie Haddad
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Frieze, August 22, 2019.
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In an interview with Churchman in the accompanying catalogue, curator Lauren Cornell describes his work as 'encourag[ing] us to look at quotidian things anew'. The artist achieves this by translating a range of subjects into a highly personal pictorial language that is also largely devoid of the human figure. Paintings of the beginning of life – a baby giraffe emerging from its mother (*Giraffe Birth*, 2017), for instance – as well as its end – the tombstone in *Spiders* (2011) flanked by two cobweb-laced trees – offer existential metaphors of human mortality in their depictions of the natural world.

Doublings and reflective surfaces abound: from the Atlantic Ocean and Hudson River to the pool in *Basically Good* (2013), in which a quizzical mouse studies his own image. As if to wryly illustrate painting's capacity to prompt self-reflection, the mirror at the centre of *Infinitely Rich Qualities of Mind* (2017) is empty – a void for us to fill in.

Leidy Churchman, *Relief of Weariness by Ultimate Mind*, 2017, oil on linen, 1.2 × 1.1 m. Courtesy: Matthew Marks Gallery; photograph: Aaron Wax

A number of paintings on display approximate the styles of other artists, such as Forrest Bess and Chaim Soutine; these feel stiff and laboured. Churchman's stronger works engage with philosophical terrain. For example, *Mahakala* (2017) – which portrays the fanged mouth of the Buddhist 'protector' deity floating in a dark sea surrounded by shafts of turquoise light – grows more layered and boundless the more time you spend with it.

Natalie Haddad
In Leidy Churchman's 'Crocodile', the Animal Kingdom Mirrors the Human World
Frieze, August 22, 2019.
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This boundlessness, central to Churchman's artistic and spiritual practices, also derives from his openness and commitment to social difference. *The Teachers* (2018) depicts the cover of *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation* (2016), a study of racism and white privilege in the American middle-class embrace of eastern religions, by Reverend angel Kyodo williams and Lama Rod Owens, both Buddhist scholars and queer people of colour. *The Piers Untitled by Emily Roysdon*, meanwhile – based on a photograph by the titular feminist artist – references the Manhattan piers where gay men, homeless LGBTQ+ youth, artists and performers gathered before their demolition in the 1990s.

'Leidy Churchman: Crocodile', 2019, exhibition view. Courtesy: Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; photograph: Chris Kendall

Churchman's considered renderings suggest his intimate connection with these subjects. They anchor his beautiful and contemplative works in the world in which he lives, a world where marginalized people and non-human species are connected by their struggle for survival and liberation.

'Leidy Churchman: Crocodile' is on view at the Hessel Museum of Art at CCS Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson, USA, until 13 October 2019.

Natalie Haddad
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Frieze, August 22, 2019.
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ARTnews

Crocodile Rock: Painter Leidy Churchman Cedes the Floor to No One in First Museum Survey

Installation image of "**Leidy Churchman**: Crocodile" at the Hessel Museum of Art.

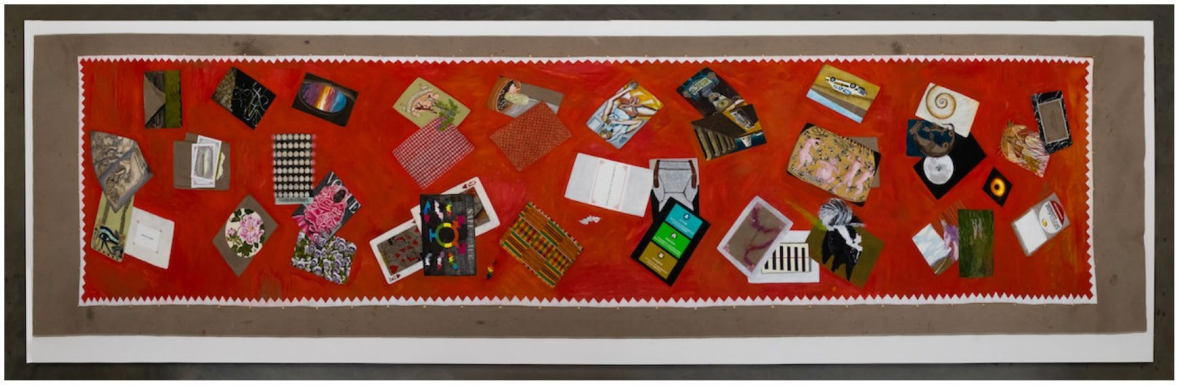
CHRIS KENDALL

When Leidy Churchman was given the floor for his first museum survey since starting out as a painter, he did not squander the opportunity. Nor did he fail to take the proposition literally—with a 32-foot-long floor painting that serves as a sort of stream-of-consciousness survey of its own.

"It's like another show in it," the artist said of a new work taking special pride of place in "Crocodile," an exhibition spanning Churchman's career dating back to the mid-2000s at the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. "I thought I should do something big and abstract, but I don't really plan much in advance. I didn't know I was going to do this."

When we met up, Churchman was in his studio on New York's Lower East Side, and he was not yet finished with the floor work that would soon travel up to the Hudson River Valley. Most of it was complete, but there were some final tweaks and tinkerings to be considered. The painting, titled *Don't Try to Be the Fastest (Runway Bardo)*, features some 40 smaller paintings within it, all of them connected—or disconnected—in ways that can be difficult to describe.

Andy Battaglia
Crocodile Rock: Painter Leidy Churchman Cedes the Floor to No One in First Museum Survey
Artnews, July 10, 2019.
https://cutt.ly/UwtH1kQ5



Installation image of “Leidy Churchman: Crocodile” at the Hessel Museum of Art.

CHRIS KENDALL

“I think of the whole thing as a sort of mind,” Churchman said. “I’m always painting about the mind in a way. There’s this idea of emptiness in Buddhism that is hard to comprehend—that emptiness is not something that doesn’t have anything in it [but] is about the in-between between everything. It made sense to put all these pictures together in space. I think of it as bumper boats or something like that.”

The subjects that double as bumper boats vary: playing cards, a skunk, a *Vogue* magazine cover, E.T. and Elliot hover-biking in front of the moon, a pink pony, a painting by Giorgio de Chirico, a sunset spied through the window of an airplane. All of it together covers the kind of ground that Churchman focuses on in his practice as a whole (two mini paintings inside the floor painting are already-extant works of his own), and fittingly, perhaps, that practice can be intriguingly elusive.

Here’s writer Alex Kitnick, in an essay about Churchman’s work in the “Crocodile” catalogue (a handsome new tome published by Bard’s Center for Curatorial Studies and Dancing Foxes Press): “There are patterns here, just as there would be in an archive of web searches, but there is also a radical juxtaposition between things that are hard to make coherent. The shape of the constellation is big and diffuse.” And then: “His interest, I think, is less in burrowing into things and reading them than in moving around their edges. Once, someone might have called that superficial, but today it might be one way of sensing (not making sense of) the glut of the world.”

Installation image of “Leidy Churchman: Crocodile” at the Hessel Museum of Art.

CHRIS KENDALL

Lauren Cornell, who curated “Crocodile” from her post as director of the graduate program and chief curator at CCS Bard, said of Churchman, “He’s evolved into a painter who can do anything, from complicated abstractions to intricate landscapes or portraits. What he puts in his paintings has always felt very timely. He paints the people around him and things he cares about. His painting tracks his preoccupations in a way, whether he’s looking at other artists’ work or thinking about different philosophies or books he’s reading or an awning on a restaurant across the street from his studio. I appreciate how over time he has created a kind of visual lexicon or archive of him and his life and interests.”

Andy Battaglia
Crocodile Rock: Painter Leidy Churchman Cedes the Floor to No One in First Museum Survey
Artnews, July 10, 2019.
https://cutt.ly/UwtH1kQ5

Cornell said she sees the floor painting as “a kind of key for the show,” and Churchman spoke of the special significance of its placement in front of another work, *Disappearing Acts* (2019). That one is a wall-hung painting of a scene from one of Bruce Nauman’s recent *Contrapposto Studies* videos, in which he walks in a pose privileged in classical European sculpture (hands clasped behind head, hip thrust out) and exaggerates it in a manner that is pointed, playful, and preposterous all at once. “He looks like he’s walking a runway,” Churchman said of Nauman, “and it gives it a movement that is nice.” (Hence the *Runway Bardo* part of the title, the artist explained: “Bardo” is a Tibetan-Buddhist word for “the in-between.” And then “Disappearing Acts,” the name of the big recent Nauman retrospective in New York and Basel, Switzerland, intimates Buddhist notions of erasure.)

Installation image of “Leidy Churchman: Crocodile” at the Hessel Museum of Art.

CHRIS KENDALL

Churchman’s mind seemed to wander, by design, as he walked around the floor painting in his studio, trying to size it up. The idea to make it sprang from the mode of reflection that attends the process of organizing a survey show with some 60 works —”showing all your cards,” as he said with a nervous grin akin to the look of the gritted-teeth emoji.

He was in good hands, he said, with Cornell, a friend of nearly two decades with whom he worked closely on the show, which runs into mid-October. “She was one of the first people to buy a painting from me,” Churchman said. “It’s a flying carpet with an ocean and these cats and bears in telephone wires. I’m in it and I’m throwing up on the rug. It’s on stained wood and looks like Maine folk art. But that was major.”

As he spoke, one couldn’t help but be curious about a tattoo of a watch on Churchman’s wrist. “I wanted to get the time of the tattoo, but it turned out I was getting it at 4:20,” he said. “So I got my birthday time, which was 9:08. In ads it’s always 10:10, because it looks like a smile. At 9:08, it looks like a smirk.” (Another clock was stitched onto his button-down shirt: “At Muji you can pay $3 and get a lot of different things embroidered. I have a sweater with a praying mantis.”)

Leidy Churchman (middle, black shirt) at the opening of “Crocodile.”

LISA QUINONES

In mind of the fleeting nature of thoughts surrounding the subject matter he paints—especially in the disparate *Don’t Try to Be the Fastest (Runway Bardo)*—Churchman turned contemplative and open-ended. “I’m trying to think of all the ways that things get torn apart and then move along and come back and reemerge—things that don’t make sense and do make sense, and all the emotions that come with them. I guess it’s a place where all these things and all their different elements can just *be there*.”

Looking down at the painting at his feet, he asked, “Does it feel like they’re all hitting each other, or like they’re transferring codes? As long as it brings you to thinking about how your mind works…”

Andy Battaglia
Crocodile Rock: Painter Leidy Churchman Cedes the Floor to No One in First Museum Survey
Artnews, July 10, 2019.
https://cutt.ly/UwtH1kQ5

PHAIDON

Leidy Churchman - Why I Paint

Exploring the creative processes of tomorrow's artists today - as featured in Vitamin P3

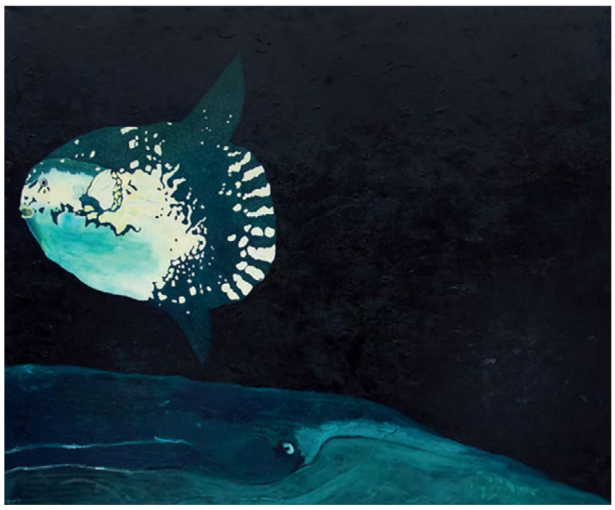
Leidy Churchman 2016

New York-based Leidy Churchman is interested in painting's ability to connect with an audience and become what he evocatively terms 'an oil pit and stain of emotion and personality'. Painting acts as a sign or a flag that conveys information regarding the human experience. You might wonder what exactly this human experience is comprised of.

For Churchman, it seems to be nothing less than what it means to exist on this planet: our relationship with nature; urban jungles; social and political structures that govern our activities; emotional exchanges; love; hate; loneliness. Churchman uses painting as a means to channel his 'urgency to try and connect'.

Through his depiction of an 'extraordinary junkyard' of symbols, a disparate array of representations comes together in his works. These are rendered in meticulous detail, as paint is applied gently to the surface in smooth colourful brushstrokes. Images of nature recur to differing effect. Here, the Vitamin P3-featured painter tells us what interests, inspires and spurs him on.

Leidy Churchman - Why I Paint
Phaidon, October 31, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/RwtH8zge



Leidy Churchman - Pelagic Ocean Sunfish, 2015 courtesy Murray Guy, New York

Who Are You ? 'I'm not your lover, I'm not your friend, I am something that you'll never comprehend..'

What's on your mind right now? Right now my mind is on finishing up a group of paintings for a show called Lost Horizons I will be doing at Rodeo in London. (the project, with Murray Guy ran during the Frieze Art Fair). I am trying to paint this big portrait of a warrior Buddha who displays a vibrant, wrathful compassion. It is said to have a 'laser-like blaze that arises within a profoundly refined compassion, understanding and intention, conveying an inscrutable non-violence that cannot be approached merely conceptually.' The painting is very black and in the shape of a monolith, a very vertical shape, with eyeballs and tongues and hands and flames and gold everywhere.

Leidy Churchman - Crab and Plankton, 2014 courtesy Murray Guy, New York

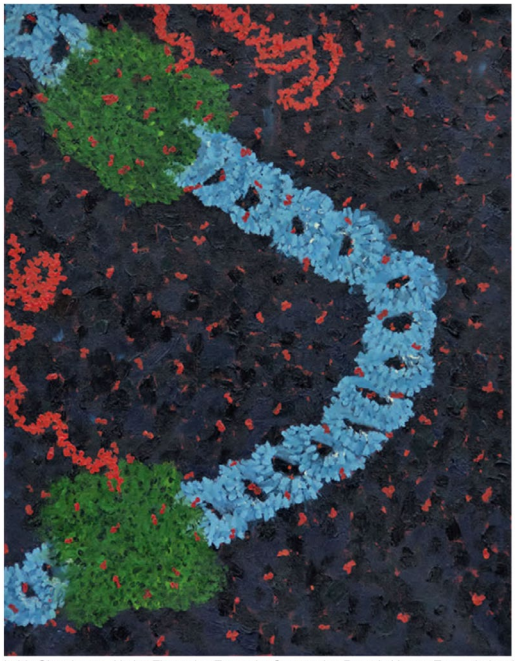
How do you get this stuff out? In this case it can be intimidating and overwhelming to interpret such a meaningful Thangka painting. But with adequate attention and care and pause the work comes about in such a way that has a lot of life to it. Paintings are complex in such a human way.

How does it fit together? Like an onion - peel and cry and in the middle there is nothing solid. It's interesting how that idea first makes me kind of sad and then my heart begins to flutter.

What brought you to this point? I was just talking to someone today about when I studied DADA art in college. That was when I started making art extremely furiously.

Can you control it? It's funny: sometimes when I am trying to get a painting sort of up and running and situated a bit, I think of it as gaining control of a horse. But once I have mounted the horse in a way, it's the two of us riding together, a strange collaboration.

Leidy Churchman - Cat Chair (Topiary) 2014, courtesy Murray Guy, New York



Leidy Churchman - Native Elongating Transcript Sequencing Reveals Human Transcriptional Activity at Resolution, 2015 courtesy Murray Guy, New York

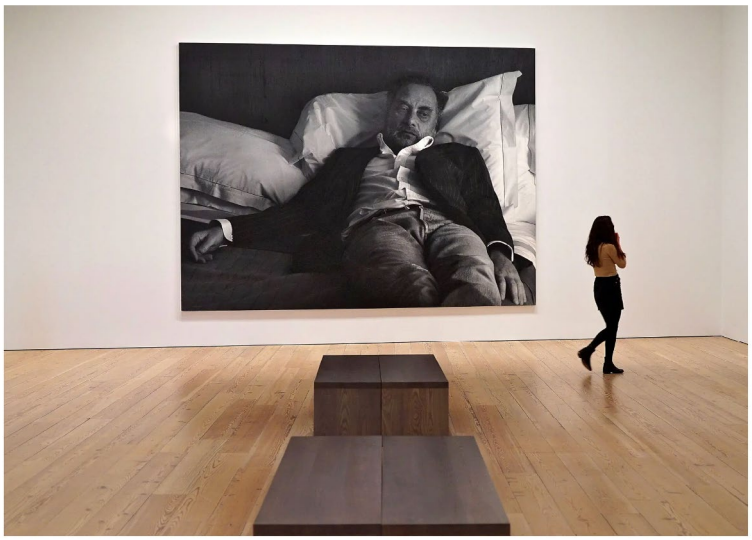
Have you ever destroyed one of your paintings? I have given paintings horse cures - something Edvard Munch did often to his paintings when they were acting badly. He put his paintings out in the snow and rain and sun for periods of time and would then bring them back in to see if they were well enough to keep going. I do keep most of my paintings. Some are just slow duds that need to sit and wait it out. I'll bring them out at different times and they can help more obedient paintings to take risks.

What's next for you, and what's next for painting? I think that because we do so much typing and much less penmanship, and because we read images constantly and they are readily available and streaming, the painting is an exuberant, spooky, and rattling 'stage' for nonlinear communication and human character. Painting seems to hold time like a solar system. When we look up at the sky everything we see is the past and has already died a thousand, million, or billions of years ago. The painting seems like this, a stage of things that have already happened, but seem to be playing out in real time before us.

Leidy Churchman - Why I Paint
Phaidon, October 31, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/RwtH8zge

The New York Times

Picturing America in the Selfie Age, at the Whitney



"Human Interest," with Rudolf Stingel's "Untitled (After Sam)" at the Whitney Museum. Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

A year ago, the Whitney Museum of American Art inaugurated its new downtown home with a permanent-collection showcase called "America Is Hard to See." Its successor, the even more immediately engaging "Human Interest: Portraits From the Whitney's Collection," is now on view. Astutely geared to the selfie age, it might well have been subtitled "Americans Are Strange to Look At," which, in the 250 images here, we sure are: funny-strange, beautiful-strange, crazy-strange, dangerous-strange, inscrutable-strange.

Spread over two floors, the display of paintings, photographs and drawings reconfirms the richness — and the geographical limitations — of the Whitney's holdings. And while pointing up the built-in unwieldiness of big shows on broad themes, it demonstrates the ways in which skillful curators — in this case, Scott Rothkopf and Dana Miller, working with Mia Curran, Jennie Goldstein and Sasha Nicholas — can organize work in porous modules that have a manageable logic of their own.

Holland Cotter
Picturing America in the Selfie Age, at the Whitney
The New York Times, April 28, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/Fwt1b4L7

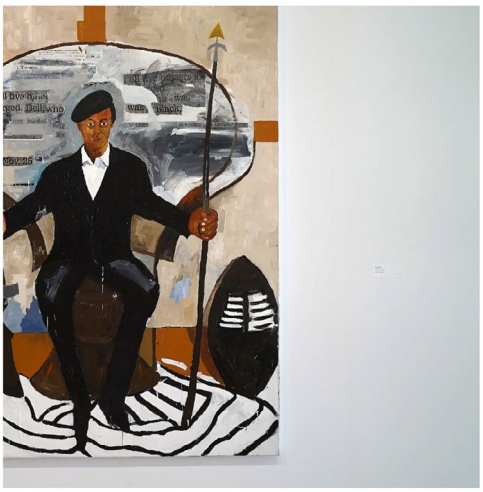
In a gallery about the American culture of violence, four of Robert Beck's "Thirteen Shooters," teenagers convicted in school killings, and, foreground, Mike Kelley's "Educational Complex." Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times; All Rights Reserved, Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Right off the seventh-floor elevator, you get a sense of the variety to come. Henry Taylor's near-life-size 2007 painting of Huey P. Newton, a Black Panther founder seated in militant majesty, hangs near Laurie Simmons's fantastical photograph of a camera with dancer's legs, a 1987 tribute to a treasured fellow artist, Jimmy DeSana. The suave, white-suited man named Steve in Barkley L. Hendricks's 1976 painting of that name, radiates every bit as much star-power as Elvis Presley does in a double-panel Warhol homage, and he's treated with a lot more respect than is the busty, grinning title figure in Willem de Kooning's "Woman and Bicycle" from the early 1950s.

The de Kooning is a tipoff that the seventh floor has the show's older material, with a concentration of it inside the first gallery. Robert Henri's 1916 painting of a lounging-but-alert Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the museum's founder, is here, as is a late-1920s self-portrait by Edward Hopper, one of the museum's foundational artists, looking rakish in a battered fedora and a shirt that matches his azure eyes.

Holland Cotter
Picturing America in the Selfie Age, at the Whitney
The New York Times, April 28, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/Fwt1b4L7

He seems far less chipper wrapped in the embrace of his wife, Josephine, in a 1933 photo by Louise Dahl-Wolfe, one of dozens of small works in this space, most hung salon-style on a central wall. Cecilia Beaux's 1902 charcoal sketch of the matinee-idol violinist Jan Kubelik is one of the earliest and finds its match in refined, smoldering ardor in Paul Cadmus's 1937 ink likeness of the ballet dancer José Martinez.



Huey P. Newton, a founder of the Black Panthers, in a 2007 painting by Henry Taylor. Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

For sheer theatricality, though, a 1929 Toyo Miyatake photograph of the Japanese dancer-choreographer Michio Ito, staring balefully from behind long bangs, stands out. It gains particular intensity when it is remembered that Ito, who had a successful career in the United States, would be arrested within 24 hours of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, falsely accused of espionage, and interned for two years before being shipped back to Japan.

Celebrity couldn't prevent this artist's downfall, though it has elevated far lesser talents and is enough of an American obsession to warrant including two galleries devoted to it in this exhibition. The one on the seventh floor presents the phenomenon in formation, notably in Edward Steichen's movie-star close-ups of Marlene Dietrich and Dolores del Rio, and Carl Van Vechten's 1934 studio shots of the African-American performers — all, interestingly, unnamed — from the cast of the Gertrude Stein-Virgil Thomson opera "Four Saints in Three Acts."

Holland Cotter
Picturing America in the Selfie Age, at the Whitney
The New York Times, April 28, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/Fwt1b4L7

Downstairs on the sixth floor, in a gallery labeled “Price of Fame,” glamour gets updated and starts to run underground, with everyone wearing and living some version of drag, from the transgender performer Candy Darling, dying of cancer and vamping in a hospital bed for Peter Hujar’s camera in 1973, to a defiant Amy Winehouse in Rachel Harrison’s posthumous 2012 colored-pencil drawings. An extraordinary 2013 figurative sculpture called “No Sex, No City: Miranda,” by the young New York artist Stewart Uoo, incorporates dead flies, maggot cocoons and dust into an image of disintegration that is also a virtuosic star turn.

Michio Ito, a Japanese dancer-choreographer, photographed by Toyo Miyatake in 1929. Toyo Miyatake Studio, Whitney Museum of American Art

The city itself, ever falling apart and resurrecting, takes a bow. A seventh floor gallery called “Street Life,” has us walking its sidewalks with Diane Arbus, Helen Levitt and Jamel Shabazz, and riding the subway with sneak picture-snapper Walker Evans. In an adjacent section called “New York Portrait,” we move indoors, with a 1940 Hopper sketch of a male office worker and a secretary sharing a tense, possibly steamy evening of overtime and a 1978 photo of Cindy Sherman impersonating a perky gal Friday whose only obvious eccentricity is wearing blackout glasses while she types.

Holland Cotter
Picturing America in the Selfie Age, at the Whitney
The New York Times, April 28, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/Fwt1b4L7

In a terrific 2015 painting by Leidy Churchman called “Tallest Residential Building in the Western Hemisphere,” we’re high above the fray, seeing the urban skyline rise like a mirage over the edge of a big pink bathtub framed by a floor-to-ceiling window in an apparently empty apartment. Like many things in the show, this picture translates to multiple thematic contexts. It would fit perfectly in the gallery called “Portraits Without People,” which treats likeness as a form of still life. There the photographer Dorothy Norman evokes the personality of Alfred Stieglitz, her lover, in a shot of his hat and coat. A modest-size Robert Rauschenberg collage — the show’s single loan piece — packs lost lives into its shockingly deteriorated layers of newspaper clippings, photographs and fabrics. In a large-format 2011 photograph by Leslie Hewitt, a book, lying on the floor in an empty room, carries entire American histories in the single visible word of its title: “protest.”

On both floors, the show ends with politically loaded installations. The final section on seven, “Cracked Mirror,” includes bizarre portraits and portraitlike images of vulnerability and mortality dating from the A-bomb era of the early 1950s and painted by artists now too-seldom looked at: John D. Graham, Stephen Greene and John Wilde. The concluding section on six, “Institutional Complex,” is about an American culture of violence in the present.

“Puzzle Bottle,” 1995, by Charles Ray. Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

Holland Cotter
Picturing America in the Selfie Age, at the Whitney
The New York Times, April 28, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/Fwt1b4L7

This is directly addressed in Robert Beck's poster-size photographs of teenage mass killers, and indirectly in Gary Simmons's now-classic 1993 sculpture of a police lineup platform equipped with a row of gold-plated basketball shoes. (More of Mr. Simmons's work is in the not-be-missed group show, "March Madness," organized by Hank Willis Thomas and Adam Shopkorn and on view through Sunday at a new gallery, Fort Gansevoort, nearby at 5 Ninth Avenue.)

Finally, the Beck and Simmons works surround a 1995 sculpture by Mike Kelley, a tabletop architectural model that combines features of every educational institution — kindergarten through art school — that he ever attended. He implies that he considered himself the product of this vast prisonlike complex, and the show pushes his reasoning further to suggest that the cultural impulse to violence is institutionally inculcated, nurtured and encouraged.

That's my reading of the installation, anyway; you'll have your own, just as you'll have your favorite images from this cornucopian exhibition. Mine include Lyle Ashton Harris's sublime self-portrait as Billie Holiday; Yvonne Rainer's video of a ballet performed entirely by her right hand; Saul Leiter's 1950s photograph of a shoeshine boy's worn-down shoes; and Nicole Eisenman's mocking self-portrait drawing titled "You're Only ½ the Artist You Could Be! And a Little Less Than ½ as Weird as You Think You Are!"

Fittingly, a show that's big on weird and basically all about ego, ends with a shrewdly monumental example of both: a larger-than-life wax portrait of the artist Julian Schnabel by Urs Fischer. You'll find it on the sixth floor, near the terrace. There Mr. Schnabel stands, hands in pockets, dressed in painter's duds, regarding his own reflection, along with that of Manhattan behind him, in an enormous mirror. Easy to miss at first is the small flame, a real one, burning atop his head. The spark of inspiration? The fire of genius? The sculpture, it turns out, is a giant candle, lighted daily, and slowly melting. Before this collection show finishes its run, comes down and is replaced by another, the portrait will be, if not entirely gone, melted beyond recognition, like a selfie snapped in bad light. So much, the piece seems to say, for the power of personality and the permanence of art, and its fashions and values, which is a healthy message for the Whitney to deliver in its new home.

"Human Interest: Portraits From the Whitney's Collection" runs through Feb. 12 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 99 Gansevoort Street, Manhattan; 212-570-3600, whitney.org.

Holland Cotter
Picturing America in the Selfie Age, at the Whitney
The New York Times, April 28, 2016.
https://cutt.ly/Fwt1b4L7

Los Angeles Times

At LACE: Daily life made strange through art

It is the beginning of the year. A time to reassess and reconsider, to attempt to redirect the ways in which we live our daily lives. Which makes it a good time to check out the latest show at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), "The Heart Is the Frame," which gathers works that insert art into the everyday — or use the everyday to make art.

Artist Sharon Lockhart collaborated with workers at a historic shipyard on a series of photographs about simple acts like lunch. A row of crude paintings by Leidy Churchman titled "Flotsam Jetsam" chronicles the things the artist saw on a daily basis during a stint in Joshua Tree, such as his bedroom and a magazine advertising the auction of seized assets.

A bench constructed by sculptor Anna Sew Hoy serves the humdrum everyday role of functioning as a place to sit, but it also plays with ideas of labor: it is wallpapered with images of keyboards. (Like she's channeling my waking dreams.)

"It questions notions of routine and repetition," curator Shoghig Halajian says of the show. "It's about how artists contend with the everyday."

An installation by Emily Roysdon, for example, features individuals engaged in various activities around New York City, wearing a crude paper mask that bears the likeness of '80s artist David Wojnarowicz -- the artist whose film, "A Fire in My Belly," was the source of anti-gay controversy at the Smithsonian Institution back in 2010. Roysdon's piece is a shout-out to a series Wojnarowicz did in the late 1970s, in which he photographed himself and his friends around New York while wearing a paper mask that depicted French poet Arthur Rimbaud.

"It's this performance of the mundane," explains Halajian. "It's the making strange of the familiar."

Carolina A. Miranda
At LACE: Daily life made strange through art
Los Angeles Times, June 13, 2015.
https://cutt.ly/TwtB43tO

Some of the most intriguing pieces in the show (which I saw before it was fully installed) are by L.A. artist Harry Dodge. More than 10 years ago, the artist began making a series of sculptures inspired by the feelings of political insecurity in the U.S. at the time. (This was in the wake of legislation such as the Patriot Act, which broadened the government's investigatory and surveillance powers.)

"He set up these parameters to make a weapon only with things that were on hand," explains Halajian. "These were pieces inspired by that panicked feeling of, 'I have to protect myself.'"

The results are as ingenious as they are terrifying: a sock studded with nails, assorted tool handles topped with resin and embedded with screws of frightening proportions, and an ax handle ameliorated with a ranch dressing bottle and what appears to be a paring knife. Dodge's use of materials is astute (I never realised how sinister a foundation bolt could be) and hilarious (Ranch dressing, weaponized!). And there's the general functionality of these sculptures as objects. If the zombie apocalypse were to happen tomorrow, I'd want a stash of these around.

In short, it's a show that makes us look at the objects around us anew. In the everyday, there is always a bit of wonder — and even horror — to be found.

"The Heart Is the Frame" runs through Feb. 14 at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), 6522 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles. (323) 957-1777. Gallery open Wednesday-Sunday, noon to 6 p.m. More info: welcometolace.org

Carolina A. Miranda
At LACE: Daily life made strange through art
Los Angeles Times, June 13, 2015.
https://cutt.ly/TwtB43tO

SPIKE

Q/A LEIDY CHURCHMAN

How do digital images change painting?

I can't believe how many images I've seen. We're so engulfed in screens that I can't remember what it was like when you had to go to the library to find secret things. I'm not alone picking imagery; I'm in a scrolling world. Scrolling gives me an idea of what's out there and what people are doing right now. We have this stuff all around us and everything is so close. If I choose an image and use it to make a painting, people already know that image or something like it and have a relationship with it. We can then study the image together. You've seen it but you might not have really been able to get closer, because the devices we use separate our bodies from all these pictures.

Often I like to start work from signs, pictures, and paintings as if they're templates to build on. I pick an image that I feel is ready to be opened up (or I am ready to open it up). For me, to paint a thing is really to consume it, to eat it.

I'm chasing real things. For example, I made a copy of a Henri Rousseau painting from 1905, *The Meal of the Lion*. I had a picture in a book that had certain colors and a certain look to it. Then I saw a picture on the Internet that had really different, bumped-up color. Then I went to the Met and saw the painting, and the real one was the best. I thought: Holy shit, this guy is so badass. The painting looked loose and crappy in such a beautiful way. I couldn't believe how imperfect it actually was. But I chose to paint the one from the Internet. It was really warm toned, and it reminded me of how I had remembered Rousseau's work. I think it's interesting what Michael Sanchez said in the essay "2011: On Art and Transmission," [*Artforum* Summer 2013] about how a warm, brown, earthy toned painting provides a point of relief during an endless scroll. It's a real thing to have that relief.

Q/A Leidy Churchman
Spike Art Magazine, Summer, 2015.
https://cutt.ly/1wtNntkL

WHEN I SEE SHOWS, I DEFINITELY DO THAT SORT OF SCANNING TOO: "WHERE SHOULD I FOCUS?" I'M SCANNING AND DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START.

You do the weird thing a dog does when they keep circling and circling to figure out how or where to lie down. But that also makes an argument for stronger work that brings you to a halt (I have hungry eyes, give me something good.).

I think oil paint is still a very advanced system with which to make things. It doesn't fall short at all. Compared to the screen, painting is not flat; you go in and every part of that picture is going to be magnified in a way, like under a microscope. A painting is like an aquarium of traces – looping but rogue at the same time. Maybe it has a lot to do with empathy. Empathy determines our degree of happiness, and the feeling comes easily when our mind joins with our body. It is such a soft sadness, it is beauty. I definitely think about that a lot with painting. A painting holds all these feelings you have but don't really talk about much. It's about embodying that flat image: the imagined real space that's inside without ever being there.

With the lack of inhibition characteristic of naive painting, Leidy Churchman's *Dada-influenced works transform the stock of existing images from the realms of art and mass culture. Churchman (*1979) lives in New York.*

Q/A Leidy Churchman
Spike Art Magazine, Summer, 2015.
https://cutt.ly/1wtNntkL

ARTFORUM

Ruth Buchanan, *No Solitary Beat*, 2012, audio, headphones, silk curtain, suspended rail, paint, chairs, light filter, dimensions variable. Photo: Eric de Vries.

THE HAGUE

"Expanded Performance"

STROOM DEN HAAG
Hogewal 1-9
September 29–December 16, 2012

You can't accuse the staff of Stroom Den Haag—an independent center for art and architecture located in The Hague—of lacking in spirit of adventure. The venue's latest project, titled "Expanded Performance," in reference to Rosalind Krauss's seminal 1979 essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," steadily encroaches upon Stroom's work and exhibition space. Artist and architect Adrien Tirtiaux will eventually reduce Stroom Den Haag by 20 percent, as a visual rendering of the Dutch government's stringent budget cuts affecting cultural institutions, by erecting slanted, skeletal wooden structures that will be filled out bit by bit throughout the course of the exhibition. An artificial hell if ever there was one, *The Great Cut* (all works 2012) was designed to physically inconvenience staff members and visitors trying to access the toilets, eat off tables, or sit at desks, all of which have been temporarily tilted or impeded.

The other projects in "Expanded Performance," presented as works-in-progress rather than finished products, also explore the ways in which objects can be performative and reconfigure spatial relations. For *Painting Rooms*, Leidy Churchman, working with performance artist MPA, had walls and a doorway built especially to frame the large-scale vinyl floor paintings. The corners of these constructed rooms are lined in places with brass rods pitched at an angle toward the luscious painted surfaces, as if engaged in conversation with them. Room edges, passages, and doorways are precisely the kind of liminal architectural spaces Vlatka Horvat's sculptural interventions inhabit and imperfectly replicate in the twin interventions *Drift (Floor)* and *Drift (Wall)*, both made of cardboard strips bound with colorful tape and lined up against the walls. Ruth Buchanan likewise puts flimsy materials—a flesh-colored curtain, a green wall painting, and a purple spotlight—to sculptural use, in three discrete installations involving a single audio piece and two yellow Eames chairs placed in different configurations. In each of these works the audience plays a central role, as it is called upon to activate what would otherwise remain a collection of inanimate objects.

Agnieszka Gratza
"Expanded Performance"
Artforum, November, 2012.
https://cutt.ly/LwtMDcnw

Art in America

Greater New York

"**Greater New York**," the quinquennial roundup of mainly emerging artists who live and work in the city, is currently in its third edition at P.S.1. The curators-Klaus Biesenbach, Neville Wakefield and Connie Butler-cut the number of participants by over half from the previous two installments, allowing more room for 68 artists and collectives. In addition, the curators announced that the museum's spaces were to be a "productive workshop" in which artists could develop their projects over time, as well as participate in performances, panels and screenings.

While on-site activities may have fostered a sense of community among the participants, the effects have probably been little noticed by visitors who don't attend the exhibition more than once. They might miss, for example, the transformation of Bruce High Quality Foundation's "art pedestal exchange program," an installation of empty white Miminalist-like plinths that was pristine at first but has grown progressively grubbier as the pedestals are swapped with used examples from art schools and elsewhere. Those visitors would have assuredly not seen Franklin Evans creating the room-size work *timecompressionmachine* in the weeks leading up to the May 23 opening, touted as an instance of the laboratorylike atmosphere of the show, though his process seems not so different from the usual preparation required for a labor-intensive installation. (An immersive space of painted and cut-up paper, including articles and other printed matter, with sly allusions to art history and a fractured take on pictorial space, Evans's room is a high point.) Ryan McNamara, who is slated for a final performance on Oct. 15, has periodically taken dance lessons within the museum's galleries from experts in various genres, something most viewers will not have seen. (His two-channel video *I Thought It Was You*, 2008, in which he executes, to the Herbie Hancock song, nearly identical spastic movements simultaneously in a disco and on a deserted country road, is on view in the show.)

Though the curators, bless them, do not publically congratulate themselves in this respect, the "Greater New York" roster presents an impressive diversity of gender, race and sexual orientation. It is likely the gayest of such summary exhibitions ever mounted. Yet the identity politics feel less ham-fisted than in days of yore. A piece by Sharon Hayes, *Revolutionary Love: I Am Your Worst Fear, I Am Your Best Fantasy* (2008), is compelling despite its didacticism, with screen projections placed at floor level in a room scattered with balloons. The viewer is placed squarely in the action: a crowd of gay people at the 2008 Republican and Democratic conventions reading, in unison, a text outing an unnamed, archetypal closeted politician.

Faye Hirsch
Greater New York
Art in America, September 11, 2010.
https://cutt.ly/MwtMM23k

There are some failures-most spectacularly, the decaying tree covered with concrete dust in the first-floor well by David Brooks, which, in making an environmental point, is neither a particularly interesting object nor a convincing metaphor. I found Emily Roysdon's text wallpaper at the entrance, faintly printed with "Who Am I To Be So Free," inadvertently laughable, and her multichannel video of a live Happening-like dance performance pointless as an installation. I was merely depressed by Leigh Ledare's sexually charged photographs of his mother, and longed for Marilyn Minter's subtler photographic portraits of her own narcissistic mother, an intimate filial homage that never feels sensationalistic.

That said, there is much excellent work. Rashaad Newsome's 2009 video mash-up of hip-hop culture samples Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, as the glitter of bling and sex polishes an old chestnut. Leidy Churchman contributes paintings, tabletop objects and two videos of wrapped people being painted with abstract splotches. The oil-on-panel paintings are especially quirky and fanciful, showing odd men with chin-
curtain beards lounging about with dogs and lovers, and, in one instance, engaged in an orgy. Deville Cohen's wall projection *Grayscale (A Video in Three Acts)*, 2009-10, involving a cast of men dressed in high heels and wearing masks or bearing structures à la Laurie Simmons, is a funny, skillfully executed meditation on art-making. A sinister video (*Mine*, 2009) by Liz Magic Laser shows a robotic arm picking through Laser's battered purse, which looks as if it has been retrieved from the site of a mugging or worse (the actual purse is nearby in a vitrine); and a surreal animation reminiscent of the Quay Brothers, *The Ascent of Man* (2009), by Tommy Hartung, offers a weird take on evolution that at one point involves a white rat climbing out of the primordial slime onto a Barbie doll. Some of these artists will be performing during a heavily programmed October, bringing to a close the laboratory that is "Greater New York."

Faye Hirsch
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