Liberal: Group Exhibition

This exhibition highlights the work of the Northwest Five consortium’s painting professors. The NW5 includes the following independent colleges in the Pacific Northwest: Lewis and Clark, Reed, Whitman, Willamette, and the University of Puget Sound. Each professor’s practice intersects with broader notions of the purposes and ethos of liberal arts institutions.

NW5 Painting Colloquium

Two exhibitions and a two-day inaugural colloquium offer an intra-disciplinary exploration of painting’s interdisciplinary engagement with the liberal arts. Painting has a special relationship to representation. The discipline’s historical and contemporary practices reflect cultural values, identity issues, power differentials, and notions of space that often envision philosophical ideas and scientific discoveries. Painting engages what art historian Richard Schiff describes as a manual imagination. It is grounded in the materiality of pigment, the immediacy of making marks, and the supremely relational and contextual nature of color interaction.
Michael Knutson

Michael Knutson was born in Everett, Wash., in 1951. He received a B.F.A. from the University of Washington and an M.F.A. from Yale University, and has taught at Reed College since 1982. He was awarded the Alice Kimball English Teaching Fellowship from Yale in 1975, an NEA Individual Artist Grant in 1982, and a New York State Council on the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship in 1989 and 1999 Portland Art Museum Oregon Biennials, a Betty Bowwen Award from the Seattle Art Museum in 1995, and an American Academy of Arts & Letters Exhibition Purchase Award in 2010. In 2006 a mid-career survey, "Michael Knutson, Paintings and Drawings, 1981–2006," was presented in two parts, at The Art Gym, Maryhurt University and the Eric and Ronna B. Hoffman Gallery, Lewis & Clark College. He is represented by Blackfish Gallery in Portland and Greg Kucera Gallery in Seattle.

"My paintings begin with a drawing of spiraling, expanding ovals. I scan the drawing into Photoshop, make three duplicate layers, and flip or rotate them into different orientations. Merging the layers creates a linear tangle with either two, three or four forms overlap. This is wholly visible. I use opaque pigments allowing the forms on all of the layers to be seen, and I enlarge the image and print it onto fabric. This makes a layered, duplicate layers, and flip or rotate them into different orientations. Merging the layers creates a linear tangle with either two, three or four forms overlap. This is wholly visible. I use opaque pigments allowing the forms on all of the layers to be seen, and I enlarge the image and print it onto fabric. This makes a layered, "Ripple Ellipse" series explores the notion of "ripple effects" through abstract compositions. Color contrast activates the encompassing, vibrating dynamics. Color relativity and interaction is powerful and provides a model for nuanced, contextual thinking. Colors change based on context: they are affected by surrounding colors. I am interested in color's ability to be expansive and inclusive. My work honors the inherent properties of a wide range of pigments and explores how these properties respond to other pigments' defining optical and material properties."

Some highlights of Richard Martinez' exhibition history include solo shows in Oregon, California, Washington, Texas, and numerous group exhibits in exhibits across the United States. He earned a B.F.A. from the University of Oregon and an M.F.A. from University of California at Davis. His work explores subtleties in process, and shape relationships through the language of abstraction. Martinez teaches at Whitman College where he is an Associate Professor of Art.

"For me the paintings show a history of process evident in the thin layers and changing decisions that relate to time and memory. There is only a loose plan as I paint, and I don’t know what it will look like when resolved. Influences include geometric form and pattern in architecture, as well as early abstract painting. I’ve been using fairly traditional materials, oil paint, enamel, and graphite. With those paintings I am working with minimal color, geometric form and shapes. There are simultaneous ways a piece can be interpreted and that conversation between possibilities is precisely the space through which the viewer enters. How do simple elements of paint, form, and process create references to ideas and feelings in us? This is where hopefully viewers will take time to let their subjective response guide them. I think much of the "content" in this work is often unnameable or non-verbal."

Symmetrical Four-layered Ovoids & Lattices III, Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 in. (157x202), 2016

Richard Martinez

Richard Martinez received his B.F.A. from the University of Washington and M.F.A. from American University. She has exhibited her work nationally in commercial galleries, non-profit spaces, and university galleries. Her paintings are included in private collections in San Francisco, New York, Washington D.C., Baltimore, and Seattle as well as The Hallie Ford Museum, King County, the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, and the City of Tacoma. Martinez was a recipient of the 2014 Greater Tacoma Community Foundation art award and 2014 and 2017 Davis teaching awards, and was finalist for the 2016 Neddy Award in painting. She is a Professor of Painting and Chair of the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Puget Sound.

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James Thompson

James B. Thompson was born in Chicago, Ill. Thompson earned his B.A. degree from Ripon College in Ripon, Wisc., and his MFA degree from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo. Thompson’s work has been featured in numerous international and nationally recognized solo and group art exhibitions at prominent museums and galleries throughout his career and is included in public and private collections in the United States and abroad. Thompson is a faculty member at Willamette University in Salem, Ore. where he serves as Professor of Art. He is a professional creative practitioner working in a variety of media spanning the realms of painting, printmaking, mixed-media, drawing, and kinformed glass.

"Every culture has at one time or another revered water, used it in rituals and as part of spiritual practice. Its significance to early peoples can be read in the way it punctuated the landscape and how the ancients responded to its absence, presence, ebb and flow. Water is considered to have healing properties and is celebrated as a source of life itself. Water must break before we are born and it is into the water we return when the boat is pushed out. Yet we waste this precious substance and put it at risk to our peril. If, in fact, water is sacred and water is life—rather than a commodity to be bought and sold—then what on earth have we done here and what is to become of life itself?"

Manganese Blue Hue (from the series, Water is Sacred (Water is Life)), acrylic, pigment, shaved US currency on Paper, 9½ x 12½ in., 2017

Cara Tomlinson

Cara Tomlinson received her B.A. in Painting and Literature from Bennington College and her M.F.A. in Painting from The School of Art and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and supported by numerous grants and residency awards including the Ucross Foundation, Millay Colony for the Arts, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Willapa Bay Artist Residency, Ford Foundation Grant, Individual Artist Fellowship Grant from the Oregon Arts Commission and two professional Development Grants from the Portland Regional Arts Council and Oregon Arts Commission. She is currently an Associate Professor and head of Painting at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

"My work engages in a dialog with the long and varied tradition of the modernist pictorial style and the tensions between simplicity and complexity, order, and entropy. I paint in layers over time. A painting creates a strata of processes that are unavailable to the viewer or artist in their entirety, but which are visible through the totality of the form at the end. In this way, it mimics the evolving self, the momentary resolutions and images that cover over all the other possibilities, how we separate meaning from non-meaning and how we make choices. Collaborating and thinking through matter means giving up control, letting material, hand, and the unconscious assert their demands. It is embodied philosophy. It plays between the two poles of pure potential and strict limitation."

Recall, Oil on linen, 34 x 36 in., 2017