BILL SAYLOR

MAGENTA PLAINS

Bill Saylor has held solo exhibitions at Magenta Plains, New York, NY; Leo Koenig Inc., New York, NY; The Journal Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; and Loyal Gallery, Stockholm, SE. Two-person shows include “Bill Saylor & Josh Smith” at Hiromi Yoshii Gallery, Tokyo, JP; “Bill Saylor & Aidas Bareikis” at Shoot The Lobster, New York, NY; “Bill Saylor & Donald Baechler” at Makebish, New York, NY; and “Mason Saltarrelli and Bill Saylor” at Shrine, New York, NY. Saylor was included in “Animal Farm” at the Brant Foundation and has participated in group exhibitions at Venus Over Manhattan, NY; CANADA, New York, NY; Martos Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; MIER Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Ceysson & Bénétière, Luxembourg and Yerba Buena Art Center, San Francisco, CA. Saylor’s work was also included in “Contemporary Painting” curated by Alex Katz at the Colby College Museum of Art in 2004. In 2010, Saylor collaborated on the zine “Ho Bags” with Harmony Korine and he was an artist-in-residence at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX. Bill Saylor lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Born in 1960, Willow Grove, PA
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Document

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DOCUMENT

Text by
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Images courtesy
Bill Saylor & Mag

Posted

‘Bill Saylor is one of the last natural ones. The last wild man. I don’t think people are having kids like him anymore.’ Justin Lowe, Walter Robinson, and more speak on how Saylor's art forms an urgent call to environmental action.

Bill Saylor paints in a gestural code rooted in history that dates back to 4,000 years ago, when prehistoric humans painted on cave walls, carrying with it the abstract expressionism that originated in New York in the 1940s and '50s. But Saylor honed his own practice in the Brooklyn of the '90s, the Brooklyn that came decades before Whole Foods and Apple planted their roots on its streets. The figures that form from Saylor's abstraction demonstrate his concern for the anthropogenic environmental distress that is destroying the Earth's flora and fauna. His latest exhibition, *Neptune's Machine*, is on view at Magenta Plains through October 23, the same date the catalog for the show will be released. *Neptune's Machine* pays homage to the world's oceans, the ecosystem that also acts as the planet's lungs, generating the air that we breathe. Echoes of fish, seahorses, squid, and other ocean wildlife appear throughout Saylor's work, doubling as an urgent call to action.

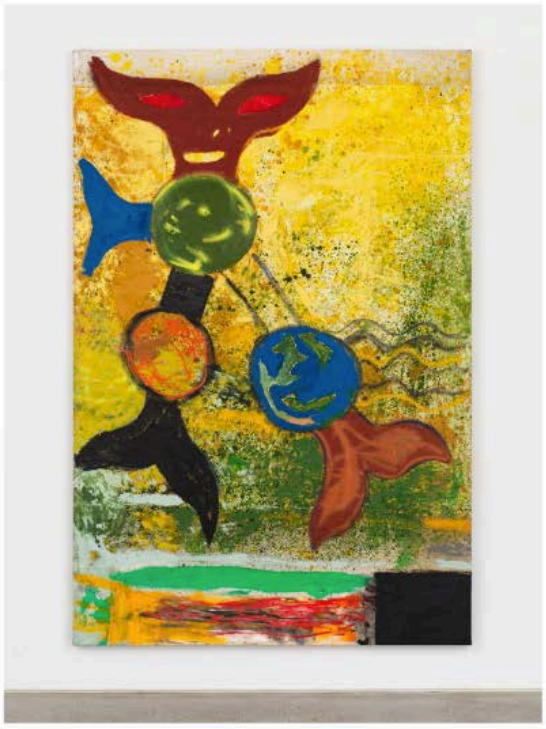
Saylor is an artist's artist. So much so, that artists Alex Katz, Josh Smith, Kenny Schachter, and Sadie Laska included Saylor's work in group shows which they curated. In the early aughts, Saylor formed relationships with a circle of Brooklyn artists who include Smith, Joe Bradley, and Katherine Bernhardt. Many of them also collect his work.

Document asked artists Walter Robinson, Justin Lowe, Jeff Elrod, and Chris Martin to comment on Saylor's allure.

Walter Robinson—"Bill? Doesn't he come from a small town in PA? Like, Appalachia? The Marcellus Shale? With like 10,000 active fracking wells? I hope so, since that's what I get from Bill's paintings, a stew of down-home folk culture all mixed up with ancient Ptersaurian spirits that rise up from those deep wells. All that gives his work this atavistic charge, and ties our reptilian brain to the primordial earth. It's an uncanny feeling, really. Know what I mean?"

Justin Lowe—"Bill Saylor is one of the last natural ones. The last wild man. I don't think people are having kids like him anymore. My understanding is that Bill makes most of his work outside in Pennsylvania near the woods. Which makes the paintings strange attractors and imbues them with something that is very personal to him and whatever 'high weirdness' is going down at that site. Which is to say that it can not be imitated and that you should not try to do this at home!

The creatures in his paintings seem recollected from an interim space that changes faster than you can catch your breath. A cryptozoological 'who's who' of the regulars creeping around Cthulhu's domain. This is Bayside voodoo. If Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band were performing at Jack Smith's lagoon, it is their presence you feel, that you think you see the shadows of, but definitely can't confirm that you did in fact see them. Only Bill *sees* them, they however, definitely see us."



Jeff Elrod—"I met Bill Saylor in 2001 in New York when he had a show at Leo Koenig Gallery on Franklin Street right before 9/11. I had just joined the gallery after the untimely closing of Pat Hearn Gallery. I do remember being slightly intimidated by his paintings at the time but I immediately liked Bill and we became friends right there.

Bill is steady, always working. Direct. No pussyfooting. He's the kind of artist that makes you think you don't work enough or work hard enough. He is also the nicest guy in the world. That 2001 show was downright wild. I thought the paintings looked like something conjured from a seance. They were haunting, as if ghosts painted them. Muddy apparitions with little existence marks and stains scarring the surface like something trapped in a mirror. They had no exit. I loved them. His paintings are the visual equivalent to eating Pop Rocks to me. Sweet but gnarly. Laden with crypto-demonic cartoons in thick opaque paint that make you want to eat them. I think of Bill's paintings as an antidote to all strategic painting. They breath life.

Artists that come to mind relating to Bill Saylor's work: Dante and Don Van Vliet (a.k.a. Capt. Beefheart)."

Chris Martin—"Love Bill and his work."

Art Viewer

October 7, 2019

Art Viewer

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Bill Saylor at Magenta Plains

October 7, 2019

Artist: Bill Saylor

Exhibition title: Neptune's Machine

Venue: Magenta Plains, New York, US

Date: September 18 – October 23, 2019

Photography: all images copyright and courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York

Magenta Plains presents ***Neptune's Machine***, Bill Saylor's second exhi-bition at the gallery consisting of new paintings and large-scale sculp-ture. Saylor's approach to topics of natural history, marine biology, and ecological crisis along with a freedom of materiality galvanize his dis-tinct painting style.

The title is a nod to the mythology of a collective past, while acknowledging a very real phenome-non: oceans are the planet's main regulatory system. Currents contribute and alter jet streams, drive weather patterns, stabilize temperatures and guide wildlife. Often those trajectories are as erratic and reckless as the deities' mercurial temperament. The metaphor of Neptune's Machine captures the raw energy and natural force of Saylor's hand and allows for a broad representation of his explorations.

Built up with layers of splattered and poured paint, parts of Saylor's canvases resemble chemical spills—motifs of environmental damage propelled by a frenetic and muscular application of paint smeared and scratched. Notational devices appear on canvases as abstracted weather maps. Their features, symbols, and contours delineate compositions that are scattered with both real and hybrid figures, evincing an ever-present drawing practice in which his work is rooted.

Recognized not only for his unique iconography, Saylor's impasto paint application and his experi-mentation with the medium clearly celebrates the act of painting itself. In a 2015 review from Janet Goleas, the critic remarks, "Saylor lays down marks in oil stick, spray paint and pigment in a furious scrawl that ricochets from side to side like visual warfare. The resulting compositions feel as if they were pulled from the subconscious with a veracity that would make Carl Jung proud."

Sculptures punctuate the exhibition with a playfulness that resonates on the collaged and painted sur-faces—three dimensional takes on the artist's mark making. Hinting at crude but viable mechanical processes, the cobbled totems syncopate a flawed yet sincere human intervention while forewarning the malice such interventions may cause. Standing as imperfect weather vanes, the sculptures allow for the possibility that imagination may be the curse and also the key to our future.

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Bill Saylor, *Neptune's Machine*, 2019, exhibition view, Magenta Plains, New York

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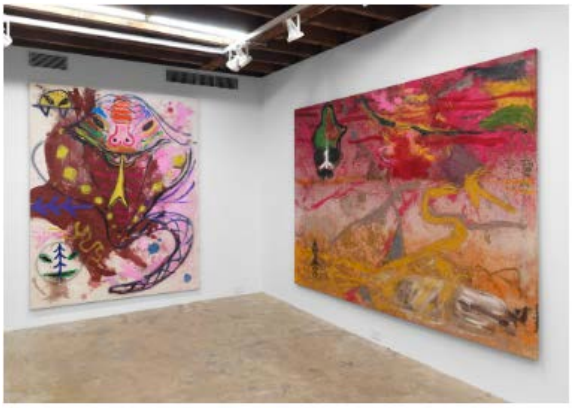

Bill Saylor, *Neptune's Machine*, 2019, exhibition view, Magenta Plains, New York

Bill Saylor, *Neptune's Machine*, 2019, exhibition view, Magenta Plains, New York

Bill Saylor, *Trident*, 2019, Wood, reclaimed cardboard, foam, canvas, fiberglass mesh, Flashe, spray paint, 92h x 68w x 61d in

Bill Saylor, *Trident*, 2019, Wood, reclaimed cardboard, foam, canvas, fiberglass mesh, Flashe, spray paint, 92h x 68w x 61d in

Bill Saylor, *Trident*, 2019, Wood, reclaimed cardboard, foam, canvas, fiberglass mesh, Flashe, spray paint, 92h x 68w x 61d in

Bill Saylor, *Drifters*, 2019, Oil, spray paint, and charcoal on canvas, 120h x 96w in

Bill Saylor, *Fly To The Tide*, 2019, Oil, spray paint, and Flashe on canvas, 84h x 64w in

Bill Saylor, *Double Overhead*, 2018, Oil, charcoal, Flashe, and spray paint on canvas, 84h x 64w in

Bill Saylor, *Accumulator*, 2019, Pine tree trunk, cedar board, metal, mylar, PVC pipe, 77.50h x 36w x 30.50d in

Bill Saylor, *Hot Lava*, 2019, Oil, spray paint, and Flashe on canvas, 95h x 64w in

Bill Saylor. *Breakers Gold*. 2019. Oil. spray paint. graphite. and Flashe on canvas. 84h x 64w in

Bill Saylor, *Cly-Fy*, 2019, Oil, spray paint, and Flashe on canvas, 74h x 104w in

Bill Saylor, *Sunset Strip*, 2019, Flashe, oil, spray paint, and charcoal on canvas, 74h x 104w in

Bill Saylor, *Disintegrating Cobra*, 2019, Oil, chalk, and spray paint on raw canvas, 84h x 66w

Bill Saylor, *Sylvia Earle Finds a Pearl*, 2019, Oil on raw canvas, 60h x 48w in

Bill Saylor, *Cosmico*, 2019, Oil on dropcloth over panel, 48h x 36w in

Exhibitions
Bill Saylor, Magenta Plains, New York, US
Sarah Smolders at mariondecannière

Time Out New York

September 30, 2019

Bill Saylor, “Neptune’s Machine”

Art, Contemporary art Magenta Plains , Midtown West Wednesday October 2 2019 - Wednesday October 23 2019

Photograph: Courtesy Magenta Plains

Time Out says

The deleterious effects of climate change—rising sea levels, acidification, warming water temperatures—on the ocean and its inhabitants provide the thematic spark for the Neo-Expressionist paintings and sculptures that, for the most part, delve into marine life and lore. Depictions of squid and sea birds are mixed with mythological references —most notably to the eponymous deity of the deep whose “machine,” in this case, is a fragile ecosystem about to break down.

POSTED: MONDAY SEPTEMBER 30 2019

Juxtapoz

September 25, 2019

JUXTAPOZ
Art & Culture

Neptune's Machine: Bill Saylor @ Magenta Plains, NYC

Magenta Plains // September 18, 2019 - October 23, 2019

September 25, 2019 | in Painting

"For me, it was more about the abstraction of all these images coming together and starting to develop a quasi-narrative." When we last sat down with Bill Saylor, back in 2015 for a print feature on his work, it felt a little bit like *Juxtapoz* heresy to showcase purely abstracted paintings. But there was something in Saylor's work that resonated as beautiful and genuine narrative, and in these stories, figurative elements emerged. In viewing an exhibition of his work, the paintings and sculptures almost bleed into each other, spilling from story to story. "(When) I was around five.... I used to lie on the floor and make drawings of my favorite comics." That influence is still apparent in the works you see today.

Through October 23, 2019, Magenta Plains in NYC presents *Neptune's Machine*, Bill Saylor's second exhibition at the gallery consisting of new paintings and large-scale sculpture. The show encapsulates Saylor's approach to "topics of natural history, marine biology, and ecological crisis along with a freedom of materiality galvanize his distinct painting style... The metaphor of *Neptune's Machine* captures the raw energy and natural force of Saylor's hand and allows for a broad representation of his explorations."

There is rawness and almost primitive mark-making that speak to the uncertainty of our ecosystems, especially the ocean, and instead of literal renderings of environmental catastrophe, these works roar with visceral anger in their urgent energy.

Art In America

March 2, 2017

Art in America
NEWS & FEATURES EXHIBITIONS MAGAZINE NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBE

Bill Saylor

at Magenta Plains,
through Mar. 19
94 Allen Street

The seven new paintings in Bill Saylor's "Shadow Ballers" present an aquatic world in crisis. Themes of ecological damage are underscored by a chaotic mix of artistic methods: rough depictions of marine life mingle with various modes of abstraction and graffitilike text. *Plexus* (2016) features two playfully rendered squids navigating an environment fraught with debris and toxic sludge. Environmental threat manifests here as a skull-headed mutant pursuing the sea creatures. Also on view are drawings and sculptures, and their motifs echo those of the paintings. In *Blizzard Wizzard* (2016), the form of a coral reef emerges from an assemblage of mass-produced objects covered in plaster, while in the drawings, frenetically applied markings encroach on squids and schools of fish. In every medium, the diversity of styles and materials suggest that the means of visual representation available to artists have become as polluted as the fluorescent waters depicted in the works. All this adds up to the ominous possibility that the fantastical world of "Shadow Ballers" is only several degrees different from our own. —*Kate Moger*

Pictured: Bill Saylor: *Humboldt Hangout*, 2017, oil on hemp, 84 by 64 by 1½ inches. Courtesy Magenta Plains, New York.

Juxtapoz

November 10, 2016

JUXTAPOZ
Art & Culture

Frank Stella: A Retrospective

de Young Museum // November 05, 2016 - February 26, 2017

November 10, 2016 | in Magazine

Photo: © Arnold Newman / Getty Images

"One learns about painting by looking at and imitating other painters. I cant stress enough how important it is, if you are interested at all in painting, to look, and to look a great deal, at painting. There is no other way to find out about painting." Excerpted from the artists 1960 lecture at Pratt Institute, this simple dictum personifies Frank Stella: deep, direct, and ready to work.

Although *Juxtapoz* is purportedly rooted in the so-called lowbrow or no-brow movement, it has always showcased the cutting edge. Meaning, whether or not the art is emerging, what we serve is en pointe. Like the brightest stars, Frank Stella goes way back, but continues to beam a brilliant light. We flipped through the pages of our magazine and identified several artists who had clearly taken his advice to heart and hand. Its a pleasure to share their observations along with the work of this artist, whose retrospective travels from the Whitney Museum of American Art to San Franciscos de Young Museum.

Bill Saylor
I used to walk by Frank Stella's studio on 13th Street in the 90s a lot. It was in a beautiful, historic building once used for selling horses and carriages, and through the window, you could always see part of some giant project hanging from a beam on the ceiling, most likely one of his wall assemblages, which were huge, dense and layered. You could see these works around town in the lobbies of big buildings like some abnormal cell growth from the architecture itself.

At the time, I was working for Julian Schnabel and was more in his camp, as well as Polke, Beuys and Oehlen when it came to making things, but one day I did buy a copy of Stella's book, Working Space, which was based on some lectures he gave at Harvard in the 1960s.

There was something about the way he laid out the importance and history of painting space and composition, from Caravaggio, Malevich, Pollock and others, to random East Village graffiti, that had an impact on me.

Maybe it was some kind of validation of all that I was looking at, or it was the first book I read devoted entirely to the subject and consideration of composition—I'm not sure. And, in the end, my favorite quote from the book was, "If its not sexy, its not art."

Hamptons Art Hub

April 23, 2015

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ART REVIEW: Ubiquity and Omnipresence at ILLE Arts

April 23, 2015 • by Janet Goleas • Art Reviews, HAMPTONS, Reviews

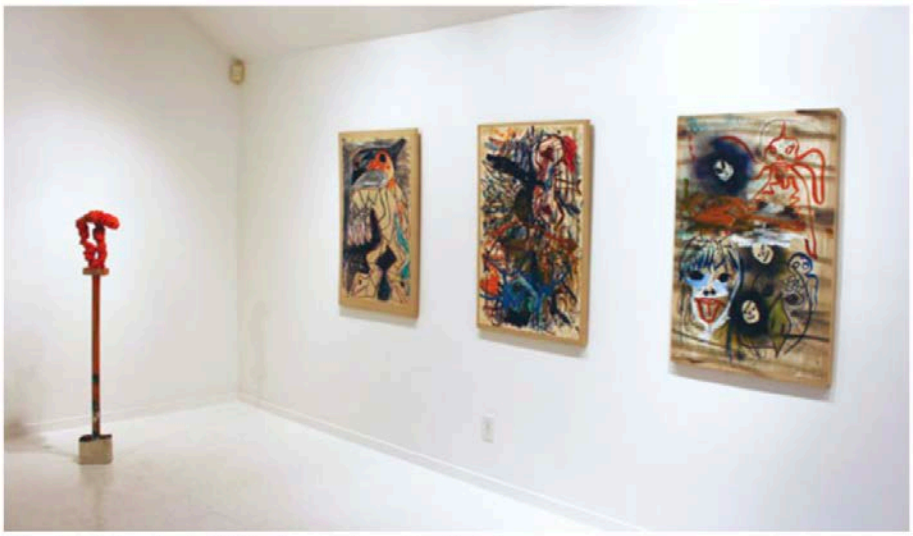
For Sag Harbor artist Saskia Friedrich, thoughts of omnipresence have yielded a lively exhibition at ILLE Arts. The show, organized by Friedrich, features five artists (including the curator herself) whose works bounce from temporality to fixed patterning, gesture and abstraction. Titled "Ubiquity," the exhibition frames the creative act as a phenomenon that exists in an eternal now, as if a work of art is always beginning, always in process and always completing.

The artist's own colorful works open the show. In them, Friedrich seeks to capture the fleeting image —a universal construct—in selected pieces that are playful and aesthetically concise. Her strategy is one of simplicity, commingling shape and color in works that are thoughtful, spare and ephemeral, their dazzling color notwithstanding.

Here Friedrich paints through stitchery, sewing various fabrics, colors and textures together in minimalist compositions. Establishing formal structure through the subtle junctures that take place in the process, Friedrich's shifting textures and colors offer a succinct and mindful clarity.

A selection of large format drawings and sculpture by Brooklyn artist Bill Saylor radiate a raw, heated energy both in muscle and tone. His drawings on paper are affixed to stretched canvas that acts as a container for the bird-monsters, amphibians and ghostly faces that crash against its margins.

Saylor lays down marks in oil stick, spray paint and pigment in a furious scrawl that ricochets from side to side like visual warfare. The resulting compositions feel as if they were pulled from the subconscious with a veracity that would make Carl Jung proud.



Artwork by Bill Saylor, installation view. Photo courtesy Ille Arts.

Relative to his paintings, Saylor's sculpture is soundless and poetic. In the main gallery *Untitled* stands like a sentinel, its head a loopy amalgam of crusty plaster and foam bobbing atop an unembellished wooden stud. Painted in brilliant reds and orange, its presence is both comedic and professorial as it holds court in the main gallery.

"Untitled" by Bill Saylor, 2015. Wood, metal wire, foam, paper mache, flashe, 24 x 10 x 13 inches. Photo courtesy Ille Arts.

Juxtapoz

January 2015

JUXTAPOZ
Art & Culture

left to right
Untitled
Mixed-media on paper
24" x 36"
2013

Lupo
Oil, collage on canvas
2011

Untitled
Mixed-media on paper
24" x 36"
2014

HAPPILY, I SPENT MOST OF THE LAST warm day of fall inside, conversing and observing the craft of Bill Saylor in his Brooklyn studio. Located near the invariably rugged Myrtle stop on the JMZ line, Bill's high-ceilinged, naturally lit studio emits an air of creative refuge. A panoramic view from the roof gives a clear perspective of the obviously old versus the bona fide new that make up the evolving neighborhood. Within the studio walls are large canvases with multiple layers of paint already poured, smeared, scratched and brushed onto them. None appear finished, all seem to be in the under-construction phase. Tables are overwhelmed with several stacks of 8.5 x 11" drawings, some layered thick with the application of multiple mediums. Every inch of space is occupied with some sort of painting supplies, more artwork, and a plethora of books. There is also a kitchen and makeshift, partially enclosed bedroom. To me, it seems ideal; for Bill it may be getting too small for the scope and size of work he is currently producing.

Curious about his method of applying large quantities of paint to canvases, I asked if I could observe a part of his process, and Bill was happy to oblige. Bill leaned over the sizable canvas on his knees and I witnessed a tactical splash of the entire container's worth of blood-hued paint into the center of the canvas. Bill then lifted and tweaked the frame in various directions, then ran around to the other side of the canvas doing the same. I pointed out that a few objects in close vicinity had fallen victim to paint shrapnel speckling, but Bill was unconcerned with the collateral damage. He appeared to have tunnel vision directed towards his newly applied layer and was pleased with what resembled a gruesome stabbing crime scene.

***Austin McManus*: What's a typical day like for an artist named Bill Saylor living in Brooklyn?**

Bill Saylor: Staying in Brooklyn, I usually wake up around 5:30 or 6:00 to the sound of my neighbor walking through a huge pile of bottles that he collects for recycling. I make some coffee and breakfast, then head down to the parking lot and check my car windows to make sure they're not

smashed out. If they are and you catch it early, you can have them replaced by the afternoon. I've done six so far. Maybe go to the gym, return some emails, turn on the radio and start kicking around in the studio. Maybe read a bit, start out with some drawings or just get into some paintings. Make some dinner later: watch some TV or movies online.

What was growing up in Pennsylvania like for you?
I grew up about thirty minutes north of the city center of Philadelphia, in a suburban town named Willow Grove. My grandfather owned the last old dairy farm in town, about 26 acres that was used for a big construction company he built. Our house was also on the property and at night, when it closed, I had it all to play on: riding motorcycles around, skating on the farm lake, playing ice hockey. Willow Grove had a famous amusement park that was started in 1896, but by the '70s, it was old and run down. We would sneak in under the fence and run around in this crazy old-world park, where every hour women came running out of a saloon and gunfighters would have shoot-outs in the "Western town" area. It had a giant wooden roller coaster that ran through a paper mache copy of the Swiss Alps. There were fun houses, freak shows and mirrored rooms to get lost in. But mostly I spent a lot of time in the woods.

Do you recall the first time you drew something or made something that you would consider art?
Maybe I was around five. I used to lie on the floor and make drawings of my favorite comics. I thought they were pretty good.

What was the attraction at age 19 when you moved out West? I attended Santa Barbara City College too.
My older brother was going to photography school in Santa Barbara and I went out for a week's visit when I was fourteen. Coming from the landlocked Northeast, the California Ocean seemed like a paradise. After high school in Pennsylvania, I worked the summer and moved out there thinking I'd stay a few months and help my brother drive back East, but I ended up staying about eight years between Santa Barbara and Long Beach, going to school, surfing, skateboarding, and scuba diving—not a bad life for a while.

You've been showing your work since the early '90s. What was your very first show like?
It was in '91 with Kenny Schacter down in SoHo: *The Unlearning Show*. Rachel Harrison was archiving her tampons and Jonathan Horowitz had a video with the song "Je T'aime" playing on loop for two months. Someone was fermenting vodka on the counter at the entrance, and Dan Asher had a feedback loop created by two talking parrot toys. I showed two sculptures, one a row of salt licks, the other a meat hook tree made from steel hooks that were left in my studio in the Meat Market. It was about ten feet tall and I was nervous that someone would tug on it and it would come crashing down.

You worked on a collaborative project with Harmony Korine that was published as a zine. How did you meet him and how did that project materialize?
I met Harmony through *The Journal* magazine. He saw my work in one of their issues and wanted to do a trade, so *The Journal* hooked us up and suggested we do a zine together that they would produce. We each started about thirty to forty drawings, then traded the piles and worked on top of each other's work, which eventually became *HO BAGS*. I never saw all the works complete until the zine came out. Later, he came back to the studio and bought a big painting. I didn't know what to expect at first but I really liked Harmony. He was cool and genuine and kept saying, "Just make the most radical shit you've ever made." He was a big supporter who connected me to Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney of The Black Keys who both bought a lot of work when I was broke.

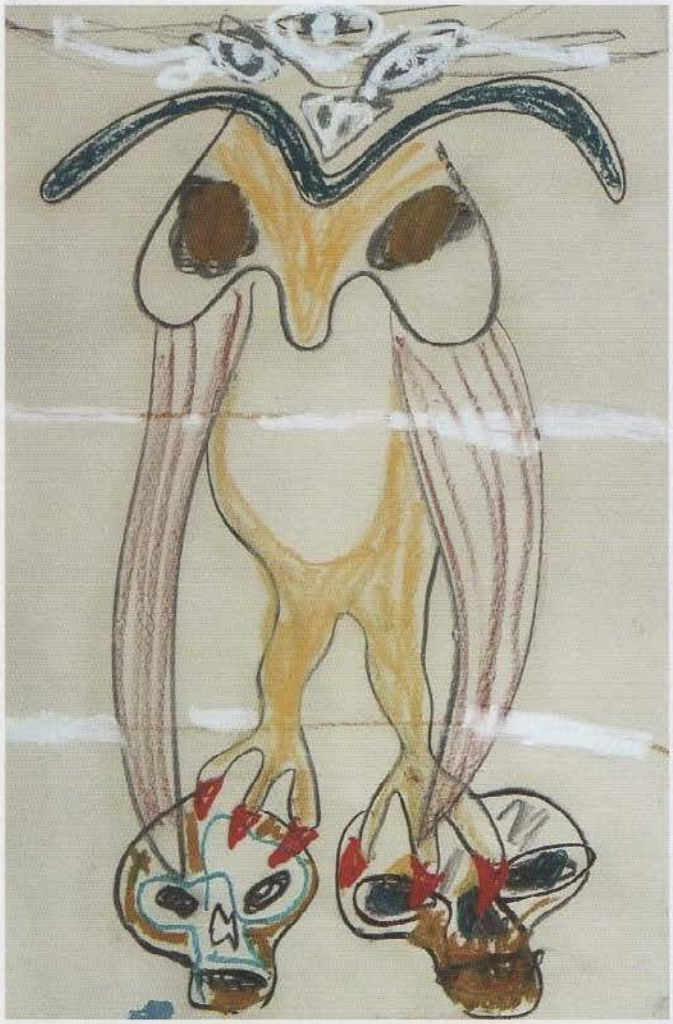
Having lived in Brooklyn for a while, I'm sure you have witnessed a slew of changes. I'm curious about how you view the current artistic climate.

left

Blo
Oil, charcoal and
paint on
64

U
Mixed-media on
25

U
Oil, charco
pencil on
25



Honestly, I lived in Manhattan for 12 years before coming to Brooklyn, and I was never that connected to any galleries here except a small show at *The Journal*. My corner of Bushwick has been slow to change, but it is starting. My grocery store has been getting better, less ratty, more food. That's been a good change.

I really enjoyed your drawings and paintings at NADA this year, especially the pieces with the extraterrestrial figures in them. Can you tell me a little about this body of work?
I wanted more works with imagery for NADA and I had a lot of drawings at the time, too many for framing, so I glued a number onto panels along with the paintings. I did have some alien figures in there, plus others that were more like octopus squid figures, which kinda look like aliens. For me, it was more about the abstraction of all these images coming together and starting to develop a quasi-narrative.

You told me an entertaining story about a past exhibition you did in Las Vegas. Can you share some anecdotes from that trip?
In 2002 my dealer, Leo Koenig, was asked to install a show in a 20,000-foot unused part of a shopping mall called Neonopolis at the head of Fremont street. He came over to my studio and saw a 4 x 5' loose black-and-white Hells Angels California painting I made. He loved it and wanted it to go in the show. I knew it could be a problem but didn't let on and let him take it anyway. I guess it was just one of those taboos that made the painting feel dangerous, however silly that was at the time. We unloaded the show into the space while construction was still finishing up, so a lot of local guys got to see the works. I had about thirty feet of wall with all kinds of paintings and drawings, and I guess the word got out to the local chapter about the one painting. After the show opened, we left, went back to NY, and then a few days later, three dudes came into the Vegas show from the Hells Angels. They scared the shit out of the young girl sitting at the reception desk, demanding it be removed.

They were pretty pissed about it, though they did like a drawing I made of Sonny Barger. They decided that could stay but they wanted the painting out. The president of the New York chapter called my gallery and really intimidated Leo by saying he wasn't able to control the Vegas chapter and anything could happen if we didn't get it out. They also said they knew who I was and where I lived which got kinda weird. Leo offered to sell it and give the money to a charity of theirs but they weren't interested. It was taken out. I did make a few more after that but changed the text to famous hurricanes and some that said "Jet Stream Loser."

You have piles of drawings at your studio. Do you find satisfaction in the immediacy of drawing on 11x14 paper as opposed to working on a large canvas?
I've always made lots of drawings of all sizes. I leave them on the floor, pin them on the wall or pile them in boxes and reference them later. I like their immediacy but it's just part of the process for me, a way to come up with new forms and images that can be bumped up. I also really like the more sustained focus you need for large paintings, making them so that they appear to have been dropped there with the same intimacy as a small drawing. That's the real trick.

Since you also work in Pennsylvania, how do the varying environments affect your practice besides the obvious difference of working inside versus outside?
The city has a lot more mark making and graphics going on in the streets. In PA, we're on the river with trees and wild animals, flooded with a different energy, but I don't think there's any big change between the two as far as my attitude about making things. I just rented a studio for the winter, and that gives me more room to spread out, which is great.

What is most rewarding about making art for you?
Deciding that a work is finished.

What are some of the greatest challenges you've faced in your artistic career?
Just holding onto my studio after the recession. Those days sucked.

JUX

For more information about Bill Saylor, visit billsaylor.com

JUXTAPOZ.COM / BILL - SAYLOR

left
Installation view of
Audio Tuna Sunshine
Courtesy of Leo Koenig Inc.
2011

right
Muddy Waters
Collage, oil,spray paint
on canvas
76" x 99"
2010-2014

The Journal

January 2010

My first encounter with Bill Saylor's work was at a big group painting show at Canada called "New York's Finest."

BILL'S CONTRIBUTION WAS A GNARLY LITTLE OIL PAINTING OF THE HELL'S ANGELS WINGED SKULL INSCRIBED WITH "JET STREAM LOSER."

Bill Saylor Interview by Joe Bradley Photographs by Tim Barber

It was the weirdest thing in the room and I've been a big fan ever since. One scorchingly hot summer evening, Bill Saylor's ghost pops a can of Schlitz, reaches for the remote (Shark Week), shoots the TV, paints the TV ("Jet Stream Loser"), throws it out the window and eats it, too.

So, hi, Bill. What do you want to talk about? When were you born? How long have you been doing this for?

In 1960. How long have I been doing it? I don't fucking know. 30 years?

Did you paint in high school?

I painted somewhat in high school. A lot of drawing, painting, building, that kind of stuff. I just grew up that way, you know? Being from a construction family... at school you were either directed towards a trade or college and I was just good at building things.

What were you like in high school? A metalhead? Jock?

No, I was an outsider—hockey player.

A hockey player! Where was that? In Canada? Are you from up north?

It felt like it at the time. It felt like way up north. Just outside of Philadelphia. It was a big hockey town at that time. The Philadelphia Flyers had won the cup like three times. Yeah, it was good. I wasn't really a metalhead. I don't know what the hell I was. A motorcycle-repair-kind-of-punk-wannabe.

A motorcycle repair guy.

Getting into trouble...

Did you get into a lot of trouble when you were a teenager?

Yeah, actually I had to pay the cops a lot of money before I left.

You had to pay them off?

I had to pay off restitution for a few things, yes.

For what?

I think one night we went to a country club, my friends and I. We had this idea to steal all the golf carts. So we hot-wired them and drove out onto the back nine, and just rolled over all the flags. It was kind of a drunken night, some people got caught, and everyone sort of got busted at the end and had to pay up some money. Typical suburban Philly.

So did you go to college for art?

Yeah, out in California. I first went to Santa Barbara. In the beginning I was just skating, surfing, figuring out what I was going to do and one day I decided to start taking classes and to get into more serious training for art. I studied in Santa Barbara for a few years and, coming from a small town, I wanted to see the big city, so I went to Long Beach, Los Angeles to finish up college. The real education, though, was going to museums, galleries, just seeing as much as possible. A couple of trips to Europe...

Yeah, I think that seems to be what works. You need to actually see the work in the flesh for it to work.

You just go and see all the museums you can. Los Angeles was good, but New York was still so important back then, everyone felt like they really had to go there. Probably they don't feel that way as much anymore.

So when did you come to New York?

It was in 1986, or so. I think it was maybe six months before Warhol died. Basquiat, those guys were sort of dropping as soon as I got here. Things were shutting down. Everything just fucking folded.

Good time to arrive?

Oh yeah, it was just like coming to the closing.

You were just winging it?

I knew I wanted to go to New York and that is how it all started. There was no plan. I ended up working for Ross Bleckner for several months, watching his six floor building which housed his studio and taking care of the dog while he wasn't there. He was renovating and people were trying to break in from the scaffolding. That's when I first crossed paths with Kenny Schachter. There was a bar in the East Village, I think it was on Second Avenue, called Flamingo East, and Kenny had an apartment in a big high rise near it. So that was kind of his drinking haunt, and he got ahold of the upstairs floors above the bar where he was curating all these shows. If you met Kenny and would have a conversation and he'd like you he'd say, "Why don't you bring something for this show that I want to do." It was really casual.

So, did you meet contemporaries right away, like artists that you connected with?

Yeah, there was a downtown scene, all the galleries were closed and people were selling out of their apartments, so it really was Kenny's choice of finding these empty spaces and making deals with the landlords and installing shows for a month or two at the most, really. They were fun.

Is that how you know Brendan Cass?

Yeah. I didn't know him that well then, but we were in some shows together. I met people like Eric Oppenheim, Dennis Oppenheim's son. He was actually really involved in curating his own shows, sort of like Kenny. He curated a show, I think it was called "The Real Thing," and everyone would agree to have their studios open at certain times for a week and there were invitation cards with maps printed on them and people would follow the maps.

What was your work like back then? Were you mostly making paintings?

When I was painting and I had the space, ideas for sculpture would come up, and I would just sort of follow them through. I did both at the same time. In 1992 I had moved into a meat locker in the meat market, and there was this huge pile of stainless steel meat hooks. I ended up making a big tree out of the meat hooks and a steel tripod with a large metal pole, and Kenny chose it for this show he was curating down in Soho called "Unlearning." I was making paintings with seaweed. I was taking seaweed, mixing it into glue and squirting it directly onto stretched canvas, so the paintings also had a sculptural quality to them. It seemed like there were a lot more organic materials being used then. At the time, Marc Quinn was making his self-portrait head out of his own frozen blood, and Damien Hirst did the cowheads and flies.

Was there a connection with Julian Schnabel, or did I make that up?

Yeah, Julian and Ross Bleckner were pretty good friends and I got introduced to him through Ross, when I was living at his space. Ross told me that I should go work for Julian. So I would go and help with oddball projects. We were welding, moving really big paintings around, gluing plates. That lasted for years. There was a series of paintings that were green tarps with these black marks. Julian would tie the tarps behind his truck and drag them on the blacktop roads and somebody would go out onto the tarp to weigh it down, pretending to be surfing, until the black surface of the road had burned into the green tarp. It was a lot of fun and Julian was very generous. He rented the Warhol estate for years and when Hurricane Bob came through and destroyed the outdoor studio, I was asked to go out there and help rebuild it. I was there for a while and I had one of the bedrooms at the estate, and there were people walking up the beach stealing TVs. Again, I was watching someone's property and I put some artwork that was out there in my room to protect it. I had a Picabia, a late Picasso and some Picasso drawings in the bedroom. And we surfed a lot. At times, I would surf with Julian, I was surprised at how good he was.

You just moved all the art around?

I moved everything into the bedroom for protection. I lived like a king out there for about three weeks or so. Walking the beach, surfing, having friends out. So those were the kind of gigs that Julian set me up with there. It was good money at the time.

I've been thinking about Schnabel. The painting in your current show at The Journal Gallery made me think of him in a kind of different vibe, like minus the Schnabel bravado or something—

Exactly, yeah, it could be. I mean, I always kind of admired how he could do a series of works and then turn around and just start something else. He never had the fear of moving on and doing different works at the same time. So that definitely influenced my work process.

Tell me more about your major influences.

I was really into Beuys, like *The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*. You know that thick Beuys book with all those drawings? It's really nice, because they covered the idea of abstract painting, they covered the idea of drawing imagery out of nature, which I have always included, and that was someone who I really started with. And then of course you get into people like Paul McCarthy who just blows it all apart, he has a great style, and a great delivery with drawing, although I think a lot of people hate those drawings. And Artaud always made great drawings.

You mentioned Beuys, but the Germans like, let's see, Baselitz?

Yeah, I guess so. I mean I can't say that I really pursued them so much, but I definitely responded to them.

I'm just looking at this upside-down turkey.

I think I painted it the other way too and them spun him upside down. I'm not sure which way I even started that one, but yeah, I can see that reference.

No one can ever make an upside-down painting anymore, he owns it.

Yeah, he does, doesn't he. Polke was cool, too. I really love that crazy series of drawings he did—I think maybe it was at MoMA or the Whitney—those really giant paper works. Really cool. I tend to go with that aggressive delivery of imagery, whether it's Polke or Baselitz. I definitely like a faster delivery. I respond to de Kooning or Pollock, and the paintings by Americans that had a certain sensibility of space that I don't think the Europeans had. Well, Polke maybe, because of the way he put the imagery down.

Yeah.

For the paintings, it's a lot about the energy, and getting out in the city, that street graffiti that you see. I've been in the city for a little over 20 years so it's just an aesthetic that you're confronted with all the time. I've never been a tagger or interested in that sensibility, but I think it's just more the collective quality of it all. These massive walls I see, this delivery of information from all these different hands, or you know, thoughts.

Yeah. I mean, I don't like tattoos that much and I don't really like graffiti for the same reason. Like, I'd rather look at an unadorned building than a building with a bunch of shit all over it—

Sure, yeah.

But yes, something about the way they handle scale is really interesting.

Recently, I've been attracted to all these wooden facades that get put up for the protection of construction sites. All these posters that get ripped off, and then someone comes along and there are just all these failed attempts, combined together somehow. And Albert Oehlen would definitely be someone who represents that in the nature of his painting. I mean, he's outside of Baselitz and Polke and all these guys, even Kippenberger, but he kind of represents that in a way. He's just going to keep moving on, and make this painting work somehow, even though it has failed so many times, and he's going to ultimately come through with something.

And you've done drawings directly on plywood or on the wall.

I got invited to go out to Yerba Buena [Center for the Arts] in San Francisco to cover the walls with drawings. It was a pretty huge space. I mean, 15-foot ceilings and maybe 60 feet of wall space. And you have three days to get that done. I had a sketchpad, I had a few images with me, but then I would sit down and make drawings, and then just quickly blow them at 10-scale at the top of a ladder.

Freehand?

Yeah, freehand. There was no other way at the time. I had no scaffolding, I was just hanging off a ladder. You know, you have that fear that you're just going to fuck something up and it's going to look horrible. But it makes you focus, and you're just clear in your delivery at that moment. It's really rewarding.

Do you try to take everything in? Do you go to shows and—

Yeah, I definitely stay on it. I just like the activity of going and seeing something unexpected, just seeing good works, you know? I mean, I enjoy it just as a spectator. It's that hope that you're going to make something equal. That you're going to produce works that other people enjoy.

Is there any good art being made these days?

I really liked Sarah [Braman]'s show, the last one.

That was a breakthrough show I think. She's going to be in this issue actually.

Is she?

Yeah, Phil interviewed her.

That'll be good!

Husband and wife team.

I really liked her piece with the cubes that bisected that trailer cover. The way she used the transparent plexi and it looked like it shot straight through that. And it's funny... one of my favorite pieces down at the Judd Foundation in Marfa was this piece that Judd made, stacked boxes with green plexiglass centers to all of them. It looked like it was off of *Battlestar Galactica*.

I've never been to Marfa, you just did a residency there.

Yeah, at the Chinati Foundation.

So there's a lot of Donald Judd's work in Marfa, that's permanently installed?

Yeah, there is the Judd Foundation and the Chinati Foundation, which Judd started. It has 100 boxes that he had installed in the ammunition building. The other buildings around the 350 acres or so have Dan Flavin, and there's a Claes Oldenburg piece outside, a giant piece that he made. Roni Horn has two big copper pieces.

John Wesley.

He has work down there, yeah.

I always thought that was really cool.

That Wesley has an installation there?

Yeah. It's so not like the rest of the work. In Marfa did you feel like there were the ghosts of the people that had been there before?

In the studio?

Yeah.

The most recent one was Rita Ackermann and her paint was coming through the wall. They had painted it over but there were sections that were coming through. And certainly the floor, there was paint that hit the ground and splashed out, it was still all over the floor. They didn't bother painting the floors back.

That's strange.

Yeah, I could just see these patterns on the floor.

You make a lot of drawings.

Hundreds of drawings. A lot of the imagery is not even thought out at times. It's a real way of being free, discovering imagery as I make it, fleshing stuff out, and discovering new combinations of things.

Do you work from drawings when you paint? When you approach a blank canvas do you have any idea what you're going to do?

Things usually evolve into something different, you know? And at the end of it, I want to be surprised when I make a painting, I don't want to know what I'm doing completely. It's more fun to have created something that way.

Do you find inspiration in your trips out to Pennsylvania?

I guess just having that time to get out of the city, and to see things other than the city, obviously. Yeah, I just like the release of the city, being able to get out of it, definitely. And Chinati was cool for that, getting out to Texas was nice. Just being dropped in the middle of nowhere, that isolation. I definitely like bringing these elements of nature into the work, these organic forms.

The animals in your work... As far as your painting goes, there's this really abstract work and then there are these paintings where there is more drawing involved, these reoccurring characters, like the snake, the cobra, the shark.

Yeah, the shark images, those I just collected when traveling, especially in California—going out there and free-diving off the beach or scuba diving when I first got there, interacting with all the underwater world. When I first came to California, before I started college, I got certified in scuba diving by this ex-Navy SEAL. He was a really cool guy, but it was pretty intense training. He would swim up behind you in an underwater sandstorm and rip your mask off and your regulator out to make sure you could get back on track on your own. So I did a lot of scuba diving, surfing and free-diving. It was great! Coming from Philly, the most you see are muskrats and turkeys, so being dropped into the ocean like that was pretty good.

Yeah.

The ocean was like a huge playground. One day, we were 25 miles off-shore, and you're supposed to have the buddy system, you know. We were diving at 80 feet and I just managed to get lost. It was like a forest, all the kelp beds and reefs, and there was a big sinkhole in the reef, just a cylinder going straight down. At the bottom of it there was a shark, it was about as big as me, not huge, and it seemed very

sleepy, not trying to kill anything. I swam down and tugged its tail. It was a tight space, so the only way it could get out was to do circles around me, you know. I was just amazed by it. No fear, just a shark swimming in circles, super slow, so beautiful, until it was over my head and took off. You don't experience something like that often, it was a truly peaceful moment.

And you're painting these things from a loft in Bushwick.

Yeah, you know, the power of memory, or myth, or whatever.

The first work that I saw of yours was actually a painting that was kind of similar to the Hell's Angels skull but then the text was—

The text was subverted—

Yeah...

Or taken away, with another text on it. In the beginning I made a painting with the original logo, which didn't work out really.

Because?

Well, I've always liked motorcycles. My family, my uncle and father rode motorcycles and I had this fascination with that older outlaw culture—it's probably not outlaw culture today, really, but I made a painting with a Hell's Angels logo and it ended up being in a show that Leo Koenig did in Las Vegas. There were a lot of tradesmen around before the show opened, like electricians, sheetrock and construction guys, so the word went out pretty fast that someone had made a painting with the Hell's Angels logo. It really was more like a fun, loose and sloppy oil painting, not a very graphic rendition. And I think it was only five days into the exhibition that the gallery got a phone call.

"Hello. This is Sonny Barger—"

No, no. Three or four Hell's Angels came into the space and confronted the poor girl at the desk. They demanded that the painting be taken down right then. So she started making calls to New York to see what she should do and by that time the president of the New York chapter of the Hell's Angels started to call my gallery in New York to contact me and ended up speaking to Leo. Leo used to think he was really intimidating as a dealer, but this guy, the Hell's Angels president was so scary and those guys are right down here in the East Village, much closer than the Las Vegas guys. So there was no way I could work with that, and it was just sort of a one-off, maybe I made two paintings like that. The best thing was the description by the girl at the desk of one of the guys that came in. Apparently he was 6-foot-something and had a scar that went completely around the top of his head. I actually also had drawings in that show, one of which was a portrait of Sonny Barger.

Was that offensive?

No, they were like, "We actually like the portrait of Sonny Barger, it's pretty good," but the other one had to come down. Later, one of the Hell's Angels guys actually brought his family to see the rest of the show. I think that was one of the funnier parts of the story that they actually—

"Hey, you know, I actually like some of the art in here."

Yeah, "we are going to take in a little culture before we break your legs." But I really did like that logo and ended up wanting to keep something of that painting and move it forward and make some others. So I started subverting the text.

So, no problems with the Angels though? You just can't have Hell's Angels written on the painting?

You just can't have that, it's a copyright infringement. They are like a big corporation, except they will just come and beat you up, no lawyers at all.

Is it a liability?

Yeah, I don't even want to say that I sold one. Under what circumstances, but, it can't really even go into print.

I don't know if the Hell's Angels read *the journal*.

Do they read *the journal?*

They need to get their subscription renewed. Let's see what we can talk about to unburden you somehow. What's "the $100 handshake?"

I have this wall of phrases and titles. Next to it it says, "My dog won't stay." The titles come before the works sometimes. Do you ever have a title that you wish you had something you could put it on?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Well, it goes on the wall if there's nothing for it. $100 handshake. Yeah, I don't know.

A $100 handshake sounds like... I thought of this thing recently that's "the miserable ending." It's a massage where you get punched in the nuts at the end of it.

Oh, yeah.

I think it might go over though. It's like the anticipation is just killing you the whole time.

I'm sure somewhere out there there are people paying extra for that right now.


MELT
FACE

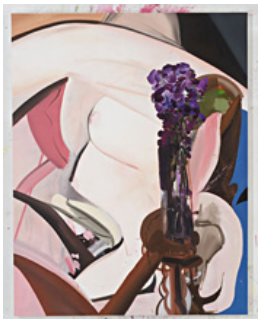
Crystal Headfish, 2008 Crayon on paper 23.5 x 18 inches Courtesy of The Journal Gallery and Leo Koenig

Untitled, 2006. Oil and Conte crayon on paper. 17 x 14 inches. Courtesy of The Journal Gallery and Leo Koenig

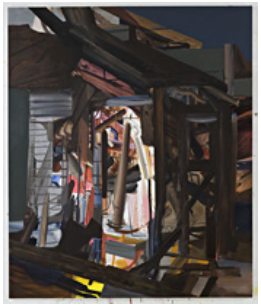
artnet

January 28, 2010

Les Rogers
Large There
2009
Leo Koenig Inc.



Les Rogers
Be Still
2009
Leo Koenig Inc.



Les Rogers
Becoming Home
2010
Leo Koenig Inc.

Julian Schnabel
Portrait of Leo
2007
"In There, Out Here"
curated by Bill Saylor
Leo Koenig Inc.

LES IS MORE
by Charlie Finch

Last summer the veteran artist Les Rogers sent me a jpeg of one of his new paintings from his New Jersey studio. The minimal image thrilled me, a kind of *Wuthering Heights* brown cloud on a cliff, called *Large There*, which seemed to be a take on that old vaudeville joke about the white picture that is really a polar bear in a blizzard.

My heart anticipated a whole gallery full of such minimal pieces at Rogers' new show at Leo Koenig, but I should have known that each painting is a new adventure for Les and not the repetition of a style. Quite unexpected, also, is the improbability that this modest, veteran painter has become an overnight celebrity, dating a famous gossip columnist and selling his new work to Elton John. Rogers' new show is mixed, as any show in the arrested Boyland that is the Koenig program (except for the ladies Nicole Eisenman and Wendy White) must be, but when Rogers is good, he is truly excellent.

The best painting in the show is Matisse-like pair of naked breasts encircling a vase of irises and another great painting appears to be a bodega falling apart as if descending a staircase. The beach blanket nudes featured on the invitation are a tad too derivative of Tom Wesselmann: this is always the dance with Rogers, who whimsically wears his influences all over his smock. *Large Bear* is indicative that this painter is best when he subtracts from his drawing practice and lets the color come forward, however damp.

Another Koenig painter, by the way, the expressionist Bill Saylor, has curated a grand show, concurrently, in the Koenig project space (which used to be the Buia Gallery). There is a killer A.R. Penck in this set from 1982, called *T-2*, a huge white on black study of the zodiac. Also featured is a hilarious portrait head of dealer Koenig, done in 2008, by Julian Schnabel, in which Leo resembles a befuddled knight of the Middle Ages covered in muck. This is simply one of Schnabel's all-time best.

Les Rogers, "Last House," Jan. 8-Feb. 20, 2010, at Leo Koenig Inc., 545 West 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

CHARLIE FINCH is co-author of *Most Art Sucks: Five Years of Coagula* (Smart Art Press).

The New York Times

January 30, 2009

The New York Times

Art in Review

By HOLLAND COTTER
Published: January 30, 2009

'PEANUT GALLERY'

The Journal Gallery

168 North First Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Through Sunday

The snappy young culture quarterly called The Journal maintains a storefront gallery in Williamsburg with a track record of good shows. "Peanut Gallery," assembled by the artist Joe Bradley, is the latest. At least some of the 20 artists tend to migrate between the art world's center and fringes. Mr. Bradley has caught most of them in their fringier mode.

This is not the case with Rita Ackermann, who shows one of her classic nymphets, or Dike Blair with his life-size gouache painting of a photo-realist eye. Keith Mayerson's portrait of Miles Davis is pretty suave; so is Nate Lowman's happy face with shades.

Things turn a little crude with a Dan Colen chewing-gum relief and a swipey Bill Saylor painting embellished with a torn dollar bill. But messy, in the right hands, can be nice, even refined. A Michael Williams picture with frosting-thick white paint soiled by dabs of brown and gray suggests an image of stars in a snowstorm. And although Leif Ritchey's buttons-and-threads collage is quite a tangle, I like to think of it as cloth coming together rather than falling apart.

Elena Pankova contributes a crisp Constructivist-style abstraction, but anyone can tell that deconstruction, or no construction, is the prevailing group trend. It's amazing the variety you can wrest from thrown-away and falling-apart. Erin Fierst, Otis Houston, Taka Imamura, Eunice Kim and the redoubtable B. Wurtz give a sense of the range. And the ever resourceful Artist Unknown -- isn't it time for a retrospective? -- is the mother/father of them all. HOLLAND COTTER

Time Out New York

August 24, 2006

John Connelly Presents, through Wed 30

By Time Out editors Thu Aug 24 2006

Installation view of “Kamp K48” Photograph courtesy John Connelly Presents

Time Out Ratings :

The pocket-sized indie art magazine *K48,* which artist Scott Hug has published semiregularly since 1999, is also well known for organizing exuberant group shows. In the latest one (conceived in 2005 for San Francisco’s Yerba Buena Center for the Arts), 51 artists ponder Boy Scout homoeroticism and the great outdoors, and mankind’s ravaging of the environment. Much of the work suggests by-products of an arts-and-crafts class—after campers have snacked on hallucinatory mushrooms. John Rappleye’s fanciful sculpture *Faireriewood,* with its phallic flowers, belongs in the gay-cruising area of an enchanted forest. In Suzanne Ackerman’s miniature, scruffy campground scene, *Boyskouts of Amerika,* a pair of black Ken-like dolls shed their fur getups for a little cabin hanky-panky. *The Hairy Hunchback* by Hrafnhildur Arnardottir (a.k.a. Shoplifter) is a towering silhouette made out of dozens of brown wigs and a cutout face (perfect for goofy photo ops at the opening).

Things get even more twisted in the gallery’s annex. Ghostly space aliens (ever notice how they show up only in the boondocks?) painted by Bill Saylor peer down from the walls. Crushed Dr Pepper cans and old issues of *Boys’ Life* litter the Astroturf floor. The disorienting sounds of mechanical noise and children singing emit from DVD installations by LoVid and Grant Worth, and a pitched tent serves as a canvas for Dominic McGill’s raging political slogans accompanied by illustrations of skulls and hanged priests. This woodsy setting, hardly an oasis, is more like Mother Nature’s funny farm. — *Les Simpson*

The New York Times

February 11, 2005

The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2005

NEW YORK'S FINEST, Canada, 55 Chrystie Street, Lower East Side, (212) 925-4631, through March 5. This exhibition of paintings by 19 mostly young and emerging artists has an eclectic, anarchic spirit. The common ground includes an interest in material, be it the store-bought fabric with which Joe Bradley conjures up a Minimalist seaman, or the Expressionist effusions of Anke Weyer and Wallace Whitney. Variations on a knowing but unjaded Pop-Expressionism prevail, mixed in varying ratios by Katherine Bernhardt, Brendan Cass, Bill Saylor, Carrie Moyer and Josh Smith, who has lately abandoned paper for canvas to good effect. "Laissez-faire, but mean it!" might be the collective rallying cry. *SMITH*

Frieze

November 11, 2003

Frieze

REVIEW - 11 NOV 2003

Bill Saylor

Leo Koenig, New York, USA

BY LISI RASKIN

Visting Bill Saylor's recent show of paintings and sculpture, 'Softail Project', was like travelling through a disruptive mechanism that belched exhaust fumes as it overturned the world order, which usually sites humans at the top of the food chain. Saylor manages this inversion by tapping into a reality that is anthropomorphic by design - here it's the animals that indulge in conspicuous consumption, skateboarding and heinous crime.

The show comprised a series of large-scale canvases and one sculpture. Like Saturday morning cartoons, Saylor casts members of the animal kingdom in starring roles. 'Softail Project' continues his focus on how the natural world will adapt to ecological disaster. For example, in the painting *Kingpin* (2003) a black bear and an octopus escape to their love nest on the banks of a mountain lake. In this piece inter-species mating becomes the logical, if not obligatory, practice for the continuation of life. Saylor's language marries skateboard and biker cult paraphernalia with expressionistic, impasto paint application and a variety of other image-making techniques, including the iron-on transfer of digital images. These disparate approaches embody the ways in which the human information infrastructure can be utilized to achieve a slew of perverse ends.

One of these is a solitary, mixed-media sculpture of a polar bear, *Perfect Drift* (2002), which towers above the mutated and mutilated fauna who inhabit the slime-green, oil-slick landscapes of Saylor's paintings. An amalgamation of fake fur, plaster and polystyrene, the sculpture sports a peg leg and two eye patches, and has suspiciously grown a third eye. It hovers on a pedestal that is laminated with aluminium foil and adorned with marker and paint pen graffiti, and looks as though it originated in a suburban skate park.

Saylor's penchant for applying human medical technology to the physical ailments and deformities suffered by animals only strengthens the analogous relationship between the skyscraper and the beehive. *Perfect Drift* hints that some animals will survive our environmental oversights, adapt to polluted wastelands, loot our stores, learn to use our technology and capitalize on our leisure, lifestyle and fetish commodities. Saylor's work rides a satirical line, implicating members of the animal kingdom and presidents of companies with an equally derisive gesture. In a painting entitled *I'm Not Only a Client, I Own the Company* (2003) the owner of the company is depicted as a self-congratulatory, omnipotent skeleton that beacons the viewer forward with a crooked index finger. The title of the painting is scrawled in a distraught font somewhere between the 'steal your face' of Grateful Dead notoriety and a carnivalesque school desk drawing.

Hung directly to the right of this painting, as if to present a cause-and-effect scenario, is the most overtly political work in the show, *Gasoline Dream* (2003). Here fanged snakes and humanoid life forms adorn the mayhem of chemical destruction, as petroleum products become petroleum people. The composition of this painting hinges on the dramatic presence of a two-headed, bald eagle whose innards are made from an iron-on digital image of a car engine block. In this case animal and machine conceptually and physically amalgamate as the ubiquitous automobile becomes a backbone and the fuel pumps, by extension, a vascular system. Even the iron-on image embodies flesh when set in the heavily impastoed paint surface that Saylor uses to depict the soft tissue of the eagle. Perhaps it is the leaching of petroleum-based chemicals from our washing machines that has produced such astonishing metamorphoses in the surrounding population. It is certainly this type of leaching that allows oil paint and iron-on transfers to exist seamlessly in the same space.

Decidedly absent from all of Saylor's paintings is any trace of blood, although maiming and decapitation, death and mutilation, are definitely in the air, much like the representations of violence in the cartoons to which they refer. Danger is also paramount: massive, wrathful and looming.

While Saylor's depiction of life after ecological disruption side-steps the hackneyed rhetoric of environmentalism, the violence it depicts hinges on the same entertainment world logic that allows Wile E. Coyote to spring back to life after a seemingly lethal plunge into a dusty canyon. Yet the premonition that animals will evolve in order to survive in the next stage of human civilization is, after all, a fascinating way for consumer culture to absorb the myth of nature and perpetuate itself in the process. Ultimately, what could be more alluring than an animal re-enactment of the wretched and excessive behaviours that are normally relegated to the most criminal and desperate human subcultures?

LISI RASKIN

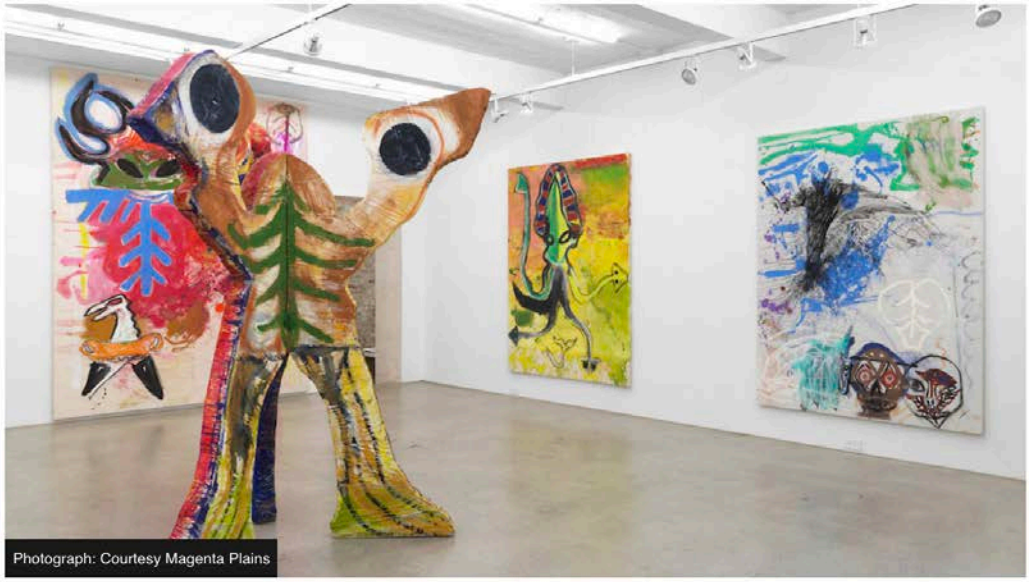
Time Out New York

September 30, 2019

The top five New York art shows this week

Check out our suggestions for the best art exhibitions you don't want to miss, including gallery openings and more

By Howard Halle | **Posted:** Monday September 30 2019



Photograph: Courtesy Magenta Plains

With New York's art scene being so prominent yet ever changing, you'll want to be sure to catch significant shows. *Time Out New York* rounds up the top five art exhibitions of the week, from offerings at the best photography and art galleries in NYC to shows at renowned institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim.

Photograph: Courtesy Magenta Plains

Art, Contemporary art

Bill Saylor, “Neptune’s Machine”

Magenta Plains, Midtown West **Until Oct 23 2019**

The threat to the world’s oceans posed by climate change—rising sea levels, acidification, warming water temperatures—provide the subtext for Saylor’s Neo-Expressionistic paintings, which include references to maritime mythology and life in the sea.