

IN BETWEEN

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**Penelec~Megahan~Bowman Art Galleries**

**January 26 - February 16, 2010**

**Zanele Muholi**, Diversity Scholar in Residence

**Mary Ellen Strom**

**THINK AGAIN** (David John Attyah + S.A. Bachman)

**Andrea Chung**

**Cobi Moules**

**Colleen Toledano**

**Jacinta Bunnell**

**Jacob Kincheloe**

**Jeannie Simms**

**Jess Dugan**

**Jesse Finley Reed**

**Jesse Jagtiani**

**Melissa Boyajian**

**Nahna Kim**

**Ria Brodell**

**Yasumasa Morimura**

Curated by Emily Chivers Yochim, PhD; Vika Gardner, PhD; and Darren Lee Miller, Gallery Director

# IN BETWEEN

## (re)Negotiating Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality

*Class, race, sexuality, gender and all other categories by which we categorize and dismiss each other need to be excavated from the inside.* - Dorothy Allison

In early 2010, we find ourselves in a culture characterized by both profound changes and intense fears. Just a year after President Obama's inauguration signaled hope and change, new terrorist activity on the United States' home front has reignited persistent and entrenched fears of *the other* - those whose identities lie somehow outside conventional norms of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nationality. Such fears are frequently soothed by social, cultural, and political practices that seek to define subjectivities as concrete and fixed - as black or white, gay or straight, male or female, good or evil. Still, continued debates about gay marriage, changing demographics signaling the impending "minoritization" of white Americans, globalized media, and the election of our first biracial President each gesture toward a culture in which traditional definitions of identity will simply not work. What's more, our responsibility as informed and concerned citizens interested in social justice impels us to see the spaces in between, to resist the urge to force our fellows into preexisting categories, and to welcome new visions of self and subjectivity.

The artists featured in *In Between* urge us to question and challenge lines of identity. Though each of the artists

works toward different specific ends, what unites them is a refusal to conform to banal and limiting myths about prevailing systems of political representation, discourse, and their categorized place(s) within those systems. Working from their own personal experiences of gender, sexuality and ethnicity, the artists also blur the lines between art and activism and the personal and political. Compelling and thoughtful work, like that featured in this exhibition at the *Penelec~Megahan~Bowman* Art Galleries at Allegheny College, has affected social and legal reform throughout the world.

If contemporary activist-art-makers stand on the shoulders of those who've come before, then they are also stepping forward to create new foundations for social change. Their work helps us to see the gaps in our own understanding and challenges our preconceptions. Gender, sexuality and ethnicities are not simple binaries. We're all required to recognize and question the complicated ways in which cultural ideological hierarchies (often internalized) serve to distribute power, privilege and opportunity throughout human societies.

The artwork here serves to remind us that things are not as simple as gay and straight, male and female, us and them. There are many spaces in between.

- Emily Chivers Yochim, PhD, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts
- Vika Gardner, PhD, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies
- Darren Lee Miller, Gallery Director / Assistant Professor of Art



## ZANELE MUHOLI

*Insula Yomuntu, 2008*

Image courtesy of the artist and Michael Stevenson, Capetown, S.A.

Vika Gardner: Tell me about the panties installation.

Zanele Muholi: The panties were bought at the market, and many of them were purchased second hand. I want to represent the gender issues, and the violence that they represent. I bought them in different places from Johannesburg

to Capetown -- they were too rent, too dirty, sometimes only 20 cents each. Women feel so dirty after being raped. Women feel as though they're second hand.

In South Africa there is an idea of curative rape: perpetrators think that it will "cure" a lesbian. If you google "Black lesbians in South Africa," you'll find more about it. The rapes have become more pronounced since there has been more talk about gay marriages.

I have about one thousand panties now, but I want to collect more than a hundred thousand.

There's an assumption that we're okay; there's much spoken about, but also secret. It's the same panty that would be used for forensics, to try to solve the crime. Who wears the panties -- the unknown quality of it -- is part of the idea, as is the cross-gender aspect, with women in men's underwear and men in women's panties. Panties are associated with women's bodies. Men can't go into a store and ask for women's panties. There's a black series, where I used menstruation to show violence and rape to show suffering. It depends on the mood. I've done photos with lesbian mothers. We have a gay church here locally, and I have a photograph of a pastor who is a lesbian mother and rape survivor.

VG: How do you capture that?

ZM: Visually, every individual has a story to tell, every individual has layers. We are dealing with the constitution that we have, witnessing curative rapes. So for me, you cannot talk about history without scribbling it, photographing it. What I'm doing is my contribution. It's a calling: it's a must, I have to do it.

VG: In the photographs I've seen of a prior installation, there are questions about touching and tasting. Do you want gallery visitors to imagine the panties being worn?

ZM: Some of the text in the prior installations is mine, about the smell and taste. I want people who are at the show to interact with it. I don't want people to come in and just look. I want them to question how they think of their mother, their lover?

VG: What about the text in other languages?

ZM: There are eleven languages spoken in this one country. They are just about communication.

VG: Do you want people to physically interact with the panties?

ZM: I want them to engage, I want to share it with them. Is it my issue or a global one? There is also space for the viewers to write on the walls as well. If we think of the panties having been grabbed by force, the viewers share in an understanding of that. What color, what size? It's up to the person who owns it to take control of it.

All my projects are based on activism. There is a lack of visual history of the issues I've observed. Before FEW -- a safe space for lesbians in Johannesburg -- there wasn't space for it. Each photograph represents a certain issue: black lesbian youth, lesbian couples and their challenge, wedding photos. One of the issues is safer sex for lesbians, since curative rape can result in HIV transmission. Some of the photographs have spoken to that issue, but it's still not well resolved for me.

This is about my story, about my community. There is a need to create the boundaries to be assertive about.

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegcheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## MARY ELLEN STROM

*Nude No. 5, Eleanor Dubinsky and Melanie Marr, 2006*  
Image courtesy of the artist and Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston

Darren Lee Miller: A few months ago I read reviews in the *Boston Globe* and *Big, Red & Shiny* of your recent collaborative work, *Four Parallel Lines*, with your partner, Ann Carlson. Do you always work collaboratively?

Mary Ellen Strom: My practice is not strictly collaborative. I work with other people when it's fruitful and fulfilling for both of us. On some level, working together with Ann infuses our work with things we're both interested in. Lately it's been intensive investigations into movement-based performances along with material that's critical and involves different groups of people. We're working with lawyers, day laborers, a cow, firefighters, and ranchers. We make portraits that refute conventional boundaries of portraiture. The sitters have a lot of agency in what is produced and that makes the work truly collaborative.

DLM: You mean, you're collaborating not just with Ann and other artists but also with the subjects in your work?

MES: It's a different methodology than we've used before. It is fulfilling in terms of process and the people we work with are finding this to be a potent experience. In *Four Parallel Lines*, you see 2x4's being dragged across the ground. We did that work during a one-month residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts, just north of San Francisco. We hired four Guatemalan construction workers and, as part of their contracted work for us, we showed them lots of artwork and talked with them to hear their responses to the various images and ideas. They all responded strongly to Walter DeMaria's 1968 piece, *Mile Long Drawing in the Mohave Desert*. They described DeMaria's ephemeral, unfinished piece as a metaphor for the border, imaginary lines, for walls that were never built. We staged *Four Parallel Lines* on the beach, early in the morning so the water looks

milky, like whitewash: another metaphor. The piece is shown as a large projection and uses the video convention of the loop. The four men drag 2x4's through the wet sand to make four parallel lines and then the lines are washed away. The action begins again so there is no real beginning or end. Some people read it as commentary on labor, others are interested in the mark making, and some have read it as a piece about mortality.

DLM: You use the loop in *Eleanor Dubinsky and Melanie Marr*. It's a re-enactment of Courbet's painting, *Sleep*, which was originally commissioned by a 19th century Ottoman diplomat who apparently collected paintings of lesbian erotica.

MES: Yes, Khalil Bey, the Turkish ambassador to France during the Second Empire. I think he also commissioned Courbet to paint *Origin of the World*, (a close-up view of a woman's spread-eagle crotch). Some say the work is objectifying but it is also ahead of its time. Lesbian erotica was fairly prevalent in the Second Empire but the normative view of sexuality was that women were not sexual beings. Men generally didn't believe women wanted to have sex. There was an acceptance of affection between women but culturally there was not a real belief in erotic relationships between women. It wasn't illegal for women to be together but...

DLM: But, there's no need to name lesbianism if it doesn't exist; and the cultural belief was that women had sex with men out of a sense of duty or obligation?

MES: In the second empire lesbianism is pictured only as a male fantasy, not as a real option. Homoerotic images of women were a bit of a fashion. Look at the work of Flaubert, Balzac, and Gauthier. Courbet stood apart and I adore him for it. He was a provocateur. He would make inflammatory statements to get people's attention and go against social norms. One of the things he did was paint poor people, not just the bourgeoisie. He depicted the working class in silk drapery and pearls. *Sleep* is magnificently beautiful and it's a sensational, sensual, huge narrative oil painting.

DLM: Do you want us to know something about Eleanor Dubinsky and Melanie Marr?

MES: I want you to know it's them. My humble attempt at recreating this piece is to give the models their subjectivity. They are not objects for your gaze but they are women with names. They are artists with names. And yet, they are very much aware they are being looked at. Unlike the subjects in Courbet's painting, Eleanor and Melanie know you are watching. Melanie makes direct eye contact with the viewer. I think of it as a personal challenge, as in, is this possible to do? If I were using more cinematic language I think it would be distracting. It wouldn't be getting at the meaning that can come from slowed-down, deep looking.

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# THINK AGAIN'S QUEER YOUTH MANIFESTO

1. The right to my history and to learn about lesbians, gays, transgenders & bisexuals as part of my basic education.
2. The right to ask for support without fear from friends, family, employers and teachers.
3. The right to choose partners and friends without feeling shame.
4. The right to feel safe from violence or prejudice at home, school and work.
5. The right to community and to mentors & role models at school & in my neighborhood.
6. The right to explore my body and to decide when, where and with whom I experiment sexually.
7. The right to my ethnic and racial identity and to refuse to choose between my sexual identity and my heritage.
8. The right to information about my body, including accurate information about becoming sexual, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.
9. The right to be seen as a whole person and to reject stereotypes which define me only in terms of sex.
10. The right to respect.

**THINKAGAIN**, David John Attyah + S.A. Bachman  
*THINK AGAIN's Queer Youth Manifesto*  
Image courtesy of the artists

S.A. Bachman: I want to talk a little bit about who we are. THINK AGAIN are two people interested in reproduced, mass produced images, visual analysis, and the cultural underpinnings of power structures.

In *Popping The Question*, a Mobile Billboard that criticized the privileged and problematic institution of marriage (gay or straight during a time when marriage has hijacked queer politics. We asked people to connect their personal desire to be married to the wedding-industrial complex (i.e. sweatshop labor, conflict diamonds, other extractive industries). Why do radical queers and feminists want to keep police out of the bedroom and laws off their bodies while also seeking state sanctioning and licensing of their relationships? This kind of project is when THINKAGAIN is at its best, when we're synthetic. We pull together unexpected structures, commingling ideas that people may not otherwise connect.

*Actions Speak* – a 17'x67' photographic image in the Worcester Art Museum that is accompanied by images projected on the exterior of the building – connects private acts of violence, domestic violence, public violence, state sanctioned violence, media violence, and HIV/AIDS.

Darren Lee Miller: Is there a risk that your work might be seen as a series of progressive PSA's?

SAB: Sometimes people ask if we're being too didactic, too prescriptive. We are super-aware of this question while we're working. For example, the mobile billboard was in motion, moving quickly, so maybe a viewer only saw one line of one part of the image until we stopped at specific sites. There are multiple aspects, it is multivalent and even the most cursory view allows some level of cognition. It depends on how much time the viewer is willing to spend with the work. We want to make sure there is always something that is accessible. Also, there are personal implications. We are not finger pointing, but investigating our own relationships to these issues.

DLM: Posters, postcards, and billboards, public projections, video and web resources are modes of dissemination that connote consumerism. To what extent are you influenced by media culture?

SAB: Tremendously for both of us. In my early work – before David and I began collaborating – I was using appropriated images. I dealt with the veracity of the photograph, critiquing media representations of “The American Dream.” Early on I limited myself to work with the size of the original materials and that turned out to be a good thing as it offered an external constraint; otherwise, I would have spent months just working on collaging or enlarging or whatever. David also has a very longstanding interest in mediated culture, mediated images and appropriation.

DLM: I think I see a postmodern influence in the ways you use

text, especially in *Queer Youth Manifesto*. We see funky, grungy, disintegrating typewriter fonts (like Trixie), cramped, disjunctive letter spacing, and overlapping leading.

SAB: In *Mind Control* and *Queer Youth Manifesto*, we wanted to make work that was transparent, in that it's not about the computer and not about design but that those things allow the content to come through. It's not so much about theory as content. We're using the pop cultural visual tools of the time and allowing them to undermine themselves. I think we all come to understand injustice at an early age, even if we can't articulate it that way. In *Mind Control* we're talking about conformity, where it comes from and how it operates.

DLM: Do you think the projected image is a visual confrontation?

SAB: That depends on the context in which the projection is seen and where the viewer is coming from. It's important to confront social injustice and inequality, but even more important to offer validation to the disempowered, to give them agency. The projection is temporary. The more important thing is that the building is cognitively transformed. The architectural space will be forever queered in the minds of the viewers.

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## ANDREA CHUNG

*Come Back to Jamaica, 2009*

Image courtesy of the artist

Emily Chivers Yochim: Can you tell me how you got started as an artist?

Andrea Chung: I always wanted to be an artist and I had to sort of fight my way into art school. My very Caribbean parents weren't thrilled with my decision, but were supportive enough to send me to Parsons School of Art and Design in New York City. I was 17 years old. I was an illustration major but really felt unsatisfied with it. I stayed in New York until summer 2002. Then I moved to San Diego

with the man who is now my husband. We lived there for a few years and then I went to Maryland Institute College of Art for my MFA. This tremendously changed my life. My director, Frances Barth, was an amazing mentor and really taught me the importance of studio practice. Being surrounded by my peers also opened my eyes to new ways of making and understanding work. I think the other artists in my program definitely influenced the ways I make work. For example, when I began the program I was a painter. By the end of my first semester I was making sculptures, something I'd never done.

ECY: What is the catalyst for making your work?

AC: My work initially began with me investigating my family. I don't remember my grandmother. She died when I was very young. I did, however, meet my grandfather who was born in China. He died when I was around 10. As I've gotten older, I've grown more interested in my family, particularly the circumstances that brought them to the Caribbean. I began collecting stories and images and this turned into some of my earlier paintings and sugar works. Sugar in particular is a very significant material. My grandmother's leg was amputated due to gangrene caused by diabetes. She eventually died during the surgery to amputate the second leg. Sugar was the largest Caribbean export during British colonial rule. From there, I began to look at the relationships materials, specifically foodstuffs, have with migration patterns (both voluntary and involuntary) into the Caribbean. I researched archival images and found photographs of itinerant cane laborers and discovered they were used to

promote tourism. I thought about my grandparents and these laborers and tried to figure out a way to honor them. I decided the best way to do so would be to give them a day off, and so I began removing them from the images. I see a parallel between colonialism and the tourism industry and I suppose I'm trying to exploit that.

ECY: I find your work extremely compelling - and the removal of the individuals from the images speaks volumes. You've really already answered the next question, I think, but I'm going to throw it out there anyway. You said that you grew up in Houston with Caribbean parents. Can you elaborate a bit on how this affects your reading of identity?

AC: It's funny because the collages and the cut outs were really just a joke for me. I found them extremely hilarious to make. I was being an asshole when I first started playing around with the idea. I am still shocked at the response to the work.

ECY: How do you balance humor with cynicism in your work?

AC: I am a researcher and my husband was a history major: that's really had an impact on me. I realize that nobody wants to think about the side effects of colonialism, especially when you are either the former colonizer or still benefiting from the results of colonialism. When I was in school, I was one of two black students, and nobody wanted to talk about issues of race. Things tend to be more accessible when they're funny but I honestly don't know if these are funny to anyone that

isn't familiar with the history. When I started making the sculpture out of spices, I wanted to specifically communicate with other West Indians or anyone that was familiar with the culture. Your sense of smell has a powerful way of bringing back memories. I suppose I'm attempting to do the same thing with the cut outs, tears and collages. Most of the images I've used are familiar and iconic. Memory is a big part of the work, and the difference with the cut outs and collages and animations is that I'm asking the viewer to question his memory. My work doesn't speak just to ethnicity, but larger issues of globalization, history and economics that resulted from colonialism.

ECY: Can you discuss your influences?

AC: The documentary *Life and Debt* by Stephanie Black really got the ball rolling for me. It's based on the essay, *A Small Place*, by Jamaica Kincaid. If I could be like any artist it would be Janine Antoni. We both share an affinity for materials. There are artists near my age that I look to who have been supportive. Hank Willis Thomas has definitely been someone who has looked out for me. Fahamu Pecou, Rene Trevino, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum are all amazing artists and good friends. I believe we share similar interests and we are supportive of one another. Oh, I almost left out one really important influence, Yinka Shonibare.

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## COBI MOULES

*Full Bodies, 2007-2008*

Image courtesy of the artist

Emily Chivers Yochim: Can you tell a bit about how you've gotten to where you are today.

Cobi Moules: Starting as a young kid I was always painting and drawing. I remember being obsessed with representing things as realistically as possible. At some point during my undergraduate years, I dropped the idea of doing any of the things I had no real interest in doing and started pursuing art more seriously. Years later here I am.

ECY: What is the catalyst for making your work?

CM: My work tends to go in multiple different directions but the base for all of it lies within my identity as a trans-guy, and my experiences as I am transitioning.

ECY: Where did you grow up?

CM: I grew up in Oakdale California, which is in the central valley of California. My experience there was very conservative and religious. Gender and sexuality outside the masculine-male and feminine-female paradigm were not talked about, except to express disapproval. My only window into other gender and sex possibilities was the *Jerry Springer Show*, which thrives on outrageous spectacle.

It took me a long time to come into my own and begin to understand the complexities of identity.

ECY: Are you more interested in presenting problems or solutions?

CM: I am more interested in presenting my own personal experiences rather than either a problem or a solution. Problems do present themselves, but most of my work does not have that goal. One painting that presents a particular problem is the double full-length self-portrait.

ECY: Do you see yourself as part of a particular lineage?

CM: I definitely see dialogues happening between my pieces and different art historical pieces, but I feel it would be a stretch to say I come from any particular lineage. I have many influences, but here are just a few: Ron Mueck, Vija Celmins, and Anthony Goicolea. What has drawn me to the sculptural work of Ron Mueck is the exaggeration of scale along with hyper-realism, and how scale plays into the psychological read of the figures. With Vija Celmins it is the effort of capturing a single moment and the acknowledgment of subtle yet significant differences from one moment to the next. In Anthony Goicolea's work it is the exploration of sexual desires through the multiplication of a pubescent self.

ECY: Can you describe a typical day in the studio?

CM: There is nothing too exciting about my studio practice. I usually get into my studio around noon. Then I get started. I take a few snack breaks but other than that I stay pretty focused for long periods of time. I usually leave around midnight, give or take a couple of hours.

ECY: To what extent are you influenced by mediated pop-cultural images?

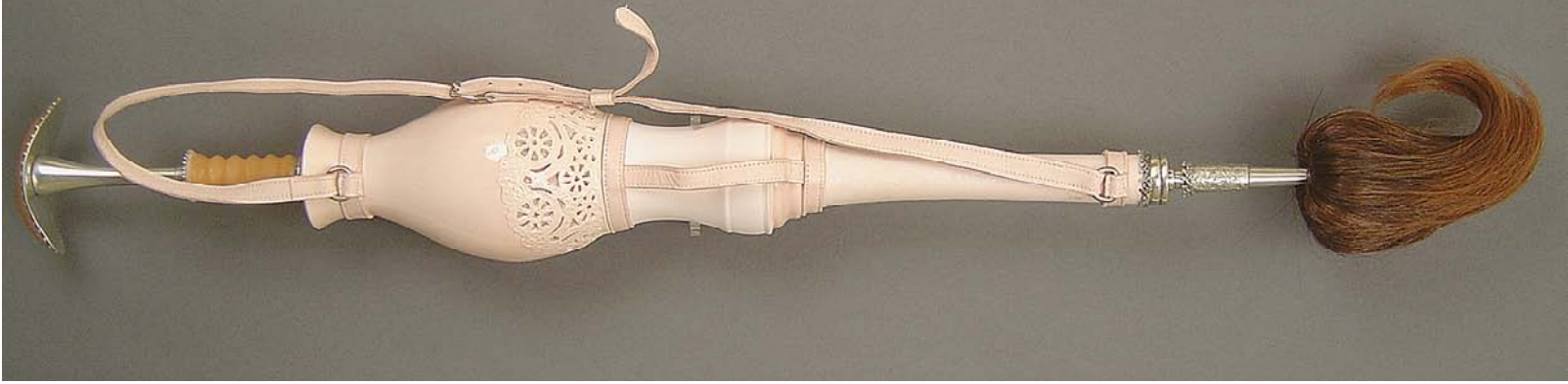
CM: I am influenced quite a bit, particularly in regard to clothing and hair. I am working even more directly with pop-culture imagery in a current project (fulfilling a childhood fantasy) by portraying myself as 4 of the 5 members of *New Kids On The Block*.

ECY: How do you balance humor with cynicism in your work?

CM: I am finding myself moving more into humor and away from cynicism. This has a lot to do with where I am in relation to my transition as well as how I am feeling about myself and my relationship to my surroundings. My work is a response to a physical, emotional and psychological self that is continually changing. There are moments of fear of the unknown and unwanted possibilities as well and pure joy and excitement.

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## COLLEEN TOLEDANO

*Smother Blush*, 2005

Image courtesy of the artist

Colleen Toledano: The two pieces in the show are part of a body of work where I developed feminine weaponry for my own fantasy use. The piece that is inspired by a rifle and a pump blush applicator is called *Smother Blush*. I imagined the piece would kill my attacker by suffocating him with blush. Not only would I kill the person with this “blush gun” I would also leave him a rosy shade of pink. I thought by doing this I would be seen as a compassionate killer. The second piece is a cross between a baton and a mascara wand, *Tangle Wand*. I was thinking about how

women tend to fight. We almost always go for the hair of the other person. This baton is used to hit the person in the head, twist and entangle a large quantity of hair, and then pull. All the pieces allude to function but they are heavily based on fantasy.

Darren Lee Miller: Are you responding to a kind of structural violence against women while simultaneously working to psychologically castrate (or at least feminize) the men? For example, women are statistically more likely to be assaulted than men? The assailants are usually men. You’re proposing to kill the guy and then doll him up?

CT: Initially, when you look at the pieces the beauty and the intricacy of the sculptures are what you notice. It isn’t until you

really look and notice the sharpness of the metal or filed points that you understand these are weapons  
I approached this body of work by trying to make an uncomfortable situation such as defending myself more comfortable, to give myself more confidence. I knew psychologically it would be difficult unless I had control over the physical part of it. I don't think most people carry around guns or batons, and most people I know have never handled a weapon.

DLM: You're taking signifiers of femininity and turning them into deadly weapons. There's something really funny and campy and kitschy about that.

CT: I see them as totally ridiculous but at the same time they're coming from a real place of fear. I'm terrified about being jumped while walking to my car, or being raped.

DLM: Is humor usually a part of your work?

CT: I think some sort of dark humor is always involved, allowing the piece to be less confrontational, more inviting. My approach to content is humor plus subtlety. The materials are very much about hard and soft. When those two materials are next to each other they emphasize the complementary qualities.

DLM: It's interesting to think about form and materials, the way they have imbedded meaning, syntax. Are there other artists working this way? People you look at?

CT: I do choose my materials very carefully. I just saw a Damien Ortega show that I was really excited about. I saw a strong consideration for materials and their meanings in his work.

DLM: Can you talk about materials and what they mean? Is craft as important as the other content?

CT: Always. Historically, the content was seen in the functionality of the object. I am an artist who uses clay, but I'm not always seen as a "ceramic artist." When I use porcelain I am interested in the fact that at some point it was incredibly soft and then became incredibly hard. There are allusions to fragility, delicacy and also a level of elegance and formality. The show pieces allude to function: false function. I was reading a lot of post-feminism at the time.

DLM: What is post-feminism?

CT: Third-wave feminism would be considered post. Feminism now is very different from what it was in the late 70's and early 80's. If you look up girl culture you will find tons of information. It's really about embracing what makes you feminine.

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**Unless things change around here, we  
don't want to be boys anymore.**

## JACINTA BUNNELL

*Girls Will Be Boys Will Be Girls Will Be...A Coloring Book, 2004*  
Image courtesy of the artist

Emily Chivers Yochim: Can you tell me how you got started as an artist?

Jacinta Bunnell: When I was very young, I knew only a few artists, and they didn't even identify as artists. These were working class people who did not feel they had the luxury to be full-time artists. My father and my aunt were two of them. They would sit and draw with me, or we would study ideas from craft books together. Approaching all work with an artistic eye was woven into every aspect of their lives, from addressing an envelope to constructing gardens. I watched them carefully, as any young person studies her environment. I realized that being an artist first meant having a steady hand, which simply comes from practice. Throughout my life, I have always been artistic, just never took it or myself as an artist seriously. It was about eight years ago that I began to make art central to my life. I had done the get-a-fulfilling-job-right-out-of-college-thing but noticed after several years that some big part of myself was not being expressed. It was then that I left my job and slowly started working on my creativity: writing, drawing and painting. I have not looked back or regretted taking the bold step to leave the "stability" of that job since.

ECY: What is the catalyst for making your work?

JB: I want to make a difference in the lives of young people. Sometimes it is as big as giving a young LGBTQ person a reason to not kill themselves that day. I want to provide media ex-

amples of real life: something other than the hyper-masculinity, hyper-femininity and compulsory heterosexuality that the mainstream media bombards us with. I want people to be proud of themselves. If you do not see yourself in print anywhere, how do you know you are not the only one that thinks, acts and feels as you do?

ECY: Where did you grow up? How does this affect your reading of gender and sexuality?

JB: I grew up in a small town in Northeastern Pennsylvania. No one spoke of feminism, gender variance, racism or sexual orientation in my town, unless it was in a crude, mean-spirited way. Boys that did not present themselves as typically male were tied to trees by football players. Awful stuff. I had to wait until I moved away from there to learn about so many things.

ECY: Who are your influences? Do you see yourself as part of a particular lineage?

JB: Of anyone, Kate Bornstein's work was the most influential to us when we were creating these coloring books.

ECY: Can you describe a typical day in the studio?

JB: When working on a coloring book, I just keep a notebook on hand to jot down all the ideas that bubble up over the course of a day: I might be inspired by something I witness on

the playground or in a conversation with a stranger, maybe something I see on a billboard. When I am fine-tuning the pages for the coloring books, it is just me quietly sitting at a desk, sometimes laughing to myself, or batting ideas around with my collaborators. Aside from making coloring books, I am a painter. I surround myself with scraps of found paper that I weave into a canvas, put on NPR or some music, and lose myself in the act of creating.

ECY: To what extent are you influenced by pop-culture?

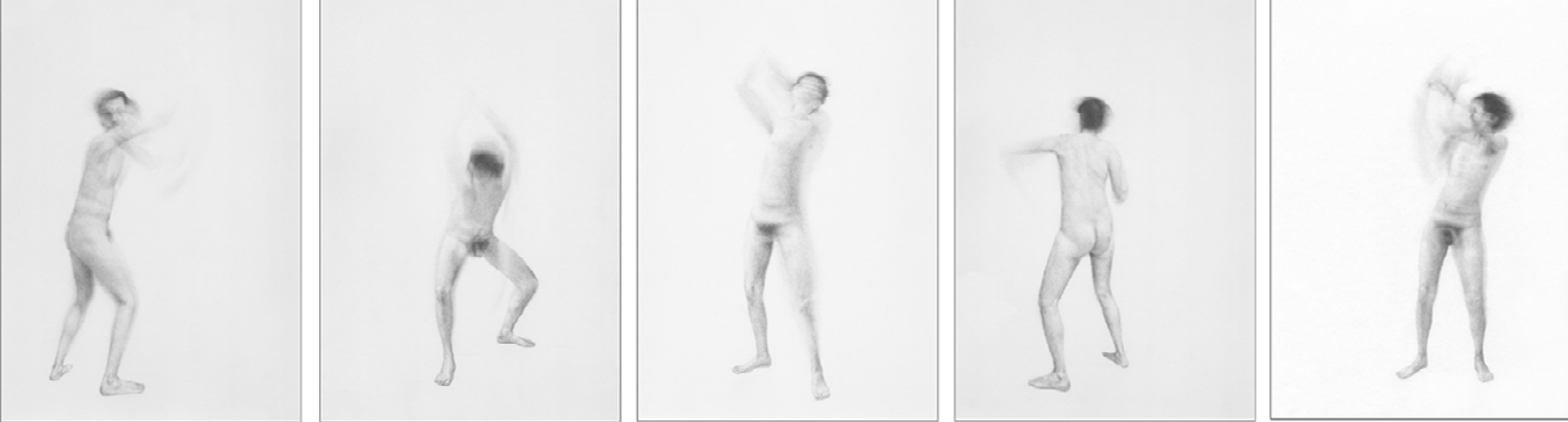
JB: I am not tuned into pop culture very closely. But I make myself aware of children's books and observe the way gender, sexual orientation and family structures are handled therein...and try to fill in the gaps with my work.

ECY: Your work is lighthearted.

JB: I try to infuse all of my books with humor. Humor is a useful tool in bringing people together, despite divergent world views. We can help people absorb the vastness of a problem if they are not on the defensive from an attack. Once you have opened someone's heart with a joke, a shared smile or a good laugh, you are better able to do the hard work of liberation together.

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## JACOB KINCHELOE

*Untitled, 2009*

Image courtesy of the artist

Darren Lee Miller: In your *Butthole* drawing I feel a tension between sacred and profane. The image is both inviting and repulsive: the grotesque sublime. The mark making is so sensitive, so soft. It's like a whisper, except, there it is, a guy's asshole and nut sack in our faces. They are the objects of my queer desire. How do you feel about my observations here? Do you see the piece as a self-portrait?

Jacob Kincheloe: This piece began with an interest in focusing on conventionally unregarded areas of the body. I aimed at exploring the parts that are often left out when

we aestheticize the figure. I started working with my camera, taking pictures, looking, and trying to find ways to examine the unexamined. The figure appears susceptible and vulnerable, but it also creates tension in its potential for sexual agency. I wanted grace, beauty and meticulous craft to describe an orifice of excretion and a positioning of the male body that is usually relegated to the grotesque. We're referring to the piece as the *Butthole* drawing, but it's really untitled specifically because I'd like for the viewer to be allowed a multivalent engagement with the image and the pose. The picturing of the anus is provocative and becomes the focal point of the piece, but there are a number of different points of entry (no pun intended) into the drawing. I like that the pose of the figure suggests different things to different people. A lot depends upon where the viewer is coming from in relation to their own body and desire.

The performative aspect is my starting point—I'm testing my body, experimenting, paying attention to the ways things feel alongside how they look. Then, the process of drawing is a way for me to slowly understand the content. This question of self-portraiture is a difficult one. The work is undoubtedly personal in part, but it's more about an investigation of the complexity of the corporeal condition as it belongs to humans generally. I'm using my body as an instrument for experimentation, examining how it behaves, how it looks, what it can do, what it makes me do.

DLM: Do you think of your work as performance art?

JK: I'm invested in interdisciplinarity, and a number of different mediums are involved in generating the work. Performance is a big part of it, but I'm really happy calling it drawing. I think the kind of image I'm building invites a viewer into a different sort of visual experience than they would have seeing the performative material in action. Whether or not the viewer has any personal experience with drawing, it is apparent that the making of these images was a slow labor of care. Within the space of the drawing, I'm able to invest myself in this delicate, layered rendering that speaks to time and effort in a certain way—hopefully in a way that one can relate to the time and effort involved in being in the world in one's own body.

DLM: Can you trace a conceptual trajectory between the sensual figure we see in the *Butthole* drawing and the tormented figure in the 5-panel piece (shown above)?

JK: The *Butthole* drawing was all about taking pleasure in the body. It is looking at the joy of the body's insularity and the individuality of its structure. The 5-panel piece is looking, on the other hand, at the horror of being trapped within such a space. I think it's a universally familiar impulse to want to escape the confines of this cage. Certain elements of our identities—race, sex, physique, to name a few—are not of our own choosing, but are physically thrust upon us, and we are made to grapple with playing out the roles they prescribe. We also are confronted with desires that do not seem to fit within the space of our own figure. So we end up hungering for ways to break these lines of limitation. I saw that in using the blurred motion captured by my camera, I could render such a rupturing of the boundaries of the body, and picture this desire to lose the edges that confine us to our physicality.

DLM: Is there an underlying anxiety about mortality in all the work?

JK: The notion of mortality plays a part in the work. We're bounded by time in the same way that we are strangely bound in corporeality. But the anxiety I'm trying to picture is less about the terror of what may come, and more about the peculiarity of the body's machinery in the moment.

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegcheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## JEANNIE SIMMS

*Dui and Friend, Hong Kong 2009*

Image courtesy of the artist

Vika Gardner: Can you tell me about the photographs in the show? Where were they done?

Jeannie Simms: I went to Hong Kong first, and saw the women gathered there years before going and photograph-

ing them. I was in Hong Kong visiting an ex-girlfriend. The Indonesian women were more out than the women from Hong Kong. The Indonesian women were there as migrant workers. Interestingly, there were many levels of migrant workers; the photographer booths were staffed by migrants from mainland China who went back and forth, and the Indonesians were working for local families.

I wanted to photograph women being photographed; the intersections of the backgrounds were interesting. Some of the photographs in that series include the photographers as well. It's very rich: the backdrops are emblems of mobility with economic liberation.

VG: Do you see this work as liberation?

JS: Luxury is something they don't have, but something liberating happens when they leave Indonesia. They support their families and therefore are held in very high esteem. The money they send home helps to build houses and can start off a newly married couple with an independent household. Back home they're basically very poor, farming to feed themselves. In Hong Kong they achieve a certain status. Hong Kong itself is very consumerist, so they get a consumerist feel under their belt. Not materialist. They dress up on Sunday [and go to the park], but they send almost all of their money back home. The consumerism comes from the scale of the advertising in Hong Kong, and from the enormous number of malls there.

VG: Was your first trip as a tourist?

JS: The first trip was as a tourist, but then I received a fellowship with the Chinese University. After I had met some of the women from Indonesia, I talked my way into the training school.

VG: You might be accused of objectifying pretty “Oriental” girls.

JS: I make sure there are titles and text with the images; it’s important to understand them. The context is important. One of the things that motivated me was the US dialogue about queer lifestyle and marriage. I’m not that interested in that dialogue, and wanted to look for a new kind of sexuality connected with migrant labor. Marriage here is such a limited conversation, and it seems unaware of the world. We have so much, and have moved away from the world’s concerns. We have a profound phenomenon of being disconnected from the goods we consume -- we don’t have a picture of it.

The picture of the two women lying on the grass was taken behind the agency in Indonesia, where the women were waiting to go to Hong Kong. They waited for as long as a year. After my work in Hong Kong, I talked the owner of the agency into letting me talk to the women, and I spent a month getting to know them. I taught them charades, and asked about their dreams and fantasies. We produced the works together. I’d show them stills of Jean Genet’s “The Maids” and Mary Cassatt, images of homosocial domestic labor so that “maids-in-waiting” would have a connection to it. The TV in Indonesia has very melodramatic dramas, so they wanted to play with

dramatic visuals. They would be inspired by something they were looking at. I felt like I was showing them something that I had some familiarity with and they infused it with their home. Some of the women had their own ideas of how they wanted to be photographed.

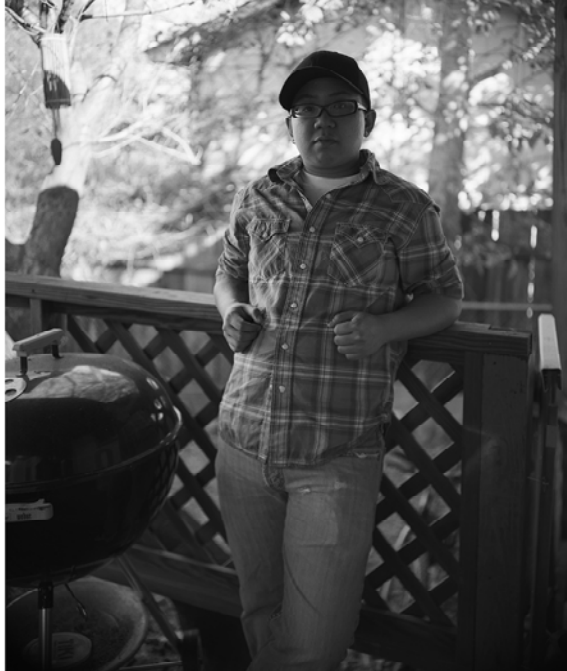
VG: So it was staged, but not necessarily staged by you.

JS: We also made videos. The women were waiting to be placed in Taiwan; participation in the photographs was totally voluntary. I was working with a local artist. The women were living in that compound for a year, bored out of their minds. They weren’t allowed to go home and visit their families; the families could come once a week, but those who lived further away didn’t see their families. Some of those who were busy learning Mandarin didn’t participate.

There’s a physical affection the women develop with each other, a coziness I wanted to capture. Both the women in this image have short hair. They have to have their hair cut when they become maids. They’re told it’s because they prepare food, but there’s a worry that if they’re too beautiful they’ll seduce the husband, and short hair is not considered seductive. It’s important to say that I’m showing them Mary Cassatt; the “orientalization” of the women is part of the conversation here.

### **For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegcheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## JESS DUGAN

*Ely on Porch, Little Rock, 2008*

Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Kayafas, Boston

Vika Gardner: What happened in 2005 that made you start photographing trans people?

Jess Dugan: The trans project began after I had chest sur-

gery; the first picture I took with my new camera was one of my mother and I without our shirts. I'd only had the camera for two weeks and so I was experimenting with both my new body and the new camera. I feel very similar and different at the same time with my mother. I was trying to understand more fully the different choices we made/make. I moved on from that to photographing others, people I knew and then people I did not know well.

VG: Do you use text to direct a viewer's experience?

JD: I'm not trying to represent narratives, or even identities. I know some people include more information on the subjects of the photographs, but I use only their names, and let the context of the images tell more about the gender. Because I'm using a 4x5 camera, I have to have a lot of participation with my subjects. The large format camera means the subjects need to be still for longer than a snapshot would typically require. The classical format and the shallow depth of field don't immediately mark anything as trans, but leave it open. I try not to show trans as a fetish, or a subject from a horror film. I want to balance it. It's like everyone else but it's not. I don't want to sugarcoat it, but rather present people as they are. I want to include scars, to show the moments of change. I've tried to do photographs of testosterone injections, the more obvious moments of transition, but they haven't worked well as photographs.

VG: Do you see yourself as part of a lineage?

JD: When I began, I looked at the radical photographers -- Mapplethorpe, Opie -- I liked that they were in your face, I was interested in that. Then I started working with the photographs of a more classical style, like Walker Evans and Dorothea Lang, and started fusing the two.

VG: Is your work grounded in a location?

JD: I think my work is specifically American. It can be very Boston. I'm not sure how my experience as a photographer would change in a different place; I've only been to Vietnam. I work full time at the Harvard Art Museum, and rent a space for a darkroom in Cambridge. I also do commercial photography, weddings, and so forth to pay for my art. Because I'm working full time and having to do other paying work, I don't have time to hang out with my girlfriend or hang out in the park on a nice day the way people with fewer commitments can. It does mean that having the time here visiting my dad (in Arkansas) includes visits to people I know here who I have been photographing, like Ely. I plan to go photograph him while I'm here. So I don't want to be too negative.

VG: Tell me about the picture with the shirts hanging out to dry?

JD: I have done a lot of portraits, and I wanted to expand into more still lifes when I did that. I had just done laundry and hung it there, and I liked it. The t-shirts -- white t-shirts -- are symbolic of masculinity for me; I wanted to wear white t-shirts. Gender sometimes seems to me as a uniform, something malleable. The pictures of drag kings also sometimes seem that way: a hyper-charicaturized masculinity that individuals put on and take off.

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegcheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## JESSE FINLEY REED

*The Merchandise, 2005 (one of five panels)*

Image courtesy of the artist

Emily Chivers Yochim: What is the catalyst for making your work?

Jesse Finley Reed: I have been thinking about this, and how it relates to the work I do in Berlin. In many ways it relates to the outsider role I inhabited growing up as a queer boy. Feeling shut out by my peers led me to find ways to express myself. Art classes provided me with freedom and confidence, an affirmation of the value of my outsider status. I think one of the main reasons I love working and living in Berlin is because I am an *Ausländer*.

My inspiration comes from what I see, my experiences, what I read/have read -- really everything around me. I spend a lot of time researching my ideas, thinking about what I want to make. My artwork, despite being reductive and cold at times, it comes from a very personal place, and is concerned with exploring, defining and appropriating the idea of the queer.

I am fascinated with how ephemeral materials, including lighting, makeup, and decoration can transform bodies, hallways and nightclubs into uncanny spaces. I create a visual image or object in disjunction with quotidian representations of my subject: nightclubs are brightly lit, rather than dark and sexy; soap is wet and dirty, rather than fresh and clean; unremarkable male bodies are superficially transformed into hyper-masculine models. The implication of queerness plays an important role

in the reading of my work, not only as a suggestion of strangeness or difference, but also in the work's relationship to sexual orientation.

I feel ambivalent about ghettoizing myself as a gay artist, although it's not a category I shy away from. Sexuality is the last bastion of discrimination in our society. To call someone a black artist or to say that an artist makes black art or Asian art would be offensive and politically incorrect; however, this is not the case with gay art. I always find it amusing when, during a studio visit, someone says to me, "well, we like the work, but it's just a little bit too gay." My experience living as a gay/queer man is the perspective from which I produce work, and I don't see any need to apologize or heterosexualize my work in order to please different audiences. There is something in my work for everyone, whether it's blatantly about homosexuality or not.

ECY: Are you presenting problems or solutions?

JFR: Neither, I am interested in the in-between. Problems are of course inspiring in some capacity to me, but I am more interested in creating polemics. I seek to shift and question meaning. This leaves an opportunity for the viewer to reach her own conclusion about what she is seeing. I inspire conversations and hope the dialogue will lead to solutions.

ECY: Who are your influences?

JFR: My influences are varied and vast, however two visual artists that have played significant roles in my development as an

artist are Robert Gober and Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

I am not particularly interested in fitting myself in the history of art, or locating myself in the canon. This is the role of art historians and cultural studies experts. I see myself as a conceptual artist using photography, and I have come to understand my practice through reading post-modernist rhetoric.

ECY: Are you influenced by media culture?

JFR: With the explosion of visual information in the world (digital snap shot cameras, the internet, the 24 hour news cycle), it's the job of artists to create visual work that contributes to this already image-saturated world in thought provoking and meaningful ways. I always tell people that the world does not need another work of art/photograph/film/dance that is not somehow inventive, or creating a new conversation. Paintings should not be made just because their creator is a painter. Photographers should not take pictures just because that is what they do. There needs to be a reason; otherwise it's just a hobby, which is wonderful, don't get me wrong. But visual artists need to be acutely aware of the content in their work. Interpretation depends upon each viewer, and if we are going to add more to the world of images and stuff, then we should understand why we're doing it.

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegcheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## JESSE JAGTIANI

*Paradise, 2004*

Image courtesy of the artist

Darren Lee Miller: Could you describe this piece?

Jesse Jagtiani: I wanted to create a humorous video that depicts mutants living peacefully together. I merged male and female body parts to create little animals. I filmed my body parts and those of my partner. Everything else was collaged

from images I found on the Internet. The children singing about what they love in the world was also found online.

DLM: What struck me was your decision to concentrate on creating fanciful creatures out of male and female sexual organs. We see flying breasts and monkey-like buttocks swinging from the trees, eating fruit. There's a peacock-like penis grazing near a stream.

JJ: My intention was to make them cute. I love to play with eye candy, to have it look cute at first glance but, upon close inspection, it is anything but saccharine. My work is concerned with recent developments in technology, embracing both expected and unexpected cultural contributions of science. In this case, gene technology and the way we use natural resources were on my mind. I want the work to be fun, but to leave the viewer feeling uneasy.

DLM: Inclusion of the children singing connotes ideas of lost innocence. Does that play into the bio-tech and environmental themes as well?

JJ: There is juxtaposition between the cute image – supported by children singing – that triggers a nice and sweet feeling; and the deeper meaning and intention, the fear of the future, the unknown, the unforeseeable.

DLM: When I first saw the piece I thought of Hieronymus Bosch's famous triptych.

JJ: I was more influenced by Paul Chan. He had just given a lecture at CMU, but I can see how you thought of Bosch. I was looking at Chan's 17-minute digital animation, *My Birds, Trash, The Future*. He currently has a piece at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston, incidentally.

DLM: Another thing that struck me about *Paradise* is that, although we see mutant creatures constructed from human sexual organs flying and climbing about the scene, there is nothing to connote gender. In fact, your work seems to create a space outside of traditional binary gender designations. Are you concerned with gender roles in your work?

JJ: Yes that is something I examine in several pieces of my work. I have a problem with the need to categorize gender and sexual identities in contemporary culture. I feel there are in-between spaces that are not definable, and in my opinion the ways we currently define gender create unnecessary social issues.

DLM: Do you think of yourself as an activist?

JJ: No. I think I'm a selfish person, an artist who has the urge to express her opinion. If it helps open other minds and creates new spaces for dialogue, all the better.

DLM: Do you think of it as collaborative work?

JJ: Maybe yes, but not consciously. I create work about things that affect me, concern me, and I'm sure generations before

have had similar issues. My work is collaborative but not democratic in execution. I tell my models what to do and they can give their input, but the ideas and the actual directing, composing, editing, collaging, animation, and finding media images is all up to me.

DLM: Can you describe your methodology (if you have one)?

JJ: Well I normally have an idea and my ideas often have digital imaging to them, so the execution has to be figured out before the shoot. In the case of *Paradise* I shot our bodies in front of a green screen. Then I separated the body parts, reconnected them in different ways and started animating. When I had the animated creatures done, I created the background from found images. Everything was separate and collaged together. My last step was laying in the sound track.

DLM: In the case of *Paradise* the sound track simultaneously supports and undercuts the image. So, what are you reading now?

JJ: I was reading *Loving Big Brother*, by John E. McGrath for a class I taught: *Live Video Performance, Power Dynamics in the Contemporary*. The book is about surveillance, mainly.

### **For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegcheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## MELISSA BOYAJIAN

*Grand Odalisque (for Said)*, 2006

Image courtesy of the artist

Vika Gardner: Can you describe what you do?

Melissa Boyajian: I'm a performer, using irony and humor. My projects are designed to question gender, homophobia, and sexism. I also question established, academic discourses. In my photographs, I am both the subject and the

artist, poking fun at the male artist's gaze. I problematize the trope with gender ambiguity, masculine women and feminine men. I created the *Odalisque for Said* during my first year of graduate school. It is among the works I abandoned.

VG: Why?

MB: I was confused about what I wanted to do. I didn't want to work on the things that I had been working on with photography. I wanted to use other mediums and subject matter; I was feeling inexperienced. I didn't know enough of the canon of art history, theory, etc. I created subjects that were meaningful for further work, although I didn't know it at the time; they turned out to be powerful.

VG: What are your influences?

MB: Said's *Orientalism* was a major influence. My grandmother, May, had recently passed away. My family is Armenian; my parents emigrated from Anatolia, modern day Turkey. I became interested in representation of the Middle East, such as the *Odalisque* from 1814. Said borrows from Foucault's contrast between the Occident and the Orient. It creates a misconception about the East or the Near East being feminine, docile.

I followed Ingres' *Odalisque* because of the idea of fantasy. The original was based on letters from the wife of the British ambassador to the Ottoman empire, Lady Wortley Montagu. Ingres' projects his own ideals based on his imagination from Lady Montagu's letters. This depicts people -- a fetishization -- based on her writing, even though the closest he ever came to the Middle East was Italy. I started thinking about my own identity and my parents coming from Anatolia. I had been questioning my gender identity as well. I began playing with ideas of female masculinity to confuse the gaze.

VG: Do you see the work as revealing problems or solutions?

MB: More problems than solutions. I think that's all art can really do, critique or reveal problems. It's not good to use force to change anything.

VG: Why did you use a beard in this image and not a mustache or other facial hairstyle?

MB: I don't know if I am being too simple saying that I was working with the idea of the 'bearded lady.' The beard did not signify anything religious or anything from Bear culture. The bearded lady, however, aside from being a subject of laughter, ridicule or a "schizophrenic" subject with "gender confusion" problems, is also an individual pushing the boundaries of gender and normality that is appreciated in the queer community, like circus entertainer, writer and bearded lady Jennifer Miller.

VG: Do you think orientalism as a theory is over?

MB: It's still really relevant, especially in wartime. People's attitudes toward Arabs and Muslims are ridiculous. It's about war and domination. There's still work to be done.

VG: What's your intellectual lineage?

MB: I am in dialogue with a circle of international Armenian writers/activists/artists. Shushan Avagyan (writer and activist), Chris Atamian (writer and director), Mamikon Hovsepyan (gay rights activist), Arpi Adamian (artist and activist), and Nancy Agabian (writer/professor), Arlene Avakian (activist/writer/professor), Adrineh Der-Boghossian (artist). I have an active interest in social/political theory (Said, Foucault, bell hooks, Judith Butler and Benedict Anderson). I am also shaped by Armenian history and stories told in my family.

VG: Given that this image is on some level based on a woman's view of the Ottoman harem, did you consider a woman's gaze in this image?

MB: I've read Lady Montagu's letters from Turkey; she was extremely impressed with the role of women. She thought they were freer than the women in England.

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegHENY.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## NAHNA KIM

*American Monument, made in China, 2008*

Image courtesy of the artist

Vika Gardner: Tell me more about the snow globes.

Nahna Kim: I want people to pick them up and play with them -- they're not precious objects. I like art you can touch. Museums are maddening to me because you can't touch anything. I always want to get close to things.

VG: Why Mount Rushmore?

NK: It comes out of an interest in American tourist monuments. In Georgia we have Stone Mountain, a granite formation that is well known. The front of the mountain has the Sons of the Confederacy, commissioned by the Daughters of the Confederacy. There is laser animation done to Dixie. I never understood it as a child, but later I understood it was kind of a fucked-up place! I watched all this red-neck stuff, and thought about the original intentions versus the actual lived experience of the South. Afterwards, it seemed to answer a different message. The same person who started Stone Mountain (Gutzon Borglum) carved Mt Rushmore. I thought about what Stone Mountain meant and then wondered, who goes to see Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota? And the "fathers of America" versus the sons of the confederacy? I couldn't go to South Dakota to see the real thing, so I decided to make it for myself. It symbolizes a kitschy America. I wanted to look at old school

America. I got in an RV, and set off to look at monuments and explore. We often don't explore because we've seen it already in photographs. We don't think of the monuments as destinations. We all fail to see America as destinations. At the same time, when visiting, there's a fine line between being a tourist and an alien. What's made for America and what's made for tourists?

VG: Where did you go?

NK: I went to state parks, Graceland, the Statue of Liberty, the Washington Monument, World War II internment camps in Arkansas, the Martin Luther King monument, the JFK library. They were accessible -- they pulled me closer to the founding things of America, the things that helped build the America that we know. I wanted to go to all these other kinds of places, the ones that were on the side of the highway but no one tears down.

VG: What's the connection?

NK: They're all kind of terrible disappointments, beautiful but unfulfilling. I felt naïve: if I visit a place, can I own a piece of it? With a photograph, you own and connect with it. But somehow it also divides and conquers by the act of photography. The photographs all ended up being unfulfilling. It stems from the idea that I don't identify with Korea. It's who I am, but I'm never fully accepted when I'm there, I'm only accepted as an American.

I went to Korea before graduate school. When I was there, the

people all looked like me, but the lesson I learned was that I'm not Korean: I smell American, look American, I don't talk like a Korean. It was a rejection of the Motherland; these people don't like me. I couldn't be there, I came back 3 months early. It was heartbreaking in some ways. So I wanted to go out and connect with America.

Living in Brooklyn, it's really diverse. People don't ask who you are, they ask what do you do and where are you from. It's my own stubbornness: why can I not be American, Why can't I be from Georgia? Why is it so impossible?

VG: How are hyphenated-Americans left out of "monumental culture"?

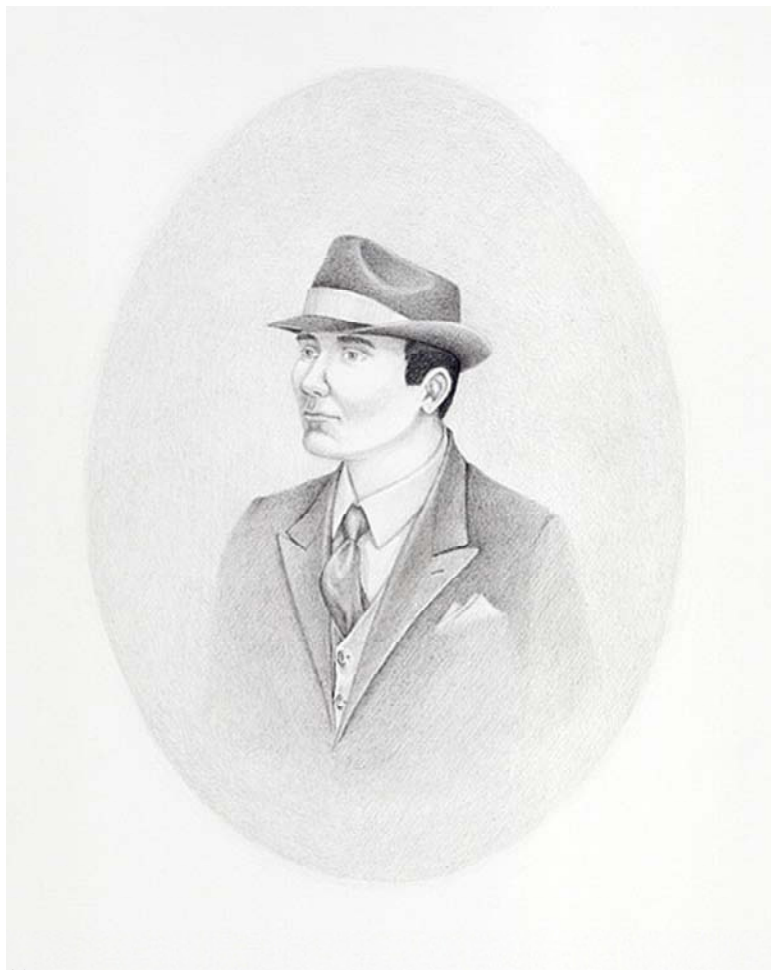
NK: When you're a hyphenated-American, you're different, a kind of half-assed-American. Race is a construct, and hyphenating seems like another construct, a way to make you less than the sum of your parts. Not knowing is what makes you crazy, but what difference does it make? Is race in all cultures? Are all people looking for commonalities?

VG: Why snow globes?

NK: There's something magical about snow globes. It felt like the best way to combine a trinket, a monument, and a possession.

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegheeny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## RIA BRODELL

*Self-Portrait with Fedora, 2009*

Image courtesy of the artist and Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston

Darren Lee Miller: In your statement you say the work “intermixes how the different figures I’ve identified with or admired, coexist in my mind, and how I see myself in them.” Most of the characters you’ve drawn are completely fictitious, or in the case of Sinatra, it is the mediated, film image of the man, not the “real” Sinatra. Can you describe how you’ve been influenced by images of film and TV stars?

Ria Brodell: So far in this body of work the “figures” have been specific individuals that I related to in some way, sometimes they were pop culture icons like Cary Grant or Freddie Mercury. Mostly it was the image of them, their “idealness.” The way they carried themselves, the way they looked or dressed: their pop culture personae. Other times it was more general, like mountain man

I think they functioned – when I was a kid, and for this series – as a jumping off point. They’re people I remember being really infatuated with and somehow knowing that yes, they aren’t real, and there is no way that when I “grow up” I can become them...but they were symbols I guess. Like a movie, I suppose, an escape.

DLM: When I first saw the drawings I thought you were drawing yourself as men to redefine your gender against a masculine ideal but I now think it’s more complicated than

that. The gender you cast for yourself isn't exactly neutral but it's also not easily defined.

RB: Yeah, they are definitely me as them, me if I could be Cary Grant or maybe me as another man who is casting himself in the image of Cary Grant.

DLM: Or, in the case of St. Philomena?

RB: With the religious pieces it's not necessary me identifying with them but more of what would they think of this. My middle name is Philomena and I've always had issues with it and with my first name too, Maria. I think I did have a close and fairly good relationship with religion as a kid; the saints were very real to me. I just feel bad that I never liked the names my mom chose for me because it was such an important and faith based choice for her.

DLM: I think there is earnestness about the work that I usually associate with childhood.

RB: Yes it did start with childhood, young adulthood etc. I think the work is just now starting to veer towards adulthood and how I feel about my gender now.

DLM: Do you name or define your gender?

RB: Not unless I have to check a box.

DLM: Yet we are expected to put ourselves into neatly defined categories repeatedly, everyday. Trying to step outside of the box becomes a politically subversive act and requires courage. To what extent does the political content of your work inform the viewer's reading?

RB: Without knowing my gender the work runs the risk of being straight up portraiture, so even there I'm forced to sort of choose a box. I hope to move in a direction with the work that starts to talk about undefined areas. It's hard. So far the work has been images of me portrayed as these masculine types, and I definitely relate more to the masculine side of things, so I guess I've always wondered, where does that put me? I'm trying to address that in the work.

DLM: Do you feel you're taking ownership of your spiritual self in equally undefined ways?

RB: Maybe. If you leave the "religion" out of it and just think of the saints, or least some of them, as the humans that they were, they were pretty interesting people. With the religious pieces, I was showing my relationship to these saints, how much they meant to me. Putting them with these "self-portraits" may have been my way of asking for approval or hoping not to be judged.

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.allegheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>



## YASUMASA MORIMURA

*Marilyn Monroe 1, 1999*

Image courtesy of the artist and Luhning Augustine, New York

We regret that Mr. Morimura was unavailable for interview at the time of publication. If we are able to interview the artist at a later date, the conversation will be posted here:

<http://webpub.allegheeny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>

**Zanele Muholi, Diversity Scholar in Residence**, was born in Umlazi, Durban, in 1972. She worked as community relations officer for the *Forum for the Empowerment of Women* (FEW), a black lesbian organization, and as a photographer and reporter for *Behind the Mask*, an online magazine on lesbian and gay issues in Africa. Her solo exhibition *Only Half The Picture*, which first showed at Michael Stevenson Gallery in March 2006, traveled to the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg and the Afrovibes Festival in Amsterdam. She was the recipient of the 2005 Tollman Award for the Visual Arts, the first BHP Billiton/Wits University Visual Arts Fellowship in 2006, and the 2009 Ida Ely Rubin Artist-in-Residence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

**Mary Ellen Strom** (b. 1955) is a video artist who utilizes media technologies in service of social critique. Her installations and site-specific projects unearth submerged narratives within art, history and cultural discourse. Her work has been exhibited in a wide range of contexts including museums, galleries, passenger trains, large-scale video projections onto industrial sites and mountain rock faces, in empty retail stores and horse arenas. She has received recent awards including the Artadia Award, Fund for Art and Dialogue, 2007 and the Augustus Saint-Gaudens memorial Fellowship Prize 2006. Recent project grants include LEF Foundation, Art Matters, Arts Partners, Rockefeller MAP and Creative Capital among others.

## THINK AGAIN (David John Attyah + S.A. Bachman)

David John Attyah (b. 1967) resides in Los Angeles and is on the faculty of Glendale Community College in Los Angeles. S.A. Bachman (b. 1957) resides in Boston and Los Angeles and is on the faculty of The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Their public projects are documented in the monograph, *A Brief History of Outrage*. Exhibitions include the Worcester Art Museum (Worcester); Museu d'Art Contemporani (Barcelona); Exit Art (New York City); Maryland Institute College of Art; Outpost for Contemporary Art (Los Angeles); and many others.

**Andrea Chung** (b. 1978) lives in Sugarland, Texas. Her work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions and in a solo exhibition in Arlington VA in 2008.

**Cobi Moules** (b. 1980) is an MFA Candidate at the Tufts University/ School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and holds a BFA from San Jose State University.

**Colleen Toledano** (b. 1978) lives in Chicago and is on faculty at Chicago State University. Exhibitions include University of Minnesota; The Mutter Museum, Philadelphia; Matt Burton Gallery, NJ and others.

**Jacinta Bunnell** (b. 1971) is a reformed cheerleader who loves making things: friends, art, homemade books, anything with a gluestick. Her favorite things in this world do not require electricity.

**Jacob Kincheloe** (b. 1983) is an MFA Candidate at the Tufts University/ School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and holds a BFA from the San Francisco Arts Institute.

**Jeannie Simms** holds an MFA from UC Irvine and is on the graduate and photography faculty at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Her works have screened at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (06), Courtisane Video and New Media Festival in Belgium (06), the ICA in London (02), and many others.

**Jess Dugan** (b. 1986) is a Master's Candidate in Museum Studies at Harvard University. Solo exhibitions include New England Institute of Art; Gallery Kayafas, Boston; Massachusetts College of Art and others.

**Jesse Finley Reed** (b. 1974) divides his time between Brooklyn, NY and Berlin, Germany. Exhibitions include Tape Galerie, Berlin; Chashama Gallery, New York City; Scope Art Fair, Miami, FL; Galeria de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City, and many others.

**Jesse Jagtiani** (b. 1975) in received her diploma in Visual Communication

from the University of Arts Berlin, Germany. Her work has been exhibited throughout Europe, the U.S.A. and Asia.

**Melissa Boyajian** (b. 1980) holds an MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and a BFA from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally, including the Boston Young Contemporaries Annual Exhibitions in 2006 and 2009, and the Mills Gallery, Boston Center for the Arts. Melissa works as a pastry chef and freelance videographer/photographer and resides in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Nahna Kim** (b. 1980) is from Atlanta, GA and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

**Ria Brodell** (b. 1977) lives and works in Boston, MA. Recent solo exhibitions include Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston; Swarm Gallery, Oakland, CA; Cerasoli Gallery, Los Angeles, and others.

**Yasumasa Morimura** (b. 1951) lives and works in Osaka, Japan. Solo exhibitions in the past two years include Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac (Paris); Byblos Art Gallery (Verona); John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Wisconsin); Luhring Augustine (New York City); Shugo Arts (Tokyo); Reflex New Art Gallery (Amsterdam), among others, and he has been part of many distinguished group exhibitions. His most recent monograph, *Yasumasa Morimura: Requiem for the XX Century*, features a selection of the "art history" photographs that first brought Morimura to international attention.

About the Curators: **Emily Chivers Yochim**, PhD teaches in the department of Communication Arts at Allegheny College. Her recent book, *Skate Life* examines how young male skateboarders use skate-culture-media in the production of their identities. **Vika Gardner**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies Vika Gardner, teaches Islamic studies at Allegheny College. **Darren Lee Miller** teaches photography in the Art Department at Allegheny College and is the Director of the Penelec~Megahan~Bowman Art Galleries.

Penelec~Megahan~Bowman Art Galleries  
Doane Hall of Art  
ALLEGHENY COLLEGE  
520 N. Main Street  
Meadville, PA 16335

[www.alleggheny.edu/artgalleries](http://www.alleggheny.edu/artgalleries)

# IN BETWEEN

## January 26 - February 16, 2010

**For the complete artist interviews:**

<http://webpub.alleggheny.edu/dept/art/artSite/inbetween.html>

### GALLERY HOURS:

12:30-5:00 Tuesday through Friday  
1:30-5:00 Saturday  
2:00-4:00 Sunday  
Closed Monday



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