

Crawl Space

Scrawl no 1

WOULD YOU LIKE TO START AGAIN AT THE BEGINNING?

Raymond Boisjoly, Josh Hite, Samantha Stagg, Lilith Yacub

Curated by Jessica Powers

by Emily Ann Pothast

Built into the question posed by the title of this exhibition (and Raymond Boisjoly's piece of the same name) is the assumption that things have beginnings. On a human scale, they certainly seem to. We experience them all the time -- and yet, behind the façade of every beginning is a sense that even the very first something must have been preceded by something else.

For cultures that view time as cyclical, there need be no paradox here. We are born, we bloom in our own time, and we die; individual fruits from a tree whose life cycle is so imperceptibly slow to us that we might as well call it "eternity." Like the ever-descending stairs in Josh Hite's untitled video, life moves on with or without us -- passing again and again that point in our earliest memory where we're sure it must have started.

The artists brought together for this exhibition have the common experience of being caught in a personal, cultural, and artistic moment with a desire for self-transcendence. For Lilith Yacub, this transcendence happens through an expansion of linear time. Her captioned photographs of natural and man-made landscapes contain nested narratives about the passage of time in a given space. The woods are ancient, the concrete enduring, and the youthful escapades fleeting. These overlapping shifts in scale place Yacub's fictional assertions of adolescent independence under the lens of deeper perspective.

Samantha Stagg's "Cohabitation" is hopelessly dysfunctional as a dwelling, however impermanent (though her statement informs me this problem is in the baggage of the beholder). The artist's hypothetical construction takes note of the precariousness and rootlessness of the living arrangements and relationships cobbled together by the young urbanites she represents. This insight is joined with a sense of longing for a simpler and more direct manner of living.

Raymond Boisjoly begins with rootlessness, scanning our shared material vocabulary for workable sources of tradition and connectedness. His "Expanding Fields" reads like a portable totem pole rendered in Christmas lights. It is an unlikely hybrid: the body of an indigenous monument with the face of a pseudo-religious spectacle and the soul of neither. By



© Raymond Boisjoly (2009) 'Would You Like to Start Again at the Beginning?'

pairing the visual trappings of two profoundly disparate value systems to produce an ambiguous, culturally-charged chimera, Boisjoly simultaneously examines and transforms the experience of meaning that arises through the production and preservation of artifacts.

Indeed, there are plenty of beginnings here. The four young artists represented are all recent BFA and MFA graduates, at the beginning of their professional careers. But as their artistic efforts demonstrate, beneath each individual experience of a "beginning" lies the ancient stream of all the comings and goings of human history. Even as we weave our lives into the unending tapestry of all stories, we cannot help but reinscribe familiar patterns. In this manner, the works in this exhibition interact to produce a collective vision, even while representing individual responses to solitary experiences.

Emily Ann Pothast is a visual artist, musician, and writer based in Seattle. She received an MFA from the University of Washington in 2005 and currently works as the Director of the Antique Print Department at Davidson Galleries. Emily is the author of the art and culture blog Translinguistic Other and is half of the electronic folk duo Middyay Veil.

SCRAWL is a one page publication presenting new written observations, discussions and analysis on Crawl Space's visual art exhibitions. SCRAWL takes the form of an art review, a creative response, or an essay on the exhibition topic. While visiting the gallery, the Scrawl will provide viewers with another entry point to think about or discuss the ideas and themes in the exhibition.

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