

Younger than Moses: Idle Worship

Benrmon Contemporary is pleased to announce its first annual group exhibition entitled *Younger than Moses*, a collection of tactile explorations featuring pervasive artworks by 22 young artists. Curated by TS+ Projects, *Younger than Moses: Idle Worship* consists of contemporary painting, sculpture, performance, film, photography and collage.

Back in the day, Israelites ran amuck thinking that guidance from their God would never come. Luckily Moses was able to converse with a burning shrub on top of Mount Sinai and received ten moral imperatives to implement. The engraved-in-stone commandments imparted that "something" to strive for, to worship, to obsess over.

Nowadays a burning bush would cause nothing more than a traffic jam, yet our society feels a similar pre-commandment tension. In a time when nearly every belief is accepted and the "Sabbath" falls on multiple days of the week, one must wonder, "What do we worship?"

The works in *Younger than Moses* provide the viewer with an artistic investigation into our society's undefined ideology of "worship." They document our contemporary opinions through visual and philosophical discourse concerning: Youthful Surrealism, Social Networking and Social Aesthetics, Celebrity and Sexuality.

A selection of the exhibition captures childhood memories and daydreams, physically sculpted and brought to life. Travis Childers, Hans Van Meeuwen, Deniz Ozuygur and Lori Kirkbride work in the genre called "Youthful Surrealism." Hans Van Meeuwen renders a clumsiness that is typically regarded as taboo in professional culture. Travis Childers grows an ecosystem on the top of a standard-sized stapler echoing our day-job thoughts that may stray.

Visual and artistic forms are often deployed in the service of persuasion and, in some cases, propaganda. The advancement of technology has led to avatars, which we create, as well as our personal obsessions, which we worship. Our self-reflection no longer remains in our studies nor sits in our armchairs; we broadcast our ideal-selves to our friends, co-workers and strangers via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, et cetera. Kahori Kamiya, Hiroshi Kumagai and Ryan Schultz appropriate social networking and news outlets to create a spectrum of works. Kamiya utilizes Twitter with the video, "Follow Me," divided into two screens—the top displaying "tweets" and the bottom depicting movie scenes. Ryan Schultz recycles iconography, such as the facebook "f" imprinted on an ecstasy tablet and photo-realistically painted on traditional stretched canvas.

Social aesthetics derives from Conceptual ideology, in which tension arises between an unfolding dichotomy of aesthetic axioms and dissident formal treatment. Ryan Brennan, William Brovelli, Isabelle Garbani, Keren Weiss and Jerry Blackman play with Conceptual aesthetics to highlight nuances in contemporary life. Although these artists do not commit to a sociological side, they do separate themselves from past Conceptual artists. They do not shy away from formal representation and they reference subject matter. Isabelle Garbani paints subway scenes with bits of starch-treated plastic bags, documenting everyday urban isolation and ecological concerns. For this show, Ryan V. Brennan put himself through a one-month bathroom residency to reflect and comment on the realities and insecurities of being an artist. Keren Weiss appeals to the technique of Caravaggio's *chiarosouro* while exhibiting the ideal modern apartment: hardwood floor, white wall and neon artwork, echoing Minimalism.

The most-obvious response to the question of what we worship would be celebrity and sexuality, which arguably spreads more ubiquitously than any religion. Posters, magazines, advertisements,

films, public service announcements, fashion, social movements, and even religion (e.g., Scientology) may be swayed by a simple utterance from a celebrity's mouth. How do we approach our identity while facing "celebrity phenomena?" Adam Krueger, James Woodward, Dylan Mortimer, Tyler Matthew Oyer and Jinkyung Chong's work observes this obsession. Adam Krueger morphs his own image into a celebrity by producing an Adam Kruger action figure. Dylan Mortimer's "bling" jewelry juxtaposes show of wealth with show of religion, "Pray-ya." Dressed as an athlete and rapidly humping a football, James Woodward explores the jock icon while engaging his own sexuality.

Younger than Moses: Idle Worship is a documentary revealing our society during a time when there is no "Moses" preparing stone commandments. *Idle Worship* tells the story of our generation adjusting to technology and a matrix of confusing ideologies through the medium of art. To whom or to what do we ascribe when "it" isn't discernibly written in stone? Assuming the descriptivist definition of "art:" we are what we art; we are the art that we make; we are those who we project to be, we are over which we obsess.

Written by Megan M. Garwood