

Futurism Restated Again: Todd Bourret, Mark Hagen, Jeff Kopp

"The wheel is an extension of the foot.
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The wheel is an extension of the foot.
The whee-"
--The Minutemen

The Minutemen lovingly destroyed classic rock while incorporating funk, country, folk and jazz forms into the notoriously rigid, rule-peppered world of hardcore. In their song which provides this show's title, one can discern a contradiction, or at least a complication of the idea of "Futurism" by its coupling with the word "restated". Futurism can be equated to hardcore: ahistorical, violent, speedy, politically problematic. The act of restating or repeating is antithetical to the progress at any cost of Futurism. In the song's subtle refutation (the mantra "the wheel is an extension of the foot" seems at first a call to arms; but the repetition of the phrase rings hollow - the recitation is deadpan and incomplete, the bored vocals peter out before the last repetition) there is an accord with Walter Benjamin's critique of "progress". Benjamin sees progress as a capitalist myth, a pretext for proffering a never-ending stream of newer and newer commodities. One way to counter the amnesiac effect of progress is to resuscitate or engage the recent past. This notion can be very useful in an artworld increasingly and often embarrassingly obsessed with fashion, commodity and "eternal newness"

Like the Minutemen did with hardcore, much of what Mark, Jeff & I do is to critically engage the present by critically engaging (art, social, natural) history. Some basic things we all have in common (things which are made manifest in the work through very different approaches) are the exploration and use of formal and theoretical devices originating in the art of the 1960's, a strong and invested interest in popular culture, in temporal and spatial contradictions, and an awareness of the social associations as well as formal qualities inherent in the materials we use.

Mark Hagen's practice employs Conceptual Art's investment in forms of information dispersion and didactic materials (pamphlets, text, magazines, posters, documentary-style video, photography), but is essentially sculptural. Aesthetically informed by the clean pop of skateboard design and the radical spirit of D.I.Y. culture, Mark's work cuts a wide swath. Subjects from obscure areas of archeology, natural history, biology and countless other fields are invoked as metaphors for various issues or problems concerning the making, display and consumption of the art object.

His piece *Circulation* (2005), for example, is a plexiglass container installed outside of the gallery filled with posters (free for the taking) that consist of a smartly graphic design-y multi-colored grid onto which accounts of the escapes and subsequent recapture or death of various zoo animals are described. The tastefully austere formal quality of *Circulation* is at odds with the emotions the accounts elicit (they are quite sad and affecting) which in turn clouds the fact that the stories are analogies for the work itself: a conflicted, perhaps futile attempt to break free from its burdensome context, to operate outside of expectations.

In **Jeff Kopp's** recent sculptures, elements in the landscape of Los Angeles collide in contradictory and fantastic combinations. Made from workaday materials, the sculptures do double duty as art historical and socio-cultural referents. At the same time, they suggest and then frustrate narrative and formal logic. The work brings to mind both Minimalism's fondness for industrial materials and highly finished surfaces, and the anything goes, bricollaged visual language of the marginalized small businesses – 98 cent stores, taco trucks, liquor stores, check cashing places - that populate the neighborhoods where artists tend to live in Los Angeles.

Jeff brings these nuts and bolts together with a strong sense of formal and linguistic play. A shift in scale or orientation, a (literal) turn of a phrase can radically complicate the read of a sculpture. In *Evil Mouse/Cute Rat Venue*, (2004 –2005), a highly abstracted Hollywood Bowl, which sits on a plane suggesting both a high-end coffee table and a projection of excavated earth, is transformed from a signifier of upper-middle brow leisure and culture to the spacious stomping grounds of the lowly, titular rodent.

My (**Todd Bourret's**) paintings and drawings examine how certain abstract/formal devices originating in postwar American art – blobs, drips, pours, piles, stains, scatters, symmetry, serial repetition, edges, etc. are manifested or used socially in various contemporary situations. Disparate subjects– razed modernist homes, piles of toxic computer waste, a collapsing department store, and, recently, mud-covered rock fans and concert stage shows are equated by their status of being like the work itself: caught between states of abstraction and representation. My use of flat interior house paints & household materials as well as traditional artist's materials relate to my sources directly and metaphorically.

Stage (Pink Floyd, 4/94) (2005), is based on a still from a late-era Pink Floyd concert. Resembling both post-painterly abstraction and a bedroom black-light poster, the painting plays with received notions of painting, viewer-ship, and the artist's propensity to "perform" for the viewer. By transforming a performative, arguably transcendent spectacle into the mute facts of paint on canvas, my intention is to re-focus painting towards more conceptual concerns and to demonstrate how abstraction is contingent upon the "real" and the "social".

--Todd Bourret, 10/05