

Something Wild

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance

Graham Collins

Jennie Jieun Lee

Working in a small cement garage in Silverlake, Strauss Bourque-LaFrance has created two interrelated bodies of work. In the first, originally intended as maquettes for larger paintings, he composes rough grids by sandwiching rope between two layers of painted canvas. The result is an adorned, almost devotional object that bears the curious energy of a handpainted sneaker or customized backpack. Indeed, these “canvasses” are heavy with punk rock impedimenta: tabs, patches, pins, etc. Their bright, primary colors point in equal measure to color field painting as well as band insignia, boardgames, or hanky flags. In one, a single rope runs up the center of the canvas, creating a spine-like texture, which gives the piece the quality of an animal pelt or premodern handicraft. In each of these works, rope is both an ad-hoc stretcher and a material full of implied energy, its action both binding, and bound. These smaller works are joined by 2 large canvasses. This series began with a personal library of crudely reproduced images, evolving to multilayered, rugged compositions that “quote” their former incarnation. Using a collage process more common to paper, his canvasses are sprayed, cut, and festooned with smaller “paintings within a painting.” The windows formed by his incisions suggest additional, unavailable layers of conceptual depth.

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance (b. 1983, Poland Spring, ME) earned a BA from Hampshire College, Amherst, MA; an MFA from Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA; and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME. Bourque-LaFrance has staged solo exhibitions across the US and internationally, at venues including T293, Rome, Italy and the Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton, MA. He has been included in exhibitions at The Kitchen, New York, NY; The Clifford Gallery at Colgate University, Hamilton, NY; ICA Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA; The Contemporary Austin, Austin, TX; Abrons Art Center, New York, NY; The Judson Memorial Church, New York, NY; and Sculpture Center, New York, NY; among many others. The artist was a recipient of the Northampton Arts Council Grant, Northampton, MA; an Artist in Residence at Dance and Process, The Kitchen, New York, NY; and an Artist in Residence at Movement Research, New York, NY. Bourque-LaFrance lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Graham Collins exhibits a selection of new wall-bound artworks. In this series, Collins creates a maze-like ceramic form, only to bury it beneath a layer of canvas. This calls the viewer's attention to the work's edge, which, depending on the vantage point, provides various entryways to its formal complexity. The result is an object situated curiously between an architectonic vessel and a “picture.” If the defining characteristic of a painting is a membrane stretched over a support, these certainly fit the bill. The stylistic investments of these works, however, is

very much up for grabs. Are they process-oriented? Monochromes? Collins has made a practice of reconstituting cast-off materials, transforming them into honorific vestiges that hold, but also devour, prior significance. Here, pieces of canvas and veneer absorb what's underneath, their texture and irregular shape a testament to their originary rending. If there is a pleasure to the sloping, serpentine forms that undergird these works, there is a perversity to denying the viewer access to them. These slabs confront the viewer like a mirror, whose shape and trimming become the only point of differentiation. The image is a self-impression.

Graham Collins (b. 1980, Washington, D.C.) received his BFA from Corcoran College of Art in Washington and his MFA from Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Recent solo exhibitions have been with Halsey McKay Gallery, New York, New York; The Journal, Brooklyn, NY; Almine Rech, Brussels, Belgium; Bugata & Cargnel, Paris, France; Jonathan Viner Gallery, London, United Kingdom. His work has been included in several group exhibitions, most recently at Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles, California; C. Grimaldis, Baltimore, Maryland; Marlborough Contemporary, New York, New York and He currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

Jennie Jieun Lee's "The Face," exhibited here for the first time, is a large, chaotic ceramic work from 2015 which marks the artist's foray into semi-representational mask-like forms. These ceramic visages hold both a naive, childlike expression, and one that is disfigured or otherwise "rearranged." In this large work, which hangs on the wall like a frieze, what appears to be a single articulated line makes its way across fractured surfaces, breaking apart only to meet again elsewhere in the "picture." This gives the impression of a partially-completed excavation, like a premodern countenance, half emerged from the muck. Unlike subsequent works, many faces can be found in its meandering splashes of color, whether the effect of pareidolia or a cartoon interloper. Lee's first ceramic mask, executed when the artist was a young child, was a portrait of her mother. Her more recent mask-like works trace from this moment, through her experience of working-class immigrant New Jersey, through the worlds of fashion and entertainment, through self-destruction and self-actualization, to the present moment. They are at once graffiti and a thing that has been defaced, screwed up, contorted in pain, ecstasy, or both. Their beauty-counter logic is cheery, garish, goofy, melancholy, clown-like, whimsical and creepy. They are literal containers, holding broad and conflicting notions of beauty, ugliness, and assimilation.

Jennie Jieun Lee (b. 1973, Seoul, Korea) received her undergraduate degree from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA and her MFA from California State University Long Beach, CA. Lee's work has been shown extensively throughout the world with solo and two person shows at Marlborough, Chelsea: Viewing Room, New York; Martos Gallery New York, New York; Cooper Cole, Toronto; The Pit, Los Angeles; Galerie Lefebvre et fils, Paris and Levy Delval, Brussels along with groups shows at Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles; Jonathan Viner, London; Brand New Gallery, Milan and Halsey McKay, New York. She is a 2016 recipient of the Pollock Krasner Foundation grant and a 2017 recipient of the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. Lee currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

—Peter Harkawik