UP DOWN UP DOWN

Carnegie Mellon 2011 MFA Thesis Exhibition
Organized by the School of Art March 18 - April 17, 2011

Artists: Sean Glover, Jesha Chen, Daniel Luchman, Courtney Dow, James Robert Southard

PUBLIC PROGRAMS
March 18, Fri. 6-8pm: Reception

March 22, Tues. 6:30-9:30pm Critique and discussion with Tina Kukielski
Associate Curator, Carnegie Museum of Art

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION
"I am writing on the threshold of the MFA thesis exhibition, where each year the graduate students extend themselves to produce something extraordinary. This stretching of imagination and ambition creates an adrenaline-fueled run-in for all concerned. Jesha will push the envelope; Sean will produce yet another magical bricolage; Dan will combine the poetic and the profound; Rob will puzzle us with some photographic conundrums; and Courtney will present us with a wry intellectual challenge. This year’s exhibit promises to be bold, ingenious, thought-provoking, and tinged with humor. I have seen them develop their work and grow in confidence over the last three years, through a mutually supportive camaraderie, which has seen them through their Carnegie Mellon journey. All have had to reappraise the notions they arrived with, and have undergone a rigorous period of critical evaluation, in order to recognize their fundamental motivations and to refine their mode of practice. Not only does this exhibit showcase their talent and considerable achievements, but it also represents the philosophy of the MFA program, which is to produce self-defined artists of exceptional ability and initiative, able to create opportunities for themselves and connect meaningfully with the communities and cultures around them.

Courtney, Dan, Jesha, Rob and Sean have certainly met these aspirations and I look forward to their further success."

- John Carson, Head of the School of Art + Regina and Marlin Miller Professor, Carnegie Mellon University
Jesha Chen

“A live improvised mockumentary exploring the nature of non-linear time, the impermanent fluidity of reality, AND the exponential possibilities of existence.” – Michelle Carello

“★★★★!! One of the year’s best productions!!” – Los Angels Times

“It’s not an easy feeling to describe: it’s whimsical yet hard-hitting; cute but completely serious; ominously inviting, like the Grand Canyon; terrifying but kind and caring.” – Jonathan Minard

“It’s not fundamentally about popcorn, either, but about the search for meaning and the consoling satisfaction of finding the patterns that define and describe both the physical universe and individual human lives.” – New Yok Times

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Courtney Dow

My work examines architectures of the familiar, often focusing on the minute and overlooked as a nod to monumental patterns or inevitabilities. In this installation, stacked elements of sound, text, image, and experience merge to explore three certainties of life: food, death, and family. Both the film and the installation investigate structures that simultaneously connect and divide, exposing issues of archetype, expanded narrative, and time. Ideas surface about idiosyncratic traditions and rituals of consumption, legacy and inheritance, communion and community, iconographic display, memory, and normalcy.

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It was all so nearly alike it must be different and it is different, it is natural that if everything is used and there is a continuous present and a beginning again and again if it is all so alike it must be simply different and everything simply difference was the natural way of creating it then.

- Gertrude Stein from "Composition as Explanation"

Food
Courtney Dow and Leslie McAhren
16mm film to video
Duration: 102 minutes
(Act 1: 26 minutes, Act 2: 48 minutes, Act 3: 28 minutes)

Residence
Courtney Dow
installation

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Sean Glover

I am interested in an excavation of the tensions between aesthetic and political approaches to material forces in history. By studying the history of objects, one is able to uncover their awkward, unsuspecting, and provocative relations, their hold on our imaginations, their impact on our most intimate, as well as our most public interactions. Objects seem to be impervious to what humans think of them. We design them. We use them. But, how do they act upon us? I wonder how military sound ranging devices merged with traditional fresco painting can serve as an archeology of the present moment. I am curious about how the carvings by a robotic mill into discarded foam insulation can echo with both whimsy and the grotesque. How do the presence and the performance of these objects resonate in tandem with our understanding of the past?

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**Beyond the Sea**
Fresco and egg tempura on new and old insulation foam, lapis lazuli pigment, smalt, and synthetic ultramarine pigment
Sound: whistled cover of Black Sabbath's War Pigs

**The Fear of Palindromes**
Illuminated injection molded channel letters, old wood, new wood

**Still Here**
Insulation foam

**The Eternal Return**
after Francisco Goya's *Saturn Devouring his Children* and the *Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra* of the *Codex Venetus Marcianus, 299 (2325)*
Triptych of frescoes on insulation foam

**Waiting for the Great Leap Forward**
Plastic 3-D print, bucket, motor, steel shaft, new and old fasteners
Daniel Luchman

Human history reveals itself as a complex collection of methods for exploiting people and resources, yet, this legacy is accompanied by a cultural archive of knowledge, mass knowledge, and this is the true fruit of civilization. The power structures that maintain civilization are the costs of this knowledge, as they also preserve cultural memory (obsessive self-catalogue, as if unconsciously hyper-aware of its own transient existence). At this expense I view knowledge as a powerful, almost sacred material. Through my work I actively merge rational and intuitive forms of thinking with a fluid practice that builds upon itself in continual layers. Many projects exist as open-ended situations, as structures with a void of undefined potential content. Gradually, overtime, I fill that void by continually leaping into it. This is a universal inquiry, the pursuit of the unknown, it is a fundamental drive, and I trust in this pursuit.

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The 2,562,011th Anniversary of the Machine
Daniel Luchman
60 min. Video
James Robert Southard

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Tooth and Nail
#1 - #5

Subsequent Occurrence
#1 - #5

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