



JANE BLOODGOOD-ABRAMS

Presence, 2010

Oil on panel

24 x 24 in.

The Hyde Collection Purchase Award

Modern Life is a negotiation between what things are and what they first appear to be.

As seen on television, “reality” is a series of controlled and edited narratives, broken into segments divisible by 30 minutes. Food is kept “fresh” with chemicals, “cheap” by transferring costs from the producer to the environment and health care. A “grass roots” crusade turns out to be financed by millionaires.

Artists, practiced liars that they are, tend to be great at sorting this stuff out. It’s a skill they use in different ways, as is amply demonstrated in the works entered in the *2010 Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson Region* exhibition.

Some let us in on the secret, enlisting us as co-conspirators. Deborah Zlotsky submitted a remarkable work to the current exhibition that is clearly smudges of carbon dust on a white background, yet conjures something vegetanimal, vaguely creepy, and surely alive. David M. Bender constructed a stitched-earth form that feels as though it comes from nature – but with seams. Kyra Garrigue sees the animal in the human, creating a video image of nearly equine musculature, full of stored energy.

Katie DeGroot draws humor, gesture, and a hint of sex from her colorful delineation of a pair of sticks. Sanford Mirling is funny, too (though perhaps a bit mean: from the evidence of a Google search, Real Comfort seems to be a line of clothing for plus-size women), but his soft, big-boned object is every bit as sensual as DeGroot’s drawing.

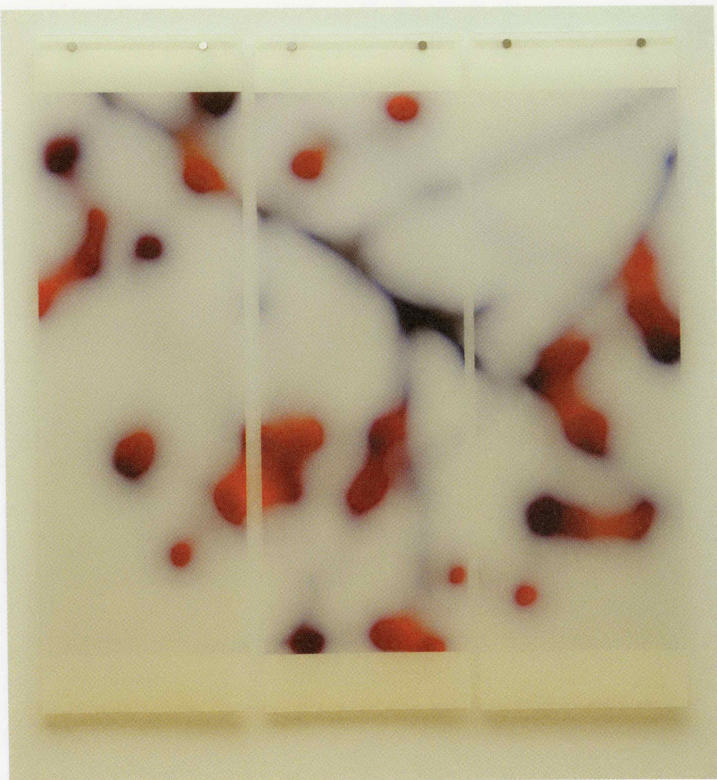
One of the few artists working in the (so-called) craft idiom to submit works of conceptual ingenuity, Sara Pfau also introduces humor with her gold pendant in the form of a celebrated scenic area.

Other artists represented here construct an alternate world they would have us accept as real. Spiritual themes recur throughout the exhibition, as they often did in works submitted. Among these, Amy Cheng’s semi-abstract forms, recalling Buddhist mandalas, invite meditative contemplation, and their production required the sort of technical skill and effort that has been compared to prayer.

Jeri Eisenberg’s accepted work, selected for a purchase award by the Albany Institute of History & Art as well as a juror-awarded prize, does not refer as directly to a spiritual tradition (though the triptych presentation does make one think of Catholic altarpieces), but it is an emotionally transportive image of the light and color of Fall. Jane Bloodgood-Abrams (whose work has been purchased by The Hyde Collection) also describes atmosphere as something both tangible and transcendent.

In contrast, William Jaeger extracts from an old industrial landscape a new place: disorienting, hallucinatory, foreboding. John Hampshire (University Art Museum, University at Albany Alumni Association purchase awardee) traces a seemingly endless pen line to a dark moment of furor and danger. Internal worlds – mysteries to us as outsiders but perhaps as turbulent as Hampshire’s tornadoes – are touched upon in the portraits submitted by Peter Crabtree.

Carrie Will shares her own mirrored world of reflection and replication, extracting from it something vaguely, uncertainly erotic. Mark McCarty offers a dream-like picture of a figure floating (ascending?) free of earthly bounds.



JERI EISENBERG

Crabapple (Fall), No. 5, 2008

Pigmented ink on Japanese kozo with encaustic
36 x 34 in.

Albany Institute of History & Art Purchase Award
Ruthann Marcelle and Paul Gozemba \$250 Juror's Award



JOHN HAMPSHIRE

Labyrinth 229, 2009

Permanent marker on panel
24 x 48 in.

Dr. Arthur C. Collins '48 Purchase Award, University at Albany Alumni Association
for the University Art Museum

And then there are artists whose understanding of truth and its opposites leads them to social analysis. A feminist and a comic, a performer and a sculptor, Gina Occhiogrosso disassembles both the socially constructed idea of "house" and a physical house, as well. James Paulsen creates a new, all-American logo of speed and money with tropical overtones.

Georgia Wohnson mixes the spiritual with the political: her mash-up of traditions as disparate as Indian sculpture, Baroque European painting, and Warholian performance art is a shrine-like tribute to nature, plasticized and compromised but nevertheless resplendent.

The *Artists of the Mohawk-Hudson Region* Exhibition, begun in 1936, is one of the most prestigious and longest-running juried art exhibitions in the United States. This is the first time The Hyde Collection has hosted the show, which traditionally rotates among major arts institutions in the area. The generosity and professionalism of the staff of The Hyde, combined with the extraordinary quality of the works offered by the region's artists, have made this assignment a great pleasure.

It takes nothing away from those who won juror and purchase awards to remark that each of the exhibitors could as well receive awards, and each deserves the support of all who see the exhibition. Indeed, though I have built a very full show and selected an annex exhibition for the Myott Gallery, we were able to include only 107 of 1,493 submitted works, a great many of which are of the highest quality.

For their insights, their sorting of dross from pure, their X-ray vision – for their lies that tell higher truths – we owe all these artists our deepest thanks.

CHARLES DESMARAIS

October 2010

In the past twenty-five years, Charles Desmarais has organized more than fifty exhibitions and authored more than 100 articles and exhibition catalogues.

Since 2005, Desmarais has served as Deputy Director for Art at the Brooklyn Museum, where he leads a staff of eighteen curators, as well as the Museum's collections, conservation, education, exhibitions, and library efforts. In addition, at Brooklyn he has overseen major exhibitions of the work of Ron Mueck, Takashi Murakami, Hernan Bas, and others.

Prior to his appointment at the Brooklyn Museum, he spent almost a decade as Director of the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati. He was responsible for the widely hailed public, programmatic, and physical transformation of that institution, which culminated in a new building designed by architect Zaha Hadid, called by the New York Times "the most important American building to be completed since the Cold War."

Desmarais was director of the Laguna Art Museum from 1988 to 1994. From 1981 to 1988 he directed the California Museum of Photography at the University of California, Riverside, where he oversaw the creation of another award-winning building, designed by Stanley Saitowitz. In 1979, he was awarded an Art Critics Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts.