

For immediate release

September 22, 2008

Contact:

Kate Hackman, Urban Culture Project

816.994.7731 / 816.522.6024

kate@charlottestreet.org

Urban Culture Project presents

On View: Art by Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Security Officers

Featuring recent work by Andy Maugh, Zak Meek, Shawn Old, Colby Sempek, Ascot Smith & Amy Wright; Curated by Marcos Gonzalez

On View

Paragraph | 23 East 12th Street, KCMO | 816.221.5115

Reception: October 17, 6-9pm

October 17-November 13, 2008

Hours: Thursdays + Saturdays, 12-5pm

“On View” presents the work of six artists who work as gallery guards at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: Andy Maugh, Zak Meek, Shawn Old, Colby Sempek, Ascot Smith and Amy Wright. Exhibition curator Marcos Gonzalez, a recent graduate of Rockhurst University in Philosophy, worked alongside these artists at the Nelson until recently as a fellow security officer himself.

“This show creates a venue where these artists can be seen by a public that doesn’t usually notice their presence, a public they watch constantly,” writes curator Marcos Gonzalez. Gonzalez is interested in the phenomenology of the museum as understood from the perspective of the artist-guard: How are the artistic temperaments of these full-time artist-guards affected by the dynamics of the museum, the Nelson’s collection, and the patrons viewing it? How does their work as paid “people watchers” put these artists uniquely in touch with the public’s cultural spirit and standards of taste? How does their own work embody and reflect these insights?

Works in the exhibition include paintings, photographs, sculptures, and video. Gonzalez notes that he has selected works for the show using the following standard: “each piece moved me either to awe or laughter.”

In conjunction with the exhibition at Paragraph gallery, five of the featured artists and Gonzalez will participate in “Off Duty: Nelson-Atkins Security Officers-Artists Talk Back,” a public program at the Nelson-Atkins Museum, November 1 at 2pm. On this walking tour of the museum, the artist-guards will offer their own perspectives on objects in the Nelson’s collection and speak to the museum’s influence on their own work.

About the artists:

Andy Maugh is an engineer of the absurd and a miner of potential, applying an inventive sensibility to the mundane things of the world that become his media. In his hands a vacuum cleaner may become a telephone, a chandelier, or simply a confounding hybrid of plastic and



lightbulbs. Part Jeff Koons, part Dan Flavin, Maugh's electrically-powered sculptures are at turns elegant, humorous, surprising, and ironic, challenging the expectations of the typical museum patron as they provokw a dialogue about beauty, value, and the role of the artist. Maugh's work has been featured in exhibitions at Kansas City area venues including H&R Block Artspace at KCAI, BNIM Architects, Greenelase Gallery at Rockhurst University, and Telephonebooth Gallery.

Like Andy Maugh, **Zak Meek** embraces the absurdist aesthetic in his work. In the case of his paintings, the subject is specifically the culture of cuteness surrounding tiny dogs. While linked to historic portraits of aristocrats holding tiny lapdogs like precious objects, Meek's narrative-based dog-populated scenes employ role-reversals, hybrid people-animals, and the iconography of slavery to explore the bizarre idea of pet ownership in a manner at once playful, crowd-pleasing, and provocative. Meek earned his BFA in Painting for Kansas City Art Institute in 2007.



Colby Sempek observes that because of the nature of modern recreational photography, museum patrons tend to perceive photographs according to a 1:1 relationship - the photograph as the record of a memory or single moment in time - thereby objectifying the content of the photograph. Through his photographic own work, Sempek seeks to encourage more instinctual, associative, and ultimately meaningful interactions, as he composes photographs that offer no cohesive or linear "reality" within the confines of the frame, thus leaving the viewer

with many interpretative possibilities. Although his photographs are not of real things, he believes the viewer makes them real with interpretations grounded in subjective perspectives. "I want to give a place to start but no directions afterward," Sempek says. Sempek earned his BFA from Kansas City Art Institute in 2007.

Heavily influenced by pop culture and often self-parodying, **Ascot Smith's** filmic work documents a particular urban Midwestern-ness. Not unlike a museum guard wishing for something scandalous to happen, his characters attempt to flee the boredom of their mundane and ordinary lives, and to blur their own senses of reality. However, these prospective escapees lose their aspirations, says Smith, and in their passivity, do battle with themselves. Smith is 2005 Kansas City Art Institute graduate whose work has been presented at the San Antonio Underground Film Festival; Living Arts,





Tulsa; Lake Area Society for the Moving Image Showcase, Osage Beach, Mo; Urban Culture Project Space; Kansas City Filmmakers Jubilee; and Anchorage International Film Festival.

Shawn Old is strongly influenced by Chinese painting, having studied with a master landscape painter in China, Wong Xingquan, for five years. He considers his paintings living records, or historical bridges connecting the artist and viewer. Embracing chance, process, temporality, and the idea of erosion of the art object over time, Old's paintings via an involved process incorporating melting snow.

Amy Wright's painstakingly detailed, pattern-intensive drawings and paintings portray "parts of things." Composed of tiny, finely variegated shapes articulated in a delicate color

palette, her partial, otherworldly landscapes or dreamscapes bear the influence of Surrealism while also recalling precious historic works from around the world, from Grecian urns to Persian miniatures, that embody a similar sense of "making special." Wright earned her BFA in Painting from Kansas City Art Institute in 2004.



An initiative of the Charlotte Street Foundation, Urban Culture Project creates new opportunities for artists of all disciplines and contributes to urban revitalization by transforming spaces in downtown Kansas City into new venues for multi-disciplinary contemporary arts programming. For more information, visit www.urbancultureproject.org or email info@charlottestreet.org.