

## ArtSeen

# GEOFFREY CHADSEY: *THAT'S NOT IT*

By **Ivan Talijancic**



Over the past decade, Brooklyn-based visual artist Geoffrey Chadsey has crafted a prolific body of work comprised of fictional portraits of ambiguously gendered subjects, rendered in astonishingly vivid detail, and exacted by obsessively precise colored-pencil and crayon strokes. A late spring solo exhibition at Jack Shainman's West 24th Street location found this genre-bending artist in peak form. The exhibition *THAT'S NOT IT* could very well be construed as the summation of his magnum opus.

Chadsey filled the galleries with a series of large-scale drawings of front-facing human figures. While I have been aware of the artist's work for several years now, I have primarily seen his smaller-scale works and studies. What struck me as particularly effective in this exhibition was the impactful scale of his large, enigmatic portraiture. Unobstructed by glass covers, the works were endowed with striking immediacy. The intimate, close-up view of the artist's technique, applied to these nearly life-size subjects, alternately urged me to lean in and pull away, enhancing my appreciation not only of the richly layered content, but also his masterful craftsmanship.

Chadsey negotiates multiple surrealistic dimensions with facility, which imparts the works with an unsettling or downright-dangerous quality. While his subjects' expressions tend to be droll, violence often lurks within, appearing at times in suggestive symbols and gestures. The figures in their entirety are coded in layers of meaning. For instance, one of the works depicts a subject with its hands holding a tote bag which holds a small wildcat; however, between the lapels of his unbuttoned jacket, a third (pussy-grabbing?) hand is seen reaching for the subject's crotch. In another phantasmagorical work, the arms of a Chewbacca-like figure morph to form a variety of gestures: one pair of arms rests by its sides, another lifts a skull above its head, another pulls a gun from a fanny pack tied around its waist. A second figure wears a casual, green pussy bow blouse, while a second pair of military-fatigue-wearing arms—seemingly sprouting



Geoffrey Chadsey, *Cat in the Bag*, 2018. Watercolor, pencil, crayon, and tape on mylar, 46 5/8 x 24 inches. Courtesy Jack Shainman.

ON VIEW

Jack Shainman Gallery  
May 17 – June 23, 2018  
New York

out of the creature's shoulders—have its head in a chokehold. As the exhibition unfolds, other details emerge and compete for my attention—a red MAGA hat here, a black Uncle Sam figure with eyes blotted out by spray paint there—each acting as a signifier, or a trigger. The current political maelstrom is mirrored in Chadsey's drawings; when violence is present, it appears as something one inflicts upon oneself, questioning the extent to which each one of us has a hand (pun intended) in it.

Chadsey presents his fictional protagonists boldly, as hybrid, poly-sexual chimeras. Their forms are equal parts solid and evanescent. In most of the drawings their features morph, vacillating between one gesture and another within the same frame. The subjects' genders are ambiguous, and intentionally so. Certain details of clothing, accessories, body parts, and expressions are rendered in painstaking detail, while other elements are akin to an unfinished sketch. This technique is a deliberate choice on the artist's part, one evoking the notion of selective memory; Chadsey draws his subjects in the same way in which human mind tends to remember things: details one deems significant are etched in one's memory in vivid, HD Technicolor, while other bits fade away.



Geoffrey Chadsey, *Emerald Choke*, 2018. Watercolor, pencil, and crayon on mylar, 61 5/8 x 42 inches. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery.

Chadsey's drawings are compelling in their timeliness. I appreciate his work's utter lack of pretense. His subjects wear their queerness on their sleeves.

Fragments of popular culture and shards of political zeitgeist are embodied effortlessly in his uncanny protagonists, who simultaneously eschew both trendiness and preachiness: they do not ask for attention—they command it. As much as they present

themselves nonchalantly, willingly participating in the act of being put on display, they remain equally inscrutable. Chadsey does not hammer an obvious interpretation into his viewers' minds. Rather, he leaves ample room for us to make up our own about what's on exhibit here.



October 1, 2020  
By Daniel Penny

## From Geoffrey Chadsey, a Visual Diary of the Last Days of Summer

Known for his riveting portraits of fictional subjects, the artist shares snapshots of some of the people he is closest to in life, and of an idyllic trip to Vermont.

The Brooklyn-based artist [Geoffrey Chadsey](#) is known for his meticulous water-soluble-pencil-and-crayon drawings on mylar of unnerving figures in various states of undress. They bare themselves while “kind of glaring at you,” the artist, 53, says of his invented subjects, whom he frequently bestows with ambiguous forms and states of mind — a portrait might feature a hairy chest and curvy hips, a ghostly set of extra limbs, or a fanny pack and antlers. Currently, Chadsey is working on a new series for a 2021 show at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York and thinking more than ever about how an exposed body can be “monstrous, clownish and, at the same time, really touching.”

The canvases hanging on the walls and strewn about the floor of Chadsey’s Greenpoint studio, then, are in stark contrast to the gauzy photographs he took, using an instant Fujifilm camera sent to him by T, this August. Moving between New York and various parts of Vermont, he documented friends, family and animals set against lush surroundings, managing to find moments of beauty and joy in the last days of what was, in many ways, a dark summer. “Drawing through this economic and social upheaval can feel like Nero fiddling through the flames,” Chadsey said. “I’m drawing alone in a studio while trying to stave off the niggling question ‘Now what is the point?’ I don’t have the answer to that yet. But, in the beginning of the shutdown, my roommates and I would do collaborative drawings that we donated to an online auction raising funds for an upstate food bank. They were cartoonish and often obscene and, even amid uncertainty, made us giggle with glee.”





"Pizza in the Studio, 'Capital is Dead. Is this Something Worse?'" Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"The studio complex where I work has a kitchen that's more like a portable convection oven, a hot plate and a toaster. Somehow, though, we manage to cook really grand things, as far as studio food is concerned. I was trying to do that sourdough starter that everyone was doing at the start of the pandemic, but it was like a willfully disobedient pet — it wouldn't bubble and it would turn weird colors. I had friends who said, 'Just keep feeding it, just keep feeding it.' I finally threw it out. The Roberta's pizza [recipe](#) featured in the Times is much easier. Next to the pizzas is McKenzie Wark's book '[Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?](#)' (2019), which I have read maybe four pages of in the bathroom. I keep buying books, thinking that I have all this time to read. The irony of the pandemic is that, because I'm not on subways on the way to work, I just don't read as much. And so I have books just kind of lying around the studio, and all over my bed and couch. It seemed totemic that one also made its way into this picture."



"Gillian Dress." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"My sister, Gillian, is an actress and a masseuse and, at 50, is engaged to Peter, an actor who plays a murderous cowboy in the video game [Red Dead Redemption 2](#). There have been close to zero weddings in our immediate family — we've had marriages, divorces, committed partnerships but very little ceremony — and she was to be married at the end of May, with a three-day party planned in Hudson, N.Y. She commissioned a tailor in Williamsburg to design this beautiful skirt, the final iteration of which will have lace and be worn with shiny boots. The event had to be pushed to September, and then again to next May. It's stressful for her, because her job is increasingly precarious. But when she's with Peter, whom she calls Sweetie, they laugh a lot."





"David." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"David and I have been dating for over a year, a casualness that evolved to constancy. We met at a [Printed Matter](#) event. At the end of February, he and I traveled to Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore, returning to New York just as Covid-19 was starting to explode in the U.S. This picture was taken during a subsequent trip to Vermont, which reminded us of Vietnam in that everyone there is so conscious of masks, social distancing, contact tracing. In this photo, David is standing on the rocks at the edge of a river pool, trying to decide if he wants to jump in."



"Clothing Optional." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"Vermont's so polite about letting you know when you're entering a nudist area. You're trekking along this path, and then suddenly there's a sign that says, 'Clothing Optional From Here.' A lot of people stop and take all their clothes off, jam them in their backpack and just keep walking. I was recently laughing with another artist about this: In all my drawings, everyone's half-dressed, but here my reaction was, 'I'm not taking my clothes off!'"



"Rosa." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"I have a daughter, Rosa, though in no way did I raise her. In 1992, I was volunteering for a queer theater festival in Cambridge, Mass. I thought I would meet a cute boy. Instead, I met two women — Jude and Laura. They were living in a squat in town as part of an organized movement for affordable housing. Nine months after we'd met, they told me they wanted a baby. Miraculously, with a coffee cup, turkey baster, awkwardness and a lot of laughter, we made Rosa. She's now a 26-year-old artist and just this incandescent, deeply caring, really funny, gorgeous creature. It sounds corny but I'm always agog when I see her. She lives in New Orleans but spent this summer in a small Vermont cabin. Here she is separating birch leaves to boil down into a dye that she'll use in her work."



"Angela." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"I live with and share a studio with the artist [Angela Dufresne](#), whom I jokingly call my wife, because what other name captures the totality of this friendship? We met at the [Fine Arts Work Center](#) in Provincetown, Mass., back in 2003 and that first night I said, 'We are going to drink whiskey and become best friends,' to which she generously replied, 'OK!' She is the gutsiest, most curious person I have ever been around, and my world is much larger with her in it. She's been upstate, so I am missing out on being adjacent to her go-for-broke painting while we blast vaguely satanic metal drone music. Her not being here has been one of the biggest wounds for me during this pandemic."



"Poppy the Goat." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"Two years ago, David bought a house in the Catskills, an idyll across from a farm with a dog, Duke, and a goat, Poppy, who have adopted David as their own kin. They wander over daily and stand on the porch, waiting to be adored. Poppy also looks like Black Phillip from the movie ['The Witch'](#) (2015). It's hard to read goats. Their eyes are so alien-looking, and you never know what the hell they're thinking. Duke gets a little jealous, though, so when I was crouching to take this photo of Poppy, chomping on plants, he came up behind my head and barked loudly, startling everybody. This was the only shot I got."



"Ernie and Victoria." Courtesy of Geoff Chadsey.

"What is up with me photographing all these people with flowers and plants? We have a backyard in Brooklyn that has gone to seed. These are two co-worker friends of mine: Victoria is in the back and Ernie is in the foreground. They are BFFs, a little intimidating to get to know at first. They used to run marathons together, and now they box together, so they're very comfortable with one another. I'm very self-conscious when people photograph me — I have my high school yearbook smile, and that's about the extent of my repertoire — but they were so excited to be photographed. It was a really fun night. We drank two bottles of rosé and got devoured by mosquitoes."





"Studio Floor." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"My studio is a place of accrual. I have two barbells from, oddly, a Chanel window display that an ex worked on. They roll around to remind me that I once went to the gym. The funny thing with this pile of work is that it's made me rethink how I might combine drawings. I've been talking about doing these heaps of drawings that are seemingly haphazardly thrown together. In some ways, it's a test — I have to trick myself to be loose and not so beholden to creating an image that follows the logic of photography."



"Self-Portrait." Courtesy of Geoffrey Chadsey.

"This is a picture of me in my studio taken by my sister. I am wearing a Todd Snyder bomber jacket that I coveted until it was 80 percent off. It was hot out but I still put this on in the studio to feel dapper for two minutes. I'm standing in front of drawings in progress. They are kind of inspired by the Rolling Stones' '[Goats Head Soup](#)' photographs, in which they're wearing these colorful scarves. But then it's weirdly like looking at Yoko Ono's hair upside down — I can't tell you what it's about. I'm just trying to make these mysterious, uncanny tornado-head creatures that may or may not have fanny packs by the time I'm done with them."

PAGE 76

## What Happens on Page 76 in This Season's New Books?

The artist Geoffrey Chadsey envisions new releases by Gary Shteyngart, Olivia Laing and more.

Aug. 7, 2018

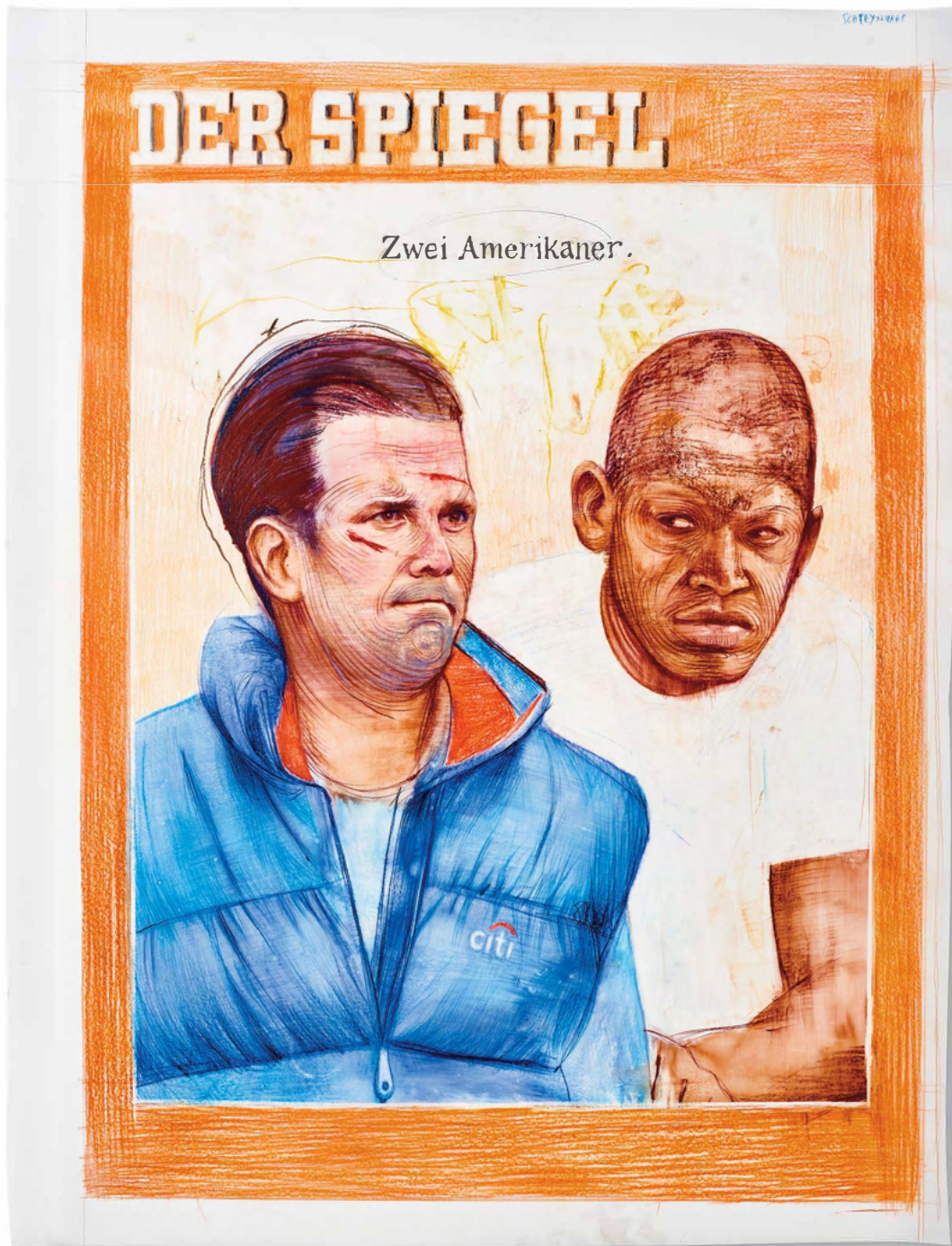


Geoffrey Chadsey

### **Brother** A novel by David Chariandy

I recognized Dru, the thick man who ran the shop. He was standing at a barber's chair, cutting the hair of a young man who now lowered his folded newspaper to stare at me. That picture of Anton again. Dru now gesturing at me with his clippers, yelling over the music.

As children, the narrator's older brother, Francis, was his protector, an ally with whom to explore the world of their public housing complex outside Toronto while their mother, a Trinidadian immigrant adamant that they not squander their "one and only chance" to overcome a system stacked against them, was at work. As Francis grew older, though, he forged new ties, and, not long after a shooting that rocked the community, disappeared from their lives, leaving in his wake a sorrow for what might have been. *Published by Bloomsbury on July 31.*



Geoffrey Chadsey

### **Lake Success**

**A novel by Gary Shteyngart**

Barry imagined a photo of the two of them appearing in a foreign magazine, maybe Der Spiegel. 'Zwei Amerikaner,' it would read. *Two Americans*. And that's all. Nothing about their race or class. He felt himself overcome with emotion. His father had been a racist, and Barry was the opposite of his father.

A largely unsympathetic one-percenter with a passion for luxury mechanical watches, Barry Cohen is having a meltdown. Overwhelmed by his son's autism diagnosis, his strained marriage and his ill-fated business deals, he channels Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" (though he prefers F. Scott Fitzgerald, having named his hedge fund "This Side of Capital") and boards a bus out of Manhattan, vowing to see the "real" America and win back his college girlfriend. *To be published by Random House on Sept. 4.*





Geoffrey Chadsey

## **Crudo**

**A novel by Olivia Laing**

A thing people said a lot that year, and especially the year before, x is a trashfire, also I want to burn everything, sometimes eroded to: burn everything. People were complaining about Pepe the alt-right frog but it seemed to Kathy that there had been some internet-induced desire for destruction on both sides.

The protagonist of “Crudo” bears a striking similarity to the late 20th-century feminist writer Kathy Acker, but its story is set in 2017, just as the world seems to be coming undone. Kathy’s mind spins just as fast, attuned to the melting glaciers and latest tweetstorms, and it is in this frenzied state that she is supposed to be planning her much-delayed wedding, even as she wonders if her greatest love might still be freedom. *To be published by W.W. Norton & Company on Sept. 11.*





Geoffrey Chadsey

**Flights**  
**A novel by Olga Tokarczuk**

Constellation, not sequencing, carries truth. This is why travel psychology envisions man in equivalently weighted situations, without trying to lend his life any — even approximate — continuity. Life is made up of situations. There is, of course, a certain inclination toward the repetition of behaviors. This repetition does not, however, mean that we should succumb in our imaginations to the appearance of any sort of consistent whole.

Tokarczuk is interested in people in transit, especially those who are simply not the settling kind, forever seeking and redirecting. Characters pass through the book as if on their way to the next stop. Two women meet in the Stockholm airport and talk animal rights over wine before their flight; a man loses his wife and child while on vacation and must extend his stay to look for them; and, inspired by “Moby Dick,” a local ferry driver on an unnamed island heads for the open seas. In this case the selected passage appears on page 77. *To be published by Riverhead on Aug. 14.*



Geoffrey Chadsey

## Ponti

A novel by Sharlene Teo

We waited by the concourse for Mummy. Szu fidgeted beside me, a twitchy beanpole. Our silhouettes in the visitor's office window reflected our whole-head difference in height. We made quite the duo: I the small one with the frizzy bob, Szu the tall one with the lifeless ponytail. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the Badminton Girls shooting derisive glances our way. I pretended not to care.

Long after her sole role playing a flesh-eating ghost in a '70s B-horror film franchise, Amisa Tan's intimidating beauty remains — much to the chagrin of her awkward teenage daughter, Szu, who's just trying to survive high school in suburban Singapore, where she finally succeeds in making one formative (if fraught) bond with her classmate Circe. Years later, Circe is tasked with promoting a remake of Amisa's big film and finds herself haunted by the past. *To be published by Simon & Schuster on Sept. 4.*

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**About the artist:** Geoffrey Chadsey was born in Philadelphia, trained at California College of the Arts and lives in Brooklyn. His drawings — intricate, figurative works exploring gender and constructed notions of selfhood — were recently on view at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York, and at the Studio, an HBO-sponsored pop-up venue in Provincetown, Mass. Currently, his work is included in "Cast of Characters," a group show that the artist Liz Collins curated for New York's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (through Sept. 16).

Photographs of artworks by Joshua Scott



# office

## Jack Shainman's Google Search

— Uncensored



May 20, 2018

Perhaps today you feel like being a man — or a woman, if that's more to your liking? Perhaps a sprinkling of both? Maybe you'd prefer to be a masked monster for the afternoon, and an obscure pop reference for the evening? There's always the option of being a distorted version of the Quaker Oats mascot, or a ten-gallon hat cowboy — or the best option, which is to be all of these things at once.

Geoffrey Chadsey has turned to his internet search history — a categorically infinite source of possibility in terms of shaping one's prospective identity — to create a hauntingly humorous new body of work.

These drawings are one-time layabouts from the floor of his studio, fair game for layers upon layers of addition, subtraction, and weird, otherworldly visions informed by concepts of the uncanny.

*Interview by John Martin Tilley*

*Images courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery*

These are creatures that visit us at the moment a dream shifts towards nightmare (or, perhaps, vice versa), guiding us into a post-gender, post-identity, post-anthropocene, post-techno dimension where everyone is absorbent of everything — the only limit being the limits of our own parasitic imaginations.

Like modern-day iterations of the famed magical picture of Dorian Gray, these figures have absorbed some of our strangest anxieties in a brave new world saturated with technology, developed and pupated in the studio as if of their own accord, and have been retrieved, as if from Wilde's attic, to blossom or wilt as they choose in the cold light of day.

*office* sat down with Geoffrey Chadsey in his studio in DUMBO to talk about these odd pictures, as well as werewolves, Big Foot and, of course, tits.

### **I'm curious about your process.**

I'm a draw-er, I have a master's in photography and a day job as a photo editor — I can't take a picture to save my life, so I steal a lot of photographs. The rhetoric about this stuff in the 90s and the 2000s was all about appropriation, you could call it a queer strategy, this pilfering of the archives to build up something new or refurbished. So I have this huge archive of

photos I've stolen from every fucking site out there, and I did a show — I used to these scenes I would build up and there'd be these art history references in them, but then it became this Where's Waldo, like people going and trying to find the Degas reference or where's that movie reference, which is fun, it gives you something to talk about, but I felt like, no one's talking about the fact that there's naked dudes staring at you, I just felt like it became like this kind of decoy, almost.

So then I did a show with Jack where I stripped all the allegory out of it and they became very surreal images of naked guys staring at you. And then suddenly it became awkward to talk about those at all, so then I thought maybe I should get less... literal, less labored. So I removed backgrounds and started focusing on the body, and then as I was drawing them I kept changing my mind. This show has work that is five or six years old that I dug up, it becomes this thing that I revisit again and again. So I've been erasing into them, drawing over them, sticking drawings on top of one another, sometimes I start taping sheets of paper on top and keep extending the body. So they're these little Frankenstein's that keep moving around.

When I was drawing on them, honestly I can't remember why but I just started putting tits on things. I guess it was kind of a play on the joke of "what's a gay man's worst nightmare" to somehow be seen next as a woman, so I was like, alright, I'm going to smack some tits on here. And then with this show, I kept erasing all the penises in the drawings, I was like, "it's time to go back in the closet, penises!" I just felt like I was occupying that stereotypical gay male artist of, "I draw naked men," and it's just like the most boring, tired, thing.

I don't know if you know Leslie Lowman, which has become an entire archive of gay male nudes, they have this crazy huge archive, I don't even think they know the extent of it — in the 80s and 90s in particular, people were just dropping dead, it was like, "get this artist archived," but you walk into the back room and it's like, whoa!, naked men everywhere.



**We were talking before about the definition of "queer" — what does "queer" even mean, do you think?**

There was this girl I just met who said she was 'queer,' and it made me laugh a little — she was saying 'queer' a bunch of times and I was just laughing, I was like, "Oh my god, I can't believe these straight girls are using this word so handily." I've been thinking about how that word is just so branded now, it's just being applied to everything, this whole gender



spectrum, sexuality hoo-ha, it's become this like go-to term now for gay lesbian whatever — whatever that big melting pot is now.

The whole point is that the word 'queer' is supposed to be unidentifiable, it's like this moving target, there are symposiums on how you can't define the term, meanwhile you open up a magazine and they're like, "this CW show explores queer identity blah blah," and you're like, "wait, what? that's not supposed to be in print!"



**There are lots of cowboy and country references — what does the cowboy represent for you and how are you toying with that?**

That is kind of new. Like, I hate cowboy hats. This show came about pretty quickly and I was joking about how to make some of these new and I was like, I'll just stick a hat on it. So that was an old drawing, I started to build up on it and there were so many iterations to it. Of course the cowboy hat alludes to the stereotypical straight masculinity, and now Trumpism, so it just seems like this demonic object that I wanted to play with. Obviously it's a huge prop in gay male porn fantasies, but at the same time in person when you see a cowboy hat you might think twice about, you know, engaging in conversation. I have this drawing that I finished in 2007, but if a drawing doesn't leave my studio it's fair game — it's like, fuck it, if you're around, I'm going to work on you again. So I came back in 2014 and added a bunch of limbs to it, and then it was again sitting here, and I guess it just needed a cowboy hat.

**The tits are so good.**

The pendulous tits — I spent on Google — some of the search terms, that's the best thing about Google is you can type in the most specific thing you're looking for like "pendulous tits," — and for some reason I just wanted these huge fucking tits on this creature. And then the sock puppet came up at the end. Sometimes it's like — I work on them so long that I honestly don't know how people look at them. I get that they're disconcerting, but I want them to be kind of funny too, so I have to remind myself to give these little nods to make people giggle.



## What is the world like that these figures occupy, do you imagine?

I think that they first started coming out of this question that was asked of me in grad school 25 years ago, when this photographer, Larry Sultan, he's dead but was the most amazing teacher, asked me why I wasn't doing work about effeminacy and I was kind of taken aback, and was just like — it's one thing to be like, "are you gay," it's another to just say, "you're effeminate." It's just this instant recoil. My defense at the time was that that's not a thing, that's something that straight people, dudes point out, like a void or lack. But then as I grew older I realized, no, it is a thing, and maybe it should be embraced, and maybe it should be terrifying. So I felt like while I was drawing these it was constantly in my head — what is this 'effeminacy,' which I equated with a failure of masculinity, which again was the joke with the tits, but I wanted it to be this thing that you could not look away from. So not being stereotypically clownish or fabulous but being... terrifying.



## Well that's a perfect lead in to my next question: I find these pictures kind of frightening, do you intentionally cultivate a sense of horror?

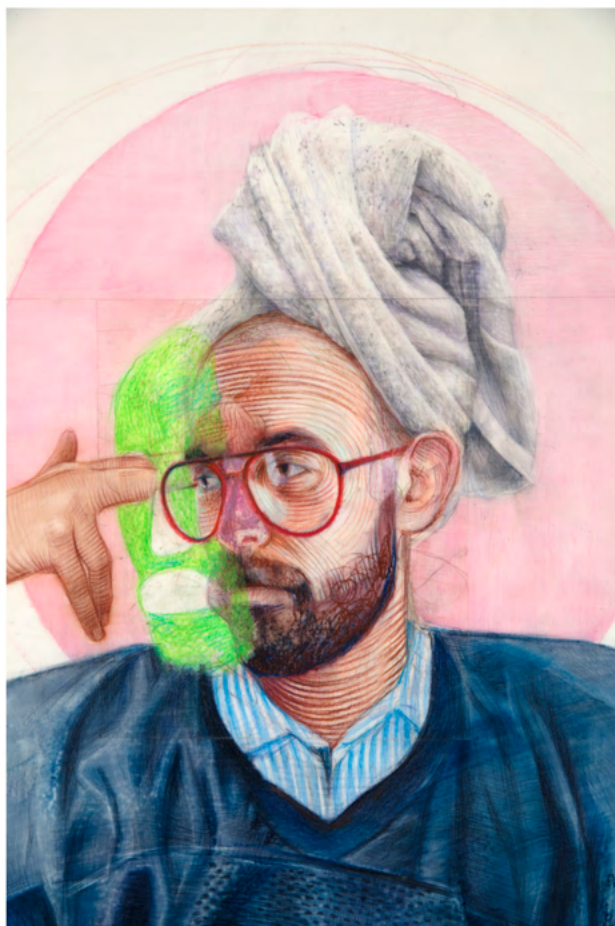
I think it's that whole idea of the uncanny — honestly, I'm scared of these being scary. I just feel like there's that whole kind of goth aesthetic especially artists licking their wounds from their break and belonging, especially with figurative work it just gets kind of... gross to look at. And I don't want to be in that space, so right now I'm riding that edge a little.

## Do you mean pornographic?

No, I guess I what I'm thinking of is this trend of what I like to call the 'hyperfigurative,' where you're kind of equating really good drawing with artistic talent — it's just over-articulated, the figure is over-articulated in that every fucking spot of the drawing is drawn but also the feelings are over-articulated. There's just no ambiguity, like I don't want these drawing to be about anything really, I'm trying to have them... it makes it hard to talk about, really, but I want them in this kind of wordless space — these aren't about, you know, 'what's it's like to be a... whatever, a gay white man in America.'

There's something about this feeling about displacement that I'm clearly aestheticizing that I want people to look at it and feel and get kind of excited about it. I don't want to be repulsive — but that's that whole thing of pushing and pulling. It's like, alright, this drawing is fucked up so some people are like, ugh, why the fuck am I looking at this — at the same time

I'm thinking about, maybe not the bodies themselves but how they're made erotic, I want it to pull them in, like 'oh my god this is really beautifully made,' but not shut them out either, being like, 'you can't do this.' So that's that whole precarious feel that I'm trying to operate in, if that makes sense.



### What was a horror movie that really terrified you as a kid?

I was terrified, like batshit crazy, flat-out horrified by Big Foot — this was the 70s. There was something about that footage, which now is so clearly fake, but it's done so beautifully. In some ways it seemed like it had these pendulous breasts or whatever as it's walking in the woods, and then it just turns and looks at the camera — it was that weird engagement. I'm telling you, it scared the bejesus out of me. Why were people obsessed about it? I have no idea. So Big Foot and then... werewolves — I just could not abide by werewolves, there was something about them. Of course now it seems so corny, right, because the werewolf is the ultimate gay figure, this like, this beastly other is constantly erupting and he or she can't control it and then they kind of go out and wreak havoc at night and then reconcile themselves with this demonic, other thing, and then piece it all back together again. I wasn't terrified of being a werewolf, I was terrified of being eaten by one, I don't know what it was about it, I mean the transformation always scared me in those movies, I don't know if you saw American Werewolf in London, but there's that scene, I guess there's The Howling, there's a lot of great werewolf movies where someone is being stalked by a werewolf, and then they really draw out the stalking.

And then, to top it all off, is Alien, which is still one of my favorite movies, but my dad took me to see it, he saw it first, I was like eleven when it came out, and then I read the book, I was so dead set on seeing it, Star Wars had just been out, every boy was like, 'space! spaceships!' and I remember my dad coming back and being like, 'it's really fucking scary,' and I said 'I don't care I still have to see it,' so we went and saw it and I was like — it's a genius film, they were doing like a Casavetti film but as a horror film, so everyone just seems like pissed off, blue collar, everyone's talking over each other, they're all terrible actors — but when the thing burst out of his chest, I just lost my mind, and in the theatre I was hysterical, and my dad was like, 'oh my god, I broke my son.' He didn't know what to do, he was like, 'am I supposed to take you out of the theatre?' and I looked up and then started laughing, I was literally hysterical. But I'm a New Yorker, I'll go to therapy — actually my therapist said, 'you shared this cathartic moment,' my parents got divorced, so he said, 'you figured out a way to to share this catharsis from real life without actually addressing it.' So now Alien has become this beautiful father-son moment even though it was so fucking horrifying.

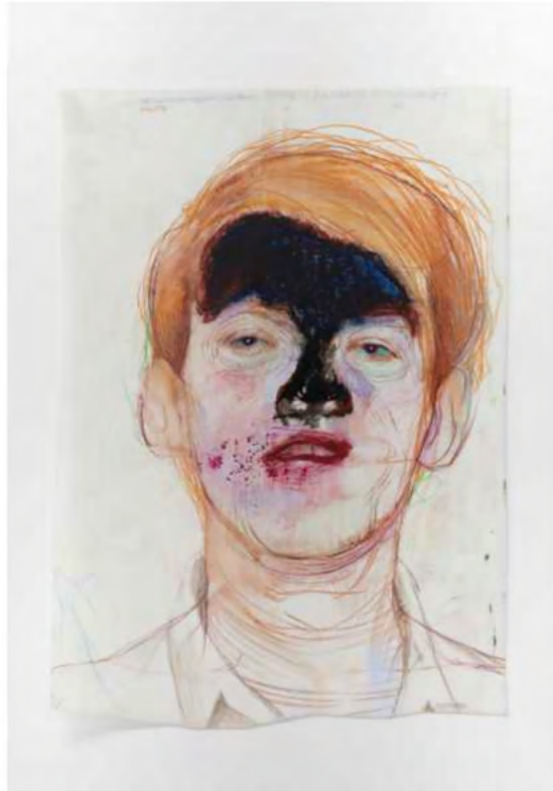
## **Would you fuck, marry or kill your art, would your art fuck, marry or kill you?**

Oh my god. Actually, the joke is that my drawings are relationships that go on way too long, so I would say kill them because I work on them way too long — so I've already married them, and then they've stuck around way too long so it's like the tail end of the relationship, so I'm like, 'you need to fucking get out, go get a job, go be something in the world — don't disappoint me!'



# Between the Masculine & Effeminate: Geoffrey Chadsey at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

BY BLOUIN ARTINFO | MAY 15, 2018



Jack Shainman Gallery is hosting a solo exhibition by Geoffrey Chadsey, titled "That's Not It," from May 17, 2018.

Gender is bent and morphed in layered drawings created by Geoffrey Chadsey at the Jack Shainman Gallery. The uncanny drawings are being presented in the show "That's Not It" and sees the lines of both gender and drawing blurred. The Jack Shainman Gallery will host the works from May 17 until June 9, 2018.

"In his ongoing series of painterly, drawn portraits, Chadsey continues a decade-long exploration of fantasized subjects that hover in the sfumato between the masculine and the effeminate: they are made-up "men" composed of selves presented for an unseen, image-consuming digital audience...Chadsey's morphed persons have visages that blur and flicker, as if yet to settle into a coherent identity. These men are caught up in enacting the various aspirations of the hyper-American notion of being all you can be. They are anxious, stuck perhaps in a moment of white male fragility: the center is not holding, the multiple drop-down-menu archetypes they enact clashing for attention. But they are excited, too; in the midst of a peacock display," says the gallery.

The exhibition will also explore Chadsey's hybrid figures that succeed in making the strange familiar and the familiar strange, blurring the line between viewer and subject, between personal history and the artist's internet search history. Presented in glassless frames, the drawings are delicate, vulnerable even. Overwhelmingly articulated in life-size scale, the figures insist on being beheld.

Born in Philadelphia Geoffrey Chadsey, currently lives and works in Brooklyn. He earned his BA in Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University and his MFA from the California College of the Arts. The artist has exhibited his work in various solo as well as group exhibitions at numerous institutions, including the most recent ones at the Boston University Art Gallery, as well as the Contemporary Art Museum, Honolulu; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; San Jose Museum of Art; the San Diego Museum of Art; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; and the Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA. He is also a 2011 New York Foundation for the Arts John Burton Harter Charitable Trust Fellow, and has been the recipient of the Artadia Art Council Jury Award and the Fine Arts Work Center Fellowship.

*The exhibition will be on view through June 9, 2018, at Jack Shainman Gallery, 513 West 20th St, NY, NY 10011.*

## Some Things T Editors Like Right Now

A by-no-means exhaustive list of things our editors (and a few contributors) are interested in on a given week.

Oct. 27, 2017



From left, Geoffrey Chadsey's "Ginger Stir Peel," 2014; "Star Spangled Sary," 2014-2017. Courtesy of the artist

### Geoffrey Chadsey's Elaborate Drawings

Men in Geoffrey Chadsey's watercolor pencil drawings are hybrids of fleshy humans and curious beings — all emanating from his imagination. "I've been collecting photos of men performing their masculinity for the camera, mostly a stoic kind, often awkward because there is a glimpse of self-consciousness going on," says the Brooklyn-based artist. "These men are performing selves for an online audience — images of being that are presented to be desired."

His new show, “Heroes and Secondaries,” at the Boston University Art Galleries marks Chadsey’s first institutional exhibition in a decade. Each element his figures clutch — such as an airplane pillow or an iPhone — contributes to ambiguous narratives Chadsey concocts with meticulous artistry and an unabashed ardor for oddity. *“Geoffrey Chadsey: Heroes and Secondaries” is on view through December 10th, Faye G., Jo, and James Stone Gallery at Boston University Art Galleries, College of Fine Arts, [www.bu.edu](http://www.bu.edu).* — OSMAN CAN YEREBAKAN



# The New York Times

ART REVIEW

## Art Once Shunned, Now Celebrated in ‘Found: Queer Archaeology; Queer Abstraction’



“Untitled (Men),” from 2010, by Matt Lipps, in the exhibition “Found: Queer Archaeology; Queer Abstraction” at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art.

Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles; Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco; and Josh Lilley Gallery, London

By Holland Cotter

Aug. 23, 2017

The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, which has a lively show called [“Found: Queer Archaeology; Queer Abstraction”](#) on through the fall, is itself an archaeological project of many layers. The museum reopened last spring after renovations, but has existed in New York, in one form or another, for nearly 50 years.

It originated in a SoHo loft shared by two men, Charles W. Leslie and Fritz Lohman (1922-2010), life partners and collectors of homoerotic painting, drawing and photography. In the summer of 1969, they opened their home as a weekend art salon and were astonished when hundreds of people showed up. It turned out that the type of art they loved, “unambiguously gay” and shunned by conventional museums, had a zealous following.

Soon afterward, the couple opened a commercial gallery in SoHo. But in the 1980s, their focus turned from promotion to preservation. AIDS was devastating the gay art community. Entire careers were disappearing as artists lost homes or died and had work trashed.

In response, in 1987, the two men formed the Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation, a nonprofit collecting and exhibiting institution, which eventually acquired a new gallery at 26 Wooster Street in SoHo. The foundation was awarded official museum status in 2011, becoming the first

accredited gay art museum anywhere. After closing for renovations, it reopened its Wooster Street gallery at double the size in March.

Over the decades, the institution had pretty closely adhered to its founding criterion for what made art gay: basically, the presence of the nude, usually white, male body. But gay culture itself changed. Women, often shunted aside in the early movement, had become a powerful aesthetic and political force. Trans people, once silent, were speaking out. Ethnic and racial diversity increased. Queerness, a concept of difference that floated free from binary notions of sexuality and gender, had evolved. And this more complicated sense of identity, incorporating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer consciousness, had gone global.

In the new century, under the leadership of Hunter O'Hanian, the museum, which absorbed the foundation, acknowledged these changes. And now, directed by Gonzalo Casals, it fully incorporates them, as is evident in "[Found: Queer Archaeology; Queer Abstraction](#)." The male figure is still here, and sometimes nude. But in large-scale watercolors by Geoffrey Chadsey it's a racial and sexual hybrid. In collages by Troy Michie it's physically fractured, its erotic charge interrupted, confused, even canceled out.

At any point over the past several decades, for example, you might have found, hanging on Leslie-Lohman walls, a circa 1900 photograph of Sicilian youths by Wilhelm von Gloeden, or George Bellows's 1923 print of a men's bathhouse, or one of John Burton Harter's academic 1980s nudes. You would have been far less likely to find the equivalent of Zanele Muholi's portraits of the black South African lesbians, or Chitra Ganesh's feminist mash-ups of South Asian comic strips, or anything at all resembling the doll-like hand-stitched sculptures of the transgender artist Greer Lankton — all of which have recently arrived in the collection and look completely at home in the show.

The museum has a history it can be proud of, a radical one. From the start, it championed an outcast art and stood boldly, unfashionably, by it. Now it is complicating its earlier aesthetic direction without compromising its social mission, which is a tough act to pull off. Whether the museum is, or will continue to be, as advertised, the only art institution of its kind doesn't matter. It's a museum that both stretches "gay" and resists "normal," and for that it's invaluable.

"Make being different your strength" could be its motto. Wasn't that the lesson the 1960s were teaching when Mr. Leslie and Mr. Lohman first opened their home and their art to the public that summer — the summer of Stonewall, as it happened — all those years ago?

*Correction: August 23, 2017*

*An earlier version of this review described incorrectly the status of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art. It reopened last spring after renovations; it did not officially open then. (The museum has existed, in various forms, for nearly 50 years.) The review also misidentified the curator of an exhibition there, "Expanded Visions: Fifty Years of Collecting." That show was organized by Rob Rosen and Branden Wallace, not by Gonzalo Casals.*



# ARTFORUM



Geoffrey Chadsey, *Portrait (Pink Beak)*, 2010, watercolor pencil on Mylar, 36 x 34".

SAN FRANCISCO

## Geoffrey Chadsey

ELECTRIC WORKS GALLERY

130 8th Street

January 3 - February 12

In the startling series of watercolor pencil drawings exhibited in this show, Geoffrey Chadsey depicts characters that embody an uncanny, unbalanced mishmash of malleable flesh and warped psyche. These are figures with questionable fashion sensibilities and rock-star ambitions, who shift between genders, time frames, and, in some instances, species. Made using a rendering technique that echoes the dense curving and parallel lines

used in engraved likenesses of presidents on paper money—or, more broadly, a plastic surgeon's felt-tipped notations on bare pre-op skin—the nearly life-size figures often seem graphically gestural. They look practically charged with electric current, particularly around their nipples.

Many of the works depict pasty white guys whose softness nudges them into third-sex territory, androgyny allowing for vast possibility. *Portrait (Pink Beak)* (all works 2010) presents a doughy, shirtless figure, with attentively articulated curls, a Na'vi-blue forehead (over-the-counter facial mask is a recurring, multihued motif), and a mildly monstrous attenuated shadow profile.

Works with more explicit evidence of physical gender transformation deepen the appeal of the show. *Black Couch* presents a nude reclining on a luxuriously lumpy piece of furniture. The body has the head and hairy legs of a frat boy, but it also has the breasts of a woman, and a conspicuous lack of a penis for a crotch-draped hand to cover. An extra arm that seems to dangle to the floor—and the setting is apparently an artist's studio with sketches blue-taped to the wall—suggests that a single pose is insufficient to capture the gist of self. The same could be said of the stances and gestures that imply masculinity.

Chadsey's source images seem to be harvested from random Flickr pages or hook-up websites—the imperfect bodies, ordinary furniture, and flat lighting are all the stuff of private worlds made public online. It is with a deft hand and a peculiar vision that the artist manages to construct works imbued with such memorably freakish integrity.

— Glen Helfand



# The Boston Globe

GALLERIES | CATE MCQUAID

## Geoffrey Chadsey plays with male self-presentation

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 15, 2017

Screwy, misbegotten, and antiquated ideas of masculinity have contributed to this moment of sexual harassment revelations and making American great again. The male mask has gotten so old and rigid it's cracking. Queer, effeminate, dark, and vulnerable stuff is seeping out from beneath.

Geoffrey Chadsey stares it all in the face in his drawings at the Faye G., Jo, and James Stone Gallery at Boston University. His monstrous and fantastical portraits synthesize images he draws from the Internet: Selfies on gay hookup sites (where masculinity is always a performance), photojournalism, and any digital detritus that catches his eye.



Geoffrey Chadsey's "Reacher" is part of the "Heroes and Secondaries" exhibit at the Faye G., Jo, and James Stone Gallery.

He draws these portraits in watercolor pencil and crayon on transparent Mylar, erasing and leaving ghostly traces, so that the process of drawing echoes the changes of pose, and changes of self. Several figures have many arms; several are nude. Some have breasts or broad hips. The genitalia alone signal the conundrum — or the vast menu — of sex and gender. There are penises, and disturbing voids; some have a rope, braid, or fingers for genitals.

A familiar red baseball cap flies off the head of the man with many limbs seated on an easy chair in "Reacher." His wild hair and beard are leonine; his mouth is a black, tooth-lined circle, his eyes beady, his face that of a frightened beast on the defensive. The dude in "Camouflage" poses for a selfie; hands emerge from his shoulders, and he wears a red mask with a circular rainbow at the mouth.

Chadsey's men are outrageous, yet evasive. In investigating the glittery surface of self-

presentation, this artist reveals something harrowing and desperately protective in the interstices. We may be enticed by these guys, but we'll never get to know them. That slipperiness may be a product of digital identity. Or it just may be the way we have always been, and the Internet is merely a burlesque stage, and the mirror we crave and loathe.

**GEOFFREY CHADSEY: HEROES AND SECONDARIES**

At Faye G., Jo, and James Stone Gallery, Boston University, 855 Commonwealth Ave., through Dec. 10. 617-353-3329, [www.bu.edu/art](http://www.bu.edu/art)

REVIEW - 01 NOV 2010

## Male

Maureen Paley, London, UK

BY KARI RITTENBACH



'Male', 2010, Installation View.

Vince Aletti's New York apartment is stacked, floor to ceiling, with photographs, drawings, newspaper clippings and the like. The music and photography critic has been acquiring this hoard since the late 1970s, and it comprises thousands of disparate representations of man: un-catalogued navels and nether regions. Aletti first displayed works from this extensive personal archive in 2008 at White Columns in New York, though the dense installation there – all manner of portraiture crowding in together along shelves mounted low, and heavily, against the gallery walls – comprised only a very small portion of his holdings.

Collier Schorr has expressed admiration for Aletti's intoxicated eye (despite, as a woman, her own exclusion from the subject-object relations of his pet project), arguing that his ever-amassing material, delightfully unrestrained by the provinces of fine art, 'creates a Cosmos: at once a microcosm of gay male life, a personal fantasy, and the infinite, enveloping world.' If seemingly simple,



the universe of 'Male' posed an exciting proposition for exhibition in an era of digital intangibility which, among other developments, has witnessed a decline in alpha-male physicality proportional to that of blue-collar labour. Shrewdly enough, Aletti – in his curatorial statement – resists the urge to define maleness: 'Masculinity can be a straitjacket, an armour plate, a bad joke. Or it can be loose, light, and vibrant: Something unexpected, something sweet, something wild.' His ambition with 'Male' is to reveal the superficially constructed gender of the dominant sex; a coy inversion of Simone de Beauvoir's radically political sentence on the fairer ('one is not born, but rather becomes a woman'), and with flashier results.

Lightly spanning four walls of the lower gallery at Maureen Paley in a salon-style hang (which Paley called 'a departure' for her), the backbone of 'Male' was a set of modestly-sized headshots made by Bob Mizer and Don Whitman during the 1950s. These fresh, upturned visages – homely, dimpled, earnest, and yet so unlike one another – string together a seductive portrait of a toothsome America. Classic black and white photographs by Peter Hujar and Karlheinz Weinberger punctuated with iconic (now passé) typologies – the cowboy, the greaser, the barrel-chested immigrant – almost jarring alongside fashionably current images (by Scott Treleavan and Paul P.). Wolfgang Tillmans' photographs of anonymous necks more subtly echoed the turned back of Hujar's nearby *Andrew* (1975), while Stephen Irwin's collages capture a latent eroticism – painted-over vintage pornography disclosing only a suggestive index finger, or the pattern of a bedspread beneath the hint of limber legs.

If the predominance of expressive painting in 'Male' prevented the viewer's gaze from fixating only on the physical, it also frustrated Aletti's aim to complicate man's 'conventional' image. For all its troublesomeness, the male subject as represented in painting has often been ambiguously sexualized: from Leonardo da Vinci's *St. John the Baptist* (1513–6) to any number of Egon Schiele's early 20th-century self-portraits (nude and otherwise). As such, Geoffrey Chadsey's treacly watercolours, based on found Internet imagery, do little more than highlight the bravado worn lightly by strangers online – alerting to a homoeroticism that, by now, is at home in popular culture. Comparatively, photography's voyeurism and the camera's illicit gaze still excite with a tremor of the real: however awkwardly posed, Jack Pierson's subject in *Self-Portrait #2* (2003), for example, is trapped by the shock of hair and arched brows that belong to the domain of self-representation. Pierson reveals – rather than represents – the sexualized artifice that is intimated by man and not only produced by art.

Instead of urgently exposing illusory male beauty, then, the variety represented in 'Male' described a mundane incoherence, losing its thread of contingency in the egalitarian mire of the group exhibition. The practices of a number of participating artists (all of whom are men) – including Patrick Lee, Attila Lukacs and Jack Pierson – in fact focus on the male form, in different media

and diverse formats; the contact points at which their own complex projects converge with Aletti's mythic personal predilections might have been made more explicit.

All together, the exhibition's mostly urbane images were missing that salacious fervour intrinsic to Aletti's personal trove, which one imagines to be most intimately appreciated because handled, selected and specifically owned by him. It may be an unfair contrast; still, the more hastily pinned up men at Maureen Paley seem instrumentalized in pursuit of an (evident) open-ended masculinity. Rather than exhibiting what may only be considered modern and contemporary art, 'Male' would have benefited from trekking through less explored cultural deposits (as Aletti's unabridged collection does), without which its concept easily wears thin. It was Walter Benjamin who once lamented: 'The phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner. Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter.'

# San Francisco Chronicle

## Christopher Taggart show: Science, art duke it out

By Kenneth Baker | February 5, 2011



IMAGE 2 OF 3  
"Wolf" (2010) watercolor pencil on Mylar by Geoffrey Chadsey 42" x 33"

Bay Area artist Christopher Taggart has an undergraduate degree in physics, and it shows. We get whiffs of the madness of science and the madness of art in his exhibition at Baer Ridgway.

No single work can represent the zany variety of things here, but "Bananawar" (2008-11) indicates the level of Taggart's commitment to seeing an idea through.

On three aluminum panels measuring 5 by 10 feet all told, he has engraved by hand a colossal image that the title nudges us to see as a drifting Portuguese man-of-war. A bunch of bananas stands in for its "float," its tentacles formed of chains of combination box- and open-end wrenches.

Taggart has calibrated the profile of each of these elements with measurements and marked every calibration with a compass-traced circle corresponding in diameter to the unit of measure. The resulting welter of light-catching incised circles clothes the figure in an optical effervescence.

If this description sounds hard to follow, know that it barely suggests the storm of visual detail into which a viewer looks when gazing at "Bananawar."

Not surprisingly, the eye starts to dream when confronting this level of complexity. Prepare to see a skeletal human figure with a strange headdress emerge.

"Bananawar" evokes commitment to a project run amok, which we see more often in war making and big science than in art. Think "going bananas," "banana republic" - the old political slur, not the retail chain. What sort of war unmasks a banana republic? A bananawar, of course.

Taggart gestures toward institutionalized manias more effectively by skirting the overtly topical than he could by simple allusion.



With "Portrait of My Wife" (2010), he resumes a more personal orbit, but not without a comic wobble of paranoid vision.

Here the viewer finds scattered on three walls and the ceiling of a room irregular patches of black and brown adhesive paper. At first Russian Constructivism comes to mind.

A small, motorized apparatus on the floor intermittently jerks into various positions what looks like a crude model of a radar screen. By watching the pair of monitors on the opposite wall, a viewer discovers that the form being jerkily repositioned is a custom-faceted mirror.

The monitors display what the mirror "sees." Every so often, it gets thrown into the place where its facets gather all the scattered forms on walls and ceiling into rough images - the "portrait" - of Taggart's wife's eyes.

The work's absurd mechanism hints at technology interfering with our recognition of one another's humanity, fostering the illusion that only technology can reconnect us.

The few pieces on which Taggart seems to have misspent energy might be a comedown, did he not appear to have a boundless fund of it.

**Selfhood as disguise:** Geoffrey Chadsey presents at Electric Works portraits that find new depth in an often prized feature of traditional drawing: pentimenti, the graphic traces of revision.

Working in watercolor pencil on Mylar allows Chadsey a spectrum of effects, from translucent line to the caking of pigment to washes made by dissolving marks with brushed-on water.

His mastery of this medium lets him deploy ghostly revisions and overlays of imagery that evoke conflicting aspects of his sitters' identities.

"Wolf" (2010) presents a standing half-naked man - though the exhibition context will leave you wondering - apparently long-haired, bearded and in partial blackface. He appears armless, but faint pentimenti show that earlier the drawing had his arms akimbo and now has them stretched behind - or amputated, depending on your taste for the grotesque. In other pieces, alternative poses remain in full detail, equipping figures with extra limbs or multiple faces.

A lupine mask clings to the side of the figure's head in "Wolf." A little time with Chadsey's work will make you unsure whether to take it as description, symbolism, allusion to shamanic beliefs or as sheer pictorial mischief.

In contrast to the easy surrealism that many of his contemporaries practice, Chadsey goes to the limits of representation to describe the convergence of identities that we suspect marks every individual today.

Sandra Ono's process-oriented sculpture at Electric Works initially looks a world removed from Chadsey's hallucinatory vision.

But a sort of log she made of pieced-together rubber bands takes on the aspect of a dissected forearm. A coursing mass of collapsed black balloons she assembled turns to guts. Each fresh glance intensifies the biological or visceral reference of Ono's accumulative pieces.

**Christopher Taggart: Away:** Sculpture, drawings, photo collages and installations.  
Through March 5. Baer Ridgway Exhibitions, 172 Minna St., S.F. (415) 777-1366.  
[www.baerridgway.com](http://www.baerridgway.com).

**Geoffrey Chadsey: Shift, Return:** Drawings.

**Sandra Ono: Homeostasis:** Sculpture. Through Feb. 12. Electric Works, 130 Eighth St., S.F. (415) 626-5496. [www.sfelectricworks.com](http://www.sfelectricworks.com).



## Shotgun Review

# shift, return

*By Shotgun Reviews*

*January 25, 2011*

Geoffrey Chadsey's solo show at Electric Works proves that the artist, who trained in drawing and photography at California College of the Arts, is increasingly "thinking like a painter." Chadsey excels as both a colorist and portraitist; his art unites multiple visual languages together with notions of desire, homosexuality, gender, and technology in this new suite of watercolor-pencil-on-Mylar drawings.

Take *Portrait (Pink Beak)* (2010), where drawing and painting strategies nicely overlap. A moist sheen of azure blue coats the figure's forehead and collects into a single, slender watery drip that drains down his chest. A fantastical mutation of the subject's profile, stretched, plastic-like, is rendered in slender ribbons of salmon.

Chadsey's interrogation of gay social and visual culture recalls Hal Foster's 1985 essay "Subversive Signs," in which he considers art that uses the public sphere "as both a target and weapon." Foster was writing about scene-stealers, like Barbara Kruger, and appropriation; one could wage that Chadsey's art evinces and attacks the gay online—a dense, ever-evolving realm of posing and preening.

Chadsey "nabs" anonymous male self-portraits from chat rooms to spark his art. Then, using watercolor pencil, he "cross-breeds" a face or a pair of lips from a magazine or from a snapshot of a friend or family member. Extra pairs of limbs are sometimes added. His strategies situate his mash-ups in the territory, among others, that Matthew Higgs describes for painters in his 2002 "Reality Check: Painted in the Exploded Field" essay where "sampling, hacking, and [the] downloading" are integrated into contemporary practice.



*Portrait (Pink Beak)*, 2010; Watercolor pencil on Mylar; 36" x 34". Courtesy of Electric Works, San Francisco.

Chadsey's *Grinder* (2010), for example, a reference to the gay mobile application that pinpoints user locations using Global Positioning System technology, remarks on the anonymous and amateur digital self-portrait. Here, a young man sucks in his stomach for the camera. Chadsey activates his gaunt face, as if it's twitching or in cranked-up spasms; a third eye stares out.

A new hybrid race has been envisioned here—and one that looms large. Chadsey has an uncanny ability to pluck a lonely image out of the Darwinian online sea, invest it with chimerical qualities—multiple sets of arms, a ghastly beak—and redeploy it, terrifyingly and gorgeously re-worked. In Chadsey's hands, these posers flourish and command. There should be a waiting list.

*shift, return* is on view at [Electric Works](#), in San Francisco, through February 12, 2011.

Brent Foster Jones lives in New York and previously taught at California College of the Arts.

ON EXHIBIT



COURTESY ARTWORK

The face in "Boxer Jude, 2000," by Geoffrey Chadsey, is taken from "Judith I," by the Art Nouveau painter Gustav Klimt. The haughty seductiveness of the femme fatale reads quite differently on a young man's half-clothed body.

# **‘I’m interested in how people get read’**

**Geoffrey Chadsey explores the point where perceptions of identity are jumbled by reality**

By Keiko Ohnuma  
[kohnuma@starbulletin.com](mailto:kohnuma@starbulletin.com)

They don't look like much at first glance, especially from a distance. But there's something about Geoffrey Chadsey's pencil drawings of ordinary people in ordinary settings: It feels as though the faces are familiar somehow, even though they're clearly not.



The fiction extends to the way the paper looks, which on closer inspection is 8-by-11-inch sheets -- the earliest ones on actual notebook paper -- taped together at the edges. It's adolescent doodling by a talented adolescent, except that there's an intensity to the expressions that leads to not only tip-of-the-tongue recognition, but the eerie sense that these people also recognize you.

With the "Portrait" series, further down the time line of the Contemporary Museum exhibit, the game is up: Here are the iconic faces of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, lifted from greenbacks and redrawn on the bodies of shirtless young men. Immediately it becomes clear why we don't recognize them right away, despite their familiarity: We never think of those heads as being attached to bodies, and certainly not bodies as pale, fleshy, hairy, adolescent -- in a word, physical -- as these.

It soon becomes clear, if someone has not already clued in the viewer, that everything Chadsey draws is a mash-up -- sampled like musical riffs or downloaded jpegs, stolen from fashion photographs, album covers, Old Master art reproductions and online blogs, then redrawn piece by piece onto the bodies of the artist, his family and friends -- a Weekly World News tabloid joke that is enjoyable to the extent that it is both utterly believable and obviously faked.

But more is going on in Chadsey's drawings than the ubiquitous copying, borrowing and collage that is the cliché of contemporary culture. Beneath the adolescent joke, the campy delight in

## **'Boys in the Band'**

"Geoffrey Chadsey Drawings  
1998-2006"

» **On view:** Through March 18

» **Place:** The Contemporary Museum, 2411 Makiki Heights Drive

» **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Tuesdays to Saturdays; noon  
to 4 p.m. Sundays

» **Admission:** \$5; \$3 students  
and seniors; children free

» **Call:** 526-1322 or visit  
[www.tchmi.org](http://www.tchmi.org)



mounting the swagger of Snoop Dogg onto the flowing mane and pert exhibitionism of the fashion model, lingers a nagging doubt: Is this joke for us or on us?



COURTESY ARTWORK  
"Drunk, 2005," borrows optic tricks from Diego Velazquez's 17th-century painting "Las Meninas": Chadsey adds the shooter of the source photograph in the mirror.

What's unsettling about drawings like "Boxer-Juvenile," the eponymous rapper's face on a friend's fleshy body, or "Boxer-Jude," Gustav Klimt's Art Nouveau painting of the biblical heroine Judith as a young man reclining in a rumpled bed, is an uncertainty about where the artist situates himself in terms of the copying, the subjects, the viewer and himself.

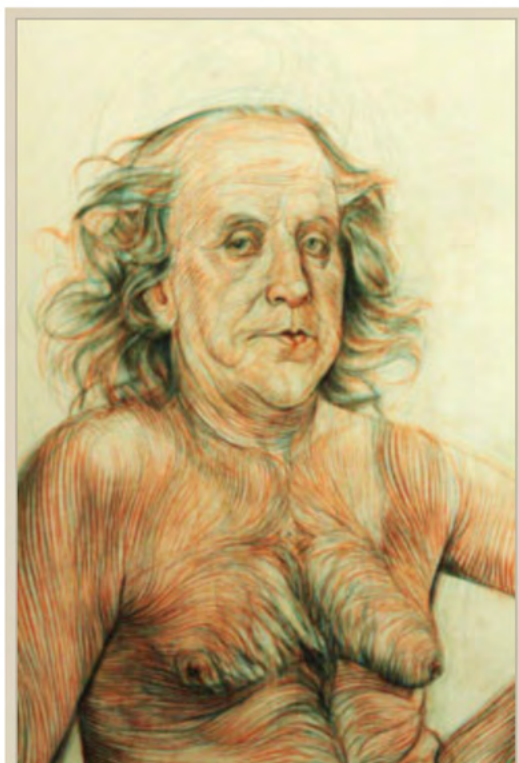
On the one hand we sense the cool detachment of the collector, browsing snapshots on MySpace or gay Web sites (his current source of material) to morph with his sister's face and his own body, for example.

But when it comes to combining those parts, we see none of the cynical flawlessness of magazine close-ups or the Photoshopped e-mail joke. Chadsey's bodies are carved with contour lines that ritualistically trace the curves, folds, bulges and surfaces of the skin, almost as if the artist were shaping those flat renditions into breathing, sweating, gesturing life.

Chadsey admits to a certain "hostility" in his act of choosing photos and a "vengeance" in distorting them. In selecting source material, he said, "I'm interested in how people get 'read'" -- meaning the cues of gesture, appearance and attitude that announce a certain species of identity, and increasingly appear in awkward online snapshots that attempt to advertise an ideal image.

In the universe of Chadsey's drawings -- that of gay men and rappers -- that ideal is all about projecting an "authentic" masculinity that says pure, plain, tough, real -- and relies entirely on being looked at.

"It's where that performance fails that I'm really fascinated in," he says.



COURTESY ARTWORK  
A "portrait" of Ben Franklin.



The issue is personal to him as a gay man, as he was always being made conscious of how his behavior looked to others -- "effeminate" -- as if there were some kind of basic, natural, "real" masculinity on top of which the excessive "frill" of gesture or tone would give him away.

"Notions of 'passing' (for mainstream) have resonance for both people of color and gay people," he notes of his subjects. "That point where someone's 'passing' or not 'passing' because they're failing to act in a certain way -- like their body is somehow giving them up -- is somehow inherently fascinating to me."

In the self-portraits that form the context for Chadsey's drawings, the attitude of the subjects shows their awareness of being looked at against "this kind of idealized notion they have in their head about who they're talking with," he says.

Filtered through his three-dimensional treatment of the bodies, the effect is both intimate and alien, not as easily glossed over as the seamless juxtapositions of commercial advertising.

His more recent drawings, on single sheets of vellum or Mylar, push harder against the limits of believability as they grow more colorful and wild. The sober two- or three-color palette of the early work flourishes now in purples and greens (for the flesh tones) and backgrounds that have evolved from rigorous studies of rumpled bedsheets or wallpaper patterns to oceans of color that include paintlike drips -- from wetting and brushing the watercolor pencil -- and the ghost of redrawn lines.

The perspective, too, grows dizzying and surreal, while the bodies continue their bold three-dimensionality on a separate, realist track. The drawings thus toy with our feelings both intellectually -- by altering the degree of abstraction and realism on the same page -- and physically, in exciting attraction or recoil toward the natural artificiality of the hermaphrodite.





COURTESY ARTWORK

In "A Sure Thing, 2000," the fleshiness of the chin, nose, belly and arms of the figure form a stark contrast to the softness of the background, playing with our investments in the sense of touch and vision.

Chadsey laughed last week as he walked into the Contemporary Museum show for the first time and noted the "viewer discretion" warning sign -- increasingly common at art galleries around town -- implying that male genitalia are somehow dangerous to view. But he later acknowledged that what scandalizes is not so much the anatomy, which is seen in the most staid art museums, but the way it is rendered.

There's a sense of transgression in Chadsey's work that goes beyond ordinary sex or nudity, and which led David Goldberg, in the exhibition catalog, to dub the artist a "22nd Century Pornographer."

It is not only that Chadsey makes of gender, race and identity something "put on," a cut-and-paste trompe l'oeuil, but that he does this by exploiting our faith in what we see with our own eyes: the natural instinct for who is friend and foe, fake or real, whether it is the person we desire or the one in the mirror.



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"Snoop, 2005" mixes rap posing with gay male markers of masculinity, a "peacockery" that Chadsey sees as similar to what bloggers do on MySpace: trade in photographic signs of "the idealized other." His drawings attempt to highlight the modern dilemma of identity -- a failure to match that ideal image to the one in the mirror.



# OtherPeoplesPixels Blog

Websites for Artists by Artists

## OtherPeoplesPixels Interviews Geoffrey Chadsey



*Recliner (in progress)*

2014

Watercolor pencil on Mylar

42" x 63"

GEOFFREY CHADSEY's watercolor portraits on Mylar are amalgams of found images from chat rooms and hook-up sites geared toward men seeking men. His poignant and provocative drawings reveal both the specificity of their source material and the universality of donning plumage—in the form of performances of gender, race, persona and cultural affinity—to make ourselves more desirable and to communicate our availability to others. Geoffrey received his MFA from California College of Arts in 1996 and was awarded the prestigious [Eureka Fleishhacker Fellowship](#) in 1999. His numerous solo exhibitions include shows at [James Harris Gallery](#) (Seattle), [Jack Shainman Gallery](#) (New York) and [The Contemporary Museum](#), now part of the Honolulu Museum of Art. His work will be included in the group show, *Drawingroom*, which opens March 7, 2014 at [Galerie im Taxispalais](#) in Innsbruck, Austria. The exhibition, curated by Peter Weiermair, will travel from [Ursula Blickle Stiftung](#) in Stuttgart, Germany, where it was shown in December 2013. Geoff lives and works in Brooklyn.

**OtherPeoplesPixels:** Do you consider these drawings to be portraits of individuals?

**Geoff Chadsey:** Each drawing is a portrait of individuals, plural. They are composites of photos taken from a number of social media sites—other peoples' self-portraits (or should I say, Other People's Pixels?)—that are further fleshed out with my own photo studies and images ripped from magazines. I spend so much time on them that they feel imbued with personhood. Frankenstein's monster, but without the creator's god-complex or nature-challenging hubris?

**OPP:** The morphing of figures and the presence of multiple heads/arms/bodies is a richly compelling aspect of your drawings, and it seems to be used to different ends throughout your practice. Sometimes the extra body parts evoke potential motion, as with *Reacher* (2012) and *Reacher, revisited* (2013). In works like *Vestigial Velasquez* (2011) and *Portrait (Pink Beak)* (2011), I read the second face as representing a buried part of the personality trying to escape. Visually these remind me most of horror movie effects used when someone is possessed. *Tinchy Klünt* (2011) brings up the idea that our own personalities contain distinct elements of the



surrounding culture, i.e. hip hop and fine art. I could go on and on—I haven't even mentioned Hindu deities! What does this hybridity of form and body mean to you?

GC: I have no grand narrative. I am no great revelator, although I enjoy and agree with your readings. I pursue the uncanny, but as a wary surrealist, who is suspicious of images that beg interpretation or that try to look weird or provocative. The multiple poses, limbs and faces—[pentimenti](#)—render indecision into full form. I read a review of a friend's show, which described her paintings as portraits of people who couldn't make up their minds about who they wanted to be. That description of multiplicity, confusion, playfulness of identities delighted me. That's what the internet was supposed to be about when it became a popular medium. People were talking about how you could reinvent yourself in chat rooms and be whoever you wanted to be. It was supposed to be a post-identity space. Instead, people have become even more entrenched in their identifications of who they'd like to be—and who they'd like to be with.



Wolf  
2011  
Watercolor pencil on Mylar

The added limbs, faces and traces of previous poses also add distance between my drawings and the unseen source material of the screen and its frozen image. They add a physicality to the figure, as well as movement and the passage of time. *Reacher*, which quotes a *Sports Illustrated* basketball cover, and *Marines*, which evokes Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, both read like dance. *Portrait (Pink Beak)*, a self-portrait, reminds me of spirit photography; the vulpine mask came from a moment of wanting to just SCRIBBLE. *Tinchy Klimt* is a melding of two common source materials for me: hip-hop and Klimt. There is no reason for it, other than those are images I am repeatedly drawn to: the riveting swagger, the rancid glamor, the spectre of murder. Theater, basically. Popular metaphor of the mask is about hiding, artifice, fakery. Popular psychology is about removing the mask, revealing the true self. But masks enable action. [Giorgio Agamben](#) writes that, "'Persona' originally

means 'mask' and it is through the mask that the individual acquires a role and a social identity." He goes further to describe how, in the online era, this mask gets separated from the individual as a profile of online behavior, purchases and likes. Data mining companies collect this information in order to present further enticements or calls-to-action to the individual. You are what you "like."

In online chat-rooms, you can see how men increasingly identify themselves with costumes that indicate a masculine archetype: the straight-acting (an overtly theatrical role that requires great skills in projecting illegibility), the jock, the leather-daddy, the preppy/ Abercrombie-and-Fitch collegiate, the scruffy urban-woodsman, the executive, the thugster, the punk. Each one calls out to other lovingly-detailed archetypes for a meeting of the masks. The hybridity in the drawings is about pursuing identities that aren't easily summarized as racial, gender, personality types.

**OPP:** I've read that many drawings are based on images from [Grindr](#), an iPhone app for meeting "gay, bi, and curious guys" and other internet chat sites, although they aren't identified that way on your website. For me, knowing this source adds a distinct layer of longing to connect and to belong that might not be otherwise present in the drawings of single figures. Would these drawings be the same if you drew these figures from life? How important is the source material to you?

**GC:** "Curious"—isn't that hopeful? Yes, Grindr is one source, [Manhunt](#) another. I have an archive of photographs from sites I have been collecting for over 10 years. I've been an active participant in these sites, by the way. These images are about longing and the self-presentation that goes into being longed-for. Men post themselves in an online bazaar to a fantasized other; it's a peacock gallery. Maybe that's the discomfort of these drawings. Here is a figure presenting himself to you. You are an implied part of the drawing. He is looking out at you, he is looking FOR you, but you are also not the original intended audience.

Someone asked me a few years ago if there was any empathy in these renderings. It's complicated. While looking at so many beautiful men online, I find myself collecting the photographs where the performances are wonky. There's some sort of excess that disrupts the aspiring hotness factor, like a bulging belly or an [overenthusiastic hairdo](#). Empathy and delight enter in those moments. Popular gay iconography is all about desirability: beauty, youth, the fitness factor. I seek to capture a more disruptive figure, something you can't take your eyes off of, something disorienting, alien, horrific like a movie monster that rivets the gaze. Let's call it the aspirational abject.



*Black Couch*

2010

Watercolor pencil on Mylar

36" x 60"



**OPP:** All your drawings are watercolor pencil on Mylar. Why do you choose it? Is there anything about your work in this medium that doesn't translate well online? What are we missing as online viewers?

**GC:** The image ecology from screen to Mylar back to screen is largely how my work is seen these days. I joke that I am represented by the gallery called Facebook, and they give me a show whenever I want. It's fun to gather "likes" and to see your work bounce around Tumblr. But the jpegs are pale ghosts of their originals—you miss the WORK involved in making it, the physicality of the line, the painterly goop of the melted scribbles, not to mention the size (some of these drawings are six feet tall). So then the question becomes: why draw? I have a Masters in photography, but I drew my thesis show. Call it digested photography, a reconstituted archive. Drawing is a sentimental attachment to the personal mark, to the mastery of the rendered copy and to the intimate privacy of mulling over images alone in my studio.

**OPP:** You are a 2013-2014 Mentor at [Queer | Art | Mentorship](#), which is an organization dedicated to "pairing and supporting mentorship between queer working artists in New York City." Will you tell us a little about the program and why you decided to become a mentor?

**GC:** The program is about nurturing conversations between (roughly) two generations of participating gay male and female creatives. Because of homophobia, the closet and a generation lost to AIDS, these relationships have to be sought out, created and fostered outside of the university. This is my second year participating. Each generation of gay youth coming into their own has perhaps less baggage than the generation before. The generation before meanwhile has accrued experiences that might be summed up as wisdom—not just about being a thriving gay adult but about being a working artist in New York. The mentorship is about an exchange of ideas, readings, film recommendations, critiques. My participation comes from a desire to integrate my practice into a larger community, to share and receive new ideas about what it means to be queer today.

*Featured Artist Interviews are conducted by Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist [Stacia Yeapanis](#). When she's not writing for OPP, Stacia explores the relationship between repetition, desire and impermanence in her cross-stitch embroideries, remix video and collage installations. She is an instructor in the Department of Fiber and Material Studies at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where received her MFA in 2006, and was a 2012-2013 Mentor-in-Residence at BOLT in Chicago. Her solo exhibition I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For at Klemm Gallery, Siena Heights University (Adrian, Michigan) recently closed, and her solo exhibition [Everything You Need is Already Here](#) is on view at Heaven Gallery in Chicago until February 17, 2014.*