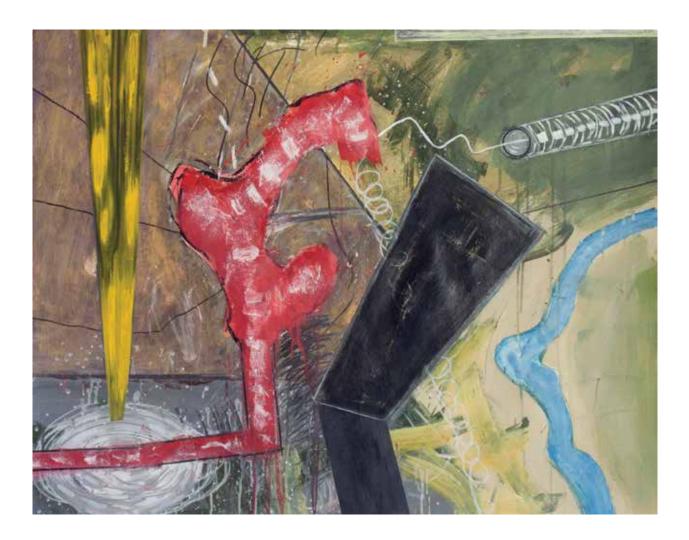
STRANGE AFFINITIES



DANVILLE CHADBOURNE JOHN MATTSON



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November 7 - December 5, 2013



Curated by Diana Lyn Roberts

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John Mattson TORPOR

STRANGE AFFINITIES: A CURATORIAL PERSPECTIVE

Strange Affinities presents the works of painter John Mattson and sculptor Danville Chadbourne: two thoughtful, productive, engaged artists who approach their work with similar formal and conceptual concerns, yielding very different results. Both artists have, over the past forty years, developed a deeply personal and consistent visual language unique to his individual perspective. Yet correspondences in the work suggest a sort of convergent evolution. When viewed individually, each body of work is quite distinct from that of the other artist. Yet juxtaposing the two reveals a sympathetic sense of color, a shared interest in the interaction of geometric and organic forms, a mutual commitment to formal and compositional concerns, and a similar interest in the irony, paradox, and fundamental philosophical quandaries of human existence. This is not an exhibition of collaborative works, as neither artist works particularly well in that mode. Rather, *Strange Affinities* explores how each artist arrives independently at a distinct visual manifestation from similar concerns and tendencies, and the tangential threads that unite them. Presenting their works together for the first time, this exhibition explores the peculiar aesthetic relationship between two artist-friends committed to giving abstract visual form to their observations on human nature.

The strange affinities found in these works – and the artists themselves – are revealed in the dialogue between them. For years, Chadbourne and Mattson have engaged in a lively intellectual discourse regarding aesthetics, politics, philosophy, society, formalism, and the creative process. As the wife of one artist in the exhibition and counting the other as a close friend, I've seen a lot of their works over the years and have been privy to their conversations. The idea for an exhibition emerged from this ongoing dialogue, driven in part by my own compulsion as a curator and art historian to look closely at how their conceptual concerns are embodied in the artwork.

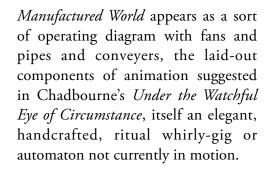
Both artists are compelled to observe and try to make some sense out of the human experience – folly and triumph alike. Both artists are committed to responding to this endeavor through primarily non-representational visual means. Mattson, the painter, works in a traditional, rectangular to square, flat format, creating quirky abstractions and psychological projections that function as characters in illogical, yet visually conventional, two-dimensional depictions of an implied three-dimensional space. Chadbourne, the sculptor, creates three-dimensional abstract forms that exist in real space, often embellished with iconic, primal symbol imagery rendered either in the form itself, or in two-dimensional graphic form on the sculptural surface. Both artists tend to juxtapose peculiar organic shapes with clear, conventional, geometric elements, often imposing an intentionally awkward or disconcerting quirkiness, frequently accentuated by peculiar color combinations. Used primarily to create dynamic compositional balance, the result in both artists' work is a consistent anthropomorphism that is more psychic and gestural than figural.

I am particularly interested in how these affinities bridge the arbitrary divide between the painted surface and the sculptural object. Configurations that provide three dimensional solidity or gestural dynamism in Chadbourne's sculptures may be echoed in Mattson's paintings, but in a flat, almost diagrammatic, graphic manner, as if the individual sculptural elements were laid out and examined for different purposes.

The self-contained tension of Chadbourne's Reflexive Doubt is achieved by the copper zig-zag that completes the loop between the long, dynamic, upward-reaching arm branching off in multiple directions and the low, rounded, stable form resting on the elegant square base, the geometry of which is amplified by simple graphic bands and lines embellishing the surface. Mattson's Exquisite Sensitivity seems to take the same basic elements and dissect them: the warm grey-browns and soft greens are reiterated, but transposed to other elements; the ritual presentation of Chadbourne's base becomes a mat on which the operation is performed. The organic branching arm of the sculpture is transformed in the painting into a rod-like appendage, either penetrating or emerging from the central figure, which echoes the seed-like form of the sculpture. The prominent zig-zag element no longer holds the tension in an elegant loop, but is discarded to the side. Similarly, Mattson's



Danville Chadbourne REFLEXIVE DOUBT



The formal correspondences are sometimes striking, especially given that all of these works have been created independently over the past thirteen years or so. Similar colors, shapes, and gestures provide an interesting visual dialogue of inverted relationships: the peculiar pink "body" of *The Unconscious Birth of Dark Potential*, with its showy,



John Mattson EXQUISITE SENSITIVITY



John Mattson EXIT

assertive green spikes, has an odd grace and sense of presence, achieved at least partially by its largerthan-human scale and the solid, almost monumental geometry of the vertical, rectangular base. The same formal elements are present in Mattson's *Reservoir of Tears*, but the color scheme is inverted, as is the disposition of the primary form: the dominant pink form is here smeared with black, despondent, prostrate in a strange architectural void where the monumentalizing block of Chadbourne's base becomes a flat, isolated space under the figure. A long mangled tube penetrates the seemingly dominated figure. The green of the flat background creates a sickly, almost depressing pallor, in opposition to the animated green display of Chadbourne's form.

In an even more striking comparison, Mattson seems to have channeled the same sculptural form in the far right-hand side of *Torpor*, here operating as a sort of psychological projection or emanation from the central, soft, grub-like figure impaled by the hard edges of geometry, all in a torture chamber where



walls are spattered with hot, orangepink hues of psychic distress. The exuberant menace of *The Blind Hunting* of Souls is reiterated, both formally and psychologically, in the insect-like protagonists of Mattson's *Quit Pushing* and in *This Way*, a work in which the ambiguity between helping and harming evokes the proverbial spider inviting the fly into his parlor.

On the other hand, both artists commonly inject a mitigating, if ambivalent, whimsy into their works. The gleeful dance of Mattson's Pirouette is echoed in Chadbourne's more sedate, but equally friendly, The Unaccompanied Myth of Reversible Perspectives. The inquisitive gesture of Chadbourne's The Conscious Imitation of Illusory Nature is reiterated in the main "character" enjoying Mattson's A Wonderful View. The disarming appeal of Chadbourne's curious, tailwagging figure in The Instinctive and Decisive Moment mimics the cheerful chaos of Mattson's At the Zoo, especially the figure bounding off into the left edge of the picture.

At their core, though, both are inclined toward the darker, or at least more complex, aspects of human nature.

Danville Chadbourne UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF CIRCUMSTANCE



John Mattson MANUFACTURED WORLD

This is most evident in their titles, used by both artists as indirect, intuitive descriptors of any given piece. Mattson's wry, tongue-in-cheek, and occasionally euphemistic titles often employ humor or understatement to provide clues to the arrested, implied narrative depicted in his images. Chadbourne tends toward verbal paradox and condensed poetic phrases to allude indirectly to universal ideas and archetypal abstract notions, rather than actions or depicted circumstances. Both artists are inclined toward word play, where connotation and inference alternately focus and confound the viewer's range of possible reaction or interpretation. Similarly, both artists employ color in peculiar ways to shift the connotative tone of a work, while exerting an equal emphasis on resolving the compositional and formal challenges, or enticements, of a particular palette. All of this contributes to the viewer's emotional and psychological engagement with a particular composition or form, enhancing the tendency to relate to these shapes as characters: non-figurative entities that exist in a somehow familiar and vaguely naturalistic spatial arrangement.

Here again, the inherent difference in format is both a distinction and a subtle connection. The tendency is to interpret painting as narrative depiction, and Mattson more or less complies: within the spatial conundrums and flat, graphic depictions of motion, emotion, sight lines, and random marks, he essentially creates environments in which his neurotic dramas, events, interactions, and emotional processes are acted out and resolved by abstract "characters" of dubious intent. He frequently suggests

architectural spaces with floors, corners, or openings in walls that lead to some other unspecified realm. In *Exit*, for example, the ambiguous, amorphous space contains a geometric shape in the center that suggests an architectural passageway, from which the spinning, emotive, organ-like form seems to have entered and, perhaps, will pass back through. As Mattson describes it, he tends to work on the edge of compositional collapse and, in this case, he incorporated an escape hatch.

Chadbourne, on the other hand, creates self-contained, three-dimensional entities that seem to embody or personify abstract notions and the complexities of emotional, rather than spatial, conundrums. Unlike Mattson's free-floating painted forms, most of Chadbourne's linear, organic figures are mounted on solid, geometric bases that ground them, isolating them from the surrounding environment. The forlorn, aimless, pink figure floating in a toxic green atmosphere above jagged black shards in Mattson's *No Soft Landing* has found a safe, isolated mooring in Chadbourne's *The Blind Search for Desire*. The graceful balance of awkward, drooping arms and the playful bands of color project



Danville Chadbourne THE BLIND HUNTING OF SOULS

a vaguely performative character, a sort of long-limbed, abstract dance. In works with multiple elements, like The Self Selecting Hypothesis or Reflexive Doubt, Chadbourne's figures exist in a self-contained interaction, in the same space as the viewer but visually and psychologically separate. Even in dynamic freestanding works like The Inevitable Invention of Mythology – Divisibility, which looks like it might stride assertively across the room, the work maintains an isolated aesthetic aloofness. In some ways, Chadbourne's sculptures operate as the objectified, singular manifestations or agents of the complicated notions that Mattson elaborates, disassembles, and illustrates in the abstract interactions depicted in his paintings.

It should be noted that Mattson also makes photographs, primarily of curious, humorous, or ironic tableaux found in the real landscape of deserted human environments. Chadbourne's work includes a large body of essentially graphic, wall-oriented objects and paintings, as well as sculptural works with extensive surface imagery. Ironically, the strongest affinities are found in Mattson's more painterly





Top: John Mattson THIS WAY Bottom: John Mattson QUIT PUSHING



Danville Chadbourne THE INEVITABLE INVENTION OF MYTHOLOGY - DIVISIBILITY

pursuits and Chadbourne's more emphatically sculptural works. Both artists are very conscious of compositional dynamics, and the particular characteristics of their chosen formats.

Mattson takes a very painterly approach, almost always beginning with a compositional sketch but essentially letting the immediacy of mark making take over. The bulk of any given work is generally



John Mattson AT THE ZOO



Danville Chadbourne THE INSTINCTIVE AND DECISIVE MOMENT

completed in one dynamic sitting, with refinements made over the next week or so. He may begin another work in this phase, but he tends to work serially, one painting at a time, until it is finished. Excepting a few tweaks and adjustments after the fact, his paintings are the result of a concentrated moment of improvisation, through which he finds a sense of aesthetic – and perhaps psychological – closure, redemption, or resolution. His dark humor results in a tragic-comic melodrama of the psyche.

Unlike Mattson's spontaneous, focused, single-session working-out of a particular psychological or formal quandary, Chadbourne may work on a hundred pieces simultaneously, over a long period of time. While the sculptural process involves a certain focus on mechanics and overall compositional balance, Chadbourne improvises with form as well, especially in the hand-built ceramic sections and in his inventive use and adaptation of naturally

occurring gestures in wood. His sculptural process involves the same kind of intuitive choices, but these are more typically the genesis, rather than the completion, of a fullyformed sculptural idea. For Chadbourne, these physical, formal. and intellectual conjunctions come together in a concentrated moment as individual parts, which are later assembled, configured, and reconfigured in a sort of ritual object: a singular sculptural manifestation of a series of accumulated observations.



John Mattson NO SOFT LANDING



The most intriguing aspect of presenting the works of John Mattson and Danville Chadbourne together is the remarkable similarity in their formal vocabularies. Both artists are intrigued by formal conjunctions and their resulting conceptual implications: Mattson in his endless array of painterly forms, and Chadbourne in his physical juxtaposition of material, shape, and gesture. Both are engaged in striking an asymmetrical balance of both formal and connotative intent, juxtaposing both intuitive and counter-intuitive elements. Both are endlessly fascinated by the contradictions, implications, paradox, and conundrums of human relationships, both with each other, and with the world around them. Ultimately, the strange affinities that emerge in their artwork arise from a deeper set of affinities that inform their perceptions, their friendship, and their broader aesthetic sensibilities.

Danville Chadbourne THE BLIND SEARCH FOR DESIRE

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Diana Roberts is an independent curator and arts writer. She holds a BA in Music from the University of Texas at Austin and an MA in Art History from the University of Texas at San Antonio. In 2006, Roberts was fellow of the NEA Arts Journalism Institute in Classical Music and Opera at Columbia University, and in 2011 held an Internship in the Department of Old Master Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

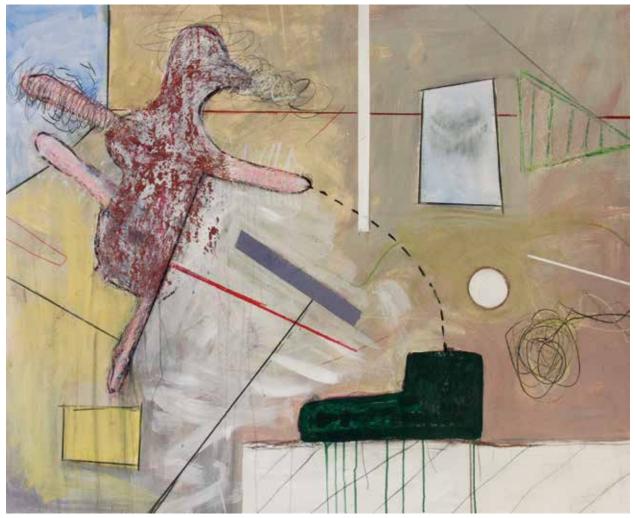
In San Antonio, Roberts has served as Director of The Center for Spirituality and the Arts, Assistant Curator of the AT&T Center Art Collection for Carrington Galleries, Curator of the Airport Art Spaces, Gallery Director at Galeria Ortiz Contemporary, and Gallery Coordinator for the UTSA Satellite Space. She has been a guest juror for numerous organizations, including the Southwest School of Art, the Texas Sculpture Group, the San Antonio Art League Museum, the Friends of Dard Hunter International Organization of Hand Papermakers, and the Bountiful Bowl Pottery Fair in Rockport, Texas. Roberts has contributed essays to numerous exhibition catalogues and has been a frequent contributor to Ceramics Monthly, the San Antonio Current, and Artlies. She has also contributed to Sculpture Magazine, Art News, The Langdon Review of the Arts in Texas, San Antonio Magazine, and Voices of Art. She lives in San Antonio with her husband, sculptor Danville Chadbourne.



Danville Chadbourne FALSE MIMIC FROM THE PARALLEL WORLD



Danville Chadbourne THE UNACCOMPANIED MYTH OF REVERSIBLE PERSPECTIVES



John Mattson PIROUETTE

DANVILLE CHADBOURNE

STATEMENT FROM THE ARTIST

Essentially, my work is concerned with the evocation of spiritual or primal states, using simple organic forms, often in suggestive conjunctions that elaborate metaphorically primary issues of ambiguity, morality, accident/intention, contradiction or even existence. Frequently there is an allusion to circumstance, contextual usage, and time as a condition of the work, but it appears in a peripheral, indirect, or generalized way, never specific or obvious. I have chosen by personal evolution to use forms and images that appear to be part of some culture with an elaborate mythological structure, never quite defined, but evidently interrelated. I am concerned with the intellectual speculation that we make regarding other cultures, especially primitive or ancient ones based on our observation of their artifacts. This anthropological perception is a key issue in my work.

Formally, I use relatively simple sculptural images, sometimes static, like monuments, other times active, dynamic forms that suggest some usage, often ritualistic. I also tend to use materials and processes that imply cultural attitudes that are harmonious with nature and the passage of time. Clay has the most associative power in archeological terms and easily responds to the expressive needs of my ideas as well as being rather permanent and durable. Wood, stone, fiber, bone, and some found objects also work effectively as materials charged with connotative powers in this context. Hopefully, each element, as well as the whole body of work, contributes to the total effect of rediscovering an artifact that is evidently outside of our culture at one level, but reflects a kind of universal human consciousness and ultimately stimulates the perception of our own personal existence.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Danville Chadbourne was born in Bryan, Texas in 1949. He received a BFA in 1971 from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas and an MFA in 1973 from Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. After teaching studio art and art history at the college level for 17 years at various institutions, Chadbourne quit teaching 1989 to devote himself full-time to his art. He has exhibited extensively, including more than 100 one-person exhibitions. In 2007 Chadbourne held a residency at ArtSpace India, culminating with exhibitions in Calcutta and New Delhi. His work is included in numerous private and public collections. In 2013 he was the featured artist for the West Texas Triangle, a consortium of five museums, with simultaneous exhibitions at the Old Jail Art Center in Albany, the Grace Museum in Abilene, the Museum of the Southwest in Midland, the Ellen Noel Art Museum in Odessa, and the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts.

Primarily a sculptor in clay and wood, Chadbourne works in a range of materials and in both two- and three-dimensional formats. Over the years he has created a complex body of work unified by a primal iconography and an artifact-like quality emerging from a very personal and consistent formal, aesthetic and philosophical sense. He lives in San Antonio, Texas with his wife, Diana Roberts.



Danville Chadbourne THE MIRACLES OF LUST

JOHN MATTSON

STATEMENT FROM THE ARTIST

We live in a world filled with imagery of all sorts, most of which we take for granted and usually ignore. It is easy to forget that a great photograph, a great painting, a great piece of art can change the heart. Strong painting has the potential to give us pause to contemplate. And contemplation, and the opportunity to do so, seems so sorely missing from our busy, even frantic, lives. Painting – art – reminds us of our own humanity and through it we are faced with our own lives – our pain, our fear, our yearning, our endless ability to love and to hate. Art still has the potential to exalt, and to trigger emotion. That is the tradition of painting within which I strive to work.

These paintings are the cartoons of a soul unable to ignore the psychic distress inherent in our lives. Whether we admit it or not, however we rationalize it, there is deep within us a core of truth that scares us. I strive to make this visual with iconography that has slowly evolved as I mature. I see most of my work as one frame, one snapshot, in a life of personal observation and inner search. My work is my diary. The formalism of good composition is important to me. I am obsessed with creating strong shape. Though I work from preliminary sketches I never really know what will happen. Usually I feel that I am working at the edge of disaster. For me painting is an exploration of uncharted territory and a constant test of my ability to be honest with myself.



John Mattson BREATHING SPACE



John Mattson FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Mattson trained as a painter, earning an MFA from Mills College in Oakland, California and BA and MA degrees in painting from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. Originally from California, Mattson has worked in commercial galleries in Santa Fe, as Preparator at the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, and is currently an adjunct lecturer of drawing and design at Angelo State University. He has exhibited both paintings and photography in many galleries, art centers and museums around the country.

For over forty years, Matttson has created paintings that are unrestrained reflections on his reactions to the world and his life, developing a deeply personal visual language of his inner psyche that juxtaposes humor, anxiety, formal control, and a messy, organic humanity. In 1978 Mattson bought a camera to record his paintings and became enamored with the instrument itself. Taking long walks with his camera, Mattson records his fascination with the random and often ephemeral results of human impact on the world through happenstance tableaux. Like his paintings, Mattson's photography celebrates the ironic, the whimsical, and the beauty of the mundane. He lives in San Angelo, Texas with his wife, artist Karen Zimmerly.

DANVILLE CHADBOURNE - WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

1.	THE INSTINCTIVE AND DECISIVE acrylic on wood, antler, fiber 36" H. 26" W. 14" D.	MOMENT 1997
2.	THE MIRACLES OF LUST wood, acrylic and ink on wood, fiber, antler, metal 56½" H. 14½" W. 9½" D.	2000
3.	UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF CIRCUMSTANCE wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware 30½" H. 12" W. 11" D.	2000
4.	THE INCREDIBILITY OF VIRTUOUS ASPIRATION acrylic on wood, earthenware and plywood, horn, fiber, metal 120" H. 16" W. 16" D.	2000
5.	THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION OF REINVENTED DESIRE acrylic on wood, earthenware and plywood 101" H. 15" W. 15" D.	2000
6.	THE SEARCH FOR PARALLEL DESIF wood, acrylic on wood 75" H. 13" W. 4" D.	2001
7.	THE BLIND HUNTING OF SOULS acrylic on wood, antler 59" H. 32" W. 10" D.	2001
8.	THE BLIND SEARCH FOR DESIRE acrylic and ink on wood, acrylic on earthenware 26" H. 13" W. 5" D.	2001-02
9.	REFLEXIVE DOUBT wood, acrylic and ink on wood, metal 19" H. 9" W. 8" D.	2003-05
10.	THE UNCONSCIOUS BIRTH OF DARK POTENTIAL acrylic on wood and plywood 85" H. 22" W. 16" D.	2003-06
11.	THE CONSCIOUS IMITATION OF ILLUSORY NATURE acrylic on earthenware, wood and plywood 39" H. 21" W. 15" D.	2005-06
12.	THE UNACCOMPANIED MYTH OF REVERSIBLE PERSPECTIVES acrylic on earthenware, wood and plywood 86" H. 16" W. 15" D.	2005-06
13.	THE INDULGENCE OF INDEFINITE ASPIRATION acrylic on earthenware 32" H. 11" W. 11" D.	2006-08
14.	THE FALSE HISTORY OF CURIOSIT	Y

wood, acrylic and ink on wood 31" H. 11¹/₂" W. 7¹/₂" D.

2005-08

15.	 FALSE MIMIC FROM THE PARALLEL We wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware 	
	71" H. 13" W. 10" D.	2008
16.	THE INEVITABLE INVENTION OF	
	MYTHOLOGY - DIVISIBILITY	
	acrylic on wood, beads	
	112" H. 40" W. 38" D.	2010-12
17.	THE SELF SELECTING HYPOTHES acrylic on wood and earthenware, fiber, m	
	45" H. 20" W. 14" D.	2009-13
18.	THE ENDLESS DREAM OF THE BLIND HUNTER wood, acrylic on wood, fiber	
	wood, acrylic on wood, liber	

2004-13

35" H. 13" W. 6½" D.



Danville Chadbourne THE SELF SELECTING HYPOTHESIS

JOHN MATTSON - WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

1.	TORPOR acrylic and mixed media on paper 36¾" H. 44" W.	2007
2.	NO SOFT LANDING acrylic and mixed media on paper 36½ " H. 45" W.	2008
3.	THE EXERCISE OF POWER acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 56" W.	2008
4.	CALL TO ADVENTURE acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 43 ¹ / ₂ " W.	2011
5.	TSUNAMI acrylic and mixed media on paper 38½" H. 48" W.	2011
6.	AT THE CORE acrylic and mixed media on paper 22" H. 22" W.	2012
7.	AT THE ZOO acrylic and mixed media on paper 33" H. 42" W.	2012
8.	EARTHBOUND YET SEEKING acrylic and mixed media on paper 21" H. 26" W.	2012
9.	EXIT acrylic and mixed media on paper 22" H. 22" W.	2012
10.	EXQUISITE SENSITIVITY acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 43½" W.	2012



John Mattson CALL TO ADVENTURE

11.	acrylic and mixed media on paper	
	22" H. 22" W.	2012
12.	JUST CHILL acrylic and mixed media on paper 22" H. 30" W.	2012
13.	MANUFACTURED WORLD acrylic and mixed media on paper 32" H. 42" W.	2012
14.	OUT OF THE STORM acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 51" W.	2012
15.	PERSPECTIVE acrylic and mixed media on paper 22" H. 22" W.	2012
16.	PIROUETTE acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 51" W.	2012
17.	QUIT PUSHING acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 50½" W.	2012
18.	THE FRANTIC EVOLUTION OF STRES	SS
	acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 43½" W.	2012
19.	THE PERIL OF PEDESTALS acrylic and mixed media on paper 21" H. 26" W.	2012
20.	THIS WAY acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 51½" W.	2012
21.	TOO MUCH acrylic and mixed media on paper 22" H. 22" W.	2012
22.	WE NEVER KNOW acrylic and mixed media on paper 22" H. 22" W.	2012
23.	A WONDERFUL VIEW acrylic and mixed media on paper 33" H. 42" W.	2013
24.	BREATHING SPACE acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 59" W.	2013
25.	FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 59" W.	2013
26.	RESERVOIR OF TEARS acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 59" W.	2013
27.	SAFE ZONE acrylic and mixed media on paper 42" H. 59" W.	2013







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