

# Uteriors

## Curated by Dennis Kardon

When I look at art, I follow my gaze. What is the first thing I see? Where do I go from there and why? Noticing the play of my own attention has become my principle preoccupation when painting and looking at art. Artists deliberately orchestrate attention through particular decisions they make, and these decisions reflect motivations interior to what is simply depicted. Uteriors, while similar to interiors, is an attempt to explore the way this play of attention constructs meaning. All the works in Uteriors are on a spectrum from total abstraction to photographic representation. Their connection with the interiority of viewers' minds is through the ways they bodily engage their attention. Ambiguities arise in this process, whose motivations, while not exactly hidden, are not always readily apparent either. While I have met, known and even written about most of the artists here, the way their work engages my attention to create unsolvable mysteries is what unites their works.

On each wall two or three pieces initiate a conversation through their similar formal approaches to molding a viewer's attention. This conversation is then "overheard" and taken up on each adjacent wall.

For instance David Humphrey's *Swimmers*, depicts a deceptively simple, but conspicuously interracial, interaction. From the other side of a red brick wall, a shirtless tall White man, clad in loose fitting blue swim trunks revealing the top of his butt crack, is seen from behind self-embracing his torso. A laughing curvaceous Black woman in a white bikini faces him/us. The foreground is occupied by a bulbous grey form representing an abstracted car fragment, whose abstraction, while on a different order of representation from the figures, rhymes formally with their bodies and makes us aware of the graphic construction of the painting. Humphrey sexualizes this interaction but complicates it through the defensiveness of the guy's gesture and, particularly, the woman's ambiguous expression of either flirtatious laughter...or derisive mockery. Amplifying both the abstractness of form and the understated red, white, and blue American theme in *Swimmers*, the adjacent Roe Ethridge photo, *Nathalie with Hot*

*Dog and Flag* is more absurdly erotic. Nathalie is wearing a navy pea coat sitting on a personified, pale flesh-colored wiener squirting ketchup and mustard on its head in front of an American flag. But note the bruise marring one of Nathalie's alabaster naked legs. Chin resting on fist, wearing a crystal necklace, red hair flowing like the flag stripes, coat buttons echoing flag stars, Nathalie (years later, now Nathan) dangles their left hand provocatively between their parted legs. It isn't simply that Ethridge blurs the lines between art, fashion, and editorial photography but that he questions what constitutes the boundaries between those categories in the first place.

The formal structures that call attention to the abstract nature of representational images also unite the long wall. Matt Bollinger's *Furlough II*, my own 2013, and Jordan Kasey's *Double Moon*, all play with ideas about darkness, chiarascuro, and reflective surfaces and are moodily expressive without juicy brushwork. The cut V-shape of the red reflective vests in *Furlough* are echoed by the V-neck of the dress in 2013, and finally by the triangular piece of sky in *Double Moon*. And then there are the slivered horizontal reflections rising through the paintings that start as the edge of a car window on the left, move to the rim of a bowl in the middle, and end as an illuminated edge of pool tiles. The paintings on this wall have a brooding quality, and *Double Moon*, is simultaneously overwhelming and confidential, representational but formally abstract, whose thick moonlit figure has the monumentality of Picasso's Neo-classical period, and is as ponderous as a whale gliding through the ocean.

Echoing forms and movements from paintings on that adjacent wall, Anne Neukamp's painting *Twirl* is paired with Gary Stephan's more purely abstract, *Bardo*. Both present images as abstract forms and vice versa. By confusing functions of what is foreground and positive space with what is background and negative space, they emphasize the abstract nature of pictorial representation and the pictorial nature of abstraction. Their paintings pair a sophisticated formal starchiness with an idiosyncratic logic. As abstract painters, they might evade the seductive charms that conventional

picture-making proffers, but its scent still lingers on their canvases.

And anchoring the whole show are the large tall paintings by Judith Linhares and Melissa Meyer which bracket the small painted and cut paper collage by Anthony Iacono. In *Lizzie Hazeldean* (after a strong-willed female character in an Edith Wharton novella), Meyer is even more purely abstract than Stephan with improvisatory brushstrokes that nevertheless create forms floating in a colorful, airy space. Its color and light is very similar in impact to Linhares' more allegorical *Carry On*, depicting a tall orange naked man transporting (or being commandeered by) a small mauve naked woman on his back. While reflecting on Humphrey and Ethridge's teasing sexuality, the formal complexity to Linhares' strange vignettes is executed with energetic but measured brushstrokes which conjure ecstatic uneasiness pervading a slightly seedy Arcadia. In both Linhares and Meyer there is an awareness of how the whole painting is assembled in a way that is not planned, but is, nevertheless, spontaneously deliberate. As much as they use light to create a coherent image, they also fracture attention by the awareness of how abstractly everything is put together one stroke at a time. Anthony Iacono's little cut paper piece perfectly bridges the two. *Mark* presents the middle of an orange man in shaded underpants against a red background, straddling a black Windsor chair whose back and bars both imprison and striate the figure. A strange illumination at the base of the seat subtly illuminates and defines Mark's penis. Iacono's delight in color, form, and composition camouflage his darker fetishist fascinations, whose minor off-color behaviors are executed with a suave brio that belies their kinky preoccupations.

Matt Bollinger (b. 1980, Kansas City) lives and works in Ithaca, New York. His practice encompasses painting, animation, sculpture and music. He earned his BFA at the Kansas City Art Institute in 2003 and his MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2007. His animations have been included in numerous film festivals and screenings across the world. His work is in the collections of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City; Museum

of Fine Arts, Dole, France; and the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine. Recent solo exhibitions include *Extended Present*, South Bend Museum of Art, South Bend; and *Labor Day*, M+B, Los Angeles; the *Armory Show*, with Staver, New York (2020). Forthcoming solo exhibitions include *Mother's Tankstation*, London, 2021; and *Zürcher Gallery*, New York, 2021.

Roe Ethridge (b. 1969, Miami) lives and works in New York. In his photographs, Ethridge uses the real to suggest, or disrupt, the ideal, creating images that are both generic and intimate, often treading between humor and cynicism. He received a BFA from the Atlanta College of Art in 1995. In 2005 the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, presented Ethridge's first solo museum exhibition, *Momentum 4: Roe Ethridge*. His work was included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, and in *New Photography 2010* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010). Ethridge was celebrated with a mid-career survey as part of the FotoFocus Biennial 2016 in Cincinnati. His work is held in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; SFMoMA, San Francisco; S.M.A.K., Ghent; Tate Modern, London; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

David Humphrey (b. 1955, American) lives and works in New York. For over forty years he creates formally inventive paintings that tell stories of vexed intimacy, socio-political reality, and imaginative projections crashing into the real. He has been the subject of several solo exhibitions including McKee Gallery, New York; Sikkema Jenkins, New York; Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami; and Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati. His work is in the collections of several museums and public collections including Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Saatchi Gallery, London. He is currently teaching in the MFA program of Columbia. He was awarded the Rome Prize in 2008.

Dennis Kardon (b. 1959, Des Moines, Iowa) lives and works in New York. He is a graduate of Yale University, took part in the Whitney Independent Study Program, and was a student of Chuck Close and Al Held. The artist challenges painting's potential by creating representational scenes that materialize from loose abstract brushstrokes, treating the surface of his canvases as a field he endows with various properties like reflection and distortion creating representations pervaded with a feeling of unexpected intimacy. Since the 1970s, Dennis Kardon has widely exhibited in the United States and beyond, and his work is part of public collection such as, among others, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the New Museum, the National Museum of American Art in Washington D.C., the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Jordan Kasey (b. 1985, Chicago) lives and works in Brooklyn. In her gigantically-scaled oil paintings, colossal and lonely figures painted in surreal moments belie notions of time and reality. She received her BFA at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore in 2008. Kasey has exhibited her work at Loyal Gallery, Stockholm (2020, 2018); Capsule, Shanghai (2019); Carl Kostyál, Malmö (2019); Signal Gallery, Brooklyn (2018, 2016); Kate MacGarry, London (2018); MoMA PS1, New York (2017); White Cube, London (2017); and Greenpoint Terminal Gallery, Brooklyn (2016), among others. Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Collezione Marimotti, Italy and the Zabłudowicz Collection, London.

Judith Linhares (b. 1940, Pasadena) lives and works in Brooklyn. She received her BFA at the California College of Arts & Crafts in 1964 and her MFA in 1970. In her paintings she creates personal mythologies, depicted in a raw and immediate style, featuring dark outlined figures against luminous backgrounds. Since the 70s she has had over forty solo shows and has been included in many important group exhibitions including the Venice Biennale in 1984. She is the recipient of the Artists' Legacy Foundation Artist Award (2017), The Joan Mitchell Foundation Award (2013), John

Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (1997), and three NEA awards ('79, '87, '93). Her work is held in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Yale University Art Gallery, and the Oakland Museum, among others.

Melissa Meyer (b. 1946, New York) lives and works in New York. She is known for her calligraphic abstract paintings where she gracefully navigates transparency of line and form. She received both her BS and MA from New York University. With her first solo exhibition taking place in 1976, over the decades that followed her paintings have been written about by a number of artists, including Stephen Westfall and Robert Storr. The artist's works are held in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Brooklyn Museum, among others.

Anne Neukamp (b. 1976, Düsseldorf, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. In her work she puts functional signs and images from our consumer society in new and different ways, stripping them of their univalent meaning and stimulating the most diverse interpretations. She received her MFA at Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Dresden, in 2007. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at University of the Arts Philadelphia, Philadelphia (2018); Galerie Valentin, Paris (2018); Marlborough Contemporary, New York (2017); Gregor Podnar Gallery, Berlin (2015); Agustina Ferreyra, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2014); Oldenburger Kunstverein, Oldenburg, Germany (2013); and Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen, Germany (2012). Her works have been included in group exhibitions at Columbia University, New York (2014); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2011); Arthema Foundation, Düsseldorf (2012); Kunstverein Heidelberg, and the 5th Prague Biennale (2011).

Gary Stephan (b. 1942, New York) lives and works between New York and Stone Ridge, NY. He received his MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1967. Since the late sixties, he has been showing his paintings, drawings and sculptures in the United States and Europe. Stephan's work is included in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,

New York; The Metropolitan Museum, New York; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, among other museums. He is a recipient of awards from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters and most recently a Joan Mitchell foundation Award. Stephan teaches in the MFA program at School of Visual Arts in NYC.