



L: Brian Jobe, *Tuft vs. Turf (Watering Can)*; *Tuft vs. Turf (Sled)*, 2009; 7 inch zip ties, found objects; watering can: 24 x 30 x 10 inches; sled: 50 x 20½ x 13 inches; courtesy the artist

R: Denny Renshaw, *Untitled (Faces)*, 2009; digital print; dimensions variable (57 x 39 inches as seen); courtesy the artist

NEW YORK

Perceptible Systems

New York Center for Art & Media Studies

Systems shape so many aspects of modern life that it's no surprise they wield enormous seductive power for artists. From a simple, repetitive pattern to an intricate network, systems find a natural affinity with the artist at work in his or her studio. Increasingly, the processes inherent to artmaking are being taken up as subjects in their own right. *Perceptible Systems*—an exhibition of ten very different artists, mostly New York-based—suggests that systems are pervasive across contemporary practices.

Curated by artist Brian Jobe, a UTSA graduate, *Perceptible Systems* covers a satisfying high/low-tech spectrum. Eric Hollender's *Lucky Day* is a pile of fortune-cookie-shaped ceramic objects positioned on the bare floorboards of the NYCAMS gallery. This sensuous work strikes an interesting balance between its rough physical parts and elegant conceptual whole; the workmanlike drudgery of making each element parallels an analogous, metaphorical process of making one's own luck, day by day. This process-oriented approach is echoed nearby in the San Antonio-based Judith Cottrell's *LTY*, where circular black marks made with gel pens on a large, painted panel accrue into a dark, quiet atmosphere resembling fog or smoke.

What was traditionally called "process art" has a different cachet today, where process is as sophisticated (and mechanical) as fractals, game theory and digital media. John Truex's giclée series *Detroit Patterns* uses digital processes to create lacy, Escher-like designs from fragments of highway infrastructure, combined and replicated ad infinitum. With *Apples and Hot*, Denton artist Amie Adelman suggests the weave of textiles by applying cutesy stickers to graph paper, adding a register of unexpected humor to

a rigorous process/pattern. Through a painstaking additive process, Eric Taylor's pencil-on-paper work, *Reminders of Death*, builds up a faint image of skulls from tiny, rectangular marks. Likewise, Denny Renshaw's series of digital photographs, *Untitled (Faces)*, builds a collection of expressionless portraits, a systematic repetition that coaxes the viewer into a process of comparison.

San Antonio artists Karen Mahaffy and Alex Lopez bridge the high/low-tech chasm with striking, unfussy videos. Mahaffy's *Foam* captures in close-up the formation of soap bubbles, their iridescent surfaces and complicated attachments infused with otherworldly processes. Lopez goes even simpler with *Blackbird*, a haunting video in which a fluttering, silhouetted hand and its mirror image suggest a bird in flight. Lopez also references the Rorschach inkblot test, a systematic interplay of symmetry and variation.

Brian Jobe and Matt Alexander cull objects from consumer culture as material for systematic engagement. Jobe's signature trope is the plastic zip tie, which he attaches in orderly fashion to a watering can and a sled in his *Tuft vs. Turf* series or to railings, fire escapes and other built elements out in the real world. Alexander combines manufactured materials—tennis balls, beakers, artificial flowers, stool legs, lamp and desk parts, AstroTurf—into new, absurd commodities. They may currently have no market but they do suggest a system, which appears, increasingly, to be the "bottom line" of existence.

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