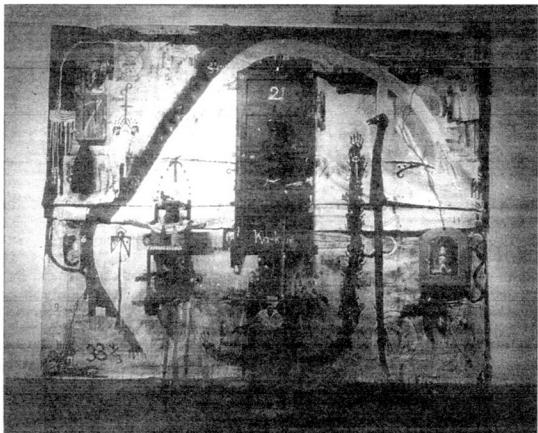


"Texas Dialogues" at Blue Star Art Space

# NEW STAR



Angelbert Metoyer's *Coin Coin (Ko-Kwe)*, 2001

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Like soda pop and detergent, an art institution can occasionally reinvent itself. Right now, locals have the delicious opportunity to watch Blue Star Art Space change its stripes. Under the interim direction of ArtPace alum Laurence Miller and a refreshed board, the new Blue Star is loosening up its programming with a Conversations series and new Project Space. Alterations to the entrance and interior have dramatically enhanced the physical character of the institution. Whether the product or just the packaging has changed is not yet evident. But a new box always shifts the contents.

"Texas Dialogues: Houston-San Antonio" makes these changes starkly apparent. In past years, the two-city sampler has brought El Paso and Dallas artists into close contact with San Antonio's own. Curated by Blue Star's Risa Puleo and Glassell School Core critic Annika Marie, the current mix is an uneasy fit. That may be a result of Blue Star's new physical openness, which significantly alters the way future curators will work with the space.

Entering directly into the vast central gallery, visitors encounter John Calaway's sculptural installation, *The Pod*. A group of

outward facing chairs encircles a tall metal tank, each chair connected to the tank by a gas mask and plastic tubing. An instrument of euphoric hedonism or mass execution, the work's ambiguity is extremely uncomfortable, particularly in light of current geopolitical tensions. Consequently, Calaway is given a wide berth, with other artists positioned around the periphery.

Angelbert Metoyer's *Coin Coin (Ko-Kwe)*, an altar-like wall assemblage, is more ethereal. Afro-Caribbean religious culture is suggested by candles, dried flowers, photographs, and household odds and ends. These hang on a large canvas painted with symbol systems and broad expressive marks. Nearby, a scattershot arrangement of Metoyer's small, delicate drawings seems to illustrate a personalized cosmology with animal and human elements. On the same wall, Gabriel Delgado's mixed-media abstractions on paper are less distinguished. Elsewhere, however, this artist delivers a solid punch with works constructed from canvas-covered stretcher bars splintered and twisted into defiant compositions. These anti-paintings are rebellious and grandiose, with titles like *Pissed on and Forgotten*.

Thédra, the fourth Houston artist, has a separate room dedicated to her *Biometric Group Portrait*. Apparently, thumbprints of visitors are the raw data for an elaborate computer tree whose blinking keyboards and mice branch out across a wall. The project feels too busy to find a point, either practical or symbolic, but the image of a techno-organism is an idea that still holds some cultural wattage. Across the hall, Alex Lopez's installation *Indirect Response to a Young Man's Questions While Watching a*

*Truck Burning* (aka *A Garden for Machines* from the *Luxury/Necessity* series) also suffers from busyness, as the title would perhaps indicate. In complete darkness, an obstacle course of hanging briefcases is briefly illuminated by a video projection. Other projections and small, house-like objects occupy the space as well. This San Antonio artist is a notable craftsman of incisive, conceptual bits, but the sum of Lopez's parts can often be abstruse.

The other San Antonians (minus Guy Hundere, who was publicized as presenting) finish the show with strongly conceived and fully realized contributions. No matter how familiar the technique, Todd Brandt's paint-cup paintings continue to thrill the eye. His large screen painting (green) is either a flat monochrome from a distance or a bouncing, mint-green beach ball when viewed up close. The painting virtually disappears when viewed from the side. Despite the obvious optical fun, the joy of Brandt's work comes in noting that all of these effects cumulatively constitute the single painting, redefining the genre as some active, ever-changing thing.

Likewise, Andréa Caillouet's lush "Home Series" expands the vocabulary of traditional photography, here with digital effects. Fuzzy close-ups of private furnishings and intimate spaces are a staging area for an overlay of interlocking decorative patterns. This treatment creates images with multiple surfaces, slippery perspective, and surreal content. As dialogues go, Caillouet's digital prints are wonderfully chatty. ●

#### TEXAS DIALOGUES:

HOUSTON-SAN

ANTONIO

Curated by Annika Marie and Risa Puleo

Wednesday-Sunday: noon-6pm

\$2 suggested donation

Through February 22

Blue Star Art Space

Blue Star Arts

Complex

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