

JOHANNES VOGT



The Visiting Resident: Artist Josh Reames Makes Dallas Home for a While

By Chris Byrne | Photography by William Bichara



I recently had the chance to meet with the painter Josh Reames—a graduate of North Texas who went on to receive his Masters at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2012. SAIC has arguably become the nation's most influential graduate program—challenging the supremacy which Cal Arts and Yale once enjoyed—with faculty members such as Gaylen Gerber, Michelle Grabner, José Lerma, Tony Tasset, and Scott and Tyson Reeder as well as recent graduates Paula Crown, Rom Ewert, and Tony Lewis.

Reames and his wife, Amber Renaye—also a graduate of SAIC, decided to leave Chicago this summer, initially planning on moving to Los Angeles. But since his family lives just north of Dallas, they decided to settle here for a few months. During their drive from Chicago, they were in touch with Kevin Jacobs, the owner of the Oliver Francis Gallery, and learned that the space would be available to use as a studio during their stay in Dallas. Josh immediately began to work on large-scale canvases in A Clean, Well-Lighted Place.

In a conversation we had this past month, the artist said, “We anticipated a relaxing few months here, but it’s been totally insane! Dallas has changed so much in the last five or six years, it’s far more metropolitan, very exciting for the city.” They will be relocating to New York later this year.

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While at school, Reames admired and identified with the work of his advisors such as Adam Scott, Katy Siegel, and Andrew Falkowski, as well as the aforementioned Reeder brothers and José Lerma.

For Reames, these artists provided inspiration because “humor and spectacle were important parts of the work, making it more exciting and more democratic.” (Gaylen Gerber—one of Reames’ professors—even highlighted the disarming advantage comedians have over typical public speakers or politicians in communicating important issues.)

It was also during graduate school that Reames founded and ran a gallery in his basement called Manifest Exhibitions. During these two years, he displayed the work of Brett Cody Rogers, Sam Falls, Paul Cowan, Ruby Sky Stiler, Stephen Collier, and Josh Mannis. He also made improv recordings at Club Nutz, playing a few live shows in artist-bands with Scott and Tyson.

Josh describes his own development as going “through a ton of phases, pure abstraction/messy abstraction/figurative painting,” with the desire and intent to “try everything.” His one reservation was directed toward the popularity of so-called “Provisional Painting,” first introduced in an article written by the art historian Raphael Rubenstein for the May 2009 issue of *Art in America*.

Rubenstein states, “I first noticed it pervading the canvases of Raoul De Keyser, Albert Oehlen, Christopher Wool, Mary Heilmann, and Michael Krebber, artists who have long made works that look casual, dashed-off, tentative, unfinished, or self-canceling. In different ways, they all deliberately turn away from ‘strong’ painting for something that seems to constantly risk in consequence or collapse.”

Reames notes: “Provisional painting was huge when I was in grad school,” which he opposed as “lazy, insular, and academic.”

For me, his paintings recall and smartly allude to Abstract Illusionism—a now-disparaged and maligned movement from the late 1970’s and early 80’s, which became known as a go-to example of a short-lived, pre-fab art fad. Until recently, it existed as a sort of short-hand reference for all such moments that—as much as they feature half-baked painting and ill-digested concepts—also simultaneously point to the art market’s insatiable hunger for and instant assimilation of novelty and gimmicky objects. Of course that only makes it all the more ripe for its current revival.

Reames has recently exhibited with 356 Mission in Los Angeles and Chicago’s Carrie Secrist Gallery. He will be included in two-person shows scheduled at Luis de Jesus in Los Angeles and Johannes Vogt in New York City. He will also be creating a special project with Milan’s Brand New Gallery. **P**

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HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

GALLERIES

An Exhibition About Dogs That Barks but Doesn't Bite

by Kate Sierzputowski on January 20, 2015

CHICAGO — Although cats seem to be the [current animal darlings](#) of the [art world](#), [DOGS CHASE BALLS](#) at Carrie Secrist Gallery focuses on the less-cooed-about creature. The exhibition, curated by Mexico City duo [NO Space](#), features pretty much what its name lays out: tennis balls bouncing on the floor and painted on the walls in gallery one, plus a video projection of dogs chasing the same bouncing balls in gallery two. The show is stupid, yet it works in its blatant simplicity. Many of the works pique the viewer's interest as dog traits become sexualized through human imitation.

[Kat Schneider](#)'s dirt-stained traces on the carpet of "Wipe Yr Paws" is one example. The purposeful hand prints and muddy traces of the artist's knees allow the audience to envision Schneider's crouched body slowly massaging herself against the plush floor while leaving her dirty canine impression. The carpet is topped by the artist's "TOYS," a picture book comparing the surprisingly similar designs of playful dog toys and sex toys. Shown as untouched images on white backgrounds, the opposing toys have uncanny similarities in their shapes and colors, differing only by their marketing schemes or sets of instructions.

Just as Schneider's installation exchanges normal domesticated dog habits for those of human sexuality, [Bradford Kessler](#)'s suspended leather dog harness screams BDSM. Installed on a leash-like chain mounted to the ceiling, it looks like an image out of a dungeon rather than one you'd see right before walking a dog. The harness bears a poetic message comprised of stick-on letters tracing the leather straps: "BORN BORED IN THE PRISON LAWN, MORE LIKE A BODY WITHOUT ORIFICE, ECHO

OF LONELINESS NEVER COMES, ATE MY FRIENDS AMYTAL AND DORAL." Kessler also bequeaths a sexuality to his understated casts on a nearby wall, collectively titled "smells like friends." In addition to plastic, the casts are made from the artist's own mucus and topical analgesic rub, materials that poke fun at the sculptures' forms: dogs noses.



Two videos play loudly in the exhibition, "DOGS CHASE BALLS," produced by the show's curators, and "Aesthetic Contemplation," another work by Schneider. The first is a view of dogs shot from a human perspective, showing the animals playing in the gallery with the tennis balls that are scattered on the floor. The second is a view of humans from a dog's perspective, as a hyper toy dog runs around several New York galleries with a camera strapped to its back. Schneider has set this video behind a doggie door, making viewers kneel in order to see it and adding a layer of hilarity to the piece beyond the manic jostling of the camera. Instead of exiting the doggie door to go take a shit in the backyard, the dog has chosen to galavant around the New York City art scene.

Another obvious nod to the exhibition's title is the inclusion of the artist [Puppies Puppies](#), whose work seems the least connected to the show thematically. "One Can't Be A Puppy Forever (Green)," a sculpture of yellow flowers submerged in a vase filled with blue water, blends in with the gallery's reception desk but doesn't add much the show at large. Puppies Puppies' other piece, "A Stapled Document For A Show About Dogs," is a discarded paper in one of the barre corners of the gallery. The underwhelming work is a poem by the artist on cat adoption paperwork, a mocking nod to Darren Bader's [cat adoption piece](#) shown at MoMA PS1.

The exhibition's minimal hanging and simplicity relate perfectly to its equally simple doggy-obsessed subject matter. Many of the artists, in their attempts to tackle this canine concept, ended up tapping into the most basic of human tendencies: sex. In this context, the title of the show changes from innocent to a crude and funny innuendo. After all, that's one thing many humans and dogs have in common: their love of chasing balls.

[DOGS CHASE BALLS](#) continues at Carrie Secrist Gallery (835 W Washington Boulevard, Chicago) through January 31.

Tagged as: [Carrie Secrist Gallery](#), [dog art](#), [NO Space](#)

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NEWCITY Art

Jan

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Review: DOGS CHASE BALLS/Carrie Secrist Gallery

► Art Books, Installation, Painting, Video, West Loop



Josh Reames. "Infinite Scroll (#1)" and "Infinite Scroll (#2)," both 2014, acrylic on canvas

DOGS CHASE BALLS is a show for, (occasionally) by, and about our four-legged companions, with many of the works situated low to the ground for convenience of canine access and interaction (dogs are welcome and frequently present in the gallery throughout the run of the show). NO SPACE, the Mexico-based duo comprised of cool kids Débora Delmar and Andrew Birk, curated this group effort and contributed two pieces. Tennis balls stenciled with their logo are scattered throughout the gallery; evidence of interaction exists in the form of ricochet marks on Secrist's white walls. A video loop showing happy pups using these props projects onto the floor, harkening to the curatorial impetus for the show (witnessing the unadulterated joy of a dog playing with a ball). The film is a virtual who's who of Chicago's art pupperati: breakout stars are Vincent Uribe's Milo and Wolfie Rawk's Rudi.

NO SPACE'S David-Foster-Wallace-esque curatorial statement is touchingly sincere. An excerpt reads, "We've become apathetic and callous. We spent the whole day on our laptops." The curators' wish is simple: to provide a space for observation and appreciation of simple pleasures. They call for increased presence, wonder and awareness, and the presented works offer opportunities for such with mixed success. A portion of the proceeds from this show will be split between PAWS Chicago and the families of kidnapped students in Ayotzinapa, a gesture equal parts humanist and animal-rights activist.

Always the life of the party, Josh Reames dazzles with a new suite of stonerific paintings, deploying his trademark spring-break aesthetics throughout three psychedelic tennis-ball-laden canvases. Kat Schneider's installation is equal parts humor and horror, featuring, among other things, a GoPro tour of the gallery filmed from a dog's perspective. Her video and accompanying ephemera is situated atop "Wipe Yr Paws," a white carpet streaked with dirty handprints left by a crawling human. In a gesture of inclusion, Schneider invites human visitors to play chew vs. sex toy with her glossy hardcover "TOYS," which features alternating images of both with no indication of which is which. Fun for two and four-legged viewers alike! (Erin Toale)

Through January 31 at Carrie Secrist Gallery, 835 West Washington.

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RAIN AND SPIRITS contemporary art talk

SMART PAINTING: AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSH REAMES

October 31, 2013 · By Kevin Blake

Josh Reames makes smart paintings. Whether he is deliberately utilizing painting tropes, such as the dripping brushstroke, or deploying obvious geometric abstraction, Reames' work acknowledges his awareness of the painting vocabulary while creating his own grammar from canvas to canvas. Reames aligns his understanding of painterly tradition with his interpretation of contemporary experience that speaks directly to the viewer through text, emoji, palm trees, and anything that seems fitting in the moment of creation. As Reames carves out his own space in the painting world, he wittingly nods his head to a history he knows well.

Kevin Blake: *You have an interest in the escapist ideal, and while those ideals are more overtly addressed in your multimedia constructions, I think your paintings, at times, depart from those ideas and allow for a more eclectic read. Can you talk about your modes of production and how those different methodologies have different relationships to your conceptual framework?*

Josh Reames: Sure, I think the paintings lend themselves to an eclectic read, but only as a group. I try to keep individual paintings focused on specific ideas. I think all of the work addresses escapism, just in varied ways. The tropical imagery and psychedelic drug references are just as involved with escapism as the act of painting is. The eclectic read is a product of my scattered focus, which is probably a product of internet culture. My conceptual framework is pretty broad; if I had to describe my intentions with painting it would be to use painting as some sort of filtration device for cultural bi-product. I mean, I'm super into the idea of relativity (cultural, moral, etc.), and painting has this ability to literally flatten images and references into a rectangle. By pushing images together and composing them into a painting, you can flatten the references and remove the hierarchy of importance. So Abstraction, palm trees, emoji, drippy brushstrokes, dollar signs, cigarettes, and the Sphinx can all be flattened to the same level – composition. Either nothing is really dumb anymore, or all of it is, it's getting hard to tell.

KB: *You make pictures that perpetuate your grasp of the canon of abstract painting, and I wonder if there is any escape from those parameters. When you are making paintings, how do you filter your knowledge of abstraction (historical and contemporary) to maintain something that is your own? Can artists escape the initiated forms they supersede? Can painting ever escape from itself?*



JR: Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems like the need for iconoclasm is outdated. I think the idea of superseding or escaping abstraction comes from some need for a linear narrative of "this became that, then that became something else" which I think has been a legit way of understanding a progression of artists, at least for the past few hundred years. But now I think it's a little different; sampling, re-sampling, homage, and straight plagiarism are all viable forms of historical awareness in art.

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The drippy brushstroke has historically been an abstract tool, meant to express the presence of the artist – a remnant of the physical self. But over time, that becomes a trope, a symbol separated from its original context. I think this is liberating in a way. It's sort of like Tarantino using the tropes of old kung-fu films like Zatoichi and Lady Snowblood; he takes an outdated thing and makes it fresh. In that sense, Robert Motherwell or Franz Kline didn't have the internet, so I have a fresh set of tools to play with.

KB: *Is sampling, re-sampling, homage, and straight plagiarism unavoidable at this point?*

JR: I mean, all the best artists have stolen, it's just easier now. When you are completely inundated with images on a daily basis there becomes this subliminal pool of imagery and information that seeps into the studio. I don't think it's completely unavoidable, but if you are like most artists with access to the internet, it is pretty difficult to avoid. That being said, I don't think there is anything wrong with it.

KB: *Your paintings reference artists like Charline Von Heyl and Christopher Wool among others and I am curious as to how you think you arrived at those influences? What I am trying to understand from your perspective, is how you feel about so many artists drawing from the same well. The internet provides an infinite range of source material, yet the pool of imagery that seeps into your studio, seems to be oozing into everyone else's simultaneously. Fortunately, you are distilling it all in an interesting way. It is a pattern in art history for contemporary artists to be in dialogue with one another. How do you negotiate those terms and demands?*

JR: I love Wool and Von Heyl, I think they are some of the most important living painters. I relate to how Wool handles abstraction, especially with the screen prints, in an almost hands-off kind of way. He takes abstraction, a historically and emotionally charged way of painting, and filters it through a Warhol-ian process that removes the hand. I think there is a lot of humor there, super dry though. So good! There are only so many ways to make paintings; different combinations of styles, tropes, paint handling, tools, etc. Eventually it's not difficult to take a step back and see artists doing similar things. I'm not sure it matters though, as long as the thing being made is interesting and has some connection to the artist. After that it's all personal taste.

KB: *Shifting gears a bit, I was hoping to talk to you about text in your paintings. Often times, text is integrated into the image and sometimes the text appears to be squeezed*

out of the tube on top of an abstract composition. Your paintings "YYY" and "Land Grab" come to mind. How does text operate for you in your paintings?

JR: Text is a way to guide the viewer, to give some sort of context to an otherwise abstract painting. I always integrate the text so that the letters or symbols double as marks, either sprayed or squeezed in the same way any other mark would be made on the canvas.

KB: *I'm interested in your word choices and how, if at all, you see them as a personification of yourself. Or are the words derived from language you see fitting into your escapist trajectory?*

JR: I keep a running list of text ideas in my sketchbook and on my iPhone. The word combinations that get used are usually really open ended, allowing for specific/individualized reads, but also have a specific connection to me. Sometimes it fits the escapist trajectory, but others will be references to books I'm reading or words that I came across that stuck with me.

KB: *Can you talk about how the array of non-traditional painting materials have made their way into your painting practice? Spray paint, airbrush, and fluorescents, to name a few, seem to be the rage. Are these materials and/or high key palettes coincidence or do you think they reflect something more concrete?*

JR: In a broad sense I think non-traditional painting materials, usually applied to abstraction, are a way to make abstraction relatable. Matias Cuevas' poured paintings on carpet, or Andrew Greene's glass abstractions are good examples; they bridge the gap between a messy abstraction which really just exists as a historical trope, and everyday materials, which pulls the trope into something new. I don't think my work really fits in this category, I think using airbrush and fluorescents aren't that uncommon; I started using the airbrush because I have no patience with paintbrushes. I'm a pretty shitty painter if you put a brush in my hand, I can never make it do what I want it to do! The airbrush is different, it's way more versatile, and quick. As far as the high-key color palettes go, I'm sure there's some coincidence there, maybe trends – personally I just like shiny things...

KB: *I think you are right, these techniques are becoming more and more common in contemporary painting practices. Maybe it relates to a culture of instant gratification, immediacy, and even escapism. Does the pace of everyday life influence your material applications*

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and the speed at which you make your work?

JR: I agree, I think people (artists included) generally have a short attention span and as a result, a lot of impatience. I know I do. I am always able to look at a painting that took months to complete and think “wow, that took a lot of time.” But I don’t think the amount of time something takes makes it any better than if it was quick. Again, my use of the airbrush is entirely about speed and impatience. I want the paintings to look meticulous, with slick surfaces and plenty of precision – but I want to make a lot of paintings, so speed is key! The pace of everyday life probably has an indirect influence on that.

KB: *Speaking of the pace of everyday life, how do things look in your studio right now as you prepare for your solo*

exhibition at Luis De Jesus in Los Angeles this January? What do you plan to show?

JR: It’s crazy in here, I just got back from an 11 day trip to NYC where I saw some pretty rad shows (Josh Smith, John McCracken, Joshua Abelow, etc.). It’s great to be back in the studio working on some new paintings. I think I’m going to make a handful of emoji paintings and text paintings with text-message shorthand. The working title is THE INTERNETS. Time is such a luxury though, I’ve been considering hiring a studio assistant so I don’t have deal with those pesky tasks like stretching and priming canvases... we’ll see!

Kevin Blake is an artist and writer working in Chicago.

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SFAQ

INTERNATIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE

FEATURE

JOSH REAMES: IN REGARDS TO VACATIONS



Describe your definition of a “vacation”?

Vacation is an escape from normal life.

How does this play into your current work?

I like the way vacations are idealized experiences, which are usually totally different from the actual. Think about a Corona commercial, just chilling with some beers on a perfect tropical beach; in reality there would be sunburns, sand in your shorts, the beer costs \$10, and there’s a crowd of kids screaming and throwing sand-mud all over the place—not quite the same experience anymore! Painting is similar in a way, a history of idealizing the subject (or doing the opposite)—a lot of room between the idealized thing and the actual thing.

I also like the idea of escapism in relation to art-making. Making paintings is a kind of escape. It’s weird though, when making art is your job you don’t really have so much to escape from—not like some 9 to 5, weekend warrior office job. Everything is art-related; most of my traveling has to do with shows or collaborating on projects in other cities—vacation and work are totally integrated.

What is the worst vacation experience you have ever had?

I went on a cruise in 2006 in the Caribbean, which was pretty great for the first half (soft-serve ice cream everywhere) but then, along with 70% of the ship, I caught a virus that was picked up by someone on one of the islands where we stopped. It was super gnarly, the most intense sickness I’ve ever experienced. When the ship returned to Florida it was boarded by the CDC and decontaminated by a bunch of guys in Hazmat suits, Morgan Freeman style.

Five essential must haves when traveling?

Toothbrush, comfortable shoes, phone charger, shower cap, booze money.

If you could move anywhere for one year where would you go and why?

Probably Berlin. That place is amazing. It’s totally like a chill vacation, except in a major city. And it’s cheap, has great art, amazing public spaces, people walk their dogs without leashes, and you can drink beer anywhere.



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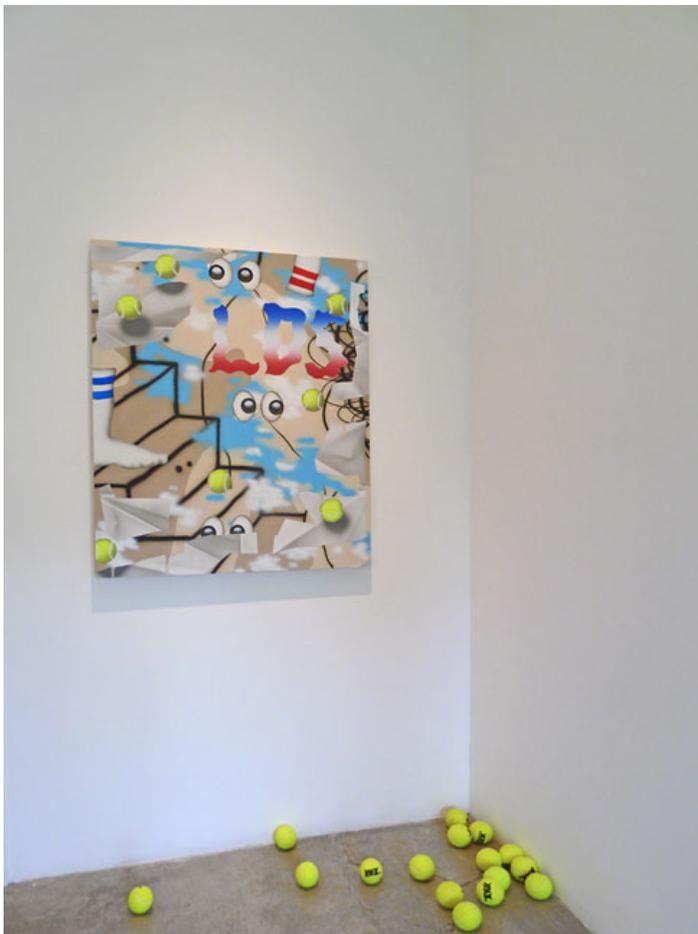
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One word to describe your personal style?

Clean.

Dream exhibition location/space?

There used to be this gallery in Dallas called Light & Sie, it was the most pristine room I have ever seen. It was pretty huge with white walls, white ceiling, and a glossy white floor. The gallery looked like something out of a Kubrick film. It was the most beautiful space, but also pretty terrifying. Making a show there would be a major challenge, how do you improve on something that is already incredible?



Hot or cold weather?

I don't like extremes. I'm going to go with 70 degrees always; does this place exist?

Which do you prefer: sit back and relax, stay busy sight-seeing, or party party party?

All of the above, just at different times of day. It's a pretty natural cycle.



What's the weirdest thing you have eaten?

7-11 hot dogs.

Where do you not want to vacation?

Somalia. The whole pirate-y kidnapping thing sounds like a real bummer. However, there is this island right off the coast of Somalia called Socotra that has the most insane, alien, Dr. Seuss wildlife and plant-life.

Josh Reames currently has a show on view at Luis De Jesus, Los Angeles.

Visit here for more information.