

JOHANNES VOGT

GALLERY | NEW YORK

GalleristNY

By Dan Duray
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“Make It Indigo! Travis Boyer Dyes Clothes at L.E.S. Gallery”

“Do you think my dress is happy in there?” asked a blonde woman in round glasses.

She wore elbow-length rubber gloves and was referring to a striped number she’d submerged in a trashcan full of the dark blue dye indigo. That trashcan was the centerpiece of Travis Boyer’s Crocking Off the Bloom, a performance at the Lower East Side’s Participant gallery this past weekend.



A photo from an earlier performance of “Indigo Girls.” (Photo courtesy of <http://zittel.wordpress.com>)

Mr. Boyer, in natty, dark clothes and a single glove nodded. “I would leave it.”

Crocking Off the Bloom is an evolution of an earlier piece that Mr. Boyer has performed since 2008, Indigo Girls, and with a similar thrust—participants bring items of clothing, or photos, or wood, to be dunked into a vat of indigo, and Mr. Boyer helps. He used to wear a costume reminiscent of a children’s television program, but for this new three-day work, he opted to go low-key.

“People bring all kinds of things,” he said after a middle-aged couple dunked pairs of panties and a baby blanket into the vat. Likewise, people bring their own touchstones—he’s had people tell him that they see everything from kibbutz to counterculture in his piece. He’d made the dye extra strong for this L.E.S. iteration. “You never know if some punk kids are going to walk in with their entire laundry basket and just dump it in.”

A redhead stood over the vat with the corners of a pillowcase held in both hands to create a groovy pointed effect on the submerged area. Suddenly his phone rang. He glanced around the room for help but none came and that goofy Blackberry ringtone (“doo doo doo doo doo, DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO”) went on and on as he stood at the vat with his pillow.

On the ground near him was a formerly white T-shirt with Morrissey on it, his arm raised tragically away from his face.

“That was great, watching that be lowered in,” Mr. Boyer said. “It was like he was saying ‘noooooo!’”

<http://galleristny.com/2012/02/make-it-indigo-travis-boyer-dyes-clothes-at-l-e-s-gallery/>

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CONTEMPORARY ART STAVANGER

INTERVIEW: TRAVIS BOYER



Travis Boyer's evocative abstract paintings, cyanotypes and relational performance works have long engaged audiences and broken down barriers between the private and the public, the intimate and the unknown. The Texas-born, New York-based artist recently traveled to Stavanger to participate in a residency at [Frida Hansens Hus](#), and currently has an exhibition on view at [Studio 17](#). Below, Boyer answers a few of our questions about his influences, drives, and experience of making work in Stavanger.

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Heather Jones: I understand that you grew up in Ft. Worth, Texas and received a BFA from the University of North Texas before going on to earn an MFA from Bard College in New York. Can you tell us a bit about your background and how you first came to be involved in art?

Travis Boyer: It is a very broad question so I will offer an anecdotal story. When I was a teenager, a big art foundation called the Barnes Collection came to the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. It was a big deal that temporarily bolstered the local art scene. I ended up helping a textile artist paint silk scarves and woven things that were for sale; I learned a lot about textiles and art that summer and I suppose on some level, twenty years later, I'm still making scarves.

HJ: You're currently participating in the residency program at Frida Hansens Hus and have a project, *Sunshine on a Greased Pearl*, on view right now at Studio 17 in Stavanger. Viewers can see paintings of abstracted forms, photo emulsion negatives of belts, and a sterling silver *Tequila Netipot*. What can you tell us about the works in this exhibition and how they relate to each other?

TB: For the most part these are themes I have been working with for the past two years. The velvet paintings in this show are the most experimental and a growing aspect of my practice.

HJ: You've participated in exhibitions from New York to Amsterdam, Mexico to Belgium, and now Norway. Looking through some of your past exhibitions, a lot of your artworks and installations are site-specific. Do you often work in response to your current place, and did the geography and culture of Stavanger in anyway influence this exhibition?

TB: Stavanger has become very near and dear to me at this point. I now have a lot of friends here and plenty of folks to say hi to on my walk from Frida Hansens Hus to the Kunstsenter but in terms of how Stavanger has inscribed itself onto my artwork – I spent two weeks in June very jetlagged and also having trouble adjusting to the sunny nights. I would sort of sleep walk around the town and especially down to the docks at Paradis in the very early hours of the morning. I would chat up road workers and learn my way around the city. The stillness of the water and strange luminosity on those nights was very surreal and the level of privacy you feel as a foreigner in an empty coastal town with pink sky and water is something quite special.

HJ: In general, your work seems to blend boundaries between abstract painting, figuration, textile work and performative events...including a recent performance *Cobras Loving Cobras Loving Drawing* at Rogaland Kunstsenter. Do you see these as separate approaches, or all part of the same artistic practice?

TB: My work is really inclusive – the paintings are gently participatory in the way that you are drawn to touch them, and how they relate to the body. The cobra drawings are the third variation I have performed based on a drawing exercise that Amy Sillman would do with me and the other Bard painters in grad school. I like generative group activities and think about them as being a socio-kinetic form of art. Sort of like relational aesthetics except socio-kinetic does not attempt to settle into some moralizing or utopian idea that comes from the artist; it is about the activity being really legible in such a way that you as a participant can take it or leave it, project onto it or ignore it. It takes on multiple interpretations without needing to anticipate what those might be. For example, here in the kunstsenter the cobra drawings seemed to be more about interrupting normal social barriers. I don't think Norwegians are especially touchy-feely and so it was profound to touch and be touched in an art context. The drawings are great but I think the artistic byproduct here was goosebumps–But I could be wrong.

Travis Boyer has a forthcoming exhibition at Johannes Vogt Gallery this November. To learn more about the artist, visit the artist's page, [here](#).

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN: ART

TRAVIS BOYER

In his confident solo debut, Boyer, a young Texas-born, New York-based artist, gives painting on velvet a good name in a series of burnished-looking, loosely geometric abstractions. These are exhibited alongside a group of unstretched cyanotypes on indigo silk, printed—using natural light in outdoor locations from Fire Island to Joshua Tree—with the silhouettes of belts collected from the artist's friends and lovers. Tensions between luxury and kitsch, delicacy and swagger, and intimacy and threat are palpable. More contrived is a selection of sterling-silver neti pots and doorknobs, embellished, Southwestern style, with belt buckles. These are heavy-handed invocations of thresholds and interiors, from the bodily and the architectural to the erotic. Through Dec. 15. (Vogt, 526 W 26th St. 212-255-2671.)

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