

# HÄNDENTÄNDEN



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April 25 – July 3, 2008

Leann Leiter – Christian Meade – Tracy Meyer – Selwyn Ramp – Allison Reilly – Tyler Young

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THE TROUT GALLERY  
Dickinson College



# Introduction

Although the artistic process is often romanticized as being the province of the recluse, for the six graduating studio art majors at Dickinson College this process has been a collaborative effort. The students not only engaged with faculty for academic direction and challenging critique, but they also sustained a discussion among one another and received advice, encouragement, and inspiration. The senior studio art majors share a common studio space where, regardless of individual creative pursuits, they develop a thorough awareness of each other's personalities and subjects of artistic interest. The senior seminar—a yearlong capstone experience—is punctuated by rigorous reviews of the students' artistic progress and various field trips to museums, galleries, and artist studios. While each student brings a unique perspective to the art-making experience, this group of seniors has formed an exceptional intellectual and emotional bond. This exhibition, then, is a celebration of each individual's most recent artistic efforts, but when displayed together, the singular works radiate as a complementary whole.

The six student artists represented in this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue endeavor across a number of various materials and styles, but share a commitment to thoroughly investigating a deeply personal creative vision as well as larger societal, historical, and aesthetic concepts. The subjects and symbolism of the work actively encourage dialogue and a kind of collaboration with the viewer, as the art easily piques a viewer's interest, curiosity, and concern. In the paintings of Allison Reilly, for example, one looks for familiarity amid her numerous portraits. Her work encourages a search for personal resemblance in the

likeness of others. A personal sense of memory and nostalgia are requisites to gain access to the complex histories put forth in the work of Leann Leiter and Selwyn Ramp. Intended to evoke sympathy for the worn or ancient, the viewer is invited to question his or her own brief place on an infinite timeline.

Borrowing strongly from conspicuous historical devices meant to alter identity, Christian Meade's perverse (and yet strangely humorous) masks solicit the viewer's sympathy with an imagined wearer. Even though his creations would obviously restrict our sensory experience, Meade's masks beg to be physically touched or worn. A strange repulsion drives a strong need to investigate the containers of Tracy Meyer.

Whether it is a threatening surface, odd contents in an unlikely container, or the allure of an unknown object promised but blocked from our view, Meyer involves her viewer by almost daring one not to look. Finally, the viewer is lulled into the fluid forms and colors in the paintings of Tyler Young and is asked to embrace the further abstraction of a subject that is already largely ethereal. Our ability to interpret his forms is dependent on an almost primal notion of smoke; the allure and danger of fire is bound to a collective unconscious. The seniors' insistent commitment to sharing ideas and questioning concepts of aesthetics, function, mortality, and identity reveals a conscious effort not only to create compelling works of art, but also to sustain a mutually rewarding artistic and intellectual community.

*Anthony Cervino  
Assistant Professor of Studio Art  
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# Leann Leiter

My paintings, prints, drawings, sculpture, and installations are strongly influenced by my curiosity of the celebrated and hidden aspects of life and culture in rural Pennsylvania, of which I am a native. Although the aesthetic of the backwoods and farm fields of the region is familiar and beautiful to me, this area possesses an intrinsically foreboding and uncanny quality. Abandoned houses, dilapidated barns, antiquated farm machinery, and long-unvisited deer stands are imbued with a sense of mystery, larger cultural history, and a deeply personal past. The niche-like burrows, dens, and small paths found within the greater landscape hold within them the potential for both emotional and physical discovery. My work documents my experience of exploring these places. I present the viewer with the aspects that affect me most: the first glimpse of an overgrown, boarded-up building, or a memento taken as I leave a dark, dusty house.

Derelict structures inspire thoughts of crime, tragedy, deviance, and neglect. Combined with their inherent nostalgic allure, the ambiguity of the unknown past of these places makes them a curiosity. I am as equally compelled to imagine the history and previous occupants of an abandoned structure as I am to explore what lies inside. My mind weighs the danger of further investigation with an irrepresible urge to see every aspect of a space. These strange locales seem separate from the rest of the world, but they also appear organically integrated within the immediate

landscape. Driven by intense curiosity, and in spite of acute trepidation, I immerse myself in the site and dare to investigate, excavate, and collect.

In order to fully experience these conflicting emotions and express them in my work, it is necessary for me to probe these scarcely populated areas in person, almost always alone. My active exploration of these places not merely sates my curiosity, but rather spurs it further. I take multiple photographs intended as support for paintings or prints and often collect discarded items and weathered materials to be used in installations and sculptures. The process of creating work allows me to convey my feelings of wonderment, awe, and terror about the places to which I am drawn.

In both the two- and three-dimensional pieces I make, I present my subject simply and without judgments, but with a quiet reverence. Through deliberate yet spare layering and a focus on the contrast of light and shadow, I create paintings and prints with atmospheric qualities that are evocative of dreams or memories. Using discarded materials and objects I gather from the places I explore, I construct installations and sculpture that invite the viewer's investigation of the space. The viewer must kneel down, peer in, weed through, and recreate the fascination and eeriness of the spaces I have encountered. My work is most successful if it transmits a trace of my own experiences with these original, peculiar locations.





Left:  
*Stumbled Upon*  
Oil on canvas  
36 x 28 inches

Below:  
*Propped Up*  
Oil on canvas  
14 x 18 inches

Opposite page:  
*Abandoned Country Road*  
Oil on canvas  
14 x 20 inches



# Christian Meade



Masks may express or negate a person's identity, or perhaps change that identity into something non-human or super-human. A mask may also serve ritualistic purposes, be employed as a form of entertainment, or exist as an object of punishment. Ultimately, masks hide a person's original identity either by choice of the wearer or through coercion by another. Through this costuming, a new identity can be created and defined by both the wearer's intention and the larger social reaction and context. In creating my own series of masks, I aim to explore notions and functions of identity.

Both personal and public, identity revolves around both an individual's sense of self and the projection of multiple selves to the world around him or her. Once someone puts on one of my masks, he/she no longer moves in his typical manner. Movement is restricted, and performing a simple task takes more time and energy. The wearer's vision may also be limited, as it may be more difficult to see one's surroundings. In addition, the wearer could be restricted to looking at a single object or person. One's idea of personal identity is transformed because of these restrictions, and people around the wearer react according to how they perceive this new identity.

In my sculptures, I am greatly influenced by historical practices and technologies of mask-making. For example, some of my masks are influenced by the medieval practice of using "shame masks." Reserved for minor societal crimes, these cumbersome metal

contraptions would be worn as a form of punishment. Different masks were used for particular punishments, but all stigmatized the wearer and caused the punished person considerable physical discomfort. These masks were to be worn specifically in public as part of the punishment. I also have examined a restraining device from Colonial America that was used in psychiatric hospitals. As with the shame masks, these psychiatric tools produced physical and social discomfort.

My use of the fencing mask in some of my sculptures refers to the medieval technology of the "shame masks," while the structure of the Colonial medical apparatus inspires my wooden masks. I manipulate the form of the masks to take on actions contradictory to their original functions. For example, the fencing mask was once a form of protection. After the form is changed, however, it can be likened to a medieval instrument of torture and punishment. Similarly, when the medical restraint is taken out of the hospital and placed into a social environment, it is not a medical aid, but rather imbued with the same function as a "shame mask."

These objects can be interactive, but their display does not require active modeling to provoke an intense reaction in the viewer. It is my aim that viewers can envision themselves in the roles of wearers as well as ogling observers. The effect of the masks is unsettling, as the viewer realizes the perverse and punitive origins of these objects.



Left:  
*Mask for Forced Interaction*  
Manipulated found object  
13 x 22 x 7 inches

Opposite page, top:  
Untitled  
Wood  
24 x 9 ¼ x 9 ⅛ inches

Opposite page, bottom:  
Untitled  
Wood  
48 x 9 ¼ x 10 inches

# Tracy Meyer



Containers permeate every facet of contemporary life. Packaged foods afford the home chef the opportunity to skip parts of the meal assembly process and move quickly to the consumption phase. Virtual folders and mailboxes organize information in computer databases. Ideas and memories take physical forms, such as photographs, that are tucked away for occasional use and enjoyment. Time is divided into modules, “set aside” as if it was a tangible object and described using words like “block” and “chunk.” Members of society sort, contain, and store the bits of their lives in every imaginable way.

In my art I expand the definition of “container” beyond the scope of the vessel and its function. For me, containers connote more than the confinement of objects. Containers surround, confine, mask, hide, control, protect, act as barriers, hold in, and hold back. By using an expanded notion of what a container is, I offer my viewers the opportunity to view common objects in new ways. I might ask them to question the assumption that an interior/ exterior relationship exists in all containers by suggesting that an object without enclosed, interior space is a container. A child uses a mask to conceal his identity when he attends a Halloween party. Although his head is not completely surrounded by the mask, the fact that it hides his physical appearance from other party-goers makes the mask a container, by my definition.

I construct containers in a variety of ways to enhance the viewer’s experience of my

work. Sometimes the containers are sealed. They do not open and I offer viewers no guidance as they attempt to identify their contents. Occasionally I create containers that have nothing inside them. The viewer must decide the containers’ functions based on their shapes and physical features. By strategically withholding information I encourage intellectual as well as visual interaction with the work.

Containers function in ways that go beyond single, utilitarian purposes. Some of them achieve iconographic status and become synonymous with their contents. Shoppers might use these relationships to speed through the grocery store and make selections based on recognizing shapes of the containers that are familiar without stopping to read the labels that identify what is actually inside them. When I place objects in the containers I make, I sever the assumed relationship between a container and its contents. I accomplish this effect by using one familiar element and one that is unanticipated. By presenting these conflicting notions, I charge viewers with determining how the objects I use to construct the entire work are related, prompting them to think about the world in which they live and to question how it works. By placing unexpected contents into my containers or by manipulating their outer appearances, I dispel preconceptions about what lies within them.

By confronting my viewers with something they do not anticipate, I am encouraging them to think both inside and outside the box.



Above:  
 Untitled  
 Wood, latex, cosmetics, acrylic paint, glass jars with metal lids  
 17  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 27  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 9  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

Left:  
*Room with a View*  
 Wood  
 15 x 15 x 15 inches

Opposite page:  
*Left Behind*  
 Cement, found materials  
 23  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 4 inches diameter

# Selwyn Ramp

Although my artwork is based on functional ceramics, it is not my goal to create usable vessels. Rather, I am interested in establishing an aesthetic that illustrates the concepts of use and decay of such objects over time. Many of my objects will never be used in a traditionally utilitarian way due to their intentional cracks and imbalanced forms. The surface and texture of my pieces are ragged, rough, cracked, and sometimes broken in order to suggest what years of use and decomposition may have done to them. Although these works are newly created, it appears as if time, a central theme in my work, has worn them down.

As a native of the Netherlands, I am interested in seventeenth-century Dutch painters, many of whom examined the idea that everything eventually will pass, change, and disappear. Many of these Dutch artists painted *vanitas* scenes, which often included skulls, half-burned candles, and other objects suggestive of time. These still lifes remind the viewer of the fragility of humankind and our world of desires and pleasures in the face of the inevitability and finality of death. In a similar fashion, defining the passage of time also became a preoccupation of Dutch landscape painters. Paintings of ruins and related images of the changing landscape portray the dynamic processes of time and circumstance that shape the material world. Through such themes these Dutch artists depicted the world around them not as the simply static creation of matter, however precisely rendered, but as a



reality that was both subject to and created by the passage of time.

With my ceramics, I reexamine the *vanitas* theme. In line with the Dutch interest in the moral and spiritual symbolism of decay, I create various forms that appear as corroded relics and archaeological finds. A particular interest of mine is the barnacle-like texture on objects that have languished on the bottom of the sea for years. With the Dutch seventeenth-century masters in mind, I seek to create work that may challenge the viewer to think about the inevitable passage of time. By creating broken and seemingly imperfect ceramics, I invite the viewer to meditate on how life changes and how quickly it passes.

My ceramics, however, are not intended simply to replicate work from any specific period. Rather, I take concepts from different times and places and unite them into one unique body of work. For example, my inspiration is drawn as much from contemporary ceramics as from ancient Greek pottery. This blending of various eras and environments removes the work from any specific period or age. The broader concept of time, with its evocation of history, mortality, and religion, then may be considered.



Above:  
*Remnants from the Flow*  
Stoneware  
9 x 10 x 9 ½ inches

Opposite page, top left:  
*Ages to Perfection*  
Stoneware  
12 ½ x 7 x 7 ½ inches

Opposite page, bottom left:  
*Still Life*  
Stoneware  
15 ½ x 16 x 14 inches

Opposite page, right:  
*Growth in the Eddy*  
Stoneware  
9 ½ x 10 x 10 inches

# Allison Reilly

In a practical and theoretical sense, all of my works are self-portraits. Whether the subject is a traditional self-portrait, a study of my feet, or another person's face entirely, everything ultimately becomes a psychological reflection of "self." I am exploring self-portraiture not as the portrayal of my own physical characteristics, but as the depiction of how I see. My portrayal of the "self," in part, is a reaction to my own self-awareness as well as a subconscious expression of what I perhaps cannot fully "see."

The human figure is my primary subject, but my central concern is the human condition. I am interested in how the human body can show emotions, expressions, and deeper psychological thoughts through something as simple as a wrinkled piece of skin or the positioning of the jaw. Subtle alterations or exaggerations of these seemingly minute details increase the intensity of an expression. I am not, however, consciously creating these alterations. I rely instead on my subconscious to dictate the details that I emphasize. For

example, in my series of portraits of other people, the particular colors I use and the placement and nature of my marks define the character of each individual. An angular nose imposes a stern demeanor on a face. A wide stroke of yellow above the eye can imply ill-motivated or well-motivated intentions within a person. A cool blue glow expresses the quality of a dreamlike atmosphere. This approach to depicting people also aligns with my self-studies.

Each of my paintings is the physical trace of an internal dialogue between the real presence of the physical subject and my interpretive depiction of the model. In the process of creating a work, I continually look back and forth between the subject in real life and the subject as I am depicting it. The immediacy required to record this interaction results in a palpable tension and energy within my work.

The spontaneity of my process and the materials I use guide me to create the sensation of being in a particular "moment." As I become absorbed by the subject I am representing, specificities such as a wrinkle, the silhouette of a nose, or the corner of a mouth turn into an abstraction of light, color, and line. In acknowledging these abstractions, I embrace the subtle shifts in color and contour that define the visual mood. My goal is not to create a specific likeness of the subject, but to see how the gestures within the composition play into the mood, emotions, and thoughts of that moment. Working from life is essential.





Above:  
*Self as Others* (detail)  
Oil on panel  
15 x 12 inches

Top right:  
*Self as Others* (detail)  
Oil on panel  
15 x 12 inches



Bottom right:  
*Self as Others* (detail)  
Oil on panel  
15 x 12 inches



Opposite page:  
*Self-Portrait*  
Oil on panel  
25 1/2 x 96 1/4 inches

# Tyler Young



Smoke, in its material boundlessness and visual smoothness, represents both freedom and tranquility. Regardless of most physical boundaries, smoke calmly flows throughout a space. It expands and takes over the area it occupies, curling and wrapping around surrounding objects. In my paintings, I illustrate these bold, yet ethereal, characteristics and mimic the way smoke ascends and disperses into nothingness.

Specifically, the smoke from a cigar slowly yet energetically unravels and glides through space in a single smooth, strong line. The stream curls back into itself and is continuously unpredictable with its movement. It swells, then dissipates into the entirety of the atmosphere. This fluid quality is meant in my work to evoke a soothing response within the viewer. Unlike cigarettes or pipes, a cigar creates a bold and dominant rippling effect through the air. The smoke originates from the cigar in a perfectly defined line and dances and floats throughout the atmosphere. Before it dissipates, smoke adapts, flows, and engulfs objects that it encounters. When smoke is exhaled from one's mouth or nose, it takes on a new form of representation; it becomes the manifestation of the invisible. The smoke is literally the materialization of breathing, which is otherwise disregarded. It illustrates an awareness of breathing and life.

In a portion of my representations I have adapted smoke as simply a reference to create an atmospherically abstract painting.



I have simplified the images in shape and colors. The color palettes are reduced to being nearly monochromatic with a range of tonal values and scattered accent colors. This decision highlights the smoke and erases any distracting objects. I seek to emphasize the transparency of smoke and explore how it adapts to the space it inhabits. Smoke, with its soft edges and an ethereal transparency, provides a visual experience for the viewer that can be appreciated apart from other sensory impressions.



Left:  
Untitled  
Oil on canvas  
40 x 30 inches

Opposite page, left:  
Untitled  
Oil on canvas  
39 x 10 inches

Opposite page, right:  
Untitled  
Oil on canvas  
39 x 10 inches

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