LOGAN CENTER GALLERY

CURRENT EXHIBITION

LOGAN CENTER GALLERY
915 East 60th Street
June 26th, 2012 - August 5th, 2012
Tuesday through Sunday
11:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Featuring the work of Faheem Majeed, Cathy Alva Mooses & Eliza Myrie
2011 Artists-in-Residence, Arts & Public Life and the Center for the Study of Race, Politics & Culture

RELATED EVENTS

OPENING RECEPTION
June 29th, 2012
6:00 - 9:00 PM
Logan Center Gallery
7:30 - 8:30 PM
Music by Douglas R. Ewart and Quasar with special guests Ann Ward, Jeff Parker, Lester "Helmar" Lashley & Harrison Bankhead

GALLERY TALK
July 17th, 2012
6:30 - 7:00 PM (Refreshments); 7:00 PM (Talk)
Logan Center Gallery
With Theaster Gates, Hamza Walker, Faheem Majeed, Cathy Alva Mooses & Eliza Myrie

INDIVIDUAL ARTIST SPOTLIGHTS
In conversation with Tracye Matthews & guests
6:00 PM Logan Center Gallery
July 11th, 2012—Eliza Myrie
July 23rd, 2012—Cathy Alva Mooses
August 1st, 2012—Faheem Majeed

GALLERY HOURS
Monday: Closed
Tuesday-Sunday: 11 am – 8 pm

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Penneys, chairs, a bundle of broadsides, and a reality billboard. In the absence of any bid for illusion, how does this art work? Where is the "work" in these works of art? I pose this question not in terms of production, where the artwork may be readily acknowledged as the result of manual and or intellectual labor. I raise this question in terms of reception. Is art a privileged site of meaning? Asked another way, how, if at all, does art inform us about the world in a manner distinct from mass, say, mass media, documentary or the social sciences? Is art distinguished by its reflexivity, i.e. an articulation of the contradictions inherent to the conditions and systems governing art's very production? If so, in regards to the question "where is the 'work' in the work of art," when then is reflexivity manifest? Is it an inelamable property of the object, supplementary discourse, or simply a way of looking at things? Needless to say, the answer would depend on the example, be it Marcel Duchamp's notorious Fountain or an Ad Reinhardt black painting. But in any case, over the course of the past century, the question as to whether we look for meaning inside or outside the museum has become part and parcel of art itself.

With a clear disposition for the legacy of the ready-made and strategies of appropriation, Local Metrics tacitly acknowledges ours as an era in which anything can be art. Featuring the words and images of three well recognized artists, Cathy Alva Mooses, Faheem Majeed, and Eliza Myrie—Local Metrics, in addition to questioning the ways and means by which art signifies, also addresses the site of meaning in a more literal fashion, as series of discrete geographic locales. As a matter of coincidence, each of the artists has made at least one work addressing a particular Chicago neighborhood.

Cathy Alva Mooses' video and book project link the shifting Hispanic demographic of Chicago's southwest side with the rural Mexican village of San Pabloito in Puebla which is known for the production of the coarse, fibered amate paper. Amate production is a nationally recognized craft tradition dating back to the Aztecs who used it to record matters both sacred and secular. The Otomi people, who were residents of the Puebla region, offered it as tributary payment to the Aztecs. Just as it was then, amate still remains a form of currency as it is San Pueblos' primary industry. The homes Mooses has documented belong to families with a relatively good standard of living as evidenced by the cinderblock, as opposed to adobe, construction. They not only do well as paper makers, their incomes are supplemented with remittances from relatives working abroad. On two sheets of amate hung on the wall of the smaller gallery, Mooses, instead of engaging with a decorative paper-cutting tradition has chosen to render a dot pattern illustrating a decline in the southwest side's Hispanic population. This decline is directly reflected in the stack of surplus chairs from a Pilzen gradeschool whose annual enrollment has been shrinking over the past several years.

The front cover of Eliza Myrie's broadside features fashion "BJ" Bullcock, one of several youth found guilty in the 2009 beating death of Derrion Albert. Albert was killed in a gang related brawl as he was walking home from his Roseland high school. The back of the broadside features Albert's sister Rhealah mourning her brother's death. Both images were prominently featured on the covers of local newspapers. In and of itself tragic, the Albert case was actually the tip of an iceberg. In the five years prior to Albert's death, Chicago Public Schools experienced a dramatic spike in violence, notably school shootings. Several months before Albert's death, Attorney General Eric Holder pronounced the levels of violence "unacceptable." These images were at once specific to Albert's death and generic insofar as they conform to a stereotypical idea of dysfunction within the black community, particularly amongst its youth. Myrie's reproduction and redistribution of these images speaks less to the tragedy and more to a catalysis of racial imagery of young black subjects who cannot escape a sense of themselves as a fateful statistic.

The dismantling of Chicago's public housing high rises in favor of mixed-income developments represents a new chapter in the city's history. After several years of setbacks and harsh criticism, freshly minted Hope VI communities such as Oakwood Shores are finally starting to flesh out. Majeed abscended with this sign before most of these projects broke ground, at a time when plans to revitalize this community were met with deep skepticism. Relative to what the neighborhood had devolved into over several generations, the advertising campaign of "The Arches at Oakwood Shores" was registered as a cruel irony. Rather than being better accommodated, the former residents of the Madden/Wells/Darrow homes had every right to suspect they were being displaced. Now that the homes are built, the irony has waned, becoming a vague wariness about the urban fabric under neo-liberal auspices where the problems with public services, whether schools, housing, or healthcare, is perceived to stem from the very fact that they are public.

As it relates to the title of the exhibition, it is only fair that one ask whether anything is getting better or worse. Should we be looking for signs of hope? And if so, where? The world might very well be going to hell in a hand basket, but what about Logan Square or Englewood, or 69th and Dorchester for that matter? Local Metrics is not an exhibition about globalization, and in that respect there is no optimism to guard. Myrie's pennies are not from heaven, and Mooses' chairs and Majeed's reality sign make this exhibition a realist endeavor where good and bad are joined by a third option: fact-of-life. Consider not the lily of the field, but the thistle in the vacant lot.

Hannah Walker