

# N·O·A·R

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Ted Riederer: *St. Antipode* M/M. Courtesy Jonathan Ferrara Gallery



Emily Sartor: *Careless Love*. Oil on canvas. Courtesy Le Mieux Galleries.

# Projections

BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

Prospect 1.5 Group Exhibitions  
Jonathan Ferrara Gallery  
LeMieux Galleries  
New Orleans, LA

DAN CAMERON, FOUNDER of U.S. Biennale Inc., which produces the Prospect Biennale in New Orleans, organized showings of local and foreign talent in various gallery spaces for an interim installment of the exhibition dubbed “1.5.” It is meant as a preview of things to come in a greater, more expansive Prospect 2, which would, according to gallerist Jonathan Ferrara, again bring New Orleans national and international attention as a site for collectors who tour the world circuit of cultural exhibitions, thus generating commerce, revenue, and reputation in our city. Simultaneously, it is an opportunity for New Orleans to burnish and add to the surface of its palimpsest, a means to bring acclaim and attention not only to our city but its artists as well. Curated shows by Cameron at two galleries aim to achieve this goal. Three of these in succession fill the center gallery at LeMieux, each featuring artists who have lived in Louisiana, and now work elsewhere. Jonathan Ferrara Gallery gives up the entirety of its space to Cameron and Prospect in *Resounding*, an exhibit of the work of five artists dealing with the sense and absence of sound, a key aspect of the city’s history.

Paintings by New York-based artist Emily Sartor,

originally from Monroe, Louisiana, are the third in the series of Prospect 1.5 exhibitions at LeMieux. Described by the artist as “free-wheeling and sentimental,” they are narratives in various formats. The composition of graphic novels is evident in the fractured picture planes, gutters, and panels familiar to comics that structure two pieces, *Rank Stranger* and *Nocturama*. But, in their “free-wheeling” nature, the subject matter of these paintings explores a range of interests from dada-istic poetry to the films of Antonioni to the prints of John James Audubon. However disparate, isolated moments of painting and drawing visually cohere into a plausible narrative, much like single images caught in time on a comics page express themselves together as a story.

This is especially the case in *Rank Stranger*. A *horror vacui* encompasses the space, text and image filling and flattening toward the edges of the picture plane. But, color and undulating line create a surface that simmers and pulses outward from the edges, like a bubble before exploding. The paper itself has a sense of depth in the eye of the artist; Sartor feels the white of paper is a kind of dimension in illusionistic space.

Banners of text in a decorative and western font proclaim the title of the piece and other phrases, recalling the lyrics and phrasing of the eponymous song. The text stretches across the composition, linking strangely juxtaposed egrets, anatomical studies, and a drawing inspired by a still from an Antonioni film, *The Passenger*. The repetition of the word “unknown” across the middle of the composition formally links the imagery, and threads the narrative



Ted Riederer: *St. Antipode*. M/M. Courtesy Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

as well. In the film, a journalist becomes a stranger; in the song, a man finds himself in an unfamiliar community – the unknown is the constant, and it is personal. This seems appropriate for the flowing nature of Sartor’s narrative; the story could go anywhere into the unfamiliar.

While tactility of the paint and the richness of the visual imagery in Sartor’s pieces cue the senses, they do not immediately appeal to the one sense explored in the exhibit at Ferrara. All of this gallery space is devoted to the artwork in *Resounding*, which explores the absence of sound. In an interview with Diane Mack, Cameron asks whether it is possible to talk about music without hearing it. The artists in this exhibition produce work that provides an answer.

Ted Riederer’s piece *St. Antipode* uses the iconography of music to evoke the idea of opposing forces. A pile of skulls cast in vinyl records faces its conqueror, a tall figure armored in the same material. Described as both Darth Vader and St. George by the artist and his critics, this figure is created using records that hold songs dear to the artist, with which he armed himself during 1986. In a video from Robert Goff Gallery in New York, Riederer describes this personally difficult year, and says that music was a kind of armor for him during that time. The skulls are vinyl recordings of the top 200 hits from the same time; these less personal songs are vanquished, irrelevant, and dead. Vinyl itself might be considered similarly obsolete, a pile of detritus that serves only to remind of the finished past. The vinyl is silent and unplayable, but the music, physically immaterial, persists.

The viewer cannot become fully involved in the extremely personal context of Riederer’s piece, and it is the same with *Theorists*,

a video installation by Turkey-born artist Fikret Atay. In what seems typical of Atay’s work, the video features intimately filmed moments familiar to the artist, but enigmatic to the viewer. Sound becomes non-specific and incoherent; it seems deliberately left without translation, and it is up to the viewer to create and decipher meaning in isolation, in a small room at the back of the gallery, somewhat encapsulated but also lost. Still, these are moments of prayer and traditional dance, and the specialness associated with the ritual translates through Atay’s film style if the language does not. The video is a sign of a disconnect that still exists in a world supposedly linked by constant news and information.

Photographs by Rhona Bitner and sculpture by Tim Lee and Sean Duffy are more easily approached. Bitner’s visual records of the emptied spaces where great sounds occurred reverberate with the hollow echoes of their memory. The celebrity of sound also forms the basis of works by Lee and Duffy. Lee creates memorials to easily recognized and famous individuals with printed lyrics, liner notes, and vinyl, a full-fledged “record” of great things. Duffy plays with a pop-art aesthetic that also recalls teenage-bedroom fantasies of celebrity and shrines to musical heroes in meticulously handled album covers marked-up with Sharpies. In each of these works, sound is absent, and memory is the key to seeing and listening.

Prospect 1.5 might be described as a meditation on the nature of the biennale in New Orleans. Aspects of the city, like its music and the far-reaching talents of the natives of its state, are dissected and examined in these few exhibitions. It might be this kind of inquiry that deepens and broadens the projects that comprise the next installment in the Prospect series. □