



Grave

CRAVE

curated by Matthew Garrison

Joel Carreiro

Betsy Chaffin

Amanda Sparks

Thomas Weaver

Brian Wood

DELTA AXIS AT MARSHALL ARTS

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UT DOWNTOWN GALLERY

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Cravings stem from primal urges seeking satiation. Artists, intuitively and through practiced perception, are especially aware of their personal cravings and cognizant of the cravings of their audience. In the exhibition, *Crave*, five artists recognize the process of craving as a creative force in itself—a force capable of propelling their work into fresh observations, new methodologies and concepts.

Almost all cravings are open to interpretation. Craving a cigarette in one society can be seen as acceptable social behavior, another might see it as harmful, and yet another as immoral. "Men are but children of a larger appetite, ... full of cravings," Dryden writes, "...with appetites as apt to change as theirs." But, judgment and fickleness aside, cravings for the artist *are* a force of the moment, generating demands that, in turn, can instigate new cravings. A demand met might be empowering, a demand unanswered devastating; a demand devoid of action indicative of hopelessness or self-restraint.

The cycle of craving/demand/craving is a persistent force in an artist's life, alongside brief moments of satisfaction. This is a tension carried over to the creative process. **Brian Wood**, whose work directly explores unresolved desire, explains that "satisfaction erases the craving, but it's basically a limited experience; a merged state that will separate." Wood's piece, *Crossings*, isolates a moment of satisfaction, while eliciting feelings of longing. *Crossings* consists of an ink drawing on mylar with a black and white photograph of flesh forms collaged to the surface. It is as if there were a contraceptive barrier separating the passages of ink from the photographic flesh. Wood's depiction of an organic, primal state in the drawing seems to be longed for by the photographic flesh, yet hindered by the separateness of the two media. When the visceral forces of the photograph are combined with feelings of yearning and hindrance, rational behavior is distorted or altogether eliminated. Wood's work explores these moments between longing and satisfaction, when cravings shape behavior and alter judgment.

Cravings also directly affect perception when they are coupled with an overriding drive toward satiation. **Thomas Weaver** explores the influence of craving on perception within a "circuitry" of accumulated images. Weaver's work is comprised of patterns, scenes and anonymous figures stenciled on overlapping sheets of paper tacked directly to the wall. It looks as though Weaver has shuffled storyboards from various film genres into an ongoing narrative inhabited by a cast of stenciled characters. Although the source of the imagery

is unspecified, it often recalls the cinematic moments at the beginning or the end of films. The cinematic references, in conjunction with the work's disjointed narratives, instill in the characters' gazes a sense of longing and craving. For example, one image presents a figure floating in deep water under a bright sun looking at the land in the distance. Although only the back of the bobbing head is shown, the figure's gaze is clearly fixed on the land. The instinct to survive has generated a craving which, in turn, dictates how the land is perceived and the intensity of the character's gaze. Furthermore, Weaver's circuitry of images deprives his audience of any closure but, instead, speaks to the possibility of deferred satisfaction through the employment of fluctuating, nonlinear storylines and associations.

The manifestation of cravings and the nascent feelings that ensue are as varied as the individuals who harbor them. **Amanda Sparks** thinks about cravings in terms of the "things you can't have." Her work is guided primarily by emotional cravings triggered by recollections and experiences. Sparks has channeled her childhood cravings into *Half a World Away*, an oversized pop-up book for adults where childhood memories and imaginings are recreated around her earliest impressions of the American dream. Sparks presents the American dream as being "statistically generic," consisting of nice houses, healthy families and good food. *Half a World Away* draws its imagery from family photo albums and internet image searches using common key words. For example, since Sparks wanted to live in a two-story house growing up, she Googled "two-story houses." *Half a World Away* serves as a record of Sparks' childhood expectations and the ideals that shaped them. It is also a depiction of her idealized present-day life as her past self had imagined it. Ultimately, Sparks' work acts as a conduit, connecting romantic values and cravings to current realities and circumstances.

Joel Carreiro's studio activity is fueled by his need to "process experiences through objects that provide order." Much of his work has developed from the organization and recomposition of small squares of imagery taken from Renaissance and Baroque paintings, while his recent work utilizes fragments from images of 18th century Commedia dell'Arte porcelain figurines. Commedia dell'Arte, a type of Italian theater that ran from the 15th century through the 18th century, incorporated bright colors and patterns into whimsical costumes and set designs. The incentive behind Carreiro's change in subject matter stems from his sense that a new visual language can be developed from any imagery, even decorative objects from other times and places, when released from its original meaning system through dissection and reorganization. To arrive at a worldview, it's necessary to consider the emotional cravings driving ideologies, aspirations, and events. Carreiro looked to his renaissance and baroque counterparts for direction, and recognized that their visual eloquence was rooted in the articulation of subtle gestures and tonalities, as well as the grandeur of a subject matter that often connected our world to one with eternal connotations. Of course, not all emotions are grand, and, Carreiro,

with an inclination towards inclusiveness, has employed the mischievous humor intrinsic to porcelain figurines in his work. The change in subject matter provides Carriero with more patterns and palettes to work with when charting an emotional framework while feeding his craving to convey a worldview.

Betsy Chaffin utilizes oil paint and tar when channeling her cravings into emotionally charged paintings. While the adverse media separate as they dry into a delicate terrain, Chaffin builds up layers of paint and repeatedly scratches crosshatching marks into it. She explains that "this gathering of marks is, in a sense, about the passage of time," associating them with the scratchings of captives counting out their days on a wall. The excessive quantity of marks in Chaffin's work appears to measure seconds rather than days, and to imply the persistence of time rather than a specific duration. Chaffin's piece, *Early March*, exemplifies her process of frenzied crosshatchings within a tempestuous "emotional space." *Early March* directly channels Chaffin's emotions into a barrage of colors where yellows, reds, greens and purples materialize within an aggressively crosshatched surface. The immediacy of the marks appear to stem from a craving to record the moments between an emotion's conception and the time it is anchored in actual events and words. Chaffin also describes her crosshatches as scars and the surface of painting as skin. When Chaffin's marks are perceived as scars, they come to represent the end of a healing process. From this viewpoint, Chaffin connects emotional cravings and the creative process to health, wellbeing and issues of survival.

Just as the cyclical nature of cravings stimulates artists to satiate the yearnings intrinsic to their work, the cravings of the art audience stem from their urge to better understand the concepts and uncharted, internal realms investigated by artists. In effect, artists function as mediums channeling the emotional and visceral origins of cravings through the formation of their feelings, thoughts and inclinations. Even the most conceptual artist must first tap into the personal craving to investigate an idea before beginning a project. In *Perceptual Pleasure and the Brain*, Dr. Irving Biederman, Director of the Image Understanding Lab, University of Southern California, and Dr. Edward Vessel, Post Doctoral Fellow at New York University, write, "Human beings are designed to be 'infovores.' It's a craving that begins with a simple preference for certain types of stimuli, then proceeds to more sophisticated levels of perception and cognition that draw on associations the brain makes with previous experiences." For artists and audiences alike, the buildup of experiences and associations is linked to an ongoing process of craving and satiation. Artists provide new associative experiences that fulfill their audience's craving for fresh visual stimuli.

Furthermore, the craving to make art by the artist and the craving for art by the audience may be more closely related to issues of survival and evolution than one might think. According to Biederman and Vessel, visual stimulation is directly linked to the release of

endomorphins in the brain, a neurochemical opioid. They state, "Perceptual preferences arise from the connections the brain makes with stored information. That's because the brain's association areas have the greatest density of mu-opioid receptors. In other words, it is the interpretation of visual pattern that leads to the feelings of pleasure." It can be presumed that the visual experiences artists provide must also activate mu-opioid receptors, consequently, satisfying their audience's craving for visceral pleasures stemming from brain activity. At this level, the monitoring of brain activity provides evidence that the cravings of artists and their audiences may actually be instinctive and, what's more, tied into an evolutionary process. Primal instincts are often associated with survival of the species and, in the case of humanity, the mining of emotional and visceral cravings in art provides us with invaluable access and order to an otherwise turbulent internal realm. The instinctive cravings of artists and their audiences to tap into these internal realms is, in fact, part of an essential healing process for a species that is especially susceptible to its emotions.

Matthew Garrison has curated numerous exhibitions at the Lab Gallery, New York City, and was a curator for *News, Surprise and Nostalgia*, Leubsdorf Gallery, Hunter College. Garrison wrote the exhibition essay, *Helicon: Art Historical Influences in Contemporary Art*, for Albright College's Freedman Gallery; his review of John Water's retrospective at the New Museum of Contemporary Art was published in *Circa, Contemporary Visual Culture in Ireland*. Garrison recently has shown in exhibitions at the Minnesota Museum of American Art, Saint Paul; the Islip Art Museum, East Islip, NY; Alternative Space Bandee, Busan, Korea; and the University of Wisconsin's Foster Gallery. He received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from Hunter College. Garrison currently is an Assistant Professor of Digital Media at Albright College.

JOEL CARREIRO



Left: *Zembla*, heat transfer on birch panel, 6 x 14 inches, 2007
Right: *Ark*, heat transfer on birch panel, 26 x 26 inches, 2007



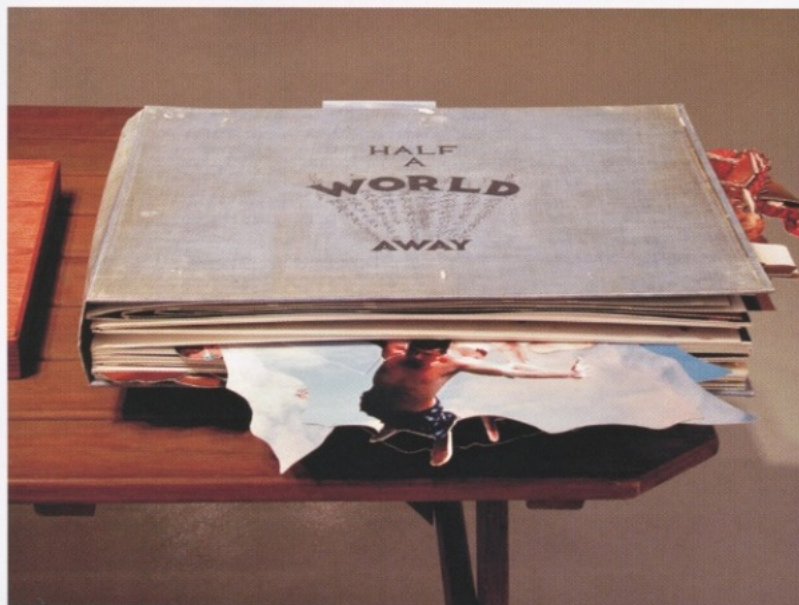
BETSY CHAFFIN



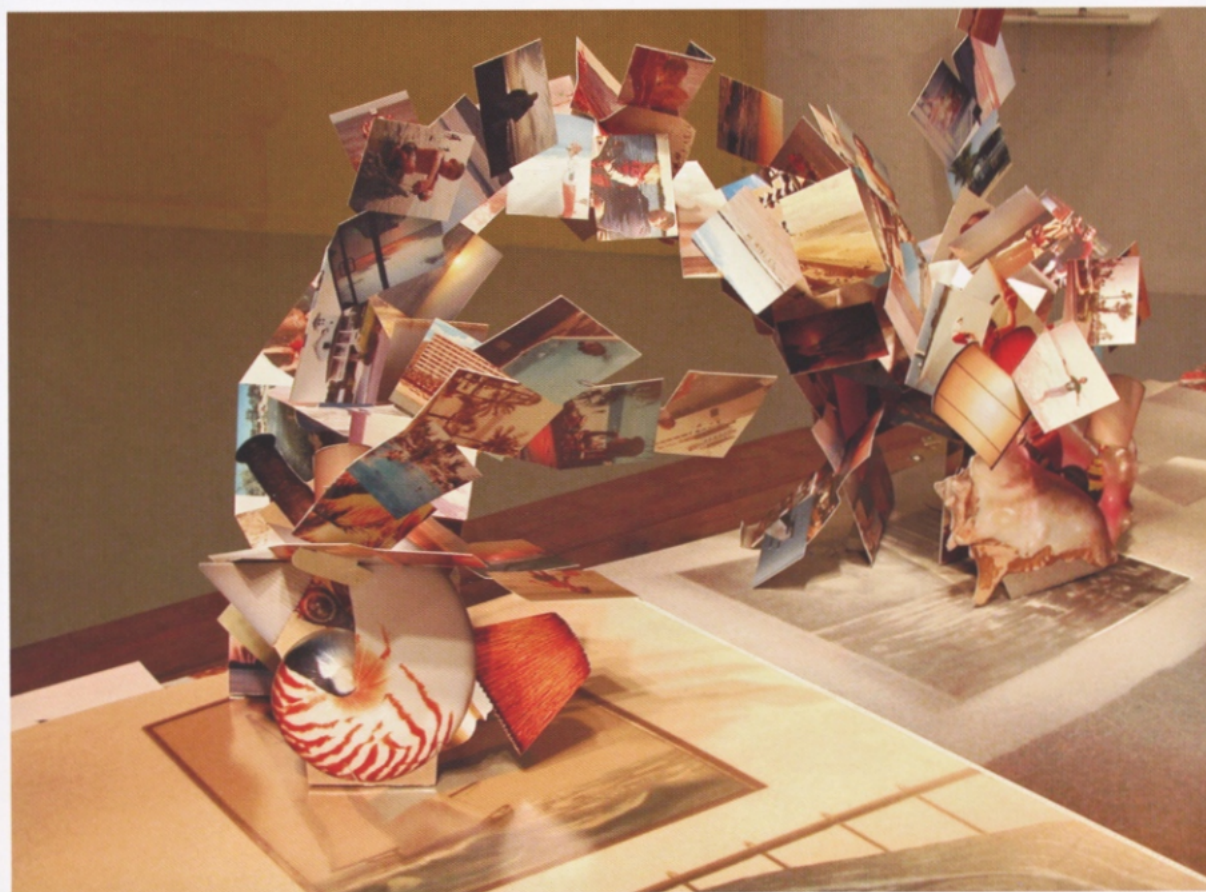
Left: *By Myself*, oil on canvas, 24 x 18 inches, 2007
Right: *Early March*, oil on canvas, 24 x 18 inches, 2007



AMANDA SPARKS



Half A World Away (installation views), inkjet prints and mixed media, 2006



THOMAS WEAVER



Little Orgone Box, acrylic, pen, pencil on paper, 116 x 161 inches, 2007



BRIAN WOOD



Left: *Crossings*, ink & photograph on mylar, 13 x 9.5 inches, 2004
Right: *Night Light*, ink on mylar, 67 x 46 inches, 2007



JOEL CARREIRO

Joel Carreiro is based in New York City and directs the Graduate Program at Hunter College. He has shown work at P.S.1, the Brooklyn Museum, the Alternative Museum, the Johnson Museum at Cornell University and the University of Richmond Museum in Virginia as well as galleries around the country and in Europe. He has done residencies at Yaddo and Artpark in New York State, the Anderson Ranch in Colorado, and Haystack, in Maine as well as at the Cill Rialaig Project in Ireland. As an independent curator, he has organized exhibitions for the Rotunda Gallery in Brooklyn, the Rockland Center for the Arts and the Hopper House Art Center in Nyack, New York, and the Intar Gallery and the Lab Gallery, both in New York City. He has received grants from the City University of New York, The New York State Council on the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

BETSY CHAFFIN

Betsy Chaffin works in a variety of forms including paintings, collages, photographs and sculpture. Recent exhibits include "Markings," a one-person show at Charles Street Gallery in Beaufort, South Carolina, "Penumbra" at Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, the College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, and "Duende," at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village, Colorado. She was a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome in 2005. Chaffin shows her work at Charles Street Gallery in Beaufort, South Carolina. She lives and works on Spring Island, South Carolina.

AMANDA SPARKS

Amanda Sparks was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1976. She completed her BA in Art History at Agnes Scott College and recently received her MFA in Printmaking from Hunter College, CUNY. She has shown at the Queens Museum of Art and currently teaches at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi.

THOMAS WEAVER

Thomas Weaver is an artist who has exhibited nationally and internationally. He has recently shown work at The Arts Center in St. Petersburg, Florida and Elizabeth Harris Gallery in New York City. His curating activity includes Handmade Readymades at Leubsdorf Gallery in New York City and the catalog essay for Drip, Blow, Burn at The Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York. He is preparing a one-person show at Walsh Gallery in Fairfield, Connecticut. He is the Chair of the art department at Hunter College.

BRIAN WOOD

Brian Wood works with multiple media in New York City. He exhibits internationally and his work is in such museum collections as the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the National Gallery of Canada. His awards include the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, the NEA Fellowship, the New York Foundation for the Arts Grant, and Canada Council Grants. He currently teaches at Hunter College in New York and previously taught at Yale University. Wood is represented by Jeannie Freilich Fine Art in New York City.

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