

# Harris Lieberman

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## **BETWEEN THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER THING**

Liz Glynn, Jason Kraus, Dashiell Manley, Stephen Prina  
January 17 – February 16, 2013

*On Monday January 7th 2013 Liz Glynn, Jason Kraus, Dashiell Manley, and Stephen Prina all sat down to discuss how to install this show, and the relationships amongst the works contained within it. The original premise for the show was to create an exhibition where the works were made to engage one another, in order to investigate a broader range of meanings than those contained in each work functioning autonomously. The artists were initially interested in using the idea of the exhibition as one of situation specificity. The artists discussed the works in this show and their relationship to late 19th and early 20th century paintings and sculptures. The central premise of the show was the existence of content in the space between things.*

**Jason Kraus:** There is an interesting relationship that happened organically between our works in this show, and late 19th century and the early 20th century painting and sculpture. I wasn't expecting this when we started talking about the exhibition. For me, my paintings somehow exist in relationship to the language of Hudson Valley landscape painting. Through Stephen's exquisite-corpse pieces, and Liz, your works engaging Rodin's process, there is a relationship to different classical artworks. I might call them surrogates.

**Liz Glynn:** Actually I've been thinking a lot about Stephen's work in dialog with Manet, and more broadly about the way all of our works are systematizing these earlier artistic processes. In some sense, some type of deconstructive engagement has produced works that become abstract and systematic, though their sources might be representational.

**Jason Kraus:** Everything is both abstract and representational at the same time. Scale and physicality becomes as important as the image.

**Stephen Prina:** It is very important to me that I try to avoid using the word 'surrogate.' It has something to do with when I developed the (*Exquisite Corpse*) project, because the first one I made was 1988, but I developed that project two years before that. At the time there was a lot of talk about faux painting and I didn't quite understand that because I always accepted Piero Manzoni's paintings - stretching fur over a stretcher bar - as painting. And so all of these ideas of the faux didn't sit well with me. I went through a lot of different prototypes and rejected many, because I thought that they would be seen too much as the stand-in for something else. That is why I ended up trying to make them in the most traditional way that I could, on rag paper with sepia ink and that each one of the drawings is unique and made by hand.

**Jason Kraus:** For the green screen pieces, I use the word 'stand-in' to describe them because I like the idea that this green screen material is a stand-in for landscape.

**Dashiell Manley:** Technology often stands in for landscape.

**Jason Kraus:** Yeah. In terms of film, backgrounds are almost always landscapes. But, yeah, I didn't mean to think that the exquisite-corpse pieces were stand-ins for paintings; I think about them using the scale and the physicality of the referenced work to re-represent a new object-hood.

**Dashiell Manley:** My works appear to be paintings, but there are elements that are inherent in their construction and materiality that prohibit them ever functioning as such. The films that I make actually function more like paintings than the object works that appear

to be paintings. The object works actually produce an experience that is much more temporal than the films. With these double-sided objects, I'm negating or removing part of the experience of seeing; i.e. you can't walk around them.

**Liz Glynn:** By not creating something that is contingent upon the supporting apparatus of a referent, these works seem to produce their own logic through the process of their construction.

**Dashiell Manley:** Yes, in that their presence as objects isn't denied.

**Stephen Prina:** I thought it was important to always maintain that element of the work. For instance, when I saw your work (in the *Made in LA* show) Dashiell, at Barnsdall, I had no problem reading those framed works on the shelf as painting. I don't even think I thought about it.

But I did think about how the film and my experience of the film modified my apprehension of those objects on the shelf. And so it seems that this happens with a lot of the works that we're making. For instance, with the exquisite-corpse project, it isn't that attention is focused upon that drawing. It functions in relationship to this offset litho that talks about this other kind of system, and all these works that have been made and all these works that have yet to be made, and where we are in that at this point in the process. And I just try to give form to what I think is a general condition of art, that this is always happening, and a lot of times we're discouraged from thinking of it that way.

**Jason Kraus:** For me, the interest in this grouping was an investment in some exposure of process. For example, a Christopher Wool painting exposes its own layers to a certain extent. There is a finalized object but it always refers to its own production.

**Stephen Prina:** It happens with Chris's work to a high degree. With the Rubber Stamp paintings, I think about how he could use those rubber stamps in so many different ways. And I remember the first time that I saw one where it was just one stamp and you focus upon how much it takes to prepare one of those aluminum panels and to have it surfaced in the way that it is and to have a rubber stamp made, and then the painting is made in a millisecond, it seems. He really focuses on that moment. Some of the other paintings aren't so preoccupied with that, so you get involved with something else that he is doing with those tools.

**Jason Kraus:** For me, one of the very first things I was thinking about once we started to work on this work for the show was trying move back and forth between what was being used as a material for production and a material for exhibition. So the light became a tool for shooting the photograph, exhibiting a painting, and creating an image, at the same time while making a complete sculpture. The painting and the light existed as aesthetic objects but then they were also materials for making the photograph.

**Dashiell Manley:** A functional transformation takes place.

**Jason Kraus:** Originally, I had intended to make these using not photo lights, but track lighting, so that the painting would come with exhibition track lighting. But then as I started physically working on them, the photo lights became more interesting to me as themselves, as sculptural objects.

**Stephen Prina:** The track lighting can go back into the file.

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**Liz Glynn:** In many of the works, the process of making is actively performed. Dash, in your works, I think about the accumulation of repeated gestures in creating the paintings and animations; with Jason, I think the about the theatrical function of the lights. I thought about it in my own work when I was making the work Rodin, and these Dutch still lives, inhabiting the process of another artist in a different way than Stephen, your work sometimes takes one element of an artist's work and magnifies it.

**Stephen Prina:** I'm just always thinking about Manet's labor. He executed a certain amount

of labor in the front of a canvas with some certain dimensions, and that I'm exercising a certain kind of labor, and it is parallel, but it results in a different kind of image. It may be abstract, but I'm of the generation that thinks that our abstraction isn't a component of the representational. But my pet peeve is when people call my drawings blank. This happened to me this fall, when I was showing a sequence of those drawings in London.

When I got to London, I was filming a slow panning shot up and I saw my drawings and it's like, "Why do I see my signature?" The framer thought that the signature was actually the image of the drawing and had hinged them in reverse in the frames. The show was opening two days later and I'm thinking, "Can these be removed? Are they going to be destroyed?" I thought that I had confronted and solved this problem a long time ago, but they were still seen as being blank. I always think of them as being totally full, that they're full of gesture from side to side, top to bottom; and it may be subtle but still, it's full of stuff. That actually raised my temperature just remembering that. But they brought the conservator in and everything is fine.

**Jason Kraus:** (to Dashiell) Are your works restricted to the way they're first installed?

**Dashiell Manley:** The only specifications that I give are that, "These works have to be installed with a shelf." I don't give specifications as to the size of that shelf, or what that shelf looks like.

**Jason Kraus:** You don't provide the shelf?

**Dashiell Manley:** I do. But most of the time I've found, when I've gone to the homes of collectors that have acquired the work, they're usually never installed on a shelf. They're on mantles and they're leaning, which is good because I intended for them to lean. I've denied countless requests to build apparatuses for them to be suspended. It's a problem that I've been working on for the last year and will probably continue to work on. I like this problem.

**Liz Glynn:** There are conditions where works can be hung in a number of potential configurations. Sometimes I would like people to be able to pick up a piece and move it around, but how do you make that option available without some incredibly clunky musicological didactic?

**Jason Kraus:** For instance, this happens with the piece that you had at the Hammer Museum, (*Anonymous Needs and Desires (Giza-Gaza)*, 2012). Somehow, when I saw the work again at Paula Cooper it worked much better because there was a staff member at who replaced the objects every time somebody took one out. It gained a certain sense of elegance. I'm not sure if you were going for that, but it was helpful to me.

**Stephen Prina:** Were you going for elegance?

**Liz Glynn:** No. But perhaps some museological authority.

**Jason Kraus:** And that works differently at Paula Cooper. There was a lot of space around the works. So it's a very different set of conditions. You can stand back and actually look at it as a thing whereas at the Hammer you were always in it.

**Stephen Prina:** I don't think one is preferred over the other. I'm always interested in these different conditions and how they shift. I mean, I've made certain works that are very dependant upon being site specific in a way that I thought was over determined, and that is the first way that they're shown. And then it's intended that they will be shown again, always in conflict with the architecture that houses them subsequently. So that was a way to take on the myth of the site specific.

Someone just sent me an image of a work of mine that was being installed in Germany and it's a sculpture that takes the shape of a room with books on it and I thought it was just so clear how it has to be installed. They installed it inside out. So instead of the rough part being on the outside and the finished part on the inside with all the books, it's addressing the audience. And I thought, "That is fine," because I have shown this work

in a variety of ways, though I didn't design that option.

It's not so much about starting with limits, but the idea that at in every situation you asking yourself, "What are the proper limits here?" because for instance, in London I could have just shown those drawings the way they were, and according to certain decisions I've made maybe I should have. But I thought, "No, this is overstepping a limit and it's eradicating too much about what that project is attempting to do" and maybe I'm not ready for it yet. Maybe that is a better way of saying it.

**Jason Kraus:** I've had a real sense of frustration about this situation which is a function of the art fair to a certain extent, where you make a painting, the painting goes in the box, the box gets shipped to any number of locations and painting functions identically in all contexts: Art Basel, or MOMA. There's an assumption that the content is fully held within the painting. Yet I'd be willing to bet that everybody in this room would agree that a painting functions really differently at an art fair than it does in a museum, and that space and surroundings are always enter into the content of the artwork. I've been trying to make things that aren't necessarily site specific. They can be removed and are autonomous but they're always in conversation with the first space which they were made for.

I was thinking about the terms of the group show, and how the other works in the show inevitably effect what you're doing. As an artist you're usually asked for Piece A, B and C to ship in a box without knowing what else is in the show. When we started talking about the show, the impetus was the ability to make new works while we were all speaking to one another about what the other one was making, or to include older works that informed the new. We were functioning as artists and curators simultaneously.

**Liz Glynn:** The selection of the works, and the process of editing think, is as important as the making. I began a number of pieces that didn't make sense in the context of the other works, and ended up shipping two pairs of related works, so that there was an anchor point for them to be understood.

**Stephen Prina:** Oh, I see.

**Liz Glynn:** Because there needed to be some anchor point for the works to be understood. I think the selection process overall seems very important in that.

**Jason Kraus:** When the Boetti show was up at MoMA I walked through with Christian Rattemeyer. I was a fan already, but I didn't really understand the work in the way I did until I saw that show two or three times. One of the things Christian was talking about was this idea that Boetti was inspired when certain bodies of work were all in the studio at the same time. So if the work sat for a while, piece-A informed piece-B and piece-B informed piece-C. Piece Z might have looked completely different than A, but there was a kind of linear thinking process. I was thinking a lot about that because as Dashiell was saying the other day; there is just no work in his studio. You make something and it gets removed immediately.

**Liz Glynn:** I had a similar experience as the shippers were in the driveway of the studio. And I felt like I hadn't made any work at all. After work leaves, the studio is empty, and this happens every month or so.

**Stephen Prina:** Where does that pressure come from?

**Liz Glynn:** It's totally pathological.

**Dashiell Manley:** Yes, when the shippers were at my studio, I couldn't help but think about editing and how initially I approached the show as a platform that I could use to make new work. Not necessarily to make work in a new way, but directly informed by these conversations we were having about similarities between our practices. As it happened, it came down to editing from what was already there. Within this editing process there is a kind of making; a selection process that aims to articulate a collective idea.

**Jason Kraus:** There is something nice about this. For instance, I'm in this show in Milan

that opens next week that has seventeen artists. I have no idea what anybody made for the show and I just sent a new piece. The show proposal that I received was vague, and I had little to go on when making the work. In comparison with this show, even if it's something like as rudimentary as, "Well I'm not going to send these ones because I know Jason made green and blue paintings and the red paintings will look funny next to the green and blue," there is something valuable about having some control over the context your work will exist in.

**Stephen Prina:** We operate under all of these different kinds of conditions. Sometimes the curator in principle won't tell you whose work will be in close proximity to yours. I just think it's all, you know... just a party. You just show up and you all do the best job that you can, though from the conversations we've had and what I've seen of the work that is going in, it feels like a little bit tighter of a group show than what I'm normally used to being in. It feels like the things react more and that there are relationships that were unexpected but make sense.

The title for instance, crept up on me gradually. Initially when I saw it I didn't spend very much time with it and I thought, "Well maybe this is one of those titles that, you know, just holds that space of the title. Then yesterday I ended up talking with a friend about it and explaining it to him that well, no, it isn't one of those kinds of titles. There is actually something to this.

**Liz Glynn:** Yeah. It's funny because when we were talking about the title on the phone and Jason was advocating heavily for a non-theoretical title, something simply about conversation and process. We tried to avoid using larger words to describe a similar situation.

**Stephen Prina:** They are very small words.

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**Stephen Prina:** There was a certain moment when Chris and I were really trying to think through the implications of the site specific so we started using the term 'system specific.' It's an idea that comes from a kind of museological preoccupation, but as an idea it's not so tethered to the site but it's what happens in the site. What are the different kinds of functions that can happen there? Anyway, sometimes you go along with the program that exists because you think that maybe by seizing upon that and accelerating those tendencies allows you to see something else. Other times you work against those tendencies and try to introduce something that at least seemingly is anonymous to the structure.

**Liz Glynn:** I tend to think much more about how our experience of artwork is so charged by all those unconscious cues, especially the difference between a museum and gallery, studio or a bar.

**Stephen Prina:** Yeah, I know. I try to be so careful in the studio not to say "Oh, your paintings are fine but, wow, this electrical outlet is really fantastic." That was the old CalArts thing, remember?

**Jason Kraus:** Martin was telling me about a student at CalArts who painting his way through the Dunn Edwards catalogue. Michael Asher went to the studio for a studio visit and there were these monochromes.

The artist says something like "These paintings are about the essence of painting" and Michael responds - as I'm sure that almost every single person who ever had a studio visit with Michael has had something like this happen to them - by pointing at the paint cans on the floor and saying "Those are the essence of painting, These are paintings." The nail that hangs the painting, we can talk about that, but not the painting.

**Liz Glynn:** We had this term in our first year MFA critique; a "blue-tape issue," because someone had hung their black and white drawings on the wall with blue tape. In the critique the artist presenting was not allowed to speak, therefore we talked about nothing but

Stephen, I've been thinking about the statement you made at Michael's memorial in the middle of your remarks: "I am not you." I've thought about that a lot, having been his TA and being influenced by his rigid sense of conceptual practice on the one hand. On the other hand, in the last couple of years I've taken radical departures from that logic sometimes and made a lot of subjective decisions. It's interesting because in a lot of our work we have an awareness of these methods, but also a willingness to operate outside of it.

**Dashiell Manley:** Yes, it's really important too. It's easy for me to remember while I was at CalArts how much I relied on a systematized way of working and how it seemed as if there was absolutely no way I could break free that without sacrificing something dire contained within the work. The realization that the rules could be broken and new systems invented and put into play was an unbelievably liberating feeling for me.

**Jason Kraus:** I haven't come up with a better word for it but I like to call it 'finding the intuitive space' almost.

**Stephen Prina:** They were really regimented when you were there. We were not so hard.

**Jason Kraus:** I had this studio visit the other day where I was showing somebody the paintings that are in the show. I referred to the placement of the light as the space for me being able to make an intuitive gesture within the work. I think they thought I was a lunatic, but for me it's about locating that little space where it didn't have to be so tight.

**Liz Glynn:** But part of it is perhaps a recognition of what systems are at play. The systems we impose can be arbitrary, and I'm increasingly interested in how we superimpose multiple seemingly unrelated systems upon each other in the production of work.

**Stephen Prina:** And didn't Michael, himself, come to that realization?

**Liz Glynn:** Yes.

**Jason Kraus:** We've been working around something similar, this idea that there are certain systems that have to be adhered to but then there are other systems that we can discard. It has to be this grey, right, but then it can be any size, or these two have to be together but the third one, it could be on Pluto as long as it's still thought of as part of the work. It's funny, it seems as though maybe that's not a system, but it's also totally systematic.

**Liz Glynn:** But regardless the number of conditions or rules you impose upon a work, at some point the work produces itself. Something similar happened a lot at Michael's last show at the Santa Monica Museum. People just didn't know what to do with the spectacular visual effects created by the layers of metal studs and I remember Benjamin Buchloh calling it "Mannerist", provoking an audible gasp from other art historians in the audience.

**Stephen Prina:** I mean, I hadn't seen all of Michael's pieces in person but I don't think that that was the first time that they...

**Liz Glynn:** That they were aesthetically spectacular.

**Stephen Prina:** They were always dense I think. You know, for instance that work that was in Chicago at the Museum of Contemporary Art; there was so much to inspect and look at and take in. All sorts of different layers. You know, because the late 1980s façade would... when it was removed, would reveal the 19th century brickwork behind. They had worked so hard to conceal all of that and to make themselves modern in a different way and with one little shift that had been changed back. I left something out of that letter to Michael and I kicked myself later because I remembered my first task as his TA - it was to make a photocopy of a text, and I just decided to have it printed on pink paper without consulting Michael. And so I come in with this huge stack of pink paper and never referred to it. It might as well be pink, you know. Maybe pink goes much further back in my history than I thought ...

**Liz Glynn:** No comment.

**Stephen Prina:** Yeah. So if I'm called upon to deliver that again I'm going to include that one- pink episode.

**Liz Glynn:** Its conditions are un-accounted for in the instructions.

**Stephen Prina:** Um-hmm. But you mentioned the word excess and so that has become a very important component to the way in which I look at things and the way that I attempt to produce things because I think there is always the production of an excess no matter how much is attempted to be controlled and... so I'm always trying to...you know what I just described where this one work was installed inside out and I thought, "Well what am I going to do with that? And what is that?" So that was an excess that I didn't anticipate because I thought it was so logically driven in a different way. I thought, "Well here is something that was un-accounted for and what do I think of that?"

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