Brown University 250th Anniversary

Alumni Exhibitions

DAWN CLEMENTS
PAUL RAMIREZ JONAS
KERRY TRIBE
ROB REYNOLDS
SARAH MORRIS
TARYN SIMON
Part 1  February 15 – March 30, 2014

PAUL RAMIREZ JONAS ’87
DAWN CLEMENTS ’86
KERRY TRIBE ’97

Part 2  April 12 – May 25, 2014

TARYN SIMON ’97
ROB REYNOLDS ’90
SARAH MORRIS ’89

Alumni Exhibitions

Brown University 250th Anniversary

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Essay  RALPH RUGOFF ’80
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Sponsored by the Office of the 250th Anniversary, the Department of Visual Art, and the David Winton Bell Gallery
Is the catalogue essay an inherently suspect genre of writing? As an appendage to a public exhibition, it is meant to provide a reassuring background murmur of approbation and intellectual gravity. Commissioned and paid for, it is essentially the quasi-academic equivalent of an influencer’s post. Its purpose is to extol and elucidate the artworks at hand, rather than question or criticize. This essay, meant to accompany an exhibition that forms part of the official celebration of Brown University’s 250th anniversary, might seem to occupy an even more dubious position in assuming a (minor) role in an institution’s self-puff promotion. The fact that the participating artists were selected, in part, because they are all Brown graduates only adds to the feeling that the conceptual horizons of this text might be roughly equivalent to that of a public relations exercise.

What details these assumptions is the actual work in the exhibition, none of which was made for this particular occasion, and which, despite spanning a wide aesthetic range, nevertheless shares some fundamental ways of thinking about what art does and how it engages with the world. In particular, the artists—Dawn Clements, Paul Ramirez Jonas, Kerry Tribe, Sarah Morris, Rob Reynolds, and Taryn Simon—all seem to make art that grows out of expansive and invigoratingly skeptical ways of reading. When Ramirez Jonas declares that in his approach to making art, “I have always considered myself a reader of texts,” it seems to me that he could be speaking for all of the artists in this exhibition. Their work engages an eclectic array of social and cultural phenomena with interpretive intent. Ideologically aware and systematically taking nothing at face value, it is also keenly attuned to that fact that, as every good reader knows, as Roland Barthes, language is never innocent.

Ramirez Jonas’s contribution to the exhibition, a sculpture called The Commons, is partially based on an ancient Roman equestrian statue commemorating Marcus Aurelius, a bronze copy of which (I learned much to my surprise) has stood behind Brown’s Sayles Hall since 1908, and which, despite my having attended classes in Sayles I have no recollection of having ever seen. Of course, as Austrian novelist Robert Musil famously noted, “there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument.” But apparently students are now paying more attention:

The cool thing about this statue is that it’s a replica of the original Marcus Aurelius statue in Rome. The even cooler thing? The original in Rome was actually destroyed during one of the World Wars, so Rome had to come to Brown to make a replica of the replica … While the FYBU blog plays fast and loose with the facts (the original statue is safely preserved in Rome’s Museo Capitolino), the attitude is worth noting: it’s a “classic” second-hand Baudrillard, with the writer reading the statue as a signifier of a culture in which the authentic and the ersatz are diabolically enmeshed. Today this way of “reading” cultural artifacts has become almost second nature. But as a semiotics student in the late ’70s, it was a revelation to learn that just about everything—kinship structures, prison architecture, Hollywood melodramas, advertisements, capitalism—was a text that could be interpreted. For many of us semiotics seemed like a conceptual version of a decoder ring, enabling its users to unveil the ideological assumptions, hidden power structures and subject positions, embedded in our cultural conventions and narratives.

We learned that anything could be “read” including the self doing a particular piece of reading. With The Commons Ramirez Jonas takes this impulse a step further in enacting a radical re-reading of the possibilities of public sculpture. Consisting of a rider-less horse and plinth, both made of cork, his non-monument presents itself as a type of collective notice board. It offers a place where visitors can post texts, and also read them. In doing so, it invites us to help realize the work, while also provoking us to think about the role of singular voices within a collective body, and how our monolithic institutions make space for (or fail to accommodate) the concerns of a heterogeneous public.

While it addresses distinct concerns of its own, Rob Reynolds’s installation of paintings and sculpture likewise addresses us as fellow readers. Reinterpreting images of historical maritime disasters, his paintings invite us to look and also to read, as they feature short caption-like texts that are often equally enigmatic and descriptive. An upholstered bench-like sculpture, meanwhile, includes a shelf featuring some of the artist’s “source” materials—books dealing with catastrophes at sea, myths of modernism, empire and capitalism. Visitors are invited to peruse these texts while sitting upon this hybrid sculpture/study center, and to reflect, perhaps, on how Reynolds’s paintings re-stage archival accounts of naval disaster not to deter our enjoyment of sublime images but to activate it— to prompt us, through a consideration of multiple perspectives, to re-examine our own reading process.

Completed only through the participation of their audience, these works by Ramirez Jonas and Reynolds imply that art is a collaborative undertaking between artist and audience. That notion, in turn, largely rests on an appreciation of reading and interpretation as actively creative endeavors. From this vantage point, the work of the author-as-reader and the reader-as-a-kind-of-author are intimately connected. In art history this perspective is often associated with Marcel Duchamp, who famously declared that roughly half of an artwork’s meaning is created by the viewer; students of semiotics, on the other hand, might link it to early writings by Barthes, as well as Umberto Eco’s seminal 1962 volume The Open Work. Artworks by Dawn Clements and Kerry Tribe, both of which translate and reconfigure pre-existing cinematic texts, further develop this link between making and reading. Taking a mid-century Hollywood “woman’s picture” as its point of departure, Clements’s Twenty-foot long ballpoint pen drawing Mrs. Jessica Drummond’s ‘My Reputation’, 1946’ functions a scene showing a supine female figure in a domestic interior by joining together drawings that transcribe different shots of the room. Clements’s stitched-together patchwork counters the “naturalism” of its classic Hollywood text by revealing, on closer inspection, the seams of its own construction. Reflecting different camera angles, lighting conditions and changes in focus, the drawing presents a room uncannily composed from multiple perspectives. On one level the spatial tenor in Clements re-reading of this cinematic interior hints at the claustrophobic social position of women at the time. On another, it meticulously wreaks havoc with the material and visual discontinuities that classic cinematic coding typically seeks to conceal. (This is, not incidentally, the abiding concern of “suture” theory, a key branch of cinema studies [and one well covered in Brown’s film
Tribi’s research included compiling all the dialogue spoken in every one of them. This rhetorical overlaying of crime scene and film location is given a further twist by Trible’s decision to fashion her script exclusively from lines of dialogue taken from movie scenes that were also filmed at the mansion (starting in the 1920s, Greystone became a popular location for the film industry, and was used in over 60 movies ranging from Eraserhead to The Social Network; Trible’s research included compiling all the dialogue spoken in every one of them). This rhetorical confluence results in characters whose speech sounds oddly wooden if not inchoate at times, and imbues Trible’s video with something like the uncanny aspect of a ventriloquist’s dummy. It becomes a figure through which fragments of other films are speaking, and especially in these moments where her source material is recognizable, we experience the strange sensation of simultaneously tracking unrelated narratives through the same lines of dialogue. There Will Be Sheep’s palimpsest-like character seems to pointedly parallel the way that our remembering of actual events is increasingly contaminated by our media derived memories.4 Our very capacity for reading the past, as well as the present, is becoming ever more precarious.

In contrast to the focus on interior domestic spaces in works by Clements and Trible, Sarah Morris’s Rio takes the eponymous Brazilian metropolis as its ostensible text. This 90-minute video pores over the sprawling city, relentlessly and elegantly probing its various spaces, architectures, and commercial and leisure activities. With a pulsing electronic score as its only soundtrack, it engages us in a visual reading of Rio’s most famous (and infamous) locales, from its iconic modernist buildings to its fawels, from Ipanema beach to the soccer stadium, from Carnival to plastic surgery procedures. Yet unlike a travelogue, Morris’s coolly detached camera and non-linear editing estrange us from our ready-made associations. As Morris uncouples her pictures of the city from their familiar storylines and associations, she subtly highlights, and brings into question, the limits of our habitual “visual literacy” — our way of translating signs and images into known narratives. By contrast, in Rio the city’s multifarious facets never cohere into a unified picture: instead we are left with an urban portrait that seems irresolvable and in perpetual flux.

Taryn Simon likewise asks us to pay attention not only to her unusual subjects in An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar — her photo-and-text survey of what might be broadly termed “restricted access environments” — but also to how they are represented. Typically her photographs are seductively lit, staged, and even self-dressed, lending them an aesthetic charge that is often at odds with their densely factual extended captions. This paradoxical combination — which seems to invoke cultures of secrecy and spectacle alike — upends our reflex responses. The surprising beauty of Simon’s photograph of a flowing nuclear waste storage facility may seem unnerving, for instance. Some of these works is like the image of a woman undergoing a hymenoplasty procedure so that her future husband will believe she is a virgin — overtly remind us that appearances are deceiving. But objective “truth” is hardly provided by the written word: for all their seeming editorial neutrality, Simon’s texts often bring into play troublingly contradictory perspectives. An American Index has been hailed for its democratic aspirations in revealing our country’s hidden places, but it only appears to render the hidden and unknown in a legible form. It seems much more deeply engaged with arousing our skepticism and disorienting our habitual modes of reading.

While not exactly “research-driven,” Simon’s undertaking exixts a deep engagement with research that also distinguishes the work of most of the other Brown alums in this exhibition. Perhaps this is a necessary part of making art that explores and reweaves existing cultural texts. At the same time it is striking how, in one way or another, almost all of the works in this exhibition examine issues related to space, whether it involves the representation of domestic interiors, citiescapes and seascapes, or the place of public monuments. Space, of course, is the arena in which our social lives are enacted. How we perceive and think about different types of spaces inevitably reflects our assumptions about the lines between the collective and the private, individual and society — a subject of urgent interest at a moment of spiraling economic inequality.

In the works by these artists we find new approaches for navigating this terrain, and new ways of exploring how our cultural topographies shape and reflect human relationships.

None of this, of course, adds up to anything like an identifiable Brownian aesthetic. The idea that critical thinking is integral to art-making, rather than a parallel activity, goes back at least as far as conceptual and feminist art. But the lively and challenging culture of “reading” at Brown certainly seems to be sympathetically echoed in these artworks, even as they develop it in new directions. In different ways, all of the artists in the exhibition remind us that to read actively is to maintain a vigilant uncertainty: that it entails probing ambiguities rather than glossing over them, and opening up multiple perspectives rather than complacently accepting the usual point of view. Their works also insist that to read well means to dig not only beneath the surface of the subject at hand, but also to probe the particular conventions and clichés through which it appeals to us, and then to rigorously consider and investigate the terms of our own inquiry as well. Their approaches, at once rigorous and open ended, playful rather than pedagogic, may deny us the comfort of hard-and-fast conclusions, but may afford us the lively pleasures of altering the ways in which we read works of art as well as the world around us.

**RALPH BUCOFF**
Director, Hayward Gallery, London

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1. This quote from Paul Ramirez Jonas’ text appears in a video statement on his website — see http://www.paulramirezjonas.com/ selected/refImages/CV/statement.pdf.
3. When The Commons was previously shown in New York and Brazil, the plinth became plastered with paper ephemera—flyers, business cards and flyers, stickers, postcards, ephemera and notes.
4. Given our current consumption media patterns, roughly half of the visual memories of the average American will be materialized images of some kind or another.
5. It is worth noting that the last two decades, the increasing cultural and political impetus toward the preservation of different sites of cultural space has brought attention of a substantial number of contemporary artists, while also marking the development of a “space industry” in the critical theory departments of universities.
Paul Ramirez Jonas explores social relations as an artistic medium, creating art that enables interaction amongst audience members and produces temporary publics. While broadly resonating with recent discussions of relational aesthetics, Ramirez Jonas’s work is distinguished by his interest in and empathy for the contribution of the viewer to the artwork. His artworks are platforms that allow for and often require the participation of the public — producing opportunities for meaningful dialogue and exchange.

With his artworks, Ramirez Jonas persistently addresses questions such as: “What constitutes social relations?” “How can art enable and produce publics?” The Commons (2011) plays with the social relations of the monument. Standing proudly in the lobby of List Art Center, the equestrian statue is without a rider, perhaps incomplete. However, the material of the work — cork and push-pins — suggests that the object is not simply a statue but is also a platform for participation. Viewers are able to contribute messages and notes, pinning them to the base of the statue. Countering the immutability of traditional monuments, it is the viewers (and not the absent rider) who complete the work.

The Commons is modeled on the prototypical equestrian monument of Marcus Aurelius (180 AD) now standing in the Capitoline Museum. In a delightful yet unintended coincidence, is that a full-scale bronze replica of the Marcus Aurelius equestrian statue also stands at the top of Lincoln Field on Brown’s campus.

Witness My Hand (2013) continues the exploration of platforms of participation. A ubiquitous office photocopier becomes a plinth for a hydrocal reproduction of a book sculpted by the artist. Just as a pedestal might transform an everyday object into an objet troué, Ramirez Jonas’s photocopier pedestal transforms the artist’s static sculpture into a participatory artwork. The title references the role of the notary public as one who testifies to the authenticity of a signature. Here it is the audience that is invited to participate and produce an authentic image, attested by their own action. The viewer is allowed to press the green button, produce a photocopy of the sculpture, and take the photocopied image away with them. The work explores the distribution of artwork and involves the audience directly in the publication and circulation of the work, bypassing the traditional constraints of the art market.

Accompanying the two sculptures are selections from Ramirez Jonas’s most recent body of work: the Assembly drawings (2013). The series consists of studies of the physical and social relations within places of assembly. Continuing with themes from his Admit One drawings (2010 – 2013), these works use ink, color pencil, graphite, and perforated paper to create a collage of tickets arranged to represent the floor plans of spaces of debate, arbitration, decision, and spectacle. The tickets represent both the physical seats of the actual locations as well as the person who would occupy the seat. Works from the series such as Assembly: Globe Theatre, U.S. Senate Chamber, Suburban Home (2013), overlay the assembly floor plans and seating plans of different spaces, inviting the viewer to compare their forms and perhaps meditate on their similarities and contrasts. The drawings respond to Paul Klee’s aphorism that “art does not represent the visible; rather, it makes visible.” They do not merely represent physical space; rather, they make visible the interdependencies of the assembled publics made possible via these spaces.
Paul Ramirez Jonas  
Witnes My Hand, 2013

Paul Ramirez Jonas  
Assembly: Globe Theater, U.S. Senate Chamber, Suburban Home, 2013

Alumni Exhibitions Part 1
Dawn Clements is known for her meticulous documentation of architectural and interior surroundings, both her own and those imagined and depicted in cinematic melodramas. The four works included in this exhibition demonstrate the range of her practice—from smaller still life drawings to monumentally-sized yet intimately-detailed portraits of place.

Fascinated by the hyper-realism of cinematic melodrama, Clements often maps the places in which these films unfold, focusing attention on the ways in which context shapes content. For *Mrs. Jessica Drummond (My Reputation, 1946)*, which was included in the 2010 Whitney Biennial, Clements worked directly from the 1946 film *My Reputation*. Using only black ballpoint pens she stitched together a panoramic view of the protagonist’s bedroom. *My Reputation* is about a recently widowed woman, Jessica Drummond (played by Barbara Stanwyck), who feels trapped by her life until she meets a younger man and embarks on an illicit affair. The frenetic lines and menacingly dark tones of the drawing reflect the psychologically claustrophobic situation Drummond finds herself in.

When read from left to right the sprawling twenty-foot long drawing evokes the spanning gaze of the camera’s eye and oscillates with its zooming lens, creating an image that is both enwrapping and disorienting. No single perspectival logic structures the depicted space as Clements traces the bedroom in snippets revealed throughout the film. Clements has noted that “in Hollywood cinema a sensation of seamlessness is created from fragments. My drawings are constructed in a related way.” Upon first glance *Mrs. Jessica Drummond* appears to present a linear space. However, close reading reveals incongruities, such as a chair missing a leg or a bending counter-top, from where Clements has sutured together different scenes. As the drawing is experienced over time, each spatial distortion is compounded upon the last, and *Mrs. Jessica Drummond (My Reputation, 1946)* begins to feel labyrinthian: the hybrid...
Clements’s Susan Rethorst’s Table (2013) also depicts an impossibly complex environment. The drawing is a portrait of choreographer Susan Rethorst’s kitchen table, produced to accompany a retrospective exhibition of the dancer’s career. While Clements was working, the table was transferred from Rethorst’s kitchen, to her rehearsal studio, to the stage where it was used as a prop for dancers. Clements diligently records each of these moves; theater seats, for example, peep out from under the left side of the table, while a stove stands behind it. The large central table binds these disparate spaces together into one illogical whole.

The more recent works in this exhibition, Susan Rethorst’s Table, Grass, and Table (Civitella Ranieri), all from 2013, mark a return to color for Clements. Her embrace of accidental and incidental marks — she almost never erases — is also especially evident in these drawings. Grass, made while in residency at the Civitella Ranieri in Italy, is laden with transcribed song lyrics Clements overheard on the studio radio. Words from Italian love songs hover around the edges of the deep green mass, like wisps of foliage straying from the central floral arrangement. These miscellaneous impressions, indications of Clements’s wandering mind, provide a record of the artist’s process.

Clements consistently challenges the conventions of drawing. Folded, pressed, and creased, her drawings hang loosely, covering walls like textured fabric. This adds a sculptural dimension to these architecturally-scaled images. Like Jorge Luis Borges’s absurd actual-size map, Clements’s immense drawings constantly threaten to engulf their surroundings.
Kerry Tribe’s short film There Will Be (2012) begins in medias res; a maid carries a pistol wrapped in a yellow hand towel through a darkened hallway and into the kitchen where she suspiciously stows the weapon in a large oven. One small fleck of red at the towel’s edge visually reinforces what the ominous soundtrack and sound of clipped footsteps suggest: something terrible has happened. Using this classic narrative device, Tribe launches her viewers into familiar territory, as the story of the Greystone Mansion murders begins to unfold. Tribe draws on such tools of cinematic storytelling to blur the line between cinematic and historical representation in a critical investigation of the spaces in which popular memory takes shape.

In 1929 the Greystone Mansion was the site of an oft-forgotten real-life drama. Ned Doheny Jr., owner of the mansion, and his secretary and confidant Hugh Plunkett were found dead in what was suspiciously ruled a murder-suicide. Filmed literally at the scene of the crime, There Will Be ostensibly examines the circumstances of this horrific incident. Re-staging crime scene photographs, Tribe offers five competing, plausible accounts of the events of February 16th 1929. In doing so, she challenges the objective certitude of photographic documentation and the historicity of the original police report, as she explores the subjectivity of each individual witness’s memory of the gruesome deaths. However There Will Be is about more than just the veracity of official histories. Since graduating from Brown University as an Art Semiotics concentrator, Tribe has been making short films, photographs, and installations that explore the phenomenological complexities and personal subjectivities of how memory functions. There Will Be...
expands the scope of this investigation by looking at the role cinema plays in mediating collective memories. The architecture and interior of Greystone Mansion feel uncannily familiar to the movie watching public. The building has been a favored Hollywood set location for decades; repeated images of decorative elements draw forth false memories attached to the landmark from years of shooting there. Its neo-gothic walls have provided the dramatic background for countless fictional murders, and tales of wealth and greed — themes that Tribe notes ironically reference the building's actual past.1 The recurring sight of the mansion's iconic black and white tile floor may remind viewers of The Big Lebowski (1998); while an empty shot of the mansion's famous bowling alley evokes the climactic murder scene of There Will Be Blood (2007).2 As a result of its fabricated filmic past, Greystone has become a simulacrum of itself; its own brutal history displaced by memories associated with a fictional legacy of violence and absurdity.

The sense of vague acquaintance with the building is enhanced by the script, which is collaged entirely of dialogue pulled from other movies made at Greystone — Bibliography (Greystone), 2012, screened alongside There Will Be Blood is a montage of these original sources. The result feels disjointed and at times deliberately generic, suggesting that There Will Be Blood is as much about the notion of film in the abstract as it is about the specific story it tells.

1 Kerry Tribe in conversation with the author, Monday December 2, 2013.
2 Interestingly, There Will Be Blood — from which the title of Tribe's film is derived — is the only Greystone movie to reference the building's actual history. Daniel Day Lewis's character is loosely based on Edward Doheny, while the Doheny family actually owned Greystone.

Kerry Tribe, installation view of There Will Be Blood, 2012 at The Power Plant, Toronto. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid
foot from an unshielded capsule would receive a lethal dose of radiation in less than 10 seconds. Hanford moves faster than light through a transparent medium. The temperatures of the capsules are as high as 330 degrees Fahrenheit. The pool of water serves as a shield against radiation; a human standing one foot from an unshielded capsule would receive a lethal dose of radiation in less than 15 seconds. Hanford is among the most contaminated sites in the United States.

The breadth of Simon’s investigation is too large to detail here. A few notable images: a vile of live HIV; members of the Neturei Karta, an anti-Zionist Jewish sect; a decomposing body at a forensic anthropology research facility. America’s relationship to nature is referenced in an image of the Hoh Rain Forest, a protected undisturbed park in Washington State. But far more often, encounters with the natural world are viewed through a lens of control: caged birds in a quarantine facility, a white tiger crippled by inbreeding, a great white shark captive in an aquarium. And the interior of Microsoft’s headquarters with a forest projected onto an interior wall for “atmosphere.”

Not since the publication of Robert Frank’s The Americans, in 1958, has a photographer attempted such a broad portrait of the United States. A comparison of the two series demonstrates not only national changes, but also the evolution of documentary practice. The subjectivity of photography is now accepted and authoritative truth questioned. Separated from her texts, Simon’s images host numerous interpretive possibilities. Her texts tie them down, creating the impression of authenticity and authority. But the possibility of manipulation is omnipresent. Begun in 2003, in the aftermath of 9/11 and its attendant fear, uncertainty, and paranoia, An American Index is Simon’s idiosyncratic snapshot of American culture and a suitable document for the twenty-first century.
These VSNL sub-marine telecommunications cables extend 8,037.4 miles across the Atlantic Ocean. Capable of transmitting over 60 million simultaneous voice conversations, these underwater fiber-optic cables stretch from Saunton Sands in the United Kingdom to the coast of New Jersey. The cables run below ground and emerge directly into the VSNL International headquarters, where signals are amplified and split into distinctive wavelengths enabling transatlantic phone calls and internet transmissions.

This cryopreservation unit holds the bodies of Rhea and Elaine Ettinger, the mother and first wife of cryonics pioneer, Robert Ettinger. Robert, author of *The Prospect of Immortality* and *Man into Superman*, is still alive.

The Cryonics Institute offers cryostasis (freezing) services for individuals and pets upon death. Cryostasis is practiced with the hope that lives will ultimately be extended through future developments in science, technology, and medicine. When, and if those developments occur, Institute members hope to awake to an extended life in good health, free from diseases or the aging process. Cryostasis must begin immediately upon legal death. A person or pet is infused with ice-preventive substances and quickly cooled to a temperature where physical decay virtually stops. The Cryonics Institute charges $28,000 for cryostasis if it is planned well in advance of legal death and $35,000 on shorter notice.
Rob Reynolds is a Los Angeles-based artist who often explores historical images and genre painting. His recent series of maritime paintings featured in the 250th Anniversary alumni exhibitions are a mischievous indictment of postmodern painting and a proposition for renewed engagements with the history, subject, substrate, and technique of painting. At first, the installation prepared by Reynolds appears to be a modest salon-style arrangement of maritime scenes of ships, shipwrecks, and the sea. Based on historical records of shipping disasters, the images of ships and shipwrecks suggest a possible metaphorical critique of the roots of our global economy. Clear reading Newly, however, that something more pointed is occurring. Within the images, Reynolds has painted texts such as “Chapter Seven,” “The Bohemian disaster,” and “Frolic.” In each, the fonts, size and length are different. These texts are excerpts from published records of maritime catastrophes compiled by amateur historians and are taken from the colophons and captions of the images upon which Reynolds has based his compositions. Reynolds is careful to represent the texts’ original typesetting. At times, a modern sans-serif font accompanies what would otherwise appear to be a late 19th or early 20th century maritime painting, effecting an aesthetic dissonance that indexes the history of the publication and circulation of these images. These tensions between text and image offer both the beginnings of possible interpretations and an unclear or unstable meaning. They are consciously constructed to generate meanings — as an effort in poesis that indexes the viewer in resisting the expectation for interpretive certainty. Reynolds has placed history back into the frame of contemporary painting. Perhaps confronting Clement Greenberg’s disregard of the representational as kitsch,
Reynolds’s paintings become an exploration of what painting can address. Turning to historical techniques of representational painting and abstracting images and texts from archival source material, his paintings sit precariously between representation and historical abstraction. With his installations, Reynolds creates a liminal space in the interpretation of the painted image, critiquing semiotic closure. While his images may be clear, their meanings are open-ended.

The shipwrecks become more than catastrophes. They become a requiem, signaling the inevitable closure of postmodernism and a springtime for formal exploration of the substrate, materials and techniques of painting. At a moment when there are popular expectations of modern visual media to represent an accurate image of the world, Reynolds proposes a reconsideration of representation via the painterly gesture. His technique of transforming archival source material into a series of open-ended interpretive possibilities may be an effort in archival abstraction. The painting, for Reynolds, becomes more than an image made “now”; it is a place where all times become contemporary.

Accompanying the installation of paintings, a daybed stands as a bench and a bookcase — displaying the archive of research materials from which Reynolds has worked. The daybed evokes the modern psychoanalyst’s couch but Reynolds associates it more directly with Mark Rothko’s couch on which, anecdotally, the color field painter would spend hours contemplating his works. For Reynolds, the daybed is an opportunity to pause, reflect, and view the works before you. Literally resting on the foundations of the artist’s research, it is an invitation to begin a conversation, to look around and consider the painterly propositions set before you, and ponder the question, “where shall we go from here?”

Chapter Seven
Cities have occupied Sarah Morris since the late 1990s: more specifically, late capitalist cities, their architecture and infrastructure, businesses and people, power and style. Through an unusual parallel practice of painting and filmmaking Morris has pictured Manhattan, Washington, Miami, Los Angeles, Beijing, and most recently Chicago and Rio de Janeiro. She describes her work as an investigation of “urban, social, and bureaucratic typologies.”

Morris’s films are long form meditations on place — visual images building one upon another and set to a musical score. *Rio* (2012) begins with life on the streets. The bustling activity of a café is accentuated in shots bifurcated by mirrored surfaces that double the action. She moves on to iconic landmarks — the peak of Sugarloaf, the statue of Christ the Redeemer — and to the fashionable beaches of Ipanema and legendary slums of the “City of God.” As it always does for Morris, architecture, the visual and physical sign of a city’s ambitions, looms large. She presents the swirling curves of Oscar Niemeyer’s buildings and Roberto Burle Marx’s landscapes, and the magnificent stained glass of the Cathedral of St. Sebastian. The film wanders from football stadiums to racetracks and from hospitals to factories. What Morris calls “drifting as a device.” We enter into the Duloren factory, where women sew lingerie, while a billboard for the company outside presents a racy fantasy of female empowerment. Morris concentrates primarily on public spaces. When she goes inside, it is often to enter the sanctuaries of celebrity or power: the offices of the mayor Eduardo Paes; the home of Danuza Leão, model, socialite, journalist, and ex-wife of Oscar Niemeyer; or Niemeyer’s apartment, where Morris met the architect shortly before his death at 104. We witness a spectacular mountain view through the windows of an elegant apartment, as a woman in a maid’s uniform vacuums and her daughter eats lunch in the back. It is through vignettes such as these that Morris builds a picture of a city that encompasses great beauty and difference. Morris’s Rio paintings — large geometric abstractions — carry specific titles that serve as clues to her film, as...
they literally tell us what they refer to: João Goulart (the 24th president of Brazil), Andradas (a Brazilian defense contractor), Globo (a media conglomerate), Casa das Canoas (the home that Niemeyer built for himself in 1953). The paintings retain a flat emblematic surface, with minimal indications of depth. A composition of blue, green, white, and black triangles and squares is titled Cosan [Rio] referencing Brazil’s second largest petroleum company.

The palette draws on the company’s logo, a stylized “C” in green and blue on the white background. Burle Marx repeats the distinctive S-curves of the architect’s famous promenade at Copacabana beach. While another group of paintings— with circles set in a calendar-like format—are identified by months of the year and riff on lunar cycles. The paintings draw influence from the bright colors of beach chairs and juice bars, and the dancing shapes of Rio’s architecture and industrial design. Morris envisions a lively tropical city, the city of Carnival, with modern architecture and infrastructure, and disparate economies.
KERRY TRIBE was born in 1975 in Boston, MA. She currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Tribe graduated from Brown University in 1997 as an Art Seminaric concentrator. She went on to study in the Whitney Museum of American Art’s Independent Study Program and received an MFA from University of California, Los Angeles in 2002. Tribe uses film, photography, and installation to produce work that critically examines how meaning is processed and circulated. Her work has been included in numerous significant recent exhibitions such as the Hammer Museum’s 51st Biennial exhibition including Los Angeles-based artists, 4th of The Arab World (2011), and the Whitney Museum’s 75th Biennial (2012). She has held solo exhibitions at the Power Plant in Toronto and Modern Art in Defending other places, and she is the recipient of a Creative Capital Grant and a USA Artists Award. Her work is in major public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney, the Generali Foundation.

TARYN SIMON was born in 1973 in Bostom, MA. She currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. She concentrated in Art Semiotics at Brown University and graduated from Brown University in 1997. Simon’s work has been included in numerous important recent exhibitions such as the Hammer Museum’s 51st Biennial exhibition including Los Angeles-based artists, 4th of The Arab World (2011), and the Whitney Museum’s 75th Biennial (2012). She has held solo exhibitions at the Power Plant in Toronto and Modern Art in Defending other places, and she is the recipient of a Creative Capital Grant and a USA Artists Award. Her work is in major public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney, the Generali Foundation.

ROBYN REYNOLDS was born in 1966 in Newton, MA. She holds dual BFA from State University New York-Albany, which she received in 1989. Clements’ accumulated body of work, centering on visual and conceptual elements, highlights the artist’s extensive knowledge of film, photography, and Installation. Her work is included in numerous group exhibitions at major institutions, including Mass MoCA, North Adams, MA (2012), the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2005), Kunsthalle, Vienna (2000), and the Drawing Center, New York (2000). She is the recipient of a Curatorial fellowship (2013), a Guggenheim fellowship (2012), and an Arts and Culture fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation (2008). Her work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Deutsche Bank Collection, the Saatchi Collection, and the Tang Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY, among many others.

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Untitled (Bonanza), 2013
Oil, alkyd and acrylic polymer paint on canvas in aluminum frame
32 x 41 x 1 ¼”
Lent by the artist

Untitled (Empire Still Burning 3), 2013
Oil, alkyd and acrylic polymer paint on canvas in aluminum frame
23 ¼ x 28 ¼ x 1 ¾”
Lent by the artist

Untitled (Opium Cutter Frolic), 2012
Oil, alkyd and acrylic polymer paint on canvas in aluminum frame
31 x 41 x 1 ¾”
Lent by the artist

Untitled (Big Bang), 2011
Oil, alkyd and acrylic polymer paint on canvas
23 x 28 x 1 ¼”
Lent by the artist

Untitled (Forever And Ever), 2011
Oil, alkyd and acrylic polymer paint on canvas in aluminum frame
21 ¾ x 24 ¾ x 1 5/8”
Lent by the artist

SARAH MORRIS
Rio, 2012
Red Code/HD
88 min, 33 sec
Courtesy the artist and Petzel Gallery

Cosan (Rio), 2013
Household gloss paint on canvas
84 ¼ x 84 ¼”
Courtesy the artist and Petzel Gallery

Elebrades (Rio), 2013
Household gloss paint on canvas
84 ¼ x 30 5/8”
Courtesy the artist and Petzel Gallery

Curators
JO-ANN CONKLIN
WENDY EDWARDS
ALEXIS LOWRY MURRAY
IAN ALDEN RUSSELL

It has been our great pleasure to work with these talented artists on the creation of the Alumni Exhibitions. We thank each of them for sharing their works with the Brown community, and extend our thanks as well to Jen Hitching at Pierogi, Margaret Liu Clinton at Koenig & Clinton, Aida Sehovic at Paul Ramirez Jonas Studio, Andrea Teschke and Ko Sadaprio of Petzel Gallery, Greg Malone of Parallax, James McKee of Gagosian Gallery, Isha Welch at 1301PE, and Anna Wittenberg at Kerry Tribe Studio.

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