

“What’s Going On (feat. 4 Non Blondes)”

Carey Lin & Bonanza

January 17 - February 21, 2015

During a meeting with Bonanza, they slowly read out loud to me the instructions for the yoga “bow pose,” – which serves as a statement of sorts for their work in this exhibition (organized around the theme of flexing or flexibility).

In this context, yoga pose instruction, already borrowed as metaphor for artistic practice, sounded a bit like poetry and also took on a sexually suggestive flavor, as though it could just as easily be instructions for a sex position.

“on the journey to the standing dancers pose
is first a heart opener...”

“relax the gluts, don’t grip - open hips is key...”

“windshield wipe the legs from side to side...
heals splayed open”

This way that meaning is shifting and interpretations vary depending on context is a theme at the heart of Bonanza’s practice, which regularly explores contingency through formal relationships – i.e. collapsing boundaries between mediums, individual works and the spaces in which they’re installed. Themes, from dressing to naming conventions for horse races, are often playfully appropriated to signal ways identity is performed and open to a multiplicity of interpretations.

For this exhibition, Bonanza’s theme is flexing or flexibility, as in flexing your stuff, flexibility of the body, or the flexibility of collaborating with others, in a space that is itself flexible; a laundry room, garage and an art space. Bent metal sculptures suggest these various kinds of flexing and flexibility, including a piece which cuts across the garage door entrance to the interior project space, requiring our flexibility in maneuvering around it and constituting a rather bold display of “flexing.”

Both Bonanza and Carey Lin create colorful, playful, abstract works that move beyond expected boundaries - i.e. Lin's paintings extend beyond their frames through blown up reproductions of painting details that serve as wallpaper behind them. However, while the formal relationships in Bonanza's work point to external ideas such as those described above, Lin's work is primarily self-reflexive, exploring the process and limitations of painting itself. Her "palette paintings" portray the very palettes she uses to create the paintings - an impossible representational exercise, as her subject is constantly changing as she adds, subtracts and moves paint around. In the end, the paintings are highly abstract and it's unlikely her process will be perceived by the viewer, raising questions about intention and reception.

In its constantly shifting subject and openness to interpretation, Lin's work, like Bonanza's, might also be said to deal with a kind of contingency and multiplicity. This is the connection that interests me most - because the work's openness to ever shifting formal and expressive relationships enables endless new meanings and possibilities to emerge.

Buddhist spiritual teachers remind us that letting go of fixed ideas or limiting constructs opens us up to a universe that is infinitely more interesting and vastly fuller of potentialities than the little worlds we create in our heads. Of course, this letting go requires a certain degree of openness, playfulness, and... flexibility. One might say it requires first, "a heart opener."

(That, or a steady diet of white Russians and a strict drug regimen to keep your mind limber).*

--Suzanne L'Heureux

*from the Big Lebowski