

Inman Gallery presents

Shaun O'Dell
Feeling Easy Feelings

May 20 – July 2, 2011

Opening reception: Friday May 20
6:00 – 9:00pm

Gallery hours Tues-Sat 11am – 6pm
and by appointment

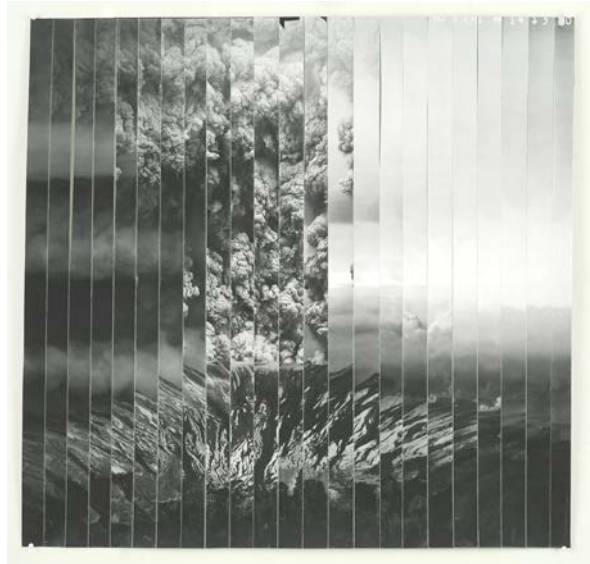


image: Shaun O'Dell, 2nd Feelings. #26, 2011 collaged silver gelatin print, 20 x 20 inches

The first major exhibition for Shaun O'Dell in Texas will be presented in the newly refurbished and expanded Inman Gallery at 3901 Main Street. Installed across four rooms, the exhibition includes drawings, sculpture and two wall installations. Opening with an artist's reception on **Friday May 20, 2011**, the exhibition will be on view through July 2nd.

Feeling Easy Feelings comprises a major body of new work by San Francisco-based artist Shaun O'Dell. O'Dell's artistic practice has been informed by his decade of immersion in the study and performance of jazz saxophone. Transferring the system of musical improvisation from performance to the act of making drawings, he has created a rich and provocative body of work that has explored the history and mythology of America's relationship to the natural world. In this most recent body of drawings, O'Dell has consciously altered his working practice; whereas in earlier work he constructed a symbolic language with which he built specific narratives designed to "re-tell" the American story, in *Feeling Easy Feelings*, we see a more pared down, distilled aesthetic. Informed by a folk vernacular, there is a particular focus on hypnotic, repetitive linework and a cut-collage structure.

His new technique is both constructive and destructive - taking a "finished" drawing and cutting and re-organizing pieces allows O'Dell to experience a visceral shift in point of view. For the artist the process is an attempt to develop a system of creative production that models the natural dialectical processes at work in nature.

Shaun O'Dell was born in Beeville, Texas and grew up in California. He received an MFA from Stanford University in 2004. His work has been exhibited widely in the US since that time. He has won numerous awards and honors including The Tournesol Award (2009, Headlands Center for the Arts), Diebenkorn Teaching Fellowship (2006, SF Art Institute), Artadia Award (2005, SF). His work is included in a number of permanent collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, NY, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Berkeley Art Museum.

Gallery talk with Shaun O'Dell SATURDAY May 21st 12 noon.
Light lunch follows.

ARTIST STATEMENT

For dialectical philosophy nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything: nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and passing away, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher.

Friedrich Engels, Anti-Duhring

For years my drawings - and paintings as well - have been thoughts about how we engage and interact with nature. Specifically, I have been interested in: how our engagement with nature has influenced the development of the American mind, how this construction has contributed to a myth and ideology that has greatly influenced the shape of American history, as well as contemporary events in the US and consequently the world, and finally, how this particular kind of American myth/ideology is in many ways generated and supportive of power and the ruling class.

These drawings traced an historical narrative. I was, in a sense, acting like a historiographer identifying inaccuracies and deception in the historical consensus and feeling compelled to retell the narrative in a more truthful manner - one that revealed the dissensus. In many ways the work was a re-mapping of research about American political and cultural history.

I created a lexigraphical system of symbolic elements that were interchangeable throughout different drawings to represent these new maps. I was partially inspired to create this non-static visual language from years I spent playing free jazz and studying with veterans of Cecil Taylor's bands from the 80s. I found I could transfer the system of musical improvisation I had learned to my developing visual language and could then improvise on it in a similar manner.

In contrast, American political and cultural ideology appeared more and more static and romanticized. To affirm this cultural stasis I began making drawings of layered, compacted and fixed American mythic narratives set within compositional armatures that referenced timelines and geological diagrams. I transferred these ideas about layered time and geology to formal elements in the drawings. I enjoy making marks that literally trace and record time passing and in some cases figuratively represent time in the narrative or conceptual context of the whole composition. In contradiction to what I've stated about making drawings that seem fixed I also tried to create compositions that seemed to be moving, falling apart, and in flux. Simultaneously slow and glacial like geology and abrupt and violent like an earthquake - or revolution.

In recent times power has concluded that we have reached an end point in socio-cultural evolution and that capitalism has won the battle over all other possible economic systems - namely socialism. This claim establishes the ideology of profit before people as fixed and unchanging. In response my current work has adopted the idea of dialectics for its elegant ability to describe the ever-changing quality of nature. I have embraced the concept of quantitative becoming qualitative change as a system for constructing abstractions based on dialectical improvisation. The technique is both constructive and destructive. I start and maybe finish a piece and then transform it through a process of cutting and re-organizing. I continue to do this until an image appears that feels right. This process models the idea of quantitative to qualitative change embedded within dialectics. Slowly, through quantitative acts of drawing, painting, cutting, re-arranging, gluing and often repeating these steps a number of times, a qualitative shift happens and the piece bursts forth. Each piece and body of work represents a quantitative progression toward a qualitative emergence of a thing unforeseen in its final form. This is an attempt to develop a system of creative production that models the natural dialectical processes at work in nature.

Shaun O'Dell May 2011



image: Shaun O'Dell, 2nd Feelings. #2, 2011 gouache, ink and silver leaf on collaged paper, 40 x 30 inches