

CHARLES ROSS/STAR AXIS
GIUSEPPE GABELLONE

MILLIE CHEN
DAVID ALTMERD

ART PAPERS



By the sun, Shiroishi's isolation will...
According to Matthew Higgs, "If anything has a chance of making sense outside its geographical site of conception, it first has to make absolute sense locally." Past SECA winners like Barry McGee (1996) and Chris Johanson (2002) illustrate the principle. They each redefined the Bay Area scene in their own image, and then rose to international significance in quick succession. Of this year's winners, Shaun O'Dell could be poised to do the same. It's not that his work dominates the show, it's just that it makes absolute sense here in San Francisco. The Stanford MFA stands at the head of a legion of Bay Area artists doing folksy, freeform drawing that blends naivety and a controlled channeling of impulses with sophisticated ideas and a cosmopolitan eye—horror vacui one moment, design-consciousness the next.

O'Dell's inks on paper derive sprawling compositions from early American history. Our colonial mythology provides the work with a solid core, which the drawings orbit but never enter. Refusing to explore meaning, he burks didactic approaches to the subject. Just as importantly, the work's self-imposed limit disables our reliance on interpretive logic, and forces all our energy into the sensual. Early on, we give up searching for messages to concentrate on visual impressions, in the manner of formal abstraction. Rhythmic patterning describes natural textures of wood and water or inflects

By multiple iterations of pigments on their...
Simon Evans and Josephine Taylor also seek that elusive, elusive but common with the reason. The personal nature of their work makes it, in fact, more more urgent. Evans' works show O'Dell's human scale and an affinity for design-making. His drawings are mostly text, maps, and charts, though anything that can bear a label is apt to show up. It's accordingly everything, from the shoulders of a climbing boy to the base of a jungle palm, seen in the background, leaves that on the drawing field. They look spontaneously across the entire sheet at another girl who, though well, sense the established ground. She, through the white wall, looking out at us with a calm, knowing smile.

If the characters perfectly resemble their real-world counterparts, the artist's own vulnerability of dreams and early memories, it can depart from reality at any moment. Taylor leaves her memory out of its recesses and goes to the page, as careful as a butterfly collector to preserve its delicate structure. The effect is so complete that, standing in the gallery, we feel a measure of what's going on. The effect is so complete that, standing in the gallery, we feel a measure of what's going on. The effect is so complete that, standing in the gallery, we feel a measure of what's going on.

SAN FRANCISCO

After considering more than two hundred emerging Bay Area artists, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and its auxiliary Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art (SECA) have awarded four with their annual prize: Rosanna Castrillo Diaz, Simon Evans, Shaun O'Dell and Josephine Taylor. The resulting exhibition [SFMOMA; January 22–May 15, 2005] brings their works, which are already well known to the local arts community, to the museum's considerably wider audience.

SAN FRANCISCO

In Julie Barkatan's recent show (June 10–October 10, 2004), she wonderfully leaves the/whoreme group of three performers, rendered in the white space, and then uses sensitive, and named styles to fill in the details. As the show unfolds, audience members combine and

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indigenous craftwork. Space is mapped by curling arrows and branching trees, and punctuated by realistic illustrations of pilgrims or deer. Intuitive and untranslatable, the works communicate their resonant impression profoundly, beyond language.

Simon Evans and Josephine Taylor also seek that elusive, acutely felt communion with the viewer. The personal nature of their work makes it, in fact, even more urgent. Evan's works share O'Dell's human scale and an affinity for diagramming. His drawings, on surfaces of layered Scotch tape, are mostly lists, maps, and charts—though anything that can bear a label is apt to show up. Texts accompany everything from holes burnt by a cigarette to the anatomy of a tongue to sections of a pie chart. If language is a bridge from one individual to another, Evans is re-engineering it according to his own deeply embedded rules. Often (but not always) palpably humorous, his game is played close to the edge of nonsense. Cumulatively, the work nonetheless translates his internal process with literary precision.

Josephine Taylor's immense gouache drawings turn to the human form. Running nearly floor to ceiling, four works fill her gallery. Larger-than-life figures rendered in photographic clarity cut through mostly white expanses of untouched paper. Their bodies are psychologically distorted, and Taylor's palette is so reserved it is ghostly, inflecting the narrative of multiple figures with the quality of a dream. Drawn from Taylor's experiences, the stories are also somewhat unreal. In *Chicken*, 2004, two identical girls (or maybe twins) lean forward from their seat on the shoulders of a stumbling boy. The frame of a jungle gym, seen in the background, secures them on the drawing field. They look apprehensively across the empty sheet at another girl who, though well below the established ground, falls through the white void, looking out at us with a calm, knowing expression.

If the characters perfectly resemble their real world counterparts, the action has the unpredictability of dreams and early memories; it can depart from reality at any moment. Taylor teases her memory out of its recesses and pins it to the page, as careful as a butterfly collector to preserve its delicate structure. The effect is so complete that, standing in the gallery, we feel a measure of voyeurs's guilt. We are tapping into the vulnerable ellipse between a person and her life's experience.

If Taylor's practice is psychological, Rosanna Castrillo Diaz's is meditative. *Untitled*, 2004, a giant, nearly invisible network of Scotch tape loops, is innovative in technique, but the aim of her work is not to push the boundaries of drawing. Instead she probes the boundary of the object, searching for an absolute zero of existence, on the edge of nothingness. Suspended at a slight distance from the wall and lit minimally, the piece moves with the air. Only its shadow is a constant; the work itself shifts in and out of visibility. Viewing is an active experience.

Around the corner, small framed graphite drawings hyperrealistically depict stacks of blank papers, or the spines of leaning notebooks. If the approach is radically different from *Untitled*, the intent is much the same. They represent objects that are somehow emptier than nothing, rendered with the highest concentration.

—Abraham Orden