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M.A. Alford, *Useful Spanish Phrases*, 2012, Site-specific installation, Two chairs, audio cassette, tape player.





M.A. Alford, *Cowboys and Indians* and *Macbanae*, 2012, Both mixed media on canvas (coffee, acrylic, oil, pastel, graphite, paper, wheatpaste, and silkscreen and photo) 48x 60" each.



M.A. Alford, *Prada Body Bag*, 2012, variable dimensions, 2012.

Youth will be Served, Considering a Newer Generation

6601 Swope Parkway  
816-739-1375  
Kansas City  
*Under 21*  
July 26, 2012-August 10, 2012

by appointment

By BLAIR SCHULMAN

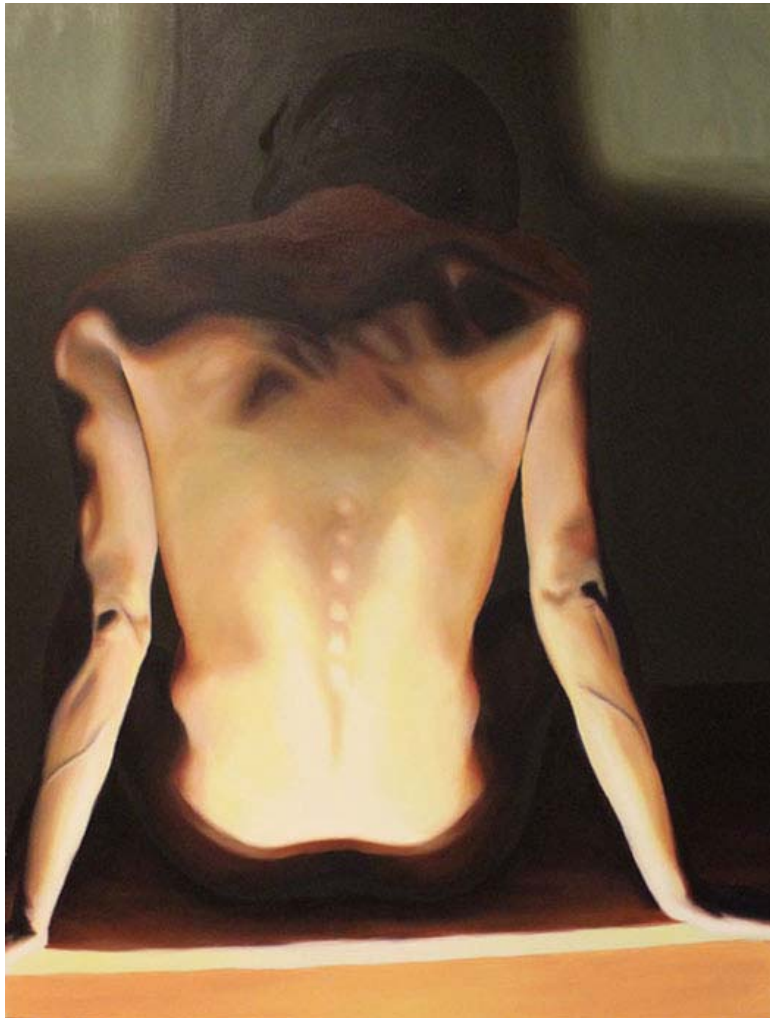
Young, emerging artists might think no one is paying attention to them. It isn't a matter of being ignored; there are many voices battling for attention louder and longer than someone just getting started. To be heard, one has to create something worthy of conversation, and this short-term exhibition at the Swope Interactive Center is worthy of conversation. If not for the originality of concept and uniqueness of some work — it isn't — but for the gleaming idealism that is present with every turn of this evocative show.

Curated by Hannah Cahow, the artists here are all under age 21 and include, M.A. Alford, Lydia Bryan, Jennifer Hayden, Reed Kyle, Lisa Menne, Sophia Reed, and Cayman Robson. The show covers, among several mediums, classically-rendered paintings with plenty of conceptual ideas thrown into the mix. The installations throughout the space are somewhat static in that it's difficult to get a bead on where it is all heading. But this is the refreshing part; to see a level of folly that stands in opposition to serious, overly-scripted chatter that the business of showing art sometimes becomes. This is a hands-on, get up close-type of affair; a "total sensory experience." Sales and academic head-nodding are not the point here; just an unrestricted freedom to view manners, mindsets and mediums that explore controversy and insight.

The Swope Interactive Center is a century-old mansion that sits in the center of Swope Park, near the Kansas City Zoo and Starlight Theatre. M.A. Alford, a Kansas Cityan studying at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, is the Director of this exhibition. His mother works for the Blue River Watershed Association located in the building, which, says Alford, "educates and informs on water quality testing and keeping the Blue River clean." They only use part of the office space and Alford re-imagines it as an exhibition venue. The multi-story building is a warren of oddly shaped rooms and ante-spaces that allow the artists to take advantage of an environment that is far away from the sacrosanct white cube space that will be a strong influence on their future curatorial goals. As part of the Center, there are the standard maze of cubicle alcoves. And balanced precariously atop these partitions in the main space are old vacuum cleaners; dusty, cumbersome objects that make one grateful for Roomba and maid service.

This inclusion of kitsch sets the tone for the show as it prepares one for any surprises one might stumble upon. Open (and some shut) doors are an invitation to look inside. It takes a moment to figure out whether some objects pitched about are part of the show or not. But a darkened room under the stairs with origami-style paper hangings with only a penlight to see is a clue. A broom closet with two folding chairs and a cassette deck giving language lessons uncovers the realization that everything is intentional and everything is material. This is not only about the work itself; it's also about the experience and the discovery.

One of the strongest chords this exhibition strikes is the cozy relationship between consumer and product. Even people become the ultimate brand. Ring the bell and watch another Kardashian enter the public consciousness. Alford has taken this concept to another level with his full-scale body bags emblazoned with must-have designer logos; Chanel, Marc Jacobs and Prada, to name a few. The bags are stuffed with mannequins, which is a strong, strong implication that the name becomes more important than the wearer up until death. Somewhere in the room Jane Fonda is spouting her 1980s aerobics mantra from a record player (remember those?). The paterfamilias between the element of nostalgia and familiarity of public brand consciousness are organically intertwined. Pop art is the attitude that proves this point same as non-traditional ideas and practices become the engine for Conceptual art. To see a new generation of artists revisiting these ideologies signals a support of the past while training their eyes towards the future.



Lisa Menne, *Back*, 2011, Oil on canvas. 36x 48".





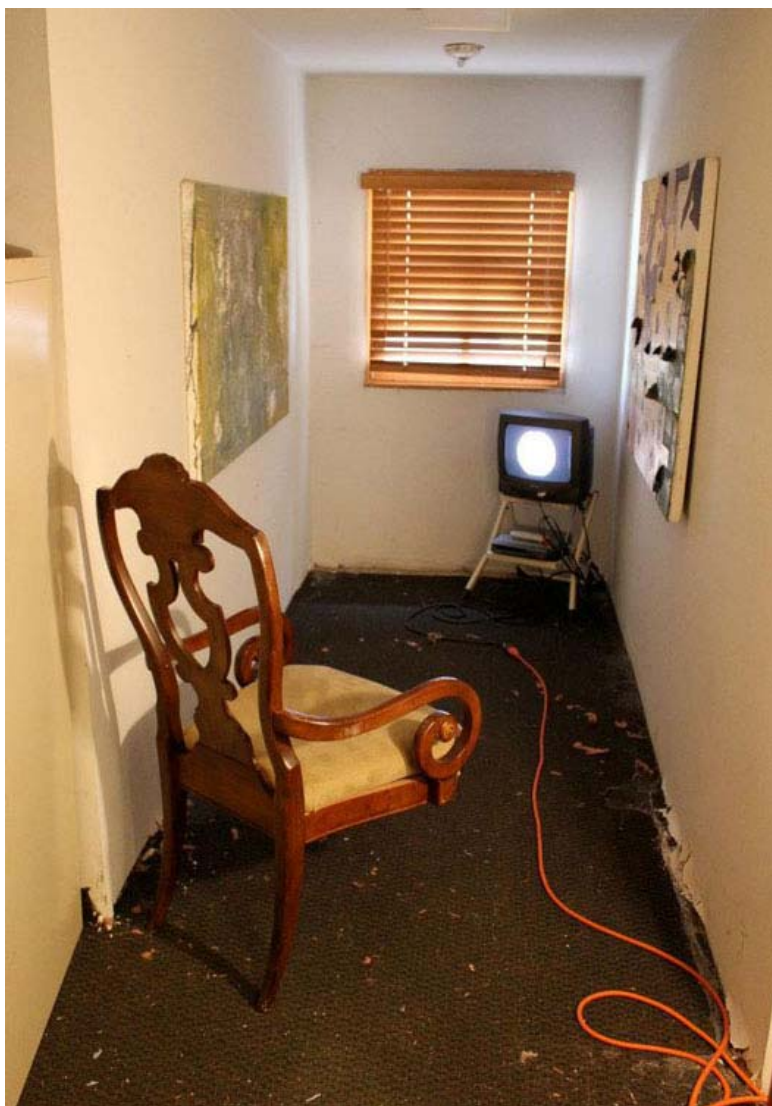
Jennifer Hayden, *Untitled*, 2012, Plaster cast and microfilament, Dimensions variable.



*Under 21*, Installation view.



*Under 21*, Installation view.



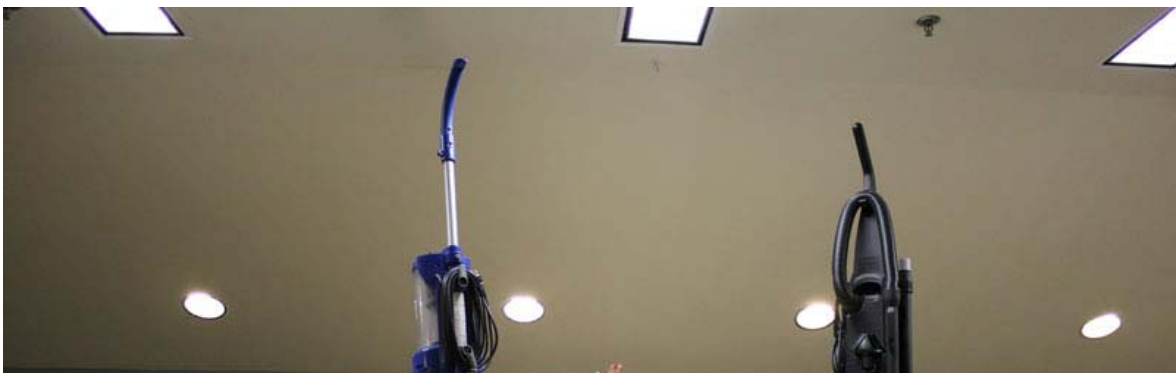
Cayman Robson, *Lydia*, 2010, Oil on canvas. 20 x 24".



Under 21, Installation view.

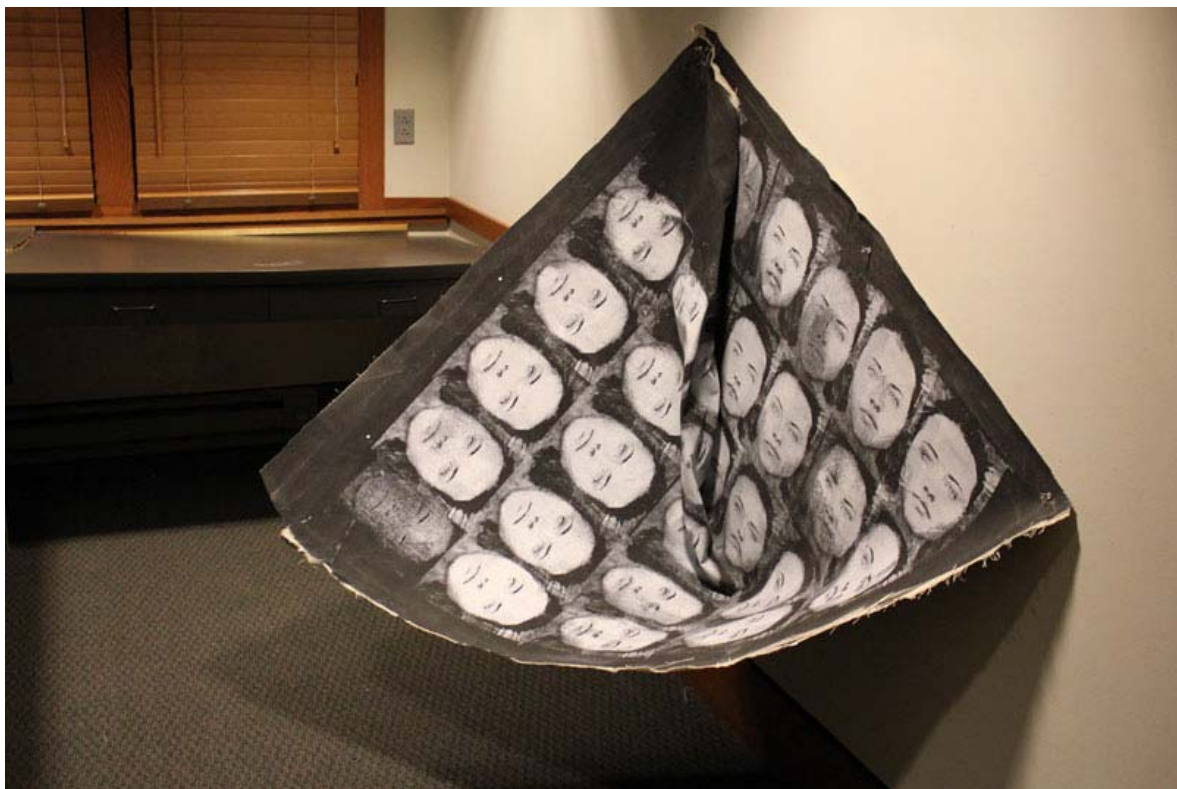


M.A. Alford, *Chanel and Marc Jacobs body bags*, 2012, variable dimensions.





Cayman Robson, *Vacuums*, 2012, two vacuums, dimensions variable.



M.A. Alford, *Ennui*. Acrylic silkscreen and oil on canvas, uniquely shaped.