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Molly and Athan: Separation, 2012, Oil on canvas.



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Study for Aging New House, 2011, Acrylic on paper.

Momentum and Process, Curatorial Studies at Subterranean Gallery



Backyard/Beach course vacation-planked location with strand-lit courts and towels and iced coolers, 2012, Acrylic on panel.



Subterranean Gallery
4124 Warwick Blvd, Spt. B
Curatorial Studies
November 2-November 30, 2012

By BLAIR SCHULMAN

Sometimes, the most exciting shows occur by odd couplings in unusual environments that prick up your senses in ways that haven't been activated in some time. Ayla Rexroth's Subterranean Gallery might be one of those spaces and *Curatorial Studies* might be one of those shows.

Rexroth gave me a preview inside her basement apartment gallery near the Kansas City Art Institute before everything was completed. The work for the most part was hung; but finishing touches were still underway. It was nice to be around the space with notes stuck on walls, levels on the floor and the lighting undecided. What felt the most right was the momentum of these seven artists whom Rexroth had made studio visits to over the course of a few months. This was like another studio encounter and I love being amongst the disarray and frenetic energy of what might happen next, whether by chance or circumstance.

Perhaps a little unorthodox, I am not going to name the artists here. Once you see the work in this space the surprise will be that much better. It is very exciting to figure out how each artist decides what they want us to see. The bonus is getting a peek inside their studios at a singular moment in their practice.

On one wall are marked up images framed in thrift store finds. Having been run through an ink jet printer on glossy paper they unmask poorly constructed editorials that were actually published in a local magazine. The feet of a model are cut off, like colors bleed into one another on the page and the unobtrusive retrofitting made here renders the original crappy art direction more blatantly obvious.

This artist continues on a path towards what I see as his studies of hierarchy and status that stand in line with photographer Diane Arbus. This theory is elevated to another level; especially with this work as Arbus herself was once a successful editorial photographer before becoming better known for her

Cuttlefish Submarine, 2012, Gouache.



Subset, 2012, Tape on paper.

studies of people standing on the edge of society.

Set along another wall is an installation where copper tubing hangs between the individual pieces; a reminder that Sub Gallery is not only a residence, but

also the maintenance zone of the apartment building above it. The tubing is a perfectly organic three-dimensional addition to the work surrounding it.

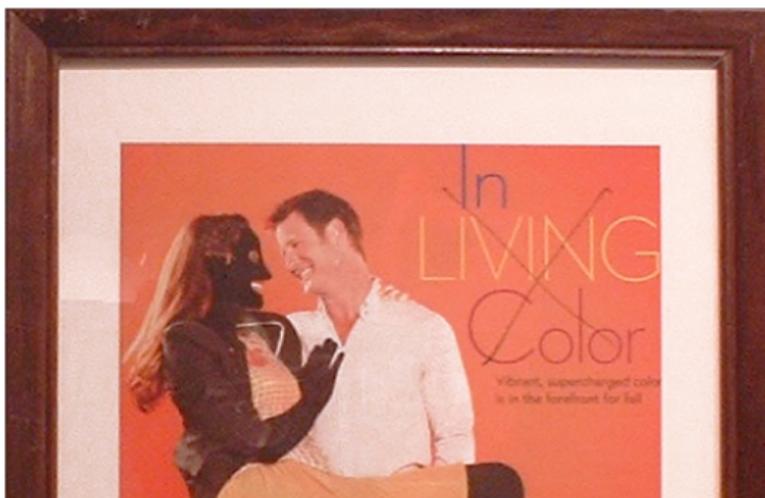
Works of gouache on paper and acrylic on panel is of a different visual language altogether and set naturally into the space. One might find themselves standing right beside it for some time before realizing it's not part of the decor. Conversely, an African mask hung elsewhere here is a symbolic gesture that is more a paean to this particular artists' long-running trajectory of examining history, politics and our own place within it.

The very point of this show having no particular rhythm is giving the precision of none at all. Rexroth expects, and I agree, the viewer is going to have to figure that out for themselves. However, the organism that does link one another is the individual point of practice from each artist disclosing something personal about their work. It reveals a kernel of intimacy about why they make the work they do and Sub Gallery becomes the environment in which to contextualize this. Rexroth says this entire endeavor is her first attempt at rationalizing what works in here and the artists selected add energy to the environment.

Curatorial Studies isn't necessarily constructed for you to love or not love, although I do believe it would be difficult not to find something personal to hold onto. Think of this exhibition more as a laboratory of ideas and processes landing in a space that feels energetic, forward-thinking and not precious at all.



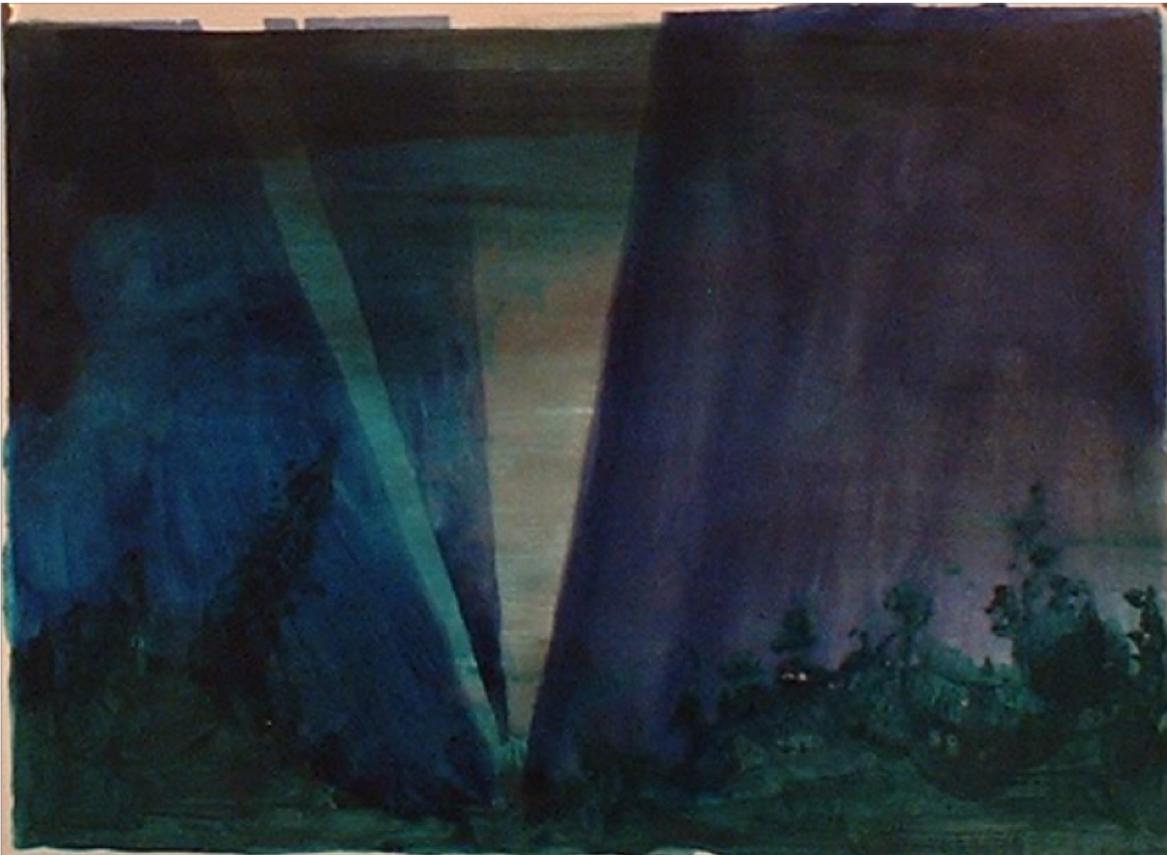
KC #2.





African Mask, headphones, 2012.

KC #1.



Study for Distant Casino, 2009, Acrylic on paper.