

# TIF SIGFRIDS

## MOUSSE

MOUSSE 43 ~ Lisa Williamson, Alex Olson, Laura Owens

**THE EMPTY-HANDED  
PAINTER FROM YOUR  
STREETS  
IS DRAWING CRAZY  
PATTERNS ON YOUR  
SHEETS.**

**Lisa Williamson  
Alex Olson  
Laura Owens**

— LOS ANGELES —

Like modern-day *fauxes* ready to attack, the works of Lisa Williamson, Alex Olson and Laura Owens demand a bodily—more than a visual—reaction. They insist on being seen with the heart, mind, fingertips, tongue, wherever the eyes cannot reach. Andrew Berardini experiences the strange bodily forms of Williamson, the pleading personal ads of Owens, the screens impregnated with shadows of Olson, all in our stead, as it were...

BY ANDREW BERARDINI

Consider this an ill-considered party, a portfolio of stories I've wanted to make about all these picture-makers, the prancing of their brushstrokes, the cut of their jibs, the jibe of their colors. The collection perhaps weirdly obvious, perhaps not. If three of their works faced each other on three walls, you plunked against this trio in a Mexican stand-off; laughter and snorts, flirtations and snubs would slither out of all the layers and armatures, colors and marks, actions spilling out of stillness, a triple whammy of paint.

They window into other rooms and out back at each other. They make me want to write "smeary" over and over. I want to imagine different parts of each like characters in anachronistic costume dramas: Constable Oxblood odd-bodying in the cellar with the Colonel and a half bottle of off-year pinot gris. Wet and slathery, tangible reality pokes out of composed fantasies, a swath of unadorned canvas there, the warp and welt of materials here, four corners of a few jutting out like sharp elbows across unadorned walls.

Abstraction, after all, isn't a veer away from reality, only from one way our eyes see it. Burnt orange clouds frost skies bruising from pink to purple. Squiggles drop shadows. That dangle and bend cracks a tart, off-color joke. New colors: neon and fluorescent shimmer with an alien and electric light, excellent for abductions and dance parties. Close your eyes and rub your fingers over them: is that vision abstract or actual? Remove your glasses or squint: is the blur false?

Representation and abstraction are weak words failing to summarize strange continents. Alone, our eyes are a feeble instrument seeing. Heart and mind, fingertip and hip-crease, tongue and toe-tickle, cocks and cunts all see where eyes fail. Not to mention that third-eye yogis and new-agers

espy dharmic truth with when the Ajna chakra petals open like a blooming lotus in a mudbath.

Across the summer skies waves of strange light ripple across the blue: colors collide, wobble, shimmy in patterns so protean and unpredictable they are untraceable. I still attempt to trace their patterns with language, painting's linear cousin, a method of mark-making with its own expansive spaces and hard boundaries.

Hallucinations are just another kind of real, patterns repeat out of nature, interior visions wrestle with materials into surfaces daubed and decorated, stabbed and stroked, wholed and colored, here at least with paint.

A history of humans making marks give us only conditions, not directions. When it comes to tradition, we have to paint our way out of that corner on our own.

LISA WILLIAMSON:  
THE COMEDIENNES

*I had an idea I'd try and write a play... He sits there longer and longer until the audience gets more and more bored and restless, and finally they start leaving, first just a few and then the whole audience, whispering to each other how boring and terrible the play is. Then, once the audience have all left, the real action of the play can start.*

David Foster Wallace, *The Pale King*

(AHEM)...

The stand-up comediennes all droop around the white room, speechless. They wear off-colors, tertiaries and strange shades, powder-coated and drapery: a fleshy hue, a cream blushed with ash, lavender clay, teal legs and tuxedo blues, a sliver of star-bright yellow.

(COUGH)...

Leaning against the wall stiffly, all of their odd bodies shape just so, hanging and angular, bulbous and planar, humpious and slim, snicker-worthy, inspiring guffaws, suppressed chortles. Different than one-liner yuck-yucks, their shapes and hues wryly bend, a subtler wit. Staged, their routines change very little from the still, motionless concentrated clustering on view. Separated, each a real somebody, they could snappily fill all the empty sightlines without wasting a breath to crack a joke; you can hear it without a sound.

(SNIFF, SNIFF)...

The room doesn't have any windows, except the one out to you, but windowless blinds shiver along the walls in the wind, whispering and peeking trim shades. These tightlipped cowgirls sing the loneliest tunes, excepting the lack of lips, cows, and any song these comediennes sing is not of the sonic variety. And though feminine form folding off the end of "comediienne" feels like a natural gender epithet, this gaggle bends those terms too (along with their shapely bods) whenever they damn well feel like it.

(SIGS)...

Tiptoeing past, you try not to interrupt them silently practicing their material.

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