

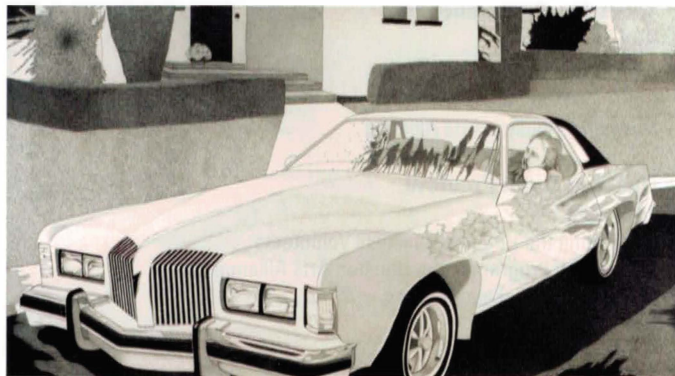
"TX ★ 13" TEXAS BIENNIAL ARTIST HIGHLIGHTS

art ltd.

Houston art writer **Kelly Klaasmeyer** casts an appreciative eye on a half dozen Houston-area artists featured in 2013 Texas Biennial.

McCLAIN
GALLERY

As a child, **Michael Bise** would sit in front of the television with a pencil and paper, drawing while he watched tapes of old black-and-white movies—the only TV his Christian fundamentalist grandfather would allow. Today Bise makes large-scale pencil drawings, rich in autobiographical narrative and composed with a cinematographic eye. The 30-something Bise has turned his art to his Pentecostal upbringing, his father's early death, and his own recent heart transplant. His drawings are composed using dramatic "camera" angles—the raised hands of a congregation fill the foreground with a tiny evangelist in the background of a 2012 work. In a 2007 image depicting his father's fatal heart attack at 50, the prone figure lies on a cracked concrete patio, image drawn from above, as if the soul is looking back down on the body. The interiors Bise renders are filled with telling detail, the kitschy bric-a-brac in a grandparent's house, the Winnie-the-Pooh wallpaper of a childhood bedroom, the Disneyland "Happiest Place on Earth" poster behind his belt-wielding mother. Bise's work could easily be maudlin but the artist skillfully blends poignancy with wry dark humor, fully on display in the artist's autobiographical comic "Life on the List," chronicling Bise's wait for a heart transplant.



"UNCLE CORKY," 2011

Michael Bise

GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 36" X 64"

PHOTO: COURTESY MOODY GALLERY

Romanian-born **Adela Andea's** light-based sculptures and installations have an Eastern European disco vibe—in a good way. There are no trafficked prostitutes and track-suited Mafiosi, but Andea's luminous constructions recall the luridly unnatural lighting of a nightclub. Andea uses everything from cold cathode fluorescent lights to LED's to create sculptures that accumulate her light sources into clusters, towers and wall-spanning installations. In recent work, Andea is combining materials like foam pool noodles with her lights to create otherworldly-looking constructions. Last year, her sculptures invaded the courtyard of the Art League Houston, hanging from the trees. Andea sliced vividly hued pool noodles into discs to create cell-like shapes and massed them together to conjure unsettling yet oddly beautiful biomorphic forms. Sections of flex neon trailed off and snaked between them like umbilical cords. Sitting in the courtyard at night, it was as if a cluster of alien life forms had descended from the skies, leaving locals too stunned by the spectacle to resist the invasion.



"PRIMORDIAL GARDEN 2 (OUTDOORS)," 2012

Adela Andea

FLEX NEON, POOL NOODLES,

STEEL STRUCTURE, PLEXIGLAS, CCF LIGHT, 30' X 30' X 24'

PHOTO: COURTESY ANYA TISH GALLERY

In *Care House*, **Carrie Marie Schneider** turned her empty childhood home into a painfully moving installation. *Care House* was a memorial to her mother's lost battle with cancer, as well as the artist's own lost childhood. As invited viewers wandered the empty rooms of the suburban home, a video of a long ago Christmas morning played on a old set in the living room, the voices of the young Schneider and her brother echoing like ghosts. In the kitchen, family photos peeked from behind bits of peeling wallpaper. In her mother's room, projected video of the artist interacting with the space created a silent lament. The counter in a downstairs bath was stacked with the prescriptions her mother took to battle pancreatic cancer. The warnings and side effects covering the plastic bottles read like a chronicle of suffering. In *Care House*, Schneider didn't just tap into her own grief and nostalgia, she found the viewer's as well. Schneider is just as sensitive to the stories and places of strangers as her own. She founded Hear Our Houston, "a hub of publically generated walking tours." For the project, contributors take a walk in a Houston neighborhood while recording their own audio tour. (Non-Houstonian FYI: attempting to walk in the searing heat and sprawl of this city built around the car is a performance piece in itself.) Schneider's project allows people to share and experience each other's neighborhoods in a very intimate way. There's an app as well—you can hear everyone from The Reverend Ray Martin, Houston's First Fighting Preacher to entomologist and banjo player Lara Appleby to artist and former pizza delivery guy Raul Gonzales. There are more than 50 entries to date with more being added all the time.



"CARE INSTALLED," 2012, **Carrie Marie Schneider**

VIDEO, 5:13 LOOP

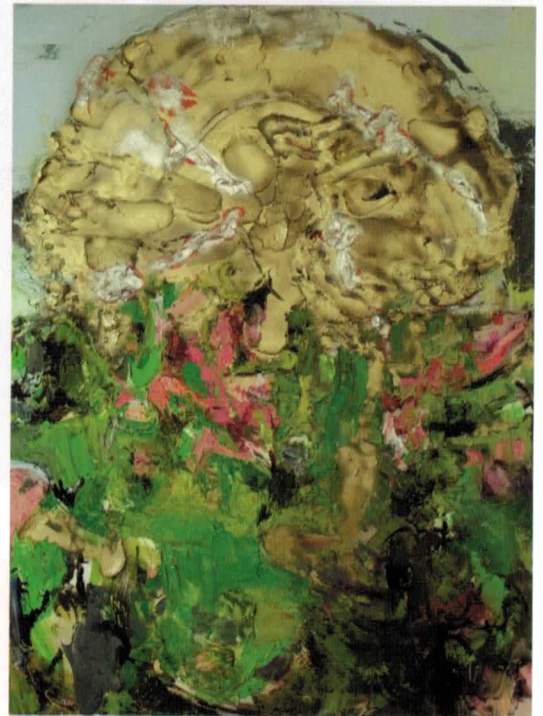
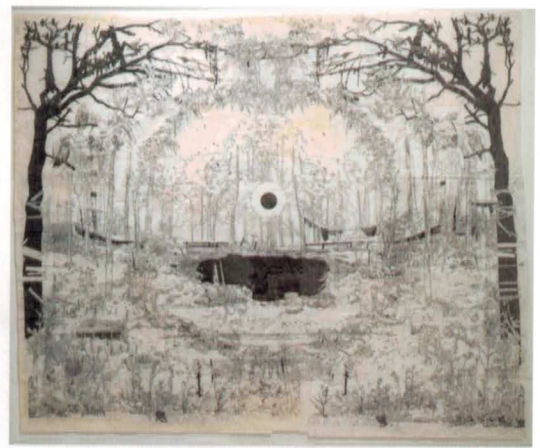
8'4" X 4'5" (PROJECTED AT LIFE SCALE)

PHOTO: DABFOTO CREATIVE

The nature **Kent Dorn** paints would make the Hudson River School turn over in their collective graves. Dorn gives us forests, clearings and ponds tainted by human occupation—the wandering dirt bag stoner variety. His *Dead End (Water's Edge)* (2011) features cigarette butts on the ground and, parked near a pond, a '70s Impala with battered Samsonite roped on the roof. Dorn contrasts flat washes of greyed color with gloppy additions. The red and black stuff near a log fire could be a red flannel shirt, part of an animal carcass or a chunk of the one of the car's occupants. No one is around. A length of yellow rope on the ground adds another possibly ominous element. In a separate 2011 work, an abandoned van sits up on blocks in a forest clearing. Something is piled (sitting?) in the front seat, but you can't tell what. Trash and an old tire are strewn on the ground. A multitude of narratives present themselves. In other pieces, Dorn has pushed his thick viscous additions to the canvas to the extreme. In a 2012 painting, a clumpy bark-like ground is covered with slimy extruded green letters that look like a cross between cake icing and pond scum. They roughly spell out "THE END." Dorn has a knack for walking the line between familiar and uncomfortable.

Geoff Hippenstiel pulls off a kind of baroque abstraction in his paintings—he's got bold impasto strokes and gold and silver aplenty. It's an interesting feat, accomplished without the artist wallowing in expressionist gesture. Hippenstiel has figurative sources for his work that provide loose parameters for his abstracted imagery. The paintings flicker into and out of recognizability. A massive multi-hued skull is identifiable in one painting in a series. In later works from the same series, only vestiges remain, mainly as kind of mental afterimage from the first. In another series of works, abstractions of 17th-century frescos, the paintings convey the visual aura of their ornate source rather than any specifics. Hippenstiel's paintings occupy intriguing territory—there are only flickers of figuration on the work and the paintings are neither ironic nods to Abstract Expressionism nor are they the work of a true believer. Hippenstiel uses paint well, and enjoys what it can do, but he's still keeping one foot on the ground, mining in the real world for inspiration. And he's making some gorgeous work while he's doing it.

Native Texan and card-carrying MFA **Seth Mittag** spent three years in New York doing stop-motion animation for the likes of Nickelodeon, Moveon.org and Michael Eisner. Mittag moved back to Texas a few years ago and has since channeled his animation skills into his own art. Tornadoes, trailers, guys in gimme caps, kids in overalls, used car dealers and old school buses used as housing inform Mittag's work. He animates the audio of an old local news report with an anchorman sporting a porn star mustache and a tornado witness in a gimme cap. Currently at work on a film, Mittag has crafted character figures that look familiar to anyone who grew up in the rural south. The same regional familiarity goes for mobile homes and tornadoes. The artist has created sets of small town destruction, a trailer lodged in a tree, a pair of kid's jockey shorts clinging to the branches. Tornadoes and trailers may be a redneck cliché to some but for others they are a real and tragic reality. In an earlier work, Mittag created a coloring book based on old family photos of himself as a small child with a deer rifle. He cast crayons into the shape of shell casings to accompany it. Within his work one finds both empathy and humor.



TOP RIGHT:
"AURA (DEATH VALLEY DAZE)," 2012
Kent Dorn

GRAPHITE AND TAPE ON TRACING PAPER ON NEWSPRINT
77" x 93"

PHOTO: NASH BAKER, COURTESY McCLAIN GALLERY

"UNTITLED," 2011
Geoff Hippenstiel

OIL ON CANVAS, 84" x 69"

PHOTO: COURTESY DEVIN BORDEN GALLERY

"HURRICANE ALLEN," 2012
Seth Mittag

STILL FROM STOP MOTION ANIMATION, 3'30"

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST