

Elizabeth Huey: Polychromatic Projection

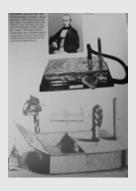
May 20th - July 2nd 2011 Heiner Contemporary

Elizabeth Huey: Polychromatic Projection

The title of the show, "Polychromatic Projection," marks a useful starting point for taking up Elizabeth Huey's latest work. "Polychromatic" comes easily enough in these vibrant paintings, which pulse with an array of hues. As is often the case in Huey's work, color refuses to perform a purely descriptive role. It animates the surface with a broad prismatic spectrum in a language all its own. But the paintings are polychromatic in another sense as well. They do more than illuminate the picture plane: they also vivify the past.

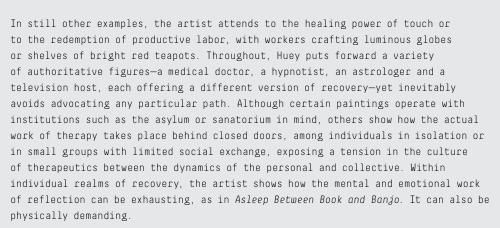
Indeed, works in this show are often based on black and white photographs, postcards, advertisements and other visual resources Huey collected while probing medical history archives as a Smithsonian Institution Artist Research Fellow. Though the links between the paintings and their sources are not always direct, there are traces, for instance, to an ad for a nineteenth-century electric shock machine in a medical supply catalogue; to the photograph of a physically awkward and somewhat out-of-focus meeting between a Victorian doctor and his patient; and to a postcard depicting an insane asylum built in an appealing Tudor-style design—all of which once served entirely different audiences and goals. The faded monochromatic surfaces of artifacts culled from such medical sources are enlivened by Huey's technicolor brush, with the artist performing her own medical feat by breathing new life into these historic subjects.

"Projection," the second word in the show's title, likewise carries multiple associations. As a verb, "project" means to thrust forward, to send out into space, which is precisely what Huey does, particularly in the larger paintings where people and objects are cast about in a gravity-defying picture plane. To "project" is also to display on a screen. While Huey is primarily a painter, the sense of movement in her paintings is perhaps best understood as cinematic. When I first met the artist more than a decade ago, on a Terra Residential Fellowship in Giverny, France, she was rarely without her video camera, insistently processing the flow of events defining everyday life through a filmic lens. More recently, Huey, looking back to the magic lantern shows that were a form of popular entertainment in Victorian times, has also made projection an explicit part of her work, turning slide shows of her photographs into a form of exhibition. Thus, just as with her subject matter, which conjoins the present with the past, the artist uses projection techniques inspired by both contemporary and historic practices.





Finally, in light of persistent references to hypnosis, Freud and a more general culture of psychotherapy, it is hard to miss how "projection" in Huey's work also functions in the psychological sense, as in the cathartic transference of emotion onto other persons or inanimate things. This last meaning of projection leaves the viewer to ask what Huey is finally saying about the world of therapeutics. Certain works—such as *Electric Shock*, *Hypnosis*, *Astrology Report* and *Psychospiritual Demonstration*—call our attention to specific healing practices. Others, such as *Glen Echo* and *Persuading Sanity* refer to famous nineteenth-century healers, Clara Barton and Thomas Kirkbride.



Perhaps no one works harder than the sculptor in Freud's Head and Historian, Sculptor, Shrink, where we see that not unlike the psychoanalyst, who transforms individual memory, or the historian, who defines our collective understanding of the past, the artist, who literally carves heads, also molds consciousness and powerfully shapes the mind.

- Elizabeth Lee

Elizabeth Lee (Assistant Professor of Art History) teaches courses in modern, contemporary and American art as well as in art theory and art historical methods at Dickinson College. Her current research explores connections between turn-of-the-century American art and the history of the body, medicine and health. She recently received funding for this research from the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, the Wolfsonian Institute and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.







Asleep Between Book and Banjo, 2011 Acrylic on wood 18" x 18"



Televised Report, 2011 Acrylic on wood 18" x 24"

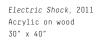


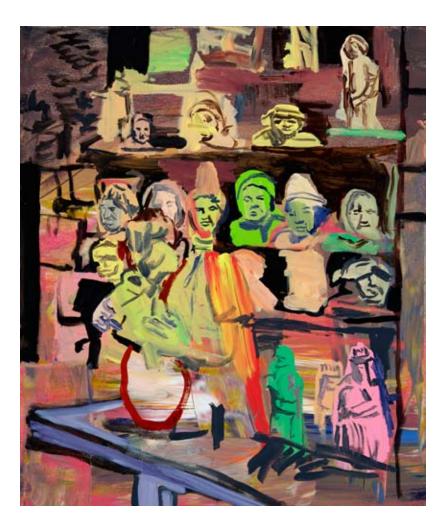




Globe Factory, 2011 Acrylic and oil on wood 18" x 14"







Historian, Sculptor, Shrink, 2011 Acrylic on wood 24" x 20"





Glen Echo, 2011 Acrylic on wood 60" x 96"

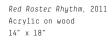


Psychospiritual Demonstration, 2011 Acrylic on wood 16" x 16"



Bedtime Kiss, 2011 Acrylic on wood 14" x 18"







Hypnosis, 2011 Acrylic on paper 21″ x 29″



Freud's Head, 2011 Acrylic on wood 18″ x 14″



Astrology Report, 2011 Acrylic on wood 16" x 16"



Born in Virginia, Elizabeth Huey currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She earned her BA in Psychology from George Washington University and studied at both the Marchutz School in France and the New York Studio School before receiving her MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2002. She has received numerous awards such as a Terra Museum of American Art Fellowship and Residency in Giverny, France (2001), a travel fellowship to Italy from Johns Hopkins University (2006), and an Artist Research Fellowship from the Smithsonian Institution (2008). Huey's paintings have been exhibited extensively both in the U.S. and abroad and are in collections such as the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia.

Art Photography: Susan Alzner
Photograph of Artist: Eric Von Massey

ver: (Detail) Persuading Sanity, 2011, Acrylic on wood, 72" x 96"

Essay: Elizabeth Lee, Assistant Professor of Art History, Dickinson Colle

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