

TREADING

Peter Hiers and JoJo Whilden

Sept 24th - Oct 28th, 2011

Treading

Treading, the current Cherry Center exhibit, rests on the assumption that a distinct and memorable artistic aesthetic can emerge by focusing on — or employing materials — that are typically discarded and overlooked. Pacific Grove sculptor Peter Hiers and New York photographer JoJo Whilden were both intrigued — in different ways — not by the destruction, but through the transformation of car tires and their effects.

In *Treading*, Hiers and Whilden convey metaphors that fulfill aesthetic, political and environmental concerns. Hiers' and Whilden's work is informed by a commitment to those issues in ways that surprise, disclose and uncover. Salvaging such defiant beauty from scraps of rubber tires provides a compelling metaphor of survival in the modern world.

Although the representation of these issues seems prominent throughout their work it is by no means their primary concern. The artists' scopes of interest are vast and aesthetically diverse. The work calls attention to industrial and technological revolutions, consumption, issues of sustainability, the aesthetics of so-called non-artistic material. The exhibit also deals with physical and emotional scarification related to issues of loss, beauty and identity.

Peter Hiers began to create work from automobile tires in 2002. The various tread patterns, colors and textures which the tires possess create a canvas for Hiers similar to the palette for a painter. Hiers' utilization of rubber tires is a response to the integration of man-made and natural landscapes.

His sculptures stem from a tradition in modern art of using found objects and industrially fabricated materials recalling artists as diverse as Mark Di Suvero, Louise Nevelson, and Marcel Duchamp. Yet Hiers' work goes beyond this conventional reading, incorporating elements of intertwining material and sculpture. The textures and patterns of the tires give them a woven, textile-like quality, yet the forms seem particularly anthropomorphic. The surface finishes range from rich and lustrous to dried and cracking.

The images of JoJo Whilden address the lost integrity of salvaged — but still occupied — environments that evoke “moments in time, trigger memory, and offer access to the trauma and desire of events past.” The skid marks are temporary shadow-like traces on the ground, similar to photographic images, which are merely silver tracks left on celluloid. Some will also discover small shocks of recognition, of shared experiences, as Whilden's camera work reflects upon and reveals the presence of the visible past. Looking through her camera, she consistently engages in making images where the actual absence of people symbolically enhances the presence and mystery of skid marks. She skillfully unveils how the tire marks act as an instrument to collect and modulate the light back, towards, and through the lens. Whilden makes no attempt to describe a specific physical place. Rather, small fragments of the world — spinning abstract marks across parking lots and highways — are isolated and photographed. She masterfully printed these images in a complex range of deep, resonant and mysteriously somber tones that reward both the eye and the mind.

Robert Reese
The Cherry Center for the Arts





Declaration of Dependence by Peter Hiers
FRONT: *Z Mythology Unraveling* by Peter Hiers

Peter Hiers

Artist Statement

Seeing ubiquitous tire fragments by our highways reminds me that in our present way of life in the USA, individually we no longer work directly to provide ourselves with the basic survival necessities of food, clothing and shelter. Instead we give our lives to the endless cycles of consumption and production, earning and spending, all to provide indirectly for our basic survival by participation in a most intricate network of interdependence, supporting human existence by a vital but vulnerable web of transportation, electricity and money.

Every bag of groceries I bring home from the store represents thousands of miles of travel to get to my dinner table and fill my bloodstream with nutrients for another day of life. There are countless gallons of finite fuel sent down the drain every day in the ongoing swirl of keeping humanity alive another day, while their combustion leaves behind negative ecological impacts. Like the vehicles which abandon torn tire fragments alongside the highways, our materialist consuming society leaves behind a vast array of by-products of our ways (i.e. CO2 emissions) — evidence so common that we often don't even see what we have used up, what we leave behind, nor the implications of our lifestyle.

Tire fragments are an ideal metaphor for our times and for the violent tension between human forces and the natural forces within which we operate. As the Social Fabric that provides the necessities for human survival, these fragments show engineered textures made by our human industrial prowess and also the shredded and ripped textures created when the natural forces of heat, friction, centrifugal force and vapor pressure ultimately overpower our human technological creations. Which powers are greater here?

How do we reconcile our growing human population with our dependence on finite resources to support the delicate web of our survival? Has our primary gift as humans - our imagination and ability to create technology for our survival - led us down a materialist path that could ultimately take us away from survival as a species? Can our imagination as artists and problem-solvers help us change course? Can our interdependence be reassembled in a more sustainable fashion? What Ideology can we develop to replace the imbalanced Consumption = Fulfillment Myth? Clearly we need to find a more sustainable, balanced and less vulnerable way of life - while we still can.

JoJo Whilden

Biography

JoJo Whilden grew up in Monterey, California. She started working as a photographer on weekend assignments for the Alameda Times-Star while attending San Francisco State University. Post University, she moved to London and did lots of traveling. Eventually she settled in NYC and worked as a photo editor for SABA while she earned a Masters degree in Photography at the International Center for Photography and New York University. She later branched into video art and electronic media and started working on feature films as a still photographer. When she opened an art studio in Brooklyn, she was awarded fellowship at the Millay Colony for the Arts, and is represented by the ClampART Gallery in Chelsea. JoJo now teaches at NYU and the School of Visual Arts while she lives with family in New York City.

Artist Statement

The photographs in this series are a homage to drawing and driving. The photographs formally and aesthetically depict ubiquitous tire tracks left on pavement. The framing and formality of the compositions, as well as the richness of the medium of black-and-white photography, suggest images of beauty and at the same time, the marks on the road represent something potentially more fearful. The skid marks are temporary shadow-like traces on the ground, similar to photographic images, which are merely silver tracks left on celluloid. Both reference moments in time, trigger memory, and offer access to the trauma and desire of events past. The aesthetic structure of this series looks back to the great Modernist photographers of the last century (Weston, Adams, etc.), who found images of beauty in nature's forms. These forms are found in the fleeting qualities of the new century: today one simply whips past nature in a speeding car. Inspiration for this project was also derived from contemporary literature and cinema (most directly J.G. Ballard's novel, *Crash*, which was later translated to film by David Cronenberg) and from many hours spent driving the car on the highway.



Skidmark #12 by JoJo Whilden