Megan Abajian
MFA Painting
BFA, University of Texas at Austin

I have the mind of a boy. I enjoy most things taboo. I think it’s funny. When I was younger I would break open roly-poly’s to see what was inside—not all roly-poly’s, only the ones that had white stomachs. I thought there were babies in there. It is this same attitude of discovery that informs my studio. I enjoy capturing the grotesque, all the slimy, squishy forms that really should not be seen, we pretend they are not there. Skin is wonderful casing for all things gooey. I like what’s under the skin. It makes me giggle and cringe at the same time. I want the viewer to do the same when they experience my work. The goal is for my paintings to have the same innocent cruelty of a child who pulls off a spider’s legs. My dream painting would look like it’s either a section of your gut, a parasite attached to a vital organ, or something you expelled from your body—if it could have hair, even better.

1. Fat Soluble, 44”x55”, collage, mixed media on paper
2. Donnadio, 24”x60”, collage, mixed media on panel
Steve Backhus
MFA Sculpture
MFA Drawing/Sculpture at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design

I rarely purchase art supplies to make art. My objective is to be frugal, yet as fruitful as possible. This ethical practice is the foundation to my creativity that offers balance to a prodigal society.

I am drawn to make art out of devalued materials, spaces, and communities because they represent the fears of the dominant society that largely controls our perception of environments, possessions, and peoples. I treat subjects that reek of constructed negative connotations with the utmost care and respect to make us question and reevaluate our points of view, where they derive, and what purpose they serve.

1. Meditation
2. Social Stoop: The Next Level

![Image of pallets and materials]
Considering the rapid pace of technological advancement and genetic manipulation, one wonders how long the familiar world will last. As humanity continues to engineer new organisms, the distinction between organic and synthetic blurs. Over the last year, I have constructed an alternate world populated with bizarre creatures. This alternate realm is informed by several sources including, but not limited to, the following: biology, genetic manipulation, natural history illustration, scientific diagrams, and mythology. In this world, humans and genetically modified cephalopods (squid, cuttlefish, and octopi) battle for dominion over the earth. After the terrestrial and marine forces collide, the dust settles and the two cultures mesh. My drawings and prints represent artifacts from this imaginary realm—isolated moments in an imaginary, unnatural history.

1. Neocephalopod Breakdown, Ink, watercolor, gouache, screenprint on paper.
2. Unnatural History #2, Ink, watercolor, gouache, on paper.
A painting is a surface on which to think and play. It is a place where I can build terrains to explore or secluded rooms to occupy and decorate. Things get made, unmade, and push against each other. Illusions are created, false images that give us real sensations of gravity and forces affecting one another. The settings often come from memories of places that were once familiar to me, whether real or fictitious. This work is about coming to terms with forces that are beyond our control. Getting older and losing loved ones, or thoughts of natural disasters and war, fill us with feelings of impermanence—a sense that things can end abruptly, without resolution. I am more content as I confront these thoughts that we tend to put in the back of our minds.

1. Sunk, oil on canvas, 66" x 78"
2. You Always Got To Be Prepared But You Never Know For What, oil on canvas, 30" x 20"
3. Seconds Pass Slowly And Years Go Flying By, oil on canvas, 22" x 11"
A process of dissecting and immediately reassembling my pots for the lines it creates has become the core of my aesthetic and the impetus for my work in clay. Deconstruction and reconstruction yield a decoration that is structurally expressed, uniting the interior and exterior, prompting the user to contemplate the structure of the objects, as well as the process I developed to make them. This method of decoration forms the platform upon which formal, functional, and structural decisions interlace. Connections between these decisions are discovered as I make, and become part of the conscious intention of my work. Each piece, while serving to inform me, bears the essence of discovery.
One of the most intriguing inventions of humankind is the notion of permanence. Whether this idea takes the form of an address, relationship, art object, ritual, theory, law or god, I believe that it serves us in a fundamental way, both practically and existentially. I am drawn to ceramics because it embodies the desire to make permanent something ever-changing. As an installation artist, however, I am not concerned with creating permanent objects for possession. I create tenuous moments of coalesced forms, images, sound and physical/bodily movement, that expose our nerve endings to the fragility and power of being sentient and imaginative creatures of agency.
Through the process of making I come to a better understanding, a better understanding of my surroundings and myself. I like material and working with my hands. Through labor I gain clarity. The work is thematic in that the theme is my life and its interactions with others and the environment I inhabit. I often address hope, desire, death, and humility. I work intuitively in the vein of a short-story writer. My hope is that trends and motives will become clearer as I age. Dualities are often present, like morbidity contrasted with spirituality. These dualities symbolize a balance that I find fundamental and consistent in life. I strive to make unique work with a human presence, my presence.

1. **Barn**, copper, steel, acrylic
2. **Death W oosing**, cast bronze, steel, flowers
3. **The Night Box**, copper
Tom Ferrero
MFA Metalsmith and Jewelry Design
Post Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts from The University of Auckland, Manukau, New Zealand
BFA Metalsmithing and Jewelry Design, Rochester Institute of Technology

I have long been fascinated with fantasy art and space exploration and wanted to create a body of work that nurtured this passion.

“Artifacts of Fantasy” investigates the possibility of unknown civilizations through the objects they might have left behind. The work is a type of field guide for these cultures specifically focusing on their knives. It examines our understanding of what defines a knife. What purposes do knives have? And who might the users be?

The knife is of particular interest for its multiple associations – that of weapon, tool, and ceremonial object. As an artist, it is a source of limitless possibilities.

1. Gourd Knife, silver, gold, walnut, bone, amethyst
2. Moss Cutter, silver, copper, steel, wood, garnet, citrine, zircon, tourmaline
3. Fruit Lance, silver, gold, citrine
Maureen Forman  
MFA Painting  
MFA painting, Maryland Institute, College of Art  
I aim to make work that teeters on the edge of abstraction and representation. My images are a complication of lines, shapes, and colors that slowly register into real objects. The space in the paintings is simple but the details are complex. I hope that my work has a sense of delicacy, stillness, awkwardness, and beauty.

1. Hills, 18”x24”, oil  
2. Frustration, 20”x14”, oil  
3. Grip, 10”x14”, oil
Melanie Frakes
MFA Ceramics
MFA in ceramics, Cal State University of Long Beach

My work is an object based investigation into some of the ways in which I’ve connected with nature throughout my life, organized into an artificial landscape composition. Through experimentation with ceramic processes in my studio I am able to present individual samples collectively, which reveal a landscape of layered material. The sculpture gives the viewer an opportunity to take a visual journey through the woods in a similar way that I would. For example, the focus varies from a flower floating along a bubbling creek to the changing colors of the horizon skyline. I’m interested in capturing and conveying the poetic experience which happens while traveling through the wilderness.

“A lovely flower, worth going hungry and foot sore miles to see.
On which would some other man that I have found
If planted in a fairer landscape.” – John Muir

1. Landscape #1 with detail
2. Core with detail
Shelley Given
MFA Photography
BA in Art concentration in Photography
BA in English, Otterbein College, Westerville, OH

Through pinhole photography, I address issues of unease, discontentment, and loneliness that can stem from nostalgia. I believe that romanticizing one’s past, as well as one’s future, is symptomatic of the human condition and can lead to melancholy when the present does not live up to preconceived ideals. By manipulating the vantage point from which one experiences the pictured subjects, I am removing a solid point of reference with the intention of causing confusion and disorientation. The photographs are about being in a perpetual state of limbo. An individual who is always thinking about the past or dreaming about the future does not fully experience the present — in neither here nor there.
David Hicks
MFA Painting
BFA Missouri State University

My internal and ever-growing desire has always been to unite my everyday life with the hopes I believe in. My paintings involve both people I love and have known in my lifetime, and people I admire or am curious about in history. Hopes and dreams soar higher in my paintings than anything seemingly close to real life, yet even when I feel I have expressed my greatest dream in a painting, it usually ends up goofy in some way—which is okay with me. My message to the viewer is one of confession, without guile, and unashamed faith in Christ.

1. Singers, oil
2. The Garden, oil
3. Barbecue, oil
Joshua Highter
MFA Painting
BFA, University of Vermont
Certificate of Illustration, Portfolio Center

I contemplate what the world looks like. Seeing through my own consciousness or viewpoint, the division of self and landscape is sometimes indistinguishable. Working with observation, memory and invention has been a way of representing the essence of a place and state of mind. My paintings start from real-life situations and places, which quickly turn into memories. It is these ephemeral moments that stay clear in my mind.

1. Pemaquid Point, 16"x19.5", oil on panel
2. Winter Coast, 14"x20", oil on panel
3. Rephased, 31"x59", oil on panel
I think of myself as a non-denominational designer. The fundamental principles of design—form, color, composition, unity/variety, balance—easily translate across all areas of design. To me, each area (architecture, interior, fashion, product, and graphic design) is a potential vehicle for communication, expression, and function.

My approach to design involves recognizing possibilities, choices, and options in any given situation, and designing objects with the inherent function in mind. The more uses an object has, the more I value it. I enjoy manipulating form, structure, and material to play up exploration, opportunity, and choice. Encouraging the audience/user/consumer to engage and interact with a design in different ways is one of my main goals. An important question for me is: How many things can a design do?
Through my personal aesthetic sensibility and craftsmanship, the body of work presented explores body adornments and personal objects with the theme of hope through the symbolic transformation of nature.

In every culture, the deepest and most secret human desires have been found within adornments to be worn on the body and in personal objects. Jewelry is perhaps the most intimate of objects and can be intrinsically linked to hope in such examples as charms. Vessels represented in the body of work are personal objects, like jewelry, that literally hold or contain and convey a relationship to natural forms.

I have always been interested in designing and decorating the surface of metal. The surface decorations I have incorporated are details of nature through the techniques of chasing, piercing, and etching. I would like the work to provide a universal language of hope to both the maker and the wearer, through the overall design, text, and symbolic images from nature that are meaningful to my Korean and western heritage.
I came to IU from Korea with an interest in bookmaking and during my time here I experimented with a variety of book structures. I explored a range of topics and often the content I chose to work with played an important role in deciding the structure of the book. In short, the book’s structure mirrors the book’s content, thus, corroborating the good old saying, “form follows function.” My interest ranges from social, cultural, political subject matters to the very personal. The printmaking classes I took at IU gave me the skills to take on a more self-expressive or artistic approach in some of my work. It’s a unique opportunity, and a process I have enjoyed very much.

My goal is to design books that engage the viewer in an experience of discovery that goes beyond reading. The viewer must become involved not only with the text, but with the physical presence of the book itself. My work functions as a seamless whole where the book structure, materials, typography, and illustration are all in concert with one another.

I am looking at ways of utilizing the various skills of printing and binding that I have learned for making new and innovative books. I also want to continue to travel. Travel broadens the mind. It is the search for ideas that transcend time, language, and culture, and I hope my work serves as an example of that notion.
Garments, furniture, interior design and architecture are all oblique, intuitive symbols of the corporeal human, the most basic existential experiences. But they are all also symbols of human civility and intellect—a markedly more sophisticated synthesis of existentialism—while remaining very everyday, accessible, familiar objects. This collection of wearable pieces integrates garment forms with these tropes to cite changing historical and cultural associations of philosophy, beauty, and modernity. Political, emotional, and aesthetic utopias are conflated into a singular entity of the wearable art object.
I see many people today oblivious to what is happening around them. They are listening to an I-Pod or creating a virtual self on a computer game. Perhaps they are not using any high tech device, but the over-stimulated or half-transcended from pharmaceuticals or stress, lack of sleep, or sugary processed foods. They seem half connected, but in a fantasyland they did not construct. These modern distractions or narcissisms are not categorically different from their historical counterparts, but they are more pernicious and more dangerous. The proliferation of mass mediation removes us in ever increasing increments from the human touch. More than ever, we yearn for real experience.

People can combat these developments by eating ‘natural’ packaged foods or watching ‘reality’ television shows, but those are responses to symptoms of what is probably the oldest human existential conundrum: the problem of being both an actor in and interpreter of our world. The extremity of our modern dislocation carves this ancient problem into such deep relief we fear the sculpture may topple over on us. The arts have always dealt with this hyphen in the human personality. Artists today have to be physicists and baseball players. We must interpret nature even as we become it. This dual character of art making, or any formal creative communication, builds a much needed interface between our shared outside world and our inner private worlds.

1. Baby Cave, 24”x22”, oil monoprint
2. The Young Mother, 60”x42”, oil
3. The New Heroic Age, 60”x42”, oil
Sim Luttin
MFA Metalsmith and Jewelry Design
Undergrad: Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)

The transcendence presented by the miniature is a special transcendence, a transcendence that erases the productive possibilities of understanding through time. To be sure is to deny the nostalgic – Susan Stewart, 1993.

The Temporary Nature of Things considers notions of beauty, nostalgic importance, and passing time. Motivated by the deterioration of memory and how this is represented nostalgically through miniature objects, the exploration comprises an installation of jewelry and objects, made one a day, over the course of one year.

A collection began March 27, 2007 ending March 26, 2008, each piece embodies a collection on the nature of that day; be it a response to broad organic forms found in the environment or the introspective contemplation of aspects of the human condition. Idealistically intended to discover the poetry in the everyday and the little things that might otherwise pass one by, these daily forms came to abstractly exemplify contemplations on life, time, and indeed temporality.

Three major pieces accompany the collection, comprising a series of mourning jewelry that respond to the journey of the everyday experience recorded by the miniatures. Embodying the collective memories of the past year, the Mourning Series are essentially reconstructions that tell a story of how this past year is to be remembered; they provide closure to a particular chapter in time.
I am an interdisciplinary and installation artist, with a focus in digital media (small-screen media and digital video) and ceramic sculptures. I am interested in boundaries, humility, space (inside, personal/private vs. public, ritual is actual), and the fluid constant of memory and time. My work explores topics related to gender, identity, desire, sexual politics, and duality of experience and relates to my personal experiences. The impetus for my explorations of these topics begins with the ideas of pin-up posters, burlesque, peepshow, and play.

1. Pearl
2. Gams
For me painting is about playing and storytelling. In these paintings I tell stories of my experiences. I know what the stories are, but how am I going to tell them? Paint swirls and mixes on my palette, it is lifted onto my brush and is finally applied to the canvas where it becomes part of the story. My mind drifts; edges and shapes appear and disappear. The world on the canvas grows lighter and darker, my story comes in and out of focus. These paintings are not just records of my experiences, they are my adventures.

1. Whomp, 60”x40”, oil
2. Red, 72”x60”, oil
3. The Gump, 13”x9”, oil
These self-portraits represent more than ten years of my life, each documenting a particular moment on a specific day. Viewed as a body of work, they present a narrative photo, a change in both the physical and in consciousness. Unlike the change from caterpillar to butterfly, these changes are the incremental and subtle alterations in physiology, environment and self-awareness. As a form of time-lapse photography, this unique visual record allows viewers to experience the daily actions of creating a single self-portrait to represent the subtle daily transformation that each of us undergoes as we grow, age, and mature.
Eva Nikolova
MFA Printmaking
BFA Printmaking and Painting, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

My work explores narratives of nationalism, history, power and tradition through images of iconic cultural objects. I examine the role of the latter in the construction of identity and memory – personal and collective, individual and national – in a region ever at the mercy of larger geopolitical forces through narrative works which use deconstructed architectural forms, evoking both cultural specificity and offering a framework open for interpretation and association.

The motif recurring throughout these works – the characteristic form of the Orthodox Christian church – while at no point conjuring a static metaphor, suggests a definitive sense of place. That place – my home country Bulgaria, as well as the larger region whose name has become synonymous with fragmentation – is in a period of intense social and economic flux. It has been my experience of that history and culture in transition and the very complex and numerous implications of that transformation that finds resonance in my work.

1. Balkan Kin (detail), 84”x84”, charcoal
2. Recurrence, Six Sequential Frames from animation
3. Re-construction, 57”x22”, charcoal
The pieces that I am constructing are personal narratives of my childhood and my childhood imagination. These self-portrait figures captured in moments of play and imagination are a stage of personal symbols, ironies, familiar images, common stories, and universals. References to pop culture, Pop art, and historical ceramics and sculptures are intertwined within the pieces I form. I want the stage I provide to provoke the viewer to participate in the act of briefly reflecting upon their past; to remember for only a minute a time of innocence, fantasy, ironies, and play.

1. Soldier
2. Memories of Flight

Thomas Parker
MFA Ceramics
BFA Ceramics, MED Curriculum and Instruction, BSEd K-12 Art Education, University of Missouri

The pieces that I am constructing are personal narratives of my childhood and my childhood imagination. These self-portrait figures captured in moments of play and imagination are a stage of personal symbols, ironies, familiar images, common stories, and universals. References to pop culture, Pop art, and historical ceramics and sculptures are intertwined within the pieces I form. I want the stage I provide to provoke the viewer to participate in the act of briefly reflecting upon their past; to remember for only a minute a time of innocence, fantasy, ironies, and play.

1. Soldier
2. Memories of Flight
For several years I’ve walked past a small locust tree every day. I observe it growing and changing through time: it blooms, leaves out, sets pods and then goes dormant. The tree is a natural clock. How many Autumn days have I walked along and had things fall on me? Acorns, sumac, chestnuts, etc... The locust pods were designed to be eaten by animals that have been extinct for at least forty thousand years (woolly rhinoceros, giant sloths, mastodons.) At night, when the wild locusts bloom deep in the forest, the whole town smells like grape bubble gum. The flowers are white but they smell purple. The beekeepers in the area isolate the honey made during that short period of time. Locust honey is the lightest and most fragrant of the local honeys but the pods are highly toxic. My paintings come from observing and thinking about the rich ecology of information that springs up around a natural process.

1. Swamp, 36”x48”, oil
2. Full Moon Sushi Night, 36”x48”, oil
3. Slow Current, 28”x32”, oil
Most of my work takes a playful and humorous approach to design. Type works as image, and I generally like to work in print media, like posters and books. My penchant for complexity makes me create largely drawn-out posters that function as intriguing puzzle pieces. Collage and montage are an integral part of my process, which tends to be almost gestural or spontaneous, as evidenced by some of the pieces shown here.
Pauline is my grandmother. I was seven years old when she was diagnosed with diabetes in 1989. I knew that if she could, Pauline would make it so that no one would ever have to experience diabetes the way she has and continues to struggle with on a daily basis. My grandmother says, ‘This damned diabetes! I just hope my kids don’t ever get it. None of my grandmother had it, my mother had it, and four of her daughters had it, but I’m the worst one. It can take you away from here if you don’t watch yourself... in a New York minute.’ This realization of her mortality, as expressed in such statements, is something that is part of our human existence. We cannot turn away from this ever-present truth: someday we too shall pass from this place. In documenting Pauline’s life, someone who is reminded daily of her mortality because of her afflictions, we are forced to confront the fragility of physical life and our own existence in the face of Pauline.
The young lovers that I paint have healthy appetites and know no boundaries. The paintings explore a limitless human capacity for love, embodied in the sensation of color, form and gesture. This love has vitality, humor, sexuality, and an intimacy created by the humility and vulnerability of our own bodies. I wedge my central characters into threatening environments. Their presence only momentarily anchors the painting’s search for stability.

1. Mudslide, 72”x54”, oil
2. Salamina, 70”x70”, oil
3. Dara, 60”x48”, oil
There is a complicity between the viewer and the artist when the subject is something exotic. An image that evokes the exotic has more to do with reflecting a bit of the viewer’s own fantasy back at them, and less to do with accurately portraying a foreign culture. When I watch a belly dancing performance, I know the performer might not be from some distant location and might not be wearing real silks and jewels. I know her style of dance may bear little resemblance to its original form or presentation, but if she’s a good dancer, I’m transported by the performance just as thoroughly. I want my paintings to invite that same kind of suspended disbelief.

1. Climbing Duet, 72"x54", oil on linen
2. Zills, 70"x70", oil on linen
3. Untitled, 60"x48", oil on linen
"What if" is a good question, I think. What if I was taller? Would that make me different inside? What if I was five years old? A five year old doesn’t think before they simply do whatever pops into their head. Like kicking in the lake just to see the water splash. What if my body was female, or a horse, or a bird? What if the room I’m in is an illusion and the picture hanging on the wall is real?

Delightful as curious exploration may be, however, there is something else that drives me. I want to capture those emotional states that we all have as humans. Moments of being that elude verbal description. How does humor make sadness more poignant? Or sadness give humor more depth? How can loneliness be so starkly personal and yet utterly universal? And why does art always have to be so damn serious?
For me, the most appealing part of the design process is the development of an idea into a mature concept and an effective end product, whether that product is in the form of printed matter or electronic media. The mental challenge of bringing an idea into a visual format is as appealing to me as the physical creation of the piece itself. Design to me is not a passive activity; it requires careful thought and the ability to adapt to changing needs and tools. Although much of my design work involves the use of computers to write code, create graphics, or design a layout, I also enjoy the manual and “dirty” work involved with letterpress design. Getting my hands dirty with ink, handling and choosing paper, manually setting type and creating images that can be printed on the press is a part of the creative process that cannot be completely replaced by a computer program. I’m thankful for the opportunities the MFA Graphic Design program at IU Bloomington has offered and the wonderful faculty that I’ve been lucky enough to work with while here.
Annie Wedler
MFA Painting
MFA Painting, Missouri State University

The extreme can feel so real and unreal at the same time. I love the adventure of human interaction augmented by the process of growing and trying to make it through life. The people in my work are at odds with each other, or their situations, creating a mixture of complicated feelings. I like balancing the fun of chaos with the joy and torture of intimacy while considering solitude as a sanctuary and a penance. I try to express this by combining the dangerous with the whimsical. A painting becomes reexamined and distilled into what it is to be social beings with the challenges and rewards of sharing the experiences of life.

1. Raft Bed, 72”x60”, oil
2. Fish Dinner (Middle Child), oil
3. The Explorers, oil
In the Flesh, for the Senses

By Daniel Desi

As the author of this catalog essay, I find myself in a strange situation that is probably quite common. Because of scheduling constraints, I’ve written these first few paragraphs having only encountered the work of the 32 Indiana University MFA candidates in reproduction. Although not ideal viewing conditions, one could argue that this reflects a relevant and important aspect of the contemporary art world, where the number of digital images available to you get some distance from the inherently contradictory history and the present moment. And yet, the moment of the digital maelstrom, but rather the more traditional massive stream of internet information. It’s a familiar idea that reproductions provide their originals to such an extent that the originals act as copies of their copies, or even become concepts rather than objects. Of course, one can imagine a theory that would exaggerate the inherent thorny issue for artists. I joke with friends about how our works, no matter what medium, end up as pixels, and in turn, lose their autonomy. That is, all we are able to see rather than read, understood in terms of senses as much as the mind. It reminds me of Peter Schjeldahl’s assessment of the current Courbet painting retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He writes that Courbet’s deep involvement with the messy, fluid materiality of his medium serves as the perfect “therapy for a bodiless society of cybernetic narcissisms”. And, as such, that our digital images are, in turn, how much I look forward to the chance to see these works and think about the ways to build imaginative image-worlds while never letting go of the tough opacity and self-consciousness perfected by twentieth century abstraction.

Megan Abajian renders, with the luminous clarity of internal light, anthropomorphic figures that can’t help but make it all into balance with a strong sense of abstract design. Megan shifts from volumetric rendering to flatness, pristine surfaces to collaged physical texture, and brings into play its full range of abstraction and figurative narratives to both reveal and interfere. In a similar way, but to very different effect, Suzy Schiene’s figurative narratives are realized in energetic fields of painterly bravura, where a scruffy or splatter doubles as a rock surface or passage of fabric. Sometimes based on real people in an intimate scenario, Suzy infuses her stories with conflict and longing. There’s no distance or irony, no exorcism about dramatic effect. Her figures writhe and reach for each other and something more ambiguous: perhaps they register the tension and speed of Schien’s process, as they are in the act of painting themselves into her passionately unstable world. Elise Schweitzer’s bold and streetwise brushwork flits with wildness and yet is always kept in control, defining volume, light, texture, and space. While her figures seem anchored in some sort of receding or playing, the real wonderment is in the process: a virtuosity of touch that simultaneously makes the painter apparent (as in, I can see how she made that) and mysterious (as in, how in the world did she pull that off?).

Meghan Ablajan, with the luminous clarity of internal light, anthropomorphic figures that can’t help but make it all into balance with a strong sense of abstract design. Megan shifts from volumetric rendering to flatness, pristine surfaces to collaged physical texture, and brings into play its full range of abstraction and figurative narratives to both reveal and interfere. In a similar way, but to very different effect, Suzy Schiene’s figurative narratives are realized in energetic fields of painterly bravura, where a scruffy or splatter doubles as a rock surface or passage of fabric. Sometimes based on real people in an intimate scenario, Suzy infuses her stories with conflict and longing. There’s no distance or irony, no exorcism about dramatic effect. Her figures writhe and reach for each other and something more ambiguous; perhaps they register the tension and speed of Schien’s process, as they are in the act of painting themselves into her passionately unstable world. Elise Schweitzer’s bold and streetwise brushwork flits with wildness and yet is always kept in control, defining volume, light, texture, and space. While her figures seem anchored in some sort of receding or playing, the real wonderment is in the process: a virtuosity of touch that simultaneously makes the painter apparent (as in, I can see how she made that) and mysterious (as in, how in the world did she pull that off?).

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Elegantly reductive works allow for a random in, and voyeurs of, the ambient music of a crowd. Chan’s hollowed ceramic rocks, viewers become participants event. As sound bounces around the room and inside the embedded microphones turn the gallery (and particularly installations of cast rocks with probably even flirt with, Matusek’s fallen figurines. Oursler’s muttering mutants would be certainly befriend, and a challenge to the ill-defined “craft” and “progressive” color and surface, belies a flickering, animated presence of or slumped symmetrically in monochrome white ceramic. Chris Matusek’s having serious fun with it, something that the fashion and over-the-top theatrical, excessively ornamental, and based objects. Lester undermines the typical status signifiers championing bodily “defects” as inspiration for beautiful design, haute couture fashion, and social commentary, constructions. They are visually striking hybrids of furniture utility and their undoing enter Holly Lester’s iconic as shapes (“vase” or “cup”), the fault lines imply at vessels’ ability to contain. While the pots remain relatively heightened, cinematic way. Otherworldly quality of his objects feel very real in a with his astounding control of the medium, making the work reductive, industrialized aesthetics of minimalism with hybrid, and ultimately critiquing nature. While it would be tempting to analyze their constructions. They are visually striking hybrids of furniture and light, encourage belief in impossible objects (is it make hyperbolic) the mantra of an aspiring designer. When grouped with the rest of her professional accomplishments, the overall effect is one of anxiety underneath the well-managed surface; a less for, and struggle with, the endless expectations of self-improvement and aesthetic perfection embedded in a totally designed life. Michael J. Stamper’s promotional packages detonate very differently, but also convey and resilience towards the nature of his profession. Stamper’s “Octane 93” presents a maltov cocktail sold in the language of an alcoholic recreational beverage. This is a collection of two extremes—a commercial product meant to find a pleasing-soothing lifeline, and an ace high weapon usually associated with violent revolutionary spheres. Stamper deftly uses the language of design culture to critique the marketing of disturbing lifelines, using visual smartness with social engagement to reflect on how and what we are selling and sold.

Steve Backhus also approaches a high-low collision theme, both in medium and subject: a series based on Sean Salyard’s sort of combination that keeps a rarefied art tradition and robins to having such robust community in that there isn’t enough space to write about every artist in the group, but at least here, not only because of the consistent level of outstanding quality, but also because of the diversity of projects made for a lot of apples v. oranges comparisons. This is a healthy sign for an MFA program, as it reflects the increasingly eclectic range of practices in the contemporary art world. Art is true for almost all the work I saw in Bloomington: it was significantly better in person than in reproduction. I want to give particular appreciation to Megan for being my host and time cop. Moreover, I wish to thank (to be) former students of IU for the great conversations and the opportunity to experience the unique presence of art made for the senses.

Daniel Dove is a painter who currently lives and works in San Luis Obispo. C. He received his MFA from the University of California, Davis in 2003. He has exhibited in a number of solo shows and group exhibitions throughout California, and is currently represented by Cherry and Martin gallery in New York. He has recently been featured in Art in America, Ars Ceramica, Los Angeles Time, and artforum.com.
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The Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Arts
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Megan Abajian, Catalog Committee Chair, Editor
Gregory Scott, Designer
Sim Luttin, Suzy Schireson, Fundraising
Brad Wicklund, Advising
Special Thanks to Tim Mather for his advocacy of this project and to all the faculty and students who donated artwork and time towards the catalog fundraising auction.

Thesis Schedule
March 25 – April 6, 2008
Megan Abajian
Shu Mei Chan
MacKenzie Freeman
Chris Martinek
Shweta Rapagapal
Sue Slade
Sue Schireson
Michael Stamper
Anna Walker
April 8 – April 20, 2008
Paul Bohensky
Jill Capozza
Melissa Falz
David Hahn
Lauren Haber
Isaak Kim
Holly Letter
Michael Lefly
Mike McCarthy
Eva Nikolova
Elie Schenker
April 22 – May 4, 2008
Stephen Barlett
Joe Benefield
Zack Dehdashti
Shelby Givens
Tim Fettro
Shelby Givens
Joshua Higgins
Hyun Jung Kang
Sim Luttin
Kevin O. Mosney
Thomas Rohrer
Sarah Pearce
Gregory Scott