ON THE EDGE

Master of Fine Arts Exhibition
AQUA Art Miami 2014

Georgia State University
ERNEST G. WELCH
SCHOOL OF ART & DESIGN
PAINTING. DRAWING
TEXTILES
MFA PHOTOGRAPHY
PRINTMAKING
GRAPHIC DESIGN
INTERIOR DESIGN
SCULPTURE. CERAMICS
aqua
art miami
DECEMBER 3-7 | 2014
The Ernest G. Welch School of Art & Design and Georgia State University are honored to present this year’s M.F.A. candidate exhibition, On the Edge: Conversations from Atlanta at Aqua Art Miami 2014 — the emerging international art fair during Miami Art Week. This is GSU’s fourth consecutive year participating in this exciting satellite fair, now in its tenth edition. Once again, the works produced by our graduate students offer a glimpse of what is possible when afforded the luxury of time, focus and unfettered exploration. Collaborative in nature, the art fair experience is a marquee highlight of our M.F.A. program that provides real world practice for our studio artists, as well our graduate art history candidates who contribute to the editorial content of the catalog. Additionally, I would like to extend our appreciation to Graphic Design M.F.A. candidate Carrie Brown who designed this year’s catalog that includes an insightful essay by Erin Dziedzic, Curator of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. I would like to give special thanks to Erin for taking the time to visit the campus, do studio visits with each of the artists and for writing the catalog essay.

Located in downtown Atlanta, the Ernest G. Welch School of Art & Design seeks to provide a challenging and cross-disciplinary studio setting where a diversity of experiences, backgrounds and talents are put forth and tested — in the studios, in the classrooms and on the streets. This urban experience has informed the ideas, messages and approaches of each artist and scholar. Under the guidance of established faculty who are all active in the contemporary art and design world, the programs at the Welch School seek to cultivate a level of inquiry and commentary that is unique to each student. The 2015 M.F.A. candidates have used the past three years both to build on and to deviate from established practices in their respective fields. It has been a journey fraught with excitement, angst, clarity, uncertainty and passion — a passion for learning, for personal exploration and, ultimately, for making. These students of Art History, Ceramics, Drawing, Painting, Printmaking, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Photography and Sculpture have achieved much; but more importantly, they stand on the edge of even greater possibilities.

The Welch School of Art & Design is proud to present the works of its outstanding 2015 M.F.A. degree candidates at Aqua Art Miami 2014.

Michael White, Director
Welch School of Art & Design
Georgia State University
The graduate program of the Ernest G. Welch School of Art & Design offers three degree programs at the Masters level:

Master of Arts in Art History
Master of Art Education
Master of Fine Arts in Studio


The overarching goal of our graduate program is to conduct rigorous scholarly and studio based activities that foster challenging conceptual, technical and intellectual development. Our programs offer a professional training ground for artists, designers, art historians and art teachers. These full time programs, encourage excellence through experimentation, cross-disciplinary pursuits and critical analyses of existing ideas about art and art history.

For more information, please visit artdesign.gsu.edu
ON THE EDGE

Conversations from Atlanta

by ERIN DZIEDZIC
Curator & Head of Adult Programs, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO

This broad range of works by eight M.F.A. candidates at the Ernest G. Welch School of Art & Design at Georgia State University in Atlanta reveals the artists’ shared interest in layering material and techniques and swathing the works in an air of mystery. As we peel back the layers, the works engage with themes of self-identity, the tension between strength and vulnerability, and notions of change and transformation, ultimately coalescing in a group exhibition that speaks to the reserved energy that pre-emergent artists share as they ready for a future in the art world.

The unpredictable physical and psychological alterations of the body as self-portraiture are the focus of works by KELLY STEVENSON (ceramics). Her mixed media works allude to the sense of locating and leaving behind sources of personal strife. She takes great care to shape clay into small female figures that are then hidden beneath layers of sprayed and painted words, images and shapes. Everything is then coated with a layer of encaustic. The translucent skin-like appearance of the wax bars the viewer from a clear reading of the ambiguous text beneath while simultaneously suggesting the weight one bears while dealing with personal demons. The two-dimensional works recall the form of known Japanese artist Jun Kaneko’s massive ceramic heads. Like Kaneko, Stevenson uses shape and pattern to evoke emotions. In doing so, she discloses her works to a universal audience.

ION YAMAZAKI’s (sculpture) multimedia art practice is concerned with the cyclical patterns of the body’s strength and vulnerability. His 30 Days of Barefoot (2013) documents an endurance project in which he walked barefoot around the city of Atlanta for a month. Thirty ten-by-eight-inch images of the
bottom of his feet mounted linearly in sequence — one for each of the thirty days —
show the blisters, dirt and calluses caused by exposure to the harsh pavement. In the
final image the skin that was once soft and supple has grown a protective rough layer,
demonstrating the body’s ability to endure and recover. Yamazaki’s interactive piece at
Aqua Art Miami 2014 has a similar tone in the idea of building up and breaking down.
He plans to build a stepped pyramid-like structure using small chunks of two-by-fours,
rebuilding if and when it falls or is knocked down by visitors. He sees this cycle of building
and collapse as a metaphor for life’s patterns of ups and downs. Yamazaki welcomes
viewers’ assistance in rebuilding, suggesting that collaboration and documentation of
the artist’s personal processes become a universal, shared experience.

Tackling issue of queer identity in photographic portraits, CHARLES SNYDER’s
(photography) Dear Friends series sheds light on the artist’s vision of what he currently
perceives as ideal images of intimate relationships. He takes closely cropped photographs
of male couples — friends of his — in various embraces. The images render a genuine
tenderness accentuated by the complimentary palette and interlocking compositions of
the bodies. This series marks a distinct shift from the dominant and submissive aspect
of his own relationship, portrayed in the series Precious Little Queer. There, Snyder
plays the role of an effeminate childlike submissive dog to his unidentified butch male
master. His own participatory role as the subject of these images projects aspects of his
relationship onto the viewer, whereas the Dear Friends series situates him in the role of
observing others’ relationships.

LANE KETNER (drawing, painting and printmaking) pairs drawings of famous figures
whom he considers to be controversial, such as Ernest Hemingway, John Gotti and Chris
Farley, with objects meant to articulate the personality he perceives of those individuals.
Ketner draws small portraits with graphite and places them onto found objects such as a
laminate cafeteria tray and other random pieces of wood materials. Refusing to conform
to a specific style or medium, Ketner experiments with a range of elements outside of
an authentic scope of painting, reminiscent of the prolific German American artist Martin
Kippenberger. Ketner’s choice to cover some of his canvases in grey translucent plastic
bags is perhaps even an attempt to mask his own painting style or personality.

The subject of personal style greatly influences the work of RICKY WARREN (graphic
design). Warren blends sneaker culture and religion to lift up and work through the element
of fetishization present in both arenas. Photographing profile images of sneakers from
his own collection, Warren inserts distorted images of figures from religious paintings. By
combining iconic imagery from the past and present he emphasizes the sustainability of
“culting a brand.” Fetishization of religious figures and objects is sustained by the iconic
images that stand as place markers for devotion, as much as the focused advertising
image creates a desire amongst consumers. Through his visual pairings, Warren explores
the ever present and growing trend of the mash-ups of such spheres as art, fashion,
sports and hip-hop, which are part of larger conversations of a wider cultural influence
present in the work of artists like Kendell Carter, Wendy White or Kehinde Wiley.

LAUREN PETERSON’s (drawing, painting and printmaking) work deals with human
consumption and object use in a post-consumer realm. Using weaving, printmaking
and sculptural techniques, Peterson repurposes typically single-use materials, primarily
plastic bags, into more permanent containers. Woven together in a basket-like
structure, the cheap plastics develop more stable malleability — they stand on their
own but can be shaped to resemble new forms and new use. For example, Peterson
has created two small cylindrical vessel forms that are each about eight to ten inches
in diameter and approximately twelve inches wide or high depending on the
placement. Each is fabricated with light brown plastic grocery bags in a basket
weave fashion. One is placed upright on the floor and slumps and folds to look like a
wet paper bag. The other is turned on its side, against a wall with the opening facing
outward, resembling the gaping mouth of a suckerfish. The shadows cast by the newly
organic forms create a temporary imprint of the work in space that blurs the distinctions
between painting, printmaking, sculpture and environment in Peterson’s work much in the way Jessica Stockholder or Sarah Sze’s ephemeral installations of post-consumer objects leave traces of human behavior.

While Peterson’s materials and installations suggest the footprint of a human action, NICK ADAMS’ (drawing, painting and printmaking) paintings emphasize mechanization’s influence on text and the multiple. Adams’ large-scale pages resemble content from non-fiction technical texts (specialized text that correlates with subjects such as physics and chemistry). He uses a syntactical structure — a combination of patterns and rhythms found in letters and symbols — as well as the composition of pages derived from technical texts to create his own cryptic document. He re-creates a traditional serif typeface to mimic the impact and bleeding onto the page of older typewriter models and he rolls ink onto areas of the page where ink might smudge had the paper been run through an older model copy machine with a faulty drum. Making the page appear aged by the aid of manual and electronic machines, Adams suggests a broad spectrum of time in which the viewer has to contemplate the history of the document. Here we could read it as a mimetic object associated with Plato’s ideal thrice removed from its most perfect form, a meditation on the ways in which the copy or multiple is rendered in printmaking processes, or an exploration into notions of the abstract through a non-syntactical mode of visual language. Ultimately, this machine-aged piece of paper, with its scrambled letters and symbols bars the viewer from fully understanding the content and could be perceived as a map-like document for which the key has yet to be found.

In contrast to Adams’ individual indecipherable pages, WESLEY TERPSTRA’s (drawing, painting and printmaking) groupings of works lean on one another to form a dialogue. A monochromatic palette of soft greys, blues and roses pervade each of his painted images on paper or canvas, material-wrapped objects and woven pieces. They read as a montage where we catch glimpses of still domestic scenes and abstracted imagery forming what feels like a clouded memory reminiscent of many of the scenes that come in and out of focus in Julian Schnabel’s The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (2007). The sense of impermanence evoked in the light and ephemeral objects, such as newspaper and flowers in Terpstra’s oeuvre, underscores the notion that the artist views his salon-style compositions of multiple works as a living thing that can be endlessly rearranged.

This exhibition held in such close proximity to a major hub of the contemporary art world, during Miami Art Week, situates these students in an ideal position to forge new pathways into future dialogue. Having the opportunity to exhibit collectively at Aqua Art Miami 2014 is a valuable one for these young artists working primarily in their respective departments at the college — art history, ceramics, graphic design, painting, drawing, printmaking, photography and sculpture. They share a genuine interest in continuing to connect, work and exhibit across disciplines, the value of which will shape and assertively unfold the projects to come.
Ion Yamazaki creates relational and ephemeral works. He often relies on an element of chance in order to explore a bodily relationship to an environment, a physical task or to other people. In his piece, *Up and Down*, for instance, Yamazaki stacks pieces of wood into a staircase of ascending towers until the structure becomes too precarious and it collapses. As part of the performance, the artist invites bystanders to assist in the construction, thereby incorporating a cooperative element that is also structural, as the piece may grow taller than the artist can achieve alone. The repetition of stacking and collapsing metaphorically illustrates a sense of futility, while the assistance of others provides a corresponding need for connection common across human experience.

Similarly repetitive and relational, *30 Days of Barefoot* documents the artist’s daily, barefoot walks through Atlanta. Through the quotidian activity of walking, Yamazaki uses his own feet to capture and document the residual traces of the individual lives and activities of the city. Presented through a series of 30 photographs taken daily over 30 days, Yamazaki’s feet bear the traces of the city’s inhabitants while also documenting the artist’s own movements. The visible emergence and re-healing of blisters on his feet over the duration of the performance indicate both the vulnerability and strength of the artist’s body when subjected to the public urban space. Through his socially engaged work, Yamazaki’s work transforms the viewer into both a participant and a subject, and the body into an experiential archive.

**30 Days of Barefoot**

inkjet print mounted on foam board

22" wide / 10" tall

ionyamazaki.com
Kelly Stevenson’s ceramic work is personally driven. Her figurative sculptures, which she creates with varying degrees of individualism, convey emotional turmoil. This is clear in the figures’ distraught expressions, as well as in the copious amounts of indistinguishable writing and drawing Stevenson adds to their surfaces, an allusion to their inner unrest. The lack of color is also significant, as it mirrors the lack of color in the figures’ emotional world. When color is included, bright pink for instance, Stevenson intends it to illustrate the individuals breaking free from their despair.

Currently, Stevenson is inspired by the urban landscape of Atlanta, which is reflected in the graffiti style of her work. Having grown up in Montana, the artist finds the city pushes her out of her comfort zone. She has lately been expanding her media beyond clay to include encaustic, wood and acrylic, as well as craft-based materials such as fabric, yarn and string. She is also interested in exploring the relationship between two and three-dimensions. All of these aspects can be seen in the works included at Aqua Art Miami 2014.

**KELLY STEVENSON**

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**Ungrounded**
ceramic stoneware, wood, encaustic, acrylic, grafite
25.5” wide / 33” tall / 15” deep
stevensonceramics.com
One might refer to Nick Adams as an information junkie. Outside of his creative pursuits, he has interests in science and history, spending much of his time reading technical texts from the fields of physics and engineering, specifically. He describes his recent body of work as a coming-to-terms with the inevitability that the consumption of information — whether scientific, historical or otherwise — is always compromised: by the effects of time, by its specialty-specific language and delivery systems, and by the relative cognitive abilities of any one person. To address this inevitability, Adams creates paintings featuring fake text designed to approximate the technical language used in the manuals he reads. Using oil, acrylic and printer ink, he also creates images that simulate the appearance of photocopied texts. This effect lends credibility to his painted documents, suggesting that they bear legitimate information that is valuable enough to have been duplicated and preserved, but that ultimately is unreadable.

Though the original documents on which he bases his work are peer-reviewed and from authoritative sources, Adams believes that the veracity of their information is compromised once they enter the purview of someone outside the field. Since he is not a specialist in particle physics, engineering or history, the artist finds his attempts, as an outsider, to access their highly technical information as pleasantly futile as it is frustrating. It is the co-existence of these experiences that he seeks to approximate for viewers.
Inspired by the cultural phenomenon of sneaker fanatics, graphic designer Warren acknowledges how the marketing efforts of large corporations such as Nike drive the prices and cultural behaviors of consumerism. The motivation behind his designs is the exalted and idolatrous tenor of contemporary consumer behavior, which he feels is frequently encouraged by the marketing strategies of big businesses. In his own work, for instance, he addresses the cultish sensibility that Nike sneakers inspire in buyers. Self-identifying with the psychology behind this sensibility, Warren draws on his own consumer practices, in this case using a favorite sneaker from his personal collection. In Sacriposite, the glorified sneaker, personifies a cult celebrity, but its grunginess also draws awareness to the violence often associated with the exclusive release of limited edition sneakers.

A trinity of ideas drives Warren’s work: the iconic presentation of the object; the consumer idolatry inspired by its marketing; and the real world violence that results from the combination of the first two. By reworking the iconic images of Nike and Air Jordan, Warren tackles the negative effects stemming from current marketing tactics and challenges consumers to reevaluate their brand loyalties.
Charles D. Snyder’s artistic practice entails an exploration of identity. Through his work, the artist navigates the influences of his conservative southern heritage, his progressive queer sexuality and his masculinity. This body of work was inspired by David Deitcher’s book, *Dear Friends*, which highlights the physical intimacy captured in vintage photographic portraits of male couples. Drawn to the points of contact between the male bodies (limbs draping each other, heads inclined, cheeks resting on shoulders), Snyder began to examine his own life within the context of this book. He became interested in drawing attention to moments of physical intimacy among his friends. Snyder intends his photographic images to highlight the quieter, non-sexual side of queer intimacy as a counterpoint to the hyper-sexualizing of queer men within American socio-political discourse.

**AREA OF RESEARCH**  Photography  
**UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTION**  University of South Carolina  
**PLACE OF BIRTH**  Columbia, SC

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**CHARLIE D. SNYDER**

**Untitled (Christian & Josh), 2013**  
archival pigment print  
20" wide / 20" tall  
charlesdsnyder.com
Compelled by discarded objects and materials, Wesley Terpstra is interested in preserving them through his paintings. He imagines his treatment of these seemingly insignificant but intimate moments of encounter as similar to words that come together to create a poem. Like individual words, his individual observations of a surface, of light and its effects, of the materiality of an object or the colors in a shadow, all have their own meanings and potential as subjects of his paintings. Like a poem, the coming together of these individual elements gives further meaning to the object.

Terpstra works in watercolor and oil, using the materiality of these media to explore ephemeral moments of beauty caught through careful observation. Through his trompe l’oeil paintings, he captures the intended purpose of an object, as well as something of its life after its purpose has expired. Often, the worn and faded surface of an object initially draws viewers into the work, while Terpstra’s formal treatment sustains their attention. Though representational, the work verges on monochromatic color-field painting. As Terpstra explains, painting is about paint regardless of subject matter. Paint allows him to capture what is striking in the forgotten or overlooked. The potential conversations that happen between his individual paintings are also important: as they are arranged and re-arranged, the paintings speak to the variety of effects that can be revealed in close looking.
Lane Ketner explores the biographies of controversial if not altogether infamous public figures in order to question the validity of applying rigid good/bad binaries to notable subjects in US culture. He chooses people whose commonality rests on their historical notoriety, as well as their diminished contemporary relevance. By combining traditional charcoal portrait drawing techniques with the exploratory elements of provisional painting and abstraction, Ketner constructs tributes to the depicted subjects and attempts to create a formal diversion from their history as polarizing public figures. Many of his works include found relics, which the artist employs as memorials invoking the subjects’ relative obscurity today. Double Hemingway, for example, presents two drawn portraits of the American author on opposing planes: one austere, presented atop two stacked wooden surfaces, which evenly frame the image, and the other adhered sideways to a plastic, wood-grain printed serving tray complemented by a band of bright orange paint.

In addition to combining colorful and high-contrast areas of paint with muted charcoal passages, in some instances Ketner also obscures the legibility of his works by wrapping them in grey plastic. The plastic blurs and dulls the barely visible images underneath, an effect that connotes a concealed or fading memory. Ketner’s visual rhetoric, incorporating both nostalgic elements of black and white portraiture and incorporated objects, combined with notions of memorialization implicit in their forms and presentation, evoke a reconsideration of the complexities of human biography and of narrowly projected public identities.

*Double Hemingway*
mixed media
17.5” wide / 18.5” tall / depth varies
Lauren Peterson is interested in the discarded, residual elements that fill our periphery, the “stuff” we consign to negative spaces once its intended use is exhausted. She pursues the idea that we are not only defined by space, but we also define it through the accumulation and eventual abandonment of resources and products. Inspired by waste as a latent cultural infrastructure, Peterson collects cast-off items and repurposes them into artistic materials: string, bent wire, shredded paper and twisted plastics are meticulously woven into installations, discrete objects and drawn manifestations that demarcate space through line and form. Through these works, the artist directs our attention to the boundaries where images become objects, objects become images and transience yields to permanence. Her works become self-contained regenerative systems that defy the built-in obsolescence of mass consumption and poke fun at our current cultural value system. Through her material alchemy, Peterson re-contextualizes single use objects in order to point to their unnecessary yet pervasive presence.

Installation view with Waste Bin and White Picket Fence
plastic bags, chicken wire, house paint with mixed media
variable, 54” wide / 32” tall / 32” deep as shown
laurenmichellepeterson.com
Art Historians

**Lauren Browning** is pursuing her M.A. in Contemporary Art History. She received her B.F.A. from the University of West Georgia. Her research interests include the portrayal of motherhood or lack thereof, the representation of the female body at-large and the idea of the crafting woman. She contributed the catalog entries on Lauren Peterson and Charlie Snyder.

**Meta Gary** is currently completing an M.A. in Contemporary Art History with a focus on socially engaged art. She received a B.A. in Studio Art from the University of Georgia and an M.F.A. in Graphic Design from Georgia State University. She wrote the catalog entries on Lane Ketner and Ion Yamazaki.

**Stephanie Jackson** received her B.A. in Art History from Florida State University in 2011. She worked as a tour guide at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens from 2012-2013. She is pursuing an M.A. with a specialization in Ancient Egyptian Art, with a focus on Old Kingdom sculpture. She wrote the catalog entry on Kelly Stevenson.

**Brooke McGee** is completing an M.A. in Early Modern Northern Art History with a focus on religious and devotional art. Her thesis research is on the artist Geertgen tot Sint-Jans. She contributed the catalog entry on Ricky Warren.

**Brianne Sharpe** is pursuing her M.A. in Art History with a focus on the theological concept of the concordia, the acquisition of ancient pagan artifacts by Vatican figures, as well as the historiography surrounding women artists and figures of the time. She contributed the catalog entries on Nick Adams and Wesley Terpstra.
With over 14 years of professional practice experience, Carrie Wallace Brown has developed a clear philosophy for her work—graphic design lives at the intersection of art and visual communication and must translate to the masses. Inspired by the art form at an early age as her high school newspaper’s layout designer, Carrie went on to obtain her undergraduate degree in Graphic Design. With a body of work ranging from emerging, boutique businesses to global, Fortune 500 companies, she has immersed herself in her clients’ businesses to be a partner in meeting their visual communication needs. Through Carrie’s diverse collaborations with clients, students and faculty, she has fostered a multi-disciplinary design approach, innovatively crossing media forms and leveraging her crisp and clean style.

**CARRIE W. BROWN**

ON THE EDGE, Master of Fine Arts Exhibition, Aqua Art Miami 2014
catalog design
carriewbrown.com
The Importance of Being Ernest.

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- M.F.A. accepted students receive full tuition waivers and monthly stipends as part of teaching assistantships.
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- M.F.A. students collaborate with renowned faculty in a diverse and vibrant urban setting.
- Numerous M.A. in Art History and M.A.Ed. research assistantships are granted with equal benefits.

Application deadline:

*January 15, 2015*

For further inquiries, please contact Graduate Director, Dr. John Decker, at 404-413-5229 or jdecker@gsu.edu.

For more information, please visit

*artdesign.gsu.edu*
Many people contributed a great deal of time and energy to the Ernest G. Welch School of Art & Design’s exhibition at Aqua Art Miami 2014. Sincere thanks go to Erin Dziedzic for her excellent essay; Joe Peragine, Associate Professor; Susan Richmond, Associate Professor; Craig Drennen, Assistant Professor; Tim Flowers, Senior Lecturer; and Tony Mangle, Public Relations.

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