

Support Documents Dialog; j.frede & Joshua Petker – June 2012

With exhibitions approaching for both artists j.frede and Joshua Petker have been having a personal dialog about the work each were making for their up coming shows and decided to create this document to further explore the ideas behind their new works.

Joshua Petker ; Adrift

June 9th, 2012

La Basse, Projects

Culver City, CA

lebasseprojects.com

joshuapetker.com

j.frede ; Heirlooms

June 22nd, 2012

Pirate Contemporary

Denver, Co

pirateartonline.org

jfrede.com

(Two-person show alongside Amanda Gordon Dunn - amandagordondunn.com)

[j.frede]

The paintings I have seen for your up coming show both in my studio visits with you and what you have sent me seem to deal primarily with the subject of distress which is represented with beautiful washes of color creating both a harmony and a juxtaposition of the appealing and the anxious, i.e.: The lovers picnic, The Monster, sinking ships, rouge waves. Do you feel this is a fair assessment of what you are representing in your new body of work? give us some further insight to your perspective of what is driving this body of work.

[joshua petker]

There is an element of distress to the paintings that is intentional but the starting point for this work was my interest in vastness. Not vastness simply in terms of pondering our place in the universe but a vastness felt by simply considering time, matter, and mortality. I uncovered a quote by Anna Freud that said, "We are imprisoned in the realm of life, like a sailor on his tiny boat, on an infinite ocean" and though I found this quote well after I began painting it is the same illustrative metaphor that I had in my mind informing the direction of my new work.

I find some of your new work a bit unsettling, J. Frede. The security sculptures especially interest me and I hope you don't mind me saying they are unsettling. I believe your use of the rope itself stands as a symbol of the human being's adaptive inventiveness at finding ways to use nature and physics to understand and harness the physical world. To make it a better place to exist. Yet, the broken stool sculpture, the gun sculpture, and the clock sculpture are all unsettling. Seeing functional objects so seemingly out-of-sorts is interesting to me. Am I making a fair assessment of this series?

[j.frede]

Unsettling is a fair reaction to the new (Heirlooms) works, they deal with the idea of objects retaining memories that are only accessible to people whom have a past with the object. In the artists statement I wrote "we can have strong reactions at the mere sight or smell of items whose history we can recall and the same objects are static to anyone else who sees them with no personal association." While this something all of us are already aware of none of us are free from the reactions of memories, for me the smell of a wet street takes me so quickly back to my childhood and riding my bike after a rainstorm I instantly feel homesick and frozen if just for a single second. The visual of the knotted masses appearing as gripping fists or growths is intended to display ownership and/or enslavement depending on the memory (good and/or bad).

Vastness as a muse is surely both easy to become obsessed with and a fleeting lover, with mortality being maybe the only factor that restricts us from vastness ourselves. I remember conversations we had as you were beginning to work on ideas for this show and you mentioned being interested in making space paintings, and as you have boiled down your direction you have refined your focus to the sea in some of the paintings which is as vast and untamable as the cosmos but is something we can touch, fall into and relate to as human creatures.

[joshua petker]

I am interested in your approach to memories. How does one create a piece of art that speaks to this abstract concept of memory as a 'thing' that exists only in one individual consciousness yet can be shared universally as an experience we all have separately together. Even in the instance of remembering something like, say, the 9/11 attacks in New York, we each have our own memory of the moment. How do you create a piece of work that speaks about this abstract part of consciousness in a way accessible to everyone when the power of the memory is its individual relationship to the consciousness? i.e., your example of a rainy street and what it means to you where as to me the same smell might lead me to recall a car-crash on a rainy day and is thus a stressful smell for me to 'remember'. We will experience the piece of art differently together, right? Is this of concern to your concept?

[j.frede]

I would not think its a concern because the these works are specific objects that are less abstract or broad reaching to say a smell or date (9/11) so I feel they are more concentrated and while the viewers of these specific pieces will not have a memory reaction it may cause them to consider objects they have either at home or at say their mothers or grandmothers house that takes them back to another time.

Could you tell us a little about how your interest in philosophy has affected your current body of work and how you balance beauty with the absurd? i.e.: the sad face painting and what your thought are on this balance?

[joshua petker]

Yes, but before that I want to say that I think you are accurate in your assessment of your new work leading one to re-consider objects in their own life and memory. That happened to me just now as I was thinking about your work. But will you elaborate more on the importance of the knotted masses in your work? They are both conceptually intriguing and atheistically beautiful; and they lead one to know immediately that something beyond memory is going on here.

My interest in philosophy stems from an interest in existentialism and the absurd. I imagine you're familiar with Camus' assertion that the only real serious question in life is whether to kill yourself or not. Though I've made my own personal decision in regards to that question, and I have chosen life, I have still never been able to move past the conflict. In my work I explore that balance, between beauty and melancholia.

I'm interested in examining life in all of its absurdity. I wouldn't label myself a melancholic but I am a romantic and I strive for romantic purpose before our melancholic end. I've come to the conclusion that there is no purpose outside of what we create for ourselves and that the examined life is more rewarding than the unexamined life. I intend that my new work lead people to thoughts they don't generally enjoy thinking about - i.e., dying alone, dying at all, etc., but that the aesthetics, color, and humor in my work make people smile about it while thinking about it. Tragedy and death do not necessarily have to be bad things.

[j.frede]

The knotted masses deal with the idea of security, obsessive security and perceived security and the death of function that occurs as a byproduct of these actions and reactions. The rope is rendered useless from other possible functions do to excessive knotting, while in this context I realize they do take on a new function as an art object but my intention is to consider the death of intended function and reason through excessive protection. They also trigger thoughts of tension and possibly stress, which corresponds nicely with the idea of neurotic security measures. In this instance they are nervously grasping objects from the past and standing alone with nothing to secure.

I know you dealt with these subjects (death, beauty, absurdity, the temporary) in your *Celluloid Constellations* body of work, which seemed to me to be a sea change from the previous work I had seen of yours and more directly tied in conceptual elements to your paintings. With *Adrift* you have beautifully combined your color techniques, old world imagery and the ever-looming comrade *Loneliness*. From the playful monster to walking on water to the sinking of ships it seems you have gracefully accomplished the balance between happiness and despair (and since you are a romantic I should point out that in love happiness and despair can often be the same feeling).

Glad we had a chance to have a back and forth about our shows, can't wait to see yours next weekend.

[joshua petker]

I always enjoy talking art with you, J.Frede. I'm looking forward to your show.

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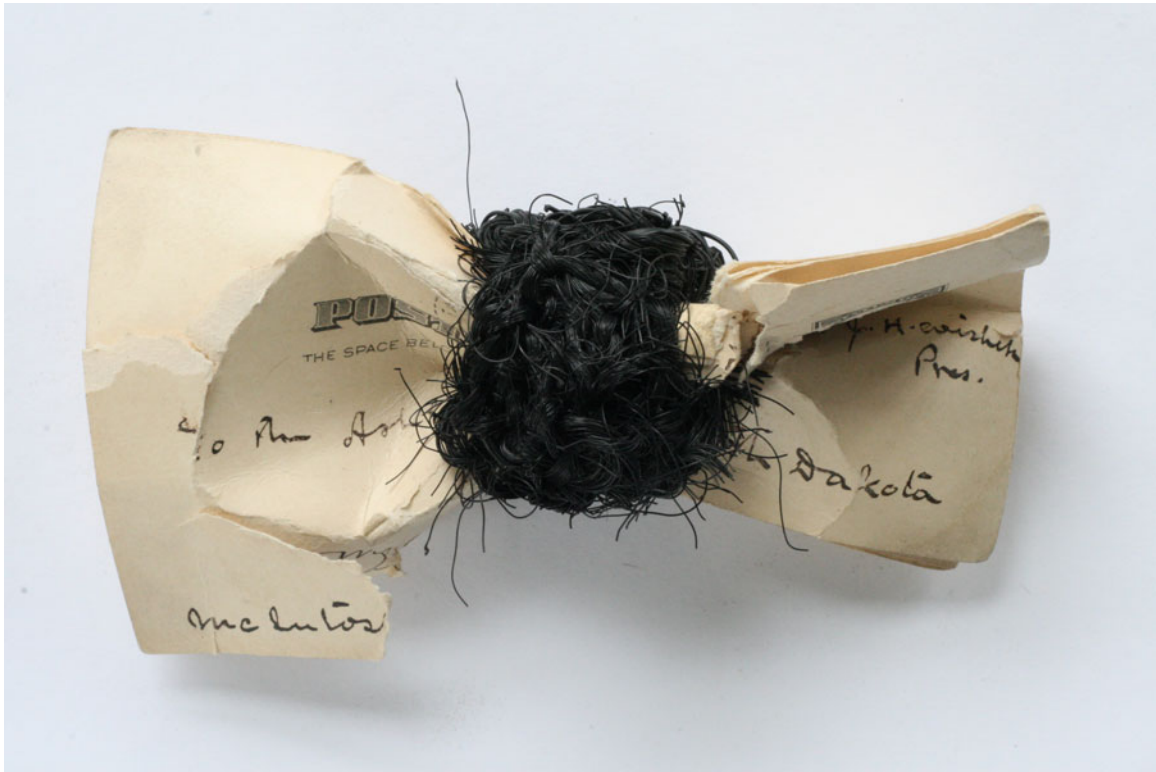
Joshua Petker, Untitled (Adrift), 2012, acrylic and ink on canvas, 36x48"



j.frede, Weisse, 2012, wood and rope, 24x16x16"



Joshua Petker, Untitled (Beached), 2012, acrylic and ink on canvas, 36x36"



j.frede, Friday Morning, 2012, postcards and rope, 1x3x5"



Joshua Petker, Confidence, 2012, acrylic and ink on canvas, 36x36"



j.frede, Großmutter, 2012, Bavarian China and 180' of gold wire, 3x8x8"



Joshua Petker, Untitled (Monster), 2012, acrylic and ink on canvas, 36x36"



j.frede, Sivells, 2012, Arrows, Rope and Leather, 4x30x4"