

2012

Docu-Commencement

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Kay Healy

James Johnson

Jennifer Levonian

Gilbert Plantinga

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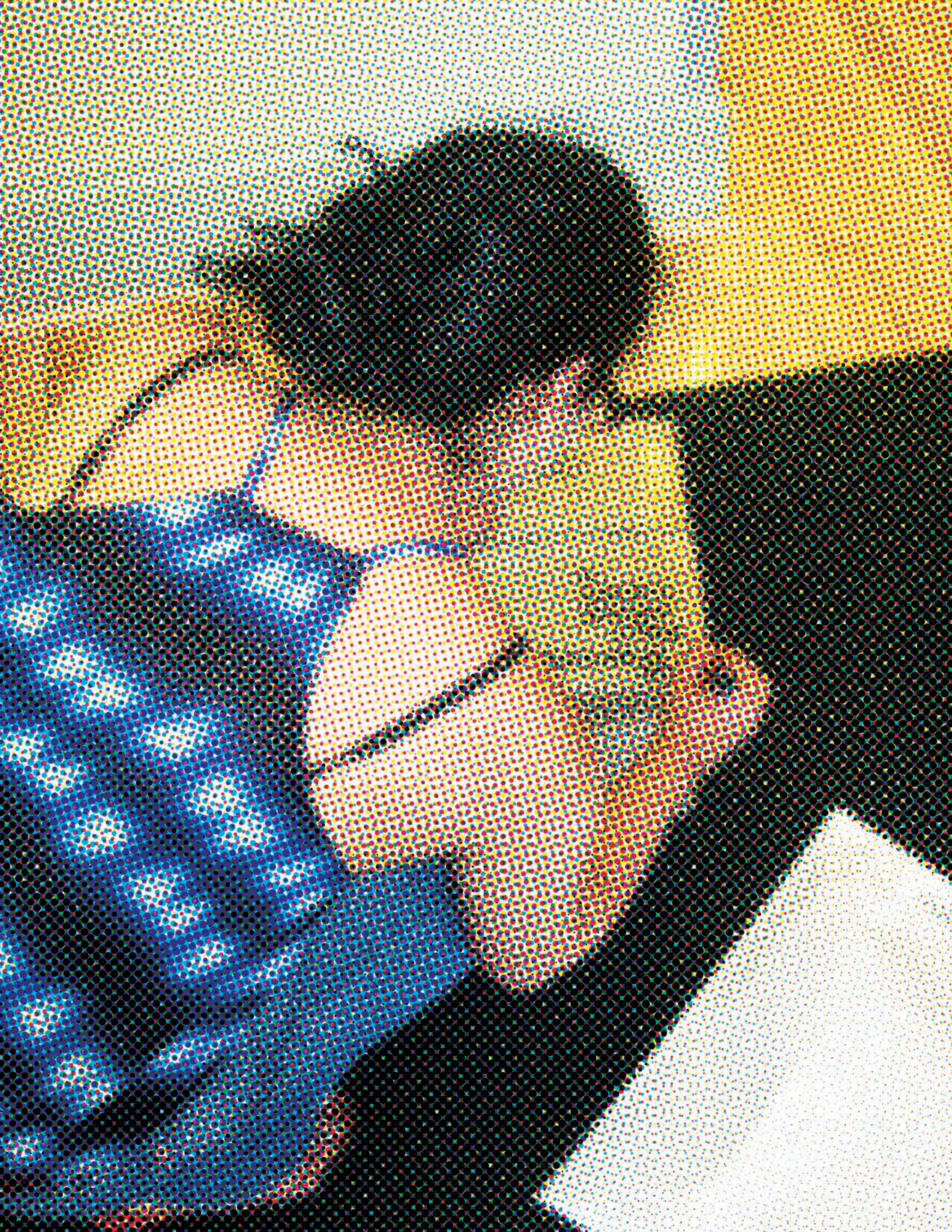
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Docu-Commencement:

Kay Healy, James Johnson, Jennifer Levonian,
and Gilbert Plantinga

New print, photographic, sculptural, video, and installation
works based on intensive artist residencies held during
Bryn Mawr College's 2012 Commencement weekend.

October 25–December 14, 2012

Bryn Mawr College

Class of 1912 Rare Book Room, Canaday Library

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Friends of the Bryn Mawr College Library.

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Cover: details from project studies/works in progress by (top to bottom) Kay Healy,
James Johnson, Jennifer Levonian, and Gilbert Plantinga.

Inside front cover: image derived from Shari Osborn, *Oregon*, 2012.

Inside back cover: Shari Osborn, *Untitled (Twin Mirrors)*, 2012.

Back cover: Whitman Carroll, *Special Collections Project Crew*, 2012.

All works 2012; digital images; dimensions variable. All works courtesy the artists; works
by Jennifer Levonian courtesy the artist and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia.

Introduction



Shari Osborn, *Untitled (Dumbwaiter)*, 2012.

This brochure accompanies *Docu-Commencement*, an exhibition of new works by four artists whom Bryn Mawr College hosted for 24-hour residencies spanning the weekend of Commencement 2012: printmaker/sculptor Kay Healy (Philadelphia), new media/installation/sculptor James Johnson (Philadelphia), painter/ animator Jennifer Levonian (Philadelphia), and large-format photographer Gilbert Plantinga (New York).

Docu-Commencement was designed to connect members of the campus community with the work of visual artists, to provide students and faculty in the arts and humanities with sustained access to a cross-section of contemporary art practice, to provide the college with points of engagement with regional and national contemporary artists, and to generate new visual perspectives on the educational goals of the college.

After several months of pre-residency planning, the residency phase of the project in May 2012 was a blur of activity: Commencement swirled around us as the four artists and their designated student ambassadors roved the campus day and night while staff and our project coordinator provided logistical, technical, and caloric support at a weekend-long “base camp” in the Lusty Cup café space on the lower level of Canaday Library. Students and other members of the community were anxious to share their views on larger meanings—and particular realities—of commencement with the artists, each of whom gathered his or her impressions of these events in different ways. James Johnson selectively recorded views and anecdotes in high-definition video and a small notebook; Jennifer Levonian used a camera as a highly efficient record of incidents, impressions, and expressions; Kay Healy, too, used the camera as a quick recorder of scenes for later contemplation and as something akin to a license to wander and look at people and things; and Gilbert Plantinga, working with a complex large-format camera that insistently intrudes upon any situation it is pointed at, choreographed selected members of his intermittent audience into position and held them there just long enough for the slow, light-hungry camera to capture their images.

A quick survey as the artists dispersed at the end of the residency period indicated that each—whether sketching and exploring at the beginning of a process or already in possession of nearly-finished artwork—had gathered enough material to work with over the summer. Several rounds of studio meetings with the artists—conducted in the company of selected student ambassadors—revealed the extent to which the immersive character of their commencement experience had, in quite different ways, galvanized each artist’s sense that the contradictions between continuity and rupture that commencement embodies can, through the power of ritual, be re-rendered as connections.

Along with this synthesis of opposites, the works in the exhibition also address another kind of dynamic that ritual so often is called upon to mediate: the tension between the unique experiences of individuals and the continuity embodied in the long-standing rhythms of the academic institution those students belong to even as they depart it. From Gilbert Plantinga’s depictions of awkwardly self-conscious and yet touchingly heartfelt intimacy (and the parallel incongruities of commencement’s physical settings) to Jennifer Levonian’s wry-seeming but delicate and ultimately celebratory adumbration of the messy process of self-discovery, and from Kay Healy’s indirect and affecting take on the physicality of loss to James Johnson’s hermetic meditations on

symbolic communication, the works in this exhibition, while they hardly cohere into a document of commencement, do represent contemplation and expression as crucial elements of academic inquiry and human curiosity.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of my colleagues in Special Collections, whom I warmly thank for their professionalism and support, I thank artists Kay Healy, James Johnson, Jennifer Levonian, and Gilbert Plantinga, project coordinator Shari Osborn, residency logo designer Whitman Carroll, and our crew of student ambassadors: Catherine Casem, Joelle Collins, Jiayang Gao, Pan Hu, Claudia Keep, Christina Lisk, Deborah Matus, Indigo Moon, Emily Scioscia, Rabia Shahab, and Amalia Wojciechowski.

Two graduate assistants in Special Collections, Shira Backer, History of Art MA '12 and Anna Moblard Meier, History of Art MA Candidate, provided important assistance with the project, as did Praxis student Jillian Payne Johnson '12 and Special Collections Intern Hyounghee Kong '13. Staff in Bryn Mawr College's Alumnae Association, Center for Visual Culture, Campus Safety, Communications, Conferences and Events, Counsel, and Facilities Services offices, along with the offices of the President and the Provost, were very generous with their time and expertise. Steve Tucker and Russell Castro collaborated on exhibition design and logistics; Camilla MacKay, head of Rhys Carpenter Library, provided valuable editorial assistance; and Phil Unetic designed this brochure, which was printed by Apple Press.

Finally, we are indebted to the Friends of the Bryn Mawr College Library, whose support of Bryn Mawr's exhibition program makes possible the broad range of perspectives on art, artifacts, education, and culture that the college presents every year.

Brian Wallace

Curator and Academic Liaison for Art and Artifacts



Jennifer Levonian, *Untitled (Grace2)*, 2012.

Over the course of commencement I was struck by the dichotomy between the sense of permanence in Bryn Mawr’s traditional stone structures and the ephemeral, frenetic feeling of the people who inhabited them. I was initially greeted by piles of haphazardly placed folding chairs and tables strung out with caution tape in preparation for the post-graduation tea ceremony. I took lots of photographs. The whole campus was littered with transient catering equipment—chairs, tables, stacked or thrown on the ground, very unloved stuff. It looked like a battlefield, but really it was the night before the slaughter of cookie trays and pitchers of iced tea.

I toured the dormitories, taking many more photographs. Some of the rooms were shockingly messy. There were many give-away piles of stuff no one would want: old string cheese, a glittery tutu, reusable plastic coffee mugs, rubber boots with holes in them.

The dorm rooms have carved oak moldings, iron grated fireplaces, and shuttered paned windows with brass placards naming the previous inhabitants of the room. The students furnish these rooms with plastic shower caddies, puffy paint-decorated mini-fridges, and collapsible mesh laundry bags from corporate discount stores.

The hallways were lined with mounds of things, some packed in suitcases and boxes, others thrown in garbage bags. The hallways reminded me of news clips of stranded people at snowed-in airports over the holidays. There were very few people around, except of course for the weary-eyed parents and jealous younger siblings helping to fold clothes or tape up boxes.

The common areas had contrasts similar to those in the dorm rooms. The buildings were classically designed with paned glass windows, beautiful grandfather clocks and intricate parquet floors interspersed with overstuffed early 90s southwest motif lounge chairs or lumpy and stained sectional couches. In all of these photos there is a contrast between the old and enduring with the new, ephemeral and temporary.

After roaming the grounds and the buildings, I felt tired and without a place to go. I went to a sparsely attended Brazilian concert and dance performance. Women wearing sparkly thong bikinis and feathers were dancing for awkward fathers.

I eventually found Common Room 105, and this couch. It is a striking couch and the room has a lovely view. I could imagine students hanging out and reading in the silence of the room, or gathering and talking for hours on end. I could also imagine Facilities deciding the couch was too raggedy and ought to be trashed. I wondered if I could save it from destruction, but it would not fit in my hatchback car or in my trinity apartment. I couldn’t save it, so I decided to recreate it.

I worked on couch drawings and then screenprints in my studio in August and September. One day, leaving the studio building to drive to a meeting, I got stuck behind a garbage truck that was taking a discarded couch. It was an awful thing to watch this couch, which seemed to embody so many human interactions, experiences, and comforts, be devoured by this disgusting machine. But it was also a more visceral version of the transience I had been seeing over commencement. I took over 300 photographs of the truck and compiled them into an animation to be paired with the couch installation.

The gallery installation at Canaday Library includes a life size, wheatpasted screenprint of the couch along with the animation alluding to its eventual demise. There are five couch screenprints wheatpasted outdoors throughout the campus. Through a slower process, these pieces will decay with exposure to the elements and by human intervention, while the couch in the gallery installation will eventually be destroyed to make way for the next exhibition.



Kay Healy, *Untitled*, 2012; digital image, dimensions variable; courtesy the artist.



This work alludes to the inevitable destruction of all things, and to my personal nostalgia and intense desire to stop the process of change. While a somewhat depressing theme, commencement from my view is an ending of the idyllic, collegiate life. My own transition from college was not easy—you lose your social structure, the benchmarks of the semester, the comforts of a dining plan and cleaning services. Though it is a joyous occasion, commencement can be a harsh transition. On the bright side, while life after college is not as predetermined and immersive, it is also usually more independent and less institutional. After all, as great as it was at the time, I would never wish to go back to living in a dorm with a roommate, or ever again to eat Ramen Noodles.

Above: Kay Healy, study for *Common Room Couch*, 2012; digital image, dimensions variable; courtesy the artist.

Below: Kay Healy, still from *Bulk Pickup*, 2012; digital animation, duration 43 seconds; courtesy the artist.



I'm not particularly interested in ceremony, so being on the Bryn Mawr campus for twenty-one and a half hours during commencement presented me with an opportunity to explore many public and private spaces while their usual users and occupants were preoccupied with other activities. I spent my time on campus wandering with a camera and looking. I didn't know exactly what I was looking for, so I gathered information, pointing my camera at things that were interesting for one reason or another. I made a few videos and a lot of photographs.

Over the summer, as I reviewed the information that I gathered, I realized that I had collected two types of information: first, I had discovered a few non-art-gallery sites, where I thought it might be interesting to install artworks (a dorm designed by one of my architect-heroes, a nondescript science lab, and a field of grass), and second, I had gathered some information that would be useful as components of actual artworks. I proceeded to make my contributions to this exhibition by mapping out my proposed installation locations and making objects appropriate to those contexts.

Idleness (Field Well)

This work came as a surprise to me. While walking around campus, I discovered that a party tent had been erected in the cloisters. The diffuse quality of light that the tent was shedding upon the central fountain created an eerie tone. The effect was a confusion of interior and exterior. I made an HD video of the fountain under this light, which became the main component of this new animated diorama. The window and door through which the diorama is viewed are replicas from a guest house in Santa Monica, CA, designed by artist/architect Roy McMakin. The title of this work comes from an anecdote about discovery and forgetting in Haruki Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood*. This work is an attempt to conflate certain aspects of Marcel Duchamp's works *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau / 2° le gaz d'éclairage* (*Given: 1 The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*) and *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*). It has something to do with dreaming of autonomy.

James Johnson, study for *Idleness (Field Well)*, 2012; digital image, dimensions variable; courtesy the artist.



Something of utility and of art (A table for you...and me)

I try to work in a space where formalism, intellectualism, utility, art, design, architecture, and work/labor cross paths. I'm also interested in some of the tenets of the (somewhat) recent art genres referred to as socially engaged practice, relational aesthetics/activities, and performance, although I don't think of myself as a practitioner of any of them. My intention is that this table will serve as a site where people will feel comfortable enough to come together to engage in some common activities together...eating a meal, having a conversation, working on a project. It is public, but not too public. After visiting Bryn Mawr a number of times and observing the ways in which people use various spaces, the green at Rhys Carpenter Library seems to be a place where members of the campus community converge in just the way I'm looking for. This is the ideal location for the table. The form of the table also seems to match the furniture that's already there. It pleases me that most users/viewers will assume that it's simply another piece of furniture provided by the college.

Goldbrick 214 and Goldbrick LK

This series of works represents an ongoing problem that I'm always trying to solve. I have a strong urge to make formal, aesthetic objects, but I think that engaging in this activity without critical consideration is incredibly irresponsible. At the moment, I am allowing myself the pleasure of making these things, but at times they feel somewhat thin. In order to continue to work on these objects, I constantly have to ask myself "what's wrong with them" and "are they about anything besides form?"

Antenna (Misunderstanding)

In graduate school, I took a class about postmodernism in architecture that used Robert Venturi's book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* as its main text. In class, we dissected and examined Venturi's buildings and his ideas about the history and practice of the discipline. After moving to Philadelphia in 2003, I secured a job on Spring Garden St., three blocks from Venturi's iconic Guild House. Since then, I've walked, driven, and biked past this building hundreds of times. I look at it and think about it perhaps more often than any building besides my own home. It looks naked without its crowning feature, which was removed after a controversy over the architect's intention detailed in this passage from a 2001 Philadelphia Museum of Art exhibition catalogue *Out of the Ordinary: Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Associates: Architecture, Urbanism, Design*:

"Most notoriously, the architects designed a gold-anodized aluminum sculpture, resembling a television antenna, for the center of the roof. Added to the project as the building was nearing completion, and after it had been determined that a functioning antenna could not meet their aesthetic standards, the sculpture precipitated a long argument with the otherwise very supportive client, Guild executive director Francis Bosworth. In the end the architects contributed 2,000 dollars toward the overall construction costs, in part because the Guild said that it had counted such a contribution when it agreed to fabricate the metal ornament. Playing the enfant terrible, Venturi explained that the sculpture was 'a symbol of the aged, who spend so much time looking at T.V.' While this was a clear-eyed acknowledgment of a cultural reality, such as Herbert Gans was recording in Levittown, many saw the sculpture as a belittling statement about the occupants. But Venturi always insisted, 'we didn't mean it that way. It's not for us to tell people that television is bad, and they should read books,' and [Denise] Scott Brown averred that the antenna was conceived 'not hatefully, but lovingly; with tears maybe.' This unhappy misunderstanding would carry over into the interpretation of later, similar works."

I'm interested in referring to this misunderstanding or slippage as a metaphor for the vast disconnects in thinking/principles that develop between social classes.



James Johnson, detail of *Antenna (Misunderstanding)*, 2012, embroidery thread, vinyl, 18 x 18 inches; courtesy the artist.

My old college friend and I sometimes talk about the almost constant state of wonder we felt when we were in college. We were crazy for confessional poetry, art house movies, graveyards, crumbling 19th century books in our college library, autumn. Once my friend wrote a long heartfelt letter to our favorite writer (she even included some pressed fall leaves). A few months later, the writer wrote her back. When we opened her college mailbox and saw the handwritten response, we almost died of euphoria. It probably didn't help that our college bordered the living history park of Colonial Williamsburg. When you're living in a strange version of Colonial America full of costumed interpreters who won't break character, it's easy to lose your bearings.

Now in our mid-thirties, my friend and I talk about how it's a little tougher to access that state of wonder. My friend thinks that maybe it's impossible to maintain that almost manic euphoria over a long stretch of life. It would just be too exhausting to be that open all the time. But looking back on our college years, it's that sense of wonder and energetic curiosity that stands out above all else. I wanted to capture that feeling in *The Poetry Winner*, the animation I made after my 24-hour residency at Bryn Mawr College.

My animation opens with seven current Bryn Mawr students and one recent alumna telling the camera their most interesting paper titles ("Cold Stance on Cold Fusion," "Wonder Woman Leads the People: Dara Birnbaum and the Modern Female Allegory."). These scenes are based on video I recorded during my residency and are intercut with painted imagery of the campus on Move-Out Day. Papers, trash bags, flip-flops, a poster of Virginia Woolf, a hookah, and a mini-fridge are heaped into a dumpster.

On the day of my residency, first-year student Jiayang "Grace" Gao showed me around. The spring weather was beautiful and the Gothic Revival buildings shined in the sun. The campus grounds were so tidy that my animation's messy dumpster scene had to be invented. I took pictures of dorm decorations and interviewed students. Things looked pretty similar to my own college dorm experience except Bryn Mawr's dorms are more posh. (One dorm hallway was decorated with a large gold mirror and a potted yellow orchid. Grace called it the fancy dorm.) But there were all the emblems of college—shower caddies, dry-erase boards, mini-fridges. I saw caring notes students left each other ("I got you lunch!" "We have been looking for you since forever."). I remembered how dorm-mates bond so quickly, becoming like an intense family. All the signs of communal living—dozens of color-

Jennifer Levonian, still from *The Poetry Winner*, 2012, cutout animation using watercolor and collage, duration 7 minutes 30 seconds; music by Nathan Parker Smith; courtesy Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia.





ful shampoos, shelves of laundry detergents, flip-flops lining the halls—made me smile and I looked forward to painting them. I saw a list in a dorm kitchen titled “Things that cannot be microwaved” and I was reminded how recently these independent students were cared for by their parents.

That kitchen list led me to my idea for second half of *The Poetry Winner*. I thought it would be interesting to animate a student at that moment when her parents pick her up to take her home. Her newfound independence is stamped down as her parents continue to give her guidance. She’s changed, but things fall back into the routine of her old self. I also wanted to contrast her life in the campus bubble to her life in her remote hometown.

The animation’s second half follows fictional student Caitlin as she shares her paper title and then goes to meet her parents who drive her to her West Virginia hometown in the mountains. There, the narrative takes place at her summer job in a discount store. This scene was inspired by strangely vivid memories of a summer I worked at Walmart, a job that for the most part I enjoyed.

My main character is often unlikeable. Sulking in the back of her parents’ minivan, she is so gloomy that she can’t bring herself to respond to their cheerful questions about her summer plans. Later, she is patronizing toward a customer on public assistance. She is so wrapped up in her new identity as a prize-winning poet (having won the poetry prize in her college literary magazine) that when another customer, in a surreal moment at the end of the animation, demands to know “what she is,” she identifies herself as the “poetry winner.”

I wanted the animation to end joyfully so I animated the main character running from her cashier stall to perform a gymnastics flip. She tumbles over a chain of carts and sticks her landing. (Someone watched a lot of London Olympic coverage while making this animation...) The character is triumphant because she has chosen to identify as a poet and pursue a life devoted to art.

Jennifer Levonian, still from *The Poetry Winner*, 2012, cutout animation using watercolor and collage, duration 7 minutes 30 seconds; music by Nathan Parker Smith; courtesy Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia.

To date, my photographic projects have begun by making some pictures, which I have often thought of as “works in search of a body;” I then allow the pictures to suggest a project theme which could subsequently and more deliberately be expanded into a series. The problem for me is that once a theme has emerged and I start actively looking for pictures to support the theme, I tend not to photograph things that I probably should photograph simply because they are not useful to the current project. I am trying to overcome this tendency.

Docu-Commencement thus made for a challenging departure from my usual practice. In addition to my personal photographic practice I do some commercial work, including event photography, and I felt that, while some aspects of this project are primarily documentary, it would be wrong to simply work in a documentary reportage mode. So I decided that I would use the large format (4 x 5 sheet film) camera, as I do when I’m working on architectural landscapes and staged portraits. While the large format is inappropriate for event work (it’s too slow), it captures more detail in the picture than I usually see—at least consciously—when I’m making the photograph; the negative is often full of little surprises that I didn’t notice at the time of exposure.

In April I visited Bryn Mawr to try to think through a plan for the project. I began to learn about some of the specific traditions of the college community—the bell tower, the “offerings” to Athena, May Day, &c. I made only one photograph, Athena in the Great Hall. I made a list of things I might include in the project (none of which I actually photographed), and I began to think about the architecture, noting the seams between old and new styles where Gothic Revival structures have modern additions. This last thought would prove vital to the project as it unfolded.

On Friday of commencement weekend I arrived with my sketchily formed list of possible subjects and a single thought, a question which has ultimately informed the entire project: is Commencement really a beginning, as the term implies, or is it really more of an end? Knowing fully well that the only reasonable answer is both, I asked this question to graduates, undergraduates, parents, and nearly everyone else with whom I spoke throughout the weekend.

While clinging to the notion that the ambiguity of this question could be addressed in photographs of the aforementioned architectural seams, I felt that perhaps I might find something more valuable in portraits. So rather than simply asking whether commencement was a beginning or end, I began to ask which it felt like. And the answers began to reveal something akin to the holy grail for a photographer who seeks deadpan in portrait subjects—ambivalence. Ambivalence is certainly not apathy; on the contrary, I understand ambivalence to be the simultaneous experience of conflicting emotions.

Another notion that I have been exploring in my practice is that of emergence and emergent systems, specifically organized systems that emerge from seemingly random elements. In my own life I have found that reaching a state of ambivalence (regarding deep life issues) led directly to the emergence of not simply new understanding, but entirely new ways of experiencing life. While I don’t believe that the ambivalence I was discovering in my portrait subjects at Bryn Mawr was exactly comparable to the kind of ambivalence I achieved in years of psychotherapy, it is clear that commencement marks a major emergence. It is also not an area where I succeeded in finding a visual expression, except in one picture (the sapling growing from the stump). Emergence was nonetheless vaguely on my mind while making pictures throughout the weekend.

So on Friday afternoon I began making pictures. I photographed the students lined up in front of Taylor Hall for the rehearsal; I photographed the tent; I photographed Dalton, Thomas, and Goodhart Halls for the architectural seams; I photographed the oak stump and sapling; I photographed a table and chairs arranged in anticipation of the garden party (anticipating emergence?); I photographed a corridor in Rockefeller Hall, full of departing student’s belongings and trash, and



Gilbert Plantinga, *Sapling (emergent)*, 2012; pigment ink print, 25½ x 32 inches; courtesy the artist.



Gilbert Plantinga, *Emily with Lizards*,
Denbeigh Common Room, 2012;
pigment ink print, 32 x 40 inches;
courtesy the artist.

reeking of one side of the ambivalence I was looking for; and I photographed a note saying “Keep Calm, Peace Out” hanging inside a restroom.

On Friday and throughout the weekend I also struggled with the bright full sunshine that is anathema to my architectural and landscape style. I don’t usually go out to photograph at all on bright sunny days. The shadows create lines that I choose not to draw.

On Saturday I chose not to photograph the ceremony itself except for a single picture made from an angle outside the tent. And I got Edward Elgar’s composition “Pomp and Circumstance” stuck in my head. I made more pictures inside the dorms and I made several portraits; I photographed the garden party; at the end of the day, near sunset, I photographed the Labyrinth. But shortly after the ceremony itself I heard a PA announcement that changed my entire weekend experience, “Please return all regalia to room ...” And then I had Frank Zappa’s “Peaches en Regalia” also stuck in my head. I soon realized that the two pieces shared some fundamental structure in a Schenkerian sense, (and I now believe that that was intentional on Zappa’s part).

On Sunday I made a few more pictures in the dorms, one more portrait, and a picture of the “false door” to Goodhart. I exposed 30 sheets of film in all.

Through the following months I looked over the images and thought over possible ways of completing the project, including possible ways of utilizing the musical insights in a multimedia installation.

I designed a program to display the pictures (especially the architecture) crossfading the old and new, while crossfading the music, old and new, in an algorithmic though non-deterministic manner, with the audiovisual output controlled by (or perhaps it would be better to say influenced by) the presence, position and appearance of the viewer(s) looking at the display (the viewer is tracked by the web cam over the screen). The purpose or goal of the installation, along with the exhibition prints, is to reveal the ambiguity and ambivalence of the nature of commencement, and its emergent imagery.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

KAY HEALY

Originally from Staten Island, NY, South Philadelphia artist Kay Healy received her B.A. from Oberlin College and her M.F.A. from the University of the Arts. Healy's works—installations that employ the traditional media of printmaking, textiles, and ceramics—center on the transience of memory and the nostalgia conjured by idiosyncratic, everyday domestic objects. In exhibition locations as diverse as the UArts window on Broad Street, the Philadelphia International Airport, and the Fleisher Art Memorial, Healey's large-scale screenprints of discarded furniture and playfully iconic ceramic sculptures of domestic abodes create a rich tension between conceptions of "home" as a material, inhabitable space and as an immaterial memory or nostalgic illusion. Utilizing the replication made possible through printmaking and the effects of natural decay that her chosen installation sites and materials invite, Healy's works engage with and challenge our notions of the familiar, the domestic, and the permanent. Healy has received two Faculty Enrichment Grants from the University of the Arts, a fellowship from the Center for Emerging Visual Artists Career Development Program, and a Leeway Foundation Art and Change grant. Her works have been exhibited throughout the United States and in Lorca, Spain. She teaches at Ursinus College.

JAMES JOHNSON

Born in upstate New York, Philadelphia-based artist James Johnson received his B.F.A. from Marywood University in Pennsylvania and his M.F.A. from the Rochester Institute of Technology. Adapting the visual and thematic conventions of diverse traditions, Johnson employs a wide range of media in his installations. His works grapple with the social and artistic changes engendered by technology and media culture, surveillance and voyeurism, and the growing permeability of the borders between public and private spheres. Johnson has worked on collaborative projects with fellow artists and served as co-curator for Vox Populi's 2007 exhibition, "The Sudden and the Temporary." His works have been exhibited in Philadelphia at Vox Populi Gallery, the Fleisher Art Memorial, and Moore College of Art & Design, and at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, and the Firehouse Center for the Visual Arts in Burlington. He teaches photography and digital art at Moore College.

JENNIFER LEVONIAN

Jennifer Levonian is a Philadelphia-based artist who redefines the traditional media of watercolor and drawing in her narrative animations. Using cutouts from her luminous and meticulously rendered watercolor paintings, Levonian produces stop-motion animations that critique contemporary consumer society. Through this labor-intensive process, Levonian illuminates the strange and frequently humorous details of everyday life in works that are filled with precisely drawn and beautiful details and rich art-historical references that complicate the comic absurdity of her narratives. In 2009, Levonian received a Pew Fellowship. Her animations have been exhibited at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., the Fleisher Art Memorial, Philadelphia, Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, and Exit Art, New York. Levonian received her B.A. from The College of William & Mary and her M.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design. She teaches at the University of the Arts.

GILBERT PLANTINGA

Originally trained as a musician, Gilbert Plantinga turned his attention to photography in 1999. While his early black-and-white photographs were predominately individual portraits and street scenes of New York City, Plantinga's focus gradually shifted away from the human element to its traces in landscape and architecture. In a three-year project that Plantinga began in 2007, the lonely facades of decaying farmhouses and repurposed churches along New York's Route 28 became the subjects of large-format color photographs. In this series, the viewer is confronted by starkly framed landscapes, which, although devoid of figures, speak to the sociology, economy, and politics of the communities that have built, inhabited, and at times abandoned these environments. His works potently blend the formal conventions and the visual impact of portraiture and landscape. In 2003 he was the recipient of the Photographer's Fellowship at the Center for Photography at Woodstock. Plantinga's photographs have been exhibited at venues including Cuneen-Hacket Arts Center, Poughkeepsie, Daniel Cooney Fine Art, New York, Van Brunt Gallery, Beacon, NY, Cabane Studios, Phoenicia, NY, Barrett Arts Center, Poughkeepsie, and the Dorsky Museum at SUNY New Paltz, and his works are included in the permanent collections of the Griffin Museum of Photography, Winchester, MA, the Dorsky Museum, and the Center for Photography at Woodstock.



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