



Amid/In WNY

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curated by Kyle Butler, John Massier & Rebecca Wing

Amid/In Western New York was a seven-part exhibition series that presented the work of 66 regional artists, derived from 202 studio visits over the course of eighteen months. In collaboration with Buffalo artist Kyle Butler and Hallwalls Curatorial Assistant Rebecca Wing, *Amid/In* was structured for maximum efficiency and minimum overthinking—we drew up our working lists; contacted that list with a schedule of dates; accomplished our visits; and then, usually three weeks before an opening, contacted specific artists with requests for specific works.

The title of the project harkens back to *Beyond/In Western New York*, a multi-venue regional biennial organized in three iterations with the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and eleven other regional galleries and museums between 2005 and 2010. (Even more convolutedly, "Beyond/In Western New York" harkened back to the Albright Knox's earlier *In Western New York* survey exhibitions from 1977–2002) *Amid/In* did not seek to replicate the gargantuan proportions of *Beyond/In*, opting instead for a fast, stripped-down, low-fidelity, reasonable facsimile of a biennial project. We kept the best parts of that larger survey process—group studio visits and lunch meetings—and yet, by the end of it all, 202 visits didn't sound like enough. And curators can never have enough lunch.

It had begun as a plan for a single group exhibition. A couple dozen studio visits deep, that seemed insufficient to what we were seeing, so three exhibitions sounded a little more meaty. Three exhibitions soon enough became five, filling out an entire year of Hallwalls' gallery programming. Then during our final few months of studio visits, we added the last two exhibitions. Seven. The magnificent seven. Sounds epic. Finally, on the launch date of this catalogue publication, the series will ultimately conclude with a value-added "epilogue" exhibition of work still drawn from those 202 studio visits. Our enthusiasm is a slippery slope.

We had no ambition to create a comprehensive "omnibus" of regional art—textured by curatorial subjectivity, that lofty aspiration always falls flat. Those projects end up being the ones people love to hate with a vengeance. With *Amid/In*, what audiences saw in the gallery and what you see in this catalogue is what, a few decades ago, might have been called "Art Today!" or "Art Now!" The nowness factor of *Amid/In* derives from the ongoing and over-arching conversations behind it—who were we interested in visiting? What did we see? What couldn't we forget? What could not be denied? Months after the final exhibition (and not just because we were working on this catalogue) we still talk about it.

Buffalo and its surrounding region is currently in a moment of perceived "resurgence." But *Amid/In* was not an effort to exclaim "Go, Local Renaissance!" Ask around and you'll discover that WNY arts and culture cannot truly be re-emerging because it never went anywhere. It was *always* here, crazy and active and deeply enthused, seemingly disproportionate to its population, and waiting for the rest of the region to catch up. Still, whatever resurgence may mean in other terms, we felt it was a good moment for Hallwalls—never an exclusively WNY venue—to reiterate our awareness that we do exist in a place at a time.

This is some of what we saw.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator

WITH THANKS

The Marks Family Foundation
The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
New York State Council on the Arts
The John R. Oshei Foundation
M & T Bank
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LIZ BAYAN
BENJAMIN ENTNER
DOROTHY FITZGERALD
RICHARD HUNTINGTON
LIZ LESSNER
JASON SEELEY

opening reception

Friday, September, 18, 2015

8 to 11 PM

exhibition continues through October 30

curated by Kyle Butler, John Massier & Rebecca Wing
HALLWALLS CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER 341 DELAWARE AVENUE, BUFFALO, NY 14202

image: Benjamin Entner artwork drawn from memory by Kyle Butler font hand written by Rebecca Wing



NEW YORK
Council on
the Arts



LIZ LESSNER



LIZ BAYAN

"Affectio is a mixture of two bodies, one body which is said to act on another, and the other receives the trace of the first."

— Gilles Deleuze

If ever there was a time when an intimate relationship with a man felt right, I can't remember it. Instead, my romantic relationships have left me feeling deeply disconnected from myself, casting my identity as a heterosexual interloper. Intimacy, it seems, eludes me. Yet I linger in the intimately banal moments of covert glances from strangers; empathetic feelings for characters on a screen; that drop in my stomach when I meet someone new. It's been ten years since I started dating men, and became an actress — a performer of femininity. However, each successive relationship has instilled in me the uneasy perception that I am failing my gender. When I look back at these relationships, I hardly recognize the person I would become once I integrated myself into my partner's life. I have come to learn that it is not loss, but the residue of intimacy which haunts and contorts my memory of these experiences, as well as my sense of who I am, who I was.

BENJAMIN ENTNER

Benjamin Entner creates works that are the result of conceptual play and material experimentation. Entner's work actively engages a viewer to intimately react and interact through the use of humour, wonder, and large physical presence. Entner writes, "When I work, I am very conscious of my viewer and, often, I want to make my viewers conscious of themselves. I try to accomplish this by creating a presence of an object, subject, or installation that interrupts or intervenes in a viewer's passive viewing of a piece, and forces them to actively experience it."

Entner's current body of work explores the boundaries and interplay between two and three dimensional methods of making. These works are made with a keen awareness to art historical precedents and are often a direct reference to or parody of the figurative work of Classical and Renaissance masters.

Ego Sum is a continuing body of work that explores the boundaries and interplay between two- and three-dimensional methods of making. Specifically, the point at which a drawing can become form and an object can become representation. These works are made by drawing in a realistic manner on sheets of fabric that are then sewn together and inflated with air. The re-

Classical and Renaissance sculpture.

DOROTHY FITZGERALD

The female body is a widespread topic on social media. I paint the feminine body because I find it a safe place for weaving a narrative of body image by women for women, and it allows an exploration of the interplay between sexuality, gender, and form. I often have conversations about my body with myself and these talks end up in my paintings. Sometimes I make those conversations clear and sometimes I put them in secret code, for women only. Painting the body allows me to interpret women's bodies and mentalities in a way mass media society does not conventionally allow or shies away from.

RICHARD HUNTINGTON

In 1959 Norman Mailer published *Advertisements For Myself*, a collection of essays, stories and commentaries designed to showcase the author's unparalleled brilliance, good looks and all-around wit. A half-century later I borrowed Mailer's self-aggrandizing idea for a big painting called *Advertisement for Myself* (singular). It features a 1950s-type cheerleader — a flashy figure that I'm guessing Norman would admire — who is shown bestowing her unbridled enthusiasm on one "RH," i.e., me.

She performs her unfettered leap before a big comic book explosion/star and is surrounded by a field of steady-state, 10-point stars in various colors and sizes that, by some lights, would indicate the painter's twinkling brilliance and cosmic importance. The challenge of the painting was to make a fairly flat and formally aggressive figure cohere with the relatively delicate construction of the stars that were only spatially anchored by the lumpy white ground.

Good Work, Sally is a "noir" version of a comic book situation in which a Dick Tracy-like police chief has enlisted the help of a pulchritudinous woman who has evidently just captured the bad guys. The mood is dark and comic at once, the painting style both graphic and painterly. Overall, the scene parodies the conventions of sexualized fiction.

LIZ LESSNER

These objects are negative space castings of people engaged in intimate gestures. They are the interstitial space between two people enacting iconic gestures like air-kissing, or pushing one another. This work represents a new method of visualizing the performance of agency and desire. *Stills* is a series of negative space castings of people engaged in choreographies of the intimate. They are the interstitial space between two people engaged in iconic gestures like air-kissing, or pushing one another.

Stills consist of 5 individual sculptures:

JASON SEELEY

Quartered responds to the forces and contradictions that the contemporary experience systems of oppression, the expectations of the powerful, its starving of resources. It is a legally enforceable expectation on the contemporary father, the ordered seizing of resources, predetermined deadbeat, independent of the level of effort and investment of a father in the lives of his children. A father is expected to provide his best in providing a second, third and healthcare and still be a single individual with no debt. This level of fiscal expectation established to foundationally male's dependence on the machine more often than the sense of the real paternal necessary in the lives of children is seen as supplemental to the established legal system. A thematic framework is exact economic trend that creates ties for economic sustenance, the ideology of a stepping market that sees little need for long-term investment in the employee.

Art is a self-legitimizing value. Artists deny self-worth of their work, but it undermines the worth of their art is non-conformist, non-rise and fall of the market can only be sustained through sales, how do we authentically value our work? value ourselves? Is it worth people to struggle and take two or three jobs to support that is valued outside of the check system to which we have to sell in New York? Do artists? Do we have to sell we real artists if we don't? artists if we don't?

The painting *Real* is a negotiation of my own struggle, male, father, artist, against the idea of what my role should be as a real man and a real artist, systems of self-worth and arenas, as they all work to create the often contradictory that makes up all real life.



HUNTINGTON



LESSNER



BAYAN



ENTNER - BAYAN



ENTNER



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