

Magic

Nov. 7 - Dec. 1, 2016
The Gallery at MCCC

That art can transform, or provide a transformative experience, is a part of how we understand its function. Art making is magic. Something is made where before there was nothing, and it is more than the sum of its parts. The artists in *Magic* inhabit this potential in both material and subject. Their works address the otherworldly, alchemy, mysticism or the manifestation of imaginary histories. They address these concerns in incantatory, paradoxical or futile ways. Images may be used to record ecstatic experience, symbols or materials an alchemical transformation, color to suggest an ethereal presence.

Recent interest in painter Hilma af Klint reflects two urges. First, the search for early abstraction¹. Or, maybe more to the point, an ongoing conversation about the many instances of the abstract impulse that have grown side-by-side with approaches to figuration. Second, interest among some painters in otherworldly concerns and the far-reach of visual form; whether it is possible to address universal languages of conjuring — ancient practices and the spiritual promise of abstraction alike.

Chris Martin's paintings straightforwardly address the act of painting and their visionary forms take as their subjects the practice of Buddhism and James Brown records as equally evocative. The junky, collaged surfaces gesture toward the celestial while remaining decidedly rough-hewn and thus human. **Henry Samelson** marries high and low also; painting in enamel spectral rays which might be the zap of a CRT or an astral burst. **Karla Knight** and **Laurel Sparks** create codes with their key lost. In Knight's works, modeled or pictographic logograms are either illustrations of the aliens themselves or their hieroglyphs, sometimes progressing in grids of semiotic iteration. The culture recalled in the codes is both utterly specific and unknown. Sparks similarly creates map-like paintings, embellished with bells, glitter, shells, marble dust; the off-kilter grids align their gems at intersections like dream catchers condensing and transforming the ephemeral in their axes. **Matthew F Fisher's** imagery exists somewhere between picture, pattern and symbol, a meditative hum of symmetry and balance. **Hayley Barker** and **Sarah Peters** both articulate a gap, a place in-between or outside the "real" world. Barker records her own ecstatic experiences resulting from the act of painting and nature-based feminist spiritual practice. Some images evoke a tear through membrane into another state. For Peters there is a motley narrative formed from mistranslation of signs and symbols across eras, a magical new fiction. **Kristine Moran's** images also evoke another state. Moran sees herself as clairvoyant, using automatic drawing and painting gesture to explore a liminal zone between life and death.

Tiffany Calvert is a painter and Assistant Professor of Art at the Hite Art Institute at the University of Louisville. Her work has been exhibited in group and solo exhibitions including Lawrimore Project in Seattle, Visual Arts Gallery at SVA New York, and The Lab in San Francisco. She has been a recipient of a Geraldine R. Dodge Fellowship and residencies at the ArtOmi International Arts Center (NY) and Djerassi Resident Artists Program (CA). In 2010 she was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. Her most recent solo exhibition was mounted with Carl & Sloan Contemporary in Portland, OR.

¹ <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2003/04/art/everything-is-finished-nothing-is-dead-an-article-about-abstract-painting>