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# INTIMATE gathering

Six Artists from Red Dirt Studio

June 2 - July 14, 2018

Amy Hughes Braden

Lorenzo Cardim

Mike Corigliano

Gayle Friedman

Liz Lessner

Tim McLoraine

Curated by Leslie Holt

It's not uncommon for artists to mine their personal histories to inform their work. The six artists in *INTIMATE gathering* use this tactic to tell a range of stories that explore deeply personal positions on identity, transformation, and interpersonal connection. While the aesthetics and mediums the artists choose are vastly different from each other, all the work in *INTIMATE gathering* compel us to get close and to consider every detail and revelation.

## ABOUT THE WORK:

Of all the artists in this exhibit, Amy Hughes Braden may dig into the most personal experience - as a mother, and more specifically, within the dual role of artist and mother. Fluorescent colors and unruly tattered canvas spill from the walls as the artist asserts her right to have a loud and messy place in this world, which still so often expects mothers to disappear in their private worlds of caretaking and nurturing. She's not having it, and she works through her conflicted feelings and questions assertively with neon paint, deconstructed canvas stretchers, unruly blobs, found objects, and plastic gems. While she grapples with complex challenges of being a mother in today's society, the work has a decidedly playful,

almost celebratory, tone. A self-described human magpie, Braden shares her fascination with candy colors and shiny plastic objects, but not too far under their surface is the knowledge that this world is not as simple and sweet as it appears.

In his *Stumblin' Forward* project, Michael Corigliano also tackles his personal struggles through a highly playful approach. In these works, he delves into his multiple identities as single dad, middle-aged curmudgeon, and player on the perilous contemporary dating scene. His oversized wigs constructed out of clay cap off these personas, referring to the absurdity of juggling these roles, and adding metaphorical and actual weight to these identities. In viewing the wig forms, one can't help but think of how cumbersome and uncomfortable it would be to wear them. Of course, this makes sense. While Corigliano is infusing his work with humor, he also depicts the real struggle to integrate his selves – the nurturing single father, the crabby guy yelling at kids to get off his lawn, and the surly lounge lizard – all of whom reveal an underlying longing for intimate connection.

Gayle Friedman creates objects and installations that reference memories of her parents through their belongings. These belongings surrounded her as a child, and now she is contending with the same items as an adult after their passing. The anthropomorphic objects incite a playful conversation between her mother's kitsch delft collection and her father's old tools. Friedman engages deeply in this dialogue by mashing up actual objects with her poetic interpretations of them including delicate porcelain hammers and other hand tools that would immediately shatter if you tried to use them. Some tools are decorated with the signature blue and white delft patterns, drippings of fluorescent paint and frou-frou feathers, lending a decidedly feminine element to these traditionally male objects. Many have a corporeal presence that refers to bodies writhing, splitting, or cracking open, exposing the imperfections and brokenness we all carry. Her subject matter is deeply personal. The objects are steeped in grief and loss, but she is not wallowing. She grapples with the subject playfully and gracefully with an eye toward the transformational power of these altered objects, managing to infuse them with a tenderness while sidestepping overt sentimentality.

Liz Lessner creates objects born out of close human interactions. First posing people in simple gestures such as a touch on the arm or an air kiss, she casts the space between their bodies. Referring to them as "interstitial spaces," she removes the literal figures and creates lyrical objects out of the shapes that the absence of bodies creates. In art language we refer to those areas as "negative space." Lessner

flips that notion on its head by shaping these spaces out of plexiglass and literally highlighting them with strings of light with visible cords that seem to refer to the inherent messiness of human interaction. The objects themselves represent an effort to freeze and isolate what are usually fleeting moments to which she is a self-conscious witness. This work, generated from staged moments, translates into elegantly amorphous objects, based on careful observation. Absence holds the weight of presence and both create the passing moment of human connection.

Lorenzo Cardim's highly polished wooden forms refer to bodies, whether it is an oversized hand or a larger than life zipper form climbing up the wall. The zipper's reference to a body and to sexuality is clear, on the surface. For Cardim, the invention of the zipper literally allowed women to dress and undress themselves, an important moment of liberation. The sparing moments of color create exquisite visual accents and also refer to his own gendered language, in this case a specific blood-red hue of nail polish, painstakingly applied. Cardim's hand sculptures serve as stand-ins for dubious tropes of the queer – typically feminine gestures of the limp wrist or flared pinkie depicted with solid chunks of wood, a material from which we expect so much strength and structure. These hands appear to have no bones. Cardim's use of his own body translates into a grace born of hard labor. He presents objects layered with meaning that he culls from deeply personal questions about the philosophical basis of humanity, gender identity, queerness and social justice. For Cardim one of the core questions is: how do these sculpted fragments communicate gender identity and how does the body become vulnerable by identifying as queer? As we are invited into his questions, the objects become idiosyncratic iconography, holding meaning on both universal and personal levels.

Tim McLoraine's video works create kaleidoscopes of personal and collective memory using appropriated video and layering color and hand drawn structures. Throughout this work there are narratives of journey, transformation and personal history. The embedded stories mesmerize, and we get entranced by the luscious color and careful design of each frame and transition. We may think we know what is going on as familiar imagery pops up on the screen, but they don't stick around for very long and images quickly dissolve into pure form – color, line, rhythm, pattern. The result is dreamlike, surreal, and sometimes hallucinatory. Moving digital paintings melt one into another. We can insert our own stories in the specific references - a child dancer, a cartoon character, a thin legged deer -each trigger personal memories and journeys. But in the end, we can't put it together in a sequential or linear fashion. And we shouldn't. McLoraine invites us to enter his

story while simultaneously prompting us to link collective meanings and to create our own.

**Image: Untitled (Zipper), 2018 Lorenzo Cardim, Cherry wood and Enamel, 38 x 44 in**