

Press Releases

August 2004

First Happiness

Curated by Corinna Ripps Schaming

Drawings by Roger Andersson, Nancy Friedemann, David X. Levine, Ati Maier, Shaun O'Dell, Jon Rubin, Scott Teplin, Leigh Tarentino, and Su-en Wong

On view at the University Art Museum
September 28 through November 14, 2004

Opening Reception: Tuesday, September 28, 5:00-7:00 PM
Featuring WOOGIE of taciturnrecords.com

Art & Culture Talk (ACT), Tuesday, September 28, 4:15-4:45 p.m.

Joe Amrhein, Director, Pierogi Gallery and Susan Swenson, Editor, Pierogi Press, will discuss their roles in the evolution of both the Pierogi Flatfile and Pierogi Press

ALBANY , NY--- The University Art Museum is pleased to present *First Happiness* , a drawing exhibition that brings together nine contemporary artists whose work is inspired by events and experiences from their own childhood and adolescence. Curated by the museum's associate director Corinna Ripps Schaming, *First Happiness* features work by **Roger Andersson, Nancy Friedemann, David X. Levine, Ati Maier, Shaun O'Dell, Jon Rubin, Scott Teplin, Leigh Tarentino** , and **Su-en Wong** . Each of these artists considers drawing their principle mode of artistic expression and maintains a passionate commitment to the possibilities inherent in the directness of the drawing process.

The artists in *First Happiness* employ traditional materials and drawing styles to render unconventional and idiosyncratic visions of maturity gone awry. Pencil, ink, watercolor, and gouache are their mediums of choice. Fluctuating between elegant fastidiousness and oddly exact crudeness, these artists handle line and shade with labor-intensive specificity. Candy colors, fairytale exploits, fallen heroes, dated hangouts, and blissed-out mindscapes abound in these beautifully off-kilter drawings that either exceed the boundaries of the page or hover in the center of a nebulous blank space. Even though an unabashed nostalgia permeates much of the work, the artists in *First Happiness* aren't interested in taking a trip down memory lane. Instead, nostalgia serves as a metaphoric device by which to confront the emotional longings and dislocations of adulthood.

For these artists, storybook escape, teen lust, comic book crazies, great guitar riffs, and grandma's kitchen wallpaper are just a few of the inspirational sparks that fuel the desire to stay in touch with

what Walter Benjamin refers to in his *Dialectics of Happiness* , as the “eternal repetition of the same situation, the eternal restoration of original first happiness.”

In his recent *Letters from Mayhem* , Swedish artist **Roger Andersson** presents a series of perverse interior worlds in which miniscule figures engage in a host of illicit acts. Meticulously rendered in blue watercolor, each letter of Andersson's alphabet is a tribute to adolescent good times gone wild—lust, pot, chain smoking, naughty cartoons, and heavy metal music are a small portion of his lexicon—the whole libidinal stew is done with an elegant flourish and skilled hand that harkens back to artists of the Northern Renaissance like Martin Schongauer and Albrecht Dürer.

Andersson has had recent solo exhibitions at Sara Meltzer Gallery in New York (2003 and 2002) and Galleri Magnus Karlsson in Stockholm , Sweden (2001). Selected group exhibitions include *Moderna Museet c/o* at Malmo Konsthall in Malmo, Sweden; *Bifurcation* at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, California; *Three Rooms* at Ciocca Arte Contemporanea in Milan, Italy (2002); *Bevil* at Modern Museum in Stockholm Sweden (2001); and *Liste 2001* at the Young Art Fair in Basel, Switzerland (2001).

Born in Bogotá, Columbia to an American father and a Columbian mother, **Nancy Friedemann** lives and works in Brooklyn , New York . Through a complex drawing system of delicate ink lines, circles, dots, hatch marks, and automatic script, she reinterprets old lace and wallpaper patterns on wall size sheets of mylar. Weaving a path that bridges two cultures, Friedman's linear intricacies echo the laced curtains that hung in her grandmother's house in Bogotá. The expansive scale of her drawings celebrate commonplace domestic patterns that for Friedemann play a universal role in unraveling the imagination and shaping the contours of personal experience.

Friedemann has had recent solo exhibitions at Galeria Diners in Bogotá, Columbia (2004); Cheryl Pelavin Fine Art in New York (2003) and Queens Museum of Art in Queens , New York (2001). Her work has been featured in group shows at The Work Space in New York (2002); Exit Art in New York (2002); Islip Museum in Islip , New York (2002); and Gasworks in London , England (2001).

New York-based artist **David X. Levine** is a synaesthete who hears music as color. From Howlin' Wolf to Sonic Youth, Levine doesn't miss a beat in connecting his passion for drawing to his unique relationship with music. Ranging from 6 to 60 inches in size, his vibrant mandalas are densely rendered in black ink and colored pencil. The emblematic, folk-like quality of his work belies a sophisticated knowledge of traditional drawing practices. Through a complex layering of color wash and repeated pattern, Levine's finished drawings exude an uncompromising precision and idiosyncratic authority that is totally in synch with the rock and roll legends he salutes.

Levine's solo exhibitions include *Recent Drawings* at OSP Gallery in Boston , Massachusetts (2003) and *Teenage Symphonies to God* at Cynthia Broan Gallery in New York (2002). His work has been featured in group shows at Bodybuilders & Sportsmen in Chicago , Illinois (2003), McKenzie Fine Art in New York (2004); Kunstverein Firma in Linz , Austria (2003); and Gallery Lombardi in Austin , Texas (2003).

Ati Maier lives and works in Berlin and New York . Her vividly detailed drawings of imagined galaxies, stratified terrain, and free-floating space stations are done with colored ink and wood stain on paper. Maier's skillful mixing of Fauvist color and Bauhaus design heightens the indeterminate timeframe of her narratives—each drawing is a dazzling voyage back to the future. At once futuristic and nostalgic, her euphoric imagery suggests the promise of brighter days while her whimsically elegant drawing style recalls sci-fi visions of a bygone era.

Maier has had recent solo exhibitions at Pierogi in Brooklyn , New York (2003) and Dogenhaus Galerie In Leipzig, Germany (2002). Selected group exhibitions include *Public Notice* at Omi International Arts Center in Ghent , New York (2004); *Art Forum Berlin 2004* at Julie Saul Gallery in Berlin , Germany (2004); *Hier Und Jetzt* at Galerie Anita Beckers in Frankfurt , Germany (2004); *drawing on landscape* at Gallery Joe in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania (2003); and *MARKERS* at the Venice Biennial, Italy (2001).

San Francisco-based artist, **Shaun O'Dell** employs a tightly-honed drawing style that melds the charm of 19th-century folk art with the linear precision of contemporary blueprints. He serves up a host of American history references in large-scale ink and gouache drawings that read like an old-fashioned schoolboy primer conceived through CAD. Modeled portraits of pilgrims and frontiersman float above quirky schematic drawings of bridges, oil derricks, and irrigation systems while mastodons, falcons, and whales hunker on the sidelines. Calling into question America 's legacy of conquest, O'Dell traces a clear-cut path leading back to times no less innocent than our own in the exploitation of natural resources in the name of human progress.

O'Dell has had recent solo exhibitions at Jack Hanley Gallery in San Francisco , California (2004) and New Image Arts in Los Angeles, California (2001). Selected group exhibitions include *Majority Whip* at White Box in New York City (2004); *Storyline* at New Langton Arts in San Francisco, California (2004), *New Acquisitions Show* at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, California (2003); and

International Paper at UCLA Hammer Museum in Los Angeles , California (2003).

Jon Rubin lives and works in San Francisco . His scrupulously detailed drawings of 1970s suburbia depict remembered interiors of his friends' houses. These densely constructed, totally off-kilter images lay bare all the trappings of the good life. Stone fireplaces, sectional sofas, potted plants, oriental carpets, and ample closet space abound. While Rubin approaches his subject with a celebratory eye for the nuances of material comforts, the ruptured manner in which these things spill across the page suggests a darker, less cozy side to growing up on the right side of the tracks.

Rubin's recent solo exhibitions include *the peaceable kingdom* at Lizabeth Oliveria Gallery in San Francisco, California (2003); *Drawings and Videos* at Lizabeth Oliveria Gallery in Oakland, California; and *Boy* at Center on Contemporary Art in Seattle, Washington (2000). Selected group exhibitions include *Ladies and boys and touching* at Yale School of Architecture in New Haven , Connecticut (2003); *Adolescent Boys* and *Living Rooms* at Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo in Mexico City ,

Mexico (2002); and *Of The Moment* at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco , California (2000).

New York-based artist, **Scott Teplin** taps into the best of adolescent drawing inspirations: Mad magazine, Zap comix, Dr. Seuss, and Hellraiser Movies. His ink drawings of disembodied mouths are an amalgam of twisted teen visions conjured up while playing alone behind closed doors. Derived from keen observation and drawn with clinical precision, Teplin's stubbled mouths ooze spit with abandon while thick hairs sprout up through decayed teeth and long tubes disappear behind misshapen tongues. With each beautifully rendered dribble and drool, Teplin celebrates anew the adolescent rush of grossing out friends with a sleight of hand.

Teplin will have a solo exhibition at Adam Baumgold Gallery in New York in September 2004. Other recent solo exhibitions include *Moron* at Jessica Murray Projects in Brooklyn , New York (2003) and *Lubricious* at DiverseWorks in Houston , Texas (2003). Selected group exhibitions include *Erotic Drawings* at Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield , Connecticut (2005); *25th Selections Anniversary at The Drawing Center* in New York (2002); *Miami International Art Fair* in Miami , Florida (2001); *Books by Artists* at Nicole Klagsbrun in New York (2001) and *Greater New York* at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City , New York (2000).

Leigh Tarentino lives and works in Brooklyn , New York . Many of her large-scale black and white ink drawings are derived from photographs of Albany , New York where she grew up. Unlike the early 20 th -century Precisionist vision of the bustling metropolis, Tarentino turns her eye toward the flipside of American progress. Her generic views of street intersections, traffic lights, crisscrossing telephone wires, and down-in-the-heel businesses convey the palpable sense of emptiness that surrounds places passed through on the way to somewhere else. For Tarentino these washed-up landscapes are much more than the surface sum of their parts. By confounding the conventions of perspective through intricate linear distortions and skewed spatial effects, her drawings imbue the most ordinary sites with a sense of complexity and wonderment.

Tarentino recently had her first solo exhibition at Black and White Gallery in Brooklyn , New York (2004). Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at Rotunda Gallery in Brooklyn , New York (2004); HERE Gallery in New York (2001); and Schroeder Romero Gallery in Brooklyn , New York (2001).

In her exquisitely rendered colored pencil and acrylic self-portraits, Singapore-born artist **Su-en Wong** explores the mysterious nature of transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Often repeating her self-portrait several times in one work, Wong positions herself amidst lush settings and gigantic color fields, sometimes nude and sometimes in different costumes. At once vulnerable and coy, assertive and shy, playful and serious, each Wong portrait examines the fits and starts and conflicting paths that every young girl travels in her quest to define an individuated self in an often less than welcoming adult world .

Wong has had recent solo exhibitions at Shoshana Wayne Gallery in Santa Monica , California (2003); Zolla/Lieberman Gallery in Chicago , Illinois (2003); Savage Gallery in Portland , Oregon (2003); and Deitch Projects in New York (2002). Recent group exhibitions include *Open House: Working in*

Brooklyn at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (2004); *Women on Women* at White Box in New York (2003) *Online* at Feigen Contemporary in New York (2003); *Bootleg Identity* at Caren Golden Fine Art in New York (2003); and *Peppermint* at Smack Mellon in Brooklyn , New York (2001).

For further information or visual materials, please call (518) 442-4035 or visit our website at [www. albany.edu/museum](http://www.albany.edu/museum).

MUSEUM HOURS: Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. , Saturday and Sunday noon to 4 p.m.