

A COMMITMENT

TO WHAT

IS BEFORE YOU

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ALEXANDRE PÉPIN

DONYA STOCKTON

RYAN MCKERLEY

Northern–Southern

5th St. b/w Brazos & San Jacinto
Austin

northern-southern.com

@northernsouthern

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January 15–February 19, 2022

Donya Stockton
weaving

Alexandre Pépin
painting

Ryan McKerley
ceramics

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organized by Phillip Niemeyer

thanks to Jules and Drew and MASS Gallery



Alexandre Pépin
Small Bird Precious Life, 2021
oil on canvas
48x84 inches



Donya Stockton
Becoming, 2020
cane, reed, copper



Alexandre Pépin
Group Meditation, 2021
oil on canvas
9x12 inches



Alexandre Pépin
Walking the Dog, 2021
oil on canvas
11x14 inches



Ryan McKerley
2022
cups in white and black porcelain



Alexandre Pépin
Aftercare with Wild Flowers, 2021
oil on canvas
60x72 inches



Alexandre Pépin
The Instant of Bloom, 2021
oil, pastel, and paint remover on canvas
48x60 inches



Donya Stockton
It Can't Happen Here, 2020
cane, reed



Donya Stockton
Blind Assassin, 2020
cane, reed



Alexandre Pépin
*Grief Landscape
(Primordial Soup)*, 2021
oil on wood panel
18x24 inches



Donya Stockton
The Areas of My Expertise, 2020
cane, reed



Donya Stockton
*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier
and Clay*, 2020
cane, reed



Alexandre Pépin
Crying is a Gateway, 2021
oil on wood panel
18x24 inches



Alexandre Pépin
Small Body Basking, Floating, 2021
oil and pastel on canvas
8x10 inches



Alexandre Pépin
Overabundance, 2021
oil on canvas
24x36 inches



Donya Stockton
Emma, 2020
cane, reed



Donya Stockton
Unorthodox, 2020
cane, reed



Donya Stockton
So, Anyway, 2020
driftwood, cane, reed

Alexandre Pépin

Q: How does a painting begin?

Sometimes a painting begins when noticing something in the everyday that I had never recognized as poetic before. It is seeing something under a different light for the first time. Sometimes I draw and paint to process a particularly significant, troubling, moving or joyful experience. Sometimes an idea for a painting appears from the practice of drawing and painting itself, through doodling, messing around in the studio, trying to see if the materials I use themselves hold a poetic potential. I consider the feeling of inspiration to be sacred and very close to the feeling of gratitude. It is a will to engage deeply with the whole of our individual experience of being alive. In that spirit I am not trying to weed out difficult experiences from what I consider to be inspiring- or beautiful- in existing. I try to remain open to as many subjects and ways of treating them as possible, as every inspiration belongs to a specific experience and deserves to be developed on its own terms.

Q: How do you know when you are finished?

I know I am done with a painting when I see in front of me the initial inspiration in a material form, when I know and feel that the painting loops back to the originating point that motivated me to work in the first place. Agnes Martin, in her “Advice to Young Artists” says: “The direction of attention of an artist is towards mind in order to be aware of inspiration. Following inspiration life unfolds free of any influence. Finally the artist recognizes himself in the work and is happy and contented.” I deeply believe in the simplicity of these words. To live up to that simplicity is difficult.

Q: What is a commitment to what is before you?

Following on the previous answers, a commitment to what is before you evokes finding a state of presence, receptivity and inspiration in the everyday experience of life. The word commitment involves the will to engage in an activity in a steady and perhaps infinite duration. It is to walk towards a vanishing point, fully rooting every step along the way. It points to both the sacredness and mundanity of a conscious practice.

Donya Stockton

Q: How do you start a basket?

It kind of varies. Traditional baskets almost always start with the base, mine generally don't have bases. If they are toruses, I always start with the tube in the middle.

Mainly, though, it starts with an idea and then I spend a while thinking about the logistics of making that idea come together into an actual physical object. Sometimes it can, sometimes it can't. Some I'm still thinking about.. Then, I get some materials together and see if my theory works. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't...

Q: What does it feel like in the middle of a weaving?

In the middle, it's usually a little daunting and overwhelming. I'll have a million pieces sticking out in every direction and I'm trying to wrangle them into a shape. I liken it to something like calf roping, but more like wrestling a spiky octopus..?

Q: How do you know when you are finished?

It's usually just done and it's pretty obvious, once all the ends are attached and the holes are filled, it's done. But some of them just want to have windows and openings because what's happening inside is as interesting as what's outside. Those choices are a little harder, but generally the basket dictates.

Ryan Mckerley

Q: What makes a ceramic perfect?

I always tell my students that if they like it then it's good. That's all that matters.

I have a sculpture of a paintbrush hanging on my studio wall. Billy Ray Mangham of San Marcos made it. It's red, yellow, green and black and it has PRO stamped into the handle. It's made from a rough gritty clay. There's a hole at the top of the handle so it can hang on a nail. After it was fired Billy Ray put it in a metal can with burning paper. The burning paper toned down the brightness of the glaze colors and created a nice patina, black dots and black crackle lines. I love everything about this object. The bright colors and the word PRO always make me smile and think of my good friend who made it. This ceramic is super perfect!

Q: What does it feel like in the middle of a forming a piece?

If I am warmed up and having a good day then the middle of forming a piece feels great. Everything is going smoothly. There's good music playing. I'm excited about what I'm making or I am excited about getting paid for what I am making. Both feel great.

Sometimes it feels really good but the middle part is often difficult. And it's not fun failing a few times before figuring it out, but that's a necessary step in the process.

Q: How do you know when you are finished?

That's the easy part of pottery. When it comes out of the kiln it's finished.

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