

Brad Tucker **N**

OUTER
MIDDLE



Transmountain

Brad Tucker (1965, West Covina, California) works from a garage studio on a leafy block in Lakeway, Texas. There, he distills and stretches thrift store forms into puzzles made of pep talks.

The painting-sculptures in *Outer Middle* scoot and jiggle on the walls. The action is in the area just before the borders. Tucker's work is in the in the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, The Houston Museum of Fine Art, the Menil Collection, The New Museum, New York City, and the Plains Museum, Fargo, North Dakota.

Lindsey Culpepper (1978, El Paso, Texas) and **Gil Moreno** (1976, Austin, Texas) partnered as the design duo **Transmountain** in 2014. Transmountain is the name of the highway carved through a mountain connecting East and West El Paso, where they both grew up.

For *Outer Middle*, Culpepper and Moreno imagine a catalog for a conscious home. The forms are resourceful-chic, seductive, but assembled from utilitarian materials: papercrete, concrete, plywood, found lamp parts. They greet scarcity as a challenge, welcome improvisation to their process, and look to wrest aesthetics back from the unsustainable cycles of consumption and refuse.

Brad Tucker

OUTER MIDDLE

Transmountain

Exhibition and zine organized by Phillip Niemeyer
Photography by Tyeschea West



on the walls

Brad Tucker

Foot Prints, 2022

primer on various types of wood
variable dimensions

Brad Tucker

24 Hour Block, 2022

acrylic on canvas

38" x 41" x 1"

on the floor

Transmountain

Etagere with Cone, 2022

papercrete, plywood, laminate, concrete, cork

42" x 42" x 11"

Brad Tucker

Q: What is the significance of the monkey with the wrapping tail?

Brad Tucker: Oh wow. How do I say this? The monkey with the wrapping tail was a gift, a simple graphic image printed on a pad of paper given to me by a local rotary club in Houston when, more than twenty years ago, I was selected teacher of the year by Grady Middle School. I was immediately charmed by the image and just kept it around all these years. The monkey's tail maintains a nice, consistent thickness as it snakes around the perimeter of the page, and when you follow it with your eyes you are greeted at the bottom of the page by the monkey's cheerful and slightly mischievous grin. I likened the image to things I hoped to accomplish through art, and at times when teaching was tough, I could look at my desk and see the monkey and remember, "Hey. I can get through this because I have paintings and objects I need to make!"

Q. Some of the works feel almost like color field painting, but not quite. You call them something else?

BT: Yes. When we were talking the other evening, I somewhat cheekily referred to the paintings as Bakersfield paintings. Cheeky or not, the term holds some meaning for me. My father and his family were all from Bakersfield, California (not Bakersfield, Texas!). I spent a lot of time there with that part of my family. My grandfather loved making all kinds of things out of wood. I watched him work and decided that I wanted to work with wood too! I think of my father and

detail

Brad Tucker

Royston Chew, 2022

acrylic on canvas

21" x 24" x 1"

on a skateboard

Brad Tucker

Fingers, 2019

acrylic on canvas and wood, plaster, urethane, bearings



grandfather, and time spent in Bakersfield, a lot when I work quietly in the studio constructing the curved wooden supports for paintings. Weirdly, I also think a lot about color field painting, so, yeah, those influences definitely come across in the choices I make.

Q. What do you look for in color?

Color plays a major role in my work, and yet I have difficulty describing how I make it work. I'm not in any way scientific or theoretical about how I come to color. I mix heavy bodied pigments with murky, paint sludge and ugly, house paints in hopes of finding colors that feel simultaneously accessible and complicated. I have to play with the color quite a bit before I get it right. I have no color confidence, just an openness to when it seems to work.

Q. The footprints, the white-ish assemblage, does echo another piece of yours?

During the time that this show at N-S is open, another show called Synapsis will open at the Silos on Sawyer as part of Sculpture Month Houston. Each artist in the show will present an installation in one of the many silos converted into exhibition spaces. I will present a very large piece called GAS consisting of an array of small-scale, painted constructions arranged in a wide band around the inner circumference of the silo. The piece at N-S, titled Footprints, is an index of that piece in Houston. The arrangement of shapes on the wall, thin wood cut-outs quickly washed over with white primer, directly mimics the shapes and arrangement of the pieces in the GAS installation without reference to their color or physical volume. Instead, the shapes in Footprints document the outer shapes of each object in the GAS installation.

Q. Did you skate in pools?

Not really, no. I used to go to skateparks and skate in bowls that were similar to pools. Later, when the skateparks were bulldozed, I skated on backyard ramps with friends. That was very fun! When I was a sophomore in high school, around the time I got my driver's license and could potentially travel to cool abandoned swimming pools, my family moved to Michigan where pools were in short supply.



above, left to right

Brad Tucker
Royston Chew, 2022
acrylic on canvas, 21" x 24" x 1"

below

Brad Tucker
Royston Chew, 2022
acrylic on canvas, 21" x 24" x 1"

Brad Tucker
Big Foot, 2022
acrylic on canvas, 25" x 32" x 1"

Brad Tucker
Big Foot, 2022
acrylic on canvas, 25" x 32" x 1"





above, left to right

Brad Tucker
Camp Patch, 2021
acrylic on canvas
18" x 25" x 1"

Brad Tucker
Beach Day, 2022
acrylic on canvas
20" x 22" x 1"

Brad Tucker
Dune, 2020
acrylic on canvas,
25" x 20½" x 1"



on the floor

Transmountain
Tall Mirror, 2022
antiqued mirror, plywood,
laminated, veneer
25" x 84" x 25"

Q. How did you start Transmountain? Where do you think you are at now, with the design you are making? The work is sculptural, but still useful, functional furniture.

Lindsey Culpepper: We started Transmountain in 2014, since then we've worked in a variety of ways together: woodworking, scenic construction, custom furniture and installation, and special projects for bars/restaurants/retail spaces. We often design the overall look and feel of these projects, though have also done fabrication for other creatives, too. We're ready to continue with a variety of work, experimenting with materials more often, making furniture and objects that our close friends might describe as, "that's super-transmountain, I could tell right away that was yours!" Part of my creative process is about solving functional problems, creating utilitarian objects that work well and editing everything down to practically nothing. While the other part is concerned with the aesthetics, the politics, the narrative, the daydreams...

Q. What about the objects in Outer Middle?

LC: At the start, we decided to work with concrete at the scale of furniture things. This was a jumping off point, but quickly... Actually very slowly, we ditched the concrete furniture idea because it was too unwieldy. At that point, we had the breeze blocks underway, a concrete cone cast in a typical traffic cone and an idea about using papercrete to reduce the weight of a single-material furniture. The cast cone provided inspiration for the form and proportions of the mirror and reflected the interior draft angles of the breeze blocks, as the molds for those bits were made with little traffic cones.

Q. How do you come up with these objects, what sort of process gets you to these things?

LC: We have a lot of material bits and random knowledge learned from each project, each new project becomes a different version of a previous project... like a weird reflection of it with new elements that make it interesting. We often use leftover bits as starting points, combined with new random or specific ideas that we then winnow down until something interesting is revealed. After we all brainstormed the name for the show "Outer Middle", I started understanding the random phrase as a description of a type of creative process. Identifying the parameters, considering the constraints, incorporating leftovers, identifying expediencies, winnowing away bits until the center is found. Alas, a concept!

Q. What are you saying with the materials—formica, plywood, concrete, papercrete—why these materials?

LC: We work with laminates and veneers and plywood a lot, typically in a way that hides the fact that it is a surface material applied to plywood. I like the smoothness of formica paired with plywood, and the richness of mahogany veneer on plywood. Plywood is just a material, can be whatever you like, really. It's cheap and looks nice when you want it to. I've done some casting before, with silicone and rubber molds and various types of plaster and concrete blends but only on small objects, like things you might put on a bookshelf or atop a table somewhere. Gil and I both wanted to experiment with larger single-material objects, and to figure out how to make larger molds and forms and how to incorporate negative space into those objects. That got us to the Etageres made of papercrete.

Q. What is papercrete?

LC: Papercrete is just recycled paper and cement, typically used by, like, preppers, hippies and weirdo architects. It was patented in the 1920's but has remained somewhat underappreciated because it hasn't been very commercially viable or standardized. It's somewhat eco-friendly because it uses recycled paper in a cool way but somewhat less eco-friendly because the other material is cement. It looks cool, like an ancient artifact... we tried to be very precise with the form so that it would come out perfect, but it's a funny material that shrinks unevenly, that has soft patches and voids... all of those things we couldn't design in to an object, but the material brings a lot of little surprises.

Transmountain



above

Transmountain
Breeze Blocks, 2022
cast concrete
6" x 6" x 3"
~80 pieces

to the right

Transmountain
Tall Mirror, 2022
antiqued mirror, plywood,
laminated, veneer
25" x 84" x 25"

September 23 – October 23
2022



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5th St. b/w Brazos & San Jacinto
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