



Lost in Music

Sean Duffy
Dzine
Erik Hanson
Nadine Robinson
Jude Tallichet

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Johnson County Community College • Gallery of Art



Jude Tallichet, *It's All Good*, 2004, heat formed and fabricated plastic, fluorescent lights, steel chain and fixtures, dimensions 48" x 60" x 50", courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, NY



Sean Duffy, *Waiting*, 2003, 3 birchwood benches, 3 sets of 7 LPs, 96 speakers, cables, 3 birchwood wall pieces with cables, 3 turntables, 3 amplifiers, dimensions variable, collection of Rebecca and Alexander Stewart, Seattle, WA, courtesy Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, Los Angeles, CA

Sean Duffy

Sean Duffy's phonographic designs take as their starting point the last decade's most prevalent contextual model for the avant-garde collagist auteur — the multiple turntables of the DJ mixmaster. Anyone who's spent any time among art students in the last 10 years knows that while they may pay lip service to Robert Smithson in seminars and critiques, the artist they would most like to be is Beck. While the art world has dragged its heels to avoid the market implications of unbridled appropriation, turntablists from mainstream hip-hoppers to post-industrial experimental noisemakers have embraced the enormous potential of cut-and-paste aesthetics.

Part of the appeal of the DJ-as-artist is the potential for a bedroom recording geek to become a star, with the art world-uncool connotations of theatricality and authoritarianism that go along with it. In Duffy's 2003 installation, *Waiting*, he reconfigures the turntablist model as a non-hierarchical social space activated by the potential in its interstitial silences. By displacing the heroic protagonist of the DJ wars and replacing him with the constantly shifting consensus-constructed author that emerges when three (or two or one or no) members of the public choose to play, Duffy disrupts the cultural tropes of originality and intentionality at the heart of Modernism.

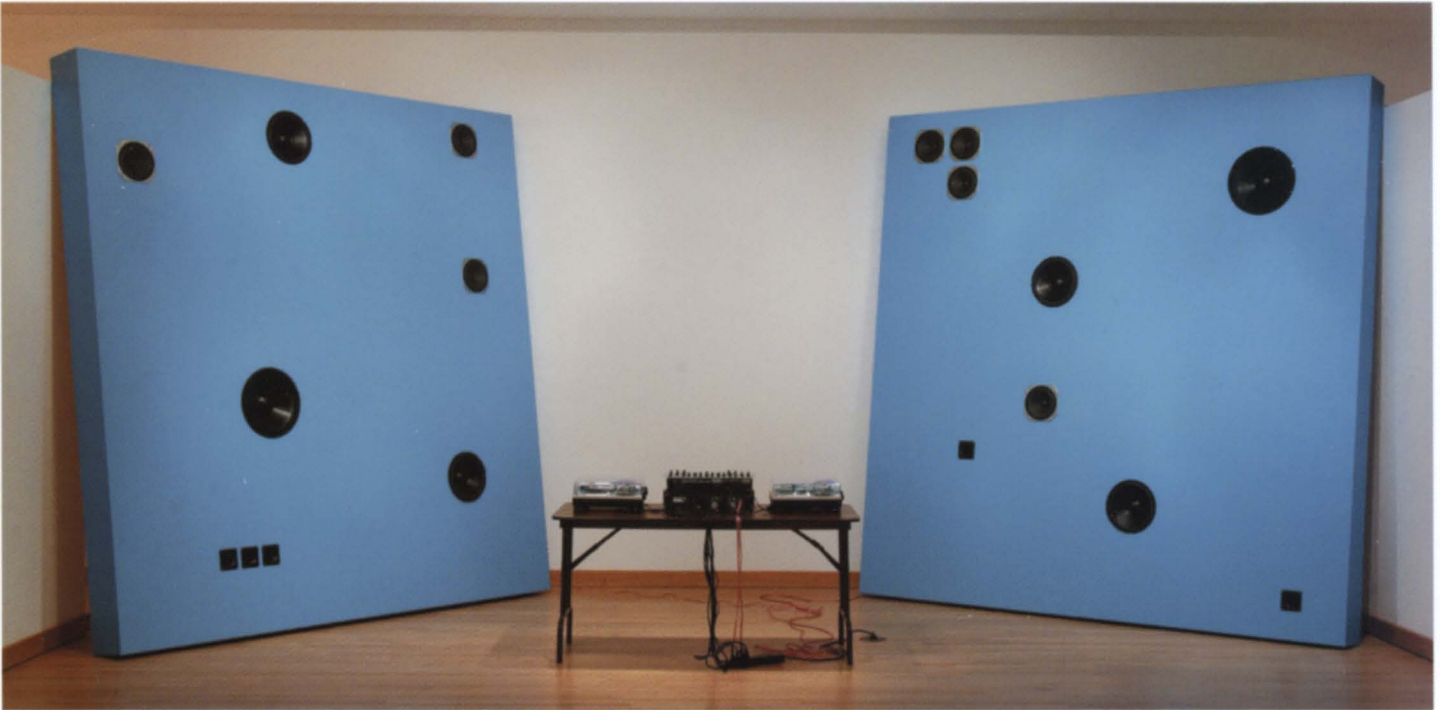
By dispersing the resultant signal across 96 randomly dangled speakers, he further eradicates the possibility of any single participant laying claim to authorship. By limiting the choice of vinyl to a handful of mostly identical platters, the possibility of demonstrating cleverness in choice or hipness in taste is diminished, even as the effectively infinite permutations afforded by this small amount of layering are affirmed. Deliberately referencing cool, institutional Modernist design, *Waiting* draws a connection between the utopianism of that era's prime with the ambivalent post-postmodern social sculptures of the last few years, while indulging in a little remix of its own. But by placing the basic tools at the disposal of just anyone, *Waiting* interrupts the sermon and transforms it into a conversation.

— Doug Harvey, art critic, *LA Weekly* and contributing editor, *Modern Painters*, Los Angeles, CA

Dzine

Dzine chose his name well. Whatever else we say about this ambitious and energetic artist, it all comes back to a kind of velocity of design, to accelerating the pictorial, to seek and find that up-tempo rhythm that can literally make the heart race. Intensity is a life-heightening thing, and Dzine's work is so bubbly, insouciant and jazzy as to provide as giddy and exhilarating a visual experience as anything in contemporary art. He revs it up, in terms of color, composition and surface treatment, creating work that you never 'contemplate' or 'regard' or 'observe' but instead always ride, boldly ride.

Dzine is tuned into some of the richest graphic design of our moment, a loopy and riotous cursive flow that is also extraordinarily elegant and tasteful. He melds eye-popping color (though always controlled and judicious), snippets of imagery and abstract form (hints of skies and landscapes, droplets suggesting tears, circles



Nadine Robinson, *Big Baby Blue, Version Three*, 2005, latex paint, canvas, wood, speakers, speaker wire, power cord, crossover, records, turntables, mixer, amplifier, table, dimensions 10' x 10' x 1' each, courtesy of the artist and Caren Golden Fine Art, New York, NY

becoming bubbles, etc.) and an energetic sense of pattern (he seems equal parts psychedelia, the *Book of Kells*, and Disney at his most manic). And if all this isn't enough, if there aren't already more things layered and churning around in a work such as *Staring at the Sun* than any of us are likely to perceive, Dzine then covers the entire work with a schmear of transparent glass beads(!).

This last bit, of course, makes his work literally shimmer, the glistening tiny sprinkles of glass—fabricated in collaboration with Maya Romanoff—twinkle in the light like mini-baubles, creating another surface that is both transparent and assertive (and that's hard to do!). It's like a coating of caviar, a kind of spry pointillism that conceptually and formally always supports the imagery it finally encases. And it's like Dzine too, a reminder that speed thrills, with motion the natural state of matter.

— James Yood, Professor, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Erik Hanson

Kind of like Morrissey, Erik Hanson adapts his diaristic practice into curious configurations. Here, it's a pathway in a park of his making in which hand-carved signposts and clusters of tree trunks delineate an idiosyncratic memoir of past loves. Each sign bears a recollection, or confession, in the form of a singer and a song, corresponding to a particular former relationship: *Nico Singing All Tomorrow's Parties*. Circling every sign is a gathering of logs and each, upon close inspection, bears an inscription much more elaborate and telling than initials carved in a tree. Hanson's carefully modeled knotty birch exteriors meld with black resin interiors, and where the rings of a tree, showing its age, would normally be, he has faintly drawn the grooves and labels of albums and singles. Hanson's marks of love remembered are drawn records that coincide, for the artist, with the music that drew each of his loved ones toward him.

In his unapologetic devotion to music, Hanson divulges tastes ranging from the embarrassment of pop to the obscurity of connoisseurship—making his choices the elemental systems of his work. He seeks to organize the immeasurable emotions attached to songs as they intersect with personal experience, making signposts that mark particular times, places and feelings. Using a combination of inert materials (of culture) and organic forms (of nature) is characteristic of his visual translation of the everyday experience of listening to music into various structured, material utterances—drawings, paintings, sculpture, needlepoint—whatever medium can serve to embody his memory as it lodged itself to a song. *My Love Life* expands such contingencies by situating the most show-bizzy of culture, *Shirley Bassey Singing Something*, into his invented state park nature. Citing a particular performance of an unlikely cover version, this sign could hint, much like his formal choices, at opposites attracting.

— Lia Gangitano, Director, Participant Inc., New York, NY

Nadine Robinson

Mixing minimalist visual structure with maximum sound potential, Nadine Robinson turns painting on its conceptual head and twirls it round like a breakdancer performing a graceful headspin. These opposing aesthetic languages cross wires in *Big Baby Blue, Version Three*, to produce a hybrid form of art that's both fresh and exciting.

Exploring the fusion of sound and image, Robinson made her first audio-visual work after a chance encounter with a tweeter on the way to her New York studio in 1997. Applying the black ready-made speaker to a white canvas announced an endless stream of possibilities that Robinson ironically dubbed *Boom Paintings*.

While an artist-in-residence at the World Trade Center in 1999, Robinson conceived *Tower Hollers*, a dynamic installation of ninety



Dzine, (on left) *Lavender Lust (if Sun Ra played the trumpet)*, 2005, acrylic on canvas with glass beads on wood mount, dimensions 84" x 102", collection of Joel and Vivian Porkorny, Chicago, IL; (center) *Beautiful Otherness*, 2004, acrylic on canvas with glass beads, dimensions 6' x 24', courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago, IL; (on right) *Staring at the Sun*, 2004, acrylic on canvas with glass beads on wood mount, dimensions 40" x 40", collection of Marc and Liza Brooks, Chicago, IL (all works fabricated in collaboration with Maya Romonoff)

speaker-canvases with four boxed turntables, blending "Negro" work songs and elevator Muzak. *Tower Hollers* premiered at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2001. In the following year, a monumental version with 455 speaker-canvases and a dozen record players was prominently displayed in the group show *Tempo* at the Museum of Modern Art.

At SMH, Robinson began simulating Modernist color field paintings by combining hair extensions into monochromatic works. A series of black, then white, abstract hair paintings followed — some braided, some incorporating sound and others, words — that referenced Robinson's personal history. Her interest in subverting Modernism had developed while still a student, after viewing the Robert Ryman retrospective at MoMA. Awed, yet overwhelmed by his use of whiteness, she was challenged to express her own point of view.

At the heart of Robinson's experimentation with sound and formalism is *Big Baby Blue, Version Three*. Originally created for an exhibition investigating the influence of hip-hop on contemporary art, it appropriates the blue album cover of the famed Sugar Hill Records, best known for the hip-hop anthem *Rapper's Delight*, while constructing a working sound system to carry on the music. Referencing her coming of age, *Big Baby Blue, Version Three* offers up two turntables and some powerful paintings that echo in the future while blowing the past away.

— Paul Laster, artist, writer and curator, New York, NY

Jude Tallichet

Jude Tallichet's sculpture *It's All Good* represents an important shift from the artist's most recent series of work. Known for the

architecturally-based, sound-enabled sculptures and installations she has created over the past decade, Tallichet chose with this piece to refocus her formal vocabulary on another category of iconography entirely; the solid, cylindrical geometry of the classic drum kit. Further, she now chooses silence as the ironic accompaniment to her musical creation.

The kit hangs upside down from cables, the faces of its five drums lit softly from within by fluorescent lights as they plunge towards the viewer. The drums are anchored to an oval of sandblasted plexiglass, intercepted on its fringes by five upright cymbals.

Every choice Tallichet has made is a challenge. She has thrown her work into the air; she has chosen the vertiginous confusion of complete inversion, she has taken on the mimetic problematics of the real scale imitation. What remains, though, is the essential generosity that characterizes all of the artist's work; it is ironic without being cynical, playful without being jokey. Present too, is a more melancholy theme in Tallichet's sculpture. Her miniaturized singing buildings evoked Edens from which we are forever banished, places located in memory and the marvelous, too perfect for our diminished and compromised selves. The human presence in her utopias is metaphorical, latent. We are not with them in body, only in spirit. The drum set, however, is life-sized and we could play it if we could fly, but we cannot fly. The drums are close enough almost to touch, but the marvelous floating, mirrored space it inhabits just above our heads is impossibly distant. We cannot swim up into the glowing air and give voice to the silent drums. We can only stand beneath them and ponder our own impotent yearnings.

— Matt Freedman, artist and writer, Queens, NY

Cover: Erik Hanson, (*Lost in Music* installation view) *My Love Life*, 2005, wood, steel, concrete, enamel, bondo, resin, acrylic, graphite, dimensions variable, and *Hear Me, I'm graphically Yours*, 2005, latex paint on wall, dimensions 12' x 40', courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York, NY