

# ART=CITY

## Road Trip! AFC Goes to Philly

by WHITNEY KIMBALL on JULY 20, 2012



Philadelphia has birthed a ton of emerging galleries in over the past couple of years, so of course, it was time to pay them a visit. Though I couldn't get into the Barnes (it's [a bitch](#); tickets must be booked well in advance for half-hour time slots) I was pleasantly surprised by some solid shows. We'll bring you more on the scene next week, but for now, here's the art:



*Install shot of "Daphne" (Photo courtesy of Fjord Gallery).*

## Fjord, “Daphne”

[2419 Frankford Ave](#)

Open by appointment through Tuesday, July 31st.

“Daphne” pointedly picks up on a theme running through many of the recent painting shows in New York. Jack Henry and Ted Gahl, who appeared together at DODGEgallery last year, both have work in the show, and both have their finger on a certain contemporary note.

Objects disguise themselves as something else, with jokes on materiality: a basketball is painted as a soccer ball, a mailbox manifests in plywood, found objects disguise themselves as painting.

Most toe the line between sculptural painting, like Cameron Masters’ chunky, rock-like slab, and painterly sculpture, like Daphne Gardner’s (a.k.a Liam Holding’s) paintings stacked to look like licorice allsorts. Over and over, you find yourself duped, even though you never actually took these things to be authentic reproductions in the first place. I thought that’s an interesting question: what’s an art object, if it doesn’t eventually refer you to some final idea? Is misdirection a valid direction in itself?

## Gallery 102, “Dirty Pretty Things”

Crane Arts Building

[1400 North American Street](#)

Open through July 26th

Wednesday – Sunday, 12 – 6 PM

This colorful abstract painting show, themed by “artists who work together,” falls a little flat. Like a lot of what’s everywhere, it’s heavy on materiality, light on substance, and too-loosely curated.



Rachel Cox, "Mind Meld," 2012. Archival pigment print, 23 by 27 inches. (Photo courtesy of Rachel Cox)

# Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, 3rd Annual Photography Exhibition

Crane Arts Building

[1400 North American Street](#)

Open through September 8th, Tuesday through Saturday

This tops my list so far of this year's emerging photo shows. Jurors Natasha Egan (curator at the Museum of Contemporary Photography) and Kathy Ryan (Director of Photography at *The New York Times Magazine*)'s pick a few breathers from estheticism. [One such image](#) by Noah Addis presents a squatter's village on the riverbanks of Mumbai, little more than a vomit-pile of splinters and tattered tarps. The documentation alone alarms.

Other highlights include [Rachel Cox](#)'s "Mind Meld," in which young female hands immature-ishly frame a grandmother's dignified head. A little bit art school, but it also acknowledges that editing one's grandmother seems absurd, anyway.

And a particular show-stopper is Lauren Marsolier's hyperreal landscape of pull-up hoops in a sandbox. As part of her seven-year series [Transitions](#), Marsolier has been photographing empty spaces from around the world, a blend of "real" and manipulated imagery. The scene appears so geometric and even-toned that it couldn't possibly exist; by the same token, the evenness makes it look more photographic, and therefore more real.

## Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Ryan McCartney: "Breaks to Make"

[319A North 11th Street, Suite 2H](#)

Open through July 29th, Saturday and Sunday 2 – 6 PM and by appointment

This isn't my bag, though that's not to say it doesn't do what it does well. Shadowy black-and-colored paintings and colorful skull silhouettes on an oversized bead-counter seem to address death, lightly. Perhaps the removal of symbol from signified is exactly the point, but they read as passive design objects. If they're design, they're extremely well-crafted.



*(Untitled?) painting by Orion Martin (Photo courtesy of BODEGA)*

## BODEGA, “Fükengrüven”

[253 North 3rd Street](#)

June 9 – July 29

Open Saturdays and Sundays 12 – 4 and by appointment.

Though New Yorkers will probably recognize Joshua Abelow by now, the other three painters in “Fükengrüven” are welcome discoveries. Their level of calligraphic ease—Pia Howell’s breasts (a wavy line and two circles), or Orion Martin’s über-satisfying slippery rope of a head—stirs up a love of making which comes with an expert hand. If the candied palette and allusions to prefab furniture in Phil Cote’s half-structure-half-painting evoke consumerism, then the show is aptly-named. It comes from the 90’s advertising term “Fahrvergnügen,” or “Driving Enjoyment.”

## Grizzly Grizzly, “Dog is in the Details”: Coop Collective Exchange Show

[319A North 11th Street, Suite 2H](#)

Open through July 28th, Saturdays and Sundays 2 – 6 PM

The collective Grizzly Grizzly has organized an exchange show with the Nashville-based collective COOP, so Grizzly’s work is now in Nashville. The resulting show is, again, not my thing; precious paintings and cartoony prints seem to be on autopilot.

But community initiatives are one of Grizzly Grizzly’s strong suits. They recently co-founded a Community Supported Art ([CSA](#)) program with Tiger Strikes Asteroid, based on a model founded in Minneapolis by Springboard for the Arts. Paying members receive nine pieces of local artwork throughout the season, and hopefully become collectors later on. I’ll definitely be keeping an eye on that.



*Marc Blumthal, "Unilateral Health Care," 2011. (Photo courtesy of Marc Blumthal)*

## Napoleon, “Finding Nemo”

319 North 11th Street, 2L

[Open through July 27th](#)

Saturdays and Sundays 2 – 6 PM or by appointment

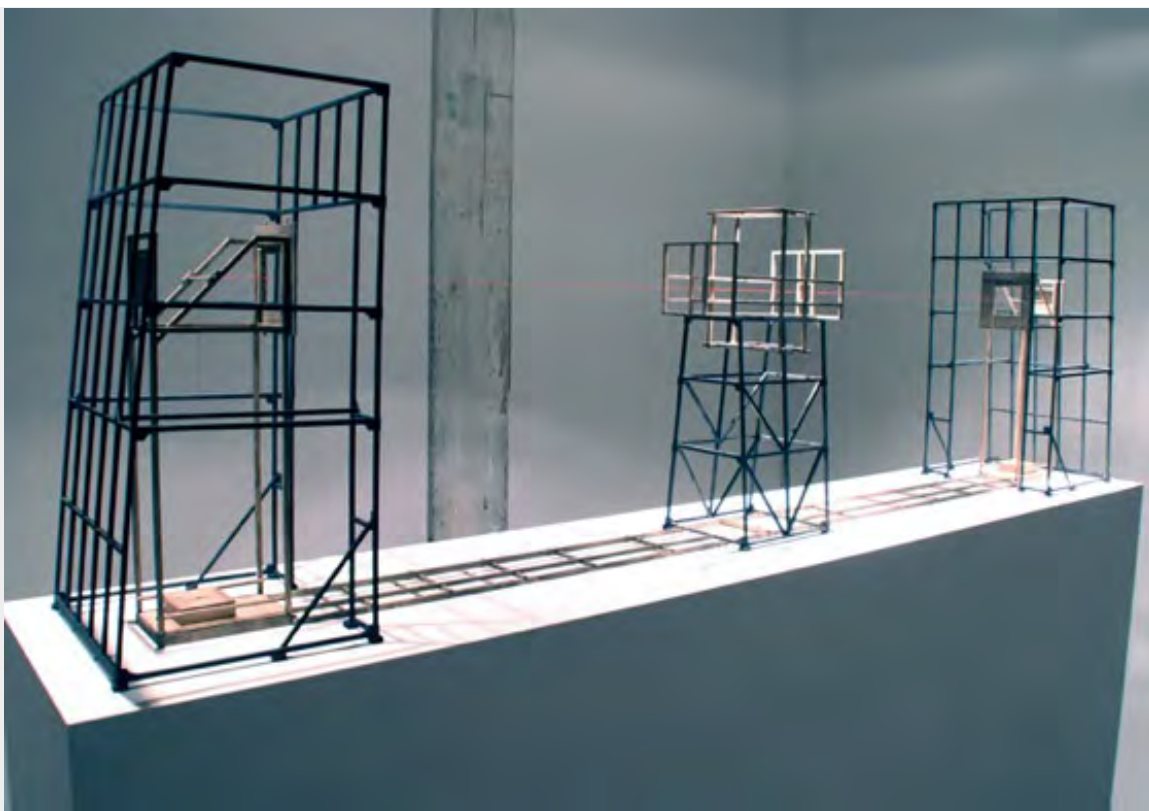
Napoleon hosts a solo show of work by photographer [Marc Blumthal](#), who also appeared in the Philadelphia Photo Arts Center exhibition. There, his dissecting-the-image photo collages struck me as a series of mental exercises, but not in the obligatory image-theory-Rx sort of way. Mundane family snapshots contain silhouettes of a baby or a figure, replaced by piecemeal bits of background, as though their absence leaves a slightly-jumbled ghost. His concurrent solo show at Napoleon in the Rollins Building is equally good. Minor alterations use a Baldessarian logic: “Unilateral Health Care” mirrors Hillary Clinton’s hairline and body, while preserving her focused expression, so that she appears to be turning against herself. Other figures are blurred out with color halftoning. An enormous black circle blows a massive hole in an outdoor portrait photo. The mix of mechanical and psychedelic puts the viewer on edge.

## Vox Populi: “Vox VIII”

[319 North 11th Street, 3rd floor](#)

Open through July 29th, Wednesday – Sunday, 12- 6 PM

Like everywhere, the emerging shows are hit-or-miss. Here's the miss. This one packs video, installation, painting, and sculpture together with the clearance-sale feel of an art fair. Works by 23 artists were selected by SculptureCenter curator Ruba Katrib and artist Marlo Pascual. Though I get the desire to include as many people as possible, it does everyone a disservice.



*Second room of Scott Kip's "Illuminated Sculptures" at Marginal Utility. (Photo courtesy of onereviewamonth.com)*

## Marginal Utility: "Illuminated Sculptures"

319 North 11th Street, 2nd floor

Open through July 29th, Saturdays and Sundays 12 – 5 PM or by appointment

This one's the hit. [Scott Kip](#)'s "Illuminated Sculptures" at Marginal Utility are all precision.

Through three adjoining rooms, a series of similar architectural models of towers progressively advance, as though each depicts a different stage of industry. As you turn each corner from room to room, minor alterations have a surprisingly powerful effect. By room number three, the towers are no longer physically connected by string or bridges, but telekinetically by mirrors. It leaves an implicit but unseen bridge, like radio waves, or wifi.