

5 to Watch

Exceptional Graduates from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

JUSTIN JOHNSON, PAUL METRINKO, SAMANTHA MITCHELL, THOMAS PAUL RAGGIO, AND CHRISTINA WEAVER

MARCH 19–APRIL 16, 2015

Avery Galleries is pleased to present *5 to Watch*, our third annual special exhibition that showcases the artwork of five exceptional graduates from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In keeping with the show's established theme, the work of these contemporary artists is set in dialogue with Avery Galleries' exceptional collection of historic American art.

Part of our mission statement for *5 to Watch* is to choose a diverse group of artists not only to highlight the range of artwork that PAFA alumni create but also to facilitate how their work corresponds to our current collection. We always pay close attention to the individual strength and distinctive artistic style of each artist's work, but we can't always tell how the group will function collectively. In this regard, we are particularly pleased this year by how the artwork presents as a group. There is variety in terms of medium and style, but there is also continuity in the quality and thoughtfulness behind the work.

For artists Justin Johnson, Samantha Mitchell, and Christina Weaver, form as a metaphor or allusion to something else is an important theme. Whether it is the magic of a literary narrative, the complexity of a knot, or the ethereal quality of fabric, the artists captivate their viewers with their technical prowess and sensitivity to the form and content of their subjects. Paul Metrinko uses his keen powers of observation to distill the myriad details he sees in everyday life to their elemental forms, highlighting the value of their simplicity. Taking this idea one step further, Thomas Paul Raggio removes the observable world from his work entirely and uses the most basic geometric shapes to create a transcendental experience for his viewer.

As the artists themselves state, they greatly valued their time at PAFA and appreciated the importance tradition played in their education there. We look to them as the future of American art as we contemplate and appreciate the historic artists who came before them.

AVERY GALLERIES

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JUSTIN JOHNSON (born 1978)

"First Impressions Are Often Entirely Wrong," 2012; Oil on linen, 12 x 12 inches (30.5 x 30.5 cm)

2005–2010, Coursework for Bachelor of Fine Arts, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
2005, Associates Degree, Fine Art, Community College of Philadelphia

Selected Recent Exhibitions

- 2015 *The Places You'll Go* (solo show), Lancaster Public Library, Lancaster, PA
2014 *December Group Exhibit of Red Raven Artists*, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
Art 4 Everyone, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
2013 *December Group Exhibit of Red Raven Artists*, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
Art 4 Everyone, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
Media to Medium: An Interpretation of Literature, Film, & Music (solo show), Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
2012 *December Group Exhibit of Red Raven Artists*, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
Art 4 Everyone, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
Recent Paintings & Drawings (solo show), Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
2011 *December Group Exhibit of Red Raven Artists*, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
Six Philadelphia Artists Come to Red Raven in March, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA

As an artist and avid reader, I have always been deeply influenced by literature in my life and artwork. The appealing narratives that I find in books take on new meaning for me as I explore my interpretations of these stories through paint. My paintings are often inspired from a line of a book or the whole book itself. The final compositions are not always literal adaptations, but rather arrangements of objects and forms that capture my reactions or responses to the narrative. Although I seek to embed my paintings with these hidden narratives, the specific literary allusions may not be obvious or immediately recognizable to the viewer. Rather, it is my hope that with the viewer's first look at my work, he/she will see the subject matter, focus on the form, and then realize that the form becomes the content. After intently observing one of the small birds or a cup in my painting, the viewer's interest should be held by the form as well as the personal feelings it elicits.

I use limited color tones and values to create a quiet yet insightful look at the objects and their forms and colors. Sometimes, I introduce fairly saturated colors into my compositions to create a visual path that I want the viewer to explore. As paradoxical as it may seem, I believe there is surprising visual complexity in something as simple as a cup haphazardly placed on a box. The work of such famous still-life painters as Giorgio Morandi, John F. Peto or Euan Uglow illustrates this idea, in that the simpler the composition, the more complex it becomes.

I first embarked on my in-depth investigation of still-life painting at PAFA. Through conversations with my teachers and critics, I began to find deeper narratives in the still-life paintings of my favorite artists such as William H. Harnett and Peto. These works became more than just pretty pictures of fruit, animals, and violins. Rather, I learned to view them as visual journeys that were guided by subtle suggestions from the artists, through their use of light, spatial perception, and proportion.



PAUL METRINKO (born 1986)

Harlem Pool Party II, 2013; Acrylic on board, 7 x 9 ½ inches (17.8 x 24.1 cm)

2011, Bachelor of Fine Arts, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

2011, Certificate in Painting, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Selected Recent Exhibitions

- 2014 *Inspired Landscapes*, Oxford Art Alliance, Oxford, PA
Summer in the Rockaways (solo show), Bookplace, Oxford, PA
Art at Kings Oaks, Newtown, PA
- 2012 NYC (solo show), Bookplace, Oxford, PA
71st Annual Juried Exhibition, Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia
A Drawing Show of Philadelphia Artists, Philadelphia Sketch Club
Honoring the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2011 *Selected Works* (solo show), Bookplace, Oxford, PA
Betsy Meyer Memorial Exhibition: PAINT!, Main Line Art Center, Haverford, PA
Promises of Greatness, Philadelphia Sketch Club
Environmental Perspectives, Alumni Gallery, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
November Group Exhibit of Red Raven Artists, Red Raven Art Company, Lancaster, PA
Inside Outside: A Broad Interpretation of Space and Place on the Edge and in Between, Goggleworks, Reading, PA
New Faces Exhibit, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
February Juried Show, Oxford Art Alliance, Oxford, PA
110th Annual Student Exhibition, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
New Members' Show, Plastic Club, Philadelphia

I did not care much for painting or drawing as a kid. I had the usual collection of colored pencils and crayons and knew my way around a glue stick, but I never felt an overwhelming urge to pursue creative outlets. I did, however, spend a lot of time observing my surroundings when I was young. I found myself reflecting on the shape of neighbors' houses, the colors of the pasture in my grandma's backyard, and the intensity of the reflection of the moon on the ocean.

During my studies at PAFA I learned how to paint, but more importantly I learned how to cultivate my observations into paintings. With the guidance and mentorship of the faculty, who became more like family members, I was able to translate my observations into a visual language of my own.

My paintings serve a dual purpose as both archive and artifact of my observations. This combination creates a powerful tension between the mundane things I see everyday and the uniqueness of my artistic vision. My paintings often start from or are inspired by life, but evolve into individual objects with a distinctive purpose. Each painting requires a different blueprint for construction, in that the forms interact with the medium in their own way. I try not to dictate or cajole the outcome of my work too much; the paintings tend to make better studio mates this way.



SAMANTHA MITCHELL (born 1986)

Loose Tie, 2014; Ink on paper, 22 x 25 inches (55.9 x 63.5 cm)

2012, Master of Fine Arts, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

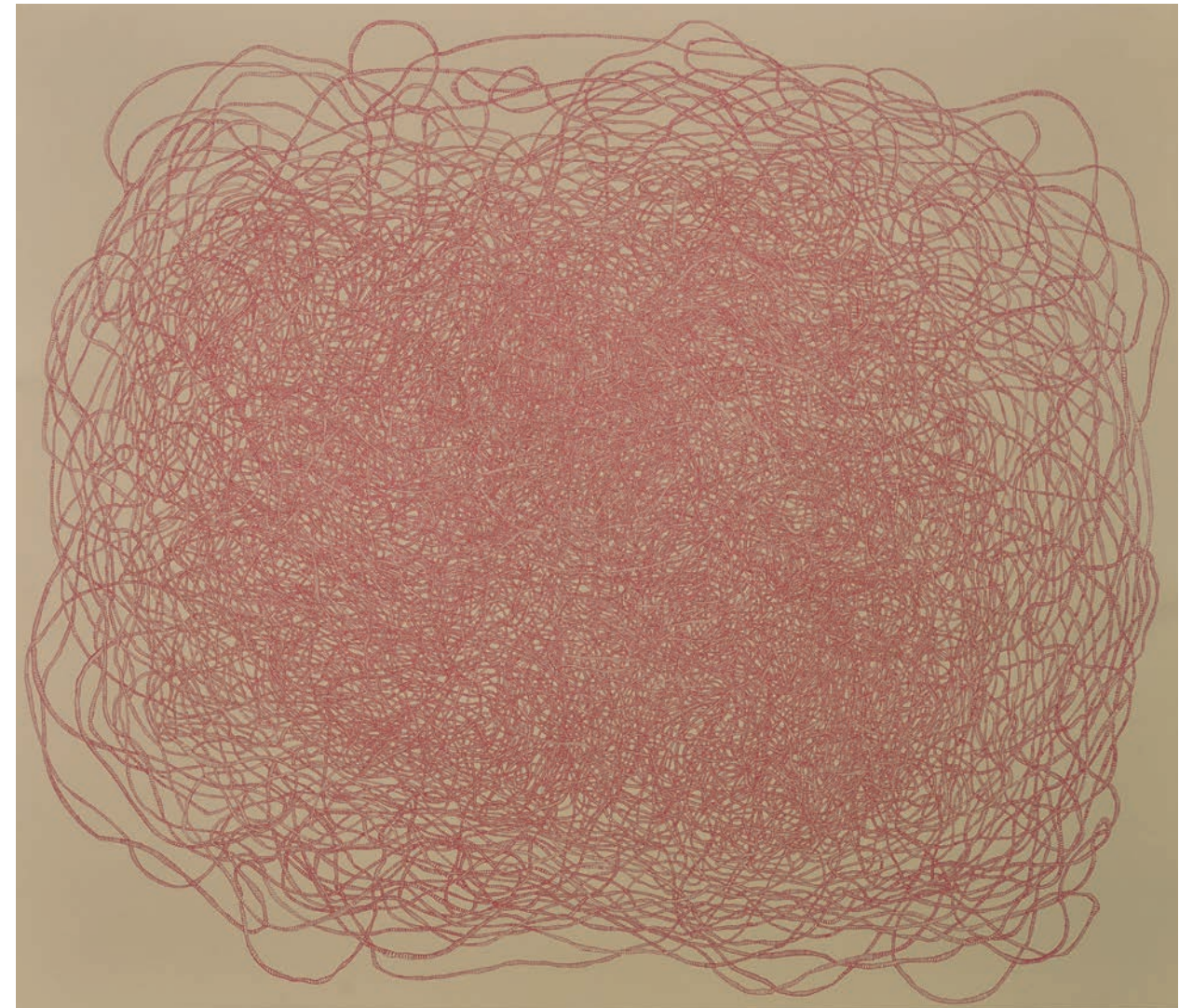
2008, Bachelor of Arts, Oberlin College, Ohio

Selected Recent Exhibitions

- 2014 *MFA Picks*, Alumni Gallery, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Before, Again, Gross McCleaf Gallery, Philadelphia
In With the New! Recent Gifts on Paper, Richard C. von Hess Foundation Works on Paper Gallery, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
- 2013 *Faculty Art Exhibition*, Delaware County Community College Gallery, Media, PA
Me and Earth, Pile of Bricks, Philadelphia
AQUACHROME, Manifest Gallery, Cincinnati, OH
Small Matters of Great Importance, Edward Hopper House, Nyack, NY
GroupThink, Pierre S. du Pont Arts Center Gallery, Wilmington, DE
- 2012 *Samantha Dylan Mitchell: Totems and Topographies* (solo show), Grizzly Grizzly, Philadelphia
New Prints 2012/Summer, International Print Center, New York, NY
MFA Thesis Exhibition, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Elemental: Nature as Language in the Works of Philadelphia Artists, Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia
- 2011 *Wish You Were There*, University City Arts League, Philadelphia
Other Possible Titles, Grizzly Grizzly, Philadelphia
Organic Form, PAFA Gallery 8, Philadelphia

I believe there is a tension between order and chaos that exists in anything formed through an organic process. It creates a kind of fragile stability that is constantly in motion, like a fabric with an imperfect weave, contracting and expanding as it rearranges itself. My work attempts to engage this tension of opposites through the medium of drawing and the potential energy of the knot. Using the form of the knot, I create singular, contained images that are tenuously held together by a web of tangled lines that could devolve into a chaotic mass of infinite complexity. Through a process of repetitive mark-making that both clarifies and confuses the procession of time, bound shapes emerge through restriction, improvisation, and containment.

I came to graduate school at PAFA with a deep fear that my particular artistic practice would be dismissed entirely in favor of something more immediate. At the time, I worked slowly and methodically creating 3 ½ x 5 foot facial portraits with fine-tipped pens. I thought surely that my painstaking and time-consuming process would not be feasible in an environment that required frequent critique and the expectation of constant production. As I anticipated, the faculty at PAFA did encourage me to examine my practice, but instead of recommending a faster method, they suggested that I experiment with new media. Working in woodblock print and etching expanded my understanding of mark-making by delaying the impact of my line on the page. Printmaking, specifically the act of creating the plate, forced me to engage with my imagery in a more sculptural way; it also allowed me the freedom to play with color and duplication. PAFA's commitment to and deep appreciation of the development of artistic process, beyond the boundaries of contemporary style, allows its students to fully engage in their investigation of subject and technique.



THOMAS PAUL RAGGIO (born 1987)

I'm Here / With You, 2013; Acrylic house paint on canvas, 46 x 58 inches (116.8 x 147.3 cm)

2011, Master of Fine Arts, Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

2009, Certificate in Painting, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Selected Recent Exhibitions

2014 *Thomas Paul Raggio / David Meyer – Breakdown* (solo show), James Oliver Gallery, Philadelphia

2013 *Thomas Paul Raggio* (solo show), Citibank, Morristown, NJ

Thomas Paul Raggio (solo show), Dylan Gallery, Philadelphia

Blind Date – Junge Positionen, Kunstgaleriebonn, Bonn, Germany

2012 *Thomas Paul Raggio* (solo show), Simon Gallery, Morristown, NJ

2011 *Ghost in the Machine*, Lennon, Weinberg, Inc., New York, NY

NOWHERE, White Box Gallery, New York, NY

MFA Thesis Exhibition: Round 1, Mason Gross School of the Arts Gallery, New Brunswick, NJ

The Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions Gallery, Heldrich Hotel, New Brunswick, NJ

College Art Association MFA Exhibition, Hunter College / Times Square Gallery, New York, NY

My work is an exploration of linear geometric relationships that create a transcendental presence in the paintings. I spend countless hours in the studio contemplating every color, drawing, mark, and placement of the line to formulate what I like to call rhythmic velocities. This term describes the relationship of color and motion that creates a heartbeat, gives life to the composition, and opens up a dialogue. The minimalism of the lines in relation to the canvas or pictorial space forms a new realm, which dislocates the viewers and challenges them to think beyond the spatial plane.

The foundation of my work centers on the stories created through my years of travel as well as the friends, family, and strangers I have met. These interactions have deeply affected my approach toward painting, generating dialogues that create the relationships of the lines and color in my work.

When I began my studies at PAFA, I was introduced to a rich historic tradition as well as to a contemporary studio practice for the first time in my life. During my time there, the critiques, conversations with faculty and students, and studio practice initiated me into my career as a professional artist. It is rare to be part of an institution filled with so much history that also pushes its students to create work that is challenging and engaging.



CHRISTINA WEAVER (born 1987)

Rift, 2014; Oil on panel, 48 x 36 inches (121.9 x 91.4 cm)

2014, Master of Fine Arts, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

2012, Bachelor of Fine Arts, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

2011, Certificate in Painting, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Selected Recent Exhibitions

2014 *Regional Showcase: Paintings from Ohio and Indiana*, Manifest Gallery, Cincinnati, OH

Inside and Out, The Painting Center, New York, NY

MFA Thesis Exhibition, Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, IN

The NOW! Body, Fuller Projects, Bloomington, IN

National Society of Arts and Letters: 2014 Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition of Emerging Artists, Ivy Tech John Waldron Arts Center, Bloomington, IN

Christina Weaver, Waxlander Art Gallery, Santa Fe, NM

2013 *Christina Weaver*, Waxlander Art Gallery, Santa Fe, NM

2013 *National Society of Arts and Letters: 2013 Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition of Emerging Artists*, Ivy Tech John Waldron Arts Center, Bloomington, IN

Indiana University MFA Group Show, Grunwald Gallery of Art, Bloomington, IN

2012 *Christina Weaver* (solo show), Ellenburg Art Gallery, Homewood Library, Birmingham, AL

Tiny, Gallery 924, Indianapolis, IN

Christina Weaver, Loretta Goodwin Gallery, Birmingham, AL

2011 *New Faces* (solo show), Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia

110th Annual Student Exhibition, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Art of the Flower, Philadelphia Sketch Club

I use fabric and other decorative materials as compositional vehicles for my paintings. Though faithful representation has always been essential to my work, I have been developing passages in my paintings where familiar items are transformed into something else entirely. Lighting, ambiguous spaces, and imposed gravities confuse the identity of my subjects and blur the boundary between the ethereal and the physical. Discarded wrappings call to mind rolling terrain and tumultuous weather as they change into mountain ranges, flowing rivers, and storm clouds. At the same time, fabric folds resemble something as intimate and close as the interior tangles of the body, evoking viscera. I ask my audience to acknowledge and reconsider objects that are seen as merely ornamental, aiming to elevate the frivolous into the realm of the monumental.

At PAFA, I gained experience in traditional painting and drawing techniques. Careful study of the human figure from life was a daily practice at the Academy, and figurative painter and professor Scott Noel had a particular effect on my way of seeing and perceiving the world. He opened my eyes to the abstract beauty that can be found in everything we observe and drove home the importance of balancing accuracy and invention in representational painting. Noel's teaching philosophy and passion for painting have deeply influenced my own teaching methods and are constant motivators for me in the studio. Though Noel had a powerful influence on me, the entire family of artists, teachers, peers, and patrons at the Academy provided me with a rich art-making experience and environment that will continue to shape my aesthetic and my studio practice going forward.

