



Curators' Selects | Artomatic 2024 Curators' Commentary

Liz Brown, Athenaeum Gallery Associate

Liz selected Ellen Cornett, Lewis Frances, Phyllis Mayes, Brian Sieling, and Christian Tribastone. Here is her commentary:

I enjoy facing art with curiosity, first and foremost. Curiosity is the driving force of anything I look at, and be it for the subject matter, material, color, or size, I want to be faced with something I've never seen before - A new perspective on subject or materials.

Driven by curiosity and wonder, I like knowing from the start that the artist is adventurous, and longs to create things they've never seen before. And when they do, they use what's on hand to drive their own curiosity in life.

Ellen Cornett

Silliness and play with words, with subject matter, with color and imagination – Ellen's work shows that observation can take a silly turn and make something we see into something we can place in our own narrative.

Phyllis Mayes

I love that each figure is like a special little doll that's been created by experiencing many stories and stitching them all together. I'm drawn to the detail and sense of play in each piece, and reminded that all of us are also made up of stories, stitched together. With the curiosity of a child, but the understanding of an adult, I embrace the figures in this work knowing that I'm somehow one of them.

Lewis Francis

Lewis's work, while not about material in a media sense, teaches us to view an environment strictly from one visual perspective, while allowing us to explore the concept and exploration of time from the one visual perspective. We can ask ourselves – who else has seen this same view? When was it? What did it look like? In this shared experience of looking, how will my view of these places differ from how they looked in their prime?

Brian Sieling

The art of looking and placing is what Bryan's work shows me. Each object has shape and design, but reaches away from its intended purpose as an object to interact with other objects of the like. I'm drawn to the creating and mixing, while providing an opportunity for a viewer to explore on a multitude of approachable levels- as well as delightful craftsmanship to guide instead of hinder.

Christian Tribastone

Materials and play between simplicity and complexity – Christian’s work reminds me that art is made by people who want to make it. Materials come from what we have, and subject matter comes from what we see, and the result is a new perspective.

Twig Murray, Athenaeum Gallery Director (pro bono)

Twig selected Camron Anderson, Kim Dyer, Marta Holmes, Jenny Kanzler, and Eric Celarier. Here is her commentary:

I must be a ‘glass half empty’ kind of girl. When I have visited Artomatics in the past I would become grumpy about having to deal with the many exhibitors that didn’t strike me as particularly talented — and come away from the show feeling I could have spent my time better elsewhere. When we broached the concept for Curators’ Selects | Artomatic 2024 I was not confident I would be able to find even four or five artists I was unfamiliar with whom I would consider showing in the Athenaeum Gallery.

Wow, was I wrong. After checking out every exhibit room over the course of two days I was surprised to learn I had identified 16 people who I thought really stood out for their remarkable work. —And that is not counting the number of the artists I was already familiar with whom have already been featured on our gallery walls.

Camron Anderson

I was immediately drawn to the strength of Camron Anderson pieces. While they have a bold ‘in your face’ kind of power that demands attention. They also seem sort of tortured, as if the subjects are struggling with how others might feel about them. In the works in this show I get the feeling the subjects are just about to lose it.

Kim Dyer

Kim’ Dyer’s works are similarly powerful with their bold shapes and colors and implied movement. I know nothing about the human brain – but I get a sense of a ‘neural network’ in them. They became even more fascinating to me after learning that as a PHD scientist, the artist had suffered a stroke and was using art – for the first time – to express herself.

Martha Holmes

Also a scientist, Martha Holmes, calls her works Emotional Chromodynamics. They take inspiration from science, nature, emotional states, as well as indigenous, prehistoric and abstract art. In addition to finding them visually captivating, I feel a little like an archaeologist attempting to translate ancient hieroglyphics – or someone trying to decode a secret treasure map. They’re trying to tell me something — I am not sure what – but I like attempting to puzzle them out.

Jenny Kanzler

Jenny Kanzler's works are quiet and a little dark but also quirky and charming. The way she makes things glow – like the little fish or the Cicada larva in the lunchbox makes me feel there is a secret life within..... I love that a slice of cake, or a cupcake – things normally associated with delicious happiness are balanced by what appear to be industrially applied metal decorations and trim. Light and dark. Playful and serious. Innocent and menacing.

Eric Celarier

Upon first seeing Eric Celarier's blue works, I confused them for Cyanotypes – but on further examination one can see that his process is totally different – specially when he introduces his incredibly joyous color palette. He prints directly from the objects depicted and ends up with an effect that somehow reminds me of stop-motion photography. There is a feeling of the passing of time in viewing them.

Veronica Szalus, Athenaeum Executive Director

Veronica selected Rita Eisler, Dennis Goris, A.D. Herzel, Candace Tavares, and Luis Del Valle. Here is her commentary:

To me the artist has many roles, and foremost among them is providing a means to reflect upon society by chronicling the people, places, conversations, possibilities and challenges of our lives. Art can spark conversations and debates, provide a platform for voices, present viewpoints other than the viewers own, and through the use of imagery and materials, present new ideas for a better future.

Rita Eisler

Rita Eisler's artworks were on display in an open space at Artomatic close to where I was also showing work. I found myself gravitating to her space on a regular basis to view a large panel with an arial view of a mountain range beautifully rendered with chalk pastel, and I was delighted to discover that it was rendered on bags collected from everyday transactions that included the stamps from the inspectors/workers who made the bags.

We live in a disposable society, and it is refreshing to see artwork that seamlessly incorporates reclaiming materials.

Dennis Goris

When I saw Dennis Goris's work I experienced an explosion of human expressions rendered through striking linework with color or in grayscale. There were dozens of images depicting people with a full range of emotions from calm and collected casually waving to sneering and teeth gritting anxiety. I thought a lot about the images with zipped teeth or stitched lips, are the subjects *silenced* for expressing dissenting or unpopular views or imposing self-censorship to avoid being harassed?

A.D. Herzel

For me, much of A.D. Herzel's art is an evolution of drawing that can have a hypnotic effect. I see her work as an organic mixture of delicate graphite ink layered into powerful compositions that simultaneously draw the viewer in while also emitting the feeling one

remains too far in the distance to actually have any involvement. This made me wonder if this is how A.D. sometimes feels. Her art practice revolves around themes of transracial identity that are informed by her experience of being a Korean purchased for adoption by a white family in the United States

Candice Tavares

Candice Tavares's masterful use of wood articulates the focus of her artworks with an abundance of heart and soul. Heavily influenced by her experiences as a black woman working and living in our society while facing inherent challenges for respect or protection, her portraits and figures reach out well beyond their frames with exquisite strength, beauty, contrast, layers, and depth, both physically and metaphysically.

Luis Del Valle

I was immediately drawn to the intensity of Luis Del Valle's portraiture. He depicts the people he paints (family, friends, everyday people and historic figures) with striking energy in a delightfully raw and simultaneously realistic manner that seems to tell a story with every brush stroke. Heightening the effect, many of his works are painted on street signs or otherwise found materials drawing the viewer even further into the contemporary world of his subjects.