

Telegraph

Steph Zimmerman and Tuan Nguyen
Curated by Lyndon Barrois Jr.

Friday, March 25, 2016
Opening 7-10pm

The Millitzer
3103 Pestalozzi Street
St. Louis, MO 63118

<http://millitzer.com/>



The Millitzer welcomes a conversation between the work of two artists that address questions of material expectation. Tuan Nguyen (b. 1972, Vietnam) and Steph Zimmerman (b. 1991, US) perform similar tasks of masking to different ends. Nguyen's use of pigment, wood and gesso disguise any straightforward notion of process or product in the context of painting. Zimmerman's objects bear the mark of household fixtures, having apparent functionality, though their use remains quite unclear. With both practices, the presence of shelves, pedestals, walls and mark making provide all the ingredients for conventional understanding, but recognition has been upended by a process of othering materials and their formal applications.

Tuan Nguyen is a painter, sculptor and Director of Education at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. His artwork has been exhibited nationally in venues in Los Angeles, CA; New York, NY; Seattle, WA and St. Louis. Nguyen received his MFA from the University of Washington in Seattle, WA. Born in Vietnam and raised in Rockledge, FL, Nguyen currently lives and works in St. Louis.

Steph Zimmerman is an artist living and working in St. Louis. She has a BFA in Digital Media and Photography from Washington University in St. Louis. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, and has attended residencies at The Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, Vermont; and the Arteles Creative Center, Haukijärvi, Finland.

Alterstanding

Lyndon Barrois Jr.

The fadeaway jump shot remains one of the most elusive moves in the game of basketball. Physiologically, it goes against every logic of efficiency; a player's back is to the basket, they jump away from it, must turn their body in midair, finally releasing the ball on the descent of the jump, rather than the apex. One's awareness of the exact position of what they are shooting at is somewhere between premonition and afterimage. When perfected, the shot is virtually unstoppable, and it is time-tested as a move that prolongs the threat of aging veterans among younger opponents. Speed and surprise have little to do with it, as it is likely to be effective even when a defender *knows* it is going to happen.

It is appropriate to begin with sport to acknowledge the role of play. And *serious* play with a certain level of maturity belies the trust and intuition to relish rawness, just as comedy draws its rhetoric from spotlighting and reframing true occurrences. Nguyen's work is not overwrought by process, even though meticulous labor necessitates the affect of his objects. They are intermedial, possessing a kind of hybrid identity, in which the materials have been uprooted and placed in another form and context, unable to situate itself in any particular demographic. Do they remain tied to their origins, assimilate into otherness, or hover somewhere in between?

Zimmerman plays with domestic economies, capitalizing on the mimicry of image and use. Through a cyclical loop of molding and masking origins, the works present a paradox of protection. In the works *Ottawa O.K.* and *Royale* for example, she creates a dependency between materials whose use functions are quite different: one insulates fragile devices that are to be used, the other a stand-in for natural wood and tile as both surface and visage. Newly applied in the inverse, the form of the styrofoam mold takes a foundational position, *dictating* the treatment of the linoleum, rather than *servicing* the appliance it should be packed around. There is a specificity attached to each material's limited purpose, though Zimmerman has employed them outside of their economical systems.

The true magic present in both bodies of work, is that the material transparency does not undermine their transformation. One is suspended between full recognition, and uncanny curiosity. Perhaps this sensitive familiarity is what allows discourses to continue more so than simple innovation. It is not the shock or mystery of presenting the wholly original, but the ways in which one complicates what is already plainly understood.

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