



LEARN TO KNOW YOUR HAWKS," 2015, **Luke Matjas**, DIGITAL/ANALOG DRAWING, ARCHIVAL PRINT, 54" x 96"
PHOTO: COURTESY OF CARNEGIE ART MUSEUM

Camino College Art Gallery. A series of pink-white porcelain portraits—ranging from full-length to isolated arms or heads—depict airman Mao covered in peony blossoms. These works are an inherent critique of the 57 "Hundred Flowers" campaign, a short-lived invitation to voice criticism against the Communist Government. Poignantly, they end in eulogy for those Mao later deemed poisonous weeds."

Fukazawa fuses her interest in the artistic rite of Chinese art in multiple bodies of work. At the gallery's entrance a series of various celadons, i.e., multi-spouted teapots and the like, constructed from undesirable toasters are installed across from a wall featuring hanging clusters of the prized medium of tea. In each, the pairing of valued/devalued is both playful and overt. Further in, a series of large porcelain boxes, bearing monochromatic landscape paintings reference historic styles dating back to the Ming Dynasty. The artist employs the familiar serene and distinctive *cun*, or texture strokes, before disrupting the imagery with various symbols. In effect, Fukazawa re-creates the traditional red stamp seals of membership, approval and artistic success by bureaucrats, scholars and emperors, and re-created them with corporate logos, golden ink patches or red dot decals—our contemporary signs of ownership, approval and commercial success. The landscapes are completely disrupted by these contemporary additions, scattered over the carefully rendered scenes—perhaps a reflection of the commercially driven disruption of the traditional views of the natural landscape.

—MOLLY ENHOLM

"I WASN'T THE THINNEST, NOR THE PRETTIEST, BUT I WAS THE WINNER!" 2015
Jennifer Greenburg

ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT, 24" x 30"
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JDC FINE ART
art ltd. / May / June 2016

OXNARD, CA
Luke Matjas: "That Great Rock Mass Is Called the Earth"
at Carnegie Art Museum

Coming of age in Orange County in what he terms "the primeval world of the 1970s," Luke Matjas witnessed massive rapid housing development that unearthed the fossilized remains of prehistoric creatures. This collision of natural history with Home Depot persists in his colorful drawings, which depict fantastic concatenations of nature, artifice, and decay. In Matjas' sharply realistic scenes, customized coolers borne by noble wild animals preserve plants and other specimens from a fragmented Southern California landscape. Look closely at one of his brightly colored large vertical drawings and you'll notice how frequently these cargo coolers sway from ropes and pulleys. It's as though when they are not lashed to the backs of grizzly

bears or mountain lions, they are swinging freely: perhaps onto the deck of some futuristic Noah's ark. The work implies that these potted slices of Southern California will be grafted into a new home somewhere, still trailing detritus of the civilization from which they were torn—orange highway caution cones, cheap plastic deck chairs, and even oozing pools of liquid nacho cheese.

Matjas, who chairs the art department at nearby Cal State Channel Islands, is a master draftsman who plays freely with the vocabularies of popular and technical illustration. His appropriation of the bold style of 1950s "pulp science" books lends such works as *Model of the Inputs, Outputs, and Transfers in the Always Strange and Surprising Animal Kingdom* (2006) a surface sincerity that enhances the wry ironies of its manifold juxtapositions. This colossal (96 by 40 inch) vertical image depicts a California grizzly bear wearing a cooler full of trees cavorting with turtles in a lake of liquid cheese—and that only begins to catalogue the surprising features of this remarkable image. Throughout Matjas' oeuvre, inscriptions, overlays, and loads of digitally-assisted representational drawing combine to conjure an irreverent yet sympathetic style that's highly appropriate for his subject, which is the artificial paradise of Southern California circa 2016. Elsewhere, meticulous small images of crumpled highway cones and enigmatic versions of national park trail signs dot the walls, complementing the scale of the ambitious, large panels. With his seemingly unlimited ability to manufacture new combinations of nature and trash—a condor perched atop a blasted recliner, for example—Matjas radiates the same confidence with which he endows



"SHIFT #2," 2016, **Jeffrey Palladini**, OIL AND CHARCOAL ON WOOD, 36" x 72"
PHOTO: COURTESY ANDREA SCHWARTZ GALLERY

the heroic animals that populate his post-modern dioramas. In a final *coup de grace*, a 30-foot horizontal image covers the entire main wall of the Carnegie's second floor exhibition space. It's a vivid reflection of how successful Matjas has been in making this museum into a habitat for his menageries.

—CHARLES DONELAN

SAN DIEGO
"Revising History by Jennifer Greenburg"
at jdc Fine Art

"Revising History" at jdc Fine Art (through May 28, 2016) consists of midcentury photographs into which Chicago-based photographer Jennifer Greenburg seamlessly inserts herself, rendering telling narratives through a gamut of characters. *Sadie Cohen was very upset that I got to model in the Hadassah fashion show. She didn't speak to me for weeks!* 2015 comprises a triptych of color photographs. To assume her character, Greenburg transformed herself through vintage costumes, classic red lips, and platinum blonde hair. Cindy Sherman's photographs come to mind, but Greenburg's work is arguably more nuanced, appearing as images from a family album—representative of middle-class women vying for a bit of glamour. The "Hadassah fashion show" features references to a Jewish charity event that existed at a time in American history when Jews were marginalized from mainstream organizations. The sardonic title supports the visual contrast between the vivid fashion model played by Greenburg and the society ladies who gaze at her with a mix of envy and admiration.

Greenburg's style is further enhanced through black and white photographs. *I wasn't the thinnest, nor the prettiest, but I was the winner!* 2015 presents Greenburg in a 1950s swimsuit among bathing beauty contestants, displaying an expression of sheer surprise. The bombshell image initially seems playful, but Greenburg alludes to a darker underside. The following images tap into the model's or beauty queen's fate. *I've always preferred my own birthday* 2013 represents Greenburg as a severe mother cornered at a kitchen table across from a girl wearing a

starched dress facing her birthday cake. Greenburg maintains tight lips and heavy eyes with an ashtray spotted to her left. The image blatantly captures the potential disillusionment of motherhood. *I have never been good at handling unwarranted attention* 2015 showcases Greenburg amidst a cocktail party facing an older man who grips her with his mouth inches from her as she recoils, encapsulating a timeless power struggle. *Two years later, I was drunk enough to sing at the St. Pat's party. How embarrassing!* 2014 shows Greenburg in a full length dress donning a Rita Hayworth hairstyle. Her closed eyes imply retreat, in spite of the atmosphere. Greenburg's recent work, *When they lifted me on to the piano, I had no choice but to oblige* 2016 depicts alcohol induced revelry. "Revising History" appears to satirize midcentury middle-class women. Yet we can find a myriad of counterpart images in our visual culture today supporting mechanisms that continue to distract women from achieving real agency.

—LAUREN BUSCEMI

SAN FRANCISCO
Jeffrey Palladini
at Andrea Schwartz Gallery

"We go through our lives... bombarded [by] ... internal and external forces. Often, our personal stimuli—memories, inspiration, longing, lust—seem to come from somewhere outside ourselves, outside our control," writes San Anselmo painter Jeffrey Palladini. This postmodern concept of human limitations is useful, but only to a point: Sir Kenneth Clark in his *Civilisation* series stated that artists need a base level of confidence in society. Palladini has found a way out of the despair born of helplessness. Quoting Faulkner's "the past is not even past," Palladini hypothesizes time to be as fluid a medium as the watery beings it supports: "Perhaps moments are not linear and sequential, but looping, repeating, simultaneous." He considers time as relative, and "time's steady march" as possibly just another sociocultural myth.

In paintings and one sculpture, Palladini questions human perception as well as the conventions of traditional (immobile) art. He depicts the silent protagonists of his paintings in the bold outlines and flat colors of pop art, but with their faces averted from the viewer, and subjected to "fragmentation, multiple views, sequential images, and off-sets" (his words). *Shift #2* shows a young man's head from a three-quarter rear view, his face hidden, with the image seemingly painted on out-of-register slats or strips that one visually tries to "correct." *Doppler*, its name reflecting the subjectivity of perception, comprises 25 square paintings of a man's profile with the face cropped out, as if badly photographed; it is seen in sequence small, larger, and then again small, as if the camera zoomed in and out, looking for focus. *An Alternate #2* juxtaposes two identical views of a figure looking down, with the standing figure seeming to scrutinize the horizontal one below. *Chaise #24* and *A Gradual Descent* feature sleeping women, one in bed, the other napping at poolside or beach, both with faces averted. The sculpture, *Seven Pieces*, is a pyramid of painted wooden sticks; stand in the right position, and the abstract images align and coalesce into another of the artist's elusive protagonists. As Palladini explains: "Our identity is made up entirely of bits of past, present, and future, and is never static."

—DEWITT CHENG

SAN FRANCISCO
Jason Middlebrook:
"The Small Spaces In Between"
at Alcohol 16

The California-born artist Jason Middlebrook, now living in upstate New York, returns to the West Coast after major shows at MASS MoCA and SITE Santa Fe with an impressive show of abstract paintings on wood, titled "The Small Spaces In Between." The title might refer to his cheerful *horror vacui* covering of irregularly shaped hardwood boards (selected from a Massachusetts mill) with intricate geometric designs. But it's also the name of one of the pieces: Middlebrook's oddball sense of humor is reflected not only in the interplay of wood grain, plank shape, and his beautifully absurdist paint "skins," once characterized as "riotous," but in his playful titles: e.g., *Nature Doesn't Stay in the Lines* (2016), *The Layer Between Us* (2015), and *The Small Spaces In Between (the Many Colors of Poison Ivy)* (2016). Middlebrook addresses the "collision between man and nature," a trope usually treated with glum, heavy-handed political correctness and makes the synthesis of opposites a joyous, radiant melding of complementaries—a sly collusion, rather, from an artist interested in ecology, recycling and entropy—and the imagined fate of art objects in a post-anthropoc era.

On display are a dozen of Middlebrook's 10-year-old *Plank* series, nine- or 10-foot tall cuts of maple, walnut, cherry, cypress and curly maple that have been roughly shaped and