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by Rebecca Marino | Published August 6, 2015



"When is the new space going to be ready?" is a question that Austin Nelson, Chris Whiteburch, and Sean Gaulager of [Co-Lab Projects](#) have been answering quite a bit lately. Every other Saturday, many in the art community ask themselves, "Wait, isn't there something going on tonight? Shouldn't I *be* somewhere?" Co-Lab's exceptionally frequent, consistent programming had become ingrained in many of us. After their very successful Kickstarter campaign in 2014, they continue the great move from their previous

homestead to a brand new location that will house a much larger gallery, as well as studio spaces for artists. However, even without a current physical space, Co-Lab remains a proactive force in the art community. The success of [SUMMERSCOOL](#) ultimately speaks to that.

SUMMERSCOOL is a summer program developed for young artists between the ages of 18 and 25. Prospective participants fill out an extensive [application](#) including a thorough exhibition proposal. Those selected spend their summer with the Co-Lab team learning everything from how to pack and ship their artwork to refining their personal artist statements. Through a series of critiques, workshops, guest lectures, and field trips, Co-Lab demystifies the process and connects the young artists with the local art community. “They’re in an age group that really needs to learn these skills,” says Whiteburch. “They need to learn how to work with other spaces, they need resume-builders, and they need to have shows in established spaces.” In the end, students are assisted in the final execution of their proposed exhibitions.



Courtesy Co-Lab Projects

“Working in a gallery setting was a completely foreign idea to me at the time,” said SUMMERSCOOL alumna Erin Miller. “These classes gave me the skill set needed to pursue art as a career. More specifically, I have taken these skills and directly applied them to starting up [The Mom Gallery](#).” Indeed, Miller took the technical know-how provided by SUMMERSCOOL (installation, lighting, gallery maintenance, etc.) straight to the home gallery she now co-directs and curates in the Hyde Park neighborhood with several of her colleagues. Miller “became part of the family,” said Gaulager. She

remains a presence at SUMMERSCOOL, assisting with this year's group along with another SUMMERSCOOL alumnus and Co-Lab family member, Mark Leavens. The curriculum continues to build on itself and has become significantly more professional and structured even in the short span of a year.



Courtesy Co-Lab Projects

To simply report on the nuts and bolts of the program would be a disservice to the SUMMERSCOOL group presently installing their final shows. This collection of young artists is made up of seven talented women split into three exhibitions: [You Are When You Sleep](#) by [Brittany Reeber](#); [Peels](#) by [Kayla Jones](#) and [Lillian Byrd](#); and [labile affect](#) by [Natalie Bradford](#), [Whitney Hill](#), [Tsz Kam](#) and [Kate Wilson](#). All open simultaneously on Saturday, August 8, at Co-Lab's temporary space at Canopy, next door to [Big Medium](#).

While young and (previously) inexperienced, these ladies demonstrate nothing but passion, dedication, and talent. Their work is extremely thoughtful, provocative, and—thanks to Co-Lab Projects—well executed and presented. I was fortunate enough to sit down and talk with several of the artists during install and felt I was amid what was clearly a female undergraduate powerhouse. Not often given the opportunity to exhibit outside of the academic sphere, several of the artists agreed that the exhibition proposal process was more than a little intimidating, even for a program like SUMMERSCOOL specifically designed for young, intimidated artists. Inspired and encouraged by their peers who participated in the previous year of SUMMERSCOOL, they decided to apply. “We’ve been able to realize works in a way you’re not necessarily able to within the confines of a traditional art school critique,” said Wilson, “and being

able to show that work and get that feedback and technical advice has encouraged us to really build a space and do something larger and more ambitious or more complicated than we've tackled before." That confidence takes form in the bold choices made in these three exhibitions.



Brittany Reeber, the only member without an academic background in art but with plenty of experience in the film industry, presents *You Are When You Sleep*, a combination of video and installation that touches on the anxieties of developing identity. Reeber uses a combination of monitors and sculptural projections to display her performative yet subtle video work. Beyond identity, Reeber attacks individual perspective from all angles, questioning both reality and our personal placement within it.



Still image from Reeber's *You Are When You Sleep*

Kayla Jones and Lillian Byrd, paired together by the Co-Lab team, present *Peels*, an exploration of texture, tactility, and the absurdity surrounding the artificial reproduction of nature. Byrd combines both synthetic and organic materials, placing liquid latex on bark and leaves, then peeling them apart to create a synthetic blanket of Earth. Jones takes a more digital approach, hanging banners of PowerPoint backgrounds and creating marble columns out of foam and manufactured paper. While their individual styles differ immensely, the artists seek to recontextualize materials as a way to manipulate expectation from the viewer.



Natalie Bradford, Whitney Hill, Tsz Kam and Kate Wilson present *labile affect*, a collaborative multimedia exhibition. This project explores the duality of feminine constructs as commodity through the use of color scheme, fabrics, and other domestic materials. In front of a large-scale mural of infinite pink rats, they have created a nook that feels somewhere between a gift shop and a young girl's bedroom. Along with this installation, they've included a tablescape of what they refer to as Betties: small pink geometric eggs encrusted with various things such as pearls, glitter, and sewing pins, reflecting the multiplicity of rats that hover above them.





[You Are When You Sleep](#), [Peels](#), and [labile affect](#) open this Saturday, August 8, 2015, 7-11 p.m. at Co-Lab's temporary space at Canopy, next door to [Big Medium](#).

[Rebecca Marino](#) is co-editor of Conflict of Interest. She also works as a visual artist and curator in Austin, TX. She has bartended at many Co-Lab opening receptions over the years and has exhibited in several of their group exhibitions, including *Teenage Wasteland* and *Art of the Brew*. She enjoys tickling Austin Nelson, drinking beer with Chris Whiteburch, and getting Lyfts from Sean Gaulager (Get a free \$20 ride if you are a new Lyft user. Enter his code: SEANSHEAVYLYFTIN).

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