

SARA FRANTZ

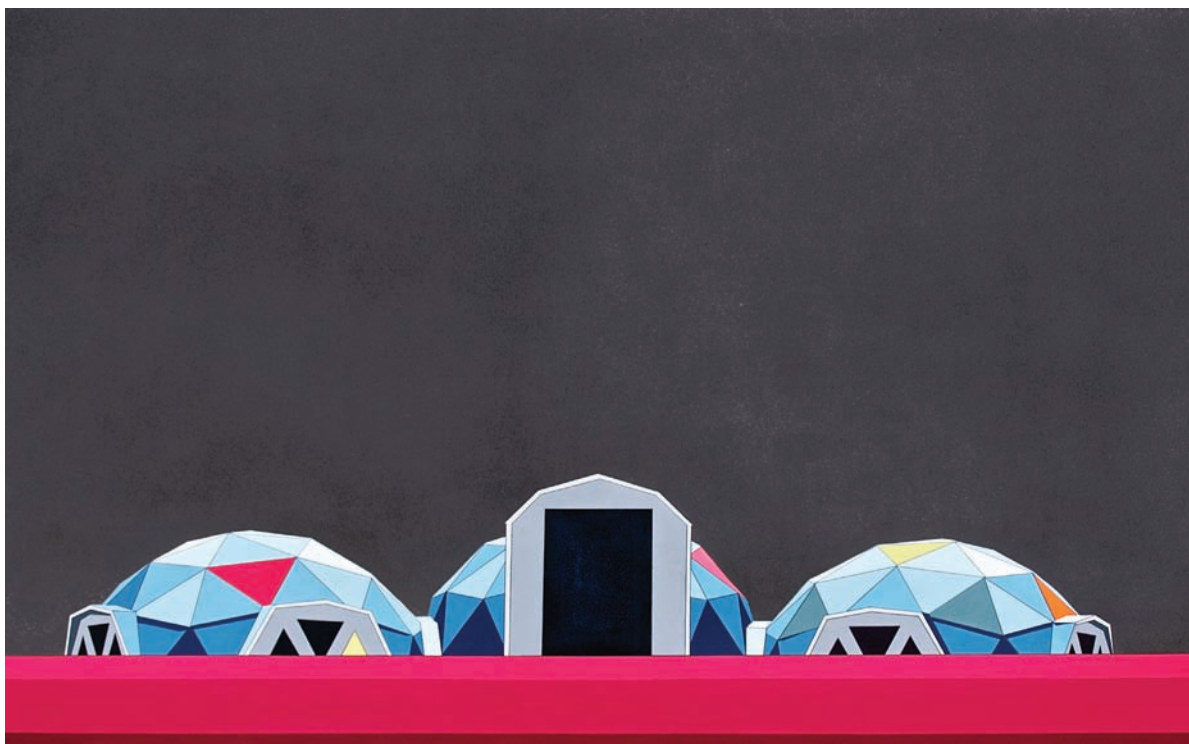
Between Borderlands



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

January 24 - March 19, 2015

Austin, Texas



Sun Valley Blvd, gouache and graphite on paper, 24" x 32", 2014.

Cover Panel: *Burger Boy*, gouache and graphite on paper, 38" x 24", 2014.

SARA FRANTZ
Between Borderlands

In Search Of The Vernacular

“Growing up, on a clear day I could see the Sears Tower from the peak of ‘Mt. Trashmore,’ a manufactured hill in a forest preserve that conceals a former landfill. Even less than the full Chicago skyline, that shape still looms in my memory with all its presence and potential. The Sears—now Willis Tower—was unknown to me, but I was excited that my city had the tallest building in the world. Years later, I was disappointed when another building usurped the title, despite no longer living in the state. That lingering sense of place came from nature, from the man-made, from culture and from history, both shared and personal.”

—Sara J. Frantz, *Artist’s Statement*

“Welcome to Costco. I Love You.”

—Mike Judge, *Idiocracy*

Sara J. Frantz’ latest series of gouache and graphite landscapes furthers the artist’s engagement with the alleged polarities of banality and beauty. In parsed, uninhabited re-imaginings of the built environment, unremarkable specimens of low architecture like burger joints, abandoned gas stations and strip mall hellholes become prismatic reliquaries—flamboyant harbingers of obsolescence infused with an odd sentimentality. The result is *Between Borderlands*, a sort of visual recap of Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* as seen through the lens of that candy-colored clown we call the Sandman.

Originally from the Midwest, Frantz spent years in Texas prior to accepting her current position at California Polytechnic in San Luis Obispo. Much of that time was spent on the road. As the artist crisscrossed the countryside,

she added photographs of the surrounding landscape to her bank of source materials, which currently exceeds some 20,000 images. From these roadside snapshots, she produces the meticulous graphite drawings that are the foundation of her highly stylized universe.

After choosing a source image, the artist isolates individual buildings within the landscape—the more bleak the better—often framing out elements that might encumber the structure’s anonymity while allowing surrounding foliage to remain. In some instances, grass, shrubs and tree trunks are the only reliable indicators of scale. In other works, structures seem like they were chosen for their ubiquity or some quirky architectural shorthand, like the telltale pitch of a roof line that could only be an abandoned Burger Barn or Howard Johnson’s.

Regardless, all of these structures reside firmly in the vernacular, an unusual but not unprecedented choice—think Ed Ruscha’s *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*.

According to her artist’s statement, Frantz deliberately seeks out another, albeit not altogether unrelated nostalgic referent. “My work,” writes the artist, “is about how obvious and often disregarded built environments define our experience of modern nature. Man-made forms whittle and shape the landscape leaving carvings that serve as sociological accounts of a region [...]

I now drive cross countries to search out and photograph new wave scenes along the highway. There is something appealing to me about the shift one sees along a route, the gradual progression and eventual blending of towns, architecture, rivers and forests in which you can almost read the history of an area in its landscape.”

The formal strategies Frantz employs—traditional figure/ground relationships combined with rigid theatrical framing of otherwise unremarkable structures—quietly question conventional notions of beauty in landscape painting. This jab at art historical convention underscores her work, as does a penchant for the absenting of the subject. In several older series, beginning in early 2010, Frantz initiated the practice of leaving pristine white voids in the work to simultaneously mark and mask architectural structures that inhabit the landscape. In a relatively new but significant turn that the artist attributes to an affinity with the work of Robert Ryman, the void is now applied



Geo Fields, gouache and graphite on paper, 20" x 20", 2014.



Sunglo Gas, gouache and graphite on paper, 24" x 32", 2014.

instead of merely omitted, painted directly atop the subject and background.

Early experiments tease out the material complexity of Frantz' graphite landscapes and successfully blur the lines between abstraction and representation. And there is, of course, the tantalizing paradox of drawing attention to something inconspicuous by its very erasure—a strategy of foregrounding anonymity popularized by John Baldessari, among others. For Frantz, her early voids are intermediaries, screens upon which the viewer projects their own notions of place and the aestheticization of memory.

While taking an initial cue from Ryman, rather than settle for the simple but salient gesture of collapsing the figure-ground relationship via a cold white abyss, Frantz immediately began to apply thick, sometimes wildly colored blocks of gouache to her voided spaces creating

fantastical, almost carnivalesque tableaux. A collage-like contrast emerges between saturated hues that alternately mask and embellish underlying architecture and richly textured gray scale backgrounds. Chunks of concrete, wood and industrial glass become opaque geometric confections, making the subjects all the more impenetrable and idealized—cloaked, as they are, in the subjective causality of their own reimagining:

"I am interested in architecture as a reflection of social or cultural values and attempt to recontextualize the presence of these spaces through mimicking nature and abstracting constructed forms. The stylized layering and reduction of representation to a common denominator is a system of fragmentation breaking apart an otherwise more naturalistic space [...] Decaying ruins and gentrifying new constructions are cheerily fractured to depict the ever-changing battle between

man-made structures and nature. Out of time and dislocated from their original space, each piece is an attempt to balance restraint with excess or at least to temper the anxious over-embellishment with order."

While it is obvious that each location in *Between Borderlands* is a real point in the real world, it is equally obvious from Frantz' ever-growing repository of personal reflection—her vast accumulation of source imagery—that the journey is as much part of her already process-heavy practice as the destination. In other words, her works are not depictions of Cartesian realities so much as distillations of time—humble roadside markers along a peculiar quest to willingly encounter and reevaluate the banal.

Sara J. Frantz is represented by David Shelton Gallery in Houston, TX.

Anjali Gupta is Director of Sala Diaz, a nonprofit contemporary art space in San Antonio, TX.



Two Bits, gouache and graphite on paper, 38" x 24", 2014.

SARA FRANTZ

Education:

- 2007 MFA - Painting, University of Texas at Austin; Austin, TX
2003 BS - Studio Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Madison, WI

Professional Experience:

- 2014- Assistant Professor, California Polytechnic State University;
San Luis Obispo, CA
2008-14 Senior Lecturer, University of Texas at San Antonio;
San Antonio, TX
2007-09 Lecturer, University of Texas at Austin; Austin, TX

Solo Exhibitions:

- 2016 (*Upcoming*), Sala Diaz; San Antonio, TX
2015 (*Upcoming*), Harold J. Miozzi Art Gallery; Cuesta College;
San Luis Obispo, CA
(*Upcoming*), David Shelton Gallery; Houston, TX
Between Borderlands, Women & Their Work; Austin, TX
2012 *Focus* at the Houston Fine Art Fair, David Shelton Gallery;
Houston, TX
2011 *New Landscapes*, David Shelton Gallery; San Antonio, TX
2009 *Quit the Neighborhood*, Cactus Bra Gallery; San Antonio, TX

Group Exhibitions:

- 2015 (*Upcoming*) *New Views on Landscapes*, Main Gallery; UTSA;
San Antonio, TX
2014 *Nurtured Nature*, Muriel Guepin Gallery; New York, NY
Paris Art Fair, Muriel Guepin Gallery; Paris, France
Texas Draws III, Southwest School of Art; San Antonio, TX
Star BASH, Women & Their Work; Austin, TX
2013 *Miami Project*, David Shelton Gallery; Miami FL
Drawing Annual, Tiny Park Gallery; Austin, TX
Laissez Le Bon Temps Roulez, Southwest School of Art;
San Antonio, TX
Group Show, Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum;
San Antonio, TX
XV Faculty Exhibition, Department of Art & Art History,
University of Texas at San Antonio; San Antonio, TX
MAP, Artists Foundation of San Antonio; San Antonio, TX
Layered (Reverie), Red Arrow Contemporary; Dallas, TX
2012 *Miami Project*, David Shelton Gallery; Miami FL
New Works on Paper, David Shelton Gallery; San Antonio, TX
2011 *Miami*, David Shelton Gallery; Marlin Hotel, Miami Beach, FL

XV Faculty Exhibition, Department of Art & Art History,
University of Texas at San Antonio; San Antonio, TX

Texas Contemporary Art Fair, David Shelton Gallery;
Houston, TX

Next, Galleri Urbane; Dallas, TX

Suite Art Fair, via David Shelton Gallery; Dallas, TX

Works on Paper, David Shelton Gallery; San Antonio, TX

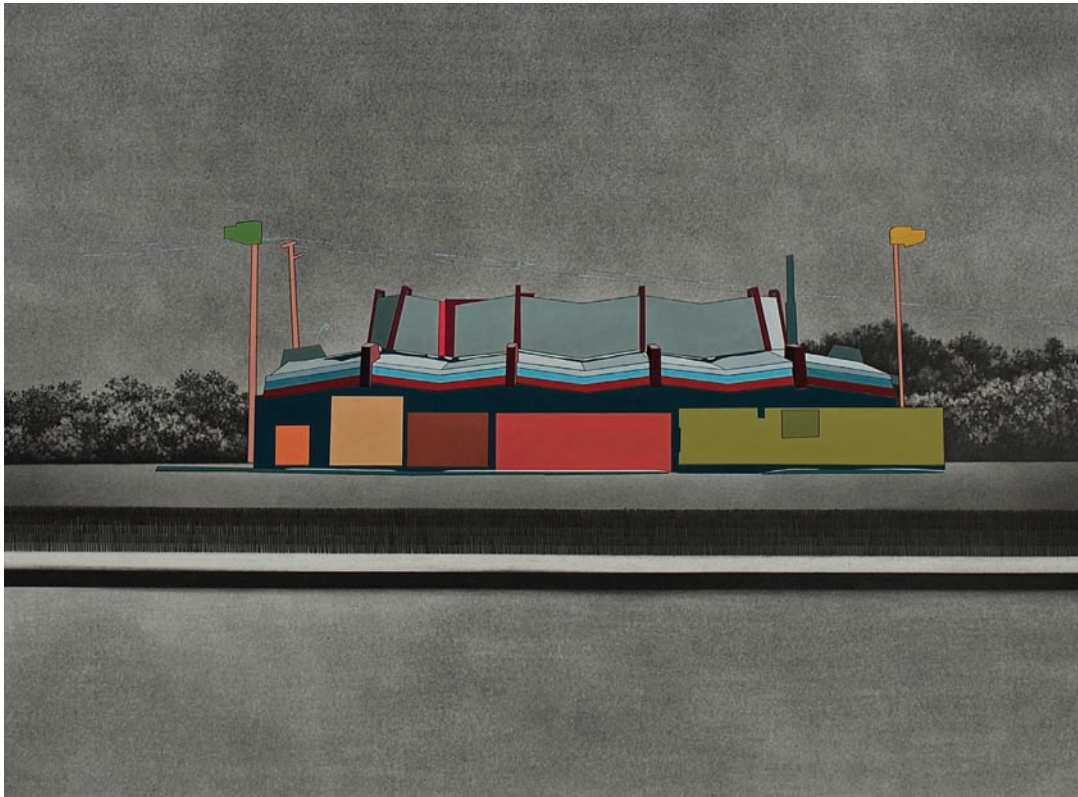
BlackBall 2011, Glasstire: Texas Visual Art; Houston, TX

Residencies, Grants & Awards:

- 2013 Summer Resident, Vermont Studio Center; Johnson, Vermont
2012 Graham Weston Award for Visual Art (Grant),
Artist Foundation of San Antonio; San Antonio, Texas
2009 Winner of Best in Show: Twisted Spurs 2009, Juror: Angel
Quesada of the MexicArte Museum, K Space Contemporary;
Corpus Christi, TX
2008 Summer Resident, Nes Artist Residency;
Skagatrönd, Iceland
2006 Graduate Travel Grant; University of Texas at Austin;
Austin, TX
2004-05 Emily Maverick Miller and Emily Miller Wells Endowed
Presidential Scholarship in Art, University of Texas at
Austin; Austin, TX

Selected Bibliography:

- 2014 Cover Image: Paul, Karri, *Hunger Project*, Dancing Girl
Press, MS, Chicago, 2014.
Cover Image: *American Short Fiction*, Volume 17, Issue 58,
December, 2014.
Elda Silva, "Artist Explores the Architecture of
Abstraction," *San Antonio Express News*, April 4, 2014.
2013 *New American Paintings*, West Addition, Juror:
Veronica Roberts, Curator of Modern and Contemporary
Art, Blanton Museum of Art, No. 108, 2014.
"Sara j Frantz," *Ça j'aime bien* (blog), December 10, 2013.
<http://cajaimebien.com/2013/12/sara-j-frantz/>
Owen Bay, "2013 Tiny Park Drawing Annual,"
Glasstire.com, August 8, 2013.
Luke Quinton, "Tiny Park artists going old school for new
exhibit," *Austin American Statesman*, August 1, 2013.
Matthew Irwin, "The 2013 Tiny Park Drawing Annual,"
Austin Chronicle, August 2, 2013.



The Golden Waffle, gouache and graphite on paper, 24" x 32", 2014.

Women & Their Work

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Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 37th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,881 artists in 293 visual art exhibitions, 121 music, dance and theater events, 15 film festivals, 25 literary readings and 534 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, the New York Times, ArtForum and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from

the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 950 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



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