

The Highlights - Exhibition Preparations

Triple Candie

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exhibition preparations

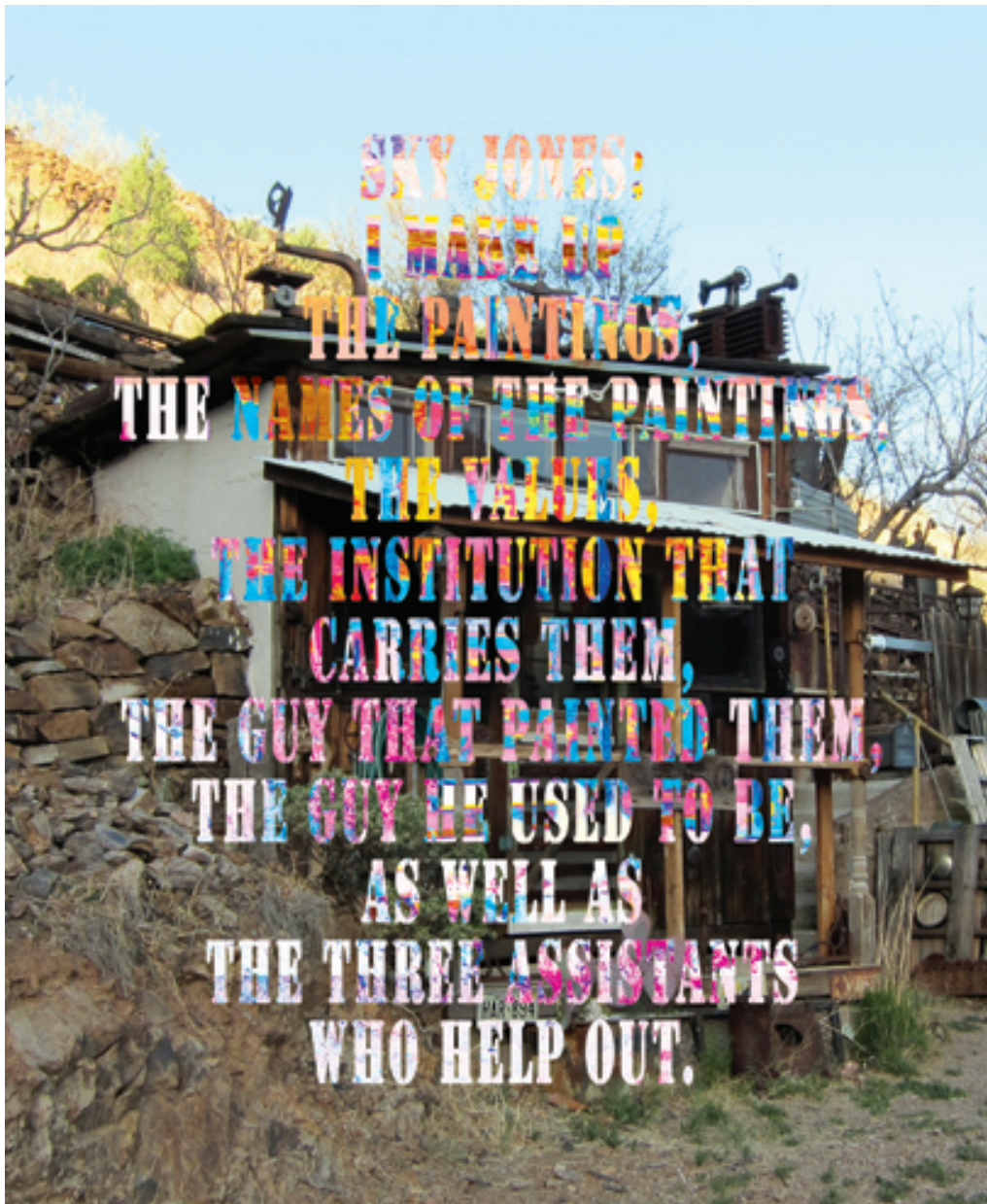
Dear Aaron,

The boxes are on their way-expect them in about a week. There are four containing the ten scrap-wood sculpture-props; a box with dollar store purchases for the barter case (dried prunes, socks, a toy car, etc.) and the paint can bottoms, some with a good two inches of dried paint; a tube of posters; two cardboard cases each containing five wood-framed drawing-surrogates; a cardboard flat with the "a few known campsites" map; and another box containing object labels (mounted on Foam Core); two-dozen miniature reproductions of the goddess paintings; four Lulu-printed copies of the Securities Exchange Commission deposition; a custom-made puzzle; a wallet with a newly designed Banker Art Museum logo; mounted color-prints of the museum in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, LaVerne, and Salt Lake City; and a headless, ceramic angel with a broken wing.

Please tell David and the rest of the staff not to open anything before we get there. We spent weeks making the sculpture-props but we expect they'll be in pieces when they arrive and that we'll need to spend at least an afternoon gluing them back together. We also anticipate that at least one of the drawing-surrogates will slip out of its frame (they are spray-mounted to wood backboards but aren't glazed). Let us be the ones to discover and address these mishaps. Your registrars will freak. Of course, all the materials only need to survive the exhibition; afterwards, we'll ask you to return a few items that we might use in future shows-the angel, the bird-and the rest you should either discard or recycle.

Have you heard any word from the artist? We share with you a mild anxiety that he will find out about the exhibition and try to stop it, putting your director in an awkward position and this whole thing will become a big "conversation" about our desire for curatorial sovereignty and the museum's need to act in what it deems "the best interests" of local artists. From everything we've been able to uncover, the artist seems to have a pretty relaxed attitude. Actually, we think he'll appreciate the visibility. Even when the S.E.C. was lavishing negative attention on him in the late 1990s, he told the S.E.C.'s attorneys that he was flattered by the amount of research

they'd done on him. On his website and in his self-published retrospective catalogue, he boasts of the S.E.C.'s findings more than \$250 million of his art is in U.S. corporate collections-though, naturally, he claims the figure to be much higher.



Anyway, this has been a fast, fantastic journey. It is hard to believe that only four months ago we were knee-deep in our research on Paul McCarthy's Upriver Skool when we stumbled into Siren Bliss's rabbit hole. Thank you for letting us change course. It might open up a new line of inquiry for us-a deeper investigation of artists like Bliss who despite their origins and training within the conventional, institutionalized art world, have departed from it, not to abandon art-making altogether or to go into seclusion (like Cady Noland) but to set up their own art infrastructures that exist outside of but parallel to the art worlds we know much better. In our early research, people we contacted who knew Bliss when he was still

going by his birth name, Michael Whipple, wrote him off as a Scientology freak. The more we heard statements like that, the more we became interested. And when we learned about his multiple personas, his bartering millions of dollars of art for corporate stock, real estate, cars, etc., his setting up more than a dozen museums dedicated to his own work, and his mind-boggling production-80,000 works of art!-he became an irresistible subject.

Back to the show: David now has the introductory wall text and can cut the vinyl. He also has the 3-minute faux-documentary that needs to be looped (it is Peter in our basement playing the role of Bliss in his studio). We've written the press release and sent it to Danica, whom we imagine will forward it to you for a quote. David also mocked-up one of the recycled-wood stands for the sculpture-props and it looks great. We've asked him to proceed to make the rest of them. Oh, and a note about the surrogates in general: the objects are about 1/3 the size of Bliss's originals and while they capture their overall spirit they really do not resemble his works. This is intentional. By contrast, the drawing-surrogates are accurate re-drawings of the originals but at the wrong scale. This is all stated in the object labels, but we wanted to be clear with about that with you in advance.

Looking forward to finally meeting you on the 3rd (hard to believe that we've communicated for seven years without actually meeting!). You are kind to offer to drive us up to Spiral Jetty. We'll see. One of us did our graduate work on Smithson, but over the years our collective interest in him and his work has eroded considerably (as it is meant to). We'd rather spend the time poking around Mondo SLC.

Warm regards,

S+P