

Shawn Huckins & Billy Reynolds

Flayed Parables



Billy Reynolds *Natural Processes*
2011 oil on linen 32" x 24"



Shawn Huckins *Portrait of A Lady, Saturday Night, (What Do You Think? Wine And Sex And The City AT 5:30? Who's Down?)*
2012 acrylic on canvas 44" x 36"

June 23 – August 18, 2012

Artist's reception: Saturday, June 23, 7 – 10 pm,

L2kontemporary's summer exhibition, "Flayed Parables," features recent works from Los Angeles artist Billy Reynolds who is incorporating a new method of construction and execution in his paintings, and Denver based Shawn Huckins, whose work is more focused on 18th century American painting and portraiture in the context of 21st century lexicons – Facebook status updates, tweets, texting acronyms – that permeate today's popular culture.

Reynolds's new paintings in this show are based on digitally altered photographs or special effects props. No longer are his paintings based on using sculptures first as models. The new digital approach has resulted in a higher level of realism than ever before in Billy's work.

What is constant is the fact that Reynolds is still drawn to human anatomy and peering inside the human form, but only from a safe distance through printed images and paint. Gore and macabre do not interest Billy as much as the inner workings of our highly complex human processes, and then recreating these processes in an approachable, clean, almost clinical manner. The painting of the Joshua Tree Forest in the background shows Billy's strong interest in the similarity of the natural processes humans share with all life forms; our natural processes that keep us alive are inseparable from our natural environment. In his portrait of him touching his face and wearing ear buds, just the one simple artistic maneuver of cutting away his flesh from his right eye down past his lower teeth, leaves the viewer with a strong sense of just how fragile we really are. Billy's work is influenced by such things as Italian anatomy waxes of the 18th century and artist Francis Bacon, both examples of exploring deep into our bodies but through safe and sterile means.

Shawn Huckins, on the other hand, is not as concerned with peeing inside the human form as pondering the 18th century American painting and portraiture in the context of present time.

Nearly infinite information delivered instantaneously has so obsessed us with tweets, pokes, buzz words, and status updates that we feel deprived when we haven't logged in to check out the latest postings or to see who 'likes' our status. Who hasn't panicked at the sight of no bars on their cell phone? We are enslaved, according to Huckins, by our smart devices, computers, and social networking sites as much, if not more, than by a distant king. Huckins's process is a meticulous replication of portraits from the American Revolution era, and then the superimposition of text-messaging acronyms in large white letters. The result is a deeply unusual mix of pop-cultural humor and post-modern theory that begs you to ask big questions: Have we reached the Baudrillardian point where hyper reality has supplanted nature? To what extent do text-messages and Facebook posts further destabilize meaning and language? And underneath it all lies a distinct sense of humor and a juvenile assertion that we shouldn't take any of it, especially ourselves, too seriously.