



## Print Article



**Shana Moulton**  
*Whispering Pines #5*  
 2005  
 Joymore, Brooklyn



**Shana Moulton**  
*Electric Blanket Temple*  
 2005  
 Joymore, Brooklyn



**Michael Smith**  
*The Biggest Building in the World*  
 1982-2005  
 Joymore, Brooklyn

## AUGUST COMPANY

### by Ben Davis

As the summer comes to an end, the New York art world enters into a pregnant silence, as everyone waits for the fall art season to begin before officially wheeling out the serious stuff.

Earlier this week, after the August heat wave had finally passed, a visitor across the East River to Brooklyn's Williamsburg art district could find a host of smaller spaces holding onto the charm that is the best of summer.

#### "Precious Moments" at Joymore

Probably the most interesting of this "before the fall" crowd is to be found at the small, intimate headquarters of Joymore gallery at 236 Grand. Founded by Melissa Schubeck in Chicago in 2000 before relocating whole to Brooklyn, Joymore has a pronounced taste for the provocative. For August, director Schubeck has let artist Josh Kline curate "Precious Moments," Aug. 5-Sept. 10, 2005, a group show that highlights the loopy and the artificial.

One standout in the exhibition is the pair of two video installations by the Amsterdam-based artist Shana Moulton, a 2004 graduate from Carnegie-Mellon in Pittsburg (she did a performance piece dressed as a flower at the Andy Warhol Museum's 10th anniversary). The first of her works here, playing on a TV at the space's entrance, is part of the artist's *Whispering Pines* series, and focuses on the misadventures of a character played with deadpan comedy by Moulton herself.

Lying in bed apparently recovering from a neck injury (she sports an unwieldy neck brace), the character flips solemnly through a self-help book titled *Feeling Good*. Soothing knickknacks surround her. All is well, until one of these gadgets releases a small thread of electricity that zaps her, triggering a self-help-flavored psychedelic freak-out. A nice digital effect makes her quilt come alive, one of the pattern's soothing diamonds rising up before her and floating away. After that we watch her as she waltzes in graceless ecstasy through a dream-world that is half David Lynch, half Deepak Chopra, sucked into a cloud of mystical symbols and enormous, space-ship-like versions of her electrical toys.

Moulton's second piece at Joymore is the installation *Electric Blanket Temple* (2005), which occupies the darkened back gallery. A small altar sports sea-anemone-like fiber optic bouquets and some glowing dolphin figurines, as well as a set of pink pipe organ tubes that frame a video projection that clarifies and intensifies some of the themes from the first video. Images and even some footage recur, dream-like, including the imperiously smiling head of the guru author of the book that Moulton's character was reading, along with various free-floating scientific diagrams and spiritual symbols.



Brian Belott's *Furry Beasts* (2005), *Sunsets* (2004) and *TV's and Fireplaces* (2005) at Joymore, Brooklyn



Liz Rywelski  
*Portraits: Kmart, Walmart, and Olan Mills, Suits 1, 2 and 3*  
2002-present  
Joymore, Brooklyn



McCaig-Welles Gallery in Brooklyn



Koren Shadmi  
*Untitled*  
2005  
McCaig-Welles Gallery, Brooklyn

All this imagery is accompanied by a male voice detailing the ways that understanding your body's electrical fields can help you take control of your life. If in the previous episode, we were watching from the outside as a woman overdosed on New Age feel-good, here the darkened room, props and authoritative narration give the impression that we have been put in her position and are watching from inside her mind.

The rest of "Precious Moments" is just as well put together. Walead Beshty contributes a large-format photo of a desolate indoor shopping center -- it is part of the artist's "dead mall" series -- while Michael Smith shows a photo-comic of a character uttering goofily inane stuff as he wanders through the World Trade Center (the piece is from 1982). And works by both Brian Belott and Liz Rywelski show that real life can become strangely fictional: Belott with an installation of found snapshots, displaying them in a way that brings out their standardized quality (the different series have titles like "Food and Stuff" and "Christmas Trees," accenting the predictable content); Rywelski with a series of photos taken of herself at different Kmart and Walmart photo booths, putting on display the different codes and costumes projected onto her by the handlers there.

"Precious Moments" does a nice job of taking some traditional summer pastimes -- going to the mall, snapping photos, just relaxing -- and injecting them with a benign but unsettling irony. So it should be a good prelude for those who are looking to get back to real work after vacation.

### "To Hell with the Hamptons" at McCaig-Welles

Meanwhile, over at McCaig-Welles Gallery at 129 Roebling, the title of the show says it all: "To Hell with the Hamptons." Much less focused than the Joymore get-together, this group show has the feeling of a rooftop end-of-the-summer barbeque. Opening with a sangria party on Aug. 17, 2005, and pricing the works very affordably, the owners of M-W have conceived of the exhibition as a way to bring their stable of artists to the public, a group that includes Joel Dugan, Sam Friedman, the Goldmine Shithouse, R. Nicholas Kuszyk, Travis Lindquist, Richard Mirando, Sean Taggart and SEEN. Some of the most eye-catching pieces at the crowded show are already sold, like Koren Shadmi's small, moody, richly colored painting depicting a pregnant woman sunning herself as two demonic children go wild in the background, snapped up for \$260.

McCaig-Welles has gained a lot of cred for consistently championing street artists rather than career-minded art-school grads, and one of the standouts in this packed display is the Minneapolis-born Logik, a youthful polymath who moves between painting, comic strips, illustration and his signature graffiti character, who is a sort of African-American secret agent. Here, several of his crisp pen-and-ink drawings (most of them only \$125 -- you get more bang for your buck in Billyburg!) breathe an enthusiasm that is truly endearing.

Logik's concerns are typical comix fare: tortured mutant men, languorous vamps and edgy but celebratory emblems of youth culture -- one features an ominous crow perched on the arm of a turntable, the needle of which appears to be dripping with blood, as if the bird has been drawn by the promise of a fresh kill.

The point is not just to riff on vernacular culture, but to participate in it without (too much) posturing or explanation about what it all "means." Logik's use of simple -- though artfully accomplished -- black ink illustration, leaving most of the sheet blank, mirrors his

**Logik***DJ Kamikaze*

2005

McCaig-Welles Gallery, Brooklyn

**Logik***Thelonius Monk*

2005

McCaig-Welles Gallery, Brooklyn



Stay Gold Gallery, Brooklyn

**Hiroki Otsuka***Ms. Shinya*

direct relation to his source material. A drawing of Thelonius Monk, eyes closed and head bent as he engages directly with his music, is a nice metaphor for the artist himself.

**Hiroki Otsuka at Stay Gold**

This is a fine point of comparison for Hiroki Otsuka's show at the artist-run Stay Gold Gallery on 451 Grand, July 22-Sept. 4, 2005. Like Logik, Otsuka is stuck on comics, but whereas Logik draws on the American underground, Otsuka draws on the manga images of his native Japan, where he worked as illustrator for magazines like *Hi-5*, *Badi*, *Rabumani* and *Erotics*. He also toiled for a time under Takashi Murakami, but unlike Murakami (and like Logik), he grabs at the style in a way that is not at all arch.

Working mainly in black-and-white with splashes of pale color, his sea-weed-like creeping lines and patterned bodies recall Aubrey Beardsley in paintings like *Ms. Shinya* (\$1,000), in which a floating pink head attempts to engulf a nubile she-male with its hair. But all art history references aside, the disturbing, graphically frank human-machine couplings are unmistakably the work of a manga-head. In *High Teen Road* (\$1,200), a woman in a Speed Racer outfit is shown riding a motorcycle with a heroic determination -- of course, the vehicle is made out of the body of a prone man, her seat corresponding to his exposed erection.

Otsuka's got a brain full of kinky sex and imaginative mutants, and has the enthusiasm of an illustrator using art rather than an artist using illustration. He embraces the style with all its disturbing adolescent undertones, not making apologies for it or trying to undercut it, in fact, doing everything he can to propagandize it as mall-ready fun, from selling belts and shirts (\$15 and \$35, respectively; an artist-designed comic is already sold-out), to executing paintings on the back of skateboards, like *Don't You Have a Girlfriend?* (2005) (\$300). It's very far from trying to be controversial, it's just a guy making work about his own private play world -- and that makes it just right for the last days of summer.

BEN DAVIS is associate editor of Artnet Magazine.

2005

Stay Gold Gallery, Brooklyn



**Hiroki Otsuka**

*High Teen Road*

2005

Stay Gold Gallery, Brooklyn



**Hiroki Otsuka**

*Don't You Have a Girlfriend?*

2005

Stay Gold Gallery, Brooklyn