

Addressing Nature

Johannes Zits

July 4 - August 3, 2013

Opening Reception: Thursday, July 18, 7 - 9:30 PM

Art Crawl: April 12, 7 - 11 PM



Floating in a Pool, 2011
Digital print



HAMILTON ARTISTS INC
ARTIST RUN CENTRE

Addressing Nature

The difference between being *in* an environment and being *a part* of an environment is a delicate line that we rarely acknowledge, but when it is addressed, we can establish a stronger understanding of how we define the self.

It seems clear to define reality as that which shapes and influences us by the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Comfort or dis-ease can easily be noted when it passes the threshold of day-to-day experience, but to be aware of our physical self, moment-to-moment, demands an attention that is often ignored. Our experience of the world is shaped by our sensory experiences; tactile, auditory, and physical occurrences. To this end, a reminder of the value of body-awareness, and the role our body's play as recorders and interpreters of experience, is awakened in the work of Johannes Zits.

The photo series and video work presented at the Hamilton Artists Inc. brings light to *the body* as a threshold between self and environment in Zits' practice, allowing viewers to begin an empathic evaluation of the sensation of being embraced and embracing; a meeting of skin with foliage, mud, water, or sand.

In Zits' work, the relationship between the body and the land becomes not about the dichotomy of the two, but rather where the two intertwine. In many of Zits' actions and performances in landscape, the body's movements are shaped by the conditions of the space. Contortions and subtle gestures taken on by the human form are shaped by spaces in which they find themselves. The nature of wet sand, soft and supple, sifting and conforming to the body's shape as the tides wash over it, becomes activated in the presence of the naked body as a medium through which it is experienced. Viewing these works brings an understanding of how we experience the physical world to the fore. We may all understand the sensation of sand on skin, and be able to imagine the experience captured momentarily before us, but to truly give oneself over to an act of engaging in sensation, an awareness of the synthesis between self and sensation must be paid.

Zits' collaborative video with Yingmei Duan allows for an engaged extension of his still works. The slightest of touches reverberate in the movements of the figures in constant resonance; equally with each other and with their environment that acts as a kind of ampule—thus molding the movements of the responsive bodies. In working with Duan, these two artists' reactionary actions—adjusting, embracing and amending—are shaped equally by the movements of the other's body and the environment in which they find themselves. A tree branch demands the same attentive touch as a limb; the grassy earth offers the same stability and support as



Colour Field, 2010
Digital Print

an outstretched hand.

The naked body becomes an element of the landscape, absorbing the sun, releasing its own body heat into the environment, inhaling and exhaling in a shared cycle between trees photosynthetic properties and human lungs. Thus, Zits' naked body is in direct engagement with the circumstance in which it finds itself. His work negates any distancing or viewing the body as a nude in a landscape.

Unlike the nude form, the artist's active body becomes the medium; engaged in its action upon and reaction to its immediate circumstance. Nude implies an unclothed figure, but it is important to view the artist's body as not simply bare, but rather unprotected from the elements. Zits' actions are not posed or gestured (otherwise stressing the naked body), but rather are informed by the vulnerability of the body; an uncensored immediate experience. Zits removes the fig leaf, as it were, but allows for the foliage of the environment to act upon and engage with his naked body. To engage with these works demands the ability to reflect on physical boundaries between the self, and the world in which we situate ourselves. His work offers up a graceful reminder of the physical world we live in, and the physical bodies through which it is experienced.

Essay by Corrie Jackson

Corrie Jackson is an artist and curator based in Toronto. She is currently pursuing her Master of Visual Studies in Curating at the University of Toronto and is a member of XXXX Collective.

Johannes Zits works across many disciplines with a focus on the body and the many meanings it engenders. His work draws attention to conventional image-making processes as well as the ways images from mass media are disseminated and consumed. In his work with the natural environment Zits aims to extend the notion of the performer to include nature itself. Considering nature as a body and as an active participant ensures that it cannot be construed as a passive prop or backdrop; nor adored and fixed in the realm of the sublime. He has presented work across Canada as well as internationally. www.johanneszits.com

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HAMILTON ARTISTS INC

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