

Interior Conspiracy : Contemporary Paintings by Jesse P. Thomas

January 7- February 8, 2011

Opening reception January 7, 5-8 pm.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jesse P. Thomas is an adjunct lecturer at the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. He was born in Washington D.C. in 1970 and grew up in New Orleans. He received his BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1993, and his MFA from Washington University in 2003. Thomas was featured in the August/September 2010 edition of *New American Paintings*, and has shown at numerous prestigious art institutions in the Midwest, such as the Evansville Museum in Indiana and the Kemper Museum in St. Louis. He was a semifinalist in the National Portrait Gallery's Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition in 2009, and has work in the permanent collection of the Louisiana State Museum in Baton Rouge, LA. He has also taught for Washington University's study abroad program in Florence and the University of Georgia's program in Cortona, Italy.

According to Thomas, the human drive to produce images is originally magical and spiritual in nature. Space is the infinite deity in which he creates, populated by characters hiding and sleeping and residing in sub folders of himself. His brain, his subconscious, is connected to something larger, the imaginative powers of that world, its creation or recreation of endless places, places of infinite detail, perhaps recombined as hybrids from his past. In them he sees, speaks with, loves, and battles old friends, animals, and monsters. These paintings were realized as their various points of origin combined like long experience coagulating in a dream. He wonders, are they all his own or do they come to him from someone or somewhere else?

These paintings are ritual objects of a secular humanism, created at war with and for defense against strong evidence of smallness and insignificance. Old rules are replaced by the codes of American neo-liberalism, that wealth is the defining goal and measure of man's being. His pieces are at once the site of resistance and its artifacts. Painting is always in the present tense, and in figuration we stare into the possibility of a sentient consciousness with the long eye contact of lovers.

The pieces selected for Robert Bills Contemporary's exhibition *Interior Conspiracy* are simultaneously visual and tactile. They create or propose space, transforming inert materials, earth and mineral, vegetable and animal in origin, into the embodiment of other objects. In these images we encounter unfolding time. In their limitations they demand attention, imagination, energy, and offer a field for experience and interpretative creativity.

Painting searches for authenticity in the means of its creation; technique and application must remain open as the piece evolves. The cerulean, cobalt, and manganese-clad players strive for integrity and balance. Like their own antiquated medium, they are always struggling and always falling just short. They are ruled by humors. They lash out, paranoid and unreasonable. They bully and argue, betray, and, most of all, hold fast. They participate, unwarned, in a geometry of scale, their pathetic forms providing the center - an anchor for the painter's work and the viewer's attention.