

Maryland Art Place

JANUS

Janus

March 14–May 6, 2006

Maryland Art Place

Maryland Art Place (MAP) is a non-profit center for contemporary art established in 1981 to: develop and maintain a dynamic environment for artists to exhibit their work, nurture and promote new ideas and new forms, and facilitate rewarding exchanges between artists and the public through educational leadership. In addition to presenting an average of fifteen exhibitions annually in its downtown gallery space, MAP organizes traveling exhibitions, and offers a variety of educational and performance opportunities.

Today is Tomorrow's Past

In 1984, musician David Byrne released the wake-up call, *Stop Making Sense*, and some fifty years earlier, the Dadaists launched an attack on bourgeois complacency, with situational art jarring to the senses and the mind.

Out of the many ways of understanding the world, 'making sense' can be one of the more limiting. It's what we are taught; it's how we are homogenized. The fifteen artists in *Janus* seek alternate approaches. Like their spiritual forerunners, who fed off the ills of social upheaval or mass conflict, they explore the fluid state of the fragmented self, globalized culture, and imperiled environment in idea-driven works full of passion and surprise.

With blurring emerging as the new clarity, Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and endings, is making a return. Two-faced, he simultaneously looks backward and forward in time, representing the threshold, the point of transition, where the known and the unknown mingle and cross-fertilize. The artists in *Janus* embrace this ambivalent situation. Some draw lessons from flora and fauna behavior; others anthropomorphize everyday objects and places; still others choose people as their primary source. Immersing themselves in process, they generate disparate works that converge on the body, echoing their makers' desire to connect with their fellow beings and surroundings.

Jackson Martin, Melissa Dickenson, Keith Sharp, and Perry W. Johnson mine the possibilities of other life forms. In Martin's collaborative *Small Talk*, two hanging potted plants stand in for people, their natural transience countering the calculated permanence of their industrial armature. Above a two-way mirror, they simultaneously present a domesticated scene of both entrapment and engagement, while underneath, their riotous roots reach across a divide to meet halfway. Issues of survival and our fragile eco-system recur in Dickenson's mixed media paintings. Here, delicate animals of saddened expression tread uneasily in ambiguous terrain, sutured for the time being.

Hints of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and surrealism animate Sharp's hybridized self-portraits, where man and nature literally merge. *Tree Man*, for example, bemoans the lone isolation of an empty field, evoking the difficulty of the outsider fitting in. By contrast, internalized demons assume group proportions in Johnson's absurdist critiques, whose formal order belies a world spinning out of control. Drawing analogies between cicadas, matches, and humans, *Death Mask* presents the

Jackson Martin, *Small Talk*, 2005
wood, mirror, terra cotta, roots, wires, jade trees
48" x 62" x 26"



Melissa Dickenson, *Crow*, 2005
acrylic, graphite, threads on canvas
19" x 17"

Keith Sharp, *Tree Man*, 2004
toned gelatin silver print
20" x 16"



Perry W. Johnson, *Death Mask*, 2006
mixed media
96" x 24" x 54"

residue of a performance where chirping cicadas set the tone for contemplating the brevity of life and the interchangeability of people.

Death is also the subject of *Inanimate Autopsy* by Jason Ferguson, who, along with Nathalie T.A. Pham, Travis Childers, Meaghan Harrison, and Karey Kessler, uses objects and places to comment on the human condition. Made in collaboration with a pathophysiologicalist, Ferguson's video installation features the medically-correct disassembly of a black leather recliner, exposing the difference between passive being and conscious existence, even as it spoofs our current craving for forensic TV shows. The creation of hybrid sculptures lies at the core of Pham's *Brave New World* series, which studies the cultural impact of mass-production and consumption in an increasingly globalized world. In its grafting of Caucasian white (virginal) and Asian red (lucky) nuptial traditions, her fanciful *Wedding Dress* rethinks the expectations of marriage and explores a bride's conflicting emotions of shame, fear, and lust. By contrast, in Childers' *Cultures*, Petri dishes isolate faces, lifted from newspapers with Silly Putty. He addresses how contained cultures develop along different lines, and warns of the confusion that results when similar appearances are mistaken for like content and when the media spins our understanding of culture.

Harrison's "visual maps" strike a dynamic balance between childhood fantasies and inhibitions within the restrictions of adult life and our industrial society. *Hot 4 Truckers*, for example, abstracts a chance encounter with a trucker along I-94 to Chicago by means of bright, commercial colors popping in and out of layers of jagged and rounded Styrofoam fragments. Conversely, Kessler's cityscapes function more as metaphoric maps, where the city represents the fleeting accretion of wealth, and paradoxically, its transcendent archetype. Carriers of collective memory and markers of dissolving time, the paintings' sketchy buildings and meandering lines plot a palimpsest-like space that fuses the terrestrial and the heavenly as well as the imaginary and the real.

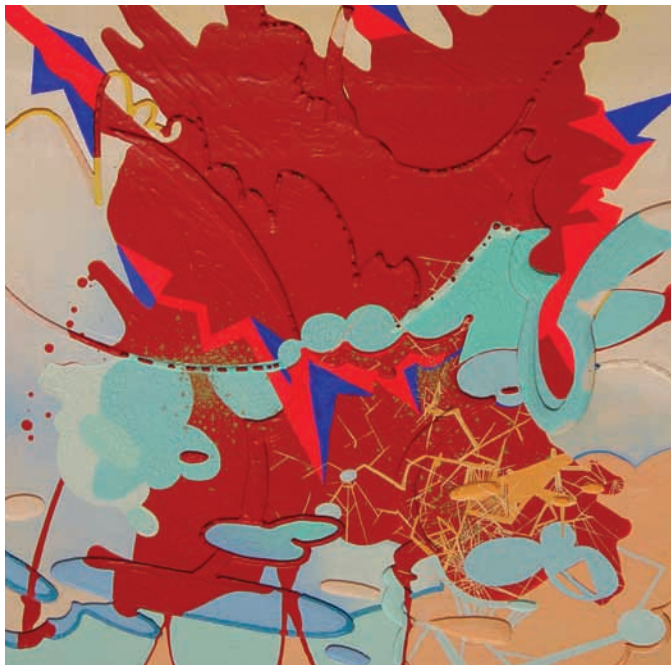
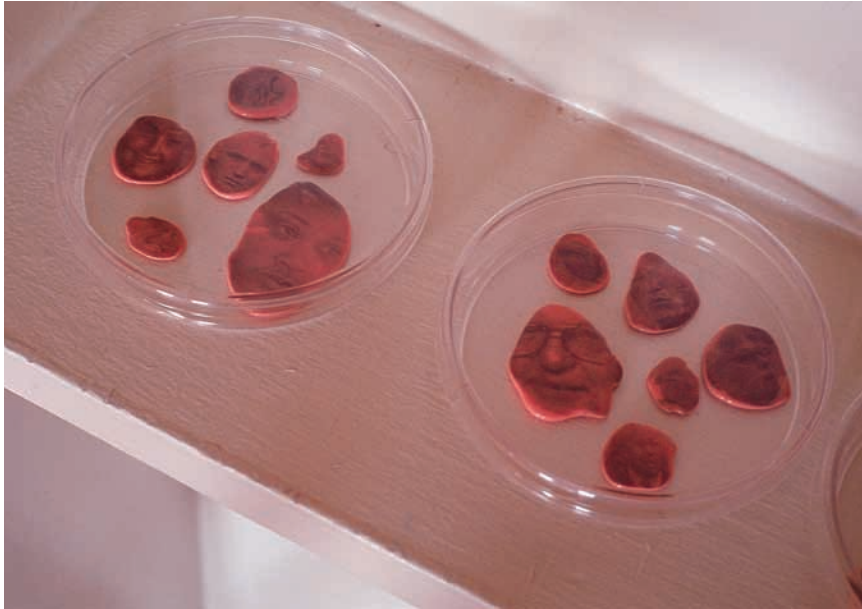
The connection to the body is most directly made in the work of Beth Line, Matti Havens, Aaron Oldenburg, Djakarta, Eric Finzi, and Kyle Miller. Expanding the traditional definition of the self-portrait, Line takes samples from body tissues and fluids in addition to clothing fibers, dust and other materials from her personal surroundings, and then digitally manipulates them to reflect her psychological and emotional states. In these camera-less images, micro and macro visions

Jason Ferguson, *Inanimate Autopsy*, 2005
wood, stainless steel, recliner and video projection
66" x 102" x 30"



Natalie T. A. Pham, *Brave New World, No. 2:
The Wedding Dress*, 2004, mixed media
48" x 48" x 120"

Travis Childers, *Cultures*, 2005
mixed media
8" x 46"



Meaghan Harrison, *Hot 4 Trickers*, 2005
gouache, latex house paint, oil paint on styrofoam
24" x 24"



Karey Kessler, (from upper left): *Time 2:34pm*, 2006; *Rosebud (like a rosebud)*, 2005; *Time 5:54am*, 2004; *Time 7:54am*, 2004; *Orange Monoazdique (like the sunset)*, 2005; *Time 1:33pm*, 2005; *Brilliant Yellow Pale (like dappled light)*, 2005; *Time 2:06pm*, 2005; *Time 4:45am*, 2006; *Cobalt Blue Turquoise (like the sea)*, 2005; *Time 12:44pm*, 2006; *Earth Green (like moss)*, 2005; *Dianthus Pink (like unicorns)*, 2005; *Time 6:10am*, 2006; *Cadmium Red (like passion)*, 2005; *Time 6:02pm*, 2006; oil on panel, 6" x 6" each

merge, and associations range from Hubble photographs to MRI scans. In Havens' video *Hair Piece* and the subsequent, *Vis-à-vis*, the artist is again the subject, joined by his girlfriend. Both videos investigate the dynamics of an intimate relationship through the experience of cutting each other's hair in the former, and in the latter, the process of their two faces becoming one.

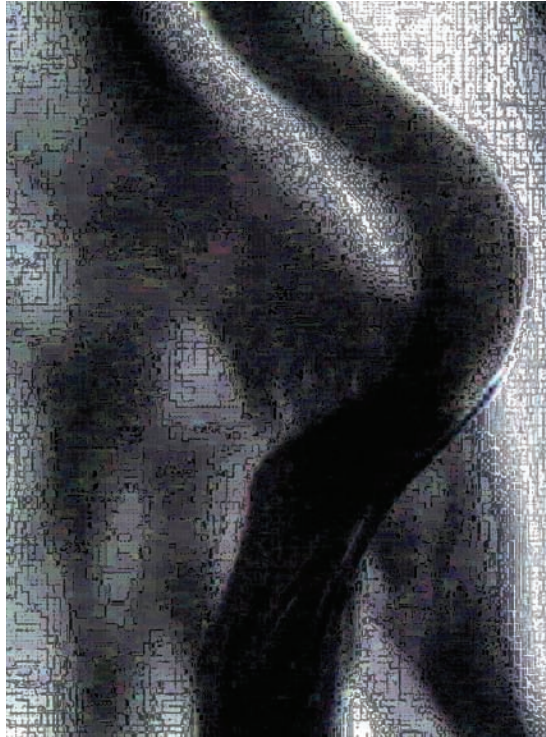
Actor and viewer reverse roles in Oldenburg's interactive video, *Where Are Our Diamonds, Mr. President?* in which the viewer/player assumes the part of a child soldier during the civil war in Sierra Leone. As the troubling game unfolds, differences between hero and villain are strained to the point of insignificance, and the sensationalizing of combat by the media is brought to the fore. Djakarta's photographic series, *fiction*, also operates in the make-believe to force us to confront and re-think issues of identity and social acceptance. Bathed in dramatic light and color, the hyper-realistic images interpret key passages of novels that have deeply affected her, such as Danzy Senna's *Caucasia*, creating new memories from the original stories merging with her own life.

Finzi's *Augustine* series questions gender stereotyping and the current craving for confessional voyeurism by invoking Salpêtrière, the 19th century Parisian hospital for abnormal women. The series focuses on the 15-year-old Augustine who was made to reenact her hysterical seizures and later escaped dressed as a man, the gooeyness of the paintings' epoxy resin mirroring the permeability of her identity. Miller shares an interest in psychology by exploring the pitfalls of audio communication. With echoes of the childhood game "telephone," his self-reflective installation, *Break*, features two sound tunnels playing "Do you know what I mean? You know?" and "I know" on a loop at different intervals to disrupt our assumed patterns of engagement.

Combining intuition, calculation, and chance, the artists in *Janus* draw elements from the past and present to produce art for the future. At a time when *American Idol*, Nascar racing and *Lost* are must-see TV, they seek to redirect our escapist urges and continue the call for discovery and change. As contrasting and intangible as their works may initially appear, they all forge a link to the body and the lived world. In reminding us of the mutability of the self and the relativity of culture, they ask us to escape the confines of our individual realities and awaken new channels in our psychic pathways.

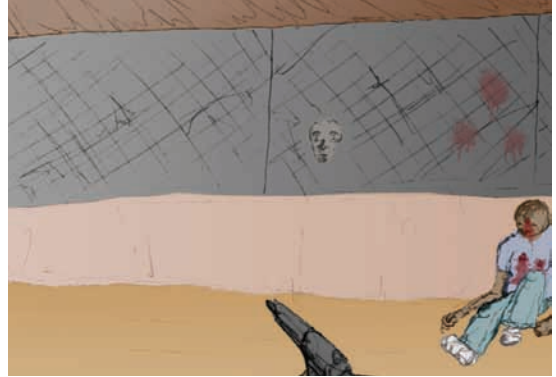
Sarah Tanguy, juror

Beth Line, *Self portrait #3: Manipulated Microscopic Image*, 2005
digital print on canvas
48" x 36"



Matti Havens, *Vis-à-vis*, (video still), 2005
color video (2 minutes, 20 seconds), edition of six

Aaron Oldenburg, *Where are our Diamonds, Mr. President?*,
(animation still), 2005
interactive computer game on iMac
16" x 15" x 18"



Djakarta, *Fiction (Caucasia)*, 2004
Kodak Duratran photographic print
30" x 35"

Eric Finzi, *Augustine, Catalepsie I*, 2003
resin on wood
40" x 40"



Kyle Miller, *Break*, 2006
plastic pipes, speakers, DVD player, receiver, monofilament
variable size

Travis Childers was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1971, and received a BFA from Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN in 1995 and a MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD in 2000. Childers has shown locally at School 33 Art Center, Baltimore, MD; the District of Columbia Art Center, Washington, DC; and the Arlington Art Center, Arlington, VA. In addition, he has shown at the PS122 Gallery, the Tattfoo Gallery, and the Korean Cultural Center in New York, NY. Internationally, he has exhibited in Slovenia in an exhibition organized by LIPA in Chicago, and in Israel through the Sotheby's International Young Artists' Program.

Melissa Dickenson was born in 1980 in Cuba, New Mexico and received a BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD in 2002. She has exhibited in a number of solo and group exhibitions within Baltimore, including the Current Gallery, Maryland Art Place, and the Schiavone-Edward Contemporary Art Gallery, as well as *Fresh Produce* at Anno Domini in San Jose, CA. Her work is also currently featured in *Femme Effect: Part Deux* at Gallery Imperato in Baltimore, MD. Dickenson received a 2006 Individual Artist Award from the Maryland State Arts Council.

Djakarta was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1975. She is a Washington, DC-based artist who studied commercial photography at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia prior to receiving a BA in photography from the Corcoran College of Art & Design, Washington, DC in 2004. Djakarta's work has been selected for several Washington, DC area group shows, including *Academy 2004* at Conner Contemporary, as well as the most recent WPA/C annual art auction, curated in part by Sally Troyer. She is also the recipient of two grants from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

Jason Ferguson was born in 1979 in a suburb of Washington, DC and raised in the small town of Poolesville, Maryland. In 2001, he received a BFA from Towson University, Towson, MD and is currently working towards completion of a MFA at the University of Delaware, Newark, DE. Ferguson is an experimental artist who employs concept to determine the ideal process and materials used in his work. Ferguson's work has been featured in numerous exhibitions including: *Drawing to Sculpture* at the Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center, Frederick, MD; *Heavy Metal: An Exhibition of Sculpture in Metal* at Yorkarts, York, PA; and more recently in *Identity* at Gallery MC, New York, NY. In addition, his artwork can be found in various private collections, both nationally and internationally, including work in a collection in Zaltbommel, The Netherlands.

Eric Finzi was born in New York City, New York in 1957, and received a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA in 1977. Recent exhibitions include *Augustine* at the Walter Wickiser Gallery, New York, NY this past winter, and *Alice In Wonderland*, at Perihelion

Arts, Phoenix, AZ in 2005. This June, Finzi will exhibit new works in *Down the Rabbit Hole* at the Metalstone Gallery, New York, NY and *Through the Looking Glass* at Heineman-Meyers Contemporary Art, Bethesda, MD.

Meaghan Harrison was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1981 and received a BFA in Painting from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN in 2002. She has shown in five group exhibitions, including School 33 and Gallery Imperato, both in Baltimore, MD. In the summer of 2003, Harrison participated in the Emerging Artist Studio Residency as part of *No Name Exhibitions* @The Soap Factory, Minneapolis, MN, and in 2002 she was a resident artist at Franconia Sculpture Park in Shafer, MN. During her residency, she completed a custom paint job on a twenty-ton crane, on view to patrons and used by resident sculptors. Her work will be featured in a national exhibition entitled *Tele-phone*, scheduled to debut in Seattle, WA this fall.

Matti Havens was born in Delft, the Netherlands in 1977. His family moved to the small town of Skaneateles, NY, when he was five years old. After high school, he spent a year in Ecuador as an exchange student before going to St. Mary's College, St. Mary's City, MD, where he received a BA in Studio Art in 2000. After graduation he spent a year in South Korea teaching English, and subsequently his experience as a teacher led to his teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) for several years. Havens is currently pursuing a MFA at the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD. He recently curated an exhibition entitled *3* at the 5th Story Gallery in Baltimore, MD.

Perry W. Johnson was born in Lynnwood, Washington in 1975 and received a BFA in Sculpture and BA in Interdisciplinary Art from the University of Washington, Seattle, WA. He is working towards completion of a MFA from the University of Maryland, College Park, MD. In the summer following his graduation from the University of Washington, Johnson was invited by the Sand Point Arts and Cultural Exchanges, Seattle, WA, to create an interactive work using on-site materials, in order to promote awareness of its new facility. During 2001-2002, he showed with the *Art Star Project* in Seattle, WA, and from 2002-2003 he worked at Pomona College as the school's Sculpture Technician. Since 2003, he has exhibited at the Montpelier Cultural Arts Center, Laurel, MD; Indiana University, Indiana, PA; Gallery 10, Washington, DC and the Union Gallery, College Park, MD.

Karey Kessler was born in Rapid City, South Dakota in 1974 and received a BA in Fine Arts from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA in 1996, and a MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA in 2001. Kessler spent a month at the Vermont Studio Center in 2004. Her landscape paintings and map drawings depict theoretical cities, the collective memory embedded within

architectural forms, and the dissolving of one time into the next. Her work resides in the flat files of the Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn, NY and in the slide files of the Drawing Center, New York, NY. Kessler exhibited her work often in 2005, receiving honorable mention in *Strictly Painting*, a show curated by Jonathan Binstock at the McLean Project for the Arts, McLean, VA. In addition, her drawings were selected to be in an exhibition entitled, *Boundaries: Contemporary Landscapes* at the University of Maryland.

Beth Line was born in Hanover, Pennsylvania in 1948, and lived most of her adult life in Bethesda, MD and Albany, NY, before moving to the Baltimore area in 2000. Married and the mother of two adult children, Line enjoyed a successful twenty-five year career in training, grant administration, and private consulting before pursuing a long-time dream to study photography. Planning to graduate from Towson University, Towson, MD, with a BA in Art and a specialization in Fine Art Photography in May, 2006, Line also holds a BA and MA in Education. During the 2005-2006 academic year, Line's work has been included in four Towson University-based exhibitions, including *Body Image*, and she has been awarded a grant to pursue research in non-traditional methods of image capture. In the fall of 2005, she participated in *Mixed Messages*, an invitational show at the Columbia Art Center, Columbia, MD.

Jackson Martin was born on a commune in the woods of Summertown, Tennessee in 1978. He received a BFA from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, TN in 2004, and is currently a graduate student in the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD, having received a scholarship for his studies. Martin recently exhibited in *Means* at Area 405, Baltimore, MD and in *3* at the 5th Story Gallery in Baltimore, MD. In 2005, he curated *Peripheral Haze* at Liquid Smoke in Murfreesboro, TN. In 2004, Martin participated in a group invitational exhibition at the Striped Door Gallery in Nashville, TN, and regularly exhibited with the Untitled Artist Group in Nashville throughout 2003-2004.

Kyle Miller was born in Saginaw, Michigan in 1971 and received a BFA from Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI in 2003. He is currently completing his first year of graduate studies in the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD, having received the Rinehart Scholarship in 2005. His work was recently included in *3* at the 5th Story Gallery in Baltimore, MD.

Aaron Oldenburg was born in St. Louis Park, Minnesota in 1979 and received a BFA at Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL in 2001. He is currently a graduate student within the Digital Arts Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, MD. Oldenburg has exhibited in several film festivals, including this year at *No Festival Required*, in Tucson, AZ. He was awarded the jury prize at the Creative Alliance, Baltimore, MD in 2005. His interactive installation

and animation work was shown at the University of Maryland's graduate student exhibitions at the Raleigh Industrial Space in Baltimore, MD in 2005. He exhibited four interactive screen-based pieces in the BFA graduation show at Florida State University's Fine Arts Gallery, Tallahassee, FL in 2001. Between August 2001 and October 2003, he worked as an HIV Health Extension Agent for the Peace Corps in Mali, West Africa.

Nathalie T. A. Pham was born in Germany to Vietnamese parents in 1971, and grew up in the small town of Lampertheim. She received a BFA from the University of Missouri, Columbia, MO in 2002 and a MFA in Sculpture from Parsons School of Design, New York, NY in 2004. Pham is a recent Artist in Residence at the Newark Museum, Newark, NJ. After her undergraduate coursework, she worked as Dimitri Hadzi's apprentice at Harvard University, Boston, MA. Her sculptures have been exhibited in many venues and galleries within the Mid-Atlantic region, including at the A.I.R. Gallery, and alongside Leslie Dill in *Sacred Waterways*, both in New York, NY. The Jersey City Museum, in Jersey City, NJ, has invited Pham to speak about her work with Midori Yoshimoto in its *Emerge* lecture series in April, 2006.

Keith Sharp was born in Chester, Pennsylvania in 1968 and currently resides in Media, PA. He received a BFA in Photography in 1980 and MAT in Art Education in 1981 from the University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA. His solo exhibitions include: Silver Eye Center for Photography, Pittsburgh, PA; the Arts Club of Washington, Washington, DC; and the Muse Gallery, Philadelphia, PA. His work has been included in various group exhibitions, including: Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia, PA; Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE; and the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Wilmington, DE. Collections include: the Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; State Museum of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, PA; West Collection at El Investments Company, Oaks, PA; and Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, Madison, NJ. Last year, Sharp was a participant at Review Santa Fe, an annual program at The Santa Fe Center for Photography.

Sarah Tanguy, juror

Sarah Tanguy is a curator for the ART in Embassies Program as well as an independent curator and critic based in Washington, DC. Her current projects include: *transrealities*, a joint US/Lithuania photography exhibition; *Taken for Looks: Imaging Food in Contemporary Photography*; *Breaking Bread*; a Cuba/Russia/US exhibition; and an ongoing exhibition series for the American Center for Physics. During the early stages of her career, Tanguy participated as a writer in MAP's *Critics' Residency* Program, and is now a frequent contributor to *Sculpture*, among other publications.

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