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TRANSFORMER proudly presents **E3: Painters**, an exhibition of new work by **Brent Baumgartner, Christopher Lee, Piero Passacantando, and Lisa Marie Thalhammer** - the 3rd year participants of *The Exercises for Emerging Artists*, a peer critique and mentorship program at Transformer.

E3: PAINTERS

July 1 – August 5, 2006

OPENING RECEPTION:

July 1, 2006, 7-9pm

ARTIST TALK:

July 15, 2006, 2pm

BRENT BAUMGARTNER
CHRISTOPHER LEE
PIERO PASSACANTANDO
LISA MARIE THALHAMMER

E3 PAINTERS



Launched in March 2004, *The Exercises for Emerging Artists* was created to support artists at critical points or crossroads in their professional growth and development. Consisting of a series of salon style gatherings at Transformer, the program is designed to stimulate and encourage participating artists as they create new work. Critique support and additional feedback are provided by Transformer's advisory council and staff, invited guest curators, and other arts professionals. This year's mentors included Transformer co-Founder and Advisory Council Member Jayme McLellan, Transformer's Executive Director Victoria Reis, curators and gallerists Andrea Pollan of Curator's Office and Leigh Conner of Conner Contemporary Art, artist Jeff Spaulding, and artist/collector Giorgio Furiolo.

The artists in **E3: Painters** met monthly beginning in February 2006, discussing the challenges they face as artists, the inspiration that helps propel them forward, as well as their artistic intentions and goals, while developing the new work presented at Transformer. The works featured in **E3: Painters** are a combination of finished bodies of work, works in progress and the beginning of new series that the artists will continue to explore. **About the artists and their work:**

Brent Baumgartner studied painting and drawing at the Corcoran School of Art and Design focusing on figurative oil painting. He has been a part of several fine art shows in Washington, DC. His current work mainly consist of figures and objects with a focus on personal items and somber moods. Brent states, "I am trying to depict reality to a certain degree; by the nature of the material and the sources that I use, it becomes possible to represent different dimensions at the same time - this is an effect I would like to portray. I am very influenced by Vermeer, even though most of his paintings were on a smaller scale and he probably spent much more time on his than mine. One of the contemporary painters that I like is Odd Nerdrum - I am not crazy about his subject matter, but I really like the way he applies paint."

Christopher Lee was born in Harlem, 1962. In the early 1970's he received a scholarship to an exclusive Manhattan private school leaving him to negotiate the extremes of the New York City social spectrum, and leading to an early interest and fascination w/social studies and art that deals with social issues. An alumnus of Rhode Island School of Design, Chris returned to NYC in the mid-Eighties. Chris states, "I was never a really committed artist in my twenties and thirties; in that period I got caught up in a sort of personal odyssey through the 'art world' as such. In the late eighties I joined the Coast Guard which gave me a land based billet in the Hamptons, where I got a look at what was then the cultural establishment. I went back to NYC where I worked for a short while at Christie's Auction house and lived in Williamsburg's 'New Bohemia'.

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I'm as much interested in 'art' as a cultural phenomenon as I am in the so called 'merits' or meaning of an individual work."

Incorporating the influence of Dada and the artistic approaches of Kurt Schwitters' collaging in his work, Chris states, "I'm attempting to aestheticize the cultural issues of the 14th street area where Transformer is located. The MLK assassination riots and the turmoil of the late 1960's are explored in transfer rubbings. Additional works on paper and larger India ink drawings are meant to present the friction between African and European sensibilities. Over all, the works mean to comment on the creativity and destruction that friction has produced."

Piero Passacantando was born in Rome, Italy in 1979. At the age of three, he and his mother moved to Milan, where he spent his formative years. He developed an early interest in drawing and as a young teenager he was very fascinated by the graphic aspects of comics, cartoons and videogames. Later, his interest moved to graffiti, which had a very strong anti-establishment connotation. In the mid 90's the hip-hop scene was blooming in Milan, and graffiti provided a tool for many teenagers to express artistic inclinations in ways that challenged the status quo. In 1997, at the age of 18, Piero moved with his father to Washington DC, where he attended the Corcoran School of Art. The school's conceptual approach as well as the international community of artists had a very strong impact on him, providing a key to open up new doors in his artistic development. Graduating in 2001, he traveled and moved to New York City in 2002 to explore the artistic scene of the city. He moved back to Washington DC in 2004 where he now lives and works in Takoma Park. He has been exhibiting both nationally and internationally. Upcoming shows include an exchange between artist from Baltimore, Richmond and Washington DC, and a solo show in Milan, Italy.

Piero states, "I work in a variety of media, including painting, installation and video. I create my artwork 'openly', without being concerned about formal unity between individual works. My artistic process gravitates around the creation of inter-related reflections on the possibilities of artistic expression and communication, rather than specific statements on arbitrary themes. My art is investigative rather than explicative. I feel life is ultimately ironically and tragically mysterious and multifaceted. I want my art to reflect my perception of life."

Lisa Marie Thalhammer relocated to DC from the flatlands of St. Louis MO in 2004. She received her BFA with honors from the University of Kansas. There she received numerous awards including the Amsden Award, the Hollander Family Foundation Award, the Daniel Macmorris Scholarship, the Warner Ferguson Service Scholarship and the Jacobs Prize. She has shown at ART Coop and Venus Envy, located in her hometown of St. Louis MO. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Fully Loaded: New Works by Lisa Marie Thalhammer*, was located at Studio One Eight in Washington DC.

Lisa Marie states, "My work challenges passive representations of women in Western culture by placing them in untraditional roles. Women boxers are only accepted in contemporary culture by a very exclusive group of sports enthusiasts. By combining violent strength and feminine beauty my work deconstructs conventional notions of gender, identity and power. This work was inspired by the abundant amount of strong women I am surrounded by on a daily basis."

Exhibition Hours for E3: Painters are Wednesday – Saturday 1-7 pm, and by appointment.

TRANSFORMER is a Washington, D.C. based 501(c) 3 non-profit, artist-centered organization that connects and promotes emerging artists locally, nationally and internationally. Partnering with artists, curators, art spaces and other cultural entities, Transformer serves as a catalyst and advocate for emergent expression in the visual arts. Entering its fifth year of operation Summer 2006, Transformer's 2006/2007 exhibition series is supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, The Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, and the Visionary Friends of Transformer.

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