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Each of These Things Is Unlike the Others

Please Allow Me to Introduce three very different artists from LA

By **JUSTIN EDWARD COFFEY** Thursday, Apr 20 2006

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If art is but a reflection of its generating culture, and culture but the sum total of society's accomplishments in a given place and time, then a common thread unites the artists in "Please Allow Me to Introduce Myself" at the Office in Huntington Beach. All three—Carleton Christy, Travis Collinson and Jean Robison—are LA-area artists. Aside from this, they could not be more different and still be in the same show. But we press, press ever onwards.



Snow Deer, 2006, by Travis Collinson

The two selections by Christy are tightly constructed affairs that reward close inspection. Under the glare of the gallery lights, *City #1* (2005) appears first as a coppery, oblique-angle cityscape under the season's first falling snow. Look again, and the pregnant flakes are revealed to be the heads of hundreds of nails, several of which pierce each individual building and affix them to the board like so many collected butterflies. The effect is both industrial and organic, suggesting the millions of rivets that hold such buildings together, while allowing for the subtleties of each building's unique design. Christy's other piece, *Untitled Spiral* (2006), is one of a series of drawings each composed of one unbroken line. Rather than

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coming off like staid and traditional Celtic knotwork, his spiral is dynamic and barely controlled, ripping itself apart from centrifugal force while pulling the interior ever tighter.

Like chapters in a book of short stories, Collinson's pieces are worlds unto themselves—or at least slices of worlds. *Two Houses and a Yellow Truck*(2005) portrays consecutive sections of the American Dream seen thousands of times over in Southern California. We see a clean, bright porch with an empty (but not ratty) couch, and of course the tiny pickup with body-colored rims, presumably belonging to the house's owner and kept up as meticulously as the grounds themselves. A sapling stands tied to a supporting rod in the grass near the curb, representing the promise of new life in a different neighborhood. Collinson's other pieces, such as *Snow Dear*(2006) and *Rainbow* (2005), are concerned with more natural settings, yet he imbues them with hyper-natural colors in a manner reminiscent of the Tijuana city scenes of *Gregg Stone* (another LA-area artist). Points also to Collinson for leaving in certain elements of the artistic process, such as the penciled guidelines around the delicate, dying vegetation in *Leaves* (2005).

And, as if on yet another hand, Robison's *Baseball* (2005) adds sound and moving image to the party. In its own darkened nook of the Office, her piece brings to life the importance of sharing one's knowledge, of teaching a man to fish—even if that man is a woman, and fishing the art of throwing the perfect knuckle ball. In slow speed, the action is surprisingly sensuous. Her hand first slides over his to feel the placement of his fingers along the seams, then his over hers to confirm precise positioning. Robison gives us no faces, no background and no dialogue, only the sound of ball hitting backstop to an incessant Tejano accompaniment. The only color commentary is that provided by the artists themselves.

"PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF" AT THE OFFICE: AN ART SPACE, 5122 BOLSA AVE., STE. 110, HUNTINGTON BEACH, (714) 767-5861. TUES.-FRI., 1-5 P.M. THROUGH MAY 5.

Caretton Christy Travis Collinson
Jean Robison Huntington Beach
Gregg Stone

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