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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: GEORGE RAHME & PUBLIC POOL

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This past Friday I drove to Hamtramck, Michigan. Hamtramck is a culturally diverse home to a lot of musicians and fine artists, and it is almost completely surrounded by Detroit. As I drive down Caniff Street, this drive reminded me of why I love this community. An old “Welcome to Hamtramck” sign guides you in, past old shops and new endeavors, and a new addition- a slew of impressive street art, past the celebrated Planet Ant Theatre [a theater company, improv colony, and record label, housed in a purple three-story tenement]. And finally, I arrive at my destination: Public Pool, a recently opened gallery space.



As of late, I have come across a lot of contemporary collagists. It seems a natural response to this dizzying information age—a way to take in and digest the layers and layers of imagery and color thrown at us on a daily basis. Some collage artists do not have the artistic eye to know when to stop or the discipline to make a compelling well thought-out piece. Other artists—like George—approach this medium with a true artistic eye, and they create pieces that are structurally sound, pieces that tell complex and engrossing stories. George noted that he does not believe he is making collage per say but that, “it’s more like painting, or manual Photoshop.”

I agree. George’s first piece that I saw echoed more of the style and genius of Julie Mehretu’s paintings than any of the collage art I have seen. This is a perfect venue to experience a truly creative soul hard at work—open doors and open conversations.

Colin Darke: Firstly, what, or who inspires you?

George: I can’t put my finger on one thing in particular; there are no hierarchies in my head. Yet there is something to see in all things, and there is always something to learn—especially from your surroundings, and culture. I find that the way in which things function between micro and macro scales inspiring. Nature, and also the friction and tension that exists within culture, and how it is something to move through.

Colin: How has your experience at Public Pool been?

George: Amazing. I have found enormous inspiration from this experience and I am gracious for the opportunity. Also, I’ve really enjoyed working with Steve Hughes and hope to do more collaboration.

Colin: Have you learned anything from having your studio in a gallery – working in front of the public?

George: I’ve learned more about how downtown Hamtramck functions. Living on only the second street from Caniff, I am amazed as to how dramatic the recent change has been and how Hamtramck is the center of the metro area, as well as the nuts and bolts of diversity in Southeast Michigan. This opportunity has allowed me to see my new work with fresh eyes, considering most people who wander in are not familiar with art, and

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sometimes beautifully naive. For me, experiencing the people is like experiencing something completely new to myself.

Becoming punctual with how my time is spent, although it can become too routine, could be its downfall.

Colin: What are the good and bad things about working in Detroit as compared to the other places you have worked and shown [New York in particular]?

George: Like I said, there are no hierarchies. Everything is relative, just some things I choose to do. I feel being here I can make a stronger impact on the community and not jump into the spotlight. Working away from commerce and the influence of mainstream New York is important to me.



It's important to know what is going on in the World; we are all living on the crossroads. To have a global representation in art is important. To make work that speaks to everyone no matter where they live. This is what I believe, and that is why I am represented by Fred Torres Gallery.

Colin: How has your art career changed over the past five years?

George: My network has expanded, allowing me the opportunity to exhibit globally and include my work in collections outside the U.S.

Colin: Do you have any mentors?

George: Yes. Paul Nilsson, Jim Ferguson, Chido Johnson, Gilda Snowdan.

Colin: What current artists inspire you?

George: El Anatsui, although I have not seen his work in person yet. The 2011 Venice Biennale. Christina Galasso and many other people who are close in my life. But I am also inspired by anyone, even if they are not an artist. I enjoy diverse perspectives. Mostly I am inspired by those who are excited and inspired themselves-meeting my new friend today even, Thomas Gerald.

Colin: Where do you see Detroit in 10 years?

George: The city is going in good directions and possibly some bad directions. The farming and adding more

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adding more green space is essential. Yet we still need to get rid of the incinerator, which is crazy to have in the center of the city. Not to mention the corruption (at all levels) this tends to plague this place, which needs a cure not a Band-Aid.

You used to be able to counter the corruption with the amazing underground parties that sparked the world. Unfortunately the parties are no longer here, but the slum lords still own the buildings, well most of 'em.

All the newly restored skyscrapers downtown once were venues for all night parties. I had much more fun in Detroit before it started to hit the mainstream. I am beginning to embrace this however, and somehow do good things with the newly flourishing art happenings.

Colin: What's next for you?

George: As of now I am hoping to work with the city of Hamtramck in creating more pop-up studios. In an effort to highlight Hamtramck's great spaces which are available, with all hopes to interest people, artist, and businesses. I also plan on visiting my buddy, Trent Abbe to work on some printing which will be used in my next piece. And in the mean time I look forward to preparing for a couple shows west of the Mississippi, one in Montana, and another in San Francisco.

Public Pool is located at 3309 Caniff, Hamtramck, MI 48212. George Rahme's Fire Over Water runs from now through October 27. The gallery is open daily and you can stop by and meet the artists. The opening reception is on September 15th, 7 pm to 11 pm (refreshments courtesy of Traffic Jam).

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