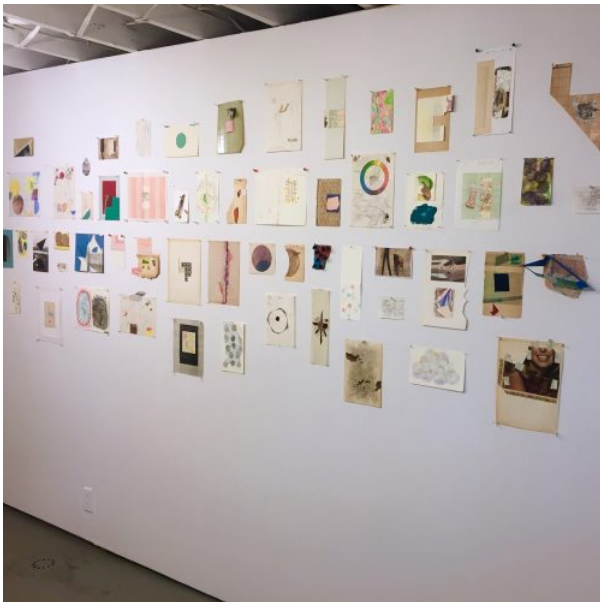


ART SPIEL

Austin Thomas – Lots of little things at LABspace

NOVEMBER 1, 2018 BY SARAH JACKSON

All images: Austin Thomas collages, photographed by the author



Austin Thomas's drawings, *Lots of little things*, currently on view at LABspace, a small gallery in a tiny town, are diminutive in size but vast in scope. Arranged in three irregular rows on one wall, these forty-odd drawings offer the viewer enough to look at for several hours. I have been to the show three times and was sorry to leave each time. They seem to display almost everything drawing can be.

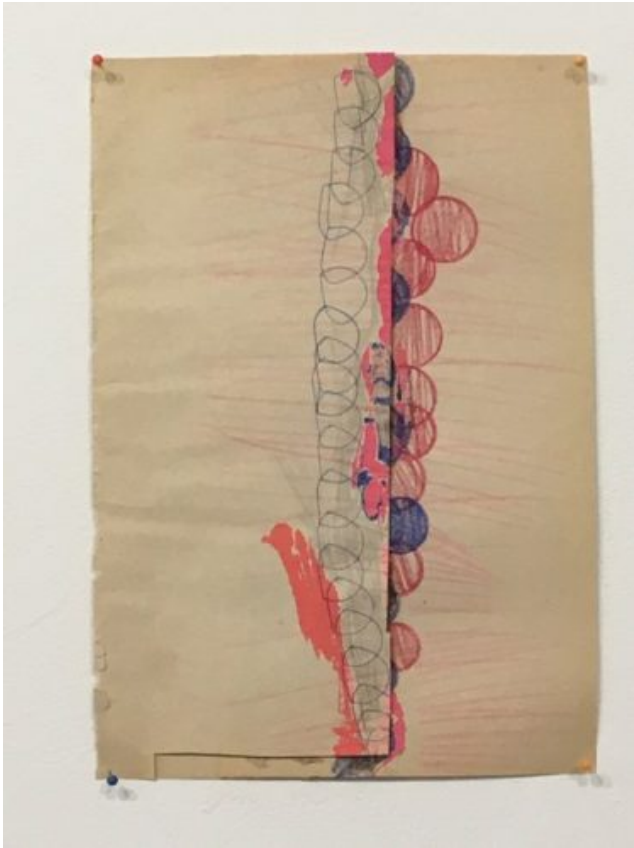
Thomas incorporates pieces of postcards, old magazines, pictures, the covers and slightly yellowed endpapers of old books, pages torn from a stranger's old ledgers, and pencil sketches of animals (also possibly done by someone else), with pieces of her own prints and drawings. A full range of drawing materials are utilized – graphite, colored pencils, ink, water colors, and collage in both two and three dimensions. Thomas moves fluidly amongst her materials like a great drummer, going from snare to cymbal to bass and back again.



These drawings cancel language: words in the mind go quiet because there is so much to look at. Pure observation replaces narrative. They are tangible evidence of the unselfconscious and solitary play of an artist finding ways to surprise herself. Odd juxtapositions abound – an old envelope is cut open to reveal its decorated lining which receives an additional embellishment of pebbly shapes in pencil. They show up silvery against the deep turquoise of the lining, transiting to grey as the graphite hits the ivory of the exterior, a sort of graphic equivalent of Emily Dickinson’s envelope poems.

Thomas employs her own drawings in a similar manner, slicing and layering in order to improvise along an edge. What appear to be a couple of pages torn from her own notebooks or journals with dates and notations, hold their own among the larger and more complex pieces.

Thomas’s drawings occupy the smaller room, while the larger room at LABspace is inhabited by a lively bunch of objects by Elisa Lendvay, Elisa Soliven, Hannah Foster and Susan Still Scott— collaboratively installed by the artists and gallery directors Julie Torres and Ellen Letcher. Their curation is as playful as the sculpture, ceramics, and three dimensional paintings they have gathered on walls, floor, and even in corners. Susan Still Scott’s work perfectly embodies the show’s title, “Colorforms.” These small paintings look as if they have woken up, climbed off their stretchers, turned themselves inside out and begun dancing.



Austin Thomas's solo exhibit "Lots of little things" — drawings, collages, prints and photographs, on view alongside group show "Colorforms" at LABspace in Hillsdale NY, 2642 NY Route 23, Hillsdale, NY

Through Nov. 4, 2018; Closing celebration: Sunday, November 4th, 3-6PM