

This is what  
happens

when you meet a

Stranger  
in the  
Alps



Ethan Grosso

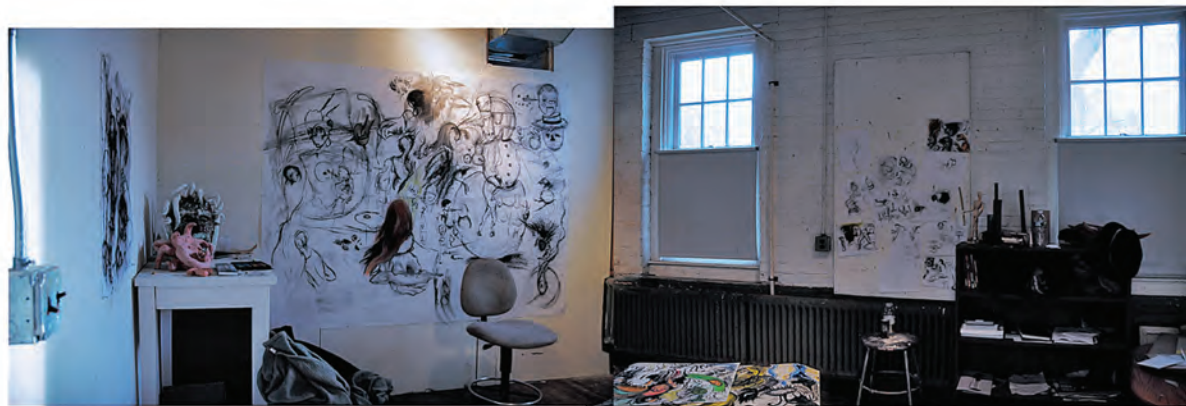
Christina Neno

Sophia Rothbart

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April 29 – May 22, 2011

THE TROUT GALLERY, Dickinson College

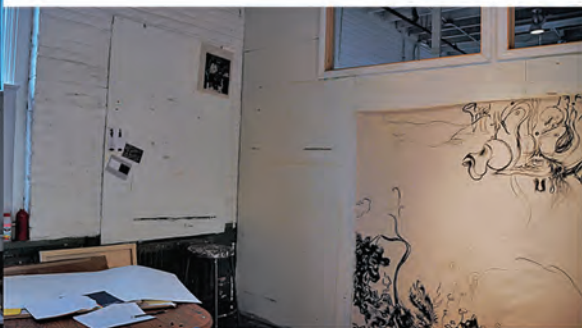




This is what happens when you  
meet a Stranger in the Alps

Ethan Grosso  
Christina Neno  
Sophia Rothbart

April 29-May 22, 2011





# Introduction

The senior seminar is the capstone experience of the studio art concentration in the Department of Art & Art History at Dickinson College; it spans one academic year, affording students the necessary time to develop a body of work for exhibition. True to the nature of a liberal arts education and the pluralistic manner of contemporary art, students are encouraged to think in an interdisciplinary manner and draw from four years of intensive learning and life experience.

The 2011 senior seminar exhibition, *This is what happens when you meet a Stranger in the Alps*, exemplifies the culmination of this intensive period of development. It is a time for students to refine the technical aspects of their work, while challenging the notions of what art is and focusing on conceptual development, thus allowing them to find an individual voice.

The title of this year's exhibition, *This is what happens when you meet a Stranger in the Alps*, is a line used in edited versions of Joel and Ethan Cohen's cult film *The Big Lebowski* (1998). This replaces the original dialogue, which falls outside of Federal Communications Commission guidelines. On one level, this raises questions regarding free speech and artistic freedom; in recent years the replacement dialogue has reached a level of absurdity that appears to mock the practice

of censorship, acting as a subtle form of critique. In cases such as *The Big Lebowski*, the dubbed lines work to change the context of a scene, arguably making it more interesting than the original. This can be attributed to the fact that many of the replacement lines sound strange and cryptic, substituting conventional speech with something less logical that challenges the viewer in ways the original did not.

The work of the artists in this exhibition subverts logic in a similar manner. Each takes familiar themes and conventions and finds ways to morph and transform them into pieces of art that trigger a kind of reflection rarely found in mass media. The logic that dictates the work starts with convention, but is transformed during the working process into a way of thinking that transcends common thought. The discoveries made during this process elevate the work beyond simple craft, causing it to pose challenging questions to both artist and viewer.

Todd Arsenault  
Assistant Professor of Art  
Department of Art & Art History

# Ethan Grosso

Drawings work as visual interpretations of thought, recording cerebral decisions as they are made. The loose, energetic line quality of my drawings has an immediacy that is similar to the sketch language that artists long used for preliminary drawings. This style of drawing has an honesty that reveals the struggle between conscious thought and subconscious elements of creation. The picture plane functions as an arena for experimentation where a union of seemingly disparate concepts coexists with still-evolving ideas. The narratives that emerge are non-linear and challenge the viewer to piece the story together like a puzzle. While the majority of imagery suggests a common theme, particular iconography complicates the interpretation, creating an added level of complexity.

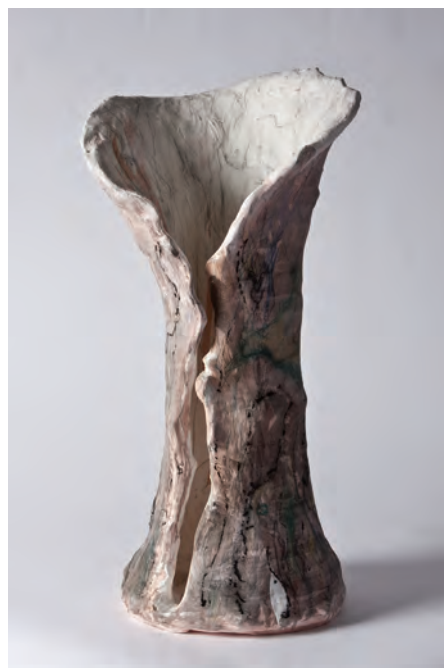
The materiality of the charcoal and pastel used to create the drawings is important, as these mediums have a malleable quality and allow me to work quickly. The materials are erasable, leaving behind a ghost image that serves as temporal evidence of the process. Through the additive and subtractive processes of drawing, layers of visual information build up and become intertwined with previous layers. The viewer must look longer to comprehend the totality of the piece and new details are continually discovered. Working at larger scales allows for more space to

develop the narrative, while subverting the traditional intimacy of sketches.

The imagery and passages of text that constitute the drawings are part of a world that has been developed in sketchbook studies. Many of the characters that come to occupy my drawings develop through stream of consciousness. Their significance is how they tread a line between animate and inanimate. They refer to both a dispensability of organic matter in large volumes and a personal value that each element can individually engender. The latter is intended to ultimately triumph. As life can primarily exist for life's sake, I believe art can as well. My creations may never truly come alive, but they can lead to a progeny as I work out ideas that evolve into more refined ones or completely new branches altogether.



*Tall...or Maybe Not So Tall?*  
2011  
Charcoal and pastel on paper  
72 x 96 inches





Opposite page:  
*Growing Up in Seclusion*  
 2011  
 Underglaze pencil on ceramic form  
 19.5 x 7.5 inches

Above:  
*Hammer to the Head*  
 2011  
 Charcoal and pastel on paper  
 23 x 29 inches

# Christina Neno

Remains associated with human and animal life, such as cocoons, shells, nests, hives, skeletons, and objects of sentimental value, inspire the imagery in my work. The language has close ties to branches of science such as biology and paleontology. Although this language draws from empirical and scientific evidence, the end result becomes something familiar and yet unrecognizable. My sculptures and drawings, like fragmented prehistoric remains, are representations of life that are abstract enough to inspire original mythological bestiaries, while maintaining a semblance of something found in reality. I want to create work that elicits awe in the viewer, allowing for reflection on what we know of nature as well as the mystery it still holds.

Ideas of transience and mortality are present in the physical structure of my sculptures. The delicate materials used, including feathers or thin paper, suggest the temporality and vulnerability of life, while heavier materials, like bone or rock, have a clear association with funerary sculpture, death, and finality. The remains can be suggested through either a literal representation or a more abstract form that evokes the same feeling through keeping the essence of the original object. Through drawing, the specific aspects of the form can be emphasized, abstracted, and viewed in a new light. The fragility of the sculpted

object is not lost but highlighted through the drawing process. In looking at the sculptures and the drawings side by side, the visual investigation of these remnants is textured, visually tangible, and yet reminiscent of scientific analysis and investigation. A visual investigation of an object, approached from both a scientific and aesthetic perspective, brings artistic and scientific understanding together in ways that challenge the conventional notions of each.



*Neoteny*

2011

Polymer clay, gesso, tissue paper, and glue  
approx. 6 x 4 inches





Opposite page, top:

*My own*

2011

Polymer clay, beads, rubber bands, and thread  
approx. 4 x 8 inches

Opposite page, bottom:

*Hieronymus*

2010

Wire, feathers, paper, acrylic paint, and hot glue  
approx. 10 x 14 inches

Above:

Untitled (detail)

2011

Vine charcoal and compressed charcoal on canvas  
72 x 128 inches

# Sophia Rothbart

Photography allows me to make sense of the world by compartmentalizing and isolating moments in time. Textures, surfaces, and seemingly insignificant details become the unexpected focus of my photographs and video pieces. Mundane details, when framed a certain way, are activated to reveal beautiful complexities, revealing poignant moments in overlooked places.

The camera is the center of my working process. Whether shooting still images or working with video, my role as an artist is based on engaging or reacting to the environment around me through the lens of the camera. This role requires me to adapt to various situations; at times, I am an outsider working in a voyeuristic manner, while other instances require me to establish a personal connection with the subject. The work does not always offer a clear or linear narrative, however, it does tell a story about the location. As the imagery is meant to challenge the viewers' perception, it begs them to reconsider the way they visually interpret what they are seeing. In this way, the pieces function in a space that falls between reality and memory.

The work for this exhibition was made in the city of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. While in many ways it is a specific reflection of this location, it is also a meditation on small-town culture in the greater sense. I am

drawn to the idiosyncrasies of culture outside of urban areas, as most of my life I have lived in densely populated places. By exploring Carlisle and its inhabitants, I have come to appreciate the daily routines of individuals who play small roles in the greater whole of society. There is not a fixed sentiment attached to the images or videos; worlds are presented in an impartial manner and do not convey specific motifs or profound messages. Evoking different levels of meaning, they serve as candid representations of places, people, and activities.



*Pleasure is not the Motive*

2011

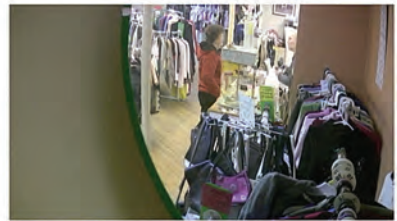
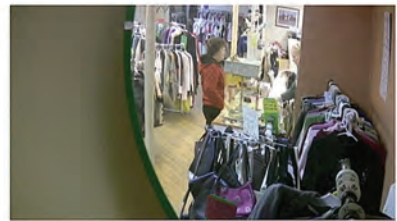
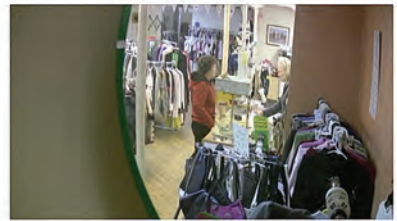
Dye based print on found parchment

Overall, 19 x 31 inches; Individual, 5 x 9 inches

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37. BN 527
38. BN 528
39. *Sense et Non-sense* (Paris: Nagel, 1949), trans. J. O'Brien (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949).
40. pp. 143-144.
41. Merleau-Ponty finds it in Husserl's later conception of *Lebenswelt* in *Crisis*.
42. See Chap. 6, "The Problem of
10. F.
11. F.
12. P. viii
13. B.
14. B.
15. B.
16. B.
17. B.
18. P.
19. P.
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The Censor Must be in Bad Faith  
2011  
Dye based print on found parchment  
5 x 9 inches



Video still from Thrift  
2011





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### Image on cover:

Ethan Grosso, Christina Neno, Sophia Rothbart  
Untitled  
2011  
Pastel on dye based print  
8 x 11 inches



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THE TROUT GALLERY  
Dickinson College  
Carlisle, Pennsylvania