



Through October 8 ROBERT INDIANA: NOW AND THEN

Robert Indiana, Like a Rolling Stone, 2016.
Limited edition poster, available online and
at the museum.



Through October 8 JAY BOLOTIN: THE BOOK OF ONLY ENOCH

Jay Bolotin, Bones (From The Book of Only Enoch portfolio), 2011-
14, woodcut and relief etching on paper, 23 x 63in



October 28, 2016 – March 18, 2017 PHANTOM PUNCH: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM SAUDI ARABIA IN LEWISTON, MAINE

Rashad Al Shashai, Heavens Doors, Mixed Media, 101 1/8 x 256 5/8in

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BEYOND Sculpture

Meet the Maine artists whose work dares to jump traditional boundaries and transports us into the unexpected.

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

SPOTLIGHT ON THE VOID

TAIWANESE-BORN Maine artist **Ling-Wen Tsai**, 46, does it all, fusing her talents in painting, photography, and video imagery with installation and performance art. As Associate Professor and Chair of the MECA Sculpture Program, Tsai engages crowds with her ephemeral, fourth-dimensional approach. “It feels inadequate to try to define sculpture. I want

to push against definition. I like to explore sound, space, emotion.” In particular, Tsai’s installation work concerns itself with interactive experience and audience participation. An exhibition entitled “Sitting Quietly,” which was shown at Coleman Burke and the UNE Gallery in 2012, exemplifies her preoccupation with silence and absence. Audience members are invited to enter a circle of stools, put on noise-cancelling headphones,

and just...sit. “I wanted to remove the expectation of being entertained. By taking away any external distractions the audience is rewarded with silence and space. You create this private, individual space in a public area. It invites introspection.”

The artist’s current project is a series of 12" x 12" panels covered with single words or basic sentences written entirely in binary code, entitled “Binary: silent, still, void.”

OUT THERE

PAST PROJECTIONS

When *Portland Magazine* first interviewed **Frank Menair** in 2007, he had just surged onto the local art scene with his striking photography project, *Projectotrain*. Nearly 10 years later, Menair, now 41, continues the vivid process of capturing images projected onto the sides of passing train cars at night—a method that “can take literally months to get one image.”

Menair’s approach has evolved over the intervening years as the artist has lived and learned. He’s introduced an industrial

“It can take literally months to get one image.”

strength projector; flash bulbs have replaced the heavy and costly strobe lighting units (“I used to borrow them and invariably break them”); and perhaps most significantly, he’s switched from film to digital photography. Other changes have been more conceptual, won from years of consideration and development.

“Back at one of my openings in 2011, an artist I hugely admire, mp Warming, approached me and said, ‘I like what you do, but you’ve gotta do more. You need to create a unity between the environment and the content and context of your photos.’ I mean, I guess it’s not considered polite to speak to someone like that at their exhibition opening, but I appreciated it! I’m a lot more thoughtful now with what I do.” With this in mind, Menair has attempted to tie his “pathological obsession” with trains into the context of his recent images. This has included projecting a large portrait of Amtrak Downeaster founder, Wayne Davis, something of a personal hero to the artist, onto a traincar. The theme of family still dominates the ongoing *Projectotrain* project as it did back in 2007, although “It’s never easy, because my family is now scattered all over the globe.” The artist’s early exhibitions memorably displayed snatched images



Top picture: Frank Menair’s *Lindsay’s Eyes and Flowers*.

Below: Robert Bennett Jr.’s *y/lem* was made using plaster, 2-inch speakers, 2 x 4s, and wooden dowels.

Right: Bennett Jr. plans his next move.





of an empty vodka bottle and an urn, references to the artist's father's passing in 2003. "As a former professor once told me, "The more personal you make it, the more universal you make it."

LISTENING IN

Enrolling at MECA in 2010, **Robert Bennett Jr.** originally planned to pursue a major in painting. However, the freedom of expression that Tsai's sculpture program offered soon drew him in. "Unlike painting, I had no preconceived ideas about sculpture. It was an open book for me."

Bennett Jr. combines both sound and performance installations to create pieces that question "how much history is found in any given space." Using printed silk-screen drapes and bone-conducting exciters—transducers that use direct vibration of the skull to convert surfaces into speakers, emitting recordings of fellow artists reading aloud—Bennett's 2014 thesis show, *They Could No Longer Contain Themselves*, attempted to establish human connections between artist and audience.

Since graduation, his work has deepened into "exploring soundscapes more and more, as well as performance art. I'm currently planning a project entitled *With Me*—I'll attempt things like lying down in public and waiting until someone lies down next to me. I don't really think anyone will. I want to show that difference between your needs and expectations—the imperfect reality." ■

COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS



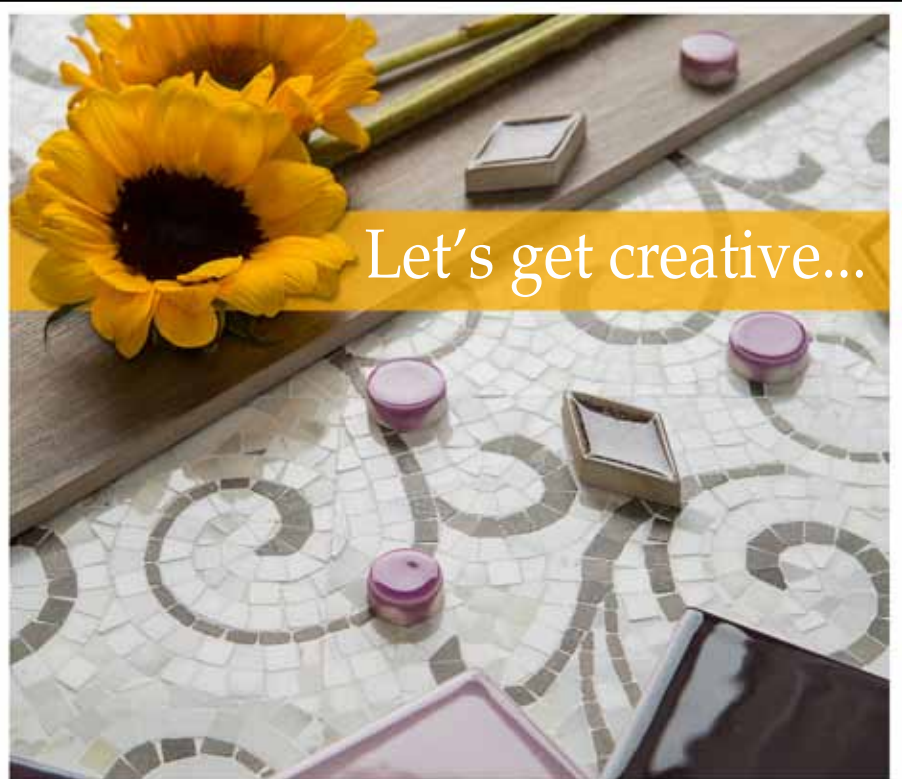
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