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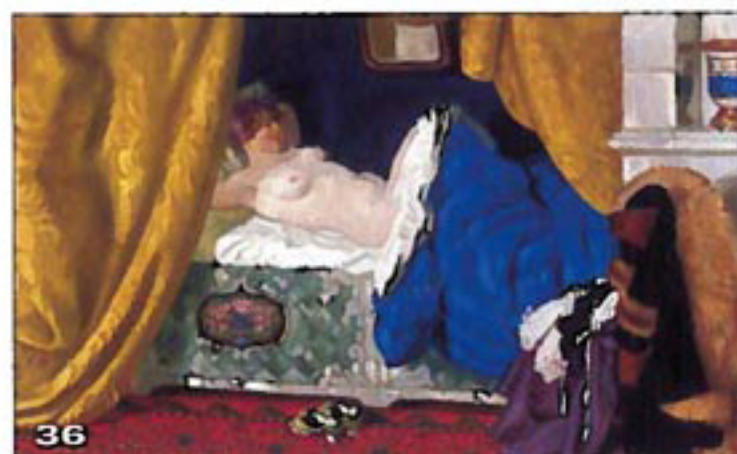
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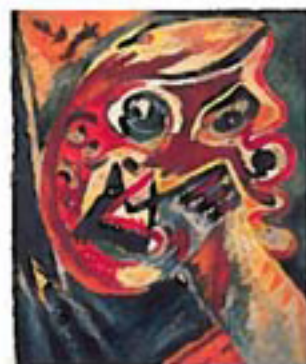
**COVER** Tracey Emin, *I promise to love you*, 2010, aqua marine and coral pink neon, 57 1/2" x 56 1/4", edition of 3. ©2013 Tracey Emin. All rights reserved. DACS, London/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York and Hong Kong. See story, page 60



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### INTERNATIONAL

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Buenos Aires  
David Lamelas



of street art by inviting viewers to plug in and download files or even leave some of their own. The Chinese collective MeatMedia showed a crude-looking helmet-and-lightbulb getup, *Brain Station 2* (2012), which lit up according to signals from the wearer's visual cortex.

There was plenty of digital skill on display, though it was occasionally bogged down by procedure-laden explanatory wall texts—but the most compelling works were the ones that unplugged from the ether entirely. Wendy Jacob's *Squeeze Chair* (Blue-print), 2012, brought visitors back into their bodies with a chair that delivered a powerful full-body hug. Unlike Apple's or Google's rather detached definition of "touch," usually expressed as a single finger swiping across a screen, Jacob's chair offered a wholly physical experience, and it out-interacted the more typical interactive works in the show.

—Lamar Anderson

## John Alexander

Arthur Roger Gallery  
New Orleans

In this new series of pastels, charcoals, and watercolors on paper, John Alexander represented nature's innocence at the violent hands of human folly. Harking back to Alexander's childhood memories of the wetlands in Texas and Louisiana, the works in the show depicted bucolic marshlands that were injected with foreboding hints at the inevitability of destruction. For inspira-



John Alexander, *Seven Spanish Angels*, 2012, oil on canvas, 96" x 76". Arthur Roger Gallery.

tion, and to maintain a sort of metaphysical connection with the past, the artist built a lily pond and a "Louisiana Swamp" outside his current Amagansett, New York, studio; the scenes presented in the exhibition, titled "Recent Observations," were composites of his real-world impressions and nostalgic memories.

Throughout the show, Alexander's representations of nature seemed idyllic at first, but that judgment faded with closer inspection. Often embedded in his romantic images of wildlife at peace with the landscape was subtle evidence of, and implied warnings against, environmental degradation. In *The Danger Zone* (2012), for instance, three large herons stand in a thicket, staring out warily from the canvas, as if distrustful of those looking back at them. It seems like a tranquil scene until you notice, discarded in the brambles, a section of rusted chain that embodies mankind's careless intrusion into fragile habitats.

Alexander continually creates visual tension between the beauty of untouched nature and the corrupting power of human encroachment. The sharp points of a flowering thistle bush in *Thistles with Finch* (2012), surrounded by a flock of canary-yellow birds, lend the painting an unsettling air. In *Seven Spanish Angels* (2012), bright red and vibrant blue macaws take flight across an ominously dark and melancholy forest, which, Alexander seems to suggest, might not exist for much longer. —John R. Kemp

### UP NOW

## Kara Walker

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum  
South Hadley, Massachusetts  
Through May

In this suite of 15 monumental prints, Kara Walker confronts the imagery contained in *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War*, the 19th century's most authoritative history of the conflict, by adding her own powerful silhouettes to it. Often deemed the artist's quintessential work in a multiple format, the series, subtitled "(Annotated)," has been included in several of her exhibitions since

it was made in 2005. But this single-focus encounter grants viewers the full and uninterrupted experience of the piece's poetic power.

Greatly enlarged by Walker through offset lithography, the *Harper's* woodcut illustrations literally serve as backgrounds for her outsize, densely inked silk screen silhouettes, which loom like specters in the historic landscape, and evoke an alternate legacy to the one canonized by text-



Kara Walker, *Exodus of Confederates from Atlanta*, from the series "Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)," 2005, offset lithography and silkscreen, 23 1/2" x 28 1/2". Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.

books. In *Buzzard's Roost Pass*, Walker dramatically transforms a static battle scene. Modifying it to include enormous, aggressive images of an African American woman's severed head, arm, and breasts scattered against the sky, she illuminates the true horrors of war and the unacknowledged victims of violence. The irony of her series title is clear: these are no marginal "annotations."

While the *Harper's* account presents a completed narrative, Walker has specified that there is no fixed order for her 15 prints, indicating that the story isn't over. In what is perhaps the most striking single image from the series, *Exodus of Confederates from Atlanta*, the profile of a pretty young girl, probably of mixed descent, obscures most of the scene. Cut into her black silhouette is the transparent silhouette of an African American man's head, his neck severed by jagged slices; through him, we can see a section of the original print, in which black and white boys help load a Confederate wagon. Walker's masterful blending of history and art exposes the ongoing trauma of race relations that America contends with to this day.

—Bonnie Barrett Stretch