

AP: So, what is Okay Mountain's vision? Are these works maneuvering through an endgame? I don't know if it all points to something so grave but according to the work and its response to the present, we are all fucked up and so manic that we are incapable of performing singular, banal actions.

NG: Well that is certainly a dramatic reading of the work. What in particular are you responding to?

I'd say that Okay Mountain's vision is pluralistic. I've always considered the amount of members (9) a strength. Each of us have different experiences of the world, sets of interests, skills, and curiosities- but when we are working to make a project all of that stuff goes into the pot. Each project is a product of countless group-thinks and through that process the work avoids binary oppositions. We are all interested in continuing to make work together, attempting new processes, using new materials, and trying new working methods. Though each of us have our own personal practice I think that the collaboration is vital to each our creative lives and satisfies something different. Currently there are several project ideas speculating and collecting momentum- waiting for the right opportunity. There is no endgame in sight.



AP: You're right. It was a bit of a dramatic, almost angry reading. . I think it came from School Night. It put me in the place of Happy Gilmore and how frustrated he got at that clown on the mini golf course. Is there a relationship between Okay Mountain and pop culture?

NG: School Night actually does present the aftermath of frustration. It's not a frustration with the game though – it's a frustration with being stuck in a sort of limbo – with that transitional period between childhood and adulthood. I think we can all relate to the feeling of being in that awkward in-between stage; too old for playgrounds but too young for bars. School Night presents the remnants of a late night alcohol-fueled scene where petty vandalism has taken place- the type of crime that is committed by a very specific demographic. We chose the trope of the clown head as the setting because of its symbolic quality and ability to represent a distinctly American style of leisure culture.



Okay Mountain's relationship to pop culture is slippery and multifarious.....it's a juggernaut. Most people have taken bits and pieces from pop culture to help construct their view of themselves and their life. Sometimes these things just stick to you. The members of Okay Mountain and our projects are no exception. We make work out of our shared experiences of the world- pop culture is inextricably linked to that. Sometimes we satirize it, sometimes we are inspired by it, sometimes we just use its language, and sometimes we are in awe of it.

I think our work is the strongest when we are doing all four things at the same time. We have always attempted to imbue the work with a nonjudgmental quality. We are not the solemn judges of culture- we are also active participants and guilty parties, as well. The most succinct way I think of answering your question is simply to say that we actively engage with popular culture in our creative practice.

AP: How do you, as individuals, approach and maneuver through the creative process? More specifically, with so many others to work with, how democratic is the “group think” method?

NG: There is not one way that Okay Mountain approaches or maneuvers through the creative process. Our practice and relationships with one another are constantly shifting and in flux, as there are no fixed roles.

Ideologically, we have an egalitarian mindset that uses democratic processes. When we are making work together it is all under the identity of Okay Mountain, so each of us have to let go of our egos and a personal sense of “ownership”. Having a separation between our personal creative work and Okay Mountain’s creative work is essential. Each of us have to respect and trust the group and remember that we all have the same goal in mind. That is not always the easiest thing to do and we have had several heated exchanges and disputes, but in the end the group usually finds the best solution any problem. As with all relationships, communication and honesty are key. Being that we started our creative relationship out of long standing friendships we know how to navigate the different personalities that compose the group. We are pretty good at knowing when to take space or temporarily table a decision. And if common ground can’t be found on a specific issues we take a vote and that outcome sticks. Again, it’s all about remembering that each of us have the same goal in mind and not taking things personally.



Pragmatically, we change and adapt our creative process for each project we complete, however there are two distinct modes of working that most of our past projects conform to. The first is a building or additive method. It starts with a general theme or broad idea. Then parameters are set for all contributions. Once the parameters are set each of us begin to generate content and apply it to the project. As those additions are made visible, they influence the subsequent content. So the project clarifies it’s terms while it is being constructed. Two perfect examples of this working method are “Corner Store” and “Benefit Plate”. Usually when working this way it is difficult to talk about a work before it is fully resolved because aspects of it are subject to change throughout its construction.



The second mode, which has been utilized more recently, is to painstakingly plan fully resolved projects and then execute them. This working method begins with the idea generation, where we brainstorm for hours, days, or even months. Each individual keeps throwing ideas out to the group until something resonates with everyone. Once an idea has caught everyone's imagination then it quickly snowballs into something larger and more complex. That is a really exciting time to be in the studio. After everyone has added their thoughts- the group refines and clarifies the agenda. At that point the project is precisely planned and then finally executed. "Wheel" and "4 Wheeler Rollover" exemplify this working method.



Long Plays will be on view through March 16, 2013 at Mark Moore Gallery in Los Angeles, CA.

Nathan Green is an artist and curator currently working and living in Dallas, TX. Green recently curated Failing Flat: Sculptural Tendencies in Painting, an exhibition set to run through April 27 at Central Trak: The University of Texas at Dallas Artists Residency.

Arthur Peña is an artist and professor currently living and working in Dallas, TX.

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