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Tuesday, October 7th, 2014

Mind Craft: Munro Galloway's New Paintings and Drawings

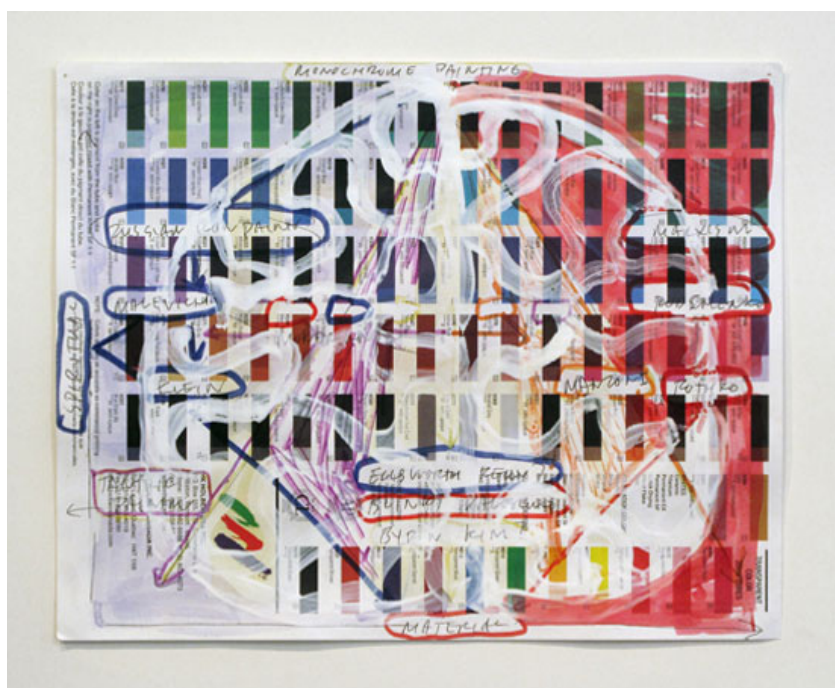
by Alexandra Nicolaides

Munro Galloway: Belief System at Soloway Gallery

September 14 through October 19, 2014

348 South 4th Street (between Hooper and Keap streets)

Brooklyn, 347 776 1023



Munro Galloway, *Brain Drawing*, 2014. Ink and gouache on paper, 8 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches. Photograph by John Berens, courtesy of the artist and Soloway Gallery.

The brain is the king of the organs. The brain's shape and structure define our humanity, though its method of governance over our bodies and actions remains largely a mystery. In "Belief System" at Soloway Gallery, Munro Galloway bares his brain. It's not preserved in a jar for our scientific prodding; instead he slowly and intimately reveals it in glimpses, repetitions, and uncertainties. The accumulation of these revelations is confounding. "Belief System" includes works on canvas, drawings and books, with Galloway moving fluidly between different media. The canvases are oil and acrylic, inkjet prints, or some combination of both; the drawings layer collage, ink and gouache. Galloway has built out a low shelf to display three of the canvases and another purpose-built shelf shows the drawings. Interspersed among these drawings are books he has been making for a number of years. The works function together — a system — formed out of Galloway's actions and use of material. The result is work that tantalizingly hovers between imagination and existence.

A walk through the canvases is a needed precursor to the drawings and books in the back room. The canvases appear graphic and accessible. In 65" x 50" (*Lean Over Fat*) (2014), abstract, bright yellow squares and lines are painted with a thick brush. Grey and white lines, squares and bell-like shapes are rendered more like sketches. "65" was jotted down in the top left corner and "50" in the bottom right. The size, a notation typically found on the back of the work, is put for any to see. The painting is almost stripped bare in its simplicity and openness — Galloway's process seems clear, just from the title. 65" x 50" are its dimensions. The phrase "lean over fat" reverses a rule of oil painting where "fat" paint (as the name implies, there is a high oil-to-pigment ratio) is applied over "leaner" paint (with a lower oil-to-pigment ratio), as the latter dries more quickly than the former. By applying the oil lean over fat, the surface is more likely to crack. The dimensions on the canvas and the method by which the paint was applied in the title integrates the decisions made by Galloway during painting to the work as it is now apprehended by the viewer. The openness of the canvases insists on being taken at face value, but after looking at the shelf of books and drawings, they change.

The drawings are of brain slices — the shape of two spongy lobes repeats with permutations. All titled *Brain Drawing*, they are made on a variety of found paper, including color



Munro Galloway, 65" x 50" (Lean Over Fat), 2014. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 65 x 50 inches. Photograph by John Berens, courtesy of the artist and Soloway Gallery.

charts, takeout menus and exhibition flyers. *Brain Drawing* (2014), on the top left shelf, is ink and gouache drawn on ledger paper. The brain shape is drawn in black ink. Inside of this shape are two connected rectangles diagonally bisected by a line with bulbous ends. Galloway loosely applied blotches of black ink and washes of blue that permeate the shapes. More precisely, the black ink of the rectangles has been colored yellow. The identical shape of the yellow rectangles in both 65" x 50" (*Lean Over Fat*) and *Brain Drawing* imply a derivation. But, where typically a painting resolves or completes a drawing, after viewing *Brain Drawing*, 65" x 50" seems less finished. Instead, it looks like a memory or a strong impression of the drawing.

Galloway has made artist's books for many years. *Vessel States* (2009) uses an art catalogue as its base. Galloway has left the captions (written in German) alone, but has also placed clunky and ill-fitting paper cutouts over the objects in the images. His collages are reproduced in black and white to make a seamless surface. A bronze or marble hand juts out from behind a paper covering — a bit of toe and a marble plinth are also visible. Again, there is interplay between revelation and mystery. In the books, this interaction forms the story as it unfolds in time as a narrative. The relationship between *Brain Drawing* and 65" x 50" is also a narrative, not linear as in the books, but circuitous with connections that fire like synapses.



Munro Galloway, 64" x 48" (Nervous System), 2014. Acrylic and inkjet on canvas, 64 x 48 inches. Photograph by John Berens, courtesy of the artist and Soloway Gallery.

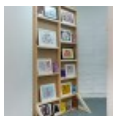
Another *Brain Drawing* (2014) is drawn on a color chart. Black and red form a field for the white brain shape; there are scrawled nonsensical notations and circles of orange, pink, green, and yellow within the silhouetted organ. Despite these layers, the color chart comes through in different degrees of visibility. In 64" x 48" (*Nervous System*) (2014), Galloway has enlarged and inkjet-printed the same color chart onto a canvas on which he had already painted a scramble of different colors. It is difficult to tell the difference between paint and inkjet-print on the canvas. Galloway visually connects painting and inkjet-printing in 66.5" x 50.5" (2014). The image is barely a brain. Multi-colored lines jig and stutter like a printer running out of ink, but the canvas is not an inkjet, but a direct monoprint from another painted canvas. There is an increasingly complicated interplay of repetitions through the image of the brain and the use of materials and technology. These repetitions play with expectation — nothing can be assumed despite previous experience with other work in the show.

The materiality of the works displayed in "Belief System" is continually undercut by the intricacies of the works within the "system." Simplicity hides complexity as a raw painting becomes a

finished drawing. Abstract fragments are glimpses of an unknown more in a print from a painting. The paper of a drawing repeats as the pigment on a canvas. Art making intimately touches and pushes at something both fundamental and unknown within us: it is imagination mutating into existence and mystery founding belief.



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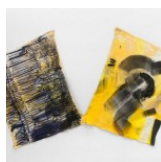


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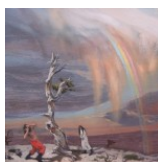


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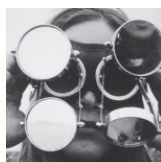
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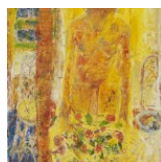
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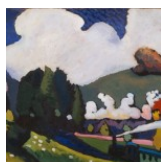
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