

DASHIELL MANLEY: Whitney 2014 Biennial, Five Hot Artists to Watch

Written by John DeFore
March 7, 2014

Its downtown digs may be nearing completion (the target for opening is spring 2015), but the Whitney Museum of American Art has one last installment of its closely watched Biennial to offer in its iconic Marcel Breuer-designed uptown home. However flexible the event has been since its 1932 beginning (at some points it was held annually instead of every other year), the Biennial has always aimed to present an informed, persuasive survey of what matters in contemporary American art. This year that job fell to three curators: Stuart Comer, Anthony Elms, and Michelle Grabner—each of whom was responsible for filling one floor of the building.

More than usual, this year's event (running from March 7 through May 25) stretches notions of what constitutes artwork, incorporating everything from the notebooks and marginalia of author David Foster Wallace and a series of trade paperbacks published by Semiotext(e) to two films made not for galleries but for cinema. Both Andrew Bujalski's 2013 *Computer Chess* and Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel's experimental doc *Leviathan* are playing in full on continuous loops for the exhibition's duration. One hundred and three participants (some of whom are collectives with multiple members) are represented, making the show impossible to summarize. But that doesn't mean some don't stand out:

Dashiell Manley

Los Angeles based Dashiell Manley, one of the youngest artists there, got his MFA a mere three years ago from UCLA. His ambitious *The Great Train Robbery*, expected to take ten years or so to finish, will be a scene-by-scene remake of Edwin S. Porter's landmark silent film, albeit not your ordinary remake: Each scene is shot against an abstract backdrop covered with shorthand-like descriptions of the film's action, sequences that may only obliquely refer to the original. The installation at the Whitney, a recreation of the film's third scene, was previously exhibited in a LA storage unit.

Why focus on this film, one wonders? "I had been wanting to remake a film for a while," Manley says, "and there were two specific criteria that I was looking for: I wanted the film to be a first in as many ways as possible: first action film, first jump cut, etc. Second, I wanted the film to have been remade already." Michael Chrichton's 1978 version starred Sean Connery and Donald Sutherland.

"More than the idea of simply remaking a film," he continues, "I am interested in telling the same story over and over again and the core reasons why we do this." Other scenes in the project will be produced in different styles; the one he's making now will be "traditional hand drawn animation, no physical sets or props," he says.



An abstract backdrop of *The Great Train Robbery* sequence descriptions exhibited in a LA storage unit.