

# t r a n s f o r m e r

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Transformer is thrilled to present:

## *Here & Now*

May 10 – 24; May 31 – June 14

Focusing on issues of place, time, fragility, security and fantasy, this two-site exhibition features 17 artists creating large scale, site-specific installations and environments within Transformer's project space, and in three floors of the former Church of the Rapture building space up the street from Transformer at 1840 14th Street, NW.



Artists Participating in *Here & Now* include:

**May 10 – 24**

At Transformer (1404 P Street, NW): **Jennifer Burkley Vasher** (Placitas, NM)

At 1840 14th Street, NW (entrance on T Street, NW):

**Kyan Bishop & Kate Hardy** (Washington, DC)  
**Sonya Blesofsky** (Brooklyn, NY)  
**Mandy Burrow** (Arlington, VA)  
**Graham Childs & Lily deSaussure** (Washington, DC)  
**Derek Coté** (Richmond, VA)  
**Mia Feuer** (Richmond, VA)

**Lisa Kellner** (Hanover, VA)  
**Jong Sun (Jay) Lee** (Baltimore, MD)  
**Chris Moukarbel** (New York, NY)  
**Amy Rubin** (British Columbia, Canada)  
**Paul Shoemaker** (Richmond, VA)  
**Jiny Ung** (Washington, DC)

**May 31 – June 14**

At Transformer (1404 P Street, NW): **Mariah Johnson** (Los Angeles, CA) & **Valerie Molnar** (Richmond, VA)

### **Special Programming:**

**Saturday, May 10, 2008**

1:30 PM – Conversation between Ryan Hill, Manager of Interpretive Programs and Curatorial Research Associate, Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, and artist Jennifer Burkley Vasher (Transformer)

4 PM – Performance by artist Paul Shoemaker (1840 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW)

**Saturday, May 17, 2008 (all events at 1840 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW)**

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1:30 PM – Discussion of work between selected *Here & Now* artists and Kristen Hileman, Assistant Curator, Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden

3 PM - Guest lecture by current Whitney Biennial artist **Matt Mullican** (New York, NY), presented in partnership with Street Scenes: Projects for DC

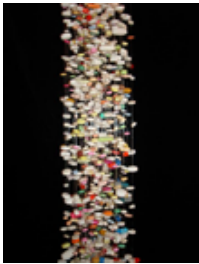
## Saturday, May 31, 2008 (Transformer)

3:30 PM - Conversation between Cynthia Connolly, Director of the Ellipse Art Center and Curator of *The Thread as the Line* and artists Mariah Johnson and Valerie Molnar

**EXHIBITION HOURS for both *Here & Now* exhibition venues:** Wednesday – Saturday, 1–7pm & by appointment.

### About the participating artists (as per the order listed above):

**Jennifer Burkely Vasher** (b.1967) works and lives in New Mexico. Originally from Indianapolis, Vasher received an MFA from the University of New Mexico and is currently an Instructor at Central New Mexico Community College. Vasher's work has been shown nationally, including solo exhibitions at The Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, The Lawndale Art Center in Houston, The Mesa Contemporary Arts Center in Phoenix, and the Soap Factory in Minneapolis. Vasher participated with an installation booth at this year's Pulse Art Fair in NY courtesy Richard Levy Gallery.



About her work, Vasher states: "Just like the Seinfeld episode, I too have medicine cabinet snooped. In childhood, my brother and I snooped either to be in the know or just looking for something - anything. Pharmaceuticals run through our infrastructure, our families, our country. For the exhibition at Transformer, I've pulled inspiration from our overmedicated society (though I think some of us could benefit from a little more help!), the brilliant Dr. Seuss's book; *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* (Where They Never Have Troubles --At Least Very Few..), in combination with the Hindu concept of Maya, The Great Illusion

(represented as a net).

**Kyan Bishop** was born in Seoul, Korea and raised in northern Minnesota. She has experience teaching sculpture and ceramics classes, managing youth arts and crafts programs, and has worked at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Asian Art. In 2005-06 she was an Artist in Residence at the Landon School in Bethesda, MD, and prior to that completed a residency at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, VT. Last year, she was invited to be a resident artist as part of the Tin Shop Guest Artist Program in Breckenridge, CO. Kyan currently resides in Washington, DC and is part of the Flux Studio, based in Mount Rainier, MD. Her sculpture and installation work have been included in numerous shows around the country. She currently is employed at the Federal Reserve Board in the Division of Consumer and Community Affairs.

**Kate Hardy** was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. She has a BFA from the Corcoran College of Art and Design, an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, and a Certificate in Museum Studies from George Washington University. She is currently artist-in-residence at the Red Dirt Studio in Mount Rainier, MD. Her work is theoretically based on people's relationships to images, objects, spaces and each other. To explore these relationships and inform her art she has been working as an historic housekeeper, an exhibit fabrication specialist, and a paper conservationist for The Smithsonian Institution and the National Historic Trust. She is represented by Project 4 gallery.

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For their collaborative work featured in *Here & Now*, Kyan & Kate state: "While human population has lived a rural lifestyle through most of history, migration to urban centers around the world is quickening at a pace more rapidly than ever before. Green spaces and natural landscapes are being swallowed, manipulated and maneuvered by the accelerated expansion of metropolitan areas. The consequences of such actions remain to be wholeheartedly understood.

Although we live in close proximity to our neighbors, it is easy to become isolated from our environment and each other. Time, memory, and a sense of community become key tools that enable us to preserve, archive and construct both our individual and collective history."

**Sonya Blesofsky** received her MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and BA from UC Santa Cruz. She has held residencies at Smack Mellon, Dieu Donne Papermill, Chashama, LMCC's Workspace:120 Broadway, Plane Space, and the California Legion of Honor. Her work has been shown in New York at Plane Space, Smack Mellon and Chashama, and in San Francisco at Patricia Sweetow Gallery, Mission 17, and Pond. Blesofsky's work will be included in summer exhibitions at Smack Mellon and Mixed Greens, and she will be an Artist-in-Residence at CUE Art Foundation in Fall 2008. Born in Boston and raised in California, Blesofsky currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



About her work, Blesofsky states: "Urban theorists posit that we experience the city by the way in which we move through it. My work is directly inspired by my daily commutes in New York and San Francisco on foot, bicycle, bus or train through an ever-evolving architectural landscape. Primarily, I am interested in architectural failure, construction, development and urban renewal. My work comes from a place of great anxiety about things being unstable or falling apart."

**Mandy Burrow** lives and works in Arlington, VA. She currently exhibits throughout the United States and teaches studio art courses at local universities. Burrow recently received a grant from the Puffin Foundation, Ltd. and was selected as a Sondheim Prize semi-finalist by the Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts. She earned a B.A. from Asbury College in Wilmore, KY, and a M.F.A. in painting at The George Washington University.



Burrow's work focuses upon the passage of time and redemption in every day life. She typically manipulates found objects to explore memory and hope within the context of personal narrative. Burrow states: "Rusted tin cans, broken boxes and old photographs reveal our history. Once valued and now discarded, each object possesses a personal narrative through which we may trace our everyday lives. I often collect these devalued objects, cataloging and organizing them to better understand the transience of time. In this way I redeem their forgotten pasts and place them into a new context, a collective present that combines the multiple histories into one. The final work, then, is a record of transformation. It is a new story and a new sense of time that envelops life, death, memory and resurrection. *This Place* addresses the transformation of 1840 14<sup>th</sup> St., NW. From its inception as Taylor Motor Company in the 1920s, through years of abandonment, then as home to the Church of the Rapture, and finally, in its present state, the building offers us the remnants of its life. I piece together the broken bits of time – researching the building, collecting the detritus from all four floors and recording each room's history as I have found it. Gradually, time and space collapses. And *This Place* melds past, present and future into one."

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DC artists **Graham Childs** and **Lily deSaussure's** installations celebrate the domestic relationship, its hardships and its rewards. By building structures that designate place, the artists create a theatrical platform on which these concepts perform.

They state about their work: "In this collaborative work, we explore the many facets of our domestic relationship. The structures we build are simulations of our "dream"

sunroom in our apartment as well as a portrait of domestic bliss. The space renders our own vulnerability as it yields a dissection and investigation into the adversities of shared lives. The environment, devoid of walls, remains framed by architectural elements and relays limitations of boundaries. The household objects painted white raise questions of intended specificity. Amidst the furniture, windows, molding, plants and other objects, hang hand-embroidered pieces depicting moments from our lives preceding our current relationship. These images of personal memories stem from different places and times specific to each of us and are connected only by thread and color. The color is representative of the integrity of our environment as a whole – it suspends the architecture and stands for evidence of us."

**Derek Coté** studied at Virginia Commonwealth University and Western Washington University where he received his BFA and MFA respectively. He has exhibited nationally and internationally including exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, New York; Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Washington; Exit Art and Roebling Hall, New York; Delaware Center for Contemporary Art, Wilmington, Delaware; Contemporary Art Center of Virginia, Virginia Beach; Scope Art Fair Special Projects in New York and Miami; Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey; and appeared on Artwave Radio in Athens, Greece. In addition, Derek was included in the 2007 Young Sculptors Competition and Exhibition at Miami University of Ohio, is a recipient of a Professional Artist Fellowship from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and was Artist-in-Residence at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. [www.derekcote.com](http://www.derekcote.com)



About his work, Derek states: "My sculptures, installations, and drawings explore notions of memory and gestalt as a function of architectural relationships, geography, and place dynamics. Investigations into universal place as well as personal displacement are arranged by recreating familiar instances that employ scale shifts, the collision of metaphors, and posing interior versus exterior. The social and cultural landscape is a recurring theme that is at once personal and foreign. Through the investigation of general

and specific sites, I present conditions that provide a platform for questioning individual place, displacement, and what it means to belong. By encouraging conceptual versatility and flexibility, I am able to employ a range of relevant media from wood, plastic, and cardboard, to light, sound, and video, as a function of their inherent ability to communicate."



**Mia Feuer** was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada. She received her BFA with a major in sculpture from the University of Manitoba in 2004 and is currently a 2009 MFA candidate in the sculpture program at Virginia Commonwealth University. She is the recipient of numerous grants from the Winnipeg Arts Council and the Manitoba Arts Council. Before moving to Richmond, VA to attend graduate school, Mia spent time

living in the West Bank, an occupied Palestinian territory where she facilitated "on the street" sculpture workshops with Palestinian children using next to no resources. Through her work, Feuer investigates the illusion of security and the idea of systematic dehumanization through architectural form. Informed by time she spent in the West Bank, Feuer searches for an understanding of barricades both as signs and as physical realities which restrict freedom and deeply affect people's lives.

**Lisa Kellner** received her MFA from the Art Institute of Boston, Boston, MA in 2008. She attended the School of Visual Arts, Fine Arts Painting Program, New York, NY (1999-2004). In 2008 she participated in the

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following selected group and solo exhibitions: Installation at Gallery 5, Richmond, VA; Mock Magazine ads in Perfect 8 Magazine, New York; *I Dream of Genomes*, Islip Art Museum, Islip, New York; *Black and White*, ArtDoxa.com. Further bio details can be found at [www.LisaKellner.com](http://www.LisaKellner.com)



About her work Kellner states: "In my work, I mine the surfaces and inner regions of the body, deciphering the systems and patterns that inherently provide meaning. By exploring the landscape of the body, my work questions perceptions and engages memory. *Inner Sanctum* is an installation made entirely of hand dyed and formed silk organza. In response to the 1840 14<sup>th</sup> street NW space as part of Transformer's *Here & Now* exhibition, I am incorporating other materials such as flax, porcelain and mohair to the installation. Together these materials explore the qualities of flesh and bodily structure juxtaposed with aspects of a personal sanctuary. I seek to create a visual fusion between the two."

**Jong Sun (Jay) Lee** was born in Taegu, South Korea. Although she demonstrated artistic ability from an early age, she did not take a direct route to becoming an artist. A driving force in her life has been to give hope to disadvantaged people. While living in Korea, she worked as a teacher in an orphanage; since moving to the United States, she has aided immigrants, convicts, elderly people, and children with autism. It was only in her thirties that she recognized that she could inspire others as well as express her deepest insights by becoming an artist. Following three years of course work at Montgomery College, in 2005, Jong Sun transferred to the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore, MD, where she completed her BFA in sculpture. She graduated from MICA summa cum laude in 2007, and is currently pursuing an MFA there in the Rinehart Sculpture program. She will graduate in 2009. Still a first year graduate student, she received a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Award from the U.S. Department of Education. She recently worked with internationally known environmental sculptor Andy Goldsworthy on The Clay House Project in Potomac, MD. To involve and affect audiences to a greater extent, Jong Sun has incorporated performances into her installation sculptures. She will soon demonstrate this new synthesis at The Living Theater, marking her entrance into the New York art world.



About her work, Jong Sun (Jay) Lee states: "I have always tried to find the un-ordinary in the most unexpected places. In the materials that I reshape and transform, I seek to evoke attraction to the object, followed by an ambivalent reaction. For instance, I have found human hair to be an extraordinary medium, which invariably produces a visceral response. The aim is not to achieve shock value, but to encourage reflection upon one's own mind and in relation to culturally constructed feelings. In the interstices of ambiguity, ambivalence, and uncertainty, I focus my attention conceptually on locating affirming tendencies in difficult or traumatic circumstances. Thus, my performance-installations explore the idea of hope and healing coinciding with suffering and pain. The human capacity to recover from trauma is an extraordinary phenomenon, which examined symbolically and enacted respectfully permits greater understanding of and empathy towards our fellow human beings."

**Chris Moukarbel** (b. 1978) lives and works in New York, NY. In 2006 he received his MFA from Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT. Prior to that he received his BFA from the Corcoran College, Washington, DC. He also participated in the International Student Program at Goldsmiths College, London, England. Selected exhibitions include *System Error: War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, Palazzo Papesse Centre for Contemporary Art, Siena, Italy (2007); *Group Show*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY (2006); *Video America*, The Hospital Gallery, London, England (2006); *Action Adventure*, Canada Gallery, New York, NY (2006); *Data Mining*, Wallspace Gallery, New York, NY (2006); *Don Quixote*, Witte de With, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2006); *World Trade Center 2006*, Air de Paris, Paris, France (2006), among others.



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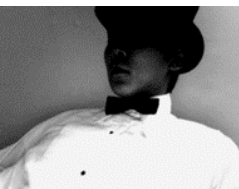
Chris Moukarbel makes site-specific video and installations, often using found media or objects as his sources. His projects explore the idea of memorial, fiction, and are concerned with the ways in which politically driven events are edified. *Points of Departure* featured in *Transformer's Here & Now* exhibition is part of Moukarbel's on-going project *IN/OUT*. Over the past three years, Moukarbel has been installing anonymous roadside memorials and displaying them on the Web. Hollywood movies, Internet media and political demonstrations have functioned as both source material and a destination. "Moukarbel is interested in how culture is created, expanded and shared, and who if anyone can claim ownership. He is a willing participant in his chosen cultural idioms rather than a detached observer."



**Amy Rubin** states about her life and work: "I have always been interested in people and the stories of their lives. This is what led me first to a career in psychology before exploring these themes through art. I use mixed media techniques and installations in my work because I want viewers to have an experience on more than one level simultaneously. By granting the viewer a sense of intimacy and trust, allowing them to do what they are normally not allowed to do, it is my hope that viewers will be less guarded and detached, if only for a few moments. Born and raised in Ontario, I currently live in British Columbia, Canada, with my artist husband Ken Flett, our baby Jonah Bear, and our dog Cedar. Becoming a mother and spending time in the enchanted rainforests of the Pacific Northwest has fuelled my interest in exploring myth and fairytale themes in my work.

*The Story Tree* (presented in *Here & Now*) is a work about childhood innocence, myth, and yearning. It is about the possibility and belief that our world may hold more than we have yet personally seen with our own eyes. It is about the part of us that hopes, that blows the dandelion seeds and wishes upon stars. It is about curiosity winning out over fear, the part of us that peeks again when we encounter a dead animal, that keeps secrets, that spurs us to go where we have been forbidden to go."

**Paul Shoemaker** was raised in Virginia and is receiving his Bachelors of Fine Art this year from Virginia Commonwealth University. In 2005, Paul was selected as a representative to the Tasmeem Design Conference in Doha, Qatar. The following year he worked as an intern in the Photography Department at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden under Lee Stalworth and Amy Densford. In 2007, he studied abroad in Stockholm, Sweden for five months. While studying at VCU he received the James Bradford Scholarship (2006), won the Virginia Museum of Fine Art's Portfolio Review (2007) and the Richard Carylton Research Fund (2008).



For *Here & Now*, Paul is presenting his new work, "*Pennies from Heaven*". Paul states: "If you want the things you love, you must have showers," is a remarkable line that comes from my performance and installation "*Pennies from Heaven*." The desires and fantasies we all strive to fulfill or experience are continuously being bombarded by the realities of our lives. Meaning is subjective but experience, especially in a live performance becomes a shared moment. For my piece, this shared moment of a performance along with allusions to abstracted historical references is meant to be a bizarre and theatrical spectacle. The life of a dream is metaphorical to the ephemeral act of a performance while artifacts seemingly from a distant time period try to ground the piece into a familiar reality."

Living and working in Washington, DC since 2006, **Jiny Ung** states about her work: "*Daily Staple* (funded in part by the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities) examines issues that are hidden: marginalized Vietnamese Americans who work as cogs in a wheel behind the scenes, underpaid, and overworked while eliciting thoughts on cultural, ethnic, social, political and economic issues. My work documents the struggle of

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Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans. The interviews, quotes, and images depict the Vietnamese in the DC area who are otherwise normally depicted as the “Model Minority” – the stereotype that all Asians have strong traditional values, plenty of wealth and opportunities, are submissive and respectful, silent and obedient, and live free from struggles and racial discrimination. The bomb bowl pieces evoke issues that are ignored and have not been resolved since the infamous Kissinger bombing campaigns, the spread of Agent Orange, the Vietnam War era and the plight of Vietnamese who have difficulty assimilating in a foreign country. In addition, the pieces suggest war as a commodity and profitable resource where those for and against war are subject to it no matter what results from it. Though everyone is affected, third world countries tend to bear a multitude of consequences that are tenfold and eventually relegated onto our children’s children so that this cycle may continue.



The grenades symbolize the “new grain” or new food of Vietnam. The cynicism of the word correlates with the “new era” of Vietnam called “Doi Moi” where economic reforms were created to bring Vietnam out of its current state of economic crises. The “new grain” has become a daily staple in the Vietnamese diet where war and survival are ingrained from one generation to the next. People settle anywhere as long as it offers promising opportunities and dreams. Sadly, they are still eating out of these bowls as second class citizens in “developed” countries.

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1979, **Mariah Johnson** received her Master of Fine Arts in Painting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2006. Now living and working in Los Angeles, CA she has had solo exhibitions at The LAB in San Francisco, CA (2008) and at LittleBird Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2008).



Mariah states about her work: “Since I began working as an artist, I have had an interest in storytelling, narrative, and memory. My interest in these subjects stems from my having grown up in the South, where culture is focused on the past and family histories are preserved in a collective memory of language, objects, and gestures. This memory is often tended, preserved, and passed on to others by women. My installation-based work grew out of my thinking about my mother’s efforts at maintaining aesthetic order in her home—even if the rest of the house is a wreck, she wants her linen closet to be beautiful when she opens the door. With my mother’s habits in mind, I began to construct sculptural arrangements from bed linens, particularly sheets and pillowcases that I purchase from second-hand stores. I fold and pile these sheets on simple shelves or chairs, as well as on and around the significant or quirky architectural features of an exhibition space. I think of these folding and stacking activities as akin to creating paintings with brush and canvas. The interactions among color combinations, printed patterns, and folding systems become visually engrossing and reference abstract or minimalist paintings. Because I have removed them from their domestic context, the sheets can operate on a purely formal level.”

**Valerie Molnar** is receiving her Masters of Fine Art in Painting from Virginia Commonwealth University, School of the Arts, Richmond, VA this May 2008. In 2007, she attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME. She received her Bachelor of Fine Art in Painting from the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH in 2006. Recent exhibitions include: *Thread as the Line*, Ellipse Center, Arlington VA (May 1); *Watershed*, Nathan Larramendy Gallery, Ojia CA; *You Catch More Flies With Honey*, Carroll Square Gallery, Optima, Washington DC. [www.valeriemolnar.blogspot.com](http://www.valeriemolnar.blogspot.com)



At Transformer, Valerie will present *Progress Report*. Valerie states about her work: “I knit paintings. Knitting is a meticulous, repetitive, and unassuming process. The handcrafted object, because of its labor-intensiveness, communicates emotions that a machine-made

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item can never produce. It comes from a personal hand that prevails, despite our ability to create efficiently and flawlessly with machines. These ideas are imbedded in the works by process, while their placement on the wall, non-utilitarian form, art historical references, and eye-candy color scheme suggest, "Look and analyze, but do not touch." When viewed at a distance the texture disappears and the objectness of the knitting creates an image. The friendliness and familiarity of the 'hand knitted object' shifts to suggest painting on the wall; the two coexist in flux, not as a versus but a marriage. The images created are intentionally knitted to be large and loud with pleasing color combinations that are easy to swallow. As paintings, as images, I want them to be beautiful and seductive in order to bait the viewer with a visceral, visual experience."

**Complete bio and artist statement information for all of the artists will be available during the *Here & Now* exhibition. Please contact Transformer for further details.**

**TRANSFORMER** is a Washington, D.C. based 501(c) 3 non-profit, artist-centered visual arts organization that connects and promotes emerging artists locally, nationally and internationally. Partnering with artists, curators, art spaces and other cultural entities, Transformer serves as a catalyst and advocate for emergent expression in the visual arts. Transformer's 2007/2008 exhibition series is supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, The Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, and The Visionary Friends of Transformer.

Many thanks to Four Points, LLC for the use of the 1840 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW building. Graffiti artwork throughout the 1840 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW space is courtesy of Meat Market Gallery's Performance Week 2008.

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