

GALLERY 1: Calvin Burton—*Canopy*

GALLERY 2: Javier Piñón

ON VIEW: January 18–February 23, 2008

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Branch Gallery is pleased to present *Canopy*—Calvin Burton’s first solo exhibition at the gallery. Burton’s gestural, abstract paintings explore the ambivalent nature of the American imaginary. Born in Roanoke, Virginia and raised in Lake Tahoe, Burton’s work reflects his interest in political philosophy, history, and the mythic American frontier. Often large in scale, they consider monumental architecture and landscape as allegories for the persistent optimism of the American Dream—drawn from such sources as Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, modernist deck homes, and contemporary skyscrapers, as well as the hills, valleys, and mountains of the perpetually shifting American wilderness.

Burton employs abstraction, jarring color combinations, and impasto to confuse the boundaries between the lived and the dreamed, creating surreal landscapes that have an energetic entropy that is particular to abstract painting. As the artist states, “In the mind, personal memories are experienced alongside history, fiction, and film. Sometimes they get confused. As these elements are woven into a painting, like colors, they mingle, fuse, and overlap. This ambiguity is reflected in the flickering relationship between paint and image: each being a vessel for the other.” At the same time, such ambiguity may give way to ambivalence—one cannot be sure if these works celebrate or are disillusioned with the Catholic consideration of utopia, inspired by the contemplation of such a grand landscape. Burton seems to wonder if perhaps, this very ambiguity helps to define the American experience.

Burton received his MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University. He has participated in solo and group shows at venues including: Raw & Co., Cleveland, OH; ADA Gallery, Richmond, VA; Galeria Ramon Alva de la Canal, Veracruz, Mexico; Appetite, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Denise Bibro Gallery, New York, NY; and the California Institute for the Arts, Los Angeles, CA.

Branch Gallery is also pleased to present new work by New York based artist Javier Piñón. Though born in Miami, Piñón moved at an early age to Houston, Texas. It was there that he formed a fascination with the American West and its masculine archetype, the cowboy. In his carefully constructed collages, Piñón shows his hero being bucked and thrown from mountains of Chippendale chairs or riding on the backs of crystal chandeliers in a state of triumph. By injecting the violent activity of a rodeo bull into typically static objects, the artist is able to capture a unique sense of tension, drawing the viewer into his unlikely pairing of cultural trappings.

Piñón received his MAT from Rhode Island School of Design and in 2007 was awarded an artist fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA). He has participated in group and solo exhibitions at venues such as: El Museo del Barrio, New York; David Risley Gallery, London; Atelier Cardenas Bellanger, Paris, France; Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco; and ZieherSmith, New York, where he is a represented artist. Piñón’s work will also be included in the 2008 Beijing Biennale.

For more information, please contact Teka Selman or Chloë Seymore at info@branchgallery.com or 919.918.1116.

Gallery Hours: Wed–Sat 12–6 or by appt.

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