
THE BOX

January 1–January 28, 2010

Jennifer Levonian

Selected Works, 2006–2009



Holy Donuts image courtesy of Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia

DF: *Do you give primary importance to either the painted or animated components of your work? The painting seems like it is much more involved or time-consuming, yet the fact that you continue on to create a narrative with movement is a significant gesture.*

JL: Although it's difficult to separate the two components, the painting is probably the most essential part of the work. Without movement, the narrative loses some meaning, but it could survive as a slide show of stills. I spend 90% of my studio time painting, and I pack a lot of detail into my images. In my most recent animation, *Take Your Picture with a Puma*, the sound became a more important component. The narrative depends on the voice-over, and music composed by a friend sets the mood and unites the story.

DF: *There are a number of pop culture references in your work (The Muppet Show and The Blue Lagoon in Holy Donuts, for example). Does pop culture serve as a memory trigger for you or do these inclusions serve a different purpose?*

JL: In each animation I try to create a tone that feels specific to a certain time, so the pop culture references seem almost necessary. The TV was always on in my house, so I opened *Holy Donuts* with *The Muppet Show* blaring in the background. *The Blue Lagoon* influenced my early idea of romance, so I made it invade the fantasy of the main character. The animations are kind of like period pieces to me. Sometimes period piece films edit out the mess or the tacky moments of daily

life, presenting versions of the past that are too clean or too elegant, but I try to include it all.

DF: *Your films tend to portray fairly specific moments or encounters from your memory. How much do you embellish or fictionalize these moments, and what is it about these moments that interests you?*

JL: I heard a scientist on a radio show say that every time you access a memory, you reinvent it in the remembering. So the memories you conjure up the most frequently are the least accurate. The memories you haven't accessed since they happened are the memories with the truest details. It's fascinating that we embellish memories just by remembering them. Since my animations are based on memories that sort of spin into magical realism, I guess I take that idea of the inevitable embellishment and run with it. My interest in the memories that inspire the animations is different for each project. Generally speaking, the memory has to do with both a theme that's interesting to explore and a time or place in my life that I don't mind reliving for the six months to a year that it takes me to complete the work.

DF: *Many early animators turned to animation or filmmaking for formal qualities not available with painting. One could display your paintings in the proper order and still appreciate your visual style and the story. What does animation add to your work?*

JL: I studied painting and turned to animation four years ago because I thought animation could create a more dynamic environment for my narratives. By setting a series of narrative paintings in a time-based medium, pace and mood are instantly created. I love how you can alter the tone or even the meaning of a story just by changing the pace.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN ARTIST JENNIFER LEVONIAN AND DAVE FILIPI, CURATOR OF FILM/VIDEO.

Jennifer Levonian is a Philadelphia-based painter and filmmaker whose work has been shown at the Fleisher/Ollman Gallery in Philadelphia, Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and Philadelphia Museum of Art, among others. She was also the recipient of a 2009 Pew Fellowship in the Arts.

Jennifer Levonian

Selected Works, 2006–2009

app. 20 mins., video

Program:

Take Your Picture with a Puma (2009, 7 mins.)

You, Starbucks (2006, 2 mins., 25 sec.)

Holy Donuts! (2008, 5 mins., 25 secs.)

Wexner Center for the Arts

The Ohio State University

WWW.WEXARTS.ORG | (614) 292-3535