

Aaron Wrinkle

- American, b. 1978 in Aurora, Missouri
- Lives and works in Los Angeles
- 2008 MFA, California Institute of the Arts; 2004 BFA, Kansas City Art Institute
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Body of Work

Aaron Wrinkle is a multidisciplinary conceptual curator and artist working primarily in painting and sculpture. Wrinkle's paintings are modernist compositions with nightmarish surrealist gestures. Figures emerge in landscapes of collage and crude color palettes. He displays works on paper alongside these paintings like sketchbook drawings and journal entries, including poems and lyrics, in which recurring themes and characters are developed. His recent exhibition at his own LA gallery space included paintings, sculpture, mobiles, performance and sound work, and it was juxtaposed by a 33-person exhibition he organized titled *Three's Company*. He described his series *Auto Bodies*: "Continuing my investment in formalist abstraction, I created a series of new works in a large open space through deliberate and automatic gestures. . .the works were continuations of variable compositions situated now as 'auto bodies' in relation to their materials, automatic nature as limb like forms and auto biographically to my father's profession as an auto refinisher." He elaborated, "As automatic refers to the self by definition, the final works in the exhibition curiously referred to the body in the form of a subdued and somewhat reptilian self-portrait, anatomical abstractions of the ear, intuitive performances and a personalized site based sound experiment."

From 2008 to 2011 Wrinkle ran the Dan Graham gallery, named as an homage to the New York Conceptual artist (b. 1942), and he completed the project with a public conversation with the gallery's namesake at Art Los Angeles Contemporary. In 2012 Wrinkle curated a series of Pacific Standard Time exhibitions on the Cirrus Gallery's archives with Jean Milant (PST refers to a Getty-funded initiative that's revitalizing the forgotten cultural beginnings of Southern California). He wrote essays on the work of Paul and Damon McCarthy and Dan Graham for Geoff Tuck's *Notes on Looking*, a blog about contemporary art.

Wrinkle has presented solo exhibitions in Kansas City at Leedy-Voulikos Art Center, group exhibitions including the 2006 Charlotte Street Foundation Awards at H&R Block Artspace, and he has participated in numerous exhibitions in Los Angeles, New York, Europe, and Japan. He has collaborated with Michael Decker in the duo Wrinkle/Decker and is currently collaborating with Raymond Pettibon on a fanzine. His work has been reviewed and featured in *ArtForum*, *Art Journal*, *Artnet*, *Art Scene*, *Interview Magazine*, *LA Weekly*, *Modern Painters*, *The New York Times*, *Notes on Looking*, *Night Papers*, and Phaidon Press.

Aaron Wrinkle

How autobiographical is this artwork?

How about greatly covertly autobiographical, with varying degrees of emphasis and pressure — every disturbed smiley face, every abstract blob, loopy line, toadstool, starry night, clown shoe, all the formalist rigor.

Aaron Wrinkle's paintings are from a series titled *Auto Bodies*, continuations of variable compositions comprised of paintings, sculptures, mobiles, performance and a sound work. In 2016, his exhibition *69* included drawings, paintings, and the ongoing reconstruction of a vintage Volvo in the Night Gallery courtyard. The car belonged to his teacher, Douglas Huebler, a conceptual artist and dean of the art school at California Institute of Arts, 1976-1988.

He Draws a Lot of Faces

Wrinkle draws a face with blue and black ballpoint pens, a soft male face with six eyes, all arranged nicely in rows of two – the antithesis of a Cyclops, or like six Cyclopes molded into one, cartoony but spooky. A face like Wrinkle's, though far-far away, in a reality nearly untouchable to him, on a pillow or a soft stone, a face that doesn't totally want to deny the existence of God; a face that is somewhat God fearing, a Joan of Arc boy-face, in thrilling throes of stoicism. This lost face that Wrinkle drew has three-and-a-half mouths, two ears stacked on top of each other on one side of his face, her face – it is a clown's countenance, sans makeup. Wrinkle's nervous lines are desperate in the best possible sense, wide-eyed and curious; a drawing in yearning, searching mode, in the direction of recognition, grace, common cause. The face also has a partial neck but no collarbone. The head appears cut off from the rest of its body, discontinued, a head that is not in league with the body. And so, the trunk drifts down, wanders off, the disconnected torso, and it appears to be blooming bosoms.

There's a wrinkle in Wrinkle, a crease that runs from irony to sincerity, a tear from a clown. You can see it in every painting he makes, particularly in figures and faces: exaggeration, caricature, cartoon, a method of examining the body. And even when people and figuration are gone and there are just bars and dots and blobs of paint — a so-called upstanding abstract painting — the fact remains that though the work looks like a carnival funhouse, Wrinkle's paintings are ultra-serious, sincere, and passionate. They are themed around ambiguous, androgynous and hermaphroditic forms more commonly associated to organic abstraction. Fundamentally they are rooted in push pull abstraction and color field painting. Wrinkle refers to these new paintings as *Auto Bodies* so the forms are literally highlighted by a word suggestive of the body. As previous paintings were suggested through language and form, ditto the batch of new ones, which evolved and suggested something other than their ambiguous anatomy. So, Wrinkle gave them appendages: heads, hands, feet, etc. Soon they became a family of clowns as if from a magic box or the classic game Operation. The depictions of the First Family are the first portraits he included around the exterior of an abstract painting. So, now there's a political lean to it all. Along with the clown portraits and the large self-portrait, the paintings are essentially platforms for anatomical manipulation and exasperation. And since the subject matter largely references Wrinkle's body, he calls them "morphed mirrors."

Memorial, An Interview with the Artist

Q: Let's talk about Douglas Huebler's upside-down car you exhibited in the Night Gallery parking lot. It had been abandoned in one of the parking lots at CalArts when you were a student there, right?

A: The car was about its proximity on campus and its disrepair. I found it strange that the former dean, a highly regarded and influential conceptualist, teacher, would have his old car just sitting there destroyed by the weather and student parties. I convinced his daughter Darcy and her husband to trade it to me for labor I carried out in his old house. The importance was the collaboration with my own father to restore its body.

Q: Often when you speak or write about this project and other projects you use the word "variably." Could you explain that?

A: Variably speaking is where any concepts relate to Huebler. The car's variable positions almost like a body being resurrected, flipped, dismantled, salvaged and now stored away as parts is somewhat dark, but ultimately organizing and storing parts was the only way I could hold onto most of the vehicle's parts. It's to be a continued project. Also, all my paintings are *Variable Abstractions* or *Variable Gender Abstractions* and numbered accordingly. This line of titling is relevant to Huebler's own titling in his photographic sequences. I'm also more interested in connecting to his teachings or significance through artists he taught.

Q: Please talk about teaching yourself things.

A: As far as learning, I'm on my own now. Art to me is a grab bag. In some ways I've had to forget what I learned in academia – from CalArts teachers and even my peers. The return to painting theory, adolescent drawing and performance has given me more freedom. The Volvo being upside down was a gesture to acknowledge I did everything I could at that moment by restoring it. The only other variable at the time was to roll it. Volvo also means to roll. So, in theory, the evolution of the paintings with new figurations relates to Volvo in regard to the paintings continuously evolving in viewership, presentation and public/self-learning.

- Benjamin Weissman, writer and visual artist, Los Angeles