

Beaux Mendes, *Willow Staging Area*

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Annuals in the Landscape
by Erin Henry

Today, I'm going to make available my thoughts about this project by writing up all the notes I've taken so far. It's become clear to me that the processing of these is the organizing property of this work. Let's begin with an explanation of what I had hoped to do at the Willow Staging Area when we met there last. Do you remember? I asked you before we came that you would go along with my requests because you understood that my work emerges from a process, and that you too must undergo it if you want manifest my portrait of you here. Do you remember that I asked you in the moment if you understand?

My promise to produce everything is earnest, and here for what it's worth is my account, characterized by what I can remember and only that, described here in my own words, and in so far as possible situated within a broader description or landscape, from which my words will gain more meaning. Matthew, it is said, attempted the analogy: for truly I say to you if you have faith: like a grain of mustard seed you will say to this mountain "Move from here to there," and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

The point of the thing was to drum up as much mimetic spread as possible. It's like this: you suspect a surface of some kind exists, and you aim to trace it further. The most important thing to focus on in those beginning stages is the incidence of moments that have, in the past, generated the posited surface. Keep your mind open. It is here that your instincts were activated. Learning about your instincts, how they deliver you to this point, and how to tune them more finely - this is different than field mapping. People who feel safe don't flinch. I'm not implying that you don't feel safe, just that having a body means that you're collateralized; it will be your primary motivating factor until you don't have it anymore. The body is a wellspring.

We've spoken of your work as prodromal in the past, and I'd like to get into that here briefly. It may well be that others use that word with a slightly different character than me, I wouldn't know. I can't separate it from this land. I'm well aware that this happens in other places, but I've only ever felt an earthquake here in Orange County. Actually, I would say that in retrospect it does render the smell particular to that moment into the quality of the scene. I smell exactly what it smells like here, it's pleasant, dust and sage. That's what I probably remember, really - having thrown myself into understanding what had just happened, what I did was become very alert to a wealth of details, and in the context of what I could immediately remember about key points that I recorded in the moment as discordant, I took down details that corresponded with this state of mind. Earthquakes happen when the rocks are baking in the sun, a breeze comes in, there's a pause, and it always smells like this.

'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders.

STARS is delighted to present Beaux Mendes's debut solo exhibition Willow Staging Area. Their work investigates the spaces where paintings are displayed and received, and the aesthetics that function alongside their attending conventions. What effect does a single painting have in a room (a home, lobby, or corporate plaza)? Can it transform or activate the room, or speak beyond or through its status as a painting? Mendes often uses the structure of pilgrimage as a tactic to disrupt and transform the experience of place. Many of the paintings on view were made during pilgrimages to public monuments in Orange County. Combined with their use of plein air painting, the resulting works are marked by a quality of ambiguity that's difficult to situate in time. By assigning and simultaneously denying the attachment of language in their work, they foreground a trans-identity that locks meaning as it's on the brink of resolution.

Beaux Mendes (b. 1987) lives and works in Los Angeles. They received their MFA from the University of California Los Angeles in 2019. They have exhibited their work at The Gallery @ Michaels, Los Angeles; LTD, Los Angeles; Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects, New York; Real Pain Fine Arts, Los Angeles; and Good Weather, St. Louis. They are part of an ongoing collaborative drawing project En Plein Error with fellow Los Angeles-based artists Willa Wasserman and Jenny Gagalka. Mendes is currently a faculty member of Pasadena City College's painting department.