

# **UNTITLED**

## **Matthew Chambers**

October 22 - December 12, 2010

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Curated by Joel Mesler and Carol Cohen

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# ESSAY

Matthew Chambers' recent exhibition at UNTITLED continues his practice of distilling and composting the act of painting as filtered through his own visual memory. Selected by Joel Mesler and Carol Cohen, the 36 canvases in the exhibition, all measuring eight by four feet were hung almost edge-to-edge, with three paintings hung from the ceiling; in total the effect was a visual blitzkrieg of genres and styles, forms and temperatures. As is the artist's wont, the exhibition was a full catalog of his myriad styles, including representational, abstract, and ripped "strip" paintings. In addition, two handmade books of study drawings for the paintings, one featuring abstract drawings, the other representational, were exhibited. These two books, bound by the artist's mother, offer an intimate key to Chambers' idiosyncratic practice, each filled with the geometry and purloined images that make up his skewed visual language.

The Los Angeles-based Chambers (b. 1982) is in a constant dialog with the history of representational and abstract painting – he internalizes this dialog in his own practice by conceiving of the latter as an extension of the former. His fast, dirty, and wry representational practice is a study in the theft of images from art history and from pop culture, which bubble up through his own fevered imagination. For Chambers, the only way to deal with our overloaded culture of images is to articulate and regurgitate all that he ingests. These paintings – of an overhead shot of men working pit-stop-like on a car, for instance, or twisted fast-food mascots, or lushly painted naked men – seem like snapshots, each different in texture and treatment, and yet clearly from the same mental archive. Perspective and scale change radically from image to image but, somehow, the point of view, the artist's position in relation to the canvas and the viewer, feels consistent across his entire output.

Chambers' representational works are like documents of stolen glances and half-remembered children's television shows. The paintings are as likely to depict a romantic scene from a misremembered romantic comedy as they are to document a logo of a failed, and perhaps never extant fast-food franchise. Even when colorful and anthropomorphized, and no matter how buffoonish the brushwork, the work is never cartoonish; but it is often *blotterish* – it would not seem out of place on a sheet of acid. And perhaps that is the mode of visual engagement that these paintings prefigure best: the psychedelic. There is something in the constant shift between subjects and styles, from the heartfelt to the ironic, the personal to the cultural, the known to the imagined, that seems to speak to a mode of envisioning that is de-linked from the rational and the stable. And of course, in an age when front pages and blogs seamlessly shift from LiLo's latest rehab stint, to economic and environmental calamity, to Charlie Sheen's antics and the Tea Party's regressions, it only seems right and sensible that his subjects and styles should melt together with as much finesse as mind on a rather large strip of blotter.

Chambers' abstract works enact a transformation: they take the overload, the leftover, and the discarded representational paintings, digest them into strips, and then reorient them into a dizzying display of form and texture. In these works, the abstract is built from the painter's own failure to represent, constructed from the ground up

using the detritus of yesterday's work. They do not offer abstraction as a Utopian urge – they are not a distillation of representation but are instead a failure to represent, they acknowledge the failure of figurative painting to communicate anything but their presence, or materiality. If the strangely psychedelic canvases in Chambers' practice stand in for an attempt to harness the distracted image-saturated nature of the contemporary subject, the move to abstraction the artist makes is an acknowledgement of the impossibility of cohesion, of stability. Each canvas, ripped to shreds and reordered on a Euclidean basis, is a rejection of the productive possibilities of representation and of narrative. They are as sexy and desirable as they are wonton; their suppleness a direct result of their instrumentalized failure. If the representational paintings reference a visually overburdened age, the abstractions seem to underline the impossibility of cultural productivity, of forward movement, in such an epoch.

Yet to create a separation or tension between the abstract and representational in Chambers' practice is a vexed exercise. In his work both engage a similar process, both enact a material alchemy, well mixed with an understanding of the image-driven nature of our contemporary existence. **!**

**INSTALLATION**













# WORKS

All works by Matthew Chambers 2010  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
96 x 48 inches 243.8 x 121.9 cm



To Read Them as Lines



The Recapture of Excitement and Intensity of Interest



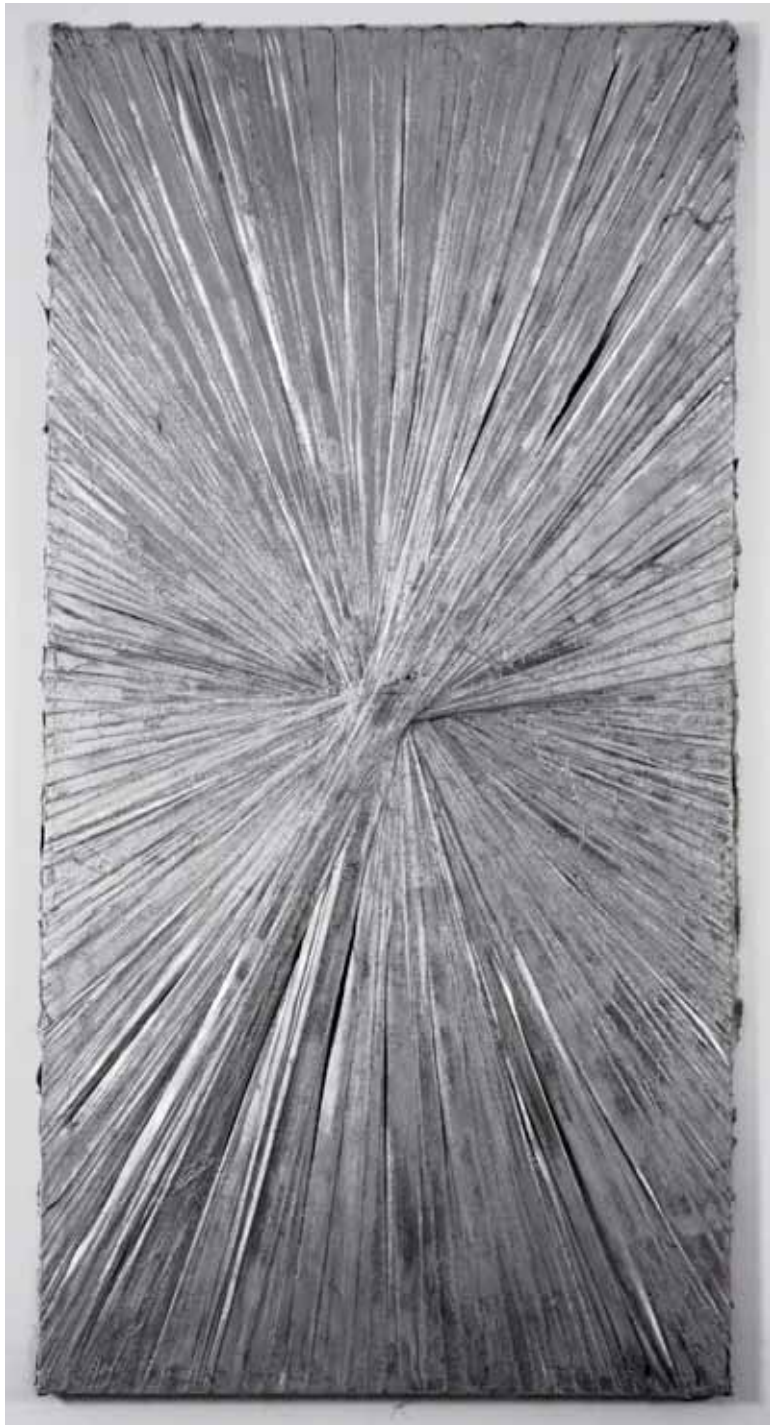
When Ships Have Come to Port at Last



The Day Erased, The Lesson Done



Having the Reality at Heart



**And Again It may be We are Dealing with Similar Abertrations**



**Which Antiquity Begins to Resume**



A Part of His Understanding



The Weather-Beaten Figure



And that the Great Machine of Organized Society Is Ready to Carry Them On



With Feelings so Tender He Poured Out Tears



Shimmer the Souls of the Planes



As a Part of the Nature that He Contemplates





We Could Not Speak of Our World As Something to be Distinguished



As Punishment for My Imperfections, My Arbitrariness and Passiveness



In Honey'd Accent Spoke



A Change from Substance to Subtlety



As Sources of Our Present Conception



Of a Considered Elaboration



Whether Below or Above Appearance



How Thick this Goblet Is with Ornaments



The Same Question As the Question of Significance



To Envince the Relations



As Suggesting that It Possesses Less of the Artifice



As to Put It to His Own Uses



Her Hand Twists a Paper Rose



The Beholding of Conversation Between these Two Worlds



**And Justice by the Robes**



**The Formidable Public Buildings**





Without the Unequaled Beauty of His Prose



Where Original Law Fosters All Evolution



To Become in Time a Mystical



One of the Effects of Analogy



It Is His Affair As It Is He Who Tries to Live



As Means of Moral Inspiration



And Sailors After a Voyage



A Utility of Immense Details



After the List



For Every Object, Its Appointed Objectification



Arousing the Sense of Pathos



In the Roughest Manner of Indication



For All Their Beauty



Liberations and Discoveries



For His Extrusion from Philosophy



Into the Sanctuary Itself





Of Sunless Dry



Precious Portents of Our Revelations



**Which Permits Us a Banality of Form**



**In Language, Truth and Logic**



Smells of Chestnuts in the Streets



The Lamp Hummed of the Moon



For if Medical Men did not Have Their Cassocks



And to Lie Down at Night



He Refers to Soldiers and Kings



Home Adorned with Garlands



Our Way of Thinking a Potent Good



That the Imagination Disposes All Things



As the Senses Are Not Respecters of Reality



That One Should Speak of Aspirations







As of this Fruit



**The Heroic Subject of All Study**

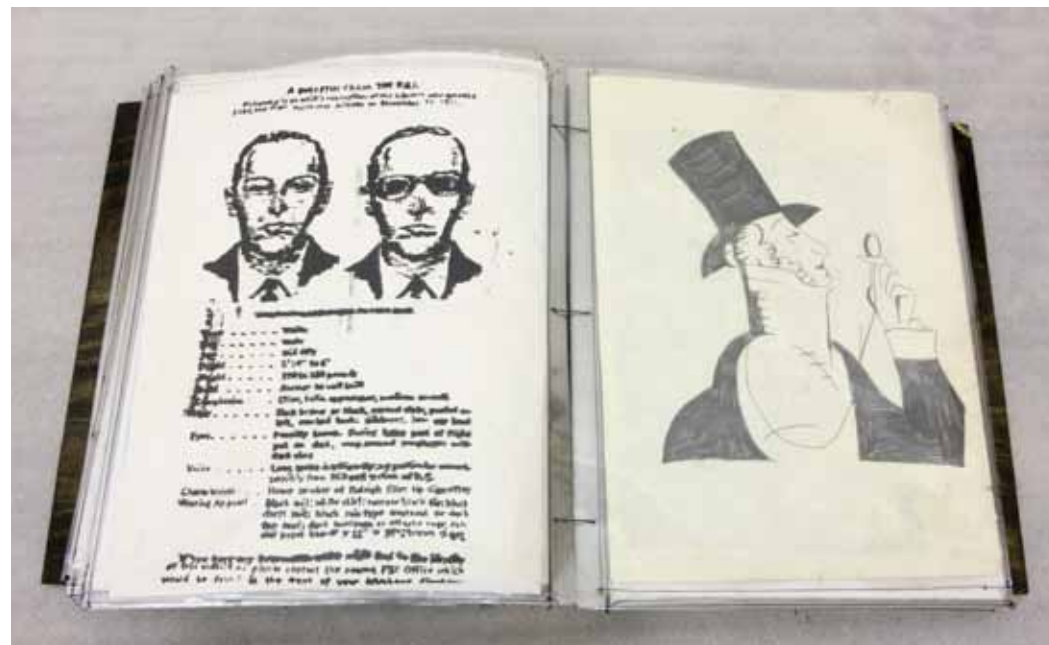
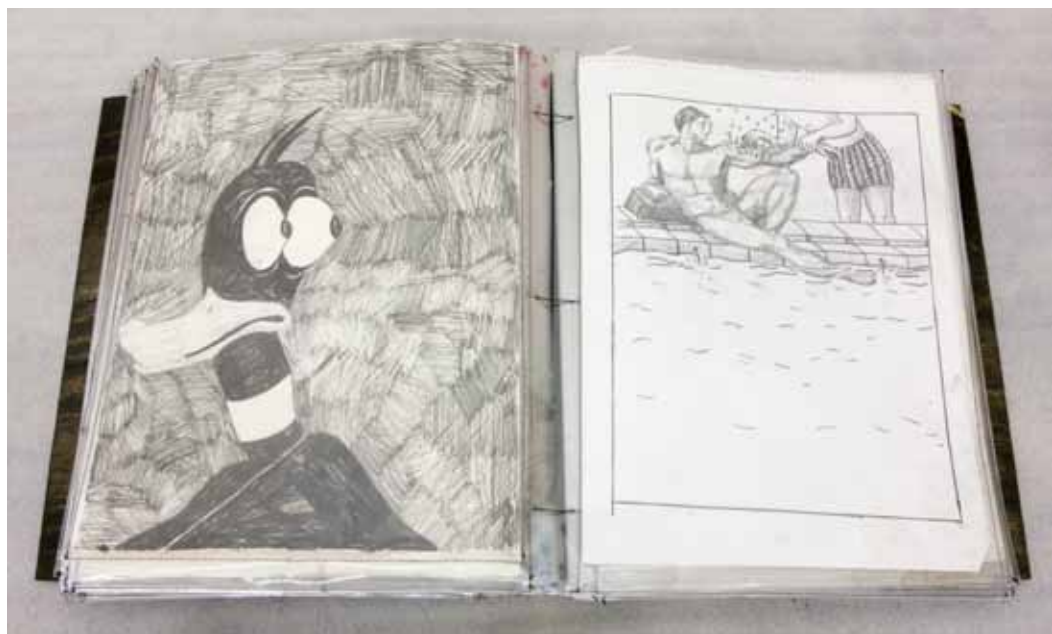
# FIGURATIVE STUDIES

**Figurative studies** 2010

Plywood, gold-anodized hinges, stain, graphite, colored pencil, india ink,  
acrylic, spray paint, china marker, paper

24.5 x 23 x 5.25 inches 62.2 x 58.4 x 13.3 cm



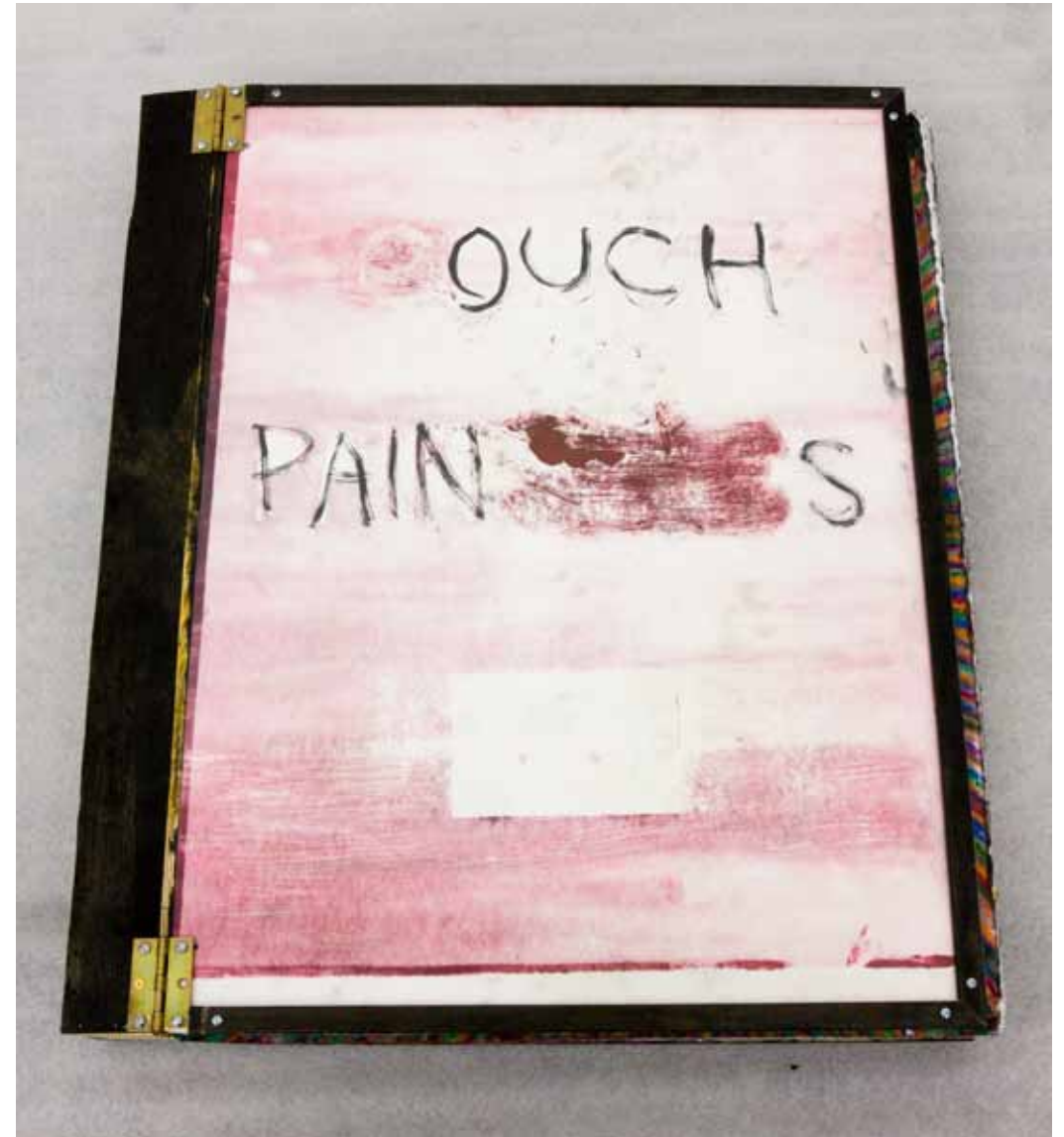


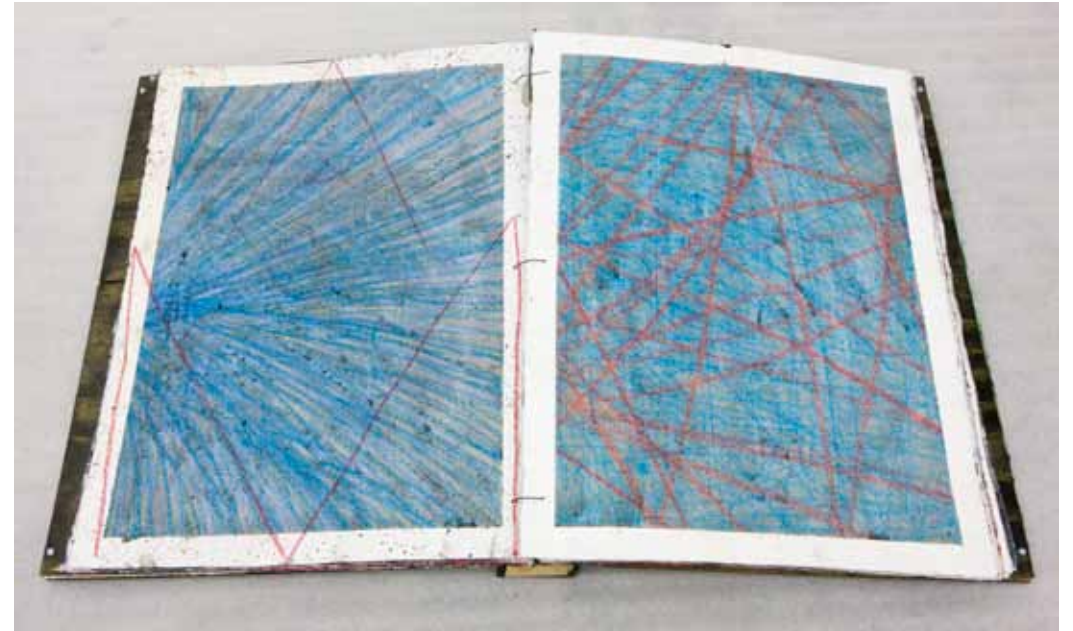
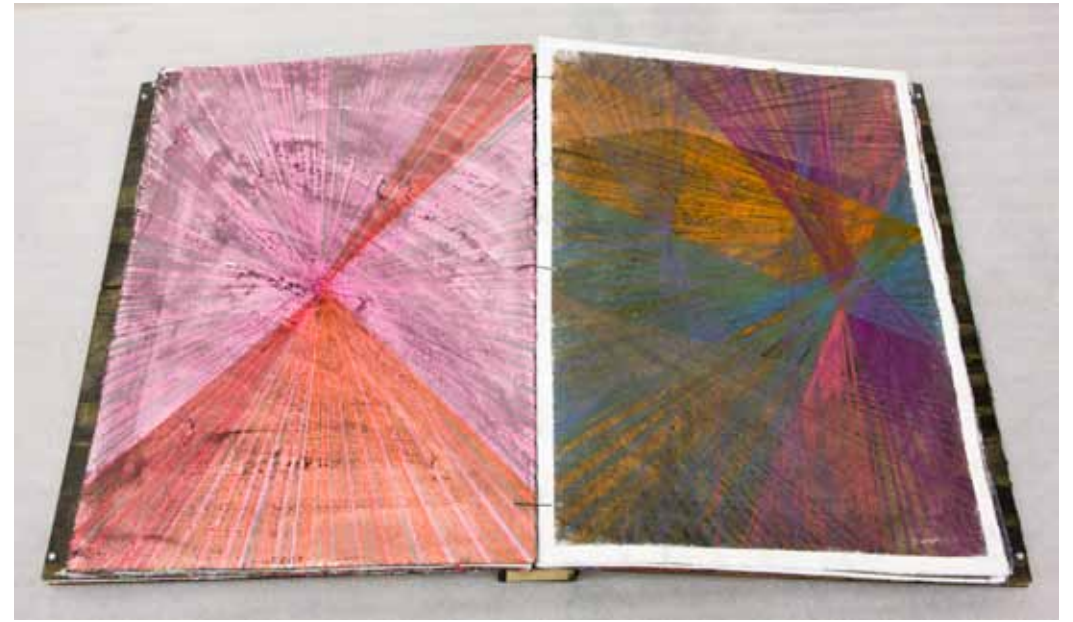
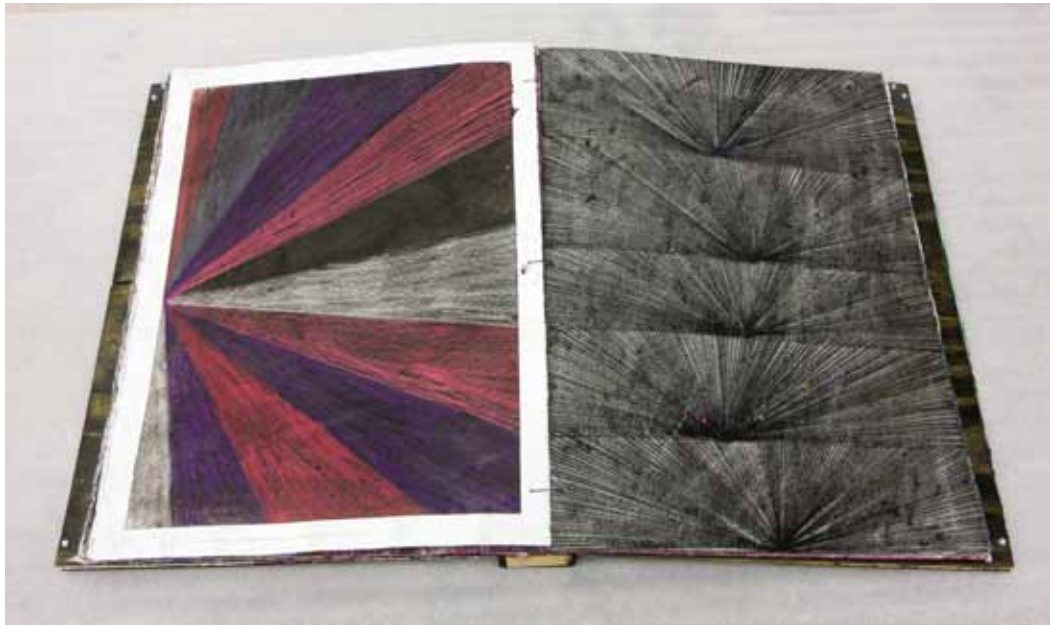


# ABSTRACT STUDIES

**Abstract studies** 2010

Plywood, gold-anodized hinges, plexiglass, enamel, intaglio ink, china marker, crayon, Sumi, acrylic, Arches paper  
30.5 x 25 x 4 inches 77.5 x 63.5 x 10.2 cm









# C.V.

## MATTHEW CHAMBERS

Born 1982, Boise, ID  
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

### Education

MFA (incomplete) Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles, CA, 2006  
BFA University of Miami, FL, 2004

### Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 *Curated by Carol Cohen and Joel Mesler, UNTITLED, New York, NY*  
2009 *An Activity So Pure, Rental Gallery, New York, NY*  
*Proverbs About Town, Blanket Contemporary Art, Vancouver, BC*  
*Like Wooing a Lover, Angstrom, Los Angeles, CA*  
2008 *Fear of a Black Hat, 2nd Cannons, Los Angeles, CA*  
2007 *Cartier On The Way, Blanket, Vancouver, BC*  
*MAVIS, BROADWAY 1602, New York, NY*  
*2 of Six, Angstrom, Los Angeles, CA*

### Selected group exhibitions

- 2010 *Animal Style, curated by Drew Heitzler, Pepin Moore, Los Angeles, CA*  
*ADD: Attention Deficit Disorder, curated by Benjamin Godsill, Il Giardino dei Lauri, Umbria, IT*  
2009 *Made in the USA at Pete's Motors, Great Barrington, MA*  
*Matthew Chambers / Brendan Fowler / Rashid Johnson / Jason Kraus, Rental Gallery, New York, NY*  
*To Illustrate and Multiply, MOCA, Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA*  
*The Morning After (aka RU-486): Matthew A. Chambers, Michael Phelan, Aaron Young, Matt Sheridan Smith / Nikolas Gambaroff, Liz Magic Laser, Sean Raspet, Michele O'Marah, curated by Benjamin Godsill for Artisterium 09, 2nd Tbilisi Contemporary Art Exhibition, Tbilisi, GE*  
2008 *PRUESSPRESS, Rental Gallery, New York, NY*  
*Group Painting Show, Angstrom, Los Angeles, CA*  
*Bitter Finales, Angstrom, Los Angeles, CA*  
2007 *Artists from the Los Angeles Collection, Angstrom, Dallas, TX*  
*Back in the Day, Freight and Volume, New York, NY*  
*Nothing Moments, MOCA, The Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA*  
*Hovering Over the Universe, Honor Fraser Gallery, Venice Beach, CA*  
*Warhol and..., Kantor/Feuer, Los Angeles, CA*  
*No Jerks, Rental Gallery, New York, NY*  
*Big Secret Cache, Angstrom, Los Angeles, CA*  
*Paper Bombs, Jack Hanley, Los Angeles, CA*  
2006 *Bring the War Home, Elizabeth Dee, New York, NY*  
*Zine Library Nieves, Tokyo, JP*  
*Oh! That Sumac Aura of Brilliant Bringers, Stairwell, Providence, RI*

### Public and notable collections

Susan and Michael Hort, New York, NY  
Sender Collection, New York, NY  
Il Giardino dei Lauri, Umbria, IT  
Saatchi Collection, London, UK

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Evan, Henry, Genevieve, George,  
Giovanni, Greg, Honor, Jennifer,  
Joel, Jona, Jonathan, John, Ryan,  
Julius, Kyle, Lydia, Mark, Matthias,  
Michael, Natalia, Neil, Owen, Paul,  
Phil, Pip, Russ, Sam, Sarah, Sean,  
Shirley, Susan, Trevor and William.



-Matthew Chambers

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