

BIO

KEITH ALLyN SPENCER was born and raised in the American desert southwest border region. An emphasis w/ the middle letter of his name helps diminish the perpetual mix-up with similar named persons: Keith Spencer, Kevin Spencer, Kenneth Allan Spencer, Spencer Kenny Allen, Kanye West, so on and so forth.

Currently, Kurt resides with his family in Bloomington, Indiana, USA – the tie-dye capital of the world. He is a (just) Visiting Assistant Professor at Indiana University, trying to navigate towards long-term job security, cul-de-sacs, and organic groceries. Kent has showcased his works in various group shows, “pop-up” spaces, coffee shops, bars, blogs and academic galleries. Most recently, Karl has held solo exhibitions at Welcome Screen, Oliver Francis, Target, Domino’s Pizza and the Rhode Island Credit Union so help you God.



CALL FOR APPLICANTS

Instead of volunteering at my son’s school, or the local soup kitchen, or building houses for the less fortunate in Latin America, I make paintings about painting. I take full advantage of my fortunate state of being: white, male, straight, healthy, family loved and supported. Rather than protesting for gay rights or petitioning against hydraulic fracturing, I pursue a creative endeavor which at times feels inane and trivial against the ills of our society; however, every hardship ever endured *EVER*, is in vain without attempting to fulfill the potential which art can bestow upon us all.

The work iz important and will not wait for an invitation to affect someone somewhere somehow. It will not take for granted anything, any person, or place. It does not discriminate unless you do. It is only closed-minded if you are. It entertains and decorates while smiling back — yearning to challenge and change you.

INSTALLED AND LEFT

These works have been impermissibly installed and left in spaces my family and I utilize or frequent. They were not left as a marketing ploy or promotional gimmick and no contact information was left behind. They remain as a gift. These exhibitions at some point force not only a visual participation,

but a physical one, as well; coercing the individual to remove the work, handle it, flip and rotate it to experience the piece in its entirety. The goal is to create a positive disruption -- surprised, baffled, then enriched. Ideally, this gift exchange continues, not between myself and the recipient(s), but with others in some way or another, w/out direct compensation nor direct recognition.

GOOGLE SEARCH WHAT GOD WANTS FOR YOU – Welcome Screen

The border is where I m from: between neither here or there. The region felt void of something -- and jobs. After thirty some' years, my family and I took the plunge: got rid of the house, tha dawgs, and traveled near across the U.\$. to endure the professionalization of being an artist. Hindsight is 20/20 and if I knew then what I know now, I would have known it would have been impossible to know what I wanted to know now, then.

Instead of volunteering at my son's school, or the local soup kitchen, or building houses for tha less lucky in Latin America, I make paintings about paintings. I take full advantage of my fortunate state of being: white, male, straight, healthy, loved and supported. Rather than protesting for gay rights or petitioning against hydraulic fracturing, I pursue a creative endeavor which at times feels inane and trivial against the ills of our society; however, every hardship ever endured *ever*, is in vain w/out attempting to fulfill the potential which art can bestow upon us all.

The work iz important and will not wait for an invitation to affect someone somewhere somehow. It will not take for granted anything, any person, or place. It does not discriminate unless you do. It is only closed-minded if you are. It entertains and decorates while smiling back -- yearning to challenge and change u.

MADAM I'M ADAM -- Remote Projects

I always b workn' with what s at hand. Preferably, materials find me: paint tubes abandoned from students r used as pigments, t-shirts left behind on basketball courts utilized as canvas, and plywood boards covering potholes r scavenged for stretchers.

The process has to reveal something -- an element of surprise. I completely completely coplmetey welcome unexpected consequences... w/ some strategy involved, of course. It's not enough to just roll that boulder down tha hill and fully embrace what's left of it w/out determining which hill and which boulder to use 1st. The ol' saying goes, "Beauty is n d eye of the boulder", no?

A big chunk of my process, however, is to legitimize what I'm doing while the ills of the world go round. I have to forcibly ignore my guilt in order to merit my art making. I must constantly re-instill faith that making these artworks is beneficial for societal woes instead of doing something like volunteering at the local *Boyz and Girlz Club*, spending more time with my kids, or even adopting a highway. It is just simply not enough for the paintings to sit and look pretty/ugly.

Documenting the works has started to take on a path of its own. The paintings in a way have become subject for working w/ photography, rather than my use of photography as a mere means for documentation. Are these images art? Are they recordings? Is what I'm doing distracting from the paintings? Or, maybe, the paintings are distracting from what I'm doing in the photographs. I don't know. I have no idea what's happening or will happen, and that's pretty exciting stuff.

Getting my work out is constantly in the back of my mind. There's nothing wrong with the formal gallery setting and I'm always willing to exhibit when/wherever, but I truly like the interventionist aspect of impermissibly installing and leaving my paintings in places -- Disrupting the everyday -- Not waiting for an invitation to engage others-- Doing graffiti w/out doing graffiti. Perhaps, 'tis time to go bigger and better than 1-offs here and there, or Maybe it's time to ask permission.

FOUNDATIONS – pedagogy

Art is used to isolate the everyday. The absence and presence of lightness and darkness is captured or disregarded. Any resemblance to its origination is either or not embraced. Unexpected consequences are welcomed while retaining total control. We draw in – making the invisible visible – to be moved while remaining still.

aLMOST RELEVANT – Oliver Francis Gallery

The pieces utter not taking people, places and things for granted: the painting stretcher, the places they occupy, and the ability to pursue painting instead of volunteering at the local soup kitchen or Afghan military outpost. They depict a fortunate state of being where I am able to partake in what, self-admittedly at times, feels inane and unproductive within the larger scheme of things.

Sometimes there is a level of guilt associated with my art making. I feel guilty for wanting to paint, to make paintings, for wanting others to experience them, to talk about them and in the end serve my own ego. Deep down inside though, I want these to move people, to create change, and somehow be an antidote for the ills of our society. I have little faith that merely looking at an artwork can evoke the power needed to urge someone to help. It is hard to believe that such a subtle gesture in life can change anything. What I really want is for these works to directly move others into constructive action. Do not ask me how.

Art Review: At Oliver Francis Gallery, Dirty Underwear, Lost and Found

((POSTED IN [A, VISUAL ARTS](#). NOV 15, 2012 AT 7:24 AM BY PETER SIMEK

<http://frontrow.dmagazine.com/2012/11/art-review-at-oliver-francis-gallery-dirty-underwear-lost-and-found/>))

The “found object” is the pun in play at the typically tongue-in-cheek Oliver Francis Gallery, which stages a show by Keith Allyn Spencer called *almost Relevant*. Spencer’s tiny creations — book-sized, painting-like objects — combine shards of scrap and dyed fabric, as well as novel and specifically-noted materials like “son’s old clean underwear with doodoo stain” into clusters of color and texture. Yes, their intimacy (more puns) is important, as is close attention to the surprising moments of delicate beauty present in these discordant works. But the exhibition is energized by its off-kilter installation and the list of works. Visitors to the gallery find themselves looking at floor boards, door handles, corners, the ceiling, the sink, trying to find the pieces that are nearly-hidden, provoking a scavenger-like hunt for art with names like “Undocumented Mexican woman Domestically Abused outside Walgreens.”

Unpack all the linguistic hijinks at your own risk, that’s as much of the fun as the general feeling of nonchalance that pervades the gallery space. You could call Spencer’s work performance painting — or just another art joke — but the artist’s compositions and tactile intelligence are too acute to warrant a dismissal of the work itself. All the while, Oliver Francis Gallery continues to insist upon idiosyncrasy as the defining element of its program. And given the general landscape of Dallas art, Spencer’s show reminds us that it is a project that has not yet tired out.

I/I – RK Projects

I equate my paintings and their installation with that of parenting. When you have children and you are involved in their lives, you are enabled to have a life besides your own. It is not that your life is less important -- your dreams, interests and passions are/should still be present; but, your life is now less *self*-important. There is a greater potential for you to engage upon that was not present before having kids. You inform and enrich your children’s lives and this relationship is reciprocal. Your life as a parent is also heightened to another level previously unavailable.

The paintings and their installation enhance each other. The pieces seem to become material for the installation, but again, it is not that the works are less important in regards to the display, but they are less *self*-important. There is a potential for the artwork to work beyond itself. The paintings tend to highlight areas of the space that are usually disregarded, unappreciated and deemed impractical. Simultaneously, these interstitial areas tend to activate the pieces' overall content -- not taking things, people, and places for granted.

A VIEW FROM THE EASEL -- Hyperallergic

A hole in the wall is not a far exaggeration to describe my studio space. I have seen walk-in closets larger than my work area; however, it is financially practical and convenient to have a live-in work space right now, especially when juggling an art practice and a young family.

The studio is attached to my bedroom, the view you see here. There is no routine. I jump in when I can: during the many quick naps my baby takes, between flipping pancakes, or when my wife takes the boys out on various park excursions and errands. Heavy oil and solvents are a no-no.

Woodworking is done right outside the building, preferably on warm, partly cloudy days. Yet, if need be, I'll lug my equipment out on chilly, snow-filled days, too. Space, time and processes are limited, but I accept them as positive obstructions for my artwork.

MICRO-EUTOPIA – RK Projects

What good is it to have your artworks piled and piled atop each other, packaged and shelved, collecting dust in your mother's attic, or fungus in your landlord's basement? It is perfectly fine if you are awaiting the romantic idea of them being discovered generations later, finely appreciated and sold at the finest fine art auction house for record million\$. Yet, meanwhile, and more importantly, there is a potential that lies with your art that should be engaged with immediately – the potential to beautify, the potential to ponder, the potential to entice and provoke. The prospect for your work to affect change is lost if you hoard it privately. You have an obligation to share it, especially, if you have gained anything from its production; but, it should not take several months, years, or decades to occur. There is an audience unexpectedly waiting for its arrival, a world out there for it to intervene upon, and countless opportunities for it to occupy.

Family Advice

The frustrations and benefits as an artist, coupled as a family man, drive the overall content for my artistic endeavor. A balance between the two, which at times are polarizing, yet intermixed, inherently compliment and challenge one another, fostering each other's growth and appreciation furthermore. Parenting and marriage provide healthy parameters. They supply an incentive to work diligently, full of commitment and rigor while my paintings act as a surrogate for the unimaginable, allowing me to vicariously live through them. They allow me to do what I please when I please. They mirror a basic desire for freedom, an intuition against being told what to do, what to say, what to think, and gratitude for not having to do so thank u god.

Painting Abstract -- Thesis Abstract

As it hangs on the wall, the anterior of the painting suggests abstraction; however, the unseen backside shows its complete makeup, revealing it rather as pure representation: a painting about painting. The core materials which comprise the work—oil, canvas, and wood, in a rectilinear format—run several painting generations deep. The artwork's construction and installation, however, tend to stretch and bend these conventions to their breaking point. The painting process is reversed: the stretcher becomes a completely integral and indexical component to the painting's composition, while the paint is applied from the back to the front. The artwork is stretched, re-stretched, and occasionally reworked several times over. The small and intimate scale inevitably invites preciousness, but such a characteristic is negated through installation: these paintings are placed in underutilized areas of the gallery and left along interior walls of local restaurants, laundromats, post offices, and other non-art public venues, waiting to be intervened upon. Such strategies lean towards institutional critique and suggest anti-commodification; however, they merely want to not take for granted the numerous other opportunities that may be overlooked and under appreciated in and out of an art context. With the utmost respect, the artwork can be described as a cartoon of a painting via painting. It is scoffed at, ridiculed and criticized in so much as it is adored, cherished, and respected. Just like family, they nag only because they love.

Painting Dreams

The buffalo, with their prehistoric splendor, trample and further push these pieces sediments deep. Their touch fosters handsome powers only to be revealed thousands of years later once pyramids hover with past/future Egyptian revolutions. Sunsets reflect upon the horizon over and over again until suddenly they stay still. The works' majestic qualities are to be truly realized once excavated and held again – mending an ungodly disconnect with a familiar bond.

Backsides Revealed – (thesis prep)

These paintings are about the forgotten. They are about the unrealized, the hidden and lost – a mystic artifact of the back from the future. Struggling is characteristic of the rear. They hedge on their own specificity: real/abstract, painting/sculpture, love/hate. They are paintings affected by effects of life, a pregnant wife, a toddler boy which all bring love to my joy. These default to and from just one thing.

Yes!, these are the stretcher paintings. They've strained to get here. A relentless pain sought after and found. At last, at least for now, they are right = work + play, made from a resourceful bounty of goods. I will use those old paintings and boards you're throwing out, Ma'am. That paint you forgot about, I had to grab it. Admittedly, I do choose certain materials and look for specifics to marry the two. Not all is as a matter of a fact, albeit, the stretcher structure once stretched at times is stretched to the complex. The front of the painting is created from the back. Their stretchedness, aka completedness, at times is a gift from our gods, other times they are a struggle reluctantly accepted – accidental happenings. They climb onto your back and down your spine as frustrations afflicted. It is unknown how to handle them, but by pinning and rubbing them between floors and walls, against its own refuse, grime, and filth – an intervention in tough love and open armed unexpectedness.

I am okay, too, if you want to say I said these works are “A painting about making a painting!” but I must say, “No. That sounds really close to something else someone said once.” Take the notions of traditional paintings and mangle them while in salute. Call it antagonizing conventions while in convention. It can be other things, things of antiquity, filthy tablets revealing an invisible truth of artifact like futuristic facts, pointed positions. They have bombarded my dreams. Do me a favor. In a hundred years, please, hold them in your hands while I asleep. They discharge strange powers. The strength which they possess are only of benefit; but, hard to realize in which way. These here objects, of what is or will be left, associates with the buffalo in mysterious ways.

I cannot do abstract. I cannot do it without something to hold on to. You see the abstract, but its make-up is contingent of the back. It is what it is, what it is made out of. It is something more than seeing a painting. Subtract. See an object. See principles - cared and uncared for. Aging gracefully fast forwarded; but, they are not impoverished. They are not poor quality or made to remain within a state of poverty; although, along with everything, anything sets to perish. Hundreds of times past several days have released in deserts like my own home evidence of art_fact intelligence – being beyond simply being and the beauty of such. Its mega-metamorphosis, of course, will alter prior

cosmetic surgery, maybe even parting ways entirely. Dirt to dirt will eventually remain any way. A few of these will survive submitted as evidence.

There is no need to scream any longer in the nicest possible way. Wait until I pick it up to show you; but, you are privileged. You are lucky I am here to allow you to do so. OR, are you the impatient kind, the kind to touch it, your finger to my canvas, skin to skin? Am I right? Aim right and it will help you think. Have the nerve to take it off the wall when you are alone and be stunned, be short-changed sometimes; nonetheless, you embrace whole-heartily with your skeptic. You are let in, and now a member of those self-selected few. Your invitation to cower in the corner with us, hunkering and heckling over the little one trying to figure out the front, is infinite. No WAY God will allow that touch to be white-gloved. Interactive inhibitions and ignorance as the culprits increase such sentiments twofold. YOU! did it, though, grabbing it and swirling it around, thoroughly flipping here and tugging there led to your dirty eye and sickly hands all over. Your oils intermix and others' traces jigsaw-pieced together kept you awed. At times it is not known to be anything more than just something, but you revealed the truth and thus become significant to the legend it conspires to hold tight.

Untitled Statement

The stretcher is serious business. If you are a painting and lacking one, most likely you've been rolled up, stored, discarded, or adorn the pages of *High Times*, *Hard Times*. It's a lonely road one lives as painting's backbone. Imagine always living in the shadows of your spineless nemesis, how it feels never being appreciated or even recognized, and feeling worthless and replaceable, unable to evade the boasts, bragging, and criticism constantly adorning the former.

Painting the back of a canvas on the front is a move in the right direction, a cordial approach to restitution, finally giving light to disregarded craft, aesthetics, and histories of the rear; but, it's not good enough. Merely portraying a canvas backside atop the painting, albeit creatively and expressively, still points the majority of emphasis again to the painted surface, stopping short of any further exploration remotely close to its opposition.

There needs to be a model, an exemplary leader advocating for such new realizations about the entirety of a painting, a standout amongst the bunch which can use the front as a tool to subvert old conventions into new meaning and wonderment about the unrealized backside. It is inevitable for initial focus to be centered frontally, that is the nature of traditional painting. The gaze of the foreground must transform into a quest of the structure, eventually leading to the behind. All the

front visual cues must draw the viewer in closer and closer to the picture plane, furthering potential explorations of the back by instigating a question of formation. Any real/natural world representational imagery must be avoided so as to not cause distraction. Just before the front's imagery fabrication is revealed, the pursuit to appease such creative curiosities is interrupted by one's own interactive inhibitions.

The touch, finger to canvas, exposes the abstract formations' birth to the structure it's bound by – the stretcher. The forms, lines, and colors are filtered from the backside to the front, leaving the viewer with a decision: handle the painting to reveal the backside, its maker and co-conspirator; or, leave in wonderment about its construction while you mentally construct your own. Only those few who either have enough nerve to remove the artwork from the wall or those authorized to do so can ever fully appreciate its total consideration – front and back.

It is not the back, however, nor the stretcher which desires to sit front and center, but it is the knowingness that each entire portion of the painting is fully considered. It is an object crafted and cared for, worked over diligently and creatively from start to finish, back to front. It is about play: playing with painting and playing with those perceiving it.