

March 3rd, 2011
by Ali Fitzgerald



I fly back to Berlin tomorrow, finally ending a prolonged Kerouac walk-through of mid-sized southern cities; a spring break for the “mild girl.” During my Texas stay, a sun constitutional in Austin and Houston, I wanted to disassociate myself from anything artistic, preferring instead to concentrate on porch and taco-related endeavors. I was fully equipped with a dismissive sigh refined in Europe and a range of excuses. But, despite my insistence that I only go to water parks and gay bars, I came across some really good shows that reaffirmed my belief in the work being made in regional art centers.

Highlights in Houston included Jillian Conrad’s nimble assemblages at Art Palace and Carl Suddath’s subtle paper pieces at Inman Gallery. Former CORE fellows dominated the block, with finessed watercolor cutouts by Natasha Bowdoin at CTRL and the tight group show Weasel, organized by Chelsea Beck and Kurt Mueller at the Inman Annex.

*One disappointment in Houston was the recreation of Kurt Schwitters’s Merzbau at the Menil Collection. The installation seemed so much smaller than the psychic space the black and white photograph occupied in my mind. However, Schwitters’s reliefs, violent and precocious, more than made up for this fact.

In Austin, Erin Curtis displayed free-form paintings that somehow merged the Leipzig School and Indian tapestry (not an easy feat). The newly renovated Arthouse had a charmingly autobiographical show by Lisa Tan in which she charted her romantic relationships over the years using printouts of doctor’s visits. The group show Out of Place, at Lora Reynolds was one of the best I’ve seen in a while, with video standouts Yael Bartana and Oded Hirsch. I wrote about it.