



CLING TO ME

Joey Fauerso

2008 february 22 through march 26  
clough-hanson gallery, rhodes college, memphis, tn





Still from *Get Naked*, Video, 2008, Sound design by Paul Fauerso



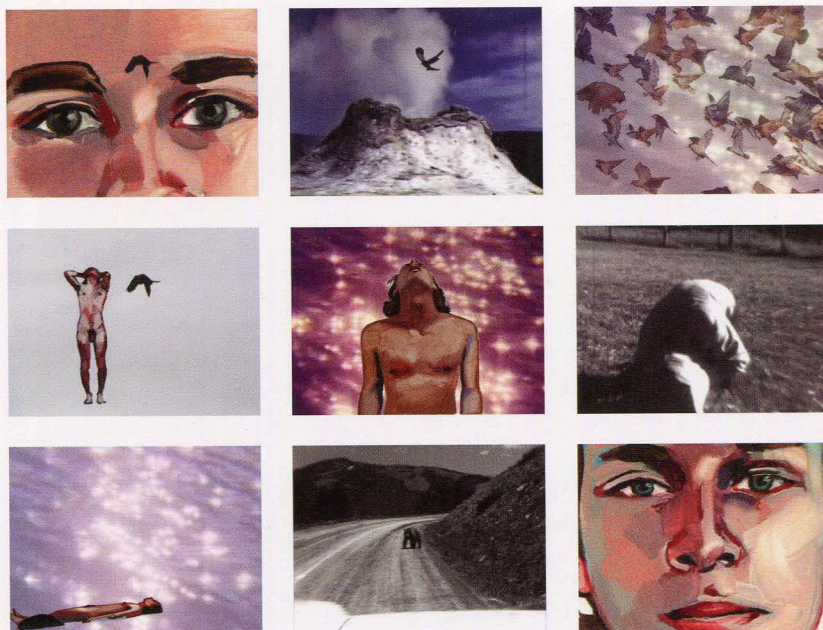
Beginning in the fall of 2005, Joey Fauerso spent a year in New Mexico at the Roswell Artist in Residence program where she spent a great deal of her time in the Southwestern landscape. There, she found herself at the Bitter Lake Wildlife Refuge walking about and watching the sandhill cranes, snow geese and red-wing black birds. While the artist's work has addressed the figure and its relationship to his environment in the past, her Roswell residency marks a sea change in the extent to which nature functions in her work. The extended stay in the Southwest fostered a stronger, more intimate, connection for the artist and in *Cling to Me*, her exhibition for Clough-Hanson Gallery, one sees the results of this greater attunement. The artist has broadened the role of the landscape in her imagery, adding a reinvigorated sensibility and energy to her continued investigation of physical and metaphorical transcendence.

Paired with this important time spent outside in New Mexico, there was a great deal of time spent working inside, learning the ins and outs of an animation process that has allowed the artist to further communicate these transcendent moments by adding a temporal element to what had been, until then, a very spatial studio practice. In Fauerso's video piece, *Get Naked*, the artist employs dramatic juxtapositions of animated oil paintings and found landscape footage to build the piece. The paintings are renderings of individual frames from a video performance where the artist has her long-time model, Tommy McCutcheon, perform a series of repetitive tasks. The artist thinks of this time-consuming process as a "slow way of filtering the experience."<sup>1</sup> In making these figurative paintings she is able to spend time physically constructing this event, frame by frame, moment by moment. In this video, the painted figures are layered in with black and white or color images culled from her father's and grandfather's home movies. Through the course of the video there are passages where the model shares the frame with a single black-bird that appears to be somehow flying in place just to the right of his head. The bird appears to function as a stand-in for the man's spirit or consciousness while at

the same time speaking to the way memory works, seamlessly fluttering from one time period or reality to another. The end of the video has the man standing, mouth open, facing the sky, slowly he fades out and we are left with the looped footage of crashing waves. The video's shifting realities leave us with an uncertainty as to just what is real and what is imagination: the discord between the figures, made from mushy brushstrokes and the shifts in the grainy footage layered behind him. The music for the video piece, designed by the artist's father, is at times ambient and dissonant. The atmospheric organ and sharp piano passages contribute an otherworldly flavor to the work while adding to the disparate nature of Fauerso's animation. In two of Fauerso's earlier video efforts, *Death of an Outlaw* and *Four Ways to Disappear* (both from 2006), the artist shows the gradual erasure of the figure by animating the process of wiping away, with an unseen rag or brush, the painted image of the model, in this case her brother Neil. *Get Naked* is both an extension and an elaboration of the idea of a person losing his body in moments of transcendence.

Sharing the space with the video works are Fauerso's large, luscious landscapes. Even when not paired with moving images, the viewer is keenly aware of their great stillness. The pieces subtly capture the moment when one is seized by an event or vision in nature and the awareness of time slows or even stops. Rather than functioning as a conventional window into another world (defined by the usual four sides of rectangular paper), these lush watercolors are defined by the shape of an open, human mouth. For the inspiration for the watercolors, the artist draws from a story in the *Bhagavad Gita* about Krishna as a child and his foster mother Yasodhara. It is written: "Krishna was fond of butter, and he raided her storehouse for this delicacy. She discovered him in the act, once and began to scold him. He opened his mouth to cry, and therein, Yasodhara, saw, to her astonishment, the whole Earth, the solar system, and the entire Universe. Filled with awe she bowed to Him, retreating, but he closed this vision and comforted her, but, never did she forget this great vision..."<sup>2</sup> This experience of viewing the





Stills from *Get Naked*, Video, 2008, Sound design by Paul Fauerso

landscape through this portal, or what the artist has described as a “tear in the body to the soul,” transports the viewer at once inside and outside the body.<sup>3</sup> We are able to lose ourselves in the rich surfaces as much as if we were witnessing the scene in situ. In certain passages the rich watercolor pigment is uncharacteristically thick and shiny, while in other areas, the viewer is treated to the watery, luminous qualities one expects from the seductive medium. The scenes are selected from the artist’s collection of personal photographs from her time watching glaciers in Norway, canoeing on the Potomac, and walking in Roswell. The broadness in her selection for sources ties in with the variety found in the disparate footage of the videos.

The work speaks to the meditative experience that happens not only as Fauerso prepares hundreds of individual oil paintings for the animations but how connected and present in the moment

the artist has to be in order to execute these monumental one-shot watercolors. The role of the meditative state is further augmented by the artist’s use of repetitive cycles in the videos are looped to create a kind of breath-like, contemplative rhythm. In the exhibition, *Cling to Me*, the viewer finds the artist aware and alert in the world. All the while she is using her work to investigate a number of spiritual and metaphysical paths in an effort to address some age old queries: “How do we hold onto our memories and experiences?” “How do we express our emotional response to nature?” “How do I fit into the nature of the universe?” In considering these questions, we see Joey Fauerso assembling a personal cosmology where she is pushing the real and perceived boundaries of our bodies and our minds.

Hamlett Dobbins  
Director, Clough-Hanson Gallery

<sup>1</sup> Telephone conversation with the author, February 3, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> In her June 2007 interview with Wendy Atwell for [glasstire.com](http://glasstire.com) the artist cites this quote from the Introduction to the Bhagavad-Gita which can be found on [www.teosofia.com/gita/gita-intro6.html](http://www.teosofia.com/gita/gita-intro6.html).

<sup>3</sup> In her essay in the brochure for Fauerso’s exhibition *Wide Open Wide* at Women and Their Work in Austin, author Kelly Baum cites a telephone conversation with the artist from September 2, 2006 where the artist describes the mouth as “a tear in the body to the soul.”





*Dale Forest*, watercolor on paper, 45" x 45", 2007





*Field study (3)*, watercolor on paper, 45" x 66", 2008



**Rhodes College**  
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