

CHURNER *and* CHURNER

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Exhibition: **Joianne Bittle**
On My Way Gone

Dates: **September 6 - October 13, 2012**
opening reception: Thursday, September 6, 6-8pm
artist's talk and exhibition walk-through: Thursday, September 27, 6:30pm

Churner and Churner is pleased to present "On My Way Gone," an exhibition of new work by Joianne Bittle. With an installation, over twenty-five paintings, and the artist's first film, the exhibition is Bittle's largest and most ambitious to date. This is her second show with the gallery.

"On My Way Gone" is anchored by two works: *Unconformity* (2012), a large-scale diorama of an iridescent cave, and the ten-foot painting *Moonman V* (2011-2012). The two works span prehistoric geological formations and space age exploration, setting these two seemingly disparate worlds in stark synchronicity.

Constructed in the gallery's front window, *Unconformity* presents a version of Plato's cave (the philosopher's allegory of painting is a conceptual touchstone for the show overall). Using the techniques of traditional diorama construction, honed through her practice as a professional dioramist for the American Museum of Natural History, Bittle creates a layered scene of light-dappled stalagmites and stalactites. Unlike the closed-off worlds of the natural history museum, however, Bittle's *Unconformity* is not based in geological history; rather, it is formed with the poetic sensibility that tethers the works in this show to Bittle's preservationist practice. The diorama's painted-plaster rock formations, glass platform, fluorescent lights and mirrors create an illusion of depth while allowing the viewer to see himself, quite literally, inside the cave.

Segments (also 2012) is a series of twenty-two large panels that further derail the traditional mode of diorama painting, presenting a vibrant panorama that includes floral and molluscular details that could be primeval or contemporary. The panel painting leads the viewer to the back room of the gallery, where *Moonman V* threatens to escape its site. This ten-foot painting, the culmination of over a year's work by Bittle, required a hole to be cut in the gallery's ceiling for installation. The painting is the latest in a series depicting close-cropped images of astronauts, their faces obscured by reflective helmets. One imagines these moonmen intrepidly stepping out onto the surface of the earth's satellite or some other alien environment.

In the same room is the artist's first filmic project, an HD video titled *On My Way Gone* (2012). The video is a meditative tour filmed while floating down a mangrove swamp in a no-wake boat. The reflection in the water mirrors the mangrove trees and sky overhead, creating the illusion that the camera is floating weightless through the air. Intentionally positioned across from *Moonman V*, the image of the swamp becomes that which we see reflected in the astronaut's helmet. It strikes another consonance between nature's beauty and the outer limits of technology, treating both as specimens of the wonder of exploration, whether of the deepest lagoon or the outer reaches of our atmosphere.

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An artist's book accompanies the exhibition.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joianne Bittle has had solo exhibitions at Churner and Churner, New York; Eugene Binder Gallery, in Marfa, Texas; and Wave Hill, Bronx. She will be included in the upcoming exhibition "Art by Telephone . . . Recalled" in Fall 2012, which will take place at CNAEI, Chatou, France; CAPC, Bordeaux, France; the Emily Harvey Foundation, New York; Barnard College, New York; the San Francisco Art Institute, and the Chicago Art Institute. Bittle has participated recently in several group shows, including "Tableaux Parisiens" at The Do Right Hall, Marfa, Texas (2011); "A Live Animal," at Root Division, San Francisco (2011); "Entomologia" at the Observatory Room, Brooklyn (2010); "Rubber Sheets" at C.R.E.A.M Projects, Brooklyn (2009); "Bioluminescence" at Akus Gallery in Willimantic, Connecticut (2009); and "Viridis II" at the Hewitt Gallery of Art, Marymount College, New York (2009). In 1998, she earned a BFA at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, and was awarded an assistantship at the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica in Venice, Italy. Her work has been reviewed in *Artforum* and *New York* magazine, among other publications.

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