

Lineage

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organized by Deanna Lee

One of my favorite aspects of a studio visit with another artist is the opportunity to see what artistic ghosts are present. Usually these are in the form of postcards or photos or books, tacked to a wall or on a shelf. The visit is typically (and rightly) focused on topics of the host artist's choice, often works in process or those recently completed. Rarely does a visit focus on the images and words that silently accompany an artist's practice in the studio—what I consider examples of artistic lineage. But looking at and thinking about these elements can be revealing and rewarding. Being an art-history nerd, I think that all artists see themselves within self-defined, perhaps idiosyncratic, lineages of creativity that shape their work and artistic trajectories.

What I find fascinating is the degree to which an inspiring idea, image, or oeuvre is visually absorbed by an artist and then transformed by an individual process and proclivity to become a new work of expression. Some resulting works will clearly resemble their artistic genesis, and others will only divulge their influences with some prodding. This project was intended to prod.

I wanted to learn from my artistic colleagues the role of past artists, artworks, and eras as sources that inspire, motivate, and challenge them—as keys to answering questions and solving problems, suggesting meanings and interpretations, and offering options and possibilities

This project is like a peek into the studio, a glimpse of ideas behind the art. In my call for participation, I asked artists to answer with images and a statement a number of questions, all concerning if and how they define and identify with an artistic lineage. I wanted to open a conversation, and embrace harmless conjecture, with an online exhibition in which artists present certain aspects of their work alongside art of their role models and idols, including images of works normally beyond the reach of an artist-organized exhibition in real space

Here, seven members and guests of galleryELL share their thoughts on and examples of a personal artistic lineage. Joel Bacon's work is sparked by a diverse range of images and objects, from natural science and archaeology to Renaissance and modern masters. Describing herself as a "thief," Nancy Hubbard finds the Western art-historical canon, as well as film, to be a wellspring of motivation. Kirsten Nash connects her work to certain examples of painting from the twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. John Ros relates a sense of artistic lineage stemming from his personal experiences with many inspiring artists, some of whom were his former instructors. Cecilia Whittaker-Doe focuses on two visionary painters as touchstones for her work. Likewise, Zach Seeger draws his lineage to two contemporary figures, one visual artist and one filmmaker. And Jodi Hays consistently derives artistic nourishment from the work of a leading post-Minimalist artist.

In accordance with my open-ended inquiry, this exhibition is not intended to supply any conclusions. My hope is that it may prompt further contemplation and conversation. As the idea of lineage suggests looking back as well as forward, I hope viewers will enjoy perusing the image galleries in both directions. I am grateful to the participating artists for their generous responses through their images and words.