

UMLAUF PRIZE 2014 | Adam Crosson

About Adam Crosson

Adam Crosson is an MFA candidate in Sculpture + Extended Media at the University of Texas at Austin and holds a BA degree from the University of Arkansas Fay Jones School of Architecture. He has lived and studied in Fayetteville, AR, Hawaii, Mexico City, New Orleans, and Austin. He recently returned from a residency at the Vermont Studio Center and in June was awarded a fellowship from the University of Texas Department of Art and Art History to study at the Royal College of Art in London this fall.

UMLAUF Prize: History

In 2004, sculptor and former UMLAUF Board Member Damian Priour (1949-2011) created the UMLAUF Prize to support the careers of outstanding UT graduate students. Priour stipulated that the Prize be juried and accompanied by a cash award. While *Intermodal* is on exhibit, we are fortunate to simultaneously celebrate three UT Austin generations: Adam Crosson, Professor Margo Sawyer, and Charles Umlauf (1910-1994).



Charles Umlauf



Damian Priour

UMLAUF Mission

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum provides educational experiences that encourage the understanding and appreciation of sculpture, and exhibits the work of Charles Umlauf and other contemporary sculptors in a natural setting.

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Special thanks to Suzanne Deal Booth and the Booth Family. This exhibition was made possible by René Albee, Debbie Dupré, the Priour Family and the Austin Community Foundation.

Juror's Statement



Suzanne Deal Booth

It is never an easy task to make a selection from a group of peers where individual talent inspires and challenges the group to work at a higher and more creative level. I believe that an award of this kind is a reflection of both individual achievement and community excellence. Charles Umlauf expressed a passion for the integration of art and nature and, I believe, also felt very strongly that artist and community exist symbiotically. This is reflected by Charles and Angeline Umlauf's gift of their home, garden, studio and 168 pieces of sculpture to the City of

Austin that they loved. Adam Crosson was selected for the *UMLAUF Prize 2014* from a very talented group of graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin, where sculptor Charles Umlauf taught from 1941 to 1981. It is especially pleasing that the current UMLAUF exhibition features Margo Sawyer's wondrous indoor & outdoor site-specific installations. Margo is one of Adam's professors at UT Austin and this highlights the student teacher relationship so important to Charles Umlauf.

On wandering through the UMLAUF, Adam came upon the sculpture of the fragmented angel wing and saw in it something that related very much to his own work. He decided to use this as a point of departure in his project proposal. As a Juror, I found this very compelling. He expressed that, "A fragment is suggestive and in its suggestive nature becomes abstract – the viewer is challenged with the task of completion." The idea of linking a figurative work of art to something more abstract is what connects Adam's work to the legacy of the UMLAUF.

Adam has been exploring the nature of the physical and psychological aspects of transit and transport. The way in which we are all impacted by the inescapable "spaces of motion", whether in cars, buses, subways, airports or train stations. These spaces are now an indelible part of our lives, but ones that we in many ways take for granted. Adam seeks to refocus the rich connection between the original design of these "spaces" and our impact on them and their impact on us.

His suspension of a segment of an aircraft wing in the terrace area here at the UMLAUF brilliantly references the angel wing fragment. Significantly, when we discover this abstracted form, we both recognize it for what it is and are led by its fragmentation to completing an imagined or recollected flight or travel experience. The viewer is led to complete the thought. As a Juror, I hope you find this work as affecting as I do and feel its subtle reference to the broken and unbroken connections we make in our journey through life.

I would like to thank Nina Seely, Katie Robinson Edwards, and Diane Sikes for making the role of Juror both a fun and rewarding experience. It has been a true pleasure to be involved in this process and I count myself lucky to be a citizen of Austin that can celebrate this local place of refuge and inspiration.

Suzanne Deal Booth is a philanthropist, art historian, writer, and publisher. She co-founded the Booth Heritage Foundation and the Friends of Heritage Preservation (FOHP), a non-profit organization dedicated to critical preservation causes worldwide. She currently serves as a Trustee of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Menil Collection, the Centre Pompidou Foundation, Ballroom Marfa and also serves on the Art Committee of the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago.

Adam Crosson | *Intermodal*

With this body of work I seek to negotiate strategies of intermodal freight transport (IFT) with the social and literary theory of negative capability. The literary theory of negative capability was first described by John Keats (1795-1821) as the creative necessity of being comfortable with the unknown. In the late 20th century, Roberto Mangabeira Unger (born 1947) outlined in his social theory of negative capability an individual's ability to eliminate illusions of social constraints in order to achieve maximum individual freedom.

IFT utilizes multiple modes of transportation to haul freight in standardized intermodal containers, commonly referred to as shipping containers. Goods of varying sizes and shapes are conformed to the internal dimensions of the containers, rendering a systematic uniformity. IFT strategies have decreased the amount of direct human handling of goods in lieu of cranes, hoists, and other large scale mechanized equipment as a way to increase efficiency and safety.

Keats writes that an embodiment of negative capability includes being able to project oneself into different roles, the necessity of indifference, and a presence of insecurity and neurosis. Unger states that negative capability undermines the simplified binary that an individual's only choices pertaining to social structuring is either assimilation or rebellion. At the heart of negative capability is the discovery and negotiation of internal conflict—of a persistence of social forces, both internal and external, simultaneously attempting to deliver the self into something well defined.

I am seeking a reflexive relationship between efforts to contain and forces pushing against that containment. Where some of my previous works have utilized moving parts, this body of work questions the relationship between movement and stasis by way of the familiar and the speculative. Through a layering of IFT and negative capability, I look to create episodes of tension between the processes of transportation efficiencies and the social negotiations of routine and rebellion.

