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NEWS RELEASE

MIT List Visual Arts Center

presents

Cheyney Thompson
February 10 – April 8, 2012

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 9, 6-8PM
Conversation with artist Cheyney Thompson and List Center curator João Ribas
5:30-6:30PM, Bartos Theatre



Cheyney Thompson, *Chronochrome I*, 2009
Collection of Ray Ellen and Allan Yarkin

Cambridge, MA-January, 2012. The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to present the first U.S. museum exhibition of the work of New York-based artist Cheyney Thompson (b. 1975, Baton Rouge, LA.) Cheyney Thompson has made the technology, production, and distribution of painting the subject of his work for over a decade. Thompson employs rational structures, technological processes, and generative devices as part of “thinking through problems that organize themselves around the terms of painting.” The artist addresses the contemporary conditions of painting while expanding its potential through visually engaging yet exacting work. With such a rigorous approach to the medium, Thompson produces work that addresses varieties of abstraction, including pictorial, economic, and technological. The artist received his BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1997 and was a cofounder of Oni Gallery, at 84 Kingston St in Boston, in 1998.

The luminous surfaces of the *Chronochromes* (2009–2011) are painstakingly composed using the color system devised by Albert H. Munsell, a Boston-born painter and professor at the Massachusetts Normal Art School (now MassArt), in the early 1900s. Thompson grafts this color system onto a calendar: each day is assigned a complementary hue pair, with every hour changing the color value, and every month changing the saturation, of each hand-painted brushstroke. This system produces paintings “which register fatigue, distraction, and interruptions,” as well as the flow of time itself.

The materiality of painting is the basis for his *Chromachromes* (2009), which depict motifs drawn from a scan of the underlying canvas. Thompson’s recursive process merges digital reproduction with the literal ground of painting: the scanned linen is divided into values of light and dark, and painted using colors drawn from Munsell’s system. Each painting is given a unique historical format, including the academic portrait painting, the diptych, and the Renaissance tondo (a round painting or sculpture). The use of this typology continues Thompson’s engagement with the history of painting, from still life, to the chromatic variation on a single motif.

Thompson’s long-standing interest in the circulation of painting, and the artwork as commodity, is evident in eight paintings of his landlords composed using the CMYK four-color process of commercial printing. Through a subtractive process removing degrees of light from the image, the portraits combine deskilled technology with painterly technique. The portraits also comment on the historical relations—artist and market, labor and value—of artistic production, as well as the circulation and exchange of commodities and information.

Other works on view reframe or reiterate details and motifs from previous paintings. Reflecting his interest in the conceptual and material conditions of image production, these paintings combine both senses of the *digital*. Blurred photocopies of garbage are used to produce a digital artifact that serves as the source for Thompson’s series of *Untitled* (2006) paintings. Enlarged sections of these images are meticulously rendered in shades of gray; arranged in a grid, the tonal scheme used to produce the paintings is itself presented in *Is-A* (2008). For his participation in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, Thompson reframed details from the digital images to produce a new series of works.

The exhibition also features a series of Thompson’s recent pedestal sculptures, which turn sculptural volumes into surfaces. Rather than following the convention of presenting art works, these sculptures self-reflexively address their function by presenting information and supplemental materials related to the exhibition, the artist’s research process, and the works on view.

A monograph on the artist will be published by Walther König in early 2012, featuring essays by noted art historian Yve-Alain Bois, poet Ann Lauterbach, scholar, writer Simon Baier, and LVAC curator João Ribas.

Cheyney Thompson is organized by João Ribas, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center

About the Artist

Cheyney Thompson was born in 1975 in Baton Rouge, LA, and currently lives and works in New York City. He received his BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1997. He cofounded Oni Gallery, along with Count Zero guitarist Brendon Downey, in an artist-occupied space at 84 Kingston St, Boston, MA, in 1998. Recently, his work has been presented in solo exhibitions at Sutton Lane, Brussels (2010), Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles (2010), Galerie Buchholz, Berlin (2009), and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2009). His work has also been featured in significant exhibitions such as *Slow Painting*, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany (2009); *Collatéral*, Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers, France (2009); *Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2009); *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2008); *TBA: Cheyney Thompson and Eileen Quinlan*, Arnolfini, Bristol, England; and *Greater New York*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island, NY (2005).

Funding for Cheyney Thompson has been generously provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Council for the Arts at MIT. Media sponsorship provided by the Phoenix Media Communications Group.

Directions: The MIT List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames Street, at the eastern edge of the MIT campus. It is in close proximity to Kendall Square, Memorial Drive, and the Longfellow Bridge.

By T, take the Red Line to the Kendall/MIT stop, follow Main Street west to Ames Street, turn left, and walk one block to the crosswalk. The MIT List Visual Arts Center, housed in a building identifiable by its white gridded exterior, will be on your left. Signage is on the building.

By car, coming across the Longfellow Bridge or from Memorial Drive, follow signs for Kendall Square. Limited metered parking is available on Ames Street. A parking garage is located at the Cambridge Center complex (entrance on Ames between Main and Broadway). Paid public parking is also available at the Marriott Hotel on Broadway.

Gallery Hours: Tues-Wed: 12-6PM; Fri-Sun: 12-6PM; Thurs: 12-8PM; closed Mondays and major holidays.

Additional Information: 617.253.4680 or <http://listart.mit.edu>

All exhibitions at the MIT List Visual Arts Center are free and open to the public.