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ArtScene

ArtScene, VAS cover visual art, Western U.S.

James Magee, Patrick McFarlin Lead Current Top Shows in the Western U.S.

The opening round of fall exhibitions continues with our realization that longtime sculptor James Magee's below-the-radar body of work on view in Dallas has achieved a formidable fusion of delicacy and profundity. In Santa Fe, Patrick McFarlin's "reproductions" of recently deceased artists of fame is, but goes well beyond being, an apt homage. Top shows in California and Washington round out this week's selections...



...Taking for his subject the obituaries published in a major art magazine's Annual Guide, **Patrick McFarlin** reproduces the obits and in so doing, allows us to reconsider the lives and works of these so-called masters. That McFarlin calls his well-executed homages "mini" masterpieces, further subverting the whole "great artist" theme. If you get your name into Art in America after you die, is that true success? Or does the magazine rightfully acknowledge, complete with artists' photographs and the obligatory approbation expressed in text, the lives that -- in many cases -- helped make the publication tick? McFarlin chooses familiar names to further his case: These are the anointed ones whom we continue to chase through major exhibitions, biographies, and

the stuff of legend.

The diptychs and triptychs that function as obituary-plus-examples of the artwork are the most successful part of the show. Without these mini "isms" alongside their creators' black-and-white portraits and roughed-in text, the show is merely a lineup of talented people who happen to be recently deceased. Presented this way however, "Bacon - Self Portrait" looks out with greater vulnerability, and the copy of a portrait of a seated figure becomes more nuanced in the immediate presence of death -- a neat trick with a subject whose whole being could be said to have courted Thanatos.

- Kathryn M Davis

PICTURED: Patrick McFarlin, "Bacon - Self Portrait, 1973," 2010, oil on paper, 14 x 11", at Launch Projects.