

## JUST KICK IT TILL IT BREAKS

Fia Backström, Carol Bove, Bozidar Brazda, Gardar Eide Einarsson,  
Adam Helms, Scott Hug, Corey McCorkle, Dave McKenzie,  
Josephine Meckseper, Michael Phelan, and Meredyth Sparks

March 8 – April 28, 2007

### Checklist of the Exhibition

Front Area:



Josephine Meckseper  
*Rest in Peace*, 2004  
Video, 8:51 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist, Elizabeth Dee, New York, and  
Arndt & Partner, Berlin/Zurich

In this video, Meckseper combines Super-8 footage she shot of anti-war rallies at the onset of the war in Iraq and video footage of a student activist meeting with footage of an orgy from a 1960s film about LSD culture. The soundtrack blends psychedelic music or protest songs from the '60s with excerpts of the hip hop track by Cash Money Brothers called "Bling Bling."

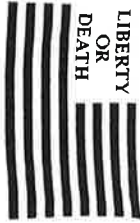


Fia Backström  
*RECYCLE - Hanging proposal for "Untitled"*  
(2006), Sculpture by Kelley Walker (*Ecco Art #2*), 2007  
Mixed media, silkscreen on fabric, Play-Doh, felt, Kelley  
Walker's *Untitled* (2006)  
Courtesy of the artist

Fia Backström's practice is based on a skeptical, suspicious scrutiny of all kinds of ideology and power, including those familiar to corporate and art world structures. Continuing a new series she calls "Ecco Art," Backström has created a pair of "environments" that mimic the displays found in home furnishing stores like IKEA or Crate & Barrel. As "hanging proposals," each set-up displays household items and furniture - some customized by Backström - and incorporates an existing work of art by another artist. A gold-leafed metal sculpture of the recycling symbol by Kelley Walker is the starting point for a picnic-like set-up. Coaxing the work of art to "drop down" into the lifestyle environment, Backström repeats the symbol throughout the display and even fashioned a miniature, kiddie-version of the symbol from Play-Doh. On the wall hanging and cushions, she prints a repeated graphic element from the logo of British Petroleum - a company that has recently campaigned for a more environmentally-aware identity by rebranding itself "Beyond Petroleum."

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## Main Gallery:



Gardar Eide Einarsson  
*(Untitled) Liberty or Death*, 2006

Cotton

Courtesy of the artist and Nils Staerk Contemporary Art,  
Copenhagen

Gardar Eide Einarsson's mixed-media installations and paintings use the logos, texts, and slogans from cult outsider figures and various youth subcultures to explore their functions in relation to consumer culture at large. Newspaper clippings, generic protest signs, corporate logos, and historical flag designs all become triggers for Einarsson's works which consistently point to the ideological battle inherent to these sign systems. *Liberty or Death* is one of series of flag pieces that draws from Einarsson's research into defunct flag designs from historical moments of transition and revolution such as the American War of Independence or the Mexican War. Einarsson increases the dimensions of the flag up to grand proportion and renders the design in black and white, underscoring the violent undertone that runs back to the early days of the country as well as the rampant merchandizing of patriotism evident today.



Josephine Meckseper

*Untitled (Only a Monster Can Allow Himself the Luxury of Seeing Things as They Are)*, 2005

Shelf with mixed media

Collection of Elizabeth Dee, New York

Josephine Meckseper mines the increasingly overlapping domains of fashion, politics, and consumerism as she combines carefully-arranged found and store-bought objects with paintings or collages made of fabric, newsprint, or photographs - all of which refer back to the symbols and aesthetics of 1960s political activism as seen through the lens of today's fashions, styles, and modes of commercial display.



Scott Hug

*History excised*, 2006

Silkscreen and latex on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and John Connelly Presents, NY



Scott Hug

*Praise the Lord*, 2006

Silkscreen and latex on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and John Connelly Presents, NY

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Scott Hug  
*Rage the roof*, 2006  
Silkscreen and latex on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and John Connelly Presents, NY



Scott Hug  
*What a racket*, 2006  
Silkscreen and latex on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and John Connelly Presents, NY

Scott Hug mixes American politics and global events with the logic of celebrity culture, interrogating an apathetic national culture that allows an obsession with celebrity and 'newstainment' to supersede pressing political concerns. In an ongoing series, Hug searches Page Six, the daily gossip column of *The New York Post*, looking for particularly striking combinations of headshot and caption, which he then lifts as is, enlarges, and silkscreens onto canvas. Taken off the newspaper page and without the accompanying story, these works create unexpected associations and sometimes jarring secondary meanings.



Dave McKenzie  
*Yesterday's Newspaper*, 2007  
newspaper and wood  
Courtesy of the artist and Small A Projects, Portland, OR

*Yesterday's Newspaper*, which changes daily, is exactly that - a succinct reminder of real-world headline news that also highlights the fact that the constant barrage of news we receive affects a continual erasure of the import of the recent past.



Corey McCorkle  
*The Circular*, 2007  
Newsprint  
Courtesy of the artist and maccarone gallery llc

This piece accompanies McCorkle's other work in the exhibition using original broadsheets published by the Oneida Community in the 1850s. Further details about McCorkle's work relating to this group can be found below.

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Carol Bove  
*The Sensuous Dirty Old Man*, 2006  
Mixed media  
Collection of Philip E. Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons,  
Maryland and New York

Carol Bove's sculptures and installations hone in on a short period of American history, the late 1960s through the early 1970s, when liberal ideals of political consciousness and social responsibility were widespread throughout popular culture. Using furniture, books, magazines, and small objects from the period, Bove teases out a guiding visual aesthetic of this pivotal cultural and political moment. In this shelf piece, Bove creates a carefully-orchestrated tableau incorporating such items as a vintage paperback copy of Isaac Asimov's 1971 satirical self-help book *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man*, after which Bove titled the work; an art historical monograph on Giacometti, whose attenuated figures are often read as expressions of the alienation of modern life and the trauma of war; and various materials from a press kit about the film *Chappaqua*, including the two black & white film stills displayed in Bove's piece. Released in 1966 at a time of transition from Beat culture to hippie culture, *Chappaqua* was a landmark underground movie that provided a window onto a culture of sexual liberties, experimentation with drugs, and anti-establishment sentiment. Bove juxtaposes these specifically-chosen items with other printed matter and decorative elements that recall an intimate, domestic setting to evoke the complexities and contradictions of this by-gone era, re-inserting them into the present and subtly suggesting critical resonances with our contemporary moment.



Meredyth Sparks  
*Untitled (Gudrun with record player)*, 2007  
Digital scan, aluminum foil, glitter  
Courtesy of the artist

Using appropriated imagery from record covers, publicity stills, or history books, Meredyth Sparks interrupts the glamour and artificiality of iconic photographs of important historical figures and groups. In this work, Sparks uses two images of the Baader-Meinhof group or Red Army Faction (RAF), a German left wing terrorist group active in the 1970s, which were circulated widely in their time and were further mythologized by a famous series of Gerhard Richter paintings. Sparks enlarges to near life-size proportions an image of RAF member Gudrun Ensslin, one of three imprisoned RAF members found dead in their prison cells on October 18, 1977. Placed on top of Ensslin's image is a photo showing where it was believed a gun had been hidden in the cell of one member who died of a gunshot wound to the head. Although their deaths were officially declared suicides, some have long suspected that the government in fact murdered the prisoners. To create the work, Sparks scanned book reproductions of the Richter paintings of the famous photographs, altering and removing elements digitally to create the impression of aggressive scratch marks and tears. Onto a digital print, she then adds glitter and foil shapes in response to compositional elements in the

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image, creating a visual stuttering effect that simultaneously interrupts and increases the seductive power of these images and speaks to the complicated relationship between the historical significance of particular images and the glut of circulated images today.



Corey McCorkle  
*Perfectionist (Free Love) Monument, 2007*  
Steel, copper, nickel, and silver  
Courtesy of the artist and maccarone gallery llc

Corey McCorkle's installations and sculptural projects emerge from his interest in the intersection of ideology, architecture, and design. This most recent body of work began from his research about the Oneida Community, an early utopian group which started in New York State in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, which believed in communal property and possessions as well as shared sexual partners. In fact, the group coined the phrase "Free Love" we normally associated with the 1960s. It was also a religious sect whose members aimed to be free of sin and perfect in this world, not just in heaven – a belief system they called Perfectionism. Oddly, the group supported itself in part by manufacturing bear traps and wolf traps, which proved to be a very profitable business venture. In *Perfectionist (Free Love) Monument*, McCorkle had two original traps ground down to the underlying steel and then had them silver-plated, adding a decadent opulence to the traps' utilitarian yet striking design. In addition, the long-term commercial success of these violent products is an unusual counterpoint to the group's otherwise socialist and seemingly progressive goals. The community ultimately abandoned its utopian principles and is now associated with the widely available Oneida flatware, but McCorkle's investigation of this early period highlights the historical tension between expanding market concerns and spiritual or utopian movements which has renewed significance today.



Michael Phelan  
*All cats love fish but fear to wet their paws, 2007*  
Dyed bamboo pole, printed silk flag, aluminum pole rings, rope  
Courtesy of the artist



Michael Phelan  
*The best way out is through (#18), 2007*  
Dye on linen  
Courtesy of the artist



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Michael Phelan's sculptures and installations investigate the perversion of historical and culturally-specific practices for a popular commercial market. Using mass market references and outsourced production methods, his works re-configure commercially available items such as tie-dye textiles, faux-bamboo lawn ornaments, hanging decorative mobiles, and rock-n-roll banners made for teenage bedrooms to create assemblages that explore how ersatz Eastern spirituality becomes associated with certain values and lifestyle choices. To create his series of tie-dye paintings, titled *The Best Way Out Is Through*, Phelan sent out blueprints for a multicolored target design of concentric circles to a professional tie-dyer to be executed onto unprimed linen, which he then stretched onto wooden supports to evoke the high-Modernist abstract paintings by artists such as Kenneth Noland and Jasper Johns. Phelan's "paintings" also underscore how the traditional folk art form of tie-dyeing, which was appropriated by the 1960s counterculture as a marker for peace, freedom, and protest against the Vietnam War, has become emptied of its countercultural weight and associated meanings through mass-marketing.



Dave McKenzie  
*Tomorrow Will Be Better*, 2007  
Aluminum, metal, and wood  
Collection of Steve Corkin, Boston  
Courtesy Small A Projects, Portland, Oregon



Bozidar Brazda  
*Insiders*, 2007  
Mixed media  
Courtesy of the artist

Bozidar Brazda's work reflects his interest in juxtaposing the visual and linguistic tropes of Eastern European socialism and Western capitalism, obliquely addressing how various political systems affect methods of distribution, consumption, and communication. In the new installation, Brazda explores how many companies selling bottled water brand their products in way that aligns them with a particular national identity. On a small, low table with a mass-produced modern design, Brazda places an assortment of designer water bottles, a few painted in bright, solid colors like a band in a flag, in one regular line. Nearby hangs a digital print of the reverse image of the 1981 self-titled album cover from a punk band of the former East Germany called "Die Unbekannten" - or The Unknown Ones, in which they used a World War II-era photograph. Staring out with binoculars, these figures complete the mysterious relationship Brazda creates between the viewer, the phalanx of "nationalistic" products, and this inscrutable relic from an abandoned political system and bygone era.

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Rear Gallery:



Adam Helms  
*10 Untitled Portraits*, 2007  
Ink on Mylar  
Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, NY

Adam Helms is intrigued by the ethos of violence and the romanticization of extremist ideologies. *10 Untitled Portraits* draws from a series that began as an experimental studio practice. Helms has been producing an ongoing series of graphite portrait drawings that depict the New Frontier Army, a fictitious militia group that practices group living, hunting, and possibly mass mayhem. In an attempt to mask some of the graphite drawings, he covered them in Mylar and poured ink over the heads depicted in them. The ink pooled in abstract patterns and, through the drying process, took on unique textural qualities that differed each time, adding chance and experimentation to his process—and allowing the drawings to take on personalities of their own. Based on a large databank of images Helms has culled from the internet depicting revolutionary terrorists but also other masked figures of power or authority, these stark silhouettes reflect the media's creation of the omnipresent, invisible enemy while their rich and nuanced rendering in ink imbues them with a menacing attractiveness.



Fia Backström  
*APPLE - Hanging proposal for "Apples and Cigarettes"*  
(2004-2006) photograph by Roe Ethridge (*Ecco Art #3*),  
2007  
Mixed media, ink-jet digital print-outs, fabric appliqué,  
Roe Ethridge's *Apple and Cigarettes* (2004-2006)  
Courtesy of the artist

Like her work in the front gallery, Backström here juxtaposes fine art with misplaced corporate logos and design displays. The still-life photograph *Apples and Cigarettes* by Roe Ethridge becomes the launching pad for this installation with the image recurring on coasters and playing cards. Backström also lifts the bitten apple of the Macintosh computer and inserts it on tablecloths, cloth napkins, and coasters. The wallpaper reproduces an essay by a radical ecology group about the drastic reduction in the number of apple varieties caused by mass agriculture. Dating to the early 1990s, the text has subheadings which take on new meanings today such as "The Apple as a Machine" and "The Commodification of the Apple."

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Scott Hug  
*No Escaping Martha*, 2005  
Digital ink on waterproof canvas, black mirror, and  
custom wood frame  
Courtesy of the artist and John Connelly Presents, NY

This corner piece renders a paparazzo's shot of Martha Stewart avoiding the camera more vivid than the viewer's own image, or even Martha's, in the reflection of the perpendicular black mirror. Exploring the intersection of politics, pop culture, and media sensationalism, Hug creates dark propaganda tools for a culture of mass distraction, creating indirect critique by exaggerating his source material with disturbing humor, biting critique, and sometimes grotesque overtones.



Gardar Eide Einarsson  
*Infinite Crisis*, 2006  
Lightbox  
Courtesy of the artist and Team Gallery, New York

Einarsson borrowed the name and logo of a recent comic book series for this light box sculpture. Lying on the floor and slightly banged up, the object seems to be leftover signage from a now defunct commercial enterprise. Yet, still illuminated, it echoes the exaggerated tenor of broadcast news programs with their unending scroll of urgent and breaking news at the bottom of the screen.



Dave McKenzie  
*(B)LACK*, 2006  
Colored pencil on paper  
Collection of Anthony Elms and Jacqueline Terrassa,  
Chicago

Dave McKenzie's work often examines the relationship between identity politics and consumer culture in contemporary America. This collage transforms generic directions for assembling a shelf from IKEA into a document more specific to his needs and identity, underscoring how one's concept of self in contemporary society is often produced by consumer culture and the media rather than the other way around.



Josephine Meckseper  
*Der Umkehrbare Lauf der Dinge*, 2005  
Metal, glass, tape, acrylic, aluminum scouring pads,  
toilet paper, aluminum can  
Courtesy of the artist and Elizabeth Dee, New York  
Private collection, Los Angeles