HEADBONES

NEOPRIEST

NEOPRIEST

HEADBONES GALLERY

Artist Catalogue: Headbones Gallery - Neopriest
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Neopriest essay by Ashley Johnson
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Aleks Bartosik, Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo, Billy Copley, Scott Ellis, Scott McEwan, Robert Farmer, Ed Giordano Jr, Ashley Johnson, Zachari Logan, Jesse McCloskey, Julie Oakes, Srdjan Segan and Jenny WingYee Tong

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RICH FOG

Micro Publishing
Toronto Canada

POP **R**EALISTS **I**NTELLECTUALLY **E**NGAGED **I**N **S**TORY **T**ELLING

NEOPRIEST

THE BOOK OF HEADBONES, CALLED

NEOPRIEST

CHAPTER 1

1 Neopriest - New Pop Realism Intellectually Engaged in Story Telling

2 NEOPRIEST is:

An assertion of identity
A declaration of aesthetic preference
An acknowledgement of accomplished practice
An endorsement of visual style
An exploration into the sublime
A prospect for a potent seduction

3 ¶ *Neopriest* is about a journey that has provided insights and created the desire to broaden the scope of *Headbones Gallery*.

4 *The Drawers* has been exploring contemporary drawing and works on paper with some vigour for the past three years and will continue to do so.

5 ¶ *Neopriest* will be an additional focus of *Headbones Gallery* - almost like the splitting of one cell into two distinctive organisms.

6 ¶ *Headbones Gallery* will build further awareness by asserting an identity in the form of the *Neopriest* aesthetic.

7 The aesthetic might be summarized by *a quick graphic read with bold clarity.* It can pop out at you or draw you in. Realist elements tell a story. The work is accomplished, thought provoking and engaging.

8 This catalogue is the medium used to introduce the *Neopriest* aesthetic. It contains writings, artworks and short bios of the artists.

Richard Fogarty, Director
Headbones Gallery & The Drawers

ESSAY BY JULIE OAKES

NEOPRIEST

CHAPTER 2

1 The identification of an aesthetic can serve various positive purposes.

2 The naming - in this case *neopriest* - grants an opportunity to take a breath, and contemplate, distancing from the art object in order to place it in relation to historical and philosophical positioning.

3 For the artists, it affords an objective from which to consider why the name is applicable.

4 For the appreciator, it allows for roads of association to be travelled that might not have been self generated and thus also discover the aesthetic that runs within these works and from there discern the correlations.

5 To the art writer, critic and curator, it gives a platform upon which to comment, theorise, criticize and organise.

6 For some, it increases the already rich fog that surrounds the art object, increasing mystique and like a sauce, adding a new flavour to an already sufficiently nourishing dish.

7 The naming of an aesthetic presents ruminating possibilities hitherto undiscovered and in this respect can be pronounced a viable exercise in thought.

8 The grouping of the works as *neopriest* is circumstantial and in so declaring this fact there is acknowledgement that there are most certainly more *neopriest* works out there than the perpetrators of the denomination have time to access. For the time being, the group of artists is this, in alphabetical order (a non-hierarchical classification of 'before' or 'after'): Aleks Bartosik, Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo, Billy Copley, Scott Ellis, Scott McEwan, Robert Farmer, Ed Giordano Jr, Ashley Johnson, Zachari Logan, Jesse McCloskey, Julie Oakes, Srdjan Segan and Jenny WingYee Tong. Thirteen to date - but the number is irrelevant (falling into the circumstantial arena like the alphabetical order), nothing mystical or ordained.

9 Each artist could have a different idea in mind when applying *neopriest* to his or her art work, but there is a resonance, a willingness to be considered under this heading and varying latitudes of acceptance.

10 Since there was intended to be nothing binding in the grouping, this works well for all.

11 *Neo* connotes a previous generation, the older, that the new has descended from. In this case it does not mean 'emerging' or nascent but refers to historical comparisons and precedents.

12 There is a maturity to the works of each of the artists; they have all fully arrived, been 'outed', blooded, vetted and assumed rank.

13 The acronym most applicable seems to be *Pop Realists Intellectually Engaged in Story Telling* and each of the words is coloured in varying tones, hues and brightness in relation to the works.

14 Some are more saturated with *Pop*; Billy Copley, Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo, Scott McEwan and Robert Farmer all use a cartoon style and coloring.

15 Some are stronger in the *Realist* spectrum; Ashley Johnson, Zachari Logan, Aleks Bartosik and Julie Oakes.

16 Some are more heatedly engaged such as Giordano with his inescapable angst or Jesse McCloskey with his expressionistic handling.

17 Others are cooler, more analytical, like

INTERPRETATION

Scott Ellis' carefully constructed manipulations of imagery taken from media sources.

18 All are telling stories and are intellectually engaged. Some repeat the same characters and plot lines like Jesse McCloskey with his girl/witch and dog/devil or Srdjan Segan with the innards of his stretched men being exposed, again and again, or Jenny Wing Yee Tong with her donkeys lit by antique chandeliers causing swoons.

19 But all of the works contain some of the ingredients of this acronym.

20 The reference to the real is always present. None of these artists have left the representational and abandoned themselves to abstraction although there is also an element of abstraction running throughout.

21 Space also becomes pertinent in McCloskey's and Copley's work with the picture planes receding and advancing - but they are the exceptions. For most, figure on ground reigns against shallow perspectives.

22 It is of note that there is an adherence to traditional mediums, that primarily the neopriest practice is producing paintings and collage works. McCloskey, Copley, Segan and Wing Yee Tong all employ an expressionistic handling of the material.

23 There is a metaphysical bent running through the aesthetic. The ghostly and ghastly make appearances.

24 Jesse McCloskey calls upon New England witch hunts; Johnson, the shamanism and primitivism of Africa; Oakes, Buddhism and the apocalypse; Wing Yee Tong, fairies, fantasy and midsummer night's dreams; Segan, the mythological; Logan, classical and Christian constructs; Castillo, Aztec Gods; Bartosik, Amazon women exhibiting a pantheistic display of curiosity; while Scott McEwan invokes the psychedelic states. Even Scott Ellis, with all of his repercussive immediacy calls up the three realms of Heaven, Earth and Hell. Ed Giordano's enigmatic *Father Domini* or his crucifixion imagery is clearly an outbreak of confessional guilt.

25 Copley steers clear - unless the great pilgrimage of consumerism, brought to iconographic singularity with his shopping bags could be deemed a contemporary metaphysical orientation.

26 There is very little of the jaded outlook or detached irony that has been a telling mark of the post-modern era within the *neopriest* aesthetic and here the relationship to the word 'priest' is brought forward.

27 Juice courses through the veins of the corpus of this aesthetic, pumped by undaunted commitment to the work.

28 The artists, acting much like priests, serve as mediators between the great spirits and the growing congregation of those who have found their way into the Church of Fine Arts.

29 *Neopriest* shows dedication in the artistic practices that have transcended the commonality of quotidian rounds to partake in faithful rituals that make art happen.

30 The obsessive, stridently focussed practices of these artists are a testament to their calling where each observes a near religious adherence to production with personal genuflections to varying principles, be they specific or as general as human rights and righteous indignation.

31 The clearing aside of all other duties and distractions to live the monastic life of the artist sequestered in the studio, the confrontation between the self and the reason for existence, the telling of knowledge through the physical body of work - many apt

associations can be drawn between religion and art.

32 And there is the obvious; that art serves as the conduit for the un-see-able, assisting in the difficulty of believing by exercising slights of hand.

33 *Neopriest* is new - a spark of life more than a crowning glory. The term, *neopriest*, is a light touch of a verbal wand. Nothing more. A godmother has anointed heads and sparkle dust is beginning to whirl with faceted brilliance causing reflections.

34 This is not an opening act with explosions, fireworks and didactic predispositions but a subtle insertion, a glimmer of insight.

Julie Oakes
Toronto
September 2008

ESSAY BY ASHLEY JOHNSON

NEOPRIEST

CHAPTER 3

1 Humanity is on the brink of momentous changes that will either make life more difficult or, if we adapt our thinking in time, better.

2 The global disparity of wealth and the inability of financial institutions to bridge the divide necessitate change. The current financial crisis is really bad news for wealthy nations but it is catastrophic for the poor. Most probably the solution chosen will be more powerful global banking institutions less accountable to national interests. The continued reliance on outmoded political and socio-economic strategies also militates against resolving the environmental crisis, which is the larger catastrophe.

3 One wonders why this is such an intractable problem and how come the gamut of political positions is so defined and resistant to change.

4 An anomaly to take note of is the common view of reality as a space/object/time phenomenon. This Newtonian perception is directly challenged by Quantum Mechanics, which demonstrates a new kind of physics where distinguishable objects in space become indistinguishable sub atomic flux. The problem is that these two versions of reality cannot be reconciled with one another. Society mainly uses the older version of reality while physicists explore the latter. The significance of this is it indicates a human conceptual failure in that we cannot accept the inherent ambiguity of mutually exclusive 'truths'.

5 Western society is largely oblivious to other cultures, but certain cultures have no problem reconciling alternative versions of reality, like the San Bushmen of the Kalahari or the Australian Aborigines. They see experiential reality as part of an overall Dreamtime or Spirit-world. One of the features of this way of thinking is to see the animals and environment as part of the self and vice versa.

6 It seems to me that the Western notion of the individual is really just a paradigm and that creative endeavour could/should be aimed at reinventing the persona and as a logical extension, the society. If the 'environment' were contained within the idea of the 'self' perhaps we would pay more attention to it and devise better structures of governance.

7 As an artist, a fundamental aspect of the drive to reinvent the 'self' is to tell stories. These stories delve into the underbelly of society though, exposing taboos and crossing boundaries. The point of bringing these hidden aspects into view is to re examine outmoded ways of thinking in an effort to permit new vision. It is a process of un-censoring.

8 Neopriest is a loose affiliation of artists sharing certain attributes such as the need to communicate through art, addressing social issues.

9 Some artists come from countries in the Balkans or South America that have experienced extreme trauma and they bring this vision to their art. Others from North American society note uncomfortable aspects of this society such as the cannibalistic preying by powerful corporate predators.

10 The propaganda machine that ships youngsters off to die in foreign fields fighting

for causes that are not obvious or true. The insurance/banking machine lures the consumer into a modern form of slavery while offering the illusion of freedom.

11 There are many aspects of society that need to be revisited, most notably religion. A new form of spirituality is needed for the modern age, one that takes proper cognizance of the environment and venerates all life instead of imagining that humanity is distinct and more valuable.

12 Certain Neopriests focus on Christian mythology and view it through the consumerist mentality that trivializes existence. Pagan belief would seem more congruent with the modern desire for symbiosis between environment and self.

13 Sexuality is another area where prejudicial perceptions are engendered by religious and moral background. Several Neopriests bring these issues to the fore, attempting to restore balance and rekindle an interest in human nature. Issues of gender equality are also contained among these stories.

14 The Neopriests are obsessive in their work and driven by the banality of a society that seems bent on self-destruction. The consumer society's scale of values elevate the least worthy, aided and abetted by a media intent on selling products.

15 There is an urgent need for an intellectual revolution and the Neopriests would hope to be part of this inevitable process of re-valuation.

Ashley Johnson
Toronto
September 2008

PALINGENESIS **R**EALISED IN **I**CONOGRAPHIC **E**LONGATED **S**TRETCHED **T**OTEMICS

SRDJAN SEGAN

CHAPTER 4

1 Size brings monumental themes into play and yet is rarely executed in paper, a fragile medium.

2 That the subject is a human image, stretched, hanging from the hands and visiting animist sites as it makes the long transition of space, both attests to the grand notion of humanity and also to the brief trajectory of each life through time.

3 All that the drawings embody is related to the artist's history through a traceable path.

4 Srdjan Segan is a Serbian from Croatia, a minority ethnicity who had made up a lesser percentage of the population for centuries.

5 He grew up in a country where the citizens were often pitted against each other. At nineteen he was able to receive a refugee status but it was not until he was twenty-four that he began the process that would allow him to immigrate to Canada; he was twenty-six when he finally arrived.

6 He had changed, while in Serbia, from his studies in medicine to an interest in Fine Arts.

7 The innards exposed in the drawings, twisted and mixed-up bring up the medical orientation of the body as corpus, as the physical structure and animal substance.

8 The drawing as a whole, magnified as it is, they becomes “the main or central mass of a thing”.

9 Then, there is the third connotation of a corpse or a carcass, splayed and hanging to cure. Srdjan uses charcoal and coffee to stain and draw on the paper - simple substances on a humble ground. In doing so he grants the body a more 'full bodied' rendition of the matter making the concept of monumentality a virtual object in the art piece.

10 A room filled with these draping hanging presences, punctuated by his equally immutable bronzes, brings to mind ancient temples.

11 These are icons that can refer to religious imagery as awesome as the Eastern Island sculptures and the massive Buddhas of the Orient.

12 They are warriors - guardians of sacred spaces, warning against marauders. They speak of man's dignity.

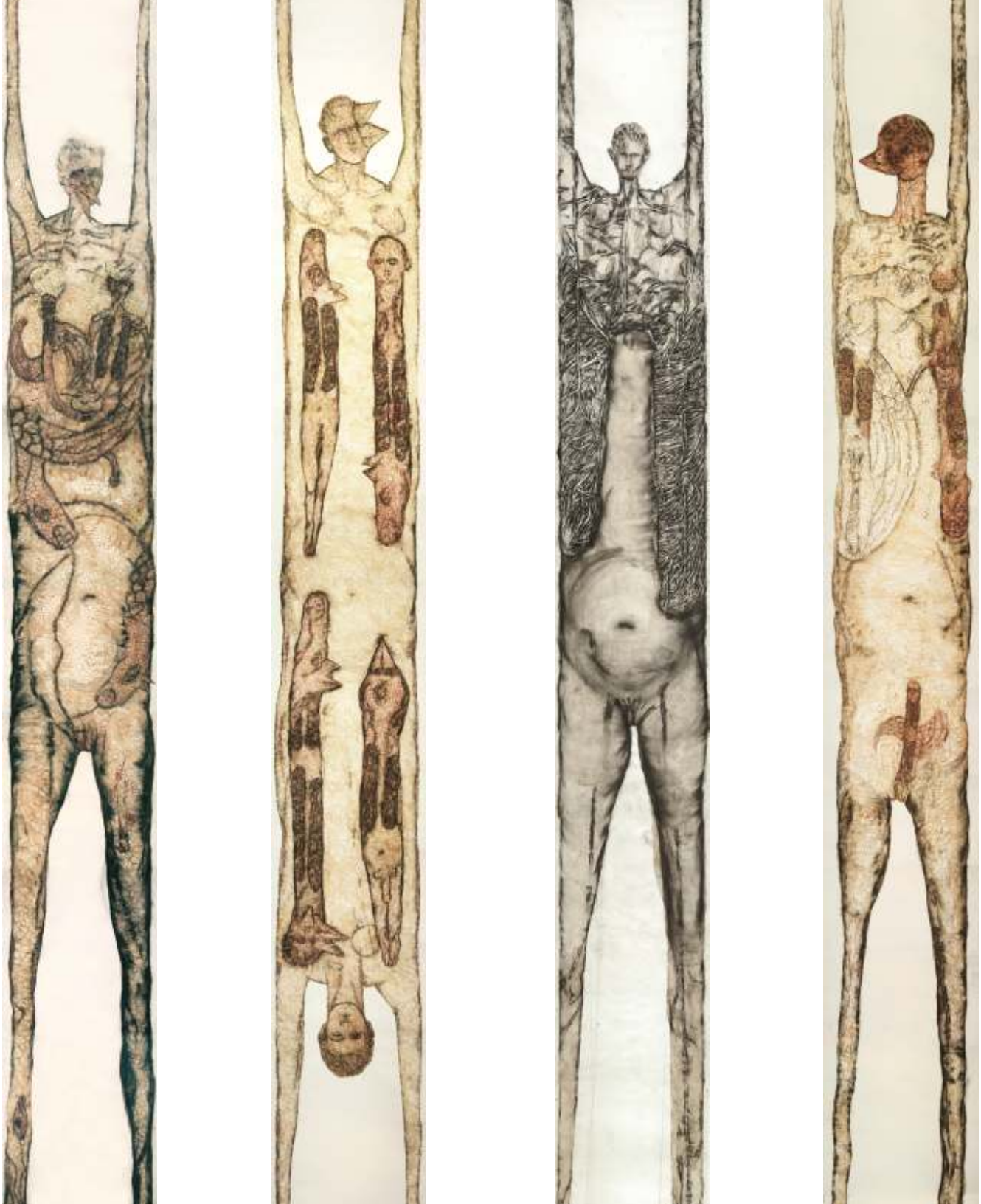
13 They are a testament to his status, standing upright above all of the other species. They are not singularly consumed though and while incorporate images of the lesser realms and hence show the relationship and interdependency of the creatures of the earth.

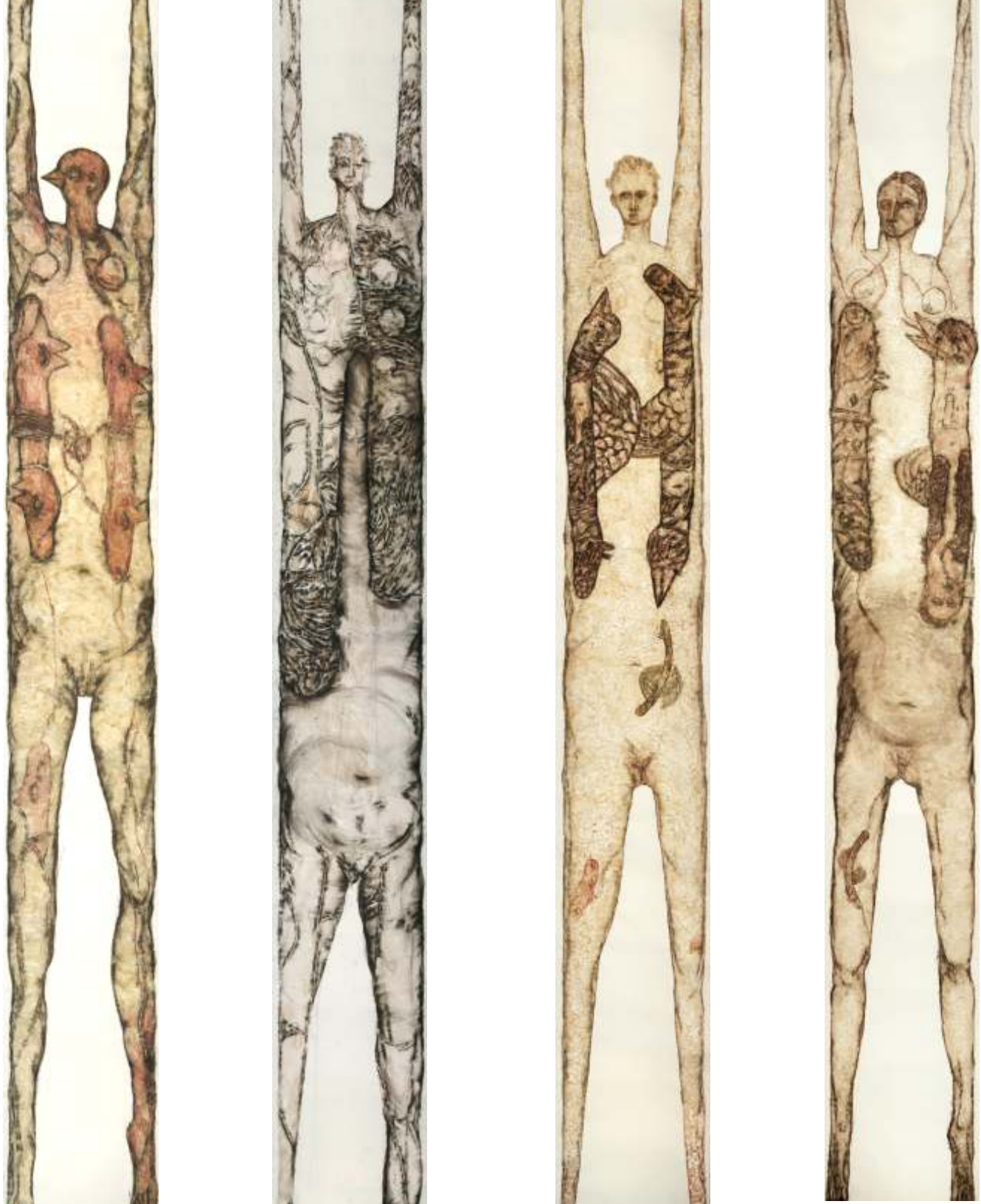
14 There is also an alien intonation as if the long paper men/women are from another galaxy, a silent witnessing being from outer-space.

15 We walk down the length of the bodies or squint to peer up at the faces from our picayune vantage point.

16 We are connected to the giants through the large drawings and the human potential is made greater.

Untitled (Tall Standing Figures) 2004-08, charcoal, coffee & dye on paper, 30 to 40 feet by 42 inches wide





PROPAGANDIST **R**ESEARCH **I**NTEGRATING **E**DITORIAL **S**CIENTIFIC **T**HEATRE

SCOTT P. ELLIS

CHAPTER 5

1 Minding your own business doesn't leave as much room to be your brother's keeper as Scott Ellis needs to continue to edit his understanding of things.

2 He strikes with a dogmatic lash and the resounding snap is hopefully going to cause someone to wake up. How many times does the world have to be told that what is happening is coming through, loud and clear and off center, before reaction sets in and the inevitable revolution begins?

3 Maybe the revolution has begun, quietly, in the collage imagery of Scott Ellis.

4 If the world ends with a whimper rather than a bang it's because the meek have been told that they will inherit the earth and that noise, commotion and rabble rousing will be of no avail when the final tally is made.

5 Scott knows this so he quietly snips and glues, allowing the muffled groan of art, with historical precedent, to once again speak its mind. It is repeating the words of the song of the sixties “Something is happening here and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones.”

6 The work is statement oriented, message saturated, obsessively executed and well researched. He has his nose to the ground, his ear to the wall and his artistic discipline intact so that what he over-hears can be retold from a scrutinized vantage point.

7 His work is didactic, opinionated, monomaniacal, and obstinate in regard to the matter spoken of - and proud to be so! It is also open, embracing, tolerant, and consummated within the act of making art, a vested belief.

8 There is heart, soul and passion behind these reconstructed media images.

9 The context has changed, the pictures,

We're Working Together to Serve You - 2008, collage on panel, 30 x 24 inches

accepted by the public relations boards that mediate world events have been cut out, rearranged and pasted into a brand new position with the result being another new world order, another dreaded acronym flipped!

10 It veers between desperation and control. There is an unsettling loss of balance and a desire to comprehend in a glance. There is too much to deal with.

11 The initial flash of daunting recognition is taken over by a slow dawning that reveals a

The Best Society Has To Offer - 2008, collage on panel, 33.5 x 72 inches

sense out of the nonsensical overload of information, a comprehension and a wonder.

12 Has Scott Ellis managed to reign in the dissonance of information and present a clear picture? The task appears too ambitious. It is, in fact, impossible to be able to understand just by looking at the work, what he is precisely saying. The wonder is that he has managed to put it all together, to design and to execute it - to make the artwork.

13 His methodology begins by addressing a subject, and in doing so he makes an initial step towards organization.

14 But even here his choice creates a balk. Subject matter; World War One, World War Two, Industrialization, Religion, Manufacturing, Globalization - Scott has taken on the grand themes. Deconstructing an overall miasma of media images, paying attention to the parts, committing to an order, refusing to ignore language - a new politic emerges.

15 He has assumed a plenipotentiary position, taking upon himself full authorization to control and handle our diplomatic relations to both our history and current social and political status.

16 Whereas the media's encapsulation of world events tends to be parasympathetic, like the contraction of the pupil of the eye, Scott's oeuvre has an expanded pupil that in turn stimulates a form of psychedelic perception.

17 Just as with the use of hallucinogens, the miracle of earthly existence becomes an acceptable revelation - in the tranced state there is no avoiding it - so Ellis' barrage of

The Fine Art Of Womanizing - 2008, collage on panel, 30 x 24 inches

thing ness and happenings brings about an acceptance despite the queasiness.

18 That we are able to live within this jumble of information, a combination of synchronism and memorable images - seems a wonder.

19 His commentary vacillates between topical and historical.

20 It is a wonder that his head doesn't explode or that he doesn't become tongue tied, intimidated by his task. But that which comes about with a psychedelic infusion is a loosening of the tongue. As the synapses of the brain go crazy, connecting along new pathways and assuming an illogic of an independent nature, the programming becomes rerouted. The master board is discombobulated. The brain machine is shorting out and the result is enlightening, freeing, for there is no longer a valid reason to stay within the confines of historical reference.

21 No longer is the axon of one neuron and the dendrite of another connecting in sequence. There is a new route along which there are no totally objective, immutable signposts. There is, in the place of that truth, endless possibilities.

22 Consider the moon, waxing and waning. Sometimes, Scott Ellis is showing a haunted spectre of the day time's reality; sometimes he is more obscure than the darkening night, holding back the clues as to the pathways that we are accustomed to traveling. It is a paraselene, a bright, moonlike spot on the lunar halo that overrides the presence of the moon.

23 World events, dimmed by time and existing in the half-light of the past, already exist as hazy, often personalized interpretations of those events.

24 Does he believe that we will be able to find our way out of the convoluted pathways of heavily laden imagery?

25 Has he done the work for us and a charted a direction, or is the flashlight dim, a lunar trance-like light that makes our pupils grow large in order to encompass the blast?

26 Scott has something to say. He is like a factory where the raw material goes in the door and then comes out the other end, reshaped, furbished with a fresh slant and yet skewed by the unique re-combination of parts.

27 Taking outdated as well as current media sources he rearranges the puzzle pieces so that the resulting message has a semblance of

familiarity, as if the message is straight, but not quite.

28 He inserts his point of view, the private illuminations of a stealthy sleuth into the permutations of mass media messaging.

29 As glib in real life as he is in his visual dispensation, Scott brings the full punch of a lively mind to bear and compresses it into a tightly wound ball of information.

30 There is no choice but to receive the messages. They operate on many levels: the work ethic that is evidenced with the thousands of cut-outs, the color combinations providing aesthetic clues as to where to look next, the metaphors in the choice of materials (burnt holes in a globe, gasmasks, children's blocks, vintage magazine and newspaper illustrations) and the ever-present realization of the dedicated focus that Ellis has brought to the subject.

31 As an author, he has invited us on a visual read - a veritable tome! - and with absolute conscience, he has put a dedicated effort into the story that he has elected to tell.

32 He has promised that he will not waste our time and that the time that we spend walking through the maze that he has reconstructed from recycled media reportage, will not be for naught.

33 He has granted us choices, the possibilities seen from a psychedelic brain.

34 It is not a philosophy where 'nothing is sacred' and all can be expropriated. It is a philosophy where everything is sacred, needing to be rescued.

35 Having been given the license to create, Ellis is upping up the ante with a clarion wake-up call.

36 He is walking us through the tunnels of things, in a junk yard of old news events, in the heart of a city of variables, in a country brimming with potential, in a world of various combinations, in a galaxy of interpretations, in the universe of Scott Ellis.

How To Build An Empire - 2008, collage on panel, 36 x 48 inches

POP **R**EALIST **I**NTERPRETING **E**CCLESIASTIC **S**URREAL **T**ALES

ROBERT FARMER

horgod - 2008, oil on wallpaper on panel (framed), 18.5 x 24.5 inches

CHAPTER 6

1 Robert Farmer is a modern day surrealist with a pop bent.

2 As inundated as we are with visual imagery, and especially in the age of aggressive advertising, it is not surprising that the information that we believe we are receiving when we 'see' is not the true long and short of it.

3 There were rumours (justified) circulating that planted a creeping suspicion in the mind of the viewing public that they were being subliminally affected by messages imbedded in the apparent, messages that floated behind the screen or beneath the surface.

4 It is with surreptitious objective that Farmer lays down his ideas, seduces and snatches our trust.

5 On the surface, it all looks so nice and sweet. The colors are happy with shades of innocence in the pastels and tones of childhood in the cartoon-like manifestations.

6 The paintings seem fit for a small child's bed time in a pleasing nighty-night room with a candy-coloured story book.

7 The paintings draw us in, just like advertisements for junk food. There is a concealment of pertinent facts that in reality nullifies the promise that the visual seemingly was granting. Numerous examples come to mind.

8 The overall patterns of bunnies for instance, appear to be an utterly benign image. No one will back away from their innocent allure on first confronting the work.

9 The background has bled through and the bedroom has been overrun with copulating bunnies.

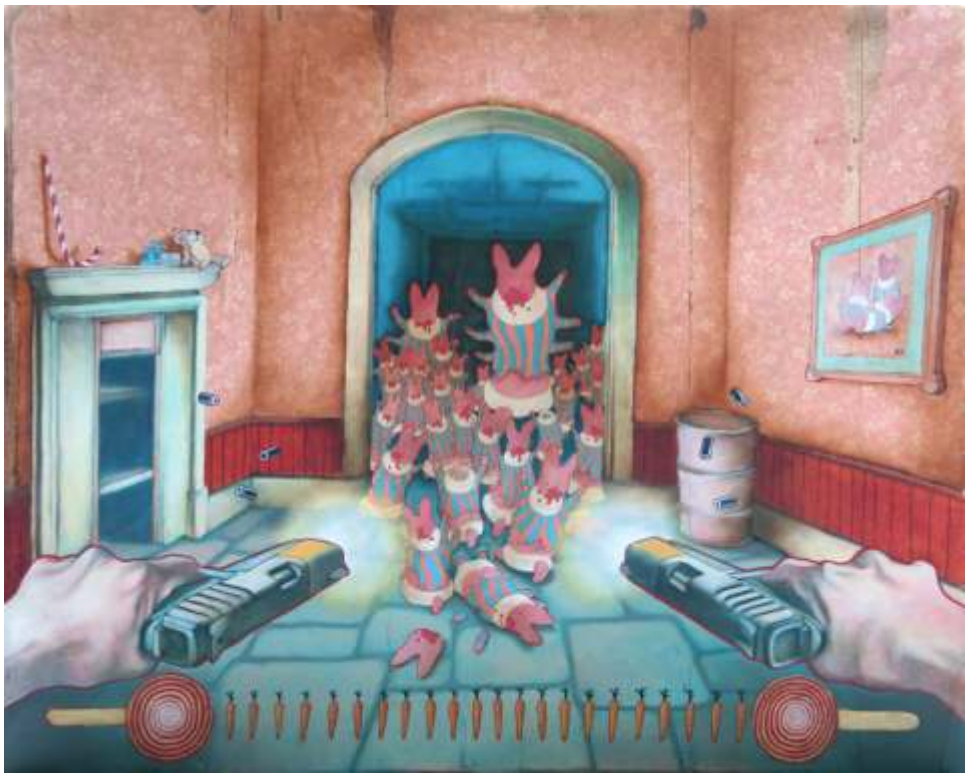
10 The wet dreams of the innocent have become part of the wallpaper - almost unnoticeable.

11 The overall design made by the shadowed pink and blue clad carousers forms an abstract lacy web over the surface of the aged paper and lulls the awareness of the permutations into a comforted sense of quiet decency.

12 A closer look steps up the energy as the bunny bodies, in their imaginative positions, exhibit human tendencies - for the animal world doesn't employ the props and playthings that these bunnies do.

13 The bunnies at one time were merely witnesses to the madcap world of Robert Farmer. Their references more naïve, they had

the shapes of things to come (f)above (e) below - 2008, oil on wallpaper on paper, 5 x 30 inches



zombunnyocalypse - 2008, oil on wallpaper on panel, 24 x 30 inches

sat at tea parties in the company of baby faced guests, marvelled at the hot dog served for the last supper or been present, and perhaps in collusion, when the teddy bear humped the pussy cat.

14 More than one bunny has lost its head over the strange state of affairs, but never before have they appeared with such fornicating force - crowds of bunnies getting it on with an overall frantic feeling of "What are those bunnies up to?!"

15 There is a formlessness to their bodies that belies the sexuality being enacted. Like androgynous figurines, they appear to be

made of a malleable substance similar to bubble gum. Their shapeless clothes recall gum wrappers and the overall color scheme of pink (for a girl) and blue (for a boy) reiterate the hermaphroditic allusion.

16 Robert throws in accents of other characters such as a snowman in a cowboy hat, a gay reference to the archetype of a queer cowboy hooker.

17 Since he has carrots serving as dildos, the erect nose of the blue snowman, launched into an upturned bunny body, furthers the reckless atmosphere of wild orgiastic abandon.

18 Cavorting with the glee of propagating and adding twists of bondage to the naughtiness, Robert Farmer's bouncing characters play out their sexual fantasies against a backdrop of delicate wallpaper and within their lacy layout they appear as harmless, delightful and seductive as safe sex.

19 The paintings using hot dogs also use subreption as a ploy. The hot dog is depicted with a nostalgic flare. It is the good ol' hot dog, the ten-cent hot dog before food additives and carcinogenic fillers.

20 It is the hot dog sold on the corner by a paternal vendor with a push cart, wearing an old straw hat and standing under a candy striped awning.

21 It is a visual vocabulary invested with belief, old fashioned and not yet jaded by modern times.

last supper II - 2007, oil on print (framed), 24 x 48 inches

FARMER

22 The same can be said for the ice cream cones. Farmer's ice cream looks as if it was made in a wooden ice cream maker, with cream, sugar, strawberries and ice ground down from that rare commodity on a hot day before refrigeration, when the ice truck delivered to the neighbourhood and an ice pick was better known as a utilitarian tool than a murder weapon.

23 Robert Farmer's ice cream is pre-petroleum products, before the occult manipulations of recipe makers vying for a grosser profit transformed a special reward for good behaviour into a habit.

24 Farmer tells the tale. He tattles, in fact, on the bad guys. He points out the obvious that has been obfuscated beyond recognition. He shows us that children are fat and ill tempered, that the Last Supper has become a giant hot dog, and that bunnies are fluffy sex maniacs.

25 The redeeming factor in all of this clothed exposure, this posturing of promises, is that the art piece, the work itself is actually 'quite nice'.

26 Although we are an overweight, unhealthy society, it's not all that bad if we can gently prod ourselves on to a better position.

27 There is still time to relegate the hot dog to the ten cent past. Above all, Farmer cautions against depression at the state of affairs.

crackerjacker - 2006, oil on paper on panel, 48 x48 inches

28 His tongue in cheek lyricism is palatable and we can take our medicine as he's mixed it - within an emulsion of sugar and spice and all things nice.

Corndog, Frankenstein, Vienna Sausage Monster - 2008, oil on paper on panel, each 20 x 20 inches

PSYCHOLOGICAL **R**EALISM **I**NSINUATING **E**XPLICIT **S**EXUAL **T**ABOOS

ASHLEY JOHNSON

CHAPTER 7

1 This is a series of acrylic paintings on paper that are thematically linked around the Human/Animal dichotomy. They try to find the animal within the human psyche.

2 Ancient cultures like the San or Bushman have an interesting concept of the power possessed by animals. This power is called n/um and seems to be an energy that can be beneficial to humanity if controlled or destructive if not channeled.

3 The San perform the Trance Dance, which is a healing ritual, around a fire at night. The women sit in a circle and clap the intricate rhythms of wordless songs that are named after "strong" things like Eland or Gemsbok antelopes. The men dance in a line within the circle and alternate the vortices by changing direction. (This manner of engaging with energy is mirrored in contemporary homeopathic procedures for preparing medicines).

4 Spirit animals are attracted to the dance site. The dancers describe a boiling in their stomachs and begin to see pathways of light that lead to the spirit world.

5 At a point some go into a trance that enables them to blend with the spirit world and in certain cases become spirit animals. This allows them to transcend physical barriers to become shamans. These healers will now physically seek out the "sickness" in the other individuals, drawing it out through sites like belly buttons. Finally, they collapse exhausted and are coaxed back to life by the others through song and stroking.

6 Conventional Western perceptions of reality have very defined separations between fact and fiction or objects in space.

Wildebeest Woman - 2001, acrylic on paper, 42 x 38 inches

7 Cultures like the San blur the boundaries between observed reality and the spirit world. They engage with reality using a range of strategies to deceive bad spirits, so for instance a successful hunter will deny hitting his prey and will only modestly admit to scratching it. The purpose is to avoid giving offense to the spirit of the animal killed.

8 Similarly, myths can contain several contradictory stories like an onion with many layers. Reality is in truth a very complex, multi-layered experience.

9 The reason to develop a new way of seeing is to alter our effect on the environment. Instead of seeing a tree we need to see the

larger organism.

10 The individual must relinquish boundaries so that environment merges with self. The San provide an example of a culture that achieves this.

11 The Primal paintings have been evolving sporadically from these ideas since the 90's.

12 Wildebeest Woman is about the deep place women have recourse to during birthing. Having participated in the birth of my children, it was interesting to note the loss of consciousness as deeper, animal instincts took over.

13 Bovines seem to epitomize inner strength and ability to suffer. The doctor who delivered my first born, which took 36 hours, had been working in the Congo region where he said the African women had very few problems delivering. He ascribed this to the fact that they worked in the fields and in many cases even gave birth there. Apparently the squatting position is quite beneficial as an aid to deliverance.

14 Beautiful Beasts indulges in erotic fantasy and contrasts the warthog, which is considered ugly, with a beautiful woman, blessed with the behind of an Indian Rhinoceros. They engage the viewer with their glances, perhaps imparting some of their pleasure. Or, perhaps it is the inscrutability that fascinates.

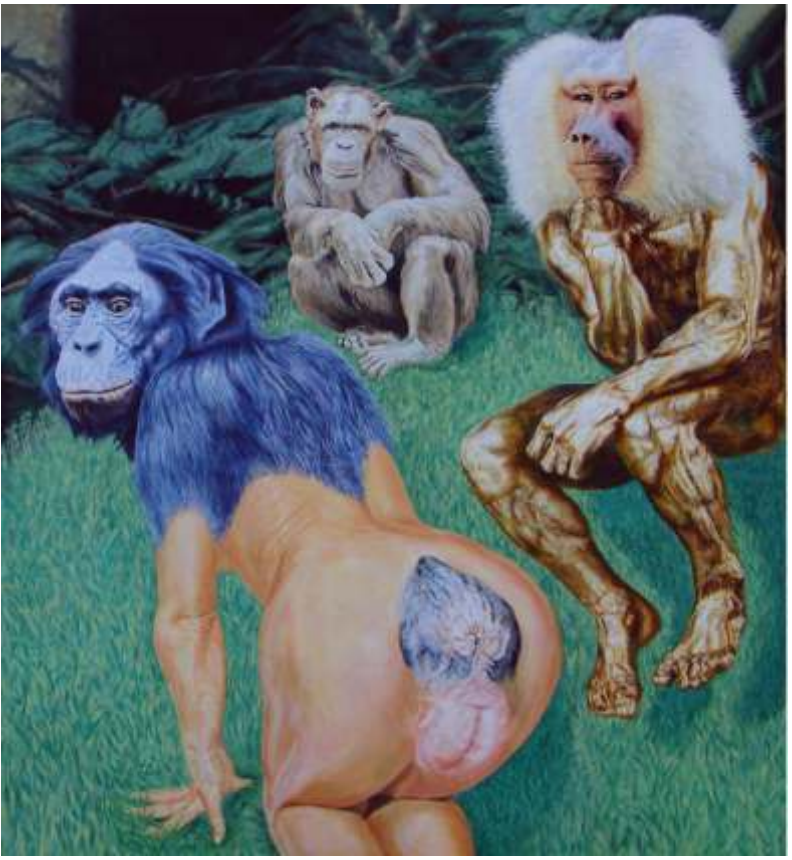
15 Hyena was inspired by the phenomenon of infant rape, an unfortunate reality in South African society. About 30% of the population

Beautiful Beasts - 2001, acrylic on paper, 42 x 38 inches

Anomalous Position - 2007, acrylic on paper, 42 x 38 inches

has AIDS, is largely poverty-stricken and illiterate. Traditional beliefs persist and some sangomas or witch-doctors promoted the idea that having sex with a new born would cure the disease.

16 This led to a spate of baby rapes which still continues as it is impossible for the authorities to control. The government desires to be seen as a progressive force in Africa so it was very embarrassing for them and they went into denial.



Rethink - 2008, acrylic on paper, 40 x 37 inches

Hyena - 2003, acrylic on paper, 42 x 38 inches

17 I felt it was important to expose this part of the human psyche, which apparently also reared its head during the Black Death period of European history.

18 However, the infant's head is that of an old man, probably my father, who used to delight in visiting my studio when he was still alive. Her feet are hyena's paws. This indicates perpetuity.

19 Anomalous Position is an uncertain coupling. It deals with the anomalies of inter-sex where female and male possibilities coexist. The reality that we surround ourselves with often doesn't make allowance for ambiguity and contradiction.

20 In defining ourselves we induce imprisonment even as we express freedom. I am suspicious of explanations like the theory of evolution, which have become entrenched in the scientific psyche, because they use a conceptual lexicon that is already compromised with limitation.

21 To my mind, reality is a figment of the imagination. By this I mean that the creative chaos of possibility is the flux of existence and the act of naming or identifying co-ordinates, merely indicates a momentary bias.

22 As a body, the works have an undercurrent of sensuality and movement between states.

Ashley Johnson

Necromance (opposite) - 2008, acrylic on paper, 40 x 37 inches

PAINTERLY **R**EFERENCES **I**NVOKING & **E**XPRESSING **S**ITUATIONAL **T**RIALS

JESSE MCCLOSKEY

Ann Putnam - 2007, hand painted block print, 24 x 18 inches

CHAPTER 8

1 There is a depth to the narrative behind Jesse McCloskey's shocking expletive where the dog/devil and girl/witch act out.

2 The works of Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg and Johns used references that came from childhood and adolescence - guns, toys, cartoons, maps, targets, cars, posters, advertisements, televisions and more.

3 Their youth had come from the upswing of consumerism and their interest had been informed by the milieu of a prosperous America.

4 Jesse McCloskey grew up in New England, home of the witch trials, Plymouth Rock and the Mayflower, Pocahontas and then the normal - bad boys, naughty girls and dogs.

5 Mix these essential components in with a Fine Arts education replete with references from art history and there is a clue to McCloskey's secret ingredients.

6 There is an acknowledgment of suffering, wrong-doing, struggle and righteousness in the squiring of tales such as the one of a little girl of four years was tied, hands to feet, during the Inquisition - that in reality was based on property rights - in order to extract information on the devil. Quite the story to tell.

7 The struggle is not so easy to categorise as being 'renegade' or 'reactionary' once the impetus behind this work is explored.

8 Abhorrent situations can be spellbinding so when he studies historical reference books for content of a nasty nature, gobbles it up and spews it out with a frenetic energy, the witchcraft has begun.

9 There are stories that are common to cultures and ages that serve as templates for the common narrative of the time: the creation myths, the passion plays, the Greek tragedies, theatre del arte, classical allegories and biblical morality tales. The action within them serves to illustrate the temper of the time.

10 Jesse McCloskey appears to have developed a current common narrative within the consistent imagery of the dog/devil and the

Bird Hunt - 2005, Vinyl paint and paper collage on paper, 50 x 38 inches

Escape from the Park - 2005, Collage and tempera on paper, 22 x 30 inches

girl/witch that he has used in paintings and drawings over a number of years.

11 Are the dog and the girl with their hedonistic foreplay and wild abandon an apt metaphor for a debauched culture or is his work a release for both himself as the perpetrator of the imaginings and for the voyeuristic perspective?

12 What might have seemed to be solely a flight of fancy into naughty-making, has now gained the credence of a commitment and the story has even progressed to encompass raunchier sexual exploits with more brutal retaliation against the harassment metered out by the 'other', be it dog or girl.

13 This work is not as simplistic as the pitching of good against evil, despite the angelic face of the girl or the gradual leaning of the physiognomy of the dog to goat-ishness for the girl gets down and dirty as well.

14 Neither is hanging on to appearances and in fact the girl has been showing her witch-y side, throwing back the liquor with apparent relish and riding the strangled canine hard.

15 This is permissive abandon, bestiality and bad messy fun.

16 There seems to be no moral amidst the searing colors and libidinous sweeps of paint.

Park Art - 2002, Paint and paper collage on paper, 38 x 50 inches

Attack In The Park - 2005, Collage and Tempera on paper, 38 x 50 inches

Devil Girl 2007, Vinyl paint and paper collage on paper, 50 x 38 inches

17 From the contemporary awareness of a world with a political climate of masked purposes, incomprehensible corporate power-mongering and materialistic prompts, it's a relief to spend some quality time following the scatological incorrectness of McCloskey's girl and dog.

18 He is uncovering malaise, recognizing it and placing it in the face of a complacent society with as much aplomb as he can muster with his expressionistic handling of the picture surface.

19 None of the cucumber cool of the early pop guys; he pushes and pulls the surface with vehemence and extracts the energy needed for his un-didactic wake-up call.

20 Jesse McCloskey is the Red Bull of pop.

Pussy Devil - 2007, Vinyl paint and paper collage on paper, 22 x 30 inches

Elixer - 2007, Vinyl paint and paper collage on canvas, 48 x 60 inches

POP **R**EALISM **I**NTRODUCING **E**L **S**ALVADORIAN **T**RAGEDIES

OSVALDO RAMIREZ CASTILLO

CHAPTER 9

1 Working with images that unflinchingly examine the grotesque and painful alongside of the fantastical, Castillo moves forward with a steady and adept talent.

2 The macabre content of his drawings on Mylar depict vague and extraordinary memories of his native country El Salvador where political unrest was a part of the daily diet of his childhood.

3 Lately, the malignant imagery has been couched in a rainbow palette. The overall effect is one of wonder that the face of extremity can be so gloriously rendered as to become almost comprehensible.

4 Transformation myths help to explain the unexplainable and often irreconcilable opposites of good and evil. They allow ugliness to change into beauty, beast into man, darkness into light and inspire the hope of devastated peoples who feel they have been abandoned by their god.

5 Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo reinvents the Aztec character as a means of dealing with the violent imagery, born of memory and experience, that have made up his artistic output.

6 From the dense black and white pain of *Shipwreck in Jucuapa*, 2005, to the harmful in influence and effect of his imagined interior of *Quetzecoatl* in 2007, there has also been an artistic transformation.

7 From grey scale or muted analogous color schemes to a full and lurid palette, his work has gone through a transformation that reaches further into the convolutions of his fertile mind.

8 Quetzalcoatl is an Aztec sky and creator god. The name is a combination of *quetzal*, a brightly colored Mesoamerican bird, and *coatl*, meaning serpent.

Santa Maria - 2007, mixed media on Mylar (est. 54 x 42 inches)

9 He is the God of the wind and the air, part bird and part snake.

10 One of the pantheon of deities that reigned over the consciousness of South America before the advent of the Spanish, he was a personified translation of the mysteries of survival made into a visual form.

11 However, other than the flying horse, clarion crying rooster and gaseous atmosphere enveloping the serpent, there is not a lot of flight in Castillo's rendition of the mythical creature.

Ferias II (detail) - 2007, mixed media on Mylar, 42 x 142 inches

12 If the snake was the creator (phallic, truthful metaphor) - then the beginning was slithering into being rather than rising upon a spirit wave.

La M.S. - 2007, mixed media on Mylar, 17 x 9.5 inches

Hungry Dogs - 2007, mixed media on Mylar,(16 x 16.5 inches

13 There is violent indigestion in this hell-like process of birth and the element is fiery rather than light and airy. If these are Quetzalcoatl's children in gestation, then all hell is about to break loose.

14 The violent memories of a people are often passed on in story telling, the intimate disclosure from father to son or mother to daughter of the trials and tribulations of their generation.

15 The figures, fantastic and unreal to our Western culture where there has not been a war fought upon this native land, have a resonance for Castillo that was born of experience.

16 This is the telling seed of the conceptual beginnings of Castillo's work. It has been processed through his life and passed on from his parents who heard from *their* parents

similar tales of transformation and change.

17 This is the valuable insight that he is able to share and the result, foreign and horrific with exploding bodies, dog-men, soldiers, spikes and torture; is a cause for wonder.

18 Only Castillo knows where, in *Quetzacoatl's Children*, the ropes towards the sky are anchored. That he delivers this epic version of the Aztec god with the deft and clairvoyant mastery of an angel, renders the statement even more poignant.

Quetzalcoatl's Children (detail) - 2007, mixed media on Mylar, 42 x 142 inches

POP **R**ECONSTRUCTIONS **I**NCORPORATING **E**LEMENTS FROM **S**ERIAL '**T**OONS

BILLY COPLEY

Finger & Spring - 2006, Acrylic and rice paper collage on paper, 41 x 29 inches

CHAPTER 10

1 In the early days of Pop art, evidence of the artists hand gradually disappeared from art in favour of techniques of mechanical reproduction. This reinforced the concept of the multiple. Individuality was replaced by mass production.

2 Fifty years later, artists once again crave the authentic self. A one of a kind approach, recognizing the individual. The unique is once again desirable.

3 The more subjective arrangement of images and surface treatment is the fresh take of Billy Copley's recent works.

4 Working with pre-painted papers, Copley seldom leaves a flat uninterrupted color field.

5 He uses a rich range of colors that are created with patterns, washes and gradations, transmutations layered and collaged so that each area is unique. This also makes for illusions of depth which in turn allows the push and pull of the picture to be activated.

6 Within each piece there is a maximum of means and a maximizing of the opportunity to present a surface.

7 Rather than trying to convince us that there is a distance from the imagery, Copley acknowledges his engagement in the process and thus encourages the subsequent engagement by the viewer.

8 Copley melds the abstract and subjective with the discipline of an obsessive, precise aesthetic.

9 With freedom to borrow from kitsch and sentimental rag barrels, he snips, pastes, prints, rubs and paints his way into a new corner, a place of no return for there are so many layers of visuals that the process of looking back to the beginning is indeterminate.

10 Relishing the creative process, there is a lip-smacking tastiness in the riot of elements, recognized and strange, within each work. Elements balance precariously in a circus ring like juggling balls.

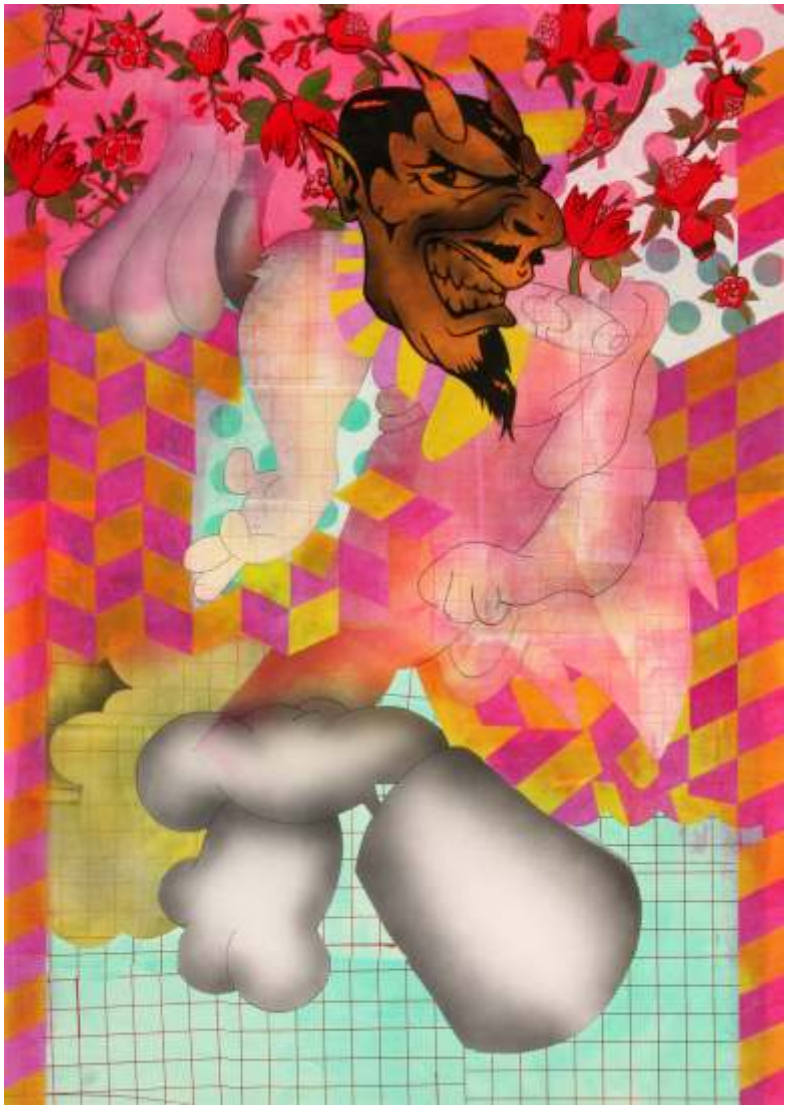
12 While these appear to be happy works, there is also something disquieting about

Drink Problem - 2004, Acrylic and rice paper collage on paper, 40 ½ x 36 inches

COPLEY

them. They scream for attention much like a child at play.

13 These works however, are mature no matter how loud they scream. Through the Power of visual presence, Copley extracts a varied beauty from the wacky objects and patterns he juxtaposes using styles from hard edge to mottled surfaces, visual treatments that carry braggadocio as if they were developed to wow the viewer.



Untitled Devil - 2006, Acrylic and rice paper collage on paper, 40 x 29 inches

Daffey Duck/Target Bag - 2006, Acrylic paint and rice paper collage on paper, 24 x 20 inches

14 With a painterly, psychedelic perspective, the foreground competes with the background and the relationship between the visual spaces becomes queered and all the elements fold into each other.

15 Billy Copley seems to be pushing all of the buttons at once and taking us on a ride that brings forth a thrilling if somewhat queasy jubilation.

16 The imagery propels the precepts of earlier pop art into fast-forward (or perhaps fast-reverse) and this results in giddy interesting work which like the wackiness of Saturday morning cartoons is full of

adventurous changes.

17 So with Copley, his use of the familiar - be it pin-up girl, rose, polka dot or grid becomes new again and creates a sensational pop!

18 For those who get their kicks out of art, it's a rush. Copley gives a lot of energy to the work.

Petco Bag (Redesigned) - 2006, Acrylic paint and rice paper collage on paper, 25 x 20 inches

Girl With Rose - 2006, Acrylic and rice paper collage on paper, 47 x 31 inches

PERSONAL **R**EALISM WITH **I**NSIGHTS **E**XPRESSING A **S**EEABLE **T**RUTH

ZACHARI LOGAN

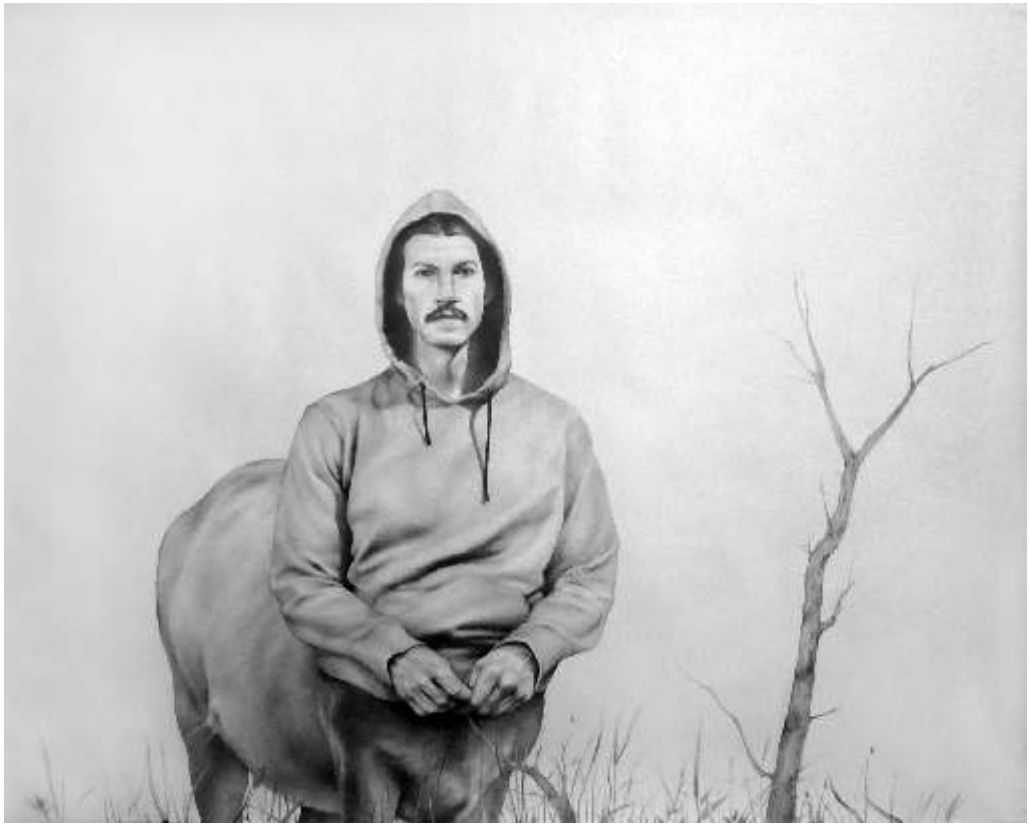
CHAPTER 11

1 In previous drawings, the men were secondary to the narrative for Logan had placed them in a context that was general, perhaps historical (*The World is Flat*) or with a vague semblance of legend as in *The Voyage*.

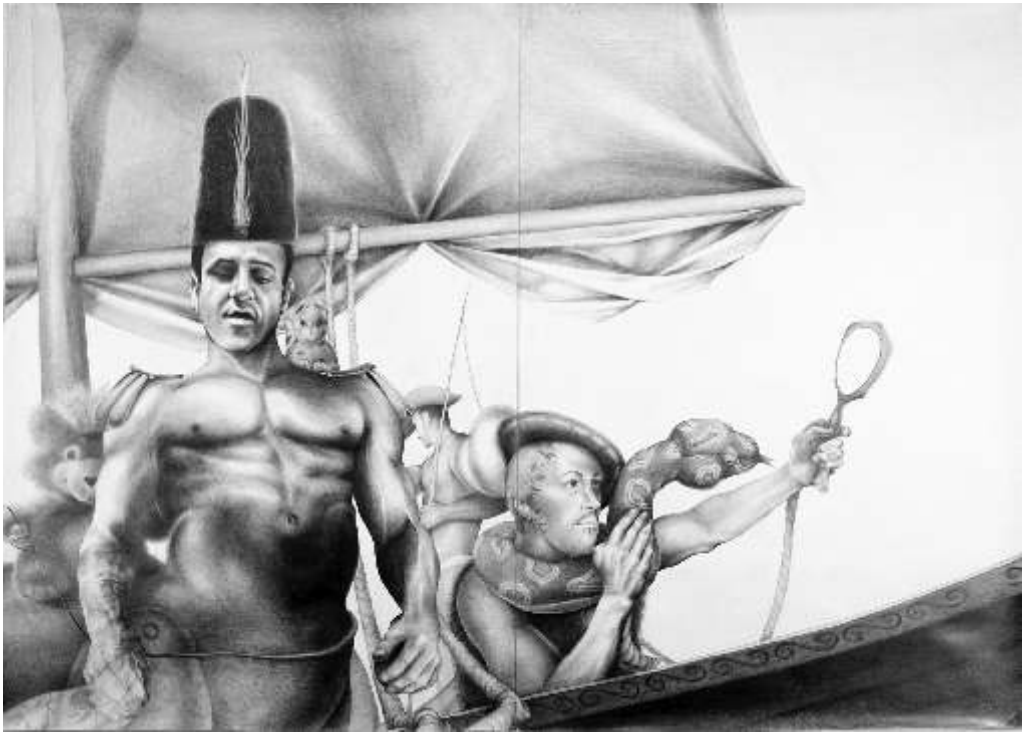
2 Even the men dressed in women's clothes were not seen as necessarily homo-erotic for the dresses, gowns, are identifiable with an era when cross dressing was closer to a parlour game than a sign of homosexuality.

3 Using history, mystery, the mundane and menace as wedges to open the doors of acceptance to the masculine gaze that turns upon itself, Zach Logan's male figures reinvent our references to masculinity.

4 By concentrating on fine specimens of men, bodies muscled and taut, with handsome faces and a wholesome stance of advocacy towards homoeroticism, he brings forth a witty range of situations from muffled, masked love-making to lounging satyrs.



Bunny Hug - 2008, graphite on paper, 48 x 42 inches



Voyage - 2005, graphite on paper, two panels, 86 x 96 inches

5 The later drawings bring the men into an arena that is unavoidably sensual and although they are not depicted having sex, the allusion is prescient and enticing. Able bodied, athletic, valenced and physically grappling, the actions edify the exchange of the male gaze.

6 The recipient of the gaze or the object for the desire has all of the attributes of wholesome masculinity.

7 The visually seductive figures could be compared to a proactive poster advocating gay rights.

8 Even when the heads are draped in cloth and there is dynamite strapped to the figure, the viewer is not alienated but invited to identify.

9 It has been the open door that Logan has used through out his work, a reasonable justification of images that are not meant to shock or alienate but to invite understanding.

10 It becomes a plausible premise to partake in the witnessing of a sexual orientation that is still questioned, even condemned in certain factions of society.

11 This is a polite affirmation, a quiet gifting of interest, a sensitive hand forward.

12 It is a message that is sent with the clear talent of a gifted draftsman and the dynamic of a confident artistic presentation.

LOGAN

Gulliver - 2005, graphite on paper, 57 x 42 inches

The World is Flat -2005, three panels, graphite on paper, 91 x 126 inches

JULIE OAKES

Big Bob - 2006, charcoal and ink on paper, 60 X 44 inches

CHAPTER 12

Written by Ashley Johnson

1 Oakes's "Conscientious Perversity" is a rich autobiographical narrative that is laden with metaphor.

2 This is the last element in Oakes's "Human Sacrifice" trilogy (comprising "The Quercia Stories," "The Revolving Door" and "Conscientious Perversity"), which draws on libertine adventures and different ways of exploring sexuality as a woman.

3 The main characters are the siblings Juliette and Justine Quercia, alter egos of the author borrowed from the Marquis de Sade. Juliette serves as a foil for the more libidinous Justine.

4 Although the works have titles corresponding to chapters in a book by Oakes, they are not strictly illustrative. Indeed, the writing often seems painterly, with expressive metaphors piled up like vehicles in a traffic jam.

5 The artwork is metaphysical and packed with humorous undercurrents that are manifested through cartoonish simplification.

6 The repeated appearance of the artist's trademark orange bob hairstyle alerts us to the fact that these are self-portraits.

7 There is a beguiling menace in these works, like a female spider about to devour her mate in the act of making love. A delicate, feminine sensuality is embedded in the web of imagery with the inclusion of lingerie or exposed limbs. Clairvoyant third eyes peer through various orifices and negative spaces, observing the voyeur. Hilarious silhouettes burst into life and dash across the works' surfaces, frantically trying to lose clothing. Carcasses of dead animals become energized again.

8 The fervid atmosphere is passed on to the viewer, giving one the sensation of entering a whirling mass of imagery. It is an illusion, however; the works are disciplined, with certain forms echoing throughout.

9 In the enormous painting *Conscientious Perversity*, felines stalk over us, then the composition shifts to suggest something else.

Thin Boundaries - 2005, oil on canvas, 152 x 132 inches

10 Oakes uses dissonance: virulent crimson tones abut oranges and maroons with an occasional startling blue.

11 The inversions of scale conjure a scene reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*.

CHAPTER 13
Written by James Campbell
Courtesy Galerie Samuel Lallouz

1 Oakes draws upon a daunting inventory of images in the execution of her paintings, from masterworks of Buddhist iconography that can be found at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Metropolitan Museum in New York and a thousand other institutions and sources between and betwixt them.

2 Oakes's visual art suggests the undertow of the cosmic law of karma that is integral to Tibetan Buddhism. In Buddhism, your karma

The Three Realms (Heaven, Hell, Earth) - 2007, oil on canvas, 72" diameter

The Spark of Life

The Crowning Glory

When Pomegranates Flow

Electric Reciprocity

2008, edition 25, four color silk-screen print on paper, 50 x 19 inches

is simply inescapable. One might suggest that in these works, Oakes, searcher and savant, has surrendered herself to her own karma.

3 She paints without any escape clause, caveat, if–then conditional–or empty codicil. She simply gives us, her viewers, everything, and thus we are the willing beneficiaries of all that she has in mind to say, hand to express–and heart to heal.

4 A maverick artist who has stubbornly refused to shy away from controversy and provocation over the course of almost 40 years, Julie Oakes is one of a handful of Westerners who have succeeded in translating all the sophistication and complexity of the Buddhist spiritual system into a radiant painting world that is as engrossing as it is challenging for believers and non-believers alike.

5 She is that rarest of creative beings, a Buddhist who expresses her spiritual practice in figures which cut across all cultural antipodes, belief oases and trans-celestial divides, and speaks to us in one voice from the very heart of *self* and *selflessness* and *self-surrender.*

PAINSTAKING **R**EFLECTIONS **I**N **E**THEREAL **S**UBTLE **T**ECHNIQUES

JENNY WING YEE TONG

Faster Than A Running Lantern - 2008, mixed media on vellum, 40 x 70 inches

CHAPTER 14

1 The placement of a donkey's head on a human body is imbedded in the western lore of fairytales, enchantment and children's stories.

2 For example, Shakespeare had Oberon, king of the forest, bring the fairy Queen Titania back under his amorous sway by placing the braying beast's head upon a player's shoulders and tricking her into an embarrassing liaison with the donkey.

3 Pinocchio was pulled from a path of wrong living by the example of truant boys transformed into donkeys. A brash voice, far from mellifluous, stupidity, slowness and stubbornness are the poor beast's attributes.

4 Its position within the beastly hierarchy has been that of a peon - one of toil and basic portage. But there is also a magical aspect to a donkey that might be based on it's potential for transformation. Being so lowly, like frog to

A Wayward History - 2005, mixed media on vellum, 95 x 81 inches

prince, the donkey, from its rung down the ladder of evolution when it comes to human enchantments, might be raised and transformed.

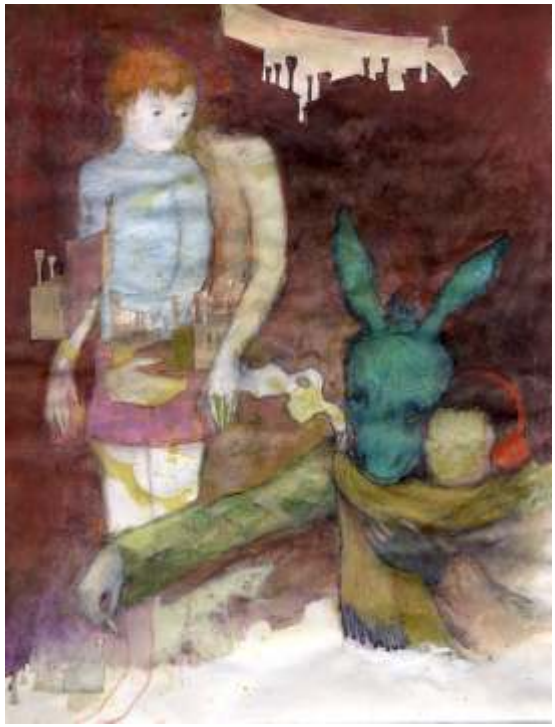
5 The subjects are fabulous, fable-lesque, from fables that Wing Yee has spun from a combination of eastern and western legends.

6 When the butterfly's wing, dusted by fairies, reflects the light of the moon or sun shine bounces on the back of a beetle, Jenny Wing Yee Tong's colors were created. With the pastel overtones of Degas' palette, filaments of luminosity describe fantasies.

7 There are many layers of translucent paint on thin membranes of paper. The Wing Yee palette is primarily pastel. The dense dark fur and solid structure of the donkey when placed in more ethereal contexts stands out as a firm reminder of the propensity to ignore the humble animal.

8 While Jenny's donkey heads maintain their footing within the ephemeral, gossamer environments where candelabras are the pivot for décor, allusions to tales yet untold abound. Wing Yee, with a surefooted delicacy wends her painterly way through nuances of conciliation and the cares of existence dissipate with the flutter of an eyelash or a butterfly kiss preserved on paper, still fragile and dewy with belief, all of our excuses of superiority.

9 Wing Yee embraces the donkey and in doing so is a catalyst for the frog to turn princely.



That Winter - 2006, mixed media on paper, 10.5 x 8 inches

TONG

Au Plus Belle Age - 2006, mixed media on vellum, 36 x 24 inches

The Exam - 2006, mixed media on vellum, 100 x 92 inches

PSYCHIDELIC **R**ENDERING **I**LLUSTRATING **E**CCENTRIC **S**TEREO-**T**YPES

SCOTT McEWAN

Camel Clutch - 2005-07, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

CHAPTER 15

1 When two circles are eccentric, they don't share the same center although they do share the same space.

2 Scott McEwan's work is within the circle of art - accomplished, current, informed and ardent; and yet it is slightly off center. It is this skew that catches, engages and provokes interest. The personal circle, Scott's circle, that is inhabiting the greater art circle, is centered. In fact it is holistic and the art work contains signifiers of a well rounded experience.

3 The work is about wrestling, queer culture, pop iconography and graphic imagery. It tells us a story. Scott is one of the main characters. The paintings on paper and canvas tell it all.

4 He's an art teacher, a wrestler and he's gay. He has asthma. He hangs out with a colorful, cross-dressing crowd.

5 He has brilliant taste and a fine hand. He is committed to his art practice and currently has a habit of drawing black ink portraits, varying in size. The smallest are drawn on the cards given out in gay bars to pass on telephone numbers with the hope of future assignations.

6 There are also larger than life size formats, often committed to paper from memory, of all of the men that he meets.

7 His world is lined with men, grappling and cavorting in masculine demonstrations of fitness and strength. The wrestlers, dressed like super-heroes exist in an atmosphere of clouds, flames and bubbles where every element is outlined in black - a cartoon and candy-colored depiction of a hairy, sweating, sensuous sport.

8 There are pansies throughout - that antiquated derogatory term once used for homosexual men. Yet like the resilience of the gay culture, Scott too has reclaimed, with punchy pride, the slur and worn it on his heart sleeve.

9 'Queer' at one time described a mentally unbalanced, deranged or qualmish individual and then extended into a slang derivation for 'homosexual'. The homosexual community

adopted the term and, with fey bravado, ran with it.

10 This is where Scott McEwan shines. He shies away from nothing. He allows the combination of brash colors, whimsical lyricism and an enchanted oeuvre free-range in the world of wrestling.

11 Starting with a random word from the lingo of the ring; he builds on it visually, inserting his characters into a turbulent, active world where excretions spurt high and explosions, just like in the comics, are a matter of course with no more significance in the echelon of masculine attributes than the veined petals of a pansy.

12 His skew is clearly stated, his circle is intact and he's spinning but not out of control. Like a dervish, he twirls and as the sequins catch flashes of ambient light, he sparkles.

Worked - 2005-07, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 40 inches

What's Happening - 2005 -07, acrylic on arches, 30 x 22 inches

Ending - 2007, acrylic on arches, 30 x 20 inches

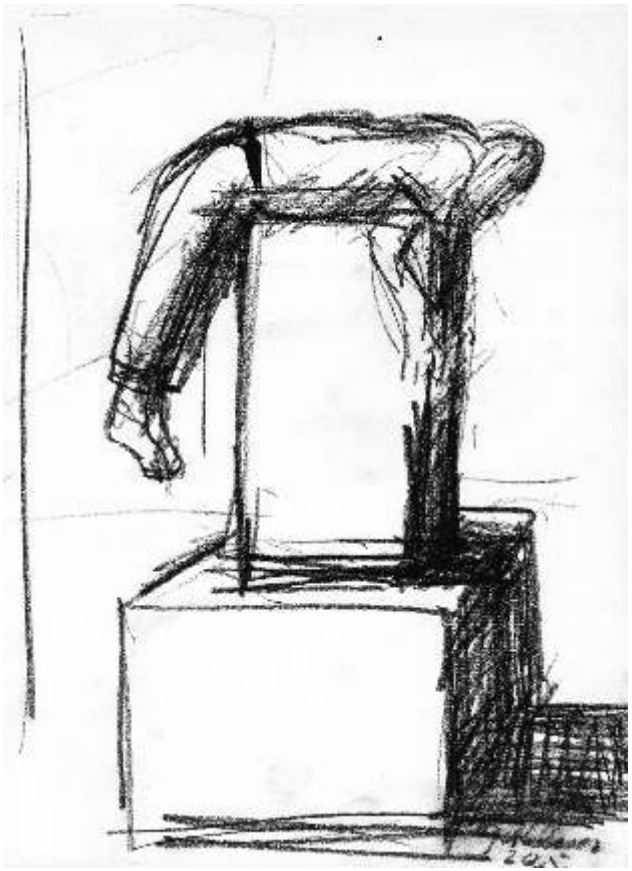
(opposite) Hood - 2005-07, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

Finisher - 2005-07, acrylic on canvas, 30.5 x 40 inches

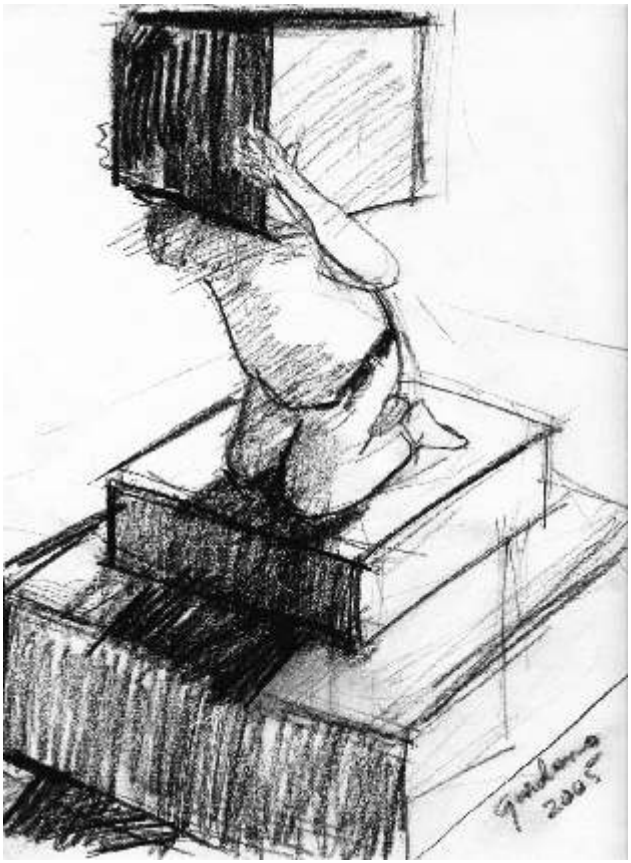
HOOD

PESSIMISTIC **R**EALISM WITH **I**RONIC **E**XAMPLES OF **S**TRESS & **T**ENSION

ED GIORDANO JR.



Untitled (on box) - 2005, graphite on paper, 8.5 x 11 inches



Untitled (lifting box) - 2005, graphite on paper, 8.5 x 11 inches

CHAPTER 16

1 The acknowledgement of superficiality that the pop pioneers purported was punctuated by the poignancy of works by George Segal and Edward Kienholz. Both eschewed the religiosity towards materials that had come before them by using ordinary plaster as the end result rather than a step in the process of sculpting. They took found objects and set the context. They addressed topics that were psychological and they looked at contemporary consumerist orientation as the root of dysfunction.

2 'Loneliness' was not just a word in a pop song but the dripping faucet that was draining the resources from a morally depleted society.

3 Giordano had studied with Segal and the influence is felt. But he has distilled the final

Ecce Homo (detail) - 1999, plaster & wood, 144 x 48 x 24 inches

Labor Omnia (detail) - 1997, plaster & wood, 144 x 24 x 24 inches

product, bringing the angst to its most intoxicating level and the plaster personifications cloy with a chalky under taste like the suspicious milky drink in Rosemary's baby served as an annunciation with a slightly demonic gene.

4 Ed Giordano's prognosis is bleak. His typical man seems unable to move off of his solitary and compromised perch. He is imprisoned in words, covered by statistics, pinioned by the message of modernity rather than set free by the fictionalization of his possibilities.

5 There is no room to soar upwards and pursue the divine quest of finding himself. The 'overman' is someone else. This sad and

GIORDANO

Boundaries (detail) - 2001, plaster & rough cut lumber, 56 x 96 x 16 inches

stymied 'ordinary guy' is not going anywhere.

6 This is the pith of the sorry matter and with true psychological zeitgeist the pieces transcend intrinsic commonality through the monumental truth of angst.

7 By confronting the locked position of this vision of man, the opposite is invoked - freedom and all of it's liberating facets.

8 The diminutive size and rough rendering points a way around the grand philosophical mysteries without having to be overwhelmed by the impossibility of understanding.

9 The more likely fault - missing the mark - looses the stigmata of ignorance.

10 The potential for expressing the human condition has been realised in these unassuming figures.

11 They pose no threat upon our need to stay at least somewhat comfortable within our sentience. In fact, they grant a reverse dignity to our common plight by vesting humility with a presence, a powerful sculptural identity.

12 Ed Giordano's sculpture opens a door to compassion. It is void of arrogance and admits no challenge. It exists with a stubborn right to be blindly depressed.

13 We feel sorry that it had gone this far, that the straight jacket has fused like a second skin, that we have not taken better care and been more attentive to this diminishing stature.

14 It is his unflinching persistence that modernity is serving up less than it is capable of, that under-achievement is expected, that the weight of life is not equal to the potential for ascension that is first and foremost on his agenda.

15 He is undauntingly pessimistic.

16 This is Ed's Fresh Pop - he insists the ingredients are toxic. His is not a bubbly intake but a draught with a bitter aftertaste.

The Champion (detail) - 1999, plaster, wood & clamps, 144 x 12 x 8 inches

Father Domine - 1998, plaster, wood & acrylic paint, 18 x 8 x 12 inches

Untitled - 1997, plaster, wood & acrylic paint, 36 x 18 x 16 inches

PREDISPOSITION TO **R**EVEALING **I**NCREDIBLE **E**FFEMINATE **S**ITUATIONS & **T**ALES

ALEKS BARTOSIK

This Venus Stole an Artichoke Heart - 2007, acrylic, charcoal and gesso on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

CHAPTER 17

1 These are provoking drawings, rebellious stances that push the unconventional. They are pugilistic with the boxing gloves loaded - clenched fists ready to punch. They're masochistic and appeal to the sadistic side of the psyche, that unacknowledged cry to be beaten and receive the full brunt of nastiness and humiliation.

2 Aleks Bartosik reconciles the opposites of human grossness and glamour with the dramatic brashness of size and theatrical composition.

3 Primarily focusing on the female figure, she creates situations that suggest a tangential perversity. None the less, there is a sexy allure and it is in this respect that the unconventional comes into play.

4 They appeal to the fascination of a big naughtiness like a Roman overindulgence that is so over-the top that it is destined to implode but tastes delicious until that final cut is made.

5 Alice went down the rabbit hole and in wonderland she met up with grotesques, exaggerations of the world as she had left it. There was always a resemblance to the 'real' world but the skewing raised questions, entrapments, predicaments and drugged perceptions that begged to be acknowledged. Alice, a pretty little blonde girl confronted the unusual, fascinated with the revelations.

6 Aleks Bartosik is taking a similar trip and exploring temptation. She indulges her curiosity and hence furthers the voyeuristic interests of the viewers.

7 The presentation of her compromised females - fat and clumsy or tastily dainty, pinioned and stuck, gloved for battle but hung, or small before a beastly headless adversary - allow the contemplation of gothic possibilities without a self righteous prod.

8 There is no moral. There is no need to rescue. There is only the shock, the recoil, and then the step forward for a closer inspection.

Venus II - 2007, acrylic, charcoal and gesso on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

9 A gutsy hip chick who steps outside of constraints, Aleks Bartosik uses the full force of her appearance as the autobiographically based subject of her bold yet intimate narratives.

10 Using a storyline of self exposure, Bartosik allows her bad girl inclinations free reign.

11 With a repertoire ranging from expressionist drawings to performances,

12 Bartosik has distinguished her persona as a force to be reckoned with, peaked at and exclaimed upon.

Faces No. 1 - 2005, charcoal, conte, acrylic & oil stick on paper, 75 x 40 cm

Faces No. 8 - 2005, charcoal, conte, acrylic & oil stick on paper, 75 x 40 cm

Installation Wall Drawing - Hysterics

Self Control - 2003, charcoal, conte, pencil, acrylic, oilstick, 210 x 285 cm

BARTOSIK

Learning To Conform - 2003, conte, pencil, oil stick on paper, 225 x 150 cm

Dirty Hands (Boxing Gloves) - 2003, oilstick, pencil, acrylic & pencil on paper, 112 x 76 cm

NEOPRIEST

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

SRDJAN SEGAN

Srdjan Segan is a graduate from the Ontario College of Art and Design in 2004 specialising in sculpture, installation, drawing and painting. He was awarded First Prize in the John B. Aird 5th and 8th Annual Drawing Exhbitions and has also received The Ludwig Voglestein, Ontario Arts Council Grants, The Artcast Inc. Sculpture Award from The Sculpture Society of Canada and others. His work has been exhibited in many exhibitions in Canada, New York, Italy and Belgrade with solo exhibitions at Detroit Industrial Projects in Detroit, Headbones Gallery, The John B Aird Gallery and Kabat Wrobel Gallery, Racoon Space, New York and with a solo Installation at Diego Salazar Studios during the ISCP Open Studios, also in New York. Segan is currently featured in The Varley Gallery of Markham Ontario's *Face Forward: Contemporary Portraiture*, *Maison de la culture* Cote-des-Neiges in Montréal and is scheduled to be at The Thames Gallery in The Chatham Cultural Centre.

SCOTT P. ELLIS

Collage artist Scott P. Ellis was born in Colborne, Ontario, 1970. Scott started visually exploring the underground and punk rock scenes using photography in Montreal in the early nineties. The staged photographic work presented a visually challenging message directed at the perverted abuse of power in religious and corporate environments. Because of the costs and substantial coordination associated with staged photographic art, Ellis settled into the medium of collage for his artistic expression. In collage, he has chosen to regurgitate popular media and propaganda and serve up his own visual dish of worldly interpretation. Recent successes include three published books of his works and three major solo exhibitions in 2007 and 2008: Master Of The Universe, at Gallery Samuel Lallouz in Montreal, Collage at Gallery Moos in Toronto and Warnings at Headbones Gallery, Toronto.

ROBERT FARMER

Originally from Winnipeg Manitoba, Toronto artist Robert Farmer was born in 1968. Farmer briefly attended Emily Carr College in 1995 and attained a foundation year at Kootenay School of the Arts in Nelson, BC (1998-1999). Primarily an independently self-schooled artist, Farmer moved to Toronto and in 2003 while employed as a faux finisher he co-founded The Eastern Front, an artist's collective in the East End of Toronto. Farmer's work has been featured in The Toronto Star, NOW Magazine, Riverside Quarterly and was part of the press release for The Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition in 2007.

ASHLEY JOHNSON

Ashley Johnson, from South Africa, presents work from his Primal Series. Harkening to a spiritual root of first importance and fundamental to the psyche, humans shape-shift into animals, interact with the beastly and attach to areas of the subconscious. This delving into the basic impulses, much like Freudian psychology, allows for a confrontation with the nether regions where, by visually speaking the unspeakable, knowledge is gained.

Johnson was one of the cofounders of Dasart in South Africa, an artistic co-operative with a radical alternative bent that mounted exhibitions that travelled internationally (1995 2003) and were the subject of critical reviews in Time Out, The Financial News, The

Star and Daily News (SA), Trouw (Nederlands), The Sunday Tribune and the Daily Dispatch (SA). With a dual capacity as writer and visual artist,Johnson is currently a contributing writer for Canadian Art Magazine. He will have his first solo exhibition in Canada at Headbones Gallery in November 2008.

JESSE McCLOSKEY

Jesse McCloskey is the young renegade. He freely emotes, applying a pop consciousness to a New England narrative. The result - inclusion in our current exhibition of three New Yorker artists, Fresh Pop, NYC,and a concurrent solo exhibition in New York City at the Christopher Henry Gallery starting September 5th. McCloskey is pushing and pulling his brand of freely expressive and energetic painting and collage across more than one border.

With an MFA from parsons, he has appeared in many group and solo exhibitions, and is an alumni ofthe Yaddo Artist's Residency in Saratoga Springs, New York. His work has been reviewed and reproduced by the New York Times. He has done record covers for the band, The Geraldine Fibbers, including the cover for their "Butch" cd, released by Virgin Records. His paintings also appear in filmmaker, Douglas Buck's cult favourite, Family Portraits: A Trilogy of America.

OSVALDO RAMIREZ CASTILLO

Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo was born in El Salvador where he grew up during the political unrest of the eighties. The macabre content of his drawings on mylar depict vague and extraordinary memories of his native country where malignant images were a part of the daily diet of his childhood.

He has been awarded many prestigious awards including the Duncan McPherson Award, The Ludwig Volgelstein Foundation Award and grants from the Canada Council, The Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council. His work has been reviewed in Buffalo Spree magazine, Le Monde, The Toronto Star and The Bank Independent. He received his MFA from Concordia University. He has exhibited internationally including Casa Las Americas, Cuba; International Egyptian Print Triennial, the International Print Center, New York and, most recently, in Beyond/In Western New York 2007 Biennial, Buffalo.

BILLY COPLEY

Billy Copley is a graduate of Chouinard Art Institute Los Angeles, CA. In 1971, after an exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery, Ny, he was one of the artists featured in the exhibition Ten Young Artists; Theodoran Awards at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. He was a part of the pop milieuof the 70's and 80's, working alongside of Warhol and showing at the galleries of Max Protech, John Weber, Phyllis Kind and the newly emerged PS1.His work was included in Selections 49 at The Drawing Center New York, NY in the 90's.

With an impressive exhibition record, he has been working in NYC consistently producing an evocative style that echoes the early Pop movement, and fifty years later, is still craving the authentic self. Relishing the creative process, there is a lip smacking tastiness in the riot of elements, recognised and strange, within each work. He has recently been engaged with Pace Prints doing a series of new prints.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

ZACHARI LOGAN

Logan's practice consists of large-scale drawing and painting, as well as some photographic work, centered around the male figure. The work addresses constructions of male identity and the intersections of queerness within contemporary and historical masculine archetypes. Using himself as subject, he formally utilizes the mimetic language of Baroque, Neo-classical and Renaissance styles to create narrative content about identity.

He has been featured as MIX Magazine's Spotlight Artist in issue 31.2, and was featured in the BorderViews section of Border Crossings Magazine, issue 103. His paintings and drawings are in the current issue of the French publication NINJA Magazine, as well as the current issue of the Italian publication Pisszine. He has been featured in exhibitions at the Mendel Public Gallery in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He had a solo show of his paintings at Craig Scott Gallery, Toronto in 2007 and Logan's next solo show is in Paris in January, 2009 at Jean Roch Dard Gallery.

JULIE OAKES

Born Julie Cowan in Nelson, British Columbia, (Zangmo) Julie Oakes established her reputation as a provocative, culturally critical, multi-dimensional artist. Through painting, drawing, writing, video and performance, most of her work autobiographically comments on social concerns, with emphasis ranging from banal to exotic and erotic.

Oakes holds a Master degree in Art and Art Professions from New York University and a second Masters degree in Critical Theory, Liberal Studies, from the New School University in New York City.

Notable are some of her more universally known works such as The Purse Snatching , a performance andvideo in1969 done in conjunction with Felix Partz of General Idea; Earthlines Deadlines Lifelines an environmental theme exhibition of five artists that toured museums in Western Canada and California curated by John R Taylor; Breast Protest Anonymous a silkscreen, photo, performance and video; 1992-94; Cunte an installation, performance, painting, video, 1993-94 that continues to be shown most recently at Miami Basel POOL and Human Sacrifice a trilogy of exhibitions that include (painting, drawing, and three limited edition novellas, 2004 2007. Her most recent body of work The Buddha Composed made u her solo exhibition at The Varley Museum of Markham Ontario and included The Weeping Monkey, a bronze that cries.

JENNY WING YEE TONG

A graduate from OCAD in Drawing and Painting, Jenny Wing-Yee Tong experiments with mixed media drawing and painting processes. Her work explores narrative possibilities, visually culling theatrical, fable-like and sacred iconographies, playing with the mixing of old and new image cultures she experienced while living in Hong Kong, Toronto and Italy. In 2005, she participated as an invited artist in TRSIC 05, an international multimedia art residency in Serbia. Recent shows and projects include a drawing installation for “Nightless City”, an independent project in the Church Street Village, part of the city-wide Nuit Blanche event in 2007; “IN/EX”, an all-girls show at Fountain Contemporary; and “Face Forward”, a contemporary portraiture exhibition at Varley Art Gallery in Unionville. Jenny Wing-

Yee is a recipient of the Ontario Arts Council project grant for Visual Artists and the Canadian Arts Council Traveling Grant for Visual Artists.

SCOTT McEWAN

Scott McEwan was born in London, Ontario Canada on November 7th, 1970.

His educational accomplishments include an Honours B.F.A. (Visual Arts), B.Ed. (Visual Arts), French as a Second Language, M.F.A. (Painting/Drawing and Theory), the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training), and a nomination for Rhode's Scholarship by the Faculty of Arts at The University of Western Ontario.

McEwan has exhibited in public art institutions, commercial galleries, artist-run centres, alternative spaces and as a result of his provocative work, has been written about in publications throughout Canada and abroad. A selection from exhibitions include: Zsa Zsa Gallery, Edward Day Gallery, Headbones Gallery, Spin Gallery, Paul Petro Multiples, YYZ Artists Outlet, Sis Boom Bah Gallery, Forest City Gallery, The London Regional Art Gallery, McIntosh Gallery, Art Gallery of Brandt, Cambridge Art Gallery and NEMAA in Minneapolis. McEwan was the cover artist for the Toronto Alternative Art Fair International in 2005.

ED GIORDANO JR.

Ed Giordano, with humanitarian angst shows the plight of the common man in his most disadvantaged insecurity. With a sculptural technique that relates to the work of George Segal (he had studied with him); he presents the popular dilemma with the freshness of a well placed slap.

Giordano has received grants from the Violette de Mazia Trust of the Barnes Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, The Delfina Studio Trust, The Hohenburg Family Foundation, The Robert Lehmann Foundation and the Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation. He was the featured artist at DJT Fine Art spring 2008. He is currently working in residence at the Art Students League of New York in Rockland County, NY, and in his studio in New York City.

ALEKS BARTOSIK

Aleks Bartosik studied fine art at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada; Graduating in 2001. Upon graduation from Queen's University, the artist received top studio scholarships to pursue further studies at a graduate level obtaining an MFA degree at Concordia University in Montréal, Québec, Canada in 2005.

In 2004 Aleks was the recipient of the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant for her figurative painting and the William Blair Bruce European Fine Art Travel Scholarship. Studies and residencies abroad include Belgium, England, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. In December 2005, her work was exhibited in Italy in the Biennale of Contemporary Art in Florence. In 2007, Bartosik received Jurors Choice Award at the juried Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant and 2nd place at the Juried Art Show at the Mississauga Living Arts Centre in 2008.

The paintings and drawings executed by Aleks often depict the artist as the protagonist within invented narratives.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

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