COLLECTED RELEASES

John Neff
1999 - 2009
I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain’d, 
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition, 
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, 
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God, 
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things, 
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago, 
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them, 
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens, 
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?

- Walt Whitman
1992: Pulaski, WI

What does it mean?

John Neff of Pulaski discusses his art work with his sister, Laurel Neff. This brightly colored work titled, Face of Conclusion started out as a bowl of fruit and ended up as a self-portrait. His work is part of the exhibit Tomorrow's Artists at the Neville Public Museum.

Coming to light

Juried exhibit allows student artists to show off their talents

By Kendra Meinert

There’s something about John Neff’s self-portrait, titled Face of Conclusion, even the most scrutinizing viewer would notice.

“It started out being a bowl of fruit,” said Neff, a 16-year-old senior from Pulaski High School who has two of the 53 works on display at Tomorrow’s Artists. The juried exhibit of art from Brown County high school students is on display at the Neville Public Museum through March 28.

Neff likes a rush of spontaneity in his paintings. When he first applied white acryl paint, he found himself painting scenes of fruit, then he worked on a self-portrait.

“I started out being a bowl of fruit,” said Neff, a 16-year-old senior from Pulaski High School who has two of the 53 works on display at Tomorrow’s Artists. The juried exhibit of art from Brown County high school students is on display at the Neville Public Museum through March 28.

Neff likes a rush of spontaneity in his paintings. When he first applied white acryl paint, he found himself painting scenes of fruit, then he worked on a self-portrait. He decided to do it in one day, Neff said.

“I have a tendency to use things laying around my workspace,” he said. “People might think it’s pretty rough or crude, but I think the process is just as important as the final work; it has just as much meaning.”

Neff would like to one day pursue a career in art. He plans to study art history and eventually teach art at the college level.

Brown County art instructors selected 53 pieces of student work for display in Tomorrow’s Artists. Fifty-three pieces were selected and then juried on the basis of technical expertise and original concepts by Chris Davitt, a University of Wisconsin-Green Bay faculty member.

Eleven students including Neff received awards of commendation. Works included in the show range from sterling silver jewelry to photographs to paintings. Venues to the exhibit will find a black and white acrylic of Simon and Garfunkel, a woodcut print of The Field of Wonders and a pencil drawing of a giant eagle swirling over Mount Rushmore.

For the students behind the works, the exhibit is a rare chance to show their talents off in a job well done.

— John Neff artist

Pulaski High School

See for yourself

What: Tomorrow’s Artists, a juried exhibit of 53 pieces of artwork from Brown County high school students

When: On display through March 28

Where: East Gallery of the Neville Public Museum, 210 Museum Place

Free
November 9 - 17:

December 7 -14:

February 1 - 9:
John Neff and Cassie Riger, *Funny Curious or Funny Ha Ha*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery

February 15 - 23:
*Real Live Girls: Art and Artifacts From the Sex Industry* (Organized by Kirsten Simonsen), Torch Gallery

March 15 - 22:
*Documents & Documentation*, John Weber Gallery

April 20 - 27:
Dates Miller, *Fruits*, Fanny Garver Gallery

May 4 - 11:
Priyanka Basu and Elizabeth Payne, *Disenchanted*, 303

June 15 - 28:
Mark Wagner, *Would I / Wood Eye*, Sidney Janis Gallery

July 20 - August 2:
Aaron Van Dyke, *Photographs*, Portikus

August 17 - 31:
Lavel Tyler, *Word*, Ubu Gallery

November 16 - 22:
Stan Shellabarger, *Collages / Untitled Performance*, Exit Art Gallery
WOULD I WOOD EYE
ASSEMBLAGES BY MARK WAGNER

THE SIDNEY VANTS GALLERY
214 WEST GILMAN #2
MADISON, WI 53703
(608) 255-4179
ONE BLOCK FROM STATE ST.
JUNE 15 - JUNE 28
MONDAY & WEDNESDAY 1 - 6
THURSDAY & FRIDAY 1 - 5
OPENING RECEPTION SUNDAY,
JUNE 16, 6:00 - 9

STAN SHELLABARGER
COLLAGES
NOVEMBER 16 - 22
OPENING RECEPTION SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
GALLERY HOURS BY APPOINTMENT
UNTITLED PERFORMANCE
A BODY CENTERED ENDURANCE PIECE OF INDETERMINATE LENGTH BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 3:00 PM ON NOVEMBER 23

EXIT ART GALLERY
214 WEST GILMAN #2
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53703
608-255-4179
PRESS RELEASE

JOHN NEFF | SCOTT SPEH

VEXATIONS | PAINTINGS

NOVEMBER 15 - 22
OPENING RECEPTION - NOVEMBER 15: 7-9PM
THE MADISON CANDY CO.
744 WILLIAMSON STREET
MADISON, WISCONSIN
GALLERY HOURS 4-8PM WEEKDAYS
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 1-5PM
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Madison artists John Neff and Scott Speh will be presenting new work at the Madison Candy Company from November 15 to November 22. There will be an opening reception, free and open to the public, on Saturday, November 15, from 7 to 9pm.

John Neff is a founder of Homewrecker, organizer of the Documenta Performance Festival, and curator, whose shows have featured such Madison artists as Aaron Van Dyke, Mark Wagner and Stan Shellenbarger in his apartment gallery, which has been featured in The Madison Times and Isthmus.

Mr. Neff will exhibit Vexations on the Third Floor of the former candy manufacturing plant. Vexations, a multi-media installation consisting of video and audio elements and thousands of sugar cubes, will investigate the uses of repetition in the arts and common culture of the modernist era.

Scott Speh, whose work has recently been seen in May at the Commonwealth Gallery, is a founding member of SLOP Brand A/Jit and a recent MFA recipient from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Speh is currently teaching etching at the UW. His exploits with SLOP have been written about in Isthmus, the Capital Times, Madison Magazine and New Art Examiner.

Mr. Speh will exhibit new paintings on the Second Floor. These formalist abstractions on styrofoam using enamel, screenprinting, cement, joint compound and acrylic paint, distill the influence of the pop imagery and logo-driven formalism of his previous investigations of mass media. The paintings use construction materials and construction imagery alongside sly (and not so sly) references to contemporary and modernist abstract painting.

The Madison Candy Company is a former candy manufacturing plant that will soon be renovated to house a variety of businesses. Colin Strohm showed at the Candy Co. in August, and owner John Martens had kindly donated the space for one more show before commerce comes rushing in.

For more information regarding this exhibit, feel free to contact Mr. Speh or Mr. Neff
Scott Speh: (608) 284-1900 or speh@wmsz.macc.wisc.edu
John Neff: (608) 255-4179
1. Erik Satie, *Vexations*, 1893

Sheet music found by Peg Brown at Mills Music Library. Performed, sequenced, and recorded by Rich Path on a Korg 01/WFD. Recording assistance provided by Robert Verberkmos. Audio tape played on my mother and stepfather’s stereo.

At the top of his score for Vexations, Satie suggests that anyone wishing to play the piece 840 times in succession should prepare in advance in the “greatest silence and grave immobility.”

2.

Photograph by Alison Brashaw; negatives scanned by Hyperion Studios; scans formatted to resemble a contact sheet by Aaron Van Dyke and Scott Speh; inkjet print made in the Art Department computer lab at the University of Wisconsin with assistance from Michael Connors; print laminated, trimmed and grommeted by Hyperion Studios.

In early September of 1997, I called Alison Brashaw in Los Angeles and asked her to take some pictures of the ocean for me; these are the photographs she sent.

3.

8640 Domino Dots sugar cubes, purchased in bulk through Elegant Edibles Catering with the help of Tracy Swing. The cubes are presented on tables rented from A-Z RentAll that have been covered with light blue poster paper bought at the University Bookstore’s State Street Mall location. Joseph Connelly, Dutes Miller, Stan Shellabarger, and Mark Wagner helped me lay out the grid of sugar cubes. The tables are lit with fixtures provided by Jason Lee.

This, I imagine, is what tea time is like in Marfa, Texas.

4.

White decorative plastic chain by Peerless Chain, purchased at Blain’s Fleet Farm.

Elizabeth Payne drove me to Fleet Farm and helped select the chain. I was glad that she knew exactly what I meant when I said that it had to create a “field trip” situation.

5.

Half-inch color videotape, endless loop, shot by Cassie Riger and edited by me at the Instructional Materials Center at the University of Wisconsin. I stood in front of the camera and asked Cassie to crop tight and make the shot as pedestrian as possible – no drama. She did just that.

6.

This text is a simple footnote, an attempt to sketch the outlines of a more consuming, expansive project. It is also a symptom of my own circularity; clumsy skipping on my mental LP. How much of my own and others’ time have I spent applying the logic of the assembly line to a dream of freedom? I imagine Satie, or Mondrian, sitting at the sea, watching waves hit the shore while factories rumble behind them.
Western Exhibitions Presents:

Prints From FRESH HOT PRESS

February 20 - March 28, 2009

On February 20, 2009 Western Exhibitions will open a group show of new prints from Madison, Wisconsin print-making shop Fresh Hot Press. A public reception will take place from 5 to 8 p.m. The exhibition will run until March 28, 2009.

Western Exhibitions presents new prints produced by gallery artists Adriane Herman, Miller & Shellabarger, and John Neff at printmaking studio Fresh Hot Press in Madison, Wisconsin. Fresh Hot Press publishes small editions and unique prints in collaboration with visiting artists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Art Department. During the fall semester of 2008, Fresh Hot Press invited these three alumni of the UW Art Department to print editions in conjunction with Western Exhibition’s show at The Project Lodge in Madison. Herman, Miller & Shellabarger, and Neff each brought unique conceptual approaches to printmaking, but interestingly, all three produced work with a distinct concern for subtleties in the print’s surface. Each piece encourages an intimate experience of its topography and an appreciation of the inimitable qualities of a hand-pulled print.

Adriane Herman’s print, Necco Census No. 1: Scratch-Off, Scratch ‘N Sniff Alignment, a silkscreen with hand cutting and perforation, is literally a scratch ‘n sniff piece printed from a solution that matched the fragrances of Necco wafer’s eight flavors mixed in same proportion as they appeared in the pack. This print was featured in the exhibition “New Prints 2008/Autumn” at the International Print Center New York. She also made the prints “Checklist” and “Checklist Deluxe” at Fresh Hot Press, re-producing a list she found at the Maine College of Art made by a beginning art student, a list of all the things one needs to include in order to make good art. Herman figured if she made a print from it, it would automatically be good art since it inherently contains all the items on the list.

Miller & Shellabarger have embossed a silhouette of themselves with their beards tied together to make their striking, black-on-black untitled print. This piece is a continuation of their Conjoined Silhouette series, which typically take the form of black cut paper silhouettes mounted on white paper. This body of work was mostly recently seen in a solo presentation by Western Exhibitions at the NADA Art Fair in Miami this December.

John Neff’s screenprint Vexations, based on the score of Erik Satie’s infamous 20-plus hour piano composition of the same name, holds 841 layers of ink on the paper’s surface. As conceived by Satie, Vexations is a short chordal passage and a bass line which is repeated twice, itself meant to be repeated 840 times - thus Neff’s hundreds of ink layers. Western Exhibitions will also show this print as part of its solo presentation of Neff’s work at The Armory Show in New York City in March.

Fresh Hot Press is the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s student-run print club dedicated to promoting student, faculty, and community involvement in all forms of print media. In addition to organizing exhibitions of student work, they regularly host and print editions with regional and national artists. They not only aim to maintain UW’s involvement in the national printmaking community, but to share resources and generate interest in print media at a local level.
Slide 8: 

_White_, 1998

_White_ was presented at the University of Wisconsin - Madison’s Art Department Gallery. The gallery and the rest of the department’s facilities have long been plagued by problems with ventilation and air quality. The Humanities Building, which houses the department, is seen by many on campus as representative of the flaws of UW’s institutional architecture.

For _White_, I solicited contributions of white artwork from art students and faculty. The work in the show was offered for sale, and proceeds from sales were donated to the department. The donated monies were to be put towards a planned reconditioning of the gallery.

One half of the space was painted a dark gray. A white shelf, holding a bid book and three pairs of binoculars, hung on the gray wall. Above the shelf hung three framed documents: a quotation from Peter Watson’s history of art sales *From Manet to Manhattan* and two pages with a numbered list of the works in the show and their prices. The other half of the gallery was painted bright white. It held the works offered for sale, and was rendered inaccessible by a cord pulled across the space. On the wall beside each piece was a small black number. The floor was dusted with powdered plaster.

Watson’s quotation, which dealt with art sales in 19th century France, read, in part: “Certain dealers objected to the public’s being allowed into auctions and spilled powder on the salesroom floors, which inflamed throats so much that people coughed up blood.”
2 PRODUCT COMPARISONS FOR LARC:

1) INTERIOR LATEX FLAT FINISH WALL PAINTS (WHITE)
2) GLASS CLEANERS (AEROSOL AND NON-AEROSOL)

The 30 3'11" x 1'3" burlap covered plywood panels comprising the gallery's north and west walls have been divided into ten groupings of three panels. A different brand of white interior latex flat finish wall paint has been applied to each grouping of three panels. Beginning in the northwest corner of the space and continuing left towards its southwest corner, the brands applied are:

- Distinctions, Pittsburgh Paints, $22.98 gal.
- Dutch Boy Dirt Fighter, Dutch Boy Paints, $9.65 gal.
- Easy Living, Sears & Roebuck Co., $10.54 gal.
- ZD Delgans Private Stock, United Coatings, $9.98 gal.
- F & F Home Style, manufactured for Farm & Fleet, $8.99 gal.
- Glidden Spread Satin, Glidden Paints, $9.39 gal.
- Lucite, PPG Architectural Finishes, $10.89 gal.
- Magicolor, Magicolor Paint, Inc., $4.96 gal.
- Tru-Test EZ Kare, Tru-Test Manufacturing Co., $14.99 gal.

The 22 3'9" x 7'5" x 1/2" glass panels comprising the gallery's south and west walls have been divided into two groupings of three panels (one consisting of the glass wall's first three panels, the other of its last three panels) and eight groupings of two panels. Beginning in the southeast corner of the space and continuing left towards its northwest corner, the brands applied are:

- Bon Ami, Faultless Starch, 20 fl. oz., $2.09
- Clinch, Proctor & Gamble, 32 fl. oz., $2.57
- Formula 499 Glass and Surface, Clorox, 32 fl. oz., $2.39
- Glass Plus, Dow, 32 fl. oz., $1.99
- Household Glass Cleaner with Ammonia, 22 fl. oz., $1.29
- Spring Fresh, Sunshine Co., 17 fl. oz., $0.99
- Sparkle, A.J. Funk & Co., 32 fl. oz., $1.23
- The Works Glass and Multi-Surface Cleaner, Lime-o-Sol Co., 32 fl. oz., $1.79
- Windex Original, S.C. Johnson & Son, 22 fl. oz., $2.69
- Windex No Drip, S.C. Johnson & Son, 22 fl. oz., $1.74
1998 - 1999: Sears Pictures
“Edwards’s journals frequently explored and tested a meditation he seldom allowed to reach print; if all the world were annihilated, he wrote…and a new world were freshly created, though it were to exist in every particular in the same manner as this world, it would not be the same. Therefore, because there is continuity, which is time, ‘it is certain with me that the world exists anew every moment; that the existence of things every moment ceases and is every moment renewed.’ The abiding assurance is that ‘we every moment see the same proof of a God as we should have seen if we had seen Him create the world at first.’

— Perry Miller, "Jonathan Edwards" from *Art and Objecthood*

by Michael Fried

**CURATORIAL PROJECTS**

*Cold Conceptualism (with Derek Fiskler)*
Suitable Gallery
Chicago, Illinois
2000

*Life, After The Squirrel*
Location One
New York, New York
2000

*White*
Humanities Gallery
Madison, Wisconsin
1998

**EDUCATION**

Bachelor of Fine Arts
University of Wisconsin, Madison
1998

**RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

*Stray Slow*
SoGo
Chicago, Illinois
2001

Sarah Conaway, Cindy Loebr,
John Neff, Anne Olson
Gallery 400
Chicago, Illinois
2001

*Suare Picture*
Dimensions variable
Framed color photographs
1998-2000

For two years, Neff went to a Sears department store on the first Sunday of every month. There, he purchased and put on a new white shirt in the Men’s Department. He then went to the Sears Portrait Studio and had his portrait made.
Sometime in 1948, I began photographing portraits in a small corner space made of two studio flats pushed together. A very rich series of pictures resulted. This confinement, surprisingly, seemed to comfort people, soothing them. The walls were a surface to lean on or push against. For me the picture possibilities were interesting; limiting the subjects' movement seemed to relieve me of part of the problem of holding on to them.
Performing 4’33” by John Cage, Framed silver gelatin print, available light, wall


Untitled (Nixon / HAL), Single channel video, TRT 5’45”
Ms. ______:

Scott Speh of Western Exhibitions in Chicago forwarded to me your recent email about a 1999 work of mine. I’m curious about your project, wonder which piece you have questions about. I’m happy to help out in any way possible.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,
John Neff

Dear Mr. John Neff,

Thank you very much for your email. I guess my request was a little bit misunderstood. I am sorry. I write my thesis about Irving Penn’s cornerportraits and my last capter is about corners in contemporary art. I found your work “Irving Penn” from the set of Empty Space from 1999 at the Illinois Arts Council homepage, but couldn’t find any further information about it.

Maybe you could be so kind and tell me a bit more about it? I would love to know more about the central formal concept of empty spaces. It is right that the quote from Penn is on the left inside of the corner? If yes, why? Why did you pick this motif of Penn? How did spectators react to it? Did you posed yourself inside the corner? Would you call it a corner? Does your work have the exact same angle as Penn’s corner? Did you want people to enter? But then they have to turn, right? What is the difference between sculpture and set for you, if there is one? Do you have more pictures of the work?

I think it is a wonderful artwork and would love to write about it in this capter. I would be really thankful for any information.

Kindest regards,
Anna

Anna:

Regarding the piece Irving Penn -- and the “sets” generally -- I think that the following text is a good initial description of my work in the early 2000s:

After completing the work now titled Empty Space, I began to use the term “set” rather than “installation” to describe large-scale environmental artworks composed from multiple and discrete elements. While installation may accurately describe my earlier works, I feel that it implies a relationship to site that Empty Space, Figure / Ground and Repetitions do not have. The later works were not specifically tailored to one site, and can be shown in any location as long as the prescribed placement of the objects is maintained.

In part, I developed the set concept in response to the practical demands of a graduate art program that demanded delivery of at least two new, large-scale works per semester. Working at that pace, I was unable to negotiate all of the logistical complexities involved in the large-scale, site-specific installations that occupied me during the later 1990s. Ultimately, however, it was my growing dissatisfaction with what I had come to see as the easy, predictable effects offered by site-specific installation that was the most important factor in my decision to adopt the vocabulary and approach of the set. The sets were the first steps in an ongoing project: attempting to make artworks that retain the referential complexity and keen awareness of conditions of production / distribution which characterize the best post-modern art while also aspiring to a formal autonomy, however contingent. I approached my project with tongue partly in cheek, concocting sets on the “formal properties” of artworks as they are taught in contemporary art schools (Empty Space = negative space, etcetera).

This concentration on “first principles” allowed me to gather and associate diverse references within each set. These references, in concert with each piece’s formal arrangement, articulated secondary and tertiary themes. In Empty Space, for example, each component of the piece was a portrait in uncertain time. Irving Penn is a representation (not an exact copy, and made after intense examination of Penn’s corner portraits but without any detailed research into the construction of his backdrop – e.g. size, angle of corner, etcetera) of a Penn portrait setting, which is made to stand in for the photographer and his literal and figurative embrace of his subjects. The corner also alludes to the corridors and corners of Post-Minimalism, which unlike Penn’s photographs insist on an experiential “now” rather than a photographic past. Performing 4’33” by John Cage enacts a nearly opposite movement, freezing the aleatory space-time of Cage’s piece in a photograph which captures not only a split-second of a specific performance but also the look of a whole era in art documentation. Untitled (Nixon / HAL), a historical document and a fragment of film script recited by a deadpan actor, created a triple confusion between historical eras, speakers and authors. Below are the specifications for each component of Empty Space and attached to this email you’ll find a series of images of the set. If the images don’t come through, or if you have any other questions, please let me know. I have a comprehensive documentary website coming online at the end of the summer, but would be happy to email you further information as needed.

Sincerely,
John Neff

It is right that the quote from Penn is on the left inside of the corner? If yes, why? Yes. The quotation is an “interior caption” for the piece and “bait” inviting observers to enter the construction. Why did you pick this motif of Penns? I’ve always been interested in Penn’s corner portraits and my interest in the images was particularly strong during 1999. I’m not sure how – or even if – artists pick the images that they work with. How did spectators react to it? Most peeked tentatively into the corner and then entered, turned, looked briefly out and then exited as they entered. Did you posed yourself inside the corner? No. Would you call it a corner? Sure. Does your work have the exact same angle as Penn’s corner? I don’t know – I never did any research into the construction of Penn’s flats. Did you want people to enter? Yes, but I think that the piece works with or without the presence of an observer. Indifference to the observer is an important part of the work.

Dear John Neff,

Thank you very much for your email, answering my questions and the information and pictures about your works. By now I see your work much clearer than before. I think the aspect of the indifference to the observer is really interesting in it. It makes it even more complex and abstract to me. It is the perfect ending for my thesis, like all what I wrote all the pages before to be transformed into a form, a piece of art. I also love that your work is that white. It reminds me of the white cube itself, for human bodies, because Penn’s corner isn’t that clean at all.

I also like the play with time-moments in relation to Penn and Cage works, even if it is not what my thesis is about.

Maybe you could explain to me what exactly do you mean by “gather and associate diverse references” in the case of the Penn piece? Probably some examples which you found during working on that piece? And one more question: What do you think is that interesting in Penn’s corner-portraits and why have you been particulary interested that strong in these images in 1999? If there is a reason or you know why. Of course, there are so many things we don’t know and never will, which is also good, I think.

Thank you very much again. I am looking forward to take a look at your homepage, when its up and maybe to see you in an exhibition when I am in Chicago again one day. It’s a great city.

Best wishes and kindest regards,
Anna

Anna

I’m glad that you like the piece. I suppose I wasn’t clear on the “gather[ing] and associat[ing] diverse references” point. I meant that each set groups together subjects and references not usually addressed together under a single heading ( e.g Cage, Nixon, and Penn are seldom represented together).

As for my interest in Penn’s work, my answer to your first question was a bit of a cop-out. I can offer three further motives behind my interest in the Penn photos around ’99. 1. I have had a copy of Penn’s book Passages since I was a young boy. My beloved grandmother bought the book for me. 2. Around 1999, I was becoming interested in and studying “art” photography (as opposed to photos by artists -- the Conceptualists, etc). 3. Thinking about sets led me to consider spaces that also acted as images, as pictures. Hope that helps.

Again, thank you for your interest. Please let me know how your thesis turns out.

Sincerely,
John
I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life.

- Ronald Reagan, 1994
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Figure / Ground is composed of six elements installed on opposing walls. Above: Figure / Ground (White) Right: view of Figure / Ground (Blue) from gallery entrance
FIGURE / GROUND (WHITE)

Avedon with Stand – In
Black and white enlargement with photogram mounted on gator-foam

A photograph was taken in the manner of Richard Avedon (a human torso against a seamless white backdrop). The negative was enlarged to life-size. As the photographic paper was exposed, a human figure blocked out the photographed figure, returning the figure to ground.

Ground Segal
Plaster and cotton gauze

Richard Avedon, American, 1923 –
George Segal, American, 1925 – 2000

The de-differentiation of figure from ground is a death act. The color of the de-differentiation of figure from ground is white. This process is specific.

FIGURE / GROUND (BLUE)

Brady Grid
Digital video, continuous loop

Sears Portrait Studio Light Blue Background
Paint on canvas over wood (manufactured by Owens Originals Studio Backdrops, Kansas City, MO)

The Brady Bunch
116 episodes plus pilot, aired on ABC Television 1969 – 1974

The Sears Portrait Studio is a subsidiary of Sears, Roebuck and Company

The differentiation of figure from ground is a birth act. The color of the differentiation of figure from ground is blue, the color of the universal background. This process is general, not specific. For this reason, the Sears Portrait Studio Light Blue Background is best viewed with a back to the canvas.
Clockwise from entrance:

**Herm Box**
Western red cedar, glue

Carl Andre
**Herm**
1960 (destroyed), remade 1976
Western red cedar

HERM: Ancient Greek and Roman columnar markers, placed at roadside and often accompanied by busts of Hermes or another important gods or ancestors.

**Conversation**
Two channel digital video, pedestal, suspended screen

Francis Ford Coppola
**The Conversation**
Color 35 mm film

**Bench: Walter De Maria’s Boxes for Meaningless Work Inverted**
Birch plywood

Walter De Maria
**Boxes for Meaningless Work**
1961
Wood

**Godot Tree**
Steel, Paper mache

**Waiting for Godot** (stills from a 1975 production by Samuel Beckett)
2001: Triptych (Untitled, Untitled, Copyist)
2001: Untitled (To My Mother)
The piece has three components: a projected image of the sun in a field behind my mother’s home in winter, a monitor-bound shot of her bedroom, and a white bench upholstered in blue-and-white Laura Ashley fabric. When a viewer sits on the bench, the exterior, projected image is blocked by the interior, monitor-bound image. Footage of my mother appears on screen briefly at random intervals.
2002: Black Sun Study

Slide 10:

Black Sun Study
2002

Video camera, video projector, live electrical cables, MDF
Dimensions variable

The projected video is a live-feed image of the side of the circular video projector. The video projector and the video camera are connected to 250’ extension cords that weave together to form a barrier, enclosing the piece.
A Black and White Photograph: Dutes Miller Portraying John Bunyan, Imprisoned at Bedford Gaol, Penning the Defense of Allegory that Precedes The Pilgrim's Progress
2002
Framed 8” by 10” color contact print, engraved title plaque
PAPERS ON WORK

John Neff
Papers On Work
(Collages and Explanations)
JOHN NEFF

PAPERS ON WORK:

COLLAGES AND EXPLANATIONS

Untitled Collages, 2001 – 2002
Mixed media on vellum (mounted on aluminum foil, rag board, newsprint)

PINK:
- MIND / MENTAL ENERGY
- GENERAL
- GEOMETRY

BROWN:
- BODY
- PARTICULAR
- INDEX, WRITING, SHT

BASE METAL

WHITE:
- DEATH (DE-DIFFERENTIATION OF FIGURE FROM GROUND)
- PREPARED SURFACE (RECEPTIVE TO BROWN [PINK FLOATS])

BLACK:
- CONTAINMENT
- BLINDNESS
- FRAME

BLACK SUN (TRANSFORMATION)

THE INCURSION OF BLACK INTO A PINK OR BROWN AREA IS A MENTAL OR PHYSICAL IMBALANCE.

GOLD:
- FIRE
- BLUE (ONCE REMOVED)

RED:
- RED

ANTHOR:
- CARREL, CLOISTER, NICHE, STUDY (ARCHED)
- SKULL
- GATHERING AND JOINING

LABYRINTH
2002: Tasty Dog Collage

Tasty Dog was a great success! As you can see from the visitors to the show on the front of this card, Arlene and Kressen chose from Vienna and Kressen for the exhibition.

Pick up your work at the Suburban. Next Saturday August 10 we are having an opening/BBQ 7-9pm. Join us. You can pick up your work then or call to arrange a time.

Thanks for participating!
Cheers.

The Suburban
244 Lake Street
Oak Park, IL 60632

John Neff
1314 N. Claremont
2R
Chicago, IL 60622
Below is a list of the confirmed participants in the "Lively Dog" show. Please review the wording and let us know if a change is needed.

We are still shootin' for the June deadline for drop off of artwork.

Artwork specs:
- No 3D works, no photo bases, no 3D objects
- No video art, no performance art
- No install art, no miniatures
- No spray paint, no aerosols
- No glass art, no sculptures
- No crowds, no live animals
- No live performers

Install specs:
- All artwork must be installed in the gallery for the entire week.
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2003: Hysterical Pastoral

*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

HYSTERICAL PASTORAL
THE UKRAINIAN INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART

JULY 11 – AUGUST 17

WHAT: Hysterical Pastoral, an exhibition of contemporary landscape images.

WHO: Organized by John Neff and including work by Dan Attoe, Andreas Fischer, Nicholas Frank, Amy Hauber, Brad Killam, Dutes Miller, Melissa Oresky, Sterling Ruby, Aaron Van Dyke, and Mike Wolf.

WHERE: The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, 2320 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622

WHEN: The show runs July 11th through August 17th. An opening reception will be held on Friday, July 11th between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. The Institute is open Wednesday through Sunday, 12 to 4.

Hysterical Pastoral, a show of contemporary landscape images, opens at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art on July 11 and runs through August 17. Organized by John Neff, the exhibition presents landscape images created through writing (illustrating texts, making specific literary references, or following language-based production processes). Many of the works in the exhibition approach their status as pictures from the plane of writing. That is, they are pictures in which there is a physical or conceptual transition from the flat, horizontal plane of writing and the printed image to the upright, vertical plane of Western pictorial space (cf. Michael Fried’s Realism, Writing, Disfiguration).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JOHN NEFF, 510-433-0334 / jdn1@earthlink.net

Hysterical Pastoral invitation card, Offset print, 4" by 6"
John Neff: Travels Between the First and Third Dimensions

September 25 to October 30th, 2004

Travels between the First and Third Dimensions at Western Exhibitions is John Neff’s first Chicago solo show since relocating to the Bay Area in 2003, and his first solo show with Western Exhibitions. Neff will be showing reliefs, flat panels on the horizontal or the vertical axis, that twist into three-dimensions. The panels are ceramic tile mosaics and/or metalworks in brass, lead, and steel. Most incorporate pre-made decorative objects like tiles, vases, and small representational sculptures. Many of the panels have a nominal function: table, fan, heater, doorbell, ashtray, decoration. These panels reflect a subtle shift from the concerns of the works on paper presented in Neff’s last solo show at Chicago’s Suitable Gallery in 2002. Small-scale paper collages, those pieces dealt with private, cloistered worlds. The relief panels are more outward-looking, and refer - sometimes blatantly and sometimes obliquely - to current events and to Neff’s day-to-day life with his co-workers and sister (a mosaicist).

John Neff (b.1975) lives and works in Oakland, California. In Fall 2003, Neff’s "We Are All Sinners" poster was distributed by Post-Chicago and his "We Are All Sinners" billboard was subsequently displayed by the Roof, an alternative space in Chicago. That summer Neff curated "Hystorical Pastoral" at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in Chicago. Five of his collages and one photograph from a 2002 show at Chicago’s Suitable gallery were acquired by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Recent exhibitions include "Here and Now" at the Chicago Cultural Center; "Accidental Sublime" at The Bower, San Antonio, Texas; "Tasty Dog", Atelier Top 25, Krems, Austria, and at the Stray Show in Chicago in 2004 with Western Exhibitions. Neff received a MFA from the University of Illinois-Chicago in 2001.

Anthor Tile (surrounded by Lucinda Walker)
High fire ceramic tile, fabric, buttons, fabric batting, feathers, baby shoes
16” x 13” (baby shoes variable)
Decorative Panel #5: Old Books: Wall Sconce
Wood furniture fragments, broom parts, photograph, brass fixture, electrical wire, fabric, paint, hardened epoxies and fillers, electrical cord
49" x 26" x 5" (cord variable)
Decorative Panel #2: The Deep: Ashtray
Wood, metal, paint, glass, ceramic heart (artist unknown),
lead crystal fish (artist unknown [made in Sweden]), paint, sand
16” x 13” x 6”
Decorative Panel #1: Turbulence: Fan and Heating Coil
Wood, lead, brass, steel ship (artist unknown [made in Taiwan]), brass sun (artist unknown), fan and heating coil, electrical cord
38” x 34” (cord variable)
Decorative Panel #18: Faultline, San Francisco, California: Flower Vase
Wood, concrete, ceramic tile mosaic, small vase (artist unknown), brass, steel, velvet, crack sealer
17” x 19” x 6”

Decorative Panel #8: To Gwen Araujo: Two Fans, Candlestick and Chimes
Wood, ceramic tile mosaic, cement bird (artist unknown), electric fans, salt, brass candlestick, lead balls, bells, brass wire
Dimensions variable
Decorative Panel #7: Angel: Fountain
Single basin stainless steel sink, steel faucet, ceramic lily (artist unknown [made in Italy]), pump, tubing
Dimensions variable
Travels between the First and Third Dimensions

September 25 to October 30, 2004 at Western Exhibitions

Scott interviews John via email.... copyright 2004

Scott: Since you're on the West Coast, and I'm in Chicago, and since you've been stinging with digital images, tell me about the work you plan on showing at WX? I understand they are reliefs? Using materials collected from your current job at a salvage yard?

John: You could describe these things as reliefs. Each thing begins with a flat panel (most are around 14 x 16") on which I then affix a variety of objects: trinkets salvaged from theelds of the West or from a flea market, pieces of mail, office wrappers, metal things like bottle caps, etc., small spaces where one deals with pages and other stuff at flea markets and on the street. Usually, a panel is arranged in my workshop at specific moments, and the idea of making panels.

How do they relate to the collages shown at Suitable two years ago?

Well, they're smallish, at least in terms of three dimensions. Most of my collages began as sheets of 9" x 12" Bristol brand vellum paper. The collages were composed of flat paper objects (Xerox copies, business cards, booklets, even my sister's medical records) torn from their "natural" state and compressed -- into the space of the page. Without exception, the anthor took the form of niches, cloisters, and carrels -- small spaces where one deals with pages and other stuff at flea markets and on the street. The collages were smallish, at least in terms of three dimensions. I don't think of my work as being "about" Modernism, or as being art-about-art, though. It's important to me that my work always addresses its nominal subjects and the organizing principals that underlie each piece or body of pieces.

Is the current work more personal? Is this why it's more hands-on? I see more overt nods to sexuality, familial relationships, politics, to your physicality. How accurate is this assumption?

Personal references are more blatant in these pieces, more hands-on? I see more overt nods to sexuality, familial relationships, politics, to your physicality. How accurate is this assumption?

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Western Exhibitions, one of the invited galleries from Chicago, exhibited John Neff's The Hobbyist (2005), a photograph that suggests that Art Chicago may be tamer than in the past but hasn't gone soft. We see an intensely serious hobbyist in his workshop carving a huge erect phallus. There are chips around his piece-in-progress and tools behind him. This is a man in love with his work, who makes us wonder what he does with the rest of his time.

Victor Cassidy, Art Chicago 2005, Artnet.com, 4/29/05
2005: Dear Anthony

John Neff
821 8th AVENUE
GRINNELL, IA 50112

September 15, 2005

Dear Anthony,

It was a pleasure to see you at Art Chicago recently; I enjoyed our few brief conversations. As I mentioned, I’ve just returned to the Midwest and am living in Grinnell, Iowa. Over the next year, I’ll be completing a large-scale sculptural / photographic project here.

In addition to working on my sculpto-graphic work, I hope to complete some other projects that have been on my back burners. When we spoke at Art Chicago, you mentioned that Whitewalls might be interested in a proposal for a book. In addition to a description of my planned large-scale project, I’ve included two book proposals in this envelope.

The large-scale project, Pornographic Pantograph with Allusion to Joan Sanchez Cotan (Patent Pending), is my most important work right now. (At this point, for clarity’s sake you might want to look at the enclosed project description, then keep reading this letter.) The Pantograph synthesizes different strands of my thinking over the past nine years. It brings together the “coldly” conceptual approach that characterized the video and installation works I made before and during my years in Chicago with the improvisational mode of my collages and assemblages of 2001 - 2004.

In order to make this work – and the synthesis it represents – more comprehensible to interested viewers, I envision a series of printed materials reproducing my work alongside relevant commentaries, source materials, and details of the psycho-geography of my studios and homes. Some of these publications will be conventional books; some will be other kinds of image-text objects.

The series will begin with a record of works made between 1975 and 1989, but its core will be a trilogy of text objects documenting works made after 2000: an illuminated manuscript detailing the production and presentation of collages shown in Papers on Work: Collages and Explanations at Suitable gallery in 2002, a scrapbook documenting the relief works shown in Travels Between the First and Third Dimensions at Western Exhibitions in 2004, and a website presenting texts, plans, and images from the Pantograph (tentatively scheduled for a Fall 2006 premier at Western Exhibitions). (The sequence is historical: codex, printed volume, electronic document.) I’d be most interested in working on the first of the three projects with Whitewalls.

The book documenting the Suitable collages will be modeled on Medieval illuminated manuscripts. Like those manuscripts – like the installation of the Suitable show – the images and texts in this book will provide glosses on one another. Images of completed collages, collages in progress, unmanipulated materials, and tools will coexist in the book. Texts will describe completed collages, quote other documents, provide citations for source materials, and encode production formulae. In this way, the structure of the collage volume will be a foreshadowing of the website accompanying the Pantograph: both illuminated manuscripts and websites mix visual and verbal signs promiscuously and without priority. Both forms work within tight, small-scale formats that embrace, simultaneously, the grandest and the most banal themes. Additionally, both media harness light. I imagine the collage book in a deep-toned, heavily tooled cover (or one produced to resemble a hand-tooled surface) referring to the bejeweled bindings of many illuminated manuscripts and to the relief panels that followed the collages in the development of my work.

These volumes will have dual roles: aesthetic and documentary. I believe that these pieces provide some uncommon approaches to problems of contemporary art – concerns about art’s distinctness as a cultural discipline, about the effects of digital technologies on traditional genres.

I’d be glad to produce some mock-ups of my ideas for the illuminated manuscript. Please feel free to contact me at the above address or via email at jdn1@earthlink.net with any questions about my proposal.

As always, thank you for your time and careful attention.

Sincerely,

John Neff
WARNING!

This gallery contains explicit gay adult pictures. You should not enter this gallery if such pictures are against the laws of the country or state where you live or if you are under the age of eighteen or easily offended by cock sucking, jockstrap fucking, anal blasting, and cum eating action!

young gay teen porn, amateur gay porn teen, free gay male porn, old and young gays, old men gay pics, free gay twinks, gay personals, free gay twink boy pics, free mature gay movies, nude gay men, gay cock, young gay video, free bisexual porn, story gay, hunk men porn, hunk gay movies, gay teen picture, sexy gay men, naked gay, gay male fucking, gay fucking, older men sex, gay gallery, free gay teen twinks, gay boy movie clips, gays in underwear, gay anal, nude gay men gallery, gay fuck movies, gay cum, gay man sex story, free gay teen sex, free gay porn site, gay and more.

WARNING!

As a viewer of this site -- by entering this site -- you are agreeing with the following statements:

I am at least 18 years of age (or the legal age for my community) and have the legal right to possess adult material in my community and the state in which I am viewing this site. By entering this site, you declare that you are at least eighteen years of age and are not otherwise barred by law from viewing adult materials.

The material I am viewing is for my PERSONAL USE and will not be viewed by minors or other people who have not accepted The Agreement.

I do not find images of nude adults, adults engaged in sexual acts or other sexual material to be offensive or objectionable. I understand that I will see images of a sexual nature, including, gay, babes, blondes, brunettes, redheads, asian, anime, anal, cumshots, hardcore, lesbians, interracial,

I will not sell and / or in any way redistribute the contents of this site.

If I use these services in violation of the above agreement, I understand I may be in violation of local and federal laws and am solely responsible for my actions.

We have strong studs, skinny twinks, shy jockers, passive and active gays from everyday life and much more!

Themes range from mild to wild -- everyone will be satisfied!

Asian gay barely legal teen boy twink pictures young gays hard nude hard-core action


Oral anal group masturbations huge gay boy orgies with deep penetrations! Cum eating and rim games and many more! Virgin boys first time opening the score!

NUDITY AND ADULT LANGUAGE. THE MATERIAL IS OF AN ADULT NATURE. IT IS NOT INTENDED FOR MINOR AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 VIEW THIS MATERIAL. BY CLICKING ON ANY OTHER BUTTONS OR LINKS ON THIS SITE YOU ARE REPRESENTING THAT YOU ARE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE. IF YOU ARE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE, IF GAY ADULT MATERIAL OFFENDS YOU OR IF YOU ARE ACCESSING THIS SITE FROM ANY COUNTRY OR CITY WHERE ADULT MATERIAL IS SPECIFICALLY PROHIBITED BY LAW PLEASE LEAVE THIS SITE.
2005 - 2006: Pornographic Pantograph
Pornographic Pantograph with Allusion to Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending)

By JOHN NEFF

Show Dates: September 16 October 21, 2006
Opening Reception: Saturday, September 16: 6 to 9 pm
Gallery Hours: Wednesday thru Saturday: 12 to 6 pm

EXTENDED PRESS RELEASE

Western Exhibitions, recently relocated to 1821 W. Hubbard Suite 202, is proud to present John Neff’s new project Pornographic Pantograph with Allusion to Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending). A “studio view,” the exhibition includes preparatory blueprints, maquettes, presentation mannequins and patent application materials related to the Pornographic Pantograph, a sculpto-graphic device that Neff has been developing since 2001. When completed (projected prototype completion date fall 2007), the Pantograph will be a machine that enables users to replicate and re-photograph poses observed in gay male pornographic digital images using live models. Pantographs, long used by mechanical draftsmen and now being supplanted by digital technologies, are tools used to copy, reduce and enlarge building plans, production diagrams, and other two-dimensional images.

The preparatory blueprints, unique cyanotypes, are printed from negatives derived from existing gay online pornography but will include a broad range of stylistic references. The blueprint layouts mimic the design of pornographic websites. Superimposed over the photographic images, mechanical / technical drawings trace models’ poses. These tracings will serve as guidelines for the design of the various body clamps, reinforcements and restraints that will be the primary mechanical digital components of the completed device. Pseudo-Victorian photograms of diseased flowers and foliage and common weeds around the edges of the blueprints allude to both the first published book of photography (Anna Atkin’s 1843 British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions) and to the characterization of sexually expressed homosexuality as an undesirable, marginal abnormality.

Also included in the exhibition is a 1:5.75 scale maquette of the pantographic device, constructed in steel using parts from existing body-sculpting objects (exercise machines, medical instruments, office furniture). When produced as a production unit, the pantographic device will be large enough to constrain and control the physical movement of at least three full-size male bodies. Plaster casts of heads of cabbage hang within the maquette’s “viewing window.” The cabbage serves several functions: it is a stand-in for the figure of the model (much as fruit and carcasses are often used in industrial safety tests); it makes explicit the cross-genre nature of the pantographic device (it is both a still life and a figurative composition); it expresses the title’s “allusion” to sixteenth century Spanish still-life painter Juan Cotan; and it refers to the German novelist Heinrich Böll’s report (made by a priest in his novel The Clown) that cabbage was once believed to quell the passions.

The two mannequins, both cast from the artist’s body, represent a seated figure looking directly at the pantographic device maquette and a standing figure facing the exhibition visitor. The seated figure is cast using plaster bandages in the manner of the late American sculptor George Segal. The cast components are assembled as fragments on an armature constructed of used wheelchair parts (using a technique similar to the method employed by conservationists attempting the reconstruction of figurative sculptures from Antiquity). The standing figure “presents” the exhibition, gesturing towards the other sculptures and towards an enlarged figure “presents” the exhibition to viewers, gesturing towards the other sculptures and towards an enlarged copy of the show’s press release. The standing figure’s vertical orientation and address to the viewer are in every way the opposite of the incomplete, silent, “absorptive” white figure.

Pornographic Pantograph With Allusion to Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending) also includes studio artifacts from the production of the exhibition, including a series of “studio snapshots” (some overleaf, in the style of an art magazine advertisement, with exhibition information), negatives and production molds. Contrary, however, to many “process oriented” sculptural and installation works now being exhibited, the Pantograph as a device will arrive at a point of definitive completion. The current presentation is a “studio view” of the in-progress work, but the idea of the device itself exhibits a will to formal autonomy at odds with the self-consciously theatrical device (borrow a term from art critic and historian Michael Fried), open-ended nature of much contemporary “sculpture-in-process.” (Work in the tradition of Robert Morris’ Continuous Project Altered Daily and Robert Smithson’s Non-Site). The theatrical work, by definition, is always incomplete in itself, acknowledging and depending, as it does, on the presence of an observer.

Art is in the midst of a crisis of appearances, one that arises – simultaneously and relatedly – out of the neo-avant-garde’s rejection of the formal autonomy of the work of art (however contingent) and the rise the spectacle as a primary means of socio-political control in the West. Precipitated by the knowledge that today all things appear first as their exchange value, this crisis is all the more deeply felt in an artistic context of radical questioning of the stability of individual “acts of culture,” a context that undermines – or preempts - emphatic self-delineations. Much serious contemporary art uncritically adopts a theatrical relationship to its viewers in an effort to respond to, resolve or intensify (hoping to exacerbate the collapse of Art as a disciple and, by extension, existing social orders) the crisis of appearances. The will to formal autonomy, on the other hand, necessarily entails an indifferent, conflicted or troubled relationship between the artwork / situation / device and an observer. In the context of a commercial contemporary art gallery, these statements are insane but necessary.

Historically, the Pantograph stands (humbly) in a long line of systematically sensual artworks stretching from Pontormo to the present. This tradition marries methodical - sometimes quasi-scientific - formal experimentation with a keen appreciation of the “excesses” of vision and body, those experiences that evade and respond inconclusively to analytical interpretation. The seventeenth century Spanish monk Juan Sanchez Cotan, for example, painted a series of still lives in which pieces of ripe fruit and vegetables hang from strings in dark window frames. These lush images were composed according to strict algorithmic formulae. On a page titled “Vegetables as Threat” posted in February 2003 on the website Vantisite. com (since replaced, interestingly, by a pornographic hosting site) this mysterious claim was made: “Juan Sanchez Cotan’s fatal obsession with vegetables led him to a hellish impasse, which he escaped only by the total renunciation of this world for a rigidly cloistered life.”

In relation Neff’s own oeuvre, the project will extend the interests of his installation pieces and works on paper. Like the Pantograph, the installations Faxtions (1997) and White (1998), and the sets Empty Space (1999), Figure / Ground and Repetitions (both 2001), dealt with the relationship of flat images to three-dimensional space, the seduction of identical things, and the problem of the beholder’s role (or lack thereof) in the creation of an artwork’s “meaning.” The artist’s works on paper, notably those included in Papers on Work: Collages and Explanations (2002) have a two-fold action: they are simultaneously clear, concise expressions of a given set of rules and completely irrational objects.
Negative (Brûlage), Acetate, ink, marker, sealers, tapes, toner / tape on wall
John Neff

Pornographic Pantograph
With Allusion To Juan Cotan
(In Progress, Patent Pending)

SEPTEMBER 16 - OCTOBER 21

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS
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Chicago, IL
60622

TEL. 312.307.4685
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a butt is just the top of a leg - 24

Reply to: mon@29274169@craigslist.org
Date: 2004-04-20, 7:49PM PDT

a shoulder is just the garage of your arm, a peck is the spreading hairy masculinity, an ab is just the place to where it all comes together, a toe is just an antennae, a thigh is just a landing strip, a hole is just a nervous invitation, a neck is just an extension of possibility, an armpit is the tropical zone, a bicep is a way to say you love yourself, a hand is a thing to cup, claw, pull and interface with, a mouth is just the softest thing you can imagine, an eye is a high end, small plasma screen, hair is the frosting on the cake and a dick and balls are the ornament of beauty and power, 24 y/o windsurfer iso something 2nite

it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

29274169
The first doll was the first man. Genesis 2:7 reads “And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” Adam’s name is derived from *aw-dawm*, the Hebrew word for man, but it is also closely related to *aw-dawm-ah*, which means red earth or red clay. And so art preceded life, and it is we who come from dolls and sculptures rather than being, as we like to believe, their masters. Art as a striving for mastery, for a control like that of a living being.

From earth, to earth. In the words of the English burial service “dust to dust,” from Genesis 3:19’s “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt return.” Paul Dickinson’s 2004 audio sculpture *Music For Worms and Compost* consists of a large, carefully crafted, sealed plywood box filled with rich humus and earthworms. (Humus, like human, comes from the Greek word for earth.) Powerful microphones burried deep within the box broadcast the sound of the burrowing creatures through large speakers at the gallery’s perimeter. All boxes of a certain size recall coffins (we think of all enclosed boxes as coffins; the coffin—with, perhaps, the safe— is the Ur box). The association is very present in *Music For Worms and Compost*: its floor consists of a base inauthenticity. Barbie has “multiple selves.” Dr. Nairn reports: “The girls almost always talked about having a doll, a Barbie. (These were all middle class children). So, to them, Barbie has come to symbolize excess. Barbies are not special, they are disposable, and are thrown away and rejected.” The study found that Barbie’s “multiple personalities” were a problem for the children interviewed. The doll’s legion identities (Surfing Barbie, Dr. Barbie, Flight Attendant Barbie, etc.) were widely seen not as expressions of possibility but as manifestations of a base inauthenticity. “Barbies are so disposable, it’s like burning matches,” according to Dr. Nairn: “from the children’s point of view they are simply being imaginative in disposing of an excess commodity in the same way as one might crush cans for recycling.”

I myself was recently involved in the dispersal of a hoard of Barbies. This collection, rather than being the result of sloppily excessive consumption, was carefully and lovingly gathered over the decades by one woman. I work as a photographer, copy writer and photographer for a man who consigns antiques and “collectibles” on eBay. According to Dr. Nairn: “from the children’s point of view they are simply being imaginative in disposing of an excess commodity in the same way as one might crush cans for recycling.”

The Barbie / girl relationship seems the perfect illustration of what we might call the body dissatisfaction / destruction process. Engaged in imaginative play with Barbie, the young girl identifies with her, animates her, and begins to see herself as a friend and dream investment. If Barbie is an ideal model, then she becomes a monster. When this ideal is ultimately proven unattainable, however, the girl (now woman) begins a process of mourning, (according to Haynes) self-control that can only lead to the grave.

Recent research, however, seems to contradict this widespread model. A 2005 study of the University of Bath found that, rather than identifying with Barbie, young girls questioned about the doll expressed deep dislike, even hatred of her. Dr. Agnes Nairn of the University’s School of Management “the meaning of Barbie went beyond an expressed antipathy...[to] actual physical violence and torture towards the doll... The types of mutilation are varied and creative, and range from removing the hair to decapitation, burning, breaking and even microwaving.”

What might cause such an intense reaction to Barbie? Dr. Nairn reports: “The girls almost always talked about having a doll, a Barbie. (These were all middle class children). So, to them, Barbie has come to symbolize excess. Barbies are not special, they are disposable, and are thrown away and rejected.” The study found that Barbie’s “multiple personalities” were a problem for the children interviewed. The doll’s legion identities (Surfing Barbie, Dr. Barbie, Flight Attendant Barbie, etc.) were widely seen not as expressions of possibility but as manifestations of a base inauthenticity. “Barbies are so disposable, it’s like burning matches,” according to Dr. Nairn: “from the children’s point of view they are simply being imaginative in disposing of an excess commodity in the same way as one might crush cans for recycling.”

The Barbie doll, for over forty years a 12” long piece of plastic and rubber pressed and molded into a little-chambered representing womanhood, has undergone radical alterations in use and meaning. The intended consumers of the doll — young girls — seem to have rebelled against it (or now demonstrate a negative dedication to Barbie). What might might be called an “empathetic” reaction to Barbie has been replaced by a shocked realization of “her” status as an object. At the same time, a secondary market has been created around the doll as a cultural icon, a representation that is in effect pure brand, depending not on affective responses but on an audience’s awareness of and immersion in a detailed history of Barbie’s production, distribution, and evolution. And a similar movement has occurred in sculpture...
Fig. 2. *Trans Genital Blueprint* (Etching). Cyanotype on paper. 8 1/2 x 11 inches. Image courtesy of Western Exhibitions.

This work is from Neff's *Trans Genital Blueprints* series, a collection of unique cyanotypes (literally blueprints). All of the prints were exposed using the same negative, a photographic transparency of Neff's male genitals that was cut and reassembled to depict a schematic vagina.

**John Neff** produces works of art, organizes gallery exhibitions and practices short-form critical writing. He lives and works in Chicago.
2006: Grinnell, IA

Jordan Acker Anderson - Painting
September 8 - 28, 2006
Sponsored by Wells Fargo

John Neff & John Celuch
Architecture Decorated & Documented
October 6 - 26, 2006
Sponsored by the Pennysaver

Warren Grant - Travel Photography
November 3 - 22, 2006
Sponsored by Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance

Mollie Osgood - Painting
January 5 - 25, 2007
Sponsored by the City of Grinnell

College Students - Sculpture
February 2 - 22, 2007
Sponsored by Grinnell College

Elementary & Middle School Art Exhibition
March 16 - April 12, 2007
Sponsored by First Federal Bank

High School Art Exhibition
April 20 - May 17, 2007
Sponsored by Ramsey-Weeks, Inc.
“Over the course of the past thirty years, mainstream contemporary art’s attention has shifted between the picture and the page. That is, the aesthetic discourse of artists, art writers, and other market actors has privileged images and structures in turn (e.g. the 1980s passage from Neo-Expressionism to Neo-Geo or, recently, a shift of emphasis from Gothic figuration to forms of conceptual montage).

Now, some artists are attempting syntheses of these terms, talking about artworks in ways that fuse investments in pictorial effects with deep attention to the structures of art objects and the systems through which those objects are distributed. Small printed pages (photocopied, laser prints, cheap color photos, and altered advertisements) are a primary medium of this new work.

This art discourse arises from, and documents, the effects of increasing virtualization on daily life in the industrialized world. As the Cubists and Futurists imbricated the stuff of industrial society into representations of their changing worlds (with Dada, the aims of collage were different), so young artists today incorporate the materials and techniques of the internet age. Their work expresses a wish and striving to represent, through images being and touching bodies, a culture in thrall to sinister myths of immateriality.”

Printed Space, collated by Scott Speh and featuring an essay by John Neff (draft excerpted above), will be on view in Western Exhibitions’ Plus Gallery from July 14 through August 18. At the close of the show the gallery will publish a small Xerox catalog containing reproductions of exhibited works and a version of Neff’s essay.
2008: Dead Center / Marginal Notes

Marginal Notes:

Don’t forget to change the artist names here and in the text.

Maybe “curated by John Neff” should be in bold type?

Change to “the second”

Don’t forget to add a “through” (not thru) or “…”

"Dead Center/Marginal Notes: Dan Devine/Eugenio Dittborn"

WESTERN EXHIBITIONS
1821 W Hubbard Street, Suite 202
January 12–March 29

“Dead Center/Marginal Notes” is a yearlong series of two-artist exhibitions organized by artist John Neff for Western Exhibitions. The stated focus of the program is to “deal—directly or indirectly—with the relationships of centers to margins (culturally, geographically, politically and within works themselves as a formal concern).” The project had the ground running with this first installment, which brings together two works: one by Eugenio Dittborn, the other by Dan Devine. Dittborn’s The 22nd History of the Human Face (Triquetra): Annular Pendant no. 123, 1998—a blank bipartite canvas surrounded by a border of printed or painted faces (mug shots, caricatures, police sketches, and the like) displayed near mail pouches with thematic quotes and the work’s exhibition history written on them—exemplifies the artist’s interests in indexing the circulation of artwork and in investigating the international traffic of information. Devine’s work, Operation (1997), is a small concrete block encasing an automotive part, the hollow openings of which are visible in the sculpture’s center. In both works, the edge formed by a fold of containment be it an envelope or lip formed at the edge of concrete and engine part, offers the point of contact between a hero and a thief.

The subset of this exhibition is distance in time and taste. Neither work is new, and neither artist is as discussed as he was years gone by. Neff suggests the folly of current systems of judgment by turning his back on the implausible search for the next thing and concentrating instead on what is necessary, whether or not it is considered as being the center. Neff in effect reminds that we forget far more than we know, an opening statement that bodes well for the rest of the series.

—Anthony Elms
Jeanne Silverthorne has been exhibiting her work in installation, photography and sculpture nationally and internationally for over twenty years. Her recent projects have included solo presentations at the Butler Gallery in Kilkenny, Ireland and at Seoul’s Gallery Seomi. Additionally, the artist is a widely published critical writer and a noted educator. Silverthorne is represented by McKee Gallery in New York, were she lives and works...

DCMN 3:

...Dead Center / Marginal Notes: John Boskovich focuses on works from the artist’s 1993 Rosamund Felsen Gallery solo exhibition Rude Awakening. It also includes three related Polaroid and text pieces from the 1990s “It Series.” Western Exhibitions’ display centers on extant components of Boskovich’s project-cum-installation The Honey Machine: It Works Without Thinking, which was first shown in Rude Awakening. In a 1994 Artforum review, critic David Rimanelli described the installation:

Embrs smolder in “The Honey Machine: It Works Without Thinking”, an installation in which Boskovich has assembled 250 Honey Bears and miniature Buddhas and encased them in three Plexiglas,</nowiki>virines. In the role of artist-as-researcher (cf. Hans Haacke), Boskovich counted for six months the number of ads placed by “models” (read: hustlers) in Frontiers, a California gay magazine. The number was always close to, and sometimes exactly, 250. The comforting little surrogates for the 250 advertised pleasure-workers all face a framed text of an ad Boskovich took out in Frontiers bearing this inviting text: “SHAVED HEAD MUSCLE DADDY 36 yo, 5’11” 190 lbs. Big Dick TOTAL TOP Looking for smooth muscle pussy boys--verbal abuse a must PAGER: (310) 582-6112.” The pagers was hooked up to a sound system installed in the gallery, and the voices of respondents would often interrupt a pre-recorded tape featuring, among other things, Patti Smith performing “Piss Factory,” Allen Ginsberg reading his depress poem, “Aunt Rose,” and T.S. Eliot intoning passages from “Four Quarte.”

In the fifteen years since Rude Awakening, several of the elements described by Rimanelli have been lost. Rather than attempting to recreate The Honey Machine as it was initially presented, Neff has chosen to include only surviving original elements of the installation in Dead Center / Marginal Notes. Those elements include the framed text piece Daddy and Frontiers, a framed magazine containing Boskovich’s actual advertisement. The perishable Honey Bears and fragile Buddha figurines have disappeared: if a tape of the respondents to Boskovich’s advertisement exists, its location is unknown.

Two live audio cables protruding from the wall and terminating, unconnected to any machine, on the gallery floor mark the absence of the installation’s audio track, and of Boskovich’s carefully selected playback devices. The visual contrast between Western Exhibitions’ austere gallery display and 1993 documentary photographs of The Honey Machine also indicates the fragmentation of Boskovich’s installation over time. The curator hopes that these specific differences in presentation suggest the difficulties of preserving and exhibiting conceptual artworks outside of collecting institutions, while simultaneously pointing to the ways in which Boskovich’s art generally could be said to allegorize the gaps and ruptures – baffling or productive – that inhere in relationships between humans and images, or relationships between humans through images....

DCMN 4:

...The fourth show in the series, opening September 5th, presents artist Holt Quentel’s large-scale painting Black 3 Gesture (B/W) Hope of 1989.

After receiving her education in Chicago and Princeton, the artist Holt Quentel (American, born 1961) rose to sudden prominence in New York’s art scene of the late 1980s. Typically, Quentel’s works were large-scale unstretched paintings resembling battered awnings, signs and tarpaulins. In creating these works, the artist first hand-crafted, and then carefully distressed, her canvases’ surfaces. When first exhibited, the paintings’ denial of a transparent relationship between process and appearance – a defining characteristic of painting after Minimalism – was often read through then-current theories of “simulation,” notably Jean Baudrillard’s notion that Postmodern culture values impressions over actualities. Likewise, contemporary critics related the artist’s frequent allusions to the history of abstract painting to the appropriationist tactics of 1980s photo-conceptualists and Neo-Geo artists.

However, as these paradigms of art criticism faded in the early 1990s, critical attention soured on Quentel’s...
art. Her rapid career success was characterized as a symptom of 80s art-world excesses, and her work was dismissed as faddish decoration. Quentel’s last solo exhibition was held at Stux Gallery in New York in 1992; shortly thereafter she left the art world. Although she may or may not continue to practice painting, there is no available record of Quentel exhibitions during the past sixteen years.

Despite her initial reputation as an avatar of modish “Simulationist” painting, Quentel’s work evades easy categorization and is not hidebound by period concerns. Her pieces are replete with unexpected formal devices, moments of strikingly painterly expression and virtuosic trompe l’oeil surface treatments. Still, the paintings resist reification, and often appear to be waste products rather than calculated visual expressions. (In this last respect it is, perhaps, interesting to see Quentel as a precursor of Abject Art rather than an endgame appropriationist.) The artist’s paintings are not necessarily dreary Postmodern souvenirs of the lofty aspirations of twentieth century abstraction; they can also be read as meditations on the practices of attention that cause artifacts to shift into and out of legibility, and thereby of fashion. Rags to riches, and vice versa.

The alteration between the exemplary and the rejected embodied in Quentel’s paintings was bitterly recapitulated in her career as an artist. Viewing Quentel’s art from outside the frame provided by theoretical debates of the 1980s may surprise the contemporary viewer who too often straddles aesthetic encounters. Likewise, attention to the story of her career provides instructive insights into how meaning and status in art are the two forked extensions of a single movement, discourse constantly advances here and there – and retracts them from – specific art and artists with the quick, relentless flicks of critical tongues.

DONM 5:

...Chicago’s Robbin Lockett gallery opened in January of 1986 and remained in business until late 1992. From its inception, the small commercial gallery’s program pointedly mixed local art with work from more widely recognized centers of production. Like much mainstream art of the 1980s and 90s, the work shown at Lockett relied heavily on precedents set by Minimalism and Conceptualism, with a few notable exceptions. In this regard, Lockett’s stable of artists participated in what is often seen as a generational shift in Chicago art: from the self-consciously quirky figuration of the Imagists to the more apparently polished production of a group of younger artists variously described as participating in trans-regional Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Minimalism or generically “Postmodernist” movements. (Given the distance of time, all of these labels seem imprecise. Applied to post-1945 American art in general, the former terms assume a model of rupture and return where continuity is clearly visible, while from the perspective of Chicago art specifically the latter formulation ignores the proto-postmodernity of Paschke, Ramberg et al. while also eliding their – admittedly sometimes oblique – influence on the development of Chicago artists emerging in the mid-1980s.)

In keeping with the methods of their acknowledged art-historical forbears, the artists exhibiting at the Robbin Lockett gallery occasionally referred to or incorporated the gallery’s architecture and practice into their shows, often while simultaneously maintaining a self-consciously blank aesthetic orientation. The gallery’s program was thus marked by a paradoxically cosmopolitan style of site-specificity that strove to validate Chicago production not, as earlier Midwestern artists had, by emphasizing the peculiarity of a regional vision, but rather by highlighting some Chicago-based artists’ adept deployment of a loose set of aesthetic and professional conventions that was at that time formalizing as the operational code of an emergent global art culture. As gallery owner Robbin Lockett said in a 1987 New York Times article on Chicago’s then-thriving art market, “The artist here to have a dialogue with the world. But we’re getting more press and critical support – and vice versa. It doesn’t have to have the New York stamp of approval.”

It is productive to reflect on the ways in which the evaluative standards for “good work” of the sort Lockett described – especially those traditions that are left in doubt as to what in the record is actual and what is a flight of fancy. The

Dead Center / Marginal Notes: Lockett & Hermetic will present several components of The Hermetic Archive on loan from the personal collection of Nicholas Frank, whose work is now represented by Western Exhibitions. The show will also include a collection of announcements, invitations, images and reviews relating to the Robbin Lockett gallery and the Hermetic gallery, a public panel held at Western Exhibitions during the show, organized by the curator and critic Kathryn Hixon, will bring together some participants in the Chicago art world circa 1990 to discuss that era. Considering the trajectories – stories that may not yet be histories – of the Robbin Lockett gallery and the Hermetic gallery, we are compelled to ask certain difficult and possibly troubling questions about the development of contemporary art in culture. For example, how do works of contemporary art – especially those made from acknowledged centers of production, deny or reflect their origins? Who are the intended audiences for galleries of “advanced” art located in provincial cities, and do those audiences actually see the artworks and respond to their vision? Do those audiences actually exist? And why, despite their integral roles in the creation and display of contemporary visual art, are art galleries themselves so seldom discussed in complex aesthetic or theoretical terms: why are limitations of their art-historical roles so often limited by the anecdotal?...

One of Frank’s final exhibitions through Hermetic presented The Hermetic Archive, a collection of art-works, ephemera, essays and photographs arranged within the gallery space to form a chronological account of its career. The show was another tour-de-force of mischievous tweaking of mainstream contemporary art’s conventions of display and reception, as it is unusual for a small art gallery to explicitly formulate its own historical record (although the practice does occur in older, wealthier businesses with an economic and social stake in establishing an image of histor-ical importance). It is even rarer for an art space to chart its history as a meta-commentary on the facts and feints of the art world: viewers of the Archive – especially those who see the project in conjunction with Frank’s ongoing Nicholas Frank Biography – are left in doubt as to what in the record is actual and what is a flight of fancy. The Archive thus charts a mysterious terrain between ideas, places and concrete objects.
The solo exhibition Nocturnes for Boston, the first Boston presentation of work by Chicago-based John Neff, is comprised of large-format toned cyanotype prints and projected transparencies. The figurative images depict historical and recent Boston events involving transvestism (colonists’ wearing of Indian garb during the Boston Tea Party) or masking (a study for a memorial to the 2006 death of British citizen Adrian Exley during a breath control / BDSM session in suburban Boston).

Since 2005, Neff has been developing a distinctive photographic method that involves: collecting and generating digital photographic images; printing the images as negative acetate transparencies; collaging together those transparencies on glass to produce figurative images; and, finally, printing his collaged negatives as cyanotype photographs. Often, Neff presents his hand-worked negatives in conjunction with his prints.

For Nocturnes for Boston, Neff has darkened the Proof gallery space and presents a large selection of his glass transparencies as projections from an altered vintage overhead projector. As gallery visitors pass through the projectors’ beam, their shadows mingle with the artist’s historical reconstructions.

Neff has darkened and tinted his cyanotype prints of nocturnal Boston scenes with tea toning and multiple exposures. Although more conventionally presented, these works also invite intimate engagement from beholders; each is accompanied by a small chapbook outlining detailing the pictures’ historical context and citing the images’ sources. Compositonally, all of the works in the show are modeled on 18th century British “conversation pictures” and grand portraiture.

Proof is located at:

The Distillery
516 E. 2nd Street
South Boston, MA 02127

The main entrance is The Distillery’s side entrance on East 2nd Street.

508-963-9102
proof.gallery@gmail.com

Proof’s Hours are:

Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays 12-5pm or by appointment
Study for a Memorial to Adrian Exley (Details above and opposite), Cyanotypes on paper on wall, acetate negatives and tape on door, and paper collage on acetate.
New York Times / May 18, 1987 / U.S.S. Stark / Long Island Garbage Barge (Negative), 2008, Acetate, toner, adhesives on glass with metal hardware, 23” by 27.5”
U.S.S. Cole Hole, 2008, Cyanotype on plastic adhered to wall with petroleum jelly, tape on wall, 14.5" by 13.5"
Bathers, Cyanotype on paper, clear acrylic sheeting, wood, 84” by 72”

Drowned Man, 2008, Cyanotype on siliconized paper, tape on wall, 60” by 72”
Western Exhibitions is pleased to announce the May 24th opening of John Neff’s solo show *Bathers and Other Liquid Pictures* in the gallery’s main space. Male nudes and nautical pictures, the artist’s new works include two large-format assembled cyanotype prints, several hand-made glass plate negatives and a figurative sculpture.

In contrast to Neff’s three-room 2006 solo show with Western Exhibitions, *Pornographic Pantograph With Allusion To Juan Sanchez Cotan (In Progress, Patent Pending)*, this spare display will present a small number of relatively discrete works.

In his large-scale cyanotype prints, Neff uses a hybrid photographic technique he developed while working on the *Pornographic Pantograph* project. The artist first collects or generates digital photographic images; then, he prints these images as acetate negatives; the acetate negatives are then collaged together to create figurative images; finally, the negatives are printed using the Victorian photographic technology of cyanotype printing (literally, blueprinting).

Previously, Neff’s use of this technique emphasized his graphic materials’ disparate sources and the physical tearing and re-orientation of the collaged negatives. His newer works strive to create more unified representational fields and more complete figures, a shift reflected in the use of traditional subjects such as the bather. Neff notes this relationship between his current subjects and his preferred photographic technology: blueprints are developed in a water bath.

The “other liquid pictures” of the exhibition’s title are two small works - a glass plate negative and a photographic print - from an ongoing project to create 100 pieces depicting a maritime history of the 1990s. *U.S.S. Stark*, documenting a 1987 Iraqi missile strike on a U.S. Navy frigate in the Persian Gulf, is the series’ prologue. *U.S.S. Cole Hole* – a rendering of that U.S. Navy ship’s hull after a suicide boat bombing in 2000 - functions as the series’ epilogue avant-le-lettre.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a printed interview between Neff and critic Jeff Ward, which will be distributed in the gallery and online at [www.westernexhibitions.com](http://www.westernexhibitions.com).

Most of my recent pictures are the size of either a page or a person. This is partly a result of the work’s sources (digital or printed documents and photographs) and subjects (human figures). It is also – perhaps more importantly – a consequence of my technique, and by extension of certain ideas about figures and figuration that I am slowly working through.

To make my pictures, I first collect or generate a variety of photographic images. Then, I print the images as acetate negatives. The acetate negatives are then collaged together to create figurative images, usually either at the size of a single acetate sheet (8.5” by 11”) or at the actual size of the body represented. Finally, the negatives are contact printed using the antique photographic technology of cyanotype printing (literally, blueprinting). In individual pictures, the effect of this process is a photographic surface that materially and visually integrates disparate sources, while opening into a non-perspectival pictorial space that is unified but, stylistically, neither fantastic nor realist. My hope is that these pictures are able to generate – even if only for a moment – an empathetic relationship with their beholders, a relationship transacted over the surface of the pictures, but also within them.

The photographic negative has traditionally been seen as a locus of photographic truth – as original in every sense. With their evident processing – digital and printing artifacts, visible seams – my negatives work to sidestep such claims. Similarly, the rich and unpredictable materiality of the cyanotype printing process gives substance to digital images, typically imagined to be disembodied and perfectly replicable.

In addition to my work in photography, I am pursuing a practice of making three-dimensional representations of the human body. Like my cyanotype prints, these sculptures involve the gathering and joining of indexical traces, in this case plaster life casts. Taken from the same body or from multiple bodies over long periods of time, the casts – often intermixed with used and unused molds – are assembled into single sculptural figures.

This and other syntheses of fragment and whole in my work relate to my ongoing efforts to arrive at a figuration – an idea of the human – through which I might imagine the existence of integrated, singular subjects whose identities are not contingent on toxic and untenable conceptions of authenticity.
2009: Father, can’t you see I’m burning?

**John Neff** (Chicago) is one of three artists commissioned by photo MIAMI 2008 to create a solo installation at the fair. Neff’s new multi-media project mixes pictures of male bathers with images based in his ongoing series of photo works depicting a naval history of the United States in the late twentieth century.

The bathers, large-format cyanotype prints, are presented on the specially constructed transparent exterior wall of Neff’s exhibition booth. A jpeg of the blast-scared hull of the U.S.S. Cole floats on a computer screen inside the dim booth, a space furnished to resemble a makeshift workshop. Cyanotype renderings of news clippings about the Cole bombing provide further nautical imagery.

Two audio files play simultaneously on the computer that presents the Cole image. *Father, can’t you see I’m burning?*, the project’s title, refers to a Freudian dream recounted in a lecture excerpt from philosopher Slavoj Žižek discussing relationships between wartime violence and personal traumas. The other audio element is drawn from a video chat originally webcast on the military-themed gay porn site Active Duty; the porn performer makes frequent references to water, swimming, and drowning.

The work’s audio-visual juxtapositions suggest that private and public, personal and political, events and identities are not just interpenetrated but actually constitutive of one another in contemporary American society.
2009: The Analog Hole (Or “Abundance”)

[Two images of dryers, one labeled 'EQ3.JPG @ 100% (Gray/8)', the other labeled 'Coin%20Operated_HC20_...']
The Analog Hole (Or “Abundance”)  
By John Neff

Window display on view May 9 – March 31, 2009  
Gallery hours with the artist: Sunday, May 10, 1 – 5 pm and by appointment

RIGHT WINDOW Gallery  
972 Valencia Street, San Francisco  
Curated by Cassie Riger

The Analog Hole (or “Abundance”) is a new installation for RIGHT WINDOW Gallery by Chicago-based artist John Neff. The term “analog hole” refers to the difficulty of controlling rights to non-interactive digital media during playback. Coined by the Motion Picture Association of America, “analog hole” was quickly corrupted by the vernacular into “a-hole”. Neff’s recent digital-to-analog photographic process involves shooting digital images, creating hand-collaged acetate internegatives from those images, and printing his negatives as cyanotype photographs (or blueprints). At RIGHT WINDOW gallery, the artist’s elaborate printmaking process embodies the rich possibility offered by the analog hole.

Neff was one of three artists commissioned to create special projects for Photo Miami this year. His project, Father, can’t you see I’m burning mixed images of nude male bathers with pieces based on his ongoing series depicting a nautical history of the United States. Exploring transparency and opacity, the bather images, large-format cyanotype prints, were presented on the specially constructed transparent exterior wall of his exhibition booth. The nautical subject – a monitor-bound digital image based on U.S. military photos of the 2000 bombing of the U.S.S. Cole and a collection of cyanotype reproductions of news clippings about that incident – were shown in the booth’s dim interior, a space that was furnished to resemble a makeshift workspace. The project’s title, Father, can’t you see I’m burning?, was drawn from a Slavoj Žižek text that discusses the relationship between external violence and internal traumas in psychoanalysis, by way of a Freudian dream.

At RIGHT WINDOW Gallery, Neff will apply acetate negatives to the space’s front windows, transforming their panes into interpenetrated representations of an enlarged computer desktop and a small business storefront. Inside the gallery, prints made onto a variety of found fabrics will hang from lines stretched across the space. (Cyanotype prints are, in fact, developed in a water wash). Sorting, washing, folding, and hanging images out to dry, Neff will transform RIGHT WINDOW Gallery into a laundromat of sorts. As with his recent series, Bathers and Other Liquid Pictures (2007 - 2008), Neff’s new project foregrounds watery studies of nude figures to suggest a return to the primacy of subjectivity in the visual arts.

RIGHT WINDOW Gallery: RIGHT WINDOW Gallery is a collaboration of twelve San Francisco artists and curators who pool resources to create street level venue for visual art. Because the exhibition space is small—it’s literally the right display window of a Valencia Street store front—the Gallery aims for creative uses of the space. Neff’s exhibition during May 2009 is curated by Cassie Riger. Riger’s last project for RIGHT WINDOW Gallery was Looking But Not Touching; a four-part performance series featuring over 30 artists, writers, and musicians, all free and available to pedestrians on Valencia Street in May 2008.
2009: Basic or Boring Pictures

*Napkin Picture*, Cyanotype on fabric, nails, tape on wall

*Dry Bathers*, Cyanotype on fabric, nails, tape on wall
"Back and Back II, Digital silver prints, 4" by 6"

http://www.marjoriewoodgallery.com/exhibitions/neff/basicspecs/
How were these pieces made?

Most of the pictures were made using a print process I’ve been developing over the past few years. I shoot digital photos, convert the files into life-sized digital negatives, segment those negs and print them on 8.5” by 11” transparencies, collage the transparencies back into full figures and then contact print the collaged negatives using the cyanotype process. I also make cyanotype pictures at the size of single acetate sheets - mostly variants of my larger pieces and photos that ride a line between amateur snapshots and classic straight photography. Everything is done using common materials and tools: overhead transparencies, point-and-shoot cameras, laser printers and sunlight. I like cyanotype because it’s cheap, it’s easy, and it has a dubious modern pedigree.

A couple of the newest pictures here deviate from the method I’ve described. They’re digital silver prints, and the source images are unmanipulated files made with a digital camera I constructed. The figurative distortions in these pictures aren’t Photoshop effects: they’re the result of movements - performances - made during the camera’s slow exposures.

What’s the significance of the title of this body of work: Basic or Boring Pictures?

Lately, the words “the violent return of the subject” run through my mind. Exactly that pseudo-academic phrasing. I take this to mean that bare subject matter has forced itself to the surface of my art. I no longer prioritize the crafting of subtle reflections between materials and depicted subjects, or try to foreground resonances between my work and a specific historical past. (I don’t, but I do. Now, this stuff lives and dies alongside plainer things.) Maybe this is because I’ve arrived at a studio method I can take as a given. Or maybe it’s because I feel a strong pressure to make pictures of my fantasies, my world, whatever. Maybe I now see the everyday as stripped to its epic dimensions. That’s the violent return of the subject.

But what about the title?

The pictures show moments where the bestial and the human overlap or separate, mundane events that make civilization. Those moments are basic, and they’re boring.
Occasional Gallery St. Paul Presents:

Snowfall

By John Neff

February 17 – April 14, 2007

Alternate Titles:
Snowfall: An Explanation of and an End to Certain Themes and Motifs in the Art of John Neff
Snowfall: A Scene of Quiet Beauty

Occasional Gallery is pleased to present Snowfall by John Neff, a work possessed, simultaneously, by interminable logorrhea and mute solipsism. A re-presentation, examination and explanation of selected themes and motifs in Neff’s work of 1998 to 2001, Snowfall is also a covering-over of autobiography within his oeuvre in that self-reference is buried under its own accumulation. Further, the work is a winter for the figure of “The Artist,” Neff’s final refusal to depend on that doddering construction’s authority.

Neither photography nor sculpture, and not necessarily an installation, Snowfall could more accurately be called a criticism, claim or complaint in sculpto-graphic form. The work represents a wintry Minnesota landscape and is constructed of re-deployed documentary and production artifacts from a series of multi-media arrangements (or “sets”) and photographic pieces that Neff created in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Visitors to Occasional are greeted by a snowy curtain pieced together from fragments of white dress shirts, remnants from the production of Neff’s Sears Pictures of 1998-1999. A sculptural bust shaped from this curtain presents this press release, as well as information documenting the sources of Snowfall’s iconographic and material references. At two-week intervals throughout the duration of Snowfall, further installments of this press release will be posted in the gallery and online at www.occasionalart.com.

Passing through the curtain and into Occasional’s main gallery space, visitors see a large photographic in cool blue tones. Composed from cyanotype prints (literal blueprints) on Tyvek, this mural depicts a bare tree (Goddot Tree, a copy of a piece of scenery from a 1975 production of Waiting For Godot presented in Neff’s Repetitions, 2000) and a pair of disembodied legs (Ground Segal from 2000s Figure / Ground) as well as gallery floor plans and reproductions of works by other artists. Tyvek, the mural’s substrate, was the primary material of Scott Speh’s 2003 Occasional exhibition The Farewell Tour. White monochrome paintings on home-wrap supports, the pieces in that show were Speh’s last works of art: he now operates Western Exhibitions, a Chicago art gallery exhibiting, among others, Neff and Aaron Van Dyke, co-director of Occasional.

Within the curtained enclosure of the gallery, the floor is covered with the oiled paper negatives used in the photo-mural’s printing. Massed in corners, they resemble snowdrifts, or perhaps studio detritus from the production of Van Dyke’s Swirl photographs, which depicted eddies of white packing peanuts blown against uninflected black backdrops. The Swirl pictures were first exhibited in 1996 in Madison, Wisconsin, at a gallery run by Neff out of his home. They were later included in Cold Conceptualism, an exhibition that Neff co-curated at Chicago’s Suitable gallery. The white floor as a compositional device was also present in Neff’s 1998 curatorial project White, which included works by both Speh and Van Dyke.

Rising in the middle of the room is the plaster form used in the production of the fabric presentational bust. A cast taken from Neff’s head and shoulders in the pose of the Sears Pictures, this plaster body fragment is a mute counterpoint to its cloth double.

The multi-media arrangements from which the majority of Snowfall’s motifs are drawn were termed “sets” by Neff. Of the sets, he has written:

After completing the work now titled Empty Space, I began to use the term “set” rather than “installation” to describe large-scale environmental artworks composed from multiple and discrete elements. While installation may accurately describe my earlier works, I feel that it implies a relationship to site that Empty Space, Figure / Ground and Repetitions do not have. The later works were not specifically tailored to one site, and can be shown in any location as long as the prescribed placement of the objects is maintained.

This shift in approach and language was precipitated in large part by my growing dissatisfaction with what I had come to see as the easy, predictable effects offered by site-specific installation. The sets were the first steps in an ongoing project: attempting to make artworks that retain the referential complexity and keen awareness of conditions of production / distribution which characterize the best post-modern art while also aspiring to a formal autonomy, however contingent.

I approached my project with tongue partly in cheek, concentrating on the set’s “formal properties” of artworks as they are taught in contemporary art schools (Empty Space = negative space, etcetera). This concentration on “first principles” allowed me to gather and associate diverse references within each set. These references, in concert with each piece’s formal arrangement, articulated secondary and tertiary themes.

A field dusted with disorganized allusions, Snowfall is not a logical grouping but a disused stage littered with the props of long-closed productions. In this house, presenter and audience are one and the soliloquy is a whispered chaos of personal histories, pointed questions, claims of priority, vague recriminations and disordered observations. Old man’s mutterings. Not the death of “The Artist,” “The Personal,” but the beginning of his and its decline into irrelevance.

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