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ART GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Johannes VanDerBeek

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meaning, as if stammering on verges of articulation. Yet again, as is her wont, Williams suggests someone who, bent on vengeance, can't help stumbling into beauty. *Through April 14.* (303 Gallery, 555 W. 21st St. 212-255-1121.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Sarah Charlesworth

The influential Pictures Generation photographer, who died in 2013, at the age of sixty-six, plumbed the depths of consumerist longing in her distilled, often sinister works. In this airy installation, the black lacquer, oval-framed, cibachrome prints in her series "Natural Magic" (1992-93) appear like dark thought bubbles. A magician's gloved hands produce fire; a woman in white heels, draped in blue silk, levitates; seven flames, in a vertical line, flicker above a Victorian candlestick. Each vignette floats, isolated against a slick sea of black, drawing a parallel between the illusionism of stage magic and the tricks of commercial photography. With their portal-like, sculptural presence and ghostly images, the chic works of this rarely exhibited suite seductively conjure the menacing undercurrent of both nineteenth-century occultism and contemporary mass-media enchantment. *Through May 6.* (Maccarone, 98 Morton St. 212-431-4977.)

Justin Couillard

Inside a psychedelic living-room installation—complete with drawn shades, gently spacey prints on the walls, and a coffee table furnished with a novel by Philip K. Dick and a bong—is an enormous projection of *Alien Afterlife*, a video game that the artist, a self-taught coder, designed. It begins with a hospital deathbed scene and continues on in strange landscapes charged with uncertain threats and suggestive gibberish. It's as fun as it is disconcerting. A hilariously over-the-top coda is installed in the gallery's basement: two life-size sculptural aliens, talking to each other while sitting at facing desks, typing in a live chat room—you can join in at alienafterlife.com. *Through April 2.* (*Yours Mine & Ours*, 54 Eldridge St. 646-912-9970.)

Dan Herschlein

The Stephen King of new art, born in 1989, Herschlein continues to rattle his viewers as a suave lyricist of dread. Sculptures include a fool-the-eye realist bathroom sink with the top of a head visible beneath the drain. Low reliefs uncomfortably situate figures with shrouded or missing heads. Works on paper depict squalid domestic interiors occupied by grotesque young men. In each case, tenderly tactile materials, such as wax and casein, enhance the creepy-crawliness, like an unfriendly whisper in a dark place where you thought you were alone. *Through April 9.* (JTT, 191 Chrystie St. 212-574-8152.)

Leonhard Hurzmeier

This German pictorial humorist makes his New York debut with a show titled "All New Women"—crisp paintings on canvas or paper of generic females bicycling, doing yoga, protest marching, playing hockey, stealing jewels, or just cutely simpering. Composed of hard-edged and curvy geometric shapes in cheery colors, the works variously evoke advertising posters and graphic road signs, with echoes of Art Deco-era semi-abstractness. They all but audibly squeak with good-naturedness, so zealous to please that, in a New York way, you may suspect a cryptic catch. But good luck winking it out. *Through April 23.* (Uffner, 170 Suffolk St. 212-274-0064.)

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GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

Justin Amrhein and Colette Robbins

This duet between two young artists matches portentous Jungian mystery with frenetic Freudian avoidance. Works by Robbins that employ Rorschach-like blots feel rather literal, but her 3-D-printed polymer sculptures—narrow, complex towers in various shades of gray—suggest futuristic fetishes or the deformed bones of impossible animals. Amrhein's elaborately precise diagrams of sci-fi engineering projects suggest airtight systems of delusion. A white-on-black light box, almost thirteen feet long, depicts a vast machine with nearly three thousand individually labelled parts ranging from topical to absurd: "Trump shit extruder," "drone attack policy valve," "wimble bimble." *Through April 26.* (Transmitter, 1329 Willoughby Ave. 917-653-8236.)

MOVIES

OPENING

Beauty and the Beast Emma Watson stars in this adaptation of the fairy tale, about a young woman who falls in love with a monsterlike prince (Dan Stevens). Directed by Bill Condon. *Opening March 17.* (In wide release.) • **Frantz** Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. *Opening March 15.* (In limited release.) • **Song to Song** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening March 17.* (In limited release.) • **T2 Trainspotting** Danny Boyle directed this sequel to his 1996 drama, based on novels by Irvine Welsh, about a group of heroin addicts in Edinburgh. Starring Ewan McGregor, Ewen Bremner, Robert Carlyle, and Jonny Lee Miller. *Opening March 17.* (In limited release.)

NOW PLAYING

Actor Martinez

Nathan Silver and Mike Ott's film is a spinning prism of fiction and nonfiction that tosses off iridescent glints of melancholy whimsy. Arthur Martinez plays Arthur, a computer technician in Denver who dreams of making movies and connects with two filmmakers—Silver and Ott, playing themselves—in the hope that they'll make his dreams come true. They recruit Arthur to play a character based on himself, in an improvised drama based on his life. They film him at work, at home, and in discussion with themselves about the course that the film will take. But Silver and Ott find Arthur's life undramatic, and they spice up the action by hiring an actress, Lindsay Burdge (playing herself), to play Arthur's ex-girlfriend. Then they guide the action, instructing Lindsay to "press his buttons"; as they force Arthur to confront his problems on camera, they create problems for themselves, too. For all their self-deprecating irony and jack-in-the-box narrative gamesmanship, Silver and Ott—crafting a precise and exquisite visual style—turn Arthur's life and their involvement with it into quietly grand melodrama.—Richard Brody (In limited release.)

Before I Fall

This adaptation of the novel by Lauren Oliver is a sort of adolescent "Groundhog Day," about a frivolous young woman who learns the meaning of life after experiencing death. Zoey Deutch plays Sam, one of a quartet of popular high-school girls who make life miserable for their nonconformist peers. Her best friend, the queen bee, Lindsay (Halston Sage), is driving the group home from a party when an accident occurs, killing Sam—who nonetheless awakens again, at home, in her bed, exactly as she did the previous day. Sam figures out that she's being forced to repeatedly relive the last day of her life, but enlightenment arises only after she learns that her cruelty has lasting effects on her victims. The setting is the Pacific Northwest, but the social context is utterly undefined, apart from its cozy prosperity. Each of the characters has an identifying trait or two, but none has any identity. There's little that the director, Ry Russo-Young, can do with the material's sentimental thinness, but she does something anyway, pushing the storytelling toward portraiture: lingering closeups on Deutch suggest mysteries that escape the confines of the drama.—R.B. (In wide release.)

Daughters of the Dust

Julie Dash's boldly imaginative, ecstatically visionary drama, from 1991, is one of the best American independent films; she turns one family's experience of the Great Migration into a vast mythopoetic adventure. The action is set in 1902, as four generations of the Peazant family, Gullah people living on one of the Sea Islands, off the coast of Georgia, prepare to move to the North, where the bourgeois and devoutly Christian Viola (Cheryl Lynn Bruce) and her stylish and independent cousin Yellow Mary (Barbara-O) already live. From generation to generation, the islanders have maintained the traditions of their African-born ancestors, along with tormenting memories of slavery. The matriarch, Nana (Cora Lee Day), herself a freed slave, resists leaving her home and losing her link with the dead; the movie is narrated by the Unborn Child (Kay-Lynn Warren), whose future life bridges tradition

Art in America

DECEMBER 2014

EXHIBITION REVIEWS



View of Johannes VanDerBeek's exhibition "Early Hand," 2014, at Zach Feuer.

JOHANNES VANDERBEEK

Zach Feuer

The imposing steel screens greeting visitors to Johannes VanDerBeek's exhibition initiated impressions of a dystopic playground or institutional holding pen. Five 9-by-8-foot welded steel frames holding diamond-pleated metal mesh were joined to transect the front gallery into open rooms—viewing spaces that were both constraining and porous. Viewers could see through these “walls,” hung with paintinglike objects (both fronts and backs visible), to observe sculptures of freestanding silhouettes and wall-propped schematic figures.

Upon the birth of his daughter, VanDerBeek became fascinated with “imagining how she was seeing the world without the pre-associations that language provides,” according to press material. The objects (all 2014) in “Early Hand,” VanDerBeek's fourth solo at Feuer, did invoke children's art, but it was parenthood that really animated this exhibition. A parent's privileged observations and responsibilities to both protect and educate can liberate consciousness as well as restrict freedom.

The 9-foot-tall stick-figure-like sculptures made of metal rods evoke first drawings as well as an adult seen from a child's perspective. While their titles, such as *Hurrying*, *Running* and *Throwing*, describe action, they lean statically against walls. The human-size silhouettes, from a series titled “Early Outline,” suggest filled-out versions of the stick figures; however, their bent-rod armatures were actually made and applied after puddles of CelluClay, Aqua-Resin and paint had been shaped but had not hardened.

The real highlights here were the “cast wall objects,” the gallery's term for what looked like paintings. Seductive yet puzzling, they were the apotheosis in conceptual development of the other objects, as they added pictorial structure to sculptural presence.

Constructed by an unusual, reverse-painting method of casting, these works were emphatically not paint on canvas. Drawing with clay, silicone and paint on a piece of framed acetate, VanDerBeek then filled the frame with colored Aqua-Resin, a liquid, water-based sculpting material. After hardening, the object was removed from the acetate, and the former work area, now covered and opaque, became the back. Reversed as in a print, the new surface was worked further, by wholly or partially peeling off the clay or silicone, and sometimes filling the resulting grooves and gouges with more paint or clay.

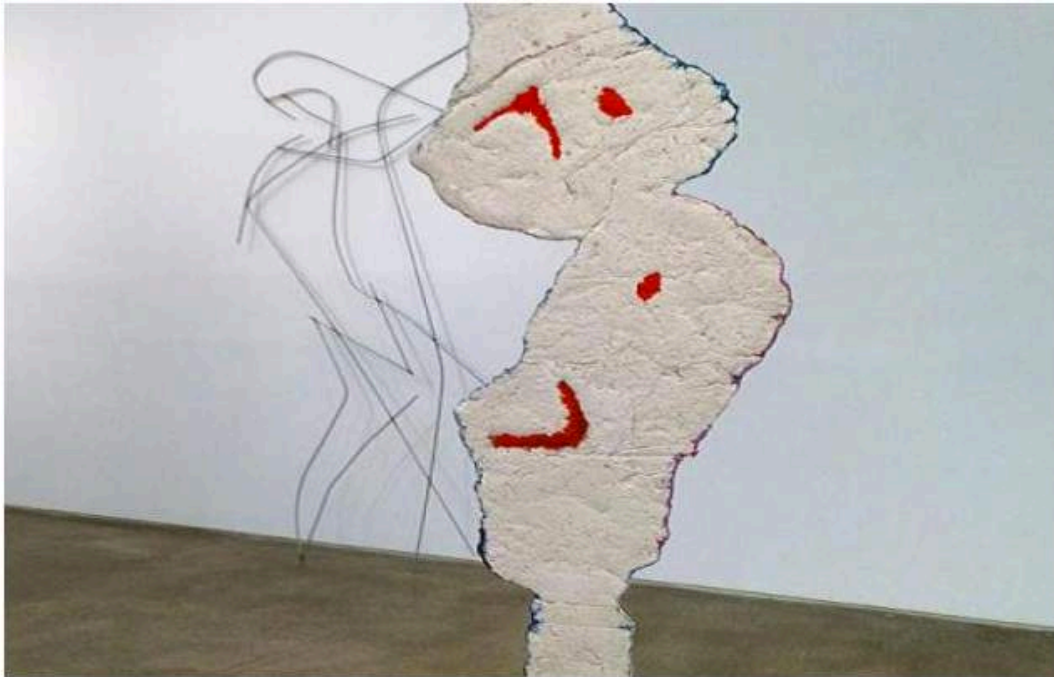
The results are dense and richly textured works, morphing from slate smooth to cracked and grooved. Colors range from muted to phosphorescent. Ironically, given their weight and convoluted process, the objects have an easygoing, spontaneous, expressionistic quality. Their pictorial nature spans the ambiguously biomorphic, abstract and cubist (as with *Wild Plants* and *Electric Adolescence*) to the more obviously figural (such as the big, primitive head in *Blue Tantrum* and the female torso in *Running in Grass*).

Dubuffet is the obvious referent. But installation is paramount for VanDerBeek, who employs the French artist's Art Brut aesthetic in order to examine his relationship to childhood rather than to create more childlike things. Despite their pictorial ideas, these “cast wall objects” are more meta-painting than painting, made by an artist who is more sculptor than painter.

A mixture of primitivism, historicism and wry humor has enlivened all of VanDerBeek's exhibitions. Growing up in a world increasingly driven by an electronic simulacrum of reality, VanDerBeek, at 31, investigates the handmade process. He is compelling as an artist because of his effort to understand his own place in the history of making objects. And he assumes responsibility for protecting, from the digital threat to make them obsolete, important ideas inherent in the making of things—ideas about how consciousness, through the body, can be visualized in its interaction with the physical world, changing it and being changed by it.

—Dennis Kardon

Johannes Vanderbeek, Zach Feuer Gallery



Johannes Vanderbeek Zach Feuer Gallery

10-09-2014

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The Zach Feuer Galley opens this season with a show of new works from sculptor Johannes VanDerbeek. There are cast wall works made of clay and resin with subtle warm and cool neutrals painted on top. The wall works have the texture and primal impact of cave drawings.

Also along the walls are simple gestural drawings made from steel wire twisted into human forms. They have the freedom and fluidity of Matisse's late figurative expressions. While the wire armatures lean against the wall, scattered around the galleries are stand up sculptures that reiterate a very primal and textural use of clay and color. It is a very integrated installation blurring the boundaries of two dimensional 'paintings' and three dimensional sculpture.

All the works suggest human and animal forms rendered with a non western style found in primal African masks. Following the birth of his daughter, VanDerBeek became interested in how his baby daughter may visually experience her exploration of the world. He parallels her innocent perceptions with the neo-primitive arts created at the dawn of our human empires. To quote the gallery press release "These objects require looking, and provoke questions about how physicality can emulate shifting mental states." I may add they are all stunningly beautiful.

Words: Lizanne Merrill © Artlyst 2014

Johannes Vanderbeek 'Early Hand' - until 4 October

ON VIEW

'The Crystal Palace' at Rachel Uffner Gallery

By Will Heinrich | 08/06/14 12:16pm

Daniel Gordon's *Blue Face II*, a photograph of overlapping rectangles of color, reads as a candid revelation of personality in the normally silent material world. A long shadow hangs down like a monocle into a staticky blue the color of a humming TV, crossing a brief curve of darker color that's either the shadow cast by a pixelated blonde toupee or the photographic residue of a former shadow. In the middle are two overlapping noses; to the right, slashes in orange static; and to the left, a blurry ear turned in abstract profile like a hieroglyph. Ripped edges add a cottony, cloud-like texture. In *Zinnias*, a bouquet in a crumpled, blurry vase—pixels become almost painterly the second time you see them—casts a live shadow on the wall. The effect is powerful, but as with the original Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, there's something morbidly nostalgic about the project; Mr. Gordon destroys his models after shooting.

The face of Peter Saul's beautifully dippy blue *Watchdog*, colored pencil and acrylic on paper, is covered in a maze of thick, blue-gray lines that work simultaneously as folds of floppy skin, rivulets of sweat, figurative dismay and Paschal marks of Cain. Purple and gray lightning surrounds the beast; an orange halo like an underwater racetrack wobbles overhead. A 1964 pencil drawing by Robert Indiana consists of angled sienna lines like stiff fur forming a manhole cover or medallion lettered *The American Way: Sing*; Stan VanDerBeek contributes a series of robustly-constructed, tunnel-vision collages; and Van Hanos' *Dismal Woods*, a handsome six-foot oil of a stand of bare trees in the snow, looks back to Klimt, but sets a viewer's teeth on edge with its thin, tautly-stretched opacity, just like a photograph. In Mr. VanDerBeek's 1964-5 *Untitled (Facescapes)*, four to six faces of older white men, one of them halved as if with an executioner's hood, another overhanging a tiny but almost audibly bleating little mouth, revolve like the blades of a fan against a background of eerie purple smoke. Anya Kielar's *Les Doubles Dames* is a seven-foot-tall plaster-white rack of dismembered female body parts—or at least, that would be the neatest way to describe it if its tone, thanks both to its color and to the parts themselves being more allusive than specific, weren't so carefully noncommittal. A head made of rope could be either killer or victim—or it could be a janitor's unsettling joke with a mop. Two breasts hang separately, also in rope, like quantities of undifferentiated flesh, and two inverted feet flank the uneasy head like horns. The figure repeats, upside down, as in a playing card.

Looking down on this one or these two figures is an epically odd, untitled construction by Johannes VanDerBeek. A speckled, nocturnal blue paper pulp rock roughly in the shape of a pinched and pointed corset, with raised peaks like cheekbones, is affixed to the wall. Balanced atop it, a second oval rock, lighter in color, marked with blue and white patches like mold. The lady's hat, cocked like a Japanese emperor's, is a long black spatula. In a collage by Joseph Cornell, a cat in a ruff collar presides, above the brand name L'ABEILLE, over a demonstration of ascending cubes on a game-table green counter. Providing a very welcome flash of unself-conscious pleasure, as it appears in a collage, on a section of painted wooden fence, and on the seat of a metal folding chair, is Ray Johnson's baguette-eared, floppy-nosed, egg-eyed, pancake-flat, seen-from-above bunny.



Pilgrim Ghost is a figure from a by-gone era. Hauntingly situated within a grove of trees, it has the ability to completely disappear when seen from a certain vantage point.

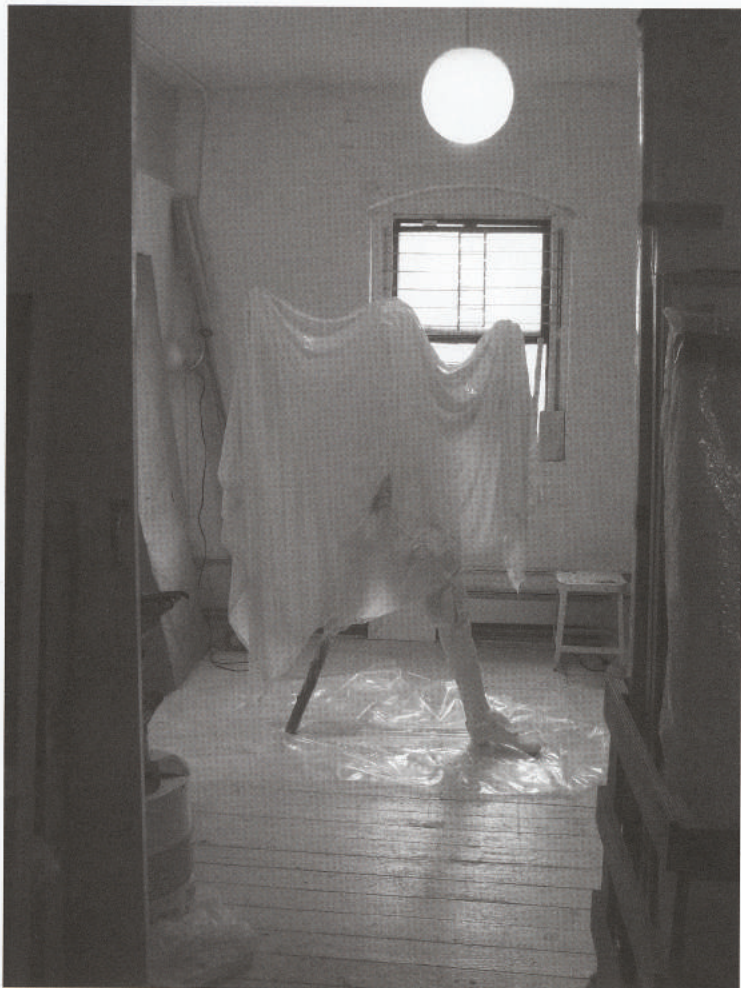
A painted aluminum sculpture, VanDerBeek made the figure combining clay, wood, cloth, wire, and a wig, then sealing it with resin so it could be cast. A fabricator cast the sculpture while VanDerBeek photographed the landscape in which his figure would be situated for use as reference in the *trompe l'oeil* painting on the figure's surface. Using oil paints mixed for durability, he and a team of painters overlaid numerous layers to achieve the effect of a figure materializing in the MetroTech landscape. First they painted the landscape that would act as the background, then the details of the pilgrim's face and clothing, then they finally painted in a third layer of the billowing sheet's folds and crevices, each additional layer adding to the sculpture's complexity.

The resulting figure suggests a long-dead pilgrim appearing in the fall light of a contemporary public park. Draped in the archetypal shroud of a ghost, it is a sculpture of a ghost wearing a ghost's costume.

Pilgrim Ghost, 2009
Aluminum, oil paint, varnish
68 x 53 x 17 in.

Johannes VanDerBeek was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1982; he lives and works in New York City. VanDerBeek received his BA from the Cooper Union School of Art and Science, New York (2004). He has an upcoming solo show at Zach Fuer Gallery, New York, (spring 2010) and has participated in current and recent group exhibitions including *Amazement Park: Stan, Sara and Johannes VanDerBeek*, Tang Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs (2009–2010); *Without Walls*, Museum 52, New York (2008); *Now, More Than Ever*, Foxy Productions, New York (2006); and *National Projects*, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City (2005–2006).

Johannes VanDerBeek



(clockwise from top right)
Sculpture being painted at artist's studio
Testing for placement at the site
Sculpture in progress at artist's studio

(opposite page)
Artist rendering from proposal



Interview with Johannes VanDerBeek

Jesse Evan Hamerman: Your piece reveals itself slowly, and as you experience it there's a payoff once the painted landscape meets its surroundings. In certain movies, like *The Sixth Sense*, there's a reveal at the end which alters their meaning and gives you a lens in which to rethink what came before. Your sculpture can be viewed in the same light. How does this reveal change the meaning for you or the viewer of the sculpture once you experience its "ending"?

Johannes VanDerBeek: I'm glad you brought up cinema; I would probably have jumped more to photography just because of it being a still thing, but both have affected my thinking about ways of looking. I started this project wondering about how people actually experience public sculpture in the midst of their own lives. It seems a lot of public sculpture aims to be the focal point of the town, of a square or wherever it is sited. The idea is to bring attention to the sculpture and potentially create a point of gathering. I really wondered how realistic that is, given how fast we are constantly moving within the city environment and how focused we all are on our own objectives. That led me to aim for an invisible sculpture that could creep into someone's awareness or even startle them to a degree that forces them to pay attention to it. That was the reason for depicting a ghost, because it incorporated the formal elements of a traditional public sculpture but it could become the discreet presence I was hoping to produce. I tried to invert the purpose of an outdoor piece and make it where the thing is trying not to be seen, it's a ghost trying to hide, so it becomes this comical double entendre. All of this gives the piece the type of transient quality that mirrors the fleeting glance from the passerby. It could also lead to this culmination similar to a movie, where you have all these innuendos that seemingly line up toward a conclusion.

Jesse Evan Hamerman: Right, and that's why I said cinema, because there is a definite narrative arc; there's an arc of experience with the piece, whereas there might not be with a standard sculpture. Things reveal themselves slowly and in different ways.

Johannes VanDerBeek: I always have an interest in finding ways for painting or what I think painting is to come into sculpture and what I think sculpture is. The way I see it, painting has an entry point for a viewer, the idea of a picture plane and a representation of something, so the viewer can suspend their disbelief and go into that world, but then sculpture is very much a real thing and you have to relate to it on the same level as your own bodily dimension. I think the two can almost butt heads at points, but it's also challenging to find the cross-sections as well.

Jesse Evan Hamerman: With this piece you definitely bridged that gap between the two. I know that you were expressing concerns during the process of fabrication that your work would reference other well-known painted sculptures that were installed throughout New York, the painted cows for example. There was a fine line that you had to walk ...

Johannes VanDerBeek: I think it was a good thing to bring up. In a lot of ways you want to ignore all that classification between high and low art and put everything on the same level. It comes down to what are its visual qualities and what the ideas are that lead to it. You could say that anything should be up for grabs, but there are always connotations to things that are worth avoiding, and a certain type of painted sculpture needs to be tiptoed around. Mainly I think painting will take over sculpture, so when you paint a form you need to ensure that it is done in a manner that entwines with the shapes. Otherwise, you get a cow for a canvas and just ignore the cow in the room. What led me to thinking about painting was an experience I had at a museum a few years ago. I watched as visitors repeatedly walked past the Rauschenberg sculptures in the room to look at the Pollock paintings. It led me to believe that people have a hard time understanding sculpture, and more so that they have a hard time looking at it. An image will take over a form almost nine times out of ten for most people, except for the rare people that really believe in sculpture to the core. I like making situations where the painting component is confined by the ridiculous principles of the sculpture. So in this piece there is a ghost hiding under a sheet, which meant there needed to be this weird depth created between three things that were transparent. There was the landscape behind the piece that was the background or even the "canvas." Then the figure of the pilgrim ghost that is under a sheet that you are also seeing through, but

which was crucial in creating the imaginative part of the sculpture, the break of the fiction. The wrinkles of the sheet were the foremost layer that abstracted the scene but also created the effect of a standing painting. From the beginning there was the aspect of a failed attempt at illusion framing all of it, because the effect of transparency would only work from one viewing position, and even in that situation everyone has a different vantage point. So it never really works, but it sets up this weird breakdown of that moment.

Liz Linden: When considering what exhibition we wanted to curate, we started out thinking about material transformation, and of course your proposal was extremely intriguing in this context. You initially proposed many of these sculptures, ideally installed scattered through some remote part of Central Park. Now that the sculpture consists of a single object, I'm wondering what your thoughts are on seriality. Do you think the sculpture as an independent project functions differently than the constellation of sculptures you had in mind?

Johannes VanDerBeek: What I'm happy about is it became a better piece through the transition from a proposal, where you are reaching for the stars, to settling upon a realistic outcome. When it's entirely hypothetical in terms of materials and design, it's all in the mental stage, and my mind doesn't always understand the rules of gravity. But as you make something you realize, as a stand-alone object it has to be the vessel for many divergent ideas, and it has to stand. The initial proposal involved more straightforward figurative sculptures not wearing "ghost" shrouds, but depictions very much in the vein of traditional public sculptures that were going to be painted as though you are seeing through them. Conceptually I was thinking about ghosts as walking photographs, and that within their vaporous silhouette you see a superimposition of time periods. But when I started to sculpt them I realized there wasn't much interplay between the painting, the sculpture, and the photography idea because there wasn't much open surface area to work with. Sculpturally speaking, it became this setup to a final visual pun. I found that in the end doing a standard figurative sculpture just wasn't very intriguing. It set up this waiting for the whole kick to happen at the end, and the kick can't happen at the end unless the buildup to it is interesting. As soon as I put the sheet over the sculpture, it became a more appealing form, and also

suggested this idea of a sculpture being covered up, which seemed to be a nice side story, a piece depicting a figure from the distant past that has been shrouded for protection. Of course the sheet also picked up the association to a Halloween costume and added a humorous element of a ghost pretending to be ghost.

Liz Linden: Would you ever consider expanding this work into a series of sculptures, or do you feel the project is finished?

Johannes VanDerBeek: It's complicated. In the past I always worked in a way where I tried to get all my wants into one piece. I wanted to avoid repeating myself, because I thought maybe at that point you slip into certain preset modes of thought and miss out on all the strange things that come about in squeezing so many ideas into one piece. But recently I have seen the merits of following up on ideas, because it can start to open them up and get to a place you weren't anticipating. In fact, while making this piece I made a different ghost sculpture using a metal mesh that was literally transparent. I'm planning to pursue that and make memories of apparitions. In general I am trying to maintain an open mind even to the prospect that I need to narrow down ideas sometimes. Before, when I didn't want to ever duplicate myself, I made up a rule that I would only make one of everything. So if I was going to make a rocking chair, I had my one chance to make that rocking chair. I wanted to make the rocking chair of my lifetime, and then move on. I thought there are really so many things you can focus on that it was a shame to miss out on thinking about all of them. Actually, I always wanted to make a pilgrim sculpture. It was going to be made out of mud, but maybe this is it.

JOHANNES VANDERBEEK

b.1982 Baltimore, Maryland, USA;
lives & works: New York City, New York, USA

Like an archaeological dig into the underside of our universe, Johannes VanDerBeek moves through layers of life, afterlife, history and myth with artifacts of the everyday. Piecing together the pseudo remains of this civilization, he authors anachronistic collisions of ancient forms and contemporary chaff with a charming neo-craftsman touch. VanDerBeek's inspiration comes in the reimagining of everyday items in an expanded field, elevating the detritus of daily life into oracle-like cogs of a larger cosmos. In his words, "I want my art practice to enable me to redefine my principles with each piece, to force a more intimate understanding of nature and history, and to guide mysterious interpretations of things we all know." As such, his painstaking working method echoes that of the conservator: compressing,

cutting, scraping and plying his material with an absurd, but reverent attention. In the process, with everything from tin cans, wire mesh and aluminum display boxes to dead neon tubing, newspapers and old magazines, VanDerBeek looks for clues to greater metaphysical meaning in the numbing streams of commercial minutia. With a proto-historical perspective on the contemporary, he "[wonders] if the sublime aspect of things from the distant past is due to the fact that the original purpose of the...object is so far removed from the present context, it allows for romanticized interpretation." Manifesting this hypothesis into a lens on the present, VanDerBeek ossifies piles of outdated, paper-based media (i.e. magazines) into the blocks of quasi-ancient structures. Imagining his art-making as a tunnel beneath the earth, and said work as a time capsule discovered a thousand years from now, he ages the present — to imagine a past — that speaks to the future.



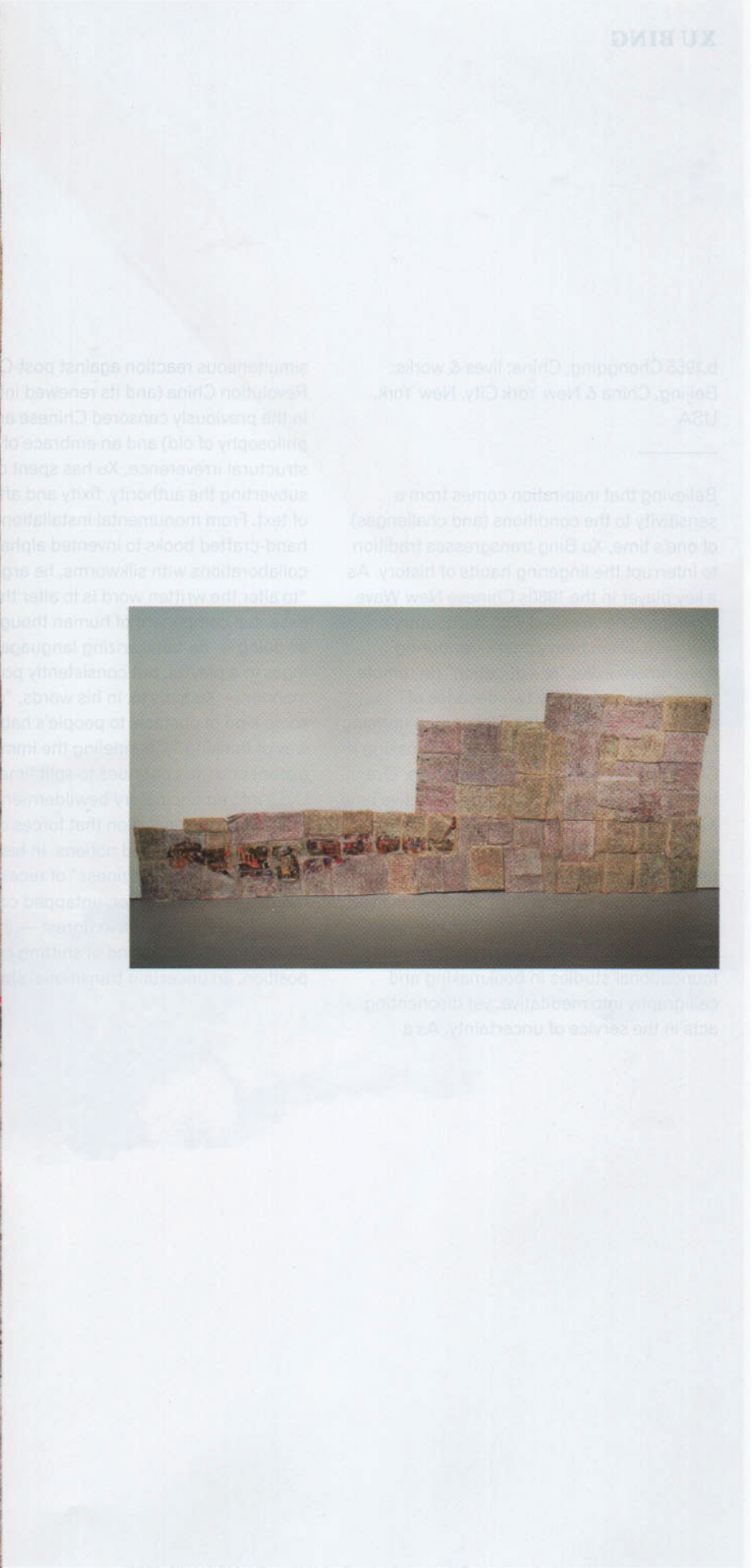


Paperless. Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, 2012: 98-103.



Paperless. Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, 2012: 98-103.





XU BING

1995 Chongqing, China; lives & works
Beijing, China & New York City, New York,
USA

Believing that inspiration comes from a
sensitivity to the conditions (and challenges)
of one's time, Xu Bing transgresses tradition
to interpret the lingering habits of history. As
a key player in the 1980s Chinese New Wave

OVERLEAF: American Silkwoman Series Part II (Computer Paper), 1995
OPPOSITE: American Silkwoman Series Part II (Law Book) (detail), 1995

View of Johannes VanDerBeek's exhibition "Another Time Man," 2010; at Zach Feuer.



JOHANNES VANDERBEEK ZACH FEUER

For his second solo at Zach Feuer, titled "Another Time Man," New York-based artist Johannes VanDerBeek divided the gallery into three sections, filling them with ad hoc, slightly manic assemblages that, according to the poetic (and lengthy) press release, are meant to reflect on "transformation, the passage of time, dreams, being broke but resilient, and searching for stories within holey pockets of thought" (all works 2009 and '10). Whether or not VanDerBeek entirely succeeded in this, his works do indeed suggest resilience in the face of penury, perhaps in part because they conjure the backyard of a hyper-prolific Outsider artist.

Upon entering the gallery, viewers were confronted by three imposing pieces made of 8-foot-high, worn, gently warped boards leaning against overturned chairs, works that crowded the entrance like overeager hosts. Each board is stained with a faint wash

of color and features one tiny, blank, roughly 2-by-3-inch swatch of canvas at eye level, which makes it feel as though the work is staring straight back at you. Hanging on the walls of the first room were 12 "Towel Tablets," 4-foot-square grids of 16 paper towels painted with polka dots or batik patterns, which reinforced the general kooky vibe.

Standing nearby were perhaps the zaniest works in the show: four "ghosts" made of aluminum mesh. Transparent yet solid, each of these life-size figures has been spray-painted to fill out colors and details. *Hippie Ghost* seems right at home in his tie-dye T-shirt, shades and flip-flops. *Indian Ghost* sports an impressive feathered headdress, while *Woman Ghost* looks like the Wicked Witch of the West. A 10-foot-wide cardboard screen—one side painted black and white, the other hues of blue and gray, and carved with Louise Nevelson-esque shapes—divided the room (*The Big Stone Flatscreen with Static*). Just beyond a cylindrical, foil-covered barrier was a mini-exhibition of aluminum-can sculptures. The cans had been stripped of their labels and painted in monochromes, then stacked in various formations.

Two adjacent walls in the back room contained foil reliefs, eight altogether, resembling rusty car hoods, the surfaces scored with linear patterns and coated in pastel. Opposite were five found aluminum display boxes, each approximately 2 feet wide, mounted on pedestals. Within each is placed a photograph cut from a magazine and torn to create a

kind of face, with eyes and a mouth. VanDerBeek's interest in the fantastic is well served by his throwaway materials, which counteract the potentially twee tendencies that can result from indulging flights of fancy. (For his previous show, he included, for example, a medieval knight asleep on a tomb made out of old copies of *Life* magazine.) While perhaps not quite achieving the dreamlike quality alluded to in the press release, the exhibition demonstrated a strikingly original sensibility.

—Claire Barliant

Portugal Arte 10



Courtesy of Portugal Arte 10
Installation view of Portugal Arte 10

By **Marina Cashdan**

Published: July 29, 2010

"A Survey of Contemporary Art," Lisbon, Grândola, Portimao and Vila Real de Santo António, Portugal Through August 15, 2010

Last week marked the opening of yet another major "bi-annual" exhibition. While its organizers are reluctant to call it a biennial, Portugal Arte 10 is Lisbon's attempt to snag a place in the art world's summer calendar. (And why not — the seaside city is a perfect summer destination.) While the first (and perhaps only) edition of this "survey" is overly ambitious, entirely unorganized, and confused ... that's not to say that it doesn't have a lot of promise.

The "multi-platform international survey" presents art "interventions" in the cities of Lisbon, Grândola, Portimao, and Vila Real de Santo António, but really the breadth of the show is in Lisbon, in the Portuguese Pavilion designed by Pritzker-winning architect [Alvaro Siza Vieira](#) for the 1998 World Expo, as well as public art pieces — by **Sterling Ruby**, [Robert Melee](#), and street art collective **Faile**, among others — dotting downtown Lisbon. The press materials claim that the exhibition, coinciding with the country's 100-year anniversary of Republicanism, reflects the historic occasion, but, where and how? It feels more like a survey of contemporary art in East Coast and West Coast USA, with a few Portuguese artists sprinkled in and a side plate of Cuban art, undercooked and unseasoned.

"Personal Freedom," on the ground floor, is the best use of the gargantuan Pavilion space, and curator [Johannes VanDerBeek](#), who is also an artist, managed to finesse the large rooms just as elegantly as he did the small rooms. The 28-year-old artist-cum-curator's bent was artists born in the 1970s and '80s (with a few exceptions), including several of his **Cooper Union** peers ([Aaron King](#), [Ernesto Caivano](#), [Max Galyon](#), [Nancy Lupo](#)), former **Zach Feuer** artists like [Justin Lieberman](#), and artists he may have searched out at **Columbia** or **Yale** MFA degree shows. This exhibition was refreshing and engaging. Works that particularly stuck out were the elegant ink-on-paper pieces by **Caivino**, including "Diptych Arbor Axis (Body of Leaves)," 2006, which was hung solitary on a wall overlooking an atrium; [Anya Kielar](#)'s visceral collage assemblages; [Stephen G. Rhodes](#)'s historical un-coverings; [Valerie Hegarty](#)'s warped, mutated, burned and/or slashed installations; [David Kennedy-Cutler](#)'s magpie sculptures; Portuguese artist (one of only five in the whole exhibition, I might add) **João Pedro Vale**'s ironically camp and crafty works; and of course, VanDerBeek's own monumental "Ruins," 2007, made of Life, Time, and National Geographic magazines and which debuted at Zach Feuer Gallery in 2007.

Upstairs "Inside/Outside," curated by Swedish gallerists [Martin Lilja](#) and [Amy Giunta](#), is the most cohesive exhibition in the Pavilion, with a focus on New York and New England artists who have embraced the taboo — earnest appropriation of pop culture, cartooning, and neon colors, for example. Neolithic [Joe Bradley](#) paintings and [Cory Arcangel](#)'s personal abstract large scale "paintings" based on Photoshop's gradient tool share a room with [Jim Drain](#)'s gnarly (in a wonderful way) Orange Shadow, 2007. In a small room, early works by **Tauba Auerbach** exude an innocence that seems to have oozed out of her recent works. As seen beside Providence-based artist [Ara Peterson](#)'s kaleidoscopic and hypnotic "Tube," 2008, and wall reliefs, Auerbach's work seem tame and delicate.

Almost jarringly dissimilar is the dreamy, laissez faire, and at times disconnected neighboring exhibition "California Dreamin'," a sprawl of work meant to epitomize California life — namely beach life, surfing, and drug culture. Tie-dye paintings by [Michael Phelan](#), a large-scale photograph of surfers by [Olaf Breuning](#) and [Til Gerhard](#)'s LCD-inspired paintings of hippie culture are more direct, while works by California art collective **Date Farmers**, part of the Beautiful Losers street art scene, cull particular movements that have arisen in the "Eureka" state. While the majority of this exhibition felt humorous (Phelan's Bock beer-drinking bears), light, and, well, dreamy — job well done — it was the video works that gave it some weight, with usual suspects like [Bruce Nauman](#) and [Mike Kelly](#) and then less expected works like [Bruce Bickford](#)'s claymation "Prometheus' Garden," 1988, and [Kate Gilmore](#)'s "Wallflower," 2006-2007.

A painting exhibition titled "Gradation" and the obscurely organized "Points of View" are less inspiring, and the delicate, thoughtful, though somewhat anachronistic works in the Cuban exhibition "Serendipity" was gobbled up by the sensory overload of its neighboring exhibitions, especially the roaring techno music spewing over from next door's addendum to "California Dreamin'," a coma-inducing cavernous video room that could enwrap a viewer for hours. [Marco Brambilla](#)'s "Civilization (Megaplex)," 2008, which one might recognize as the seductive videos in the elevators of the Standard Hotel in New York, shines (or rather hypnotizes) in this room of overstimulation.

Artistic director [Stefan Simchowitz](#), a fixture in the celebrity photography and film world (and son and step-son of art collectors **Manfred** and **Jennifer Simchowitz**), emphasized the words "integration," "coordination" and "participation," and whilst the latter seemed to fit with the overall essence of the exhibition, the integration and coordination aspect felt a bit gritty, something that needs to be more finely tuned. No doubt Simchowitz managed to get some very interesting curators and artists involved — having lost quite a few on the way — but he has also managed to make some enemies in the art world, something he talks about quite openly and a situation that added to the difficulty of organizing such an ambitious exhibition. But Simchowitz is as open to say that he doesn't give a shit what the art world thinks of him; he's setting the mark for "creative cultural entrepreneurship." I appreciate his zeal, however I question whether his enthusiasm has longevity. Is this just another one-off project for Simchowitz, like a film, or is it an attempt to make an art exhibition that's brand-able? "We'll take Portugal Arte to Angola," he says enthusiastically, ignoring my question of where the Portugal aspect would fit. I can't tell, but my recommendation would be that if the exhibition does want to get some solid legs, a clearer direction and a strong community foundation (and artistic inclusion) are necessary. With the hopes of securing the magnificent Pavilion space for future editions, a major financial sponsor (Portuguese energy giant EDP) and one year under its belt, Portugal Arte 10 has all the logistical ingredients for a must-see exhibition. But we'll just wait and see.

THE HUFFINGTON POST

The Promised Land? Will Portugal Arte 10 Become a Fixture on the Art World Calendar?

Marina Cashdan

Posted: August 3, 2010 11:55 AM

Last week marked the opening of yet another major "bi-annual" exhibition. While its organizers are reluctant to call it a biennial, **Portugal Arte 10** is Lisbon's attempt to snag a place in the art world's summer calendar. (And why not -- the seaside city is a perfect summer destination.) While the first (and perhaps only) edition of this "survey" is overly ambitious, mostly unorganized, and confused... that's not to say that it doesn't have a lot of promise.

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"Personal Freedom," on the ground floor, is the best use of the gargantuan Pavilion space, and curator **Johannes VanDerBeek** (*Read my interview with VanDerBeek below*), who is also an artist, managed to finesse the large rooms just as elegantly as he did the small rooms. The 28-year-old artist-cum-curator's bent was artists born in the 1970s and '80s (with a few exceptions), including several of his Cooper Union peers (Aaron King, Ernesto Caivano, Max Galyon, Nancy Lupo), former Zach Feuer artists like Justin Lieberman, and artists he may have searched out at Columbia or Yale MFA degree shows. This exhibition was refreshing and engaging. Works that particularly stuck out were the elegant ink-on-paper pieces by Caivino, including *Diptych Arbor Axis (Body of Leaves)*, 2006, which was hung solitary on a wall overlooking an atrium; Anya Kielar's visceral collage assemblages; Stephen G. Rhodes's historical un-coverings; Valerie Hegarty's warped, mutated, burned and/or slashed installations; David Kennedy-Cutler's magpie sculptures; Portuguese artist João Pedro Vale's ironically camp and crafty works; and of course, VanDerBeek's own monumental *Ruins*, 2007, made of *Life*, *Time*, and *National Geographic* magazines and which debuted at Zach Feuer Gallery in 2007.

In Conversation with Johannes VanDerBeek, on curating "Personal Freedom," Portugal Arte 10

MC: The Portugal Pavilion, the main building of the Portugal Arte 10 exhibition -- designed by Pritzker-winning architect Alvaro Siza Vieira for the 1998 World Expo -- was pretty spectacular, or at least architecturally. It looked like it was very challenging curatorially, though. Not only was there a lot of space to work with but the building has not been in use since the Expo. Was this difficult, as I know you had limited time for installation and your show was the largest of all the exhibitions within the Portugal Arte exhibition.

JVDB: Yeah, the building really hasn't been used since 1998. In theory a beautiful space, but to be used as a museum or exhibition space, there were many hurdles, like vents everywhere or walls with too many windows. It makes for a beautiful space but for hanging a show, you only have two walls and a big window.

MC: But I felt like you managed the space very well, very elegantly, as you had both very large rooms and very small rooms on the ground floor. You managed to break up these spaces with the perfect type, size and style of works. For example, I loved the Ernesto Caivano ink-on-paper diptych ["Diptych Arbor Axis (Body of Leaves)", 2006] hanging on the wall overlooking that atrium. It almost oversaw that area and you couldn't help but be drawn to it. You really brought that work out. The same goes for the Ana Santos and Anya Kielar rooms, as well as the light-filled room with sculptures by Aaron King, which I loved. You managed to really highlight each artist in a way so that he or she wasn't competing with the other artists and works in the show.

JVDB: When you're dealing with a space that's modular but also sprawling and with quite a large artist list, it was a real struggle. There are a couple key things that make it difficult: One, to allow an artist to breathe and represent what that artist's vision is; I always take the artist into high consideration and often in big shows, the work can get flat because it becomes this graphic representation. It's almost like everything is too strong. And in a big show, you don't want to just catalog. So that was the idea with one big group show and lots of solo shows [within the show]. What comes of a big show that's mainly comprised of solo shows?

MC: One important thing to note about "Personal Freedom" was that you were only one of two curators to include any Portuguese artists. The whole Portugal Arte 10 survey felt more like an East Coast - West Coast contemporary art survey. How did you come across these Portuguese artists?

JVDB: That was an extra challenge because I'm based in New York and I don't know a lot of people there. So what I did was a lot of Internet research. But in any city there are networks of artists that work within groups and that come from certain disciplines or modes of making work and you start to see a lot of the same artists show in the same places. A lot of it was one artist recommending another artist. My whole logic was to create clear connections between American artists and Portuguese artists, to show that there was a lot of commonality there no matter where you're coming from.

MC: Like João Pedro Vale, who was even looking at American History and made references to *Moby Dick*.

JVDB: Yeah, he was looking at all the misreadings of *Moby Dick*.

MC: So were you able to go to Lisbon a few times before the installation?

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MC: So were you able to go to Lisbon a few times before the installation?

JVDB: No, it was all done online, which was really hard because I had no idea. And the only other thing I did was -- which is what I did with the gallery [Guild & Greyskul, founded in 2003 by Anya Kielar, Sara VanDerBeek, and Johannes VanDerBeek and closed February 2009] -- I knew that artists are always running in groups so when you meet one you say 'Hey, who do you like?' and it really becomes a string of recommendations and you have to make sure it's still in accordance with what you're interested in, but a lot of it was one artist recommending another artist. I feel like everything functions that way, on that level.

MC: Yes, every art movement has become a movement because of this. I do think it's more difficult to have a movement in the Internet era but there will always be that sense of community nevertheless.

JVDB: Interesting people tend to gravitate toward interesting people. They all have different approaches but... I mean, there were certain learning curves even for me to get on the same wavelength as some of the Portuguese artists, as I feel like there's a slightly different discipline there. I think there's generally a difference in European art. In American contemporary art something is physically presented; in Europe it's about what's conceptually developed. In general, I was happy to learn about all of their work. I wouldn't have otherwise had that opportunity to research a city and learn about what's going on there. We probably missed many great artists and maybe it would be good one year to primarily focus on Portuguese artists.

MC: The exhibition has a lot of promise, and I also think that there could be more of a relationship to what's happening in Portugal -- a meeting of these geographical areas and of potentially multitudes of disciplines, practices, circles of artists. But the exhibition, only in its first edition, is in a position to grow and refine. They have the opportunity to refine the approach or concept or mission. I know there is also talk of having Portugal Arte be a branded exhibition that travels... but then my question is where does the Portugal part come in, or would they name it something else?

JVDB: Yeah, I think it's all a bit nebulous right now but I think that's an advantage. The interesting thing would be to do a combination, which is how it started. I think it would be great to focus on cultural identities formed based on geography, for example if you had California as the focus and you have that cultural identity interact with the place you bring the exhibition to. There could have just been a Portuguese show but I found it more interesting to meld the artists: Here's a group of artists [in the US] and what's happening there and they're thinking about these things but then to also see what's happening here with this group of artists [in Lisbon, for example] all with the energy of Portugal Arte--which I think is the most impressive thing about it, the scale and this idea of infusing the city with this energy. It's an ambitious idea that could be refined but it could be this traveling enterprise.

MC: Yeah, I think that concept of cultural identity would be interesting, one cultural identity introduced to another. They may be very similar but equally very different and ultimately the undercurrent of what art really is, the root of what all artists -- no matter what

location -- are attempting to achieve will come through in some respect. For example, your show even focused on a small niche within New York, many young artists, born in the late '70s and '80s. I learned about several young artists who I hadn't heard of before. And then saw similarities in their approach--not necessarily their practices but their approach. Then I realized that many graduated from Cooper all within a 5-10 year span, you included. I found that very interesting. Thanks for introducing me to them!

JVDB: Yeah, that was great. I have a lot of friends who haven't showed very much. And for some artist, that was their very first show. That was one thing that I appreciated -- they [the organizers of Portugal Arte 10] were open to that. The biennial didn't rely on big names.

MC: Yes, that was a wonderful quality, I agree.

More installation views of "Personal Freedom"



THE Arts

The New York Times



Another Time Man This show by Johannes VanDerBeek at Zach Feuer Gallery includes the sculpture "Hippie Ghost."

Creative Debate, Not Too Loud

Artistically speaking, West Chelsea — land of several hundred art galleries — is a tower of Babel spread on the horizontal. On any given day, scores of different visual languages are being spoken at once, often in raised voices. Arguments made by one show for one aesthetic position are immediately, sometimes violently, countered by the show next door. The effect can be cacophonous and confusing, although the other extreme is probably more disconcerting: when too many shows are talking alike.

ROBERTA SMITH

ART REVIEW

Perhaps most interesting are those instances when a few shows speak enough, but not too much, of the same language to have an engaging debate. That's happening this week among exhibitions of three younger artists working primarily in three dimensions — shows that focus on sculpture and its ostentation in terms of means of production, use of materials and methods of display.

Their efforts offer pointed commentary on the medium, particularly in its most cash-dependent forms: large-scale public sculpture and pricey portable objects that involve complex techniques, skilled artisans, expensive materials and demanding maintenance regimens. Each artist here takes a do-it-yourself, low-budget approach involving found, inexpensive materials and objects, which they simply but deliberately — and at times ingeniously — work, rework or combine. Wit is a common denominator, and in all cases works on paper amplify the cross talk. Otherwise, these artists go their separate ways.

In his second solo show in New York (and at the Zach Feuer Gallery), Johannes VanDerBeek embraces traditional sculptural subjects in nontraditional ways and in cheap materials, displaying a facility and historical awareness

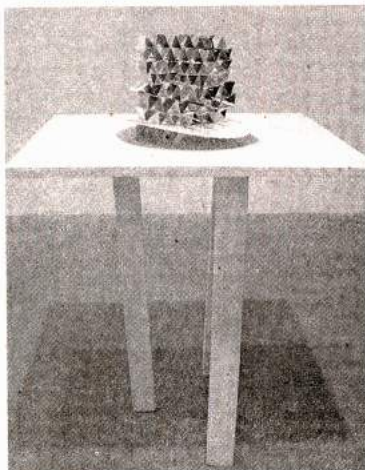
Continued on Page 5

Creative Debate Among Artists, Not Too Loud

From First Arts Page

that have never been quite as overt, whimsical or physically inventive. The exhibition, titled "Another Time Man," has about six distinct bodies of work — it's actually a series of capsule shows — that range across the ages. This is implied by the first large work you'll see, a partition titled "The Big Stone Flatscreen With Static." It is cobbled together from pieces of cut-out cardboard, painted fuzzy black and white on one side and smeared on the other with a gray material called Celluclay. It's television versus cave painting.

One group of works, displayed within a shimmering but flimsy curved wall painted silver, are fashioned from tin cans that have been sliced open, bent, stacked in various ways, welded together and tinted with spray paint; they flit effortlessly among Cubism, Futurism, Modern architecture, totemic figures, tramp art, Calder and toys. Life-size sculptures made of wire mesh offer ghostly depictions of an American Indian, a frontier woman and a hippie as vanished characters, implying some kind of historical continuum. Darkly colored slabs of textured metal could be remnants of an ancient culture or just Rust Belt castoffs, signs of more recent obso-



SIOBHAN LIDDELL/CRG GALLERY

lescence; either way, they are aluminum foil colored with ink and pastel and incised with a ball-point pen.

Eriest of all are several found aluminum display boxes on pedestals whose interiors, looped with dead neon tubing, have been gingerly spray-painted and outfitted with arresting masks collaged from magazine images — talking heads, Roman portraits or ancient spirits conjured up around the campfire. Mr. VanDerBeek's vision is darker than you think.

In his physically slightest work, he distracts us with grids of paper towels, stained and splashed with paint: sweet, sophisticated nothings of considerable pictorial power. His next target may be abstract painting.

More exclusively focused on — and dismayed by — the present, Josephine Meckseper continues her meditation on American consumerism in her

Johannes VanDerBeek's "Another Time Man" runs through June 12 at Zach Feuer Gallery, 530 West 24th Street, Chelsea; zachfeuer.com. Josephine Meckseper runs through June 26 at Elizabeth Dee, 545 West 20th Street, Chelsea; elizabethdeegallery.com. Siobhan Liddell's "Ordinary Magic" runs through Saturday at CRG Gallery, 535 West 22nd Street, Chelsea; crggallery.com.

ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

Photographs from the exhibitions:
nytimes.com/design

second solo show at the Elizabeth Dee Gallery. This time she offers a kind of chrome monochrome environment in which the references ricochet among Modernist sculpture, the automobile as the No. 1 object of American male desire and various references to the fairer sex, which might be described as desire No. 2.

Ms. Meckseper's dazzling surfeit of reflective surfaces takes the animal fascination with shiny and runs with it. "Americanmuscle" updates Duchamp's bicycle wheel with a chrome car wheel on a mirrored pedestal. Other ready-mades, hanging from chrome display stands and racks, include a tail light, chains of different sizes, fox tails and rabbits' feet. Gender differences are acknowledged in the display of a nylon stocking and crude approximations of designer handbags made from metal mesh and chain, sometimes with a car logo attached, using a bit of tar- or crude-oil-like substance. "Brillo" consists of a chrome tree-like counter display stand, each of whose nine small platforms holds a metal pot-scouring pad, as if it were a precious object, perhaps a feminist hood ornament.

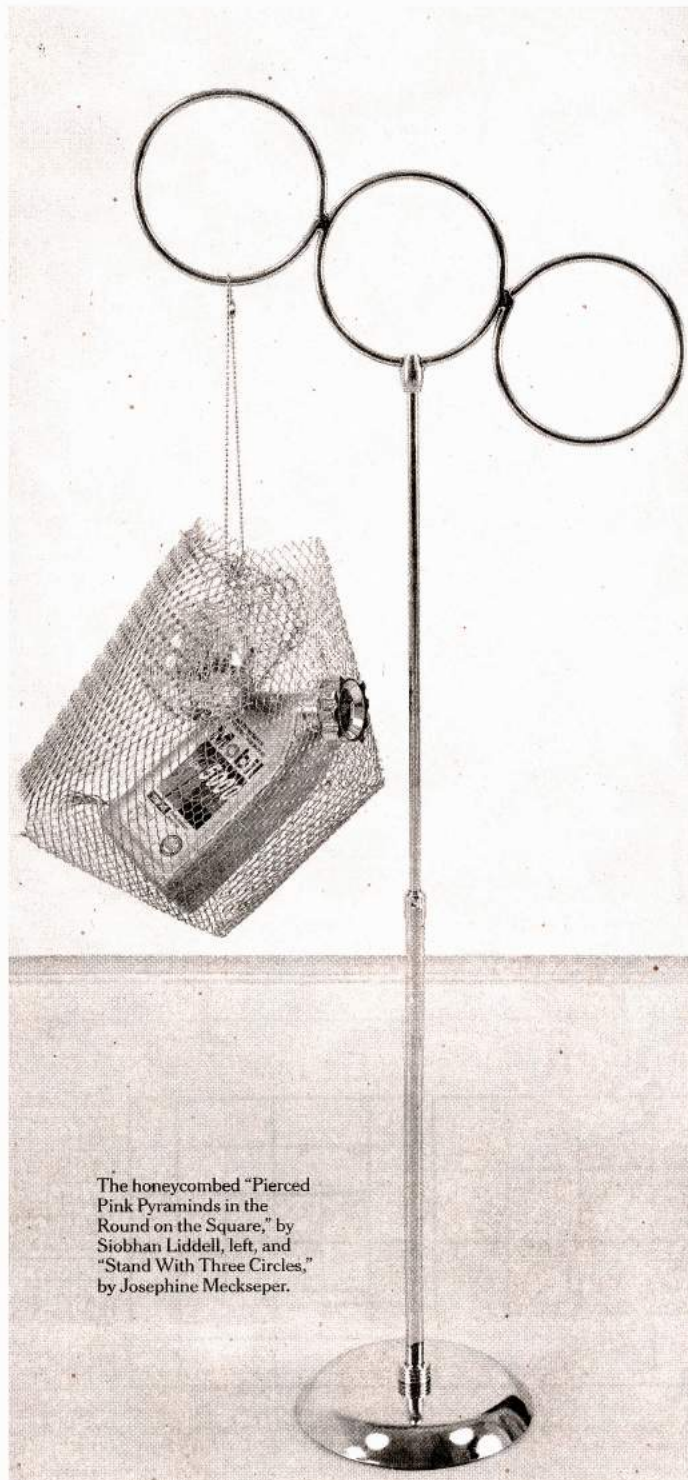
Repeated uses of enlarged watch faces from Cartier ads in wall pieces and papier-mâché forms may be a comment on the work of the key appropriation artist Richard Prince and his extensive use of car culture. Elsewhere, a small photograph of the burning Deepwater Horizon rather heavily suggests the self-destructive implications of consumerism, as does a small and erratic video of cracked glass — a car windshield or store window.

Haim Steinbach's Neo-Geo sculptures of the mid-1980s, and the more dour, redneck tack taken by Cady Noland in the late 1980s are influences here. But Ms. Meckseper is no stranger to the store display case; here she creates an environmental one in which we are both pliable consumers and available commodities.

If a kind of Americana prevails in those two shows, Siobhan Liddell turns more decisively toward Europe in "Ordinary Magic," her outstanding fourth show at the CRG Gallery. Ms. Liddell has always been interested in making the most of fragile, ephemeral materials, with colored string and thread, wire and especially paper high on the list. Miró would seem to be the dominant influence here, although Richard Tuttle and Alan Shields, the 1970s master of tie-dye and the sewing machine, can't be ruled out.

This show is dominated by a series of exquisitely modest structures, most involving jewel-colored paper, often hand-painted. All rest on tables cobbled together from mismatched pieces of wood that contribute to the works' charm. There is a sexual undertone to the title of "Pierced Pink Pyramids in the Round on the Square," while the honeycombed structure suggests a kind of architectural model on holiday, masquerading as a Mardi Gras float. "Blue and Gold Fold" is simply a small square of shiny gold foil, slightly peaked to reveal the paper's blue underside; it might refer to similar, larger floor pieces by Roni Horn and Felix Gonzalez-Torres. The tabletop piece "Ordinary Magic" presents a handmade disco ball about to be inundated or perhaps seduced by a multicolored wave in glazed ceramic that exudes a freer sense of abandon.

Ms. Liddell works with many of these same materials in collages on linen, with elegant Dada results. But the outstanding work on the wall here is a large, untitled piece where expanses of small cut-out paper — white on one side and green on the other — create a raised surface that evokes leaves, fur and scales while resolving itself into a large plant form. O.K., it's not sculpture, but it is consistent with the conviction, palpable in all three shows here, that art is far more a matter of imagination and ingenuity than of materials and money.



The honeycombed "Pierced Pink Pyramids in the Round on the Square," by Siobhan Liddell, left, and "Stand With Three Circles," by Josephine Meckseper.

ARTCAT



Courtesy of Zach Feuer Gallery

Johannes VanDerBeek, Another Time Man

TOP PICK

Zach Feuer Gallery

548 West 22nd Street, 212-989-7700

Chelsea

May 8 - June 12, 2010

Reception: Saturday, May 8, 6 - 8 PM

[Web Site](#)

Zach Feuer Gallery is pleased to present **A*nother *Time Man**, the gallery's second exhibition of work by Johannes VanDerBeek. The exhibition will be on view from May 8 through June 12, 2010.

This exhibition is vaguely divided into three sections that form a sequence. These sections use light and materials in varying ways to reflect upon larger themes such as transformation, the passage of time, dreams, being broke but resilient, and searching for stories within holey pockets of thought. As viewers move through this body of work, they should consider how an exhibition could be

interpreted in a dream and now different elements become stand-ins for a larger meaning in both comical and puzzling ways. They should also set their imagination upon wide expanses of time and the ways in which light, color, and materiality can become increasingly condensed and distorted as they move through the prisms of life, afterlife, and history.

The viewer enters into the living space where there are domestic objects with blank portraits that imply someone was just there. These tiny placeholders also come to represent the open door at the center of everything. The things in this room are made mostly of wood, a material that is still alive. Natural light filters through windows and there are shadows that allude to a fleeting quality of form. Slatted walls diffuse the natural light and hold up memories but also conceal the beaming light from the big can on the other side – before it has been kicked.

As you enter the main space you are in the immediate afterlife. Possibly heading towards the heaven like shine of the big can. Behind this wall of light are ethereal structures made of smaller tin cans, which can either be interpreted as an indication of blunt reality (behind the door is another door) or how supreme geometry can be found in base things. In this section, materials change to transitory or transparent surfaces that are hard to see. There are voluminous metal ghosts that appear as projections or delusions. There is a large stony flat screen television made out of cardboard with a fading signal of decomposing static. There are other sculptures made out of paper towels, wire, and driftwood that are like antennae or signals that depict the impression on the eye after it has stared into a glowing orb. Both the paper towels and the cardboard are further steps in the break down of wood as it is thinned by age or process. In general, all of the objects aim toward an idealized formalism that is grounded by the limits of physicality. The combination hopefully leads to an illusive mental state and the reminder that our mind is the matter we eat towards.

When you head toward the back room the light fades and is solely a representation. Color spectrums are dense and dusty as though the weight of time has pressed them into an atomic powder. In this room there are mostly accounts of dreams that have been scribbled into a mysterious material that looks heavy, like stone or steel, but floats airily on the walls. There are stories to inform the imagery much like a caption in a museum but they do so inconclusively. This is the place of collected histories from the nights before. It is most like our understanding of institutions that preserve the present by constantly shaping the past. This place also references the divergent aspects of our collective imagination. It shows the potential for the burning devil of doubt but also the whimsical wonderings of the subconscious. There are shadow boxes with photographs from decades ago that are treated like ancient relics hovering permanently in trompe l'oeil neon light. There is possibly a weird man that changed himself into an artifact because of something he did to a pig.

All of this is interpreted through the lens of art making. It is not a literal interpretation but rather a layered sequence of allegory that hopefully affects the viewer's perceptions for a brief instance.

Johannes VanDerBeek graduated from Cooper Union in 2004. His work was exhibited in National Projects at PS1/MoMA in Long Island City and Amazement Park: Stan, Sara and Johannes VanDerBeek at the Tang Museum at Skidmore College. His work is currently featured in Trapdoor an exhibition organized by the Public Art Fund at MetroTech Center in Brooklyn, NY.

“Johannes VanDerBeek, Another Time Man.” ArtCat.com. May 2010.

New York Artists Dictionary / Part 1



JOHANNES VANDERBEEK

Baltimore, USA, 1982.

Johannes VanDerBeek's sculptures and collages take on varied forms and ideas. From a series based on the artist's observation and perception of familiar objects to large-scale ruins built of *Time*, *Life* and *National Geographic* magazines, his work imposes meaning on the innate qualities of form and re-translates existing texts and readings.

(Gallery statement)

Represented by: Zach Feuer LFL, New York.
Bush, 2007. Wax, metal, wood and pigment,
226 x 226 x 226 cm. Courtesy Zach Feuer LFL,
New York.



JOHANNES VANDERBEEK: BED BUSH RUINS

ZACH FEUER GALLERY (LFL), NEW YORK
2 MARCH – 7 APRIL

Ruins, 2007, *Life*, *Time* and *National Geographic* magazines, wood and glue, 287 x 508 cm. Courtesy Zach Feuer Gallery, New York

Johannes VanDerBeek's work hunts down a new paradigm of collage, but it does so with all the subtlety of a howitzer, so that very little of that historic practice is left behind, let alone recognisable, once the artist's done with it. In two works, both titled *Ruins* (2007) – with one qualified by the parenthetical (*Culture Pants*) – VanDerBeek eschews the stable ground, the blank page or canvas, onto which the collagist appends clippings and cultural detritus, and opts instead for the creation of a new 'ground' altogether, one entirely composed of, or perhaps accreted from, iconic magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, and *National Geographic*, all of whose pages are glued together to make individual stratified blocks of image and text.

Rather than add to this new artificial geology, however, VanDerBeek erodes it, equally artificially, with a Dremel, that ubiquitous high-speed rotary tool that is a favourite of craft hobbyists. The ensuing surfaces of the *Ruins* may be described in any number of ways, the most honest of which might simply be 'overworked'. The gouging, cutting and grinding down of this new 'ground' is so complete as to nearly lose it to the category of relief. The larger of the two *Ruins*, which occupies an entire wall of Feuer's gallery, does nothing to resist this impulse. There the eviscerated magazines serve as mere blocks in the construction of a quasi-archaeological folly. The smaller *Ruin* supports a fully sculpted figure, one which recalls the recumbent fellow from VanDerBeek's earlier *Time Tomb* (2006), but now in three dimensions. Here it would seem we are travelling in the domain of sculpture proper, but on a path still bordered by the shallows of collage.

VanDerBeek would have us believe that there are big ideas circulating through these pieces, ideas which, as his process demonstrates, must necessarily exceed the bounds of flat graphics, photos and text. Allegories of time, perhaps? *Bush* (2007) would appear to second that allegorical impulse. Less a sculpture of an actual bush than of a collection of tree branches and leaves all emanating from a common source at the floor, *Bush* takes a page from such recent efforts at sculptural verisimilitude as Roxy Paine's *Weed Choked Garden* (2005), as well as his half-decade's worth of well-wrought mushroom fields. But each leaf of VanDerBeek's piece, we are told, reveals a painted picture of outer space, thereby offering the viewer a look at an alternative – albeit arboreally structured – universe and its space-time roots. The triangular and perspectival construction of VanDerBeek's somewhat inscrutable portrait sculpture *Bed* (2007) points to a similar taste for implicit recessions too: alternating pillows, out of whose stuffing the artist has shaped various faces, growing smaller as they approach the piece's far apex-cum-vanishing point.

When faced with the potentials locked away in those ground-down 'grounds' of the *Ruins*, however, all of this pointing at history, or cosmology, or the imaginary, is easily left behind. Though at the moment the work may rely too heavily on a mere process, as a medium – that of 'excavation' – it is worth pursuing further. Jonathan T.D. Neil

johannes vanderbeek

self-portrait/autoritratto



I want my art practice to enable me to redefine my principles with each piece, to force a more intimate understanding of nature and history, and to guide mysterious interpretations of things we all know. This has led to the development of two bodies of work.

One sprang from my acknowledging all the things in the world and then making my own example of each thing. I imagined myself sitting in a house, near the end of my life, with one fork, one pilgrim, one shoe, one ghost, and so on. Although it's a preposterous endeavor, I earnestly believe that making objects can establish an individual place in the plural world. So these works are founded on the premise of observing inherent qualities of a singular object and using them as a starting point for a representation that gives those qualities new meaning. For example, *Bush* (2007) is a life-size bush made out of wax in which each leaf is a painting of a view into outer space. The idea is that its structure—a central root, branches that spread outwards, and hundreds of leaves on the outer edge—has some link with the widely accepted dynamics of a big-bang universe. The other body of work takes its inspiration from the

feelings experienced when looking at something that is very old and made by someone else.

I wondered if the sublime aspect of things from the distant past is due to the fact that the original purpose of the structure or object is so far removed from the present context, it allows room for romanticized interpretation. To complicate things further, I took magazines from the twentieth century and glued their pages together so they would dry hard. I then grounded down the surface to produce the effect of a psychedelic ancient stone and built structures like a large wall that resembles early Middle Eastern architecture. In a recent series of collages I sanded away parts of images on individual pages to produce a white field where the ink used to be. This makes it possible to have seamless joints between disparate images, creating absurd scenarios that look as though an anxious Roman fresco assistant made them.

Johannes VanDerBeek was born in 1982 in Baltimore. He lives and works in New York.
Photo credit: Zach Feuer Gallery (LFL), New York.

◀ Johannes VanDerBeek *Bed Bush Ruins*, 2007. Installation view / Veduta dell'installazione.

▶ Johannes VanDerBeek *To be titled (Old Trashman)*, 2007, mixed media / materiali vari, 55,9 x 48,3 cm.



johannes vanderbeek

Voglio che la mia pratica artistica mi permetta di ridefinire i miei principi con ogni lavoro, che obblighi a una comprensione più intima della natura e della storia e che susciti interpretazioni misteriose per le cose che tutti conosciamo. Ciò mi ha portato a sviluppare due gruppi di opere. Uno è scaturito dal prendere atto di tutto ciò che esiste e, quindi, dal creare un mio esempio personale per ogni cosa. Mi sono immaginato seduto in una casa, quasi alla fine della mia vita, con una forchetta, un pellegrino, una scarpa, un fantasma, e così via. Anche se si tratta di un tentativo illogico, credo seriamente che creare oggetti possa determinare un posto individuale nel mondo plurale. Così queste opere si basano su una premessa: l'osservazione delle qualità intrinseche di un determinato oggetto e il loro utilizzo quale punto di partenza per una rappresentazione che conferisce a quelle qualità un nuovo significato. Ad esempio, *Bush* (2007) è un cespuglio a grandezza naturale fatto di cera in cui ogni foglia è un dipinto di una veduta nello spazio. L'idea è che la sua struttura — un nucleo centrale, rami che si protendono all'esterno e centinaia di foglie sul bordo — possieda dei punti di contatto con le dinamiche ampiamente accettate

di un universo generato dal Big Bang. L'altro gruppo di opere trae ispirazione dai sentimenti che ho provato guardando qualcosa di molto vecchio realizzato da qualcun altro. Mi sono chiesto se l'aspetto sublime delle cose provenienti da un passato remoto sia dovuta al fatto che l'obiettivo originario della struttura o dell'oggetto è così lontano dal contesto presente da dare adito a un'interpretazione romantica. Per complicare ulteriormente le cose, ho preso delle riviste del Ventesimo secolo e ho incollato insieme le loro pagine, così da farle indurire. Poi ho molato la superficie in modo da produrre l'effetto di un'antica pietra psichedelica e ho costruito strutture come una grande parete simile alle prime architetture mediorientali. In una serie recente di collage ho levigato parti delle immagini su singole pagine per dar vita a un campo bianco dove prima c'era l'inchiostro. Ciò permette di avere invisibili punti di giuntura tra immagini disparate, creando scenari assurdi che sembrano essere stati realizzati da un ansioso assistente per gli affreschi dell'antica Roma.

Johannes VanDerBeek è nato nel 1982 a Baltimora. Vive e lavora a New York. Credito fotografico: Zach Feuer Gallery (LFL), New York. Traduzione di Paola Colombo.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 2007

THE Listings

April 6-April 12

★ **JOHANNES VANDERBEEK** The debut solo show of this artist at is a poetic, storybook tableau with a full-scale sculpture of a medieval knight reclining on his tomb and a walled-up archway set in the gallery wall. Both are made of papier-mâché made from old copies of Time and National Geographic. The beautiful little tree that stands between them is also of paper and paste. And check out the time- and space-warped sleepers in the back room. Zach Feuer Gallery, 530 West 24th Street, Chelsea, (212) 989-7700; closes tomorrow. (Cotter)

Johannes Vanderbeek
"The Listings"
NY Times, Friday, April 6, 2007
By Holland Cotter
pg E 27

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 2007

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THE MINUTE

by Abraham Orden

April 5, 2007



Johannes VanDerBeek's *Bush* (foreground) and *Ruins*, both 2007, at Zach Feuer Gallery



Johannes VanDerBeek's *Ruins (Culture Pants)*, 2007, at Zach Feuer Gallery

"Tweaked" is an apt term as well for the four impressively weird sculptures by **Johannes VanDerBeek** on view at **Zach Feuer Gallery** on West 24th Street. The exhibition's title, "Bed Bush Ruins," is misleadingly allusive, as it turns out to be a literal description of the show's contents -- sculptures of a bed, a bush and two ruins, one a largish wall and the second a sarcophagus of sorts. The exhibition is the first for the 24-year-old artist, a co-founder of **Guild & Greyskul** gallery in SoHo.

The ruins are made of smallish, drab panels that turn out to be magazines, with their pages glued together and then worked over with a heavy-duty hand-sander, resulting in a surface that we read at first as built up, like papier-mâché, only to discover that it is in fact carved away. The technique shows a sculptor's affection for structure and texture, but also poses a more "theoretical" question of what sort of ruins will be left by the information age, and what their significance might be.

The bush sculpture is about eight feet tall, covered in leaves made of wax and speckled and splashed with paint so as to suggest tiny images of distant cosmos, as if an earthbound model of the Big Bang. A homemade idea, the sculpture is beautiful all the same, and suggests that VanDerBeek is carving out a language all his own. The works are priced between \$16,000 and \$25,000.

Orden, Abraham. "The Minute." *artnet.com* 5 April 2007.



March 22, 2007

Best in Show

by R.C. Baker

Johannes VanDerBeek At first glance, *Ruins* (2007) looks like a weathered medieval wall with blunted crenellations and broken arches. But the squarish gray stones are actually *Time*, *Life*, and *National Geographic* magazines that have been glued together and then sanded with an industrial grinder. Flecks of bright color and portions of text and photographs are sometimes visible on the ravaged surfaces; when a section of bar code or the shifting garishness of a printed hologram snaps into focus, you may get a prescient glimpse of the garbled remains of our empire. *Zach Feuer, 530 W 24th, 212-989-7700. Through April 7.*

Baker, R. C. "Best in Show." *The Village Voice* 22 March 2007.



Johannes Van der Beek, *Untitled*, 2004, mixed media, 30.5 x 91.4 x 61cm

Johannes Van der Beek

Johannes Van der Beek is not only a talented emerging artist, he's also the co-founder of Guild & Greyshkul, one of New York's most vibrant spaces for other up-and-coming talent. Born in 1982, in Baltimore, Maryland, this Cooper Union graduate certainly has a keen eye: his gallery has shown Ernesto Caivano, Mika Rottenberg, Anna Conway and Lansing-Dreiden. But Van der Beek's own meticulously conceived and audacious work has begun to garner attention in its own right at several group shows. Elaborately crafted, his sculptures mix the conceptually sublime with the painstakingly ridiculous.

'Sometimes I think about art-making as a tunnel one burrows beneath the world that branches into countless passageways intricately weaving real and imagined moments. However, if one digs too deep it becomes impossible to navigate by means of logic – one justifiable step in front of the other gives way to abstract meandering. My hope is to find the intersections between daily occurrences and platonic treasures that portray the balance between idle and idealistic thinking. One means of doing this is to imagine no one will see my work until it is dug up in a thousand years.'

“The ArtReview 25.” *ArtReview* 2005.