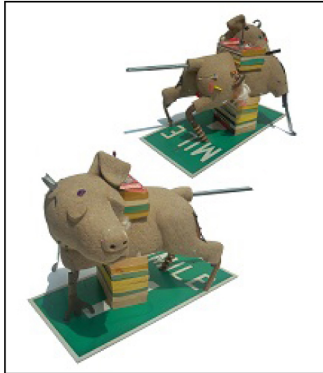


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Fuzzy Memory

July 25, 2011 - 23:48 — alison_b



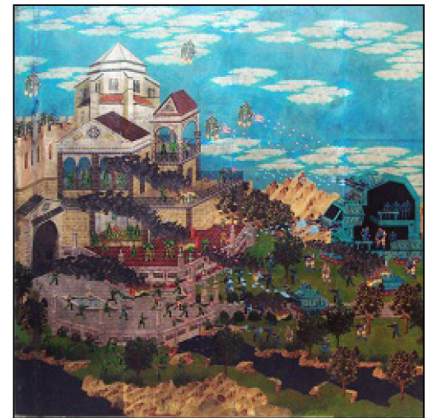
Monkey Spoon
Kim Foster Gallery NYC
Through July 29th

Blurring the boundaries of time, memory, and materials, *Monkey Spoon* is a superb group show. Using non-cartoony pop-surrealist art, the show aims "to reveal something new through unusual combinations that expand the awareness of the viewer." The work in this show tackles significant issues, and instead of an instigating anger, a few abstract themes blend among the twelve artists' work: play, anonymity, and nostalgia.

While play is the work of childhood, sometimes the fun and games of adults reveal the unresolved nightmarish human nature within a culture. Fairy tales are prime fodder for this distortion, and John Howard's work is laden with our compulsive and greedy behavior. Caught in the act of addiction, with names such as "Tropical Obsession," "Gamblers Aides," and "Narcissus," his naughty pixies tempt humans, trapped in precarious balancing positions.

Monkey Spoon features many toys and references to games that reference nostalgia and the general disgust of popular culture and the military industrial complex. Dominick Lombardi's Urchins are made up of sand, childhood relics, books, and other found materials. As these "sand dogs" (above: "Urchin #31") have pieces coming out, chunks missing, and metal limbs, I surmise dogs are the most nostalgic thing in our culture, and the concept of the child and the beloved dog can tap into our collective timeless memory banks. Beside one dog, an exploratory, escapist tone was set by one pile of books including Carlos Castaneda, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and topped by *Down These Mean Streets*.

Dan Hernandez's clever mixed media are based on Medieval tapestries depicting important historical moments, commonly war scenes (right: "Nesega Mythology"). Hernandez appropriates this flat technique to feature '90s-era video game characters at siege, appropriately synthesizing the inane quality of war. On the other side of kitsch, Joseph JK5 Aloï's graffiti paper works and Flowbots are exceptionally flashy toys from the future, referencing a lighter, alien intelligence.



The human presence is very elusive in this show. Reminiscent of the enigmatic and doleful lost children on milk cartons as well as the Mona Lisa, Christian Faur's Melodie series leads us into the mysterious and anonymous. He hand-casts crayons, the art medium of children, to recreate a face in different color schemes. The result is a faceless image, whose meaning vanishes, *a la* Warhol. Susan Wides's "I, Mannahatta" was likely taken in a Times Square toy store that features an indoor Ferris Wheel. Behind the ride, faceless shoppers are scattered on different levels, depicting the amusement and anonymity of the city.

I love this show because the fearful is balanced with the satirical which gets many important points across while also giving respite for fantasy. A few post-apocalyptic artworks walk this fine line. Lori Nix creates retro-futuristic work using miniatures and computers. In "Vacuum Showroom" (left, courtesy of ClampArt), a dirty room is full of perky little vacuums, while outside the city teems with plant life. Nix's "Museum of Art" teems with bees, honey dripping from hives that are buzzing more than the art -- and art becomes a thing of the past. "Shrapnel" and "Tripod" by Peter Drake are more disturbing post-apocalyptic warmonger images, taking place on a fiery planet with characters that mix action figure and horror film serial killer.

In a world without people, this art show keeps an emblem of nostalgia without becoming sappy. Kendall Messick's films and prints feature an old-timer who spent his long life fixing up theaters, holding onto a beautiful past he helped to shape. This references a time when filmgoers



made a night of it, dressing up, and movie houses were palaces that raised up the art form of film and themselves works of art. Messick's prints are beautiful, richly colored images of the old man still making the rounds of his old palaces. This 20th century nostalgia is also picked up by Ken Butler's assemblage guitars. His working electric guitars of the future, made of various objects, show that anything can be an instrument of cool; our garbage, our memories, our lost souls, can still be picked up and cherished to again make sweet, sweet music. - *Alison Beth Levy*

Ms. Levy, a Brooklyn art curator for nine years, recently launched an astrology counseling business, Weeping Willow Astrology, and is currently living at an eco-village in central Massachusetts.

