

ENTERTAINMENT

March 3 – April 2, 2011

Greene Naftali is pleased to announce *ENTERTAINMENT*, a group exhibition featuring historical and new works by David Robbins, Haim Steinbach, Rachel Harrison, Allen Ruppertsberg, Ericka Beckman, Michael Smith & Joshua White, Shelly Silver, and Craig Kalpakjian. Incorporating a wide range of media including installations, sculptures, photographs, and video, the works in this show examine the various formats that entertainment takes today, including the commercial display, the television commercial, the popular spectacle, and the corporate sponsored event, in an attempt to either undermine or elevate them from within.

David Robbins' *The Ice Cream Social*, first hosted in 1993 in an actual Baskin-Robbins in New York, comprises a myriad of vernacular objects—handmade bowls, campaign bunting, fridge magnets, frosted cakes—which together offer one example of how Robbins' work has weaved in and out of the art world in order to explore questions of comedy and collective experience; the video in this incarnation was commissioned by the Sundance Channel, and Robbins' book on the project functions as a key component of the work as well. Similarly, Robbins' *Five Instances of Concrete Comedy in the Form of Signs* looks outwards in order to illustrate the artist's concept of "concrete comedy" in which comedic form inheres in physical objects ranging from John and Yoko's Bagism to album covers and business cards.

Taking a more haunting tact, Haim Steinbach's *Mothers, Daughters, Children (with 37 Stories about Leaving Home by Shelly Silver)* (1997-2011) uses empty industrial shelving units to frame a scene of partially buried school chairs, a red balloon, and Silver's video about familial relationships, all of which offer a stark counterpoint to the dog toys and sugary cereal boxes featured in the artist's *froot loops 2*. Moving in yet another direction, Michael Smith and Joshua White go for broke in their delirious *Take Off Your Pants* (2005), which offers a cacophony of screens celebrating the pleasures of taking off your pants and surfing the 'net. Smith's *ITEA* (International Trade and Enrichment Association), a fictional company parodying the synergy of arts and business collaboration, has produced a trade show booth for this exhibition complete with an informational pamphlet and straight-faced infomercial explaining how to put on a successful group show.

With color and panache, Rachel Harrison's two dolled-up contributions, *Zombie Rothko* and *The Spoon Bender*, are rather entertaining while offering ideas on the relationship between the "high" arts and a wider cultural space. While the former work suggests an embodied version of painting (a kind of "walking dead"), the latter is loaded with battered examples of "good" and bad design like painted shelves, rusty metal chairs, a doll, and a black painting that gather into a monumental pile. It seems worth pointing out in this context that the theatrics of *The Spoon Bender* take place on a stretch of red carpet.

If Harrison's sculptures suggest conflations of entertainment, design, and high art, other works in the exhibition address the media of entertainment more directly. Craig Kalpakjian channels the dark power of the screen by offering digitally constructed fictional spaces that capture the tension, drama, and suspense of cinematic reality while pointing to the emptiness and artifice behind them. (Another photograph from this series appeared on the cover of JG Ballard's *Super Cannes*, a story of the netherworld of the global corporate elite, suggesting ways in which artworks can seamlessly slip in and out of the sphere of popular entertainment.) Moving into a different type of social and projected image space, Ericka Beckman's *You the Better* (1983) features an endless changing gambling game, somewhere between dodge ball and roulette, which takes place on a playing field made up of primary colors and abstract graphics. Working with a similar interest in color and language, Allen Ruppertsberg's *Preview* offers a string of poignant, sometimes puzzling aphorisms (*Are You Crying? What Should I Do? It's Not Art (That Counts Now)*) printed on the appropriated surface of a Colby poster, while his *Past, Present, Future* (billed as a "science fiction story") uses the same materials to open up gaps between language and its support.

In an age when popular film directors have entered the art museum and contemporary art has entered the spaces of mass culture (including football stadiums and reality television), *ENTERTAINMENT* asks questions about what we do, and what we take pleasure in, outside the time of work, while acknowledging the increasingly permeable boundary between leisure and labor today. What do we find entertaining and what do others want to entertain us with? Combining one part slapstick comedy, one part deadpan humor, and a slight sense of loss, this exhibition attempts to shine a light on the dark underside of the sphinx-like term *ENTERTAINMENT*.