



ARMAND BARTOS FINE ART

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For Immediate Release
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SIGN/AGE: Lost in the Supermarket
November 21 – December 19, 2008
Opening reception: Thursday, November 20, 6-8PM

Opening next week is the second in our three part *SIGN/AGE* series. Assembling works by artists from the Post-War period to the present, these exhibitions mine ideas and images from the rich arenas of advertising and consumerism. Since the Fifties, signs have become extremely complex, functioning not just to fulfill needs but to create them. Signs are designed to sell, and people are lined up to buy, because without our products who are we? *Lost in the Supermarket* includes works by artists that are in direct conversation with our consumer-based culture, taking on the subject from all angles.

Arman's Consumer Cascade installation is thirty shopping carts nested basket to basket, instead of end to end, forming a tidal wave sized arc that cascades down the gallery wall.

Mike Bidlo replicates a pair of Ballantine Ale cans, originally cast in bronze, and revives a joke by Jasper Johns on Leo Castelli in response to the oft quoted line by deKooning that "you could give that son of a bitch [Castelli] two beer cans and he could sell them."

At the height of the Jesse Helms era, **Philip-Lorca diCorcia** won an NEA grant and conceived of a project colloquially known as *The Hustlers*, and so doing tested the limits of public funding. Avoiding any real obscenity, he found his colorful subjects working the streets of the sunset strip, and hustler or not, paid them to take their picture. The work is titled according to each man's name, age and place of birth.

William Eggleston traveled across the country during the Seventies, taking pictures of the faded roadside. The saturated color of his dye-transfer prints exaggerate the by-gone era effect in this photo of a steak billboard, blistered and peeling; advertising what, we are unsure.

Martha Friedman sees pattern and form in everyday objects. She breaks down the pattern and distorts the form, creating elegant and absurdist sculptures rich with historical references. For this exhibition we have two food works that transform ordinary supermarket items. *Noodle* is an oversized macaroni necklace so large you feel like the shrunken Alice in Wonderland, and *Bangers* is a bronze piece of linked sausages, stacked like Brancusi's *Endless Column*.

Since the Sixties, **Ralph Goings** has been making sincere still life paintings of diner counters, including catsup bottles, metal creamer pitchers, salt and pepper shakers, and the great American donut.

Moving beyond natural science's preoccupation with the biological, **Julian Montague's Stray Shopping Cart Identification System** has created a classification for further understanding of these stolen and repurposed urban vehicles.



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Claes Oldenburg undermined the inhumane mechanics of industrial production when he opened up *The Store*. At this hand-made emporium you could buy anything from lingerie to lunch, all of which he produced with humble materials. Constructed with plaster and tempera we have several food items from that era.

Based in Kentucky, **Thomas Pfannerstill** whittles the detritus of modern culture into trompe l'oeil sculpture. Each piece is a one-to-one scale sculpture in wood, replicating trash from the street, including the story of its finding on the back of the work.

In this series of light boxes, **Daniel Pflumm** strips recognizable logos of their type, robbing them of their corporate brand identity. The process results in bold arrangements of hard-edged color, not unlike Ellsworth Kelly's shaped canvases.

We have two works from **Danica Phelps'** ten year project that recorded her daily activities, including red and green hash marks, representing every dollar earned and spent.

American culture is intricately connected to motorized vehicles. **Michael Spano's** most recent series, *Auto Portraits*, capture commuters in the sanctum of their cars, stuck in traffic, surrounded on all sides by the billboards, stores, and trucks, that keep the wheels of commerce greased.

Turning his camera on the big box store, photographer **Brian Ulrich** investigates the consumer landscape we inhabit. In the large-scale prints from the *Copia* series, products are stacked in modernist grid formation, and shoppers stare blankly at the endless merchandise in front of them. It is a symbiotic relationship that both buyer and inventory demands a purchase be made in order to be deemed of value.

Responsible for mechanizing the art-making process with his silk-screens, **Andy Warhol** replaces content with dollar bill signs, eliding his work with value, as if by repeatedly drawing this symbol of US currency he could mint money.

Tom Wesselmann's *Still Life #48*, with a three-dimensional Formica shelf, lifts a jar of Hellmann's mayonnaise and a perfectly ripe beefsteak tomato to iconic status.

Forthcoming: A full color catalogue with introduction by Sarah Murkett and essay by Christian Viveros-Faune. For more information please contact Sarah Murkett, sarah@armandbartos.com.