

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Meme: Romanticism at EFA Gallery

Meme: Romanticism

Organized by Michele Thursz

Artists: Tobias Bernstrup, Jeremy Blake, Claudia Hart,
Michelle Handelman, Reynold Reynolds and Partick Jolley,
and Carlo Zanni

February 16, 2007- March 31, 2007

Opening Reception, February 16, 6:00-8:00 pm

SCREENING TIMES Wednesday through Saturday:

Winchester Trilogy: 12PM, 2PM

Mantis City: 1PM, 3PM

This Delicate Monster: 1:30PM, 3:30

Folly & Error: 1:40PM: 3:40

The Possible Ties Between Illness and Success: 1:50, 3:45PM

Sugar: 4-6PM

The Swing and the prints are in the main gallery.

“I want to compete with the movies”

Meme: Romanticism examines five artists' cinematic productions that utilize technological aesthetics, cultural symbolism, historic compositions, and narratives to expose the conceptual underpinning of Romanticism. The exhibition will be set up like a theater, with viewing times allocated by length of the video. The room will have a sound system and projection with seating for the viewer's comfort, so they may enjoy the works. The waiting area will be set up as a traditional gallery space with prints derived or inspired by the films, but still functioning as unique objects.

The exhibition includes the artist collaborative feature film Sugar and prints by Reynold Reynolds and Patrick Jolley; Mantis City, a video and print by Tobias Bernstrup; Winchester Trilogy, videos and print by Jeremy Blake; The Possible Ties Between Illness and Success, an interactive video and prints Carlo Zanni; This Delicate Monster, video and prints by Michelle Handelman; and The Swing, 3-D animation and prints by Claudia Hart.

Romanticism as a movement emerged in the late 1700s. Artists took a stance against formal aesthetics to define art as a place for sentiment, nature, and the play of the imagination. This was an idea of art in which individuals shared their subjective realities with the public. Since that time, technologies of representation have advanced from still to moving images, from early cinema to

Hollywood films to personal computers and the Internet. A social medium of representation unfolded with the capability to archive and to edit histories, identities, and geographies. These capabilities allow the public to participate in fantastic situations. Movies became popular because they reflect the dreams, fears, or fantasies of a mass public. The impact of Hollywood film and mass media is intriguing sociologically: How does consumer culture affect the personal? How does it effect the way people define their own identities?

Artists of the 50s and 60s started using the machinery of commercial culture to create and engage a broad public. This tendency was later identified as “Pop”. Today’s contemporary artist raises the ante of the Pop aesthetic by creating works that reflect our communal experiences. Communality is the key to the success of the movies and mass media; both use the tactic of bringing together a general consensus and the popular. The market and the media are based on the human need to share—empathy, opinion, and history—making the media generative by the public and the media reflecting back and forth on each other.

In the contemporary art context these cinematic or communal works become the romantic concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk, the total work of art. The exhibited works are cinematic and poetic by the nature of their production and their narratives. They reference historic compositions to create an emotional outlook on nature. These works are also a good index of the values and needs of our society because they are invested in our cultural life. In them the hierarchies and histories of art making is deconstructed and reapplied to these artists’ craft and aesthetics, aligning their artistic intention with the ideas of romanticism.

Meme: Romanticism suggests that Romanticism was more than a formal movement of the past but successful in changing and adapting with the times and the exigencies of history—and with the needs contemporary art making.

—Michele Thursz, 2006

This exhibition is presented by the EFA Gallery, a program of The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts. With additional support from The Helen Keeler Burke Charitable Foundation, Peter C. Gould, Materials for the Arts, and Carnegie Corporation Inc. and many generous individuals.

The EFA Gallery is a curatorial project space. Through the gallery, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts supports the creative work of independent curators. Curators build the framework in which we understand artists and the art they make. At their best, they redefine how we look at culture. The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts believes in the essential importance of art in a civil society. The value of the artist's creative spirit is not limited by age, race, nationality or acceptance by others.

SCREENING TIMES Wednesday through Saturday:

Winchester Trilogy: 12PM, 2PM

Mantis City: 1PM, 3PM

This Delicate Monster: 1:30PM, 3:30

Folly & Error: 1:40PM: 3:40

The Possible Ties Between Illness and Success: 1:50, 3:45PM

Sugar: 4-6PM

The Swing and the prints are in the main gallery.

ROUGH DRAFT OF SYNOPSISSES

Mantis City

Directed by: Tobias Bernstrup

Dur. 12.58 min. 2006, HDV-video

Music and sound: Tobias Bernstrup

Director of photography: Annika Larsson

In the work Mantis City, Tobias Bernstrup adopts the language, metaphors and low-tech special FX techniques of early Asian and American science fiction movies like Godzilla, Mothra and King Kong. Set in a 1:1000 scale model over Shanghai's futuristic skyline we see two giant praying mantises fighting each other and climbing the Oriental Pearl and Jin Mao towers. The dramatic lighting of the video recalls an atmosphere from Fritz Lang's Metropolis (1927) and Carol Reed's The Third Man (1949). Like in several of Bernstrup's earlier works, he raises questions about physical representation, how reality mimics fiction and vice versa in a world where the border between fiction and reality is getting more and more blurred

The video Mantis City was produced in collaboration with the Duolun Museum of Modern Art in Shanghai with support from the Arts Grants committee in Sweden.

BIO: Tobias Bernstrup (living between New York and Stockholm) is working with videos, machinima, interactive works, live performances and electronic music. He received an MFA from Royal College University of Fine Arts Stockholm in 1998.

"Virtual reality continues to provide a free space for experimentation, desire and transgression at many levels and to many ends. You might compare it to the painted realms of pre-Renaissance art, where the laws of physics were warped to convey the transcendence of the profane. In the multimedia worlds of Tobias Bernstrup there is a similar sense of manipulation through desire and a will to believe in the improbable. His videos, interactive works and live performances reveal the malleability of the artist, as he appears to cross gender boundaries and traverse anachronistic cityscapes. Bernstrup's videos adopt the aesthetic of computer games; their sci-fi vistas with prominent vanishing points are a

familiar, yet nonetheless odd, mix of classicism and gothic noir, or digitized De Chirico."

—Sally O'Reilly - *Modern Painters 2006*

Tobias Bernstrup's works has been exhibited in major galleries, museums and institutions worldwide among them Palais de Tokyo, Basel Museum fur Gegenwarts Kunst, Busan Biennale and Biennale de Lyon. He recently had a major solo show at the Duolun MoMA in Shanghai.

Winchester Trilogy
Jeremy Blake

Winchester, 18 min Combines static 16mm historical photographs of the house, drawings, and laborious digital manipulation to convey a psychological portrait of the house. Accompanied by a moody soundtrack, the piece opens with a black-and-white shot of the architectural facade. Superimposed over the house, the silhouette of a gunfighter fills the frame, alluding to the Winchester legacy. As the film unfolds, both mansion and rifleman are eclipsed by veils of saturated color and kinetic abstractions. Painterly shapes resembling gunshot wounds morph into Rorschach-like inkblots and back again into rifle-bearing specters.

1906, 2003, 21min takes much the same approach with synthesized film footage as well as images from my paintings and drawings, but it shifts its focus to the interior of the mansion and the parts of the house that suffered most in the earthquake of 1906. Sarah Winchester chose not to repair certain damaged sections, preferring to build around them, as she imagined that the house's resident spirits disapproved of these accommodations. To shoot live footage for this DVD, I used Kodak 8mm for its simultaneous painterly and touristy quality. The film begins and ends at the highest point of the house, creating a continuous sense of descent, and uses the sounds of construction mixed with period music.

Century 21, 12 min moves from the roof of the Winchester house to zoom in on a complex of three domed, space-age movie theaters situated across the street: Century 21, Century 22 and Century 23, alluding to the fact that it is film, TV and the media that perpetuate the icon of the gunfighter. The work consists of three short sections intended to represent what is "playing" in each of the theaters. These include richly layered montages of the Old West and pop-culture imagery, as well as art and film celebrities who appear as phantom stand-ins to embody the specters of the Cowboy and of Sarah Winchester herself.

BIO: Jeremy Blake is well known for his DVDs, C-prints, paintings and drawings that present visual semi-narratives combining the representational and the abstract. His highly acclaimed artworks blur distinctions between artistic media to present a new kind of art experience for which Blake is recognized as an innovative pioneer.

Blake has exhibited extensively in museums and galleries worldwide, and his works are in numerous public collections including the Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos, Spain; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. In 2002 he was invited by director Paul Thomas Anderson to create abstract sequences of art for the film, *Punch-Drunk Love*. He also produced a series of album covers and inserts for Beck's CD, *Sea Change*.

The Swing, 2006

Claudia Hart

Single channel 3D animation

A plump nude loosely based on the Baroque painter Peter Paul Reuben's portraits of his wife is the inspiration for Machina, an avatar who appears in many of my animations and still frames. In *The Swing* (2006), Machina becomes Rococo fleshy decadence. In this animation, Machina swings on a seat suspended from the sky, in super Mannerist slow time. Her wooded surroundings ebb and flow at another rate, imitating stop-motion, years passing in a matter of moments. Machina is the driver of the mechanical, technological cycles that have here seized control, but a driver who is not the mistress of her situation – she is instead, a Mother Nature heading straight for what she suspects might be oblivion.

BIO: Claudia Hart studied art history at NYU, completed her graduate studies at the Columbia University School of Architecture, and began her professional life as a critic, first as an editor at *ID: the Magazine of International Design* and then *Artforum*. She showed paintings at Pat Hearn Gallery in New York in the late 80s, and after receiving a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Arts Fellowship in 1989, shifted her practice to Europe where she spent ten years and received numerous fellowships including from the American Center in Paris, the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, the Frauen Stipendium from the Berlin Senate, the Luftbrückendank Foundation Grant, the Berlin Kulturfond and the federal Kunstfond Bonn. In Europe, she exhibited widely with galleries and museums and her work from this period is in many institutional collections including the Museum of Modern Art, NY, The Metropolitan Museum, NY, The MIT List Center, Cambridge, The Vera List Center for Art and Politics, New School, New York, The San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Berlin. Hart returned to New York in 1998 to publish two illustrated books, *A Child's Machiavelli* (Penguin; Abbeville; Nautilus) and *Dr. Faustie's Guide to Real Estate Development* (Nautilus). In 2001, she received a degree from New York University's Center for Advanced Digital Applications in Computer Animation, and shifted her practice to digital media. She creates temporal, animated paintings using 3D animation to interject sensual female bodies that project emotional subjectivity into what is typically the overly-determined Cartesian virtual world. She currently teaches 3D animation in art

and design at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville.

This Delicate Monster
Michelle Handelman

This Delicate Monster is a multi-medium pop fable inspired by Charles Baudelaire's 19th century collection of poems, *Les Fleurs du Mal* - an abject space where passion, obsession, fashion and ugliness collide. Handelman transposes *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil) into a pop landscape, creating a haunting and hallucinatory fragmented narrative that can best be described as a cross between a horror film and a fashion shoot gone terribly wrong. Collaborating with couture fetish designer Garo Sparo, Italian noise band Larsen, and a cast of performers, the multi-screen narrative is constructed of gestures and sounds that breathe life into Baudelaire's text such as, "No abyss compares with your bed" and "condemned to an eternal laugh because I know not how to smile." Handelman constructs a sympathetic symphony of gasps, shrieks and repetitive actions that implicates the viewer into a mediated world of attraction and repulsion.

BIO: Michelle Handelman makes confrontational works that explore the sublime in it's various forms of excess and nothingness. Her videos, performances, and public installations have shown internationally including Performa 05; ICA, London; American Film Institute, San Francisco MOMA, Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Artists Space, NYC; Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art and The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art. She is the director of the feature documentary *BloodSisters* (Bravo Award) and has worked with Monte Cazazza, pioneer of the Industrial music scene; Eric Werner, co-founder of Survival Research Laboratories; Paul Miller AKA DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid and media artist Lynn Hershman-Leeson. She has contributed to the cultural anthologies *Apocalypse Culture* (Feral House Press) and *Inappropriate Behaviour* (Serpents Tail) is currently a 2006-07 artist-in-residence at the LMCC Studio program in lower Manhattan. Her work has been reviewed widely in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Time Out*, and *Art Forum*. Handelman is represented by Jack the Pelican Presents, Brooklyn, NY and teaches full-time at The School of The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Media Studies Graduate Program of The New School.
www.michellehandelman.com

Sugar, 2005
Dur: 72 min, experimental feature film.
Reynold Reynolds, Patrick Jolley, Samara Golden
Adapted from a story by Reynold Reynolds
Music: J.G. Thirlwell
Sound designers: Bruce Odland, Sam Auinger
Actor: Samara Golden

The dark and lingering influence of a former tenant has a horrific effect on the woman currently occupying a run down room in co-directors Reynold Reynolds and Patrick Jolley's semi-experimental skin-crawling urban nightmare. Her new living space still filled the belongings of former occupant Anthony, the newest tenant of a dilapidated studio apartment listens to the increasingly menacing messages on Anthony's answering machine before setting about cleaning up the living space and making it her own. Soon haunted by a series of terrifying visions and vivid nightmares however, the increasingly troubled tenant soon learns that you can never truly own that which still belongs to someone who, even in death, is not willing to let go.

—Jason Buchanan, All Movie Guide

The Possible Ties Between Illness and Success, 2006

2 min

Carlo Zanni

<http://www.ThePossibleTies.com>

The Possible Ties Between Illness and Success is a two minutes short movie transformed by an Internet data flux and re-edited server-side when web statistics (Google Analytics) are available: the public can watch a new movie every day.

The core idea of the work is the relationship between manic-depressive illness forms and success at large, a theme it symbolically tracks through the filming of a ill man lying in a bed and the presence of his partner (actress Stefania Orsola Garelo). The man's body (actor Ignazio Oliva) progressively fills with stains: quantity and position depend on the number of users (and country of origin) visiting the website. The more users, the more stains, thus causing the "illness" to spread all over the body. The public grants success while appropriating the body of the artist. The public "visits" the body of the actor leaving a sign of their passage.

The title of this work has been derived from a review of a book called Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament by psychiatrist Kay Redfield Jamison. Music for the film is by acclaimed composer Gabriel Yared (The English Patient, Cold Mountain); words of the voice playing over the film are taken from the last page of American Purgatorio, a novel by Brooklyn based American writer John Haskell, who also plays the text in the English version.

BIO: Carlo Zanni (La Spezia, 1975) is an Italian born artist living between Milan and New York. In the past years his work has been shown worldwide in galleries and museums including: MAXXI Museum, Rome (2006); New Museum, New York (2005); Gavin Brown's Enterprise at Passerby, New York (2005); Chelsea Museum, New York (2004); CCA Glasgow (2003); Analix Forever Gallery, Geneve (2003); P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2001). ICA - Institute of Contemporary Art in London held his first retrospective in October 2005 and

published the book "Vitalogy". In October 2006, "8-bit" a documentary by artist Marcin Ramocki featuring an interview with Carlo Zanni premiered at MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York.