

heavysset frontier woman totes a rifle and sports a Mickey Mouse head while a man, back to the viewer, is seen in partial profile from the shoulders up watching an empty television screen at the foremost spot in the landscape. Flanked by the body of what, I am told, is an actual dead cat and a basket toting figure in black that looks to be one of our earliest ancestors, the man is the brightest bit of color. His orange skin and green shirt form a murky spot of color in an otherwise barren landscape. An accomplishment of mastery and mystery, *The Lost Frontier* would be pure ominous warning if not for the irony of its exquisite craftsmanship and vision, a commitment that cannot help but rely to some extent on hope.

In the larger gallery, Stone's new works flutter and spiral between something recognizable—leaves and grass, tears and earth—and an illusionist's fantasia. Acrylic paint is applied to Mylar that is then cut into strips and configured into pieces that flow like plastic waterfalls, weave like painted grass, or blot the wall like giant ink spots, softly integrating shadows into their structures with what feels like invisible arms. The most interesting of these waves of color have a quiet dread or doubt looming within the picturesque. One bright red piece is a celebratory waterfall and simultaneously—mysteriously—a disembodied river of blood. Another, configured in the same shape, *Oil and Water Fall #3*, utilizes layers of browns, evoking nutrient rich earth with more than a hint at its potential pollution. The materials bear the stamp of manufacture while the forms and colors are evocative of organic shapes and processes. Less successful, though formally engaging, are smaller works that float on the wall. *Pond Quake* plays with abstraction and form, part sculpture and part painting, but is missing the excitement of those that seem to fall from wall to floor, alive with the pressure of gravity. The weightlessness and simplicity evident in Stone's work is a refreshing rendition of works that seem to inform them: Liz Lerner's materiality and Kandinsky's brushstrokes come to mind. Like an insightful nomad's compact pack of essentials, Stone's work gathers together abstraction, reflection, and formal concerns. Adjoining these two very different artists gives each an opaque mirror through which to see the other and creates a dynamic viewing experience.

—Annie Buckley

Katy Stone and Llyn Foulkes closed in November at Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica.

Annie Buckley is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles.



## 'Naïve Set Theory' at Cirrus Gallery

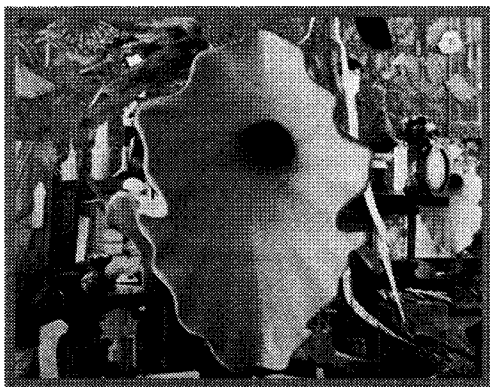
*Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;  
/ And take upon's the mystery of things; /  
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,  
/ In a walled prison, packs and sets of great  
ones / That ebb and flow by the moon.*

—William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

**I**n the play *King Lear*, Shakespeare asked, "Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out"? In other words, what constitutes this group or "set" contained by a prison wall? Empirically, a set is a collection of objects with some sort of relationship to one another, or a common connection to their container. The concept of set is fundamental to mathematics and within this context can be loosely defined as a collection of objects that belong together or belong to a place. How to establish and frame sets is a question that has teased (and plagued) curators of art exhibitions since the mid-seventeenth century when the term, "curator" (denoting a custodian of a collection) entered common usage. After all, the core duty of the job of fine art curation is to arrange and exhibit sets of artworks and/or sets of artists.

The artists in *Naïve Set Theory* have vague stylistic and technical relationships to one another. This tenuous relationship serves as an allusion to naive set theory, which was devised as a conceptual tool for mathematicians. It was used as a means to visualize an infinite array.

Above: Jennifer Sullivan, *Bob Dylan with Hat*, 2006, mixed media, 18" x 18" x 10"; below: Brian Bress, *Vortex (for John Boorman)*, 2006, collage on C-print with string supports, 30" x 39", at Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.



However, it was eventually demoted to informal theoretical status because, though useful, a number of paradoxes that were the result of loose relationships were eventually revealed. The formal set theory, named axiomatic set theory, which was developed to address these paradoxes, does not look at the members of a set, rather only the provable facts about members based on a definite lists of axioms (accepted truths).

Curator Catherine Taft contends the artists included in *Naïve Set Theory* can be seen as a casual or loose set because they share common ground. The common ground includes the following: all are emerging artists (each is a recent graduate from an MFA program), all produce work that projects a faux naïveté, in most cases the projected innocence is a screen meant to mediate mature and often political content. However, what is not shared by the artists is the paradox that threatens to break up the set. These artists range across a broad spectrum of weighty and complex issues that do not overlap. Individual works in the exhibition explore the broad concepts of psychological states, nationalistic identity, institutional authority, allegory, myth and popular culture. Plus, the artists' process is far flung. It includes drawing, interactive Web-based work, performance, painting, video, collage, photography and sculpture.

The delicate watercolor and pencil drawings produced by Julie Lequin have a fragile sense of humor. *I have a cat in my throat* is an example wherein a big blue-eyed blond child is spitting out a striped cat.

Brian Bress's collages, on the other hand, are chaotically complex and eerie. *Rubble* features a male bust comprised of layered images that are difficult to tease apart. The images within the composite include sinuous, serpentine eyeglasses and a death's head mask among many, many other elements. This is also the case, though the figure is implied, with *Vortex*, a collage over a C-print, by Bress. Lastly, Ami Tallman paints, with ink on paper, brightly colored portraits of imaginary patriarchal, often military, figures like *Military Muckety-Muck*.

Some theories of curatorial practice suggest that it is the curator's task to make choices that result in a matrix or structure that links together a set and creates a significant object (or text) from the set that is larger in scope than its ele-

ments. If an exhibition achieves this status, the members of the set are in essential dialogue with one another. This dialogue, once established, is entered into by viewers/participants who are rewarded (ideally) with a barrage of interconnected information that can be formal or conceptual, but importantly and ultimately, useful in the way that expanded knowledge is useful. In the end, the question is posed here—how important is an interactive and productive architecture to an exhibition?

—Charlene Roth

*Naïve Set Theory*: Brian Bress, Julie Lequin, Jennifer Sullivan and Ami Tallman closed in December at Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.

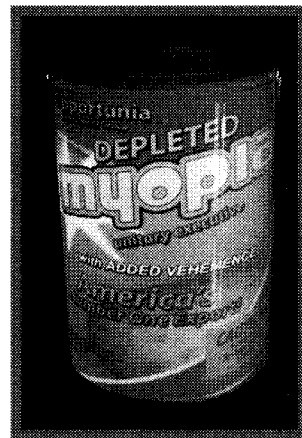
Charlene Roth is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.

## Perry Hoberman and Curtis Stage at Fringe Exhibitions

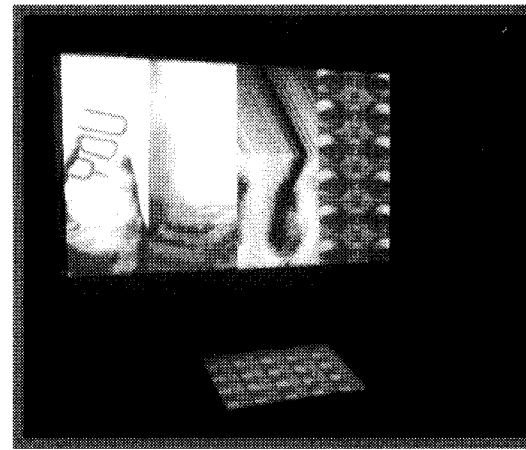
**D**espite their ever-increasing ubiquity, the bold-type soothsayers of consumer warning labels, nutrition facts and FDA advi-

sories often elicit no greater response from contemporary consumers than does the cryptic pattern of a barcode. Perry Hoberman's recent installation, *Trusted Makes*, responds to this phenomenon of omnipresent warning labels and proposes that the dangers posed by such "trusted makes" are increasingly severe.

Hardly a month passes without the release of new studies and counter-studies that unequivocally prove the risks presented by all manner of products, both naturally occurring and man-made. Then, as



Above: Perry Hoberman, *Myopia*, 2006, mixed-media installation; below: Curtis Stage, *Pop Bastard*, 2006, installation view, at Fringe Exhibitions, Los Angeles.



# Reviews

Hoberman's installation comically illustrates, these ominous pronouncements are adjusted and refuted, though, ultimately, ignored by the public. Hoberman's melodramatic warnings, ranging from "May Destroy Life On This Planet As We Know It" to "Kills Because It Cares" and "Made with Genuine Regret," may seem outrageous and inconceivable, at least until one recalls the former popularity of materials like lead and asbestos.

Characteristic of Hoberman's work, the interface design and audience feedback in *Trusted Makes* is extraordinary. As in previous works like *Cathartic User Interface* (2000), in which visitors were encouraged to physically react to exasperating computer error messages, Hoberman creates new participatory systems designed to serve the specific goals of each installation. *Trusted Makes* engages viewers through tactile and visual means as it re-creates the experience of a shopper spinning a can on a supermarket shelf in order to read the label. As the viewer spins the plastic can, the simple rear-projected graphics and warnings evolve. The animated labels change like a time capsule, capturing decades of dire pronouncements about recently discovered side effects or hideous environmental damage resulting from toxins in those familiar and "trusted makes."

In the gallery's downstairs space Curtis Stage's latest interactive video installation, *Pop Bastard*, beckons visitors with a booming, continuous loop that begs to be molded into a melody. The title *Pop Bastard* is a play on the Bastard Pop music genre (also known as Mashup) in which DJs mix the musical tracks of one song with vocals of a disparate musical style. However, due to the installation's multiple sound and video channels and the impossibility of predetermining the remixed outcomes, the themes explored in *Pop Bastard* belong more fully to the umbrella category of remix culture. Using a touch screen of colored squares, visitors manipulate the projected video images and accompanying soundtracks into unique personal arrangements.

As in much of Stage's work, *Pop Bastard* focuses on the creation of personal identity and communication between humans. The four video streams feature sexualized images of men grinding with microphone stands, close-ups of pulsating speakers and suggestively indeterminate images of bare female bodies. The viewer's capability to rewrite this visual history of sex and rock 'n' roll is undermined by the lack of labels or directions on the touch screen. Sexually explicit, deviant and sometimes just plain perplexing narratives are constructed as the visitor experiments by tapping the colorful, though blank, boxes on the touch screen.

A second screen in Stage's installation features a rapidly gathering and dispersing constellation of names, including

Clapton, Cobain, Dylan and McCartney, which further underscores the testosterone-driven nature of rock music. The difficulty of escaping this firmly entrenched history is emphasized by the selection of Stage's sexually charged video clips and the obscure and impossible logic of the touch screen navigation.

Though their aesthetics and content are very different, these works by Stage and Hoberman are quite similar in their self-awareness and desire to engage with the audience. Eschewing the trend in corporate engineering to make the interface disappear into the cognitive background, these artists celebrate the interface, never letting it slip into obscurity. The custom mechanics of both *Trusted Makes* and *Pop Bastard* are essential to registering the viewer's physical connection with the artwork. Without the avenue of interactivity by which the visitor announces his presence, the artwork would remain static, responding to nothing but its own closed system. Stage and Hoberman, however, boldly invite visitors not just to touch but also to participate in and contribute to the continuous evolution of these new interactive artworks.

—Kim Beil

Perry Hoberman: *Trusted Makes* and Curtis Stage: *Pop Bastard* closed in November at Fringe Exhibitions, Los Angeles.

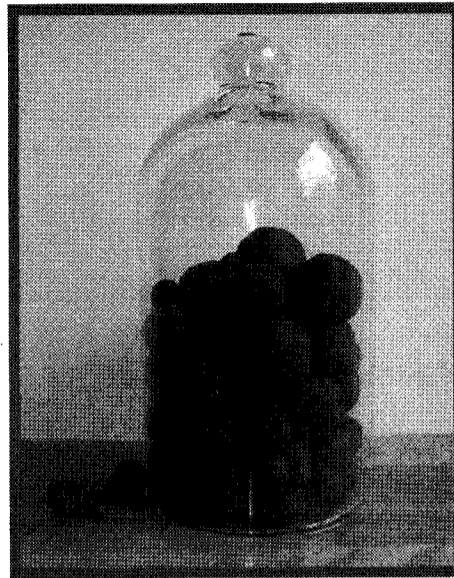
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## Wendy Kawabata and Lisa Solomon at Kruglak Gallery, MiraCosta College

**I**dentify and the numerous ways it is formed—the eclectic mixture of gender, culture and personal history—is explored in the diverse two-person exhibition *Wendy Kawabata and Lisa Solomon: The Point of Loose Ends*.

Distinct in their individual approaches to art, these artists nonetheless engage us in their own personal dialogues that, thematically, may not be new, but, with their own artistic insights, end up being fresh, insightful, and, curiously enough, an added commentary on the work of the other artist.

Bay Area-based Lisa Solomon exudes the confidence of a second-generation feminist artist who skillfully and cunningly uses craft, primarily thread and embroidery stitches, as a fine art medium. With a wry sense of humor, she explores American middle-class mores inspired by Victorian England ideals and concepts of masculinity/femininity that



Top: Wendy Kawabata, *Stemma*, 2006, kukui nuts, thread, bell jar, 18" x 6" x 6"; bottom: Lisa Solomon, *Wallet size me*, 1980, 2004, embroidery on satin, vintage embroidery hoop, 8" x 8", at Kruglak Gallery, MiraCosta College, Oceanside.

she is continually eliding. She also, on occasion, delves into her own past.

Of her skills, her greatest strength is her use of conscious simplicity coupled with irony that results in a total shift of perception. An example of this technique is found in her series of rifle targets such as *Cozied Rifle Target: pink honeycomb*. Solomon transforms both new and used targets with embroidery or paint. Those with shot holes are mended with stitches, while others are painted with images of flowers used in herbal medicine to stop bleeding. In other words, the targets are subverted and invalidated.

Solomon also turns portraiture on its head. An elevated genre traditionally done in oils becomes, in Solomon's hands, a unique commentary on both artistic mediums and on herself. The series, *Wallet size me: 1975–1985*, are embroidered portraits based on snapshots of the artist and family members. Using embroidery hoops as frames, Solomon's blank backgrounds and red thread are seen on what is actually the wrong side of the fabric that reveals knots and loose ends. Such meshing of fine art and craft is so well done that the craft part of the

piece—the materials and embroidery techniques—are initially overlooked.

More oblique and nebulous in her message, yet no less personal, is the work of Wendy Kawabata. Her fascination with Eurocentrism, orientalism, colonialism and imperialism begun in graduate school, remains integral to Kawabata's life and practice. As a non-Asian woman married to a Japanese man living in Hawaii, and as a fairly new mother, these theoretical concepts are more personal than academic. Kawabata questions both western history and artistic styles, and examines eastern techniques and traditions. She then blends the two revealing new meaning and a unique style that is both complicated and translucent.

A number of works in which she examines eastern and western signifiers are found in her series *Itinerant*. Small and simple, each piece is the outline of one barely visible, yet fairly iconic, image such as Buddha or the figure of English artist Thomas Gainsborough's 1770 painting *The Blue Boy*. Not immediately obvious, these pieces quietly make us think about what is admired in different cultures.

Much more complex are the three pieces *Celebrant*, *Protestant* and *New World*. Made up of tiny pin holes on white paper, each piece is an outline of either an individual—like Christopher Columbus or a woman in colonial dress—which merges with the outline of a land mass. Eschewing western perspective and western mediums, and quietly alluding to European influence on new lands and cultures, these seemingly simple pieces are dense and convoluted.

More complicated still is Kawabata's process piece *Stemma* in which the artist is wrapping red thread around 600 kukui nuts for an upcoming exhibition in Rochester, New York. In the artist's own words *Stemma* "is an attempt to depict the problems of defining identity through bloodlines, and in defining my relationship to Hawaii through marriage and family. The kukui nut inside the thread are not visible but the resulting form is reliant upon it."

As focused as this last statement is, it can also be used to sum up the exhibition at MiraCosta: Solomon and Kawabata inherently and broadly question artistic mediums, traditions and styles that most artists rely upon.

—Victoria Reed

Wendy Kawabata and Lisa Solomon: *The Point of Loose Ends* closed in December at Kruglak Gallery, MiraCosta College, Oceanside.

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