

**I Like
the Art World**

**and the Art World
Likes Me**





I Like the Art World and the Art World Likes Me

January 14 - March 5, 2011
EFA Project Space, New York

Curated by Eric Doeringer

Artists: Conrad Bakker, Marc Bijl, Jennifer Dalton, Eric Doeringer, Nancy Drew, Bill Drummond, Alex Gingrow, Simon Grennan & Christopher Sperandio, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Charles Gute, Nate Harrison, Pablo Helguera, Dan Levenson / Little Switzerland, The Matthew Higgs Society, Loren Munk, Filip Noterdaeme, Laurina Paperina, William Powhida, Ward Shelley, Jade Townsend

I Like the Art World and the Art World Likes Me is an exhibition featuring artists who make work inspired by the art world. The title is a play on **Joseph Beuys'** infamous 1974 performance *I Like America and America Likes Me*, in which he and a live coyote inhabited a small Manhattan gallery for three days. Beuys' performance explored the German artist's complicated relationship with America; this exhibition presents the similarly fraught relationship between emerging artists and the art-world establishment. The title can be read as either a sincere or a sarcastic statement, as the artists included all have "love/hate" relationships with the art world. They desire to participate more fully and to be recognized, but are simultaneously repulsed by some of its aspects. There is a critical, iconoclastic, or subversive character to much of the work, but also a great deal of reverence. Despite their criticism, these artists clearly love art.

There are precedents for this type of work. **Marcel Duchamp's** *L.H.O.O.Q.*, **Ad Reinhardt's** *How to Look at Art* series, **Robert Rauschenberg's** *Erased DeKooning*, **Marcel Broodthaers's** *Musée d'Art*

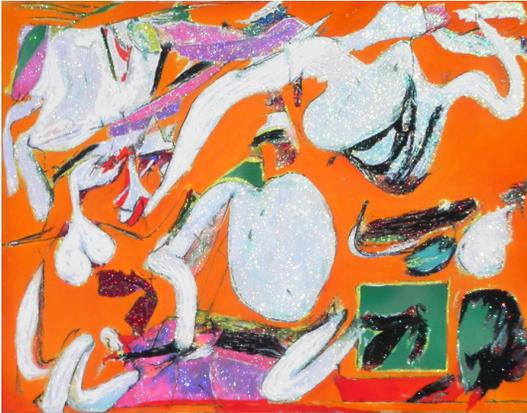
Moderne, Département des Aigles, and any number of pieces associated with "institutional critique" are obvious forebears. Although the artists in the exhibition work with similar subject matter, this is not a movement and each artist has a unique approach. Many utilize strategies of mimicry to challenge the art-world hierarchy. Some make work based on pieces by earlier artists, while others emulate institutions such as museums, galleries, and art magazines. A few choose to comment directly, addressing their criticism of artists, critics, and galleries by name. Still others work as documentarians, charting the history of their influences and/or contemporaries.

As an artist working with similar themes, I have been following these artists for many years. I am excited to have the opportunity to bring their work together for this exhibition. Some of them may be cynical, but all display a sense of humor and strong personal vision. Like Beuys and his coyote, the relationship between these artists and the art world is continually shifting – sometimes friendly, other times adversarial, but always with the constant threat that someone is going to get bitten.

The Appropriators

Whether called appropriation, sampling, copying, or stealing, the re-purposing of existing material to create new works of art is one of the most important developments of postmodernism. Many of the artists in the exhibition use this tactic as a way to simultaneously reference and subvert elements of the art world.

Recycling imagery has become a fairly accepted practice, but **Filip Noterdaeme** and **Dan Levenson** perform a more complex type of appropriation: they



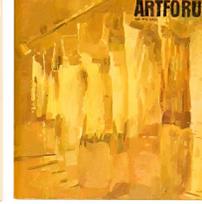
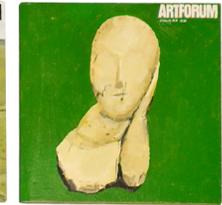
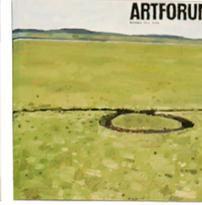
Cover: Florence Coyote, Director of Public Relations, the Homeless Museum of Art (HOMU) **Left:** Dan Levenson / Little Switzerland - *Chliine Schwiiz* (detail), 2010 **Above:** Nancy Drew - *Island Fire*, 2008; Aneta Grzeszykowska - *Untitled Film Still*, 2006; Filip Noterdaeme - *HOMU Booth*, 2010, photo by Daniel Isengart; Eric Doeringer - *Bootlegs*, 2001–2011

borrow the structures of art institutions to create a framework for their art. **Filip Noterdaeme** is the self-appointed director of **The Homeless Museum (HOMU)**, which is, paradoxically, housed in his Brooklyn apartment. **HOMU** parodies the conventions of the art museum and responds to controversies that arise within the museum world. Noterdaeme recently expanded **HOMU**'s reach by building a portable kiosk that he sets up on the streets of New York. There, he and Director of Public Relations **Florence Coyote** (a conceptual, if not genetic, descendent of Beuys' coyote) meet with pedestrians who choose to sit down and become "museum visitors." Noterdaeme has installed the *HOMU Booth* (along with several of his "open letters" to the art world) in the **EFA Project Space** and will greet visitors on Saturday afternoons during the run of the exhibition.

Dan Levenson is the founder of **Little Switzerland**, a Berlin-based gallery representing a group of young Swiss artists. However, **Little Switzerland** and its roster of artists exist primarily in Levenson's imagination.

The project, which has been manifested as a series of installations, serves as a vehicle for Levenson to address the conventions of the "white cube" gallery aesthetic and the art world's fascination with young, hip, Euro-chic artists. His installation *Chliine Schwiiz* ("Little Switzerland" in Swiss German) consists of a wall of "Swiss Standard Art Gallery Binder Boxes" that reference Minimalist sculpture and European industrial design. In front of the boxes, a monitor shows a video of Levenson typing the names of potential gallery artists. The time stamp in the corner of the video dates it to the summer before the gallery's 1997 opening.

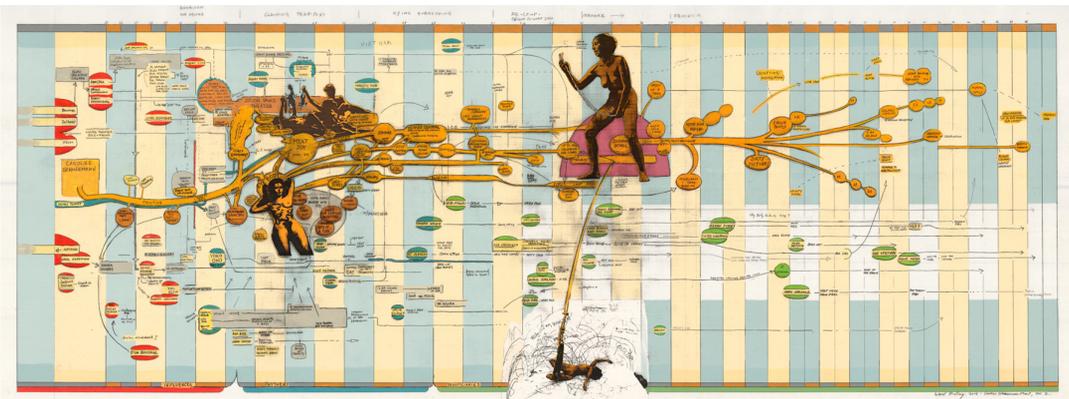
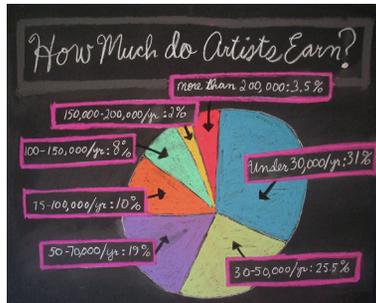
Nancy Drew and **Aneta Grzeszykowska** are perhaps more "traditional" appropriation artists - they make art by co-opting elements of other artists' work. **Nancy Drew** derives her compositions from works executed in "masculine" styles, like abstract expressionism and hard-edge painting. *Island Fire* is based on a painting by **Arshile Gorky**; *Then Again* is drawn from a work by **Piet Mondrian**. She feminizes the works by swapping the original color palette for more "feminine" hues and



Alex Gingrow
*Younger Than Jesus made me throw
 up in my mouth a little bit. Okay. A lot.*
 22in x 30in
 graphite and acrylic on paper
 2009
 AG1979-01

NEW
235 BOWERY
NEW YORK NY
10002 USA
MUSEUM

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rendering the paintings in plush flocking and shiny glitter. The original works are recognizable in Drew's paintings, but they have been softened and prettified. The meaning has been entirely transformed.

In contrast, **Aneta Grzeszykowska** finds inspiration in **Cindy Sherman's** *Untitled Film Stills*, works already associated with feminist discourse. In the original *Untitled Film Stills*, Sherman photographed herself performing the roles of various filmic archetypes: the femme fatale, the ingénue, etc. In Grzeszykowska's series, she presents herself adopting each of Sherman's guises, further complicating the questions of identity and authenticity raised by the original works.

My art practice also involves copying the work of other artists. At the suggestion of **EFA Project Space**, I have included a group of my *Bootleg* paintings in the exhibition. The *Bootlegs* are small, unauthorized copies of contemporary artworks that I used to sell on the sidewalk, like a vendor of counterfeit handbags. They are not necessarily copies of pieces I like – they were chosen for their commercial appeal. Taken as a whole, the series – which includes copies of more than 100 different artworks – presents a snapshot of the important (or at least popular) contemporary artists at the turn of the millennium.

On the flip side (literally), **Alex Gingrow** paints enlargements of the stickers that galleries affix to the backs of framed artworks listing the artist, title, medium, and date of the work. Not only are the gallery logos appropriated, but the “titles” depicted in Gingrow's paintings are comments she has overheard from art-world professionals, such as, “Which one was damaged? The unsold one? Oh, that's fine. Nobody cares about that one anyway.”

Marc Bijl and **Conrad Bakker** appropriate elements from art magazines. Bijl's publication “Forever” *Marc Bijl's Flash Art Faksimile* mimics the design of **Flash Art** magazine. Discovering it on a newsstand or coffee table, one would easily mistake it for the real thing. However, every photograph and article is dedicated to Bijl's artwork. Bijl's intervention is so seamless (the articles are interspersed with advertisements for actual galleries and follow the usual sequence of **Flash Art** features) that most readers do not become aware of the subterfuge until they read several articles and realize they are all about the same artist.

Conrad Bakker contributes work from two different series based on **Artforum**. *Untitled Project: SUBSCRIPTION* [*Artforum International: Sept 1969-June 1970*] consists of paintings of ten **Artforum** covers. The paintings were sold by subscription (collectors had to write their information on handmade replicas of the **Artforum** subscription card) and mailed out 40 years after the publication of the original issues.

Untitled Project: Advertisement is a series of hand-painted reproductions of exhibition advertisements torn from old copies of **Artforum**. The prices of Bakker's pieces are related to his source material. The *SUBSCRIPTION* paintings were sold for the cost of an *Artforum* subscription, while the *Advertisements* are priced according to the cost of advertising space in the original issue.

With their austere appearance, grid-based compositions, and reliance on language, **Charles Gute's** *Find-A-Text* paintings borrow the look of late 60's Conceptual Art. However, they are derived from a low-brow source: the “word search” puzzles commonly sold in supermarket checkout lanes. Hidden at first, this lineage is revealed when the viewer walks past the paintings and discovers the “solution” canvasses installed on the opposite side of the wall. Gute equates the puzzle solver's search for words with the art viewer's attempts to find the meaning of a work of art. Further complicating the high/low dichotomy, Gute has also produced a supermarket-style “puzzle book” that compiles all of the works in the series.

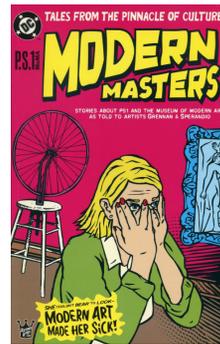
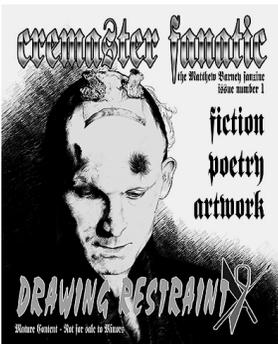
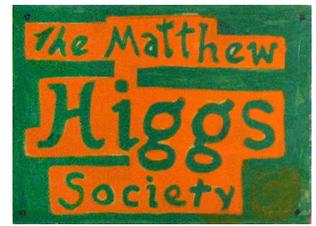
The Documentarians

A number of artists in the exhibition take a documentary approach to the art world. However, these are not impartial accounts; they are personal and critical responses to the art (and the art world) of the 20th and 21st centuries. Through their work, these artists draw attention to people, events, and facts that might otherwise be neglected in the construction of art history.

Jennifer Dalton analyzes the art world from a statistical vantage. Her slide show *How Do Artists Live?* presents a series of graphs that explore the nuts and bolts of being an artist. *Every Descriptive Word Used to Describe Artists and Their Work in Artforum's 'Best of 2007'* is a 14-foot scroll on which Dalton divides the titular information into male and female columns. One immediately sees that men have received a disproportionate amount of coverage. A closer reading also reveals the differences in the language used to describe male and female artists' work.

Ward Shelley and **Loren Munk** paint maps, timelines, and charts of art-historical information. Both artists focus primarily on the past 150 years, transforming data into intricate, colorful compositions. Shelley's *Addendum to Alfred Barr* traces the interrelations of art movements from the Enlightenment to the present. *Carolee Schneemann Chart* follows Schneemann's oeuvre alongside related developments. A more personal work, *Ward Shelley – An Artist's Career*, charts the interplay between the prices, demand, profit, and (self-determined) quality of Shelley's work over a 30-year period.

Conrad Bakker - *Untitled Project: SUBSCRIPTION* [*Artforum International September 1969 - June 1970*], 2009 – 2010; Alex Gingrow - *Younger Than Jesus made me throw up in my mouth a little bit. Okay. A Lot.*, 2009; Charles Gute - *Big Dealers*, 2008; Marc Bijl - “Forever” *Marc Bijl's Flash Art Faksimile*, 2002; Jennifer Dalton - *How Do Artists Live?* (detail), 2006; Ward Shelley - *Carolee Schneemann Chart*, 2006



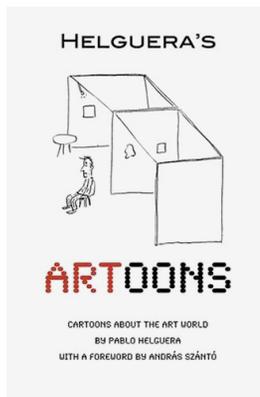
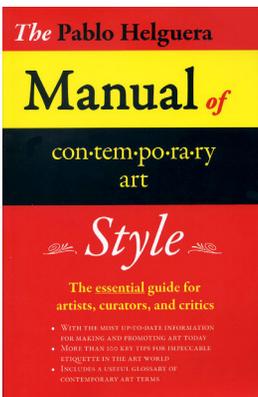
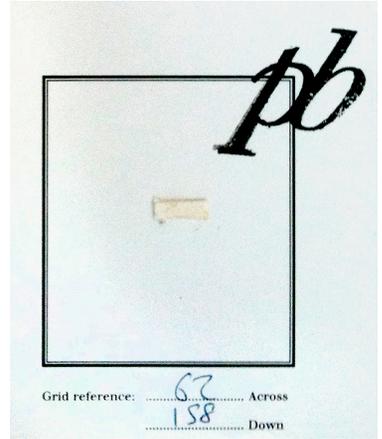
Loren Munk - *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn*, 2006-2010; The Matthew Higgs Society - *Matthew Higgs Archive* (detail), 2010; Eric Doeringer - *Cremaster Fanatic* – *the Matthew Barney Fanzine*, 2006; Simon Grennan & Christopher Sperandio - *Modern Masters*, 2002, and *Art School Superstars*, 1998; Jennifer Dalton and William Powhida - *Our Condolences* (detail), 2008

Loren Munk shares Shelley's interest in contemporary art history and the visual organization of information. His painting *Dead Write* maps the Manhattan homes of famous art critics on one side and those of artists who met untimely deaths on the other, claiming (somewhat disingenuously) that, "No correlation is implied." Slightly more upbeat, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* depicts a rainbow-hued tree sprouting from the locations of artists' studios in New York's most populous borough.

Simon Grennan and **Christopher Sperandio** create brightly hued comic books that tell the stories of common citizens. The duo has published several books about the art world. Instead of focusing on the elite, Grennan and Sperandio document the "little people" who fall beneath the radar of most art writers. In *Art School Superstars* they present portraits of art students annotated with the students' comments about school and their future aspirations. *Modern Masters* recounts the experiences of visitors and staff at the **Museum of Modern Art** and **PS1 Contemporary Art Center**.

The Matthew Higgs Society is a self-proclaimed, "non-membership-based honorary society dedicated to fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of the varied accomplishments of the British-born artist, curator, and writer **Matthew Higgs**." The society maintains an extensive archive (housed in Harlem's **Triple Candie** gallery) of materials, including press clippings, reproductions of Higgs' artwork and writing, photographs of Higgs at parties, and ephemera related to Higgs' exhibitions. Although the Society appears to venerate its subject, deeper study reveals a healthy dose of skepticism about Higgs, who has attracted considerable criticism since becoming director of New York alternative space **White Columns**.

CremasterFanatic.com provides a similar honor to sculptor **Matthew Barney**. This "fan site" contains erotic fiction about Barney, photographs from his early career as a male model, Halloween costumes based on characters from Barney's films, and a *Cremaster*-themed video game. The exhibition includes a copy



Above: Nate Harrison – still from *Aura Dies Hard (Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Copy)*, 2010; Bill Drummond - *\$20,000* (detail), 2001; Pablo Helguera - *The Pablo Helguera Manual of Contemporary Art Style*, 2007; and *Artoons*, 2008; Laurina Paperina – *Shirin Neshat and Takashi Murakami in Love*, 2010 **Right:** Charles Gute - *Big Dealers (SOLUTION)*, 2008 **Reverse:** William Powhida and Jade Townsend, *Art Basel Miami Beach Hooverville*, 2010

of the *Cremaster Fanatic Fanzine*, featuring material submitted by numerous **Matthew Barney** fans from around the world.

The Critics

Most of the work in the exhibition is critical, but some of the artists are particularly explicit. They point directly at their targets, drawing attention to the foibles and follies of the most powerful members of the art world.

William Powhida and **Jade Townsend's** *Art Basel Miami Beach Hooverville* (reproduced on the reverse of this brochure) is a Bosch-esque portrayal of more than a hundred critics, dealers, collectors, curators, and artists (both friends and enemies of the artists). Purporting to be a “public art proposal,” the work envisions a post-recession, post-apocalyptic shantytown built in the parking lot of **Art Basel Miami Beach** – the most important art fair in America. The drawing depicts representatives from all tiers of the art world: everyone from mega-players like **Charles Saatchi** and **Jeffrey Deitch** to anonymous graduate students (and includes

several of the artists in the exhibition).

Powhida contributes two other works: the video *A Study for the Sofia Coppola Film: Powhida and Our Condolences*, a series of sympathy cards produced in collaboration with **Jennifer Dalton**. In the video, Powhida shows clear disdain for both “Powhida” (his hungover art-star alter-ego) and the machinations of the art world, but also more than a hint of a longing for “Powhida’s” rock-and-roll lifestyle. The condolence cards were created in response to the global financial crisis and subsequent bursting of the art-world bubble. At a time when numerous galleries were forced to close and previously successful artists could no longer sell their work, Dalton and Powhida offered homilies like, “Look on the bright side, no one can call you a sellout anymore!” and “Chelsea won’t be the same without you.”

Bill Drummond and **Nate Harrison** are interested in the way that monetary value is ascribed to an artwork and the related issues of authenticity and originality. Their pieces cannibalize other artists’ work to question the tenets of the market. The title of Drummond’s work *\$20,000* refers to the amount he once paid for a

photograph by the artist **Charles Long**. The photograph, titled *A Smell of Sulphur in the Wind*, depicted a stone circle that Long had constructed in the Icelandic wilderness. After living with the work for several years, Drummond realized that it no longer moved him. First, he attempted to sell the photograph out of the back of his car for \$20,000 (although it's "market value" had increased). When that failed, Drummond sliced the photograph into 20,000 tiny rectangles, which he has been selling for \$1 each. Once Drummond sells all of the fragments, he plans to bury the money on the spot in Iceland where Long shot the original photograph and take his own photograph of the site. He will title the new work *A Smell of Money Underground* and hang it in the location once occupied by Long's artwork.

Much as Drummond's *\$20,000* grows like a phoenix from the remnants of Long's photograph, **Nate Harrison's** video *Aura Dies Hard (Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Copy)* is a Frankenstein-like mash-up of short clips taken from preexisting art videos. On the soundtrack, Harrison discusses the distribution of video art through both legitimate and unauthorized channels, and how these different conduits affect the scholarship, discourse, and market surrounding video art. While an art video downloaded from the internet may hold no monetary value, it can be "invaluable" to a critic, curator, professor, or artist like Harrison, who could not have made *Aura Dies Hard* without a hard drive full of illicit videos.

Pablo Helguera and **Laurina Paperina** temper the bite of their criticism with a touch of humor. *The Pablo Helguera Manual of Contemporary Art Style* is an "essential guide for artists, curators, and critics, with the most up-to-date information for making and promoting art today." Although the book's tone is tongue-in-cheek, it provides surprisingly useful advice for navigating the art world's unwritten rules. Chapter headings include *Designing a Gallery With Taste*, *Art Fair Behavior*, *What to Say When We Don't Like the Work*, and *How to Survive the Lack of Recognition*. Helguera offers guidance for dilemmas not covered in the *Manual with The Estheticist* – an art-world advice column. Questions may be submitted online or via a drop box in the gallery. The exhibition also includes a compilation of Helguera's *Artoons* – cartoons lampooning the art world that have appeared in numerous publications.

Laurina Paperina's work also shows the influence of cartoons (of both the *New Yorker* and Saturday morning variety). She contributes a series of paintings of today's hot artists - but in Paperina's case, "hot" could refer to either the artists' careers or their sex lives. Her paintings show art stars like **Takashi Murakami**, **Marina Abramovic**, and **Maurizio Cattelan** in sexual situations suggested by their artwork. The bright hues of Paperina's paintings belie their dark humor, as the works are often more nightmarish than erotic (she has created similar works imagining the deaths of famous artists).

At the end of his *I Like America* and *America Likes Me* performance, Beuys hugged the coyote (which had

become used to him) and flew back to Germany. It remains to be seen whether the art world will embrace these artists. It is equally unclear how the artists will feel about achieving wider success. Art critic **Jerry Saltz**, shown being stabbed by an angry artist in Powhida and Townsend's *Art Basel Miami Beach Hooverville*, subsequently titled a column *William Powhida Is Making Fun of Me*, and *I Love It* and placed Powhida on his year-end top-ten list. Powhida later wrote on his blog, "My inclusion on his top 10 list started feeling more like an anchor around my ankle than a life raft in the art world." Many of these artists share Powhida's anxiety. Only time will tell whether they can make the art world a better place, or if success will dull their fangs.

-Eric Doeringer, 2011

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EFA Project Space, a multi-disciplinary contemporary art venue focused on the investigation of the creative process, aims to provide dynamic exchanges between artists, cultural workers, and the public. Art is directly connected to its producers, to the communities they are a part of, and to every day life. By contextualizing and revealing these connections, we strive to bridge gaps in our cultural community, forging new partnerships and the expansion of ideas. Through these synergies, artists build on their creative power to further impact society.

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