

G E O R G K A R G L

Press information

CHRIS JOHANSON

Georg Kargl Fine Arts

Press preview: September 11th 2007, 11 a.m.

Opening: September 11th 2007, 7 p.m.

Exhibition dates: September 12th – October 27th, 2007

Rooted in San Francisco's Mission Street community, Chris Johanson engages in his work with issues of urban realism and the aesthetic of the streets. Born in 1968, the artist moves in his work among the realms of graffiti, a comic-strip style, and street art. Street credibility is thus a key foundation of Johanson's work. The sculptural environments he creates thus break the limits of painting and installations.

Influenced by conceptualism and the figurative painting of the Bay Area School, the self-taught artist developed his own style in painting skateboards and surfboards and buildings. The urban observations that come together in this work are still the source for Johanson's political and social commentary, anti-war slogans, and critique of consumerism.

The post-punk aesthetic following a do-it-yourself principle generates an urban rustic quality— a conglomerate of shiny surfaces of recycled materials represents the human need for balance and harmony. On the surface, humorous drawings in which a deeply socially critical and tragic component inheres, are sensitive snap shots, and serve as an instrument to present the negative and positive aspects of post-modern, globalize society. The self-proclaimed provincialism appears like a microcosm of the all-American way of life, globalized everyday life, where only irony seems possible: this is what constitutes the realities of the post-Fordist subject. In a humanistic manner, Johanson poses the question of utopia: the search for the ideal society, the ideal self.

The naïve-seeming drawings with simplified figures and comic strip dialogues communicate the absurdities of the self-alienated and therapized individual within rituals of conformity and marking distinctions. In thematic terms, his colorful, sketch-like pictures circle around visual and text formats, mental and social stability, the consumption of group ideology, community codes and ironic product labeling, based on a comic-strip ethics.

Johanson's reduced visual language, abstract surfaces, and simplified pop and op-art visual effects refer to social, state, and authoritarian structures. Through the conscious working with recycled materials and found pieces and location in public context, his sculptural works operate as a radically democratic gesture. "Art is really about sharing information and ideas ... that's more important than the artist" according to Johanson, who tries to move in a realm beyond egomaniacal artist positions, to give positive impulse. Always immanent to his installative art is his habitus as a noise-punk musician: live and intense!

Text: Rebecca Harms, Irene Kari

Press image download: www.georgkargl.com

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Opening hours

Tue – Fr	11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Thu	11 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Sat	11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

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