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## NOTA BENE, OPENS AT DORSCH GALLERY



Garland, by Patricia Smith

May 9 - June 2, 2009




Opening reception May 9, 2009, 7-10pm

Dorsch Gallery will inaugurate **nota bene: Illustrated demons & allegories, stripped of one religion, culture or narrative, are cast adrift and, accordingly, find new haunts.** Curated by Tyler Emerson-Dorsch, this group exhibition features work by Rene Barge, Ernesto Caivano, Alyssa Phoebus, Shahzia Sikander, Reeve Schumacher, Patricia Smith, and Nora Woloszczuk of Team Team collective.

The contemporary artists in **nota bene** assign new associations and meanings to familiar elements, culled from various sources. The aesthetic they choose is important to the

dissemination of new symbologies.

There are of course other modes of viral visual influence, but the ones that we collect and hold close to us seem have the most lasting effect. Walter Benjamin

kept with him a Paul Klee painting of the Angel of History that affected his imagination profoundly enough to use it as his Allegory in “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” Benjamin’s description of the painting’s image is not an art historical reading but a result of a sustained, personal meditation on the implications of the picture. Similarly, the artists and the curator participating in this show keep collections of referential objects that influence their curiosities. Sometimes, being an object in such a collection and being subject to repurposing is a form of death. However, the state can also be seen as redemptive - a form of reincarnation. One wonders which of these works will manifest in other forms, having altered at least one imagination.

Arlen Austin is a master printmaker and carpenter based in New York. His prints show line drawings that depict one thing, like a primeval forest, as his application of broad fields of vivid color convey contradictory sensual stimuli. He presents these prints in a variety of handcrafted wooden viewing devices. These works conjure whimsical responses and also instigate a serious interrogation of the relationship between the distribution of prints and the ways in which they are made visible. Austin earned an MFA from Columbia University in 2008. He is a member of Die Störung, whose NY show was recently reviewed in the *New York Times*.

Miami-based sound artist Rene Barge's trio of collages from 1996-98 are part of his series “earth particles,” an effort to find another way of recording a moment. At this point, Barge was heavily involved in the aesthetics of noise. Barge performed for the drawings’ first exhibition. These collages’ whimsical cutouts from illustrations of the Virgin or children of the nineteenth century are drawn one in. The artist’s intent, however, is to present a time capsule of a moment and all that is in it: memories, fantasies, sounds, emotions, and ambitions. The way Barge seeks to communicate the inner state of an individual aligns with surrealism. Barge references Jacques Attali: Noise heralds the arrival of transformations, revolutions, and alterations in symbolic systems. Recently included in the exhibition “Sound” at the Bass Museum of Art, Barge is an active educator and sound artist in Miami.

Alyssa Phoebus’s *Good Woman* (2008), a work in graphite on rag paper, appropriates song lyrics by Cat Power and then translates them to paper. Phoebus draws different fonts to point alternately to embroidery samplers or handwriting. The shift between these states and the words we read “I want to be a good woman and I want you to be a good man this is why I will be leaving this is why I can’t see you anymore” indeed suggests something in between the lines, something the words fail to convey. Phoebus’s work uses this translation process to explore the representation of what lies between the lines, letters, or words in accounts of traumatic or emotional experiences, especially those pertaining to women. When asked to elaborate on her work, Phoebus references Jean Genet’s memoir *Prisoner of Love*. Genet writes: “They claim to give an account of it, but in fact it buries itself, slots itself exactly into the spaces, recorded there rather than in the words that served only to blot it out.” Phoebus has an MFA from Columbia University and is also a member of Die Störung. She is represented by Bellwether Gallery in New York, where she lives and works.

Reeve Schumacher’s sculptures each appropriate old, leather bound books as locations for a more timeless kind of vision. A large egg nests in an elaborately carved volume. Five books with yellowing pages are sewn shut in a pattern that looks like cobwebs. A complete set of nineteenth century encyclopedias are presented on a shelf, pressed together. A peephole at one end allows to viewer to gaze into outmoded, disused knowledge, into which the artist has brutally cut a passage for light. The relationship of the old to the new in his work is particularly cogent, since he emphatically supersedes man-made knowledge with more eternal truths. Schumacher has a BFA from University of Miami. He lives and works in Miami.

In his studio, Schumacher’s collection of natural and art objects are displayed with equal care, honoring his plethora of interests in marine science, medieval and nineteenth art and photography, religion. Objects he lives with become sources for or poles against which he acts. Indeed, the way the “old” aesthetic



resurfaces in many of these works is one of the threads this exhibition explores, reiterated by a small display of collected objects, among them: a fake Durer etching, a Janson's art history book, several postcards, a pdf printout of "Dispersion" by Seth Price, and magazines.

Patricia Smith's *Garland* and *Twin Rationalization Towers with Fortifying Embellishments* (both 2008) will both be displayed on tables, so that viewers can look down at these large, luxurious maps of imaginary lands. The experience of lowering one's head and gaze to examine a drawing is akin to the intimacy of looking at a book, appropriate here, since both the map and display join forces to help transport the viewer between different states of mind. Examining the labels of regions on the maps invokes questions about the drawings' alignment with psychology and/or fairy tales: "A Palpable Feeling of Aloneness," "Join the Club," "Ladies Entrance." Indeed, the maps look as much like anatomical charts, wrought-iron gates, fantasy maps (think Tolkien), or pseudo-scientific brain maps, as they do geographical maps. This aesthetic oscillation points to contradictory overlaps between science and fantasy.

Both the Ernesto Caivano and Shahzia Sikander's suite of prints come to the show courtesy of Arlen Austin, who, in addition to making his own work, also helps other artists in their printmaking. These prints entered his collection as thanks for his efforts. Caivano, who recently had a solo show at White Cube in London, infuses literary motifs into his prints and drawings, layering bible references with fairy tales, Nan science and astronomy. Such a technique is familiar, yet Caivano draws out the failures of these various mythologies - in relating people and nature, he states that there are "echo[es in the way] that we are creating the world, similar to a pastiche monster..."

Sikander is well known for her paintings that recall the techniques, aesthetic and fantasy of Islamic illuminated manuscripts and imagery from multiple cultures, including those of Islam, Hinduism, and the United States. By using the miniature painting style in the 21st century for her depictions, she tries to deconstruct this traditional practice. Her renditions of her culture imbed critique in her precious depictions of serpents, turbans, young woman and men. Her portrayals complicate what we think we know of the cultures and what we think we can judge. The prints in this exhibition are examples of some of these motifs.

Finally, Nora Woloszczuk's t-shirt design "Homo Sapiens 4ever" sports a tongue-cheek graphic that recalls the medieval hierarchy of beings, in which humans - or more precisely Man - was at the top. Here, not only are humans at the top of the triangle, they are also in the center of the universe, superimposed over the sun. Even though the knowledge available to humankind has progressed far beyond this point, humans today often act as though they have forgotten this knowledge. The t-shirts are distributed by the artist collective Team Team, an artist collective that seeks to make artist's designs available Born in 1983 in Vienna, Austria, Woloszczuk studied design in the USA at RISD.

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