



Anthony Cervino

Hurry with the Furies

March 10 - April 11

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Anthony Cervino: *Hurry with the Furies*
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Artist Talk: March 17, 7pm
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Martin Art Gallery
Muhlenberg College
Allentown PA 18104
muhlenberg.edu/gallery
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Images courtesy of the artist
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Front cover: Detail from *Regalia*

Introduction

Paul M. Nicholson

Director Martin Art Gallery

Anthony Cervino's solo exhibition *Hurry with the Furies* features a suite of works that employ the visual and formal language of institutional critique to explore how we fetishize our own past. Cervino's recreations of historical-looking objects usurp material conventions by interrogating kitsch through his humorous and often transgressive substitutions.

His *Gathered* (2019), takes the form of a museological linen-lined shadow box, which contains rows of broken porcelain flatware pieces shaped into arrowheads. Other works upcycle dollar store detritus, which is paired with his constructions that seem to possess a yet unknown ceremonial application.

Most display cases are meant to be protective, decorative vessels, but his are an integral component of each work. Through immaculate construction, we cannot help but be drawn to Cervino's personal institutions, which seem purpose-built to house a peculiar set of recollections and sense of humor.

His editorial selections would appear to have a predominantly adolescent preoccupation... regularly featuring toys, figurines, tools, scouting, and erections, which seem to pop up at random. Rather than shy away, Cervino embraces reminiscing about these occasionally taboo topics, which gives license for us to look closer at them, and perhaps to confront or embrace our own idiosyncrasies.



Gathered, 2019

decorative plates knapped into a variety of points, rough cut white oak, plywood, paint, linen, glass

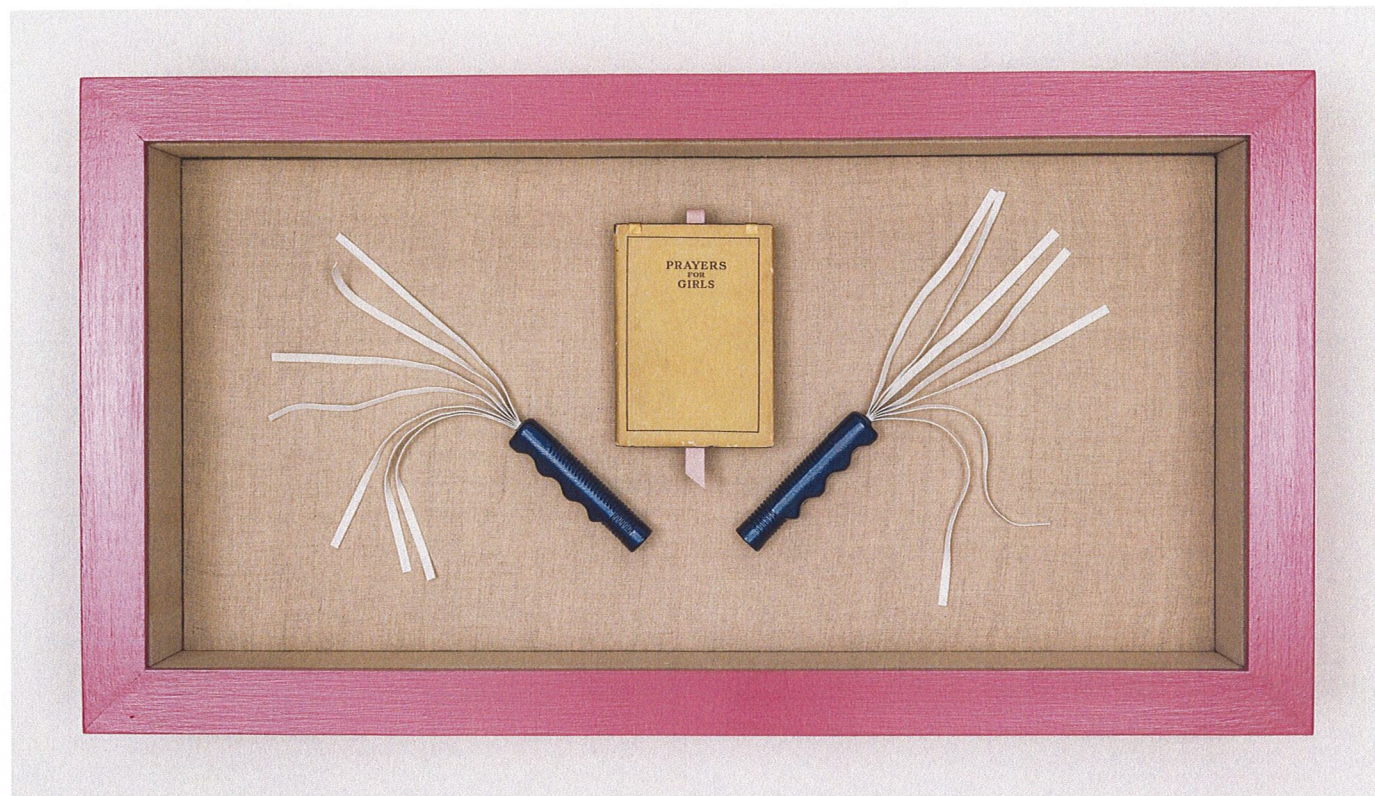
Anthony Cervino: *Hurry with the Furies* Margaret Winslow

"...the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart..." William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

The works of art that constitute Anthony Cervino's *Hurry with the Furies* represent a collection of propositions. Like R.E.M.'s 1987 driving incantation "It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)," from which the exhibition title is drawn, Cervino's offerings emit a kind of stream of consciousness gathered together for personal and collective contemplation. For the artist, swirling amongst the associations are notions of youth, male virility, fatherhood, fear/desire, lost/found, vulnerability, and a perceived pathway by which one is brought via seeming natural order to adulthood.

Following a trajectory set out by his and Shannon Egan's 2015—ongoing project, EJECTA, Cervino navigates cultural and psychobiological notions through his Long Lost series. The series consists of a group of encased objects—with their materials meticulously listed—displayed in quasi museum display case meets 1970s curio cabinet. Taken together, the objects in the Long Lost series serve as a personal archive, "archaeologic relics of boyhood narratives." Cervino has described his creative practice as cannibalistic, and he actively recycles objects from previous artwork, sifting through his collection. This process is cyclic—objects gathered and recycled and later repurposed, the associations woven twofold for the viewer's interpretation.

Gathered (2019) consists of a display of 17 knapped—shaped through striking—points. Each point includes visual hints to allow the viewer familiar with such commemorative and decorative plates from the 1950s through 1980s to identify probable themes. Cervino has a surfeit of plates from which to draw as he has gathered dishware with images of wildlife, religious stories, poetic musings, and United States history. *New Frontier* (2018) and *Double Troubled* (2019) both reference weapons in form but are symbols in function. The objects read as commemorative and the list of materials—daughter's hair, avocado pit—imbue personal associations.



Rescue Party, 2018

cast bronze, steel, found book, pink leather,
brass, paint, oak, plywood, linen, glass

Others denote a narrative such as *Rescue Party* (2018, with Elisabeth Robinson Scovil's *Prayers for Girls*) and *Lost Patrol* (2018). The functional objects paired with suggestive titles imply a failed mission, and the signs of the body—rub marks on handlebar grips—beg for an outcome. Whether indicated through the stasis of a handheld tool or through handles worn smooth through friction, the body's energy resides in each object.

At Long Last (2018) quite literally engages with the narrative, assembling multiple copies of a found book interrupted by cedar shims. Published in 1948 as volume 27 in the Hardy Boys Mystery Stories, *The Secret of Skull Mountain* displays a dramatic cover with a large boulder hurtling toward the protagonists. Cervino has coupled the image with a formal treatment; the form of the book repeated into a series of stutters or repeated frames. The action is repeatedly suspended as is that moment in time and its associated youth. It is with this work that Cervino's associations with boyhood are strongest, and the theme shifts from on to off the wall, taking form in the large, built table occupying the center of the gallery. The boys of adventure, or misadventure, are present in the marks they have left behind. One can imagine the scene, a gang of lost boys—more Lord of the Flies than Boy Scouts of America—gathered together. Their misdirected energy and frustration left in burn marks and wear to the furniture. They are fatherless, without elders to guide their hands to dexterously wield a tool or properly start and tend a fire. It is a study of male adolescence, boyology—to borrow a term from YMCA leader and author Henry William Gibson—suspended in the shellac, signs of the boy savage missing the guidance of the sage mason, a generation skipped in the passing of knowledge.

Juxtaposing Cervino's meditations on youth is the sailor figure, a totem of male virility, the "old man 'fertility god.'" The talisman sailor is rarely without his black pipe, similarly erect with connotations to male physiology. However the artist's careful manipulation of the ubiquitous figurine makes the figure's outward manhood questionable. Cervino defrocks the sailor, revealing an aging body underneath, and the results—despite the sailor's erection and satisfied smirk—lean closer to humor or embarrassment and less to triumph. These are bittersweet associations, meditations on youth tinged with the realities of adulthood ahead. The propositions are simultaneously bleak and hopeful, like the promise of a dystopic future or Roddenberry-esque optimism radiating across the bridge of the starship USS Enterprise circa 1968. Each object in the Long Lost series contains within it this dichotomy and the possibility of reflection on the part of the viewer. Cervino, like Michael Stipe, shows us that fine line between resignation and endurance.