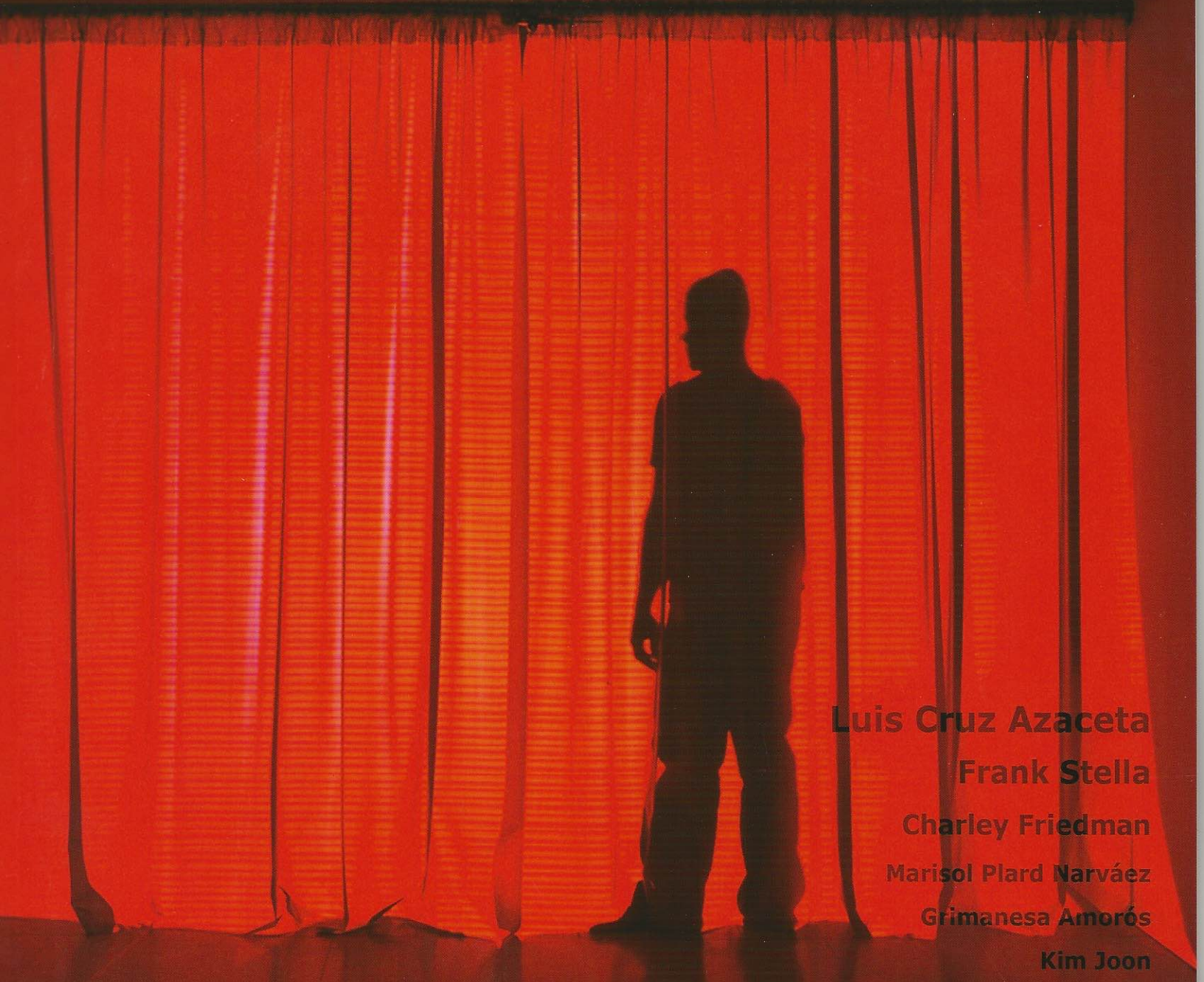


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# WYNWOOD

THE ART MAGAZINE



**Luis Cruz Azaceta**

**Frank Stella**

**Charley Friedman**

**Marisol Plard Narváez**

**Grimanesa Amorós**

**Kim Joon**

**Trends**

**LISTE 08**

**The Cinema Effect**

at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

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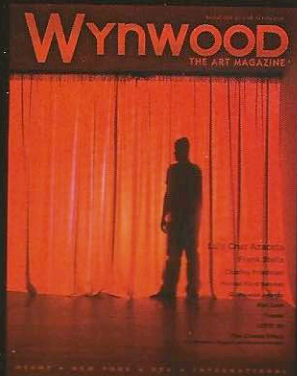
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**Front cover :**  
**Douglas Gordon**

Off Screen (Silver), 1998  
© Douglas Gordon.  
Courtesy Gagolian Gallery

**Right: Ghary Bowlin**

Untitled, Unretouched, (Detail)- 2008  
Photograph, Size variable.  
From upcoming series.  
Courtesy of the artist.





# CHARLEY FRIEDMAN

## A CAUSTIC FLASHBACK IN THE HISTORY OF ART

Dinorah Pérez-Rementería

visiting the past, with irony, without ingenuity  
Umberto Eco

Was Charley Friedman born in 1991? If so, he'd be only 16 years old and a true genius, with such an amazing career. Friedman uses (his) "knowledge" as a weapon to threaten the History of Art. Knowledge is power. The information accumulated over the years allows the artist to approach minimalism, conceptualism, objectuality, video, and performance art from ironic/humorous points of view. And although he is not as young as it is stated on his resume, the artist discloses a contagiously novel, uplifting vibe through his work.

"Felix, Flowers, Flags & Poems," (2002) (video projection and photograph) document an action made by the artist in Chelsea during Valentine's Day. In his little stand, Friedman sells Felix Gonzalez Torres' candy for \$1.25 and reads love poems for \$0.75.

Pedestrians stop by the booth and pay for the artist's services. Some of them bring their own love poems to be read. Here the issue of love is associated not only with feelings of joy but it also has depressing connotations. Gonzalez Torres created his well-known interactive sculpture entitled (Lover Boys), using 355 pounds of candy that the public eventually would take home until there was nothing left, a beautiful but cruel metaphor of sadness, absence, and death in the time of AIDS. Friedman's action is surrounded by a veil of tragedy as well. It's not a coincidence that he chose to do his performance on the first Valentine's Day after September 11th 2001.

The piece "Carpet World and Moon," (2003-2007) represents the Earth and its natural satellite. The two handmade-carpet balls differ in diameter—one is three times bigger than the other. "A carpet is any loom-woven, felted textile grass floor covering," says Wikipedia (the Online Free Encyclopedia). In other words, it's a fabric destined to be stepped on and get inevitably filthy, polluted. The world has been depicted in primary colors as if created for school beginners. Countries are divided and illustrated according to politics and wealth criteria. The perfect rounded shape of

the balloons seems to invite people to play with the World and the Moon. Is the artist approaching the unbearable lightness of being? Has the rug been designed to protect the world from a looming explosion?

In "Lobster Clock," (2006), Friedman transforms the material's aesthetic appearance, searching for other possibilities of meanings. Lobster shells, a clock mechanism, and metal are used to build this piece. The clock gives the real time, but it could also refer us to an imaginary time measured under the sea. Is the clock perhaps measuring eternity? The



The images are courtesy of the artist and Gallery Diet

Page: Charley Friedman, Untitled (Chasid) 2008 - c-print 48" x 36"

Art: Felix, Flowers, Flags, and Poems 2002

Video still from a performance done in Chelsea February 2002



Top: Capet World and Moon 2005-2007 Installation View Gallery Die! February 2008  
 hand hooked wool, thread, oil, and rubber 4" diameter (world) 18" diameter (moon)

Bottom: Lobster Clock 2006 - lobster shell, clock mechanism, and metal, 3" diameter

orange shell of the lobster looks like synthetic leather for making shoes. This work reminds us of Tom Friedman's "Untitled," (1995), a starburst construction made with thousands of toothpicks. Similarly to what happens with the toothpick sculpture, the materials used in the construction of the clock liberate from their materiality while getting into more symbolic domains of representation. The display of this piece brings to mind what we know as "the lateral thinking," a popular term coined by Maltese psychologist and writer, Edward de Bono. The lateral thinking is related to reasoning that is not obvious and to ideas that may not be achievable by following traditional logic.

"Nipple Eyes," (2006) is a series of two somewhat erotic, very playful photographs. Are the nipples thought to be the eyes of our chest as the eyes are the mirror of our soul? The artist shaves the hair around his nipples to make them appear more luminous and clean. Is hair removal considered another successful kind of make-up? For centuries, hair removal has been practiced in all human cultures. Medical, social, cultural, sexual and religious reasons have made people get rid of unwanted hair on their bodies. Shaving is the most common method of depilation. Friedman's nipples stare straight at our eyes, for they have been perfectly delineated within the hairy chest. This piece may be revealing a new conceptualization of trompe l'oeil technique. It would have moved away from the mere creation of optical illusion that makes objects in a two-dimensional painting seem real. Friedman tricks the spectator's eye, by means of producing a deep sensorial connectivity between the viewer and his photo-performance.

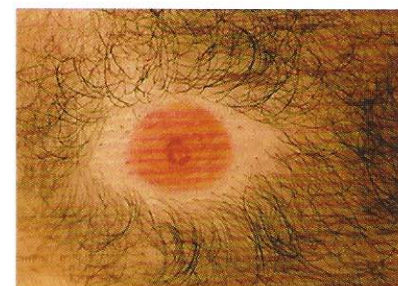
"Q-Tips," (2008) recalls the best of minimal art made by Carl Andre or Donald Judd. "Art excludes the unnecessary," wrote Andre in the catalog for the 1959 show "16 Americans" organized by Dorothy Miller at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. His words referred to Frank Stella's stripe paintings, in which the treatment of structural arrangements differed a great deal from the works by Willem De Kooning and the rest of the abstract expressionists. Made of wood, paper and cotton, the swabs have a realistic appearance, with a yellow tint of wax at the tip. The geometrical composition may perfectly fit between two adjacent walls. Q-Tips (or Quality Tips) were invented by Polish-Jewish American, Leo Gerstenzang, whose "Baby Gays" product became a widely-sold brand name. First aid and cosmetic application are among their most popular uses. (Warning: neither Friedman's nor the sterile packaged swabs should be put directly into the ears!).

A sound/video projection, "Four Part Memory," (2004-2008) reproduces the Beatles' famous album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. The artist breaks down the iconic music as though he were cutting an orange in four slices. The Beatles' songs represent a significant component of his past (or even his most present) memories. Without the worry of editing images or sounds, the artist films/records himself performing the vocals, bass, guitar,

and percussion a cappella. Friedman's performance recalls the caustic sense of humor found in Bruce Nauman's films, in which the artist questions his role as assumed communicator and manipulator of visual language. The four fractions of the video projection are put together in a random way, and yet they seem to have an enigmatic/invisible thread linking them to each other. There is also an arbitrary bond between the sounds that generates a very charismatic if not an especially infectious rhythm.

Caricaturing Chuck Close's notorious "Big Self-Portrait," the 2008 work "Untitled" (Chasid) displays the image of Friedman as a Jewish man. To create the powerful enlargement of his face, Chuck Close used airbrush, rags, a razor blade, and other tools over a period of four months in 1968. There are patent similarities and differences between Close's and Friedman's work. Reminiscences from Close's piece are Friedman's insolent look, cigar and glasses. In contrast to it, Friedman's self portrait offers a more polemical view since the artist wears black and white garments, a distinctive hat, and two long curls at both sides of his head. Another important clue to analyze Friedman's photo is the title of the piece, in which the word Chasid –name given to a member of a Jewish sect that observes a form of Orthodox Judaism– appears hidden in parenthesis. What position or theory does the artist refute here? Is Friedman denying himself, his identity and history? Is he trying to prove wrong certain artistic/social evidences? Far from being considered as a plain self-portrait, Friedman's piece is a symbolic argument against tradition, convention, and belief. □

*Dinorah Pérez Rementería. Art critic, whose work appears in ArtNexus, Arte al Dia International, Miami Art Guide, Conjunto, Tablas, among other publications.*



Top: Nipple Eyes, 2007 : 2:30" x 40" prints C Print  
 Center: Cotton Swabs 2008. Cotton, wood, and paper, 8" each  
 Bottom: A Cappella February 2008  
 Installation view Gallery Diet (Carpet World and Moon, Nipple Eyes, Untitled [Chasid], Cotton Swabs, and Lobster Clock)

