

CAPITALISM IN QUESTION (Because It Is)

Ian Arenas

Matthew Brandt

James Melinat

Gabie Strong

Kara Tanaka

Grant Vetter

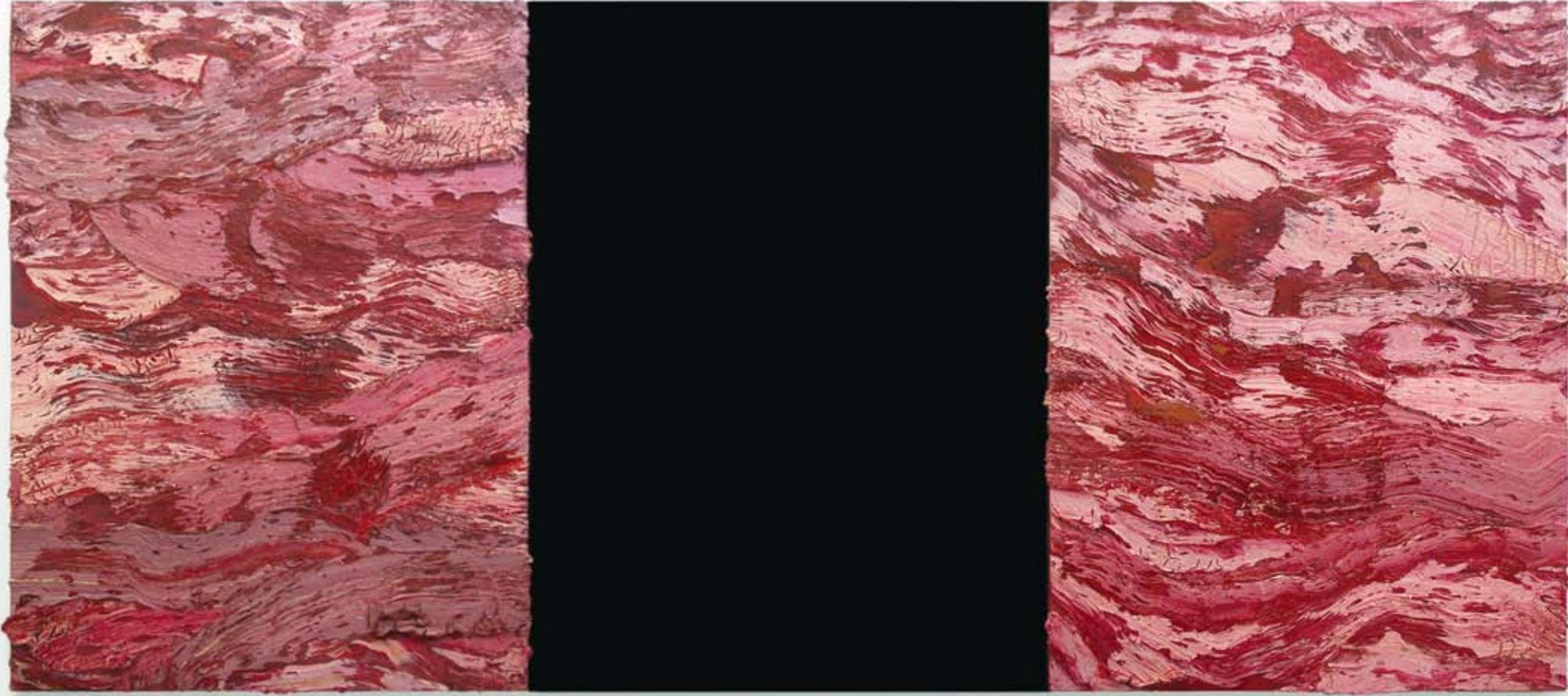
January 28 - March 19, 2010 - Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College

CAPITALISM IN QUESTION (Because It Is)

**Ian Arenas
Matthew Brandt
James Melinat
Gabie Strong
Kara Tanaka
Grant Vetter**

January 28 - March 19, 2010 - Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College
Co-curated by Daniel Joseph Martinez & Ciara Ennis

Capitalism in Question (Because It Is) is co-sponsored by the Pitzer Art Galleries
and the Munroe Center for Social Inquiry at Pitzer College



Grant Vetter, *Collateral (triptych)* (2009).
Oil on Canvas stretched over panel, acrylic and lacquer. 66 x 150 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.

Table of Contents:

Daniel Joseph Martinez <i>My New Hat, and We All Love Capitalism, Don't We!</i>	6
Daniel A. Segal <i>Pursuing a Common Conversation across Differentiated Modes of Human Inquiry</i>	18
Ciara Ennis <i>Expensive Taste</i>	28
Artist's Biographies	40
Writer's Biographies	46
Acknowledgements	49

My New Hat, and We All Love Capitalism, Don't We!

By Daniel Joseph Martinez

As long as society is founded on money, we won't have enough of it.
—Leaflet, Paris strike, December 1995

This is the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself, and hence a self-abolishing contradiction, which presents itself prima facie as a mere point of transition to a new form of production.
—Karl Marx

Capitalism only triumphs when it becomes identified with the state, when it is the state.
—Fernand Braudel

As I write this on November 26, 2009, I see that at this moment, the United States national debt is 12,056,777,883,135 trillion dollars (www.usdebtclock.org).

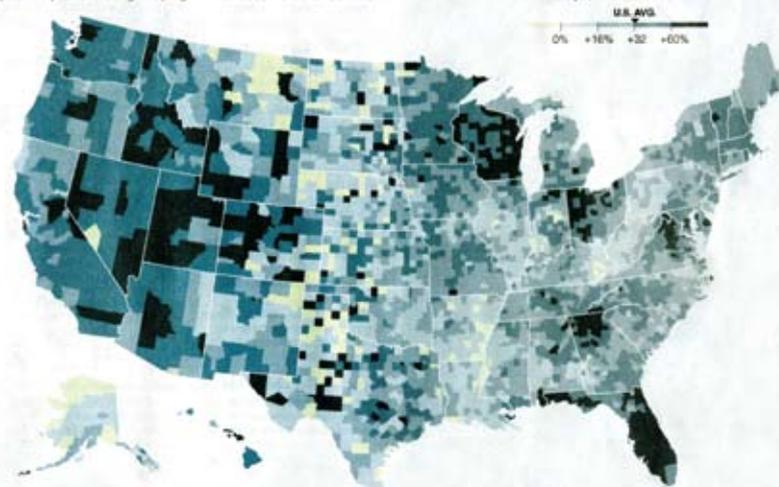
It is Thanksgiving Day. We celebrate every year, pretending that, because we live in this great empire, in this marvelous country, nothing else matters. We have no worries as long as we can shop, stay abreast of our debt and participate in the consensual fantasy that we are an ethical and moral citizenry earnestly trying to solve the world's current crises. Yet we are all complicit in keeping capitalism healthy and alive. In a sense, the 21st century is a rerun of the 20th, which was a rerun of the 19th—same industrial squalor, colonial-imperialism, commodification, alienation, ravaging of materialism and accumulation of wealth, rule of money and class war. Capital is triumphant, unopposed, virtually divine. In fact, we no longer need any of the philosophical apparatus of capitalism. It's just money, pure and simple: the free market as a perpetual motion machine.

Who am I? If I tried to answer this question, then perhaps everything would amount to knowing who it is that I “haunt.” I must admit that this last word is misleading, tending to establish, between certain beings and myself, relations that are stranger, more inescapable, more disturbing than I intended. Such a word means much more than it says—paradoxically it makes me alive while I play a ghostly part, referring to what I must have ceased to be in order to be who I am. I am doomed to retrace my steps under the illusion that I am exploring, doomed to try and learn what I should simply recognize, and doomed to relearn a mere fraction of what I have forgotten.

Food Stamp Use Soars Across U.S., and Stigma Fades

The number of people who receive food stamps has increased nearly a third over the past two years, resulting in a program that feeds more than 36 million.

Change in number of people who receive food stamps, June 2007 to June 2009



For the past hundred years, some of the world's greatest minds have been debating and warning us about capitalism. What has it done? Where has it gotten us? We now have capitalism and democracy so conflated that the two cannot be teased apart. So one failure is built upon another. And we maintain this discussion as if change were possible, as if capitalism could be amended to a new, just and equitable form. But capitalism is here to stay. It is more than a fact of our daily lives—it is our daily life. It will never leave us until we are willing to restructure the entire world, and maybe it would not be such a bad idea to reboot the world. Shake the dice, let 'em roll and see what happens. After all, wouldn't anything be better than the state of existence we call living, which is, in effect, contemporary slavery.

Here are the names of some writers and thinkers who have considered the subject of capitalism in depth:

Marx, Weber, Lukacs, Polanyi, Mies, Wallerstein, Harvey, M. Davis, Boltanski and Chiapello, Gibson-Graham, E. Anderson, Honneth, Mikhail Bakunin, Vladimir Lenin, Eduard Bernstein, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Friedrich Engels, Eduardo Galeano, João Goulart, Salvador Allende, Juan Perón, Noam Chomsky, Caroline Andréani, François Arzalier, Roger Bordier, Maurice Buttin, François Chesnais, Maurice Cury, François Delpla, François Derivery, André Devriendt, Pierre Durand, Jean-Pierre Fléchar, Yves Frémion, Yves Grenet, Jacques Jurquet, Jean Laïlle, Maurice Moissonnier, Robert Pac, Philippe Paraire, Paco Peña, André Prenant, Maurice Rajsfus, Jean Suret-Canale, Subhi Toma, Monique and Roland Weyl, Claude Willard and Jean Ziegler, Sylvère Lotringer, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Louis Althusser, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Gramsci, Hannah Arendt, Jurgen Habermas.

After all these years of analysis, thinking and writing, we have barely come to acknowledge the truth of capitalism—that it is a system that requires the coexistence of two conditions. One is a ruling class whose driving force is the “free” market and which controls the system of governance. The second condition is the counterpart of the ruling class—namely, a slave class, disposable people who provide the labor for the wealth. This is a self-sustaining and equilibrated system: you cannot have one side without the other. So the idea of trying to fix capitalism is, after all, absurd.

In *Le Livre Noir du Capitalisme* (The Black Book of Capitalism), published in France in 1998, an appendix provides an incomplete list of 20th century death tolls that the book's editor, Gilles Perrault, attributes to the capitalist system. The list includes both combatant and noncombatant dead. There are an estimated 58 million dead from the First and Second World Wars, plus death tolls from colonial wars, anti-Communist wars and repressions and ethnic conflicts. There are also victims of famine or malnutrition. This list, though incomplete, attributes about one hundred million deaths to capitalism in the 20th century.

The following two lists, compiled by Forbes magazine, give the 25 wealthiest people and the 50 wealthiest corporations in the world (www.forbes.com/lists/2009). It isn't hard to figure out why the world is on the verge of all-enveloping war, economic ruin and global destruction.

25 wealthiest people in the world

Rank	Name	Citizenship	Age	Net Worth (\$bil)
1.	William Gates III	United States	50	50.0
2.	Warren Buffett	United States	75	42.0
3.	Carlos Slim Helu	Mexico	66	30.0
4.	Ingvar Kamprad	Sweden	79	28.0
5.	Lakshmi Mittal	India	55	23.5
6.	Paul Allen	United States	53	22.0
7.	Bernard Arnault	France	57	21.5
8.	Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Al Saud	Saudi Arabia	49	20.0
9.	Kenneth Thomson & family	Canada	82	19.6
10.	Li Ka-shing	Hong Kong	77	18.8
11.	Roman Abramovich	Russia	39	18.2
12.	Michael Dell	United States	41	17.1
13.	Karl Albrecht	Germany	86	17.0
14.	Sheldon Adelson	United States	72	16.1
15.	Liliane Bettencourt	France	83	16.0
16.	Lawrence Ellison	United States	61	16.0
17.	Christy Walton	United States	51	15.9
18.	Jim Walton	United States	58	15.9
19.	S Robson Walton	United States	62	15.8
20.	Alice Walton	United States	56	15.7
21.	Helen Walton	United States	86	15.6
22.	Theo Albrecht	Germany	83	15.2
23.	Amancio Ortega	Spain	70	14.8
24.	Steven Ballmer	United States	50	13.6
25.	Azim Premji	India	60	13.3

50 of the wealthiest corporations in the world

Rank	Company	Country	Industry	Sales (\$bil)	Profits (\$bil)	Assets (\$bil)	Market (\$bil)
Value							
1.	General Electric	United States	Conglomerates	182.52	17.41	797.77	
2.	Royal Dutch Shell	Netherlands	Oil & Gas Operations	458.36	26.28	278.44	
3.	Toyota Motor	Japan	Consumer Durables	263.42	17.21	324.98	
4.	ExxonMobil	United States	Oil & Gas Operations	425.70	45.22	228.05	
5.	BP	United Kingdom	Oil & Gas Operations	361.14	21.16	228.24	
6.	HSBC Holdings	United Kingdom	Banking	142.05	5.73	2,520.45	
7.	AT&T	United States	Telecommunications Services	124.03	12.87	265.25	
8.	Wal-Mart Stores	United States	Retailing	405.61	13.40	163.43	
9.	Banco Santander	Spain	Banking	96.23	13.25	1,318.86	
10.	Chevron	United States	Oil & Gas Operations	255.11	23.93	161.17	
11.	Total	France	Oil & Gas Operations	223.15	14.74	164.66	
12.	ICBC	China	Banking	53.60	11.16	1,188.08	
13.	Gazprom	Russia	Oil & Gas Operations	97.29	26.78	276.81	
14.	PetroChina	China	Oil & Gas Operations	114.32	19.94	145.14	
15.	Volkswagen Group	Germany	Consumer Durables	158.40	6.52	244.05	
16.	JPMorgan Chase	United States	Banking	101.49	3.70	2,175.05	
17.	GDF Suez	France	Utilities	115.59	9.05	232.71	

18. ENI	Italy	Oil & Gas Operations	158.32	12.91	139.80	35. Siemens	Germany	Conglomerates	108.76	8.05	128.46
19. Berkshire Hathaway	United States	Diversified Financials	107.79	4.99	267.40	36. Hewlett-Packard	United States	Technology Hardware & Equip	118.70	8.05	109.63
20. Vodafone	United Kingdom	Telecommunications Services	70.39	13.30	252.08	37. Intesa Sanpaolo	Italy	Banking	50.56	10.58	835.15
21. Mitsubishi UFJ Financial	Japan	Banking	61.43	6.38	1,931.17	38. Bank of America	United States	Banking	113.11	4.01	1,817.94
22. Procter & Gamble	United States	Household & Personal Products	83.68	14.08	138.26	39. Honda Motor	Japan	Consumer Durables	120.27	6.01	124.98
23. CCB-China Construction Bank	China	Banking	42.98	9.45	903.35	40. BBVA-Banco Bilbao Vizcaya	Spain	Banking	56.51	6.99	747.99
24. Verizon Communications	United States	Telecommunications Services	97.35	6.43	202.35	41. ArcelorMittal	Luxembourg	Materials	124.94	9.40	133.09
25. Petrobras-Petróleo Brasil	Brazil	Oil & Gas Operations	92.08	14.12	120.68	42. Johnson & Johnson	United States	Drugs & Biotechnology	63.75	12.95	84.91
26. Nippon Telegraph & Tel	Japan	Telecommunications Services	107.02	6.36	179.95	43. ENEL	Italy	Utilities	82.92	7.37	177.21
27. EDF Group	France	Utilities	89.46	4.73	2278.76	44. UniCredit Group	Italy	Banking	83.72	8.70	1,482.98
28. IBM	United States	Software & Services	103.63	12.34	109.53	45. Generali Group	Italy	Insurance	118.39	4.26	546.50
29. BNP Paribas	France	Banking	107.96	4.20	2,888.73	46. France Telecom	France	Telecommunications Services	74.50	5.67	125.32
30. Bank of China	China	Banking	40.10	7.70	817.84	47. Samsung Electronics	South Korea	Semiconductors	104.42	7.87	99.47
31. Telefónica	Spain	Telecommunications Services	80.70	10.57	129.16	48. Deutsche Bank	Germany	Diversified Financials	124.78	9.47	2,946.88
32. Nestlé	Switzerland	Food, Drink & Tobacco	103.01	16.91	97.12	49. Microsoft	United States	Software & Services	61.98	17.23	65.79
33. Sinopec-China Petroleum	China	Oil & Gas Operations	154.28	7.43	100.41	50. Pfizer	United States	Drugs & Biotechnology	48.30	8.10	111.15
34. Crédit Agricole	France	Banking	107.75	5.90	2,064.17						



U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT DATA BOOK, 1992

UG
1243
U55
10th
1988

U. S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT DATA BOOK, 1992

U. S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT DATA BOOK, 1996

U. S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT DATA BOOK, 1997

U. S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT DATA BOOK, 2004

U. S. MISSILE DATA BOOK, 1988

U. S. MISSILE DATA BOOK, 1992

U. S. MISSILE DATA BOOK, 1994

U. S. MISSILE DATA BOOK, 1996

U. S. MISSILE DATA BOOK, 1997

U. S. MISSILE DATA BOOK, 2004

TECHNICAL REPORT AFFDL-TR

TECHNICAL REPORT AFFDL-TR

UG
643
A47
NO. 76-91
1977

UCI

TECHNICAL REPORT AFFDL-TR

UG
643
A47
NO. 79-
3065
1979

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1980

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1981

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1982

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1983

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1984

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1985

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1986

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1987

UCI

WHAT EVERY VETERAN SHOULD KNOW

UB
357
W5
1988

UCI

Gabie Strong, *Datum* (2008) (detail).
Lightjet photographs, mounted to Dibond, framed. 15 x 18 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.

Pursuing a Common Conversation across Differentiated Modes of Human Inquiry

Daniel A. Segal

The gallery exhibit that this catalog accompanies is one response to a statement I prepared in the spring of 2009 to announce the common thematic focus of all of the spring 2010 programming of the Munroe Center for Social Inquiry at Pitzer College. Like the exhibit, that statement bore the title, *Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)*. It is worth quoting the statement in full here, before I comment, albeit briefly, on the quixotic project of asking artists and academics (themselves of sharply divergent disciplines) to respond to a common prompt, in this case on “capitalism.”

During the spring 2010 semester, the Center for Social Inquiry at Pitzer College will present lectures, seminars, and a gallery exhibit that will aim to re-open questions about capitalism and its discontents—rather than treat

capitalism, or “markets,” as the all-purpose answer to social questions. This sustained thematic inquiry will look backward in time to examine the most recent and earlier “busts” following capitalist “booms,” and will look forward in time to consider the range of forms, both desirable and undesirable, that might emerge when the global economy “recovers” from the Great Recession of the present.

Critics of capitalism have long argued that capitalism, even when it is thriving, bears fundamental discontents. One way to think about these discontents is in terms of relations that extend in space and relations that extend in time.

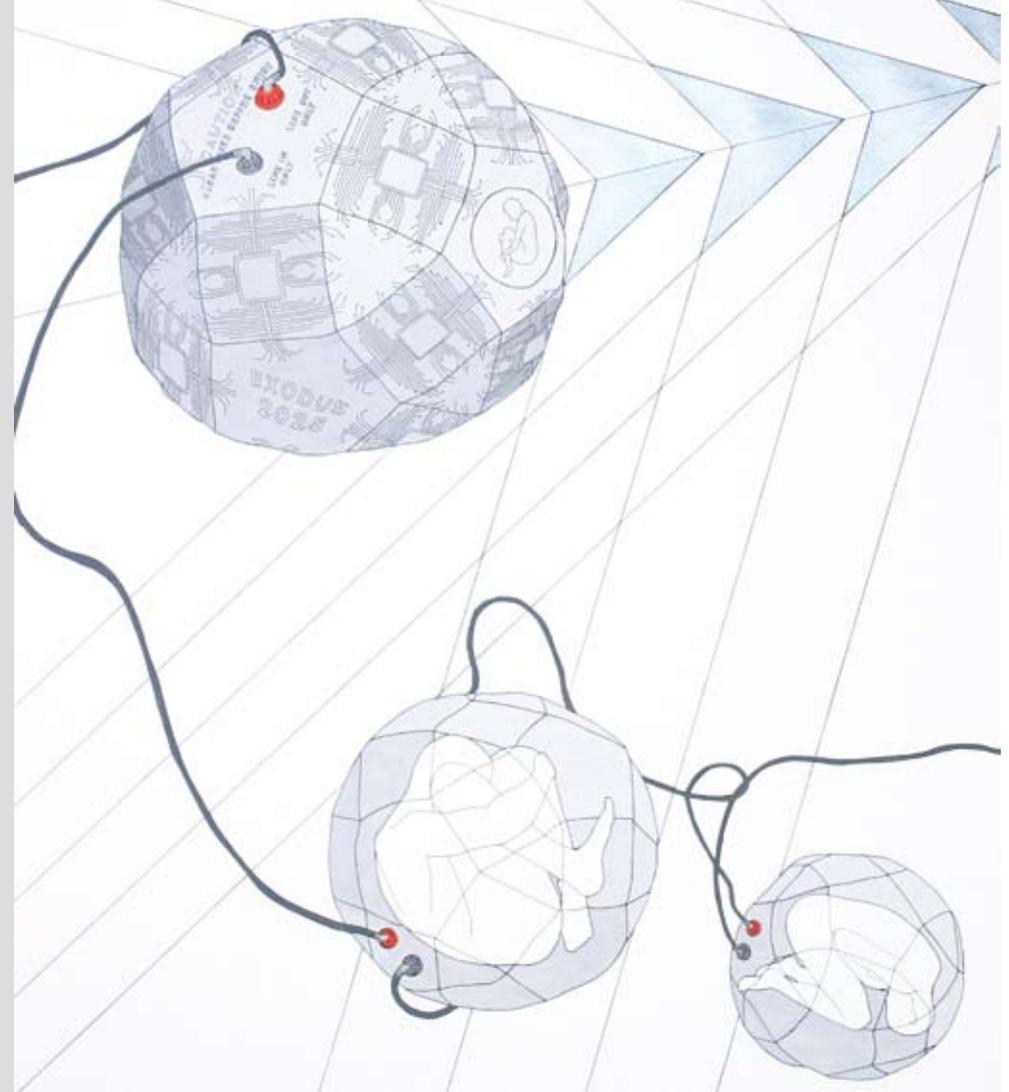
Start at any physical site of prosperity and select a profitable consumer good—coffee, let us say—and follow the labor chain behind that good across various borders and geographic formations (or across the often subtle barriers between urban neighborhoods). As a rule, sooner or later, you will find some workers who were intensely exploited in the production of that good. To quote from the March 2009 Gourmet magazine: “If you have eaten a tomato this winter, chances are very good that it was picked by a person who lives in virtual slavery.”

Alternatively, start at a moment of visible prosperity—autumn 2006, let us say—and move forward in time a few years. As a rule, at some point moving into the future from the starting point, you will observe a fantastic economic collapse and evaporation of money-wealth. One could equally well pick February 1637 as autumn 2006—and then move forward in time to observe the fantastic collapse and evaporation of all of the wealth invested in tulips rather than houses.

Or—as a different example of the way the discontents of capitalism are to be found either in another place or in a future time—one can think about the ways capitalist enterprises, at least since the industrial revolution, have externalized the costs of environmental damage, whether burdening marginalized communities, future generations, or both.

Simply put then, capitalism, even when it is visibly thriving, always bears discontents—be they located somewhere else or in the future. Moreover, if we place ourselves at some distance from the prosperous and observe them in their moments of greatest prosperity, we can add that capitalism both bears discontents and produces some extraordinarily gullible persons. These are the people who have the fantasy that the economic “boom” of their time, unlike all previous “booms,” will not be followed by a “bust”—as if, somehow, “the market” had become savvy enough to accurately factor in all elements of “risk.” These are the people who assert that capitalist prosperity can be shared by all—that poverty can be ended in a capitalist world economy—if only the poor would work hard enough (a conservative view) or be afforded enough schooling and “skills” (a neoliberal view). Here, what is assumed is that capitalism can produce its heights of prosperity (its super-rich) without extracting surplus value from labor somewhere in the world, and what goes unasked is whether it is possible, in a market economy, for all laborers, in every region of the world, to be “high-wage” laborers—or even “living-wage” laborers.

Finally, if we peer forward in time from our own moment in the Great Recession, we can see in front of us a broad horizon of possible futures, stretching from the dystopian to the utopian and from the banal to the



Kara Tanaka, *Space Pearl: Exodus 2025* (2009).
Acrylic ink on paper. 30 x 22 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and Simon Preston Gallery, New York.

fantastic. The character of these futures, and the possibilities for having some role in shaping them, are other questions we will explore during our semester of social inquiry.

These comments do not, of course, exhaust all of the dimensions of capitalism and its discontents. They are, instead, only a starting point—initial provocations to be taken, we hope, in myriad directions.

To seek a common conversation, as I have done, by presenting this prompt to artists and scholars (themselves of disparate disciplines) is to raise the question of the relationship of creative and intellectual work in our time a prominent feature of capitalist political economies: *specialization*. No one would suggest that specialization, and specifically the fragmentation of human inquiry into distinct endeavors, began with capitalism. Yet it is certainly true that specialization increased greatly with the spread and intensification of capitalism that occurred over the course of the last several centuries. Moreover, the very concept of “civilization” that emerged in association with this historic expansion of capitalism is one that attributes “the origins of civilization” to a fantastic division of human society into a mass of ordinary persons who do the work of subsistence for everyone and a privileged class who do the (supposedly exalted) work of “making progress.”

Significantly, in his famous vision of a socialist utopia, Marx upends and reverses this capitalist tale of civilization’s origins. Peering forward into the post-capitalist future (rather than backward into the mists of prehistory), Marx presents a world in which all of us will “hunt in the morning, fish in

the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, and philosophize after dinner . . . without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or philosopher.” This communist way of life will give us not “progress” in a narrow sense, as occurs with the expansion of the money-economy, but the fulfillment of our humanness as creative and democratic social beings.

The deep affinity of capitalism for specialization, along with the concomitant rejection of specialization in Marx’s utopian vision, suggests that the resistance we so often experience when we ask people in different fields to address a common prompt (on whatever topic) is not due solely or primarily to our parallel devotions to our chosen vocations. Rather, this observation suggests that the deeper cause of such resistance, and of the condition of possibility for these competing devotions in fact, is our shared location in a political-economy that values specialization – perhaps as much for the way specialization pre-empts conversations in the public sphere as for its functionality in maximizing production.

This conclusion bears, in turn, on the question of how we as viewers should approach the art we see in an exhibit such as this one, juried and curated, as it was, in response to a prompt addressed to a broad range of differentiated fields of inquiry. Specifically, it suggests that we should be pro-active in seeking out and appreciating the elements of these art works that make the effort to participate in such a common conversation.

This is not, however, to say that we should be looking for art to be something other than art, for the sake of entering into a conversation with scholarly work in, say, economics, anthropology, and history. To the contrary: if we

are to achieve the goal of a productive conversation between works of art and diverse disciplinary inquiries, we must eschew the expectation that all participants will convert their meanings into expository prose, treated as the privileged *lingua franca* of the conversation. This is, however, exactly what happens when, on the one hand, we ask the artist to “explain” her work while, on the other, we never ask the scholar to “materialize visually” her analysis. Privileging any one mode of expression diminishes the heterogeneity in, and thus the richness of, our conversations. What is needed instead is that we cultivate our capacity to listen and respond to the diverse voices of the different—“specialized”—modes of inquiry in our world. In so doing, I would argue, we can pursue the realistic, and yet utopian-tinged, goal of appropriating “specialization” for purposes other than those held dear by capitalism.

NOTES

Acknowledgments: Bill Anthes, Richard Handler, and Kira Poplowski provided helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this essay.

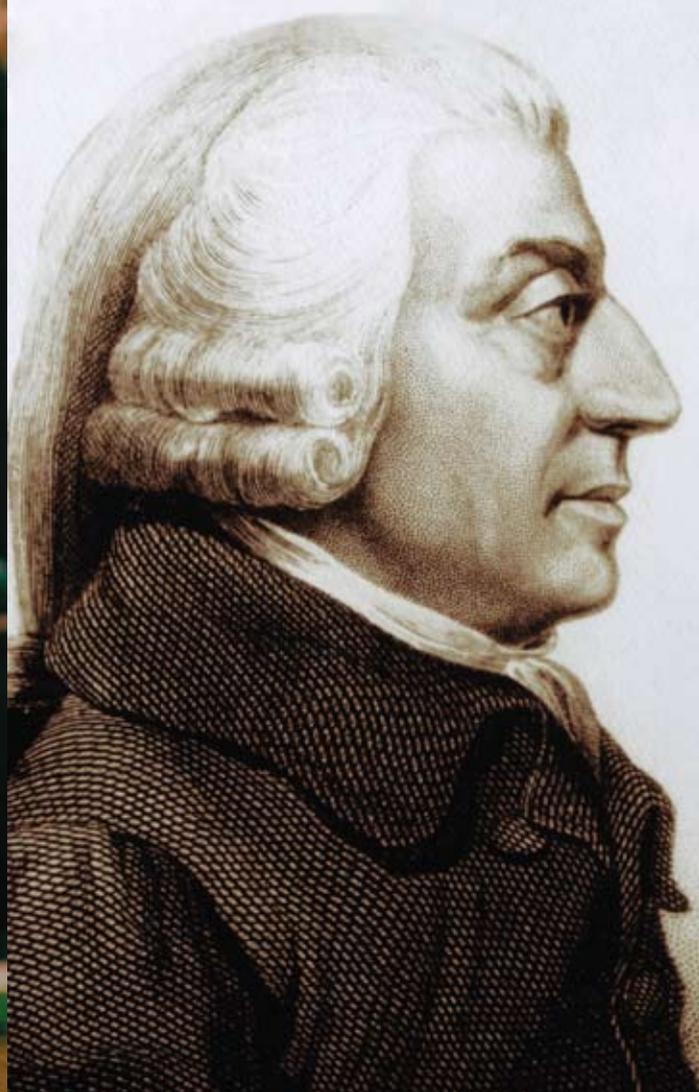
¹ I avoid any greater specificity about the dates of this “great transformation” because this is a contested issue of historical theory that lies outside the scope of this brief essay, but very clearly, this expansion and intensification of capitalism took place after 1500ish.

² The quotation is from the 1845 manuscript co-authored with Engels, *The German Ideology*. Because this passage is so singular in Marx’s voluminous writings, there is a good deal of debate about how to read it in relation to

the larger corpus. My own concern, however, is with its relationship to the capitalist tale of civilization’s origins, rather than its place in Marx’s thought. As a point of entry into the debate over this passage, see chapter 5 of Terrell Carver’s 1998 book, *The Postmodern Marx*. I thank Andre Wakefield for directing me to this text.

³ My comparison of the capitalist tale of civilization’s origins with Marx’s vision of a utopian future takes inspiration from the final paragraphs of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s 1949 work, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. On the concepts of “civilization” and “prehistory,” see my entry, “Civilization, Savagery, and Barbarism,” in *The Encyclopedia of World History*.

⁴ The same point applies to, say, poets. Bob Dylan, to consider a notable example, often seems disappointingly inarticulate when asked to “explain” his lyrics; yet it seems very likely that most of his interviewers would seem bumbling and flat-footed if they had to express themselves in song.



1. There are four bases laid out in a square.
2. The bases are approximately ninety feet apart.
3. Balls hit outside of first or third base are foul.
4. There are three outs per inning.
5. Teams play an equal number of innings.
6. The striker must swing and miss three times to strike out.
7. On the third swinging strike, the striker may run to first base if the catcher does not catch the ball on the fly or on one bounce.
8. Runners may be put out by being tagged or forced.
9. A runner cannot be put out by soaking.
10. Throwing at a runner is prohibited.

Expensive Taste

By Ciara Ennis

“Our constant search for a new and better way in which to perform is akin to the questionings of the artists whose works are represented here.”

John A Murphy, President, Philip Morris Europe, Sponsor’s Statement for “When Attitudes Become Form,” 1969

The union of art and commerce is an arranged marriage—mercenary, parasitic and indissoluble. Art not only sells a product—whether it is politics, drugs, or religion—it is itself a product and has been pimping itself since the Renaissance. Although recent corporations like the tobacco giant Philip Morris (generations-long peddlers of carcinogens) and Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising (contracted to secure the rise to power of conservative Margaret Thatcher and thereby bring misery to millions of British citizens) have sought to whitewash themselves with the collateral radiance of great

art, none have been so successful as the legendary Medici clan. Securing their power as the most successful European bankers in the 15th century, the Medicis went on to dominate the political, social and cultural scene in Florence for the next 400 years. Their infamous and vast patronage of the arts gained them such influence that they were able to buy their way into the papacy—Medici Popes Leo X and Clement VII—and marry their kin into various monarchies—Medici Queens Caterina and Maria of France. Just as Lorenzo Medici nurtured and wedded himself to Michelangelo, so Charles Saatchi did to Damien Hirst, financier patrons whose names will be historically linked to the greatest art of their times.

The capitalism of sophistication and refinement as employed by the Medici, and since copied by corporations over the centuries, generates publicity, good will and prestige. This cultural currency converts smartly into profit and its distillate, power. Through application of this formula Philip Morris linked itself to Harald Szeeman’s “When Attitudes Become Form” (1969), one of the most significant exhibitions in curatorial history. Hailed as the founding father of contemporary curating, Harald Szeeman, through his definitive and unique projects, singled-handedly redefined the curator’s role—inadvertently resulting in the curator’s hyper-inflated status today—by rejecting traditional ideas about exhibition-making in favor of open-ended thematic and narrative structures. No stranger to the reciprocal and enabling pact between art and money, Szeemann candidly acknowledged Philip Morris’s part in the exhibition, “People from Philip Morris and the PR firm Ruder Finn came to Bern and asked me if I would like to do a show of my own. They offered me money and total freedom.”¹ Despite awareness of the company’s despicable and well-documented practices,



Matthew Brandt, *Meat/ Capsules. A Short Story About Alchemy (Part I & II)* (2008).
Lightjet print mounted on gold anodized aluminum frame. 31 x 41 x 2 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.

it is difficult to argue with Szeemann's reasoning. Autonomy of vision and financial independence, so rare within the confines of an institution, should never be undervalued or taken for granted. Just a few years before his death, Szeemann further highlighted this mutually dependent relationship by curating "Geld und Wert / Der Letzter Taboo (Money and Value/The Last Taboo)," for the Swiss Expo 2002, a flag-waving exhibition dedicated to promoting Swiss nationalism. The exhibition, ironically sponsored by the Swiss National Bank, presented a work by Max Dean that shredded 1,200 decommissioned Swiss 100 franc notes per day (20 million francs during the entire exhibition) in a pavilion sheathed in gold for the occasion.

Like Szeemann, the artists in *Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)* have found shrewd ways of discussing the complexities and interdependencies of art and commerce. In a timely installation, **Ian Arenas** explores the relationship between Major League Baseball, steroids and laissez-faire economics through a series of portraits, ranging from Adam Smith to Barry Bonds, juxtaposed with text works—a hanging banner with the ten original rules of baseball from 1845—and objects—a baseball encased in a vitrine. Arenas equates the players' use of performance enhancing drugs with an attitude of willful ignorance adopted by MLB Commissioner Bud Selig in the service of recovering declining profit caused by the cancellation of the World Series of 1994. The subsequent "juiced" games were sensational, home run-filled affairs that unfairly smashed long-standing records but succeeded in reviving baseball's diminished popularity and revenues.

¹ "When Attitude Becomes Form: Daniel Birnbaum on Harald Szeemann," *Artforum* (Summer 2005), 55.

Referencing the singular DMC-12 automobile, memorialized in the Sci-Fi movie *Back to the Future*, **Matthew Brandt** muses on the short life and epic downfall of the DeLorean Motor Company, a representation of America's once mighty, now moribund, auto industry. Despite relocating to Belfast to take advantage of generous Northern Irish business subsidies and concomitant mass unemployment, DeLorean's ill-fated company fell into debt, which the eponymous founder and CEO attempted to alleviate by selling cocaine to undercover FBI agents. By the time it closed two years later, DeLorean's company had manufactured only 900 cars. Brandt's photographic diptych, *Part I*, pictures the car parked in a showroom, while *Part II*, depicts a gold-plated version in the basement of an automotive Museum—acting as a memento-mori to America's auto industry while alluding to the faulty business models, largely driven by the greed and excess of the CEOs, that led to its demise.

Taking a more abstract approach, **James Melinat** explores the relationship between three mysterious and complex systems, black holes—collapsed stars with extreme gravitational pulls—computational origami—an advanced form of origami used in engineering, space technology and computer processing—and dark pool trading ventures—stealth markets that enable educated traders to secretly buy and sell vast sums of stock. The large-scale wall-based works begin their life as paintings but extrude, like geometrical growths, into the exhibition space. The text, *A Death Marked By Elegance*, written on the surface of the works, appears distorted and crumpled, like a first draft discarded in a wastepaper basket, alluding to the anything-but-elegant recent stock market crash that so heavily contributed to the current financial malaise.

A
DEATH
MARKED
BY
ELEGANCE

A
DEATH
MARKED
BY
ELEGANCE

Gabie Strong's grid of 16 color photographs depicts various configurations of military journals found in local libraries. Bound and organized by color, military theme and date, these are the trade magazines of the military industrial complex. Like any other corporation or industry, the military has its own ledgers and directories that deal with jobsite management, shipping and receiving and supply and demand, except in the military's case it has an analogous accounting system tabulated in human lives.

In recent years, vast sums of government funding have been channeled into robotic technology with a view to replacing humans in warfare and space. Although economically more viable, **Kara Tanaka** argues that robots are no substitute for human beings, who would be far more effective—equipped as we are with millions of years of evolutionary development and experience—in providing clues and information about our species to alternative life forms. Suggesting a more poetic and idealistic option to robotic astronauts is *Space Pearl*, an installation comprising 13 single-person space packs specifically engineered for a one-way journey into space. In addition to donating their bodies to advancing scientific research, volunteers would benefit from a dignified and alternative burial in space.

Another work concerned with militarism is **Grant Vetter's** *Collateral*, a large-scale, three-panel painting comprised of a central black tablet flanked on either side by thickly textured paintings rendered in colors that suggest mutilated flesh. Employing the language of Abstract Expressionism Vetter references its Cold War use by the US State Department as a tool to promote abstraction (freedom) over social realism (bondage), and by extension capitalism's superiority over socialism. With this oozing, corpulent paint

treatment Vetter alludes to the current carnage in Iraq and Afghanistan, spawned by the same imperious ideology.

Over the past year we have experienced worldwide financial meltdown and witnessed some of the most abject displays of greed and deception—Bernard Madoff's ponzi scheme and the sub-prime mortgage debacle are just two examples. It therefore seems appropriate that we might wish to examine the ideology that has helped produce this situation. Not all capitalist ventures, however, are inherently evil and if we are to question capitalism then it is also important to acknowledge the spectacular achievements that it has brought in nearly every aspect of our lives. To paint capitalism as irredeemably wicked is perhaps both naïve and hypocritical. The free market deals not only in dollars and cents but also in ideas. If Harald Szeemann hadn't accepted funding from Philip Morris then we would not have had the groundbreaking exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form," we might have had a show compromised by the dictates of Kunsthalle Bern's Board, who in turn were led by their own financially driven agendas. If Philip Morris represents pure evil then what about Absolut Vodka and Becks Beer, other popular art sponsors? The cultural climate that we find ourselves in today is driven by the decisions made by multi-billion dollar corporations—which cultural outlets to support and which ones to ignore—that in turn, helps to determine what art is made available for our consumption.

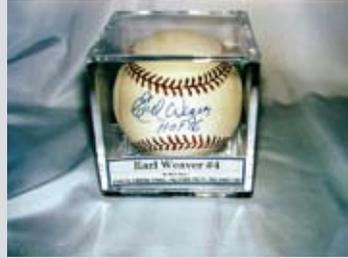


Kara Tanaka, *Exodus 2025* (2009).
Phase II prototype digital image.
Courtesy of the artist and Simon Preston Gallery, New York.

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHIES

Ian Arenas

Ian Arenas received his MFA in 2008 from California Institute of the Arts. His solo exhibitions include *Negating Has a Long Life but No Future* (2009) and *Golden Age* (2006) at D300 Gallery in Valencia, CA. He has exhibited in numerous group exhibitions including *Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)* at Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA (2010), *The Holographic Principle: A Screening of Video Works Not Normally Screened* at Sea and Space Explorations (2009), *LA Wonderground: Recently from Los Angeles* at the Maniac Gallery (2008), *We Want A New Object* at the Acuna-Hansen Gallery (2008) and *Salty Dog Bites the Hand* at the Angels Gate Cultural Center (2008). Arenas received a Merit Scholarship from the California Institute of the Arts (2006 and 2007) and was the alternate for the Windgate Fellowship at the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design (2006). He lives and works in Los Angeles, California



Matthew Brandt

Matthew Brandt received his MFA from the University of California Los Angeles in 2008. He exhibited solo in *Chocolate, bees, dust, sperm and sprinkles* at the Cardwell Jimmerson Gallery (2009). He exhibited in many group exhibitions including *Torrance Juried Art Exhibition* at the Torrance Art Museum, *Some Young LA Artists* at the Cardwell Jimmerson Gallery (2008), *The Most Curatorial Biennial of the Universe* at Apexart (2007) and at the Schombury Gallery (2001). He lives and works in Los Angeles, California.



James Melinat

California-born James Melinat received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2007. He exhibited solo in the exhibition *Gravity and Grace (a sum of all my hopes and fears)* at D301 Gallery (2006). He has exhibited in numerous group exhibitions including *Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)* at Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College (2010), *Small (though your heart is breaking)* at Gallery 1927 (2009), *The Between is Tainted with Strangeness: Superheroes, Zombies and Masked Wrestlers* at Farmlab Public Salon (2008), *Goodbuy: Cruel World* at Space 47 (2008), *Mini Mini Max: Festival Internacional de Video* at Appetite Gallery (2007) and *For Ever* at 915 Mateo (2007). Melina received awards and honors including an Artist's Fellowship from the Skowhegen School of Sculpture and Painting (2007); a Dean's Fund Scholarship from the California Institute of the Arts (2007) and a Merit Scholarship from the California Institute of the Arts (2006). He lives and works in Los Angeles, California.



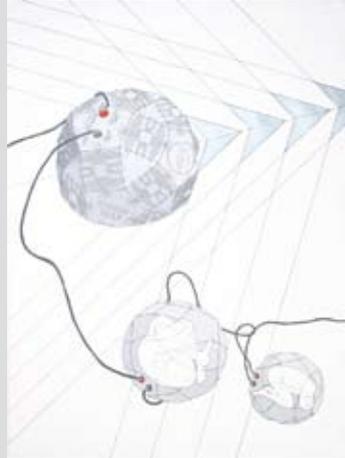
Gabie Strong

Gabie Strong, born in Denver, Colorado, received her MFA in 2008 from the University of California Irvine. She has participated in numerous exhibitions including *Welcome to the Neighborhood* at the Tight Space Gallery (2009), *Art Swap Meet at High Desert Test Sites, 2008 California Biennial, (2008), 88 Boadrum* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2008); *Wreckers, Records, Redeemers* at LA Art (2008) and *Summer Guests Show* at the Acuna-Hansen Gallery (2008). Strong has received numerous awards including the Student Researcher Award in Photography from University of California Irvine (2008), the Graduate Student Research and Travel Grant (2008) and the Graduate Teaching Assistant Fellowship (2008). She currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California.



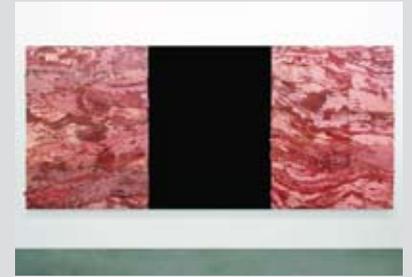
Kara Tanaka

A California native, Kara Tanaka received her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2008. Her solo exhibitions include *A Sad Bit of Fruit, Pickled in the Vineyard of Grief* at Collezione Maramotti (2010) and Simon Preston Gallery (2009), *Migrating Body & Generative Power* at CAA (2008) *Pining Wind* at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center (2008) and *Dissolver* at LA Art (2008). She has participated in many group exhibitions including the *2008 California Biennial* at the Orange County Museum of Art (2008); *November, Again* at the Harris Lieberman Gallery (2008) and *Fat Head Balloon Self-Portrait, Exercising for Exorcising (Mein Doppelganger and My Lights (Kokopelli)* at Simon Preston (2008). Tanaka's honors and awards include the California Biennial Residency from the Orange County Museum of Art (2008) and the Jacob K. Javits Fellowship from the U. S. Department of Education. Kara Tanaka resides and works in Los Angeles, California.



Grant Vetter

Grant Vetter is a newly emerging artist. He earned his BFA from Art Center College of Design and will receive his MFA in 2009 from the University of California Irvine. He has shown in numerous exhibitions including *MFA 2* at UAG Gallery (2008) *ACUTE 2: Small Works from 22 Los Angeles Artists* at Room Gallery (2008), *Catalyst Retrospective* at the Catalyst Gallery (2007); *Wonderoom* at Catalyst Gallery (2007) and *JSA (Jim Shaw's Army)* at Rental Gallery (2006). Vetter received an Orange County Arts Grant for Drawing, Painting and Printmaking (2007) and a Bradford Hall Arts Scholarship (2005). He lives and works in Irvine, California.



WRITER'S BIOGRAPHIES

Daniel Joseph Martinez

Daniel Joseph Martinez, an artist who exhibits internationally, lives and works in the Crenshaw District in South Los Angeles. His works range from the digital to the analogue, ephemeral to the solid. Using forms of strategic engagement and illusion, Martinez employs mutation and schizophrenia as a form of confusion directed toward the precondition of the coexistence of politics as radical beauty. In 2006, he officially represented the United States in the Cairo Biennial. He participated in the groundbreaking 1993 Whitney Biennial and the 2008 Whitney Biennial, the 2004 San Juan Triennial, the 2005 Lima Biennial, and the 2007 Moscow Biennial. He received three National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist Fellowships, The J. Paul Getty individual artist fellowship and the 2008 United States Artist Fellowship. He is a professor of theory, practice and mediation of contemporary art at the University of California Irvine, where he teaches in the Graduate Studies Program and New Genres Department.

Daniel A. Segal

Daniel A. Segal is the director of the Munroe Center for Social Inquiry and the Jean M. Pitzer Professor of Anthropology and Professor of Historical Studies at Pitzer College. He is a founder of the movement to add the words “Andrew Jackson Was An Indian Killer” to the US twenty dollar bill, so that all of us can tell “the truth about history” every time we go to buy something. His undergraduate degree is from Cornell University and his Ph.D. is from the University of Chicago. He is a past fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and past editor of *Cultural Anthropology*, as well as the recipient of the American Historical Association’s William Gilbert Award. He has published on race and nationalism in Trinidad, incest in Jane Austen, and the history of textbooks—among other topics. His current research includes a study of the fabrication of human-chimp closeness in Jane Goodall’s work. His recreation primarily involves cooking and attending concerts of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He’s a huge fan of Steve Reich and Avro Pärt.

Ciara Ennis

Ciara Ennis is the director/curator of Pitzer Art Galleries at Pitzer College and was the curator of exhibitions at the University of California Riverside/California Museum of Photography, particularly of *Still, Things Fall From the Sky* (2005), *Ruby Satellite* (2006) and *Eloi: Stumbling Towards Paradise* (2007). Ennis moved from London to Los Angeles where she was project director for *Public Offerings*, an international survey of contemporary art, at MOCA, Los Angeles, 2001. From there she became associate curator at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, where she initiated the Project Room and programmed a series of experimental exhibitions with such artists as Urs Fischer, Simon Leung, Mark Leckey, Johan Grimontprez and Eduardo Sarabia. Ennis has been director of Pitzer Art Galleries for the past two years, during that time she curated a number of exhibitions including: *Antarctica* (2007); *Narrowcast: Reframing Global Video 1986/2008*, co-curated with Ming-Yuen S. Ma (2008); and *Veronica* (2009). Ennis' curatorial practice blurs fact with fiction and focuses on storytelling as a means to explore the fluidity and fragility of identity, revealing the subtleties of the social, political, and the cultural issues that impact our lives. She received her MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our very special thanks goes to artist Daniel Joseph Martinez, who so generously donated his time, effort and expertise to make this a compelling and meaningful project.

We would also like to express our deepest gratitude to Daniel A. Segal (Professor of History and Anthropology, Pitzer College) for inviting Pitzer Art Galleries to participate in the timely and pertinent *Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)* series of events.

The catalogue for the exhibition *Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)* was published in conjunction with the Munroe Center for Social Inquiry's multi-disciplinary program of lectures, seminars, and concerts, all focused on issues of capitalism and its discontents. The series was initiated and conceived by Daniel A. Segal, Professor of History and Anthropology and Director of Munroe Center for Social Inquiry, Pitzer College.

Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)

Ian Arenas, Matthew Brandt, James Melinat, Gabie Strong, Kara Tanaka, Grant Vetter
Co-curated by Daniel Joseph Martinez & Ciara Ennis

January 28–March 19, 2010 – Pitzer Art Galleries, Nichols Gallery

Capitalism in Question (Because It Is) was co-sponsored by the Pitzer Art Galleries and the Munroe Center for Social Inquiry at Pitzer College.

Pitzer College Art Galleries, Pitzer College
1050 N Mills Ave
Claremont, CA 91711
Tel: 909.607.3143
www.pitzer.edu/galleries

Pitzer Art Galleries Staff:

Ciara Ennis, Director/Curator

Anna Mendoza, Curatorial Assistant & PR Coordinator

Angelica Perez: Exhibition Preparator

Munroe Center for Social Inquiry, Pitzer College

Daniel A. Segal, Director

Andrea Olson, special assistant to MCSI

www.pitzer.edu/mcsi

ISBN: 978-0-615-31623-9

Catalogue Design: Gabriela Contreras

Editor: Kira Poplowski

Printing: Inland Group

This catalogue was printed in an edition of 500 copies and is available through Pitzer College

With special thanks to:

Bill Anthes

Laurie Babcock

Marnie Briggs

Max King Cap

Anna Chang

Gabriela Contreras

Jeremiah Gregory

Stephanie Guerra

Joseph Dickson

Alan Jones

Andrea Olson

Kira Poplowski

Daniel A. Segal

Laura Skandera Trombley

Capitalism in Question (Because It Is)
ISBN: 978-0-615-31623-9

Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College
Tel: 909.607.3143
www.pitzer.edu/galleries



PITZER
COLLEGE

A MEMBER OF THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES

1050 North Mills Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711-6101