

Lisabeth Eva Rossof at Lenzner Family Art Gallery, Pitzer College

Over the last six years, Pitzer alumnus Lisabeth Eva Rossof has been creating art that investigates the paradigms of social power in contemporary American society. Her current works spotlight the nexus between media culture, political leadership and the American underclass. *Street Signs*, a DVD created between 2002 and 2004, is the earliest work in these veins showcased in this show. It presents a roughly ten-minute video loop that features posters made by the homeless, wrought on cardboard with hand-rendered lettering. While numerous passersby sight the homeless on their daily journeys, Rossof has walked among them shooting footage of their signs that plead for help. Some of the signs presented in the video read: *Needy Not Greedy; Hungry Hobo; Will take Verbal Abuse for Money or Pot; Can U Help; Famished; Recently Homeless due to Spouse's Death; Spare Change for Food and Tampons; My Name is Odis Jack Gillard, Anything Helps, Even a Smoke*. An audio soundtrack featuring cars passing by, occasional horns blasting and muffled human voices speaking from time to time accompanies the ongoing cycle of visual pleas. Ironically, while perhaps meant to simulate a city street corner, the raw edginess of the depicted reality shifted in the gallery context into a visual spectacle of social blight.

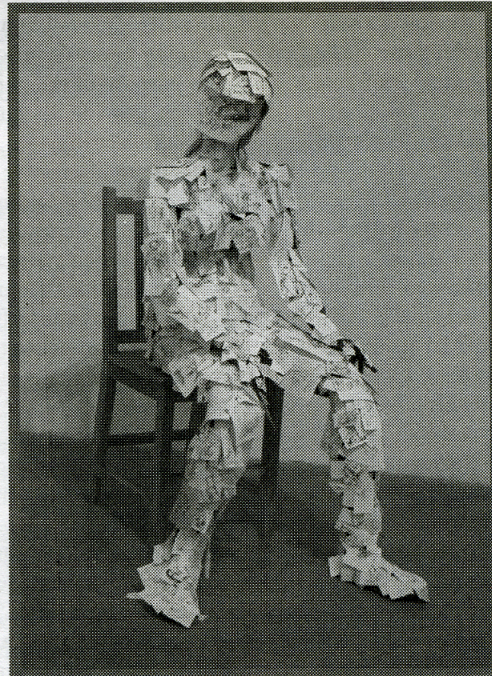
Rossof's nearby floor-to-ceiling installation titled *I Bush*, featured on all four walls of the largest gallery room, adapts and re-spins Apple's iPod marketing campaign. Conflating media marketing tactics with publicly solicited responses to W's presidency, the installation juxta-

poses the ubiquitous power of media culture's visual voice with the idiosyncrasies of individual voices that are rarely publicly heard. While pungently political in innuendo, both *Street Signs* and *I Bush* examine the poster as an art form. The contrast is powerful. For, the individually hand-crafted *Street Signs* are collectively much less commanding—

even though disseminated via the artist's DVD—than the Warhol-colored, mass-media posters, which through their very numbers allude to the processes of media dissemination. Studying the interrelationship between social power and imagery in the twenty-first century, the *I Bush* installation features 357 posters in all, which replay four, distinctive silhouette's of Dubya, each accompanied by a unique satirical, verbal description. These include such logo-defined monikers as *iMogul*, *iNegligent*, *iIncorrigible*, *iDishonest*, *iWhiny* and *iUnprincipled*.

Atop the wall postered with *I Bush* images, Rossof hung hand-drawn portraits of Bush administration officials such as Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Scooter Libby, Karl Rove and Dick Cheney amongst others. These images were not drawn by the artist as one might suppose, but by various unwitting U.S. police officers and detectives who were cajoled by Rossof to create their drawings using "composite drawing for law enforcement" techniques. By, layering these portraits over her *I Bush* panels, Rossof adds another layer of political critique to her installation, framing the figures as suspects.

Using the art gallery as a forum in which to redress mainstream media coverage and power, Rossof attempts to interject into the public realm a discussion of contemporary political corruption in an era that is largely driven by media-defined realities, topics and vantage points. Studying the nexus



Megan Williams, *Purge*, 2008, bendy manikin, drawings, pins, chair, 52" x 29" x 29", at Carl Berg Gallery, Los Angeles.

between art, media culture and social responsibility, Rossof's satirical work questions authoritarian power by ironically invoking caricature. Utilizing the power of the visual to call out the power of the verbal, her works converse with theories, aims and objects of artists and philosophers of the 1960s including Warhol, Lichtenstein, Foucault and Derrida, who cut paths for investigating historical, social and political power, championing in the process the rights

of individuals to define their collective destiny.

—Collette Chattopadhyay

Lisabeth Eva Rossof closed in March at the Lenzner Family Art Gallery, Pitzer College, Claremont.

Collette Chattopadhyay is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.

Megan Williams at Carl Berg Gallery

Since 1981 Megan Williams's cartoon-punk paintings have been featured in numerous exhibitions, including as one of four women in MOCA's 1992 bonanza *Helter Skelter* which ultimately mapped out a new, and decidedly darker, territory for Los Angeles art. In her third solo show at Carl Berg Gallery, the vigor and playful edge of earlier work was enhanced by new and compelling contrasts. While humorous, these paintings are also soulful. The style and imagery may be powerful, but the touch is often feather-light. The prevailing thread was a palpable energy that pulsated from wall to canvas, transforming gestures into images, and bridging two and three-dimensional space. In *Purge*, the exhibition's only sculpture, a figure sits leaning forward on a simple wooden chair, legs slightly parted and hands on knees. The posture strikes a perfect balance of ambition and ambivalence: head juts purposefully forward while back relaxes into a curve, feet are firmly planted but one stretches tentatively to the side.

Lisabeth Eva Rossof, detail of *I Bush: 1,000 Words for Bush*, 2004-08, digital prints with hand-applied vinyl letter cutouts, at the Lenzner Family Art Gallery, Pitzer College, Claremont.

