

To Epithymitikon (the soul's desiring power)

Nodal pyrolatry, brume of gold, honey dusk.
Lightning tesseraed, psychic pollen, encombed augur.
Roman foretime, abundant stasis, cenobitic dream.
Risen figures, ripened nectars, ultimate geometry.
Icon of thunderclaps,
Astronomic icons,
Nocturnal radance, sulphured amber, knowledge of morning.
Stanted recess, multiplication of the Mother, folded cherubic pinions.
Gestures of blessing, lutescent balm, serum of gold.
Angelic benison, incanted longings, flux of gold.
Encrypted rafters, storied arches, golden nebula.
Conic insufflation, oleagine of light.
Old Testament corridor, Biblical God.
Annunciated seed, archangelic lily.
Reanimation of antique devotions.
Reliquary of gloomiest monitions.
Unction of dazzle, Pentecostal spokes, pantheocratic awe.
Unquiet of eyesight, afterimage of ordered throngs, evangelists' support.
Calligraphic compression, glare of judgment, stooping seraphs.
Himation's zinc, love of suffering, the Church within the Church.
Love of miracles.
Love of cupolas & marble.
Love of gold's concentration lengthened by vision into ash of brass.
Mantled altar, depth of the monstercane, paradisaic glass.
Crepuscular forecast, cathedral of animate dread.
Glimmered imago, dove in emanation, incorporated, orbic sphericity.
Apary of light harvests, nave of golden petition.
Spirit cataracts, infinite curvature of time.

Peter O'Leary is the author of two books of poetry, Watchfulness (Spuyten Duyvil and Depth Theology (University of Georgia). As Ronald Johnson's literary executor, he has edited three books: To Do As Adam Did: Selected Poems (Talisman House), The Shrubberies (Flood Editions) and Radi os (Flood Editions). For over fifteen years, he has co-edited the literary magazine LVNG. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Our bracketed lives keep us attentive to the before and after, but meanwhile the main preoccupation is with what's right under our noses, and our feet.

— Nicholas Frank, curator

Steven Foster’s most recent photo-pictures are like triangular mandalas, patterned in angled equilibrium rather than centered on a circle’s natural focus-point. Foster has long made a practice of photographing mundane, overlooked subjects, removing them from their overwhelming contexts and offering them the identity of isolation. The essential property of photography is contemplation, freeing a moment to look at it unhindered by the nag of passing time, which might be Foster’s true subject. As he frees himself and his old photos from their earlier roles as depicctors, Foster gets closer to whatever truths lie in the material of the pictures. One might ask what part of the pictures is real, but they are not merely games of recognition. Foster twiddles and tweaks, multiplies, divides, obscures and artificializes his former pictures of the real into photographs that fairly represent the digital mind, where information passes through the microcosm.

Umberto Eco, in an exchange of letters debating belief in God with Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, imagines life after death as a kind of data transfer:

Today’s electronic universe teaches us that message sequences can be transmitted from one physical apparatus to another without losing their unique characteristics, and even to survive as purely immaterial algorithms from the instant they leave one physical apparatus to when they reach the other. Who knows if death, rather than being an implosion, may be an explosion—the impression, from somewhere between the vortices of the universe, of the software (what others might call soul) created by our living, made up of memories and regrets, and thus our implacable suffering, or sense of peace for a duty fulfilled, and love.³

Distortion is a central problem for utopians. How to project a vision of an ideal world without bending the current one so out of shape it becomes unrecognizable in the new version? Buckminster Fuller, a particularly pragmatic utopian thinker, created a more accurate map of the world, free of the distortions of the Mercator models. In *Sky-Wreck* (2001), poetic minimalist Helen Mirra inverts Fuller’s geodesic-form Dymaxion world map to chart a section of the sky, condensing the uncondensable. She returns the beyond to its prior position within the dome of the heavens, where it resided in the time before Copernicus shattered geocentric notions of the universe. The *Sky-Wreck* sculpture is placed on the floor. Looking down at it we are upended, our feet pointing to the sky, head over heels. Feet offer different prayers when they walk on air.

Corey McCorkle laughs when he mentions the resemblance of Preah, the eponymous bovine subject of his video, to Andy Warhol’s *Cow* paintings (1976). According to curator Peter Eley, this superficial resemblance isn’t the only one to Warhol’s work. Eley characterizes *Preah* as a “flip” of philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto’s “transfiguration of the commonplace,” the process whereby artists like Duchamp and Warhol imbue common objects, like shovels and soup cans, with transcendent significance simply by selecting them as subjects for art.² But Preah (which means “God” in the Khmer language) is already transcendent, her saliva contains miraculous healing powers prized by the neighboring Cambodian villagers. McCorkle’s position is one of observation, rather than definition, allowing the usual play of belief and disbelief in viewers of art to mingle with the tensions of doubt and faith. The title of this exhibition, *Place of the Transcommon*, derives from Eley’s flippage: McCorkle and the other artists locate transcendence within commonplace forms rather than imposing it upon them.

PLACE OF THE TRANSCOMMON

PAUL CALHOUN
STEVEN D. FOSTER
JESSICA JACKSON HUTCHINS

CINDY LOEHR

COREY MCCORKLE

HELEN MIRRA

ALTHEA THAUBERGER

February 2-March 16, 2007

Inova/Vogel

Opening reception: February 2, 6-9 pm
Reading by poet Peter O'Leary begins at 6:30 pm

Gallery talk with Nicholas Frank: February 17, 2 pm

Cover image: Gean Moreno



Wednesday-Sunday, 12 noon-5 pm

Gallery hours:

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Vogel Hall

INOVA/VOGEL

Nicholas Frank, Curator

Bruce Knackert, Director of Galleries

of new work.

Since 1996, the Institute of Visual Arts (Inova) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Peck School of the Arts has established an international reputation as a contemporary art research center. It now comprises four gallery spaces in the Peck School of the Arts: Inova/Vogel, Inova/Kenilworth, Inova/Arts Center and Inova/Zelazo (the Mary L. Nohl Galleries). The mission of the Institute of Visual Arts is to engage the general and university publics with contemporary art from around the world through exhibitions and programs. Inova is recognized for the high quality of its programs and for the opportunity it offers artists to experiment in the creation of new work.

Wm. Robert Buckner, Dean

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remove themselves from the action to sing sorrowful, questioning prayers straight from their mouths to God’s ear, portraying the tragedy on several scales at once. Do teens really act with such wince-inducing, embarrassing sincerity? Who among us hasn’t reached out, even snidely or defensively, to whatever sentience or omniscience might lie beyond in order to make sense of senseless events? Thauberger’s theatrical reaching holds its own grace beyond theater, allowing viewers enough distance to smirk at the earnestness of the girls, or cry along with them, while empathizing with their hope and dread.

Like life, love, the afterlife and afterlove—all preoccupations of the artist—Cindy Loehr’s six Seraphic wing sculptures contain multitudes of contradictory information: they are clunky, heavy, hard-edged, and light, airy and transcendent. The iconic sculptures are paired with a searching lyrical chant that measures aspirations against fleeting existence, with its various tumults of desire, love, failure and despair: heavy and transcendent, or “Heaven to pavement,” as the lyric from *Fuel For Constant Light* sings. Loehr’s work explores the various kinds of faith, as necessary in love as in spirituality, available to seekers after transcendence and deliverance.

The children’s finger-folding game goes “here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors, see all the people.” The gesture is small, but accurate: people are what make the church. Storefront churches dispense with the ostentation of official Christendom, keeping just the few necessary cues that signify a place of remove from the pains and strains of the world outside. Paul Calhoun’s photographs of worshippers inside the storefront churches of central-city Milwaukee manage a respectful distance while still intimately portraying the clenched eyes and splayed hands of people in the throes of connection to divinity. The pictures are at once intensely personal and comfortably unifying.

Place of the Transcommon is an exhibition of artists who have focused on the human sense of divinity lodged in commonplace materials, forms, situations, events, meanderings. No matter its origin, divinity resides in the person and finds its way into the world from there. “I felt my legs were praying,” Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., after joining the 1965 Selma civil rights march. Such is the commonality of dirt and divinity. “Got to scrape the shit right off my shoes,” Mick Jagger sings in “Sweet Virginia” (1972), in a tired plea to see one’s way through earthy encumbrances. Having experienced a vision that Christ had come to inhabit the very fabric of the material universe, Philip K. Dick saw the divine everywhere around him, literally, in the walls and furniture of his home. He chose to fictionalize his vision as VALIS, a Vast Active Living Intelligence System that sees and interacts with humanity as a kind of computerized omniscience.

The Jessica Jackson Hutchins collage drawing, *Where heaven and earth meet that is where you’ll find us* (1999), sounds like a rock song, and looks like some staples, a line and a smudge. In everything she touches, Hutchins’s hand deftly and gently unites the real with the imagined, and her earnestness in answering unanswerable questions exposes the pathos and thrill of asking. To see her small, crumpled ceramic sculptures, a viewer must perform an act of self-reduction, to project the sense of self into a tiny space and draw immensity from what was barely noticeable. Hutchins’s path sculptures, little fields of baked earth, poignantly depict fractions of journeys as if from a view-point far above, hovering moments where it appears that nothing much is happening, while subtle seismic shifts change whole life courses.

The drowned dog in Althea Thauberger’s *A Memory Lasts Forever* is an odd, undignified place for divinity to reside. But the narrative of the work derives from a real story about partying teens happening upon the family pet dead in the pool. The actors in Thauberger’s filmic work

Where Heaven and Earth Meet

There is a grain of sand in Lambeth which Satan cannot find

While deep in the heart's question a shameless light

Returns no answer.

—Thomas Merton ¹

Art since the two great world wars has never seemed a particularly religious place. Walking into the National Gallery’s East Wing and seeing Barnett Newman’s *Stations of the Cross* paintings felt nothing like the prayer services my parents took me to as a child, where we’d

move through the old bas-relief stations of the Passion in the naves of dark, yawning churches. The plain space of the octagonal gallery was a suitably reverent setting for Newman’s twelve abstract masterworks, another entry in the line of heroic, existential Abstract-Expressionist paintings. But for me, religion was absent from the room. Yet Newman made architectural designs for a synagogue. And then there’s the Rothko chapel. Still, modern art appeared determinedly separated from its historical place as religion’s illustrator.

Despite the seeming secularity of modern and post-modern art in America, with its whitewashed walls and furnitureless spaces, nothing about art makes it necessarily secular. For hundreds of years art and religion were inextricably tied, yet now there is a gulf between them at least as wide as that between religion and the rest of intellectual culture. Wouldn’t it be interesting, though, if the Roman Catholic church supported contemporary artists as it did in the past? Maurizio Cattelan would make a fine Michelangelo.

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PAUL CALHOUN

New Outlook Church of God in Christ, 2006



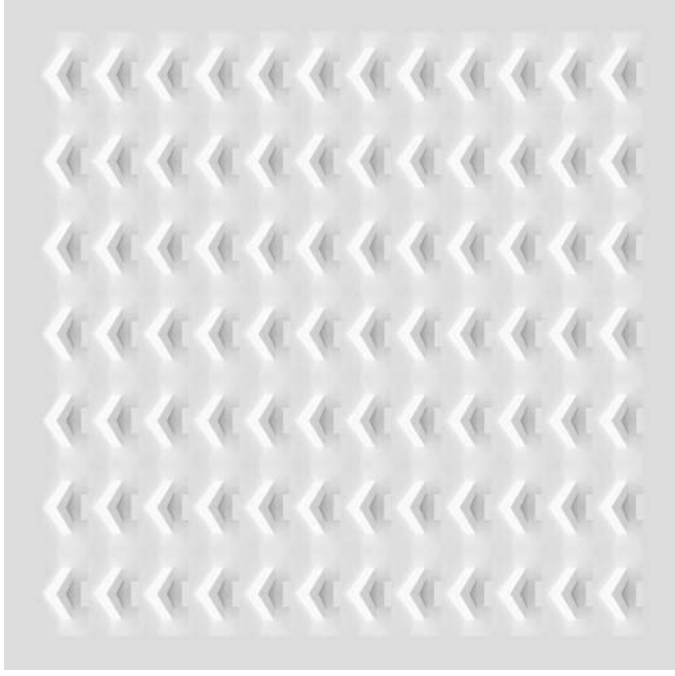
CINDY LOEHR

Fuel for Constant Light, 2006



COREY MCCORKLE

Preah, 2005



STEVEN D. FOSTER

Chromatic Field: Ceiling Corner Beam Triangulation, 2006

PAUL CALHOUN

Paul Calhoun's current photographs of storefront churches in Milwaukee's central city represent a portion of a larger photographic and audio project sponsored by The Council for a Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. The project is a collaboration with his son, Ben Calhoun, political reporter at the Chicago affiliate of National Public Radio, WBEZ.

Calhoun has been documenting communities for two decades. In 1991, his photographs of New York's Chinatown were recognized as an outstanding contribution to the arts by the State of New York. In 2004 and 2005, Calhoun traveled to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, where he photographed, taught and exhibited his work. The photographs he took there, along with those of Gia Chkhatarashvili, a Soros Fellow and photographer from the Republic of Georgia, are traveling to major museums in Europe and North America (they will be exhibited at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design in March 2007). Calhoun received a Suitcase Export Fund award from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Mary L. Nohl Fund for Individual Artists to support his work in Georgia.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Paul Calhoun has been a photographer and educator for 25 years. He earned an M.F.A. from the City University of New York, where he studied with noted American photographer Walter Rosenblum. Calhoun's photographs have been exhibited and published internationally, and his work has received financial support from a number of major public and private foundations, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the U.S. State Department. He currently teaches photography to orphans and street children in Europe and to central city students in the United States. The resulting photographs are utilized in online exchanges, and have been exhibited in the United States and Europe.

STEVEN D. FOSTER

These triangulated photographs, made at the end of 2006, constitute one of the many thematic groups within a larger series of digital images entitled *Triadic Memories: The Repetition Series Photographs*. Foster began the *Repetition Series* in 2003 with two primary intentions: to explore the visual meaning and perceptual dynamics of image repetition (with digital printing technology, which was new to him at that time), and to create a body of photographs in response to the music, ideas and even the titles of American composer Morton Feldman—especially his 1981 masterpiece for solo piano, *Triadic Memories*.

Feldman's music was influenced by the abstract painting produced in New York in the 1960s and '70s; his published writings and lectures about music, the visual arts, and the *Abstract Experience* shaped the project as it unfolded and progressed. Eventually, the *Repetition Series* project took on a life of its own, separate from Feldman's music. Nonetheless, Feldman's influence resonates in all the work.

The triangulated photographs were made by digitally selecting a triangle-shaped area inside a larger image (usually a *Chromatic Field* photograph or an image from the *Abstract Photographs* series), then inverting the tones inside the selected area in Photoshop. *Triadic Memories: The Repetition Series Photographs* is, among other things, a visual meditation on the number 3, the image triad, and in this thematic group a three-sided (abstract) picture space.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Steven Foster teaches photography in the Department of Film at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has exhibited his photographs nationally, and regularly in Chicago and Milwaukee, for the past thirty years. His work is in many permanent collections including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Walker Art Center, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



JESSICA JACKSON HUTCHINS

Portrait of S.M. (Wings), 2005

JESSICA JACKSON HUTCHINS

The bend in a path that I walked on one day in the park, a place I stood with my daughter, another man's Garden of Eden, the top of a Styliite's Column...Simon the Stylite (stylus, Greek for column) rebuilt a column higher and higher and installed himself at the top, standing in self-imposed privation for the rest of his life. His piece of ground is charged with the extravagances of living in devotion to meaning.

— JJH

In Hutchins' emotional topographies, one finds small, eccentric vessels perched atop "mountains," molded in tandem with the landscapes beneath them, each object dependent upon yet unfettered by the other. Hutchins suggests the erotic possibilities in the conflation of the sublime and the domestic as she collapses nature and submits it firmly to the body's needs and pleasures.

Hutchins' methods hover between chance and control, recalling Fluxus investigations into consumption and conviviality. Hutchins weds porcelain with newspaper, paint, and cardboard, often adding toilet paper into the watery, porcelain slip. In the most recent works in the exhibition, clay and porcelain are fused with chicken wire. When fired, the objects burst into scarred organic forms.

— Stephanie Snyder, Curator, Douglas F. Cooley

Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, Portland, Oregon
(from an essay for the 2006 exhibition, *Stylite Optimism*)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jessica Jackson Hutchins currently lives and works in Portland, Oregon and New York. Her ceramics, papier-mâché sculptures, and collages share a raw aesthetic and a preoccupation with the thin line between disaster and success that disguise a genuine attempt to convey ideas about communion, fear and loneliness. Hutchins' New York shows and exhibitions include: Derek Eller Gallery, Champion Fine Art, EFA, Debs & Co., Lombard-Fried Fine Art, and The Sculpture Center in Long Island City. She has also shown with the Institute for Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, Midway Contemporary in Minnesota, and Small A Projects in Portland, Oregon. She has exhibited internationally in Germany, the United Kingdom and Iceland.

CINDY LOEHR

Angels act as translators and intercessors between the ineffable abstraction of heaven and the concrete reality of earth. The six-winged Seraphim are the highest order of angels. Described as emanations of pure light, they are the most philosophical of the angels. Their only job is to fly around and sing, but they sing in direct communication with God.

In the song "Fuel for Constant Light," human desire is sung as an earthly aspiration towards the divine. This is a subversion of traditional Christian doctrine, which sees desire as the root of all sin. The title is from Peter O'Leary's poem, "With More Passionate Flying," which says: "Words of angels are fuel for constant light."

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Cindy Loehr has shown her work widely. Exhibitions include: Hiroimi Yoshii Gallery, Tokyo; The Contemporary, Atlanta; Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago; the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. She was awarded an artist residency with the Core Program of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2003-05), and earned her M.F.A. from the University of Illinois, Chicago (2001). Loehr also runs the *Love Letter Collection* as an ongoing project (collective experience org). She is represented by Monique Meloche gallery in Chicago and lives in Milwaukee. Loehr received production support for this project from Brad & Leslie Bucher and Nancy & Gene Hoof.

COREY MCCORKLE

Keeping with his interest in utopian ideas of nature and transcendence, Corey McCorkle traveled to a village in northern Cambodia earlier this fall in search of a mystical white calf named Preah ("God" in Khmer), who has apparently been curing a variety of ailments with his lick. At the farm of Puch Pich, McCorkle joined the thousands of sick Cambodians who have been lining up to pay for a touch of the calf's curative saliva. After Puch Pich's wife reported that she had been cured of pains in her arms and legs by Preah's tongue, the calf was credited with restoring the sight of an older village woman with four licks—which thereafter became the standard dosage for the masses that flocked to the farm.

In his deadpan depiction of the calf, McCorkle flips what Arthur Danto called the artist's "transfiguration of the commonplace," relying simply on the transformative magic already attributed to his subject. Showing the work in a meat-packing warehouse, the artist takes this gesture transfiguration to its extreme. In a place symbolic of the cow's most base and unremarkable identity as a perishable commodity, McCorkle gives us a Golden Calf imbued with the weighty aura of redemption.

Preah is yet another reminder of the fact, at turns inspiring and disappointing, that the miraculous tends to take the form of the mundane and unimpressive. The ultimate subject of McCorkle's work is not the cow he journeyed across the globe to find, but rather the power and vulnerability of belief. Belief, it may be said, remains the most effective means of transforming the world before us, if not the only way to truly remediate and redeem it. As Puch Pich warned visitors, "if he doesn't think you believe in his powers, he won't lick you."

— Peter Eley, Curator, Creative Time, New York (from an essay for the 2005 exhibition, *The Plain of Heaven*)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Corey McCorkle was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1969. He has exhibited internationally, with solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; MC Kunst, Los Angeles; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London; macarone inc., New York; Objectif Exhibitions, Antwerp; The Marrès, Maastricht; and Gallery Speak For, Tokyo. Group exhibitions include: Kunstrotterdam; Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn; The Sculpture Center, New York; Middelheim Museum, Antwerp; The Renaissance Society, Chicago; Kunsternes Haus, Oslo; The Drawing Center, New York; Creative Time, New York; Apex Curatorial Program, New York; Triple Candie, New York; The Arnolfini Museum, Bristol; Murray Guy Gallery, New York; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; South London Gallery, London; Galerie Fortes Villaça, Sao Paolo; and Transmission Gallery, Glasgow. He lives in New York.

CREDITS

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HELEN MIRRA

In 2001 Helen Mirra made *Sky-wreck* as a scale model of a section of the sky, if the sky was a geodesic dome. The sculpture was 1/11th of the sky, at a scale of 1:333. This in turn broke into smaller sections. Included in this exhibition is a pair of these sections, respectively 1/2% and 1/4%. *Sky-wreck* was made in some relation to the poetry of the German writer Paul Celan (1920-1970). A few years later Mirra wrote an index for the W.G. Sebald (1944-2001) novel, *The Rings of Saturn*. The letter press print she made of this index appears in its plainness as an offset sheet. Most recently, Mirra has been doing research on the Swiss German writer Robert Walser (1878-1956), and here proposes a kind of sculptural and textual triangle that includes these three writers, dreamers and obsessives.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Helen Mirra was born in Rochester, New York in 1970. Her work occurs in varied—generally scrap—media and engages structural and conceptual logics. It is often referred to as poetic, but her interest is less in the lyrical than in the actual, and the metrical. Recent solo shows include Meyer Riegger-Galerie, Karlsruhe; Peter Freeman, New York; Dallas Art Museum; Galerie Nelson, Paris; and the Berkeley Art Museum. She was a guest of the DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm in 2005-6. Mirra lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts and teaches at Harvard University.

ALTHEA THAUBERGER

Canadian artist Althea Thauberger's video and audio works are made up of collective musical or choreographic performances, the result of her collaborations with various groups and communities. Her collaborative musical video, *A Memory Lasts Forever* (2004), began with a call to young female performers distributed through community performance listservs in Vancouver. Thauberger chose four young women—some were accomplished singers, another a writer and actor, two specialized in musical theatre—to make a musical video about an incident from her adolescence. The video was shot after four weeks of improvisation/writing sessions in which each of the women remade Thauberger's story with herself as the central figure. Each wrote a "prayer" in the form of a song. Some of the prayers were overtly Christian, some not at all. *A Memory Lasts Forever* was shot in a suburban backyard in Vancouver with a three-camera video team accustomed to documenting stage performances. They brought the conventions of this kind of documentation to the work.

Like much of Thauberger's work, *A Memory Lasts Forever* is both a documentation of a series of performances and a work in its own right. In spite of the eccentric formal charms of these performances, they nonetheless have an alienating effect on viewers, who often remain puzzled about the contradictory display of vulnerability and empowerment. *A Memory Lasts Forever* was supported by the British Columbia Art Council and was co-commissioned by the Berkeley Art Museum and Presentation House Gallery, Vancouver.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Since completing her M.F.A. at the University of Victoria in 2002, Althea Thauberger has exhibited in North America, Europe and Asia including the Berkeley Art Museum; Seattle Art Museum; The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; MUHKA, Antwerp; BAK, Utrecht and the Singapore History Museum. Thauberger lives and works in Vancouver and Berlin.