

Second Glance



"222" is our summer program comprising two, two-person, two-week exhibition. Each is "curated" by a gallerist selecting two artists they do not represent for a "dialogue". For this season the selection of the galleries was done by Omar Lopez-Chahoud.

selected by
Sara Meltzer

July 16 - July 31, 2002

cover: Laura Carton *Untitled #7*, 2002, digital c-print 22" x 26"

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Stardust

selected by
Anton Kern

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291 church street
new york, ny 10013

212 431-5270 ph

212 431-4447 fx

info@apexart.org

www.apexart.org

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cover: Eli Sudbrack *Garden*, 2002, wallpaper dimensions variable

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Stardust

Let's celebrate memories and dreams by embracing the mundane and pop elements of our lives. *Stardust* is a mix of *Yellow Submarine* with *Saturday Night Fever*. Assume Vivid Astro Focus and Kalamán are not afraid to defend the beauty of commodities. They produce, explore, exploit, sell and expose their works in many manners. They are pro-product and optimistically accept personal attachment to corporate culture. The Beatles, Adidas, soccer, cartoons and Atari can still inflict a starry-eyed unconditional innocence. Both artists employ pseudonyms, but for different reasons: Robert Lutz uses Kalamán as a brand name for his art; Eli Sudbrack founded Assume Vivid Astro Focus as a communal life style. Both strategies stem from advertising and the belief that their attitude should be shared.

Kalamán leverages the brand equity of Germany by appropriating Adidas iconography, as well as more banal standardized industrial products including pencils, t-shirts and ladders. Through irony, he creates work revealing the pride and sentiment of German products and their relationship to their precise production and highly considered craftsmanship: "Made in Germany" or in this case: "Made by Kalamán". Without apology "he" is a company, an idea factory.

Another point of entry is in his critique of criticism. Playing on politically correct language he has employed children to produce pieces (*Guaranteed Child Labor*) and created works such as a mousetrap with the word "unfair". Other work takes a less sarcastic view. The ladder series (*First Step*, *Stairway to Heaven* and *I am so high*) relates to the innocent aspiration of becoming famous. Industrial ladders are covered with mirrored tiles, capitalizing on our obvious desire for stardom. Reflective tiles also cover three-dimensional bubble script sculptures. Decontextualized glittering words like "happiness" and "dope" float into ones mind like disco balls hypnotizing the dance floor.

Assume Vivid Astro Focus is a dynamic project, which operates as a collective force. Audience members can take part in the project on the premises or at home via postcards, stickers, etc. At its core, it is art as fan club. AVAF has devel-



Kalamán Walking on Broken Glass, 2001 performance

oped a universe and philosophy flowered with psychedelic protagonists influenced by memories of childhood and wonder. It is a world of fantasy and dreams, where happiness replaces despair and skeptical irony.

Even though AVAF embraces similar ideas as Kalamán regarding consumerism and pop culture, the approach is more ethereal and dreamy.

Manipulating "commercial art" references such as Peter Max and Milton Glaser, AVAF creates a disclosed world of personal introspection. Rediscovery and uncritical innocence conjure up a

romantic *déjà-vu*. Using 60's inspired mural installations where fluorescent imagery and cartoony decals float on graphic backgrounds, whirls of memories emerge from this kaleidoscope of illustrations.

Stardust is a state of being; it draws on our fading memory and allows it to be present. Through the process of mining memories held by the public, they become personal and meaningful. Without preconception, both artists celebrate the popular culture of "glam-rock", slang and an accumulation of seemingly shallow experience. It is about letting go, having fun, celebration and bliss.

Fernanda Arruda
Anton Kern Gallery

the figures. Images that appear to be travel snapshots or postcards take on a secondary layer of meaning. They exist at the brink of action and allude to the fact that something erotic and/or illicit has happened in this location. The viewer can't help but imagine it. A calm, almost overlooked dining room or bedroom scene instantly becomes a staged scenario. The absence of figures invites the viewer to place himself in these settings, an indulgence that seems simultaneously intriguing and disarming.

Jonathan Grassi photographs fabricated realities. The scenes are unsettlingly familiar, yet foreign in their alienating subject matter. He portrays adolescents on the brink of adulthood and places them into "plots" that are left for the viewer to resolve. What results is a series of ambiguous and suspenseful moments. A dramatic use of color and light, and the inclusion of often disturbing and violent details heighten the intensity of his images. His construct of image versus idea tense-ly but poetically estranges his characters as well as his audience. There is a psychological distance between the viewers and the subjects. As the perspective becomes more intimate the characters become more anonymous. Grassi's visual language is derived from popular culture, which serves as society's contemporary mythology.

Laura Carton and Jonathan Grassi's photographs appear as documents, but both mask fiction under the presumption of truth. The complex ritual of visual appreciation are used against us, as we must somehow involve ourselves in and dis-place ourselves from this work. They are, in effect, crime scenes: the viewer is an incriminated voyeur and an inevitable detective.

Laura Carton attended the International Center of Photography and is currently participating in the Whitney Independent Study Program. She has been included in exhibitions at the Aldrich Museum and Artists Space, among others. Jonathan Grassi received his B.A. from Parsons Museum and was included in MoMA's "Life of the City" exhibition. Both artists are based in New York.

Adam Frank
Sara Melitzer Gallery



Jonathan Grassi Untitled from the Immunology Series, 2000 c-print 24" x 30"

The photographs of Laura Carton and Jonathan Grassi play with initial perceptions. They share a necessity for reexamination. Both artists present seemingly normal, perhaps even clichéd scenes: Carton's range of interiors devoid of figures; Grassi's interactions of people in bare spaces. However, each artist creates a dynamic opposition between the cursory and informed viewings of their work.

The importance of Laura Carton's works lies not in what is present, but what is missing. She has taken internet pornography and digitally erased

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Imagery is often not what it seems at first glance. The eye and the mind work together to make assumptions in hopes of providing a logical, basic understanding of what is presented. However, this is only the first step. Imagery cannot be taken at face value. We are inundated by visual stimuli to a point beyond recognition or absorption, and the images themselves can no longer be seen as a representation of truth. Photography automatically explores this occurrence, as its processes involve