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Press Release

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Display - Marketing as Art

Contemporary Art Galleries, Storrs Campus

February 3, 2014 – April 14, 2014

Monday – Friday 10 – 4 & Sun 1 to 4

Symposium 4pm – April 14

Display: Marketing and Commercialism in Art

Art Building, CAG

Exhibition Reception 5:30 to 7pm – April 14, 2014

Artists in Exhibition

Martin Basher, Gabriele Beveridge, Dike Blair, Josephine Meckseper, Mika Tajima.

DISPLAY: MARKETING AS ART features works that illustrate, engage, and challenge the visual language of commercialism. It is both about the seductive nature of effective product display and a critique concerning last year's record-breaking auction prices. A \$142 million price tag for a work of art blatantly marginalizes the significance of the artist's original intent.

DISPLAY challenges the viewer to inspect the blurring of lines that separate art and commodity. This initial idea was developed from the overwhelming sensory experiences one has upon entering high-end stores such as *Barneys*, *Bergdorf Goodman*, or Madison Avenue's elite boutiques.

The work of the five artists presented here echoes and appropriates the visual language and materials associated with fashionable product display to different ends. The artists fabricate their creative commentaries utilizing chrome fixtures and shelving, reflective materials and mirrors, various types of display panels, and colorfully packaged objects. Their works follow the rich tradition of removing an object or material from its normal context and putting it into an art specific context. The recontextualisation of everyday objects became a hallmark of the 20th century beginning with Picasso's and Braque's Synthetic Cubism, followed by Duchamp's



experimentations with “ready-mades.” Since then, the trend to employ found objects and embed them with new meaning has gone through numerous cycles. The seven installations presented here are part of that continuum, referencing art history while adding new perspectives.

Each of these sculptures employs images never meant to stand on their own, but rather to expand the iconography created by the artists to be incorporated into their more encompassing art content. Where Herman Miller’s iconic cubicles are transformed into un-enterable minimalist cubes, every work likewise includes and incorporates materialistic objects such as Noguchi lamps and modernist furniture.

This exhibition has been made possible through the generous support of Walbridge Capital and Kristi Ann Matus.

Curated and Conceptualized by Barry A. Rosenberg

Martin Basher manifests the themes of *Display* through his unique aesthetic that incorporates found objects and original paintings. Of particular interest to Basher is the manner that the visual language of commercialism exploits, “an almost limitless range of social, spiritual, aesthetic and bodily desires.” *Untitled (Spiritual Marketplace 3)* was created specifically by Martin Basher for *Display*. Critical to this piece is Basher’s exploration of the hopeful longing experienced by consumers. A hope to improve oneself through material objects and assuage the feelings of inadequacy that commercialism simultaneously produces and promises to alleviate. Men’s hair and skin products, mid-range whiskey, free weights, mirrors, chrome, and wood presents an illusion of hyper-masculinity. By appropriating the language of marketing through found objects, Basher offers a powerful indictment of the absurdity of commercialism’s promises, as well as our continued faith in solutions that can be purchased.

In *Paradise Salé*, Basher returns to the central theme of commercialism, longing and desire. Placed outdoors the mirrored surface of Basher’s vitrine obscures its contents during the day. After dark fluorescent lights reveal a painting of a color-saturated beach sunset, whiskey and high-heels. The boldly colored sunset illustrates how central sublime landscapes are to the visual language of advertising. For Basher, the use of utopian landscapes in commercialism has had a direct correlation to western attitudes of land ownership as a God-given right. According to the artist: “I use images that propose or promise an ‘ideal space’ in a disposable culture, for example, from jigsaw puzzles and lottery tickets. It’s about social structures and capitalism: the residue of longing, belief, landscape and the sublime.” Basher’s inclusions of the sunset in conjunction with women’s high heels and a bottle of alcohol also speaks to the escapism offered by our hidden desires. Drinks and private memories or fantasies offer relief from the doldrums of daily life. After dark when the workday is through, these transitory escapisms can be indulged for the fleeting hours until the sun rises, forcing them back into hiding.

Martin Basher lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand. He has exhibited extensively there as well as in the United States, with solo shows at the City Gallery of Wellington in New Zealand, Saatchi & Saatchi in New York as well as at the 2012 Armory Show. Basher is represented by Starkwhite, NZ.



Dike Blair explores the possibilities between different media, including painting, sculpture, photography, language, and ready-made within *(IN) Out*. Blair walks carefully along the boundary between the materiality of art and the concept of commodification within the artistic realm. For the artist, an important aspect is how the piece can become its own unique packaging crate that is able to hold every aspect of the sculptural installation from the Noguchi lamp and carpeting to the artist's painting, while still acting as an integral part of the work's display. Through the inclusion of the Noguchi Lamp and the construction of his own high modernist system, Blair inserts himself into the contemporary dialogue of the canon of modern design: "I remember looking at non-objective painting and feeling the scales fall from my eyes: suddenly I understood the language." His minimalist style supports the sharp contrasts between vertical and horizontal lines, rectangle and round shapes, colorful flatness and three-dimensionality evoking the aesthetic of Mondrian. This convention of contrasting forms divides space while simultaneously combining it to create one complete, static form, inspiring a dialogue between material, space, and ambience. According to the artist: "My interest was in seducing, not controlling. My aim was to create sensoriums and possibly to encourage contemplation of formal flip-flops while I indulged my decorative tendencies."



Born in 1952, Dike Blair grew up in western Pennsylvania. He developed his ability as a painter through his work with his mother, also a painter. He earned his MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1974. Before, he also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1974 and participated in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 1976. He is currently a professor at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and an accomplished writer. In 2007, WhiteWalls published a collection of his writings entitled *Again: Selected Interviews and Essays*.



Gabriel Beveridge constructs assemblages from a personalized lexicon that includes elements such as photography from 1980's magazines, rocks, crystals, and domestic and retail store fixtures. In *Post-Exertion Visibility*, Beveridge weaves several of these elements into a vague narrative that touches on themes like the sublime landscape, vanity and the emptiness of advertising.



Beveridge uses a steel pegboard as the foundation for her collection, similar to the retail fixture that holds Josephine Meckseper's, *The Lily of the Field*, on the opposite wall of the gallery. In the visual center of Beveridge's pegboard hangs a frame that contains a magazine image of a woman's face with glossy red lipstick partially buried under a layer of fine beach sand. Resting at the top of the frame is a crystal, replete with glimmering mineral formations. A windchime, a lichen-covered rock, a bleach blonde wig, and a set of fake pearls hang from various hooks around the pegboard and a black and white phototransfer of palm trees and sky covers the surface of the lower third of the piece. The assemblage seems to tell a story about a washed out vacationland where people and things are airbrush beautiful, yet the meaning of the narrative remains elusive. In creating this tantalizing tension, Beveridge skillfully mirrors the tenor of advertising that surrounds us daily but adds her own personal twist.





Gabriele Beveridge was born in Hong Kong, China, and lives and works in London, England. She received her M.F.A from the Slade School of Fine Art in London and is represented by the Elizabeth Dee Gallery in New York, New York.

Josephine Meckseper When walking into the gallery, *The Lily of the Field* transports the viewer to a make-shift departmental store. Meckseper's installations are a complex collaboration of found, fabricated, and altered objects that come together to cleverly comment on art as a commodity. She uses the tradition of contextualizing and appropriating the objects to speak to the usage of advertising. "The abstractions in [Meckseper's] paintings were actually based on how you divide an advertising page—the quarter-page, half-page ads." The departmental slat boards with its chrome attachments that are vacant, the paintings that reference art historical movements, such as Minimalism and Color Field, are unattainable. However, they are displayed in a fashion that remains easily accessible, right off the rack. The found canvases that can be bought at any craft store, yet again, hint at art as a common object, and the battle between high art and low art and where those blurred lines materialize.

Meckseper living and working in New York, was born in Germany. She received her MFA from Cal Arts in 1992. Prior to this she studied at Hochschule der Kunste, Berlin. She has appeared in two Whitney Biennials and the Sharjah biennial. Saatchi Gallery, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; art some of her most notable private and public collections.

Mika Tajima combines sculpture, painting and design to construct un-enterable installations and expand the notions of our perceptions of each medium. Comparing geometric abstraction to the shape of our built environment, Tajima explores how material objects outline everyday actions. This body of work draws on analogies with the office work environment creating sculptures out of repurposed Herman Miller Action Office system, the pre-fabricated wall panels of the first office "cubicle". Tajima plays on the legacy of industrialized work spaces by creating systems of dysfunctional configurations including a sealed cube and a wall mural. Tajima used the vocabulary from the post-modern movement to shape the wall panels into minimalist configurations. On some panels, Tajima has painted over the original blue-gray canvas with vibrant primary colors and attached silkscreen prints calling attention to art as commodity.

Mika Tajima, born in Los Angeles, California (1975) and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She earned a BA from Bryn Mawr College (1997), an MFA from Columbia University (2003) and attended The Fabric Workshop and Museum Apprentice Training Program (2003). Tajima's work has been shown internationally, at venues including the South London Gallery, London; Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Seattle Art Museum; Sculpture Center and PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York City; Bass Museum, Miami; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. She was included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial.



