

Straight to Video

By Isabella Macpherson and Neville Wakefield

In the relatively few years since faith in the prevalence of normality passed into the siege states of a nation at war with itself and others, America has been witness to a type of art-making that sets out to simultaneously celebrate and challenge the received narratives of the daily media. For a generation of emerging artists the American dream is re-cut on a daily basis.

As curator and writer Neville Wakefield explains, "This exhibition has been an opportunity to bring together work that answers back to the conflated visual bombardment of politics, misinformation, history and entertainment. Whether reflecting the shock and awe of the media back on itself, recreating history in celebration and protest, or simply describing the feral antics of an American road trip, these are artists for whom home and homeland security have never been the same thing."

The four artists in this exhibition, 'Krug Presents: Video America' reflect how America is reacting culturally in the new century. The quality of their work has made them leading lights in the New York art scene. Josephine Meckseper and Dash Snow were chosen to exhibit at The Whitney Biennial this year, Chris Moukarbel in creating this piece has become the focus of discussion amongst the public and the media, while The New York Times recently said of Robert Boyd's piece: "Mr Boyd...cuts right to the political chase, but at a pace that leaves your head spinning, at least until the very end." Chris Moukarbel's work is a case in point. Recreating scenes from a stolen script before the release of 'World Trade Centre' landed him with a cease and desist order from Paramount. In response he re-cut his interpretation of Stone's script into the form of a silent video of actors awaiting their cues from history and the re-created events of 9/11. "I'm interested in memorial and the way Hollywood represents historical events. Through their access and budget they're able to affect a lot of people's ideas about an event and also affect policy. I was deliberately using their script and pre-empting their release to make a statement about power."

For Josephine Meckseper the politics of American consumerism is signed and scripted in the street, in the store-fronts and protest marches that form the recent subject of her work. Blurring the lines between images of political news, the fashion industry and advertising, her work mingles activism and aesthetics, to juxtapose the interrupted desires of shop window displays and anti-war protesters. Meckseper claims to be neither an activist nor a detached observer of the demonstrations she films. "I'm an artist and documentarian. It's a reflective role – active but not ideological." While Meckseper films live, Robert Boyd uses found footage to probe society's self-destructive impulse,



Top and bottom: Josephine Meckseper. Middle: Robert Boyd.

parodying various elements of popular culture such as documentaries, news media, cartoons and pop music. Culled from hundreds of hours of archival footage, he tweaks, condenses and re-frames modern events into seconds-long image bites, re-presenting history as a series of MTV-style music videos. Dash Snow's response is more personal – here represented by an untitled film of a road trip made with his friend and artist Dan Colen from New York to the Art Basel Miami Beach Art Fair.

The political position of America has been a catalyst to internal cultural and social reaction, producing art which has drawn global attention. International museum shows, art fairs and collectors are giving more space to artists from its East and West coasts. The Serpentine's latest show is called 'Uncertain States of America', Charles Saatchi has been building towards his show, 'USA Today', for the last year, and in a precursor to this show, The Gallery at The Hospital exhibited works from Frank Cohen's collection 'New Art from LA, Dirty Boyz Get Clean'.

The man behind 'Krug Presents: Video America', Neville Wakefield, is a curator at PS1, the contemporary sister museum of MOMA, New York. He has also worked on projects with Mario Testino, Steven Meisel and Madonna, and lectured at Yale and MOMA. Neville is the founder/producer of the Destricted art films which were shown at Sundance, Cannes and Tate Modern by Sam Taylor-Wood, Matthew Barney, Larry Clark and Richard Prince.

Video art, which grew in popularity in the 1960's and 1970's, has developed as a form of contemporary artistic expression, especially with the new role of the general public as reporter, as has been witnessed in the past year with breaking news often captured by the man on the street. The show's focus on the medium of video makes it even more immediate, and plays with our understanding of news delivery versus artistic practice. All four works are being shown for the first time in the UK.

'Krug Presents: Video America' has been commissioned and produced by Krug alongside their initiatives in theatre and film, building on their programme of working directly with actors, directors, curators and artists to create new work.

Wednesday 11th to Sunday 15th October
Wednesday to Friday: 10am – midnight
Saturday: noon – midnight
Sunday: noon – 6pm
The Gallery