

# ARATALAND!



A MID-CAREER SURVEY OF ARTWORKS BY MICHAEL ARATA  
DOUG HARVEY



PET SPACES FREDERICK'S OF HOLLYWOOD 1, 2, 3, 4 (1987)

# **A Coney Island of the Butt**

-Doug Harvey, curator

Artists, it is often said, each live in a world of their own. The nature of these worlds can be as disparate as the tortured misanthropy of Francis Bacon, the cerebral monotony of Daniel Buren, or the canny but lighthearted psychedelia of Sigmar Polke. The important constant is the will to remake the world in one's own image. And while this could be argued to be the underlying *modus operandi* of all creative activity, it is particularly evident in the Modern and allegedly Post-Modern eras of western contemporary culture, where the solipsistic narcissism of the Romantics collided with exponentially expanding technological capabilities to endow virtually any individual with god-like Creationist powers.

Think of Adolf Hitler's attempt to reconfigure Western Civilization along what were essentially aesthetic lines. Or think of Walt Disney, who was less nakedly ambitious but ultimately more successful in imposing his idiosyncratic symbolic taste on our species' collective consciousness. I would contend that Ground Zero of Operation Disneyfication lies just 30 miles due south of downtown Los Angeles – in Disneyland, the Happiest Place on Earth, where Uncle Walt's monomaniacal pursuit of The Cute blossomed from the introspective media of cinema and children's doll games into a 3-dimensional kinesthetic transactional environment; a relational virtual reality: a theme park.

One could trace the lineage of the theme park as artist's medium all the way back to the caves at Lascaux, or the Sistine Chapel, or Jacques-Louis David's Revolutionary fêtes, but the last century has brought the value (both creatively and economically) of an idiosyncratic vision to the forefront, while mobilizing an unprecedented range of resources towards fabricating such visions. Disneyland was only the beginning.

For artists (and other professionals) working in the Fine Arts tradition, this expansive paradigm has been a two-edged sword; increasing the possibilities of interactive and installation strategies while radically amplifying expectations of entertainment value. Certain artists fare better than others – a retrospective of someone like Robert Rauschenberg might include motion-activated stained glass sliding doors, a bubbling mudbath, a sonar-activated windmill painting, and relics of his 60s performances and 80s global collaboration tours. Jean Tinguely and Nikki Saint-Phalle were both consciously flirting with Ride Theory, while many Light-and-Space environments and Land Art sites are phenomenological rollercoasters for the sloooowed-waaaay-dooowwn set.

In fact, this characteristic could be used as a defining criterion for a distinct strain of contemporary art – work that is humorous, theatrical, audience-aware (if not always so friendly), open to popular modes of symbolic communication and unbounded by traditional material or genre constrictions. Work that, taken individually suggests restless inventiveness if not outright multiple personality disorder, but en masse generates a layered, immersive, synergistic narrative environment that rewards attentive viewers on multiple sensory and intellectual levels. Interestingly, the bulk of artists that spring to mind are from the West Coast: Bruce Nauman. Chris Burden. Mowry Baden. Eleanor Antin. Paul McCarthy. Mike Kelley. The Museum of Jurassic Technology. Tim Hawkinson.

And Michael Arata. Arata, whose artistic vision was forged in the same unholy furnace as Hawkinson's (San Jose State University – "Powering Silicon Valley!") shares all of the aforementioned criteria for Theme-Parkism with his more famous Spartan alum – though their respective oeuvres couldn't be more different, apart from that. What is central to their similarity – as with many other TPists – is the human body as the inescapable fundamental bottom line of Art – subject, object, and the playground upon which the difference is duked out.

#### HAUNTED MANSION

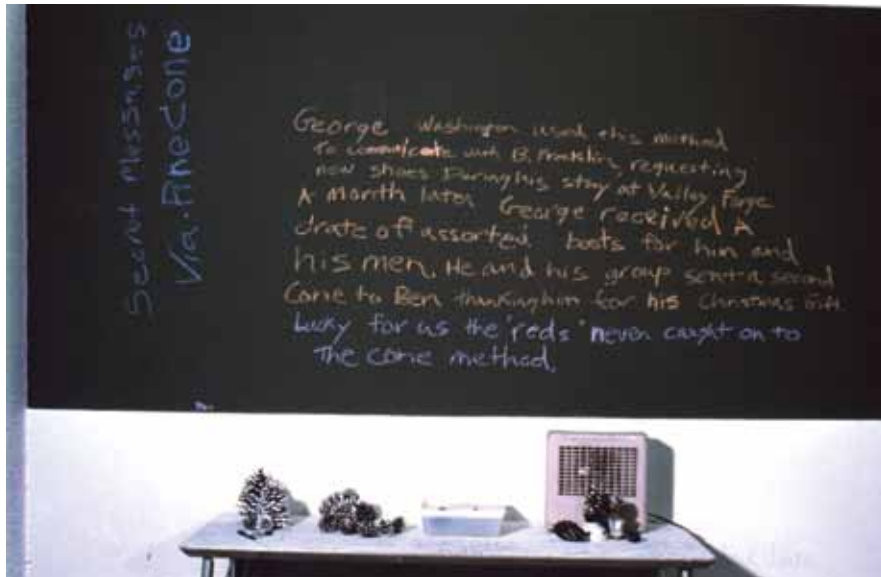
Are we not, each of us, a haunted mansion? OK, got that out of the way. Let's look at the negative spaces between the posed limbs of Victoria's Secret models. OK! Now, let's fill those negative spaces with primary colors. OK. OK, Now let's reconfigure those colorful negative spaces as 3-dimensional sculptures made of newspaper and masking tape and acrylic paint, attach google eyes to them, then pose for photographs with the Victoria's Secret models' negative spaces placed in the negative spaces of our own limbs. Uh... Geeez I don't... OK! The threads of Michael Arata's associative conceptualism are not always easy to follow, but they inevitably lead to profoundly intelligent, keenly felt, formally virtuosic, and endlessly entertaining artworks.



MARCO POLO REINVENTS THE WHEEL, INSTALLATION VIEW (1987)

Arata came of artistic age when sculpture had yet to experience the same rejuvenation that had returned painting to the forefront of contemporary commerce (and discourse) in the early 80s. His earliest major works – the *Monet Haystack* and *Marco Polo* installations among them – combined formal and autobiographical elements (Arata had worked as an engineering draughtsman, and the 3D cross-section structure of the urns, ships, and haystacks derive directly) with art historical and historical references, and a prescient concern with globalism, issues of sustainability, and relational aesthetics – the latter at this point limited to an awareness of the physicality of sculptural installations. But soon to blossom and mutate in extraordinary directions.

The first of Arata's crackpot interactive schemes was his *Secret Messages via Pine Cone* kiosk, where a still little-known woodsy cryptographic technique -- allegedly used by George Washington at Valley Forge to secure a shipment of shoes from Ben Franklin -- was demonstrated. Audience members were invited to inscribe their own messages on the underside of the individual scales of a dry cone, which was then exposed to moisture -- causing the cone to close up, its epistolary nature concealed until dried out again. The layers of audience engagement in this work are numerous and complex, beginning with the sheer absurdity of the activity, leading to the participants' complicity in this Jurassic Technology-styled fiction; the possibility of actually using the system to communicate with (or confess to) the artist, future viewers, or persons unknown; and finally the recruitment of the public in the creation of artifacts that resemble nothing so much as early 70s system-based conceptualism -- series of more-or-less arbitrary texts arrayed across alternating Fibonacci spirals.



SECRET MESSAGES VIA PINE CONE, ACTIVITY (1985)

*Secret Messages via Pine Cone* conflated a number of concerns that would dominate Arata's work for the next few years (and, to varying degrees, to this day): the need to engage his audience in a transactional relationship, often resulting in their partaking of a fun but patently ridiculous activity; the exploration of systematic aesthetics of analysis and classification and their application to arbitrary or random phenomena; and a distinctly ambivalent engagement with the visual art tropes of late modernism, often to deliberately and outrageously humorous effect.

The *Statistical Samples* group gathers together a number of works that emphasize the second of these characteristics: displays that collect and alpha-numerically itemize such phenomena as fallen leaves (*Fallen Leaves* 1 – 30 1992) and a neighbor's discarded liquor bottles (*My Neighbor's Habit* 1994) as if the subject of an archeological/anthropological study. Several of these works were, in fact, derived in whole or part from excavations of building demolition sites and the artist's own studio grounds, the resultant artifacts catalogued with a paradoxically indeterminate X/Y schemata referencing both the mathematical graphing of the Cartesian coordinate system and the familiar sex determination chromosomal tags and their implicit genealogical implications.

This line of inquiry reached its apex with 1994's *Average Life Expectancy*, an interactive installation consisting of 75 cast plaster cylinder sections, each visually subdivided pie chart-style into a number of color slices, one variation for each year of the average life expectancy of an American in the year of the work's creation. Viewers were invited to light color-coded birthday candles set atop each of these "birthday cakes".

Another major group of works from this period was the *Orphans* series, which constituted Arata's 1992 solo exhibition at Food House (later Acme). These objects took the simplified geometric structures of minimalism – spheres, boxes, grids, etc –and invested them with an awkwardly sentimental metaphoric physicality, most often by embedding baby pacifiers – surrogate human nipples – into the found

objects – thrift store suitcases, deflated soccer balls, demolition scrap medicine cabinets – from which the *Orphans* technology was constructed.

It is at this point that Arata first declares his close affiliation with the spirit of the European Arte Povera tradition, a humorous, carnal and existential version of Minimalism (and other postwar Puritanisms) that swept through Europe in the 60s but only trickled down to America with the postpunk celebrity of Joseph Beuys. But Arata's take is at once more world-weary and more optimistic than his European counterparts – a uniquely Yankee take on the marriage of abstraction and entropy, as dark and exquisite as that other orphan American epic, Harold Gray (1894–1968)'s *Little Orphan Annie*.

Nevertheless, one of his most pitch-perfect pieces from this series is quintessentially European: the suburban creation myth of 1992's *Piano Bench* – formally compelling on its own terms, but also a droll visual pun on the Romulus and Remus story, specifically an art history standard *The Capitoline Wolf* (500 BC – 1500 AD) which depicts the founding orphans of Western Civilization suckling at the tit of a wild bitch. In Arata's contemporary Cronenbergian incarnation, the order of things is inverted, or shifted – nurture is erupting from the underside of the infrastructure of cultural expertise; a piano bench is sprouting boobs. The interactive element in Arata's orphanage is implied – the works are allegedly functional, designed for the nomadic portability demanded by the foster home shuffle and assembled largely from easily acquired cast-offs. But their intended users remain hypothetical, no orphans having taken comfort from their ample charms. The degree and kind of interactivity in each of Arata's artworks varies widely, from pieces like his *Vapor Rising from Hot Coffee* series (1990 – present) or his dazzlingly decorative *Military Target* (1990/2009) and *Explosion* (2010) sculptures -- which function as more-or-less traditional objets d'art – to the passive generosity of *Disposable Drawings* (1991 - present) in which a wall-mounted paper towel dispenser is continuously refilled with unique drawings for public consumption; to his *Hot Dog Exchange* (various iterations, 1999 – present), which consists almost entirely of the quirky transactional concept – the commodities in question acting as mere props for the relational theater.

*Hot Dog Exchange* asks the public outright to produce art for food. *Little Virgins* (198?) contains the



BRANDED BUNS (1999-PRESENT)



hidden record of a similar, somewhat creepier exchange, in which the artist approached private school-girls and offered them donuts in trade for their worn out uniform saddle shoes, which Arata then transformed into a sculptural depiction of the new testament narrative of Pentecost, when tongues of flame (here represented by flickering candle-shaped light bulbs) descended upon the twelve apostles of Jesus and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues.

A more experimental game theory approach runs through much of Arata's work, dating at least as far back as *Fat Flies* (1989) which recruited the public to fold paper airplanes out of Victoria's Secret catalog pages then launch them over a drop ceiling inscribed with diagrams of fat molecules and studded with target holes, which would drop the winning projectiles down a two-story stairwell. 1990's *One to One Ratio* (recreated in 2010 for Barnsdall Park ) invited viewers to hurl white rocks at suspended brown beer bottles painted with eyes. In 1991, *Venus as a Fertility Figure* offered audience members the opportunity to fill-to-bulging a target made from pantyhose – suspended from a basketball hoop and weighed down by high heels – using individually numbered “eggs” formed out of the typically idiosyncratic combination of materials – newspaper, masking tape, and acrylic paint – that was to become Arata's primary sculptural medium over the intervening two decades.

It also significantly amplified the transgressive tone of Arata's oeuvre, its ambiguous gender politics making the persuasion of the public to participate in the quintessentially fetishistic activity even more potentially offensive. Equally and inextricably linked to his conceptual bent and his sense of humor, this calculated and deliberate crossing of the boundaries of propriety – his 2006 catalog of *Virgin “T”s* (tee shirt designs bearing such slogans as “Having a Virgin Daughter is Like Shitting Gold Bricks” and “Practicing Santeria Will make a Virgin”) was a particular watershed – can be traced to the same urge to examine and renegotiate borders – a primal form of line-making, after all – that informs Arata's more direct social interventions.

Arata's controversy-inviting side emerges sporadically, seemingly at random, but with carefully calibrated ethical nuances. Mickey Mouse and Hello Kitty branded pipe bombs and cartoonish op art sculptures depicting terrorist attacks (both created long before 9/11) may seem to trivialize postmodern guerilla warfare, but their canny conflation of child-targeted global corporate media symbology and blue-chip abstract painting vocabulary (respectively) with the technology of instantaneous traumatic reality disruption mines a deeper, more hardwired collective vein than most political punditry can muster.

Victims also fare ambiguously in Arata's schemes. *Alleged Suspects and Disguises* (2005) provides zany wigs – sculpted into ridiculously extravagant 'dos painted in brightly colored decorative patterns – as ostensible criminal camouflage for the child abduction suspects pictured on public service mailouts. *Remember* (2009) consists of an array of folk-artish paintings of the hairdos of anonymous possible victims of a 1980's LA-based photographer/serial killer.

For the Catholic League, *Flock* (2005) [4E], consists of a herd of sculpted sheep, dilated vaginal/anal/cloacal orifices ready for relational aestheticization; the occasional hovering gold donut halo designating



virginal status. Other affronts to Arata's religion of birth include the aforementioned teeshirts, his recent depiction of human *Souls* (2010-2011) [4K] as decorated turds floating in toilet bowls, not to mention an elaborately articulated series of works depicting the reproductive cycle of angels.

The *Angels* series [2B] – including *Where Angels Mate*, *Male Angel Larvae* and *Female Angel Larvae* (all 1993) as well as the formally arresting *Birth of Angels* serial folding chair sculptures, and *Angels and Oxygen* drawing installation from 1994 – signaled the morphing of Arata's interest in fantastic genealogies towards the articulation of pseudo-biological morphologies for imaginary immaterial entities.

In the case of the *Angels*, Arata wanted to work with a pre-existing mythological structure, adding fragmentary details to the collective, cumulative religious story -- in order to emphasize that it is, in fact, a living collaborative tradition. Arata's additions include swarms of male larval-stage angels – small, blue polka-dotted newspaper-and-masking tape golliwogs sprouting wings and white athletic sock-tails emblazoned with chemical symbols representing methane and hydrogen sulfide – odiferous components of flatulence, which Arata asserts are the gasses angels give off as they mature. More original than blaming the dog!

The angel larvae emerge from the ground once activated by rain, having been deposited there in spore or egg form by pregnant mature (blue and yellow folding chair) angels that have copulated on the undersides of furniture. The pink-spotted female larvae hover near ceilings, with circular fluorescent lightbulb halos. All mature angels give off oxygen, like trees. These contributions to angel lore are deliberately incomplete, adding a subtle interactive nuance to the work by inviting audience members to fill in the gaps, or even invent entire new mythologies of their own.

Arata's next foray into previously unsuspected realms of natural history took the form of his *Rainbow* series, which followed a similar life-cycle breakdown to the *Angels*, but fleshed out the taxonomic overview by examining such variations as monochrome, complementary and grayscale rainbows. In addition to what Arata refers to as the “playful physics” of transposing an ephemeral atmospheric optical phenomenon into distinctly corporeal incarnations, the elaboration of the stages of their life cycle, and the addition of google eyes (and in some cases handguns) to render them sentient (if not always so friendly) entities, the *Rainbow* variations also absorb and twist a range of formalist art historical concerns of the



PET SPACES, FREDERICK'S OF HOLLYWOOD 1, 2, 3 (1987)

Greenbergian post-painterly, Minimalist, and Light & Space movements.

This hybridization of improbable cartoonish animism with the aesthetic formulae of late Modernism carried over into Arata's next major series, *Pet Spaces*. Beginning with the negative space in the corner of a room, Arata applies his principal of "inanimate anthropomorphics" to a wide array of overlooked geometric configurations – including the spaces between tree branches, between palm trees on LA boulevards, and in the gaps in decorative wrought-iron security window grills. But the primary non-loci of Arata's attention are the areas surrounding the human body.

After his initial *Corner Pets*, Arata turned to one of his frequent tools for aleatory concept generation – junk mail. Noticing the spaces between the limbs of models in mail order catalogs from Victoria's Secret, Frederick's of Hollywood, and International Male, he first painted in the areas on selected pages, then struck the poses himself, traced out the negative spaces, constructed objects from newspaper and masking tape to fit those spaces, painted them in bright primaries or solid white, and gave them eyes. He then restruck the poses -- with the puffy, personality-imbued geometrics wedged into the appropriate holes – and had himself photographed.

The complexity of the symbolic power inversions at play in this sequence of actions is distinctly and deliberately at odds with the Mondrian mascot cuteness of the *Pet Spaces* themselves. Commercial fashion and photographic objectification of the female body passes through the looking glass. The non-object areas surrounding and defining the object are literally objectified, and endowed with an uncanny simulation of sentience more emphatically pitched than that of the models themselves. If that wasn't enough of a twist, these liberated nooks and crannies then become the determinant factors in a new series of actions and photographs that subordinate the (male) artist's own body to the role of frame.

Restless tinkerer that he is, Arata produced numerous variations on this theme – the *Hand Held Pet Spaces* (2001-04) gave new meaning to 'digital' and 'gestural' art by applying the Pet Space formula to such nonverbal hand signals as the peace sign and Rose Bowl Parade: Queen's Princesses Wave (2001-04), while his full-body horror vacuii prosthetics line was expanded to embrace bodybuilder and ballerina poses, sexual and prayer positions, and the multi-player *Spanking Machine* tableaux, which added another layer of political kink as the prone artist appears preparing to crawl an initiatory gauntlet. The separate presentation of the *Pet Spaces* as autonomous sculptural objects further expanded their existential validity, detaching them entirely from their generative context. Meanwhile, the formula was mutated further to create the series of custom made wrought-iron mock stained glass security windows for Arata's *Chapel of Mary's Parents* (2002-06) installation. The windows' rectangular *Pet Space* components bring the allusion to the Geometric Abstractionist grid to the forefront – bulging out beyond the sacred picture plane, in fact -- oozing past the ornate grillwork like some invasive numinous immanence or Modernist Oobleck. At the far end of the facing parallel rows of windows was *Mary's Parents* (Chapel Icon for the *Church of Mary's Parents*) (2001-2), a photographic self-portrait of Arata with his wife and daughter, their heads surrounded by *Pet Space* halo entities, bringing the concept of negative space entirely into



OBSTACLE COURSE INSTALLATION VIEW WITH 5 SOULS (2005)

the ectoplasmic realm, where it rested for several years.

When Arata eventually revived the *Pet Space* formula -- having thoroughly explored its potential as a tool for portraiture -- he did so in the context of the other major genre of pictorialism: landscape. His *Highland Park Palms* photographic series (2004) activates the interstitial spaces between the archetypal California flora lining the streets of his Los Angeles neighborhood. *Laurels* (2004) applied the same treatment to a Polaroid of a complex tangle of branches, while *Reverse Perspective* (2002-05) offered an array of sculptural realizations of the same trope, presented in small-to-large arrangements deriving from the visual vernacular of department store display.

The performative aspects of the *Pet Spaces* -- especially when displayed as independent sculptures -- continued Arata's concern with interactivity, but his next bodies of work returned public participation to its previous centrality. First came the *Obstacle Course Painting* (2005-present), which was, again, inspired by junk mail. In this case however the form was digital, and the junk was email spam. Employing a rudimentary analog of a naive Bayes classifier filtration model, Arata fashioned a cluster of modular abstract paintings representing various pathways and blockages (though no ultimate inbox), which the audience members were invited to reconfigure -- ostensibly into more efficient filtering configurations. Although visually similar, the *Obstacle Course Activity* (2006-09) installation was inspired by the semi-disarray of piles of art, cleaning supplies, and other material at a mid-point during the move into an empty new studio; piles which Arata reasonably enough perceived as a set of potential obstacles to navigation, then -- less reasonably -- as an artwork waiting to happen.

Some of these blockages morphed into iconically abstracted mud puddles, with concentric rings suggesting ripples from a cast stone. Others obstacles took on vaguely organic landscape or animal forms. The set-up was completed by the inclusion of goals based on discarded flamenco dresses, with the empty waistband as the target for puffy roller discs, some emblazoned with portraits of the constantly embarrassed "Even Blush Girl" who appeared to the artist in a vision, warning him that he'd better stop huffing so much brake fluid. Arata considers the work incomplete until the audience plays along. "I'm setting the groundwork for a performance to take place," he notes "But the actors are just normal



REMEMBER #37 (2009)

people.”

Normal people play a wide range of roles in several interconnected series of works based on human hair that Arata developed during the same period as the Obstacle Courses. The previously mentioned *Alleged Suspects and Disguises* (2005) and *Remember* (2009) series – both reliant on forensically absent normals -- bracket a third, more patently participatory group of sculptural objects. *Beards and Mustaches* (2007-09) are constructed and decorated in the same overinflated cartoon style as the *Pet Spaces*, then used as props in a number of photos, but intended primarily as dress-up accessories for studio, gallery, or home.

As a studious pogonologist, Arata is, of course, aware of the Zohar’s description of the kabalistic Beard of Faith as an active channel for divine energy to the human soul, and this connection led to the development of his recent production of related sculptural objects, the red-and-white striped, sausage or squash shaped *Souls* (2007-present) which, once again, give an almost absurdly tangible presence to a commodity whose most defining characteristic is its immateriality. This ironic paradox reaches its zenith (to date) with his retouched photographs of floating Merde D’Artiste, giving fresh meaning to the concept of “passing of souls.”

Themeparkism – as manifested in the Art World – is a play between opposites: the subjective inner expertise of the artist flipped into a virtual reality consensus. In a sense, it is Modern art history come full circle, and biting itself in the butt. Since the advent of photography, Fine Art’s role as the primary technology of simulated reality has been a nostalgic ruin, and the smart money has sided with ideas and artifacts that went as far in the opposite direction as possible. But the butt abides; without it there is no ride. Artists like Michael Arata have absorbed and adapted the lessons of the last century and a half of artistic experiment and identified the inescapable common denominator as the human body. By reasserting the physicality of such seemingly immaterial conceptual quantities as categorization, quantification, emotions, humor, spirituality, territoriality, transaction, and play, and by embodying them in the hardwired language of the human nervous system – AKA formalist aesthetics – Arata has imagineered a parallel reality that invites us to drop our hard-won defenses and go for a ride. But it’s more than just entertainment – free your butt and your mind might follow.

## **Doug Harvey**

Since graduating with an MFA in painting from UCLA in 1994, Doug Harvey has written extensively about the Los Angeles and International art scenes and other aspects of popular culture, primarily as the main art critic for LA WEEKLY for 13 years. His writing has also appeared in Art issues, Art in America, The New York Times, The Nation, Modern Painter, ArtReview, and numerous other publications. He has written museum and gallery catalogue essays for Jim Shaw, Jeffrey Vallance, Tim Hawkinson, Marnie Weber, Lari Pittman, Georganne Deen, Gary Panter, Margaret Keane, Thomas Kinkade, and many others. His curatorial projects have ranged from many traditional gallery and museum exhibitions (including the short-lived Annual LA Weekly Biennials; Don Suggs: One Man Group Show and Heart and Torch: Rick Griffin's Transcendence (both 2007 - co-curated with Meg Linton and Greg Escalante, respectively); and 2008's Aspects of Mel's Hole: Artists Respond to a Paranormal Land Event Occurring in Radiospace) to CD compilations of sound art, programs of found and experimental films, performance events, experimental radio, artist's comic books and zines, and an LA solo gallery exhibit determined by raffle. Mr. Harvey also continues to maintain an active art career, exhibiting his visual art (painting-based multimedia) locally and internationally. He lives and works in Los Angeles and maintains a blog at [www.dougharvey.blogspot.com](http://www.dougharvey.blogspot.com) and a website at [www.dougharvey.la](http://www.dougharvey.la)

## **Secret Messages Via Pinecone**

**This method was used by George Washington to communicate with B. Franklin to request new shoes during his stay at Valley Forge. A month later George received a crate of assorted boots addressed to him and his men. He sent a second cone to Ben acknowledging the Christmas gift.**

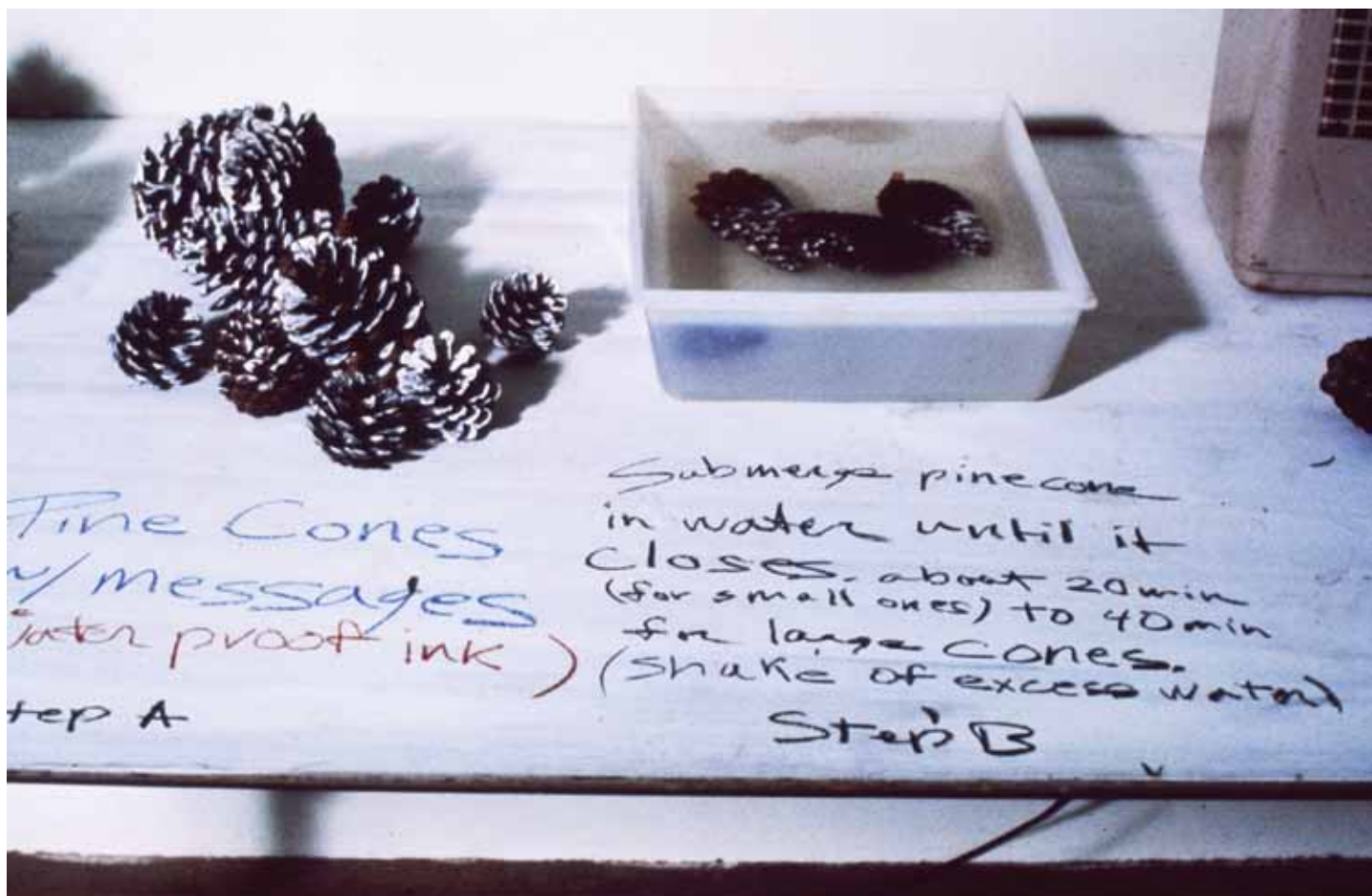
### **SECRET MESSAGES VIA PINECONE BANNER**

vinyl banner

24 x 96 inches

2011





### SECRET MESSAGES VIA PINECONE, ACTIVITY

mixed media activity

84 x 72 x 30 inches

1985





**BANANAS (DETAIL) FROM MARCO POLO  
REINVENTS THE WHEEL**

masonite, asphaltum and acrylic paint

66 x 48 x 40 inches

1987

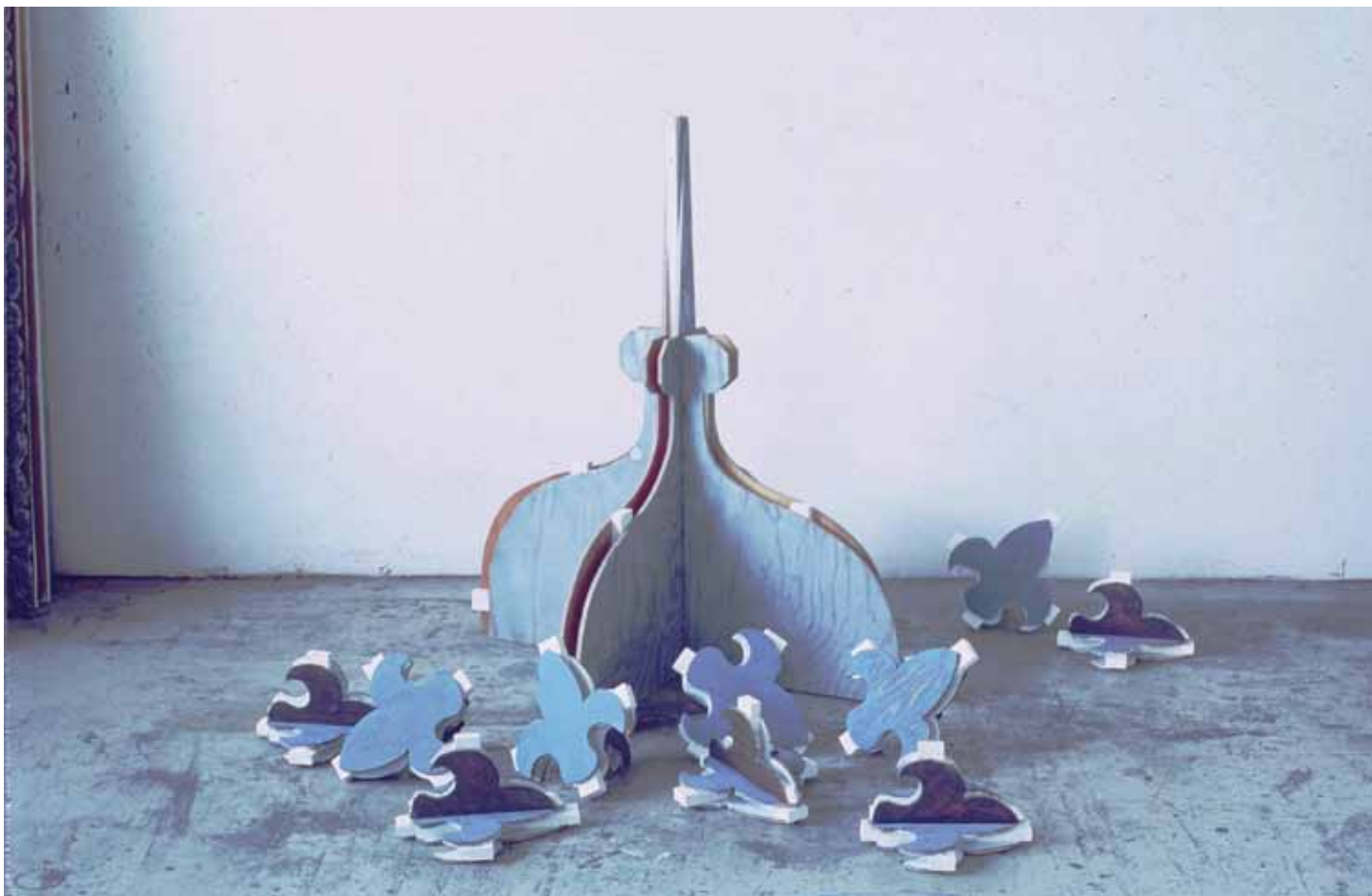


**STORAGE JAR (DETAIL) FROM  
MARCO POLO REINVENTS THE WHEEL**

plywood, encaustic and paint

36 x 24 x 24 inches

1987



**MINARET WITH FLEUR DE LIS**

plywood, asphaltum and acrylic paint

32 x 40 x 44 inches

1988



**MILITARY TARGET**

plywood and acrylic paint  
 26 x 46 x 30 inches  
 1985- 2009



**MILITARY TARGET**

plywood and acrylic paint  
 34 x 41 x 24 inches  
 1985- 2009



### **WHITE TOTEM**

plywood, acrylic, oil paint, Masonite,  
and aluminum

125 x 27 x 30 inches

1988



### **INTESTINES (DETAIL) FROM WHITE TOTEM**

plywood, acrylic and oil paint

27 x 1.25 x 13 inches

1988





### CRUSHED 0-100

enameled pan, masking tape, light bulbs, paint and acrylic resin  
24 x 18 x 9  
1993

### FALLEN LEAVES 1-30

cabinet door, baking pan, glass, leaves, wax and paint  
28 x 14 x 4.5 inches  
1992

### M & N

wood, pillow, shoes, wire, masking tape and acrylic resin  
23 x 15 x 7 inches  
1990

### PRESERVATION

cup rack, ceramic cups, masking tape, black and white photos, paper and acrylic resin  
47 x 30 x 8 inches  
1990



### VAPOR RISING FROM HOT COFFEE

ceramic cups, paper, masking tape  
and acrylic resin

34.5 x 12 x 5 inches

1990

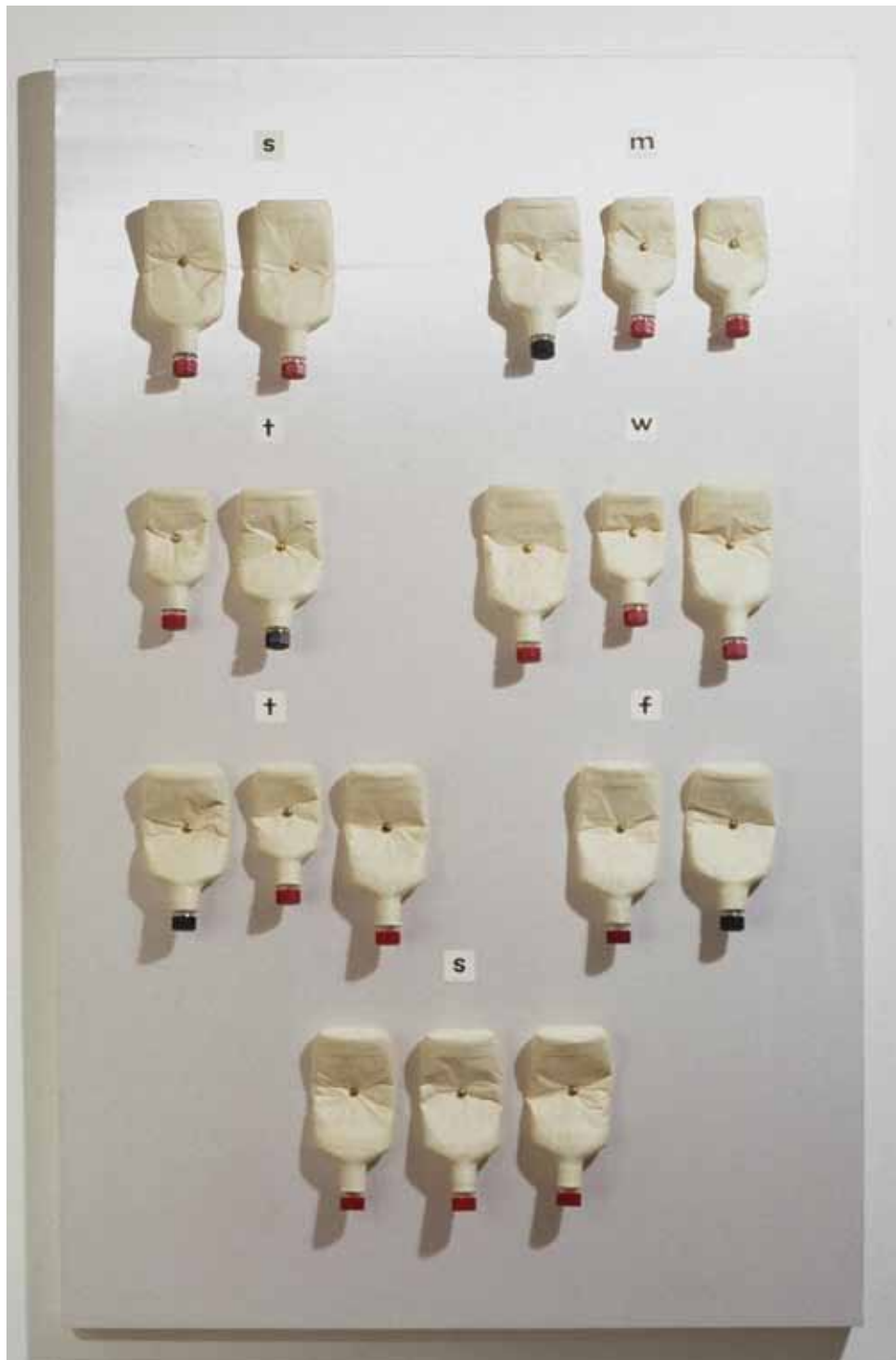


### VAPOR RISING FROM HOT COFFEE

ceramic mugs, paper, masking tape,  
acrylic resin and acrylic paint

42 x 22 x 9 inches

2006



**MY NEIGHBOR'S HABIT**

liquor bottles, paint, and masking tape

on stretched satin

64 x 40 x 4 inches

1994





**DISPOSABLE DRAWING, ACTIVITY**

drawings on paper in paper towel

dispenser

16 x 11 x 4 inches

1991-2010



**VENUS AS A FERTILITY FIGURE,  
ACTIVITY**

pantyhose, high heel shoes, basketball  
hoop, masking tape, paper, acrylic  
resin and paint  
120 x 24 x 24 inches  
1991

**VENUS AS A FERTILITY FIGURE (DETAIL OF EGGS)**

variable dimensions  
1991



### **ONE-TO-ONE RATIO, ACTIVITY**

furniture, beer bottles, hardware,  
rocks, paint, masking tape and  
charcoal  
variable dimensions  
1990

### **ONE-TO-ONE RATIO, ACTIVITY (DETAIL)**

variable dimensions  
1990

### **FAT FLIES, ACTIVITY**

wire, feathers, plastic sheeting, light  
fixtures, and paint  
variable dimensions  
1989

### **AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY ACTIVITY**

plaster, paint and candles  
85 x 25 x 18 feet  
1994

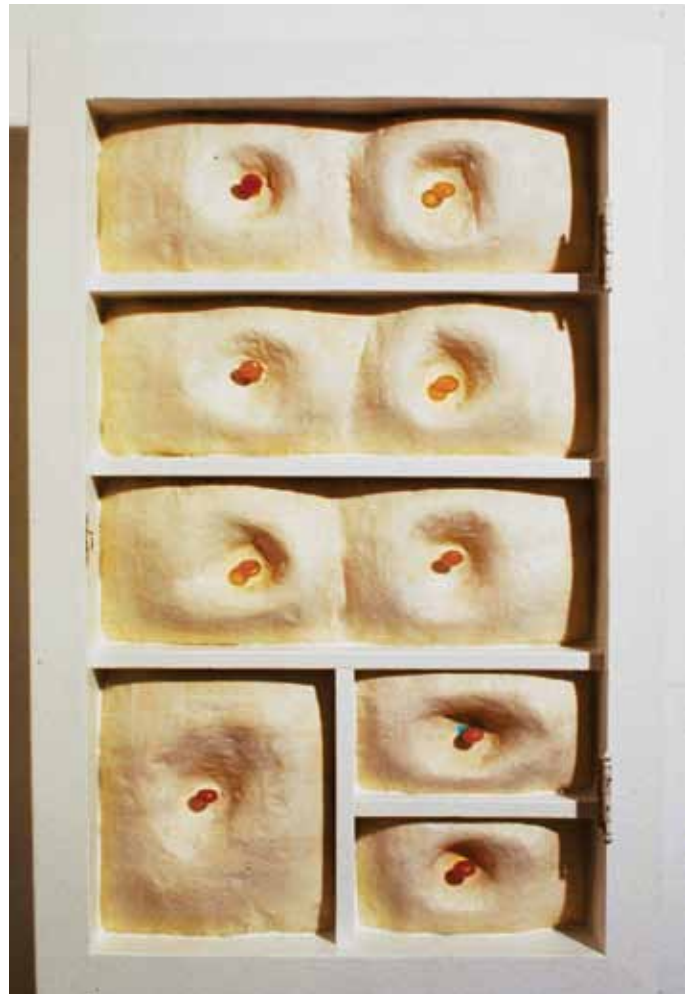


**NURSING STOOL**

furniture, paper, masking tape, paci-  
fiers, acrylic resin and paint

19 x 17 x 17 inches

1991



### PIANO BENCH

furniture, plaster, polyethylene foam,  
pacifiers and paint  
21 x 35 x 15 inches  
1992

### SURROGATE

stuffed pillow, pacifiers, and paint  
12 x 14 x 8 inches  
1992

### NURTURE-NURTURE

polyethylene foam, paper, acrylic resin,  
pacifiers, rubber balls and paint  
29 inches diameter  
1992

### MEDICINAL

medicine cabinet, polyethylene foam,  
paper, pacifiers, acrylic resin and  
paint.  
34.5 x 22 x 7 inches  
1992





**WARM AND COZY**

suitcase, stuffed animals, polyethylene

foam, socks, acrylic resin and paint

18 x 22 x 10 inches

1992



### **CLAM PAN**

dishpan, rubber, clamshells, paper and acrylic resin

6.5 x 15 x 13 inches

1993

### **RAVANA'S SWORD**

serrated knife, paper, masking tape, clamshells, acrylic resin and paint

48 x 13 x 2.5 inches

1994

### **THONG**

rubber sandal, plaster, clam shells and acrylic resin

29 x 8 x 3 inches

1993





**FAT CHAINS WITH DO RE MI**

paper, masking tape, hardware, acrylic  
resin, chicken feathers and paint

126 x 96 x 5 inches

1995



**BIRTH OF ANGELS (DETAIL)**

polyethylene foam, folding chair,  
chicken feathers, plastic eyes, paint,  
graphite, masking tape and acrylic  
resin

37 x 18 x 12 inches

1994



### **BIRTH OF ANGELS**

polyethylene foam, folding chair,  
chicken feathers, plastic eyes, paint,  
graphite, masking tape and acrylic  
resin  
37 x 96 x 12 inches  
1994

### **ANGELS AND OXYGEN**

drywall, graphite and electric lights  
21 x 34 x 3 inches  
1994

### **WHERE ANGELS MATE**

furniture, curtains, electric lights, paint,  
dolls and chicken feathers  
58 x 54 x 40 inches  
1993



### **MALE ANGEL LARVAE**

socks, paint, paper, graphite, masking  
tape, plastic eyes, and acrylic resin  
variable dimensions

1993

### **FEMALE ANGEL LARVAE**

electric lights, paint, paper, graphite,  
masking tape, plastic eyes, and acrylic  
resin

variable dimensions

1993





### **LITTLE VIRGINS**

electric light components, flicker flame  
lights, saddle shoes, paper, masking  
tape, acrylic resin and paint  
11 x 46 x 48 inches  
1993

### **LITTLE VIRGINS**

saddle shoes, paper, silk flowers,  
masking tape, acrylic resin and paint  
10 x 42 x 42 inches  
1993



**LITTLE VIRGIN DRESS**

wood, masking tape, acrylic resin, acrylic  
paint, silk flowers and satin ribbon

26 x 23 x 15 inches

1993



**SPRING MEMORIAL**

wood, paper, polyethylene foam, masking tape, acrylic resin, silk flowers

63 x 10 x 9 inches

1993





### **ASSORTED RAINBOWS**

masking tape, crayon, acrylic paint,  
hardware, plastic eyes and tin foil  
variable dimensions  
1995-2000



### RAINBOW LARVAE

tin foil, masking tape, paper,  
acrylic paint and acrylic resin  
5 x 48 x 36 inches  
1996

### MONOCHROMATIC RAINBOW

wood, masking tape, paper,  
plastic eyes, acrylic paint  
and acrylic resin  
14 x 12 x 2.5 inches  
1996

### GRAY SCALE RAINBOW AREA RUG

wood, masking tape, paper,  
acrylic paint and acrylic resin  
2.5 x 28 x 15 inches  
1995

### ROUND RAINBOW

wood, masking tape, paper,  
plastic eyes, acrylic paint and  
acrylic resin  
14 x 12.5 x 3 inches  
1995



**MICKEY MOUSE PIPE BOMBS**

paint, steel cable and pipes  
11 x 11.5 x 14 inches  
1996

**HELLO KITTY PIPE BOMBS**

paint, steel cable and pipes  
11 x 11.5 x 14 inches  
1997





**EXPLOSION**

wood and acrylic paint

12 x 28 x 13 inches

2010



### **CORNER PET**

cardboard box, masking tape, spray foam,  
paper, acrylic resin, paint and graphite

8 x 24 x 24 inches

2004



### **PET SPACE CATALOG POSES**

paint and graphite on catalog pages

variable dimensions

1996-1998



## London Jeans in four fits

Sale \$25 & \$29



NEW SLIM FIT HIP-HUGGER

### CLASSIC FIT

A. Classic Fit London Jeans offers a relaxed fit that follows the contours of your body. Tapered to fit the waist, ease around the natural curve of the hip. Colours: shown left. Domestic/imported cotton denim. Sizes 2-16.

Four inseam lengths:  
30" inseam, XK106-425  
32" inseam, XK106-430  
34" inseam, XK113-275  
Penny with 28" inseam, XK118-976 Reg. \$30. Sale \$25.

### SLIM FIT

B. Slim Fit London Jeans have a straight, narrow cut through the hip and seat. Available in all the colours, shown left. Domestic/imported cotton denim. Sizes 2-16. Four inseam lengths:

30" inseam, XK115-146  
32" inseam, XK115-147  
34" inseam, XK115-148  
Penny with 28" inseam, XK115-474.

Reg. \$25. Sale \$25. See D.

C. Slim Fit Hip-Hugger Jeans fit low on the hips with a slim shape through the hip, seat and leg. Colours shown below.

Domestic/imported cotton denim. Sizes 2-16. XK115-134 Reg. \$29. Sale \$29. Scoopneck stretch top has a great cropped shape. White (92) or black (93). Domestic cotton Lycra® spandex. XS, S, M, L. XK115-6-42. Orig. \$15. Sale \$15.

D. Relaxed Fit Hip-Hugger Jeans have a low-slung shape that sits below the waist. Fuller cut through the hip, seat and leg. Colours shown below.

Domestic/imported cotton denim. Sizes 2-16. XK115-138 Reg. \$29. Sale \$29. Cropped V-neck top with rag sleeves. Black (92) or white (93). Domestic cotton Lycra® spandex. XS, S, M, L. XK116-822. Orig. \$25. Sale \$19.



NEW RELAXED FIT HIP-HUGGER

## PET SPACE CATALOG POSES

paint and graphite on catalogue pages

variable dimensions

1999-2002



**PET SPACE CATALOG POSE**

C print

40 x 30 inches

2000



**PET SPACE  
CATALOG POSE  
VICTORIA'S SECRET**

C print  
40 x 30 inches  
2000

**PET SPACE  
CATALOG POSE  
VICTORIA'S SECRET**

C print  
40 x 30 inches  
2000

**PET SPACE  
CATALOG POSE  
FREDERICK'S OF HOLLYWOOD**

C print  
40 x 30 inches  
2000

**PET SPACE  
CATALOG POSE  
FREDERICK'S OF HOLLYWOOD**

C print  
40 x 30 inches  
2000



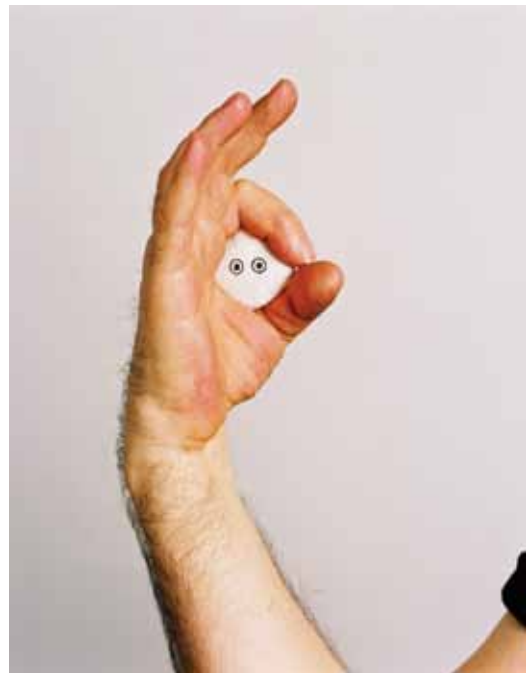
### **ASSORTED PET SPACES**

wood, paper, masking tape, acrylic resin,

paint, plastic eyes and tin foil

variable dimensions

1998-2000



**HAND HELD PET SPACE  
PEACE**

digital prints  
20 X 20 inches  
2001

**HAND HELD PET SPACE  
HELLO/ GOODBYE**

digital prints  
20 X 20 inches  
2001

**HAND HELD PET SPACE  
ROSE BOWL PRINCESS WAVE**

digital prints  
20 X 20 inches  
2001

**HAND HELD PET SPACE  
OKAY**

digital prints  
20 X 20 inches  
2001





### **SPANKING MACHINE 1**

digital prints  
40 x 40 inches  
2001

### **SPANKING MACHINE 2**

digital prints  
40 x 40 inches  
2001

### **SPANKING MACHINE 3**

digital prints  
40 x 40 inches  
2001





**LOST WEIGHT, BELLY**

plywood, paper, paint, masking tape,  
acrylic resin and tin foil

13 x 8.5 x 2 inches

2002

**LOST WEIGHT, BELLY**

plywood, paper, paint, masking tape,  
acrylic resin and tin foil

9.5 x 10 x 2 inches

2002



### **RED SEA**

plywood, paper, foam, masking tape,  
acrylic resin, paint and tin foil  
7.5 x 62 x 12 inches  
2000

### **DEAD SEA**

plywood, paper, foam, masking tape,  
acrylic resin, paint and tin foil  
2 x 29 x 7.5 inches  
2000



**HIGHLAND PARK PALMS**

digital print

20 x 20 inches

2004



**HIGHLAND PARK PALMS II**

digital print  
20 x 20 inches  
2004



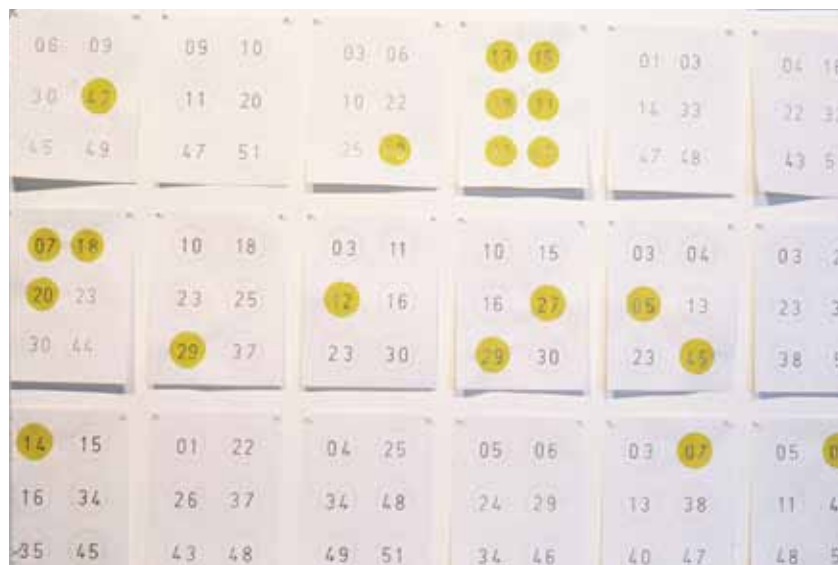
**LAURELS**

digital print  
24 x 24 inches  
2004



## **REVERSE PERSPECTIVE**

styrofoam, wood, paint, acrylic resin,  
tree limbs and tin foil  
variable dimensions  
2002-2005



# **WINNER**

365 drawings on paper, graphite and paint  
variable dimensions  
1999-2000

# **LOTTO TICKETS**

lotto tickets, paper and graphite  
3.75 x 3.25 inches  
1999





**CHAPEL OF MARY'S PARENTS  
(INSTALLATION DETAIL)**

security window bars, masking tape, paint, acrylic resin,  
wood, plastic eyes, tin foil and mixed media on paper  
variable dimensions

2002-2006



**MARY'S PARENTS**  
**(CHAPEL ICON FOR THE CHURCH OF**  
**MARY'S PARENTS)**

cibachrome print

40 x 30 inches

2001 - 2004



## **FLOCK**

styrofoam, wood, masking tape, acrylic  
resin, paint, craft gold leaf, hardware  
variable dimensions

2005



**OBSTACLE COURSE PAINTING,  
ACTIVITY**

paint and acrylic resin on canvas  
(8 x 14 feet) variable configurations  
continuous from 2005





**OBSTACLE COURSE ACTIVITY,  
ACTION SEQUENCE**

styrofoam, wood, acrylic resin and  
paint  
variable dimensions  
2009



## **OBSTACLE COURSE ACTIVITY**

### **(DETAIL)**

styrofoam, wood, acrylic resin and paint

variable dimensions

2006-2009





**KAREN WITH SANTA'S BEARD**

digital print

22 x 16 inches

2010



### **BEARDS AND MUSTACHES**

styrofoam, wood, acrylic resin and  
paint

23 x 36 x 8 inches

2007-2009



**FOO-MAN-CHOO, FROM  
BEARDS AND MUSTACHES**

digital prints  
20 X 16 inches  
2009

**PHARAOH, FROM BEARDS  
AND MUSTACHES**

digital prints  
20 X 16 inches  
2009

**HASIDIC, FROM BEARDS AND  
MUSTACHES**

digital prints  
20 X 16 inches  
2009

**ZZ TOP/ PROPHET, FROM  
BEARDS AND MUSTACHES**

digital prints  
20 X 16 inches  
2009



**ALLEGED SUSPECTS (DISGUISE)**

synthetic hair and paint

12 x 8 x 8 inches

2005



**Last Seen With:** Rosa Chaar Padin  
**DOB:** 6/22/1951   **Age:** 51  
**Ht.:** 5' 2"   **Wt.:** 142 lbs.  
**Hair:** Brown   **Eyes:** Brown  
**Sex:** F   **Date Missing:** 9/7/2001  
**From:** San Juan, PR

**ALLEGED SUSPECT (ROSA)**

digital print  
26 x 20 inches  
2005





**REMEMBER (INSTALLATION VIEW)**

paint on wood panels

90 x 22 inches

2009



**REMEMBER #43**  
paint on wood panel  
14 x 13 inches  
2009



**REMEMBER #49 (DETAIL)**

20 x 14 inches

2009

**REMEMBER #38 (DETAIL)**

18 x 16 inches

2009

**REMEMBER #41  
(DETAIL)**

18 x 16 inches

2009

**REMEMBER #46 (DETAIL)**

18 x 16 inches

2009



**CARTEL HITS I**

paper, paint, acrylic resin, graphite and  
synthetic wig

12 x 7 x 8 inches

2011



**CARTEL HITS II**

paper, paint, acrylic resin, graphite and  
synthetic wig

12 x 7 x 8 inches

2011



**SOUL**

paper, paint and acrylic resin

7.5 x 3 x 3 inches

2010





### **FIVE SOULS**

styrofoam, wood, acrylic resin, paint  
and hardware

91 x 7 x 5 inches

2008



### **DEFLATED**

styrofoam, wood, acrylic resin, paint  
and wire

64 x 22 x 10 inches

2007-2009



### **TWO SOULS**

styrofoam, wood, acrylic resin, paint  
and wire

19 x 13 x 9 inches

2010



#### **SOUL I**

digital print and paint  
16 x 12 inches  
2010

#### **SOUL II**

digital print and paint  
16 x 12 inches  
2010

#### **SOUL III**

digital print and paint  
16 x 12 inches  
2010

#### **SOUL IV**

digital print and paint  
16 x 12 inches  
2010



**SOUL**

paint on beer can

5 x 3.5 inches

2011



**PLANE JAYNE WITH PET SPACE**

digital print

16 x 12 inches

2011

**michael arata**

born 1955

## **EDUCATION**

- 1982 MFA, San Jose State University, San Jose  
1979 BFA, San Jose State University, San Jose

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

1999-02 Founder and Co-curator of One Night Stands, an alternative gallery

## **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 2011 *ARATALAND!* Beacon Arts Building, Inglewood, CA  
2009 *Remember*, Kristi Engle Gallery, Los Angeles. CA  
*Spotlight Artist*, San Diego international Art Fair, San Diego, CA  
*pARTy*, Marino Pascel Residence, Los Angeles, CA  
*Touch*, Diana Slotnick Collection, Los Angeles, CA  
*Obstacle Course*, Cabrini Gallery, Woodbury University, Burbank, CA  
2007 *Chapel of Mary's Parents*, Robert V Fullerton Museum, Cal Stat University San Bernardino  
2005 *Flock*, AcunaHansen Gallery, Los Angeles  
2002 *Fill in the Blanks*, Abel Joseph Gallery, Brussels, Belgium  
2000 *Me and My Shadow*, Post Gallery, Los Angeles  
1999 *Winner*, Abel Joseph Gallery, Brussels, Belgium  
1998 *Killer Rainbow*, Abel Joseph Gallery, Brussels, Belgium  
*Vapor*, Robert Miller Fine Arts, Los Angeles  
1996 *Bad Gas*, Random Gallery, Los Angeles  
1992 Food House, Santa Monica  
1991 Downey Museum of Art, Downey  
Gallery 5, Santa Monica  
1990 Brown Davies, Los Angeles  
1988 *Vocabulary*, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati  
*Objects*, Occidental College, Los Angeles  
1987 *Military Targets*, Davies Long Gallery, Los Angeles

## **INSTALLATIONS**

- 2004 *House/Home*, Xavier Courable Gallery, Washington DC  
1995 *Average Life Expectancy: A Limited Activity*, Crossing Gallery, Los Angeles  
1994 *Fat Flies*, Occidental College, Los Angeles  
*Chili Cook-Off*, Far Bazaar at the Brewery, Los Angeles  
1993 *Immigration*, Ramora Gallery, Los Angeles  
1990 *One To One Ratio*, Opus Gallery, Los Angeles  
1987 *Marco Polo Reinvents the Wheel*, Museo ItaloAmericano, San Francisco  
*Target Bowling*, site installation in Anza Borrego Desert  
1986 *Explicit Dark Horses*, Double Rocking G Gallery, Los Angeles  
1985 *Military Target*, site installation in Anza Borrego Desert  
*Monet's Haystacks*, Pacific Grove Art Center, Pacific Grove  
1984 *Transplant*, Triton Museum of Art, Santa Clara  
*Alternating Wave Patterns*, Northwest Artists Workshop, Portland, Oregon  
*Formal Gardens*, Southern Exposure Gallery, San Francisco





BEACON ARTS BUILDING

808 NORTH LA BREA AVENUE, INGLEWOOD CA 90302 [WWW.BEACONARTSBUILDING.COM](http://WWW.BEACONARTSBUILDING.COM)

**Critics-as-Curators** is the inaugural art exhibition series at Beacon Arts developed and directed by Beacon Arts director Renée Fox. In recognition of the gallery's first year, esteemed art critics and writers — recognized locally, nationally and internationally — have been invited to bravely step out from behind the pen, and conceive and curate shows of their choosing at the Beacon Arts Building in conjunction with discussions, lectures, catalogues, or other ways to reveal the thought process behind why exhibition works are chosen with insight into their importance to the curator. The individual expertise and personal taste developed by the curators' world-view will be on exhibit throughout Beacon Arts' first year. The series kicked off in October 2010 with *Ghost Stories: Happenings, Hauntings, and Curiosities* curated by Shana Nys Dambrot, followed by *Densities: Line Becoming Shape, Shape Becoming Object* curated by Peter Frank and continues with *ARATALAND!* curated by Doug Harvey, March 26 - May 22, 2011.

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Editors: Michael Arata, Renée Fox &

Doug Harvey

Photography:

**PET SPACES: VICTORIA'S SECRET CATALOG POSE(2000)** FRONT COVER

**VENUS AS A FERTILITY FIGURE, ACTIVITY (1991)** BACK COVER

**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION #9 (1994)** INSIDE BACK COVER

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