

Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful Series: Photo Op* (2004)



UNNAMABLE NAME

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An installation within the book-stacks
at the Tompkins County Public Library
101 E. Green St., Ithaca, NY 14850

January 11 - March 30, 2008

Organized by Ithaca/NYC based artist
Todd Ayoung

Participating artists:

Ayisha Abraham
Kenseth Armstead
Kim Asbury
Jeff de Castro
Elizabeth Cohen
David Diao
Toby Greenberg
Johan Grimonprez
Jane Jin Kaisen
Janet Koenig
Katherine Liberovskaya
Phill Niblock
Jenny Polak
Rit Premnath
Martha Rosler
Dread Scott
Greg Sholette
Buzz Spector
Jacob Tell
Mierle Laderman Ukeles

Catalogue essay by Jelena Stojanović

Cover image

Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home:*
House Beautiful series: Photo Op (2004)
Digital photo montage, dimensions variable

Unnamable Name exhibition catalogue
published by Blackout Ink, 2008



This exhibit was made possible with support from

with additional support provided by
the Danish Arts Council

The Rules of the Game

Exhibition Guidelines from Todd Ayoung

“The fact would seem to be, if in my situation one may speak of facts, not only that I shall have to speak of things of which I cannot speak, but also, which is even more interesting, but also that I, which is if possible even more interesting, that I shall have to, I forget, no matter. And at the same time I am obliged to speak. I shall never be silent. Never.

Samuel Beckett *The Unnamable*

“The aesthetic dimension still retains a freedom of expression which enables the writer and artist to call men and things by their name---to name the other unnamable.”

Herbert Marcuse

“...the unnameable ‘essence’ of the name is that which conjoins a possible and a prescription.”

Alain Badiou

Many individuals historically have interfaced with the library as a source for further enlightenment, research, and information gathering. From Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and James Baldwin to the Unabomber, the library has functioned as a place of the possible, and the impossible. The singularity of this possibility and impossibility is what I will prescribe as the unnamable name. It is potentially a politics leading many to revolution, or “terrorism”.

Isn't this why the library has become an ongoing battleground for surveillance vs privacy issues, especially after 9/11?

Artists were asked to create work for underused non-art spaces inside the Tompkins County Library in Ithaca New York. This *unnamable* art appeared as sightings, un-bindings, and unidentified objects located in the “gaps,” “voids,” and “empty” places between the categories of information and entertainment the typical library visitor is usually in search of. The artwork worked to address the persistence, repetition, and notion of the *unnamable*, as sightings between identity or naming of a category.



Tompkins County Public Library, Ithaca, New York

Todd Ayoung splits his time between New York City and Ecovillage at Ithaca, in Ithaca New York. Ayoung has exhibited nationally and internationally and has worked with performance, video, audio, photography, sculpture, journals, curating, and installation. Some of his work can be found at this website:

www.asbury.dk/ayoungandrade.htm

Special Thanks

Sally Grubb, Beth Killheffer, Kim Asbury, Megan Pugh, Valorie Rockney, Karl Fitzke, Shifter Magazine and Jelena Stojanović.

Much thanks to **Chris white** for the opening night music improvisation for Samuel Beckett's *Film*, 1965.

Chris White is cellist and composer who plays classical, jazz and other improvisational styles. He has two solo CDs and has played on recordings by other artists. Chris is the director of the international New Directions Cello Association and Festival, now in its 14th year. For more information about Chris White visit: www.newdirectionscello.com/chriswhite/index.htm

About the Library: The Fine Art of Camouflage

Jelena Stojanović

The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books. It is a phenomenon of the library.

Michel Foucault

I

Some artworks look like library books on library shelves, but the pages are glued together or missing. Others consist of books with a pair of figures hanging between them, or a photograph squeezed in between. Some artworks are mock-up book wraps, or book cover replicas, and yet another consists solely of a stack of sheets with no library information which are available for library patrons to take away freely.

II

This is not yet another art exhibition organized under the aegis of an established art institution with the works displayed in designated and used-for-this-purpose areas. This exhibition in the public library tactically disregards its official “exhibition space” in order to disrupt, misuse, and invade the institutional library space. This exhibition spreads art over the book shelves, across the library computer monitors, and on the walls behind the stacks.

Todd Ayoung, a New York/Ithaca installation artist, has invited an impressive number of artists, a truly international group, to produce art using the Tompkins County Public Library in an idiosyncratic way. In his invitation, Ayoung made clear these very peculiar exhibiting conditions: “Artists are asked to create work for, and exhibit their work in, under used non-art spaces inside the Tompkins County Library. This ‘unnamable’ art will appear as sightings, un-bindings, and unidentified objects located in the ‘gaps’, ‘voids’, and ‘empty’ places in between the categories of information/entertainment

the typical library visitor is usually in search of.”

This manifestation builds on and works through the complicated history of the avant-garde/neo-avant-garde critical art interventions, such as the staging of art in the factories by Italian and Russian futurists at the beginning of the last century in Europe (avant-garde); or numerous instances of contextual, performative artistic practices, perhaps somewhat uneasily referred to as site-specific or site-oriented practices, that have developed around the world since the 1950s (neo-avant-garde).

III

In his invitation, Ayoung—not as a curator or exhibition organizer, but rather as an informant or collaborator—supplied the artists with a detailed list of possible locations throughout the library that he deemed appropriate for his concept. He made clear why being specific was so important: “From Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and James Baldwin to the Unabomber, the library has functioned as a place of the possible, and the impossible. The singularity of this possibility and impossibility is what I will prescribe as the unnamable name. It is potentially a politics leading many to revolution, or “terrorism.”” In concluding he simply asked, “Isn’t this why the library has become an ongoing battle ground for surveillance vs. privacy issues, especially after 9/11?”

Predictably every artist responded differently to the invitation. Most worked within the given guidelines, choosing carefully from offered samples and locations, and made works by creating a tension between a chosen physical site (book shelf, computer monitor, library wall) and a discursive, institutional framework underlying it or rather legitimizing it (library as archive, collection of knowledge, public institution). However, a good number of artists offered an oblique, often more intricate response, further productively complicating the intervention.

IV

Thus, for example, **Johan Grimonprez’s** video *Double Take* (2007), to be seen on library computer monitors, is a work-in-progress. The theme of identity and doubles or look-alikes centers on British film director Alfred Hitchcock and Belgian Surrealist painter René Magritte. (Incidentally, Grimonprez happens to be Belgian). Similarly, the minimalist composer **Phil Niblock**, in his video work *Topolo PN* (2005), again on library computer monitors, explores different visual and temporal densities in an open ended work, completely disregarding given physical and institutional framework.

On the other hand, **Jenny Polak**, in her work *ICE-Escape* (2007) which doubles as a library mock-exit sign, raises issues about citizens, illegal immigrants and political and administrative borders. And in her video *Borderline Fraternities*, (2006), on library monitors,

Katherine Liberovskaya similarly examines the theme of borders and fraternity while reflecting “on NAFTA and the European Union as symbols of political fraternity or fellowship and the conflict between national and pan-national identity in the global economy.”

Kenseth Armstead’s installation, *Spook* (2005), composed of three prints and a video located on the back wall behind the book shelves, explores the issues of race and identity formation, ultimately raising the question of history writing and the uses and abuses of historical knowledge. Likewise, Elizabeth Cohen’s installation *Untitled*, (2007), placed on a shelf with Latin American history, frames the undeniable passage of time as a way to problematize the formation of historical temporalities. Ayisha Abraham’s installation *Land-Scapes or Reality is Neatly Framed From Here* (2007), on library computer monitors, in like manner critically examines the ways knowledge is constructed and represented.



Kenseth Armstead, *Spook* (2005)

Wary of any ideological recuperation, Jacob Tell with *No Artwork*, (2004), nonetheless offers to library users, in place of a work, a series of sheets explaining a rationale behind his decision to omit creating any object. These are to be found in different locations all throughout library.

V

The majority of artists, however, worked closely with the library, both as a physical condition and as a discursive formation directly probing into library institutional mechanisms such collecting, systematizing and organizing knowledge. Many addressed the issue of the library as an embattled site and focused on an ongoing tension between politics and the library as a public institution and citizens’ rights to privacy in their search for information. In doing so, they followed closely Ayoung’s prescriptions, working in and making use of a deceptively paltry mode, creating ‘unidentified objects’ and exploiting a possible misrecognition in an allegorical mode.

An example of this is a collaboration between Jane Jin Kaisen and Sreshta Rit Premnath entitled *Revised Systems* (2007), an audio piece situated on the shelves between sections 100 and 200. The work examines a

shift in library categorization as a way to expose inherent arbitrariness. Similarly, Jeff de Castro, in his installation *Odd Infinitum* (2007), created a series of mirrored carts placed strategically in the library, addressing the ingrained self-referentiality of library systems. In the same vein, Jane Jin Kaisen’s video work, *Conceptual Cathedrals* (2007), displayed on library computer monitors, exposes library institutional mechanisms. Dread Scott’s series of interventions - *Title Sealed* (2007), mock book wraps interspersed on the shelves in the biography and history sections, and *Removed for your protection* (2007), alterations on stack numbering, in a barely visible gesture - highlight the politics of information and the public sphere.

Abstract painter David Diao’s collage *Bobst Library Floor*, (2008) nonetheless, frames what he perceives to be both alienating and/or mythical workings of the modernist architectural discourse.

VI

One of the greatest dangers of site specificity, including for this exhibition, is the potential for works to result in an opaque gesture that renders the institution not more open and public, but more hermetic and narcissistic – relegated to initiates, and incomprehensible and closed to the general public. To avoid this, it is necessary for the artist to exercise self-reflection, in order to increase the critical distance and allow the public to become more critical. A good number of the works gathered in this manifestation is aware of this danger and is judiciously self-reflective.

Probably the most powerful example of this awareness is that offered by Greg Sholette’s *Still Life with Dead Fascists* (2007), a mixed media installation which works “in the ‘debased’ form of souvenirs, figurines, action figures, and plastic model kits” to address the ever pressing issues of historical awareness and politics. Powerfully self-reflective in a different way, the work of Kim Asbury, *Black holes, passage of knowledge* (2007), displayed in the art section, similarly uses figurines and action figures to expose violence embedded in modernist discourse on art.



Kim Asbury, *Black Holes, Passage of Knowledge* (2007)
Martha Rosler, *Lifesavers in a Time of War* (2008)

Janet Koenig's work *The Autobiography of J. Edgar Hoover* (2007), an installation in the form of a mock book cover in the biography section, cunningly links a historical personality and the cleaning industry, hence offering a new spin on Cold War discursive mechanisms. By contrast, Toby Lee Greenberg's, mock book installation *Biography Unwritten*, is part of continuing work on the justice system. While the installation is primarily conceived as a critique, it also acts a memorial for all 'innocent men who have been incarcerated for crimes they did not commit.'

Buzz Spector's collaboration with Lisa Nichols, *Shelf Life* (1993-95), displayed in the Periodicals reading area, is an installation which deliberately blurs the distinction between the private and public, fact (document) and fiction.

Martha Rosler's contribution includes *'Photo op'* (2004) a photomontage from her ongoing *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* series, while *Lifesavers in a time of war* (2008) a selection of book covers from artist's personal library (an ongoing project), displayed on library shelves, is also available on library website as a PDF *Screen Saver for a Time of War* (2008). For the artist this is a way to 'call to readers' attention to some books and images of analysis and resistance.' In the same vein is Mierle Laderman Ukeles's work *Don't even think about it* (2007), which consists of five printed utterances placed throughout library. Semantic shifters, 'you', 'us' are used in a well-known neo-conceptual manner to destabilize the authorial (speaking) position, and invite the library users to an active response.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles
Let's Just Leave It at That (2007)

VII

Libraries (not unlike museums) since Modernity are powerful tokens of everydayness, a condition premised on ever increasing specialization and self-referentiality as evidenced in Foucault's epigraph. A condition where the reality is closed off (turned into yet another

representation), and where the imaginary "resides between the book and the lamp".

In response, the artists reunited here and their works symbolically take over the library by forcing the referent in and using the fine art of camouflage in a utopian gesture reminiscent of early avant-gardes.

VIII

This is not an art exhibition, this is a library occupation – library patrons beware!

Jelena Stojanović, a visiting scholar at Cornell, teaches and writes about European modernism. Her essay *Internationalities: Collectivism, the Grotesque, and Cold War Functionalism* is included in *Collectivism After Modernism The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* edited by Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette. She is finishing a book on European cold war art and culture. She holds a PhD in art history from the University of Sorbonne, Paris.



Gregory Sholette, *Still Life with Dead Fascists* (2007)
Two resin figurines installed with books [8”x 8”]

Cultural critics from Walter Benjamin to Roland Barthes have argued that the most sentimental and debased forms of art often reflect contemporary society better than those of the fine or “high arts”. Pulp novels, ‘B’ movies, cheap advertising all directly apprehend what less “base” modes of culture often obscure. My work involves examining and reproducing work in the “debased” form of souvenirs, figurines, action figures, and plastic model kits and often takes the form of scenes, or dioramas that I then photograph and display. I have chosen to work with these familiar, ‘middle-brow’ forms because they navigate a narrow line between irony and innocence, the sentimental and the uncanny. Like portable icons I imagine these momentos invoking sentimental longings as well as everyday life and small-scale histories. According to scholar Jeffrey Skoller, Sholette’s “counter-practices have been less concerned with the commodification of culture and artistic auteurism than with working in multiple ways to create an arts culture committed to critical practice, that redefines the role of the autonomous artist into a citizen participant actively working to transform cultural discourses and institutions within their communities.” (From Selected Works catalog essay, Colgate University)

Gregory Sholette is a New York-based sculptor, multimedia artist, writer, and founding member of the art collectives Political Art Documentation and Distribution and REPOhistory. Recent exhibitions include “Weather Report,” Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art with Janet Koenig, “Historical Revisionism” at the Other Cinema, San Francisco, and “Mapquest” at PS122, NYC, and “Survive/Alive,” with J. Koenig at Wave Hill, Bronx. Along with Blake Stimson he co-edited the book Collectivism After Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945 (University of Minnesota, 2007), and together with Nato Thompson co-edited The Interventionists: A Users Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life (MassMoCA/MIT Press, 2004, 2006). Sholette is an Assistant Professor of Sculpture in the Department of Art and Art History at Queens College, and is currently working on a book about the political economy of the art world and his concept of creative “dark matter” for Pluto Press, UK.



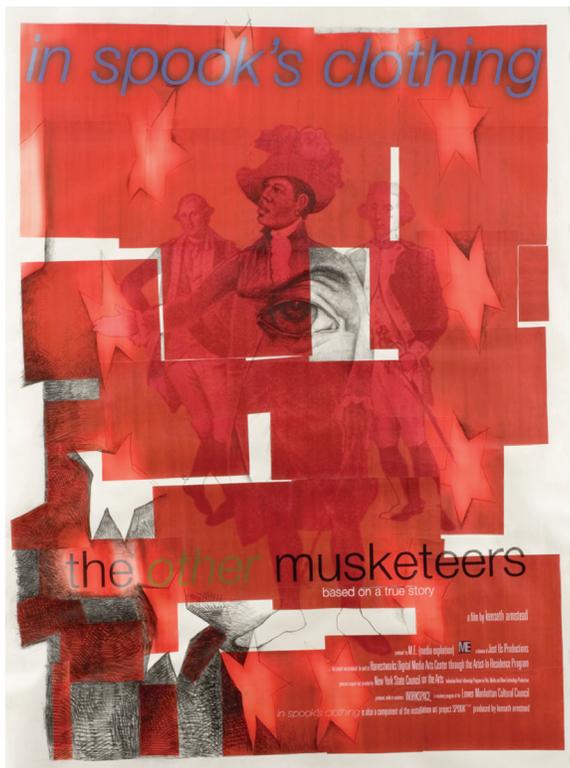
Johan Grimonprez, *Double Take* (2007)
Video [work in progress]

Double Take is an adaptation of a J.L.Borges’ story portraying a world of doppelgangers starring professional Hitchcock look-alike Ron Burrage. Now in post-production at Anna Sanders Films (Paris) it is scheduled to be released later this year. A first chapter, called *Looking For Alfred*, premiered at the Photographer’s Gallery (London) and the Palais Des Beaux-Arts (Brussels), and went on to win a Spirit Award (New York), as well as the 1st prize at the ZKM International Media Award in 2005.

Johan Grimonprez achieved international acclaim with his video collage, Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y. With its premiere at Centre Pompidou and Documenta X in Kassel in 1997, it eerily foreshadowed the events of September 11th. The film tells the story of airplane hijackings since the 1970s and how these changed the course of news reporting. The movie consists of recycled images taken from news broadcasts, Hollywood movies, animated films and commercials.

Grimonprez’s productions have traveled the main festival circuit from Telluride, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, to Tokyo and Berlin. Curatorial projects were hosted at major exhibitions and museums worldwide such as the Whitney Museum in New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich and the Tate Modern in London. Grimonprez’s work is included in numerous collections such as the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, the Kanazawa Art Museum, Japan, the National Gallery, Berlin and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark. Nominated for the Hugo Boss Award in 2005.

Johan Grimonprez lives and works in Brussels and New York. In 2007 he had his first retrospective at the Pinakothek Der Moderne (München), accompanied by a monograph with texts by Thomas P. Elseasser, Slavoj Zizek and Tom Mccarthy.



Kenseth Armstead, *Spook* (2005)
Video and three digital prints [50" x 30"]

In the summer of 1781, James Armistead Lafayette was the sneakiest man in America. He earned this dubious distinction providing intelligence to help end the American Revolution. Against impossible odds, James succeeded, liberating our insurgent forefathers from the British Empire. *Spook* is a multimedia installation project, in-progress, based on James' true story as a double-agent for America's first Director of Central Intelligence, George Washington. *Spook* lyrically extends and technologically upgrades the tradition of Neo-classical history painting exploited by Jacques-Louis David. It is inspired by David's lasting images of Napoleon and the age of revolution. *Spook* operates in critical dialog with David's example. I recover an obscured fragment using rigorous historical research techniques; the true story of James Armistead Lafayette - his role as the double-agent / slave. Then, like Fred Wilson and Jenny Holzer, I construct an ironic, questionable reality. The formulaic memory composition changes, requiring a re-assembly of our notion of the American Revolution and the founding fathers. The existing components of the *Spook* project; screenplay, videos, film posters, drawings, video game demo and historical research materials are all integrated into an installation based on the facts that tell James' remarkable story.

Kenseth Armstead received a BFA from the Corcoran College of Art and an MS in Integrated Digital Media from Polytechnic University. He participated in the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program.

Armstead's multimedia and installation works have been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Bronx Museum of Art, Studio Museum in Harlem and MIT. Grants include a Pollock-Krasner Award, NYFA video fellowship, NYSICA (Individual Artist Grant, Film & Media / New Technical Production,) and a Camille Hanks-Cosby Fellowship.

This past year Armstead was resident artist at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace, Harvestworks and the Castle Trebesice in Prague, CZ.

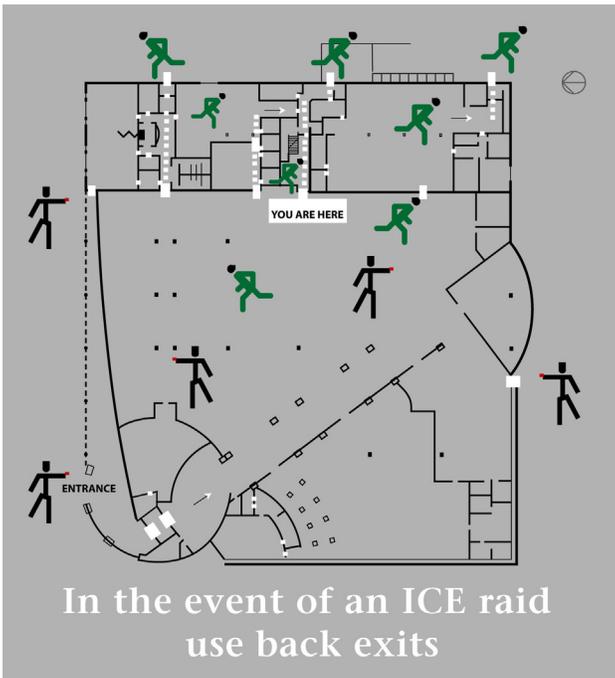
www.kensetharmstead.com



Elizabeth Cohen, *Untitled* (2007)
Digital print and paint on foam in masonite box
[17" x 11.25" x 7.5"]

That which escapes from behind closed doors or book covers to bleed into the space beyond - A portrait through time in a constant dissolve and remix.

Elizabeth Cohen is an interdisciplinary artist who has shown her work both nationally and internationally at galleries, museums and festivals. Her recent solo exhibitions include: "Splice" at the Miroslav Kraljevic Gallery in Zagreb, Croatia where she received an Artslink Award, and "Random Access" at Sideshow Gallery in Brooklyn NY. Her work was recently included in "Nxt Message" at the Koffler Gallery in Toronto Canada. Elizabeth Cohen is an Associate Professor of Art at the University of Rochester.



Jenny Polak, *ICE-Escape* (2007)
Mock emergency exit sign [12" x 11"]

Jenny Polak designs and installs fictional architectural hiding and dwelling places for people without immigration papers. All are mutual survival kits for a status quo that desires immigrants even as it excludes.

The *ICE-Escape* sign series is a decentered public art project that evolves as more venues have asked the artist to design their own customized ICE-Escape signs. The signs draw attention to the fact that community members in the US are living in daily fear of being caught in a raid by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Polak's related web and drawing projects also inhabit an intersection of art and design. She has invented a fictional interior design company, *Design for the Alien Within*, to frame her domestic work. It appears to market furniture units with human hiding spaces in them. Posing as modern furniture or infrastructural elements, the works infuse design logic with the dangers of today's immigration politics. The cultural resonances of visibility and secrecy and the cheery terms of interior design consumption recast immigrant-citizen struggles at home, at work, and in prison.

In alluding to illegal assistance of undocumented and stateless people, the artist draws on my her own life as a resident alien, her migratory family history as well as current events. Polak comes from England and a family history of hiding and migration drives her work's preoccupation. She has shown widely and is a recipient of a Franklin Furnace Future of the Present Award and a Digital Matrix Award among others. She currently lives and works in New York City.

www.jennypolak.com



Phill Niblock, *Topolo PN* (2005)
Video and sound, 11:50, NTSC on DVD Loop

Topolo PN is about stretching time subtly, in both video and audio. It was made at a residency and festival in Northern Italy - the Stazione di Topolo, in a mountain village on the Italian/Slovenian border, Donatella Ruttar and Moreno Miorelli are the producers.

Phill Niblock is an intermedia artist using music, film, photography, video and computers. He makes thick, loud drones of music, filled with microtones of instrumental timbres which generate many other tones in the performance space. Simultaneously, he presents films/ videos which look at the movement of people working, or computer driven black and white abstract images floating through time. He was born in Indiana in 1933. Since the mid-60's he has been making music and intermedia performances which have been shown at numerous venues around the world among which: The Museum of Modern Art; The Wadsworth Atheneum; the Kitchen; the Paris Autumn Festival; Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels; Institute of Contemporary Art, London; Akademie der Kunste, Berlin; ZKM; Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard; World Music Institute at Merkin Hall NYC. Since 1985, he has been the director of the Experimental Intermedia Foundation in New York www.experimentalintermedia.org where he has been an artist/member since 1968. He is the producer of Music and Intermedia presentations at EI since 1973 (about 1000 performances) and the curator of EI's XI Records label. In 1993 he was part of the formation of an Experimental Intermedia organization in Gent, Belgium - EI v.z.w. Gent - which supports an artist-in-residence house and installations there. Phill Niblock's music is available on the XI, Moikai, Mode and Touch labels. A DVD of films and music is available on the Extreme label.

www.phillniblock.com



Jane Jin Kaisen, *Conceptual Cathedrals* (2007)
Short film / Video (three channel) Length: 17 minutes

Director, editing, script structure: Jane Jin Kaisen
Camera: Jane Jin Kaisen / Carl Johan Sennels

Script development: Dag Petersson, Jan Bäcklund,
Tobias Hübinette, Deborah Caldwell-Stone

Actors:

Dag Petersson (*The Royal Archivist*)
Jan Bäcklund (*The Conceptual Collector*)
Tobias Hübinette (*The Anarchist*)
Jennifer Gonzalez (*The Librarian*)

Dancer: Sun Hee Engelstoft

Voiceovers: Vera Maeder, Runo Lagomarsino

Sound assistance: Karl Fitzke

The library and the archive as sites of knowledge and power are scrutinized through a number of characters representing different subject positions. These positions are based on interviews with people who are, in various ways, related to the archive or library. *The Royal Archivist* represents he who decides which photographs are included or excluded in a National image collection. *The Conceptual Collector* is an artist who elaborates on the systematization of knowledge, while *The Unnamable*, played by a dancer, is a trickster character only communicating through movement, neither included, nor completely excluded from the archive. *The Anarchist* and *The Librarian* have more critical attitudes towards the relationship between knowledge and power. While *The Anarchist* has tried to unveil the secrecy surrounding prominent people who were members of Nazi organizations, *The Librarian* elaborates on the consequences the USA Patriot Act has had on issues of privacy rights and intellectual freedom.

Jane Jin Kaisen is a visual artist working in an interdisciplinary mode, with film, video, performance, text, and photography. Using reversed strategies and constructing multi-layered and non-linear narratives, her work attempts to complicate notions of subjectivity, discourse, and ideology. Jane Jin is educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and is currently on a Fulbright scholarship at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in New York.
www.janejinkaisen.org

Sponsored by the Danish Arts Foundation



Buzz Spector and Lisa Nichols, *Shelf Life* (1993-95)

In the summer of 1993, Lisa Nichols commissioned Buzz Spector to fill a shelf in her library with books of his choice, the site to be determined by mutual agreement, with completion of the selection to be determined by the choice of site. The work includes the books on site, a photograph of the installation, and this list of titles, in the order of their purchase and shipment.

Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*
(translated by Emecec Editores)

Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition*

Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*

Harold Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object*

Steven Toulmin & Allen Janik, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*

William H. Gass, *On Being Blue*

Ann Goldstein & Mary Jane Jacob, eds., *A Forest of Signs* (exh. cat.)

Dave Hickey, *The Invisible Dragon*

Michel Leiris, *Brisées* (translated by Lydia Davis)

John Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*

Susan Stewart, *On Longing*

Charles Rosen & Henri Zwirner,
Romanticism & Realism

Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*
(translated by Joachim Neugroschel)

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*
(translated by William Weaver)

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Sanford Schwartz, *Artists and Writers*

Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*

Guy Davenport, *Tatlin!*

Claude Simon, *Triptych*
(translated by Helen R. Lane)

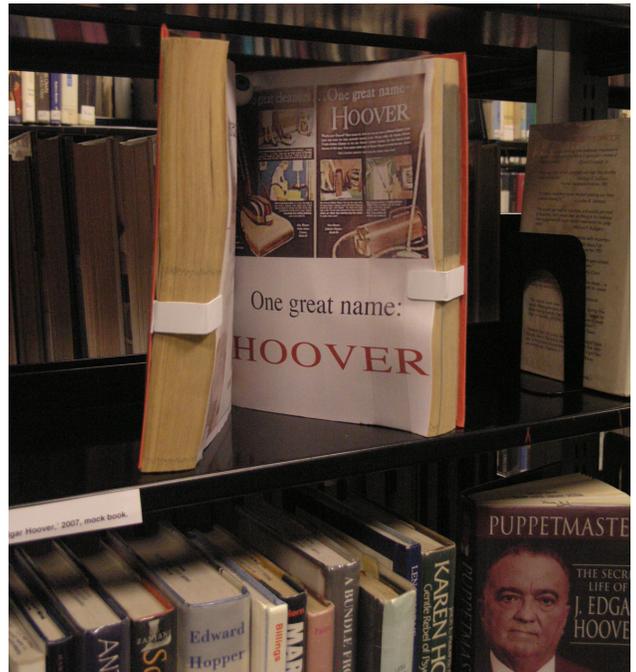
Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*
(translated by Leon S. Roudiez)



David Diao, *Bobst Library Floor* (2008)
Collage on canvas [16.5" x 12"]

The Bobst Library at NYU designed by Philip Johnson in 1972 has a history of tragedies. Two students jumped to their deaths by throwing themselves to the atrium floor 5 stories below. Stories and myths have sprung up over the years that the tile design itself, which was based on a church floor in Venice, contributed to these suicides.

David Diao who began his work in the 60s as an formalist painter has since the mid 80s taken the myths and stories abstract painting tells to justify itself as a starting point and subject for his paintings. Recently he has taken his musings to architecture. He just returned from France where he showed his Barnett Newman Series from 1990-1992. He is busy putting finishing touches on his first solo in China which hopes to recreate in found ciphers and memory his demolished family home in China. He has shown for 20 years at Postmasters Gallery, NY.



Janet Koenig, *The Autobiography of J. Edgar Hoover* (2007) Mock book cover with eyeball [11" x 9" x 2.75"]

The erosion of our civil liberties and increased surveillance everywhere recall earlier times when FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wielded enormous power over our private lives. He died in office in 1972 but his COINTELPRO operations which he started in 1956 to witch hunt communists, civil rights activists, and radicals lasted until 1975 when Congress was forced to end them. Obsession with cleaning out communists and rooting out radicals from every nook and cranny of American life seemed to go fittingly with the 1950s obsession of collecting cleaning gadgets to run the perfect suburban home. And what better cleaning machine than the vacuum cleaner? In the 50s, Hoover became the name synonymous with the vacuum cleaner. Though Hoover was head of the FBI for almost half a century, he never wrote his autobiography. But then, why should he have bothered when he had telephone books at his disposal?

Janet Koenig is a New York based artist and graphic designer whose work has appeared in the Museum of Modern Art, Exit Art, P.P.O.W. gallery, the Studio Museum of Harlem, Alternative Museum, and Dia Art Foundation, NYC. Her work has been reproduced and/or reviewed in the *New York Times*, *Village Voice*, *AfterImage*, *Artforum*, *Oxford Art Journal* and *Print Review* among other venues. She has been a member of these art collectives: the Catalog Committee of Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, which produced the *anti-catalog*, Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PADD), and REPOhistory.

www.gregorysholette.com/projects/koenig_sholette/koenig_sholette.html



Toby Lee Greenberg, *Biography Unwritten* (2007)
Installation of nine mock books, dimensions variable

Toby Lee Greenberg's *Biography Unwritten*, is a collection of old books whose titles are a person's name, suggesting that the viewer is about to read a biography. However, the books are not only empty, but their pages are glued shut. It is not until the last page where the viewer finds some factual information, along with a single sentence describing one of life's seemingly ordinary moments, but in this case a moment which has been lost or a milestone which has been missed.

These are the empty biographies of innocent men who have been incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. Exonerated after serving anywhere from 4 to 30 years in prison, and for some on Death Row, these books tell the "unwritten" stories of people whose lives have not been lived, who upon release struggle to find a place for themselves in a world quite different from the one they left behind. These frail and brittle books mimic the fragile lives wasted and lost within a system, hardened or broken by prison life and void of any content. They are torn, tattered and empty in the middle, as are the men whose missing years cannot be replaced.

Toby Lee Greenberg is a mixed-media artist living in New York City. Her works often include ordinary objects or an appropriation of public information which she uses to express a critical analysis of current social or political issues in popular American culture. Ms. Greenberg has an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and was awarded a fellowship from the Whitney Independent Study Program. Her work has been exhibited throughout North America and Europe.



Jeff de Castro, *Odd Infinitum* (2007)
Four mirrored carts made of wood, mirrors, acetate, flashlight and headrest [3" x 24" x 34"]

Jeff de Castro subverts the hierarchical indices common to contemporary public libraries and other bureaucratic structures through infinite repetition and ambiguous location. *Odd Infinitum* (Odd Infinite Item) is an installation that visually brings to life Jorge Luis Borges's essay about an imaginary library called The Library of Babel. Borges's Babel is an infinite labyrinth of hexagonal rooms containing every book and idea ever conceived. In *Odd Infinitum*, De Castro creates a series of mirrored mechanics carts placed at strategic locations ambiguous to the library's system (Dewey Decimal System). These carts are frozen in place beneath the weight of books and stacks. The carts' mirrors perform an infinite recession of repeated rational and irrational decimals. Fractions such as $\frac{2}{3}$ of the library = 666.666666... etc. that make subject categorization impossible. Infinity is reduced to an absurd number play between possible indices and unlocatable books within the library system. The mechanics carts in *Odd Infinitum* are based upon a previous performance work that was a protest of the first Iraq war.

Jeff de Castro is an installation artist whose public work has been sited at many cultural and public locations in New England, New Jersey, New York, Illinois and Delaware. He has been listed as one of 250 community artists in the United States 2000 Initiative called Artists and Communities co-sponsored by The Mid Atlantic Artist Foundation and The National Endowment for the Arts. De Castro has also received grants from the Mid Atlantic Artist Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, Very Special Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. His previous work at the Tompkins County Public Library was called "Textscapes" and included 40 participants: poets, artists, adults and youth in wrapping the entire library with a 1 foot x400 foot roll of surrealist text. de Castro has been a member of The Inkshop in Ithaca, NY and served previously as a board member of the Revolving Museum, a public art and community-based organization in Boston.

Martha Rosler, *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful Series: Photo Op*, 2004 (see catalogue cover)

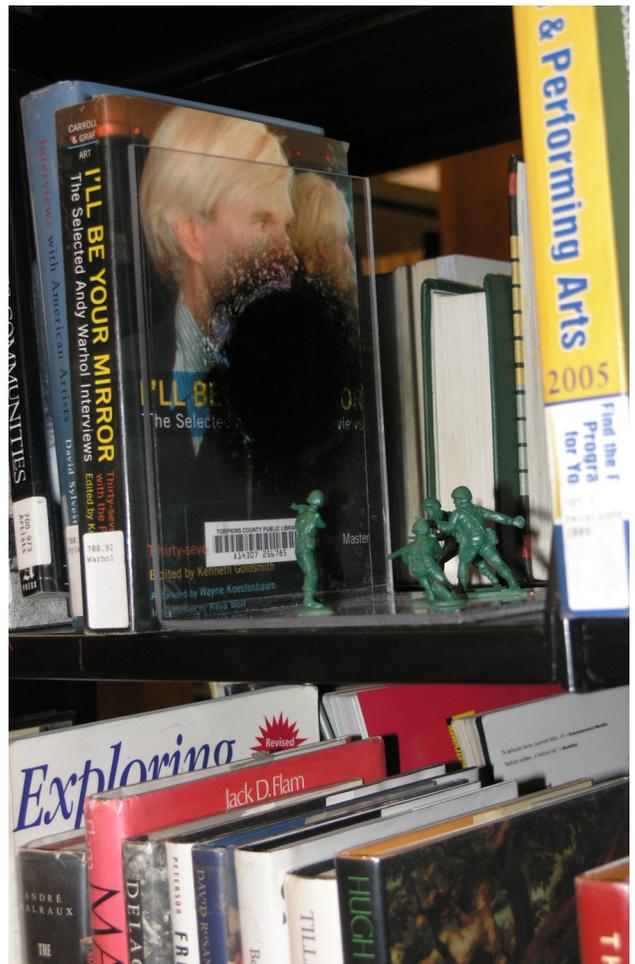
Screen Savers: Lifesavers In a Time of War? (2008)

The new millennium has turned out to be a lot more dangerous for all of us, and not just in terms of war, retail terrorism empire, and occupation—the fundamentals of our constitutional government are also under threat. The rule of law by which we have long recognized ourselves (to borrow a thought from a year-end lead editorial in the centrist newspaper *New York Times*) are being systematically dismantled in order to reconfigure the United States as a National Security state, with ever-fewer rights of privacy. At the same time, our government flouts international law and justifies torture. This seems like a good time to call to readers' attention some books and images of analysis and resistance.

Martha Rosler is an artist working in video, photo-text, installation, and performance. She also writes criticism and lectures nationally and internationally. Her work on the public sphere ranges from everyday life and the media to architecture and the built environment, especially housing. Her work often centers on women's experience.

Rosler has long produced works on war and the “national security climate” that predisposes to war. Her photomontage series joining images of war and domesticity, first made in relation to the war in Vietnam, has been reprised in relation to Iraq and Afghanistan. Her works on systems of travel and their associated environments, including air travel, automobile travel and urban undergrounds, further consider the landscapes of everyday life.

In 2007, Rosler participated in the *documenta* and *Skulptur Projekte Münster* exhibitions. Her work has also been seen in several Whitney Biennials; at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and many other venues. A retrospective of her work was shown in five European cities and in New York in 1999-2001. In 2005, Rosler received the Spectrum International Prize in Photography and a partial retrospective was held at the Sprengel Museum, Hanover, in conjunction with this award. In 2006, Rosler received the Oskar Kokoschka Prize, Austria's highest fine arts award. In 2007, Rosler received an Anonymous Was a Woman award. She has published fourteen books, in several languages, and numerous other art and essays. Her book of essays, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*, was published in 2004. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



Kim Asbury, *Black Holes, Passage of Knowledge* (2007) [8" x 6" x 6"] Plexiglas book holder, plastic toy soldiers and digital print

The Passage. Strategy of the screen . Intervention of war. I was thinking of a way to comment on the peculiar situation of the library. The collection of knowledge, and of data. Knowledge that makes thoughts and things happened !

Kim Asbury is a Copenhagen based Danish artist who has been making art for a long time, especially in the areas of painting, photography and installation. From 1997 - 2001 he was involved with an artists run gallery called North Udstillingssted in Copenhagen, Denmark that exhibited mainly installation art.

www.asbury.dk

www.north-udstillingssted.dk



Ayisha Abraham, Installation *Land-Scapes or Reality Is Neatly Framed From Here* (2007)
Thumbnail photographs, screensaver and booklet

This is a very specific view from a frame, the frame of a window, on to a mountain and a highway recorded simultaneously. It can be said to be a frame of an individual's vision; a frame that directs the viewer towards the inherent limitation of knowledge imposed by any singular perspective or methodology. There is a particular tension created between words that describe and the image of a scenery that is just there, and I see that perpetual tension playing out between what lies within the comfortable spaces of the "inside" and that which lies "outside". Ultimately what lies outside is a "Site" that we are destined to view through the limitations of our senses, "Sightings inevitably caught in a persistent struggle to name that, which is often without name, in other words "Unnameable", Crossroads:

"It is the juncture where the slow meets the fast."

Reality is Neatly Framed From Here, is a set of small thumbnail photographs, a screensaver, and a booklet which comprises what can be described as an intimate diary of the way I perceived a landscape from a single vantage point. It is a view of two sides of highway NH#3, on the Mumbai-Nasik Route. The Western Ghats make its presence felt here. The rocky hills on a plateau speak of the geological time that mark such rock formations. I focus on one such hill, Mahuli, with its imposing presence. It formed a backdrop and a picturesque view from the window of the guest house where I stayed. The culture of the highway speaks of another passage of time. Writing is deliberately chosen as a means for this recording, allowing for anonymity. I try to direct the viewer to a time that ties together random daily happenings into a narrative that reads as part documentation and part pure fiction.

Ayisha Abraham is an installation artist and experimental filmmaker. Her short films include *Straight 8* (2005) and *One Way* (2007). She teaches at the Srishti School of art design and technology, Bangalore, India.



Dread Scott, *Title Sealed* (2007)
Books encased in printed tyvek envelopes

Removed for your Protection (2007)
Altered library reference signs (not in photo)

This is a world where a tiny handful controls the great wealth and knowledge humanity as a whole has created. It is a world of profound polarization, exploitation and suffering and billions are excluded from intellectual development and full participation in society. It does not have to be this way and my art is part of forging a radically different world. The work illuminates the misery that this society creates for so many people and it often encourages the viewer to envision how the world could be. The US government has given itself the right to spy on all people, including in this country. And part of that includes monitoring what we read in libraries. In *Title Sealed* and *Removed for Your Protection* the viewer is confronted with a government that is attacking critical thinking and is overall moving in a fascist direction. Information is suppressed. Like current authority, these pieces don't reveal or define what information is hypothetically so dangerous it must be censored, it just poses that the government has the authority to suppress whatever it deems a threat.

Dread Scott makes revolutionary art to propel history forward. His work received national attention in 1989 over its use of the American flag. The entire US Senate denounced his artwork and President Bush declared it "disgraceful." His work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum and museums and galleries across the country.

www.dreadscott.net

IF THERE IS NO
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WHAT IT TELLS

Jacob Tell, *No Artwork* (2004)

Black and white image/text on 100 pieces of paper
[8"x 11.5"]

No artwork, 2004, deals with the art of producing art and the role of art, its main purpose is to locate the idea of non-representation and rejection of everything outside the art institution or, in the periphery of art. *No artwork*, 2004, uses negation of the object and commercial values in order to produce a free space, a free mind and a free language. Working with language is like working with stone or paint, you ask yourself what can I do with this stone/language, and try to shape the idea, or the idea occurs as a result of investigating the media.

Jacob Tell is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. He has exhibited his art internationally, and nationally.



Katherine Liberovskaya, *Borderline Fraternity* (2006) 10 minute Video

Borderline Fraternity was produced within the context of the Trinity Square Video, Toronto, and Videographer, Montreal, run 2005-2006. Artists were commissioned to create a new video work in response to the theme of Fraternity. Katherine Liberovskaya recorded her travels across the borders of France, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as well as the Canada - U.S. border. The resulting video reflects on NAFTA and the European Union as symbols of political fraternity or fellowship and the conflict between national and pan-national identity in the global economy.

Katherine Liberovskaya is a video and media artist based in Montreal, Canada, and New York City. She has been working predominantly in experimental video since the late eighties. Over the years, she has produced many single-channel videos, video installation works and video performances which have been presented at a wide variety of artistic venues and events around the world. As of recent years her work - in single-channel and installation video as well as performance - mainly revolves around collaborations with new music composers/sound artists, notably Phill Niblock, Al Margolis/If, Bwana, Hitoshi Kojo, Zanana, and David Watson. Since 2003 she is active in live video mixing exploring improvisation with numerous live new music/audio artists including: Margarida Garcia, Barry Weisblat, o.blaat, murmer, André Gonçalves, Monique Buzzarté, Anthony Coleman, Giuseppe Ielasi, Renato Rinaldi, Alessandro Bosetti, Audrey Chen, Marina Rosenfeld, Anne Wellmer, among others. In addition to her art practice she has concurrently been involved in the programming and organization of diverse media art events, notably with Studio XX in Montreal (programming coordinator 1996-1998, president 2001-2003), Espace Vidéographe, Montreal and Experimental Intermedia, NY (Screen Compositions 2005, 2006, 2007) as well as the OptoSonic Tea series with Ursula Scherrer at Diapason in NYC.

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT

LET'S JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

Don't Even Think About It (2008)

Five different black and white text/images placed on tables throughout the library (see p. 8)

The public library, besides being a practical place to find and check out books and other media and to have a place to come in out of the cold and to sit awhile, is actually the closest thing we have in democratic culture to a temple of thinking utterly freely. This is endlessly precious. So it is vital to be highly alert to any curtailments on our freedom. We become used to little cultural phrases that can, at first, seem harmless. But actually, they serve to censor our ability to think freely. They creep into consciousness and corrupt our human gift to think without limits. While a case can be made for accepting limits in resources, especially environmental limits that protect the planet, however, in the area of thinking freely and being able to express oneself freely, there can be no limits. We are inherently free creatures. Each person is unique and free, unlike any other human who ever lived. This is a home for your free thinking. Watch it.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles is an artist who lives in NYC. Since 1977, she has been the official, unsalaried Artist in Residence at the NYC Department of Sanitation. This year she is a senior critic in sculpture at Yale. She is represented by Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in NYC.

www.feldmangallery.com



Sreshta (Rit) Premnath and Jane Jin Kaisen
Revised Systems (2007) Audio

Revised Systems seeks to reflect on the archive and on how knowledge is systematized. We are interested in the relationships that emerge when the original Dewey Decimal Classification System, written by Melvil Dewey, is compared to the present revised system. The fact that culture, ideology, and the perception of knowledge constantly change, is reflected in the 22 revisions of the DDCS so far.

The piece consists of an audio duel between two voices. One reads the current categories of the DDCS in a given section while the other reads the original categories written by Dewey. For instance, #130 in the original system was "Anthropology," which has been changed to "Paranormal Phenomena" in the current system. Also, #159, "Intellect" is now "not assigned, or no longer used."

Sreshta (Rit) Premnath is an artist and the editor of Shifter Magazine. He lives and works in NYC. He received his MFA from Bard College in 2006, his BFA from The Cleveland Institute of Art in 2003 and is currently attending The Whitney Independent Study Program. His work has been shown at Rotunda Gallery, Bose Pacia Gallery, and Exit Art in NYC, The Islip Art Museum in LI, Spaces Gallery in Cleveland, OH, and GallerySKE and Gallery Sumukha in Bangalore, India. For more information on his work visit: www.circumscript.net

See Jane Jin Kaisen bio on page 18.