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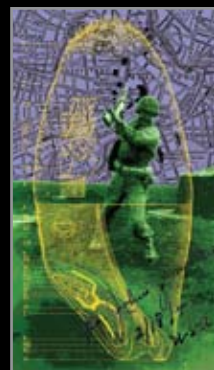
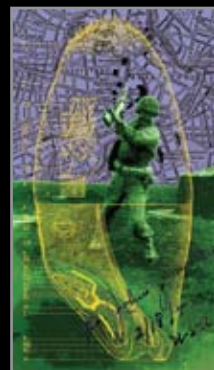
a s u r v e y o f w o r k b y *kaz m e c u e*

with essays by:

sarah glover, ph.D.

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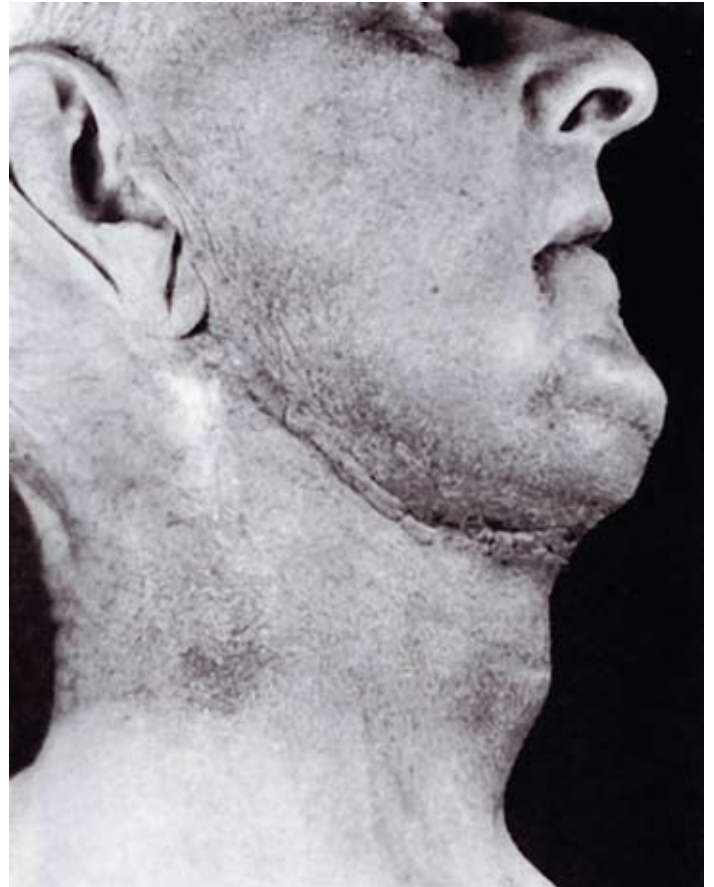


no sissy stuff

With a refreshingly straightforward, in-your-face approach, Kaz McCue doesn't allow his audience to play nice. His work transforms the still, quasi-sacredness of the gallery into a playground---a playground where the viewer is encouraged to romp, to roughhouse, to laugh, and to mock. McCue becomes the carnie, egging us on: Pick up a ring. Toss it at the asshole. Scream at the bastard. Don't mind your manners. Don't watch your P's and Q's.

This isn't work that is meant to be discussed in hushed whispers. Don't sit back, and contemplate it at a safe distance, because, as the work constantly reminds us through its aggressive titles, broken forms/bodies, and indistinct memories, there is no such thing as safe. Through its various levels of spatial, tactile and textual engagement, McCue's imagery forces the audience to become aggressors and to join the artist in a conversation that isn't merely an interior monologue, but an expression, sometimes an expletive, that is voiced out-loud.

Much of the aggressive gaming found in McCue's work forms part of an exploration of gendered ideas of masculinity. His approach provides a refreshing contrast to much work, particularly that appearing in the 1990's, that equated, or reduced, visual examinations of masculinity to explorations and depictions of the male body---works that often seemed to transform the heroic into the narcissistic. McCue's work doesn't focus on the exterior dimension of masculinity; it acknowledges masculinity as an attribute, rather than an accessory. Much of his recent work focuses on the aggressive aspects of masculinity and takes both a serious and playful look at male aggression, seen as negative and positive. This exploration ranges from his direct questioning of the violence and politics of war (*Kill the Bastards*, *Removing a Human Stain Requires a Strong Cleanser*) to his amusing and jarring self-portrait as the enraged American asshole (*Crazy Clown: Portrait of an American Asshole*).



McCue's bad-boy attitude is tempered with whimsical playfulness and graceful complexity. Yes, there is roughhousing. But the work doesn't merely scream, there is an undercurrent of a whisper. The subtleness, the whisper, found in much of McCue's imagery stems from the materials used and the way in which these materials are played off one another, forming a delicate balance: baking soda piled upon the seat of a suspended chair, (*Terre Haute High Chair*), delicate script cut into steel, human heads transformed by melting wax (*Utopian Night Sweats*). Many of these elements suggest ritual, a ritual placement of objects, and materials. This results in works that are removed from the laughter and aggression of the carnival, and, instead, serve as shrines to memory and experience. This is particularly true in those works that deal directly with childhood, family and death (*Can't Hurt Me, Forget*) or deal with similar themes in a less direct, but increasingly complex and ritualized manner (*Fell Down*). Although much of McCue's work can be classified, rather dryly, as independent mixed-media installations, experienced as a whole, they function as series of events and rituals that forge connections between forgotten memories and current concerns.

These connections were fully exploited in McCue's recent installation at the Prairie Center of the Arts in Peoria, Illinois. * Manipulating the stripped, industrial gallery space, McCue's work evoked the ghosts of industry and labor with a subtle humor and beauty. A stainless steel surface, delicately inscribed with the ironic and ambiguous phrase, "I need more than an ordinary grind," reflected the streaming light filtering through the warehouse windows by day and, by night, the industrial lights of the factories beyond. A series of white chairs, animated by projected images, transformed the space into an attic of stored and disjointed memories (*Yellow Line Drawn Through a Truncated Dreamscape*).

McCue's work explores boundaries, between interior and exterior, proper and improper, laughter and hysteria, satire and earnestness. Creating the finest of lines, rather than chiseled boundaries, he allows for ambiguity and uncertainty.



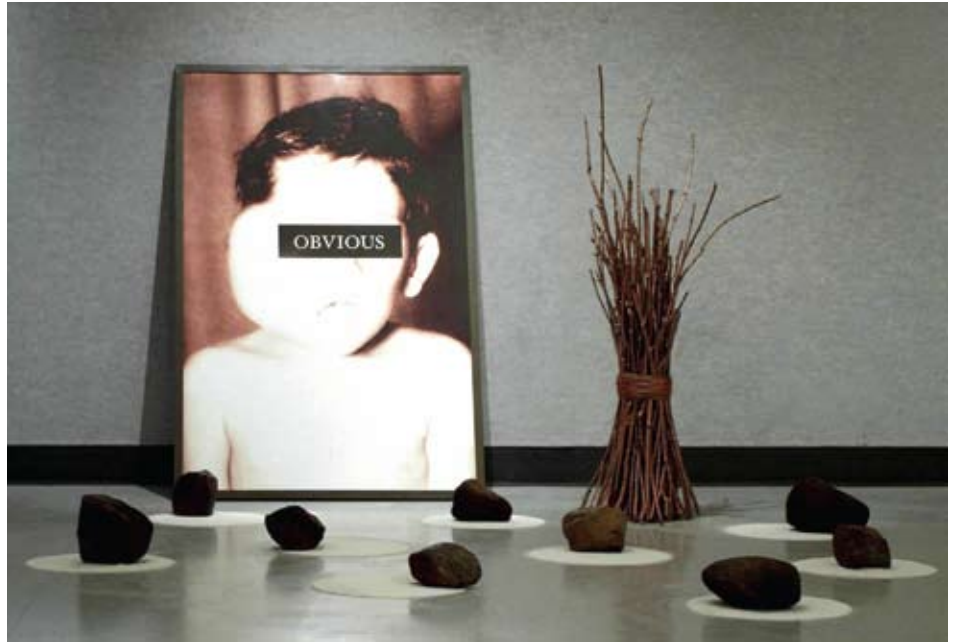
*removing a human stain
requires a strong cleanser*
(detail opposite)
2006

6'1 x 5.5'h x 4'w
installation with found
objects, fake fur, video
and copper tubing

Sarah Glover, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Art
Bradley University

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*Prairie Center of the Arts
1412 SW Washington Street, Peoria, IL
Located in a massive century-old warehouse,
listed on the National Historic Register, the Center
provides a vast, flexible exhibition space and an
artists-in-residence program.



can't hurt me
2006

10'l x 6'h x 8'w
installation with digital print in
steel frame, natural wood, rocks,
baking powder



guns are for pussies
2005

40" x 60"
digital print on canvas
with monotyping



a pound of flesh
2004

5'1 x 5'h x 2'w
interactive installation
with writing stand,
scale and printed cards
with found image on front
and bible sex quiz on back



shut up
2004

5'1 x 5.5'h x 5'w
interactive installation with
etched mirror, found objects
and screenprinted surgical
masks



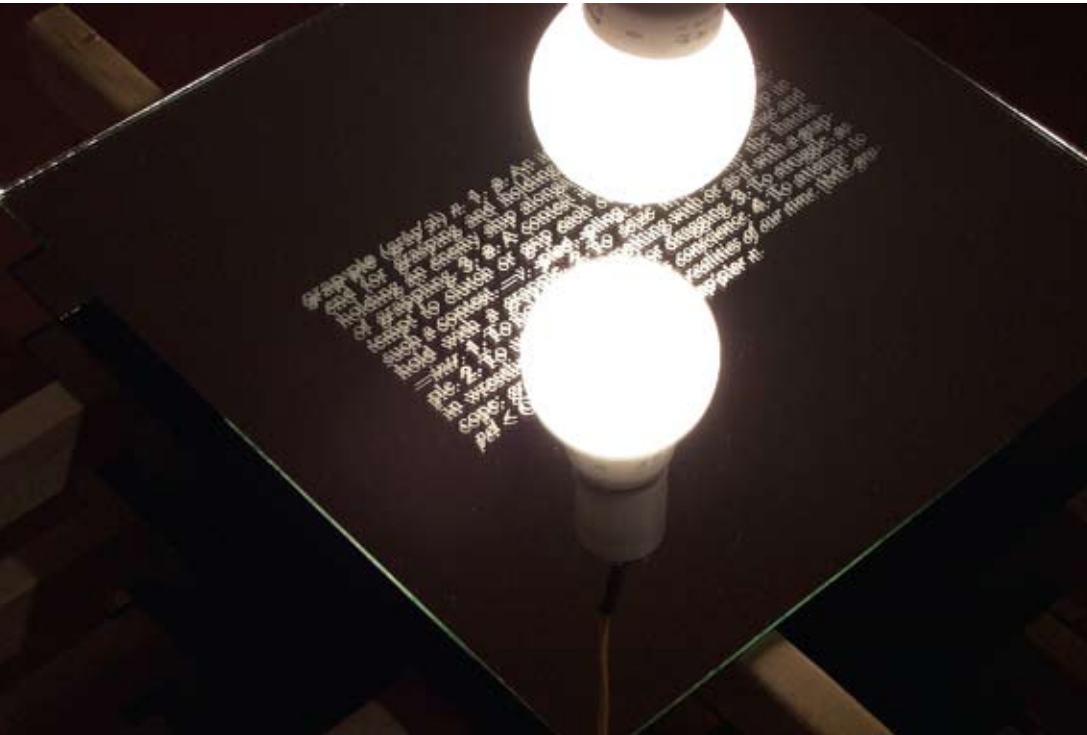
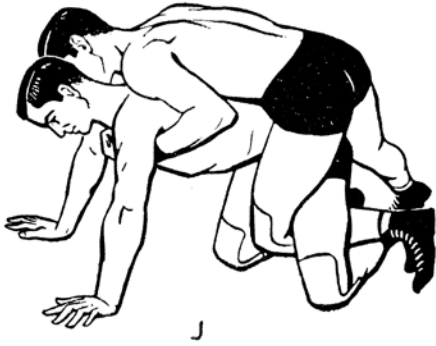


terre haute high chair
2006

3'1 x 8'h x 4'w
chair wrapped in fabric and
string, mirror, baking powder

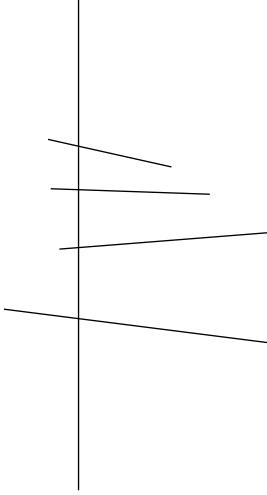
*created in-residence at the
prairie center of the arts





grapple, dominate, subdue
2005

10' l x 7' h x 10' w
vinyl, wood, light bulbs,
etched mirrors



pig sticking
2004

3.5'l x 6'h x 2.5'w
installation with found
objects, fake fur, digital
print, shredded prints on
dictionary paper





any child

That inescapable animal walks with me,
Has followed me since the black womb held,
Moves where I move, distorting my gesture,
A caricature, a swollen shadow,
A stupid clown of the spirit's motive,
Perplexes and affronts with his own darkness,
The secret life of belly and bone,
Opaque, too near, my private, yet unknown,.....

"The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me" by Delmore Schwartz

Faces, masked and unmasked figure prominently in Kaz McCue's recent work, involving installation, performance, sculpture, printmaking and mixed media. Trained in printmaking, he continues to combine and extend this expertise in quite radical ways. A consummate craftsman, he is nevertheless open and daring when it comes to choice of media and imagery, that is often funky and irreverent. Outwardly brazen and often defiant, his recent work in particular stems from self-examination.

With *Shut Up*, (2004) the title alone suggests a transgressor mode. This is an installation / performance in which viewers are asked to wear screen-printed surgical masks hiding part of their faces and muffling their voices. Wearing this mask, the participants are simultaneously throttled and protected from harm as they are encouraged to engage one another in conversation. The artist describes the performance as an "experiment....I get to manipulate people and then enjoy the randomness of the situation." Adding to these counteractions of control and contingency are the "1" and "0" printed on the masks signifying something and nothing, predomination and probability.

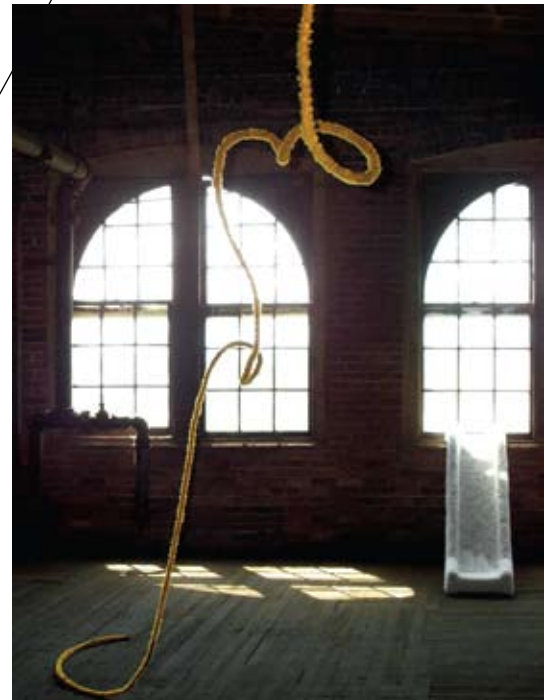
Crazy Clown: Portrait of an American Asshole, (2005) is visually more ferocious and confrontational. The work features the artist's face distorted in a scream or roar digitally printed repeatedly over a span of two yards. Into the surface a series of pegs have been driven and black rubber rings from a child's ring toss game are available to viewers who can toss them at the "clown." Here a dichotomy exists between pictured rage and the more benign gesture of the participant. A successful throw must be arced with dexterity rather than directly and forcefully heaved. Hanging from a peg, the black loops around eyes and noses "make up" the clown adding to the images' grotesqueness. The screaming face has appeared before – it is a haunting image in Sergei Eisenstein's film *Potemkin* and in several paintings by Francis Bacon. In McCue's piece, however, there is the added element of receptivity, as he allows audiences a counter. Tension is created between a depiction of internal anger and its publicly produced foil.



The featureless head of "any child" dominates *Can't Hurt Me* (2006). Here the face hides behind the word "obvious" in another statement of ambiguity between the overt and covert. Based on the rhyme, "Sticks and stones can break my bones but names can never harm me," bunches of branches and large rocks lie before and around the maximized visage, yet these potential projectiles are bundled and grounded, and the child's identity is erased and replaced by a pronouncement. Similar to other pieces, this installation seems about a reigning in or suppression – primal instinct curbed or compromised by external circumstances.

Giving McCue's art its "edge" is a fencing, a thrust and counterthrust, assertion and withdrawal. Basically its an internal affair and the fact of its restraint allows viewers to experience their own personal balancing act of deep private instincts with accepted outward behavior, of childhood impairment and adult disguise. As he proceeds in an ongoing array of exceptional work, McCue extends a Dadaist-Surrealist psychological realm that reaches subliminal levels in us all.

Judy Collischan, Ph.D.
New York, 7/06

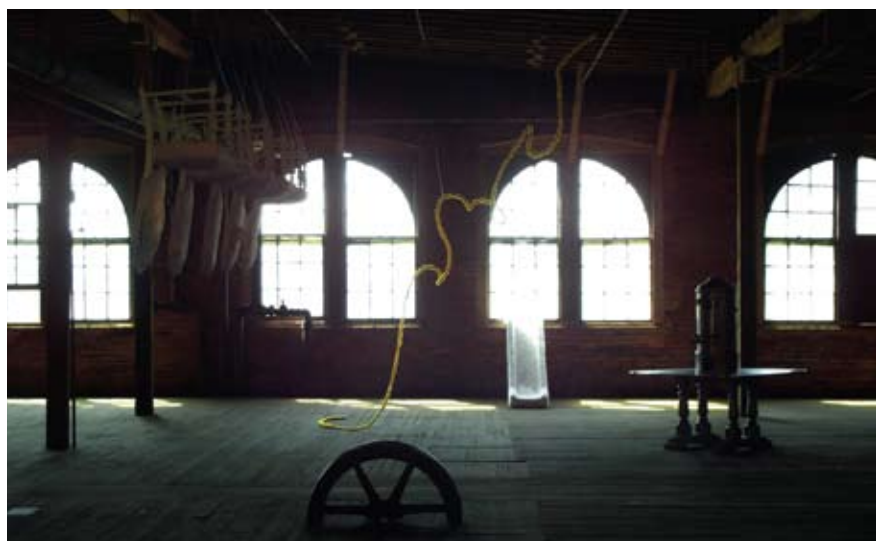




*yellow line drawn through
a truncated dreamscape*
2006

16'l x 10'h x 20'w
installation with found
objects, precision-cut
stainless steel, fake fur,
projected images

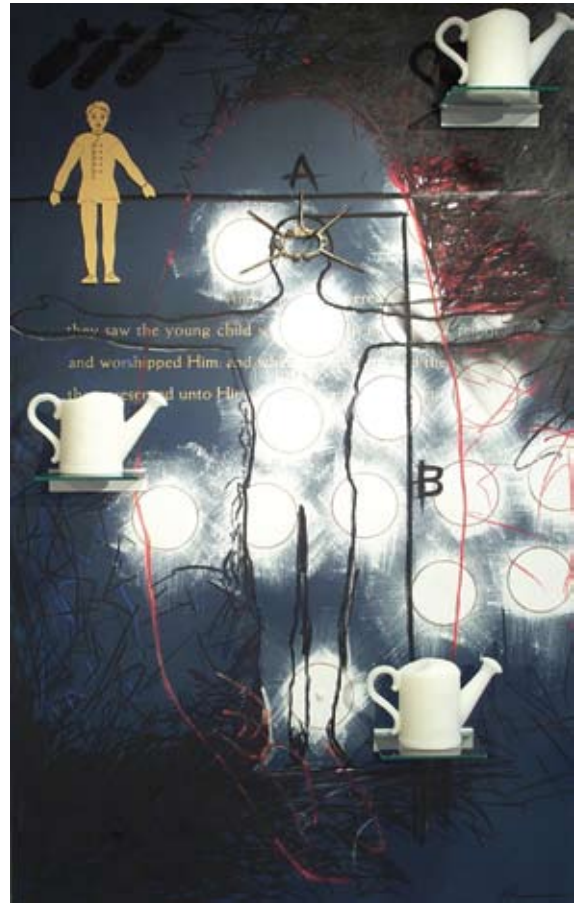
*created in-residence at the
prairie center of the arts





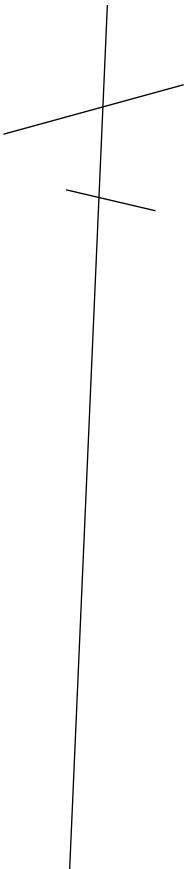
big gun
2004

18" x 24"
hand-wiped xerox transfer
etching on roofer's copper



fell down
2006

4'1 x 8'h x 5'w
installation with multi-media drawing,
found objects, cast soap





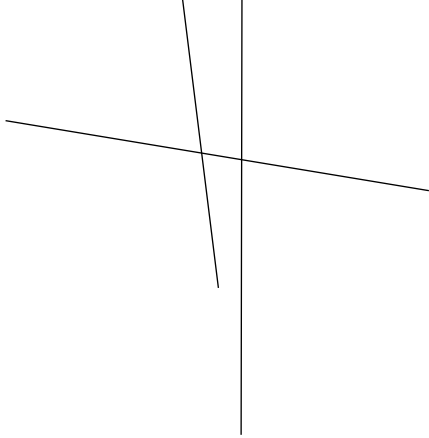
forget
2004

8'1 x 5'h x 10'w
installation with found objects,
fake fur, panels with xerox transfers
and screenprinting, video



print dispenser
2004

5"l x 6"h x 5"w
found object construction with
screenprints on dictionary paper



*crazy clown: portrait of an
american asshole*
2006

5'1 x 5.5'h x 6'w
interactive installation with
digital composite print, steel
pins and rubber rings



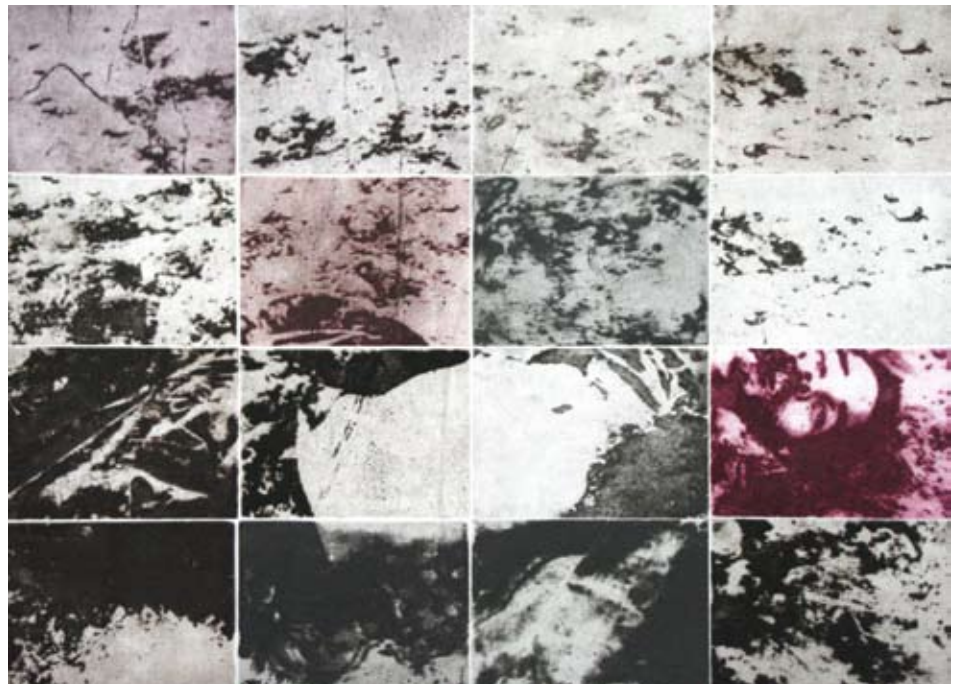


stick a fork in it
2003

8'1 x 1.5'h x 1.5'w
installation with hand-wiped xerox transfer
etching plates and found objects

*kill the bastards:
one dead soldier*
2004

16" x 20"
hand-wiped xerox
transfer etching





utopian night sweats
2006

10'1 x 4.5'h x 8'w
installation with found objects,
fake fur, video monitor, wax

*created in-residence at the
prairie center of the arts



bad seed

stay out of my way or I'll beat your ass
i say to myself in the fight

piss and vinegar the art of my past
what a comfort to have been so bad

now a life in the middle
i look to myself
a normal man barely at all

During a residency at the Prairie Center of the Arts, I had a strange revelation. I was intrigued by an illustration I found there in an old book and it compelled me to think about existence...mine in particular. The illustration contained a primitive figure and I thought about it a great deal as I worked in the shell of what was once the Peoria Cordage Company. As I searched for materials and objects in the remnants of the old rope factory, I was confronted with the emptiness of the space...the quietness. For an instant, I wondered about my own consciousness and imagined myself a ghost. I knew I was alive but if I were a ghost, how would I know I wasn't there? How would I know I wasn't dreaming?

This experience led me to pose questions about my work and what I was doing as an artist. More and more, as I grow into a more normalized adult, I look to my past for inspiration. I miss those days as a wild young punk, angry and ready to battle. The primitive figure made me think about my past and I began to imagine those moments as impressions in time much like my current life would soon become. I imagined making connections to the savage ancestor by bringing attitude...all that is male...into my work.

When I was younger, I had no image of myself at this age. Now that I'm here, I have to make up my story as I go. Increasingly, that story relies on who I was and conversely, so does my work. Getting in touch with my past, inevitably, means reaching back to a male attitude that is really not acceptable in my present world. It is this erosion of my own psyche (or evolution of it) that presently intrigues me in my work. That figure I was is just an impression in my mind, a series of stories I tell like an old man. Using those images of my past self, my old attitude, allows me justify my own existence...to see my ghost.



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Website: www.art2xs.com

Previous page: detail from *Some Say It With Bricks*.

*photograph taken by Pamela Ayres

Performance photographs by Nathan Caffee and Dan Jakoubek.

This page: *Fussypuzznut*, 1993, construction with fake fur and found object. 2.5'l x 2.5'h x 3'w

Special thanks to Judy Collischan, Ph.D. and Sarah Glover, Ph.D. for their written contributions to this catalogue.

Gratitude is also extended to the Prairie Center of the Arts for the residency opportunity and the chance to work in such a wonderful space. I am particularly grateful to Joe and Michelle Richey for their support and their on-going commitment to the arts.

