



Kelly Jazvac, *Deflationary Club*, 2008, salvaged adhesive vinyl, T Square, 57 cm x 99 cm x 22 cm
PHOTO: PETER ABRAHAMS

pendent on his belief in the transparency of representation, especially as he equates representation with imitation or mimesis. Hobbes uncritically maps his conception of the human body onto the social sphere, never acknowledging the effect this representational process has on his logic. Fones' insistence on the breakdown of the legibility of the text through a laboured form of representation calls attention to this aspect of Hobbes' text. For Fones, representation is not a matter of truth or imitation but of form, a conceit that threatens Hobbes' entire conception of the State. In this sense, *Leviathan #5* demonstrates the way in which slang's ability to frustrate communication can be used as a visual strategy as well.

John Massey's *Pink Dawn* (2005) comes closest to the kind of startling ambiguity Bethune-Leamen experienced with Timbaland's *The Way I Are*. As part of a series of photographs (*This Land [The Photographs]* 2005–08), that combines images of luxury car interiors with wilderness landscapes, the piece is a marvel of combination. At first glance, *Pink Dawn* seems to be merely another luxury car ad-

vert; the beige interior of the car is foregrounded against a pink sun setting over the ocean. However, slight differences and imperfections in the lighting between background and foreground and the absence of any land visible outside the car windows serve to give the image a kind of weightlessness. Without a beach or coast, the car seems ungrounded and its beige interior comes to stand in for the border between sea and land. The lack of an occupant also gives the image a kind of lifelessness and we are left to compare the superficial qualities of the interior of the car with the impossibly deep and inaccessible depths below the surface of the water. This contraction and expansion of space between the car's limited interior and the great expanse of the ocean serves to give the image—otherwise indistinguishable from any automobile advertisement—a sinister quality. Far from detracting from the image's power, these slightly incongruous elements—specifically the lighting and grounding—give the image its ambiguous power. Introduced into the most innocuous and bland of commercial forms, these sinister elements serve

as a kind of visual slang—as if Massey has learned to curse in the language of car ads. Much like Bethune-Leamen's inability to say "the way I are," the image resists an easy reading by slightly altering the grammar of representation through awkward combination.

Kelly Jazvac's *Deflationary Club* (2008) and *Slump Block* (2008) also disrupt the language of advertising. Yet, while Massey's *Pink Dawn* subtly recapitulated the content of car ads, Jazvac's work goes after the form of representation itself. Made of vinyl salvaged from an advertising signage manufacturer, Jazvac's sculptures take on the very materiality of advertisements. By re-sticking, folding, cutting and draping the discarded vinyl, Jazvac translates a two-dimensional material geared to communicating its subject as efficiently and easily as possible into an illegible three-dimensional object. These formal interventions into the material of advertising efface the ad's original utility for communication, retaining only its seductive surface in wrinkled and droopy form. This reconfiguration and disruption of communication is essentially what was at stake in the conception of slang presented in *The Way I Are*. ▶

WHAT IT REALLY IS

Curated by Nicholas Brown, featuring
Kristan Horton, Liz Magor, Kristi
Malakoff, Kerri Reid and Jennifer
Rose Sciarrino, *Red Bull 381 Projects*,
Toronto.

by LEAH TURNER

What It Really Is, at Red Bull 381 Projects in Toronto, comprises sculptural works from Kristan Horton, Liz Magor, Kristi Malakoff, Kerri Reid and Jennifer Rose Sciarrino that make use of materials, process and our shifting faculties of perception to explore the slippery dialectic between reality and artifice.

Throughout the exhibition, the viewer is confronted with the uncanny devices of mimesis: the familiar made strange, and the unfamiliar made familiar. In the accompanying catalogue essay, curator Nicholas Brown asks, "what is it, really?" Well, as he subsequently suggests, it all depends on where you stand, or alternate-

ly, on how closely you look. Full of double takes and red herrings, this is a show that necessitates bodily engagement and rigorous perceptual inquiry, a testament to the thoughtful curating of impressive excerpts from the individual oeuvres of the artists on display here.

Long occupied with exploring the dynamic between the real and the replicated, Liz Magor's work is a highlight of this show. *Carton III* (2006) is doubly deceptive. Initially appearing to be a folded pile of clothes placed on the gallery floor, one must bend over and look closely to discern that these are not found objects, but rather, near perfect copies; it's a sculpture cast in polymerized gypsum, the surface of which sparkles in the light, reiterating its artifice. Examining the back of the sculpture reveals it to be a hollowed out façade, a cache hiding someone's guilty stash of (actual) cigarettes, cigarette packs, matches and chewing gum. Playing off our nonchalant acceptance of the readymade as part of the artistic lexicon, and demanding optical decipherment, Magor troubles the perceptual distinctions between reality and artifice, revelation and concealment.

Experiences of scale and perspective are varied throughout the gallery, with each piece requiring a unique way of looking. Jennifer Rose Sciarrino's *Supposed Stalactites* (2009) present an altered (sur)reality. Craning your neck upward, her delicate, remarkably coloured purple and green

logical formation of cave stalactites, where dripping minerals accumulate by as little as a fraction of a millimetre per year. A natural phenomenon that represents millennia of time through one of the smallest units of measurement, Sciarrino seizes upon elements of the magical and fantastic within the natural environment, translating these qualities into an abstracted sculptural language.

Kristi Malakoff's *Speisepilze/Giftpilze (Fairy Ring)* (2008), a miniature paper sculpture diorama, is "assertively beautiful" according to curator Nicholas Brown. Housed in a tiny glass vitrine, Malakoff's delightful mushroom fairyland has been fabricated from 32 stamps circulated in the German Democratic Republic between 1974 and 1980. Malakoff's *Polyhedra Se-*

Kerri Reid and Kristan Horton are also concerned with significations of the commodity, seeking to intervene within the lifespan and materiality of otherwise mundane objects. Horton's surprisingly hypnotic 6-minute stop-motion animation *CigsCoke2-TinsCoffz.Milk* (2006) documents a series of seemingly self-morphing objects. A duMaurier cigarette pack deconstructs, its cardboard and tinfoil taking shape instead as an ersatz Coke can. A real Coke can takes its place, unfurling and metamorphosing into a food tin, and so forth—as the title of the video suggests—until the animated sequence concludes with a carton of milk. Though deliberately makeshift replicas at best, his commodities transform with fluidity. Within his manipulation of form and identity, Horton explores how materials



Kristi Malakoff, *Speisepilze/Giftpilze (Fairy Ring)*, 2009
PHOTO: KRISTI MALAKOFF



Jennifer Rose Sciarrino, *Supposed Stalactites*, 2009, paper, archival glue, and cable, dimensions variable
PHOTO: JENNIFER ROSE SCIARRINO

"stalactites" appear to float un-tethered above our heads, forming as if from nothing. Improbably constructed by hand from hundreds of minutely waning, tonally graded layers of paper, Sciarrino's laborious process of assembly mimics the slow geo-

ries (2008) welcomes the gallery visitor, displayed in a narrow alcove located in the ground floor's stairwell. Resting upon circular mirrors, like jewels to be admired from all angles, these intricate sculptures are created by folding bills of various international currencies. Referencing the practice of origami employed by mathematicians to work through geometry, Malakoff's intimate paper folding attempts to, in some way, make abstract scientific realities tangible. There is also a magical quality to how Malakoff transforms the quotidian characteristic of these two types of official currency. She converts one fetish object into another, literally transforming money into an object of aesthetic desire. What do art and money have in common if not functioning as fetishes, epitomizing the arbitrariness and inflation of value?

of base equivalence are transformed into the definitive identities that constitute corporate brands. Reid's *Broken Cup* (2007) project also interrogates our relationship to objects, particularly things deemed useless or broken, and investigates what happens when such objects are treated with extreme, even excessive, amounts of care. After a chance encounter with a broken cup in her studio, Reid made plaster moulds of each broken piece and slipcast a series of copies, which are displayed here alongside photographs and drawings that document the shattered cup. She further attempted to integrate the broken cup back into the larger cultural and economic circulation of objects and commodities by putting the pieces up for auction on eBay (for which they received no bids), and presents documentation of the process in the gallery.

Presenting the viewer with otherwise mundane objects and materials that have been transformed and (re)invested with value, *What It Really Is* reconciles seemingly disparate experiences of the everyday and the fantastical. Here, the interplay between the real and the replica provokes perceptual shifts, forcing our familiar reality to become momentarily strange and wonderful. ▶

ALTERMODERN: TATE TRIENNIAL 2009

Franz Ackermann, Darren Almond,
Charles Avery, Wilead Beshty,
Spartacus Chetwynd, Marcus Coates,
Peter Coffin, Matthew Darbyshire,
Shezad Dawood, Tacita Dean, Ruth
Ewan, Loris Gréaud, Subodh Gupta,
Rachel Harrison, Joachim Koester,
Nathaniel Mellors, Gustav Metzger,
Mike Nelson, David Noonan, Katie
Paterson, Olivia Plender, Seth Price,
Navin Rawanchaikul, Lindsay
Seers, Bob and Roberta Smith, Simon
Starling, Pascale Marthine Tayou,
Tris Vonna-Michell, Tate Britain,
London.

by CHARLENE LAU

The man who fostered the regular use of the artspeak term "relational aesthetics" to describe the near end of postmodernism now brings us another term: "Altermodern." While many people are hesitant to put labels on things, Nicholas Bourriaud is an exception. An unabashed taxonomist, he has put the kibosh on the "one thing followed by another" exercise that has been plaguing modernism and its descendants. Altermodernism attempts to free itself of postmodernism's stranglehold, classifying the unclassifiable whilst trying to tame the conformingly nonconformist ways of artists. It seems Bourriaud is pandering to a grander stage for this neologism to be recognized on a greater cultural scale. Case in point, a look at the exhibition's website reveals that there is a lot of didactic material: a cartoon based on a french fry named "Chipiski the Altermodernist," short videos with Bourriaud explaining the terms and a manifesto proclaiming that postmodernism is dead and breaking down the basic themes of alter-

modernism. There is even a Facebook application attuned to the teenaged girl in all of us: a quiz to determine to what extent one is altermodern.

Bourriaud says that "alter" is equivalent to otherness. It appears he is suggesting some post-colonial form of art for everyone, but I can't help but think of Said and wonder what he would say to this, especially since Bourriaud is a white, French male. Are artists and their art cultural others? He also states that history is the new continent, but it sounds to me like these statements are all leftovers from postmodernism. Has he lost his way a little, forgetting that his job as curator is to reveal how this art addresses and describes a new cultural moment, not necessarily to

international tone of altermodernism; however, upon closer inspection, the exhibition belies localization and reinforces centralized cultural production. With 26 of the 28 artists either being of European descent or residing in Europe or America, the premise breaks down.

Set in the north Duveen Gallery, the front hall of the exhibition has a hush-hush museum atmosphere. It could not be a more perfect space for Ruth Ewan's best-in-show *Squeezebox Jukebox* (2009), a giant built-to-scale sparkly accordion. Made in Castelfidardo, Italy, the international capital of accordion builders, it is the world's largest working accordion. Every day, two people standing on stools play protest songs from Ewan's collection that is titled



Nathaniel Mellors, *Giantbum*, 2009, video installation with animatronic sculpture
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MATT'S GALLERY, LONDON

manufacture a overarching historical exegesis! It seems that in this sense the exhibit fails, as Bourriaud stretches to arrange art to serve his context, rather than have his curatorial framework emerge from the art. However, this observation should not detract from the art itself.

Among the 28 artists, there are the usual impressive names: Franz Ackermann, Tacita Dean, Bob and Roberta Smith and Simon Starling. More importantly, there are strong presentations from young upstarts. Some hits, some misses, but overall, a notable and huge overview of what is happening in contemporary art today. According to Bourriaud, altermodern art features themes of travel, borders and exile, all part of today's reality in the advent of globalization and the increased frequency by which issues of displacement and expanding boundaries appear. While still relevant today, these themes are not new, having prevailed within modernism. Many of these artists are dislocated from their birthplaces, superficially supporting the

"A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World." It is a clever instrument (pun intended) of leftist ideology, illustrating its struggle for social change with an oversized, clumsy and inelegant object.

Franz Ackermann's << *Gateway* >>-*Gateway* (2008-09) is a jarring, visually confrontational installation featuring a psychedelic painting, a video and a large metal cage. << *Gateway* >>-*Gateway* provides a big splash that makes the art after it appear grey and boring, which is exactly what I experienced when I walked into a room of Tacita Dean's melancholic series of photogravures on paper entitled *The Russian Ending* (2002). My eyes were too busy recovering from Ackermann's visual assault to care about what I initially thought were stodgy old black-and-white photographs. Dean's work suffers from its poor contextual placement, not from its content, for she crafts tragic endings to imagined films that are based on the visual narratives of historical images.

Aside from this misstep, the rest of the