

Through the Looking Glass

at

Salon Oblique

opens October 11th, 2008, from 6 to 9 pm
continues through November 8th

Attendance for this event is limited and by RSVP only.

When you RSVP you will receive the address and parking information.

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Spirit sponsor: Christiania Vodka

A few weeks ago the title for this exhibition came to me after a long evening switching between Fox News, CNN and the Daily Show. Subsequently everyone I've talked to, whether in casual conversation or in business dealings, mentions an odd feeling-tone (or as the Germans call it a *Gemüthsstimmung*) to daily life. I've heard "strange, weird, uneasy, unique". Words that persuade me we are heading down a rabbit-hole as Americans, coming out in a world that looks curiously like Alice's in that Victorian Age epic. Lewis Carroll used a child's visions as vehicle to presage the end of an era and the beginning of the 20th centuries dislocations. We too have clearly arrived at a *certain point*; something's coming and we should look to artists for hints of what up ahead.

Contemporary artists can appear as savants. They work in a world of subtle values so if we are to examine subtle shifts in the culture, we might consider them specialists. Specialists in the same way witchdoctors function in primitive cultures: both tune into a vibe and channel expression outside of the rational lines of their respective societies. They are holding up a mirror for us, but not the mirror of literal reflection, rather the mirror of Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*, the mirror as doorway to imagination. So please slip over to Salon Oblique for a spot of tea (more likely a shot of vodka) and a bit of Jabberwocky. Enjoy a trip "Through the Looking Glass" with us.

Cheers,
Maria Jenson
Gallery Director

Salon Oblique is pleased to present ***Through the Looking Glass***, a group show exploring the intimate and sometimes controversial relationship between the artist and their audience. The relationship between viewer and artist is often a complicated one. Why does someone connect with a certain work, while another is left empty? Art is undoubtedly subjective, but on a deeper level there is the reality that our choices about art reflect directly on whom we are and our particular passions and desires. Art reflects the artist *and* their audience. Furthermore, in these times of political, social and economic upheaval we are forced to question how we are positioned and what are views really are. We must peer through the looking glass and magnify ourselves under it – something ultimately liberating.

In *Through the Looking Glass*, all the work encourages both a literal and conceptual engagement with “looking”. Many of the artists use materials that literally reflect the viewer. The mirror has always played a major role in art, even from early paintings such as Diego Velasquez’s 1644 work, *Venus at her Mirror*. The mirror often functions as a vehicle for spiritual and self knowledge in a quest to search for the truth beyond the surface. One may notice when you peer closely into another’s eyes, you see your own image. The eye often seen as the “window to the soul” is also a mirror. Bridging the gap between science, nature, memory and mysticism, the artists in *Through the Looking Glass* share this fascination with the eye as portal to the soul.

In **Wendy Wischer’s**, continuously looped video *Under the Spell of Maya*, we are confronted with an all-seeing eye that is more akin to a lone blue planet suspended in space. As we watch the iris and pupil dilate, we watch this eye, stripped of any other human associations, breathing and expanding in space. This work seeks to remind us of microcosm and macrocosm and our role as humans on our blue planet and the universe beyond. In Buddhism, Maya means illusion, so this work also references our human state of illusion and the limitation of human consciousness to fully realize the meaning of existence. Much of Wischer’s work is based on blurring the separation between the spirituality of working with nature and the cutting edge of new media. “I address boundaries of nature, technology, science, mythology, personal identity and universal connections.”

In *Velocity*, **McLean Fahnestock** uses science and language in a way that we can most literally look through the looking glass at the human condition. Nature can be seen as the mirror of humanity and humanity is an extension of nature. “Properties of physics and mathematics are accepted as truths. When these universal truths are paired with universal questions that arise when we step out of ourselves and into relationships with others, they turn illustrative and insightful. Science becomes the oracle – equations become the poetically phrased answers”.

R.S. Yeager’s diptych *Chemical Beauty* is reminiscent of fluid patterns created by water on an aqua ocean floor. As an artist who usually employs traditional photography to explore nature and its structures, Yeager was interested in recreating nature through another natural and somewhat uncontrollable practice. Through a special process involving the burning of Polaroid film, Yeager creates images characteristic of found patterns in nature. I thought it would be interesting to try and evoke nature with film without taking a picture of anything”.

Lynda Lester’s series of abstracted photographs are an ethereal dance through other worlds. By taking an intimate look at nature she believes that we may also see ourselves. “I believe that the deep emotions revealed in these photographs – tranquility, amusement, rage and sensuality – are also hiding beneath are own defenses”.

Personal histories and perceptions are also explored in **Ela Boyd’s** work. In *Memory*, Boyd has created a glass raindrop bearing a heat transferred image of children jumping in water. This nostalgic sculpture becomes a vortex of time, its natural length and shape guiding the viewer down into the raindrop and further into the depths of long lost memories contained in a single moment in time.

In **Tal Yizrael’s** *Rosebund Community* we see yet another containment of time and memory in what appears to be a row of snow globes glowing with angelic figures from another plane. The symbol of the snow globe immediately evokes childhood and other worlds, along with the passage and preservation of time. The artist, who develops her final prints while placing bubbles over the negatives or the slides, is interested in constructing micro-realities and alternative landscapes. “Sometimes, I overexpose slides in order to gain the bright look of a memory. I then print them as if they were negatives, resulting in an inverse color effect in this memory-atmosphere.”

John Koller's work also possesses a powerful ability to create atmosphere. Influenced by fetish, funk, and other Modernist principals, Koller uses image, pattern and application to evoke the mystery and ritual involved in more timeless traditions. The mirror can be a trickster – an alluring force that draws us into another world. What lies beyond its surface - place-less place, a subconscious realm? In his three dimensional painting, *Coda*, Koller uses the same paint can that held the paint used for the work. Re-using the can as an empty tube protruding from the painting, Koller has created a vessel for self-reflection, a navigation marker and passage into another world place beyond the surface of the painting.

Kevan Jenson approaches art through a post-modern mist. His ubiquitous layers of smoke both mask what lie beneath and allow an intervening scrim of Rorschach like projection from the viewer. Interestingly his smoke photograms reverse the dark smoke into areas of gleaming light, pointing to a spirit glowing within an inner darkness of unknowing.

In an attempt to represent the theories of physics in his work, **Fred Eversley's** soaring and translucent sculptures act as parabolic mirrors of reflectors that capture and focus frontal light energy onto an imaginary plane or point that appears to be suspended in space. "The physical energy phenomenon, represented optically by the sculptures, represents the entire spectrum of electromagnetic and acoustical energy".

Through a combination of studying the mathematical plotting of old master paintings and mathematical patterns in nature, spiritual and religious histories are explored in **Michael Walsh's** *Reliquary* sculptures. Walsh is also interested in how humans have historically tried to make a connection between themselves and the land, often using mathematical principles way before their time to map their existence onto the earth. Sites such as Stonehenge and the Egyptian pyramids have served as inspirations to continue an investigation into why this continues to be important to humans and to manifest itself in modern architecture and art.