

JOHN HITCHCOCK

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**AUGUST 1 to
OCTOBER 3, 2009**

**OPENING RECEPTION:
SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 2009
FROM 6:00 PM TO 8:00 PM**



PYRAMID ATLANTIC ART CENTER
8230 Georgia Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20910
3 blocks from the Silver Spring Metro
pyramidatlanticartcenter.org

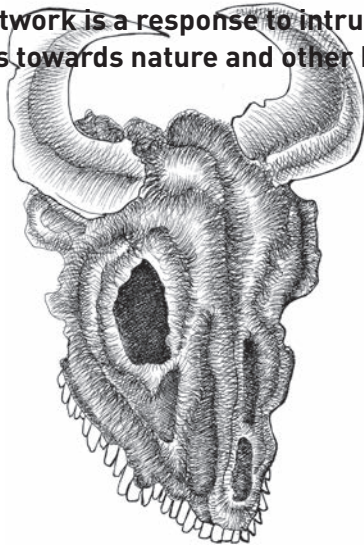
EXHIBITION HOURS
Monday - Saturday 10:00 am - 5:00 pm



The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation • The Marpat Foundation

JOHN HITCHCOCK ARTIST STATEMENT

The representations of military weaponry, plastic toys, and mythological hybrid creatures are based on my childhood memories and stories of growing up in the Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma. I have a fascination with the imagery of war and weaponry from growing up next to Fort Sill, one of the largest Field Artillery training installations in the Western United States, and living around the hunting culture of rural Oklahoma. Oklahoma State Highway 49 separates my family's land from Fort Sill. The memories of helicopters flying overhead, soldiers playing war games in the woods, and military tanks noisily driving by at 3 am preparing for battles haunt my imagination. As a child in the early 70s, I thought the television's images of war in Vietnam were coming from outside my window across Highway 49. It was somewhat confusing. The influence of playing games like cowboys and Indians as a child to the overload of violent visuals in media, and the escalating violence in our world are a primary source for my installations and prints. I explore notions of good, evil, death, and life cycles. My depictions of beasts, animals, and machines act as metaphors for human behavior and cycles of violence. My artwork is a response to intrusive behavior by humans towards nature and other humans.



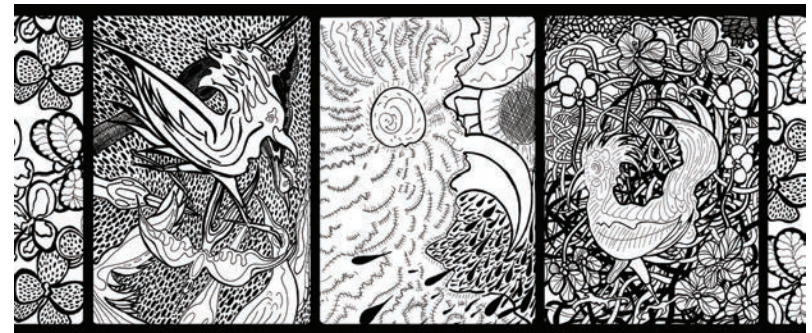
ABOVE & COVER: Drawings for exhibition

ARTIST BIOS

John Hitchcock an Artist and Associate Professor of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he teaches screenprinting, relief cut, digital mixed media prints, and installation art. He earned his MFA in printmaking and photography at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas and received his BFA from Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma. He is the recipient of many honors and awards including: the American Photography Institute National Graduate Seminar Fellowship at New York University and Tisch School of Arts; Jerome Foundation grant, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Vilas Associate Grant, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Hitchcock's teaching experience includes: Assistant Professor of Studio Art at the University of Minnesota, Morris and Visiting Artist at Texas Tech University. His current works are a blend of printmaking, digital imaging, video, and installation

Matthew Owen Wead is an artist from Chicago, Illinois and received his BA in Visual Arts from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He recently received his MFA from the University of Maryland, College Park. Matthew is a hybrid artist, mixing technology with traditional techniques. Grounded in the power of ideas, the intent of his work is to address broader issues by using a mixture of the observational with the personal. Since graduating, his belief is that finding a commonality between our individual experiences is the only way to truly understand each other. The work is meant to show an uglier side of humanity in an effort to reconcile the current ugly with the potential beauty.

Federico Signorelli is a political-conceptual artist born December 4, 1978 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His specialties include: print art, objects, video, installations, interventions and simulacra.



ABOVE: The Protector, John Hitchcock

BELOW: Blancos, Hitchcock, Wead, and Signorelli



BLANCOS

In collaboration with artists Matt Wead and Federico Signorelli, John Hitchcock presents Blancos. BLANCOS deals with the inevitable outcome of war – annihilation. By referencing images as diverse as the buffalo, Francisco Goya’s *The Third of May 1808*, and images of the 30,000 disappeared people in Argentina, the artists confront the viewer with the cause and effect as well as the mindset of communal violence. The sounds of 80’s/90’s death metal band Slayer and Tango music intertwine for the sound-scape.

BELOW: Brutality Ghost, John Hitchcock



IMPRACTICALLY POLITICAL: THE ART INTERVENTIONS OF JOHN HITCHCOCK

Artists are not obligated to uphold standards of correctness, in terms of either accuracy or politeness. John Hitchcock in his body of work, ImpRACTICALLY Political, playfully and poignantly underscores the advantage that art brings to a self-determined dialogue. Historical and contemporary events, the past and present, collide and morph into hybrid readings. Artists often have great latitude in dealing with the truth, the privilege to freely distort and exaggerate. However, what happens when life events become a caricature? A distortion? An exaggeration? An absurdity? John Hitchcock’s works of art do not ask these questions, they embody them. Hitchcock provides a reminder of why the multiple is important. Through his repetitive use of layered iconic imagery and mass, Hitchcock offers a reflection and a re-contextualization of colonial and postcolonial thought without falling into self-righteousness, cynicism or irony. Rather Hitchcock’s work embodies the fractured fairytale of American History, and the magic mirror he holds up to our face does not tell us that we are the fairest in the land.

Optimism is derived from the Latin word *optimus*, translating to “best”; this describes an optimistic person as one who is always looking for the best in all possible situations and expecting that ultimately good things will happen. It is the tendency, despite what we know, to still believe, expect or hope that things will turn out okay. Hitchcock’s art never falls into the trap of pessimism; rather it abounds with a positive and inclusive concern and hopeful goodwill. Hitchcock’s work uses participation, humor and the familiar language of the sign to disarm his viewer and make palatable for contemplation the serious events and great injustices of our past and present histories. Through play, inclusion and collaboration, his work resists the trap of becoming didactic or preachy. Hitchcock extends an open invitation to all comers. He expands his audience and creates reflective art that, once witnessed, will resonate with the participants long after the dismantling of the exhibition. It is the optimist who hopes that possibly, through the experience of art, the viewer will perceive the world a little bit differently. This distinction makes all the difference, and through this endeavor, Hitchcock sustains his poignant artistic voice.

Similar to other important political artists, from Goya to Nancy Spero and Jimmie Durham, Hitchcock creates his life as a work of art. His own pluralistic heritage birthed him into the dualistic world of Germanic European and American Indian cultures. Through life experiences, a haircut becomes an act of honor and mourning, a generic federally subsidized canned food label becomes a target, and a gathering becomes a cacophony of layers for vernacular storytelling in complete harmony. Hitchcock applies his cultural knowledge to create art interventions. Hitchcock does not permit and is not interested in the passive viewing of his art. The art/viewer relation is not a transmitter/receiver paradigm. Hitchcock utilizes post- or neo-Dada and Fluxus strategies to expand the discipline of contemporary printmaking through collaborative art happenings that result in spontaneous actions and are open to further reactions. Hitchcock brings possibility to his viewer and allows them to resolve these contacts for themselves. Hitchcock makes a seemingly mundane train ride between two points on a map into a destination for an exhibition opening, as demonstrated in the [Moving Target](#) events in Poland-to-Germany and again in the [Objetivos Moviles](#) project performed on Argentina’s Buenos Aires train system. In these art happenings, Hitchcock and others solicited works on paper from over 100 artists in North and South America who shared their political concerns and agendas. These prints (multiples) were then strung upon a clothesline and paraded through a moving train, going from car to car, like a literal airing of our dirty laundry. These works transverse borders and boundaries to demonstrate the potential of art as a vehicle for change and an opportunity to learn about other global political and cultural issues. Hitchcock’s unsuspecting and somewhat captive audience inadvertently has a contemporary art gallery experience. If nothing else comes of these events, Hitchcock is definitely assured that the train ride will remain in the commuters’ memories; the mountain does indeed come to Mohammed.

The atmospheres of Hitchcock’s events create a spectacle sensation. Similar to a Mardi-Gras carnival, they too commemorate or precede somber events with frenzied collaborative revelry that sometimes takes on the spirit of Bacchus or Dionysius or the Pied Piper. This is evident throughout Hitchcock’s repertoire, as demonstrated in the collaboration of a much earlier work performed in 2004, [When We Reach 87 Billion STOP!](#), where Hitchcock screenprinted, and invited others to screenprint, the same image over and over again, as the gallery began to fill uncomfortably with hundreds and thousands of pieces of paper, intimidating as Midas’s touch, threatening to overwhelm the viewer. The physical motion of the performance is exhausting similar to a Whirling Dervish or Native American ceremo-

nial dance. During this intervention each piece of paper is printed with tick marks that are grouped in bundles of five representing the United States’ mounting national debt.

Similarly, another intervention Hitchcock performed at the University of Maryland in 2007, [Collateral Consumption](#), used collaboration as a key component in its production. Images of military helicopters and tanks printed on grey felt swarmed the walls, with projections of alternating targets and explosions of comic book clouds superimposed upon them. These images shared the wall with what looked like possible timelines for various conflicts (America/Iraq, Palestine/Israeli); these lines were littered with thousands of hand drawn X’s. Perhaps there was one X for every day a bomb was dropped or every bullet shot or every human being killed. On the floor, shaped prints of animal skulls, deer, buffalo, and coyote were scattered. Perhaps these were trophies, signifiers of wasted innocence, symbols of extinction? The use of multi-media art to make an environment transforms the art from a subject and turns the viewer into an object, a part of the piece, a Pygmalion participant.

The use of the multiple in Hitchcock’s work leads the viewer to notice the exhausting physicality of repetitive action and the resulting mass. These are no longer works on paper; these are not toys or mere symbols; these are lives and destinies unfulfilled, and the multitude overwhelms as it diminishes us. The essence of [Impractically Political](#) embodies these previous pieces and continues to ask the central questions germane to Hitchcock’s treatise. When is the war, carnage and suffering resulting from politics practical? How can we refer to a battlefield as an arena or theater of engagement? Is it practical to equate the word “collateral” with the extreme loss of human life through direct and purposeful acts of human violence?

The title of this exhibition, [Impractically Political](#), also reflects the impractical heart of the artist and the political person who is John Hitchcock. Every art action he makes merely asks us, “Why?” while optimistically telling us that it does not have to be this way; there is a choice. Hitchcock creates his work fully knowing it is the equivalent of throwing a stone in a pond and entrusting the rippling vibration to change the world. His optimism is not a form of denial nor does it avert the gaze; Hitchcock looks boldly upon war and terror, unblinking, bravely distilling these passionate events for those of us too cowardly to do so. He kindly recontextualizes the horror through metaphor, simile, and analogy; his cautionary tales become modern Aesop fables for those of us both timid and unaware, needing to relearn how to be human beings. Perhaps through the generosity and inclusive spirit of Hitchcock’s works of art, the time has come for the pond ripples to become a wave, a whitecap, a swell, a tide and eventually a tsunami of hope, of optimism, of change. After all, the [Impractically Political](#) may just turn out to be politically practical.

ANITA JUNG / IOWA CITY, IOWA / 6.12.2009