



## RESPOND!

In the RESPOND! Series, the Art Center asks visitors to tell us what they think about the work in the exhibition. This time we asked Spring Break Creative Campers.

### **Happy Hydrogen Bomb** by Christian Kuras and Duncan Mackenzie

The scene starts with an “ugly” gray city. There are no colors. The floor around it is green, but the green stops at the edge of the city. Why doesn't the city have color? Then, right at the center of the city is a colorful bomb. Aren't bombs supposed to be bad? But this bomb is a happy hydrogen bomb. Maybe the city was bad. On the bomb, the colors are always in order. Maybe the color order matters. The buildings, especially at the edge seem to be arranged in a certain way, sort of like words. Maybe the way the houses and buildings are arranged have something to do with the reason for the colorful bomb.

Look carefully!

### **Freed** by Paul Lloyd Sargent

When you are at the end of the hall you see a water picture at the end. You walk to the end and suddenly you are in the water. You hear it slopping around you. In front of you, there is a boat. It is moving, but it never gets to the other side of the screen. But why? Look closer. The boat goes, but every time it gets to the green buoy, water rises above your head. When the water comes back down, the boat is back where it started! You turn to your right and suddenly everything is on a diagonal. There is a boat in this film too, but it goes off the screen then the screen goes black. When the film starts, you can see seaweed under the water. Now, the boat is back on the right side of the screen. Next, the boat goes backward across to the left. Weird. Then the film starts over. You turn around and leave the gallery. No more water. Your ears relax.

– Erica Frank, age 12



### **Secrets and Lies and More Lies** by Deb Sokolow

This stream of paper fills one segment of a wall with beautiful drawings and a well thought out story. It is sort of like the “Choose Your Own Adventure” books. There are many possible paths you can take, and each one leads to a different part of the story. I really like how the drawings change the perspective. By this I mean one moment you're looking at a drawing of the whole house, the next moment you're looking at a detailed and colorful drawing of a room in the house. I also like how the whole piece isn't done in color; I like the effect it gives. Your eyes are attracted to the color, but when you look at the un-colored part of the drawings, you see a whole different piece of the picture. Sometimes the most important piece of the drawing isn't colored. It is clear that the artist paid close attention to the detail while making this piece and the result is fabulous.

– Siobhan O'Muircheartaigh, age 11

### **Chromogenic Photographs** by Sarah Anne Johnson

All of these beautiful pictures bring real life aspects into the new life of art. With pictures ranging from clay figures to real life everyday “you and me” pictures, this set of pictures brings everything from swimming to sleeping into concept.

– Gabriel Ovsiew, age 11

## Hyde Park ARTCENTER

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 [www.hydeparkart.org](http://www.hydeparkart.org)

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by the Alphawood Foundation; The Chicago Community Trust, a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; the Illinois Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois General Assembly; The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; The Lucius and Eva Eastman Foundation; The Field Foundation of Illinois; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Joyce Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; Kraft Foods; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The National Endowment for the Arts; The Orbit Fund; The Playboy Foundation; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Sara Lee Foundation; South East Chicago Commission; The Terra Foundation for American Art; and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; and the generosity of its members and friends.

# Gallery 2 & The Cleve E. Carnery Gallery

March 18 –  
May 13  
2007

## The Adventurous Type

Work by Christian Kuras and Duncan MacKenzie, Paul Lloyd Sargent, Sarah Anne Johnson and Deb Sokolow



**Left:**  
Sarah Anne Johnson  
*The birds*  
2005  
Chromogenic prints  
20 x 24 inches

**Back Side:**  
Paul Lloyd Sargent  
*Freed*  
2003-2007  
Digital video installation

Deb Sokolow  
*Secrets and Lies and More Lies*  
2006-2007  
Graphite and ink on paper

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “We are always getting ready to live, but never living.” The four art installations presented in the exhibition *The Adventurous Type* invite you, the viewer, to live dangerously by taking a mental journey through fictitious cityscapes and unpredictable landscapes and determine the outcome of the narrative presented in the artwork. All of the works employ a plot structure reminiscent of the Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) book<sup>1</sup>, a type of children’s book that sets up a series of choices for the young reader to make in order to resolve the plot. These “game books” can be considered a generational icon, influencing the imaginations and thought processes of those who grew up in the 1980s and 90s. For artists Christian Kuras, Duncan MacKinzie, Sara Anne Johnson, Paul Lloyd Sargent and Deb Sokolow, the narrative can be considered a medium relied upon as much as the paper, video tape, ink or paint these artists use to create the artwork on view.

Intentionally juxtaposing reality and fantasy, these artworks situate the viewer as the protagonist deep in the middle of a psychological scene that is somewhat recognizable and at the same time bizarre.

Reality-based digital video and photography by Paul Lloyd Sargent and Sarah Anne Johnson, respectively, utilize nature as a vital setting that provides an unknown territory and uncontrollable circumstances. *Freed* by Sargent consists of two large-scale projections with atmospheric underwater sounds and one tiny monitor. The installation reveals the artist’s self-professed obsession with the real life persona Abbie Hoffman (1936-1989), a lawless man most known for his yippie (a radical youth oriented counter culture



Christian Kuras and Duncan MacKenzie, *Happy Hydrogen Bomb* 2007, Wood, enamel, fiberglass, and vinyl

movement) activist involvement in the Chicago 7. Running from the law, Hoffman underwent plastic surgery, changed his identity to Barry Freed, and absconded to the remote north east. Playing the role of Hoffman/Freed, Sargent wanders the St. Lawrence River (seen on the small monitor), taking the viewer along with him, and reenacts the fugitive’s journey with hopes to uncover clues that ultimately lead to the tragic downfall of Freed. The natural environment channels a psychologically disturbing vibe in the work of Sarah Anne Johnson as well. The installation of 31 photographs purposely arranged by Johnson introduces a trip the artist took to the Galapagos Islands as part of an ecological volunteer program. Since many of the islands are still active volcanoes and are inhabited by a vast range of wild animals—most of which are fearless due to the lack of natural predators—the Galapagos are full of wonderment and peril. At a closer look, the installation bares actual scenes and individuals or characters interspersed with staged images photographed from three-dimensional dioramas. By alternating real and fake subjects, the installation creates a series of pauses for the viewer to literally

connect the dots, which in this case are photographs, and invent several possible scenarios of what happened during the adventure in an exotic and untamed land.

In comparison, the bold graphic installations by Christian Kuras and Duncan Mackenzie working collaboratively, and Deb Sokolow take a fantasy-based approach and suspend our inhibitions towards adventure through a comic-book aesthetic. Although the artwork may appear emotionally naïve, they are quite the opposite. In the two part sculptural installation, *Happy Hydrogen Bomb* and *The Vindicator*, a highly critical and devastating event appears frozen in time. Consisting of a generic metropolis, a colorful mushroom-shaped cloud protruding from it, and a wall of enlarged and deflated vinyl masks overlooking the city, the installation transforms the lobby area into a superhero’s worst nightmare. The exaggerated sense of scale places the viewer in between the city and the superhero masks, begging the question, who will save the city from destruction when we realize that our idols are merely impotent symbols of authority? On a less fatal, but equally immediate note, *Secrets and Lies and More Lies* by Sokolow leads the viewer, addressed as “you”, through the intriguing story behind the Winchester Mystery House, an actual place in San Jose, California. Assuming the role of the central character, you traverse the text and diagrams that take you from an office space to an old hotel to the mystery house, and eventually to a Borders Bookstore, all with a dizzying amount of information and an extremely clever sense of humor. The black, orange and blue coded texts determine the information you believe to be factual and the degree of suspicion you are willing to admit. In the end, the villain in *Secrets and Lies Untold* and *Happy Hydrogen Bomb/The Vindicator* is man, as opposed to nature, which presents a critical perspective of the paranoid and powerless attitude that dominates the current social and political climate.

According to the University of Chicago psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, we seek adventure to enjoy life. He wrote, “It is not possible to experience a feeling of control unless one is willing to give up the safety of protective routines. Only when a doubtful outcome is at stake, and one is able to influence that outcome, can a person really know whether she is in control.”<sup>2</sup> Decades of his research show that people enjoy the sense of *exercising* control in a complex situation, as opposed to *being* in control, and enjoyment ultimately leads to happiness. *The Adventurous Type* presents four distinctive art installations that thrill, amuse, and bewilder to encourage you, the viewer, to take a risk. All of these works warn that it can be just as dangerous being sedentary and refraining from involvement than it is to take a chance, get out there and live life to its fullest.

### Allison Peters

Curator of *The Adventurous Type*

In kind support for the exhibition has been provided by Meeting Tomorrow.

<sup>1</sup> Published between 1979 and 1998 and selling over 250 million copies, the CYOA book is the most popular children’s book series of all time. Written in the second person and spanning all literary genres, these books encouraged the reader to role-play and always contained a hero and a villain. The stories included between 35 and 50 possible endings that are determined by the reader, depending on the choices he/she makes at various junctures which cause the reader to skip or go backward to certain page numbers to complete the narrative.

<sup>2</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York, 1990), 61.