



Jonathan Horowitz, *Hillary Clinton is a Person Too*, 2008, bonded bronze, 72 x 34 x 34".

ralled within a net attached to the ceiling, awaiting release at that orgasmic moment of political consummation. A chronological progression of framed reproductions of official portraits of all the US presidents, from Washington to George W., was mounted on the gallery walls, while a photo of Obama sat on the floor next to the last empty spot, awaiting an inevitable installation, or coronation. A new beginning for our political culture, or merely a sobering reminder that Obama enters a pantheon of dashed hopes?

Horowitz also offered up a table densely populated with small kitschy figurines of different typologies (*We the People are People Too*, 2008), inscribed with sayings like CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE TOO, EDWARD KENNEDY IS A PERSON TOO, HENRY PAULSON IS A PERSON TOO, BRISTOL PALIN IS A PERSON TOO, and so on. A gold-plated bronze titled *Larry Gagosian Is a Person Too*, 2008, stood across the room from a larger-scale bronze, *Hillary Clinton Is a Person Too*, 2008, featuring a woman about to be crowned. No one, nothing, escapes Horowitz's skepticism and rapier wit as he performs the role of the artist-as-court jester, coyly asking: Is there anything left to believe in?

—Joshua Decker

Elizabeth Neel

DEITCH PROJECTS

Elizabeth Neel is an accomplished painter, though it's not clear what, specifically, her accomplishment is. Her paintings are fourth-, fifth-, sixth- (I've lost count) generation samples of Abstract Expressionist painting. She is struggling hard to renew the meaningfulness of passionate gesture, but her gestures, while passionate, do not themselves seem to have much meaning. If, as Harold Rosenberg wrote, "the test of [the] seriousness [of action painting] is the degree to which the act on the canvas is an extension of the artist's effort to make over his [or her] experience," then Neel doesn't so much take the test as sidestep its challenge.

To her credit, she lives the experience of painting, which is not to say she has transformed the experience of living into her painting.

Dogg; the VOTE OBAMA one offers up a pregnant Jamie-Lynn Spears in a parking lot. Nearby, a soda vending machine (*Coke and/or Pepsi Machine*, 2007) offered us the archetypal consumer-culture menu of non-choice as choice, difference as sameness: Pepsi as the blue candidate, Coke as the red candidate, a reference to the corporatization of politics and the politicization of consumption. This allegorical two-party machine sat near a raunchy split image: above, Katie Couric reading the news; below, a widely circulated paparazzo shot of Britney's naked crotch—resulting in a deliciously sordid media hybridization.

The main event, however, occurred within the gallery's larger space, wherein we encountered red and blue carpets (*Your Land/My Land*, 2008), and two large flat-screen televisions suspended from the ceiling (*Culture War [CNN vs. Fox]*, 2008), one transmitting, in real time, CNN, the other Fox News, again invoking the feedback loop of implacably binary ideological "choice." A gaggle of red, white, and blue balloons were cor-

Instead of being made over, bits and pieces of her experience float like debris in a Sargasso Sea of painterliness. But hers seems to be an experience of the history of gestural painting; we don't see the residue—memory traces—of her own life story. In *Humpndump*, 2008, a schematic fragment of a female body rises from a gestural swamp, holding our attention because some of its details seem de Kooning-esque. Neel's paintings, in the gestures and shapes they contain, seem haunted by ghosts of past accomplishments, a quality that suggests they are reprises—remembrances of past art that do it some justice, but that don't share its presence. Reworking Abstract Expressionism doesn't necessarily make it work again but does remind us that it once worked well, as its evocative power indicates. Neel's version, however, is not emotionally provocative or aesthetically innovative: It's all surface excitement.

Both the first- and second-generation Abstract Expressionists had not only energy but also structure in their paintings; most of Neel's works, though, seem to have more energy than structure, particularly the small acrylic paintings on paper—hasty puddings indeed, to refer to one of their titles. Perhaps the irony is lost on me, but the thrown paint seems thrown any which way, which suggests Neel doesn't know the way. *Sbits and Giggles*, 2008, another small acrylic, is a clever mess, symptomatic of the scatological (and frivolous) turn some art has taken, perhaps because of the artists' inability to achieve the heights of the sublime, heights that are achieved in the works of Pollock, Newman, Rothko, and the naturalistic abstractions of Frankenthaler, Mitchell, and de Kooning.

Neel is at her best—half-serious, aesthetically interesting, in the sense in which Hans Sedlmayr says that the interesting has become the substitute for the beautiful—in three big works: *Yankee Doodle*, 2007, and *Sideshow* and *Count to Ten*, both 2008. All these works have structure as well as force, particularly *Sideshow*, where the powerful grand gesture circles back on itself to form an interior frame. One has to give Neel credit for trying hard, even if here it seems she has not tried hard enough.

—Donald Kuspit



Elizabeth Neel, *Yankee Doodle*, 2008, oil on canvas, 76 x 90".

Annika von Hausswolff

CASEY KAPLAN

I Am the Runway of Your Thoughts (all works 2008), the installation that gave Annika von Hausswolff's recent show its title, is made up of multiple photographs of a woman pointing a model airplane toward her open mouth. Produced in either color or black-and-white, and displayed either singly or in sets of two, three, or five, the photographs are cinematically and dramatically lit, and together have the effect of a slow-motion advance toward a terrible moment.

The gesture in the images is obviously sexual, and obviously violent; the echoes of 9/11 are impossible to ignore, there (still) being no stronger symbol of violence than an airplane. The work freezes the moment before impact, examining it from all its possible angles;

sensitive use of graphite and ink was redirected into unsettling depictions of the American “war on terror.” Seventeen of her “Interrogation Drawings,” which are based on images of Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and Iraq, were lined up on a single wall. Made on sheets of pastel-colored graph paper, these drawings of interrogation rooms, prisoners, cells, and torture devices exude a haunting magnetism, bringing to mind Susan Sontag’s study of wartime images in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). Like Sontag, Simpson engages aesthetics and ethics, but her drawings eschew didacticism or any particular political stance. They are instead rooted in ambiguity, seeking to question the power of images and their mass circulation rather than the mechanics of making powerful images.

Adjacent to these drawings, Simpson’s video *Long Slow War* created a dialectic in the gallery between historical spectatorship and modern cruelty. The work pairs Thomas Edison’s silent film of two trains crashing head-on, *Railroad Smash-up*, with a black-and-white film of fireworks exploding. The sound track, slowed-down pops and bangs that sound like dreadful moans, correlated eerily with the nearby drawings. Pivoting between beauty and brutality, Simpson’s new works show she is taking stock of her past, embracing change in the present, and experimenting with future possibilities.

—Lauren O’Neill-Butler

Donald Moffett

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

Queer variations on a theme, the fourteen coquettish canvases in “Easy Clean,” Donald Moffett’s most recent exhibition at Marianne Boesky, all service the same end. In the front gallery, Moffett showed three monochromes, bristly sculptural paintings resembling patches of AstroTurf or dense clusters of flagella (each a sliver of oil paint squeezed directly from the tube). Cut with holes, the canvases reveal the walls in simple shapes—an exclamation mark, a matrix of dots, and an array of overlapping circles.

The main gallery featured work no less corporeal for being less hirsute: eleven canvases, muted and tawny, that hung on the back wall as if lined up for a firing squad. Pieces of stretched material, either linen or cotton duck, peppered with zippers and tidy, thumb-size holes, these works are tight in their execution, and suggest bondage hoods and snug pairs of jeans. They also recall (and riff on) *Arte Povera* works, particularly Lucio Fontana’s canvases with yonic slashes.

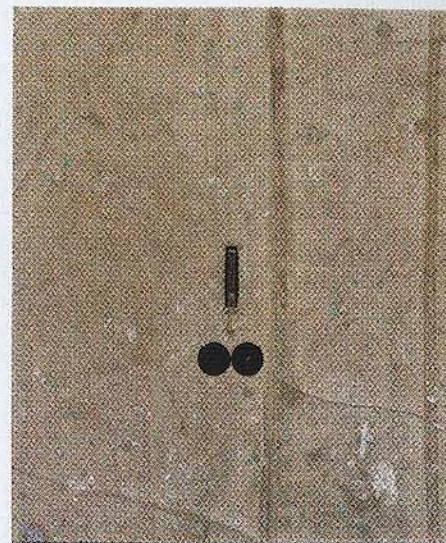
Lot 011707 (loo), 2007, in which a short zipper is stitched above two painted black dots, lewdly, cartoonishly, conjures a penis. Another, *Lot 081907 (IOO)*, 2007, simultaneously resembles a bomb, a bowling ball, and a boob. One of the more salaciously sophisticated, *Lot 010907 (7wl)*, 2007, features seven white zippers arranged to form an asterisk in the center of the canvas. The zippers come together at an opening, a sort of generic orifice that could be read equally as an asshole or a glory hole.

Moffett was one of the founders of Gran Fury, a critical agitprop collective that, during the late 1980s and early ’90s, helped bring attention to the AIDS crisis. In those days, and for some time thereafter, his solo work employed Kruger-esque strategies, juxtaposing curt, gnomonic text with often-lubricious imagery; even as his work grew more abstract in the late ’90s and the first years of the 2000s, it often retained a dimension of topicality. His 2002 exhibition “What Barbara Jordan Wore” at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, for example, paired gridded abstractions with gridded photographic layouts of Texas legislative bodies to explore, as he termed it, the civil rights advocate’s “aesthetics of political progress.” In a 2003 exhibition at

Marianne Boesky, he projected videos from the Ramble, a gay cruising ground in Central Park, onto monochromes. In his latest work, however, rather than force juxtapositions or impose a projection, Moffett slyly invites penetration. If there was a specific “topic” for “Easy Clean,” it remained abstruse. The shift is compelling, almost startling, and some might argue that it betrays apostasy, that Moffett has clearly lost faith in the efficacy (or virtue) of “political art.”

But even a policy wonk would know that politics transcend the specific. And with gay rights movements increasingly choosing sexual normalization over subversion, locating the perverse within formal traditions certainly has political resonance. Moffett’s canvas-based work cleverly teases out the tension between figuration and abstraction, raising the question of how a painting could be coded as pornographic if it does not, in fact, “depict” anything. Rather than heroically gesticulating in the manner of AbEx, these works cagily insinuate; the love dares not speak its name. The two series dovetail in an effort to fetishize the canvas, to make it a field of pleasures not only visual but also potentially tactile—even if to touch is still taboo.

—David Velasco



Donald Moffett, *Lot 011707 (loo)*, 2007, acrylic gesso, oil, alkyd, rayon, and plated nickel on cotton duck, 24 x 20".

Jonathan Horowitz

GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE

On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama won the presidency. That night, an election returns party was held within Jonathan Horowitz’s opportunistically timed and oddly entertaining “Obama ’08” exhibition. Horowitz irreverently and wittily appropriates items from American lowbrow and middlebrow culture, converting an already-reified pop vernacular into a pastiche of itself, and reveling in the tragicomic dimensions of postmodern life. His practice is cynical, hopeful, soulful, empty, celebratory, critical, complicit, engaged, fatalistic, satirical, stupid, and thoughtful.

“Obama ’08” might be understood as an alternative campaign headquarters, a platform offering an acerbic lampooning of the ridiculousness of popular and advertising cultures, the news media, the art world, and mainstream politics. Two elements of the show were viewable from outside, through the gallery’s windows: the title phrase OBAMA ’08 inscribed on a wall, and a canvas (*The Ugly Republican [violet]*, 2008) that slyly evokes Richard Prince with this joke: JOHN MCCAIN AT A REPUBLICAN PARTY FUNDRAISER: “WHY IS CHELSEA CLINTON SO UGLY? BECAUSE HER FATHER IS JANET RENO.” Inside hung an ink-jet-print pseudo-campaign poster featuring a grid of US presidential portraits and, at the bottom, a photo of Obama and the phrase OBAMA ’08. Nearby hung a framed sequence of *New York Post* front pages combining images of Britney Spears gone wild and Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, with headlines such as SUICIDAL BRITNEY AND HILL FIRE: SHE LETS LOOSE BLAZING ATTACK ON BARACK. Horowitz produced two other fake campaign posters (together titled *Nightmare on Main Street: Election ’08*, 2008) that riff off the underlying racial fears surrounding the election: THE VOTE MCCAIN one features a hip-hop Britney carried like a child by a dreadlocked Snoop