

ARTWORK IN EXHIBITION

(Alphabetical by artist. Asterisk indicates artist is in di Rosa collection.)

ANTHONY DISCENZA

Ambivalence, 2011
Free printed poster
Courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco

Another Post-Apocalyptic Scenario, 2011
Vinyl on aluminum (Installed outdoors)
Courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco

Conditions on the Ground, 2011
Cut vinyl transfer
Courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco

The Week in Catastrophe, 2011
Vinyl on aluminum (Installed outdoors)
Courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco

HALFLIFERS

(**Torsten Z. Burns/Anthony Discenza**)
Afterlifers: Walking & Talking (Extended Mix), 2004/2008
Digital video, 2 channels, continuous loop
Courtesy of Torsten Z. Burns and Anthony Discenza

SUZANNE HUSKY

Sleeper Cell (Round), 2011
Mixed media
Courtesy of Recology, San Francisco

INKA HOOTS

(**Joshua Short/Joel Dean Stockdill**)
Stronghold: #2, 2011
Mixed media, site-specific installation
Courtesy the artists

Stronghold: Fight or Flight, 2011
Mixed media, site-specific installation (Installed outdoors)
Courtesy the artists

PACKARD JENNINGS*

Bible Stickers, 2005
Free stickers
Courtesy the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery

Destructables.org, 2011
Website, presented with reference books
Courtesy the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery. Additional support by Southern Exposure.

Stack of free publications from CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective

ROBIN LASSER* & ADRIENNE PAO

Border Fence, 2005
C-print
Courtesy of the artists

Ice Queen: Glacial Retreat Dress Tent, 2008
C-print
Courtesy of the artists

Ms. Homeland Security: Illegal Entry Dress Tent, 2005
C-print
Courtesy of the artists

WHITNEY LYNN

Bunker/Bunker, 2010
Archival inkjet print mounted on aluminum
Courtesy of the artist

Castle/Castle, 2010
Archival inkjet print mounted on aluminum
Courtesy of the artist

Containment Model no. 002 (Couch Fort), 2010
Model, vitrine
Courtesy of the artist

Whitney Lynn
Containment Model no. 003 (Ruins), 2010
Model, vitrine
Courtesy of the artist

Containment Model no. 005 (Shelter), 2011
Model, vitrine
Courtesy of the artist

Fort/Fort, 2010
Archival inkjet print mounted on aluminum
Courtesy of the artist

JULIO CESAR MORALES

Undocumented Interventions, 2011
Triptych. Watercolor and ink on paper
Courtesy of the artist and Frey Norris Contemporary & Modern, San Francisco

Undocumented Interventions #2, 2011
Watercolor and ink on paper
Courtesy of the artist and Frey Norris Contemporary & Modern, San Francisco

Undocumented Interventions #3, 2011
Watercolor and ink on paper
Courtesy of the artist and Frey Norris Contemporary & Modern, San Francisco

LUCY PULS*

Recinere (Hangers), 2010
Photographs mounted on wood and aluminum panel, glue, magnet
Courtesy of the artist and Electric Works, San Francisco

Recinere (Hanging Lamp), 2010
Photograph mounted on Plexiglas mirror, glass and metal lamp lens, paper
Courtesy of the artist and Electric Works, San Francisco

Recinere (Lockset), 2010
Photographs mounted on aluminum, glass, paper
Courtesy of the artist and Electric Works, San Francisco

Recinere (Outlet), 2010
Photographs mounted on aluminum and wood, paint
Courtesy of the artist and Electric Works, San Francisco

Recinere (TV), 2010
Photographs mounted on aluminum, plastic television casing, water-based resin, paper
Courtesy of the artist and Electric Works, San Francisco

CAROL SELTER*

A Turtle and Two Squirrels Walk Into a Bar... (God it's hot), 2011
Single-channel video with sound, edition of 5 + 2AP, duration 0:52
Courtesy the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles

A Turtle and Two Squirrels Walk Into a Bar... ("Like the foot of an elephant..."), 2011
Single-channel video with sound, edition of 5 + 2AP, duration 0:35
Courtesy the artist

A Turtle and Two Squirrels Walk Into a Bar... (No comment), 2011
Single-channel video, edition of 5 + 2AP, duration 1:02
Courtesy the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles

A Turtle and Two Squirrels Walk Into a Bar... (Oh god...), 2011
Single-channel video with sound, edition of 5 + 2AP, duration 0:59
Courtesy the artist

A Turtle and Two Squirrels Walk Into a Bar... (Where's the water?), 2011
Single-channel video with sound, edition of 5 + 2AP, duration 1:06
Courtesy the artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles

ZOMBIE-PROOF HOUSE

JUNE 18 - SEPTEMBER 17, 2011

FEATURING PROJECTS BY:

ANTHONY DISCENZA * HALFLIFERS (TORSTEN Z. BURNS AND ANTHONY DISCENZA) * SUZANNE HUSKY
INKA HOOTS (JOSHUA SHORT AND JOEL DEAN STOCKDILL) * PACKARD JENNINGS * ROBIN LASSER AND ADRIENNE PAO
WHITNEY LYNN * JULIO CESAR MORALES * LUCY PULS * CAROL SELTER

CURATED BY ROBERT WUILFE

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Please join us for a satellite video exhibition in partnership with the San Pablo Arts District Fund in Oakland, CA, featuring video works by Anthony Discenza, HalfLifers (Torsten Z. Burns and Anthony Discenza), Suzanne Husky, Inka Hoots (Joshua Short and Joel Dean Stockdill), Packard Jennings, Robin Lasser and Adrienne Pao, Whitney Lynn, and Carol Selter.

Opening reception Friday, June 24th, 9pm-11pm
5512 San Pablo Avenue @ 55th Street, Oakland, CA
sanpabloarts.org

SUPPORT

This exhibition was made possible through the generosity of donors to the Fresh Art Fund. Additional support by members of the di Rosa Collectors Council and *Onward!* Young Collectors. We wish to thank the artists and the lenders to the exhibition: Catharine Clark Gallery, Charlie James Gallery, Electric Works, Frey Norris Contemporary & Modern, and Recology San Francisco. Reception sponsors: Tieton Cider Works and Hess Collection. Thanks to all the artists, volunteers and staff who made this exhibition possible!

Ceci n'est pas une Zombie...

This is not an exhibition about zombies. *Zombie-Proof House* is a meditation on anxiety and hope in a troubled time. It explores recent history and potential futures as they relate to collapse, fortification, political upheaval and shared responsibility. Yet, from the financial world, to politics and pop culture, “zombie” is now a prevalent signifier for ideas or institutions that are perceived as dying or dead. The phenomenon embodies hopelessness, but also approaches the moribund and insurmountable with a darkly humorous sensibility. While mindful of post-apocalyptic images and humanity’s tendency to tempt fate, *Zombie-Proof House* also tries to expose some of the absurdity of paranoia and fear, grounding itself in the present and resuscitating the idea of hope and resistance. When you awaken in a zombie-proof house (metaphorical or otherwise) and discover that the world has gone on—like emerging bleary-eyed into the sun from a Cold War bunker—how do you give up your fear?

Fear and worry about the future is a paralyzing force that can proscribe productive action and cooperation. Whether it is climate change, financial collapse, illegal immigrants or terrorism, threats in recent years—both real and falsely-perceived—have increasingly become amorphous and multiplicitous, prone to oversimplification by politicians and the media. Like the exhausted citizens in George Orwell’s *1984*, fatigue has sometimes made exact definition of the menace irrelevant. Similar to the walking zombies of the movies, the pace of threats has been lumbering, but capable of wearing down resistance through sheer persistence. **Anthony Discenza** succinctly embodies this blurring and fatigue through one of his text works in *Zombie-Proof House*, which simply states: “*The ambivalence of this statement is regrettable but deemed necessary in light of recent events.*”

Artists **Julio Cesar Morales** and **Lucy Puls** poignantly present moments in time from these recent events in ways that are heartbreaking but fundamentally necessary for us to acknowledge. Morales’ watercolors of Mexicans being smuggled across the border reflect the extreme—and true—lengths to which individuals will go to achieve a better life in the land of the American Dream. As the border is increasingly fortified and politicized, the methods of human smuggling have become almost baroque, with children hidden inside piñatas and adults placed inside the upholstery and dashboards of vehicles. Filtered through the rhetoric of anti-immigration hysteria in the United States, the humanity of the desperate is lost. In Puls’ works—carefully constructed tableaux of foreclosed and abandoned homes—the humanity of the dispossessed in our own country is made achingly clear by their absence. The enormity of the recent financial collapse made us all well aware of the faults in the system—which have included extreme measures to rescue corporations—yet the real effects of the collapse on individual families remain largely confined to statistics. Puls recuperates the memory of what has been lost.

Along with Morales and Puls, **Whitney Lynn’s** photographs and small-scale models also evoke a wry combination of the personal and the political, with the architecture of childhood juxtaposed with military language and fortifications. Her works are quiet meditations on innocence in the shadow of regimented power.

As in the work of Morales, Puls, and Lynn, notions of shelter, architecture, borders or fortification are central in much of the artwork in *Zombie-Proof House*. The artists create environments and scenarios for the viewer to reflect upon recent crises, apprehension about the future and the potential for finding a better way forward. They engage with our relationship to the spaces around us in useful ways, providing perspective on issues that affect both individuals and society at large. Several of the projects in *Zombie-Proof House* ask viewers to recognize that a future guided by fear is not inevitable. **Suzanne Husky’s**

interactive *Sleeper Cell* plays with the nomenclature of terrorist ‘sleeper cells’ rising up from within our midst. She has repurposed the name for a series of functional structures created from recycled materials that speak to the possibilities of living off the grid, sustainably and in constructive opposition to globalized consumer culture. The massive outdoor installation, *Stronghold*, by **Inka Hoots (Joshua Short and Joel Dean Stockdill)** takes the notion of fortified architecture to a futuristic and post-apocalyptic extreme. Their fallen airplane, turned into a shelter reminiscent of a Mad Max movie, combines a dark warning for the future with a humor that one hopes will remind us that we would be crazy to allow things to get so bad. Through their *Dress Tent* series, **Robin Lasser and Adrienne Pao** subvert the relationship between architecture, land, politics, fashion, and the female body by creating wearable structures that critique assumptions about these subjects. Their photograph of *Ms. Homeland Security: Illegal Entry Dress Tent*, installed on the Mexican border, echoes the fraught politics of immigration we see in Morales’ work.

As noted, this exhibition is not about zombies *per se*. They are, though, a surprisingly useful and pervasive metaphor through which anxiety and fear manifest. As the only zombie-based project in the exhibition, a video installation by **HalfLifers (Torsten Z. Burns and Anthony Discenza)** demonstrates the utility of the genre to elucidate complexity, and solutions for restoring the agency of the self in an overwhelming world. As they have written regarding their co-opting of the zombie format: “Simultaneously embracing physical humor and a sense of nostalgia for alternate realities and timelines, HalfLifers imagines a futurological slapstick which provides a cushion against the alienating and disempowering effects of the modern technologic state.”¹ This critical slapstick and strategic humor is also evident in a series of video vignettes by **Carol Selter**, who animates taxidermy specimens. By doing so she does not create zombies, but rather

sentient creatures saddened and overwhelmed by the impact of humanity on the planet. Her low-tech actors are at once eloquent in the brevity of their statements and absurdly sad.

In recent years, the zombie has intruded into consciousness in a way that goes far beyond its depiction in film. The “classic” undead, brain-eating creature still pops up with increasing frequency and originality, but “zombie” has also morphed into a more pervasive, linguistic descriptor and cultural phenomenon, especially in the language of economics (see Paul Krugman quote). As a language-based tool, the zombie has become shorthand for false (dead) but persistent (undead) ideas that have been proven to not work (i.e.: trickle-down economics) but will not go away or cease creating damage. As well, under the obvious gore and absurdity of zombie movies there has often been an explicit critique of consumer culture and political ineptitude, especially in the decades of films by George A. Romero, the *de facto* father of the genre.

Though the title *Zombie-Proof House* is largely tongue-in-cheek, it begs the question: What is it about our time that makes zombies so morbidly compelling? Without the sensuality of vampires or the animality of werewolves, why has our culture embraced an unstoppable vision of decay and mindless consumption? Sociologically and psychologically the notion of a zombie apocalypse is perhaps one of the ultimate and most clear-cut escapist nightmares to cross the boundary into desirable entertainment (consider the fact that AMC’s frankly mediocre zombie series *The Walking Dead* gets three times the ratings of *Mad Men*). For clues to the attraction of this peculiar fantasy, consider the basic premise of the scenario: A world-wide contagion has reduced the individual’s responsibilities and actions to a simple equation of running and hiding, scavenging the leftovers of society, and shooting zombies in the head. All other trappings of modern life fall by the wayside. One is liberated from the responsibilities of the everyday and left to retreat into an adrenaline-fueled, almost primal state. As far as escaping into the world of entertainment for a brief period, zombie films (and increasingly, books) offer a dark haven and release from obligation.

Writer Rebecca Solnit has found a similar—albeit sometimes more positive—dynamic operating in her study of individual and collective behavior during disaster, *A Paradise Built In Hell*. When discussing the work of sociologist and disaster specialist Charles E. Fritz she notes:

“Fritz sheds light on life during disaster, but the shadows cast on it are those of everyday life—of the alienation not just from each other but also from tangible solutions, heroic roles and chances to begin anew that disaster provides. His essays hint that disaster is relatively easy, at

least in knowing what to do and who to be. It is everyday life that is hard, with its complications and ambiguities, its problems to which no easy solution can be found, its conflicts between people because of economics and ideologies that become relatively insignificant in crisis.”²

This potential for liberation or redefinition through disaster—or the morbid fantasy of it embodied by a world overrun by zombies—is a strong and temporarily seductive urge. Yet, the emergency state that facilitates release can only

be maintained for so long before exhaustion kicks in. As *Zombie-Proof House* attempts to elucidate, we have a range of choices available to us along the spectrum from giving in to the paralysis of fear and anxiety, to assuming the responsibility of nurturing and fighting for a better future. As **Packard Jennings’** new web project *Destructables.org* shows us, there are creative ways to engage with activism, protest and the reconfiguration of society in ways that are nonviolent, humane and conscious of the interconnectedness of the world. Anxiety and fear are natural and useful, but we do not necessarily have to be disempowered by them. We live in a time of great potential for both good and bad. *Zombie-Proof House* is a contemplative warning for this age, with a bifurcated

message: We are rapidly walking down a dangerous path, but are capable of better. Like the zombies themselves, the exhibition tries to encourage a useful questioning of our true priorities as we run desperately towards the future.

**-Robert Wuilfe
Curator**

“Yes, politics is the art of the possible. We all understand the need to deal with one’s political enemies. But it’s one thing to make deals to advance your goals; it’s another to open the door to zombie ideas. When you do that, the zombies end up eating your brain — and quite possibly your economy too.”

-Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman, writing in the New York Times³

NOTES:

1. HalfLifers (Anthony Discenza and Torsten Z. Burns), “HALFLIFERS:HOLYOKE/OAKLAND,” http://halfifersprojects.blogspot.com/2006_10_01_archive.html (accessed June 1, 2011)

2. Solnit, Rebecca. *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*. (New York: Viking, 2009), 109.

3. Krugman, Paul. “When Zombies Win,” *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/20/opinion/20krugman.html> (accessed June 1, 2011)

THE AMBIVALENCE OF
THIS STATEMENT IS
REGRETTABLE BUT
DEEMED NECESSARY
IN LIGHT OF RECENT
DEVELOPMENTS

Anthony Discenza, *Ambivalence*, 2011. Printed poster.
Courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco