

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



CHRIS JOHANSON TOTALITIES

**SEPTEMBER 4 – OCTOBER 25, 2008
18 WOOSTER STREET**

Totalities, a “contemporary living installation” by Chris Johanson, can be experienced at Deitch Projects from September 4th – October 25th. The exhibition presents the artist’s thoughts on contemporary living, involving plants, animals, and people, expressed through a multi-media construction incorporating paintings, sculpture, installation and musical performance.

When the viewer enters the gallery space, all they will see is a giant checkerboard of skin tones and natural hues, representing the colors of the world. The viewer then passes through the artist’s natural tunnel and emerges into a “space temple,” which also represents a space ship or a universal time capsule. All the paintings within are representations of the past, the present and the future. The works are intended to share the thought that time goes on forever in both directions, illuminating the concept that we are here right now, but the things we effect go on forever.

The exhibition’s major theme is the planet earth and its place in the universe. There is also a meditation on the natural world of plants and animals and how they live within themselves and how they are affected by humans, with an emphasis on recycling. All of the wood used in the exhibition is recycled. Almost all of it comes from New York State and most is retrieved from dumpsters near the artist’s Brooklyn studio and from discarded art shipping crates. The artist asks his friends and acquaintances for scraps of wood, endeavoring to give the wood a third life. He uses the beautiful, natural history of the wood with all its scars to prolong its life and build an entryway back into nature. Johanson talks about the degradation of the planet and the beauty of the world through his art, reminding people of their responsibilities.

Johanson’s work has become increasingly abstract because “you get to infuse it with whatever kind of magic you want, and its not obvious what you are talking about...you can tell people what kind of rhythm you want, but it’s open to interpretation.” His new figurative work is also more abstracted “so that you can look at the essence of the people.”

Johanson's exhibitions often involve collaboration with a group of friends. Wherever he lives and travels, he develops a creative community. Jo Jackson and Christopher Garrett have collaborated on some of the paintings and drawings. Kal Spelletich made the mechanical elements of the mobile sculpture about "the gray area of life."

Writing about Johanson's work, Carlo McCormick explains the artist's efforts to "locate the self within the social," and how he seeks to answer the essential personal question, "How do I fit in?" He describes how Johanson "dumpster-dives through the detritus of the modern world, transforming all manner of refuse into aesthetically recycled speculations on our past, present, and future."

Totalities is Chris Johanson's first New York exhibition in six years. His last Deitch Projects exhibition, *Now is Now*, and his stairwell installation for the Whitney Biennial took place in 2002. Johanson was born in San José, California in 1968 and lived for many years in San Francisco where he was a key figure in the Mission District cultural community. He now lives in Portland, Oregon and in New York. Johanson is also active as a musician and a CD compilation of the music that will be performed in *Totalities* will be produced to accompany the exhibition.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT JASMINE LEVETT AT
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