

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



We Are Electric **November 8 – December 20, 2003** **18 Wooster Street**

We Are Electric brings together works that explore mental and ethereal terrain. The 12 artists in the exhibition create works that suggest a new psychedelic and spiritual aesthetic. Personal totems, icons, mysteries, and mythologies are manifested in a variety of media, including sculpture, painting, and collage. Curated by Chris Perez/Ratio3, *We Are Electric* will be on view from November 8 to December 20, 2003. The participating artists are as follows; Jose Alvarez (New York), Hisham Akira Bharoocha (New York), Christopher Garrett (San Francisco), Robert Gutierrez (San Francisco), Tim Hawkinson (Los Angeles), Scott Hewicker (San Francisco), Let's Be Active (San Francisco), Keegan McHargue (Elsewhere), Wangechi Mutu (New York), Amy Sarkisian (Los Angeles), Matthew Ronay (New York), and Michael Velliquette (San Antonio).

One aspect of Jose Alvarez's work is the psychology of belief, investigating how people believe and the conditions necessary for that belief to be established as "truth." Expanding on the aesthetic and conceptual underpinnings of his initial performances, Alvarez explores issues of power and faith with a new body of work that he calls "crystal paintings." He utilizes rock crystals to allude to the way in which people tend to invest objects with **power**, hoping to subject themselves to the object's "aura."

Hisham Akira Bharoocha's wall collage will consist of one central photographic image which references humans' interactions with nature in urban environments. Beginning at the central image, cut paper and painted shapes pour out of the image, bursting outwards like an explosion. Bharoocha views the piece as visualization of the feeling of bliss and peace experienced within the chaos of daily life.

Christopher Garrett will show new drawings and sculptures. Themes of sexual and social anxiety come alive in his drawings, while the sculptures further highlight feeling of fear and confusion.

Robert Gutierrez's paintings depict gouged out landscapes with poisonous elements seeping within the crevice and cracks. Intricately painted, quasi-spiritual landmarks litter the work and orgies of bodies and color abound. Gutierrez's figures often appear locked in a struggle over power of out-of-control environments teeming with sex and mystery.

Combining a keen exploration of materials and an accomplished sense of craft, **Tim Hawkinson** creates work that appears both disturbing and humorous. Hawkinson has made two new works for the exhibition, including a large photo collage that continues his on-going creation of mind-bending self-portraits. The other piece subtly references Donatello's *St. Mary Magdalen* and Victor Hugo's initial drawings as the inspiration for a large, tangled form that will hang from the ceiling.

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Scott Hewicker will unveil a new painting entitled *King of Kings*. The piece depicts a large tree comprised of smaller trees, creating a network that relies on itself to survive yet is threatened to sag under its own weight. Hewicker uses the tree form to examine the growth of numerous possibilities which lead only to unreachable goals. Playing with the Christian exaltation "King of Kings," Hewicker's idea of a tree of trees is something that inspires so much awe that it borders on repulsion.

Expanding upon his imagery of mythic figures and disjointed shapes, **Keegan McHargue's** installation will be comprised of several new paintings on panel and on the wall, as well as small house-like structures. Utilizing a style reminiscent of Islamic paintings, McHargue paints patterns and figures into a flat landscape, creating a subtle tension between perspective and form.

Wangechi Mutu's wall drawing is based on the form of a centipede, which in various African mythologies represented and foretold the introduction of the railroad to the African continent. Mutu uses the centipede as a spine for a narrative filled with both personal and historic moments in African history. Teeming with female forms and imagery borrowed from fairy tales, Mutu laces the piece with a satirical tone and heavy references to wars and other tragic occurrences.

Matthew Ronay creates sculptures that are atmospherically specific yet open-ended in their final reading. Ronay will present two new large works; one being the first sampling of a large series which will encapsulate imagined cultural moments in the 1970s. *Infected Carrot* tells the story of when humans abandoned looking for economic and social resources on the surface of the earth, and the resulting consequences of a dire chain reaction.

Amy Sarkisian will show seven enlarged bat heads accompanied by seven bat houses. Exaggerated in scale, the bat heads simultaneously appear comical and sinister. Sarkisian brings attention to the subtle details of these small, winged creatures which few have the chance to examine closely. The bat houses will stand impaled on tall posts yet remain fully functional. Sarkisian adorns the houses with metal studs and spikes, beckoning wandering bats and children of the night who seek shelter.

Michael Velliquette's current work comes from the persistent questioning of his place in the world and an interest in the idea of doppelgangers, or doubles. Velliquette's *The Bilocater* is a 20-foot tall mobile comprised of hand-cut double-sided profiles of the artist's face. The mobile is activated by subtle air currents, kinetically expressing both random and controlled movements, while creating a playful metaphor for the ever-changing nature of life.

Let's Be Active, founded by Jarrett Mitchell in 2002, will present a physical manifestation of a journey to the center of Babylon. Viewers are welcome to enter and pass through the piece, experiencing their lives until they die, and to die until they live again.

May sadness and suffering end. May confusion be dispersed. May all be happy and aware.

About the curator: Chris Perez is the owner/director of Ratio 3, an access point for contemporary art based in San Francisco. His most recent actions include: *Phantom Arch* (White Columns, New York City), *Thee Magick Boxx* (New York City) and *Taqueria Cancun: The San Francisco Hook-up* (Allston Skirt Gallery, Boston). Perez previously worked as the curatorial assistant for contemporary art at the Whitney Museum of American Art, helping organize *Bitstreams* and the *2002 Biennial Exhibition*. Prior to that, he worked at the CCAC Institute in San Francisco.

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