



# ART NOTES Kim MacConnel and Brian Dick

**Art Notes by Robin Clark, PhD, Curator for the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego**

## **Kim MacConnel**

Kim MacConnel has lived in San Diego since the late 1960s, when he was a student at the then-new campus of the University of California San Diego. He has long been a touchstone of the art community here. As a professor in the Visual Arts Department at UCSD from 1977 to the present and as a working artist, Kim's influence has extended to several generations of younger artists including Polly Apfelbaum, Jim Isermann, and Laura Owens. Kim's first major exhibition, *Collection Applied Design*, was organized for the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art (now the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego) while he was still a graduate student. In the fall of 2010, MCASD will be proud to present the first retrospective of Kim's work in San Diego.

Developed in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition will not be presented in a linear chronology but will instead reflect the practice of sampling and recombination which are hallmarks of Kim's work. An artist's book from 2004 (titled *A Collection of Applied Design* in reference to Kim's 1976 exhibition in La Jolla) documents the strong influence that Chinese clip art books had on Kim's work. On a conceptual level, the possibility of reading and misreading visual codes was a rich area of exploration, which continues to the present. The exhibition will also include an installation of beach trash reflects Kim's accumulative way of working, and suites of his recent, jewel-like abstract canvases such as the *Woman with Mirror* series inspired by both Picasso and Matisse.

## **Art Notes by Katherine Sweetman**

**Artist, educator, curator, and freelance writer for San Diego City Beat and the San Diego Visual Arts Network, Director of Lui Velazquez, an alternative art space and gallery in Colonia Federal, Tijuana.**

## **Kim MacConnel and Brian Dick**

Kim MacConnel's long, impressive career in the arts includes a teaching résumé that spans more than thirty-years. His many significant exhibitions include works for The Venice Biennale, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and other museums and galleries across the United States and abroad. MacConnel's status as a ringleader in the Pattern and Decoration movement of the 1970's propelled him into a class of artists that successfully break the rules while at the same time acknowledging and referencing the past. The playful, daring strategies used throughout MacConnel's work makes his selection for emerging artist, Brian Dick, a fitting and delightful choice. Dick has proved himself to be a smart, brave, and important artist with recent exhibitions and performances at the San Diego Museum of Art, Luis de Jesus Seminal Projects, and The New Children's Museum. Dick acknowledges Kim MacConnel, along with Allan Kaprow, as a major influence on his work. In many ways, MacConnel's colorful, decorated worlds have been spatialized and performed in the playful work of Brian Dick. The two artists both create mischievous unions of objects they encounter in their daily lives, turning the items into sculptures, assemblages, and enti-

ties. For this show, both artists explore aspects of the lives' of strangers. MacConnel takes on beach trash, assembled into the form of clowns while Dick takes on the facial gestures of strangers and objects, making them into his own. The works are at first humorous yet at the same time straddle that strange line between perfect satire and absolute truth.

**Art Notes by Gabrielle Wyrick**  
**Education Curator for the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego**

**Brian Dick**

In his book, the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman wrote, "The general notion that we make a presentation of ourselves to others is hardly novel, what ought to be stressed is the very structure of the self can be seen in terms of how we arrange for such performances." In Brian Dick's recent body of work, he utilizes himself as the primary subject, delving into the myriad ways in which identity and self are created. In a project such as the *Muscle Mimicry Series*, Dick presents himself in photographs that document the transformation of his own face after staring at celebrity photographs for countless hours. *Olfactory Portrait* features a mannequin donning the same clothing that the artist wore for several weeks, capturing a representation of the artist's self through the trace of his scent. Through these and other related works, Dick takes us along his multifarious, performative, and often comical journey to document and explore the essence of self.

While other artists have certainly tackled such weighty questions of self representation, what I admire most about Brian Dick's work is that he manages to do it in a way that is, well, funny - really funny. As a museum educator who spends the majority of my time talking to people about art, I am struck by how great the disconnect between contemporary people and contemporary art can be and how frequently it happens. In the work of Brian Dick, even the most suspicious and cynical of viewers are given access through the artist's undeniable sense of play and humor, without sacrificing any of the bigger ideas in question. I congratulate the artist for receiving this recognition, and I look forward to the ways in which his future work will enhance our artistic perspective and simultaneously make us smile.

Goffman, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Doubleday, 1959, Pg. 252

**Art Notes by Vallo Riberta**  
**Artist and art teacher at Southwestern College**

**Brian Dick**  
**From Brillo to Brian**

There is an ongoing debate that still exists and is central to the world of high art. Can any art after Warhol's Brillo boxes have any real or meaningful influence on the evolution of art history in any deep or significant way? Many theorists contend that Warhol's Brillo boxes represent an endgame for Western art history by collapsing the entire visual experience into a self referential, subject-object relationship, leaving many viewers from that period confused and at odds with trying to understand how to separate out content from form.

Like the Brillo box, the nature of Brian Dick's production is almost always self – referential. Where Brian evolves beyond the Pop indium is in the exclusive use of his body, in whole or in part, as the vehicle to express and define form and content. And where the Brillo box contends it's self with an exact mimesis and parity, which subverts and confuses form, content and meaning, Brian enfolds all three of these elements into a self-referential alter idem or second self. When fully formed and activated this second self is given full expression through all of its many manifestations, i.e., the Afghan boxer, the satyr, the mascot and any other of his intuitive guises. Each of these manifestations is endowed with a whimsical nature which is a hall mark of the artist's modus operandi, and like much of Post Modern art production, whimsicality and humor are the masks that conceal the more profound implications embedded in these trickster-like personas. Critical, social dialogue is engaged in when ever and where ever the artist chooses his intended venue and audience. At times, these unscripted, impromptu manifestations can pose difficult and stressful situations which puts the artist in a vulnerable position, but it is these very moments of vulnerability and uncertainty that provides each of these persona a separate identity and enriches each moment of their brief existence with their own individual sense of purpose.

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