

Rebellion in the Living Room

By Timothy Ackermann



Trong Nguyen
Happy Birthday War
 (aka *Warm defever*, *Born April*
 30th, 1969), 2005
 Ölfarbe, Aluminium-
 Kuchenständer,
 Plexiglas-Glocke
 Höhe 35,5 cm, Ø 34,00 cm
 Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
 Berlin
 Verkauft



Trong Nguyen
Help Me, 2005
 Ölfarbe, Aluminium-
 Kuchenständer,
 Plexiglas-Glocke
 Höhe 35,5 cm, 34 cm
 Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
 Berlin
 EUR 1.400,-



Bill Lohre
Gun rack, 2006
 Karton, Fahnen, Zahnstocher
 130,7 x 209 x 14,7 cm
 Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
 Berlin
 EUR 5.000,-



Bill Lohre
The White House (aka Loaded),
 2006
 Karton, Zahnstocher, Lollipop-Stiele
 69,7 x 184,7 x 34 cm
 Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
 Berlin
 EUR 5.000,-



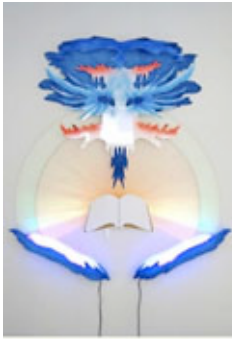
George Boorujy
Settlement #4, 2006
 Tusche auf Papier
 134,4 x 237,8 cm
 Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
 Berlin
 EUR 11.000,-

Where have the good things gone that make the American living room so different, so attractive? In the time of Pop Art, a sentence like "From our living room to yours" still promised technical progress and un-bridled consumer joy. Today the sentence has earned itself the role of exhibition title in the Berlin gallery Goff + Rosenthal. Six contemporary artists from New York, none of whom are represented by the gallery, send warm regards from their living rooms, with the qualifier "this exhibition is not tea time/ coffee talk."

Except for the cakes! At first glance, they appear very nicely frosted. In actuality, the mustard colored icing on **Trong Nguyen's** birthday cake is made of modeled oil paint. Even the red greeting written on the cake by the Vietnam-born artist, "Happy Birthday War," tastes bitter. The un-enjoyable/inedible treat in the colors of his homeland, alludes to the invasion of Vietnam by the Americans 30 years earlier. Nguyen's memorial cake was sold before the exhibition opened. The New York Times has already acknowledged the conceptual artist and his socially critical pieces, as when he disseminated George W. Bush quotes in the form of messages in Chinese fortune cookies. Nguyen's skeptic attitude regarding the "land of the free" and its national myths ties him to the other artists in the exhibition, who were chosen by the independent New York curator Daria Brit Shapiro.

Land of the free, home of the brave. These stories, which are so consistently fluffed by the mass media's filter are the subject of scrutiny by the German-born artist **Bill Lohre**, who also now lives in New York. His gun rack, with doubled, winking "star spangled banners" was meticulously made from cardboard. He illustrates the history of American's infatuation with weapons, from the Colt to the ultra modern machine gun. On the other hand, these junk cardboard rifles are the expression of a joyful utopia. In addition, Lohre altered the official residence of the president, also out of paper and with rockets and surveillance cameras sculpted from old lollipop sticks. A mockery of the White House. Also not an everyday sight in American art. But a reaction to 9/11 and the two opposing developing factions, here suggesting that that which spawned the terror attack in the USA is a result of repressive American foreign policy. In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of artists living in American metropolises who are making politically or socially critical art.

In this sense, Goff + Rosenthal, the first New York gallery to open a space in Berlin, has brought a consistent version of the actual "American Way of Life" to the Spree (a river in Berlin, FYI). Shapiro's remarks that "Fear, disillusionment and anger, which are sometimes hidden behind irony" describe the show's atmosphere. "Maybe it has something to do with the fact that our country is engaged in a war that it appears no one wants. And our president continues to steer us into more and more dangerous waters. It is really frustrating." A frustration invoked by relatively concrete artwork, like **Jeremy Earhart's** *Smoke and Mirrors*. The wall sculpture made of Plexiglas shows an open book, above which a silhouette of smoke or an atomic bomb mushroom cloud rises. The pages of the book are blank. It could be any



Jeremy Earhart
Smoke and Mirrors, 2006
Flexiglas, Acrylfarbe, Neonfaden,
Schwarzlicht
178,8 x 144 x 4,7 cm
Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
Berlin
EUR 8.500,-



Jon Elliott
The Throne, 2006-2007
Dispolymier und Kollage auf Platte
121,3 x 181,5 cm
Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
Berlin
EUR 8.000,-



Marci MacGuffie
Illuminating the Blind Spot, 2006
Mischtechnik und Kollage
427 x 305 cm
Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,
Berlin
EUR 18.500,- (gesamte
Installation)



Marci MacGuffie
Five Greys, 2006
Bastelkarton
128 x 171,50 cm gerahmt
Courtesy of Goff + Rosenthal,

dogmatic text, from the Bible, the Koran, or Capitalism.

In another way, **George Boorujy** exposes conflicting feelings about his homeland. In fact, at first glance his light and sun drenched watercolored landscapes appear archaic. At second glance, however, an ecological dilemma becomes clear. The river's water level is threateningly low and shabby huts of a slum community brace themselves in the rock walls of the canyon. Boorujy's bright paper works contrast only in their palette to the darker vision of **Jon Elliott**. This artist paints nightmarish landscapes from glossy oil polymer. In *The Throne* the viewer sees the outline of televisions and computers, which have accumulated to form a mountain of waste. In their screens, the artist mounted photos of American GIs, large automobiles and blond women. Elliott represents the ultimate destruction of the American pop culture mythos. While Andy Warhol's Marilyn was allowed to be "larger than life," Jon Elliott's Pamela Anderson is just a little blonde speck in an oily, black mass. Here emerges the skepticism of the artist, who rejects the cultural dominance of his country.

Will Goff+Rosenthal become the flagship of this new American art tendency in Berlin? The director of the Berlin gallery, Caroline Stummel, does not completely agree, "Our program is colorfully eclectic," she says, "We represent artists from America, as well as from Europe and Australia." In spite of this and because of "From our living room to yours", the gallery will continue to be considered more and more as a window/gateway to New York City- as a platform for the emerging art scene of urban America. This is the first time the six artists in the "Living Room" exhibition have been shown in Germany.

Actually the American skepticism has garnered interest and, despite almost no known names, "From our living room to yours" has found its audience. Caroline Stummel estimates that about 50% more visitors have come to this show than to the gallery's last exhibition. Three works are already reserved by collectors. The next American group show is already being planned, which should take place in early 2008.