

activism. If Hirschhorn is obsessed with the hypertrophic need to multiply, Chan, to the contrary, bases his own work on the idea of subtracting. His video animations combine a taste for meager, almost trashy, low-budget digital images with poetically, perplexingly vague texts. Chan not only reduces the image to a minimum, but also deconstructs narrative, renders it ungraspable and in so doing manages not to fall into the obvious, didactic tone of so much politically engaged art. In some cases, his work assumes an ironic, subversive tone, as in "Re: THE OPERATION." In this work the artist imagines all of the members of Bush's cabinet as soldiers in Iraq who write sorrowful letters from the front to their mothers.

GOD LESS AMERICA

The Whitney Museum opened "Down by Law," a group show curated by the Wrong Gallery (Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick) which reveals the America of deviance and of people outside the law. It is a careful, sophisticated curatorial project which brings together a varied series of works inspired by the dark side of this country, by its rebellious, self-destructive spirit. Among the best pieces in the show are David Wojnarowicz's portraits "Arthur Rimbaud in New York" and *One Day, This Kid*, which perfectly represent the dramatic, romantic and suicidal side of the American Dream. Others include Chris Burden's photographs of himself as he shoots a pistol at a Boeing 747, Mike Kelley's posters mocking the Clinton administration, Jeremy Deller's video *Memory Bucket* (dedicated to the 1993 Waco Massacre), Fred Tomaselli's self-portrait with drugs, and a drawing by Paul Chan of Judas' kiss with the topical title "The Beginning of Love, the End of Law." Perhaps the show's only limitation is its lack of space; the 54 artists' works hang on the walls, crammed into the museum's small photo gallery, making one feel as in a picture shop.

This polite, drawing-room atmosphere is in sharp contrast with the subject of the show and its evocation of a country obsessed with order and so often besieged by disorder.

Where Wrong Gallery has attempted to bring together contrasting individual, spontaneous reactions to the system, Ralph Rugoff, in "Monuments for the USA," attempts instead to stimulate a constructive, developmental response to the current social and political situation in America. For his group show at White Columns, Rugoff has invited over fifty international artists to propose "ideal monuments" for the United States, free of budgetary or practical constraints. Amid drawings, models, video works and small sculptures, there are projects dedicated to the pioneers of online pornography (Olav Westphalen), to the end of war (Paola Pivi), to democracy gone astray (Barbara Kruger) and even to the underappreciated artist (Jeffrey Vallance). In reality, because monuments are by their very nature celebrative, the offerings in this show become anti-monuments. Consider for example the pyramid of trash proposed by Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, which is meant to be the tallest mountain in North America. Among the inevitable clichés, expressed through childish visual means, a few great ideas emerge, such as *Short Term Memory* by the duo Elmgreen and Dragset, a very timely anti-monument dedicated to the ferocious indifference which predominates in our culture.

THE BODY AND WEAPONS

The work of Mika Rottenberg is also subtly political. His latest video (at Nicole Klagsbrun) takes place inside a miniature factory, where women produce dough to make bread. The camera dwells on their heavy, sweaty bodies and their allergic reactions, while the dough falls vertically, through several holes, passing slowly from one compartment to another. One thinks of John Bock's surrealistic videos and

claustrophobic spaces, but Rottenberg is not seeking to achieve chaos or a short circuit of logic; on the contrary, the narrative system is rigorous and methodical. The artist seems to point out the connection between the human body and production, between the individual and the impersonal, even if the surreal effect of his works overcomes their content.

Meanwhile Gagosian Uptown presents a show of works by Pino Pascali, the legendary Italian artist whose creative activity spans the four-year period between 1964 and 1968, the year he was killed in a traffic accident in Rome. During this brief period Pascali expressed himself with an explosive inventiveness that combines a creativity connected to the world of games and toys, and an unconventional interpretation of the realities of the Italian industrial experience. Through refined gestures of appropriation, Pascali provides a kind of 'Roman' transcription of New Dada, minimalism, and primary sculpture, even foreshadowing many aspects of the objective sculpture of the '80s. Using techniques of model aircraft construction, he creates ironic, playful objects like his series of prehistoric animals. Through the transformation of industrial materials — inverting the Pop process of appropriating the serial element — he created enormous animals like silkworms and a giant spider. With his playful, but also knowing and bitter art, Pascali is one of the leading representatives of the original 'antitragic' vein in Italian art, which continued in the work of Gino De Dominicis to arrive finally at that of Maurizio Cattelan. ■

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From left: PAUL CHAN, *The Beginning of Love, the End of Law 1*, 2005. Charcoal on paper. Courtesy of Greene Naftali, New York; MIKA ROTTENBERG, *Dough*, 2006. Video still. Courtesy of Nicole Klagsbrun, New York. Opposite: JACK PIERSON, *Psycho Killer*, 2000. Installation, 25 x 102 x 91 cm. Courtesy of Daniel Reich and Cheim and Read, New York. Photo: Takahiro Imamura.

