



GEORGE W. BUSH STAMPED "IDIOT KING" FIRST CLASS FOREVER

By Antoine du Rocher

NEW YORK, 30 APRIL 2008 —While the planned U.S. Postal Service First-Class postage increase is the hot story of the moment in numismatics, and the "Forever Stamp" is the hot-selling item at the post office, the centerpiece of an art exhibition in New York promises to be a much stickier, and much more enduring, commemorative issue: the "George W. Bush Idiot King" stamp that paints the Commander in Chief as a first-class idiot.

The show, curated by Judy Pfaff of the CUE Art Foundation, gives center stage to the Houston-based artist, David Krueger (b. 1953), whose work mixes political commentary, technology and artistic experimentation to produce work that broadcasts a message of disappointment and political disillusionment through the humble postage stamp.

Krueger has issued numerous stamps over the last several years to comment on issues like gun violence, environmental damage, and the bias of Fox News, but the most buzz-worthy of his stamps must be the image of Bush as Idiot King.



Krueger created the Idiot King stamp in 2001, long before the folly of the Bush years would become evident and at the time, it may have seemed a cheap shot, but in retrospect, some would call it prescient. And, deliberately or not, timing the show to coincide with the price hike for the First-Class Mail stamp adds to the ironic resonance of Krueger's work.

CUE Art Foundation, a non-profit forum for contemporary art and cultural exchange between artists and the public based in Manhattan's Chelsea district, describes itself as "a foundation in the heart of New York where artists are given their CUE to take center stage."

Born in Odessa, Texas and educated at the University of Houston, TX (MFA), David Krueger had this to say about his work on view through 31 May at the CUE Foundation:

As a boy I collected stamps. For several years, we lived two blocks from my maternal grandmother who gave me my first stamps and stamp book before I started elementary school. After we moved away, frequently I would receive lavender scented envelopes in the mail filled with beautiful stamps. In my teens, my paternal grandmother became the Postmaster of Encinal, TX. I loved going to the old wooden clapboard post office on the town square; the feeling it had was incredible. The building was the hub of local communication with people coming to pick up or drop off their mail while sharing the latest gossip. Occasionally, I was allowed to help put the mail in the boxes and I would examine the stamps on the envelopes, hoping to see something new or from a far off exotic place.

I never lost that attraction. I love the way stamps have the ability to travel around the world, miniature pieces of art, often barely noticed. Today, I buy commemorative stamps to use for my postage. Commemorative stamps were conceived as a way of celebrating great individuals, as well as high ideals, values and achievements of society. In my eyes, those values have disappeared, replaced instead by corruption, greed and cruelty. Therefore, it seems to be a natural choice for me to use the form of a stamp as a way to "commemorate" these new qualities and values. My first stamp "commemorating" the 2000 presidential election carried an image of George W. Bush, crowned and decorated, with the words "Idiot King" emblazoned on his chest. Created on the computer, laid out in grids and perforated using a manual machine from 1918, these tiny art works could be pulled apart and given away, a simple means of distribution.

This installation recreates the old post office where I spent so much time as a child. To me, it represents the disconnect between the past "ideal" and the loss of trust, privacy and human rights that I see today. Much of the installation is made from cardboard covered with an encaustic paint, infused with a bit of lavender oil to bring back those warm memories of my grandmother and simpler, idyllic times. The post office doors and working vending machines were purchased on eBay. The vending machines sell my stamps.

Krueger's installation at CUE Art Foundation, his first solo exhibition in New York, uses cardboard and encaustic paint, infused with lavender oil, to reconstruct the post office from his childhood which, according to the artist, represents "the disconnect between the past 'ideal' and the loss of trust, privacy and human rights...today." Keeping in line with the artist's outcries for educated egalitarianism, the viewer will find, as Krueger mentions above, that the stamps are for sale in vending machines within the "post office" at CUE (single stamp: \$1.00 in coins).

Giclé printed sheet of perforated stamps, limited edition signed by the artist (25 stamps) \$300.

Laser printed sheet of perforated stamps, unsigned (25 stamps) \$50.

David Krueger

Until 31 May 2008

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