

IAN COOPER

Curated by Sue de Beer

April 28 – June 4, 2005

(Opening Reception: Thursday, April 28, 6-8pm)

Ian Cooper explores the collapse of fiction and reality through the dissection of contemporary film, construction of meticulous sculptural scenarios, and elaborate prints and drawings that break down complex information into symbols, icons, and systems. In addressing the tenuous balance between these two worlds, interrelated themes involving implausible logic structure, obsessions with telecommunication, and the desperation caused in group association and identification also emerge.

Love Heather, 2003  
Digital print & screenprint (lemon juice on paper)  
10" x 8"



Child-actress Heather O' Rourke played the role of Carol Anne Freeling in all three *Poltergeist* films (a fact which is engraved on the outside of her crypt). For Cooper, O' Rourke epitomizes the leading role young women have played throughout the history of spirit communication (and telecommunication). In fiction, she is presented as a darling American daughter and a consummate conduit to the spirit world. In reality, she starred in these films, and then succumbed to death at age 13, while shooting the final installment. By appropriating and re-photographing a publicity still of O'Rourke and attaching what appears to be a "personal" note from the actress in *Love, Heather*, 2003, (an artwork within the larger installation, *Wake*, 2002-2004), Cooper alludes to the parallel trajectories which bind Heather to Carol Anne. This also speaks to the level of alienation that often fosters the fictionalization of "friends" through the obsession with characters in film.

Capturing the transitory moment which unifies certainty with illusion also enables the artist to employ childhood rules of invention. "Intuitive devices, like the whole idea of the cup with the string and another cup..." says Cooper "...are an illustration of something, and thereby when kids are building things like that, they *know* it should work, because it *looks* like it should work." His fascination with these reductive or iconic systems has resulted in sculptural works which use extracted props, sets, or scenarios from Hollywood coming-of-age films as springboards. Once reconfigured and transposed through the artist's own idiosyncratic logic structure into a "real" sculptural realm, the bricolage-inspired communication device from *E.T.*; the exposed wishing well in *The Goonies*; and Carol Anne's mirrored bedroom wall from *Poltergeist III*, each take on new visual dimensions and meta-functions. The pieces, *Troy's Bucket*, 2005, and

*Otherside*, 2005, both play with perceptions of above vs. below (or in front vs. behind) to explore the concept of feeling trapped on the "other" side; while cinematic split-screen effects used in the video, *Constellations Align (BFF) & Constellations Align (GFF)*, 2005 explore cosmic loneliness, the longing for connection, and the cliché of "true love" locked within the video art trope confines of the continuous loop.



Wake, 2002-2004  
Plywood, cotton fabric, telephone wire, steel cork, enamel, aluminum, felt, plastic flowers, prints and hardware  
Dimensions variable

(cont.)

Dualities are further explored by incorporating both machine and hand-made elements, fabricated by the artist or by others. In *Closed Circuit Faith Device*, 2004 – 2005, Cooper provided both new and vintage machine-made fabrics, as well as intricate patterns and instructions for the manufacturing of the sculpture's foundation. In *Troy's Bucket*, 2005, the artist stitched together a custom-silkscreen fieldstone pattern on canvas to create the form of the wishing well, while commissioning a custom-knitted, black-on-black varsity sweater as another element in the piece.

Other materials and chosen imagery used to create his manufactured states of hyper-reality reflect an obsession with current spirit and telecommunications devices and their antecedents, including: a skull shape fashioned from 200 feet of tangled telephone wire, die-cut pixilated web-cam images, silkscreen nylon phone jacks; and channeling accoutrements such as candles and pentagrams. Throughout his exploration of darkness, the artist's deft choice of materials de-stigmatizes the macabre sting of his work and encourages closer examination.

Cooper's juxtaposition of new and old, fantasy and reality, handmade and high tech, reveals an aesthetic and consciousness which has less to do with feasibility and more to do with nuance of meaning. In the end, his work both venerates and exposes the futility of attempting to transcend reality, in the hopes of unearthing a greater truth embedded in the cliché of cinematic structure.

#### **ARTIST'S BIO:**

Ian Cooper was born in 1978 and raised in New York City. He received a B.S. in Studio Art from New York University in 2000.

Recent group exhibitions include *Let the Bullshit Run A Marathon* at Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York, 2004; *Black Milk* at Marvelli Gallery, New York, 2004; *I Am The Resurrection* at Locust Projects, Miami, 2004; *Video (Por)Traits* at Art In General, New York, 2004; *Attack! The Kult 48 Klubhouse* at Deitch Projects Brooklyn, New York, 2003 and *Teenage Rebel: The Bedroom Show* at Agnes B. Galerie du Jour, Paris, 2003.

This exhibition at CUE Art Foundation represents the artist's first solo exhibition.

Upcoming group exhibitions include *Youth of Today* at the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, scheduled for winter 2005. The artist will also be participating in the Grizedale Arts residency program in England in August 2005.

Cooper lives and works in Red Hook, Brooklyn with artist, Rachel Foullon, and their Chihuahua.

#### **ABOUT CUE:**

*CUE Art Foundation, a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization, provides educational and professional development programs in the visual arts. These include student internships, stipends, exhibitions, public lectures, and an in-gallery studio program, all of which draw from the talents and experience of the diverse community of artists, art critics, and teachers that the Foundation brings together.*

*CUE's exhibition season gives unknown or under-recognized artists public and professional exposure comparable to that offered by neighboring commercial galleries, without the usual financial restraints. The Advisory Council, an honorary group of artists and leading figures from the arts education, applied arts, art history, and literary communities, has the responsibility of selecting exhibition curators. The curators, in turn, nominate artists to exhibit at CUE, and continue to play a role throughout the exhibition process. Both the Advisory Council and the exhibition curators actively participate in the public lectures and educational programs.*

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