

JAY ISAAC

February 3 - March 12, 2005

“Artist Jay Isaac never fails to challenge his audience with his subversions of past art movements and by embracing the otherworldly qualities of “hotel” art,” says exhibition curator Xandra Eden, assistant curator at Toronto’s Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery. Adept at blurring the lines that separate “high” from “low” art, Isaac combines a reverence normally reserved for traditionally defined art movements, with a sincerity and sentiment for the everyday and commonplace, in current work which incorporates strains of Cubism, Surrealism, Fantasy Art, Nineteenth-Century Romanticism, Modernism, Primitivism, and Outsider figuration.

Armed with a healthy dose of ironic detachment, the Toronto-based artist’s installation of sculpture, digitalized prints of unsold paintings, stills from performance art pieces, and multi-media installations at CUE says Eden, “places issues of class and taste, improbably, expectantly, and inquisitively back on the table.”

A youthful irreverence for art world dogma is at play throughout the exhibition and in *New Age Philosophy*, 2003, Isaac breaks the ultimate taboo in painting by installing a series of digitalized prints of past unsold paintings. Further testing the boundaries between contemporary artistic practice and its hierarchal governing structures, the artist refines a modest collection of bric-a-brac into small-scaled sculptural objects of incremental value. He achieves this by refining pieces of wood, glass, resin, plaster, clay, and steel through myriad traditional techniques including carving, forging, and molding, and aptly calls them “antiques from the future.”

The artist’s unfiltered, sincere, and somewhat idiosyncratic need to enhance the meaning of his everyday life, by turning existence into art, is boldly explored in a composition of video stills taken from a sequence of street performances staged in collaboration with Jenny Bishop throughout Europe last fall. In these recorded performances, Isaac and Bishop assume a variety of personae in relation to each changing

environment and at times, push the envelope to a disturbing degree in order to engage the public and gain financial support.

Isaac’s ability to bring a sense of urgency and ingenuity to each work is a testament to his indefatigable pursuit of new art forms. In making work that crosses the accepted boundaries of good taste, he also consciously sidesteps the creative second-guessing that accompanies the need for validation.



Untitled, 2004
Mixed-media
11" x 13" x 3"



European Street Busking (Detail), 2004
36 Video stills

(over, please)

ARTIST BIO:

Jay Isaac attended the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, Vancouver, 1993-1997 and the Cardiff Institute of Art and Design, 1996, Cardiff, Wales. Recent exhibitions include *The Cave and the Island*, 2004, at Galerie Kunstbuero, Vienna and White Columns, New York; *The Republic of Love*, 2004, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto; *Maritime Frazetta*, 2004, Greener Pastures Contemporary Art, Toronto; *New Age Philosophy*, Acuna-Hansen Gallery project space, 2003, Los Angeles; *The Matlock Juxtapose*, 2002, Mercer Union, Toronto; *Selling Out and Buying In*, 2002, BizArt, Shanghai; *Synthetic Psychosis*, 2002, Museum of Canadian Contemporary Art, Toronto; *Officina America*, 2002, Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Bologna.

Isaac lives and works in Toronto and was a recent resident artist at CUE.

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.

For additional information, please contact Beatrice Wolert-Weese, Gallery Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, (212) 206-3583, or email beatrice.wolert@cueartfoundation.org.