

CUE

ART FOUNDATION

Michael Minelli

Curated by Sowon Kwon

January 26 – March 10, 2012

(Opening reception Thursday, January 26, 6-8pm)

“Michael Minelli’s work is carefully and singularly *made*...its modesty in this regard is as purposeful as its engagement with the big, the bang, the speed and polish of our world as mediated by mass culture, is ambivalent. His work lays bare the extent to which we are irrevocably made, remade and struck dumb in mass culture’s wake.”

—Sowon Kwon

From *Souvenirs*, 2007 - 2011
Sculpey III and wire, Dimensions variable



Los Angeles-based artist Michael Minelli’s first solo exhibition in New York City—on view at CUE Art Foundation—will include a selection of works from his most recent series, *Souvenirs* (2007 – 2011). Minelli’s practice, which includes object making, drawing, writing, photography and performance, is as much about engagement with consumerist culture as it is about engagement with materiality itself. He pushes his materials, from gaffers tape and sequins to plaster and photo backdrop paper, to do unexpected things, sussing out

a certain internal, material logic. Using Sculpey brand polymer clay for the *Souvenirs* series, Minelli investigates the material while drawing upon a rich archive of references—the clay itself reminiscent of childhood arts and crafts projects or 19th century folk art while the miniature figures depict subjects ranging from Michael Jackson to the victims of Abu Ghraib, from a banana peel and rubber chicken to Kim Phuc (the child horribly burned by napalm and depicted in the Pulitzer-Prize winning photograph taken during the Vietnam War). His work, as curator Sowon Kwon writes, “counters consumerist spectacle and bombast without reproducing it (a neat trick), and without cynicism, sanctimony, or panic.”

Minelli’s practice is rooted in an exploration of materiality, both literally—as he seeks to understand something through the process of making it—and culturally, through his use of media-derived imagery. Minute in scale, Minelli’s *Souvenirs* sit casually in opposition to the medium’s history of grand gestures and epic proportions. Small, hand-worked, and crafted out of an ordinary material, the *Souvenirs* demand an intimacy with America’s uncomfortable and recent history of race, war, torture, and celebrity culture. Each *Souvenir*, stunningly straightforward in its presentation, carefully oscillates between sinister and playful, funny and dark, irreverent yet startlingly candid—an honest invitation to more closely examine our relationship to, and complicity in, a culture of consumption and spectacle.



From *Souvenirs*, 2007 - 2011
Sculpey III and wire, Dimensions variable

(More, over)

For additional information, please contact Ryan Thomas, Programs Coordinator, CUE Art Foundation, 212-206-3583, or email ryan.thomas@cueartfoundation.org

Free catalogues available.

ARTIST'S BIO:

Michael Minelli's practice is sculpturally based, insofar as he believes meaning is both created and informed by the material relationships we encounter in our daily lives. Minelli's work includes object making, drawing, writing, photography and performance, all with an eye upon the prickly alliance between popular media discourse and the individual subject. As a member of the artists' collective REHAB, Minelli's video and performance work were part of a weekly broadcast on Manhattan Public Access Television from 1987-89. In 1993, Minelli participated in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program and went on to receive his MFA in Sculpture at UCLA in 1999.

Minelli has exhibited his work in the United States and abroad since 1987. His work has been featured in group exhibitions at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, The Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, The Design Museum of Holon, Israel, ABC NO RIO and The Knitting Factory in New York City. Minelli is a founding member of WPA in Los Angeles, a collective exhibition space formed in 2009 in response to the rhetoric and reality of fiscal depression. His exhibition *Black Boxes* opened at WPA in November 2011. This marks his first solo exhibition in New York City.

About CUE:

CUE Art Foundation is a non-profit arts organization dedicated to promoting culture by supporting the creativity of under-recognized visual artists by offering comprehensive arts education programming for artists and students, and interdisciplinary arts events for public audiences.

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