



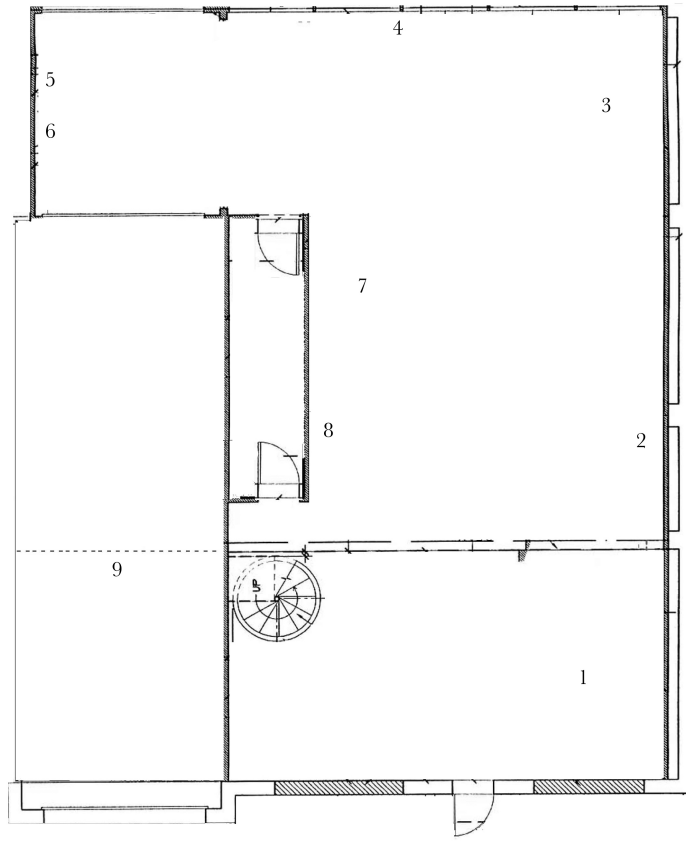
WHITE FLAG PROJECTS

Impossible Vacation

Tommy Hartung
Thomas Helbig
Tony Matelli
Lin May
John McAllister
Scott Olson
Virginia Overton
Mitzi Pederson

May 7 – June 4, 2011

Impossible Vacation attempts to assert the primacy of the artist, proposing a reduced curatorial role in mediating the interaction between art and its audience. Discarding any organizing construct and foregrounding discrete artworks, this exhibition urges each contribution's independent consideration, unencumbered by any edict or secondary scholarship. *Impossible Vacation* sees the gallery space as a simple machine for the transmission of art to the viewer, declining to contrive connections or contextualize the works on view beyond the terms defined by the artists themselves. In adopting this institutional distance, the artworks and the exhibition are freed from superfluous interpretation, cultivating fuller experiences of uncertainty and understanding without capitulating to expectations for articulated linearity, resolution, or codification.



Exterior- Virginia Overton
Untitled (Upended), 2011
Digital print on vinyl, 154 x 154 inches.
Courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

1- Virginia Overton
Untitled, 2011
Poplar, 176 x 191 x 14 inches.
Courtesy Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

2- Scott Olson
Untitled, 2010
Oil on linen, 15 x 16 inches.
Courtesy Taxter & Spengemann, New York.

3- Lin May
Slow Bird, 2011
Steel, jute, coated and painted styrofoam mounted on board,
21.4 x 16.1 x 5.9 inches.
Courtesy Jacky Strenz Galerie, Frankfurt.

4- John McAllister
Dusk Deserted Field Lights, 2010
Oil on canvas, 19 x 16 inches.
Courtesy James Fuentes, LLC, New York.

5- Tony Matelli
Nina, 2011
Enamel on mirror, 60 x 36 inches.
Courtesy Leo Koenig, Inc., New York.

6- Tony Matelli
Jew Town, 2011
Enamel on mirror, 60 x 36 inches.
Courtesy Leo Koenig, Inc., New York.

7- Thomas Helbig
Liegende, 2008
Wood, 9.45 x 12.99 x 22.83 inches, on MDF base, 45 x 83 x 12 inches.
Courtesy Bortolami, New York.

8- Mitzi Pederson
Untitled, 2010
Velvet, felt, and silver reflective paper, 22 x 13 inches.
Courtesy Nicole Klagsbrun, New York.

9 (Library)- Tommy Hartung
The Ascent of Man, 2009
Color video with sound, 15:36 minutes.
Courtesy On Stellar Rays, New York.

My dear brothers,

I must crave your pardon for not having written ere this.

I saw Kean return to the public in 'Richard III.', and finely he did it, and, at the request of Reynolds, I went to criticize his Luke in Riches. The critique is in to-day's 'Champion', which I send you, with the Examiner, in which you will find very proper lamentation on the obsoletion of Christmas Gambols and pastimes: but it was mixed up with so much egotism of that driveling nature that pleasure is entirely lost. Hone, the publisher's trial, you must find very amusing; and, as Englishmen, very encouraging-his Not Guilty is a thing, which not to have been, would have dulled still more Liberty's Emblazoning-Lord Ellenborough has been paid in his own coin-Wooler and Hone have done us an essential service-I have had two very pleasant evenings with Dilke, yesterday and to-day, and am at this moment just come from him, and feel in the humour to go on with this, began in the morning, and from which he came to fetch me. I spent Friday evening with Wells, and went next morning to see Death on the Pale Horse. It is a wonderful picture, when West's age is considered; But there is nothing to be intense upon; no woman one feels mad to kiss, no face swelling into reality-The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. Examine 'King Lear', and you will find this exemplified throughout; but in this picture we have unpleasantness without any momentous depth of speculation excited, in which to bury its repulsiveness-The picture is larger than 'Christ rejected'.

I dined with Haydon the Sunday after you left, and had a very pleasant day, I dined too (for I have been out too much lately) with Horace Smith, and met his two Brothers, with Hill and Kingston, and one Du Bois. They only served to convince me, how superior humour is to wit in respect to enjoyment-These men say things which make one start, without making one feel; they are all alike; their manners are alike; they all know fashionables; they have a mannerism in their eating and drinking, in their mere handling a Decanter-They talked of Kean and his low company -Would I were with that Company instead of yours, said I to myself! I know such like acquaintance will never do for me and yet I am going to Reynolds on Wednesday. Brown and Dilke walked with me and back from the Christmas pantomime. I had not a dispute but a disquisition, with Dilke on various subjects; several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously - I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason-Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetratum of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

Shelley's poem is out, and there are words about its being objected to as much as "Queen Mab" was. Poor Shelley, I think he has his Quota of good qualities, in sooth la!! Write soon to your most sincere friend and affectionate Brother,

John



Today is such a time, when the project of interpretation is largely reactionary, stifling. Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities. In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art.

Even more. It is the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world - in order to set up a shadow world of "meanings." It is to turn the world into this world. ("This world"! As if there were any other.)

The world, our world, is depleted, impoverished enough. Away with all duplicates of it, until we again experience more immediately what we have.

Domination of Black

At night, by the fire,
The colors of the bushes
And of the fallen leaves,
Repeating themselves,
Turned in the room,
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
Came striding.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails
Were like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
In the twilight wind.
They swept over the room,
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks
Down to the ground.
I heard them cry – the peacocks.
Was it a cry against the twilight
Or against the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,
Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire,
Loud as the hemlocks
Full of the cry of the peacocks?
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window,
I saw how the planets gathered
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
I saw how the night came,
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.
I felt afraid.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

Riding attempts with fatal outcome

Man on

>> Lion – Duration ca. 2 seconds.

>> Ostrich – throws man off at high speed. Man suffers a few small abrasions; resulting in infection with bird-flu virus > immune system collapses.

>> Stag – runs like lightning through the woods > man succeeds in holding on to the antlers and sitting more or less upright > stag runs under a branch, which hits human exactly in the head.

Hello to you all, how do you live?

Rabbit :

We live in small groups, have no fixed partnerships.
Build widely branching tunnel systems,
in which our young are born, naked and blind.
We still reproduce when imprisoned.

Hare :

I live solitary. Sleep in a shallow hollow.
My offspring are born with fur and open eyes.
I have never been domesticated.

Humans :

We don't quite know.
Until we have found out, we wage wars.

The Silence of the Animals

Different reasons could be imagined why an animal does not answer when it is asked a question. One is the rather esoteric sounding theory, which claims the animal remains silent because it is meditating. The meditation would be so deep that it cannot even be lifted when the animal dies a violent death. Its super-conscious is silent while its unconscious makes sounds, which are misunderstood as “unarticulated” and fill the space surrounding the animal and its adversary.

The other possibility would be that the animal can actually speak, though only very slowly. Ages can pass before an animal enunciated the sentence, “Please, don’t kill me!”, in an almost infinite expansion of syllables. Like someone writing his name on the surface of the moon. Depending on the particular species, this can take hundreds of thousands of years.

Despite holding down a demanding day job, Cleveland Cavaliers center Shaquille O'Neal has published two memoirs, cut six records, acted in seven movies, starred in a reality show, served as a reserve police officer, and studied for a doctorate in "human resource development." Now he's curating "Size DOES Matter," an exhibition opening February 19 at the Flag Art Foundation in Chelsea. Shaq made 66 selections for the show—which features works ranging from the ginormous (Andreas Gursky's billboard-size photograph Madonna I) to the microscopic (a Shaq portrait by Willard Wigan)—out of over 200 images that founder Glenn Fuhrman and director Stephanie Roach showed him over dinner after a game.

How did you make your choices?

Art is a process of delivering or arranging elements that appeal to the emotions of a person looking at it.

It's what you feel.

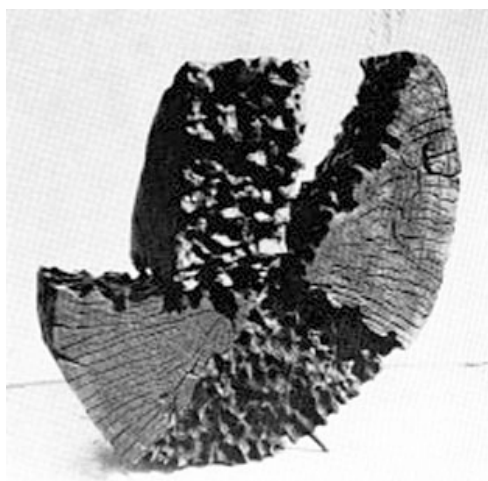
I picked those things because they were beautiful.

The thing about size—if it's big or small you have to look at it.

Because I'm so big you have to look at me.

I think of myself as a monument.

But sometimes I like to feel small.





C: There seems to be a kinship between the mirror pieces and *Abandon*, but also a shift; it seems the effect is more layered for the viewer.

M: The mirror paintings use some of the same aesthetic strategies, you know, and they are rendered in a really tight way. What I like about that way of working is that it is explicit. When I was younger, I was really interested in being very direct about what I was speaking about, what the work was about. I was interested in how I was putting the work out there, not in any kind of interpretation. However over time, I began to feel that way of working was stifling the work, and so the Mirrors to me indicate—though they employ the same kind of strategies as before—a diffusion, a kind of intellectual or artistic diffusion. For me that diffusion is a portal to a more interpretive space.

C: The challenge is to maintain communicative clarity while introducing other levels of access to the work—is that what you are calling diffusion?

M: Yes, like a palimpsest. I talked about the Mirrors this way before and it's a good analogy of how other works can function, too—a bunch of layered texts, all of them legible, just in different degrees of prominence and recession, so it's this constantly moving thing. Clarity is always shifting in a way, you know, and there are layers of clarity; what was clear a week ago is now fogged out and obscure.

C: Why do you describe the mirror pieces as paintings—why not sculpture?

M: I describe them as paintings because they are paintings.

C: I am interested in this, because most people would associate your practice with sculpture, and would perhaps read the Mirrors as sculptural objects. Is it about appropriating painting, or transposing concerns of sculpture to another genre?

M: No, no, I couldn't care less about that stuff. I am an artist. People think of me as a sculptor because I make a lot of sculpture, but I don't think of my work in terms of sculptural language. I don't think about sculptural space and pictorial space and push and pull and volume or whatever language these people use. I like sculpture because it's unwieldy, and there is a resistance to decoration in sculpture that I like, the same way I like painting because it hangs on a wall. I do not care about painterly space or any of that, whatever painters think about—canvas, weave, structure, and the support, who knows? That kind of thinking rarefies art, and ultimately kills art. The Mirrors just needed to be done in this way, and any of those genre-based interests are just completely foreign to me. Genres are at the service of ideas, not the other way around.

C: The ambivalent status of the object seems to link up to what you are describing as creating a series of diffusions in your recent work, opening up interpretation.

M: Good point.

C: But you can see how it touches painting discourse in a way. They are surfaces, they are supports that you're putting gestures, or content, or marks on, or making images on top of. So you would understand why people would enter you into that discussion.

M: Ok, that's cool, I'm just not too invested in that shit. I paint all my sculptures; are they paintings? If so, fine with me.

C: Painters don't think that way.

M: Terrible....

C: Yeah, like making a sculpture for them is like having a sex change, you know....

M: It's just a different way of working.

C: You know, there's that Chris Rock joke, that if a bullet cost five thousand dollars, people would think twice before shooting somebody. I was wondering if the mirror paintings present a new way of producing for you, compared to the resource-intensive work in the past that required certain conceptual and aesthetic aspects to be resolved before you went all in.

M: Not really. The process is more or less the same, but they are iterative in a way that makes the process a little more free. I can cover more territory and try more things out. If one turns out badly, it's not a huge loss; I can just kill it. With the sculptures, I feel the pressure to have them do a lot. If a particular mirror painting doesn't accomplish everything I had in mind for the series, I can just make another one.

C: Your source material is graffiti, or anywhere somebody left a mark?

M: Mostly I am just making them up as I go. I appropriate the handwriting style from images of graffiti, but not usually the content—sometimes, but not too often. Each mirror has a sort of dominant text, and that's always my invention. Most of the things are pretty simple anyway: hearts, names, smiley faces, dicks, etc.

C: Technically, how do you achieve such real dust-on-mirror effects? It looks so casual that you almost can't think of it as anything but a neglected mirror.

M: First I make a basic drawing on the computer. Then, after preparing the glass, I lay a series of resists down in the shape of whatever it is—let's say the word "Bob". Then it's sprayed very lightly with auto paint, and that process is carried out a few more times to create the layers of dust, text, and images. Wherever the resist is, it appears as a negative mark on the mirror—a fingermark. Once I have what seems like enough paint on the surface, all the resists are removed, and I go in with a brush and start painting all of the fingertip accumulations of dust and whatnot. Also, I go back in with airbrush to push some texts back or emphasize others. The last part is what gives it its character, and makes the dust feel kind of alive on the surface.

The mirrors sort of reveal themselves differently depending on the position of the viewer. From certain angles, you see no painting at all; from other angles, light makes the dust (paint) appear vividly. Also, while you walk around the painting from, say, left to right, you not only see the dust slowly change, but you are also constantly seeing the reflection of the room, of other works, of other people and yourself, all of this combing and layering with the painting.

C: So it's really not about the actual thing.

M: To me, the dust isn't the point—the point is the person or the humanity in the thing. It's not time passing that's interesting, it's the effect of time on the human mark that's important.

C: Using dust as a subject is not to fuck with value?

M: No, the dust is not the point—the fingermarks are the point.

C: And your work is not about the immateriality of art, right?

M: Not at all. Anyway, I try never to make art that speaks about art. I hate that.

C: Why not use the literal materials and call it a day?

M: Because of the speculative distance generated by a represented thing—simple. Why is the Charles Ray tractor solid milled stainless steel? Why isn't it cast plastic? Because it's incredible that it's solid stainless steel! There's a poetry to it, and this brings us to the really simple, dumb stuff that art is sometimes, but that actually has lots of power. We have connections to certain materials and certain efforts. A painted plastic thing does not register the same as a painted bronze thing, it just doesn't. It's not because it looks different, it's because we understand the materials differently.

When I was making *Glass of Water*, I was talking to glass fabricators, and they tried to convince me to make it in plastic—there would be no visible difference, it would be faster to make, and far cheaper. But I knew it had to be solid blown glass, otherwise the work would not have that authority I was talking about earlier. Also, there is a poetic and conceptual resonance to the purity of its material translation; *Glass of Water* needs to be made of glass, you know, because the original thing is glass. There's a beauty in that. Lenses are made of glass—that work is a lens.



Tennessee Trash

He's a little bit of you
He's a little bit of me
He's the trash along the roadside in Tennessee
He's the garbage that we find
He's the dream we left behind
Lord, there ain't no lower class
Than Tennessee trash
A throw away bottle or a pop top can
May not seem much to a travelin' man
But a little bit of litter goes a long, long way
Growing and a growing
Getting bigger everyday
Tennessee trash
Messing up the highways
Tennessee trash
Junkin' up the byways
Lord, there ain't no lower class
Than Tennessee trash
Lord, there ain't no lower class
Than Tennessee trash

Thursday, April 28, 2011 5:51 PM

Dear Matthew,
pardon...what context?
the sculpture is a piece of degenerated shit.
it is a meditation of its own decay.
context is crap.its cultural studies.its a corrupt belief in the idea that you can read art.
you can not read *Liegende*.

Liegende is you and me.

Thomas Helbig

--

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And it's about nothing?

Absolutely nothing.

So you're saying, I go in to NBC, and tell them I got this idea for a show about nothing.

We go into NBC.

"We"? Since when are you a writer?

(Scoffs) Writer. We're talking about a sit-com.

You want to go with me to NBC?

Yeah. I think we really got something here.

What do we got?

An idea.

What idea?

An idea for the show.

I still don't know what the idea is.

It's about nothing.

Right.

Everybody's doing something— we'll do nothing.

So, we go into NBC, we tell them we've got an idea for a show about nothing.

Exactly.

They say, "What's your show about?" I say, "Nothing."

There you go.(A moment passes)

(Nodding) I think you may have something there.

Tommy Hartung's film *The Ascent of Man* was included in Greater New York 2010 MoMA/P.S.1, New York. His work has also been included in exhibitions with Espacio Minimo, Madrid; Murray Street, London; Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York; Scaramouche, New York; Apartment 6/L40, Berlin; and 8 Seymour Place, London. Hartung earned his MFA from Columbia University in 2006. He lives and works in Queens, New York.

Thomas Helbig has had recent one-person exhibitions at Bortolami Gallery, New York; China Art Objects, Los Angeles; Vilma Gold, London; Galerie Guido W. Baudach, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; Galerie Diana Stigter, Amsterdam; and Galerie Ruediger Schoettle, Munich. He studied at both the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich and Goldsmiths College, London. Helbig lives and works in Berlin.

Tony Matelli's work is included in the group exhibition *Personal Structures*, part of the forthcoming *54th Venice Biennale: Illuminations*. Matelli's upcoming solo exhibitions include the Kunstraum Bethanien, Berlin; Leo Koenig Inc., New York; and Leo Koenig Projekte, New York. His work has previously been exhibited with Andrehn Schiptjenko, Stockholm; Gary Tatinsian Gallery, Inc., Moscow; Charlotte Moser Gallery, Geneva; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Spencer Brownstone, New York; and Greene Naftali, New York. Matelli earned his MFA from Cranbrook in 1995. His studio is in Brooklyn, New York.

Lin May's work has been included in solo exhibitions at Galerie Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt and Galerie Flor, Düsseldorf. Recent exhibitions include Galerie Tomas Flor, Düsseldorf; and Perla Mode/Dienstgebäude, Zurich. May lives and works in Berlin. *Impossible Vacation* is her first exhibition in the United States.

John McAllister has had recent solo exhibitions at James Fuentes LLC, New York, and Ribordy Contemporary, Geneva. His group exhibitions include Sister/Cottage Home, Los Angeles, and the Cue Art Foundation, New York. McAllister received his MFA from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena in 2007. He lives and works in Los Angeles.

Scott Olson's one-person exhibitions include his current exhibition with Galerie Nordenkake, Stockholm, as well as recent shows with Taxter & Spengemann, New York, and Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles. Olson's paintings have also appeared in recent group exhibitions with Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York; Galerie Andreas Huber, Vienna; and Misako + Rosen, Tokyo. His work has been discussed in *Artforum*, and *The New York Times*. Olson lives and works in Kent, Ohio.

Virginia Overton's most recent solo exhibition closed in April at Freymond-Guth, Zurich. Other recent exhibitions include group shows with Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York; Elizabeth Dee, New York; SculptureCenter, New York; and Le Magasin in Grenoble, France, among others. She was also included in Greater New York 2010 at MoMA/P.S.1, New York. Overton earned both her BFA and MFA degrees from the University of Memphis, Tennessee. She lives in New York.

Since being included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial Mitzi Pederson has had one-person exhibitions with Nicole Klagsbrun, New York; Ratio3, San Francisco; and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Her work has been discussed in *Artforum* and *Frieze*, and was included in the Phiadon publication *Vitamin 3-D: New Perspectives in Sculpture and Installation*. She earned her MFA from California College of the Arts in 2004. Pederson divides her time between San Francisco and Berlin.

Cover illustration by Virginia Overton, courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

Letter from John Keats dated Sunday, December 21, 1817.

Portrait of John Keats, by William Hilton.

Excerpt from Susan Sontag's essay *Against Interpretation*, 1966.

Domination of Black by Wallace Stevens, first published 1916. Contributed by John McAllister.

Three brief texts, contributed by Lin May.

Art Curator Shaq Is His Own Masterpiece by Linda Yablonsky, New York Magazine, February 7, 2010.

Excerpt from interview between Tony Matelli and Howie Chen. Contributed by Tony Matelli.

Three photographs of studio source material. Contributed by Scott Olson.

Film stills and lyrics from public service announcement. Contributed by Virginia Overton.

Email message from Thomas Helbig. Contributed by Thomas Helbig.

Dialogue from *Seinfeld*, Episode 43, originally broadcast September 16, 1992.

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The title of the exhibition is from a novel by Spalding Gray.

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