

WIGGIN VILLAGE

A Project by Jim Drain and Ara Peterson

December 3, 2004 through March 31, 2005

Reception: Saturday, December 4, 2004, 8:30pm-12 midnight

Guest Curator: Lawrence Rinder

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ArtBasel Miami Beach Hours:
Fri-Sun, Dec. 3-5, 2004: 10am-5pm
Regular Hours thereafter: Fridays 10am-2pm,
Saturdays 10am-5pm and by appointment.

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Inside poster image: Jim Drain & Ara Peterson, *Wiggin Village*, 2004.



Wiggin Village

Wiggin Village is the newest collaborative work by Providence-based artists Jim Drain and Ara Peterson. Drain and Peterson began working together nearly ten years ago when they were undergraduates at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Peterson's interest in 'demented assemblage' and abstract film combined with Drain's comic sensibility and enjoyment of craft to create a powerful, hybrid practice. Both became members of Forcefield, a group of artists that also included Mat Brinkman and Leif Goldberg and which was known for high-energy music as well as for visually intense videos, sculptures, and installations. Forcefield was based at the legendary Fort Thunder, a large industrial loft in Providence that, between 1995 and 2002, was home to some of the most innovative art and music made in America in the 1990s. The work created there—in a wide range of media—is characterized by psychedelic imagery, primal themes, and a raw, hand-made aesthetic.

Wiggin Village expands on many of Drain's and Peterson's earlier concerns while introducing new techniques, forms, and themes. Both artists have for years been interested in the evocative nature of everyday, handmade materials. Their work is characterized by time-consuming processes that result in physically compelling and optically rich forms which often incorporate "craft-like" components such as beads, yarn, or clay. Drain, whose early work was largely in sculpture and comics, began to knit shrouds—often incorporating found afghans—or his fellow Forcefield band members in 2000. In *Wiggin Village*, these knit shrouds have come to cover a host of diverse abstract personages. Meanwhile, Peterson's painstaking creation of abstract videos and films using sections of multi-colored modelling clay is further developed in *Wiggin Village* through work that extends this bizarre 2-D effect into an even more peculiar three-dimensional form.

In *Wiggin Village*, there is a particular emphasis on architecture, or as Drain and Peterson describe it, a 'cartoon architecture.' Although this approach may be new to their installation work, it was prefigured in the remarkable interior design of Fort Thunder, where each resident designed and created their own sleeping area, often to quite fantastical ends. *Wiggin Village* itself fills The Moore Space with various architectural motifs including platforms, arches, gateways, and turrets, transforming an ordinary former commercial loft into a childlike wonderland. The artists have pointed to a combination of extravagance and minimal pattern that evokes qualities of Islamic architecture and surface decoration. The scenographic dimension of *Wiggin Village*—and of Fort Thunder itself—was inspired, in part, by the legendary work of Gary Panter, an illustrator and comic artist who is best known as the designer of the sets for the TV series *Pee Wee's Playhouse*. Panter's free-spirited imagery and forms which veered between cheerful innocence and dystopian revolt anticipates the range of approaches—"from the eye-fuck to the organic"—in Drain and Peterson's work. By giving the viewers' the ability to move through and personalize their experience of this 'comic architecture,' Drain and Peterson bring to life the now-common experience of navigating through the fantasy worlds of computer-video games.

Amongst the rococo concatenation of *Wiggin Village*, the artists have placed discrete works that become the inhabitants and incidents of this strange community. These works include Peterson's video projections and abstract beaded abstract forms, and Drain's totem-like objects covered with

knitted shrouds. While occurring in what might seem like a very otherworldly space, the inspiration for many of these works lies in the real world of people, plants, and animals. Notes on their sketches for the works suggest their naturalistic origin: Graveyard, Fountain, Bumps, Treetops. Other notes point towards more fantastical identities: Piggy Pony, Diamond Garden, Sweet Surrender, Arch Enemy, Pure Evil. One note, "maybe persons," suggests the virtually anthropomorphic quality of nearly all of their work. There is a sense that every piece, whether physically figure-like or utterly abstract, is a manifestation of some independent, often un-nameable sentient force.

Like *Third Annual Rogga Bogga*, Forcefield's installation in the 2002 Whitney Biennial, *Wiggin Village* possesses a subliminal narrative element. However, whereas the shrouded beings in the Whitney piece clearly formed a kind of surrogate audience attending the screening of one of Peterson's abstract films, the narrative thread of *Wiggin Village* is less overt or clearly identifiable. What is clear is that each form or image leads to another in a chain of relations that seems based as much on rhymes of color and shape as on any kind of storyline. In the artists' words, *Wiggin Village* is "an arrangement where a variable speed happens, paced by scale, patterning, and color." Arguably, this approach to linear progression, tempered by the formal differences among sequential incidents, echoes the graphic qualities of Fort Thunder comics. The comic work that emerged from this scene was characterized by the expressive qualities of hand-drawn lines, suggestions of narrative the emerged from subtle transformations of form, and by an attention to the overall—often highly congested—appearance of the page.

Abstraction has been present in Drain and Peterson's work for some time, most recently in their extraordinary video kaleidoscope and accompanying sculptural spheres. In *Wiggin Village*, several elements extend their investigation into the peculiar resonance and optical power of pattern and shape. Again, notes to their preliminary sketches provide clues into their way of seeing these objects: Donut Forms, Cone Forms, Sphere Forms, Wiggle Forms. In a statement written as the show was in development, the artists' anticipate that, "The forms themselves will have a grace of labor, a clunky elegance and a clean economy of materials." Interestingly, both Drain and Peterson seem to be re-engaging with some of the formalist concerns they first encountered—and initially rejected—at RISD, where artists such as Tony Cragg and Martin Puryear were celebrated by the faculty.

In *Wiggin Village*, Drain and Peterson attempt a delicate balancing act: it is a collaboration in which each of these very idiosyncratic artist's work is distinct and identifiable. Their shared fascination with the resonance of form and consciousness, with the tension between dimensions of representation, and with the subliminal suggestion of narrative allow them to work side by side in creating a carnivalesque riot of the imagination that is, at the same time, a thoughtful and integrated whole.

— Lawrence Rinder

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JIM DRAIN / ARA PETERSON

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS/GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2004 *Domestic Porn*, (as Forcefield), curated by Monika Szczukowska, Foksal Gallery Foundation. Warsaw, Poland
Bizarre Love Triangle, Mattress Factory, installation with Eamon Brown. Pittsburgh, PA
- 2003 *It Happened Tomorrow*, Biennale D'arte contemporanea De Lyon Untitled installation with Eamon Brown. Lyon, France
Window Installation, H.P.France: Bjoux. Tokyo Station, Japan
Regarding Amy, Green Naftali Gallery, Kaleidoscope installation. NY, NY
- 2002 Group Show, (as Forcefield), Rhona Hoffman Gallery. Chicago
Flashpapers, (as Forcefield), Daniel Reich Gallery. NY, NY
Third Annual Roggabogga, (as Forcefield), Whitney Museum of American Art. NY, NY
- 2001 *Forcefield*, Parlour Projects. Brooklyn, NY
- 2000 Group Show, (as Forcefield), Curated By Jim Drain, Welsh-Beck Gallery. LA, CA

JIM DRAIN / ARA PETERSON SELECTED EVENTS

- 2004 *Optimo: Manifestations of Optimism in Contemporary Art*, (as Forcefield), Marfa Ballroom, Marfa Texas. 2004
Prospectif Cinema, (as Forcefield), Pompodou Center. Paris, France
- 2003 *NUEVA Video Festival*, (as Forcefield), Tokyo, Japan. Nov.
- 2003 *New Tech Lo-Fi and a Synthetic Video Revival*, (as Forcefield), Ocularis. Brooklyn, NY
Totem Tour 03 Cross Country Media Blitz, (as Forcefield)
New York Underground Film Festival, "Psyche-out 2k3," and "Magnetic Fields Forever", (as Forcefield), Anthology Film Archive. NY, NY
- 2002 *Hlgh Dessert Test Site*, (as Forcefield), A-Z West. Joshua Tree, CA
"ZMTRX" Video Performance, (as Forcefield), Bard College, Annondale on the Hudson, NY
Andrew Kreps Gallery/Daniel Reich Gallery, (as Forcefield), NY, NY
Picture Start Film Series, (as Forcefield), Castle Cinema. Providence, RI

ARTICLES

- 2003 Hanada, Maki. "Anytime Psychedelic," *Studio Voice*. 9, Vol. 333. September 2003. p.13.
"The Rainbow Men Have Come to the Marunouchi Bldg," *BT Magazine*, Japan. Vol. 55, No. 838. 2003. p.10-11.
Smith, Roberta. "A Grand Finale of Group Show Fireworks," *The New York Times*. July 18, 2003, B29, Weekend Fine Arts and Leisure, p.31.
Schwendener, Martha. "Regarding Amy," *Art Forum*, Online Magazine, Critics' Picks.
Yablonsy, Linda. "Regarding Amy," *Time Out*. July 10-17, 2003 issue No. 406.
Cotter, Holland. "Doing Their Own Thing, Making Art Together," *The New York Times*. January 19, 2003, Section 2 (Arts and Leisure), pp. 1, 36.
BT Magazine, Japan. Vol. 55, No.829, 2003. p.39, p.46-47, (Forcefield and Daniel Reich).
- 2002 Cotter, Holland. "Forcefield," *The New York Times*, Fri. Nov. 22, 2002, E33. Review of Flashpapers show at Daniel Reich Gallery
LaFreniere, Steve. "Opening: Forcefield," *Artforum*. November 2002, pp.176, 177 (and cover box score).
Bharoocha, Hisham. "GorgonRadeo/Forcefield," *V Magazine*. September/October 2002, p.70.
Forcefield, "Art Forum Top Ten," *Artforum*, Summer, 2002. p.83.
Stern, Jared Paul. "FORGET MATISSE-NOW IT'S ALL ABOUT PATOOTIE," *New York Post*, Front Page. March 7, 2002.
Rinder, Lawrence. "Forcefield," Whitney Biennial 2002 catalogue, p.80.
- 2001 Maffeo, Lois. "Fort Thunder," *Nest Magazine* (Spring 2001), pp.134-55.

ARA PETERSON

Born 1973 in Boston, MA, lives in Providence, RI

EDUCATION

- 1997 B.F.A. in Film/Video/Animation, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

ARA PETERSON GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2004 *Color Wheel Oblivion*, Curated by Chris Perez, Marella Arte Contemporanea Marella Art, Milan, Italy
Video Screening Program, Curated by Rene Morales, Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI
The Transparent Eyeball, Curated by Duncan Hamilton, Liverpool Biennale. Liverpool, England
Curious Crystals of Unusual Purity, Curated by Steve LaFreniere and Bob Nickas, P.S.I. Long Island City, NY
Collection, (or how I spent my year), Curated by Bob Nickas, P.S.I. Long Island City, NY
Tedious Limbs Exhibit, Curated by Devin Flynn, Flynn Farm. LA, CA
- 2003 Group Show, Andrew Kreps Gallery. NY, NY
Piled High, Hanna hp grp. Tokyo, Japan
Karaoki Death Machine, Daniel Reich Gallery. NY, NY
Body of Work, Gallery Agniel. Providence, RI
Paper Rodeo Group Show, Space 1026. Philadelphia, PA
The Kids are Alright, Curated by Joe Bradley, ATM Gallery. NY, NY
- 2002

ARA PETERSON SELECTED EVENTS

- 2004 *Cinema Series II*, presented by Artprox, Prince Charles Cinema, London, England
Black Dice Light Show, Volume. Brooklyn, NY
Video Whoopie Cushion (film/video screening), Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Fear and Anger (film/video screening), AS220. Providence, RI
NUEVA Video Festival. Tokyo, Japan
New Tech Lo-Fi and a Synthetic Video Revival, Ocularis. Brooklyn, NY
Filmstock, Curated By Carlo McCormick, Adidas Store Soho. NY, NY
"UV" audio/video performance, Andrew Kreps Gallery. NY, NY
"UV" audio/video performanc, Bard College. Annondale on the Hudson, NY
Plate Tectonics Light Show, Monahasset Mill. Providence, RI
"Zombie Vision" Light Show, Brown University. Providence, RI
"Photation" film performance, Movies With Live Soundtracks, Providence, RI
- 1998 *Annecy International Animated Film Festival*. Annecy, France
Ann Arbor Film Festival. Ann Arbor, Michigan

ARA PETERSON ARTICLES

- 2004 Robert Nickas. "GOREFEST 2004," *Vice Magazine*, p.46, Volume 11, Number 1. 2004.

JIM DRAIN

Born 1975 in Cleveland, OH, lives in Providence, RI

EDUCATION

- 1998 B.F.A. in Sculpture, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

JIM DRAIN SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2004 *Theskywasfilledwith1000starswhilethesunkissedthemountiansblueand1lmoonsplayedacrosstherainbows*, peres-projects, Los Angeles, CA
Eldorado (1 of 5), Drantmann Gallery, Curated by Anne Pontegnle, Brussels, Belgium

JIM DRAIN SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2004 *Curious Crystals of Unusual Purity*, Curated by Steve LaFreniere and Bob Nickas, P.S.I., Long Island City, NY
Feels Heavy, Floristree Space, Curated by Lexi Mountain-Lake, Baltimore, Maryland
Infinite Fill, Foxy Productions, Curated by Cory Archangel and Jaime Archangel, NY, NY
Golden Limo Tour, Traveling Group Show Curated by Frankle Martin, USA
Collection (or how I spent my year), Curated By Bob Nickas, P.S.I., Long Island City, NY
Tedious Limbs Exhibit, Curated by Devin Flynn, Flynn Farm. LA, CA
- 2003 *The Kids are Alright*, Curated by Joe Bradley, ATM Gallery, NY, NY

JIM DRAIN ARTICLES

- 2003 Spurgeon, Tom, "Fort Thunder Forever", *Comics Journal*, Issue No. 256, November 2003.