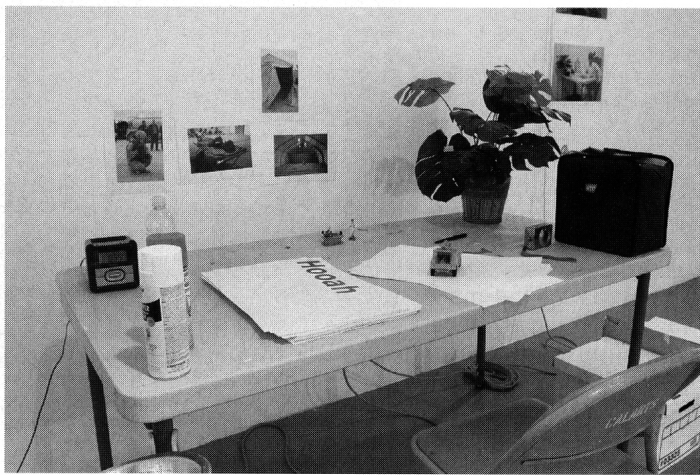


and have resided in Amsterdam for over 10 years. Their works have been as huge as murals and as small as stickers. One piece from the London Brothers is located in Kreuzberg, Berlin, and spans a six-story building. This exhibition marks their first solo show at the Carmichael Gallery. It includes not only paintings but also a short film describing how the



Matthew Siegle, "Hooah," 2009, installation view

artists create their work. Using hand-painted indelible ink on canvas, surrealistic urban, freeway cityscapes with a recurring happy face appear throughout their work.

I encountered thought traffic with the *Massive Brutality on the 405 (even though it seems like the PCH)* (2009). The larger-than-life black-and-white on canvas celebrated that dreaded gridlock. It pointed to the hurry-up feeling of being late because of other people's driving. And the repetitive happy face was a cynical reminder that traffic shows no favoritism — it is an equal opportunity irritant.

Both shows pay homage to what is both simple yet complex. Whether it is facing a paradigm about life or happily trying to break free of gridlock, both are innovative in creative execution and message.

—Richard May

WELCOME TO FAKE IRAQ

Angels Gate Cultural Center,
San Pedro, CA

A GROUP SHOW featuring eight CalArts graduate students who took an intrepid field trip out to something called the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin (simulated urban desert warfare theater), rises to the second floor of Angels Gate Cultural Center as a kind of show-and-tell pantomime of sixth-graders disclosing their wacky summer adventures. Except that the subject of "Welcome to Fake Iraq" isn't deserving of boys-camp humor or my-grandparent-has-an-Alaskan-fishing-boat sentiment. Can sophisticated (institutionalized) artists successfully conjure up so many magic decoder rings to wave feverishly over the subject of the war?

There is a lot of photo and video-conceptualist gesturing in the two upstairs galleries here at the Cultural Center — itself a former military barracks. Where there are still photographs, a lot of them come off as contrived snapshots, but sometimes as affected art photography, which means a kind of photography that straddles the line

between high-gloss commercial signification and concerned, cerebral, psycho/social commentary candy-wrapped in thoughtful, pin-drop silent compositions. Can these reliable commercial and artistic trajectories manage to reach all the way to Iraq? Or even as far as the Army's Baghdad and Kabul analogs baking inside Ft. Irwin's Mojave desert oven?

Art is a poor index of lucid foreign policy strategies and the virtual-reality mirages (NTC) that mirror them. Doesn't looking at a raw military exercise through the prism of art school conjecture only worsen the situation? By galvanizing the NTC's training aesthetics as a handy go-to source for psycho-political deconstructive meaning as it pertains to corporate hegemony, the expansion of the military-industrial complex, the current moral crisis of American patriotism, and the vulgar complicity of the media factories in facilitating the invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq?

From Stephen Colbert's recent U.S.O. Tour in Baghdad to this CalArts field trip to Ft. Irwin, the punchy-but-cerebral analysis, the artistic embellishment, the commercial sideshows of hot-button issue inquisition (or interrogation) isn't getting us any closer to the "full spectrum domination" off-ramp. If anything, art world inquiry often activates a rabbit-hole gravity that sucks both artist and viewer into the very belly of Wonderland. Case in point here: participating artist Danielle Adair was so moved by her NTC experiences (her video piece, *The Making of Americans*, seemed an oblique argument against the war) that she sought out and obtained media sponsorship to qualify to become an ACTUAL IMBEDDED JOURNALIST in Afghanistan. Does art reach that far? Can you see Joseph Beuys riding in a U.N. tank in the Middle East to recharge his social sculpture batteries?

Artist Matthew Siegle provides the Jungian moment of symbolic clarity here with his installation, "Hooah." His makeshift command center sports, among other things, a card table sentimentalized with some

personal effects, including two small plastic figurines: Dr. Frankenstein and his hapless monster. The monster, cast here in frustrated struggle against the restraining straps of the operating table, seems in a twisted moment of anguish to be hurling some cosmic accusation at the attendant Dr. Frankenstein. Just a feeble, tortured whisper: "The horror! The horror!"

—Darrin Little

NEW YORK

MIKE KELLEY AND MICHAEL SMITH
SculptureCenter, Long Island

MIKE KELLEY AND Michael Smith are iconoclasts who for years have challenged accepted conventions, creating artworks that provoke and titillate. Although friends since 1975, they have never collaborated before. "A Voyage of Growth and Discovery," their first work together, is significant in this regard. Here each man has brought his own sensibilities — the signature stuffed animals for Kelley; baby IKKI for Smith — and in collaboration have fashioned an environment where documentation of Baby IKKI at an arts festival (Burning Man) is surrounded by sculptures, lights and artifacts that transport viewers both physically and spiritually to the event's local.

The installation moves from outside to inside. Viewers are first greeted by a row of portable toilets and Baby IKKI's dilapidated VW van, the interior of which contains a chair-like sculpture created by assembling numerous stuffed toys. As the viewer moves into the gallery space they cross the threshold from day to night and are immediately confronted by pulsating lights and a room filled with music.

In the darkened space six video projections recant Baby IKKI's journey to and during the festival, culled from hours of footage and edited into a six part narrative. Smith attended Burning Man as baby IKKI, staying in character and filming his performance at the four-day event. Watching the videos in fragments reflects the event where many things happen simultaneously and where what is thought of as the ultimate group experience can also become quite isolating. Each screen is hung in or near its own individually spotlighted structure, separating the journey into discrete segments.

The environment adds vitality to the piece that both celebrates and critiques the festival. Using sections of metal tubing the artists have assembled open tents and domes that resemble Buckminster Fuller's architecture. These empty structures house the screens upon which Smith's videos are projected and suggest what remains when the crowds have gone. In one the floor is