

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

309A THIRD AVENUE SOUTH, SEATTLE, WA 98104
tel: 206.903.6220 fax: 206.903-6226 email: mail@jamesharrisgallery.com

Press Release Shaun O'Dell

June 7th - July 7th
Reception: Thursday,
June 7th, 6:00-8:00 PM



James Harris Gallery is pleased to present a new group of Shaun O'Dell's archetypal drawings. Balanced between autobiographical and historical narratives, O'Dell's intricate iconography traces humanity's complex relationship to nature. He employs paternalistic figures from literature and history to explore the imperialist, nationalistic, racist, and environmentally irresponsible ideologies constructed by America's ruling elite. Pilgrims, buffalos, and bald eagles, mingle amidst liberty bells and menacing skulls. Portraits resembling our forefathers and three-masted vessels linger above pristine renderings of setting suns and feathered bridges. Together, the imagery maps the exploitation of the natural world and ultimately exposes how American cultural and nationalistic ideologies have been constructed from our fears.

In this latest body of work the artist's tightly sharpened drawing style comes to a visual climax. Compositionally these new drawings are looser and more organic than the formal, layered stratification of past work. Whereas his iconographic development has reached a point of complexity, the artist now converses in it fluently. Experimenting with free association and improvisation, the increased specificity of O'Dell's symbolic language has allowed him to deploy it all the more profusely. As a result, some works take on genuinely expressive moments as vivid washes of blood-red and deep-blue pay homage to peoples, species, and cultures that have been all but annihilated.

Beyond the historical symbols that have repeatedly appeared in his work, new formal experimentation has also emerged. Now optically charged formal elements complement O'Dell's narrative lexicon. Mandala-like circles act as visual and narrative portals allowing the viewer to enter into O'Dell's layered vocabulary. These spare open circles become legends, mapping imagined fictional narratives to create a new American story, one that is embedded in the contemporary American condition and speaks even louder about the consequences of man's desire to conquer.

O'Dell received his MFA from Stanford University in 2004. Most recently, O'Dell's work has been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His work was included in the 2007 group show, *How To Build A Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later*, at the Wattis Institute, San Francisco. Among other things, O'Dell is also the recipient of the 2005 SECA Art Award given by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Gallery hours are Wed. - Sat. 11:00am - 5:00pm & Tues. by appointment
Additional images are available upon request

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Press Release – JHG Project Space

Claude Zervas

June 7th - July 7th

Reception: Thursday, June 7th, 6:00-8:00 PM

James Harris Gallery is also pleased to present several new light pieces by Claude Zervas. Investigating aspects of the natural and organic landscape, Zervas's electronic sculptures are a perfect conceptual complement to O'Dell's work despite the difference in medium. Whereas O'Dell works on paper, Zervas employs technology to examine the world around us.



Nudibranch, 2006, white LEDs, electronics, wire, steel, 83"h x 38"w x 9"d

As in the past, Zervas continues to construct sculpture with thin fluorescent lights, LED's, wire and transformers, but now he adds LEDs and electronics to imbue the sculptures with movement. The gestures of the wires, lights, and supportive structures act as three-dimensional drawings, activating a physical space through movement and subtle shifts of light and shadow.

Previously, Zervas used technology to deconstruct the Northwest landscape. Now he turns his attention to our visceral experiences of movement. For instance, in one particular sculpture, a stacked row of lights subtly undulate and mimic the movement of a small single-celled sea creature. In another piece, Zervas takes us to the edge of a dark forest but doesn't let us in. On a small screen, a blurred and shaky image of a wooded area is projected. Not quiet clear-cut forest and not quite verdant green woods, the image captures a liminal space which is heightened by the dreamlike quality of the camera work.

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