

gesture of Armleder's *Don't Do It!*, 1997–2000, a work composed of a series of Flavin-like neon tubes scattered like so many pick-up sticks across the gallery floor.

"Slow Motion," 2008, is a series of six large triangular red-and-white-striped paintings that together suggest three rectangles halved, their respective two parts hung, in this show, opposite each other. The compositions inevitably recall Daniel Buren's signature motif—borrowed from an industrially produced awning pattern—though the allusion is vitiated by a gradual darkening at the edges of the red, as if to imply an error in the work's production. *After Birds*, 2008, provided the most compelling example of Decrauzat's seemingly endless quotations, an elegant homage to the "flicker" films of Ken Jacobs, Paul Sharits, Tony Conrad, and others. Digitally extracted from the animated title sequence of Hitchcock's classic *The Birds* and printed to 16 mm, the footage of blackbirds dipping and swooping in flight is here sped up and crisscrossed to produce a Rorschach-like flickering abstraction that pulses from white on black to black on white. Nevertheless, in its self-satisfied reliance upon one reference after another, Decrauzat's work ultimately exhibits a laissez-faire criticality, one that may have lost some of its luster in today's climate of contraction.

—Fionn Meade

Xylor Jane

CANADA

Xylor Jane's third solo exhibition at Canada, titled "NDE," as in "near-death experience," did not on first impression look to be about death. Products of a conceptual, task-based approach that Jane began developing in the mid-1990s, these new works, more explicitly than their predecessors, depict patterns through dabs of brightly colored oil paint. Some of these patterns have their origins in printouts of numbers from the Internet. Others are based in a system Jane has generated that links the seven colors of the rainbow to the seven days of the week. If their palettes were more consistently muted, their grids more judicious, her new works might bring to mind Agnes Martin's meditative paintings. Instead, the dots form bright and busy rhythmic patterns—as they do in *Bombinating*, 2009, where they build into equilateral triangles fitted together hexagonally—or they outline numbers.

In an accompanying four-page, handwritten guide, Jane notes that *Shroud*, 2008, is based "on prime Julian days from 06.06.08 to 07.17.19, paired according to their day of the week." The document provides useful notes about most of the exhibited paintings, even if it doesn't explain what Phi decimals or palindromic number sequences are, and how they might be represented. "Dot boxes celebrate 28, the second perfect number," she adds, while the result, more simply, resembles the form designated by the phrase written below this text, ostensibly an organizing principle of her work: "Rainbow Quilt."

Looking at Jane's dense vortices and networks of dots, I was reminded of Joan Didion's book *The Year of Magical Thinking*, in which she writes, "Survivors look back and see omens, messages they missed. . . .

They live by symbols." It is clear that Jane has long been interested in nature and the unknown and possibly the sublime. She is thoroughly engrossed in systems and mathematics, and creates order and structure in her work, and perhaps in her life too, through numerology. Her obsessive practice brings to mind a wide range of artists—from Danica Phelps to Yayoi Kusama to Hanne Darboven to Bridget Riley—and, like Martin, who spent nearly forty years in Galisteo, New Mexico, Jane lives off the grid in a small community outside of major art-world centers, laboriously, if idiosyncratically, painting.

As with Phelps and the others, the trace of Jane's hand is present throughout her works, a reminder that nothing can be completely controlled or perfect. Mistakes are marked in pencil and sit on the surface, undisturbed. Jane does not seem to idealize precision, and is comfortable exposing the flaws that materialize in even the most controlled experiments. Her conceptualism is less mechanical and impassive than it looks, her self-generated systems more personal, and more about death (and perhaps life), than they initially seem. Her works are records of time but also reflections backward and projections forward, abstracted calendars of days past and days to come.

Jane has been known to work out her ideas in various forms—printouts, calendars, notes, and finally the paintings themselves—but the handwritten key was unexpected. Partially illuminating and partially mystifying, the guide offered yet another side of Jane's intricate exercises while the works showed how much her practice has developed since the early 1990s, when she graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute. Somewhere within the scramble of numbers and colors, grids and patterns, were, I sensed, fleeting glitches of emotion, like blips on radar, slow yet steady.

—Lauren O'Neill-Butler

Lisa Kirk

INVISIBLE-EXPORTS

Inspired by the theatricality of street and media activism, Lisa Kirk's projects—or, as she sometimes calls them, "social occasions"—are marked by a winning combination of wit, nerve, charm, and aggression. For "The Greatest Show on Earth," her exhibition at Participant Inc. in 2003, she had an effigy of the Whitney Museum fashioned from cake, and then blown up. For her project *Revolution*, 2006–, she created a customized fragrance memorializing the persistent smell—or, rather, the stench—of street violence, bottled in pipe-bomb vials and "marketed" with a bandanna face-mask accessory and a DVD commercial. At times, she desists from artmaking entirely, choosing instead to curate polemical shows as rejoinders to contradictions she perceives in the art world. "I figured there was already too much art out there," she explains. "It seemed like it would be more interesting to do something with it." Wholly original, Kirk's projects are always a synthesis of personal experience, current events, and an insider's perspective on cultural politics.

In this show, "House of Cards," Kirk gleefully conflated the collapse of the real estate market, vacation time-share incentive marketing, and the "hard-sell" techniques used in furniture showrooms. She constructed a freestanding one-and-a-half-room shack within the tiny Orchard Street gallery. The structure, built in fifty-two parts from found materials, is both a sculptural installation and a time-share sales model. Ingeniously conceived and made, the shack is an indigent clubhouse. A wok dropped into the center of three stacked-up tires serves as a cooking range. Metallic gift-wrap curtains frame Plexiglas windows. The scavenged plywood interior walls are adorned with peeling wheat-pasted posters from yesteryear's protests—one shows a

Xylor Jane,
Bombinating, 2009,
oil on panel, 44 x 41".



Lisa Kirk, *Maison des Cartes* (House of Cards) (detail), 2009, mixed media, 8 x 24 x 8'.



cop clad in full riot gear, with the pitiful phrase ABOLISH ALIENATION printed on his face-shield.

At the close of the show, the work was moved to a donated lot in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where it will remain until next April. Viewers were invited to participate in the project by purchasing one-week time-shares at the low starting price of \$199. Backed up by a “deed” produced by Kirk herself, the shares entitle their owners to full use of the shanty for the purchased time period. Battery and solar power are available at the site. Should they choose to do so, owners can take up residence throughout their week, or simply use the time-share as a venue for parties. Higher membership levels are also available. For \$599.99, “Basic Collectors” can own a signed piece of the shanty when it’s removed from the yard. For \$8,999.99, Kirk will have the piece bronzed. Fees can be paid in convenient, interest-free installments.

Actors Susan London, Luella Lu, and Bob Spence were recruited to function as “sales associates,” greeting prospects as they entered the gallery and conducting tours of the model while highlighting ownership benefits: “You are contributing to art history by becoming part of this project. . . . You are not only buying a piece of art but becoming part of it!” Eventually, viewers were led to a windowless sales center (otherwise known as the gallery office), where the deals were closed. As an added incentive, buyers were allowed to “look under the rug”: That is, they were led down a flight of rickety stairs to the dank gallery basement, where portions of Kirk’s *Revolution*—ransom notes, a milk crate of gilded Molotov cocktails, posters proclaiming SORRY ABOUT ALL THE TORTURE AND EVERYTHING—were reprised as a peep show.

An artist with ideas to spare, Kirk approaches the “House of Cards” enterprise with the same zeal that drove Claes Oldenburg’s *Store*, 1961, his exuberant ode to primitive capitalism. But whereas Oldenburg sold plaster sneakers and sausages from his storefront studio, “House of Cards” transcends the mere physical object. What’s for sale is the *idea* of ownership, backed up by specious grant deeds.

—Chris Kraus

“Regift” SWISS INSTITUTE

Lewis Hyde asserts, in the introduction to his book *The Gift* (1983), that “works of art exist simultaneously in two ‘economies,’ a market economy and a gift economy.” Recent contemporary art can be accused of focusing on the former to the detriment of the latter. Hyde’s subsequent insistence that “a work of art can survive without the market, but where there is no gift there is no art” appears to ignore or

be at odds with the realities of a commercial market flying high, as it was recently, or laid low, as it seems to be now. Yet his counsel is a welcome reminder that, no matter our commercial concerns, we must also acknowledge other ways of valuing art and pay heed to its other functions. This group exhibition, organized by artist John Miller, suggested something similar by presenting artworks that engage the subject of gift exchange.

“Regift” brought together two dozen artists and art collectives. Although a few, like Felix Gonzalez-Torres, explicitly spotlight the questions raised by the show’s topic, most are not known to be particularly concerned with it. The diversity, however, made up for what some of the artworks lacked in gift-exchange sophistication. Sam Durant’s *American Hospitality* (*biological*), 2006, a folded blanket and a bottle of Jack Daniel’s resting on a pedestal, is a caustic meditation on the ends toward which gifts can be used. The work refers to soldiers (a British commander in the eighteenth century, the US army in the nineteenth) who reportedly distributed smallpox-infected blankets to American Indians. Durant’s sculpture resides at the opposite end of a conceptual spectrum from Maria Eichhorn’s overly earnest *Gift, Regift*, 2009, which facilitates a Secret Santa-like exchange of unwanted gifts submitted by the public, or Sylvie Fleury’s wan *I Love You: February 14, 2009*, for which she instructed Miller to find a kitschy Valentine’s Day gift and install it in the gallery. (The checklist playfully credits the teddy bear as courtesy Rite Aid, among others.)

Two artworks stood out by frankly addressing the power of the artist to change the value of an object by designating it as art. Jim Shaw’s *Sketch for Museum Installation*, 2009, is composed of the drawing for a 1940 comic that he gave to his mother; a fruitcake box like the ones his father sells on behalf of a men’s club; and a text that outlines a proposal for an art installation that would link the two and, in the process, fiscally benefit his parents. The complicated entwinement of gift exchange with personal relationships and the obligations they entail is given a thorough workout in Shaw’s scheme. Something similarly fascinating is found in Leigh Ledare’s proposal that New York’s Museum of Modern Art assume responsibility for a family graveyard plot by accepting it as a gift from the artist.

As a critic, Miller has written about several of the show’s artists, including Mike Kelley, whose giveaway iron-on T-shirt decals attempt to undermine the profits of a company that appropriated one of his drawings without permission. As an artist, Miller shares galleries with the majority of the others included here, a fact that points to yet another, less tangible yet no less important type of gift exchange: the productive, informal back-and-forth between artists who help each other further their individual practices. Recent exhibitions at Anton Kern Gallery and Andrew Kreps Gallery have made affinities among



View of
“Regift,” 2009.