

Vitamin 3-D
New Perspectives
in Sculpture
and Installation

PHAIDON

Nominators and Contributors

Nancy Adajania
Critic, cultural theorist and curator, Bombay

Negar Azimi
Senior Editor *Bidoun*, New York

Sarina Basta
Curator, SculptureCenter New York

Devrim Bayar
Curator and residency coordinator Wiels Contemporary Art Centre; Editor in Chief *Code* magazine Brussels

Kirsty Bell
Writer, Berlin

Iwona Blazwick
Director, Whitechapel Art Gallery London

Andrew Bonacina
Curator and writer, London

Thomas Boutoux
Curator and writer; founding member of castillo/corrales, Paris

Lindsay Brown
Writer, Vancouver

Adam Budak
Curator, Kunsthaus Graz

Jon Bywater
Writer; Programme Leader for Critical Studies at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland Aotearoa, New Zealand

Giovanni Carmine
Director, Kunsthalle St Gallen

Luca Cerizza
Curator and writer, Berlin and Milan

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev
Curator, Castello di Rivoli Turin; Artistic Director Biennale of Sydney 2008

Tyler Coburn
Artist and critic New York

Suzanne Cotter
Director, Modern Art Oxford

Bice Curiger
Curator, Kunsthaus Zürich; Editor in Chief, *Parkett*

Penelope Curtis
Curator, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds

Trinie Dalton
Critic and writer, New York

Wouter Davidts
Writer, Antwerp

Lillian Davies
Curator, editor and writer Paris

Diedrich Diederichsen
Curator and critic Berlin

Florence Derieux
Curator, Paris

Dominic Eichler
Curator, musician and writer; Contributing Editor, *Frieze*, Berlin

Anne Ellegood
Curator, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC

Russell Ferguson
Curator and critic; Chair of the Department of Art, University of California, Los Angeles

Richard Flood
Chief Curator, New Museum, New York

Claire Gilman
Curator and writer, New York

Thelma Golden
Director and Chief Curator, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

Ann Goldstein

Senior Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles

Isabelle Graw
Publisher, *Texte zur Kunst*, Berlin; Professor of Art Theory, Kunsthochschule Städel Schule, Frankfurt

Melissa Gronlund
Managing Editor *Afterall* and *Afterall Online*, London

Bruce Hainley
Writer Los Angeles

Kit Hammonds
Curator; tutor, Curating Contemporary Art MA, Royal College of Art, London

Glen Helfand
Curator; critic for *Artforum*; Associate Editor, *CMYK*; Adjunct Professor, Fine Arts California College of the Arts, Oakland

Jens Hoffmann
Director, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco

Matthew Higgs
Director and Chief Curator, White Columns, New York

Laura Hoptman
Senior Curator, New Museum, New York

Anthony Huberman
Chief Curator, Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis, Missouri

Ronald Jones
Artist and writer, Stockholm

Geeta Kapur
Curator and critic, New Delhi

Céline Kopp
Curator and writer, Paris

Vasif Kortun
Director, Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Centre, Istanbul

Miwon Kwon
Associate Professor, Department of Art History, University of California, Los Angeles

Christy Lange
Assistant Editor, *Frieze*, Berlin

Sylvère Lotringer
Professor of French Literature and Philosophy at Columbia University, New York; General Editor *Semiotext(e)*

Carol Yinghua Lu
Critic and curator, Beijing

Francesco Manacorda
Curator, Barbican Art Gallery London

Chus Martinez
Chief Curator, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Rosa Martinez
Curator, Barcelona

Tom McDonough
Critic and Associate Professor of Art History at Binghamton University; Editor, *Grey Room*, New York

Charles Merewether
Art historian and curator, New Delhi, New York and Hong Kong

Dominic Molon
Associate Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

Shamim M. Momin

Associate Curator, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Branch Director and Curator of the Whitney Museum at Altria

Tom Morton
Curator, Hayward Gallery; contributing editor *Frieze*, London

Gerardo Mosquera
Curator critic and art historian, Havana; Adjunct Curator, New Museum, New York

Neil Muhiolland
Writer; Director of the Centre for Visual and Cultural Studies and Reader in Contemporary Art Theory, Edinburgh College of Art

Julian Myers
Art historian, critic and professor California College of the Arts, San Francisco

Bob Nickas
Curator and critic, New York

Hans Ulrich Obrist
Co-Director, Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects, Serpentine Gallery, London

Sally O'Reilly
Writer, London

Adriano Pedrosa
Critic and curator, São Paulo

Emily Pethick
Director, The Showroom, London

Jenelle Porter
Associate Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia

Bert Rebhandl
Critic, Berlin

Beatrix Ruf
Director and Curator, Kunsthalle Zürich

Ralph Rugoff
Director, Hayward Gallery, London

Trevor Schoonmaker
Curator of Contemporary Art, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

Barry Schwabsky
Critic, London; Co-Editor of International Reviews for *Artforum*; critic, *The Nation*

Katy Siegal
Associate Professor of Art History and Criticism, Hunter College, City University of New York

Katie Sonnenborn
Writer; Director of External Affairs, Dia Art Foundation, New York

Beate Söntgen
Writer, Brussels

Rochelle Steiner
Director, Public Art Fund, New York

Francesco Stocchi
Curator and critic, Rome

Alina Tortosa
Critic curator and writer, Buenos Aires

Lee Trimming
Artist and writer, London

Marc-Olivier Wahler
Director Palais de Tokyo, Paris

Gilda Williams
Critic, London

Rachel Withers
Writer, London

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Jay Heikes

01

The unusual impetus for Jay Heikes' recent body of work was a joke — a rather generic, unfunny joke about a parrot's absurd stand-off with a one-eyed pirate. The joke was a generative element, its narrative and visual components tools in the artist's kit of parts. What began with Heikes 'performing' the joke on video segued into drawings made from the video stills, as well as painting, sculpture and installations, which he called 're-tellings' and with which he telegraphed the work deeper into the realms of metaphor. The joke figures in the work only obliquely, a frame of reference rather than a narrative illustrated. (In fact, it is only directly referenced in texts like this one).

This body of work seeks at once to interrogate and create language using codified motifs: clocks, beds, rooms, traps, hooks. For instance, the *Changing Room* sculptures are places where one could do just that — change. The roughly made boxes are variously sized: sometimes big enough for a human figure; sometimes a squat, horizontal box resembling a puppet theatre, replete with an awkwardly scaled and haphazardly constructed pair of laced-together jester's boots. The boxes' canvas curtains are painted with bleach that oozes like a primordial soup. All the works are parts of a narrative but are comprehended as abstract representations of broader ideas: limbo, stasis, repetition, voided histories and absurd gestures. It was Heikes' formal and conceptual explorations of topics from stage props to the existentialist playwrights Samuel Beckett and Jean-Paul Sartre that led to these particular works, which borrow the apparatus of theatre, performance and staging. Exhibitions are in themselves stages, after all.

Heikes employs a vast range of techniques, in part inspired by Arte Povera's tactic of using 'poor' (i.e., everyday) materials to great effect. His intensive material explorations took the joke through the paces of its inevitable degeneration and demise. The joke was a battery forced to corrode. This narrative mutation found its analogue in materials, in effect transferring concept to form. For example, a simple hooked cane morphed into an assemblage of wood and tape, cast in various metals. Some sculptures mix bronze and iron, a chemical composition akin to a battery, and like a battery they are decaying, changing — a relic produced by time.

Heikes' recent series of paintings on steel bring full-spectrum colour to his work. 'Fallen' pictures, they blur the line between painting and sculpture by resting heavily on the floor. They are pictures of static, an image borrowed from the television screen, or perhaps from the end of the video-recorded joke. Static is a condition of not moving, breakdown; it is leftover radiation from the Big Bang. Static is the end of the broadcast day and the painterly gestures bleached out of the changing-room curtain. Painting static freezes it just long enough for a new picture to emerge well the scrambled lines. The surface, marred by rust that slips out from under the applied colour, is entropic, constantly mutating by rusting away. For now, Heikes' work rests in the crux of a paradoxical condition of simultaneous stasis and entropy. [Jenelle Porter]

- 01 from left:
- *A Broken Record*
Not a Broken Record, 2007
Bronze, bleached cotton
wood, hardware, paper, latex
185 x 267 x 277 cm
 - *VI: III II*, 2007
Enamel, toner on paper
10 sheets
Each 81 x 102 cm
 - *Everything All at Once*
(Channel 4), 2007
Enamel on steel
83 x 89 cm
 - *A Broken Record Not a Broken*
Record Just a Sound, 2007
Bronze, bleached cotton,
wood, hardware, paper, latex
234 x 330 x 234 cm
 - *The Ninth Re-Telling*, 2007
Bronze
183 x 38 x 43 cm



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Jay Heikes

02

03



- 02 from left:
- *I: VIII V*, 2007
Enamel, toner on paper
6 sheets
Each 81 x 102 cm
 - *Broken Record*, 2007
Bronze
2 parts
307 x 62 x 25 cm
340 x 62 x 25 cm
 - *Rules of Attraction*, 2007
Iron, bronze hardware,
rope, latex
Trap 83 x 36 x 36 cm
Cheese 5 x 9 x 12 cm
Rope dimensions variable
- 03 from front:
- *The Soft Pillow*, 2007
Wood string
latex, coconut,
bronze, copper
25 x 213 x 81 cm
 - *6:30 Today, tomorrow and*
the day after that, 2007
Bronze, wood cement,
plaster, enamel
244 x 244 x 15 cm
 - *Awkward Pause*, 2008
Bronze, iron, rust
13 x 119 x 76 cm



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