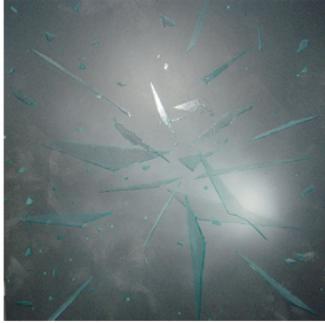




Inga Dorosz
Nought Nowhere was Never Reached I (2005-7)



Claudia Parducci
Shatter-5 (2007)



Sydney Croskery
Birds vs Microwaves (2007)

Big Bang, and Other Origins

David Salow Gallery, December 1 – January 12th

Sydney Croskery, Inga Dorosz, Michael O'Malley, Claudia Parducci, and Kim Schoenstadt

If our universe, which has been expanding since the beginning of time, can be a model for art-making, the artists' universe in *Big Bang, and Other Origins* has been expanding since the late 1960's and 1970's. The works in this show take their inspiration from science fiction illustration (think Philip K. Dick pocketbooks), the organic forms of California Funk furniture, and tourist photos with rounded corners and bleached greens and blues. Inspiration swells into landscapes, objects, and visions that grapple with contemporary problems of surface, space and form. Space and form themselves are points of departure to investigate trauma, the everyday, social interaction, technology, and the future.

In *Big Bang, and Other Origins*, 5 artists navigate space and landscape in projects that renege on the usual contracts between figure-ground and object-architecture while running wild with strategies of pictorial illusion. The artists undermine the usual perceptions of quotidian materials, converting the pedestrian into the sublime through unsentimental pairings of beauty and fear. The landscapes here become metaphoric surrogates for the psychologized landscapes of memory, nostalgia, utopia, and cynicism. Many of the works suggest the infinite, but this is an infinite which is porous, crushed, or portends life-after-earth.

Big Bang, and Other Origins is curated by Micol Hebron and Elizabeth Tremante

Claudia Parducci's painting, *Shatter-5*, is an illusionistic painting of glass fragments, hurling through the air, post explosion. The depicted state of suspended animation is simultaneously silent and devastating. The viewer imagines a deafening roar of an explosion, the tinkling of breaking glass, the echoing of the ruptured pane throughout an infinite space. At six feet square, the painting proposes an infinite spatial field that has the potential to envelop the viewer. Parducci's image connotes a strong force as well as a weightless, gravity-free space through which the shards of glass might float forever. One thinks of the aftermath of a traumatic event (a nuclear explosion?), or a sonic boom, a sudden displacement of the senses that is wholly destabilizing. Claudia says of the work: "An abrupt rush of adrenaline profoundly distorts the perception of time and space, turning one's world into a slow-motion spectacle. Danger can be beautiful."

The two images from the *Lake Powell Series* feature large color prints of family vacation photos taken by **Kim Schoenstadt's** father-in-law at Lake Powell in the 1970s. Architectural forms are overlaid on the photos: perched atop a butte, clinging to a shore, or simply floating above the ground. The images act as proposals, enticing brochures for your imagination: "Your modernist utopia here". A third component - a solid colored, amorphous topography - is overlaid and interjected between the drawings of buildings and the landscape. The forms are complex enough to imply a specific derivation, but too complex to evidence the source. Using the 'magic wand' tool in Photoshop, Schoenstadt has digitally selected all of the pixels of an anomalous color in one of the other photos and digitally painted in the selected area that resulted. She has relinquished authorship and choice, handing it over to the algorithms of Photoshop rather than the subjectivity of a student or colleague. The resulting images contain visual layering that functions as a neat analog for the layers of meaning, process and contemplation inherent in the act of superimposing 'a' and 'not a'. In these postmodern landscapes, culture (architecture) invades nature, digital invades the photographic, and the present is entangled with the past. Schoenstadt amicably obliterates the neat canons that have traditionally allowed for those classic binaries of art criticism and theory - avant-garde and kitsch, author and viewer, etc. She is creating an imaginary topography that engages elements of desire, aesthetics, history and culture that are culled simultaneously from the fin-de-sicle avant-garde, mid-century modernism, and contemporary post-post modern sensibility.

Michael O'Malley's sculptures draw upon the regional aesthetics of his Northern California boyhood. The freewheeling expressive forms that sprouted out of modernist design merge a love of materials, craft, nature, and California's expansive natural landscape into furniture and environmental sculpture. Artists such as Jack Rogers Hopkins created environments and functional objects that specifically reflected the values, needs and social interactions of the free spirits who put down roots in Northern California in the 1960's and 70s.

O'Malley's work has its own origins in performative objects—as sculpture that intervenes or directs social interactions. *Object for a Conversation* and *Object for an Epiphyte* mark a shift toward a more complex idea of the way in which an object can mediate a social interaction. His sculptures' organic form, worked out of steel coated with a slurry of newspaper, wood glue, and house paint, engage primary modernist concerns with the relationship of an object to the body and architecture. O'Malley uses negative space and precise balance punctuated by forms of cast aluminum and other materials to map a secondary visual and spatial experience upon the piece. His work is confounding because it comes within a hair's breadth of reading as functional. O'Malley's materials are reconfigured elements from the built environment. He installs various pieces as one might install corner shelving, a chandelier, or a coffee table. This proposal of functionality breaks down as the work embodies a more dangerous idea - that of sculpture and art swallowing and replacing the functional with something more uncertain, more ungainly, discomfiting, and ultimately more reflective of contemporary social machinations and ambitions.

Inga Dorosz's work transforms edible materials and small-scale sets into large, expansive landscapes and celestial events. Made in collaboration with Amanda Fin, photographs from *Antarctic Tales My Mother Told Me* are made by closely photographing terrains of flour, sugar and salt to capture a seemingly infinite, darkening landscape. The drama of the light and the vastness of the resulting space brings to mind opening paragraphs of Jack London's "To Build a Fire", with its remorseless, sunless landscape of ice and snow.

Nought Nowhere was Never Reached digitally manifests an imagined asteroid belt. The giant prints place the viewer within the space as if he or she is floating among the asteroids. The asteroids are actually potatoes, photographed and placed in illusory space. What was once symbolic of the great unknown, an infinite space upon which metaphysical questions are mapped, becomes a folly. This crushing blow to man's contemplation of the heavens is comical and dark. The status of the banal potato is raised, its history intertwined with the famine and salvation of human populations, its star-turn in Van Gogh's *The Potato-Eaters* is acknowledged, and its current culinary vogue (mashed with garlic and Asiago cheese) is invoked, as the potato is positioned at the center of our conception of the universe.

In both bodies of work, Dorosz is doing more than having a chuckle about the man's desire to see his importance writ throughout the beauty of the universe. She sends us on a dramatic journey through our imaginings and desires for the infinite, only to end our journey at home--among the salt, sugar, flour and potatoes that will go into tonight's dinner.

Sydney Croskery's work contrasts nature and technology through drawings exhibiting a precise formalism that is intermittently punctured with moments of more abstract gesture. Croskery writes, "I have titled them *Psy-Fi: Battles and Hybrids*, a psychological fiction that explores unrealistic future conditions of our world from a hyper-realistic-dreamy-aerial-view inside our imagination." Her work fits neatly into the imaginary of late 1960's and 70's science fiction that played out real Cold War fears and paranoia in space and on other worlds. It is no surprise the Croskery's current battleground is nature, and humans are the unseen invaders. In *Building vs. Stalagmite* a giant building, with only suggestions of windows and floors, has not only become impaled upon sharp rocks, but the landscape has even grown over it. The size of the building implies the vast vertical space it once occupied above the rocks before its fall. With this piece Croskery evokes Charlton Heston's horror in *Planet of the Apes*, as he rides horseback on a beautiful beach, only to see the waves washing up around the ruins of the Statue of Liberty.

Birds vs. Microwaves pictures an explosive cacophony of birds swarming over a human site for information gathering and transmission, where hundreds of satellites are clustered atop a skyscraper. The birds occupy expansive space, while the satellites and factories are packed in and crowded below. Croskery does not choose a winner in this battle; her ambivalence acknowledges the harm that human ambition and desire has caused on the planet, and at least in her imagination, the planet is fighting back.

Big Bang, and Other Origins runs through January 12th, 2008.

The opening reception is Saturday, December 1, 2007 7-9pm.

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