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ON ZEITGEIST

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

JAMES SHAM

Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy and Studio Art, Dartmouth College, 2005
Master of Fine Arts, Sculpture, Virginia Commonwealth University 2008 (anticipated)

Director: Kendall Buster
Associate Professor, Sculpture

Virginia Commonwealth University
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Abstract

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by James Sham, M.F.A.

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Virginia Commonwealth University, 2008

Director: Kendall Buster, Associate Professor, Sculpture

This thesis is an exploration into the possibilities and repercussions of articulating *zeitgeist*, that is, the spirit of our current age. The parameters and ramifications of such a project are, in this writing, analyzed in reference to the notion of historicity, and the narrative gaze that it perpetuates. The mechanism of canonization, and a discourse's capacity to be viral are examined.

Preamble

To take survey of the current ideological landscape, the *zeitgeist*, or ethos of 2008 is an incredibly problematic task, and perhaps against my better judgment, I will attempt something of the like. The problem is that by describing the current condition, one far too deterministically regulates the dialogue by consolidating messy and multifarious narratives into a centralized account. No such unilateral judgment can occur since no such unilateral condition exists. At the same time the notion of a 'world stage' seems to surreptitiously float around numerous discourses, industries and histories. While I can only hypothesize as to the nature of the current ethos, it is the concept of *zeitgeist* itself with which I find fascination. The guise of taking the sum total of an era or group's ethos seems at the heart of a common chronological gaze. Our awareness of this process propagates a tendency to canonize contemporary trends, prepackaging present phenomenon for historical narrative. This process of centralization, and its function of creating an *ideological mainstream*, is the object of my analysis and my stated focus.

On the possibility of *Zeitgeist*

The project—to envision the overarching cultural and intellectual climate—is as curious as it is disconcerting. It is disconcerting for the fact that it is difficult to evaluate the *zeitgeist* of a particular era without in some sense emblemizing ideologies. This requires a process of centralization, which is problematic to say the least. If I state, for instance, that the *zeitgeist* of the 1970's was one of indulgence, I have characterized indulgence as the primary metric for my narrative. The rise of cocaine, the exuberant fashion and even the tone of popular music are all seen in light of this and collectively dictate a rather strict and linear account. While this assessment may be organizationally useful, it is also incredibly generalizing. Moreover, this generalization is a geocentric one. That is, the phenomenon of 1970's indulgence is most manifest in major North American metropolises, and much of this account converges at these epicenters. Consequently, the proximity of other cities and narratives to these hubs becomes a measure of their relevance to the spirit of the era. In this manner, proximity is both a measure of geography and ethos. Relevance however, is a function of *which* narrative one chooses to centralize. As such, this classification is much narrower than appears; it is in fact a disco-centric Studio 54-based characterization of history.

The problem is both spatial and temporal. As discussed above, the geographic and cultural delineations of *zeitgeist* involve a lateral motion; for the most part this is a question of breadth. The project of 'world history', for example, is well acknowledged to suffer a Eurocentric myopia, and this puts into question the entire venture. Oddly, the practice of

world history only emerged as a distinct academic discipline as recently as 1982 and this has not been without complication.¹ In fact, the practice of ‘world history’ has been concerned as much with the parameters and possibilities of its inquiry as with the object of inquiry itself. That is, to create a single, all-encompassing master-narrative for such broad and manifold histories seems a misguidedly Herculean task. Geographically, it simply seems unfeasible to cover that much ground without a central organizing theme. The placement of the Prime Meridian, the establishment of Greenwich Mean Time and even the naming of a *lingua franca* are exemplary of this. While it is clear that these examples are emblematic of a Eurocentrism, it would be a disservice to simply dismiss them as wholly unconstructive. The Prime Meridian had to occur somewhere, and to some extent it has been greatly useful where it is. The question, however, doesn’t concern so much the use-value of said centralization, but rather the damage incurred by the totalizing effect of each simplification. Temporally, these narratives are organized into overly simplistic lineages for which ethos becomes an important thematic device. The ‘roaring’ ethos of the 20’s, for instance, is characterized much in service to the subsequent depression of the 30’s, which seems too convenient a premise. Consequently, the current conundrum is how to negotiate alternative narratives without merely creating counter-centrisms in retort.

I write all of this to contextualize a particular feature of the current ideological landscape, that is, a hyper-awareness of history and the need to canonize contemporary

¹ The establishment of World History as a discrete field of study occurred in 1982 with the founding of the World History Association and this instigated a change in graduate programs at a handful of universities. For the past 20 years, the field has emerged as the dominant methodology in professional publications and graduate programs at large. It has become an increasingly popular approach in North American high schools and colleges as most new textbooks are published with a World History methodology. “History and Mission Statement.” The World History Association, 14 May. 2008 <http://www.thewha.org/history_mission.php>.

phenomenon into singular dialogue. The notion that an idea, aesthetic or methodology can be dated, implies its opposite: that other ideas, aesthetics and methodologies are more relevant. The implication is that there is a central discourse against which these constructs are *made* relevant. For the discourse of contemporary art, this is especially clear. The Venice Biennale, for instance, is considered to have closer proximity to this dialogue than the annual Ipswich Art festival. Robert Storr is closer to it than Robert Ludlum. The gallery scene in New York is more central than its counterpart in Borneo. I do not write this, however, to flatfootedly criticize these realities; it is a misguided view to simply conclude that marginalized groups require greater advocacy. It is misguided for the fact that such advocacy simply feeds into the same model of centralization by merely replacing the current hierarchy with another. Even in markets extending beyond art, this feedback cycle of the fringe into the mainstream only serves to further underscore the problem. As such, I find it much less fruitful to engage in these polemics than to examine the mechanism at large.

On the Viral Nature of Discourse

Perhaps the most mysterious feature of a centralized discourse is its capacity of ideologic gentrification. I am concerned with the question of why some discourses incorporate and colonize outside ideologies, and not the other way around. A hypothetical contemporary artist for instance, could readily enter a folk art convention as a “performance” without really acquiescing her status as ‘contemporary’. A folk artist,

however, cannot conversely enter the contemporary arena without a loss of identity. Entering the contemporary discourse usurps the artist's identity as belonging to 'folk', and any perceived naiveté is immediately suspicious. As a venue, the gallery is clearly as equally laden as the folk art convention, but for some reason the gallery can semiotically hijack the folk venue and *not vice-versa*. One might say that this is happenstance of a capitalist market, but this only re-contextualizes the problem. That is, a capitalist economy is viral of its own accord. Consider that capitalism naturally proliferates when introduced into a socialist economy, while the opposite—the introduction of socialism into a capitalist economy—does not correspondingly thrive. China's recent acquiescence to capitalism, for instance, has been largely an act of containment, with preemptive measures to confine its spread. On the other hand, the Socialist Party of America was simply incorporated into the preexisting democratic model, and eventually subsumed into the system.²

That said, it remains a peculiarity as to why certain models—be they historic, ideologic or otherwise—are naturally viral. John Thornton's study of religion in 17th century Kongo touches on just this issue.³ In his account, Catholic ideology is readily incorporated into indigenous Kongolese belief and resultingly, hybrid versions of local and European religion evolve. The opposite, however, does not occur since Catholic ideology remains dogmatically closed. This is not to say that one framework is more closed-minded than its counterpart. Rather, it demonstrates the feature of permeability; some ideologies

² The party met its demise in 1973, and eventually dissolved into the Democratic and Republican parties, functioning more like a think tank than a political or economic entity.

³ John K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement 1684-1706* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1998)

are simply more conducive to an additive process of hybridization. Simply put, closed-system paradigms (such as that of the Catholic variety) resist hybridization because they entail a totalized perspective. The narrative of Catholicism is meant to be all-encompassing, and alternative accounts threaten the comprehensiveness of this framework. It is just this feature of comprehensiveness that resists ideologic permeability, and may account for the unidirectionality of these hybrids.

On Canon and the “Strike-proof” Game

Before I continue, I must first address the methodological difficulties in addressing the concept of ‘canon’ in this way. Admittedly, I am not so particularly concerned with the Western canon itself, but rather the concept of a ‘canon’. That there is an ideological curation of history weighs heavily on our current condition, and this informs whatever notion of *zeitgeist* we might formulate. On considering ‘canon’ however, I must first concede the impossibility of assessing the situation without self-implication. Writing about *zeitgeist*, for instance, presents a conundrum in that there is little distinction between *description* and *prescription*. I cannot write about the history of ideas without inherently inculcating my own account as a part of this history. As such, it is prescriptive of the reality it attempts to merely describe. If I were to write, for example, “In the year 2008, many thinkers wrote and argued about the notion of *zeitgeist*”, it would be a self-fulfilling statement. The sentence alone evidences its own assertion and in doing so prescribes the narrow set of responses possible. Even a refutation of this assertion reinstates it in

antinomous relation. In this way it is difficult to write any exposition that is not in some sense, “author-centric”. Furthermore, the more centrally placed my writing is in the greater milieu, the more prescriptive my exposition. If I write the above statement as the utmost respected scholar in an esteemed publication, the implication is that my subject matter is truly important and relevant to the greater discourse. This may or may not be true in itself, but my proximity and access to the centralized dialogue *makes* it true. This is particularly clear in world politics. If WMDs are a concern of George W. Bush, then they are relevant to the political discourse, whether or not they *actually* exist. WMDs are relevant because of *who* George W. Bush is, and what he can do. This reality makes it impossible, and furthermore irresponsible, to refute the relevance of WMDs.

The inability to refute the authoritative tone of this kind of dialogue is in parallel to what Danto refers to as “strike-proof games.”⁴ In his comparative analysis of Wittgenstein and Bruce Nauman, Danto examines imperatives that *ipso facto* necessitate obedience. He offers an example in the following statement: “Read this sentence!” One hoping to disobey this command will find it an impossibility. That is, the precondition for disobeying the order is to obey it at least once. In the case where someone genuinely did *not* read the sentence in question, she would have no awareness that her action (or lack of action) constituted an act of defiance, and this is no act of defiance at all.

While the feature of irrefutability is usually a marker of a bad theorem (or at least a nonsensical or unproductive one), here it has the flavour of paradox. That is, the

⁴ Arthur C. Danto, *The Madonna of the Future: Essays in a Pluralistic Art World* (Berkeley: University of California Press., 2001), 133.

statement has a paradoxical *look*, but results in reinforcement rather than contradiction. In a paradox, two antinomies collide in incongruence; the puzzle is how the two can co-exist in the same framework while being mutually inconsistent. The classic liar's paradox, "This sentence is false", is similarly self-referential and involves a clash of truth-values. This arises from the assumption that a statement is either true or false, and not both true and false. In Danto's "strike-proof games", the two antinomies, a) reading the sentence and b), *not* reading the sentence, never collide in quite the same way. The most obvious reason is that directives simply do not have truth-values; "Do the laundry!" cannot be true or false of its own accord. However if we analyze complicity and non-complicity in the same manner as true and false, pseudo-paradoxical results arise. Someone either obeys or disobeys a command, and cannot *simultaneously* obey and disobey. Somebody claiming to disobey the command "Read this sentence!" would thereby be caught in contradiction, nullifying her initial claim. This is somewhat short of a full paradox, however, because of a misaligned pretense. That is, the distinction in Danto's example is not between those who obey and disobey. The distinction is between those who obey, and those external to the entire binary of obedience and disobedience. As stated earlier, one who does not *know* she is acting defiantly, is not defiant at all.

This provides a useful rubric for distinguishing between the 'rogue' and the 'alien'. Notably a canon is in large part a function of its fringe elements. The history and institution of rock, for example, is defined mostly by the rebellious elements that serve to expand its field. Artists are consistently cycled through a progression from rebel to royalty.

It is curious that there is a rock and roll hall of fame at all—that an institution exists to canonize those on the fringe. Similarly, the discourse of art is largely a function of the avant-garde, whether or not this is too convenient a construct. The notion is that those on the fringe work far enough away from the mainstream to be progressive, but close enough to be recognized as rogue. ‘Rogue’ as a notion is defined from the center, and in this way it mirrors the order and hierarchy that is necessary for the appearance of defiance at all. This is not to say that the ‘rogue’ is not of value, only that its role is that of expansion rather than upheaval. This is completely in contrast to ‘alien’ elements, which are so foreign to the discourse that they are wholly undecipherable. While the ‘rogue’ has the posturing of defiance, the ‘alien’ is simply illegible from the common paradigm. The ‘alien’ isn’t merely on the fringes of a paradigm, it is outside it altogether. Notably, the fine line between the two masks a difference *in kind*. The ‘rogue’ serves to expand its paradigm while the ‘alien’ requires complete paradigm shift to appear sensible in the least.

I write this to underscore the viral features of the concept of ‘canon’. Merely having acquaintance with a particular canon involves an involuntary and implicit incorporation into its dialogue by simply accepting its terms. In the same manner that one cannot comprehend Danto’s sentence without also complying with its demands, acknowledgement of a canon’s terms already constitutes an act of acquiescence. In this manner knowing, learning, comprehension, and perhaps even awareness of a canon, are far from neutral acts, even when enacted involuntarily. Since such discourse employs an internally-defined lexicon, having acquaintance with the terms of debate preconditions one

as an ‘insider’. Consider even the ‘insider/outsider’ binary: by definition, an ‘outsider’ artist cannot be aware of his status as ‘outsider’. If he were to call himself an ‘outsider’, he would be using the insider’s vocabulary. An outsider cannot call himself an ‘outsider’, just as a hooligan would never call himself a ‘hooligan’, since only non-hooligans use the word ‘hooligan’.

The one-way trajectory of these lexicons gives concise account of the viral nature of such discourses and mirrors the one-way hybridization of religion mentioned earlier. A paradigm’s degree of *ideologic permeability* was hypothesized earlier as a function of an incongruence of comprehensiveness. While this may be explanatory to some degree on the macroscale, these internally inscribed vocabularies gives an account on the microscale. Take the earlier analysis of the semiotic differences between the folk art convention and the gallery. When a contemporary artist enters the folk art convention in the guise of performance, she takes with her the vocabulary of the gallery-world. For such an artist, accepting these terms requires a semiotic bracketing of folk art as a reference, and this distances ‘contemporary’ from ‘folk’ in a manner in which only those in contemporary discourse are privy. The inverse, however, is not true. A folk artist does not similarly bracket ‘contemporary’ as a reference since the divisive line between ‘folk’ and ‘contemporary’ is a distinction arising principally from the contemporary perspective.

One might even critique my above characterization as resting on a fallacious or unfounded division of ‘folk’ and ‘contemporary’ in the first place; this however, only further implicates my critic into the arena of my bias. That is, if there *really* wasn’t a

distinction between ‘folk’ and ‘contemporary’, my hypothetical would seem nonsensical, rather than fallacious. Comprehension of my terms, even if in disagreement, proves that the semantic distinction is being communicated and this comprehension is indicative of my reader’s compliance. In this way my bias itself is viral. My critic’s disagreement, in short, implicates her as an insider to *this* dialogue, and *this* writing. If she did not grant the division of ‘contemporary’ and ‘folk’ at least initially, she would not be in a position to disagree. Agreeing or disagreeing prerequisites comprehension, and assumes a mutually shared set of references for the purpose of communication. If my reader is not already familiar with these terms, the writing would simply appear irrelevant or meaningless.

On Reductionism and Dominance

In this sense, the determination of *zeitgeist* is in fact deterministic. If I am already a part of the dialogue, I cannot diagnose the current condition without normatively creating the circumstance I describe. The problem is familiarly postmodern, since any account of historicity is constantly foiled by its own consolidation into such history. The underlying difficulty is that naming a *zeitgeist* is largely reductive. That is, the ethos of a particular group must be generalized and reduced to the perceived average or shared set of attitudes. Notably, this *perceived* average is a function of dominance rather than consensus. The current American democratic process, for example, is most influenced not by the greatest number of voices, but rather the loudest ones. Often, volume by amplification is mistaken for volume *en masse*. Notoriety, media sensationalism and capital are among many of the

vehicles of amplification currently employed. Moreover, it is a delicate task to circumvent these voices. As much as the historian scours the most obscure archives, it is already guaranteed that the dominant voices in history are the ones who procure record to begin with. Similarly, one may try to determine the *zeitgeist* of the most obscure movement, but in doing so pays greater heed to the dominant voices within the group. This however, may not necessarily be misrepresentative since dominant voices often hold persuasive power. In trying to ascertain the popular sentiment I might, for example, poll the loudest voices in a crowd. I would do so, however, not because their passion represents the passion of greater numbers, but rather because their volume might affect and thereby determine the greatest number of listeners. Paying heed to these voices may be justified in that the dominant voices are causative *as well as* indicative of the populace at large.

This structure, however, creates incentives to have the loudest voice in a crowd since the most dominant message becomes a function of the quantity of listeners one commands. This makes for a highly engineered mechanism for which attention becomes the primary commodity. In its most general sense this is the same structure as that of a 'mainstream'. The reductive quality of *zeitgeist* predisposes incorporation of the most widely applicable and resultingly, the most generic perception of the dominant view. When I appeal to the ideological mainstream then, I mean to call into question the structures in place that proliferate this process of centralization in the greater discourse; it is even conflicted to use the term 'greater discourse' itself, since it is already a reduction of sorts. Where the scientific model of methodological reductionism reduces explanations to

the smallest possible entities, the formulation of *zeitgeist* reduces the group ethos to its most dominant view. Clearly this is not an entirely democratic process, but the curious question remains as to why various voices and frameworks are persistently dominant.

On the Hyper-awareness of Historicity

That said, I would hypothesize that one of the most characteristic features of the current condition is a persistent obsession with *zeitgeist* itself. The feeling that time itself is compressing into smaller and smaller segments is a result I think, of a hyper-awareness of history and the constant urge to canonize our past into tidy narrative. The greater this compression, the greater the urge to categorize each segment, and this results in a constant archiving of contemporary phenomena. There is a strange progression that evidences this:

- 1) Prehistory is measured in eons, of geographic and mythical proportion.
- 2) With the advent of written record, classical antiquity is measured in centuries.
- 3) From the turn of the century to current, history is categorized into decades.

In short, our awareness of history transitions from eons to centuries to decades. While this is a highly simplified account, the basic observation is that the more recent the history, the more compressed its categorizations. Of course, this may be a phenomenon of collective memory bias, or a manipulation of recorded history, but it is nonetheless the context from which our contemporary gaze arises. Consider that movement, as a measure of both space and time, is a function of heterogeneity. In a completely homogenous universe running from point A to B is nonsensical, since point A does not differ in any way from B. Any degree of

movement is implausible since no change or difference exists by which to acknowledge having moved. Similarly, time is also a function of heterogeneity. In a universe where nothing changes, one moment is no different from the next. No notion of time can exist without change or *differance* in its most general sense. Even the notion of progress (which is problematic in its own right) is a function of heterogeneity. One could conjecture then, that the time compression described above is a function of increased change or heterogeneity in the cultural climate. Of course, this may be an *appearance* of heterogeneity since whatever history is closest to us is the one that we can discern and subdivide the most specifically. On the other hand, the time compression could be a result of an *actual* increased heterogeneity in North American society, beginning with the industrial revolution and further escalated by technological advance. The light bulb alone has changed the notion of chronology, from an increase in the span of a day to an elongation of history. It is curious that Modernism is largely characterized by homogeneity, and simultaneously increases heterogeneity on a historical timeline, a result of rapid-advancing change.

In either case, the sensation of living in a time-compressed society has very visceral consequences. Each decade in the 20th century has a distinct flavour, and it is no coincidence that there is a rotation dictating which particular flavour constitutes the current 'retro'. The most ludicrous instance of this is evidenced by VH1 programming. Programming such as *I Love the 70s*, and *I Love the 90s* are the template for the most absurdly pseudo-historical show, *Best Week Ever*. In the show, the past week is chronicled

and rehashed in terms of popular culture from an almost historical perspective. As an archive of information, it is vast. As a symptom of our collective Attention Deficit Disorder, it is shocking. The point here is that the line between recent memory and historic record is completely confounded. Where once the distinction was categorically discrete, there is now a gentle continuum. The result is a tendency to perpetually contextualize our current circumstance into a larger milieu, and this contextualization prerequisites entry into the discourse. Philosophy for instance, is a discipline concerning as much the history of philosophy as Philosophy itself. Today's anthropologists are tomorrow's historians of anthropology. The *zeitgeist* of today becomes an eventual chapter heading in our textbooks. The style and manner of VH1's *Best Week Ever* will eventually become a sound bite in a potential future show, *I Love the 2010s*.

On the Anachronism of Ideologies

This hyper-awareness of history has direct correlation to the manner in which we digest the legacy of Modernism. Examine the following anomalies: in contemporary art Modernism is an anachronism, but in industrial design it is cutting edge. Writings on Modernism feel dated, yet writing in general is still dominated by a Modernist model of semantics.⁵ Desktop publishing has relativized the production of media, and still the most ubiquitous font is Helvetica, the most Modernist of typefaces. Even the romanticism of a Lionel Richie ballad belongs to another era, and yet features in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*.⁶

⁵ A system of semantics in which words have a static set of meanings.

⁶ Curiously, even in recent memory Lionel Richie has headlined concerts at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

I index these anomalies to point to the persistence of the Modernist framework, the most pervasive of which might be how postmodernism is historicized. That is to say, the way in which postmodernity is contextualized against the backdrop of Modernism is itself conceptualized as a metanarrative, historically and otherwise. This belies the entire project of postmodernism and demonstrates the pervasiveness of the Modernist framework that has itself become ubiquitous. If postmodernism represented a return to the vernacular, especially in the fields of architecture and design, the vernacular has surfaced with a largely Modernist look. The regime of Apple technology is exemplary of this aesthetic. Many might see this pervasiveness as a consequence of a cyclical pattern to history. In the same manner that the 80's awaits its next reign as the current 'retro', Modernism persists in a natural oscillation of ideologies, styles and other 'isms'. This however, may not be accurate—it seems unlikely that pre-Socratic thought will ever seep into popular culture the way we can track the trappings of Modernism and postmodernism in media at large. The persistence of the Modernist ideology I hypothesize, is a similar function to that concerning the viral nature of discourse discussed earlier. In the same manner that Catholicism's comprehensiveness allows for the one-way hybridization of religion, the all-encompassing feature of the Modernist narrative creates a unidirectional hybrid in thought-structure. Simply put, the postmodern paradigm is permeable to its Modernist counterpart, and not vice-versa. That is, the allowance of relative truths in postmodern thought permits the incorporation of many ideologies, including a Modernist one. The Modernist framework, however, is ideologically exclusive and when put in the same pot as

non-absolutist accounts, tends to pervade. In short, when element A is permeable to element B, and *not* vice-versa, element B has a greater likelihood of becoming dominant. While this conjecture remains solely on the level of hypothesis, I would note that it seems impossible to adopt a view towards it without implicating oneself in *either* Modernist or postmodernist assumptions. While this may be due to a lack of imagination, the disjunctive quality of the binary seems already to evidence a Modernist methodology.

On Conclusion

While the above analysis may easily be appropriated as a simple critique of current conditions, I would hope that it is much more—that it provides an account of the possibility and manner in which the notion of a ‘current condition’ can be formulated at all. Certainly the process of centralization in canonical discourse is problematic for its totalizing features, but this is an obvious and somewhat mundane conclusion. These processes of reduction, generalization and centralization moreover, seem a necessary prerequisite for communication in general. That is, the agreement of terms and the need for syntactical stability seems already on a semantic level to incorporate the above problems in common conversation. These problems, I must emphasize, are problematic in the manner of a mathematical puzzle. One ought not to look to the solution for the greatest elucidation, but rather to the process of puzzling and depuzzling the paradigm. I think it in line with Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. The principle—that the more one knows about a particle’s momentum, the less one knows about its position, and vice-versa—is

beautiful because it encodes the impossibility of having a “God’s-eye view”. Similarly in discourse, the more I can articulate the current *zeitgeist*, the less I can imagine its trajectory as an alternative account, and vice-versa. Admittedly, I may have fallen prey to my own trap by writing this paper, having made the attempt to articulate the conundrum as the part of the current condition as a whole. It is with an air of mischief, however, that I have quietly adopted and developed a largely singular and centralized narrative of ideologies in general. It remains to be seen, however, whether this is in contradiction, paradox or simply another “strike-proof game”.

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VITA

James Gee Hall Sham

Born 1982, Victoria, B.C. Canada

Education

- M.F.A. Virginia Commonwealth University, Sculpture, 2008 (*anticipated*)
 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, 2007
 B.A. Dartmouth College, Philosophy and Studio Art, 2005, *Magna Cum Laude*

Residencies

- 2008 *The Core Program*, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX (*upcoming*)

Exhibitions

Group Shows

- 2008
Virginia Commonwealth University MFA Thesis Exhibition, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA
Grey Area Stakeout, Crane Arts, Philadelphia, PA
Sediment, Union Gallery, UMD, College Park, MD
Four Play, Area Lugar de Proyectos, Caguas, Puerto Rico
- 2007
 MINI-MINI-MAX, Appetite Gallery, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Vertical Hold, PUNCH gallery, Seattle, WA
Vertical Hold, Gallery One Visual Arts Center/Ellensburg Film Festival, Ellensburg, WA
Endless Summer - Selections from Skowhegan 2007, Northwest Film Forum, Seattle, WA
Company Picnic, Metro Gallery, Richmond, VA
 MFA Biennial, Delaware Center of Contemporary Arts, Wilmington, DE
Introducing the Commonwealth Bricoleurs, Off Grounds Gallery, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
We and Us, Playspace Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2006
Acting Out: Videos from VCU Sculpture, ADA gallery, Richmond, VA
Debate Team, FAB gallery, VCU, Richmond, VA
- 2005
Dartmouth College, Senior Majors Exhibition, Jaffe-Friede and Strauss Gallery, Hanover, NH
- 2003
 CSA exhibit, Logan Gallery, Chautauqua, NY

Performances

- 2008 *Mission: Goodwill towards Men*, City of San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 2007 *To Consume a Lobster*, Heritage House, Skowhegan, ME
Penance, City of Charlottesville, VA
- 2006 *For Tantalus*, Vietnam 1, Richmond, VA
To Displace and Redistribute Debris, City of Richmond, VA
Sustenance, Barrows Gallery, Hanover, NH
- 2005 *Homage*, Hanover, NH
Labour/Leisure, Hanover, NH

Publications

- 2008 "The Birth of Mirth: An Account of Jest" *Curious Spring* 2008, Richmond: VCU Print Projects
 "To Displace and Redistribute Debris" *Triple Canopy* Issue 1 Spring 2008, www.canopycanopycanopy.com
- 2007 "Collection of Zen" *Curious Spring* 2007, Richmond: VCU Print Projects

Honours

- 2008 Visiting Artist, American University
- 2007 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 2006 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Virginia Commonwealth University
Phi Kappa Phi Scholarship, Virginia Commonwealth University
- 2005 Magna Cum Laude, Dartmouth College
Wolfenden Fine Arts Award, Dartmouth College
Richter Memorial Trust Grant, Dartmouth College
- 2002 Atherton Greek Prize, Dartmouth College
Lester Reid '56 Classics Award, Dartmouth College