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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ZERO ZONE

2 July – 8 August 2008



Demetrius Oliver "Moon", 2007

Jane Benson, Ian Cooper, David Kennedy Cutler, John Espinosa, Rashid Johnson, Rosy Keyser, Demetrius Oliver, Alyssa Pheobus, Jennifer Ruff, Marc Seguin and Siebren Versteeg.

Tracy Williams, Ltd. is pleased to present a group exhibition, *Zero Zone*, curated by David Hunt.

—CURATOR STATEMENT—

"Space Age and Stone Age attitudes overlap to form the Zero-Zone, wherein the spaceman meets the brontosaurus in a Jurassic swamp on Mars." -Robert Smithson

The exhibition *Zero Zone* takes Robert Smithson's oft-cited reformulation of time as a crystal structure whose matrix expands rhizomatically as its launching point. Whether describing the planetarium as Pascal's infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere as a theatrical stage for "vague disorders and contingencies," or the practice of art as a "vast mining enterprise, with innumerable shafts, most of them closed down," Smithson, in a language of willful confusion and hyperbolic prophecy, began his lifelong critique of Hegelian linear time and its attendant illusion of temporal development that has come to structure all of art history.

For Hegel, art was a succession of incremental styles, each object improving piecemeal upon its immediate predecessor through subtle cosmetic variations in a grand program of triumphal universal humanism. We can thank Hegel for our culture of "Nowness," our obsession with cultural artifacts that draw an exact and unerring bead on the tools, materials, and general atmosphere of our immediate present. In short, zeitgeist art marketed, promoted and embraced by a custodial class employed by museums where a leisurely afternoon trip to the mausoleum is an exercise in moving from void to void "where anachronisms protrude from every angle," and "themes without meaning press on the eye."

Through feedback loops, eternal recurrence, endless spiralling and circularity, and above all, the notion that all great art carries within it the protocols of its own entropic dissolution, Smithson was able to conflate "remote pasts" and "remote futures" as an antidote to what he characterized as, "that massive deception, the art history of the recent past."

In the *Zero Zone's* ambient economy, where emotions and moods prevail over the resolutely immanent, control and schematics take a backseat to the conjuring of signature auras. Vapors abrade, then coalesce. The will to timelessness through statuesque transparency is held in abeyance. Boilerplate appropriations of textbook styles of the "recent past" are blown out in favor of deep compressions of the galactic and the prehistoric. Time dilates back and forth; styles are elided to better stoke an atomized seepage.

Smithson would have blushed with fraternal pride at the new "New Monuments" created by the eleven artists gathered together in *Zero Zone*. "Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future."

For further information and images, please contact the gallery at 212.229.2757.
Summer Hours: Monday- Friday, 11-6

Join us for the opening on Wednesday, the 2nd of July from 6 to 8 p.m.

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Jane Benson

Jane Benson was born in Thornbury, England and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received her MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1997. In *The Swing*, Benson gives a dark salute to the ostentation and frivolity of the Rococo, in a sinister, raven sculpture referencing Fragonard's famous swing. Using such materials as tar, ostrich feathers, mirror and steel cables, Benson alludes to the excesses of vanity, as she does with her piece *Ouroborus (Naked Swan)* which metaphorically (and quite literally) references the destructive ramifications of narcissism.

Ian Cooper

Ian Cooper is a Brooklyn-based artist who received his B.S. at New York University in 2000. In his ethereal piece, *Humble (Fluorescent)*, Cooper creates an homage to the duality of meaning in Charlotte's gesture to save her dear friend Wilbur, the pig, in the children's classic, *Charlotte's Web*. Hung like a Japanese noren, *Humble (Fluorescent)*, in both its placement and medium, simultaneously recalls not only the delicate nature of a spider's web, but also the sensitivity and ephemerality behind Charlotte's gestures.

David Kennedy Cutler

David Kennedy Cutler currently lives and works in Brooklyn and received his BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2001. The sculptures of Kennedy Cutler possess a gritty, earthen quality, as seen through his use of such organic materials as wood, sand, dirt, roots, celluclay, ashes and even bubblegum. In his dark, irreverent and quirky sculptures, a sense of fragility and rawness is portrayed, through the use of such delicate, natural materials. Like a slabbed cross-section of a meteor that has smashed and compounded with the surface of a craggy, scabrous city sidewalk, *Transplant (Bushwick)* is a fossilized remnant of cosmic destruction and urban decay.

John Espinosa

John Espinosa was born in Bogota, Colombia and received his MFA from Yale University in 2001. He currently resides in Los Angeles. Espinosa's work often delves into the realm of supernatural and futuristic—his sculpture, *She Is Like Air We Are Like Water*, similarly possesses the absurdist qualities that characterize his work. In this piece, Espinosa pays tribute to the most-kissed woman in the world, *L'Inconnue de la Seine*, the unknown woman that drowned in Paris, whose angelic face was then made into a death mask, which later became the ubiquitous face of the CPR doll. Espinosa creates a type of space-age bust, in which hidden inside, the death mask of *L'Inconnue* is placed. A steady stream of air is pumped throughout the sculpture, alluding to her present incarnation as the face of CPR resuscitation, and with every breath of air, her eyelashes flutter delicately.

Rashid Johnson

Rashid Johnson was born in Chicago and received his MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005. He currently resides in New York. Johnson's work takes the previous generation of "black art" and uses it as a first principle that launches his exploration of a myriad of contemporary racial themes. His poetic sculptures reference the literature of Black writers such as Chinua Achebe and LeRoi Jones (or Amiri Baraka), the rituals of African mysticism, the power of Black nationalism and the painful, yet inspiring history of the civil rights movement. Johnson's work is also heavily influenced by Afro-futurism—an African diaspora cultural and literary movement which developed in the late 1990s—and more specifically, with the mix of Afrocentric and space-age themes that exist within the Afrofuturist approach to music, first created by the late Sun Ra. In many of Johnson's sculptures, his use of shea butter, black soap, photographs of mystical imagery, and various bowls and chalices, instill his work with a nostalgic, altar-like quality. Whether it is in the concentric mounds of shea butter that he shapes or the black soap he employs to develop a waxy texture over his pieces, the use of such materials alludes to their importance in much of sub-Saharan Africa, as both healing and ritualistic properties.

Rosy Keyser

Rosy Keyser was born in 1974 in Baltimore and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. She received her MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago. Keyser's self-proclaimed "neo-brut" paintings evince a sense of fluctuation and temporality—using a contrasting mix of mica, rough sawdust, twine and glossy enamel, Keyser highlights the pictorial tension and the complex process behind her expressive and at times, spiritual, abstractions.

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Demetrius Oliver

Demetrius Oliver was born in Brooklyn in 1975 and currently lives and works in New York. He received his MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2004. In this selection of four digital chromogenic prints, *Canis Major*, *Lepus*, *Ursa Major*, and *Vulpecula*, Oliver ostensibly creates constellation charts of the northern sky, however, imbues each work with a deceptive twist; Oliver references the Latin animal eponyms that create the title of each piece by substituting circular photographs of animal fur for where the astral depictions would have been.

Alyssa Pheobus

Alyssa Pheobus is a recent MFA graduate of Columbia University and currently lives and works in New York. In her series of stenciled graphite drawings drawn on handmade India paper, Pheobus reappropriates the vernacular language from popular love songs, examining such themes as desire, sexual violence and despair, as well as the sexual politics that revolve around a heterosexual identity. In *Good Woman*, Pheobus culls the lyrics of the Cat Power song of the same name, depicting the moving text amidst a thicket of harsh, jagged stitchwork patterns.

Jennifer Ruff

Jennifer Ruff is an experimental filmmaker who currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. In her five-minute digital video, *Heroin(e)*, a petite woman is seen battling a feral alligator as an entertainment spectacle in Thailand, at times immersing various body parts within the creature's treacherous jaws. Through the juxtaposition of the overt sexuality and femininity of the entertainer and the fierce bestiality of the alligator, Ruff explores not only the fine balance between victory and death, but more importantly, the struggle for female empowerment in a patriarchal, masculine world.

Marc Seguin

Marc Seguin is a Canadian artist who lives and works between Montreal and New York. He received his BFA from Concordia University in Montreal. Seguin's large-scale three-dimensional painting, *Astral Death (Flags)*, consisting of 72 naturalized crows and plastic diamonds adhered to canvas, coalesces to form the shape of a giant crow, possessing a certain apocalyptic, post-modern morbidity. The crow has long been a symbol of evil, inauspicious omens and death; Seguin independently shot all 72 crows and had them taxidermied. The reference to the number 72 carries a far more ominous meaning—Seguin alludes to the Islamic concept of 72 virgins being the pinnacle of heavenly paradise for those that become martyrs in the name Allah.

Siebren Versteeg

Siebren Versteeg was born in New Haven, CT and currently resides in Brooklyn, NY. He received his MFA in 2004 from the University of Illinois, at Chicago. Versteeg's computer-driven work and video installations explore the chaotic and perpetual torrent of information, visual data and interactivity of the Internet. Versteeg's work, whether in the form of tiled laser prints, archival inkjets, or video installation, highlights our ever increasing over-stimulation to what philosopher, Paul Virilio coins "stereo-reality." In *Zero is the Center* and *Inexhaustible Joy Kernel*, Versteeg creates a mathematically formulated computer program which generates numbers and patterns at random to form rhythmic abstract works that almost mimic the controlled chaos of our electronic world.