

**June 2006
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MOC P

Museum of
Contemporary Photography

COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO
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A PECULIAR CROSS-COUNTRY TRIP THROUGH AMERICA, STEEPED IN NOSTALGIA AND NARCISSISM

Exhibitions feature works by Tim Davis, Greta Pratt, Kelli Connell, Justin Newhall, and Brian Ulrich

Tim Davis: *My Life in Politics*

Greta Pratt: *Using History*

MP3: Kelli Connell, Justin Newhall, Brian Ulrich

August 18, 2006 – October 14, 2006

Chicago- In August of 2006 the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago opens three exhibitions that investigate American identity and behavior, documenting the earnest theatricality of vernacular storytelling, tourism, and consumerism through which many recreate their past and present.

Tim Davis' series *My Life in Politics* depicts the detritus of our civic involvement as pop culture: buttons, bumper stickers, cardboard cutouts and handmade signs compete with myriad other trappings of capitalism. Davis offers little judgment and no partisanship, presenting the political landscape as divisive, muddled and unresolved. Tim Davis studied photography at Bard College, graduating in 1991. He pursued a career as a poet and editor in New York before returning to photography, receiving an MFA from Yale University in 2001. He has since had solo shows in Brussels, Geneva, Whitecube in London, Milan, and New York, including a recent exhibition at the Bohlen Foundation.

Greta Pratt's photographs explore how we perceive history – specifically, American history – through individual experience, notions of patriotism, nostalgia and community. Pratt depicts physical historic sites, re-enactments and museums with an eye to how locals and tourists alike interact with them today – simultaneously capturing past, present and future with warmth and wit. Greta Pratt is the author of two books of photographs, *Using History*, Steidl, 2005 and *In Search of the Corn Queen*, National Museum of American Art, 1994. Pratt's work is included in major public and private collections, and her photographs have been featured in the *New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *American Art*, and *Photo District News*. She was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1987.

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MP3 presents works by three emerging talents from the Midwestern United States: Kelli Connell, Justin Newhall, and Brian Ulrich. These artists have been selected to inaugurate The Midwest Photographers Publication Project (MP3) series, published by the museum in collaboration with the Aperture Foundation. Each of the artists is profiled in an individual volume containing images selected from their most recent work with essays written by MoCP curators Rod Slemmons, Karen Irvine, and Natasha Egan.

Kelli Connell uses elements of private relationships she has experienced herself or witnessed in others to inspire the two-person narrative of her series *Double Life*. With the help of digital imaging, Connell creates photographs in which a single model plays two roles. In Connell's narrative, when one partner loves the other, she loves herself, creating a poignant exploration of vanity and the duality between self and other. **Justin Newhall's** photographs explore the energy we put into keeping myths alive—the stories of undaunted courage, brave explorers, cowboys and Indians— by capturing the landscape, historical sites, discarded memorabilia, and makeshift roadside museums littering the modern West. When, in the wake of September 11th, Americans were encouraged to respond by shopping (so as to maintain the nation's economic stability), **Brian Ulrich** began documenting consumerism. Shot in malls, grocery stores, and commercial warehouses, Ulrich's pictures document the bounty of commercial goods available to consumers and the peculiarities of the places that offer them for sale. Ulrich photographs unobtrusively, capturing people frozen in a trance somewhere between ecstasy and torpor in the grandiose environments of shopping malls and big box stores.

Founded in 1982 by the MoCP, the Midwest Photographers Project is a rotating archive of contemporary photography established to promote both prominent and emerging photographers from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The MP3 series aims to give greater recognition to artists on the verge of national and international prominence.

ABOUT MOCP

The Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP), a resident organization of Columbia College Chicago, is the only museum in the Midwest with an exclusive commitment to the medium of photography. By presenting projects and exhibitions that embrace a wide range of contemporary aesthetics and technologies, the Museum strives to communicate the value and significance of photographic images as expressions of human thought, imagination, and creativity.

The Museum is free and open to the public:

Mon–Fri: 10am to 5pm

Thu: until 8pm

Sat: from 12 to 5pm

EXHIBITION SPONSORS

The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of MoCP are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation; The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The Henrietta Lange Burk Fund; The Palmer Foundation; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/After School Matters; American Airlines, the official airlines of MoCP, J&L Catering, the official caterers of MoCP, and our members.

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Image Credits

(Left) Greta Pratt, *Channel Two News, Monmouth, New Jersey, 1991*, c-print, Courtesy of the artist

(Right) Justin Newhall, *Monument to Custer's Seventh Cavalry, Bighorn County, MT, 2000*, inkjet print, Courtesy of the artist