

Growing Pains

Curated by Rita de Alencar Pinto

November 18th - December 31st, 2010

Private View: Thursday November 18th 6-9pm

Galerie Charles de Jonhge is pleased to announce *Growing Pains*, a group show curated by Rita de Alencar Pinto featuring: Marcus Brias, Jota Castro, Graham Dolphin, Ryan Humphrey, Michael Kagan, Robert Lazzarini, Edwin De Larosa, and Adam Parker Smith.

growing pains (plural noun) are defined as:

1) dull, quasi-rheumatic pains of varying degree in the limbs during childhood and adolescence, often popularly associated with the process of growing. 2) An American television sitcom about an upper-middle class family with a working mother and a stay-at-home psychiatrist father raising three children together, which aired on ABC from 1985 to 1992. Starring Alan Thicke, Joanna Kerns, Jeremy Miller, Kirk Cameron and Tracey Gold.

A play of words on the definition of *growing pains*; this exhibition explores variations of the themes of *rite de passage* and coming-of-age tales. Hero-worship and childhood icons create lasting impressions on young boys. This exhibition traces these personal childhood and creative influences.

Joseph Cambell describes the *Monomyth* as: the hero's "separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return". This archetype exists throughout literature and in modern cinema, and provides a model for the adventure of the hero. How these artists identify with the hero varies from personal childhood memories to sports figures to musical heroes. C.G. Jung explored notions of the hero within the structures of the psyche and considered them to be paramount in the creation of his theory of the ego and the formation of archetypes that are manifested by the collective unconscious. These heroic archetypes exist in the unconscious of all individuals, and are inherited in their genetic structure, and cultural memory bank.

Nietzsche defined his *ubermensch* or superman as a possibility; "man is something which ought to be overcome", that man's natural instinct should be to transform into something greater than himself. Adam Parker Smith takes on this subject in his work *Superfight, 2010*. Here the viewer is presented with a collage of hundreds of Superman comic book figures in a fighting stance. For the artist, the multiplicity of thousands of Supermen on the canvas nullifies their power; Superman becomes not so super. By packing the images together like a swarm of bees, Parker Smith hopes to absorb the hero within himself, and offer a counterpart to the archetype. Superman is seen as vulnerable as he rendered by Kryptonite.

In other works, Parker Smith alludes to Rene Daumal's half finished book *Mount Analogue* whereby the protagonist believes in the allegorical story of the

discovery and ascent of the *Mount Analogue* of the title. Mount Analogue's summit must be inaccessible, but its base accessible to human beings. It must be unique and it must exist geographically. The door to the invisible must be visible". A known spiritualist and surrealist poet, Daumal creates a vivid analogy of reaching an unknown destination by identifying its portal. Parker Smith loves this paradox and uses it as a medium within his painting, *Farout E, 2010*. This idea of the portal to another world has been known since the Egyptian and continues today in the wardrobe of C.S. Lewis, and Jean Cocteau.

The sports icon resonates deeply within our culture and Jota Castro champions this fascination by transforming the soccer ball into marble. Such a shift in medium alters the perception of the standard leather inflatable and monumentalizes it into a cosmic sphere. Here Castro pays homage to the game that has inspired him throughout his life. This kind of personal reflection is central to his work at large where politics and social issues are at its core. As a former European Union, and UN diplomat, Castro brings his political concerns to his work.

Ryan Humphrey draws from his childhood in Ashtabula, Ohio in the late 1970's. He worshiped Evel Knievel, the motorcycle daredevil, and guitarist Eddie Van Halen of the famed band Van Halen. Both men were known for elaborate costumes and showmanship. Humphrey's own history as a BMX rider and daredevil, combined with this mixed cast generates a bold body of work clearly

his own. Using a toxic color palette and the readymade, Humphrey adopts the motifs of his youth and re-articulates them using formal art historical references. Humphrey studied at the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, New York. Odes to Duchamp, Albers, Stella, Warhol and Gordon Matta-Clark, are often seen within his work.

Graham Dolphin, b. 1972, Stafford UK, appropriates objects and icons from the fashion and music industry, transforming them in assemblages. Obsessive etchings directly onto ready-made objects, such as vinyl records, album sleeves, advertising posters gives the works a fanatical quality. Dolphin arduously scratches passages of minute, immaculate text into their surfaces. The text can be a transcription of lyrics by that particular recording artist, perhaps just a few songs or as much as their entire back catalogue or in a recent series of works, a recantation of verses of the primary text, the Old Testament. As Dolphin performs his alterations, he defaces and destroys these objects as products; the scratched record is removed from circulation and broken, and simultaneously re-circulated and re-made.

Astronauts can be interpreted as the modern Icarus or sky god. Michael Kagan uses this imagery in his recent paintings in order to emulate the cinematic experience of an impassioned viewer of space travel. His bold brushwork suggests the kinetic frenzy inherent in “lift off” which is amplified by their large scale. An MFA graduate from New York Academy of Art, Kagan skillfully renders

these large-scale works infused with light and brilliant hardware. Why astronauts? Kagan's fundamental interest in space travel stems from childhood experiences at his father--son NASA space camp, rocket launches in the park, and nighttime telescope viewings of the moon. These paintings study personal, historical and fictional experiences of space travel.

Superstar professional BMX rider Edwin De Larosa (b.1984, Panama) grew up in Brooklyn NY and is currently living his childhood fantasy. DC Shoes, Animal, Red Bull, Fitbikeco, Zoo York, Dan's Comp, 9star and Front St sponsor him, in addition to the recent launch of his own company, Skavenger. Privately, De Larosa has been shooting photographs of his daily life, antics and interactions with fellow professional BMX riders for the last ten years. In the vein of Larry Clark, Nan Goldin and Dash Snow, De Larosa captures both intimate moments and the New York City landscape. His keen eye conceives formal compositions with movement and reveal De Larosa as an artist as well as a pioneer who ushered in a new age of technical urban riding.

Marcos Brias (b.1981) is a Brazilian artist who has lived in the USA and has an active engagement with the English language and a problematic relationship with his mother tongue Portuguese. He appropriates nature photography going back to Ansel Adams or other photographers of the great American landscape, and quotes them in thumbnail scale.

Brias spent his formative years in Texas, and considers horses and the landscape of the West as influences in his life. In the work titled, *All the Pretty Horse*, the artist takes on the motif of guns used in the book by Cormac McCarthy of the same title. These 1860's rifles speak of the *vaccero* lifestyles and the rambling landscapes that are featured in other works by Brias.

Contrary to the stereotype of the hero, violence isn't a primary concern in the work of Robert Lazzarini (b. 1965). Common objects such as those used by pop artists like Oldenberg are spatially distorted digitally as though presented in a fun-house mirror. This type of distortion harkens back to the imagery in the collection of Queen Christina, but updates the genre. The images float in an "a-perspectival" (Jean Geber) realm, suspended on distorted planes in space. The distortion of planes floating in space goes back to the *Suprematism* of Malevich.

Lazzarini's sculptures trace their lineage back to 1960s minimalism and to the introduction of phenomenology into art discourse. Additionally, all of Lazzarini's sculptures are created out of the same materials as their subjects; for example, the *skulls* (2001), which Lazzarini first exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, was created out of cast bone. In *brass knuckles (t-v)*, 2010 and *gun (i)*, 2008 the artist distorts brass knuckles and guns in order to describe the flexibility of the images and their meaning. Lazzarini has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and has received numerous awards from the New

York Foundation for the Arts, Artist's Fellowship, Sculpture 2005, American Academy of Arts and Letters, May 2003, New York Foundation for the Arts, Visual Arts Grant, June 1986, New York Foundation for the Arts, Visual Arts Grant, July 1985.

Here, the artists have evolved their studio practice yet incorporated interests or motifs they loved most as adolescents. This exhibition explores the multi-dimensions of the hero archetype: modern sports hero, comic book character, frontier cowboy, music icon, and the gangster. Through appropriated images, digital distortion, and other devices, the artists have attempted to do what Carl Jung calls "giving the myth modern dress".