



Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions

PRESS RELEASE

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Against The Grain

Curated by Christopher Russell

Tom Allen, Brian Bress, Robert Fontenot, Wendell Gladstone, Matt Greene, Julian Hoerber, Brian Kennon, John Knuth, Amy Sarkisian, Ryan Taber, Ami Tallman, Kelly Sears, Anna Sew Hoy and Cheyenne Weaver

12 June – 21 September 2008

Opening reception 12 June, 7pm - 9pm

A full color catalog will be available.



Image: Kelly Sears video stills

LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) is pleased to present *Against the Grain*, curated by Los Angeles-based artist Christopher Russell, as part of LACE's thirtieth anniversary celebration. Russell looks back on a seminal exhibition from LACE's history, *Against Nature: A Group Show of Work by Homosexual Men* (1988), curated by Dennis Cooper and Richard Hawkins.

Cooper and Hawkins' original show looked at decadent seclusion and syphilitic deterioration as modes of social rebellion and was informed by J.K. Huysmans' novel *À Rebours*. This exhibition exposed the margins of the already marginalized world of gay men. The curators translated Huysmans through the lens of AIDS in a politically and socially conservative era, and displayed rich, decadent and inherently morbid work. They reacted against aesthetics that seemed polemically overwrought, privileging activism over the individual.

Now, Russell looks at the influence of this lineage. Beyond the Fin de Siecle, beyond AIDS activism, he asks after the influence of radicality among a new generation of artists. Using *Against Nature* as a point of departure, Russell has selected 14 local artists that seek a similar critical position in our social climate today -- **Tom Allen, Brian Bress, Robert Fontenot, Wendell Gladstone, Matt Greene, Julian Hoerber, Brian Kennon, John Knuth, Amy Sarkisian, Ryan Taber, Ami Tallman, Kelly Sears, Anna Sew Hoy and Cheyenne Weaver**. These artists undertake themes of decadence within a present day context.

There has been a lot of talk around the gothic and the decadent in contemporary art. However much of the current generation exploring these ideas has not made the historical connections that seem common among artists of the 1980's. This show attempts to draw a tighter line between varied approaches to the gothic and the decadent, pointing out recent, local connections but also establishing a lineage: Huysman's novel, *A Rebours*, translates not just to *Against Nature*, but also to *Against the Grain*.

A full color catalog will be available (\$25). LACE members receive a 15% discount.

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LACE is a nonprofit contemporary art center located in the heart of Hollywood. For three decades and counting, LACE has curated and produced art and events that inspire the public imagination and engage with timely issues that shape local and global life. www.welcometolace.org