



OCTOBER 14-
DECEMBER 7, 2014

THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER ART MUSEUM

CONTEMPORARY **SHAPESHIFTING** MASCULINITIES

FIRST YEAR STUDENTS RESPOND
Sports and Social Justice

David Wolshire '18

James Blake Usher '18

Roger An '18

Erin Fulcher '18

Kiandra Smith '18

Lissette Torres '18

Andeani Lovett '18

Ian Brim '18

Jason Levin '18

Trevor Bowden '18

Cole Jimmerson '18

Jack Mueller '18



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION AND “FACULTY/STUDENTS RESPOND”

This exhibition brings together ten emerging and established artists who question, reframe, and explore perceptions and anxieties about evolving masculinities in the 21st century. The exhibition raises—but does not necessarily answer—questions about the relevance of the historical male role model, contemporary ideas about gender construction, and the purpose of fraternity.

The ten artists in SHAPESHIFTING can be loosely placed into three categories—evolving cultural terrain, gender normative behavior, and the role of fraternity. In the first grouping, Robyn O’Neil, Alec Soth, Sara Greenberger Rafferty, and Hank Willis Thomas mine different aspects of evolving attitudes toward gender roles. O’Neil’s *Hell* series signals the end of 20th-century male norms, while Soth’s *Broken Manual* project investigates the life of the contemporary hermit. Hank Willis Thomas addresses questions specific to African American men, and Greenberger Rafferty melts and morphs iconic male attire. Ideas about the formation and shattering of gender normative behaviors are found in the work of Marcella Hackbardt, Michael Scoggins, Kris Knight, and Weston Ulfig. Hackbardt’s young male dancers are beautiful yet somehow uncomfortable to view, and Scoggins’ oversized marker drawings ask us to remember a youthful self that fantasized about saving the day with larger than life super powers. Kris Knight subverts traditional ideas about the “male gaze,” while Weston Ulfig empowers the stereotype of young boys and guns. Finally, Brooks Dierdorff and Fall On Your Sword consider the role of fraternity through their critique of the actions, repercussions, and value of male bonding forged through sport.

Because the topic addressed in this exhibition is both driven by and will most affect the Millennials (ages 18-33), the CWAM invited students in two classes to write a response to an artist or piece that resonated with them. The two classes were Amber Kempthorn’s *Intermediate and Advanced Painting* (Amber also generously contributed a response), and Nancy Grace’s *First Year Seminar* class, *Sports and Social Justice*. Additionally, two CWAM gallery assistants contributed texts—Bjorn Olsen ’15 and James Parker ’15. All student responses are available on the CWAM website.

Kitty McManus Zurko, Director/Curator
The College of Wooster Art Museum



STUDENTS RESPOND

Alec Soth's *Broken Manual* includes four photographs that depict different aspects of the life of the contemporary hermit. One photograph is of an unfinished room that has numerous holes in the drywall, and exposed electrical wires. There is a backpack in the lower left corner, and the words "THEY DiD iT" scratched into the wall. The words seem to be blaming something on a group or perhaps the government.

The second photograph is of VHS tapes stacked on top of each other. The movie titles indicate that these tapes are about wars, military takeovers, natural disasters, government secrets, and survival in the wilderness. The tapes imply that the hermit is paranoid about an over-controlling and untrustworthy government, and that he needs to rely on only himself and his survival skills. The third photograph features a hermit named Norman. I think that this picture is meant to put a face on the "normal" hermit.

The fourth photograph is of a man in the wilderness holding a cat with vast forest and mountains behind them. He stands near a semi-trailer that appears to be a sort of safe house or bunker to be used the event of a natural disaster or government/military takeover.

Together, these photographs provide insight into the life and thoughts of a hermit—possibly a survivalist—who believes that when a society does not function, it is up to them to survive away from the rest of civilization.

David Wolshire '18



Alec Soth, From the **Broken Manual** project:
Clockwise from top left:
2007_10z10006, 2007
Framed archival inkjet print
2007_10z10030, 2007
Framed archival inkjet print
The Arkansas Cajun's backup bunker, 2007
Framed archival inkjet print
Roman, the nocturnal hermit, 2006
Framed archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery,
New York ©Alec Soth

STUDENTS RESPOND

Alec Soth's *The Arkansas Cajun's Backup Bunker* is a photograph from a series titled *Broken Manual*. The photograph contains a man in a jumpsuit cradling a cat in a small clearing of a vast forest. The man is staring down intently at the kitten and the kitten is returning the gaze. Both man and cat are at peace together in the vast, open area. While the man's dark green jumpsuit resembles the foliage of the forest around him, his sunglasses and dress shoes seem out of place. The photographer does not interrupt the moment these two creatures are sharing. Behind the two is the back of a dirty, white trailer that is without wheels, anchored down, and not moveable. The clear white sky above them provides contrast to the green foliage that dominates the photo.

When I look at *The Arkansas Cajun's Backup Bunker*, I see the man both as my father and as myself. They remind me of old photos with my dad holding me in his arms when I was an infant. Being someone who has raised a rescue cat for ten years, I can also relate to the shared bond they have. I know my cat can only be held for a specific period of time, but during that time, she does not squirm. The intense staring between the man and his cat displays an immense amount of trust between the two. The cat knows the man has all of the power in this situation, but it does not matter. It is not trying to escape, allowing the human to effortlessly cradle it in his arms. This bond might represent the paternal and maternal instincts being understood and accepted by a younger, weaker animal.

James Blake Usher '18



Alec Soth

The Arkansas Cajun's backup bunker, 2007

Framed archival inkjet print mounted to
four-ply museum board

36 h x 44 w (inches)

Courtesy of the artist and

Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

©Alec Soth

STUDENTS RESPOND

I Am Man is one of a group of eight paintings by Hank Willis Thomas that features wordplay using different combinations of the words, “I, am, and man.” Each painting utilizes these core words in some combination with other words to imply something different. Although the meaning of these words is not explicitly stated, they seem to be related to the Civil Rights movement and racism. Therefore, these “I am” paintings can be interpreted in many different ways, from the civil rights movement to war, identity, and dominance, as well as uniqueness, humility, loyalty, and finding one’s inner self. For example, when considered in the context of the Civil Rights movement, *What A Man* reminds us of Jackie Robinson, a four-sport athlete at U.C.L.A. who broke the color barrier in baseball, and is the epitome of athletic and academic excellence.

Roger An '18



Hank Willis Thomas
I Am Man, 2009
Liquitex on canvas
25 ¼ h x 19 ¼ w x 2 ¼ d (inches)
Framed; Edition 2 of 3
Courtesy of the artist and
Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

STUDENTS RESPOND

Marcella Hackbardt's *All Boy* features all male dancers. The seven photographs include three older teenage boys photographed in the midst of dancing, and four younger boys holding a pose. Included in the series are an African-American teenager, two young boys with glasses, and a teenage boy with long hair. One of the younger boys wears what looks like pajama pants and no shirt, while two of the older dancers are in ballet shoes. The third wears tap shoes. The variety of dress and dance style selection might represent different forms of dance expression.

By photographing only male dancers, Hackbardt suggests that males can be delicate, and not always just rough and masculine. In one photograph, there is piece of fabric on the wall with an image of a female ballet dancer putting on her point shoes. To me, this detail seems to suggest that dancing, and specifically ballet, is a female dominant activity because the image of a ballerina lacing up their shoes is such a common motif. However, by photographing only males, *All Boy* shows that that not only should people not be judged based on gender, but that just because someone is a male, it does not mean he has to have big muscles and be aggressive.

Erin Fulcher '18

Above: Marcella Hackbardt
**Lance (Jump), Ballet Met,
Columbus Ohio, 2007**
Digital chromogenic print
24 h x 27 w (inches)

Below: Marcella Hackbardt
**West, Sweetheart Daycare,
Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2007**
Digital chromogenic print
24 h x 27 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist



STUDENTS RESPOND

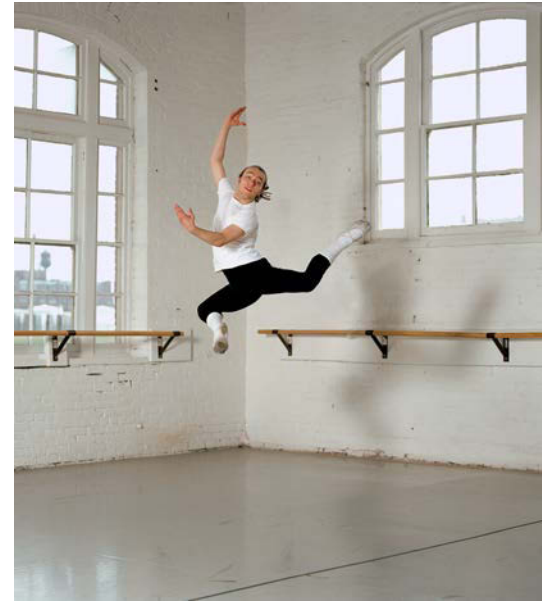
Marcella Hackbardt's photographs feature seven male dancers—three young adults and four children. They wear a mixture of dance shoe types, jeans, t-shirts, and spandex shirts. Posed in different dance moves such as leaps and fundamental dance ballet positions, the figures seem to occupy various dance studios.

The photographs intentionally portray images of male dancers in a female dominated environment. Since the males in the photos wear ballet, tap, or jazz shoes, I assume that the background in each of the images is a dance studio. This use of contextual clues also establishes the idea the artist is trying to convey to her audience about the male presence in the dance world and how they are stereotyped. I interpreted this piece as a way to bring gender role stereotypes to light. In society, males are supposed to be strong and dominant, but the seven figures in the images are displaying masculinity through the art of dance—a typically a female dominated art.

Kiandra Smith '18

Above: Marcella Hackbardt
**Lance (Jump), Ballet Met,
Columbus Ohio**, 2007
Digital chromogenic print
24 h x 27 w (inches)

Below: Marcella Hackbardt
**West, Sweetheart Daycare,
Albuquerque, New Mexico**, 2007
Digital chromogenic print
24 h x 27 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist



STUDENTS RESPOND

Kris Knight paints two young men with blushing skin in *Raised in a Teacup* and *Spellbound*, both painted in 2013. These men are beautiful, handsome, and almost too perfect. In *Raised in a Teacup*, Knight paints a young man observing the viewer with such intensity that it makes one feel uncomfortable. The young man's gaze seems to convey a mix of feelings of inner confusion and frustration. *Spellbound* depicts a young blue-skinned man reservedly looking down. The young man might be mistaken for a woman because of his perfectly defined facial qualities. The shirt, skin, and background painted blue, however, suggesting a depressed feeling, which may or may not reflect the mixed emotions of coming of age. Kris Knight's *Slumming It* more clearly demonstrates the inner confusion of sexual identity through the two men relaxing in nature.

In contemporary society men can be lost between social norms and their real identities as society expects them to act a certain way, sometimes causing internal conflict with sexual identity. This dissonance damages their development and self-esteem. Knight illustrates this idea through his paintings by his decisive use of color and his focus on the subject matter. The downward gaze may suggest self-esteem issues, the piercing gaze confusion, and the two males romantically sitting on a field of long grass and flowers, clearly establishes ownership of their sexual identities.



Kris Knight
Slumming It, 2013
Oil on canvas
36 h x 36 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist and
MULHERIN, New York and Toronto

STUDENTS RESPOND

Weston Ulfig's three-part series includes two relief prints on paper, and one sculpture made of Lego blocks. Each portrays an SMG, or Uzi submachine gun. The artist uses a maximum of five colors in this work—red, white, blue, yellow, and green. The backgrounds of the prints repeat the Lego block imagery, spelling out OMG or “Oh My God.”

Given that whatever is present in an artist's work is usually put there by the artist for a reason, Ulfig may be using the SMG (Uzi) to bring awareness to gun activity with children, and how easily accessible they are to children. Here, the artist seems to be suggesting that the youth of today are exposed to violence (weapon violence to be specific) at a very young age.

Andreani Lovett '18



Weston Ulfig
OMG SMG, 2012
Relief print on paper
12 h x 12 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist and
Douglas Einer Olson

STUDENTS RESPOND

Artist Weston Ulfig's three pieces, *OMG SMG*, *OMG SMG pt. 2*, and *Untitled*, represent the corruption of thought in the minds' of children, and their admiration for violence in today's society.

Untitled, is a sculpture made out of LEGOs, one of the most popular toys of today's generation. In this sculpture, Ulfig used his experience growing up to evoke admiration for violence and war through his creation of a toy Uzi submachine gun. This infers that children are being influenced by war and crime, which has come to affect what they admire in their LEGO creations.

The two prints include a picture of the Uzi machine gun and the letters "OMG!" repeated in the background. This is a popular phrase used by today's generation, and means "Oh My God." The artist's use of this phrase might show the shock and surprise of the Uzi made from LEGOs. Typically, a child's sculpture made from LEGOs might be a house or a plane, but in this case, it is one of war and danger.



Weston Ulfig
OMG SMG, 2012
Relief print on paper
12 h x 12 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist and
Douglas Einer Olson

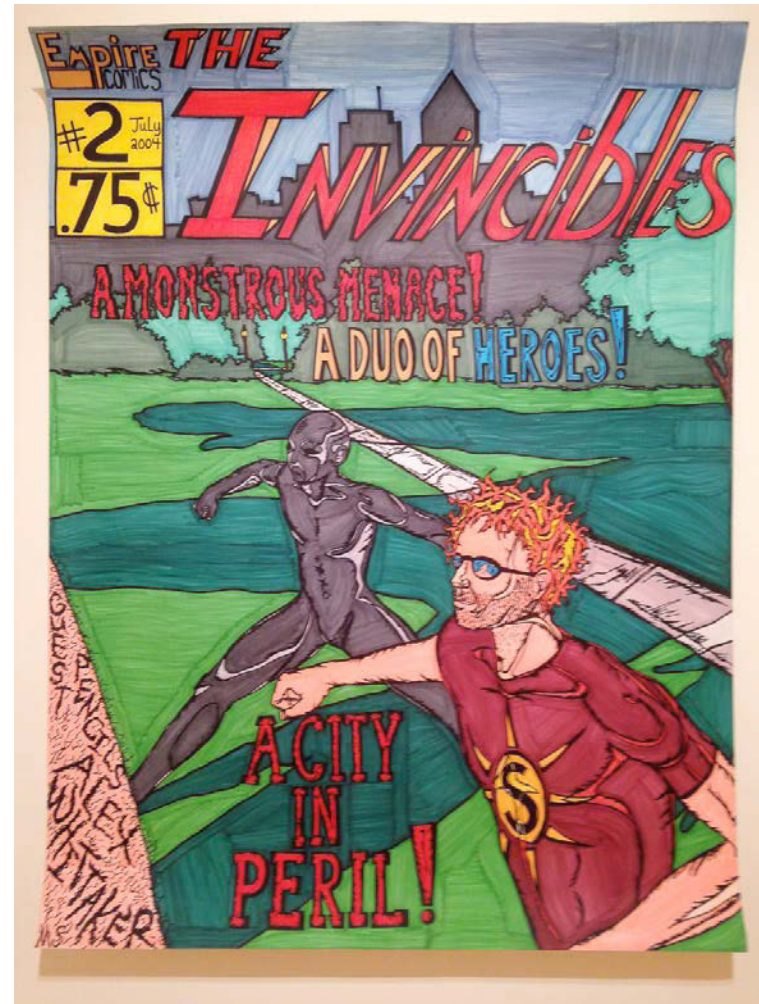
FACULTY RESPOND

In Michael Scoggins' *The Invincibles #2*, viewers are presented with an oversized, hand-drawn comic book cover. The piece is drawn in Prismacolor and markers, and is the artist's rendition of the traditional comic book cover. The vibrating font lets the viewer know that this is a dangerous situation, and the giant shadow shows us that that danger comes from a giant, off-camera villain. Also depicted, are two super heroes preparing to fight the giant. This battle of epic proportions takes place in a large park in a big city.

The "Monstrous Menace" seems to be what is causing the giant shadow. It appears to be human-like as demonstrated by the hairy leg in the lower left corner, and the silhouette of the menace in one of the hero's sunglasses. The hero on the left appears to be metallic, and not unlike the silver surfer from the *Fantastic Four*. That figure also appears to be gender neutral, inhuman, and has nothing but black where the ears should be. The hero on the right is male, and his hair resembles fire. Unlike his less colorful counterpart, this hero is wearing a super suit with a large "S" in the middle of what appears to be the sun on his chest. The suit itself is very unusual because, unlike the super suits of most superheroes, this one looks like a T-shirt with short sleeves. Also unlike most male super heroes, his beard is unkempt and scraggly, which is considered highly unprofessional in the superhero world.

This work seems like the product of the daydream of a teenage boy. This is not by any means a bad thing, as many of the best comics are the product of teenage daydreams. The piece captures some of the aspects of classic comic book covers, but still retains an amateur quality.

Jason Levin '18



Michael Scoggins
The Invincibles #2, 2006
Marker, Prismacolor on paper
67 h x 51 w (inches)
Courtesy the artist and
Freight + Volume Gallery, New York

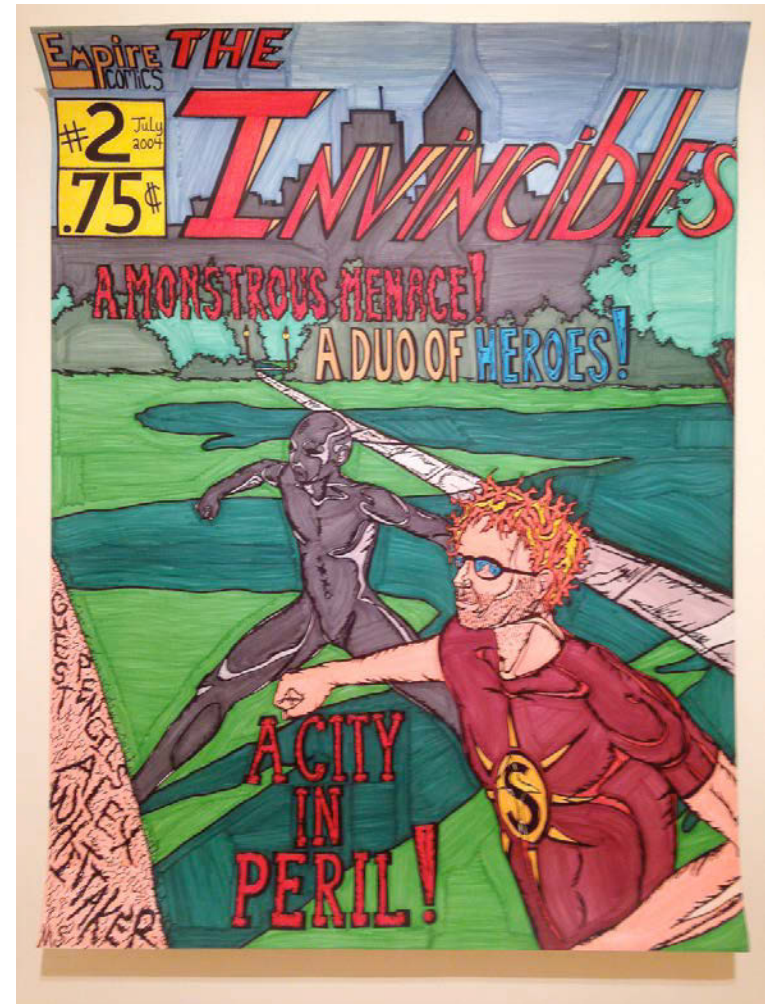
FACULTY RESPOND

Michael Scroggins uses markers and colored pencils on high-grade, cotton-fiber paper to create his version of comic book cover titled *The Invincibles #2*. This “larger than life” drawing contains numerous colors of the spectrum and depicts a battle between “A Monstrous Menace” and “A Duo of Heroes.” The action takes place in a park with a city skyline making up the backdrop for the face-off.

In the foreground, the two heroes stand at ready anticipating their battle. The hero to the left has the body type of a male figure, but has no descriptive features. He appears to not be wearing clothes, and is drawn using only shades of black and grey. His hollowed out eyes add to the mystery as to whether the “man” is human, or simply a shadow-figure of the other hero. The “hero” to the right appears to be an average guy with the typical pinkish skin tone of a Caucasian male. This man has messy, fiery-like hair, and wears a skin-tight maroon shirt with a black “S” on the chest within what could be considered a sun. He also sports a pair of sunglasses that reflect the outline of his foe.

The “Monstrous Menace” itself is not depicted in the drawing of the comic book cover, but there are numerous clues as to his identity. The first clue to the monster’s size is a huge shadow that crosses the whole page. The second clue is the outline of the figure’s head shown in the reflection of the hero’s sunglasses. However, due to the inclusion of the monster’s arm in the bottom left corner, one can speculate that the monster himself is also human because the arm is drawn exactly like the skin of the human hero, and matches both the skin tone and body hair.

Are the heroes really fighting a monster? Or is the human simply fighting a giant projection of the hero’s internal conflict? The world may never know.



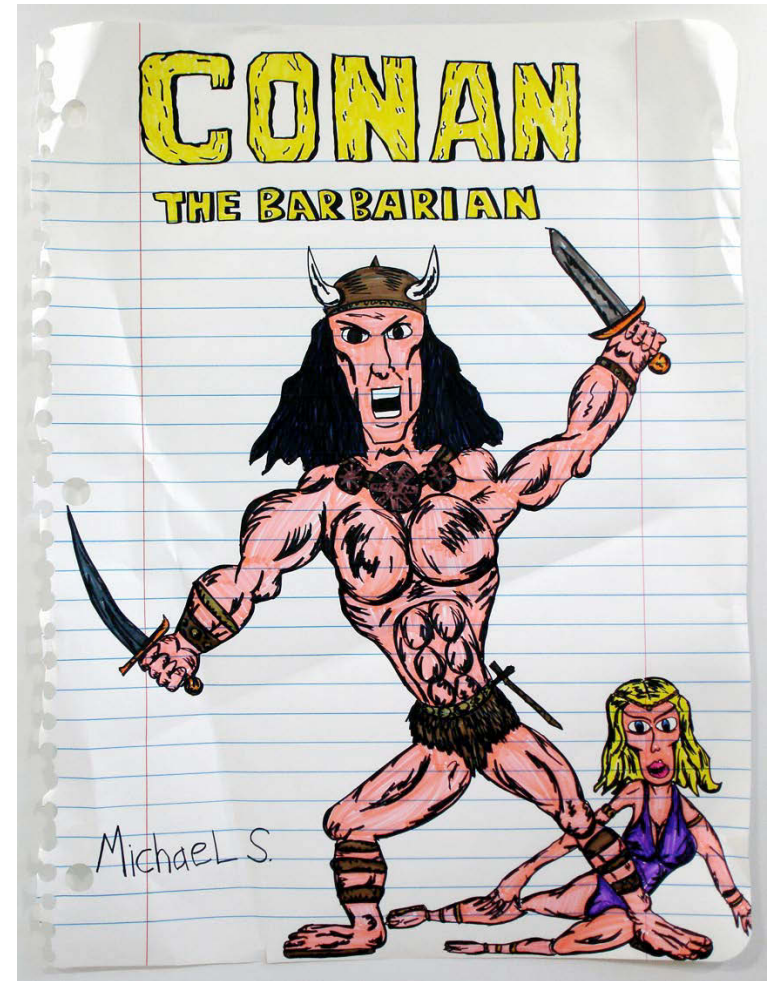
Michael Scroggins
The Invincibles #2, 2006
Marker, Prismacolor on paper
67 h x 51 w (inches)
Courtesy the artist and
Freight + Volume Gallery, New York

STUDENTS RESPOND

In Michael Scoggins' *Conan The Barbarian*, viewers are presented with an extremely large piece of faux notebook paper. On this huge piece of paper is a very muscular man dressed as a barbarian. The man stands holding two daggers, and has a look of ferocity on his face. Along the bottom of the drawing, a woman wearing barbarian-type clothing reclines. The big man looks like he is either getting ready to fight or is trying to protect the woman.

Scoggins' drawing demonstrates the idea that the men are supposed to protect and stand up for women. It expresses the idea that everyone is taught at a young age that men are responsible for defending women and keeping them safe. This represents an ultimate form of masculinity, as every man wants to be the big strong guy, fighting and protecting his woman.

Cole Jimmerson '18



Michael Scoggins
Conan the Barbarian, 2008
Marker and Prismacolor on paper
67 h x 51 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist and Freight + Volume
Gallery, New York

STUDENTS RESPOND

Fall on Your Sword's *Blaze of Thunder* is designed to overwhelm the senses, and in this, it succeeds. From the blasting movie score to the shouting racing enthusiast to the constant shifting of the scene, the viewer is immersed into the piece. What makes the piece so unique is how it involves the viewer through the platform and red button, because when a person steps on the platform, the camera shifts to a slot car's point of view as it races around a track that weaves through a cluttered apartment. When the button is pressed, a car crash from a movie scene appears on the screen.

The constant action on the screen combined with the blaring movie score and shouting creates a comically epic affect. Taken in its entirety, the piece becomes a living commentary on NASCAR. First, the piece questions the hyper-masculinity of NASCAR by making it seem comical. Secondly, the piece investigates the responsibility of fans and their passionate participation in the sport as entertainment. Regardless of your opinion about NASCAR audiences who may or may not subconsciously seek the thrill of the crash, this is a piece that needs to be fully experienced in order to appreciate the message that it embodies.



Fall On Your Sword
Blaze of Thunder, 2013
Original video and score, electronics,
wood, metal, slot car track
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist