

"Face Off"

RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS
31 Mercer Street
October 23–November 27

In the hangover wake of the election, this group exhibition—which showcases the politically-oriented productions of thirty-one artists—reads quite differently than it would have had the position of leader of the free world gone to the other party. Had Kerry won, the anti-war, anti-Republican works on display could have been studied to see if they still stood up as potent artworks capable of polyphonous meanings, or if they merely served as radical propaganda in a time of severe national division. Among the Bush-whacking works on view, Pascal Lièvre's six-minute video is a standout: A newlywed couple gallivants around Niagara Falls, singing Bush's famous "Axis of Evil" speech, in French, to a cheesy '80s pop tune. The result is a hilarious conflation of cultures with a frightening undertaste of right-wing mind control. Joe Wezorek, meanwhile, creates a haunting gestalt shift by compiling a mosaic-like portrait of Bush from nearly one thousand stamp-sized portraits of soldiers killed in Iraq. Dan Ford presents two wildly romantic watercolor paintings of the sea—complete with a tanker spilling oil, in one, and a looming oil rig in the other. A wall of the gallery is covered in T-shirt designs produced by artists to raise money for Democratic campaigns. One says simply: IMAGINE WAKING UP ON NOVEMBER 3. . . (SO WAKE UP ON NOVEMBER 2ND AND VOTE.) If things had been different, this exhibition might have seemed like a time capsule. Instead, it feels more like an open wound. For better or for much worse, the derisive political messages expressed by these artists continue to be valid—and will remain so for at least four more years.



Dan Ford, *Untitled (Oil Rig)*, 2004.

—Christopher Bollen