

**YOUR GOLD TEETH II**

Curated by Todd Levin

June 19 – August 15, 2009

Opening reception June 18, 2009 6-8pm

jānis AVOTIŅŠ jean-michel BASQUIAT alexandra BIRCKEN alighiero e. BOETTI james CASTLE joseph CORNELL  
thea DJORDJADZE leonardo DREW robert ELFGEN roe ETHRIDGE peter FISCHLI/david WEISS melissa GORDON  
Rodney GRAHAM hannah GREELY rashawn GRIFFIN françoise GROSSEN david HAMMONS jay HEIKES  
mary HEILMANN barkley I. HENDRICKS diane ITTER sergej JENSEN titus KAPHAR marvin LIPOFSKY  
john MCQUEEN ed MOULTHROP bruce NAUMAN cady NOLAND william j. O'BRIEN george OHR  
demetrius OLIVER yoko ONO paul OUTERBRIDGE steven PARRINO ed ROSSBACH sterling RUBY  
anj SMITH shinique SMITH gert & uwe TOBIAS rosemarie TROCKEL peter VOULKOS franz WEST toots ZYNSKY

**Curator Statement**

For three years, starting in 1961 (the year I was born), the English literary critic A. Alvarez prepared a series of programs for BBC radio on the intellectual scene in America called "Under Pressure." In these broadcasts, various writers commented on the need for artists to create their own language. This is an extract of what poet Robert Lowell said to Alvarez: "Some artists have impatience with the prosaic, everyday things of life, that sort of whimsical patience that other people may have...they leap for the sublime...what one finds wrong with culture is the monotony of the sublime...Art is always done with both your hands...the artist finds new life in it and almost sheds their outer life.."

Whilst relistening to, and reflecting upon these radio programs recently, it became sadly apparent that facile irony had become one of the dominant philosophical stances of the art world, and that perhaps the artists and artwork I chose for inclusion in Your Gold Teeth II simply had to lay in wait until the Oligarch decade was over. Any artist can hide for a long time in the wilds of their own irony, never rising above the vegetation. But hipness, in the illicit art world sense, feels suddenly puerile, meaningless, a sham, another way of simply buying into the system. One is sick to death of all the posturing.

In contrast, within this group exhibition one senses that boundaries are being tested, and rules of art conduct are being subverted – not subverted where craft is cast aside in favor of studied simplicity such as in the recent Whitney Biennial and Unmonumental exhibitions, but subverted by craft itself. On the contrary, there is a 'muchness' to a great deal of the work in this exhibition. When the cultural bar has recently been lowered to the point of absurdity, the only revenge worthy of the name comes from reestablishing standards lost to laziness and expediency, putting into sharp relief the dreck that surrounds it.

So much of what one sees today is one-sided. Either it is cold and calculated, with a minimum of feeling, or it is a sloppy slum of terrifying emotion. Somewhere in the labyrinth the artists in this exhibition have found individual answers to this balancing act. To give this 'answer' in words is approachable, but ultimately impossible. What is involved is the union of an idea with emotion, precomposition with improvisation, discipline with spontaneity.

These artists have an affinity for the controlled yet significant gesture, the performed essence, a result of concentrated internal selection from a vast repertoire of expressive options. This stripped down approach to craft often obscures a wider technical command than is immediately apparent. If you're looking for order, you will find it. But even when these artists systematically subvert themselves for the devious pleasure of it, they still maintain a level of control where they strange can be made familiar - and vice versa. By eschewing displays of obvious virtuosity, the artist gains the advantage of a kind of mystery.

A good jazz improviser can make one note do the job of many. Incomplete utterances can fully communicate an idea. Imply, don't state. Artwork doesn't have a necessary end goal. Ideas, rendered in these artists' distinctive lo-fi argot, feel aired out and simplified without being rendered trivial. A sense of satisfactory dissatisfaction remains. The artwork featured in Your Gold Teeth II is about the opening up of ideas and approaches, not the pin-point sharpening of them. - Todd Levin, June 2009

Marianne Boesky Gallery is located at 509 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street, between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues. Our summer hours are Monday to Friday from 10am to 6pm beginning June 23rd. For further information or images, please contact Annie Rana at 212.680.9889 or [annie@marianneboeskygallery.com](mailto:annie@marianneboeskygallery.com).

**YOUR GOLD TEETH II**

Who are these children  
Who scheme and run wild  
Who speak with their wings  
And the way that they smile  
What are the secrets  
They trace in the sky  
And why do you tremble  
Each time they ride by

Throw out your gold teeth  
And see how they roll  
The answer they reveal  
Life is unreal

Who are these strangers  
Who pass through the door  
Who cover your action  
And go you one more  
If you're feeling lucky  
You best not refuse  
It's your game the rules  
Are your own win or lose

Throw out your gold teeth  
And see how they roll  
The answer they reveal  
Life is unreal

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The answer they reveal  
Life is unreal

Words and music by Walter Becker and Donald Fagen

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