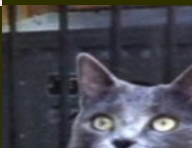**Montserrat**College
of **Art**

# A NEW
# ORDER

APPROPRIATION
ART IN
THE

## DIGITAL AGE

December 3, 2004 – February 5, 2005

Mary Behrens
**Capa Spliced**,
2004, laser image,
acrylic on paper

# A NEW ORDER
## APPROPRIATION ART IN THE
## DIGITAL AGE

A multifaceted exhibition *A New Order: Appropriation Art In The Digital Age* showcases regional and national artists who incorporate 'found' photographs, TV and film footage. Responding to the daily barrage of visual imagery, they attempt to create a new order. By excerpting the found imagery from their original contexts and reinterpreting and re-assembling them using pattern, repetition, and juxtaposition, the artists imbue the images with new meaning.

While the (re-)contextualization of found images or appropriation art is not a new phenomenon, it is certainly a current one. With the plethora of



Elizabeth Cohen,
**Practical
Poses 1**, 2003,
digital photomon-
tage on paper

visual information readily available on the web – as well as our culture's constantly evolving notions of art, ownership, and law – artists engaged in image appropriation are increasing in number and becoming more visible. However, art making that incorporates appropriated imagery is risky business. All the artists included in this exhibition use source materials without permission, often not knowing whether their materials are protected or not. As a result, some run the risk of getting sued.

Appropriation of imagery by artists for the purpose of parody, criticism, and/or social commentary is protected and allowed under the Fair Use Policy. Nevertheless, throughout the United States, artists engaging in this activity are receiving 'cease and desist' letters. In most court cases between large corporate entities and artists, the latter, provided they had the financial resources to defend themselves, would prevail. Unfortunately, this is often not the case and the artist is usually forced to stop making, selling, and exhibiting the work in question.

Image appropriation and the ever-changing intellectual property laws are in the forefront of cultural discussion today. Artists feel it is essential for their livelihood of to be able to freely create without fear of litigation. In turn, it is important for exhibition venues to continue to support their efforts by exhibiting so-called "illegal art" and address the surrounding issues with educational support materials and programming. *A New Order: Appropriation Art In The Digital Age* is an attempt by Montserrat College of Art Galleries to do just that.

**Leonie Bradbury**, Assistant Gallery Director

**Mary Behrens** (York, ME)
Fragmented, stretched, and blurred to a point where the original photograph is barely recognizable, Behrens takes iconic images such as Robert Capa's so-called *Fallen Soldier* (1936) out of their initial context. Placed against a sharply contrasting background of candy colored striations, as in *Capa Spliced* (2004), the image is left distorted and void of its intended meaning. Behrens considers her source material a palette she can manipulate freely. She examines the mutability of a photographic image over time and how the filter of the past always obscures the real event or the true historical moment from a viewer.

**Elizabeth Cohen** (Boston, MA)
One in a series of monumental wall size photomontages, *Practical Poses I* (2003) is both visually vibrant and slightly disorienting. Digitally combined, manipulated and enhanced the two photographs of a pair of hands Cohen found in a vintage advertisement stock book are transformed. She views the human hand as a marker of the juncture between the self and the world. Exploring scale, color and repetition, Cohen addresses nostalgia, history, and ultimately the relationship of the body to the self.


Amy Stacey Curtis, **Fragile**, detail, 2000, mixed media

**Amy Stacey Curtis** (Gray, ME)
Carefully sewn together, the hundreds of egg cartons that make up Curtis' *Fragile* (2000) form an overwhelmingly large grid. Each is filled with a small black and white image collected from various (mostly stock) photography books over a six-month period. Curtis Xeroxed each image once from its original source, often reducing or enlarging its size. All the fragments were then copied again for seven generations in order to reduce its visual information to the simplest blacks and whites while preserving its strongly resonating essence.

**Gary Duehr** (Somerville, MA)
Filled with cinematic beauty and saturated in color, the images from Duehr's *Liminalities* series (2003) are created in an effort to capture the moment between things. Gleaned from movies in the theatre using a slow shutter speed as frames shift from one image to another, he literally suspends the narrative. Although providing the viewer with a mere glimpse, his images can be seen as cultural social commentary on a specifically American consciousness. In an effort to remain under the radar and in part due to their aesthetic Duehr chooses obscure independent films that are less likely to be recognized.

**Robert Goss** (Somerville, MA)
Found at flea markets and rummage sales, Goss' interactive site-specific installations incorporate hundreds of anonymous photographs and are comprised of many individual pieces. Goss is concerned mainly with the process of decision-making. Already taken out of their original context, he allows the visitor to re-arrange his images and alter their order and context again. Through this process of layering visual information the viewer experiences first hand how the meaning of a photographic image changes when placed in alternate contexts.

**Jane Hesser** (Providence, RI)
While conducting a research project at the Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane, Hesser found a large number of portraits of the hospital's former patients. She used them as a source for a number of pieces including *Asylum* (2002). After re-photographing and digitally manipulating the images to mirror (reminiscent of Rorschach ink-blots), the photo is printed on vellum paper. Hesser installs the images in a pattern similar to a patchwork quilt or brick wall. Through repetition, doubling and an exaggerated scale Hesser transforms imagery that refers to the body into imagery that concerns the mind.


Jane Hesser, **Asylum**, 2002 digital photomontage on paper, wax, shellac

**D. Jean Hester** (San Francisco, CA)
In *Buy Me* (2002), Hester appropriates slick television commercials selling mundane products and converts them into intense visions of abstraction and beauty. Recorded from television screens using Super 8, hand-processed, filtered, and manipulated until the fine sheen of the advertising agency is blasted away. The film removes the commercials from their original context and brings them to a place where they inspire thought, reaction, or simple appreciation of a beautiful image that no longer has the power to sell.
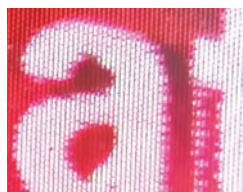

D. Jean Hester, **Buy Me**, 2002, digital video and hand-processed super 8 mm montage

**Rick McKee Hock** (Rochester, NY)
Hock's Codex series of Polaroid transfers (created mostly in the 1980s) derive their imagery from both photographic and non-photographic sources such as paintings, cartoons, and news clippings. Multiple readings are achieved through intentionally bizarre juxtapositions and the placement of the images within a grid. They are an early comment on our image-flooded world and reveal a deep understanding of twentieth century image making. Documents of both the process and the substance of cultural memory, they can be seen as a critique of our pictorial heritage.

**Negativland and Tim Maloney** (Ashton, NC)
A collaborative project between creative the music/performance group Negativland and animator Tim Maloney, *Gimme the Mermaid*, (2000) is a digital video montage created with film footage taken mostly from corporately owned originals. Refusing to be original, Negativland re-arranges these bits and pieces in densely layered whole to make them say things they never intended to. In performing this kind of cultural opposition and 'culture jamming' have been sued twice for copyright infringement and have since 1991 been actively involved in advocating a significant reform of America's copyright laws.


Negativland and Tim Maloney, **Gimme the Mermaid**, 2000, digital video montage

**Liz Nofziger** (Boston, MA)
Quirky, clever and filled with humor, Nofziger's *TV Dinner* (2003) combines a 1980s exercise video with a 1950s McDonalds commercial. Underneath its hilarious surface lies a critical comment on our culture's obsession with both fast food and exercise. Incorporating a two-way mirror and a bizarre "facercise" video, the installation *Lift* (2004) is both beautiful and mysterious. Taking known, generally benign cultural elements and placing them in challenging new contexts Nofziger reveals something exciting, unexpected and frequently disturbing.
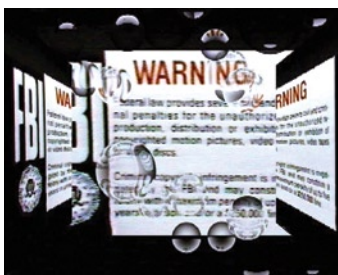

Keith Sanborn, **The Artwork in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction**, 2003, digital video montage

**Keith Sanborn** (New York, NY)
In the digital realm where distinction between copy and original has become absolute *The Artwork in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* is intended as a confrontation with contemporary (read corporate) notions of intellectual property. Instead of simply reviewing specific intellectual property laws in the service of critique this work aims at deconstructing the notion of intellectual property itself by appropriating the fiercest imprecations. Pushing notions of authorship, the State appears as the guarantor of intellectual property and the FBI appears as the proverbial dragon guarding the horde.
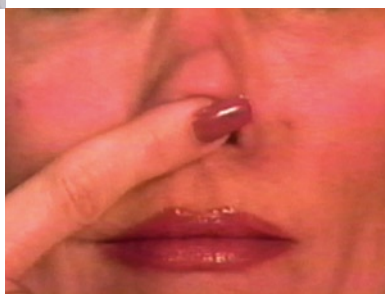
**above**
Robert Goss,
***(Re)Stretch
and (Re)Serve***,
2003, mixed
media, magnets,
metal

**left**
Rick McKee Hock,
***Big Codex:
Peewee***,
ca. 1984, polaroid
transfers on paper

**left center**
Liz Nofziger,
***Lift***, detail, 2004
mixed media and
digital video

**below**
Gary Duehr,
***Untitled, from
the Liminalities
series,*** 2003
pigment print



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**Gallery Hours:**
**Monday-Thursday, 11-7 pm,**
**Friday 11-5 pm, Saturday 12-4 pm**
All programs are free, open to the public and barrier free.

**Katherine French**, Gallery Director
**Leonie Bradbury**, Assistant Gallery Director
**John Colan**, Design