

# contemporary

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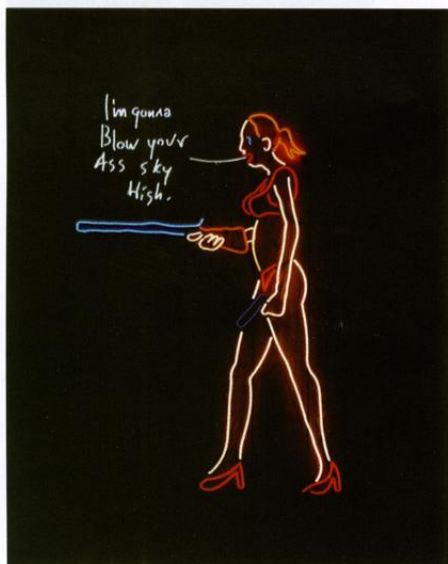
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Nuno Cera, *Dark Forces*, 2006. Courtesy: Centro De Exposições, CCB, Lisbon

An examination of architecture's intertwinement with collective memory defines most of Cera's works on view. Belonging to the series 'Lost, Lost, Lost' (2005), a group of snapshots – that of a window simultaneously reflecting both a metropolis' skyline and the interior of a room is the best example – capture moments of loneliness. In *Berlin – a Super 8 Movie* (2002) the city is the subject, represented by its people and places. This theme is further developed in *Ultra-Ruhr* (2006), which focuses on the German Ruhr region, an axis crucial to the country's post-war industrialisation. Based on a double projection composed, on the one hand, of a static shot presented on the right and, on the other, of a perspectival one taken from a moving car and train, the work confronts two views of a historically significant territory.

The commission for the exhibition, 'Unité d'Habitation' (2006), best demonstrates the topics suggested by those works, yet with a twist of Cera's recent exploration of horror movie imagery. The starting point of this project is a 1959 Le Corbusier building in Berlin, one of the variations of his famous Unité d'Habitation (1947-1965). As in a documentary, the architectural splendour of the edifice is revealed in a series of deadpan style shots and in the introductory text audible at the beginning of the video. However, the sequences of the long hallways and a dramatic soundtrack generate an atmosphere of terror. The murder of a young blonde woman, illustrated by the blood pouring from her arm, represents the



Dan Attoe, *Loaded, Nailed, Short on Cash* 2006. Courtesy Peres Projects, Los Angeles, Berlin. Photo: Joshua White

climax of the work. The spectral presence of this character alludes to the alienating effect present in Le Corbusier's construction; hence the title of the show: according to the artist, individuals are no more than phantasms in today's existential condition.

MIGUEL AMADO

## LOS ANGELES: PERES PROJECTS

DAN ATTOE: *LOADED, NAILED, AND SHORT ON CASH*  
28 October – 16 December 2006  
[www.peresprojects.com](http://www.peresprojects.com)

Dan Attoe may be suffering from cabin fever: too many grey and dark winter nights spent in the rainy Pacific Northwest finds him sitting in bars and hallucinating on the neon beer signs over the counter. His current exhibition at Peres Projects is a hilarious collection of neon sculptures as we wished they might look. It is as if Attoe has channelled the 'log lady' from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, telling us how everyday objects take on their own life and speak strange and prescient pronouncements.

A painter as well as an excellent draughtsman of small and quirky representational psycho-dramas, Attoe has fitted out the gallery space with cheesy wood panelling, neon sculptures and light-box prints hung floor to ceiling to create a festive and utterly ludicrous setting. The sculptures are line drawings of animals, birds, lusty naked women, flying angels or demon-infested trees, all of whom have something to say: 'You have had it way too easy', 'Emotional problems don't mean shit', 'You are vulnerable just like the rest of us.' These take the place of the advertising signage we normally associate with this kind of neon, and, instead, we get an indicator of the dark and humorous thoughts that pass through Attoe's mind as he ponders his beer and biker friends at the local watering hole.

This is a true and original slice of Americana, presented by an up-and-coming artist who is creating his own buzz in the art world. As he says in one of his works, 'There's electricity in your head.'

CLAYTON CAMPBELL

## MILAN: PADIGLIONE D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

ANDRES SERRANO  
14 October – 27 November 2006  
[www.comune.milano.it/pac/index.html](http://www.comune.milano.it/pac/index.html)

In this twin exhibition at PAC, the bourgeois city of Milan celebrated one of the photographers most censored by Catholic moralists. The retrospective bore the title 'Il Dito nella Piaga' (literally 'to bring up a sore point') and the unpublished photos from the series 'The Morgue' (1992) confirm Serrano's masterful ability to deal with present-day social taboos.

In the past, the choice of portraying any kind of character, symbol, or situation with equal dignity shocked the audience, most likely unprepared for such 'democratic' criticism. Famous, in this sense, is the complaint lodged by American senators Jesse

Helms and Alphonse M. D'Amato against Serrano's *Piss Christ* (1987), the well-known photo showing a crucifix dipped in the artist's urine. But now, 20 years later, we are free to focus on the formal nature of his works and most importantly the art historical foundations of his work – especially portraiture, the genre that allowed Serrano to find a perfect equilibrium between shape and subject.

Facing each other, the outcasts of the 'Nomads' series (1990) and the Ku-Klux-Klan members put the observer in the bull's eye of a symbolic tension near to deflagration. Nevertheless, possibly the climax of his portraying ability is achieved by the recent 'America' series (2002 ongoing), a sort of reportage focusing on the faces of North Americans after September 11, standing out as a topical representation of pure Renaissance portrait painting. The subjects are usually framed from below, a direct light making their postures majestic and dignified at the same time: from firemen to policemen, to imams and celebrities.



Above: Andres Serrano, *Killed by four great Dones*. Below: *Knifed to death III*, both images from 'The Morgue' 1992. All images courtesy: Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, B&D Gallery, Milan

The exhibition also included the well-known *History of Sex* (1996) (though not in its entirety) on the path to reach one of Serrano's most beloved subjects – death – presented here through the corpses of 'The Morgue' series, shown for the first time with ten previously unpublished pictures. The bodies are immersed in a Caravaggio-esque light as if they were still alive and, on second glance, we realise that Serrano's intention is neither to provoke nor to shock the viewer. Instead, his works definitely seem to tell us more about ascension and redemption than loss and death.

RICCARDO CONTI