Research Grant – Spring 2009

Title or Proposal: Production of “Hoods” Catalog
Faculty member: Julie Weitz
Unit: School of Art and Art History

Abstract:

I am seeking funds for the project of producing a unique artist's catalog that will present my current series of paintings in print form. The catalog will mimic, in design and structure, 18th and 19th century print folios and limited edition books. It will be designed to open as a folder and contain a set of 8-10 high quality digital prints of individual paintings. Derek Conrad Murray, Assistant Professor of Critical Theory at University of California, Santa Cruz will contribute an essay to the catalog that will contextualize and elucidate the significance of the work.

Proposal:

The central focus for this body of work has been the representation of subjects hidden from view- disguised by the covering of the hood. The hood, though ubiquitously linked with terrorists in our news media, is not a consistent or dependable sign and can be sourced to a variety of contexts including religious processions, military regalia, superhero masks, and perhaps most revealing, the hoods worn by both terrorists and their prisoners. The catalog would present the variety of designs represented in the series, ranging from ski masks to camouflage headgear, each painted with scrupulous detail using the material of gouache, an opaque watercolor. Traditionally employed by illustrators, gouache is a painting medium that references a history of observation, as it was used to visualize, categorize, and label information within a specific area of study. One of the most well known illustrators to use gouache was John James Audubon in the early 19th century. His ambitious project to travel across the United States to study “the feathered race”1 manifest in the collection of prints The Birds of America. With Audubon’s project looming ominously behind, I have created a set of paintings depicting individual hood designs; the production of a catalog would be an extension of that project in a way similar to how Audubon’s watercolors developed into a portfolio of prints, now considered to be a touchstone of American visual culture.
The catalog’s unique design, the superior presentation of the images and Derek Conrad Murray's critical text will combine to present my work in a visually and conceptually rich way. While fortifying the conceptual framework of this work, the catalog will also function as promotional material; I plan to distribute the catalog to professionals and institutions across the country to further broaden my professional network and to use the catalog as a catalyst for initiating plans for a solo exhibition. Schroeder Romero Galley in Chelsea will exhibit four paintings from the series in a group show February 27-April 4, 2009. Lisa Schroeder, the director of the gallery, has expressed enthusiasm for the work and the possibility exists of a solo exhibition. A show at this venue, located in the center of the New York gallery district clearly achieves the level of significance sought by USF. The catalog would accompany any future exhibitions of this work and further highlight USF’s contribution to realizing my overall project.

Likewise, the author Murray is a nationally recognized writer in the field of contemporary art theory and his contribution to the catalog will enhance the critical reception of my work. Murray has already written about my work in the forthcoming essay "The Beautiful Ones" which will be published in a collection of essays by the author. He is a key advocate of my work, presenting it in public lectures and selecting it for exhibition in a 2010 show at the Mills College Art Museum in Oakland, CA.