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"GAY BATMAN"ARTIST GETS "CEASE &DESIST"

D.C. Comics has hit a Chelsea art dealer with a "cease &desist" letter for exhibiting **Mark Chamberlain's** watercolors on a "gay Batman" theme. The works, which were exhibited at **Kathleen Cullen Fine Art** this spring (where they found ready buyers at prices starting at \$200), include images of Batman and Robin exchanging a kiss, a watercolor titled *Robin's Baby Pictures* depicting the Boy Wonder's cute rear end, and a rendering of the Caped Crusader, sans shirt but otherwise in costume, striking a languorous pose. "D.C. Comics wants me to hand over all unsold work and invoices for the sold work," exclaimed dealer Kathleen Cullen (the gallery was formerly named **Artek Contemporaries**). "I've spent the last two weeks of my life consulting lawyers!" (Some works are also posted on Artnet, which has received a similar letter.)

The use by fine artists of mass-market and commercial cartoon imagery goes back decades -- both **Robert Rauschenberg** and **Andy Warhol** were pursued by photographers for copyright violations (the artists tended to settle), and **Jeff Koons** famously litigated the *String of Puppies* case all the way to the Supreme Court (he lost). The **Walt Disney Co.** brought an infringement suit against **Dennis Oppenheim** for using small statuettes of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck in his sculpture *Virus*, with mixed results -- the artist was forbidden to sell the work but allowed to exhibit it. **Karen Finley's** 1999 book, *Pooh Unplugged*, a rather scatological version of the children's classic, forestalled a similar lawsuit by labeling the publication "a parody" on its cover. The issue is a hot one -- more recently, artists including **Tom Sachs** and **Damien Loeb** have been touched by copyright (and trademark) disputes. Stay tuned.

VANDAL HITS ROBERT GRAHAM SCULPTURES

Four outdoor sculptures by **Robert Graham** were knocked off their pedestals and damaged earlier this month at the **University of California at Los Angeles**. The sculptures were part of a suite of Graham works installed in UCLA's neo-Renaissance Rolfe Courtyard. The damaged pieces include *Lori*, a 1986 sculpture of a female torso, and three works from 1988 depicting dancers on columns that are included in the artist's **Duke Ellington Memorial** at the northeast corner of Central Park in New York. A few days later, a suspect -- **Ricky Lee Owens**, 47 -- was arrested and charged with felony vandalism; he is being held in lieu of \$20,000 bond and is slated

to be arraigned on Aug. 29.

The damaged sculptures have been put into storage and await repair by the artist. The incident was linked in the press to a current proposal to place Graham's six-foot-tall stainless steel *Torso*(2000) on public display in the center of Winward Circle near the Venice post office. A gift by Graham patron **Roy Doumani**-- the works at UCLA are also from his collection -- the sculpture has drawn a certain amount of opposition for its nudity. The **California Coastal Commission** gave its approval for installation of the work the day after the vandalism.

"ECSTASY" IN LOS ANGELES

Is **Paul Schimmel** of the **Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art** the trippiest curator in the business? The test comes this fall, as L.A. MOCA opens "Ecstasy: In and About Altered States," Oct. 9, 2005-Feb. 20, 2006, a show of works made in the last 15 years by 30 artists whose "interventions into human consciousness" call attention to "mechanisms of perception and expanding notions of reality." The heighteners of sensory experience are **Franz Ackermann, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Francis Alÿs, Chiho Aoshima, Assume Vivid Astro Focus, Massimo Bartolini, Tatsuro Bashi, Glenn Brown, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, Olafur Eliasson, Lara Favaretto, Sylvie Fleury, Tom Friedman, Rodney Graham, Jeppe Hein, Carsten Holler, Pierre Huyghe, Ann Veronica Janssens, Ann Lislegaard, Matt Mullican, Takashi Murakami, Paul Noble, Roxy Paine, Charles Ray, Erwin Redl, Pipilotti Rist, Paul Sietsema, Fred Tomaselli and Klaus Weber**. In addition to "Ecstasy" (where he is assisted by MOCA project coordinator **Gloria Sutton**), Schimmel has organized "Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s" and "Forest of Signs."

"DADA" IN D.C.

The District of Columbia is getting its first major taste of Dada, and we'll see if the movement's famed outrage at the disasters of World War I has any resonance with the contemporary political culture of our nation's capital. "Dada," an exhibition of over 400 works, arrives at the **National Gallery of Art**, Feb. 19-May 14, 2006, after debuting (with variations) at the **Centre Pompidou** in Paris, Oct. 5, 2005-Jan. 9, 2006. The show's third and final stop is in New York at the **Museum of Modern Art**, June 18-Sept. 11, 2006. "Dada" is divided into sections focusing on the main centers of the movement (Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, New York and Paris) and is organized by NGA curator **Leah Dickerman** and Pompidou curator **Laurent Le Bon**.

"GARBO'S GARBOS" AT SCANDINAVIA HOUSE

Nordic allure, anyone? **Scandinavia House, the Nordic Center in America**, located at 58 Park Avenue in New York, opens "Garbo's Garbos: Portraits from Her Private Collection," Sept. 17-Nov. 12, 2005, a presentation of large-format vintage photos from the private collection of film star **Greta Garbo**. Photographers include **Arnold Genthe, George Hurrell** and **Edward Steichen**. The show is organized by **Robert Dance** for the **Santa Barbara Museum of Art**, where it is currently on

view, June 4-Aug. 21, 2005, and celebrates the centennial of Garbo's birth on Sept. 18, 1905.

NEW PAVILION AT INDIAN MUSEUM IN NYC

The **Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian** in New York City, a.k.a. the **George Gustav Heye Center**, has begun construction of a 6,000-square-foot pavilion for performance and exhibitions. Slotted into an unfinished space beneath the impressive rotunda of the museum's current facility at the foot of Broadway in Lower Manhattan, the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House, the new space -- dubbed the **Charles and Valerie Diker Pavilion**-- carries a \$5 million price tag (the Manhattan Borough President's Office is kicking in \$1.1 million) and is designed by **Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects**. The pavilion is expected to host dance, music and storytelling programs, as well as objects from the museum collection. Construction is scheduled to be completed in spring 2006.

"MAGIC MESSAGE" FROM VAN LAMSWEERDE & MATADIN

Say one thing for the artistic team of **Inez van Lamsweerde & Vinoodh Matadin**-- they know how to get the attention of lowly art scribes. Arriving in the mail last week as a promotional freebie for their forthcoming exhibition at **Matthew Marks Gallery**, "The Now People, Part Two: Life on Earth," Sept. 17-Oct. 29, 2005, was a black t-shirt silk-screened in silver with a Rorschach image of a big-breasted, skull-faced, winged angel -- the very image of the fashionable avant-garde. The exhibition itself promises large sculptures of scrap metal and photographs, made in collaboration with the sculptor **Eugene van Lamsweerde** in Paris, and an enormous collage of over 500 works, reproduced as stickers, made by the pair during the last two decades. For more info, see www.matthewmarks.com

ROOFTOP SCULPTURE GARDEN AT LOCKS GALLERY

Philadelphia's **Locks Gallery** is inaugurating the fall season with a new rooftop sculpture garden at its building at 600 Washington Square South. The garden debuts on Sept. 9, 2005, with an installation of works by **Anthony Caro, George Segal** and **Isaac Witkin**. The rooftop displays are open to the public on Saturdays and by appointment.

LEO KOENIG MOVES TO WEST 23RD IN MANHATTAN

Leo Koenig Inc., the cutting-edge gallery that opened in Williamsburg before moving to the eastern fringe of SoHo, has now relocated to Manhattan's Chelsea art district. The new gallery at 545 West 23rd Street, designed by **Studio Morsa Architects**, is twice the size of the previous space, and currently features a group show of gallery artists. Opening Sept. 9-Oct. 8, 2005, is "Very Friendly Fire (Born to Make You Happy)," a show of new paintings by the German artist **Frank Nitsche**.

PRISKA C. JUSCHKA FINE ART MOVES TO CHELSEA

Another stalwart of the Brooklyn gallery scene is moving to Manhattan. **Priska C.**

Juschka Fine Art opens its new space on the second floor of 547 West 27th Street with "New Found Land," Sept. 8-Oct. 8, 2005, a group exhibition of about a dozen artists. Coming up in October is a show of new paintings by **Aaron Johnson**. For details, see www.priskajuschkafineart.com

TATE APPOINTMENTS

The **Tate** museum has announced the appointment of a new conservator and a new curator. **Leslie Carlyle**, a researcher with the **Canadian Conservation Institute**, has been named head of conservation for the **Tate Collection**. And **Ann Gallagher**, senior curator in the visual arts department of the **British Council**, has been hired as curator in charge of British art from 1900.

NEW CONSERVATOR AT MET

Michael Gallagher, keeper of conservation at the **National Galleries of Scotland** in Edinburgh since 1999, has been appointed conservator in charge of the department of painting conservation at the **Metropolitan Museum of Art**. He fills a position that was left vacant with the death of **Hubert von Sonnenburg** last year.

EBAY ART PROJECT IN SAN FRANCISCO

Impressed by the wealth of amateur artwork for sale on **eBay**, San Francisco artist **Michael Rosenthal**-- former associate vice provost at Stanford University and an exhibiting artist since 1999 -- purchased dozens of "unattributed and affordable" paintings on eBay and invited 33 artists to remake, paint over and otherwise transform the works according to their own vision. Among the participants are **Reed Anderson**, **Edwin Schlossberg**, **Marta Thoma** and **Calvin Turnwall**. The resulting works go up for resale on eBay on Aug. 23, 2005. For a catalogue of images and further details, see www.wefixart.com

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