



**For Immediate Release**

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**Exhibition *Drama of the Gifted Child – The Five Year Plan*  
at the Armory Center for the Arts  
June 28 – August 30, 2009  
Opening reception, Saturday, June 27, 7 – 9 p.m.**

**Pasadena, CA** – *Drama of the Gifted Child – The Five Year Plan*, an exhibition curated by David Burns, will be presented at the Armory Center for the Arts, June 28 through August 30, 2009. A public opening will take place on Saturday, June 27, 7-9 p.m. The exhibition consists of new work by ten of Los Angeles' emerging artists, all Southern California art school MFA graduates of the last five years: Dan Bayles, Spencer Douglass, John Knuth, Julie Lequin, Julie Orser, Marco Rios, Amy Robinson, Christopher Russell, Kelly Sears, and Bari Ziperstein. The exhibition is organized by David Burns, a member of the artist collective Fallen Fruit and the former Assistant Curator at the Armory.

The works included in this exhibition examine these artists' recent work as a process by which they explore the relationship between an often-hyped academic training and the raw demands of a career. The exhibition consists of videos, sculptures and installations and reflects the various practices of artists trained in the new millennium, after 9/11 and after the crash of what appeared to be an unendingly growing international art market.

Each of the artists selected by curator David Burns could be characterized by the combination of their studio practice and growing exhibition record, however considered as a group, each of the projects in the exhibition generates a larger internal and external dialogue. The work in the exhibition is bold and experiments with its materials and messages. Representing some of the more outstanding emerging artists in Los Angeles right now, *Drama of the Gifted Child – the Five Year Plan* suggests the relationship of artists to career goals and academics that has fostered the opportunity for success as a contemporary artist today. Each of these artists employs a bold directness that is hard to deny.

Set against a dramatic soundtrack, Julie Orser's *Blood Work* explores the tropes of Hollywood horror movies from the 1980s, alternating between shots of a messy stagehand and the main character, "blood," as it splashes, drips and

oozes unexpectedly in a generic art studio space. Bari Ziperstein's sculpture work considers the domestic nostalgia for preciousness and sentimentality in a renegotiation of middle-class living room tables and bastardized bric-a-brac. Julie Lequin's *Top 30 (en3 temps)* Top 30 is a 3-channel video that investigates the experience of turning 30 as a conceptual catalyst to reexamine a subjective biographical history. Christopher Russell's installation in the infamous former ammunition vault uses a single portrait of a school age boy and manipulates it 26 different ways, including his signature scratched photograph technique, to get at a ghostly psychology.

Death and desire, plus food, riddles Marco Rios's new installation of work with curiosity and complexity that includes a series of steaks taken from his favorite steak houses and recast in stainless steel. Amy Robinson's use of text and language challenges the viewer to understand meaning through illegible transcriptions painted onto the walls of the gallery.

Kelly Sears's collage animations are created from collected periodicals and ephemera and offer a way to critically and visually reflect on our own history that we have come to understand through popular images. *Sugar Landscape* by John Knuth activates one ton of processed refined sugar using electricity and heat to create a bubbling smoldering sensual vista. Dan Bayles's new work combines selected drawings and paintings, recreating sketchbooks as a continuous wall installation. Incorporating nostalgic and anonymous detritus, relics of both personal and mass consumption, Spencer Douglass transforms the everyday into the symbolic by corrupting found objects into a wrong-side-right installation piece.

The title for the exhibition comes from Alice Miller's *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, a best-selling 1980s book of popularized psychology that became a touchstone of self-analysis or self-help. Miller traces the source of our feelings of emptiness and alienation to its childhood roots in trying so hard to please a parent's narcissism. In order to meet parental expectations and receive their "love," one loses oneself in parental demands and can only survive by becoming numb. This idea is paired with the "five year plan," a pervasive concept in corporate America that has its roots in communist Russia as an economic call to arms by Joseph Stalin in 1928. Ironically, the 1980s not only brought us the era of the MFA as an essential prerequisite for an art career, but it also brought us the end of authoritarian communism as well as the dawn of self-help or self-analysis.

All of these artists were included in the Supersonic shows 2004 through 2006, an innovative and now vanished exhibition of graduates of the top Southern California art MFA programs. While each artist's project is essentially different in both content and form, each has a strong and unique voice and style. What interested curator David Burns about this show is how the artists' work communicates to create a complex dialogue. Perhaps, these artists are working through the formation (and the deformation) they received from their narcissistic parental role models?

However, Burns was thinking of this more in terms of how you experience mixed messages at large. At a dinner party or art opening, you hear many parts of conversations and take in many messages at the same time. The statements in *Drama of the Gifted Child – The Five Year Plan* are a collection of expressions from the participants' work and do not necessarily reflect his own opinions.

*This exhibition will be on view in the Caldwell Gallery at the Armory at 145 North Raymond Avenue, Pasadena, and will be open Tuesday – Sunday, noon-5 p.m. Admission is free. The Armory is easily accessible from the Gold Line Memorial Park Station in Pasadena. For information about Armory exhibitions and events, the public may call 626.792.5101 x122. or visit the Armory website at [www.armoryarts.org](http://www.armoryarts.org).*