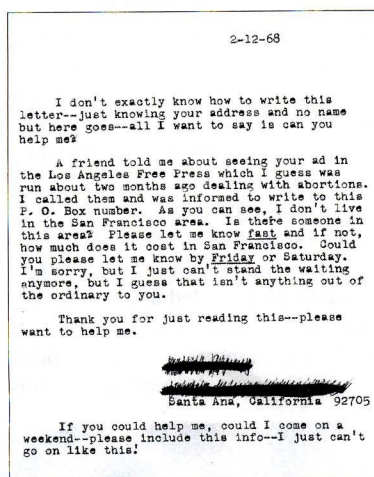


'Monuments for the USA'

White Columns

Ralph Rugoff, currently director of the Wattis Institute at the California College of the Arts and recently appointed director of London's Hayward Gallery, invited 70 artists from 20 countries to submit proposals for a monument that, he wrote, the "people of the United States need, or deserve, at this moment in history." The resulting projects on view



Andrea Bowers, from the series *Proposal for Wall of Letters: Necessary Reminders from the Past for a Future of Choice*, 2005, graphite on paper, 22" x 15".
White Columns.

here, all from 2005, were conceptual but not overly cerebral and ranged from absurd to caustic.

Of those offering a political commentary the most engaging was Andrea Bowers's *Proposal for Wall of Letters: Necessary Reminders from the Past for a Future of Choice*. Bowers reproduced as drawings letters written to the Army of Three, a group of Bay Area women who, in the late 1960s, strove to assist women seeking abortions. Neatly typed or hand-written in childish scrawls, each letter is a plea for help in the days before *Roe v. Wade*. Bowers proposes to display the letters in public buildings throughout the country, starting with the White House.

For *Proposal: The Red-Blue Divide*, Gary Simmons suggests erecting a 12-foot-high reinforced-concrete wall to separate "blue" states from "red" ones; visitors would require a visa to pass from one zone to the other. Although Simmons compares his project with the Berlin Wall, it has even more resonance with the "security barrier" currently being

erected along the border between Israel and the West Bank.

Not all the projects were so overtly political. Kirsten Pieroth made a stack of letterheads inscribed, in ridiculously florid cursive writing, "From the Laboratory of Thomas A. Edison, Orange, N.J.," for her hilarious *Untitled (Letterpaper for inventing excuses)*.

Rugoff imagines that the government, arts institutions, and other organizations might one day look to these proposals as a kind of "mail-order catalogue" from which to commission public-art projects. In the meantime these innovative plans, which so successfully embody the realm of ideas, augment the landscape of our public discourse.

—Rachel Somerstein

Michael Lazarus

Feature Inc.

Michael Lazarus's recent works on wood panel seamlessly combine painting and collage, merging passages of oil and enamel paint with shiny slivers of paper cut from magazines and pieced together in dense mosaics. The nine idiosyncratic compositions on view in "Hold Up Your Mistake" teetered between decorative pattern and representational image, each painting a chorus of visual languages that required multiple readings.

Lazarus's appropriations are eclectic, including painted dots like those in Aboriginal dream paintings, decorative motifs borrowed from tribal or folk art, and a recurring image of a grinning face that looks like an Aztec or African mask. Order, however, prevails, as painted and collaged elements become surreal landscapes, bizarre architectural follies, and deconstructed bodies. Lively, lovely color combinations of hot, sweet, and sour pinks, sunny yellows, over-the-rainbow blues, matte and pearlescent whites, and rich, deep reds and greens, plus a multi-cultural array of flesh tones lend an upbeat aura to the entire enterprise. While most of the works were rectangles of various sizes, one—a fractured landscape



Michael Lazarus, *Maybe Lost*, 2005, oil and enamel paint on wood panel, 47" x 47". Feature Inc.

seen through a window—was diamond-shaped, and another, made up of a rectangle and a circle, hugged a corner.

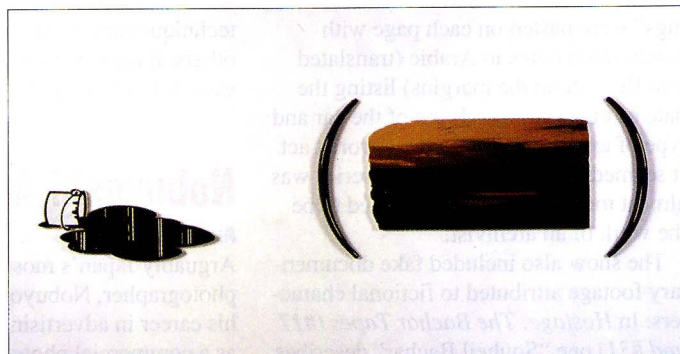
With allusive but enigmatic titles (*Don't Ask for So Much*, 2005, *Exactly How It Goes*, 2004–5, *Maybe Lost*, 2005), these works imply a narrative structure, but more arresting is the aggregation of patterns, the formal armature that resolves into images that tease and ultimately delight the eye. —Lilly Wei

Vernon Fisher

Charles Cowles

Vernon Fisher's work, while not precisely installation art, often does not actually come into existence until it is installed. The gallery wall becomes the white background against which the various elements of a piece can be assembled like a tricky rebus or an algebraic equation.

In *Death of Marat* (2002–3), for example, a paint pot that has spilled its glossy contents is rendered, cartoon-style, on a shaped wooden panel, while a butterfly-hued landscape painting showing a river inlet between rolling hills is painted on



Vernon Fisher, *Death of Marat*, 2002–3, oil on wood and mixed media, 24½" x 91".
Charles Cowles.