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ats | Bars | Film | Music |

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## Best in Show

Recommendations by R.C. Baker

**David Levinthal: 'Hitler Moves East'**Glenn Horowitz Bookseller  
5012 East 64th Street, through April 26

## Massive Mini Attack

Is it those stylish Nazi uniforms that make World War II such a visual bonanza? David Levinthal has long photographed miniature models for his books, which "document" everything from Wild West tales to X-rated encounters; this show updates his first publishing project, a '70s collaboration with fellow Yale student (and *Dooniesbury* creator) Garry Trudeau. Levinthal photographed HO-scale dioramas of toy German soldiers and armaments in grainy black and white, to which the pair appended text excerpted from books rehashing the savage battles of the Eastern Front. Realistic scenes were achieved by carefully positioning plastic combatants and using a tight focus to disguise the artifice. Even so, the authors were surprised when their tome began appearing in the history sections of bookstores rather than on the photography shelves. Along with a new "Artist's Cut" of the book, this exhibit gathers together many of the original photos, which convey the blurry jumpiness of combat photography—Wehrmacht troops are rocked by Soviet bombs; train tracks evaporate into out-of-focus perspective. Preliminary shots reveal the flat stands under the soldiers' boots and the cut-paper explosions, which only adds to the offbeat verisimilitude of the final tableaux. In the upstairs gallery, contemporary war-play takes place in a large sandbox: scale-model U.S. troops pose in multiple roles, such as stopping Iraqis at a checkpoint or cradling children as they speak to moms attired in colorful head scarves or black hijabs. As ever, hobbyists demand dead-on details; hence the red crew cut, khaki flak vest, guard dog, and wraparound shades that turn one mini-protagonist into a Blackwater contractor. Oh, for those carefree days of black-and-white carnage, when we knew we were fighting a just war.

**Martha Wilson**

Between 1971 and 1974, while teaching English at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Wilson began a series of photographic self-portraits, including *A Portfolio of Models*, in which wardrobe and makeup transformed her into Professional, Housewife, Goddess, Lesbian, etc. An introductory caption notes: "The artist operates out of the vacuum left when all other values are rejected." A 1971 project surveys female breasts ranging from flat to conical to pendulous, with the supposed ideal smack-dab in the middle.

Although Wilson nowadays performs political satire, she beat more familiar artists such as Cindy Sherman to the theatrical punch, which makes this, her first solo exhibition, all the more intriguing. *Mitchell Alguis*, 511 W 25th, 212-242-6242. Through April 26.

**McDermott & McGough**

A cardboard box that once contained four dozen cans of Campbell's soup now holds old romance comics. In actuality, a painted-wood sculpture, *Because of Him*, 1966 (2008), aligns Warhol's '60s soup-can paintings and Brillo Box sculp-

tures with McDermott & McGough's explorations into the slipperiness of time, gender, and art history. Comics are generally seen as a male bastion, yet the duo has focused on a female genre; similarly, their lush photorealist paintings offer a smorgasbord of screen beauties—Kim Novak, Lana Turner, Tippi Hedren—in two-panel canvases that convey open-ended tales. What to make of a couple necking above a close-up of a blonde's full red lips and misty green eyes? Is she leaning into the kiss or just observing it? A number of these wily paintings feature classic movies broadcast on early TV sets—objects of desire projected through a prism of evolving cultural mores and shifting technologies. *Cheim & Read*, 547 W 25th, 212-242-7727. Through April 26.



Paddy Johnson

**Rushin' to Russians: 'Hitler Moves East'**

**Ashok Sukumaran: 'Glow Positioning System'**  
Watch this 2005 video and share in the surprised delight of the pedestrians who *ooh* and *aah* as Sukumaran turns a large crank that controls decorative lights hung on buildings in Mumbai. Columns and domes are delineated by strings of lights that dim and then flare. One boy operating the crank looks up in wonder, as if not quite convinced that his arm movements are connected to the sweeping luminance. Apartment dwellers gaze from windows as the lights glide past, cars honk, and everything coalesces into an artwork that alters public space in a simple, joyous manner. *Thomas Erben*, 526 W 26th, 212-645-8701. Through April 19.

**Ai Weiwei: 'Illumination'**

This Chinese artist has laid a gaudy, ballroom-style chandelier on the gallery floor, twisting the brass framework into a wallowing behemoth. Previously, Ai Weiwei created an illuminated version of Tatlin's never-realized communist tower, but the sagging red beads of this collapsed light fixture drag such architectural ideals down with tacky luxury. One fascination of this grand sculpture is the entwined economies—U.S./Chinese/art-market/failing—that it slyly embodies. *Mary Boone*, 541 W 24th, 212-752-2920. Through April 26.

**Kim Holleman**

Miniature landscapes glued to vinyl record albums revolve on outmoded turntables like tiny planets, though one record player is as lifeless as the four ash-covered Matchbox cars affixed to it. Elsewhere are ant farms filled with glitter and other unhealthy-looking sediments, houseplants mounted on toy-truck chassis that race across the gallery floor, and a mountain of discarded plastic bags rising in the rear courtyard. Holleman has envisioned a Hobbesian environment threatening to spin out of control and cast humanity from the garden for good. *Black & White*, 483 Driggs Avenue, Brooklyn, 718-599-8775. Through May 25.

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