

Artistic Cycles

When clothing company RVCA and Italian cycling giant Cinelli provided 13 artists with raw material in the form of top-of-the-line bike frames, the results ranged from stylish to conceptual: a bicycle with wheels inspired by Italian tondo paintings, a one-gear racer converted into a semifunctional lawnmower. "Pressure," an exhibition of these painted, sculpted, and reconfigured two-wheelers, is on view at **Lance Armstrong's** Austin bike shop, Mellow Johnny's, opening on the 19th of this month.

Cinelli has a history of engaging in artistic collaborations. In 1989 the company produced a bike designed by **Keith Haring**, and in 1994 Cinelli commissioned 26 artist-designed cycles and sold them at auction to raise money for the Italian AIDS foundation ANLAIDS. Now bikers themselves have taken to tweaking and modifying their rides into personal statements. "Thirty years ago, a bicycle was a bicycle," the company's president, **Antonio Colombo**, tells *ARTnews*, "not a state of mind."

That doesn't mean all gearheads like the idea of coveted Cinelli cycles—whose frames alone typically sell for \$1,200 to \$6,000—converted into immobile art. Artist **Ashley Macomber** turned her Cinelli into a "clown bike." The wheel-less frame sports white gloves on its fork and is balanced in a handstand atop a stack of books. When Macomber sought technical assistance from a local bike co-op in Los Angeles, the staff suggested in vain that she trade in the Italian frame and use a less precious substitute.

KAWS, a New York-based artist known for his illustrations and toy designs, liked the idea of sending up Cinelli's elite status. He removed the components and covered the frame with papier-mâché, turning it into a canvas for one of his bulbous cartoon characters. "They basically sent me a beautiful frame and I papier-mâchéd it to look like something I would make for Halloween when I was eight," he explains. "When you think of Cinelli, you think of



Ashley Macomber's
Clown Bike, 2008.

those track bikes, these fast things—I thought it'd be a good contrast."

Barry McGee's Cinelli, illustrated with his graffiti-esque cartoon faces, is the only bike that was made available in a limited retail edition. While McGee considers Cinelli to be "about as good as you can get," the artist admits to riding "a Sears three-speed, a complete piece of junk," for his own daily rounds. Fifty frames were produced, to be sold for upwards of \$2,100. "I'm pretty sure they're all gone," McGee says. "I'm trying to get one myself."

—*Scott Indrisek*