TROPHIES

YORAM WOLBERGER
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I am drawn to familiar objects: symbols of security and intimacy, known to us from ordinary domesticity. In my work, I am investigating the interaction between physical, mental, and social spaces.

In previous projects, objects such as furniture and toys were deconstructed and then reconstructed. Their interior was exposed, their functionality was questioned, and their intimacy was violated. Later, I digitally enlarged familiar dime-store figurines such as toy soldiers, Cowboys and Indians and plastic bride-and-groom that tops wedding cakes back to life size.

In this project I am again, interested in exposing that which we choose not to–or don’t want to–see: The deformities, irregularities, and mass-production markings embedded in familiar objects. By enlarging miniatures to life-size, emphasizing their irregularities and odd proportions, I hope viewers will see the ‘familiar’ in a different light. Aspiring to uncover hidden, and sometimes uncanny, meanings within these icons, symbols, and stereotypes.

Yoram Wolberger, 2009
SIMPLICITY MAKES WOLBERGER'S PIECE VERY INTRIGUING / MARC CHOQUETTE

“One may suddenly feel that they have been shrunk into the world of the film “Toy Story” upon first seeing San Franciscan Yoram Wolberger’s piece entitled “Toy Soldier #3 (Crawling Soldier).”

This ability of a work to alter one’s perception of reality was something Frederick Weisman saw as paramount to determining a piece of art’s value. Wolberger certainly achieves this with this 2004 work, which is on display at the Weisman Museum’s latest contemporary art exhibit: “Made in California.”

Wolberger has gained notoriety for his life-sized fiberglass sculptures of plastic toy figurines we remember as children. But it is not just the physical perspective that gets altered when you are staring face-to-face with the same GI Joe that you remember playing years ago.

What is most intriguing about observing this simple, fiberglass figure is the mental image one gets when seeing these figurines in life-sized proportions. All of the sudden, the gun he holds seems more real. The cowboy and Indian figures also done by Wolberger (but not on display at the Weisman) are no longer just toys on the living room carpet battlefield. They suddenly portray a real-life conflict that was a dark part of our history, one that was far from what many would consider “fun and games.”

Wolberger has always been fascinated in giving a new lease on life to mundane and familiar objects, removing the numbnness that we eventually. In molding these life-sized plastic toys, he has created a new perspective through which to view our childhood. Suddenly, we begin to see through the green resin coating how we can be indoctrinated at a young age to view the world in a certain way, where life is seen in black and white terms and you are either on our side or their side.

With so many children idolizing the perfect, obedient American soldier in GI Joe, the life-sized version of the same character emits a reaction decidedly different than one would have seeing a bunch of these miniature toy soldiers sprawled out on the floor. It indicates image manipulation at its finest.

Wolberger’s work calls into question the whole idea of how figures such as these, in positions to kill with guns drawn, send a message to America’s youth that violence is, in fact, the answer. His other figures provide the basis for which Indians are vilified in American society and cowboys are seen as heroes.

Despite the plasticity and sharp lines that circumvent the figure (showing the evidence plastic mold used to form them), the lack of detail in the figure is much more noticeable at its inflated size. It is intriguing to note that all of these toy soldiers are faceless, as if to disconnect their humanity from the task at hand.

The powerful message by Wolberger through simple, offbeat means is what makes this latest batch of contemporary art so intriguing. While the message maybe simple and clear, his desire to call into question parts of life that many overlook and take for granted is what makes “Toy Soldier #3” and other works at the Weisman’s latest exhibit worth the trip.”

(Marc Choquette, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA, Nov. 26, 2007)
Male Baseball #2: 3-D Digital Scanning, Digital Enlargement, Bronze, Chrome; H 84 in x L 43 in x W 29 in
Male Football #1: 3-D Digital Scanning, Digital Enlargement, Bronze, Chrome; Aprox. 90 in x 70 in x 24 in
Male Tennis #1: 3-D Digital Scanning, Digital Enlargement, Bronze, Chrome; Aprox. 96 in x 60 in x 11 in
Female Tennis #1: 3-D Digital Scanning, Digital Enlargement, Bronze, Chrome; Aprox. 96 in x 60 in x 11 in
Female Runner #1; 3-D Digital Scanning, Digital Enlargement, Bronze, Chrome; Aprox. 96 in x 60 in x 20 in
Male Achievement Award #1; 3-D Digital Scanning, Digital Enlargement, Bronze, Chrome; 100 in x 72 in x 11 in
BIOGRAPHY

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2010  Benrimon Contemporary, New York, NY
2006  A Survey of work from 1998 - 2005, Center for Contemporary Art, Sacramento, CA
2004  Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
2002  Parting Lines, New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA
2001  Introductions 2001, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010  New Art for a New Century: Contemporary Acquisitions 2000-2010, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA
       Child’s Play, Institute of Art, Design and Interactive Media CCBC, Baltimore, MD
2009  American Identities, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
       DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA
       Syzygy, The Lab, San Francisco, CA
       NY Pulse, with Mark Moore Gallery, New York, NY
2008  Group Exhibition, Scott White Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA
       From the Permanent Collection, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
2007  California Art: Selection from the Fredrick R. Weisman Art Foundation, American Jewish University, Bel Air, CA
       Made in California: Contemporary California Art from the Fredric R. Weisman Foundation,
       Fredric R. Weisman Museum of Art, Peperdine University, Malibu, CA
       Model Behavior, organisms, Portland, OR
2006  No Reservations, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT
       Through the Rabbit Hole, ZIC Museum, Louisville, Kentucky
       See Jane Run, The Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek, CA
2005  Summer Pleasure, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
       Social Insecurity: The Future Ain't What It Used to Be, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2004  Overt/Covert, Aidekman Arts Center, Tufts University Gallery, Medford, MA
       Domestic Odyssey, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA
The Armory Show with Henry Urbach Architecture, New York, NY

Hard Candy, the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), San Jose, CA

Just One Word: Plastics, Square Blue Gallery, Costa Mesa, CA

2003

Art on Site 2: officespace, Tel Aviv, Israel
Sprout, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA
realUNREAL, Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery, University of Reno, NV
War (What Is It Good For?), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL
A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood, Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Sun Valley, ID

2002

2002 California Biennial, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA

Portrait Obscured, the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), San Jose, CA

Pro Arts’ Juried Annual 2001-2002, Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland, CA

2001

Present/Tense, University Art Gallery, Sonoma State University, Sonoma, CA

Introductions South 2001, the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), San Jose, CA

By Appointment, Refusalon, San Francisco, CA

Jernigan Wicker Fine Arts Gallery, San Francisco, CA

About Body and Space, Diego Rivera Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Installation, Annual Mystery Ball, Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA

2000

OpenHouse; Art on Site 1, San Francisco, CA

Bay Area Student Sculpture Biennial, San Francisco, CA

Limited Situations, curated by “Los Carpenteros” and Toni Labat, San Francisco, CA

1993

The Week of the Young Artist, The Schrieber Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel

1992

Gallery 13, Jaffa, Israel

The Week of the Young Artist, The Israeli Museum of Modern Art, Ramat Gan, Israel

1991

Tel Aviv Museum of Modern Art, Tel Aviv, Israel

EDUCATION

2001 MFA, New Genres Department, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

1992 BA in Design, Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem, Israel
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joanne Silver, “‘Overt’ forces look at aggression”, Boston Herald, October 22, 2004
Sullivan, James, “A Love Affair with Appliances Only Keeps Us in the Kitchen”, San Francisco Chronicle, March 25, 2004
Gant, Michael S., “House Unbound”, Silicon Valley Metro, March 17-24, 2004
Hayes, Holly, “Domesticity goes for a spin” San Jose Mercury News, Mar. 13, 2004
Woods, Casey, “Alternative to Exhibit Space”, Miami Herald (Neighbors), December 7, 2003
Kantor, Sharon, “Another Day at The Office”, Ha-ir, May 15, 2003
Gilerman, Dana, “New Life to a Deserted Office”, Haaretz, May 8, 2003
Hieggelke, Brian, “When Hawks Cry” NewCityChicago Online Magazine, March 26, 2003
Hawkins, Margaret, “WAR, Exhibit Cry Out for Peace,” Chicago Sun-Times, January 24, 2003
Tanous, Adam, “Center Exhibit Examines the Concepts of Home,” Express, December 18, 2002
Frank, Peter, “2002 California Biennial,” LA Weekly, August 30-September 5, 2002
Walsh, Daniella, “Exhibition Two Years Young,” The Orange County Register, June 2, 2002
Mendenhall, Lauri, “A Multi-layered Debut,” Coast, June 2002
Goldner, Liz, “Provocative Summer Shows, from Warhol to Edge of the World, Post-pop, Multimedia Extremism,” OC Metro, 2002
Novakov, Anna, “Open House: Art on Site 1,” Vistaview Journal of Contemporary and New Media Art, March 25, 2001

CATALOGUES

2004 Northrup, JoAnne, Domestic Odyssey, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA
2002 Armstrong, Elizabeth and Hofman, Irene, 2002 California Biennial, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA

RELATED ACTIVITIES

2003 Co-curator of group show installation in a vacant office space: Art on Site 2: officespace, Tel Aviv, Israel
2000 Co-curator of group show installation in a vacant Victorian house, Art on Site 1: OpenHouse, San Francisco, CA
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