



bition *Everything to Gain*, but it also serves as a convenient makeshift theater for his two video works on view. Here, Lulic seems to revel in the functionality of modern architecture, despite its ties to social unrest.

Kreider also conjures modernism and monumentality, although he is concerned with inversion rather than implosion. The centerpiece of his exhibition, *Restless Attractor*, 2007, is an assemblage of oversized outlet converters, cords, and adapters cast in pigmented trethane. Orchestrated and seemingly logical, this configuration is nevertheless non-functional as it channels the ghost of Nikola Tesla, the famous electrical engineer who not only invented radio but also the alternating current electric power (AC) system—or so indicates the brochure.

Tesla is the sort of mad scientist to which artists frequently gravitate. He is often depicted as a brilliant but borderline personality, who retreated to desolate Colorado Springs to conduct trials and freely explore his creative urges. *Restless Attractor* does not invoke the drive or imaginative impulse that seemed to haunt Tesla, however. The humble monument of converters and cords simply, and quite literally, pays homage to Tesla, the marginal genius, whose unbelievable experiments opened the way for technological revolutions.

In other works, Kreider relies on common objects to bring unease and fright. In *Behind their Teeth*, 2007, simple but precise incisions suffice to transform milk jugs into a series of disturbing skeleton faces that, cast in porcelain, lie inverted on an improvised table.

Also on view is a series of drawings of different phrases and words spelled backwards: “Trepan,” “New Work,” and “Bottomless Pit.” Such inversion reaffirms the centrality of mold-making to Kreider’s process. He makes forms from molds. Looking at the negative of an object—that is, the expectant space of the mold—can

often reveal unexpected qualities. What’s more, one needs to project *through* the mold and imagine looking at it from the other side in order to anticipate its outcome. This mental rearrangement could be seen as a desire to experience the threshold between opposing forces. Or, perhaps Kreider is suggesting that to experience the other side—death, madness, electrical shock, and the like—one needs to project oneself across that threshold.

—Micah Malone

KELLY MARK

#### LEADED RICHMOND

Curator N. Elizabeth Schlatter developed *Leaded: The Materiality and Metamorphosis of Graphite* from rather simple concepts [Harnett Museum of Art, University of Richmond; August 23–September 30, 2007]. Featuring work by a diverse group of international artists, the show is premised on the fact that graphite is a material that speaks to both artists and non-artists alike. As such, *Leaded* begins and ends with graphite. Many of the artists in the exhibition share her views on the universality of the medium: graphite and its mass-produced vehicle, the pencil, are ubiquitous, unprivileged, and already understood. Following this logic, *Leaded* is conceptually straightforward yet artistically complex and challenging. It is articulated around three general themes: Graphite as Content, Graphite as Transformative Agent, and Graphite as Sculpture. Of course, many of the works easily engage two or more categories.

Though Schlatter certainly recognizes that many artists primarily use graphite to draw, *Leaded* is not a survey of contemporary works on paper. It is first and foremost a show about material. While it is certainly interesting to ponder the results of any extreme investigation of material, the most successful works in the show extend materiality beyond experimental manipulation into signifying experience and meaning in the world.

Gloria Ortiz-Hernandez’ works are, in fact, drawings. As such, they provide a fairly easy entry into the exhibition. *Sum II*, 2004, and *Sequitur III*, 2004, arrangements of graduated circles and squares on pristine sheets of paper, initially seem like exercises in the simple control of the pencil. Yet simplicity, as we know, is hardly ever simple. These drawings transcend both hue and monochromy to become meditative studies of shape and space, which evoke landscape, light, and air.

Hernandez’ drawings set a bar for delicacy, which the show foregrounds as a property of graphite. Delicacy

ABOVE, LEFT: partial view of exhibition [courtesy of the artists and the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, Portland, OR], foreground: Peter Kreider, *Everything to Gain*, 2007; background: Marko Lulic, *Unsocial Sculpture*, 2007; ABOVE, RIGHT: Sarah Lovitt, *Chain*, 2003-2007, wax and graphite, variable installation dimensions, full length of chain: 179 inches [courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York]





OPINION

evolves into elusiveness in the work of Mark Sheinkman and Christopher Cook. Sheinkman's graphite-on-canvas works allude to ethereal puffs of smoke; Cook's blend of graphite, oil, resin, and solvent produces a surface that, similarly dense and layered, is established through larger gestures. Cook, Sheinkman, and Hernandez share a colorless world, which propels their paintings into explorations of form.

Even when graphite is layered heavily, as in the work of Stephen Sollins or in James Busby's *Number Thirty-Seven*, 2003, the silvery surface allows us to perceive the ground as something other than mere blackness. Sollins' camping supply catalogue pages are so densely hatched that they crinkle, leaving the images of tents and sleeping bags in supernatural darkness—a terrifying sea of shimmering desolation. Similarly, Busby's *Number Thirty-Seven* is an abysmal construction that propels us onto a pond of graphite, whose silvery surface captures our reflection and expands indefinitely.

Works by Creighton Michael and Sarah Lovitt explore graphite's three-dimensional potential. Their sculptures enlist graphite's metallic sheen to convey an illusory solidity. Michael coats small bundles of rope with graphite until they resemble fragments of scrap steel-wire. Their arrangement on the wall and floor suggests a dense bramble patch. Sarah Lovitt's *Chain*, 2003-2007, functions somewhat similarly, while contrasting perceptions of solidity with fragility more intentionally. Here, Lovitt enlists plays of texture and mass to create illusion and poetry. With its gray scale of graphite powder, the wax chain hovers between ghostly form and the solidity of steel. Molly Springfield's obsessively rendered drawings of photocopies are also quite elusive. By presenting a copy of a copy of an object, she puts forth the problem of originality. A question arises, underpinning this investigation: "why would anyone go to the trouble?" *The Real Object*, 2006, a drawing of a photocopied art

history text, unmercifully begs us to follow Springfield down the rabbit hole. While her sensuous rendering of the photocopied page is masterful, the subject matter leaves us cool.

The work in *Leaded* is both mesmerizing in its beauty and challenging in its content. Often, artists who strip their means down to absolute essentials—paper, pencil, and maybe an eraser—derive the most from exploration. So do exhibitions.

—Andy Kozlowski

TRANSFORMER  
RICHMOND

The exhibition *Transformer* suggested pretense, dress-up, and make-believe as primary means of modification [Anderson Gallery; June 15–August 12, 2007]. From McCallum & Tarry's solipsistic shearing in *Cut*, 2006, to Annie Schap's faded parodies of parody in *Me Time*, 2006, and *All Out of Love*, 2004, it seemed to have more to do with the limited range of motion of mid-1980s shape-shifting toys than with the artist as imaginative agent or observer of change. Playing superficially, it operated on two registers: "it just isn't me, being me" and "the me I pretend to be."

Pretending and play are certainly fruitful means of imagining alternatives. Here, however, most of the works bring a limited menu of options to the table. As such, *Transformer* leaves us hungry for deep and fanciful metamorphosis. One aspect of make-believe is easy but unfulfilling: it operates on the level of costume, nostalgia, disingenuous charade, or clever imitation. Transformation, however, calls for a different kind of make-believe, a bone-deep metamorphosis that converges with change in its inexorable and continuous motion. With the exception of Mark Newport's knitted heroic fantasies, the works in *Transformer* reflected the more trivial view, suggesting either a belief that change is impracticable—a sort of shrugging "plus ça change...so why bother?"—or an unwillingness to grapple with change's full range of demands.

It was difficult not to feel nonplussed by FEAST's contribution, *FEAST hearts ¡MEXICO!*, 2007. The collective—Terral Bolton, Terry Brown, Sherry Griffin, Stephanie Lundy, C. J. Hawn, and Chris Norris—combines performative role-play with site-specific installation. For *Transformer*, they styled themselves as a mariachi band, created ersatz photo documentation of their "tour," and filled two galleries with overblown memorabilia—roses, swags, donkeys, penny candy, ornate picture frames, maracas, and ribbons—swathed

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Mark Sheinkman, *4.11.2007*, 2007, oil, alkyd, and graphite on canvas, 66 x 60 x 2 inches [courtesy the artist and Von Lintel Gallery, New York]; McCallum & Tarry, still from *Cut*, 2006, video, 4:30 minutes [courtesy of the artists and Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, DC]