

CONSUME

2006 MIXED-MEDIA PAINTING / SCULPTURE / INSTALLATION / PHOTOGRAPHY

JUDITH KINDLER

Preface: Robyn Roehm Cannon
Essay: Daniel Kany

Published by CoCA
Center on Contemporary Art, Seattle, Washington
to document the exhibitions of
Judith Kindler's *CONSUME* at CoCA
and Gordon Woodside/John Braseth Gallery

Robyn Roehm Cannon and Amy Gautschi, editors



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Photography: All images, Judith Kindler, with the exceptions of the Image of Judith Kindler working in the studio and the Vitabone Installation, Lisa Jacoby

*Judith Kindler working in
her studio on Consumer I and II, (right)
November, 2006*

*Box with Seven Birds (left)
Mixed Media:
Encaustic, Oil, Photography on panel
30" X 20", 2006*



PREFACE

By Robyn Roehm Cannon

I think back to the night last summer when I met Judith Kindler, during the opening of a group show at Seattle's Gordon Woodside / John Braseth Gallery, in which several of the works in her encaustic series "The Dreams" hung.

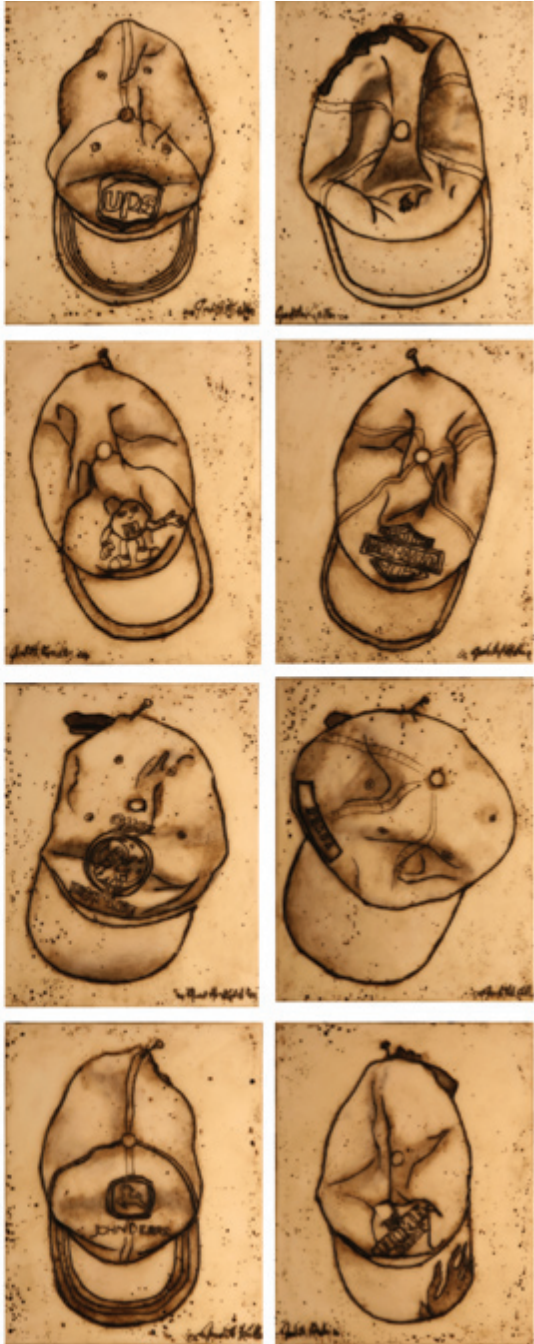
I'd observed this vivacious woman across the room, wearing what I've come to know as her signature black baseball cap, laughing and holding the rapt attention of a group of patrons. Apparently, she observed me too, because it wasn't long before we were drawn together in a lively discussion of her work. Before I knew it, I was invited into the gallery's back room to view more work and learn a bit about the long history and intricate layered technique of encaustic painting, which she has so beautifully mastered and so clearly and enthusiastically articulates. I left that evening enchanted with her style and her spirit, which shine luminously through far-reaching topics—like dreams, truth and consumption—that she tackles in her bigger than life-size sculpture, paintings and photographs.

Turns out, the layering of encaustic is much like the layers of Judith's own personality, and so, in my view, it is the perfect medium for her to work in. Warm, ironic, humorous, determined, inquisitive, adventurous and caring are just a few of the adjectives I might attach to the many facets of this artist I have come to know and respect. Like encaustic, getting to know her is like peeling back the layers of a giant onion...with each new layer there are new emotions to be expressed and new statements to be made. She is nothing if not complex, and all of this complexity is what makes her work so memorable.

That evening at Woodside / Braseth, before I met Judith, I stood with a group viewing a triptych, and of course, we each had our own distinct impression of how this work should be interpreted, and what message the artist was delivering. That is the thing about Judith: she is not heavy-handed nor does she attempt to box the observer into a specific viewpoint. Rather, she opens up the possibilities, creating a venue for the imagination to run with it.

Along the way though, when we least expect it and perhaps while enjoying the





surface whimsy of a piece, we are hit squarely between the eyes with a more complex message—allowing us to review for ourselves the larger scope of life that encompasses her commentary. I've come to the conclusion that it's all very seductive, because Kindler's work demands that I draw my own conclusion. I find it is like looking into a mirror and at times that effect is rather jarring. But she makes me think outside of my own reflection and so I become a part of the message.

The body of work "Consume" was completed in 2006 and will be featured in two concurrent Seattle exhibitions in January 2007: the mixed media painting and sculptural installations at the Gordon Woodside/John Braseth Gallery, and the large scale photography at COCA, the Center on Contemporary Art.

Judith Kindler documented her thoughts and extensive research throughout the creation of this series in a monthly journal. Some of her ideas on the subject of consumption have been pulled from that diary to appear in this book, as well as in the gallery exhibitions. So, as you view her art—and absorb her words—allow yourself to become a part of the discussion she invites. If you look closely, you too will see yourself reflected in the encaustic, thus enriching the cumulative effect of her work.

Robyn Roehm Cannon
 Seattle, Washington
 December 2006

Robyn Roehm Cannon is a journalist based in Seattle, covering topics of lifestyle, design, art and architecture for regional and national magazines and newspapers.

Promotional Hats
 Mixed Media:
 Encaustic, Oil, Photography on 16 panels
 14" X 11" each panel, 2006

THE MOTION OF CULTURE: JUDITH KINDLER'S 'CONSUME' SERIES

By Daniel Kany

Judith Kindler's *Consume* series has the initial feel of Andy Warhol's version of Pop Art, but the similarities end quickly and decisively. Warhol focused on the proliferation of the image, the effect of packaging and the loss of individuality. His images of Marilyn Monroe, for example, explored how Marilyn, the person, became buried and invisible under the innumerable public repetitions of her image.¹

Kindler's *Consume* series speaks to the individual, albeit the individual in the context of a consumer culture. Her images address notions of personal choice in a cultural landscape where the individual cannot escape apparent complicity with marketing: every choice is partisan because everything is marketed. Kindler's insight is that any consumption appears to condone marketing on some level. Rather than fighting the notion, Kindler investigates it with a seemingly light but rigorous hand. Her ideas often play out through humor: hyperbole, sly reference, parody and irony.

While the works from the *Consume* series welcome the viewer with apparent clarity, they do not resolve quickly or easily: their play and wit lead to philosophical or sociological complexity.

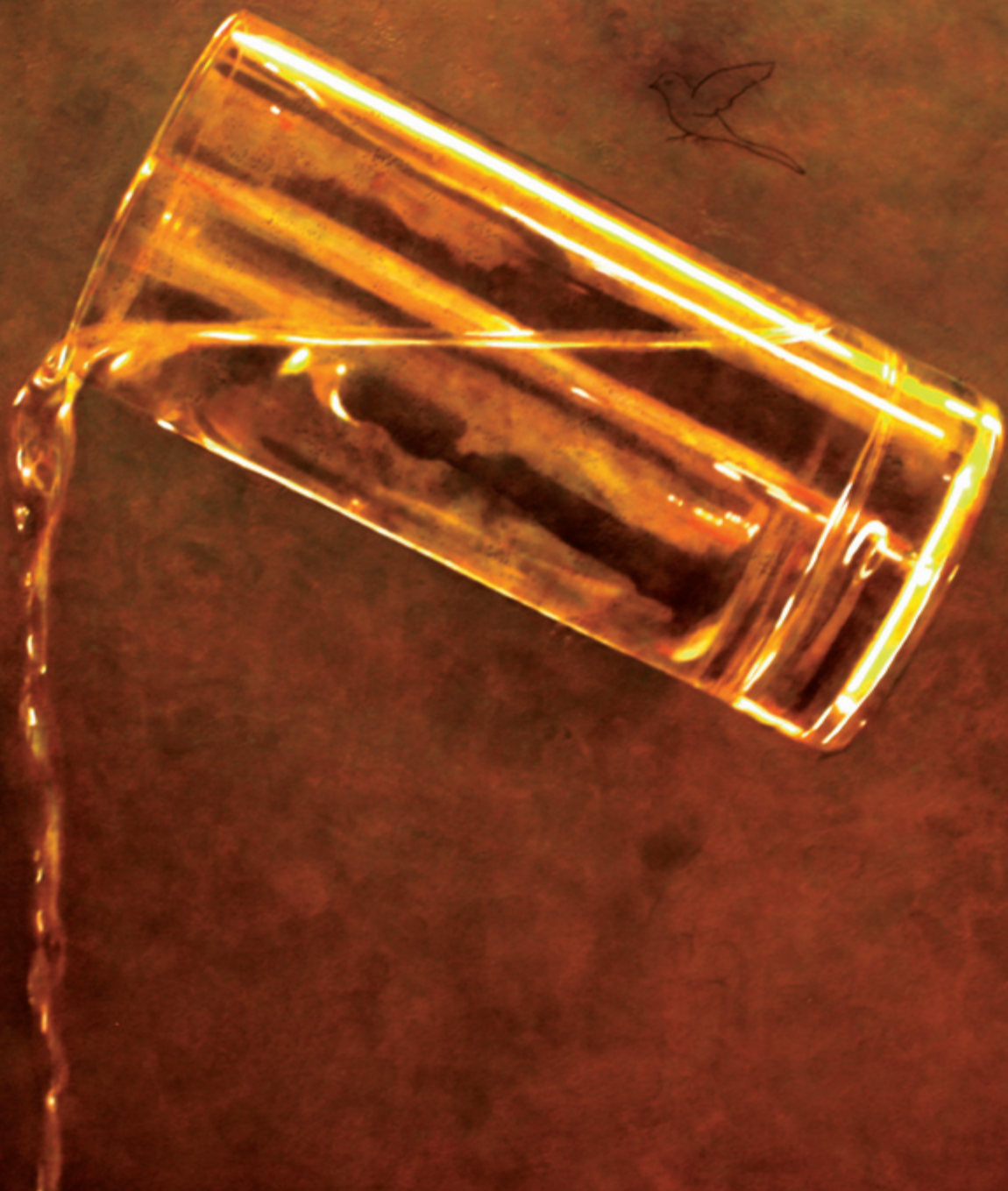
It might feel obvious that Kindler's gigantic painting of a Triple Whopper® is a beady-eyed threat, but how could such a threat be sustained without the complicity of our consumer culture? The lines of reasoning and play can quickly lead the viewer from questions of over-indulgence to world hunger, and from there to environmental sustainability, and so on. Kindler's humor, however, disallows any cheap jump to moralizing heavy-handedness. Rather, it comes back to the viewer and begs him to ask questions. In the case of the Whopper, these might include: Who eats these? Who thought of making these things? Is this thing more evil than good? And while the questions could go on and on this way, a few things do become clear, and most notably among them is the insight that this cannot be a neutral object. It has teeth of its own.

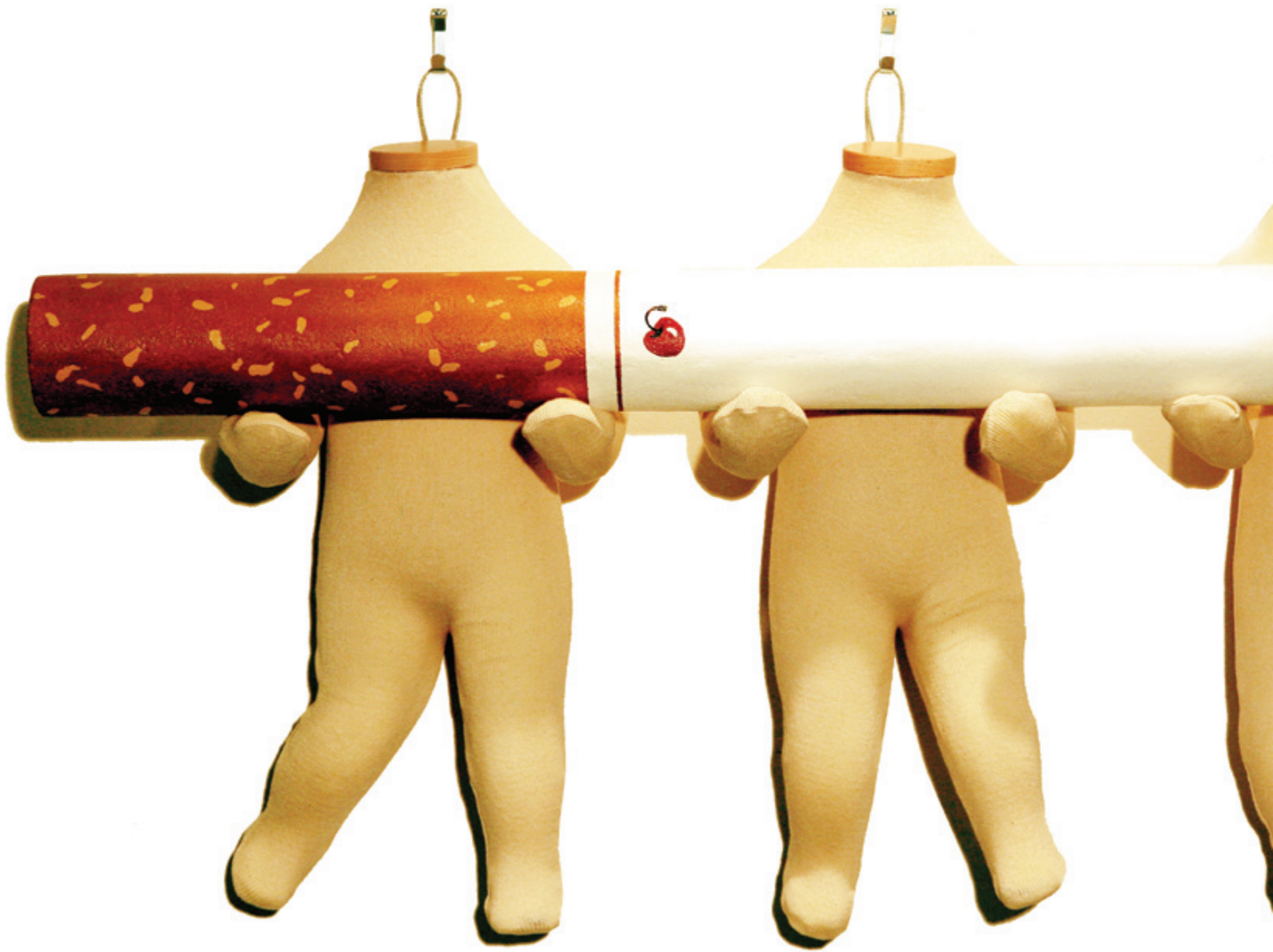
Much of Pop Art, such as Ashley Bickerton's work of the 1980's, has been about the art market.² In contrast, Judith Kindler's



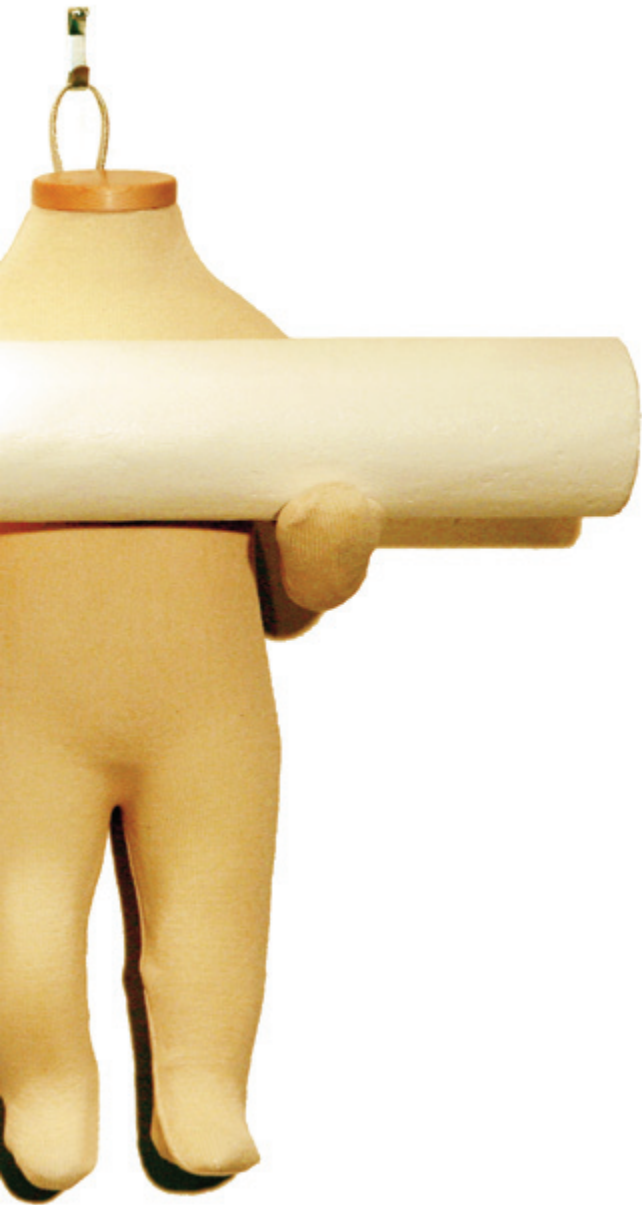
Tequila I and II (left)
Mixed Media:
Encaustic, Oil, Photography on 2 panels
30" X 30" each panel, 2006

Scotch or Water (right)
Mixed Media:
Encaustic, Oil, Photography on panel
96" X 96", 2006





Hooked I
Mixed Media
23" X 44", 2006



insights are about the relationship of consumption to broader questions of culture: Kindler hints there is no such thing as culture without consumption. Indeed, from an anthropological standpoint, culture can be defined as “the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.”³ The logic here is that transmission results in consumption by the receiving party. In the case of culture, this is usually an unconscious process.

Much of Pop Art from the 1980’s and thereafter maintains an anxious relationship to the notion of consumption—often equating brand loyalty to dehumanization. It is a popular and probably too-easy strategy to equate *haute-culture* brands such as Prada with upper socio-economic classes and, thereby, class warfare. It is a short-sighted assumption to believe that it is only the richest classes who want to announce their class positions through material presentation to the world: people often choose beer, sports teams, jingoistic regalia, work clothes, trucks, t-shirts and baseball caps (to name a few) to specifically identify class-defined social groups with whom they identify.

Kindler reminds us with a surprisingly gentle wit that everything we buy, eat or wear—everything we consume—participates in culture. In this sense, culture can be seen as style or aesthetics or even, to use a rather damnable term, *taste*. In doing so, she reminds us that culture will happen regardless of whether those participating are aware of the process or not. While many people consider “culture” to be something along the lines of affect—that is, something unnecessary and likely to be adopted by people who want to be seen as “cultured”—Kindler implies that culture is the product of all people and is an inevitable quality of civilization. The works in the *Consume* series can be seen as philosophical meditations on these notions. In this light, for example, Kindler does not privilege “high art” over anything else. A can of Budweiser, we are reminded, is just as iconically powerful as anything else in this entire culture.

One major reason why this series is so successful hinges on Kindler’s radical ambivalence about the subject: The balance is heavily weighted on both sides. Yet, I think we are seeing the egg come well before the chicken as the marketing image precedes the actual object acquired by the consumer.

Arthur Danto, arguably Pop Art's literary champion, was pondering the notion of "precedence" when he came to question the difference between the two physical Brillo boxes—the one fabricated by Warhol and the one on which it was based—in order to talk about why one is art and the other is not. Danto's physical honesty (the difference between two boxes) seems almost quaint to us now.

Kindler's work seems to argue that culture is the dialectic of that which we consume and—maybe more importantly—the public collateral which affects our decisions about what we consume. While she might present these as somewhat unequal terms, her work posits the presence of a dynamic force that both insistently balances and mediates the pair: *taste*. This is the site of personal agency; that is, the place where the individual can make decisions that will affect her community, notions of her identity, the marketplace and so on. Further, within this dynamic process, Kindler finds narrative.

It is telling that Kindler uses photographs of mannequins as they play out sequences of desire and exchange. Of how they, as manufactured objects (a slyly oblique reference to us, the potential lemmings of consumption), have, want, possess, and change their minds about consumables. We see clear items such as fries from McDonalds, but the images are not so simple: the Ken and Barbie sequence could be about tabloid-ism, or maybe about shifting ideals of beauty—such as the shift from the Greeks' ideal of a male body to the renaissance Neo-Platonist's idealizing of the female form.

If one is to consider the history of the differences between objects-of-desire and their ensuing parades of simulacra, the premise of Danto's first book on art, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, appears to quickly fall to the banal. Without a narrative, the object of desire might remain a mere icon, or a simply intangible image. With the *Consume* series, Kindler taps into a source of kinetic energy. Culture, she hints, is made of images in motion. It is transaction; interaction; exchange; commerce. It does not—and cannot—sit still. Culture, she insists, is transitive.

When is Enough Enough
Mixed Media
78" X 27", 2006



Kindler's take on this mediation is an entire rethinking of culture in a politically democratic world where we experience culture not as a top/down process but as a bottom/up (i.e., democratic) process. Kindler would have us leave behind the histories of kings and great wars for the experiences of the masses. This might superficially smack of the ideologies of social historians, but Kindler embraces and even celebrates the amenities of capitalist consumer society. Within it, she sees freedom and personal agency.⁴ Taste, she would have us see, is where we can freely define and redefine ourselves; it is where we create communities, voting blocks, and thereby, power. In a democracy, the popular is the powerful.

To wit, *Consume* is not a political body of work since it does not advocate any specific ideology. Rather, it is about culture and how culture functions *vis-à-vis* society. While it would not be an uncommon argument to say this is the very stuff of Pop Art, it clearly leans away from much thinking about Pop, like Danto's, which focuses on what Pop says about the boundaries of art, or the pioneering Pop artist Richard Hamilton's self-described "search for the epic in everyday objects and everyday attitudes" or even Warhol's monolithic meditations on images ventured for public digestion.

In a 2004 *Artforum* edition dedicated to Pop Art, Lawrence Alloway—the originator of the term "Pop Art"—says of the movement's "third-phase painters," such as David Hockney, that they "take their standards from graphic art rather than from painting. In graphic art, of course, anything goes...." While Alloway is attempting to be brazenly derisive, he is, in fact, precisely correct, and his gestures at the pejorative fail: It was Hamilton's, Warhol's and Hockney's use of graphic art strategies that led to their freedom to play with painting and comment on culture with such terrific wit and delicious bite. This is just as true of Kindler, but she mobilizes both photography (large format digital color) and painting (encaustic) to their extremes of technology and delectation. Moreover, Alloway seems to forget that the world of images has changed: a typical person now sees hundreds of images each day that are produced by graphic designers. Everything on television, in papers and magazines, or online is produced by graphic artists. This is the dominant mode of our visual culture. Moreover, it is complex, sophisticated and well-researched.

Kindler focuses less on the graphic arts (though she does employ them) than on the consumption of ideas. Her focus on narrative and emotions hints at her intense thinking about books and the packaging of ideologies or even religions. Kindler's generation (she was a student at Kent State during the shootings, attended Woodstock, etc.) is one that has reached for books for help, change or information: It should be no surprise that her studio is piled to the ceiling with books about art, artists, philosophy, graphic design, and so much else. That ideas could be packaged as commodities is not a stretch for people of her generation. Books appear in Kindler's paintings, and it would be almost impossible to over-estimate their role in her work.⁵ While a sort of logical end-around, this places Kindler's production at the core of Clement Greenberg's thinking about Pop Art. Greenberg was no fan of Pop and never published on it; for him, it remained "literary" as opposed to the "anti-literary" painting because of Pop's insistence on the world of ideas rather than feelings. Innovation, he insisted, had to be "felt" and not merely conceptualized. While his dialectic of the "visual and the literary"⁶ feels true of the day, it breaks down in the light of work such as Kindler's and other contemporary artists; perhaps we simply think differently now. If we accept the view that Modernism maintains an "anti-literary" focus on painting as Pop offers a broader focus on culture and its mechanisms, then clearly, in Greenberg's terms at least, Kindler is a Pop artist.



With her *Consume* series, Kindler contends that we have shifted from an oligarchy of idealized objects-of-desire to a democratic global culture of consumption: This is a world that is no longer defined by monumentally unique images like Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, but instead by international economics, public health, global environmental concerns, corporate marketing and so on. Kindler reminds us that our personal freedom to choose—and consume—defines the world in which we live and that we, maybe more than the individuals of any other moment of history, have the ability to determine the culture in which we live: Even if that means voting with our pocketbooks, or—*gasp!*—our brand loyalties.

Daniel Kany is a curator, art dealer and art historian. He is a current board member of Seattle's Center on Contemporary Art (CoCA) and is a past Chair and Director pro tem. He has held curatorial and director positions at Columbia University's Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library (NYC), William Traver Gallery (Seattle) and Friesen Gallery (Sun Valley and Seattle). Kany opened his eponymous gallery in Portland, Maine in 2006.

Trained in art history at Bowdoin College (Maine) and the Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore), his most recent exhibitions at CoCA include Robert Kantor: The Hope Series (2006), Evidence: Photography by Mateo Zapata Zachai (2006) and Yumi Kori: Infinitation (2005). Kany's publications include: Robert Kantor: The Hope Series and Other Sculptures (CoCA Editions, 2006), Lino Tagliapietra: Maestro (2004) and La Ballata del Vetro Soffiato (2002).

Endnotes

¹ Warhol's vision almost passes as anti-art by celebrating the loss of what Walter Benjamin defined as "aura" in his great essay "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction." Kindler's art seems to enjoy consumer society while—very much unlike Warhol's—still taking responsibility for its implications and effects.

² In her review of Bickerton's 1996 show at Sonnabend (600 W Broadway, NYC), Mia Fineman notes how Bickerton's work set out to define itself as an "eminently consumable metacritical commodity." The full text of the review can be found on Artnet.com

³ *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (New York: 2006).

⁴ When explaining her thoughts on personal choice and culture with me, Kindler singled out Herbert Gans's *Popular Culture & High Culture* as a book that she had found compelling. In it, Gans advocates the right of individuals to choose their own culture.

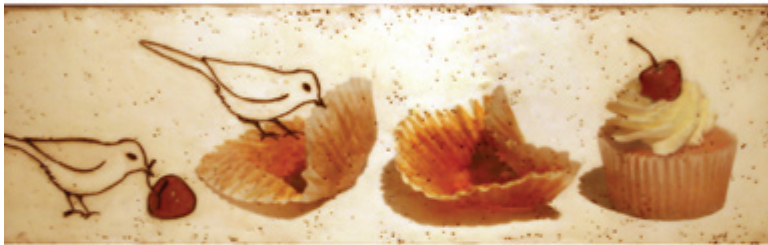
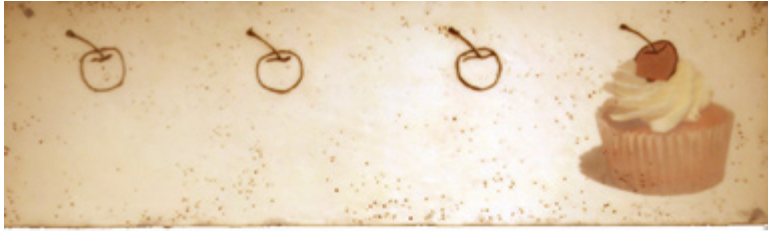
⁵ I was struck by the timing and feel of Ian Frazier's parody about the over-consumption of hardcover books in the 2006-11-13 issue of the *New Yorker Magazine* that portrayed the buying and reading of books as an addiction that could be treated, often saving the addict up to \$600 per year.

⁶ My thoughts on Greenberg's "Pop Art" text were very much directed by James Meyer's introduction to Greenberg's text. Both were published in the October 2004 issue of *Artforum*.

Budweiser II (previous page)
Mixed Media: Encaustic, Oil, Photography on Panel
80" X 36", 2006

Triple Whopper® (this page)
Mixed Media, Encaustic, Oil, Photography on 2 Panels
72" X 80", 2006





Here a Cherry There a Cherry (left)
Mixed Media: Encaustic, Oil, Photography on 5 Panels
12" X 36" each panel, 2006

Vitabone Installation (right):

Red Vitabone (Top)
Orange Vitabone (Bottom)
Mixed Media: Encaustic, Oil, Photography on Panel
36" X 80" each, 2006

Wants More Than Has (Figure)
Mixed Media
77" X 24", 2006



Wants, Has, Fears, Lusts

Mixed Media: Encaustic, Oil, Photography on Panel
30" X 30" each, 2006



I recently heard that a person's happiness is defined by what he consumes in relationship to his friends or community. If he doesn't have as much as all his friends he feels inadequate, unsuccessful, unfulfilled – all the 'un' words. When is enough enough? - JK







Consumer I and II
 Mixed Media: Encaustic, Oil, Photography on Panel
 80" X 36" each, 2006 (left: detail of Consumer I)



We are shifting from identifying with our country, region, family and heritage to identifying with a curated brand identity. How does this affect us culturally? - JK



Branded
Mixed Media: Encaustic, Oil, Photography on 3 Panels
32" X 24" each panel, 2006

CONSUMING YOUTH THE PHOTOGRAPHS



One aspect of consuming that has become very disturbing to me is the direct marketing to children. In these large-scale conceptual photographs exhibited at CoCA, headless child mannequins disturbingly interact with typical childhood toys, foods or each other. There is an anxiety in our culture about the overwhelming intrusion of this marketing at increasingly younger ages. Parents struggle with this unavoidable competition and feel they are losing control of their children as the influence of their own values is being supplanted by the marketer's.

- Judith Kindler

Consumers (detail)
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006



Oh No!
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006



Tired of Her
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006



Holding on to Barbie
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006



But I want . . .
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006



I Like Him
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006



Stack of Consumers
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006



The One Who Consumes the most Wins
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006

Are we the
sum total
of what we
consume?

- JK



Bumpy Love
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006

Consuming Each Other (right top)
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006

Good Bye (right bottom)
Ultrachrome Photoprint
60" X 40", Edition of 10, 2006

2007

R & F Gallery, Kingston NY , "Give and Take" works from "Surface" (Four Person Show)
Woodside/Braseth Gallery, Seattle, "Consume" Paintings and Sculptural Installations (Solo Exhibition)
CoCA (Center on Contemporary Art), Seattle , "Consume" Large Scale Photographs (Solo Exhibition)
Bakersfield Museum , CA – Encaustics (Group Exhibition)
Paris Contemporary Art Exhibition 2007 Invitational, Paris , France
Pratt Fine Arts, Seattle – Master Artist Solo Exhibition "Surface"

2006

R & F Gallery, Kingston NY , "Give and Take" works from "Surface" (Four Person Show)
Chiaroscuro Gallery, Scottsdale , AZ , "The Dreams" part I (Solo Exhibition)
Anne Reed Gallery, Ketchum ID, "The Dreams" part II (Solo Exhibition)
Woodside/Braseth Gallery, Seattle (Group Exhibition)
Alysia Duckler Gallery, Portland OR , "Confections" (Group Exhibition)
ArtLA 2006 Art Fair, hosted by Alysia Duckler Gallery, Portland OR
Poncho IFA auction, award of merit, (Invitational auction)
Poncho/Escala opening event exhibition Invitational (Group show of 6 artists)
Pratt Fine Arts (Invitational Auction)
Woman's funding Alliance (Invitational Auction)

2005

Anne Reed Gallery, Ketchum ID, (Group Exhibition)
Woodside/Braseth Gallery, (Solo Exhibition), Seattle WA
Chiaroscuro Gallery, Scottsdale , AZ , (Group Exhibition)
Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle , WA , (Solo Exhibition)
Gas Gallery, Torino , Italy (Group Exhibition)
Pratt Fine Arts (Invitational Auction)

2004

Gas Gallery, Torino , Italy (Group Exhibition)
Anne Reed Gallery, Sun Valley "Defining Truth" (Solo Exhibition)
AT.31 Gallery, "Alter Ego" (Solo Exhibition)
Anne Reed Gallery, (Group Exhibition)
Pratt Fine Arts (Invitational Auction)

2003

Ann Reed Gallery, Sun Valley (Group Exhibition)
AT.31 GALLERY, "Defining Truth" (Solo Exhibition)
Poncho IFA (Invitational Auction)

2002

"Best of Show" 2002 Juried Exhibition - Bellevue Art Museum , Bellevue WA
"Nourish" (Part I), Atelier 31, Kirkland WA (Solo Exhibition)
Poncho IFA (Invitational Auction)
Woman's funding Alliance (Invitational Auction)
"Nourish" (Part II), Margo Jacobsen Gallery, Portland OR (Solo Exhibition)

Selected Collections:

Museum Louvre or Leave It; Cornish College of the Arts; Heller Erhman; The Johnson Law Group; Ebber-son, Lasher; Odessa Brown Clinic; Jon and Mary Shirley; Chap and Eve Alvord; Catherine and David Skinner; Greg and Sharon Maffei ; Howard and Lynn Behar; Paul and Wade Skinner

Recent Accomplishments

"Master Artist," Spring semester 2007, Pratt Fine Arts, Seattle
Gold Award for Excellence in Printing: Kindler designed and published "Defining Truth/Judith Kindler" in 2004 focusing on her body of work entitled "Defining Truth" Interview and Introduction by Stefano Catalani, Curator of the Bellevue Arts Museum in Bellevue WA

Kindler is represented nationally by the following galleries:

Gordon Woodside/John Braseth Gallery, Seattle, WA
Gail Severn Gallery, Sun Valley/Ketchum, ID
Chiaroscuro Gallery, Sante Fe, NM
Chiaroscuro Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ
Alysia Duckler Gallery, Portland, OR
Daniel Kany Gallery, Portland, MN



Retail Therapy
Mixed Media:
Encaustic, Oil, Photography
on Panel
36" X 48", 2006

Take Out I and II
(inside front and back cover)
Mixed Media:
Encaustic, Oil, Photography
on Panel
30" X 30", 2006

