

3721 Washington Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63108 USA

NEWS RELEASE

November 12, 2009

SHELF LIFE: selected work by Buzz Spector

Front Room: *Shawn Burkard: Phantasmagoria*
Project Room: *Beverly Fishman: Pharmako - Xanadu*
Media Room: *Maya Escobar: el es frida kahlo*

Opening Reception: Friday, January 22, from 6 to 9 pm
Dates: January 22 – March 6, 2010

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| Media contact: | Wednesday through Saturday |
| Bruno L. David, Director | 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM |
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BRUNO DAVID GALLERY PRESENTS SELECTED WORK BY BUZZ SPECTOR

SAINT LOUIS, MO — Bruno David Gallery is pleased to present an introductory exhibit of the art of **Buzz Spector**. “SHELF LIFE: selected work” includes photographs, drawings, collages, and bookworks created over the past ten years. A fully illustrated catalogue with writings by Buzz Spector and friends will accompany the exhibition.

Buzz Spector is best-known as an artist for his work with books, but his studio practice also includes photography, collage, installation, and drawing. This introductory exhibit covers the past eleven years of Spector’s work. The selection reveals the material diversity and intellectual coherence of an artist concerned with memory, perception, and desire. It is no coincidence that Spector is also a writer; he is constantly crafting a poetry of things.

Spector comes to St. Louis as the new Dean of the College and Graduate School of Art in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University. While he is recognized for his teaching and service to the field, Spector has also had an influential career as a studio artist and critic. His work is in numerous museum and gallery collections in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, and his writing has been published in such magazines and journals as *Artforum*, *Art on Paper*, and *WhiteWalls*, the journal of language and art that Spector co-founded in 1978, while still a graduate student at the University of Chicago. Spector is the author of several books on art and artists, his new book “Active Voice: Essays on Artists’Books, Books as Art, and Art as Language” is to be published by Granary Books, New York, in 2010.



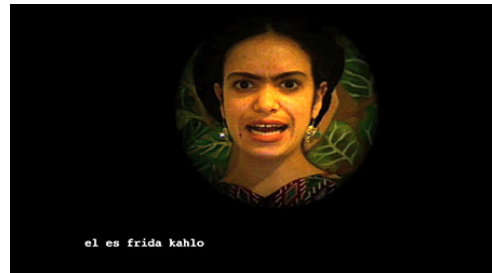
Spector's work has been exhibited in St. Louis on several occasions over the years, including at the Forum for Contemporary Art (Now the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis), the Craft Alliance Gallery, and Webster University, but "Shelf Life" is the most inclusive look at his art here to date.

In the **Front Room**, the gallery presents "Phantasmagoria," an exhibition of photographs by **Shawn Burkard**. Influenced at once by horror movies, gothic novels, and such dark folklore as the Brothers Grimm, Burkard's work makes visible a legacy of cultural darkness. Burkard photographs scenes of his own construction, whose uncanny attributes of light, scale, and physiognomy recall nothing so much as the psychological space of fairytales—and the nightmares such tales once provoked in all of us.



Within each of his photographs, Burkard creates a fantastical but convincing storybook world. The artist meticulously plans the lighting and staging, hand crafts the settings, makeup, and costumes for the bizarre characters he plays in each supernatural scene. Though the artist manipulates his film images by hand, they remain untouched by digital alterations. Burkard invites us into a realm of disturbing visions whose creative vitality is understood once we recognize how close these dreamworlds may be to our own. Shawn Burkard is based in St. Louis.

In the **Media Room**, **Maya Escobar** presents a single-channel video titled "*el es frida kahlo*". In *el es frida kahlo* Maya Escobar confronts the ambivalence she experiences as a result of her simultaneous obsession with Frida Kahlo and weariness towards her commoditization. Viewed from a tiny pinhole, Escobar, dressed as Kahlo stands before a reproduction of one of her self-portraits. With a mixture of rage, anxiety, and complete fear, she chants "el es Frida Kahlo, ella es Frida Kahlo, el es Frida Kahlo, yo soy, yo soy, yo soy Frida Kahlo," he is Frida Kahlo, she is Frida Kahlo, I am, I am, I am Frida Kahlo. As Escobar yells, the painting behind her begins to fall. She violently tears down her braids and smudges off her makeup while continuing to yell "I am Frida Kahlo, I am Frida Kahlo, yo soy Frida Kahlo!"



Maya Escobar is based in St. Louis. She is a performance artist, Internet curator, and editor. She uses the web as a platform for engaging in critical community dialogues that concern processes by which identities are socially and culturally constructed. She performs multiple identities and sample widely from online representations and existing cultural discourses. Her identifications as a Latina-Jewish artist, dyslexic blogger, activist and educator are indexed by the blogs she keeps, the visual and textual links she posts, the books, articles, and blog posts she cites, the public comments she leaves, and the groups she joins. She received her MFA from the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, Washington University in St. Louis, and her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has performed and exhibited work in Spain, Guatemala, Puerto Rico and the United States.

In the **Project Room**, multi-disciplinary artist, **Beverly Fishman**, presents a series of sculptures titled "Pharmako - Xanadu." In this exhibition, Fishman delves into the cultural implications and consequences of pharmaceutical overload while enticing the audience with the pills' sleek visual seductiveness. As an artist, Fishman has long engaged with questions of art, technology and the body. Through this work, she ponders why a seeming cure to our hectic days and emotional strain is also, in effect, a poison. Her enveloping milieu of intense fluorescent colors, repeating patterns, and sizable scale deliberately affect the viewer on both a physical and intellectual level.

The Pharmako sculptures evoke the overt appeal of the chemical compounds frequently used to alter our minds and bodies. They represent a broad spectrum of over-the-counter, prescription, and illegal pills—all of which have entered an arena of quasi-designer products that combine technology with attractive aesthetics. In particular, Extasy pills display fun, pop icons that subsequently attract and associate a young user with the branded identity of the pill's maker. Overall, the resultant array of pills is as expansive in coloration as their real life counterparts are in function. Fishman's Xanadu Series of chrome pill sculptures takes the seduction and inclusion of the viewer to another level with gleaming exteriors that mask their dangerous possibilities. The viewer can be seen in the artwork itself through his mirrored image, thus consolidating his identity with the pill and its resultant effects. Through different angles and reflections, each of us is affected by the work in a unique manner, a visual metaphor for the varying physical and mental consequences the same pharmaceutical can have on any of us.



Fishman has had over a dozen one-person exhibitions at galleries in New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Her work has also been included in many thematic exhibitions addressing abstraction, technology, medicine, and the body. Ms. Fishman has been awarded numerous honors including a Guggenheim Fellowship Award (2005) a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2003) a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grant (1989), an Artist Space Grant (1986/1990), and a Ford Foundation Grant (1979).

Images above:

Buzz Spector. *(All the books in my library) By or About Dieter Roth*, 1999

Shawn Burkard. *Jitters*, 2009.

Maya Escobar. *el es frida kahlo* (still), 2009, single-channel video

Beverly Fishman. *Cloud 9 Extasy Pill* (Pharmako Series), 2009

2009-2010 ART PROGRAM

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|-----------------|--------------------------|
| LESLIE LASKEY: | September / October 2009 |
| CHRIS KAHLER: | November / December 2009 |
| BUZZ SPECTOR: | January / February 2010 |
| CINDY TOWER: | March / April 2010 |
| KELLEY JOHNSON: | May / June 2010 |

ABOUT THE BRUNO DAVID GALLERY

Bruno David Gallery, St. Louis' leading art gallery specializing in contemporary art and one of the most important places to see art in Saint Louis. The Gallery represents some of the best artists that Saint Louis has to offer, along with artists of national and international reputation. Located in a stunningly renovated industrial building in the Grand Center arts district, directly opposite the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. Bruno David Gallery's art program has introduced new contemporary art to local gallery goers, and has been discussed in important art publications including, Art in America, Art Papers, ArtNet Magazine.