



sarah bowen gallery

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

The Pursuit of Happiness

Group Show Curated by Christopher Howard

December 1, 2006 – January 14, 2007

Reception: Friday, December 1, 2006

7 – 9 P.M.

Sarah Bowen Gallery is delighted to present *The Pursuit of Happiness*, featuring ten New York–based artists: **John Bowman, Diane Carr, Rebecca E. Chamberlain, Jonny Detiger, Vandana Jain, Tracy Nakayama, Alexander Reyna, Kent Rogowski, Carol Shadford, and Jennifer Sullivan**. *The Pursuit of Happiness* explores representations of happiness in contemporary art as a question or proposition more than a definitive statement. Some works openly welcome this fleeting emotion into their iconography, while others harbor skepticism toward it by examining false notions of happiness in a consumer-driven society. (These conflicting views are often seen within the same work.) Other artists use tropes of happiness as a formal launching point into other areas. Whether happiness is bright colors, pretty pictures, love, sex, food, or a state of being is debatable; it is clear that happiness is an imperative motivating factor in human behavior, and therefore it is also a motivating factor in art.

How best to achieve happiness in life is as intensely debated today as it was in the Enlightenment or ancient Greece. Considering current scientific, economic, and social theories, and in a culture of instant gratification and psychopharmacology, it is questionable as to whether we are closer to finding the key to happiness. By examining the *pursuit* through art, perhaps we will find a deeper understanding of this ephemeral emotion.

Working in a variety of mediums, each artist expresses a different aspect of happiness. **Kent Rogowski's** exuberant puzzle montages and photographs of reconstructed teddy bears play on how memory is embedded tangibly in childhood toys and events, and **Jonny Detiger's** swirling paintings and drawings draw on psychedelic imagery to represent desire in myriad forms. **Jennifer Sullivan's** folksy mixed-media work and **Diane Carr's** felt and foam landscapes focus on the imagination of hopes and dreams surrounding happiness through popular culture and nature. The uninhibited, sexually engaged characters in **Tracy Nakayama's** intimate drawings create a dialogue about openness and pleasure, as well as the sense of nostalgia and loss. For **Rebecca E. Chamberlain**, happiness can transcend the personal, as her drawings of reproductions of International Style homes and offices make promises of efficient, refined living. **Alexander Reyna** and **John Bowman** present happiness as excess with video images of preadolescent male joys and paintings of an abundance of food and luxury objects. **Carol Shadford** and **Vandana Jain** examine the strain of feigned happiness and troubled desire. In Shadford's video, characters are asked to hold a smile for as long as possible, illustrating how the initial genuine pleasure turns into discomfort over time. Similarly, in Jain's work, advertising catchphrases emphasize how immediate gratification has few long-term effects.

Christopher Howard is an editor for the College Art Association in New York. He has written on art for such publications as the *Brooklyn Rail*, *Art Notes*, and *The Art Book*, and is completing a master's degree in art history at Hunter College.

sarah bowen gallery is open Wednesday through Sunday, 12 – 6 pm and by appointment. The gallery is located at 210 North Sixth Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY, 11211. Directions: L Train to Bedford Avenue stop, take Driggs exit, walk one block south to Sixth Street, and then ½ block East. The gallery is located between Driggs and Roebing on the right hand side.