

bitforms gallery
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for immediate release

MARK NAPIER

New Work

Mark Napier debuts new software art and prints at bitforms gallery in New York.

April 12 - May 19, 2007
bitforms gallery, nyc

bitforms gallery is pleased to announce a third solo exhibition with Mark Napier, April 12 - May 19. This exhibit marks the New York debut of his new software art and print work.

One of the select few artists whose Internet art has been collected and commissioned by prominent art institutions, **Mark Napier** is known for creating work that challenges traditional rules of ownership, authority, and permanence. Over the past decade he has developed custom software as an art medium, and this exhibition features virtual objects that hover between the material and immaterial.

"Increasingly we live and navigate in a world composed of energy: electrical, magnetic and light," says Napier. "Digital media infuse our lives as never before. In this media environment, power is no longer associated with physical objects, but with the persistence of ideas in the collective consciousness of the media."

A symbol of the human desire to monumentalize ideas in physical form, the Empire State Building is a subject of Mark Napier's artwork in the past four years. This icon of American hegemony is key to exploring shifting structures of power, specifically the transition from steel to software as the medium of power in our time.

The free-floating virtual skyscraper appearing in Mark Napier's recent work is governed by rules that do not apply to the natural world, a signal of our transition as a civilization. In *Smoke*, a generative software installation projected on the gallery wall, the Empire State Building appears to soften and melt, writhing almost organically, then struggle to return to its original form. Teetering on the line between organism and architecture, *Smoke* speaks to a morphological tension between static physical structures of power and those that are information-based, organic and malleable.

Another software work in the exhibition, displayed on screen, investigates the notion that we ourselves are vessels of information. This live installation delicately animates bare human flesh over the surface of the building, sensuously enveloping its structure and forming a skin.

Originally trained as a painter, Mark Napier's visual vocabulary is informed by Cubist representations of space. Specifically considering the early work of Picasso and Braque, Napier created custom software to simulate a "soft" skyscraper that is thrown and bent by unseen forces. Every iteration of the building's movement is captured, forming a densely layered record in a perpetual state of cubist deconstruction.

Displaying multiple perspectives of the same virtual form, the prints in the exhibit reflect the anxiety and tension of a transitional era of history. Named after the Cyclops, early artisans of Greek mythology, imagery in Napier's recent prints metaphorically follow the birth, rise and fall of a being that lives and dies by its ability to fashion material forms. Historically the Cyclops were blacksmiths that forged weapons for the gods, and ultimately fell from grace as they were blamed for the destruction caused by their handiwork. In "Cyclops Descends" flesh tones and fragments of architecture appear frozen, as if shattering and re-forming in the same instant.

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Mark Napier is recognized as one of the first to explore the potential of the Internet as a space for public art. Breaking boundaries of ownership in early web-based works such as the *Shredder* (1998), *Riot* (1999), and *Feed* (2001), Napier questioned fixed designs of web navigation, opened content choices to users and dissolved information into abstract expression. In *net.flag*, commissioned for the Guggenheim Museum permanent collection in 2001, Napier created a post-national flag that any visitor could change. Mark Napier's work has been included in prominent New Media exhibitions including the Whitney Museum of American Art's *Data Dynamics* exhibition, the 2002 Whitney Biennial, the San Francisco Museum of Art's *010101: Art in the Age of Technology*, and the *net_condition* exhibition at ZKM (Center for Art & Media) in Karlsruhe, Germany. A recipient of grants from Creative Capital, NYFA, and the Greenwall Foundation, Napier has also been commissioned to create artwork for SF MoMA and the Whitney Museum. His work has also been exhibited at the Centre Pompidou, PS 1, the Walker Arts Center, Ars Electronica, The Kitchen, Kunstlerhaus Vienna, Transmediale, Bard College, the Princeton Art Museum, la Villette in Paris, and bitforms gallery, among many others. Napier's work and website potatoland.org has been cited in numerous fine arts journals. He holds a Bachelors of Fine Art from Syracuse University, and teaches at the ITP program of New York University.

Opening Reception

bitforms gallery, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, Thursday, April 12, 2007

Artist's Talk

bitforms gallery, 4:00 pm, Saturday, May 5, 2007

Gallery Hours & Directions

Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. Nearest subway is the C to 23rd St

bitforms gallery is devoted to emerging and established artists who embrace new media and contemporary art practice— resulting in new languages and artistic experiences.

Upcoming

April 6 - May 12 new work by Andrew Neumann will be on view in Korea at bitforms gallery, Seoul. The next exhibit at bitforms gallery in New York, May 26 - June 23, is a group exhibition featuring new work by Lynn Hershman Leeson, Michael Joaquin Grey, C.E.B. Reas, and James Paterson.

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