

# frieze

## Summer Camp

Exile, Berlin, Germany

Over the courtyard of the Exile gallery hangs a patchwork awning of umbrella skins. Designed for single use by commuters caught in the rain, Billy Miller – a New York-based artist, writer and independent publisher, and curator of Exile's second annual 'Summer Camp' – gathered them off the sidewalks of New York.



The show's exhibition programme is printed like an independent movie poster, listing the names of 68 contributing artists on the reverse side, like closing credits. Billed as a 'Blockbuster Double Feature' of 'Headshop' and 'Lost Horizons', with an 'underground cinema' in the gallery basement, the commentary is provided by artist Lucio Fontana: 'In 500 years time people will not talk of art, they will talk of their problems and art will be like going to see a curiosity... What were they up to? Why did they cover walls with pictures?' Good questions.

## About this review

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By *Sam Williams*



'Headshop', installation view (2010)

[Back to the main site](#)



'Headshop' is not so much an installation as a print magazine detonated in the gallery space. An open wooden cabinet at the entrance provides the contents page: vintage magazines with one-off covers, a realist oil painting of a monk, cowboy boots hand-stitched with Uncle Sam sequins and spikes sewn into the lining. Plinths wrapped with Marvel comics and magazine images hold a pair of used shoes, a clay figurine in each, and artist Desi Santiago's Addams Family-style box with a bronze finger poking out – Michael Jackson reaching up from the grave and a temptation to theft.



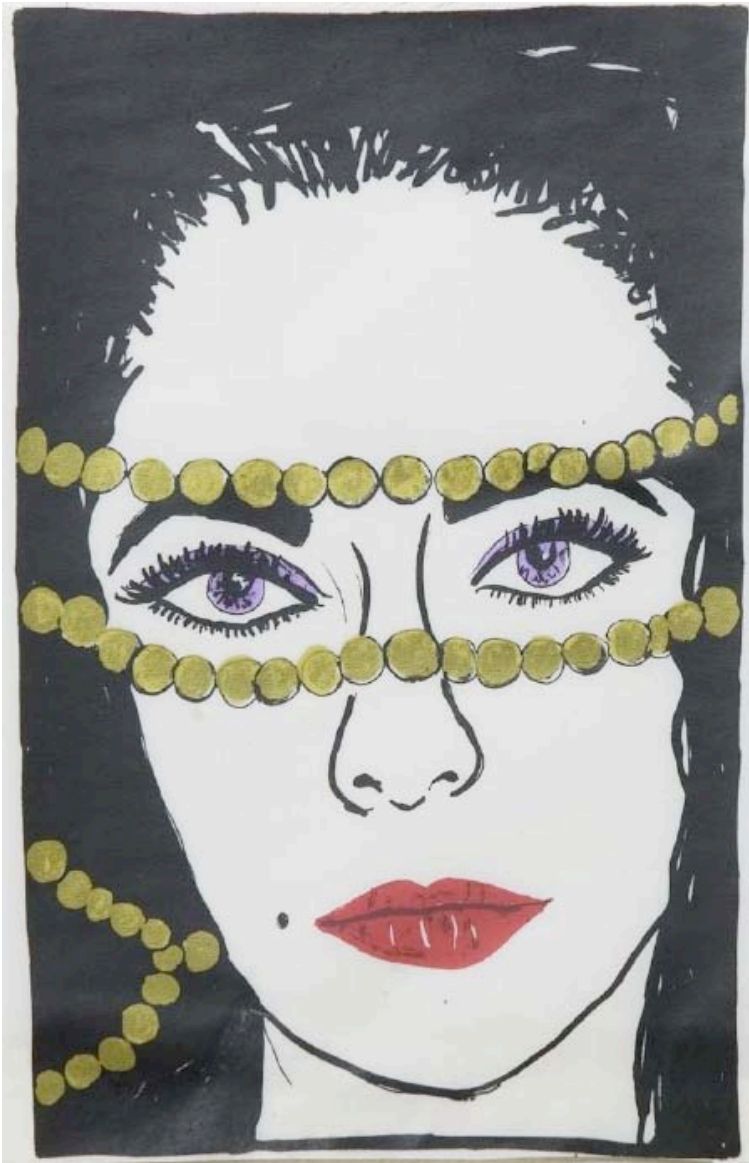
Genesis P-Orridge, *Eva Adolph Braun Hitler* (1998)

A video installation on a small TV in the corner shows Genesis P-Orridge performing *Eva Adolph Braun Hitler* (1998). In a blonde wig, full make-up and toothbrush moustache, white blouse and Lederhosen, P-Orridge screams/flirts into the camera from a darkened New York

basement – a conversation performed by the several personae of a Braun-Hitler composite. Formerly of Throbbing Gristle, P-Orridge recently completed a surgical transformation so he could resemble his deceased wife, Lady Jaye.



The headshop began life as a one-stop store for freaks or 'heads', selling the books, drug paraphernalia, records and magazines not available from mainstream vendors in the mid-1960s. In the 70s, the hemispheres split and while one bled downstream, irrigating downtown with mass-produced bongos, buttons and T-shirts, the other was given a permanent home in art galleries. Several galleries in Berlin and London now sell fashion items alongside their art exhibits, and some handmade books.



'Lost Horizons' opens with a growling sound installation, fixing the backing track in the present: the source is a BP oil refinery near the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, recorded shortly before the accident occurred. A video installation shows the fallout of Hurricane Katrina and an enormous photograph of a severed tree stump is draped on the wall. In an open wooden cabinet at the back of the room, beside a jarred specimen of vegetable matter like a mutant parasite, a series of identical sunset photographs are printed at different exposures to imitate the effect of seasonal changes – as if art is wondering whether it can step into the role nature threatens to abdicate.

The many works here are presented without context or even artists' names. They 'point outwards', Miller explains, at historical events or other art works. Like the 1970s novels of

Thomas Pynchon or Georges Perec's *Life: A Users Manual* (1973), the pieces spell out histories across the gallery walls through the references they assume. The show reverses the usual gallery installation logic in which each piece is a carefully placed structural element locked into discourse with the next, toward conceptual completion.

This throws some light on a new species of art show in Berlin. In several recent short-run exhibitions at The Forgotten Bar and Autocenter, emerging artists jostled with dead and established ones. Autocenter's recent show included Robert Rauschenberg, Martin Kippenberger, Anselm Reyle and Marc Bijl. Shows at the Forgotten Bar often last only a few days, bracketed by openings and finissages: art gallery as instant archive of the moment.

Questions about the role of art in a changing world are circling all of this. One possible interpretation is offered by J.G. Ballard: 'After Freud's exploration within the psyche it is now the outer world of reality which must be quantified and eroticised' (*Ambit # 36*, 1968). So what is art doing when it presents itself in curiosity cabinets of its own design? The lost horizons are not the ideals of the swinging seventies; what's lost is the horizon itself, disappearing in the sonic boom of a present which is overtaking the future.

**Sam Williams**

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