

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Max Schumann, June 30th to July 31st, 2005
Opening reception, Friday, July 8th, 6-8
Summer Hours after July 4th are Monday to Friday, 11-6
The gallery will be closed Friday July 1st thru Monday July 4th

Max Schumann: The Tough New Spirit of Dodge
By Todd Alden

Like a moth before a flame, I am drawn to the horrible beauty—or is it the beautiful horror?— of Max Schumann's exquisite, unpretentious paintings on cheap cardboard. The allure, no doubt, is partly in their devilishly seductive surfaces, executed with the expressive brush of a socially engaged artist who also evidently loves to paint. But Schumann also trains his eye on banality, commodity, horror, and violence. Culled from advertising, B-grade horror films, and newspapers, Schumann's world is filled with sport utility vehicles in idyllic landscapes, B-movie skeletons in portraits, George Bush in prayer, violence in Iraq, and brutality against domestic protestors. I would be tempted to liken Schumann's vision to a dystopian version of "America the Beautiful"—if only the violent melody didn't seem so acute and matter-of-factly familiar. Without eschewing the mechanics of aestheticization, Schumann's paintings remind us how anesthetized we are from relentlessly repeated and mediated horrors. In a world increasingly filled with mediated violence, Schumann asks, what is the space between fact and fiction? Between horror and the beautiful? Between the empire of sense and the empire of the senseless?

In keeping with his subjects, Schumann works in serial format, creating multiple versions of more or less the same image. As if to highlight the random rules of the economy of horror and violence, the gallery price for approximately identical works might be \$10, \$60, or \$600. As works are sold, they will be removed while new works will be continually replenished with the exhibition in a constant state of flux throughout its duration. Schumann renders legible the audience's participation in the system of exhibition, and also un-conceals our relationship to the myth-making apparatuses of the mass media and government: both, he suggests, pedal idyllic illusions about "The Tough New Spirit of Dodge". By deploying a controlled collaboration between artist, dealer, and audience, the artist not only demystifies the beautiful and horrible myths of Madison Avenue, Hollywood and Washington, but also proposes a different kind of engagement with them.