Mathieu Malouf
Campf as Inner Experience
January 29th - March 6th, 2011
Opening Reception Saturday January 29th 2011 7 - 10 PM

[1] "Once, young miss, there was an age of heroes. Some great men—a Salzmann, Pestalozzi, Fichte, Herbart, would give his era a watchword, a sense of direction. That heroic age is over. We live in the days of the masses, the flood, the inundation. Now, it is in millions of minds that ideas are born." —Wilhem Erbt, Der Narr von Kreyigen

[2] a military device invented during WW2 by Kurt Freund to measure masculine response to stimuli by measure the influx of blood to the penis.

"Der Kampf als Inneres Erlebnis" is a novel by the German military writer Ernst Juenger about his experience in the trench war of 1914, less celebrated than his first attempt at the same topic "Steel Inferno". Der Kampf leaves behind the conventional Kriegstagesbuch format and attempts to address the question "what is going on" using an experiemental, non-linear chapter structure that explores the horror through abstract themes like "blood", "nation", "fear", etc. Without the disciplining framework provided by the diaristic style, Der Kampf... constantly disintegrates under the threat of its own subject matter and fragmented subject. And it is with Juenger's literary failure in mind that Real Fine Arts is pleased to present Mathieu Malouf's first exhibition with the gallery. Already established in Europe through his involvement operating an alternative gallery in Berlin and his participation in Frankfurt's Staedelschule Program for the Arts, Malouf's installation-based practice uniquely explores the discursive relationship between contemporary art, fashion and networkable social media. Malouf rewards careful viewers of his work with his vast lexicon of specific references, especially as he distills them into his subtly altered readymades.

In the case of Campf as Inner Experience, the notion of total war, "an etsy inquisition, a lipdub holocaust" to quote the artist, is disseminated throughout language-saturated artworks and, like the Juenger experience, this language disintegrates under the epistemological weight of its object. Unintelligible and fragmentary, these thoroughly analogue works always bear the digitized tincture of applied cybernetics. Works find their form and matter in the cultural feedback between virtual and literal space, that estimable bog where value comes and goes like bodies into the deepest murk. Contemporary art's circulation as an operable form of life and its android engenderment of "Hipster" art forms, which could characterize a vast array of artists from Simon Denny to Amanda Ross-Ho, are starting off points for Malouf. Campf as Inner Experience instead self-consciously flirts with reactionary postures against the cybernetic coitus of replication—those non-productive acts of codified "worship", fingers crossed and prayers whispered by opportunists as they drag & drop the reputable code of, say, Allen Ruppersberg or Marc Camille Chaimowicz into their wholly operative studio-cum-body. Similar to the first image that greets viewer's of Hollywood's apocalyptic daddy fantasy, Terminator: Salvation, Malouf opts to unquestionably crush the drones, to face our cybernetic double against the executioner's wall just to measure its wince. Yet all of this militance, Malouf's "fueled by hate" pretense, is a mere ruse, a put-on, a means of artistically framing zones of biopolitical conflict; adversarial harassment in favor of inscribing the flesh, bearing its tact upon the unsettled soil between self and world.

Etsy, that handmade nation governed by imperial regimes of individuated creativity, is one body claimed on this unsettled soil. Campf as Inner Experience is another. A feedback farm of poor postures harvested from arduous online hours; a wanton blasphemy in unkosher meats[1] known only to measurable pleasure gauges—a concern foregrounded by the recurring motif of the plethysmograph[2] in the "hand-assembled" works on display. The appearance of Julie Verhoeven's fashion illustration is another incidence of epistemological gain in Malouf's work. With its total immersion in the industry of the creative self, Verhoeven's fey figures "do it to do it" and "they don't stop"—to quote several articles in the recent volume of Mousse Magazine—and Malouf artistically seizes this ideological mobilization of culture, like an ineffectual servant cleaning silver or brass, only to scrub the dirt further in.

... From where one stands, the proto-fascists inspired by the Juenger's fragmented hallucination of industrial warfare are indie