



Sali Taylor, *Not in Oz Anymore, 2008, collage on wood*

Ripped and Torn

532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel in New York

by Robert Curcio

In today's seamlessly cool and overly hip technology infused world, why would anyone curate an "old fashioned" exhibit of collage and assemblage? Instead of flat screens or large computer printed photographs that are all the rage at just about every gallery or museum, *Ripped and Torn* features various found or handmade papers, objects and debris that have been sliced and diced, then reconstructed by hand with ordinary materials like glue.

Valery Oisteanu's *Berlin Dream*, 1974, John Evans' *Jar*, 2007 and Tony Tiger's *Untitled* are collections of assembled detritus that are curious time pieces. Evans has pins, rings, buttons, etc in an ordinary jar that was collected on November 24, 2008. We know this

since the artist included a tag with that specific date in the jar. Dating pieces is a very important part of the creative process for Evans as he has made a

piece of art a day for decades. Not as specific as Evans, is Oisteanu's wooden curio case of 40 small niches filled with different locks and keys or keys by themselves in other niches, a couple of chess pieces, small glass containers of mysterious liquid, a green die, some bits of jewelry here and there, all creating either a time capsule from the artist's visit to Berlin or a capsule of a dream the artist had of Berlin. Time plays a central part in Tiger's *Untitled*, box construction where in the top portion a light blue model horse stands with a clock mounted into its side. The clock keeps time, but for what reason? Perhaps it is keeping time for the return of Christ whose magnified image is in the bottom section.

Following in the tradition of Surrealism with eloquent and mysterious figures depicting some story or tale of a journey are pieces by Sali Taylor, India Evans and Amy Ernst to name a few. Taylor's *We're Not in Oz Anymore*, 2008 shows a bare breasted vaguely contemporary looking Dorothy with red heels, her three companions that have been transformed into ancient Greek Cycladic statues (one wearing a funnel on its head), and a cut-out of her little dog too, traveling down a yellow brick road. Inviting the viewer on a



Valery Oisteanu, *Berlin Dream, 1974, assemblage*

meandering journey is Evans' (daughter of John Evans) *Trackless Journey's*, 2008. By relating to Evans other pieces through images of a sexy young thing circa 1920's with her face covered by a metal mask on a lush red background surrounded by neoclassical elements, Evans creates chapters with connecting visual clues, but the story remains allusive. Amy Ernst (related to Max Ernst) uses bits and pieces of a torn map with swatches of delicate blues, yellows, greens and oranges, and layered gestural black and white lines that continue or confound the maps lines. While there is no figurative reference in Ernst's *Mapping*, because of its intimate size, 4" x 6", the viewer

becomes the figure in the landscape.

A number of the pieces in the exhibit mingle various text forms from a rough graffiti style to a slick Madison Avenue advertising style. Jeffrey Cyphers Wright's *Always*, 2007, combines found stickers from the streets of the East Village, stencils and spray paint, pieces of a note or is it a piece of a poem, garish pink and green marker graffiti all nicely matted and framed. On a similar riff is Alan Sheinman's *Keep This Coupon*, 1990 which continues the use of stickers but this time it is SpongeBob SquarePants, stamps, cut outs from magazines such as TV Guide and butterflies with pieces from ads exclaiming 10% off Fridays.

Lewis Warsh's *Self Portrait*, is a wall of jumbled cut out white letters on black backgrounds with just a touch of light red here and there that allows the eyes to rest for a second. The individual pieces of paper swirl and twist forming an impenetrable visual poem rather than a narrative of self.

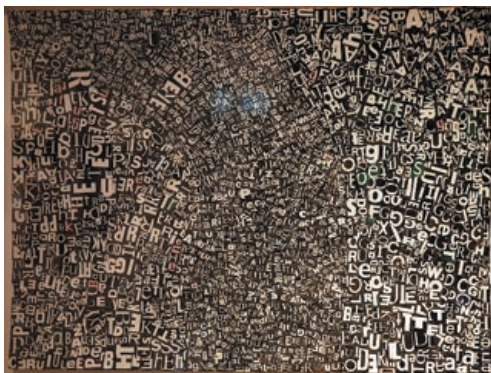
Ripped and Torn is a bit messy at times with a total of 24 artists participating, however, curators Valery Oisteanu and Jeffrey Cyphers Wright were looking for that sense of immediate and intimate human communication which seems to be missing in some of the cutting-edge art being made today.



John Evans, *Trackless Journey*, 2008, assemblage



Jeffrey Cyphers Wright, *Always*, 2007, mixed media



Lewis Warsh, *Self Portrait*, 2007, collage, 14 x 20"



Amy Ernst, *Mapping*, 2007, 4 x 6"