

Curator: **Andrea Zittel**

About a year ago I was walking down 23rd Street between 7th and 8th. It had rained earlier in the day and the street lined with piles of damp black plastic trash bags waiting for pickup, and near one of the piles of bags was a semi-wet piece of paper with clumsy scrawled crayon writing that said: “think with your head.”

Learning to think with our heads, or to think critically, is the benchmark for becoming an engaged adult participant in the discourse of contemporary art. But before critical perspective enters the door we think with our stomachs, relying on intuitive barometers like gut reaction. Often when I look at Mores McWreath’s work I feel like I’ve exhumed my teenage gut, enmeshed with pre-critical sensory confusion. Without knowing any of the particulars about McWreath’s upbringing, I instinctively believe that he grew up in a suburb just like I did, and that even though he was generally content, he simultaneously experienced that same latent sense of foreboding that something was “off” in the world.

Most of the dialog in McWreath’s videos is found (or pillaged) rather than his own, and it is clear that he objectively “gets” the emptiness of living in a culture that oppresses its citizens via the empty rhetoric of freedom. But it is also clear in his work that he is a fully “indoctrinated” participant in this same consumer culture. Without giving up on the big questions (Why are we here? What is life for? What is our purpose?), McWreath points to a world in which meaningful relationships to labor, other people or self-empowerment can easily be relinquished, in exchange for the ever evasive fulfillment promised by a continual consumption of commodities.

Similar to consumer culture that offers us variety without granting choice, McWreath’s videos are generally comprised of clips that fit together in a seeming interchangeable order. Rather than discrete works, each episode is in a sense a cellular segment that can be reconfigured into the evolving recombination that creates the larger whole. The repetitive order of his work also brings to mind the dictate of the earlier generation of minimalists who used the stance of “One thing after another” as a means to eschew subjective composition in favor of a more rote sequence that was the earmark of capitalist modes of production.

McWreath’s work is repetitive, smart, juvenile, considered and foolish. The videos have a handmade feel – as if they were crafted in the corner of a bedroom and aren’t sure how to be public. And when they do go public it can be through many various channels of distribution including Bittorrent, YouTube and Vimeo. Or then again they may just as easily be projected supersize on the walls of the white cube. The image and content privilege neither the art world nor the realm of internet techies, and the medium doesn’t dominate the message. Or in the words of McWreath when talking about his decision to post his videos online – “I don’t see the point of hiding it from anyone.”