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**Emerging Artists: 19 to Watch**  
Paul McCarthy's Santaland  
Hoaxes, Impostors, and Pranks  
Damien Hirst ♥ Francis Bacon  
Art Critics Renew Their Vows

# MODERN PAINTERS

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## COLIN CHILLAG

PRAVUS GALLERY

FROM LEFT: Colin Chillag, *I'm an Evolutionary Biologist*, 2008. Acrylic on canvas, 73 x 62 in.

Solmaz Shahbazi, *Untitled*, 2005. Lambda slide on light box, 24 x 34 x 6 in.

Patricia Esquivias, still from *Folklore II*, 2008. Video, 13 min 33 sec.

In his recent show of 12 biologically oriented paintings, the Phoenix-based painter Colin Chillag presented an outlandish depiction of human evolution. *I'm an Evolutionary Biologist* (2008) chronicles man's passage from ape to human being in a style that is a cross between Mike Kelley and Sir Jon Tenniel. Sperm belches through cartoonish black holes that are interspersed among the branches of a heavily ornamented, archetypal Tree of Life. Cat heads, birds, fish, dogs in all shapes and sizes, and other odd life forms populate the Tree. Labels characteristic of 19th-century biology identify cartoonish slime as "jawless fishes," "monotremes," "nematodes," "crustaceans," "marsupials," and "sponges." Tangled bundles of worms drown beneath vegetation and the whole mess is topped off by a yellow canary trapped by a surreal, squirting cluster of eyeballs sitting on a human brain.

*Nocturne in Orange and Green* (2008) is set outside the 7-Eleven, its parking lot and gas pumps suffused in an eerie, fluorescent glow. The Hopperesque moodiness of the scene is intensified as one follows the hand-pressed, impasto paint as it abruptly gives way to a blank gessoed canvas, onto which Chillag sketches in pencil or lightly paints a science textbook diagram that depicts how gas is extracted from petroleum. The shift is indicative of Chillag's ability to negotiate between linear narrative and stasis, leading us on wild journeys into the bizarre. —LARA TAUBMAN



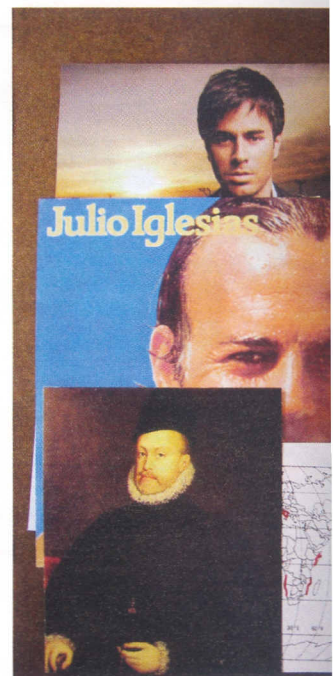
## THE GREENROOM

CENTER FOR CURATORIAL STUDIES, BARD COLLEGE

In television parlance, the "greenroom" is where staff and guests exchange pre- and post-programming conversation—and as a title, "The Greenroom" is apt in its suggestion of the current state of contemporary documentary practice. Art produced in a documentary mode is often like an off-the-record conversation in a space between public and private productions of meaning, with the potential to be tedious or revelatory. Fortunately, this collection of historically contemplative, self-reflexive artworks tends to the latter.

Accordingly, the exhibition is billed as the catalyst for an even broader conversation: a three-year public research campaign headed by curator Maria Lind in collaboration with the artist and theoretician Hito Steyerl. It intends to reassess both the body of work produced in the wake of the recent "documentary turn" and its photographic predecessors (including Martha Rosler, Sophie Calle, Larry Clark, and others).

Video most readily accommodates the discursive demands of contemporary documentary, and for that reason video works predominate, such as Steyerl's *November* (2004), a postrevolutionary paean to the artist's childhood friend Andrea Wolf, a German assassinated in Eastern Anatolia for her association with a Kurdish revolutionary group. The work shifts between deeply personal imagery (the two shot a feminist martial-arts movie together as teenagers) and media constructions of her disappearance. Olivia Plender's *Newsroom* (2008) occupies the show's physical and conceptual heart, as its sole commission. Resembling a TV station circa 1970, the installation serves as the site for the exhibition's forthcoming lectures, performances, and panel discussions. The message is clear: deconstructing the rhetorics of truth is not the task of this show—it is ours. —STAMATINA GREGORY



## BENDING THE WORD

UC BERKELEY ART MUSEUM &amp; PACIFIC FILM

Stories are as old as the world. T low-tech ur-entertainment wired archaic pleasure buttons and, sir weave graspable pattern out of c a prime social agent used to shap perceptions and official histories ancient art of storytelling is not j for order. Sly raconteurs have alv to storytelling's potential to anno détourne. It is this same waywar artists in "Bending the Word" pur with differing success. Olivia Pler installation on the Spiritualist mo somewhat flat, wavering between ethnography and earnest fascina engaging is Martha Colburn's infi intensive animation film *Myth Lak* which dissolves narrative flow in torrent of crazed pilgrims and ju with track marks. Patricia Esquiv endearingly gawky and tongue-in *Folklore II* (2008) explains the kins Habsburg monarch Philip II and J by means of a laptop PowerPoint filmed slightly off-kilter, and flopp images of the subjects in questio Michell's *hahn/huhn* (2004–08) al The piece, an installation of slides the sedimented version of a force live performance in which the art highly associative narrative (pivot near-homophonic German last n "rooster," and Huhn, "chicken"), al staccato urgency of an announcer aided only by an egg timer. Like ci altering home electronics to extra sound, the artists here rely on lo-short out traditional narrative dev fact with fiction and injecting rece with personal narrative. —YASMIN