

of human food, along with other provisions like Lays Potato Chips and Blue Bonnet Butter create a vine crawling up to a four pound package of ground hamburger meat with an American flag stuck in it like a conquered territory. There are brick and sided homes, chandeliers, a formal dining room with a decorative rug, Caesar and Italian salad kits and Martha Stewart with a gleaming smile carries a wreath and scurries away in the corner of the painting. There is a wood hutch that contains the "good" china for those special dinners and other precious objects. The background is a suede-like cobalt blue with a sun of Chex Mix radiating up to the package of ground meat. Fischer and Fritchel refers to Kuharic's view of the stereotypical middle-class and how they live.

Kuharic's works are influenced by her experiences and observations of living in St. Louis. Her paintings and drawings are rich with layered metaphors and appropriations. The super-realist technique combined with a vibrant color palette and exaggerated and exploited imagery creates an attraction and repulsion that occurs simultaneously.

Andrea Green
Curatorial Assistant

Born 1962 in South Bend, Indiana, Katharine Kuharic currently lives and works in St. Louis, Missouri. Her recent selected exhibitions include St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York, NY; Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, NY; Women Only, Eliot Smith Contemporary, St. Louis, MO; Painting Since 1990, The Sheldon Art Galleries, St. Louis, MO; Schmidt's Picks, Philip Slein Gallery, St. Louis, MO; and Wine, Women & Wheels, White Columns, New York, NY. Kuharic has received residencies at MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH and The Bellagio Study and Conference Center, Bellagio, Italy. She has received awards from the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, New York Arts Recovery Fund, College Art Association, Penny McCall Foundation, and New York Foundation for the Arts. Kuharic is currently an assistant professor at Washington University in St. Louis, MO. For the 2004-2005 academic year, Kuharic is a visiting assistant professor at Yale University School of Art.

The Contemporary Project Series is an annual awards and exhibition program designed for both emerging and established artists working in St. Louis.

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Exhibition checklist:

Fischer & Fritchel (underpainting), 2005, oil on linen, 30 x 40 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York.

Jack's Original, 2004, oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York.

Jack's Original Drawing, 2004, graphite and collage on tissue paper, 40 x 30 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York.

Ladue News Drawing, 2005, graphite and collage on tissue paper, 40 x 60 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York.

Image: Jack's Original, 2004, oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York.



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Contemporary Project Series 2004 - 2005

KATHARINE KUHARIC: THE WORLD BROUGHT LOW

March 18 - June 12, 2005

CONTEMPORARYARTMUSEUMSTLOUIS



Katharine Kuharic: The World Brought Low

Originally from the Mid-West, Katharine Kuharic recently relocated to St. Louis after having lived years on the East Coast. Her works are influenced by her experiences of returning to the Mid-West and her personal views of middle class, Mid-Western lifestyles. *The World Brought Low* includes paintings and drawings that are associated with St. Louis and reference suburban stereotypes. Kuharic collects and appropriates images of people and products from locally printed publications such as the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and Ladue News, as well as flyers, circulars, and magazines received via mail. The vibrantly colored and precisely crafted imagery is fetishized and comments on consumption, societal wealth, and suburban development.

Kuharic's process is a laborious one that begins with the meticulous and obsessive collecting of images from consumer culture. Brightly printed on slick paper, Kuharic culls her images from what most consider "junk mail" or the advertisements from the Sunday paper. She carefully cuts out images of Tide Detergent, Dawn Soap, shoes, Lays Potato Chips, bottles of Listerine, Pine Sol, etc., and arranges her specimen-like cutouts on her studio floor. Kuharic calls these "unsolicited images" because she does not seek them out. She begins by drawing each collected image onto tissue paper and arranges the paper cutouts into a collage. There are multiple layers to the drawings which are then transferred onto canvas.

Kuharic begins the painting on canvas with the Dutch/Italian technique of underpainting called *bistre*, a burnt sienna and semi-opaque reddish-brown color with a blue-ish undertone. This process involves a complete rendering in line and tone, thus adding depth to the painting. Each object is painstakingly painted with multiple layers of paint that reveal numerous brush marks.

In *Jack's Original*, Kuharic appropriated figures from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch newspaper and grouped them together with their hands folded in front of them and painted them with expressions of disgrace. They stand atop an architectural structure comprised of various products such as soaps, detergents, food, soda, and shoes. A sun made of Jack's Original frozen pizza and ringed with soap products hovers above them. The intense yellow background radiates behind the figures emphasizing the abundance of products laid out before them.

According to Kuharic, "I grouped the figures and added girth to each of them. In the act of drawing, I gave them a gesture of shame. Each covers their genital area and attempts to appear thinner by obstructing their waists. Because of the shamed gesture and post-Edenic atmosphere, this painting is an updated 'expulsion from the garden of Eden.' The composition is simple—the figures stand on a heap of junk food under a 'sun' of frozen pizza and toiletries." The painting comments on consumption, human obesity, and the overabundance of items that could be found at Sam's Club or Cosco, where products can be purchased in bulk and dramatically exceeds "normal" proportions.

In *Ladue News Drawing*, Kuharic portrays a variety of societal portraits consisting of families, children, and groups affiliated with St. Louis organizations. Everyone is clustered together and dressed in proper attire while traditionally posed in front of the fireplace mantel or seated in a formal living room. Balloons abound as a school celebrates a 25th anniversary. Children are perfectly manicured, posed, and dressed while two dogs rest quietly nearby. A young girl builds with blocks that one can only imagine are brightly colored reds, blues, and yellows. She is creating her own ideal architecture and has placed her own figures within the built structures. A painting hangs over the fireplace, fruit baskets are brimming with goods, and bottles of Tide Detergent sit among the portraits. A celestial configuration of Budweiser Beer and Nature's Nectar Apple Juice float above the heads of those being photographed. The groups of people stand on architectural scaffolding, although it appears rickety and may collapse at any given moment. Perhaps this is a metaphor for the potential fall of wealth that may occur or is it a pedestal for elevating these individuals selected for the front cover of the newspaper magazine?

Suburban sprawl is another topic in Kuharic's work that is evident in the underpainting of Fischer and Fritchel. Structures of homes appear to have collapsed and reveal various domestic settings within. Kuharic states, "These are exactly the types of homes and developments you see all over the United States, sitting alike on former farmland and situated among giant box stores like Home Depot and Wal-Mart." Alpo dog food and plates