

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

Ivan Witenstein

Infidelicious,

U2, peace and other queer shit,

Bonding across lines of difference.

The abortion of cool,

Grey Broadway,

It's a ghetto sound wave now!

April 21 - May 20, 2006

Opening Reception: Friday, April 21, 6 - 8 pm

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present new works by Ivan Witenstein.

For this exhibition, Ivan Witenstein takes as his starting point the assembling of an epic poem partly inspired by a recent biography of the abolitionist John Brown. His interest in simultaneously writing, illustrating and annotating the verses results in a constellation of paintings and sculptures. He sites as a partial template, and an additional point of reference, former *Dead Kennedys*' frontman Jello Biafra's updating the lyrics to folk singer Phil Ochs' song, *Love Me I'm a Liberal*. Biafra turned Ochs' Civil Rights era attack on liberal passivity into one on modern Clinton Democrats. Witenstein is particularly interested in this method of redirecting the accusation.

Witenstein's new sculptures are realized in pigmented resin and fiberglass, bronze and chrome plated steel. Two families of figurative sculptures are accompanied by two individual sculptures of contemplative young boys. The figurative groupings are meant to evoke both the holy trinity and nuclear family units. The boys stand in stark contrast to the families, in that they represent the individual away from the nuclear group. The boys begin and end the exhibition. The first boy, dressed up as a cop riding the family dog, serves the dual function of guarding the entrance to the show and participating as a viewer, studying the works on the wall along with the visitors. The second boy is a sensational version of Huck Finn, with parts of other characters grafted to him.

The exhibition also includes bronze weaponry (seemingly dislodged from commemorative monuments), and a sculpture based on a satirical cartoon that envisions an anti-Northern monument critiquing the North's ideological foibles from a Southern voice. Installed along the gallery walls will be a series of watercolors ranging widely in scale and source, that include allusions to political cartooning, comics, illustration, and music, among other things.

This will be Ivan Witenstein's second solo exhibition. His work has been seen in *Fight or Flight* at the Whitney Museum at Altria, *Art Rock 2005* at Rockefeller Center, and The Armory Show 2005, where *Uncle John's Band*, a sculpture commissioned by The Public Art Fund, was on view.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 615 West 27th Street, between 11th and 12th Avenues. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday from 11am - 6pm. For further information or visuals, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.