



"CHAINED AND BEATEN BY MEN IN HELMETS AND BODY ARMOR," 2005, **Selma Waldman**
CHALK AND PASTEL ON PAPER, 8½" x 12"
COURTESY OF ALLISON & ROSS
PHOTO: JIM COLEY

SEATTLE
Selma Waldman
at Allison & Ross

Selma Waldman's latest body of work, *Wall of Perpetrators* (2005), is an extension of her earlier projects illustrating and delineating political and military torture victims. While smaller in scale than her previous chalk-and-pastel works on paper (now averaging 12" x 8"), the 48 scenes make up in intensity and horror what they lack in size. Now 76, Waldman is the senior political artist in the Pacific Northwest. After a 1959–61 Fulbright Fellowship in Berlin, the University of Texas graduate dedicated her life and art to chronicling examples of social injustice, including racial violence, the Holocaust, apartheid, and the Bosnian and Iraq Wars.

Part of a plan to transport *Wall of Perpetrators* for exhibition near the World Court in The Hague, Netherlands, the survey contained some of the artist's most powerful and beautiful works. *Chained and Beaten By Men in Helmets and Body Armor* sets a prisoner on the ground beneath four soldiers about to pounce on their victim. With a wider palette than usual, the blue background in *Chained* offsets seeping red marks suggesting the victim's blood and the drab brown of the uniforms. One's initial impulse is to turn away from the detailed atrocities that Waldman describes. However, her dynamic draftsmanship activates each scene in a flurry of linear masses that also creates a see-through, ghost-like effect. *Two Dogs III* is abruptly frontal and the most compressed: the soldier stands directly above the victim reclining on the floor. He straddles an attack dog that, in turn, straddles the helpless victim. In one

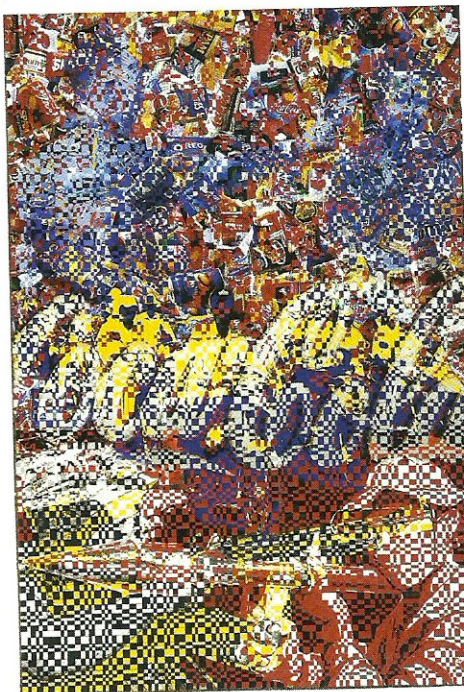
image, Waldman crystallizes the timeless hierarchy of state-sanctioned violence.

—MATTHEW KANGAS

PORTLAND

Dinh Q. Lê at Elizabeth Leach Gallery

In "From Father to Son: A Rite of Passage," Dinh Q. Lê quite literally interweaves his country's past with its present. The Vietnamese artist, who was seven years old when the last American helicopter left Saigon in 1975, addresses the Vietnam War's difficult legacy in the six woven photographic tapestries and one digital video that comprise the most recent of his four one-person shows at Elizabeth Leach since 1998. Using traditional Vietnamese grass



weaving techniques, Lê interlaces long, thin strips of photo prints into patchwork quilts of bracing color. Viewed up close, the works twinkle with abstract crisscrosses that recall late Mondrian. Viewed from several paces back, imagery emerges: hammer and sickle, tropical flowers, and a densely populated street scene in *Crowd*; American flag-draped coffins and Vietnamese war propaganda in *Energizer*; and, in *Coca Cola*, a cornucopia of Western foodstuffs—soft drinks, Spam, Oreos, Cornflakes, and Altoys—intercut with a Vietcong soldier wielding a shoulder-mounted missile launcher. The vibrant palette and witty pastiching of incongruous elements lends levity to subject matter that might otherwise implode under its own gravitas.

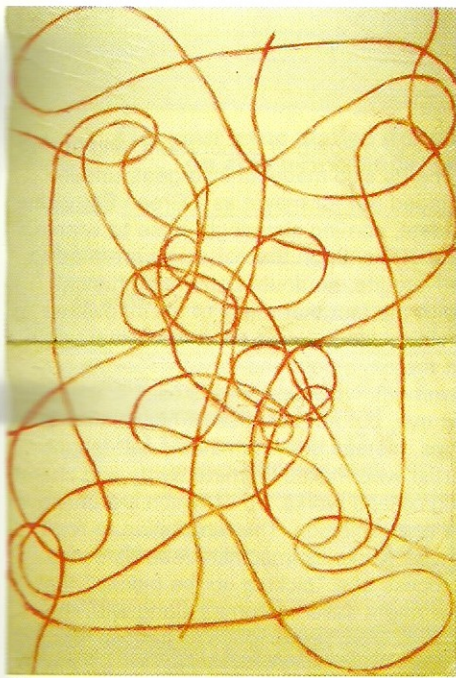
This buoyancy does not characterize Lê's digital video, from whose title the show itself takes its name. The video's split-screen edit presents scenes from Oliver Stone's film *Platoon* and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, the former featuring scenes with actor Charlie Sheen, the latter with Sheen's father, Martin. Just as the photographic tapestries are built around the conceit of intersplicing, so the video's leitmotif revolves around the intercutting of movie clips, such that the two Sheens appear to dialogue with and comment upon the other. The meta-conversation between the films yields no lack of political and familial themes, but the tack wears thin as the video's 10 minutes drag on. The viewer's mind wanders from deeper musings on patriarchy, imperialism, and war to more peripheral questions, such as "Which Sheen is the better actor?" and "Who is the more astute director, Stone or Coppola?" Ultimately, the video highlights cinematic contrasts more effectively than it illustrates ideological parallels. Despite this, the piece and the exhibit as a whole point to the uneasy relationship between a country's forward-focused present and a past that refuses to fade away.

—RICHARD SPEER

SAN FRANCISCO
Robin Hill: "Drawing the Line"
at Don Soker Gallery

Much of contemporary art is primarily cerebral and endowed with scant emotional resonance. Some works, however, reward extended viewing by slowly revealing hidden connections; they serve as metaphors

"UNTITLED (COCA COLA)"
2007, **Dinh Q. Lê**
C-PRINT AND LINEN TAPE, 71" x 47¼"



"DRAWING THE LINE #10," 2007, **Robin Hill**
WAX AND OIL STICK ON PAPER, 44" X 30"

uniting self and world; they slow us down to their eternal present, which contains both memories of the past and intimations of possible futures; and they quiet the mind's chatter. Robin Hill's elegant, introspective drawings and installations induce in the attentive viewer a meditative calm and an aesthetic, even spiritual, exaltation; synthesizing "order and disorder, motion and stillness, opacity and translucency," they endow Minimalism's reticence and process art's methodology with transcendentalist aspiration.

The drawings are composed from one to four sheets of deckled watercolor paper; coated with pure translucent beeswax, they're incised with looping sinuous lines replicating the meanders of randomly dropped pieces of string. Hill edits these aleatory patterns, multiplying and reversing them to create symmetrical unraveled knots, or perhaps calligraphic flourishes; they're lyrical and abstract, but also ambiguously suggestive, like Rorschach inkblots. She projects the resulting mandalas onto her wax topographies and uses a heated metal tool to create molten paths or channels into which she embeds red powdered pigment or oil pastel. The effect is both spare and sumptuous. The drawings read both as maps over which the viewer's eye roves and as sacred symbols or pictographs seen from aloft, like the zoomorphic mounds of ancient American Indians. They exude a ritual and mystery: the spheres lying on the floor, waxen planetoids inscribed with red canals, appear to have

"HOME MOVIES (920-1)"
2007

Jim Campbell
CUSTOM ELECTRONICS, LEDs, WIRE
192" x 288" x 8"

fallen from the device-drawings above—strange orreries (astronomic models) or game boards.

Hill describes her drawings as maps and her installations as "real space" enveloping the viewer; the combination makes the viewer both participant and observer—as we indeed are in our usual four-dimensional mental/physical reality. They're apt vehicles and maps for meditation, combining Matisse's sensual joy with Rothko's spiritual longing.

—DEWITT CHENG

SAN FRANCISCO

Jim Campbell at Hosfelt Gallery

Jim Campbell has turned his work around—literally. Known for his acclaimed low-res LED displays of figures in motion, his newest series, *Home Movies*, merges celluloid with silicon. Rather than projected outward from a panel as in previous works, here smart-chip driven diodes hang in a grid connected by wires and project inward against the wall. The images of children running, road trips, and other unchoreographed weekend activity culled from anonymous Super.8 home movies resolve surprisingly clearly despite the piece's intervening physical graph. In fact, just as the

images reference cinematic and personal histories, the hanging ribbons of chips mimic the appearance of 16 mm filmstrips.

Simply stated, to reverse engineer is to "disassemble and examine or analyze a product or device to discover the concepts involved in manufacture usually in order to produce something similar," and it is a metaphorical Rosetta stone in understanding Campbell's work. First, the artist literally and theoretically deconstructs film in order to reconstruct it into digitally driven LED simulacra. Second, in order to understand Campbell's multifarious concept, the viewer must reverse engineer both the projected images and the object/grid from which they emanate. In turn, the vague, generic projections of this familiar genre lead us each down precipitous, personal mnemonic rabbit holes.

While *Home Movies* continue Campbell's ongoing investigation into how little information is needed to visually communicate an idea, they also function as a Möbius strip of art and technological history. They embody the minimalist aesthetic of the grid, the intellectual rigor of conceptualism, the language of film, the engineering ingenuity of electronic art. Whole images are

