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The new pulse of Lower Manhattan artists

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The Shape of Things to Come

Through Dec. 14

REDHEAD at LMCC

125 Maiden Lane, 2nd Floor, off Water Street

Mon.–Fri., 12–6pm

Making Noise

Melville Gallery

213 Water Street, near the South Street Seaport

Through Jan. 2, 2008

Wed.–Sun., 12pm – 5pm

Imaginary Arsenals
Cuchifritos (Inside the Essex Street Market)
Through Jan. 19, 2008
Mon.-Sat., 12pm – 5:30pm
Closed Dec. 20-Jan. 2, 2008

By Abby Luby

The catastrophic upheaval of 9/11 affected everyone in Lower Manhattan, but an often overlooked contingent are its artists, whose work still reverberates with the impact of the WTC attacks. The umbrella organization for most of these artists is the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, who started their artist-in-residency program in 1997 — a program that sought to integrate artists with the daily grind of white and blue collar workers, de-homogenizing the social landscape of the Financial District. LMCC housed the new program in office and studio spaces on the 91st and 92nd floors of Tower One, then lost them all and tragically, one artist, Michael Richardson. In the aftermath of the attacks, LMCC staff and artists dispersed to different locations Downtown.

Earmarking a tumultuous decade and celebrating the 10th year of the residency program is “Out of Site,” a series of exhibitions that considers the future while glancing over its shoulder at September 11. A tour led by LMCC Residency Director and Curator, Erin Donnelly last Saturday started at the council’s Maiden Lane office and exhibition space “Redhead.” Entitled “The Shape of Things to Come,” the show was curated by Marco Antonini and is based on the 1933 H. G. Wells novel of the same title about future events from 1933 to 2016. Work of the nine artists include video, photography, installation pieces, sculpture, ink drawings and reflects the artists’ experience of Lower Manhattan. Among them are a projected DVD loop of a man trashing an abandoned WTC office in the spring of 2001 entitled “Requiem for the New Economy” by Patrick Meagher and Dave Shim.

Matthew Bakkon’s large photograph shows a filing cabinet next to a slender WTC window overlooking New York Bay tagged to sell for five dollars entitled “Smartworld Technology, Suite 9127, 1 WTC, 2001/2007.”

“Downtown” by Jihyun Park is a small scale model of Lower Manhattan, made out of thousands of small incense sticks. Hovering upside down near the floor, the its underbelly reveals the two protruding rectangles of the WTC. Floating nearby is a miniature Statue of Liberty, also hanging upside down.

Ambient sound of the Financial District inspired artists in the second show, “Making Noise,” at the Melville Gallery near the South Street Seaport. Curated by Andrew Cappetta and Jeff Pash, re-shaped sound was heard via speakers, video, opening a box and a sprawling multi pronged antennae shaped as a large 18th century ship. Nadine Robinson’s “Rock Box” was a glittery speaker pumping out oldies rock and roll. A street performance outside the gallery by Kabir Carter was in progress using mixed street sounds with live, random voices received by radio transmitters, altering the street experience as you walked by. This show is conceptually similar with work created during

the Fluxus movement in the 1960s, when artists considered everyday sounds and actions an art event. There is a subtle political undercurrent in some sound works here, such as Stephen Vitiello's "Whispering Corners." Vitiello took sounds from Grand Central Station just after September 11, catching subdued conversations and station sounds in what he calls "raw evidence of living in a city under military watch."

"Imaginary Arsenals," the third show in the series, are works by past resident artists using war imagery. Curated by Kimberly Lamm at Cuchifritos Artists Alliance, Inc. on Essex Street, the show uses sculptural, video, graphic, and photographic work infused with military imagery.

"The Osama Wars," an archival print of a folded dollar bill by Dan Tague, shows a cleverly folded \$20 bill that respells "Osama" on the top and "Wars" on the bottom with the White House in the center. "Occupied," by Jane Benson is a wood door sculpture with stain glass windows built into the gallery wall, evoking a self-imposed prison of one's home in an occupied country.

The works in all three shows are both intellectually accessible with a heady conceptual edge, but engrossing and stimulating overall. Steeped in the history of September 11, these artists seek to climb out of the past and move deftly to the future, embracing new unique formats that undoubtedly reflect the new pulse of artists in Lower Manhattan.