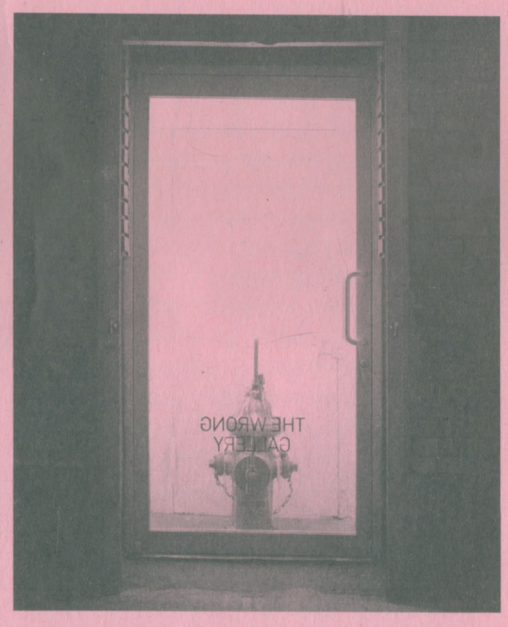
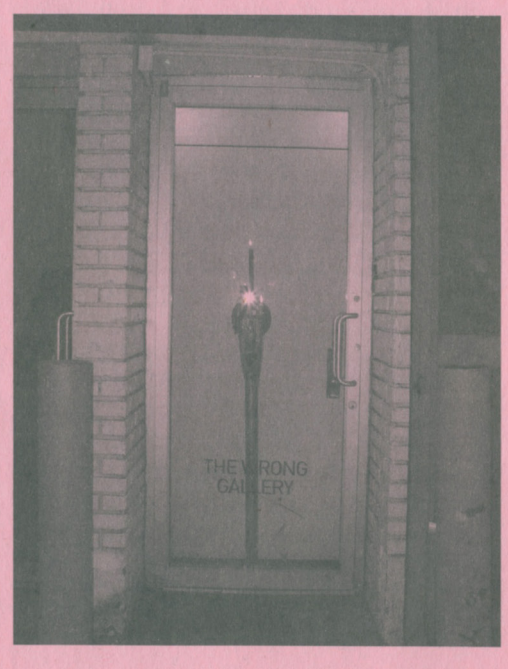
Wrong TIMES

13 QUESTIONS FOR DARA FRIEDMAN & MARK HANDFORTH BY THE WRONG GALLERY

The Wrong Gallery: Who are you?
Dara Friedman: I'm a middle aged white woman with brown hair, and I might do just about anything.

TWG: Where do you come from?
DF: I come from a meeting of opposites. Aleksandra pointed that out. The Germans lost the war. The Americans came in and occupied Germany. The American soldiers bred with Germany's best -- the lost and lovely girls who were born during the war. It's complicated. It's a place where you push and get pulled at the same time. My mother's family comes from a place of high culture- they made wine, were poets, sculptors, curators- part of German expressionism -- wild and heady and privileged. My father's family came to Ellis Island from Russia. They started with a vegetable cart and took it from there. I grew up on the beach in the 70s in Florida. I'm the existentialist in the bikini.
TWG: What are you doing?
DF: Trying to describe to you that my waters are deep, but my well runs dry. I'm sitting here in a darkened room setting up 'Sunset Island' in which my actors are asking each other these sorts of questions. But they don't answer the questions. You know, the only honest answer is an action. I can tell you that I'm sorry, but unless I don't do it again, it doesn't mean shit. Tomorrow I'll be taking care of our children again, and you, and our home. But I could disappear. Kick you in the ass. Stick with it.
TWG: Why do you do it?
DF: Because I'm addicted to love.
TWG: What inspires you?
DF: Other artists inspire me. Fearlessness and ease. Nature. People as Nature. The huge beauty of it.
TWG: What do you hate?
DF: Snobs. Fear
TWG: What are you afraid of?
DF:
TWG: What are you looking forward to?
DF: Grandchildren.
TWG: What is special to you?
DF:
TWG: What is there too much of today?
DF:
TWG: What do you need?
DF: Some time alone at home. I also need to party hard and long. To get out of my head and into my body.
TWG: What do you want?
DF: I want the house to be finished. And clean, so that Cherry's allergies stop. And a swimming pool.
TWG: What's next?
DF: I can't really see beyond right Now. I think that what's happening Now is also Next for a while. I think that this is IT. But then there's always Later.
The Wrong Gallery: Who are you?
Mark Handforth: Mark Handforth
TWG: Where do you come from?
MH: I live in Miami, though I grew up in London, but I'm born in Hong Kong and my mum's Irish.
TWG: What are you doing?
MH: Giving the girls a bath.
TWG: Why do you do it?
MH: it keeps them clean, washes the day away; it calms them down before they eat their dinner. I'm a big believer in baths; you've got to soak all that stuff out of you before it becomes you.
TWG: What inspires you?
MH: Nature, and human nature.





TWG: What do you hate?
MH: Boring conversations.
TWG: What are you afraid of?
MH: Prisons.
TWG: What are you looking forward to?
MH: Long white hair.
TWG: What is special to you?
MH: My two girls, obviously.
TWG: What is there too much of today?
MH: Real estate.
TWG: What do you need?
MH: Sleep.
TWG: What do you want?
MH: Time to enjoy what I've got.
TWG: What's next?
MH: A ski vacation?

MICHAEL WILKINSON INTERVIEWED BY MARCEL PROUST

Marcel: On my walks along the Kelvin Way I would often find myself, unexpectedly prompted by the rustling of some long forgotten crisp packet or carrier bag, caught mid flight by a protuberant hawthorn or buddleia like an arrow from Cupid's quiver gone awry in Arcadia, contemplating the effects of the packaging of childhood breakfast cereals and their role in the forming of aesthetic sensibility. Standing, bow legged and dumbfounded, before a faded and embrittled packet of Nik Naks forced as if by the hands of some woodland sprite into the crack between a park bench's bum-worn slats, the colours of the Nik and the Nak, once glorious in their flourescent sunset hues now rendered almost as transparent as the central window through which one observed the quality of the goods, I would be reduced almost to tears. The tiny barcode, in its pomp as bold as Hyperion, now faded into the slightest of hieroglyphs, the embrazened vertical gate of its columns a ghostly ruin offering little resistance to my penetrating gaze. I would be transported back to my childhood breakfast table, back to the baffling incongruity of Tony the Tiger's lurid orange coat, aflame like Hera's Aegis against the deep blue of the background, a reference no doubt to celestial Olympus, and recall how, with the slightest movement of my eye, these saturated printing inks would create a flashing optical effect as if the gods themselves were arguing, as I was with my brother and sister, over their breakfast choices, and Zeus was casting down lightning bolts because Hephaestus had finished off the Frosties.
Denied access to my heart's want, to Tony's golden horde, I would find myself considering the far less attractive option of the Rice Krispies with their attendant imps Snap, Crackle and Pop. These demiurges of the petit dejeuner occupied a universe of far greater tonal variety than did Tony, trapped as he was forever in a cage of blaring oppositional shades, scowling at the fate of such a timeworn graphic solution but bravely puffing out his chest and declaring "They're great", a reference less to the Frosties proffered in his mighty paw and more to the enduring power of blue and orange. Snap and cohorts however, erupted from a sky akin to that of a Titian, their no doubt Bacchanalian origins in some Elysian glade denoted by a subtle tint of azure and heightened by the yellow, the green and the red of their sinister pointy hats and elfin garb. These malificent hobgoblins deceived the still half sleeping mind into believing there was yet some promise in their dull offering, so apt to become saturated on even the briefest contact with milk. The chromatic variety of their packaging, a Piero della Francesca of the breakfast table, belied the deathly dunn coloured inner world of its contents. If these creatures took the form of fauns or satyrs it was with evil intent, less the offspring of Pan and more a manifestation of those ghostly harbingers of doom, the three horsemen of the Snap, Crackle and Apopalypse. I averted this disaster by turning my bleary eyes towards the remaining candidates, none sadly unopened and still holding some much fought over prize, a spokey dokey say. I quickly discounted the Golden Nuggets, their cavalcade of hirsute pan handlers provoking in me a kind of nausea, as would at times the cereal itself, should I fall prey to a greed like that of Klondike Pete's and consume half the packet before my unwitting brother, fellow frontiersmen on the breakfast goldrush, had realised his pardner's venal ambition. Even the foil inner lining of this most glamourous of cereals, unique in the breakfast pantheon, could not tempt me to follow Pete and his ludicrous donkey into their mine of precious pellets. The Weetabix too were afforded scant regard, their prosaic mantle offering neither noble beast nor mythic caricature, only an ear of corn, to my childish eye an image with liitle appeal and no relation to the breeze block of biscuit in the box.

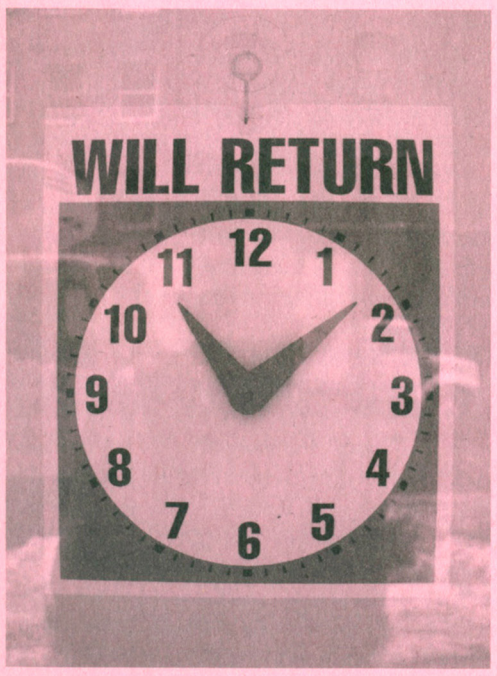
While carefully considering my remaining alternatives, a melody would steal upon me like that little phrase in Vinteuil's sonata, a haunting refrain accompanied by a lyrical poetry:
I'm a giraffe and I live in the sky,
They call me lofty and you know why,
For breakfast I have two tree tops,
But I'd rather have a bowl of Coco Pops.

Prompted by Lofty's preference I would descend into the heart of darknessthat was Coco Pops. Coco the chimpanzee, a kind of Cheeta in lesure wear, proffered all the mysteries of a journey into the interior. He erupted from an explicable bright yellow sky, as exotic as a Windward Isle banana, in proletarian jeans and t-shirt, baseball cap perched at a rakish angle, for all the

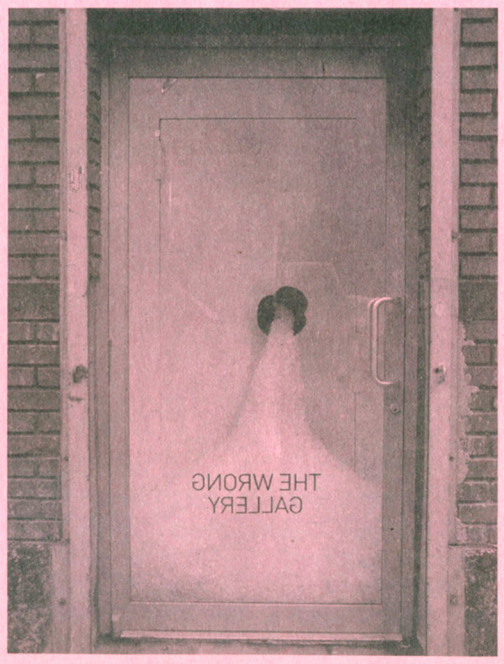
definitive proposition, the support of the artist will have a functional presence and not merely symbolic.
LK – What do you think is the role of the Wrong Gallery in this art system?
CF - Art has the task of creating wrong words, so maybe wrong galleries. The art system is a delicate, invisible structure, frightened and intimidated. Whatever experiences a rapid evolution in art is reflected in the system as a mere shadow of what it could have been. The consequences of a greater or lesser sense of responsibility are equally divided. The artist finds his own dimension in the positive, participatory betrayal of the loftiest ideas of art. It is only human to try to share the resulting sense of guilt and to become everyone, the distracted audience of mutual shortcomings.

TALK TO THE HAND: MATT KEEGAN INTERVIEWS JAMIE ISENSTEIN

I walk up to Jamie's hand, which is set in a golden oval frame with a blue background and is illuminated by a picture lamp, at PS1 in Long Island City. She is trying to look like a painting, so she holds her hand still for minutes at a time in various art historical gestures. She has been sitting behind the wall performing her work Magic Fingers within the Greater New York 2005 exhibition since March and it's now July. She will be here until the end of September. Her commitment to performing this work has led me to receive e-mails such as, "Sorry I've been so bad about emailing, I've been in the wall at PS1 for 4 days this week." I watch the audience examine her hand. "Is it real?" asks an entranced kid to his mom. I saw Jamie execute a prior version of this work in 2003 at Andrew Kreps Gallery, but I never get tired of watching people fall under its spell. I lean in and whisper, "Jamie, I'm here" and then I go around to the adjacent room. Jamie leaves her post for a moment to open the make-shift entrance to her secret chamber. I enter her little bat cave and see the Wiz behind the curtain. The following conversation took place in this hidden space. Jamie's left hand continues to mesmerize the exterior audience while we talk. Occasionally people blow on her or touch her. A few gasp or scream when she changes gestures.
M: Something that has always interested me about your work is your relationship, comedic or otherwise to death. Paradoxically though, most of your work emphasizes the fact that you are alive, whether by your actual physical presence or by your suggested presence with the "Will Return" sign you hang when you are temporarily absent from the performance. With this work I've noticed that once your audience realizes you are alive by seeing your hand move, they try to interact with you by touching you, blowing on you… You told me you get licked and that once someone gave you a paper cut. What do you think about the idea that unlike a regular artwork that is framed or a sculpture or whatever, you confront your audience with your aliveness and they need to let you know that they are living as well?
J: Yeah, that explains to a certain extent why I've gotten such strange responses, really visceral responses like being stroked and licked. I hear people say that there must be a camera set up somewhere so I can see them even though I can't. They feel like they're being watched.M: So your presence makes them aware of their own presence. J: Exactly! Also I am always surprising people and spooking them. I think people go to museums expecting that everything in the museum is going to be fake or a representation of some kind. Then I work with that pre-supposition and turn it on its head, so that something that looks fake or inanimate is actually real. M: Maybe it's the surprise at finding something a little too familiar that causes them to respond with their own body. They don't believe you're real so they have to touch you to know for certain what they are up against. J: That's my guess.



M: Have you read Inside the White Cube by Brian O'Doherty? I thought of your work and the question of you being alive in the exhibition space when I read this. O'Doherty writes that "Art exists in a kind of eternity of display, and though there is lots of 'period' (late modern) there is no time. This eternity gives the gallery a limbolike status. One has to have died to already be there". J: I don't know that, but it sounds like it's up my alley.



M: Yeah, the idea is that the exhibition space is timeless, but in your work you make the viewer aware of time by placing temporal work into traditional exhibition spaces. At PS1 you are here growing older while you sit in the wall, and in the Wrong Gallery installations there was a melting iceman with a slowly descending top hat in the large space and the "Will Return" sign with a working clock in the small space… All these works are presented in types of vitrines that frame the work as relics, as something that is supposedly suspended in time, but you are doing the reverse. You are displaying time and movement; melting ice, a clock that is set ten minutes ahead, your moving hand…J: Actually that's the catch. I'm simultaneously trying to do both, suspend time and display it. My hope is that the eternal space of the museum will make things that would normally die last forever… which of course is impossible. But I'm looking for that loophole. M: So in the scheme of death versus eternity is the "Will Return" sign the next life, the after life or is it the fountain of youth?J: It's more of a placeholder. I like to use the "Will Return" sign in my performances because it implies a human presence when I'm absent. It's a promise of my future presence and in this way it prevents me from really ever being gone. So it's not exactly a fountain of youth but it does prevent my death in a way. M: How do you see your work functioning when you are dead? Will the "Will Return" sign still reference you when you are dead as it does now while you are around? J: It's my intention that I never die. I just ignore that issue. Intentionally.M: Uh huh. (laughs)J: Sure the conceit is that I will die and the works that are about me living forever are really about my mortality in a way. But according to the sign I'm just temporarily gone. M: It seems like the Wrong Gallery "Will Return" sign is the most useful version of the sign as your permanent replacement because it is always set ten minutes ahead. You never have to go back to advance it. J: Yeah, it's true- that silly gag clock is my permanent replacement. I'll have to put it on my tombstone one day. M: You can have the grounds keeper change the battery! But you're not going to die.J: No way!M: So moving on, another thing O'Doherty writes about is how installation shots are always photos of the uninhabited gallery and if there is a person in the photo they are only there as a physical reference to the height or dimension of an art work. Basically O'Doherty suggests that the gallery is like a tomb – a space reserved for the dead to live eternally. And the installation shot emphasizes this by usually being devoid of people. I always consider photographs of art as something that freezes that moment of the art on display, but with a lot of your performance installations, that's not possible because of the temporality of your presence in the space. So do you think about this issue when shooting installation shots to document your work? J: That's a really complicated question with documenting my work and my photos in general. A lot of my impetus to start performing live for such long stretches sometimes has to do with getting over the problem of documenting a performance because photographs and video never depict what actually happened. Nothing can replace the real thing so if I want the work to exist as I conceive of it with a living component then it has to be live.
M: But you do document your work, and even present this documentation as art. And I love this documentation because it does archive what happened, but it's also an artwork and it's also a document of you being alive and present. It reminds me of something we've talked about before, Barthes' Camera Lucida and its discussion of death, and how Barthes writes about photography as capturing a specific time, a lived moment that has passed. So do you see your performances and the subsequent installation shots or performance documentation as having a relationship with death? J: I know what you mean and I do see my photographs as having a relationship with death in a way by capturing me at a specific moment, especially with the installation shots. But when I photograph my performances for display, I don't think about them as documentation but more as proposals.
M: Proposals- so like a proposal for a future project?J: Or just a proposal for a sculpture that has a live component to it, in general, not even something to make in the future. Because documentation is so deadening, like you were saying.
M: Yeah, especially with a lot of performance documentation.
J: I often think about Charles Ray's Plank Piece where he's in the studio propped up on the wall draped over a plank of wood and you don't know how long he was there and it's not endurance art, its just that time is not a consideration …Sure it's documentation of this ephemeral event but I like to think of it as a proposal for a sculpture as well. M: It's also related to your work in that his body does not become physical anymore. In that moment he's like this lifeless slab just as architectural as the board and it doesn't matter what he does after, or what he did to get up there, it just seems articulated perfectly.J: I want that same approach to this work. I want to imagine that if Charles Ray was asked to put that work into a museum then he'd go to the museum and hang. And well, I guess I'm doing that.
M: Yeah, I like the idea of thinking of all these different things as proposals because a proposal isn't finite. If the vernacular of the work is about temporality, a proposal always allows for some kind of fluctuation in the work. Obviously, when you sell work, it exists in a finite form for the collector, but the idea that there are other permutations is so relevant to your work. It's so nice to think about what you do as something that isn't finite and is not a statement with a period at the end.
J: Yeah,… sculptures and even photos risk dying when they become so stagnant and stationary. But if I try to think about everything I make as proposals than they can grow and change- and there's a lot of hope involved in that idea, and that is a way of living forever. Just through possibility rather than through completion.
M: I think that's a good place to stop for now.
J: Ok.

SILKE OTTO KNAPP IN CONVERSATION WITH JASON RUBELL

Jason Rubell: Silke, thanks for agreeing to this interview for the Wrong Times 2. I am neither a writer, nor critic but for some reason I have been asked by the editors to interview you as a collector. Hope it works here we go …
When we first met at your London studio with Daniel Buchholz about two years ago I was taken aback by the subject matter of your paintings. On the one hand, we saw overgrown tropical landscapes and on the other, the fantasy of an American landscape (Vegas in all its glittering glory!). Why the juxtaposition of such diverse imagery?
Silke Otto Knapp: I was interested in the extreme artifice of Los Angeles and Las Vegas and the way their representation feels both familiar and exotic. The architecture of Las Vegas casinos comes alive at night and the resulting spectacle of dissolving lights became the starting point for a series of paintings in which I used the white of the canvas as a negative space for the black of the night. The city lights and casinos translated into pools of paint dissolving on the white surface of the canvas. The tropical landscapes you saw were also based on photographs I took in Los Angeles—in the Huntington Gardens, an amazing botanic garden where different habitats exist next to each other in the actual landscape, rather than the confined space of a greenhouse. The juxtaposition of different plants—cacti next to palm trees, next to flowering fruit trees etc. —appears like a staged composition. Both the garden paintings and the cityscapes at night are based on an existing structure that seems to be in the process of dissolution. This becomes visible on the canvas where the uncontrollable nature of the watercolor collides with the composition of the photograph. At the time you visited the studio I had also just completed the first paintings with figures in them: stage sets with dancing showgirls in various formations. I think the showgirl paintings would not have been possible without the gardens: the choreography of the girls on stage, walking down a staircase in their feathery costumes, directly relates to the all-over pattern of the subtropical foliage and the way it is translated in the paintings.
JR: The technique you utilize is also quite unique. The use of watercolor on canvas seems to accentuate the dreamy almost abstract feeling in the works. Isn't watercolor on canvas almost an oxymoron? Or is that the only way to control the desired emotional content of the painting?
SOK: The watercolor has an immateriality that I really like—it sits on the surface of the canvas like a translucent layer. Initially I draw the image relatively close to the photograph, but it soon gets caught up in the different layers and washes, slowly emerging out of the process as something different from its source. It is almost as if I am witnessing the painting process, observing what is happening to my concept of an image and reacting to it as I go along. I am often surprised by the result.
JR: Today there seem to be a numbers of painters, such as Laura Owens and Peter Doig to name just two, who are becoming increasingly adventurous in both their control and selections of mediums. I recently saw, during a trip to the Basel Art Fair, a large, new Laura Owens painting where the watercolor became the primary medium. The watercolor demanded a sureness of hand and decisiveness that made the painting quite vital and essential. Does the demand for complete control of the watercolor on the slick canvas "excite" the painting in a way in which oil or acrylic simply cannot?
SOK: I saw that painting and really liked it. She is very bold and unafraid in making decisions both in terms of subject matter and handling of the paint. I am much more hesitant—my paintings emerge out of a slow process—building up the image, removing it again with washes or sprays of water, then continuing with the traces, building it up once more. Drying marks, drips, blotches and layers of color often collide with the image and lead to new decisions. The surface ends up very worked and quite dense and I guess that's in contrast to qualities associated with watercolor. Using it on canvas enables this process and makes it visible without building up a heavy surface. In a way I try to gain control over the watercolor by slowing the painting process down but at the same time coincidences and unpredictable effects are incorporated into it.

JR: I know your source materials come from photography, both found and taken. I was with a painter recently who said that his professor said that a painter should not use the photograph as source material in his paintings. Does the actual photo reference make the painter less of a painter? Should imagery and subject matter come simply from the head?
SOK: For me, using a photograph as a starting point has always felt liberating because the initial decisions regarding the composition are already made. Once the image is drafted onto the canvas, I feel very free to do with it whatever I want and the photograph becomes less important. My paintings develop in series or groups and the one I am working on is usually some sort of reaction to the one I just finished. A whole wall in my studio is taken up by photocopies of images that I always regroup in new formations as a way of developing ideas and deciding which ones will eventually end up as paintings. It's a bit like imagining future exhibitions even if in reality things take a long time to evolve.
JR: I went to see the Venice Biennale last month and was taken aback by the American Pavilion exhibition of Ed Ruscha. His rehashed historical look at the Los Angeles paintings of his past was for me a slick trick. These newer works felt almost like some form of conceptual or documentary exercise on the changing American landscape. The romance of the 1960s and 70s L.A. landscapes from the older paintings was turned into some sort of sociological game. I was curious about your views on these works since you share an affinity and reverence for this slice of Americana in your own paintings.
JR: I really liked the new paintings. It seemed totally in keeping with Ed Ruschas' analytical approach to painting to revisit earlier works and then showing both versions together in the two identical sides of the pavilion. The fact that the rules were so transparent made the results even more interesting. I thought the new