

# ART=CITY

March 4, 2013

THEODORE:Art, 56 Bogart St.

(Through 2/24) Tad Beck / Diana Cherbuliez

What's on view: Lenticular photos and video of men and boats by Tad Beck and cut mirror sculptures by Diana Cherbuliez. The two have been friends for twenty years and both have studios on the small island of Vinalhaven, Maine.

**Rhett Jones:** This show was my favorite of the day. Tad Beck's lenticulars in particular were great. The pieces brought to mind the history of mysticism in queer art. Jack Smith, William S. Burroughs, Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, A.A. Bronson, Jhonn Balance and many other major artists have established a mystical tradition for queer art. The nautical theme even evoked the sailors in "Fireworks" by the most mystical queer artist of all, Kenneth Anger. He places these glowing, naked men on the stern of the ship like Mermaids or Helen of Troy. As the lenticular changes with your movement, a vague mandala shape appears around them. I knew it wasn't just the mandala that gave the work a magical quality and looking at the press materials he states that the pieces were shot in the style of spirit photography from the late 19th century. It's art that I haven't seen before that understands the history it's working with.

Diana Cherbuliez's work is less exciting but in this case it benefits from the collaboration with Beck. Again the nautical theme comes in and the mirrors in her sculptures gave the room a refracted quality that made the two artists work breathe together. There's something very boring about the naval aesthetic in general to me. When I see these seafaring and ship related objects in a normal context it makes me think of a boring dad who has a yacht and a basement with a bar, where everything is ship themed, and he serves nothing but gin. The fact that this show could get me into a broader mindset despite an extremely specific and personal aesthetic prejudice is an accomplishment.

**Whitney Kimball:** I'm not as crazy about the transformation of ship-theme from uninteresting to kinda interesting, but I think you're spot on with the analysis of their work. Definitely some Jack Smith-style fantasy and an antique quality about Tad Beck's lenticular photos; that's not as true of his more claustrophobic video of two men rowing in place (extremely similar to Michael Waugh's *The Invisible Hands* that was in his recent show at Winkelman). There wasn't enough work here to get to the bottom of that, though, and Beck could benefit from more space.

Given that they're on an island, it was interesting to me that almost all of this work seems to be about isolated beauty—literally, self-contained, shiny, microcosmic shapes, or Cherbuliez's ropes hanging from glass. I didn't take much else from the show, but maybe that was the point?

**Corinna Kirsch:** I wasn't so drawn to the lenticular images; they seemed too gimmicky to me. The mirrored sculptures seemed gimmicky, too, because as you drew into the work, you realized there were small objects like teeth and human figurines attached to it. The teeth attached to a string weren't so bad because they were more than decorative; lined up on each side of the "valley", looked like they were waiting to cross to the

other side. To meet up with their teeth buddies on the other side? Who knows? That poetic effect was silly, and a bit too vague for my taste.

**Adrian Chen:** To be honest, I like gimmicks in art. Give me some gimmicks or I might get confused and bored and start checking twitter. I think this is because I mainly experience art via looking for interesting stories to write about for my job, which means I look for novelty, easy comprehension and/or controversy. All of the net art I've liked most and written about (Brad Troemel and Jogging's stuff, the privacy-challenging projects of OKFocus and Kyle McDonald, Adam Parrish's Everyword twitter bot) could be considered more or less "gimmicky."

That is to say, I liked this show a lot. The nautical theme was a strong conceptual hook I could hang my enjoyment of the tricks being played here. I was not surprised to learn these guys are based in Maine, because their work reminded of a book I loved in college, Joy Williams' *The Changeling*, which is a modern-day fairytale about a woman who is swept up by a rich guy to his family's magical/haunted island off the Maine coast. There's a similar WASP-y New England mysticism about this work: Those two fit naked guys trapped in an eternal crew team practice could be the end-product of a lacrosse-playing magician's revenge.

