

April 8 - May 15, 2010

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 8, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Stephanie Cormier
*The Reconceptualized Universe
of the Anti-Logo League Girls*

Stephanie Cormier was born in Montreal, Quebec, raised in Barbados in the Caribbean and now lives in Toronto, Ontario. Her practice includes photography, video and sculpture installation. Cormier "sculpts, draws and paints" with everyday materials, using objects that are either plentiful and recycled or conversely nostalgic or obsolete. She enjoys giving these humble objects a new and honorable context. Stephanie studied at the Ontario College of Art and Design where she completed her BFA. Her work has been exhibited across Canada as well as in London, England and New York City. She has earned several national grants and awards and her work can be found in the *Carte Blanche Photographers Book* between Susan Coolen and Douglas Coupland.

Tara Marshall is an art historian, curator, writer and educator from Toronto. She earned her BA in Art History from McGill University, and her MA from York University, where she wrote about the use of irony in the films of Joyce Wieland. She has written for catalogue essays for exhibitions of contemporary art and been published in *Lola* and *Canadian Art*. She currently teaches at the Art Gallery of Ontario and the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Toronto.

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EDITING Sara Kelly, Heather Webb
TYPESETTING Sara Kelly
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A.L.L. Girl 5, mixed media, 10" across, 2009



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The Reconceptualized Universe of the Anti-Logo League Girls

by Tara Marshall

In the captivating, hybridized and reconceptualized universe of the Anti-Logo League Girls, a sincere, non-ironic belief in the salvation of nature and humanity is the inspiration for a world where excess waste is no longer our collective dirty little secret – and is reborn into new, and encouraging, signs of our time.

Stephanie Cormier's new universe is populated by beautiful women – the Anti-Logo League Girls – surrounded by aesthetically alluring symbols and patterns. But don't let all that decorative beauty fool you; these symbols and patterns contain multiple references and many layers of meaning that unfold upon further contemplation and systematically work to subvert our contemporary consumer culture.

This reconceptualized universe, composed of several series of digital prints and assembled objects, touches upon the realms of fantasy, myth and reality. Within each print, the material is layered in a process similar to traditional printmaking, but actually accomplished entirely through digital technology. Strips of waste packaging – detritus from our hyper-consumer culture – have been scanned and then digitally combined, or woven together, using computer software and thus reborn with new meaning and importance as symbols of the new Anti-Logo universe.

Cormier's work is transformative and transgressive. It functions outside of categories and through the productive coexistence of dichotomies: it is simultaneously craft *and* art, traditional *and* contemporary, rooted in history *and* boldly bounding into the future. Cormier's transposition of hand crafting processes such as printing and weaving into a digital process represents a new hybrid art form and suggests the potential of combining new technology with old techniques and materials.

The *Digital Weave* prints, although created digitally, retain their association with hand weaving, presenting a new, modern, visually seductive aesthetic that could be called "handtech." Weaving is a meaningful choice for Cormier's new universe – in ancient belief systems weaving is a metaphor for the creation of the universe. The strips of waste packaging from which the weaves are made are chosen in such a way that the logos or original sources are obscured. The resulting patterns lose their connection with current or popular culture imbuing them with gravity that is belied by their frivolous source material. The digital weaves also reference the nature-based spirituality and mythology of Aboriginal Canadian culture while drawing our attention to the ongoing exploitation of its people and their land with environmental degradation. By combining weaving with digital technology, Cormier's work also challenges the gender stereotypes in which weaving is women's work and technology is the realm of men. Furthermore, weaving is commonly viewed as "merely craft" and Cormier cunningly blurs the line between art and craft, bringing the marginalized realm of craft into that of "high art."



In *The Reliquary* print series Cormier transforms garbage into relics of contemporary society, or the world as it was before it was taken over by the Anti-Logo League Girls. The strips of cast-off packaging and recycled material have now been composed, again through digital photography, into neopagan symbols or talismans of Cormier's new belief system. These patterns and symbols, reminiscent of the God's Eyes and mandalas of ancient cultures, replace the ubiquitous corporate logos that populate our current visual field. Instead of the swoosh of Nike or the LV logo of Louis Vuitton, Cormier gives us symbols whose inspiration is recycling, not just as a survival technique in our garbage saturated culture, but as a requirement for admission into the Anti-Logo universe.

At the centre of this new universe are the Anti-Logo League Girls. They are warriors, who with ferocity and allure point us towards, if not righteousness, then at least a new consciousness. They are the defenders of the natural environment and are poised, ready to guard against the deluge of advertising, of which, significantly, women are the key targets. Just as the Guerilla Girls protested the treatment of women artists by the American art establishment in the 1970s and 80s, so too these guerilla Anti-Logo Girls protest corporate exploitation of the environment and of consumers. Their beauty is straight from a magazine but has been obscured or depersonalized by the fact that we cannot see the pupils of their eyes. Stripped of their individuality, they become icons – not beauty icons, but rather icons of social and environmental justice, like modern-day Athenas. Adjacent to these goddess-like women, small sculptural creations made from waste packaging are displayed. In Cormier's universe these objects replace the brand-name fetishized products of contemporary culture, and are examples of a new form of art and a new sort of beauty based on reusing and repurposing. In the same way that advertisements strategically pair beautiful women with luxury consumer products as an enticement to consume, Cormier pairs her Anti-Logo League Girls with these new art objects, inviting and enticing us to enter her new universe. The invitation is hard to resist.