

# LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

514 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10001 Tel. 212 941 0012 Fax. 212 929 3265

info@lennonweinberg.com www.lennonweinberg.com

## Joseph Zito

Heartney, Eleanor. "Joseph Zito at Lennon, Weinberg." *Art in America*, November 2005.

# Art in America

November 2005

### Joseph Zito at Lennon Weinberg

Given that Joseph Zito's subject here was war and its effects, the sculptures in this exhibition (all 2004-05) had a surprisingly light touch. The best are like haikus, simple gestures that reverberate outward, evoking pity, pathos, grief and rage without resorting to histrionics or bombast. Like Zito's earlier sculptures, they reveal a strong relationship to the restraint of Minimalism and the evocative dissonance of Post-Minimalists like Eva Hesse and Bruce Nauman, as well as to the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

Some of the works displace or juxtapose preexisting objects, while others follow Robert Gober's strategy of re-creating familiar items out of unexpected materials. As a result, the relationship between material and form is crucial to an interpretation of the works. For instance, *Untitled (Helmet)* is a military helmet cast from glass and filled with real rose petals. The fragility of the materials presents a counterpoint to the martial reference, giving the work an elegiac air. *Dog Tag* melds the outlines of a soldier's ID with the polished granite solidity of a tombstone. One of the most powerful works here was *Ascension*, in which a number of small, infant-size body bags were attached to the wall, one above the other, from floor to ceiling. They were dyed in shades of reddish purple, from dark purple on the bottom to gradually lighter hues, eventually arriving at pure white at the top of the column.

Several sculptures use the form of the hand grenade to various effects. In one work, grenades are cast out of white rubber and cluster in a basket like Marcel Broodthaers's eggshells. In another they are composed of wood and partially covered with a layer of shiny red enamel; they hang in a cluster from the ceiling like party balloons. In *Precious Object*, a single copper grenade rests like a piece of jewelry on a red satin pillow atop a red Plexiglas base. In each case, the conflation of these instruments of death with benign domestic objects is chilling.

Zito also included a set of gunpowder drawings, which are created by placing gunpowder on the white paper and igniting it. The fire is extinguished before it burns away the paper, leaving behind a dark residue. As in the gunpowder drawings of Cai Guo Qiang, Zito's works sometimes carry the historical and metaphorical weight of this unusual material. In some of them, the burn marks are carefully contained within designs (targets, stars and stripes) that reference war and nationalism. In others, Zito scatters the powder more randomly so that the drawing resembles a starburst or shrapnel blast.

In this show, Zito sensitively evoked the specter of war and its domestication without having to hammer his points home. Tinged with sadness, these sculptures and drawings leave it to the viewer to connect the dots.

—Eleanor Heartney



Joseph Zito: *Untitled (Helmet)*, 2005, cast glass, steel and rose petals, 12 by 20 by 20 inches; at Lennon Weinberg.

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## Joseph Zito

Baker, R.C. "Best in Show: Enjoy Every Scapula." *The Village Voice*, October 2, 2007.



Art

Best in Show

### Enjoy Every Scapula

Recommendations by R.C. Baker

October 2nd, 2007

But hey, the sun was still shining, and, refreshed by the crisp air, we headed south, only to wander into **Joseph Zito's** horror-show playground at Lennon Weinberg (514 W 25th, 212-941-0012, through October 27). Snugglies fabricated from toxic lead droop from the wall, limp embodiments of current Chinese manufacturing scandals; a powdery orange stain hints that a pair of swimmies lying in a desiccated wading pool are actually made of cast iron (shades of Jeff Koons's confounding bronze aqua lung). In the rear alcove, a seesaw teeters, a live current arcing from one end to the other with loud, hissing snaps. Elsewhere, a hand winch plays tug of war with red jammies—like all these grotesqueries, the piece captures a strain of imperiled innocence.

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## Joseph Zito

MacAdam, Barbara. "Joseph Zito at Lennon, Weinberg," *Artnews*, January 2011, pp 112-113.



Joseph Zito, *Untitled (for Jamie)*, 2009-2010, wood and steel, 8' x 10' x 30'. Lennon Weinberg.

Skeletons inevitably speak of death, but also of endurance. A huge, handmade, bare-bones hulk of a boat filled the back of the gallery to barely squeeze-by-able dimensions. Behind the sculpture was a somber purple curtain with a bench poised before it: a funeral.

The boat itself, installed here upside-down, contains an abundance of symbolic content. A capsized ark, perhaps? Charon's ferry that transports souls across the Acheron River to Hades? The Titanic? A coffin? None of it good. But the raw, fresh wood it is made of also speaks to creativity and potential — to new beginnings.

The show, "Not Even the Saints Can Help," was overtly autobiographical, finding Zito reflecting on loss, especially the death of his father. Accompanying the boat, *Untitled (for Jamie)*, 2009-10, were delicate gouaches on paper lining the walls of the long entry space. Their presence provided a striking yet unassuming contrast to the vessel.

Titled *Stations 1 through 11* (2010), the multipart work suggests the Twin Towers as well as the tops of ghostly houses in reds, oranges, and blues, gently expressing emotion through color. A rich, blue chalk-powder drawing, *Curve of the Keel at the Bow* (2010), was one of several pieces recording Zito's working process.

Playing all the while was a video projection beside the ship's frame showing a turbulent sea, in what may have been a too-literal but nonetheless commanding commentary.

Zito stopped working after his father died in 1998 and he began again after 9/11. The emotions here were quite powerful, expressed not only in the images themselves but also in the materials, which speak their own language and do so very directly — and to lingering effect.

**Barbara A. MacAdam**