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A RECORD OF STREETWEAR & URBAN ART — 2006–2014

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Mark Jenkins

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Mark Jenkins is the man. See his art next to ballers of arts and culture industries â€“ remember Jenkins â€œEmbed Stories?â€ Right, heads have to be stuck in walls to not remember â€œEmbeds,â€ â€œTape Men,â€ â€œTraffic-Go-Roundâ€ and the handfuls of press clippings that praise Jenkinsâ€™ work.

At 37, Jenkins supplies a catalogue of work that most artists spend a lifetime creating. Not to mention heâ€™s fresh. Yeah, no Keith Harring bites and no Andy W. look-a-likes â€“ top billing. Um, everyone likes Jenkins, well, the authorities kind of, sort of are salty, â€œCops have thrown some of the fake people in the trash which is why I started installing some of them in trash bins from the get go, and a fire truck came and rescued the girl on the roof,â€ says Jenkins.

> “Some get scavenged for shoes. A few of the babies have gotten adopted…”

Format: How has your early musical background affected your art?
Mark Jenkins: With the bands I played in, we were more focused on the live show and with the goal of getting people to physically react. I think that’s carried over to the street installations but also wanting to absorb the people onto the stage.

Format: When and why did you first start working with street art?
Mark Jenkins: I started doing installations on the streets and beaches of Rio de Janeiro in 2003. I wanted to bring the works to life outside in the city rather than in a gallery. But I think the ease for me just to step out with my works was more to do with being around the outdoor culture a lot. I’d been traveling around South America for the past year and had been taking in a big mix of stuff– vendors, street performers, stray dogs, litter, nature.



Format: Public art installations are bold statements. What is your message for viewers?

Mark Jenkins: I've played with the idea that the tape people are a sort of fictitious evolutionary step for mankind in a dystopian sense, but I'm not too big on my art having a direct message. I like the absurd nature of my work and that's it's sort of a question mark against itself and everything around it. But I think it still has a social impact, like that it might make someone look twice at the next homeless guy to see if he's real or not–not a bad thing.

Format: When choosing a location to place your pieces, to what degree do you have to compromise? Based on what factors?

Mark Jenkins: Location hasn't been too problematic for me. I haven't done a lot of site specific work except for the Traffic-Go-Round and Meterpop installations, but those were repeating structures so I could pick and choose to find ones that suited the needs of the project.



Format: What was your inspiration for the stuffed body sculptures?
Mark Jenkins: With adding clothes to the self-casts, it was a desire to go somewhere new. I'd been doing the clear tape cast installations and had worked through tape men, women, kids, babies, animals, objects, and the well was running dry on new ideas. But with the Embeds, it was a move in the opposite direction, toward camouflage, hyperrealism, and it opened up a new frontier to explore.

Format: The Storker Project is based on a tape sculpture of a baby. Itâ€™s innocent and somewhat eerie. Can you explain your draw to childhood?
Mark Jenkins: I like that an iconic object can draw people to their own feelings about something, like a baby, and the same goes for the toy carousel horses. But the Storker Project was inspired more by the cicadas that had come out around in 2004, especially the shells they leave behind after they metamorphose.



Format: How long do the pieces stay on display outside? What happens to them afterwards?

Mark Jenkins: Generally a couple days to a week. Some get scavenged for shoes. A few of the babies have gotten adopted and I imagine at least some that were put in out of the way spots weathered to become indistinguishable from the rest of the plastic litter. Cops have thrown some of the fake people in the trash which is why I started installing some of them in trash bins from the get go, and a fire truck came and rescued the girl on the roof.

Format: To what degree does a gallery change the meaning of your work?

Mark Jenkins: Galleries are tough, and are the hardest place for making the art happen. And I've realized now that if I want the Embeds to really function right, I need to slip into a group show under another name, or unannounced and set something up, be it a fake gallery goer passed out drunk in the corner or a pair of legs coming out of the toilet. But I really like that the art wants me to go

through the hole in the fence rather than the front door of the gallery because for me it makes it a tactical challenge similar to the street installations.



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Format: How was it working with Graffiti Research Lab?

Mark Jenkins: The Jesus 2.0 collaboration with the GRL was a great experience and Evan/James got me thinking about things differently: the idea that street art is a form of hacking, recon/documentation practices, and making my techniques open source. It's influenced my work and work philosophy in a lot of different ways.

Format: Who do you look forward to collaborating with in the future?

Mark Jenkins: I've been doing some collaborative portraits with artists like Borf, Kinsey and am wanting to add some more to that series. But as more and more people use my DIY and more and more tape people get made and put outdoors it's a sort of bleeding out in a way that feels collaborative even if I don't meet the people or see the pieces. That works for me too because it syncs with the way the installations grow out into public space and that much of what happens I'm unaware of. I like that my art has become it's own organism.

More Info: http://www.xmarkjenkinsx.com/



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   March 10, 2008 at 11:58 pm
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2. *jchicalata* says:
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