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**Ellen Cantor**

***Within a Budding Grove***

**May 22 - July 6, 2008**

**Opening reception: Thursday, May 22, 7-9pm**

**Gallery hours: Wednesday-Sunday, noon-7pm**

*A budding flower has appeared  
And I'm crazy about her  
She looks so beautiful  
And yet so natural  
She must be wonderful to know\**

From May 22 - July 6, 2008, PARTICIPANT INC presents **Ellen Cantor, *Within a Budding Grove***, an installation that brings together recent drawings and collages with an epic story in the form of a hand-drawn film script that will be utilized in the production of film/video works made and exhibited during the run of the exhibition. *Death Skull* (2008), a large-scale drawing that serves as both the centerpiece of the exhibition and a tunnel-like detour from Cantor's storyboard, is a direct reflection on loss and death. A video epilogue, *Deborah 1948-2007*, is a mournful homage to friendship. Through this installation of her latest work, Cantor continues her examination of the indivisibility of the idealized and the dysfunctional, lightness and dark.

*Circus lives from hell* (2004) is a storyboard of 82 diaphanous yet highly expressionistic pencil drawings that outline, in episodic soap opera form, the sexual and psychological developments of young characters coming into maturity in a fairytale world filled with brutal violence and saccharine innocence. Segments of this series constitute potential propositions for new time-based works to be produced, inaugurating a process of illuminating and obscuring, overlapping and revealing, which mirrors Cantor's study of the simultaneous presence of goodness and evil.

"There is a sense as an adult, why is this happening? There is no way to get away from it - everywhere around you is perpetual violence, and it's on a personal level also. Still retaining this vision you grow up with as a child - that there is goodness, honour, love - how do you reconcile this?"  
- Ellen Cantor (from interview with Gerald Matt in the catalogue, *My Perversion is the Belief in True Love*)

*Circus lives from hell*, while disclosing the intertwined lives of five characters from childhood to adulthood, also reveals its nature as a microcosm of surrounding political discord, cycles of destruction, and mounting violence. The story is at once tragic and comedic, historically overarching and highly detailed in its specificity about actual things occurring in the lives of its characters, all obliquely revolving around the Pinochet regime in Chile. Although never explicitly stated in the drawings, segments of a particular history are made observable through circumstances of the individual lives depicted (unlike through a newspaper, particularly because a newspaper history of American supported dictatorships did not exist in the US). Within this story of circus life—complete with princesses and identical sisters, a boy who dresses like a clown, unicycles—childhood fantasy is permeated by structures of annihilation, which the characters later create in their own lives as adults. The story ends with the question: Is tragedy a choice?

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Borrowing Proust's title, *Within a Budding Grove*, Cantor makes dual reference to a particular phase of US imperialistic intervention, which forms a basis for ever-escalating levels of concealed aggression (*chaos, panic, and disorder*), as well as the possibility of beatitude. This potential for light to come from darkness is manifested in a series of carefully measured drawings/collages on pink paper. These sexually animated works combine a specificity of art historical sources (from Fra Angelico to DeKooning) with the erotic exuberance of an Iggy Pop song, *Success*.

Ellen Cantor lives and works in London. She has exhibited internationally, with solo exhibitions and screenings including *White Cubicle*, London (forthcoming, 2008); *Abbt Projects*, Zurich (2007); *1000000mph*, London (2006); *Sketch*, London (2005); *Kunsthalle Wien* (2002); *Transmission*, Glasgow (2000); *Delfina*, London (1999); *XL Xavier LaBoulbenne*, New York (1998 and 1996); *Feigen*, Chicago (1997); *Cabinet*, London (1996); and *Postmasters*, New York (1995). Group exhibitions and screenings include: *Considering Detroit*, MOCAD (2008); *Zombie Surfers*, Cell Project Space, London (2008); *Cinema Cavern*, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2007); *Underground Lost and Found*, V&A, London (2006); *All the Pretty Corpses*, Renaissance Society, Chicago (2005); *International Film Festival Rotterdam* (2003); *Edinburgh International Film Festival* (2003); *Exploding Cinema*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2000); *Mr. Fascination*, Thread Waxing Space, New York (1999); *Pink for Boys, Blue for Girls*, Kunsthaus Bethanien, NGBK, Berlin (1999); *Gothic*, The ICA, Boston (1997); *Eau de Cologne 1983-1993*, Monica Spruth, Cologne (1994); *Coming to Power: and 25 Years of Sexually X-Plicit Art by Women*, (curated by Cantor), David Zwirner, New York (1994). Cantor's work has appeared in various publications including *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Frieze*, *Art Review*, and *Contemporary Magazine*. A catalogue, *my perversion is the belief in true love*, was published by Scalo and Kunsthalle, Wien in 1998.



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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the Lower East Side. Subway: F/V to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit.

Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, noon-7pm  
[www.participantinc.org](http://www.participantinc.org)

\*Bollywood film lyric, overheard on BBC TV