

# POP DRUID

David Dixon

Antenna Gallery

3161 Burgundy Street, New Orleans, LA

March 14-April 5, 2009

## Press release:

Artist and Filmmaker David Dixon's recent work will be on view at Antenna Gallery for one month, opening on Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. The exhibition, *Pop Druid*, includes a feature film and an eclectic mix of painting, sculpture, video, and photography. The gallery work tacitly critiques the received artistic traditions of pop, minimalism, expressionism and conceptualism while exploring a range of subjects from Jackson Pollock's grave, to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, to the ancient art of rock stacking, to Pop Tarts. These elements trace a circuitous through-line that indirectly, and sometimes directly, relates to the film, titled *Unloosened and Root*. The film is both documentary and narrative fiction, and alternates between scenes shot in pre-Katrina New Orleans during Mardi Gras and a haunted campground in upstate New York. It is an elegiac film that eulogizes the death of the artist's mother, not by telling her particular story, but by enlarging her death through allegory. This is done partially by focusing on the unusual funerary ceremony conceived by New Orleans's own Robin Drake who died of cancer at the tragically early age of 32. She too was a mother, and Dixon documents as her family and friends execute her final wishes, creating an uncanny artistic collaboration between the living and the dead. Premiered at MoMA in 2005, this will be the first public screening in New Orleans: Antenna Gallery, Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM.

David Dixon grew up in North Carolina, but has been living and working in New York City since 1989. In those years he has exhibited, performed and/or screened his work in many venues including The Kitchen, Saint Marks Church, Galapagos, Monkey Town, Barbés, Momenta Arts, Postmasters and the Museum of Modern Art. He is currently enrolled at Cornell University as an MFA candidate.

## Artists Statement:

### The Wailing Wall

Soon after my mother died in 2002, I visited Israel with my Father. At the time he was enrolled in seminary, a post-retirement decision meant to deepen his Christian belief and qualify him to preach. We traveled throughout Israel in a tour bus filled with prospective Southern Baptist preachers, a great opportunity, I thought, for a sometimes-documentary filmmaker like myself. I was loaded down with several cameras but nothing narrative really happened. What did happen for me though was the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, a massive, highly site-specific "installation" in the heart of the city. In fact, not only is it in the heart of Jerusalem, it is the heart of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Behind this wall lies the Holy of Holies, the monotheistic God

Himself's original home on earth. The temple was razed by the Romans in 70AD, destroying the room that was the Holy of Holies, but not the god that was housed within. To get closer to Him, notes with prayers are still placed in the wall's cracks. In New Orleans, perhaps not coincidentally, this Wailing Wall looks a lot like a levee, the cracks here possibly not so much harbingers of hope, but a sign of potential danger. Either way, the natural force behind, whether it be God or a surging sea, is the wall's reason for being, a separation that is more about what is hidden than what is seen.

### Jackson Pollock

After Pollock's tragic death by drunken automobile accident, Lee Krasner, artist and wife, conceived and arranged his monumental gravesite at Green River Cemetery in the Springs, New York, about a mile from the house they shared. Originally choosing a bolder for this purpose from a group that was in their backyard (from which Jackson one day planned to make a sculpture), she later replaced it with a much larger boulder of pink granite and used the original rock for her own grave marker which now sits at Jackson's feet. It is reported that rather than use the indoor facilities, Jackson liked to urinate on these rocks in the backyard. He also, famously, urinated in Peggy Guggenheim's fire place during a party thrown to celebrate the completion of his painting, *Mural*, which he had just installed in her New York City residence. One could even go as far as Jackson's biographers do in *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* and say: (Jackson) watched as his Father climbed a near by boulder and urinated onto a flat rock below creating a distinctive pattern on the sun-baked surface.

### Rock Stacking

The term "pop druid" comes from a conversation between the characters Joe and Jay in my movie *Unloosened and Root*. Joe is out camping and has built several rock stacks. Jay comes along and seeing them derides Joe's rock stacks as "pop druid," implying that they are some kind of ancient form of popular art that are totally lacking in originality. Joe makes no defense, and he really needn't, because he makes no claim that his rock stacks are art. Art requires the expression of difference, choice, or originality, rock stacking does not try to do this, it simply delimits natural forces: gravity, friction, balance, etc. Rock stacking is the original, and perhaps best, expression of the modernist notion of truth to materials, and here, in Styrofoam, it is brought to bear on Pollock's response to the question, "Do you work from nature?" His response, "I am nature."

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