

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013



**CHRISTOPHER CHIAPPA "AS FUNNY AS BRAIN CANCER" AT FREDERICKS FREISER
STEPHANIE CASH
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Conceptualist Christopher Chiappa belongs to the school of comedic one-liner artists that includes such talents as Maurizio Cattelan and Erwin Wurm. Chiappa often layers his visual puns, using video, photography, sculpture and digital technology to make his ideas work. In this recent show at Fredericks Freiser, he made himself, his friends, his dealers and even viewers the butt of his jokes.

Some of Chiappa's works are decidedly lighthearted, such as *Shower*, for which he installed a shower head and fixtures on a gallery wall. Any other artist might have been content with the absurdity of the location, but in this case, the plumbing was fully operational. To satisfy curious visitors, the gallery provided demonstrations, running the water on to the drainless concrete floor, which then had to be mopped up.

McMiracles is a photographic diptych of the artist at a McDonald's restaurant. On the table in front of him is a carefully constructed, precarious looking arch made out of stacked hamburgers. In the other images, a skull has been formed out of mashed-together french fries. It's not clear if the artist intends a commentary on the dubious nutritional content served up in America's favorite fast-food chains, but the association is tempting.

Other of his works convey a more biting sense of humor. In *All the Women I Know Are Pyschos*, a large-scale group photograph in the manner of a high-school class photo, Chiappa gives visual form to the credo of many maladjusted men. The artist stands amid numerous females, young girls to older-women – all of whom are wearing T-shirts with "Psycho" emblazoned across the front. Lest female viewers be offended, Chiappa acknowledges his loutishness in another large-scale piece called *Big Asshole*, a self portrait collage composed of tiny photos of anuses cut from porn magazines.

The Duchampian peephole has become a familiar feature in many gallery shows, revealing assorted visual experiences. Here, a piece titled *Room with a View* consisted of a black roundel projecting from the gallery's back wall. Coming close and peering through, viewers saw nothing. Blackness. The real punch line of the peepless peephole could be found on the other side of the wall, in the gallery's office. Stepping through the doorway, viewers saw that they had just been staring down the barrel of a shot gun whose muzzle penetrated the wall. Undoubtedly, some visitors may have found this disconcerting (the show preceded the Washington, D.C., area sniper attacks), but in the context of Chiappa's amusing show, it was easier just to laugh.

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