

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

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CHRISTOPHER CHIAPPA "AS FUNNY AS BRAIN CANCER"

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Can an artist perform miracles? Christopher Chiappa seems to think so. In one sequence of seven photographs taken in as many seconds, he captures himself passing through a subway turnstile. The twist? Chiappa keeps his hands raised the whole time; without ever inserting a token, he easily passes through. Although Chiappa's work is less the result of transubstantiation than it is sleight of hand, his show "As Funny as Brain Cancer" revives the alchemical spirit with an offering of tight, intelligent brainteasers.

Faith is a series of 16 photos depicting the artist applying stencils that read FAITH to a white wall. Chiappa sprays the surface with white paint and removes the stencils, the wall, quite naturally, appears unchanged. Here, we see Chiappa's approach, which is to create something nearly invisible that is actually the result of a labor-conscious effort whose significance is revealed over time. In this case, "faith", of course, rests with the viewer- a fact that bears mentioning, since Chiappa neither bludgeons us with his message nor attempts to wrangle meaning out of opacity. Such tactics would only undermine the elegance and spareness of his logic.

Chiappa caught my eye because his weird, tragicomic inversions are instantly recognizable, and yet they don't rely on some sort of stale collective Pop consciousness or seem programmatic and rote. *Wiener*, for instance, consists simply of a ballpark frank sticking out from a hole in the wall. The piece works both figuratively and literally- as a self-portrait of a limp artist, and as a view from the consumers side of the glory hole. It's a quick, nimble idea that, like all of the work in this show, is served straight up without any gratuitous condiments.

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