

David Jung

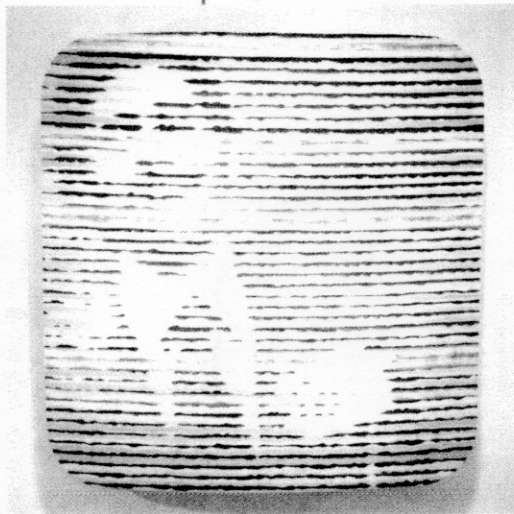
Numark Gallery, Washington DC

In his latest paintings and video installation, David Jung, a Washington, DC-based painter, mined the emotional terrain of television game shows and the hope and despair surrounding the promise of instant riches. *The Price is Right* is Jung's favorite source, and for the past several years the artist has painted stills cribbed from the show's '70s-era episodes in order to lampoon American greed and excess. But Jung's latest suite of works cast a more sympathetic eye on the search for salvation through instant gratification. This time, Jung borrowed romantic images of winning contestants embracing host Bob Barker, painting the scenes in lacquered acrylic on TV screen-shaped wood panels—some flat and some convex—in sizes varying from five feet in diameter to just a few inches across. Jung shows seventeen such paintings, each hovering between abstraction and representation: up close, the images break up into feathery brushstrokes; seen from afar,

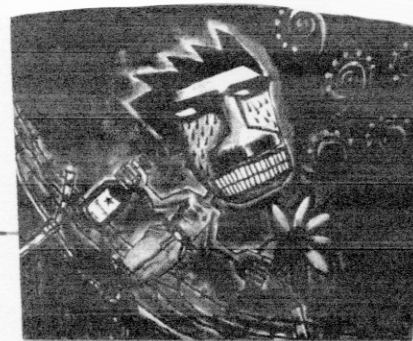
they resolve into scenes of contestants and host, some almost unrecognizable owing to the dense horizontal lines he paints to ape poor TV reception. For his accompanying video installation, Jung shot and re-shot a hazy image of a woman embracing Barker, much as an animator might. Each shot—there are about 900—have enough ever-so-slight variations to yield nine minutes of jumpy, jittery footage. The video is screened on six vintage television tubes—each four inches across—interspersed with tiny birch panels of the same size and painted with the same image, like so many ghosts of

the flickering original. Accompanied by a scratchy soundtrack, the installation has a frustrated and anxious quality. The still image Jung chose to focus on—of the young contestant reaching up to clasp Barker, who himself is glimpsed only in profile—could be a scene from vintage film noir, the woman's expression rich with both pleasure and anxiety. Ultimately, such mixed emotions echo Jung's own concerns regarding technology, and our infatuation with the possibilities it offers. Just as game show cash guarantees instant relief from economic woes, so technology promises a more efficient—and happier—future. Jung reminds us that those promises are fraught with as much grief as gain.

Jessica Dawson



David Jung, *Rob*, 2001, acrylic and epoxy on Baltic birch panel, 152.4 x 152.4 x 20.3 cm.



Cruz Ortiz, *Te necesito, baby doll*, 2001, mixed media on panel, 121.9 x 116.8 cm.

Cruz Ortiz

Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio

Beans, beer, and love songs are staples of South Texas culture. With the art of Cruz Ortiz, the local inventory now also includes a clever repertoire of paintings, silkscreen prints, and videos that blends cartoon imagery with social commentary. At twenty-nine years old, Ortiz typifies young Mexican-Americans caught between the political idealism of the 1970s Chicano Movement and the mainstream seductions of American consumerism. In the exhibition *¿American Dream?*, this ambivalence is personified by "Spaztek," Ortiz's shirtless, ill-starred alter ego. Sloe-eyed and weepy, the sad sack Spaztek is a South Texas "everyman" whose comic pathos is part Aztec, part Charlie Chaplin. Spaztek is featured in the serigraphic prints which Ortiz posts on telephone poles in the primarily Latino neighborhoods of San Antonio. The quasi-epic *El Corridos de Pudding Boy y Refried Beans Boy* are ironic tales of hunger situated within a context of fast-food convenience. Inspired by the story songs of regional *conjunto* music, these deadpan, "Spanglish" texts relate Spaztek's adventures in a surreal cityscape of bus stops, bars, and supermarkets. Other posters explore the tragicomic vicissitudes of romantic love. Ortiz also pairs the lyrics of popular Tejano singers Sunny Ozuna and Selena with graphic line drawings of refried bean cans and tacos, often emblazoned on the artist's bare chest. These crisp, eye-popping images are presented as contemporary icons of working-class life and call to mind the bold New York City graffiti of Keith Haring. Ortiz's poster captions use a chunky, meandering typeface straight out of *Scooby-Doo* cartoons, accentuating the madcap humorism of the artist's "hit-and-run" broadsides. Ortiz's paintings, with their high-key colors applied to jig-sawed wood panels, borrow from indigenous Mexican rituals to transform Spaztek into Jaguar Boy, Deer Boy, or Scorpion Boy. These comic book superheroes sport animal-spirit headdresses and cast sideways glances from a stylized backdrop of stars, hearts, and black lightning bolts. Also included in *¿American Dream?* were the artist's slapstick videos, staged in the neighborhoods where he organizes community mural projects. Throughout these different media, Cruz's spiky-haired, slim-hipped alter ego encapsulates the dreams and doubts of a generation wedged between two cultures.

John Ewing