



MCLEAN PROJECT FOR THE ARTS



DISAMBIGUATION

NEW WORKS BY FRANZ JANTZEN



**Front cover image: *Preble County Fair*
(*Grange Hall Exhibits*), detail, 2008,
digital assemblage, 57 x 172 inches**

D I S A M B I G U A T I O N

NEW WORKS BY FRANZ JANTZEN

April 16 – June 6, 2009



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INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure that we present *Disambiguation: New Works by Franz Jantzen* in the Emerson Gallery at the McLean Project for the Arts. In December of 2007 MPA presented a juried exhibition called *PhotoGenesis* that featured works that sprang from photographic images, ideas or techniques. This unique exhibit was juried by Charles Brock of the National Gallery of Art, Claudia Bohn-Spector, an independent curator specializing in photography, and Stephen Bennett Phillips of the Phillips Collection. Sixteen artists were represented in this beautifully crafted exhibition that covered a broad spectrum of styles, media and approaches, including collage, text, found objects and digital images. Franz Jantzen contributed two of his large-scale digital assemblages to the mix, and even amongst such good company, his work stood out. A few months later I saw more at his solo exhibition at the District's Hemphill Fine Arts, and the idea of a Franz Jantzen exhibition here in the Emerson Gallery firmly took root.

Jantzen was delighted at the prospect of showing his assemblages in the Emerson, one of the few galleries in the area with enough wall space and high enough ceilings to accommodate larger works and still give them room to breathe. Since he wanted to create new pieces for the MPA show, and since his working process is incredibly labor-intensive, he needed time. At last, after months and months of hard work on the part of the artist, and much anticipation and excitement on the part of MPA staff, we are very pleased to present this exhibition.

With generous help from a grant from the Arts Council of Fairfax County, we are able to publish this small catalog to accompany the exhibit and highlight Jantzen's oeuvre. Included is an essay by Charles Brock, one of the jurors from the original *PhotoGenesis* exhibit and Associate Curator of American and British Painting at the National Gallery of Art. Brock was curator of the NGA's 2006 exhibit *Charles Sheeler: Across Media*; and since Sheeler is an artist of particular interest and inspiration to Jantzen, there is a natural affinity. I think you will find Brock's thoughts illuminating.

Nancy Sausser
Exhibitions Director and Curator
McLean Project for the Arts

THE COSMOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION: FRANZ JANTZEN

The first digital assemblage Franz Jantzen constructed in 2004 incorporated 600 images; its title described what it depicted: *The Entire Ground Floor of Duttonhofer's Bookstore, Cincinnati, Ohio*. Jantzen's intent was "to capture a single plane in space—the floor itself." Anything that detracted from the task of showing the floor represented, as Jantzen put it, "the edge of my data; such chaos and unknown is represented in black." The final result conveyed a feeling not unlike the floating, disembodied qualities of satellite photography; except in this case, instead of being situated miles above the surface of the earth, the satellite device generating the imagery was a small hand-held digital camera suspended a few feet above a bookstore floor by the artist.

As Jantzen's own language suggests—*space, edge, chaos, unknown*—he is interested in something like a cosmological point of view in which the limits of seemingly small, discrete worlds are placed within and amplified by larger bodies of knowledge. More specifically, in his efforts to map a universe of information as comprehensively as possible by exploring how much visual knowledge a single image can hold, he can be thought of as a cosmographer.

Like books in a bookstore, Jantzen's assemblages illuminate the often paradoxical ways in which single, intimate, microcosmic views can be tied into more complex, macrocosmic structures. He has notably returned to his first theme of books recently in *Coal Creek Library* (2007-2009).

Before his excursions into what I am calling *cosmography*, Jantzen had been a skilled and successful practitioner of more traditional forms of *photography*. Initially skeptical of digital technologies, he embraced the new medium once he realized that it was not a lesser, derivative photographic form but something in many ways wholly different. Just as Pablo Picasso in his invention of the modern pictorial language of cubism at the dawn of the twentieth century was thrown back upon ancient traditions of African sculpture, so Jantzen's investigations of state-of-the-art digital assemblages in the early twenty-first century have led him to engage, not so much the related heritage of photography, as might be expected, but surprisingly, the history of a more archaic medium: painting. Using a stylus on a digital tablet to knit his intricate images together on a computer, Jantzen has discovered a kinship with the virtuoso

handiwork of a grand lineage of master painters from the Limbourg Brothers and Jan Van Eyck, through Paul Cézanne and Picasso, up to David Hockney.

Earlier cosmographic art as epitomized by Van Eyck or Vermeer presented a vision of divine universal order to which their cultures were clearly linked. Artists like Cézanne and Picasso later sought to capture a similarly profound underlying order while simultaneously taking into account the uncertainties, disjunctions, and complexities of optical relationships. They found that problematic areas most often occurred precisely at the point where multiple facets of vision overlapped or connected, as well as at the edge of the paintings where the frame negotiated the boundary with the viewer. One of the most remarkable aspects of Jantzen's works is the way he further refines the problem of how visual space is constructed and coheres. He does this with a degree of precision unimaginable a century ago by exploiting the capacities of new digital technologies to integrate visual data from literally hundreds of images.

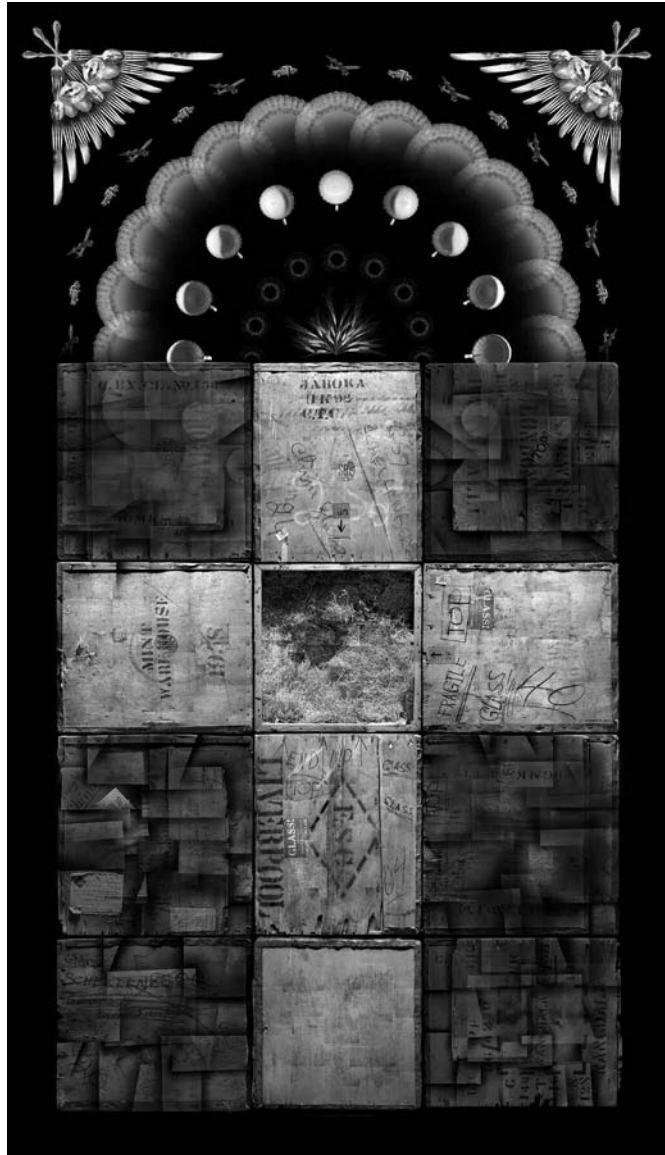
In engaging and struggling with eternal visual conundrums of sight and space, as for instance in his homage to Cézanne, *Study No. 32 (I Like Cézanne)* (2009), Jantzen has tapped directly into a vital and seemingly inexhaustible source of pictorial invention. A wide variety of subjects and formats are featured in the present exhibition. They range from the explicitly religious and personal content of *Dream Crate* (2006) to more formal investigations of art itself as in *Art* (2008) and *Inventory No. 1* (2009). Also included among the physical wall pieces is a projected image on the floor: *Will The Circle Be Unbroken?* (2007).

Jantzen's assemblages more than repay close attention. Contemplating a work like *Traveling South* (2008-2009), one might initially register the package of cigarettes or the hand written poem "Give Me a Little More Time to Pray," before the much larger implications of the image emerge—these are bleachers, stripped of their seats, in a corner of the derelict Washington Coliseum where someone had once lived. Here the everyday, the discarded, the forgotten, somehow manage to intimate the cosmic, otherworldly dimensions of human existence.

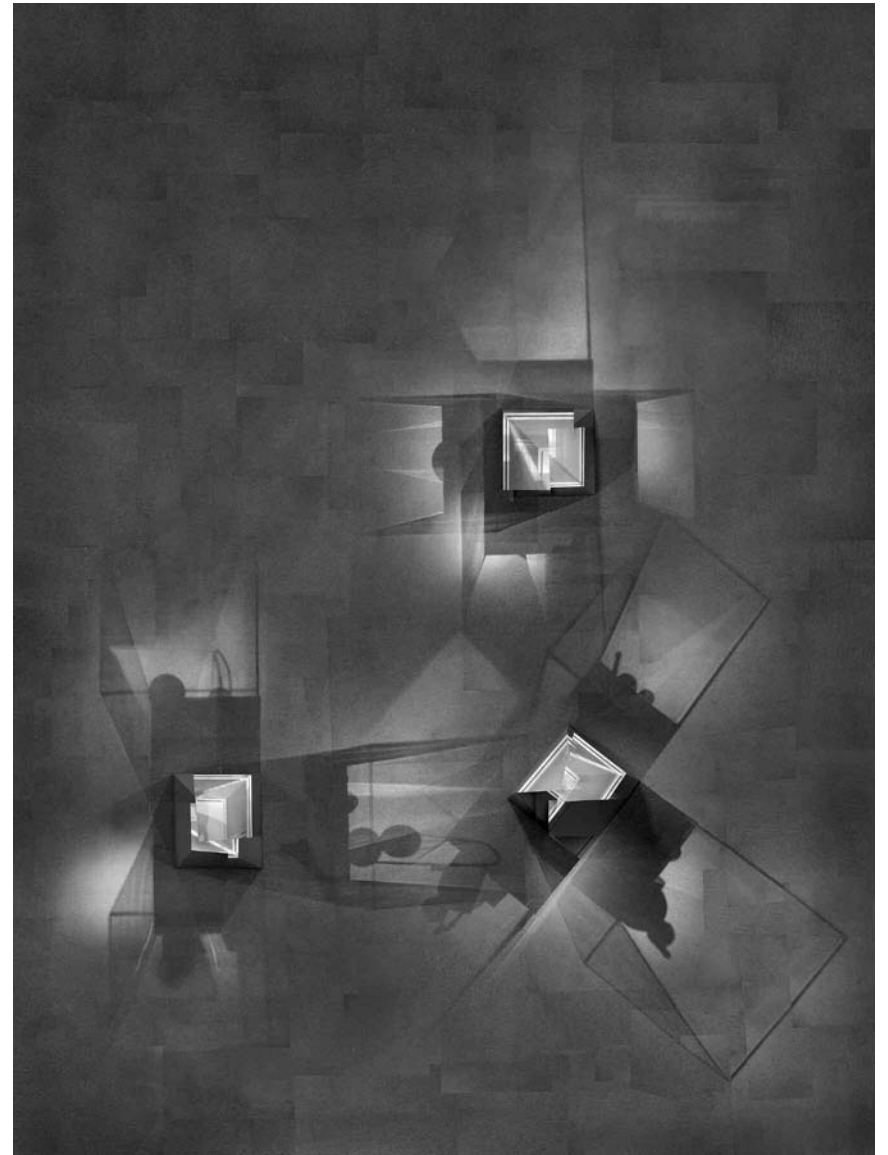
Charles Brock
Associate Curator
American and British Painting
National Gallery of Art



Coal Creek Library, 2007-2009, digital assemblage, 84 x 51 inches



Dream Crate, 2006, digital assemblage, 76.5 x 43.5 inches



Museum Objects, 2008, digital assemblage, 31 x 23.25 inches



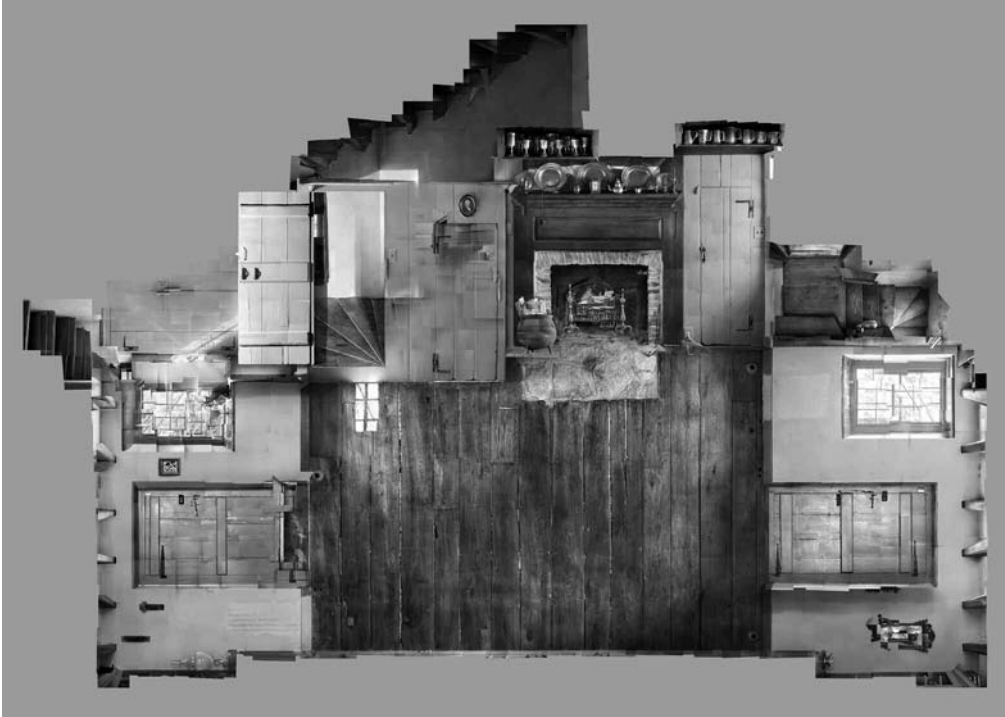
Preble County Fair (Grange Hall Exhibits), 2008, digital assemblage, 57 x 172 inches



Above: *Inventory No. 1*, 2009, digital assemblage, 41 x 34 inches

Opposite, top: *Art*, 2008, digital assemblage, 36 x 26.5 inches

Opposite, bottom: *Study No. 32 (I Like Cezanne)*, 2009, digital assemblage, 20 x 16 inches



Above: *Wedding Special Window Display*, 2009, digital assemblage, 25 x 43 inches
 Opposite, top: *Doylestown Interior*, 2007-2008, digital assemblage, 85 x 119 inches
 Opposite, bottom: *Traveling South*, 2008-2009, digital assemblage, 57 x 112 inches

SOLO EXHIBITS

- 2009 *Disambiguation: New Works By Franz Jantzen*, McLean Project for the Arts, April – June
- 2008 *Manifest Order: The Assemblages of Franz Jantzen*, Hemphill Fine Arts, March-May
- 2006 *Cartographic Assemblages by Franz Jantzen* at The Artist As Social Conscience, Mennonite Arts Weekend, Cincinnati, Ohio, February
- 2000 *Nature Bent Culture Melting: Franz Jantzen's Photographs of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal* at Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. July – August
- 1986 *Personal Landscapes and Tools: College Still Lives*, College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio (Senior Thesis exhibit)
- 1985 *Culture and Nature: 25 Photographs of Peaceful Entropy*, College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio
- Silent Spaces: Photographs of the Cincinnati Union Terminal*, Cincinnati Union Terminal
- Silent Spaces: Photographs of the Cincinnati Union Terminal*, Dionysus Restaurant, Cincinnati

GROUP EXHIBITS

- 2009 *Synthesis: Contemporary Collage*, Carroll Square Gallery, Washington, April – June
- 2007 *Site Project DC* (public installation), 14th Street corridor, Washington, D.C., June – July
- ArtDC art fair, Washington Convention Center, April
- 2006 *PhotoGenesis*, McLean Project for the Arts, McLean, VA, Nov – Jan 2007
- Permanent Exhibit at City Hall (John A. Wilson Building Public Art Program), Washington, opened October
- 2005 *Re-Fresh*, Hemphill Fine Arts, July – September
- 2004 Hemphill Fine Arts, November – December
- War Or Peace*, Warehouse Theater, Washington, D.C., October – November
- 2003 *The Art of Butler County: The First 200 Years*, Butler County (Ohio) Courthouse, October – November
- 2001 Recent Work by Mennonite Artists, Mennonite USA General Assembly, Nashville, Tennessee, July
- 2000 *Maryland In Focus: A Photographic History, 1839 – 2000* at the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland, December 14, 2000 – April 15, 2001
- En Photographiant des Anges (Photographing Angels)*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, March

- 1999 *Black White Beautiful* at Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, D. C., July – August
- Our Good Earth: Landscape at the End of the Century* at Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, D.C., May – June
- 1998 *Art In the Everyday*, Mennonite Arts Weekend, Cincinnati, Ohio, February
- 1996 *Sensuality* at the Rock Creek Gallery, Washington, D.C., September – October
- Washington Center for Photography, July – August
- 1994 *Eighth Annual National Juried Exhibition*, The Eye Gallery, San Francisco, California, April – May
- 1993 *12th Annual Washington Area Photography Exhibition* at The Ellipse Art Center, Fairfax, Virginia, November – December
- 1992 *Washington Invitational III*, The Arts Club of Washington, February – March
- Mennonite Experience: Present Day Expression* at Carnegie Arts Center, Covington, Kentucky, February – April
- 1991 The Washington Center for Photography, Washington, D.C., July – August
- The Tartt Gallery, Washington, D.C., July – August
- 1989 District of Columbia Arts Center, May – June
- 1988 *Perceptions and Processes in Photography* The Martin Luther King, Jr. Public Library, Washington D.C.
- The Dead Animal Show: A Provocative Exhibition of Dead Animal Imagery*, C.A.G.E. Gallery, Cincinnati
- 1987 *Bicentennial Cincinnati: The City In Photographs* at Images Gallery, Cincinnati
- Adams-Morgan Day Exhibit, Washington

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Ogden Museum of Southern Art; The Folger Shakespeare Library; D.C. Commission on the Arts & Humanities; The Washington Post; Fannie Mae; Sidley, Austin, Brown & Wood, LLP; Hogan & Hartson, LLP; Crowell & Moring, LLP; Ruesch International; numerous private collectors

GALLERY REPRESENTATION

Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. (www.hemphillfinearts.com)

Robert Klein Gallery, Boston (www.robertkleingallery.com)

Scott Nichols Gallery, San Francisco

Bonni Benrubi Gallery, New York (1996-2002)



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MPA's Mission

The mission of McLean Project for the Arts is to exhibit the work of emerging and established artists from the mid-Atlantic region; to promote public awareness and understanding of the concepts of contemporary art; and to offer instruction and education in the visual arts.

MPA's Benefactors and Partners

MPA, a 501(3)(c) organization, presents the visual arts program for the community at the McLean Community Center in a public/private partnership with the McLean Community Center and Fairfax County. We are a Partner with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Corcoran College of Art + Design. MPA's exhibitions and educational programs are funded by many corporate and community sponsors, individuals and foundations. Please visit www.mpaart.org for a list of MPA's supporters.

MPA is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and Fairfax County in cooperation with the Arts Council of Fairfax County.

