

DIGITAL DREAMS

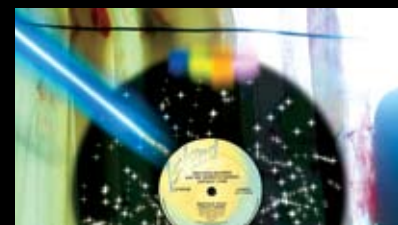
JEREMY BLAKE'S MOVING PORTRAITS



JEREMY BLAKE, STILL FROM READING OSSIE CLARK



JEREMY BLAKE, STILL FROM GLITTERBEST



JEREMY BLAKE, STILL FROM SODIUM FOX

Jeremy Blake's posthumous exhibit, *Wild Choir*, opening October 27 at the Corcoran Gallery, will be bittersweet to fans of the late visual artist. From the saturated colors and painted imagery of *Punch-Drunk Love* to Beck's music videos and the mysterious Winchester Mystery House, Blake's innovative multimedia work created tapestries as psychologically dense as they were visually hypnotic. He often used art and technology to explore isolation and the overwhelming surreality of existence in our digital age; in a space where form is content, it's hard to tell what is controlling whom.

Wild Choir collects three "moving portraits" that examine the psyches of disparate artists. Each collects fragments of its subject's psychological existence, using that raw material to weave a suggestive visual narrative. It's one of Blake's most compelling themes—inscrutability of consciousness in a world that, these days, we tread through via technology. "Sodium Fox," the portrait of poet and Silver Jews frontman David Berman, depicts the alienated narrator's hallucinatory journey, one that ends in a motel room with a prostitute who may or may not be a messenger of God. "Reading Ossie Clark," voiced-over by the late Swinging London fashion impresario's widow, is a pastiche of non sequiturs and coded references gleaned from Clark's diaries. The third work, "Glitterbest," focuses on music and fashion icon Malcolm McLaren. It's the only piece included in this survey that is incomplete; it was unfinished last July, when Jeremy Blake left his clothes on Rockaway Beach and walked into the ocean.

Blake committed suicide a week after finding his partner of twelve years, graphic illustrator and filmmaker Theresa Duncan, overdosed on bourbon and Tylenol PM in the couple's Greenwich Village rectory apartment. Collaborative in everything and seldom seen without the other, both had recently been withdrawing from friends and insisting that they were being harassed by the Church of Scientology. Duncan's blog, *The Wit of the Staircase*, documents a powerful intellectual and creative life infused with mounting paranoia. Blake, as he wrote in his own suicide note, killed himself because he couldn't live without Theresa.

This backstory certainly lends a chilling gravitas to *Wild Choir*, but the exhibition is stunning without the artist's dramatic biography. What makes Blake's work so appealing is the lucidity with which he portrays life in moments that feel like dreams—fitting, since Berman, Clark and McLaren were all in the business of conjuring dreams from the fabric of reality. *Wild Choir's* portraits don't try to explicate the psychological complexity, but they do illustrate exactly how dense it is. Even more eloquently, in the face of Blake's suicide, they reveal the need for lasting human connection.

As the artist wrote in the statement for "Sodium Fox": "Even where the language is at its most oblique, our protagonist's sincerity in looking for something or someone worthwhile remains unclear. At one point he considers the central Gen X question, 'Could I be saved by something as simple as caring or not caring?' The question doesn't need to be answered outright. Once addressed directly, the effects of apathy, the preferred narcotic of a generation, begin to wear off." **LORI FREDRICKSON**

Wild Choir is at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., October 27 through March 2, 2008.

www.corcoran.org

BERTRAND LE PLUARD: IMAGES

STÉPHANE GABOÛÉ: BEAUTY EDITOR AND TEXT

BEAUTY-FULL PRESENTS

Offering a perfume or a beauty product for Christmas might sound cliché, but it almost always works, especially if you opt for first-rate and exclusive products. Here are our suggestions.



A HEADY, UTTERLY FEMININE MIXTURE OF MAGNOLIA, WHITE ROSES AND JASMINE, RUMEUR CONFIRMS THE REVIVAL OF THE HOUSE OF LANVIN.



NARCISO RODRIGUEZ. QUITE SIMPLY THE BEST WOMEN'S FRAGRANCE OF THESE LAST FEW YEARS.