

LEE GOREAS



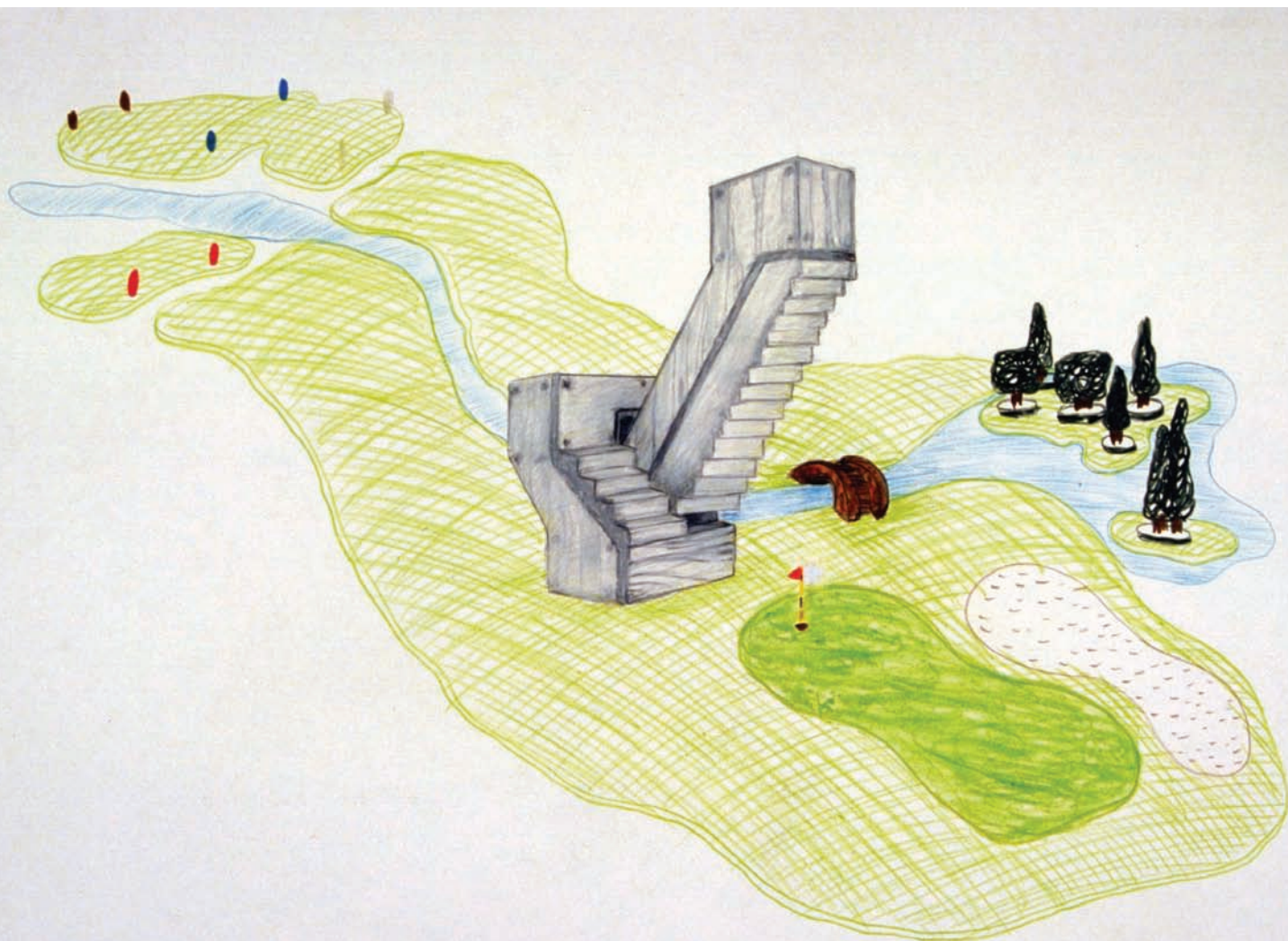
STARS AND PARS

Lee Goreas once emblazoned an installation with vinyl text on the wall that read: SPACE COWBOY. This was over a decade ago and while it was important then, it seems even more important now.

I have long thought of Lee Goreas' work to be about desire, coupled with the self-conscious pathos in recognizing the hapless chance in desire. But you could hardly accuse him of being didactic about it. Goreas' route toward these ideas arrives in various guises and his current exhibition is a template map of Goreas' cowboy pinings. And while he is playful, his play is serious in recognizing the connections and commonalities between seemingly disparate ideas and subjects.

He is playing with space—with the space of a gallery, with the space between artworks, with the space suggested within works, and with the various definitions and implications of space. Connected to this are ruminations on scale and volume, as well as thoughts about time. The space of time and the time of space. Goreas' path does not lie in a singular direction and he is always willing, even anxious, for meaning to function in multiple directions simultaneously.

The title of the current exhibition, Stars and Pars exemplifies that attitude. It's an innocuous pun, but it evokes some basic thematic strokes in the work. Par is not exemplary, but it's good enough. It is as expected. No worse than the average, but not spectacular. It need not be ashamed, but there's nothing to boast



about. Stars pack considerably more metaphoric punch. They inspire awe, they allude to time and possibility, and they can generate a wellspring of desire. Do stars trump pars? Maybe, but you can shoot for the stars and crash in a blaze of failure while someone achieving par moves on to the next whole.

(And what of bars? In the show's one text sculpture, "bars" is added to the exhibition title as a third, punning stooge.)

Perhaps stars and pars are art stars and those who pine to be. Goreas is toying with a few possible meanings in his series of eighteen pencil crayon drawings in which famous modernist sculptures and installations are reimagined on his fictive golf courses. There is the artist's clear affection for the formal properties of a good hole, the lines and curves that comprise that iconoclastic leisure sport all about desire and possibility. And there is the reinstallation of famous artworks, their own iconoclastic sense of space, and their own iterations of desire and possibility. In what often turns out to be the telling equation in Goreas' work, what at first appears ludicrous eventually blossoms into entirely unexpected but fulsome significance. By collapsing the art and golf worlds, Goreas is sketching coexisting dual adorations.

Their colored pencil rendering is playful and loose, underscoring the absurdity of their hybrid. It also underscores some of the implicit functions contained within those works. When he plunks a Rachel Whiteread sculpture on the course, it remains dominant, imposing and aggressive, while Walter de Maria's vertical poles, while still absurd, are elegant and even plausible. Goreas is mocking neither art nor golf, but recognizing their shared attitudes—either can be aggressive, elegant, frustrating, or sublime.

In his two video works, Goreas uses golf course details as abstracted images that also serve as cues to other (worldly) allusions. Is Goreas' golf hole a planet or asteroid or black hole of void and nothingness? Is his sandtrap the shifting terrain of a far-flung planet? Or the perpetually transformative sands of time? One is still, with an ambient soundtrack, while the other slides by us as a silent time-lapse, a detail that injects the work with the quality of a science documentary. Neither of these images are disguised from their original source. We can recognize what they are, but they are used as evocative formal gestures that expand the poetic space between the various images and objects in the exhibition.

So the space of a golf course, already aligned poetically with the space of an artwork, expands to connect to the space of space. In the only "older" work in the exhibition, Goreas creates a new version of his signature planetary wall drawings, which have appeared as temporary galaxies within galleries throughout the last several years. I have always been drawn to Goreas' drawing style (so much that I once held on to a Lee Goreas sketchbook for many months, as a coffee table book I enjoyed frequently, until the artist finally pressed for it back). His

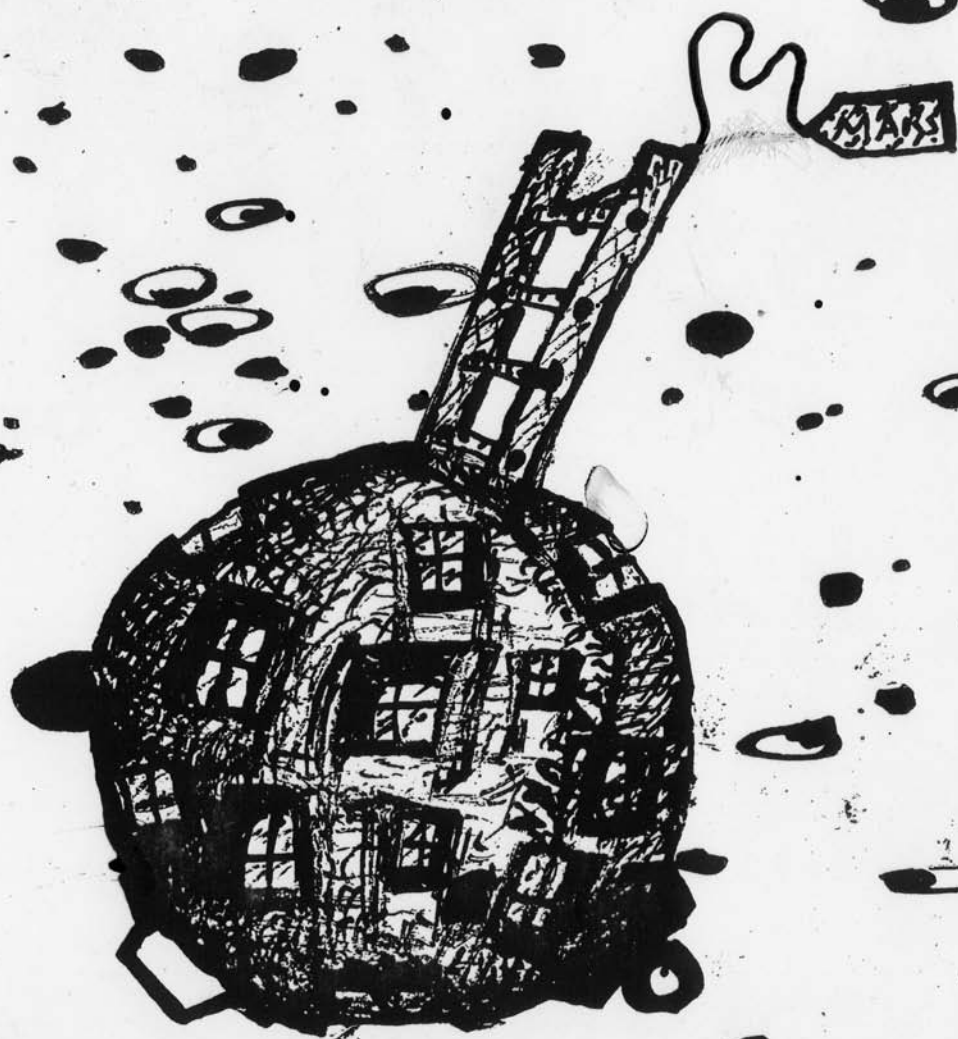


rendering is vaguely cartoonish, always fluid and elastic. His loose, immediate style evokes both a slight pathos and eternal resilience.

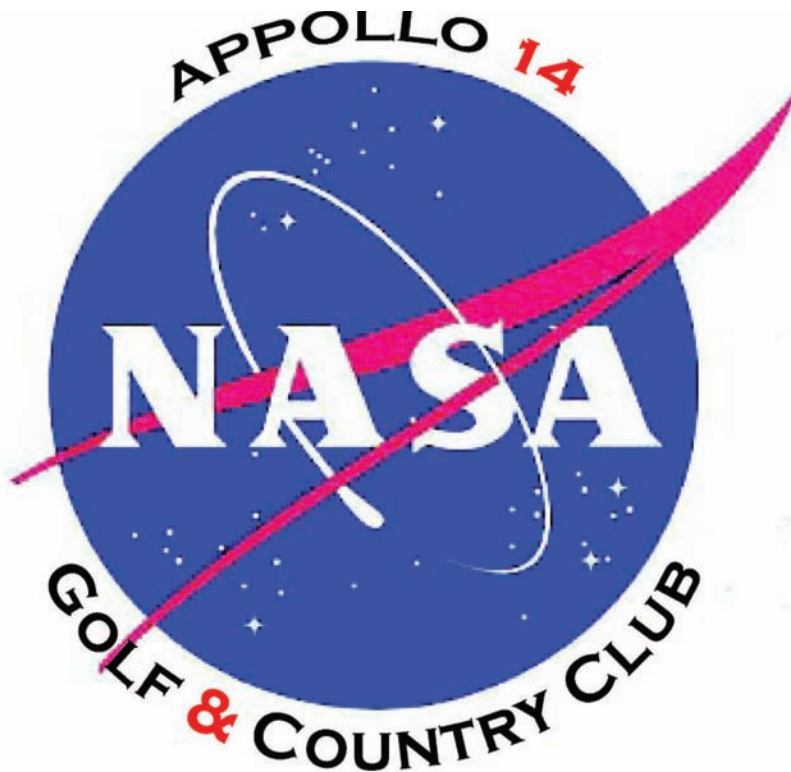
There is a general spirit of hilarity to the manner in which Goreas plays with the gallery space. It's ultimately unclear which terrain—gold course or space-cape—is dominant. Goreas' installation functions as a hybrid environment, with a little from column A and a little from column B. That he situates an actual golf cart, festooned with imaginary Apollo 14/country club logos, into the midst of the equation would drive the point home in a manner sufficiently absurd. But Goreas takes it one visual pun further, with a small sculpture of a golf cart, which has been wrapped in brown paper like a lost Christo unearthed after a thousand years of golf and art have gone.

Goreas' unaffected approach—blunt, self-deprecating, and bemused—should not be misunderstood a jokey or overly casual. He may be a SPACE COWBOY, but he is also a SOUL MAN, digging for poetry in the spaces between seemingly unrelated ideas. He is, like any serious golfer or artist, pursuing that moment when you hit a ball or an idea in its sweet spot. Time doesn't really stand still, but it seems to—it seems to elongate and suspend itself in the unutterable depth of the moment. It's a sublime moment, on the green, in the gallery, or out in the stars.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator







LEE GOREAS • *Stars and Pars* • January 17 to February 21, 2009.

Lee Goreas received his MFA from the University of Victoria (Canada) in 1990, and has exhibited nationally and internationally since then, including Museum Stuki (Poland), Potsdamer Platz (Berlin), YYZ Artists Outlet (Toronto), Robert Birch Gallery (Toronto), Stride Gallery (Calgary), Southern Exposure (San Francisco), Artcote (Windsor), Access ART (NYC) Canadian Embassy (Shanghai), AAF Contemporary Art Fair (NYC), Kelowna Art Gallery (BC), and Birch Libralato (Toronto). Goreas lives and works in Toronto and is Assistant Professor of Drawing at the University of Toronto/Mississauga. He is represented by Birch Libralato, Toronto.

www.birchlibralato.com/

Hallwalls' visual arts program is supported by generous grants from the New York State Council of the Arts, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and The Cameron Baird Foundation. Additional thanks to Big Orbit Gallery, Buffalo, NY.



The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts



HALLWALLS

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

341 DELAWARE AVENUE

BUFFALO, NY 14202

www.hallwalls.org