

art

MIXED MEDIA

Low meets high

Marriott makes intriguing connections **By DAVID JAGER**

JOHN MARRIOTT at MKG127 (1445 Dundas West), to April 18. 647-435-7682. Rating: **NNNN**

Contemporary artists go on about erasing the boundaries between high and low culture, but few put the notion into practice effectively. Toronto's John Marriott, whose plumbing of the zeitgeist stretches from meditations on zombie flicks to Fluxus and beyond, not only erases boundaries but elicits subtle and zany illuminating connections.

Take his *Zombie Economy* paintings, which bring together problems of art theory and basic zombie apocalypse survival. The zombie trope, signifier of a consumerist society in mindless decline, gets borrowed to comment on the contemporary state of painting.

The series of abstract canvases with boards hastily nailed over them raises a few questions. First, "Is it time to close up shop?" Also, "How do artists keep from being eaten alive

by the zombie hordes of the over-inflated corporatist art market?"

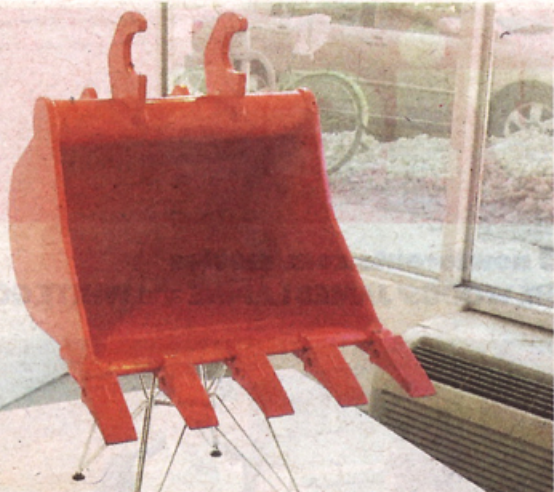
A squat industrial backhoe bucket on delicate Eames chair legs is funny in a different way, upending time-honoured notions of mid-century modernist form and function while thumbing its nose at the Duchampian readymade.

This impish pleasure in a cognitive clash is what drives Marriott's work. His brutalist quilt features silk-screened examples of the massive concrete architecture reviled for its monumental coldness onto something meant for snuggling.

Some pieces simply disturb. Replacing the face of a man on a bronze bust with a lo-fi typographic wink emoticon ;) brings the eerie rift between complex human affect and digital text into uncanny relief.

The sculptural piece *Spoiler* puts the entire back gallery between parentheses by cutting a parenthesis-shaped chunk out of a gallery wall and leaning it on the opposite wall. It's a stunningly elegant way to dem-

John Marriott's backhoe bucket makes a canny comment on design ideas.



onstrate the fragile, ephemeral nature of context. The world, Marriott is saying, is never entirely fixed, but

a contextual aside between parentheses. ©

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