



forever finding its resolution. This time, he is not telling us what to see: instead, blood orange skies suggest real incident, and his lens invites our position. In a medium currently at risk of collapsing under its own weightlessness, this return to form ballasts the image. And, instead of pointing, these images beckon.

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## EDWIN JANZEN: GUYS IN CAVES

DIEFENBUNKER, OTTAWA

AUGUST 13 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2010

BY LAURA PAOLINI

Edwin Janzen's MFA Thesis exhibition, *Guys in Caves*, took over the Diefenbunker in Ottawa from August 13 to September 30, 2010. Canada's Cold War museum may seem like an unusual venue for an art exhibit—after all, it's not exactly the National Gallery—but this museum holds secrets. For instance, the number of spies between North America and the former USSR, and how real the possibility of nuclear annihilation once was. Not to mention the numerous jingles and public awareness campaigns used to reassure and control Canadians of my parents' generation, for whom there can be little comfort in knowing the "duck and cover" drills they rehearsed would have done nothing in a real nuclear attack. Just like knowing the Diefenbunker would have protected only a select few

if such a catastrophe had actually occurred.

Various rooms in the Diefenbunker, such as the Canadian Mint's old vault, which now holds a memorial to the fall of the Berlin Wall, are sites of apology for acts of past war to people wrongfully arrested and to lives taken. Appropriately, Janzen's artwork infiltrates each underground level with site-specific installations. In doing so, he takes the space to task by questioning whether or not the Cold War ever really ended, and juxtaposes it against present-day fear-mongering rhetoric.

*Vigilant* (2010) is installed throughout the ground floor—identified as the 400 level in the visitor's guide—and consists of lamico office signage engraved with such phrases as "Evildoers," "Shock & Awe" and "Axis of Evil," all in Helvetica typeface. Blending into beige-coloured walls, the hermetic similarities between the signage and the Diefenbunker are apparent, and deeper connections begin to emerge. I first found myself trying to remember who

Maher Arar was and why this sign bearing his name made sense on the Spy Room door that features the story of Igor Gouzenko. Arar, recently faced with rendition and torture, and Gouzenko, a Russian defector to Canada, were both subjects of ongoing espionage hunts. This artwork also acts as camouflage: the signs look permanent and authoritative sitting overtop floorboards, at junctions and corners, littering the corridors, on laundry chutes, and placed on mirrors in bathrooms. Yet the text of these signs makes their presence subversive, and they lead into the thematic exploration of Janzen's exhibition.

Descending deeper into the Diefenbunker is a descent into the militarized mind. Much of our vernacular has roots in military jargon (Janzen's examples range from 'taliban' to 'evildoers' and 'mission accomplished') and the meaning of such phrases can quickly transform following traumatic events and rapid political changes. *Guys in Caves* illuminates the making of monsters

and how one's own mind can become an ideological cave. "In this sense," says Janzen in his artist statement, "language itself becomes the conceptual architecture of our mental bunkers." And this really becomes apparent as you begin to explore the so-called caves, or rather the offices, once occupied by bureaucrats and secretaries keeping Canada safe from the Red Menace.

Several video pieces permeate the 300 level below and are collectively titled *Adversary*. The videos play on the Diefenbunker's original monitors, utilizing them as artifacts and vehicles and removing the need for an additional construction that would draw your attention. Using appropriated footage from 60s movies and television shows, Janzen's videos present silent and varied depictions of "the enemy." For example, the office of Energy, Mines and Resources has a looped video of trees swaying the wind. The surveillance quality of the work is immediately humorous but closer inspection reveals that these are not just



↑ Edwin Janzen, *Vigilant*, installation view, 2010  
PHOTO: IRINA LYUBCHENKO



any trees, but the trees surrounding the fictional town of Twin Peaks. (The 90s Frost and Lynch series *Twin Peaks* depicted a small town with secrets and dark troubles allegedly created by “the evil in these woods.”)

At the other end of the floor, in the External Affairs office, two monitors sit in adjacent roped off offices. One monitor features the 60s cartoon series *The Mighty Hercules* while the other displays Greek ruins from the cartoon with superimposed text reading, “Even in the absence of credible adversaries, this is still a potent nightmare from which we cannot seem to awaken... we have to make it our worst fear that the capabilities of our enemies could outmatch and surpass our own.” While Hercules struggles on the first monitor to free himself from the clutches of an evil giant, the text on the second returns us to the humanity of the enemy—something propaganda tries to render invisible.

In the belly of the beast, wrapped behind the Bank of Canada vault, *Gauntlet* (2010) is installed in an awkward, narrow curving corridor that Janzen has illuminated with several red lightbulbs. Navigating through the hallway, you approach large mirrors and meet your reflection until you turn and eventually exit back into the area where you found the work. And the whole time, the theme from *Get Smart* (the 60s spy comedy show with Maxwell Smart) plays from hidden speakers. This exercise in frustration references Bruce Nauman’s *Green Light Corridor* (1970), in which the viewer encounters their body physically and recognizes how their presence affects the nature of the space. Nauman used this

motif as the subject of several corridor pieces, yet Janzen takes Nauman’s claustrophobic passageways into a political context and back to the Diefenbunker. Despite eerie red lights and the sound of doors slamming echoing throughout the corridor, you will find yourself unharmed and back where you started.

Descending into the Diefenbunker may seem like retreating, yet once inside you

will meet the same adversaries, the same way history often repeats itself. We find the largest threats are ourselves. Janzen’s work responds so well to the Diefenbunker’s interior that it seems to levitate, existing as a cultural critique of Cold War fear-mongering yet also resonating in the discourse of present day that feeds off our anxiety and our inability to recognize the enemy created within. But the question remains, how

to operate in an age that has contributed to a disenfranchised and disillusioned public? What remains after experiencing *Guys in Caves* and recognizing it as a twofold cultural critique is a desperate social need to climb back towards the light.

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## DAVID DIVINEY: HEAD FOR THE HILLS

DALHOUSIE ART GALLERY, HALIFAX  
OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 28, 2010  
BY JANE AFFLECK

Upon entering a room, you don’t expect to be immediately greeted by an exit. But a visit to the Dalhousie Art Gallery last fall afforded just that experience: ahead and to the right was a mixed-media piece calling to mind a trapdoor. But after even a cursory glance, it’s clear this door, *Untitled (Diptych)* (2007), won’t provide an escape route. Affixed to the ceiling of the DAG alcove space, a rustic square door painted the colour of strong milky tea hangs open from a matte black plywood “hole” from which a bucket contraption is suspended nearly to the floor by a thin rope. The “door” leads nowhere, and there you are, standing beside the bucket. What’s up or down, in or out, isn’t exactly clear.

It’s disconcerting, this topsy-turvy point of view. But, partly because of the materials and techniques that

Diviney uses, you’d be forgiven for emitting a peal of laughter instead of a squeal of distress. The fake door is reminiscent of Saturday morning cartoons, and the double bucket, with its Pop Art aesthetic, is also cartoonish. Would a tug on the rope elicit a reciprocal tug, or perhaps a noise? A splash? A whistle? A ratcheting tic?

Despite their primal themes of hunting and being hunted, nervous laughter is an understandable reaction to many of Diviney’s pieces. Another involving a bucket, *Fountain* (2004), is perhaps more comical than *Untitled (Diptych)*. A steel bucket is pocked by a couple dozen bullet holes. But they’re not *real* bullet holes; they’re black, white and grey adhesive decals that come in two different “calibres.” No gun was aimed at this bucket to blow it to smithereens, and the absence of that classic phallic symbol, or its true after-effects, imbues the piece with a certain impotence. But the bucket’s integrity belies it somewhat: the holes aren’t real so it can still be used as a vessel for carrying water. But, then again, considering the title, *Fountain*, shouldn’t water be able to flow from it? Alas, there is no real hole in this bucket, dear Liza, and nary a trickle can escape. The piece is then simply a *trompe l’oeil* prank, the viewer



↑ David Diviney, *Fountain*, 2004, steel bucket, decals, enamel paint, wood bracket  
PHOTO: STEVE FARMER; IMAGE COURTESY OF DALHOUSIE ART GALLERY, HALIFAX

↑ Edwin Janzen, *Inferno*, installation view, 2010  
PHOTO: IRINA LYUBCHENKO

→ Daniel Barrow, *No One Helped Me*, 2010, Mixed media, 44.5 cm × 44 cm  
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