

# ART PAPERS



## JOE SOLA ATLANTA

California appropriation art has been gathering strength over the last few years. Mark Roeder remade Robert Smithson sculptures, and Richard Pettibon, whose replicas first brought him to critical attention in Los Angeles in the late fifties, is currently having multiple retrospectives. On view in the exhibition *Taking a Bullet* [Atlanta College of Art Gallery; January 26—March 5, 2006], the work of Los Angeles artist Joe Sola revisits iconic performance works from the last century.

The show's title, *Taking a Bullet*, clearly refers to fellow Californian conceptual artist Chris Burden who gained notoriety for the performance *Shoot*, 1971. Burden arranged for a friend to shoot him, turning a small group of unknowing friends into witnesses as the bullet grazed his arm. More recently, Burden was in the news because he denied Marina Abramovic permission to perform his work as part of her 2005 series of reenactments of other artists' early performances at the Guggenheim. In 2005, he also resigned in a huff from UCLA's faculty when a student was not expelled for proposing to shoot himself as part of a performance. The evocation of Burden therefore raises questions of propriety and ownership. In his early performative video *Saint Henry Composition*, 2001—played on a small monitor in the gallery—Sola had an entire football team tackle him. So often the subjects of 1970s body art, tests of endurance, commitment, and the ability to sustain pain particularly invoke Burden's work. Is Sola appropriating from his predecessors, paying homage to them, satirizing them, or extending their tradition when he, like Burden, explores and tests his physical limits through performance?

The show's pivotal work is the video *Studio Visit*, 2005. We watch the artist discussing his work with a

succession of curators in his studio. The sound is intentionally quite poor, which makes it difficult to tell what Sola is actually saying. After the first few minutes, this proves unimportant. Sola gets up, tells the curators that he would like to show them a new work, and very elegantly jumps through a closed window, breaking the glass, and falling outside and down. The curators' reaction is most amazing—they all begin to laugh. They remain seated in their chairs laughing, more stunned and amused than concerned.

*Studio Visit* refers to Yves Klein's *The Leap into the Void*, 1960, a photographic pseudo-document of Klein's leap out of a window and flight into space. Sola may be paying homage to Klein but he appropriates Klein's gesture and makes it his own by repeatedly jumping out the window. Sola treats Klein's work in much the same way Klein himself treated the sky when he signed it and declared it to be his work.

In the center of the gallery are the remains of a performance orchestrated by the artist for the exhibition's opening. The jumble of materials looks like many artists' studios: paint, cups, paper and artistic debris. Sola engaged male models to make the work publicly in the gallery, and to perform as artists. While the models did not pretend to be Sola, the idea of using a performer as a surrogate for the artist also refers to earlier work. A few years ago, Maurizio Cattelan hired a surrogate to give a series of public lectures as the artist himself. Andy Warhol did the same thing many years earlier.

The relationship of Sola's work to that of other artists ranges from evocation to appropriation. By remaking others' ideas, Sola claims them for himself. His art is thus in the tradition of the Hollywood remake. Sola appropriates concepts and images for the same reasons Hollywood remakes older films: the remake is new for those who do not remember the older version, and eternally linked to tradition for those who do.