

ARTLOG

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Beyond Jasper Johns

Rebecca Siegel



Dave Cole, *The Knitting Machine*. Presented at MASS MoCA on the 4th of July weekend, 2005. Courtesy of Dave Cole, photo by Arjen Noordeman.

This Fourth of July, most of us will be celebrating our three-day weekends with much-needed down time, while vaguely appreciating that nationalism, if not patriotism, is the reason behind this extra day off from the grind. Amidst the red, white, and blue fireworks, these works offer more nuanced perspectives on patriotism.

Steven Gagnon consistently grapples with America's divergent viewpoints and has even exhibited at The Democratic National Convention. Recently on view at Exit Art, *Iraqi Freedom (Study)* consists of black toy soldiers heaped in disarray under the auspices (and imprint) of the American flag. The political statement here is hard to miss.

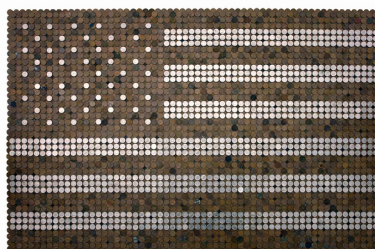
John Salvest's *Change* recreates the American flag with carefully arranged pennies and dimes. The piece plays on the word "change," which America promises in spite of the white, male legacy of its founding fathers. The faces of those forefathers, imprinted on currency, become fodder for quotidian experiences like feeding parking meters. Similarly, Salvest reduces the symbolic value of America's flag to its bare use value: money.

Wilfredo Prieto's *Apolitical* recreates the flag of every country designated by the United Nations – in greyscale. Prieto honors official designs, dimensions, and fabrics, but the flags become hard to tell apart without color, undermining national branding. What's the difference between France and Italy without the color green? *Apolitical* alludes to increasing cultural homogeneity, and appropriately, it has traveled to New York, Cuba, the Sao Paulo Biennial, and around the world.

In *Flame Test*, Will Kwan prints twenty-eight flags with news images of flag-burning protests. The images are almost banal at this point in 2011, but together, the installation creates palpable unrest. Rather than present a traditional row of flags as a unifying gesture, Kwan taps into a different universal: the massive discomfort brought on by the sight of flag-burning.



Steven Gagnon, *Iraqi Freedom (Study)*, 2011. Courtesy of Exit Art.



John Salvest, *Change*, 2007. Courtesy of Morgan Lehman.



Wilfredo Prieto, *Apolitical*, 2001-2008.