

**Michael Wutz: *Silver Lining flat lining*
August 30, 2007**

The concept of "personal apocalypses" has already been lingering on my mind before I walked into *flat lining*. I had recently re-watched the Gorillaz music video *Clint Eastwood*, which features scenes of storm-filled, desolate graveyards. The music video also features gigantic ghoulish gorillas chasing a lone human being. So basically, when everybody around you descends into their primitive selves, with their reptilian brains firing up, then you know it's time to run to the hills. This is the aesthetic of apocalypse in *Clint Eastwood* and in Wutz's *flat lining*.



Michael Wutz, *Smoked Heads of Slain Friends*, 2007. charcoal on paper. 88 x 122 cm

The above charcoal drawing is on the cover of the brochure for the show. It's a drawing of shrunken heads, supposedly reminiscent of actual headhunting tribes. Next to *Untitled* is *Speer v2 Germania*, a vision of Nazi utopia. The two together remind me, then, that the apocalypse will come from other people collectively tapping into something insidious inside the human spirit: from the blind exuberance of Speer to the primitive brutality of the headhunters.

The Internet is still in its infancy to understand exactly how ideas spread. My suspicion is that we're at the point where links that were popular and widely

forwarded in 1998 return back to popularity if for some reason there's a collective interest in them. Here's a link to images of actual shrunken heads that spread around the Internet a year ago. Whether or not Wutz caught wind of that link, an artist can make good by tapping into the global consciousness. George Dubya and Tony Blair are both "End of Times" men, invoking the language of Rapture to justify insane policies. Wutz, during a talk, referred to how we are being bullied by the fear of apocalypse. The fear is somewhat self-fulfilling, no?

While you can view 44 tiny photos of *flat lining*, I highly recommend visiting Volitant in person. Going to *flat lining* is the second time I experienced stepping out from the Austin summer heat into the white soothing, air-conditioned lobby of art that is Volitant. The place has marble floors, white walls, and a large open space. In seeing Wutz and the curator, Till Richter, in person, I felt they were very much inspired by the space. On one wall, Wutz drew *Reflection on Durer's Four Horsemen*:

While Wutz's pieces were probably created before the choice of gallery, there is a great energy between Wutz's work and Volitant. This can be credited to Till Richter's curating. The curatorial features I noticed were the seriousness of the selection and the unity toward a theme. These features, though, can be problematic at times. The pieces feel full of themselves, and chosen more for their ability to powerfully invoke a theme, rather than soothe the senses over a long period of time. There's a couple stare-worthy pieces, like the triptychs on the right wall of the gallery. But while the pieces do a great job tapping into the global consciousness, they don't re-examine or reveal anything new about the concept of personal apocalypse. However, the show is an event and the art is worth feeding to your eyes. It did a good job inspiring me to write this. So take a date and talk.