tity, of belonging to a land, a tradition, and a community; in other words a sense of being rooted historically, culturally, and geographically—thus, from a memory sacred in origin but on which man independently constructs. And it is this profound, stratified, mythical-sacred significance that is totally lost within the technical-scientific homogenization of space that is typical of modernity. Vercruysse's work aims to revive the desire to safeguard memory as a living source of the present. We live in a globalized and thus delocalized world, a world where we pass from one nonplace to another. Probably, as Vercruysse's new works imply, art is the terrain on which we can maintain the memory of a difference, of a world oriented in another way, of a horizon that is not closed off.

—Massimo Carboni

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

Maurizio Nannucci, Explore, 2005, neon and glass tubing, 6'6¾" x 26'10¾".

Dan Attoe, We are all memories, 2004, oil on canvas, 12 x 12".

BERGAMO, ITALY

MAURIZIO NANNUCCI

GALLERIA FUMAGALLI

Since his first appearance in a group show in 1964, Maurizio Nannucci has been investigating the relationship between word and vision. In 1967, he began using neon as a medium for his text-based work. Today Nannucci continues to explore the same territory, which is essentially that of the relationship between signifier and signified. This is what distinguishes his work from that of other pioneering Conceptualists like Joseph Kosuth, whose early work was more involved with the definition of the "thing," or Bruce Nauman, whose art is often characterized by the emotional trace of the self.

In Nannucci's recent exhibition "Neon Words," the viewer encountered seven words in seven different colors and in large letters resembling signage on a building: SHOCK, LOOK, HEAR, EXPLORE, PERCEPTION, MIND, and VISION (the artist generally uses English). These isolated words are nevertheless tied by an idea that apparently establishes a sort of hierarchy among them. "Shock" is the motor of sensation, particularly in art (the idea is borrowed from Walter Benjamin), and so it lies at the vertex of this hypothetical pyramid. Then, in cascading fashion, the senses become involved ("look," "hear"). Finally more complex and active mental workings come into play, expressed by the four remaining words. So much for the overt content of the exhibition, but as a work of Nannucci's from 1987 reads, nothing new to say but something to say in a new way. What is original in Conceptual art lies not so much in its purely linguistic-structural aspects but in the form that is attributed to these and that must be effective in the territory of art rather than in that of linguistics. In this sense, Nannucci's choice for this exhibition is audacious since in his other works—like most of those by other Conceptualists—words, all words, are generally connected to form phrases, and therefore substantially specific and complex meanings; but here the relationships between the words are in the mind of the observer, and the connection is variable. Clearly the artist's "authorized" interpretation exists, if only through his conversation about it, but this interpretation may not be the most convincing; and the artist himself, in this case, leaves individual words open to suggestion. The connections among these, which, all things considered, are deliberately weak, find visual analogy in the colored halos that each illuminated word casts around itself. The halos become blurred, and a small area of reciprocal influence, marked by the indefiniteness of the color, tells us that between those two words there must exist some link. They are neither entirely detached from one another nor are they connected. Rather, they seem to be awaiting linkage, suspended in a sort of conceptual "standby" situation. We know through intuition or convention that one or more meaningful paths could and should connect them to each other, but we are not shown these connections.

—Marco Meneguzzo

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

NAPLES

DAN ATTOE

404 ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

In his first European solo exhibition, American artist Dan Attoe portrayed his inner life and his cultural milieu in twenty-five paintings (all works 2004). Trained in both psychology and visual art, he reveals childhood memories and dreams in small cinematic scenes with handwritten captions spoken by characters who seem to be working through deep emotional issues. The paintings are often set in sublime, distinctively American natural landscapes that are so impressive, almost heroic, that they become characters in the scenarios. Underlying these remarkable yet ordinary situations is a sense of uneasiness—and even a touch of *Twin Peaks*–style surrealism—conveyed through sickeningly vivid colors dominated by cold blues, greens, and yellows, as well as by the deadpan texts and desperate expressions of the subjects.

Sometimes comical and cartoonlike, sometimes mysterious and foreboding, Attoe's compelling pictures convey the meeting of the everyday with the extraordinary. In the midst of a grandiose romantic landscape, three figures on a cliff stare awestruck at a spectacular unearthly cloud formation bursting forth and bathing them in a splendid light. Yet the handwritten caption below brings us back to earth: i am working through things. The paintings often depict unsettling or nightmarish experiences whose drama is undermined by humorous images or ironic captions. An isolated log house surrounded by tall pines and lit up at night—a Christmas tree in the window, a snowman and plastic Santa on the front lawn, and icicles hanging from the roof—has a fairy-tale quality. But we see it from above, dwarfed by a looming yellow-gray storm cloud with a witchlike female head whose mouth emits the words we are all memories. Thus, a feeling of impending disaster hovering over a happy home pervades this mythlike portrayal of a childhood memory.

Adolescent angst is acted out in *Disabled*, in which a young man wearing a blue mask and a flowered shirt kneels on a tiled kitchen floor with his hands in the air in a scary-monster gesture. Underlined by the comment we are all disabled, it is at once both tragic and tender. In another painting, a couple stands in a park surrounded by picnicking families. Gesturing emphatically at his blonde companion as if they are arguing, the man says, things inside us make us go. The narrative nature of Attoe's work is augmented by notes written on the backs of the paintings—which were revealed by the gallery owner on request—to provide clues to the inspiration or backstory. In *Thought Clouds*, a man wearing a baseball cap and clenching his fists walks under giant devil-shaped clouds commenting, i need them. i am stuck. On the back the artist has written, "This is the answer to everyone who asks 'Where do your ideas come from?' Satan, nothing, air and water and pollution, TV, force, rock music, luck, social ineptitude." The small scale of the canvases—most of them only five-by-five inches—oddly intensifies their powerful effect: because they must be viewed up close to read the texts, you are drawn into their peculiarly American world. Indeed, Attoe's paintings can be read like pages from a book—and like good short stories, they suggest the

Matthieu Laurette, Apparition: The Today Show, NBC, December 31, 2004 (detail),
color video loop, 2 minutes 30 seconds.

Patrick Faigenbaum, Palmarès, 2004,
color photograph, 55⅝ x 53⅛".

vulnerability and absurdity of life with a few simple gestures.

—Cathryn Drake

PARIS

MATTHIEU LAURETTE

YVON LAMBERT

More than video, photography, or any other medium, Matthieu Laurette's favored mode of appearance is, precisely, the appearance. This tautology says a good deal about his art of endless refraction, a self-reflective oeuvre that nevertheless takes on, perhaps not the lowest forms, but in any case the least reputable ones in the realm of television and media, from talk shows to celebrity gossip. It's not surprising to have seen his appearance—excuse me, exhibition—at Yvon Lambert open with some man-in-the-street interviews: Made with a team from NOATV, the local cable access network in New Orleans, *The Louisiana Repo-Purchase*, 2003–2004, shows passersby being asked to sign a petition to keep France from buying back the Louisiana territories: "That's ridiculous!" "We don't like Louisiana, so sell it!" "Yes, I want to sign that. We live here now, and we're here to stay." The video turns into a documentary on the difficulty of French-American relations in the wake of the war in Iraq: "It's sometimes easier to talk about real issues in a playful way," the artist himself has said. "People can listen more easily because you don't frighten them with ideologies."

If Laurette places trust in television—something rather unexpected these days—it's because he has been able to make it his tool and his workplace. The proof comes with his recent *Apparition: The Today Show, NBC, December 31, 2004*. That day, in front of Rockefeller Plaza, where the network has an outdoor set and where hundreds of people brandish signs and posters, wave, send personal messages, and moan in collective hysteria as soon as the camera gets them in a shot, we suddenly see a sweet little pink poster: guy debord is so cool! A fifty-nine-second appearance, enough time to send a message to television about television, enough time above all to broadcast on-screen an obviously inoffensive critical discourse: Reference to Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) has today become the custard pie of media studies, the most worn-out cliché of all discourse on (or against) the media.

Next comes the highlight of the spectacle: the celebrity appearance. As he'd done before—at openings at the ICA in London (for the show "Publicness" in 2003), at the Castello de Rivoli in 2001 (for "Form Follows Fiction"), and for the exhibition "*Au-delà du spectacle*" (Beyond the Spectacle) at the Centre Pompidou in 2000—to make *Déjà-vu: The Seventh International Look-Alike Convention at Dia's Fall Gala, 2004*, the artist invited look-alikes of famous people to mix with the art-world crowd who had come to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Dia Art Foundation. Look-alikes of Robert De Niro, Whoopi Goldberg, and Howard Stern, among others, were photographed, notably, alongside the real Lou Reed.

Beyond playing on the true and the false, Laurette's "performance" can be seen as an institutional critique, as an investigation of context via the mise-en-scène and *mise en abîme* of the social dynamics of the spectacle, and as an examination of relationships between the art world and the celebrity system—all in three easy steps. In a surprising and symptomatic reversal, the exhibition itself, with its posters, publicity glossies, and "making of" video, took the form of a media event. Marshall McLuhan is so cool!

—Jean-Max Colard

Translated from French by Jeanine Herman.

PATRICK FAIGENBAUM

MUSÉE DU LOUVRE

With all due respect to the artist, the first thing that came to my mind—once the visual and emotional shock of his monumental two-part photo installation "*Louvre et Chaussée d'Antin*" subsided—was a one-line joke: "What's the difference between a tailor and a psychoanalyst? One generation." For the visitor, Patrick Faigenbaum's artistic variation on the generic saga of the Eastern European Jewish immigrant began with "Palmarès," 2004, a mosaic of the ten large-format color photos disposed along the wall opposite the entrance to the vast workshoplike space that the Louvre has recently devoted to interventions by contemporary artists. These lush, large-format tableaux vivants represent the final days of Palmarès (literally, "prize list"), the clothing boutique on rue de la Chaussée d'Antin run by Faigenbaum's aunt for more than thirty years. Like a visual countdown, the photos mark the end of an era in ten exquisitely suspended moments, from the baroque commotion at the sales counter—where Mme Bogman, the aunt, peers out from behind an enormous desk and a dizzying array of garments—through the burlesque cohabitation of customers and demolition crew, to the classicizing desolation of a final fitting session, with a white-robed model and her seamstress-attendant posed like antique statuary in the pregnant void of an arcaded dressing room awaiting destruction.

The "Louvre" pendant to "Chaussée d'Antin" occupied the other three walls with what was at first sight a stunning counterpoint to the "Palmarès" series: twenty spectral, fragmentary, black-and-white photos of Michelangelo's two unfinished *Slaves* (both dated 1513), which have been in the museum's collection since the late eighteenth century. In contrast to the circumstantial nature of "Palmarès"—Faigenbaum learned in December 2003 that the boutique was closing and started photographing two weeks later on a daily basis—the Louvre project ("Untitled," 2003–2004) involved eight months of intimate weekly rendezvous with the *Slaves* on days when the museum was closed to the public. In contrast to the familial immediacy of "Palmarès," Faigenbaum's *Slaves* are the product of an artistic dialogue with the past. In contrast to the synthetically narrative images of the boutique, far closer to film stills than documentary photos, the *Slaves* are (with the exception of one almost full-length portrait of the *Rebellious Slave* barely emerging from stone and shadows alike) analytically fragmented into close-ups of heads, torsos, and lower limbs.

And yet, for Faigenbaum, the worlds of the Louvre and Chaussée d'Antin have always coexisted, or at least since his early teens, when, already set on becoming an artist, he used to skip school to visit the museum. And the emblematic struggles of Michelangelo's *Slaves* against captivity and death have their echoes in the deportation of the paternal grandparents and an aunt he never knew, or even the day-to-day struggles of those who survived. These parallels make "*Louvre et Chaussée d'Antin*" a moving homage from one generation to another. It is even more remarkable because Faigenbaum succeeds not only in bringing rue de la Chaussée d'Antin into the Louvre but also in capturing the expressive beauty of the clothing boutique, just as, by bringing Michelangelo's *Slaves* into his own darkroom, he has infused a living dimension into the most transcendent of sculptures. But through this artistic balancing act between observation and invention, Faigenbaum has at the same time created a world of the imagination where visitors, whether or not they are familiar with his history or Michelangelo's, can circulate freely among sculptures and mannequins, shoppers and slaves in a history of their own making.

—Miriam Rosen