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Dave Hullfish Bailey

Ditch/School

November 21, 2008- January 10, 2009

Opening Reception: Friday, November 21, 6-8 pm

PRESS RELEASE

Mesler&Hug is pleased to present the second solo exhibition at the gallery by Dave Hullfish Bailey. Presenting new installation and image-based works, Bailey continues his focus on small-scale architectures for social organization, and for the experimental organization of information.

The current exhibition emerges from “What’s left to its own devices: On reclamation”, a broader project initiated in 2007 and presented at Casco Office for Art Design and Theory in Utrecht, The Netherlands. For *Ditch/School*, Bailey focuses on one element of his research for that project, the ad hoc community library at Slab City. It is a community built upon an abandoned military base in California’s Imperial Valley. Located on the ancient delta of the Colorado River, the valley has a complex history that includes natural and human-caused disasters, agricultural triumphs, waves of land speculation, narratives of utopia, and successive busts. On its floor, 228 feet below sea level, lies the Salton Sea, created in the early 1900s when control of the valley’s irrigation system was lost. Today its primary function is to collect agricultural run-off, which has turned the sea into an ecological disaster.

Slab City and its library are the indirect beneficiaries of this 100 yearlong train wreck of industry, nature and capital—only because the surrounding land is of so little value that squatting is permitted. A large seasonal and small year-round population have built the library, which eerily replicates the logic of the sea and valley: it has become a kind of dumping ground for information, where vastly more books are donated than are checked out. The result is architecture of continual transformation, requiring continual additions and alterations based on the amount of books continue to flow into it.

Against this background, *Ditch/School* creates a space for the consumption of information and production of knowledge. The exhibition operates as a proposal for a new kind of structure, one designed to support experimental ways of disorganizing and re-organizing information. In particular Bailey is interested in teasing apart the historically interconnected rise of scientific ways of knowing the world and the emergence of “democratic” political philosophies, both of which were instrumental in “developing” the valley. He sets up a space where processes of the natural world and procedures for knowing it (direct observation, and the synthesizing logic of the analytic mind) might be deliberately confused, or might be encouraged to infect and deflect each other. Taking a specific cue from hydrological processes of sedimentation, here Bailey focuses upon the translation from organizations built by categories (of books in libraries or stones in strata) to those created by juxtaposition and continual accumulation.

The physical aspect of the project includes, in clusters on the gallery’s walls, a photographic circumnavigation of the library at Slab City. Wedged under a Palo Verde tree, the makeshift structure suggests a kind of frame for Bailey’s own forms for working with information. Shown in the gallery’s main room, Bailey has improvised various stations that will be evolving throughout the run of the exhibition: one that uses water pumps, sand and dirt to create small-scale deltas, another where Palo Verde seeds germinate and grow until they are transported, and a third where diverse historical, political and scientific information related to the Imperial Valley is researched, reproduced, cut up, re-organized and re-presented. Cobbled together, often from the “wrong tools” these observation stations propose an architecture of information about the natural and social histories of the Colorado River delta, but one which may be as unstable and difficult to interpret as the delta itself.

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Dave Hullfish Bailey lives and works in Los Angeles. Bailey is currently finishing a book, *What's Left*, which presents research and ideas related to those presented in *Ditch/School*. It will be published by Sternberg Press, Berlin and CASCO Office for Art Design and Theory, Utrecht. Past solo exhibitions include *What's left to its own devices*, CASCO, Utrecht; *Elevator*, The Secession in Vienna and Centre d'Art Santa Mónica, Barcelona (2006); and *Banding Station*, IBID Projects London (2004). Select Group exhibitions include the *Lyon Biennale* (2007); *Turrbal-Jagera*, Queensland University Art Museum, Brisbane (2006); *Socle du Monde Biennale*, curated by Jacob Fabricius for the Herning Kunstmuseum, Herning, Denmark (2004); and *New Settlements* at Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center, Copenhagen (2001). Upcoming exhibitions include a collaborative project with artist Nils Norman at Raven Row, London (September 2009), a solo exhibition at The Suburban, Chicago (March 2009), and a group exhibition curated by Anthony Huberman at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, (September 2009).

For more information or images, please contact Vera Neykov at info@meslerandhug.com or 323.221.0016.