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**My Support Group Told Me to Go to Hell**

**Heads, Hands, Liquids**

**Michael Benevento**

**7578 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90046**

September 15, 2007 - October 20, 2007

Heads, Hands, and Liquids, the terse, deadpan title of Norwegian photographer and video artist Torbjorn Rodland's works at Michael Benevento is technically true, in terms of the surface content of the work, but the images, both as individual pieces and when taken together, offer forth a lot more than a kind of diaristic collection of portraits or still lives. If anything, Rodland's understated but carefully-composed photos, as well as the quasi-structuralist video looped in the back, avoid falling into simple categories like portraits or still lives.



Rodland plays with, but ultimately defers from, giving the viewer narratives that would make the simple acts in his photos and videos less unsettling. It is a fine line he walks. Although the exhibit includes only six, mostly small photos and the aforementioned video (in which the review title is hilariously intoned, to no one in particular, by an emotionless young woman), there's a lot going on between self-contained image and scene from a narrative. The similar visual style of the photos and video (muted colors, a frequent use of natural, sun-produced backlighting) help produce this uncertainty of meaning, the sense that there is a clarity to these scenes that is just out of reach.

The key image in the show is probably Golden Lager, a small photograph of a woman's arm angled like a crane over a glass of beer with her index finger pushed down into the lager and looking swollen for the magnification of beer and glass. There's no indication who is doing this simple, incongruous act, or why, or for how long, or whether the image was staged, or even whether that's her lager that her finger is stuck in. However all of that uncertainty together is what makes the photographs so compelling. While loading the images with implied narrative, Rodland carefully removes any hint of setting or character, leaving the viewer only with a collection of acts caught on film and a sense that, at any moment, anything might happen—something horrible or something great.



Even the one photograph that seems at first not to fit—a large image of a hip-hop poster onto which blood-colored jam has been placed—starts to take on that feeling of something unfolding. In this case that "something" seems outside the frame, in the lives of whomever would own such a poster, whomever would cover it with jam, or the jam-smearing rappers pictured on the poster themselves. This multiplicity of possibilities is what makes the exhibition a necessary stop and implies a good deal of intelligence on the part of the gallery itself.



(\*Images, from top to bottom: Torbjorn Rodland, Heads, Hands, Liquids, September 15 - October 20, 2007; Michael Benevento Gallery, Hand of Hip Hop, 2006, Ed. 1/3 (+1AP), Courtesy

of Torbjorn Rodland & Michael Benevento Gallery. Torbjorn Rodland, Heads, Hands, Liquids, September 15 - October 20, 2007; Michael Benevento Gallery, Golden Lager, 2006, Ed. 1/3 (+1AP), Courtesy of Torbjorn Rodland & Michael Benevento Gallery. Torbjorn Rodland, Heads, Hands, Liquids, September 15 - October 20, 2007; Michael Benevento Gallery, Tattoo, 2006, Ed. 1/3 (+1AP), Courtesy of Torbjorn Rodland & Michael Benevento Gallery.)

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