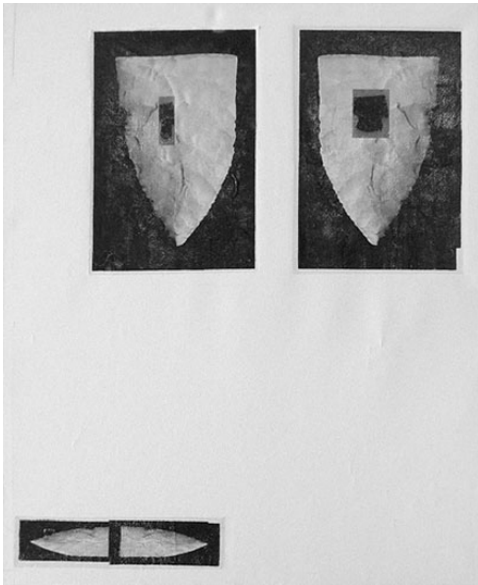


# ARTLIES

*Jeff Zilm: A Social Acid (leaked), A Terminal Edit (4), the Saps at Sea and Additional Research (Bernadine Dohrn)*

Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas

Michael Odom



Jeff Zilm, *Arrowheads #1*, 2010; iron-on transfer on pre-primed canvas; 22 ¼ x 18 inches; courtesy the artist and Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas



*A Social Acid (Leaked), A Terminal Edit (4), the Saps at Sea and Additional Research (Bernadine Dohrn)*, 2010; installation view, Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas; courtesy the artist and Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas

Jeff Zilm's second solo show at Marty Walker Gallery, *A Social Acid (Leaked)*, *A Terminal Edit (4)*, *the Saps at Sea* and *Additional Research (Bernadine Dohrn)*, is comprised of work from three categories: film paintings, password paintings and small painting-like objects made of iron-on transfers. Throughout, Zilm manipulates and often ruins encoded information while referencing aging technologies ranging from silver emulsion photography to Stone Age tools.

The pigment applied across Zilm's film paintings comes from the photo emulsion of 16- and 35-mm movie prints. Zilm chemically removes the emulsion, blends it with acrylic paint and sprays the resulting grayish mixture onto canvas. Films he destroyed for this exhibition include hundred-year-old celluloid shorts by D. W. Griffith and a 1940 Laurel and Hardy feature, *Saps at Sea*. Each movie's analogue soundtrack, as marked on one side of the film, varies in color temperature from print to print. So the soundtrack either warms or cools the emulsion's tone—making it possible for the exhibition checklist to include the delightful phrase “optical sound.” Removing a film's content—rendering it homeless and unformed—and then attaching it to canvas forces the activity (and technology) of painting to assume the burden of meaning making. The series of optical and auditory signs that previously unfolded over time in a movie are reconfigured on canvas as the instantaneous presence of a painting. Duration collapses along with narrative into a static object, one that appears to signify little more than the fact that it is painted with residually meaningful material. This, contrasted with one's memory of filmic experience, brings the semiotic structure of film into stark relief. Zilm breaks the film's code, so to speak.

Zilm's two text paintings engage other sorts of code breaking. The words he carefully inscribed onto his canvasses with acrylics are (or, more likely, *were*) functional passwords for one or another of the artist's online accounts. Exposing them ruins their utility—that's the “leaked” idea in the show's title. The password paintings also arguably violate a “painting code,” revealing the traditional mores of painting by transgressing them. Each measuring 10 feet by 3 ½ inches, these paintings feature a decidedly nonstandard aspect ratio, far from conventional canvas proportions such as the square or golden section. Moreover, stretching the word/image seems to reintroduce the subject of duration; the act of looking at the password paintings becomes an act of reading over time. It's an ironic move, given the apparent collapse of time in the film paintings.

Zilm's iron-on works, with images of Neolithic arrowheads arranged in vaguely face-like compositions, also appear to play with painting conventions. Ironing a crude photo decal onto a canvas hardly seems to be painting at all. Yet the stretched canvasses cue viewers to consider the works as paintings despite the seemingly casual and mechanical process that produced them. Zilm's concern over the conventional limits of painting is perhaps even more evident in his decision to lean the password painting *Flipper* against the wall, further asserting its “objecthood,” as Michael Fried would put it.

Set among Zilm's engagements with the aging and archaic technologies of 35 mm film and arrowheads, painting on canvas could be taken as another outdated delivery mechanism. Through it all, however, the artist appears to address painting as an elastic medium with enduring relevance. It may share something with other old technologies and still be capable of renewal.

*Michael Odom is an artist and critic living in a tiny town not far from Dallas.*

This exhibition will remain on view through February 12, 2011.