

Torment in Orange **Failé**



Date : 2007
Acrylic and silkscreen on paper
24 1/2 x 18 in.
Edition of 14 unique pieces
Pencil signed and numbered

Additional technical info:
This piece is accompanied with a certificate from Lazarides Gallery in London.

Artist bio

FAILE is a Brooklyn-based artistic collaboration between Patrick McNeil and Patrick Miller. Since its inception in 1999, FAILE is known for their pioneering use of wheatpasting and stenciling in the increasingly established arena of street art, and for their explorations of duality through a fragmented style of appropriation and collage. During this time, FAILE adapted its signature mass culture-driven iconography to a wide array of media, from wooden boxes and window pallets to more traditional canvas, prints, sculptures, stencils, multimedia installation, and prayer wheels. While FAILE's work is constructed from found visual imagery, and blurs the line between "high" and "low" culture, recent exhibitions demonstrate an emphasis on audience participation, a critique of consumerism, and the incorporation of religious media and architecture into their work.

McNeil and Miller met during their youth in Arizona. They were separated in 1996, but the duo reconnected, and with the addition of then filmmaker Aiko Nakagawa, "A Life" was conceived. By early 2000, the trio contributed to the emergence of a nascent, street art culture by circulating their screenprinted and painted work on city streets, usually by wheatpasting and stenciling. During the ensuing years McNeil, Miller, and Nakagawa solidified their style of pop-cultural collage, and changed their name to FAILE (an anagram of A Life). Nakagawa left FAILE in 2006, gaining success in her own right as Lady Aiko.

These early years were spent deploying work in cities around the world and honing a distinctive style of wheatpasted and stenciled work that recalls both the shredded commodity collage of midcentury *décollagistes* Mimmo Rotella and Jacques Villeglé, and the pulp-cultural appropriations and comic books sensibilities of sixties "pop" artists such as Richard Hamilton, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein.

Although FAILE's style can be located in these art historical legacies, their style and idiosyncratic vernacular make FAILE's work distinct and recognizable. During the early years of their career, influenced by contemporaries Shepard Fairey, BAST, and WK Interact, FAILE generated both a process of assemblage and urban circulation, and consistent visual cues and themes. One such example is the Challenger space shuttle, which crashed shortly after its launch in 1986. Not only does the shuttle appear in various forms in much of FAILE's work, the year "1986" is appended to their pieces as a signature that both invokes their specific use of the shuttle image, and also a reminder to their audience of the event itself, of its role in their personal history. There are recurring themes such as love/hate, peace/war, triumph/calamity, satiation/desire are all prevalent in work as well.

From 27 September 2006 to 7 January 2007, independent curator Pedro Alonszo's *Spank the Monkey* ran at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, UK. The exhibition brought together twenty two internationally recognized street artists and investigated street art's growing artistic quality and popular appeal and its rootedness in the realms of graphic design and global youth culture. The exhibition included celebrated "fine artists" such as Barry McGee, Takashi Murakami, and Ryan McGinness alongside noted graffiti, street, and design artists such as Os Gemeos, Shepard Fairey, Banksy, and FAILE. *Spank the Monkey* was the first exhibition of its kind, and followed closely behind the commercial success of Fairey's *Obey* line, and Banksy's "Barely Legal" sale of his own work in Los Angeles. The exhibition, which positioned works both inside the gallery received favorable reviews. *Spank the Monkey* marked both the gradual institutional acceptance of street art, and FAILE's regular display in high-profile fine-art institutions. Indeed, FAILE used the venue to display some of their most somber work to date, in a series of twelve paintings titled "War Profitees," that incorporated harrowing photographs, newspaper text, and a dark color palette to bring to life the tragic 2006 Lebanon War. The invocation of political violence, indicated an intensification of FAILE's work, and demonstrated how their technique could be brought to bear on the precarious global order of the twenty-first century. This integration of form and content in the work, and sustained, critical attention to a political theme is evident in FAILE's *Spank the Monkey*.

In response to the growing popularity - and commercial viability - of street art, the Tate Modern, organized a show simply titled *Street Art*, in 2008, one week after Banksy's *Cans* show in a London railway tunnel. The exhibition, organized by curator Cedar Lewisohn, displayed work by six artists or collaborative projects in massive relief on the riverfront-facing wall of the museum's turbine room. *Street Art* included Nunca and Os Gemeos from Brazil, Blu from Italy, Sixeart from Spain, and JR from France. FAILE was the only group to participate in both the *Cans* and the Tate shows, contributing to the latter a massive 240-square-foot image of a Native American in full regalia amidst a shredded collage of pulp images and found signage typical of FAILE's work in 2008, and constructed in pieces in the studio before being affixed to the Tate's exterior. Of the exhibition and the institutionalization of their work, FAILE argued "*At least it's no longer undermined as something on the street, something without value. Money fuels interest - it's an injection in the butt that fires people up and makes them realize they should pay attention*".

While street art was, by 2008, an increasingly accepted and popular form overseas, in New York, graffiti's traditional home, street art was embraced by only a handful of galleries, such as Deitch Projects, an early champion of sometimes FAILE collaborator Swoon. As FAILE noted at the time, "*New York has such a history of this art, but institutions are waiting to see what happens before they open the doors to it. The art is starting to surface in New York Sotheby's and Christie's, but it wouldn't be if not for the excitement in the UK*". Inclusion in the Tate show, which received widespread media attention and reached a large public, brought FAILE more fully into the international spotlight and further established them as one of the most recognizable names in an increasingly globalized and multi-platform art world.

