

**TopSpin**  
Artists of Western New York and Beyond

**Tom Holt: Test for Echo**

May 31-September 13, 2009

Opening reception with artist talk, Sunday May 31, 2:00-4:00 p.m.



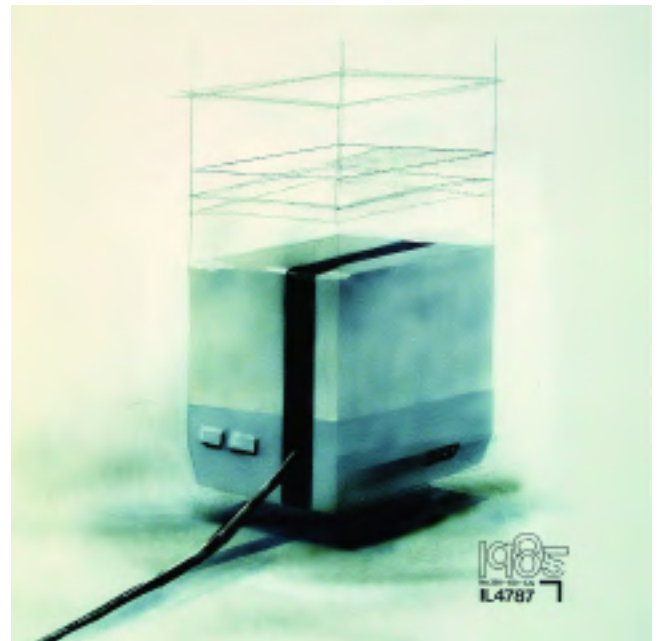
**tomholt**

*Berzerk!* (detail), 2009, mixed media on panel, 12 x 12 inches.





Untitled, n.d., spray-paint on brick.



1985, 2009, mixed media on panel 16 x 12 inches.



Love Life, 2004, mixed media on wall, approx 170 x 480 inches.



Untitled (Sketch), 2007, ink on paper/Moleskin sketchbook, 5 x 9 inches.

He is one of the most active yet underexposed artists in western New York. From small pencil illustrations and mixed media paintings to large-scale spray painted murals and digital video projects, Tom Holt's choice of material and subject matter are as varied as his considered choice of exhibition locations. His anthology of sketchbooks occupies a corner of his west side studio, abandoned mementoes of his thought process. They are, in fact, an extensive record of his uncompromising daily ritual as a visual diarist. Not only a record of his thinking process, "...they [the sketchbooks] are the thinking process," explains Holt. Detailing his rigorous dedication to the cataloging of ideas, the artist continues, "They include a variety of topics and mediums—honest, and immediate."



In conversation with the artist, it becomes apparent that his mind is continuously absorbing and collating *everything* he is exposed

to. Holt is motivated by a wide array of today's visual languages including advertising, animation, the Juxtaposed movement, and fantasy animation. From facets of mass media to his own professional experience including commercial advertising (he gets lots of junk mail); infomercials (he likes to work late when the world is "quiet"); art museums (he worked in a few, and visits a lot); to urban graffiti (been there, done that!); and in particular early video games...Holt takes it *all* in. The artist's introduction to digital video art of the past decade has caused him to reconsider an appreciation for both video art and mural paintings and see if they can be combined successfully. "Video art that once was considered emerging has something very dynamic in its visual properties," he says.

As a self-proclaimed video aficionado, he holds the world record for Skate or Die on the 8-bit Nintendo (circa. late '80s.) His living



*Sailing*, 2009, mixed media on canvas, 29.5 x 19 inches.

room is adorned with nostalgic video game systems of the past including ATARI and Nintendo that still actively entertain. Holt's enduring interest in these vintage games, "...is entrenched in the nostalgia of growing up with them." It is no surprise that as we experience adulthood, responsibilities, and bring our own children into the world, we occasionally find ourselves longing for those things that take us back to earlier years of carefree adolescent enjoyment and accomplishment.

Ever fearful of the pigeon-holing effects artists experience Holt employs a menagerie of artistic styles, materials and influences to stay well ahead of his own "stylized demise." He states, "My deliberate attempt to switch up influences and style is mirrored in my amusement of channel surfing." He is notorious for periodically working 14-hour days of what he refers to as "sporadically creative periods." Holt's fortitude finds him working



*Controller 3*, 2009, mixed media on canvas 12x12 inches.

through periods of "hyper-drive" production. Like the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars, sometimes it is disabled, but when it works, look out—you're in for an unforgettable experience.

*Test for Echo* melds together all of Holt's artistic interests from painting and illustration to digital video and graffiti. Particular influences are attributed to graffiti artists who "tag" urban locations and derelict spaces. Returning a few weeks later to see who was inspired to "respond." Often, numerous artists add their "tags" in a spontaneous arrangement that Holt describes as, "...free-form painting akin to the musical format of jazz improvisation. The purest satisfaction in art is taking something small and recreating it on a grand-scale, altering the experience and contributing to a greater visual impact," Holt explains.

**Michael J. Beam** Curator of Collections and Exhibitions

#### ARTIST STATEMENT



*Listening*, 2009, mixed media on briefcase 17 x 13 inches.

My artwork, predominantly paintings and drawings, deals with a variety of subject matter in what I call "today's visual language." Each piece I make has the freedom of expressing itself

with inspiration from anything in the menu-driven pantheon of visual history. In my work, it is mostly today's languages of graffiti, design, manga, and video games that define my compositions.

It is my belief that cartoons carry a stronger sense of originality than other artistic expressions due to the digital age of photographic reproduction. Illustrators and cartoonists define their style by the way they interpret the world around them. Recently, my style has had the opportunity to come to life through the process of animation. Through the medium of installation I will now be able to project onto murals or canvases bringing a more organic feel to two-dimensional art.



The artist will host a Blackbook event at his home Friday, July 10, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Graffiti artists regularly carry black sketch books and bring them to each other's homes to pass them around and draw in. For more information, directions, and to RSVP, please contact Curator Michael Beam at 716-286-8286 or mjbeam@niagara.edu.

Tom Holt is a painter and illustrator who lives and works in Buffalo, NY. Originally from Carmel, NY, he spent most of his childhood and teen years drawing and skateboarding. After numerous injuries from skating, Holt realized that art was a healthier career choice. He attended the State University of New York at New Paltz where he received a Bachelor of Science in Visual Arts in 2002.

Holt moved to Buffalo in 2002 to start the successful, but short lived, Kamikaze Art Gallery

on Ellicott Street, in downtown Buffalo. He has exhibited his work in exhibitions at significant institutions including Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, The Burchfield Penney Art Center, and the Buffalo Arts Studio. He has engineered large-scale work for Squeaky Wheel and Roger Waters of *Pink Floyd*. Holt's work incorporates the styles of graffiti, anime, and video games. These styles coalesce into the artist's way of digesting and analyzing the world around him.

b. 1980, Carmel, NY

Holt currently resides in Buffalo, NY where he maintains an active studio.

## EDUCATION

### 2002

Bachelor of Science (Visual Arts), State University of New York at New Paltz.

## RECENT EXHIBITIONS

*Solo exhibitions are indicated with an asterisk (\*)*

### 2009

*New Works by Tom Holt*, Unison Art Center, New Paltz, NY.

### 2008

*A Farewell to Kings*, Gallery 164, Buffalo, NY.\*

*Peepshow*, Squeaky Wheel @ Broadway Market, Buffalo, NY.

*Unhinged*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

*Vapor trails*, Buffalo Arts Studio, NY.

### 2007

*The Artists Among Us*, Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

*Nocturnal*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

*Members Show*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

### 2006

*Wall Drawing Exhibition*, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, NY.

*20th Anniversary Mural and Exhibition*, Squeaky Wheel, Buffalo, NY.\*

*My Glorified Hobby*, Buffalo Arts Studio, Buffalo, NY.\*

### 2005

*Members Show*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

### 2004

*Lost in Translation*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

*Members Exhibition*, Big Orbit Gallery, Buffalo, NY.

*Members Show*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

### 2003

*24-48*, Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

*Rough (and ready)*, Formula Gallery, Buffalo, NY.

*Artists and Models XX*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

*Kamikaze: Remaining Members*, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

### 2002

*Various Shows*, Kamikaze Art and Media Center, Buffalo, NY.

*Tom Holt Makes Things*, Student Art Gallery, State University of New York at New Paltz.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### 2006-2008

Assistant Curator, Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

### 2004-2008

Preparator, Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

### 2007

Workshop Instructor, Buffalo Arts Studio, Buffalo, NY.

### 2003

Workshop Instructor, Squeaky Wheel, Buffalo's Media Arts Center, Buffalo, NY.

### 2002

Curator/Preparator, Kamikaze Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY.

## RESIDENCIES/SPECIAL PROJECTS

### 2008

Local Artist Access Residency, Squeaky Wheel, Buffalo, NY.

### 2007

The flying Pig, commissioned theatrical prop design, Roger Waters 2007 Dark Side Of The Moon world tour, Darien Lake venue, Darien Center, NY, July 12, 2007.

### 2004

Artist Lecture, Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, NY.

# TOPSPIN

Artists of the Buffalo/Niagara Region

The museum's Tops Gallery—dedicated to the exhibition of work by local and regional artists—presents the **TopSpin** series. **TopSpin** features a broad range of visual expressions, varied in media as well as message, and focuses mainly on new and emerging artists.

**TopSpin** is made possible through the generous Support of Tops Friendly Markets, LLC.

# TOPS



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## CASTELLANI ART MUSEUM OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY

[www.niagara.edu/cam](http://www.niagara.edu/cam)

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