



Jonathan Horowitz might be the cleverest artist alive. At age 42, he's already New York's master at blending irony, politics, and humor in such surprising and off-putting forms that it's hard to stand in front of one of his brutal pop works and not think, My God, the whole problem and answer is right there and I can almost—but not quite—grasp it. He's done drawings of the electronic dots on a StairMaster console, devoted a video work to the deaf and mute in Hollywood cinema, and split the front graphic of a Pepsi and Coke soda machine right down the middle like a two-party choice. Horowitz is the art world's Jonathan Swift.

CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN: You're doing something special for election night, right?

JONATHAN HOROWITZ: It's an election-themed show for Gavin Brown's enterprise. There'll be live CNN and Fox News broadcasts and everyone's invited to come watch the returns. There'll be apple pie and beer and veggie burgers.

CB: You're one of the few artists who can make overtly political work without it looking like propaganda.

JH: Everything is political, and everything's a lot of other things, too, but human interaction is more interesting to me than shapes and colors. I don't really try to make work that's political, though, and I don't really try to make work that's funny—I try to make work that's intelligible and about things.

CB: Do you get a rise out of your own work?

JH: Sometimes. But more the idea of the work than the work itself. I don't like to have any of it around me. The

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CARDIGAN AND T-SHIRT: POLO BY RALPH LAUREN.
 ABOVE: OBAMA '08, 2008. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE, NEW YORK.

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 FASHION DETAILS PAGE 205

materiality of it gives me anxiety. Maybe I'm afraid that it will all fall apart, or maybe I'm reminded of how I can never really get anything exactly right. Oh, but on my desk I have a can of Coke and a can of Pepsi that I attached together with a section of plastic six-pack rings. That, I think, I got just right.

CB: I remember going to a screening of your Elvis Presley-*Black Hawk Down* video at Gavin's one night. No one wanted to stop drinking and sit and watch art, but you had the whole room hypnotized.

JH: That was sort of a sequel to another video about when Elvis first appeared on TV and had to be shot from the waist up. And then he was shipped off to the Army, and it all kind of ended. But I actually didn't set out to make another video about Elvis. I was doing research on recent war movies for a show that I was making for Berlin last year called "People Like War Movies." I really don't like war movies, and it was hard to have to watch a lot of them. So I was trying to get through *Black Hawk Down* [2001], and in one of the scenes the song "Suspicious Minds" [performed by Elvis] comes on, and it just jumped out at me as being very strange. It turned out that one of the characters is nicknamed Elvis. So that's where the video started—thinking about what Elvis Presley might have to do with this U.S. military raid in Somalia.

CB: I know you're going to have a mini-retrospective at P.S.1 this spring. What else are you working on?

JH: I'm working on a solar-powered project for the Museum Ludwig in Cologne [Germany]. It's going to be about climate change and disaster movies and the Christian apocalypse. And maybe I'll throw Mel Gibson in there. ■