



THE POWER TEAM COLLECTION

## ART AS A METAPHOR FOR CHANGE



**On The Cover...**

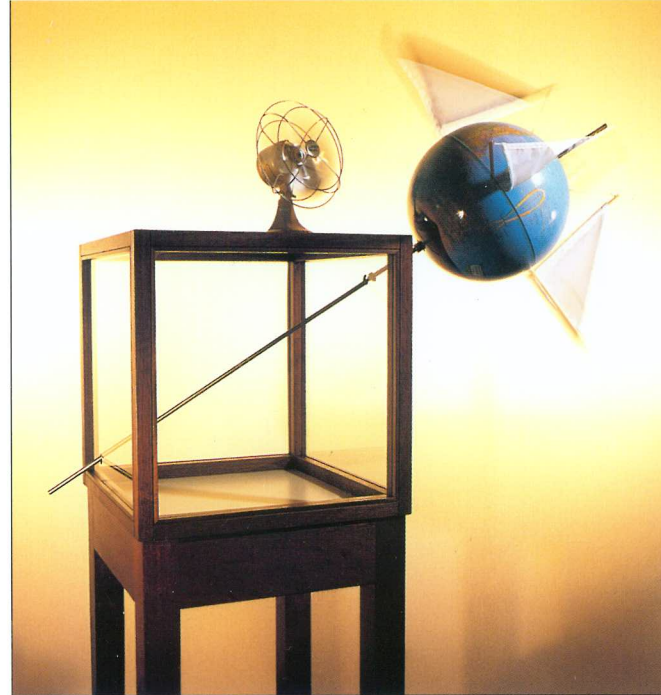
**1114 HAMPTON GARTH**  
by Maureen Connor, 1977  
Figure #1

**UNTITLED (Porky)**  
**UNTITLED (Donald)**  
by Joyce Pensato, 1994  
Figure #2



**BON CHANCE BABY**  
by Karin Giusti, 1993  
Figure #3

In 1994, a division of PECO Energy Company called The Power Team was created. Responsible for bulk sales and purchases of energy, The Power Team was envisioned by Nancy Zausner, Vice President, to be an innovative approach to traditional business management. Knowing that this aspect of the energy field requires a high degree of creativity, intuition and problem solving, all at an accelerated pace, Zausner sought to create an environment where these attributes could flourish. To that end, she established a non-hierarchical employee structure (there are neither titles nor job descriptions) and transformed a traditional office building into a space that housed not only pool tables and pinball machines but an



**NECESSARY ILLUSIONS**  
by William Stone, 1990  
Figure #4

ever-growing collection of cutting-edge, contemporary art.

The growth of this art collection, which currently consists of over forty works by thirty artists, has a direct correlation to the growth and development of The Power Team. The first pieces were purchased soon after its inception at the beginning of 1995 and as the non-traditional components of the organization were evolving, the art collection not only defined the environment, it very quickly evolved into a metaphor for The Power Team.

Notably, this evolution did not come about by chance, but through

purposeful planning on Zausner's part. "In defining this operation, she says, I wanted to create an environment that would inspire energy and creativity and push people toward problem solving. I thought the best way to do this would be through art. To create surroundings that convey physical energy, power and dimension — where one could see the creativity of the artist and transfer that into their own problem solving."

These rather specific parameters have resulted in a collection impressive for its variation in



theme, humor, range of styles and radical use of non-traditional materials. The notion that this is not a typical business is immediately apparent upon entering The Power Team offices. In a small lobby, four works of art confront the visitor with a full array of styles and sensibilities. Incorporating movement, energy, unorthodox materials and a macabre sense of humor, they range from the black and gold interlocking dresses of Maureen Connor's *1114 Hampton Garth* (fig. #1) to the objects rhythmically rotating in Ted Victoria's camera obscura box and the electric fan that blows the flags that turn the globe in William Stone's *Necessary Illusions* (fig. #4). Joyce Pensato's paintings (fig. #2) of a leering *Porky Pig* and a menacing *Donald Duck* walk a fine line between derangement and outrageous humor; the visitor might just as easily be queuing up for "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride" as entering a business office.

One may wonder how an art collection can come to stand as a metaphor for a business, particularly one whose function is one of negotiation. For The

Power Team, this metaphorical relationship ranges from the general to the specific, the literal to the more obscure. Generally speaking, there is a correlation between three dimensional art and problem solving — sculpture is meant to be seen and appreciated from all sides while the best problem solvers "turn the glass over and over."



UNTITLED  
by Robert Chamber, 1995  
Figure #5

In addition, Zausner sees negotiation as an art form in itself, one in which creative avenues must be pursued to satisfy both buyer and seller, ensuring an ongoing relationship. One can also see a relationship between Zausner's non-traditional approach to business management and the non-traditional materials chosen by many of these artists. Consider, for example, the crocheted, painted fragments and plastic tubs that make up Jessica Stockholder's *Untitled #250* (fig. #7), or Lisa Hoke's *Echo Chamber* (fig. #6), a giant wheel of wax, spools and keys.

Energy is at the core of The Power Team's existence, so it is not surprising that several works in this collection deal directly or indirectly with aspects of energy. Some of the paintings, for example the four frescoes by Carolanna Parlato, can be read as abstract renditions of unseen energy. Carol Hepper's small sculpture *Portland Plumbing #1*, made of copper tubing held

ECHO CHAMBER  
by Lisa Hoke, 1994  
Figure #6





**BAD COMPANY**  
 by Anne Chu, 1990  
 Figure #8



for its cycle. In Ray Rapp's *When I Was a Lad*, a disemboweled TV/VCR miraculously still functions while in his *Microwave Marshmallow*, one can follow the rather humorous progression of cooking marshmallows in any of the four stacked televisions. All these works require the viewer to invest time to fully appreciate them; what might be seen as wasting time by some employers is considered by Zausner as an impetus for employees to share information in a stimulating environment.

Sometimes the metaphorical relationships are not quite so obvious. Meaning can be imbedded in a work leaving it up to the viewer to extract it or extend it based on individual experience. In The Power Team offices, a number of works have taken on new or different meanings as they, over time, come to be seen in light of the industry's function. For example, in Judith Page's freestanding sculpture *Collect* (fig. #10), a cartoon-like character, without eyes or mouth but with bulbous nose and extended ears, marches bravely

*(continued on back cover)*



**UNTITLED #250**  
 by Jessica Stockholder, 1994  
 Figure #7

in place by plumbing joints is an abstract metaphor for energy held in abeyance.

Often, electrically-based works of art demand a certain investment of time on the part of the viewer. One of the more dramatic examples of this is Robert Chambers' *Untitled* (fig. #5). In this so-called kinetic breathing machine, a parachute slowly and soundlessly fills with air and then slowly and soundlessly deflates, taking several minutes





VOYAGE TO LEVANZO  
by Jill Viney, 1993  
Figure #9



*Art's primary social function is to define the communal self, which includes redefining it when the community is changing. Its images, however varied, arcane, or abstract, coalesce in the communal mind into a kind of face hovering in a mirror.*

Thomas McEvelley  
*Art & Otherness - Crisis in Cultural Identity*

ahead, unaware of a “ball-and-chain” of brightly colored paint attached to his leg. Page views this as a tragic/comedic personae, oblivious to its own history.

But The Power Team employees, who have dubbed the character “Spike,” see in it a metaphor for working — and succeeding — against the odds.

Likewise, *Bon Chance Baby* (fig. #3), a gigantic game dice and a pink faux rabbit foot sculpture by Karin Giusti, brings with it its own history, conjuring up visions of tacky state fairs

and fifties hot rods. The large scale gives these Pop-inspired works an imposing presence; yet at the same time they seem rather ridiculous with their exaggerated promises of luck. Not surprisingly, the status of these two good luck charms has changed since their arrival at The Power Team offices. Initially objects of derision, they soon occupied a prominent place in the trading room, talismans for the traders.

In many instances, these sculptures have come to define the space they occupy. For instance, Jill Viney’s *Voyage to Levanzo* (fig. #9), a wall sculpture made up of large organic pods is on the wall in a conference room now formally called “The Pod Room.” A hallway in another part of the building cannot be traversed without dodging several small hanging

sculptures by Daniel Wiener. And one cannot help but notice the rather humorous implications of Anne Chu’s sculpture *Bad Company* (fig. #8): a stick shift, gas pedal and a bear claw on the steering wheel, apparently set to drive through the wall.

It was Robert Rauschenberg who once said, “Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. (I try to act in the gap between the two.)” Zausner, it seems, is striving for the corporate equivalent of Rauschenberg’s goal by breaking down the barriers between work time and personal life. Just as she understands that this fast-paced, competitive and ever-changing business requires a high degree of commitment from all employees,

she also knows the way to encourage this commitment is to create an environment where employees will want to come, and bring their friends and family. Not everyone will respond positively to every piece in the collection (art is not that democratic), but if this art engages the viewer on myriad levels — whether it be challenging, whimsical, kinetic, or simply fun — it can have a transformative effect, not only on the work place, but on the worker.

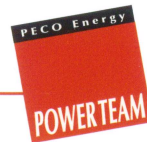
— Sue Scott

*Sue Scott is an independent curator and writer living in New York.*

DESIGN: Heflin Design Studio  
PHOTOGRAPHY: Graham Studios, Inc.



COLLECT  
by Judith Page, 1995  
Figure #10



2004 Renaissance Boulevard • King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406

610-292-6500