

# Bush on Bush

Diane Bush spells out the gibberish of Dubya and company BY JARRET KEENE

IF SOMEONE HELD THE PROVERBIAL GUN to my head and demanded I select a Las Vegas artist producing the most significant work right now, I'd have to say the name Diane Bush. As much as I loathe conceptual, postmodern and overtly political art, it's impossible to deny the raw power of *Warheads*, her recent book of photographs. *Warheads* is a culmination of Bush's 16-year struggle to capture the ugly truth about the journalists and politicians who, time and again, lead our country to war on a platform of lies and greed obscured by cheap words like "freedom" and "liberation." Such words are cheap, because to use them costs nothing, and when a politician employs them, they mean the exact opposite.

For Bush, it all began back in 1991, during the First Gulf War, when the U.S. invaded Iraq to liberate the monarchy of Kuwait. Bush — who, in a delicious irony, shares the same surname

as a dynasty of American presidential warmongers — began shooting the TV screen with a macro lens. Since real journalists were not allowed to document the conflict, she found herself taking pictures of anchors and commentators. Chattering gasbags. Talking heads. *Warheads*. It was a long way from the media's coverage of the Vietnam War, when attacks on our soldiers featured prominently in the evening news.

The Second Gulf War was no different. Sure, this time the so-called journalists were embedded with the U.S. military. Again, though, the conflict was rendered in bloodless terms, with a perverse emphasis on the near-

miraculous technology of Predator aircraft (which failed to kill Osama bin Laden) and armored Humvees (which fail to protect our soldiers). The only technology that seems to have functioned properly throughout the quagmire of Iraq is the camera of Diane Bush. She tagged everybody, from Tom Brokaw and Bob Schieffer to Dubya



This image of George W. Bush was taken with a pocket PC from a television.

and his henchmen.

Her vantage is about as far from the front lines as one can get. But it's only from a vast distance that she manages to capture the real and evil faces of these folks who fellate each other's hard-ons for death. The distortion of Bush's lens portrays these warheads as they really are, and by splashing bleach against the original prints, the viewer, too, learns to love — or at least recognize — the smell of napalm in an art gallery. Nothing speaks truth to power like these images. The only thing that could make them

better would be to synchronize them to Black Sabbath's anti-war metal masterpiece "War Pigs." Fat chance — who besides a lowly art critic would want to hear Sabbath in a museum?

Bush's warheads are currently on display in an exhibit called *Permission to Speak Freely* at the Contemporary Arts Collective. (CAC has abandoned the Holsum building and returned to its old Arts Factory location on Charleston Boulevard.) But she's not alone this time — and neither are her works. They're joined by the work of her husband, Steven Baskin, whose talking picture frames are guaranteed to make you laugh and cry — more likely the latter, though. Relying on miniature photos of cable news, minus the macro lens

and bleach, Baskin incorporates bits of audio that, when the viewer pushes a button, reinforce the fact a bunch of brainless losers run the government.

In one piece, a three-part series of the same image of Dubya dancing, titled "The Joy of Hanukkah," we are presented with an odd quote attributed to the Decider: "I can't imagine someone like Osama bin Laden understanding the joy of Hanukkah." You can hear Dubya saying this by punching the button on each of the images. Or you can hit them in rapid succession, creating a cacophony of gibberish. Another piece presents a blurry shot of Dubya and Dick Cheney, in which Mr. Mission Accomplished notes: "If this were a dictatorship, it would be a heck of a lot easier ... as long as

I'm the dictator." Find it on Google and listen to it, if you doubt me.

There are more words of wisdomlessness, but I won't spoil them for you. Head on down to the CAC and see — and hear — things for yourself. Too bad these heads, like the ones on TV and in the White House, don't listen.

**Permission  
to Speak Freely**

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