



• **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** •

Subliminal Projects Presents

ART IS NOT PEACE BUT WAR
New Works by Blek le Rat

Solo Exhibition

April 5 – May 2, 2008

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 5, 8:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

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PRESS PREVIEW: RSVP Mandatory

Friday, April 4, 2008, 8 p.m. – 11 p.m.

(Los Angeles, CA – February 20, 2008) Subliminal Projects Gallery is proud to announce, **Art Is Not Peace But War**, a solo exhibition by Parisian stencil pioneer, Blek le Rat. The first person attributed to making life-size stencils in the street, Blek le Rat is regarded as a founding father of street art and graffiti icon. This will be the artist's first solo exhibition in the United States, a historic event. The inaugural exhibition also marks the celebration of the new locale, an expanded Subliminal Projects Gallery in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Echo Park, and the launch of the 2008 exhibition calendar. **Art Is Not Peace But War** offers an unprecedented collection of new works, including original screen prints, paintings, and a site-specific, three-dimensional installation. Blek le Rat will also exhibit several original large-scale paintings featuring his iconic character, an archetypal traveler who walks through walls, discovering the world. Sybille Prou, a photojournalist and the artist's wife, will exhibit her stunning, digital photos of le Rat's street work for the first time in a gallery setting. This will be a rare opportunity to view both artists' works together.

The concept for **Art Is Not Peace But War** is inspired by an article about graffiti written by Norman Maile for *The New York Times* in 1972 read by le Rat during his first visit to New York. For le Rat, an artist is always in a constant fight to create. He views graffiti as the most democratic form of art and parlays this perspective into each of his works. "Urban art is a powerful way to serve social causes and evoke reaction from the people, and if you have a message to give to the public, it is the best way to give it." One of the first artists to deviate entirely from New York graffiti style, experimenting primarily with stencil techniques, le Rat created a new, urban language, a street aesthetic defined by icons.

Using human figures in his art, Blek le Rat communicates with his audiences effortlessly, opening a dialogue. "I love to give enjoyment to people through my art, and I create my work towards this concept: communication, pleasure, dialogue, and also love." Blek le Rat's stencil work in urban cities around the world continues to influence the sustainability of the thriving Contemporary street art movement. "I am really proud to exhibit my work in Shepard Fairey's gallery," states le Rat, "who is in my humble opinion, the most talented artist of this generation. He understood so well the importance of urban art and he has contributed this art's evolution in a brilliant way." **Art is Not Peace But War** celebrates Blek le Rat's undeniable talents and historical relevance as a revolutionary artist who continues to inspire and transcend.

An exclusive, limited edition prints series, featuring a collaboration between Blek le Rat and Shepard Fairey, utilizing Sybille Prou's photographs, will be published in conjunction with the exhibition. Editions will be signed and numbered by the artists. Signed copies of the French edition of *Blek le Rat - En Traversant Les Murs*, spanning two decades and documenting the life and work of Blek le Rat, will be available for sale in the gallery store. The book is by Sybille Prou and King Adz, edited by Prou, and published by Thames and Hudson.

About Blek le Rat

A pioneer of graffiti writers in Europe, Blek le Rat was one of the first people to use stencils to make public art on the street using icons instead of writing his name.

He was first exposed to graffiti in 1971 in New York, but didn't start making his own until ten years later in Paris. Inspired by a stenciled portrait he saw of Mussolini amongst some WWII ruins during a trip to Italy, he created a stencil of a life-sized silhouette of a rat running along the streets. He stenciled the rat for two years and quickly became recognized around Paris. This change marked a monumental break from the dominance of New York's graffiti style. His method of creating street art changed the face of graffiti and still continues to greatly influence artists around the world; from Shepard Fairey and Banksy, to Jay Badbc and Oseas Duarte to the young artist wheat pasting work around town.

His work has since evolved beyond the rat icon and taken on a more serious context. Most recently, he pasted hundreds of posters around Paris of Florence Aubenas, a French journalist who was kidnapped in Iraq, hoping to provoke a reaction from politicians and journalists and aid in her release. This project gained Blek incredible public support, and has encouraged him to continue to use his Street Art as a voice for the less fortunate.



About Subliminal Projects Gallery

In 2008, **Subliminal Projects Gallery** brings forth new growth and energy to a larger and more dynamic location in Echo Park. "We are excited to contribute a series of diverse exhibitions, lectures, and workshops to the LA community," stated Shepard and Amanda Fairey. "In addition to the fine art on view, we will also be offering limited print editions, books, and artist products in the gallery store." The gallery and publishing house has curated an exciting exhibition schedule reflecting their reputation as one of Los Angeles' premiere Contemporary art galleries. Exhibiting artists with a background in a wide range of disciplines, Subliminal Projects Gallery represented artists offer challenging, unapologetic, and relevant works. Featuring international artists from street art originators, to illustration and design authorities; Subliminal Projects' tradition of advancing artist development and influencing the art world remains a strong part of their mission. Subliminal Projects will introduce a new Artist Lecture Series in 2008 and host frequent Gallery events. "Utilizing our unique relationships among our artistic contemporaries and peers, we will become more of a source of opinions and knowledge, providing an insider's perspective in a welcoming and educational environment for all to experience."

SUBLIMINAL PROJECTS was created by artists Shepard Fairey and Blaze Blouin in 1995 as an artist collective, using skateboards as a fine art medium. By expanding beyond skateboards and apparel to include fine art prints, the group began drawing the attention of Aaron Rose, curator of Alleged Gallery in New York. As a result, Subliminal Projects is one of the key groups responsible for cementing the relationship between the skateboard culture and the fine art world, working with then-unknown artists such as Phil Frost, Thomas Campbell, Mike Mills, Dave Aaron, and Mark Gonzales. Beyond just addressing the crossover between skateboard culture and the fine art world, Subliminal Projects recognizes and fosters the philosophy that graphic art, pop art, photography, and illustration are all viable fine art forms. Now co-curated and directed by Shepard and his wife, Amanda Fairey, Subliminal Projects continues to promote art exhibitions, print publishing, and events with artists of varying disciplines. The **Subliminal Projects Gallery** is now located in the historic neighborhood of Echo Park, just northwest of Downtown Los Angeles, where it promises to bring new talent and life to an already thriving community.

Blek le Rat - April 5th - May 2nd

Dee Dee Cheriell / Louise Bonnet - May 17th - June 13th

Big Kids, Little Kids - July 19th - August 8th

Steven Harrington / Justin Krietemeyer of National Forest - August 23rd - Sept 19th

Studio Number One Friends and Family - Oct 4th - Oct 31st

House Industries - November 15th - Dec 12th

****NEW ADDRESS****

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HOURS:

Tuesday thru Friday
1PM—6PM

Saturday and Sunday by appointment

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