

Dennis Scholl: The Melody Haunts My Reverie...

Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah

Piero Atchugarry Gallery, Miami

The solo exhibition, ***The Melody Haunts My Reverie...***, takes its title from Hoagy Carmichael's iconic 1927 composition *Stardust*, a melody that encapsulates the enduring power of memory and imagination. Similarly, Dennis Scholl's artistic practice is deeply rooted in recollection, artifacts, and conceptual drawing. Through assemblages built from meticulously curated objects—ephemeral materials, archival fragments, and objects of cultural significance—Scholl creates evocative compositions that merge personal experience with broader cultural histories.

Scholl's connection to jazz music profoundly influences his work, shaping its rhythm, improvisational structure, and layered complexity. Like a jazz composition, his assemblages rely on harmony, tension, and spontaneity, creating works simultaneously grounded in history and open to reinterpretation. Jazz's legacy of improvisation mirrors Scholl's use of curated objects, allowing their meanings to evolve through juxtaposition and context. This musicality infuses his practice with a dynamic, performative quality, inviting viewers to explore the emotional resonance of his compositions.

Over the decades, Scholl has meticulously built a collection of ephemera and memorabilia from various online auction sites. He reviews over 30,000 images each month, carefully selecting a few that he wants to acquire and eventually transform into artworks. Once secured, these objects enter his archive, where they are reimaged into extraordinary pieces of art. Scholl describes his process as creating "gateways to lost moments," turning everyday items layered with historical and emotional significance into portals for reflection and rediscovery. His practice, marked by a sensitivity to symmetry and repetition, echoes the approaches of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Haim Steinbach, and Bernd and Hilla Becher. Like these artists, Scholl elevates the mundane into potent symbols, inviting a deeper contemplation of collective memory and identity.

As a filmmaker, Scholl brings a cinematic lens to his studio practice, emphasizing narrative structure and visual storytelling. His experience in filmmaking sharpens his ability to frame objects as protagonists within larger cultural narratives. This sensibility is evident in works like *Untitled (Assassination)* and *Untitled (Mourning)*, where the selected artifacts function as personal mementos and cultural signifiers. The narrative approach allows Scholl to interrogate how historical events, such as President John F. Kennedy's assassination, transcend singular moments to become enduring cultural myths.

Central to the exhibition are works revisiting pivotal moments in American history, exploring how such events embed themselves in the collective consciousness to shape new realities. In pieces like *Untitled (Oswald)*, Scholl examines the narratives surrounding JFK's assassination, highlighting the tension between public mourning, media representation, and the fragility of historical narratives. Through carefully selected objects and archival materials, he invites viewers to reflect on how such events are mythologized across generations.

A recurring motif in Scholl's work is the dodecagon, a 12-sided figure employed as an aesthetic and conceptual organizing principle. Symbolizing temporal cycles—the hours of a clock, the months of a year, the signs of the zodiac—it anchors Scholl's exploration of time, memory, and history's cyclical nature. In his *Dodecagon Drawings*, Scholl arranges archival materials,

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ephemera, and abstract elements into compositions bridging past and present. The dodecagon becomes a vessel for exploring the persistence of memory and the reinterpretation of time, elevating his works into metaphors for the interconnectedness of human experience.

In works like *Untitled (Glove)*, Scholl reframes cultural icons to probe the dynamics of memory and legacy. Here, six original copies of the *Daily News* newspaper are symmetrically arranged around Michael Jackson's iconic glove, obscuring the headline "King of Pop Dead." This omission redirects attention from fleeting news cycles to Jackson's enduring impact, reframing the glove as a symbol of cultural resonance rather than a relic of celebrity. By pairing it with newspapers—tools of both storytelling and commodification—Scholl critiques how media shapes and preserves legacy, turning ephemeral objects into profound reflections on cultural memory.

Building on Josef Albers' theories of relativity and contrast, Scholl juxtaposes objects in dynamic, unexpected ways, crafting compositions that challenge perceptions of materiality and meaning. While his work echoes the poetic assemblages of Joseph Cornell, Scholl departs by emphasizing temporal transformation. Where Cornell's constructions evoke timeless wonder, Scholl actively engages with time's fluidity, drawing attention to how cultural artifacts accumulate and reshape meaning across contexts.

Scholl's interrogation of memory is particularly poignant in *Untitled (Doctor No)*, which reimagines original lobby cards from the first James Bond film as cultural milestones. By selecting this artifact—a cinematic history touchstone—Scholl explores collective nostalgia and broader narratives about Cold War anxieties, evolving gender roles, and Western pop culture's global influence. The lobby cards critique hierarchical values in art, elevating objects of popular culture to the realm of fine art and challenging viewers to reflect on the societal forces shaping cultural memory.

The exhibition culminates in a meditation on memory's fluidity. Just as *Stardust* has been endlessly reinterpreted, retaining its essence while adapting to new voices and contexts, Scholl's works illustrate how cultural touchstones remain relevant through ongoing reexamination. His assemblages transform artifacts of the past into dynamic reflections on history, inviting viewers to reconsider their connections to the remnants of memory and reimagine how the past shapes the present. In this interplay of time and meaning, Scholl offers a poetic meditation on memory's enduring power to reshape our understanding of objects, histories, and ourselves.

-Larry Ossei-Mensah