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installation

Disorienting Dadaist stew

Wha Happened? probes everything from paranoia to pop culture By DAVID JAGER

DANIEL BORINS AND JENNIFER MARMAN at Gallery TPW (56

Ossington), to February 9. 416-645-1066.

Rating: **NNNN**

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS YOU SEE IN Daniel Borins and Jennifer Marman's collaborative exhibit *Wha Happened?* is a painting that has slid off its canvas and lies slumped and forlorn at the bottom of the wall. This surreal event is the first of a series of progressively wacky twists on meaning in which the frayed wires of politics, art theory and popular culture are gleefully crossed and recrossed.

Wha Happened? is a Dadaist stew tracing the fault lines and fissures in contemporary art as they break up and define the cultural landscape of the late 20th-early 21st centuries.

According to the show's rigorously tangential logic, this landscape includes minimalism, classic rock, the Iraq war, eBay, Saddam Hussein's crawlspace, Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*, *Planet Of The Apes*, Osama bin Laden's cave, Michael Jackson's sneakers, the iconography of American imperialism and the movies of John Carpenter. With nods, of course, to Christopher Guest.

It takes some rigour to tease out the

threads in this mediated hodgepodge. To their credit, Borins and Marman have carefully organized the show as a series of bifurcations in meaning.

For instance, the clean, white typeface Helvetica, the font of choice in business media, spells out the word "Helvetica" in neatly sculpted letters on a white shelf next to a black shelf holding a black power fist.

But this fist is actually a rubber sex toy specially ordered from Amsterdam, putting corporate power, racial politics and sexual fetishism in uneasy proximity.

Power, pop culture and the dynamics of representation continue to



The word "Helvetica" connotes business-speak in *Wha Happened?*

split, mutate and bubble throughout the show until we're forced to consider a link between E.T., Yoda and the transcendent unity of world religions in the bizarre Renaissance send-up *piETA*.

Other themes include the paranoid conceits of alien invasion flicks, mini-

malist aesthetics, Michael Jackson's *Bad* and the war on terror. *Wha Happened?* draws you by degrees into a disorienting vortex that is actually a pretty accurate portrait of our current situation. ©

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