

Challenging perceptions

Hirsch Perlman's silk-screened drawings of cats lounging, stretching and warily observing appear to require 3-D glasses to be properly seen. Printed slightly off-register, in red and green on big white sheets, the line drawings exhibit a knotted, coiled energy.

With no funky cardboard glasses at hand, however, the out-of-whack images also seem slightly cracked. You're left with the discomfiting feeling that you're not actually seeing kitty. And obviously that's correct. In his third solo show at the Blum & Poe Gallery, Perlman pokes his finger in the eye of smug assertions, of certain knowledge.

The cat prints deftly derive from a famous 1935 explanation of quantum mechanics, known as "Schrödinger's cat." Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger proved that the feline was simultaneously dead and alive; the paradox arose from a conflict between conceptual knowledge and visual perception. Think of Baghdad, New Orleans or even a personal catastrophe and Perlman's discordant work becomes weirdly sobering.

The cat prints are interspersed among hazy black-and-white close-up photographs of crumbling sandcastles at the beach, with the sea, horizon and sky unfurled in the blurred gray distance. Long exposures have left strange auras of reflected sunlight sparkling around the photos' margins, enhancing the already alien appearance of stills reminiscent of those taken from a NASA landing craft. Are we at Zuma, or on Mars?

An installation in a separate gallery provocatively ties the loose pictorial strands together. A crude wooden table holds a laser printer, a binding machine, reams of paper and stacks of faithful homemade copies of the U.S. Army's 241-page counter-

[See *Galleries*, Page E25]

[*Galleries*, from Page E24]

insurgency manual, rewritten last year for the first time since the 1980s wars in Central America. Chapter 4, "Designing Counterinsurgency Operations," begins with Napoleon's botched invasion of Spain, which doomed France's empire by underestimating Spanish resistance.

Perlman's tidy installation is also slightly feverish, like something from a college basement or Ted Kaczynski's cabin. The artist is selling the bound manual for a nominal fee, with proceeds to be donated to organizations working to dismantle the electoral college and secure rights for Guantanamo prisoners. Counterinsurgency — a struggle against subversion — assumes a smartly nuanced meaning.

In this context, the voice of Donald H. Rumsfeld echoes in receding memory: "As we know, there are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say . . ." Suddenly Schrödinger's cat snaps into register.

Blum & Poe Gallery, 2754 S. La Cienega Blvd., Culver City, (310) 836-2062, through June 23. Closed Sunday and Monday.
www.blumandpoe.com