

# WHITEHOT MAGAZINE <sup>TM</sup>

Marc Séguin  
Sainte-Therese, 2010  
Oil, charcoal and ash on canvas; 48 x 36 inches  
Courtesy of the artist.

Marc Séguin  
US navy marine corps (Semper Fidelis), 2011  
Oil, charcoal and ash on canvas; 108 x 78 inches  
Courtesy of the artist.



## MARC SEGUIN: FAILURES

By Robert C. Morgan, April 2011

Marc Séguin is a Canadian artist, a neo-conceptualist in whose work broken narratives culled from hypermedia are mercurially distended through a non-serialized pageantry of deceptively layered paintings. Take *Sainte-Therese* (2010), an image built through oil, charcoal, and ash over canvas in the matter of an abrupt deconstruction. Abrupt? Stare away, you mongrels! Observe closely the nostrils engraved within the red head of a stick figure man. What do you see? A lavish reconciliation of the past doused in shame? What kind of epithets enter the fray: Resilience? Anachronism? Hooligan boys looking for a night out? Ah, the cinematic days of *Clockwork Orange*! Meanwhile, Séguin's *Sainte-Therese* is enshrined by swatches of heavily pigmented oils, seemingly applied with a palette knife. But then, we confront her sumptuous opposite -- a lurid, nauseated lingerie girl, titled *UN navy marine corps (Semper Fidelis)*. Our fantasy is beguiled as she turns away. No eye contact. She's not exactly *Doris Day*, but hell, that's the way it goes. Note the petite red heart at the base of the spine -- near the lace panty line -- where we read the Latin phrase, the heroic marker of the marine corps. The conflicts embedded in Séguin's *Failures* are an albatross, a mighty apocalyptic finger-chill, an obsolescent recourse to media history where no one knows and no one tells. For whom do these bells toll? The artist goes for the aesthetic jugular. His effervescence cockles bind the swamp of the darkest human emotions -- in bombed out ruins, in cloisters, in confessionals, on battle fields, in graffitied ovens -- all apoplectic, torpid Shangri-La's.

The artist further transforms Lee Harvey Oswald into a muskrat of intelligence, a tight-lipped, hapless, feckless man-boy given to the assassination of a president. Séguin literally shows all sides of this curious imp, this Russe-belt morsel, molested from birth. Again, we see an opposition in *Church Flood*, also painted in oil, charcoal, and ash. According to the catalog, it's "human ash," not the ash of humans. Which could it be? The graffiti on the marble column in this somber black and white interior reads with the work's title. What kind of semiotic failure is this? We observe a mixed medium work based on an expropriated photograph of a sanctuary caught in the torrents of flood. Could it be water bound Florence in 1966 when the banks of the Arno overflowed, leaving an aesthetic spectacle close to ruin? The old war time pictures in *3D Real Death*, are equally exacerbated and exacerbating. What precisely caused the failure in which the sordid displacements of the mind came to the foreground, and the vaults of human consciousness tightened to the breaking point, permitting the return of savagery reeking havoc on innocent souls as more than six hundred men, women, and children, who simply lived their lives, were massacred in a small French village seventy years ago?

I would guess the artist wants to confront the human condition through some form of ironic displacement where the drive toward destruction is doubled upon itself through assigned failure. In this state, human beings lose sight of themselves, and the bleakness turns all the bleaker, and the disgust filters through the darkest portals where the use of language is no longer possible as a means to communicate. Here, even the graffiti fails. One may be curious to know such a pathway to art and to confront whether these somber paintings represent a commitment as deep as the obdurate shadows found in works by Francois Villon, Hilma af Klint, Bataille, Michaux, the Marquis de Sade, Gina Pane, and Baudelaire. One might say that history changes. In fact, our illusions become all the more virtual as history moves toward the speed of light. While the physical world with its gravitational pull evolves according to its own ambiguous course, the relative stasis of the planet may become less stable. Concurrently, memories from the past may no longer be able to sustain the will to express the lurking evil that human beings have fetishized for centuries. This suggests that we begin to look more deeply at what we have lost through our lack of compassion and supplanted by the desire to embrace a mindless consumption.