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Brian Belott at CANADA

By Brent Burket | Features, Reviews | January 18, 2008

*Swirly Music* Brian Belott CANADA - 55 Chrystie St, New York NY

29 November 2007 - 20 January 2008

*"Go back to those gold sounds"--Pavement*

The 70s felt like the end of wanting, at least for a little while. Like a [Carpenters'](#) song, it was a lie, but it was nice while it lasted. Brian Belott's work touches on that gauzy itchy time. The era came burning through in the faded color of the found photographs I saw in a group show at [Joymore](#) in 2005. And now here it is again innocently (and sometimes not so innocently) consuming the space in his new show at CANADA, *Swirly Music*.



It should be said that I was more than a little worried when I saw the big, garish cats. Were they found paintings with some masterful glittery strokes applied by the artist? Across the room from the paintings rest two Twin Tower like structures: dual, ostensibly random stacks of old hardcover books each support a television set on top, which in turn support a digital picture frame, the old media supporting the new(ish) and the new. These are the skeleton keys to *Swirly Music*. The two sets constantly play a stream of network IDs and TV movie intros that set the mood for the show, while the digital frames rotate through a series of Belott's found photographs — rhythmic and slow compared to the blown out colors and emphatic montage of the TV Land. The photos cover the spectrum from the odd rec room snapshot to a lost nude of your neighbor's wife.



Brian Belott, installation view of *Swirly Music*

CANADA's big space is lined with colored clothespins and keys. The clothespins look like a continuous keyboard, while the keys made me think of Stevie Wonder's *Songs in the Key of Life*. That and the contents of a bowl at the door of a key party. The paintings in the room are exuberant homages to groovy posters and caricature. They initially looked like something done by an excited kid in a high school art class, and yet there is an emotional center that kept pulling me back in. The different pieces in the room worked their collective charms on me, and made me, well, a little swirly. That feeling was augmented by the soft soothing sounds coming from the bank of gold-painted speakers on the wall. It was light mood music that was as dedicated and focused as the show. Perfect.

I'm not sure why Belott keeps returning to the "gold sounds" of memory, but I'm always thrilled that he does. Art this specific in its mood is nothing short of a miracle. Don't be fooled by the fact that you can buy pieces of *Swirly Music* to take home. This show is one big landscape of memory. The paint, glass, fur, clothespins, keys, and TVs are just the colors and hues Belott busts out to show you what he's seeing from behind the canvas. And what he sees is beautiful, wistful, and a little goofy. A rec room long gone, all played out. Only the memories and the soft strains of a distant music remain. [Ray Coniff](#) and [Henry Mancini](#) would be proud.