

# RAMIKEN

## BORDEN CAPALINO BOTANY BAY

March 1 - May 1, 2011

Ramiken Crucible presents *Botany Bay*, Borden Capalino's debut solo exhibition in New York.

As announced by the title, Capalino's installations and wall hangings invite an exploration that is simultaneously archeological and anthropologic. The historic site of James Cook's first landing in Australia in 1770, Botany Bay was intended to be a British penal colony; its fictional offspring, the SS *Botany Bay*, is a spaceship carrying the hibernating, genetically engineered despot Khan towards unknown dominions in *Star Trek*. A fugitive driven by a thirst for power, Khan is the charismatic product of failed utopian speculation; when reanimated on board the Starship *Enterprise*, he instinctively proceeds to stage a takeover. Defeated, he accepts the offer to disembark to an uninhabited planet and build a new world for himself and a handful of followers. Things go awry.

In all its incarnations, *Botany Bay* represents an institution or device through which society successfully isolates and re-engineers destructive, atavistic, irrational force into a useful, colonizing tool. Capalino's rugged, brutalist constructions house live snakes, in a gesture that mediates functional and esthetic concerns while pointing to the primal impulses that are at the core of civilization and progress. On the one hand, by providing shelter for live animals, these trashed out structures suggest a pet/owner relationship that departs from the projected anthropomorphism of contemporary terrariums; on the other, they are talismanic objects that frame and ritualize the cycles of life and death. But like any zoo, these reptilian citadels must also shelter onlookers from being attacked by their inhabitants; in this way Capalino's work invokes the protective function of primitive art.

Wall hangings featuring frayed transfers on unstretched fabric complete the symbolic elevation of the snake to the level of the iconic. Their makeup suggests both crude advertisements and the banners of a religious cult, with casual and unexpected references that allude to a complicated, opaque narrative. These clues beckon the audience to sift through the installation as an archeologist would examine the ruins of an extinct culture, though the use of contemporary materials in the work implies that the world of *Botany Bay* exists in the future - if not the present day. Somewhere in time, a barbaric architect is scavenging a return to a survivalist state of pure potential - one which also carries the seed of its own destruction.

For more information please visit [www.ramikencrucible.com](http://www.ramikencrucible.com)  
Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Sunday, 12 - 6pm