

San Francisco
· Pablo Guardiola

SAN FRANCISCO

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LITTLE TREE GALLERY

3412 22nd Street

January 12–February 16

The crux of this exhibition of seven prints and a single sculpture is an iconic untitled photograph of a brown paper lunch bag on a table. The bag is crumpled at the top, while its squarish midsection is marked by a grease stain in the shape of a world map. With this image, Pablo Guardiola manages to pack a cargo container's worth of international allusions into a humble sack. While the bag's contents remain a mystery, the oil blotches clearly stem from something homemade: There are no crisp corporate logos in evidence, only continental forms with fuzzy edges, and perhaps the promise of some delectable, deep-fried surprise from Mom. The image is wry in the manner of photographs by Gabriel Orozco or fellow Bay Area artist Will Rogan and is similarly steeped in a global milieu. The picture politicizes Guardiola's other, more ambiguous works—most explicitly in *Much More than a Brand of Crackers, a Beer, a Malt Beverage and a Legendary Taino Leader* (all works 2007), in which a bottle cap, with a brightly colored logo that reads HATUEY, is positioned on asphalt, resembling a glowing sun against a murky sky. Hatuey is a soft drink and beer brand named after a fervently anticolonialist Cuban hero. The direct reference to a notable personage is less successful than Guardiola's more open-ended images, such as *Sunset in a Bucket*, a picture of a plastic pail almost entirely leached of its red tint by the glare of daylight. Also photographed against an asphalt background, the bucket becomes a reference to cheap goods, manual labor, and photography's ability to capture and hold light. That latter theme, underlying much of the show, takes its most blazing form, ironically, as a sculpture, made of a fish tank-like Plexiglas box with a floodlight embedded in its top and pointed downward. Titled *Some Ideas Should Be Kept Warm*, the work is one of barbed minimalism, its hot air and focused beam capable of blistering the surface of the wooden plank that supports the piece.

—Glen Helfand

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Untitled, 2007, color photograph, 20 x 30".