

## ART

# The art of a six-pack

BY SARA HAVENS  
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So much for hot nuts and snow cones. The Austin-based artist collaborative Okay Mountain bring you, the voracious American consumer, “Corner Store” — part art exhibit, part convenience store — which will be on display in the Kentucky Center lobby throughout IdeaFest this week. Presented by 21c Museum Hotel, “Corner Store” is a faux retail store stocked with a campy assortment of artist-made products (Wolf Meat, Craps Candy and Drunk Dial or Booty Call calling cards, to name a few). Each part of the exhibit — from the wall murals and posters to the lighting and soundtrack — was created by the 10 members of the group, who will be on hand each day from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. manning the cash register. “Corner Store” is meant to blur the line between art and commodity and examine the role the artist plays in self-promotion. LEO caught up with Okay Mountain member Nathan Green.

**LEO:** Tell me a little bit about the Okay Mountain collective.

**Nathan Green:** Okay Mountain began as an artist-run gallery space in April 2006 and slowly evolved into an artist collective when we all started making collaborative drawings together during weekly meetings. Since then, our collaborations have developed into a wide range of projects across a variety of media, including drawing, video, sound, performance, prints, zines, murals and large-scale sculptural installations.

**LEO:** What are some of the other pieces you’ve done?

**NG:** A few of our most recent projects include a 27-minute video called “Water, Water, Everywhere ... So Let’s All Have a Drink,” where all of the members of the collective were acting, animating, directing and producing short TV spots in order to patch them together and create a satirical experience of channel surfing. In February, we exhibited a large-scale wooden sculpture called “Multi Station Machine,” a sort of torture-gym that is a mash-up of a contemporary exercise machine and a Spanish Inquisition-era torture device at the McNay Museum in



San Antonio. And most recently, we made a giant spinning wheel called “Wheel,” based off of a certain television show prop, in which all of the prizes were removed from its face and replaced with sayings of everyday banal experiences. It’s on view at the Mark Moore Gallery in Los Angeles.

**LEO:** What’s the underlying theme of “Corner Store”?

**NG:** “Corner Store” recreates the atmosphere of a small, independently owned and densely packed convenience store, particularly one you would find in the South. Everything you see in the store was made by Okay Mountain — from the walls themselves to the soda foun-

culture, while allowing an audience to participate in the fun.

**LEO:** What’s the one thing at the store you would buy?

**NG:** Well, I’d have a hard time narrowing down my selection to just one product.

Some of the products go so well together. I think you could have a fantastic evening with a gallon of Wolf Meat, a 12-pack of Big Beer Fridays, a few of bags of Snugglin’ Crumbs and a couple rolls of Apple Bottom Toilet Paper.

**LEO:** After creating this piece, would you consider working in a convenience store?

**NG:** I’ve definitely had worse day jobs ... and maybe I could consider it “research.”

**LEO:** I noticed you have bourbon as a fountain drink ... is that a hope you want materialized or just a fantasy?

**NG:** I think it’s safer for everyone if we just keep that in the fantasy realm.

**LEO:** What do you do with the money you make?

**NG:** The money goes back to the collective to help fund future projects.

**LEO:** Did you create anything Kentucky-specific for us?

**NG:** There are a few, but I won’t spoil the fun of trying to find them in the store.

**LEO:** What does the Purple Pain beer taste like?

**NG:** I’d imagine it tastes like a combination of leather and perfume ... with a deep earthy finish.

**LEO:** What do you hope people take away from this exhibit?

**NG:** A smile. ▲

## ‘Corner Store’ @ IdeaFestival

Sept. 21-24  
Kentucky Center Lobby  
501 W. Main St.  
www.okaymountain.com

tains, the ATM, the hundreds of products for sale and even the music playing on the radio. The idea was to hand-make or alter every aspect of this constructed environment and inject it full of humor and absurdity — to look at an everyday experience through a different lens. During our store hours, we will be a cash-and-carry bodega, selling “products” ranging from \$5 to \$10,000, allowing anyone and everyone to become an art collector. In the end, shopping in “Corner Store” should be an experience that examines, questions and satirizes the conventions and absurdities of contemporary consumer