

# Show connects the dot-coms

## COMMON THEME FOR EXHIBIT IS FAILURE

By Vera H-C Chan  
Contra Costa Times

One industry's pathos is the art world's revenge — although revenge isn't quite what motivates a mixed-media installation with the witty title "dot-gone."

Created by fAMOUS — three former Berkeley roommates — the exhibit examines the dregs of the dot-com revolution through the manufactured hopes, inspired greed, media excess, toiling humanity and ethereal nature of cyberspace.

The visual "documentary" transforms a corner of the Lair of the Minotaur gallery in San Francisco into a 17-by-5-foot office space, complete with Aeron chairs (the high-tech office thrones whose award-winning design signaled ergonomic decadence), a NASDAQ mural, a portrait gallery of CEOs, a video newscast, a computer that cycles through defunct Web sites, a large deflated dollar and business cards of failed dot-commers.

### Complete cycle

Of the three artists — Lacey Hanada, Xenia Jordan and Jamie A. Michael — only Michael has gone through the dot-com cycle of extravagant parties, elaborate business cards, the pink slip and subsequent road trip funded by severance pay.

Once she returned from her trip, the 24-year-old says, she didn't know what to do, but she wanted to return to that creativity she had back in school.

Partly fueled by an instinct for closure, Michael and her two friends combined their shared aesthetic, intellectual restlessness and what 23-year-old Jordan calls "an insane amount of energy" to conjure up first the name, then the exhibit.

Before "dot-gone," though, the threesome had to come up with a name for their partnership. It came to them over an Ethiopian dinner: fAMOUS, complete with the uppercase rebellion against the tradition of capitalization and the '90s design trend of lower-case informality.

### Attention-getter

The plan for fAMOUS is to create art and engaging productions and to be profitable in doing so. "Can we say we like money?" Jordan asks rhetorically.

"Dot-gone" has already piqued the attention of the public and media, such as Sa-



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Business cards of defunct dot-coms form part of the visual documentary three artists created called "dot-gone."

### "DOT-GONE"

Mixed-media installation

**Where:** Lair of the Minotaur, 3316 26th St., San Francisco

**When:** 11 a.m.-5 p.m. today-Sunday; then by appointment through Friday

**Info:** (510) 848-1747

[www.wearefamous.com](http://www.wearefamous.com)

lon.com, NPR and CNN, who are entranced with defunct business cards.

The business-card collection — which started with Michael's own card — now numbers about 400. They were solicited through the San Francisco site [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) and at pink-slip parties. Some came in their original boxes. Others cost a chunk of venture capital, like the one from Atomic Orange ("We don't know what Atomic Orange was, but the card is beautiful," Hanada says). One overflowing envelope looked as though the sender had shoved in his cards in a cathartic rage. "You can just envision him cramming it in the mailbox," Hanada says.

Ask why these cards have captured the public imagination, and the three answer almost at once, their sentences neatly slipping together: The card represents the identity of the individual as well as the individual within the company — "isolated within a group setting," Hanada says. Ultimately, the individual, the group and

the company shared the same failed fate.

As for the artists' response to the dot-com revolution, Michael loved working at the on-line ad company while it lasted, Jordan as an architect reaped the benefits of the boom and graduating senior Hanada could almost "taste" a starting salary of \$35,000-\$40,000 a year. However, the downslide brought home the "precarious nature" of Jordan's job and added frustration for the 21-year-old Hanada. "It was right there," she says. "Now a degree in English might not get me as far as I thought."

In the tumble of emotional responses, though, gratitude is the one that rises to the top. "I would not want to be a part of what's going on right now," Jordan says.

The next fAMOUS project, "Make It Big, Make it Red," is about the evolution of an artist. The details aren't worked out, but, more important, the three are on their way to meeting their self-titled goal as well as "riches, fame and immortality," Jordan says.

These tongue-in-cheek but lofty pronouncements echo the spirit of an earlier Silicon rush — but instead of commerce without soul, it's art without mercy.

"I don't care what I do," Michael agrees. "The means are not important. That's my destiny."