

# **RUNNING THE NUMBERS**

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**PORTRAITS OF MASS  
CONSUMPTION**

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS JORDAN**

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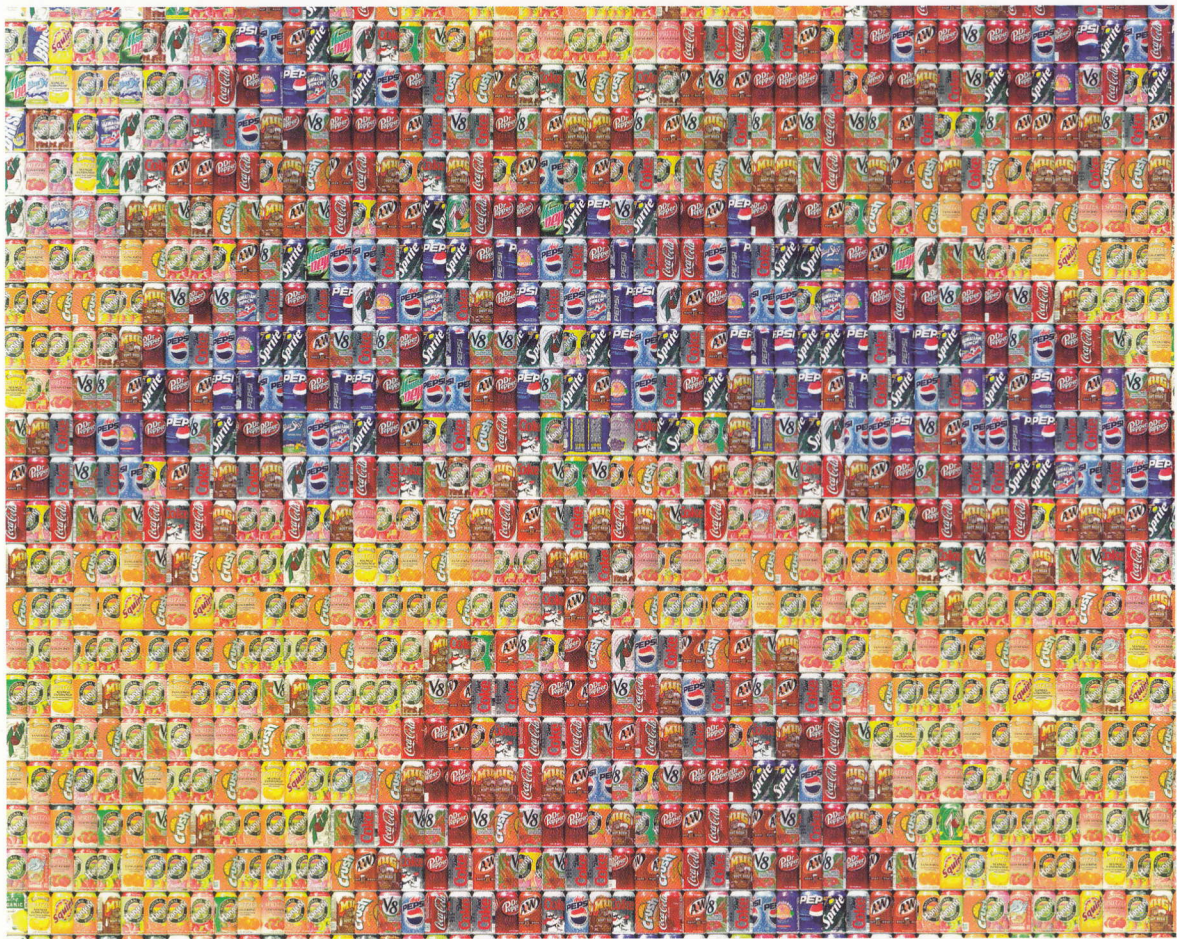
**Sordoni Art Gallery**

**August 29 - December 11, 2011**

**Opening Reception:**

**Friday, September 9, 2011**

**5-7 pm**



Cans Seurat (detail), 2007

*Running the Numbers* looks at contemporary American culture through the austere lens of statistics. Each image portrays a specific quantity of something: two million plastic bottles (five minutes of bottle use); 106,000 aluminum cans (thirty seconds of can consumption) and so on. Finding meaning in these mass phenomena can be difficult because the phenomena themselves are invisible, spread across the earth in millions of separate places. There is no Mount Everest of waste we can make a pilgrimage to and behold the sobering aggregate of our discarded stuff, seeing and feeling it viscerally with our senses.

Instead, we are stuck with trying to comprehend the gravity of our mass phenomena through the anaesthetizing and emotionally barren language of statistics. Sociologists tell us that the human mind cannot meaningfully grasp numbers higher than a few thousand; yet every day we read of mass phenomena characterized by numbers in the millions, billions, even trillions.

Compounding this challenge is our sense of insignificance as individuals in a world of 6.7 billion people. And if we fully open ourselves to the horrors of our times, we also risk becoming overwhelmed, panicked, or emotionally paralyzed.

I believe it is worth connecting with these issues and allowing them to matter to us personally, despite the complex mixtures of anger, fear, grief, and rage that this process can entail. Perhaps these uncomfortable feelings can become part of what connects us, serving as fuel for courageous individual and collective action as citizens of a new kind of global community. This hope continues to motivate my work.

This project visually examines these vast and bizarre measures of our society; in large intricately detailed prints assembled from thousands of smaller photographs. Employing themes such as the near versus the far, and the one versus the many, I hope to raise some questions about the roles and responsibilities we each play as individuals in a collective that is increasingly enormous, incomprehensible, and overwhelming.

~chris jordan, Seattle, 2008





Sordoni Art Gallery  
Wilkes University  
150 South River Street  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766

Tel 570-408-4325

Fax 570-408-7733

[wilkes.edu/sordoniartgallery](http://wilkes.edu/sordoniartgallery)

Gallery Hours:

Noon – 4:30 p.m., daily

### **Cans Seurat, 2007**

Depicts 106,000 aluminum cans, the number  
used in the US every thirty seconds.



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