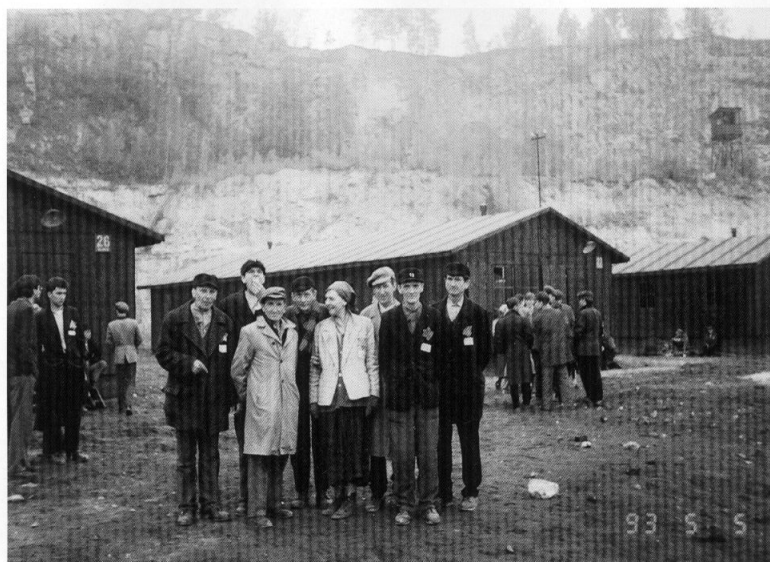


Art in America

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FEATURED REVIEW



Omer Fast:
Spielberg's List,
2003, photos taken
by extras during
the production of
Schindler's List, 1993,
in "More Real:
Art in the Age of
Truthiness."

“More Real: Art In The Age Of Truthiness”

SANTA FE — SITE Santa Fe

In October 2005, Stephen Colbert coined the word “truthiness” during his satirical TV news report on Comedy Central. The instantly popular term refers to what one feels to be true as opposed to truth determined by logic and facts. Truthiness cuts to the heart of information (or misinformation) processing in our media-saturated times. The Minneapolis Institute of Art’s Elizabeth Armstrong curated this show, inspired by her time in Orange County, Calif., nestled between the bizarre “artifacts” of Disneyland in Anaheim and nearby Hollywood. (The exhibition travels to the MIA, Mar. 3-June 9, 2013.)

“More Real,” presenting photographs, videos, sculptures and installations by 26 contemporary artists, is divided into three themes: “Deception and Play: From Trompe l’œil to the Authentic Fake”; “The Status of Fact: Unreliable Narrators, Parafiction, and Truthiness” and “Reshaping the Real: Cinema, Memory, and the Virtual.” However, most of the works—produced over the past 13 years—would sit comfortably in any of the three categories, which ultimately provide helpful contours for the exhibition’s extensive catalogue. The show itself has a savvy, politically charged feel, offering delightful and disturbing views into contemporary culture and

its fraught relationship to representation in the digital age. Artists range from Mark Dion and Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle to Ai Weiwei and Pierre Huyghe, as well as a younger generation including Eva and Franco Mattes. Many of the works, in their subject matter and visual strategies, conflate military surveillance, video games, social media, global tensions and institutional politics.

Houston-based conceptual sculptor Dario Robleto has contributed three subtle but potent memorial sculptures to the section “Deception and Play.” *The Melancholic Refuses to Surrender* (2003), an innocuous-seeming pair of worn boxing gloves nailed to the wall, refers to the late African-American boxer Jack Johnson, who was denied passage on the Titanic due to his race. Composed not of leather and string but from a complex, alchemical recipe—including bones, dirt, pigment, lead, string and rust mixed with a melted vinyl record of folk and blues musician Lead Belly’s song “The Titanic”—the piece is a tribute to the boxer’s struggles during the height of the Jim Crow era.

“The Status of Fact” features a short promotional-style video, commissioned from San Francisco-based filmmaker

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Jonn Herschend, to orient viewers to the exhibition. The decorousness of the opening scenes, in which a voiceover describes the show as a kind of diagnosis of a cultural disease, quickly dissolves as the host and cast of actors unravel, apparently overcome by emotional pressures and love triangles.

Thomas Demand's five large-scale photographs depicting the Oval Office ("Presidency," 2008), and Omer Fast's hour-long video *Spielberg's List* (2003) also stand out. Most readers of the *New York Times Magazine* following Obama's election in November 2008 were fooled into thinking that Demand's pictures of his meticulous paper models were actual views into the inner sanctum of the White House. Fast, who was born in Israel and lives in Berlin, self-consciously excavates the film *Schindler's List* (1993), unearthing the "real" emotions and opinions of the "real" people—which for him means the actors rather than the characters Spielberg depicts. The two-channel projection alternates between interviews with Poles hired to work as extras for the film and the original film's most poignant shots. In a series of uncomfortable conversations, Fast pushes his subjects to share their sense of local history during World War II and their feelings about portraying Jews, Poles or Nazis based on their physical features.

The hefty exhibition catalogue features a newspaperlike layout, underscoring the media-consciousness of the endeavor. The powerful combination of essays (by Tom Gunning, Norman Klein, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, D. Graham Burnett, Mark Levy and Glenn Lowry) stems from a conference convened by Armstrong in fall 2010 at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass., where the critical and artistic issues that permeate the show were developed. The 28 artist entries render the book a helpful resource for scholars and the general public alike.

— Jennie Hirsh

View of Rodney
McMillian's exhibi-
tion "Prospect Ave.,"
2012; at Maccarone.

