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Paper Moon

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PAPER
MOON

BERNARD A. ZUCKERMAN MUSEUM OF ART



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Zuckerman Museum of Art, Kennesaw, GA 30144

Kennesaw State University

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*This Side of Paradise (I Lost All My Money in the Great Depression
and All I Got Was This Room)*, 2012
Mixed media wall treatment
Photo courtesy of the Artist



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Paper Moon focuses on work that, in one way or another, serves as a substitute for the real thing. The emphasis of this exchange is not on artifice but rather on a sincere effort to imitate an ideal, the desire for which may be motivated by limited circumstances, need, adoration, and longing, rather than greed or irony. The show examines how these substitutes are intended to function, the nature of their appeal, and what role authenticity and our ability to “make believe” plays in the proffered illusion.

The idea for this exhibition began with a documentary about teenage magicians and evolved into a project in which the sleight of hand and trickery behind the illusion is made evident, but the willingness to be entertained remains. The title, *Paper Moon*, is borrowed from a Depression-era song, “It’s Only a Paper Moon,” written by Harold Arlen and made popular by versions released by Ella Fitzgerald and Nat King Cole during the later years of World War II. It refers to a paper maché world of theater sets, homemade high school dance props, and parade floats—inexpensive backdrops that provide a bit of temporary glamour or romance.

Introduction



PAPER MOON

“Say, it’s only a paper moon

Sailing over a cardboard sea

But it wouldn’t be make-believe

If you believed in me

Yes, it’s only a canvas sky

Hanging over a muslin tree

But it wouldn’t be make-believe

If you believed in me”

Rather than looking exactly like the original source, all of the objects in this show are easily recognized as a variation. From Joe Peragine’s paintings of natural history museum dioramas to Adam Parker Smith’s wallpaper installation, each artist offers a turn on the real with objects that are invested with emotional and psychological weight, and perhaps, with a kind of innocence and faith. One sees what one wants to see, not just what is there. Some may understand this as a delusion, a fantasy, and I, for one, welcome that interpretation. Join us in the escape.



The Imperfect Substitute

By Teresa Bramlette Reeves

In the Micronesian island nation of Yap, large, heavy stones were once used for important payments and exchanges, such as dowries. The stones were so big that they could not be easily moved, so when one was “given” in payment, it continued to occupy the same piece of land. Only the understanding of ownership changed—it shifted from being x’s stone to being y’s stone. And even when a newly quarried stone was being transported from a nearby island and was lost overboard during a storm, the Yap honored the knowledge that the stone on the sea floor had value and could also change hands with confidence and ease. The abstract nature of this arrangement demanded the community’s investment and belief in an illusion. Everyone had to buy into the idea that the limestone rock had worth and that the current owner had the power and prestige associated with that wealth. They saw what they decided to see, not just what was there.

The Yap’s use of a stone to represent an asset turns the stone into a symbol—an abstraction with an agreed upon meaning within a particular group or culture. Thus, the stone functions both as a representation of capital and as a feature in the island’s landscape. In addition, and of pertinence to this exhibition, the absence of the stone

also represents wealth. In a solution that mirrors western economic practice, the Yap have agreed that both a visible symbol (the stone) and a conceptual substitute (the invisible stone) have value. The allowance of a substitute is ingenious as well as practical and reveals a high level of sophistication in this ancient society.

I am interested in the use of substitutes, particularly in relationship to notions of need and longing. One can easily argue that because all forms of art are representations, symbols, or likenesses, they are substitutes for the real thing in and of themselves. But my focus here is on our ability to recognize and parse the difference between a likeness and a near-likeness, the imperfect substitute.

I want to begin this conversation about imperfect substitutes with a story from art critic Dave Hickey's essay "Pontormo's Rainbow," published in his 1997 book *Air Guitar*. In a highly personal approach to thinking and writing about art, Hickey tackles the difference between actuality and representation in the form of a childhood experience of betrayal and the resulting insight. He writes that as a relatively innocent young student at Santa Monica Elementary, he voluntarily participated in a study that he later discovered was focused on the impact of violence in cartoons on the youth of America. Interviewed in the school cafeteria by what he described as a woman who was a cross between June Cleaver and a "Charlie Ray lady,"¹ he was asked if he liked cartoons, and, was he ever frightened by cartoons? And then more specifically, did Donald Duck's relationship with his nephews—Huey, Dewey and Louie—remind him of anyone—say, his parents? This was when the young Dave realized that perhaps her questions were pointed in a direction that he did not want to go. He had spent a lifetime protecting his "weird" parents; his jazz playing father and his artistic mother.

He instinctively *knew* they were different, noting "...through five states and thirteen grammar schools, I had never met any other adults who were even remotely like my mom and dad [and] I was dedicated to concealing their eccentricity.... Donald and Daisy they weren't, but neither were they Ward and June." This was the truth he tried to convey to his inquisitor. His parents weren't cartoon-like, but maybe his dog had the requisite amount of simplicity and glibness to fit the bill. Moments after sharing his insight, Dave admitted to sympathizing with Wile E. Coyote and Tom and Jerry. After that point, reading the triumph in the face of his interviewer, he recognized the futility of being honest and boldly switched to sarcasm. "Oh yeah, I'm always terrified." And this is what the lady decided to believe and include in her report—a report that made nationwide news. Hickey writes:

Even Dave Garroway talked about it on *The Today Show*...Children were being terrorized by cartoons! We trembled at Donald Duck in the role of an abusive parent. We read the Road Runner as an allegory of fear. And worst of all, we were terrified and incited to violence by the aggressive carnage we witnessed in *The Adventures of Tom and Jerry*.²

¹Charles Ray is a Los Angeles-based sculptor. In the early 1990s he made a series of over-sized mannequin-like figures, one of which was a long-legged woman, dressed in a red "power" suit. She stands 96 inches tall, thus dwarfing even a tall adult. Arms akimbo, she presents an imposing, dominant presence.

²Dave Hickey, "Pontormo's Rainbow," in *Air Guitar*, (Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1997), 47.

Hickey claims he remains traumatized by this incident:

...those ladies, in their presumption that we couldn't distinguish representations from reality, treated us like representations...we kids *knew* whereof we spoke.... We held symposia on "issues of representation" at recess, and it turned out that *everyone* knew that if you ran over a cat with a lawn mower, the cat would be one bloody mess and probably die. Thus, when the much-beleaguered cartoon, Tom, was run over by a lawn mower and got only a shaved path up his back, we laughed. It was funny because it wasn't real! Which is simply to say that the intimidated, abused and betrayed children at Santa Monica Elementary, at the dawn of the nineteen-fifties, without benefit of Lacan or Lukács, managed to stumble upon an axiom of representation that continues to elude graduate students in Cultural Studies; to wit, that there is a vast and usually dialectical difference between that which we wish to see and that which we wish to see *represented*—that the responses elicited by representations are absolutely contingent upon their status as representations—and upon our knowledge of the difference between actuality and representation.³

As the makers of the cartoons intended, Hickey and his friends got it; they were amused rather than afraid, entertained rather than forever damaged. They saw the difference between their lived experience and the cartoon world because Tom and Jerry are clearly two-dimensional, simplified drawings. They are not exactly like their real life source but are instead a near-likeness, and the difference between a likeness and a near-likeness is always revealing. It provokes questions. Why didn't the artist or maker produce something that looked more exactly like a cat? Were they not capable of making a realistic depiction? What is the intention behind this representation? I don't think these kinds of questions spring so readily to mind when we look at non-representational art; it is more natural to examine the difference between more familiar forms (the objects we know and understand) and their representations.

The artworks selected for *Paper Moon* are imperfect interpretations of reality. In their near-likeness we often locate nostalgia. No one would be convinced that Ferdinand Cooper's clocks are real, ticking timepieces or that Mark Hogancamp's photographs are accurate depictions of World War II. We can easily see behind the illusion, an ability that more often than not reveals a sense of longing, unfulfilled desire, or discontent. The ibeji figures and the flat daddy directly address loss and, despite their proactive solutions to death and separation, are tinged with wistfulness. The beautiful wallpaper made of inexpensive, disposable objects is gloriously ornate, but also, intentionally kind of pitiful. One imagines a creative child or a lone adult collecting what they can find and afford and then, patiently, pain-stakingly, creating a lovely pattern. Joe Peragine's paintings of wildlife dioramas document a late 19th century desire to educate and enlighten viewers about the natural world in a most unnatural way. We recognize that these aren't real animals in a real setting but are in fact stuffed and preserved specimens in a faux environment of simulated rocks and trees against a painted backdrop. Our understanding of this discrepancy between the real and the fake can skew our feelings about the tableau, eliciting regret rather than thrills and excitement. Paige Adair's photographs, mementos of her European travels, feature a deconstructed toy dog in what would more normally be her place

³Hickey, "Pontorno's Rainbow," 47-48.

in the record of the visit. It is this displacement of self, and the substitution of the plastic, denuded animal, that prompt our questions and result in answers that suggest underlying emotional power. Beth Lilly's photographs are similarly bittersweet in their recreation of past events, described in selected stills (implied not literal) and short texts.

Rarely does artwork evoke empathy for the artist, yet in much of the work in *Paper Moon*, our heart strings are pulled by the object, the subject, or by our sense of the artist/maker/user. We feel their need in the making and the use of a substitute and recall the role of imagination in our childhood mimesis of life. We don't know much about Ferdinand Cooper, so can only guess at what drove him to produce his odd, non-functional substitute world. Was it longing for a more perfect environment? A rejection of the "regular" world? An artist's desire to produce combined with a personal vision of life? A comment on his own dysfunctional state? In the liminal passage between our understanding of the real and our innate grasp of the substitute, we get a glimpse behind the curtain and, thus, a more complete and evocative picture of the object and the maker. The same can be said for the majority of the artists in this show. The imperfection, the unmasking of the illusionism, creates a space for deeper perception.

I generally prefer to see the slippage, and thus be clued in to my reality (however artfully it may be arranged). When I was young like Dave, I too felt betrayed when a favorite cousin, playing a role in a summer camp pageant, was "killed" and then "burned" on a huge funeral pyre. Unbeknownst to me, a cloth and paper "corpse" replaced my sweet cousin, and it was only after I panicked and became inconsolable that I was let in on the substitution. Once I knew, I was able to navigate the territory between real and not real, and separate and understand the consequences of each. Our ability to "see" and understand something beyond what is actually represented is as central to the exhibition, *Paper Moon*, as it is to art, and to life.

The Imperfect Substitute

When the *blolo bla* arrives in the dream it transforms itself into a woman. And it is not the statue that transforms itself... it represents the woman (spirit) who is following you, and it is like a photo that was taken that represents the woman (spirit), but it is not her herself.

Teki Kouakou to Susan Vogel¹

By Dr. Jessica Stephenson

I have been dreaming about George Clooney a lot lately. He seems to frequent my dreams at least once a week. We take leisurely walks down pristine Caribbean beaches, picnic in cool English country meadows, or hike up Table Mountain near Cape Town, South Africa. Sometimes the dreams are pretty intense; George takes me to war-torn Sudan where he is funding border surveillance to preserve the integrity of the newly independent south. Other dreams are more plebeian. We might hang out at home with his best friend and longest partner, Max, the potbelly pig; I worry a little that I am competing with a pig for George's attention. George has a wicked, sometimes cruel sense of humor; he often plays practical jokes in my dreams, like the time he hosted a black tie dinner party but told guest Henry Kissinger it was an informal pool-side cookout. Kissinger showed up wearing swimming trunks.

The odd thing is that while it is always George Clooney who appears in my dreams, sometimes his appearance is not that of George Clooney. On occasion he takes the form of a mature Sean Connery, or the enigmatic and trickster-like character Patrick Jane from the current television series, *The Mentalist*. These dreams have not gone unnoticed by my flesh and blood husband.

George Clooney is My Spirit Man- Spouse-Lover

Perfection and *the Blolo Bian*
and *Blolo Bla* Sculptures from
Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa

Amused, but not without a tinge of irritation, he has been a lot more attentive of late. Double bonus.

A Freudian explanation of dreams is that they are the means whereby the unconscious seeks to address psychological problems that remain unresolved in the conscious mind. The unconscious is the internal driving force behind dreaming. According to this model I have some marital work to do. However, another model of dreaming, namely that held by Baule peoples who historically call Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, their homeland, is that a dream is initiated from the outside; that is, by a spirit being. Recurring dreams in which one hooks up with a physically attractive, attentive, smart, funny, and affluent person would seem not so out of the ordinary. Indeed, a Baule person would say that the George Clooney of my dreams is my *blolo bian*, or spirit spouse lover, calling to me in the hopes of establishing a profound, lifelong, and highly beneficial relationship, enabled through dreams and interaction with a specially commissioned and consecrated figural sculpture within which the spirit dwells (Figure 1). Lucky me!

For Baule persons, spirits cohabit with humans through dreams since the dream world is a place where the visible and invisible worlds connect. Baule peoples know the other world, the *blolo*, to resemble this world, yet it includes a sense of vagueness and distance and can in this sense be compared with the digital, film, and cyberspace realms where George Clooney resides for me, a mere mortal. The *blolo* is not associated with any direction; it is neither above nor below the earth. It is the source of human life since every person originally came from the *blolo* and is never entirely free from relations with the spirits left behind there. Everyone has in the *blolo* an entire family that can continue to interact with one's life after birth.²

¹Susan Vogel, *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 226.

²Phillip Ravenhill, *Dreams and Reverie: Images of Otherworld Mates Among the Baule, West Africa*. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 1-2.

³Ravenhill, *Dreams and Reverie*, 2.

⁴Vogel, *Baule*, 259.

Blolo bian (spirit men) and *blola bla* (spirit women) reveal themselves in dreams in ways that signal their desire to live with a human partner, cause problems, or help their human partners. Newborns might have spirit partners who trouble them and make them ill or restless, but most spirit men or women do not manifest themselves until adolescence or later. Initial knowledge of one's otherworld man or woman usually occurs during a particular crisis in young adult life, such as sterility, an inability to take a human spouse, or recurring misfortune with financial matters. In consultation with a diviner, one may find that the problem results from the unhappiness or jealousy of one's neglected otherworld male or female opposite.³ Once a relationship has been established, spirit men and women come to represent an ideal in every respect: they are physically, socially, and economically superior to real world male and female partners and give their human partner success and happiness.

Like actual people, spirit partners have varied personalities, needs, habits, and ways of behaving; and, while they are superior to a human spouse, they are not perfect. The relationship with a spirit partner can be positive or negative, but, unlike a human marriage, it is inescapable, for the spirit is said to be like your soul, something you are born with. One may distance oneself from a troublesome spirit through religious conversion, yet Baule converts to Islam, for example, report dreaming of them years later. Spatial distance and physical separation can weaken the spirit's power to influence life, especially if one should move to a modern city, places where *blolo bian* and *bla* do not frequent.⁴



Figure 1



Figure 2



Steps required to establish an ongoing mutually beneficial relationship include commissioning a figure carved to represent and appease the spirit woman or man (Figures 1 and 2), the establishment of a shrine within which the carved figure resides, the giving of offerings, and weekly nights set aside for exclusive relations, through dreams, with the spirit partner. Spirit spouse shrines are established in the corner of the sleeping room of the spirit's human partner as a private space that shields them from view, and they are often further hidden when draped with a white cloth. This is because they are private and personal, carrying both sexual connotations and emotional intimacy.

Each carving of a spirit spouse is different, reflecting the unique character of the individual spirit, yet they all represent a physical and social ideal to which the spirit is held. A spirit may reveal to its human partner and to the artist who carves the sculpture, essential characteristics and appearance to be conveyed in the carving; however, dream experiences with the spirit do not allude to the sculptures once carved and the spirit always looks different in dreams: it can take the form of any person of the opposite sex and often changes appearance from dream to dream.⁵

Commissioning a sculpture is designed to increase the spirit spouse's benefits by pleasing it, while for the human spouse the carving offers a tangible, affective reality for this dream relationship. The creation of a carved figure is particularly helpful in dealing with a troublesome spirit partner, and an examination of the style and iconography of spirit spouse figures reveals that they represent Baule aesthetic and symbolic ideals. Indeed, the overarching tone of spouse figures is one of contained restraint (Figures 1 and 2). Relatively naturalistic, Baule spirit figures display overall symmetry and a closed silhouette. Notice the downcast or introspective eyes, closed mouths, slender noses, and limbs held close to the body: thus, an image of peaceful containment that might stand in marked contrast to the passionate, hot, or violent nature of the spirit itself. Through the sculpture, the potentially troubling character of an individual spirit partner is visually restrained, constrained, and controlled.⁶

Figure 1. Figure of a Male Spirit Spouse dressed as a colonial era war veteran
Baule, Cote d'Ivoire, 1995
Fowler Museum of Cultural History, University of California,
Los Angeles, x94.62.18

Figure 2. Figure of a female Spirit Spouse
Baule, Cote d'Ivoire, early 20th century
Collection of Susan Trotter, Atlanta

The figures reflect Baule physical aesthetic ideals but in exaggerated form. For example, the carving's neck should be neither too long, nor too thick, nor too short, but nevertheless, longer and finer than an average real Baule person's neck. Similarly, the buttocks of the spirit figures exhibit the correct roundness and firmness, they should neither be too developed nor too flat. The legs of both male and female figures are shapely and muscular, as are the pectoral muscles of male figures, signs of character as indicators of physical labor and thus of future success and productivity. Indeed, rather than display simply a physical aesthetic ideal, the appearance of the figure communicates the social ideals for male and female spirits held by their human partners.⁷

While those spirit spouse figures collected in the early 20th century display the spirit as naked (Figure 2), the development of Baule spirit figures throughout the 20th century and into the 21st shows an increasing preoccupation with clothing and, indeed, with modern fashion. French Colonialism introduced the rural agrarian Baule to new forms of social practice including urban-dwelling foreign and local military and government workers, salaried workers, entrepreneurs, and, beyond, the metropolitan world of France itself. Featuring shoes, ties, suits, uniforms, and other fashion items, Baule spirit spouses keep pace with changing notions of social identity and success (Figure 1).

Carvings of spirit men and women can be interpreted in many ways. Are they a crafty mechanism for addressing the needs of human spouses since they create a triadic relationship of competition between two partners: one human, and one spirit? Are they a psychological steam valve for releasing, through solitude and dreams, the social demands brought on by Baule polygamous marriages and extensive kin and social obligations? However imperfect their human partner, the sculpted image of the spirit is an image of perfection. Since the figure is always installed in its shrine on the week day preceding the birth day of its human partner—the same night that partner must spend with them being the night before his or her day of birth—the spirit spouse is in some sense an alter ego, a sort of perfect opposite-sex twin or double to its human partner. The carved figure serves to both express and remedy this contradiction by externalizing and isolating the male side of a woman and the female side of a man.⁸ They are the perfect spiritual aspect of the imperfect mortal human being.

However defined, I hope George Clooney continues to frequently frequent my dreams.

⁵Ravenhill, *Dreams and Reverie*, 35.

⁶Ravenhill, *Dreams and Reverie*, 46-52.

⁷Ravenhill, *Dreams and Reverie*, 7-9.

⁸Vogel, *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes*, 267.

Making Faces

By Kirstie Tepper



John Clang
Being Together, 2010-2012, "Leong Family /Hong Kong / Ghim Moh"
Fine art archival print, 40 x 60 in. (101.2 x 152.4 cm)

Like many families, my extended family heritage is multicultural. For three generations we have each contributed to a family melting pot by finding love in many corners of the globe, adding cultural influences from England and Wales, Latvia, Lebanon, Spain, the U.S. (that's me), and most recently, France. As a child it just wasn't possible to experience the intimacy of face-to-face gatherings with extended family that technology like Skype now allows. As new parents, without the support of local family, my husband and I are trying to find creative ways to give our son the impression of what it would be like if our extended family could all be in the same room. One solution involves everyone becoming part of a complex schedule and spending time "in the box." Via our iPad, family members are carried around the house, seated at the dinner table, next to the bath, and placed on the bookcase for story time. Skype has allowed for grandparents, aunts and uncles, and even Dad, when he's away four days of every week, to be part of the mundane aspects of daily life. John Clang's family portrait series, *Being Together* brings comfort to those of us who live this "virtual family" life and shows that there can be a substitute for intimate family moments.¹ It is possible to forget, even just for an instant, that everyone is not in the same room. Once you spend some time with these families, their closeness is evident and the physical distance between them disappears.

Presented in this context, the following collection of images invites personal references, welcomes the creation of narratives to accompany the images, and may conjure memories from the viewer's experiences. Within the inherent substitution for a person that making a portrait represents, there are connections, memories, desires, and emotions that have driven the creation of these works. The motivation behind the creation of these portraits becomes secondary to what the images come to represent.

¹Julie Bosman, "Futuristic Family Reunion," *New York Times Magazine*, June 1, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/06/03/magazine/skype-portraits.html>

Flat Daddies are one of the coping mechanisms that military families have adopted in recent years that may help to give the civilian public a sense of what it must be like to have a loved one deployed.² The flat parent, spouse, or child becomes an ever-present companion and attends sporting events, goes out to dinner with the family, or just listens as a book is read to him/her while seated on the couch. It is impossible to mistake a flat parent for the real-life version, and a mother can't rely on Flat Daddy to enforce bed-time or encourage eating broccoli, but it is possible to imagine the impact on a returning member of the military to be instantly recognized by his/her child.

Far from the ideal family life, though somehow of comfort, Clang's virtual family portraits and the Flat Daddies are products of our time and are representative of how technology can reduce the metaphorical and physical distance that is created by military deployment or relocating far from home. Although there is no substitute for a hug or a bedtime story on Daddy's lap, these examples are, however, creative solutions through which the closeness of this kind of family time can be replicated.



Josiah and Flat Daddy, Photo by Nara Garber



Main Gate Memorial postcards, 1927. Ern, Thill Bruxelles

Whereas a portrait by definition usually reflects an individual's likeness, William Longstaff's painting, *Menin Gate at Midnight*,³ pictures a monument in a landscape as a portrait of the "Digger," the legendary ANZAC⁴ soldier from World War I. Initially, I had thought of this painting in terms of its status as a national Australian icon, becoming so revered that it came to represent each of the 60,000 men who died during World War I and whose remains were never returned. By distancing myself from the nostalgia of what this painting represents for me (as an Australian), I then started to look at what it meant to have a substituted image that represents something intangible. This painting is not on display in the exhibition, in its place there are three postcards⁵ from the Menin Gate Memorial in Belgium from 1927, alluding to the idea that a site, image, or in this case, a souvenir can carry some of the meaning as the original painting, or even be

²<http://www.flatdaddydocumentary.com/>

³<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART09807/>

⁴ANZAC refers to the Australia New Zealand Army Corps; soldiers who fought in World War I are referred to as either ANZACS or Diggers.

⁵Published by Ern. Thill, Bruxelles.

representative of the sacrifice of 60,000 men. Susan Stewart in *On Longing*, addresses this transference of meaning as being exemplified by the souvenir, and discusses the ability of an object “to serve as traces of the authentic experience.”⁶

We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative. Through narrative the souvenir substitutes a context of perpetual consumption for its context of origin. It represents not the lived experience of its maker but the “secondhand” experience of its possessor/owner.⁷

These postcards have come to represent: a painting, that focuses on a national preoccupation to immortalize heroes; a 1927 war memorial dedicated to 350,000 World War I soldiers, (60,000 of which were Australian); an historic battle in 1917 and much more. These souvenirs therefore become “the juxtaposition of history with a personalized present.”⁸

The substitution in James VanDerZee’s studio portraits is situated somewhere between fiction and essential truth. To VanDerZee, Harlem was home and family, community, and personal identity were of the utmost importance. In the 1920s, when the photographs included in this exhibition were made, VanDerZee’s studio photography business was at its height. These portraits not only include some of the techniques like photomontage and negative manipulation that VanDerZee commonly employed to realize the effect the client desired,⁹ but also show how meticulously he approached each photograph’s setting. A variety of furniture and home wares congruent with the interiors of Harlem homes at the time were on hand and customized for each sitting, backdrops were also substituted depending on the client.

The “villa garden” backdrop was used when the desired effect was to create the feeling of the dwelling space of aristocratic gentry. However, if the mood was meant to be more romantic, the “villa garden” was replaced with the “moon over water.” Neither of these backdrops would do for family groups. In these instances the “gothic window” was used on the rear wall of the pictorial space. The “fireplace” was a symbol of domestic warmth and security.¹⁰

⁶Susan Stewart. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 134.

⁷Ibid., 135

⁸Ibid., 138

⁹Deborah Willis-Braithwaite, *VanDerZee, Photographer; 1886-1983*. (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 44.

¹⁰Ibid.



James VanDerZee
Future expectations (Wedding Day), 1926
Gelatin silver print, 6 1/2 x 4 1/2 in. (16.5 x 11.4 cm)

James VanDerZee Photograph Collection, Archives Division, Auburn
Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History,
Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System

M a k i n g
F a c e s

In addition to the fireplace, a stuffed toy or cut out dog also symbolized loyalty and domestic comfort. Each alteration or added element was about the human subject above all else. “In the studio the client was offered the opportunity to construct alternative realities to the social roles determined by the exigencies of class and race.”¹¹ VanDerZee “established a space in which his subjects could expand spiritually, emotionally, and symbolically.”¹²

In Jay Van Buren’s fur suit portraits (pages 50-51), the substitution is immediately recognizable and less subtle. His subjects are obviously masked, or exposing their true selves depending on interpretation, but ultimately Van Buren concentrates on communicating the inner character of the fur-suiter. This painting and accompanying photograph are a record of a “Fur Suit Portrait Paint-off” in which Van Buren’s impressions of the sitter are recorded (per- and fur-sonality).¹³

And lastly, after Ryan Petty and her father were forced to abandon their family home due to a complicated and messy foreclosure ordeal, Petty later revisited the property as a performance piece. *House* (pages 44-45) becomes the record for the performance and is presented by juxtaposing childhood photographs with images taken during the visit. The nostalgic portraits are presented in stark contrast to the fabricated experiences from the performance. By revisiting her family home long after the evidence of inhabitation has been erased, the empty house has been reduced to nothing more than a site for the ‘after’ images; stripped of emotion, these images also come to represent all of the family history that did not have the opportunity to be made.

¹¹Willis-Braithwaite. *VanDerZee, Photographer*, 44-45

¹²*ibid.*, 13

¹³<http://mediastorm.com/training/a-tail-of-identity>



Penguin, 2010, Photograph
20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Kitten, 2010, Photograph
16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm)




Chipmunk, 2010, Photograph
16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm)

Paige Adair

STATEMENT

In the summer of 2010 I received Penn Design's Susan Cromwell Coslett travel fellowship and embarked on a solitary journey to visit narrative garden sites in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. While wandering the streets of Salzburg, I stumbled into a toy store and met "Fur Real Friends," cute, fluffy, small electronic toys that mimic the movement and sounds of live animals. Meant to invoke a care ethic in children, the creatures drew me to them, became my travel companions and accompanied me to Hellbrunn, an extravagant estate known for its humorous use of intricate water-operated mechanical theaters hidden in its gardens and grottos. The interior and exterior spaces of Hellbrunn incorporate a humorous yet deranged fantasy where the narratives can captivate and repulse visitors and guests. In my short time there, I was compelled to turn the bodies of my befriended mechanical creatures inside out, paralleling the external machinery of my surroundings. Stripped of their fur and revealing the gaps and crevices of the machines inside, my companions revealed themselves as hyper precious and grotesquely sentimental creatures that have become the tourists in this emotional exercise.

BIOGRAPHY

Paige Adair has always been fascinated and inspired by all forms of storytelling. She is most interested in the relationship between animals and humans in fairy tales along with the roles they play in day-to-day life. Adair earned an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania with a concentration in Painting and Time-Based Media in 2011. She is currently living in her hometown of Atlanta, GA, where she completed her BFA from Georgia State University in 2008. Adair also works as the Manager of Reprographic Services at the Kenan Research Center Archives of the Atlanta History Center. 

www.paigeadairart.com



Eleanor
Antin

The Adventures of a Nurse (Parts I and II)

Eleanor Antin

1976, 65 min, color, sound

Part I: The artist, in the role of a nurse, fantasizes on romantic themes, using a set of foot-high, hand-painted paper dolls as actors. A fantasy within a fantasy. The “Nurse Eleanor” paper doll performs as a surrogate self for Nurse Eleanor Antin and is the much put-upon but brave heroine of a succession of romances with a dying poet, a biker, and a doctor.

Part II: “Nurse Eleanor’s” romantic odyssey continues with two new lovers—a French ski bum and an anti-war senator.

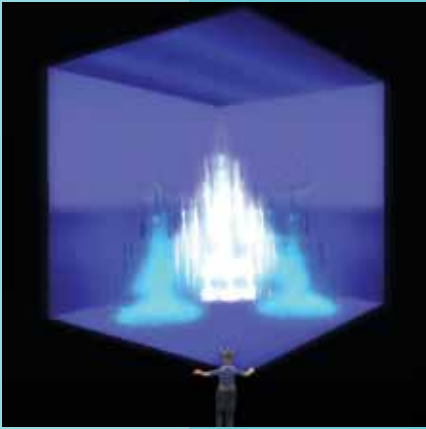


Eleanor Antin *"The Adventures of a nurse (Part I and II),"* 1976.
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.
<http://www.eai.org>.

BIOGRAPHY

Eleanor Antin, who has worked in film, video, photography, installation, writing, and performance since the 1960s, uses fictional characters, autobiography, and narrative to invent histories and explore what she calls, "the slippery nature of the self." In her performance-based video works, Antin uses role-playing and artifice as conceptual devices, adopting archetypal personae—a ballerina, a king, a nurse—in her theatrical dramatizations of identity and representation. Antin lives and works in San Diego, CA.

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From EAI Online Catalogue: <http://www.eai.org>.



Still image courtesy of Jay Van Buren

Concept: Jay Van Buren
Co-Creator: Boris Kizelshteyn
Original Collaborators: Amy Wilson, Don Carroll

Later Collaborators: Noreen Leddy, Beth Harris,
Steven Zucker, Lori Landay, Stacey Fox, Jenna Spevack,
Beth Olds, Karina Mitchell, Bianca Ahmadi, Juan Rubio,
Arahan Claveau

Bloggers and Interns: Cameron Browning,
David James, Diogenes Wylder, Kristin Francoz,
Julie Renee Williams, Kat2 Kit, Elena Levie,
Mab MacMoragh, Misprint Thursday, Kristen Galvin,
Nusch Ray, Rebecca Drysdale, Nicole Sansone,
Seddel Cougar, Shirley Marquez, Strawberry Holiday,
Walter Scott, Wilson Rosario

Artists of Second Life: Glyph Graves, Bryn Oh,
Selavy Oh, Nebulosus Severine,
DanCoyote (aka DC Spensley)
(Selavy's show within a show) Comet Morigi,
Arahan Claveau, Dekka Raymaker,
Oberon Onmura, Misprint Thursday

Brooklyn is
Watching

Conceived by Jay Van Buren and executed as a collaboration with Boris Kizelshteyn and the Popcha! development team in February 2008, *Brooklyn is Watching* was a relational art project that invited interaction between *Second Life* and Williamsburg, Brooklyn, two wildly contrasting art communities. The project consisted of a series of inter-related spaces for artists, audience, and participants. The primary spaces were a square parcel of land (sim) in *Second Life* where artists were invited to leave their work for one week, and an alcove in the Williamsburg art gallery *Jack the Pelican Presents*. In the gallery, the sim could be viewed on a large monitor and entered via Monet Destiny, a large eyeball-shaped avatar wearing a trucker's cap.

Over the course of a year, more than one hundred artists left approximately four hundred works of art on the sim, which resulted in a constantly changing, dynamic, uncurated exhibition space where the nature of the *Second Life* environment allowed artworks to mingle or intentionally intersect. Because so much of the art native to *Second Life* is concerned with defining space, the art itself shaped and reshaped the sim's geography. *Brooklyn is Watching* was perhaps the first *Second Life* project to explicitly focus on the juncture between real and virtual art practices. To accompany this project two forums for online discussion were created and archived at www.brooklyniswatching.com. A blog chronicled and commented on the work, and weekly podcasts were broadcast that invited art historians, gallerists, and critics to discuss the art and the issues it raised. The works represented here are the "Final Five;" footage was created for a finale exhibition in August 2009 that celebrated the first year of the project.¹ 

FINAL FIVE:

Nebulosus Severine, *The Seven Selves*, 2009

Selavy Oh, *The Final Show*, 2009

Glyph Graves, *Urban Renewal*, 2009

Bryn Oh, *Willow*, 2009

DanCoyote Antonelli (aka DC Spensley),

Tower of Light, 2009

¹Parts of the above excerpted from "about BIW by Beth Haris and Steven Zucker"
<http://brooklyniswatching.com/2009/03/06/about-brooklyn-is-watching/>




Being Together, 2010-2012, "Tye Family / Paris / Tanglin"
Fine art archival print, 40 x 60 in. (101.2 x 152.4 cm)

Being Together

In this series, a webcam was used to do a live recording of families in Singapore. The recording was then transmitted via Skype to countries where the main sitters are located and projected onto their living space. This is how families, dis(membered) through time and space, can be re(membered) and made whole again through the use of a third space, a site that is able to reassemble them within the photographic space that we call a family portrait. Drawing upon my own experiences of being separated from my family as a New York-based Singaporean, this work documents and examines our condition of new-wave diaspora—Singaporean families of various races and ethnicities grappling with the same predicament of separation through time and space.

J o h n
C l a n g

BIOGRAPHY

John Clang (born 1973) is a photographer and visual artist. He lives and works in New York City and Singapore. His first exhibition, at 20 years old, was a two person show at the controversial (and now defunct) Singapore art gallery 5th Passage Artists. He has since participated in more than 20 solo and group exhibitions in China, France, Hong Kong, Italy, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States. His artwork is collected by the Singapore Art Museum and private collectors from around the world. In 2010, he became the first (and is still currently the only) photographer to receive the President's Designer of the Year award, the most prestigious design accolade in Singapore. His next solo exhibition will be held at the National Museum of Singapore in early 2013. 

www.clangart.com



Being Together, 2010-2012, "Leong Family / Hong Kong / Ghim Moh"
Fine art archival print, 40 x 60 in. (101.2 x 152.4 cm)



Being Together, 2010-2012, "Lee Family / Tokyo / Punggol"
Fine art archival print, 40 x 60 in. (101.2 x 152.4 cm)



Being Together, 2010-2012, "Ang Family / New York / Tampines"
Fine art archival print, 40 x 60 in. (101.2 x 152.4 cm)

Ferdinand Cooper

Ferdinand Cooper constructed and lived in a shed-sized home (approximately seven feet deep by ten feet wide by seven feet tall). Mr. Cooper never had any plumbing, electricity, real furniture, or other home conveniences—even a door lock and key. What he didn't own, he created. He whittled or otherwise fabricated items from salvaged materials such as tin, iron, wood, screen, and plastic, crafting functional and non-functional replicas of everyday objects.




Ferdinand Cooper's house
Photographs by Lionel Castillo
Courtesy of the Wieland Collection



Interior photograph
Ferdinand Cooper's house
Photograph by J. Micha Entrekin
Courtesy of the Wieland Collection

BIOGRAPHY

Ferdinand Cooper was born in Sanford, FL in 1911. With the exception of leaving for a period of military service during World War II, Mr. Cooper lived in Sanford his entire life and died there in 2008. 



Still from *3 Minute Cinema*, Photograph by Matt Haffner

STATEMENT

For this piece I wanted to employ my love of photography but keep a mixed media approach to making the work. I thought the magical feel of a camera obscura would be a perfect solution. I wanted to create a cinematic piece with movement and a feel similar to video but keep things as analog as possible. Mechanizing a diorama and combining it with the camera obscura challenges ideas of scale and also that of movement. In my work, I like problem solving. This piece provided several challenges that had to be overcome. Often I know what I want a piece to look like or what I want it to do, but then I have to research and figure out ways to make that happen. I'm not an engineer, so things are sometimes backward or poorly designed, but that is an important part of my work. I like the handmade and the home-engineered things that you come across where people make do or figure out new ways simply out of a lack of resources. This is so much more interesting to me than something that is slick and polished and looks mass-produced.



3 Minute Cinema installation view
Photograph by Matt Haffner

Matt Haffner



3 Minute Cinema (detail) 2010
Mixed media 72 x 48 x 48 in. (182.9 x 121.9 x 121.9 cm)
Photograph by Matt Haffner

BIOGRAPHY

Matt Haffner is an Atlanta-based artist and educator. He works in a variety of media including large-scale public works, drawing, painting, photography, video, and installation. His work has been exhibited regionally, nationally, and internationally, and is in a variety of public, corporate, and private collections. Matt is head of the photography department in the School of Art and Design at Kennesaw State University. His work is represented in Atlanta by WhiteSpace Gallery and in Philadelphia by Pentimenti Gallery. MH

www.matthaffner.com

Mark Hogancamp

Marwencol

Mark Hogancamp loved to draw until he lost that ability when five men beat him into a coma outside of a bar in Kingston, New York. This violent incident left Mark with brain damage but not without his imagination. As part of his healing process, he created a one-sixth scale World War II era town in his backyard. The town, Marwencol, is populated by women who come to the rescue of Hogancamp's alter ego—Mark “Hogie” Hogancamp—when his P-40 Warhawk is shot down. The dolls that inhabit the town represent Hogancamp's real-life friends and family, and every detail of the one-sixth scale figures and their surroundings is meticulously calculated, right down to the scar on the right side of Hogie's face (mirroring the injuries that he sustained from the real-life beating) and the wear and tear on a Jeep's tires. This high level of detail and Hogancamp's talent for staging are what draw the viewer to his photographs.


Hogancamp never intended for his photos to be seen by the outside world, let alone displayed in an art gallery; there were no artistic or professional aspirations behind Marwencol or the photographs—he began shooting images of the town with an old Pentax with a broken light meter.¹ Yet, Hogancamp's photos are crisp and emotionally charged, telling stories of wartime struggle in which the good guys (and gals) always emerge victorious.

Hogancamp may have felt helpless on the night that he was beaten, but this is surely not a feeling that he experiences in Marwencol. Out of imagination and a desire to heal, Hogancamp created a safe haven where he is the hero and not the victim. The photographs included in this exhibition clearly capture both Hogancamp's artistry and his triumph over adversity.



Untitled Photograph
4 x 6 in. (10.2 x 15.2 cm)
© Mark Hogancamp
Photo courtesy of One Mile Gallery

BIOGRAPHY

Mark Hogancamp lives and works in New York state. The photographer David Naugle befriended Hogancamp and introduced his work to the art journal *Esopus*, where it was seen by filmmaker Jeff Malmberg. Malmberg's film about Mark Hogancamp and his work, *Marwencol*, debuted in 2010 at the South by Southwest film festival and has since been released on DVD. 

¹Penelope Green, "In a Tiny Universe, Room to Heal," New York Times, 6 Oct. 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/garden/07marwencol.html?pagewanted=all>



Magic, 2010
Archival pigment print
22 x 17 in. (55.9 x 43.2 cm)

B e t h
L i l l y

STATEMENT

In this body of work, I re-enact actual experiences and dreams from my life, selecting actors for the roles from my relatives and friends, each choice adding for me another layer of meaning. Constructed as a serial narrative, each story in the project is comprised of three to four images paired with handwritten text. There is no specific viewing order imposed on the stories. I've constructed the images to interact regardless of sequence. These are not meant to be memoir or autobiography. Instead, I'm framing my real experiences as an exploration of our concepts of reality and the nature of memory and perception. The story is about telling the story.



The Dream of the Red Elephant 1, 2010
Archival pigment print, 17 x 22 in. (43.2 x 55.9 cm)



The Dream of the Red Elephant 2, 2010
Archival pigment print, 17 x 22 in. (43.2 x 55.9 cm)



The Dream of the Red Elephant 3, 2010
Archival pigment print, 17 x 22 in. (43.2 x 55.9 cm)

All images courtesy of the Artist

BIOGRAPHY

Atlanta-based artist Beth Lilly utilizes a wide range of photographic possibilities in her conceptually driven projects. A monograph compiling work from her performance/cell phone art project, *The Oracle @ WiFi*, was published by Kehrer Verlag this year. The Oracle project was also featured in *Noplaceness: Art in a Post-Urban Landscape*, published in 2011. She has shown her work at the New Mexico Museum of Fine Art, the Photographic Resource Center in Boston, The Center for Photography at Woodstock, NY, and Silver Eye Center for Photography, among other institutions. She was awarded Atlanta Celebrates Photography's annual public art grant in 2009. Her work has been reviewed and published in *Fraction Magazine*, *Art Papers*, *Lens Culture*, *The Photo Review*, and more. **BL**

www.bethlilly.com

STATEMENT

One of the profound beauties of light is that it has no visible form until it reflects off an object. That object then becomes its form. An orange, for example, glows with the color for which it is named. It has a life in our eyes that is separate from its physical existence. This is because our eyes can only see a tiny fraction of the light and color that exist all around us. An orange is only orange to humans. We are surrounded at any given moment with streams of light and color that we cannot see. *Unseen* is a way for us to tap into this mystery. Through the use of your mechanical eyes, in the form of your cell phone camera and video or provided lenses, you can glimpse the hidden light in the landscape.






Photograph by Robert Pack



Photograph by Robert Pack

Rebecca
M a k u s

BIOGRAPHY

Rebecca M. K. Makus holds an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts and a BA from Smith College and is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Kennesaw State University. Her work frequently includes custom designed and built light objects that are unique to each production. Her international work includes designs at Lyon Opera Ballet, Nuffield Theatre at Lancaster University, Opera de Monte Carlo, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and Sibiu International Theatre Festival. She has also worked extensively in New York City for over ten years including shows at Lincoln Center, Mint Theatre, Dance New Amsterdam, Dance Theatre Workshop, P.S. 122, HERE Arts Center, and D.R.2 Theatre. 

Joe Peragine



Bear with Reflection, 2012
Oil and acrylic on canvas
66 x 96 in. (167.6 x 243.8 cm)

STATEMENT

Nature Porn is a body of work that looks at the perverse connection between exploration and exploitation. Much of the work in this series is directly inspired by dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History in NYC. I used to visit this museum as a child and was drawn to the dioramas. Returning many years later was interesting. Their aesthetic appeal had not diminished, but, informed by years of skepticism, I saw them as pornographic. By that I mean the dioramas were beautiful, idealized landscapes with perfect specimens. And similar to pornography, they were exploitative. The museum claims that the endeavor of creating the dioramas was a way of educating the public and acting as stewards of the environment, but even when they were made in the 1930s and 40s the animals and environments were in peril. Yet, the stewards went out and bagged the biggest and best specimens for display. The irony, what I hope is evident in the work, is that despite my aversion to the method of creating the dioramas, I do love these displays.



Polar Bear, 2010
Oil and acrylic on canvas
66 x 96 in. (167.6 x 243.8 cm)



Wapiti, 2010
Oil and acrylic on canvas
48 x 56 in. (121.9 x 142.2 cm)

All images courtesy of the Artist

BIOGRAPHY

Joe Peragine is an Atlanta-based artist and educator who works in a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, and animation. In 2002 his public art project entitled “Brute Neighbors” at Atlanta’s Hartsfield International Airport was a winner of the Atlanta Urban Design Award of Excellence. Other public art commissions include paintings for the Omni Hotel in St. Louis and Wolfson’s Children’s Hospital in Jacksonville, FL. In addition to his public art works, he has exhibited works regionally, nationally, and internationally. Honors include being invited to travel to Beijing, China to exhibit work and participate in the Art and Science International Exhibition and Symposium at the National Art Museum. Peragine is an Associate Professor of Drawing, Painting, and Printmaking at Georgia State University. 

www.josephperagine.com



House

Collection of childhood photographs, newspaper clipping, photo frames, and digital documentation of performance.
2011


House

House is a collection of images that document my childhood home at different points in my life. Each printed image has a corresponding digital partner that emphasizes the relationship between me and the setting and reveals the passage of time. The short videos also align old with new. The newspaper clipping of our foreclosure is dry and informational in tone, standing in sharp contrast to the intimate and emotional nature of the photographs and the event itself.

When my father and I were forced to move from our home in the Fall of 2010, I sought to reconcile the gap between the physical and emotional circumstances. The resulting piece is a reflection of my relationship with the house as it stood empty. The collection is intended to simultaneously provoke a sense of intense individuality and complete anonymity. It is a celebration of this house from several angles: the house as a home, the house as a commodity, the house as a measure of time, the house as a hollow shell. Every state of it is equally precious and worth being shared.

R y a n P e t t y

BIOGRAPHY

Ryan Petty is a recent graduate from the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art program at Georgia State University. Born and raised in Cobb County, she has lived in Georgia for her entire life. Her work is conceptual, performative, and includes found objects, personal artifacts, and original works in multiple mediums. 



House

Collection of childhood photographs, newspaper clipping, photo frames, and digital documentation of performance.

2011

All images courtesy of the Artist

A d a m
P a r k e r
S m i t h

STATEMENT

Conflating painting with sculpture, and mass-produced objects and imagery with high-art conventions, I form visual paradoxes and parodies to create visual tableaux and phenomenon that are isolated from the everyday and glorified. In this installation, the greatly enlarged pattern emulates a traditional wallpaper motif and is articulated with an array of plastic flowers and fruit, varnished baked goods, wrapped hard candies, small paper umbrellas, and costume jewelry. While the materials allude to opulence, they are purchased inexpensively at a dollar store. There is cheery hopefulness to the arrangement that suggests both optimism in the midst of hard times and the absurdity of keeping up a good facade.




This Side of Paradise (I Lost All My Money in the Great Depression and All I Got Was This Room),
2012

Mixed media wall treatment
Photographs by Adam Parker Smith



BIOGRAPHY

Adam Parker Smith is a New York City-based multidisciplinary artist. He received his BA from the University of California at Santa Cruz and his MFA from Tyler School of Art. Smith has attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, LMCC Swing Space, Triangle Arts, Wave Hill, Sculpture Space, Bemis, Djerassi, Jentel, and Atlantic Center for the Arts. His work has been shown widely in the United States as well as internationally at Urbis, Manchester, England; Nordine Zidoun, Luxembourg; The Delaware Center for Contemporary Art;

Berkshire Museum, Massachusetts; Soap Factory, Minneapolis; Painted Bride, Philadelphia; Parisian Laundry, Montreal; The Times Museum, Guangzhou, China; Galerie Sho, Tokyo; and the Maraya Art Centre in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. Smith's work has been written about in *New York Times*, *Art in America*, *Beautiful Decay*, *The Village Voice*, *Fiber Arts*, *ArtForum.com*, *Art World*, *White Wall Magazine*, and *The New York Post*. 

www.adamparkersmith.com

STATEMENT

"I have always been a curious person, and my parents encouraged that. Even as a boy I had a small microscope and a telescope. With these I experimented and discovered the world." Marc Steinmetz has since adopted a digital camera as his principal tool of investigation, and in 1999 he focused his lens on escape tools made by prisoners in the German corrections system. He visited several prisons where wardens showed him all of the illicit objects that had been confiscated from inmates over the years. When it came to deciding which tools he would photograph, Steinmetz chose some for their intelligent design and ingenuity while others were selected for their absurdity and seeming lack of functionality. The inmates who were skilled enough to craft these tools could use them not only as a possible means of escape but also as currency within the prison walls, trading the objects for money, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and possibly even for protection. Although the tools achieve varying degrees of success in mimicking the form and function of their real counterparts, each of the objects was created out of a desire to be liberated from the constraints of prison life.

M a r c
Steinmetz



Shotgun, 1999, C-Print
16 x 24 in. (40.6 x 60.9 cm)




Dummy Pistol, 1999, C-Print
16 x 24 in. (40.6 x 60.9 cm)



Radio Transmitter, 1999, C-Print
16 x 24 in. (40.6 x 60.9 cm)

BIOGRAPHY

Marc Steinmetz was born in Düsseldorf, Germany in 1964. He received training in graphic design in Munich and worked for several years as a graphic designer and art director. Since 1996, however, Steinmetz has dedicated himself to freelance photography, focusing his work in the areas of reportage and science and technology. The photographer is represented by VISUM agency in Hamburg. He has received numerous awards for his photography, including three World Press Photo prizes, three *Wissenschaft Visuell* prizes, two *Bilder der Forschung* prizes, and a German Award for Science Photography. In addition to prison escape tools, his photographic subjects have included plastination of corpses; Karakorum, Mongolia (ancient capital of Genghis Khan's empire); the manufacturing of artificial eyes; and the USS *John C. Stennis* aircraft carrier. Steinmetz currently lives in Hamburg, Germany but photographs all over the globe. 

www.marcsteinmetz.com

Fursuit Portrait Paint-Offs

Interview between
Jay Van Buren (JVB) and Kirstie Tepper (KT), 2012

KT: Who is this fursuiter?

JVB: He is a furry named Pistol Pup and the suit is named “Stanton Coyote” (many fursuiters have a furry name that they use within the fandom and then the suit has it’s own name too). He works in technology and lived in Kansas City at the time. I stayed with him over a weekend and painted the painting in his basement.

KT: So a fursuiter could identify with multiple fur-sonalities?

JVB: Yes, some do. There’s quite a variety of attitudes about this out there. I’ve met fursuiters who have only one suit, would never have another, and say that the suit represents their “true self” and that they are more themselves in-suit than they are out. On the other extreme, I’ve met people who say it’s “just a hobby” and might go to one event in one suit and another in a different one, changing it up as easily as someone else might change clothes. And, of course, there’s everything in between.

KT: Can you talk about the act of painting a fur suit portrait? How do you think about these portraits in terms of your own practice and body of work?

JVB: I used to make paintings that were about trying to justify or rationalize my love of painting, but at some point I realized there’s just nothing rational about it—I just love to paint—so I see the fur suit portraits as the evidence of an encounter between two people (a painter and a fursuiter) doing something that’s a little bit silly for no better reason than because they love to do it. I don’t do any preparatory sketches and I always work from life and just jump in; the fun for me is in not knowing exactly how it’s going to come out and just reacting to what I’m seeing.

KT: How did this series of work evolve? And how do you balance the representation of the fursuit and its suiter?

JVB: I started out doing paintings of stuffed animals, and then moved to painting fursuiters. I try to paint what I’m seeing—both the suit and the human I know is inside. We talk as I’m working and get to know each other. Somehow, something of the person inside the suit comes through in the painting.

KT: One of your other recent projects is also represented in this exhibition: *Brooklyn is Watching*. Did the substitute reality created by *Second Life* play into how you approached this piece (or these pieces)?

JVB: There’s definitely a relationship between them: the realization that I’m a painting-nut and that the fine art world is a small, marginalized sub-culture made me interested in other kinds of nuts and other kinds of sub-cultures, like the furry fandom and the world of *Second Life*. I enjoy bringing people from different subcultures into contact with each other in a way that acknowledges their real differences but is fun for everyone.



Stanton Coyote with Jay Van Buren.
2007.

J a y V a n B u r e n

KT: Do you think that your subjects see these portraits as their true likenesses?

JVB: Some of them do. For many of them they also recognize and appreciate that by painting the suit as it looks rather than painting an idealized version of the fursona (which is what most furry art does), the painting ends up being partially about the tension between who they are trying to be and who they are, which for me becomes a metaphor for that aspect in all of us.



Stanton Coyote
2007
72 x 60 in.
(182.9 x 152.4 cm)
Courtesy of the Artist

I think all of us sometimes long to be more than or other than we are. Also, they all have really enjoyed being painted; traditionally you paint portraits of people that are important, so this project is a way of honoring what these people are doing. They are doing something they know everyone thinks is pretty much the dorkiest thing ever, and they don't care; they are doing it anyway because they love it no matter what anyone thinks. To me that's the human spirit at its best.

BIOGRAPHY

Jay Van Buren is an artist and designer living and working in Brooklyn, New York. He has been an artist, curator, teacher, and writer in the New York art scene since 1997. He was the founder and director of the legendary Videoland gallery on Manhattan's Lower East Side, and his artworks have been exhibited in Kansas City, New York, Washington, D.C., Amsterdam, and Rotterdam. His recent artworks and events create encounters between people from radically different subcultures.

www.jayvanburen.com

James VanDerZee

James VanDerZee opened his studio in Harlem, New York in 1912. By the 1920s he was the photographer of choice for Harlem's most distinguished residents.¹

Transformations occur in VanDerZee's portraits. In the introduction to "Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America," Mary Schmidt Campbell describes the careful balance of pride and carefully-constructed artifice.² The artifice, though, is a sincere but obviously substituted reality. By maintaining a supply of props, costumes, furnishings, and backdrops, VanDerZee provided this artifice with varying degrees of subtlety, while always depicting the sitter in such a way as to expose the pride from within.

In addition to photographing public events, meetings, and other organizational activities for Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), VanDerZee's role as the organization's official photographer³ also included bringing its members into his studio to have their portraits made. The image shown here is one such portrait (Figure 1). Further reinforcing the domestic setting is the loyal (though not real) family dog at the young boy's feet.



Figure 1. A member of Garvey's African Legion with his family, 1924
Gelatin silver print
9 1/2 x 7 3/4 in. (24.1 x 19.7 cm)



Figure 2. Future expectations (Wedding Day), 1926
Gelatin silver print
6 1/2 x 4 1/2 in. (16.5 x 11.4 cm)

In Future Expectations (Wedding Day) (Figure 2), a young couple poses in the glow of a painted canvas fireplace.⁴ This backdrop appears in a number of VanDerZee's portraits, for instance, this "fire" also provides "warmth" for *Nude*, 1923 (in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art). The silhouette of the young girl playing with her doll in the foreground of the portrait predicts the future of the couple.



Figure 3. Man with cane wearing white suit with dark lapel and derby hat, 1929
9 3/8 x 6 7/8 in. (23.8 x 17.5 cm)

Images courtesy of the James VanDerZee Photograph Collection, Archives Division, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System

The painted backdrop, visible in both *A member of Garvey's African Legion with his family* and *Man with cane wearing white suit with dark lapel and derby hat*, (Figure 3), is another example of how VanDerZee altered the studio environment and mixed truth with fiction. VanDerZee commonly manipulated his negatives to create photomontages. This technique added depth to an already detailed narrative, which VanDerZee personalized for each of his clients while also reinforcing his own view of his community. **KT**

¹Deborah Willis-Braithwaite. *VanDerZee, Photographer: 1886-1983*. (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 8.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, 11

⁴The backdrop was painted by VanDerZee and Eddie Elcha, who was also a Harlem photographer.

Collections & Films

Ére Ibeji

For the Yoruba of Nigeria, multiple births are revered, and the death of one or more of the children is marked with particular significance. Upon the death of a twin, the soul of the deceased child is understood to inhabit a designated wooden figure that is created in the likeness of a mature adult. This memorial, the *ére ibeji*, is one of the measures taken to nurture the spirit of the deceased twin that, in death, becomes a minor deity (Figure 1). Honoring and caring for these *ére ibeji* ensures that the child's spirit will live a full life in its next incarnation. While this practice continues today, Yoruba who have converted to Islam or Christianity have updated this tradition to avoid the use of carved figures by replacing them with factory produced dolls (Figure 2) or photographs.

Photographic versions of *ére ibeji* depict a surviving triplet in the role of all three siblings, an illusion made complete through photographic manipulation of the negative. In this case the photograph not only replaces the traditional carved figure, but also the living sibling becomes a substitute for his/her deceased triplets.

The same is also true for the red and green dolls (Figure 2). Just as the photograph assumes the role of the carved figure, these factory-made plastic dolls represent a similar double substitution: they are used in lieu of the traditional carved figures whose original purpose was to embody and honor the spirit of the deceased twin. **KT**



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1. Twin Memorial Figures (Ere Ibeji)
Nigeria, West Africa. Early 20th century CE. Wood, pigment
12 x 3 1/4 x 2 3/4 in. (30.5 x 8.3 x 7 cm), 11 1/2 x 3 1/4 x 3 1/4 in.
(29.2 x 8.3 x 8.3 cm) © Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University.
Photograph by Bruce M. White, 2010.

Figure 2. Ibeji Dolls
Yoruloa peoples: Nigeria, West Africa. N.d. Plastic, metal
9.8 x 3.5 x 2.9 in. (25 x 9 x 7.5 cm)
Fowler Museum at UCLA.
Photograph by Denis Nervig

Flat Daddy



Devin and Dylan Winter with
Heroes on a Stick of their parents
Photo by Nara Garber

Only 1% of Americans currently serve in the U.S. Military, and their families have borne the disproportionate burden of more than a decade at war. Many have turned to “Flat Daddies” and “Heroes on a Stick,” life-sized cardboard cutouts of their husbands, wives, parents, and children serving overseas, to ease the pain of repeated deployments. Using these two-dimensional surrogates as a connecting thread, *Flat Daddy* follows four very different families from Minnesota, Las Vegas, the Bronx, and Maine over the course of a year to explore the lasting impact of the war on those left behind.

Flat Daddy had an Advance Screening at the GI Film Festival and celebrated its sold out World Premiere at the DOC NYC Film Festival at Manhattan’s Independent Film Channel Center in November 2011. *Variety* noted that the film “offers a unique perspective on the cost of war,” and the *Military Times* wrote that “*Flat Daddy* is an intimate portrait of the sacrifice and struggle of those left behind... an embed into the living room trenches and bedroom bunkers where real life must somehow continue.” *Flat Daddy* has since screened at the Atlanta and Montclair Film Festivals and recently embarked on a series of community engagement screenings designed to raise awareness of the challenges faced by military families during and after deployment. For more information and to find out how to bring *Flat Daddy* to your community, please visit www.flatdaddydocumentary.com.

Make Believe



Hiroki Hara

Make Believe follows six teens who all share an extraordinary passion: the art of magic. Armed with great skill and a dazzling array of illusions, they embark from around the world to attend the World Magic Seminar in Las Vegas. There, they hope to be crowned Teen World Champion by Master Magician Lance Burton.

Onstage, the film’s subjects are remarkably assured and dedicated. Offstage, however, these young outsiders confront the diverse obstacles of adolescence, turning *Make Believe* into an inspiring coming of age story. With great humor, honesty, and heart, *Make Believe* reveals an enduring world audiences know little about while exploring a time of life no one ever forgets.

Courtesy of Firefly: Theater and Films
www.makebelievefilm.com

Marwencol

Marwencol is a documentary about the fantasy world of Mark Hogancamp.

After being beaten into a brain-damaging coma by five men outside a bar, Mark builds a one sixth scale World War II-era town in his backyard. Mark populates the town he dubs “*Marwencol*” with dolls representing his friends and family and creates life-like photographs detailing the town’s many relationships and dramas. Playing in the town and photographing the action helps Mark to recover his hand-eye coordination and deal with the psychological wounds of the attack. When Mark and his photographs are discovered, a prominent New York alternative space, White Columns, sets up an art show. Suddenly Mark’s homemade therapy is deemed “art,” forcing him to choose between the safety of his fantasy life in *Marwencol* and the real world that he’s avoided since the attack.



The beautiful but deadly women of *Marwencol*.
Photograph by Mark E. Hogancamp.
Courtesy of The Cinema Guild.


Marwencol was released theatrically by the Cinema Guild and aired on PBS. It has won over twenty five awards, including two Independent Spirit Awards, Best Documentary of the Year from the Boston Society of Film Critics and Rotten Tomatoes, and the Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary at the South by Southwest Film Festival. *The Los Angeles Times* calls the film “an exhilarating, utterly unique experience” while the *Village Voice* says that it’s “exactly the sort of mysterious and almost holy experience you hope to get from documentaries and rarely do.”

Marwencol is now available on DVD, Blu-Ray, Netflix, and iTunes.

Courtesy of the Cinema Guild
www.marwencol.com

Dressing up like Indians Collection of Anonymous Photographs




These photographs of non-Native American men, women, and children dressed in some form of Native American costuming or regalia were collected over several years and reflect the owner's personal interest in the idea of "playing" Indian. This practice has been in evidence in the United States and parts of Europe (particularly in Germany) since the founding of this country. The historian Philip Deloria, in his 1998 study of this phenomenon, observes that Indian-ness has been reinterpreted to meet the circumstances of the times; from the Boston Tea Party rebels who dressed as Indians to identify with notions of freedom and difference from the British, to the Cold War interest in defining American-ness.¹ These underlying political agendas were informed and perpetuated in American culture through the influence and popularity of late 19th century dime novels; early 20th century silent movies that featured cowboy and Indian tales; and the hippie movement, green party, and spaghetti westerns of the 1960s. Camp Fire Girls, Boy Scouts, numerous summer camps, *Sky King*, Roy Rogers, and more instilled a longing for the Wild West that emerged in countless ways across generations. Deloria writes that playing Indian evoked a desire for disguise, an attraction for the primitive, natural world, and a uniquely American form of war games. Whatever drove individual choice to play dress up as an Indian warrior or squaw, these photographs reveal a small sample of this prevailing interest. 

Swedes (Sweded Films)

Be Kind Rewind

Sweded films originated with the 2008 comedy film *Be Kind Rewind*. The movie follows a video store clerk and his friend who are faced with remaking a series of popular movies when all of the VHS tapes in the store are erased. The protagonists claim that their low-budget, low-tech versions are from Sweden (hence the name "sweded") as an explanation for why it takes so long to stock new films in the store and why the rental costs have risen. With no money and a major time crunch, the two make their swedes with a basic camcorder and whatever props they have at hand. Their shoestring versions are made without computer-generated special effects, and sounds are also created without the help of a computer. The results are undeniably funny. Since the release of *Be Kind Rewind*, sweded films have started popping up all over the Internet as people post their homemade interpretations of well-known movies on sites like YouTube.

The sweded films included in this exhibition were selected from a large pool of submissions and all share a Southern flavor that comes from characters, narrative, place, or subject. The selected films also stay true to the hallmarks of the genre in that they are short, no-frills versions of full-length movies. Even though they are highly condensed versions of the originals, the swedes still manage to be recognizable knockoffs of their big-budget counterparts. We applaud the swede makers for their creativity, resourcefulness, and sense of humor. 

¹ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998).

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