

# ARTFORUM

SEPTEMBER 2004

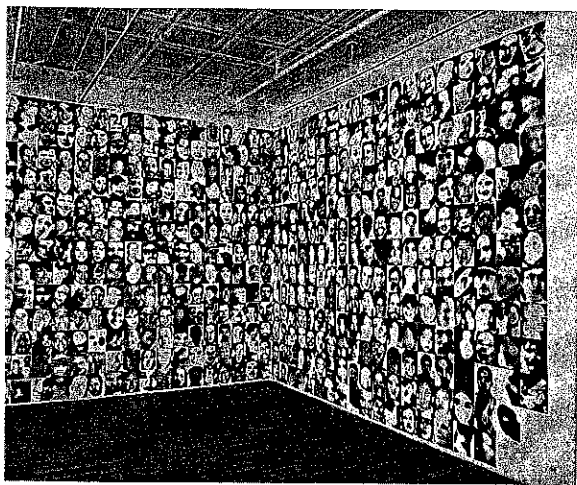
I N T E R N A T I O N A L



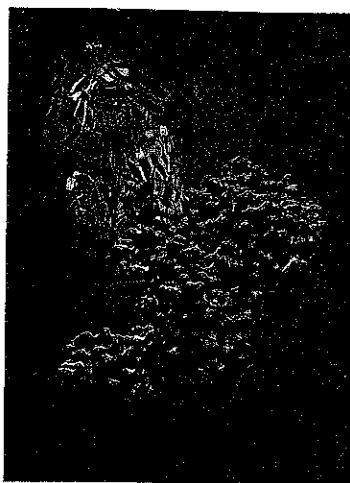
**FALL PREVIEW**  
50 SHOWS WORLDWIDE

**THE  
POLITICAL  
SEASON**  
ARTISTS RESPOND





Motta, *Pesca Milagrosa*, 2002-2004, ink-jet prints and map pins, 13 x 25'.  
From "Establishing Shot."



Ellen Sandor and Keith Miller of (art)n with Matthew Franklin, *Omnitarg: Hope*, 2003, PHSCologram, Duratrans, Kodalith film, and Plexiglas, 40 x 30". From "The Art of Science."

els. Here, Morgan herself as the bride rather a white bridal uniform. Her later works dominated by lively staccato over subsequent shift in mode of expression active years, renounced author-a divine source for This exhibition ting Morgan's claim a patronizing dis- honors her as a con-

—Jennifer P. Borum

## IG SHOT"

lishing shot" refers ice of a scene, the orient the audience it events. Often a long shot, it sets a, and mood of what ing a crucial—if often or otherwise)—rence. At once an possibilities and a limit possibilities might sumably intelligible illy only legible rarrative sequence. stablish much at all. ," Christian atorial gambit at his definition to thcoming season

through the work of ten artists who underscore the potential incompatibility between a work's formal structure and its thematic points of reference. But what was on offer was really more a tracking shot than an establishing shot, including artists who are more often midcareer than emerging. Familiar names Liam Gillick, Douglas Gordon, Carsten Höller, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija collaborated on their own cinematic excursion via the deliciously ambiguous dialogue and character morphing of *Vicinato*, 1995 (which Höller, Parreno, and Tiravanija produced), and *Vicinato 2*, 1999 (which brought together all six artists), while Blake Rayne rethought and recoded a history of modernist painting, reaffirming its viability in works like the saturated and facture-laden, if oddly stark, *No More Winter, We Are Tired of Your Free Coffee*, 2003, and Dee Williams investigated the limits of order and rationality in constructions of history in a series of photo-and-text works documenting streets in Berlin named after natural scientists.

In the case of Gareth James's sculpture of the mythical European curator and color theorist Storm van Helsing, the artist's first attempt at a portrait of his quixotic alter ego, we gain insight into the stakes of that which is purportedly being "established" (or, better, refused), as his portrait is marked precisely by its shifting, indeterminate quality. Nothing more than some clothes dangling from the ceiling, the work is a canny placeholder to be variously inhabited by freewheeling acts of association and identification. As a disarmingly productive instance of conceptual displacement, it necessarily opens onto

the notion of the artist as a fictional or fictionalized construction, here conceived not as a latter-day Rose Sélavy but as a strangely anonymous site of cultural and social production.

It is perhaps in the work of Carlos Motta that the show's theme is best articulated. Converging in a corner and fanning back out across two large walls, Motta's epic *Pesca Milagrosa*, 2002-2004, comprises digitally altered ink-jet prints of more than five hundred missing Colombians downloaded from the Internet and positioned to form a massive Day-Glo grid. Themes as diverse as kidnapping in Latin America (the title, which translates, roughly, as "catching fish," is taken from the motorway barricades erected by Colombian guerrillas to stop and capture passersby) and the status of the documentary in the age of global information and omnipresent manipulation surface and disappear into the same hazy, attenuated abstractions from which they emerged. The grid itself tapers off at its bottom right corner, signaling its deferred completion. Cold, neutral, resigned? Culpable, engaged, alarmed? If we are to take seriously the show's conceit, it may be too soon to tell.

—Suzanne Hudson

## "THE ART OF SCIENCE"

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

In light of recent art-historical obsessions with technology, information theory, vision, and modes of attention—not to mention our acute cultural preoccupation with all things scientific—it is perhaps

unsurprising that the ICP has devoted a number of shows to such topical themes. Eugenics, genetics, and the discovery of DNA all figured prominently in past installments of its five-show series "Imaging the Future: The Intersection of Science, Technology, and Photography," curated by Carol Squiers. Even so, this final show managed to astonish in a way that its predecessors did not. Tucked away in the institution's lower rear gallery, "The Art of Science" would have been better and more suitably installed in a Big Pharma lobby. To be sure, the art of science here looked a lot like propaganda.

Disavowing a *Mr. Wizard's World* amateur ethos for the expert status of corporate biotech, the show's light boxes and LCD and plasma screens, which displayed positron-emission tomography (PET) scans, functional magnetic-resonance imaging (MRI), and computer displays of mutated cells, constituted a biomedical son et lumière. As the introductory wall label trumpeted: Life, which is to say the genetic code, "can now be reduced to pixels and processed as data." Spectacular data were thus ubiquitous, but inferences were far from transparent. As the larger interpretive frameworks from which data were extracted were not invoked in a detailed way, the often stunning images were radically decontextualized, hovering in an uncanny hyperreality of crystalline screens and flaunting a renegade pictorialism of new technology cleaved from manifest content. Science here becomes a mode not of evaluation or even of illustration—of an idea or experiment or functional network—but of paratactic representation.

If the show's premise was to highlight the range of aestheticized image worlds that scientists construct to elucidate or communicate otherwise opaque findings, its objectives were undercut by a lack of clarity. Even in the case of the explicitly didactic works contributed by (art)n, a collaborative group of artists and scientists, lucidity became dangerously inextricable from publicity for a drug (currently in clinical trials) that explicitly prompted their participation. Inspired by a new anticancer treatment called Omnitarg, three spectral light boxes emblazoned with images of tumors superimposed on photographs (two of which were by Man Ray, one depicting Francis Picabia) seemed a particularly odd endeavor. Stranger still, in relation to another work that used dyed fluorescent antibody molecules to examine the cellular response to sudden environmental changes (in temperature, salinity, pH, and so on), the press release invoked not cellular biology

but 9/11 as the determinant referent, explaining that “stress” has lately become a hot research topic, perversely reading cellular research as a cultural pathology.

This non sequitur brought us to the unwitting crux of the show: the palpable attempt to bring the art of science back to the stuff of the body while making it strange and even beautiful. Magnifications of microscopic scenes turn cells into nebulae and objects into luminous abstractions, disorienting already-unmoored imagery through transformations of scale and dissolutions of inside and out. For all the show’s lip service to this effect, positivistic science this is not. Bodies are resolutely foreign rather than knowable (a point once emphatically made in the yawning orifices surveyed in Mona Hatoum’s panoptic video-installation chamber *Corps étranger*, 1994), opening onto questions of literal body politics and what might prove to be more than metaphoric.

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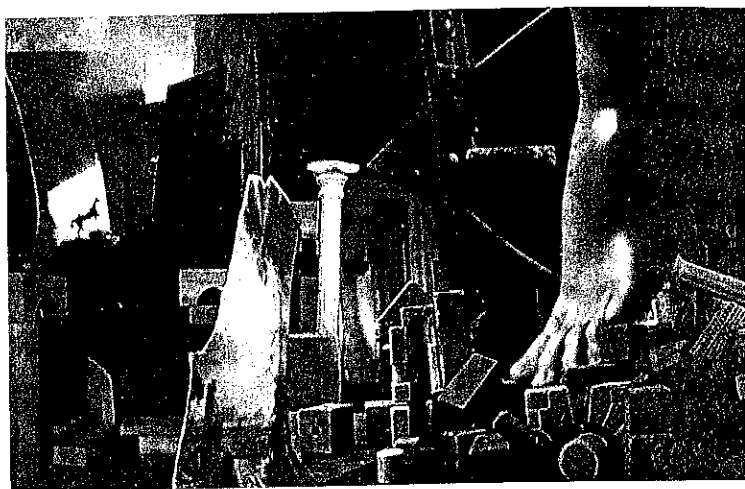
## BOSTON

## JOHN O'REILLY

HOWARD YEZERSKI GALLERY

Miniaturist John O'Reilly has been constructing montages since the late '60s, creating photographic tableaux from pictures and props that he reassembles into complex worlds that are always poetic and intimate. The black-and-white Polaroid montages in the series “Panoramas,” 2002–2004, average only about four or five inches in height but stretch up to twenty-three inches across, establishing a cinematic space. Using an uncoated film that allows him more time to compose the assemblages, O'Reilly's pasted-together photographs unite allusive narrative in cubistic space. These sixteen works are characterized by dynamic surfaces, meticulous craftsmanship, and an improvisational quality. The seventy-four-year-old O'Reilly, whose themes are art, war, and death, uses a simple vintage camera, scissors, ink, and paste to produce multilayered work.

Many of O'Reilly's favored cast of characters—which includes Britten, Corot, Muybridge, Nijinsky, and Velázquez—crop up again here. He also continues to employ images of his own studio interior and the miscellany of small objects to be found there. His cutout protagonists are often partial, ripped, and torn ghosts of earlier works and are dwarfed by their natural or architectural settings.

John O'Reilly, *Blocks 1-12-04*, Polaroid montage, 5 1/4 x 10 3/4".

As the artifice of montage becomes apparent, O'Reilly leaves the studio to weave through forests and gardens, the photographed view from his urban Worcester, Massachusetts, studio as a reminder of quotidian reality. Incongruities of scale and the varying rhythms of light give these panoramas a mythic feel and illusory appearance.

“Orpheus Suite,” 2002–2003, is dedicated to the mythological poet and musician who, although torn apart by Dionysus’s maenads, lives, according to O'Reilly, “in the sound of forests, rivers, winds, and the voice of the arts.” O'Reilly mimics Orpheus’s fate in six patched-together montages, equating the tranquility of the forest with the quiet of the studio. In *Orpheus Suite #28, 1-26-03*, the graceful arm of a dancer (taken from an image of Nijinsky) grows like a branch from a Brueghel painting of a tree (suggesting crucifixion and regeneration) and is transformed into Orpheus. He inhabits a studio that becomes a forest, while a tiny goat (borrowed from a Muybridge image and representing Dionysus) overlooks an Edenic landscape from the vantage point of a cardboard bridge. This suite of montages is intended to “suggest music through dance-like rhythm across the surface, shifting swings into and out of background space, and individually placed movements,” and succeeds in creating its own serene, shadowy world.

A more bellicose realm is presented in the apocalyptic *Muybridge in a War Torn Interior, 5-2-03*. Next to a huge pile of crumpled paper “rubble” strewn with toy soldiers, an elderly Muybridge contemplates the horrors of war. Heavenly light

penetrates a hollowed-out building fashioned from the empty pages of a Victor album, as the valet from *Las Meninas* bears witness to the destruction of this miniature civilization.

Veiled autobiographical references to O'Reilly's only visible presence in his new work occurs in *Old Albums, 2-9-04*, a memorial to his recently deceased younger sister. The image of a woman cut from an early-twentieth-century photo album, represents his sister, sitting on a pile of aged albums, while the gothic hand of the artist reaches down to show her a photograph of a young man with a dog. A stone archway leads us from nostalgic memories of the studio to the reality of telephone wires, a pavement, and a house across the street. This image is the most personal of the exhibition, conveying the relationship of the artist and his sister without picturing them directly, and evoking the passage of life and time.

As O'Reilly busies himself creating photographic stage sets for the dear subjects of the past, he makes colossal universal statements. Oppositions of inside and outside, war and peace, life and death: Apollonian and Dionysian are questioned but not all resolved, in these immaculately fabricated worlds.

—Francine Koslow

### “POSSESSED” WESTERN BRIDGE

The conceit of “Possessed”—the overlap between the things that we own and things that own us—is a common-en-