

Holly Zausner, A Small Criminal Enterprise @Postmasters

By Loring Knoblauch / In Galleries / July 13, 2012

JTF (just the facts): A total of 20 photographic works and 1 film, generally framed in white and unmatted, and hung in the entry area, the front and back gallery spaces, and the studio area. The super 16mm film, entitled Unseen, has a running time roughly 17 minutes and is available in an edition of 5+2AP; it was made in 2007. The other works are unique photo collages constructed from images/stills from the film, each collage made between 2009 and 2012. Physical dimensions range from 15x20 to 60x90 (or reverse). There are 18 single work collages and 1 diptych on view. (Installation shots at right.)



Comments/Context: The large photographic image made up of thousands of tiny images as stand ins for pixels has now become a digital era cliché. While countless artists have explored this approach (Rashid Rana and Alex Guofeng Cao are just two of many), the juxtaposed ironies of this method have now become too obvious and predictable; the novelty has worn off and I'm sure it will only be a matter of time before a software filter will exist to turn family snapshots into my own personal digital mosaics. With the inevitable dumbing down of this trend running as backdrop, Holly Zausner's shrewd new photo collages come as even more of a surprise.

The best way to comprehend this show is to start with the short film running on a video screen in the back room. In it, Zausner drags oversized elongated alien-looking bodies (alternately in blue and yellow) through the wide streets of Berlin, her heels clicking rhythmically as she wanders through empty sidewalks and seemingly abandoned train stations, carefully cradling the heads of her soft passengers. Her ceaseless travels take her to a decaying amusement park (toppled dinosaurs, rusty roller coasters), factories churning out newspapers and loaves of bread, and the sculpture garden of the Neue Nationalgalerie, where a menacing tiger inexplicably prowls among the reflecting pools and the hedges. Her ultimate destination is a quiet room filled with Baroque statues at the Bode Museum, where she is finally able to deposit her cargo, the blue form splayed on the floor in well deserved rest.

Starting with film stills and images from this stylized performance (in both positive and negative, black and white and color), she proceeds to do just the opposite of all the other digital stitchers: she doesn't collage them into some larger recognizable image which we will find clever, but instead arranges them into increasingly abstract compositions that swirl and stutter like static. In fact, she actually meticulously pastes them together image by image, foregoing the simplicity of scans for the hand craftedness of highly organized grids. The most logical antecedent here is really Ray Metzker's masterful composites, although Zausner seems more interested in allowing the underlying images to devolve into something illegible. In some cases, her large abstractions are found to be made of photographic blurs and smears of color, frustrating our ability to connect the intention back to the original film.

What we're left with is an open-ended, metaphorical story that then becomes even more obscure as it is translated into skittering, all-over collages. The works don't converge toward an overly simple reading, but instead diverge into something diffuse and fractal. It's as if the farther we delve into Zausner's symbolic narrative, the more it reveals itself as unknowable.

Collector's POV: The collages in this show are priced based on size, as follows.

15x20: \$3500 each

20x30: \$5000

20x30 diptych: \$6000

40x60 (or reverse): \$15000 each

60x90 (or reverse): \$25000 each

The film is priced at \$15000. Zausner's work has very little secondary market history, so gallery retail likely remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.