

ARTFORUM

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

THE ROLLING STONES IN FILM

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DAVID WEISS: A PORTFOLIO



given a different surface treatment—marble, wood grain, chrome—but is otherwise akin to a newly manufactured showroom dummy in its smoothed-over, rounded-off featurelessness. The sound track is a compilation of short, Muzak-like instrumental themes that, while supposedly describing a spectrum of moods, rapidly collapse into the same homogeneity as the visuals. The work is profoundly wearying, yet hard to turn away from.

Magic Hands and *De-Employed* utilize similarly debased lexicons. In the former, a pair of white-gloved conjuror's hands repeatedly clasp and unclasp, each motion revealing a new object, image, or effect that hovers in space until replaced by the next in a seemingly endless sequence. In the latter, Bell-Smith's animation technique reaches some sort of technical apex, as an array of off-the-shelf special effects end every bit of programmed or found footage in a fanciful explosion or screen wipe. There are also subtitles of a sort, a sequence of words that gradually form what might be song lyric mash-ups (EVERYDAY READ THE PAPER CAN RIP IT UP AND START AGAIN). Again, each frame lasts only a few seconds before it is displaced.

Other artists before Bell-Smith have, of course, explored the landscape of boredom. But even if his work is finally just an update, it remains a useful addition to the canon. Itself resistant to "expression," it functions as a weirdly compelling survey of defunct motifs that somehow stagger on, zombie-like, despite their thorough absorption into the rootless, soulless culture of commerce. There's an energy to the videos that is irresistible in its sheer relentlessness, even as they worry at our unfulfilled expectation of a wonderful wizard behind the screen.

—Michael Wilson

Dennis Adams

KENT FINE ART

For his forty-two-minute-long video *Malraux's Shoes*, 2012, artist Dennis Adams disguises himself as André Malraux, a novelist, art historian, and politician who is known in part for his concept of the "museum without walls." Malraux famously realized this museum in *The Imaginary Museum of World Sculpture* (1952–54), a three-volume cornucopia of reproductions of works of art from all cultures, a virtuoso demonstration of heterogeneity in art—deliriously varied and infinitely extendable. The museum-as-archive brings to mind T. S. Eliot's line in *The Waste Land* (1922): "These fragments I have shored against my ruins"—for archives, after all, are a kind of ruin. They remind us that all we have left when time has done its dirty work are a few memories, and flawed ones at that, because reproductions are hardly adequate to the real thing.

Adams's video, itself a reproduction, is based on the iconic photograph of Malraux that appears in *The Imaginary Museum of World Sculpture*, in which the Frenchman stands over an array of photographic plates like a god or caesar deciding their fate—whether they should survive, if only in the meager form of a photograph or in the amphitheater of the book, or disappear into oblivion. Like the photo, the video portrays the room from above—it shows no walls, focusing on the grid of images on the floor—but Adams-as-Malraux approaches the photographs arrayed around him with a very different attitude: He practically profanes them. At one point, he looks at the photo of a female figure, probably an ancient Indian goddess, naked from the waist up, and begins caressing her breasts, continuing to do so for a while before he turns to the male Buddha to his left, which he gives barely a casual glance. At another point, Adams drops cigarette ash on the ground; at another, he smashes a glass. All the while he rants hysterically about subjects ranging from art and politics to history.



Dennis Adams, *Malraux's Shoes*, 2012, HD video, black-and-white, sound, 42 minutes

In the press release, Adams celebrates Malraux's text as both "a prescient manifesto of the digital age that enacts the displacement of the physical art object and the museum by photographic reproduction" and the "first instance of explicitly locating the creative act in the process of assembling, grouping, and displaying works of art." The grab bag of "Tagging the Archive," photographs from 2011–12 that accompanied the video here, exemplifies curation as art: We find images of retro book covers—such as Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* (1971) and Franz Erhard Walther's *Objekte, benutzen* (1968)—and depictions of screen-printed political posters being produced and displayed, each work accompanied with bit of cryptic verbiage. Could these pictures serve as entries to an ever-changing, ever-evolving museum without walls? It is far from certain that Malraux would have seen book covers or posters as deserving of a place in his imaginary museum, which he reserved for art he deemed "eternal" or an "expression of highest values." America, Malraux wrote, is "the first civilization capable of conquering the entire planet, but not of inventing its own temples." Adams, speaking to our image-saturated age, argues that we don't need them.

—Donald Kuspit

Ellen Gronemeyer

KIMMERICH

Is that a grin or a rictus? The kooky, bug-eyed faces that leer from the eighteen oil paintings in this exhibition raise the question more than once. Ellen Gronemeyer's first solo exhibition in New York was titled with the German word *Affentheater*, or "ape theater," the name for traveling shows popular in the second half of the nineteenth century in which trained monkeys were dressed in human clothes and made to perform acrobatics and imitate human behavior. Accordingly, the cartoonlike figures in her paintings imply discomfort, as if they had been painfully wrenched into their circumstances of vaudevillian hilarity.

A handful of works appear to directly invoke the bawdy burlesques of the show's title. In *comme ci comme ça*, 2012, four caricatures of primates—tongues lolling, limbs flailing—arranged themselves in an impossible configuration, their twisting limbs and torsos constituted by outlines that dissolve into the background's dense accumulation of white and yellow marks. Similarly, in *Find ich spitze* (That's Great), 2012, a furious little man in a handstand balances on his index finger. He too is delineated via outline, a perfunctory nod to discrete form at best, since the mottled brushwork of fleshy pink, toothpaste green, and dark red is visible through his body. The exhibition also included a