

# ART

Monthly

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## Colour it Black

Howardena Pindell interviewed  
by Ellen Mara De Wachter

## Centre. Margin. Other.

Morgan Quaintance

## Serafine1369

Profile by Tom Hastings

## Letter from Moscow

Chris McCormack



Louise Lawler, *Untitled (Koons)*, 1988

## Exhibition as Image

80WSE, New York, 16 November to 20 February

'Exhibition as Image' is a group show that follows two previous projects, 'Exhibition as Image: Art Through the Camera's Eye' and 'Exhibition on Film', from 2016 and 2017, by the curator (and *AM* contributor) Saim Demircan. 'Exhibition as Image' looks at exhibition image-making within the field of artistic production and criticism with works that intervene, conceptualise or complicate the process of documentation. The show includes more than a dozen works spanning 1959 to 2021, ranging from film and video to print, sculpture and digital media.

Seeing artworks in person is still considered the privileged way of experiencing an artwork over video walkthroughs, books, catalogues, OVRs or online images. Yet the role of documentation has expanded from what was once a niche and academic domain into a marketing requirement and category that holds larger social currency. When the now discontinued aggregator art blog VVORK was at its most popular, artists commented that getting documentation featured on the website 'might be an alternative to moving to New York'. Artists also used to maintain that the catalogue was more important than the exhibition itself for their career. Now, documentation is even more embedded in the system of artistic production and circulation with artists curated into shows and sold through image platforms like Instagram.

Documentation works within a field of image production that exists across publications, video, press and online. It also typically operates within particular aesthetic codes. Demircan notes that these routinely attempt to erase subjectivity. The process of representation is meant to appear to be as unmediated and transparent as possible, removing any visible traces of the photographer or figures in the exhibition space.

Within a group of videos titled 'Orchard Documents', which shows artists and events from the 2005 to 2008 artist-run gallery Orchard, is a video of an Andrea

Fraser performance from 2005. The video stitches together several shots taken from different performances of *May I help you?*, 1991, enacted over a day. The work demonstrates Fraser's impressive performing talent as she is able to maintain each delivery word for word, matching tone and expressivity seamlessly across several iterations. As we see cuts that jump to different audiences and reactions over the many recordings, however, it becomes impossible to view the documentation of the performance transparently because it becomes obvious that the video is constructed from multiple recordings.

Earlier in the show, and installed on separate plinths, are three paperweight works by Louise Lawler. The three images at the base of the paperweights are of an office interior with artworks - Jeff Koons, Matthew Barney - hanging in the background. Viewing each artwork is an intimate, embodied experience, since the height of the plinths requires that the viewer stoops in order to navigate the correct focus needed to view the images. Lawler's examination of the role of subjectivity and reception is a thread that runs throughout the exhibition.

Judith Barry's *Damaged Goods 3D*, 1986/2015, is a reconfiguration of a work she produced for the 1986 New Museum exhibition 'Damaged Goods' - one of the first shows to survey the tactics of appropriation. Her contribution to the show was to design the exhibition architecture, and *Damaged Goods 3D* is a set of three dioramas with the original installation documentation printed as half-opened diptychs and small replica models of the exhibition placed directly in front so that the represented installation appears to extend out into the gallery space.

The oldest work in the exhibition is Hans Haacke's *Fotonotizen documenta 2 (documenta 2 photographic notes)* from 1959, a series of 26 black-and-white framed photographs of visitors looking at the works of Documenta 2 in Kassel. Haacke worked as an exhibition guard and art handler at Documenta and the photos are portraits taken of the viewers at the exhibition. The artworks in the photos appear in the background and are subordinate to the people who obscure their view.

For Demircan, the photo series is an example of an artist attempting to reintroduce context and subjectivity. The argument is that documentation generally flattens exhibitions into images. 'Exhibition as Image' looks at works that have exceeded and unsettled this process in order to operate in new registers. In 'Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism', Mary Kelly points out that documentation not only 'determines the reception' but also has an 'effect on the signifying practices themselves'. 'Exhibition as Image' offers a well-researched range of works that are in conversation with this idea, and includes many underexposed and surprising artworks that add some welcome messiness to artist production.

**Tim Steer** is a curator and writer based in London.



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