

Record (ca. 1900–1905), because they're both set in stables. And so on.

Excepting that both forms of media realistically portray life at the time, the "links" the show was reaching for are tenuous at best. And the movies, because they move, have a creepy advantage: however artless and often victimized by chemical decomposition, they nevertheless seduce. Not all of them are cinema-history standards—John Sloan's magnificent and darkling oil *Six O'Clock, Winter* (1912) was paired with Edison's hypnotic two-minute elevated-train journey *New Brooklyn to New York via Brooklyn Bridge* (1899), and several William Trost Richards seascapes flanked a 1895 short film of the sea at Dover by nearly forgotten British pioneer Birt Acres, who came in third behind Edison and the Lumières in the breathless late-century race to perfect the first moving-picture camera.

What lingers in the wake of so much fin de siècle residue is not a debate about art but an argument with time; we see paintings as the ageless manifestation of the artist's will, but early film history, frozen yet ephemeral, is fraught with melancholy. What flows out of them is not an artist's transmutative sensibility but the very nature of the chemical medium (steered by inventors, scientists, and showmen), capturing life as it storms by. Being more or less permanent records of human business, the naive, functionalist movies of the period become instant requiems for their own populations, cities, cultural iconography, and social currents. They are, simply, clear windows on the past—or, as Woodrow Wilson said (wrongly) about D. W. Griffith's 1915 *The Birth of a Nation*, "history writ with lightning." A snippet of footage of the 1903 New York waterfront is, really, "about" us all, including the dead. The artist is, relatively speaking, on his or her own.

—MICHAEL ATKINSON



JENNIFER BORNSTEIN, *STUDY FOR 16MM FILM (ELIZABETH HELLERSBERG, MARGARET MEAD'S HUSBAND'S JUNGIAN ANALYST, 2006* • COPPERPLATE ETCHING, IMAGE: 6 X 4 IN., PAPER: 12 X 10 IN. • COURTESY GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE, NEW YORK

JENNIFER BORNSTEIN

GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE

Much like Margaret Mead, Los Angeles-based artist Jennifer Bornstein likes to study her environment. Using copperplate etchings, an antiquated, labor-intensive medium with links to science and anthropology (the pre-photographic technique has been used to document the natural world since the 1500s), Bornstein turns an attentive eye to the people and objects around her, including Mead herself. Completed while Bornstein was teaching at Yale in 2003, one part of this exhibition presented isolated scenes of single

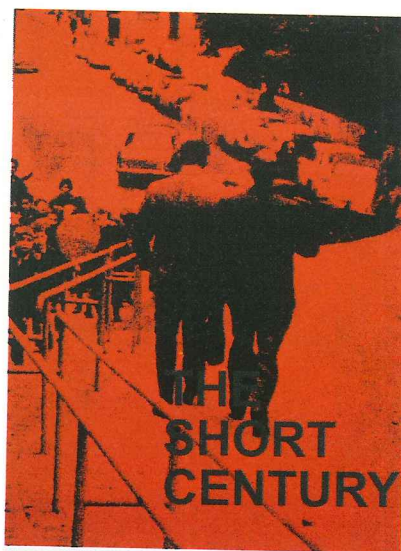
figures in Bornstein's academic milieu. We were invited, for example, to observe a teenage roommate doing laundry, a student on the night before his graduation, and a librarian sitting at his desk. Bornstein's more recent studies for film and sculpture focus on such fellow artists and historical figures as Simone Forti, Ana Mendieta, and Buster Keaton. These prominent characters are treated with a tender intimacy that both revels in and humanizes their foibles and eccentricities (Mendieta is shown wearing a bird costume). Despite its scope, Bornstein's investigative opus is a far cry from vindicating an innocent eye. Located somewhere between documentary and fiction, she seems to occupy an ambivalent position, at once fascinated by objectivity and flouting its limits.

—NUI BANAI

JOYCE PENSATO

PARKER'S BOX

It's almost impossible to make Homer Simpson look sinister. Joyce Pensato's *A Different Homer* (2006) comes close; the large, approximately six-by-five-foot painting portrays Homer's familiar domed head, thick mouth, and bulblike eyes emerging from an inky black background in a scrawl of hurried white graffiti. Paint drips down messily, lending the lovable dullard a menacing appearance. In this show, Pensato, a Brooklyn-based painter who once studied with Joan Mitchell, returned to a long-developed motif, subjecting other cartoon icons to a similar gestural treatment in which feverish brushstrokes replace



ADAM PENDLETON, *THE SHORT CENTURY, 2006* • SILK SCREEN ON CANVAS, 65 1/2 X 48 IN. • COURTESY PERRY RUBENSTEIN GALLERY, NEW YORK

ADAM PENDLETON

PERRY RUBENSTEIN

"The Lab Paintings," Adam Pendleton's 2006 series of silk screens, reproduces

photographs of what appear to be protest marches, stylish modernist interiors, and crime scenes, all in stark shades of black, white, and red. Laid over these images are cryptopoetic and historical words and phrases—SYMPATHY, SO I INDEPENDENT IN GEORGIA IN THE 90S, THE SHORT CENTURY. The latter tidbit nods to the 2001 exhibition curated by Okwui Enwezor of art and artifacts related to struggles for freedom in various African countries from the end of colonial rule in 1945 to the end of Apartheid in 1994. Despite this reference, however, Pendleton abjures direct political statement, leaving the links between word and image far from immediate. In Pendleton's hands, such disjunctions function in the manner of archaeological fragments, as bits of some yet-to-be-reconstructed narrative.

—JONATHAN NEIL



JOYCE PENSATO, *DONALD RISING, 2006* • ENAMEL ON LINEN, 90 X 72 IN. • COURTESY PARKER'S BOX, NEW YORK

the clean lines that normally delineate Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, and others. Wide-eyed stares and chipper grins—these characters' inescapable attributes—become emblems

of frightful immobilization. Pensato probes an ambiguous psychological zone in which familiar figures from childhood become symbols of emotional conflict.

—EVA DIAZ