



KAI ALTHOFF AND NICK Z, INSTALLATION VIEW OF "WE ARE BETTER FRIENDS FOR IT." PHOTO: DAVID REGEN, COURTESY THE ARTISTS AND GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK.

KAI ALTHOFF AND NICK Z

GLADSTONE GALLERY

A zigzag-shaped canvas depicted two men good-naturedly strangling each other while smiling (as though for a camera). On the facing wall, a bright, cleanly spray-painted tag offered up its author's signature. These two pieces opened Gladstone's collaborative exhibition of German artist Kai Althoff and Brooklyn-based graffiti artist Nick Z. While more cryptic and artful than Z's lackluster efforts, Althoff's deft, expressionistic lines and leering, militaristic, homoerotic subject matter express a similarly amorous regard for tiring themes of man-child disaffectedness. The painting's pebbled surface—at odds with the shiny lacquer Althoff usually favors—mimicked the cheap carpet rolled out across the floor, leading into an installation that emanated the dank, slightly threatening stink of a postadolescent boy's lair. Althoff's customary palette of dark greens, blues, bloodreds, and sickly yellows came through in the assembled elements: old couches, a video projection, broken chairs, dress forms, dirty dolls, Nike Dunks, amateur porno pics, vitrines lit with colored fluorescent lights encasing medical models, sugar cereal, and pages of graf doodles (one reads, *I DECIDED THAT I DEFINITELY WANT A FERRARI*). ACROSS the walls, in Z's loose, spray-painted hand, streamed the vernacular of your typical bored adolescent: *SURE, OKAY, NOTHING*. Throughout the show, Althoff's war-tainted, gay-leaning, Grimm's fairy tale-like paintings (with a touch of Georg Trakl's autumnal atmospherics) switched off with Z's cartoonish drawings rendered in an unremarkable suburban hip-hop style. Oddly the installation reminded me of Ilya Kabakov's abandoned Communist schoolhouse in Marfa, Texas, which evokes the innocent wonder of childhood and the threat authoritarian systems

pose to it. While curiously romantic about abject, youthful powerlessness, Althoff and Z's collaboration did less with more: it romanticized both the spiritual and economic disenfranchisement that capitalism deals out to its young men, and the glittering, terrible, alluring totalitarian past that preceded it. —QUINN LATIMER



FRÉDÉRIC CHAUBIN, WEDDING PALACE (TBILISI, GEORGIA), 1985. ARCHITECT: VICTOR DJORBENADZE. COLOR PHOTOGRAPH, 39 1/2 X 34 1/2 IN. COURTESY STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE, NEW YORK.

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STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE

A sea of gray concrete cubes, featureless and identical. This is our typical conception of Soviet architecture. But in the 1970s and '80s, as the Soviet Empire declined and aesthetic codes based on dull functionality began to thaw, architecture flourished, glorifying creative and often outrageous visions that recall the heady, idealistic days of post-Revolutionary design, when architects were building for a new world.

French photographer Frédéric Chaubin—known for his images of architectural oddities from all over the world—has spent the past five years traveling throughout the former USSR

to document these buildings, with fantastic results. Influenced by science fiction, early modernism, Suprematism, and folk art, the buildings evoke flying saucers, the game Jenga, robots, saunas, giant sprockets, and the sterile sets from Tarkovsky's *Solaris*. Even the sensual forms of Gaudí are glimpsed in one picture of Tbilisi's wedding palace, a building that, along with a sinuous crematorium (also on view), was scrutinized by censors for the slightest hints of religious connotation (apparently form had been freed, but content was still a state affair). Since innovative Russian architecture was usually documented in grainy black-and-white, the clarity of Chaubin's color photographs is startling by comparison. His tendency to depict the structures within calm, rural surroundings makes their alien presence all the more jarring. Some buildings show signs of decay, while others, disappointingly, have recently been demolished. This obsolescence, along with Chaubin's omission of human figures from most of the photographs, creates an eerily futuristic portrait of abandoned ideals. —LYRA KILSTON

PETER CAMPUS

LESLIE TONKONOW ARTWORKS + PROJECTS

Peter Campus's recent show was titled "agenesis," leaving one to wonder (after a quick refresher on medical terminology) just what organ has failed to grow in the womb. Coming from one of the pioneers of video art, the title may very well be a reference to the abbreviated history of the medium itself. Emerging in the late 1960s after film's decades-long exploration of the indexical nature of "light writing," video had a rich but

stunted development, one that was made virtually obsolete in the '90s by digital technologies. Campus himself has made the transition from video to digital, and the six works that were on view question how each medium represents time differently. In particular, the possibility of digital recording to accrue footage continuously, dependent only on the size of file storage, is explored in his work.

Campus was one of the first artists to employ surveillance cameras, and the idea of an "all-seeing eye" is evident in his new work in digital format. In the pieces that were on display, each presented on a flat-screen monitor, he reduces the duration of his signature near-static shots to about 10 to 20 seconds each, zooming in on a particular stationary object like a garbage can by the sea or a vacant causeway on Long Island. In one especially meta work, *lost days* (2006), Campus shows a laptop playing a video of an abandoned dump truck in the middle of a snowstorm. As the video plays on the laptop, the artist zooms in on the screen, showing the cars passing behind the truck, then zooms out to show the "frame" of the computer and the objects lying outside the frame, like his bed and a sun-filled window that suggests the weather outside is far less inclement than what is happening on the computer. Campus records seemingly endless bits of life in anticipation of capturing a single fleeting action. Yet his footage always exists on the threshold of the arbitrary, as though a camera were tracking activity regardless of whether anything of importance occurs at all. In this sense, "agenesis" may refer to the slow atrophy of narrative drive in new digitally assisted forms of seeing. —EVA DIAZ



PETER CAMPUS, STILL FROM *LOST DAYS*, 2006. DIGITAL VIDEO TRANSFERRED TO APPLE TV HD PLAYER, LCD FLAT-SCREEN MONITOR, SOUND, 4 MIN 4 SEC. COURTESY LESLIE TONKONOW ARTWORKS + PROJECTS, NEW YORK.