



A great deal of anxiety surrounded the development of color television in the 1950s: an anxiety surrounding not simply its relative necessity, but its optical fidelity to the images transmitted. For many, the potential problems entailed in these images' diffusion – visual inaccuracy and sensory stress – outweighed the benefits of heightened chromatic realism. Parallax error; vertical moiré; dot pitch distortion; oversaturation; degradation fringing; flicker... Against a swell of possible technical misrepresentations, teams of “color consultants” were dispatched to ensure the “convergence” and “purity” of the televised image. In the wake of high-definition compression more than a half-century later (and recent complaints about its “too real” exactitude), these earlier concerns seem like relics of a simpler age: by-products of a medium in its infancy, still growing into its mimetic powers.

It is by means of a peculiar sort of archaeology that Thomas Killian Roach excavates fragments of that recent past, setting them to incongruously aesthetic ends. Rather than evade distortion or distension, his work courts it, in color and black-and-white alike. The artist derives his arresting, horizontal images from scans of live CRT television: whether transmissions of daytime programming or of French New Wave cinema (of which he is a keen devotee). Roach's scans are seemingly anamorphic distortions – planned formal stylizations that might somehow be deciphered – but his compositions are in fact arbitrary and aleatory. Placing a monitor face down upon a modified flatbed scanner, he captures imagery during minute-long intervals without the assistance of a view-finder. Since the artist must listen in order to confirm what is being projected, the resulting images entail as much a kind of aural editing as a visual one. The exhibition's title – *Weling* – derives from an early scan of live television the artist took, in which the word- or name-fragment “weling” appeared. That term now superintends Roach's process, informed by chance and fatality in equal measure.

As the scanning bar passes under the projections in question, images are recorded in contiguous, vertical bands, which come briefly into view before bleeding into a successive scene. Recording the museum sequence in Jean-Luc Godard's *Band à Part* (1964), for example, Roach's *The Louvre Run* (2014) reproduces a portion of Jacques-Louis David's famous history painting, *The Oath of the Horatii* (upon which Godard's camera lingers for several seconds). By virtue of an autonomous logic of montage, Roach's image then jump cuts to the silhouette of a security guard, frantically waving his hands at the gallery's uninvited pranksters; the piece ends with the scene's dénouement, in which the group runs through a long, sculpture-lined hall. Though clean, straight lines provide breaks between different sequences in Roach's piece, these are less logical than random derivatives of the scanning function; if they lend the image some compositional organization, they in no way clarify its content. Yet it is precisely in this sense that *The Louvre Run* pays nuanced homage to Godard's nervous camera handling: jerky swerves and saccadic jumps evoke the director's characteristically “breathless” style. The work is thus not simply a reproduction but a lyrical, cinematic refraction.

Printed in comparable dimensions, *Oskar Werner* homes in instead on a lone figure – the eponymous actor as he appears in François Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966). His fireman's cap barely visible, Werner's Guy Montag appears in conversation with his mistress, played by Julie Christie, whose face has been reduced to a thin sliver (and it is here that the anamorphic effects of Roach's imagery recall Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), with its wayward skull/vanitas squashed into unrecognizable dimensions). Werner's visage, by contrast, conjures up more recent art historical examples: from Cubism and Expressionism, to their reworking in the painting of Francis Bacon, or their adaptation to André Kertész's Surrealist photography with its willful perspectival distortions. With the eyeball unnaturally distended, ear butterflyed and splayed, and face redoubled from divergent angles, Werner's likeness conjures up the early twentieth-century obsession with visually reproducing duration and simultaneity, both physical and metaphysical. In the artist's own words: “There is something about both television and film, their systolic contractions, diastolic swellings, and circuitry, that wants a blood pressure cuff.” His prints suggest less some fo-

rensic, metric analysis, however, than a thickening of televised duration – a spatialization of temporal dimensions, wherein time congeals into texture, substance, light.

*Untitled (60-04)* further underscores Roach's oblique engagement with the history of Cubism and collage. Drawn from local daytime television, and gathering in its wake a loud orange advertisement for Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, *Untitled (60-04)* collapses into the same pictorial plane swatches of unrelated textures and disparate lettering: phenomena wholly indifferent to each other yet seamlessly reconciled in the same flattened plane. Indeed, in addition to its sprawling horizontal format, the insouciant suturing of dissimilar imagery here recalls the Pop paintings of James Rosenquist as much as the chance tearings of Jacques Villeglé's *décollages*. Motivated by a similarly appropriational impetus, the singularity of Roach's images hinges upon their unabashed second-handedness. He has professed a penchant for the work of filmmaker Chris Marker (1921–2012), whose short features like *La Jetée* (1962) consist entirely of still images from printed photographs, and who referred to himself as a kind of “cobbler.” Submitting video projection to its own re-recording, Roach himself cobbles together imagery from within the echo chamber of electronic transmission. Like Marker (deemed by Finn Bruton the “Douanier Rousseau of new media”), Roach resists technological savvy in favor of “unskilled” experimentation and improvisation.

While the neatness of Roach's syntheses is striking, their weft – the parallel grooves that organize surface – also calls attention to the unrelenting mediation of their imagery. Celluloid, cathode ray, digital image, photographic print: the various layers of reproductive remove that separate objects from their apparition invites reflection upon that mediation, as well as the artist's particular role in (or absence from) its process. Roach practices a tautology of visual representation, in which one technological apparatus plays mirror to another. *Wiha* and *Onion* (both 2013) short-circuit that rapport. Seemingly unrelated to the artist's other works, they in fact developed as test strips for Roach's CRT scans. Looking like some noble sea creature in profile, the latter features a power strip, sprouting cords next to the more platonian geometry of an onion; the former, meanwhile, reproduces the silhouette of a thin paddle or wand. Resembling the cameraless photograms by Moholy-Nagy and Christian Schad, these prints are derived from direct contact between scanner and object. The image sensors employed use only ambient light to record their images, rather than a lamp. (Though interestingly, these “contact” scanners normally use red, green and blue lamps for illumination – the very same color spectrum used in reconstructing televised imagery.) Roach's work returns us again and again not simply to the image of electronic transmission but also to the near synaptic processes at work in such a transmission: processes that are otherwise hidden by a fluid or uniform picture.

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