

Elizabeth Dee

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We were strangers for too long.

Meredyth Sparks

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September 4 - October 11, 2008

Opening Reception: Thursday September 4, 6-8 pm

Elizabeth Dee is pleased to present Meredyth Sparks' New York gallery debut, *We were strangers for too long*. The show includes new collaged works, wall-based installations and sculptural editions.

In her multi-layered works, Sparks mines images from (sub) cultural sources. Building up the surface of her found imagery by formally breaking down compositional elements, Sparks reworks images in Photoshop-scanning, cropping and layering-before manually applying foil, glitter and vinyl to the printed surface. For this show, Sparks focuses exclusively on figures from 1972 through 1977 (Ian Curtis, Kraftwerk, Gudrun Ensslin, etc.), a period she designates as a bellwether point of resistance prior to the rise of Reagan, Thatcher and the Neo-Conservative movement. Constructivist iconography appears in her wall-based installations, alongside glitter, vinyl and aluminum foil-materials one might associate with the rise of late capitalism-complicating the counter-cultural and revolutionary spirit to which her work refers. Although the depicted figures are sometimes familiar or iconic, through a series of interventions and ruptures in the surface of the image Sparks frustrates the viewer's desire to make contact, highlighting how these figures have, in turn, been co-opted by the very ideologies they sought to dismantle. As suggested in the ambiguity of the show's title, Sparks' stagings construct a performative space in which the relationship between artist, viewer and image remains indeterminate and unstable.

Several pieces included in the show allude to Eadweard Muybridge's early motion studies and indicate Sparks' interest in sequentiality, which she here distinguishes from seriality. One wall is covered with a group of collages showing Ian Curtis, whose famous-and infamously erratic-performances are replicated in a sequential grid. Sparks' *Gudrun in Sequence* screen bifurcates the gallery. Taken from the preliminary sketches Gerhard Richter used for his *October 18, 1977* (1988) paintings, Sparks reanimates the Baader-Meinhoff leader. Critiquing the purported glamour today associated with 1960s and 1970s radical chic, Sparks juxtaposes Gudrun's movement with the spatial persistence of Malevich's Suprematist imagery.

In her record sleeve art, Sparks intends to recuperate political agency within the circulation of appropriated images. For this installation, Sparks' dust jacket features an evidentiary photograph of a record player German authorities claimed Andreas Baader, leader of the Red Army Faction, used to transport a gun into his prison cell, a weapon the police contend Baader later used to commit suicide. By mutely offering the turntable's image on the dust jacket, Sparks encourages the viewer to, in effect, right/write the official record, taking the sleeve and image with them as they leave the gallery. Reversing the explanation German authorities offered-making the concealed evident and emptying what it officially was said to contain-Sparks' record sleeve art offers sly commentary on authoritarianism and the cynicism so

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often associated with appropriation art since the early 1980s.

This is Meredyth Sparks' first solo gallery exhibition at Elizabeth Dee. Her work was featured in the two person show, *Meredyth Sparks & Richard Aldrich* presented at the gallery in 2007 and in 2006 her first solo exhibition took place at Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris. Recent group exhibitions include *Cosmic Dreams*, Kunstalle Centro Cultural Andratx, Mallorca; *Just Kick It Till It Breaks*, The Kitchen, New York; and the *2nd Moscow Biennale*. A monograph on Sparks' work, with an essay by Nicolas Bourriaud, will be published in 2009.

Please contact the gallery for more information, +1 212 924 7545.