

Where does (s)he stand? What does (s)he want? – I always ask if an artist is answering this question' Thomas Hirschhorn



Mika Tajima, *The Double*, 2008 (installation view). Photo: Tom Powel. Courtesy Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York

## MIKA TAJIMA: THE DOUBLE / GLEN FOGEL: QUARRY

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Both Mika Tajima's installation *The Double* and Glen Fogel's video *Quarry* literally and figuratively shapeshift. They each shuffle and reshuffle a precarious house of cards, manipulating identity, violence, morality and mass media into polished forms.

With *The Double*, Tajima crafts a lobotomised environment of crisis. Inspired by Herman Miller's Action Office system of adaptable cubicle components, Tajima constructs a wall of movable panels that divides the gallery into a wide and a narrow space. Each panel, set in a fixed frame, can be flipped over to reveal the reverse. Similar to a carnival funhouse, where mirrors and passageways distort reality, the panels are variously mirrored or coated in glossy, eye-catching colours. Other panels, such as *Distortion* (2008), are rigidly geometric paintings of overlapping shapes and lines. Evoking Russian Constructivist abstraction, the paintings are like an architectural drawing disordered, its shapes floating in space. With their paintings of elegantly jumbled forms, their physical capacity to move and turn over, and their inherent theatricality as a sort of elaborate stage set, the panels embody transmutability.

Behind the wall is *Edge of Breakup, / (I)* and */ (II)* (all 2008). A pendant lamp swings back and forth in broad gestures, its light filtering through two laser-cut panels. It lifts shadows of macabre splatter marks onto the wall in wavelike crests. Tajima is directly referencing a scene in Donald Cammell's (and Nicolas Roeg's) identity- and gender-bending film *Performance* (1970), where an apartment is vandalised with red paint, similar in effect to Pollock's Abstract Expressionism. The film, concerned with the idea of identity as a performance, is reduced here to modernist design that merely suggests its performative potential. Though the photocopies of various source material thumbtacked to the panelling seems out of place, *The Double* is nonetheless a modernist monster – a hollow, slick stage setting for personality change and disorder.

*Quarry* (2008) dwells in the same territory. Fogel's video rapidly alternates between an excerpt from the pilot episode of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (1999) and his own detailed reenactments. In the excerpt, a paedophile identifies the baseball caps of boys he molested by handling each cap. While the editing is brisk, rendering an auditory rhythm from the spliced footage, the video is dramatically slow-motion.

Adopting the identity of the paedophile and brazenly inhabiting the part, Fogel exposes awkward relationships between homosexuality, paedophilia and pleasure. More uncomfortable still is its context as an NBC-scripted feature – the broadcaster's iconic peacock logo is always stationary in the corner of *Quarry*. Interrupted by lingering shots of *Law & Order* star Mariska Hargitay feigning concern, *Quarry* is impossible to see as anything but entertainment. Paedophilia may be a sexual disorder, but it is pleasurable as television fodder. Though *Quarry* and *The Double* utilise very different disciplines, both Fogel and Tajima fashion pleasure. Coating unease in aesthetic candy, their work is sweet to the taste but bitter beneath. *David Everitt Howe*