

SEAN PAUL

EVERY HAIR
OF THE BEAR

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November 11 - December 17, 2011

The camera, with its strong moral claims to truth and objectivity now over a century old [c.1953], has established its manner of seeing as the common visual currency of our time, and we come to think of photographic experience as the equivalent of personal participation. But we should ask ourselves who would be truly richer – one who possessed photographs of every surviving building of the classical world, or Sir John Soane, who had measured every stone of the Coliseum and could quote its intercolumniation even in his old age.

— Reyner Banham, “Parallel of Life and Art”

The creative dimension of taking photographs consists in its being handed over to fashion. “The world is beautiful” – that is its motto, precisely. In it stands revealed the attitude of a kind of photography that is able to make any tin of food look as if it is floating in space but cannot grasp a single one of the human contexts in which that tin features. It is a kind of photography that, however dreamy the subject, heralds more of the marketability of that subject than its apprehension. But since the true face of this photographic creativity is advertising or association, for the same reason its proper counterpart is exposure or construction.

— Walter Benjamin, from *A Brief History of Photography*

A still life assembled from domestic products (cup, bowl, saucer, and plate) is marked with black squares of tape, and pictured from six perpendicular angles (front, back, left, right, top, bottom). The black squares function as tokens, which allow the spatial geometry of the still life to be discerned. This is done in first angle Mongean space (standard fare for the industrial engineer). An ideational six-sided planar box is then constructed around the set, from which perpendicular linear projectors are extended, forming a trace upon each of the six receiving planes of the box. This box of traces is opened and then refolded in a systematized way so that multiple views may fold together simultaneously. A system for folding the tokens of the four objects is developed, in multiples of two/four. Objects become views; four items presented in distinct cases as one, two, four, or six views are folded into a single plane. This plane then becomes the array, which informs the material images’ unfolding into lived space, or a domestic scene. At which point one could pose the Herzogian question (while considering the entirety of the phone book), “Yes, but do they dream?”

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Presented in collaboration with Thea Westreich and Ethan Wagner

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