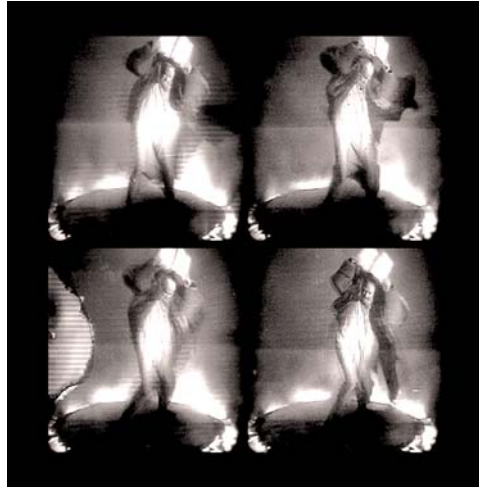


John Aäsp

Eternal Now

January 17 - March 7, 2009

John Aäsp is a multimedia artist from Texas who utilizes a chronophotographic sensibility in his videos to bridge the seemingly contradictory characteristics of cinema and photography: motion and stillness. In his *eternal now* series, Aäsp reconfigures found material to disrupt its established chronologies, generating works that resist categorization as either cinema or photography but nonetheless contain traces of each. By borrowing and reorganizing scenes from old silent films and modern television, Aäsp paradoxically melds linearity and repetition to "create a media-hybridized moment standing in a new temporal flow."



(union), 2006-9.

For instance, in *(radial device)*, two ends of a mysterious apparatus are carefully united, resulting in an ostensibly torturous instrument resembling a crown of thorns. As the viewer's eyes follow the movement of the video from the lower right corner to the top left (fittingly in reverse of the Western system of reading left to right, top to bottom), he/she anxiously awaits an action or response to follow the hand's offering gesture, but is instead forced to re-witness the act with discontentment.

While the footage from *(union)* is derived from an adaptation of the classic sixteenth-century German tale of Faust, a doctor who makes a pact with the Devil in exchange for knowledge, Aäsp's decontextualization has left it virtually unrecognizable. However, just as Faust's hedonistic yearning ultimately leads him on a diabolical course, Aäsp's struggling protagonist is ironically trapped in an endless and climactic state of futility, a feeling which is mirrored by the viewer in his/her frustration with the familiar yet peculiar imagery. His character's situation is rendered even more hopeless through the quadrupling and delaying of the



(*altarpiece*), 2006-9.

sequence; every wasted effort is repeated threefold to dramatically increase the suspense.

Although the stills featured in (*altarpiece*) were retrieved from an old silent religious film, the youthful nun with her sinister smile and slow-rolling eyes resembles a subdued version of the kind of twisted personality found in modern horror movies such as *The Exorcist*. Aäsp's incorporation of the staggered triptych format succeeds in decelerating the ominous movements even further, extending the tension like a recurring nightmare.

Rather than utilizing the camera to gain a scientific understanding of movement, Aäsp's work challenges the notion that photography provides a glimpse of reality and that the moving picture, by default, tells a story. With these works, Aäsp constructs bizarre cyclical narratives that entice the viewer while simultaneously producing feelings of uneasiness and longing for closure.

- Cori Wolff, Exhibition Curator



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