

M+B

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JON RAFMAN: MIRROR SITES

May 19 – June 23, 2012

Artist's Opening Reception: Saturday, May 19, 2012 from 6 to 8 pm



M+B is pleased to announce *Mirror Sites*, a two-part exhibition of new work by Jon Rafman. Rafman is a leader in demonstrating how images created in digital space can be transformed to exist in physical space. As Jon Rafman bridges our two worlds, the virtual and real, it is only fitting that he should introduce us to his work at two galleries in a show entitled *Mirror Sites*. Mirroring is a salient term in both the computing and artistic worlds. Rafman's *Mirror Sites* is a dialogue spanning M+B and China Art Objects Galleries, both exhibiting examples of *9-Eyes of Google Street View* and *New Age Demanded*. This approach expands the dialogue of re-use and re-interpretation as well as our own desire to look for meaning and intent. As the digital world becomes alive in this new way, its images become vital in their new form, and we are made to rethink both the virtual and the real world. *Mirror Sites* runs from May 12 through June 9, 2012 at China Art Objects Galleries and May 19 – June 23 at M+B, with an opening reception at M+B on Saturday, May 19 from 6 to 8 pm.

In Jon Rafman's *9-Eyes of Google Street View* (GSV), the accidental, the incidental, the baffling and the dramatic collide. Rafman's work consists of selected images taken by the cameras atop the Google Street View vehicles that document the world's roadways in a constant mission to organize the world's information. While Street View's only goal is to capture the planet, mediated and easy for a viewer to peruse, Rafman's intervention is one of an Internet curator. He searches through the vast records of fleeting moments, holding up a planet size mirror to ourselves, nature and our constructed world. From this chaotic reality Rafman builds an ambitious visual project that reflects both our modern experience and our desire to read meaning into images. Within the sheer vastness, there is an inherent tension recognized by Rafman between the uncaring camera and the human being that sees meaning, sees stories and looks on things as a moral creature. As a result of editing, re-framing and focusing these moments, we are presented with images from the banal to the extraordinary in works that range from apparent social commentary to surreal landscapes touching on the sublime. The formal visual qualities Rafman manages to inject or discover only reinforce the terse but open-ended, comprehensive social message. We seem to live always under the eye of such observation. From some perspectives it appears to be Google, God or chance, but Rafman suggests that the universe that is reflected is our own contemporary consciousness.

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Previously conceptualized and rendered solely in digital form, these shows mark the emergence of the *New Age Demanded* (NAD) series in physical form. Inspired by Ezra Pound's poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, in which a poet struggles to write in a Philistine age, NAD expresses Rafman's stance that every age demands something new of its artists, and that the artist can be seen as screaming to express it. Rafman takes the real to the virtual and then back to the real, bridging past and future, high and low, history and narration. Employing 3D software, Rafman sculpts the "skin"—including paintings by Bruce Nauman, Francis Picabia, Robert Delaunay, Mark Rothko and others—onto virtual busts. This evocation of both classical Greek busts and the covers to long-lost sci-fi space operas results in an image that suggests conversations and clashes between past, present and future. The reference becomes almost invisible yet fully integrated, as the different works in the series can be seen to represent different individuals in different ages on different planets. For Rafman, sci-fi is the literature of ideas, the world of alternative possibilities, and NAD allows the viewer to contemplate the artworks as unique beings of expression from what might appear to be another world of alternative possibilities. The age demands new artists capable of taking up this challenge, of plunging into this simmering broth and emerging with new awareness, new languages and new rules. The ability of Rafman's work to appeal to this call is what makes it so radical and potentially threatening. The exhibition will also be the preview of another digital intervention, *Tokyo Color Drifter*. The video work filters the city's landscape through the experience of a video game rendering of speed, a form heavily dependent on science fiction and virtual worlds.

Jon Rafman (b. 1981) is a Montreal-based artist, filmmaker and essayist. Mixing irony, humor and melancholy, Rafman's work explores the paradoxes of modernity. Well known within the digital community, his work is informed by the rich potential provided by contemporary technology in its possibility for celebrating and critiquing contemporary experience. As an artist whose subject is the human experience, he captures the human in a wide variety of potentially alienating contexts. He received his BA in literature and philosophy from McGill University in Montreal, QC in 2004, and his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, IL in 2008. Rafman has exhibited his works across the US, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan and Russia. This month, Rafman's work will be included in "Collective Identity," a group exhibition at the Museum of Canadian Contemporary Art (MOCCA) and presented as a feature show of the 2012 CONTACT Photography Festival at Angell Gallery in Toronto. The first part of 2012 also sees Rafman's work being exhibited at the 2012 Moscow Photo Biennale, the 2012 Hong Kong International Art Fair, the New Museum (New York, NY), American Medium (New York, NY) and China Art Objects (Los Angeles, CA). Rafman's *Nine Eyes of Google Street View* has been featured in *Modern Painters*, *Frieze*, *Der Spiegel*, *Libération*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Harper's Magazine*.

Location:	M+B, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90069
Show Title:	Jon Rafman: Mirror Sites
Exhibition Dates:	May 19 – June 23, 2012
Artist's Reception:	Saturday, May 19, 2012 from 6 – 8 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

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