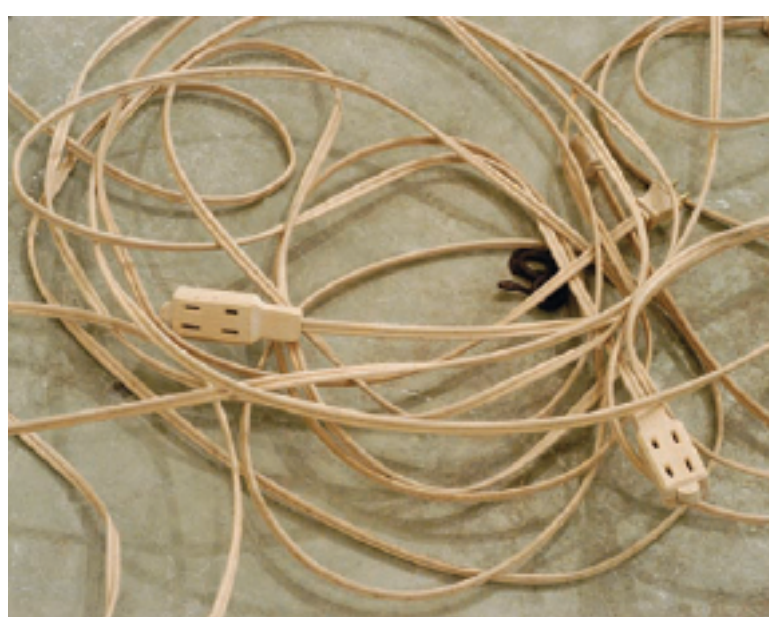


Remaking the Real

Curated by Claire Christie
June 28 – August 18, 2007



Ian Carr-Harris
Robin Collyer
Liz Magor
Kevin Yates



At first glance, each of the featured works appears as something readily identifiable: streaming sunlight, a neatly folded pile of clothes, a photograph of a house, a pile of extension cords, and so on. But in one swift gesture, our perceptual reflexes are challenged to perform a new range of responses. Mimicry is indeed camouflage, and it is through this act of concealing by assuming the form of an object that the works ultimately open up to notions of authenticity, replication, identity, and absence, while still insisting upon consideration of the new hybrid: the realness of the remade real. Revealed in the activation of a “double-take” is the ruse of mimesis, a condition which, rather than collapsing meaning to an equation of representation, expands the field of interpretation to include precisely that act of replication.

Taking form as a shifting sunlight pattern filtering through a large, paned window, Ian Carr-Harris’ *231 Queens Quay West* evokes an immediate sense of familiarity, a kind of physical registration that perhaps always accompanies viewing natural phenomena. Almost as immediately, though, there is an unsettling realization that the window—the frame of reference—doesn’t exist in the exhibition space, and that the subtle movement of the light across the wall, tracing the passing of a day, is cast in projection by artificial means. In mimicking a transient moment, the work recreates what is past, thus illustrating an absence, a position deepened by the fact that the original window itself is most often cloaked behind drywall in the building at the address of the work’s title, The Power Plant Gallery in Toronto. At the same time, this durative staging necessarily underscores a “now,” as it unfolds before our eyes. Through this confluence of presences and absences, Carr-Harris maneuvers into view consideration of the window and its projected silhouette as a discrete system of repetition: an inherent and ceaseless cycle of replication.

Robin Collyer looks at issues of authenticity with his *Transformer Houses (Bungalow-Style Substations)*, a series of black-and-white photographs that presents a taxonomical sampling of various Toronto neighbourhoods’ vernacular architecture. The houses of the photographs stage a banal normalcy with their manicured lawns, restrained landscaping and typified architecture. Yet it turns out that they are mere masks to utility, as each of these “houses” is a hydro substation, built in simulation to be enfolded into neighbourhoods, unnoticed. Collyer articulates their presence by photographing them—essentially scrutinizing the deliberately invisible—and through this mechanism of documentation—the photograph—draws out the condition of reproducibility that prevails within the suburban or urban setting, the sameness of the real (the typified architecture) and the distinctness of the simulacral object (the cloaked substation).

With Kevin Yates’ *Extension Cords*, the remaking of the real begins by promoting its own condition of being overlooked, not unlike the replicant houses in Robin Collyer’s photographs. With painstaking accuracy, Yates has carved several pieces of beech wood to resemble lengths of extension cord, which are subsequently steamed and coaxed into their coiled and yawning forms, and finished with brass fittings for the plugs. Yates plays with the condition of verisimilitude to manipulate perceptual triggers. Here, the notion of mimicry as camouflage is amplified by the veiled presence of, at the core of this mass of cords, a miniature, coiled, cast bronze snake. With the detection of the replicated snake—a fine simulation save for its wholly distorted scale—the viewer is led to revisit the categorization of the cords as “authentic.”

The fashioning of verisimilitude is well staked out territory for Liz Magor, whose investigations of identity have consistently proceeded from a deliberate circumstance of imitation. *Carton II* appears as a pile of neatly folded clothes—one can make out shirts and sweaters of varying colour and bulk—but misperception is exposed upon rounding the work to view it from the back. Its completing dimension is effaced by a cache of cigarettes and cigarette packages, lighters and chewing gum, cramming into the interior of what had, moments before, all the markings of a “truthful” object. Cast in polymerized gypsum, the “pile of neatly folded clothes” is revealed as a hollow form, doubling the device of deception at both the level of simulacra and as the “hiding place,” becoming a site of refuge.

Each of the works presented here is expressive of the fertile territory that exists in the interstice between the real and the replicated, a gap that can only be perceived under the condition of remaking. The mark of concealment, inherent in the works’ Lacanian structure, ultimately confers a kind of perceptual elasticity, allowing meaning to overtake the simulated contours of the originating object. For real.

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