

'The Original Copy' at MOMA; Okay Mountain's 'Benefit Plate' at Freight + Volume

Plus Arielle Falk's 'Lego My Ego' at LZ Project Space

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The Estate of André Kertész



Some strings attached: André Kertész's *Marionettes de Pilsner*, 1929, at MOMA

Details:

'The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today'
 Museum of Modern Art
 11 West 53rd Street, 212-708-9400
 Through November 1

Back in the day, the Photo Department at MOMA considered '80s-style "photo-conceptualist" art by the likes of Cindy Sherman to be simply bad pictures. As a result, that influential work was first collected by the museum's "Painting and Sculpture" division. How times change! In its way, MOMA's just-opened "The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today"—assembled by photo curator Roxana Marcoci—represents the definite triumph of the "photoconceptualist" paradigm over the past. The idea here is that, since photography doesn't just reflect but also transforms an object's image, the venerable tradition of photographing sculpture has always served as a kind of closet concept-art, expanding, extending, and "questioning" the reality of the art it depicts.

Maybe the whole thing is just a clever excuse to put a bunch of great pictures together. But the premise really is clever, and the works—some 300 of them, by 100 artists—truly are great. It's exhilarating to see the intellectual bravado with which Marcoci draws connections between (for instance) early-20th-century Frenchman Eugène Atget's proto-surrealist images of objects on the Paris streets and contemporary Swiss duo Fischli & Weiss's fun snaps of sculptures built from precarious constellations of household objects.

Edward Steichen's stylish images of Rodin's sculpture of Balzac are classics of black-and-white formalism. But here, the emphasis is on how each picture is labeled according to the time of day it was photographed (*Balzac, The Silhouette—*

4 a.m., etc.), fitting Steichen—onetime, über-formalist MOMA photography director!—into the tradition of serial photography, a vintage conceptual photography device.

The trick works the other way around, too. For his "Mirror Displacement" project, '60s artist Robert Smithson photographed mirrors in different landscapes, a quintessential idea-art head game, all about how a subtle change to an environment can transform it into art. Here, presented via crystal-clear new prints, you gain a fresh appreciation for how striking the images that convey Smithson's ideas are, as photos.

Okay Mountain: 'Benefit Plate'

They're young. They're hot. They're Texan. They are Okay Mountain, the Austin collective that won a ton of attention at last year's Pulse Art Fair in Miami, taking home the "Pulse Prize" for an installation

that was essentially a Potemkin convenience store, every element of it a jokey, hand-created work of art.

Their new project at Freight + Volume involves a gallery-filling, tricked-out trailer (the *OKMT X'treme*), each feature representing some kind of slightly incoherent fantasy of the coolest custom-designed camping vehicle ever. There's a BBQ grill, with a condiment rack housing "Spermicidal Cheddar Cheese Dip" and "Spicy Mustard Hair Gel." There's a gas tank that doubles as a condom dispenser. And so on. Like their Pulse store, the piece doesn't feel completely revelatory (and it suffers from the fact that, unlike in Miami, the guys aren't on hand)—but also like the Pulse installation, it doesn't matter. The point is the goofball individuality of each of the parts, as if the gang came up with a project idea and just let each of its members go to town. *Freight + Volume, 542 West 24th Street, 212-691-7700. Through September 3*

Arielle Falk: 'Lego My Ego'

Let's talk about the work of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. And some big, bonkers sunglasses. Such are the basic ingredients of "Lego My Ego," the pleasantly daft, first-time solo show from Arielle Falk at the Lower East Side's LZ Project Space. Essentially, the small exhibition consists of large "sunglasses for the face" made by Falk—sleek, impenetrable face shields, in various shades of black and gray, with subtle variations—accompanied by photos of the artist modeling the shades.

The stated idea behind these works—something about carving out a space for privacy in a Facebook world, combined with something about "breaking the co-symmetry of the face-to-face encounter" (that's Lacan coming in there)—is not totally true to the photos. Falk poses in the same, neutral pose for each, so they convey less an intimate world that you're blocked from than the blankness of the fashion plate. And yet the glasses are interesting objects. And before long, you do find yourself projecting different moods onto their various, inscrutable designs. *LZ Project Space, 164 Suffolk Street, 212-627-3276. Through August 21*

