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Kim Schoen
MOSKOWITZ BAYSE



Kim Schoen, *New Large Dictionary (Neues Grosses Lexikon)*, 2017, C-print, 13 1/4 × 19 7/8".

An open book on an angular asymmetrical plinth partially submerged beneath granules of sand: This tableau was the first thing one encountered in Kim Schoen's "Hawaii," an exhibition that elsewhere offered the book not as an object but rather as a fantastic, disemboweled placeholder for the printed tome. The paperback on display was one of the hundred that comprise *Hawaii (160)* (all works 2017), an exquisite editioned artist book featuring texts by Schoen, Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, and Jan Tumlir, interleaved with the images on view in the present context and orphan "pages without books" recovered from the Argosy Book Store in New York. It was installed in the gallery's antechamber alongside *The Finale (Das Finale)*, a glossy C-print that formally corresponded to the photographs of blanks—hollow cardboard boxes intended to be viewed as real books—hanging in the main room beyond.

A perfectly crisp photograph of a maquette for one such cover marked with the dates of its various reissues by the printer, *The Finale (Das Finale)* suggested the absurdity of the notion of termination as applied to an object with no beginning, middle, or end. Yet the *Finale* book cover further intimated another kind of narrative, as Schoen revealed the fake books to be aligned within the economy of the commercial workshop that manufactures them, one in which the automated production of the blanks serves a compensatory role within a dwindling market for other literary forms. Schoen does not crop the production site—replete with metal type blocks and large machinery frames—out of *The Finale*. Instead, the industrial background frames and offsets the upright cardboard prototype.

Even more emphatically, she positions this location—a bookbinding factory in Baden-Württemberg, Germany—and its proprietor, Thomas Moser, the son of the inventor of the automated process behind these blank books, as the focus of the twenty-three-minute video *Hawaii (23)*, which looped in the space's west gallery. The video's soundtrack, with its snippets of workers' conversation, droning hums of working presses, and the clicks of conveyor belts, contrasted sharply with the preternaturally still photos of the bookmaker's wares. The wan island exoticism suggested by the work's titular locale is embodied by generic island imagery interspersed throughout, including a shot of a writhing hula dancer against a flaming sunset, and another of pineapples falling.

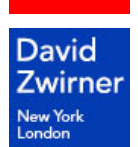
The word HAWAII appeared again in *Hawaii (Stack)*, a diptych featuring two turquoise books, the shared title of which runs down one's spine and up the other's. Additional pictures emphasized the objects' emptiness, such as *New Large Dictionary (Neues Grosses Lexikon)*, with its twinned books stacked so that the lower volume displays a gold-embossed title while the one atop it is turned to expose its hollow interior, efficiently disrupting the armature's illusion. Meanwhile, in *Memories, Memories, Memories (Erindringer)* and *U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.*, the covers are shown in horizontal lineups that echo those of the metered units by which they are sold.

The objects Schoen depicts propose an expedient solution to the problem of an empty waiting-room shelf, offering an anodyne and visually appealing filler. Despite the calculated abrasion of lettering implying wear through use, details admit the books' fraudulence via the artist's pairing of multiple copies of the same title. The calculated aesthetic behind the objects' colors, typography, and purported subject matter is presumably part of the pleasure for "bookmaker" and customers alike, despite the superfluity of such concerns given the books' primary function—that of taking up space. In one scene in the video, Moser describes *Canada Made Me*, the name of one such book, as "one of those high-minded titles you can read a lot into." If this is the Oz-like moment of unveiling that reveals that the "blanks" are indeed authored, Schoen never lets on that

the maker's intentionality trumps the receiver's projections, or that the latter are incidental. They meet halfway on the shelf.

—Suzanne Hudson

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