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1. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?

By FRANCOIS BRUNET | Published: 14. JANUARY 2014



EXCERPT RESPONSE BY

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Currently I'm interested mostly in such photographic images that confront me with unsettling, stimulating temporal disjunctions. With a particular asynchrony in which the constructed nature of a single image, or a series of images, and the image worlds from which it originates are both mirrored and distorted. Exactly this I find on view in a number of current images by John Sparagana (see: <http://www.corbettvsdempsey.com/2013/11/06/john-sparagana/>). The images he recently presented under the title "Crowds & Powder" are said to display a "subtle struggle with the dialectical role of images in mediating history", as Benjamin Paul writes in his catalog essay on these works from 2013, and seem to fit as illustrations in our ongoing debate (see for instance: <http://johnsparagana.com/2007-08/view/71>). They manifest the interweaving of re-presentations and time. And appear as multiples: as inkjet pictures that are made from once printed newspaper photographs now being used as templates for collages, everyday objects recounting time turned into artifacts documenting the materiality of the medium narrating events in ink on paper. At the same time, they confront us as their viewers with our blind spots. Blind spots that happen to occur in the moment whenever we detach photos of their medium and remove them from contexts to see them as nothing but signifiers of a visible world in which we seemingly locate ourselves. In an all amazing manner, Sparagana's photographic images show a transformation rarely experienced when viewed in person, depending on how one distances oneself in the exhibition space before

them. At one moment they appear as enlargements viewed with a magnifying glass and blown out of proportion, then again as a striking visual images almost occupying the three dimensional room. When look at however in print on catalog pages or on the screen, this impressive effect does not set. (Which is why the links above are actually misleading: and yet serve as sign posts to spot the images somewhere in reality!) Thus, John Sparagana's works convey many adverse viewing options one has to come to terms with in an instant to determine oneself in relation to the images viewed. That does take time, be it only as much as it takes to make one step. The vista points they create by activating the viewers—and thereby sizing the space—are mutually exclusive, and yet we understand them as they also present at the same time. What they convey is a sense of disruptive time in view of what is visible and what is not, and this testifies to an essential non-simultaneity in the viewer him- or herself.

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