



Elad Lassry, *Zebra and Woman* (still), 2007. Super 16mm color film, silent, 5:21 minute loop. Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles.

Elad Lassry was born in 1977 in Tel Aviv, and he lives and works in Los Angeles. He has presented work throughout the U.S. and Europe, including a recent monographic survey at Kunsthalle Zürich and an exhibition of three films at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He has also presented his works at the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; New Museum, New York; Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach; and Gallery 400, University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2008, Lassry exhibited a small selection of his photographs in The Front Room at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

Cover image:

Elad Lassry, *Tomatillos*, 2010. Chromogenic print, 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of the artist; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; and Galleria Massimo De Carlo, Milan.

Elad Lassry: *Sum of Limited Views* is co-curated by Anthony Huberman, Guest Curator, and Laura Fried, Associate Curator, and organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

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ELAD LASSRY: SUM OF LIMITED VIEWS

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ELAD LASSRY: SUM OF LIMITED VIEWS

There is a sense of misplaced familiarity in the work of Tel Aviv-born, Los Angeles-based artist Elad Lassry, and for his first major museum monograph in the United States, the Contemporary surveys the artist's exploration in making still and moving pictures.

Combining over thirty photographs with a selection of 16mm films, *Sum of Limited Views* spotlights Lassry's recent practice, including several new works. With an installation designed by the artist, the photographs occupy the Contemporary's first main gallery, each one in its own brightly colored frame. Highly aware of photography's aesthetic allure, Lassry constructs a seductive viewing experience by balancing small scale with precise composition. Cloistering his subjects within saturated fields of color, excised from their original context, Lassry immerses these objects within their own visual properties. Despite their extreme realism, these toothsome vegetables, sunny faces, and pristine products are overwhelmed by their own formal conditions and design—effectively merging their representation with their abstraction.

Lassry's photographs slip effortlessly between genres and iconographies, capturing plastic still-lives, uncanny publicity portraits, collages, animals, and landscapes—all to hyper-stylized effect. He meticulously arranges anonymous but happy headshots (a recurring figure here is a young Anthony Perkins); unusual pet portraits; cat-toys; Persian cucumbers; bright lipsticks; and pearlized display cubes; among other specialty goods. Framed, these subjects are freed from their role as illustrators or storytellers, and instead embrace their talent as pure sculptural forms. While still recognizable, these vivid objects dissolve into backdrop and become bold combinations of color, shape, and pattern.

Forever bordering on its own abstraction, each composition moves beyond the simple category of "photography," challenging the viewer to reconsider the process of looking itself. Lassry ensures that one's eye is never fixed, as his images slide between stillness and movement. Whether through layered exposures (reminiscent of early techniques in "ghost photography") or the staccato rhythm of colors, and between field and ground, his still-lives and portraits possess a magnetic but unstable hold on

our vision. Ever suspicious of the status of photography, Lassry also paints his frames with richly saturated hues to match an image's dominant color—flirting with the nature of the monochrome, as well as the photograph's identity as an object. As a result, the picture establishes a perceptual contradiction, announcing itself as a visually prominent sculpture, while simultaneously camouflaging itself within its frame.

Lassry's practice is studio-based, and after he shoots his photographs, he carefully edits the contrasts, shadows, colors, and lines to locate the desired visual effect. While he stages many of the images himself, Lassry occasionally appropriates outmoded textbooks, Hollywood publicity photos, picture books, and vintage magazines, which he also adapts, edits, and adjusts. Suggesting a distant narrative, these pictures add a historical tint, but remain in limbo, ultimately divorced from the world outside their frames.

The potential for an image to become unfixated is equally relevant to Lassry's practice as a filmmaker, and like his photographs, his short 16mm films blur the experience of the still and moving picture. Presented in a black-box gallery

at the Contemporary, three recent films combine realism, narrative, and abstraction. For his first film, *Untitled (Agon)* (2007), the artist draws from a 1958 modern dance manual called *The Art of Making Dances*, in which a series of instructional diagrams illustrate a dancer's strength points on the stage. Fixing his camera along these key axis points, Lassry films a performance of George Balanchine's neoclassic ballet *Agon* (1957)—cropping the bodies of two dancers as camera and performers attempt an impossible collaboration. Filmed in acutely slow-moving pans, *Zebra and Woman* (2007) captures the slightest trembles on the bodies of two frozen figures locked in a stare. Finally, a trompe l'oeil photograph found in a 1971 science textbook is the source for the third film, *Untitled* (2008), in which four actors perform empty gestures and hyper-staged interactions within the optical illusion. In each of these works, as in the exhibition as a whole, the image hovers between approximations of stillness and the abstraction of unmoving forms.



Elad Lassry, *3 Variations on a Bob, Silver Grey*, 2006. Chromogenic print, 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of the artist; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; and Galleria Massimo De Carlo, Milan.