



Matthew Marks

links

Pilar
Parra &
RomeroGavin
Brown's
enterprise

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GALLERYYANCEY
RICHARDSON
GALLERY

Otero Plassart

ROSE
GALLERYDAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

P · P · O · W

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MAUREEN PALEY

GABINETE
DE ARTE
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500 WORDS

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Ann Carlson and Mary Ellen Strom

03.18.09



Left: Carlson/Strom, *Meadowlark*, 2008, still from a six-channel color video, 7 minutes 30 seconds. Right: Carlson/Strom, *Sloss, Kerr, Rosenberg, and Moore*, 2007, still from a single-channel color video, 4 minutes 30 seconds.

Choreographer Ann Carlson and video artist Mary Ellen Strom, frequent collaborators, recently created a six-channel video installation, *Meadowlark*, for their exhibition at the DeCordova Museum, in Lincoln, Massachusetts, on view until May 17. Here, Strom discusses their new work, as well as their use of spectacle and humor to provide spaces of reflection.

MEADOWLARK BEGAN, AS MOST WORK DOES, as a research project. The project involved the painter and illustrator Frederic Remington and his method of circulating imagery. In his painting *Indians Simulating Buffalo* [1908], Remington depicts a pair of Native Americans on horseback disguising themselves with buffalo hides. While this was not a practiced hunting method, the image reinforces the myth of the sneaky Indian. We worked with video and performance artist Bently Spang, who is Northern Cheyenne, to dismantle Remington's implied imperialist ideologies regarding both Native Americans and the impact of white American expansionists on the land. Bently and Ann are seen on horseback, masquerading as buffalo, speaking to each other in sign language, while a meadowlark sings in the background. The camera pans across a decimated landscape, an ecosystem transformed by one hundred years of unconsidered exploitation of natural resources. Although at first glance the landscape appears sublime, with a deeper look the viewer can see that it is threatened land, impacted by drought, clear-cutting, fossil-fuel mining, beetle infestation, and forest fires.

The work is presented as a ring of six screens; we were interested in mirroring the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century cycloramas that were about sensationalism—the San Francisco earthquake, the Galveston flood, the Chicago fire—but our hope was to create a contemplative space. It becomes about ways to bring the contemporary story of this landscape to urban museumgoers—not unlike Remington.

Meadowlark shares concerns with a site-specific work, *Geysers Land*, that took place in 2003 between Livingston and Bozeman, Montana. The spectators were on a passenger train. We projected video onto the mountain rock faces that the viewers would see. The work put the spectator in a tourist position. *Geysers Land* also shares ideas and meanings with *Four Parallel Lines* [2007], in the current exhibition. *Four Parallel Lines* is a collaboration with four men from Guatemala who work as day laborers. Its point of departure is Walter De Maria's *Mile-Long Drawing* [1968]. Our video was shot on a beach. The men draw four lines in the sand, and as they do this, over the course of eight minutes, the sea washes their lines away. That project is shown in tandem with a video called *Sloss, Kerr, Rosenberg, and Moore* [2007], which is a work made in collaboration with four lawyers. This work features the lawyers performing a movement and vocal score that references their work and lives.

For me, art-historical references function like a fantasy collaboration: a conversation with other artists, some of whom are alive, some of whom are dead, some of whom I am awed by or highly suspicious of, some who broke ground both figuratively and literally, as with De Maria. I am fundamentally collaborative in what I do, whether it's with Ann or day laborers or members of the Northern Cheyenne nation or a group of lawyers—or with animals. Our work *Madame 710* [2008], a three-channel installation, is on one level a conversation with Joseph Beuys's *I Like America and America Likes Me* [1974] and on another level about production and consumption. In Beuys's work, he had an interesting but contested relationship with a coyote. In *Madame 7-10*, Ann attempts communication with an industrial dairy cow named Gerri. Throughout, there is a Beckettian approach to a physicalized language: an attempt to think or to dance outside ideology. Working to build a substantive relationship with the animal, seeking intersections and likenesses, the human ultimately cannot be released from her position of consumer.

— As told to Dawn Chan

PERMALINK TALKBACK (0 MESSAGES)