

ARTNEWS

‘After the Fact: Propaganda in the 21st Century’ at Lenbachhaus, Munich

BY *The Editors of ARTnews* POSTED 06/21/17



Carlos Motta, *La Buena Vida* (The Good Life), 2005–8, 12-channel-video installation, flyer, and wood.

COURTESY THE ARTIST

Pictures at an Exhibition presents images of one notable show every weekday.

Today’s show: “After the Fact: Propaganda in the 21st Century” is on view at the Lenbachhaus in Munich through Sunday, September 17. The group exhibition “looks at the concept of propaganda in order to broaden its definition in light of the societal, political and technological developments of the 21st century. [The] goal is not to define propaganda as an obvious source of evil, as blunt, recognizable and passé, but as an analytical framework that is as potentially problematic as it might be helpful,” according to a curatorial statement. Participating artists include Coco Fusco, Aura Rosenberg, Hannah Black, Alfredo Jaar, Nancy Spero, Samuel Fosso, John Miller, Carlos Motta, and Josh Smith.

Here’s some additional information from the exhibition’s curatorial statement:

Propaganda is commonly understood as a strategy of blunt manipulation, easily recognizable to enlightened citizens, that takes place in totalitarian or authoritarian regimes. Most Westerners associate it with Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, North Korea or the so-called Islamic State.

[. . .]

With the 21st century begins a new era of propaganda. Geopolitical events such as the “War on Terror” declared by George W. Bush, the wars in the Middle East, and the introduction of the European currency, accompanied by an aggressive post-1989 process of globalization and the fast-paced development of digital technologies have lead to polarized fronts: Freedom Fighters and Terrorists, “political” and “economic” migrants, Wutbürger (German for “enraged citizen”) and mendacious press, the European Union as “haven” for some and imposition for others (Brexit) are binaries that characterize current public debates.

Most recently, the widespread usage of conspiracy theory by the right in the US has rendered visible the ideological co-ordinates of institutions long considered neutral and objective. The presence of ideological propaganda and mechanisms of control in all spheres of life has been brought to bear by the emergence of new terms such as “fake news”, “alternative facts” and “post-truth” in widespread political discourse.

