

The New York Times

THOMAS DEMAND

Through April 7. Matthew Marks,
523 West 24th Street, Manhattan;
212-243-0200, matthewmarks.com.

Thomas Demand is a hybrid photographer. He trained as a sculptor and is best known for making cardboard and paper models of momentous events and politically charged sites — the meager kitchen in Saddam Hussein’s last hide-out in Iraq or the nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan — and photographing them to look deceptively realistic. In his current show at Matthew Marks, however, Mr. Demand shifts his primary focus to recreating photographs taken with his cellphone.

In the front gallery the walls are covered with gray wallpaper depicting school or workplace lockers (overtones, perhaps inadvertently, of American school shootings). Two videos shown on monitors suspended from the ceiling and a handful of photographs reproduce saccharine or banal subjects that Mr. Demand photographed with his cellphone: a red bow tied to a fence, a box with electrical wiring, blinking stoplights and balloons attached to a plastic clip. In the rear gallery are three large photographs in Mr. Demand’s recognizable style, depicting the ruins of an unidentified bombardment, the interior of a barracks tent and the warmly lit workshop of a Bavarian violin



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maker — all near-perfectly sculpted in cardboard and paper and photographed.

The cellphone-derived works, titled “Dailies,” are not as dramatic or captivating as the historical scenes. And yet, they accurately depict the present, merging Mr. Demand’s anesthetized aesthetic with a world in which people are attached to their smartphones, capturing images they will never look at again. In this sense, Mr. Demand memorializes the banal and the forgotten with the same painstaking care he gives to more charged moments in history and suffuses the “Dailies” with an uncanny absurdity and pathos.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER