

ARTFORUM

Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler

LORA REYNOLDS GALLERY

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The psychological, interior world of cinema, with its complex temporality and ambiguity of reference, has long been central to the concerns of Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler. Their recent work explores the traces filmmaking leaves on the people and places connected to it. "Filmstills: The End," 2002, a photographic series on view at Lora Reynolds, records the facades of old, run-down movie palaces (continuing a theme from the 2008 video installation *Grand Paris Texas*). These were once grand monuments to modern life, distinctive and central in their small-town surroundings. Their decay suggests how modern life in these towns has fallen into ruin.

Also on view, the two-channel video installation *Méliès*, 2010, which along with *Grand Paris Texas* forms the first two-thirds of a planned trilogy, investigates the intriguing location Movie Mountain, in the Chihuahua Desert near Sierra Blanca in West Texas. It explores the probability that about a hundred years ago, Gaston Méliès and his film company, while relocating from San Antonio to California, got off the train in Sierra Blanca to shoot a film. Today, local residents recall their relatives working on some sort of silent film, but all the details are uncertain. Hubbard and Birchler use these faint wisps of connection to the past to generate a braid of overlapping narrative strands, music, and landscape vistas. Its pacing is characteristically meditative and unhurried.

The work invites comparison to a constellation of figures interested in open-ended, suggestive reflections on film, memory, and place. Wim Wenders and Méliès are specifically acknowledged as references; one might also add Larry McMurtry and Tacita Dean. In its seamless interweaving of history, memory, and fiction, Hubbard and Birchler's work is characteristically cinematic even as it is based in photography and video. It performs an archaeology of the cinematic for a postcinematic age.



Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler, *Dead Cat on Movie Mountain, Sunrise*, 2011, color photograph, 43 1/4 x 54 3/4".

— Benjamin Lima

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