

DANZIGER GALLERY

Biography

Corinne Vionnet

The French-Swiss artist Corinne Vionnet is a pioneer in the exploration and re-purposing of web based imagery. Beginning in 2005 (well before many other contemporary artists began layering j-pegs pulled from the internet) she began carrying out online keyword searches of vernacular images of tourist landmarks from around the world after observing that most snapshots were either conscious or unconscious renderings of existing imagery of that location. This led her to examine how we select the optimum spot from which to photograph a landmark and how we edit out that which is superfluous to our constructed reality of leisure. Where do we stand at the gateway to the Taj Mahal in order to render its architectural façade in perfect symmetry? Where do we stand at Mount Rushmore so as to frame all four American presidents on the same scale?

Vionnet pored over statistics on popular travel destinations and photo-sharing web sites. Thousands of these images went into the making of the series “Photo Opportunities” -

the artist’s commentary on mass tourism and its relationship to digital culture. Working with multiple images of different monuments, she collates around a hundred appropriated photographs for each of her layered, ethereal compositions. Underneath these beautiful ghost visions is a serious concern with how the persistence of formally repeated photographic compositions affects our cultural and historical awareness. The images that form the infrastructure of Vionnet’s works are mediated versions of the real. Landmarks such as the Parthenon, the Giza Pyramids, and the Hollywood sign float in a dream-like haze. Tourists appear as apparitional beings, allowing the viewers to insert themselves into the photograph and envisage an exclusive encounter with the scenery.

As Sontag aptly put it, excursions are often scripted successions of photographic mediations with the real – disruptions that distance us from any direct engagement with our environment. The construction and review of the contemporary travelogue allows us to draw out the nostalgic process of reflection so as to elongate and idealize experience over time. When shared online, these “photograph-trophies” assimilate into vast directories of indexical images.

In “Photo Opportunities” Corinne Vionnet theorizes our consumption of, and contribution to, these patterns in visual culture, providing a nuanced perspective that may provide inspiration for our own next photo opportunity.

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