

Maison de Regret

While we intuitively understand that there must be a connection between the diorama and photography, the direct and tangible nature of this relationship is surprising. Carl E. Akeley, the taxidermist responsible for



the Africa Hall at the Natural History Museum in New York, grew so frustrated with his camera equipment's inability to capture the wild that he designed his own camera. The Akeley Camera had its public breakthrough when it was used to film the racehorse Man-o-War win the Kentucky Derby in 1920 and when its innovative telephoto lens captured the Jack Dempsey vs Georges Carpentier heavyweight battle. On his last adventure in 1926, the Akeley-Eastman-Pomeroy African Hall

Expedition, that collected for 10 dioramas of the Great Hall, Akeley finally succeeded in filming African lion spearing. He was accompanied on this safari by a wealthy 71 year old man, travelling with his own physician and commanding his own railroad train. His name was George Eastman - of Eastman-Kodak fortunes We know that pictures are referred to as windows. We know that windows are used to symbolize spiritual openings, or portals even, through which the mind can embrace "life". Also the window creates a boundary for the very same act. We know it as a portal from the outside to the inside, a breach of privacy or a forbidden entry. The windows here, have literally been framed so as to become pictures. Maison de Regret balances between a sort of neo-realism, and a deadpan use of symbolism. It is a symbolism exhausted to

the extent that it seems undead and weirdly free. “Outside” a wind is blowing – an autumn storm maybe – and the yellow and brown leaves have been whirled up. Along with them we see other stuff with similar hues. Red and yellow and greenish paper money from different currencies, torn pieces of yellow and red Kodak photographic film wrappings. More than merely being the stuff of civilization, the photographic image as well as money are the ultimate translators of everything that constitutes our world. Both photography and capital are linked to possession. They both possess what Marx called “the property of appropriating all objects”.



Of course the very premise of modern exhibition making is the white cube and one of the white cubes most important qualities is that it is window less. These windows sit in those good taste oak shadow-gap frames so typical of 60s and 70s painting. A time connected with the emergence of the art market. Since then the visual art world has been tied to real estate from top to bottom. It has been walking hand in hand with gentrification, one of the biggest distorters of the distribution of wealth. We have the new Guggenheims, the new Whitney, we have the galleries moving to Harlem, we have artists moving to new cheap neighborhoods only to be kicked out as soon as their presence has rendered the area sellable to an

audience with money. All this goes to say that the windows in this piece are hybrid objects. They are symbolical and they are realistic.

While these pieces might evoke painting they obviously are not. For instance they do not have a back. Instead the wall of the gallery space becomes the background and the space between the window pane and the wall the depth needed for the primitive illusionistic trick of these Diorama like pieces. The term Diorama, etymologically means seeing through. Here we obviously don't see through anything. On the contrary *Maison de Regret* highlights conventions and stereotypes of the world we inhabit. These windows are very real signifiers of an inside and an outside – of inclusion and exclusion.

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