

NEW YORK

“Permutation 03.2: Re-Place”

P! // March 8–April 21

THIS EXHIBITION ADDRESSES the astounding capability of contemporary media to metastasize information: The most forgettable music video can spawn YouTube fan versions within minutes of its release, real news gets avalanched under Photoshopped fake news, and our memories accumulate around mediated images of our experiences. But this is hardly a surprise; the copy, in all its forms, may be the totalizing metaphor of our current cultural landscape.

What curatorial strategy can engage with such a dizzyingly overabundant theme? With a show

about copying, the world is your gallery. How to set the limits of the inquiry? P! takes an approach simultaneously concise (four artists) and expansive (wildly different subject matter and methodologies) to present ruminations on “replicas, remakes, and recurrences,” as the press release puts it.

Visible from the street, Margaret Lee’s fruit replicas are painted and placed in a black and white

polka-dotted storefront display. Though Lee presents her work like wares—set forth in the exhibition as a wry reminder of the gallery’s location on the edge of Chinatown, where small shops jostle one another to sell all manner of enticing goods, particularly fruit—this space of commerce is flattened and decontextualized, and made oddly unreal by the optical pattern.

In the gallery’s entryway, the voiceover for Oliver Laric’s ongoing video project *Versions*—available in different iterations online—speaks in the cool, detached Mandarin of an Air China flight attendant. The video presents an evolving collection of Internet memes, brief scenes from films, clip art, and other online flotsam, as the voiceover (speaking in British English in one online version) recites fragments of parables from various philosophical traditions. Some of these disconnected statements, such as “if you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup,” “an ax that has its handle replaced five times and head replaced four times,” or “upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow,” suggest that the replica may be the very thread that holds existence together: As soon as there was form, there was replication of form.

The remaining two works are more overtly concerned with the historical and national role of the copy. The Danish design team Abåke hacks the intaglio process by making digital prints of molds of Italian Renaissance statues that are reproduced in Copenhagen, then sent to Beijing. Filmmaker Amie Siegel presents *Berlin Remake*, in which she uses footage from forgotten East German films, reshooting each scene at its original location but without the actors. The new film, with its evacuated cinematic landscape, is shown alongside the old, eerily standing in for an unrecoverable past.

How do such works, which mine the contextual implications of the copy, sit alongside Laric’s *Versions* or Lee’s dots, which underline precisely the opposite: the possibility for iterations to exist within “the context of no context,” to repurpose George Trow’s term for the world created by television? For this exhibition, these differences don’t seem to matter: The show posits the copy as form, a medium unto itself, and as with painting or sculpture, examples of the medium take different guises. Here, each artist’s engagement with this notion is enough: No additional relationship—visual, historical, or otherwise—need exist between the works or artistic practices.

Yet despite the individual fascinations each of the artworks provides, presenting the copy purely in its multiplicity seems, somewhat paradoxically, limiting. Works that speak more directly to each other might have granted a more detailed account of each artist’s individual engagement with the ideas. Nonetheless, true to its theme of repetition, P! is presenting a series of programs around the notion of the copy, of which this exhibition is only the second. Perhaps over time, issues that could only be gestured at here will be further elucidated. —Nova Benway

RIGHT: Margaret Lee Installation view of *Dots*, 2013.

BELOW: Amie Siegel, Abåke Installation view of *Berlin Remake*, 2005, and *Pietà in Reverse*, 2012.

