

ARTFORUM

"Elsewhere"

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM
4202 East Fowler Avenue, CAM101
August 27–October 13



Olaf Breuning, *Home*, 2003, still from a two-channel color digital video with sound, 32 minutes.

This exhibition foregrounds notions of being elsewhere, largely through abrupt juxtapositions, displacements, and the conflation of fiction and documentary, in which the viewer is projected abroad, into other historical eras, or into the distorted psychology of the characters themselves. In Olaf Breuning's comical two-channel video *Home*, 2003, a raving-mad protagonist is transported out of himself in several vignettes, including one in which he tours Peruvian mountains and another in which he materializes as a pathetic cowboy in the middle of a classic western shootout. Stuart Hawkins's video *Souvenir*, 2006, chides American foreign policy by telling the story of a fictional leader of the United States who sends his assistant on an absurdist colonialist mission to find, capture, and return a mythical creature called the Co-Co Man from Nepal. Equally surreal is Emanuel Licha's two-channel video *Preparing for Serious Events*, 2007, which depicts hooded vandals torching the facade of a tourist office while gleeful cheerleaders chant "Burn it to the ground!" Illustrating how the concrete rendering of a mythical place quickly yields a site for tourism, Patty Chang's fanciful installation *Shangri-La*, 2005, features a selection of "souvenirs" from Zhongdian, China (a town that has declared itself the "real" Shangri-La), including a fantasy bridal video and a mirrored mountain. But most profoundly, Joachim Koester's 16-mm film *Message from Andrée*, 2005—a collection of reclaimed photographs of a fatal exploration of the North Pole by balloon in 1897—depicts a spectral elsewhere that is suspended between historical document and the purely fictional. The exquisitely abstract montage of damaged and erased photographs bears an indexical, and also iconic, relationship to the blizzard conditions, flowing water, and other elements that destroyed the negatives and stranded the crew. Here, Koester, like many of the artists in this show, produces an "elsewhere" that collapses the production of art, as well as the production of history and myth, into a singular form.

—Gregg Perkins

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