

David DiMichele

BY LESLIE MARKLE

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In David DiMichele's new photographic series, "Pseudodocumentation," large-scale images of imagined art installations question the documentary function of photography within the gallery context. DiMichele's process is to create scale models of exhibition spaces, "install" work in them (including appropriately diminutive viewers), and then photograph the lot. Ending up as huge light-jet prints, these meticulously detailed maquettes inevitably belie their much smaller originals and relatively scaled installations. Evoking Daniel Buren's trademark pinstripes or Robert Smithson's piles of dirt, they nonetheless don't record actual shows but openly present themselves as cons. This merging of fakery and fact establishes the slippery ground on which art as mediation always lies.

Pseudodocumentation: Inside the White Cube (2006) shows a model museum interior with everything in dazzling white—the walls, ceiling, mural-scale monochromes, and assortment of monumental white cubes. While immediately referring to Brian O'Doherty's seminal *Artforum* essays published in the mid-1970s, the work also calls to mind Robert Rauschenberg's white paintings shown at Black Mountain College in 1951, as well as numerous cubes by Tony Smith and Richard Serra, while the architecture quotes the vernacular of Sol LeWitt. Furthermore, the whole conceit paraphrases the kinds of installation that Robert Irwin and Bruce Nauman practiced in the 1970s, where the phenomenology of space and spectatorship are mutually called into question.

Generally speaking, the muted color of the prints reflects the appropriate ambiance of the models until one stumbles across the presence of small brightly colored plastic figurines which, functioning as digital avatars or miniature surrogates, effectively permit viewers to project themselves into the work. Over time, subtle gradations of color and valence become increasingly apparent, further directing attention to the viewing experience as an artificial byproduct of carefully nuanced and diffused lighting.

In *Pseudodocumentation: Desert Disks* (2007), we see three monumental saucers hovering in a modernist setting, flanked by grand picture windows. The forced perspective of this image mirrors the totalizing effect of minimalist sculpture, while the juxtaposition between the richly nuanced interior and stark desert landscape seen through the windows points to the artificiality of the abstract sublime. While clearly alluding to Donald Judd's Marfa installations, to the uninitiated it might as well be a pirated image of a UFO carport.

What DiMichele puts under the microscope is the ritualistic sameness of installation art, which in its most typical expression foregrounds presence and absence in the unfolding field of spatiotemporal experience—here portrayed as more a style of art world dress-up à la Cindy Sherman, albeit without the stockings and garters. For example, the formal similitude between installation model and pseudo-documentary photography tends to subvert the authority of both, foregrounding the experience of art as one of endless mediation. Though this strategy has the aroma of the simulacrum, its end result seems less critique than a jolting of the imagination to infinite possibilities—in miniature.



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