

Rebecca Bird Grigsby

MFA Thesis Exhibition
what lies between here and there

November 29 to December 16, 2007

Mixed Media Installation
(cardboard tubes, painted paper, miscellaneous hardware, shelving,
digital photographs, wooden frames, snow globes, glitter, postcards)
Approximately 10'w x 8'h x 24'd

Statement

This project is, in short, inspired by the Parthenon, including the physical site of the ruins in Athens, Greece, the Elgin Marbles housed in the British Museum in London, England, and the full-scale replica of the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee. The subject of my installation is the fragmentation, dislocation, and replication of the Parthenon. The project represents an effort to investigate the idea of place and the complicated relationship between an original and its copy. Equally interesting to me is the examination of our desire for “authentic” experiences. As Hugo of St. Victor wrote, “not to deny the possibility or importance of a connection to a particular place, but rather to maintain a sense of active engagement with it.”

The installation incorporates architecture, print media, and concepts of the souvenir to represent the complex impressions of travel (specifically trips to London, Athens, and Nashville), and to explore notions of authenticity, artifice, and desire. Though my memory of the Parthenon has become a composite of these experiences, I cannot deny the overwhelming impression of visiting the ruins in Athens. As Graham Binns writes about the history of the Parthenon, “Despite every disaster, what remains is magical.” Was the emotional response a product of some inherent “authenticity,” the specifics of my experience (the anticipation, the heat, the hike up the Acropolis, the difficulty of travel), or a combination of the two?

The photographs, postcards, and souvenirs I brought back from my travels – not unlike the photographs, postcards, and souvenirs I present in this installation – are traces of my experiences. Inherent in all three are a longing and desire for the experiences that they mediate, “authentic” or otherwise. As Susan Stewart writes, “The souvenir must be removed from its context in order to serve as a trace of it, but it must also be restored through narrative and/or reverie.” This installation aims to restore some of that narrative in an experience that, ideally, exists for the viewer somewhere *between* the real and the mediated, the “authentic” and the artificial.

You are invited to participate...

The three series of postcards against the outer wall are based on screenprints of the photographs presented in the center of the installation. Using the CMYK printing process and attributing a color to each location, the postcards create a conceptual composite that the viewer is invited to further disperse (and perhaps fragment) by taking a set for themselves upon leaving the exhibition.

Additionally, for the opening reception, I invited gallery visitors to participate in the opportunity this installation presents to photograph myself and the viewer in front of my recreation of the Parthenon. The images are available to view and download by going to the Flickr web page indicated on the cards next to this binder.

Acknowledgments

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