



project:rendition

JC²

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project:rendition was a collaborative project that incorporated elements of installation, printed agitprop, audio, and performance into an interactive environment. The project was produced by JC², a collective comprising the artists Joy Episalla, Joy Garnett, Carrie Moyer, and Carrie Yamaoka. The exhibition took place in May–June 2007 at Momenta Art, an artist-run charitable institution in Brooklyn that promotes emerging and underrepresented artists.

project:rendition used the enactment of “rendering” to examine military policies hidden from public view. The term *extraordinary rendition* refers to the clandestine kidnapping and extradition of suspected terrorists to countries where they can be interrogated and tortured beyond the reach of the U.S. judicial system. While extraordinary rendition is generally reserved for supposed high-value suspects, subtler forms of political repression, state-induced terror, and disenfranchisement are common, insidious, and long-standing. Throughout history, similar acts have proved effective means of rendering individuals and entire populations politically mute or existentially invisible.

The centerpiece of project:rendition was a tall, five-sided structure made entirely of mirrored panels and functioned as an inverted panopticon, or surveillance tower. Upon entering the “pod,” would-be voyeurs instantly became specimens to be observed, able to see only their own reflections multiplied endlessly in the one-way mirrors. Alternatively, visitors

could choose to stay outside in the “safety” of the darkened gallery and watch other audience members subject themselves to the brightly lit pod.

The project drew lines of connective tissue between text and action. Copies of John Winthrop’s 1630 sermon “A Model of Christian Charity” were made available to visitors as a free silk-screened broadside. Winthrop’s seminal text has been a touchstone for countless U.S. politicians over the past two hundred years, including Ronald Reagan in

his “Shining City upon the Hill” speech and

George H. W. Bush in his “Thousand Points of Light” address. Intended as a cautionary tale, Winthrop’s sermon has since morphed into a philosophical foundation for American exceptionalism and its contemporary manifestation, superpower hubris.

As installation, project:rendition invoked a theatrical space that alternated or reversed roles of spectatorship and performance. JC² invited musicians, artists, and writers to give readings and performances in the space throughout the duration of the exhibition. Viewers’ and performers’ fleeting sense of personal power and vulnerability were tested as expectations and conventional parameters for behavior were rendered in flux or illegible. Lines were blurred between contradictory states of being: paranoia and security, privacy and voyeurism, power and vulnerability, self-awareness and self-absorption, engagement and indifference. Which side are you on? Are you in or out?





Donna Evans shadowboxes on opening night.

**FOR WE MUST CONSIDER
THAT WE SHALL BE AS
A CITY UPON A HILL.
THE EYES OF ALL PEOPLE
ARE UPON US. SO THAT
IF WE SHALL DEAL FALSELY
WITH OUR GOD IN THIS
WORK WE HAVE UNDER-
TAKEN, AND SO CAUSE
HIM TO WITHDRAW HIS
PRESENT HELP FROM US,
WE SHALL BE MADE A
STORY AND A BY-WORD
THROUGH THE WORLD.**

**JOHN WINTHROP, A MODEL OF
CHRISTIAN CHARITY (1630)**



EXCERPTS



ANNA BLUME

performing a selection from “[Euphemism]”

June 17, 2007, 3:00 p.m.

As I stand in this panopticon of interrogation and I speak with the language of authority, perhaps like someone teaching a class, I am confronted with the multiplicity of my own image and a sense of fear, fear that I don't know where I begin, where I end. But more importantly, where is my connection to those who have been rendered elsewhere? Those who have been tortured in the name of my country's freedoms. They are not my freedoms—when you torture another being you have tortured me as well. And how do I connect to that? It's a question I feel very much within this space. . . .

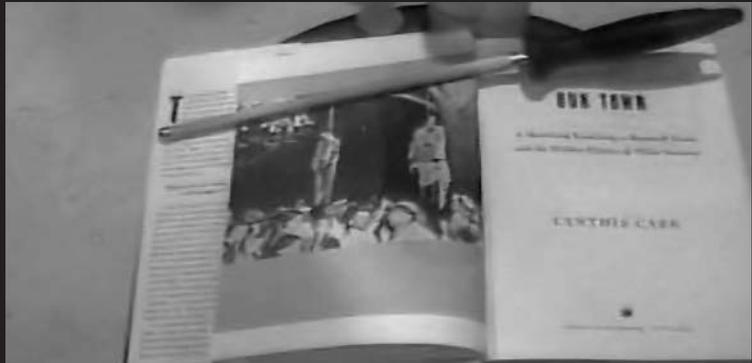


DAVID LEVI STRAUSS

reading from an unpublished work

June 17, 2007, 5:00 p.m.

In the six years since September 11, Bush & Co. have changed what Americans think about themselves. Out of fear—the seed of terror—has grown a terrible complicity and stupor. . . . The question the rest of the world is asking now is this: What are these new Americans—unrestrained by tradition, loyalty, or law—capable of? People don't believe in reality anymore. They believe in images. And this belief makes it possible for them to be manipulated through images. Images and words matter. The symbolic world, the world of phantasms, matters. We are all subject to it. And since this is where artists and writers go to work, I believe we have a special responsibility to try to unmask the propaganda and to decode the messages being sent out on American screens, and to try to counter them with different words and images—to imagine other ways of thinking and acting.



CYNTHIA CARR

June 17, 2007, 2:00 p.m.

reading from her book Our Town: A Heartland Lynching, a Haunted Town, and the Hidden History of White America (New York: Crown, 2006)

[Klansman Jim Ferguson liked to refer to his klavern as “the lodge.”] He said: “Things are coming true today that we predicted twenty and thirty years ago. That the country would bankrupt itself with all the giveaway programs.” Back in the 1960s he’d written critiques of welfare, affirmative action, and integration. He had felt great discouragement but was heartened now by the country’s growing conservatism. “A year ago the whole lodge got together for a meeting, the first we’d had in about five years, and they’re planning on another one this winter. With people being a little more receptive to right-wing ideals, the Klan may become visible again. That’s just something being discussed.”



DR. KAY TURNER PURGES THE POD

June 24, 2007, 2:00 p.m.

reading from the Associated Press, “Twenty-Three Detainees Attempted Suicide in Protest at Base, Military Says,” January 25, 2005

Twenty-three terror suspects tried to hang or strangle themselves at the American naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in a mass protest in 2003, the military said yesterday. The coordinated actions were among 350 “self-harm” incidents at the prison that year, including 120 so-called hanging gestures, said Lt. Col. Leon Sumpter, a spokesman for the detention mission. In the protest, the 23 prisoners tried to hang or strangle themselves with pieces of clothing and other items in their cells from Aug. 18 to 26, the United States Southern Command in Miami said in a statement.



A FOGGY MIST HAS COVERED ALL THE
LAND, WHERE SKULLS AND BONES LAY
SCATTERED IN THE DUST. TEXAS WHITE
HOUSE BURNING, ALL GOOD DEEDS UNDONE,
AMERICA AWAKENING TO ITS OWN INFAMY,
THE DEVASTATION OF THE CYPRESS OF
CHAPULTEPEC. FULL OF ROAD RAGE, HIS
SPLEEN SPITTING BLACK TOBACCO JUICE,
WRATH STANDS BLINKING IN THE DARK.
YOU KNOW HE HAS NO GOVERNMENT OF
HIS HANDS OR HIS TONGUE. PALE ASH
ANGEL OF THE APOCALYPSE, A BLUSH
OF CORAL ON HIS SKIN - HE SEETHES FAT
ONTO THE FIRES OF FRANCIS OF ASSISI,
HE CAN'T UNPACK THE WORDS THAT PATIENCE
NEEDS TO PROPERLY ENTOMB THE DEAD.
INSTEAD, AGAINST A DOOR HE BANGS HIS HEAD.

WILLIAM ALLEN

reading his poem "Wrath," from The Seven Deadly Sins

June 17, 1007, 2:00 p.m.

project:rendition Participants

WILLIAM ALLEN is a poet and painter. His poetry books include *The Man on the Moon* (1987) and *Sevastopol: On Photographs of War* (1997). His art and poetry can be seen at www.ekphrases.com.

JAKE ARAUJO-SIMON attends Stuyvesant High School in New York City.

ANNA BLUME is a professor of art history at the School of Visual Arts and the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. She writes and teaches about translation and the interaction of cultures.

CYNTHIA CARR was a columnist and arts reporter for the *Village Voice* from 1984 until 2003 under the byline C. Carr. She is now at work on a biography of the artist David Wojnarowicz.

JOY EPISALLA is a member of JC². Her photographic, video, and sculptural work has been exhibited in the United States and abroad. She is a longtime AIDS activist and a founding member of fierce pussy, the lesbian public art collective.

DONNA EVANS is a printmaker. She was a member of fierce pussy and has performed with the WOW Café Theatre.

JOY GARNETT is a member of JC². Her paintings reenact appropriated news photographs. Her exhibitions include a solo show at the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., in 2007.

CARRIE MOYER is a member of JC². She is a painter, writer, and cofounder of the public art project Dyke Action Machine! She is an assistant professor at the Rhode Island School of Design.

DAVID LEVI STRAUSS is a writer and critic. He is the author of *Manoeuvres: Poems* (1980), *Between Dog and Wolf: Essays on Art and Politics* (1999), and *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* (2003), among other works.



Jake Araujo-Simon, piano recital: Debussy and improvisations.

KAY TURNER is the folklorist for the Brooklyn Arts Council. She is the author of *Beautiful Necessity: The Art and Meaning of Women's Altars* (1999), among other works.

CARRIE YAMAOKA is a member of JC². Her reflective and optically charged paintings of Mylar encapsulated in resin have been exhibited widely over the past decade. She is a member of fierce pussy.

JC² thanks Bryan Webster for his technical assistance.