



MICHAEL BOSWORTH  
PAPER WALLS

March 18 to May 6, 2011

Michael Bosworth received his MFA in photography from the University of New Mexico, a BFA in Art and a BA in English from the University at Buffalo. Recently a part of Beyond/In WNY 2010, he has exhibited work at galleries such as the Sean Kelly Gallery(New York, NY), Burchfield-Penney Art Center(Buffalo, NY), Visual Studies Workshop(Rochester, NY), Rochester Contemporary Art Center(Rochester, NY), O'Connor Gallery of Art(Chicago, IL), Big Orbit Gallery(Buffalo, NY), CEPA Gallery(Buffalo, NY), and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery(Buffalo, NY). His Commissioned public art project include the Main Street/Art Street Windows Project and Herd About Buffalo. Bosworth is currently a Professor in the Photography Department of Villa Maria College in Buffalo, NY.  
[www.aesthetocracy.com](http://www.aesthetocracy.com)

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The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts



**HALLWALLS**  
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Revisiting a year-old conversation with artist Michael Bosworth around the topic of an imaginary “iron chef” art competition, Bosworth was invited to enter Hallwalls’ gallery space and recycle installation materials previously used by artist Tim Roby who had himself recycled materials from a previous gallery construction. The proposition was not brought forth as a coy attempt to illustrate gallery sustainability or to cut against the grain of an artist’s practice—in the case of Roby, recycling materials is a common trope in his sculptures and installations and in the case of Bosworth, it was an invitation to further his explorations in constructing and reconstructing reality.

With a background rooted firmly in photography, much of Michael Bosworth’s exhibition practice over the past decade has involved the manipulation of imagery within mutable and shifting exhibition environments. While he has exhibited singular and diptych photographs, his more prevalent practice has involved an ever-shifting landscape of projected images, often involving screens and projectors built by the artist. Video images projected from within bulbous forms; through projectors made of insulation materials and heated, nearly boiling water; light emanating from beer case projectors, through actual beer; life-sized zoetropes; even video images ensconced within the compact form of a beer can. Bosworth has rarely settled on a single means of image production or presentation, preferring instead to treat the image and how it arrives before an audience as an ever-shifting landscape of forms and ideas.

In this context, it’s immediately intriguing that his installation *Paper Walls* would appear to be absent of any photographic or video imagery. Instead, Bosworth chose to rework the materials at hand into a set piece describing a mid-rebellion moment, with two large trebuchets ready to fire more chunks of drywall over a wall and through an architectural structure, threatening the throne which itself rests atop its own rubble pile. It’s sheer coincidence that Bosworth mounted a rebellious scene in an exhibition taking place at the height of the Arab Spring of 2011

because, as Bosworth himself notes, rebellions are like natural disasters—they’re always taking place somewhere. (Disasters have also figured as a recurring trope in Bosworth’s work.)

While there is a comic aspect to Bosworth’s mis en scene—his fast and dirty construction style recalls a boyish fort-building aesthetic—there is also a quixotic mystery to the scene. Most significantly, amid the low-fi construction, Bosworth has inserted some of the most contemporary visual monickers available, a series of QR codes layered upon the paper walls facing off against the trebuchets. These high tech signifiers—also cut by hand from available scraps of drywall—are the entry points to the visual imagery at first presumed absent from Bosworth’s piece.

Via smartphone barcode scanners, the QR codes direct the viewer to a series of black and white images on the artist’s website depicting “surveillance” shots captured around the White House (the QR codes remain live, if scanned from this brochure). Photographing “public” sites in Washington D.C. is an ambiguous equation—often discouraged with a tripod, often ignored without—and Bosworth’s images play with the mysterious space of photographing a site that is wrapped in security while simultaneously functioning as “the Peoples’ House,” ostensibly belonging to the public. In this fashion, the images accentuate the post-9/11 psychological edge of public spaces, private notions, security, and free and open dialogue.

The ambiguity of these security-style images plays into the viewer’s use of them. By capturing the QR codes and accessing these images via the artist’s website, the viewer becomes complicit in their transmission. They have accessed surveillance photography of the White House. It’s a deft and elegant gesture tucked within an installation that, on first glance, appears playfully cobbled together. That this constructed reality contains a dark ambiguity within is a subtle hint that we are running short of playful spaces. There are edges of darkness and fear in all directions.

That he has also literally constructed a “white house under siege” in the gallery is as much a coincidence as anything. Not since the latter days of the Nixon administration has the real White House actually been barricaded (with buses) against protestors, but it also remains true that any White House and any occupant therein is typically under some sort of metaphoric siege.

Or perhaps it is that we are all under metaphoric siege.

John Massier  
Visual Arts Curator

