



Photo: Dan Meyers



Alexandra Grant *¿Dónde está la escalera al cielo?*, 2007



Cover Images:

Alexandra Grant, *nimbus II* (after Michael Joyce's "nimbus"), 2003
Bernhard Hildebrandt, *THIS IS NOT KOSUTH*, 2007
Mary Temple, *Southwest Corner, Northeast Light*, 2007 (cover and left panel)

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Alexandra Grant
Bernhard Hildebrandt
Mary Temple

double-take

the poetics of illusion and light

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contemporarymuseum



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With painting, photography, video, and sculpture, artists Alexandra Grant, Bernhard Hildebrandt, and Mary Temple create images and environments that challenge perception, often creating works that harness the evocative potential of light and shadow. Visual slights of hand, the provocative doubling of meanings and images, and a poetic and refined aesthetic unites the artists in *Double-Take* creating a dialogue of seductive and richly-layered works.

Images and meanings double in the works of Baltimore-based artist **Bernhard Hildebrandt** who skillfully merges and manipulates illusion and reality through works in painting, photography, video, and neon word sculpture. Hildebrandt's ongoing *stereo series* exemplifies these pursuits as well as one of the central explorations of his artistic practice—an aesthetic and conceptual investigation of the relationship between painting and photography. Creating one of his stereo works begins with Hildebrandt painting a highly glossy monochrome surface in either white or black. The resulting minimal painting is then hung in Hildebrandt's light-filled studio and photographed in 35mm, producing a twin of the painting that captures some of the details of the room as reflected in the painting's surface. Streams of sunlight and the subtle patterns of shadows cast by nearby walls and window mullions animate these photographs. Although both the painting and photograph represent the same thing, are sized identically, and are hung side-by-side, they nonetheless seem to belie their relationship. Hildebrandt's camera lens has captured so many otherwise overlooked and fleeting visual details created by light and reflection that it is at first difficult to read these two images as each other's double.

To further complicate this relationship between his paintings and their photographs, in two recent works entitled *Anna* (2007) and *Anna Alarmed* (2007), Hildebrandt has removed the painting and its photographic representation and instead presents a short stop-action video animation created with several frames of his photographed paintings. Because a figure is now reflected in his painting's glossy surface, these animated photographic sequences create a disorienting and frenetic sense of movement. With these videos, as in his stereo works, Hildebrandt presents provocative visuals and a layered play with perception that challenges how we see and what we see, while continuing to explore the relationship between the original art object and its representation.

Hildebrandt follows this line of inquiry with two recent works that challenge artistic authorship and originality. *THIS IS NOT KOSUTH* (2007) is a neon word sculpture that boldly asserts its identity in relation to artist Joseph Kosuth. One of the pioneers of Conceptual art, Kosuth is known for neon word sculptures that he created during the 1960s and 70s that reduce the art object to its corresponding language. Kosuth's influential legacy is playfully evoked by Hildebrandt with text in blue neon tubing that underscores his related interests in dismantling the creative act to its essential conceptual elements while also making a nod to René Magritte's iconic and paradoxical surrealist work *This is not a pipe* (*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*) (1929).

In *Unerased de Kooning Drawing* (2007), Hildebrandt intervenes in another famous artistic gesture--Robert Rauschenberg's erasure of a Willem de Kooning drawing in 1953 as an act of his own art. Although there were no known photographs taken of de Kooning's drawing before



Alexandra Grant, *nimbus II* (after Michael Joyce's "nimbus"), 2003 (installation view)

Rauschenberg's irreversible act of destruction, there was another de Kooning drawing on the verso of the paper of which a photograph does exist. By manipulating a digital image of this little-known drawing, Hildebrandt was able to both erase and "unerase" the original de Kooning on video, in effect, repeating Rauschenberg's act of erasure while examining the meaning and relevance of this iconoclastic appropriation.

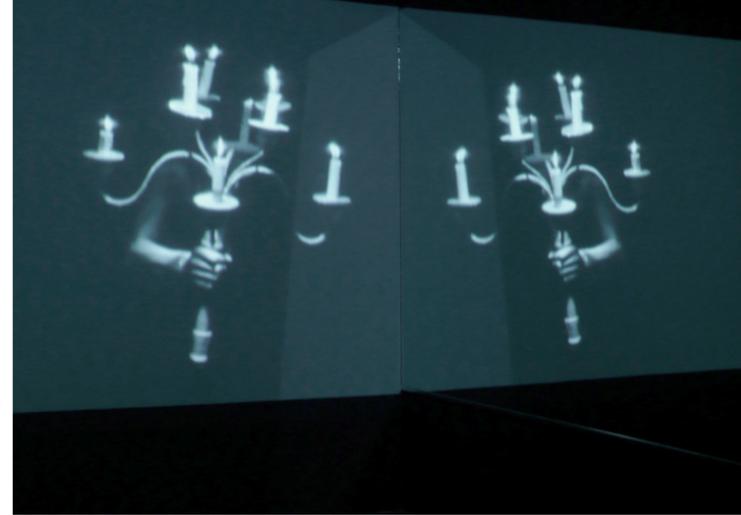
In other recent video works, Hildebrandt has mined memorable scenes from classic films with a similar intention of unpacking the underlying meaning and lasting impact of indelible images. In large-scale installations like *The Corridor* (2007) Hildebrandt loops and doubles iconic movie tropes to produce mesmerizing and at times disorientating visual experiences. In *The Corridor*, Hildebrandt has isolated and looped a short clip from Jean Cocteau's 1946 film *La Belle et la Bête* (*The Beauty and the Beast*), amplifying the haunting and dreamlike quality of the scene. With lit candelabras being carried infinitely in a dark corridor, heightened by Hildebrandt's addition of a howling wind soundtrack, this work evokes the suspense of a movie scene that has lodged in the artist's memory. By doubling this cinematic fragment with a large mirror hung at a right angle to the projected image, the suspense and surreal quality of this haunting clip becomes further augmented while allowing for the possibility that the reflection of the viewer might also enter into this uncanny scene.

While Hildebrandt's work suspends time in an infinite video loop, works by Brooklyn-based **Mary Temple** seem to freeze time altogether. Temple's large site-specific trompe l'oeil paintings introduce the faint outlines of shadows on gallery walls and floors giving the appearance of sunlight streaming through a window. Although her chosen gallery spaces have no corresponding windows, and in many cases, no windows at all, Temple's shadowy painted outlines of windowpanes, tree branches, and bushes trick the eye as they appear to dapple the walls and floors with washes of sunlight. In *Southwest Corner, Northeast Light* (2006), for example, Temple has suspending a moment of sunlight streaming through a large window. Although this scene is a physical impossibility in the museum's windowless space, the painted illusion is convincing, almost causing a sense of warmth from the portrayed sunlight. Temple writes of these works, "I'm relying on the viewer to

complete my architectural intervention by conceptualizing a window and borrowing from past experiences with light in space." Often in these installations, a viewer's memories of such past experiences are so strong, and Temple's painted surfaces so believable, that the eventual revelation of Temple's subtle artifice is often met with disbelief, since both the eye and the mind have reached a conclusion in startling opposition to the reality of the delicately painted gallery walls.

In a series of screenprints entitled *Light Describing a Room (Dark)* (2006) and *Light Describing a Room (Light)* (2006), Temple translates her fictitious sunlight from real architectural space to imagined two-dimensional space. In these two works, Temple has delineated elaborate and improbable architectural interiors, each subtly articulated with layered projections of light that seem to originate from multiple sources. To create these works, Temple used a colorless gloss gel on black paper to create the somber interior of *Dark*, and printed with white on a white paper to produce the sun-drenched room of *Light*. As a result of this tone on tone printing, the various angles of these spaces, the light streaming onto the floors, and the shadows cast on the walls, are all barely discernable, and are dependant on a viewer's vantage point. At certain angles, Temple's subtle interiors even seem to disappear. "The success of the print," writes Temple, "is dependent on the viewer finding and figuratively triggering the light." As with her site-specific paintings, Temple's prints actively engage the viewer in her skillful manipulations of reality and perception.

Temple's interest in visual illusion translates to video in *Landscape Train* (2007) a work that captures the rare appearance of natural light in the New York City subway system. Streaming down the walls, these incongruous subterranean strips of light become almost cinematic as they appeared to Temple in the cave-like darkness of a subway platform. Twenty minutes of footage in real-time are compressed in this video to three as Temple captures the movement of fleeting sunlight as it traverses the subway wall before disappearing under the tracks. With *Landscape Train*, Temple presents a wonderfully incongruous scenario, as nature appears to rush by, seemingly building speed, while passengers stand stationary on a dark subway platform.



Bernhard Hildebrandt, *The Corridor*, 2007



Bernhard Hildebrandt, *Untitled* 2007

The illusionist qualities of light and shadow are set into motion with hypnotic effect by Los Angeles-based artist **Alexandra Grant**. In *nimbus II* (after Michael Joyce's "nimbus") (2003), Grant explores the mutable nature of language and the metaphoric potential of light and shadow with a large orb-like sculpture in twisted wire filigree. In creating this work, Grant meticulously shaped several gauges of wire to create an infinite line drawing with embedded passages of text. Hanging from the ceiling like an ephemeral cloud, when *nimbus II* is brightly lit against a white wall, its silver surfaces shimmer as its linguistic forms cast a delicate shadowy double of words on the gallery walls. Meaning is fleeting and ever-changing, however, since Grant's textual nimbus is slowly rotating on its axis like a celestial body, constantly bringing words in and out of focus. Momentarily legible, *nimbus II* teases, as fragments of passages seemingly become coherent and linear, until the words rotate out of focus and out of view, and meaning is once again obscured.

The conceptual and textual raw materials for *nimbus II* are words from the hypertext poems of writer Michael Joyce. A genre of electronic literature, hypertext poems like Joyce's are interactive, non-linear, and open to many possible narratives. With wire filigree words set into perpetual motion, Grant gives dynamic visual form to Joyce's linguistic electronic networks while evoking the constant and incessant flow of information and the pursuit of meaning in our digitally mediated world.

Often presented as a companion to *nimbus II* is Grant's custom wallpaper entitled (*¿dónde está la escalera al cielo?*) (2007). Before the many wire segments of *nimbus II* were joined together, Grant digitally photographed these fragments to allow her to create an intricate custom wallpaper. Printed on white paper, Grant's images of her wire and text forms link together in a playful and meandering web of words and wire. Installed in a non-repeating scheme, the wallpaper produces a field of line, text, and shadow, appearing almost as if it were drawn directly on the gallery wall, or even, that segments might actually exist in three dimensions. As with many of the conceptually and visually complex works in *Double-Take*, light and shadow conspire in Grant's dynamic wallpaper installation to produce a convincing optical trick and a captivating illusion that demands more than just one double-take.

- Irene Hofmann

Works in the Exhibition

Alexandra Grant

Born in Fairview Park, Ohio, raised in Mexico City and Paris; lives in Los Angeles

¿Dónde esta la escalera al cielo?, 2007

Inkjet on wallpaper
Dimensions Variable; Edition of 10
Printed by Lapis Press, Los Angeles
Courtesy of the artist and Honor Fraser, Los Angeles

nimbus II (after Michael Joyce's

"nimbus"), 2003
Wire, motor, light; 5 feet diameter
Courtesy of the artist and Honor Fraser, Los Angeles

Bernhard Hildebrandt

Born Fitchburg, Massachusetts; lives in Baltimore

Anna, 2007

Single-channel digital video of animated 35mm photographs of a polyurethane enamel painting with sound; 37 seconds
Courtesy of the artist

Anna Alarmed, 2007

Single-channel digital video of animated 35mm photographs of a polyurethane enamel painting with sound; 1:26 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

THIS IS NOT KOSUTH, 2007

Neon; 3.75 x 46 inches
Courtesy of the artist

The Corridor, 2007

Single-channel black and white video with sound and mirror

Courtesy of the artist

Unerased de Kooning Drawing, 2007

Single-channel color video with sound
2:07 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2005

Polyurethane enamel on Plexiglas (left panel) and digital C-print on Plexiglas (right panel); 43x96 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled, 2007

Polyurethane enamel on Plexiglas (left panel) and digital C-print on Plexiglas (right panel); 32.25x72 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Mary Temple

Born in Phoenix, Arizona; lives in Brooklyn, New York

Southwest Corner, Northeast Light, 2007

Latex paint on existing architecture, hardwood floor, stain, varnish
12x13x12 Feet
Courtesy of the artist and Mixed Greens, New York

Light Describing a Room (Dark), 2006

Screenprint on a Somerset Black Paper
30x44 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mixed Greens, New York

Light Describing a Room (Light), 2006

Screenprint on a Somerset White Paper; 30x44 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mixed Greens, New York

Landscape Train, 2006

Single-channel color video with sound; 3 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Mixed Greens, New York