

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON TRUTH

By Mary Voelz Chandler

The complexity of the human mind and the smudgy line between knowing what is true and what is not are the quandaries at the heart of two new exhibitions on view at MCA DENVER.

Or should I say "two more new exhibitions," since in a four-week period MCA DENVER has popped out three new installations, keeping true to its mission to have something new to look at all the time? No wonder it is so close to meeting its goal of 50,000 visitors within the 12-month period after it opened late last October. (The revamped MCA DENVER Web site - thank you, what an improvement - keeps track of the figure for those who follow that sort of ephemera.)

But what's in the galleries is the important information here. In the Photography Gallery, that's collaged photographs by Jane Hammond, a New York-based artist who works in numerous mediums but is attracted to the added element of collage.

And in the New Media Gallery, Berlin-based Omer Fast's video *De grote Boodschap* (*The Great Message*) mesmerizes as it runs on a loop and has, really, no beginning and no end.

Instead, Fast finds ingenious ways in which to connect the lives of four different pairs: an aging woman addicted to pills and her caregiver; a young woman and her boyfriend; a real estate agent giving a mysterious man a tour of the apartment where the now-dead aging woman lived; and a flight attendant and her unemployed husband.



A PRODUCTION STILL FROM OMER FAST'S 2007 *DE GROTE BOODSCHAP* (*THE BIG MESSAGE*). PHOTO BY ERIK DE CNOTTER.

The action takes place in adjoining rooms in the same building, so Fast appears to merely move through walls as he eavesdrops on conversations that range from treachery to jealousy to self-absorption to the suggestion of malice.

Often, works of new media are so self-referential (and self-reverential) that it is difficult to stay focused on what is happening. In *De grote Boodschap*, though, the big message is clear: The inner workings of the psyche continue to amaze and amuse, especially as disparate people interact by chance.

Meanwhile, in the Photography Gallery, MCA DENVER executive director and chief curator Cydney Payton has selected work from three series by Hammond to keep us guessing about how the artist has assembled such witty and remarkable imagery.

That's because in one series - "Starring Roles" - the key is to find Hammond in each work; she has superimposed her face, and assembled numerous images, to create each photograph. In "The Others," Hammond takes us to exotic locales made even more exotic by her assemblage of elements. And the works in "Early Men" assume the nature of an anthropological adventure, with the aura of really odd postcards purchased along the way.

The installation wraps up in a display case of snapshots in which Hammond is the central figure, inserted in situations of all sorts.

In both exhibitions, viewers are asked to confront their humanity and their definition of what is true - not a bad charge at any point in time, but particularly appropriate during days of political, economic and psychological turmoil.



JANE HAMMOND'S 2007 SELENIUM-TONED GELATIN PRINT MEN. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GALERIE LELONG, NEW YORK.