

Ruby Satellite at the UCR/California Museum of Photography, Riverside, California

Named after the deus ex machina that Russell Weston thought would save the world from a dreaded disease—and which he stormed the Capitol Building in Washington to find, killing two guards in the process—this exhibition brought together works that addressed at least one of three interconnected themes: violence and sexuality, dogma and disillusionment, and faith and dystopia. The resulting assembly brimmed with images in which the reportorial authority of newspapers and news sites collapsed into the feverish rumormongering of blogs and chat rooms. Paranoia ran deep, but it ran in both directions; the artists' social and psychological unease mirrored our own.

The two-man collective Industry of the Ordinary provided the show's one take-home souvenir: a midsize placard, white letters on blue, that declares VOTE FOR ME in Arabic script. Similarly, the found photographs that Magnum photographer Thomas Dworzak brought back from Afghanistan also played on Islamophobia, but amped up that paranoia by allowing the photographs to mock the macho fundamentalism of their own subjects, namely Taliban members whose likenesses—supposedly forbidden by strict Islamic rules—Dworzak found in Kandahar already garishly retouched.

Uniformed authority came under the critical scrutiny of several of the artists, including Yoshua Okon, who bribed various Mexico City guards and policemen to dance for his video camera; Annika Larsson, who fetishized riot gear; and



Industry of the Ordinary, *Democracy*, ink on paper (each 11 x 17 in.) 2004, infinite edition.
Courtesy the artists

Nicoline van Harskamp, who represented three European capitals (London, Berlin, and Amsterdam) by their police and security guard garb.

Other authority figures, both state sanctioned and countercultural, received a jaundiced eye in Kota Ezawa's tape-loop animation, which turns intellectual and pop-culture icons such as Beuys, Sontag, and Lennon/Ono into poster-flat abstractions; Wei Guangqing's silkscreens, which play with Ming Dynasty children's behavior manuals (bringing forth their proto-Maoism); and Adam McEwen's appropriation of one of the last century's more gruesome, and yet more hopeful, war photos, the 1945 shot of Mussolini and his mistress, dead and hung upside down like beef

carcasses—only McEwen has upended the image so that the pair seems to be jumping or even flying. Conversely, Paul Chan ironically valorized self-declared antiauthoritarians—anarchists, Black Panthers, Yiddish leftists—using an FBI-developed software program to zoom in on their upper lips.

Bringing together artists from several continents, the exhibition, curated by Ciara Ennis, found as much fantasy as it did disquiet in the current state of generalized fear. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of our age of anxiety, these artists would seem to caution, is the addictive quality of its delirium.

—Peter Frank