

INSPIRATIONS

# Lisa Klapstock shares Clint Griffin's eye for garbage

Clint Griffin makes other people's photographs his own and then gives them back to the world. He turns private into the universal and addresses the condition of alienation prevalent in contemporary urban society. Griffin recycles garbage: He salvages snapshots from the dumpster of his photo shop and transforms them into art. He scratches, punctures, tears, cuts, staples, sews, draws, and paints on these found photographs, rarely putting his finished work behind glass; rather, he makes temporary site-specific installations that are often stapled directly to the gallery wall.

There's an immediacy to Griffin's work that is manifested in his informal techniques. This immediacy, combined with painstaking precision — evident in the selection of images and the dissection and reconfiguration of the snapshots — results in a provocative tension, which has consistently struck me in his work. His most recent installation, *Leaving room for movement and making room for movement* at Toronto's Mercer Union, was no exception.



*Clint Griffin's leaving room for movement and making room for movement, 1999.*

From a distance, this piece looked like an erratic musical score, dotted with colour, measuring 4.5 metres across a pristine white wall. The abstract nature of the work drew me in for a closer inspection that revealed, to my amazement, hundreds of minute human figures frozen in motion. The piece was a patchwork of colour snapshots of crowd scenes with all but

the crowd obliterated. Griffin had joined people together with a zig-zag sewing machine stitch, and the resulting "quilt" was fastened to the wall with industrial staples and whitewashed around the edges with latex wall paint.

In his found snapshots, he undermines the personal by erasing it — he literally scratches away the context. In doing so, he simultaneously makes the images accessible to all and displaces the photographic subjects. I share his interest in this decontextualization of photographic content through "reframing," and in the resulting transformation that, as Griffin writes when describing his row of houses, dislocates the subject to "the point of non-belonging." There is a redemptive quality to his work because he finds value in that which others have discarded. I, too, am interested in finding alternative meaning in the overlooked.

While Griffin reclaims and transforms the actual found object in his work, I transform found fragments of marginal urban architecture and detritus into abstract, autonomous

photographic objects. The tension in my work is between the entropic subject and its controlled seamless presentation.

Although Griffin and I both work with photographic medium, it is not always apparent upon first viewing. Our work neither belongs to the world of conventional photography nor traditional art-making. I feel a kinship with Griffin through his work and I am inspired by the intimacy he employs in consistently making compelling art from the discarded.

*Lisa Klapstock is a Toronto photographic artist whose work can be seen during May at Archi and Gallery 1313 in Toronto.*



*Lisa Klapstock's Excavations, 1998.*