

PRESS RELEASE

DAVID LEVINE

Hopeful

March 20 – April 25

François Ghebaly is pleased to announce the exhibition “Hopeful”, a project by New York-born and Berlin-based artist David Levine. “Hopeful” is the result of several years of collecting and cataloguing discarded unsolicited portfolios. Levine has assembled this material to analyze cultural waste in a tangible way, while also displaying human-scaled statistics in an industry where everyone is trying to be discovered.

Los Angeles is an emblem of the American dream, where actors migrate to reach their success. Today, ninety-nine percent of the estimated twenty-five thousand headshots submitted to Los Angeles and New York agents weekly, are routinely thrown out. The number of those few who succeed is minute when compared to the millions who try and fail. The images presented all differ in proportion, pose and appearance, but collectively contain the same underlying desire to succeed. Ironically, Levine offers the actors the access to voyeurism that they strive for, exposing the conventions and pretensions of creative professions across the cultural field.

David Levine’s practice is an anthropology of cinema, theater, acting and spectating. His use of techniques ranges from sociology à la Michel de Certeau to dramaturgical methods of Bertolt Brecht and Constantin Stanislavski. Levine’s research becomes a discussion of the space between reality and theater, the unsaid mechanisms that put them in motion, which then are collapsed together. The artist’s projects tend to be immaterial, performance-based and potentially unnoticeable even to the most attentive audience.

Beginning with his fieldwork in 2005, sifting through refuse and collecting dossiers, the installation at François Ghebaly Gallery illustrates the frequency of effort and the seasonality of hope in Levine’s work. “Hopeful” maps out a parallelism of the relentless self-promotion of the art world by revealing a semiotics of solicitation. Reflecting high-gloss productions costs, Janus-faced versatility, an effort to seem both specific and generic, cover letters on fine paper, feigned first-name use, free tickets to “off-off” premieres; all of these elements amount to an intense quantity of material and a portrait of the undiscovered and emerging.

An index of phraseologies plumbs the depths of brazen confidence and last-ditch efforts. We bear witness to paradoxical questions regarding the nature of a material that has passed through states of being: an investment of several hundred dollars per subject, a range of self-portraiture voluntarily given away like a message in a bottle, then discarded with the junk mail, and now found; its financial value transformed into an epistemic one.

David Levine is participating in *Symposium: Audience Experiments* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in May of this year. He recently produced the interactive performance “Venice Saved” at PS122 in New York. In 2006, Levine received a grant from the Kulturstiftung des Bundes to produce the action and film Bauerntheater. Levine’s performances and projects have been seen at: Documenta XII, Gavin Brown’s Enterprise @ Passerby, Townhouse Gallery (Cairo), FEINKOST, Galerie Magnus Muller, and various theater and performance spaces throughout the U.S. Other projects, including “Hopeful”, have been profiled in Cabinet magazine, who presented this exhibition in their project space in 2009. Levine’s newest project, HABIT, will be presented at Robert Wilson’s Water Mill Center, Mass MoCA, and Toronto’s Luminato Festival in 2010-11.

Text by Aaron Moulton

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