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# Michel Auder's Images of Images

Jonas Mekas has called Auder a “voyeur par excellence.”

by Adina Glickstein



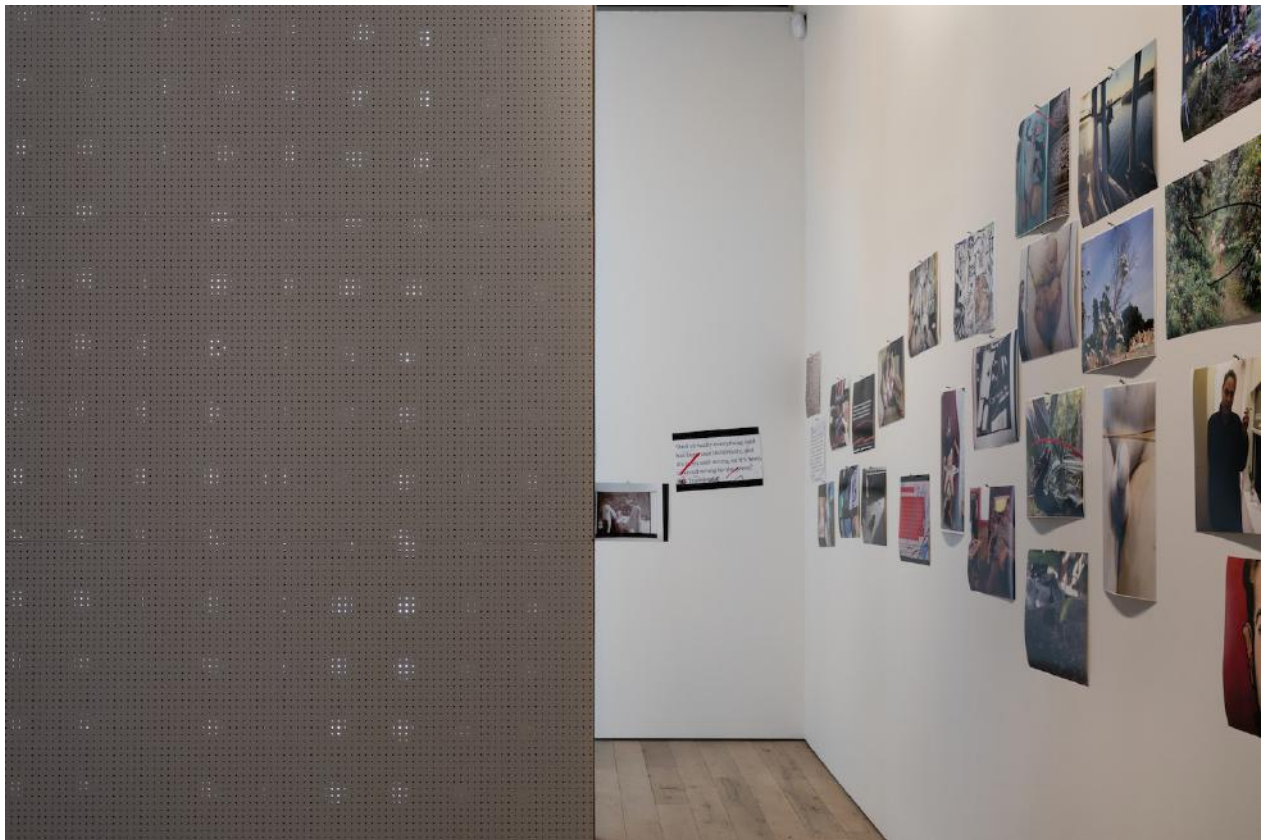
Michel Auder, *And virtually everything said has been said incorrectly, and it's been said wrong, or it's been covered wrong by the press* (2018), mural of 91 artist-printed photographs, dimensions variable; installation view (all images courtesy Martos Gallery)

The title of Michel Auder's current show at Martos Gallery — his second solo exhibition in the space — reads like stratagem for subverting criticism at the outset: *And virtually everything said has been said incorrectly, and it's been said wrong, or it's been covered wrong by the press.*

A warning shot in the form of a sheet of printer paper is taped to the door of the

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Chinatown gallery: *This exhibition contains graphic images that may not be suitable for children.* Indeed, the series of C-prints ranging across the floating walls (built by Auder's former collaborator, the artist Servane Mary) cordoning off the show's central vestibule, are provocative not only in content, but in sheer volume. Secured crookedly by thumbtacks and arranged in conspiratorial clusters, these images resemble the pinned-up evidence collected by a frenzied detective, a motif reinforced by the floating walls' pegboard texture and the jagged lines and annotations that cut across the photos, sporadic markings from an inconclusive investigation.



Michel Auder, *And virtually everything said has been said incorrectly, and it's been said wrong, or it's been covered wrong by the press* (2018), mural of 91 artist-printed photographs, dimensions variable; installation view

These prints, presented as evidence, taunt you to find a connection among them: lush forests and a transcript of Eric Garner's last words; paintings in ornate frames and internet porn stars banging long into the night, alongside highlighted texts



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from Rimbaud and Hilton Als.

Somehow, the more information you take in, the harder it is to assemble any kind of coherent message; the only pattern that emerges is the lack of pattern. The prints that line the walls seem only to have one thing in common: they all reveal themselves to be mediated, images of images — photos of paintings and desktops and iPhone screenshots. Gesturing towards the questions of mechanical reproducibility that have nipped at the heels of image-makers since the advent of the printing press, Auder dares you to whip out your phone, snap a shot, and layer on to the mediation matrix.



Michel Auder, *And virtually everything said has been said incorrectly, and it's been said wrong, or it's been covered wrong by the press* (2018), mural of 91 artist-printed photographs, dimensions variable; installation view

The photos taper off. Respite? Comprehension? Not today. Stunned and slack-jawed, you find yourself ushered into a semi-enclosed screening room. Two benches jut outward from a floating wall, perpendicular to a massive projection.

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The odds are good that, at whatever moment you wander in, you'll be greeted by a larger than life-size still photo of our President's face, cropped and rotated at an unsettling angle, no doubt captured while accenting the wrong syllable of some racially charged invective. A title card in garish purple script announces the name of the video, which loops to a Matthias Grübel soundscape, reverberating through the gallery: *TRUMPED*.

The photo of the video's eponymous subject is interspersed with images, moving and still, as confounding as those slapped along the walls: a distressed-looking cat fades to a windowsill strewn with dying potted plants, more iPhone screenshots, Insta-Thot nudes, and their equally naked precursors from art history. Surveillance footage seeps in for good measure, along with newsreels from the neo-Nazi descent on Charlottesville and disarmingly inoffensive home videos. You're narcotized before the slideshow's mesmerizing loop, inhabiting a media landscape that's eerily familiar: Auder has elevated the ickily banal hypermediation of any "relaxing" afternoon at home, online shopping and swiping through Tinder while CNN drones in the background, to the realm of fine art. In so doing, he leads you to a couple of conclusions: every image in the show is political — even the kids with the shark balloon, even the Instagram photos from Documenta — insofar as it indexes the vulgar ideological conditions of its production; the overwhelming experience of image saturation is a condition unto itself, not unlike a psychedelic trip.



Michel Auder, "TRUMPED" (2018), HD video, color, sound by Matthias Grübel, 8:55 minutes

Auder has been active since the early 1960s, long before the onset of infoglut. This is precisely the magic of his oeuvre: over years of imagining technological change, as the exhibition's [press release](#) puts it, as “an extension of his body” and “an ongoing archive,” Auder has developed a strategy for coping with the rapid change and ramped-up mediation that have now become causes for alarm. In 1991, legendary experimental filmmaker Jonas Mekas wrote an [appreciation](#) of Auder’s “magnificent love affair” with continuous recording, christening him a “voyeur par excellence.” But the voyeurism that Mekas ironically calls, complete with scare quotes, a “sickness,” is actually a form of play that enables Auder to achieve radical intimacy by revealing poetry of details that otherwise go unnoticed.

Whether the contemporary hysteria of image-mediation is a real signal of world’s end or just this generation’s apocalyptic imagination hopped up on Juul fumes and FourLoko, Auder’s work sketches out a coping mechanism that never veers into

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reactionary territory or engages with the politics of caps-lock liberal outrage. Rather, it undertakes a far more valuable project: questioning how this saturation might be embraced, how the radical path might actually involve carving out spaces to frolic amid the madness.

Michel Auder: And virtually everything said has been said incorrectly, and it's been said wrong, or it's been covered wrong by the press *continues at Martos Gallery (41 Elizabeth Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan) through August 3.*