



MARK MOORE GALLERY | **JOSH AZZARELLA**
STATEMENTS

JOSH AZZARELLA

STATEMENTS

Mark Moore Gallery: *Statements* introduce a featured gallery artist through images and candid interview. From noteworthy early examples to present bodies, the works featured in *Statements* act as an overview of the varying practices and movements implemented by a given artist in tandem with their thoughts and interpretations.

Josh Azzarella (b. 1978, Akron, Ohio) creates videos and photographs that explore the power of context in the authorship of memory, oftentimes utilizing seminal moments in pop culture and news media to create accessible confrontations with historiography. By illuminating the individual encounter with communal experiences, Azzarella evaluates the perception of realness – which can ultimately be rooted in both the fantastic as much as the pragmatic.

Azzarella was the recipient of the 2006 Emerging Artist Award and a solo exhibition from The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (CT). He has previously shown at DCKT Contemporary (NY), Kavi Gupta Gallery (IL), Academie der Kunste (Berlin), Sean Kelly Gallery (NY), and Catharine Clark Gallery (CA). His work is included in the permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

JOSH AZZARELLA

Interviewed by: Catlin Moore, Mark Moore Gallery Director

You've stated that your work typically explores "the authorship of memory." Can you please expound on this overarching theme, and how you initially gravitated towards it?

Originally, I wasn't working on the authorship of memory. I began this body of work attempting to answer two related questions:

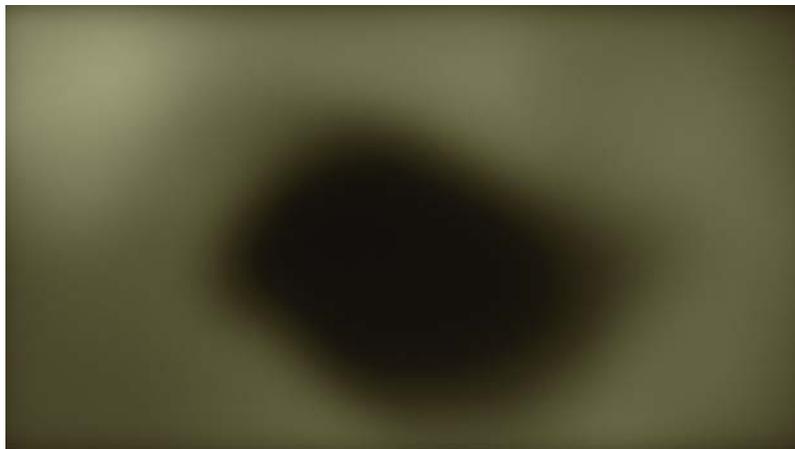
First, whether there is an inherent energy to an image and, if so, how is it affected by manipulation or reconstruction of the image? This investigation has lineage in my black and white formal photographs of post-rubber Akron (1998-2003); I was attempting to make photographs of absence that reflected the vitality that once was.

Secondly, I explored how slowly a moving image can be moving before it's no longer considered to be a moving image. What kind of energy does this slow-moving footage retain of the original action?

It was in investigating these two questions that led me to consider the veracity and authorship of our memories: If images contain an energy from the events they depict, and those images can be manipulated, can I form, erode or confuse our collective and personal memories?

The source material utilized in your work ranges from the highly popularized to the more obscurely historical. Does equally employing these two distinctive genres create a larger dialogue within your work?

I view my manipulation of both well-known and obscure imagery as an equalizer; once the subject of the event is removed, I believe all



stills from: *Untitled Study #2*, 2010.



of the images hold the potential to contain an event of significance – they become studies of memory and anticipation.

A result I didn't expect was the amplification of the original memory in some of the well-known images and footage once the events were removed. I've seen people watch *Untitled #6 (W.T.P.2)* (2004) and gasp every time the plane flies past the buildings – as if reliving the event over and over every eleven seconds. I've also encountered viewers who have created some disturbing narratives around the lesser-known images, and some of those images could be considered positive or emotionally neutral in their original form.

How is one's perception of reality – or even experiences beyond his/her realm of understanding - explored in your work?

Obviously, I'm working with the idea that there might be multiple realities or multiple experiences of a single event. But further, I want to unseat peoples' comfort with images they may have held closely for years.

In my 2010 exhibition in New York, I showed manipulated cinematic images together with historical and personal images, deliberately blending those realities and asking the viewer to construct new narratives.

The process of historiography is oftentimes at the center of debates surrounding archival practices. As someone who spends a great deal of time delving into visual records of both the past and present, how do you feel this methodology has shifted over time?

An interesting aspect of the type of research I conduct is that I'm often finding the frame before or after the "iconic" image, and using parts of them to manipulate the more famous image. People seem to almost willfully forget other frames of an event just as often as those frames are

"deleted" by the historiographic process – because knowing these other images takes away from the power of the single iconic image.

The methodology of historiography has changed, most notably by having a multiplicity of voices, but this multiplicity of voices has its own pitfalls. It used to be that the victor wrote the history. Now, we can see an event on the news, and also find personal images and accounts through blogs and social media. There are so many authors of memory, that it is sometimes difficult to assemble them into a whole.

Your video works call for an incredibly meticulous, laborious process. When you begin a new project, what technical elements need to be considered? What does that process entail?

I consider only what I want the final work to be, and then work to solve the technical issues as I encounter them. When working with video, the first thing I figure out is how many frames will need to be produced and stored, how many giga- or terabytes of storage will be needed for the working and final versions as well as backups. I also need to determine whether my computer will be adequate to render the most complex sections of the video in a reasonable amount of time. I currently have a piece rendering in the studio on multiple computers and due to the complexity of the final work, that step is taking just over one month to finish each section of forty-six sections.

When beginning the manipulation, I don't always know what might be involved. I'm constantly learning or figuring out new techniques to solve new problems. In one of the earliest video works - *Untitled #7 (16mm)*,

2004 - I began utilizing multiple techniques that failed or had to be rethought, including testing 3D models of the former President's head and shoulders. Ultimately, I concluded that salvaging from other footage and images from that day looked more integrated. This meant, however, that each frame had to be doctored individually.

Later, when working on *Untitled #100 (Fantasia)*, 2009, doctoring each frame individually was ineffectual for some pedestal or panning camera shots. To solve this problem, I rebuilt one image of the scene in the computer, projected the image planes onto virtual planes created in the software and then moved a virtual camera through the space. I thought I'd invented it when I finally figured it out. It turns out it's called "camera mapping," and has been a technique employed by CGI artists for some time.

Since you work in both photography and videography, how does your approach to one medium differ from the other?

My approach toward both is the same - I approach everything as a still image or set of still images. Which, admittedly, has been daunting at times when I see that there are over 17,000 frames in a work.

However, a key component to my studio practice is learning - learning how to manipulate and break the rules of the software to make it work faster, better and more seamlessly. If the manipulated works are lined up in a row, one can see my hand and technique very clearly in the early works. However, over time I have become better at what I do and my hand is slowly being eradicated. It's this constant learning and refinement of process that has allowed me to make the twelve-minute *Untitled #100*

(*Fantasia*), 2009 in eighteen months, whereas my first eleven-second video work took almost two years.

There have been times, however, that I simply can't figure out how to do something and this is reflected in the skipped numbers in my title sequences. I often consider returning to abandoned works and trying to solve the problems I was facing, but newer works always feel too crucial and unyielding to allow me to return to something previous.

“Azzarella’s interpretation of the classic offers a landscape that’s ripe for new fantasies.”

– Paul Laster
Flavorwire, 2009

When you select your content – be it abstracted footage of "Shock and Awe," Michael Jackson's "Thriller" or amateur photos shot by soldiers overseas – what are the compelling characteristics that flag it for consideration? Do visual traits ever take precedence over subject?

For many works, I choose an image for its impression and influence on the memories within our collective consciousness, not for particularly personal reasons. However, in the early stages of research I'm often most interested in and drawn to the formal qualities of a photo or video. Some days I look through hundreds of images and employ the same process as when I was photographing in the streets of Akron; if something makes me look twice, then there's something there to investigate. If I flip through eight hundred images in a day, and I'm still thinking about a certain image one hundred images later, then I need to go back.

How do you feel censored or informal narratives function in your work, versus the commercialized or familiar?

I acknowledge that it seems like a totally different investigation to choose



images that few will recognize, as opposed to iconic ones, and then remove the event from them. What interests me especially in the personal and informal images is how they're created by the untrained, by someone engulfed in an event rather than outside it. Often our well-known collective historical images are produced by someone observing an event from the outside as a part of a job. The two have an inherently different energy.

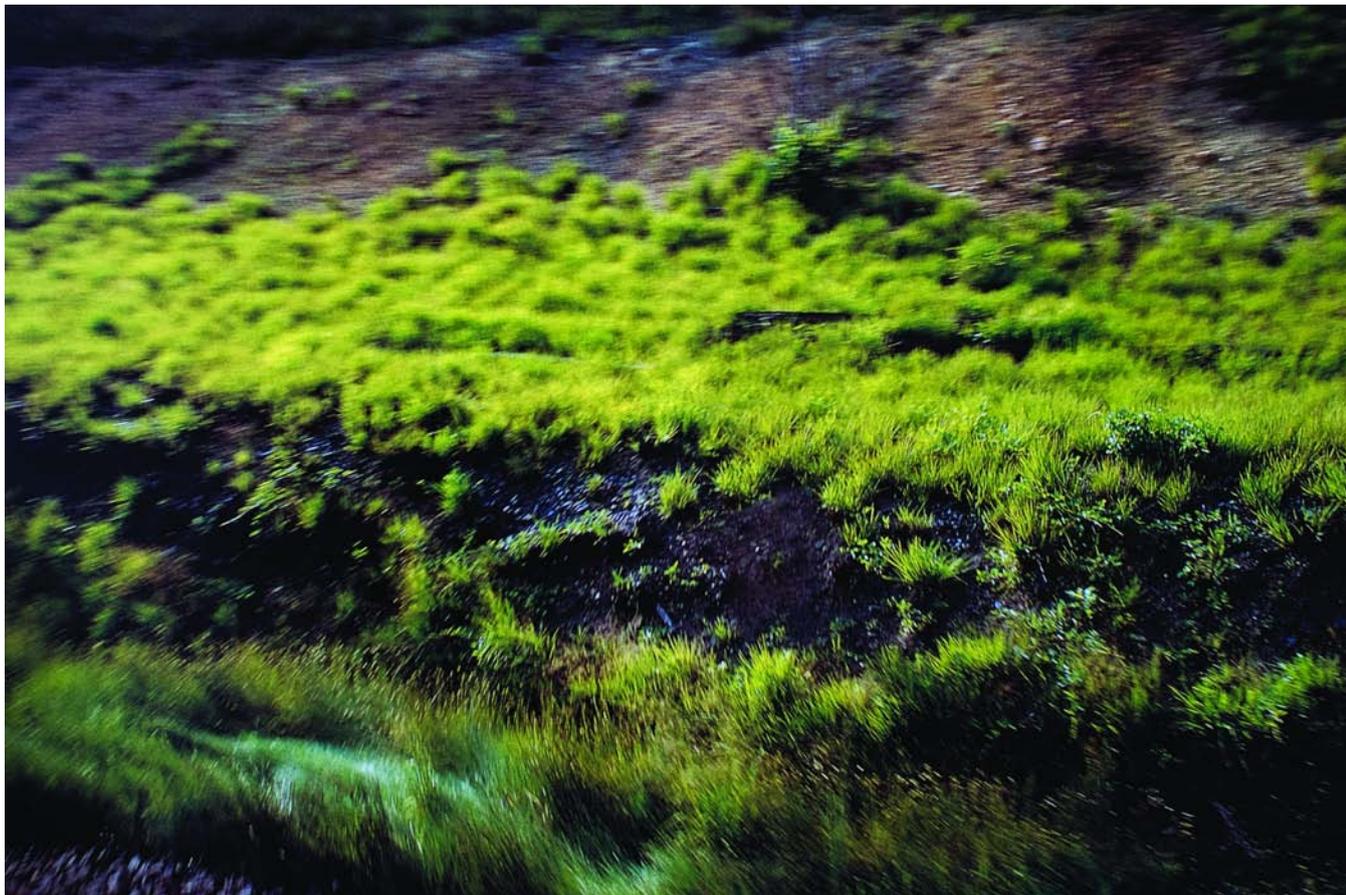
If access wasn't an issue, what kind of content would make for your ideal project?

Access is not an issue. With the internet access becoming faster and storage becoming less expensive, higher resolutions and more comprehensive archives are becoming readily accessible to everyone (i.e. The Library of Congress online archive, NASA Commons on Flickr). This has made my research and creation much easier in some respects.

My ideal project is always what I'm currently working on. I allow the in-progress and recently completed work to inform the upcoming works. I recently began production on an iconic Hollywood feature length film, one I've been quietly talking about since 2007. Hopefully it will be finished in late 2012, and will be *Untitled #150*.



stills from: *Untitled #100 (Fantasia)*, 2007 - 2009, 12m 6s, Ed. Blu-ray 5 + 1ap
Collection of Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA



Untitled #88 (Glenn), 2009. 8 x 12 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, Cibachrome



Untitled #122 (HAHO), 2010. 15 x 22 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, Cibachrome



Untitled #120 (Flushing), 2010. 13 x 18 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, silver gelatin print

**“Azzarella's edited images
represent art as lucid
dreaming, self-consciously
willing away the nightmare
of history.”**

– Ben Davis, *The Village Voice*, 2008



Untitled #86 (Lopez), 2009. 10 x 10 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, Cibachrome



Untitled #114 (MacGuffin), 2010. 13 x 18 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, silver gelatin print



Untitled #115 (HH-60), 2010. 12 x 18 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, Cibachrome



Untitled #51 (L=kSV²C_L), 2009. 25 x 38 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, silver gelatin print



Untitled #57 (Pruss), 2009. 28 x 38 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, silver gelatin print



Untitled #49 (Christian Rath), 2008, 22 x 17 inches each, Ed. 3 + 1ap, silver gelatin print



Untitled #50 (LES), 2008. 5 x 8 inches, Ed. 3 + 1ap, silver gelatin print



Untitled #43 (PAR115311), 2007. 20 x 30 inches, Ed. 7 + 3ap

“Because our memories automatically fill in these blanks, Azzarella’s radical revisions don’t blot out the traumas; they revive and reinforce them.”

– The New Yorker, 2008



stills from: *Untitled #46 (The Awful Grace of God)*, 2007.
2m 16s, Ed. DVD 7 + 3ap
The Margulies Collection, Miami, FL



stills from: *Untitled #36 (Loan)*, 2007. 24m 10s, Ed. DVD 7 + 3ap



Untitled #38 (Bryan), 2007. 20 x 30 inches, Ed. 7 + 3ap, C-print; Collection of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA



Untitled #20 (Trang Bang), 2006. 20 x 30 inches, Ed. 7 + 3ap, C-print



Untitled #33 (Balcony), 2007. 20 x 30 inches, Ed. 7 + 3ap, C-print



Untitled #13 (AHSF), 2006. 20 x 30 inches, Ed. 7 + 3ap, C-print



Untitled #15 (Tank Man), 2006. 20 x 30 inches, Ed. 7 + 3ap, C-print



Left:

stills from *Untitled #7 (16mm)*, 2005. 0m 11s, Ed. DVD 5 + 5ap
Collection of Western Bridge, Seattle, WA
Collection of JP Morgan Chase, New York, NY

Below:

stills from *Untitled #6, (W.T.P.2)*, 2004. 0m 11s, Ed. DVD 5 + 5ap
Collection of Western Bridge, Seattle, WA
Collection of JP Morgan Chase, New York, NY

Right:

stills from *Untitled #8*, 2004. 2m 31s, Looped Ed. DVD 7 + 3ap



“Josh has integrated new technology with our image obsessed culture to ask historically thought provoking questions.”

– Modern Art Obsession, 2008



BIO

Josh Azzarella

Born 1978, Akron, Ohio

Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York

Education

2004 MFA, Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, NJ

2002 BFA, Myers School of Art, University of Akron

Solo Exhibitions

2011 Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

2010 DCKT Contemporary, New York, NY

Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

2009 Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago, IL

DCKT Contemporary, New York, NY

2008 Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago, IL

Second Street Gallery, Charlottesville, VA

DCKT Contemporary, New York, NY

2007 Two Person Exhibition, Lawrimore Project, Seattle, WA

2006 Lisa Boyle Gallery, Chicago, IL

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT

Group Exhibitions

2010 <Metadataphile>, Begovich Gallery, California State Fullerton, Fullerton, CA

Fear of Flying, Christopher West Presents, Indianapolis, IN

Cue: Artists Videos, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada

Never Records, No Longer Empty, New York, NY

2009 *UltraSonic IV*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

The Aesthetics of Terror, Akademie der Ku.nste, Berlin, Germany

Paradox Now, Arlington Arts Center, Arlington, VA

2008 *Art in the Age of Uncertainty*, Sonoma State University, Sonoma, CA

Say Goodbye To..., Colgate University, Hamilton, NY

Aldrich Undercover, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT

Group Exhibition, The Heder Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel

Doppelganger, Mason Gross School of the Arts, New Brunswick, NJ

Lawrimore Project Biennial, Lawrimore Project, Seattle, WA

Cancelled, Erased, Removed, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, NY

Speaking to the Unspeakable, Catharine Clark, San Francisco, CA

A New Reality: Black-and-White Photography in Contemporary Art,

Stedman Gallery, Rutgers University, Camden, NJ

2007 *A New Reality: Black-and-White Photography in Contemporary Art*,

Walsh Museum, Fairfield, CT

Noorderzon, Groningen, Netherlands

Crash. Pause. Rewind. Missoula Art Museum, Missoula, MT

A New Reality: Black-and-White Photography in Contemporary Art,

Zimmerli Museum, New Brunswick, NJ

2006 *Home: Living With Contemporary Art*, Indianapolis Museum of

Contemporary Art, Indianapolis, IN

Some Things Which Are Funny and Some Things Which Are Quite

Serious, Lisa Boyle Gallery, Chicago, IL

Coming Home, Emily Davis Gallery, University of Akron, Akron, OH

New Images, New Image Gallery, James Madison University,

Harrisonburg, VA

Activating The Medium, Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo, CA

Activating The Medium, SF Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

New Media / New Work, New Media Caucus of the College Art

Association, Boston, MA

Crash. Pause. Rewind. Western Bridge, Seattle, WA

2005 *Cash and Carry*, Lisa Boyle Gallery, Chicago, IL

Photo National, Lancaster Museum of Art, Lancaster, PA

Disputed Territories, City Without Walls Gallery, Newark, NJ

1st Year Out, Temple University, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA

AtoD, Gallery 1f, Brooklyn, NY

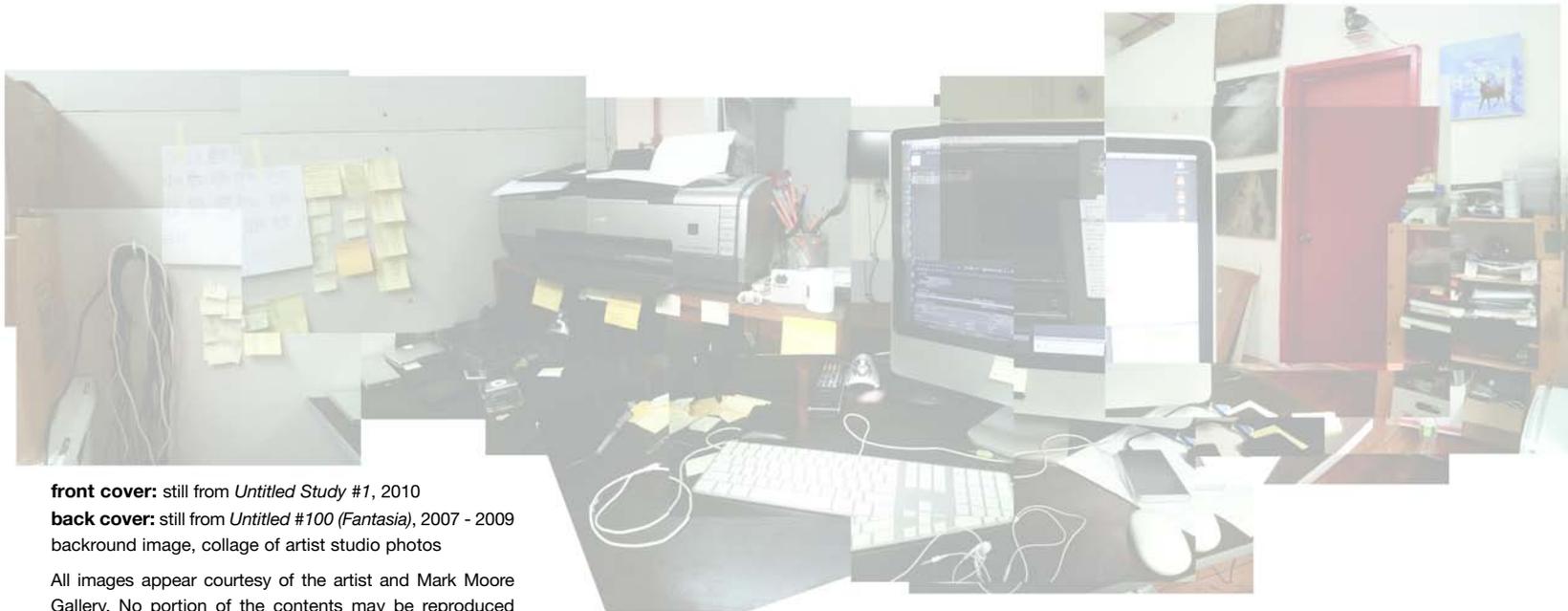
- Spring Video Show*, 7hz, San Francisco, CA
New Jersey Fine Art Annual, Montclair Museum of Art, Montclair, NJ
Athens Video Art Festival, Athens, Greece
Digital Visions, British Columbia University, Vancouver, Canada
- 2004 *The Odds*, City Without Walls Gallery, Newark NJ
Dimensions, Shane House Gallery, Tucson AZ
Group Exhibition, New Screen Broadcasting, FL
1800 Frames, City Without Walls Gallery, Newark NJ
First Look, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, NY
Group Exhibition, Seton Hall University / City Without Walls Gallery, Newark NJ
Members Show, City Without Walls Gallery, Newark NJ
- 1999 *273.15 K*, Millworks Ice and Coal Complex, Akron, OH

Collections

- JP Morgan Chase, New York, NY
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
The Margulies Collection, Miami, FL
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
Western Bridge, Seattle, WA

Grants and Awards

- Emerging Artist Award, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2006
Fassbender Award for Excellence in Photography, 2003



front cover: still from *Untitled Study #1*, 2010

back cover: still from *Untitled #100 (Fantasia)*, 2007 - 2009
background image, collage of artist studio photos

All images appear courtesy of the artist and Mark Moore Gallery. No portion of the contents may be reproduced without the express written permission of the publisher.

© 2010 Mark Moore Gallery and Josh Azzarella

Published by Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA



www.MARKMOOREGALLERY.com