

The affective dimension of Steinbach's work was most strongly evoked by a room in the exhibition given over to a series of small black-and-white photographs of shelf pieces installed, in the early '80s, in people's homes. In these images, the artist's constructions come off as awkward interlopers, never quite jibing with the furnishings around them. They represent intrusions of difference into spaces whose decorating schemes are meant to express the putatively closed systems of self or family. As much as they speak to taste and accumulation, then, they also serve as models for the vagaries of human relatedness. These pictures, like so much of Steinbach's work, reflect on our desire to find meaning from and through the objects that surround us as we go about the messy business of living.

—Michael Lobel

CAMBRIDGE, MA

Chris Marker

MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER/
CARPENTER CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

Years before Chris Marker made his first film, he actively pursued still photography, and he spent much of his subsequent six-decade career engaged with a wide variety of media. Marker enthusiastically embraced analog-video synthesis in the 1970s and began experimenting with digitally altering images in the 1980s. In the last decades of his life, he published his work on CD-ROM, Flickr, and YouTube and built a museum in the virtual world Second Life dedicated to his oeuvre and influences. Split between the galleries at MIT and Harvard, the ambitious exhibition "*Guillaume-en-Égypte*"—which took its name from Marker's pet cat and alter ego—offered an overview of all these aspects of his practice and more.

Curator João Ribas made an admirable attempt to be as inclusive as possible while staying true to each of Marker's original mediums. The artist's YouTube videos, which include digitally collaged send-ups of the marriage of Prince William (*The Royal Polka*, 2011) and the death of Steve Jobs (*iDead*, 2011), were shown on a computer monitor. So was Marker's Second Life museum, which was available for viewers to tour using an avatar of Guillaume the cat. The artist's thirteen-part television series on Greek philosophy, *The Owl's Legacy* (1989), was shown on an array of monitors, as were other video works, including the charming and little-seen animation *Theory of Sets*, 1990, which uses Noah's ark as a pretext to teach children math. An extensive selection of Marker's films were also screened at the Harvard Film Archive. Unfortunately,

many of these were also given a considerable amount of exhibition space, which could better have been used to house more of the artist's gallery-oriented works.

The exhibition at MIT featured three series of photographs that, at their best, interrogate the relationship between photographer and subject, often capturing the momentary connection that takes place when someone is looking into Marker's lens. Such images are found through-

out his now-iconic series "*Coréennes*" (Korean Women), 1957, and "Staring Back," 1957–2006. He departed from this focus in his final series of photographs, "Passengers," 2008–10, for which Marker used spy cameras on his glasses and wristwatch, producing leery-eyed pictures of women on the Paris Metro. Marker digitally manipulated most of these photographs to great effect, even reworking images he originally shot long before the availability of digital tools. Throughout, he played with digital artifacting, smudging, and texturing, increasing the intensity of his images by focusing on individual faces, paradoxically heightening and blocking any empathetic connection a viewer might form with the person shown.

Two of Marker's multimedia installations shown at the Carpenter Center stood in striking contrast. The funereal *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men*, 2005, is a two-channel, eight-screen installation subtitled after a T. S. Eliot poem from 1925. Marker's heavily manipulated black-and-white images are interwoven with the poem's text in a danse macabre populated with figures striated and effaced in postproduction so that they float like ghosts through a penumbral ether. The campy *Silent Movie*, 1995, consists of five monitors playing video-synthesized remixes of old films, a suite of photographs, and a handful of hilarious posters for imaginary movie mash-ups. A poster for *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad Dog* features an image of a digitally altered, bug-eyed Rin Tin Tin accompanied by the tagline "He came to help our Russian allies, [but] the Bolsheviks turned him into a MONSTER!"

Marker's thematic interests (travel, memory, and politics among them) have been well accounted for in the literature on his work, but his media manipulations have not, so it was a pleasure to explore here what the artist referred to as his "naive informatics." In revealing the many ways in which Marker plastically altered his images, either through video synthesis or through digital manipulation, the exhibition offered an extremely timely revision to our understanding of his work and thoroughly demonstrated that an old cat like Guillaume was continually and expertly—no matter how naively—up to new tricks.

—William Kaizen

EAST LANSING, MI

Beverly Fishman

BROAD ART MUSEUM AT MSU

Using the Broad Art Museum's new Zaha Hadid–designed building to advantage, curator Alison Gass has installed two separate yet related series of Beverly Fishman's geometric paintings from the past three years on the irregular, pentagonal ground floor. The title of the show, "Focus," comes across as a pointed pun, given that it is precisely focus itself that these paintings—much like the deconstructivist building that is hosting them—destabilize, distract, and charge with dizzying physical energy.

Fishman's densely layered works are silk-screened onto bases of polished stainless steel that mirror distorted versions of the surrounding environment. Their quintessentially Op-art effect—a heightened immediacy and disorienting illusion of incessant oscillation—is thus amplified by their reflective properties. Fishman was heavily influenced by the hard-edge abstract paintings of artists such as Gene Davis and Richard Anuszkiewicz, yet her Conceptualist approach extends beyond Op's traditional appeal to visual sensation alone. Her feverish patterns are in fact appropriated from medical imaging, and as such, her paintings combine perceptual effects with found-image art—Bridget Riley meets Gerhard Richter. The picture and its effect, in Fishman's work, thus

Chris Marker,
Untitled #188,
2008–10, C-print,
13¼ x 16½".
From the series
"Passengers,"
2008–10. MIT List
Visual Arts Center.

