





UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

In 2017, Saudi King Salman, Egyptian President Sisi, and President Trump were photographed collectively fondling an illuminated globe at the inauguration of the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology in Riyadh. Resembling a reality competition show, the televised event served as an introduction to the facility's "command and control center," a bizarre spaceship-like interior fitted with computer bays, luminous floors, and enormous digital screens ostensibly monitoring online extremist activities in real time. By placing their hands on the glowing orb, the three leaders appeared to activate the "counterterrorist" technologies on display. While the ominous globe served primarily as decoration—evoking crystal balls, occult rituals, and the Eye of Sauron—its symbolic resonances seemed to signal a new age of geopolitical theater, one supported by cinematic soundtracks, HD surfaces, and the promise of state-sponsored surveillance and data-driven technologies.

Elsewhere, globes are displayed with less menacing intentions: in classrooms, home libraries, or as kitsch restaurant décor. At the Red Lion Tavern—a German-themed pub in LA serving bratwurst and Hefeweizen alongside football games on flat screen TVs—another illuminated sphere hovers from the rafters of the outdoor pergola. Pierced by twenty-four flags from various countries, the refashioned globe was originally intended to display the national banners of the twenty-four World Cup finalists (a dated design considering that the World Cup finals expanded to thirty-two teams in 1998). Today, the globe displays a more benevolent assortment of flags collected from visiting customers whose homelands reign from all over the world.

In *Unconditional Surrender*, Andrew J. Greene's solo exhibition at the Modern Institute, an equivalent globe finds itself mounted to the ceiling of a Glasgow art gallery. Sharing the same title, the industrially fabricated sculpture is now positioned within the field of contemporary art and its marketplace, assigning it new aesthetic import. Despite the assumption that this new context might further enact geography as commodity, *Unconditional Surrender* does not quite rouse one's desire to consume. Surrounded by a series of imperfect photographs, and centrally installed in the dimly lit post-industrial architecture of the Modern Institute's Bricks Space, the lone sculpture conjures the ominous forms of underwater mines and airborne drones. Terrestrial globes are, of course, a 15th century technology. In Greene's interpretation, the spherical model is positioned bottom-up—a nod to the more political aspects of cartographic orientation, and the arbitrary nature of certain global norms set by Eurocentric perspectives. Historically, the European continent has always found itself on top.

If world globes, like maps, attempt to reduce nations and landscapes to static and objective representations, actual borders and topographies are almost perpetually in a state of flux. Shifting and wavering, just as the lines and edges of Greene's flag designs also seem to oscillate. Drawn and colored in with sharpie markers, they exhibit subtle but crude imperfections that eschew the

sleek, objective neutrality of maps and info-graphics for more tentative and intimate means of address—namely, the artist's hand.

Likewise, in an untitled series of twenty-four photographs, Greene has casually interposed himself into the work by way of the images' photographic anomalies. Taken with his iPhone and printed in the four standard sizes offered by his local drug store, the images document autographed celebrity portraits and fan snapshots found in local Southern California bars and restaurants. Many of the pictures have been awkwardly cropped, while others include the noisy glare of the camera's flash or his faint reflection. Errors that might otherwise render the images worthless, now serve as physical indexes for the artist's proximity to both the photographs and their primary sites, further affirming his "authorial" role in their production and distribution. In other works, scratches and abrasions on the surface of the original frames are prominently featured—positioning the images as vulnerable, palpable objects rather than infinite, depthless content. Subject to physical abuse and accident, these works eliminate any semblance of a flawless photographic copy and, in turn, corrupt the very subjects being depicted. In Emilio Estevez (Jones), 2018, a defaced glass surface frames a photograph portraying Emilio Estevez and an unidentified female companion. They both smile unwittingly as the scratched lines cast shadows in the form an upside-down cross on the woman's forehead.

The quaint genre of restaurant celebrity headshots has long been obsolete, superseded by more relentless social media-sharing services that are accessible anywhere and everywhere. In *Unconditional Surrender*, these outdated relics hang on aluminum tracks that comprise an inoffensive display system meant for offices, hospitals, and other institutional spaces. The almost imperceptible metal lines cut across the gallery's architecture, framing its rough and exposed surfaces with a minimalist edge. Meanwhile, the smiling faces of displaced and defaced icons stare hollowly into the center of the room. Here, celebrity culture's glitz and gloss is tarnished by the unsightly effects of IRL exposure. "Views," "likes," and "comments" are not publicly measured and displayed but manifest instead, as surface defects.

This is not so much nostalgia for an earlier photographic zeitgeist but ambivalence towards the inexplicable effects that our current networked technologies have on media and the act of mediation.

The passé prevails in *Unconditional Surrender*. Where inconspicuous design forms and obsolescent media are decontextualized, renewed, and treated by hand, but do little to draw precise formal connections or posit absolute meanings. Instead, the sculptures and objects in Greene's exhibition seem to fluctuate between notions of the global and the local, between the industrially produced and the handmade. In our current moment of accelerated globalization, when ideas of post-nationalism are simultaneous with the restoration of nationalism and geographic privilege—most often, in the name of racial or ethnic supremacy—Greene's appropriated restaurant décor serves as a welcome salve for the theater and fractious optics of our new geopolitical climate.

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