

HOME AGAIN JOHN DIVOLA & MEGAN PLUNKETT

TIMESHARE

3526 N. BROADWAY,
LOS ANGELES, CA

SEPTEMBER 14—OCTOBER 12, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

John Divola was let on the set of *The X-Files* during the filming of the show's final season in 2002. Capturing sets packed full of stuff but devoid of actual people, Divola's images evoke the architecture and aesthetics of a crime scene. Imbricated with a sense of evacuation, the images are haunted with clues, signs and falsified suggestions pulled from a constructed televisual world that works overtime trying to convince us that there might, in fact, be nothing to see here. Says the artist: "I am interested in how these stills collectively construct a fictive sense of the normal."

According to some, the word paranormal is a mistranslation of an earlier term – the supernatural.

In 2020, Megan Plunkett completed forensic image training at UC Riverside, the school where Divola recently retired from after teaching for 36 years. Plunkett's series "Signs and Wonders", "The Thing" and "The Government Don't Get a God Damn Telling Me When to Die" detail Coke cans and promotional ephemera, roadside water jugs and an awkwardly re-made plastic prop beer container in mysterious processes of flight and transformation. Although much of what we see remains unexplained, it is generally easy to recognize. Each artist's work here conjures forensic imaging and other utilitarian image-making practices that invite different kinds of mental reconstruction. Playing with cues that volley between modes of perception, reality itself becomes suspect and a problem of authority emerges: "How does the eye eye the eye?"¹

In 1998, Mike Kelley spoke with artist and ufologist Chris Wilder about the latter's deliberately staged and "faked" UFO images:

"For the true believer, faking a UFO photograph is a testament to their faith. The image reflects their experience, their reality. But then other people fake them to amuse themselves. Those people are more like artists, in my estimation."²

1. Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Flip*, p. 164

2. "Weaned on Conspiracy: A Dialogue Between Mike Kelley and Chris Wilder", *Be Magazine*, No. 5 [Science and Surfaces] (Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, May 1998), pp. 41-53.

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ARTIST BIOS

John Divola Spanning over 40 years, John Divola's work has consistently questioned the limits of photography, interweaving sculpture, installation, and performance to highlight the inherent tensions within the medium. Divola's imagery often examines the Southern Californian landscape, including urban Los Angeles or the nearby ocean, mountains, and desert. Initially inspired by Minimalist and Conceptual work while in college, which he accessed predominantly through photographic reproductions, Divola was one of the first artists to highlight the role of photography in mediating our experience of the world and our surroundings.

Between 1973 and 1975, without a studio of his own, Divola travelled across Los Angeles in search of dilapidated properties in which to make photographs. Armed with a camera, spray paint, string and cardboard, Divola vandalized vacant homes with abstract constellations of graffiti-like marks, ritualistic configurations of string hooked to pins, and torn arrangements of card, before cataloguing the results. Entitled *Vandalism Series*, this early body of work informed the trajectory of Divola's career, in which he deliberately blurs the boundaries between reality and artifice.

Over the course of his career, Divola has produced many similar projects involving an extended engagement with a particular site over time. In a more recent series, *George Air Force Base* (2015-2020), Divola photographed the abandoned housing area at the decommissioned George Air Force Base in Victorville, California. We are shown scenes of dereliction – crumbling walls revealing layers of paint and plaster, in which Divola's gestural interventions in the form of painted shapes offer a surprising contrast. Here, Divola captures the tension between the observation of the specific and the insistence of the abstract.

Born in Los Angeles in 1949, Divola earned an MFA from University of California, Los Angeles in 1974, where he studied under photographer Robert Heineken. Since 1975 he has taught photography and art at numerous institutions including California Institute of the Arts (1978-1988), and from 1988 to 2024 he was a Professor of Art at the University of California, Riverside.

Since 1975, Divola's work has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions in the United States, Japan, Europe, Mexico, and Australia, including Galerie Marquardt, Paris, 1990; Laura Bartlett Gallery, London 2012; Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2013; Wallspace Gallery New York, 2014; and Palm Springs Art Museum, 2019. His work can be found in numerous public collections including Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Among Divola's Awards are Individual Artist Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1973, 1976, 1979, 1990), a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (1986), a Fintridge Foundation Fellowship (1998), a City of Los Angeles Artist Grant (1999) and a California Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship (1998).

Megan Plunkett is an artist who works with images to investigate the material conditions and visual economies of reality in photography. She uses mundane objects and visual conventions drawn from forensic crime scene documentation, commercial product photography, and old Hollywood set tricks to access a sense of estrangement and the uncanny. She is interested in what kinds of visual authorities we listen to, and what we ignore.

Recent exhibitions include "anti-corpo", a two-person show with Manfred Pernice, at Emalin (London), and solo exhibitions at Sweetwater (Berlin) and at F (Houston). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Shivers Only, Paris, FR (2023); King's Leap @ Room3557, Los Angeles, US (2023); Park View / Paul Soto, Los Angeles, US (2022); The Wig, Berlin, DE (2022); Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, DE (2022); MOSTYN, Llandudno, UK (2022); Magenta Plains, New York, US (2021); DREI, Mönchengladbach, DE (2021); Sweetwater, Berlin, DE (2020); Art at Michael's, Los Angeles, US (2020); Normandy Hôtel, Paris, FR (2019); and Reena Spaulings Los Angeles, US (2019).

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WORKS LIST
Clockwise

1. Megan Plunkett
The Thing 03, 2024
Inkjet print on Canson Platine Rag, aluminum frame
2. Megan Plunkett
The Thing 05, 2024
Inkjet print on Canson Platine Rag, aluminum frame
3. John Divola
X-Files, X26F15, 2002
Archival pigment print
4. Megan Plunkett
The Government Don't Get a God Damn Telling Me When to Die, 2024
Inkjet print on Canson Platine Rag, aluminum frame
5. John Divola
X-Files, X4F10, 2002
Archival pigment print
6. John Divola
X-Files, X8F5, 2002
Archival pigment print
7. Megan Plunkett
Signs and Wonders 02, 2022
Inkjet print in aluminum frame
8. Megan Plunkett
Signs and Wonders 13, 2022
Inkjet print in aluminum frame
9. Megan Plunkett
Signs and Wonders 08, 2022
Inkjet print in aluminum frame
10. Megan Plunkett
Signs and Wonders (The Mirror 02), 2022
Inkjet print in aluminum frame
11. John Divola
X-Files, X23F2, 2002
Archival pigment print
12. John Divola
X-Files, X21F1, 2002
Archival pigment print
13. Megan Plunkett
Signs and Wonders 01, 2022
Inkjet print in aluminum frame