

*The moment depicted in the picture is in fact not that moment, but a reenactment of it. Yet it is probably indistinguishable from the actual moment.* (Jeff Wall 1996)

It's been about 10 years since *Big Brother* first appeared and became the first in a series of Reality TV portals to enter our living rooms. We are still fascinated by watching the mundane realities of other people's lives, despite or perhaps because of knowing they are *in reality* staged. Reality TV offers us a perfect model of what our mundane realities and their interactions should look like.

Shifting from one reality to another, we come out of the *staged* living room in *Big Brother* to our own *real* living room from which we watch. In doing so, perhaps a coffee cup or magazine is casually but carefully re-arranged in an attempt to make our own realities more *real*. A few years ago in Vancouver, Jeff Wall did exactly that. Less casual and more careful, the artist spent a series of months organizing, staging and photographing a mundane domestic scene to appear like *real* documentary. In Wall's *A View from an Apartment* (2004-5), the *real* living room from which we may watch the *staged* living room of *Big Brother* becomes its own *staged reality*. Two women stand and sit, perfectly poised in their own absorption, simply ironing linen and reading. Far from being simple though, the photo's disquieting perfection is its own clue. The women in the photo remind us of the reality of reproduction itself.

From the set to the street, our preference for reproductions is spreading like an oil spill, seeping into the tiniest cracks of the everyday. In Berlin, this process is unfolding neck and neck with gradual gentrification. Amidst wastelands shape-shifting into condo-sprawls, the faded imagery on the Berlin Wall has been whitewashed like a fresh canvas. The same artists who left their marks in the revolution 20 years ago have been invited back to re-create their images in bright poster paints. Now tourists can snap their shutters and capture a postcard-perfect reproduction of a now faded history as if time had stood still.

Whether the moment and its reenactment are indistinguishable (as Wall notes) or whether it even matters is, perhaps, of particular curiosity. If we are able to replace our entire surroundings with perfect models, then why not? We may, in fact, be able to then purge everything and simply start again. But then, this brings us back to the original reality on which *Big Brother* is based, George Orwell's *1984*, where the reality of history and our situation as a result, can be changed at any moment.

What reproduction can do, however, is remind us of the reality of reproduction. Although one day it will also fade, the newly painted Berlin Wall has now become re-noticed. It is now a monument both to the revolution itself and the reproduction of this revolution. It both re-concretises the inevitable transience of the monument and gestures that even what is concrete must change and evolve with the city.

Less monumental but no less an everyday reality on the street, piles of hard rubbish are still a reminder of things abandoned and indicative of Berlin. Broken and discarded remnants are continually fetishised, whether overpriced and re-sold as collectable commodities at Flea markets or captured in glossy photographic reproductions. Even piled on the street in reality, hard rubbish in Berlin has become a cliché of itself. In reality or in reproduction, it now exists as the perfect model of sentimentality. As areas are becoming increasingly gentrified, so the clichés must be gentrified alongside. Perhaps these piles of dereliction will be taken back off the street and turned into slick design.

Perhaps they will become monuments, surface reproductions of sentimentality, like the newly painted Berlin Wall. And perhaps in their staged *reality*, they will make us re-notice our own everyday realities and the ease with which they can become a reproduction. *I heard it from my friends about the things you said* (2010) reflects on this ambiguous idea. In the installation, paper/board model replicas of broken household objects assume their places carefully in a junk pile, presenting themselves as perfect but precarious possibilities.

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