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The word ‘text’, in its etymological roots and conceptual underpinnings, does not exclusively refer to language, but rather to the act and presence of construction, as in a textile or work of architecture. In this sense, Vik Muniz’s highly-constructed art works qualify as ‘texts’, and in Muniz’s distinctive practice are by extension are not only ‘legible’ but simultaneously call attention to their own legibility. In other words, they convey an image while at the same time calling attention to the language – or rather, the linguistics -- of the image conveyed. As Muniz himself has said:

“When people look at one of my pictures, I don’t want them to actually see something represented. I prefer for them to see how something gets to represent something else.”

This linguistics of the image – how ‘something’ represents ‘something else’, literally and figuratively – is central to Muniz’s recent series *Pictures of Magazine 2*, now on view at the Elba Benítez Gallery.

In *Pictures of Magazine 2*, Muniz uses a combination of collage and *trompe o’oeil* techniques to create replicas of iconic works from the history of painting, such as Caravaggio’s *Sick Bacchus*, the Hopper’s *Summer in the City*, or *Flowers after Warhol*, which he then photographs and prints at a much enlarged scale. The collages are ingeniously assembled from scraps of paper that have been roughly torn out of glossy magazines and then re-assembled, like mosaic tiles or thick daubs of paint applied with a palette knife. Thousands of decontextualized, fragmentary reproduced images and words – the disposable detritus of mass-media culture -- are transformed into reproductions of unique works of the finest of fine art – and which themselves are endlessly reproduced in magazines and catalogues, through which they are in practice best-known.

Thus *Pictures of Magazine 2* is structured around an oscillatory instability -- or rather, various oscillatory instabilities operating at one and the same time: between craft and mechanical reproduction; between high art and popular culture; between the ephemeral and the perdurable; between the coded and the recognizable; between visual delight and intellectual challenge. Muniz’s comments on Ghiberti’s bas-relief sculpture known as “*Doors of Paradise* – that it “*splices two readings of the images into one*” and “*forces the viewer to become aware of the image’s syntax, to assume an active role in the apprehension of the image*” -- might well be applied to *Pictures of Magazine 2*, and to Muniz’s entire engaged and engaging *oeuvre*.

Vik Muniz (São Paulo, 1961) creates meticulously crafted work that delights viewers with its invention and playfulness while simultaneously raising more thought-provoking questions about the nature and mechanics of illusion and representation, as well as the role of representation and reproduction in contemporary society. Muniz has had numerous solo museum exhibitions – including at P.S. 1 MoMA (USA, 2007), the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (UK, 2007), the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (Brazil, 2004), MACRO (Italy, 2004), the Irish Museum of Modern Art (Ireland, 2004), the Menil Collection (USA, 2002) and elsewhere -- and his work is included in major private and public collections around the world. A retrospective of his work is currently at the CAC in Málaga. This is his the fourth show at the Elba Benítez Gallery.

George Stolz