

Pick of the Week

by Jody Zellen | June 20, 2019

Eva and Franco Mattes
Data Doubles
Team (Bungalow)
May 12 - June 23, 2019



Installation view: Eva and Franco Mattes "Data Doubles." Image courtesy of the artists and Team (Bungalow).
Photo: Jeff McLane.

Eva and Franco Mattes are net art pioneers who have been collaborating since 1994. Best known as 0100101110101101.org, their online projects were among the first to share the contents of their home computers, making the private public over vast networks. At Team (Bungalow) they have created a physical installation that calls attention to the presence of invisible data and the networks it travels. This rambling sculptural work weaves through interior and exterior spaces and is presented alongside *Riccardo Uncut*, 2017, a work originally commissioned by the Whitney Museum for which the Mattes purchased an archive of smart phone photos and videos for \$1000 from someone who responded to an open call. The Mattes present over 3000 personal images taken between 2004 and 2017 as a looping projection that showcases Riccardo's life in chronological order. The voyeuristic nature of this work cannot be denied. It is an unedited glimpse into someone's life — how he documents himself, presents himself to others, who his friends are, where he has been, and what he happens to record with his phone. The video overlaid with a snippet of Jeanne Moreau singing *Each Man Kills The Thing He Loves* becomes a strange and melancholic trip down someone else's memory lane.

Appropriation is pivotal in the Mattes practice. They have appropriated Riccardo's life by turning his image archive into an artwork. By doing so, they explore and expose the compulsion to document, to share on social media and the ever mutating perception of the blurring line between private and public in the digital era. The Mattes have also created *Ceiling Cat*, 2016, a sculpture based on an appropriated "LOLCat meme." Nested in the ceiling, this simultaneously cute and scary taxidermied cat peeks through a hole. It appears to be always watching. The "laughing out loud cat meme" is a popular internet phenomenon where images of a cat with the text, "ceiling cat is watching you," passing judgement on, or witnessing your activities. In making ceiling cat into a sculpture, the Mattes have made the ephemeral, physical.

Looping through the galleries interior and exterior spaces is a long metal tray, a support system for micro computers, cables and wires. This cable tray forges a path through the exhibition like rogue train tracks carrying invisible data. The micro-computers send a signal back and forth that transmits all the photographs the Mattes shot in September 2009. (142 files). These photographs are in constant movement traveling back and forth along the cables, yet unseen by human eyes.

Though in some ways there is little to see in *Data Doubles*, there is plenty to think about. In an era of fake news, endless image bombardment and myriad discussions about how the private is made public, the Mattes' installation resonates. Here, the works are "centered around the creation and transmission of images, and the interconnectedness of those two processes." Creating to share versus creating for one's self, and who is watching who are integral questions in these burgeoning digital times.

- Jody Zellen