

JENNIFER & KEVIN MCCOY

Postmasters Gallery | New York, New York

Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's latest show at Postmasters, "I'll Replace You" (through January 10), comprises a 16:40-minute video, two enamel on oil paintings, two sets of digital C-prints, and a 19-DVD viewing station. Continuing in the mold of their earlier cinematic scaling of art's Hollywood heights, this time the husband-and-wife duo have taken on multiple personalities to stake their claim. By far the least characteristic, but most transparent, substitution occurs in *Princess Painting (light)* and *Princess Painting (dark)* (all work 2008), in which elements of Disney's *Cinderella* are layered and erased to form cartoon-like abstractions in the vein of Mike Kelley or Arturo Herrera. Only on closer inspection does the paint itself become apparent, betraying the screen memory of childhood fantasy and its enduring legacies.

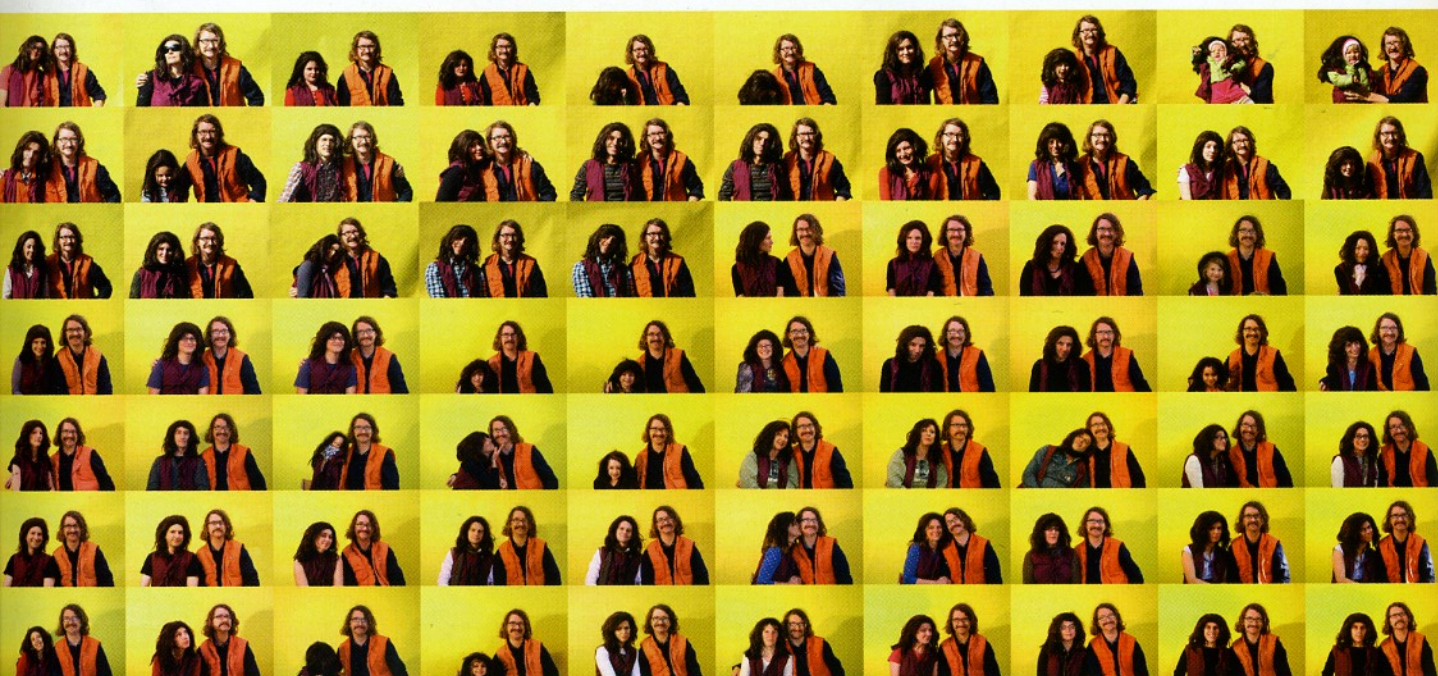
Pursuing the Cinderella theme of true identity and misrecognition, *Jennifer and Ken McCoy* and *Jessica and Kevin McCoy* offer two sets of a hundred or so "replacement photographs," in which one of the couple appears paired with a stranger or friend dressed as the other, in vaudevillian wigs and drag. In both sets, the "real" spouse is captured, photo-booth-style, standing alongside his or her "other half," of divergent ages, sexes, and sizes, and in various affectionate poses but you really have to look closely to notice the difference. All the costumed participants fall into the category of instant plausibility, showing how easy it is to replace reality today with idealized equivalents, in an endless parade of accommodating glass slippers. Picking out the "real McCoy" from among the numerous competitors is the rule of the media game.

Again mining the reality show format, the McCoy's *I'll Replace You* video revolves around scenes taken from their daily

lives as artists, academics, spouses and parents, except that here they are played by a number of oddly cast actors. Covering one impossibly long "day in the life of the McCoy's," different groups of actors run through the usual activities one would expect from such a busy pair, including waking up, chatting with colleagues and students, studio time, eating out, and taking their two daughters to school. Real time and credible action soon fades from the film, however, leaving us with just the illusion of a basic continuity or storyline. To heighten the improvisatory, often miscast and self-stereotyping nature of all mediated identity, at certain moments the McCoy's actors turn round to invite the audience to doubt their own credulity, evoking something like Walter Benjamin's "messianic time," the ever-present now.

Meanwhile, at the viewing station *Artist Talks*, various actors can be seen impersonating artists delivering a slide show of work, passing it off as their own. Seated at the console, visitors can sample the different performances and try to figure out, like the old TV show *I've Got a Secret*, who is believable and who is not, thus bringing into question the very notion of artist talks. Watching the actors struggle—sometimes hilariously, sometimes spot on—to express the ideas they have merely borrowed for a time, it becomes apparent that people slip in and out of identities far more easily than is usually admitted, exposing every trace of authenticity as potentially bogus—even that of the McCoy's themselves. In the game show equivalent of Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographical confession that she and longtime partner Sartre "had no wish to observe [themselves] from a distance through the eyes of strangers," the not-so-real McCoy's keep their eyes on the ball they are having in the court of the other.

-Maxwell Razdow



(ABOVE) JENNIFER AND KEVIN MCCOY, *JESSICA AND KEVIN MCCOY*, 2008 (DETAIL), DIGITAL C-PRINT, MOUNTED ON SINTRA & LAMINATED, 43 X 58 IN. COURTESY POSTMASTERS GALLERY, NEW YORK. (OPPOSITE TOP TO

BOTTOM) ABELARDO MORELL, *CAMERA OBSCURA IMAGE OF SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE WITH SCAFFOLDING IN PALAZZO BEDROOM*, 2007. UPRIGHT CAMERA OBSCURA IMAGE OF THE COUSEUM INSIDE ROOM #20 AT

THE HOTEL GLADIATORI, 2008. © ABELARDO MORELL. COURTESY BONNI BENRUBI GALLERY, NEW YORK.