



Martin Roth

untitled (debris)

September 9th – October 18th, 2015

For his third solo exhibition at Louis B. James, Martin Roth presents a new installation, *untitled (debris)*. Entering the main space, viewers encounter a desolate landscape of crumbling masonry and sand, partially brought to New York from a destroyed building from the conflict in Syria. The scene is unsettling yet familiar; it resembles any number of conflict zones we are accustomed to viewing on the nightly news. Yet the space houses unlikely occupants: colorful parakeets that roost on the pipes and ducts of the gallery's bright ceiling, using the debris as their litter.

As in prior works, Roth has introduced elements that build upon and disrupt our understanding of the diorama. Characteristically, Roth sets up a situation and then removes himself, giving weight to the formal and psychological implications of the incidents that are set in motion. Here, the parakeet—that most domestic of birds—exacerbates the contrast between the deep familiarity we nurture with pets and the remove at which global conflicts unfold over mass media. Detached from fixed reference and dislocated, viewers move from this space to yet another incongruous environment on the gallery's lower level. A landscape of ruin, activated by the birds' constant motion, is met with stillness, an endpoint.

Glenn Ligon, writing of David Hammons' work, once observed that "the question is: how to remove weight, to move toward lightness." This question is a starting point for Roth, who asks us to consider the pervasive images of distant violence in our daily lives. By assembling the elements of this living environment, Roth touches upon issues of conflict, migration, and displacement. Yet he does not propose to ameliorate representations; instead, he collapses distance. In this exhibition, he brings the dust of conflict to our doorsteps.

Living things do not merely animate Roth's work; they drive its form, its pacing, and its intimate relation to the viewer. Domesticated animals (rescued parakeets, frogs raised for food) manifest a complex web of social relations; they also operate under their own agency. In prior works, Roth has used organisms shaped by cultivation (bonsai, zebra finches, goldfish) to explore the interrelationship of nature and culture, plants and animals. In this exhibition, for the first time, viewers are inserted into Roth's organic system, tracing their own paths through the dust of destruction.

Martin Roth (b. 1977, Graz Austria, lives and works in NY). His work has recently been shown at Reinisch Contemporary (solo), Graz; The Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Vohn Gallery, NY; mumok (museum moderner kunst), Vienna; Museum of Natural History, Graz; The Artists Institute, NY, among others. In 2014 he was named one of "24 Artists to Watch" in *Modern Painters*. Louis B. James is located at 143b Orchard St, NY NY 10002. For more information please email info@louisbjames.com or call 212 533 4670.