

Louis B. James



Martin Roth
In August 2007 I drove a fly from Italy to Germany
May 6- June 5, 2016

Louis B. James is pleased to present *In August 2007 I drove a fly from Italy to Germany*, a project by Martin Roth. A fly inches across the surface of a car window in Martin Roth's landscapes. Recorded with a 35mm Lomo camera, which automatically captures four sequential stills, each image is then translated into halftone silk screen on wood panel. The low fidelity and grain of the resulting print, coupled with their incidental composition, transform the oblique view from the passenger window into a confined and constructed environment, in which the haptic glass surface acts as screen. The serial images document the fly's movement across the passenger window, caught inside the car while the artist drives past the Alps toward the north of Europe.

In August 2007 I drove a fly from Italy to Germany is Roth's title for this series; with it, Roth both states the literal parameters of his past action and points to its conceptual core. As in prior works in which he assumes the role of caretaker, Roth uses living organisms to de-center the human subject; by taking seriously the proposition that a single fly become the work's main actor, the artist is relegated to the role of chauffeur. To consider a fly's migration northwards from Italy in this way is an absurd act that is nonetheless serious in asking us to reconsider the position of an unwanted guest. The fly itself is no longer a mere annoyance or transmitter of disease; here, it acts as a romantic *Rückenfigur*, poised against receding mountains yet irrevocably isolated by the window glass.

In many Dutch still life paintings, the fly evokes a sense of movement and life even as it augurs putrescence and death. At the same time, the fly calls attention to the edge of a contained, proximal world, rendered like a diorama or a vintage film. Cinematic viewing necessarily involves an erasure of the self; as Alexander Galloway has written, one becomes an "invisible half-participant in the world." By making the fly his collaborator, Roth signals his interest in the poetic possibilities of such a disappearance.

Martin Roth has recently been shown at the Kuenstlerhaus, Vienna; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; mumok (Museum Moderner Kunst), Vienna; Museum of Natural History, Graz; among others.

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