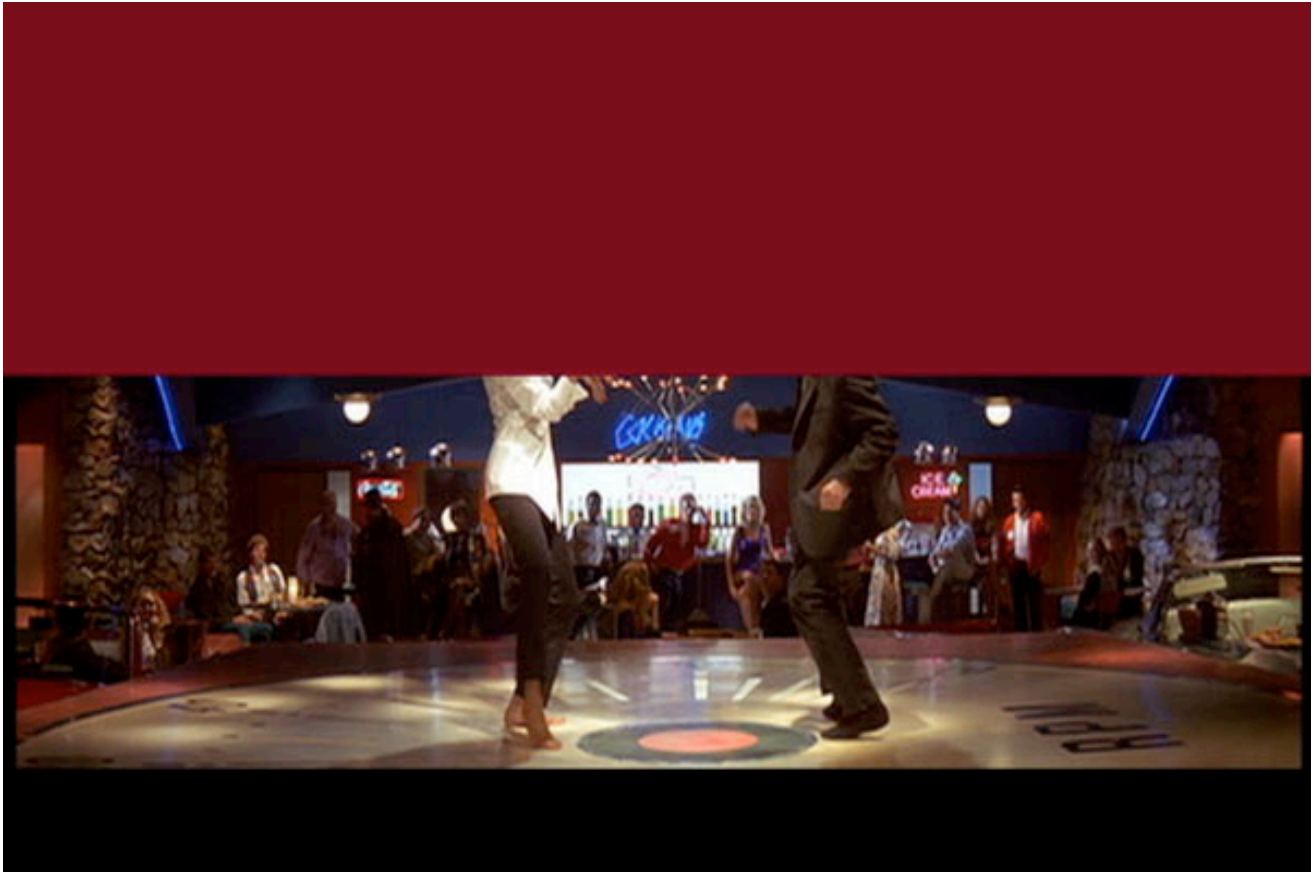


MARTOS GALLERY

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Curtis Mitchell, Still from *Pulp Fiction*, 2008, video installation

Curtis Mitchell

PERSONAS

October 29th - December 5th, 2009

Opening reception: Thursday, October 29th, 2009 from 6 to 8 pm

Martos Gallery is pleased to announce a project by Curtis Mitchell, featuring two ensembles from his series *Personas*.

Over the past several years, Curtis Mitchell has been setting up visual dialogues in *Personas*, an ongoing series of video installations. In these works, looped video clips from canonical films like *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Godfather* [sometimes] converse with large c-prints laid on gallery floors. At times, an actual object relating to the onscreen images completes Mitchell's circuits of identification, stirring the three-dimensional into an image, crystallizing traces of the self found in shards of well-known images as they break against the discontinuities of lived time and space.

Projectors placed on the floor in opposite corners fill the room's east and west walls with complementary, archetypal scenes culled from *Pulp Fiction* and *The Godfather*. These are alternately blocked and revealed by what Mitchell calls "monochromes", bands of solid color pulsing arhythmically up from the floor and down from the ceiling, palpating the imagery with an uneasy, blinking movement. At times the whole scene is obliterated, but at no point are any faces visible, keeping the celebrity appeal of the material at a certain distance. We recognize Mia and Vincent as they perform their iconic twist around the red-dot center of a dance floor painted to represent a giant vintage RPM vinyl platter. Repeated, however, the clip distills into gestures, approach and retreat, and the winding up of passion's tight springs - a primal scene of courtship. Familiarity gradually spins out, replaced by the shadows of viewers as they move between the projectors, adding a third layer of ambiguous presence to the headless dance and the fibrillation of the monochrome.

In the installation, the shadows of visitors move like ranks of midgets and giants against the movie scenes, while the monochromes reflect on their actual feet and faces in the no-man's land between the films. If Mitchell's work here represents a Debordian "détournement," seizing and redirecting brand names peeled from ubiquitous mass culture, it is also a tribute to the power of its constitutive scenes.

Douglas Max Utter, 2009

While the viewer of Mitchell's video works is spectacularized, the spectacle is temporarily personalized.

This conceptual thread is enabled by the other works in the show: Seemingly ordinary, mass-produced and impersonal objects are transformed into unique entities by a process that emulates the mundane routines of daily usage. Applying a highly exaggerated version of an object's utilization allows Mitchell to gradually quarry its inherent humanity.

The video installations and objects in this show clearly show that Mitchell is not so much concerned with the material and medium of a piece but rather with the concept of synthesis between human body and manufactured object.

New York based artist Curtis Mitchell received his MFA from Yale University School of Art in 1983. His work was shown in solo exhibitions at The Sculpture Center, Cleveland (2008), the PS1/MoMA Project Room (2006), the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh (2003), Esso Gallery, New York (2002) and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York (1992). Group shows include *The Word Is...* at Galerie Misonneuve, Paris (2008), *3 Degrees* at Martos Gallery, New York (2007) and *Modeling the Photographic: The End(s) of Photography* at the McDonough Museum of Art, Youngstown, Ohio (2007). Currently on view at the Hunter College Art Galleries, the show *Processed: Considering Recent Photographic Practices* features a selection of Mitchell's *Meltdown* series.