



Re-Animator

By on Monday, September 22nd, 2008



Image: Kota Ezawa, *LYAM 3D*

Kota Ezawa's current exhibit at Murray Guy, New York presents two new pieces done in the artist's own established method of rotoscoping, for which he uses a computer to re-draw individual frames from video or film source materials, then compiles them into moving images, granting his work the look of motion-captured digital animation, but created through a more classic, labor-intensive process. The first is *Brawl*, based on a YouTube video of an infamous 2004 Pistons-Pacers game that erupted into a massive free-for-all fight. Ezawa retains the footage's original soundtrack, and has transferred his animation to 16mm, looped for exhibition. The second, *LYAM 3D*, repurposes moments from Alain Resnais' 1961 film *Last Year at Marienbad*, choosing sequences in which actors stand stock-still while the camera pans. His video is processed in stereoscopic 3D, and watched through colored glasses, giving the re-drawn actors the quality of 2.5-D cut-out puppets. The two pieces continue the artist's penchant for taking on emotionally-charged sources (the OJ Simpson trial, Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee's sex tape, the Kennedy assassination) and draining them of their punch by rendering them as superflat, designy cartoons. The artist has said that he aims for a "banality" or "hollowed-out" quality for his work, and in this objective he succeeds. He also claims to see his work as moving paintings, rather than films or videos per se -- citing *Brawl*, for example, as a nod to compositions one might find in a work by Rubens. However, these would be rather unambitious goals for anyone who takes on the medium of animation; one wonders, for example, if the use of 16mm might bear any greater consequence than its ability to project more muted tones. Though some viewers apparently find satisfaction in Ezawa's coy formal references and cool graphic capability, those who expect a more complicated and significant experience from the moving image will not. - Ed Halter