

Edison Train Flick Inspires Simpson; Blind Perceptions: Hot Art  
By Katya Kazakina



Dec. 9 (Bloomberg) -- More than 100 years ago, inventor Thomas Alva Edison staged a head-on collision of two steam locomotives.

The event was documented in "Railroad Smashup," the Edison & Co.'s 1904 film. Its grainy, black-and-white footage is part of Lorna Simpson's new exhibition at Salon 94 on the Lower East Side in Manhattan.

Projected in slow motion onto a wall, the silent images unfold with frightening inevitability. Simpson pairs them with archival black-and-white footage of fireworks. The sound of exploding rockets serves as an audio background for the looped train wreck.

Displayed side by side, the two sequences form a dark, meditative piece entitled "Long, Slow, War," referring to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Simpson succeeds in conveying violence and doom. There's a formal clash between the fireworks shooting up randomly into the night and the consistent horizontality of the moving trains.

Also on view are Simpson's graphite drawings of seemingly ordinary room interiors: desks, chairs, phones. In reality, the images on grid paper depict torture and interrogation rooms in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. The banality of evil may be the artist's point, but the sketches fail to convey the terror of torture.

Prices range from \$5,000 for the drawings to \$60,000 for the video work. The exhibition, "Ink," runs through Dec. 13 at 1 Freeman Alley; +1-212-529-7400; <http://www.salon94.com>.

## Touching Art

An elderly woman in a blue suit crouches on a floor in the Brooklyn Museum, wrapping her hands around Auguste Rodin's sculpture "The Burghers of Calais."

A younger woman in a red sweater pushes against Barnett Newman's "Broken Obelisk" at the Museum of Modern Art.

There are no museum guards in sight. The two museum goers, it turns out, as well as the other subjects of Matt Ducklo's color photographs, are blind. The show "Touch Tour Pictures" refers to excursions organized by museums for visually impaired visitors.

The blind subjects relate to these artworks with intimacy and care through the sense of touch. The physical relationships radiate depth and warmth.

Blindness comes across as both a limitation and an advantage. Two arms embrace the ancient Egyptian stone statue of Thutmose III at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The person, who is concealed behind the artwork, will never see the pharaoh's vacant stare and traditional headgear. But how many of us have caressed a piece of world history?

The photographs are \$4,500 each. The exhibition runs through Dec. 21 at 11 Rivington St.; +1-212-982-1930; <http://www.elevenrivington.com/>

(Katya Kazakina is a reporter for Bloomberg News. The opinions expressed are her own.)

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