

Art in America

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Jimmy Robert

PARIS,
at Art Concept

by Brooks Adams

Jimmy Robert (born in 1975 in Guadalupe and currently living in Brussels) belongs to a new generation of artists for whom choreography is increasingly the subject matter of videos, installations and ephemeral collages. A graduate of Goldsmiths College in London, Robert is thoroughly conversant with the idioms of both Post-Minimalist sculpture and dance. For the flier of this show, the artist, a lithe man of color who often dances in his own works, had himself photographed with an Art Deco sculptural group, joining hands with one of three putti frolicking with a rampant goat. The image seemed an attempt to lead the dance, as it were, into real time and space.

Paper emerged as the performer in Robert's first one-man show in Paris. (No live actions took place during the show.) "The pleasure of being fooled (duet)" consisted of two large freestanding table installations and three wall-hung assemblages (all works 2010). From the street, the first impression was of a chaotic office, with lots of white paper on the floor. Entering, the viewer was confronted with a large table veneered in beechwood. The tabletop was pierced with four narrow slits through which long, undulating inkjet photo-scrolls had been inserted. Closer inspection of the scrolls revealed multiple images of a female Japanese dancer in a pearl-colored coat performing in a windswept landscape. The velvety vagueness of the

inkjet accentuated mossy greens in the landscape and blue-blacks in the dancer's hair. The white versos of the scrolls functioned abstractly in sculptural arcs under the table.

In their recycled, found materials, the wall-hung assemblages provide an unexpected sense of the exquisite. Pale and tattered, a silk brocade *obi* (Japanese ceremonial sash) dropped dramatically from the ceiling and puddled onto a small beechwood table. Underneath it, a stack of white office paper filled the negative space. The materiality of the *obi* rhymed with the photo imagery of the Japanese dancer's trailing scarf, and lent further credence to her shimmering, illusory presence.

That Robert's installation is intended as a deconstruction of Jeff Wall's famous 1993 photograph *A sudden gust of wind (after Hokusai)* only adds layers of latter-day japonisme to its conceptual load. Wall's digitized composition depicts a flurry of papers escaping from a businessman's briefcase and floating across the sky, which helps explain the movement of paper in Robert's installation. But getting the reference to Wall is not necessary, strictly speaking, to appreciate Robert's installation. As can be seen in a second table sculpture—a loose grid of small black-and-white photos depicting the artist performing atop a trestle table—his is an abstract, cool physicality, and his works wear their dance history lightly.

Photo: View of Jimmy Robert's exhibition "The pleasure of being fooled (duet)," 2010; at Art: Concept.

