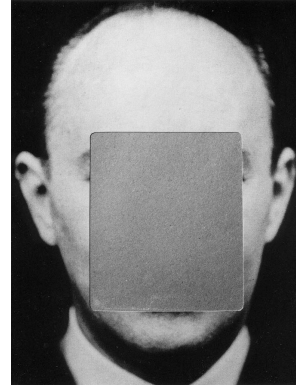


Erica Baum: "Them"

October 7 – November 6, 2004

Opening Reception: Saturday October 9, 6-8pm



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

D'Amelio Terras is pleased to present "Them," New York artist Erica Baum's third solo exhibition with the gallery. Her new large format black and white silver gelatin prints explore the semiotics of games. They are based on her own interpretation of a mid twentieth century photographic card game called *Physogs*, in which one pieces together pictures of facial features to form composite portraits. The result is a series of faces that fall short of looking truly human, the effect of their compiled features ranging from humorous to sinister. These composed faces suggest mug shots and call to mind ambiguous film figures such as Fritz Lang's M or Frankenstein's monster. The title of the series "Them" makes reference to a fifties horror movie about giant nuclear mutated ants taking over the earth – a sci-fi parallel to the horrors of biotechnology that Baum's mutation of the card game suggests.

Baum relates the logic of this game to both police identification kits and to the nineteenth century study of physiognomy, in which human physical characteristics are broken down into a series of parts. These parts are read as symbols and are believed to gage a subject's inner intentions. According to Baum, these phenomena "were developed with the belief that the outer person embodies the inner... the features of the eyes, the nose and the mouth are broken apart, numbered and linked to a key which supposedly reveals the character of the face, for example magnetic, impetuous, stubborn, dissipated, determined, pleasant, suave, credulous, and crafty... The pseudo clinical system of keys which link a facial feature to a character of the personality suggests efforts to pin down and control human populations such as the experimentation in eugenics of the nazis. The grainy texture of the black and white photographs and their enlarged scale drift the viewer away from the inconsequence of the game towards the fear and paranoia that attend scientific developments when coupled with the powers of state apparatus." Within this series Baum has included the blank heads where human features are put, which to her "function as empty frames where personality is placed... and recall an era in photography where the instrumental gaze of science and the state were enmeshed."

Erica Baum graduated with a Masters of Fine Arts in Photography from Yale in 1994 and also has a Masters of Arts in Applied Linguistics from Hunter College CUNY. Baum has long been interested in the poetry produced as words collide within classification systems and she has primarily photographed found texts that become poetry within the visual field. In previous bodies of work Baum has turned her attention to paper dolls, card catalogues as well as art reference systems and indices.

For press and visuals requests, please contact Stevie Howell at 212-352-9460 or stevie@damelioterras.com

D'Amelio Terras shows Polly Apfelbaum, Erica Baum, Delia Brown, Amie Dicke, Tony Feher, Amy Globus, Joanne Greenbaum, John Morris, Rei Naito, Noguchi Rika, Damián Ortega, Cornelia Parker, Miguel Rio Branco, Karin Sander and Yoshihiro Suda.