

Sinan Revell's Art Show, "DoppelgAngers," reviewed by Richard Modiano. Nov 17-Dec 22, 2007.

The Human Universe: "There are laws, that is to say, the human universe is discoverable as that Other. And as definable," said Charles Olson. "I am an Other," said Arthur Rimbaud. Sinan Leong Ravell's show of photographs "DoppelgANGERS" at the L2K Gallery in Los Angeles Chinatown gives graphic proof of the propositions of the two poets just quoted.

In her artist's statement, Revell says, "'DoppelgANGERS' is a series of self-less portraits that reflect our social media landscape ... We become anaesthetized to yet another 'war-torn disaster, high-school shoot-out, teen drug overdose, racially profiled police brutality, suicide bomber attack.' We are all connected. We are 'doppelgANGERS.' I put myself into these pictures to show how were all connected."

The photos on exhibit range from re-creations of famous images such as the 1968 execution of a suspected Viet Cong to a US magazine-like portrait of the "good life" called "Bling Bling." "LA Shooting" refers to the shooting of African-American teenager Latasha Harlins by a female Korean grocery store owner, a contributing factor to the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising (or riot, depending on one's politics), and the beating of Rodney King is also re-created with Revell as Sgt. Stacey Koon and his cohorts as well as King. There are also generic scenes such as "Homeless & Hungry," satirizing privilege. Most controversial of all is a photo of Saddam Hussein at the gallows: the "Beast of Baghdad" is shown going to his death with quiet dignity in an image recreated from the smuggled video of his execution.

Where does the ANGER in DoppelgANGERS come from? The corporate media-crafted version of "reality" that allows us to become passive spectators of our lives, the transformation of people into consumers of faux realities. Revell adds, "By putting myself into all the pictures and impersonating all the figures, I'm not indulging in narcissism, rather I'm trying to show that we're all victims and victimizers. I want to question those easy judgments we make about people like Lynndie England and Saddam Hussein." The social criticism is tempered with compassion.

Revell referred to her Buddhist background in conversation at the show's opening. The Buddhist idea of interdependence underlies the work on exhibit. This is the understanding that any phenomenon exists only because of the existence of other phenomena, in an incredibly complex web of cause-and-effect covering time past, time present and time future, and the notion that we've all been here before, whether as a stoic coolie rickshaw runner or an elegantly attired passenger - as in the photo entitled "Rickshaw." Phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause-and-effect.

Finally, "DoppelgANGERS" is Revell's repudiation of image-mediated reality that uses passive identification with "the spectacle" (as Guy Debord described it) to supplant genuine activity.

**Richard Modiano – RE/search newsletter** (who recently organized a marathon reading of Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" in L.A.)