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"Elad Lassry: Luhring Augustine"

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Elad Lassry: *Pillow*, 2010.
C-print with painted
frame, 14½ by 11½ inches;
at Luhring Augustine.

ELAD LASSRY LUHRING AUGUSTINE

If Israeli-born, L.A.-based photographer Elad Lassry hadn't come along at this particular moment in photography's history, theorists would probably have had to invent him. A self-conscious cross-trainer of no small talent, Lassry here showed 24 small-scale, sensuously colored yet conceptually cool photographic works, as well as a silent, 5½-minute 35mm film (all works 2010). The film, shown in a continuous loop, cuts back and forth between a pretty woman having a conversation with somebody (or something) off-camera, and a California king snake gently writhing in someone's bare hands.

The photo works reference a diversity of genres and involve a broad range of image-making processes. At first read, they gather strange bedfellows: commercial food and object photography, conceptual photography, studio portraiture, collage, printmaking, found-image appropriation and cinema. Yet Lassry manages to unite them in a perfect storm of tropes "high" and "low." Imagine, if you will, a single domestic object, styled and lighted as if for a slick shelter magazine, carefully cropped or otherwise double-exposed into an image "hiccup" in the mode of '70s Structuralist films, then encased in a plastic frame perfectly color-coordinated with the image and carrying just as much compositional weight. That Lassry can pull this off, and does, is impressive. He's effectively created his own hybrid of photography and sculptural fetish object.

Though a few of the works here incorporate found imagery, by and large the subjects are studio-shot by the artist in an appealingly simple and seemingly direct style. Smiling, shirtless *Geoff* (2010), a handsome, 20-something guy, faces the camera head-on, his dark hair neatly shorn, the skin on his hairless pecs exuding a healthy glow. *Sea Lion* (2010) takes for its subject that adorable mammal perched in front of blue-green water. And *Pillow* (2010), one of the most attractively shot objects here (if also one of the most inscrutable) is a soft sculpture of interlocking stitched satin or silk shapes in bright pink, flesh and white that rests on a reflective surface.

The works were hung in a line, just below eye level, and once we encountered two or three, some formal and conceptual rhythms began to strongly assert themselves. *Geoff*, cropped just below his nipples, stands before two garish, mismatched curtains—one bright yellow, the other bright blue. We might wonder about the weird, two-color convergence, but, alas, *Geoff's* lovely torso is blocking our view. The body of the sea lion, like *Geoff's*, effectively divides the picture plane into thirds, its wet brown pelt uncannily echoing the sheen of *Geoff's* tanned skin. The pillow (if indeed that's what it really is) sits on a table surface that is dissolved in light, much like the sea lion's water.

We sense that, even after prolonged viewing, we'll never learn more about the attractive people,