

HAMMER



This Is the End

Ed Atkins

Loretta Fahrenholz

Tommy Hartung

January 10 – June 7, 2015

HAMMER PROJECTS

This Is the End

Ed Atkins, Loretta Fahrenholz, Tommy Hartung



Hammer Projects: This Is the End features three recent videos by three international artists working independently. Sharing similar sensibilities and employing an array of unconventional narrative strategies, the individual works by Ed Atkins, Loretta Fahrenholz, and Tommy Hartung address such themes as trauma, melancholy, surrealism, and the uncanny. Atkins's *Even Pricks* (2013) comprises a series of hyperpolished digitally rendered vignettes that relate the idea of depression—both physical and psychological—to the immaterial surfaces of images. Fahrenholz's *Ditch Plains* (2013) depicts New York City and its environs in the wake of an unspecified disaster that seems at once physical, virtual, and emotional. The protagonists move through a dilapidated landscape, acting out narratives both real and surreal. Hartung's epic video *THE BIBLE* (2014)

incorporates found footage, fictitious news footage, and animation in a dramatic exploration of issues from the Old Testament, including morality, ethics, religion, and war.

Tommy Hartung

January 10–February 22, 2015

In his videos and sculptures, Tommy Hartung concocts strange worlds populated by ethereal beings and bodiless voices. *THE BIBLE*, which the artist refers to as “a network of finely woven nets,” is the culmination of three years of work, and he plans to continue adding to it over time. Taking on one of the most renowned books of all time, Hartung presents a hallucinogenic world rife with war, trauma, creation, destruction, and other catastrophes, not unlike that of the real Bible. Like the increasingly influential “citizen journalists” who inspired him, he mixes actual news footage, found eyewitness video clips, and reenacted found footage with his own fictional narratives. Using handmade sets, stop-motion animation, and video montage, he creates alternative universes, posing existential questions of ethics and morality while exposing the inequalities and contradictions inherent in society today.

The piece begins and ends with a monologue by the American theoretical physicist and Einstein protégé David Bohm, who speaks about truth (and later about thought and sensitivity). Also featured are an Osama bin Laden speech about 9/11, pictures of a bunch of happy white men featured in an advertisement for the best lawyers in New York, the story of two gay men in Soweto who were caught having sex and then stoned by onlookers (one of the men later died from his injuries), and a Hindu shaman possessed by a spirit. An extended segment about convicted US Army Pfc. Chelsea Manning (née Bradley) begins with a robotic voice-over reciting his court statement. The unsettling portrait quickly breaks down and transforms into footage reminiscent of a nature documentary, exploring the flora and fauna of a mysterious island as well as its inhabitants, which are hybrids between humans, animals, and ghosts. War scenes recall video games, and it feels at times as if we, the viewers, are playing the game (actual video game footage is featured briefly). Animations with dolls and toys and handmade miniature sets were shot mostly on web cameras, and the varied sound track includes an ancient Aramaic or Hebrew song, Hindu chanting, the Soviet national anthem, and an emotional song featured in the final episode of the television series *Lost*. The film concludes (after we hear Bohm discuss how conclusions are violence) with a melodramatic account of the Vietnam War veteran John Constantino, who self-immolated on the National Mall in 2013. The moods of the video frequently shift from melancholic to idyllic and back again, and throughout the piece evokes empathy and provokes questions about life, liberty, and humanity.