

OBJECTS OF DEVOTION AND DESIRE

Ishmael Randall Weeks /

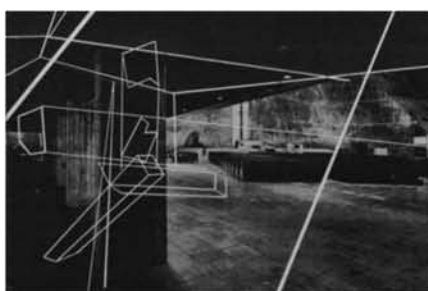
TOKIO-SUSPENSION (AFTER LEBBEUS WOODS)

2009. Acrylic and photo transfer drawing with cutout mounted on paper. 7 3/4 x 11 3/4 in. Collection of Alejandro Zaia. Courtesy of the artist and Eleven Rivington, New York. Image courtesy of Kim Hoeckele.



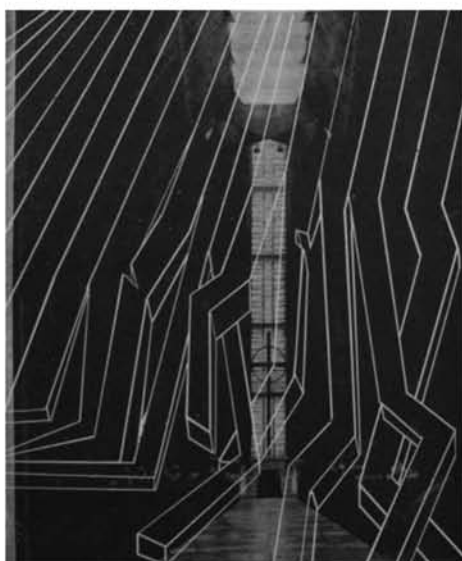
MANNHEIM-SUSPENSION FIELD (AFTER LEBBEUS WOODS)

2009. Acrylic and photo transfer drawing with cutout mounted on paper. 11 x 10 1/4 in. Private Collection. Courtesy of the artist and Eleven Rivington, New York. Image courtesy of Kim Hoeckele.



MUNICH-SUSPENDED (AFTER LEBBEUS WOODS)

2009. Acrylic and photo transfer drawing with cutout mounted on paper. 9 x 11 in. Collection of Alejandro Zaia. Courtesy of the artist and Eleven Rivington, New York. Image courtesy of Kim Hoeckele.



Ishmael Randall Weeks's works on paper are characterized by their obscured meaning, precise craftsmanship, and immediate beauty. In the three works on exhibit, Randall Weeks addresses the dynamic nature of sacred space. The churches in the images were of particular interest to him because they were built through a communal effort on the rubble of postwar Germany and Japan. Although expressing spirituality is not his objective, the artist recognizes its place in his work. Raised as a non-Catholic in a Catholic country (Peru), Randall Weeks views church interiors as community structures rather than religious ones.

To create his works on paper, Randall Weeks photocopies images from found books on modern architecture and paints a clear acrylic gel over the photocopied image; when the gel dries into a 'film,' the artist peels it and the transferred image off the xeroxed page and glues it onto another sheet of paper. He then scratches line drawings—derived from architect Lebbeus Woods's 2006 study on how buildings collapse titled *Conflict Studies*—into the acrylic film surface.

Although in both *Munich-Suspended* and *Tokio-Suspension* natural light seems to pour in through the tall windows, illuminating altars and rows of pews, the spaces are obscure. The hanging lamps in *Munich-Suspended*, for instance, along the left row of pews, appear inexplicably suspended in space, the photo transfer process having removed the hanging wire detail. The Woods-style drawing appears stable but taut in this image; perhaps too taut, as though it might snap. The diagonal lines direct the viewer's gaze away from the church altar and further obscure the church's interior. The drawing is more contained within *Tokio-Suspension*, allowing the viewer to better interpret the space, but the low ceiling creates a cavernous entrance into the spiritual site, distancing the viewer from the light-filled altar.

Just as relics are distinguished as being lit from within, Randall Weeks's decision to cut through the surfaces of his photo transfers creates an illusion of light of a different sort than the light of the sun. This is particularly evident in his work *Mannheim-Suspension Field*, where the white lines of Woods's drawings assault the viewer's perception of the underlying work, embodying combative energy and the threat of collapse.

The original found photographs Randall Weeks used reproduced only a fragment of each church—a fragment that, like a relic, intimates a whole. As Susan Sontag writes in *On Photography*, photographs "accord value to their subjects," but also "fiddle with the scale of the world" (Sontag, 4, 15). Photographs get blown up, but also fade, deteriorate, disappear, and even get sold on the market. Randall Weeks sees value in these found images of modern churches. He demonstrates this through process, giving each image its own emphasis and character through the Woods design. With his work, however, Weeks also shows that the hazy transferred images depict vulnerable spiritual spaces. These sites have been charged with energy by the people who believe and the performances they enact. Their significance is tenuous, as it is dependent on a community of faith and, like the fallen buildings upon which they were constructed, their structures are susceptible to collapse and destruction.

Amy Levin