



TIM LEE

Written By Yaelle Amir

In his recent solo exhibition at Cohan & Leslie, Tim Lee presented photographs and videos that posit complex interpretations of cultural emblems. The works on view ultimately represent the endpoint of an elaborate research process and reenactment of an iconic image, song, or performance. Rather than building upon the original creation, Lee derives his inspiration from a remake of the work—thus forming an additional degree of separation from the named source. ¶

Lee's works contain multiple layers of references from popular culture and art history, coupled with an allusion to larger issues of race and collectivism. The photograph "Untitled (Pink Panther, 2092)" (2007) depicts Lee photographing himself as he stands in a Dan Graham mirror pavilion that multiplies the image ad infinitum. He is wearing black-rimmed glasses with attached binoculars, while holding a 35mm camera up to his eye (all three objects are also on display in an adjacent vitrine in the gallery). The repetition of the image suggests the photograph's reference point—*The Pink Panther* film remake from 2006, starring Steve Martin. ¶

In the movie, Martin, an American, plays the part of French detective Jacques Clouseau, who was originally portrayed by the British actor Peter Sellers. Martin has been the subject of several of Lee's previous works, and is perceived by the artist as the embodiment of the "WASPish" comedic persona who had to reinvent himself entirely in order to be relieved of his initial "brand

character." The "Pink Panther" series (partially on view in this exhibition) juxtaposes an art historical reference (Graham) with a pop icon (Martin), in turn prompting discussion on the possibilities in reinvention, as well the fluidity of global nationalities. ¶

"My My, Hey Hey (Out of the Blue)/ Hey Hey, My My (Into the Black), Neil Young, 1979" (2007) is a large-scale photographic diptych that epitomizes the creative struggle as embodied in Neil Young's seminal album *Rust Never Sleeps* (1979). Each photograph depicts Lee reenacting Young's presumed pose while playing the first song on the album with an acoustic guitar ("My My, Hey Hey...") and the last song ("Hey Hey, My My..."), an electric version of the first track. Lee perceives these two alternate takes as Young's demonstration of the old and the new, the past and the future, and his inherent agitated creative process. ¶

In the two-channel video "Goldberg Variations, Aria, BWV 988, Johann Sebastian Bach, 1741 (Glenn Gould, 1981)" (2007), Lee further explores the process of restaging the already restaged work. The video depicts a close-up of Lee's piano version of Glenn Gould's 1981 remake of his own 1955 adaptation of Bach's famous composition. For the creation of this work, Lee studied the piano, recorded each hand playing the piece separately, and assembled the various takes to form one continuous version of the Aria.

Cohan and Leslie

Images courtesy of Cohan and Leslie

His struggle with the instrument is apparent, yet it is through this imperfect rendition of the work that he withdraws the spotlight from the actual music, and instead shines it on the underlying concept—the question of authenticity as one keeps recreating the same piece over and over again. ¶

In each of his works, Lee assumes a popular persona and refashions it to include multiple references. Through these juxtapositions, he reflects on the period during which the original author created the piece he is enacting, ultimately illuminating not only the icon, but also the culture and context within which the work was initially produced. ¶

~~Images (left to right):~~

1. "Untitled (Pink Panther 2092)," 2007
C-Print. 2 Parts: 60" x 48" and 48" x 60" Edition of 5