


## We Went to Dumbo

by PADDY JOHNSON AND WHITNEY KIMBALL on JANUARY 31, 2014 · 0 COMMENTS

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Robert Hickman and Mónika Sziládi, Smack Mellon

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### Smack Mellon

92 Plymouth St, Brooklyn

Rob Hickman, "DMMDIA", Mónika Sziládi, "Wide Receivers & Tight Ends"

Through March 2nd.

**What's on view:** Robert Hickman's latest mosaic, DMMDIA, a wall of mirrored pyramids; Mónika Sziládi's gauche-glam portraits, or ass-and-back photos, titled "Wide Receivers & Tight Ends"

**Whitney:** Mirror art rarely gets me too excited, whether that's Josiah McElheny's "Walking Mirrors", or selfies in mirrors, or the mirror-tiled sculptures that seem to be so popular on the fair circuit. Maybe that's simply just because mirror, as a material, deflects, so you can't look to the surface for a story or a trace of the artist.

The better mirror works I can think of compensate for that fact with an extra level of sensitivity, like Tony Matelli's trompe-dust paintings, created with a light spray of automotive paint. The best I've ever seen are aluminum boxes by Donald Judd, which I appreciated because they seamlessly reshape the surrounding landscape. This wall of triangles does not have that intention.

**Paddy:** My favorite part of this exhibition was the giant sign in the window warning people that their children could get hurt because of the extremely sharp glass. Naturally the first thing I did was touch the glass to see just how sharp it was. I survived, but yes, it's sharp.

This work barely seemed to function as a mirror, since every surface was angled. It read more like a long jewel to me, so I wondered why this piece wasn't at Pace, or some similar blue chip contemporary art gallery.



**Paddy:** It's hard not to think of Jessica Craig-Martin's photographs when looking at "Wide Receivers and Tight Ends", a series of 13 photographs by Monika Sziládi. That's a good thing, because Sziládi captures the same kind of "failed armor" Jessica Craig-Martin describes as her subject. People seem exposed.

There are, of course, differences. Monika Sziládi's photographs don't focus as much on high society, but rather a relationship between performance, social circles, and technology. Everyone is either posing or getting their camera phone ready for something. For that reason, the subjects are sometimes a little more like participants in the project rather than material to be manipulated by the artist.



Now, I realize that's a little odd to say given that Sziládi digitally manipulates her photos, but those manipulations are not always apparent. Take for instance, the photograph of a woman in a bikini bent over a motorcycle. We see every vein in her legs, and even the brown of her ass crack. It's probably the least attractive lighting I've ever seen used and I have no idea what, if anything has been manipulated. This image read more like a re-presentation of amateur soft-core porn, so on its own I'm not sure it would be much more than grotesque.

But these photographs benefit from being displayed as a group. The picture beside it is a shot of a man, back arched, who's either diddling with this phone or his dick in a mirror while carrying parts from a disassembled Christmas tree. There's a push and pull between the two poses that's incredibly satisfying.

If it's possible to have a preference in this group, for me it was probably "Untitled (Pink Accent)", which pictures a maniacal woman (or man) wearing a pink cocktail dress and pink periwig in a ballroom that doubles as a convention center. Beside her is a figure who looks like Comic Book Guy from The Simpsons. Here, I like that the cast of characters seems broader, and weirder than you'd normally see. That construction seems a little more interesting than some of the other manipulations. The ones where you would notice different versions of a scene in a camera view finder after looking for a while weren't quite as good—it seemed like the redundant visualization of a process (though I say this knowing that I've just noted that process isn't apparent a lot of the time, so maybe those images are needed).

**Whitney:** Totally. I didn't notice that the figures were collaged until you'd mentioned it, since they're so seamless, but you immediately notice slight inconsistencies in scale and depth that make these feel very surreal. Something's definitely off but it's not clear what.

While a lot of these immediately stand out as raunchy or unnerving, the image that stuck out most to me was "Untitled (Cheer Circle)". It's just a girl on an ice rink, with her back to us, cheering with a cell phone in her hand, in front of a slightly larger projection of herself, which shows a big crowd behind her. The more you think about it, the more you realize this situation makes no sense. Why is there a crowd facing a screen that just displays itself? Why is nobody directly facing each other, or the viewer? Sziládi has set up a chain of mirrors that illustrates the degree of removal that happens when you project your identity through technology.

