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Jason Lazarus, *Phase I/Live Archive*, 2011–, mixed media, dimensions variable.
CHICAGO

Jason Lazarus

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, CHICAGO (MCA CHICAGO)
220 East Chicago Avenue
March 19–May 18

Jason Lazarus's solo exhibition, installed in two separate areas of the museum, investigates the learning process and the various overlapping contexts—public and private, individual and collective—in which it happens. Strangely, Lazarus does so through displaying objects and images that are partially hidden from view and are thus not fully comprehensible. Snapshots are pinned to walls with their “backs” facing viewers, a board of photographs found in New Orleans is completely covered by a brown blanket, and a smallish “X” of white glow-in-the-dark tape is placed high on a wall. The works’ titles sometimes provide clues, but not enough information to deduce meaning beyond the hypothetical. The resulting state of contingency can be liberating—or maddening. For *73 Selected Narratives (March 10th)*, 2013, Lazarus cut a hole in the wall, buried seventy-three news articles from the title’s date inside, and then resealed it, leaving a scar-like strip of unpainted plaster. Although the artist confounds viewers with an information archive they cannot access, nothing stops them from researching that day’s events themselves and actively formulating their own conclusions about its significance. Indeed, that may be the point.

For *Untitled*, 2013, Lazarus asked a college piano student to learn Chopin’s *Nocturne in F*

Minor, op. 55, no. 1 inside the museum over the course of the exhibition. Held several times a week, these practice sessions—ordinarily conducted privately—are here rendered visibly and vulnerably public. Several floors below hangs *Phase 1/Live Archive, 2011–*, a number of Occupy Wall Street signs that Lazarus’s students recreated from media images. Visitors are invited to select a sign, carry it around the museum, and share images of this microrally through Twitter. If visitors do so, their actions become part of the archive; if they decline, the signs’ disruptive potential (however limited) goes unrealized and the “live archive” becomes, instead, a crypt.

— Claudine Ise

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