

Casey Ruble, 'Michel Auder', Art in America, October 2010

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

Michel Auder:
#78 *Heads of the Town*,
2009, video, 12 minutes;
at Newman Popiashvili.



MICHEL AUDER NEWMAN POPIASHVILI, ZACH FEUER AND PARTICIPANT INC.

What do prostitutes trolling the Bowery, paintings by Brueghel and the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles have in common? They all have been captured by Michel Auder, who has exhaustively recorded the world around him ever since he purchased a Sony Portapak in 1969. Consisting of some 5,000 hours of raw footage, his personal archive includes events that range from momentous to mundane, titillating to tender: drug-fueled debaucheries among Warhol Factory denizens, a visit to a museum of Flemish paintings, Viva Superstar—to whom he was once married—giving birth to their daughter, a TV weatherman reporting the forecast. Influenced by Warhol and the French New Wave, with its aversion to tidy plotlines, Auder plumbs this archive, often years after the material was shot, to link fleeting moments in poetic, loose narratives and montages oddly removed from, yet submersed in, the experiences of life. The vastness of Auder's work begs

for a survey exhibition, which Newman Popiashvili, Zach Feuer and Participant Inc. delivered with the chock-full "Keeping Busy: An Inaccurate Survey of Michel Auder." (Concurrently, a fourth segment of the show was on view at Volume 2 in Los Angeles, and New York's Anthology Film Archives screened his 2007 *The Feature*, co-directed by Andrew Neel.) At Participant Inc., a constellation of monitors presented various works, from the Dionysian *Cleopatra* (1970)—which features a cast from Warhol's ensemble and is an improvisational, low-budget takeoff on Mankiewicz's 1963 Taylor-Burton film of the same name—to more recent videos shot during trips to Bolivia and Rome. At turns captivating and tedious, *Chelsea Girls with Andy Warhol* (shot 1971-76, edited 1994), part of a series chronicling the New York downtown art scene of that era, was projected on a side wall; feature-length pieces were available for screening on demand.

Among the work at Feuer were projections of two seminal midcareer pieces: *Rooftops and Other Scenes* (1986) and *The Games: Olympic Variations* (1984), the latter shot off television and edited to emphasize the erotic potential of the footage. Newman Popiashvili showed new montages on five monitors, which included double exposures of a narcoleptic woman and dreamlike shots of a wolf killing a rabbit and water running in a sink, set against ambient sound.

Auder's work has been described both as autobiographical and voyeuristic, but it really exists somewhere between the two.

Auder as an individual largely remains absent, even in the rare instances when he appears in the frame; what is offered instead is a pan of the circumference of a life that could belong to almost anybody. Although it often appears deceptively nonexistent, the editing of these pieces plays a crucial role. Declining grand statements, Auder gracefully sutures minute details: similar gestures, expressions, camera angles, moods. #78 *Heads of the Town* (2009), shown at Newman Popiashvili, includes a series of three-quarter-profile views of people gazing at or near the camera, filmed just before they speak (as Auder informed me in a phone conversation). Paradigmatic of Auder's work as a whole, this sequence captures the suspended, replete moment before what you say pins you down and eliminates all other possibilities.

—Casey Ruble