

DANIEL JOSEPH MARTINEZ

**The enemy of my enemy is my friend and my friend is my enemy.
Did you know it snows in Los Angeles in the summer time.**

by Gail Victoria Braddock Quagliata

SIMON PRESTON GALLERY | SEPTEMBER 12 – OCTOBER 31, 2010

In 2009, Daniel Joseph Martinez made the journey from his Los Angeles home to the comparative wilderness of Alaska with the intention of traveling the entirety of the 33-year-old, 800-mile-long Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. The enemy of my enemy is my friend and my friend is my enemy. Did you know it snows in Los Angeles in the summer time is both an emotionally complex visual catalog of this solitary expedition and a cerebral sucker punch. It draws the viewer into the position of a displaced, dazed other (a sort of momentary surrogate-Martinez), while simultaneously demanding a conscious awareness of all that has led to this modern world of Alaskan oil pipelines, improvised explosive devices, Sarah Palins, and pristine, wildlife-crammed vistas that exist solely on the front of postcards. Entering the gallery space, the viewer is immediately thrust into Martinez's trek by the likes of "CHRONICALS OF HOMO SAPIENS/I am here to make lists/Let them think what they list/Most of the population of the world is listed/as missing 2010" (2010), in which unsteadily hand-scrawled facts and figures spell out genocides and massacres directly on the wall. This patently unromantic collection of humanity's greatest horrors serves as bleak wallpaper for the more interactive piece facing it from the opposite side of the room, "She could see Russia from her house! Those who wish for peace should prepare for war! — Old Sasquatch Proverb (In search of the Tribe Called Sasquatch, or who really built the Alaskan Oil Pipeline) 16 Communiqués and found photographs from traveling the length and breath of Alaska during the month of August, 2009" (2010).

Here, warped mirrors reflect the viewer's image twice, one upside down, the other righted, both distorted awkwardly and interrupted by the blurred but still awe-demanding natural beauty depicted on the face of one of 16 postcards. These postcards are mounted on Plexiglas rods just far enough from the mirrors to gently mutilate the subject of the cover photograph—a wolf, an eagle, a mountain, countless trees rolling off the frame into presumed infinity. Yet over the viewer's shoulder peers that omnipresent chronicle of misdeeds, mass murders, and outright holocausts in its plain, wavering hand, creeping insistently into each serene Kodak moment of oblivious elk or lolling bear. This leads the viewer's eye to an even more immediate text, Martinez's abrupt, fact-based poetry stamped large on the back of each postcard and colliding with the insipid ad-speak laid out in delicate pre-printed font peddling Alaskan wonder in terms of acreage and miles.

Overseeing this spectacle is "praying to a dead hare/or watch out madness is a reality, not a perversion" (2010), a suspended hare strapped to a makeshift explosive device awkwardly assembled from an old cell phone and several sticks of dynamite. This hare is hardly the Joseph Beuys "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare" hare, gently rebuking humanity's frequent lack of intuition and sense; no, this hare, like Martinez's text, is an I.E.D. serving not as retribution but as a vivid reminder of history's brutal tendency toward blind repetition, and humankind's attempts to glance anywhere but at the blood-soaked foundation upon which many of its greatest triumphs rest.



"praying to a dead hare, or watch out madness is a reality, not a perversion" (2010). Taxidermy, paper, wire, misc. hardware – dimensions variable.

Courtesy of Simon Preston Gallery.