
ART IN REVIEW; George Kimmerling Deborah Stratman

By HOLLAND COTTER
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Momenta

72 Berry Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Through Sunday

In mood, the two bleak, acrid solo shows paired at Momenta are of a piece. George Kimmerling's installation is a horror-tale version of American childhood. One wall of the gallery is covered with clips from newspapers and magazines, each a report of violence committed against, or by, children and adolescents: sexual molestation, school arson, the murder of parents. The clips are randomly interspersed with pictures of criminals and victims, as if to suggest that violence is free-floating, its players interchangeable.

Two series of drawings specifically link violence with sexual desire. One series recreates images of child-heroes from comic books and television cartoons who were teamed with adult male partners in their fight against crime. The other reproduces scrawling love notes written by a real 12-year-old, Alex King, to a convicted child molester, Ricky Chavis. Last year in Florida, Mr. Chavis was charged with killing the boy's father but was acquitted. Alex and his brother were also charged separately and convicted; after their convictions were thrown out, they pleaded guilty to third-degree murder.

Mr. Kimmerling isn't out to draw conclusions, never mind a moral, from any of this. As in his past work, he sifts a body of cultural facts and makes his report, and he is doing so ever more forcefully.

A video by Deborah Stratman in Momenta's smaller back gallery extends Mr. Kimmerling's exercise in Warholian unease with a succession of lingering bad-dream views of gated suburban communities and anonymous figures tracked by surveillance cameras. With its restless movement across nighttime lawns and its omniscient views from above, the film generates an anxious tension that is never resolved. It feels like a slasher film without the slasher, a news report of a disaster still to come. HOLLAND COTTER

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