

LA CRITIQUE

★★★★ par Tania Brimson

Ethan Levitas, "In Advance of a Broken Arm"

Polka Galerie, Paris 10 June - 4 September, 2010

The narrative image - one that has something to say and tell - has rarely been realized with an exposure that reverberates as brilliantly as that which comes from under the navy blue caps and through the cunning eyes of 'In Advance of a Broken Arm': a compilation of fortuitous encounters between Ethan Levitas and police officers in the streets of New York City. For here, the Street Photography of this American challenges the codes of the medium of photography to the point where the photo no longer tells the story. It is the story. And the exhibit is a case for the rights riddled by the security psychosis inherited from September 11. By capturing the worried look that the police force bear toward cameras in the public space, Levitas freezes exactly the moment the photographer has become a "public enemy," just before being stopped, reprimanded, or even arrested. Each photograph is also accompanied by an epigraph clarifying the circumstances of the censorship, if censorship is what it is. In other words, portraits of NYPD officers, taken from reality at the moment that they react to the lens, are the result of the photographic act, and not vice versa. It is fear, distrust (or even their own complicity) that inspires the photographic practice that creates here the photojournalistic consequence. The approach, intelligent, reveals certain paradoxes of the American national identity in the heart of a city where photography and film have formed the collective imagination. The result, alive with a rare acuity, penetrates with a documentary concern as well as a sense of palpable anxiety. And, perhaps, the cunning pleasure to have immortalized the moment when Big Brother chases his own tail.

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