

salt 5:

Daniel Everett

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fig. 1. Daniel Everett, *Monument I / Monument II / Monument III*, 2011, inkjet prints, courtesy of the artist

Daniel Everett's work often depicts a certain kind of anonymous architecture: security booths, surveillance towers, airports, and various passageways, like elevators and corridors with moving walkways. These are places defined primarily by what lies beyond them; places that serve to channel or control those who pass through or past them. They are instances of what anthropologist Marc Augé would call “non-places:” generic spaces of transience, in which people suspend their usual identities and purposes until they pass through an official exit and return to the world.¹

The images that comprise Everett's photographic series *Monument I*, *II*, and *III*, feature security booths, those ubiquitous modular “non-places” that mark the entrances of parking lots, the peripheries of so many private properties (fig. 1). It is difficult to think of a more banal type of building. Everett isolates and decontextualizes the security booths, positioning them against single-color gradient backgrounds (cyan blue, emerald green, pink) that seem derived from Photoshop. There the structures float freely, as if in some perversely cheerful advertisements for security systems.

But, why call these buildings *monuments*? A monument generally serves a commemorative function; situated in a specific place, it pays homage to an event or person associated with that place. If the ‘monumental’ suggests an object of grandiosity and outsized presence, Everett’s title may therefore seem ironic. Yet his tone—his stance toward the ordinary, standardized architecture in these works and others—seems earnest, or perhaps ambivalent. He locates traces of modernist form in these minimal, boxy structures—something of a debased International Style. Early in the twentieth century, modernist architects like Le Corbusier called for an aesthetic based on the formal strength of mass-produced objects and industrially engineered structures. In a similar spirit, it seems that Everett retains an attachment to the ordered, autonomous world of modernist art. “I seek to monumentalize a sense of longing,” he has written. We might read the security sheds as ghosts—monuments to modernist ideals that still haunt us.

That would be one reading, a benign reading, of the security booths. After all, these structures, however banal—in part because of their banality—represent an architecture of authority. These structures function to house guards and security officers; they are places of surveillance and power. Consider the security booth featured against the cyan blue backdrop, which is apparently higher-tech than the other two more commonplace booths. More like a bucket, with opaque reflective windows, it sits atop a mechanical lift, well above street level. Everett calls it a “portable panopticon”—invoking the prison model made famous by theorist Michel Foucault—and says he photographed it on the streets of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Given that Crown Heights is a neighborhood known for its racially and culturally mixed population, and for the riot that took place there in the early 1990s, it requires little imagination to see this security booth lift as a disciplinary apparatus aimed at crowd control. Indeed it does function according to the principle of the panopticon, the prison designed by Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th century, which positioned a guard’s tower at the center of a ring of cells. While the guard can see out, the inmates cannot see in, and the latter must assume that they are under constant supervision. For Foucault, the panoptic function becomes diffuse, internalized by individuals and generalized to the whole of society. “The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges,



fig. 2. Daniel Everett, *Antenna I / Antenna II*, 2011, inkjet prints, courtesy of the artist

individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished, replaced by a collection of separated individualities.”² Questions about the ways in which the built environment, and the larger human-made landscape, shape and structure our experience as individuals are at the core of Everett’s investigations.

The artist sometimes points to a human subjectivity or presence in images that initially seem devoid of such. Two photographs of a rooftop antenna appear identical at first glance (*Antenna I* and *Antenna II*, 2011, fig. 2). However, from one photo to the next, a slight pan to the right has occurred: in the second image, we see a larger section of sky on the right side of the antenna. Everett refers to this piece as a “two frame movie,” as two frames are all that is required to create the impression of movement and elapsed time. What the piece also suggests is a trajectory of vision corresponding to a human subject, perhaps to

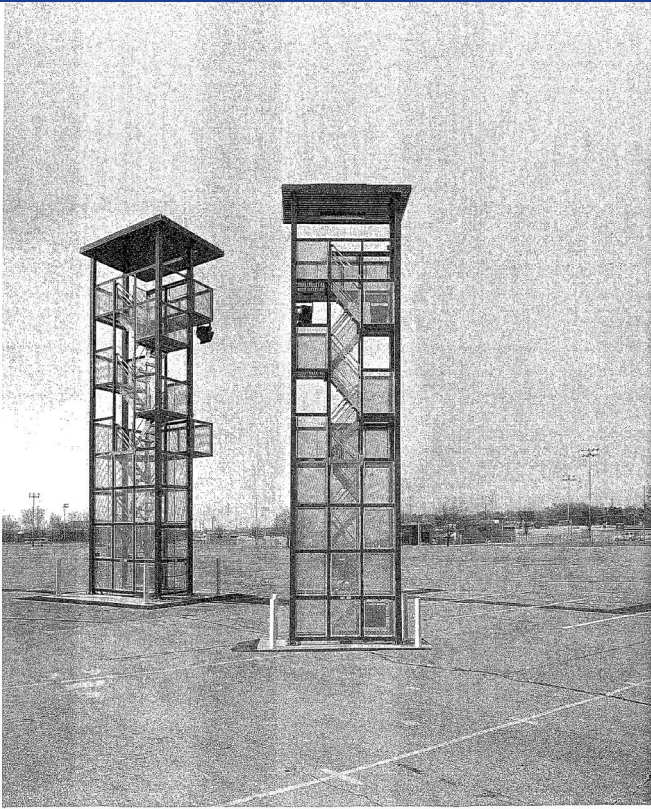
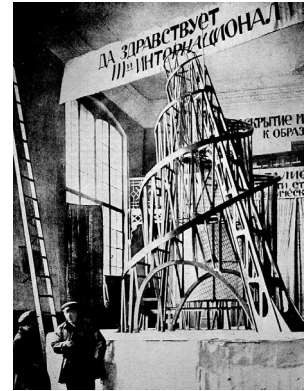


fig. 3. Daniel Everett, *Tower II*, 2012, inkjet print, courtesy of the artist

fig. 4. Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International*, 1920



the person behind the camera. Unlike the security booths, which show us the place from which the surveilling-gaze emanates, these photographs invite the viewer’s identification with the sight line of a human subject.

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A similar kind of doubling—the repetition of a form that is almost the same, but not quite—occurs in other works of Everett’s, as in a photograph of what he calls “observation towers:” tall, modular frameworks with a staircase running up the center of each, topped by platforms (*Tower II*, 2011, fig. 3). Equipped with megaphones, the towers are vaguely suggestive of Russian Constructivist architectural structures designed as public buildings or monuments (for example, Vladimir Tatlin’s admittedly more heroic model for the *Monument to the Third International*, often called his *Tower*, of 1920, fig. 4). In reality, the “observation tower”—located in a parking lot near the artist’s home in Provo, Utah—

serves as the platform for the leader of the Brigham Young University marching band in rehearsal. There is, in fact, just one tower in the parking lot, but Everett has complicated the image—and distanced it from reality—by doubling the tower in Photoshop. He then purposefully degraded the image quality by Xeroxing the photograph—making a copy of the image that contains a copy—and rescanning it.

We discover a parallel logic at work in a new installation by Everett that incorporates a photograph of a copy stand (*Copystand*, 2011). The photograph is taken from above, the camera looking down on the grid of the copy stand, on which an image or text might be placed for photography or “copying.” This photograph of the copy stand’s grid has been printed onto newsprint, which, like the Xerox, serves to degrade the image. The newsprint image is pinned to the wall, and nearby sits a stack of the same newsprint images, available for visitors to take away. From there, one imagines, the image of the grid will be further degraded, folded and wrinkled as it is carried away, or crumpled up and thrown into the garbage.

There are grids to be found in the architectural structures Everett photographs, as in the rows of windows on the imposing security tower depicted in one installation piece (*Tower I*, 2011). The tower’s multi-tiered observation deck sits atop a central column, its grid of windows blankly reflecting the sky. This photograph, mounted to foam core, sits directly on the floor, and Everett has cut it diagonally toward the base. Leaned against the gallery wall, the diagonal cut throws the building off-kilter, creating the appearance of a leaning tower. Here again Everett undermines the all-seeing gaze of the security tower, as well as the rigid order represented by the grid.

The grid appears elsewhere in the artist’s work, in more abstracted form, and with each appearance, its regularity and flatness is interrupted. In a new untitled installation piece, colorful overlapping grids—some digital photographs, some printed on fabric—intrude on one another’s space. The grids, some of which are rendered in perspective, have the clean,



fig. 5. Daniel Everett, *Ascension III*, 2011, video still, courtesy of the artist

generic, slightly *démodé* look that Everett consistently locates in mass culture. They could almost be pulled from the original *Tron* movie, but in fact Everett appropriates these grids from cheesy flyers that target the owners of arcades, advertizing video game cabinets and machines.

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Of course, within the realm of art, the grid is associated not with kitsch, but with high modernism. Beginning in the early twentieth century, artists turned to the grid for its release from mimesis—for the way in which it declared its autonomy from the world. But as art historian Rosalind Krauss has explained, the grid has always carried a dual nature: for some artists it opened onto universal and spiritual truths (as in the work of Piet Mondrian), while for others it was an emblem of clear-eyed rationality. “The grid’s mythic power,” she writes, “is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes, science, or logic) while at the same time it provides us with a release

into belief.”³ The grid, then, embodies a contradiction between the material and the spiritual, between order and chaos, perfection and debasement, rationality and faith. This contradiction runs throughout Everett’s work; it is a tension he courts.

Ascension III is a digital video—one in a series the artist has made—that takes us into the corridor of an airport terminal, yet another non-place (fig. 5). Everett shot the footage at the Salt Lake International Airport in a hallway between a terminal and a parking lot, but signs marking any specificity of place have been erased. Moving sidewalks run along each side of the frame, parallel paths that converge in a perfect vanishing point. The video is a loop, without beginning or end, and we as viewers are propelled toward that vanishing point, endlessly. Fluorescent lights are embedded among the ceiling panels (where we find yet another grid), and the inexorable forward movement vaguely suggests a ‘light at the end of a tunnel,’ or the near-death experience of ‘going toward the light.’ That the piece is called *Ascension* suggests the association of a spiritual journey is intentional, if also fraught, for our passage through this sterile environment is unnerving, and more than a little uncanny. Is this a space of transcendence, finally, or the homogeneous non-place of global transit? Everett ambivalently—or perhaps multi-valently—embraces both possibilities.

– Jill Dawsey, Associate Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego,
former Chief Curator, Utah Museum of Fine Arts

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1. Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1995).
 2. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 201.
 3. Rosalind E. Krauss, “Grids,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985), 12.

Daniel Everett is an assistant professor of visual arts at Brigham Young University. He received a BFA in photography from Brigham Young University in 2006 and a MFA in photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2009. Everett has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the NEXT Art Fair, Chicago, and his work has been included in group exhibitions at Spencer Brownstone Gallery, PPOW Gallery, and Allegra LaViola Gallery, all in New York; 12 Mail Gallery, Paris; XL Art Space, Helsinki; and the Central Utah Art Center, Ephraim, Utah. His work has appeared in *Index Magazine*, *Proximity*, and *Carousel Magazine*.

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salt (sôlt)

n.

1. A colorless or white crystalline solid used extensively in ground or granulated form as a food seasoning and preservative
2. An element that gives flavor or zest
3. Sharp, lively wit
4. A mineral sharing definitive characteristics with Utah's capital city