Contemporary Art Writing Daily

Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda at Essex Street

CAWD, previously:

> Artists continually forcing a reading between the lines they force distinctly apart. So that the blank white space feels ominous and full, like a detective novel, figure it out, Jay Chung & Q Takeki Maeda adept at objects in aura of evidence or clues. In dark forests we imagine predators, in confusion invent gods, or artists.

And this exhibition showing why "reading between the lines" is so precarious, from the preface:

> "Bad Driver is a work of post-truth conceived in this post-truth era. It is a collection of historical writings that constructs a generalized picture of "Asians," following an outline made up of a constellation of fixed racial stereotypes. ... The authors have "done the research"—as conspiracy theorists say—and uncovered factual evidence that support these preconceived notions. ... a portrait of "Asians" that rely on the reader's presumptions and internalized prejudices far more than the materials cited within." "...the fact's factual quality was dependent on the surrounding details of its original context. Once severed, the fact immediately lost its verisimilitude as a fact."

Making interpretation a matter of delicacy. I want to say I feel vindicated for previously not wanting to enter into JC&QTM's game - this artifactization for anyone's interpretation clue boards - i.e. not become the detective - but there is something enjoyable in reading these, in playing this one's game. You feel the process of your brain latching onto fact - "connecting the dots" - despite being forewarned how worthless these contextless facts are. It still works. Chapter 4 for instance we are shown the questions on a Chinese driving test with their obvious dogwhistle possibility, but JC&QTM casual bypassing of the correct answer suddenly allows all the answers their possibility, reaffirm the racist cliche. This would be stupid if you didn't feel how incredibly effective it is in building an insidious *implication*. It is like a cliche in reverse, watch it be structured, maintained. The wellspring of implication, aura, that functions no matter how many times we say it's just Disney magic. This has obvious parallels (and critique) for any art that apparels itself with the "serious look" - the ominous monolith - the blankness for projection - allows unconscious thoughts to fester - the actor that claims innocence.