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Review: War, apocalypse and food fight humor at The Contemporary

by Catherine Fox | Nov 2, 2010



[The Atlanta Contemporary Art Center](#) offers food for thought, literally and figuratively, in a trio of engaging exhibitions through December 12.



Laura Poitras provides an intense experience of the personal and political fall-out of 9/11 terrorist attacks and the toxic cycle of suffering and revenge in a feature-length documentary and three gallery video works. One tough reporter, she works in the gray zone, where no one is blameless and everyone is a victim. Poitras makes beautiful images, to boot.

As I wrote in the [AJC](#), "the protagonists of her 2010 documentary "The Oath" are two brothers-in-law, who had worked for al-Qaeda. The film toggles between the crafty, conflicted former operative who lives free in Yemen and the Guantanamo trial of the other, who was Osama bin Laden chauffeur. Poitras captures the complexities and contradictions of the "reformed" terrorist and a flawed U.S. policy, both of which have moments of redemption.

"For the video projection "O' Say Can You See?", her first gallery piece, the New York-based artist returns to the literal and figurative Ground Zero of our current relationship with the Middle East, using her footage of people witnessing the 9/11 attack. To see the tears well up in a young boy's eyes or the quiet despair and grief on a man's face is to relive that moment with an intensity one might not expect of a vicarious experience nine years later. It is paired with two video interviews with former Guantanamo prisoners, who recount the torture they endured."



Evidence of the demise of our industrial strength — shards of bridges and such painted a disconcertingly bright and cheery shade of blue — careen through the air in an apocalyptic installation by Mia Feuer. In my [AJC](#) review I mentioned its connection to Atlantan Mark Wentzel's "[Morale Hazard](#)," an obit for the car industry in which a junked Red Mustang was suspended in the same gallery last year. But Feuer also throws in a bit of whimsy. The life-sized pair of floating donkeys is Maurizio Cattelan meets "The Wizard of Oz."



Jaimie Warren, a performance artist who stars in most of her photos, and Atlanta artist Steve Aishman share a bit of food-fight humor. Her photos embodying gluttony and its physical consequences are adjacent to his goofy exploding still lifes, photos from his "Throwing Fast Food Series." In a bit of synchronicity, The National Gallery in Washington, D.C., is hosting an exhibit



of food-face paintings by 16th-century artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo (below).

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