

SPOTLIGHT: EXHIBITION

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Is it possible to be authentic in front of the lens?

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Riccardo Uncut. 2018. Video (87 min.), 1920 x 1080 pixels. © Eva and Franco Mattes, courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art

For those who use it, social media has radically altered our relationship to image-making. Many, if not all, of the photographs we take, are dictated in part by the audience we share them with. We are bombarded with platforms on which to curate our lives; the perceived opinions of others dictate what we post. What do our personal image archives now represent – an intimate insight into our worlds, a wide-edit of our ideal selves, a mixture of both?

With *Riccardo Uncut*, on show as part of the exhibition Data Doubles at team (bungalow) LA, artists Eva and Franco Mattes present an unfiltered portrait of someone's life in order to explore ideas of privacy, authenticity and self-representation. On 19 October 2017, on a commission for the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New-York based duo posted a call on social media requesting to buy someone's phone for \$1,000. "We were looking for an individual who had been taking photos consistently over the last 10 to 15 years," they explain. "That would show us the changes in a person's life, as well as changes in the nature of photography as social media and how smartphones have transformed our relationship to image-making." Aside from this, the artists were open to almost anything.



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Mattes and Mattes received 34 applicants. They selected Riccardo. His phone contained 3,000 photos and videos, which the duo spent hundreds of hours translating into a slideshow. “[...] we manually changed the duration of every photo, trying to emulate the pace at which we would swipe Riccardo’s phone, slowing down slightly over images that are more interesting to us,” they explain. “But, the differences are very subtle, almost imperceptible.” Mattes and Mattes presented all 3,000 photographs in chronological order. The resulting work – running for just under an hour-and-a-half – spans 13 years of Riccardo’s adult life. We witness his friends and family, his relationships, his daily life at home, his colleagues and office dynamics, his travels and vacations, food, art, architecture, and his artistic endeavours – set to the soundtrack of Jeanne Moreau singing *Each man kills the thing he loves*, which the artists sourced from the background of one of Riccardo’s videos capturing a dishwasher being unloaded.

In watching the slideshow we become acquainted with Riccardo. But, the work exposes more than just the intimacies of his everyday life. As the archive progresses, the photographs are increasingly shaped by the expectation of an outside audience – reflecting the emergence of social media during this time. “We have been made well aware of our potential audiences – of the presence of cameras, and the possibility of the permanence and replicability of our images,” says Mattes and Mattes. “And we have, in large part, incorporated that knowledge into the very act of taking a photo. In other words, the vast majority of photos are now taken with perceived publicity in mind.” The series is littered with outtakes: blurred, out-of-focus versions of the selected image, which did not make it into the Facebook photo album or the Instagram feed. “This sort of portrait includes the ways in which someone curates and maintains the images that comprise their sense of self, and only a fraction of these are intentionally shared.”



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As the slideshow progresses, the notion of privacy shifts too. “Riccardo’s unedited archive ... also reveals a depth of nuanced images that were not intended for social media,” says Mattes and Mattes. Moments that may have previously remained private are documented ready for public consumption. It is now the most traditionally impersonal of images, shot without an intended audience, that may be the most intimate: “[...] photos taken as reminders, as a form of note-keeping, or a placeholder for a memory.”

Riccardo Uncut tackles themes that Mattes and Mattes have explored throughout their work. The couple, who operate under the pseudonym 0100101110101101.org, met in Berlin in 1994 and have worked together since. Pioneers of Net Art, through their provocative practice they disrupt and critique the status quo to interrogate power structures, and investigate the impact of technology in modern society. For the project *Life Sharing* (2000-2003), the duo began to explore the notion of privacy and self-representation by transforming their private lives into a public artwork. The entirety of their home computer – emails, files, bank statements etc, – was made accessible to the public for the duration of the project. *The Others* (2011) continued to tackle such themes, comprising a slideshow of 10,000 photographs sourced from random peoples' personal computers via a software glitch.



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Riccardo Uncut also explores the meaning of authenticity in the wake of social media. Photography, by its very nature, insights a certain level of performativity and this is heightened when the photograph is destined for a digital audience. “There is an authenticity in the way that we construct our fiction,” explains Mattes and Mattes. “You can only see it by viewing both the more ‘private’ photos and the ‘public’ ones.” And it is at that intersection that the ‘real’ Riccardo emerges: “Neither of these, alone, give you that so-called ‘authenticity,’ but the two combined – with all the shades of grey in between – may get you closer to that.”

Riccardo Uncut can be viewed [here](#)

0100101110101101.org

Data Doubles is on show at [team \(bungalow\)](#), 306 Windward Avenue, LA, from 12 to 23 June 2019.