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Tina Hage  
*Dream Start*, 2009, Print



Tina Hage, *Dream Start*, 2008  
Print, 60 x 42 cm  
© Tina Hage

Tina Hage  
*Dream Start*, 2009, Print

- Rahila Haque

*"Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum."*<sup>1</sup>

In the work of Tina Hage, we are undeniably presented with a fiction, a fake. There is nothing in the artist's photographic works that wishes to deceive, rather the images push forward and assert that falsity is reality. Hage takes images of crowds from the press and re-enacts them figure by figure. The resulting image is the artist herself in one or many guises, replicated in a digital montage to create a crowd. The images, ranging from political riots to celebrity fans, appear as high contrast and colourful tableaux.

In *Dream Start* (2008) Hage has created a triptych of scenarios that seem to show sports teams and players celebrating victory, but the expressions lack any sense of joy. Against a hazy background of a digital void, the confusion of bodies and limbs produce a pattern of sensual chaos. Hage presents a complete reduction of the photographs generated by the media, and brings to the fore a sense of the hysteria which underlies mass social interaction. Simultaneously, the airless quality of the images flattens the emotion on each face so as to immediately distance and require a reconsideration of what is presented.

Alluding to what Jean Baudrillard termed the "hyperreal", these digitally manipulated photographs take on a process of destabilising the authenticity and disintegrating the 'real' status of the found images they are based upon. *Dream Start* asserts the impossibility of reality in the content of the supposedly truth telling images of news media. It has the capacity, through its evident overproduction, to highlight these properties in the images we accept on a daily basis. Our relationship to Hage's work is as inauthentic as the way we often experience social and political events second-hand, and holds just as little in the way of personal resonance.

In each photograph we see the repeated figure of the artist in various poses and facial expressions which formulate a group that on first encounter refuses any sense of difference. The mass of the red, green and brown crowds overturns the opportunity for the individual to be prominent. Each figure is irrelevant and only maintains a position through a relationship with its others and how they physically interact in the given space; the crowd becomes a whole unit. That this might be a work of self-portraiture is inconsequential; that the artist painstakingly re-presents herself in various roles is not a question of identity, but non-identity.

The forged relationships which make up the composition of each photograph also present themselves in the experience of viewing them. There is none of what Roland Barthes described as the *punctum*; the deeply personal affect of the photograph upon the viewer. There is an element of recognition that is generated despite the high production of the image (which nevertheless we are more than accustomed to in advertising). This familiarity is an external one however, and one that plays on surface rather than depth. It is as though the relationship formed with the three works of *Dream Start* imitates the disconnected yet strangely habitual relations formed in those cultural and political events that make up society.

<sup>1</sup>Baudrillard, J. 1983. "The Procession of Simulacra". In *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e).