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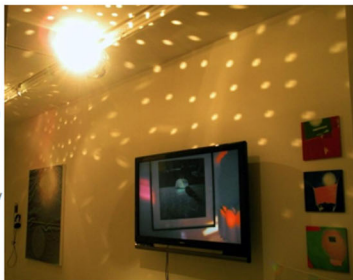
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## I Made a Terrible Mistake: Rochelle Feinstein Remembers Michael Jackson

by cameron shaw 7/6/09

Since his untimely death, I, like many, have become obsessed with the meteoric rise and fall of Michael Jackson. For me, it has rekindled my earliest flame of fanaticism: At age six, I attended my first concert, the final leg of the sold-out Bad World Tour. That night in Los Angeles, the stage was rocked by an earthquake - a common occurrence for city residents, but in retrospect, a sign of the shift in celebrity terrain that would come to define Jackson's career.

Rochelle Feinstein's latest exhibition at Art Production Fund's Lab space, "I MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE," has presciently exhumed the fertile ground of Jackson's ensuing public missteps, accusations, and apologies. Begun in 2002, days after the King of Pop infamously dangled his infant son from a hotel balcony, Jackson's fall from grace is framed by the 2003 death of crooner Barry White, known for his message of unabashed love. In her work, Feinstein draws upon images of uprooted pansies at Giverny, cherry blossoms, and a rushing river to create a synthetic Eden, unsettlingly rife with the promise of absolution and sensual redemption.



The comically disjunctive mélange of painting, photography, video, and sculpture is united by Feinstein's longstanding interest in light and its optical and metaphorical manifestations. Open only three days a week, the exhibition is visible 24 hours from the street, suggesting that one's initial impression of the works is as critical as the experience of viewing them inside the gallery. Bisected by an unfinished wall, the show is particularly dramatic at night: the Jackson side glows with colored bulbs, while a disco ball peppers the side of the gallery dedicated to White with glimmering dots.

The disco ball gains conceptual valence through repetition, becoming a symbol of transgression and transformation. In the work, *Global TV*, 2005, a small television screen is painted to resemble the clichéd party staple, while the black-and-white programming flickers unintelligibly behind. A series of white paintings, including *DJ Purity*, 2004, mimics the dappled light of the object on canvas while evoking the monochromatic works of Robert Rauschenberg. One is left to consider the crucial function of light in the painting process, and also its role as the stifling byproduct of the celebrity machine.



Though Feinstein is sometimes obtuse in her referential system, the work *Auditorium*, 2004, is agonizingly clear. In cheery pink and blue, it depicts the blank space that was created in the marquee of the Michael Jackson Auditorium when his name was removed following allegations of child molestation. Though the light in Feinstein's works seemingly burns brightly throughout the exhibition, its absence is painfully palpable as the darkness of ridicule, violence, and forgetting.

[*"I Made a Terrible Mistake,"* installation view; *Auditorium*, 2004, egg tempera on panel, plaque; all images

courtesy the artist and the Art Production Fund.]