

SEASON THREE

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

University of Waterloo Art Gallery
East Campus Hall 1239

Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday 12:00–5:00 pm

Driving:

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Images (above and right): *Teen Resting on a Bench*, 2011; *Young Couple at a Playground*, 2011.

The Russians

For more than a decade, Adad Hannah has been exploring the conceptual possibilities of *tableau vivant*. Inspired by the 19th century pastime of *living statues*, Hannah has developed an impressive body of multidisciplinary work that ranges from photography and video to installation. Often using friends, family and colleagues as models, the artist stages complex and yet subtle situations by directing his models to stand still while he records them. The resulting videos reveal a mesmerizing disjunction between the static poses and the slippage that occurs as the models inevitably begin to shift uncomfortably during the course of a typical 5-7 minute pose.

Inspired by the vivid digichromatography of Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii (1863–1944), in the summer of 2010, Hannah traveled to St. Petersburg to begin recording aspects of daily life in Russia much as Prokudin-Gorskii had done a century earlier.¹ Armed with two cameras, Hannah and his assistant scouted the city and surrounding areas looking for subjects and locations. Shot in both urban and rural settings using models of varying ages found through local contacts and by word-of-mouth, the artist began shooting his subjects in situ and ended up with enough footage to compose a suite of fifteen videos and an accompanying series of photographs.

Hannah staged each scene, from posing the subjects to selecting their wardrobes. In *Young Couple at a Playground* he chose the blue dress worn by the blond woman and orchestrated the couples' placement—ironically, the woman's companion is wearing the same patterned suit that he wore to work that day. *Guitarist in a Hammock* is similarly what it claims to be, with the addition of details including a bottle of rum, cigarette pack and sneakers in the foreground, which have been composed with the deliberateness of a still-life painting.

Because of the difficulty of not speaking the language and shooting in unfamiliar surroundings, the results feel more improvised than the work Hannah composes in the studio or shoots on location in museums. While gamely attempting to follow the artist's direction to remain still a number of subjects repeatedly break character. Some of the models seem preoccupied or are easily distracted. *Cyclist Stopped on a Path* greets a passing pedestrian. *Teen Resting on a Bench* suffers a coughing fit.

1. The Empire That Was Russia: The Prokudin-Gorskii Photographic Record Recreated
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire>.

Artist Biography

Adad Hannah (United States, 1971) spent his childhood in Israel and England, and moved to Vancouver in the early 1980s. His work has recently been exhibited at the Museo Tamayo (Mexico City, 2012), Samsung LEEUM Museum (Seoul 2011), Prague Biennial 5 (2011), Canadian Biennial (Ottawa, 2011), Liverpool Biennial (2010), the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2009). He has made commissions for the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the National Gallery of Canada, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Prado Museum (Madrid). His work has been funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec, the B.C Arts Council, the Quebec Delegations and Canadian Embassies in Madrid, Seoul, and New York. His work is represented in the permanent collections of the National Gallery of Canada, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Art Gallery of Ontario, and other prominent museums around the globe. He lives and works between Montreal and Vancouver. Adad Hannah is represented by Pierre François Ouellette art contemporain in Montréal.
www.adadhannah.com

List of Works

Video:

Boy Sitting on a Tire, 2011
HD Video, 4 min 17 sec

Cyclist Stopped on a Path, 2011
HD Video, 5 min 09 sec

Girl on a Balcony, 2011
HD Video, 5 min 07 sec

Guitarist in a Hammock, 2011
HD Video, 5 min 00 sec

Russian KAMA3, 2011
HD Video, 3 min 31 sec

Six Russians Eating Ice Cream, 2011
HD Video, 4 min 27 sec

Teen Resting on a Bench, 2011
HD Video, 7 min 01 sec

Young Couple at a Playground, 2011
HD Video, 6 min 21 sec

Photography:

Chess with Grandson, 2011
colour photograph, 100 x 134 cm

Mother Holding a Plum, 2011
colour photograph, 100 x 134 cm

Old Woman Looking Out Window, 2011
colour photograph, 100 x 134 cm

Young Family, 2011
colour photograph, 100 x 134 cm

Young Soldiers at Training Ground, 2011
colour photograph, 100 x 134 cm



These self-conscious elements cleverly shift the focus away from the documentary and anthropological objectives central to Prokudin-Gorskii's work. He set out to record life in the Russian Empire under Tsar Nicholas II. Hannah's intentions while not as grand nevertheless capture a surprisingly compelling portrait of contemporary life in Russia.

— Ivan Jurakic

November 8–December 22, 2012

Gallery One

Matthew Carver

Polizei

Gallery Two

Adad Hannah

The Russians





Polizei

Having lived and worked abroad and travelled extensively during the last decade, Matthew Carver began to notice the increased presence of local law enforcement at public gatherings. In particular, he noticed that police were not only increasingly monitoring public protests but that they had adopted military protective gear and crowd control tactics. Carver made similar observations during extended residencies in Germany, Malaysia, England, China and Canada—Toronto, specifically during the G20 protests in June 2010—and found that riot police all looked the same wherever he traveled. Inevitably, he started to incorporate these observations into his work.

Carver has been painting professionally since the mid-90s and even worked for a spell as a scenic painter. He began to incorporate anamorphic elements into his work early on, using the historical technique of *perspective anamorphosis*. This allowed Carver to manipulate linear perspective to create paintings that demand either a fixed point of reference or a reflective surface to complete the image. Carver's anamorphic paintings tend towards what is referred to as *catoptric* or *cylindrical anamorphosis*, a specialized effect in which a distorted image can be optically decoded by looking in the reflective surface of a cylindrical object.¹

Painters during the Renaissance explored the science of perspective so that they could render illusionistic figures, objects and architectural spaces in two-dimensions. Anamorphic painting pushes perspective beyond its limits allowing for the creation of mathematically precise perceptual distortions. One of the best-known examples is *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein the Younger, which features an elongated skull hovering ominously in the foreground.²

Anamorphic painting reached its zenith before naturalism came to dominate painting in the 18th century, but the emergence of CGI in cinema and the common use of Photoshop beg us to consider Carver's bending of perspective in a contemporary context. The techniques used in *Polizei* can be split into two categories: panoramics that evoke the scale of historical painting, and anamorphs, which require the use of a reflective device.

Eviction Day In Friedrichshain and *Along University At Toronto G20* evoke the scale of historical paintings and murals, many of which traditionally lionized the benevolent authority of church and state. However, in these works Carver flips the narrative. Instead of capturing a triumphant march or victory the artist depicts scenes of riot police gathering at street corners and intersections. While their appearance implies an imminent confrontation, Carver's paintings are never that overt. The use of a skewed perspective suggests a fragmented view through a particularly distorted wide-angle lens. This gives the paintings a charged cinematic quality. With no other figures in sight besides the police, we occupy an uncomfortable position at the front of a metaphoric barricade. Looking at these paintings is a far more embodied experience that looking at pictures in a newspaper or on CNN. As viewers, we are implicated in the events depicted.

August 8th on Mare Street Anamorph and *Along Skaltizer Anamorph* ironically turn the tables. Instead of being overwhelmed by the police presence, we now seem to be spying on them. To complete the work, the viewer needs to adjust their line of sight accordingly and align the distorted perspective of each painting in the reflective chrome of a cylindrical garbage bin. The use of such an ordinary object gives the work an immediacy that grounds us in the here-and-now. So why are we spying on the police?

The implication might be that we are hiding from them and stealing a look from a position of safety or watching the scene unfold through the lens of a camera. In fact, our experience of riots tends to be filtered through the media, safely removed from the trauma of the event. The method that Carver employs implicates the viewer in a more participatory relationship with the subject matter.

Seeing riot police used to be rare, at least in North America, whereas in much of the modern world conscription is still a reality and the presence of the military has long been routine at airports and civic landmarks. The use of protective armour in policing the public has become common practice and specialized firms such as Worldwide Tactical LLC have profited offering a wide range of protective riot gear.³ The use of Kevlar armour and face shields may have been normalized as a protective measure but it also serves to dehumanize and distance police from the very people that they have sworn to serve and protect.

Polizei evokes the paradox at the heart of the global struggle for democracy: as citizens demand their rights and freedoms, those in positions of authority often respond with force to suppress open protest. By pointedly turning passive viewing into a participatory experience, Carver implicates us in the uneasy struggle for social justice. — Ivan Jurakic

1. Fred Leeman, Joost, Elffers and Mike Schuyt, *Hidden Images: Games of Perception, Anamorphic Art, Illusion*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc, New York, 1976, p. 9-14 and 105-111.
2. Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors*, 1533, oil on panel, 206 x 209.5 cm, The National Gallery, London. <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-the-ambassadors>.
3. <http://www.wwtactical.com>.

Artist Biography

Matthew Carver (Canada, 1968) has spent much of the last decade living and working abroad in the United Kingdom, Germany and Southeast Asia. He received his MFA with Distinction at the Chelsea College of Art and Design and his BFA Honours from York University. His paintings are composed using complex perspectival techniques, including the perceptual distortions associated with anamorphism and incorporate digital technologies such as Photoshop. His work has been exhibited in numerous galleries and international art fairs, including the 12th Cairo Biennale. His paintings are in the collections of the RBC Financial Group, Ontario Securities Commission and Museum London as well as in several prominent private collections including the Saatchi Collection, London; Samawi Collection, Dubai; and Taittinger Collection, Switzerland. Matthew Carver is represented by Galerie Caprice Horn in Berlin, Taksu Gallery in Singapore and Christopher Cutts Gallery in Toronto. www.matthewcarver.net

List of Works

- Bersih 2.0 Kuala Lumpur Anamorph*, 2012
Acrylic on wood with garbage can
- August 8th on Mare Street Anamorph*, 2011
Acrylic on wood with garbage can
- Guarding The Gas Anamorph*, 2010
Acrylic on wood with garbage can
- Along Skaltizer*, 2011
Acrylic on canvas, 215 x 355 cm
- Eviction Day In Friedrichshain*, 2011
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 300 cm
- Along University At Toronto G20*, 2010
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 300 cm
- May 1st On WienerStrasse*, 2010
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 300 cm
- NYC Cop Car In My Ice Cream Scoop*, 2010
Acrylic on wood with fluorescent lighting and ice cream scoop

Images (Interior left to right): *Eviction Day in Friedrichshain*, 2011; *Along University At Toronto G20*, 2010; *August 8th on Mare Street Anamorph* (detail), 2011. (Cover) *Along Skaltizer* (detail), 2011.