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Surface at the gates.

“The idea that political action is heroic has blinded us to the sister's actions in concert and perhaps also to conspiratorial and even sororal powers in the world around us”

Bonnie Honig, *Antigone Interrupted*

In her work, surface opens its depths. This is what I thought about Melissa Steckbauer's work when I saw it for the first time, and it stayed, it has always been what I thought of her work, whether it was photographs, installations, sensorium, anything. These surfaces open their depths. The neglected facades, usually so evident that carelessness becomes appropriate, here become key. To things. To affects. To memories, associations, experiences. Melissa's work strikes as one not merely opening experiences, but also emancipating the surface, allowing it to rebel against the cultural obligation to praise the depth. Down with the alienated depth.

Experience is the wretched of commodified culture. In the capitalist quest for value, gained by extraction, precarization and disappropriation, experience is inconvenient, it deploys pain and suffering and blood, also pleasure, supposedly unproductive and therefore only allowed in its instant versions, as in advertisement. If compared to thought or analysis, experience is the embodied surface of the lives actually lived.

So if there is art that consists in cutting through surfaces with eyes fingers scissors memories traumas pleasures shocks or pains, it does to us what Marx did to dialectics – it puts us on our feet. To stand on our feet also means: to connect, and this connection, often missing in theoretical jargon, and more generally – from the society of spectacle, is rendered here. Or perhaps we are rendered to it, we are touched.

The work of Melissa Steckbauer confronts us with have the surface's peculiar capacity of opening and closing dimensions of proximity and vulnerability, cruelty and tenderness. The surface becomes a sensual palimpsest of our experience.