

show partial views of the expressionless faces of nurses that intersect with or are overlaid by images of the tinted windows of the hospitals they work in, the gentle curvature of the buildings' exterior moldings, and other features common to municipal and corporate architecture, whose muteness exudes impenetrability. While in Export's earlier photos the body consciously resists homogenization, the lobotomized visages in the newer work seem subservient to it.

What felt like a death knell for a culture of resistance continued in the gallery's main room. Export's consuming installation *Heads-Apharese*, 2002, consists of thirty casts of the artist's head with the face cut out, cast in either aluminum, bronze, or wax, resting on rusty metal stands. Some tilt very slightly upward, their "chins" jutting defiantly. They peer this way and that; some are pointed toward Export's videos, two of which, *People Don't Scream*, 2002, and *People Don't Scream 2*, 2007, depict images of violent death culled from an American government building's collection of homicide photographs; the third, *Fire*, 2007, shows rippling flames.

Export's early performances and photographs framed the body as a weapon, a signifier of agency and vitality, a potential threat. Here, bodies have become impotent containers—alien, lifeless objects. Export seems to argue that the struggle against normative values as propagated by corporate media—"male realities"—is failing. The exhibition, aptly titled "Dead People Don't Scream," seemed to equate the victims of homicide with the walking dead who have accepted without protest the massive corporate infiltration that is the signpost of contemporary first-world countries. In *The Plague* (1947), Albert Camus wrote, "One grows out of pity when it's useless." One also, it seems, loses faith in the efficacy of militancy.

—Nick Stillman

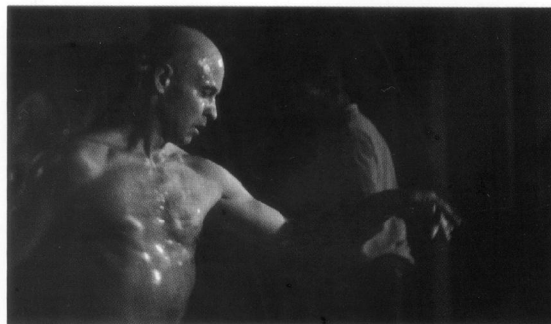
Matt Stokes

ZIEHERSMITH

Matt Stokes's six-minute forty-five-second Super-16 film *Long After Tonight*, 2005, may have won him the now-defunct Beck's Futures Prize last year in Britain, but it doesn't follow any of the current trends in American contemporary art. There's no conceptual code to crack, no extreme or particularly innovative formal gestures, no wry political critique. And as if to evince the artist's own sincere unselfconsciousness, there's even a shirtless man with a braided ponytail, whirling to music like a dervish.

All reason enough, perhaps, to like the work, which was shown at Stokes's recent New York solo debut. *Long After Tonight* was shot at a Gothic Revival church in Dundee, Scotland, where the artist staged an homage to and a re-creation of a famous weekly northern-soul night that ran for years in the adjoining social hall during the '70s. The film (presumably named after Jimmy Radcliffe's soulful version of the Burt Bacharach song) is antididactic, an object lesson in the pure scopophilic joy of watching people dance.

Opening with a bleak exterior view of the church at dusk, the scene shifts to the building's baroque interior, lingering on an incense holder and sundry Christian iconography. The sound track comprises two obscure northern-soul instrumentals, both imparted by local "soulies": The first is a song called "The World Again," by Honey Townsend, while the second—a dramatic tone poem called "Sidra's Theme," by Ronnie & Robyn—is the film's musical cynosure. As the cathartic strings of the first song begin, the camera trains on a twirling skirt; a series of deftly orchestrated edits follow, cutting quickly from tracking shots of sweating bodies to close-ups of hard shoes and acrobatic splits on the church's parquet floor. *Long After Tonight* frequently



Matt Stokes,
Long After Tonight
(Film Still), 2005,
color photograph,
9 1/4 x 15 1/8".

switches in and out of slow motion, syncopating the dancers' gestures to the music's crashes and crescendos. The film closes simply and elegantly, with another exterior view of the church at dawn accompanied by a harp's crisp glissando.

On the other hand, *Sacred Selections*, 2005–, also showcased here, is a broader endeavor comprising public recitals organized by Stokes, in which songs from musical subgenres—black metal, happy hardcore, and northern soul—are played on a pipe organ. Stokes's practice of staging and translating fragments from musical subcultures (*Real Arcadia*, 2003–, a project not included here, documents and re-creates ephemera from defunct British rave organizers Out House Promotions) has often been called anthropological, situating it vaguely in the lineage of relational aesthetics. Considered as such, Stokes's work perhaps bears greater resemblance to the more ludic happenings of Fluxus than to compatriot Jeremy Deller's politically charged restaging *The Battle of Orgreave*, 2001. Still, comparisons will inevitably be made to Deller's *Acid Brass*, 1997—a dead ringer for *Sacred Selections*—in which the artist hired a brass band to perform acid-house anthems.

The recent show included several glossy color stills from *Long After Tonight*, which largely highlighted the film's more bathetic imagery: a statue of the Virgin Mary, a man shouting in ecstasy, a gracefully posed, sweaty torso. They miss *Long After Tonight*'s finer—often awkward—moments: a woman's quiet smile as she concludes a spin or the dancers' occasional clumsiness in executing a move. In sharp contrast to the slick stills, Stokes also included individual portraits, taken during the warm-up to the film, of four of the dancers. Distinctly less noble-looking in the cruel, flattening glare of the flash, their appearance is refreshingly jarring, creating a sense of displacement that serves as a simple foil to the film's nostalgic mien.

—David Velasco

Martín Ramírez

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

This is the second large-scale survey of the work of Martín Ramírez; the first took place in Philadelphia in 1985. Twenty-two years ago, however, the artist's name was spelled without accents. A small change, seemingly, but much depends on it. The difference between this Ramírez and the one we knew before is that identity politics have become part of the way we look at art. The old Ramírez was an American outsider whose works possessed, arguably, such autonomous strength that one could simply call him an artist, without further qualification, or perhaps with only the one qualification then still potentially synonymous with universality: modernist. That artist had in turn replaced the anonymous "incurable schizophrenic" whose name was