

2011

## Manifest 770

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### Recommended Citation

Zarobell, J. "Manifest 770", *Art Practical* 3.1 (September 2011). [http://www.artpractical.com/review/manifest\\_770/](http://www.artpractical.com/review/manifest_770/)

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## Shotgun Review

# Manifest 770

By John Zarobell

September 21, 2011

Incline Gallery is a relatively new addition to the Mission arts scene. In the past year or so, the San Pancho Arts Collective has produced a variety of exhibition projects there and has invited guest curators to do the same. The wide ramp that constitutes the bulk of the hanging space was designed for use by the mortuary that once occupied the building.

In the current exhibition, guest curator Scott S. Jennings has not bypassed but drawn upon the building's history to make a statement about narrative and media, while giving a nod to site-specificity. Jennings pursued research on the site and turned up not only a succession of mortuaries at what was once 770 Valencia (the building has since been renumbered) but a cabaret and comedy club called the Valencia Rose. Jennings assembled an array of approaches and artists to excavate the history of the gallery site through their individual mediums to tell the age-old story of life and death.

It is an ambitious project that perhaps exceeds the capacities of the space. The curator made the most of the multiple, fragmentary segments of the gallery, and the show admirably builds from works preceding the front door to a spectacular array of pieces visible from the top of the ramp. Many works are subtle and sophisticated, but the most successful ones fairly explode from their little nooks and corners. Joseph Melamed's sculpted self-portrait, *Skeletal Man* (2011), is an arresting opener, with its brooding head, supported by a skeletal infrastructure, staring at an iPhone. Mitsu Okubo's wall paintings are much too large to see in the space, but they continue the conversation on human physicality and add a healthy dose of theatricality. Viewers' bodies brush up against images of truncated body parts; sex, death, and fantasy merge in a narrow passage that seethes with subconscious impulses.

Farther up, body and world merge in Bassem Yousri's *Pulse* (2011), which combines the sound of a thumping heart with images filmed from a window during the recent revolution in Egypt. The pairing of abstract and figurative photography in the works of Jessica Skloven and Lane Coder further



Joseph Melamed. *Skeletal Man*, 2011; plastic and steel. Courtesy of the Artist and mosshouse, San

Francisco. Photo: Scott S. Jennings.

de-corporealizes the self and points to the impotence of images to adequately frame both body and soul. The cut-paper sculptures by Claire Jackal impress with their precision and their sagging vitality, reminding us how brief this spell of life must be. At the top of the ramp, the viewer can survey larger works in the open gallery and reconsider the show by looking back from whence one has come. It is a fitting close, to reach the end of the line and take a quick glance back.

*Manifest 770 is on view at **Incline Gallery**, in San Francisco, through October 8, 2011.*

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