

DENNIS ADAMS (b. 1948 Des Moines)

Double Feature,

2008

Epson Ultrachrome archival pigment on Hahnemühle photo rag 310 gram

Edition of 8 + AP I/II, AP II/II

Each sheet: 33 ½ x 24 in.

Image editing: Paul Colin/Cezanne Studio

Printing: Lucien Samaha, New York

Exhibitions:

Double Feature. Kent Gallery, New York, 2008

Walls of Algiers: Narratives of the Colonial City. Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2009

Notes:

Dennis Adams's *Double Feature* is a series of composite "stills" collaged from individual frames grabbed from Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1959) and Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1965). In these constructed images Jean Seberg, the co-star of *Breathless*, has been displaced from her celebrated stroll along the Champs-Élysées in Paris, where she hawked the *New York Herald Tribune* with Jean-Paul Belmondo at her side, and relocated in Algiers during Algeria's struggle for independence from French rule, where she walks the city's war-torn streets.

The streets are those depicted in *The Battle of Algiers*. Seberg's cropped hair and her *Herald Tribune* T-shirt, along with the newspapers and little white handbag she carries, mark her iconic identity as she walks out of *Breathless* and into the demonstrations, checkpoints, and skirmishes of the Algerian Revolution. Her scene as news vendor, which was for Godard little more than a device to establish her American identity and to set up the flirtation with Belmondo, is recontextualized as an index to the unfolding historical events we find her passing through. Seberg is recast as an allegorical figure walking the fault line between the roles of messenger bearing the news and frontline witness to its making.

Seberg's role in *Breathless* will always be identified with the *New York Herald Tribune*, the famed English-language paper produced and distributed in Paris, later renamed the *International Herald Tribune*. The T-shirt with the newspaper's logo that Seberg wore as she strolled down the Champs-Élysées was a common sight in Paris during the 1950s and 60s, when it was worn by the young English-speaking women the *Herald Tribune* employed to sell papers on the streets.

While both *Breathless* and *The Battle of Algiers* depict the same historical window of time, and even share some of the era's cinema vérité, handheld camera aesthetic, they could not be more incompatible in their narrative pacing and political stance. Seberg and Belmondo wander aimlessly through Paris, attentive only to their tenuous relationship and the momentary circumstances of their lives, while the cast of characters in *Algiers*, on both sides of the conflict, tests the absolute limits of violence in a battle to defend opposing ideals.

Literature:

Adams, Dennis. *Double Feature*. New York: Kent Gallery, 2008. Catalogue ISBN: 978-1-878607-77-5

92 pages, 40 black and white plates.