



“SURPLUS III,” 2011, **Michael Krebs**, DIGITAL C-PRINT, 47" X 63" EDITION OF 7
PHOTO: COURTESY DNJ GALLERY

LOS ANGELES

Michael Krebs: “Surplus” at dnj Gallery

There is nothing romantic about the way Michael Krebs views American culture. The Vienna-based photographer’s series of digital c-prints titled “Surplus” disguises itself as a critique of gross consumerism in a capitalistic culture where the objects we once owned now own us. But to only read Krebs’ work through this lens would lend itself to a reading as flat as the surface of the photographs themselves. The figures posing in the photographs are stand-ins for those who fell victim to a false economic security and political stability. In *Surplus III*, which reenacts Joe Rosenthal’s famous photograph of the soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima, four realtors in white dress shirts and black ties work in unison to raise a “For Sale” sign on the lawn of a tract home in suburbia. No longer is the American dream living behind a white picket fence, but declaring financial freedom by selling the roof over one’s head.

All works in the exhibition share the same title, differentiated only by a roman numeral, as if the photographs are passing along an assembly line. “Surplus” exposes a moral decay in humanity and illuminates

several of the deadly sins including greed, gluttony, and sloth. In *Surplus VI*, a man balances on a cardboard box wearing a pointed black cloth over his head with arms extended in cruciform. The figure reenacts the photographs of tortured prisoners in Abu Ghraib and Krebs has repurposed the pose by hanging a board around the figure’s neck, advertising a clothing sale. Gluttony takes form in *Surplus I*, as an overweight woman bearing a bag of groceries in one hand and a baguette begins to fall backward on the asphalt. Her pose pays homage to Robert Capa’s photograph of the soldier in the Spanish Civil War but Krebs substitutes the rifle held by Capa’s soldier for bread suggesting that modern warfare is not over territory but nourishment. In *Surplus VII*, a well-worn pair of paint-stained shorts and a grey t-shirt soaked in perspiration lie flat on a white surface. The garb seems to belong to an artist who is absent from the frame. It’s unclear whether Krebs intended the image as homage to his artistic hand in the exhibition, or that the artist has become a commodity, or that he or she cannot be replaced in a world of commerce.

—A. MORET