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Johan Grimonprez

Sean Kelly

Belgian artist Johan Grimonprez made his name in 1998 with *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, a supersmart film essay whose title suggests Alfred Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder*. Pieced together from preexisting images, it connects airline hijackings and terrorism with pop culture, politics, and the media.

More recently, Grimonprez zeroed in on Hitchcock, whose films and TV series involve catastrophic culture invading the home by way of the media. Hitchcock, with his cameo roles and one-minute TV

bate, and the Space Race, along with the music of the Supremes. TV commercials for Folgers coffee recur throughout, as do Hitchcock's aphorisms and signature bowler hat and umbrella, together evok-

ing Magritte, Borges, and television, which gobbled up film "like birds devouring their father."

DOUBLE TAKE pairs the early 1960s with the early '80s, yet September 11, 2001, echoes throughout. Grimonprez lets us know that on September 11, 1948, accord-



Johan Grimonprez, still from *DOUBLE TAKE*, 2009, digital beta, 80 minutes.

Sean Kelly.

introductions, personified the insidious threats of the cold war. He was fascinated with ideas of the double: the double agent, the evil twin. So is Grimonprez, whose *Looking for Alfred* (2005) documents his own casting calls for a Hitchcock doppelgänger. Grimonprez's father, who resembles Hitchcock, plays a role.

DOUBLE TAKE (2009), the mesmerizing main event of this show, is an 80-minute sequel to *Looking for Alfred*; it's an homage to Hitchcock that splices fact and fiction—old newsreels mix with fragments of his films, his cameos and TV appearances, and his look-alikes, including a Hitchcock impersonator named Ron Buggage, who shared Hitchcock's birthday and who narrates this film. It brilliantly interweaves images of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nixon/Khrushchev kitchen de-

ing to the *New York Times*, migrating birds crashed into the Empire State Building and plummeted to the ground. Those birds link *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* and *DOUBLE TAKE* with *The Birds*—and are the first of many significant coincidences in *DOUBLE TAKE*. It isn't just Hitchcock who has an evil twin: "two of you is one too many," as pronounced in a voiceover, extends to the cold war rivalry between communism and capitalism, with a string of paired leaders. A sequence of multiple endings brings history up to date, starting with the 1996 movie *Independence Day* and concluding with Donald Rumsfeld's convoluted observation that we don't even know what we don't know. *DOUBLE TAKE*, too, ends with double-talk, and more than a little vertigo.

—Kim Levin