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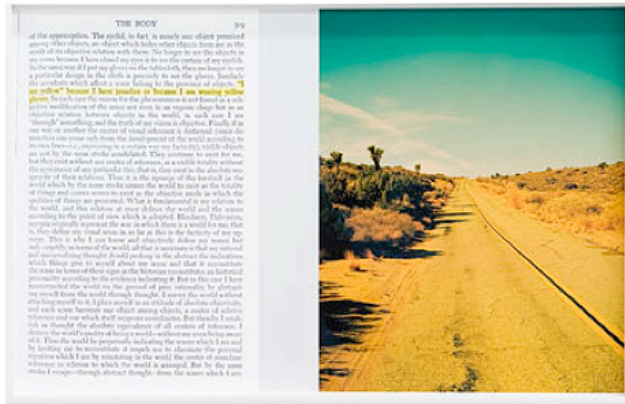
Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Art review: John Divola at Laxart

August 6, 2010 | 1:35 pm

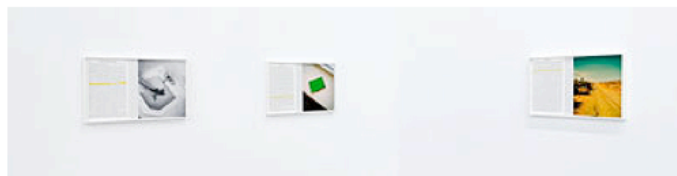
In the mid-'90s, John Divola made a series of photographs of himself running away from his camera, each image recording "As Far As I Could Get" during the 10-second span of the self-timer. Around the same time, he produced another body of work called "The Green of This Notebook," which pairs passages from Jean-Paul Sartre's 1943 "Being and



Nothingness" with their visual counterparts. The project might have been subtitled 'As Close As I Could Get,' for its attempt to concretize the examples Sartre uses to explicate his theory of consciousness and being.

Divola highlighted passages on 20 of the book's 600-plus pages. At [Laxart](#), each page hangs alongside its photographic response, most of which are black and white. (The work was also published in book form last year.) The phrase "My eyes run over the deserted corridor" accompanies an image of a school or office hallway. "I perceived a more or less illuminated screen" is answered by a picture of a blank slide projected onto a pull-down screen. Divola has selected examples from the text that refer not just to visual experience but also sound, taste and touch — the crackle of branches, the flavor of cake, the feel of a man's shirt against his skin.

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Interestingly, the pages are displayed in sequence, though there's no possibility of comprehending the continuity of

Sartre's argument. Divola's project comes across as an exercise in limitations, almost Oulipian in the randomness of its constraints. How much can we know through these correspondences? How much can we know through any photograph? Divola has asked as much in decades of wide-ranging work, and this project hints at not just the meat but the gristle in that question.

-- Leah Ollman

Laxart, 2640 S. La Cienega Blvd., (310) 559-0166, through Aug. 21. Closed Sunday and Monday.
www.laxart.org