

The Day Before The Parade 2012

Hunter Braithwaite

<http://www.hunterbraithwaite.com>

What is the difference between a parade and traffic? What causes the two forms of procession to disregard their obvious similarities and retreat to opposite camps. Traffic is blocked so that a parade might run its course. In negative: everyday traffic blocks the potential for a parade. Similarity: people in the street. Difference: a parade is planned, traffic is not. Traffic can be predicted, and is often planned around, but rush hour is a lack of a plan. With appropriate planning, traffic would not exist. From this relationship, we arrive at two tensions central to the thoroughfare: displacement and spontaneity.

The Day Before the Parade, Paola Ferrario's new series of photographs documenting a small town St Patrick's Day parade, is a nimble reclamation of the man in the crowd, or at least his folding chair. The parade takes place in Holyoke, a western Massachusetts town of about 40,000. The historically Irish town has seen a large influx of Puerto Ricans over the past few years. As the Latino population grew, the Irish community left *en masse* to South Hadley, a town across the river. The parade has remained, a monument to this country's constant flux of people and their saints.

These pictures visualize displacement via the simultaneous encroachment between the private and public realms. Similarly, spontaneity, and with that the individual, pushes against mass ornament. Who would have thought that the simple act of sitting requires this many types of chairs. Both of these arguments can be played out ontologically—what *is* a parade, and does it belong to a childhood memory, or to a dominant ideology? Or, they can be treated as photographs.

For pictures of industrially produced furniture, Ferrario's methods don't display any sentimentality. There is no fetish of the photographic edition. She shoots digital and nails the prints to the wall. That is not to say that the process is haphazard. Contrary to the subject matter's incongruity, Ferrario throws out any print that is slightly, I mean slightly, discolored. "The hardest colors to capture are asphalt and skin," she told me.

In the pop of her plastics and the bent perspective, Ferrario exists in the downgazed voyeurism of Eggleston or Martin Parr. In her continental patience, the encyclopedia building, one sees the Bechers. Ferrario is quick to shut that down. "I'm not interested in typologies, but in documenting the event." (Again, the displacement of object). And, "I choose pleasure over formal rigor." (Spontaneity). The photographs are at once studied and curiously accidental. By both denying and asserting the academy, the form matches the content: chairs that admit an emptiness but promise that it will be soon filled.