“ MORE ME” : ***John Chamberlain’s panoramic self portraits***

The Ayn Foundation’s presentation of JOHN CHAMBERLAIN- PHOTOGRAPHS at MANA Contemporary brings together seventy photographic images made by the artist between 1989 and 2002 using a Wide-Lux panoramic camera.

He has referred to these works as ‘self portraits of the nervous system’, using the camera more as an extension of his body than of his mind’s eye. Chamberlain in these scenes is an active participant instead of merely a voyeur.

He gets comfortable somewhere and just shoots from the hip so to speak. Occasionally he will set up the camera and let the 150 degree roving lens do all the work, but more often he holds the camera close to his body and moves his arm (and himself) to include as much as possible in each “take”. This method of capturing a scene without looking through the lens is reminiscent of the automatic drawing of the Surrealists, and later of Willem De Kooning’s “blind” drawings.

Many of the works are self-portraits, at times displaying more than one facial image captured by his movements and the lens at once. The artist’s painterly proclivities are fully evident throughout this series of works in the fluid brushstroke-like flourishes and dramatic colors, recalling the classic Baroque style.

“I’m more interested in seeing what the material tells me than in imposing my will on it”, is the artist’s statement referring to his approach to making sculpture. However, this point of view is a decisive element in the film works and two-dimensional media produced throughout his career.

Chamberlain has often referred to himself as a “collagist”, and the panorama photographs have elements of simultaneous disjuncture and fusing to this affect. The alternating hard and soft focus displayed in most of the photographs also mirrors the distorted visual play of the reflective surfaces that abound in many of the artist’s sculptural works.

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