



KING'S LEAP

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Spencer Longo

TIME

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***TIME* is a flat circle**

By Sean J Patrick Carney

“Oh, my God! They’re killing themselves!”

- FBI agent Bob Ricks, April 19, 1993

The quote was sensational, and entirely speculative. But two weeks later, *Time* magazine ran it as a headline atop a horrifying photograph of Mount Carmel, the infamous religious compound of David Koresh and his Branch Davidians, burning to the ground. An accompanying feature detailed the ominous conclusion to a 51-day standoff between the Davidians and federal agents outside of Waco, Texas. Fire had broken out sometime after the FBI, authorized by President Bill Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno, launched a military assault using tanks and teargas. Following the siege, Koresh and scores of his followers, including twenty-five children, were dead. In the days after my eleventh birthday, I recall nonstop television footage of Mount Carmel, engulfed in flames.

If you disassemble that May 3, 1993 issue of *Time*, as Spencer Longo has in his new series, the uncollated layout situates half of the Waco spread beside an innocuous review of “an extremely beautiful exhibition” of iron sculpture at the Guggenheim in New York. Disembodied and recontextualized, this not-exactly-happenstance juxtaposition of apocalypse and popular culture, of the Biblical and the banal, suggests an era escalating towards national schizophrenia. The Satanic Panic and SlimFast. Heaven’s Gate and Y2K. Columbine and the Clinton sex scandal.

For *Time*, his solo exhibition at King’s Leap, Longo has disaggregated multiple *Time* magazines, dating from the close of the 1970s to the epochal climax of 9/11, that feature Ayatollah Khomeini, Cuban refugees, Apple computers, oil spills, the Oklahoma City bombing, cave art, environmental movements, the Unabomber, and far-right militias. Longo amplifies the cognitive dissonances between breakneck crises and pop-cultural touchstones by mapping layered pen plotter drawings, rendered with disconcertingly creamy

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gel inks, onto the chance-derived diptychs. Evangelical tract cartoons, libertarian survivalist iconography, global village propaganda, and saccharine patriotic clip art make visible the extant but peripheral ideologies gestating beneath *Time's* stories.

Twenty years of traumatic events and trivial slop permanently scarred our collective psyche, laying a foundation for widespread twenty-first-century paranoia—the American epistemological crisis, a jittery mental multiverse lacking consensus reality. Social projects are inconceivable when every narrative is unsatisfactory, dubious, suspect. Atomized anxiety is our default. Everyone is a crank now. So I understand why so many imagine themselves as John of Patmos, receiving bespoke Books of Revelation.

To that end, in an antechamber at the back of King's Leap, Longo invites you (and another witness, perhaps your personal Elijah) to genuflect, palms pressed together, at *Prayer Kneeler/Hot Spot*, a lacquered plywood and vinyl double prayer kneeler. Upon this ready-to-assemble hassock, you might divine any number of idiosyncratic Armageddons: ecological collapse, a second Trump presidency, gay communism, something about Russia. It's your End of the World; we're just living in it.

In May, driving through Texas, I finally visited Mount Carmel. A handful of remaining adherents, the Branch, still live there. Inside their no-frills chapel, dizzying banners, tapestries, and photographs adorned the walls. One featured a pixelated Bill Clinton, giving the thumbs up, Photoshopped next to Jeffrey Epstein—a puzzling design choice, considering there exist photos of them together. Blocks of bold, all-caps text testified that in the years before 1993, in tunnels below Mount Carmel, the Clinton and Bush families had secretly manufactured firearms, processed cocaine, and—of course—operated a child sex dungeon. Koresh was planning to expose them. The Deep State murdered him in a coverup.

Oh, my god, I thought. They're pilling themselves.

– Sean J Patrick Carney

Spencer Longo (b. 1986) is a Los Angeles based artist. Solo exhibitions include Garden (Los Angeles, CA), Jakob Kroon Gallery (Worthing, UK), King's Leap (New York, NY), Chiat\Day (Los Angeles, CA), Brand New Gallery (Milan, IT), Levy Delval (Los Angeles, CA), and Smart Objects (Los Angeles, CA).