



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LOMBARD FREID GALLERY, NEW YORK

Cao Fei, *13 White Street*, 2014,
C-print, 35½" x 51¾".

CAO FEI

LOMBARD FREID
SEPTEMBER 10 - OCTOBER 25

H ugo Boss-prize nominee Cao Fei received international acclaim for her 2008 project *RMB City*, which combined global economics with video-game technology as a playful yet pointed reflection on current events. Now, with her 42-minute film *La Town*, she has once again stirred together fact and fiction to deliver a metaphoric account of the contemporary world.

To create *La Town*, Cao Fei built a model of a city in the aftermath of an unspecified disaster, with miniature figures populating supermarkets and housing projects, airports and train stations, playgrounds and strip clubs. The film freely appropriates from a wide range of sources, including the humorously creepy walking-dead and zombie movies, the dystopian vision of *Planet of the Apes*, and the voice-over in Alain Resnais's New Wave masterpiece *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. We discover toward the end of *La Town* that we have not been watching events as they unfold, but rather dioramas in a museum exhibition, not unlike the memorial at the World Trade Center.

La Town catalogues the limits of our imagination in dealing with an apocalypse, whether we are talking about global warming or nuclear bombs. In that way, it is a cautionary tale, warning that without foresight, we will be unable to avoid such a fate. For an artist who pushes the limits of her own imagination, this work is a full step forward.

BARBARA POLLACK