

## ARTFORUM



View of “Now vacant,” 2021.  
BERN

### Jenna Bliss

STADTGALERIE BERN  
Waisenhauspl. 30, 3011  
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Adopting both the lens of a low-definition, flickering 8-mm camera and the effortlessness of early 2000s advertisements, Jenna Bliss’s fictionalized documentaries in “Now vacant” subject 9/11 to a time-shifted gaze. Three shorts—*Connecting the Dots*, *Spectacle*, and *Conspiracy* (all 2021, the latter two shown on monitors theatrically elevated on towering pedestals)—superimpose erratic footage of a Lower Manhattan skyline, airplanes hovering in the sky, an attempt to capture a “Tribute in Light” show, flashing neon signs, and a digital animation of an unspecified map. The montages loosely concatenate the imagery of finance capitalism with a skyline mostly glimpsed in reflections or fenced off, vantages befitting the idea of secretive politics as suggested in the work’s titles.

Mimicking Erroll Morris’s 2002 Apple “Switch” campaign, which capitalized on the amplified individualism of the Aughts, Bliss’s eight-episode *Professional Witnesses* (2021) conflates fictional script and reenactment of witness reports based on the digital archives of *Voices of 9.11*, the official governmental *9/11 Commission Report*, and transcripts of interviews with first responders, complicating the documentary genre’s more rigid codes of noninterventionism. The staged accounts—of a paramedic, a janitor, a wall street broker, an artist, among others—reflect the social and situational factors influencing one’s point of view of a crisis and undermine the notion of universal truth, as do the films’ anachronistic time codes, which lag behind the contemporary status-quo.

— Kathrin Bentele

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