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## **TERESA HUBBARD AND ALEXANDER BIRCHLER**

Bob Van Orsouw

Zurich

Collaborating since 1990, Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler have created staged photographs that suggest unfolding stories. Recently, they have been working in video. This show consisted of a single video loop that functioned as a narrative Möbius strip wound around an American girl's birthday party. In the video, the girl, a young Chicana in a frilly pink dress, stands at a window, looking out at pelting rain and gently steadying herself by placing a hand on the sill. We also see her outside, stoic under the deluge, as she slowly surveys a picnic table and then cuts herself a piece of chocolate cake. The camera pans intimately across the table's topography of waterlogged pickles and Cheez Doodles. The streamers and ketchup bottles and plastic tiaras lie like battlefield corpses, abandoned by guests dashing from a sudden storm.

What makes this piece remarkable is not the camerawork but Hubbard and Birchler's set design. Rather than simply shooting inside a house and then in its yard, they constructed an installation that allows the camera to pan along toward what should be a corner of the room and then straight to the drenched backyard, as if the adjoining wall had suddenly dematerialized.

The oddity of the segue can easily go unnoticed because the shift seems so natural. The audio band helps sleeken the transition. As the camera pans from the room and out into the garden, for example, the distant tinkling voices of the girl's playmates are drowned out by the rain falling. Like the implausible panning shots, the sound at first is barely noticed. Only when trying to unravel this piece does one discover how carefully it is assembled.

**Marc Spiegler**