

BORTOLAMI

Nicolás Guagnini

Bibelots

FEBRUARY 23 - MARCH 25, 2017

Bortolami is pleased to announce *Bibelots*, Nicolás Guagnini's second exhibition at the gallery. For this show of paintings, the artist has developed a new body of work continuing his investigation into the material, economic and aesthetic aspects of the ceramic craft. Guagnini commissioned a mold of a canvas and proceeded to experiment with a variety of glazes and finishes. Conceived as a complementary pictorial counterpoint to his sculptural work, the *Bibelots* allow the artist to close his productive circle eliminating downtime and non-monetizable labor and testing.

Typically, glazes are sampled on what are called "test tiles," in craft jargon. By replacing the tiles with finely detailed faux canvases in an ironic and critical act of *trompe l'oeil*, Guagnini effectively broadens his field of inquiry into both pictorial experimentation and the conditions of the production of standardized and customized objects in the pre-technological fashion of ceramics, and during the productive regime of semicapitalism. Many of the *Bibelots* are purely instructional, meaning the artist simply directed the ceramics studio via phone or text message conveying what was to be done, evoking László Moholy-Nagy's *Telephone Paintings*, 1923. In addition to the molded canvases and variety of glazes, the *Bibelots* include a third and final element: silver, gold, and white decals, a technique typically used for English Royal China that requires an extra luster firing. The decals are a reproduction of a graffito scrawled by the theorist, filmmaker, activist, and cultural critic Guy Debord on an embankment of the Seine River in Paris in the 1950s. The writing proposed to 'never work': "*NE TRAVAILLEZ JAMAIS.*"

The phrase itself went on to become one of the most iconic slogans of May '68. "*Ne travaillez jamais*" is celebrated and oft-repeated, yet has proved difficult to place into effective circulation, despite (or perhaps, because of) its strange familiarity. Ironically, the Situationist International (SI) critique of labor no longer functions, as the whole of the SI can be said to have been reified into a cultural totem, the business of Art History departments, and footnotes in exhibition catalogues — a defined unit of value in the knowledge economy.

Guagnini's *Bibelots* are situated at the intersection between painting and Conceptual art, as demarcated by On Kawara's date paintings, Marcel Broodthaers' *Poemes Industriels* (plastic vacuum formed signs), Daniel Buren's attempt at a zero degree of painting, and Allan McCollum's *Plaster Surrogates*. While those practices effectively present another refusal to work (hinging on de-skilling), in the contemporary context of a "new materiality" or the middlebrow demand for "authentic" ecological tourism and organic coffee as possible responses to terminal technological alienation, the differential value of the uniqueness of each glazing, the accidents provoked by the kiln, or the random combination of chemicals and crystals, should read as both a critical departure and a response to these practices grounded in 1960s radicality. The pictorial surfaces are luscious, seductive, individuated, and unique, while the support remains constant.

The Situationist project of the "*abolition du travail aliéné*" (abolition of alienated work) was aimed at terminating capitalist labor in favor of new forms of activity that could be seen either as the negation of work or as its transformation — a transformation to such a point that the distinction between work and non-work would become almost inconsequential. As it turns out years later, however, our contemporary labor conditions can be described as the result of a temporal economy in which *travaillez toujours* (always work) might as well be the motto. Thus, the uniqueness of a moment, or the customization of a molded *bibelot*, is the most desirable product.

Two additional elements have been commissioned by the artist to complete the presentation of the Bibelots. A text by curator and critic Jenny Jaskey will be printed 5000 times on 11 x 17 in. paper sheets covering the entire floor of the front gallery, and will be further activated by the rain, slush, snow, and dirt tracked in by visitors. To further the entropy of the discursive element, blue salt ice melt will be added as necessary. As the text becomes illegible and the paper reduced to a dirty pulp, new clean copies will be added for visitors to take away and read. On March 23rd, 24th and 25th, the three final days of the exhibition, from 2 to 6 PM, a new performance by Madeline Hollander entitled *Competition* will be presented. Hollander describes *Competition* as:

...a durational performance piece that draws inspiration from a series of traditional physical competitions and warm-up routines that take place “backstage” within the world of professional ballet. These competitions set up systems for measuring physical thresholds, technical fatigue, maximum turning quantities, balancing lengths, and maximum jump-heights (...) Over the course of the performance the gallery floor will become increasingly covered by paper/salt/sludge and force the choreography to adjust accordingly. When the dancers are not participating in a competition in the main gallery space, they will be warming up in the front gallery space and visible to those passing by.

In the rear gallery space, Guagnini will present an arrangement of ceramic sculptures and glass vases with flowers. In a dialectical relationship to the discourse of labor evidenced by the Bibelots, Guagnini produces a limited number of sculptures yearly, requiring intensive hand labor by the artist himself. Composed of feet, ears, noses, and penises—figurative elements that physically break from statuary of the antiquity over time—these subversive body part accumulations continue the artist’s reflection on the fraught complexities of masculinity. *Ballot*, a large sculpture executed in rage during the election and immediately after its disastrous result, will serve as a centerpiece to the distorted, deformed, and disembodied members in the gallery.

The glass vases on display are by the Czech glass studio Beranek, dating from the 1950s and ’60s and acquired by the artist over time. Though Nazi occupation shut down the operation in the 1940s, and the studio was forcibly socialized during the subsequent communist period, they managed to continue their distinctive designs. Guagnini’s interest in Beranek craft is part of what he terms “horizontal appropriation,” as opposed to “vertical appropriation” (For example, Marcel Duchamp’s intervention involving the Mona Lisa in his *L.H.O.O.Q.* or the Pictures Generation artists appropriating advertising or low culture). Guagnini posits that choosing to execute work using a craft medium opens the possibility of appropriating examples of other “applied arts” disciplines.

Nicolás Guagnini (b. in 1966 in Buenos Aires, Argentina) and has lived and worked in New York since 1998. Recent solo exhibitions include *Union Gaucha Productions*, Artists Space, New York; *Our Lady of the Flowers*, Galerie Max Mayer, Düsseldorf; *Heads*, Lars Freidrich Gallery, Berlin; *Nicolás Guagnini: Seven*, Miguel Abreu Gallery and Balice Hertling & Lewis, New York. Recent group exhibitions include *Sinister Feminism: A.I.R. Gallery’s 12th Biennial Exhibition*, curated by Piper Marshall, New York; *Bread and Roses*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; *Dancing Museum*, Museum of Modern Art, Sao Paulo; *Descartes’ Daughter*, Swiss Institute, New York; *A Drawing Show Curated by Dan Graham*, Micheline Swajcer, Antwerp; and *Notations: The Cage Effect Today*, Hunter College Art Gallery, New York.

For more information and images, please contact annie@bortolamigallery.com.

BORTOLAMI

Madeline Hollander

Competition

A performance commissioned by
Nicolás Guagnini for the exhibition *Bibelots*

23, 24, 25 March 2017, 4 - 7 PM

Bortolami Gallery is pleased to announce *Competition*, a new performance by Madeline Hollander. Specially commissioned by Nicolás Guagnini to take place during and within his current exhibition *Bibelots*, the performance mirrors the conceptual and political concerns of the artwork. Utilizing the physical, economic, and temporal aspects of labor as the material of the work itself, both the *Bibelots* and the performance engage in a dialogue with the process of their own production.

Hollander's new performance is inspired in part by George Balanchine's ballet *Agon* (1957), one of the first pieces of modern choreography to reconcile traditional dance forms with the anxieties of the 20th century. Denoting debate or contest, the Greek word 'agon' often appears in the context of athletic competitions. Here, *Competition* presents three durational performance pieces that stage a series of physical challenges, drawing choreographic inspiration from traditional physical engagements and warm-ups that take place backstage and out of public view. Each contest fuses the games and rituals of the discipline, incorporating movements from the social one-upping of the dance milieu as well as mechanized threshold tests employed in commercial manufacturing to assess the safety, durability, and performance level of new products.

The piece sets up systems for measuring physical limits: technical fatigue, maximum turning quantities, balancing lengths, and maximum jump-heights, and the outcomes establish - and continuously reaffirm - a social hierarchy that extends beyond the game and directly affects the power dynamic within the performance. The dancers will be competing against each other in real time. Upon first glance, these competitions may be perceived as choreographies or dances; however, over time their logic and rules unfold, revealing their responsive inner patterns and mechanics.

Competition will be performed by Marielis Garcia, Katie Gaydos, Lauren Newman, Jeremy Pheiffer, Asami Tomida, and Madeline Hollander, with an original score by Celia Hollander. Costumes by 69 Clothing.

This performance is part of Nicolás Guagnini's exhibition *Bibelots*, on view 23 February – 25 March, 2017.

Madeline Hollander is a New York based artist who works primarily with performance and video to explore how human movement and body-language negotiate their limits within everyday systems of technology, intellectual property law, and mass-culture. Hollander has exhibited work at Socrates Sculpture Park, NY; Off Vendome, NY; Signal, NY; Movement Research at the Judson Church, NY; Untitled Art Fair, Miami, FL; Luxembourg & Dayan Gallery, NY; the Sculpture Center, NY; Jack Hanley Gallery, NY; Tina Kim Gallery, NY; The Kitchen, NY; Torrance Shipman Gallery, NY; and Human Resources, LA. Hollander has danced professionally with Los Angeles Ballet, CA, and Barcelona Ballet, Spain. She is a recipient of the 2016 Socrates Sculpture Park Emerging Artist Fellowship and an MFA candidate in the Film/Video department at Bard College.

Performer Bios:

Marielis Garcia was born in NYC. She received her BFA in Dance from Marymount Manhattan College. Marielis has worked with choreographers Johannes Wieland, Robert Battle, Larry Keigwin, Benoit-Swan Pouffer, Andrea Miller, and Shannon Gillen, and has danced with ODC, City Dance Ensemble, and Stefanie Batten Bland. Marielis currently dances in the Brian Brooks Moving Company and Peter Kyle Dance. Marielis teaches dance at Rutgers Mason Gross School of the arts and in NYC public schools.

Katie Gaydos is a Brooklyn-based dance artist and writer. Since graduating from UC Berkeley she has danced with Yannis Adoniou's KUNST-STOFF, Robert Moses' Kin Dance and most recently with Madeline Hollander. She has presented her own work at KUNST-STOFF Arts and Triskelion Arts. Her writing appears in The San Francisco Bay Guardian, In Dance and on the blog Culturebot. She is also the co-editor of Ugly Duckling Presse's performance publication Emergency INDEX.

Lauren Newman is a dancer based in New York. Previously with the Martha Graham Dance Company, she has worked with choreographers such as Annie B. Parson, Marie Chouinard, Michael Kliën, and Isabel Lewis. She is also a certified Gyrotonic Instructor, amateur photographer, and potter.

Jeremy Pheiffer is a choreographer and dancer from Brooklyn, NY. Pheiffer is developing a dance to premiere during SOAK at CAVE this coming June. He is a 2016-17 LEIMAY fellow and received his B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College '09.

Asami Tomida was born in Japan and trained in ballet, jazz, contemporary and Gaga. She received her B.A. from Nihon University College of Art in 2009, and graduated from Hunter College in New York as a Dance major in 2013. Tomida has worked with choreographers Stefanie Batten Bland, Donna Uchizono, Julian Barnett, Yuki Hasegawa & Doug Varone, Samuel Pott, and Ray Sullivan.

Celia Hollander, using the moniker \$3.33, is a Los Angeles based artist working primarily in audio recordings, scores, sound installations and text. Her work critically engages ways that music and sound based art can question cultural infrastructures, cultivate social connection and enable awareness of a continuously changing present. She hosts radio shows on Dublab and KCHUNG FM and has performed at MoCA Los Angeles, 356 Mission, Human Resources, Various Small Fires and the LA Contemporary Archive.