

Lyles & King

Jo-ey Tang & Thomas Fougeirol

Animot

Opening Reception: Sunday, February 16th, 4-7pm

February 16 - March 22, 2020

“The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there.”¹

Upon his naked exit from the shower, when French philosopher Jacques Derrida saw his cat staring at him, the urgency to cover up was met with a questioning of his need to do so. This moment of shame was a reckoning.

In addressing the violent gesture in the act of naming of “animal,” Derrida coined the term “animot,” a portmanteau of animaux (“animals” in French) and mot (“word” in French). *Animot* thus inscribes its own mechanism of naming.

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For *Animot* at Lyles & King, Jo-ey Tang and Thomas Fougeirol takes up this “perhaps begins here” with debris and matters from the past, as wrought on and beneath the surfaces of Fougeirol’s receptively layered paintings and in Tang’s consideration of the generative fluidity of the condition, status and temporality of art and its document/ation.

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Fougeirol applies layers of gesso and oil paint on canvases, which takes months to dry, and on and into them he throws debris, trash, and extra stuff collected from the streets of New York, where the artist keeps a studio. Previously his selection of materials was limited to dust particles and elements generated from his studio activities. Simultaneously working on multiple taxonomies of painting series, plastic gallon containers with their spouts cut off are used as paint buckets. For *Animot*, the dried-up sedimentation of paint-cakes lodged in the bottom of the buckets are employed as both mark-making device and self-referential paint-object. These deposits are re-deposited on and into the fresh layers of still-drying canvases. Dead paint meets fresh paint. Sometimes these paintings register gravitational pull, and sometimes they trick the eye into pulling them back up. They operate across multiple coordinates, pivoting between flatness and depth, between what they look like and what they might be.

The impulse to equalize and recalibrate value can be found as a parallel in Fougeirol’s anthropological research project on studio practice, *INTOTO* (beginning in 2016 and with exhibitions having taken place in New York, Berlin, and Paris so far in seven locations), with artists Julien Carreyn and Pepo Salazar. They collectively cull a range of things with unstable status: scraps, items, material tests, and for-now failures from artists’ studios, and install these finds evenly spaced in a line as a horizon of possibilities. Each is sold democratically for 100 dollars or 100 euros. These non-works show a path, whether abandoned or a way, forgoing what they might be for what they look like.

¹ Derrida, Jacques, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 29.

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For the past decade, Jo-ey Tang has attuned to the conditions of his life, its constraints and limits of energy-time, as a person, and in the ecology in the field of art, as curator of art institutions, writer and communicator with artists, to shape his non-studio and non-practicing art practice. With an ethos of non-output, Tang only generates artworks on the occasion of invitations, where concretion from past exhibitions are often dragged into the present as a kind of ephemeral anti-ephemerality. He insistently destabilizes the status of artworks and the status of documentation, as a moving target which could take the forms of photography, language, and objects. For example, photographic works might be generated by using sculptural elements or documentation from previous exhibitions, only to be broken apart into disparate images and works, and to be built up again to generate new iterations. The movement between conflict and freedom – whose and which work, what forms does it takes and how - is ongoing and not meant to be resolvable.

In the past few years, Tang has turned his focus on projects with other artists in the form of two-person exhibitions in lieu of solo exhibitions, to allow for proximities and resonances for his own works to come into being. He fluidly moves these works across time and space and medium and from the company of one artist to another, in order to take shot at boundaries. Casting unequal measures of self-doubt and trust, in this keep-doing, he hopes these works know no ends.

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In Tang and Fougeirol's 2017 exhibition at the gallery, *Bullet Through Glass*, they filled various craters of the concrete floor with macadamia milk – its allusion to the contemporary condition via the consumption and the proliferation of dairy's various substitutes – which curdled through the duration of the exhibition. A clear acrylic box contained in its middle layer a pool of macadamia milk. Above it, on the top layer was Harold Edgerton's *Bullet Through Glass* (1962), capturing the impact of the action using high-speed photography, a technique he pioneered and also employed in the iconic image *Milk Drop Coronet* (1957).

In *Animot*, Tang shares the photographic documentation of this previous floor installation, focusing for the most part on one specific crater shot from multiple angles. Here, they resemble some of the basic strokes that form the basis of Chinese characters. Depending on perspective, Tí (提) "Raising", Wān (彎) "Bending", Piě (撇) "Left-falling stroke", and Nà (捺) "Right-falling stroke". And elsewhere, Diǎn (點) "Dot", Héng (橫) "Horizontal", Shù (豎) "Vertical", and Gōu (鉤) "Hook". Meaning is contingent and only emerges through combinational alignments, activated by energies. Created through a brief contact between the analog and the digital – by manually holding a sheet of unexposed photographic paper against a computer screen – that registers the movement and force of each encounter, the resulting prints are placed on the gallery floor as an acknowledgement and a compression.

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Fougeirol and Tang had originally planned their iterations of the two-person exhibition format to occur every few years alongside a third person. This time, they realize this third entity is simply the past.

Animot marks the present as an end-beginning or a beginning-end, like a pair of outward-facing brackets that flip the notion of the supplementary.

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Like the tightening and clearing – ahem – of the throat full of internal utterings that project.

Like double-shields.

Or, as French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari might infer - we are not evolving, we are involuting.

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Like turning from one side to the other in sleep, cradling the world every which way.

— Jo-ey Tang, New York City, Feb. 11, 2020

Thomas Fougeirol (b. 1965) is a French artist living and work between Paris, France, and New York. He received his DNSEP degree from École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Solo and two-person exhibitions include FRAC Haute-Normandie, France; Praz-Delavallade, Paris/Los Angeles; Albertz Benda, New York (with Carrie Yamaoka); and CLEARING, Brooklyn (with Esther Kläs). Group exhibitions include Centre Pompidou, Paris; Collège des Bernardins, Paris; CAC - La Passerelle, Alfortville, France; Margulies Collection, Miami; Abbaye Saint-André - Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac, France; FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague; and Sean Kelly, New York. His work is in the collection of Centre Pompidou, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Fondation Louis Vuitton pour l'art contemporain; CNAP/FNAC - Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris; Collection Chanel; Berezdivin Collection, Porto Rico; The Margulies Foundation, Miami; and The Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH.

Jo-ey Tang Jo-ey Tang (b. 1978) is a Hong Kong-born American artist, curator, and writer living and working between Paris, France, and Columbus, Ohio. He received his BFA from San Francisco Art Institute and MFA from New York University. He has had solo and two-person exhibitions at Komplot, Brussels; Treignac Projet, France (with Jason Hendrik Hansma); Galerie Joseph Tang, Paris (solo and with Carlos Reyes); Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris (with Shanta Rao); PORINO/Chert, Berlin; and Exile, Berlin.

Group exhibitions include Le Musée d'art contemporain la Haute-Vienne, France; Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard, Paris; Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht; IAC-Institut d'art contemporain Villeurbane / Rhône-Alpes, France; Occidental Temporary, Villejuif, France; Walker Art Center Library, Minneapolis; and Denniston Hill, Woodridge, NY. Since 2015, he had been collaborating with the original core members of queer art collective fierce pussy. Their project has taken the form of exhibition as chapters, arms ache avid aeon: Nancy Brooks Brody / Joy Episalla / Zoe Leonard / Carrie Yamaoka: fierce pussy amplified took place at Beeler Gallery at Columbus College of Art & Design, and at Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia. Tang was arts editor of n+1 (2009-2014), and curator at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2014-2015), and since 2017 Director of Exhibitions at Beeler Gallery, where he temporalizes a programming in a non-static format that prioritizes movement and change. He has curated and organized events and exhibitions at Rupert, Vilnius; Chi K11 Art Museum, Shanghai; FUTURA Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague; and Praz-Delavallade, Paris. His writing has appeared in Artforum.com, Flash Art, and ArtAsiaPacific. He has

talked to Pratchaya Phinthong, Jean-Luc Moulène, Josephine Halvorson, Gabriel Kuri, and reflected in writing on the works of Yu Ji, Elaine Cameron-Weir, and Wang Bing, among others. His work is in the collection of Centre Pompidou, Paris, and MoMA Library.

The plates of the present

From 2013 to 2019, Thomas Fougérol and Jo-ey Tang's non-curatorial project *The plates of the present* took place in Ivry-sur-Seine, France. More than 130 artists were invited to create eight photograms, spending from an afternoon to days in a storage-turned-photographic darkroom. The project's name is taken from the beginning of a sentence in William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*, the first photographically illustrated book commercially published in six installments between 1844 and 1846. Stages of the project have been exhibited at Baxter St / Camera Club of New York in 2015, curated by Sonel Breslav, with a publication by Blonde Art Books and Secretary Press, and at Praz-Delavallade, Paris, in 2017. Its entire archive of more than 1000 photograms and one video has been gifted to Centre Pompidou, Paris, in 2019. An exhibition organized in collaboration with Florian Ebner, chief of photography at Centre Pompidou, will open in October 2020.