

COBRA

彼らは、透明に、爽やかに
、ただ酔い漂う目玉なのさ

*They're transparent,
refreshing, just intoxicated,
drifting eyeballs*

February 26–
May 6, 2023

Design alone cannot bestow liberation. Mere options do not indicate freedom anymore than isolation grants insight into the self. Cages, boundaries, limits and authority are not always, perhaps even rarely visible or perceptible, yet often in some sense, known intuitively. The omnipresent superstructure of language, with its dominant visual component, establishes the fertile realm of common sense and grammatical expectation that COBRA naturally undermines. While nearly every aspect of the relationship of language to the senses is dripping with absurd incongruities, COBRA is choosing to conflate several distinct subjects in looping sequence. Of primary concern is the human relationship with animals (the animal), who both share the same basic needs and desires; food, shitting, shelter, sex. The key differences between birds and people as presented by COBRA are the appreciation of aesthetics, recreation (though this is debatable), and the conceptualization of time and freedom.

Ordinary human/animal relations are automatic, ostensibly complicated by the fact that humans are animals. Humans are of the same place, time and stuff as animals, we coexist at all times, directly and indirectly whether we are aware or not, conscious or ignorant. We can say that animals are not humans but humans are technically animals. These categories however are about as useably fixed as those of Art and Comedy. Humans can observe, disregard, appreciate, fear, anthropomorphize, possess, love and even consume animals, yet cannot fully be animal. We cannot experience the freedom from consciousness that a Parakeet, Leghorn or Plymouth Rock Chicken experience as their permanent metaphysical circumstances. Similarly a bird is different from a rat yet both eat, shit and reproduce automatically. Neither, as far as we humans know, can imagine an alternative to the present. At least this is what we tell ourselves when we keep them as pets or dispose of them as pests.

These speculative ruminations serve as a semiotic context in which COBRA's material/symbolic Art objects are nested. These hybrid painting/readymades frame and transform each other in a way that never quite synthesizes but rather suspends the deadpan contradictions. Sameness and difference echo through the layered and mixed metaphors. It's as if the assembly line of reproduction, its purpose, has been frozen for inspection and misuse. This suite of kitsch-modern bird cages have been re-appropriated as prefab comedic sets, designed and prepared; awaiting the selection of the perfect pet (prisoner). Maybe casting is the final step before production. Compounding the situational absurdity is the delicate rendering in paint, of the adjacent subjects of Egg, Painting and Food. These ideations are meta-conflated within each little *mise en scène*, located inside the actual human Art Gallery-as-Stage. The resultant humor is a mix of scrambled allegory, moderately pathetic melancholia and non-linear formal juxtapositions. With this iteration of the "Bird Gallery for Birds" series, it is the tautological repetition that really kills the pan. We are left puzzling together nonsensical notions like; "Egg as symbol of precarious freedom," "Bird as implied prisoner or escapee," "the pet as connoisseur of modern cage design," and "the natural cannibalistic tendencies of birds as figurative painting motif." In generous and simple ways, it just doesn't add up. Obviously this all for the best as COBRA leaves us free from the desire to count before the hatching.

Ron Ewert *The Conspicuous Absence of Birds*, 2023

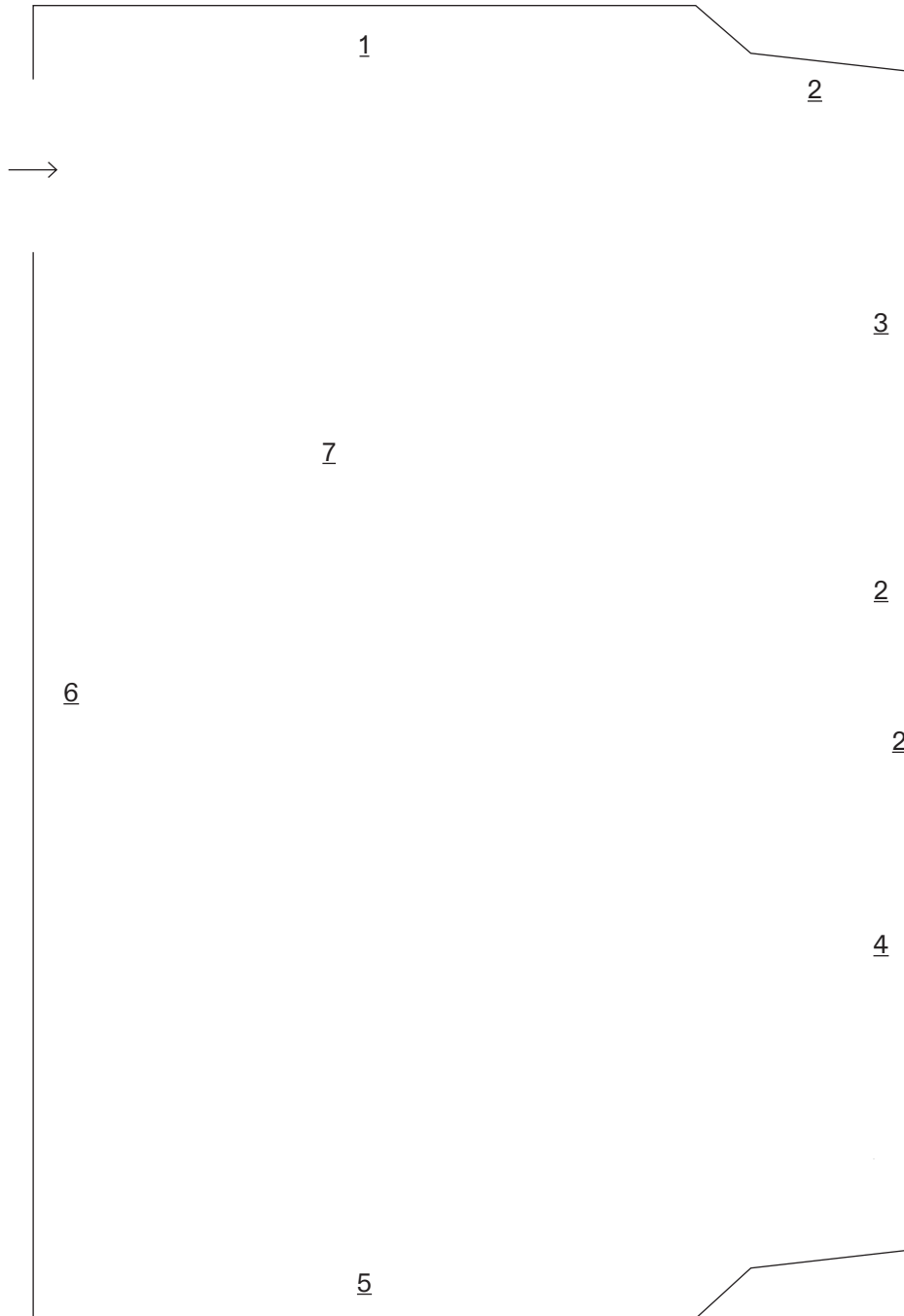
彼らは、透明に、爽やかに、ただ酔い漂う目玉なのさ *They're transparent, refreshing, just intoxicated, drifting eyeballs* by COBRA is the Tokyo-based artist's second solo exhibition with Good Weather and is on view until May 6, 2023, with gallery hours on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 1–6 p.m. or by appointment.

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1
Story of eggs
(bird gallery for birds), 2023
Acrylic on canvas, bird cage,
and various other materials
13 × 11 × 19 in

2
Driftwood, fly, plastic
toy, paper flyer, 2023
Various materials
Dimensions variable

3
Story of eggs
(bird gallery for birds), 2023
Acrylic on canvas, bird cage,
and various other materials
14.25 × 11.25 × 18 in

4
Story of eggs
(bird gallery for birds), 2023
Acrylic on canvas, bird cage,
and various other materials
11.25 × 9 × 16.25 in

5
Story of eggs
(bird gallery for birds), 2023
Acrylic on canvas, bird cage,
and various other materials
13.5 × 11 × 16 in

6
Story of eggs
(bird gallery for birds), 2023
Acrylic on canvas, bird cage,
and various other materials
11.25 × 9 × 16.25 in

7
Battery powered cat toy, 2023
Various materials
3 × 3 in

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COBRA (b. 1981 Chiba, Japan) is a Japanese artist and founder of XYZ Collective, an artist-run gallery based in Tokyo, Japan. Using various disciplines such as video, performance, sculpture, and painting COBRA intends to present trifling contradictions hidden within both art history and our daily lives, with a dose of humour. COBRA received his BFA in the Department of Ceramic, Glass and Metal Works from Tama Art University (Tokyo). He has extensively exhibited in Japan as well as in North America at 356 Mission (Los Angeles), Springsteen (Baltimore), Good Weather hosted by Gutter Box (Raleigh, North Carolina), The Apartment (Vancouver), Brennan & Griffin (New York), Shane Campbell Gallery (Chicago), The Green Gallery (Milwaukee), and Freedman Fitzpatrick (Los Angeles), among others.