

Parallel Manipulation

B. Ingrid Olson, clémence de la tour du pin

Wschód, Warsaw

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Opening: Saturday, July 15, 12-18 pm

The ability to see something as what it's not—to see a familiar object or pattern in otherwise random or unrelated items—is an experience called pareidolia. The exhibition *Parallel Manipulation* draws our attention towards this phenomenon. B. Ingrid Olson (born 1987 in Denver, USA) and clémence de la tour du pin (born 1986 in Roanne, France) both root their artistic processes in using found objects sourced from their surroundings and resituating them so that nothing is really what it seems to be. When collecting found elements, the artists acknowledge the object's possibility to become something new. Through recontextualization, reconstruction, and disfiguration of the things that Olson and la tour du pin find, the two artists instigate a conversation about potentiality. In this malleable system, a form can exist for and by itself but always holds the capacity to transform into a new element once removed from its original function and value. The viewer is, therefore, asked to practice a double gaze: to see and recognize the work as its source, the raw material, and then re-examine it, allowing for it to become something entirely else.

Olson's *Umbra* series features photographic works that picture provisional arrangements that have been set up temporarily on her studio floor. The assembled scenarios incorporate handmade props, raw materials, discarded items, and fragments from her previous sculptural works. These ad hoc compositions give rise to abstract representations of both internal and external body parts, transfiguring disparate elements into figurative references through their collective interaction. Captured during the late afternoon with the sun casting strong light at acute angles, the intense illumination accentuates the interplay of shadows. Olson carefully adjusts and revises the compositions, taking multiple images, as the sun's movement alters the shadows' locations and intensities. Olson has said about the *Umbra* series that, "the forms themselves are often not the subject of the image—but rather the strong shadows that fall off of them, occlude them, or surround them.." The works portray fragments of someone's corporeal realm, yet this corpus is diffused and never shown as one complete whole. The disfigured limbs, stuffed cavities, irregular lines, and moving boundaries in these images all work to decompose the idea that the singular term "the body" can suffice to encompass the complexities inherent to being an individual person with a particular body. To recognize the specificity of each body is to also recognize the capacity of these bodies to constantly change and transform.

In *Sunshade* for an expanded field, la tour du pin repurposes 19th-century silk umbrellas for children by positioning them vertically on the gallery walls. These objects were collected from rural areas near her hometown in France. The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region holds a significant industrial history related to textile production, and the umbrella was once closely tied to France's

opulence. The umbrella's protective function, like a barrier between our skin and the elements, exposes our vulnerabilities: as if without covering, our epidermis could peel off or melt away. However, in Sunshade for an Expanded Field, the roles are reversed. These umbrellas, originally adorned with silk or cotton tassels, now bear the signs of weathering, mold, and parasitic infestations. *La tour du pin* meticulously preserves the intricate details that narrate their past lives, making only minor alterations such as adding a thread or button and making cuts on the surface. In being estranged from their original utilitarian purpose, they are liberated from an existence of functionality and transformed into signs on a wall.

The Enlargers are a series of found objects that Olson has left untouched—aside from altering them to be wall-mounted—allowing for the divots and marks that indicate their former use to remain on their surface. The objects are comprised of high-speed steel, in the form of sharp conical points that are used to enlarge holes and bore into surfaces. The placement of these punctuations across the gallery walls imposes an interaction with a violent undertone. Aimed at our eyes, navels, and orifices, as though they could pierce into us if we come too close. Simultaneously, the Enlargers' perceived force is rendered neutral, or even humorous when considering the relatively small scale and decorative, almost Baroque detail of the flanges radiating across the forms. Nevertheless, proximity remains intimidating, calling for an oblique or distanced viewing experience. The physical gap reenters the field when reading the pieces through their titles. While the Enlargers are arrow-like punctuations with a clear direction, their titles break down this linear scheme. These invisible (but nonetheless attached) words diffuse and misplace the crafted direction of the physical works. Olson plays with the blurriness and non-specificity of this language inflicting a puncture between the object's original and present nature. As a result, the works point away from themselves and back at the viewer.

La tour du pin's Study for Stricture series of pencil drawings explores 18th-century game tables. Focusing specifically on Tric Trac tables, these preparatory drawings reveal a fascination with the recessed game board and wooden trim which allude to an inward-turning surface. The word "stricture" is significant in both the medical and figurative sense. In medicine, it refers to the abnormal narrowing of a bodily canal; whereas figuratively speaking it represents limitations or laws. These meanings depict a physical constriction within rigid biological functions or cultural norms. *La tour du pin* reflects on themes of constraint by capturing the experience of being entangled within a system of rules. The absence of pawns intensifies the experience of entrapment. Nevertheless, by transforming these games into aerial bird's-eye perspectives of architectural planes, *La tour du pin* exposes patterns that simultaneously induce and free themselves from their own restrictive system.

Mela Miekus