

VERONICA

Ricardo Valentim

RICARDO VALENTIM 2006-2023

December 3, 2023 - January 13, 2024

Veronica is proud to present Ricardo Valentim's first ever American west coast exhibition.

Valentim's show places a collection of his artist ephemera produced between 2006 to the present day in a new sculpture. The format for this presentation is inspired by a visit to a café Valentim dined at while traveling in Italy. There, he witnessed a clear plexiglass sheet drilled to a wall, stuffed with a variety of business cards and printed matter that patrons had spontaneously fit between the flat surfaces, effectively functioning like a pinboard.

This display is accompanied by an additional poster that was produced by the Dwan Gallery in 1969 to celebrate ten years of exhibition activity. The Dwan Gallery, founded by 3M heiress, art collector, and philanthropist Virginia Dwan, was founded in Los Angeles and eventually expanded its exhibition spaces to New York. It's initial programming featured artists from the southland, such as Edward Kienholz. It later went on to present for the first time in the Los Angeles-area the works of artists living in New York, as well as those abroad in Europe. Artists like Yves Klein, Claes Oldenburg, Carl Andre, Sol Lewitt, Arakawa, Robert Smithson, Franz Kline, Philip Guston, Arman, Dan Flavin, James Rosenquist, and Jean Tinguely are some of the canonical names that have been printed upon the various pieces of scattered ephemera in the included poster. Much of Valentim's ephemera that is on display is distributed through mail services, much like how this documented pile of exhibition announcements circulated beyond the Dwan Gallery premises.

To continue the artist's practice of ephemera production, both his and Veronica's extensive mailing lists will be activated to receive a work of printed matter that is attainable through recipients' postboxes. What will arrive is an offset-printed poster of a black-and-white photograph that closely resembles the Dwan Gallery's commemorative image with some marked variances. The formal elements of a pile of seemingly unsorted papers, photographed against a grey carpeted background, are the same between both works. However, if the viewer has visited the show, it's not long until they realize that all these scattered pages and pamphlets are the same as what appears behind the wall-mounted plexiglass in the exhibition space. Where the Dwan Gallery's name was located is now Valentim's, and the dates of remembrance are set within the twenty-first century. But to quickly lay claim and say this newly scattered paperwork is all Ricardo's work doesn't explain away the series of names that aren't Valentim's own, that appear from piece to piece. A number of names, aside from those of institutions, are those of other artists, dealers, and collectors.

One mailer in the pile that stands out to me is from Galeria Filomena Soares located in Lisbon, Portugal. The horizontally elongated card is for a show by Ricardo entitled *Works from the Collection of Armando Martins*, its closing date corresponds with the day I'm writing this, November 11, 2023. On the Galeria Filomena Soares website, the title has been changed simply to the artist's name. Ricardo explained to me that this discrepancy between the printed matter and what was the final exhibition title was due to legal threat to both Valentim and the gallery from Armando Martins on unspecified grounds.

For more context, Armando Martins is a Portuguese art collector who had reached out to Valentim in 2020, looking for more information on a number of works the artist had made in 2004 that Martins had acquired. This was to update the collector's records in advance of a new museum to showcase his collection that he would be opening in Lisbon next year. However, Valentim did not consider these early works as a part of his oeuvre since they were created expressly for his graduate school applications. As a result, the artist attempted to negotiate with the collector to have the early pieces exchanged for two recent works, including a new work conceived to be situated within the collector's new institutional project.

This newly made piece, entitled, *Works from the Collection of Armando Martins*, is where the proposed exhibition took its title. This work, still unexhibited, represents a survey of Valentim's practice over the past fourteen years. It's multiple components, a combination of photography, prints, collages, and drawings, all categorized as a single artwork, helps us understand the beginning of Valentim's career, with a selection of works that he has produced since his first solo exhibition *Film Festival*, presented in Lisbon in 2006. By inserting the name of the collector into the work's title, it comments on the institutional structure the collector is creating to present his collection to the public.

With art institutions and commercial galleries losing their standing within the Portuguese cultural landscape in recent years, private collectors have sought to self-institutionalize by presenting their own collections and programming to the public. As such, they have become the de facto agents of artistic promotion and legitimation. After five months of negotiations and the production of the artwork, the collector ultimately decided not to pursue this idea nor to have it included in his collection. This text serves as the first instance that this work and context has been shared publicly.

But between this particular situation that instrumentalizes the role of the collector, and the current exhibition that makes direct citation of the Dwan Gallery poster, you have Valentim in both instances performing in various professional capacities found within the total structure of how art functions and becomes visible; how it accumulates legitimation, power, and value. Throughout his practice, he's adopted the role, image, and actions of the art historian, the book dealer, the publisher, the art advisor, the curator, the film projectionist, the Airbnb Experience tour guide, and the institution, among others, still.

This show, in title and formal constitution, might be initially understood as a retrospective—a market legitimizing designation provided by institutions—but Valentim, having self-fashioned this scenario, tinkers with expectations around this classification to constitute a new sculpture that's simply made up of past works. This newly christened wall work, slippery in its ability to be grasped as a whole—maybe here we can summon Marcel Duchamp's concept of the 'infrathin'¹—doesn't strip away constituent contexts, but instead merges them into something new and overwhelming. It's the retrospective that never was, contained in a makeshift pinboard first seen while in a European gastronomic context, that only after its strewn layout was designed, was realized to share formal similarities to a poster from a historic gallery's promotional material made over a half-century ago. Let's see how this one fares in the marketplace.

– Christian Alborz Oldham

¹ Duchamp claimed that the term could not be defined on its own but only illustrated through examples. These include: The warmth of a seat after its sitter has just left; the marriage of the smells of tobacco smoke and the mouth from which it exits; the slight differences of two forms cast in the same mold; at a shooting gallery: the sound of a detonating gun and the instantaneous appearance of the bullet hole in the target.