

a. SQUIRE

Robert Sandler

Novelty Automation

2 December–13 January

Opening: Friday 1st December, 6–8pm

Robert Sandler's feathered works bend and snap in formation. With their circuitry prolapsed and Rococo-pink plumage fluffed, they articulate—and in the same motion disarticulate—painting, making of it a ghastly and cyclical charade. To flutter is to rehash a brushstroke turned dumb: in the words of Dan Flavin, “they are dumb—anonymous and inglorious”.

Each one is a composition of wires, motors, and ostrich feathers. Programmed in a looping but randomised sequence of three indistinct acts, they will themselves to a climax before dissipating it in fits and starts. Of the five works on view, three possess an L-shaped support lacquered in candy coating household gloss paint. Like Flavin's *Icons*, to which the quote refers, these examples establish pop-minimal painting at the disjunctions between reverence and sycophancy, specificity and superficiality. The canvas is presented each time in a different orientation. By Sandler's treatment, it becomes at any angle merely a surface on which to locate (or not locate) the switch.

In two of the works, Sandler dispenses with the support altogether. The painting is taxidermised and disbanded, or is it distilled to an anxious essence? The sum of limp-wristed parts, it dislocates our focus to other defining structures—percussion, gesture, choreography, tragicomedy.

In an earlier photograph, Sandler reaches through a large cavity to write ‘kick me’ on his own back, his face painted as a clown's. The new works are no less self-flagellating. They bow in deference and hit themselves. They become, by their buffoonery, the gimmick that keeps on giving. At their crux is the ostrich feather. For Cady Noland, the ostrich feather is gay punctuation; it finesses a mark.¹ For Andrea Fraser, it is the exhaustion of an idea for a persona.² For Sandler, it is all of the above. Decadent and indispensable at once, it literalises in Seussian flourishes the eternal flirtation between painting and sculpture—the bathetic fulfilment of a potential encoded in each.

A sixth work is located in the exterior vitrine. A photograph of sprawling silk roses, the image has been algorithmically extended so that the stems now spell out the word ‘Love’ in curlicue lettering.

Robert Sandler (b. 1991, Baltimore) lives and works in New York. He holds an MFA in painting from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. Recent solo exhibitions include *Symphony for a Good Boy* and *Ha! Ah!* at Kai Matsumiya, New York (2023 and 2021 respectively). He has participated in two-person and group exhibitions at Kai Matsumiya, New York; 15 Orient, New York; Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; Hesse Flatow, New York; and Institute for New Connotative Action, Seattle. With Pujan Karambeigi he is the publisher of *Downtown Critic*.

¹ *Cowboy Blank with Showboat Costume*, 1990.

² *Um Monumento às Fantasias Descartadas (A Monument to Discarded Fantasies)*, 2003.

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Works

Clockwise from left:

Untitled, 2023

Ostrich feather, aluminium shaft coupler, stepper motor, bracket, wire, docking connector, Arduino Nano, PCB board, 12V adapter, enamel on linen
120.3 x 51 cm
47 3/8 x 20 1/8 in
SANDR-00001

Untitled, 2023

Ostrich feather, aluminium shaft coupler, stepper motor, bracket, wire, docking connector, Arduino Nano, PCB board, 12V adapter
200 x 82.5 cm
78 3/4 x 32 1/2 in
SANDR-00002

Untitled, 2023

Ostrich feather, aluminium shaft coupler, stepper motor, bracket, wire, docking connector, Arduino Nano, PCB board, 12V adapter, enamel on linen
106.9 x 51 cm
42 1/8 x 20 1/8 in
SANDR-00003

Untitled, 2023

Ostrich feather, aluminium shaft coupler, stepper motor, bracket, wire, docking connector, Arduino Nano, PCB board, 12V adapter
228.4 x 46.2 cm
89 7/8 x 18 1/4 in
SANDR-00004

Untitled, 2023

Ostrich feather, aluminium shaft coupler, stepper motor, bracket, wire, docking connector, Arduino Nano, PCB board, 12V adapter, enamel on linen
240.1 x 73.3 cm
94 1/2 x 28 7/8 in
SANDR-00005

Vitrine:

Love, 2023

Archival inkjet print
22.9 x 30.5 cm
9 x 12 in
SANDR-00006