

POST BROTHERS

P O S T

JULY 9–15, 2012

INVITED

BY

ROSA

P R O L O G

And some certain significance lurks in all things,
else all things are little worth, and the round
world itself but an empty cipher, except to sell
by the cartload, as they do hills about Boston,
to fill up some morass in the Milky Way. -

Ishmael, in Herman Melville's Moby-Dick

Merging display and critical interpretation into a single gesture, Rosa has invited me, the curator and writer Post Brothers, to temporarily occupy the gallery space and study in situ a selection of objects one by one over the course of a week. I normally produce my critical writings on art and culture from the detached confines of a humble elevator in downtown Oakland, California. Exchanging one box for another, I will set up shop in the gallery and serve as a writer in residence conscripted for the odd task of producing the secondary information for an exhibition that will never be displayed as a static whole. Each day I will analyze a new object on display, clumsily deducing the exhibition's critical and aesthetic constellations as the series progresses.

Without an obvious methodology, thematic or logic, the exhibition will be in a constant state of becoming, with each new object reorienting the trajectory of the series and forming new semantic combinations among each other. Through this piecemeal approach to the exhibition format, the show will evolve over time, with me regarding each work individually without awareness of a gestalt.

Such a game will assert the exhibition model as a series of perceptual events coming one after the other in succession. With every new item I will scrupulously delve into their contents, excavating information from the minutiae of forms, materials, imagery, references, allusions, and other properties, to build a series of textual connections and observations. Exhibiting neither overt expertise nor complete idiocy, my abstract ruminations will seek to demonstrate critical interpretation as a creative act, culling from the excess of information generated and hidden in concrete objects. Without understanding of the artworks' provenance, or the exact intentions of the artists, reckless inaccuracies will surely abound, elucidating non-knowledge as a productive methodology.

The results of the daily procedure will be amassed in a promptly produced publication that will serve not only to circulate and explicate the works outside of the limited spatiotemporal field of the exhibition but also will act as the primary site for the exhibition itself (blurring the distinction between primary and secondary information). Together, the collection of autonomous writings – hasty, impoverished and likely inaccurate attempts to publicly describe and think through the art works – will form what Adorno referred to as a “constellation”: “a juxtaposed, rather than integrated, cluster of elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle.”

Inhabiting the exhibition space like an awkward ornamental hermit, I will explore the interpretive potentials granted through imminent contact with objects. What kind of secrets will the things divulge to me over the week? Is meaning discovered or invented? Will this exercise multiply significations or divide them? Operating through a dialectic of spontaneity and organization (à la Rosa), will this activity descend into chaotic humbug or will my detective work lead me to the correct, predetermined order? What will my hairbrained hermeneutics offer to the objects through this process of rapid-fire criticism? Will my writing successfully register the object’s quiddity (the essence of the thing, what distinguishes it from other things) or will it equalize the selections, rendering them equivalent through jibber jabber? Encountering the unresponsive doodads and dinguses face-to-face, will I be able to shrewdly decipher their messages? Will I brutally interrogate the objects or succumb to their charm? Will alacritous analysis yield more art world balderdash or will immediate apprehension allow for a certain auxiliary poetry to emerge? What does misinterpretation tell us about the cognitive/symbolic chain? What will my sloppy improvised interpretations impart about information’s status today? Regardless, one can be sure that this exercise will be at least amusing and perhaps insightful.

Post Brothers, June 30, 2012

JULY

9,

2012

WELL BOOM BOOM BOOM AND A THRUM THRUM

An obsidian monolith appears in the middle of the floor as if placed by an omniscient being. Like the archaic anthropoids of Kubrick's *2001*, the first tendency may be to shriek and jump, to express awe, fear and rage for the effect that refuses to divulge its cause. In the movie, our Neanderthal ancestors eventually approached the figure, touching and inspecting it cautiously. From this first contact, evolution is catalyzed, information promulgates from the pandoric pottery, propelling the potential for objects to function as tools and weapons, as mediators. A pure iconoclastic achromatic a-representation, the monolith signifies a doorway and a blank movie screen, both a portal to infinite information and a resistance to information as such. While their apprehension to the unknown black body before them generated animated confusion and consternation, the strange form occupying the gallery space evinces another form of gregarious and automatic behavior: paradoxically inspiring in its silent dormancy an irresistible urge to dance, to rumba, to mambo, to get down to the go-go, to shake to unheard Afro-Caribbean rhythms. Static material information implies action and movement; sound is referred to without the need for frequencies to be elicited.

One cannot play Christoph Meier's *Untitled (conga)* like the Cuban tumbadora it parenthetically refers to. Nor can one treat the object as a vessel, as without a base or a cap, the form cannot properly hold any liquid or contain any matter without the supplementation of a stable ground. Regardless, *Untitled (conga)* is still a tool, an instrument that resonates at frequencies that can only be registered in the mind.

With its hollow form, the petite and curved column only supports itself, alluding to architecture without applicability. The edges demarcate a zone detached, building a discourse between outside and inside by staging a barrier between the mental,

JULY

9,

2012

social, material, and environmental ecologies within, and those without. A container without a contained, the drum-like figure folds the inside and outside, dialectically comparing interior and exterior surface. As Deleuze notes, "The outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and folding that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside."

Vertical and erect, the object is self-supporting, a form that can stand on its own and can be viewed, like all good freestanding sculpture, in the round, from any angle. A cylinder that curves inward towards its equator, the form conjures the image of a woman in a corset, a tight-laced body attempting to eliminate its middle section. Such anthropocentric allusions seem conservative at best and fetishistic at worst, but can one conceive of a vertical form without lapsing into the prototype of human proportion? Is there a way to encounter the object without falling victim to human-centered metaphor, projecting onto the object either human representation or the rituals of use and utility?

Unlike the murky monkey monolith of movie fame, one can discern much about the origins of the displayed thing without assuming self-creation or the existence of an external power. A fusion of opposing parabolic prisms, a mathematician could easily deduce a formula to decipher Meier's geometry, breaking down the dually linked form and using the real model to chart abstract valuations and relationships. Closer inspection yields evidence of the object's mysterious materially complex manufacture. Though the outside at first appears as a solid and homogenous form, with simple scrutiny one can see that the figure is made of two primary shapes (the parabolic prisms previously pointed to) that, though both endowed with semi-reflective ebony surfaces, are materially dissimilar. The base form, minisculely wider than its twin, reflects the light and shadows of its environs, mirroring and incorporating its surroundings into its sooty self. Though smooth and finished as if industrially manufactured or laminated, the surface of the lower shape discloses a history of use, transport, and inevitable wear and tear. Ridden with minor scuffs, scratches and cracks, the support implies a life before the object's appearance in the gallery, a base that is both in place and displaced.

The construction of the upper half of the work is even more perplexing. On the outside is a smooth and dusky semi-gloss glaze, the type one would expect from earthen pottery. With its symmetrical and rounded outer form, one can easily assume the

JULY

9,

2012

object to be made on a potter's wheel. Drawn inside the form by a muddy turquoise blue at the top edge that fades down the interior surface, such an assumption is immediately discarded when one recognizes that the figure is actually made up of 25 different wooden columns that have been affixed. Each of the sections contains a dense series of ridges that enunciates and collects the blue chroma as it progressively disappears down the hole. A small spill of the outer black onto the top edge divulges that the black is simply paint, but what is the material of the blue? It also could be paint, perhaps sprayed on so as to eliminate brushstrokes, but then why does it collect and spill out of the spaces between the columns? If the blue is glue, then how does it fade so gracefully down the sides?

As the blue disappears down the sides, a powdery spray of black emerges from the center. This spray is reminiscent of the British conceptual artist, John Latham's 'one-second drawings' (events made by a series of one-second blasts from a spray can), the artist's illustration of a conception of event structure where the spray signifies the most basic component of reality, a "least event", the shortest departure from a state of nothing. This connection between physics and aesthetic modeling that Latham asserted may be more apt than one may realize, as the basic form of Meier's figure itself replicates that of the hypothetical wormhole of physics. A bridge between two distinct points in space-time, wormholes pull fields into a single dimension where divergent points become a singularity. More than merely connecting the ground and the air (a heliocentric verticalism celebrated by plant and human alike), Meier's is a model for a convergence of time and space, a demonstration of the capacity for combinations of materials and forms to coalesce into a unitary whole.

If one were to regard the figure as ceramic (which is surely incorrect despite its similarity to certain forms of pottery), one would see a dialectic staged between the processes of hand building and throwing in pottery. On the outside is implied a perfect rotational symmetry, on the inside, a piecemeal construction, where disparate yet similar parts are fused to construct a whole. One method emphasizes stasis, the other, matter in centrifugal motion. But how is it that such a dormant object can imply a motion, a constant rotation? Perhaps the object is not a tool or a vessel, but a toy? Keen-eyed children and circus performers would surely point out that the axled and conic shape of the overall figure is analogous to the celebrated toy the diabolo. Derived from the Chinese yo-yo, the diabolo is a juggling prop consisting of a spool that is whirled and tossed on a string tied to two sticks held one in each hand. Frequently homophonically mistaken as the devilish 'Diablo', the circus based

JULY

9,

2012

skill toy's name was actually derived from the Greek *dia bolo*, roughly meaning *across throw*, but later implied to mean a liar who "generates confusions", "divides", or "makes someone fall". What is the relationship between the throwing of the pot and the throwing across that the diabolo-like figure refers? Is not the wormhole a speculative possibility of motion across barriers, a certain movement that does not propel the object but contorts the entire field, folding the universe so that different points become equivalent? Is not the drum a method of throwing sound, catalyzing and amplifying a frequency within a closed space so as to throw it across a space?

While careful and deliberate investigators will notice from the texture of the interior surface that the object is actually made of wood, there is also a single screw puncturing the form that authenticates its grainy woodiness. Each of the sections are actually wooden staves, strips of material tapered so as to come together in a diminishing form, a method of barrel-like construction common in the manufacture of certain drums. Resisting representation, yet supplementing the work's title with a parenthetical descriptor, Meier drums up the image of the conga; a drum with its formal roots in both hollowed logs and in salvaged barrels. Like the parabolic shape formed by the curved tendency of the staved parts, parentheses are rounded edges that contain material, separating outside and inside. Parentheses imply a supplement, information that could be omitted without destroying or altering the meaning of the whole text. The inclusion of the word *Conga* divulges a certain constellation of material and symbolic properties of the object, but is not the name of the object. Regardless, the conga has a number of powerful resonances culturally and materially. Though normally regarded as a specifically Cuban instrument, the conga is a figure of cross Atlantic rhythmic interchange, the movement of bodies and beats from one place to the next.

But what is a membranophone without a membrane? Without a tautly applied drum skin, Meier's drum is left silent. Unable to produce sound, but outfitted to amplify resonance, the chamber implies the existence of beats without the attack, an echo without a source. The object booms below the threshold of audibility, catalyzing tremors through materiality alone.

JULY

9,

2012



MONDAY

POST BROTHERS is writing about Christoph Meier's
“Untitled (Conga)”

JULY

10,

2012

knot to describe the interrelation of the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary in the structure of the subject. Conceiving of these characteristics as separate topological circles, Lacan pointed to the figure of the Borromean Knot to demonstrate how no pair of the three orders are linked with each other (the removal of any ring results in two unlinked rings), but nonetheless all three are linked. Lacan later took this concept further, adding a fourth ring to the triad (the *sinthome* or symptom) so as to tie together a knot, which constantly threatens to come undone. Perhaps mere coincidence, but even Lacan used the knot as a form of portraiture, deploying his thinking around the Borromean knot in order to psychoanalyze James Joyce through the writer's thinly veiled autobiography *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. For Lacan, Joyce's art worked as a fourth order cord that tied together his subjective knot and allowed him to escape the effects of psychosis. Here we have a knotted subject, a subject as knot, a nexus of articulations where each are vitally intertwined. If one loop or string were to be pulled out, displaced, or relooped, we would have a completely different subject.

Can the knot be viewed as a singular thing? Would this understanding be significantly different if the knot is made up of multiple ropes or a single loop? A folded assemblage of elements, the knot as a thing emerges through the intersection of other things. A knot can certainly be affecting, it can be felt and deployed, but is it not simply a relationship between things, a site of convergence that is produced through convergence? Perhaps the knot knows not why it does what it does; perhaps its knottiness is only the function of those doing the tying. As Buckminster Fuller once argued:

"The knot is not the rope; it is a weightless, mathematical, geometric, metaphysically conceptual, pattern integrity tied momentarily into the rope by the knot-conceiving, weightless mind of the human conceiver - knot former."

Fuller's conception of the knot is not as an autonomous thing or a property of the rope, but as a network that is activated by an agent who temporarily distributes the rope into a form. The knot for Fuller is an action, an assembling of flows into a form of organization. As any magician will surely attest, the same thing, the simple rope, can yield infinite variations, infinite new objects from existing formations. The knot becomes a model for a networked, variable and interconnected objecthood. As Gilles Deleuze noted, "In relation to the many folds that it is capable of becoming, matter is a matter of expression", the knot becomes a thing through the articulation of folded matter. The portrait of the knot speaks to identity as a temporary

JULY

10,

2012

formation, a constellation of folds, both bound and loose, that comes into being through interrelation. One must also recognize the unknotted rope itself as a knot; already a set of braided and interrelated strands that form a whole inextricably interrelated yet distinct from its component parts. Any unraveling of the strand or untying of the knot destabilizes the form. In basic terms, the tying of a knot captures, binds or retains something, the undoing of it releases.

Mathematicians started to describe all the different kinds of knots more than a century ago. They now assert that there are exactly 1,701,936 knots with 16 or fewer crossings. Sometimes two knots looked different, but were really the same. Other times, something that looked like a knot was really an unknot, a 'trivial knot' (known to anyone who's ever attempted to untangle lights or headphone cords, some objects appearing to be knots are in fact merely tangles, and can be unraveled by pulling). To keep from getting fooled, mathematicians looked for formulas that would serve as shortcuts for telling a knot from an unknot and one knot from another. It was to translate representation into structure that an algebraic writing system for knots was developed. Indeed an equation is the perfect knot, with so many different elements so tightly bound into one expression. They're still looking for a single formula that covers all possible knots, a unified theory that would tie, once and for all, all knots together.

In mythologies throughout the world, there are groups of characters who weave, cut and knot the threads of the lives of mortal beings, to bind them into a tapestry of life. A number of different cultures have used the knot for both decoration and as an instrument of recording. In Andean South America, 'talking knots', or Quipu, contained numeric and narrative information through the positioning and variation of knots on strings. Given the capacity of a knot to tell a story, one can surmise that Ruenzler's portrait may be even more effective than a normal depiction of a subject, as within the folds and binds, a language is developed, information is coded and recoded so as to form a history, a set of conditions that are tied to external and absent phenomena. The knot equally stands as a model for the deformation and interrelation of time, where a linear flow can be reterritorialized as a looping and intertwined simultaneity of past, present and future. Knots are at once attempts at stasis and exercises in variability.

With a momentary glance, a seasoned sailor, a competent camper, a trained topologist or a querying Quipucamayoc could quickly decipher the loops and describe the knot's properties,

JULY

10,

2012

uses, significance, history or provenance. Key questions include: What does it do? What does it connect? Is the knot a mediator or a point of mediation? How much pressure does it hold? Can it be modified? How many connections are present? Where are its points of weakness etc? Spanning the course of human history, distinct formations and separate uses of knots have yielded thousands of common names, abstract and commemorative descriptors, and infinite variations. Culling from the copious descriptions of bights, binds, bends, bowlines, hitches, stitches, slips, rings, plaits, elbows, nooses, tackles, lashings, and loops is a daunting task. Knots in common usage are generally separated into three primary categories: loop knots (knots with just one rope), bends (rope to rope knots) and hitches (rope to object knots). Limited research has yielded a number of speculations on what this particular knot in the portrait can do and what exact knot it potentially is. Could the formation be a sailorman's wench hitch, a variation of a jam-proof hitch that secures the rope to an object? Perhaps the knot is made of two ropes, forming an open-hand knot that never slips or gives but is likely to break under too much strain? If the knot were to be produced from a single rope, could it possibly be the aptly named monkey fist knot, a ball knot that allows one to heave the line from one point to another by producing a weighted end? This option would surely be appropriate, as the ornamental and practical monkey fist, like the artist's representation of the knot itself, is conceived as an instrument of movement, an agent of circulation and exchange. Attempts at deciphering the knot leads down lines of questioning that fold into and out of each other.

If one examines the knot astutely, such determinations may be found to be, in fact, entirely erroneous and premature. With loose loops and binds, the knot depicted may actually be unfinished. Arrested by the static image, the knot is seen before its full articulation. The artist presents a dialectic of strength and weakness, an interconnection of stability and tenuousness, tension and looseness. Just as the print is both an index and an image, the knot is both utilitarian device and decorative form. Frozen between its identity as rope and its identity as a knot, Ruenzler's image extracts the object from the flow of time, detaching it at the very moment before it constructs a stable attachment. But in the artist's decontextualization of the knot, she establishes mobility to the form, a possibility for the knot to extend beyond its local parameters and be transmitted and exchanged. Ruenzler's image cuts off the ends of the rope, leaving vital details necessary for proper decipherment of the picture. A common mistake when regarding any image, one must always remember that what is being viewed is only an image of a knot, not the knot itself. With two possible ends extending out to the frame of

JULY

10,

2012

the image, there is no beginning or end to the knot, no origin, context, or tendency depicted. A formation vitally determined by its unique negotiation of three-dimensional space, the artist has flattened the knot, distorting its properties through the abstract mediations of camera and printing apparatus. The smoothness of the lithograph plate is contrasted with the undulating and textured loops of the fibrous knot. The mediated knot becomes tied to a dialectic of darkness and light, demonstrating through analogy the ways the knot itself always engages in a discourse between display and obscuration, layering and hiding points of convergence in the process of articulating other points. Though it appears as an unbroken loop, the frame itself can be thought of as both a cutting of the rope and a knot in and of itself. The frame creates a monad, confines the field, creates a point where elements interact, folding the inside and outside. The black and white image's expulsion from both original context and the site of its display is exaggerated by the artist's inclusion of a bright orange frame. More than mere aesthetic device, the frame acts as both an 'Alexandrian solution' (cutting the image with one single gesture) and a knot itself that ties the inside and outside of the image. While certainly these deliberations could continue until 'the bitter end' and still come up confused, above all, the artist asserts that the knot is certainly not naught.

JULY

10,

2012



TUESDAY

POST BROTHERS is writing about Annette Ruenzler's
"Portrait eines Knotens"

JULY

11,

2012

SWEATY

SIGNS

What is painting's relationship to labor? When one considers Charlie Hammond's *The Toilers* (*Sweat Painting 4*), it is not simply a question about the labor of the artist nor of the exploitation of artistic labor generally, but rather a question of the painting's own labor, the work of the work and the conditions by which the work works. Hammond's painting (made of the expected materials of wooden stretcher, canvas and paint) insists that the painting is, above all, an object, but one with specific properties and axioms that are informative about the ontology and circulation of objects generally. Cutting the painted and stretched canvas so as to produce rectangular apertures in the field, Hammond divulges the often-disregarded material foundations of painting. Hammond's painting features a dense series of interlocking polygonal shapes, a coordination between paint and absent segments that produces a concentric series of frames, dimensions, and forms.

Laying bare both a dialectic between the customary support and surface of painting and the complex relationship between content and form, Hammond explores painting's myths and rationales, critically reinvigorating a modernist ethos of "truth to materials," while conversely stripping the form to its foundations so as to jettison the craft into new discursive arrangements. Art historians such as Yves-Alain Bois and Jan Verwoert have suggested that painting's critical potential in a post-medium environment lies in its ability to mediate between its own medium-specific conditions and histories and broader conceptual concerns. That painting has its own system of self-justification and autonomy allows it metonymic capacities. Bois and Verwoert argue that, today, painting's critical potential comes from a dialectical relationship between the isolated inside world that it implies and the outside world (everything else). If painting is at once vitally separated from the rest of the world and something that is embedded in the world, Hammond's painting is a site for the negotiation between internal and external conditions – not only on the surface, but also within the physical and symbolic logics of their border and support. The rectangular frames of paint and missing matter are not windows but delimited fields. The stretcher's limitation, its periphery, is a horizon. It outlines where the rest of the world comes into contact with a monad – the self-contained world

that is the painting. Likewise, this tenuous edge is repeated internally, breaking up the picture plane into sections that abut each other and struggle for formal domination and autonomy. Hammond's project is a literal decomposition of the general condition of the picture-support and its frameworks, but also its means of production. By engaging in a materialist unpacking and repacking of the conventions of painting (its modes, parameters, histories and so on), is the artist then deconstructing and rewriting modernist art's own attempts to reduce individual media to their aesthetic norms and essential essences? Is Hammond parodying and critiquing the material and symbolic ideologies of painting or celebrating the capacity of painting to resist discourse?

The most irregular feature of Hammond's painting is surely the quartet of cut sections that allow the viewer to see behind the work, to view both the wooden stretcher and the gallery wall underneath. With inspection of the painting's edge, one can authenticate that the canvas was first customarily stretched onto the ubiquitous armature before the artist iconoclastically carved into its surface. Though certainly afflicting violence to the canvas, the artist's gesture is less Lucio Fontana and more akin to the action of a tailor or a child cutting out primary shapes. Neither sliced with precision nor haphazardly, the parallelograms follow the contours of certain hand painted polygons in the image, fusing the dark bordered edges of the depicted forms with the event horizons of the rectangular holes. Two of the chasms hug the edge of the painting, exposing the goldenrod wood grain of the painting stretcher bars. The revealed stretcher forms reiterate the rectangles and L-shapes of the painting itself and at the top left, one can also see a supporting wedge embedded in the corner and a single screw upon which the canvas rests. Beneath each of the holes is, of course, the white gallery wall. No longer a neutral and hidden surface, the edges of the canvas and stretcher bars cast shadows upon the blank wall, creating rectangular forms that again correlate with the forms within the painting. Hammond therefore exaggerates and collapses the dimensionality of his object, articulating the varied stratas of wall paint, stretcher structure, canvas, and oil paint only to paradoxically render them each equivalent as elements of the flattened visual field. The material conditions of the painting's display and manufacture become vital components in the make up of the image, blurring figure/ground relations and producing a reciprocal interchange between external and internal phenomena. With progressively interlocking shapes, one can count a massive series of permutations of individual rectangles within the frame, filling up and breaking down the field of view into component parts.

JULY

11,

2012

In the painted sections there are likewise successive layers of paint that read as both distinguishing between potential backgrounds and foregrounds and simultaneously residing on a unified picture plane. At the base of the unprimed canvas can be seen ebony gestural marks that appear and regress beneath light washes of white. Sitting atop these scribbles and shapes is a succession of black horizontal lines that break up the foundational sections into further rectangles and recall “blank” lined stationary. Composed of thicker paint than the black and white zones are three muddy six-sided L-shaped figures and a single eight-sided form that evokes a hollow square or a rectangular doorway. Color coordinated diagonally across from one another, half of the shapes are primarily painted in a diminished cordovan rose while the other pair contains a bluish mint hue.

What is perhaps most disturbing about the forms is the loose rendering of the edges, where the small brushstrokes of complementary darks and lights serve to give the impression of volume and shadow. At certain vertices of the shapes reside dark short strokes that produce the appearance of abstract wrinkles and skin folds. At other corners and edges spring dark puffy cloud-like formations. Once one regards the parenthetical descriptor in the title, “sweat painting”, these dark blotches are immediately perceived as sweat stains, abject armpits that have been soiled. Representation and abstraction become fused, indistinguishable. With this, Hammond points to an odd possibility: that perhaps it was not ground-up ochres but rather our own stained and soiled garments that inspired the first painted marks. Building a correlation between the human body and abstract, geometric form, the artist oddly anthropomorphizes the painting, projecting onto the object not just aspects of biological form, but also the perceived and often-embarrassing weakness of perspiration. The artist lobbies a clever comparison between the profanity of the human body and the ignoble and crude materiality of paint.

One can suggest that Hammond’s armpit depictions are sarcastically alluding to the artist’s own physical labor in the production of the work. But can a painting perspire? What of the labor of the painting itself? What kinds of activities has the painting been engaged in to have broken a sweat? Perhaps the painting has been sweltering under the lights of the gallery, unfamiliar to the environment outside the studio. Or maybe the painting sweats under the strain of holding itself together as a painting. Considering its minor deviations from the standardized ur-form of painting, the object may conceivably be nervous and fatigued from having to justify itself as a painting, to support

JULY

11,

2012

itself as an autonomous object and contain its diverse elements within itself while speaking to the outside. Who are *The Toilers* that the title refers? Is Hammond abstracting the labor power of the working class even further than capitalist exploitation itself by rendering the testimony of their hard work as pure form, thereby alienating their labor a further degree? The artist's substitution of letters for money symbols in the title again points to abstract exchanges and even seems to indicate an awareness or frustration with the odd ways a labored painting can be traded for cash. The object asserts an embodiment to abstract figures, mapping the human energy and symbols traded in production and circulation. Certainly a more nuanced and realistic allusion than any declaration of painting's "death", Hammond may be referring to painting itself as an object in the midst of toil, a form that engages in a troublesome occupation.

JULY

11,

2012



WEDNESDAY

POST BROTHERS is writing about Charlie Hammond's
"T&e Toil€rs (Sweat Painting 4)"

JULY

12,

2012

YOU CAN SLEEP WHILE I DRIVE

„Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious.“ -

Sigmund Freud

An unusual combination that dialectically blurs notions of dormancy and action, Kate Davis' *Player (First Act)* juxtaposes a framed etching by the artist with a steering wheel mounted to the gallery wall. Rendered in detailed yet loose crosshatching, the intaglio print features a woman in the midst of a deep slumber; her head drooped onto a table implied by a field of flat black. With back bent over the edge of the counter, the figure's face rests upon what looks like a small plate, serving her scalp to the viewer for intellectual consumption. The black leather steering wheel protrudes from the wall below the image and is displayed at a height common for a normal vehicle. The physical presence of the wheel is compared and contrasted with the flattened representation, moving from the imaginary to the real and back again.

The mysterious medley of material is further complicated by the dramaturgical title, which catalyzes a deceptively simple question: who is the player, the protagonist? Is it the character in the image, or the viewer? Where does the narrative reside? In the gallery space? In the dreams of the sleeping woman? Is the "*first act*" a segment of a narrative arc, a description of an initial action (sleeping/dreaming as the first incitement of a motivation), or a command to the audience? Like a first act in a play or film, Davis introduces the viewer to a protagonist (either themselves or the printed figure), invokes a dramatic premise (sleep and travel), and incites a dramatic situation where one must negotiate between these often-opposing concepts. Identifying the mind as a stage for action, the artist points to a playful use of the dream while conversely alludes to the unconsciousness as a script that is followed. The allusions to the "player" and the "act" undermines assumptions that sleeping is merely a form of inactivity, asserting the dream and slumber as active

JULY

12,

2012

processes, physical and mental procedures as exertive as any other occupation. As any sharp somnologist will surely attest, the body and the mind, though suspending or diminishing certain operations, never cease.

There is certainly a long tradition of treating dreams as a form of travel and establishing sleep as a productive exercise. Davis joins a conversation with a long list of artists and theorists who have reflected on such topics. With the figure clothed and in recline over a table (a space of action vs. the dormant space of the bed), one may also be reminded of the odd practice of *Inemuri*, the Japanese habit of sleeping on the job, which literally means, "sleeping while present". For some, this practice is a way for an employee to show how committed they are to working by overextending themselves and sneaking in a few winks only when necessary. The figure in the image sleeps while present; we view her slumber voyeuristically and empathize with her fatigue. Separated from the interior goings on in the figure's head, one cannot help but wonder what latent actions are at work.

Static and without a clear form of encounter, the ambiguous situation itself produces forms of abstract conceptualization that activates the mind of the viewer. Literally and figuratively, the artist places the viewer behind the wheel, forcing them to pilot and steer their own cognitive processes in order to direct the internal discourse conjured by the juxtaposition. By presenting a tool for directing motion, is the artist advocating for a form of lucid dreaming, asserting agency in the chaotic process of unconsciousness? Who is in control? Are we able to manipulate the imaginary experiences of the character's dream environment or is the dreamer exerting mastery over our consciousness? Is the figure in the driver's seat or the viewer? Perhaps the "player" in the title is actually the viewer, invoking the mediation of video games where tactile feedback is simulated and directions are translated from physical actions to the virtual world.

Is the etching, framed with a glass façade, a windshield? A video screen? This notion correlates with the mediation and relationship of imminence and distance in Marshall McLuhan's understanding of cultural geography after Sputnik. For McLuhan, the moment where we can encounter the Earth from outside reflects a new perceptual distance to reencounter our own finite surroundings. He pointed to the contemporary fact that the landscape is often viewed through another medium, the automobile, whose windshield has become the postmodernist framing device par excellence (equivalent to the eighteenth century *Claude glass*). Here, the logic of viewing *through* not only offers a way to critique the framing devices that abstract sensory encounters but

JULY

12,

2012

also enables a formation of a language that exploits the logics of interceded examination and subjective projection in revealing ways. The screen of the family vehicle's windshield replicates the television screen viewed by the suburban household as they look upon the world. Here, Davis sets up the car window as the site for viewing, the picture plane in which events occur. Invoking the ubiquitous and synthetic ritual of driving, the artist utilizes the perceptual account of the "behind the wheel" experience to reencounter the experience of sleep and renegotiate the distance between external and internal activity.

One must also remember that print media itself is a form of transportation. Through processes of reproduction and replication, the printed form sends information from one time and space to another. With her pair of objects, at rest and immobile, is Davis invoking a form of dry steering, a means of moving and reorientation while stationary? Is this form of travel safer than actually moving, using the imagination to cross distances impossible in consciousness? Or is the unconscious a more hazardous terrain, one that demands a vigilant driver in order to negotiate its twists and turns? What kind of latent formations can be viewed within the dream that cannot be manifestly produced? Does Davis warn us of being asleep at the wheel of reason or does she advocate for somnambulistic action? One is reminded of the phenomena of sleep driving, where subjects, often under the influence of sleeping pills, operate their vehicles with no memory of their trip. Will the sleeping driver arrive at places they consciously could not access? Freud once suggested that sleepwalking was an attempt by the unconscious to access the subject's bed in childhood and saw in the activity a prime symptom of unconscious urges mobilizing the body to act outside of the subject's conscious control. One can hardly speak about sleep and dreams without referring to Sigmund Freud's belief that significant events take place below the surface of consciousness that influence, manifest, or are repressed by the actions of the subject. Surely one can also point to an odd correlation between the drive indicated in the steering wheel and Freud's explanation of drives, the bodily demands upon mental life that are manifested in representations in the mind. Bridging the physical and the psychic, Davis alludes to the ways actions erupt from a complex dialectical negotiation between conscious and unconscious motivations. Equally, the artist points to the effects of external action on the internal mind, articulating how the outside world drives and determines the dreams we have. While some may advocate for an awakening from either the dream worlds of ideology or the sleep of reason, Davis points to a deliberate somnambulism, a means of both asserting agency in the psychic process and of deploying the dream to drive action.

JULY

12,

2012



THURSDAY

POST BROTHERS is writing about Kate Davis'
"Player (First Act)"

JULY

13,

2012

**HERALDIC AND
H I S T R I O N I C
CONSOLIDATED
CONSTRUCTIONS
AS CLEAR AS MUD**

Michele Di Menna's *The Myrmidon of Muddiness* is as cryptic as its name suggests. A tower of cardboard, paper, glitter, and paint, is the object a totem? A theatrical prop? A shield? An icon? An obelisk? A barricade? A gravestone? All of the above? Or something else entirely? Leaning slightly back on a single unipolar crutch, the figure is made up of four primary sections whose forms resemble the rounded sides and flat capitals of heraldic and protective shields. With the exception of three brass fasteners, the entire structure, including the stand, is made up of flat sheets of corrugated cardboard layered together. On the façade of each of the four emblem-like shapes, the artist has affixed paper that has been printed or painted and encrusted with squiggles of verdigris glitter. The paper glued to the surfaces of the bottom three sections feature what appears to be low quality black and white photocopies. Made of actually multiple papers overlapped and pasted together, the image at the base contains a hazy and pixelated picture of a craggy, fractured and bulbous surface akin to that of dried lava. The next section above is even more indiscernible, a smoky gradient of grey that lightens towards the top. The second-to-highest form features an image of an almost tessellated surface of mangled and cracked earth. The only shape that likely does not contain a photocopied image, the uppermost part is almost entirely white (save for the glitter) and diverges somewhat from the generally symmetrical shield form, curving

JULY

13,

2012

to the left like a plant stalk tending towards the sun. Using an economy of means, Di Menna builds a complex constellation of fractal material relations that generates narrative events and moves between different scales and intensities of motion.

Creating a correlation between the cellular and repeated constitution of matter and the pixelated and pointillist representation and reproduction of images, each of the images implies an aggregation of marks and materials. Rather than fall victim to the myths of faithful and direct reproduction, Di Menna uses the photocopier as an instrument to corrupt, distort, stretch, condense, and obscure information. Though surely also employed for its economy, immediacy, and rapidity of image production, the photocopying of the images equally speaks to the relationship between macro and micro. Magnifying the more representational pair of images so as to divulge their abstract pixelations, the process defamiliarizes the textures represented, rendering them as pattern with little connection to their sources. Exaggerating the distortions in scale, quality and resolution created by the photocopying process Di Menna images through varied levels of mediation until they congeal into bemired surfaces that refer and depart from their sources. One can even imagine that the image of the gradient and the bleached surface were initially also derived from textured images, but had degraded to the point of visual noise through the darkening and lightening of successive generations.

The sources for the images disintegrate and threaten to collapse into pure form so that they are unreadable as indexes. Regardless, the artist's denotation of "muddiness" sticks the viewer's face straight into the mud, tipping them off on what kind of matter may be the matter. The result of successive sedimentations, igneous profusions, mixings, ruptures, and reconstitutions, these surfaces are collections of matter that unify to create an ignoble ground. Like Pollock bringing his paintings to the floor and then hanging them back on the wall or the "alchemical" "elevation" of base materials to art, Di Menna engages in a shifting from horizontality to verticality, regarding the dirt and pointing to the sun like a Brutalist concrete architect. Cardboard itself is also an accumulation of matter, not just a consolidation of fibrous slurry and pulp like all paper, but also a series of layers of different grades of material that creates a malleable and ubiquitous substance. Corrugated, pleated, the standardized surfaces contain fluted internal folds, brown stuff repeated over and over to create strength and dexterity. Likewise, the glitter, distributed with little order across each of the surfaces, itself invokes the atomic. Reflecting light in a sparkling spectrum of greens, glitter is an assortment of

JULY

13,

2012

very small pieces of copolymer plastics, aluminum foil, titanium dioxide, iron oxides, bismuth oxychloride or other materials painted in metallic, neon and iridescent colors. Appearing and disappearing as one reorients their position to the sculpture, hues glimmer and pierce the eyes, shifting from bluish to jade inconsistently across the images and accumulating on the surfaces in gestural and rounded cambers and dusty flakes. Are not the pixilation of the images, the powdery toner, the aggregation of the ground, the recycling and repetition of the cardboard, and the collective effect of the glitter all each examples of the appearance of a muddy uniformity, but actually a proliferation of infinite heterogeneity?

If one walks around Di Menna's sculpture they will notice that the rear surfaces of the cardboard object are completely unaltered. A refusal of sculpture's "in the round" qualities, the artist instead has treated the object like a theatrical prop, including the necessary information only on the anterior of the object so that it can "read well" (as it is the only part traditionally seen by the audience). This is not to say that Di Menna's work is one-sided, however. Indeed, the artist's binary division between front and back is more a means of demystifying her object, letting its artificial façade and its material base dialectically interact. The lightness of the material and hinged support anticipates the object's potential activation, indicating a mobility and possibility for the object to take on new roles. Without a narrative to contextualize it, the object lingers between being a set decoration and a prop, yet it functions as neither, a self-supporting supporting-object. Though dormant, the object is surely no stick in the mud. Causality and actuality are abandoned in favor of limitless possibilities of action. Rather than a passive observer, the viewer is turned into a performer, a player who moves about the stage of the gallery and activates the object through internal and external negotiation. A singular trace that stands in for an absent whole, the column, like its material components, is a collective identified in a singularity, a thing that is made of many things and a part of many things.

What are these building blocks with which Di Menna has constructed her monument? If one regards them as shields, which most surely do, then is Di Menna advocating for a new heraldic sign warfare, one that is founded on murky symbols but inherits orders of the collective and individual just as any other gonfalon? The title of the work directs one to such conclusions: *The Myrmidon of Muddiness*. Myrmidon, for anyone not familiar with Greco-Roman myth or obscure vocabulary, was a people who have come to signify unquestioning minions, a group of allegiant ruffians. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the Roman poet mentions a story where

JULY

13,

2012

King Aeacus of Aegina pleads with Zeus to restore the population of his island nation after a genocidal plague unleashed by Hera, queen of the gods. Noticing that a community of worker ants on an oak tree had been unaffected by the sickness, Zeus transforms the insects into a race of people, the Myrmidons. Fierce and hardy as ants, and intensely loyal, the Myrmidons became known as remarkable warriors and supported Achilles in his military campaign in the Trojan War. Here, we have again a profound transformation in scale, a shifting from the minute to a minacious and muddy mass. Likewise, during this change the source still retains certain properties and gains power by the multiplicity functioning as a single unit. Is Di Menna's pillar an anthill, a composite of materials that supports the convergence of a community acting as a whole? Is the construction of shields the collected signs of a warrior unit that operated like slurry and sediment, a militaristic multitude of muck? Is this a totem for a base materialism, a protective yet sacrificial disruption of "high" and "low" that emphasizes ignoble, unstable, heterogeneous, and active matter? Or is the object itself the myrmidon, a minion who adheres ardently to logics of reconstitution and base values? While Di Menna may muddy the waters to her intentions, she leaves an ambiguous and inactive stele to decode, a dirty discourse, at once liquid and solid, which coordinates mountains and the microscopic.

JULY

13,

2012



FRIDAY

POST BROTHERS is writing about Michele Di Menna's
"A Myrmidon of Muddiness"

JULY

14,

2012

A SIDEWAY VIEW OF FLAT FACADES

Blurring the lines between abstraction and documentation, Annette Kisling's *Museo 4* defamiliarizes architectural space and lays bare the role of framing in perceptual and symbolic encounters. An obviously meticulous shutterbug and image-maker, Kisling deploys the vernacular of black and white documentary photography to build complex compositions that undermines expectations and confronts normative modes of representation. Asserting the photographic apparatus as a contingent and variable form of composition making, Kisling uses photography as a way to create abstractions that function in a documentary sense, as very literal records of a specific set of physical conditions. With a keen eye for the correlation of content and form, she isolates and recomposes elements through her framing, deconstructing aesthetic perception and perceptual and stylistic expectations. In doing this, the artist reminds the viewer that all photographs are simultaneously representational and abstract, constructions that have gone through a series of translations, manipulations, and framings.

Stretching photographic representation to its lineaments, Kisling's ambiguous image masquerades as a number of ubiquitous forms of picture making but adheres to a tradition thoroughly rooted in the history of photography. Following the evolution of image production technologies, the artist substitutes the classical silver gelatin print with the piezo pigment process of printing, a quadtone form outputted from digital media that allows her to render tones and values with stunning precision and creates a unique surface quality that can easily be mistaken for intricate linework. The image features a series of mostly vertical forms that break up a flat plane of gray. Detached from context and source through her framing, the structures and objects depicted are perplexing, at once familiar and entirely alien. One can recognize at the center of the image a thin lateral view of what looks to be a classical Hellenistic structure or a museum entryway. A figure without ground, the façade appears to float on the page, isolated from any human subjects or terrains to place it in space and time. Directly behind the frontage of architecture

JULY

14,

2012

to the left is a similarly sized strip of what looks like a canvas stretcher that has a dense series of black tacks running down the edge. The architecture and the (potential) stretcher are connected to a long plank of grainy wood that bisects the image. Protruding from the center of the wooden strip is a metal structural connector or fastener that then connects to a smaller piece of timber that runs to the bottom of the image parallel to the central beam. Confusing one's perception of scale and space even further, the right edge of the image features lightly pleated and undulating strips of material that are likely curtains.

What kind of space could this image possibly be? Kisling collapses logics of proportion, rendering the architectural façade minute in relationship to the other elements of the composition. Given the screws and metal fittings of the wood, the tacks on the side of the stretcher, and the folds of the curtains, one can surmise a consistent space in which these components reside. But what of the architectural façade? Is this just an indication of the trickery of perspective, where the building recedes compared to the objects in the foreground? This is hardly likely, the distortions of scale being too extreme to follow the principles of spatial representation in Euclidian geometry. Is there a simultaneity of multiple views in the image? Perhaps the artist has engaged in photographic manipulation, cutting the elements from separate images and compiling them into a single form? This, as well, is probably not the case, as the objects commingle too naturally to be the result of even the most adept photographic collagist faker. One can even imagine that the artist has masked out the background and other elements in order to further confuse the viewer. But close analysis renders this hypothesis false; the soft and creamy gray has too much subtle variation to have been deliberately produced. If the artist has been completely faithful to the objects she is representing, what, then, is this space where such contradictions can be reconciled? Where in the universe do scales collapse, interiors and exteriors are inverted, and different materials and temporalities integrate? The title of the work gives a vital hint: *Museo*.

Rather than emphasize the artworks and artifacts of the museum, the artist looks to its materialist base, its supports. Deploying a scrupulous documentary method, Kisling simultaneously demystifies and re-mystifies the exhibition apparatus, deconstructing the museum's constitutive logics by rendering visible inconspicuous incongruities. A form of subtle institutional critique, the artist discloses the physical support structures of the museum, connecting such arrangements to their ideological underpinnings and ramifications. A site of displacement, decontextualization and distortion, Kisling points

JULY

14,

2012

to the museum as an instrument that only incorporates the façades of culture, detaching objects from their time and place so as to present the surface as part of a deliberate ideological narrative. With this, Kisling creates a nuanced constellation between her own use of photographic framing, the “frame” of the modeled vestibule, the framing and decontextualization of the museum, and the material framings that support the display apparatus.

Accustomed to the manipulation of scale in any standard photographic print, the architectural edifice appears to be a true part of a building, but is only a model of a façade affixed to a support. The building is therefore a façade of a façade, a petite model with no interior in which it relates. The exterior front is detached from its interior, serving as sign and recalling the ubiquitous practice of Façadism, a compromise between preservation and demolition where a building’s façade is left intact for the purposes of building new structures in or around it. What resides within this building, this surface indicating a history with no clear interior? Why does the artist abandon a frontal view of the architecture, emphasizing its protrusion from flatness rather than its entry into depth? Is it not odd that in order to destabilize the flatness of a surface one need only shift perspective?

The independence of the façade correlates with the mythopoetic autonomy of the interior. Without an inside for which the outside corresponds, one may believe that Kisling’s image asserts pure surface, a vital divide between outside and inside. But consider again that there are multiple interiors and exteriors within the image itself. The object is isolated from the gallery wall by the inclusion of a black frame. Within that interior is another frame, a zone of untouched paper bordering the image. The image is produced by registering the movement of light from outside to inside the camera. The picture produced is an interior shot that captures the objects and allows them to exist externally from their time and place. And within the image itself resides a model of an exterior brought inside, the evidence of a series of borders and frames contextualizing and supporting the object, and a curtain which functions to demarcate and mediate between outside and in. At various and overlapping points, thresholds are maintained and undermined. Such folding and unfolding of interior and exterior within the image could be found *ad infinitum*, demonstrating the inextricable interrelation of outside and inside, a shifting and schizophrenic tension where each is at once independent and regulated by a strange, pre-established correspondence in such a way that each one sets off the other. Individual spatial elements are subdued because the architectural possibility comes not from the autonomy of individual elements, but from the disparity and in-betweenness

JULY

14,

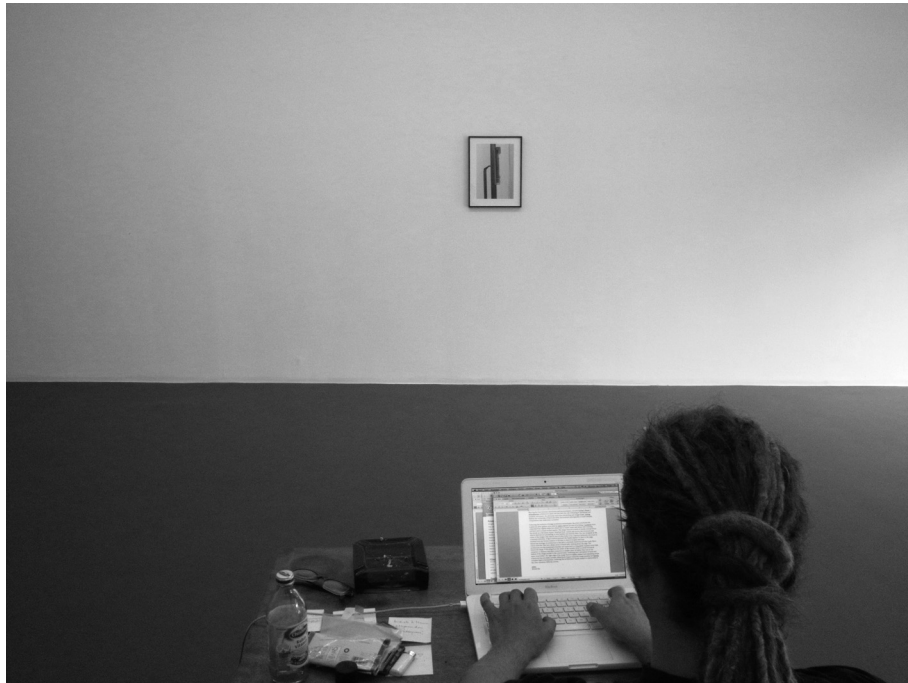
2012

in which the elements exist. Kisling defamiliarizes space, contrasting the flatness of the image itself with the open and closed spaces it implies. The artist presents multiple planes in a single field, collapsing dimensions. This lens-based negotiation of the museum in turn creates a new territory, a new space and mode of interaction. Kisling encounters the museum obliquely, laterally engaging with its structures and deconstructing its depths so as to not succumb to the trickery of frontal views and artificial façades. Neither overtly critical to the content nor purely formalist, her pivoted point of view of the museological apparatus is not an attempt to sidestep discussions but rather presents an unfamiliar view of a familiar context, accessing foundational truths by turning hidden or unacknowledged structures into abstract forms.

JULY

14,

2012



SATURDAY

POST BROTHERS is writing about Annette Kisling's
"Museo 4"

JULY

15,

2012

PULLING THE PLUG ON IMAGES AND OBJECTS

A black hp photosmart 5510 e-all-in-one printer hangs on the gallery wall with a sheet of glossily printed paper partly protruding from its paper tray. A work by Simon Dybbroe Møller cleverly entitled *Produce*, the household printer was first purchased by the artist, inputted with an image file, activated, and then unplugged in the midst of producing its very first piece of paper. With a strip of blue packaging tape holding closed its auxiliary scanner bed, it is immediately apparent that this action was the printer's first and final task. A parody of the idiomatic "out of the box" immediacy of mass production, Møller catalyzes the system's failure, promptly incapacitating the object before it can finish its inaugural operation. Existing somewhere between notions of manufacture and usage, Møller charts a nuanced constellation between stasis, inconclusiveness, production and value. The title of the work, *Produce*, is a humorous homographic handle, a reference to the numerous uses of the word in English, which simultaneously means to "bring into existence", "to manufacture", "to show", and "to provide", and also, if pronounced divergently, "fresh, farm produced goods", especially fruits and vegetables. Forthright to these connections, the incomplete printed image features a grouping of oranges, producing produce for the production of productive probing.

Using a subtle and understated gesture of sabotage that renders the printer and image seemingly intact yet unusable, Møller tests understandings of function and utility and offers up the objects as items that seemingly retains semiotic value while simultaneously failing in purpose. The printer, perhaps even "fresher" than the oranges themselves, is harvested and abstracted from its function. Møller's interruption exaggerates and undermines the logic of the readymade, deconstructing the ways value and utility are shifted in the movement from commodities to art objects and back again. The artist first

JULY

15,

2012

engaged in an economic exchange, purchasing through retail a desktop tool for the production of images. Triggering the object and deploying it for its manufactured purpose, Møller then alienates the object from its intended use, detaching it from its “use value” and giving rise to new forms of “exchange value” and “sign value”. No longer tied to its material purpose, the object is rendered a sign. By pulling the plug, the artist demonstrates the immediacy and violence of the readymade gesture through the most economical means possible. The printer is denatured and rendered unproductive, not only severing its intended circulation and use but also disconnecting it from a network of energy (taken off the electric grid). Pointing to the readymade as an object displaced from its functionality, Møller deconstructs the value form within art production, exaggerating the isolation and abstraction necessary for ubiquitous objects to re-circulate as art objects. The printer is encountered first through its exchange value, is then reinvigorated with utility, and then has its use value erased, accruing new sign and exchange value through its decontextualization that is wholly independent from its use.

While Møller’s action can be regarded as a demonstration of the interrelation of the commodity form and the logic of art, it is also important to consider how his destructive maneuver testifies to a critical enmity towards forms of production and the social interactions derived from such systems. By halting the workflow, one can regard his gesture as a form of strike, a work stoppage that seizes the means of production and impedes the constant manufacture of commodities/images. Leaving the productive apparatus at a standstill, the artist accentuates the often-ignored material conditions in the production of images, terminating the object’s productive capabilities at its base. In this sense, the title *Produce* can be seen as a command, one that Møller directly resists and undermines by refusing to let the tool operate. The artist’s terminating act freezes the object in time, taking it out of the course of history by isolating and extending a single instant. Likewise, by displaying the object in a state of dysfunction, the artist presents a familiar and frustrating scenario where mass-produced commodities that are depended upon are subject to irritating defects and designed obsolescence. Paradoxically turning the paper jam into an asset, Møller’s printer becomes a symbol for deferred production, an object that resists objectification and instrumentalization.

No longer an indifferent and reproductive apparatus, the printer focuses only on a singularity, its role as an implementer of multiples is reduced to the barest unit. Normally a vital component in the production of the work that is hidden from view, the printer is shown as an essential part of the work, a

structural and aesthetic element as important as the image it clutches. The black mass-produced form of the printer recalls the primary structures of minimalism and appears almost as a totemic mask, an anthropomorphized face with the tray as a probable tongue, neck, or buckteeth. In the course of producing “art”, the printer becomes art. Likewise, the printer replaces the frame that would potentially hold and display the image. While one can say that Møller has transformed a tool of production into a display apparatus, it is also significant to note that the paper tray itself is already a form and instrument of display. In fact, the tray is the primary site for the image’s material exhibition; the first frame that holds it after it has been outputted to a physical surface. When the tray is integrated into the image, a slippage occurs not only between image and object but also between the image and its contextualizing frame.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the work is the confusing relationship between the image printed and the structure of the printer itself. With stunning orange hues and a dense composition, the background of the unfinished picture looks akin to a generic stock image, a readymade and exchangeable stand-in for real commodities that can be purchased and continuously re-signified. Whether or not the artist produced the background image of fruit may be of little consequence, but a keen eye will surely notice that the irregularities of the oranges themselves divulges the lack of photographic artificiality common in commercial image production and discloses the artist’s intentionality. The oranges are printed almost life-size, therefore establishing a dialectic between object and image. Creating cognitive dissonance through a sly form of photographic *trompe-l’œil*, the artist superimposed an image of the printer’s paper tray atop the field of fruit. The apprehension of this playful exaggeration of photographic representation inverts figure/ground relations, creating a sense that the paper is toggling from the top of the tray to below it. The border between the image and the machine of its manufacture is rendered permeable, each affecting the other. A moment of unexpected self-reflexivity for the object itself, the printer is printing the printer. Is this a metaphor for autonomy, for the self-made man? Is this a warning call about the omnipresence and dependence on technology and mediation, an attempt at demystifying the material supports that generate images? Or is this a demonstration and exaggeration of conceptual art’s compulsion for empiricist and positivist self-reflexivity, “the founding logic of Capitalism” whose destiny, Benjamin Buchloh prophesized, was to “aspire to the conditions of tautology”? Not only is the print frozen in the middle of its emergence, but also, as it is the first image generated by the machine, the printer itself is arrested in the midst of it

JULY

15,

2012

own becoming. A printer is not a printer until it prints, just as a print is not a print until it is printed. The image tests the parameters and potentials of the machine, while the machine equally tests the resolution and fidelity of the image. With a nod to Robert Morris' *Box With The Sound Of Its Own Making*, Møller presents a tautological relationship between document and source, a mutual determination.

JULY

15,

2012



SUNDAY

POST BROTHERS is writing about Simon Dybbroe Møller's
"Produce"

E P I L O G

The critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticizes as the artist does to the visible world of form and color, or the unseen world of passion and of thought. -

Oscar Wilde, The Critic as Artist: With Some Remarks Upon The Importance of Doing Nothing

On July 9, 2012, I stumbled into Galerie Kamm at 11 am for an odd rendezvous. Inside the space, a single artwork was installed. Set directly across from the object was a modest wooden desk that resembled the one I normally use to write from in my elevator office. Atop the desk was a yellow post-it note with the title, artist name, and date of the artwork that had been presented primarily for me to admire. Feeling both nervous and privileged to have such a rare experience, I immediately sat down and commenced writing about the bewildering thing in front of me. This assignment I repeated everyday for the rest of the week from 11 to 19, producing seven texts regarding seven distinct objects from the gallery's inventory. Each new artwork presented a new set of challenges and catalyzed in me new lines of thought that I bunglingly typed into the mystic writing pad that is my computer. Without any awareness of an organizing principle or intentionality to the selections and lacking notes or other prepared material (and discombobulated by technical difficulties with my computer), I regarded each work individually, deconstructing the properties of the manifest object and pontificating on their repercussions and significations. These things opened up successive processes of thought that began to reappear, calcify, and evolve as the week went on.

Like an animal on display or a prisoner in custody, the exercise involved a level of public exposure uncommon in art criticism, which normally exists entirely hidden from view, as if it was a natural consequence of the art object. Curious visitors to the gallery were confronted with only a partial view of an exhibition, becoming witnesses to only a single fragment of the whole that was mediated by the presence of an out-of-place figure "at work" in the room. Contrary to literary myths, there is likely no such thing as optimal writing conditions; all work is produced under limited circumstances and in the presence of specific prompts and distractions. Surely this form of rapid and public production would be of little difficulty for a journalist, poet, jazz musician, or improv comic, but, alas, I am no expert on such

improvisations. Comparisons can also be made to the experience of rushing to meet a deadline on a school essay or Brian Dillon's text *I am Sitting In a Room*, where the writer produced a book in 24 hours while occupying a gallery space in NYC. Rather than insisting on a performative dimension of text production, my predicament was much simpler: to work through thoughts publicly within a specific spatio-temporal frame by scrupulously deconstructing the presented objects one by one.

My professed goal over the course of this operation was to form semantic bridges between the works, calculating through a piecemeal approach somewhat of a thesis behind the selections. In the press release I had inaccurately used the term "random", but such a specific situation could hardly be fully subject to chance. The works were surely selected, but if there was intentionality to the progression of objects, it was surreptitious at best. Whether or not I "got it right" is hardly at issue. In fact, the question resides more in what it means to attempt to project an order onto relations, to distill from the noise points of contact, conflict, and comparison. Before I began, I had mentioned Adorno's description of a "constellation": "a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle." I'd even venture to say that my task of elucidation is even more detached and artificial, less a constellation than an asterism, a conspicuous grouping of stars, an arbitrary and subjective order imposed by the viewer onto an indiscernible cosmos. Not sanctioned as a constellation, these groupings are derived by a process of abstract pattern recognition. The identification of an asterism reflects a specific anthropocentrism, a truth procedure grounded in the perceptual operations of the human visual/symbolic system. The universe is revealed as an architecture of infinite regression, traces of the past flickering across the darkness and given form through the signifying methods of the receivers. In my imminent encounter, I sought relations by which to relate to, a capricious yet compulsory orientation. In a sense, an asterism demonstrates the various ways impalpable information is organized and intermingled in order to produce definable structures. As a system of knowledge divorced from standardized constellations, the asterism enacts a misapprehension and reappropriation of existing orientations to chart new or hidden formations.

Certainly both a reflection on my circumstantial interests and the heterogeneous yet calculated proclivities of the gallery itself, there are numerous connections between the works that can be made. Each of the objects accentuated, elaborated, and contested their particular media and materially specific conditions. Generated through a critical encounter with these forms, the works celebrated and disputed the capacities of their materials to connect to the world outside and produce meaning. In this sense, each of the works dealt in some way with their

particular material and literal framings, contesting the autonomy of the artworks by blurring and folding the boundaries between inside and outside. Just as I was an outsider consigned to the closed gallery space that maintained a capacity to interact with and pull information from outside, the objects equally moderated cognitive and signifying leaps between their manifest content and information hidden, absent, or elsewhere. My focus over the course of my writings was mostly on the material properties of the successive objects, which signaled to me larger conceptual and ideological dimensions. An exhibition that built over time without an access to or conception of a gestalt, the process was akin to walking through a gallery with mnemonic and visual blinders on, no memory or knowledge of past or future, just immediate access. Above all, the exhibition was a contorted version of the customary "summer show" where the gallery artists' works are re-presented in tandem and direct conversation (I use quotes not as a snide remark or a stressing of the generic moniker but as a reminder that storms of rain continuously fluctuated throughout the week). We only have 52 weeks a year and this project was an attempt at signifying and overloading a week with information and activity, of making this week unlike another week. Think about those weeks where you feel like nothing significant happened or nothing got done. The project could have been a number of things, but this is what happened this week. In conclusion, I could attempt to answer the questions I set out in the prologue: Lots of things, little bit of both, multiplied significations, chaotic humbug, a little bit of extra attention, no access to essence but no overriding equivalence, not really, succumbed to their charm, more balderdash, a great deal, that information is embedded in things and refers to other things. Anyone who reads the texts will surely create their own thematic groupings and lines of thought between the works and likely will arrive at less clumsy conclusions than I. Nevertheless, this slapdash form of interpretation was an intriguing and demanding endeavor.

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