

Program notes for a chance collaboration between John Cage and Fumito Ueda: In/Out, that's what I'd call it. And not just because you're In a Landscape, or because those sublime digital vistas—vast, ashen and craggy—are, in turn, encased in an interior...itself within a video... or those identical records falling subtly in and out of synch on matching 1200s... and on and on like a Matryoshka doll... The logic of games—their inside—like Cage's chance operations, works on the free play of possibility within the arbitrary limits of a system. These are the rules; the rest is total freedom. Chance, for Cage, meant the freedom from intentions, for Ueda the essence of gaming, instantiated in Shadow of the Colossus in a desolate world and lonely quest, trimmed of so many of the conventions of the adventure genre.

“All Thought utters Dice Thrown” - Mallarme

But then In a Landscape is not one of Cage's chance compositions, and Ueda can no more dispense with all convention than Cage could rid composition of the baggage of the composer. Every system is encompassed by another... and another... Out of the Shadow: the meanings, histories and armature of cultural forms.

A Los Angeles based artist, Oliver Payne was born and raised in London. This is his first solo show here. Payne's work over the past decade has entailed, among other things, a persistent interest in the functioning of space—urban, suburban, exurban, the space of youth cultures and the lunatic space in bullet hell games.

The world of videogames is situated in a liminal cultural space—no longer disdained, if still not quite respectable. While due deference is paid to profit margins, industry apologists continue to churn out volumes explaining Why Videogames Matter to the uncomprehending and uninitiated. Leave boosterism to the boosters, our princess is in another castle.

Marquees and control panel overlays (CPOs): relics of the ancient landscape of the arcade, a vanished social space. These titles represent not a catalogue of classics but a sampling of the abundant rank and file. Where once they exteriorized the world of the game, Payne's abstracted CPOs collapse into frame a fraction of the game-in-the-world and a bit of the world itself. His marquees, inverted like the signs of out-of-business shops, emphasize as well the strange fate of replacement parts for obsolete commodities. These parts can still be sourced, destined for nostalgic fetishization in the minted-out basement arcades of collectors or next to the photo booth in a Brooklyn bar.

Two spaces: the evanescent arcade and the white room. They plot two points in the history of gaming: the advancing sophistication of the medium and the near total displacement of the arcade by the home consul. This is not to dust off the cliché of the alienated gamer, antisocial and In My Room, consumed by increasingly complex distractions. The symmetries of Payne's room point to a kind of collectivity as much as they serve as elements in a chance experiment. Blank walls and office plants evoke an office space, turntables and incense an adolescent bedroom. In that pairing—the office-bedroom trajectory—one glimpses the transfigurations and interpretations of commodities once we get our hands on them.

Eli Diner

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