

animal house*

STRIP

Tommaso Nervegna-Reed
Augusta Vinall Richardson

31.8.24
- 5.10.24

clockwise from door

Tommaso Nervegna-Reed
Untitled (Agora State Prison #1), 2024
Enamel, staples, archival inkjet
pigment print on canvas
220 x 40cm

Augusta Vinall Richardson
See How They Fit Together?
2024
Corten steel
180cm x 66cm x 30cm

Tommaso Nervegna-Reed
Untitled (Agora State Prison #2), 2024
Enamel, staples, archival inkjet
pigment print on canvas
220 x 110cm

Tommaso Nervegna-Reed
Untitled (Agora State Prison #4), 2024
Enamel, staples, archival inkjet
pigment print on canvas
220 x 122cm

Tommaso Nervegna-Reed
Untitled (Agora State Prison #5), 2024
Enamel, staples, archival inkjet
pigment print on canvas
220 x 50cm

Tommaso Nervegna-Reed
Untitled (Agora State Prison #6), 2024
Enamel, staples, archival inkjet
pigment print on canvas
220 x 100cm

Tommaso Nervegna-Reed
Untitled (Agora State Prison #3), 2024
Enamel, staples, archival inkjet
pigment print on canvas
220 x 30cm

Augusta Vinall Richardson appears courtesy of The Commercial, Sydney.

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If it was said that something simple has one fold, that an accomplice is someone you're folded in with, that explicating is folding out, or that a multiplicity is of many folds, you'd be forgiven for thinking that this text was taking a metaphor from the works and forcing it on itself. Etymological derivations of the Latin root word "plicare" (to fold) and "plectere" (to braid or to weave) abound in the way we speak, particularly when it comes to spatial relations and mathematics. Words with "plic" in them (application, implication, complicit, replica) or "plex" (simplex, duplex, perplex) as a suffix almost all tend to have these origins. When we consider something complicated or complex, it contains a tightly woven series of folds that are hard to disentangle. When there is a plus between two variables, we are talking about a single fold connecting them, whereas when we talk about multiplication, we are denoting more than one fold. This aligns with the distinction that's drawn between an increase that is onefold, versus one that is twofold or threefold.

In 1837, French mathematician Pierre Wantzel proved that the ancient geometric problem of doubling the cube and the related problems, squaring the circle and trisecting the angle, couldn't be solved using a compass and straight line. By 1980, Hisashe Abe proposed a solution that used folded origami to successfully trisect the angle and shortly after, in 1986, Peter Messer adopted the same method to develop an original solution to double the cube. The American physicist Robert Lang, also one of the foremost origami artists in the world, has written on the philosophical implications of folding. He notes how the origami object possesses, much like the works of the two artists in this show, a reflexive quality by which it simultaneously maps out the processes that it has come from, and what it could have been otherwise. The picture of transformation that he arrives at aligns closely with the ontological impermanence central to Buddhist and Shinto thought, the "radical impermanence" of the 20th Century Kyoto School (of philosophy) and the various theories of "becoming" that emerge in continental philosophy. On many of these views, perception involves a static cut made away from a visual field of constant transformation. Where a fixed object can successfully lay out where it has come from, and what it will be, it is uniquely placed to make the viewer aware of the cut which vision is making, if only momentarily.

Another of Lang's recurring observations centres around the potential for folding to visually demonstrate how complex systems can be derived from simple parts. Origami begins with simple folds and the complexity of the outcome is determined by how these folds are sequenced rather than the amount of components that are used. This insight is shared by Gilles Deleuze in a late work "The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque", wherein folding (alongside Leibniz and Baroque architecture) proves to be the hidden answer to a series of problems from the nature of movement, to memory and subjectivity. The issue with Descartes, he suggests, was that he thought in straight lines. From this perspective, the vitality and immense presence of Augusta Vinall *Richardson's See how they fit together?* emerges as much from its internal folds as it does from its orientation and the arrangement of its parts. "Force itself is an act" he asserts, "an act of the fold".

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Deleuze maintains that multiplicities are constituted, not just by many parts, but of simple parts with many folds. An encounter with Augusta's sculpture involves oscillating between seeing it as a unified whole, and noticing it for the difference in its constituent parts, minimising them and scanning each ridge, panel and box for its divergence from the ones that it is folded into. To get closer to the Deleuzian sense, of force derived from micro folds more than macro, it's worth noting the ones hidden on the surface of the geometric forms. The process of a suntan is one common visualisation of how something that seems to be on the exterior can fold itself into the "pleats of matter". The rigid division between an exterior sun and a bodily interior is broken down at the point where the sun is able to penetrate the body, lodging itself into pleated matter as a darkened residue. The rusting that Augusta has induced involves a similar process. Rain embeds itself into the skin of the sculpture before eventually encouraging the metal, by corrosion, to fold itself back into the atmosphere.

Plato was one of the first in a long line of philosophers to suggest an interior subject vying to access an exterior world, forming the distinction that Deleuze moves to dissolve across his body of works. Where the Platonic tradition would distinguish between two worlds, for Deleuze, the preeminent Baroque innovation is "the world of only two stories, separated by a fold" expressing the "transformation of the [plural] cosmos into [the singular] "mundus."" Each of the works in Tommaso Nervegna-Reed's *Untitled (Agora State Prison)* series contains a photograph that he took in Athens, at the location where Socrates is alleged to have drunk the hemlock that killed him. A flash, positioned near the cave entrance, points outwards, towards the lens of his camera on the outside. Those familiar with Plato's allegory of the cave are reminded of the blinding sunlight that prisoners see when they reach the surface and see the world for what it really is. Still, the light that viewers see in these photographs doesn't seem to be one that promises transcendence. It is artificial, facing out from the direction of the cave, spliced and fragmented, both across the canvases and within each canvas. In one sense this is closer to the historical picture that we receive.

Historians continue to question whether the actual location of Socrates' prison is another cave, five minutes away and, more consequentially, whether the Socrates that we receive from Plato is nothing like the real figure and just a springboard for his ideas. It also fits, then, that the folds in these works are less the constitutive inflections that give a box its form, than the partial envelopments that obscure something from view. Tommaso marks the implication of his perspective onto the image with the same structure that grants his vision, and the viewer's, its embeddedness. Deleuze uses differential equations, derived from Leibnizian mathematics, to support the claim that perspective emerges at a point of inflection on an enveloping fold. If there's anything in the physical appearance of an enveloping fold that affirms this, it's the way interior and exterior slip between one another without ever fully instantiating themselves.

Theo Paphitis
August, 2024