

“We’re an information economy. They teach you that in school. What they don’t tell you is that it’s impossible to move, to live, to operate at any level without leaving traces, bits, seemingly meaningless fragments of personal information. Fragments that can be retrieved, amplified...”

- William Gibson

Stems Gallery is pleased to present *There is nothing I could say that I haven’t thought before*, the latest exhibition by Cynthia Daignault. It is her first exhibition with Stems, and her first in Belgium. Daignault developed this exhibition in collaboration with Cory Arcangel, Sadie Barnette, Carol Bove, Andy Coolquitt, Sara Cwynar, Josephine Halvorson, Peter Harkawik, Matthew Higgs, John Houck, Allan McCollum, Josephine Meckseper, Jonathan Monk, Roula Partheniou, Magali Reus, Jenna Rosenberg, Erin Shirreff, Julia Wachtel, Stanley Walukau-Wanambwa, and Letha Wilson.

Throughout her career, Daignault has sought new ways to invite collaboration into her painting practice, often sharing content creation with collectors, curators, participants and artists. As Daignault wrote, “I have no interest in the model of artist as singular genius... Sharing intentionality and responsibility, risk and reward, these are acts of expansion, multiplying possibilities for meaning and communion in my work.” Daignault began this latest collaborative series by curating a group show of twenty artists whose work explores themes of objecthood, still-life, display, and appropriation. She asked each artist to select one of their own works for the show. Yet, instead of shipping and displaying the actual objects, Daignault has made and is showing here painted copies of each artwork instead. Part solo show, group show, and curatorial project, *There is nothing I could say that I haven’t thought before* explores the roll of the virtual in contemporary art. It is now rarer to experience a physical art object than it is to encounter its surrogate: jpegs on websites and phones, or photos in catalogs and books. Is it any less absurd for the proxy to be a painting rather than a photograph?

At the heart of the show, is an act of appropriation. Yet, one in which Daignault has re-empowered the artists being referenced. Her collaborators were given full agency, both in the ability to decline the invitation and in the choice of which works she would depict, thus reversing the power relationship normally present in appropriation. If cultural appropriation is a fact of a data-driven, content-saturated world, Daignault posits that there is another option besides the nihilistic approach that everything is rights-free and up for grabs. Instead, Daignault redefines appropriation as collaboration. It is an act of exchange, not plunder, a fact Daignault underscores by giving each artist a small painted copy of their artwork in return for its loan. In the gallery, the works create a virtual group show, suggesting an art fair booth, showroom, website or catalog. The show is an index of contemporary artists, like a yearbook, and an array of objects that constitute art-making

in 2016, like a time capsule or collection. The works are both still-lives and portraits. Presented salon-style, in traditional portrait format, Daignault suggests that every group show is itself a portrait gallery. The objects one leaves behind, both physical and digital contain some data on the individual. So, in the infinite data stream receding in our wake, we trail a river of surrogates--our ghosts--in every object and every machine.

Opening Reception and Performance, April 19, 2016. We are delighted to announce that continuing her experiments in collaboration, Daignault has invited Brussels based choreographer Vera Tussing to stage a series of dance and movement pieces in response to the works and ideas in the show. There will be a series of performances during the opening on April 19 by Ruben Martinez Orio, Vera Tussing, Esse Vanderbruggen, and Lucas Zileri, and at other dates and times to be announced.

Cynthia Daignault is an artist, born in Baltimore, Maryland and based in New York and Los Angeles. She attended Stanford University, was a MacDowell Colony Fellow, and was the recipient of a Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant. Her paintings have been the subject of numerous solo shows, including exhibitions at White Columns, Lisa Cooley and Rowhouse Project; and of numerous group shows, including exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, the Fort Worth Modern, and the Brooklyn Museum, where in 2014 she exhibited the massive installation I love you more than one more day, featuring 365 paintings of the sky. Daignault is an active writer. She is the founder of the publication A-Z, an editor of the Sean Landers Monograph, Improbable History, and the former associate director of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. She publishes and reads regularly, including readings at PS1, the Seque series, and NYU. She has published two limited edition artist books, titled CCTV (2012) and I love you more than one more day (2013).

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