

A certain appetite of the mind can, then, find more nourishment in the label on the can than in its contents: a poetic, if wayward feast.

If that appetite came with photography, and grew in film, it has not found its limit; rather it seeks it in a metapraxis of observation, analysis, production.

– Hollis Frampton

ROOM EAST is delighted to present a second exhibition of works by Hollis Frampton that will focus on the the largest presentation to date of xerographs from the series *By Any Other Name 1979-1983*. The two-floor exhibition will consist of the upper floor dedicated to xerographic works, and the lower floor to a projection of two seminal short films *Lemon 1969* and *Carrots and Peas 1969* on continuous loop. The exhibition will be on public view Thursday – Sunday 12pm-6pm for the duration of the exhibition, and by appointment. This year marks the 80th anniversary of Frampton's birth.

The sources of *By Any Other Name* are a series of appropriated food labels that Frampton collected. When viewed en masse, the visual and linguistic poetics, the humorous disjunctions between product and profit are rich in detail and deadpan in delivery. The work could be read as a visual cipher, a riposte to Pop art, an ode to consumerism, or a fractured map of postcolonial empire. Frampton did not stipulate an order for the works beyond placing them into a set of six series of labels from around the world including America, China, England, India, Japan, Korea, Scotland, Spain, and Thailand, etc.

Writing at the age of 27, Frampton defended the work of James Rosenquist in a text to Carl Andre, and provided insight into his work experience and approach to making art:

I work in a color laboratory, and nightly expend my skill and knowledge towards perfecting “commercial” photography: nylons, frozen orange juice, leaded gasoline, bread with calcium propionate and so forth... To use an image is to make another. I do it myself. I have only what is in me and before me, and can only examine the honesty of the effort by which I have come by the scraps that I conserve.²

By Any Other Name illustrates the evolution of what Frampton once referred to the “First Photographic Culture of the Disposable Epoch.”³ In another sense, it is a heterogenous portrait, a you-are-what-you-eat tableau, a feast from the pantry of our past. While most of the companies are long defunct, several are still manufacturing products with widely recognizable brands: Bumblebee,

Carnation, Chef Boy-ar-dee, Land o Lakes, Green Giant, Little Debbie's, and Sunmaid, among others.

Frampton was an inveterate technologist. His time at the University of Buffalo brought him into proximity to several institutions that supported his work. In addition to Kodak Eastman (founded in 1888), Xerox (founded in 1906 as the Haloid Photographic Company) was also originally headquartered nearby in Rochester, NY. Xerox introduced the color photocopier in the early 1970s. The Everson Museum in Syracuse, NY invited Frampton to make work using the color photocopy machine that it had on premise.

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Early commentators on *BY ANY OTHER NAME*, 1979-1983:

"Frampton here presents the labels, boxes, wrappings, etc. in "unassisted" form, leaving his mode of critique and commentary to the original process of selection and to the titles he concocts for each. These two interpretative modes are closely aligned by one of the few rules governing the series—that brand name and product be as unrelated as "Bumblebees" are to tuna and that the label display words and illustrations for both terms... The titles that Frampton provides in turn play upon the unmotivated forms of nomination that link objects, people, places, a vast range of physical phenomena, and even history with items of consumption. He simply unanchors the referents and then reverses their relationship to create equally unmotivated, but radically different products for the marketplace.

Frampton's singular focus upon the process of naming embraces linguistic and visual metaphors. The "contradictory images" obtained by nomination must ultimately cohabitate within the same space—the flattened file of the printed label. Almost invariably, the balance between these items, the product and its iconographic double, results in comic inversions of scale... Equally odd are the comparisons with forces of nature, as in the inversions enacted between large but banal lemons and the spectacle of an iridescent meteor or between huge Magritte-like tomatoes and a schooner besieged by a hurricane...

Like the Duchampian ready-made, the works exert their force simultaneously against the practices

of the world at large and against that smaller domain known as art. A cultural morphology emerges that is based upon an archive that, as Frampton recalled, was not always fit for human consumption. The metapraxis exercised within this work, however, is the result not only of a lifetime spent at the supermarket, but of one devoted to satisfying a “certain appetite of the mind.”⁴

“A witty look at the folk poetry of capitalism, the xerographic series *By Any Other Name 1979-83* explored the production of meaning in an unlikely quarter—consumer product labels. The rules for Frampton’s selection of the labels stipulated: first, a two-part product name consisting of a noun that specifies the product, and an unmotivated accompanying adjective, and second, the presence of an illustration derived from the adjectival component. In a striking inversion, the titles that Frampton assigned to the individual pieces invited us to imagine an alternative reading of the label (Meteor Brand Lemons, for example, become “*Lemon Brand Meteors*”) and to ponder the fragile line distinguishing sense from nonsense.”⁵

1 Notes for the exhibition “*Animated Images / Still Life*.”

2 “On James Rosenquist and Other Inquisitions, September 22, 1963,” in *Carl Andre / Hollis Frampton: 12 Dialogues, 1962-1963*. The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art, 1981, p. 92.

3 “Some propositions on Photography,” *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton* MIT, 2009, p. 5.

4 Bruce Jenkins *Hollis Frampton: Recollections-Recreations* The MIT Press, 1984, p. 27.

5 Christopher Phillips “Word Pictures: Frampton and Photography,” *October* 32, 1985, pp. 71-2.

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