

Office Baroque is pleased to announce Leigh Ledare's second solo exhibition at the gallery on Bloemenhofplein in Brussels. The artist will present two interconnected bodies of work which formed the core of his recent solo exhibition at The Art Institute of Chicago. In the gallery's first room, his film *The Task* will screen twice daily at 1pm and 3pm; and in the second room, he will present five large scale assemblage works from his related series, *Plots*.

For the opening on Saturday, November 9th, a special screening of *The Task* will start at 4pm, followed by a conversation between the artist and Lisa Long, an independent curator currently working with the Julia Stoschek Collection in Düsseldorf/Berlin.

Ledare's 2017 film *The Task* comprises an intervention into a renowned method of experimental social psychology initially developed in the 1950s at London's Tavistock Institute. Ledare began by staging an immersive three-day Group Relations conference—an intricate feedback apparatus designed to surface and reflect upon unconscious group phenomena—around which he conceived a complex filming structure. In addition to directing the film's crew, Ledare assembled a diverse group of twenty-eight participants that represented a cross-section of Chicago's population and secured the collaboration of ten psychologists trained in the method. During a sequence of small and large group encounters, the group enacts a temporary institution whose purpose is to study itself—an abstract “task” that allows participants to examine the identities, roles, desires and biases that individuals import into the group, as well as the emergence of conscious and unconscious group dynamics. Arguably more anthropological than therapeutic, this model hinges on a rigorous scripting of restraints—withholding any clear topic of discussion; adhering to the “here and now”; and recasting the typical dependency relationship between patient/psychologist through the rubric of “authority.” Into this container Ledare introduced an unprecedented modification: the presence of a camera crew and the artist as observers and collaborators. Like sprinkling sand into the machine, this intervention complicates the system by making its members grapple with the effects of external social and technological forces—eliciting contradictory fantasies and fears that influence how the camera is symbolized and used by the group. By throwing into crisis authority and boundaries among all members—including the artist—Ledare calls attention, by analogy, to power structures that govern our relations to one another in a society where we are increasingly both observers and observed.

*The Task* sites the viewer at the intersection between the individual, the group, the camera and the void. The film's seven chapters focus on the last three of four large group sessions that took place, each of which included all 28 participants, three psychologists (or “consultants”), six camera operators, three observers—and Ledare himself, whose presence serves as both rupture and mirror.

Throughout the film, the group's members confront the emergence of complex patterns of stereotyping and other projections of identity; assumptions around authority are defined, questioned, and transgressed; and viewers of the film are implicated as the membership negotiates subjective forces which exceed the structured constraints of the self-made system.

Just as *The Task* represents a population of people, the *Plots*—presented in the gallery's second room—represent populations of images. Contained between large scale sheets of glass, each *Plot* consists of an assemblage of materials culled from a vast archive of printed ephemera collected by the artist—tear sheets from weekly periodicals, fashion magazines and consumer advertising, art reviews, counter-cultural publications and pornography, newspapers and cartoons. Like pieces on a chess board, the numerous representations that comprise each plot “socialize” in complex ways—encounters between identities, attitudes and roles producing new psychological positions and modes of address either enabled (or limited) by the rules of the system in which they're set. Subtitled to correspond to the film's individual chapters, the *Plots* both analogize the group and serve as expansive footnotes to the film, indexing numerous historical genealogies which, accruing force through their repetition, open onto broader conditions within the social.

*The Task* and *Plots* extend themes present within many of Ledare's previous projects, a number of which were first exhibited in Brussels during the artist's 2012 Survey at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre. Pushing the limits of familiar social constructions to sound out the multifaceted networks of meaning that underwrite the social, and continuing his examination of the camera and its use as a subject in and of itself, these two bodies of work extend strategies of intervention that have been present since the inception of his earliest project, *Pretend You're Actually Alive*, an intimate portrait of his own family that centers around his mother's complex enactments of sexuality towards both affirmative and negational ends. With Ledare at its center, the entire project presents highly structured encounters between private and public, the individual and the group, and direct experience and its representation.

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