The Ends of Art | curated by Euripides Altintzoglou

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Duration | July 5 - 26, 2013

Exhibition dedicated to the life and work of David Bainbridge

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Rationale

From Marius de Zayas to David Rabinowitch and Richard Huelsenbeck, and from Arthur Danto to David Kuspit art is declared dead every time it goes through a critical stage in its course of development. Post-modern stylistic plurality posed as the end of art history but recently relational aesthetics placed Pluralism under dispute and in doing so signaled the dawn of a new era. Instead of joining conservative historians in a post-apocalyptic religiosity about the loss of all that was great in art we need to turn to critical self-reflective strategies that echo the spirit of conceptualism. The intention of this group of works is not to simply demonstrate ways by which there can be art after the 'end of art' and thus to seek for means to satisfy Arthur Danto's uncertainty about the future of art after Plurality by sustaining a purist approach to art history. Rather, each work included in The Ends of Art deals solely with the nature of a given discipline through another and, thus investigates the potential for an even more radical and thorough process of examination of the changing nature of art through interdisciplinarity; expanding the field of each discipline is the methodology of this exhibition, not the aim. At the core of this methodology is the intention to eradicate the last remaining traces of humanism in art history: the dissolution of distinct art disciplines for the means of theoretical analysis.

Euripides Altintzoglou

Jim Abernethy | Interventions

This project looks at the loss of faith in modern technological progress and the ways by which it affects the current status and future development of printmaking. The notions of boundaries kept in place by traditional printmaking land strong consideration for technical and aesthetic qualities, and thus are often considered more desirable than that of a digitally generated print. The woodcuts included in this series combine the two in a classic tension between traditional and new processes, which also reflect society's compulsion to drive progress into the unknown. In addition, this project questions notions of human digitally biased existence within a natural environment, and our responsibilities to global issues and future generations. This was accomplished by digitally routing into two pairs of five cross section discs from a tree-trunk. The routed shapes resemble commonly used computer-based symbols. The broken age rings from the wood are then imitated by embossed computer generated contours, extending its virtual existence, therefore implying a transition from natural to an unnatural intervention. Finally, this body of works aims at blurring the distinctions between man and our manufactured digital post human existence and thus question popular approaches on this matter.

Euripides Altintzoglou | The End of Sculpture

The installation consists of a series of video works documenting the stages of the industrial processing of marble into tiles. The videos are shot in a straight conceptualist manner and have not been aestheticized neither during the shooting nor the editing stages. Likewise, the sound elements of the work have been left unaltered in order to evoke the original atmosphere of the factory. The clinical portrayal of the commercialization of an otherwise historically traditional material for sculpture (marble) through an industrial repetitive process underlines the recent methodological transitions in sculpture after the readymade: the substitution of the unique hand-made artifact by a massively reproduced object. In other words, it is a 'behind the scenes' documentation of the process that produces a would-be-readymade while at the same time the material (marble) by which this object is produced is considered to be an important constituent of sculpture's history and tradition. Likewise, due to the fact that this work problematizes the promise of a 'new sculpture' offered by the historic transition towards interdisciplinarity it demands an approach that is foreign to the conventional aesthetic means and phenomenological confines of traditional sculpture; hence, the choice of video. Despite the radicality of Duchamp's Fountain it persists as a sculptural form; regardless of how much it expanded the methodological field of sculpture and by extension the definition of art it remains an object.

Andrew Bracey | ReconFigure Paintings

In 1839 Paul Delaroche is famously (perhaps mis) quoted as having said, "from this moment painting is dead" in response to seeing the Daguerreotype for the first time. In the years since painting has survived many pronounced deaths and re-invented itself numerous times. In many ways the challenge set down by photography has forced painting into ever more interesting corners. The painter, Steven Parrino said, "I saw this as an interesting place for painting... death can be refreshing, so I started engaging in necrophilia...approaching history in the same way that Dr. Frankenstein approaches body parts." The paintings that I find most engaging expand out from this discipline to consume and use ideas and approaches of other mediums of art; there is much interest in the slippage between painting, sculpture, print, photography, installation and so on. Recently I have turned to painting's rich history as a subject to explore, with the attitude of a contemporary cross-media artist. ReconFigure Paintings feature an additional abstract geometric triangular structure to the human figures within the compositions of printed reproductions of well-known historical paintings. The eye alternates between this contemporary addition and the background of the original, something that is usually sidelined by the dominant figure. Despite a consistency of rules that I adopt when painting, each work takes on its own unique character and alters our perception of the original source. For The Ends of Art a further layer has been created between original and reproduction. Paul Delaroche's The Execution of Lady Jane Grey has been printed onto canvas in the National Gallery shop to be transformed into a new ReconFigure Painting in my studio to then be turned into a print, at the size of the Delaroche's original canvas.

Cornford & Cross | Praxis

This work presents a visual resemblance between a slab of stone and a stack of paper to invite reflection on a transition between, or fusion of, different forms of power. The A4 page is part of a system that combines classical geometry with metric measurement, to correlate scaling and multiplication. The proportions of all pages in the system are a diagon, a geometric construction of a square and an arc described by the diagonal of the square. This produces a rectangle in which the ratio of the short side to the long side is one to the square root of two. Thus, two sheets of A4 placed side by side are the same size and proportion as one sheet of A3, and so on, so that 16 sheets of A4 make A0. The revolutionary republic of France devised and established the metric system. In 1795 one metre was defined as one ten-millionth of the distance from the North Pole to the Equator, measured along the meridian passing through Paris. One litre was defined as the volume of a cube with edges of ten centimetres, and one kilogramme was defined as the mass of one litre of pure water at the melting point of ice, 0° centigrade. Because one sheet of A0 is one square metre, the weight of paper can be measured in grammes per square metre (gsm), allowing accurate calculations for mass production. As a key element of international standardization under modernity, the A4 page became so ubiquitous as to appear neutral. Yet its success is aligned with bureaucracy, in which production is subordinate to administration, and creativity struggles with the alienation that is a reaction to control. The block of marble was cut from a quarry on the Greek island of Paros. Parian marble has been prized for its purity and whiteness, and used for masterpieces of classical Greek sculpture, historic buildings and structures including the tomb of the French Emperor Napoleon. In Ancient Greece, the philosopher Aristotle proposed that there were three basic activities of man: Theoria, Poiesis and Praxis, which have truth, production, and action as their respective purpose or end. Today, when economic, social and political tensions presage transformation and destruction, this work draws on the symbolic identity of Athens as the birthplace of popular sovereignty and direct democracy.

Mat Dalgleish | Ruin

The crossover of image, sound and other senses dates back centuries. However, fuelled by technological advances of the period and a recognition of the fluidity of sensation once captured by electrical or electromechanical means, the early 20th century saw an influx of quasi-synaesthetic inventions intended to transpose one sensory domain into another. Notable sound-to-light (often known as visual music) systems such as the Sabalat, Clavilux, and Mobilcolor were followed in the 1960s and 70s by video synthesizers such as the Scanimate, Rutt-etra, and Jones Colorizer. However, like their (modular) audio synthesizer cousins, these analogue innovations were pushed into obscurity by the arrival of the personal computer. In the post-digital age, powerful laptops and accessible programming environments have greatly widened participation, but the resulting New Media has often been blind to all that went before, driven by newness for its own sake. With the allure of newness diminished and eroded (by austerity, environmental concerns, etc.), RUINS seeks to reconnect the digital with its neglected histories. In doing so it develops an alternative historical narrative of New Media in which the computer is not year zero but a continuation of a far longer strand of artistic activity. Taking the form of a participatory installation, RUINS invites gallery visitors to play (individually and collectively) the instruments of a prototypical rock band (e.g. guitar, bass, keyboard), yet their familiar sound output is transposed (in real-time) into image. Nevertheless, this is not simply a nostalgic recreation, for while the underlying processes are informed by historical aesthetics (e.g. video feedback), RUINS exploits (and is reliant upon) contemporary techniques such as real-time FFT analysis of the instrumental input.

Dean Kalland | Living Room Series – Desperate Hours

This project seeks to investigate and examine the construction of masculine gender stereotypes in selected situation comedies from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. The references and source material derive from my own personal nostalgic experiences and memories of the televised repeats. The research draws from historical contextualization of situation comedy within Post War Britain: autobiographical account, historical figure and sitcom character. In doing so, this project utilizes multi-disciplined approaches that encompass performance, photography, filmmaking, and mixed media processes. It touches on philosophies of identity, cultures of taste, and histories of class identity and structure in order to produce engaging observations of collective cultural identities. In addition, the production of performative work within contemporary spaces is linked with the comedy characters as performed by the original actors. Concentration on the sitcom as a significant historical/political reflection of period Britain becomes a tasting ground for a multi-disciplined arts methodology. The artist is re-presented in the guise of comedy character Harold Steptoe of the legendary sitcom Steptoe and Son. In character, the artist repeatedly attempts to inhabit the figure. This element of repetition, characteristic of the principles of representational acting, marks the transition from the immediacy of live performance in theatre to the pursuit of perfection in studio productions for cinema and television. As a result, each mimetic repetition exposes the blurring of one identity into another and so interrogates the inter-subjective identifications between actor and audience mobilized through 'performing masculinity'.

Adam Kossoff | Glitch

A photographic still taken from video grab from filmed footage of a protest march in support of the Stoke Newington 5, Glitch foregrounds that which has migrated indelibly from film to the digital and then to the still photograph. A glitch, a short-lived fault in a system, for example when an image, on video or computer, is momentarily corrupted, is a sudden, unexpected violent irruption that quickly passes. It is a momentary failure that foregrounds the technological and a sudden shift in the sensibility of memory and the political. In the early 1970's the Angry Brigade carried out a bombing campaign, during which they targeted banks, embassies, the Miss World event and the homes of Conservative politicians. (One person was hurt and no one was killed). In 1972 the especially formed police 'Bomb Squad' raided a flat in Stoke Newington, N.E. London, found a cache of guns and explosives (including a machine gun used in attacks on the Spanish and American Embassies) and eventually arrested eight people. The defendants were held for nine months, before one of the longest criminal trials in British history took place. Four people were found guilty of conspiracy to murder and sentenced to ten years in jail, adding to the fifth, already sentenced for 15 years. Perhaps regarded as a glitch in British politics (the IRA campaign aside), the Angry Brigade soon became part of the forgotten British left. The debate around a politics of change is currently confined to a false sense of unity, bonded by the commonplace sensibilities of democracy. This is a view ingrained into our everyday psyche, indelibly impressed upon us by the imagined exchange contained by the consumerist model that sustains and informs the aesthetics of the art world. Favouring the distribution of the sensible, Jacques Rancière dismisses Walter Benjamin's modernist line on the centrality of technology. But aesthetics cannot be considered a neutral conduit for sensibility, for as Bernard Stiegler continually argues, technology (and mnemotechnology) makes memory and thus subjectivity possible by externalizing it. The glitch reflexively repositions the spectator, disrupting desire and exposing the centrality of the technological.

John Timberlake | Menzel's Empire

These works were made by first taking large format (13cm x 10cm) photographs with a technical camera. These were then digitised and sections of the image removed. The resulting altered photograph was printed on to a matte paper. I was then able to draw directly onto the paper in the erased areas with a soft pencil. The works arise out of an ongoing fascination with the idea of the 'artist's impression'. This fascination is partly rooted in a notion that an 'artist's impression' of something may be speculative or, perhaps, somehow misleading (ie standing in place of an actual thing not yet realised, or perhaps unrealisable). Thus we find 'artist's impressions' of unrealised aircraft, cities in space, unbuilt hotels and housing developments. At the same time, the 'artist's impression' is often governed by a particular ethics of illustration that arises from the need to construct an image as quickly as possible through a set of shorthand conceits: the sketch, the montage, the composite, or the appropriation. The seemingly pointless set of proposals I arrived at – half road working, half land art – seemed to suggest the deflationary, unresolved tension of a small unfulfilled promise.

Alistair Payne | False Dawn

The contemporary condition of painting casts it within a vastly expanded field, one in which it has begun to free itself from its relationship with the notion of a fixed purity of form, thus casting aspersions upon discussions around its imminent and recurrent, or recurrently imminent, demise aside for the time being. Yet, I would argue that this still maintains a particular type of practice, at least a form for painting, which is rigorously defined within the medium itself. Painting has sought to internally destabilise its formal arrangement or organisation as an object, but it still in many ways is left dealing with a 'Greenbergian' ghost or spectre, which has become a perennial thorn in its own side. These notions allude to (medium) specificity and singularity, material dependency and definitive structural boundaries, creating and structuring division rather than integration, which in effect creates a form of resistance, a form embedded though its dependence upon this very notion of resistance. In order for painting to persist it must seek external possibilities, which can force new forms to be considered, spatially, temporally and architecturally, structured through multiplicitous connections, rather than focusing upon the singular internal machinations of a medium specific practice. Persistence here might be defined as the potential for painting to continue to move forwards through different obstacles and objections, though, or whilst, often conjuring conjectural and divided opinion. The installation proposed for The Ends of Art, presents painting as a persistently subversive, and indisciplined tool for negotiating the complex territorial distributions of alternative media. The work breaks down formal divisions in order to reconsider and reorganise the constraints imposed upon painting as a practice. The installation consists of two works displayed upon laminate surfaces - placing the projected surface alongside the painted surface.

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