

Shadows of a Doubt

Tallinn Art Hall

02 – 27 October 2013

EXHIBITION NOTES

“For me the noise of time is not sad: I love bells, clocks, watches – and I recall that at first photographic implements were related to techniques of cabinetmaking and the machinery of precision: cameras, in short, were clocks for seeing, and perhaps in me someone very old still hears in the photographic mechanism the living sound of the wood.”

– Roland Barthes

Herewith I would like to exemplify and underscore some of the aims of the exhibition and the linkages between the works on display. *Shadows of a Doubt* is loosely connected by four interweaving strands, in order to posit different artistic statements dealing with the present moment and the conditions it puts forward. The exhibition does so by creating an active and dedicated space for an “appointment with thought” – a space that allows for the viewers’ reflection and speculation on his or her own ambiguous and fascinating relationship with the present and the passage of time.

“The risk of being in public is accidentally appearing on a photograph.”

– Diane Arbus

Upon entering the main exhibition space of Tallinn Art Hall, an axis made up by works of Oliver Laric, Meriç Algün Ringborg and Mario García Torres informs the concept of individuation of the image – looking at how an image could be identified and distinguished from other images. The section focuses on and calls into question the ways in which we construct narratives and our consistent attempts to make a whole out of often fragmented and unhinged images.

Meriç Algün Ringborg’s *The Risk of Being in Public* (2011) is a journal of situations in which one is aware of being captured in a photograph whilst not being part of the story the image intends to tell. Mario García Torres’ *Time to Piece* (2010) offers us fragments of a scene that the visitor might have encountered before entering the exhibition – its recollection suspended in time until completion of the puzzle game.

Oliver Laric’s practice seeks to parse the productive potential of the copy, the bootleg, and the remix, and examine their role in the formation of both historic and contemporary image cultures. *Versions* is a rendering from 2012 of his ongoing video project that challenges the concept of “the authentic original”, suggesting instead a flatter image economy consisting of countless layers of versions.

“But the moment we begin to question our projects, begin to doubt or to reformulate them, the present (the contemporary) begins to be important or central for us. Because the contemporary is actually constituted by doubt, by hesitation, by uncertainty, by indecision, by the need for prolonged reflection – by the need for a delay. We want to postpone our decisions and acts, to have some additional time for analysis, for reflection and consideration. And that is precisely the contemporary – a prolonged, even potentially infinite time of delay.”

– Boris Groys

The works by Persijn Broersen & Margit Lukács, David Raymond Conroy, Filip Gilissen, Flo Kasearu, Katja Novitskova, Magali Reus, Tarvo Varres in the second section, also located in the main space, focus on the tension between the present moment as a time of delay, hesitation and uncertainty, and as a situation requiring immediate action and decision-making. This paradox of doubt versus certainty, delay versus readiness, hesitation versus decisiveness, rendering problematic our position within the silky flow of time, is explored by positioning a number of works at each others opposite ends.

Some of the works focus on our constant movement and acceleration in a time-pressured culture of high performance: a culture in which one ought to be productive, to be either working or busying oneself with other activities.

Filip Gilissen's *I Love New Work* (2007) seems to celebrate an urge to always seek or create something new. In his video installation *Hauling / It's not the past but the present that determines the future / Act Natural* (2011 – 2012), David Raymond Conroy talks about being confronted with vast amounts of imagery on a daily basis via the internet and social media and the troublesome decisions it puts forward. Casts of digital cameras appear in Magali Reus' *Auto-timer* (2011). Referring to machines built to capture and reproduce moments in time, these stylised versions already act as monuments to objects that will in the future inevitably become redundant. Tallinn-born Katja Novitskova's *Process Watch* (2012) comments upon the constantly shifting and changing composition of the present condition, through weather forecasts and financial speculations.

Other works in this section foreground delay, recurrence and repetition: the idea of being on time for an appointment that one cannot but miss in Flo Kasearu's *We Are On The Way* (2012); the public spaces at which we take a turn, but rarely seem to notice - Tarvo Varres' *Corners* (2008 – 2013); the present as an eternal now in which decay and resurrection go hand in hand - Persijn Broersen & Margit Lukács' *Time & Again* (2011).

“A paradox: the same century invented history and photography. But history is a memory fabricated according to positive formulas, a pure intellectual discourse which abolishes mythic time; and the photograph is a certain but fugitive testimony; so that everything, today, prepares our race for this impotence: to be no longer able to conceive duration, affectively or symbolically: the age of the photograph is also the age of revolutions, contestations, assassinations, explosions, in short, of impatiencies, of everything which denies ripening.”

– Roland Barthes

The third section of the exhibition engages with the idea of history as a fictional outcome of one's memory or the blurred evocation of a past consciousness. Here, Nina Beier's *The*

Blues (2012) - outmoded and degraded beauty photographs taken from a Copenhagen hairdresser, are hardly frozen in time, but have weathered and aged with their subjects.

Jani Ruscica's video *Scene Shifts, in Six Movements* (2011) is a journey through several continents in which the cross-cultural misinterpretations, constituted through language, give shape to our understanding of history. Gert Jan Kocken's *The Past in the Present* (*Anna retable, Domkerk, Utrecht. Defacement 7 March 1580*) is part of a series of photographs of defaced religious objects (2004 – 2008). The crisp prints focus our attention on the fury that images have provoked in the past and pose questions about the way images exercise their power today.

"We are too accustomed to thinking in terms of the "present". We believe that a present is only past when it is replaced by another present. Nevertheless, let us stop and reflect for a moment: How would a new present come about if the old present did not pass at the same time that it is present? How would any present whatsoever pass, if it were not past at the same time as present? The past would never be constituted if it had not been constituted first of all, at the same time that it was present. There is here, as it were, a fundamental position of time and also the most profound paradox of memory: The past is "contemporaneous" with the present that it has been."

– Gilles Deleuze

The final section of the exhibition leads the visitor to more speculative grounds, towards states of anticipation and potentiality.

The works in this section explore the concept of a future that exists within our present. Ane Mette Hol's sound work *The Concept of Clouds (That Will Never Exist)* (2011) comments on the non-disclosure of events anticipated through looping and continuous repetition. Based on a single recording of a falling droplet, the digitally processed composition could be an atmospheric story of rainfall against a tin roof, but the association is haphazard.

Laura Kuusk's *Almost Film II* (2012) is a film about an envisioned film that so far has only been thought of – perhaps more exciting as the final product it attempts to describe? Toril Johannessen's *Circular, Linear, Cubic* (2012) is a simple light projection of a timeline traditionally associated with progression and eternity, activated and interrupted by the movements of the viewer. It's title offers three values, two of which are traditionally associated with the passage of time.

The projection booth features *The Physical Expression of Potential* (2012), a cinematic installation by Gabriel Lester, putting forward a revolving view of a cityscape, which is indefinitely trapped in a cycle of undisclosed potential.

Yours sincerely,

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Curator Shadows of a Doubt