

JOHANNES VOGT

GALLERY | NEW YORK

“TROUBLE EVERY DAY”

June 27-July 27, 2013

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, Kathe Burkhart, Jen DeNike, Marte Eknaes, Keith Farquhar, Jesse A. Greenberg, Matthew McCaslin, Alan Ruiz

Curated by Dmitry Komis

Johannes Vogt Gallery is pleased to present *Trouble Every Day*, a group exhibition that brings together artists engaging with objects and rituals of daily life. The works oscillate between purely formal investigation of objects and their implied (mis)use, as instruments for leisure or torture.

The title references Claire Denis’s film of the same name, a coldly detached narrative-phobic parable that investigates excessive desire in its physical form. The exhibition follows a similarly loose structure; with each work forging an ambiguous relationship to the body, as a banal vessel or as a site for potential danger and transgression.

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance fuses everyday materials into beguiling formal compositions and precarious arrangements that playfully subvert mundane interiors and position domesticity as a *mise-en-scene* for role-play and disjointed narrative. Though autonomous as individual works, the amalgamated placement of objects is crucial for Bourque-LaFrance, allowing meaning to shift in relation to the viewer’s body and each other.

Since the early 1980s **Kathe Burkhart** has explored the social construction of gender, sexuality, dominance and power via a multidisciplinary practice that includes painting, photography, video, performance, and fiction. In her ongoing *Liz Taylor Series* of paintings, Burkhart deconstructs the genre of the self-portrait; with her 1990s *Torture Paintings* series, she turns her gaze on her lovers; each painting becomes a “portrait” of an ex, as represented by a medieval instrument of torture (the plaque on each painting’s frame indicates the lover’s name and corresponding years of coupling). Collaged elements and decorative nods to Regency prints and ornate frames highlight the paradox of desire and aggression. In these works the S&M undertones in Burkhart’s practice are brought to the fore, and the “master” medium of painting is ultimately “detourned.”

Jen DeNike's interdisciplinary practice investigates rituals and the vernacular. In *Alchemy*, quotidian ribbons reference an ancient ceremony whereby 107 women were found wrapped in white linen with gold and silver ribbon in their hair. For DeNike, this follows ‘medieval alchemists’ interest in transmutation of non-organic base materials into more exalted materials such as gold. Gold is a perfect body, engendered of argent-vive, pure, fixed, clear, red and of sulphur. Gold is satisfied, and wants nothing. Silver is a body - clean, pure, and almost perfect - clear and white. It wants nothing, save a little fixation, color, and weight. The inner practice of alchemy, involves the transformation of the individual from the unconscious raw being into a form of enlightened consciousness." Though the ribbons remain an unsolved mystery, DeNike reframes these humble objects as a site for regenerative energy.

Marte Eknaes moves between two and three-dimensional works to explore consumer objects, corporate culture, urban planning, and the expanded field of sculpture. Modernist tropes and expected notions of "good design" are playfully deconstructed to insert a private, or subjective voice, drawing

attention to how common objects inform our private behavior in public space, or how shared social values are formed through constructed corporate structures and hierarchies. In *Arranged for Effect* (2013), ventilation tubes are juxtaposed with images of mass-produced thermoses, conflating the domestic with the commercial, and simultaneously deflating the pomposity of the Modernist column.

For the past decade, **Keith Farquhar** has made works that move between painting, sculpture and installation, 'using contemporary technology to create and record.' In previous works Farquhar has used items of clothing such as Gore-Tex jackets, hoodies and other contemporary fabrics to suggest figuration and in other series has represented the body and classical shapes in flattened cardboard statues that explored classicism and representation as machine reproducible products. His most recent paintings are the result of scanning found plastic bags and printing the recorded images on canvas. The bags have been transformed through everyday technology into ready-made trompe l'oeil paintings, riffs on elevated "consumer-culture abstractions and monochromes." Plastic bags are now biodegradable; breaking down in UV light, they will disappear. "These works archive the disposable, whilst also functioning as an aesthetic snapshot of the culture at large."

Influenced by Industrial Design and corporate culture, **Jesse A. Greenberg** works with plastics and industrial materials to create otherworldly objects that possibly mimic solar panels, cooling units, ATMs, or outdoor signs, but not quite. Familiar, even eerily domesticated objects, they are unintelligible, bodily and decidedly mutant. With a molecular texture and sensuous complexity that bellies its nods to Minimalist cubes and process based art of the 60s and 70s, there is a transformative sensory presence that shifts between the organic material, and rigid, industrial shell that contain them.

For the past three decades, **Mathew McCaslin** has been creating sculpture and installation at the intersection of nature and technology, drawing unexpected parallels and investigating the viewer's relationship to both. His formal language emphasizes slick material culture and utilizes household objects that include fans, electric fixtures, outlets, conduits, and bulbs; everyday materials that seem immediately familiar yet constructed into hybrid forms that appear absurdly alien. Riffing on the seriality and 'function as form' mantras of Minimalism, McCaslin retains the inherent function of his materials yet leaves meaning decidedly in flux.

Alan Ruiz is an installation and multi-media artist working at the intersection of digital imagery, abstraction and architecture as means of exploring the space around us. Shuttling between literalism and illusionism, his work resists a stylistic constant. Instead, he heightens the spectator's engagement with the work through the physical act of looking. 'This pursuit is vested in part in a belief that abstraction holds new potentialities as a viable mode of artistic production and meaning making today.' In *Singular Plural* (2013), Ruiz imbues a marginalized corner space with subjectivity via a "camouflaged" screen that reflects the viewer's gaze in a mirror, thereby making the act of looking "self-conscious." The mirror "creates a kind of self-surveillance, wherein the perforated pattern becomes a kind of prison."

Since its inception only two years ago, the gallery has taken on a challenging program leading to a change of location in November 2012. Johannes Vogt Gallery is committed to bringing attention to the complex artistic and cultural ties that bind New York to both Europe and Latin America.

Summer hours: Tuesday – Friday, 11 am – 6 pm and by appointment. For further details please contact Samuel Draxler at samuel@vogtgallery.com or at 212.255.2671