

sobering



Adam Vackar, *From Hand to Hand*, 2013. Metal bar, shop window mannequin hand, overall dimensions 130 x 10 x 7 cm, edition of 3. Photo: Adam Vackar. Courtesy the artist, Gandy Gallery and sobering.

Posterity is a Form of the Spectator

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87, rue de Turenne

75003 Paris

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With works by Quentin Armand, Ulla von Brandenburg, Chris Bünter, Adrian McGrath, Laurent Montaron, Jos Näpflin, Lorenzo Puglisi, Ursula Sulser, and Adam Vackar

Conceived by Vittorio Santoro

Cultivating a distinct quality of curiosity and, at times, vivid self-questioning, some works in this exhibition are like an avowal of faith in simplicity and directness; others trace a more elaborate and fine-spun path. They are charged with flows emanating from both conceptual and emotional tendencies.

I feel attracted to the kinds of works in which I can see the artist's honesty of thinking. This encompasses the unaffected engagement to explore what it means to dedicate long stretches of time to develop one's work and, at the same time, the willingness to deconstruct the language of art. In my opinion, too many works today dangerously serve current "discourse," subordinating themselves to what is "relevant" or relating to issues of "taste" only. Objective criteria in art are a myth concealing more disconcerting issues. A distinct personal taste: isn't it a despicable aspiration?

The maker and the receiver of the work often pass for two a priori distinct parts. But there are works suggesting that both parties might be locked in a mutually anguished and absurd co-dependency. To be involved in someone else's game (including the artist's game), might arouse feelings of unease and irritation, or even be countered with resistance or rejection. But does this not fail to recognize the fact, unnerving for some people, that being in society means being involved? Ignorance, the "desire" to ignore and not acknowledge one's implication, is hardly an option.

To be a spectator has little to do with the "natural mood" of a person. Rather, the spectator transacts operations such as looking and making sense (which includes his or her "preferring not to"). In *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (1976) Pierre Cabanne asks the artist: "You have also said that the artist is unaware of the real significance of his work and that the spectator should always participate in supplementing the creation by interpreting it." While answering obliquely Duchamp took the point further: "Posterity is a form of the spectator," he said, adding "It's the posthumous spectator (... and therefore... posterity) that will decide, because the contemporary spectator is worthless...". Posterity—spectatorship in general—results from acts of valorization (or denial of valorization). Such acts on the level of reception bring the "aesthetic" into being. How artists decide to approach or manipulate the relationship to the spectator is a different question.

Although Duchamp's view might seem drastic, it takes us to the core of how I gathered works for this exhibition: without them being necessarily embedded in a particular agenda or scheme of thinking, they struck a cord in me when I first saw them. I also asked some artists I was curious about, to show me works I hadn't yet seen. Asked as an artist to conceive this exhibition, I choose works which hint at puzzling issues: ambiguous and confrontational articulations, a sense of testing language in its syntactic adaptability able to infiltrate lexical concision, attention to incompatibility, personal vigor in the face of conformity, and so on. All this leading up to the notion that art can be like a Molotov cocktail that, depending on one's attention and emotional state, might, without conflagration, go off at any moment.

—Vittorio Santoro

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