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Curatorial Programs



AN AESTHETICS OF SLOWNESS

ASHLEY BILLINGSLEY, SANDY DE LISSOVOY, CHRIS FREEMAN,
MARGARET HONDA, PAUL QAYSI, FRÉDÉRIC SANCHEZ, JEANNIE SIMMS,
AND BRIAN WILLS

Curated by Chương-Đài Võ

January 18 – March 29, 2015

Opening reception: Sunday, January 18, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Technology and globalization have transformed travel and speed into the mundane accoutrements of daily life for many people. We can view art and take virtual tours of exhibitions from anywhere. How do we attend to our bodies and our sense of place, time and location when speed and accessibility are the priorities?

An Aesthetics of Slowness proposes a seeming contradiction of what it means to be current in a world of intense, global circulations. The paintings, drawings, photographs and sculptures in this exhibition are about the uncertainty of physical experiences and perceptions, and extend to the viewer an invitation to look, wait, and look again. The exhibition offers works that require time—from the artist in the production and from the viewer in the reception.



Jeannie Simms *Interiors, 2008*



Margaret Honda *Les animaux du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris (06), 2005-2007*

Upon first view, many of these works are not clearly legible. They emerge only as one moves from side to side, leaning from various angles. *An Aesthetics of Slowness* embraces the limits of perception in apprehending physical experience. The works exist somewhere between presence and absence, visibility and invisibility. They require a viewer who moves around and looks from various positions. They remind us that perception is a continual process, a contemplation that probes beyond the surface of the legible. In their opacity and seeming transparency, the projects do not offer easily discernable representations, but instead focus our perception on the process of looking and seeing.

Ashley Billingsley's pencil drawings *Fire in Woods I-IV, 2011-2013*, reflect upon a pivotal scene in Akira Kurosawa's 1954 film, *Seven Samurai*, in which anxious villagers await invasion by hostile forces. Fires light the path into a forest harboring danger unseen but felt, lifting the darkness and postponing inevitable confrontation. The landscape delineates a buffer between the protagonists' known existence and what will come, framing a fugitive present tense. It is too dark to know what is really out there, so conjecture picks up where the senses leave off. Despite the ways we mark and measure it, our position in the external world is unclear and limitations of mind and body render the most basic features mysterious. *Fire in Woods* uses landscape as a vehicle for exploring the inadequacy of the senses in deciphering direct experience.

A different kind of anticipation underlies **Jeannie Simms'** exploration of fantasy and representation. *Interiors, 2008-2014*, is a series of photograms inspired by Georges Bataille's writings on photography, death and pleasure. In his wide-ranging explorations of desire and physical experience, Bataille saw photography as a space of the uncanny, a disruption of social conventions of value and acceptability. He likened this space of the uncanny to an orgasm—"la petite mort" that produces a momentary suspension of consciousness. For her project, Simms literalizes the relationship between the two—the dying use of analog photography material and the elusive, unfixed



Frédéric Sanchez *Untitled*, 2009

nature of erotic fantasy—by making love to expired paper and exposing it upon climax. In a further allusion to Bataille the archivist, Simms displays each print in a vitrine as you would an object in a collection. The prints, however, do not offer a recognizable image or subject.

When she visited the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle in Paris, **Margaret Honda** initially intended to document the specimens in La salle des espèces menacées et des espèces disparues (Room of Threatened and Extinct Species). The museum had dim lighting and did not allow photography with flash and tripods; the images came out barely visible. Paradoxically, the near-absence of an image moves the photographs toward being objects. Without a clear subject, one engages with the image differently, shifting one's position, moving closer, moving back. The subject emerges over time. With most photographs, we see through the surface into the scene; with *Les animaux du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris, 2005-2007*, we see the surface because it is what we scan to construct the image that we assume lies



Brian Wills *Untitled (Green, blue, orange and purple stack)*, 2014

beyond it. Echoing the extinct or endangered status of the subjects, the photographs exist on the threshold between presence and absence, visibility and invisibility.

Brian Wills uses thread to destabilize our perception of foreground and background, object and surface. With a background in painting, he has experimented with various material to remove the brush from his process, including dental floss, wire and thread. Wills' *Untitled (Green, blue, orange and purple stack)*,

2014, is a meticulous and precise laying down of thread on wooden frames that makes each panel appear green, blue, orange or purple. The viewer standing directly in front of the work sees a set of transparent panels with light hues; but at an angle of 35 to 45 degrees, the thread colors are fully saturated. While the strands of thread seem to hover on the edges of the frames when seen from one angle, they appear as solid surfaces from another. The kinetic aspect of the paintings requires a viewer who moves around the work and looks at it from various positions.

Frédéric Sanchez plays with the conventions of abstract painting to explore perception as a social construction and process. A set of brown acrylic paintings on canvas, his project blurs the line between the art object and the frame, the product and the packaging. The brown paint evokes wrapping paper and other packaging material, visually transforming the canvas cloth and the paint into envelopes that coat the structure. Spanning 8 x 4 feet each, the five canvases comprising *Untitled, 2014*, refer to standard construction material such as plywood, MDF boards and plasterboard—objects that are easily hauled onto trucks and transported. While the particular work must be wrapped for transportation, the authority of an art genre circulates through art history texts, curatorial writing, and exhibitions in galleries and museums. These forms of speech and canonization can be considered a type of packaging that creates the value of a product. Playing with the convention of the monochrome painting as an object that refuses representation, *Untitled* reminds us that perception is a process that requires waiting—for the art object to be transported and delivered, for us to look beyond the surface.

Sandy de Lissovoy sees the surface as integral to the process of perception. *Screens, 2014*, is a floor piece of three wooden frames with inserts of color panels, metal sheets and plexiglass that questions the categories of painting, sculpture and architecture. The screens of interlocking frames can be folded, extended and repositioned to create varying configurations of space and perception. Depending on where the viewer stands, the metal sheets reflect the color panels;

the solid panels in the foreground obscure those in the background; and the plexiglass offers a transparent view through to those panels behind it. The mobile screens envelop neither interior nor exterior spaces, holding only the surfaces of the frames and inserts. The opacity and transparencies offer nothing representational, instead they focus our perception on the process of looking and seeing.



Sandy de Lissovoy *Screen #3 and Screen #5, 2014*



Paul Qaysi *Gaza. July 16, 2014 I0192116 AUG 14 MISPRINTI, 2014*

Paul Qaysi's prints and transparencies on light tables question the invisible structures of perception and framing that shape notions of truth and reality about war, death and civilian casualties. He looks at how the Western media shapes our understanding of the wars in the Middle East, and how people in the region stage mourning and grief for international viewers with the understanding that the camera is an apparatus of war. For *Misprints, 2014*, he

uses found images on the Internet of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, Iraq and Gaza. The images are printed on transparencies, silver film and speckled film rather than photographic paper. Without the necessary coating substrate, the ink bleeds and pools, complicating recognition of the digital image. The images are not readily legible, but call our attention to the spectacle of war through the aestheticization of death and mourning. *Mispriants* uses the “problem” of fixing the image to reframe perception as a set of social and technological conventions.

For *Flock*, 2012, and *Widow Maker*, 2012, **Chris Freeman** takes a minimalist and personal approach to material and equipment, using house paint, small brushes, queen-size bed sheets, and stretcher bars made from “household”-scale, pre-cut wood bought at the local hardware store. The bed sheets are the material embodiment of his intimate life—they fit his body, they are the space of relationships and dreams, the daily cycles of waking, breathing and thinking. When he is awake, he takes long walks in the woods, which have become a space of contemplation away from the manic noises and distractions of the plugged-in world. The woods offer a timeless place where Freeman can contemplate the trials of life, and be surrounded by history. *Widow Maker* takes its inspiration from the phenomenon of a branch that falls and kills a person, creating a widow; Freeman made the painting while his partner was dying of cancer. *Flock* presents a branch that has fallen, but has not hit the ground. In contrast to the omen of death, a flock of birds takes off, reminding the viewer that in the midst of tragedy, there is hope in the form of support.

BIOGRAPHY

Chuong-Đài Vỡ is an independent curator and writer whose work involves frequent travel between the U.S. and Southeast Asia. Her research and curatorial interests focus on decolonial aesthetics, diaspora, war, assemblage, alternative practices and the vernacular. Her projects include *Far from Indochine*, a Curatorial Opportunity Program selection at the Boston-area’s New Art Center; *On the Streets*, a Franchise Program of the New York City-based apexart; 1975, at TOPAZ ARTS, Inc. in Queens; and the forthcoming *Home* for the Los Angeles World Airports Arts Exhibition Program. She has received fellowships and grants from Asian Cultural Council, Fulbright Program, Mellon Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and University of California Pacific Rim Research Program, among others. She has a Ph.D in Literature from University of California, San Diego, and a BA in Writing Seminars and a Minor in Art History from Johns Hopkins University.



Chris Freeman *Flock*, 2012

The trees are anthropomorphic actors in the theater of life—they live and die, hold up their neighbors, weather brutal winters and continue to grow. *Flock* and *Widow Maker* are awkwardly painted on purpose, an acknowledgement of life as suspended struggle. In contrast to the forest of unknown danger in Billingsley’s drawings, the woods in Freeman’s paintings embrace the uncertainty of clarity.

The exhibition *An Aesthetics of Slowness* comprises eight projects that offer a continued probing of the limits of perception and the human desire for legibility and comprehension. Somewhere between photography, drawing, painting and sculpture, these works disrupt the conventions of genre and media; the delineations of frame and surface; the body’s location in space and time; and our understandings of perception as subject, object and process. ■

—Chuong-Đài Vỡ
Vientiane, Laos, 2014

CHECKLIST

ASHLEY BILLINGSLEY

FIRE IN WOODS I, 2011
Pencil on drafting film
15 x 24 inches unframed,
1.25 x 24 x 30 inches framed

FIRE IN WOODS II, 2012
Pencil on drafting film
15 x 24 inches unframed,
1.25 x 24 x 30 inches framed

FIRE IN WOODS III, 2013
Pencil on drafting film
15 x 24 inches unframed,
1.25 x 24 x 30 inches framed

FIRE IN WOODS IV, 2013
Pencil on drafting film
15 x 24 inches unframed,
1.25 x 24 x 30 inches framed

Courtesy of the artist

SANDY DE LISSOVOY

*SCREEN #3, SCREEN #4 AND
SCREEN #5*, 2014
Red oak, steel hinges, aluminum,
plexiglass, paper maché, paper,
sawdust, indigo dye, ink, acrylic
paint and varnish, shellac
3 feet high each, extendable to
8 or 11 feet

Courtesy of the artist

CHRIS FREEMAN

FLOCK, 2012
Latex paint on bed sheet
94 x 3 x 80 inches

WIDOW MAKER, 2012
Latex paint on bed sheet
86 x 3 x 72 inches

Courtesy of the artist and TOPAZ
ARTS, Inc.

MARGARET HONDA

*LES ANIMAUX DU MUSÉUM
NATIONAL D'HISTOIRE
NATURELLE, PARIS (01)*, 2005-2007
Chromogenic print mounted
on dibond
30 x 22 inches

*LES ANIMAUX DU MUSÉUM
NATIONAL D'HISTOIRE
NATURELLE, PARIS (02)*, 2005-2007
Chromogenic print mounted
on dibond
22 x 30 inches

*LES ANIMAUX DU MUSÉUM
NATIONAL D'HISTOIRE
NATURELLE, PARIS (06)*, 2005-2007
Chromogenic print mounted
on dibond
22 x 30 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PAUL QAYSI

*GAZA. JULY 16, 2014 [0192116
AUG 14 MISPRINT]*, 2014
Inkjet monoprint transparency
in lightbox
17 x 22 inches

*YEHUD-MONOSSON, ISRAEL.
JULY 16, 2014 [200818 AUG 14
MISPRINT]*, 2014,
Inkjet monoprint transparency
in lightbox
17 x 22 inches

*GAZA CITY, GAZA. JULY 8, 2014
[211910 AUG 14 MISPRINT]*, 2014
Inkjet monoprint on speckled film
34 x 44 inches

*GAZA CITY, GAZA. JULY 8, 2014
[099211 AUG 14 MISPRINT]*, 2014
Inkjet monoprint on speckled film
12 x 12 inches

*GAZA CITY, GAZA. JULY 8, 2014
[102055 AUG 14 MISPRINT]*, 2014
Inkjet monoprint on silver film
12 x 12 inches

Courtesy of the artist

FRÉDÉRIC SANCHEZ

UNTITLED, 2014
Acrylic on canvas
8 x 4 feet each
Courtesy of the artist

JEANNIE SIMMS

INTERIOR NO. 1, 2008
Expired silver gelatin photogram,
biofluids, photo-sensitive cherry
wood, plexiglass
8 x 10 inches

INTERIOR NO. 2, 2008
Expired silver gelatin photogram,
biofluids, photo-sensitive cherry
wood, plexiglass
8 x 10 inches

INTERIOR NO. 3, 2008
Expired silver gelatin photogram,
biofluids, photo-sensitive cherry
wood, plexiglass
8 x 10 inches

INTERIOR NO. 4, 2008
Expired silver gelatin photogram,
biofluids, photo-sensitive cherry
wood, plexiglass
8 x 10 inches

INTERIOR NO. 5, 2008
Expired silver gelatin photogram,
biofluids, photo-sensitive cherry
wood, plexiglass
8 x 10 inches

INTERIOR NO. 6, 2008
Expired silver gelatin photogram,
biofluids, photo-sensitive cherry
wood, plexiglass
8 x 10 inches

INTERIOR NO. 7, 2008
Expired silver gelatin
photogram, biofluids, photo-
sensitive cherry wood, plexiglass
5 x 7 inches

INTERIOR NO. 8, 2008
Expired silver gelatin
photogram, biofluids, photo-
sensitive cherry wood, plexiglass
5 x 7 inches

INTERIOR NO. 9, 2008
Expired silver gelatin
photogram, biofluids, photo-
sensitive cherry wood, plexiglass
5 x 7 inches

INTERIOR NO. 10, 2008
Expired silver gelatin
photogram, biofluids, photo-
sensitive cherry wood, plexiglass
5 x 7 inches

INTERIOR NO. 11, 2008
Expired silver gelatin
photogram, biofluids, photo-
sensitive cherry wood, plexiglass
5 x 7 inches

INTERIOR NO. 12, 2008
Expired silver gelatin
photogram, biofluids, photo-
sensitive cherry wood, plexiglass
5 x 7 inches

INTERIORS CAPSULE, 2008-2014
Photo-sensitive cherry wood
box with unprocessed, expired
chromogenic color photograms
23 x 27 x 4.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

BRIAN WILLS

*UNTITLED (GREEN, BLUE,
ORANGE AND PURPLE STACK)*,
2014
Rayon thread on wood
12 x 24 inches each

Courtesy of the artist

Cover: Ashley Billingsley, *Fire in Woods IV*, 2013

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