

An Ornithology for Birds Kavi Gupta, Chicago
Nov. 7, 2015 - Feb. 20, 2016

Work in this show consists of multiple paintings, several objects and a video. There are two sets of paintings that are conditional to one another. The first set consists of paintings of individual parrots. Directly after one of these parrots is painted, it is treated as a readymade stamp and pressed against the second painting onto which some of the paint transfers. This second painting is a vertical composite of partial images stamped by several paintings, accumulating a crowded surface language through this frottage. It is a predominantly inverted mimetic gesture where most of the content offered by the source is rejected. This denial of the pictures total registration by the composite, which doesn't comprehend the image but receives its paint, also completes the initial parrot painting that gets somewhat denuded from the rubbing in a coarse symbiosis.

Scales (false acrylic fingernails bonded to one another with PVC glue, occasionally painted) spiral across narrow table tops like entropic, cursive autographs cut from the hands of a person in hibernation or in a long standing coma.

Chamber Music is a recent video composed of arrangements of other videos taken from YouTube of children competitively reciting Chopin. Different pieces, preludes and waltzes, are played alongside one another with their durations extended, compressed and amputated to match one another in metered time. The cuts and replays collaged together compose an entirely different musical composition through an imposition of symmetry.

The title of this exhibition is a play on a Barnett Newman quote from a conference on art and aesthetics that he spoke at in 1952. "Aesthetics is for me like ornithology must be for birds." Correctly or not, it's been conventionally understood as a quippy, romantic assertion that an artist's relationship to the work they make emanates from a primary or native experience as opposed to something like a transmission of a situated empirical knowledge and the understanding that it could be spoken of or taught within the realm of authority accepted by philosophy or science. This exhibit doesn't share an allegiance to either position but gravitates towards a primitively handled conflation of their differences as an attempt to gut any such assumption of who may or may not get to say I.

Either by extending some causal gesture that cancels the assertive image of the metaphor or reasserting that the subject is merely a metaphor by rescinding the causal gesture, these works disagree to agree on a static subject of identification. This refusal to locate or present an authentic voice into a singular idiom is not intended as a dismissal or as a mockery of the construction of singular idioms nor as a way out from the implication of claiming one. As a set of horizontal actions it is a construction in itself, an ongoing choreography of gestures intended to recite a fracture and displacement of ego. This dislocation and the dotted trails it might infer could create something like a demonstratively problematic language, a perverse legibility, "a field of identification" (to borrow this beautiful term from Hilton Als) that I'd be willing to claim. I would prefer to locate my ego somewhere between the objects than within them but without the material I'd be next to nothing.

James Krone
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