

Prologue:

I looked at the deer, its young legs splayed, its neck stretched forth. Placed between a gold rimmed coaster with red roses and the edge of the sideboard it looked as if it might stumble over the edge of the precipice, onto the pile of newspapers below. Opposite a cheetah was crouching down, her nose sniffing the edges of a cardboard box. Her back foot pressed up hard against a pile of boiled sweets. Lower down on the shelf underneath a polar bear is facing the opposite direction to the cheetah above. Two universes interconnected but not, completely and blissfully unaware of one another in their daily pursuits. In this living space these ceramics cohabit as timezones have collapsed and these surfaces have become one big interspace - lives lived and fought. Their stasis captured in clay.

You don't need a weather man to tell you which way the wind blows

I looked at the deer, their two heads facing away from me, on a pavement. A diptych, black and white, two photographs. One deer? The image murmurs incongruence, the elegance of their dainty heads marshaled by the symmetry of the paving stones - the architecture of the city aligning ears. Lempert's world is one of order and precision, precise disorder. The camera can fabricate that.

When the dog appears I don't know what to make of it. It is a mystery with a sharp edged hard rock pink leg. I think it represents aesthetics. I remember Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. I think that this massive quotation is about cinema. It must have been hard to be a certain kind of dog to camera since - our guide through this nocturne. But culture builds too, it doesn't always self-reference. We understand ourselves through our environment and we are embedded deeply within it. Huyghe knows this as the mulch and the ecosystem buzz with life devoid of us, but only seen here because of us. The camera can do that too.

Wood is a hard, fibrous structural tissue found in the stems and roots of trees and other woody plants. It has been used for thousands of years for both fuel and as a construction material. It is an organic material, a natural composite of cellulose fibers (which are strong in tension) embedded in a matrix of lignin, which resists compression. In close up it is possible to see the intricacy of its structure. *Elephant* by Knut Henrik Henriksen is half an arc, using the wall as its halfway point and support. The last attached plank defying the logic of the construction to bury her nose into the floor. In this final moment an image is formed and the sculpture sets the intent of the elephant free.

*OSB board is a low cost versatile, non-structural building board. It is the lining behind our gallery walls. These days it is supposed to be responsibly sourced and E1 emissions compliant. Looking at a close up photograph of the OSB board its structure is revealed as arbitrary, formal and wondrous. I wonder at the possibility of its cells to support life in microbial forms such as fungal species and insects. Maybe Lempert will have studied this when he worked as a biologist. **

This exhibition is about many things, but like anything it has to start somewhere. By looking at animals you can get anywhere - it is virtually an open field. Humans have used animals to describe nearly every aspect of human life, either literally or in parallel. The path between subject and object is often played out here too - the biological reality of animals' lives capturing something useful, poetic or funny, awful and sad. If the world can only be understood through its multitude then our matrix of understanding is always moving, sometimes we are lucky and get an expanded view, but mostly we are compressed by our lack of understanding.

Angell refers to compost when discussing his work: from its Latin root *compositus* - it is literally 'something put together.'

Something put together connects to Huyghe's vision in *The Way to Untilled* - putting together and making something 'without culture' (his words), but highly constructed within culture. 'Putting together' also permits other forms to emerge here. I see a bee hive headed sculpture, the dyed leg of our dog. The architecture of the microcosm in and out of view reveals beauty and regiment. If we think of ourselves and our context as atoms and cells, the reorganisation of self might seem like a possibility. This is utopian, real and very dark. The relationships between sculpture, bench and the buzzing energy of animal life brings into relief how tired, limiting and wonderful culture can be. How ongoing, limiting and wonderful art can be.

Detritus is a fundament of life, but the kind produced by grass eating animals is more palatable than most. Zebra droppings have provided the form for some of the shapes in Andrea Büttner's *Titschmarks* (*table decorations*). She has cast these formless forms in bronze, making the impermanent permanent. I understand bronze as an age-old material used in art fabrication, decorations and functional objects such as weapons and body armor. The delicacy of the cast zebra droppings and grass connects this fragile, dissolving matter with 'bronze' most often an alloy consisting of copper and tin. This has changed throughout the ages, and historical bronze artifacts show different combinations of material - bronze seems therefore to have been made variously according to what was at hand. The scattered table arrangement isn't permanent and suggests use value, change and beauty.

In Aaron Angell's tables of objects the headfirst downwards motion of a dinosaur type creature appeals to a sense of exasperation and humour. Wheel shapes and toadstools proffer in this landscape. The use of clay to create narrative form makes me think of all those figures and scenes found, appreciated and discarded as kitsch, junk in now called vintage shops all over. The idea of the amateur hobbyist is an interesting one. I think of George and his ceramic animals. Where does an amateur begin and end? Do we have the right to define, demarcate and attribute value according to the contexts and methods of display and cultural hierarchies?

As a trope the notion of the formless chimes with a desire and a need to disrupt and repudiate. Compost, detritus, constructed carelessness. In a seminal OCTOBER text it is mentioned that Robert Smithson always thought of casting as a way of theorizing entropy. This is not only a need within art and its discourse, but an expression found within our culture generally, specifically.

Drag in *Charming for a Revolution* is also tethered to a recalibration of self. Costume, enactment and camera. A loop keeps the moment held. Animals become actors. Humans seek to overturn the mistakes of years past. The gritty age of cabaret is evoked, the perfume and powder still hanging in the air. A tortoise is the worlds longest living animal sometimes up to 150 years. The tortoise as living historian.

Enoch Powell was a deluded man, a dangerous man. I do not like the thought of Britain in the late 60s and 70s. We too often mistakenly think of this as a time of liberation. It was also a time of hate and fracture. *The Singing Will Never Be Done* introduces this displacement through the firmament of family life. A painted mother with her children, her white, they brown- Powell running scared. A shed, a clay head. A garden, a clay head. The bold lines of the clay head running through this most ordinary suburban home. Cammock holds up the parakeet as emblem in the revolving door of demography.

Pacheco's whale is a small painting, the representation of weight and transformation carried out within the confines of a small canvas. This painting is a study for a much larger work that is held at Serralves Museum in Porto, Portugal. As the largest mammal the whale is both mythical and precarious. The light touch canvas may or may not serve as an indictment, a thought passes that describes this. Painted from a found photograph we don't have a privileged view and can only be left to wonder.

Person three: Let me show you the original music 'film' for *Subterranean Blues*? It's on youtube.

Person two: You don't need a weather man to tell you which way the wind blows is a lyric from that Dylan song, do you think it could act as a title and statement in one?

Person one: Would it be strange to think about this in relation to animals?

Person two: That lyric says as much today as it did in the 1960s - we are still there.

Person one: I can think of works by artists that would talk about different kinds of sociabilities and sensibilities that could take us out of a given specificity and into the multitude.

Person two: I can think of artworks that offer a register of different experiences and mediums that I would like to show.

Person three: This exhibition is an ongoing conversation. Perhaps we should do Chapter two.

Lisa Panting, London, January 2014

**Whilst not in the show, this piece exists, upstairs in our store and can be seen on request.*