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Betrayal of the Proper Medium

Michael Wirth Broff, Pat Navarro, Patrick Krzyzanowski

Reid Jenkins & Andrew Remington Bailey

Curated by Andrew Remington Bailey

October 18 – November 9, 2013

The five artists within *Betrayal of the Proper Medium* - Andrew Remington Bailey, Reid Jenkins, Patrick Krzyzanowski, Pat Navarro, and Michael Wirth Broff - playfully mine contemporary media and modes of cultural production. Drawing inspiration from sources such as computer screen savers, clipart, fan art, logos, video game environments, and YouTube videos - they collectively offer a calculated and entertaining subversion to what is typically expected from both high art and information technology.

Andrew Remington Bailey's digital print series, *Maximal Ernst Fantasy*, is based on Max Ernst's first volume of wordless collage graphic novels in his series *Une Semaine De Bonte*. Ernst created the darkly humorous scenes of social unrest within these artist books by reassembling images taken from pulp magazines, a type of comic-fiction known for their lurid and exploitative stories. What distinguished these works from most other collage work of the time were their overall coherence and technical plausibility; without seeing the source material, it is difficult to work out where Ernst intervened. Using Photoshop, Bailey has created images that have been assembled from appropriated consumer media that conceptually represent typical avenues for contemporary obsessive fandoms such as three-dimensional video games, pixel-based software, and two-dimensional animated cartoons. By referencing Ernst's original collage methodologies, and re-skinning them in a pastiche of deteriorated pop media Bailey is creating a dialogue between the canonized philosophies of the montage, and the repetitive campy appropriation found in fan art.

Reid Jenkins' work consists of a series of three large-scale digital collage prints, all featuring similarly composed figurative portraits. These portraits have all very obviously been constructed digitally in Photoshop, each portraying a female figure sporting a strange smile and elongated bodily proportions. However, once you get past the initial sense of uncanny unease that these faces provoke, you will begin to notice that there are certain patterns of composition and source material that link each of these pieces together. Jenkins uses the same formulaic combination of stock imagery to graft together the characters within this series: a landscape photo, a business portrait, chipped teeth, a scar, a celebrity hairstyle, and a designer shirt. Jenkins offers a cynical proposal of how in our everyday online routines we are meticulously constructing our own virtual identities and obsessively self-branding.

Patrick Krzyzanowski's installation *Tape Wall*, features geometrically patterned wallpaper made from folded tape perfectly framing a projected video of the bouncing logo that typically appears as a screensaver for DVD players. *Tape Wall* fools the viewer into thinking that there is a technical error or unintended glitch. The folded tape acts as a beautifully distracting alibi for this trickery - such a extremely mesmerizing and obviously labour intensive frame couldn't possibly have been built to house such banal content as the eternally bouncing DVD logo, could it? Besides the primary purpose of humorously deluding audiences, this clever combination draws attention to many of the practical considerations that fine artists have to deal with when trying to use media devices such as projectors or DVD players to display their work. By appropriating a logo that is widely recognized as only being a temporary placeholder for more desirable video, and then creating a physical bounding box on a wall for it to interact with, Krzyzanowski is toying with our expectations of how video art functions within the gallery space.

Krzyzanowski's second piece within this show, simply entitled *Jurk*, works as a companion piece to his *Tape Wall*. By folding a promotional poster for Steven Spielberg's 1993 film, *Jurassic Park*, so that title font now says 'Jurk,' the titular logo, even though altered, is still completely familiar and has additionally become both hilariously new and unexpected. When looked at collectively *Tape Wall* and *Jurk* act as a slightly ridiculous micro theatre environment where everything has been intentionally set up incorrectly, eliciting a mingled reaction of initial laughs and second thoughts.

Patrick Navarro's *Inventory*, features gloss-white painted objects on a single pedestal sitting between two beams of projected light. Navarro, using a specific type of light projection called 3D projection mapping, has made it so that the light shines in such a way that it only wraps around the objects and pedestal and nothing else within its path. With this technology Navarro has programmed the projector to shine a variety of shifting digital patterns onto the objects he has placed upon the pedestal. These objects and patterns have all been selected in reference to iconic video game symbols and items that, within their original game narratives, are imbued with a special quality or power that brings them above the status of ordinary objects. It is this specific video game trope that Navarro is using to dually poke fun at the practice of presenting found objects as art within a gallery space, and the notion that an art object has any sort of uniquely inherent aura. By projecting pixelated video game imagery onto an art pedestal and his motley assortment of whitewashed items, Navarro has set up an irrefutable but distinctly kitschy example of an aura for his audience.

Finally Mike Wirth Broff's video piece, *I.D.G.A.B.T.T*, features the the text "It Doesn't Get Any Better Than This" with the Patrick Hernandez' s 1979 song *Born to be Alive* playing on a loop through accompanying headphones. The floating script is set in front of the classic Starfield screensaver that comes included in many older versions of the Windows OS, and arches across the screen confidently in a garish pink typeface that looks like it could have been very popular in the 80's. The piece is displayed on the screen of an older desktop PC that rests on a pedestal sitting alone along the front wall of the gallery. Wirth Broff's video has used a piece of familiar media and upended it for the purposes of humour and artistic intention in a way that is atypical to conceptions of what should be elevated and placed on a pedestal.

With the advent of social media such as Youtube or Tumblr, any single piece of creative work that can be uploaded has much more potential of reaching and affecting people online than if it were on display within a gallery. If this is the case, what then is added or taken away when such informally crafted work is transposed into the specific context of the fine art world? As the Internet and technology become more and more ingrained into every aspect of our lives, and the ability to consume and view art becomes increasingly easy to do outside of a gallery environment, will the frame and pedestal attitude of the gallery still maintain its relevance? Can things like Youtube videos and memes survive the transition into a gallery environment? Or would this transfer into such a rigid structure deflate them of their significance? The artists in this exhibition do not collectively offer one single answer to any of these questions but through the use of humour, parody, and satire they have each proposed a potential option out of this cultural quandary that not only prompts critical thought but hopefully a few laughs too.

- Andrew Remington Bailey