

Contemporary Art and the Politics of Process (London, 20 Apr 18)

University of Notre Dame in England, 1-4 Suffolk Street London, UK SW1Y 4HG, Apr 20, 2018

Elyse Speaks, Notre Dame

Contemporary Art and the Politics of Process

Chairs:

Elyse Speaks, University of Notre Dame

Bibiana Obler, George Washington University

In 2018, the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square will showcase "The Invisible Enemy Shall Not Exist" by Chicago-based Iraq-American artist Michael Rakowitz. Previous versions of this work, which he began making in 2007 for indoor venues, consist of reconstructions of looted Iraqi museum artifacts, all of which have been intricately refabricated by Rakowitz and a team of assistants out of various types of paper – packaging for Middle Eastern foods and Arabic newspapers foremost among the materials chosen. The process is painstaking, and the labor cannot go unnoticed, despite the cheap, insignificant quality of the materials with which the artifacts are reproduced.

That Rakowitz's work will be given such a platform in the current political climate both in the U.K. and the U.S. is significant. It speaks to the way in which artistic processes today play a central role in producing a critically viable aesthetic practice that engages with such public political issues as immigration, war, and national identity. In this, his work is an extension of one strain of art making that has expanded throughout art of the twentieth century, namely a means of drawing out the politics of an artwork through a loaded use of materials and processes that both challenge artistic convention and draw art into dialogue with larger cultural frameworks.

From the practice of synthetic cubism and collage in the early twentieth century through today, artists have increasingly turned their attention to the use of unconventional materials in order to foreground the way in which the process of constructing an artwork constitutes an explicit and meaningful part of the conversation about what it is the viewer is asked to apprehend. This one-day event will explore recent scholarship on questions of process within the field of contemporary art.

PROGRAMME

10:30-12:30 Morning session - Labor

10:45-11:15 - Kim Grant (University of Southern Maine),

"Making People Part of the Process: Amateurs, Assistants and Social Engagement."

11:15-11:45 - Catherine Spencer (University of St. Andrews),
"False Flowers: Abstraction and Extraction."

11:45-12:15 - Elyse Speaks (University of Notre Dame),
"A Labor of Love and the Politics of Process."

12:45-2:15 - Lunch

2:15 - Afternoon session – Resistances and Revisitings

2:30-3:00 - Pamela Corey (SOAS, University of London),
"Sonic Materialities and the Politics of Identification: The Art of Vong Phaophanit and Claire Oboussier."

3:00-3:30 - Eva Bentcheva (SOAS, University of London),
"On the Heels of Forgotten Histories: Assemblage, Research and Re-Enactment in Contemporary Southeast Asian Art"
Coffee/Tea Break

4:00-4:30 - Bibiana Obler (George Washington University),
"Fast Fashion/Slow Art."

4:30-5:00 - Jo Applin (The Courtauld Institute of Art),
"Art Work as Trap."

5:45 - Closing Remarks and Reception

Please register for attendance at our event website: London Global Gateway Conference: "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Process"

Reference:

CONF: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Process (London, 20 Apr 18). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 19, 2018
(accessed Apr 30, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/17634>>.