

PRESS RELEASE

"a very, very long cat"

Nina Beier & Marie Lund
Walead Beshty
Alexandre da Cunha
Sean Edwards
Ian Law
Dan Rees
John Smith
Kerry Tribe

January 14 - February 13, 2010
Opening Thursday January 14th 6-8pm

"You see, wire telegraph is a kind of a very, very long cat. You pull his tail in New York and his head is meowing in Los Angeles. Do you understand this? And radio operates exactly the same way: you send signals here, they receive them there. The only difference is that there is no cat." -- Albert Einstein

"a very, very long cat" brings together artists residing in Berlin, London and Los Angeles whose work is concerned with transmission -- the conveyance of ideas, memories and objects across distances long and short. Some approach these issues indexically, making objects that register their displacement (Beshty, Rees), while others use performance to address the complexity inherent in representing the past in the present (Beier and Lund, Smith). In a broader sense, the artists here explore the structures that facilitate the communication of ideas, with the aim of creating a causal, if not always direct, relationship between thought and the form it assumes.

Dan Rees (b. 1982, United Kingdom; lives Berlin) will contribute a new, site-specific piece from a series of monoprint painting installations. Rees applies paint directly to a canvas and then presses it against the gallery wall, leaving a mirrored imprint. The two parts are exhibited as one piece, articulating in physical space the distance between the original painting and its reproduction.

Sean Edwards (b. 1980, United Kingdom; lives Wales) uses ephemeral, commonplace objects as the starting point for his sculptural works, which often contrast his everyday sources with traditional artistic materials like bronze and oil paint. Edwards will show a painting of an RS box (RS is an electrical company in London which, aside from having very appealing boxes, claims to be able to supply "any part for any job"). The artist likens his boxes to the *Barres de bois ronds* (Round Bars of Wood) sculptures that André Cadere made and exhibited from 1970-1978, in that they are deployed (and redeployed) in various exhibition contexts, and bear the marks of their imagined use -- the box's fetishized object-surface gets older and more dilapidated with each consecutive painting.

Ian Law (b. 1984, United Kingdom; lives London) is a recent graduate of The Royal College in London, where he developed a conceptual painting practice that builds chance, performance and duration into its logic. As Law notes,

his "pieces are worked in relation to others, to then be cast elsewhere or used in some other way." He talks about his interest in "a process that is activity." Recent works have been based on re-learning how to somersault or reconsidering the thought process involved in making monochromatic paintings. In most cases, each grouping of works follows directly from the previous, as in *Ambulant* (2009), a sculpture comprised of a stack of newspapers that finds a second life in *Clears* (2009), a series of paintings made to the size and format of the newspapers in the previous work.

Walead Beshty (b. 1976, United Kingdom; lives Los Angeles) will contribute works from his ongoing *Fedex*© series (2008-ongoing), in which he fabricates glass or copper boxes that are the exact dimensions of standard Fedex© shipping boxes, and then ships these via Fedex©. The handling and damage accrued during shipment--from the fingerprints of the delivery people, to scratches and dents sustained en route, to the continuous addition of shipping labels over time--become concrete manifestations of movements typically obscured or repressed in the transit and distribution of art objects.

Similarly, **Nina Beier** (b. 1976, Denmark; lives Berlin and London) and **Marie Lund** (b. 1975, Denmark; lives Berlin and London) reveal elements usually kept hidden within an exhibition context. For *Autobiography (If these walls could speak)* (2010), the gallery staff has been asked to excavate all the spackled holes in the walls made from hanging artwork in previous exhibitions, following only their own memory. The history of the gallery is communicated through that tiny distance between the painted surface and the holes just beneath - a very, very short cat. For *Imprint* (2010), the gallery staff has memorized descriptions of artworks the curator wanted to include in the exhibition but was not able to. If any visitor inquires, the sitter will transmit these descriptions, which will necessarily vary with the each retelling.

John Smith (b. 1952, United Kingdom; lives London) will show a significant film from the early 80s called *Shepherd's Delight: an analysis of humour* (1980-1984), which attempts to trace the etymology of the well-known saying, "Red sky at morning, shepherds take warning; red sky at night, shepherds' delight," through a series of analyses that run from the explanatory to the absurd. Smith's films exploit "the opposition of illusionism and materiality, the key motif of the post-war avant-garde cinema...used here and elsewhere in his work to underpin subtle questioning and undercutting of the authority of the word,"¹ occupying the distance between a text and its interpretation. Smith is a well-known figure in Britain, but is rarely exhibited in the US. A retrospective of his work in film and video was held at the 2007 Venice Biennale.

Alexandre da Cunha (b. 1969, Brazil; lives London) repurposes mundane, often domestic objects (mops, plungers, baking sheets) into modernist-inspired sculptural configurations that underscore the objects' often overlooked formal qualities. As Jens Hoffman notes, "da Cunha improvises on the concept of the readymade by reusing everyday objects in ways that reflect on those objects' specific histories and aesthetics." For this exhibition, he will show *Club Sandwich* (2008), a mobile constructed from baking tins whose kinetic form refuses a fixed state, transmitting perpetually shifting signals and readings.

¹ A.L. Rees, "Art in Cinema," National Film Theatre, London, 1987

Kerry Tribe's (b. 1973, United States; lives Berlin and Los Angeles) explorations in film, video and installation form an ongoing investigation into memory, subjectivity and doubt. Tribe, who lives and works in Los Angeles, will exhibit letterpress prints from her *H.M.* project (2009), part of which will be shown in the upcoming 2010 Whitney Biennial, and which was a driving force in the organization of this show. The centerpiece of the *H.M.* project is a two-channel presentation of a single film based on the true story of an anonymous, memory-impaired man, a famous amnesiac known in scientific literature only as "Patient H.M." In 1953, when he was 27 years old, H.M. underwent experimental brain surgery intended to alleviate his epilepsy, the unintended result of which was a radical and persistent amnesia. Though he was no longer able to make lasting memories, his short-term recall, lasting about 20 seconds, remained intact. He lived anonymously in this condition for more than half a century until his death on December 2, 2008. His case is widely credited with revolutionizing our understanding of the organization of human memory. The genius of Tribe's piece lies in a simple formal gesture: the second screen of the projection plays the same footage as the first, but lagging 20 seconds behind, thereby mirroring the patient's brain glitch and giving it both a formal equivalent and a palpable emotional immediacy. The works on view at first glance appear abstract, but on closer inspection we learn that their form is based on crossword puzzles published between the onset of H.M.'s amnesia and his death.

Like all of the works in "*a very, very long cat*," Tribe's piece gives form to the spaces between -- between what we know and that which we've forgotten, between here and there, between the teller and the told - and draw attention to what accrues and what is lost along the way.

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