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#artLAB Publication Series < 03 >

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Philip Gurrey
First Time/Last Time, 2022
Oil on Canvas with child's T-shirt
150 x 150 cm

***Sometimes
in the night,
the fox
slips by***

Anahí González
Philip Gurrey
Dong-Kyoon Nam
Sasha Opeiko

January 7 - February 3, 2022
artLAB Gallery

Text by Imogen Wilson

#artLAB publication series <03>





Anahí González, *Bueno, Bonito y Barato*, 2021. wood billboard, adhesive vinyl, paint 97" wide, 96 1/8" tall

Sometimes in the night, a fox slips by is an assemblage of works which are investigating the unctuous illusiveness of the material. A mysterious flux of feeling, of memory, of what is at stake and what is lost, characterizes the works of artists Anahí González, Dong-Kyoon Nam, Phillip Gurrey and Sasha Opeiko.

González large-scale photographic installation is a dominating force within the gallery-space. When one enters, you are immediately struck by the graceful quality of the construction, it feels alive in the space, but also somehow out of place. In retrospect, *Bueno, Bonito y Barato* is not really out of place, as much as it exists in such a way that it

feels as though this construction could live in many places. There is a quality of transience here, grounded by the work's reference to the billboard and the site-specific. But this work is not a classical billboard, no, the construction doubles up and tilts to the side, the first step in a crystallization of many images to come. This slanted diptych features two cinematic photographic images. The image mounted on the left side of the two panel billboard is a kind of glamour shot of a floating norteño, a brimmed hat "commonly used in the north of Mexico and southern USA, also known as a Texano or Occidental" (González). The norteño floats behind an indigo crushed velvet background. The image to the

right mirrors the vitality and presence of the norteño; depicting a marigold coloured, circle-pattered tie, set in the foreground of the image and hanging by a wooden dowel. The background of the photograph is layered in rich brown leather, coating every surface. These two lush images refer to Mexican Casta and Costumbrista paintings of the 19th century. Explorations of the social customs and dress in Mexico in the 19th century, these images were often defined by a convergence between the aesthetic and the political.¹ So too is González's *Bueno, Bonito y Barato* an expression of the vitality of these everyday articles of dress, which, when they are displayed, become deeply

entrenched in the politics of labour and global trade.

Phillip Gurrey's paintings have a presence about them which appears to extend beyond the canvas. These minimalist abstract works appear as meditations on *process* and *making*, while also being connected to the fleeting impermanence of youth and loss of innocence. The works are created by a slow and methodical thin layering of diluted paint on canvas, slowly built up in order to create a sense of traces hidden beneath the surface. This method also reminds one of the natural environment, of movement or wind, a force which is more powerful than



Philip Gurrey, *This Time // That Time (TBD)* detail, 2021, oil on canvas with found object, 150 x 150 cm

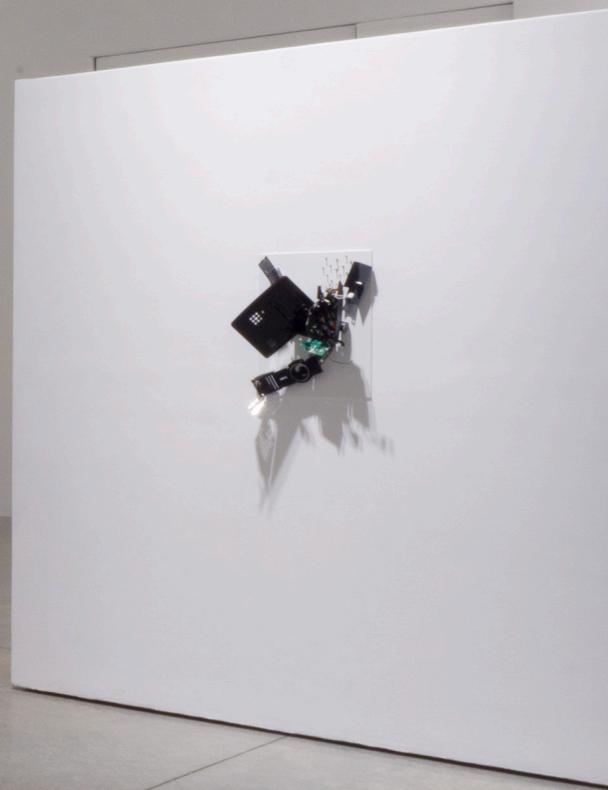
the individual. There is a complexity of layering through process which is integral to Gurrey's paintings, which is balanced by a kind of loaded flatness. Similar to González's *Bueno, Bonito y Barato*, Gurrey's works illustrate in encounter with a memory-object. With each painting, thoughtfully placed above, draped overtop or staged beside the canvas we see the object which was the method of production, whether that be a disturbed balloon on a string, a paint-stained child's t-shirt or a 2X4 carefully wrapped in canvas. Gurrey's method here becomes intrinsically linked to the conceptual implications of the works. For these materials do not only encompass

a pragmatic usefulness, they are personified, they have been gifted with complex personalities through their use. The children's t-shirt and grief-stricken balloon appear as though lifted from a fragment of a lost memory.

Dong-Kyoon Nam's series *re|cycling* are assemblages of cyborgian potential. Animations of various discarded, domestic devices such as, PS4 consoles, cameras, home projectors and computers, these objects were all originally intended for acts of escapism, entertainment, creative endeavour and pleasure. Nam's meticulous process of re-constructing these objects appears as objects alive, bursting from their



Philip Gurrey, *I Want to Sea*, 2021. Oil on Canvas with shelf, string and balloon 150 x 150 cms





Dong-Kyoon Nam, *Untitled - 11*, 2021, parts of digital camera, canvas panel, 20" x 16"
Untitled - 08, 2021, parts of Xbox, canvas panel, 12" x 12"
Untitled - 05, 2021, parts of portable PlayStation, canvas panel 20" x 16"



Dong-Kyoon Nam, *Untitled - 11* (detail), 2021, parts of digital camera, canvas panel, 20" x 16"

frames. And yet, they are set on the frame, they embody an expressionist painterly quality in their presentation. Nam's process activates the interior components of the technological apparatus, those which are most often hidden behind a plastic casing, a membrane. Bolts are strategically placed raindrops, and the orange transparent glow of the circuitboard dances with the metallic reflective mirror of thin steel and mini discs. These assemblages are bodies paused in motion. The artist has emphasized that their use of the term 'assemblage' is connected to an approach which is understood as a nexus between the sculptural and the theoretical, a mode

of making originally associated with new materialist thinkers.

Nam's *Untitled- 13*, 2021 sits on the floor of the gallery, mounted on a square of raw wood. A small ticking sound draws you closer, towards this delicate sculpture of the deteriorated, stained and cracked open remains of a slide projector, carefully arranged beside a torn up and dirt-laden instruction manual and thicket. Here, the organic and the apparatus are made one through this illustration of the mortality of the projector, its eventual slow degradation. And yet, in a poetic turn, the work emits the small sound of the slides clicking through, this familiar





Sasha Opeiko, *#melancholy*, 2021, iPhone, digital video generated by an AI model, duration: 16 mins, looped
Forged Afterimage Compression, 2021, digital video, duration: 30 min 17 sec, looped

sound, the ghosting of the apparatus's former usefulness.

Sasha Opeiko's digital multi-media works are equally invested in the ghostly traces of memory- objects, but also, the ways in which data networks and artificial intelligence result in a digital deterioration through loss of information and processes of conversion. *Forged Afterimage Compression* visualizes a pulsating virtual landscape, flattening and expanding as it floats in space. The obscured digital landscape is without any distinct signifiers; the viewer is unable to gauge where this environment is meant to exist geographically. It is a digital construction of 'landscape', totally

removed from the physical environment and nature. Opeiko's process begins with 3D scans captured using the app Trnio. These scans are incomplete and inconsistent. Opeiko states: "The outcome is a kind of forged afterimage, compressed into a digital skin or something like a distorted geological compound, resulting from the app's inability to fully comprehend a 3D representation on a flat screen. These are remnants forged from remnants." Opeiko's approach cannibalizes the information image through distortion through repetition, a mirroring of the affects of the internet and digital networks on information and images online.

González, Gurrey, Nam and Opeiko have all drawn from John Burnside's poem *Hypothesis* in their curatorial approach. Burnside's fox is the creator of trace fragments of destruction and carnage, as he slips by in the night and leaves the evidence of his kill, slowly becoming dust. Investigators of material degradation, but also reinvigorators of the cast aside, each artist deeply considers the role of the material and its disintegrating particles. These remnants might be loaded objects, connected

to cultural constructions of aesthetic desire and global politics, or they might be memory-objects imbued with both utility and nostalgia. These objects may be lost souls, so deeply degraded into pixelation that their original form is forever abstracted. In the case of each, the presence of the material is built around its own individualism, deeply affected by the destructive force of capitalism, technology, global trade, and mortality.

FOOTNOTES

1 Mey-Yen Moriuchi, *Mexican Costumbrismo: Race, Society and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Art*.



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