

Abstract Possible

The Birmingham Beat

List of works, 6 October 2012

FACADE BILLBOARD:

Alejandra Salinas and Aeron Bergman
'Abstract Your Shit Is' (2009)
Video still

MAIN GALLERY:

José León Cerrillo
'Hotel Eden Revisited' (2011)
Silkscreen on plexiglass, mirror, metal, paper, light

'Hotel Eden Revisited' re-contextualises the vocabulary that José León Cerrillo has developed in several exhibitions; involving recurring elements such as screens, paper curtains, two-way mirrors, and a reduced geometry (circles, squares, triangles). Together they form a distilled visual grammar or hint at a possible system of meaning, a new beginning for signification as such. Like Pierre Guyotat's novel 'Eden Eden Eden' (1970), which is written in 'one breath' without a period, this work is based on overlaying and simultaneity, making it impossible to isolate one panel from the other. The effect is one of withdrawal from normal behaviour and surrender to an entirely different existence set apart from the world.

José León Cerrillo is an artist living and working in Mexico City. He received his BFA from School of Visual Arts, New York, and MFA from Columbia University, New York. He has presented solo exhibitions and projects at venues including Galeria Nara Roesler, Sao Paulo; Dispatch Bureau, New York; Circuit, Lausanne; Galería OMR, Mexico City; Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City; Mark Moore Gallery, Los Angeles. Select group exhibitions include 'VIA Stage I', a L.A.N.D. project by Shamim Momin; Entre Casa y Jardín, JUMEX Collection, Mexico City; 'Greater New York', P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center; Prague Biennial; 'Abstract Possible', Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm; 'Painting as Paradox', Artists Space; and 'Everything Beautiful and Noble ...', EFA Gallery, New York.

Zachary Formwalt
Reading the Economist (2010)
Book

Zachary Formwalt's work deals with the operations of capitalism through various instances of material culture. A notebook kept by Karl Marx in 1868 on 'The Economist', a couple of episodes in the history of spirit photography, the infamous photographs of bank queues in 2007, and an image found at 'the beginning of the photo-illustrated press' are brought together in an attempt to capture the space that separated financial journalism from photojournalism as they emerged in the nineteenth century. 'Reading the Economist' is a book which departs from a single image — a print often referred to as the first photograph to be printed in a newspaper without the intervention of an artist's hand. As such, the photograph became a part of histories of photography and photojournalism, but remains absent from histories of urban development. This has left the objects and the place depicted in the image unclear. It could have been an image of the place that became Central Park, or it could be somewhere else. The book was co-published by Casco and Fundação de Serralves-Museu de Arte.

Zachary Formwalt is an American artist born in 1979 in Albany, Georgia, living and working in Amsterdam. His recent solo exhibitions include 'The Royal Exchange (after Henry Talbot)', D+T Project, Brussels, 2012; 'Zachary Formwalt', ARGE Kunst Galerie Museum, Bolzano, 2011; 'Reproduction Direct from Nature', Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, 2010; 'At Face Value', Wexner Center for the Arts: The Box, Columbus, Ohio, 2010 and 'The Form of Practical Memory', Kunsthalle Basel, 2009. Selected group exhibitions include 'Homo Economicus', Cabinet, London, 2012; 'Cultured Nature', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2011; 'The End of Money', Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2011; 'All that Fits: The Aesthetics of Journalism' QUAD, Derby, 2011; 'Reading the Capital', Perla-Mode, Zürich, 2011; 'To the Arts, Citizens!', Serralves Museum, Porto, 2010 and 'All the Memory of the World' Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino, 2010.

Goldin + Senneby
with Kate Cooper & Richard John Jones, filmmakers
'Regus' (2010)
Suspended poster on mdf

Off-site screening, 16 and 17 November
Regus Centre, Victoria Square, Birmingham
Video, 28 minutes
Booking essential, contact Eastside Projects

'Headless at Regus' is one element of Goldin + Senneby's ongoing multi-formal project 'Headless' (2007–), which uses the off-shore financial company Headless Ltd, and Bataille's ideas around the act of withdrawal as points of departure, to stage an enquiry into the concrete, the virtual and the undisclosable. This work is staged as one (or several) closed screenings of the documentary 'Looking for Headless' in a Regus meeting room. Goldin + Senneby commissioned London-based artists Kate Cooper and Richard John Jones to produce the film, in which the filmmakers interview businessmen and women, academics, private investigators and fictionalized characters that seem to have some relationship to the shadowy company. As they travel through the geographic spaces of London, Gibraltar and the Bahamas, every turn in the investigation is an opportunity to invent the next step in their inquiry. By using outsourcing and other post-Fordist ways of organising work the artists enact significant aspects of today's society.

Goldin + Senneby (since 2004) is a framework for collaboration set up by artists Simon Goldin and Jakob Senneby; exploring juridical, financial and spatial constructs through notions of the performative and the virtual. Their collaboration started with 'The Port' (2004–2006); acting in an emerging public sphere constructed through digital code. In their body of work known as 'Headless' (2007–), they approach the sphere of offshore finance, and its production of virtual space through legal code. Looking at strategies of withdrawal and secrecy, they trace an offshore company on the Bahamas called Headless Ltd. A ghostwritten detective novel continuously narrates their investigations. Since 2010 their work has focused on The Nordenskiöld Model, an experiment in theatrical finance.

Wade Guyton
'Untitled' (2010)
Floor constructed from plywood and paint

The work 'Untitled' is a remake of the floor in Wade Guyton's former studio. Cheap plywood is painted glossy black, thereby creating a large sculpture or pedestal, as the very support of all work taking place in the studio. At the same time, the floor becomes an enormous monochrome painting. In 'Abstract Possible', the floor has been released from the context of both the studio and the exhibition space where Guyton has previously presented it together with his 'paintings', taking on a different existence. The paintings are generated on a computer, typically featuring abstract shapes, and are then printed on paper or canvas using commercial printers inside the studio. The paintings literally fall on the floor as part of the production process, hinting at the artist's preoccupation with precise conditions of production. The artist has asked for 'Untitled' not to be cleaned during the exhibition period.

Wade Guyton is an artist living in New York City. He currently has a solo exhibition at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He has also had solo exhibitions at Secession, Vienna; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Portikus, Frankfurt; Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurles. He is preparing exhibitions for Kunsthalle Zurich and Kunsthaus Bregenz for 2013.

Alejandra Salinas and Aeron Bergman
'Abstract Your Shit Is' (2009)
HD video, 1 minute 58 seconds, sound

In 1969 attorney Kenneth Cockrel called the presiding judge in a police corruption case a 'lawless rogue bandit, thief, honky dog fool and a racist pirate', and then successfully defended the contempt of court charges that followed. While conditions in Detroit (and elsewhere ...) remain artificially and ideologically stressed, there have been some fundamental changes: Cockrel became a Detroit City Council member, and his son Ken Cockrel Jr., became the youngest president of the Detroit City Council and eventually interim mayor of Detroit in 2008. Cockrel's monologue in this video was recorded in 1969 for the educational newsreel film made in Detroit by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers called 'Finally Got the News'.

Apple, now the worlds largest publicly traded company, best demonstrates the ideals of liquid

abstraction in their animation program 'Motion' — the latest 'prosumer' development with roots in a plasticity so successfully marketed by Walt Disney. Disney said about animation: 'it's kind of fun to do the impossible'. The video shows abstracted elements of money, in extreme close up, a still image of which is reproduced on the billboard on the front of Eastside Projects.

Acknowledgements: Kenneth Cockrel, the filmmakers Stewart Bird, Rene Lichtman, Peter Gessner, and John Louis Jr. and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

Aeron Bergman (USA) and Alejandra Salinas (ES) are an artist duo currently living and working in Oslo and Detroit. Solo and group exhibitions include Centre d'Art Santa Monica, Barcelona; Serralves Museum, Porto; Röda Sten Art Center, Gothenburg; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva; IMO, Copenhagen; ICC, Tokyo; Taipei Fine Arts Museum; CCCB, Barcelona; Kunsternes Hus and Henie Onstad Art Center, Oslo. They have also performed in venues around the world such as Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven; The Knitting Factory, New York; Overgaden Institute for Contemporary Art, Copenhagen and MUDAM, Luxembourg. Bergman and Salinas have directed Lucky Kitchen editions for electro-acoustic music and published 15 solo audio CDs or vinyl on various labels as well as producing audio for German and Swedish national radio. They have been awarded an Award of Distinction by the Prix Ars Electronica, Linz. In 2011 they created INCA, an artist, poet and scholar in residency program, exhibition and lecture space in Detroit where they curate the program. They have taught and lectured in art schools such as Umeå Art Academy; Malmö Academy of Art; Trondheim Art Academy and the International Academy of Art, Palestine in Ramallah. Bergman is currently professor of art at the Oslo National Academy of Fine Art.

'Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios' (2012)

Edited by Olav Velthuis and Maria Lind

'Contemporary Art and its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios' is published by Sternberg Press and Tensta Konsthall as part of 'Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies'. This report maps and analyses the complex and contested entanglements of contemporary art and its commercial markets.

Contemporary art as an asset category and celebrity accessory, the rise of the art fair, and the increased competition of auction houses are among the phenomena which are discussed by academics, theoreticians and artists. While some of the contributions show how the market's globalisation, and commercialisation both reflect and propel the way art is produced, presented, and perceived, others downplay the impact of these developments and argue that the market's structure has essentially remained the same. All the texts trigger the question: What will art look like in 2022 and how will artists operate?

Contributions by Stefano Baia-Curioni, Karen van den Berg/Ursula Pasero, Isabelle Graw, Goldin + Senneby, Noah Horowitz, Suhail Malik/Andrea Phillips, Alain Quemin and Olav Velthuis. Design by Metahaven.

SECOND GALLERY

Yelena Popova

'Portrait Gallery Withdrawn' (2012)

Painting installation, light, props

In the second gallery Yelena Popova has made a new installation with rectangular, circular and oval canvases, furniture props, light and shadows. The elements have been made to work with the specific conditions of the gallery and the existing wooden panelled wall system which carries a history of supporting painting shows. The colours and materials of the different elements have been produced to approximate the tonal range of the greys and browns of the room in order to lose or gain definition depending on the lighting set by the artist and the position of the viewer. In 'Portrait Gallery Withdrawn' Popova uses neo-abstract 'portraits', which are composed in relation to the viewers shadows, caused by the position of ceiling and floor lamps.

Yelena Popova was born in the USSR (1978), in a secret settlement, an unnamed place dedicated to nuclear research. She is living and working in Nottingham at Primary Studios. Following her move to the UK ten years ago she learnt to view facts and events from multiple perspectives. She graduated from MA Painting at the Royal College of Art in 2011. Recent solo shows include: 'Zabludowicz Collection Invites', London 2012; 'Unnamed', Figge von Rosen Gallery, Berlin 2012. Recent group exhibitions include: 'Red Mansion Art Prize Winners 2012', London; 'Twofold', Outpost Gallery, Norwich,

2012; 'Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2011', ICA London; 'New Sensations 2011', Victoria House, London. Forthcoming group shows include: 'Gaiety is the most outstanding feature of the Soviet Union', Saatchi Gallery, November 2012.

ESP SALONS

Speaking of Abstraction I

Tuesday 11 September, 6.30–8pm

For the first in a series of interdisciplinary talks which complement 'Abstract Possible: The Birmingham Beat', Dr. Angus Cameron, Senior Lecturer in Spatial Organisation at the University of Leicester and Dr. Liam Connell, Lecturer in the department of English, Creative Writing and American Studies at The University of Winchester have been invited to speak about 'abstraction' in relation to their own subjects and research interests. This is the first new programme strand to be developed by the ESP Programming group.

Angus Cameron studied for his first degree in Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. After two years working as a financial journalist he then took a Masters degree in International Relations and a DPhil in International Political Economy (IPE) at the University of Sussex. His thesis, *Globalisation, Social Exclusion and the Discursive Localisation of Poverty*, combined elements of constructivist IPE with theorisation of the 'social exclusion' agenda then current in UK politics. After four years as a research associate in the Geography Department at Durham University, he came to Leicester in 2001. After lecturing in the Geography Department for 10 years, Angus moved to the School of Management in June 2011. Since 2008 he has extended his academic work by acting as 'spokesperson' for Swedish performance artists Goldin + Senneby on their ongoing project 'Headless'.

Angus Cameron's primary research interests address the broad themes of spatiality, representation and performance. Empirically this has embraced topics of money, offshore finance, boundaries, taxation, cartography, discourses of inclusion / exclusion / exception, semiotics and the mythical figure of the Trickster. His current interests include the relationship between the contemporary state and the body and the construction of 'xenspaces' — fictional but functional spaces of exteriority. Angus also continues to collaborate with Goldin + Senneby and other contemporary artists.

Liam Connell's research interests include contemporary literature and globalisation. Cultural representations of illegal migration and cultural depictions of the offshore in relation to finance, labour and law.

Recent publications include, 'Global Narratives: Globalisation and Literary Studies', in 'Critical Survey' 16, no. 2 (2004); 'Business as Usual: The Image of the Corporation in the Cultures of Globalisation', in 'Globalisation and Its Discontents', edited by Stan Smith, London: D. S. Brewer, (2006), p. 161–180, 'E-terror: Computer viruses, class and Transnationalism in Transmission and One Night @ the Call Center', in 'Journal of Postcolonial Writing' 46 (3) and with Nicky Marsh (eds.) 'The Literature and Globalisation Reader', London: Routledge (2010).

Speaking of Abstraction II

Wednesday 24 October, 6.30–8pm

The October edition of 'Speaking of Abstraction' will present two Birmingham-based academics who will discuss abstraction in their fields of expertise: politics and economics.

Representation has always been essential to politics; it provides the sensory forms through which communities understand themselves as sharing certain normative values and ideals. In his talk Ross Abbinnett will examine the political implications of new media technologies which have transformed this sense of belonging, and particularly their reduction of the individual to an abstract unit of work, consumption, and desire.

Mainstream economic analysis is grounded in models that abstract from reality in order to reduce the complexities of the real world to manageable detail. Dr. Fiona Carmichael will use examples of abstract economic models to illustrate how some central ideas and concepts in Economics have been developed.

Ross Abbinnett is senior lecturer in social and political theory at Birmingham University. His books include 'Culture and Identity' (2003); 'Marxism After Modernity' (2006); and 'Politics of Happiness' (2012).

Dr. Fiona Carmichael is Reader in Industrial and Labour Economics, Department of Management, Birmingham Business School. Carmichael's research focus is on the intersection between labour economics and the sociology of work, in health

economics and in sports economics and her teaching is in microeconomics, managerial economics, game theory and sports economics. Carmichael has published numerous articles and publications including 'A Guide to Game Theory' (2004).

Speaking of Abstraction III

Tuesday 27 November, 6.30–8pm

November's salon will explore sensory perception, sound and physical space with two experts from the fields of computational neuroscience and music technology.

The information we pick up from the environment is continuously varying. We reach out, explore, and interact with objects that can move unpredictably. We have multiple sensory signals available contemporarily, these signals are continually varying, and the information that they carry is a function of our actions. Massimiliano Di Luca investigates how the brain combines and uses multisensory information for perception and action and is especially interested in capturing the temporal properties of multisensory processing to model how they influence perception. Through a series of demonstrations, Di Luca will share his research into the complex, abstract realm of human sensory processing.

Music is inherently abstract, and musicians often think in terms of abstract ideas, which are difficult to clearly relate to the physical properties of sound and space. By contrast, computational systems are deterministic, providing the possibility for precise control over the fine details of sound synthesis and processing. Jamie Bullock will explore the relationship between musical intention and physical sound as mediated through computer-based interaction. He will discuss the tensions that arise between musicians and technology as the result of an 'abstraction mismatch' between system design and human cognition, and suggest how these tensions might be resolved through musician-centred design.

Massimiliano Di Luca is Lecturer in Computational Neuroscience at the School of Psychology at the University of Birmingham. He works in the newly established research centre for Computational Neuroscience and Cognitive Robotics. He received the Laurea in Psychology from the University of Trieste in 2000 and a PhD in Cognitive Science from Brown University in 2006. Following this he was postdoctoral researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics.

Jamie Bullock is co-founder of Integra Lab, a music technology research centre based at Birmingham Conservatoire. He has experience in the fields of sound art, composition and performance with live electronics, music informatics and user-centred development. His current work focuses on systems that transform the way musicians interact with technology.

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Free entry
Open Wednesday to Saturday 12–5pm

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