

Jacques Louis Vidal: Dead End Jobs That Kill

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Jacques Louis Vidal confronts an as-is world; reckoning with the physical limits of tech and the value of labor, the awkwardness of occupational constraint and the acrid pleasure of railing against the system. Poetics are borne of repetition and layered imagery, glitches and byproducts that are indulged and amplified. He leverages a facility for 3D printing to subvert the dominant narrative: machines that provide perfect labor without the human problem. Jacques's 3D printers create imperfect figures, and their mechanized labor endows the sculptures with an unexpected bathos of lost souls. The magic happens in fissures; luck, chance, and a "Nach mir die Sintflut" ethic are central to his project. Vidal's work is always in perpetual motion: one work handing its problem to the next. Any event can be broken down into a series of small choices. Here, we are reminded of their connective tissue, not their finitude.

For an artist so invested in the pageantry of the product, the work does little to reproduce it's cheap didactic modes. The intractable machinations of the globalized supply chain are dealt with as points of

minor friction—in other words, as we encounter them, not as the stuff of abstract problems. Wooden screens provide false privacy in a shared space. Signifiers give way to pure id; weirdness and play congeal in jaunty humanoid creatures. Soldiers, cops, and questioning youth share an uncomfortable sandbox, their limbs awkwardly bisecting their torsos, as if an assistive device has merged with the body it was meant to aid. This is Donna Haraway's internet, not Peter Thiel's. With the flick of his knife, Vidal asserts that the hypertext model is alive and well, that his maximalist worlds-within-worlds, tangential webs and entropic generators are eminent, pervasive, and “already beautiful.” They are overworked into a state of perpetual resilience, carried along as a token of good fortune, memory of toil, and victory in the face of adversity.

Vidal's process is thoroughly additive, recalling John Stezaker, Thomas Hirschhorn, or Rachel Harrison. What reconciles the sprawling ideas contained in the works is the ambitious mind of the viewer, not the artist or the frame. The translucent plastic skeins of *Dead End Jobs* are containers left for us to fill; doing so brings us under Vidal's employ, into the aegis of his creative pedigree. We submit to time's embrace much as he has, lost in the act of successively eradicating images in order to reconstitute them. It comes as no surprise that the “stuff” of the job is decidedly low: snakeoil narratives, mechanical turks, megauploads, as-seen-on tv, harbor freight logics; ready-made ideas factory farmed in marketing boardrooms. Embracing and then expanding upon traditional systems and ideologies is the job that Vidal assumes. There are certain points of departure—labor, technology, overproduction. Looming memories of jail time and escaped destinies—institutions heaping mandates on the individual.

Like a Lucas Samaras box behind Judd's pillow, a buffalo nickel in the pocket of a drifter, or a leaf blowing around the backseat of a car, Vidal offers us a little “out.” He reminds us that, ultimately, feelings of estrangement and destitution are as easy to escape as we allow them to be. His work serves as a caustic inspiration, reflective of a willingness to participate and contend with a world that is at once beautiful and intimidating. He reminds us that, above all, there is always an opportunity to shake hands with the bright side.