

Josef Albers used to say that art inhabits the gap between the factual and the actual.

*I hope to God you're not as dumb as you make out* is a group show of new paintings, sculptures and drawings by Matthew Brannon, Milano Chow and Alan Reid. Also on view is a collaborative work titled *Public Intellectuals*.

“In order to be known, artists must suffer a minor mythological purgatory: we must be able to associate them quite mechanically with an object, a school, a fashion, a period of which we call them the precursors, the founders, the witnesses, or the symbols; in a word, we must be able to *classify* them easily, to subject them to a label, like a species to its genus.”

*Erté or À la letter,*

*The Responsibility of Forms Roland Barthes (1985)*

Clarity of windows. Display. Unobstructed but unobtainable contents. Glint. Bas-relief as metaphor for psychological space. Rules of engagement. *The Rules of Attraction*. Just the surface. Drives running on the surface. Props? Falsity. Fraudulence. The artificialness of it all. The inherent falseness of the creative act. The falsification of documents. A metaphor machine. Tied-up in a signifying nightmare. Honesty. A crisis of audience – who are we in bed with? A group show is a trial for these overlapping individual metaphor systems. A dorm room experiment. Weren't we just students? We smoked in bed afterwards. What Wilde said about cigarettes. Dreaming at the same time. Scissors that edit, remove, that bring interiority out, that bring the inherently flat into the actual world. Fold. Roll. Fashion an entry into the world of signs. Accumulate the signs. A silhouette and a shadow brought into relief. The artificial ideal. Student of the world. Emptied, or reassembled as an elaborate defense mechanism to sooth some existential gasp – or as a toy to balance dreary hours. Dreamy bed – of taste, affectations, manners. Manors! The luxury manor. Visualizing architecture as clothing. Looking on the street. How the pedestrian gaze affects us. How modern architecture is psychologically linked to our sense of being an estranged actor in the metropolitan spectacle. The mask necessary to sustain the individual in metropolitan conditions for existence. Contemporary humans (the estranged actor) as existing between dignity and masquerade... struggle to develop a system of defense from the exterior. The message is the medium, the material an adjective. Painted frustration. Drawn hope. Sculpted yawn. Drawn illusion. Real illusion. Clear. Clean. Drinking from crystal. A toast... to the lesbians I love. Voyeur. Chameleon. *If looks could kill*. L'Oreal ad for waterproof make up. Make up! Frame. Barrier. A bar. Barring access. Mirror. Minor. Minor mythological purgatory. The language of clothes equals the language of architecture equals the language of the novel. Open metaphor. For instance the Leaning Tower of Pisa is a metaphor for infidelity, or is it estranged lover? Or is it castration? – AR

Matthew Brannon's multifarious artistic output has at its centre an attraction to the structure of expressive writing, with recent exhibitions having included entire novels written by the artist. His work, either explicitly or indirectly, sets the stage for an internal dialogue by developing points of reference provocatively left hung in the air. This is evident here, for example, triangulated in *More Than This*, a painting of illusory cultural touch points: Steven King's *The Shining*, Roxy Music's *Avalon* and the journal *October*.

Milano Chow makes drawings influenced by representation in advertising, window displays, and trompe l'oeil painting. Objects are culled from design history and home magazines, resulting in a pastiche of good taste. There is the presence of a figure throughout her work, but only as a trace; the figure alluded to by their belongings - a pair of shoes or an umbrella, detailed interiors, curtains and blowing candles - as if we have just missed an action, a presence and are privy only to the afterwards, only left with a trace. As with Brannon and Reid, object-ness and still life is an important focus in the work.

Alan Reid's work delves into apparent contradictions and pursues a line of thinking which incorporates modernist art history, painting's echo in culture, modes of desire and the linguistic instability of painting. Reid's personal and analytic iconography commandeers art-historical motifs, subverting and employing them in varying degrees. His references are often absurd, but also speak to aspects of polite society, hospitality, and the way humans inevitably read and misunderstand each other. By continuously adding elements, whether sculptural or functional, figural or abstract, Reid avoids categorization. Fascinated by themes of camouflage, of social masks, chameleons and absences, Reid filters his work through his over-arching theme of lightness, adding elements which are open metaphors and open to interpretation.

Born in 1971, Matthew Brannon lives & works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *'The Manifest Destiny Project: Chapter 10: Matthew Brannon,'* LAND (Los Angeles Nomadic Division), Los Angeles (2015); *'Leopard,'* David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; *'Department Store at Night (Five Impossible Films I),'* Marino Marini Museum, Florence (both 2015); *'The Ventriloquist,'* Office Baroque Gallery, Antwerp (2012); *'A Question Answered with a Quote,'* Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2011). Group exhibitions include *'Rio,'* Office Baroque Gallery, Brussels (2015); *'Trapping Lions in the Scottish Highlands,'* Aspen Art Museum. His solo exhibition *'Skirting the Issue'* opens at Casey Kaplan in New York in mid September 2015.

Born in 1987, Milano Chow lives & works in Los Angeles. Chow received her BA from Barnard

College in 2009 and attended in 2013 the Skowhegen School of Painting and Sculpture. Recent solo exhibitions include *'Mode Pratique,'* Young Art, Los Angeles (2015). Group show exhibitions include *'Openings,'* Fused Space, San Francisco; *'Another Cats Show,'* 365 Mission, Los Angeles; *'Two rocks do not make a duck,'* LVL3, Chicago; *'Light Night,'* Wallspace, New York (all 2014). She has a forthcoming solo exhibition *'The Painted Screen'* at Chapter NY, New York opening in October 2015.

Born in 1976, Alan Reid lives & works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *'An Absent Monument,'* Mary Mary, Glasgow (2014); *'Echo Avalanche,'* Patricia Low Contemporary, Gstaad; *'POEMS, Sans Souci,'* Lisa Cooley, New York (both 2013); *'The Chameleon,'* Gallery A Palazzo, Brescia, Italy (2012). Recent group shows include *'Imperfect Surface (Dieu Donne Paper Invitational),'* Dieu Donne, New York; *'We play at Paste,'* Lisa Cooley, New York (both 2014); *'Air de Pied-a- terre,'* organised by Alan Reid & Lisa Cooley, Lisa Cooley, New York (2013); *'Keno Twins 5,'* curated by Michael Bauer, Brescia, Italy; *'Beholder,'* Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh; *'Eva Berendes, Andrea Buttner, Knut Henrik Henrikson, Alan Reid,'* Jacky Strenz Galerie, Frankfurt. He has a solo show at Lisa Cooley, New York opening in Spring 2016 and his first book will be published early next year.

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