

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

Discussion: *Images, Information, and Meaning*

Peter Wolfendale, Claire Lehmann, Joshua Johnson, and Pieter Schoolwerth

Date: July 26, 2016, 7PM

Location: 36 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002

Where is the meaning of an artwork? Does it come from the object that we view? From the artist's intention? From the viewer's interpretation? Or from the culture and institutions which enshrine it? The late 20th century saw an explosion of texts such as Arthur Danto's "The End of Art" that recognized a crisis in the meaning of art that has not been resolved today. As the use of media expanded and the monopoly of a single Western metanarrative was increasingly challenged, art could no longer be defined according to historic notions of aesthetic beauty. The conceptualist trajectory inaugurated by Duchamp complicated the remit of art, suggesting its meaning came not just from how it looked, but also a content that was extraneous to its presentation. Taking recent essays by writer and artist Claire Lehmann and philosopher Peter Wolfendale as a point of departure, this event proposes to examine the multiple channels which inform the production and reception of art, and to locate new ways of thinking through these processes.

In her essay *Color Goes Electric*, Claire Lehmann examines the development of color photography and its admission into the canon of contemporary art. While photography has long been considered to be indexical to its subject matter, the incorporation of color into the medium raises a unique challenge to this idea, as the colors of the world had to be transformed into the information of film—a highly mediated operation designed around the complexities of human visual processing. The responses of the eye must work in concert with memory, preference, and physical stimuli to produce "pleasingsness"; but whose preferences—whose eye—does the camera privilege? And how has the reproduction of photographs shaped and reinforced those processes further? Lehmann shows how corporate objectives and consumer preferences deeply inflected the development of color imaging as a technical process, and how photography as art was influenced by its cultural imbrication.

In his recent paper *The Artist's Brain at Work*, Peter Wolfendale reconstructs the dialectic between aesthetic and semantic models of art, presenting an alternative information-based model that synthesizes the two. He argues that art intervenes on multiple levels of human cognition. Our senses are not merely passive receptors of form and color (like the indexical view of the camera), but are influenced and reinterpreted by semantic and cultural practices which articulate this information in distinct ways. Wolfendale's explicit framing of the human as an informational processing system offers a means to consider the capture and development of human perceptual systems on the technological level. These transformations propose new capacities for art, but also new critical questions regarding the development of technologies, as is demonstrated by the development of color photography.

The common thread in both of these author's presentations is the idea that how we model the systems of technical or human production must be more deeply considered. Moreover, these systems cannot explain the whole of art's practice in themselves, but must be thought in conjunction with a broader discursive environment. This event will consider a dialogue between the concrete issues of a particular practice raised by Claire Lehmann's presentation and the general framework offered by Peter to ask new questions about how we understand the production and reception of artworks as a particular kind of human technology. Peter and Claire's presentations will be followed by a panel with both presenters, moderated by Joshua Johnson, and including the artist Pieter Schoolwerth.

Organized by Joshua Johnson in collaboration with Miguel Abreu Gallery and Office for Applied Complexity (<http://officeforappliedcomplexity.com>).

Biographies

Claire Lehmann is an artist and writer based in Brooklyn. Formerly an editor at *Cabinet*, she has contributed to publications including *Artforum*, *Parkett*, and *Triple Canopy*, and to catalogues for the Museum of Modern Art and the New Museum of Contemporary Art. She co-curated *Ileana Sonnabend: Ambassador for the New* at the Museum of Modern Art, and is coeditor and coauthor of a monograph on artist's books, forthcoming from Phaidon.

Pete Wolfendale is a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Johannesburg. His work develops the consequences of philosophical rationalism for the philosophy of mind, aesthetics, and metaphysics. He is the author of *Object-Oriented Philosophy: The Noumenon's New Clothes* (Urbanomic 2014). His current project pursues the possibility of computational Kantianism, interpreting Kant's transcendental psychology through developments in artificial intelligence research on the one hand, and the program of artificial general intelligence through Kant's transcendental philosophy on the other.

Pieter Schoolwerth is a painter and filmmaker who lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. His work explores the ways in which the ever-changing forces of abstraction in the world effect the task of representing the human body. He is interested in depicting the figure grounded in the ubiquitous glowing screens of digital technology, and how this mediated reality affects our sense of space, time, and attention span. Schoolwerth has been included in group exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Centre Pompidou, Paris, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. From 2003-2013 Schoolwerth ran Wierd Records and the Wierd Party on the LES of NYC, releasing music by 46 bands and producing over 500 live music, DJ, and performance art events internationally. In 2016 he will present solo exhibitions at Capitain Petzel in Berlin, and Miguel Abreu Gallery in New York.

Joshua Johnson is a New York based artist and writer. He works across a diverse range of media including sculpture, video, online-media, installation, and research based practices. His art has been shown at Outlet Gallery, Parallel Arts Space, Louis B. James (all NY), amongst others. He has contributed writing to *The Third Rail* and has presented papers at Parsons School for Design and the Montreal Biennale (2014). In 2015, he founded the ongoing research and resource hub Uberty (<http://uberty.org>). In 2013, he organized and edited *Dark Trajectories: Politics of the Outside* ([NAME] Publications), a compilation of recent philosophy. He is engaged in several collaborative projects, including Office for Applied Complexity, and is currently an Artist's Alliance resident artist.

For more information, please contact the gallery:

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Summer hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10:30AM to 6:30PM or by appointment

Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street; J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street