

A-Z USE: Body of Work

Tamar Ettun / Clynton Lowry / Trevor Tweeten / Felix R. Cid

Curated by: Maayan Strauss

The body meets climate, available balance, design and market demands. Facing the survival challenge of the freelancing mode, the contemporary art producer is called to follow the ethos of "opportunity" and to invent new forms of aesthetic exploitation.

Sushi Bar is proud to launch its first show with A-Z USE: Body of Work, bringing together the works of four New York based artists: each working in different media, their work responds to the conditions situating art production in the space that stretches between Utopia and apocalypse.

Tamar Ettun (b. Jerusalem, Israel 1982) assembles music instruments using mundane or found materials. The humoristic and often perplexing objects she creates could be regarded—like much of her sculptural and performance work—as attempts to reevaluate ergonomic logic, to offer a fresh perspective on objects as extension to our body and to suggest deficiency as quality.

This approach goes hand in hand with Ettun's colorful, eclectic and democratic aesthetic, which brings together materials and objects of all sorts into one constellation of challenged function: whether directly, in case of the music instruments, or indirectly, through elements that are identified by their original function (yet often deprived of their ability to perform it). The formalistic language of the work strongly connotes a characteristic aesthetic associated with contemporary sculpture: combinations of arbitrary materials, strong colors and awkward, unrefined combinations. However, in front of this low-tech aesthetics stands a spirit resonating start-up form of thinking, which emphasizes problems as opportunities. In the hi-tech context, these could be opportunities for new apps, platforms, products and profit. This approach embraces problems with affection, similar to the way in which Ettun embraces her personal trauma as foundations of her art practice.

Clynton Lowry produces a hyper-trendy line of clothing and equipment inspired by the art handling industry and designed as a utilitarian living kit for the urban artist/nomad, branded as a fashion accessory. Using shelf products both new and used, Lowry transforms the moving blankets he collects into customized jackets, jumpers and sleeping bags. After considering various forms of appropriation in the past few years, Lowry here appropriates materials from one use to another yet keeping them within the same context, creating a powerful comment on the relations between contemporary art and fashion and the economic conditions from which they emerge and generate.

Identifying the lifestyle of underpaid art industry employees as an opportunity to develop new products, this 'line' absurdly renders the brandibility of anything in

contemporary economy while seriously accounting for style, craft and fashion related concerns, which keeps the piece charged with the tension between being an art object and an affordable fashion accessory.

Trevor Tweeten (b. Wilmington, Delaware, 1983) builds a heated water container as his self-portrait. The heating coil warms the water to an average human body temperature through convection. The tank holds 11 gallons of water, the amount contained in an average human male's body. Presented as a self-portrait, a category recognized as perhaps the most personal genre of artworks, Tweeten presents a non-personal analysis of himself, a simple technical abstraction of his body. Although the piece does not have a function, the design conveys functionality, which stimulates thoughts of potential applicability. For instance, the adjustment of the piece as a luxury pool or bath heater, that connects to a smart-phone and could prepare the water for bathing, heated to an optimal temperature according to climate and body temperature.

Whether we think of it as the inspiration for a Nike post-workout-bath type of app, or merely a minimalist poetic rendering of the human body, this self portrait makes us think about how the body works, and how is this work could be utilized.

Felix R. Cid photographs people sleeping in public spaces around the world: homeless as well as camping backpackers, outdoors and indoors. Putting together hundreds of digital photographs of the same subject in the same angle, he composes what is essentially a stop motion animation video of a breathing sleeping bag. He then mirrors the image in a playful gesture that forms a cocoon-like shape, making the living creature the subject of the moving image series, rather than the actual people. The sleeping bag, a piece of gear designed to support sleep in various conditions, is shown here as the living creature itself. This frames the sleeping bag as a basic living aid, depicting it as an almost organic extension of the human body, in use throughout many potential habitats: from the loans of groomed camping sites in Europe, beaches of Ibiza and to the New York Subway tunnels.

Perhaps a coincident, the four artists included in the show all have athletic bodies. Weather used in the work prominently, as in Ettun's case, or indirectly through the physical labor that informs the work, as in Lowry's case, the presence of the body is central. Both Felix R. Cid and Tweeten have traveled expansively as part of their photographic practice, putting their energetic drive and physical skills into image hunting. This trivial detail is brought here only to suggest a certain heightened awareness of the body that influences the making of these artworks, which all position the body as their absent subject.

Under the current economic conditions, artists as well as other creative middle class urban citizens are enduring a clash between living standard and the lack of available resources. Subletting your apartment when you decide to spend the night at your OkCupid date's place, counting the organic potatoes for tomorrow's dinner or carefully measuring the fair-trade coffee, to make sure it will last for every morning of the week,

looking for cleaning jobs from your brand new shining MacBook Pro: all of these are common experiences that emphasize the inconsistencies of contemporary urban life, which blurs the lines between the old notions of luxury and these of necessity.

In the current period that seems to challenge our ideas about capitalist economy and labor as an option of supporting a convenient life, the body seems to be either a burdening limitation or a source of deficiencies that presents an endless opportunities for profit making. The artworks in A-Z USE: Body of Work instigates utilitarian methods vis-à-vis artists' understanding and response to this present-day condition. Displaying how their artistic practice and battle for self-sustainability marry, the artists here could perhaps mark a certain shift. What was usually a privilege: engaging with art, as well as being an artist, reserved to an upper middle class, now emerges as an economic necessity: to invent one's own means of production. While this could be perceived as a diminishing position for this once glorified occupation, it could also suggest a newfound mindfulness of the artist as a producer and a future of united labor and ownership.

Artworks details:

Tamar Ettun, ***Yellow Guitar***, 2013, plastic Container, electric guitar parts, 15x37x5 in.

Clynton Lowry, ***Sleeping bag***, 2013, moving blanket, metal zipper, waxed cotton, nylon.
Jacket (grey and black), 2013, moving blanket, metal zipper, nylon, dimension varies.

Trevor Tweeten, ***Self Portrait (or how I have always wanted to be a wave)***, 2013, steel, Plexiglas, thermometer and 11 gallons of water, 72 x 8 x 8 in.

Felix R. Cid, ***Untitled (Madrid)***, one channel video, 80X 35 in.