



KINMONT VAN HOUT PATTERSON SOFO

6 MARCH - 17 APRIL 2010

OBJECT, MEMORY AND SELF

The passage of time is remembered through objects which are often only a husk, while the meat of the memory itself decays through action. This infuses that which is left behind with a sense of melancholy. The objects become talismanic, embodying the personal, physical and measurable. The artists in this exhibition each explore self-portraiture through these remnants of a present which has now passed.

Rather than make his own impression on materials, Robert Kinmont waits for matter to make its impression on him. When it does, his art is created. In *8 Natural Handstands* (1969/2009), a simple physical action by Kinmont is depicted in each photograph, and the artist becomes a temporary punctuation mark on the earth. The tension in these images lies in the transient nature of Kinmont as sculpture, as the artist re-enacts the handstand in different locations. Presumably the site bears no trace of the action afterward; however the artist's perspective of the area has literally been turned upside down.

In another act of inversion, *Cast Aside* (2005), the artist has cast the sides of his torso in plaster and fiberglass. The two pieces echo each other in form, nestling together as a couple. Their rough, unfinished edges and casual placement is indicative of Kinmont's minimal intervention with basic materials. This is also the case for *Willow Loop* (1972/2005). This piece of wood, looped back on itself, is not only a beautifully simple allegory for nature's regenerative processes but also for the artist himself, who recommenced art-making in 2005 after a 30 year hiatus.

"I love how wood weathers and endures."¹

In *Wood Ideas* (2010), Charlie Sofó has created an environment in which everyday items are re-presented in timber. Where Kinmont's approach to wood is to wait for it to approach him, Sofó's use of the material in this work is intentionally controlled. Paddle-pop sticks, pencils and drumsticks sport cool, pristine surfaces which mimic a manufactured original.

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However it is the vitality of the artist's chosen medium that renders it personal: "The resistance of the wood varies depending on the place where we drive in the nail: wood is not isotropic. Nor am I; I have my "exquisite points."²

The objects here are all remnants of the past or future. A burnt-out match asks a question about enduring validity to two book covers, the pages of which Sofó replaced with wood after reading them, immortalising them as sculpture but rendering them unreadable. Sofó's inclusion of dice and jigsaw puzzle pieces hints at the chance nature of the piece, where "the components are free standing and can be moved around to create different relationships."³ The artist's interest in the increasingly tenuous nature of our urban environmental and social structures is highlighted through his examination of the small and personal. For Sofó, identity is formed collectively through shared experience and repeated action.

Kenzee Patterson employs modes of measurement in his exploration of self-portraiture. For Patterson, the existence of the human is proven through traces of activities or of physical form. Systems designed by humans for quantifying each other and their environment, are adapted and extended by the artist into works which suggests the system as the point of identification rather than a tool of comparison. The artist has made a physical presence for himself in *AS/NZS 2210.3* (2010) through his steel-capped safety boots which support a large metal cube, "as though the weight of Minimalism has been dropped onto my toes."⁴ The boots are designed to withstand a force of one and a half tonnes. If the viewer were to put themselves into the artist's shoes would they find themselves burdened with this mass?

Alternatively, a cube made entirely of spirit levels, *Type 70* (2010) presents an unsolvable puzzle in which the apparatus for measurement becomes the structure itself rather than the assistant. Patterson's self-reflexivity in these works adds warmth to their cool Minimalism of form.

(over page)
Robert Kinmont:
from 8 Natural Handstands 1969/2009
Nine silver gelatin prints, each: 21.5 x 21.5 cm
edition of 10. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin

(top)
Ronnie van Hout:
Cold Shoulder to Cry On 2010
Aluminium spirit levels, two pack paint
100 x 50 x 50 cm (irregular)

(bottom left)
Charlie Sofó:
Wood Ideas 2010
Wood, paper, plastic, metal, enamel paint, PVA
85 x 85 x 100cm

Ronnie van Hout's work often conjures up scenes from the artist's memories, adapting props from another time and playing with scale and self-portraiture to distort dream and memory. The resulting tableaux create an eerie presence in the present. In *Cold Shoulder to Cry On* (2010) van Hout has created a small-scale replica of his late father's backyard shed, from which emerges simple stilt legs wearing a child's shoes. This image of the child disappearing into their preoccupations recurs throughout van Hout's practice, and indeed the artist describes *Cold Shoulder* as "a work seeking therapy."⁵ The artist strives to create a point of the personal in the work, drawing the viewer in through self-portraiture as a device to address broader issues of memory and time.

"By making allusions to the human body you allow an element of empathy to occur in the viewer to the object."⁶

The physicality of sculpture is crucial to these four artists' exploration of self. Each is concerned with what they read, who they met, or where they went at particular moments. In capturing these moments through objects, elements are measured or re-observed, creating something which moves beyond the personal, turning trace into event.

Chloé Wolfson, February 2010

1 Charlie Sofó, *Neither the other, nor myself* in *Progressive Method* (artist's web log), <http://progressivemethod.wordpress.com/2010/02/10/neither-the-other-nor-myself/>, accessed 10 February 2010.

2 Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*. Canada: Harper Collins, pub. 2001 - cited in Sofó, op. cit.

3 Charlie Sofó in email conversation with Chloé Wolfson, 9 February 2010.

4 Kenzee Patterson in email conversation with Chloé Wolfson, 25 January 2010.

5 Ronnie van Hout in email conversation with Darren Knight, 14 January 2010.

6 Ibid.

(right)
Robert Kinmont:
Cast Aside 2005
Fiberglass and plaster
67 x 48 x 21.5 cm (overall)
Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin

(bottom right)
Kenzee Patterson:
Type 70 2010
Aluminium spirit levels, two pack paint
58.5 x 58.5 x 58.5 cm



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