

neo-con.

Contemporary Returns to Conceptual Art

The show will display the work of 5-6 contemporary artists re-making (with a twist) famous conceptual artworks.

Artworks that reference other artworks as their main subject matter run the risk of being little more than esoteric in-jokes for those who know their art history. Whilst the pieces displayed in this show are on one level exactly that, they are also far from being just a dry homage or conceptual one-liner. Re-enacting (with a twist) famous conceptual works, the artists in **neo-con** level and humanise, by quirky humour and down-to-earth sensibility, the key principles of Conceptualism like the favouring of ideas over object-making, the dematerialisation of the art object, the production of work in collaboration and often without a studio. Far from the low resolution, degraded black and white images associated with the art from Sixties-Seventies, they infuse the sophisticated and cryptic aesthetics of Conceptual Art with mass culture. Beneath this playful, ironic take on art making, however, is a serious scrutiny of the very idea of art, its status, appearance and market value, as well as the myth of the artistic genius.

Although being based on appropriation, a constant in postmodern aesthetics, the power of the works exhibited is experiential as well as referential. They are a combination of reconstruction and revision, a double-take, a superimposition paralleling two eras, two forms of cultural expression and two dialogues; the dialogue with the reference work and the dialogue with the present. By creating warps in time, they intend to promote connectivity instead of competitive dialectics of history.

Works exhibited:

Joao Onofre (Lisbon, Portugal, 1973) *Catriona Shaw Sings Baldessari Sings LeWitt Re-edit Like a Virgin Extended Version*, 2003

In the video artist Catriona Shaw interprets Madonna's song *Like a Virgin*, but with altered lyrics: excerpts from Sol Le Witt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1969)--which had already been sung by John Baldessari in 1978. The work pushes to the limit the ironic intersection of two systems -arcane theoretical discourse and popular music-- addressed by Baldessari while interpreting Le Witt..

Ian Forsyth (Manchester UK, 1973) Jane Pollard (Newcastle UK, 1972) *Walking After Acconci (Redirected Approaches)* 2005

The work references a seminal video work made in 1973 by Vito Acconci. In it, Acconci paces the length of a corridor, talking to an absent ex-lover. Forsyth and Pollard worked closely with Plan B, a sharp-tongued young MC, to update the script and re-shoot the video, liberally adopting the style and aesthetic of contemporary urban music videos. *Walking after Acconci* appropriates Acconci's confrontational strategies but mixes them with contemporary references and techniques, producing a multi-layered result that is clearly sited in the here and now.

Jonathan Monk (Leicester, UK, 1969) *None of the Buildings on Sunset Strip*, 1997

A self-explanatory work. A riff on Ed Ruscha's seminal artist's book *Every Building on Sunset Strip*, 1966. Monk simply photographed all the streets leading to Los Angeles's infamous Strip, that is: none of the buildings. Still alluding to the types of systems and processes that artists such as Ruscha employed so rigorously, what a little shift Monk demystify the creative process, suggesting alternative models for how art and the role of the artist can be interpreted.

Francesco Vezzoli, (Brescia, Italy, 1971), *Good Boy, Bad Boy*, 2006

Being influenced by his fascination with the era of the "glamour cinema" and its divas, Vezzoli re-enacts, using celebrities, the video installation which Bruce Nauman made in 1985. It consisted on a pair of side-by-side monitors. On one a woman conjugates a series of judgments and attitudes while a man on the other screen spits them out in a slightly staggered sequence. Nauman's implications for racial as well as gender conflict, are mixed with ease genres deriving from the universe of television, Freudian psychoanalysis and Hollywood cinema.

Yoshua Okon (Mexico City, 1970), *Coyoteria*, 2003

Coyoteria is a re-make of and contemporary commentary on Joseph Beuys' legendary 1974 performance *I like America and American Likes Me*, during which Beuys spent a week living in a New York gallery with a coyote, with only a felt blanket and a cane to protect himself, as a meditation on the relationship between nature and culture. In his update of the performance, Okon evokes a post-colonial version of the coyote by employing a human "coyote" from Mexico City - a man known for trickery, greed and exploitation who is hired by average citizens to mediate between themselves and the government. Okon interacts with the "coyote" armed only with a blanket and a police nightstick. Not only does Okon's *Coyoteria* revisit Beuys' examination of man's relationship to nature, he also addresses issues of class, corruption, and the subjugation of man by man.

To coincide with the opening of the exhibition the re-enactment of a seminal panel discussion (to be selected together with the artists) held in New York in the 60s/70s, will be organised. The same topics of the original symposium will be discussed by the artists in the show.