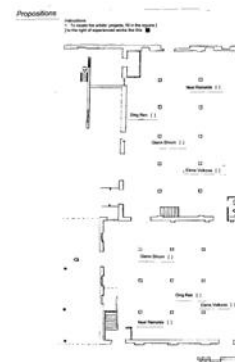


Statement from the Curator of

Propositions

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What locates a proposition if a proposition lacks a spatial qualification? For instance, the proposition “this is Samantha” does not imply a place for her. The proposition, instead, identifies the subject simply as Samantha. The placement for a proposition appears absent, making it an *unhomely* prospect. A proposition thus requires the addition of a preposition from whence it came to locate its historical contingency. If this contingency be one of an imagination of emancipation from colonization and capitalism, it follows, then, a discontinuation of those narratives by the displacement of the subject whose object no longer appears that of exploitation and domination of the *other*. If emancipation from colonization and capitalism requires the displacement of the subject from those forms of exploitation and dominance, the proposition provides the *placeless space* to do it.

Propositions intends to investigate the emergence of the proposition in the process of imagining a placeless space in which distances collapse and the subject of identification becomes present. *Propositions* includes the work of Neal Reinalda, Ding Ren, Glenn Shrum and Elena Volkova. Each of the artists’ works locates between the projection of an autonomous image and its other. The artists propose a third space for viewing that does not happen in one place, but, instead, signify the transition from one to the other. Each of the artists proposes a different way for considering the effect of time via the dissemination of images.

Neal Reinalda’s work traces the uncanny appearances of everyday objects. Whether an upside-down clock titled “Seven up,” or, a glass of water which falls to the floor as the platform it rests on becomes unbalanced by the water’s evaporation, Neal’s work demands a curious eye to see the uncanny appearance of the everyday. Neal’s work demonstrates a coupling of text and image in a way that expresses neither a tautology of textuality nor a mystical representation of non-happening in art. If the spectacle is the ‘quintessence of consumerism’ as Guy Debord, Marxist theorist, writer, filmmaker, hypergraphist and founding member of the groups *Lettrist International* and *Situationist International (SI)*¹, states, Neal’s work proposes a space in which the mundane encounter with the everyday counters the spectacle by becoming mysterious.

Ding Ren’s work plays with the potentially boundless repetition of boundaries. Ding chiefly uses humor in her work neither to exempt herself from following rules nor follow rules without exception. Ding finds exceptions in a rule’s application. Ding uses a projector to write on a wall “A PROPOSITION STARTS WITH A LINE” in tiny letters. The writing looks like a horizontal line or shadow the further away it becomes while is itself a proposition. In another work, Ding reiterates shapes that resemble various places on a map when found in the peeling paint and gouges in the gallery floor. Ding’s work displaces the grand, symbolic narratives

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_Debord

perceived to define nation-states by locating them within previously undefined, insignificant spaces. If maps define places by their boundaries within a territory, Ding's investigations into location and the approximate relationship of the *here* and *there* when referring to the present produce the effects of a placeless space of a boundless territory. Ding then gives these sites plaques which contain writing on the etymology of the place resembling a found shape. One of these plaques contains the etymology of Newfoundland. That these spaces have no place on a map disassembles orientations with binaries such as North and South, East and West. Ding collapses notions of distance. Homi K. Bhabha, postcolonial theorist and professor at Harvard University, writes that territory is "[e]tymologically unsettled, 'territory' derives from both *terra* (earth) and *terrere* (to frighten) whence *territorium*, a place from which people are frightened off."² Ding's work shows the process of defining boundaries as an opaque affair and not a matter of producing clear and transparent boundaries.

Glenn Shrum's work is as much about the difference between light and shadow as it is about the intervals which produce these effects. Intervals between light and its absence reveal only more lights and shadows. However, the intervals appear contingent on a syntax that gives way to a rhythm. Like a *virtuoso*, Glenn's use of light does not seem to have a fixed end. He shows the extension cords that power the lights and produce its shadows. Paolo Virno, Marxist theorist and semiotician, writes that a *virtuoso* is "a memorable performance" and that:

what defines the activity of virtuosos, of performing artists... [f]irst of all... *is an activity which finds its own fulfillment (that is, its own purpose) in itself*, without objectifying itself into an end product, without settling into a "finished product," or into an object which would survive the performance. Secondly, it is *an activity which requires the presence of others*, which exists only in the presence of the audience.³

Like the entrance of the chorus in a Greek tragedy, we enter Glenn's work in the interval only to find ourselves in the place of the exiled despot.

Elena Volkova's work locates its subject in a liminal space between something and nothing. Her work becomes a transition from semblance to dissemblance and *vice versa*. The image of scrap pieces of paper shown on other pieces of paper recalls an image lost through its representation in what Elena calls "paperscapes." The resemblance of scrap pieces of paper on the surface of another sheet of paper reveals a tension between semblance and dissemblance through the process by which dissemblance produces another semblance of the object in question. As John E. Penny,⁴ artist and professor of contemporary art, art history and theory at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), writes in an essay on Elena's solo show, *Elena Volkova: Waterlines*⁵, "[t]hey are citations of tenuity, lacking as they do, substance, or solidarity. Their thinness and scant perceptibility is most obvious in their relationship they maintained [sic] with their boundaries. Edges are only established in order to bring themselves into question."⁶ The edges thus define the supplement of an uncertain relationship between images of semblance and their dissemblance. Elena shows a liminal and ambivalent space between the semblance of paper and the dissemblance of that paper as *lost*, which only shows another piece of paper in its place.

² Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, p. 142

³ Virno, Paolo, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, p. 52

⁴ Former professor of the writer and Neal Reinalda at MICA; former MFAST professor to Glenn Shrum and Elena Volkova

⁵ Paperwork Gallery, Baltimore, MD, February 8 - March 15, 2008

⁶ Penny, John E., "Waterlines Essay by John E. Penny" <http://bmoreart.blogspot.com/2008/02/waterlines-essay-by-john-penny.html>

The artists selected for *Propositions* demonstrate a profound interest in proposing a space of transition. An exhibition on the subject of the proposition states its intention in investigating the nature of the proposition as necessary for a transition from one place to another. Today, the United States experiences a transition from the semi-fascist, imperialist tendencies of the Bush regime to a new, potentially different one. This new regime has to propose radically new and different ways of interaction lest it repeat the previous administration's mistakes. Because propositions designate a placeless space that denies the prospect of identification with the subject of occupation, the proposition thus denies the utopian fantasy of liberalism⁷ in which everyone minds 'their own business' with the expectation that everyone appears in 'their own place.' Yet, if a proposition opens the space of transition, it has yet to come to terms with any one end. This happens in the aleatory encounter.

⁷ Liberalism: an ideology of the separation of the individual from the state by notions of a division between public and private spheres of control.

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