

# ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

SUMMER PREVIEW  
ART IN RIO  
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uncertain guarantors of verifiable knowledge. Which leads back to the issue of accountability: By denying us access to the type of hard data one expects from such a classification project, Simon makes it the responsibility of the viewer to reconsider just what one is seeing.

—Jennifer King

## Carter Mull

MARC FOXX

The digital video *Hearts of Gold*, 2013–14—the sole work in Carter Mull's exhibition of the same name—centers on an “artist's book” constructed on the broadsheets of the *New York Times*. The newspaper format, of course, once heralded the end of the book as a memory-storage technology, its pulpy pages as transitory as the information imprinted thereon. While newspaper content was, for a time, preserved on the celluloid rolls of microfiche, the effort was highly selective. Today, in the age of big data, all recorded content can be made immediately and indiscriminately available for posterity, while newspapers have plummeted in number. If a new paper is founded, it is often with heightened self-consciousness of its ephemeral nature. Mull likewise highlights the temporal aspect of his book; its newsprint pages are layered with speedily improvised collages and painterly sketches reminiscent of Pollock. The result might recall Guy Debord's collaboration with Asger Jorn on the 1959 book *Mémoires, structures portantes d'Asger Jorn*, or, in a more programmatic sense, Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore's attempts to remodel the book form for a postliterate readership. Here, however, we take leave of the bound-paper delivery mechanism entirely: Mull's book exists only on digital video, where words and pictures are from the first moment conjoined in numerical code.

There is a spread in *The Medium Is the Massage* (1967) where the hands of a reader are photographically doubled in the margins of the text. In Mull's video, we are also shown hands, but these hands move, leafing through the book for us. The video is tightly focused on this act, as manicured fingers turn and smooth out pages in a manner that is both vaguely erotic and indifferent. The tabletop on which the book is placed is chroma-key green, suggesting that it could be anywhere and nowhere; however, the camera periodically pulls back from this mise-en-scène for a Brechtian reveal of a cluttered studio. The “talent” seated behind the table is downtown LA scenester Alanna Pearl, sporting a “cholita Barbie” cut, thick black-framed glasses, a shirt similar to a Shenzhen bootleg but made in Los Angeles, turquoise hot pants, and yellow platform sandals. Pearl's mash-up style speaks to a moment when fashion's ever-accelerating process of coding and recoding might have finally reached a rate indistinguishable from stasis—like the freeze-frame that stands in for a velocity beyond our representational

capacities. No less than the book she manipulates, she has become an illegible palimpsest.

The baroquely attired LA model Chebo occasionally appears alongside Pearl, acting as videographer, while the artist, as director, films in and out of the frame. With an interest in tracing the interaction between autonomous art and everyday culture in social networks, Mull befriended Chebo, Pearl, and an online group of self-styled tastemakers—kids who see no contradiction between the words *brand* and *identity*—and recorded their activities within various set-up situations in his studio. On the video, via voice-over, a girl dreamily intones a series of self-promoting statements, such as “I broke my own brand,” that alternate with more theoretically inflected ones—“You live in an arcade,” “Your body is merchandise”—effectively repurposing the critical literature of modernity, from Marx to the Frankfurt School, for strictly post-ideological purposes.

For Mull's protagonists, such language no longer sounds a note of alarm; it is an entrepreneurial mantra. One could go on about reification and how quickly forms of critique are subsumed by the profit motive, but this would be redundant. Like the hands that pass over the pages of his book, Mull's video registers little more than a distracted curiosity in this state of affairs in which a ceaseless pileup of information has crashed any remaining historical framework. A blinking cell phone lies beside Mull's book as a complement, not a competition, opening more windows onto a world that will increasingly be tried on for size rather than read critically at a distance.

—Jan Tamin

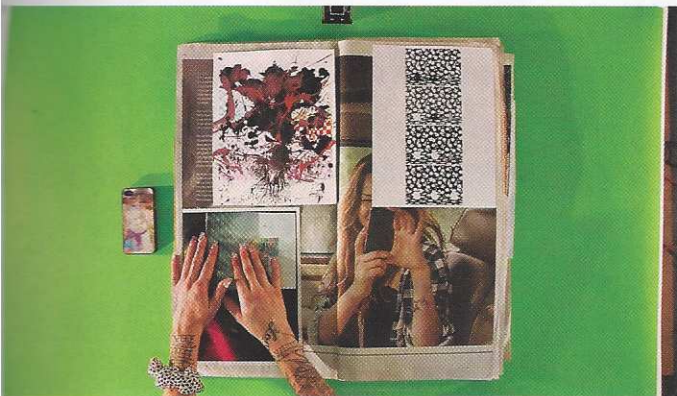
## Isabelle Cornaro

LAXART

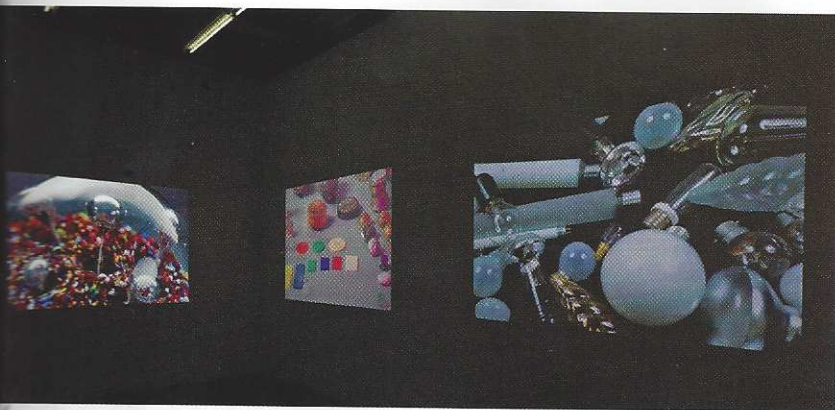
The establishing shot arrives almost halfway through Isabelle Cornaro's *Figures*, 2011. It's not much of a wait; the film runs only two and a half minutes. But with this long shot comes a delicate shift in tone and, seemingly, in intention. The scene could almost pass for the Hollywood trick (familiar from *Body Double*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, and a dozen other movies about movies) in which an opening sequence is abruptly revealed as a film take: We're not where we thought we were; we're on set.

Cornaro is an artist of drifts and quiet permutations, and her version of this maneuver is miniaturized and, significantly, depopulated. The set consists of a spread of antique tchotchkes: buttons, figurines, coins, compacts, vials. The early impression of someone's dressing table is quickly dispelled as the film takes on an increasingly analytic quality, scrutinizing the aged articles with variations in light, angle, and movement. This study of forms, presented in a filmic language so simplified as to be monosyllabic, manages to monumentalize the baubles: Lipsticks become obelisks. Yet when it arrives, the belated establishing shot offers up the full array of copper, glass, and ivory relics with a bald facticity: Here they are . . . *things on film*.

In fact, *Things on Film* would do just fine as the title for any of the very short films in Cornaro's recent show at LAXART, “This Morbid Roundtrip from Subject to Object.” *Premier rêve d'Oskar Fischinger (Part II)* (Oskar Fischinger's First Dream [Part II]), 2008, presents blown-glass paperweights from varying angles and proximities, drawing out the psychedelic nebulae of vitric colors and the overlapping textures of air bubbles and film grain. *Film-Lampe*, 2010, shows a collection of lightbulbs of various sizes and styles. They go on and off, the surface on which they rest begins to shake, and, as in all these works, the boundaries between the material content and the medium become blurred. Who's the star here? Who's being upstaged?







View of "Isabelle Cornaro," 2014. From left: Premier rêve (Oskar Fischinger (Part II) (Oskar Fischinger's First Dream [Part II]), 1988; Figures, 2011; Tim-Lampe, 2010.

These formal studies come off as archaizing, with their grain and filaments, not to mention procedures that languidly recall structural film. Returning, for a moment, to that establishing shot in *Figures*, we glimpse a complicating dimension to the nostalgic tones of Cornaro's aesthetic. Bringing to mind an overstuffed vitrine of antiquities or ethnographic objects, the shot leads us from a sequence of gentle transformations of appearance to the simple truth that the way we see art is always bound up with where and when and how we see it. Context and presentation are often constituent of form.

Given Cornaro's interest in the determinative force of display and context—distantly related to the formal typologies of found objects in Gabriel Orozco's "Sandstars," 2012, and to Haim Steinbach's careful presentation of commodities—it is only fitting that the show was installed with a reverence and an almost monastic simplicity that exaggerated the properties of the work. The only illumination in the room was provided by the projections and a set of filtered pink and blue lights above *Orgon Doors* (edition), 2014, a plaster sculpture cast from a still life of stones, jewels, a chain, and a sheet of faux snakeskin.

The sculpture shares the films' concern with the de- and recontextualizing of found materials—the slippages between the object as a subject of fascination, curiosity, or seduction and the object as an object of a medium. While the very name of the exhibition attests to this ambiguity, it suggests as well the greater uncertainty glimpsed by Cornaro's work, conjuring appearances on the shifting sands of meaning. The materials and preoccupation here may look like those from the past, but they seem to signify something very different—if only, perhaps, the Sisyphean curse of having to endlessly reenact the battles of twentieth-century art in a fog.

—Eli Diner

## LONDON

### Al Taylor

DAVID ZWIRNER

Around the mid-1980s, Al Taylor began to extend his drawing and painting practice into three dimensions, turning chipped wooden broomstick handles and other found carpentry scraps into linear, wall-mounted (and later, freestanding) constructions. Taylor—who died in 1999 at the age of 51—carefully assembled the broomsticks into small clusters and structures that protrude out and away from the wall, like lines drawn in space, although one example in this recent show, *Untitled* (Pick Up) #2, 1990, sits on a series of upright aluminum rods as though floating above the floor. Taylor's sculptural work engages in a playful back-and-forth between literalism and illusion, figuration and abstraction, never quite settling on one or the other. He also had a keen

eye for the witty and the silly, and *Layson a Stick* (Blue Balls), 1992, is a good example of the wordplay and visual gags Taylor was fond of making. It consists of three plastic Hawaiian leis drooping from a broomstick, which thrusts at a perpendicular angle away from the wall. The formal appearance of the stick was intended as a schoolboy pun on its erect nature, while the title offers both a synonym for sex (the word *lay*) and a homophonic echo of *liaison* (with its implication of an illicit affair).

In other titles, Taylor turned away from such puns toward a kind of dumb literalism, yet still avoided Minimalist-style say-what-you-see transparency. *Untitled* (Eating with Children), 1986, a four-part structure comprising two large and two small broomstick handles attached to the wall, was made in response to an afternoon spent eating Chinese food with some kids. Look again, and the work turns, momentarily, from a trapezoid wall relief into a schematic figurative outline of chopsticks resting on a plate. But it just as quickly flips back to an abstract register, revealing Taylor's formal dexterity. Even if the backstory of the work is not known in advance, or the viewer is not quick enough to work it out for herself (I wasn't), Taylor's objects still hold their own as abstract sculptural interventions.

Taylor's three-dimensional objects offer surprising and sly explorations upon the well-trodden terrain of the everyday. Each work in the "Latin Studies" series, 1984–85, consists of a number of small, latticed forms made from recycled plywood strips painted different colors. These are unusual, slow works that take their time to unfold. Taylor's references might be historically grounded in Russian Constructivism, but they might equally be as familiar as a game of pickup sticks. Yet the real strength of Taylor's work is how closely it hews to the artist's own idiosyncratic investigation into the possibilities of working within a familiar range of ordinary materials. Taylor's inventive bricolage revels not in the honing of his craftsmanlike skills (no sawing, sanding, or refining is in evidence here) but in the generative aspect of working with a limited set of means in a seemingly endless circuit of possibilities. His objects are modest, although no less engaging for that, offering a spare and witty meditation on the art and act of making.

—Jo Applin

### Magali Reus

THE APPROACH

Magali Reus's exhibition "In Lukes and Dregs" came with a feverish press release promising "dirty realism," "perversion," "social taboo," "filthy interiors," "amoral vices," "sexualized . . . protrusions," Brutalism and fetishism—but visitors hoping for a McCarthyesque, abject grime-fest would have been badly let down. This was a coolly installed show combining eight squeaky-clean sculptures in a quietly thoughtful way. No smells, slime, or grisly prostheses; rather, a calm reflection on ideas of material preservation and indeterminacy—and by extension (since all that stuff that doesn't die is both "of its" and "not us," in

