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ACCIDENTAL/COINCIDENTAL

Chance, occurrence, and intention in contemporary art
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NEWHOUSE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

In preparation of its survey of accidental and coincidental art, the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art organized a call for artists and withheld 12 international artists: Carina Grossman (Argentina), Natasha Gudermane (France), Timothy Hutchings (US), Nicholas Knight (US), Sharon Lomasney (US), Alexandru Niculescu (Romania), Stefano Pasquini (Italy), Robin Press (US), Patricia de Ruijter (the Netherlands), Irys Schenker (US), Fabian Todd (Canada), and Monica Wiedel (US). Co-curators Stefano Pasquini and Frank Verpoorten made selections and will publish a small catalogue in conclusion of the exhibition.

Art theoreticians traditionally agree on a few uncompromisable signifiers within the institutional definition of art: historical and chronological context, continuity, expertise. According to this approach, art can be considered as such when the artist, art historian, or school of thought says it should. However art is not always a product of intention, but also of procedure and function. From a proceduralist approach, one defines the art object by the process by which it is created or viewed, not by any inherent feature, nor by the amount of acclaim it receives from the institutions of the art world after its introduction to society at large. From a functionalist approach, the function that the art object plays in a particular context can have an impact on whether or not a piece counts as art. This group exhibition at the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art places these various thoughts in perspective. In the absence of an intention or a creator the general audience plays a role in the validation of art, and can help yield a wider understanding of contemporary art practice and trends.

Accidental art can be defined as art that is subject to occurrence, is mostly purely visual, and to which the artist is merely a participant; and coincidental art as art that has become something exceptional simply because some fortuitous convergence of energies operate – in this case the artist doesn't have complete control and has to acknowledge the perfection of chance. In either instance, a natural or artificial expression of art is found by the artist and either prelevated, photographed or appropriated in order to officialize its status as a work of art. Frequently the chance experience meets unconscious personal experiences or problems and can thus fulfill a symbolic function. Over the course of art history, many artists have dealt with the themes of occurrence and chance: Leonardo da Vinci, Marcel Duchamp and the Dadaists, Hans Arp, Joan Miró, Max Ernst, Jackson Pollock, Niki de Saint Phalle, and others.

For an artist, a lot of factors come into play in the completion and installation of an artwork. The work of the artists in this exhibition is informed by processes which originated from chance or occurrence. The exhibition explores the possibility that the coincidences that contributed to the making of an artwork could improve the artwork itself.

For more information about the exhibition or the visual arts program at Snug Harbor Cultural Center, call Renee Bushelle, 718 425 3511 or email rbushelle@snug-harbor.org