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A POLITICAL IDIOM

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Radical Praxes 01a | A Political Idiom

Amanda Beech | Ella Ziegler | Matthew Burbidge | TC McCormack | Tee Byford

Amanda Beech is head of Critical Studies at CalArts. 'State Line' is an excoriating examination of the US Democratic Party's links with the American-Italian mafia. Beech's rage at the murderous corruption at the heart of American politics finds its manifestation in her horizontal camera movements inside the Cal Neva Lodge on the shores of Lake Tahoe on the border between California and Nevada. The state border runs through the swimming pool. This is where the American-Italian mafia has traditionally controlled its interests in Las Vegas and California as well as the American Midwest. The 'Godfather' films also reference this place. The decor of the place is disgustingly opulent, seventies Mafia kitsch that Beech's camera records as evidence of abuse of power and law. The video is accompanied by a suitably aggressive electronic music soundtrack specially composed for the piece. 'State Line' is from 2007.

Matthew Burbidge's 'RP01a' makes a strong argument against the stratification of power and wealth within the international art context, notably calling Udo Kittelmann an 'idiot' because of the idiotic things he says and believes. 'RP01a' is an introduction to just a few of the goals that Radical Praxes will achieve if it is successful in defining a space for art production, dissemination and consumption free of the corruption that sadly has come to typify German's museum sector, hopelessly in thrall to imbeciles like Kittelmann, and to the commercial goals of a few international galleries. We aim to separate art from money. We aim to lead a new social class – that of art professionals worldwide – to redefine the very reasons for which people practice and consume art.

Matthew Burbidge's 'Dogheaded Man' sits atop the black table in the midst of the exhibition: we believe that politics is run on principles very similar to those that make the mafia work. The 'Dogheaded Man' is of course either a representation of a gangster that has mastered their own particular 'political idiom', or a person attracted to that idiom and about to embark on the dangerous task of mastering it. We believe that the political idiom does not essentially change over time, but finds new linguistic manifestations, dependent on many contingent factors. The drives that cause Hillary Clinton to become president of the USA or that cause Tony Soprano to rise to the top of his gang are essentially the same. That is why Radical Praxes will also function as a model for study into new types of democratic representation. The group itself is modelled on Athenian democracy, with a heavy dose of Hannah Arendt.

Tee Byford is a young designer living and working in the UK. His piece 'The Social Mining Union' is manifested in the exhibition via totemic objects that result from his wide ranging 'speculative design' project of the same name. Byford unionised scrap metal dealers in England and examined their financial links to a particular mining company: Glencore. For the union, he made a number of objects that have a ceremonial function: a hammer, a magnet, a flag. He bought shares in Glencore and pointed out their untrammelled and impermissible exploitation of families, materials and markets. The human and environmental damage that a company like Glencore causes worldwide is legion. Radical Praxes stands with Tee against the horrors of idiotically short-sighted short-term liberal capitalist exploitation. As part of his process, Tee also forged his own incredibly beautiful base metal objects, which are also presented in the exhibition.

TCMcCormack is an artist who works also in the UK as an educator and PhD supervisor. He is an associate of Radical Praxes. His piece 'Accessories Lemon Zest' is made up of a photographic diptych juxtaposing escaped snakes with an international art context gathering. It is itself paired with a sound piece on headphones which explains the title. Even in the sad squalor of the international art context, there is poetry to be made. In fact, the squalor makes the poetry more powerful. Friedrich Nietzsche recognised something similar in an aphorism written for his book 'Gözen-Dämmerung'.

Ella Ziegler is a Berlin based artist who one would like to call a 'conceptual artist' except that the term would be insufficient for the transcendence of her praxis. Conceptual artists of our day are just not very good at making artistic iterations, in the end just practising 'illustration' rather than 'art'. Not so Ella Ziegler.

Her poster image is cribbed from a book about wrestling published in the 1950s. From this book Ella has proposed a film that is based on cropped images from this book. It will be accompanied by a live performance on a full drum kit for the 2nd Finissage of 'A Political Idiom' which will be held outside, at night, and only by invitation.

The image of two Japanese women wrestling can be seen as a call to arms for Radical Praxes, apart from all the other associations it may provoke.

This project is a collaboration with *Radical Praxes*

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