AMANDA BEECH

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Opening: 29 June 2019 - H. 18.00

From 01.07.2019 to 30.09.2019

Capital Does not Explain Culture, 2016, Mixed Media
Self Conception Does Not Equal Self Transformation, 2016, Mixed Media
No Horizon does not equal Progressive Future, 2016, Mixed Media

CAUSE AND EFFECT

curated by Anna Longo

Amanda Beech is an artist and writer living in Los Angeles. Her work entangles narratives of power, contingency and functionalism from philosophical theory, literature and real political events, exploring how the myths that seem necessary for an account of human agency are lived with, but can also be supplanted by a realist politics. In her hard critique of liberal and neo-liberal cultural politics she examines and produces the condition of language as force and the force of language with the weight of a commitment to a future. On the occasion of her solo show Cause and Effect at Artericambi Gallery, Amanda Beech discusses some core themes of her work focusing on how art might demystify the promises of emancipation promoted by standard forms of cultural politics as well as locate others.

Anna Longo: Concerning the works which are part of this exhibition, the video installation Covenant Transport Move or Die and the works on paper, Cause and Effect, it seems that the formal aspects of the work, like the aesthetics of video-clips, street art and TV series, are relevant in the sense that they are pushed to self-contradiction becoming the

impossible objects of an irreflexive but merely reproductive flux. Could you explain the articulation of form and content, aesthetics and meaning, mechanical reproduction and creation within your artistic practice?

Amanda Beech: Yes, you are right to point out that the works have a strong interest in popular culture and the aesthetics of popular mass entertainment, as well as being set within the landscape of mediatized environments of communication. Both the video work and the 2-D works use stylistics from 'game-like' environments to explore how we are always at work within systems of production. In the video this is taken to the ideality of mobility, movement, difference and freedom that subtends liberal mythologies of individual autonomy. The term "Covenant" speaks to the idea that we are born into a system that validates mobility and that this sense of freedom is an effect of this pre-political framing of life that seems impenetrable to us. The video actively explores that conditions of this dilemma by inventing a set of 'transcendental' subjects. These characters can think beyond this problem of entrapment. However, they are also part of the world, a world that is dominated by myths and misrepresentations of reality. Their language twists through these conditions - of being in the world, and conceptualizing a view from beyond its aesthetic and empirical locations. This play across these spaces and times aims to set up a view of reality that is more real than the views that have so far supports what we take as our reality, but do so within this space.

Question: Could you explain how this views which crosses different spaces and times is possible? How do this relate to the real experience?

AB: The role of the 'everyday' world of popular culture speaks to the world in which we live, which when taken as the site of neo-liberal capital is one of circularity and self-reference, but it also attempts to prise away the possibility of language as a means to think, model and propose a conception of reality that exceeds this, in a simultaneous existence, almost like a parallel world. The 2-D works take this up as well by playing out a game of construction and destruction that seems to occur simultaneously. The works invent a game-like system where it appears that each work is the means to produce the other, a kind of self producing system, where there is some detective work to explore what part each work played as a tool to produce the other. The formal system of the work then is important but also the aesthetic choices that occur in each piece. The works adopt an aesthetic of graffiti that is collapsed with agitprop activism, as well as video game console-styled LED lights and explosions of shapes. These all suggest that we are trapped in games that we cannot access the rules to, and that our beliefs about how the world works are a product of our pathology. Whilst our pathology for making correlations between the abstract and particular and for seeing ourselves as part of, and agents of systems of cause and effect undergirds the mechanisms of much of our lived reality, we also know that this claim to identicality is a myth. The work plays out a set of false identicalities that are taken by us as real and natural. Showing these as unreal is not the 'end' of the work. The aim here is not to tell us that our language is

impoverished, and that we should be pessimistic about its potentiality to manifest reality. So rather than claim that the language we use is always destined to repetition of the same actions, and beliefs, the work explores another possibility for the production of reality. In this we can take the scene of what is accessible to us as a necessary aspect of mediating our comprehension of reality which is set in motion with our comprehensions of our relations to this material. This analysis of reality then produce reality. This is why I would say that the world of the popular is not a 'negative' representation in the work - it is not something that is there to be overcome necessarily or without question. It is the precise scene for a common space that embraces systems of meaning, but opportunes a traversal of the paradigms of the given.

Question: one could say the "real" is one of your main concerns, both as a theoretician and as an artist. You express a will to unmask what we take for the real, which is the system of beliefs that provide a sort of justification for our functional behavior within society. However, although another system could be thinkable according to the potentiality of language, how can you say that this would address something beyond appearances? Is it an issue of accessing reality or of accessing the real conditions of the construction of reality, to which we are usually blind? This a central problem within the recent philosophical tendency called "speculative realism", what is your relation to it?

AB: This is a great question. The relationship between what we take as 'real' in terms of ideologies and belief systems that seem natural to us is certainly a concern to my work. The confusion seen in the history of art has often been to identify the image as an identity of the real on the one hand (discourses on the sublime and affect) or to see the image as never adequate to the real on the other hand (antirealism). This troubling of the real as correlative (positively or negatively put) was situated in many philosophies associated with Speculative Realism, but these theories did not explore language, image and the political enough. The idea that we can think the real, without it being identical to an image is important, especially when the language that we think the real with (the voice inside your head) and the idea that we need to share these thoughts with others is always already conditioned to forms of representational and ideological systems and rules. Therefore, language and thought have shared constituent material even when they are not seen as identical to each other. The way in which art could construct an epistemology to participate in the explication of the real via representational forms has to work across these two ideas of reality as project and reality as nature. The two aspects of the real that you set out here, a real that is atemporal and irreducible to our understanding and the question of a real that seems available to us in a temporal sense is important. The work is predominantly mobilized by the latter in terms of its thematics, aesthetics and vernacular, but is subtended by the former, in the sense that the question of understanding "the real conditions that construct reality" bears out a constructive relation with the "real as inaccess", because of the vacuity of the real, or the idea that there is no sufficient reason to

Convenant Transport Move or Die, 2015, five channel video installation

explain the fact that reason exists in standard nihilistic terms. So, in the end, for me, this is not so much a question of access to the real, but rather; if we should identify knowledge as absolute process we then must deal with the consequences of such a claim. Here we must ask how this comprehension of process manifests itself in particular expressions in language, whilst: a) not making our representation of absolute process a substitute for process, and; b) refusing to identify absolute process as a means to undermine commitments to a future in the sense that a life as process might suggest a surrendering to the idea of agency, the power of action and mind.

Question: could you clarify the relation between the process of the becoming of knowledge, the becoming of the real as a process, and the artistic production of the real?

AB: The formats/categories of the real that you describe are always being unfixed and re-dealt when we consider how we represent them or picture them. Whilst the work proposes that we are inhabiting many "misrepresentations" of the real (for example the view that climate change is not real has impact upon how we act in the world and the world we will produce in the future) the work also understands that we generate world. Often this construction is a machinic or pathological production of image making and representing; it has no reason or science. Artworks that I make via an explication of the relations in causal time-space and conceptual atemporal registers, continue this construction, but demand that we exceed this pathology. The work explores how this can occur when we cannot always rely on evidence and empirical science to instruct our decisions between what is true and what is false. This leads me to continually critique aesthetic expressions, in forms, words and pictures that this non-mirroring or oblique attitude-stance to the real produces.

Question: contemporary art has often been considered to be a critique of society as a system of artificial or non-authentic relations. Many artists suggest that the artworld could be the place for reprogramming social relations according to the idea of collective creation. What is your position with respect to the value of art for societies? What kind of community are you addressing?

AB: The problem of how universal claims can connect to the production of a collective will seems to be implicit to your question. This seems to be that matter of the bridge between philosophy and politics which art has traditionally been set within. Your question of a collective creation also leads us to consider the grounding consensual base for what might be defined within the collective and if art has anything to do with a social program, which would need to take relations seriously rather than identify them as inauthentic and stop there. I think a lot of art has done precisely that, it has exposed the unreal conditions of life and found that pointing to the incapacity of language is enough. This has led art despite its critical claims to settle for a life within the non-normative, that is a space of nature where the belief that one thing leads to another is paramount. In other words, the notion of

Art itself allows for a set of project. In many ways I think that my work tries to adopt the position that art needs to be a constructive project, and that it needs to commit to certain things, and not just to live in a skepticism of everything where the best art can do is show its suspicion of all things. To show that art can construct and commit to something is not a theological project but instead an investment in the structure of logic. The works, images, scenes and sounds that emerge from this exploration might not have the recognizable elements of what we understand to be 'constructive' work, it might not make 'sense' in traditional forms of the understanding. This is because the constructive constructs the possibilities for what can be in front of us, and therefore does not offer a view that we are so familiar with or might be comfortable with or know how to use. In that sense, the work could be instrumental, but it's not an instrument that we necessarily know how to use. This description then is not so much a call to an existing audience/collective, but the call to the production of collectivity in itself.
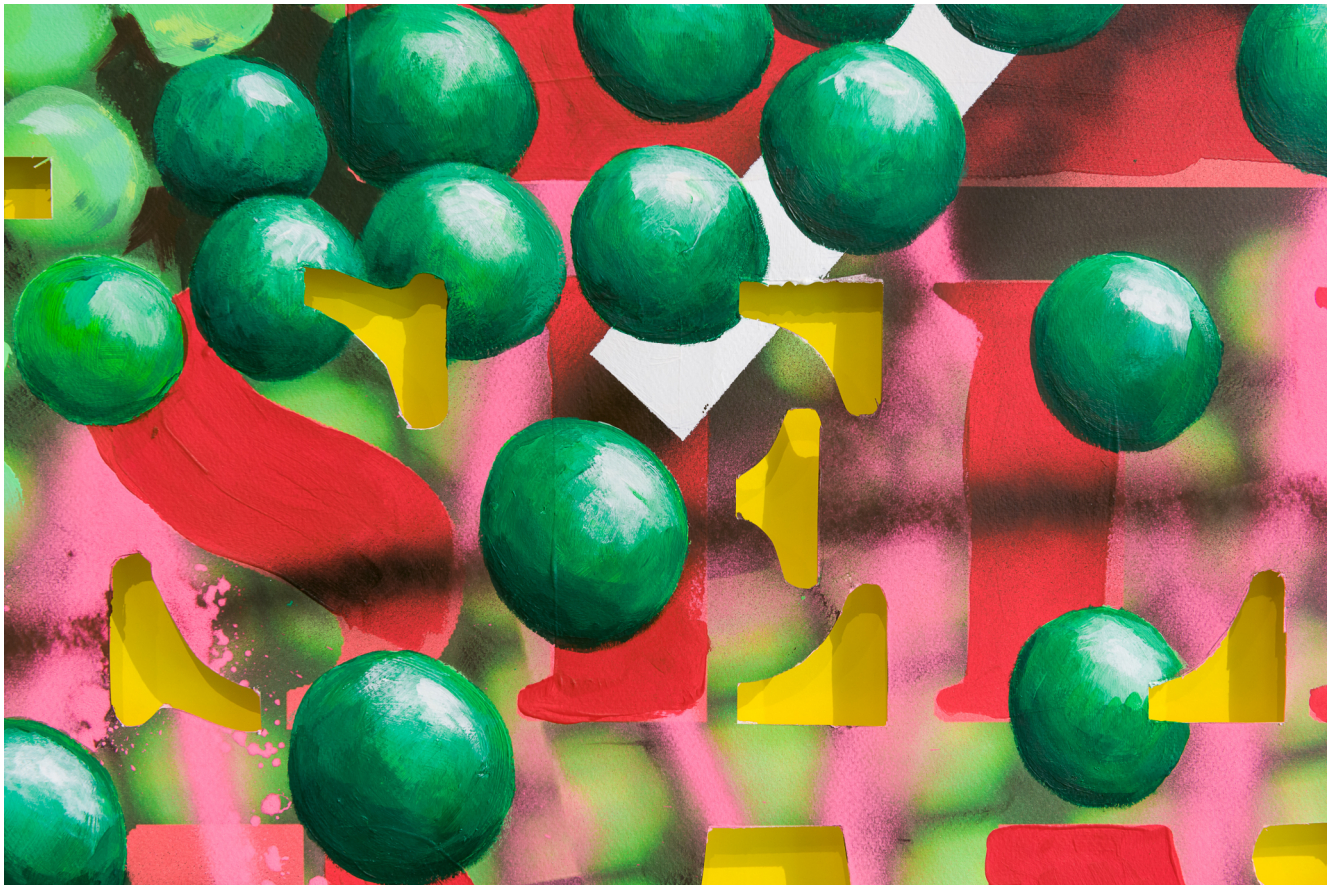
Self Conception does not equal Self Transformation (detail), 2016