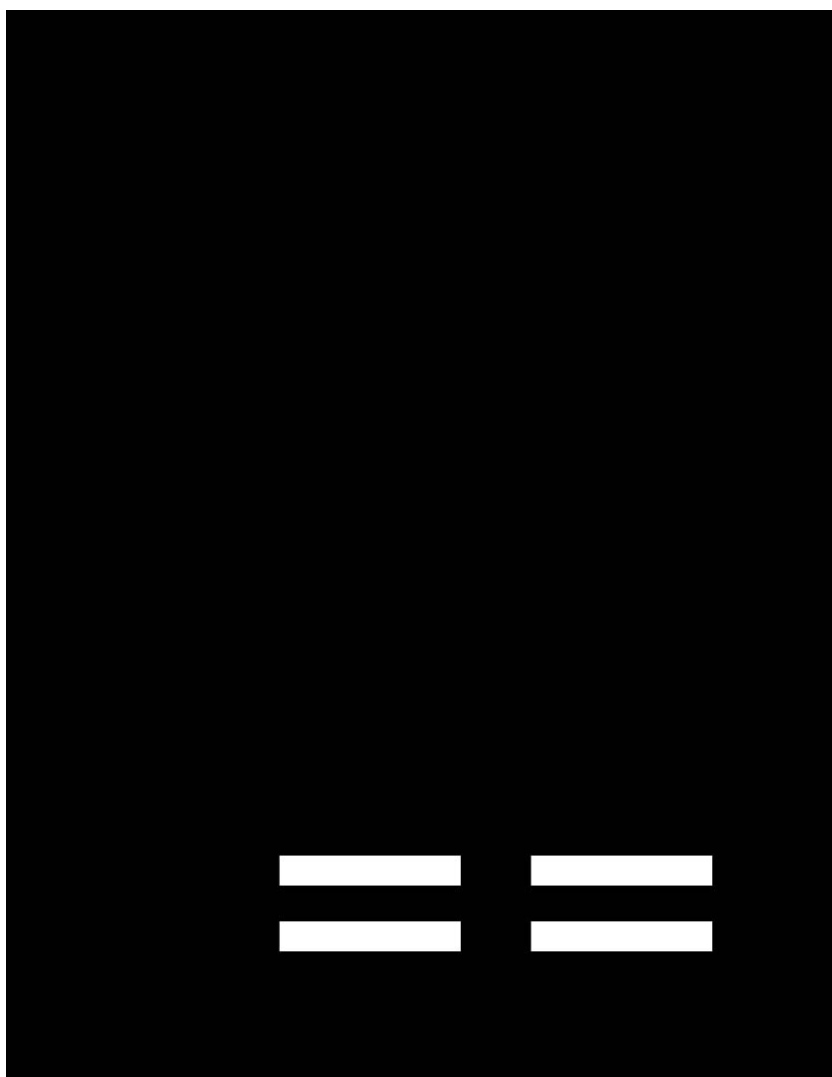




michèle didier

= =

Matt Keegan



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Matt Keegan

mfc-michèle didier has the great pleasure to invite you to the preview presentation of its latest publication, the work == by New York based artist Matt Keegan. == features newly commissioned essays, interviews between artists and editioned works.

== is not the catalogue of the exhibition. It is exactly the opposite, it is an independent project, conceived ahead of the exhibition. In fact, Matt Keegan has devised the exhibition from the publication, rather than the traditional reverse.

The first proposal for the exhibition will be held from May 12 to June 30 at mfc-michèle didier gallery, and the two following proposals are already scheduled in New York in June and in Los Angeles in September.

The exhibition at mfc-michèle didier will thus show a work by each of the internationally known artists who are at the core of ==’s publication: Liz Deschenes, Nikolas Gambaroff, James Richards, Kay Rosen et Erika Vogt.

You will also be able to see the works by the artists who contributed as well to the publication: Ajay Kurian & Sreshta Rit Premnath, Caleb Considine & Caitlin MacBride, Josh Tonsfeldt & Uri Aran, Alex Kwartler & Michele Abeles, Paul Lee & Jacob Robichaux.

The curious title of this publication refers to html programming and the double equal sign is used to create equivalent fields. Open to various pronunciations, this symbol points to the plurality of this edition and its future life as a computer file.

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Edition

The edition consists of a book containing 108 pages and measuring 29,3 x 22,8 cm.

The ten critical texts regarding the five artists are from Sarah Charlesworth and Carter Mull for Liz Deschenes, Chris Kraus and Nora Schultz for Nikolas Gambaroff, Ed Atkins and Steve Reinke for James Richards, Alejandro Cesarco and Cary Leibowitz for Kay Rosen, Math Bass et John Miller for Erika Vogt.

The interviews are from Ajay Kurian & Sreshta Rit Premnath, Caleb Considine & Caitlin MacBride, Josh Tonsfeldt & Uri Aran, Alex Kwartler & Michele Abeles, Paul Lee & Jacob Robichaux.

This edition contains also five multiples by Liz Deschenes, Nikolas Gambaroff, James Richards, Kay Rosen and Erika Vogt.

The edition containing the book and the five multiples is limited to 150 numbered and signed copies and 50 A.P. It is published and produced in 2012 by mfc - michèle didier.

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Textes critiques

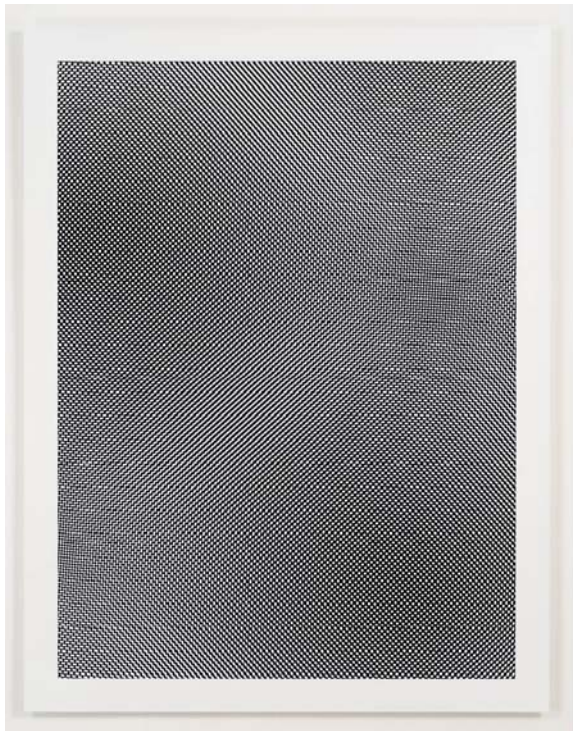
Sarah Charlesworth and Carter Mull for Liz Deschenes

Chris Kraus and Nora Schultz for Nikolas Gambaroff

Ed Atkins and Steve Reinke for James Richards

Alejandro Cesarco and Cary Leibowitz for Kay Rosen

Math Bass and John Miller for Erika Vogt



The Silver Monochromes of Liz Deschenes

Carter Mull

In 1999 Bill Gates wrote, "As I was preparing my speech for our first CEO summit in the spring of 1997, I was pondering how the digital age will fundamentally alter business. I wanted to go beyond a speech of dazzling technology advances and address the questions that business leaders wrestle with all the time. . . . If the 1980s were about quality and the 1990s were about reengineering, then the 2000s will be about velocity. About how quickly the nature of business will change. About how quickly business itself will be transacted. About how information access will alter the lifestyle of consumers and their expectations of business. Quality improvements and business process improvements will occur far faster. When the increase in velocity of business is great enough, the very nature of business changes. . . . People have lived for so long without information at their fingertips that they don't realize what they're missing. One of the goals in my speech to the CEOs was to raise their expectations. I wanted them to be appalled by how little they got in the way of actionable information from their current IT investments. I wanted CEOs to demand a flow of information that would give them quick, tangible knowledge about what was really happening with their customers."¹



His voice is filled with triumph and critique. It's as though he saw the decade ahead with crystal clarity and, like a writer of speculative fiction, was able to actualize his vision into reality through his eminence as a broadcaster of thought to a very empowered class. Not only has digitization given us the conveniences of e-mail as well as the luxury of tracking a UPS delivery—it has also given us the incessant gurgling of the cell phone, that little Tamagotchi ever in need of a tap or stroke. Digitization has made speed count more than ever. For Gates, velocity is the actualization of a dream—a kind of utopian fulfillment of a much larger intellectual and industrial project. After all, he's on top. His industrial production has implications that are greater than simply cultural. His work has literally changed space and time for subjects of the first, second, and third worlds. As a subject of global capitalism working in an engaged, albeit destabilized, space, I also shudder at the ring of this prescient quote.

Unfortunately, the increased velocity in the world and the further sense of precariousness we feel creates some rough patches. Such speed creates pathologies that are both minor and build over time, clouding our ability to think clearly. Ironically, the space of art—institutional, activist, or commercial—provides a sense of refrain—either critical, performative, or affirmative—from our daily grind. Yet it is rare that art-objects open up a space of philosophical questioning that addresses the pressing conditions of our time, as predicated by Gates's delivery to his fellow producers. Clock time is an institutional

Carter Mull for Liz Deschenes, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012



Pictures and Early Words

This is the third of four early journals written in 1970 (*The First*); in 1971 (*Country Girl*); in 1972 (*Pictures and Early Words*); in 1973 (*Big Words*). These journals depict the development of the clairvoyance from feeling and seeing auras, to seeing pictures, and finally the slow development of seeing words which first appeared singly, then later in short phrases. The culmination of this seeing of words resulted in the *Clairvoyant Journal*, written in 1974 and published by Angel Hair Books, now known as United Artists Books, in 1978, and in *many* books that followed.

The first word I saw was in August, 1972. It was

The word W

R

O

N

G seen diagonally on my pant leg.

This book begins in September, 1972.

*Hannah Weiner
Silent Teacher*

Semaphore

For Nikolas Gambaroff

Among my old notebooks I find one labeled "CAPITAL - notebook #2." It's a notebook I kept during my first year in New York, which was most likely 1976, though I've lied about dates for so long in an effort to keep my age-or rather my "generational identity"-ambiguous. I don't really remember. The poet Fanny Howe remarked, as she gets older, the illusion she's happiest to shed is the importance of being accepted by members of her generation. Who, I asked Fanny, did she consider her generation? The poet John Wieners

sprang to mind. In his magnificence, his dispossessed Boston Brahmin's stately clairvoyance, I've always considered him to be her closest peer. No, Fanny said. He was several years older. And then she named several names-New York names, names of poets whose work seems to me of no more than contextual interest.

I was born in New York in the mid-1950s and have never once felt an affinity with what could be described as "my generation." Too young to participate in the events of the '60s, too old to convincingly mimic the ontological amnesia of those growing up two decades later.

Chris Kraus for Nikolas Gambaroff, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012



James Richards Steve Reinke

Maybe it's good to start a project with low expectations. Or, if not low, exactly, vague. The people at Light Industry in New York were putting together a packed slide of events as their contribution to the alternative art fair No Soul for Sale. They asked Jim and I if we would hastily assemble an exquisite corpse compilation from our respective stores of audio-visual material. I didn't really know Jim then, not really. We had met when he was a participant in Luit's associate program in London and I was doing an exhibition there. But we didn't really hang out at all or even talk, despite the efforts of Mike Spetinger and Ben Cook, who both told me I should pay attention to James' work. And if I didn't really pay attention to it then, it was only because the opportunity did not present itself. I was sent back home to America with a DVD

Image taken
by James Richards
at the Experimental TV Centre,
2010

Steve Reinke for James Richards, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012



Math Bass for Erika Vogt, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012

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Interviews

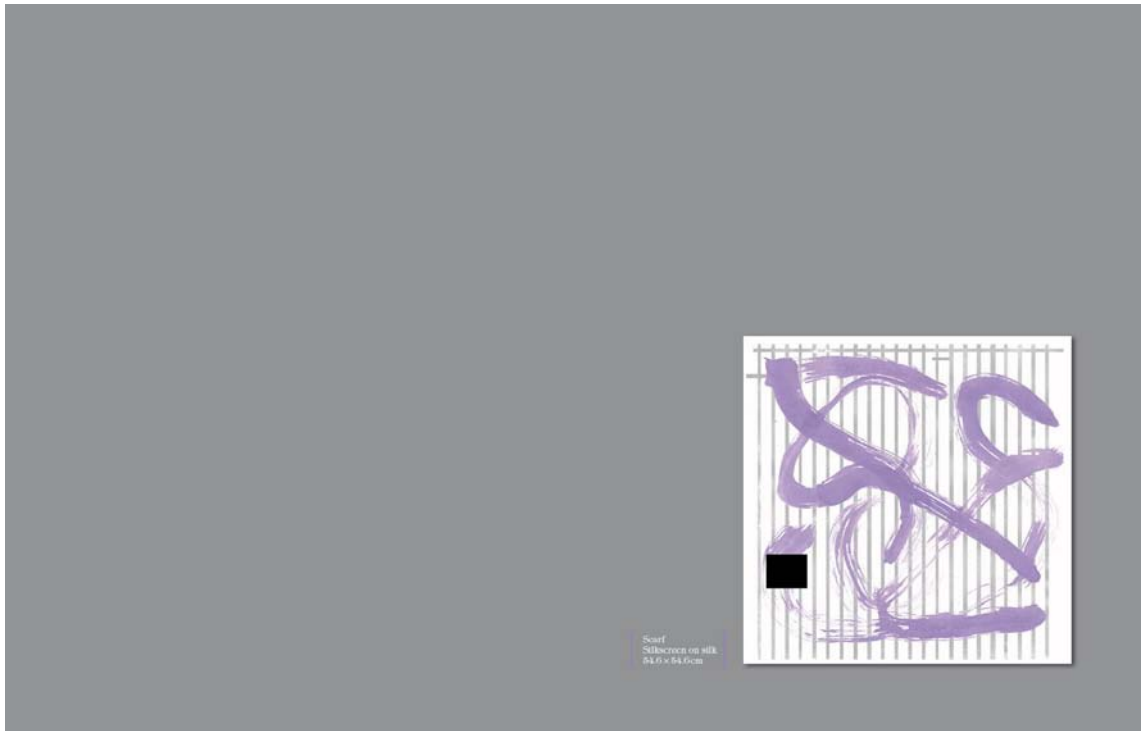
Michele Abeles & Alex Kwartler

Uri Aran & Josh Tonsfeldt

Caleb Considine & Caitlin MacBride

Ajay Kurian & Sreshta Rit Premnath

Paul Lee & Jacob Robichaux



Michele Abeles & Alex Kwartler, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012



Uri Aran & Josh Tonsfeldt, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012



devices and their development by groups, specifically by teens who aren't given much verbal agency. Historically, Japanese kids' responses to Disney cartoons lead to the development of manga, and for them it became a new mode of communication that was specific to their own culture and their place in it. It's an interesting reflection of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature and deterritorialization, or the

process of an under-represented group co-opting the language of their oppressor and altering it for their own purposes, which then becomes a source of power. To use a minor language is to take a major language, displace it, then replace it. Instead of confronting something with opposition, you subvert it from within. For children this can be a safer and more advantageous mode of

exercising yourself. What's interesting about anime and manga is that they have become a sort of universal language among youth. What was once a specifically Japanese style is now super popular in Western cultures. I get a huge kick out of a Web site called [deviantART](#), a place where kids and teens share their latest achievements in manga drawings. Some the repeated, perfected styles and characters deteriorate the

individuality of the drawings, but what they lack in originality brings them closer to a new signal or a series of symbols that string together a form of communication. It also further breaks down divisions of origin such as nationality, race, class, and gender, and it reflects the globalization of current youth identity. I'm also interested in the popularity of this style as related to Julia Kristeva's concept of adolescence, or more specifically, the "adolescent novel"; how the concept of adolescence is a "crisis structure" because it represents the open borders "between differences of sex and identity, of reality and fantasy, of art and discourse." Our media tends to represent teens as being a threat because they're still developing, and that transient identity poses a threat to the norm. Their identity hangs in an undecided and fluid place that engenders more possibilities than the established and commodified system has to offer. Kristeva thinks that they cross between these borders so easily because they "nearly mirror the free flow . . . of our mass-media society." Young people are finding modes of communication that suit the media they've grown up with and therefore manage to be both easily exchanged and still threatening, confusing, in their simplicity and juvenile nature. I find the communication systems of overlooked or underrepresented pockets of society provocative in their ability to survive and thrive despite having little validity in mainstream or more established eyes. The desire to exchange information is

inherently human, yet having real communication has always been one of the hardest things to attain.

CC You mentioned that working on paintings for other people as a job roughly corresponded to your move away from the kind of brushwork and conventional applications of paint that show your "hand." It's clearly not a sharp split. Your earlier paintings employed spray applications, stencils, and references to graphic or decorative mark-making, which already puts your indexical touch at a remove. But that shift toward mark-making and the inclusion of directly appropriated texts happened while you were being paid to make work for others using traditional paint application. This could be an entry point into the poetics of your process.

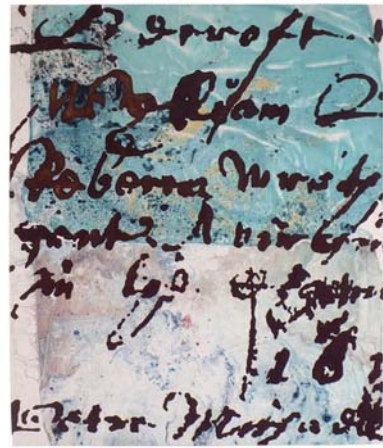
CM Well, early on I did use some found images, but overall the spray paint, the mark-making techniques, and using more specific found images came after I'd begun working as an artist's assistant. I had worked as one before, but I did not actually make the artist's work. When I started painting as a job—spending forty hours a week making someone else's work—that was when I started searching for new ways to paint. In some ways it was a relief because I'd been searching for a way to get out of my comfort zone and pursue other interpretations of painting. But on some levels it was also a bit frightening. At work I was painting super tight images that weren't allowed to have

visible brushstrokes, and that tendency began to infiltrate my own work. I guess it's an occupational hazard of the artist assistant. At one point I took a month off from the job to go to a residency and I found myself fighting with my own hand. I'd spent over a thousand hours in this other style and I had to find a way to separate myself from it. It's interesting to watch your own hand become commoditized. It's been talked about quite a bit, the factory setup and market demand that so many artists

operate within. Yet for me, participating on that level as an assistant is what sparked the move away from the idea of a true image or a true mark that comes from a privileged, individual artist. Much of the work I'm doing now is a layering or interweaving of readymades. Both the mark-making technique—using paint in water—and the use of found images remove the indexical touch and much of the brain-to-hand decision making. Yet images continue to exist, and painting continues to exist, and I

suppose I'm interested in exploring both of those while acknowledging the current state of art production.

CC That makes me think of the way that abstraction operates in your paintings: it's somewhere between incident and motif. The element of incident is fairly obvious—these are chance operations. But I say motif because the way they act as a support for graphic imagery makes them seem like either craft or commercially-produced patterning—the



Caleb Considine & Caitlin MacBride, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012

REALITY AND TRANSLATION



R: I feel like when we talk about notions of reality and translation, we can't get around their separation because of the very language we are using. It's written into our language. So perhaps our understanding is reality and there's no other reality, but our language makes it difficult to articulate that.

A: Yes, it really does seem like a false problem. When we realize that other animals are capable of seeing the world in a different way—that birds can see a whole range of colors that we don't, say—it means that facets of reality exist that are as real as ours. And in knowing how other beings experience the world, we are able to understand not only the contingency of our own experiences but also the truth of all those particular experiences.

R: And the importance of acknowledging our inability to have every experience or perceive everything at once.

A: Why is that the Holy Grail? To experience everything all at once?

R: There's a great Borges story called "The Aleph," in which a guy finds a point in space in his basement and realizes that if he looks through it, he sees everything in the universe at once. It's just overwhelming. The thing that was difficult for me to understand was how he knew that he was seeing everything. How could you ever know that you are seeing everything, because when you see things that you have never seen before you don't necessarily perceive them as things at all. They might just be perceived as noise.

A: That's another linguistic deficiency. I think. We are able to point to everything, but that doesn't mean we understand.

R: We can say "the world," for instance, and understand it as a concept, although we only experience one point in the world at any moment, one climate, one person's being...

A: In a way it's about being OK with the infinite regress of all objects all the time, even the fractal existence of the grass that we were talking about. There's so much information layered in one blade of grass: there's the cellular level, the molecular, the atomic, the subatomic. You keep going down, and we don't precisely know when it ends.

R: Zizek has this ridiculous factum idea. In a video game, when you get too close to an object or a part of the architecture that has not been fully rendered, you encounter a weird pixelation or fragmentation. In the same way that video game reality wasn't constructed fully, he proposes that our reality is only constructed to a certain resolution. So when we get too close, a new reality has to be produced in order to satisfy our looking. If you get too close, an atom is produced, if you get closer, an electron and a proton are produced...

A: It's an awesome idea, but it seems so fucking self-centered...

R: It's a throwback in a way: the idea that the production of reality depends on our intentions.

A: It's funny that he's involved in any kind of ethical philosophy because that idea seems so radically unethical.

ETHICS AND BUREAUCRACY

R: Well, in terms of ethics versus, ethics is an important issue. On the one hand, it's true that we experience the world in different ways and in a fractured way, so it's already impossible to fully understand the world, our relations, and the existence of other things. At the same time there are other beings in the world, and we must have relationships with them. The question of ethics is complicated because even the most basic ethical statement cannot be grounded easily in logic.

A: In the university setting you have layers and layers of bureaucracy. Often what ends up happening is that the position of bureaucracy is to strengthen and poorly defined that the people who run it do not realize the simplicity of their position. If they did they would be able to make it more complex and take on more information. They simply end up following protocol like "these are these forms, fill them out." And sure, there must be some protocol, but you're not a fucking machine. What they are doing, ultimately, does not make any sense, but because of strange bureaucratic accountability, the program stays in place.

In the same way, if we were to produce any form of ethics on a larger social scale, you need a bureaucracy and you need it to be really terrible.

R: Well, there's the law...

A: Yes, I guess the activity of pushing up against the law and speaking for those who can't speak for themselves are all ways in which we change the program. For me, I can't see any other way besides writing a program that will always be just simple.

R: By the time anything becomes law, it is distorted out to fit all kinds of agendas. There are business school ethics. "This is what I think is right and if you disagree, I will tell you." And there are democratic ethics, which do not always work as we wish but seem to be the best thing we've come up with. Then there are moral ethics, as you were saying. There's the original line of the institution, the school or the law or whatever, and if you need help and you need a particular individual in one of these institutions, someone who knows you, you might ask, "Listen, can you just do this? You know me. I know you. Let's just get this done." Or a moral ethical issue, there are a number of possibilities. If nothing helps, I think it's because of history.

A: It's also hard to implement these kinds of thought and changes in a systematic way. Right now do you continuously and permanently account for these moral actions when there are major things to deal with that are actually more important than your transgressive words? It's hard to articulate because we would need to function at a higher level to do all these things, and then do them even better. Maybe we will. At least that's what Ray Kurzweil says.

R: Where else?

A: He's the one who's been talking about the event of singularity when humans will merge with the technologies that they have been creating. He believes that at some point some technologies will be what keeps us alive about indefinitely. That there will be some form coming through our veins that will repair us and also radically change our intelligence and memory and all of those things. The processing power of a computer has grown about a billion times. He thinks our own human processing power will increase a billion times. And then what?

R: Then we'll be flipping through channels a billion times faster. We'll be doing dumb things even more efficiently. [laughs]

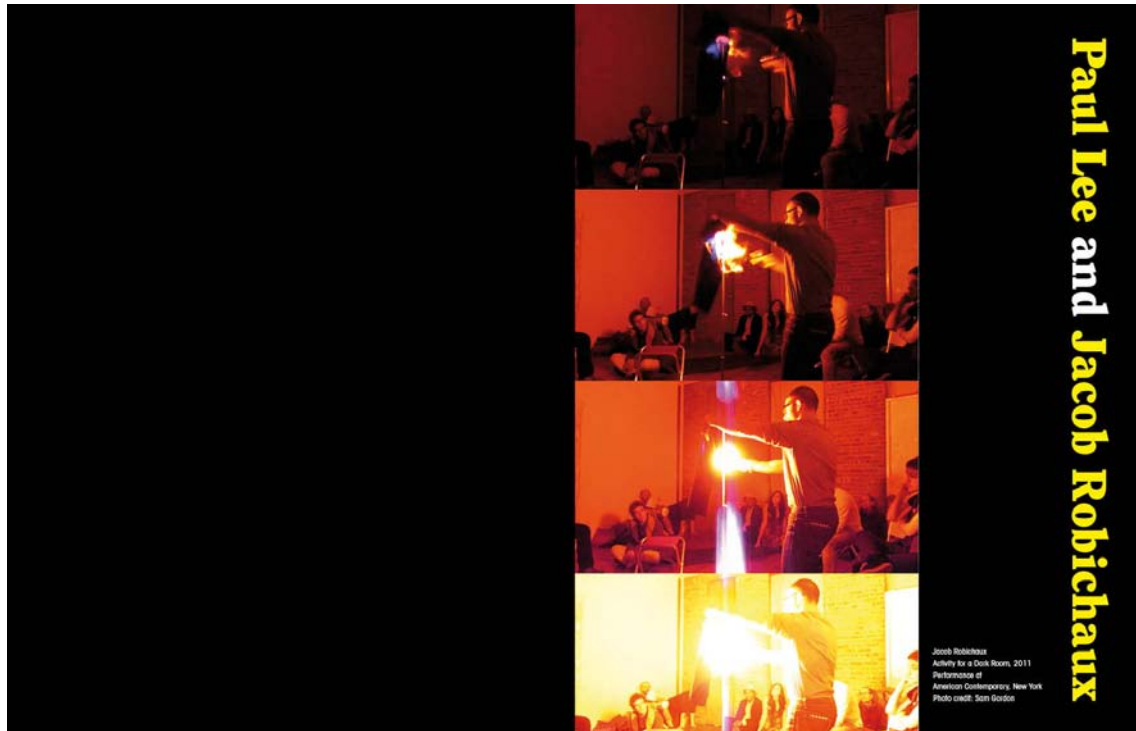
A: Machines for the accelerated mind.

R: Penography for the accelerated mind.

A: We'll have to think of new visual structures, too. Dogs can see more than just per second than we can. Before TV went digital, dogs didn't have any interest in television because they could see that it wasn't reality. They only saw black spaces in frames so they were like, "Some dog!" but they'd watch night TV. Oh no.

[Bird droppings land on Ajay's knee. We get distracted trying to find paper napkins, and the conversation ends.]

Ajay Kurian & Sreshta Rit Premnath, ==, Matt Keegan, 2012



Paul Lee & Jacob Robichaux, = =, Matt Keegan, 2012

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Multiples

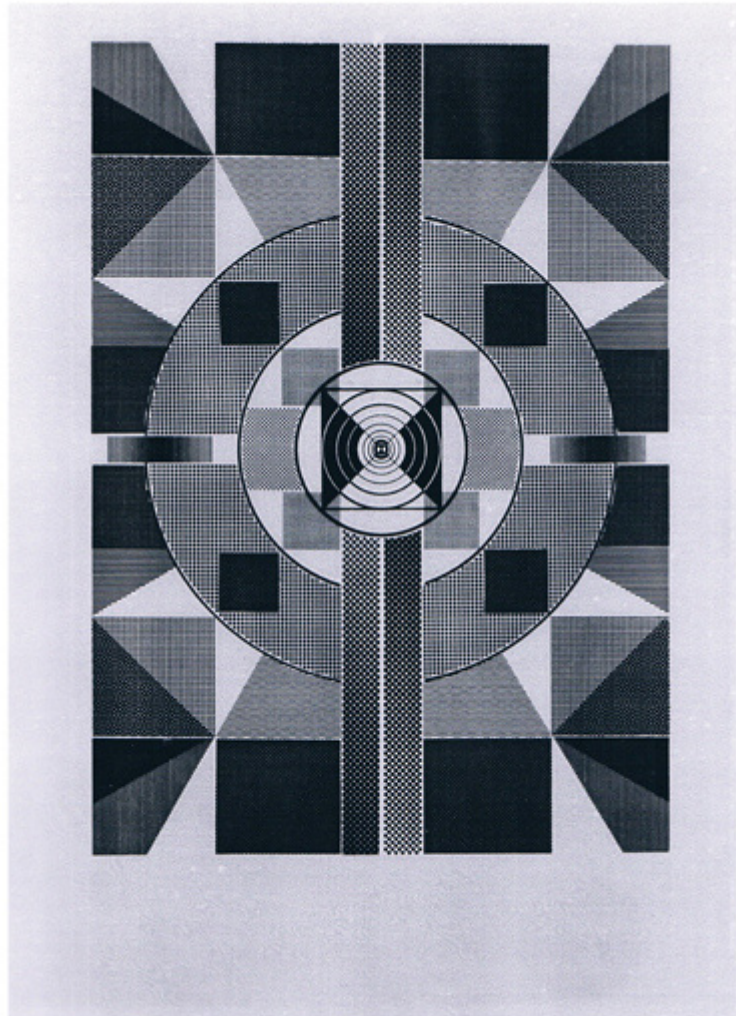
Liz Deschenes

Nikolas Gambaroff

James Richards

Kay Rosen

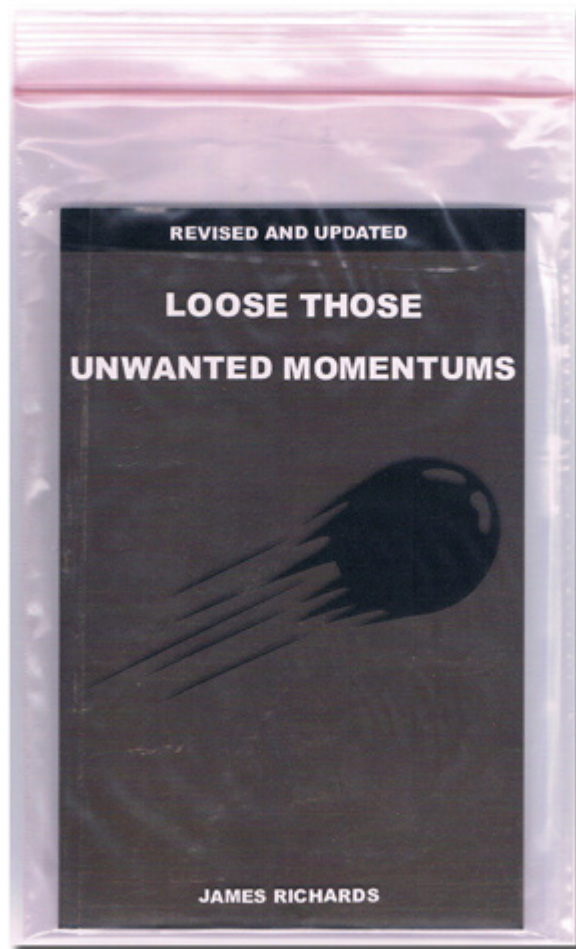
Erika Vogt



Liz Deschenes, *Untitled*, printed rhodoid, 21,6 x 28 cm



Nikolas Gambaroff, *Untitled*, Lino print, 22,2 x 29,9 cm



James Richards, *Untitled*, printed plate in pink plastic bag, dimension of the plate: 12,7 x 19,7 cm, dimension of the plastic bag: 15 x 25,4 cm



Erika Vogt, *Untitled*, inkjet print on matt cardboard, 12,6 x 10,1 cm



Kay Rosen, *Untitled*, mixed media: cardboard, plastic and photograph, 18,9 x 11,4 cm

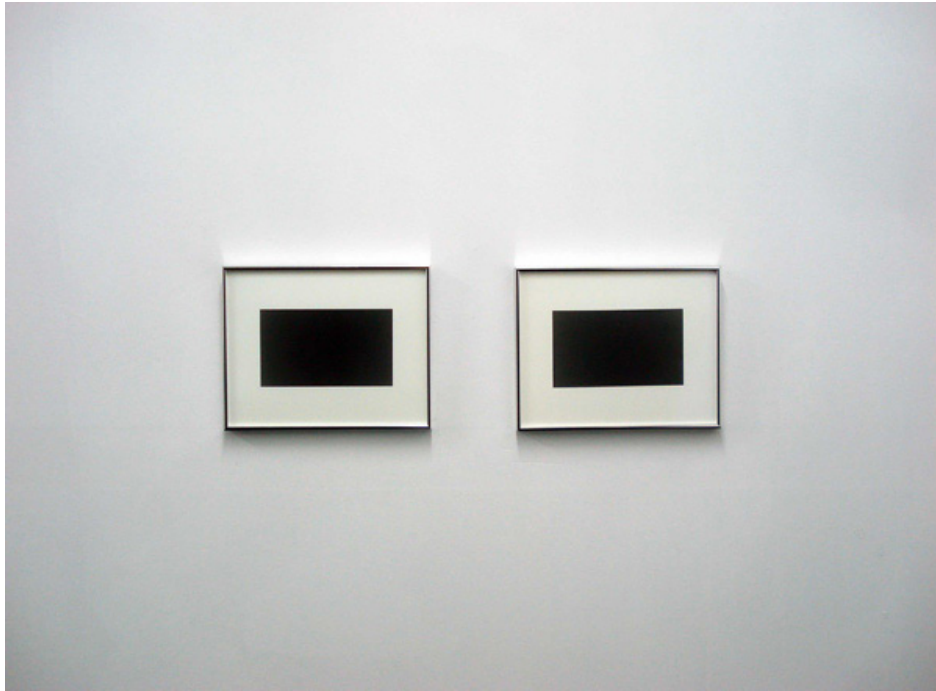
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Exhibition

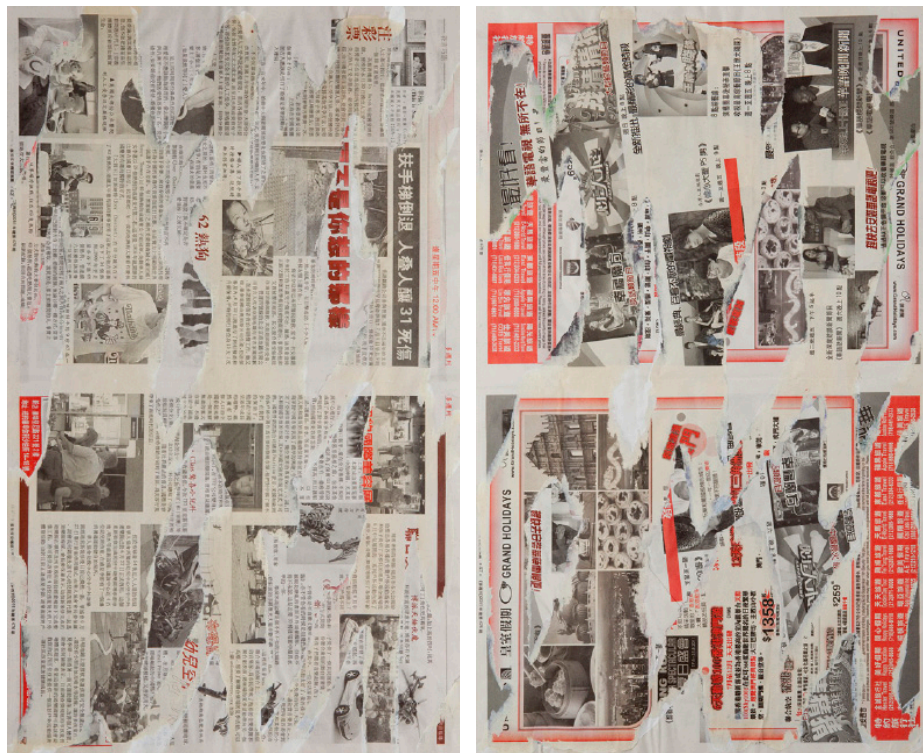
mfc - michèle didier presents the first exhibition of == by Matt Keegan.

The works by the following artists will be on show:

Liz Deschenes
Nikolas Gambaroff
James Richards
Kay Rosen
Erika Vogt



Liz Deschenes, *Study for Black and white #1 et #2*, monochromatic photograms, 25,7 x 34,4 cm (Framed: 28,4 x 35,9 cm)



Nikolas Gambaroff, *Untitled*, 2011, 2 frames: Acrylic paint on newsprint, 50,4 x 30,4 cm (Framed: 62,5 x 42,6 x 4 cm)



James Richards & Steve Reinke, *Disambiguation*, video projection, color, sound, 45 minutes

The Man Who Would
Be King
The Man Who Would
Be B.B. King
The Man Who Would
Be Queen Bee
The Man Who Would
Be Aunt Bea
The Man Who Would
Be Bea Arthur
The Man Who Would
Be King Arthur
The Man Who Would
Be Art King

Kay Rosen, *The Man*, vinyl matt black,
dimension variable, edition of 3



Erika Vogt, *Untitled*, drawing, 31 x 24,8 cm

The works by the following artists are also on show:

Michele Abeles & Alex Kwartler

Uri Aran & Josh Tonsfeldt

Caleb Considine & Caitlin MacBride

Ajay Kurian & Sreshta Rit Premnath

Paul Lee & Jacob Robichaux



michèle didier



For any further information or for image requests, please contact us at the following email address:
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Opening hours: from Tuesday to Saturday from 12 am to 7 pm

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