



Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA)

Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art presents paperless

April 27–September 16, 2012

Participating artists

Natasha Bowdoin, Peter Callesen, Doug Coupland, Simryn Gill, Katie Holten, **Kiel Johnson**, Maskull Lasserre, Nava Lubelski, Oscar Santillan, Karen Sargsyan, Jude Tallichet, Yuken Teruya, Oscar Tuazon, Johannes VanDerBeek, Xu Bing

Curated by Steven Matijcio

Made possible by an Emily Hall Tremaine Exhibition Award

The medium of paper is a fragile vehicle—carrying the immense weight of written thought, but acutely vulnerable to the forces of travel, climate, and time. This endangered status accelerates in an increasingly digitized and environmentally conscious society, where the “paperless economy” is turning said material into simultaneous antiquity and the abject. Yet even as paper struggles against its purportedly imminent extinction—moving into and out of the archives at once—artists around the world are venerating its precarious empire.

paperless celebrates these refugees of the information age, presenting theatrical elegies to the pariah of so-called “progress.” These works are the anachronistic and the ignoble; interweaving the formidable skill characteristic of cut paper work with the baroque knell of memento mori. Beyond the decorative, ornamental, and exotic, this project provides the platform for paper to translate its societal meaning (rather than just its materiality) as the fodder for cultural reflection.

The artists in paperless include Karen Sargsyan, who creates carnivalesque tableaux evoking the revelry of a royal court whose seams have begun to separate. From standard A4 sheets to wall-sized panels, Peter Callesen presents melancholic cut-outs that evoke playful dialectics of absence, presence and the limits of legacy. Boutique shopping bags undergo similar metamorphosis in the work of Yuken Teruya, who fashions fragile forests in the wombs of consumerism. Oscar Santillan collects the ink from chemically treated pages of the New York Times to create memorials to the flayed skin of vacated history.

In the opposite direction, pages are compressed, ossified, and exorcised in the visceral neo-vanitas carvings of Maskull Lasserre. Pages are similarly abstracted in the work of North Carolina based artist Nava Lubelski, who salvages shredded drawings, love letters, and rejection notes into bacteria-like growths of quilled memories. With equal applications of elegy and nostalgia, young artists Kiel Johnson and Natasha Bowdoin employ paper in the service of tragi-comic artifacts. In tribute to ancient fables and antiquated technologies, Bowdoin’s lyrical retellings of “magic realism” and Johnson’s reconstituted communication devices flicker in and out of focus—singing an ode to the obsolete.

Katie Holten navigates the life cycle of paper as environmental surrogate by repurposing newspaper into fragile paper-mache effigies of globes and phantom trees. Oscar Tuazon takes a similar approach with the legacy of utopian architectures, constructing life-size geodesic structures (out of used cardboard boxes) that crumple over the course of lived exercise. Johannes VanDerBeek’s archaeology is more visceral and ancient at once, compressing and sanding magazines like Time, Life, and National Geographic into the building blocks of contemporary ruins.

Jude Tallichet’s Ruined Bookshelf is also frozen in time, paying ode to a collapsed bookshelf in her home with a life-size cast immortalized in bronze. The life of books also informs the work of Simryn Gill and roving Canadian artist/author Doug Coupland of Generation X fame. The former delicately tears, folds and compresses pages into fragile vessels like pearls and paper boats, while the latter corporeally chews the pages of his novels into the raw material of equally delicate wasp nests.

Catalog

With the uncertain future of paper at its nucleus, the catalog for paperless provides a unique opportunity to apply parallel actions in/on the object of inquiry. Designed by Luke Hayman and Shigeto Akiyama of Pentagram, this pseudo-book will feature essays by Xu Bing, David Reinfurt (of Dexter Sinister), and exhibition curator Steven Matijcio. Their essays will never exist on physical pages, instead living as “pre-paper” audio recordings (as read by North Carolina-based authors Rosecrans Baldwin, Holly Iglesias, and Matthew Taylor) and “post-paper” PDFs on an inserted DVD. The pages of the book will be printed on synthetic plastic polymer (used for currencies), while the cover will feature recycled pulp. In so doing, the paperless catalog will inhabit numerous points in the history of print: occupying pages that have already been, as well as pages that will never be.

Source: <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/southeastern-center-for-contemporary-art-presents-paperless/>