THE BOOK LOVERS - A Project about Artists Novels

The Book Lovers, which opens at New York’s EFA Project Space in the Chelsea area of Manhattan this week, takes the form of an exhibition, series of events and a library about the phenomenon of the artist’s novel. The curators, David Manto and Joanna Zelnicka, say that their intention is “to create public awareness” about this subject. Visibility is an important issue as although they can be widely circulated and have a much farther reach than an exhibition - engagement with books is often a solitary experience - the reader, the book.

The exhibition features the work of Tim Etchells, Tim Gidal, Jill Magid, Roei Rosen, Lindsay Seers, Goldin+Senneby, Alexandre Singh, and Jula West. Most of the artists use text or language in their work. Etchells, for example, who published his first novel, The Broken World, in 2006 is known for his text based works, often in lights and in public space. Magid produced the fascinating diatonic surveillance style One Cycle of Memory in the City of L during her time in Liverpool, preparing for the 2006 Liverpool Biennial. Several events are programmed including a presentation by Roei Rosen on the work of Jewish Belgian Surrealist artists and photographer Justine Frank and a public reading performance based on Karen Cyther’s novel The Seven Most Exciting Hours of Mr. Fire’s Life in Twenty-Four Chapters. The novel will be read aloud by actors, each of the twenty-four chapters of the novel read on the relevant hour. The artist duo, Goldin+Senneby will both screen and perform their novel, Looking for Headless.

A library collection of novels written by artists is also available to visitors. Featuring writing from over 140 artists including Carl Andre, Karen Cyther, Salvador Dalí, Tim Etchells, Liam Gillick, Pablo Helguera, Stewart Home, Joseph Kosuth, Yayoi Kusama, Jana Lea, Mai-Thu Perret, Tom McCarthy, Richard Prince, Andy Warhol. This resource had previously been on view at M HKA (Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp, Belgium) and has been acquired by the museum for its collection so will return there permanently. Recent writing is accompanied by older works, for example Salvador Dalí’s 1972 Helden Faces which follows the lives of a group of eccentric 1930’s aristocrats. Also present is Yayoi Kusama who has written several faux-autobiographies including Manhattan Suicide Addict, an account of the years she spend in New York in the 50’s and 60’s.


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