

Et al. etc. presents

***Excerpts from the Red Notebooks***

Anthony Disenza

January 18th - February 29th, 2020

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 18th, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

For his third solo show with Et al., “Excerpts from the Red Notebooks,” Anthony Disenza presents a suite of interpretive works inspired by the journals of the Italian speculative writer and sometime conceptual artist Vittorio Alderotti (1931-1998).

Alderotti, a recluse and autodidact who resided in Turin his entire life, is perhaps best known for *The Abhorred City*, a surrealistic novel that recounts the gradual transformation of the earth’s surface into semi-living, spongiform rock. The “red notebooks” comprise a series of journals kept by Alderotti between 1977 and 1983. Mostly filled with notes for stories and essays, as well as more personal entries recounting Alderotti’s struggles with depression, the notebooks also contain a number of proposals for artworks. These “propositions,” as Alderotti referred to them, may be read more as prompts or scores than understood as discrete artworks, as they rarely indicate the materials or even the appearance of the proposed work. There’s little evidence that Alderotti ever attempted to physically realize any of these works; instead, the propositions seem intended to operate in a speculative or poetic fashion, remaining open to interpretation and imagination. While similar in some ways to the textual scores of Fluxus, Alderotti’s propositions possess a darker, almost gothic sensibility—George Macunias as channeled by Thomas Ligotti.

The red notebooks, which came to light only after Alderotti’s death in 1998, reveal a pervasive fascination with geologic and cosmologic time scales, sometimes juxtaposed in unexpected ways with the more transient and ephemeral aspects of contemporary capitalist experience. (In one hallucinatory entry, Alderotti describes vast clouds of discarded plastic bags transforming into a new kind of weather system as they drift over an ancient seabed.). There is also a preoccupation, bordering on mysticism, with what Alderotti perceived as the uncanny aspects of physical matter; he writes of an inherent agency lurking in even the most seemingly lifeless materials—one utterly indifferent, if not actively hostile, to human concerns. In particular, he was drawn to the dizzying array of synthetic materials and compounds generated in the wake of the industrial revolution, speculating that the production and use of these constituted a new kind of occult practice. In Alderotti’s writing, pollution and toxic waste are frequently equated with a kind of dark alchemy both produced by, and giving rise to, the unconscious forces of modernity.

In some ways these obsessions link Alderotti to the work and writing of artists such as Robert Smithson—but if Smithson’s writing tends to evoke the science-fictional, Alderotti’s sensibilities are more aligned with the literary subgenre known as “cosmic horror,” a category into which much of his own writing would probably fit. References to a wide range of fantastic and occult literature continually crop up in the journals, alongside a tendency towards a psychoanalytic reading of the systems of global production. “All matter is a ghost,” Alderotti declares at once point, “a persistent and persisting traumatic residue resulting from a vast network of forces—cosmic, geologic, biologic, economic, social—interacting in incomprehensibly complex ways. Who knows what strange forms of agency might not arise *from and within* these interactions, agencies whose operations would be utterly incomprehensible—and therefore imperceptible—to humanity?”

For the current exhibition, Disenza has produced a collection of works intended as responses to several of the propositions contained in Alderotti’s journals. Disenza sees these not as attempts to “realize” the propositions, but rather as products of his own engagement with the open architecture of Alderotti’s interests and ideas, as well as with his own affinities for the intersections of fantastic literature, deep time, and late capitalism. Each of the works in the exhibition is titled with the text of one of Alderotti’s original propositions, alongside its English translation.

Works in exhibition. Price list available upon request

*Un'opera che invoca una scala temporale geologica in modo da produrre un senso di sgomento (A work that invokes a geologic time scale in such a manner as to produce a sense of dread)*

Iridium powder, spackle

Dimensions variable.

*Un'opera prodotta al di fuori del tempo evanescente (A work that is made out of [vanishing] time), 2019*

Digital countdown clock, duration of exhibition

Dimensions and duration variable.

*Un'opera intrisa dei luridi colori dell'arcobaleno di un mondo inquinato (A work imbued with the lurid rainbow colors of a polluted world), 2019*

One gallon containers of various liquid products

Dimensions variable.

*Un'opera che non può essere percepita ma che è intollerabile (A work that cannot be perceived but which is intolerable), 2019*

Ultrasonic plug-in pest control devices

Dimensions variable.

*Un insieme di oggetti disposti in preparazione all'indicibile (A set of objects arranged in preparation for the unspeakable), 2019*

Simulaids® Trauma Moulage kit

Dimensions variable.

*Un'opera prodotta da una macchina, per l'utilizzo di altre macchine (A work produced by a machine, for the use of other machines), 2019*

Flat-panel television, Webdriver Torso YouTube channel

*Un'opera fatta per tutti, per tutti/ Un'opera della quale chiunque può fare buon uso (A work made for anyone, for everyone/ A work that anyone can put to good use), 2019*

Stack of weekly coupon flyers from local grocery chain, replenished weekly

Dimensions variable.

*Un'opera che funge da protezione contro le forze dell'invisibile (A Work that Serves as Protection Against the Forces of the Unseen), 2019*

Signal Protect Silver RF/IR shielding film

Dimensions variable