

JOHANNES VOGT

“The Middle”

Curated by Michael Bühler-Rose and John Connelly

October 12 – November 11, 2017

Caroline Wells Chandler
TM Davy
Felix Gonzalez-Torres
Van Hanos
David Horvitz
Kris Martin
Alexandra Forsyth Martinez
Agnieszka Polska
Sérgio Rodrigues
Martha Rosler
Kent Rogowski
Matthew Spiegelman

with selections from the archives of

Amber Brown and
Andy Robertson

The Middle is a sequel to the group exhibition The End, organized by John Connelly and Michael Bühler-Rose in New York City in 2012 at Vogt Gallery. The exhibition is a continuation of the ideas raised by The End’s exploration of the fertile possibilities inherent in destruction, cancellation and culmination.

As such, The Middle interprets the meaning of the center, the unfinished and the liminal in both literal and metaphorical terms. Here, rather than conclusion, the narrative of the middle suggests the transitory, the vital, and the in-between. With the midpoint or median becoming a possible catalyst for self-awareness, reflection and reassessment and a testament of continuity between “the end” of one thing and “the beginning” of another.

The works in The Middle, will touch upon broad themes such as order, gender, and style with many using references to time, history, travel and landscape as metaphors for the transience of human existence. The oblique order of this sequel both subverts expected notion of chronology and functions as an additional commentary on the nature of trilogy in both art and culture.

Caroline Wells Chandler’s exuberant, brightly colorful hand-crocheted works explore notions of queer identity within the spectrum of art historical codes traditionally representing the masculine and the feminine. Here in Strange Attractor for Agnes Martin, 2017 a typically ambiguous but adamantly queer figure does a headstand whilst beaming with vitality in a muted, lined leotard studded with minimalist black, grey and blue triangles.

TM Davy’s realist paintings typically engage the subject of portraiture and representation paired with a sincere reverence for human sentience and our ability to comprehend our own mortality. In Partial Solar Eclipse from the Beach at Fire Island and Afterimage of My Hand Over the Last Waning Crescent Moon Davy captures both rare and common moments of astrological phenomenon, rituals of cosmic existence that have repeated for millennia while still serving to signify both mundane and momentous points in time.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ work engages layers of meaning and content using common objects and materials to comment on qualities of uniqueness and reproducibility amongst the enduring nature

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of change. “Double Fear”, a black and white composition of ten small circles uses appropriated, abstracted images of crowds to suggest a morass displacing one another as they shift and adapt. The ongoing crises and anxiety suffered by contemporary political refugees is but one timely reference suggested by this multi-layered work.

Van Hanos' paintings uses a variety of visual styles to produce work that directly engages the canon of painting in art-history. In Hanos's work academicism and realism often collide with abstraction, the surreal or the unfinished. For this exhibition Hanos uses a method he has employed in the past to excavate layers of pigment, imagery and line from an overworked canvas. Thus Hanos reminds us that the artistic process is an intuitive and mercurial project with the prospect of the “finished” vs. “unfinished” providing gateways for both additional conundrums and fertile possibilities.

David Horvitz's Untitled (Dead Horse Bay) began with Horvitz combing the beach in 2014 in search of sea glass at Dead Horse Bay, a small body of water near the Rockaway Inlet off the southern coast of Brooklyn. The fragments were then melted and re-blown to form new vessels based on watercolor sketches by the artist. Because different pieces of glass have different molecular structures, and thus varying rates of expansion and contraction, these new sculptures made of man-made materials aged in nature for decades are likely to change in the coming years: cracks may form, shards may peel away. Repair (or acquiescence) of these transformations may be necessary.

Alexandra Forsyth Martinez's hand blown hourglass stand as both a body and a way to count time passing, and the body falling apart. For one year Forsyth collected all the bodily detritus in her daily maintenance and upkeep, from q-tips to feminine napkins and in a performative video cremated them. In “The End” she uses her own ashes as the sands of the hourglass as a reminder of how time passes and continue to act as the great ravager of all material elements.

Kris Martin uses recurring themes in his work such as time, history and the transience of human existence. His artwork also explores the relationship between the creators and consumer of art, and combines elements of contemplation, humour and playfulness. Self Portrait (pins) is from a series of self-portraits using found items where the objects provide quiet clues to the artist's' identity, aesthetic and interests. Here, the perceptual space between the two pins suggests how the mapping of a life from one end to the other creates an individual yet undetermined identity.

Agnieszka Polska's video Future Days creates a phantasmagoric image of a heaven inhabited by dead artists representing the avant-garde. This artistic purgatory becomes a stage for eternal discussions between the deceased, who never had a chance to meet during their lives; artists from Western Europe or North America, such as Charlotte Posenenske, Lee Lozano, Paul Thek or Bas Jan Ader, are confronted with such Eastern European colleagues as artist Włodzimirz Borowski and theoretician Jerzy Ludwiński. With a Beckett like repetition Future Days addresses mechanisms of legitimization and exclusion in language, consciousness, and art history.

Sérgio Roberto Santos Rodrigues was a Brazilian architect and designer. Along with Joaquim Tenreiro and José Zanine Caldas, he was a pioneer in mid-century design who used native traditional raw materials such as jacaranda, peroba and imbuia to create icons of Brazilian high modernism. Contemporary of Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa, his furniture was utilized in large scale in the construction of Brazil's capital Brasília. Here his small “Eleh” bench in jacaranda from 1965 acts as both a functional and aesthetic commentary on the arc of regional style in periods of art history.

Kent Rogowski's Love=Love is a series of collages that were created using pieces from more than 60 store-bought photo-based puzzles. Although each jigsaw piece is meant to fill a unique space in the overall composition, Rogowski found that these parts are sometimes interchangeable across puzzles within a particular brand. Therefore, the assemblages that

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constitute Love=Love are made using primarily the flower and sky portions from each of the boxes, reconfigured by the artist into surreal landscapes. These new arrangements are intended to disrupt the banal and bucolic images of the original puzzles, while offering playful and imaginative alternatives to more traditional ways of seeing.

Martha Rosler Since the early 1970s, through her photomontages, photographs, videos, installations, and critical writings, Martha Rosler has explored what mass-media images and public spaces reveal about power and persuasion in late capitalist society. "In the Place of the Public: The Airport Series," her photographic exploration of the airport as postmodern space, dates from 1983 to the present. In the evolution of this series, Rosler has come to recognize that airports function as a microcosm or model of the world as it is right now, giving clues to how we as individuals think about space, and how institutions think about the landscape of transport, passage, and sociability.

Matthew Spiegelman series Collected Film Works began as a way for the artist to define his personal history through the iconography of pop-cinema. Title Sequence Escape from New York and LA references two cities where the artist has lived the majority of his life. In the image presented here, lengths of 35mm movie trailers are stretched and torqued in front of backlit shadow-patterned scrims. To further accentuate the physical properties of these photographs, Spiegelman fabricate frames in color-stained woods and plastic acetates to complement specific content in the image.

Amber Brown is a graphic artist whose work and activities coincided with the emergence of a new era of extreme commercial arts in the 1950's and 60's. She is proficient in calligraphy, photography, drawing, painting, printmaking, lithography, typography, serigraphy (silk-screen printing), and bindery. She was professionally employed in the graphics department of the Enoch Pratt free library (the public library of Baltimore city) before retiring to re-enter a career in making contemporary art using her personal archive. Although Brown rarely publically exhibited her graphic art work her commissioned designs for Enoch Pratt garnered her a cult following and she was especially influential on the generation preceding what later became known as the "pictures" generation.

Andy Robertson shares his archive of books, periodicals and posters from the 1960's-1980's. This selection from the archive focuses on obscure and some less obscure artists from an era of pioneering sculptors and painters that found themselves making important groundbreaking work, that set a foundation, and stepping stone for future generations of artists.