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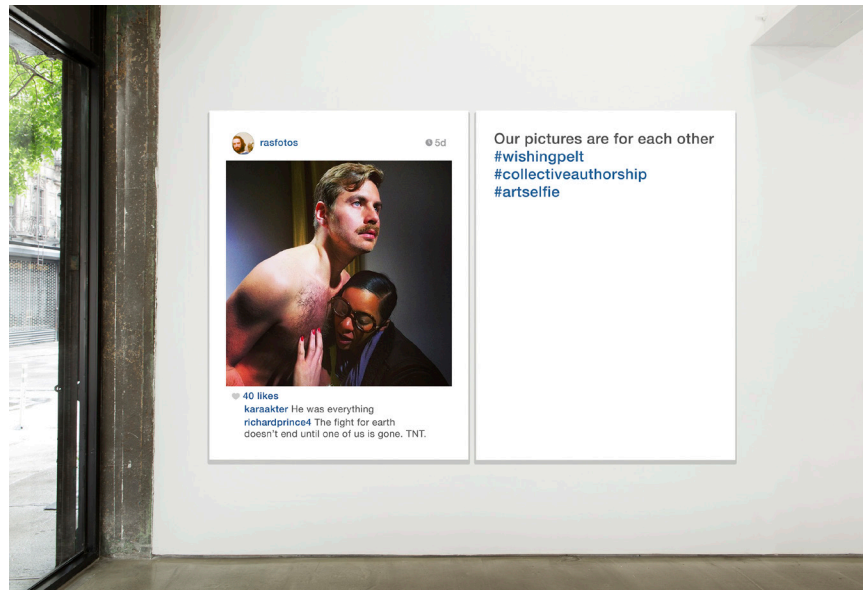
SHARE THIS! APPROPRIATION AFTER CYNICISM

Curated by Elizabeth Denny, at Denny Gallery from December 14, 2014 to January 25, 2015

Artists: Brent Birnbaum, Lily Cox-Richard, Matthew Craven, Sean Fader, Nikolai Ishchuk, Michael Mandiberg, Adam Parker Smith, Jordan Tate, Ana Teles

"The aesthetic activity is an activity of thought in the form of consciousness, converting into imagination an experience which, apart from being so converted, is sensuous. This activity is a corporate activity belonging not to any one human being but to a community. It is performed not only by the man whom we individualistically call the artist, but partly by all the other artists of whom we speak as 'influencing' him, where we really mean collaborating with him."

-R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, 1923



Sean Fader, *Backdrop for the Rebirth of the Collective Author* ("There's a Whole Lot of Authorship Going On." - Richard Prince), 2014. Inkjet print on canvas. 66x 99 inches.

Share This! Appropriation After Cynicism is an exhibition of artists who appropriate the work of other artists. Running from December 14 through January 25, it is a continuation of programming at Denny Gallery that explores alternative modes of exchange between artists, collectors, curators and exhibitors.

Having an ostensibly unique and innovative practice with strong visual branding has become increasingly important to artists. At the same time, it has become complicated due to high financial stakes in the art market, the increasing visibility of images of art on the Internet, and the increasing number of artists graduating with fine arts degrees and competing for studio space, residencies, gallery representation and sales. Yet the modern era is seemingly founded on the very notion that ownership, authorship, and the application of artistic endeavors should be consistently questioned. What are the implications of stealing an idea, a technique, an image, or an artwork itself? *Share This!* ultimately becomes a show of questions about process, intention, value, and understanding what it means to be "original". The imperative "*Share This!*" invites the viewers and the artists to collaborate and to encourage the dispersal of images of their work.

Brent Birnbaum (b. 1977, lives in Brooklyn) makes work out of collected objects, including artworks he has collected from other artists. In *Share This!* he exhibits a work he made out of two original artworks by Rob Pruitt and Barnaby Furnas. In so doing, he questions what the power of the collector should be over artworks that he owns: does he have the responsibility to preserve the object and its authorship or can he make it completely his? Even to the point of making it his own work?

Lily Cox-Richard (b. 1979, lives in Houston) appropriated some of the most celebrated sculptures by neoclassical, American sculptor Hiram Powers (1805-1873) in order to question the gender and race tropes in these iconic works. In her body of work *The Stand (Possessing Powers)*, she reproduces the base and non-figurative elements of his sculptures. She not only questions the power she can assert over the original artist's work, but also that he had over the marginalized bodies that he represented. The nineteenth century, not coincidentally, is also the period in which plagiarism or collaboration between artists became unacceptable in the eye of the discerning public and especially the market.

Sean Fader (b. 1989, lives in Brooklyn) celebrates the rebirth of collective authorship in social media. His new work is a response to Richard Prince, who reproduced a photograph from Instagram of Fader's performance piece *#wishingpelt* for his exhibition at Gagosian. Intended to live on Instagram, this work expands its authorship to everyone who takes an "art selfie" with it as a backdrop. Fader will be present Friday through Sunday during the course of the exhibition to assist with the performance of art selfies by the public.

Adam Parker Smith (b. 1989, lives in Brooklyn) exhibited *Thanks* at Lu Magnus in 2013. Smith did studio visits with 77 of his fellow artists with the intention of "acquiring" work for an exhibition, but concealed the true concept of the exhibition from the artists: it would be a collection of works pilfered from them. Yet the exhibition itself returned authorship to the original makers, and Smith entered a gray area between conceptual artist and curator. The artworks - all relatively small - were displayed in an equalizing fashion on simple wooden tables laid out next to each other rather than on the walls where hierarchies and priorities of placement would have become an issue. The work ultimately creates a strong snapshot of a community of artists, even while acknowledging that they do "steal" from each other. An abbreviated version of *Thanks* is being restaged for *Share This!*

Matthew Craven (b. 1981, lives in Brooklyn) creates works on paper out of collages of images of objects from art history and ink drawings. The works are reminiscent of Dada photomontages but also draw a line to more contemporary examples of image sources rooted in social media including Tumblr, Pinterest, and Instagram. The collages invite artistic voices both well known and anonymous from art history to engage in a transformative dialogue. Craven interrogates artistic legacy, influence, and the importance of culture and context to an artist's practice.

Michael Mandiberg (b. 1977, lives in Brooklyn) continues to perpetuate a cycle of appropriation, furthering it by making his audience active participants. Building upon Sherri Levine's project, in which she photographed Walker Evans' Depression era photographs, he facilitates questions about technology and our access to information. AfterSherriLevine.com invites individuals to browse, select and print high resolution images of Sherri Levine's photographs with a certificate of authenticity included which you print and sign yourself. He is able to create "a physical object with cultural value, with little or no economic value." Mandiberg continues to play with social media platforms that allow for the continued replication of content, allowing everyone to take part and become complicit in the act of appropriation.

Jordan Tate (b. 1981, lives in Cincinnati) looks at the geo-political implications of appropriation. For his work for *Share This!*, Tate explores imagery of the Pergamon Altar from photographs sourced from online travel photos and random internet sources. The altar was excavated in the late 19th century in Turkey and taken to its current location at a museum in Berlin, Germany, so while appropriating imagery of the Pergamon, Tate is also pointing to the looting that is part of the work's history. The altar's move to Germany brings into question notions of Western privilege and authority. Tate also incorporates an error, an accidental image reversal, into his work, questioning the many layers of reproduction and mediation between the original and how it is viewed.

Ana Teles (b. 1989, lives in London) was completing her MFA degree in London when her work became a point of contention amongst her fellow students. She was taking the artworks of her peers and copying them in a way that conveyed her personal relationship to the work - this meant either a form of close reproduction or adding an element reflective of her personal style. In this intensely competitive environment, Teles displayed these objects as her own, using the name of the artist it was "stolen" from as the title. A number of her peers were displeased, citing concerns that she was trivializing the originality of their process, damaging their objects, and diminishing their authorship. Teles' thesis can be seen as an attempt to understand the process of art making and how a derivative sense of labor can fluctuate on an individual level. The perception that her work became an invasive exploration of artistic practice highlights the general concerns associated with appropriation, where is the line drawn and should there be one?

Nikolai Ishchuk (b. 1982, lives in London) is represented by Denny Gallery in the United States and was one of the targets of Ana Teles' body of work described above. His recent works, combinations of photography, sculpture and works on paper, were subject to investigation and copying by Teles. He made a work in response to her acts of appropriation, which will be exhibited beside her "copy" of his work.