



Window Space

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court gee,

changing or taking away an object's function is the height of humor

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At the turn of the 20th century, a wave of artists began to argue for an art that fought against logic and canonical beauty, instead celebrating irrationality as an expression of contempt towards the war, conformity, and an increasingly capitalist society. Under the label of Dada, Marcel Duchamp upturned a porcelain urinal and gave it a title, thereby subverting its function. A tongue-in-cheek commentary on the state of the art world, the gesture bemused audiences across the European continent. court gee's exhibition, *changing or taking away an object's function is the height of humor*, draws from this now long-established strategy to create a body of work that likewise mingles comedy and malaise. Infused with the absurdist flavor of Dada, court gee's work speaks to ever-contemporary issues – issues similar to those that gave rise to the 1920s movement – tackling them with the wry humor of her generation.

Last year, in an article published by The Washington Post that immediately went viral, columnist Elizabeth Bruenig declared:

“I am not a nihilist, but a mood of grim, jolly absurdism comes over me often, as it seems to come over many of my young peers. To visit millennial comedy, advertising, and memes is to spend time in a dream world where ideas twist

and suddenly vanish; where loops of self-referential quips warp and distort with each iteration, tweaked [...] until nothing coherent is left”.¹

court gee’s window installation, filled with items taken from the craft bin, the domestic sphere, or the superstore, displays an array of readymade assemblages with the kind of comical twist described by Bruenig. As the artist states: “People are no longer trying to make things from scratch, instead they are reusing past media content, reworking and analyzing accumulated media material. I see the objects I use as ‘stock’ objects.”² If popular image culture is, in the memescape, endlessly circulated and recycled into witty social commentaries, self-parody, puns, nonsensical narratives, and sometimes pure meaninglessness, mundane objects are treated in a similar fashion by court gee. Behind the glass vitrine, pipe-cleaner flowers sprout from unopened bags of soil, while yellow balloons – like two deflated lungs – seal the ends of a plastic tube, as though naively attempting to contain a volatile breath. Familiar household props are repurposed in various configurations, establishing new delirious relations, until function and meaning become irrelevant.

If Dada annulled the relevance of beauty as a concept, and made a mockery of the materialistic values promulgated by “retinal”³ art, court gee revisits objects and motifs, which through the history of art, have been imbued with aesthetic value and symbolic capital. A faint allusion to still-life imagery survives – albeit ironically – in her work. For instance, two paintings of floral arrangements in neon and mismatched colors are displayed side by side, and attached to the wall with pieces of orange tape, drawing attention to the ‘de-skilled’ painterly gesture. In its beginnings as a traditional genre, still-life painting consisted of an assemblage of lavish bouquets comprising a variety of

¹ Elizabeth Bruenig, *Why is millennial humor so weird?*, The Washington Post. Published August 11, 2017.

² From the writings of the artist, 2017-2018.

³ A term coined by Marcel Duchamp to describe art that pleases the eye, but that is void of political or critical content.

geographically incongruous specimens. Artists imported eye-catching botanical rarities from far and wide, and painted them on the canvas as though they had coexisted in time and space. Though not quite recognized as ‘high art,’ these impressive feats of manufactured beauty satisfied the demands of a booming market that sought a skilled, eclectic, yet commodifiable form of representation. Here, in *Size Sevens*, court gee’s metal-wire bouquets reveal the theater of operations – the armature, the gimmick – that underlie art as commodity. In other words, her still-life imagery cheekily highlights the fraught relationship between reality and artifice, and between consumer culture and art.

Some humor also resides in the objects from which court gee’s works are constructed: solar-powered toy flowers, artificial fruit, googly eyes, rubber gloves, popular fashion brands, etc. These are from the very moment of their manufacture already outdated. Despite their newness, their shiny packaging and cheery colors, these consumer items fail to convince us of their seriousness, usefulness and timelessness. Outside of court gee’s work, one could almost feel pity for the unused Frisbee with a happy-face sticker, which seems to know full well its ultimate destiny: the garage sale or the recycling bin. Nearly self-conscious of their own disposability, these objects embody what theorist Michael Taussig describes as the “pathos of novelty”.⁴ Even new, they tread the thin line of obsolescence. One might say that court gee, through ever-banal mass-produced items and various display tactics, harnesses the giggle-inducing quality of the “recently outmoded”⁵.

“Ultimately, I don’t have the answer”, stated the artist during a recent conversation, vis-à-vis the positioning of her work within both the realms of everyday objects and of fine art. These sculptures are, after all, made of common material goods which can revert back to their function when disassembled. It is perhaps in the face of

⁴ Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity; a particular history of the senses*. Routledge; New York, London, 1993. p. 233

⁵ Ibid.

this absurd and inescapable conundrum that is at the core of most art production today – the perpetual friction between making art, and participating in complex capitalist systems of exchanges – that court gees resorts to humor, or that humor emerges. To put it simply: “DADA DADA DADA, an interlacing of opposites and of contradictions, of grotesques and of inconsistencies.”⁶

- Laura Demers

⁶ Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*, 1918.