

Emily Hall, Artforum International, March 2005

None of the Above **SWISS INSTITUTE**

There were two ways to approach "None of the Above" at the Swiss Institute: You could study the checklist of the forty-nine works and diligently hunt for them all, or you could wander around the initially empty looking gallery and find what you could find. Such was the nature of this exhibition – curated by John Armleder, founder of the Fluxus-inspired Geneva gallery Ecart – that you might emerge from it thinking that some ordinary objects in the space were art and overlooking some of the listed projects altogether. I was pretty sure, for example, that a regiment of out-of-commission poles linked by a velvet rope was an installation – a nonsensical barrier to a non-event. It was not.

In assembling the show, Armleder asked forty-seven artists for works that were extremely small or immaterial to be installed in unconventional parts of the gallery. Some of these were hidden in plain sight and marked by a Duchampian sense of humour. Laurent Pache's Untitled 2004, for example, listed a tack as its only medium, and there it was, stuck into the wall just below eyes level. Rudolf Stingel's Woody, 2004, a strip of blond wood veneer set against the darker floor, had an elegant, minimalist presence. That the tack infuriated me while the veneer was a thrill evinces the instability that such an offbeat show is bound to produce.

This capacity to provoke reactions that alternate between exhilarations and letdown seemed to be the point of the exhibition. The vacillating mood was, in part, the result of a compromised intimacy: The manner in which much of the often miniscule work was installed hampered or changed its meaning. Richard Artschwager's Hair Blp, 1989-90, for example, was hung close to the ceiling, thereby mitigating the alarming, animal quality it might have close up. But the show's changeable nature might also have had something to do with a slight and not unpleasant anxiety. Not only did you have to worry about being able to see the art, but there was also a concomitant concern that you might see it but not get it. Any insecurity over these tiny works – Martin Creed's crumpled paper; Peter Fischli and David Weiss's polyurethane peanut shells – became absurdly magnified.

There was also the simpler pleasure of noting the myriad ways in which elements of the gallery itself had been used as parts of or launching pads for the work: Fia Backstrom's animation Linjestorning (Transmission Disturbance), 2003, shown on an Apple computer in the library incorporated the sound, broadcast at regular intervals, of the machine's start's up chord (the very sound of morning dread); Armleder and Jordan Wolfson sent the Swiss Institute's flag to the dry cleaner and framed the receipt; and in The Outsider, 1996/2004, Mark Orange left a paperback copy of a British edition of Albert Camus's L'Etranger (1942) outside on the window ledge. By the time I visited the work had vanished. I hunted fruitlessly for it, looking even at windows across the street in search of a Charles Simonds – like installation, until the gallery attendant informed me that the book had long since blown away.

Finally, in Dave Allen's For The Dogs. Satie's "Veritable Preludes Flasques (pour un chien)" 1912, rendered at tone frequencies above 18 KHZ, 2002, it is the invisible paths along which sound waves travel that form the basis for the work, which is perhaps the wittiest of all the show's slants and immateriality. Here at DAT player broadcast the eponymous music at a pitch beyond the range of human hearing. Without bringing a dog to the gallery = and, indeed, a dog that could identify and discuss what he was hearing – the work remained all but unknowable.



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