

Petzel

WALEAD BESHTY

Abstract of A Partial Disassembling of an Invention Without a Future: Helter-Skelter and Random Notes in Which the Pulleys and Cogwheels Are Lying Around at Random All Over the Workbench

October 24 – December 14, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 24th, 6–8pm

456 West 18th Street

Petzel Gallery is pleased to present *Abstract of A Partial Disassembling of an Invention Without a Future: Helter-Skelter and Random Notes in Which the Pulleys and Cogwheels Are Lying Around at Random All Over the Workbench* a solo show of works by Walead Beshty. The exhibition will be on view from October 24 to December 14 and marks the artist's third exhibition at the gallery's Chelsea location.

The work *A Partial Disassembling of an Invention Without a Future: Helter-Skelter and Random Notes in Which the Pulleys and Cogwheels Are Lying Around at Random All Over the Workbench*, was originally commissioned by the Barbican Centre, London. The London-born, Los Angeles-based artist first exhibited the work there in 2014, covering the 273 ft long Curve gallery from floor to ceiling in cyanotype prints. The prints were produced over the duration of a year (October 9, 2013–October 8, 2014) and are chronologically installed in proportion to the exhibition space. For its New York premiere at Petzel, approximately 5,120 cyanotypes (38% of the total 15,616 sq. ft work) will be presented.

In *A Partial Disassembling of an Invention ...*, each cyanotype (a 19th Century photographic process using ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferro-cyanide) was produced by placing tools and other objects used in the production process of the studio on cellulose waste material generated by that same process (such as wood, cardboard, or paper) that was coated with UV-sensitive cyanotype material. After being exposed to sunlight and washed in water, the object's silhouette appears in reverse against a cyan-blue background.

In using everyday objects, such as receipts, prescriptions, invoices, financial statements, legal documents, letters, gallery invitations, etc. from the working life of the studio, an inherent transparency is embedded in the work, demystifying the artwork and exposing its process of coming to be. Representative of the lives of those who made it, the cyanotypes expose both aspects of identity and circumstance, situating the work within political, social, and economic exchange without being representational or depictive in the conventional sense. While both the Barbican and Petzel iterations deal with debris, this new display has a more overtly American immediacy to it. Considering the resurgent discourse on the politics of representation, there is a new urgency to exhibiting the work for the questions it evokes about the modes and uses of representation, such as how art can accurately display real world conditions of labor, production and power, and whether a truly accurate and transparent form of representation is possible.

Beshty will also show *Prologue to A Partial Disassembling of an Invention Without a Future: Helter-Skelter and Random Notes in Which the Pulleys and Cogwheels Are Lying Around at Random All Over the Workbench*, which are the cyanotypes that were produced in anticipation of the Barbican work from August 1, 2013–October 8, 2013, along with seven volumes of the 59-volume archive of the work.

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The books—in their Prologue and Opus volumes—comprise bound pages printed recto and verso of the entire work reproduced at 1:2 scale. The volumes create both an archival record of Beshty’s workspace as well as an index of all the tools and artefacts used for the work’s own making.

The title of the project is a reference to Hollis Frampton’s hypothetical lecture he muses about in a talk delivered at the Whitney Museum of American Art, but never actually gives. The title of this phantom lecture alludes to the origins of the medium, and its inevitable obsolescence. It also calls forward the question of the role objects play when they have ceased being useful. Wrenched by time from their intended use, the objects become purely aesthetic, becoming the focus of contemplation in both historical and poetic terms.

Also on view, Beshty will continue his recent practice of altering and reassembling the cover of daily newspapers, using gold leaf to spotlight the spaces made by inconsistencies in the day’s print. Following the Japanese tradition of Kintsugi (or Kintsukuroi, which means “golden repair”) in which broken ceramics are mended with a lacquer mixed with gold, silver, or platinum so that repairs are rendered visible and treated as part of the object’s history rather than something to disguise. At Petzel, Besthy will modify a copy of The New York Times for every day he is installing the show, furthering the specificity of this new reconfiguration.

Walead Beshty was born in London, United Kingdom in 1976 and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent exhibitions include a mid-career survey at MAMCO (Musée d’art moderne et contemporain), Geneva, Switzerland, which is traveling to Kunst Museum Winterthur in January 2020. His work is currently on view in *Media Networks* at the Tate Modern, London; and as part of the *Aichi Triennale 2019*, Aichi Prefecture, Japan. In 2017 he curated the exhibition *Picture Industry* at the Hessel Museum, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, which traveled to Luma Arles, France in May 2018. Beshty edited the accompanying anthology *Picture Industry: A Provisional History of the Technical Image, 1844–2018* (JRP|Ringier, 2018). He has had solo exhibitions at such institutions as Barbican Centre, London; Ullens Center, Beijing; Malmö Konsthall; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. He was included in the 2015 Venice Biennale, 2012 Shanghai Biennale, 2009 Tate Triennial, and 2008 Whitney Biennial. Beshty’s work is held in permanent museum collections worldwide, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; MAMCO, Geneva; and the Tate, London among others.

He is currently visiting faculty in History and Theory at the Southern California Institute of Architecture, Los Angeles, CA, and has held academic positions at the University of California, Los Angeles, CA; Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; and Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA, where he was associate professor from 2007–2016.

Petzel Gallery is located at 456 West 18th Street New York, NY 10011. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquires, please contact Ricky Lee at ricky@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.