

Rhizome
seven online
exhibitions

6/7 Pictures Generation
May 7–14, 2020

Capitain Petzel
Berlin

Node 6/7 Pictures Generation

The second to last node of the Capitain Petzel Rhizome series brings together a selection of works by artists affiliated with the legendary Pictures Generation. Influenced by Conceptual and Pop Art of the 1970s, the Pictures Generation artists worked with appropriation and montage to reveal the constructed nature of images. By experimenting with a variety of media, including photography, film, video and performance, their practices exposed recurring tropes and stereotypes in popular visual culture and demonstrated that the meaning of a work is dependent on its historical and social circumstances. The Pictures Generation's frequent reworking of known imagery would contest notions of individuality and authorship, making the movement an influential part of postmodernism.

The defining moment of the movement came in 1977 with the exhibition *Pictures* at Artist Space in New York, curated by Douglas Crimp. In the accompanying essay, Crimp described the participants of the exhibition as "a group of younger artists [that] sees representation as an inescapable part of our ability to grasp the world around us". The 1977 show included works by Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo and Philip Smith. In this Rhizome, Brauntuch and Longo are present, as well as Barbara Bloom, Matt Mullican and Rhys Chatham who also became affiliated with the visionary movement. In 2009, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) held *The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984*, a seminal exhibition which focused exclusively on this group of artists, affirming the long-standing relevance of their visions in the art world.

Barbara Bloom's practice is often considered to be more literature or research-based and object focused than that of her peers from the Pictures Generation. It nonetheless relates to the essential concepts associated with the movement, dealing with the role of context, methods of display, and the interactions between text and images. Her contribution to this node of the Rhizome forms part of her *Stand-Ins* which are on view in her concurrent show at Capitain Petzel, *Works on Paper, on Paper*. With her *Stand-Ins*, she approaches the subject of portraiture, however these works are not portraits. Instead, the stand-in furniture and props act as metonymic devices — the thing used or regarded as a substitute for someone, in this case Marilyn Monroe. Taking the memorable sequence of names on Color Preview Strip 2125' as its point of departure, *Sad Grey Story* displays a series of photographs of Marilyn Monroe reading alongside a careful selection of books from her notoriously large personal library, which Bloom had rebound in matching shades of grey. Neatly stacked on a small Art Deco lounge, the Stand-In pays personal tribute to the tragically deceased Marilyn Monroe.

Matt Mullican was part of the Pictures Generation early on, along with other CalArts graduates James Welling, David Salle, Jack Goldstein, Troy Brauntuch, and Barbara Bloom. In a recent interview, Mullican explained, "I am very much interested in how meaning is transferred and what we give [as viewer] to the picture, in terms of reality. See, I used the word picture. I used it a ton back in the day, early '70s, '73, I was very interested in breaking down the picture and also signs." The artist has since then been known for the development of his cosmological model, which implements his concept of the five universes — each represented by one color to symbolize the five levels of consciousness. According to this model, the color yellow (which reigns in this specific Rhizome contribution) is associated with the sphere of thoughts and ideas — in this case empathy — that are expressed in art and science. It represents the idea per se, the abstract concept detached from an individual object.

Robert Longo moved to New York City in 1977, with fellow Pictures Generation artist Cindy Sherman. That same year, he would take part in Douglas Crimp's *Pictures* and in the following decade would become known as a leading protagonist of the Pictures Generation. His practice since then has included drawing, photography, painting, sculpture, performance and film, and has served to critique the anaesthetizing and seductive effects of capitalism, the mediatisation of wars, and the cult of US history. His contribution to the Rhizome is double; one of his many detailed drawings, which has subsequently been enlarged to a monumental scale — a method common to his practice. The shattered iPhone he presents to us appears photorealistic from afar, but abstract and conceptual up close. Longo's adept use of chiaroscuro, the extreme use of light and dark shading, lends his work a heightened emotionality, in intimate, monochromatic detail.

Troy Brauntuch's exceptional talents as draughtsman, which would have seemed counter to the rejection of traditional media adhered to by fellow members of the Pictures Generation, gave him however a unique subject matter — he chose to make conceptual works about this paradox. To this day he is admired for his distinctive photo-based works and paintings produced with Conté crayon on dark cotton. The delicate hues and shades of his contribution evoke an inner reflection, more the memory of a scarf than the presentation of such.

This week's Rhizome ends with a snippet of **Rhys Chatham's** paradigmatic performance *Guitar Trio (G3) for 6 electric guitars, electric bass and drums* (1977), performed by Chatham and Robert Longo on the occasion of the 2018 Art Berlin Gallery Night, and to coincide with the opening of Robert Longo's exhibition *Everything Falls Apart* at Capitain Petzel. Formerly a *Guitar Trio* band member, Longo developed several films that accompanied part of the performance: *Pictures for Music*, in 1979, and *Icarus Rising* in 2018. Though not technically a part of the gallery's program, Rhys Chatham is largely associated with the Pictures Generation for his minimalist, avant-garde compositions. He described the genesis of *Guitar Trio*:

Through my discussions with Longo and subsequent readings of art and literary criticism, I began to think of the work I had done with my electric guitar ensemble as a representation of rock, that I was representing the spectacle and sound of rock in the manner of a visual artist representing an image taken from the electronic media.

Erklund, Douglas, "The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984", exh. Cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

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Rhizome | Seven online exhibitions

April 2nd – May 14th

While Capitain Petzel remains open only by appointment until further notice, we are pleased to launch a series of online exhibitions inspired by the concept of Rhizome, originally a botanical term appropriated by the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

'A rhizome is characterized by ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.'

-Excerpt from A Thousand Plateaus

Given the infinite connections between the artists in our gallery program, we are taking this notion of connectivity and ever-evolving narratives to bring to you 7 themed constellations — each week we will present 7 works by 7 artists in contribution to a wider, relevant discourse. The online shows will be launched via Mailchimp & instagram.

Node 1/7 Text

Launching April 2nd

Node 2/7 Cal Arts

Launching April 9th

Node 3/7 The Domestic

Launching April 16th

Node 4/7 Works on Paper

Launching April 23rd

Node 5/7 The Technical Image

Launching April 30th

Node 6/7 Pictures Generation

Launching May 7th

Node 7/7 Moving Images

Launching May 14th

Feat. works by Yael Bartana, Walead Beshty, Karla Black, Ross Bleckner, Barbara Bloom, Andrea Bowers, Troy Brauntuch, Isabella Ducrot, Stefanie Heinze, Charline von Heyl, Sean Landers, Maria Lassnig, Robert Longo, Sarah Morris, Matt Mullican, Peter Piller, Tobias Pils, Seth Price, Stephen Prina, Pieter Schoolwerth, Amy Sillman, Monika Sosnowska & Christopher Williams.