

BORTOLAMI

*now I am quietly waiting for
the catastrophe of my personality
to seem beautiful again,
and interesting, and modern.*

Curated by Tom Burr

(New York, NY) – Bortolami Gallery is pleased to announce *now I am quietly waiting for the catastrophe of my personality to seem beautiful again, and interesting, and modern*, a group exhibition curated by artist **Tom Burr**. This exhibition will mark the first occasion that Burr takes on the role of curator. It will include work by **Kaucyila Brooke, Jean Cocteau, Dan Graham, Ull Hohn, Hilary Lloyd, Sarah Lucas, Gordon Matta-Clark, Lucy McKenzie, Ken Okiishi, Elizabeth Peyton, Josephine Pryde, Mary Simpson, Dash Snow, J. St. Bernard, Charline von Heyl and Emily Wardill**. The exhibition runs from September 14th to October 27th, 2012, with a reception for the artists on September 14th from 6 to 8pm.

The title is taken from Frank O'Hara's poem "Mayakovsky," in which O'Hara references Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky and suggests that the self is dependent on who we surround ourselves with, reflecting the multiplicity and fluidity of identity and authorship. In the exhibition Burr examines how personality takes on "an external form, an otherness," and how this extension of oneself develops a fortuitous narrative. As O'Hara invoked Mayakovsky and other artists in his poems, Burr selected the artists in this show based on his own connection to them and to their artwork.

For both O'Hara and Burr identity becomes an indeterminate product of interaction with others, and a contingency of relation. The artists' connections and shared experiences relate to Burr's interest in the external forces that shape our identity and the autobiographical and corporeal nature of objects. Thus all the artists in the exhibition are connected, sometimes it is a literal connection like a shared studio wall – Ull Hohn shared a wall with Burr during their time in The Whitney Museum's studio program in 1988 and Burr now listens to Charline Von Heyl paint through their shared dividing wall. The connection can also be emotional, as is the case with Elizabeth Peyton, an old classmate of Burr's whose subjects over the years have included many of his intimates. Other connections are best described as tangential for Burr in which social and narrative functions of the persona yield "traces, imprints and remains, and objects that have been located and then located again," said Burr.

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O'Hara writes Mayakovsky. He writes it densely, and deeply, though the poem's frame is slight and lean and filled with open spaces. He writes along the edges of the other poet's words and phrases, nudging towards Mayakovsky's subjects and his symbols, slipping in and out of his ground, mixing their soils around. O'Hara imagines, I like to think, not only what Mayakovsky wrote, but how he wrote it, in which position and with which hand. And how he may have spoken, what the timbre of his voice may have sounded like. I imagine O'Hara thought about what Mayakovsky's lips may have looked like when speaking. There are photographs of Mayakovsky to inspire this thought.

My heart's aflutter!

Artists look at other artists. We hear ourselves across time and on the other sides of walls, working, not working, listening, painting, speaking, not speaking. We watch what we make and how we make it. We search for clues, for substance, for stimulation and connection. When we work out and through each other we tangle our language together and produce new sentences, distinct syntax. Our tendencies and our preferences, our ideas and various ways of placing those ideas, our styles even, seem to need the company of each other. There is a politics to placement, and alignment, and company. And there is a genealogy created out of manifestos, practices and love poems, out of close encounters in our immediate surroundings, and out of a trans-historical crush.

*and I'll stare down
at my wounded beauty
which at best is only a talent
for poetry*

What I mean by that is only partially clear to myself. I'm concerned less with the structure of generational groups -of gangs, schools, cults and families- and much more by the conscious and specific connections made across decades, and by the drive to construct ourselves and our working methods through proximities, (both physical and intellectual), and through associations. In this sense I remain steadfastly loyal to the notion that artworks complete other artworks, that artworks extend and expand other artworks, and that singular gestures, individual artworks, are fictions at best.

*what does he think of
that? I mean, what do I?*

Artists are constituted through other artists. We define ourselves in relation to one another in some way. We savagely pick at the bits we crave and ingest them, making them our own matter, or spit them out in revolt. We protect ourselves fiercely, and offer ourselves up freely. We project images of ourselves and then reside within them. We create our own genealogies, I like to think, which, like photographs, can be sorted, shuffled and pinned in place, only to be reshuffled again when needed.

*I embrace a cloud,
but when I soared
it rained.*

Vladimir Mayakovsky was a photogenic man. He was majestic. Does this matter? Not necessarily, but at the same time, yes. I'm guessing Frank O'Hara noticed. Maybe all artists are photogenic in the eyes of other artists.

*And if I do,
perhaps I am myself again.*