

Vilma Gold

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NIGHT STUDIO

MICHAELA EICHWALD, DAVID HARRISON, ANDREW MANIA, LUTHER PRICE, CARL VAN VECHTEN

17 NOVEMBER - 22 DECEMBER

OPENING FRIDAY 16 NOVEMBER, 6:30 - 8:30PM

Vilma Gold is pleased to present a group show featuring works by Michaela Eichwald (b.1967, DE), David Harrison (b.1954, GB), Andrew Mania (b.1974, GB), Luther Price (b.1962, US) and Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964, US). Working in very diverse mediums, including 16mm film and slide projection, painting, assemblage sculpture and vintage photography, the artists share an approach to making that allows them to navigate their relationship with the world and its substances in a way that is tactile and therefore often quite instinctive.

Luther Price came to prominence in the 80s with his emotionally stark Super 8 films and performances. Set in his Mother's house or appropriating old home movies, his early work constituted psychodramatic attempts to work through familial bonds or dark fantasies. As a means by which to open out his themes, he decided in recent years to use only found footage. Like the series 'Inkblot', his recent 16mm films are made by subjecting used celluloid stock to a variety of extreme physical treatments. Treated as an object or sculpture, the stock is affected with chemicals, cut up, glued onto, dripped with materials that never dry or left to rot for months in the garden. Its history comprises its content, its body, which continues to decay and transform beyond the 'finishing' of the work. Rather than describe Price's personal autobiography, the recent work becomes living archival testament to its own process and can be both poignant and visceral. Although the results of Price's experiments are often unpredictable, creating chaotic visual patterns and distorting the film stock to such a degree that its struggle through the projector is palpable, his method of collecting and organising his material is meticulous and almost affectionate. Akin to collage, his slides are composed of the collected detritus of his filmmaking process - fragments of 16mm film are glued together to form a single 35mm slide - so that each one becomes a concentrated representation of what he aims to achieve with a full reel of film.

As in the slide work 'No.9' which contains ants, Price sometimes traps living things between the two plates of glass. There's an element of the scientific to this, as if things have been spilled all over the lens of a microscope and caught there, which can be traced also to **Michaela Eichwald's** assemblages. Propped on found vases-cum-plinths, Eichwald too is fascinated with friezing the world's forgotten leftovers. Her small cast resin sculptures are amber-like coagulations containing bits of food, coins, wrappers, plasters etc. Often the work is smeared greasily with lacquer. There is a play between murky expressiveness and something more dainty or sensitive, so that the sculptures are awkward but dignified, human but also slightly alien. Similarly Eichwald's layered paintings include an array of collaged elements, such as books steeped in thick spills of enamel or texts by other authors and artists. In Eichwald's works details of objects are glimpsed through their suspension but nothing is ever explained or clearly shown.

Andrew Mania's habit of collecting objects both chanced on and inherited has been well noted. Like Price's early work, his personal family history often marks his starting point and this is manifested in his sensitivity to materials and their particular historical encryption. He makes constellations combining portraits with a few chosen items or pieces of fabric. Recalling the symbolism of Vanitas painting, his figures are often young and beautiful whilst the materials around them might be older, more lived in. In this way he reflects upon family myths and legends, but he also allows these stories to sprawl into new narratives upon their interaction with the physical materials that he selects, their sentimental meanings and their being in the world as things in time. As his drawings evolve they proliferate with pattern and symbolism, often spilling over onto the materials used as support so that each work becomes living memento. His works are marked by a quality of caring attentiveness. This is often manifested in his use of pattern, which, caress-like, sometimes overruns the figures that he draws.

American writer and photographer **Carl Van Vechten** was an early patron of the Harlem Renaissance. Like Mania, he was interested in relations between people, photographing many of his friends and acquaintances, which included Ella Fitzgerald, Truman Capote, Dizzie Gillespie and Bessie Smith. As well as documenting an epoch largely ignored by the mainstream media of the time, his photographs offer a glimpse into the personal relation existing between subject and author. His decisions on where to crop his frames mean that background patterns often seem emboldened, ultra sensory almost. In this way his images become slightly removed from the real to collude more with the sphere of private memory and its susceptibility to distortion; a compositional and narrative device that has been particularly influential for Mania.

David Harrison will present a group of assemblages and paintings. The pair of works 'Gargirls' for example, are made from materials recovered from the streets of Manchester whilst staying there in the early 90s. Thinking about both the city's Gothic Victorian architecture and the transvestite prostitutes he would see hanging around Canal Street, they are grotesque mask-like wall pieces. Much of their content is derived from the roughness of these materials and the specificity of the places in which they were found. Whilst one of the pair is made from a piece of broken drain with make-up applied onto it, the other is made from an old shovel covered with pieces of bright melted plastic. Shaped from societies' once desired products now casually thrown away and starting to rust or degrade out in the elements, Harrison's materials bear the marks of nature's transformative effects. Across his practice he is concerned with the relationship between man's tragic folly and nature's overwhelming wisdom or life-force. Combining history, fiction and mysticism, his sculptures literally embody man's throwaway culture and its interaction with the natural world to possess an often disarmingly talismanic potency.

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