

GALERIE CRÈVECOEUR

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Learning with errors

Xavier Antin

17/10 - 12/01/13

“Uncertainty, ignorance” hence “misunderstanding”, “illusion” or “fault”, and “heresy” in Christian Latin. It is a derivative of *errare*, figuratively to “to be mistaken”.

Xavier Antin is interested in the history of the production and the reproduction of objects, when it involves a glitch, or an accident. He creates production processes in which accidents occur, like clues of a narrative underlying the work process. Sometimes he takes the chain of production backwards, like in one of his most recent projects entitled *Five Conversations*. In conversations with the production managers of highly specialised companies, he dismantled processes leading to the production of objects such as chairs or billiard tables. He supervised the production of ersatz pieces, cubes that synthesize all the intrinsic qualities of the objects, though devoid of any functionality, extended to abstraction: a conversational cube. As if he were attempting to operate a deflection of the industrial production tool.

When he created his own chain of production that placed four printers from different periods in relation to one another, each becoming “responsible” for one of four basic colours composing the CMYK colour model, he suggests a new temporality of printing: the produced images are being built through four stratum of time. The book is called *Just in Time, or a Short History of Production*. It’s a brief history of production, which could also possibly be viewed as a brief history of derailment. Often working with office printers and self publishing, he even devised a publication as a user’s guide entitled *Printing at Home**, rooted in the individual attempt to regain control of the globalised means of production.

For his first solo show at the Crevecoeur Gallery, he displays a series of prints, in dialogue with the five cubes. More than the result of a derailment, they are the result of an attempt of pushing the limits of the ordinary means he often uses, like a standard A4 laser printer. Hence, the production of a series of A1 formats (8 times A4, which is the printer’s required format), including all the physical traces of an entire mechanics of errors – that could be seen as “strayings” or “uncertainties”. Thus, a series of hybrid objects emerge, oscillating between painting and instant serial reproduction, becoming a surface area structured by the constraints of limited production processes: a production process grid. A grid that could directly suggest the graphic designer’s page-layout grid, or more symbolically, the emblem of the modernist myth according to Rosalind Krauss (“...a structure, and one moreover that allows a contradiction between the values of science and those of spiritualism to maintain themselves within the consciousness of modernism...” from Rosalind Krauss: «Grids» October 9, 1979). Or even, the laborious quest for a reason, perhaps a function.

The arrangement of cubes and prints in the space examines how an object or surface is drawn, “designed” by its history, its process and its production context. Accordingly, William Morris casts a long shadow over this system, a nineteenth century artist, initiator of the Arts and Crafts movement, printer and publisher, master of decorative art (famous for his textile and tapestry patterns), in addition to being a writer and political thinker. Tutelary figure on the construction of a social utopia of design, he advocated the autonomy of the individual vis-à-vis the means of production and championed the democratization of art and its know-how. An idea of design, that the contemporary liberal economy seems quite unconcerned by.

Xavier Antin graduated from the Royal College of Art in London. He had recently a solo presentation of his work in the Frame section of the last Frieze Art fair in London. His work has also been shown in numerous group shows, in particular at the CNEAI in Chatou, at the Galerie ARKO in Nevers in 2012, at the Jaus Art gallery in Los Angeles, at the Design Triennale of Milan and at the Salon de Montrouge in Paris in 2011. After a residency at the Parc Saint Léger in Pougues-les-Eaux in 2012, He is currently a resident at the FRAC Champagne-Ardenne until May 2013.

* The second edition of *Printing at Home* has just been released by Ditto Press (London).