

# JACK STRANGE

## Deep Down

October 27 - December 22, 2011

Opening reception: Thursday, October 27, 6-8pm

Gallery Two

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present Deep Down, the gallery's second solo exhibition of work by British artist Jack Strange. The sculptures, drawings, collages and mixed media installations that compose the show seek to create a visual metaphor for the consciousness that permeates the physical world, and Strange takes us on an Alice in Wonderland-like journey in the process. Peeling back our preconceptions, Strange reveals the marvelous in the mundane.

In the entry space, U.S. \$1, 5, 10, 20, 50, and \$100 bills have been cut and reassembled into quirky creatures, evoking questions about value and the quantification of our world. We commonly encounter symbolic characters in everyday objects, but in these works and throughout the exhibition, Strange finds such characters lurking in more obscure, unlikely places. Given the minute scale of the currency collages, the artist urges us to get close and be drawn in. This act of drawing the viewer in is continued in Staring into Seeing, where the audience is encouraged to put on headphones and follow instructions about how to stare at the blank white wall. What feels like an exercise is meant to focus our attention on the act of seeing, including the mechanism of the eyes and the involuntary actions of our bodies.

In Consciousness Combi 1 and Consciousness Combi 2, Strange employs television monitors and vitrines filled with water to elegant, hypnotic, Op-Art effect. Refracted light gently bends around colored rods, brown elastic reminiscent of hair strands or twigs floats or sinks in the water to create a visual dissonance within ordered lines of color. Strange likens this to how a city or forest changes under different light conditions, and how light affects feeling. It can furthermore be considered as a metaphor for the concept of consciousness.

In many works, Strange challenges the phenomenological, the idea that reality consists of objects and events as they are understood in human consciousness. He seeks to illustrate a subjective understanding of the world, be it human or otherwise. The artist projects character into vegetables and other inanimate objects to develop an alternate logic and structure, and to touch upon the oblique nature of these bodies and their alien aspects. In this exhibition, thoughts and ideas are revealed to be emotional, even visceral.

Several pieces in the main gallery seem to illustrate the hidden world of vegetables: the growth cycles of these plants that we are confounded by, manipulate, or ignore, and ultimately rely on. Beginning with a series titled Metaphorical Vegetables, Strange takes the tops of supermarket veggies and adheres them to the wall. Cartoon drawings animate the objects, which are fresh and edible on the first days of the exhibition, but shrivel and deteriorate by the show's end.

In Fennel, white neon bulbs which spell the word "FENNEL" emerge from the soil. In addition to illustrating Strange's fascination with the cycle of life inherent in this everyday food item, the piece further demonstrates a humor inherent in much of the work. Strange is interested in humor as a form of logic, and his works provide an experience of what might be termed the internal logic of absurdity - the moment between fright and comedy when we don't fully recognize and understand something.

Indeed, another work made from the artist's blood entitled Unbelievably Real also investigates the idea of humor as a bridge to understanding, and our ability to cope with disbelief. In this emotionally charged work, Strange walks the line between the horrific and the amazing with a medium so

immediate and real that, disembodied and smeared on the wall, it becomes surreal. The artist likens this piece to hysterical laughter, which can overcome and transport us, for a moment, to the edge of insanity.

In the main gallery, Strange's interior world is made exterior, as the artist pushes our perceived knowledge and expands the potential of what is supposed to be. Objects of different shapes, sizes, and placements interact in a stage-like setting and exude a rhythm and pace. In *What Would They Feel?* and *What Would They Think?*, a pair of small clay heads and a pair of enlarged cardboard fingers both watch monitors that show the other pair staring back. These works create a doubling or mirror effect while highlighting notions of "the other." These works question the notion of viewing, as seeing and feeling is expanded and contracted. Also, by delving into anthropomorphization, and creating characters out of the inanimate, Strange takes us to the edge of our human understanding.

In three works using computer-animated cartoon sea creatures, repetition of words is used to create a visual effect. The artist began by compiling a list of words that attempt to describe everything - the entire universe and the full spectrum of consciousness. Whether action-oriented, emotional, or descriptive, the words together form an incoherent message. However, within the artificial vocalization, where words deconstruct and transmutate, something beyond the literal implications of this wordplay registers in the viewer, evoking a human connection to the cold, technological devices.

Based in London, Jack Strange's work was recently featured in the group shows *The Shape We're In*, Zabludowicz Collection, London; *An action, event or other that occurs or happens again*, One Thoresby Street, Trade Gallery, and Bonnington Gallery, Nottingham; *Newspeak: British Art Now*, Saatchi Gallery, London; *A Stranger's Window*, Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Nottingham, U.K.; *The Thought of Stuff*, Royal Society of British Sculptors, London. His work will appear this year and next in the exhibition *Outrageous Fortune: Artists remake the Tarot*, curated by Andrew Hunt at Queens Hall Arts Centre, Hexham, U.K. traveling to Jersey Art Center Heller, U.K., Mac, Birmingham, U.K. and Holden Gallery, Manchester, U.K. His work is in the public collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Mora Art Foundation, Australia, among numerous other private collections.

For further information, please contact the gallery at 212-414-4144 or [mail@tanyabonakdargallery.com](mailto:mail@tanyabonakdargallery.com).

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