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Essays

Introduction

Artist Statement
The Wright Gallery in the College of Architecture at Texas A&M presents, “Something Tangible” by Bryan Florentin, a visual artist and Assistant Professor of Art and Art History at University of Texas Arlington, represented by Kirk Hopper Fine Art in Dallas, Texas. Throughout the exhibition, unassuming materials salvaged from demolition sites and commonplace subjects from daily life are reimagined into conceptual photo and sculpture. Architectural drawings by the artist’s father, a former Texas A&M architecture student, are combined with objects and materials used in construction, architecture and art handling. Concrete, gravel, brick, wood, packaging foam and moving blankets are repeated in both photographs and sculpture. Images of Florentin’s studio installations are reconstructed in sculpture installations that bring attention to both the present and past; real and represented.

Florentin explores the relationship between object and image in photographs printed at 1:1 scale. He reinterprets still life compositions by one of the inventors of photography, William Henry Fox Talbot, whose mid 19th century photographs document collections of books, china and glass vessels lined on shelves (see page 4). In Florentin’s work, the reverse and front sides of wooden book cases and industrial steel shelves hold accumulations of books, periodicals and other objects and various materials. Structure and strength are emphasized in the selection of objects on steel shelves, yet is compromised in the removal of book spines and backsides of the wooden shelves.

Throughout the exhibition, proportion is emphasized in the size of photographs. Four photographs of wooden rulers are printed to scale and mounted on wood and aluminum in the work titled, 4 Versions of 1 Assumption. At first glance these may appear to be readymade objects, however upon closer observation the altered measurements and blurred boundaries of photography and sculpture are evident. Reminiscent of John Clem Clarke’s trompe l’oeil paintings of plywood, in the work titled Constructed Material Florentin alters the directions of wood grains of multiple types of wood in an inkjet print that is printed directly onto plywood. This photograph has an uncanny resemblance of standard plywood resting horizontally on cement cinderblocks against the gallery wall. The eye is also deceived in additional works by the use of actual tape and photographs of tape and stickers.

Proportion is also exaggerated in a single larger-than-life digital print titled, Accretion (Elongated Bleed/ Slightly Floating Invisible Distortion), mounted on a leaning aluminum panel featuring elongated strata of book pages that appears to float inches off of the gallery floor. In other photographic works, dictionaries and fragments of concrete float in space and defy ground. Similarly, in Scene in a Studio (Constructions) the artist uses gravity to hold the installation up to the gallery wall and teeters rolled drafting drawings in the center of his sculpture titled, Untitled Rough Draft.
Themes of accumulation, index and taking inventory are present in the exhibition. In the photograph, Articles of Concrete 1 (after Talbot), fragments of concrete are carefully placed on steel shelves like artifacts that may be found in a museum collection room. The series, (Dis)continuous Temporary Landscapes may also be interpreted as an inventory of natural color found in the landscape. In this series, the entropic nature of loose gravel and dirt is also contradicted within a grid of uniform pyramidal mounds of extracted earth.

The Wright Gallery is pleased to present a conceptual exhibition with themes relevant to all four academic departments at the College of Architecture at Texas A&M University: Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Construction Science, and Visualization. On behalf of the Curatorial Committee, I would like to thank Bryan for sharing his work with the Wright Gallery and Texas A&M community.
Photographs can sometimes seem like fragments of material reality broken off from that reality and flattened into more or less two dimensions. That is particularly true when photographs are printed 1:1 scale, thereby emphasizing their memetic qualities. No matter how “realistic” they appear, if photographs are merely indexical, if they only point to or reference material reality, then they aren’t that reality. A printed photograph is nonetheless real, in that it’s tangible, it occupies physical space.

Much of my recent photographic work deals with the relationship between the photograph as image, the photograph as object, and the material reality that it often mimics. Other recent work explores the way in which some of the same materials and objects I photograph take on different qualities when presented as installations or sculptures rather than photographs. In some cases, materials/flat objects and photographs of them are merged together to create a hybrid that functions as a different kind of image-object. As Roland Barthes speculated in Camera Lucida, a hypothetical person in the 19th century seeing the first photograph ever made was aware they were looking at a mutant, something that didn’t fit into any existing ontological category. Imaging technologies have evolved considerably since then, further complicating the relationship between material reality and lens-based imagery.
Select Images
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST
Bryan Florentin

ARTICLES OF CONCRETE 1
(AFTER TALBOT)

Inkjet Print

33.5 x 33.5 Inches
2017 - 2018
Bryan Florentin

Scene in a Library 2-a (After Talbot)
Inkjet Print (Cotton Rag Paper, Pigment-Based Ink)

37.5 x 34.5 Inches
2017 - 2018
Bryan Florentin

UNTITLED STUDIO
CONSTRUCTION 11
(SIDE 1 & 2)
Inkjet Print on Baryta

39 x 36 Inches Each
2021
Bryan Florentin

SCENE IN A STUDIO (CONSTRUCTIONS)
Inkjet Prints, Concrete Fragments, Salvaged Bricks
Used Lumber, Hardboard, Angle Iron, Paint, Wire

Dimensions Variable
2019
Bryan Florentin

CONSTRUCTED MATERIAL 2
Uv Cured Inkjet Print on Plywood

72 x 36 Inches
2021
4 Versions of 1 Assumption
Inkjet Transfer on Wood Mounted on Aluminum
1.5 x 18 x 1/8 Inches Each
2015
Bryan Florentin

ACCRETION (ELONGATED BLEED/SLIGHTLY FLOATING INVISIBLE DISTORTION)
UV Cured Inkjet Print on Aluminum Panel

72 x 36 Inches
2018 - 2019
Bryan Florentin

UNTITLED DICTIONARY 7
(ELONGATED REFLECTION)
Inkjet Print on Baryta
Works in the Exhibition
COMPLETE LIST
Articles of Concrete 1 (after Talbot)
Inkjet Print
33.5 x 33.5 Inches
2017 - 2018

Temporary Landscape (Network of Stoppages)
Inkjet Print (Cotton Rag Paper, Pigment-Based Ink)
22 x 70 Inches
2017

Scene in a Library 4 (after Talbot)
Inkjet Print (Cotton Rag Paper, Pigment-Based Ink).
38.5 x 31.5 Inches
2017 - 2018

Constructed Material 2
UV Cured Inkjet Print on Plywood
72 x 36 Inches
2021

Moving Blanket
Moving Blanket, Furniture Dollies, Wood, Lights, Acrylic Sheet, Hardware
75 x 57 x 5 Inches.
2021

(Dis)Continuous Temporary Landscapes
Inkjet Prints
Dimensions Variable.
2015 – Ongoing

Scene in a Library 2 (after Talbot)
Inkjet Print (Cotton Rag Paper, Pigment-Based Ink).
37.5 x 34.5 Inches
2017 - 2018

Scene in a Library 3 (after Talbot)
Inkjet Print (Cotton Rag Paper, Pigment-Based Ink).
35 x 36 Inches
2017 - 2018

Scene in a Studio (Construction #6)
Inkjet Prints, Concrete Fragments, Salvaged Bricks, Used Lumber, Hardboard, Angle Iron, Paint
Dimensions Variable
2019

Untitled Construction
Mixed Materials
Dimensions Variable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artwork Description</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Size/Dimensions</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untitled Studio Construction 11 (Side 1)</td>
<td>Inkjet Print on Baryta Paper</td>
<td>39 x 36 Inches</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled Studio Construction 11 (Side 2)</td>
<td>Inkjet Print on Baryta Paper</td>
<td>39 x 36 Inches</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accretion (Elongated Bleed/Slightly Floating Invisible Distortion)</td>
<td>UV Cured Inkjet Print on Aluminum Panel</td>
<td>72 x 36 Inches</td>
<td>2018 - 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled Rough Draft</td>
<td>Inkjet Print, Drafting Table (Top), Architectural Drawings, Wood, Lights, Sawhorses, Acrylic Sheet, Concrete Fragments</td>
<td>Dimensions variable</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Versions of 1 Assumption</td>
<td>Inkjet Transfer on Wood Mounted on Aluminum</td>
<td>1.5 x 18 x 1/8 inches each.</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled Dictionary 6.2</td>
<td>Inkjet Print On Baryta Paper</td>
<td>20 x 30 Inches</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floating Concrete Fragments (surface &amp; unearthed side on middle gray)</td>
<td>Inkjet Print</td>
<td>74 x 42 Inches</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled Dictionary 7 (Elongated Reflection)</td>
<td>Inkjet Print On Baryta Paper</td>
<td>30 x 30 Inches</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

Contributors & Bibliography
CONTRIBUTORS

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