

And Another Thing

Carl Andre
Laura Carton
Valie Export
Regina José Galindo
Tom Kotik
Mary Lucking
Bruce Nauman
Grit Ruhland
Anthony Titus
Ruslan Trusewych
Zimoun

Sep 14–
Oct 29,
2011

And Another Thing

**The James Gallery
The Center for the Humanities
The Graduate Center, CUNY**

**365 Fifth Avenue at 35th Street
New York, NY 10016**

centerforthehumanities.org/james-gallery

**Free and Open to the Public
Tue to Thur, 12-7pm
Fri and Sat, 12-6pm**

Sep 14-Oct 29, 2011

And Another Thing

Katherine Behar and Emmy Mikelson,
guest curators

Whether anxious and lonely or brave and hubristic, humans have staked out for themselves a privileged position, alone, at the center of everything. Anthropocentrism is the name for the ontological lynchpin that holds together centuries of art, philosophy, social theory, and scientific inquiry. The current exhibition, *And Another Thing*, is part of a movement toward non-anthropocentrism, an effort to dislodge the human from the center of discussion, to enrich the concept of being, and to open the very world itself to all things that comprise it. The world is brimming with things, and seen from a non-anthropocentric vantage, all things are equal, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral. Non-anthropocentrism repositions humans as just “another thing,” no more precious or central than any other.

The works in this exhibition approach non-anthropocentrism variously. Yet each is remarkable for denying the human subject’s centrality, or for questioning how certain things come to attain subject status. In this, they break with longstanding conventions in art, according to which human subjects have held a central place by both figuring in art and producing it. However, the works in *And Another Thing* go beyond reassessing the human subject; they reject the subject/object paradigm entirely. In place of this paradigm—one based on difference—they operate on an interchangeable mereology of humans and things. The artworks on view do not treat humans as subjects, nor even as objects, but simply as things, like everything else.

And Another Thing is timely now in part because of recent interest in these ideas in fields outside of art, most notably in philosophy. In 2007, the first meeting of a new movement in philosophy called speculative realism was held in London at Goldsmiths College. Since that time the movement has swelled through publications, symposia, and intensive discourse in the blogosphere.¹ Both speculative realism and its offshoot, object-oriented

ontology, hold non-anthropocentrism as a central tenet. Their articulation of a world composed of a nonhierarchical collection of objects inspired this exhibition. According to this philosophy, objects are specific, self-contained, and non-reducible, and human subjects are objects, no more or less important than any other. From a curatorial perspective, these concepts are compelling because they echo the ethos of Minimalism and feminist body art, along with the contemporary art that draws on the legacy of these movements.

Minimalism speaks to these ideas in three ways: by engaging the specificity of materials, by removing the authorial hand, and by opening up negative space around objects to include the human viewer and the sculptural object as equal occupant bodies. For example, in his canonical 1965 essay, “Specific Objects,” Minimalist artist Donald Judd wrote, “There is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of a material.”² We can read this statement today as indicating an emergent “object-oriented” perspective in avant-garde art.

Meanwhile, body artists turned this detached appropriation of material back onto themselves, by exploiting their own bodies as obdurate art materials. Feminist body artists confounded categories by occupying a dual role as author and artwork, subject and object, human and thing. Writing at the forefront of feminist performance art and body art in 1963, Carolee Schneeman stated, “I establish my body as a visual territory [...and] explore the image values of flesh as material I choose to work with.”³ Stressing their own commodification as art objects and consumption as objects of the gaze, feminist body artists interrogated the subject/object relationship and the hierarchies entailed.

Thanks to this history (not to mention the broad and powerful social conditions of materialism writ large) we are already primed to think of objects as subjects, to identify ourselves as “another thing,” and to use thingness to eschew human privilege. To achieve this, some works in *And Another Thing* destabilize the human subject by dismembering it and creating a distributed

subject; some render the human as a thing amongst things; and some explore relationships between things, cutting humans out of the loop. Finally, framed most broadly, the exhibition and related programs also seek to demonstrate how, in this interdisciplinary moment, each field—art, philosophy, neuroscience, physics, ecology, architecture, political science, etc.—is itself another thing, contending with thingness, just like each artwork in the exhibition.

1. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman offer an account of speculative realism's origins in "Toward a Speculative Philosophy," the introduction to their edited volume, *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds. (Melbourne: re.press, 2011).

2. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook 8* (1965).

3. Carolee Schneeman, "Eye Body," *More Than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works and Selected Writings*, ed. Bruce McPherson (New Paltz, New York: Documentext, 1979), 52.

1. Zimoun

25 woodworms, wood, microphone, sound system, 2010

HD video loop

10 min

edition of 6

Courtesy of bitforms gallery nyc

Zimoun's video of woodworms devouring a piece of wood masquerades as a still image, belying the intense activity playing out beyond human sight. In *25 woodworms, wood, microphone, sound system (2009)*, the audible element is the only hint at the concealed assemblage of woodworms and wood, an intersection between two things that is at once destructive and instructive.

2. Ruslan Trusewych

this is the way the world is, 2005–2011

modified nightlights and oscillating fans

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Ruslan Trusewych's installation, *this is the way the world is (2005–2011)*, is composed of oscillating fans directed at a cluster of flickering nightlights whose subtle motion activates one another. The arrangement of nightlights and fans creates a closed system that exists outside of human intervention. This chaotic and random mode of communication explores entropy, even while staging a sense of equipoise.

3. Anthony Titus
Empty Field 2, 2007

Wood, metal, enamel, and screen print
44 × 11 × 30 in
Courtesy of the artist and Museum 52

Anthony Titus' *Empty Field 2* (2007) consists of an atmospheric screen print adhered to a high-gloss enamel wood support. A series of formal cuts and folds fractures the pictorial as well as the physical space, resulting in a destabilization of the notions of viewpoint and prospect, thereby blocking the viewing subject's centrality.

4. Grit Ruhland
Pantoffel für Pantoffeltierchen (Slipper for Paramecium), 2007

Slide, microscopic slipper, and photograph
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

A gift for the unicellular organism Paramecium, Grit Ruhland's to-scale "slipper" is only viewable under a microscope. Ruhland collaborated with scientists at the Max Planck Institute to build *Pantoffel für Pantoffeltierchen*, a slipper-shaped home for the slipper-shaped organism, also known as Pantoffeltierchen or slipper animalcules. The use of scale makes this work at once humorous and an explicit rejection of anthropocentrism. The specific encounter between shelter and organism creates a closed system that positions the viewing human as outside and other.

5. Laura Carton
www.roughrider.com, 2000

Digital C-print
21 × 27 in
Courtesy of the artist

Laura Carton's series of photographs, each named for a website (2000–2003), begin with pornographic images downloaded from the Internet. The artist removes the actors' bodies and then digitally reconstructs the backgrounds. By literally removing the human performers, she asserts that the objects and environment are equal "performers" in generating and communicating meaning. Simultaneously, Carton's work alludes to the conventional view of pornography as objectifying the humans it displays.

6. Valie Export
Ein Perfektes Paar oder die Unzucht wechselt ihre Haut (A Perfect Pair, or, Indecency Sheds Its Skin), 1986

Video
12 min
Courtesy of Video Databank

Valie Export's *Ein Perfektes Paar* (1986) reveals the insidious nature of commercialism by taking literally the idea that the body of a consumer can become a "walking billboard." The video shows how a human subject's autonomy is consumed, and reduced to the point of becoming a floating signifier. Export emphasizes the already-objectified female subject of consumer capitalism, while also extending an equal opportunity attitude toward male objectification.

7. Laura Carton
www.classycougars.com, 2002

Digital C-print
18 x 23 in
Courtesy of the artist

See number 5 for description.

8. Mary Lucking
Pas de Deux, 2000

Breath-sensitive belts, bench, computer with custom software, and monitor
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Mary Lucking uses biofeedback technology to illustrate the tension between two bodies attempting to act in tandem. Her interactive installation, *Pas de Deux* (2000) invites two participants to occupy a space in which boundaries between self and environment must be actively challenged and dissolved. With cooperation, biofeedback allows two individuals to renounce their independence and dissolve into a singular system.

9. Regina José Galindo
No perdemos nada con nacer (*We don't lose anything by being born*), 2000

Lambda print on forex
67 x 100 cm
Courtesy of Prometeo Gallery, Milan

Regina José Galindo's work questions the ontological status of the female subject. Her photograph, *No perdemos nada con nacer* (2000), shows the artist's naked body, bagged and discarded, in a litter-strewn landscape. The work operates through overt abjection, while also making reference to the convention of viewing the female body as messy and requiring containment.

10. Carl Andre
Base 5 Aluminum Stack, 2008

25 aluminum ingots
4 x 18 x 7 in each; 22 x 37 1/4 x 18 in overall
Courtesy of Paula Cooper, New York

Carl Andre's pyramidal stack of aluminum ingots illustrates a part-whole relationship in which the part informs the structural organization of the whole. The formal logic between the ingots dictates the entire rationale of the piece: it is what it is. In this, *Base 5 Aluminum Stack* (2005) thwarts what object-oriented philosopher Graham Harman calls the "over-mining" of its content, i.e., the impulse to write human interpretation over a thing's material facticity. In Andre's work, all questions of meaning generation become self-reflexive.

11. Bruce Nauman
***Wall/Floor Positions*, 1968**

Video
59 min, 25 sec
Courtesy of Video Data Bank

In *Wall/Floor Positions* (1968), Bruce Nauman leans, props, cantilevers, and rests his body on and against the wall and floor of his studio to imitate the manner in which minimalist sculpture is positioned in relation to gallery architecture. Nauman's mimicry effaces his human significance by making his own body equivalent to the industrial materials deployed in early minimalist sculptures. Continuing Minimalism's exploration of space through relationships, the artist's body is a material with which to measure and study the room's dimensions.

12. Tom Kotik
***Rational Impulse*, 2004**

Wood, MDF, carpeting, sound proofing, and sound
96 x 96 x 40 in
Courtesy of the artist

Through engineered soundproofing, Tom Kotik's box, *Rational Impulse* (2004), is able to contain the cacophony of sound within it, until the lid is opened. The unknowable interior and its overwhelming acoustic presence play not only with expectation, but also with human denial of things' complexity.

13. Laura Carton
***www.bangbangbaby.com*, 2002**

Digital C-print
17 x 25½ in
Courtesy of the artist

See number 5 for description.

14. Laura Carton
***www.youngandtight.com*, 2003**

Digital C-print
16 x 24 in
Courtesy of the artist

See number 5 for description.

Thu Sep 15, 6pm
panel

Speculative Realism

Graham Harman, Philosophy, The American University in Cairo; Jane Bennett, Political Science, Johns Hopkins; Levi Bryant, Philosophy, Collin College. Presider and discussant: Patricia Clough, Sociology and Women's Studies, Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY.

How does the current "speculative turn" that has occurred in philosophy theorize the liveliness of objects? If speculative realism is staunchly non-anthropocentric, challenging Enlightenment notions of the subject, what are the ethical and political implications of such a stance? Join three preeminent speculative realist thinkers, Jane Bennett (Political Science, Johns Hopkins), Levi Bryant (Philosophy, Collin College), and Graham Harman (Philosophy, The American University in Cairo) for an evening of conversation, theorization, and speculation drawn from their current writings. Patricia Clough (Sociology and Women's Studies, Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY) will moderate the conversation.

The Skylight Room (9100)
co-sponsored by The Life of Things seminar

Tue Sep 20, 6:30pm
conversation

Art, Again

Bernard Stiegler, Ecole de Philosophie d'Epineuil-le-Fleuriel. Discussant: Kyoo Lee, Philosophy, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY.

How does time relate to the production, collection, and circulation of aesthetic objects, especially in this era of global techno-capitalism? Join Bernard Stiegler, renowned French philosopher and Director of the Institut de recherche et d'innovation (IRI) at the Centre Georges-Pompidou for a conversation about the material ontology of art and why it matters. He will be joined by discussant Kyoo Lee (Philosophy, John Jay College of Criminal Justice). They will explore inquiries such as, if "technics is unthought," as Bernard Stiegler argued in his field-defining trilogy, *Technics and Time (La technique et le temps, I-III, 1994-2001)*, how are we to rethink that technical "thing" along with its oddly self-destructive logic of industry? And why do we continue to produce "stuff," no matter what?

The James Gallery

Thu Oct 6, 6pm
lecture

Contemporary Art and Neuroscience

Suzanne Anker, Fine Arts, School of Visual Arts. Discussant: Adrienne Klein, Science & the Arts, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

How do state-of-the-art technologies augment the artist's imagination in the 21st century? From algorithmic computation, to robotic drawing and rapid-prototype sculpture, are Romantic notions of the artist and aesthetics being put aside or are they more robust than ever?

Suzanne Anker (Chair, BFA Fine Arts, School of Visual Arts), co-author of *The Molecular Gaze: Art in the Genetic Age*, visual artist and theoretician working with genetic imagery, will be joined in discussion by moderator Adrienne Klein (Science & the Arts, The Graduate Center, CUNY).

The James Gallery
co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Women and Society, Science & the Arts, and the NeuroCultures seminar

Thu Oct 20, 7pm
panel

No Thing Unto Itself

What are the political and ethical implications of considering all objects—whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, even whether animate or inanimate—equivalent and thereby interchangeable? Noortje Marres (Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London), Shannon Mattern (Media Studies, The New School), and David Turnbull (Architecture, Cooper Union), with Katherine Behar (Fine and Performing Arts, Baruch College, CUNY) as moderator, will discuss how this perspective changes the conversation around sustainability as well as human interaction. What happens when technology reaches the scale of cities? Can an object bear responsibility that has previously been reserved for humans? Beginning with the artists' sometimes contentious relationship to material presence as a platform for the examination of these questions, this panel will consider the constellation of disciplines including architecture, ecology, global geography, urban studies, and anthropology that are tackling these questions.

Room 9207

co-sponsored by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, The New School

The Amie and Tony James Gallery catalyzes research and knowledge production in contemporary art. Located in midtown Manhattan at the nexus of the academy, contemporary art, and the city, the James Gallery brings a range of pertinent discourses into the exhibition space through a number of innovative formats. While some exhibitions will remain on view for extended contemplation, other activities, such as performances, workshops, reading groups, roundtable discussions, salons, screenings will have a short duration. As a space for interdisciplinary artistic and discursive activities, the gallery works with scholars, students, artists and the public to explore working methods that may lie outside usual disciplinary practices.

The Center for the Humanities was founded in 1993 as a public forum for people who take ideas seriously inside and outside the academy. By bringing together CUNY students and faculty with prominent journalists, artists, and civic leaders, the Center seeks to promote the humanities and humanistic perspectives in the social sciences. In the tradition of CUNY and The Graduate Center's commitment to ensuring access to the highest levels of educational opportunity for all New Yorkers, all events are free and open to the public.

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