

Exquisite Corpse, or, The Show That Curates Itself

Initiated by Andrew Berardini

Mihai Nicodim Gallery

July 11 – August 15

Closing Reception: Saturday, August 15, 6-9 pm

Lucky Dragons

Emily Mast

Jeremy Rocine

Karen Lofgren

Nayland Blake and Robert Crouch

Robert Crouch and Christopher Oliveria

Christopher Oliveria and Manuel Ocampo

Friends & Relations (Corrina Peipon and Jill Spector)

Exquisite corpse is a game. A story is composed, a line written, and the next person writes the next and the story moves and tumbles at sudden changes of fortune and whimsy. The tales quickly become derailed, fucked up, surreal. The murdered brother of one-line turns out to be a scuffed and cherished stuffed animal in the next. The sultry sex scene transforms into a delusion told by a mailman in deep conversation with his French poodle. So the story goes.

Then there's the Summer Group Show, a ubiquitous and almost entirely useless animal that lumbers around every June to haphazardly stuff galleries with art. Named after French New Wave films or Joy Division songs or under some vague-ish medium: "Sculpture," (which though flavorless isn't dishonest). More often these SGSs are composite of friends, a spare few plucked from legions of art school chums and bar mates, or worse, the uneven programs of "gallery artists" (or rather whatever we got in the backroom that ain't sold yet). These can be fun, there's no doubt, and their laziness is truly the laziness of summer, but there's rarely any sense of adventure, expectancy, or play. Rarely do we wonder what comes next or thrill at the twists and turns of an unfolding, an unraveling, a story. But galleries should be filled with art. This is a problem that needs some attempt at solving.

So Exquisite Corpse, or, The Show That Curates Itself is an exhibition that coalesces and organizes with each new incarnation. I choose somebody. They choose somebody else. The show is rethought, recalibrated every week. The next person curates the next person. The theme of the show is decided by the artists, each one surveying the work at hand and adding. They can add their own press releases, books, plays, strategic actions, etc. I hope it doesn't

devolve into a me-and-my-friends show, but fuck it, it isn't my story anymore, I've only control over the first line. I didn't want the usual suspects trotted out, the limitations of my accomplices or even the boundaries of my vision. So other than having chosen the form, I chose with optimism the first artists, the always unexpected Lucky Dragons (Luke Fischbeck and Sarah Rara).

They choose the next. The story will coalesce and collapse in titillating ways from there. It fails or succeeds one artist at a time. Rather than an opening party there will be a closing, when the show is finally done and will provide at the very least a very good party

Closing Statement

So the experiment failed. Or maybe it succeeded. All of the clichés of a summer group show were engaged in. Artists chose their friends. People chose things that were lying around their studio (the equivalent of the dealers unsold items in the backroom). It had a cute title. Even a great closing party is somewhat doubtful, many of the artists have emailed to tell me they're going to be out of town.

But it was an experiment, a game, it succeeded in being unexpected. Each artist chose another, most I didn't know from before, or if I knew them I didn't know their work, or if I did know their work, they brought something unusual, different from what they normally do. Looking at the show what is the new theme? What form did the artists curate the show into? In every case, in one form or another, the exhibition is about collaborations. Lucky Dragons' Luke Fischbeck and Sarah Rara are longtime partners in art and music making, Emily Mast collaborated with grace and aplomb with everyone who walked in for some fresh bread. Jeremy Rocine collaborated with the friends who walked in so that he could draw their mouths describing where they live, Robert Crouch collaborated with Nayland Blake and Christopher Oliveria, Christopher Oliveria collaborated with Manuel Ocampo, Corrina Peipon collaborated with Jill Spector in an ongoing project called Friends & Relations.

Collaborations in the art world usually don't have much legs marketwise. Exceptions abound, Gilbert & George, Christo & Jean Claude, Fischli & Weiss, but usually the art-buying public prefers individual gestures, the myth of the lonely genius. So I'm glad to have opened a space for collaborations, which can't always find an easy home.

So the show succeeds in being an ongoing experiment. My curation was collaboration with the artists. The artists collaborated with each other. Unexpected things happened. The show is polyglot and heterogeneous, a cacophonous chorus, disparate voices coming together in one form or another. So it failed and succeeded.

So now, there will be a party. Come have a beer. Mingle. Laugh. Concoct new projects. Gossip about market trends, potential opportunities, run into people you haven't seen but wanted to, enjoy the last few lazy chords of summer, it's almost over now anyway.