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Wed-Sat 11am-6pm or by appointment

OBJECTIFIED

Curated by Roy Exley

Daniela Ambrus | G.Roland Biermann | Roy Exley | Oliver Godow | Christian Hagemann | Joséphine Michel | David Owen | Dylan Thomas | Elliott Wilcox

Private View

Thursday January 12th 2012 6.30-8.30pm

Exhibition Dates

Friday January 13th – Saturday February 18th 2012

Gallery Hours

Wednesday–Saturday 11am–6pm or by appointment

Objectified brings a range of divergent takes on the still image – still, not only because they are photographic images, but also because they convey a sense of stillness in the scenes that they portray (*Stilleven* – ‘quiet life’ in Dutch was the origin of the still-life genre). Evading the hook of time, they are adrift in a timeless envelope all of their own, purveying their uniquely quiet visual statements. Long gone are the days of the 19th century photographers who tried to excel at the painter’s game in attempting to emulate those classical 17th century still-life scenes of bowls of fruit, vases of flowers or the limp bodies of dead game, with their sumptuous surface reflections and diffusions of light. While the images in this exhibition do have an important feature in common with those paintings - that is, their expression of our mortality through a portrayal of the transience of the everyday objects and scenes which surround us, or in which we are immersed - their subjects are, however, very much of their time.

There is a vastly different momentum and a different cadence of course to the transient events of our contemporary world. These differences are starkly portrayed by the photographs in this exhibition. All are harbingers of hidden narratives, but narratives with distinctly 21st century significance. That the flow of time has been halted not only hints at our finite mortality but also introduces the phenomenon of artifice. This artifice invites the play of our imaginations to tweak and transform it into something that we would like it to be or to represent. We seize upon our own versions of those narratives and possess them for ourselves, engaging with them on our own terms. If, as viewers, we enter into these narratives in order to create dialogues with the artists then they are dialogues at a distance.

The mystification or reification of the object or scene through its intensified objectification in an image can engage the viewer in two contrasting ways: in one way it appeals, no matter how minimally, to our innate desire to experience genuine awe and wonder (something of which the ubiquity of ‘spectacle’ in contemporary culture has deprived us), where its mystique taunts us. The second way touches on our urge to analyse and recognise things with which we are not familiar and, for an instant, we can be caught in a limbo, subconsciously suspended between the need to fix or categorise and the desire to be mystified. The duration of that limbo moment can vary according to the nature of the image; the relationship between the covert and the overt in its composition will be the deciding factor here. The still-life can either nurture our imaginations with its subtle, half-concealed narratives, or it can goad us towards entering into a thorough-going rational analysis. Like the gestalt effect, however, we cannot hedge our bets here – it is either one or the other. *Roy Exley*

Editor’s Notes:

Roy Exley is a freelance art critic, curator and photographer who has written for prestigious publications including *Art Monthly*, *Art Review*, *Contemporary*, *Flash Art*, *Art Press (Paris)*, *Blueprint*, *Camera Austria*, *Portfolio*, *Creative Camera* and *Art World*. Since 2000 he has curated eleven exhibitions in London and Paris and has been a judge for the Photosynkryria Biennale in Thessaloniki, Greece, and twice for the BOC Young Artists award. As a visiting lecturer specialising in contemporary photography, he has worked at a number of British Universities.