

*You Must Stand This
While Reading There*

Cynthia Daignault, Isa Gagarin, Katelyn Farstad, Jeff Grant, Jack Lavender,
Adam Marnie, Ruairiadh O'Connell, Jesse Willenbring

Curated by Nathan Coutts

December 14, 2013 – February 8, 2014
OPENING RECEPTION – Saturday December 14, 7-9pm

David Petersen Gallery is pleased to present ***You Must Stand This While Reading There***, a group exhibition featuring eight internationally exhibiting artists from New York, London, Berlin, Los Angeles and Minneapolis.

Organized by artist/curator Nathan Coutts, this exhibition involves an assignment: a set of instructions with which to make an artwork is passed from the artist to another. This proposition is working under the premise that the creation of a work of art is a two-fold event involving thinking and doing. These two forms of generative activity bounce data back and forth between the different modes of engagement within an artist. Both inform one another. Both remain unique and cloistered within the parameters of their nature. i.e. 'hammering a nail into the wall and thinking about hammering a nail into the wall' are intimately related but neither produce a result without the mutual engagement of the other. For *You Must Stand This While Reading There*, these links between the mind and hand of the artist have been severed - disconnected physically, socio-economically, and experientially - while a complicated exchange has been created between the artist, the curator/gallerist and the makers. This disjunctive exchange, independently manipulated by all parties, generates further complexities and questions about the author, the concept of the artwork, its making and its objecthood, and the indefinite spaces in between.

Cynthia Daignault (New York) imagined a collaborative experiment between herself and a curator to create a painting in reverse. In lieu of the curator writing a text that elucidates the material or subject in a painting, the painting is made from the wall text. In this, the painting takes the roll of the didactic, the text becomes generative and moves the work of art to the submissive position, reversing the assumed roll of creator. For Daignault's project several curators, a poet, a collector, and critics from New York, Minneapolis, and Mexico City were enlisted to create a text to become painting.

Isa Gagarin (Minneapolis), whose work about occultation - the interruption of light from a celestial body by the intervention of other celestial bodies - uses the event as both content and as a method of production for her abstract work. Gagarin wrote a specific set of instructions that when followed produce a diptych. This work uses both the movement of the sun to burn shadows into paper, and a stencil to create the dark, partially cropped form of distant celestial body. The terms of occultation in Gagarin's work address the phenomenon from a scientific understanding of the event while touching on the deeper connection we all share with the universe. With this in mind, Father Shannon Kearns, Catholicism's first ordained transgender priest, was approached to produce the piece. Though not an artist, Father Kearns' involvement adds layers of content that add complexity to considering Gagarin's work.

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Jeff Grant (New York/Berlin) sent via email the simple instruction to have hand written on a piece of ordinary paper the phrase "You must stand this while reading there." The small twist in the assumed direction of the phrase as the viewer reads it is a staple tactic in Grant's work. The phrase has been hand written in marker by friends and acquaintances over the months leading up to the exhibit. A casual exchange asking a simple task creates a drawing from each individual's handwriting. The phrase itself, simultaneously tells the viewer where to stand while hinting at having to tolerate it. The experience is heightened by removing a comfortable viewing distance by it's placement on the wall just inside the gallery's window. "You must stand..." too close to the drawing, inside a Naumanesque corridor created by the window and wall, or outside the gallery in a Minnesota winter, "...to read there."

Jack Lavender's (London) process begins with the artist sorting through stacks of photocopies and searching for relationships within the images. These relationships translate into 3-dimensional works that manifest as assemblages of banal, mass-produced objects taking the form of metal armatures and collections of hanging hardware store detritus. For this exhibition, Lavender compiled a collection of eight images that were to be made into a sculpture, per his usual manner. These eight images were bound into a 'manual' from which artist **Katelyn Farstad** (Minneapolis) was to take over the task and make it her own work by using this manual as something to work against, "an avenue for reaction." Farstad's work also utilizes found objects, transformed to the point of unrecognizability; each often becomes a smear of color or form in the bold composition of her constructions. Farstad employs a deep relation to materials and objects that, through the mill of her practice and thoughtfully contradictory thinking, become explorations of restraint and excess.

Adam Marnie (New York), in a recent solo show at Derek Eller Gallery, removed the gypsum wallboard from the lower part of walls throughout the gallery, an act summoning memories of the widespread flooding in many Chelsea galleries following last year's Hurricane Sandy. At David Petersen Gallery, Marnie again asks for the removal of gypsum wallboard in direct proportion to the addition of works in the group exhibition. For every work added to the exhibition, a corresponding section of wall will be removed setting into play an algebraic equation about infinity and the void.

Ruairiadh O'Connell's (London) work attaches great personal meaning to the texture, lines and forms found in his sculpture. For this show O'Connell's piece takes its title from the name of an individual who has agreed to receive a haircut by a hired stylist. We are presented with the stylist and the individual conversing about the options and style of a haircut before they proceed. In reality, what we witness is the generation of a curse as it is being cast upon an unknowing individual by the actions of two others hired to act as the agents of said curse (Elizabeth Geving and Caleb Yeskey of the Aveda Institute). It is their actions and gestures in making O'Connell's physical artwork that interpret O'Connell's own intentions to the individual being cursed.

Jesse Willenbring (Los Angeles) is known for his lush abstract paintings and repetitious wall stencils. For *You Must Stand...* Willenbring changes direction from the sprawling cover that has been his wall stencils to a gesture implying a linear direction demarcated by individual modes whose basic form determine the nature of how each mark time. Like the rook, the knight, and the bishop, the nature of each determines how they move. Three individuals moving forward and leaving in the respective wake of each an imprint of their limitations. Here, three gallery representatives have each been assigned a roll of the straight line, the curved line, or the zig-zag, each leaving their respective mark in making Willenbring's piece over a period of three days.