

David Petersen Gallery
Rose Marcus - Fountains
September 16 - October 29, 2022

15 September, 2022

Ten works, the images pool, condensate, and are submerged. This carousel of color could be called a vernacular of images that come from the process of their own making: staging, documenting, testing, experimenting, and resting. As Rose once said, her images “spill” from the production of the work. The subject of this exhibition is just as much about reaching across imagined boundaries between photography, painting, and performance as it is the development from unfinished to finished.

In 1920, Marcel Duchamp was working on what would become *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, aka *The Large Glass*, when he invited Man Ray over to his New York studio to photograph a years-long accumulation of dust collecting on the surface of the work. The resulting photograph would become known as *Dust Breeding*, not so much a “is it art?” but rather a “what is it?” piece. Possibly the first artwork that defied definition by covering all its bases as abstraction and representation, sculpture and drawing, a performance and its photo documentation, while also raising questions of authorship, production, chance, duration, function, and a spatial ambiguity. Are you looking into a microscope or across the vast landscape of the moon?

Duchamp spent eight years on *The Large Glass*, initially deciding it to be unfinished until it was damaged during shipping, at which point he declared the work completed better than he could have himself. In regards to Rose’s work, the term *ongoing* is more apt than unfinished, ongoing in the sense that a readymade always comes before whatever it is you might do with it, that there is a history there whether you recognize it or not, and that appropriation has many possible futures. Or could it be that the power of the photo is its fertility, ongoing in the way menses is an unfinished work, a latent potential to reproduce, be a copy or replica or index? And yet, the exhibition pushes specificity over visual cohesion or blatant seriality. I had never thought about this before, not until seeing Rose’s work, its value as a cycle of process, and its exhibition as aperture into that process. With this level of positioning the access is like a double, or an unforgettable shadow, imprinted in the mind like Duchamp’s *Fountain* as the *Virgin Mary*.

The spirit of both Duchamp’s infamous urinal and Man Ray’s dust photo, complicated by indefinite authorship, media, and spatial confusion, is embodied in *Fountains*. Rose’s exhibition shows us a series of fountains in either form or execution, articulating a fulcrum point where the work breeds, generated by osmosis. Rose’s spills include a chip bag refracting light; blood, under water, printed in both negative and positive; construction workers flirting with and using the artist’s camera; a cropped advertisement of a woman’s belly, drawn and printed; a text about the artist’s work submerged in water; a portrait of a fountain pen; a poster of a painted soldier, artist unknown, swaddled in silk; and in negative again, documentation of a formerly exhibited work. Notably, four of the ten images were not shot by the artist.

This is all framing. Every time you pull out your phone to snap a shot of a friend or lover or loved work of art, all framing. Maybe you stage what is in the frame, “Say cheese,” more framing. You do it again when you give it substrate and platform by printing it, sharing it, and you do it once more when you support it with text. Rosalind Kraus argued that the camera’s frame is revealed as that which masters the subject, that the camera, which initially seemed to merely complete or add to human vision, in fact supplanted it, imposing its own logic on the visible world. But what happens when the images begin to perform themselves? When the images are of the tools of their own making, or documentation of previous work, or a text about the artist - all readymades. Who, or what, really made *Dust Breeding* after all? Can the subject become the author of the work?