

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

From Counterculture to Cyberculture

Curated by David Lewis

Lucy Dodd, Israel Lund, Dawn Kasper, Jared Madere, Alex Mackin Dolan, K.r.m. Mooney, Trevor Paglen, Sean Paul and Bruce Conner

July 7 – August 26, 2017

Opening reception: July 7, 6-8pm



This exhibition is inspired by, and named in honor of, Fred Turner's important history, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*.

The exhibition is not, however, a literal history. Rather: it extrapolates from Turner's historical arc in order to present a matrix of contemporary concerns, and emerging artists whose ways of thinking are enmeshed in those concerns. From Turner's research it develops a historical conceit for art-making in the present. A web of possibilities.

Some questions:

–How do emerging artists today inhabit the matrix—defined by the twin poles of psychedelia, alternative spirituality, DIY community and collectivity, on the one hand, and digital utopianism, anarcho-capitalism, globalized opportunism, and cyber-paganism, on the other?

–Is this matrix inherently teleological: do versions of counterculture inevitably transform into cyberculture (the big chill)? Or is it rather more chaotic, more malleable? (cf. Timothy Leary, *Chaos and Cyberculture*)

–How does this matrix relate to, or translate into, the "art world"? What are the constructive links between the structures deduced from Turner's book and the history of art as told by, and in, the art world, and art historical academe?

The artists in this exhibition are presented together in the spirit of such an inquiry.

Lucy Dodd's work can be seen as a formalist version of the counterculture's quest for universal mythology and profound spiritual truth. Her paintings return to the early history of abstract painting as spiritual quest referencing ideas of Malevich, Kandinsky, and Mondrian. Dodd's use of organic materials represents a return to the "whole earth" and the grounding reality of spiritual community.

Alex Mackin Dolan emerged as an artist by way of the internet (specifically the global 89plus program run by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Simon Castets), and then exhibited many of his peers at Grand Century, an artist-run space on the Lower East Side. The countercultural dreams—all the dreams—of our society are imagined from the future as ruins, as the remnants of catastrophe—as tokens, even, in a macabre science fiction casino game. It is of particular relevance to this exhibition that this young artist, this prophet of ecological doom, emerged from an entirely digital landscape and deploys almost exclusively digital tools.

For performance and installation artist Dawn Kasper, art represents not only a mystical comprehension of a

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cosmic architecture but above all a model of an alternative community, inspired—like Stewart Brand—in part by Allan Kaprow and John Cage. Her Nomadic Studio Practice is now on view at the Venice Biennial. Moreover, like many of the 60s communards, her art-making stems from a practice and poetics of everyday life and a DIY use of regular materials, transformed in the name of a potential alternative collectivity.

Israel Lund's practice resembles, in spirit and technique, that of the early Hackers chronicled in Steven Levy's *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution* (1984). Lund hacks the techniques of commercial printing, from which he derives an open, decentralized system, which paradoxically results in the creation of sumptuous, lyrical paintings. Art history (Kippenberger, Buren, Rauschenberg, Cage) is also sometimes hacked by Lund, who describes his work as pure (or nothing but) *information*, and shares, like many of the early hackers, an enthusiasm for, and spiritual kinship with, noise music, particularly Throbbing Gristle.

Jared Madere, who created and ran an important gallery of emerging artists in New York City (called Bed-Stuy Love Affair), shares an instinctive interest in psychedelic experience, and is best known for monumental expressions of states of energetic potential and transformation (see, for example, his fountain, made for the Whitney Museum in 2015). His is an art that seeks to be sensory and spiritually overwhelming and transformative, an art of intense physical and psychical presence. Like Lucy Dodd, he uses organic and non-traditional art materials in much of his work, but like Alex Dolan he is a child of the post-internet age, and his tools are often computer-based. His practice quite literally bridges the dreams of a psychedelic counterculture with the permissive, computer-based, decentralized image culture of our current cyberculture.

K.r.m. Mooney's sculptural forms explore the borders of representation. They investigate imprecise states bound to situations where visual concepts are inchoate. Embracing the countercultural ideal, these are works that suggest the still unformed or dawning moments of emergence by strategizing indeterminacy, queerness and abstraction as a way to privilege bodies that do not align with the dominant canon. Their sculptural forms imply a passage to other materialities; the avant-garde understood as innovation of language and forms that generate sensuality and transformation.

With his Last Pictures project, Trevor Paglen embedded a photographic record of human existence and its impact on the earth within a communications satellite that will quietly orbit the earth until the sun explodes 4.5 billion years from now. Preserved in the vacuum of space, the project was envisioned as a kind of record of the profound contradictions that characterize contemporary civilizations in a form that will likely outlive all other traces of our existence. Subverting the inextricable link between aerospace engineering the military industrial complex that funds its advancement, Paglen posits an alternative use for this technology that questions how we understand life, our relationship to nature and the ways we try and control it.

The works of Sean Paul treat the history of the Cold War and the development of Norbert Wiener's cybernetics—the prehistory of Turner's *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*—quite directly, taking the development of the atomic bomb and the associated figures and technologies as subject for paintings which allude to the atomic sublime, be it the Trinity test site mushroom cloud or the distortion field generated by the first Hydrogen bomb test, called *Ivy Mike*. The works are elegant historical examinations of the catastrophic implications and militaristic early history of the technologies that are now presented to consumers as elements of the ascending digital utopia.

Finally, Bruce Conner is included as an art historical touchstone, an example of an artist whose practice traverses a similar set of terms, as well as the atomic sublime, and the always changing configuration of potential liberation.

Please join us for a panel discussion featuring Fred Turner, David Lewis, and artists from the exhibition moderated by Natasha Boas, Saturday, July 22 at 12:00pm.

For more information, please contact Altman Siegel, 415-576-9300 or info@altmansiegel.com.