

Mercy Pictures, 'Covid-19 Edition'

Within the metropolises of the world, where overpopulation fuses with a rampant service industry, buildings come with an exact cutoff point to their potential occupancy - Mercy Pictures' 'Capacity Signs' modelled after New York City's markers of said limit. A numeration to safeguard catastrophes, where probability is based on an integration of architecture and the physicalities of generic people, building collapses, fires, emergency exits etc. Quantifications that need only exist as within the deranged pursuits of socialised satisfaction and capital return collectives are never far from suspending their intuitions of physics. In retrospect however, it appears that this very density and liveliness of modern populaces - despite aforementioned contingency plans - came to be the perfect petri dish, nurturing this virus to its total catastrophic effect. Precautionary measures now look like omens for that which was too evil for empathy.

Under the guidelines of the WHO nation state health councils have applied global analysis to their denizens freedoms. For instance, within New Zealand there is an indefinite capacity of zero for those old spaces of sociality - hitherto jovial or illicit, now all are guilty. In our 'bubbles' (capacity of 1/2/3/4/5...) corporeality is at once microcosmically heightened but pragmatically diminished, as the act of breathing takes focus over hedonism and habit. The only repetitions felt are in phantoms that wet but never sate the tongue. It is *business as normal* (pretty much) as I induce my cognition into the corkscrews of sensorial and social dissonance: a poor rendition of my favourite restaurant's dish, as per their 'sharing' of the recipe, eaten alone with utensils all too familiar; my favourite fashion brand wants me to dress in their clothes as though my intoxication is to effectuate a departure from my living room. It is as the saying goes: first a tragedy then a farce.

Artists like galleries, collectors, curators and even those 'art-involved-event-organisers' have responded to the present crisis, some out of materialistic livelihood but none without a sense of Covid-19's precedence and thus an attitude of artistic duty. Contemporary Art, as one could have predicted, maintains its vitality by bypassing the child's play of simulation for pure creativity, logics being generated allude to a transcendence of our extant tethering. Positive spins are laced with moralistic sentiment and at times with posterior blame: instagram residences, to share 'pertinent stories'; online viewing rooms/spaces, are to 'radically connect'; rendered artworks 'defy limitations'; or most efficiently, within the terrors of Covid-19 is 'a chance to begin again'.

Yet within the ebbs and flows of Covid-19 Contemporary Art there seems to be a tactical reminiscence of a very recent art history, quarantine practices have bootstrapped post-interest lexicons into a survivalism no longer of parody. Strategies are redeployed and rejuvenated, stripped off their estrangement (and in turn selective embarrassment), as they enter the platitudes of the good for humanity. A prophetic fulfilment that binds the differences of 'community oriented spaces' and those with books to balance: as it would appear farce has preceded tragedy within the stupors of Contemporary Art.

Simultaneously, and just outside of the purview of Contemporary Art, generalised art making also has had an amplified purpose. Days before lockdown local art stores were swarmed with those buying faber-castell and ready-made canvases preparing to engage creativity and potentially reclaim the mediums of fine art. Sketching as mechanised therapy where the tendency for elongated and elaborate sketches shows the passage of time stroke by stroke. A community is organically binding as #covidart is scheduled to reach 300k posts on Instagram in the case that this virus persists.

Thus for those that have ever pondered the automation of creativity it appears to have found its best instantiation under a declassified plague virality and only been assisted by technological fetish (albeit faulty). To return to Contemporary Art where the generation of ideas (pace conceptual art) are so few, being hindered by quality of analysis, and all that is left to do is blindly recycle, slowly eat away at context sensitivity. We could only say 'upcycling' but only to the extent adding glitter to a thrifted H&M jacket can be classified as such. If all anyone is doing is comatosed reproduction, why not accept the therapy instead of holding so tightly to a bastion whose immune system is fallible, sick Atlas.

'Capacity Signs' are putting Mercy Pictures to work, outlining graphic lettering onto paper with ball-point pen and graphite (objects that are in high supply in supermarkets BTW). Catered to your needs, hand to the paper, working by the hour, to keep this ship afloat. These drawings can be taken as tokens of your 'bubbles' civic service during the reign of Covid-19, or monuments for cities/countries worse off, or as sentiments of your favourite gallery that is presently furloughing staff (gallery's name written in an all too familiar bubbly font), or most pessimistically as signs that came too late.

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