



Rebecca Reeve, "Untitled #2, Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York," 2011. Archival inkjet print. 56 ¼ x 56 ¼ inches. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Brooklyn.

LIGHTNESS, BEING

GALLERY BROOKLYN | MAY 19 – JUNE 30, 2012

BY CHARLES SCHULTZ

Intrepid gallerists often forge unexpected partnerships, and Gallery Brooklyn is a case in point. On a quiet street in Red Hook, this new space opened in a realty office, and its inaugurating exhibition, *Lightness, Being*, pays homage to this quirky union in subtle ways. Rather than attempting to illustrate concepts in Milan Kundera's famous existentialist novel, the curator, Trong G. Nguyen, selected artists whose work is grounded in various ways of perceiving and representing spatial experience.

This seemed especially astute as I stood before Judith Braun's window-like "Floral Portal" (2011); the bases of these collages are photocopied images of flowers that the artist has arranged in patterns suggestive of stained glass. As I thought about where these portals might lead, I noticed a couple paused on the sidewalk examining the real estate listings that hang in the gallery's storefront window. Were we all imagining ourselves someplace else, momentarily transported through our looking? It seemed that way.

Other pieces were particularly complementary. John Elliot's tremendous painting, "The Approach" (2011), shared the disjunctive aesthetic and wall-sized dimensions of the zany collages contributed by the Miami collective, TM Sisters. "The Approach" comprises 333 separate little canvases arranged in an organic pattern that perhaps approximates the view of a fly as it comes in for a landing. It is as visually absorbing and serene as the TM Sisters' op-art wallpaper and light-catching collages are frenzied and excessive. One stirs you up; one settles you down.

Rebecca Reeve's shadowy photographs taken in the Brooklyn Navy Yard at night add a haunting note to the show. Here the light that illuminates each scene is artificial—a flashlight panning a warehouse interior. The pictures are hung on a diagonal axis, which takes a moment to orient oneself to and suggests that Reeve's deployment of light may have been as much a matter of seeing where she was going as it was about brightening a particular scene.

This is a strong first show, though where the gallery will go from here is hard to predict. There isn't a program per se; instead, the gallery solicits proposals from artists and curators, which means every exhibition has the potential to set off in a new direction. It also means the gallery will succeed or fail on the merits of the proposals, and that puts an interesting pressure on the very community that the gallery seeks to serve. ☞

MARGARET LANZETTA: REIGN MARKS DAVID PACKER: LES BIDONS

LE CUBE, INDEPENDENT ART ROOM, RABAT, MOROCCO | MARCH 16–MAY 9, 2012

BY CAROL SCHWARZMAN

Margaret Lanzetta and David Packer's one-person shows at Le Cube in Rabat both cast backward glances to Duchamp's aesthetics of *Étant donnés* and exile, as well as to Western Modernism's historic reframing of the Other as exotic and primitive. Yet the world has changed a bit since the first half of the 20th century, and in the contemporary work of Lanzetta and Packer, a nod to the past serves as a starting point—a given—and becomes part of the choice to make work at a nexus of cultural transition.

Having just returned to New York from nine months of working in Morocco, interfacing with a country that is "emerging" into the global contemporary art world, neither Packer nor Lanzetta is unaccustomed to functioning outside of his or her element, and it's not their practice to escape. While the artists both work freely with found motifs and imagery—Western and otherwise—the ways in which they do so incorporate the historic and the contemporary with a directness that bypasses obscurantism and, at these artists' best, the romantic.

Lanzetta's paintings and prints have always asserted that imagery, design, and decoration travel effortlessly amongst countries and across periods of time. Before we can identify the origin of a motif or trope, we adopt, own, manipulate, and communicate that which we seem to seamlessly absorb—using visual impact to our own ends. As Lanzetta has fed her increasingly omnivorous appetite from an ever-widening field of visual cultures, however, she has also dug deeper into these sources' histories, exploring how form speaks to notions of aesthetics, power, and beauty. In 2009, for example, she traveled throughout Syria and India in order to research the historical development of ikat weaving, both technically and visually, along the Spice Route.

To create many of the paintings on view in her exhibition, *Reign Marks*, Lanzetta employed a universal interlocking knot pattern found in Celtic, Roman, Byzantine, Chinese, and Arabic decoration, chopping, slicing, and reworking the basic knot as a formal device. These paintings reference the imprinted stamps used historically in China to signify and identify imperial patronage.

In her multi-paneled silkscreen entitled "Dharma Index," Lanzetta really hits her mark. Here, Lanzetta overlaid Moroccan zellij patterns adopted from the Royal Palace in Fez (printed in a Hindi palette of deep pinks and orange), onto fragments of Diasporic mosque floor plans. She ventures thus into an edgier, but somehow still lush and lyrical, sampling of the "incommensurable narratives" described by art theorist Terry Smith in his studied definition of the contemporary.

David Packer's sculptures, drawings, and wall collages evince a wry belief in the ability of both physical presence and imagery to influence the viewer's relationship to information—political, cultural, technological, and through these, textual. As a master practitioner of architectural and technical ceramics, Packer speaks simultaneously of the



David Packer, "1 bidons," Courtesy Le Cube.

intimate and the grandiose. At a 2006 Kohler Residency, he fabricated five bright red, life-size V8 car engines, which were suspended from the ceiling on chains as an installation entitled *The Last of the V8s*; this piece has been exhibited in Chicago, Sheboygan, Michigan, and Bellevue, Washington.

In *Les Bidons*, Packer has worked with Fez craftsmen to fabricate ceramic replicas of the plastic water bottles found in all Moroccan cafes. As Packer says, "Plastic is the new ceramics." Arranging multi-tiered groupings of these delicate white multiples—whose color, surface, and sleek irony call to mind Duchamp's "Fountain"—on locally-made tables, Packer places one blue and one black bottle within each assembled piece. In a region where water is scarce and oil is plentiful, the colors blue and black have particular meaning.

Packer's investigation of the visual qualities of old and new technologies was extended in a series of found-object astrolabes and collages. Cobbling together a poetics of functional sea-faring instruments from cast-off bric-a-brac and broken bits, the artist considers the never-ending, osmotic flow that underwrites cultural exchange. Exhibiting astrolabes in the Arab world carries particular meaning given the device's Islamic origins and importance as a tool used in finding and colonizing the New World.

Finally, Packer's series of photographs of local high-power lines and telephone poles speaks of the streaming of power and information, as well as the sad beauty of shared physical banality sometimes wrought by change. ☞