

A New Space

Connie Anthes' 'Tomorrow Things' concerns itself with art-objects and the process of their making. These works subvert conventional object-hood. A deflated frame pinned up in one corner upon which a digital motif is cast. A dynamic composition of shapes projected both on and through a wooden screen, crawling with dotted lines. These complex compositions exist as a marriage between the physical and the virtual, to be understood as separate scenarios rather than as objects. Process is often thought about as an idea, but here it is made physically manifest. A slender rod bubbles with the markings of a Photoshop selection tool as if it were DNA. This familiar signifier of process is cast like a building block, a binder of both cyber and earthly elements. It's also an allusion to the gap between what is present now and what will exist later. Each scenario encourages the perception of coming into being. A skeletal structure at one side of the room is speckled with little 'spinning wheels of death'. A familiar symbol of digital transformation, the message is clear: artwork pending. And so the space occupies an uncertain position between being started and being finished. It's a zone in which nothing is completed; where the act-of-doing itself exists as an elemental force that works upon the space. Moreover, this process-gap represents a cultural shift. Tomorrow's artists and tomorrow's things are in the midst of moving from the physical to the virtual.

Advancements in technology have reduced the temporal and spatial pause between what an artist can imagine and what they can do. Undoubtedly Anthes and her computer are working as one. In this space one is witness to a physical process of an artwork coming into being as it occurs in real time. Anthes is able to describe a situation in which human cognisance becomes characterised by its similitude to a computer, in which human thought itself is transformed into a computerised process. Computer science professor Lev Manovich describes this as the "projection of the ontology of a computer onto culture itself"ⁱ. How much has the human brain been affected by technology and how much is technology a product of the human brain? The situation described in 'Tomorrow Things' is not only a physical space as well as a virtual one but additionally a cognitive space too. It's a zone in which the brain works in anticipation of a technological process created in its own image; the two locked into each other's orbit, a synching that cannot be undone.

What then for objects created under these new conditions? Computer-logic permeates the creation of art-objects in the 21st Century, from its first inception as an idea in the artist's mind to its creation and eventual reception by an audience. The status of these new objects is inherently dissimilar to the art made before them; their very materiality existing as a substrate upon which an alternate identity can be projected. A sculpture may be forged from stone or marble, a painting constructed with paint. What is the constitution of these new objects? Tomorrow's things are actors, meaning to be found not in their composition but rather in the processes enacted upon their skins. They function to provide a surface of performativity, to be non-objects with the appearance of being an object. Are these sufficient substitutes for the authentic artwork or are they merely empty vessels? Tomorrow's things are not only new objects, they are suggestive of a new object-culture altogether.

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ⁱ Lev Manovich, *The Language Of New Media*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 218-219