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Current Shows

Paper Exhibition at Artists Space, New York, USA

Curated by Raimundas Malasauskas

Reviewed by **Anna Gritz**



Judith Braun, *The Line Between Fiction and Reality* (2009)

Entering 'Paper Exhibition' at Artists Space is like taking a leap through a distorted looking glass - or better through the hole in one of Job Piston's cocktail napkins *Untitled (Etiquette)* (2009), included here.

The maze-like collection of lost, found and made-up fragments and artifacts, all of which respond to cryptic narratives, is mesmerizing - but it can also be confusing. Lucky, then, that Judith Braun's drawing *The Line Between Fiction and Reality* (2009) functions as a guide to the exhibition. Taking on the longest wall of the central space, Braun's life-size charcoal work is a response to the curator's challenge to draw a line between reality and fiction. The wall-piece was drawn simultaneously with both hands, tracing concentric movements that work outwards from an empty centre. Most of the works in the exhibition, about 37 in total, depending on who's counting and who's counted (works seem to have the tendency to appear and disappear over the course of the show), linger in

a similarly indiscernible centre that evades taking shape. Though not all of the works here are on paper, the uniting quality is an ‘exchange between the literal and the literary’ - as the press release puts it. The divisions between substance and content are floating, as in Mark Geffriaud’s *Small World Hobbies* (2007), which presents a delicate origami recreation of a crumpled piece of paper next to its original.



Mariana Castillo Deball, *Visage faux* (detail, 2008)

‘Paper Exhibition’ is oddly reminiscent of Morten Harket’s struggle between physical and paper versions of himself in the video for a-ha’s ‘Take on Me’ (1985). A similar struggle can be seen in Mariana Castillo Deball’s paper masks that adorn the other wall of Artists Space’s central room. *Visage faux* (2008) consists of 24 replicas of indigenous masks made from folded A4 paper. The masks originate from the pages of art history books, though all imagery has been erased to leave only blank pages and image credits. These pages were then folded to mimic the shapes of the masks they once depicted, and the captions that once classified the masks according to terms foreign to their original context define the abstract folds instead.



Trong Gia Nguyen, *Flaubert: Madame Bovary (Last Chapter-3062 words)* (2009)

Shifting forms or the unstable essence of material is also a central idea in the work Trong Gia Nguyen’s *Flaubert: Madame Bovary (Last Chapter-3062 words)* (2009). Nguyen

wrote the complete last chapter of the 1856 novel word for word on 3,062 kernels of rice. He collected the rice in a little bag that now hangs in the gallery space. The bag doubles as its own library card and has the information provided by a New York Library card imprinted on its surface. Like a Dadaist word game or the magnetic poetry on refrigerators, every movement of the bag creates thousands of new possible endings.



Gareth Spor, *Dreamachine (Illusion is a Revolutionary Weapon) after William S. Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Cerith Wyn Evans and Loris Gréaud* (2008)

The collective speculation of curator, artists and visitors that characterizes 'Paper Exhibition' is united in a search for the missing masterpiece or the missing link, something that grants a fleeting yet momentarily satisfying feeling of comprehension and legitimization. However, this link might not even be missing, rather just masquerading as something else in the show. The show should possibly be viewed like Gareth Spor's *Dreamachine* (2008), with closed eyes - and what counts is not the object but rather its reflection on the retina of the viewer. And to escape from the alluring abyss of confusion and bewilderment that opens up one needs only to open one's eyes. Still, something stays behind, faintly staining our vision just like the repetitive sounds of Robert Rauschenberg erasing a de Kooning in Mario Garcia Torres' recording *An undisclosed month in 1953* (2007), which remains audible long after one has left the paper space.