

--<http://www.is-projects.org/text-is-sno-gruner.php>--

GOING FORWARD: WHAT IS NEW A DECADE AFTER THE MILLENIUM

Notes by Billy Gruner

IS - SNO is a current title for a reductive show now regularly put forward by Guido Winkler and Lemke Van Dijk. These artists operate a self-styled and well-defined IS projects in Leiden. IS Projects is a Dutch space clearly focused on contemporary non-objective art. For this selective reason they invite and are approached by a wide range of contemporary practitioners from around the Netherlands and the globe to make shows. In the 'IS-SNO 25-25' instance artists have been asked to submit a small reproducible work for a collectors box set, or edition (75). This year and because of the previous and close links of a range of Australian, European & American colleagues, a gathering for this purpose was held in August in Sydney Australia at SNO Contemporary Art Projects.

Looking closely at this arrangement, it is an unusual international program. And importantly, the plain speaking title is as intentionally nominative as it is purposefully reductively and art-critically functional. These two spaces for instance share a history of supposed avant-garde activity within a difficult genre. And as in previous group shows held by IS Projects and the SNO groups since the early 2000's, a post-punk 'do it yourself' curatorial attitude continues to add a certain flavour into a complex art-historical discourse these artists have been closely following and developing as a group. IS Projects in Leiden like SNO in Sydney are not typical gallery spaces. IS is held in a private house and other venues when required for example and SNO in an old apartment rooms, but most importantly because of a selective managerial design. Yet they are both seen as typifying places because they are also like other even more foundational venues that can still be found independently operating around the globe. That is, as the progenitors of specific art critical focus that brought late 20th century ideas on Art Concret and pure abstractionist or reductive interests forward into the post 20th century environment. For this reason spaces like IS Projects and SNO Contemporary art Projects are appropriately chosen by many artists from divergent age and experience groups as informing and appropriate spaces to connect with on a new contemporary route, going forwards.

In short, they are seen as significant places that particular sets of artists can come together. This explains why these bespoke spaces are also uniquely managed or organised as artist-run spaces that often operate in an almost oppositional mode to more divergent curatorial agendas or, more common place attitudes found in many other contemporary art projects or programs.

Yet this is not limiting or elitist, in fact the artists involved in a desire to locate practice within specific language or 'select range of specificity' are able to do this from many entry angles regardless within a non elitist 'Flat Platform' methodology. Perhaps this outpouring of new language development within an art historically misinterpreted genre is occurring more rapidly because travelling and communication are easier than ever before. But most importantly, it is just as probable because physically meeting remains a necessary process to go through in order to find inspiration from others interested in a development of relational and ongoing critical concerns – radical new language development is an idea that has not lost faith in certain circles, and remains an idea that is as closely linked to human contact as it is to ease of electronic networking.

In short, like 'UND Jetzt' and box set release first held at IS in Leiden in 2007, IS - SNO 25 - 25 in 2010 is the latest of a series shows and edition releases that in the most defining sense are, an homogenate experience – perhaps an idealisation of emerging interests that is best understood when considered as an evolving series of linked events. This uncontrolled collectiveness inherent in the process of artists working closely together and presenting current work over extended periods of time, seemingly provides a unique yearly opportunity for convergence in a number of places. If restated, for variously related artists this latest opportunity to be held in the Pacific region continues a certain participation in and selective viewing of new works; from out of a greater array of activities. Yet this same process provides its own opportunities and risks. The kinds of inferred language that are debated and utilised for example may fall under the banner of Presentational Art (US), Super Formalism or Minimal Pop (EU) or, as it is defined in Australia, Post Formalism – these are just three examples of fresher terminology in use for many years now that the broader art world knows little if anything about.

The list of artists participating in this particular gathering is by no means comprehensive or, representational. Nor is it a surveying event per se – that is no longer possible. Nevertheless, in this show where Guido Winkler and lemke van Dijk will also do a solo installation each, make a group presentation and, lay out the next IS Projects collectors edition box set, what is configured is just one possible grouping of artists for that year. And as stated before, that is as just one collective possibility that has been able to come together from other spaces and sets of associated connections. Curiously, this is an established network that has no name or structure or any managerial style or directorship to speak of. Yet, it is a self-regulating identity regardless.

In my opinion, the symbolism is very interesting as artists nowadays connect out of recommendation - through working with each other mostly outside of the broader and self authorising mainstream curatorial eye.

This progressive and grounded research based methodology is a select

artists driven process that produces visual and art critical clarity, and perhaps as significantly, in certain ways bares uncommon witness to some forms of difference appearing within global or localised contemporary art productions – of a contemporary art world becoming ever more conservative and rigidified and repetitive. I for instance don't know any other grouping in the contemporary

art world who are so closely knit, and who are willing to organise and work with each other on a day to day basis within a tangibly non hierarchical genre. That is an amazing feat today. And perhaps for these reasons and, because it is a genre based form of practice, it may remain something that others consider difficult to fathom from the vast aperture of contemporary art equivalence of cliché re-presentation – one can argue from that perspective that the merger between POP and surrealist influences is the great triumph and failure of invention in post 20th

contemporary art. I am personally sure however that the demanding aspect of contemporary art practices known as contemporary non objective art, has a place in current discourse. And not just because of its resilient post punk ethos. In this same manner of argument, it is genre wherein it is the social that determines. Just as integral and shared processes of developmental visual art clarification that continues to assist in how new language may be fittingly utilised in the present context, and then made useful for any others. That desire for clarification is an important metering process of the genre worldwide, and as this exhibition in Sydney Australia highlights, questions of style or modes or practice are understood or rejected collectively within an internationally based milieu growing more aware of its language patterns each year.

Actually, this a stunning attribute of cosmopolitanism rarely experienced, and this program is a significant divergence in the contemporary art world were regionalism, factionalism, and an incomprehensible system of social stratification's appear utterly unjustified, but remain trenchant – even after the modernist and post-modern eras have seemingly elapsed. Probably what is more interesting overall about the rise and rise of unsolicited alternate networks is a stringent ability of artists to engage traction with other interested artists, gallerists, collectors, outside of conventional systems of approval.

The influence of artists such as Tilman and director Petra Bungert from CCNOA, Jan and Karen van der Ploeg from PS in Amsterdam, Daniel Gottin and Gerda Maise from Hebel 121 in Basel, like that of the long standing support provided by John Nixon from AC4CA and SNO in Australia, and Matthew Deleget and Rossana Martinez from Minus Space in New York, and Richard and Anna van der Aa from Paris Concret are just a few examples that come to mind whose collective import should not be underestimated in those terms. It is their efforts amongst many others running back decades that have led to the greater development of credibility for what remains today, a

vastly misunderstood genre. Perhaps little has changed concerning perceptions on the purely abstract since Delauney and Van Doesburg first questioned Mondriaan's rather static relations or reliance on a fundamentally figurative imaging in an classic abstract modality – and in view of the vastly greater currency that the De Stijl movement continues to offer – it matters to redress.

Importantly, the growing acceptance of purist, concrete or reductive artistic concerns worldwide for example, directs our attention to the possible appearance of the significance of generics for instance. Certainly it is illustrative of one area of ongoing artistic and optimistic investigation after the 20th century and, specific places where many artists are seeking to engage ideas via newly presented realities. The discourse un-coverable through these kinds of conceptually and socially advanced programs are more generally about a kind of alternate movement as much as an overall consistency sought by certain artists, historically speaking. The IS – SNO 25 -25 project for August 2010 is in fact just one place of traction that is relatively unconcerned by overt regionalist critiques, art-historical furphy, and the like. Just as it's ongoing organisational principles are driven by newer groups of artists and fans who continue finding a reading of personal currency as something well worth defining on a wider register going forwa