

Alwin Lay
April 12 - May 18, 2013

Coffee and Cigarettes: The work of Alwin Lay

To pass the time - pastime.

Smoke - like the winding, fractal trails of milk as it is stirred into coffee - meanders, drifts and curls as it is absorbed into its suspending medium. Both follow the same rules. Both are beautiful, simple somehow, even if the complicated chaotic mathematics that govern their formations are not.

Both are also emblematic of a particular distribution and experience of time; the filling up of time, waiting or wasting perhaps. It is in these in-between moments, this kind of non-time, suspended, looped and dilated, that the works of Alwin lay variously operate. A cigarette burns endlessly as a coffee pot bubbles over; a flame set to a balloon - atop of which a bottle of water balances precariously - promises, but never manages, to cause a minor catastrophe. Time, in these works and others, is no longer governed by the laws of physics that, due to entropy, has directionality. In Lay's works time is adjusted to become symmetric; the same from whichever angle it is looked at. Time no longer has an 'arrow' so to speak and as such the usual expectations, derived from our knowledge of cause and effect, are negated.

In another work, a sparkler - the hand-held firework popular with children - is photographically caught mis-behaving. The sparks (perhaps with a knowing nod to those images that exploit long exposure times to write words in the night) rather than progress along the stick in the usual linear fashion, appear alight all at once thus creating a photographic loop whereby not only the 'moment' of the image (as happens with all photography) but also the act depicted have had their ends and beginnings stitched together in direct defiance of what we know should causally happen.

These endless loops have a certain boyish charm to them. Its is as if they are the experimental product of a curious mind which, as if from first principles, is attempting to pass the time with improvised creativity and is doing so with whatever is close to hand. Household objects and appliances, studio left-overs and various photographic equipment, all become mediums, props even, which are dug out of their commonplace contexts by idle abandon and re-composed with mischievous bent. They appear as the product of downtime in the studio. A pastime or hobby, Idle doodles performed out of boredom (or perhaps procrastination) in those moments when 'real' work should have been made. However, nothing is mis-used, quite the contrary in fact; it is actually as if these objects are used so intensely and so exactly that they are saturated with a kind of hyper-functionality that eventually renders them redundant.

An espresso machine for example, contained within a vitrine and left to endlessly spew out coffee, eventually consumes itself in an impenetrable black void of its own making. Again a sort of infinite loop, though this time it is the implied infinity of bottomless coffee and the resulting existential infinity of the void experienced as one attempts to peer into its deep caffeinated abyss, only to be met with one's gaze reflected back.

It is again no coincidence that time should re-manifest in these sentiments. In further testament to its atemporal nature, the works are deliberately embalmed in the photographic mediums. It is not however the intention of Lay to make a comment the object-hood nor mechanics of photography, but nevertheless his works speak of its characteristics and

ultimately its boundaries through their consistent exploitation of photography's temporal parameters. The works of Lay are intensely four dimensional and just as the curls of smoke and swirls of coffee wind through the atmosphere of their respective suspending mediums, so too do the the investigations of Lay's work swirl through theirs. However, rather than twist and turn only to be eventually absorbed into the grand body, the works of Lay retain a perpetual suspension, looping time over and over and thus allowing for a much needed sojourn into the meta-physical realms of thought and introspection.

G. Leddington, 2012

Blanket/ Cologne is pleased to present a solo exhibition with Cologne based artist Alwin Lay. This is Lay's first exhibition with the gallery. Alwin Lay (b. 1984, Romania) has recently received his MFA from the Academy of the Media Arts Cologne and was a student at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Lay's work appeared in Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen, III Moscow biennale for young art, Moscow, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, KIT Düsseldorf, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Kunstfilmbiennale Köln, Second Act Festival on Photography, Amsterdam among other venues. His work will also be presented in a group context during 2013 edition of NADA Cologne.