

MATT MacFARLAND

The Lost Artworks

The Lost Artworks is a structure that is simultaneously amorphous, malleable and rigid. It is a serial production without the series, at least in the traditional sense. Any medium can be employed in the Lost Artworks. Video can be next to a sculpture made of dryer lint, drawings next to a wall painting resembling a stain. There is no medium specificity, merely thematic consistency, but the potential meaning of each component of the installation, similar to how words are structured in a sentence, is dependent on the piece next to it.

"For folded into this winding down of material dissipation are a thousand loops and feedbacks...whose moves are only discernable in the syntax of their mutual relation."
-John C. Welchman on Mike Kelley

Installments of the Lost Artworks are organized around an open but unifying theme e.g. Over-abundance, myth construction, or in this case, an over-absence. All the pieces directly or indirectly relate to the pre-determined theme. Overarching premises and leitmotifs have emerged, however, over the course of several installations and everything I make seems to address ideas relating to comedy and tragedy, failure and mortality.

I am interested in how an absolute term is inextricably bound up with its inverse, how feelings of elation can easily give way to grief and how thoughts of one's life inevitably involve one's impending death and vice versa. Addressing mortality through humor is a way to acknowledge that no matter what we do, everything is futile (and simultaneously significant) because we will not be around for long. We still laugh at a person slipping on a banana peel or getting a pie in the face (or at least I do). Why are these stereotypical, cliché comedic tropes still funny? Because they are ultimately reminders of our humanity and vulnerability, because that could be me slipping and falling in public, which it often is, but thankfully not this time...

In this particular, web-specific installment of the Lost Artworks revolving around notions of "absence," the research method used by the artist has been replicated for the viewer. The viewer takes a similar journey through the Internet as I did when compiling and collecting images and information for the webstallation. When viewers click on a thumbnail of a drawing or a sculpture they may be taken in an unexpected direction, to an external website or an image or video that, upon first glance, may not seem to relate. By emphasizing the unique web format of the gallery I hoped to take the Lost Artworks in a more expansive direction, providing more options for the viewer to construct a unique and personal experience.