

Shop Floor

Jimmy Limit

January 13 – February 11, 2017

Employing aesthetics of stock photography through odd and abstracted still lifes of everyday household objects, this exhibition features a new series of light boxes and moving image works by Jimmy Limit. Repurposing these objects into strange and colourful sculptures, the work examines photography as both a supplier of commodities and a commodity in itself.

A digital copy of this text can be found online at www.gallery44.org/exhibitions/shop-floor

Artwork in vitrines left to right:

Untitled (Kinetic Sculpture for Green Screen), mixed media, 2017

Leila Timmins: Let's begin with the title, when we first began talking about this project you mentioned that you had been visiting a number of factories in the area and filming their interiors as part of your commercial work. Can you talk about your interest in manufacturing and how it informs your work?

Jimmy Limit: Outside of my art practice I work as a commercial photographer. This often informs my art, and the methods of working are oddly similar, to the point where the line between them isn't clear for me anymore. I find interest in the everyday and see strangeness in mundane situations, which helps me to stay engaged, especially when photographing dental practices (something which has become a niche for me). The only problem is that my art practice is so similar to my commercial practice that it can feel like I'm always working and staring at screens.

This past summer I was photographing inside green houses for a client that manufactures automated watering and lighting elements necessary for super efficient green house growing. They also sell machines for sorting and boxing fruits and vegetables. It was here where I became obsessed with a conveyor belt that plastic wrapped and sorted cucumbers to go to stores. It was hot and dark and migrant workers were on the line sweating; basically the opposite of the high tech, shiny machines that were being marketed. This disconnect between what is marketed (the brand new idealized form) and the reality of it in the context of industry where things get dirty and break down interests me. I usually focus on the idealized forms in my work, but always within the context of their superficiality and the realities that they mask.

LT: While this work still employs your recognizable aesthetic – bright colours, stock photography, u-line-esque catalogue images, shopping channel visuals, re-contextualized household objects and decaying citrus fruit – this work also marks a shift for you, from photography to moving image work. This new video work features a series of objects rotating like a display in a shop window, as well as a series of 3D stock images. Can you talk about the video and how movement is operating in the work and how you think it extends or transforms the still image?

JL: The still image represents just one view of something. Part of my commercial work involves photographing art exhibitions where generally one photo will represent the show. More people will see the documentation than the show itself, so this type of photograph becomes very important to represent the best view to encapsulate the show. When photographing a sculpture this is true as well, whether or not the sculptor intended it, there will be a single view point that it will be photographed from and that is how it will be remembered. Video gives the option of

Untitled (3D Rendering Idealized Desk), Fugitran print, 2017

providing multiple views and can create more context or understanding of the thing or place as a whole. Of course through editing and cropping this can be eschewed, and is by no means objective. I have trouble rationalizing the transformation of a digital file to a physical, material thing, especially with all of the costs that come with printing and framing and the onus to continuously produce more stuff for a world that is already full of stuff. Video is an amazing immaterial form that is highly malleable in terms of exhibition (monitor, projection, vr headset, online) and can also be the most engaging art form when exhibited. By that I mean it can hold a viewer's attention much longer than a photograph can. I have been using my four-year-old son as a test subject for my artwork and he definitely gravitates towards video work. He has no shame about disregarding photographs, or giving something time that doesn't grab his attention.

Technology has gotten to a point where a single person on a laptop can achieve incredibly high production value using open source or free software, an entry level DSLR and a lot of time for watching tutorials online. At times I feel like concepts in art have sort of stagnated, and technology pushes things forward and makes them seem new. 4K and 3D video will define the aesthetics of current video art just as the advent of video technology in the late 70s (and it's glitch aesthetics) defined early video art.

When I am in the studio creating work, I focus more on quantity than quality (for better or worse) and then edit down from there. Digital technology makes it easy for me to do so, and so rather than setting up one shot that I will shoot on 16mm or a 4x5 sheet, I take hundreds of photographs and videos and then try to pick out the best afterwards.

LT: Your works often play with framing, featuring multiple frames and vantages within a single piece. How do you see framing devices operating in your work and how do you think about perspective in each of the pieces?

JL: The frame plays an important role in cutting out the rest of the image, but I also always try to point to what is going on beyond it. My photos isolate an ordered area of my studio, but if I was to pan the camera to the left or right, there is a mess of wires and garbage, piles of things, so the cropping is important to isolate this idealized view and to separate it from the reality of what is going on. A physical frame in photography isolates and separates that work from what is around it as an act of preservation, and it also serves as window frame, looking into something that is apart from your immediate surroundings, something different to distract from all of the garbage around it. Of course a work of art in your home and in a gallery, which serves as a sort of show room for idealized viewing, is very different as well.

Shop Floor, digital video (

LT: You have borrowed images from stock photography and 3D rendering software to create a composite image that is reminiscent of the aesthetics of the home shopping channel or a 24-hour newscast. In many ways these media outlets are at the pinnacle of our image-saturated society. How do you see your works relating to these formats?

I hope my images blend into the rest of the images in our saturated society. They are all amalgams of these images, whether consciously or subconsciously created. If they can operate on a level of acceptance that is great, and if they cause the viewer to pause that is great too. It depends on context of course, if presented through the lens of art or in a context where the intent is not clear.

LT: The line between your commercial work and your professional practice is becoming more porous. You've talked recently about putting up all of your work on a stock photography website. I think there is something interesting here about completely giving in to the commercial impulse your work portrays. What is compelling you to make this move?

JL: I see my commercial work becoming more enmeshed with my art and I like the possibility of using commercially shot photos or videos in a different context. It highlights the fact that a photograph's context determines its meaning. This isn't particularly new, photographers I love like Paul Outerbridge Jr. and Roe Etheridge work with a fluid practice between art and commerce; Outerbridge's commercial photos now treated as art in auction houses and galleries, Etheridge's editorial photos and outtakes featuring designer brands have been printed large-scale and exhibited in commercial galleries.

I was approached by a stock photography website two years ago about submitting my archive of photos. It was tempting at the time, but I was still sourcing old photos I had taken for exhibition and it didn't seem like the right thing to do. In some ways I feel tied down by my past work, unable to move forward. When work is material there can be a grand gesture of destroying it, burning it most dramatically, but when it mostly exists on external hard drives the act of destruction is much less cathartic or romantic. There is no pleasure in reformatting a hard drive. Taking my old photos and putting them in the public domain where they are free to be downloaded, sold, altered and manipulated seems fitting as part of my larger practice. I am interested in the economy of advertising and the imagery that props it up. It will be fascinating to see where – if any are even licensed – they will appear and how that context will again change their meaning.

Jimmy Limit is a photo-based artist living in St Catharines Ontario. His recent exhibitions combine his long-standing interest in self-publishing and photography with a new fascination: ceramics and sculpture. Limit has exhibited throughout Canada and the United States, including exhibitions and at Rodman Hall/Brock University, St Catharines; Clint Roenisch Gallery, Toronto; Mercer Union, Toronto; Butcher Gallery, Toronto; Emporium, Montreal; Melanie Flood Projects, New York; Printed Matter, New York and POV Evolving Gallery, Los Angeles. His work has been featured in publications including Bad Day, The New York Times and Frieze. Limit received a BFA from the Ontario College of Art and Design in 2012.



Presented by Keilhauer