

by AARON BOGART

December 11, 2013

## Andy Boot

GALERIE EMANUEL LAYR, Vienna

November 27, 2013–January 25, 2014

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Looking up into the night sky, you wouldn't think that the color of the universe is beige, or "cosmic latte," as a group of scientists from Johns Hopkins University has dubbed it. But then again, looking at Andy Boot's new sculptural installation, you wouldn't think that the exhibition has anything to do with the internet. After all, the seven sculptures made from simple, low-tech materials, like fiberboard, appear as if they have been cut from a graphic design book and randomly nailed together, revealing nothing of the complex digital process which gave them life.

The walls of the gallery up to the ceiling have been painted cosmic latte, a hue astronomers "discovered" by averaging all the light emanating from the stars of various galaxies, which also serves as the show's unofficial title. This color was an incidental byproduct of studying star formation; its official name was created randomly, when one of the scientists stared deep into his coffee in Starbucks. Taking the silliness of this scientific discovery as his starting point, Boot randomly chose images from the internet and used Photoshop to excise all the colors except cosmic latte, leaving only creamy colored shapes. He then zoomed in on computer generated patterns, and with another computer program called Simplify, erased all the rough edges, making smooth, organic looking forms that were laser cut from MDF with a thin, matte-white paper surface. Boot tinkered with various compositions, finally nailing select pieces of the Matisse-like cutouts and Cubist shapes into seven sculptures (all works *Untitled*, 2013).

In aggregate, the sculptures share a futuristic, ephemeral quality, as if they were objects from another universe that somehow floated into our familiar part of space. Supported by three small, unseen metal legs, a large, circular work hovers above the gallery floor, so ethereal that you could almost fall into its blankness. Another piece that looks like an enlarged Maori design, or an ancient Mayan logogram, is precariously held up by a thin metal T-bar, which is reminiscent of those found in ethno-anthropological museum displays. In the creamy-hued gallery space the sculptures look more traditional than contemporary, being simply made with very basic ingredients and lacking any immediate reference to current technology. And despite their complex genesis, their spontaneity and humor is seen in Boot's impromptu combination of shapes that references both virtual and actual space, and points towards an all-encompassing network.

For Boot (who was born in 1987), the network in which we live includes not only our digital devices, but also everything else. By contrast, other artists whose output may look similar at face value have a more narrow conception of the network, using hermetic references. Factoring the ubiquity of the internet and our networked lives into art is becoming a dominant aspect of many artists' practices and has become known as the post-internet condition.<sup>(1)</sup> No doubt, we cast the images and updates that our computer or phone constantly feed us as banal, and this fact has led artists, galleries, and museums to legitimize them by making them visible, as art historian Michael Sanchez has suggested.<sup>(2)</sup> But is there really anything unique or special about the way the internet has worked its way into our lives? Haven't the effects of [insert new technology here] always been acknowledged in the process or realization of art, to mash up something curator Lauren Cornell once wrote?<sup>(3)</sup> Doesn't the very idea of a post-internet condition rely on a false dichotomy between what exists online and what exists in the "real world"—despite the very materiality of the images we see on our devices only being possible with a combination of chemicals, human labor, and mechanical processes? By mixing the technological with craft-oriented techniques, Boot's exhibition exemplifies an artistic practice that seeks to merge virtual and physical space and provides us with an appreciation of what is possible, viewing digital life along a continuum with the rest of it, pixels and all.

(1) This term, while being used more and more frequently, has acquired diffuse meanings. As I am using it, it is not meant to describe artworks, but rather their ontogenesis, as well as a broader state of being in the twenty-first century. For some of its different uses see: Artie Vierkant, "The Image Object Post-Internet," <http://jstchillin.org/artie/vierkant.html> (last accessed November 3, 2013); and João Ribas, "After Effects: Art and Technology, Then and Now," *Mousse* 40 (October/November 2013): 172–178.

(2) Michael Sanchez, "2011: Art and Transmission," *Artforum*, vol. 51, no. 10 (Summer 2013): 295–301.

(3) Lauren Cornell, "Beginnings + Ends," *Frieze*, no. 159 (November/December 2013): 131.



1 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013. (Left) Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. (Right) Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013.



2 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013.



3 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013.



4 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013.



5 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013.

Aaron Bogart is a freelance writer and editor splitting time between Vienna, Berlin, and New York. His work has appeared on artforum.com and in *Modern Painters*, among other publications. He is also a poker player.

COMMENTS

Craig

December 15, 2013

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6 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013.



7 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013.



8 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013.



9 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013.



10 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013.

1 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013. (Left) Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood, nails, and metal, 158.5 x 126 x 29.5 cm. (Right) Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood and nails, 21.5 x 157.5 x 123 cm. All images courtesy of Galerie

Emanuel Layr, Vienna.

- 2 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013.
- 3 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood, nails, and metal, 13 × 157 × 149.5 cm.
- 4 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood, nails, and metal, 158.5 × 126 × 29.5 cm.
- 5 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013.
- 6 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood and nails, 129 × 67 × 38 cm.
- 7 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood and nails, 21.5 × 157.5 × 123 cm.
- 8 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood and nails, 24 × 171.5 × 10 cm.
- 9 Andy Boot, *Untitled*, 2013. Wood and nails, 129 × 67 × 38 cm.
- 10 View of Andy Boot, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, 2013.

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