



Interview with Cecile B. Evans



JOHANNES FRICKE WALDTHAUSEN

APR 24TH, 2013 9:13 PM



Cécile B. Evans
Braille Collage, 2013
Gallery Weekend Berlin
Not for sale

Cécile B. Evans
Countdown, 2012
Gallery Weekend Berlin
Not for sale

Cécile B. Evans
I Have Nothing, 2012
Gallery Weekend Berlin
Not for sale



Johannes Fricke Waldthausen: When, and why, did you move to Berlin? How was or is Berlin influencing your artistic practice?

Cécile B. Evans: I moved to Berlin in 2009/2010, I didn't go to a visual arts school so I wanted to move to a place I could find a community to learn from, discuss with. Berlin is also the place where I could have the time to do that.

JFW: You currently live between Berlin yet you are Belgian-American raised, now living in Berlin. How does this affect your perception of Berlin as an artist?

CE: My parents are from Belgium, I was born in Cleveland, O.H., raised in Jacksonville, F.L.; I went to school in New York and then moved to Paris, and sometimes lived in London. At this stage, I am not from anywhere and Berlin doesn't make an issue of that. Being an artist means accepting a certain amount of instability. Berlin is the place that doesn't make a fuss over that. Artists find it easier here to be focused—there's less city drama. They are less forced to confront things that could be distracting in an unproductive way.

JFW: Recent video-based works of yours like "I Have Nothing" (2012) or "Countdown" (2012) often bridge performance, dance, and popular

culture, embedded into a neo-romantic melancholy. Feelings around the non-physicality in digital spaces and the loneliness through fake stardust and and fake connectedness in the virtual spaces of the Internet...

CE: A recurrence in these videos (part of a trilogy that began with *Straight Up*, 2011) is the notion of the body as talisman. The digital realm, and the computer itself, proposes something vital to us—that our selves can exist beyond our physical effects. These videos were built like a constellation of memes, each element already existing and carrying different emotional values in contemporary culture. All of them begin by covering a well-known dance piece and a pop song, adding other things on from there. In the final works several of these elements become unrecognizable, working together to create a situation where the viewer can pull out their own view, and even choose whether to support or undermine it. The melancholic tone comes from the immateriality of that experience, as well as its sincerity—I'm not sure whether this is an association or a confusion though.

JFW: You were chosen to create a site-specific audio guide for the Emdash Award at Frieze Art Fair 2012. What was this work about for you?

CE: The Emdash commission at Frieze London was an audio guide, like the ones you get in a museum, in which works in the fair were explained by a committee of non-art professionals and a holographic Simon Schama. Making this piece was important for my practice now because it reinvested in the authority of subjective value, alongside things like theory and material. It showed that a vocabulary different to the one normally used in art could thrive, even in such an established context as Frieze.

JFW: What is your next project and what inspired you for it?

CE: Currently, I am developing a new body of work inspired by Phantom Limbs and North Korean culture. I'll be making a new video (supported by Orange and the Palais de Tokyo) that uses stereoscopic 3D to explore loss through the allegory of Phantom Limbs and a talk-show interview of Dr. Cecile B. Evans (no relation to myself), who is a specialist on the subject. I'm interested in the possibility 3D video offers to create hyper-real images possessing volume and shape that still remain completely elusive. This disarming sense of immateriality is an important tool for my work.

I will also visit North Korea to see the Arirang and research a pop dance group called the Wangjaesan Art Troupe, which appears on the national TV channel. Their routines will be the basis for a performance I will do for Bold Tendencies in London. I've always used representations of emotion from familiar cultures, I want to challenge the work by pooling from references that are completely unfamiliar. The DPRK has remained isolated for over 60 years and as a result possesses a thriving, unequalled culture, one that is constantly under the threat of being lost. The video, the performance, as well as a series of collages and sculptural works (of which *Braille Collage* is the first) are being developed as part of a larger

project.

JFW: You were born in 1983 and grew up with the Internet. How does this influence your actual practice?

CE: A basic intention of many Postmodern works was the co-existence of “higher” culture and lower or pop culture. On the Internet, this is already a given: Paula Abdul coexists in the same place like Pina Bausch, Natalie Wood, Nail Art, and braille. It’s essential to me is that my work starts from this point rather than arriving to it, especially in the context of working with emotions. This aids in working more intuitively rather than with formal equations.

My primary interest in the Internet is as a condition or a tool, not just a medium. I am influenced by the internet because I use it everyday and because it is a dominant presence in society. I find most of my information online, I communicate and exchange with my peers online—so it’s not a coincidence that my aesthetic is informed by that. But that’s just as a result of living between the digital and physical realms naturally.

JFW: Are there personal heroes or artists that have influenced you particularly?

CE: Lutz Bacher, Isa Genzken, Thomas Vinterberg, Woody Allen, and Philip K. Dick... this could go on though.

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