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Theo Triantafyllidis
SARGENT'S DAUGHTERS

Theo Triantafyllidis, *How to Everything*, 2016, live digital simulation, color, sound, indefinite duration.

For his New York solo debut, Theo Triantafyllidis, an Athens-, Los Angeles–, and Berlin-educated architecture graduate turned artist, presented one small sculpture; a medium-size wall relief composed of shape-fitted shards of colorful trash; two ink-jet-on-nylon wall hangings; and, most notably, three self-generating videos, two of which were accompanied by comical props and cosmetically augmented computer hardware. The sculpture, *Mountain (Ceramic)* (all works 2016), a piled-up mound of extruded white clay bearing splashes of color and bright plastic appendages, crowned a plain white plinth. Calling to mind Richard Dreyfuss's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* mashed-potato mound, this is clearly a work with which to conjure, and that the artist does with *Mountain (Screen Piece)*, located just a few feet away: A sideways monitor showing a vertical-format video leans against a wall. The screen is connected by electronic umbilici to a nearby Mac mini tilted edgewise by a homemade fluorescent-green wire stand and cryptically adorned with an antenna-like, yellow and magenta stem poking upward from one of the device's USB ports. Embellishing his hardware with decorative flourishes, Triantafyllidis asks that we consider his enabling technology as a sculptural element in aesthetic dialogue with the video it delivers.

Speaking of the video, a psychedelic drama unfolds on-screen as tiny green humanoid figures scurry about the base of a white, crud- and object-encrusted mountain—a relatively crude, gaming-software rendering of the ceramic sculpture. The simulated POV shifts radically and unpredictably as plumes of black smoke swirl around the summit. Hot-pink lava spews down the mountainside, explaining perhaps why computer and monitor, along with the ceramic sculpture's pedestal, all sit in pools of Pepto-Bismol-colored liquid, suggestive of an interdimensional, ectoplasmic life force common to object and avatar. The Lilliputian green figures interact haphazardly with their shifting ground, moving to an erratic and unrepeatable algorithmic beat. In a similar vein, the nearby *Still Life with Yumyums* comprises a black, cubic gaming PC—tricked out with plastic doodads and propped upon an illuminated fake mango—feeding custom software commands to a large, floor-bound monitor leaning against the wall. On-screen, a Boschian tableau of jittery shenanigans is staged upon what appears to be a weightless, revolving tree slice. Among the many moving parts in this unstill life are a half-peeled banana, a smartphone, a varicose cocoon disgorging puffy white larvae, and a coiled-up turd (with encircling flies). What's more, a swarm of fiddle-footed digital flotsam bounces about amid all of this. Abstract and representational forms collide while comical inanities such as an elongated frankfurter capriciously orbit the action. Incongruity, unscripted interference, and periodic interruption are the order of the day in this clamorous microcosm.

The third video took pride of place on the back wall, sparsely flanked on one side by *World Atlas*, a neatly organized constellation of found materials vaguely reminiscent of Tony Cragg's 1980s plastic wall and floor reliefs, and on the other side by the two casually affixed textile pieces, *Rock Formation (Albedo Texture)* and *Mountain (Albedo Texture)*. Creating cloak-like squares of camoesque patterned fabric—the former muddy but with fluorescent dashes, the latter blending the color scheme of the two *Mountain* works—the artist here uses his software to abstract and transmute, shredding the depicted three-dimensional object and reconstituting it as a material, two-dimensional amalgam. And finally, the video, *How to Everything*, is, unlike its siblings, discreetly wall-mounted and unaccompanied by evident external hardware. Though sharing the same retina-piercing palette and slapstick kineticism as the other videos, this one lacks a central staging device. Rather, it depicts a pristine chromatic chamber in which all manner of insistently cute (a baby dinosaur!), zany (a chicken!), artsy (a brushstroke!), absurdist (a faceless, bloated biped!), and topical (a toy drone!) components intersect, quasi-randomly. A patently artificial world, this is not the uncanny realm of high-end 3-D motion graphics or CGI effects. This is lo-fi gamer unreality—phone-app space, compressed spectacle—engineered for hyper-responsive interactivity and low energy drag. Yet, interestingly, the artist has disallowed the very thing that enables the inhabitation of such space: user participation. Unhindered by will, the elements run amok, laying bare the anarchic infrastructure of a digital fourth dimension designed for dumb fun.

—Jeff Gibson

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