

Brody Condon & Jen Liu

On Stellar Rays, New York
29 October – 19 December

In their respective oeuvres, both Brody Condon and Jen Liu make objects that derive from the physically dimensionless realm of contemporary technologies. Whereas Condon investigates the effects of digital space on perception, Liu liberally employs the search processes available to artists in the twenty-first century, the Internet among them. Trying to relate the results in their two-person exhibition at On Stellar Rays imposes constraints that do not serve the work; it's best to see this as two separate shows.

Condon's three short videos, entitled *Cube*, *Rhombus* and *Cubes* (all works 2010), are loops of hands holding transparent Plexiglas cubes of the artist's own construction. The forms, of dubious structural integrity, are turned this way and that in brilliant light, revealing technicolour faces caked with bright smeared paint; the suggestion of the digital is shot through with a refreshing lo-fi-ness. *Vat Flesh on a Pedestal of Imitation Jade*, an anthropomorphic freestanding sculptural mass in the centre of the gallery, establishes an almost inverse relationship to the video in terms of its immaterial starting point and material output: its precisely angled facets and cleanly patterned surfaces, about as slick as the surface of a computer screen, are characteristically recognisable as having been generated by a CAD program.

Liu's extrusions of Internet search findings into physical space are completed via what seems like an aleatory set of formal rules; while this is not inherently problematic, the work rehearses a set of tropes well travelled by any number of twentieth-century artists. More problematically, she seems undecided about whether to prioritise process or the final objects, which are often visually unsatisfying. Two large works on paper effect pictorial mashups. For example, in one she places a watery, Mondrian-like grid beside a news image of an undetermined correctional facility. There are no distinguishing material qualities to the hand-executed drawings save a general dullness of colour, nor attempts to allude to the original digital state of the image. Liu's use of the Web seems to spring more from ease of access than conceptual necessity. Shaped inkjet printouts on the wall, folded accordion-style in various places, offer darkened versions of billowing clouds drawn from Internet photographs of disasters worldwide. The pieces are too small to amplify the imposing nature of their subject matter, and too large to recall the original state in which Liu encountered them.

Liu's decisions obscure the position of the maker in her final product. Condon, through the actual incorporation of the body and allusions to it in his work, uses technology as a language or framework for highlighting the human inside the container of digital technology. The latter approach seems the more contemporary, as well as, on a visceral level, the more appealing.
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