

Aujourd'hui

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Interview – Tobias Czudej (CHEWDAY'S)

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Our latest interview presents and celebrates **Tobias Czudej**, better known as **Chewday's**. The London-based curator, who recently curated "Signal Failure" at Pace London, is always able to challenge and amaze the art world with his exhibitions, all while working in distinguished institutions like Gagosian and PACE. With a very intimate view on how a show must be planned, processed and presented, we were eager to know how he manages to create unique and successful exhibitions on a regular basis. Read our interview to discover how internet blends with solitude in his new show, the personal way he subverts conventional displays and how he plans to open a small gallery in London under **Chewday's** name.



What is Chewday's?

CHEWDAY'S is the phonetic way of spelling my surname Czudej - it is the name I have been arranging projects under independently for the past two years. Later this year I will be opening a small gallery in London under the same name.

You are curating a show titled "Signal Failure" with Sara Barker, Philomene Pirecki, Cédric Eisenring and Mathis Gasser, Scott Lyall, Sergei Tcherepnin and Tobias Madison. What bring these artist's work together?

The exhibition started to form a year or so ago whilst I was carrying out research on the work of Agnes Martin. I had at that point never had the opportunity to see a work in person so all that I had to go on were reproductions online and in books. Agnes Martin's paintings really do not translate at all into reproduction – they generally appear as blank washed out empty squares. They give away nothing of the artist's intention. I thought this was very interesting in respect to artists of my generation where the reproduction and dissemination of images plays such an integral part in how art is consumed. As soon as a work is exhibited it is photographed and circulated globally through various networks – instagram, contemporary art daily, facebook etc. Mass network saturation and global exposure in the digital era can be seen to have superseded other more meaningful models of assigning value. Although there are seemingly benefits to this exposure – more people see the work etc – it has produced a problem almost as if as exposure increases, meaningful engagement decreases. There is quite a nice analogy that Morgan Quaintance made in an article on David Joselit's book *After Art* that describes this : *the internet is like a vast network of train tracks, while web pages are like different train companies who use those tracks to run their services; the goal of subway art is to get*

your tag on as many train cars as possible so that it may gain in notoriety, yield the image-maker prestige, fame and the authoritative power of ubiquity. This is exactly how image circulation functions online, and its power, whether it is an image of Joseph Kony, Beyoncé or some satirical illustration of a political figure, is based on the quick recognition of surfaces. But while depth is an essential property of art and slowness a necessary condition for its appreciation, why would anyone want to reduce their work to the status of a vapid meme? Through different strategies the artists in Signal Failure all make work that resists, complicates or confronts reproduction and circulation. Many of them utilize the tools of digital reproduction, yet whilst these artists deal with the conditions of making art post-internet there is an emphasis on real experience. A slowing down. A break in transmission. The exhibition as a format seeks to render documentation complex – to create an environment that can only be experienced in person and never fully captured and consumed as an image.





This show is inspired by Agnes Martin's self-imposed solitude. What do you think to be the importance of solitude in the artistic practice? Is it aggravated or dissipated by the growth of the digital world?

Solitude is something that seems to be increasingly scarce in our hyper-connected times –there is an anxiety in not being connected – we are terminally in touch. I spend hours infinity scrolling through facebook, tumblr, instagram etc without any meaningful result. I read hundreds of click-bait articles that after reading I realise have no content - should never exist as articles in the first place. I often feel that we are communicating for the sake of communicating – like a robot pinging another robot just to clarify that it still exists. I strongly believe that slowness and solitude are intimately tied to human potential and that it is very important to disconnect and be alone as this is where ideas distill, crystallize and form.

Your exhibitions are known for challenging traditional artistic presentation. How are you able to do so while curating an exhibition for such an established and somehow 'traditional' contemporary art gallery like PACE?

think the only way to really challenge or further traditional ideas in exhibition making is from within the institutions that have been integral in concreting these formats. As an artist or curator – as soon as you make a work you are implicated within the structure of the art institution anyway so it is not about inside our outside; it is more about interrogating the specific context and reconfiguring the format or presentation in a way that reinforces the concept.



Galleries and museums seem to have been evolving their architecture and interior design in the past decades in order to create the ideal place to view and experience an art work. However, you curate exhibitions in creepy hotel rooms and one day only events. Why is it important to challenge the traditional way of experiencing an exhibition, and what do you think to be the ideal way to do so?

Although I have put together exhibitions in non-art spaces, hotels, domestic houses etc I generally work within the constructs of the white cube and this is always the starting point - even with the hotel exhibition I was thinking of the hotel room as a surrogate white cube – a neutral space that it repeated globally throughout the various chains of hotels. There are many conventions in the display of contemporary art that are rarely questioned white walls, bright lights optimized for documentation, the way a press release is structured and worded, opening times, private view and I think it is important to precisely reconsider and interrogate each of these element for each exhibition rather than taking them for granted. Also, I am not sure that I agree that museums have been evolving their architecture and design to just create a better place to view and experience work, I think that they have got bigger and grander to better illustrate the power of the structures that fund them – before it was cathedrals and now it is museums. And bigger is not necessarily better as it means that artists are having to make bigger and bigger work. Is there more meaning in a sculpture that is 6ft rather than 6”?

What triggers your choice when curating, especially with such emphasis on emerging artists?

I am always seeing exhibitions, researching, doing studio visits, reading magazines, looking online etc. – the choice always comes down to whichever artists or works are the most interesting in relation to the concept of

each exhibition. The emphasis on emerging artists comes down to the fact that these are my contemporaries and friends who I am in constant dialogue with and engaged in similar concerns.





Do you believe that the curatorial practice has as an important role in culture as the artistic production?

Definitely not but it has a role.

How is the curatorial practice changing and what “trends” do you predict for the future?

I have no idea, I have never really considered myself a curator and I don't really focus much on curating as a practice, I am far more inspired by artists such as Jana Euler, Jutta Koether, Sam LeWitt etc. and in the way that they approach exhibitions. Artist seems to be the best curators. As for trends - brown is definitely the new black.

Exclusive interview by Aujourd'hui.

Images and interview courtesy of Tobias Czudej and Pace London.

Chewday's - www.chewdays.com

Pace London - www.pacegallery.com

<http://www.aujourd'hui.pt/interview/chewdays>