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08.04.2016

Jimmy Limit's and Sigrid Viir's exhibition "Import Export" at Temnikova & Kasela Gallery could currently be called the most fashionable art show in Tallinn, Estonia, both in the good and somewhat more suspect sense of that word.

One might ask: wherefore this aesthetic game, independent of each other but generating a common field, wherefore these refined, nuanced additions? Why, naturally to overcome the internal limitations of the photographic medium and avoid the popular clichés of digital photography. I am referring to the fact that while a photograph ends at the edge of the frame, the current work doesn't end there due to the kind of play with form we see here. I also refer to the fact that while the shutter click freezes the action on the photograph, this can be played out differently in the case of a photographic installation, for instance through the movement of the observer in the room. Interrupting the circulation of the work as reproductions – now just as common a way of experiencing art as viewing an authentic work in a gallery – making it more complicated and out of synch, also plays a role. A clearly perceptible synergy starts taking shape on the basis of the two artists' primarily photographic practice, where Viir has shifted conventional modes of experiencing photos to sculpture while in Limit's case the shift is towards the iconography of geometric colour field paintings. Both of the authors consciously stand in opposition to pictorial devaluation and the power of simulation. Although the dialogue between the artists came about thanks to an Internet connection and the artists being from Canada in Limit's case and from Estonia, in Viir's case, only came to meet in the exhibition setup phase, you can feel image-based ping pong between their works. This moulds the exhibition into a conceptual whole, making the material worth a closer examination.



Photography:
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A revolt against photography as a medium of record.

Jimmy Limit's stock in trade is assemblages made of photos, which are displayed on wall space related to a uniform background colour and spiced with natural additions (lemon, palm frond, orange peel). During the exhibition, they dry or wilt and bring the idea of ephemerality into the works. From a longer, perhaps museal perspective his works need a "gardener" to take care of them and switch out some elements from time to time. Works that hint at the still-life format, such as the juxtaposed "Citrus, Glass and Ceramic on Purple" and the "Root Vegetables on Pink with Reflection" are sometimes placed on the same colour field, in this case matte pink. For one thing, the background colour field is an attempt to tame and transform the white cube's sterility. Here each displayed colour field is bordered by, as a required component, a neutral detail, here a tiny grey square in the right corner below the field. This required grey element, whether a strip or square, is a reference to the digital photo's white balance, which is measured with a grey card.

Surprisingly, colourful digital photo processing elements have also been included as a coy nod on the surface of 12 otherwise black and white photos in Sigrid Viir's main work, the installation "Hans_55". In the picture "Citrus, Glass and Ceramic on Purple," Limit depicts, among other things, what is presumably a fragile object ready for export in a special silvery packaging material – it has an amorphous quality, a reference to the category *informe* (formless) used by George Bataille. In this way, he strikes a blow against photography's nature as a medium of record. Limit said in one interview that neutrality of a photo is important to him – they're like catalogue images that he could order from any other technically proficient photographer. In "Citrus, Glass and Ceramic on Purple" and "Root Vegetables on Pink with Reflection" the nihilistic aesthetic characteristic of technical photography doesn't actually any more seem to hold sway, though.

The so called technical photography has anti-magic that flattens the world: everything from Egyptian vases in a museum to pipe connections in hardware stores are photographed in absolutely the same way. But a barely perceptible reflection on a pinkish-orangeish expanse of picture makes for more fragile images than would ever be required in an ordinary catalogue photo mode. Limit once said: "When photographing, my goal is to liberate the objects from their original use (which is often a mystery to me) and imagine new absurd forms which are purposefully made, but lack purpose." In its quest to find abstract compelling quality from arrangements, this method is somehow akin to the aesthetics of Brassai's "involuntary sculpture". Thus Limit's works also speak to the fact that we never perceive images in the singular, not even if it is a one-off artwork. Our brain always compares what we've seen to familiar images already stored in our memories. But this unnamed object in the work "Citrus, Glass and Ceramics on Purple" is liberated from its purpose already when it was wrapped into silvery material, by preparing it for import/export. This object becomes a fetish already on a sculptural level, which like a surrogate fits in with the international range, the import and export chain, of vegetables and flower blossoms, and relates to the snowball and Polish apples on Viir's pictures.

With wordy extensions of its title (Alone, Anxiety, Balance, Colour, Comedy, Distance, Effort, Fragility, Hostility, Longing, Multiply, Nothing, Occupy, Relaxation, Reflexion, Travel, Waste) that try to conceal its more pedestrian/neutral appearance, Jimmy Limit's installation consisting of three photos and a purple expanse, depicts what looks to be a temporary totem pole. Limit has done this before – photographed objects that were positioned in a mere temporary moment of balance – the real lifetime of the sculpture could have been only 20 seconds.

Exotics.

Walter Benjamin noted that the nature that speaks to the camera is different from the nature that speaks to the eye. He was referring to the camera's ability to decode and capture processes that were invisible or too short-lived for the eye. Click! – and an arrangement has become a sculpture, the ephemeral has become permanent. If nothing else, the association of totems at least forms a compelling background that harmonizes with Viir's main work, "Hans_55." And this isn't the only place in the exhibition where the modern term "inter-iconic" could be used.

Furthermore, the picture-space of both these artists is born in the process of positioning. Limit's last work, made up of one photo and an orange background with orange peels ("Windex on Glass and Orange") is more intriguing. Upon closer inspection, the quasi-nothing proves to be a reproduction of the bubbly traces of window washing fluid on glass. Limit, who started his creative career steeped in the photocopier aesthetic of punk rock zines, has in ten or so years reached a level of refinement of images that allows us to look at quasi-nothings with a rapt gaze.

Sigrid Viir leaves us the option of seeing her three works as a single installation bearing the stylish poetic collective name "Snapshot Photos of the Moon, Black Holes Filled with Sugar Cube, Snowball as a Noble Gift, Polish Apple in a Lift." Out of 12 concrete bottles, a hint on a landscape hopelessly despoiled by plastic bottles and other trash, the shameful residues of poverty and global trade, grow twelve identical black and white faces in a semi-circular arrangement. These are true exotics, faces decorated with leaves and seeds. These faces are like a miniature symbolic audience for Viir's second installation photograph, "Gift," which rests on bottles and sponges in a corner of a room, a photograph that refers wittily, like Limit's Windex picture, to an unimaginable situation. A huge snowball or "snow-bomb" as artist referred to it, is as if an absurd weapon, which is harder to transport to Africa than Kalashnikovs – something that has become a conventional accustomed ingredient of trade with this tribe.

The paradox that Viir talked about at the exhibition opening lies in the fact that a picture found online, taken in the last decade for a book of photographs exoticising Africa, has been turned into the pseudo-authentic icon of a Surma tribe in Ethiopia. The locals happily re-enact the known picture for the delight of every curious camera crew. As this quite intriguing legend cannot be decoded just by seeing the work, the political aspect of this is only half-realized. The package of her early works called "Routine Breaker, Voucher, Table Bear and Others" at the 2011 Köler Prize candidates' exhibition seemed to be more organic, natural and not as constructed compared to the current Viir. Nevertheless the pedestrian assumption that a picture as a phenomenon itself will strike viewers as immediate, while language on the other hand is always pre-coded, is not operative in either Limit's or Viir's works.