

Søren Hüttel: "The Eclectic is now"

Solo show, 2012, David Dale Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland

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David Dale Gallery, Glasgow 28 October - 20 November 2011

In discussion with Max Slaven and Darren Tessar

?MS: How does the act of collecting memorabilia impact on your work

SH: Not that much actually. I hate sentimentality, but there is looking back in collecting memorabilia. I grew up with Star Trek Next Generation and I really like the costumes from that. I've got a Deep Space Nine costume, I've got a Star Trek Enterprise costume and I've got a Voyager costume. It's a big part of my TV experience. I've watched Star Trek every night for the last fifteen years. After a TV show is over and time passes it can become obsolete because of the way technology progresses or fashion progresses. It's what I'm interested in; I get inspired by what I look at. I like the discotheque aesthetic, I like the pop aesthetic. I would really like to create the interior of a traditional Pub. Not just chairs, tables and draught pumps, but the paint and the colours. I was influenced by a trip to Las Vegas last year, with all the fake flowers and bright lights. I really like it and am inspired by it in a formalistic way. I got inspired by Dynasty, which was on when I was a kid. They had all these puffy shirts and crazy cars, totally flamboyant lifestyles with Rolls Royce's and the big flower decorations. Although corny, I think these kind of aesthetics appeal to me. I like the excessive things, like fake flowers and I can see them as "beautiful", which is a horrible word to use in Art. I see the beauty in things that are not

.MS: It's almost like they surpass original forms. They're so suped up that they're better than the original

.SH: No, I see them as two different things. I see it as a social thing as well

It's not like the copy is better than the original,. I just find them interesting as things. I like things a lot and I think that's perhaps where the memorabilia thing comes into play as well

DT: I don't think there's enough of this idea of liking. We're inundated with going against things we dislike. It's interesting that you go to a casino and you're steeped in a very different way of seeing the casino, and it actually intensifies what you start to like It's just about being, I guess "eclectic" could be a possible word, you can't really reduce it to being typical or understandable or translatable

.SH: Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. That's probably not the right analogy

MS: It seems like the gallery is a fantasy of collecting these things that you can't live with and you can't like in normal life. When we talked about memorabilia before you said that you don't show it in your house. You've just got your spare room. A good old-fashioned memorabilia collector has their collection on the walls of their living room. The gallery seems like your spare room. That gallery's the place that you go with all the stuff, but you can't live like that and you wouldn't want to

SH: I think it is two different worlds. I collect a lot of things to make art, but I also like to use everyday materials like the fans and the A4 clip frames, which are domestic, and the shelf on which you would put your memorabilia or your trophies. I like that the exhibition has this certain domestic or pre-made, readymade aesthetic to it as well as the hand-made objects. This work is all about being eclectic with the opposition and different elements coming together to become a whole. I think it's important that the show has a tactile flow to it. That, as an artist you have created this sculpture and then have combined it with other elements that are pre-made, altered, or just arranged in the show. I think that's interesting and it turns the discussion back again to the casinos. I see this fabric, and I like it. I see the fake flowers and I really like them. I see the paint and think I can use that. I see the clip frames and, yeah, they're cool. I really like the aesthetics of fans, and the cheaper the better because the whiter they get to the point of transparency. My colleague once said that I am a sucker for bad quality and that is quite true in a way. I like bad quality, and I like bad bangers and mash in a pub with a pint. I like sleazy casinos or bad TV shows. I don't automatically see them as bad

DT: It's interesting that you talk about the opposition of these objects with this show particularly. In other pieces of your work there is a real essence of making a space for these objects to have their existence and to have their opposition. This show is very different. It has this ephemeral quality because none of the pieces work until the lights

are off. These quite clunky, shit objects, yet, under black light they all become quite ephemeral. You know that they're only activated by this very particular thing

SH: This is because, coming here for three weeks, I thought I'd try something new. I've always wanted to do this UV light thing with sculptures, or elements, where they are self-illuminating. I've worked a lot with lights and I really like to explore new materials. That's really a big part of my way of making art. I might not use things or materials for two years and then, all of a sudden, there we are. There's also all the technicalities and research of doing something that I find interesting, and that's where this UV light show came in. A big process of the making of this show has been trying to remove anything that will actually interfere with the UV light, which is actually quite a weird thing to do

MS: To bring in the title 'The Eclectic is Now', taking its reference from 'The Sublime is Now' from Barnett Newman. Is this a further negation of modernist mechanisms

SH: It's more a historical thing. I think that was really a 90s discussion with Peter Halley's example where people hated modernism, and of course it was stupid and ridiculous, with all these perennial truths. To me, I think I might be the generation after, which takes modernism and changes it, like using the visual elements of it. Do you know the city where Donald Duck lives? Duckburg. I had a tutor from Denmark who called it 'Duckburg Modernism' and that's like my flower sculpture, a very stereotypical object. Like Scrooge McDuck, when he's got a painting on the wall, it's a really modernist painting or if he has a sculpture it has two holes in it, with very flaccid shapes. There is this guy I met this summer who studied in the Netherlands and talked about slappe vormen. This referred to Per Kirkeby, a Danish painter who used to work in Germany a lot, and Baselitz. I think slappe vormen, just saying the words says a lot with the sound itself. With these flaccid shapes it was just a blob, it's not really anything that signifies anything and that's what I'm quite interested in, this idea of modernism and not just a mockery of it

DT: By the time Duckburg Modernism happened there's nothing really left to fight anymore. We have come so far away from its origin of understanding that it's new again

The interesting concept with the eclectic is that now I possibly interpret it as being a bit melancholic in some ways because it seems like the eclectic is now but it's not satisfying the eclectic. It's a bit Ballardian

SH: That's true. I prefer to have it where the meaning is floating in the air. That's why the eclectic is now was actually also the point. In Danish it's not a very common word to use and I don't know if it is in English, and there are so many different meanings

MS: It's because you see these roads lead out and you wonder what direction they're going. I mean, back in history as opposed to forward

SH: We talked about the Duckburg Modernism, it's not thematically anchored in the past, I don't think. It has more to do with questioning things and questioning artworks and what we're actually supposed to do with them. It is, in a way, a facade. My works in here are not made to last

MS: That's the point; there aren't these roads because the thing is the thing and that's it. History is history. You can apply history or you cannot apply history, the thing is still the thing. The history gets built up in the same way as the sculpture with as much or as little as you want, and you're not telling anyone

DT: I think the release of Postmodern if we're Post-Post-Modern now is that it's actually been applied, the Duckburg Modernism. We don't have any kind of resentment or a hesitation anymore at letting that just be on the same plane. You started to even say that this went full circle, walking into this casino that has inspired the show, in that it's no longer just for you anymore. Now everyone is fighting for these fragments of associations; the connotative. That doesn't necessarily question what it is, it's just where it makes you go. And everyone's going, going so many places that there is no road anymore. It's desire lines

SH: When you talk about desire there is this urge for what interests you, what intrigues you, and to back to the collection thing, you collect photographic stuff. It's shit. But my claim on that is shit too















