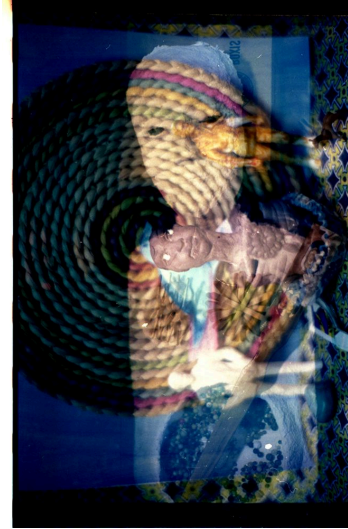


TOMMY HARTUNG

R.U.R.

May 1 - June 23, 2018

Opening Reception: Friday May 4, 6-8pm



Left: *R.U.R. Act One: The Viewer*, 2017, UHD, 8:00 min

Right: *Marius*, 2017, Archival inkjet prints from 35 mm color negatives, 37 x 26in. (94 x 66cm)

"Humans are too expensive, but their behavior is priceless." - Tommy Hartung

C24 Gallery is pleased to present *R.U.R.* a solo exhibition of new work by artist Tommy Hartung, marking his inaugural exhibition with C24 Gallery.

R.U.R. is a reinterpretation of Karel Čapek's 1921 science fiction play of the same name, most noted as the first text to use the word "robot." The original play is re-written through Hartung's surrealist DIY aesthetic and stream of consciousness storytelling through photographs, sculptures, and interactive videos. Presented in three acts, the works investigate the rapid progression of technology and the uncertainties that come along with the dehumanization of everyday life, work, and activities as human interactions become more and more steeped in technology, or "roboticized".

In Čapek's play, human evolution is dictated and eventually halted because of the technical progression and reliance on robots. The robot characters eventually develop souls and exterminate their creators so as not to have any distraction from the work they are created to do. In contrast to the original, Hartung's adaptation questions the idea of the "Robot Myth" as a blameless system that loses control, and instead asks the viewer to critique the motives of the maker. Ultimately, Hartung notes "robots are machines created by men to put distance between themselves and their eventual victims." Investigating the convention of power, the eventual question the artist considers: Why do men strive for robots to appear human?

Hartung's imagery mirrors a globalized world steeped in obsession, violence and sympathetic magic. His use of multiple media addresses overall themes of modernism and forms hybrids of characters and nuanced allegory that are referential to Čapek's play. Photographs consist of character studies and images inspired by the constructivist art originally designed for the playbills. Video installations throughout the exhibition task the viewer in exploring the works as both observer and participant. In *Act One: The Viewer*, a video installation comprised of stop motion animation indicative to Hartung's unique style, intercuts live hidden camera feeds that record and reflect the viewer back to themselves in real time. Moving further into the gallery, the viewer comes to *Act Two: Touch*. A series of touch screen computers display 360 interactive spherical animations that imitate nature, without romanticizing it. Text sourced from Čapek's play is reanimated as poetic ruminations and composited over the videos, enticing and guiding the viewer to explore the 360 axis of the video through touch. The virtual worlds are dreamlike in their aesthetic, yet the artifice of the simulated reality is left apparent.

Positioned in the gallery's atrium is the dominant feature of the exhibition: *Act Three: Silent Siege*, a single channel movie that evolves and changes as live video feeds embedded around the viewing area allow Hartung to observe and adjust the picture remotely by capturing the viewer's image and manipulating it on screen. The remote, performative element encourages the viewer to question the process of data collection and the nature of consent. A modernist style desk is set up on the opposite wall with a small computer screen where the viewer can see the software program at work. By opening the artist's production process, the viewer contributes to the work and is asked to question their relationship to Artificial Intelligence. The computer is complete with a VR headset that allows the viewer to experience the video as Virtual Reality.

Tommy Hartung has exhibited at Museums throughout the United States, including most recently The Whitney Museum's Whitney Biennial 2017, curated by Christopher Y. Lew and Mia Locks; The Rose Museum, Waltham MA; The Jewish Museum, New York, NY and MoMa PS1, Queens, New York. His work is in the collection of: The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA Rose Art Museum, Waltham, MA Dimitris Daskalopoulos Collection, Athens, Greece.

Hartung was the recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award in 2015 and the Painters and Sculptors Grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation in 2011.