



WHEN THOUGHT BECOMES EXPERIENCE AT PS 122 GALLERY

Robert C. Morgan
February 2023



Grant Landreth, *Green Lönset Weaving*, 2021/2022, paperboard packaging, cotton yarn, canvas, ikea lönset frame, 60x80 inches.

This exhibition intends to reveal how seven independent artists have indirectly developed various ways of making art in relation to their engagement with everyday life.

In some cases, the process of living precedes the art. At other times, art inevitably delivers its own structure. The precedent is contingent on intuitive feelings in which the artists might be absorbed at any given time. The discipline of engaging in these practices continues to persist, evolving into routines whereby the principle of work literally becomes synonymous with art.

C
GALLERY
2 4



Ryan Sarah Murphy, Works from the *Tract* Series, found (unpainted) cardboard on paper, 2022

Some would say that art is timeless, that it maintains a space of its own, without giving into habits from the past or elocutions in the future. Others would say that what confronts art in the present is what gives it the power to transmit, both in part or in whole, the essence of the work. Somewhere along the way, artists have learned to retain their perceptions, rather than letting them go. Time is of the essence. Upon arrival at the various points in their creative circuitry, the artists are given over to aesthetic properties, whereupon the discovery of their work becomes indefatigably real.

In this exhibition, it soon becomes apparent, that artists embody a kind of tactility that supplies their visual sensorium, conceptually and physically, throughout the days and hours. A striking, somewhat indirect comment was made by the curator, Dr. Soojung Hyun. In her reference to this exhibition, where she suggests that “while thoughts are intangible, they belong to the world of concepts.” My understanding of this remark depends largely on which works are made available to be seen. Clearly, not all of them are the same. A brief over-view might appear useful.

In works by artists, such as Grant Landreth, Cair Crawford, and Masumi Sakagrami, the connections between them are only partially evident, even as the works themselves may reveal distinct relationships. In other works, such as the *Tracts* (2023) of **Ryan Sarah Murphy** or the photographic pigment prints from luman prints by Svetlana Bailey, the somewhat intangible complexities appear to suggest formal inclusions, which may not appear entirely visible. Finally, in the disparate sensorial elements put forth by Eozen Apopian and Amir Hariri, there are other somewhat imposing conceptual aspects in the work that suggest ongoing schematic designs.



Svetlana Bailey, *Dancing shoulders*, from the series *Would the sun still rise*, 2021, pigment print from lumen print, edition of 1 + 1AP, 64.5 x 42 inches.

These categories have nothing to do with interpreting the works in any context other than a modest way of unpacking the curator's comment, which I find enlightening and diametrically significant. As for the depth of meaning in these works, they would be difficult to exploit beyond the strategy of how each artist is positioned relative to a linguistic credo. More explicitly, the deployment of how the work of artists might function in terms of their physicality is primarily a means of reading how their methodologies might fit in relation to one another.

Having written numerous essays on so-called "conceptual art," I am intrigued as to how this term has been over-used to the extent that its original meaning, from a historical point of view, has been virtually lost. Dr. Hyun's use of words, such as *thoughts*, *experience*, and *concepts* in relation to the seven artists in the current show offer an alternative, affirmative point of view. They are words that might be re-introduced into the language of art in ways that maintain a focus as to where the concepts in these works are actually going.

Curiously, the so-called "virtual" works, that have appeared online in recent years, have interfered to some extent with how art previously functioned in what might be called the tactile present. What I find significant about this exhibition is how the works represented here relate more or less directly to what many would disregard as significant due to the absence of the computer. In many circles, the computer has taken over the tactile experience in art by means of what is called "the virtual." Many have associated this with the appearance of Covid-19 nearly four years ago, which has made artists and art workers come to terms with what might be understood as a disappearance of previous social dimensions relevant to "the art world."

For the most part, “When Thought Becomes Experience” is an exhibition bereft of the necessity of the computer. The many superb works included in this show are not dependent on a screen or the various phases of AI. The concept of this show, including the works themselves, is concerned with artists as people who live and work with structure on the edge of materiality. The tactile presence of these works is an essential component in delivering the message of art – as art. I recall the subtle complexity of a woven work in cotton and paper, titled *Green Lonset Weaving* (2021/2022), again by Landreth, and another mixed-media sculpture, titled *Lineage* (2023), by Cair Crawford – two distinctive breeds, both denoting precision and haptic execution further suggesting an implicit dynamics pulling toward and against one another. It was gratifying to recall these works several days later and to usher in their composite complexity and solitary delight. The works emerge from the depth of tactile precision through a distinctive energy given over to a bifurcated placement of instinctive form.

The passage of form through the work in this exhibition is a major aspect of its originality and riveting thresholds. Again, another work by the Iraqi-born artist Amir Hariri, titled *The Bargaining Furnace* (2022), begets a painting partially (indirectly) inspired by graffiti. The difference between graffiti, however, and Hariri’s work is found in the latter’s confidence in the manner he paints. His series of work focuses on variations of gray with other subtle colors integrated in the crevices often barely visible. The presence of this painting involves vibrant quasi-mechanical/organic humanoid shapes, which are less than possible to ignore. It fulfills the abstract expressionist concept of “all-over” painting in that the figure-to-ground is ignored in favor of surface intensity, the latter being the essence and, to some extent, the contradiction that holds this painting in durable suspense.

In fact, suspense might well be the mediator between thought and experience. It’s where we begin again and where we retrieve what we think has been lost, only to re-discover what we have found. It is here we come to terms with what it means to be an artist, where thoughts open the door to what we see and think and finally come to propose. It is a kind of knowledge that only experience can offer. It is the reified place that makes things clear.

<https://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/experience-at-ps-122-gallery/5678>