

SARAH JANE GORLITZ AND WOJCIECH OLEJNIK collaborate on stop-motion animations and installations under the name Soft Turns. Board members at YYZ Artists' Outlet, they currently live in Toronto, and occasionally write about art.

RANDI NYGÅRD received her Masters of Fine Art from the Kunstakademiet i Trondheim, NTNU, Norway (2006). She has exhibited her work internationally with recent exhibitions at Kunstverein Springhornhof, Germany (2013), Akershus Kunstsenter, Lillestrøm, Norway (2013), and Performa 13, New York (2013). In the fall of 2013, Nygård participated in the URRRA Artist-in-residence program in Buenos Aires. Her work was recently acquired by The Collection of Stockholm Laen in Sweden. Nygård currently lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Oslo, Norway.

CAREFUL MANAGEMENT AND STUDY OF RELATIONS

BY SARAH JANE GORLITZ AND WOJCIECH OLEJNIK

Like collages, dictionaries are composed of incomplete, dense little fragments of information; while they purport to explain and provide a context, their abridged format is so concise that they only ever present partial statements, and always in point form. Randi Nygård's exhibition *Careful Management and Study of Relations* at YYY Artists' Outlet is composed of collages hung on walls, framed, encased in acrylic displays, like an incomplete dictionary full of parentheses, quotation marks, and other framing devices. The work however, is open ended, dynamic, like an open source document, it suggests many associations between words and texts, diverse interpretations and beckons the viewer into its intimate space.

The series *A System Is More than the Sum of Its Parts* comprises collages that seem to have burst into three dimensions, as though capturing a frozen Zabrinski-esque moment of exploding books. To make these works, various picture books and magazines were cut into and splayed out like mangled pop-up books. Their encyclopaedic contents—animals, geological formations, architecture and figures spill out in a cacophony of forms. Layers are unearthed and hang exposed, we quickly see that their movements and forms are guided by more than chance, rather, they seem to follow a system that emerges within. As we follow her knife as it traces lines and patterns that emerge from page to page, teasing out forms that are then pulled through the excavated openings, it becomes difficult to determine the amounts of deliberation and coincidence involved in the process.

Unlike the solidity of wood (used for its sturdiness and longevity to build houses, tools, sculptures), the substance of paper is frail and temporary. And yet for hundreds of years it has been one of the most important means by which knowledge has passed through generations and across continents. The materials Nygård uses for her collages are dated, almost obsolete: dictionaries, photocopied fragments and travel magazines that no longer fulfill their original

roles. Without a doubt, these works are susceptible to the same forces of decay as regular paper. The pages will slowly rot and sag, change position, Nygård's contribution is to set up a system, and follow it as it unfolds. This work is as much about the current state of the materials as how they will change. But as paper can be torn; as it rots and disintegrates, as the printed image fades or ink bleeds; its knowledge too can fade, become out of touch with the present. Throughout the gallery, works are held together in an unstable equilibrium that could be altered with the slightest breeze; one can even imagine them withering like a flower, in need of preservation.

The instability of contemporary existence, and fragility of life in general are but starting points for Nygård, for her work also deals with the changeability of meaning and language—that which we use to construct our reality. Just as paper has a relatively short lifespan, so do words, their meanings constantly shifting and changing, dictionaries are continually being updated. In this exhibition one is confronted with a large inventory of objects and words. One is faced with repetition, patterns, copies and photocopies, similar words and objects articulated and rearticulated. *Strek—Struktur*, was inspired by the fact that many words in various Germanic languages starting with the prefix “str” refer to objects that are long and thin. The drawing itself is a self-generating sequence of strokes, where each pencil mark follows and exaggerates the accidental curves of the one before, creating a pattern of lines resembling ridges on a sand dune. It is like speaking itself, one uses the same words, but they never mean exactly the same thing, they echo around from one ear to the next, always reverberating a little differently. Nygård utilizes this fumbling around that language is, as a methodology to probe the nature of language itself. The flatness of the *Careful Management and Study of Relations* collages seem to allow us more easily to trace this movement back and forth along chains of associations, as repeating recognizable shapes indicate paths of migration. But even when the negative space in one collage becomes the positive space

in another, each holds its similar information differently, and the viewer can only make assumptions as to how one collage relates to another. It is a task that cannot establish a truth, or a well-defined perspective, but depends on different contexts and relations and specific meanings of its terms. It is an approach that yields a multiplicity but also brings attention to how ideas are formed, how they function. How seemingly simple ideas are confused, tainted with other ideas, conflated and interwoven, where singular ideas cannot be isolated, but only presented together with other ideas. Consider the way Nygård relates “ecology” to “economy,” words that seem miles apart yet are direct neighbours in the Oxford Etymological Dictionary. Taken from the Greek root eco (οἶκος, “house”), ecology is the study of the house (-λογία, “study of”) and economy, the management of a house (οἰκονομία “household management”). These words seem to overlap, exist in a complex relationship, not in a simple opposition. In *Definitions 1*, Nygård builds a chain out of the words that appear in the dictionary entries for the above two words. Photocopied and cropped, each of these derivative definitions fan out elliptically from the central pair, nudging each other along the dark negative space off the photocopy's edge. To copy, to repeat is always to return, to close a circle. This becomes one of Nygård's strategies for her whole art practice. Just as she reuses the same type of prints (i.e. National Geographic magazine), she returns to similar words and imagery in order to create a rhythm. Here, it is as if time itself was another building block of her complex weave, which could always be reordered, re-structured according to other criteria. What is recorded in one magazine article intermixes with another written in a different place and time. For as everything changes with time, and time seems to push everything in a specific direction, sometimes what is left behind, what is left as essential finds a way to return. The prefix “eco” will always be in economy and ecology, and although it is arguably a trivial detail in our contemporary existence, Nygård's work reminds us that language, including non-verbal (linguistic) relations

are everpresent, determining how we talk, how we think, how we make decisions. To analyze these subtle, latent relations is not only rewarding but may inform ourselves of the way we think, the way we construct our reality.