



# Night Gallery

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Anne Libby, Marrow into Moxie, 12 December 2015 – 30 January 2016

David Korty, Figure Constructions, 12 December 2015 – 30 January 2016

Aaron Wrinkle, 1978, 12 December 2015 – 30 January 2016

Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles is a city that undeniably comes to life at night. In January of 2016 a group of friends and I climbed Mount Lowe around sunset, making it to the top just in time to see the sun go down and the city light up a moving constellation of vernacular infrastructure. It was light pollution that guided us down the mountain three hours later in a state of partial inebriation, to the highway and then the city. Antithetical to the sunny reputation of California, the night time presents an opportunity to challenge the status quo: the public accepts that strange things should happen then. Unlike New York, L.A. sleeps all day, its moving parts reconfiguring themselves after dark until the early morning hours. That same week I found myself at Night Gallery's downtown location, where it has been as of 2013, a far cry from its initial incarnation as an after-hours post-studio gallery in a strip mall in Lincoln Heights,<sup>1</sup> the initial place where Davida Nemeroff had begun her gallery practice after moving to Los Angeles in 2009, and later teaming up with partner Mieke Marple in 2011. The space was originally founded in part due to a desire to encourage art viewing at night, with the well-tested premise that nighttime conversations lend themselves to more vulnerable discourse, and therefore that riskier and more interesting positions would emerge, both due to youthful

inebriation<sup>2</sup> and the implied permission to continue the conversation at night—a conversation that tends to re-produce the daytime experience with an added element of experiment. Initially, the gallery was only open at night, its black walls featuring ambitious exhibitions by artists like Samara Golden, Alika Cooper, and Mira Dancy, artists whose practices had developed alongside the gallery. The newer space is large white room divided by walls that have been placed diagonally for these exhibitions. In the centre of the building the director's office is painted black, a reminder of the previous space. In the courtyard shared with neighbouring Flux Fahrenheit and François Ghebaly Gallery is a shed built and populated by Aaron Wrinkle in a work entitled "1978," which includes an overturned car occupying the space outside the gallery walls. Perhaps the most reflexive exhibition in the group is Wrinkle's wooden bunker—or as he calls it, the "Mausoleum"—a collaborative project-exhibition-alternative gallery that stands in for the body of the artist.

The spirit of creating space within binary negation, the space for meaning, powers the programming core of the Night Gallery. Metaphorically, the negative form as an line of interrogation of time, and its relationship to technological space binds the expertly stacked, formally composed paintings and ceramics of L.A.-based artist David Korty with the phenomenologically unsettling sculpture works of Anne Libby, who is currently based in New York. In his exhibition Figure Constructions, Korty's paintings and ceramic objects ask to be situated in relation to a particular historical intersection where technological developments begin affecting our visual perspective, and techno-utopian affectation became both subject and

apparatus in painting and sculpture. True to the anthropological potential of the painting medium, the works collapse under a punctured slate of colour, as the camera lens, collage, illustration, and non-representational painting align into a flurry of twentieth-century visuals peeking through the the flat surfaces. These create a layered image that wants to be read chronologically as both linear and simultaneous, a rhythmic and idiosyncratic pile of scraps somehow reminiscent of cinema.<sup>3</sup> The technique positions these works as a willing witness to the loopy quality of time, carefully considering the failure of the artwork as a cultural marker that supposedly falls in line with a logical perception of chronology. In an extension of this, Korty's ceramic vessel works, with their many handles, poke fun at the totalitarian use of the objects, lending a jittery perspective to a work. This meditation on the supposedly naive medium of ceramics is confronted with technological production that references gravity in a manner not incidentally aligned with some early ideas expressed in Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."<sup>4</sup> The Conquest of Ubiquity, a small manuscript by Paul Valery that sets the stage for Benjamin's essay predicts: "In all of the arts is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial."<sup>5</sup> Almost inherently, the nighttime history of the gallery thus becomes a nest of alternative history in the framework of which Korty's paintings enact a multiverse failing to adapt to a prescribed chronological order. If the night was a fertile ground for the rehashing of historical precedent, it also opens up a historical dialogue where time is of no consequence.

Where Korty's paintings and objects move somewhat freely through formal space, Libby's series of works Marrow into Moxie takes up the task of navigating the internal. Made of materials that normally reside in the

utilitarian field of usability, Libby's pieces raise questions about design and the aesthetic that lies beneath the surface. A series of metal sculptures, industrially reproduced skeletons of fold-out tables that stand vertically on the floor and mounted on the walls, are open to the gallery space. The effect is one of helplessness, like seeing the underbelly of a turtle on its back. This is accompanied by torn sheets of seaweed, laminated and mounted on plexiglass, their shiny veneer confirmed by this newfound sturdiness. The forms are inconsiderate outside of their purpose; they were not made for the human eye, but their minimal design is compelling in its rigid representation of the inner workings of what we can consider to be negative space—the inner life of human, man-made, and reproduced forms that come to support structures and aesthetics we find agreeable. The exposed undersides are a reminder of an alternative existence beyond aesthetics, succumbing to private critique. At night, the conversation continues towards the darker corners of the subjects, these negative spaces and supports that hold up the formal. The underside containing these supports becomes clear and pronounced, as the day continues to represent the expected, professionalized surfaces we are accustomed to.

Inevitably, these exhibitions find themselves re-contextualized by the Night Gallery's existing history as a nocturnally based space in the city of Los Angeles, a sprawling metropolis that gains momentum in the dark hours, blurring the lines between fiction and reality, night and day, through its persistent presence in moving pictures. L.A. confuses our sense of time and space. The factors present in the gallery's formation continue to inform its programming, and so the artworks lead a secret existence in a parallel history. In these exhibitions the local historical context becomes a central component of works that conflate this past, assumed trajectory of technological progress with current systems of knowledge and distribution. The works are in a continuous representational limbo that seeks to challenge the representational medium: like

many of the words beginning with the prefix "re—" the concept of reproduction is framed within the original notion of representation, which requires one to identify an original<sup>6</sup> from which the re-production, re-presentation, or re-petition could emerge. This sprawling root undermines the notion of re-production as the production of a replica, instead breaking up instances of production into a series of attempts, open to individualized parody, dissemination and critique, with the original in question a precarious meeting of ontological, cultural and epistemological narratives, thus allowing concepts to re-emerge. This notion of reincarnation also manifests itself the context of the former Night Gallery. Though the gallery in its current state adheres to socially standard work hours, this re-petition of an ongoing risky dialogue persists in its spirit and its publication platform, Night Papers, which continues an active political, social, and cultural dialogue relevant to local, national, and international audiences who might be involved with the arts—a crucial underlying circuitry to the gallery's network.

## NOTES

1 Andrew M. Goldstein, "Night Gallery's Davida Nemeroff on How She Found Success by Staying Up Late, Betting on the Body, and Finding the Next Picasso (Hint: It's Mira Dancy)." Art Space, 23 January 2016, [http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews\\_features/the-nada-network/davida-nemeroff-night-gallery-interview-53448](http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/the-nada-network/davida-nemeroff-night-gallery-interview-53448).

2 Ibid.

3 "David Korty, Figure Constructions," Press Release, Night Gallery, 12 December 2015–20 January 2016.

4 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Illuminations: Essays and Reflections, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

5 Paul Valery, The Conquest of Ubiquity, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 225.

6 See chapter 2 of Gilles Deleuze, Difference and

Repetition, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).