

Simone Subal Gallery

Sam Ekwurtzel

The machine in the ghost

April 27 to June 8, 2014

It is with great pleasure that Simone Subal Gallery announces the opening of Sam Ekwurtzel's *The machine in the ghost* on Sunday, April 27, 2014. This is Ekwurtzel's first solo show at the gallery. The exhibition runs until June 8, 2014. Please join us for an opening reception on April 27 from 6 – 8 pm.

Preoccupied with anomalous, if aberrant raw materials, Ekwurtzel applies a Cartesian rationale to minor reorganizations of time, space, and matter. His *incomplete open cubes* (2014), for example, are composed entirely of castings of mole tunnels forced into approximations of Sol Lewitt's mathematically determined open cube works of the early 1970s. Sourced from a mole-infested suburban lawn, these blindly formed meanderings evoke the expressiveness of projective images used in psychological tests. Their optimization into direct, platonically shaped routes is an embodiment, drawn in space, of conscious and unconscious structures of control.

Live and dead knots (2014) presents a similarly nonsensical reorganization, in which two 4 x 8 composite wood panels are modified with the addition of several thousand eastern white pine knots. By introducing a material flaw, or rather thousands of them, to an otherwise rigorously engineered panel, Ekwurtzel creates a visually stable grid whose matter-of-factness occludes the technical obsessiveness of its production. This obscuring of intense material processing is true of *Optotypes 1-5* (2014) as well, in which the structural rules of a vision test are applied to the forming of a representational sculpture. Using stone blocks salvaged from the foundation of an eighteenth century New England church, Ekwurtzel sculpted the blocks *en plein air*, using an eye chart as a hypothetical "live model," shaping the blocks by observing an icon whose sole purpose is in measuring one's visual acuity.

Two of Ekwurtzel's photographic-based projects use the mechanical apparatus in counterintuitive ways. In *two projectors* (2014), the characteristics of a slide carousel are used to inscribe two opposing rotational gestures on a landscape. One projector depicts a horizontal space in which a tree is felled, while the other projector reveals an open pit being dug—the pan or tilt of the camera corresponding to the cutting of a sawyer or digging of an excavator. In *attempt to navigate a state forest using a still camera as a tool for illumination* (2014) a digital SLR camera and guide cane facilitate seeing via momentary retinal burn. Ekwurtzel's flash photographs are the residue of a "dead reckoning" informed only by the persistence of afterimages. Here, Ekwurtzel becomes the blind tunneler, navigating a virtual landscape through the translation of autonomous real-time systems.

Ekwurtzel's activities, invested in the creation of peculiarly offset reproductions of "universal standards", evoke the interaction of representation and control known as "feedback". Also known as circular causality, feedback interpenetrates cause and effect in one neverending loop. In removing wood for wood, as in the case of *live and dead knots*, the purpose is not to branch off into a new category but to reorganize the original characteristics of a standard unit. This act of rereading, integral to Ekwurtzel's work, is tied to the outsourcing of perception and expression to interim media — sites that, external to the body, become stand-ins for the eye or hand thus producing a new context and means for contemplation and analysis.

Sam Ekwurtzel (born 1983) works and lives in New York. Solo exhibitions include: *On the beach*, Real Art Ways Gallery, Hartford, CT (2013), *Kinds of Light*, Second Guest Projects, New York, NY (2012), *The Passenger Position*, Reference Gallery, Richmond, VA (2011), and *Homo duplex*, Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA (2011). Past group exhibitions include: *Sunny in the Furnace* (with Aki Sasamoto) The Kitchen, NY (2014), *Cats vs. Dogs*, Soloway Gallery, New York, NY (2013), *Centripetal March* (with Aki Sasamoto) Chocolate Factory Theater, New York, NY (2012), *It's When It's Gone That You Really Notice It*, Simone Subal Gallery (2012), *A Failed Entertainment*, Virginia Commonwealth University Fine Arts Gallery, Richmond, VA (2011), and *A Failed Entertainment*, Land of Tomorrow, Louisville, KY (2011). Ekwurtzel is currently an Alice C. Cole Fellow at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA. He will present a solo exhibition at Wellesley College in fall 2014. Ekwurtzel will also be part of a two-person exhibition (with Frank Heath) at the gallery's booth at LISTE, Basel this June.