

BOX AND COX

An Exhibition by Dialogist-Kantor and Andrew Webb.

The Exhibition "Box and Cox" can be seen as a conversation between the work of Dialogist-Kantor and Andrew Webb. The title is an English saying meaning two people who are never at home at the same time; two people who take turns in playing a part or holding a position. The term is taken from the title of a 1847 play by John Maddison Norton. Billed as "A Romance of Real Life in One Act" and based on two French vaudevilles, the piece revolves around two characters; Box, a printer and Cox, a hatter who occupy the same room without knowing, only passing one another on the staircase, as one goes up and the other down. The farce is orchestrated by the landlady, Mrs. Bounce, until the two men become aware of her deception, eventually realizing they are in fact long lost brothers. The idea for the joint exhibition occurred to the Annie Gentils while visiting the show "Waxing and Wanning" by Webb, held in Brussels, 2005, at "The Bureau de Port" - the sometime exhibition space of Dialogist-Kantor. In part this exhibition was conceived as a response to an amazing coincidence. In the early nineties Webb collected the fallen pine needles of his defunct Christmas tree, filled an empty bottle with them and called it "Saved". It was to be the first physical object in the series of "Saved" works, which continues to the present day. Some years later he met Dialogist-Kantor and in the year 2000, visited the Bureau de Port (which also houses their studio) for the first time and to his surprise saw a row of whisky bottles full of pine needles and dated. The piece was an ongoing work, begun in 1993, a new bottle being added following each Christmas, titled "Elle Enterre des Sapins". [Some would argue that there are only a finite number of ideas in the world; that such an occurrence, therefore, is not surprising. Given the diversification of Fine Art in the early twentieth century, it could even have happened many times before. However this is too large a topic to expand upon here.) There have been other coincidences.

The work of both Artists is heavily steeped in the tradition of word play, the pun and language itself. As the exhibition was planned for June, for the 'non' french speaking Webb, the possibility of "J'une" was proposed - a kind of "I, One", (as two). This was rejected by the spanish half of Dialogist - Kantor as a french impossibility, however it did recall another work from the early nineties by the duo; "En Fanfare !", (a series of poster works) Number 11, October 1993. The text of which, apart from the title "Flac", read; "L'un lune ou l'autre", which translated into English might read; "The one lives where the other [lives]". They 'Box and Cox' ! Another possible translation could be; "The one moon the other". Webb recreated a street sign for the exhibition "Waxing and Wanning" which read "Rue du Croissant / Halvemaanstraat " - thus doubling the location of his studio.

And then there are the spots and zeros. In response to receiving a Dialogist - Kantor postcard collage of the spanish town of Ronda, with a big red spot, Webb sent them "The Big Green 'O' Lives - a large green zero collaged onto a drawing of his Madrid hotel - the hotel's card. The original big 'O' was red, a found object from an old football scoreboard the reverse side of which had been used to attach political posters. Later Dialogist - Kantor added their own typographic work. The image came to feature regularly in their work thereafter - a big zero, sign of poverty (Poor) precisely 'nothingness' and it also appeared in palindromic visual puns such as "Boools", 2003. They use the spots, usually red or green, from their interest in 3D photography, to bring another visual layer to an image - a kind of metaphysical added extra. (The spots are not at all troublesome.) The big red 'O' finally became the image for the poster announcing; "No More Patacyclistes Anymore." (The Patacyclistes were an informal group of Artists brought together at meetings staged and disorganized by Dialogist -

Kantor.) The Stranglers sang; "No more zeros anymore." The red / green correspondence, with its obvious Duchamp reference was also used in an early work by Webb.

Looking through a hole a potato could be seen intact in a green light or with a bite taken out, bathed in a red light. The piece was called "Pomme d' Arrosoir" - Webb has long since forgotten its meanings. In a performance in 2005 Dialogist - Kantor declared themselves "Patate." With Box and Cox, the printer and the hatter, we have two such zeros, each present and absent to the other at one and the same time. Had they known, I wonder what they would have said to one another as they passed on the stairs like ships in the night.