

Ian Balfour teaches at York University. He writes mainly about literature and aesthetic theory but has also published on film, pop culture, and human rights. He has twice been a fellow at the Getty Research Institute. Currently, he is completing an unwieldy book on the sublime. He last wrote a Mercer Union essay for the 1995 exhibition *Safety Gear for Wild Animals* by Bill Burns.

Gary Beydler is an American artist best known for his 16mm film works from the 1970s. A new interest in his work has been generated through the recent restoration of his films by the Academy Film Archives.

Christian Giroux and Daniel Young have been making art together since 2002. They produce sculpture, public art and film installations. Their work has been shown at Scope Miami Beach (2004), Ace Art Inc (Winnipeg, 2004), the Power Plant (Toronto, 2006), the EXIS festival (Seoul, 2009) and Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (2009). Following its premiere at Mercer Union, their film installation *50 Light Fixtures from Home Depot* will be exhibited in *Forum Expanded* at the Berlinale (Berlin, 2010) and *Beyond/in Western New York* (Hall Walls, Buffalo, 2010). They are represented by Diaz Contemporary in Toronto. Currently, they are artists in residence at the York University Digital Sculpture Lab.


Kristan Horton studied at Guelph University and the Ontario College of Art and Design, and has had an international exhibition career since the late 90's. He currently resides in Toronto. Horton's works in sculpture, drawing, digital photography and video and has produced several long-term projects linked conceptually by their serial and episodic structure. Horton takes apart and recreates his subjects in an intensive material studio practice, ultimately realizing his artworks through inventive and experimental technological means.

Marie Jager is a French artist who lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her MFA from the University of Southern California School in 2004. Her work has been presented at Artists Space (New York), China Art Objects (Los Angeles), the MAK Center (Los Angeles), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), the Henry Art Gallery (Seattle), Croy Nielsen (Berlin) and Jeffrey Charles Gallery (London). She was included in the 2006 California Biennial and her work was recently part of the DVD *Compiler 2* curated by Daniel Bauman and screened at the Swiss Institute in New York. Her work has been written about recently in *Flash Art* and *Artforum*.

Euan Macdonald was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and lives and works in Los Angeles. He has had numerous solo shows in international museums and galleries including the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), the Blackwood Gallery (Toronto), Kunstbunker Kinstverein (Nuremberg), and the University Art Museum (Long Beach). He has also participated in major group shows including *Treble* (Sculpture Center, Queens, NY, 2004), *Irreducible* (CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, 2005), *Seville Biennale* (Seville, 2004), *Gimme Shelter* (Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, 2002), *010101: Art in Technological Times* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2001) and *Fresh* (The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 2000).

Will Rogan was born in Highland Park, Illinois, and lives and works in Albany, California. He received his MFA from the University of California Berkeley in 2006. In 2007, Rogan work was featured in Tokyo both in a two-person exhibition with Yuki Okumura at Misako & Rosen and in the group exhibition *All About Laughter: Humor in Contemporary Art* at the Mori Art Museum. Rogan has been included in international solo and group exhibits at venues including Small A Projects (New York, 2009), *Diverse Works* (Houston, 2007), the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (San Francisco, 2005), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco, 2003). Additionally, Rogan is the co-founder of *The Thing Quarterly*, an object-based quarterly publication.

Elizabeth Zvonar lives and works in Vancouver. She graduated from Emily Carr University in 2001. She recently had a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver, 2009). Other recent exhibitions include *Exponential Future* (Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, Vancouver), *Parallel Dimension* (Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver), *Fade Away and Radiate* (Cohan and Leslie Gallery, New York), *Concrete Language* (Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver) and *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Mechelen, Belgium). In 2008, Zvonar held residencies at the Malaspina Print Research Residency and The Banff Centre. In 2010, she will be participating in the symposium *How Do We Go On?* at the Glasgow International Festival for the Visual Arts.

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Cover image: Marie Jager, *Pollution Painting*, 2008. Detail.



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Will Rogan, *Silencer (MUM)*, 2007. Altered magazine page, 11.125 x 8.25 in. Courtesy of Jack Hanley Gallery, New York.



Elizabeth Zvonar, *Blowing Horns Oil & Bronze*, 2009. Handcut collage, 6 x 11 in. Courtesy of the artist.



Days of the Eclipse
Gary Beydler, Kristan Horton, Marie Jager,
Euan Macdonald, Will Rogan and Elizabeth Zvonar

50 Light Fixtures from Home Depot
Christian Giroux and Daniel Young

January 22 – March 6, 2010
Opening: Friday 22 January 7 PM





Euan Macdonald, *Eclipse*, 2000. Video loop, 2:25 min. Courtesy of Birch Libralato, Toronto.



Marie Jager producing a *Pollution Painting*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist.



Christian Giroux and Daniel Young, *50 Light Fixtures from Home Depot*, 2009. 35mm colour motion picture film loop, silent, 13:00 min. Courtesy of the artists.



Christian Giroux and Daniel Young, *50 Light Fixtures from Home Depot*, 2009. 35mm colour motion picture film loop, silent, 13:00 min. Courtesy of the artists.

Front Gallery

Gary Beydler, Kristan Horton, Marie Jager, Euan Macdonald, Will Rogan and Elizabeth Zvonar

Days of the Eclipse

The shortening of daylight in wintertime is a familiar Nordic experience. With the winter equinox now passed, the cycle reverses: we are gaining light by the second. In this sense, we are always living an eclipse, albeit a more prolapsed seasonal trading of light and dark. A solar eclipse is a precise switch point in time when light and dark meet in full cancellation. It may be spectacular yet its after-effect can be bleak: the blindness that comes from the sleep of reason or the obscurity of shadows. *Days of the Eclipse* is an exhibition concerned with the orbit of time, the trading of horizons and cancellation of forms characteristic of the eclipse. The exhibition delineates a topographic map of this “state of eclipse,” providing a detailed representation of both its cultural and natural attributes across a collection of works by Gary Beydler, Kristan Horton, Marie Jager, Euan Macdonald, Will Rogan and Elizabeth Zvonar.

Kristan Horton’s *Excerpt* (2008) represents a backwards-forwards orbit. His transit is a technological migration: it starts its life as a 117-second video recording, which is then output to 4500 black and white laser prints, each scanned and reassembled into a video animation that, while maintaining the same duration, is altered substantially. The result is roughly equivalent to a travel document stamped with marks of passage. Horton designates it as “a portrait of a dimensional traveler scarred by the effects of the transfer.” The wear and tear of the technological supports contribute to a partial vanishing of the self-figured artist; as the ink wanes, the figure becomes less distinct, more of an abstraction, a blown-out phantom.

Marie Jager’s *Heat Map* (2009) is a blueprinted aerial view of the city of Los Angeles, which through various masking techniques, she has partially exposed to the sun’s damaging rays. Blueprinting is similar to the cyanotype process invented by the British astronomer John Herschel. By Jager’s intervention, she pushes the paper’s photosensitivity further, and offering the prints to the long exposure of the city’s elements, she pushes them to a point of discoloration that recalls the look of satellite weather maps. Jager’s artificial exposures may be seen as a contemporary rejoinder to the pages of Nauman’s *LAAIR* (1970), an artist’s book which falsely masquerades as a collection of Los Angeles photographic sky views but is composed simply by the flat application of ink on a printing press. Similarly, Jager’s *Pollution Paintings* (2009), which feign an abstract-expressionist feel, are in fact, derived through the process of exposing a bare canvas or paper to a car’s exhaust pipe at the moment of ignition. The resulting spray of oil serves to catalogue the natural/unnatural landscape of one second in Los Angeles, a mark as determinate and as aesthetic as an eclipse, revealing textures reminiscent of the surface of the moon.

Euan Macdonald’s *Eclipse* relies on the principle of sympathetic magic, allowing our mind to conceive an eclipse where only a soccer ball, lens flare and a puddle exist. In this found spring scene, the artist finds an everyday model of celestial movement amid elements both artificial—the soccer ball and pavement—and natural—the chirping of birds in the sound track and the rainwater forming the pool.

Will Rogan’s series literalize the idea of an eclipse by altering a found periodical titled *MUM* (an acronym for “Magic Unity Might”) published by the American Society of Magicians. To generate these images, Rogan painstakingly erased the superfluous typographic and design treatments that adorned the trade magazine, canceling out elements and leaving a ghostly body outline of the performer. By this act of appropriation and erasure, the series shares a lineage with Rauschenberg’s *Erased de Kooning* (1953), which made a new artwork by deleting another, and Broodthaer’s *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hazard* (1969), an artist’s book created by blacking out the lines of Mallarmé’s poem of the same name. Through Rogan’s waving of the wand, the magazines, once practical how-to instructions, are transformed instead into a veritable magical feat—a disappearance act that represents the ultimate wish fulfillment for the aspiring magician.

Gary Beydler’s stunning endurance piece *Hand Held Day* (1974) transports us to a desert scene, which holds a dry clarity similar to our own familiar winter landscape. Through the act holding a small mirror against the landscape for the length of a day, the artist, Janus-like, contemplates both horizons simultaneously. This motif is also repeated in Marie Jager’s *Past Present Future* (2005/2010), a laser-cut mirror that is a typographic elision of the tenses into one continuous and reflective form.

Elizabeth Zvonar’s assemblage of eighteen collages operates as a compression of the 1972 edition of Janson’s *History of Art*, the foundation text on Western Art. Her collage technique follows the principle of like attracts like. Cutting from the illustration plates of the original volume, she offers instead her analysis of the mirroring of familiar forms across time. Her cutouts highlight peculiarities of the reproductions, drawing attention to the unsystematic use of scaling that dwarfs monumental statues into miniatures. Her crosscuts serve to meld matter, fusing metal to paint and suturing centuries together in unlikely symbiosis.

An eclipse is something of an anomaly; a standstill of competing forces. It can either portend destruction or signal the complete calm of the neutral. This exhibition presents works which explore an “ecliptic” sensibility and is titled *Days of the Eclipse*, after Alexander Sokurov’s sublime desert film.

— Sarah Robayo Sheridan

Back Gallery

Here all is clear. No, all is not clear. But the discourse must go on. So one invents obscurities. Rhetoric. These lights, for instance, which I do not require to mean anything, what is there so strange about them, so wrong?

—Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

There’s no place like Home Depot. Or there is but each virtually identical Home Depot is filled with nothing but things destined for somewhere else, a home, say, or a place: your place or mine but most likely someone else’s. The lights you see in this film all come from Home Depot but it’s safe to say you’re seeing them in a way that company never dreamed of. The film before you focuses its gaze on a “clean, well-lighted place” that is unlike most you look at: a room bereft of everything but light and a light fixture.

The lights, whose job is usually to expose other things, are here unusually exposed, to the camera and to us, exposed in all their nakedness, their naked light. Everything is illuminated in this camera not obscure but that is, on the face of it, not much. Almost nothing: walls, ceiling, floor, the light and its fixture.

The film fixes the light of light fixtures. Perhaps not absolutely ‘fixes,’ because this is a film, not a series of photographic stills, despite the similarities. In this work, as in their recent *Every Building, or Site, that a Building Permit was issued for a New Building in Toronto in 2006*, Christian Giroux and Daniel Young set their camera up, Ozu-like, motionless, filming a room without any moving parts. But even if you don’t look so closely, you can sometimes see the image move ever so slightly, trembling. These minimal movements mark the almost imperceptible unfolding of time in these scenes in which nothing in particular happens. There are no incidents to speak of, except the shining of light. Light as artificial as can be.

For film, light is not just one subject matter among others. Light is the very condition of film, its condition of possibly being film. The light cast by the lights is what makes possible the capturing, the registering of things—or people or events—in the first place. Giroux and Young display a series of primal scenes of lighting: fifty sequences in a room in advance of anything else being there or happening. Lights, camera, no action. Perhaps we can be forgiven for imagining some of the blanks being filled in. One doesn’t normally see a room with only a light in it, except perhaps when one moves in or out of a “place.”

50 Light Fixtures from Home Depot:

Christian Giroux and Daniel Young

There’s a sense here of the possibilities of what might come next. Maybe soon there will be some items of furniture or even a person. What if one added a chair? Or a rug to tie the room together?

The lights come in one odd shape after another, radiating light, more or less prismatically, of one shade or another, to light up your own home that is probably not a depot. There are fifty of them: a wide range of choices, a cornucopia of options, an array that would be impossible in many parts of the world. Yet even the most agreeable of the light and fixture combinations seems tainted somehow by being in the same company of all these lights sold by the same company. Even the cool looks mainstream.

These lights are all electric. Giroux and Young slot themselves into a line in the history art that has been fascinated with electric light, from Manet and Seurat through Dan Flavin and beyond. Young and Giroux’s minimalism subtracts something from the Modernist exploration of how electric light works in relation to things and people to focus our attention on light’s bottom-line primacy. Let there first be light and then we’ll see.

The phrase “mood lighting” seems like a verbal relic of the 60s and 70s but the film brings home, in almost disconcerting fashion, how a small change in lighting can make for a big change in the moods that are solicited, if not dictated, by the light. For all of Immanuel Kant’s hyper-rationality, he maintained that aesthetics was, in the first instance, all about feelings. Nothing more than... feelings. Even the stark minimalism here strangely highlights the possibility of emotion in the absence of any human beings.

The wide array of lights and fixtures, from faux-Edwardian to basic bourgeois to track lighting young professionals are supposed to want, seems to promise a lot, more that it can possibly deliver. Yet for all the shlockiness on display here, there does lurk a sliver of utopian possibility: one could change just the light (and the fixture) and make the whole room better, make everything just a little better.

—Ian Balfour

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