

GOWEN CONTEMPORARY

GENEVA, Switzerland

NICK LAESSING (UK, 1973)

Solo Project

Artgenève 2013

Geneva, 31 January- 3 February 2013

In his work, composed of sculptures, installations, films and drawings, Nick Laessing explores the border areas of science, probing its relationship to the inconceivable.

Reflecting the utopian and romantic aspirations of amateur scientists and mathematicians of the past centuries, he designs and builds his own devices. Often departing from historical research of inventions that never became mainstream or were short-lived, Laessing's sculptures and installations attempt to find the unexploited potentials in the obsolete or overlooked. Examples of this include *Spatial Harmonics*, a mechanical installation that employs pendulums to create geometric drawings corresponding to the theory of harmonics. He has also worked with electrical machines alleged to harness energy from the atmosphere, as well as a radio first made by Friedrich Jürgenson to capture the frequency of the voices of the dead.

The body of work presented in this exhibition specifically conceived for Artgenève 2013 includes a series of copper and zinc plates titled **Galvanic Reactions** 2013. They originate from the artist's experiments with different forms of making batteries. The results reveal a complex and delicate surface which affirms the mysterious qualities of energy making processes.

Water Car, was made in collaboration with self-taught British engineer Jimmy Whitmore. This project is the most recent development of the artist's experiments with the material qualities of water. By a process electrolysis the new machine transforms water into oxyhydrogen gas becoming the fuel that runs the engine. Several myths surround this technology which is claimed to have been in use in the first decades of the 20th century and during the Second World War while there were shortages of conventional fuels. Many amateur inventors and experimenters now believe that this technology can offer a pollution-free alternative to fossil fuel.

The artist's journey to Geneva in **Water Car** for this exhibition is an important step for the project and it follows the spirit of other artists such as Chris Burden and Panamarenko who also worked with idealised forms of vehicles:

« An attempt to drive a car to Geneva on water is about the carrying out of an act. This is a response to my curiosity about whether water can contain useable energy as so many apocryphal stories seem to suggest. It is a self-consciously absurd act, like a joke, that is open to failure. It might also create other questions: political and ideological, about energy and sustainability. And it might question our preconceptions about what we understand to be possible and scientifically true » (Laessing, 2013).

A wider selection of works is presently being installed at our gallery space in Geneva, 4 rue Jean-Calvin.

Laessing, who lives and works in Berlin, has extensively exhibited in Europe and has received important awards, including the DAAD Artists in Residence at PIK, Potsdam (2012) and the Laurenz Stiftung Artist in Residence, Basel (2010-11). Past exhibitions include CEAAC, Strasbourg (2011); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011); Gregor Podnar, Berlin (2010); 2nd Athens Biennial, Athens (2009); FormContent, London (2008); Serpentine Gallery, London (performance, 2008).

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