

Kevin Rodgers
The Mystics and the Passions
Goodwater Gallery, Toronto
By Wojciech Olejnik

In March 2007, The United Nations Plaza in Berlin hosted five short talks by Liam Gillick. These mostly dealt with the relationship between politics and art, but also with the proliferation of discourse about art, where this discourse might take place and how it should develop in the future. He explained: "What I think is important to look at... is the question of the experimental, how you can create conditions... to create a productive environment... the worst critique is [to create]... the conditions for the experimental, but no experiment."

The installation *The Mystics and the Passions* (2008) by Kevin Rodgers at the Goodwater Gallery in Toronto is mostly a collection of found objects, crates and miniature models. Like a thrift shop it houses oblique objects, fashion magazines, old periodicals and dated political posters. One can also find half-empty Styrofoam coffee cups, freshly used ashtrays and stacked cartons of empty booze bottles. Such objects indicate human activity, indicate that just moments before the viewer entered the gallery the space must have been the site of an event, which is now abruptly vacated.

On the cover of an old *The New York Times Magazine* casually found on the bottom shelf of a wooden plinth-like structure is the face of a somewhat distraught Jimmy Carter. The headline reads: "Carter's vision of America: The President Talks About His Goals For a Second Term." Of course, Carter's goals were not realized, he was never reelected. However, inside the magazine a plan is drawn for something that never occurred. In these pages it almost exists, an unwritten history.

To define the space of this exhibition, to mark out its boundaries is an almost impossible task. The installation seems to occupy the full space of the gallery, where the different objects and images act as its décor, as its architectural make-up. To achieve this Rodgers utilized objects found in the basement of the gallery, including shipping crates used by the gallery for the transportation of work. Additionally, the backyard of Goodwater has been transformed to house a wooden, tent-like, site-specific structure.

In the exhibition, the objects appear to fundamentally belong to the space they dwell in, yet they do not give it a sense of place, or a sense of identity. This is because the artist makes use of iconic and easily identifiable images of celebrities and politicians, which through their strong presence bring attention to themselves. Such images are always recycled through the machinery of popular culture to the point that one can never attribute just a single meaning to them. Consequently, the space of the gallery radiates with a wealth of possible readings. What is most concrete are the relations between the objects themselves; different links and associations mutate and gently shift their meaning, rendering the objects more readable. The relations establish a ground, a loose context for these objects to subsist, a context for the event, (in the vocabulary of Liam Gillick) for the experiment to take place.

The context is the moment of anticipation, before the event occurs. We are not witnessing the fabrication of an event, nor its remnants, but we are awaiting its introduction, Rodgers creates a space for something to take place, he creates a context without a performance. It is a study of the possible. It is a study of the moment when something enters the realm of the actual from the depths of potentiality.

This is especially evident in the miniature models, which are found in unexpected places, between magazines and other objects, almost lost in their number, emergent through keen observation. These are practically the only non-found objects and so they are precious, using cardboard and wood they have been carefully constructed, perhaps with tweezers. They appear to be incomplete or partially destroyed, which allows the viewer to visually examine their interior through gaps or missing walls, and so their interior permeates into the gallery. Pieces of garbage and scraps can be found all through the gallery, but once inside the space of the miniatures they act as furnishings, where a random bottle cap can act as a round table or an architectural fixture.

The miniatures are models of idealistic constructions. Based on vacation homes from the 1950s, they have a cleansing, slightly modernist look. In fact, they may be read as tangible manifestations of a vacationer's disposition, a state of rest, which promotes the breaking away from everyday activities and indulging in non-activity. As models they are simultaneously objects, which are material and real, but also they model future buildings thus, they are illustrations of ideas. The whole exhibition could be said to model an event. After all, the whole gallery is set up in a cautious way, what looks like a deserted party scene is actually a simulation. However, an event which is orchestrated is not an event, it is theater. Faced with the event only as a potentiality, the script is all we have. The script acts like the precursor of the event, its form. And although Rodgers writes that 'form will follow fiasco,' this exhibition seems to indicate that also without form as the precursor to the 'fiasco,' one cannot think 'fiasco,' - that 'fiasco' needs a form in order to be thought (at all).