

In one small given moment and at the same time, how can language confuse and entertain, or enlighten and critique, narrate and withhold? These questions provide the foundation for the work of Stefan Brüggenmann who provocatively turn them into quite remarkable and innovative moments. He is clearly aware that any work of art carries within it the history of preconditions, in fact, it is this very thought that lays as a central aspect for Brüggenmann's position. Often working in neon and textual work, the established voice of Brüggenmann's conceptual forbearers - namely, Joseph Kosuth, On Kawara, Lawrence Weiner and Robert Barry- are frequently drawn upon in a reference game that frequently oscillates between the tautological tradition of 60's American conceptualism and the wider concerns of today.

Whereas the radical investigations posed by conceptual art stemmed from a desire to challenge the so-called unquestionable foundations on which art is built and it's very being, Brüggenmann negates any attachment with a primacy in position and claimer of originality. Instead, the artist aligns himself with a different position –that of the selector - by using an underlying principle recurring throughout his work: re-forming and re-using meaning in order to propagate a new voice distinct from the mass. He extends the legacy of conceptual art while constructing his own cleverly planned twists, but carefully planned out and rehearsed this may seem, his work is a reflection of notes that flow from the mind onto paper then sometimes monumentalized into neon or vinyl. The neon work – *SOMETIMES I THINK SOMETIMES I DON'T*

exemplifies the condition or art as an idea's predicament of which moment in the stream of thought can be classified as work and which cannot. It also seems to poke fun at Rene Descartes theory, used as means of indicating human existence: "I think, therefore I am". The notion of the product as thought, or rather, the branding of conceptual strategy once again appears in Boxes Of Nothing where nothing turns into products of something. Extending Robert Barry dictum of- "Nothing seems to me the most potent thing in the world"

The context of an exhibition plays a special part for the process of Brüggemann's work -principally his neon signs- as he sees his pieces reaching their conclusion on the occasion of a show. However, any feeling of a suitable context settlement for work is offset where simply no architectural setting seems appropriate for *THIS IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE* (2001). This particular feeling of ambivalence toward the spectator-work-context relationship has been carried forward in a recent work, for which no place seems to be the best place for (*THIS MUST BE THE PLACE*) (2005). In all of his neon work pervades a strategy of endlessly repeating and reproducing conditions reflecting the artists desire to deliberately transform the instinctiveness of thought into something quiet banal; after all, as one work proclaims, even *THOUGHTS ARE PRODUCTS* (2005)

In parallel to the artist's neon works, *Show Titles* - an ongoing work the artist began to develop – demonstrates Brüggemann's continually active fascination in the possibilities title's can pose. The work comprises a list of either single words or phrases, usually decided on impulse, that serve as possible titles for exhibitions. The list is increasingly growing in number as the artist makes additions over time. While the artist sees this as a work in and of itself, he also intends for it to operate as an ongoing achievement, for which curator's and other artists are welcome to use to name their own exhibitions. For instance, one of the titles - "Zebra Crossing" - was selected as the title for an exhibition surveying the current climate of Mexican art held at the House of World Cultures in Berlin, 2001. This process of selection is investigated further, here in Beck's, where the artist has chosen to display the work for this time. Its current form stands at 747 potential exhibition titles; each will be individually numbered and presented using vinyl text configured to each space in London (ICA), Bristol (Port House) and Glasgow (CCA). But Brüggemann's contribution to the exhibition does not end there. By taking the particular touring structure and paradigm of this years Beck's Futures into consideration, the artist offered a unique opportunity for each curator of the space Beck's will tour -London, Glasgow, Bristol- to select one individual title from this vast list which in turn became the title for each exhibition, thus adorning all forms of mediation and promotional material associated with Beck's Futures 2006. The ephemeral and somewhat ancillary elements of an exhibition -exhibition ephemera- now seem to hold more significance. By Bruggemann's contribution depositing itself in two

forms, both in and outside of the show, he plays truant from the exhibition and at the same time not.

Furthermore, the artist renders the curator responsible for naming the show, and, when confronted with the work *Show Titles* within the exhibition space, one soon realizes that the artist has exposed the curator's selection. We are left to scrutinize this decision and cast judgment in relation to the other 746 possibilities that could have been elected. Consequently, this makes room for the following questions: What would have you called the show? And, more interestingly: Is this judgment tainted after seeing/viewing the exhibition in its entirety? In this light, temporarily, the work posits a form of democracy in regards to curating by making a central aspect of this role seemingly open: the naming of an exhibition.

Paradoxically, Brüggenmann's contribution to this years Beck's Futures may have solved a critical problem: it provides the opportunity to emancipate away both from the idea of a competition (if one can see the chosen exhibition title overshadowing and taking precedence over the name 'Becks Futures 2006') and any interpretation of repetition inherent within the touring structure (the exhibition is presented over 3 venues, inaugurating almost simultaneously), as each exhibition is provided a singular contextual reading by way of an individual

**STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN: THE NAMING OF AN EXHIBITION
OR FUCKING UP THE PROGRAMME**

www.stefanbruggemann.com

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title. Fundamentally, Brüggenmann shows us that any slight disturbance or any shape of critique must be camouflaged in a form of complicitness.

1. *Fucking Up The Programme* is a work by the artist, shown in undisclosed locations.