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REVIEW: "LOW VISIBILITY" AT JOHANN KÖNIG

The Art Of Miscommunication



Artist Amalia Pica in communication with BAPs outside Johann König. Photo: Chris Phillips

If art is a way of communicating, then why do so many people often struggle to get it? Amalia Pica proves that artworks can sometimes be undeliverable messages. And that's okay.

The intention one has when creating an artwork may vary, but from the moment it is seen by a second person, a flux of communication (and miscommunication) happens between creator and observer. Communication used to be a passive and subjective endeavor: artwork communicated something simply because there was an artist expressing an idea and presenting it to another person. But after the industrial revolution, art developed a more objective relationship to the media, becoming itself a topic for creation in some circles.. Be it by making use of new technologies such as photography, video and, much later, the Internet, or by raising reflections on the topic - such as pop art being a meta-language that incorporates elements from graphic design, advertising, packaging and raising reflections on mass media.

Currently at Johann König Gallery, the London-based Argentinean artist Amalia Pica presents her work in the solo exhibition “Low Visibility.” Communication, a recurrent topic in Pica’s production, imbues the space throughout installations, sculptures, works on paper and a performance.

Failed Delivery

Pica makes a parallel between the act of speaking and having the message decoded by a listener and the experience of producing an artwork and displaying it in public. “The reason why I’m interested in communication is because, ultimately, there is an underline questioning whether art can be a communicative act,” she explains. “And obviously is not as straight forward as sending a message and someone receiving it because the interpretation should always get in the way as people are going to bring their own thoughts into the work, which I think is what makes it an interesting process.”

A thesis attached to an object can be enough to express an idea (such in the case of ready-mades, for example), but sometimes the story behind an object becomes the raw material for an artist to work with. In *Low Visibility*, there is artwork that represents a materialization of issues of communication; their poetic potential lying in the fusion of their physical, historical and metaphorical aspects. “I’m interested in failures of communication because it is a more apt metaphor for art making,” says the artist.



Installation view of “The wireless way in low visibility (recreation of the first system for non cable transmission, as seen on TV).” Photo: Chris Phillips

The sculpture “Shutter telegraph (as seen on TV)” was inspired on a Morse code signal system that was quite ineffective since it was dependent on good weather conditions. The installation “The wireless way in low visibility (recreation of the first system for non cable transmission, as seen on TV)” refers to the first wireless system, an invention by Guglielmo Marconi, made of a cable attached to a helium balloon. His attempt of making a transatlantic telegraphic wireless transmission failed when the balloon broke from its moorings.

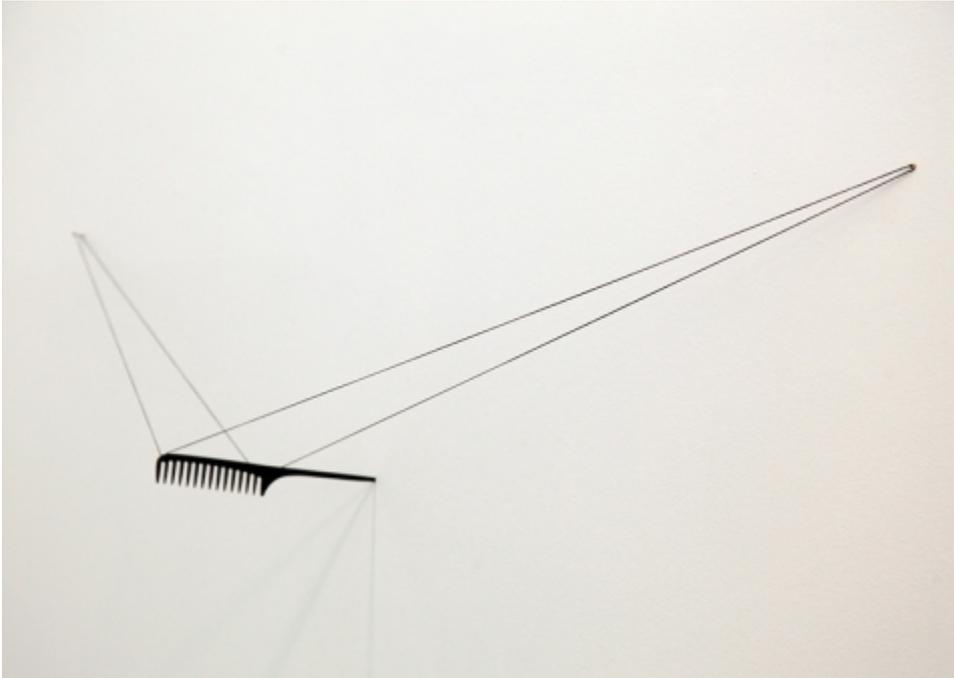


The performer declaims a monologue about banal facts of her routine. Photo: Chris Phillips

The kinetic sculpture “Playing solo and indoors (mechanical jump rope)” plays a double role, as it can be activated through a performance where a girl jumps rope while sharing banal experiences about her daily routine. The panting monolog changes weekly, according to the performer’s life events. It represents the effort one has to actually transform our thoughts into words in order to be understood and make our message clear. On a second reading, the installation without the performance can be seen as a record of a speech that already happened.

Text Under Context

As would be expected, Amalia Pica is also interested in written language. The series of sculptures "Catachresis," for example, give form to figures of speech; the artworks are always followed by an expressive caption. More than explaining what it means and instructing the viewer, the text and the visual fuse into a single object – they are part of each other, having almost the same level of significance.



The teeth of the comb: the artwork *Catachresis # 41*. Photo: Chris Phillips

Through the use of various media, Pica proves her point on how art making is more connected to misunderstandings than to an effective form of communication. "I think it's very important for me to genuinely want to get something across but knowing from the beginning that it's not going to be the case – that probably people are going to see other things." In this sense, *Low Visibility* dialogues with the fact that the personal background and references of each viewer are responsible for filling the gaps left by (the lack of) communication; that an artist's intended message may never fully reach the public, no matter the codes used or the weather conditions.

Johann König – "*Low Visibility*" by Amalia Pica – June 29th to July 27th, 2013 – Performance: Every Saturday at 2:30pm - [Price range of works: 5,000 to 22,000 Euros]

Article by Bel Borst