

**ARTIE VIERKANT**

NEW GALERIE

Selected press

# ARTFORUM

PARIS

## Artie Vierkant

NEW GALERIE

Having plumbed digital circulation and intellectual property in previous bodies of work, Artie Vierkant consolidated these interests with the exploration of a person's physical "profile." Intended as "a functional copy of that person," *Profile* (all works 2016; "Profile" was also the exhibition title) is composed of three unexhibited elements: a full-body photogrammetry scan, audio recordings of the subject made with the intention of producing a synthetic voice, and a contract that formalizes the subject's surrender of the intellectual property and personality rights belonging to these representational materials in exchange for compensation. Although materially absent from the gallery, *Profile* is an artwork in its own right whose iterable inputs and outputs constitute artworks to be displayed, as they were here.

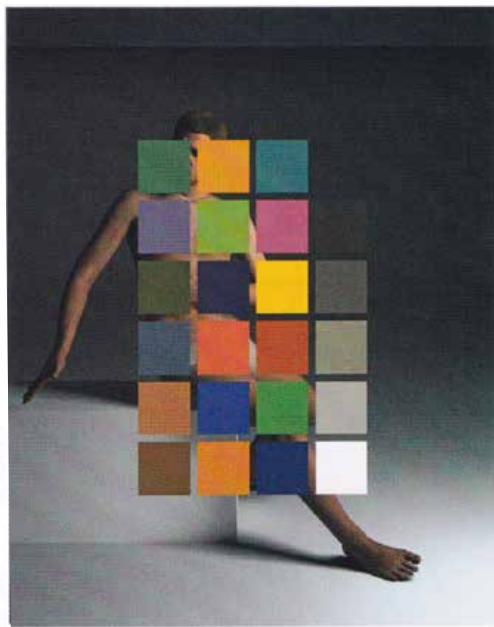
Clocking in at over ten hours, a two-channel video, also titled *Profile*, documents the audio capture, which demands a diversity of phonetic content regardless of meaning. As the subject recites a mishmash of banalities, critical theory, erotic video-game fan fiction, and articles on digital piracy, the video reflexively annotates the project's theoretical concerns in a droll auto-bibliography. The six dye-sublimation prints on display manifest the corresponding outputs of the *Profile*; these recall nude figure drawings, anatomical studies, and portraiture. Approaching kitsch, the academicism of these still images is perhaps just another response, alongside abjection, to the attempt to regulate a body within the regimes of digital figuration.

The technologies Vierkant uses, such as those devoted to scanning, storage, and printing, require standards to ensure the effective movement of information between formats in communication chains. Reproduction of color, for instance, is hardly a natural process, but depends upon industry conventions and the management of color profiles that govern the communication between input and output devices. Codifying and formalizing a set of characteristics and relations to fix an identity, a profile itself is composed through norms whose utility depends on correspondence. Vierkant tends to scramble the normalizing function of tools such as motion-capture markers and clone stamping. But he doesn't transgress so much as limn these infrastructures through *Profile's* courting of extremes of mimetic resemblance. Even as they highlight sites of technical governance, the works adhere to traditional typologies of figuration. In the process, age-old questions of the relationship between artist and model are revived through the legal agreement and the particular qualities of the technology deployed.

Vierkant's choice of subject mirrors his own social station as a white, male artist—a privileged identity that indirectly recalls the history of ideal social types and racial profiling. In a statement for the show, Vierkant positions his project against the fantasy that objects might achieve subjectivity through artificial intelligence; his concern is rather how subjects are objectified. These political valences aren't fully actualized, but the violence of imaging is encoded in the operations of capturing and rendering, and there's a genealogical connection to ways in which the instrumentalization of photography has abetted repressive state power. Here corporate applications of profiling are implicit, as the artist's work flow mirrors those of creative industries, where the use of digital 3-D models has become ubiquitous. Stock profiles are widely available, but Vierkant's use of *Profile* as intellectual property is dependent on its contractual link to the subject, secured through verisimilitude. The primary, human-friendly interface remains the picture; regardless of the content of the depiction, that person remains tied to the representation.

This referential aspect is at the crux of the social function *Profile* reckons with. But *Profile* and its associated products never adequately coincide with the subject in the manner assigned to a portrait. They make plain their misregistrations. A color calibration target's grid of colored blocks largely obscures the seated figure in *Rendition Two (Profile)*, so that technical, legal, pictorial, and art-historical disciplining structures overlap in the image. Tinged by the title's evocation of "extraordinary rendition," the figure, attempting self-possession, seems to explore the bounded non-space it inhabits, the virtual body groping for its limits. As much as the studio, it suggests the prison cell.

—Phil Taylor



Artie Vierkant,  
*Rendition Two (Profile)*,  
2016, ink-jet print on  
aluminum, 50 x 40".

# ARTFORUM

## CRITICS' PICKS: NEW YORK

by: Matthew Shen Goodman

Artie Vierkant

UNTITLED

30 Orchard Street

November 2, 2014–December 14, 2014

With someone as Internet ubiquitous as Artie Vierkant, it's always pleasant to see the work in person. His latest exhibition, "A Model Release," begins with the two-screen video piece *Antoine Office, Antoine Casual*, 2014, where Vierkant uses stock motion-capture data to animate a 3-D scan of a man. Rendered by turns in business attire and in a yellow T-shirt and flip-flops, Antoine gesticulates wildly against single-color backdrops and at one point his own flattened face.

The gallery's back room is taken over by the second iteration of Vierkant's ongoing series "Exploits." In 2013, the artist began approaching patent holders, negotiating for legally acknowledged permission to create artwork based on their intellectual property. *US 8118919 B1 (Air Filter and Method of Constructing Same)*, a patent for a layer of organza silk added to window screens for allergen filtration, is realized in altered form as a pair of hollow, white boxes, outfitted with mesh screens and silk printed with diagrammatic doodles and photogram-esque images of office clothing. Elsewhere, *US 6318569 B1*—a "detachable storage rack for a metallic structure for organizing and storing small bottles and containers within reach of the user"—materializes as large reflective metal rectangles hung on the wall, crossed by International Klein Blue shelves.

Given that copyright law already provides for the creation of derivative artworks without permission of the authors from whom their elements are borrowed, Vierkant's negotiations are in fact legally unnecessary—and this is part of the point. A generative process rather than an attempt at legal rationale on its terms, each agreement becomes material like any other. Both the sculptures' liberal interpretations of intellectual property and *Antoine Office, Antoine Casual*'s possession by stock material see Vierkant coax the formal structures of law out of objects, aestheticizing corporate language and imagery while engaging with their worlds.



**ARTIE VIERKANT**  
NEW GALERIE

# ARTFORUM

## Artie Vierkant

NEW GALERIE

The black square, once the triumphant “zero degree” of modern form, is now a screen—a window screen, to be exact. For “US 6318569 B1, US 8118919 B1; (Exploits),” his first solo exhibition in Paris, New Yorker Artie Vierkant secured licenses to fabricate seventy-five units of each of two United States patents—versions that adhere to the inventors’ guidelines within an established range of deviation. US 6318569 B1, Detachable Storage Rack for a Metallic Structure, is currently licensed as a commercial product: Magnarack, a spice rack that adheres to metal refrigerator doors via rare-earth magnets. In contrast, the owner of US 8118919, Air Filter and Method of Constructing Same, a technique for layering pollen-, allergy-, and UV-resistant organza fabric over window screens, is still seeking to sell it outright.

Unsurprisingly, Vierkant’s realizations of these patents are recognizably “art.” The screens, in single squares or door-size rectangles (with the organza behind the metal screen) recall monochrome paintings. The storage racks, here more like empty shelves, are arranged on diagonals, horizontals, and verticals against grounds of reflective magnetic aluminum, invoking geometric abstraction, Michelangelo Pistoletto’s gallery-enfolding mirror pieces, and a sculptural lineage stretching from El Lissitzky to Donald Judd.

Vierkant’s objects thus embody both legal procedure and art-historical reference—and the two are, of course, not mutually exclusive, as artists have utilized patents, copyright, and intellectual-property law before, with varying degrees of control and success. *Air filter and method of constructing same 6, Six Screen Ascending Blue (Exploit)*, 2013, brings to mind Yves Klein’s trademarking of IKB, a process for binding ultramarine pigment to polyvinyl acetate, in 1960 (one of eight French patents by the artist). “Exploit,” appended parenthetically to the title of each work, echoes the awkward language of the 1992 *Rogers v. Koons*

decision, in which Jeff Koons was successfully sued by Art Rogers for appropriating copyrighted photography (Koons’s adaptation of the plaintiff’s image into four sculptures was deemed “intentionally exploitive”). On other occasions, Koons asked companies for permission when reproducing their advertisements; in contrast, Vierkant’s objects retain the bland sheen of SkyMall gadgetry while deriving their difference from the patent language itself.

In 1992, Koons claimed that parody made his appropriation fair use, contending that his critique of American “banality” differentiated his objectives, however commercial, from those of the original photographer—a surprising recrudescence of the art/kitsch dichotomy. The community of New York-based artists that Vierkant belongs to, which includes those affiliated with the Tumblr *The Jogging*, *DIS Magazine*, and other online platforms, uses the Internet to efface any such distance from pop culture or banal consumption. Vierkant has referred to his own approach as “Post-Internet,” situated between physical objects and the manipulation of their online documentation; his ongoing series of “Image Objects,” 2011–, for example, constitutes a Web 2.0 take on Robert Smithson’s non-sites. The “Exploits” examine an older, legally mandated anachronistic relationship between design and made thing, analogizing the long history of authorship debates in art (could prior artists be understood as unofficial, uncompensated patent holders?) as much as the coding used in new technologies such as 3-D printing. Vierkant has already subtly altered the installation images, adding traces of images from the original two- and three-dimensional drawings for the patents he has licensed, and in an online “trailer” for the show, a curious thing happens. The designs appear to come to life—to dance, even—their measurements and components sliding and intertwining to an ethereal synthesized beat. This animation of the possible stands in contrast to the actual works in the gallery, which cannot escape their enervating whiff of the everyday. It is only between IRL drudgery and the absurd limitlessness of the Net that Vierkant finds his poetry.

—Daniel Quiles

View of “Artie Vierkant,” 2013. Left: *Detachable Storage Rack for a Metallic Structure 1 (Exploit)*, 2013. Right: *Air Filter and Method of Constructing Same 6, Six Screen Ascending Blue (Exploit)*, 2013. (Image modified by artist.)



# frieze

FRANCE

## ARTIE VIERKANT New Galerie, Paris

Artie Vierkant's exhibition at New Galerie was introduced with a trailer that appeared on the gallery's website before the opening. The video was a corporate-style animation sequence of transitioning diagrams, instructional arrows and CAD modulations, with a soundtrack of the kind of weakly emotive synthesizer music used in cheap online advertisements. The trailer, of course, was neither a whole-hearted promotional gesture, nor did it clearly reference Vierkant's work in the exhibition, entitled 'US 6318569 B1, US 8118919 B1; (Exploits)'. Perhaps most of all, it suggested the embeddedness of the young, New York-based artist's practice within commercial mediations and online interfaces.

Vierkant's most recent works – the first iteration of his ongoing series of 'Exploits' – are based on intellectual property legislation and the patent licenses required for manufactured objects and certain design processes. His 'Exploits' peek into a world of bedroom innovators and professional entrepreneurs, all hoping to one day sell their unique concept to a wider pool of commercial industries. This is a micro-world of patents that is governed and protected by license terms that include territorial rights for reproduction, colour palettes, material compositions and an endless list of other minutiae. Vierkant's 'Exploits' result from the artist's own direct negotiations with a number of patent holders to produce what he calls 'fabrications', which represent the realization of the patented products and their negotiated derivation as art works.

At New Galerie, Vierkant presented seven works from the 'Exploits' series, which he developed from two registered patents: a detachable magnetic storage rack suitable for domestic kitchens, and an organza air filter for windows that minimizes the effects of UV light, pollen and other allergens. The exhibition's title 'US 6318569 B1, US 8118919 B1; (Exploits)' took its name from the US patent number of these provocative yet banal products. Their implied interiority (one for use in the kitchen, the other for blocking out external environmental effects), as well as their function as support structures for presentation (a storage space, a window frame), however, are somehow analogous to the interior artistic circuitry of production and presentation that Vierkant sets for himself.

In the upstairs gallery, *Detachable storage rack for a metallic structure 1 (Exploit)* (all works 2013) had the confident proportions of a Minimalist wall sculpture. Its mirrored metallic surface acted as a baseboard for two white magnetized relief elements, arranged at oblique angles so as to diminish any reference to their latent function as pieces of a storage rack. Vierkant's arrangements of these elements also willingly introduced the art-historical precedents of structural abstraction, from Kazimir Malevich to Donald Judd to Liam Gillick. Another iteration of the same patent, *Detachable storage rack for a metallic structure 2 (Exploit)*, applied the same elements differently. In this case, a single blue rack stretched the vertical length of its metallic supporting surface and was

installed low on the gallery wall. The variety in the scales of the structures and the colours of their magnetized rack elements suggested the elasticity within the particular terms of the patent license.

The second patent provided Vierkant with a similar range of interpretative limits. *Air filter and method of constructing same 6, Six Screen Ascending Blue (Exploit)* operated within the patent's specificities of frame, mesh and fabric, but evidently allowed the artist to play with colour and format. Vierkant presented a six-panel variation of blue screens that ran like a colour palette across the gallery's back wall. Downstairs, the same patent was applied to more singular coloured forms.

For each of the two licenses, Vierkant agreed with the patent holders that he would be allowed to produce up to 75 works over the course of the series. With legal negotiation at the heart of 'Exploits', one might assume that Vierkant's priorities exist somewhere within the Conceptualist doxa of testing or affirming the limits by which objects become sanctioned and possessed by definitions other than those that art holds for itself. Yet Vierkant's work goes even further to implicate commercial objects and their circulations – most significantly, the governance that dictates their very becoming.

MATT PACKER



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Artie Vierkant  
'US 6318569 B1,  
US 8118919 B1;  
(Exploits)' installation  
view, 2013

# ARTFORUM

MEDIA

## Photo Op

BRIAN DROITCOUR ON ARTIE VIERKANT



Clockwise from top left: Artie Vierkant, (left) *Image Object Tuesday 4 October 2011 7:10 PM*, (right) *Image Object Monday 3 October 2011 4:11 PM*, version *Monday 16 January 2012 6:53 PM*, 2012, digital image, dimensions variable. Artie Vierkant, (left) *Image Object Sunday 10 July 2011 5:50 PM*, (right) *Image Object Saturday 9 July 2011 5:47 PM*, version *Wednesday 4 January 2012 5:49 PM*, 2012, digital image, dimensions variable. Artie Vierkant, *Image Object removed from documentation*, 2011, digital image, dimensions variable. All from the series "Image Objects," 2010–.

IN ARTIE VIERKANT'S EXHIBITION at China Art Objects in Los Angeles last October, he presented works from the series "Image Objects," 2010–, which consists of thick, wall-mounted Sintra PVC sheets imprinted with bright abstractions drawn in Photoshop. A few days after the opening, images of these works were posted to the gallery's website. You'd expect the exhibition documentation on a gallery's site to tell you transparently what a show looked like, but these files were not straightforward installation shots. Although the works are visible, they are clouded with Photoshopped pollutants, hazed by strange and obvious edits. In one image, the section where the wall meets the floor is repeated higher up, as a swath of white and gray striking through the artworks hanging on the wall. Another shows the photographer's arm holding a balance-calibration target,

**The conditions of art's dissemination have changed. Vierkant's work epitomizes an art etiolated by software rather than by discourse.**

the tool used to standardize color in digital images. The squares of the calibration target's palette contort and bleed past its grid in jagged wedges. In all of the images, pale, woolly patches of color—one pink and one blue—float at the corners.

I have never been to China Art Objects. Although I hate to write about art I haven't seen—as common as that is with the online proliferation of images—in this case I can reassure myself that I did see at least half of the show.

The online images are members of the series rather than a record of it. In his disavowal of documentation, Vierkant goes beyond leveling the hierarchy of original and copy. He rejects the distinction altogether, recognizing the JPEG and the sculpture as equally important modes of representation. One behaves according to the operations available in Photoshop and Web browsers. The other is bound by the physical properties of Sintra. "Image Objects" thus tests the theses that Vierkant presented in "The Image Object Post-Internet" (2010), a manifesto-like essay distributed online as a PDF: "The work of art lies equally in the version of the object one would encounter at a gallery or museum [and] the images and other representations disseminated through the Internet and print publications."

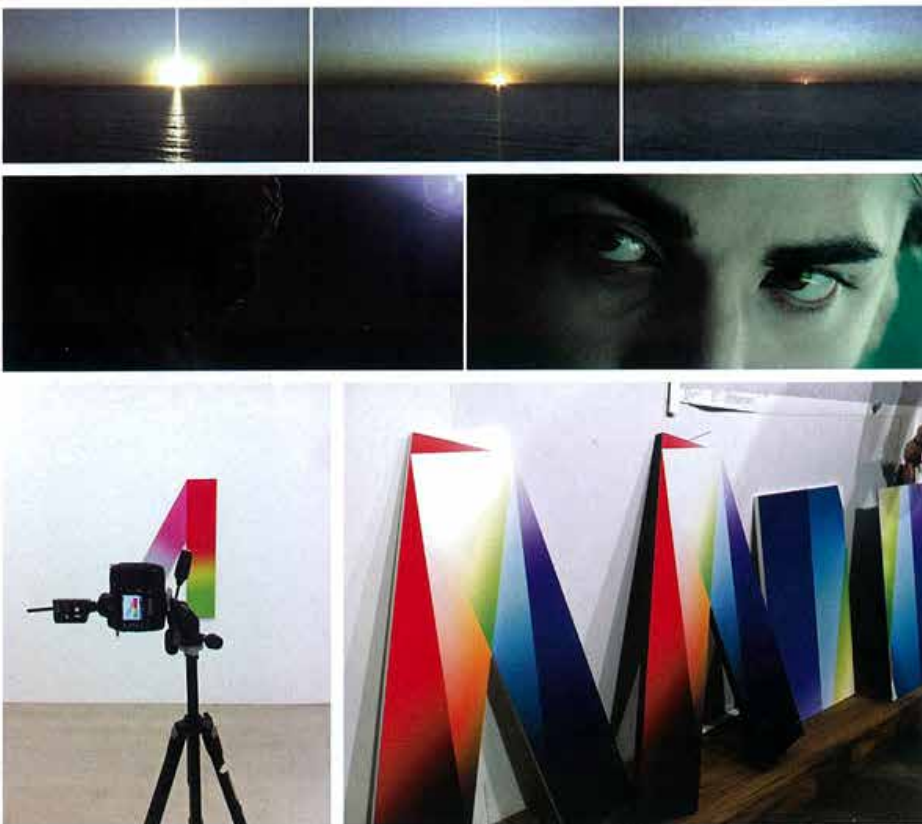
When he goes on to write that "the world of 'the screen' is our communal space," the gallery, stuck to its street address, seems to fall behind. For the "Image Objects," at least, the white glow of a screen arguably makes a better viewing environment than the white cube of the gallery. That, after all, is where they origi-

nate. Each one is drawn by a process of accumulation, guided by Photoshop's tools and default settings. The Rectangle function produces the basic shapes. Gradient fills them with color, in a smooth transition between two points on the Photoshop palette. Layers, which divides the elements of an image into different registers of action, is here used to accrue rectangles in one window, automatically simulating a prismatic blending of color and light in imitation of stacked sheets of acetate or multiple exposures.

A substantive difference is introduced when the files become tangible objects. When I had the chance to see some test prints on Sintra of the "Image Objects" in Brooklyn, I was surprised by their thickness. They look so mercurial when photographed and altered. Relishing the mutability of the digital file, Vierkant has made dozens of images of the works, freely wielding Photoshop's Clone Stamp and Healing Brush—typically used gingerly to hide a blemish on a model's face by copying a better, adjacent part of skin. In one image, the works

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MEDIA



Clockwise from top: Artie Vierkant, *Exposure Adjustment on a Sunset*, 2009, stills from a color video, 39 minutes. Artie Vierkant, *Daylight/Twilight*, 2010, stills from a two-channel color video, 122 minutes. Proofs and test prints for Artie Vierkant's "Image Objects," 2010–, New York, September 23, 2010. Camera documenting the exhibition "Artie Vierkant" at China Art Objects, Los Angeles, October 28, 2010.

have been erased entirely, and the signature patches of color in the two corners float in an empty gallery. These watermarks (added with the Airbrush function) are a way of keeping track of his images. If he comes across a photograph of "Image Objects" online without them, he'll know it was taken by someone else. And while Vierkant eschews the straight installation shot, he embraces copying and reposting as fluid movements inherent to the condition of the JPEG file. He collects anonymous modifications of his images and has endorsed altered versions of his work made by Los Angeles-based artist Jeff Baij, titled "Bootlegged Image Objects," 2011. Baij's images adhere to the principles of Vierkant's work, but in them the shapes are stripped down and washed out, and the sweep of Clone Stamp's brush is broader and more vigorous.

In 2010, Vierkant's investigations of digital tools resulted in *Daylight/Twilight*, which sequenced the frames of the titular two films (from 1996 and 2008, respectively) according to their brightness value. The movies' titles tug at the web of emotional associations connected to light, and their plots weave it into narrative. *Daylight/Twilight* coolly erases all that. The artist assumes a computer's understanding of brightness as a quantitative metric, not as a trigger for feeling, thus swapping out narrative for a ranking. For *Exposure Adjustment on a Sunset*, 2009, Vierkant adjusted the brightness of a video of the setting sun to keep it constant from beginning to end, even as the natural light waned. Vierkant was in art school at the University of California, San Diego, at the time, and this was, in a way, the ideal art school art: The works dissolve in speech, fitting neatly

in a few lines for a studio visit. The videos are puns on the doubled meaning of *brightness* as both a description of light's intensity and the name of a software operation that measures and adjusts it. By stripping away affect in *Daylight/Twilight* and the indexical representation of nature in the sunset piece, Vierkant teases open the gap between the software and the media he has fed into it.

While Vierkant used preexisting source material in these works, "Image Objects" begins with a blank Photoshop file. It is a significant turn for the artist. The software's given options guide the design of the objects, the installation shots of which then become the starting point for further modification in Photoshop and the open-ended unfolding of the series through the dissemination of altered images online. The wordplay of the earlier video pieces echoes the metaphoric logic that personal-computing interfaces traditionally follow, from "desktops" and "windows" to the browser's white field as a substitution for the white of the printed page or the gallery's white cube. "Image Objects," on the other hand, marks an attempt to exceed such metaphoric limits, to embrace the logic of the technology behind the interface. Conceptualism dematerialized the art object at a time when it had come to rely heavily on printed reproduction and critical language. A half century on, the conditions of art's dissemination have changed. Vierkant's work epitomizes an art etiolated by software rather than by discourse. In "The Image Object Post-Internet," he suggests that "the architecture of the Internet . . . helps facilitate an environment where artists are able to rely more and more on purely visual representations to convey their ideas and support an explanation of their art independent of language." Vierkant is one of many artists in their twenties thinking hard about what it means to use the Internet as a platform for artwork instead of a medium for disseminating documentation. This circumscription of sculpture with digital files in "Image Objects" shows what it means for software to be art's ground. □

BRIAN DROITCOUR IS A WRITER AND TRANSLATOR BASED IN NEW YORK.

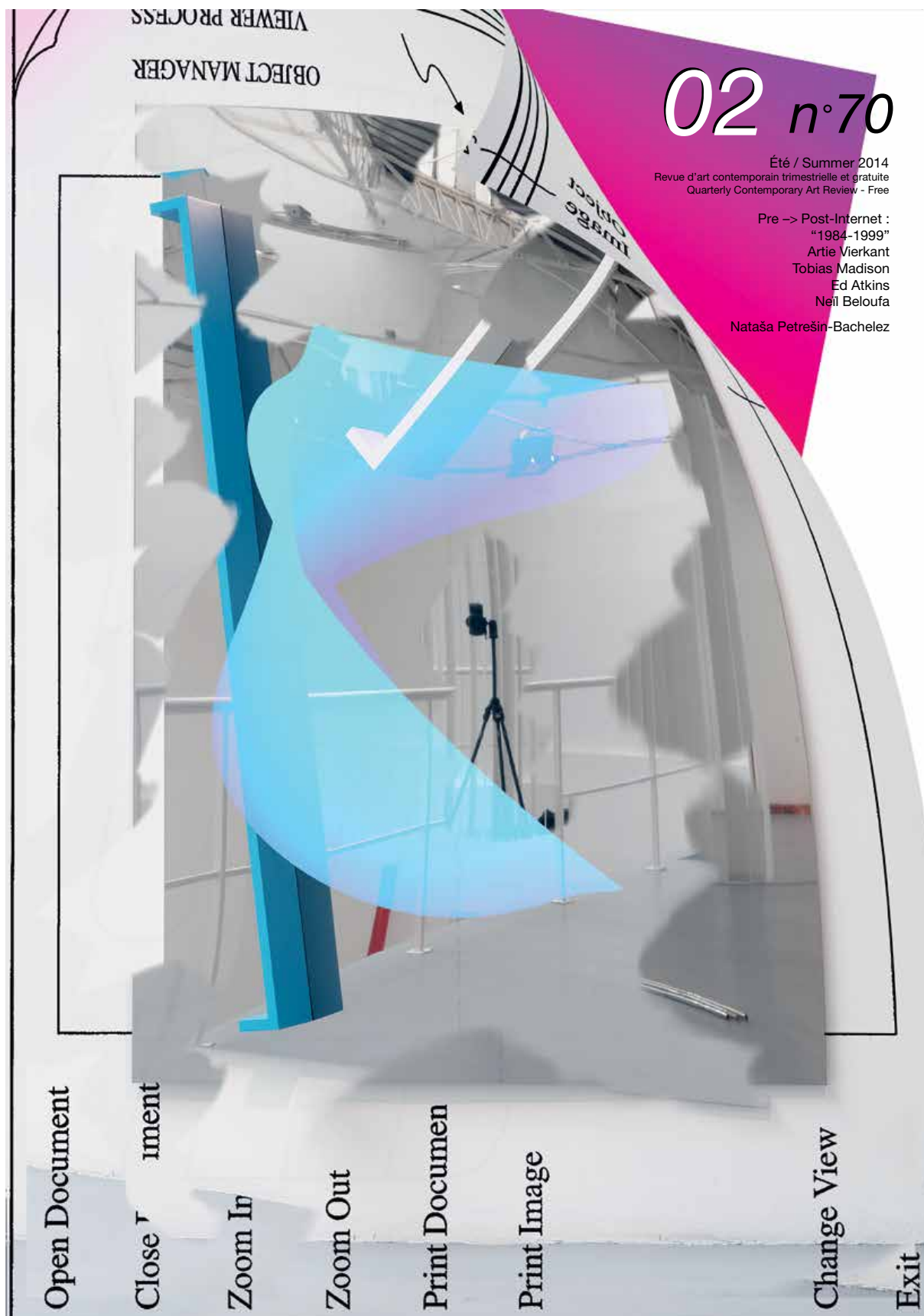
# 02

## 02 n°70

Été / Summer 2014  
Revue d'art contemporain trimestrielle et gratuite  
Quarterly Contemporary Art Review - Free

Pre -> Post-Internet :  
"1984-1999"  
Artie Vierkant  
Tobias Madison  
Ed Atkins  
Neil Beloufa

Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez



Open Document

Close Document

Zoom In

Zoom Out

Print Document

Print Image

Change View

Exit



# Artie Vierkant

## Interview

By Rémi Parcollet

Two years ago, Artie Vierkant, then just graduated from the University of California in San Diego, stated that the teachers at the school used to remind him constantly that the way in which he documented his work was just as important as the work itself.<sup>1</sup> He had already made himself known in 2010 with his text *The Image Object Post-Internet*, which was published on several websites. Reworking the visual documentation of his work, he offers an equally innovative experience of it online. His desire for the ubiquity of his work raises questions.

The photographic reproduction of a work has a radical effect on its de-contextualization (Walter Benjamin), favouring cognition over perception; conversely, a photograph of a view of an exhibition is defined in relation to time and space. The clues it provides are factors for the critical analysis of the exhibition. Invariable photographs of exhibitions permit “comparisons” and “verifications”. These images are no longer the representation of an autonomous work of art, but of an indissociable ensemble which is only coherent in its globality. Exhibition views are hallmarked by the need to represent the links between the works themselves, but also with the place in which they are set. I am exercised by your work, and more exactly by the series of *Image Objects*, which you define as ‘modified documentation’ or ‘altered documentation images’. Do you see a difference between modifying and altering? These photographs are dated but not located, they are flat like photographs of surfaces, whereas the exhibition views describe a space at a given moment and at a given time. What difference do you make between these two types of photographic documentation? Is it the principle of documentation that is modified, or the document?

‘Modifying’ and ‘altering’ are both terms I’ve been using relatively interchangeably. I think ‘altering’ is what I’ve privileged calling this process, partly because of the relationship to the term ‘alterity’. The images, I think, gain an alterity by being misrepresentations of space—or maybe by not bothering to accurately represent space—and, as you say, not acting as installation views are intended to, not describing a space at a given moment and at a given time. In a traditional view of the ontology of the image we capture something in time and space, stabilize it, store it, but this is a definition that only looks to the meaning found in the image rather than the construction and context of the image. So by altering these images, and forcing a difference between how you see the object when you view it in space and how you see the image of that object, this gesture ideally allows what we would call a secondary viewing experience to become a primary one. In a way, it just speaks to the context the work will ultimately be received in—if for the most part the work will be seen through documentation one might as well acknowledge this.

You mention the works are ‘dated but not located’—so for instance I’ll call a work *Image Object Monday 19 May 2014 1:07PM*, and this title will refer to the printed object and the altered images that circulate of it. This I’ve been doing since the start of the series and actually started as a bit of a joke about labor. The date will refer to

the moment I finalize and save the file that will be printed (they all start as Photoshop documents), so the title acts as the time stamp of when I was sitting at a machine making this *thing* and enacting this kind of soft labor. In fact this also allows some reflection on the nature of the images. Rather than being just a binary between the printed objects and the altered installation images, and saying both are one in the same, this is of course further complicated by the source file (and what gives the image object its name) being a third object, equally a part of the image as the others.

**So the date tallies with the moment when the image is altered, and not with the moment when it is produced, or, more precisely, shot. In a way it is no longer the “that’s it” or the “decisive instant” of an exhibited work making it objectively possible to include it in memory, but the moment of its re-interpretation, its re-writing. Is this like the date that is written at the bottom of a picture with the signature? As a result, can we still talk in terms of a document?**

The date actually is completely abstracted from the document—the date comes from the moment the original file the work was printed from is first saved, so in fact the installation photo is often not taken until a month or two later, once the final object is produced. I think this is all part of a refutation of that decisive instant idea. There’s the old saying that the photograph satisfies our obsession with objective image making (Bazin, I think), and we’re far from that now. The image constructs the instant rather than the instant constructing the image.

There are artists who are suspicious about the visual documentation of their work: Stanley Broun, for example, has decided to ban any reproduction of his oeuvre; Daniel Buren, for his part, does not believe either in the objectivity of the photograph or in the reliability of the photographer’s eye which replaces that of all the others and, since the late 1960s, has introduced the “souvenir photo” concept, meaning a valueless image which cannot replace the work, or be sold, unlike what certain artists, whose approaches stemmed from Land Art and performance, have managed to do. Since Brancusi, sculptors such as Didier Vermeiren, have been using photographs of their works, invariably in a situation (exhibition, studio), with these images becoming autonomous and, in some cases, works in their own right. Can we regard your series of *Image Objects* as autonomous works or works deriving from a work realized in the exhibition venue?

I think part of the work is to not impose a distinction, or a hierarchy. So really they’re neither autonomous nor derivative. Both the documentation image and the object you would encounter in a gallery space are extensions of the work, and hopefully you can’t say the work is more located in one space or another. As to the examples you mention, I’m certainly interested in the different distinctions artists have imposed between their work and the documentation. The idea of negating documentation of your work, like in the case of Broun, is a funny one to me because it just forces the auratic concept back onto the objects you’re making and makes it a matter of privilege (in a positive and a negative sense) to be able to see the works at all. I would say that the way I think about dealing with my images is closer to Buren’s, where I don’t for example print and frame these altered documentation images, despite being significant works in their own right. I don’t want to feel like I’m commodifying the images, they’re supposed to be public and free to everyone, so in that case it’s a similar drastic devaluing (in an economic sense) of the individual image by increased distribution. Something like Duchamp’s *Boîte-en-valise* if he’d had them mass-produced.

Ironically though by making the documentation a work in its own right, something I’ve noticed is people sometimes come to me in exhibitions and express that they’d always wondered what the *Image Objects* look like in real life, and are happy to finally see one in person. So by setting it up like this I’ve inadvertently triggered something that gives the object its aura back.



Artie Vierkant

*Image Object Wednesday 21 August 2013 5:15PM, 2013*

Impression UV sur Dibond, document altéré /

UV print on Dibond, altered documentation

Unlike the reproduction photograph, people who take views of exhibitions claim a share of interpretation and “translation”. Since the 1980s, incidentally, they are more and more frequently mentioned; personalities are appearing. Do you take into account the fact that these images are an author’s viewpoint about your work? Is altering the image a way of re-appropriating it for yourself?

That’s an interesting way to look at it. Sometimes I do shoot my own installation views, but often I do rely on professionals. There’s a real art to capturing the ideal look of an installation view, and a lot of it requires things beyond technical skill, but also an understanding of the context of an art exhibition and the global standards of alluring installation views. If there are particular stars of the installation view sub-discipline within professional photography I haven’t come in contact with them, but I would say the form has come into its own as a kind of genre, and in a way even when I take the photographs myself I’m just appropriating that genre.

Paradoxically, you lend a material quality to digital files which in many cases are not printed. Do you think that the need for this way of thinking about the nature of images, which you share with other artists of your generation, is the consequence of their digital production and distribution, or is it the continuity of the thinking about the irreproducibility of works and art practices since the 1960s?

I think it’s a happy confluence of both. Most artists we know of today will have gone through several stages of professionalized education, which indoctrinates us into a kind of thinking about the object and the figure of the artist which is indebted to the conversation of the 60s (and the more recent past, and maybe everything since modernism, or maybe before). At the same time one can’t help but form their ideas about authenticity, authorship, and reproducibility from the technologies available to them in their own precise moment. This is why perhaps the most prevalent conversations right now are those on the topic of how digital production has changed a number of practices in all industries, including art—I would say in fact that it’s not a question about *irreproducibility* so much as *reproducibility*. To me reproducibility is definitely a core concern of the art practices you’re referring to in the 1960s, so perhaps what’s actually come to pass is that technologies have actually come about that allow for the realization of the kinds of production and distribution artists could only dream of at that time.

Let me come back to the way of thinking about the nature of images. A lot of artists belonging to what is called the “digital native” generation work on images like iconographers and researchers. Well before the Internet, however, Aby Warburg and André Malraux—the former with the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, the latter with the *Imaginary Museum*—had developed this line of thinking about the diffusion, circulation and use of these visual images and their consequences on our perception of art. Is your work in the continuity of this thinking about iconology that has developed since Warburg or, conversely, is this a break, and a new way of thinking caused by the Web? What might the particular features of this be?

I think it would be technological determinism to say that any major development in technology can itself constitute a full break from tradition. Obviously, as we’ve seen, one of the first things people do with new technologies is to adapt formats that were created for older technologies. In some circles we refer to that as “remediation”, like the Polaroid-style filters of Instagram or cutscenes in video games that emulate cinema.

In a way I think a lot of the artists working now who act as iconographers or ethnographers are working very similarly to Warburg. Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* is incredible actually in that in concept it cuts through a lot of the boundaries he was working with at the time. It’s an archive of images but the arrangement is fully variable, the links between images are allowed to change or to stay indeterminate. It’s actually profoundly less linear than a static website, and itself is constituted of a number of links.

This isn’t to say that my work is a direct continuation from any particular inquiry of course, but I think that very much it accounts for the conversations that have been unfolding for some time about the ontology of the image.

Your work assumes very different forms—videos, sculptures, and photographs—but it is also very homogeneous, everything seems connected, and appears to work by series: *Possible Objects*, *Similar Objects*, and *Image Objects*. But this last series seems to be special because it is the outcome of the earlier productions. Do you attach a different role and function to this approach in relation to your work as a whole? Is it central or auxiliary? Will this series currently under way have an end, a culmination? Or on the contrary will it be continued in parallel with your shows?

I like to work in this way because it allows very different objects to be grouped together under a similar rubric—it echoes the kind of thinking that you can take a piece of content, reformat it, change it, re-present it, and really it’s the same thing, just a continuation or evolution. It’s also important I think to acknowledge that any one work doesn’t necessarily stand alone, but is either supported or connected by a structure larger than it, whether that is an idea or a production process. Sometimes these series die out, or I stop being attentive to them, but they have been formulated as an idea and it’s a structure I can return to—there isn’t meant to be any specific expiry date to them. It’s interesting too when these can collide. So for instance, for my series *Exploits*, where I license or purchase intellectual property to use as a material, recently I made a series of works that are produced in the same way as *Image Objects*, but were not *Image Objects*, where the prints were logos I was trying to license from the Polaroid Corporation. I think this is increasingly interesting to me. Setting up structures and then either iterating from them, or else forcing them to collide and seeing what the wreckage looks like.

1. <http://www.themagazine.com/newyork/5-art-stars-you-need-to-know-artie-vierkant/Content?oid=2221967>