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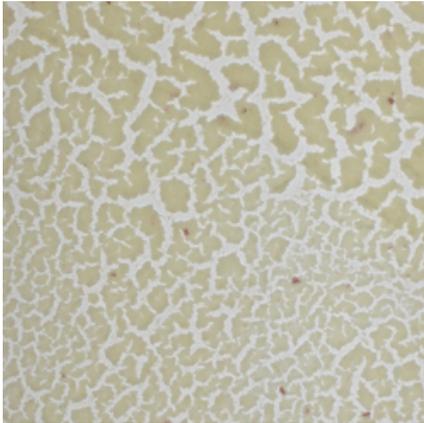
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Let Everything Be Temporary

apexart, New York, USA

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Amid all the carnival barking about the increasing commoditization of art, apexart's recent show, 'Let Everything be Temporary, or When is the Exhibition?', curated by Elena Filipovic and featuring works that side-stepped both value and visibility, proved something of a salve. The title of the show was taken from an unwittingly prophetic decree made by Lenin in 1917, when he declared that monuments of the Soviet revolution – including his own effigy – should be made from cheap, impermanent materials. Indeed there was something slyly humorous about this cleverly conceived show on transience. Light and unaffected, it countered both the endless vexations felt between artist and market – a confrontation as perpetually unsolvable, yet as strangely addictive, as a dog chasing its own tail – and the unsmiling gravity of the anxious seeking out the permanent.

From the very start the challenge to durability exhibited by the art works was total. Visitors were greeted by Gabriel Kuri's *Untitled* (2007), a take-a-number machine whose discarded tickets could be found scattered haphazardly about the gallery. Throughout the entire show viewers were compelled to take part in its destruction, and thus its creation. Joelle Tuerlinckx's *Stukjes stukjes en dingen, dingen dingen en stukjes* (Particles particles and objects, objects objects and particles, 1994) was not just fun to say but also appealing to study. At the start of the exhibition it had consisted of a square on the floor meticulously outlined in confetti, but over time the confetti had been dispersed by footsteps and air currents until it had become scattered almost completely. By the exhibition's end it had become a ghostly presence stretching throughout the room, nowhere and everywhere at once, seeming to embrace entropy without affecting nihilism.

Equally compelling was Michael Blazy's *Rosace* (1993/2007), in which an alluringly fragile spiral had been created out of a roll of precariously balanced paper towels. As with the materials comprising his piece *Mashed Potato Spread* (2007), it was the towels' very unsuitability that threatened their survival, the laws of aptness, as well as of physics, seemingly about to deny them their one chance at transcendence. Yet hand in hand with this threat of destruction was the beauty of the momentary. Like the pencil-thin legs of a stork, Blazy's *Rosace* seemed both immediately impractical yet endlessly fascinating.

Amid such mayfly concerns Felix Gonzalez-Torres, the high priest of the ephemeral, seemed to have the most substantial work in the show. By inviting viewers to pick away at *Untitled* (Ross in L.A., 2001) a vast pile of sweets covered in shiny wrappers that had been heaped against a wall, ideas of temporariness were thrust to the fore. But the artist's suggestion that the weight of the work be maintained at 175 pounds – the weight of his subject – left one thinking he was asking too much. Amid the dissipation that surrounded it, this regeneration seemed futilely, optimistic.

Elsewhere the works were even more unstable and unpredictable, like radioactive substances speeding past their half-lives. In places the exhibition even verged on nothingness, as though its ideas were so keen to embrace the void that the works were finding it hard to appear in actuality. Tomo Savic-Gecan's imperceptible *Untitled* (2005–7) varied the temperature of the gallery according to data recorded from an exhibition held a year earlier, while his *Untitled* (2007) slyly stated that the art work consisted of the value of the work itself, which was in a state of constant devaluation from the beginning of the show until its end, at which point it became worthless. With this brilliantly Ouroborian idea Savic-Gecan both neatly explicated and erased the tension between art as creative process and as commodity.

But while Savic-Gecan's work was barely there, Oksana Pasaiko's *Short Sad Text* (based on the borders of 14 countries, 2004–5) failed even to show up. A small bar of white soap on which black hairs had been positioned outlining the contours of several former Eastern bloc countries, the sculpture had been left in a public bathroom in Oslo, where it is supposed it mimicked the dissipation (and presumably prompted a sliver of the same uneasiness) that had occurred with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Fittingly a picture postcard of the work was all that was left to remind us of its existence.

Anti-art market gestures are nothing new, and neither is a study of the impermanence of works of art, but 'Let Everything be Temporary' had something strangely substantial about it. In defiance of its title, it lingered.

George Pendle