

LIVING

Peter Coffin

June 17 – September 16, 2014

Red Bull Studios

220 West 18th Street

New York, NY 10011

OPENING RECEPTION Tuesday, June 17th 7pm - Invite Only (Media)

Mary Margaret Rinebold / June 09, 2014

Red Bull Studios is pleased to announce the opening of a solo exhibition by American artist Peter Coffin, *LIVING*. Comprising several works commissioned for the occasion of the exhibition, this new articulation of Coffin's longstanding interest in the relationship between the life of the object and the approach of the viewer, will also operate as recording studio for the production of the third volume of his *Music for Plants* album series.

Like how it would be impressive if fingers and branches did the same thing. For instance, when a branch decides, it can branch off with smaller branches, which also grow leaves or pinecones or whatever else. And then these sub-branches can start growing their own sub-branches, which altogether branch out from one mother-branch. What if the fingers on hands did that?

Or how there are all these opposing ideas about the agency of objects. Or surfaces such as images. That they emanate their own personhood. More so, that they represent the mythology of the person who made them. Because the same system that makes branches makes fingers. Well to be precise, photosynthesis and reproduction aren't exactly the same processes, but the two are similarly algorithmic, in the sense that they follow a pre-determined living system, with singular outcomes¹. In both instances as well, the surrounding environment makes a difference.² And really, it could be argued that durational modes of art making hinge on related ideas: that the site for production and the site for presentation are in a continual negotiation. That one doesn't end when the other starts. Instead, the two procedures – that of the making and that of the displaying – continually trade places, or occur at the same time. This dynamic sometimes brings about a type of uncomfortable, even awkward diorama of 'the artist at work.' On the other hand, the dynamic could be seen as a means of curbing the burdens associated with the moment a subject encounters an object.

¹ Joan Simon interview Bruce Nauman, *Art in America* #9, September 1988: "A Heap of Language," Maurizio Cattelan interviews Peter Coffin, *Flash Art*, October 2007.

² My doctor called in a panic and left two voicemail messages saying I had urgently low Vitamin D levels.

The entanglement of those two – subject and an object – and the territories they trace, is the enigmatic exchange Peter Coffin incites. For if an art object, when encountered by a subject – a viewer – were only what it was. Or more to the point, working within Coffin's vocabulary, if a plant were just a plant. If a bumper sticker were merely a vinyl, horizontal rectangle pasted to a surface with adherent on one side, and a collection of letters inscribed across its other side; then fine enough, these objects and their surfaces are a practice in form and style. But what of the affects they elicit in the subject who encounters them? The bumper sticker says something, a sentence that has a meaning. If there are hundreds of them, pasted next to one another on the same surface, so that we can't really discern one bumper sticker phrase from the other, and on variously-colored vinyl rectangles, then the amalgamation of all these words and colors induces a somewhat psychedelic mental and emotional meandering in its interlocutor. Tangentially taking you all kinds of places besides the present, precipitating all kinds of thoughts besides the obvious, besides what is directly ahead.

These mediations, then, eclipse the objects we think are the topic. The unseen sets of relations between ourselves and what we are looking at, or standing near, actually take the foreground of the scene we find ourselves in, pushing both us – the subjects – and them – the objects – to the periphery. This means that Coffin is but one player in a series of transactions, here taken to mean the unseen politics between subjects and the objects before them, which are constantly changing, developing, becoming something else, and another something after that.

Time is implied here as well, as these shifts happen not all at once, but over a length of actions – the inconspicuous sequence of a series of plots -- which may abruptly, and unexpectedly reverse, distort, swell, or crease.

It follows that if these mediations are flexible, implying that the objects that co-produced them are also flexible, then we can further predict subjects are similarly flexible; that subjects change in the way they see one object, maybe even on account of having seen it.

Or put even more abstractly (as if this narrative non-sequitur isn't hypothetical enough): one could say that Coffin intuits, and then reproduces, the science of color theory through propositions with physical consequences. That is, apparently a color, orange, for example, is actually the optical product of every other color besides orange, so that what we are looking at is the negation of orange. Such as a collection of recordings made to serenade plants – at the location and moment the plants were being serenaded – may in fact be everything besides that definition and situation. That branches might be everything but branches, they might even be fingers.

About Peter Coffin

Interested in the way people perceive and interpret, Coffin's conceptual interdisciplinary practice plays with both the limitations and possibilities of our perception. Drawing on art history, science, psychology and epistemology, Coffin creates multimedia works that re-assemble the world around us in a way that makes us question our preconceptions and gain new perspective. (artspace.com)

Bibliography: <http://petercoffinstudio.com/exhibitions/>

About Red Bull Studios New York

Red Bull Studios New York is a multi-disciplinary project space, located in the heart of Chelsea, featuring exhibition space, state of the art recording studio, radio booth, lecture hall and performance space.

Location: Red Bull Studios New York -220 West 18th Street, NYC

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Through the Red Bull network, hi-res video and still images are captured and made immediately available for editorial use for all media channels including television, film, print, mobile, and digital. Peter Coffin, *LIVING* content is centrally located in the Red Bull Content Pool for media partners at: <http://bit.ly/petercoffinliving>

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