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THEY TOLD YOU SO

Curated by Mireille Bourgeois and Anaïs Lellouche

July 16 – August 14, 2009
bitforms gallery, 529 West 20th Street, NYC

Gallery Hours: Monday - Friday, 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM
Opening Reception: Thursday July 16, 6:00 - 8:30 PM

bitforms gallery is pleased to announce *They Told You So*, an exhibition curated by Mireille Bourgeois and Anaïs Lellouche. The exhibition will run Thursday, July 16th through August 14th, 2009.

The group exhibition *They Told You So* gathers work by international artists: Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead, John Menick, Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay, Roeë Rosen, and Brina Thurston. The works selected in the exhibition share a process akin to what the Situationists International have referred to as *détournement*; a term that implies a reuse of well known media to deliver a message opposed to the original. The artworks gathered have studied a very specific form of rhetoric, one shaped and disseminated as a tool for the political and economic industries. The artworks in the exhibition *They Told You So* invert, expand, and parody the rhetoric of power.

The artworks reveal the tropes of rhetoric by deconstructing its cliché yet widely spread mechanical apparatus, from lie detectors to surveillance cameras, and investigate some of its psychological methods, such as brainwashing and the use of subliminal messages. They present an industrious tension of skepticism and cognitive desire to mimic and channel the numerous forms of language manipulations that we endure from political and corporate powers daily. The works, via video, sound installation and printed text, capture the successes and shortcomings of linguistics and its means of interpretation.

Evaluating the authenticity of the recorded voice as a mechanical source of reliable knowledge, artists **Thomson and Craighead** have subjected a series of telephone speaking clocks to lie detector tests. In *Five lie detector reports* (2000-2005) most of the speaking clocks are deemed suspect or untruthful, highlighting the absurdity of these two examples of authoritative technologies.

Embedded within multiple layers, language also takes on secret meanings in **John Menick's** especially commissioned work, *The Subliminal Projection Company* (2009). This series of audio CD's Vol. 1-5, uses various soothing sounds of nature to lure the listener into a state of relaxation. Experimenting with subliminal techniques, Menick aims to translate a selection of his most intimate memories into the unconscious of the listener. The artist will also exhibit a single drawing from a series entitled *How to Tell a Story* (2009) based on a writing manual often used for screenplays and novels. The drawing points to an ostensibly systematic creativity shaped by the guidance of an emotionless and uncritical tool.

In *Live to Tell* (2002) **Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay** exposes his private performance of the musical hit by Madonna, the queen of pop and gay icon, and positions the viewer as voyeur. Replicating the action in multiple locations, the performances are synchronized in a compilation of security camera footage that inverts the psychological associations of security cameras as tools of repression into ones of free expression and identity politics.

A self-stated adorable child is possessed by evil in *Confessions Coming Soon* (2007) by **Roeë Rosen** and subjected to deliver messages in a language he does not understand. He announces an upcoming work, the terrible confessions by the "famously depraved artist Roeë Rosen". The video is composed as satirical movie trailer and represents a child whose candor has been annihilated by the culture industry.

In the multimedia sound-sculpture *Dark Pump* (2008) **Brina Thurston** with DJ Private Time plays with our perception of "home" by using the domestic object, a vacuum, as a vehicle for an audio piece that allows the listener to peek into an absurd sexual fantasy of which the vacuum hose is the main object of desire. Thurston's video *Harm* (2007) also toys with social conventions by delivering a steady flow of verbal insults

onto a poodle, making the viewer uncomfortable and somewhat abused, as the animal remains undisturbed.

Power relations between the speaker and the receiver remain illusive, navigating a space that lies outside conversation, narration, and a true state of being. The works can be read as monologues of personal experiences that operate in a neo-confessional mode that is both ambiguously intimate and anonymous for there is no human or personalized return. In some artworks, the miscommunication is transformed into role-play with no means of proving the validity of their claims or whether the experience belongs to the person ventriloquizing it. The works construct situations where technological media - from the video camera, to the computer, to sound pieces - is caught in a form of communication that is peculiarly unilateral.

Artist biographies

Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead (b. 1969 and 1971)

Thomson & Craighead live and work in London and Kingussie in highlands of Scotland. They make artworks and installations for galleries, online and sometimes outdoors. Much of their recent work looks at the web and how it is changing the way we all understand the world around us. Having both studied at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee, Jon now lectures part time at The Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, while Alison is a senior researcher at University of Westminster and lectures in Fine Art at Goldsmiths University.

John Menick (b. 1976, USA)

Menick received his BFA from Cooper Union in New York where he is currently teaching in the film and video department. His work has been exhibited internationally. Selected recent exhibitions include: La Maison Rouge, Paris, France, (Solo, 2007); Artists Space, New York (2009); CCA Wattis, San Francisco (2008); Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, (2008); The Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow (2007), among other venues. Menick has contributed to several artist-run groups, including Nomads & Residents, 16 Beaver Group, and The Thing. In 2008 he was awarded a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Video and a New York City Film and Video Grant from the Jerome Foundation.

Benny Nemerofsky Ramsay (b.1973, Canada)

Nemerofsky Ramsay is a Montréal-born artist, diarist and aspiring bon-vivant. Since 2000 his work has brought together song, self-reflexive performance and song lyrics as vehicles for examining the singing voice, the untranslatability of emotions into language and the ways in which emotional expression changes shape when mediated by technology and popular culture. Nemerofsky Ramsay's video work has screened in festivals and galleries across Canada, Europe and East Asia and has won prizes at the Hamburg Short Film Festival, the Kasseler Dokumentarfilm-und Videofest and the Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen (all in Germany), the Avanca Festival (Portugal), the Toronto Inside Out Film and Video Festival (Canada) as well as First Prize at the Globalica Media Arts Biennale (Poland). His work is part of numerous private collections and the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. He currently divides himself between Canada and Europe.

Roe Rosen (b. 1963, Israel)

Rosen received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York and was awarded an MFA from New York's Hunter College. His work has been exhibited internationally. Selected recent exhibitions include: Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel (Solo, 2009); Extra City, Antwerp, Belgium (Solo, 2009); Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA (2008); Manifesta 7, Trento, Italy (2008); FID Marseille Festival, Marseille, France (2008); Hertzilia Museum of Contemporary Art, Herzilia, Israel (2008); The International competition, The 54th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany (2008); Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, Israel (2007); Artneuland, Berlin, Germany (2007). Currently living in Tel Aviv, Rosen writes for the Israeli "STUDIO" art magazine and teaches art and art history at the Bezalel Academy.

Brina Thurston (b. 1977, USA)

Thurston received her BFA New York University (Film and Video) in 1999 and her MFA from Bard College in 2007. Selected recent exhibitions include: Socrates Sculpture Park, NY (upcoming); Location One (solo, 2009); Dean Project, NY, (solo, 2009); Rivington Arms, NY (2009). Selected group exhibitions include: International Studio and Curatorial Program, NY (2009); Flanderbunker, Kiel, Germany (2008); Dark Fair, Swiss Institute, NY (2008); Gavin Brown @ Passerby, NY (2007). Currently living in New York, Thurston is in residency at Location One.

For more information on the exhibition please visit:

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Directions to bitforms gallery

Nearest subway is the C/E to 23rd St in Chelsea

bitforms gallery is devoted to emerging and established artists who embrace new media and contemporary art practice.