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Ben Coonley
"Winter Games"

February 15 - March 24, 2019

Opening Friday February 15, 6-9pm



From "On Plain Air", 2019, video projections onto cardboard components, dimensions variable
Image courtesy of Matt Town and Microscope Gallery

Microscope is very pleased to present Ben Coonley's second solo exhibition at the gallery *Winter Games*, a title that in addition to the overt Olympics reference also alludes to the passage of time, transformation and the participatory aspect of many of the works on view.

The new 3D videos, installations, and mixed-media works raise existential questions, both universal and personal, including: the artist examining his obsession with the sport of curling (last year, he went so far as to build his own rink), moving upstate and attempting to connect with the Hudson Valley legacy of landscape art, and coming to terms with the aging of his long-time friend and collaborator Otto the cat — who has starred in many of the artist's videos as well as his 2016 geodesic dome installation "Trading Futures" most recently appeared in "Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905-2016" at the Whitney Museum — as well as the recent losses of close mentors and friends.

The sculpturally 3D video installation "On Plain Air", set in the nature of the Hudson Valley — which has been the inspiration of *en plein air* landscape painters since the 19th century Hudson River School — integrates many of the previously mentioned themes. Otto makes appearances in the work through the artist's signature use of imperfect green screen and is seen attending to "the sublimation of self into the built and natural environment, and other bucolic recreations". The audience is also invited to become part of the scene, which is projected onto cardboard with cutout holes for their faces.

In “End in Itself”, a video showing a portion of an outdoor match of curling in which the artist takes part, is projected through a wide lens onto the floor and is watched by the viewers as it was recorded, from above. The “coordinated teamwork, concentric circles, slow movements, dramatic collisions, frantic sweeping activities, and primal forms (i.e. stone and ice)” of curling give the sport, which is also referred to as *chess on ice*, the “quality of an elaborate ancient ritual” in the words of the artist. The outdoor ice rink in the video is a temporary wooden structure designed by Coonley.

Other works include large-scale custom puzzles to be solved and completed by the audience such as “Epigraph”, which reveals an image of a snapshot of the NYC MetroCard vending machine’s screen with the enigmatic question: “Add value?” or “Add time?”. A stereoscopic 3D video piece “Kane (Dust for M.A.)” contains imagery solely of dust particles as made visible by light rays peeking through the wooden slats of an old barn. The work, which is projected in a corner of the gallery, is named after the birthplace of pioneering sound artist Maryanne Amacher (1938-2009), who years ago provoked Coonley into making such a work after viewing his 2002 video “Wavelength 3D” and noticing a flurry of dust floating across the room.

Winter Games opens on February 15th and runs through March 24th, 2019, with an opening reception on Friday February 15th, 6-9pm. For additional information please contact the gallery at 347.925.1433 or be email at inquiries@microscopegallery.com

BEN COONLEY is an artist working with video, computers, 3D, and cats. Since his previous exhibition at the gallery in 2016, his work has appeared in “3D: Double Vision” at LACMA in Los Angeles (currently on view) and in “Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905-2016” at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. Coonley’s video works have also been screened in venues including BAM’s 2015 “3D in the 21st Century” series, MoMA PS1’s “Greater New York: Cinema”, Performa, the New Museum, the Moscow Biennale, and the International Film Festival Rotterdam. In 2010, he was named one of Film Comment’s “21 Leading Lights of Projection Performance”. Coonley studied Art Semiotics as an undergraduate at Brown University, and received an MFA from Bard College in 2003. He was born in Boston, MA and currently lives and works between Brooklyn and the Hudson Valley, New York.



Still from “End in Itself”, 2019, floor video projection, dimensions variable
Images courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery