



Christopher Richmond's piece for Koob Gallery may surprise those familiar with his work, as he usually deals with films and photographs with some occasional flirtations with the field of drawing. We can say that his interest is focused on researching the nature of the image in its multiple dimensions and on the function of art, and that Richmond has a certain, more or less conscious, aversion to the object and to getting his hands *dirty* while working with materials. The phrase «deep command of cinematic language» frequently appears alongside his name. And when reviewing his body of work, one readily identifies his very personal way of making films, that are certainly experimental but with a level of production sophistication. Christopher shows a remarkable knowledge of the use of the most mainstream Hollywood cinematic media, combined with the ability to stress and question its conventions. His films are constructs between science fiction and surrealism, creations of fantastic worlds amid fascination and the absurd, of multiverses full of creatures, puppets, and stuffed animals, but also with eloquent, illustrated characters who release philosophical speeches in an attempt to explore the human condition.

These voyages appear at a first glance to have a narrative, but in their dreamlike condition they seem disjointed and produce feelings of disorientation, requiring an active viewer who is attentive and willing to stitch together the

different layers of meaning. It is not by chance that the artist frequently conceives of his films in three channels—but not as video-installations—, creating explicit breaks in their continuity. There is a conscious and precise aesthetic decision in his work with the actors, in each gesture, in the non-verbal language and in the objects placed in his sets, typical of someone obsessed with the details. And it is there, in the nuance and the anecdotal details, which risk going unnoticed, where the piece that he presents here arises.

We are faced with an affective archive of absent objects, an extract from the archive of objects collected, rescued and stored by the artist in boxes in his studio. Most of these objects have been part of his films or his photographic sessions, as pieces of the set decorations or props for his characters. Some have simply found themselves in the orbit of his everyday life, where they had an emotional impact on the artist and are thereby loaded with evocative value. Is it fear of forgetting and *archival fever* that leads the artist to methodically preserve these objects that he knows he will never use again? What is behind this useless work? What is behind this dedication of time and space? And how does he decide which objects to conserve and which to discard? We can intuit, knowing the artist, that chance is rarely intervenes in their selection and that if they are chosen, it is because he wants them to be there, suspended in time and saved from disappearing into the profane and protected, regarded as significant in that *sacred space*, as Boris Groys would say.

With Christopher's hand leading you into the Koob Gallery is like entering a vitrine in a natural science museum, like a trip back in time. It is like sneaking into a box in the archives of the crazy and wonderful Museum of Jurassic Technology to observe the absence of a haunting collection of objects from an exploration of the unknown through the everyday world. And we are talking about absence, because the objects are not there, the objects are still safe in their boxes in his Lincoln Heights studio in Los Angeles. The piece works like a photograph, as a memory of a missing object, like that *punctum* that Barthes established as a *subtle beyond-the-field*; and at the same time, it is a hieroglyph, an exercise in the iconography of language. Again, we return to his interest in the nature of the image. But yet, at the same time, there is a physicality to this work. It is meant to be touched and experienced through the senses, creating an intimate relationship with the viewer in an ordinary and familiar space, away from the conventions of the white cube and its rules of use and enjoyment. In Christopher's own words, this is "the Zoom equivalent of a sculpture", a simulacrum of interaction with something other than the object, a chillingly contemporary practice.

The selection of absent objects has an autobiographical character and is at the same time a chronology of the last ten years of his work and a self-portrait of the

artist himself. Our hair stood on end when he explained to us that his first foray into collecting, and probably his first work of art, was carried out as a child: he kept the used toothbrushes that his family members discarded in a metal box. He has also been collecting minerals since his early childhood, and in this selection of missing objects, he decided to put his amethyst, which appears next to the jaw bones of a coyote —the artist's magical animal—, some bones of a bat, the stick that an actor in one of his films sharpened during the shooting, a nail, a spark plug, a pack of matches, a battery with a piece of Velcro strap attached, a light bulb, a false tooth... He has created with these choices a curious list of relics, objects of subjective and affective value, which do not obey any utilitarianism or trend, with little economic value, and which are probably a more or less conscious reflection of certain aspects of his personality and his peculiar way of seeing the world.

Richmond's intellectual and aesthetic exercise for this piece makes us wonder about compulsion and about what moves someone to collect. «To satisfy their emotional commitment to an object,» (Werner Muensterberger), to include it as part of their possessions, and what these mysterious and exceptional aspects of human behavior can explain to us about our nature and our fear of disappearing. At the same time, he is questioning us

about the artistic object itself, about the frustrated attempts to return to matter and the virtuality of the aesthetic experience and the yearning for contact, for friction. We are carrying out a useless exercise, in the best sense of the word, by making a box which weighs four kilos travel the ten thousand kilometers that separate Los Angeles from Barcelona in the midst of a global pandemic so that a group of participants can handle these non-objects with their own hands. Because, as Christopher says, once again displaying his great sense of humor, “I don’t make objects”.

