

FORMATOCOMODO

DANIEL BOCCATO

THE MAN THE OWL THE LION THE THING

17.06.2021 - 31.07.2021

Of Owls and Men and Endlessness

Ryan Cullen

The most basic definition of poetry could be understood as at least two things sitting next to each other. In this way we can consider the slot machine to be primarily an instrument for the production of poetry; its reels presenting an endless variety of at least two icons side by side. In this exhibition, we find New York based artist Daniel Boccato similarly partaking in the production of such poetry, five paintings each in simple binary form: the owl and the man. Additionally, in the back room we find a sculpture from an ongoing series of lions perched on various objects.

The works contained in *the man the owl the lion the thing* are modular in their potentially endless iterations. Each work presents its own internal poetry, binaries with variety. The works are not the artist's first examination of animal, or even avian iconography, first in a series of paintings which present a similar binary to that presented here, parrots and women, and then more recently in Boccato's sculptural inquiries into the ubiquitous birds of prey adorning various national flags and various logos.

We find represented in a variety of styles, owls and men side by side, painted on paper and pasted onto charred plywood panels. At first glance of these five panels one can already imagine an endless pile of such works on paper. Presented with these two constants of the owl and the man, one begins to question the vast formal array with which these icons are rendered. Over the duration of recorded human culture the bird has more often than not stood as a signifier. Different birds meaning different things at different times represented in different ways. Most famously we might recall Hegel's interpretation of the Owl of Minerva as the angel of history, a bird's departure marking the passing of time only in retrospect, serving as the demarcation between past and present, "taking its flight only when the shades of night are gathering."

We might then notice how Boccato's owls are never taking flight, never leaving, and neither are the men. The figure, a constant throughout art history, changing slightly, but never leaving, never moving, caught by history's gaze, the everpresent owl. On deeper reflection one might make a comparison between the artist's shifting albeit non-negotiable constants of the lion and the thing, the predator and the prey, the owl and the man, the figure and history; and our cultural reality, haunted by constants which change in style but never in substance; perhaps more defined by the owl who refuses to leave than a past that evades its own burial.

In the case of this exhibition however, we are reminded of repetition and difference, systematically beholding a figure in wait for an owl to take its flight; for a lion to dismount its thing. Caught in this forever-present, we might consider Boccato's plural binaries to offer a possibility of producing new poetry from old constants. Playing, rather than merely watching the slot machine of a slot machine culture.

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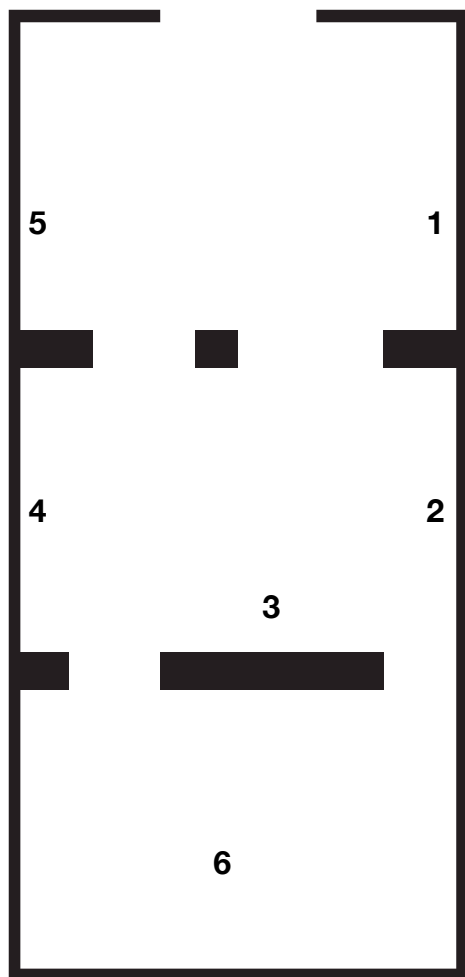
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1.
owlpainting
2021
acrylic paint, charcoal, graphite, ink, paper, plywood, polyurethane varnish
125 × 160 × 2 cm
2.
owlpainting
2021
crayon, graphite, ink, paper, plywood, polyurethane varnish, polyurethane paint
125 × 160 × 2 cm
3.
owlpainting
2021
acrylic paint, graphite, ink, paper, plywood, polyurethane varnish
122 × 160 × 2 cm
4.
owlpainting
2021
graphite, ink, paper, plywood, polyurethane varnish
125 × 160 × 2 cm
5.
owlpainting
2021
acrylic paint, graphite, paper, plywood, polyurethane varnish
122 × 160 × 2 cm
6.
“... people were all runny and liquid, running over this surface and that, looking for a container to hold everything in place, trying one thing, then the next, incessantly looking for the right one.”
2021
epoxy resin, fiberglass, polyurethane paint, polyurethane varnish, sand, washing machine
60 × 145 × 55 cm

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