

this is tomorrow

Contemporary Art Magazine

Céline Condorelli
Chisenhale Gallery, London
2 May - 22 June 2014
Review by Kathryn Lloyd

Céline Condorelli's first solo show in London is presented at the Chisenhale Gallery and forms part of 'How to work together' – a research programme organised by Chisenhale, The Showroom and Studio Voltaire. In this new commission Condorelli continues her long-term interest in structures of support – specifically the notion of friendship as a condition for working together. For Condorelli, friendship is an essentially political relationship – one of responsibility and allegiance. By constructing furniture-like objects, it is this paradigm of support which the artist employs as a framework for interrogating the way we inhabit and interact with the world.

Entering the gallery one is greeted by a gold curtain which simultaneously obscures the exhibition and introduces it. Curving slightly, the curtain creates a large but svelte helix. A recurrent motif in Condorelli's work, the curtain is a fundamentally formless object. Without a hanging mechanism a curtain does not operate as a curtain; it relies on a supporting structure to realise its own purpose.

This necessity of support is continued throughout the exhibition. 'The Double and The Half (to Avery Gordon)' is an assemblage of steps, ladders and a desk. The assorted bits of furniture create a cohesive and solid whole, yet the individual aspects rely on each other to remain upright. The accumulation of different objects furnishes the structure with multiple functions – a writing desk, a viewing platform for the above window, a ladder – thus, accentuating the purpose and significance of objects in relation to one another.

These physical conditions of support are mirrored in Condorelli's interest in social and emotional support structures. Thus, her architectural designs also become performative sites for resting and interaction. 'The Weird Charismatic Power That Capitalism Has For Teenagers (to Johan Hartle)', which mirrors the helix shape of the theatrical gold curtain behind it (thus creating a double helix – life's fundamental structure), is a set of cushioned steps which also manifest as chairs. This singular object encourages direct relationships between people, as well as people and environment.

THIS IS TOMORROW, MAY 2014

Each piece in the exhibition is dedicated to a friend and/or influence of Condorelli. This dedication is both personal and practical. For example, 'Spatial Composition II (to John Tilbury)' was developed as a 'piano bench' and instrument for him to play in an upcoming performance. 'The Double and The Half (to Avery Gordon)' also manifests as a type of instrument. Gordon, as a sociologist, is 'somebody who speaks and writes, so it's a place to speak from and a place to write on, in a very straightforward way.' Here, Condorelli utilises her friendships and influences as an impetus for creativity, producing functional art objects which are both acknowledgements and donations to her friends.

Furthermore, in Condorelli's exhibition, friendship characterises the complex set of relations produced between the series of utilitarian objects she presents, and the various possibilities they suggest. Her devices investigate the relationships between specific yet contingent objects and the dichotomy between form and function. Condorelli's multi- or quasi- functional structures induce an analysis of the idea of purpose, and a realisation of the inherently contiguous nature of our environment.

Published on 28 May 2014