

Graphemes and Epigraphs **A solo exhibition by Andrew Mount** presented by Residency Unlimited

An image bank in motion: on the image as a process

*If the atlas appears as an incessant work of recomposing of the World,
it is first of all because the world itself does not cease to
undergo decomposition upon decomposition (Georges Didi-Huberman¹)*

The interest about the archival practice is not new: artists, historians, scientists and many others have used it as a working tool with distinctive intentions. In a time where proliferation of information is unprecedented, archives have nowadays captured increasing authority and fascination. Organized according to particular methods of arrangement, individuals head there to fabricate their own view of the present.

In the last years, Andrew Mount has assembled a colossal image bank that is partially derived from the legacy of art history, from media sources or culled directly by him from different sources. Traditionally art history has been perceived as a sort of an archive, arrayed in compartments to be apprehended by a linear narrative. Nevertheless, Mount's approach towards that legacy is based on handling freely its anachronisms and discontinuities, questioning imposed narratives, proposing imaginative and critical readings of often politicized imagery.

Mount's image bank is a fluid and open system, where heterogeneous images are diagrammatically brought together, through the employment of several strategies. In some cases, Mount constructs the images he uses as a starting point, both excavating them and adding new contents, altering or accentuating certain features and revealing imaginative realms. In others, he overlaps images to highlight existing contradictions or absurdities.

For the first time in the artist's career, after several years of selecting and intervening upon found imagery, in the exhibition *Graphemes and Epigraphs* Mount displays part of this complex material and extends it into several media: photography, sculpture and installation. Aby Warburg and his seminal *Atlas Mnemosyne (1924-1929)* is an inevitable reference that comes to mind particularly when considering the presentation of Mount's digital collages (*The arena of Lost faults* 2010 and *Vehicles* 2011). This association is due to the implicit idea of *montage*, of considering the image as a process and not a mere object. Besides that, the building of new relationships between images from an archive, created by their proximity, recalls an unconscious memory, or what Warburg designated «a contamination of motifs».

Throughout this exhibition at Abrons Art Center one can observe the recurrent migration of structures, forms and processes between the works displayed. Consequently, the same motif or image can trespass into different series of works, eventually taking a reshaped appearance, as happens, for instance, in the moonlight drawings of the long photograph *Shaping back again* 2009 and in the installation *VE: Confirmation* 2011.

Profoundly concerned with language and communication, the artist has created a consistent iconography: in his body of work elements like windows, screens, car tires or mirrors are repeatedly found. It should be noted that the mirror appears also as an idea in the sense of the echoes and resonances that link the works and that the rearview mirror holds a sentence crucial to his work and that warns about the lag between what we see and our knowledge about it: «objects in mirror are closer than they appear».

¹ Didi-Huberman, Georges. 2010. *Atlas: How to carry the world on one's back?* Ed. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.

Also, several kinds of *vehicles*, such as car, trains and planes, convey a sensation of movement. This interest of his resides in the fact that it is associated with fluctuation and changeability (experienced for example while drawing in the slate stone sculpture *Consciconsconscconsconou*, 2008- 2011). *Vehicle* in his artistic lexicon comprises a double meaning: besides the physical transportation it also inscribes the signification of mental transportation allowed or constrained by imagery that we as spectators daily consume.

Finally, the title of the show merits our attention. We know that *Grapheme* is the unit of written language, an elementary constituent for discourse and that *Epigraph* refers to an inscription of a word or sentence to celebrate or perpetuate the memory of an event or person. These terms relate to the works on view in diverse ways, either for its production technique or for the fact that several of them explore the connection between art and language. But it should also be emphasized that the term "graph" is contained in both words and that it stands for a diagram that represents a system of connections or of interrelations among two or more things, a written symbol for an idea or linguistic expression. Hence the title conceals core strategies to Mount's work and which pervade the show: repetition, deviation and interlacing.

Thus what Mount proposes is to reconfigure the act of seeing - and in this regard it should be stressed that the writings of Jacques Rancière are a pivotal influence on Mount's works. By drawing attention to the autonomy of the image, the artist intends to reinforce the critical act of perceiving imagery, destined to be received by an active and participant viewer. By exposing or staging occasions to reflect about power structures, Mount aims for a multilayered knowledge about a fragmented, multiple and contradictory world.

Luísa Especial

This text was written for Andrew Mount's exhibition *Graphemes and Epigraphs*, on view from September 10th until October 1st, 2011 at Abrons Art Center, New York, curated by Luísa Especial and organized by Residency Unlimited.