

April 2016
Artforum
"Tromarama, Edouard Malingue Gallery"

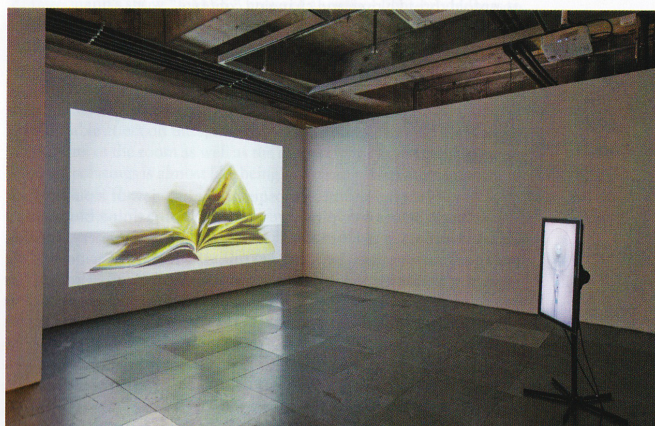
HONG KONG

Tromarama

EDOUARD MALINGUE GALLERY

The paradox of perception is that what we see is never what we see. In "Panoramix," the Indonesian collective Tromarama took on this conundrum through a collection of works brought together as a single installation, though each work is individually titled. The assemblage opened with a video, also titled *Panoramix* (all works 2015), projected on a hanging screen, showing a lush close-up of tropical leaves. The scene remains still until it slowly begins to flutter like a hanging cloth responding to gusts of wind, flapping backward to reveal a dark space behind it. The image gives way only to reveal another image: the digital black that covers the screen like a projected shroud.

Tromarama,
Intercourse, 2015,
two-channel HD
video, color, sound,
4 minutes 10 seconds.



The work was a statement on the exhibition's premise: an inquiry into the complex, multilayered mediations that occur on, among, and within surfaces. This was diagrammed in *Living Room* and *Studio*, two photographs printed on 3-D lenticular surfaces. In the first, we see a couch, and in the second, we see three stools. A pair of subtitles is printed on each—in *Studio*, I SEE WHAT YOU SEE, I THINK WHAT I THINK, and in *Living Room*, I SEE WHAT YOU SEE, I FEEL WHAT I FEEL. These subtitles point to the idea that our subjectivity prevents us from ever truly seeing anything as a conclusive, self-contained whole—a paradox best expressed through the things for which we hold emotional attachments, our objects of desire. A trio of black prints, *Unsettled*, *I Do*, and *Promise*, each with dialogues revealed over a shifting, lenticular surface, illustrate this notion. For example, *Unsettled* begins with the words I ALWAYS SEE ME WHEN I LOOK AT YOU, followed by the response EXCUSE ME, BUT IS THAT REALLY YOU?, which is then followed by an exasperated [SIGH]. Here, the screen offers neither a space within which two opposing entities might meet in the middle, nor a site through which a common understanding or relation might be reached. Just as lovers will always negotiate an active divide caused by the projections each individual brings to a relationship, perception is never still, never grounded. In the words of philosopher Cecile T. Tougas, "Awareness is a continuum in which we participate." Definition follows the same participatory logic.

The show's carefully constructed narrative of destabilization reached its culmination in the aptly titled *Intercourse*. A wall-size projection shows various arrangements of objects on a table, from a pile of napkins to a tower of cupcake holders. One by one, each arrangement is blown away, as if by the fan shown on a screen positioned directly beneath the hanging projector—a witty touch that incorporates the whirring sound of the apparatus into what is essentially a simulated experience of cause and effect. It was a compelling punch line. Though our projections cannot express the totality of any given moment, person, or thing, or move us with anything other than uncertainty, we cannot help but understand the world—and each other—through them. Even when illusions are lifted, we produce more to fill the vacuum.

—Stephanie Bailey