

CAST

Catalogue essay by Juliana Engberg for 'CAST' at Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne 2011

Signing a work of art is passé these days. The lower left or right of the picture has for years been left blank, and allowed to be fully integrated into the totality of a work, rather than being a small sequestered spot for signatories or symbols – the makers' mark. It might be, that on verso of a canvas or panel, you might discover a name and date: an authentication of the true hand of the artist, but this is secret business – for the eyes of hangers, owners, auctioneers, verifiers, rather than beholders.

The redundancy of the authorial signature was most probably secured by appearance of the eponymous R.Mutt (aka Duchamp) on the famous 'fountain' ready-made urinal. A fake persona and a skill-less object, making the 'hand' of the artist obsolete – but not the mind – this is the commencement of conceptual practice - bien sur!

The arrival of installation and environmental presentations in the 1960s – such as Robert Morris' 'Primary Structures', Donald Judd's 'Specific Objects' and Alan Kaprow's 'Happenings' – as examples - caused the signature to be redundant. Although these have become known as signature events in the history of art. After all, we still invest in the divinity of the masterpiece, to paraphrase Barbara Kruger – 'Untitled' and unsigned though her work is.

Like a lot that is redundant or entering extinction, the signature, as a kind of relic of authority, was available to be ironically re-claimed. Duchamp (again) even after killing off the 'real' author (himself) reinstates him(self) almost instantly as the authentic person to invest in, on his 'Tzank Cheque' – the 'Marcel Duchamp' signature, signed on the 'original' banknote from the Tooth and Loan company. Undoubtedly the item - authenticated by the master hand as it is - is today worth a good deal more than the primary debt of \$115 USD.

Piero Manzoni understood the value of the authorial mark and assigned it to numerous items – balloons filled with air, 'Fiato d'Artista' 1960 – excrement in cans, 'Merde d'Artista/Artist's Shit' 1960 – and thumbprints, 'Declarations of Authenticity' 1961-61. His 'Living Sculptures' – signed bodies of models, and even Umberto Eco!, elevated the mere mortal to masterpiece status, all 'created' by Manzoni.

It is these legacies of authentication that provide historical precedents for Laresa Kosloff's, *CAST (with Jennifer Allora, Hany Armanious, Richard Bell, Karla Black, Christian Boltanski, Mikala Dwyer, Dora Garcia, Charles Green & Lyndell Brown, Thomas Hirschhorn, Anastasia Klose, David Noonan, Michael Parekowhai, Grayson Perry, Stuart Ringholt, Renee So, Kathy Temin, Luc Tuymans, Angel Vergara, Catherine de Zegher)*, 2011.

CAST is the artifact-object-sculpture-remains of Kosloff's situational performance presented during the Vernissage of the Biennale de Venezia, 2011 as part of ACCA's Pop-Up Program in Venice. Departing from Melbourne with her leg encased in plaster, aided by crutches (Dali) Laresa travelled by air, bus, and vaporetto to the Biennale to participate and collaborate with an ensemble of artists as yet unmet in her speculative autograph hunt.

CAST was never planned as an endurance performance, and so when the task of acquiring as many autographs as was needed to sufficiently cover its surface, Laresa

ceased her quest and freed her leg. Nevertheless, the making of CAST was painful, in keeping with its '60s and '70s performative antecedents.

In a Biennale year devoted to assessing materiality in a number of ways, and particularly through the operation of casting and creating tromp l'oeil objects, Laresa's project acknowledged an evolutionary development of sculpture from its foundation in the body to the dis-embodiment of minimalism and all that exists in-between.

Undoubtedly her project also acknowledged the handicap that still accompanies the Australian artist in the midst of internationalism. Laresa's fandom approach to being near her colleagues, whom her gesture elevates to heroes and authentic artists, as opposed to her awkward, imposter, unofficial self, registers that sense of outsider-ness that haunts the antipodean.

As well as acknowledging her outsider status, CAST also registers that moment of Biennale inclusion obtained by Laresa. She is now authorized and a part of the ensemble she gathers. As are the artists, both international, Australian and nomadic, who have become a part of her community. CAST becomes a collective enterprise, and a part of the history of practice currently occurring under the banner of new-situationism and participatory practice.

CAST will not be sold. It remains for the moment, at any rate, a kind of work in progress as its status is discussed, its formal and informal characteristics understood, its history acknowledged. In this way it becomes an ethical object and one that asks us to consider authorship. It belongs now to the history of practice, and a very particular history of Australian participation at an international level. Undoubtedly it has the special aura of authenticity and authority in being unobtainable.