A Collaborative Research Poem:

Performing a List …
From A to Z and back again

A series curated by Holly Crawford and Anne Murray
Performing a List …
From A to Z and back again
Images by Jeanette Doyle
Text by The Aesthetics Group:
  Mick O'Hara
  Cathy O'Carroll
  Connell Vaughan
  Jeanette Doyle
Foreword
by Anne Murray

The history between AC Institute and The Aesthetics Group goes back several years and this work comes directly from performances related to this history, friendship, and collaboration. Jeanette Doyle first met AC Institute's director Holly Crawford when Crawford participated in the exhibition Cf (or the Inaugural Autonomous Biennale) at the Research Pavilion in the 2017 Venice Biennale, which was curated by Doyle. The dialogue between Crawford and Doyle continued and Crawford invited her to participate in two major shows, at Platforms Projects in Athens, Greece and at the AC Institute in New York City in 2019. The work in this current edition is an outgrowth of the work of Doyle, which was displayed in the exhibition in New York City, entitled, Jeanette Doyle: From A to Z and Back Again. Doyle used a special technique, which she developed in 2004, applying water to digital prints as paint print hybrids. The subject of the work represents the 26 letters of the alphabet in pictorial form. These

A1, A2, A3:
A = Avocado from the atoz series. A sequence of hand treated digital prints on hand treated water colour paper. 8" x 10" (Jeanette Doyle, 2019).
are triptychs of the paint print hybrids, revealing the technique and its sequential variations. Doyle describes the works, “A is for Avocado, B is for Bottle and so on. Some of the works are whimsical for instance the avocado, others political i.e. N is for Noose. Each piece is a print onto watercolor paper with the edges serrated so that the paper seems handmade. The first piece of each triptych is a straight digital print, the second is the same print with water applied so that it is indistinguishable from a watercolor, the third again involves the application of water with the addition of oil pastel. So there is a difference of ‘nuance’ and ‘timbre’ in each of the pieces of the triptychs.”

I met Doyle through participating in the Cf exhibition as well, but it wasn’t until later, when I passed through Dublin for a film festival I was participating in, that we had the opportunity to meet in person over a glass of red, in one of Dublin’s mirrored and etched glass pubs. Doyle's humility and kindness are a graceful addition to her sharp mind and inquisitive nature. Her work is a reflection of her intellect and her in-depth research into theory, philosophy, and context. She explains the origins of the atoz series “I was inspired by Jean-François Lyotard’s consideration of ‘nuance’ and ‘timbre’ in relation to the sublime. For Immanuel Kant the sublime is experienced by ‘vastness.’ Our inability to imagine ourselves in the magnitude of a volcano or a storm. Lyotard works via language through to the pictorial and to the pictorial through language. Lyotard sites the sublime in the minutia between different registers of tonal difference. The atoz series also explore the pictorial in relation to dematerialized practices as theorized by Lucy R. Lippard, which by their nature were cheap lightweight and ephemeral and represented a move from the studio to the study.” The Aesthetics’ Group members were inspired by Doyle’s work responding through a research poem which became a performance at the AC Institute within the context of Jeanette Doyle: From A to Z and Back Again (2019).

The four members of The Aesthetics’ Group originally met through their research at the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM), Dublin. They are Jeanette Doyle, Cathy
O’Carroll, Mick O’Hara, and Connell Vaughan. Doyle is an artist, curator, and writer. O’Carroll is a performer, theater and performance designer, and theorist. Vaughan is a philosopher and lecturer in Creative Industries and Visual Culture. O’Hara is an artist and lecturer in Fine Art and Visual Culture. They have been working together with aesthetic theory and art practice producing academic research and artistic performances for over a decade. This performance poem is one of the hybrid results of this unique practice, which was generated as a performance event for the atoz exhibition. The group had previously seen the 26 triptychs by Doyle at one of their meetings and proceeded by responding individually to Doyle’s works, while contemplating the sublime. These responses were as written material, which they considered later as a group collectively creating a call and response presentation through different experimental methods, such as by cutting up the text and assigning color schemes to represent each individual in the group, one color to represent the words of each member. These sequences were rearranged in this process, becoming a collection of their independent origins to create an overlapping whole. “The three different iterations of the same image combined with our four voices created a multiplicity of perspectives, tones and nuances,” explains the group. They coin their work as ‘pedagogical performance,’ which involves ‘mobilizing philosophical and artistic research’ as well as writing. In responding to Doyle’s work, their four voices relating to each set of three works, becomes a rotation, a collage, a performance that is never the same twice, since the timing of their voices and the timing of the visual images projected differ slightly, shifting the focus, attention, and understanding of the viewer as if one is participating in a game of telephone, whispering a message from one to the other, with subtle changes in tone and timbre, image, and word.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the group performed the work online for the public, which was where I first encountered it on the ZOOM platform for the AC Institute in 2020. This performance was at the encouragement of AC Institute’s director, Holly Crawford. I remember how delighted I was to attend
while on the street near my home in Budapest, watching from my mobile phone. I took screenshots of the sequences, as the voices overlapped in the call and response, as if the letters were running after each other, or chasing their own tails. Later, I was inspired like Crawford, to include them in the Bangkok Biennial Cloud 9 Pavilion, which I was curating. Because of the nature of speech and the sequencing of images and rotation of slides, the performance is different each time, the letters matching up a little differently as if to say that repetition does not always mean sameness, but rather indicates inquiry, analysis, observation, and subtle resonances, which digress, ever so slightly, in the mind of the viewer with the combined variants of live theater. It is this variation which becomes the focal point of the entire work, the feeling as if one turns slightly on the face of a clock, each second responding in a different direction to a signifier, a turning point; this performative work becomes a brilliant response to the subtle variants in Doyle's paintings, translating into time, the elements of vision and cognition, awareness and contemplation. •
The Aesthetics Group
Mick O’Hara Cathy O’Carroll Connell Vaughan Jeanette Doyle
(Re) present:

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