

THE HAGUE

Daniel Jacoby  
1646

Daniel Jacoby turns his back on many of the art world's traditional assumptions. His work is in constant flux, his installations characterized by complex shifts between ideas, images, and forms and a methodology that dodges the usual dynamics of production and presentation. Born in Lima, Peru, in 1985, Jacoby studied in Barcelona and is currently a student at the Städelschule in Frankfurt, where he is sharpening a discourse built on intuition rather than on experience, on suspicion more than on certainty, and less on references from the past than on prospective contingencies. His installations could well be perceived as laboratory experiments, for he seems to be more interested in testing the limits of systems of knowledge from a research-based attitude than in



View of "Daniel Jacoby," 2012-13. Five works from the series "Towel Sculptures," 2012-, all Untitled, 2012.

conventional artistic endeavors. The results he achieves are often utterly ambiguous, but that is the point. Deeply skeptical, he finds his results interesting only when they reveal the limitations of the very systems and structures they address.

The title of Jacoby's first solo show in Barcelona in 2010-11, "La lógica del ornitorrinco" (Platypus Logic), indicated the artist's skewed way of looking at things. Logic, after all, is the study and use of valid forms of reasoning, while the platypus—a duck-billed, egg-laying mammal—seems the most illogical animal on earth. Equally revealing of Jacoby's methodology was an experiment he developed early in 2012 during his residency at Casino Luxembourg: He set out to produce for the grand duchy a "golden record" like those launched into space by NASA in the 1970s, but ended up playfully subverting the function of such an archive by conjuring his own whimsical image of the tiny country in an intriguing installation, a new fictitious territory he renamed "Latsempoar." The new name arose after he taped over some letters of Maurizio Nannucci's neon text sculpture *All Art Has Been Contemporary*, a long-term installation on the facade of the Casino Luxembourg.

His latest project, "A Mount-Rushmore-Resembling Piece of Cheddar Cheese Melted to a Perfectly Flat Squared Slice," was yet another philosophical effort to eschew the normative. Like many artists of his generation, Jacoby is inspired by technologies related to the consumption of culture and information, and he often experiments with incorporating a range of media into his installations; for example, an audio guide at his solo exhibition in Barcelona helped viewers find the meaning of the works, an exercise that became a work in itself. Here, in similar fashion, the video *How to Take the Way Around the Workaround*, 2012, displayed a tutorial showing how to make an

origami cube in what seemed to be an experiment in displaying not an object itself but the information encoded in its making. Again, ends seem to be less important than means, and mere objects fail to contain the flow of ideas that converge in the exhibition space.

In the main space at 1646, a number of towels floated in the air. Stiffened with glue, they maintained the shapes they must once have taken when left to dry on a chair or laid on the sand at the beach, although the physical structures that gave them their petrified forms were no longer visible. Jacoby thus turned the towel, undoubtedly quotidian and banal, into a metaphor for how language spreads out into many forms of meaning and opens to many functions. This gesture could be seen as an absurd post-Conceptual mockery, but is better understood as a smart and complex investigation into the ways in which ideas drift into objects and how these objects fold back into concepts in turn. In testing the typologies of thought and language, Jacoby playfully demonstrates the strange malleability of even their most familiar forms.

—Javier Hontoria

STOCKHOLM

Mika Rottenberg  
MAGASIN 3

Mika Rottenberg is a serial absurdist, as amply demonstrated by her recent exhibition "Sneeze to Squeeze," which encompasses more than a decade of work. Take her most recent video, *Sneeze*, 2012. It's a send-up, and simplicity itself: Three men in business suits, each with a farcically misshapen, pink-tinted nose, sneeze irrepressibly. These are men who have lost control, not only of their bodily reflexes but of the very substances their bodies expel. Each sneezing fit produces another unpredictable discharge: "Achoo!" and a bunny spews out; "Achoo!" and a steak emerges; "Achoo!" and a lightbulb somehow appears. The gag's absurdist comedy has deep roots in literature and theater; Alice's famous sneeze in *Wonderland* comes to mind, as does the oft-quoted rhyme from the Duchess, another Lewis Carroll character: "Speak roughly to your little boy / And beat him when he sneezes / He only does it to annoy / Because he knows it teases." As usual, however, reality trumps silliness. Steaks and bunnies aside, Rottenberg's pathetic creatures exhibit the symptoms of the autosomal dominant compelling helio-ophthalmic outburst (ACHOO) syndrome, which, believe it or not, was first observed by Aristotle in *Problems*, book XXXIII. (Look it up.) And yet this connection to reality, even real suffering—and perhaps poverty, since despite their suits the three men lack shoes—does not lessen the comedic effect. As Nell in Beckett's *Endgame* reckons, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness. . . . It's the most comical thing in the world."

The farcically cyclical structure of *Sneeze* is embedded in all of Rottenberg's work; she is fixated on producing the pointlessly mundane—whether sneezes or, in other works, things like maraschino cherries or "units of dough"—under the spell of unmanageable nonsense. This production is often played out in preposterously complex architectural settings, where tedious and inefficient parodies of assembly lines lock her characters into hopelessly



Mika Rottenberg