

De: PROVENCE mail@provence.st
Objet: In conversation with Elise Corpataux and Brad Kronz
Date: 1 juillet 2023 à 09:30
À: comm@fri-art.ch

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PROVENCE

Dear _____,

On the first of June, [Friart Kunsthalle Fribourg](#) saw two openings: Elise Corpataux' *Life isn't good, it's excellent* and Brad Kronz's *Nine Types of Industrial Pollution*. After a month to soak it in, PROVENCE asked the artists about their cross-references, working around loaded imagery, progress, myth-making, and the assorted things that permeate their work and life and whatever slips in between.

Find the discussion below, and be sure to head to Fribourg before the exhibitions close on July 30.

Sincerely,
PROVENCE





Elise Corpataux, *Unknown Babies*, 2023. Photo: Guillaume Python. Courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg.

PROVENCE: My first question is about a form of porosity we find in your works, seeing how they deal with legacy, the anxiety of influence, or more prosaically how they deal with the environment in which they were done. A quoting technique that feels closer to a footnote than a real comment.

Elise, in the big panoramic painting in the middle of the show (*B-b-b-b-baby* (2023)), you're quoting a pop song, but only its shaky beginning, the start but on the canvas it could be only a stammering.

Brad, you named one of your previous shows *Jud* (in 2013 at Essex Street), which could be a tentative to call it Judd but missing a letter, as if the works were too sloppy to hold a comparison to the esteemed minimal artist. Is it a sense of porosity that allows for a form of failing, or a message that wouldn't go all the way?

Elise Corpataux: I think we can put it that way...It being contrasted by the way it staged, illuminated by a strong spotlight and set into a wall. This piece contains a lot of what's inherent to my practice. Like the stubbornness of trying to formulate as close as possible a sensation or a thought and having it revealed plastically by the piece, which will always end up slightly unsure, or unfinished.

Bradley Kronz: I think that is an accurate observation—the *Jud* show—my first show ever, was 10 years ago this summer. It's hard to remember exactly what I was thinking, but it was something about elevating provisional artworks, or the inverse which would be bringing art down to the realm of the provisional. I was using graphite instead of paint and folded paper instead of wood—a show of drawings and models being an end-point rather than a step toward more serious art production. I revisited this idea for the show at Friart using drawing and display in a similar way.





Exhibition view, Elise Corpataux, *Life isn't good it's excellent*, Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg, 2023
Photo: Guillaume Python. Courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg.

PROVENCE: Trying to formulate, revisiting an idea, it brings me to the notion of memory. I feel you both play out a relationship to a recent past, sometimes even a slippery feeling of a *rêverie*.

Brad for example, in your use of personal materials, but also contrasted with sometimes a call to stable art narratives or cultural artifacts, for example Albers and a modernist tradition. You also both rely on photography that feels intimate but to varying degrees. For instance, Elise, your interest in pictures of children, while Brad you have employed the use of vernacular photography; with a terrace of a restaurant straight out of the 1980s, safeguarded family photos. It feels to me that the image here is slippery, sliding into different kinds of shadows: vertigo of an art history, faith in the stability of a medium, but also in something more intimate or even religious, artworks like portable altarpieces. Does that make sense?

EC: Yes, in a way. For me, every moment in the creation of a new work has the properties of faith. *Unknown Babies* presents objects that are amulets, time capsules, objects I found at a flea market in Brussels. They reminded me of a series of works by Michel Ritter that I really like, which were exhibited here at Friart in 2021, and featured images of babies in baskets. In my work, the motifs are often allusions; for me, it's a question of paying homage by affinity, in an affective rather than theoretical relationship, to figures who precede me.

BK: I am not thinking about memory so much when making art. I like to begin with other people's art or photos as a way to start a work that in a way has already been started, and maybe arrive at something by using even a little of what's already there. I like when images come from a variety of sources rather than just one mind and art materials alone. Because I'm often using objects from other eras they carry with them a feeling of the past that is not in my control.

PROVENCE: Speaking of control, I find that in both of your works, there are repeated calls or allusions to the work/life balance. For example in your case Brad in one of your recent works you display a vintage American panic button with buttons that would directly call the Police and Fire Department, and a third option (guess what substituted the ambulance) reads "it is not fun anymore." Whereas in your exhibition Elise, the show revolves around pictures with all kind of promises.

Some paintings integrate old gestures and other motives found in previous paintings of yours, as if it was a conscious way to deal with progress.

Is artistic work still fun. Is the game still worth it?

BK: I enjoy making art! I do other jobs too and I hate working them, so maybe it makes me more appreciative of the time I can spend on my own projects. The “it is not fun anymore” panic button was an attempt at a joke about people’s expectations of art and the socializing that takes place around it. Around the end of 2019, I heard a lot of people complaining about how it wasn’t fun anymore, so you press the button and it all goes away.

EC: There's nothing quite like the moment when I find my way back to work. It gives me a palpable sense of existence that's hard to put into words. Fun is when I dance on my own in my studio, which is part of the job.



Exhibition view, Brad Kronz, *Nine Types of Industrial Pollution*, Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg, 2023
Photo : Guillaume Python. Courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg.

PROVENCE: Could you talk about your exhibition titles: *Nine Types of Industrial Pollution* for you Brad and *Life isn't good it's excellent* on your side Elise. There's a foretaste of cynicism, but I also feel a weird sense of reassurance, like a steady landscape.

BK: The title comes from a Frank Zappa song on the album “Uncle Meat.” It’s an instrumental that is probably improvised but later manipulated and sped/pitched up.

EC: It comes from a painting by the late David Robillard that speaks for itself. And think cynicism comes with a profound sadness.

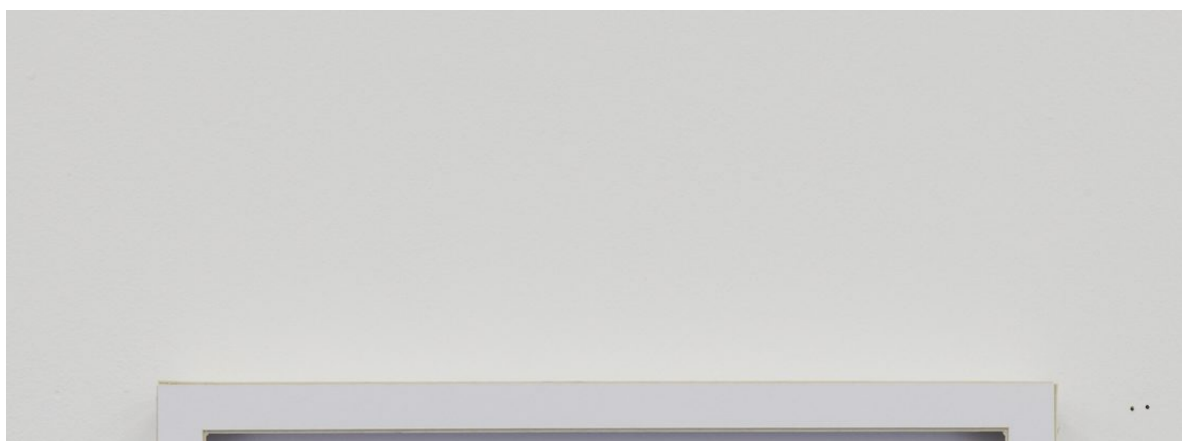
PROVENCE: We're talking here in the context of your shows at Friart Kunsthalle Fribourg, in the capital of the homonymous Swiss canton that is pretty loaded in terms of traditional Swiss imagery: mountain grasslands shaped by a rural economy and integrated into a very Swiss perception of what constitutes nature, paintings depicting the cattle brought to the alpine pasture, etc.

Elise, you're a local kid, growing up close to the city but yet already in the countryside. Brad, you have a completely different background, yet I remember your exhibition in Brussels at Mulier Mulier in 2022, which resonated with a sense of alpine or rural character. In the show at Friart, your drawing *Helium* (2023) also recalls folk art. And there are also cross-references: Elise, you made a trip in the other way—first playing a lot on an American west coast painting imagery à la Ed Ruscha—and now for the show something closer to a bedroom pop painting one could find in New York.

How do you both relate to loaded imagery and their translation in strategies of myth-making?

BK: I certainly have an affinity for farm life having grown up around rural Wisconsin which is known as "America's Dairyland." I probably like things to look a certain way because of my background, but there are subtle vibes in this region (and everywhere) that contain traces of different more mysterious influences that I feel more inspired by rather than any identifiable monoculture.

EC: For me, it all began with a poster I found fascinating as a child. It is an A1 poster that is still hanging in my grandparents house. It is a moonlight view: a girl is lying in a hammock hanging from two palm trees, and a guy is standing next to her with his hand on her thigh. I always assumed that the guy on the poster was my uncle. I never doubted it. "The guy on the poster? Yeah, that's my uncle." I always thought of him as one of those second-rate TV actors. But more like a cowboy. He has red hair, a little wavy, wears leather vests, blue jeans, and cowboy boots. So I always fantasized about my uncle's love life. I attributed to him attitudes, a slight English accent, and a lot of very committed love affairs in the USA. I think it had a big effect on me, as the very first image that printed something strong in my mind. This is where it all comes from.





Brad Kronz, *Helium*, 2023. Photo: Guillaume Python. Courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Fribourg.

PROVENCE: All things considered, I see that we talked a lot about a specific “register” that is the type of gestures, materials, and language that you integrate in your works. Things that, I feel, are close to you, as artists and persons. Is there more self-exposure when working in this way? As a consequence, is there a felt need for more self-reinvention, to maintain the actuality or excitement of what is close to oneself?

EC: I almost immediately feel a considerable distance from my work as soon as it's done. The moment I want to get back into it, I find myself in an unceasing battle trying to get back to the psychic place of "where the work happens." As it's never in the same place, the work moves. Every thought is so slippery.

BK: Yes to both. I think I used to feel the need to change my work all the time to keep it exciting, but now I think it's most exciting to be myself.

PROVENCE x Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst
Acts of Friendship





Alicia Framis, *Contemplation Room*, 1998, Metal frame, glass chairs, ash tray. Photo: Stephar Altenburger Photography, Zurich.

“*Contemplation Room* is an installation by Alicia Framis, who inspires visitors to take a moment for reflection.

The artwork also plays with the idea that smoking is an act of rebellion and of being expelled, as laws and regulations often place restrictions on where smoking is permitted. Hygiene regulations are created to preserve our wellbeing and control our environment. Laws against smoking reflect our wish for fresh air to breathe and the need to recognise and remove dangers.

Although smoking today is frequently a solitary act, in *Contemplation Room* it becomes a social, communal experience. By enabling visitors to smoke in the exhibition room and to converse with others in the glass cube, Framis creates a space that encourages friendship and a sense of togetherness.”

– Christa Michel
Visitor Services; Textile Designer

“She sits down at the back, inside, outside, lights a ciggy and blows the smoke out a long stream, slowly, watches it, through the wall, through the transparent wall. The view, the exhibition, the view, the position, the pose, go with it, leave.

Calmness, time out, reset. Another one joins her, sits down beside her and smokes another cigarette, too. Encounter. They are silent, they smoke, they listen carefully, now they are chatting, they sit, they are, they are so old school, they are there, her in the room in the room, in the building.

Christa and Moni have chosen the same work.

Christa and Moni share a cigarette!”

– Monika Schori
Head of Technical Services Exhibitions; Artist

[Acts of Friendship](#) is a collaborative exhibition in three parts conceived with the museum team including works from the collection of the [Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst](#).

The third and final Act opened, June 9 and shows works by Judith Bernstein, Alighiero Boetti, Annika Eriksson, Alicia Framis, Gabriela Fridriksdóttir, Jan Peter Hammer, Lang/Baumann, Teresa Margolles, Bernhard Martin, Juan Muñoz and Rirkrit Tiravanija. [Pilvi Takala's solo exhibition Close Watch](#), a new video installation that examines work cultures, communities, and the presence of security in our everyday lives is also on view at the museum.

For the entire duration of the three-part exhibition *Acts of Friendship* until September 17, 2023, PROVENCE presents a work from the show along with a personal text written by the team member who selected it in its newsletter every week.

Send postcards to: PROVENCE, Pavillon, Genossenschaftsstrasse 22, 8050 Zürich
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