

Uri Aran

Uri Aran's fascinating exhibitions appear as imploding laboratories, exercises in chaos theory for the eye that construct numerous pathways to be explored. How should we think or navigate our way along these roads? Aran's suggestion, as per the title of his recent exhibition at Gavin Brown's enterprise, "by foot, by car, by bus," is to go three ways at once, or "here, here and here," as the title of his 2013 Kunsthalle Zürich show has it. Overlap, contingency, and multiple determination: Aran's scenarios are stories without prescriptive narratives; experiments without evidence.

In my interview with Aran on the occasion of the Luma exhibition, "To the moon via the beach" in Arles, 2012, he explained:

Formally, the nature of my work is performative. I'm looking for those aspects in the way I think that suggest the notion of a story, or the logic of a story. Rather than telling a story, even though I am starting from text, I'm instead using a lot of formal elements.

The stories are never spelled out, but formal motifs allow, or seem to allow, for the emergence of a personal reading.

Tabletops are among the means by which Aran constructs his situations, and as in an experiment, certain things are placed on them with intention. The items themselves, in a sense, come second to the implied narratives. There are landscapes housed in cardboard boxes; chocolate-chip cookies, piles of metallic soccer-ball keychains, disposable coffee-cup lids. Against these horizontal arrays, Aran pits vertical wall displays of collaged and repeated found images, drawings, and unusual frames, as well as freestanding sculptural assemblages. Things are gathered, compressed, and expanded—debris, ephemera, broken items. They are turned around, unraveled, and returned to their improper place. Aran says, "I work a lot with quotations of situations, or the notion of specific things rather than the things themselves; thought in terms of a closed system with rules."

As in Aran's tabletops, sculptures, and wall displays, so in his performances, screenplays, and videos: a sense of speculative chaos reigns. The single-channel video *Harry* from 2007, for example, pairs an emotive narration of a love letter with slow-moving images of a newscast filmed at night in front of a construction site. What could possibly link these elements? In a new video work, *Chimpanzee*, 2013, we witness the fractured conversations of couples and individuals. Through an intricate dynamic of connection and disconnection, the familiar here is made strange and puzzling. Aran is a constant observer, picking and mixing objects, quasi-objects, and non-objects—all three at once; here, here, and here. A dialogue emerges between audience and exhibition, fostering the potential for new encounters through an open practice of experimentation.

Aran's method, his composition of laboratory situations, reminds me of an exhibition project that I cocurated with Barbara Vanderlinden in Antwerp at the turn of the millennium. "Laboratorium" intended to investigate and compare scientific laboratories and artistic studios as well as the disciplines of art and science themselves. On the occasion of that exhibition, Bruno Latour argued, "The time is gone in which scientists were isolated inside the laboratories, and the general public simply stayed outside waiting for the results to be produced and to trickle down to them through press releases, exhibits, and school teachings We are not so much interested in the result as in the modus operandi. This is why laboratories should be of great interest to artists. There is not a single feature of the arts that is not drawn in contrast to or in imitation of those of science."

To this observation, the Chilean scientist Francisco J. Varela added, "The laboratory is the gesture, the stroke, that creates a discipline I am always interested in the interface between lived experience and scientific study."

It is at this interface, above all, where Aran works; his practice is an infinite engagement with the contingencies and complexities of the quotidian.

— Hans Ulrich Obrist