CONSTRUCTING A THOUSAND WORDS  By Ken Bloom

In the process of curating A Thousand Words: Photographs from the Tweed Museum Collection, serious consideration was given to the who, what, why of each photograph. Because each print in the show represents both a photographer and a subject, in each case there is only one image to do all that work. An understanding of photographs is contingent upon context. Single-image representations can easily be misread and will certainly adopt the tone and connotation derived from the collective sense of other images on exhibition.

Photography offers countless views on the human subject from the familiar to the exotic. From its very inception, photography offered the opportunity to regard the appearances of others for pleasure, curiosity, and proof. However, throughout the short history of the medium, photographs have been understood as true representations of things real and indisputably present at the moment of exposure.

If we forget that someone aims the camera and chooses what will fill the picture frame, there’s no thought of the influence of a bias. Yet such choices are based on the perception of individuals and are thus neither neutral nor universal. Photographs present the topography of exterior facts. Time frames and emotional interiors may only be inferred.

This contrast between appearances and perception underlines why photography has become the subject of much social controversy. Taken out of their original context, photographs can mislead, especially in the representation of the subjects’ sense of reality and culture. Typical would be an unequal power dynamic between an image-maker of a dominant culture while visiting the lives of those with a different sense of belonging. The resulting appearances could intentionally or otherwise seem to corroborate and thereby perpetuate misunderstanding.

According to Teju Cole in his essay “Getting Others Right” for the New York Times (6/13/17), “Sympathy is often not enough. It can be condescending. But taking on the identity of others, appropriating what is theirs, is invasive and frequently violent. I have heard appropriation defended on the grounds that we...”
Chance is a synergetic installation that combines code, image, and sound to create a cross-sensory, polyphonic experience. A landscape of painted walls and multi-channel sound encloses the viewer. Choreographed by code, a circle of machine quartets investigate chance, emergence, friction, resonance and change, a cloud orchestration.

Chance opens October 19, 2017. The year-long exhibit will be a living, evolving space: a residency / habitation / research lab / performance space. Printed artifacts will be left in the space to give the feel of blueprints notes, a score. The Sax gallery at the Tweed is a luminous space. Its many skylights filter shifting seasons and variable weather patterns: a photosynthetic recitation. It provides a sanctuary, a place for rest and reflection.

This is a time of great planetary change and political turmoil. Chance has evolved under these skies. There is a machine / human friction present in the space. As the work evolves I have a sense of trembling before god, a struggle towards language & coherence, an ongoing ritual of conceal & reveal / imprint & erasure / struggle & resistance. As a queer artist I inhabit a landscape of the infinite between. This work embeds an infinite series of choreographed transitions. Machine renderers will perform their twists and turns (their monitor-bound between-ness) 24/7 for a year. The marks across the wall echo the arc of my body.

Chance explores the intersections between art & technology / humans & machines / polyphony & mathematical systems. My generative art-work is inspired by the mathematical representations of ecosystems that I studied while a student at the University of MN, Duluth. Mathematical models are often used to represent physical systems, our ideas about how the world works. They are like a score / orchestration / script / generative code. Algorithmic blueprints draw the contours of change and movement: convergences, divergences, emergent patterns and cascading, system-level impacts. Mathematical models can depict the complexity and profound tension between independent threads and the bounds of interconnected webs, the polyphony of life.

Code is a literature, a pattern language, a score. It is a choreography, a performance. A code renderer is the weaver, the mill, the alchemist, the wizard. Code is a spell, an incantation, an intent. When code is performed, it is an activation of text, a linguistic gymnastics.

In a perfect confluence of electricity, network, rhythm, memory, processing, action & reactions a program comes to life, Pinocchio, a real boi at last. The program (the cybernetic ze) speaks to us, calculates for us, responds to our touch, our keystrokes. It becomes our mirror, our cyborg self, our memory.
“Anima means soul or life in Latin and in many cultures especially in my Plains Cree heritage butterflies represent the souls of your ancestors. I was also drawn to the symbolism butterflies have in connection to metamorphosis, which had significance and correlation to the story I was telling within this series. Through this body of work I want to transform the way the viewer and I understand the past from the perspective of the present. Throughout all the images there is an ethereal feeling occurring. I wanted to continue this feeling and give a surreal quality to the image by having vibrant colored butterflies in a wintery landscape. Butterflies fly south for the winter and wouldn’t survive the cold days and nights of Canadian winters. I am also turning into icy figure or fading away and they are landing on me to almost bring me back to life or even to feed off me like they do a flower to keep their spirits alive. So we almost need each other for survival.” – Meryl McMaster
An exhibition of paintings opening September 19th explores the industrial landscape and its influence on the environment. Painting American industrial subjects was taken up by the Ashcan artists in the early 20th century. The artists went into the streets to paint gritty everyday scenes from city life and working class people. This tradition has been brought forward in time to include new technologies and changed conditions of work and its impact on the environment. As Rose Fredrick writes of this movement, “Though not the usual subject matter for artists who derive their primary inspiration and income from painting landscapes, a number of contemporary realists have chosen to turn their attention to urban sprawl and industrial blight, painting scenes and places, some shuttered and decaying, others functioning yet considered eyesores or environmental problems without solutions, and still others incorporating new clean technology and how it crops up in the natural landscape. The resulting paintings depict subjects that challenge both artists and patrons alike, done in a way that finds beauty amid the chaos, to reach beyond the mechanics of art into the realm of truth-seeking.”

An accompanying program will feature artists painting in Duluth the week of September 18th at the Glensheen Mansion and Duluth Timber. This collaborative project is offered by the Plein Art Painters of America, the Duluth Art Institute, the Great Lakes Academy of Fine Art and the Tweed Museum.

Join us for this exciting week with an exhibition from the Plein Art Painters and a display of new works completed from days of painting on site. The free opening reception at the Tweed Museum will be held on Friday, September 22nd from 5-7pm with a one-time chance to view the new works at the Great Lakes Fine Arts Academy on Saturday, September 23rd from 7-10pm.

In fall, there are cool evenings and crisper days, then the start of school and the leaves beginning to change.

This brings changes to the Museum Store too! We have delightful fall décor and beautiful new scarves, jewelry, alpaca socks and many other fun new things to look at!

We rotate seasonal offerings for all those special occasions. Stop by to find the right gift for that particular person or stock up on our reasonably priced, artsy greeting cards!

Hit a payday sale and get 20% off your purchase. We do have a hold shelf where you can keep items until the next payday sale!

Come Shop The Fun!

All proceeds go towards our programming at the Tweed Museum of Art.