

Lucy Skaer
Untitled (2013)
courtesy the artist
and Murray Guy,
New York



for Every Purpose

Batia Suter, Eduardo Navarro, Lucy Skaer
curated by Sarah Demeuse

May 12–June 26, 2016

Opening reception: Thursday, May 12, 6–8pm

for Every Purpose starts with what is no longer here: a mahogany tree drifting down a river in Belize, a palm on top of a salon cabinet, a picture in an out-of-print encyclopedia, a listing of speculative titles for non-existent artworks. The pieces on display originate in the overlap between scavenging for remains and invention. Hovering amidst these two poles, the exhibition conjures a skewed type of reproduction. The overall arrangement of the show mimics a moment from earlier this year, when a collection of posters and books by designer Klaus Wittkugel were featured at P!. That display becomes a blueprint for the present layout.

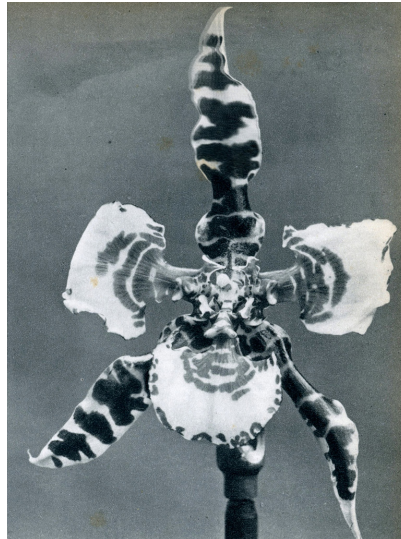
In tuning into what came before now, *for Every Purpose* invokes the logic of repetition often associated with the plant world, with which exhibition-making shares temporal metaphors. *for Every Purpose*'s cyclicity is also connected to the presence of graphic design, then and now. It treats last winter's exhibition as a page to be re-scanned and brought alive again at the onset of summer. In this way, it is a soft echo of Batia Suter's working method, which starts where graphic design ends. Suter begins with book pages, layouts, and existing image treatments, which she rescales, recalibrates, reprints, and, at times, recombines into new works.

Eduardo Navarro's PDF list of titles of fictional artworks, translated into spectral audio, acts as an in-gallery and on-line placeholder for a potential parallel oeuvre. They recur in a loop as surrogates, hyperbolic expressions of artistic imagination. Lucy Skaer's *Untitled* sculptures, fabricated from industrially-produced airfoil steel, present odd angles, faces and profiles. Their form is determined largely by their hand-production; through trial and error, each side is made to fit its neighbor and resolve into a triangle. As the three different iterations demonstrate, attempts at repetition end in variation. This question of infinite difference is even more pronounced in Skaer's mahogany lozenges, whose uniform shape accentuates the material's unpredictable variance.

An extra element in the show, *From the Roof* is a written reflection on arborescence that emerges from the looped, paradoxical temporality and de-familiarized vantage points proposed by the artworks. It is authored by Sarah Demeuse and designed by Project Projects.

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Batia Suter
Polymorph Orchid
(2013–2016)
courtesy the artist



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for Every Purpose is an exhibition staged in a venue that is acutely aware of its current “white cube-ness.” Paying homage to Brian O’Doherty’s notion that a gallery acts “as a limbo between the studio and the living room,” the exhibition quotes and overturns inherited habits of display and circulation, reconnecting the gallery with its roots in domestic space.

Here, the storied interior space of the collector is evoked, where uneven global relations of extraction were smoothed into decorative surfaces made of novel, industrial materials. Batia Suter alludes to this by refiguring bourgeois floral wallpaper motifs with a second, spectral appearance of the plant types that inspired such patterning. Similarly, Lucy Skaer’s recurring use of the distinctive diamond lozenge shape developed for the global transportation and valuation of rare gems exists here as a finished form. Both artists consider the details and intermediary objects produced in the imaging and distribution of natural resources. Borrowing tropes connected to the practice of private collecting, *for Every Purpose* also turns to organic, non-art objects regularly seen in gallery contexts. The domestic philodendron inside the exhibition space and the orchid on the dealer’s counter appear here as oversized shadow images, outgrowing their intended purpose. Similarly, a valuable type of wood used for furniture or cabinets now hangs autonomously as a giant gem, like a portrait of its precious self.

This reflection about the living room and the gallery takes place in an atmosphere shaped by Eduardo Navarro’s *Títulos* (2007–2015), the artist’s exhaustive listing of his own fictional oeuvre. Mental images conjured in the seclusion of the studio, *Títulos* represents a body of work that is never created, but that is instead archived as a list and shared through transitory placeholders. Navarro’s work acts both in the gallery and on the website as a frustrating teaser for those bent on future value or decoration.

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