

SEANKELLY

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Installation View, Iran Do Espirito Santo: DEPOSITION at SEAN KELLY Gallery

Iran Do Espirito Santo: DEPOSITION
by Hans Michaud

Mr. Espirito Santo's pieces at Sean Kelly gallery stared me down. As pieces in an art gallery go, it would be fairly difficult for especially these to "stare somebody down", since the work is neither representative of any thing mammalian (with eyes) nor is it, in another sense, confrontational. Rather, it is excessively patient, like a dusty journal in an old chest buried somewhere in the attic: it has within itself the capacity to wait for quite some time to be discovered. There is nothing about Mr. Espirito Santo's work that yells, brays, screams, knocks, shouts, whinnies or cajoles.

In the first two galleries sit the sculptures DEPOSITION 1 and DEPOSITION 2. These pieces look like large, framed pictures. Except that they are entirely black: the frame, the picture. And they do not hang, neither one of them. They lean against the wall, one rectangle resting horizontally, one resting vertically.

They are made of concrete. True, this is something I garnered from the press release; even a careful inspection of DEPOSITION 1 and DEPOSITION 2 will not reveal their concreteness to the viewer. But information is where one finds it.

Each gallery is brightly lit, as many galleries are, but these especially so. Each space glared. This may have been the effect of the actual black pieces, within each space. The contrast, more as an afterburn, is

enormous. The contrast is not due to the black-and-white starkness of the gallery walls, the object placement, etc. The contrast is an afterthought, and it is also a contrast between these two galleries and the third, but more on that later.



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Why I think it is worth it to write about DEPOSITION 1 and DEPOSITION 2: the picture-in-a-frame as object, as a heavy, weight-laden thing, suggests a history that weighs down any presentation of the actual project, any actual pictures-within-a-frame. By presenting us with these two objects weighed down and unable to hang on the walls, Mr. Espirito Santo opens for us a particular rendition of a culmination of art history, spilled over into the present. Very much like how concrete is poured, these objects represent art history and, in particular, the notion that the current gallery space, whether it is showing paintings, photographs, film/video or objects, is still a space which speaks the language of "objects on a wall" (in contrast to, for instance, a movie theater, a cafe, a public road, a shopping mall: each are weighed down by their respective histories, meaning the respective set of expectations each individual brings to each encounter with these spaces. In other words, how can each individual apprehend a "painting" or a "sculpture" within a gallery space? Not only are the objects themselves weighed down with history but also the gallery itself is weighed down. DEPOSITION 1 and DEPOSITION 2 ask the above questions eloquently and, like stated already, patiently. Like setting concrete.

In gallery 3, the largest space at Sean Kelly, an entirely different work and experience awaits the viewer. Instead of a gallery space which contains the piece, in this instance the piece itself is the gallery.

Mr. Espirito Santo transformed three of the four walls into grayscale photographic test strips. Standing inside of this, I got the distinct impression that I was occupying the inside of a photographic process, a photographic set of expectations, a history itself of the photographic space (in contrast to the gallery space). The brilliance of the piece lies not in a juxtaposition of the two spaces, but in the devouring of one by the other. It's much different than, say, witnessing a large-scale actual photograph or product of the actual photo process (a la Vera Lutter). It's far different. The disconcerting element in Mr. Espirito Santo's piece, "En Passant", is that, as a viewer/witness/spectator, I felt that I'd suddenly skipped across previously neatly-defined criteria and intellectual space and are occupying both at the same time.



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When I realized this I was not only captivated but also let off the hook, so to speak, from the obligation to literally define what I was seeing around me. It is literally impossible, in the same way that a direct interpretation of, for instance, string theory of quantum physics is impossible. I can write about it and define it as such ("two spaces occupying the same space at the same time") but in doing so I am illustrating a literal impossibility.

Mr. Espirito Santo deserves accolades for raising the questions he has, in this context. I anxiously await the next set of pieces.