The First Issue of Le Roy

View Discussion

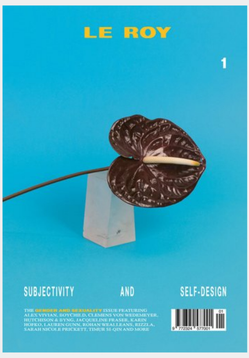
Dan Munn – 22 April, 2014

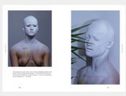
Coming off the back of editor Kelvin Soh's work on 'February', a one-off journal with curator Laura Preston, the journal takes Boris Groys' e-flux essays on what he terms 'self-design' as the basis for its 144 page selection of art documentation, artist pages, interviews, fashion shoots, theory and pop-culture commentary. Named after author Laura Albert's literary avatar, its commissioned and open-submission contributions chart the production of the subject through music, fashion, and art.

DDMMYY
Le Roy: Issue 1

Assorted essays and articles
Edited by Kelvin Soh
144 pp, colour, black/white images

DDMMYY, Auckland, January 2014





DDMMYY's new periodical canvases the publishing house's New Zealand base but is international in scope. Coming off the back of editor Kelvin Soh's work on ***February***, a one-off journal with curator Laura Preston, the **journal** takes Boris Groys' e-flux essays on what he terms 'self-design' as the basis for its 144 page selection of art documentation, artist pages, interviews, fashion shoots, theory and pop-culture commentary. Named after author Laura Albert's literary avatar, its commissioned and open-submission contributions chart the production of the subject through music, fashion, and art. The inaugural issue focusses on gender and sexuality, particularly in relation to queer and transgender personas and porn (note: some pages are decidedly NSFW!).

The interviews make up some of the best text in the journal, each a window into the origins, theoretical bent, emotional intensity, and production dramas of its subject. Slutever discusses self-censorship and the conservatism of American Vogue, the difference between a pseudonym and a project, censorship and desensitisation, feminism vs. "a girl doing something," her own interviews, and the prospect of blogging about arthritis at 60.

In *Cartoon Meat* Rohan Wealleans describes an early performance in which he was "drunk, blindfolded, earmuffed, and got dropped off somewhere random," and uses this as an analogy for the way he produces within "white man" culture, creating his own materials ("interplanetary rocks" made of paint) to compose his figurative works with. Touching on the troubled relation between contemporary and indigenous art and the ambidexterity of cartoon and sci-fi narratives as social commentary, the interview only briefly addresses the sexual and cultural inequalities embodied in his Gauguinesque beauties.

These power dynamics are considered in more depth in relation to the "blunt concept" of appropriation in Tim Gentles' interview with DJ Rizzla. Given the Boston-based musician's academic background, having undertaken a Master's in Cultural Production, he gives a surprisingly personal take on his experience of U.S. imperialism in Trinidad, his musical influences, Camille Paglia's critique of the "turgid text" of the Parisian intellectual, and being an ethical bricoleur.

Esma Kazal's discussion of her move to New Zealand from Iraq and the etiquette of Middle Eastern dress in relation to last year's *Porn Project* suited the journal's agenda perfectly but its wide cultural scope would have been more focussed alongside further documentation of the artist's exhibited work. This contrasted with *Porn Project* curator Rachel Jane Liebert's vague but reference-laden outline of the exhibition's curatorial conceit which punctuated, but added little to, several full page Peter Madden collages combining vintage porn with images of flora and fauna.

A number of pieces document existing art projects. *Sun Cinema* by Clemens von Wedemeyer features striking images of the artist's outdoor cinema, sited at the edge of the Mesopotamian plains. The text begins with the rich premise of contextualising the sun as the earliest image projector, but goes on to speculate regarding the cinema's possible uses as a multicultural and historically perennial abstraction, rather than using its actual site and structure as a place of production.

Renata Raksha's photographs of New York based *Boy Child*, who toured with rapper Mykki Blanco last year, feature some of the drag performance artist's more subtle looks. In one image the surface of her white-painted face wrinkles and cracks as she flinches away from a sharp plant and we get a sense of her dynamic body language. *Moved objects* by Georgia Hutchison and Arini Byng (from which the journal's cover illustration was selected) works in the opposite direction, arranging raw components and Memphis Group aesthetics in a kind of elemental ikebana.

Karin Hofko's *Self-Titled*, transcribed from a video of the same name, is composed of a series of monologues in which the artist essentially compliments herself in an overly gratuitous manner, to which a colleague responds with suggestions such as "try to be a bit more natural." Hofko then attempts her monologue again, with changes. In this reconfiguration of the video the text is flanked by stills in which we see the artist speaking and emoting directly toward the camera. This project expresses a limit of self-design in that the actor is only able to be as eloquent as the critic.

Several contributions were developed specifically for the journal. In *Chameleon* Barratt & Boyes and Jayme Yen present a single set of Instagram and Facebook images in a range of configurations. Although each configuration takes up a single page, I found it hard to decipher the images' relation, either to each other or to the space of the page. My misreading points perhaps to the importance of being able to assess code and context in the associative construction of personality, where style, function, currency, etc are much more important than proximity.

Lauren Gunn's fashion photo-shoot *Are You Looking at Me?* suffers slightly from its canned-Barbara-Kruger introduction. The photos themselves however are a sexy window into the heritage of Auckland's Pah Homestead, set after-hours against its dark woods and exhibition spaces. This former "gentleman's residence" is now part of one of the Auckland City Council's 'premier parks,' and houses the James Wallace Art Trust's collection of New Zealand art.

Similarly interested in gender and fashion *Genderless Grown Ups*, Sarah Nicole Prickett's informal commentary, touches on David Bowie, Lady Gaga, and a neutrois baby called Storm. Using the example of the 'boy-friend shirt,' Prickett suggests that male and female stereotypes should be borrowed or refused rather than ignored.

Arron Santry's *Homosexuality in Hip Hop* begins at the writer's intermediate in South Auckland, where he first encounter hip hop being played on "shitty radios." Unfortunately the piece quickly loses its personal touch, becoming a more conventional commentary. Its three pages surveying a wide selection of musicians producing within what Santry refers to as the genre's "self-contained moral universe" leaves me wanting more; especially details such as song lyrics, and an expansion on the writer's fascinating allusion to the reification and distribution of ethical systems.

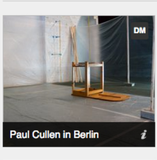
One of several moderately theoretical texts, Hamish Win's *The Better You Look The More You See* discusses the 'performance of being human,' reminding me of my own strategy for negotiating potentially dangerous neighbourhoods; I look at the clothing and shoes of my companions in an effort to assess whether they are invested in "playing the game" of being civil. Referencing Agamben, Verwoert, and Easton Ellis and artists Kathryn Andrews and Ann Liv Young, Win contrasts authenticity ("just another product") with the ability to perform off the cuff, which he sees as a potential "foil to the obligation of self-design."

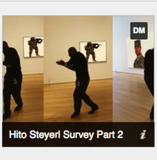
The density of Win's writing highlights one of my only caveats about this publication, which is that its chubby font and dense layout comprise the print equivalent of a salon-style hang. Giving each piece more space in future issues would key into the journal's mandate to support an informal style that, as Soh outlined in an email conversation, "entertains digressions (if interesting) and other rule-breaking inclinations." The journal's range of literary styles seems an appropriate excerpt from the spectrum of aesthetic surface and depth that self-design must attend to. Its voices respond to Groys' conception of a design that no longer admits a contemplative outside position, a defined space in which, tethered to the ornaments of a total design, a journal such as *Le Roy* must perform.

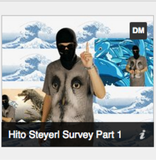
Dan Munn

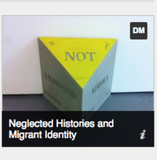
Print | **Facebook** | **Twitter** | **Email**

Recent Posts by Dan Munn









Add a comment

ART + DESIGN
EXHIBITION
7 – 21 NOVEMBER 2015

TWO ROOMS

Two Rooms presents a program of residencies and projects by leading international and New Zealand contemporary artists.

OCULA

Comprehensive online access to contemporary art & leading galleries around the world

Click Here

TE TUHI

Jenny Gillam & Eugene Hansen with Adrian McCleland
At a distance of forty-two days

1 August - 25 October 2015

EyeContact

Advertising in this column

Only $44.95 a week
30,000 - 40,000
Views a month
Click to enquire

FOX JENSEN

Tomislav Nikolic

Vestiges of Now

22 Oct - 21 Nov 2015

AUDIO FOUNDATION

Helga Fassonaki

K H A L

5 November - 28 November 2015