

URS BECHDEL

Hook

2 - 21 July 2014, 12 - 6pm daily
Opening: 1 July, 6 - 9pm

OUTPOST is proud to present *Hook*, the first UK solo show of Swiss conceptual artist, Urs Bechdel. Known as a one-work artist, Bechdel took the decision early in his career to only ever exhibit one work: *Hook*.

For his show at OUTPOST, Bechdel's hooks are installed in the gallery space and in the back rooms - the office, kitchen and bathroom. The hooks will remain in these infrastructural spaces of the gallery after Bechdel's show is over and become embedded in the daily life of the art institution, performing a playful game with the mechanisms of meaning in art. To the informed insider, the hook is clearly readable as a conceptual work of art. To others it may go unnoticed and quietly fulfill its utilitarian function as a hook.

Operating at the intersection between art and life, Bechdel's work is firmly positioned in the current debate about usefulness in art so poignantly expressed in Tania Brugera's appeal to "put Duchamp's urinal back in the restroom!" For artists like Bechdel, visual and symbolic representation will no longer suffice: instead he has selected a tool and device that functions simultaneously, and without losing value, in a multiplicity of contexts, from the gallery space to the restroom.

Bechdel's radical withdrawal from the stereotypical approach to artistic production can be read in several ways. By showing only one serial work he collapses prevailing notions of originality as well as the new, which continue to dominate our understanding and valorisation of artistic and contemporary cultural production. Bechdel reconceptualises Kenneth Goldsmith's notion of being a "boring" writer, who re-types already existing pieces of writing, merging it with Herman Melville's *Bartleby*, as if to say: "I would prefer not to, but if you insist, here is the same and the same and the same again."

Bechdel questions the pressure put on artists to produce ever more work and to subordinate to the need for a constant creative output in order to maintain a stimulating brand image. In conversations he often quotes Douglas Huebler's famous statement from 1969: "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more." His ascetic and repetitive use of hooks gives himself, his audience and the inviting institution a welcome break.

Bechdel consciously avoids the strategies of exclusivity and exclusion, which usually determine value in the art world. The price of a hook is linked to Urs' age, for example this year, a hook costs 38 Swiss Francs (£25.64), next year it will be 39 Swiss Francs. The hooks are also unsigned and industrially produced. As an active comment on the gender pay gap, Bechdel donates a percentage of his profits to support art by female conceptual artists.

Urs Bechdel lives and works in Zurich where he also teaches as an assistant lecturer at ETH Zurich. His hooks are displayed and used at a wide variety of international (art) institutions, including the Swiss parliament, the Van Abbe Museum and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Bechdel's collection *Diagrams On Contemporary Art* will be published by Sternberg Press later this year.

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