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Art Review:

ar D'Ette Nogle: Suspended Projection

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By Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

With her impassive face filling the monitor, the artist silently mouths a chronic frustration: “I – am – having – a – hard – time – making – art – right – now”. It is, as it happens, an extraordinarily productive frustration, one which galvanises much of D'Ette Nogle's paradoxical practice and provides the conceptual motivation behind the large number of works crammed into this self-generated retrospective, *Suspended Projection*.

Activating the dormant potentialities that accumulated during her recent eight-year hibernation of marked nonproduction, Nogle has undertaken the partial realisation of previously unrealised works. On simply constructed wood platforms and tabletops on sawhorses, the artist presents 23 newly fabricated old ideas for pieces, most of which are manifest as works on paper (photographs, posters, watercolours, stationery, ephemera and graphite rubbings) accompanied by several sculptures and seven short videos (all starring the artist) screened in continuous sequence on a monitor.

Suspended Projection Projection Video (all works 2009), a large-scale video projected onto the gallery's far wall, in which Nogle speaks directly into the camera from the comfort and intimacy of her bed, offers an index of the show's contents. Reframing the artist-viewer relationship as an exchange between lovers, she addresses her audience through a kind of pillow talk, dryly relating her original intention behind each partially realised project on display with a brief, objective description in the past progressive tense: "I was going to make this photograph where..." Nogle's looping litany of so many past intentions draws attention to the discrepancies – the compromises, the false starts – between any artwork's initial conception and its subsequent actualisation.

Importantly, each potential project is never fully actualised but only 'somewhat realized', as her titles would have it; the work is suspended in a noncommittal limbo of permanent incompleteness: photographs are desaturated, and fewer are printed than planned; sculptures are reduced to scaled-down models; materials are substituted; mailers remain unmailed. Insisting on a certain amount of strategic unfinishedness staves off completion's finality and holds onto a reserve of potential which implies the promise of futurity.

Where Nogle locates liberatory possibility in keeping works almost/not-quite/partially/somewhat realized, she also injects a phenomenal, self-deprecating sense of humour into her art. Her deadpan sensibility often hinges on hilarious and ridiculous titles which follow a consistent two-part format that reiterates the works' progressive states of lack. One straight-faced photograph of the artist with long blond hair, standing in front of her desk with a book, is absurdly but poignantly titled *Untitled (The Moment I Realized My Hair Was Getting in the Way of My Art Practice)*, (*Unrealized* 2007), *Somewhat Realized (Lighter)*, 2009. Nearby, a file box of alphabetised ephemera labeled 'Pick-a-Project' supplies the artist with a mock assurance of easy production.

Ultimately, Nogle not only questions the degree to which an idea must be physically realized in order to constitute an artwork but also challenges the expectations of productivity associated with being an artist. In this she offers us the distinctly contradictory and exhilarating conceptual figure of the prolific nonpractising artist.