



Interview with D'Ette Nogle ▀ Clifton Benevento, New York



MICHAEL CLIFTON & MICHAEL BENEVENTO AND D'ETTE NOGLE PRESENT REGRESSING TO MEAN – CLIFTON BENEVENTO NEW YORK, 2014 – INSTALLATION VIEW

On April 19th inaugurates “**Michael Clifton & Michael Benevento and D’Ette Nogle Present: Regressing to Mean**“, the second solo exhibition by **D’Ette Nogle** (1974, La Mirada, CA; vive e lavora a Los Angeles) with **Clifton Benevento**.

Her work is often in service of the host and the particular context in which its presented. Among her works, the video “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” in which the artist dances with some of her students from Fairfax High School in Los Angeles, putting into practice the assumption that a teacher should learn from the culture of her students in order to develop the right educational practice; in “Reality / Relax” she pays tribute to the structure of Dan Graham’s 1969 “Lax / Relax” performance by reading at home, with her parents, some dialogue transcriptions taken from reality shows. For the 2012 edition of “Made in LA”, the biennial organized by the Hammer

Museum in Los Angeles, she played inside of the museum the bells used during meditation sessions.

Matteo Mottin asked some questions to the artist.

Matteo Mottin: Could you tell me about “Michael Clifton & Michael Benevento and D’Ette Nogle Present: Regressing to Mean”? How is it structured?

D’Ette Nogle: The structure supports a testing exercise. Participants take two brief 10-question tests, Form A and Form B. The 10-question test presents visual information and the two answer choices are A) true or B) untrue. As soon as the participant completes Form A, their test is scored and they are informed of their results. Then they will complete Form B. Form B is scored and test-takers are able to determine the change between their results on the two forms of the test. They will know if they: advanced toward the mean, regressed toward the mean, or maintained a consistent position in relation to the mean. The gallery will be organized to support testing by providing an area where participants look at two tableaux that serve as prompts for the first two questions of the test and an area with a table where test-takers may sit and complete the remainder of the test questions. While test-takers wait for their results, they can also make use of a reading table where they may read material from Clifton Benevento’s extensive art library.

MM: “Regressing to Mean” reminds me about my Statistics exams... Why did you choose this title?

DN: First, there is the direct connection to the language of statistics, as you mention, and the idea that when a result is extreme in its first measurement, the second result will be closer to the average. Conversely, if the result is extreme in its second measurement, it will tend to be closer to the average on the first measurement. Also, there is a connection to the other content of the exhibition, the theme of schadenfreude and the potential connection between “meanness” and low self-image on the part of the person feeling schadenfreude. Finally, using elements from my previous show at Clifton Benevento (the office partitions), there is an intentional regression to mean or to communicate a link to my first show at the gallery which is then intended to convey a comparison between the two shows and highlight the vulnerability of the art practice to evaluation or assessment—which is often self-imposed (e.g., “Has she improved or regressed?” or “Have I regressed or is this an improvement?”)

MM: In this exhibition you overturn the common relationship artist-viewer within the exhibition circumstance: here you use a test to give marks to the visitors, and these marks are based on the answers given by a gallery representative. Could you tell me about the reasons behind that?

DN: I see it as an opportunity to consider the typical circumstances that determine how art is viewed and evaluated. In the testing exercise, one person’s subjective answers are compared to another’s, that of Silke Lindner, an employee of the gallery. People working at galleries are often called upon to provide answers to questions about the artist and the art on view. In this case, you have the opportunity to see how your interpretations of the work compare to hers.

MM: You’re using the same grey office partitions you used in your first solo exhibition with the gallery, “Michael Clifton & Michael Benevento and D’Ette Nogle Present: Information from Two Sources” (2012). Besides that, is there any other connection between these two exhibitions?

DN: Each of the two tableaux residing within the office partitions present a scenario, one involving a blonde female and one involving a male. In *Information from Two Sources*, there was a video within each partitioned space, one presenting the text from an Elle magazine article about the lifestyle of the actress Blake Lively whose role on the series Gossip Girl is characterized in the article as “the perfect escapist heroine for our recession-era daydreams,” and one presenting the narration of a viral video made by an investment publisher named Porter Stanberry called “End of America.” In the video, Stansberry employs fear-mongering and advises potential investors to invest in as much gold and silver as they can afford. Another link to the first exhibition will be a series of three *Thematic Posters for Exhibition (Improving, Regressing, Norming)*. Each of the three will graphically represent improvement, regression, and a consistent relationship to the mean. In the first show, there was an “Investment Opportunity” which presented a portfolio of prints based on scans of my hair, one gold portfolio containing color prints of my blonde hair and one silver portfolio containing black and white prints. I see the “Investment Opportunity” and the *Thematic Posters*, in their representation of value variations, as an opportunity to consider how art and artists are collected and valued.

MM: This exhibition builds around the notion of schadenfreude, i.e. the joy derived from the misfortunes of others. Why did you decide to deal with this topic?

DN: As a statistical phenomenon, regression toward the mean is also associated with “second-year syndrome” and “the sophomore slump”. I’ve been considering the “sophomore album” and the projections we might be placing on performers or other producers. When we perceive someone’s diminishing success, we may actually be seeking the experience of schadenfreude. When the value judgment is placed on the production of art or some other form of cultural expression, it is difficult to attribute it to the statistical phenomenon or a desire within ourselves. The investment of art largely operates within set conditions that determine value and affect what, by extension, will be valued by others. Within these conditions, it’s difficult to determine what is “true” and what is “untrue.”

Until May 24. The gallery is located at 515 Broadway between Broome and Spring streets, New York. Opening hours are 11am-6pm Tuesday though Saturday.

