

LONDON

Aaron Flint Jamison

CUBITT

In the second issue of the Dada journal *The Blind Man*, an anonymous editorial on Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917, famously proclaimed: "The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges." Aaron Flint Jamison's recent exhibition couldn't but bring to mind Duchamp's urinal, since, upon entering, viewers confronted a luxury Jacuzzi, mounted on the wall like a three-dimensional painting. With this updating of Duchamp's gesture, the Portland, Oregon-based artist managed to forcefully reformulate the contradiction between its assertive (this, too, is art) and negative (this is just some plumbing) power.

Yet this work was only the introduction to a far more complex and elusive project, as became explicit in the next gallery, which could be reached only through a corridor housing files, boxes, spare electrics, and the like. A narrow slit in the wall at the end of this passageway led to a room dominated by the underbelly of the Jacuzzi, its abundance of plastic pipes surrounding a curiously liver-shaped foot basin. Alongside this object, with its insistent and surprisingly organic materiality, was a system of large transparent tubes that linked the Jacuzzi to a cylindrical wall-mounted machine, as well as to a conveyor belt on a wooden pedestal, which was running independently from a small motor: a détourned symbol of empty Fordist labor.

Irregularly but approximately once every hour, the larger machine sucked air from inside the conveyor belt, expelling it into the other gallery through the drain hole of the Jacuzzi. This enterprise, also, was dramatically twofold: In the rear, the sucking air disrupted the smooth motion of the conveyor belt, while in the front, in near silence, a gentle breeze blew right into the viewer's face. Again, an allegory of transmission and permeability was at work, though one that was hard to decipher, even if the change it induced in the Jacuzzi-as-artwork was undeniable.

Other pieces in the rear gallery compounded the impression of a kind of artistic alchemy, one premised on a vacuum, an absence. The conveyor belt was paired with other, more intimate objects that one could take in hand and examine closely: a stack of prints, a tripod supporting a foam-lined box containing five books, a wooden bowl, and four small, enigmatic white forms fitted with lenses at each end. The books, hand-printed with repeating phrases and motifs, offered some words to describe what was happening in the exhibition, as well as images of the works on view. Their spines read MIND WIND/MENTAL RAY; inside were phrases such as PUSH WOOSH, FUNNEL LOGIC! The word AIRLOCK appeared repeatedly, as if a kind of chapter heading—perhaps appropriately, for it seemed to be the most fertile term via which to think about the exhibition. The site of production, poetic/technical research, and gut spilling in the rear gallery may have been complementary to the more traditional modes of perception required in the front gallery, yet they were linked by a cryptic zone of transition, analogous to but not identical with the progression of the viewer through the cupboard, or the passage of air

from conveyor belt to Jacuzzi, itself created through an imbalance of (atmospheric) pressure.

The enigmatic generosity of Jamison's exhibition, presented without a checklist or press release, was made piquant by his use of a vacuum to multiply its interpretive possibilities. A kind of mysticism was at the heart of this process, as the materiality of the Jacuzzi, as a visual object, was accompanied by its negation, in the current of air moved from one space to another: a poetic and critical interweaving of ideas of matter and its absence.

—Alexander Scrimgeour

Aaron Flint Jamison, *Funnel Horn*, 2013, acrylic, fiberglass, plastic hoses, spray foam, jets, 82 3/8 x 82 3/8 x 39 3/8".

