

Assunta Ruocco  
A Record of Unaddressed Activity

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Assunta Ruocco's practice alludes to the solitude of materials, to unexcavated, unexploited layers of unclassified minerals, never expecting to be found or perceptively consumed. Ceaseless activity does not add up, as double-sidedness and open-endedness enfold inefficiency and non-productivity within the material of the work. The objects emerging through her sets of procedures are simultaneously made and destroyed, presented and removed from view. No back, no front, but a sedimentation without strata.

*Vertical Studio* shows a series of double-sided paintings in aleatory composition. For this project, initiated in 2010, Ruocco let a contingent situation instigate the process of painting. No studio as a starting point, but a set of chipboard shelves, holding a limited number of double sided paintings. Coated daily in layers of transparent acrylic paint, first one side, then the other. On each layer drops of water that are randomly projected form a motif of roundish shapes cutting the surface of the colour, allowing a glimpse of the preceding layers of paint showing through the areas previously spared. Stood up as building blocks, both a screen and a shelter, the paintings make up a construction in fragile equilibrium, where the specific constraints of a contingent situation are contrived, together with unaccountable material effects.

Then a change of circumstances presented the opportunity for a new project. A set of rules was designed around the context of a traditional art school printmaking workshop. The workshop functions as a complex ecosystem that sediments centuries of technological tradition into the shape of a particular institution. An ecosystem where hydraulic presses, acid baths, and an aquatint dust box live. So *Aquatint Etchings* suggested themselves. The series consists of 11 double-sided prints, each side of the etching paper is in the process of being printed on 11 times, alternating 11 copper plates and 4 colours. Another pre-programmed loss of visibility. Both the object's past and its back are covered. Drops of varnish sparing the aquatint ground give a random view of the preceding states. The very specific aesthetic emerging through the process introduces the question of non-purposeful or unaddressed 'expressivity'.

The photo-etchings series emerged from thousands of automatic drawings Ruocco made while listening to lectures and conferences. Traced with a black biro on A4 sketchbooks without looking, the drawings are a record of concentrated attention, involuntary compositions tracking a corporeal experience of discourse. Friends of the artist were asked to choose one drawing they consider interesting. Their choice portrayed in a photograph, and then, through photo-etching, transferred onto a copper plate and made into an edition. Photo-etching, a materially complicated process, and another unpredictable encounter afforded by the workshop, involves a translation from drawing to photography to etching where the new piece is uncontrollably different from the original. The outcome of this complex analog-digital-analog technological migration can be seen as a currency whose value is dependent on the relationships that generated it.

By probing and trying art practice and its constituents, Ruocco makes artworks that, starting from externally determined contingent conditions, allow for multiple possible configurations. Of interest to her is the play between contingency and determination, in an attempt to free making from the production of a finished object by indefinitely protracting the process of making itself. By pre-determining sets of actions through procedural rules, the artist's decision-making is curtailed. These rule-based activities are then performed iteratively, forcing the process to rub against the limits of automatism.

*Assunta Ruocco (°1979 Italy, lives and works in London) graduated from MA Contemporary Art Theory, Goldsmiths London in 2010 after studying art practice at ERG, Brussels. She is currently conducting a practice based PhD at Loughborough School of the Arts, Loughborough University. Recent presentations include 'On Physical Work', Bureau, Manchester with Evangelia Spiliopoulou, and Ceri Hand Gallery, London.*

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