

# ERIKA VOGT: Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll



JUNE 5 -  
SEPTEMBER 22,  
2013

## FOREWORD

“Erika Vogt: Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll” is the first solo museum exhibition of the work of the Los Angeles–based artist. Vogt uses a range of media and techniques in order to explore the interchangeability of images and objects. Within her installations, she fuses elements of sculpture, drawing, video, and photography to create multilayered image spaces that challenge prescribed art-making systems. Vogt’s new work for the New Museum’s Lobby Gallery, *Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll*, continues her recent investigation into the ritual use and exchange of objects. Vertically aligned pulleys, which levitate cast plaster and found objects above the floor, demarcate the gallery space as a volumetric drawing through which the viewer can navigate. Her recent videos (also included) draw on her background in experimental film-making and playfully incorporate drawings and objects from previous projects, creating a captivating tension between objects and images on screen and their physical presence within the gallery.

We would like to thank Lisa Phillips, *Toby Devan Lewis Director* of the New Museum, and Massimiliano Gioni, Associate Director and Director of Exhibitions, who supported the exhibition; Joshua Edwards, Director of Exhibitions Management, who along with Derya Golpinar, Associate Registrar, Walsh Hansen, Chief Preparator, and Kelsey Womack, Exhibitions Assistant, brought enormous effort, patience, and skill to the exhibition planning and installation. A special thanks to Jason Mitja, who assisted the artist in the studio in preparation for the installation. The exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the entire Museum staff and, in particular, we would like to thank Karen Wong, Deputy Director and Director of External Affairs, Regan Grusy, Associate Director and Director of Institutional Advancement, and Sarah Stephenson, Editor and Publications Coordinator, who made this publication possible. Also, thanks to Riley Hooker and Megan Feehan of This is our work for their elegant design of this publication. Special thanks to Kristina Kite and Lisa Overduin of Overduin and Kite in Los Angeles for their support and valuable contributions throughout the planning of the show, as well as Simone Subal of Simone Subal Gallery in New York. The exhibition has been generously supported by the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibition Fund. The Producers Council of the New Museum is also gratefully acknowledged. The artist’s residency was made possible, in part, by Laurie Wolfert. Above all, we would like to thank the artist herself for her inspired vision and hard work, which has made this exhibition possible.

—Jenny Moore, Associate Curator,  
& Margot Norton, Assistant Curator

## INTERVIEW WITH ERIKA VOGT

by Jenny Moore & Margot Norton

**The mutability and interchangeable function of figures and objects seems to be a consistent thread in your work. How has your interest in the object and your relationship to it shifted over the course of your practice?**

After *Geometric Persecution* (2010), I wanted to understand my relationship to objects on a deeper, sculptural level. I had been working with found objects for a number of years and I wanted to understand their role in my work. Around this time, I visited the British Museum in London and saw the exhibition “Valued Material as Money.” After documenting the exhibition heavily, I wrote descriptions of the objects and tried to approach the idea of currency from a more humanistic perspective.

Recent works have applied metaphors such as wandering and currency to discuss experimentalism, process, fluency, and a variable image and subject. I think this might be the mutability that you are talking about. Currency, for example, made me think about what comes into focus when you are moving, the temporality of subject, and the idea of marginal space. I liked the idea of margins or notational space as an example of temporal space. What ends up there is often not fixed and changes with



*Armor for Chorus and Players*, 2010 (details). Steel weight, celastic, acrylic latex, 14 x 4 x 1 1/2 in (35.6 x 10.2 x 3.8 cm)

time and subjectivity. This led me to the idea that margins are alive and flow like currency. From this experience, I started to think about a “floating iconography” made up of objects and drawings situated in space. And my research for *Grounds and Airs* and *The Engraved Plane* (both 2012) explored objects in relation to subjectivity in a temporal space.

I started employing pulleys while I was working on the installation for *Grounds and Airs*. I wanted to be direct about suspending objects in the air instead of placing them on the ground or on the wall. I tried this in *Geometric Persecution* as well. Visitors could pick up the objects to see if the physical weight influenced their judgment of beauty or feelings of empathy, and when the objects were carried around the gallery, they were inherently displaced from the ground and hung in the air.

I often feel as though I have to walk in the steps of the subject to understand what I am studying when I am making something. This idea has led me to revisit antiquated materials and processes of producing objects in order to be less removed from the labor. I worked with found iron weights and hooks in *Secret Traveler Navigator* (2010) and *Geometric Persecution*, but I wanted to know how to actually make the iron objects that I was studying. I felt like I had come to a dead end with found objects, so I went back to the beginning, to how things are made. It has been an incredibly slow process of taking objects in and out of digital states to figure out how they translate into three-dimensional space. Over the past ten years, this has been the greatest shift—to go from looking at materials in the flat space of video or photography to actually making the objects that appear in my work and using them to create a drawing in space.

**In the notes you sent us for *Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll*, you mentioned that your research on drawing has influenced your work, and the installation with the pulleys certainly resonates as a volumetric drawing. What sources did you look at and how did they inform your installation at the New Museum?**

My use of drawing is pretty traditional: Drawing helps me to study form as well as influences the form of my work. I have begun to spatialize the drawings and to think about the objects, as they exist in space, as an extension of my drawings.

Recently, I have been looking at interlaced pattern drawings (mostly for their lines and the way your eye moves along them), drawings of temples, how marks are made on objects, and technical drawings. Most of the objects that were added to the debris field in the New Museum installation came out of the drawings from *Grounds and Airs* and *The Engraved Plane*.

**Your works often mix methods of art-making together, as in *Motor Post Motor Band Disband* (2006) and *Secret Traveler Navigator*, where you conflate analog and digital with your use of both 16mm film and video. You also tend to reprise drawings and objects from past projects in your video work. How do you view the relationships between the various media you use (i.e., sculpture, photography, performance, drawing, film)?**

I don't really think about the boundaries between mediums. If I did, it would pull them apart or create some kind of hierarchy, which would take them out of time. For *Motor Post Motor*, I wanted to make an image where the surface texture differentiated from the clear images of commercial media. I was interested in feeling my way through things and making an image using senses and physicality. I was also interested in the idea of the lost narrator. This gave me a lot of room to move around, to go backwards and forwards, and reverse or change course at will.

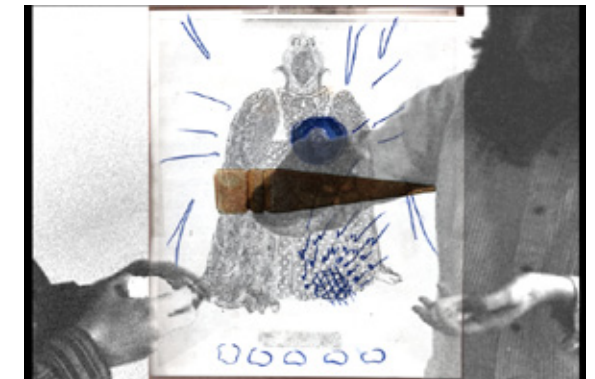
**This idea of the “lost narrator” is interesting and seems to come into play throughout your practice (as well as in the name of your website, [lostnarrator.com](http://lostnarrator.com)). What is your thinking behind this idea and how have you dealt with it in your work?**

I had been thinking about a way to let randomness into the work and to open it up to experience. I started working as the lost narrator in *Secret Traveler Navigator* as a way to avoid choosing a direction in which to travel. The story recounts a journey through an underworld with shifting characters, and the narrator (myself, the artist) was also shifting. I didn't want to go in a fixed direction or have a specific outcome in mind—it seemed too separate from real life and the ability for things to change course.

**Can you speak about your process of making a video and how an idea for making a video develops?**



*Notes on Currency (This May Be Your Last)*, 2012. Inkjet and casein on paper, 13 1/2 x 13 in (34.3 x 33 cm)



*Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll*, 2012 (stills). Two-channel digital video



*Grounds and Airs (Misshapen Bells)*, 2012. Wax crayon, pencil, charcoal, glue on paper, 27 1/2 x 21 1/2 in (69.9 x 54.6 cm)



*Grounds and Airs (The Marked Itinerant Molar)*, 2011. Charcoal on paper, 41 x 28 in (104 x 71 cm)

“I don’t really think about the boundaries between mediums. If I did, it would pull them apart or create some kind of hierarchy, which would take them out of time.”



*I Arrive When I am Foreign (Centennial Tin)*, 2006. Lightjet print, chromogenic print, 92 x 46 in (233.7 x 116.8 cm)



*Secret Traveler Navigator*, 2010 (still).  
16mm film and digital video, 11:58 min



*Engraved Plane (The Abject Seamonster)*,  
2012. Charcoal on paper, 41 x 28 in (104 x 96.5 cm)

Everything I make goes back into the videos as much as possible. For example, the videos in *Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll* include footage of artists A.L. Steiner and Math Bass passing objects back and forth. To that footage, I then added photographs and drawings from *Geometric Persecution*. The other channel is a video of *Notes on Currency IOU* (2012), with dollar bills painted and stamped on one side.

**How has your background in experimental filmmaking informed your practice as a whole?**

It’s integral to my work. It helped to free up my thinking and find a more nonlinear approach. There are a lot of images in film that are mutable and that has had a large influence on me. Before returning to graduate school, I was introduced to experimental practice through working at Women Make Movies in New York. I worked there for about six years and was inspired by the works of Ulrike Ottinger, Cecilia Dougherty, Leslie Thornton, and Yvonne Rainer. I went on to study at CalArts (which is a very interdisciplinary place), and in the film school there, I worked with James Benning, Thom Andersen, and Bérénice Reynaud.

**A nonlinear approach is certainly apparent in your early work, such as the photographic series “I Arrive When I am Foreign” from 2006. And in photographs such as *Centennial Tin*, *Mid-Century Plywood*, and *Archaic Electric* (all 2006), you collapse figure, image, space, and action into something that was unlike anything either one of us had seen before. How did these works develop and what was involved in the process of making them?**

The images in “I Arrive When I am Foreign” were conceived as videos and printed from video stills. The videos themselves are of actions—taking apart an object and walking across a printed image. The objects included a jackal jaw, a one-hundred-year-old tin can of peas, a piece of plywood from an office building, an early ceramic electric plug, Navajo-Churro wool, rubber tire pieces from a farm tractor, a lacquered disc or master record for sound, and a projector beam. The figure performing the action is there for scale, while the action itself prevents any doubling or mirroring in the image stills. The direction of walking across the printed image (as if exiting the image plane) then creates volume.

The work developed from an interest in having a printed surface as the base for a video. At the time, I was interested primarily in video and how it can change its physical form (from experiences with a litany of media, like tape, disc, files, film transfers, etc.) and be imprinted, suspended, and sent back onto another surface. I also wanted to see the video signal in a direct, raw way without any technology and at a human scale.

**What is the significance of the title *Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll* and how does it relate to the physical space of the New Museum Lobby Gallery?**

For this piece, I was thinking about a debris field that keeps collecting mass and energy. I read *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus a few years back when I was researching the underworld and *Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll* makes me think back to this book. I was also thinking about the underworld in relation to *Secret Traveler Navigator*, which is about being in an antigravity chamber where meaning and weight are elusive and everything could change.

A floating field of debris in the Lobby Gallery (a space with a lot of windows) seemed to be a good fit. I thought about the relationship of the objects to the glass, and how they would be viewed from the outside first, and then what it will feel like for the viewer to walk through the space amid an array of objects.

Erika Vogt (b. 1973 East Newark, NJ) received her BFA from New York University and her MFA from California Institute of the Arts. Vogt has had solo exhibitions at Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles, (2011) and Simone Subal Gallery, New York (2012). Her work has been included in a number of group exhibitions at venues including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (as part of “2010,” the 75th Whitney Biennial; 2010); Foam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (2011); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2011); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2011); Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, OR (2012); and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (as part of the Los Angeles Biennial “Made in L.A. 2012”; 2012). She lives and works in Los Angeles.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST  
*Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll*, 2013  
Digital video, plaster, paint, rope, wood  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist, Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles, and Simone Subal Gallery, New York

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Stranger Debris  
Roll Roll Roll**



June 5 – September 22,  
2013

**NEW**  
**235 BOWERY**  
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**MUSEUM**

This publication has been published on the occasion of the New Museum exhibition "Erika Vogt: Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll," curated by Jenny Moore, Associate Curator, and Margot Norton, Assistant Curator.

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"Erika Vogt: Stranger Debris Roll Roll Roll" is supported by the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibition Fund. The Producers Council of the New Museum is also gratefully acknowledged. The artist's residency was made possible, in part, by Laurie Wolfert.

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*Field of Debris*, 2012 (details). Plaster, paint, rope, wood, dimensions variable

All images: Courtesy the artist and Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles



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