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Paul Laster, "British artist Mark Leckey examines technology's cultural disruption," *TimeOut*, November 15, 2016



British artist Mark Leckey examines technology's cultural disruption

By Paul Laster | Posted: Tuesday November 15 2016, 1:44pm



A British artist who works in a variety of mediums, Mark Leckey's first interests were music and technology, and much of his art still deals with those concerns. Leckey, who won the 2008 Turner Prize, has exhibited internationally for more than 20 years, but his current show at MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, Queens is his largest to date. Standing among his work, the artist reflects on the role of memory in his art, the difference between stealing and taking possession of something and his obsession with Felix the Cat.



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You made your name with your 1999 video, “Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore.” Why do you think that old VHS footage of club kids dancing is still considered such an important part of your work?

Part of the attraction to it now is the VHS look of it, which has a lot to do with nostalgia for the 1990s—jungle, garage music, that period—that’s particularly strong in the U.K. It was the first real work of art that I’ve ever made, and at the time, I thought it was terrible.



You have a lot of works that reference animals, including a giant inflatable Felix the Cat. Why?

Animals are good stand-ins for desires and needs. They’re totems. The ones I use are mostly from cartoons. The reason I chose Felix the Cat is that I learned he was the very first subject for television. Back in the 1920s, someone scanned an image of him rotating on a turntable and then transmitted it. That’s why I became obsessed with him. He’s the very first electronic image, and I grew up under the influence of electronic images. They colonized my imagination. So Felix is sort of the avatar of all of that. He’s the god of TV.



You often copy other artists’ work for your own: Jeff Koons’s Rabbit, Herman Makkink’s Rocking Machine—the phallic sculpture featured in A Clockwork Orange—and others. What are you trying to tell us about contemporary culture through copying and appropriation?

Well, for me it’s not about copying. It’s not about stealing or appropriation. It’s about acquisition. I always ask permission to do it. Essentially, they’re all things I’ve fallen in love with. Now I want to possess them. I have the

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means 'to reproduce those objects, and I do that in order to have them, to get more intimate with them. Thanks to technology like 3D printing, you can capture anything in the world and remake it. Nowadays, the idea that you can have singular objects seems very hard to sustain when things can be copied and replicated so easily.



You recalled growing up with mass media. How much of your work deals with memory?

A lot, in the sense that technology replays your memories, it stores and records and replays, which induces this continual sense of nostalgia. Part of the present is to be in the past. That's our environment, I guess.

“Mark Leckey: Containers and Their Drivers” is at MoMA PS1 through Mar 5.