

ARTIST STATEMENT #406:

Repetitions

“Repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward. Repetition, therefore, if it is possible makes a person happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy—assuming of course, that he gives himself time to live and does not promptly at birth find an excuse to sneak out of life again...”

-Søren Kierkegaard, Repetition

In this series of works on paper, employing oil paint, ink, and other media, I am attempting to ask the same basic question posed by Kierkegaard in his 1843 book: Is repetition possible? To do this, I have taken my own art making practice as fodder, going back into my old sketchbooks (starting from 2004 and working my way forward) to find suitable candidates for “repetition,” that is, re-drawing, re-making, re-doing, or whatever else one might choose to call it. One basic motivation for this is that it has occurred to me, in recollection, that back then I had plenty of “good ideas,” but perhaps not the patience to fully carry the execution through to resolution. The “idea” was the most important thing to me, and it was perhaps even true to me at the time that to make a drawing too “good” was to do a disservice to the idea.

As Robert Smithson has written, “repetition not originality is the object,” and for the purposes of this exercise I have decided to forego any attempts at originality in favor of focusing on purely formal concerns, that is, making “good” drawings. Of course, in practice, this led not simply to recreations of old works at all, but oftentimes to very different ones, as I attempted, with each one, to find and accentuate its “essence” while cutting out any superfluity. Thus, much editing, substitution, and outright removal and addition has taken place, just as, I think, Kierkegaard would have expected to happen. In order to further codify the exercise (and distance myself from myself in a process that might seem perhaps a bit too self-referential) I am signing each one “Constantin Constantius,” which is the pseudonym Kierkegaard used to publish his book.

It is my hope that this fusion of past and present will, at this transitional point in my work, open a new path to the future.



Original, 2004



Repetition, 2018

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