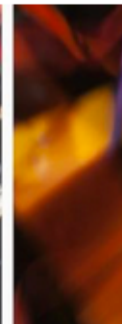
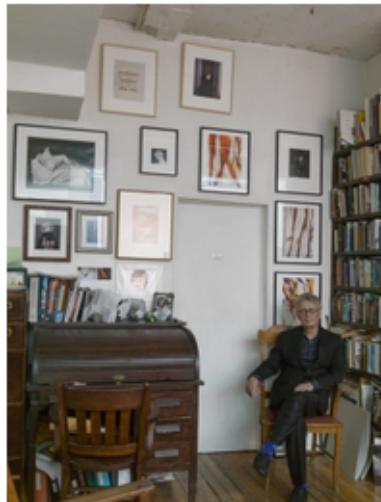


ART

BILL BECKLEY, BEYOND THE ROOSTER



... as afraid to look at a blank
... and he would look around the
... room, a table, a chair, and write
... across the center so that it
... All this time there were two
... 1960. The other was more struc-
... ture of submission and later,
... eye better, although kindly I've
... in my studio. I kept the stone,
... then it is cold I set in front of it

short and some sto-
... se living room read-
... on the first page of
... streetlight faced the
... e and a floor lamp
... shadow of a person
... air fell on the paper.
... turning. The shad-
... the movement. The
... and a mist fell over
... the ruffling stopped,
... on the last page.



Small, Rachel. "Bill Beckley, Beyond the Rooster," *Interview*. November 22, 2013.

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Bill Beckley's gone from roosters to ribbons. In the early 1970s, the artist was one of the original artists at SoHo's 112 Greene Street, the ragtag gallery-like hub of an artistic community bringing together auspicious '60s and '70s figures like Gordon Matta-Clark, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, and Dennis Oppenheim. Among Beckley's more alarming pieces was Rooster Bed Lying (1971), an installation starring a rooster the artist reportedly rescued from slaughter. He housed it in a coop over a thin mattress—"a possible wake-up call," according to the Beckley's explanation in a recent Brooklyn Rail piece—before it tragically died from toxic sisal fumes.

Beckley went on in the '70s to create a series of experimental photographic works, like Hot and Cold Faucets with Drain (1975) and The Bathroom (1977), exploring semantics of image, narrative and text.

He's since stayed in New York, living blocks away from the 112 Greene Street space in an eclectic SoHo loft. Beginning in the early 2000s, he became more interested in the beauty aesthetic of images, still incorporating visual and conceptual playfulness.

His first solo exhibition at Friedman Benda, "Facts (Fuck) I Love You," which focuses on monumental photographs, reflects this shift; and a series of Ping-Pong paddles he calls "Preposition Paddles" revisits semantic themes from his earlier work. Included are two series of photographs: one with enlarged, colorful ribbons and a second documenting the charred remains of Rainbow Diner in upstate New York, which burnt down in July 2012. In the gallery, the photographs are arranged as diptychs, sometimes combining the series. Visual similarities, like a distorted reflection of a woman in a car and a flutter of orange, purple and green ribbons begin to arise, each imparting a new aesthetic tilt on the other, in this way reframing their background and context.

Also referencing a 1971 piece involving Ping-Pong paddles, Beckley devised 20 paddles with prepositions written on them in boldface. Words like "upon," "across," "between" and "near" conjure hitting a narrative Ping-Pong ball to the next passage of some imaginary story. In keeping true its teasing, double-take inducing nature, Beckley's work has in a sense has come full circle. But we're still looking forward to his next curveball.

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