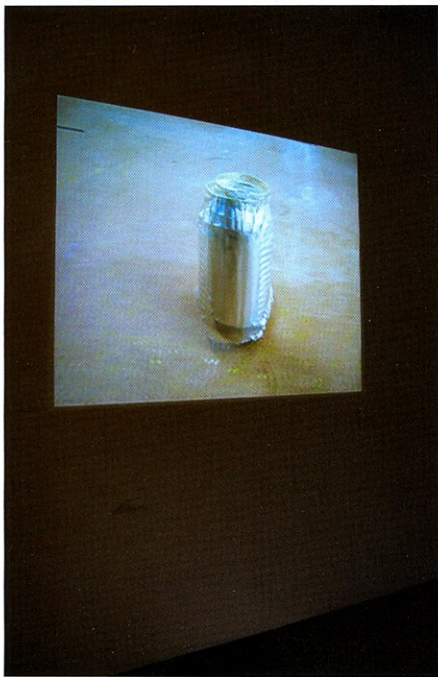


Kristan Horton

WHITE COLUMNS, NEW YORK

In April 2008, Kristan Horton presented his first solo exhibition in New York, at the downtown gallery White Columns. His video *Cig2Coke2Tin2Coff2Milk* (2006), which was featured in the White Gallery, is an animated sequence of transformation, decomposition, reversal, reconstitution and surprise. Or is it someone simply reshaping a du Maurier cigarette package into a simulacrum of a Coke can, an actual Coke can appearing and being changed into a sardine can, an actual sardine can appearing and being changed into...? Each change is carefully articulated but then reversed, and sometimes repeated; eventually a Starbucks cup and then a milk carton appear.



KRISTAN HORTON
Cig2Coke2Tin2Coff2Milk, 2006
DVD 6 min COURTESY JESSICA
BRADLEY ART + PROJECTS

In effect, the video forces the viewer (and the reviewer) to ask questions rather than find answers. Horton upsets our instinctual desire for purpose, sequential development, craft and illusion. The appearance on the screen of well-known branded objects sends us looking for a subliminal message. But any attempted analysis flounders; the packages and cans are simply familiar objects being changed into other familiar objects according to no particular pattern. There is no message here apart from the celebration of the sheer act of invention.

Are they random objects, then? Dada with some direction and purpose? No, the appearance in some frames of the hands of the artist and in others of small piles of putty used to hold a given object up while it is being transmogrified—not to mention the meticulous cutting and reconstructing involved—speaks of serious and sustained attention on the part of the artist. The objects are random, but are not treated randomly.

Why are the filmed transformations of the objects so jerky and lacking in conventional continuity? The video is obviously not meant to create an illusion or present the viewer with a technically slick production. There is an immediacy to the work that encourages the viewer to experience the hesitations, new thoughts and reconsiderations of its maker. And there is an ambiguity, even unpredictability, that invites viewing after viewing. The video can only be grasped in itself, not in the memory of its viewing.

For his 2004 work *Dr Strangelove Dr Strangelove*, Horton assembled objects in his studio to create rough replicas of scenes from the Kubrick movie, and spoke of "a need to manifest (the reality of the film) in life." In *Cig2Coke2Tin2Coff2Milk*, he seems to have felt a need to manifest the reality of his life in film. **TERRENCE HEATH**