

Techné
Collective Statement
By John Barkley

This exhibition is a much anticipated and welcome result of a series of informal meetings between the artists which began three years ago as a means to encourage artistic dialogue, development, and perseverance of each artist in his/her particular practice. Over the course of numerous meetings it became increasingly apparent that we share an approach to art making in which an emphasis is placed upon the process of making art. For it is in the process that we have a unique dialogue with materiality and our inner most self. The content which emerges from such a dialogue cannot fail to be revelatory and authentic.

In this age of technology we believe that the process of making art is increasingly important because it contributes to self-discovery and reaffirms our humanity. It provides a creative and informative avenue in which we can escape the monophasic utilitarian consciousness of “Mass Man” and his or her technological “Mass Society” and consequently begin to re-appropriate our authentic selves.

My practice is both therapeutic and self informative and the work functions to bring the viewer into his or her own experience with his or her own depths and consequently encounter a change in consciousness which can lead to inner and outer ecological change.
John R. Barkley

The process of making art, in our view, is not only therapeutic and self informative but the antithesis of the current zeitgeist (spirit of the time). For our time is characterized by an ever-increasing Cartesian mind-body split which can be observed in our alienation from natural materiality, and our alienation from our means of production. Our predicament is the existential inheritance of the positivist and modernist ideologies of progress. This progressive narrative was derived from an unexpected alliance between religious eschatology and enlightenment reason.

As a consequence of this predicament, facts, ideas, and art have often been conceived of in subject/object terms and consequently are evaluated according to a means/end structure. In other words, the truth of any particular thing or judgment is dependent upon its conformity to a pre-determined postulate and its ability to fulfill a desired utilitarian function. In artistic terms, objects become validated as art when they imitate art or the a priori assumptions of what constitutes art being.

Often this results in artistic endeavours which render the artistic process as a mere means to a predetermined end. The process and materiality of the work often become “used up” or subordinate to the text (theory) and to one-dimensional formulas often intended to be the visual counterpart of both textural criticism and fine art. In Heideggerian terms, the being of such objects are more appropriately categorized as equipment because the being of such objects rests on their dependability and usefulness, not their self-sufficiency.

Currently, artistic worth seems to be a derivative of one’s ability to transgress social conventionality by subverting institutional narratives and subsequently functioning to initiate socio-political progress. While the production of such art is often an admirable and a just usage of one’s artistic vocation, such art encounters the risk of being a mere didactic visual essay if the artistic process itself is disregarded. In addition, the appropriation of technology within the artistic practice of those of us sensitive to the projects of “other” based discourse must be profoundly examined.

Technology itself is rooted in an ideology of progress which does not seem to have an accompanying altruistic project. The idea of technological progress does not necessarily coincide with the establishment of a progressive and egalitarian society.

Technological advance can have detrimental effects upon people by alienating them from their means of production, nature, others, and themselves.

Before the development of a quicker means to an end, there was a higher level of interaction, discourse and exchange among peers, letters were hand-written and telephones answered. These processes offered a more personal encounter. Currently, progress has secluded individuals from the human experience through the dis-value of process. Consequently, my affinity for a creative experience has ultimately placed progress in a subordinate role. My practice yields the worth of process over progress.

Christos Pantieras

Our aim in this exhibit is one of placing emphasis upon the process of art making through a dialogue with the form and materiality of the medium in which the content of the work emerges from the being of the work. We become co-producers of the work through a process of inter-connected dialogue with its emergence and materiality. This is why we have chosen to title the exhibit Techné

which in Heideggerian terms refers to the manifestation of being through the medium of the artist (as Dasein). Here the artist is able to let something emerge as a thing that has been brought forth through a mode of knowing characterized by the unconcealment of being or physis.

I focus on the materiality of art making, taking the time to find materials that have inherent aesthetic value of their own, allowing the medium to be an active voice in the work. My primary concern lies with the medium and its role in the process of art making and its ability to communicate a subjective response to myself and any potential viewer of the work. The content of the work is also important, yet I do not maintain that the work should be an illustration of an idea, or a didactic means of communicating. Rather, the piece, by means of the materials and medium, delivers the content of the work.

Amy Jenkins

Thus, in our view, Techné is the antithesis of technological production because objects derived from Techné are brought forth from unconcealment, or from one's depths, and are therefore inherently self sufficient, while the being of a technological object is predetermined and dependent upon its deployment, usefulness, and reliability.

Techné

Artist's Statement

By John Barkley

My approach within my artistic practice can be characterized as a dialogue with material substances which tends to result in a content within the work that stresses the process of artistic making which is remarkably similar to processes of transformation within nature. In my work emphasis is placed upon the materiality and fluidity of the medium and therefore the work acquires a very organic like presence. In order to accentuate this organic presence I often integrate lead and machined parts within the work and consequently their utilitarian function is not only subverted by the object's mere recontextualization, but they function to enhance the organic quality of the work by their metallic contrast. An opaque industrial palette is often combined with fleshy, and transparent earthy colors and

this also tends to emphasize the struggle between Apollonian and Dionysian nature of contemporary existence. One critic made the following remark after viewing several of my pieces:

I also like the huge violent and intense oil paintings by John Barkley; this is abstract expressionism with recycled materials stuck on in relief on the canvas, all dripping earth colours as though we were watching seepage, spills, and the disintegration of the planet... something disquieting about his work.

Alvina Ruprecht, CBC Radio

My work is also a result of my artistic process which is motivated by an attempt to discern and cope with the reality of my contemporary existential existence and locate some form of transcendental purpose and being within it.

My experience within the studio is a catalyst for my departure from a mode of modern secular monophasic consciousness into an experience of interconnected consciousness with nature and all living things.

My practice is both therapeutic and self informative and the work, whether it is large scale organic nature inspired images, or archetypal depictions, functions as an attempt to bring the viewer into his or her own experience with his or her own depths and consequently encounter a change in consciousness which can lead to inner and outer ecological change.