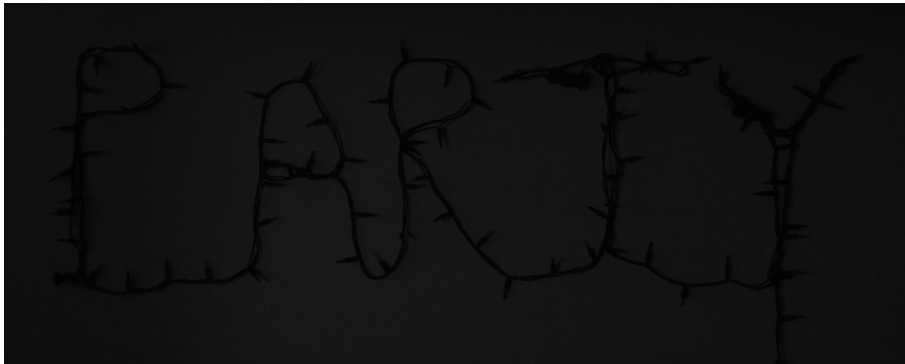


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Inside the Outside Club Zeb Zang



Kevin Schmidt

Contemporary Art Gallery
555 Nelson Street
Through June 1

Two rooms are lit by distinct projections. The first is still, the blue curve of the earth embraced by the dark expanse of space; the other is in motion, a rural house speckled with lights that pulsate in time to catchy Electronic Dance Music (EDM). The projections are immediately seductive, but outside these rooms this seduction is diluted with explanation: a calligraphic poster outlining of the building blocks of EDM hangs a few steps from the apparatus used to capture the projected photo of earth. These add humour and character to each project respectively, while expanding the focus of this exhibit by the artist Kevin Schmidt into a narrative outside the gallery.

Looking beyond the exhibit it should be noted that extremely similar visual iterations of both these works, which predate Schmidt's pieces, are easily

found online. What is more interesting, however, than a conversation concerning why analogous endeavors fall on different sides of the art/non-art divide, is the way these works relate to DJing. Maybe it's all the EDM in the air, but certain aspects of Schmidt's exhibit inevitably tie him to the DJ. This proposition of Schmidt as artist-DJ is fed from the combination of two aspects of his work. The first is his cultural sampling and replay that taps into hobbyist aviation, Christmas decorations and bedroom music production. The second is the actual experience of Schmidt's work paralleling that of an early DJ set, with a surrogate for a live event used to create a new primary experience.

The DJ's production is always an encounter with the document-as-event and not the event itself. In the darkened gallery viewers are confronted with a photograph, a video and perhaps subsequent questions regarding the apparatus used to produce these works. The insertion of an apparatus creates an important intellectual distance between the event and the documentation thus allowing the possibility of a gap between the content of the work and its intention (aka irony) to enter. There is a natural assumption that events occurring outside a controlled space are not ironic in nature, however the distance of representation throws this assumption into question. The recording allows the event to be indexed and

entered into a larger web of connections with other works from which it may be borrowing. It can then easily be understood in terms of appropriation or replay, activities that most often deal with either a discussion of mechanical reproduction and simulation or a means of highlighting the flaws of the thing being reproduced.

The question, then, is what purpose does the critique of amateur creative production through a more skillful replay serve? Perhaps the work is more than simply a sardonic criticism of suburban tropes and instead embodies a desire to closely parallel a type of unselfconscious yet fully dedicated production. To have experienced Schmidt's EDM House first hand as a flashing light spectrum on a dark mountain highway with shortwave radio pumping music into a car stereo would all but eclipse the experience of its document and notions of satire. This is because in that moment the work could easily be misunderstood as an uncontrived, serendipitous occurrence and maintain an attraction through its mystery. We enjoy a DJ set possibly because we take the record as reality, and we enjoy these more surreptitious forms of art because they appear to be natural local occurrences. What is most compelling in such works is that they present the possibility of an experience that lacks the artifice of art.

Zeb Zang