

eva international — After the Future

biennial of visual Art,
curated by **Annie Fletcher**
Limerick City, Ireland
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REVIEW BY JOHN GAYER

Marcel Broodthaers: [Various Works](#)
KwieKulik: [Activities with Dobromierz](#)
Limerick City Gallery of Art
103/4 O'Connell St.

The idea of the slide show recalls boardroom presentations, family gatherings, and art history lectures. It speaks of being subjected to sales pitches, instructional procedures and statistical data, vacation highlights, family histories, and overviews of architectural developments and painterly shifts in modes of representation. Thoughts of such events transport us back to darkened rooms and the calming hum of the projector fan, of being immersed in a vivid procession of images or patiently waiting for a less than stimulating session to end. Such associations colour encounters with the work of Marcel Broodthaers and KwieKulik. Situated in the context of an art exhibition, the slide show looks strangely out of place. Though the projector and diapositive have become obsolete,¹ this didactic aide simultaneously conjures a host of personal memories and still astounds us with what it has to show.

Marcel Broodthaers' *Sex-Film* (1971–72), *Ombres Chinoises* (1973–74), and *Images d'Épinal* (1974) mark a departure from the standard slide show as they present narratives having no logical beginning, middle or end. Comprised largely of appropriated illustrations that are projected on an ongoing basis, the projections constitute a continuous present. The implausible sequence of 19th century colour illustrations of flowers, soldiers, and oversized kitchen utensils seen in *Images d'Épinal*, for example, defies meaning. Viewers are left to focus on the images' naïve style and their inadvertent sentimentality. Curiosity over the work's title led to the consultation of a French-English dictionary, but the process only brought me back to the projection's vexing attributes. Outside of

implying annoyance, the term *épine*—the French word for thorn—bore no connection. Turns out the title does double duty. It refers to the French town where such images were printed and operates as an expression that means 'stereotypical image'.² Other self-referential nods appear in the form of two black-and-white renderings. One depicts a magic lantern, an early form of projector; the other shows a sailing ship, which points to *Bateau Tableau* (1973), a Broodthaers projection shown in Ireland late last year.³ Whereas *Bateau Tableau* presents in depth visual examination of a ship painting that shifts between the image and its technical characteristics, *Images d'Épinal* only harbours a wisp of such content. It focuses on the superficial quality of mass produced pictures. The idea of stereotype conveyed by the title bears no social dimension.

KwieKulik's *Activities with Dobromierz* (1972–74) contrasts sharply with Broodthaers' unflinchingly cool approach. Regrettably, experiencing the digitised version of this multi-projector work proved unnerving. Though the loss of the projectors' physical presence—all the expected clicking and whirring of fans—forms one of the compromises associated with preserving and restoring art, the idea that the work now exists as a shadow of its former self constituted a lingering impression. The images offer a remarkable glimpse into life in Soviet-era Poland where KwieKulik do a lot with a minimum of means. Hovering somewhere between family photos and conceptualist photodocumentation, the work reveals stages in the infant's development and his unwitting presence and participation in a practice encompassing environmental projects, performance, and process art. The activities take place in a cramped and poorly furnished apartment, and various outdoor locations. Dobromierz lies on the floor, sits in a bucket and stands atop furniture. The child is frequently surrounded by assorted objects that include tools, onions, even the entrails of a chicken. These materials may be stacked, wrapped, or encircle the boy in various ways; at times they virtually engulf him. Outside, the artists resort to using ice chunks or drawing in the soil. Grouped according to date, the images comprising its chapters express endless variety and convey a Surrealist air. The projection, in effect, feels like a sketchbook in which a broad range of indirectly related visual rhythms and moods have been recorded. It is individualistic and, as such, subverts aspects of socialist doctrine. But more importantly, it seems to derive from the artists' need to celebrate life with their



Top
 Marcel Broodthaers
Images d'Epinal
 (1974)
 Dimensions variable
 Slide projection,
 80 slides, colour,
 duration 9'20''

Collection Van Abbemuseum
 Eindhoven, The Netherlands
 Photo: Peter Gie, Eindhoven,
 The Netherlands

Below
 KwieKulik
Activities with
 Dobromierz
 (1972-74 digitised 2008)
 HD video, three-screen
 slide installation
 32'00''

Image courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw

new son. Despite an extreme lack of resources, KwieKulik produce a visually rich presentation that is tender, amusing and bizarre. Using humdrum materials, their work transcends an economically depressed reality.

Though they derive out of distinctly dissimilar cultural environments, Broodthaers' and KwieKulik's projections complement each other in an inverse way. Whereas Broodthaers treats his readymade subjects in non-hierarchical fashion by randomly ordering slides and exposing each one for the same amount of time, KwieKulik chose to accentuate several of their strikingly unusual agglomerations by intimating movement and using multiple perspectives. In contrast to Broodthaers' clinical isolation of features, KwieKulik like to mix things up. Their work is fluid; it blends life with art, and stresses playfulness. Both artists arouse our curiosity in the peripheral and mundane. They prove that there are alternate ways of seeing the things around us. As such, their works provide highly informative experiences.

1. Kodak, for example, stopped producing slide projectors in 2004 and discontinued slide film earlier this year. Available at: <http://slideprojector.kodak.com/> and <http://www.theverge.com/2012/3/3/2841202/kodak-stops-producing-slide-film-due-to-lack-of-demand>. (Accessed 24 June 2012)

2. Marcel Broodthaers: Plug In #12. Available at: [http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/browse-all/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1\[ptype\]=18&tx_vabdisplay_pi1\[project\]=75&cHash=8a97591ff7](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/browse-all/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1[ptype]=18&tx_vabdisplay_pi1[project]=75&cHash=8a97591ff7) (Accessed 25 June 2012)

3. *Bateau Tableau* (1973) was exhibited at the Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, in 2011. Available at: <http://www.mermaidartscentre.ie/exhibitions/details/julie-merriman-marcel-broodthaers> (Accessed 24 June, 2012)



Top & Bottom

KwieKulik

Activities with
Dobromierz

(1972-74 digitised 2008)

HD video, three-screen
slide installation

32' 00"

Images courtesy of Raster Gallery, Warsaw