

HILARY BERSETH | KEVIN ZUCKER

*Reverse Turing Tests*

October 9 – November 9, 2008 | 11 Rivington St, NY

Eleven Rivington is pleased to present a two-person exhibition featuring new sculptures by Hilary Berseth and recent collaborative 'curated' paintings by Kevin Zucker, on view from October 9 – November 9, 2008. Both artists work within systems to investigate how images and forms are constructed, classified, and named. The exhibition's title reformulates a thought experiment proposed by Alan Turing, the father of modern computer science. Turing's test determines whether a machine can possess intelligence: if a machine can perform a thinking task and arrive at the same result as an intelligent human given the same problem, then we must assume that the machine is intelligent in the same way as the human. A Reverse Turing test poses the inverse question: can a human imitate the way a machine thinks? The show's title reflects Berseth and Zucker's shared interest in programming systems that replace artistic decision making with processes that generate unexpected outcomes, simulating creativity. The title 'Reverse Turing Tests' also hints at their connected dialogue with the computer as medium, content, and metaphor.

Hilary Berseth will present four sculptures: two honeybee comb sculptures from an ongoing series, and a pair of new copper works. All of these are created using a similar process: a generative structure is placed into a system which then reacts to and grows from the initial form. The comb sculptures, from the Programmed Hivesseries, were grown over the spring and summer by colonies of bees in Berseth's specially designed hives. Starting from armatures of wax and wires, the bees colonize the structure, changing and adapting the architecture to suit their needs. The resulting works are a hybrid of the man-made and the bee-made. The comb sculptures are shown atop the hives in which they were created. A recent pair of works in copper explores growth in the unlikely inorganic medium of electroplating. The works develop in engineered tanks filled with a copper-rich chemical solution. Electricity coursed through the sculptural armature creates an attractive field that deposits metal on the form. As the metal builds on the armature, the electrical field is modified, which in turn attracts a different deposition of copper. This feedback loop, played out copper ion by copper ion trillions of times over weeks, evolves the quasi-organic growth of the sculptures. Berseth's four sculptures straddle the boundary between nature and artifice, programming and chance. They derive from simple systems and basic forms, yet generate a surprising degree of complexity.

For this exhibition, Kevin Zucker made five acrylic, pencil, and silkscreen paintings of empty generic metal shelving units, each of which was given a distinct subject and title by the artist. He then solicited contributions from a total of 53 artists for the five paintings. The participating artists were asked to respond to a given painting's subject by submitting an image to be placed in a designated location on a shelf. Most of the contributions were created specifically for the paintings, while some artists submitted images of existing work or collected source material that fit their painting's subject. These contributions were then printed on top of the existing empty shelf painting using an oversized inkjet printer, filling the shelves and creating a thematically curated group exhibition within each painting. The idea of a painting as a space for the collection, archiving, curation, display, and storage of existing information, rather than as a zone for creation or expression, has been central to Zucker's recent work. While the role of the hand is consciously minimized in these pieces, painterly accidents and pencil drawing remain present alongside the silkscreen and digital printing techniques employed.

Hilary Berseth was born in 1979, educated at Columbia University (BA) and currently lives and works in Doylestown, PA; his recent group exhibitions include Mary Boone gallery, NY, and Guild & Greyshkul, NY. Kevin Zucker was born 1976 and received degrees from RISD (BFA) and Columbia University (MFA); his recent solo exhibitions include Greenberg Van Doren, NY, Linn Luehn, Cologne, and Arario, Beijing.