

Alexander Muret

*Threeminutethirtyseconds, I am inconsistent and not to be relied upon*

8 Apr - 6 May 2022

4361 Melrose Ave, Los Angeles, CA

*Threeminutethirtyseconds, I am inconsistent and not to be relied upon* consists of artwork in the form of sculpture, video, painting, and objects, with attention to exhibition-making as an artistic medium. In his work, Muret investigates the fantasy of creativity and the production of fantasy, with the concept of creativity understood as a modern term with ideological implications.

Endings correspond with a kind of death. In *Threeminutethirtyseconds*, it's the death of the idea, the immaterial form which initializes movement. The pieces in *Untitled Set* (2015-2022), a work consisting of several wall and floor based components arranged across the space, have a precarious ontology as art-objects and provide a lead on how one might read the exhibition. For the artist, artwork in a state of incompleteness is a means of maintaining the function and enjoyment of fantasy, preserving the possibility of multiple or perfect endings.

From a Lacanian view, we can read the fantasmatic scene – the imagined experience of completion, satisfaction, possession – as the true site of enjoyment, not the real experience of completion or possession itself. Fantasy is the scene in which you get what you want. When you actually get what you want, your desire defers. Muret's extensive set work vies with physicality and potency to spatialize and placeholder creative thought. This frustrated effort, collectively taking on the appearance of a scenographic situation or the early production stage of set design, uses a materialist vocabulary of art supplies and supports for attempting fidelity to shifting desire. Antagonism to completion, which could serve as one definition for procrastination, can be interpreted as an avoidance strategy, avoiding the inevitable, painfully anticlimactic lack of the imagined possibility.

Beginnings are typically the site of excitement because they enable fantasy of the end. As *Untitled Set* (2015–2022) stages possible courses of creative action with physical objects, *My New, Dramatic Condition* (2022), imparts a similar relationship to starting points in the medium of video. As his first moving image work, Muret fixes an obstructing image of two speakers on the projected screen over a sequence of scenes, in a rhythm and indeterminacy reminiscent of psychological space and action. In *My New, Dramatic Condition*, representation of inner and outer-world blur with the help of a complex soundtrack, metaphorically foregrounded through the use of imagic speakers, and gives the impression of edging a psychological barrier. The viewer passes through moods of foreboding tension and melodic or silent relief, in an experience comparable to the processual of cognition itself.

*I am inconsistent and not to be relied upon* (2022), Muret's part-titular work, assumes the form of a paper-mache New York City streetlight produced to scale, ornamented with miniature canvases marketed point-of-sale at art supply stores, painted with a process of negation using modeling paste, and depicting characters in the mode of cuteness. Exposure therapy and the psychoanalytic experience gave rise to the subjective statement the work bears as title. Confessional, humiliating, and potentially endearing, this expression was originally engaged to practical ends, the practice being exposure to feared stimuli and the goal being integration of dissonant identities. Typically a therapeutic technique treating phobias, the artist used this form of therapy for symbolic ends, subjecting himself to identifications incompatible with his self-concept. In a strategy of self-negating versus popular practice of self-affirming, the task is enduring the nervous system response, to encounter ego threat and break down the ego defenses. As a complementary practice, analysis was undertaken to produce further expressions of egoic dissonance. In the psychoanalytic discourse, the aims of analysis are often defined as identification and subjective destitution – two ideas explored with the sculpture's characters and the formal manner in which they're rendered.

The installation *L8ck* (2022), the only work to have its own room, makes the space and substance of the unconscious tangible. To access this work, which is not evident unless being told or turning to the press release, one must go behind a large freestanding wall, past black curtains, and step up onto a stage. This room is all black, containing a black steel sculpture with a single spotlight for illumination. The work's title has its own code, where the character 8 acts as a stand-in for possible vowels – lack, lick, lock, luck. A theory of the unconscious becomes neatly condensed in this schematic – Lack as ontological condition, lick as libido, lock as repression, and luck as analysis. The unconscious, by its nature, can only be accessed by luck, and what one finds there is problematic. The sculpture, discerned through mangled steel, appears to be a black steel desk missing its top. Here we can use another reading of the title: 8 as infinity, infinite lack; the repressed truth in the pursuit of creativity.