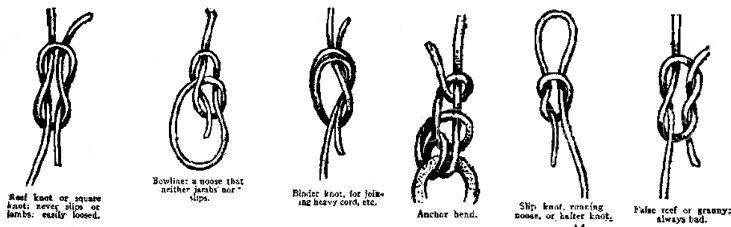


Henrik Olesen/Danh Vo

“Master-Slave Dialectic“

2 September – 22 October 2011

MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC DANH VO HENRIK OLESEN



liberty |'libərtē| noun (pl. **-ties**)

1 the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behavior, or political views : *compulsory retirement would interfere with individual liberty.*

bondage |'bändij|noun

1 the state of being a slave :

- figurative a state of being greatly constrained by circumstances or obligations :

We are used to think of power as what presses the subject from the outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and regulates to a lower order. But if we understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the path of its desire, then power is not simply what we disagree with but also, what we depend on for our existence.

Independent and Dependent Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage

In G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the Master-Slave relation is portrayed in the meeting between two self-conscious beings. Each being is deeply absorbed in the business of living, and each one sees the other as a barrier to his own control of the world.

To gain recognition, they engage in a life-and-death struggle, before one enslaves the other.

In respect for his master, and shattered by little self-identification, the slave is put to work.

As the slave creates more and more products with greater and greater sophistication through his own creativity, he begins to see himself reflected in the products he created, he realizes that the world around him was created by his own hands.

Following Hegel, if the creation of the world is the result of oppressed labor; still, the true struggle is the struggle for recognition. Although both possessed by the Master, the slave recognized that the world around him is the world he has made. Still, the terror that seizes him with his recognition of freedom appears to culminate in the simultaneous fabrication of ethical norms and the loss of the bodily condition of his own life. The Master, who as first appears to be “external” to the slave, re-emerges as the slave's own conscience, in the sense of right and wrong. The effect is the transformation of the master into a psychic reality.

Paradoxically, there is no way for the master, on his own, to escape his own form of dependence and isolation. He realizes that this does not give him the control over the world he had sought.

Self-consciousness is consciousness aware of its own unity and purpose. But it is also consciousness divided, isolated from other consciousness. Apparently, self-consciousness, or subjectivity, is a lack of something.

And freedom has its beginning here – in desire.

The collaborative exhibition of **Danh Vo** and **Henrik Olesen** consists of new works that move around an understanding of the idea of Freedom and Bondage as a shattered cliché. The work of **Danh Vo** examines the theme of one exclusive cultural image of "liberty". Five identical blueprints of a sheer plan of the head of the Statue of Liberty rendered for the occasion of its first comprehensive restoration in 1984 taken from the Ellis Island Immigration Library are covered with gold leaf. Each of these five identical blueprints has an individual title:

"Obey Your Thirst", 2011
Gold leaf on blueprint in perspex box
70 x 105 cm / 77 x 112 x 3,5 cm

"Oh What A Feeling" 2011
Gold leaf on blueprint in perspex box
70 x 105 cm / 77 x 112 x 3,5 cm

"Live Free Or Die", 2011
Gold leaf on blueprint in perspex box
70 x 105 cm / 77 x 112 x 3,5 cm

"Fly Like An Eagle", 2011
Gold leaf on blueprint in perspex box
70 x 105 cm / 77 x 112 x 3,5 cm

"Impossible Is Nothing" 2011
Gold leaf on blueprint in perspex box
70 x 105 cm / 77 x 112 x 3,5 cm

The work of **Henrik Olesen** portrays fragmentation, repetition and dependency. An electrical cord has repetitively been cast/reproduced following the course of its running, unconcealed and laid on top of the walls and is installed in different locations throughout the antiquarian bookstore and the gallery:

Cast 1, 2011
Polyurethan cast, 404 cm

Cast 2, 2011
Polyurethan cast, 543 cm

Cast 3, 2011
Polyurethan cast, 300 cm

Cast 4, 2011
Polyurethan cast, 275 cm & 338 cm

Cast 5, 2011
Polyurethan cast, 631 cm

Cast 6, 2011
Polyurethan cast, 310 cm