

drink, how that sheen reflects the green of the olive in the clear liquid, how that reflection finds a distant echo in the translucent surface of a nearby glass ashtray. This rich accumulation of effects is much more than just a visual rendering of what the artist saw. Contemplating the painting, you almost feel the sensation of the cold drink hitting your tongue. The picture engenders an illusion that induces a physical reaction, and that's what makes seeing more than a purely visual process. One is reminded of Vermeer, in whose paintings light is always more than merely an optical effect. A certain lightness, a sense of weightlessness, even a hint of eroticism are at the heart of the mystery inhabiting Vermeer's pictures, despite their lucidity. And Blair's art, like Vermeer's, exudes a sense of solitude even in the absence of human subjects, additionally bringing the work of Edward Hopper to mind.

Besides the gouaches, this show included the sculpture *OHCE*, 2014, an ensemble of wooden art-shipping crates. At first glance, they seem entirely unrelated to the paintings. But some of their surfaces are painted, variously suggesting the sky or a landscape; a framed painting hangs from the back of each crate. With their austere geometric shapes, the crates resemble Donald Judd's Minimalist objects, but unlike those objects, they're never only what they seem at first sight. The painted surfaces lend them an illusionistic quality, something they share with the gouaches.

In another interview, Blair has spoken of a sense of mystery that emerges from his work. But what's the source of that mystery? And, perhaps more important, what does it signify? The enigma is the fruit of an approach that employs a variety of means—most saliently, effects of light—to manufacture illusions, as in the painted cocktail glass. That's where the ultimate sincerity of Blair's pictures and installations lies: in demonstrating that seeing is never untinted by illusion.

—Noemi Smolik

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

ZURICH

Emanuel Rossetti

KARMA INTERNATIONAL

The bell may symbolize both the individual and collective management of social and ideological space, as exemplified by the Western church bell. Bells wake us, alert us to threats, and signal the flow of labor time. But they can be ignored, and they can be sabotaged. Emanuel Rossetti has employed bells as actual objects in the past, notably at the Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland, in 2014, where his *Gallery Bells* idly occupied a dramatic crimson carpet, except for occasional moments when an electronic sequencer would cause them to ring. For this exhibition, he chose the more expansive title "International Bells," while reducing them to the two-dimensionality of his so-called film stills, a category the artist previously reserved for similarly computer-rendered images of doughnut forms. One of the new series on view here, "Quarry Bells," 2016–, visually retains the indulgence in prosumer simulacra, and by extension, a certain mystique verging on the trivial that all of Rossetti's images have in common. Placed deep inside quarries, as the title suggests, the bells are modeled and lit in such a way as to fully bring out their reflective surface effects, either absorbing their backgrounds or, by contrast, denying optical depth and information. What appear to be formal dualisms get quickly sucked into the semiotic triangles Rossetti seems to enjoy flipping in Conceptualist fashion, updated for an age of slippery referents planted by trolling authors. In *Edüt* (all works 2016), a pair of shiny scissors floats before a grainy background depicting, I was told, the stony catacombs of Paris. Evoking the schoolyard game rock-paper-scissors, that image links thematically to a suite of unusually



Emanuel Rossetti,
Quarry Bell, 2016,
C-print, 16 1/8 x 25 1/8".
From the series
"Quarry Bells," 2016–.

shaped dice (*Nontransitive Dodecahedron I, II, and III*) that might be familiar to fantasy gamer communities—think *Dungeons & Dragons* and its many online variations—and seems to transpose the imaginary to yet another principle: probability. The dice rendered in *Nontransitive Dodecahedron* as well as in *Nontransitive Dice* are designed in such a way that each die has unequal chances of beating the other two in any given game, as illustrated in a slightly nerdy wall visualization.

The comparably small scale of these works, not least in relation to the ample space, and their lightweight, almost low-budget shininess and "digitalness" belie the headache-inducing tension that binds the series together (insofar as the works deflect topics of populism and subversion that were deliberated in an accompanying press release). What's being juggled here, one suspects, is nothing less than perceptions of factual certainty and ultimately *truth* as subject matter, vis-à-vis a media environment in which precisely these standards have become subject to around-the-clock tampering to the ends of "normalization." *Nontransitive Dice*, with its three manipulated faux-chromed dice simultaneously reflecting angles of themselves and those of their chthonic backdrop, is intriguing not only as image but as allegory, one onto which timely anxieties over universal rigging and speciousness may be projected. It is this allusion to and yet detached abstraction of rather grand and acutely current themes—systems of control and of cognition—that lend the work a dry postmodernist veneer, heightened by its sleekness and a taste for faintly pixelated artifice. One could picture *Nontransitive Dice* as cover art for any Jean Baudrillard reprint, given the comeback of that theorist's media critiques in some quarters of the New Left. The experience of all this is more bedazzling than enlightening, which may very well be the artist's intent—perhaps a stoicism toward mounting calls for professional image-making to be put in the service of explicit opposition to governmental deceit.

—Daniel Horn

VIENNA

Cécile B. Evans

GALERIE EMANUEL LAYR

Ask a robot, "What's the weather like?" and you risk the response, "What's the weather?" This punch line repeats throughout Cécile B. Evans's growing oeuvre, which explores the psychological repercussions of the increasing encroachment of artificial intelligence into a terrain previously thought to belong exclusively to the human soul. Using videos, installations, holograms, and now what she calls an "automated play," Evans questions our expectations regarding our relationships with