



Richard Forster: Notes on Architecture

Exhibition Dates: June 6—August 16, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 6, 6-8pm

The FLAG Art Foundation | 545 West 25th Street, NY

The FLAG Art Foundation is pleased to present the U.S. debut of *Richard Forster: Notes on Architecture* on view **June 6–August 16, 2019**, on its 10th floor. *Notes on Architecture* expands upon the British artist's recurring themes of social change, nostalgia, and a fear of the future, with inspiration drawn from the increasingly congested and confused geo-political climate of Brexit Britain—a nation divided along old political lines and economic fissures.

Richard Forster's thirty-five new photocopy-realistic¹ drawings, which originated as an artist book, stem from the artist's stream of consciousness and idiosyncratic visual vocabulary. Created between 2016–2018 and collectively titled *Notes on Architecture*, the works in the exhibition feature subject-matters including: pre-planned suburban housing developments; ostalgia² of the former German Democratic Republic; Hollywood starlet Jean Harlow in Griffith Park; Erich Mendelsohn-designed buildings on fire; Louis Sullivan decoration in Chicago; neon lights in Las Vegas; the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral; an iconic sign outside the now-defunct Better Days nightclub in New York City; and Tatlin's Tower wheeled through the streets of St. Petersburg as agitprop³. This sequence of drawings culminates with variations of the 1894 silent film *Annabelle Butterfly Dance*⁴ imagined alongside a Ron Hardy set from the Music Box, a Chicago house music club.

Forster's small-scale drawings first appear as trompe l'oeil newspapers, aged black and white photographs, books, and archival footage in grisaille and muted colors—some so densely detailed they nearly slip into abstraction. Upon closer inspection, the artist's preternatural facility with graphite, ink, acrylic, and watercolor becomes visible. In his recent work, Forster has introduced literal collage elements, as well as an increased use of gouache and watercolor on found surfaces to create tonal shifts and more diverse textures. "The use of book covers in a linear sequence involving a narrative of pictures but few words," Forster states, "is an attempt not only to involve found color and texture, but a nod to the book form in its' entirety. The introduction of gouache /watercolor allows me the dual faculty of being truthful to some original source matter already in color and untruthful to existing black and white source matter where color becomes additive, imaginative and symbolic."

Presented in a chronological sequence, the images—ranging from monuments to bygone starlets to architectural fragments—illustrate Forster's interest in contrasting different political eras, ideas of what the future could have been, and architecture's role in shaping that once hopeful future. Forster's associative and expansive visual approach aligns more closely with Georges Bataille's use of architecture as metaphor, for which "(...)Architecture represents a religion that it brings alive, a political power that it manifests, an event that I commemorate, etc. Architecture, before any other qualifications, is identical to the space of representation; it always represents something other than itself from the moment that it becomes distinguished from mere building."⁵

This is the first comprehensive presentation of a new body of Forster's work in the U.S. since the artist's 2012 solo exhibition at FLAG, following his participation in *Drawn from Photography*, The Drawing Center, New York, NY, in 2011.

¹ "The 'Photocopy-Realistic' Drawings of Richard Foster," *Artsy*, June 2, 2014.

² In German culture, Ostalgie is nostalgia for aspects of life in Communist East Germany. It is a portmanteau of the German words Ost (east) and Nostalgie (nostalgia). Its anglicized equivalent, ostalgia (rhyming with "nostalgia"), is also sometimes used.

³ Agitprop, abbreviated from Russian agitatsiya propaganda (agitation propaganda), political strategy in which the techniques of agitation and propaganda are used to influence and mobilize public opinion.

⁴ *Annabelle Butterfly Dance* is an 1894 silent film produced the Edison Manufacturing Company, directed by William Kennedy Dickson, and starring Annabelle Moore. In the short film, Annabelle performs one of her popular dances while wearing a diaphanous butterfly costume.

⁵ Hollier, Denis. *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*. Translated by Betsy Wing, MIT Press, 1992.

The FLAG Art Foundation

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June: Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-5pm | July & August: Tuesday-Friday, 11am-5pm

Richard Forster: Notes on Architecture will travel to **Timothy Taylor**, London, from **November 15-December 20, 2019**. A fully illustrated catalogue produced by the artist will accompany the exhibition.

About:

Richard Forster (b. 1970, Saltburn-by-the Sea, United Kingdom) is an artist living and working in northern England. Recent solo exhibitions include *Levittown*, De la Warr Pavilion, United Kingdom (2016); *Modern*, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, United Kingdom, (2015); *Fast and Slow Time*, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough, United Kingdom (2011), which traveled to The FLAG Art Foundation, New York, NY (2012); among others. Forster's works has been included in numerous group exhibitions, including *Drawn Together Again*, The FLAG Art Foundation, New York, NY (2019); *Resistance and Persistence*, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh, United Kingdom (2015); *personal, political, mysterious*, Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, TX (2013); *Drawn from Photography*, The Drawing Center, New York, NY (2011); among others. His work is part of the permanent collections of include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Tate Gallery, London.

The FLAG Art Foundation, founded in 2008 by art patron Glenn Fuhrman, is a non-profit exhibition space that encourages the appreciation of contemporary art among a diverse audience. FLAG presents four to six exhibitions a year that includes artworks by international established and emerging artists, borrowed from a variety of sources. FLAG invites a broad range of creative individuals to curate exhibitions and works in-depth with artists to provide curatorial support and a platform to realize their own solo exhibitions.

FLAG's innovative approach to foster dialogue around contemporary art includes producing artist talks, artist-led workshops, and exhibition tours for school and museum groups. Based in the heart of Manhattan's Chelsea art district, FLAG and all its related programs are free and open to the public.

Join the conversation online and follow FLAG's Instagram (@flagartfoundation) and Twitter (@FLAGartNYC) and use the #RichardForster hashtag when posting.