ARTFORUM

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Claire Bishop on the superabundance of research based art

by Claire Bishop

The trajectory of research based art then touches and illuminates a wide range of contemporary concerns and practices. Although it may be of interest to academic members, we have felt the difficulty of seeing such image exhibitions since the historical home of the 'eye. The need for alternative triage for such exhibitions become evident after the turn of the millennium. Documents, i.e. artists, between facilitated more than an historical basis of exhibition and discussion of such work. Since the mid-1990s, at least a hundred day exhibitions. Of course, the larger context for such visual saturation has become unfamiliar culture. The pressure placed upon the visual arts to be more than visual, to be more than aesthetic, to be more than a commodity, to be more than a commodity, to be more than consumer's consideration, as measured by clicks on pop-up, sponsored posts, personalized offers, etc.

> **The stakes have changed. Some formal strategies might need to be rethought.**

My concern here is too with the effects of standardized advertising than with the visual and semantic interference to which we have become habituated and the perceptual routines that have formed and hardened in response. I have mentioned elsewhere the idea of a "visual culture" that is fast-paced, reading, scroll-down, rapid-fire. I have developed over these years from the selective lifelooking of vision (being able to read a text despite the flashing banner so as to be released peripheral attention (reading my phone while walking down the street). I have trained myself to switch quickly among multiple tasks and to ignore most of what I see. Contemporary art has been a training ground for such skills as well as other skills, I think I hadn't needed to acquire.

Two key critics for the new stakes of literary and spectatorship that have emerged in the past two decades are attending and sampling. When attending, we anticipate our reading to get the gist (in the average web page, one, clearly experts, some read about six percent of the words.) "The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains" (2010) pays attention-calling. Sampling, by contrast, is what scientists do when a data set is too large to be analyzed in full. A subset is selected for analysis, results are inferred and then generalized back to the larger set. This is arguably the best way to experience research-heavy installations within a reasonable time frame. Sampling is the way I read, for instance, the work of Hans Haacke and Lucy Lippard (also). We have to assume that the artist doesn't expect us to digest all the material on display, just to taste a few dishes.

Museum we decide to tackle such installations, the effects of reading must bear directly on our literacy as viewers of art. When large amounts of text are displayed on an installation, it is more likely to be experienced as a combination of data overload rather than as a sensuous respite. This is not to say that such work should be left out of contemporary art exhibitions. Rather, the point is that the craft of assembling language, and how it is presented, needs to transcend problem contextualization. Text is never neutral but is shaped by the mode of its delivery.

Mark Bradford, Funk Station 1 (with Office), 2008. Mixed media on paper and canvas, fabric, wood, and metal, 108 x 144 x 24 inches. Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Gift of Lannan Foundation, Lannan Collection, and Museum Purchase, Gift of Lannan Foundation, Lannan Collection, Lannan Foundation, Lannan Collection, Lannan Foundation, Lannan Collection,