

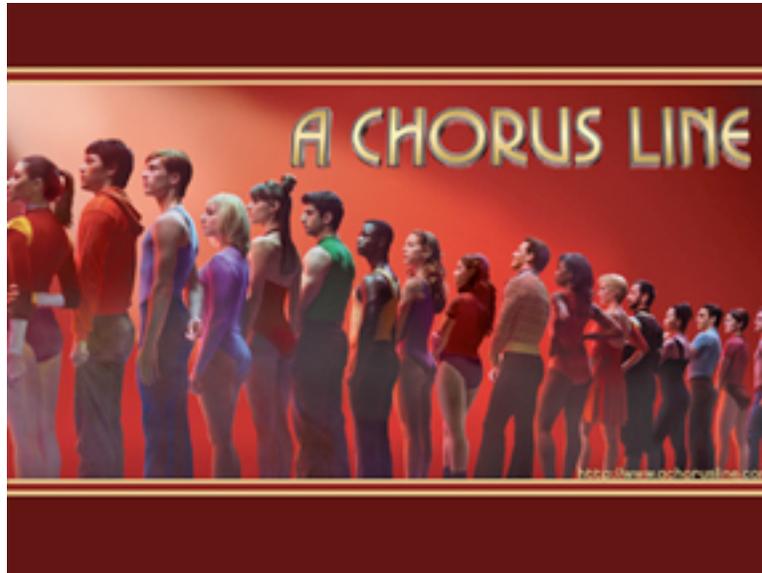
MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Scott Lyall
a dancer dances

Dates: September 10 – October 22, 2006

Reception: Sunday, September 10, 6:30 – 9 PM



Learn about A Chorusline and obtain advanced tickets by contacting the official 2006 revival website / www.achorusline.com

“Traditions are beautiful—but to create them—not to follow.”
—Franz Marc, motto of the *Société Anonyme*

Opening on Sunday, September 10th, Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to present *a dancer dances*, an exhibition by Scott Lyall.

a dancer dances is a fragment from the musical *A Chorus Line*. The full line invokes God as well as a demand and a compulsion.

‘God, I’m a dance / a dancer dances.’

We hear these words very early in the opening ensemble number, when the themes and the diagenetic space of the story are established. The show presents an audition of 32 young dancers, each competing for one of 16 places in a musical production. There is nothing that determines for us the subject of this musical, its songs or its dance style, its narrative thrust or headline stars. It’s as if the event of the spectacle were still a determining horizon, neither realized on the stage nor strictly absent or virtual. *A Chorus Line* is devoted to the symbolic understanding that works of art are in progress: the real show is still *coming*.

A Chorus Line concludes with a famous and spectacular finale: the house goes dark, a curtain drops, separating the backstage from the performance space; the lights come up and the line of 16 selected dancers enters. 16 have made it, 2 subsets of 8, men and women. They have escaped from backstage, from the cycle of hopes and disappointments, but they are regulated and made anonymous by the sameness of their costume. They now install themselves—they are incorporated—on the stage as a *company*. If this finale can stand in as the conclusion of the scenic arts in general—the end of painting, as Fried had worried, just as much as the conquest of serious theatre by the spectacle—this idea is composed at least provisionally by remembering how ‘conclusion’ was once defined in Harold Bloom’s notion of critical lateness. A conclusion is the emergence—beyond the periphery of any artwork—of an incapacity in the audience to provide further faithful interpretations. Or else, a conclusion is something like a perspective shift in the audience that cannot be anticipated or captured by the space of the artwork. (To be from Canada, which is to say to be from anywhere in global culture, Lyall has said, is to approach all of modernism from this condition of lateness.) This proposes a certain crisis: the ‘not-enough’ of every spectacle, and then the temptation of escalation, the global demand for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. (Today, super-curators are charged with including all of the dancers, promoting a cycle of obsolescence and the permanent injunction of innovation.)

But if so, and if *A Chorus Line* concludes the modern scene in general, Lyall proposes that the *Société Anonyme*, Duchamp and Dreier’s artist-made collection and exhibition program, is the point of this scene’s first appearance for New York. The *Société* is another situation based on incorporation by selection, with its 1920 inaugural exhibition consisting of 16 emerging art works. Coincidentally, like *A Chorus Line*, this show is subject to a revival. *A Chorus Line* re-opens on Broadway on September 18th, and the inaugural *Société* exhibition is replicated in a touring show currently on display at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. Lyall has positioned the modern scenic arts between these speculative brackets in order to emphasize his position on the side of their conclusion. We inhabit the space of a global audience of spectacular culture *in revival*, with no direct access to the scenes as they were composed or intended. We inhabit, more specifically, an information-driven art world. This suggests there is no way to read a modernist work directly, and that such work provides no horizon to a contemporary decision-maker. Lyall’s conclusion means, however, that the dream of autonomy in modern art has been achieved. That art is fully and finally alienated from other objects. But instead of sublime presence, autonomy has become permanent historical obsolescence, or it is assigned to the *sensational* figures of global celebrity culture.

The current show is composed by a set of 16 different elements, of various materials and styles, capable of various identifications and relations. Each is discrete, but in some cases the outer edges might seem fuzzy. A framed drawing is more obviously a discrete thing than a title. A scatter of particles is more vague than a concrete wooden platform. There are also, though, some groupings that seem to relate as in series. The 16 elements for the show derive from 4 general procedures, or 4 general orientations to the production of the show’s subject. There is symbolic manipulation of senseless information data, concrete production of programmed space, the selection of junk elements for abstraction, and a performance-like improvisation with found and ephemeral elements.

Although each element in the show has a production history of its own, and could be used to tell its own little stories of formation, the show itself does not organize them according to the themes of these stories. They are organized by the trial of their displayed incorporation. It’s not a case of going backstage for local stories as in *A Chorus Line*. That appeal to the stabilizing comfort of individual narratives is not the supplement that sustains the critical void the artist encounters. Things have crossed the velvet curtain to function for an uncertain public.

And for this reason, Lyall is committed to having one of the functions of exhibition be the occlusion of each element by the display of incorporation. An exhibition should damage the individual meanings of all its objects in favor of the collective effect of a set and its anonymous presence. One should not recognize the subject that is framed by these objects. The set should simply function. As Lyall says, *a dancer dances*.

Half of the elements come from existing and unrelated work from the studio—a mini retrospective!—while the others were made especially for this show. Besides this division, half the elements support a symbolic (organizational) subject, while the others support the appearance of a performative subject. One perspective looks backward at patterns that arise in discrete works; yet another attempts to assemble a scenic order for these relations. But all are halved, which is to say there is a hashing¹ of the apple. Each is a half cut by halves, only partially successful in its processes. There are formal relations, color and line, sensuous moments and opacities, appeals to the body and to vistas, domestic moments or consumer displays. There is also the arcanity of thwarted cultural references, dialectics of attention and distraction, and some limited entertainment. And if so, there is also an ephemeral matrix that structures everything—and an object-relation on the verge of coming together, or else collapsing.

The subject of all this is like an audience for a dancer, shifting perspectives and scanning for patterns and references in subtly choreographed movements. This subject moves the viewer's thought, as well as the eye and the body, through the impossibility of its devices, partial scenes and relations. Because this subject is submitted to the alienation/completion of its references, it is not decidable, Lyall always says, between the corporate collection and the landfill. *a dancer dances* is finally associated with the oscillation implied here. No dancer ever actually dances in a realized musical production. A dancer dancing is just the multiple of everything inapparent in scenic spectacles. A dancer dancing is an eternity lost *inside* its scenic fragments, a kind of senseless supernumary whose destiny is not-to-be, ...a-d-d-ed.

For more information or for visuals, please contact the gallery at 212.995.1774 or info@miguelabreugallery.com.

Gallery hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 11:00 AM to 6:30 PM

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Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street
J, M, Z to Delancey/Essex Streets

¹ Hash is here a mathematical slang for the cutting and scrambling of blocks of information.